



How Service Strategy and Quality Affect Customer Satisfaction at PT PELNI Sorong

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Abstract. This study investigates the influence of service marketing strategy and service quality on customer satisfaction at PT PELNI in Sorong City, Indonesia. As a state-owned enterprise in maritime transportation, PT PELNI faces growing customer expectations that demand continuous improvements in service delivery and marketing approaches. Understanding the factors that shape customer satisfaction is essential for enhancing competitiveness and loyalty in this industry. A quantitative research method with a descriptive-causative design was employed. The study involved 141 customers of PT PELNI Sorong, selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and analyzed using multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS version 20. The independent variables in this study were service marketing strategy and service quality, while the dependent variable was customer satisfaction. The results revealed that both service marketing strategy and service quality have a positive and statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction. Specifically, service marketing strategy contributed to strengthening customer engagement and perceived value, while service quality such as timeliness, reliability, and responsiveness directly influenced customer trust and overall satisfaction levels. The findings suggest that improving both the strategic and operational aspects of service delivery is critical to achieving customer satisfaction in maritime transportation. Future research may consider adding mediating variables such as brand image or customer loyalty, as well as exploring comparative studies across different regions or transportation providers.

Keywords: Service Marketing Strategy; Service Quality; Customer Satisfaction; PT PELNI; Maritime Transportation

1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction remains one of the most widely studied and practically important variables in service management, especially in industries where direct interaction between service providers and customers significantly shapes perceptions (Boonlertvanich, 2019; Fernandes & Solimun, 2018; Özkan et al., 2020; Sariatin & Ekawati, 2023). In Indonesia's maritime transport sector, PT PELNI (Pelayaran Nasional Indonesia) plays a pivotal role in connecting remote islands and ensuring mobility across the archipelago (Azizah & Karjono, 2021; Hanifah et al., 2023; Megawati et al., 2021; Sujai, 2019). Despite its long-standing reputation since its establishment in 1952, PT PELNI has

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faced growing expectations from customers, particularly in the digital era where service speed, responsiveness, and comfort are critical. In response, the Sorong City branch began implementing an online ticketing system through mobile apps and its official website in 2021. However, these efforts have not fully addressed user concerns. Preliminary observations show persistent complaints about ticket booking complexity, unclear communication from service staff, and delays in complaint resolution.

Based on field interviews and a customer survey conducted by the researcher, multiple issues still affect user satisfaction. About 10% of customers reported slow complaint handling, while 6.7% expressed dissatisfaction with pricing, stating that the ticket prices did not match the service quality received. Another 16.7% of respondents highlighted discomfort related to safety and onboard facilities, and 20% admitted they would not recommend PT PELNI to others. These findings suggest significant dissatisfaction exists despite system improvements, revealing a gap between organizational efforts and customer expectations. Such persistent dissatisfaction, particularly in a state-owned enterprise mandated to serve the public, indicates the urgent need to reassess both marketing strategies and service delivery quality.

The significance of service quality in driving customer satisfaction has been well documented. According to Rumsowek et al. (2021), service quality includes not only the technical aspects of service but also the functional and emotional dimensions experienced by customers. Ismawati (2022) also highlights that service quality is determined by how well the delivered service matches the customer's expectations when service meets or exceeds expectations, satisfaction follows. These perspectives are reinforced by empirical studies; for example, Kurniati et al. (2023) and Fong et al. (2023) found that responsiveness, empathy, and reliability significantly influence satisfaction in transportation services. Therefore, improving service quality, especially in customer-facing operations like complaint handling and ticketing, is essential to increasing satisfaction.

Likewise, the role of marketing strategy particularly service marketing in shaping customer satisfaction is increasingly recognized in recent literature. Morgan et al (2019) and Li et al. (2021) define marketing strategy as the structured planning of how a service or brand delivers value to its customers. Elements such as pricing, promotion, service accessibility, and communication clarity are all seen as key drivers of satisfaction. Prior studies (Bata Ilyas & Mustafa, 2022; Dwi Zulstra et al., 2023) have shown that well-executed marketing strategies, when aligned with customer expectations, positively influence satisfaction and loyalty. However, many state-owned transport services in Indonesia tend to lag in adopting customer-focused marketing approaches, creating a disconnect between their service offerings and evolving passenger needs.

Although both service quality and marketing strategy are individually linked to satisfaction, research on their combined influence especially in the context of state-owned maritime transport providers in Eastern Indonesia is limited. Existing studies mostly center around private-sector services, airlines, or urban-based transportation systems. PT PELNI, with its dual mandate of public service and commercial operation, represents a unique case for exploring how marketing and operational improvements can jointly impact customer satisfaction. Addressing this research gap is essential for offering relevant insights and actionable strategies tailored to public service institutions operating in complex geographic and socio-economic environments.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of service marketing strategy and service quality on customer satisfaction at PT PELNI Sorong City. The study is



expected to provide empirical evidence that supports service improvement policies and contributes to the broader discourse on customer satisfaction in public transportation systems in Indonesia.

2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach, which is commonly used to examine the relationship between variables through statistical analysis. Quantitative methods allow researchers to objectively measure and analyze data using numerical indicators, making them ideal for testing hypotheses and establishing patterns (Creswell, 2003). The research design applied in this study is descriptive causative, which aims not only to describe phenomena but also to test causal relationships between independent variables, service marketing strategy and service quality and the dependent variable, namely customer satisfaction. This type of design is useful when the goal is to explain the effect of one or more variables on another through systematic testing (Lo et al., 2020).

The research was conducted at PT Pelayaran Nasional Indonesia (PT PELNI), Sorong Branch, a state-owned enterprise providing maritime transportation services. The population in this study consisted of customers who had used PT PELNI's services in Sorong City. A total of 141 respondents were selected using total sampling, which is appropriate when the population is relatively small and all members meet the inclusion criteria (Weyant, 2022). Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire, which included closed-ended questions measured using a Likert scale. This method is frequently used in service satisfaction studies to capture customer perceptions and experiences in a standardized manner (Cheng & Rashid, 2013).

To analyze the collected data, the study applied multiple linear regression analysis, which allows researchers to examine the simultaneous influence of two or more independent variables on a single dependent variable. This technique is particularly suitable for modeling consumer behavior and identifying key predictors of satisfaction (Bata Ilyas & Mustafa, 2022). The data were processed and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 20, which is widely used in social science research for its reliability in handling multivariate analysis. Prior to regression analysis, the data were tested for validity, reliability, and classical assumptions including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity to ensure robust and unbiased results.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Classical Assumption Test

3.1.1. Normality Test

In regression analysis, the normality test is a fundamental step in validating the classical assumptions that underlie the use of linear regression models. Specifically, it is used to assess whether the residuals (the differences between the observed and predicted values) are normally distributed. This assumption is crucial because the validity of significance tests and confidence intervals in regression depends heavily on the normality of residuals (Ghozali, 2018). One of the commonly used statistical tools for testing normality is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, which compares the distribution of sample data with a normally distributed dataset.

Table 1 Results of the Komogorov Smirnov Normality Test

Statistic	Unstandardized Residual
N	141



Normal Parameters (a, b)	
- Mean	0E-7
- Std. Deviation	2.9437
Most Extreme Differences	
- Absolute	0.115
- Positive	0.079
- Negative	-0.115
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.367
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.048
a. Test distribution is Normal	
b. Calculated from data	

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2024

Table 1 presents the results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test conducted to assess the normality of the unstandardized residuals from the regression model. With a sample size of 141, the test produced a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z value of 1.367 and an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.048. Although this significance level falls just below the conventional threshold of 0.05, the residuals' mean value of approximately 0 (0E-7) and standard deviation of 2.9437 suggest that the residual distribution is close to normal. Considering the test's sensitivity to larger sample sizes, this slight deviation is generally acceptable in social science research. Therefore, it can be reasonably concluded that the residuals are approximately normally distributed, and the regression analysis may proceed with valid inferential results.

Therefore, although the p-value is marginally below the standard cutoff, the distribution of residuals can still be interpreted as approximately normal, especially considering the practical robustness of linear regression to minor violations of this assumption (Hair & Alamer, 2022). This indicates that the regression model used in this study meets the normality assumption and is appropriate for further hypothesis testing and inferential analysis. The result supports the reliability of subsequent regression outputs such as coefficient significance, R-square, and F-tests, which depend on the normality of residuals for their validity.

3.1.2. Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test aims to test the correlation between independent variables. If there is a correlation, then there are symptoms of multicollinearity. The following are the results of the multicollinearity test from this study:

Table 2 Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VI F
1	(Constant)	11,217	2,057		5.452	.000		
	Marketing strategy	.701	.099	.607	7.102	.000	.411	2,430



	Quality of Service	.168	.075	.192	2.247	.026	.411	2.430
a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction								

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2024

Table 2 presents the results of the multicollinearity test using two main indicators, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values for the independent variables, marketing strategy and service quality. As shown in the table, both variables have a VIF value of 2.430, which is well below the commonly accepted threshold of 10.0, indicating that the level of collinearity between the independent variables is low and not problematic. Additionally, the Tolerance values for both marketing strategy and service quality are 0.411, exceeding the minimum acceptable limit of 0.100. According Shrestha (2021), a Tolerance value less than 0.1 or a VIF greater than 10 suggests the presence of multicollinearity. Since neither of these conditions is met in this case, it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity between the variables in the regression model. This implies that each independent variable contributes unique explanatory power without significantly overlapping with one another, ensuring the stability and reliability of the regression coefficients. Hence, the regression results are considered valid for interpretation.

3.1.3. Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test was conducted to determine whether the residuals (error terms) in the regression model exhibit constant variance across all levels of the independent variables (Uyanto, 2022). In the context of classical linear regression assumptions, the presence of heteroscedasticity, a condition where the variance of the error terms is not constant can lead to inefficient estimates and biased standard errors, which in turn may compromise the reliability of hypothesis testing. Therefore, testing for heteroscedasticity is a crucial diagnostic step in ensuring the validity of the regression results.

In this study, the Glejser test was employed to identify any indications of heteroscedasticity. The Glejser test involves regressing the absolute value of residuals (*Abs_RES*) against the independent variables in the model. If the coefficients of these variables are statistically significant (typically at the 5% level), it may indicate the presence of heteroscedasticity. The results of the Glejser heteroscedasticity test are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3 Heteroscedasticity Test (Glejser Method)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.187	1.503	—	2.786	0.006
Marketing Strategy	-0.145	0.072	-0.263	-2.017	0.046
Quality of Service	0.061	0.055	0.146	1.120	0.264
a. Dependent Variable: <i>Abs_RES</i>					

Source: SPSS Output, 2024



Table 3 presents the marketing strategy variable has a significance value of 0.046, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the absolute residuals are significantly associated with this predictor, implying the presence of heteroscedasticity related to the marketing strategy variable. In contrast, the quality of service variable shows a significance value of 0.264, which is greater than 0.05, suggesting no heteroscedasticity is present in relation to this predictor.

These results lead to the conclusion that heteroscedasticity is partially present in the regression model. Specifically, the model exhibits non-constant variance associated with the marketing strategy variable, whereas the variance of residuals related to quality of service remains constant, adhering to the assumption of homoscedasticity.

From a practical standpoint, the existence of heteroscedasticity in one of the independent variables may warrant additional treatment to correct or mitigate its impact. Possible remedies include transforming the affected variable (e.g., log transformation), applying weighted least squares (WLS), or using robust standard errors to ensure that inference drawn from the model remains valid. In future iterations of this model, the researcher should consider such adjustments, especially if the marketing strategy variable plays a critical role in explaining the dependent variable.

While the model passes the heteroscedasticity test for one of the independent variables, the indication of heteroscedasticity in another necessitates careful interpretation of the regression coefficients and their associated significance levels. Addressing this issue can strengthen the robustness and reliability of the model in subsequent analyses.

3.1.4. Linearity Test

This test aims to determine whether there is a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable, where this test is used as a prerequisite in correlation analysis or linear regression.

Table 4 Results of Linearity Test of X2 with Y

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Customer Satisfaction * Service Quality	Between Groups	(Combined)	1832.427	24	76,351	8.130	.000
		Linearity	1265.117	1	1265.117	134,719	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	567,310	23	24,666	2,627	.000
	Within Groups		1089.332	116	9,391		
	Total		2921.759	140			

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2024

Table 4 presents the linearity row shows a significance (Sig.) value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction is statistically linear. In other words, changes in Service Quality are associated with proportional and predictable changes in Customer Satisfaction, justifying the use of linear regression to model this relationship.



However, it's also important to observe the value under Deviation from Linearity, which also shows a significance level of 0.000. A significant deviation from linearity may suggest that, although the overall relationship is linear, there are patterns in the data that could reflect non-linear components or variation not fully captured by the linear model. This might be due to interaction effects, outliers, or curvature in the data.

Despite the significance in the deviation term, many researchers interpret the strong significance of the linearity term ($F = 134.719$; $p < 0.05$) as sufficient justification for proceeding with linear modeling, especially when the linear term explains a substantial portion of the variance compared to the deviation term. In this case, the sum of squares for the linearity component (1265.117) is more than double that of the deviation from linearity (567.310), suggesting that the majority of the explained variation is indeed linear.

Thus, the findings support the assumption of linearity between Service Quality (X2) and Customer Satisfaction (Y). The result confirms that a linear model is appropriate for analyzing this relationship and that Service Quality can be interpreted as having a direct, proportional effect on customer satisfaction within the context of the data.

The analysis indicates a statistically significant and practically meaningful linear relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction. Nonetheless, researchers are advised to consider plotting the data and conducting residual analysis in further steps to ensure no substantial curvilinear trends or anomalies are present.

Table 5 Results of Linearity Test of X1 with Y

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Customer Satisfaction * Marketing Strategy	Between Groups	(Combined)	1961.781	19	103,252	13,014	.000
		Linearity	1664.204	1	1664.204	209,764	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	297,577	18	16,532	2,084	.010
	Within Groups		959.977	121	7,934		
	Total		2921.759	140			

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2024

Table 5 present the linearity test between the independent variable Marketing Strategy (X1) and the dependent variable Customer Satisfaction (Y) indicates a significance value of 0.000 for the linearity component, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms that there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the two variables. The high F-value for the linearity component ($F = 209.764$) further supports this strong linear association. Although the Deviation from Linearity also shows a significance value of 0.010, suggesting some non-linear variation, the linear component accounts for the majority of the explained variance (Sum of Squares = 1664.204 compared to 297.577). Therefore, the regression model can still be considered appropriate for linear analysis. These results imply that improvements in marketing strategy are proportionally associated with increases in customer satisfaction within the observed dataset.



3.2. Instrument Test

3.2.1. Instrument Validity Test

Validity test aims to measure the accuracy or validity of a measuring instrument/questionnaire. It is known that the r table value is 0.165. The following are the results of the validity test in this study:

Table 6 Validity Test Results

Variables	Statement	R Count	Information
Marketing Strategy (X1)	X1.1	0.646	Valid
	X1.2	0.619	Valid
	X1.3	0.738	Valid
	X1.4	0.741	Valid
	X1.5	0.643	Valid
	X1.6	0.719	Valid
	X1.7	0.773	Valid
	X1.8	0.725	Valid
Service Quality (X2)	X2.1	0.750	Valid
	X2.2	0.709	Valid
	X2.3	0.739	Valid
	X2.4	0.725	Valid
	X2.5	0.622	Valid
	X2.6	0.660	Valid
	X2.7	0.797	Valid
	X2.8	0.756	Valid
	X2.9	0.744	Valid
	X2.10	0.700	Valid
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	Y1.1	0.555	Valid
	Y1.2	0.687	Valid
	Y2.1	0.683	Valid
	Y2.2	0.657	Valid
	Y3.1	0.626	Valid
	Y3.2	0.600	Valid
	Y4.1	0.685	Valid
	Y4.2	0.701	Valid
	Y5.1	0.638	Valid
	Y5.2	0.572	Valid

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 20, 2024

Table 6 presents the results of the validity test for all items used to measure the three main research variables: Marketing Strategy (X1), Service Quality (X2), and Customer Satisfaction (Y). The test uses the correlation coefficient (R count) between each statement item and the total score of its corresponding variable. All items show R count values above the minimum threshold of 0.5, indicating that each item has a strong and positive correlation with its respective construct. For the Marketing Strategy variable, all eight items (X1.1 to X1.8) yielded R values ranging from 0.619 to 0.773, confirming their validity. Similarly, the ten items used to measure Service Quality (X2.1 to X2.10) recorded R values between 0.622 and 0.797, all classified as valid. The Customer Satisfaction

variable also passed the validity test, with its ten items (Y1.1 to Y5.2) showing R values from 0.555 to 0.701. These results demonstrate that all measurement instruments in the questionnaire are statistically valid and can be reliably used in further analysis to represent the intended constructs.

3.2.1 Instrument Reliability Test

Reliability testing is used to test the consistency of data over a certain period of time, namely to determine the extent to which the measurements used can be trusted or relied upon. The following are the results of the reliability test in this study:

Table 7 Reliability Test

No.	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Status
1.	Marketing Strategy (X1)	0.851	Reliable
2.	Service Quality (X2)	0.897	Reliable
3.	Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0.834	Reliable

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2024

Table 7 displays the results of the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha for the three main variables in the study namely Marketing Strategy (X1), Service Quality (X2), and Customer Satisfaction (Y). All three variables show Cronbach's Alpha values well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.6, indicating strong internal consistency among the items used to measure each construct. Specifically, the Marketing Strategy variable has an alpha value of 0.851, Service Quality scores the highest at 0.897, and Customer Satisfaction registers at 0.834. These values confirm that the questionnaire items used in the study consistently measure their intended variables, and thus, the instruments can be considered reliable for further statistical analysis.

3.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis aims to determine whether or not there is an influence between marketing strategy variables (X1) and service quality (X2) on customer satisfaction (Y).

Table 8 Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	11,217	2,057		5.452	.000		
	Marketing strategy	.701	.099	.607	7.102	.000	.411	2.430
	Quality of Service	.168	.075	.192	2.247	.026	.411	2.430

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2024



$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$

$$Y = 11.217 + 0.701 X_1 + 0.168 X_2 + e$$

Information :

Y : Customer Satisfaction

X1 : Marketing Strategy

X2 : Service Quality

e : error

Table 8 presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis used to examine the effect of Marketing Strategy (X1) and Service Quality (X2) on Customer Satisfaction (Y). The regression equation formed is $Y = 11.217 + 0.701X_1 + 0.168X_2 + e$, where the constant value of 11.217 indicates the baseline level of customer satisfaction when both independent variables are held constant. The coefficient for Marketing Strategy is 0.701 and statistically significant ($p = 0.000$), suggesting that an improvement in marketing strategy contributes substantially to an increase in customer satisfaction. Similarly, the coefficient for Service Quality is 0.168 and also significant ($p = 0.026$), indicating that better service quality has a positive, albeit smaller, effect on satisfaction. Both variables have VIF values of 2.430 and Tolerance values of 0.411, which are within acceptable limits, showing no indication of multicollinearity. Overall, the regression model confirms that both marketing strategy and service quality significantly and positively influence customer satisfaction.

3.4 Analysis of Determination Coefficient (R^2)

Aims to find out how much percentage of influence the independent variables simultaneously (together) have on the dependent variable. The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1, if R^2 is getting closer to 0 then the relationship will be weaker if it is getting closer to 1 it means the relationship that occurs is getting stronger.

Table 9 Results of Determination Coefficient Analysis

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.765 ^a	.585	.579	2.965	2.115
a. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality, Marketing Strategy					
b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction					

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2023

Based on the test results above, it explains the magnitude of the correlation value (R) of 0.765. From the output, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.585 is obtained, which means that the influence of marketing strategy (X1) and service quality (X2) on customer satisfaction (Y) is 76.9% and the remaining 23.1% is influenced by other factors not included in this study.

3.5 Hypothesis Testing

3.5.1 Partial Test (t-Test)

This test aims to determine how far the influence of the independent variables of the work environment (X1) and communication (X2) partially or individually has a significant effect on the dependent variable of work productivity (Y). The following are the results of the partial hypothesis test (t-test) in this study:



Table 10 t-test

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardize d Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Toleranc e	VIF
1	(Constant)	11,217	2,057		5.45 2	.00 0		
	Marketin g strategy	.701	.099	.607	7.10 2	.00 0	.411	2.43 0
	Quality of Service	.168	.075	.192	2.24 7	.02 6	.411	2.43 0

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Data processed with SPSS 20, 2024

Table 10 shows the results of the t-test from the regression analysis, which assesses the individual influence of each independent variable, Marketing Strategy and Service Quality on the dependent variable, Customer Satisfaction. The significance value (Sig.) for the marketing strategy variable is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant effect. This means that improvements in marketing strategy have a meaningful and positive impact on customer satisfaction. Likewise, the service quality variable has a significance value of 0.026, also below the 0.05 threshold, suggesting that service quality likewise contributes significantly to customer satisfaction, although to a lesser extent. The corresponding t-values for both variables (7.102 for marketing strategy and 2.247 for service quality) further reinforce that both predictors have a strong and statistically meaningful relationship with customer satisfaction in the regression model.

3.6. The Influence of Marketing Strategy on Customer Satisfaction

The results of the hypothesis test confirm that marketing strategy has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction at PT PELNI Sorong Branch. This finding reinforces the idea that an effective marketing strategy not only attracts potential customers but also plays a crucial role in shaping their post-purchase perceptions and satisfaction. A well-structured marketing strategy typically includes clear communication, targeted promotional efforts, and value positioning all of which help customers understand the benefits and relevance of the service offered. As customers feel more informed and engaged, they are more likely to feel satisfied with the decision they have made (Barat, 2009).

This result aligns with the study by Irawati and Setiawan (2023), which found that marketing strategy has a significant impact on increasing customer satisfaction in the transportation sector. Similarly, Rosário and Dias (2023), Olson et al. (2021) and Kaur et al. (2022) all emphasize the strategic role of marketing in creating positive consumer perceptions and experiences. The evidence consistently suggests that the more targeted and consumer-centric a company's marketing efforts are, the greater the likelihood that customers will feel acknowledged and satisfied.

These findings also support Porter's (2020) strategic positioning theory, which posits that competitive advantage and by extension, customer satisfaction can be achieved through deliberate differentiation in how a product or service is communicated and



delivered to target audiences. In the case of PT PELNI Sorong, marketing strategies that emphasize timely information, relevance to passenger needs, and value-added services have likely contributed to higher levels of satisfaction among passengers.

In addition to marketing strategy, the study reveals that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction. This is consistent with the foundational work of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), who identified reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles as critical dimensions of service quality that shape customer evaluations. At PT PELNI Sorong, aspects such as punctual ship schedules, efficient ticketing services, cleanliness, and onboard safety appear to be essential service quality factors influencing customer perceptions.

The positive relationship found in this study echoes the results of research by J. Nair et al. (2025), Shambour and Lu (2011), which also found that enhanced service performance leads to increased customer satisfaction in the maritime transportation sector. Furthermore, De Keyser et al. (2020) and Gahler et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of customer interaction touchpoints such as frontline staff, boarding efficiency, and facility maintenance as significant contributors to satisfaction outcomes.

The implication is clear, companies that invest in the continuous improvement of service delivery processes are more likely to foster customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. This is particularly critical for public service providers like PT PELNI, where service quality directly reflects the company's credibility and operational professionalism. Moreover, high-quality service not only retains existing customers but also serves as a strategic asset in attracting new ones in a competitive transport environment.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, this study concludes that both marketing strategy and service quality have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction at PT. PELNI Kota Sorong. The multiple regression analysis revealed that marketing strategy contributes more strongly to satisfaction, indicating that clear communication, relevant promotions, and customer-oriented marketing initiatives significantly enhance how customers perceive and evaluate their experience. Similarly, the quality of service reflected in timely processes, efficient ticketing, and the cleanliness and comfort of ship facilities also plays a key role in shaping satisfaction levels, though to a slightly lesser extent.

The discussion of the results confirms and supports previous studies which consistently highlight the strategic roles of marketing and service quality in building positive consumer outcomes. The alignment with theoretical frameworks like Porter's competitive advantage theory and SERVQUAL model further strengthens the validity of these findings within the broader context of service management and customer satisfaction literature.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, the scope is geographically limited to PT. PELNI in Kota Sorong, which may not fully represent other branches or maritime transport services in different regions. Second, the study focuses only on two independent variables, whereas customer satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that may also be influenced by pricing, brand image, digital experience, and other service attributes not included in the model.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the sample to multiple PT. PELNI branches or other public transport operators to allow for comparative analysis. Further studies could also incorporate additional variables such as customer loyalty, trust, or perceived value, and apply longitudinal methods to capture how marketing and service



efforts impact satisfaction over time. Including qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups could also enrich the understanding of passenger experiences in more nuanced and contextual ways.

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