
Service Quality in Water Distribution: Business Development Strategies for Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the impact of water distribution service quality on customer complaints and its role in enhancing customer satisfaction at Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng. A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected through questionnaires from 80 respondents. The questionnaire responses were measured using an interval scale, and respondents were selected using random sampling techniques. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software to evaluate three main relationships: the influence of water distribution service quality on customer complaints, the influence of water distribution service quality on customer satisfaction, and the influence of customer complaints on customer satisfaction. The findings indicate that all relationships examined are positive and significant, demonstrating that higher service quality leads to fewer complaints and greater customer satisfaction. These results highlight the critical role of service quality improvement and effective complaint management in strengthening customer trust and service performance.

Keywords: *Water Distribution Service Quality, Customer Complaints, Customer Satisfaction*

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1. Introduction

Access to clean water is a fundamental human necessity with significant implications for community welfare. Beyond its essential role in sustaining life, clean water is critical for maintaining public health and hygiene. The increasing global demand for clean water underscores the need to maintain its quality by minimizing contamination and ensuring purity (Ali et al., 2021). For Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng, a water utility company, this responsibility involves not only delivering clean water but also ensuring service excellence and effective customer complaint management. Efficient handling of complaints is crucial in enhancing customer satisfaction, improving service quality, and strengthening customer trust (Amir & Zaini, 2021). As global competition intensifies, organizations must prioritize service quality to ensure

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their sustainability. Service quality plays a crucial role in shaping a company's image, directly influencing its long-term success (Suardika & Dewi, 2022). In the case of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng, ensuring equitable water distribution, maintaining water purity, and providing an uninterrupted supply are key factors in meeting customer expectations (Putera et al., 2020). Customer complaints serve as valuable feedback for service improvement, as they highlight deficiencies in service delivery and provide opportunities for corrective measures (Irumva & Twagirayezu, 2020). Rangkuti (cited in Syam, 2019) categorizes complaints into two types: verbal complaints communicated directly or via telephone and written complaints submitted through forms or online platforms. Perumda facilitates customer feedback through complaint forms and a website, ensuring that issues are promptly addressed. Effective complaint management is, therefore, a critical determinant of customer satisfaction and corporate reputation (Awadh et al., 2022).

Customer satisfaction is an emotional response that arises when customers compare the actual performance of a product or service with their expectations (Rohaeni & Marwa, 2021). In the water utility sector, factors such as timely response to complaints, water quality maintenance, and reliability of supply significantly impact customer perceptions. According to Zeithaml, Bitner, and Lupiyoadi (cited in Amir & Zaini, 2021), service quality is a primary determinant of customer satisfaction and must be consistently upheld by companies. However, despite extensive research on service quality and customer satisfaction, limited studies focus specifically on the water utility sector, particularly in Indonesia. Existing studies explore service quality in various industries, such as hospitality (Ali et al., 2021), the rental vehicle sector (Amir & Zaini, 2021), water service providers in Oman (Awadh et al., 2022), and public utilities (Putera et al., 2020), but they fail to provide specific insights into the impact of service quality and complaint management on customer satisfaction in Indonesian water utilities. Furthermore, prior research has not adequately examined how complaint management mediates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in this sector (Sari et al., 2023).

This research seeks to bridge this gap by examining the interrelationship between service quality, customer complaints, and customer satisfaction in the context of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on complaint handling as a mediating factor between service quality and customer satisfaction, providing empirical evidence within a local Indonesian setting (Santoso, 2021). By utilizing advanced analytical tools such as SmartPLS, this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of these relationships and their implications for improving water utility services (Hamoud et al., 2020). The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on service quality management in the water utility industry while offering practical insights for enhancing customer satisfaction and complaint management. Addressing these key aspects will enable Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng to strengthen its role as a reliable provider of clean water and enhance its overall performance in meeting community needs (Rustanti & Alfianti, 2018).

2. Theoretical Background

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage refers to a company's ability to increase value for customers better than competitors. The challenge is to maintain each of these advantages to achieve optimal results (Kurniawan & Yun, 2018) . According to (Alwi & Handayani, 2018) , a business entity that can provide added value or advantages to consumers better than competitors will create a competitive advantage.

In this study, there are several indicators used to measure competitive advantage, namely as follows:

1) Differentiation Advantage

Differentiation advantage is the process of creating a significant difference in a company compared to the results of other companies that are already on the market, with the aim of attracting consumer attention. The difference owned by PT. Silvia Amerta Jaya is in the durian fruit products produced, which have the advantage of a soft durian fruit texture and a distinctive sweet and legit taste, thus creating added value in the minds of consumers.

2) Cost Advantage/Low Price

Cost advantage is the ability of a company to offer products or services at a lower price than its competitors to increase competitive advantage. The strategy carried out by PT. Silvia Amerta Jaya to create durian fruit products at a more affordable price, by producing quality durian fruit and minimizing profit margins that allow the company's capital turnover to run smoothly with a competitive price advantage.

3) Market Entry Advantages

Market entry advantage is the company's ability to access new markets early, build market share, and inhibit competitors. The advantage of PT. Silvia Amerta Jaya lies in its ability to achieve consumer expectations by providing products that match consumer desires, needs, and abilities. Through this approach, PT. Silvia Amerta Jaya has succeeded in occupying a dominant position in the market and entering the international market.

SWOT Analysis and Its Application in Competitive Advantage Strategies

SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is a widely used tool in strategic management to evaluate the internal and external factors influencing an organization's competitive position. By identifying these factors, companies can formulate strategies that capitalize on their strengths, mitigate weaknesses, seize opportunities, and counteract potential threats. According to Astuti and Ratnawati (2020), SWOT analysis is an essential technique in determining effective marketing strategies, allowing businesses to gain insights into both internal capabilities and the external environment. It helps companies develop targeted strategies that align with their competitive advantage and growth objectives. Furthermore, SWOT analysis is

frequently employed to understand the broader strategic context, particularly in sectors like horticulture, where market conditions can rapidly shift (Sasoko & Mahrudi, 2023).

In the context of competitive advantage, a firm can utilize SWOT analysis to understand the dynamics between its internal resources (strengths and weaknesses) and the external market conditions (opportunities and threats). For example, Alwi and Handayani (2018) demonstrate that a company's competitive advantage in SMEs can be influenced by factors such as market orientation and product innovation, which can be effectively assessed through SWOT. Similarly, Nizam et al. (2020) show that entrepreneurship, product innovation, and competitive advantage are intertwined, and SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive way to assess how these elements interact within an organization's strategic framework.

PT. Silvia Amerta Jaya's competitive advantage strategy can also be analyzed through the SWOT lens, as it reveals the company's internal strengths—such as its innovative marketing strategies—and external opportunities—such as the growing demand for durian fruit in both domestic and international markets. This analysis provides a clearer understanding of the strategic factors contributing to its success and its ability to maintain a strong position amidst competition. According to Adam et al. (2023), companies that effectively leverage their strengths while addressing weaknesses and capitalizing on external opportunities can sustain their market leadership.

3. Methodology

This research employs a quantitative method to analyze the relationships between service quality, customer complaints, and customer satisfaction at Perumda Tirta Hita Buleleng. The primary data for this study were collected through questionnaires distributed to customers of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng using a random sampling technique. The sample size, determined using Ferdinand's (2014) formula as cited in Saputra (2016), resulted in 80 respondents. The questionnaire employed an interval scale as its measurement tool. Data analysis was conducted using the SmartPLS software, focusing on the evaluation of both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model).

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The outer model evaluation is critical for ensuring the validity and reliability of the constructs used in the study. Validity reflects the instrument's ability to measure what it is intended to measure, while reliability indicates the consistency of the measurement tool. The following criteria were applied in this study:

1. **Convergent Validity:** Factor loadings greater than 0.7 indicate that indicators effectively represent the construct.
2. **Discriminant Validity:** Ensures that each construct is distinct by comparing factor loadings of indicators for their respective constructs with those of others.

3. **Composite Reliability:** Assesses internal consistency, with values above 0.7 signifying high reliability.
4. **Average Variance Extracted (AVE):** Evaluates the variance explained by the construct relative to measurement error, with a minimum acceptable value of 0.5.
5. **Cronbach's Alpha:** Measures internal consistency, with values above 0.6 considered adequate for reliability.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model evaluation tests the relationships between latent constructs. Key measures in this evaluation include:

1. **R-Square (R^2):** Indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. Values are classified as substantial (0.67), moderate (0.33), or weak (0.19) as per Chin's classification.
2. **F-Square (F^2):** Assesses the effect size of independent variables on dependent variables, categorized as small (0.02), moderate (0.15), or large (0.35).
3. **Q-Square (Q^2):** Measures the model's predictive relevance, with values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicating weak, moderate, and strong predictive power, respectively.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using t-statistics and p-values to determine the significance of relationships between variables. A t-statistic value greater than 1.96 at a 5% significance level indicates that the null hypothesis can be rejected, while p-values below 0.05 confirm the significance of the relationship. This analysis ensures the statistical validity of the research findings and provides a robust basis for interpreting the results and drawing conclusions.

This methodology offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamics between service quality, customer complaints, and customer satisfaction, contributing to a better understanding of customer behavior and organizational service performance.

4. Empirical Findings/Result

Outer Model

Construct Reliability

The reliability and validity criteria can be observed from the reliability value of a construct and the AVE value of each construct. Table 03 will present the Cronbach Alpha, Composite Reliability, Rho_A, and AVE values for all variables.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Value

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Customer Complaints	0,839	0,84	0,886	0,61
Customer Satisfaction	0,822	0,832	0,875	0,586
Quality Of Water Distribution Service	0,838	0,851	0,886	0,608

Source : Data Processed SEMPLS

Based on the information in Table 1, all constructs meet the required reliability criteria with composite reliability exceeding 0.70, rho_A at least 0.5, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.50. These criteria are recommended standards to ensure that the questionnaire used in the study is reliable. The questionnaire demonstrates good reliability and is suitable for use in the research context.

Inner Model

Assessing the model in path analysis involves analyzing path parameter coefficients and their significance in testing relationships between latent constructs. The structural model is evaluated using R-Square to measure how much variation in the dependent constructs can be explained by independent variables. Evaluation begins with assessing R-Square for each dependent latent variable, similar to regression approaches. Changes in R-Square values indicate the specific impact of independent latent variables on dependent latent variables, demonstrating the substantive effect of these relationships. R-Square estimates are presented in Table 2 to illustrate the model's ability to explain relationships between the latent variables under study.

Table 2. R-Square Value

	R Square	Percentage
Customer Complaints	0,398	39,8%
Customer Satisfaction	0,691	69,1%

Source : Data Processed SEM PLS

The results of evaluating the model using Partial Least Squares (PLS), where the R-Square value for the customer satisfaction variable is 0.691. This value indicates that service quality

variables and customer complaints can explain 69.1% of the variation in customer satisfaction levels. Based on the analyzed data, the results demonstrate how well the model can explain the factors influencing customer satisfaction. A high R-Square signifies that the contributions of the considered variables are sufficiently significant in explaining the variation in customer satisfaction within the context of this study.

Hypothesis Testing

The significance of the estimated parameters in the study provides crucial information about the strength of relationships between the researched variables. In statistical analyses like Partial Least Squares (PLS), the significance value of parameters is observed through the inner weight output, indicating how much each variable contributes to the larger construct.

Table 3. Result for Inner Weight

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Customer Complaints -> Customer Satisfaction	0,503	0,506	0,085	5,910	0,000
Quality Of Water Distribution Service-> Customer Complaints	0,631	0,637	0,075	8,447	0,000
Quality Of Water Distribution Service-> Customer Satisfaction	0,417	0,415	0,081	5,145	0,000

Source : Data Processed SEMPLS

The hypothesis testing results in Table 3 reveal a significant positive relationship between the quality of water distribution services and customer complaints, with a path coefficient of 0.631 and a t-statistic of 8.447, much higher than the t-table value of 1.960. These findings suggest that customers become more aware and critical of the service as service quality improves. Furthermore, the analysis of the relationship between the quality of water distribution services and customer satisfaction shows a path coefficient of 0.417 and a t-statistic of 5.145, which is also more significant than the alpha value of 1.960, indicating statistical significance. This demonstrates a positive and significant correlation between the quality of water distribution services and customer satisfaction; thus, enhancing service quality leads to increased customer satisfaction. Additionally, the test results indicate that customer complaints have a positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.503 and a t-statistic of 5.910, exceeding the t-table value of 1.960. Effectively handling complaints can enhance customer satisfaction with the service.

5. Discussion

The Effect of Water Distribution Service Quality on Customer Complaints

The findings confirm that the quality of water distribution services has a positive and significant effect on customer complaints at Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng. This suggests that the company has effectively implemented service standards that

align with customer expectations, particularly in addressing complaints. While the nature and frequency of complaints may vary, employees continuously strive to improve their performance, especially in resolving water distribution issues. Effective complaint handling not only enhances customer trust but also contributes to maintaining a positive company image, which is crucial for long-term sustainability.

From an economic perspective, efficient service quality reduces operational inefficiencies and enhances customer retention, which in turn leads to greater financial stability for the company. High complaint rates often indicate service failures that, if not addressed, could lead to increased costs due to customer churn and reputational damage. This study aligns with prior research by Amir and Zaini (2021), who emphasized that service quality and complaint management play a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction. Similar findings by Santoso (2021), Lamtare (2019), and Irumva and Twagirayezu (2020) also demonstrate that service quality has a significant impact on customer complaints across various industries, such as JNE Malang and Toyota workshops. These studies reinforce the notion that businesses prioritizing service quality and efficient complaint handling tend to maintain stronger customer relationships and achieve better financial performance.

The Effect of Water Distribution Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

The study also found that the quality of water distribution services positively and significantly affects customer satisfaction at Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng. Employees' commitment to maintaining service excellence and adhering to high-quality standards plays a critical role in shaping customer perceptions and satisfaction. By ensuring reliable and equitable water distribution, the company fosters positive customer experiences, leading to higher satisfaction levels.

From an economic standpoint, increased customer satisfaction translates into long-term financial benefits for the company. Satisfied customers are more likely to continue using services, reducing the cost of acquiring new customers and increasing revenue stability. Furthermore, a strong reputation for service quality can attract new consumers and potential investors, reinforcing business sustainability. These findings align with previous studies conducted by Anwar et al. (2023), Ali et al. (2021), Apsari et al. (2017), Parmayasa (2023), Mensah et al. (2021), Awadh et al. (2022), and Putera et al. (2020). Collectively, these studies emphasize that superior service quality leads to higher customer satisfaction, underscoring the importance of continuous improvement in service management to enhance customer experiences and economic performance.

The Effect of Customer Complaints on Customer Satisfaction

The results indicate a positive and significant relationship between customer complaints and customer satisfaction. At Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng, complaints are addressed systematically and efficiently, demonstrating the company's commitment to service improvement. Employees use structured complaint forms to

categorize issues based on type and location, often exceeding standard working hours to ensure swift resolutions. This proactive approach not only mitigates service dissatisfaction but also reinforces customer confidence in the company's reliability.

In economic terms, effective complaint management enhances customer retention and reduces potential revenue losses caused by dissatisfied customers switching to alternative service providers. A well-handled complaint can transform a dissatisfied customer into a loyal one, contributing to increased lifetime customer value. Furthermore, by systematically addressing service failures, companies can minimize operational disruptions and optimize resource allocation, leading to cost savings and improved profitability. The findings of this study align with those of Kurniawan et al. (2022), Amir and Zaini (2021), Jannah (2018), Hamoud et al. (2020), and Sari et al. (2023), which all highlight the importance of complaint resolution in enhancing customer satisfaction. Therefore, continuous investment in complaint-handling mechanisms at Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng is essential for fostering customer loyalty, maintaining financial stability, and securing a competitive advantage in the water utility sector.

6. Conclusions

Customer satisfaction can be achieved when customers receive excellent service quality and effective complaint handling. This study demonstrates that the quality of water distribution services and proper complaint management significantly influence customer satisfaction at Perumda Air Minum Tirta Hita Buleleng. The findings highlight that addressing diverse customer complaints often requires additional efforts, such as working overtime, to ensure customer needs are met promptly. Employees' dedication to delivering optimal service plays a critical role in enhancing customer satisfaction and improving the company's overall image. Satisfied customers indirectly contribute to the organization's positive reputation, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement in complaint resolution to strengthen customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Future research should explore additional variables that could influence customer satisfaction, such as trust, perceived value, or technological advancements in service delivery. This expansion will provide broader theoretical insights and practical implications for improving company performance and customer experience in the water distribution sector and beyond.

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