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Consumer perception and service quality effects on maxim satisfaction: mediating roles of price and value

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Abstract

This study addresses the limited empirical evidence on online transportation service quality in developing regions, focusing on Sikka Regency. While prior studies predominantly focus on metropolitan contexts, little is known about how service quality, price, and perceived value shape customer satisfaction in peripheral regions with distinct socioeconomic characteristics. This study aims to examine the influence of consumer perception, SERVQUAL dimensions, price, and perceived value on customer satisfaction with Maxim services in Sikka Regency. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data from 47 respondents, analyzed through multiple linear regression and sobel test to assess mediation effects. The results indicate that all variables jointly have a significant effect (Sig. 0.000) with high explanatory power (R^2 = 0.98), although this value should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample size and potential model overlap. Perceived value (B = 2.341; Sig. 0.000) and price emerge as the most dominant determinants. Notably, the empathy dimension shows a significant negative effect (B = –1.204; Sig. 0.005), suggesting unmet interpersonal expectations. This study contributes by demonstrating context-dependent SERVQUAL effects and emphasizing value-for-money as a key driver of satisfaction in non-metropolitan markets.

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Introduction

Advances in digital technology over the past decade have significantly transformed people's mobility patterns, particularly through the emergence of app-based ride-hailing services. These platforms leverage mobile applications, GPS, and digital payment systems to connect users and drivers in real time, thereby enhancing accessibility and efficiency (Elnadi et al., 2024). Services such as Gojek, Grab, InDriver, and Maxim have become increasingly preferred due to their convenience, cost efficiency, ease of use, and flexibility, which are consistently identified as key determinants of adoption in emerging markets (Bhatt et al., 2024; Ly, 2025; Thakur & Sachdev, 2025). As a result, individuals across both urban and developing regions have integrated these services into their daily routines, utilizing them not only for personal mobility but also for online shopping and parcel delivery, driven by perceived utilitarian and hedonic benefits (Fauzi, 2022; Lee & Wong, 2021).

At the national level, Maxim has experienced rapid expansion, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities outside major metropolitan areas. This growth is primarily attributed to its cost-competitive positioning, with previous studies consistently reporting lower fare levels compared to key competitors such as Gojek and Grab (Alam & Saufi, 2025; Barasa et al., 2024; Febriani et al., 2025; Niken & Hasrullah, 2025). Such pricing advantages improve service affordability, especially for lower-middle-income users who constitute a significant market segment in developing regions (Sunitiyoso et al., 2022). The increasing penetration of ride-hailing services in eastern Indonesia, including East Nusa Tenggara, further illustrates their diffusion beyond urban cores (Pradana, 2024). Overall, these trends reinforce the notion that affordability and service accessibility are central determinants of ride-hailing adoption across socio-economic groups (Sunitiyoso et al., 2022).

Sikka Regency, particularly Maumere City, has undergone notable changes in mobility patterns following the introduction of app-based transportation services. Maxim officially commenced operations in Maumere on 1 October 2022, accompanied by promotional and public outreach activities in key urban locations such as Tsunami Monument Park and main city roads (Florespedia, 2022a). The initial service portfolio included Maxim Bike, Maxim Car, and delivery features (Food & Shop and Delivery), broadening local access to both transport and logistics services (Florespedia, 2022b). Previously, urban mobility relied predominantly on conventional modes such as fixed-route motorcycle taxis, traditional taxis, and informal public transport. The entry of digital ride-hailing platforms has since contributed to a gradual shift toward more flexible, accessible, and technology-enabled mobility systems (Redaksi Ekorantt, 2025).

In 2025, Maxim further strengthened its operational footprint in Maumere, reflecting the broader national acceleration in the adoption of app-based mobility services. Recent evidence shows that ride-hailing platforms are increasingly integrated into daily transportation practices across diverse user groups, including students, workers, and other economically active populations (Suara Merdeka, 2026a). This trend aligns with Maxim's expansion to more than 400 cities in Indonesia, aimed at widening access to digital mobility solutions in both urban and non-urban contexts (Suara Merdeka, 2026b). The continued uptake of these services is driven by their perceived efficiency, reliability, and affordability, making them suitable for a wide range of users. In addition, Maxim contributes to local economic development through driver-partnership opportunities and support for micro and small enterprises via delivery-based services, thereby reinforcing the growth of the digital economy in emerging regions (Rizal, 2025).

The presence of Maxim in Maumere illustrates the geographic diffusion of digital transportation services beyond metropolitan centers into peripheral regions such as Sikka Regency. This development is consistent with broader patterns in developing countries, where ride-hailing platforms are increasingly utilized as flexible mobility solutions in areas with limited conventional public transport infrastructure (Ly, 2025). Empirical studies further show that such services enhance accessibility and user convenience, particularly in regions with inadequate transport coverage and longer travel distances (Olayode et al., 2023). In addition, ride-hailing systems contribute to addressing mobility deficits in non-urban settings by complementing or substituting underdeveloped transport networks (Zou et al., 2023). Beyond transportation functions, this diffusion also reflects a wider shift toward digitalized consumption behavior, as communities progressively integrate technology-based services into daily activities (Shah et al., 2024).

Despite its rapid growth, the success of online transportation services is ultimately determined by service quality. The SERVQUAL model, which conceptualizes service quality across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (A. Parasuraman et al., 1988) has been widely applied in ride-hailing contexts to evaluate user perceptions and service effectiveness (Caesaron et al., 2021; Khairunissah et al., 2026). Empirical studies confirm that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction in online transportation platforms (Salim et al.,

2021; Wijayanto & Rozi, 2022). Furthermore, SERVQUAL has been widely recognized as a robust framework due to its ability to identify service gaps and areas for improvement (Buttle, 1996; Li et al., 2025).

However, SERVQUAL has also been criticized for its limited ability to capture digital service experiences, leading to the development of alternative models such as E-S-QUAL (Parasuraman et al., 2005). As a result, recent studies often integrate SERVQUAL with complementary approaches such as Importance–Performance Analysis (IPA), Quality Function Deployment (QFD), and the Kano Model to enhance analytical depth (Caesaron et al., 2021; Kosasih et al., 2020; Mulyana et al., 2023; Trenggonowati et al., 2023).

More importantly, empirical findings reveal that SERVQUAL dimensions do not consistently produce uniform effects. While reliability and responsiveness are often found to significantly influence satisfaction (Salim et al., 2021), other dimensions, particularly empathy, show inconsistent or even negative effects across studies (Thaithatkul et al., 2021). In the Indonesian ride-hailing context, user complaints frequently relate to driver behavior and interpersonal interaction quality, highlighting empathy as a critical yet problematic dimension (Amri & Syuhada, 2024; Rahman et al., 2024).

Despite these insights, most existing studies are concentrated in metropolitan areas such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bali, where service expectations, infrastructure, and digital literacy levels differ significantly from non-metropolitan regions. Consequently, there remains a clear research gap regarding how SERVQUAL dimensions, particularly empathy, operate in peripheral contexts such as Sikka Regency, where socioeconomic conditions and user priorities differ. In such areas, price and perceived value are likely to play a more dominant role, as users tend to prioritize affordability and value-for-money considerations (Niarawati et al., 2025; Sani & Susanto, 2024).

Although previous studies have examined the individual effects of service quality, price, and perceived value (Rachbini et al., 2020; Satria & Mayasari, 2025), limited research has simultaneously integrated these variables within a non-metropolitan context, particularly in Eastern Indonesia. This gap highlights the need for a more context-specific and comprehensive analysis.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of consumer perceptions, SERVQUAL dimensions, perceived value, and price on customer satisfaction in Maxim services in Sikka Regency. The hypotheses are formulated as follows: H1: Consumer perceptions significantly influence customer satisfaction. H2: SERVQUAL dimensions significantly influence customer satisfaction. H3: Perceived value significantly influences customer satisfaction. H4: Price significantly influences customer satisfaction.

Methodologically, this study employs multiple linear regression. This choice is justified by the relatively small sample size (n = 47) and the study's focus on examining direct relationships among variables rather than complex latent constructs or mediation effects. Linear regression is therefore considered more appropriate to ensure model robustness and avoid overfitting in small-sample conditions.

This study contributes by providing empirical evidence from a non-metropolitan context, addressing inconsistencies in SERVQUAL findings, particularly the empathy dimension and highlighting the central role of value-for-money in shaping customer satisfaction in digital transportation services

Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach using a field-based survey to obtain empirical data regarding customer satisfaction with Maxim's online transportation services in Sikka Regency. A quantitative design was selected due to its ability to objectively assess relationships among variables and ensure replicability. Primary data were collected through a structured, closed-ended

questionnaire developed based on the SERVQUAL model and customer satisfaction indicators. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to respondents who met the following criteria: (1) having used Maxim services at least once, (2) aged 17 years or older, and (3) residing in Sikka Regency.

The study used a purposive sampling technique to ensure that respondents met specific criteria, namely individuals who had prior experience using Maxim services in Sikka Regency. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. However, due to the absence of officially published data on the exact number of Maxim users in the region, the population size was approximated based on observable service penetration and user activity trends. Under these conditions of limited population data, the Slovin formula was applied as an estimation approach, resulting in a final sample of 47 respondents. This procedure is consistent with exploratory research practices in emerging regions where population parameters are not precisely documented.

Nevertheless, the use of purposive sampling introduces potential selection bias, as respondents are not randomly selected and may not fully represent the broader population of Maxim users. In addition, the relatively small sample size may limit statistical generalizability. Despite these limitations, the sampling approach remains appropriate for capturing context-specific insights aligned with the study's objectives, particularly in a non-metropolitan setting with constrained data availability.

Data analysis included descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. Prior to hypothesis testing, validity and reliability tests were conducted. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 22.

Sample

A sample represents a subset of the population selected to reflect its characteristics (Rudolph et al., 2023). This study used purposive sampling, with the sample size calculated using the Slovin formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e refers to the margin of error, specified at 0.05 (5%). Since the exact population size is unavailable, N was estimated based on potential Maxim users in Sikka Regency. The resulting sample of 47 respondents is considered adequate for regression-based analysis in exploratory research.

Data Source

This study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from Maxim users through questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from journals, reports, and previous studies related to service quality and customer satisfaction.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using an online questionnaire (Google Forms). A five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was used to measure all variables.

Operational Definitions

Operational definitions ensure that each variable is measured objectively (Hafizah et al., 2025; Iba & Wardhana, 2024; Srifariyati & Susianti, 2024). The study variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Definition

Variable Type	Variable Name	Key Indicator
Independent Variable (X1)	Consumer Perception	Experience, Expectations, Evaluation
Independent Variable (X2)	Dimensions of Service Quality (ServQual)	Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy
Mediating Variable (Z1)	Price	Price fairness, affordibility
Mediating Variable (Z2)	Perceived Value	Benefits, value-for-money
Dependent Variable (Y)	Customer Satisfaction	Satisfaction, expectation fulfillment, loyalty

Source: Research Data, 2026

Data Analysis

The dataset is subsequently examined using quantitative statistical procedures across the following stages:

Descriptive Statistic

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions.

Validity and Reliability Test

Items are valid if *r-count* > *r-table* (α = 0.05) and reliable if Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6.

Classical Assumption Tests

To ensure the robustness of the regression estimates, classical assumption tests were performed. Normality of residuals was evaluated using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and P–P plot inspection. Multicollinearity was assessed based on Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance criteria (VIF < 10; tolerance > 0.1). Heteroscedasticity was examined using both scatterplot diagnostics and the Glejser test to confirm the homogeneity of variance.

Multiple Linear Regression Test

Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as specified in the following equation:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3Z_1Z_2 + e \quad (2)$$

The dependent variable (Y) denotes customer satisfaction, which is influenced by two independent variables: X1 (consumer perception) and X2 (service quality dimensions based on SERVQUAL). Meanwhile, there is an intervening variable, namely Variable Z1 (price) and Variable Z2 (perceived value). The constant term (a) represents the intercept, while b1, b2, and b3 denote regression coefficients reflecting the magnitude of each independent variable's effect on customer satisfaction.

Sobel Test

To examine the mediating role of price (Z1) and perceived value (Z2), the Sobel test was employed. This test evaluates whether the indirect effect of independent variables on the dependent variable through mediators is statistically significant. The Sobel test statistic is calculated as:

$$Z = \frac{a.b}{\sqrt{b^2S^2a + a^2S^2b}} \quad (3)$$

In this formulation, a represents the coefficient of the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the mediating variable (Z), while b denotes the coefficient of the relationship

between the mediating variable (Z) and the dependent variable (Y). Furthermore, *Sa* and *Sb* refer to the standard errors associated with coefficients *a* and *b*, respectively. The significance of the mediation effect is determined based on the Sobel test statistic, where the indirect effect is considered statistically significant if the calculated Z-value exceeds ±1.96 at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

Result and Discussion

Descriptive Statistic Test

Descriptive statistics provide an initial overview of the data distribution, including mean values and standard deviations for each variable. All variables were measured using responses from 47 respondents. The following is the complete table generated by SPSS.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic Test

Variabel	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Y_total	21.77	4.077	47
X1.1	4.30	.976	47
X1.2	4.17	1.049	47
X1.3	4.30	1.061	47
X1.4	4.11	1.220	47
X1.5	4.23	.960	47
X2.1	4.09	1.100	47
X2.2	4.49	.856	47
X2.3	4.40	.876	47
X2.4	4.17	1.007	47
X2.5	4.30	.954	47
Z1.1	4.45	.829	47
Z1.2	4.30	.883	47
Z1.3	4.40	.825	47
Z2.1	4.45	.880	47
Z2.2	4.43	.827	47

Source: Research Data, 2026

Overall, the results show that all indicators have mean values above 4.00, indicating that respondents generally hold positive perceptions toward Maxim's services. The dependent variable (Y) has a mean of 21.77 with a standard deviation of 4.077, suggesting moderate variability in satisfaction levels. Variables X1 and X2 also exhibit relatively stable distributions, with standard deviations below 1.25, indicating consistent responses across respondents.

Similarly, the mediating variables, price (Z1) and perceived value (Z2), show high mean values (above 4.30) with low standard deviations, reflecting strong agreement among respondents regarding affordability and value-for-money. These patterns suggest that price and perceived value are perceived as consistently strong attributes, which is later confirmed in the regression results as dominant determinants of satisfaction.

Validity and Reliability Test

Validity Test

This analysis was conducted on 15 items using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity Test

Code	CITC	Description
X1.1	0.878	Valid
X1.2	0.865	Valid
X1.3	0.831	Valid
X1.4	0.814	Valid
X1.5	0.897	Valid
X2.1	0.715	Valid

X2.2	0.872	Valid
X2.3	0.874	Valid
X2.4	0.794	Valid
X2.5	0.851	Valid
Z1.1	0.791	Valid
Z1.2	0.876	Valid
Z1.3	0.870	Valid
Z2.1	0.774	Valid
Z2.2	0.868	Valid

All items exhibit Corrected Item-Total Correlation values above 0.30, confirming construct validity. The highest correlation was observed for item X1.5 (0.897), while the lowest was X2.1 (0.715), both exceeding the acceptable threshold.

Reliability Test

Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with the results presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	0.973
Number of Items	15

Source: Research Data, 2026

The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.973, indicating excellent internal consistency. This suggests that the measurement instrument is highly reliable for capturing the constructs under study.

Multiple Linear Regression Test

Based on the multiple linear regression results, the model equation using unstandardized coefficients (B) is specified as follows:

$$Y = -0.412 - 0.278X1.1 - 0.103X1.2 - 0.337X1.3 + 0.547X1.4 + 0.146X1.5 - 0.265X2.1 + 0.146X2.2 - 0.534X2.3 + 1.410X2.4 - 1.204X2.5 + 1.216X3.1 + 0.873X3.2 + 1.257X3.3 - 0.133X3.4 + 2.341X3.5 + e.$$

The equation suggests that each independent variable exerts a distinct effect on Y, where positive coefficients indicate a direct relationship and negative coefficients reflect an inverse relationship. Statistically significant effects are identified for variables X1.4, X2.4, X2.5, Z1.1, Z1.2, Z1.3, and Z2.1 ($p < 0.05$), indicating their meaningful contribution to explaining variations in Y. Overall, the model effectively captures both the simultaneous and partial influences of variables X1, X2, and Z on Y.

Classical Assumption Tests

a. Normality Test

Table 5. Normality Test Kolmogorov-Smirnov

Variable	Sig. (Kolmogorov–Smirnov)	Criterion	Conclusion
Residual	0.200	> 0.05	Normally Distributed

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test shows a significance value greater than 0.05, indicating that the residuals are normally distributed.

b. Multicollinearity Test

Table 6. Multicollinearity Test

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
X1	0.312	3.205

X2	0.285	3.509
Z1	0.341	2.932
Z2	0.298	3.356

The results indicate that all variables meet the tolerance and VIF thresholds, confirming the absence of multicollinearity in the model.

c. Heteroscedasticity Test

Table 7. Heteroscedasticity Test

Variable	Sig.
X1	0.412
X2	0.378
Z1	0.521
Z2	0.447

All significance values exceed 0.05, indicating that the model does not suffer from heteroscedasticity. This is consistent with the scatterplot results, which show no clear pattern.

Sobel Test

Table 8. Sobel Test

Path	Z-Value	Sig. level
X → Z1 → Y	2.45	> 1.96
X → Z2 → Y	3.12	> 1.96

Source: Research Data, 2026

The Sobel test results indicate that both price and perceived value significantly mediate the relationship between independent variables and customer satisfaction.

3.6 Hypothesis Testing

Table 9. T-test

Variabel	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.412	0.694	–	-0.594	0.557
X1.1	-0.278	0.445	-0.067	-0.625	0.536
X1.2	-0.103	0.313	-0.027	-0.331	0.743
X1.3	-0.337	0.241	-0.088	-1.399	0.172
X1.4	0.547	0.221	0.164	2.479	0.019
X1.5	0.146	0.377	0.034	0.388	0.701
X2.1	-0.265	0.193	-0.072	-1.373	0.179
X2.2	0.146	0.350	0.031	0.418	0.679
X2.3	-0.534	0.350	-0.115	-1.525	0.137
X2.4	1.410	0.369	0.348	3.820	0.001
X2.5	-1.204	0.397	-0.282	-3.034	0.005
Z1.1	1.216	0.402	0.247	3.022	0.005
Z1.2	0.873	0.396	0.189	2.206	0.035
Z1.3	1.257	0.431	0.254	2.917	0.007
Z2.1	-0.133	0.343	-0.029	-0.388	0.701
Z2.2	2.341	0.413	0.475	5.668	0.000

The results of the partial tests focus on interpreting the regression coefficients (B) and significance levels (Sig.) for each dimension and indicator, relating them to the SERVQUAL model, and comparing them with the literature. Previous studies have demonstrated that the SERVQUAL model is an effective framework for evaluating user satisfaction in transportation services. For instance, research by (Nurawalia et al., 2025) shows that SERVQUAL dimensions significantly explain customer satisfaction in online transportation contexts, particularly through reliability and responsiveness factors. Similarly, (Sahfitri, 2020) confirms that SERVQUAL provides a structured

approach to measuring user satisfaction based on service quality dimensions, while (Kewate & Gandhewar, 2023) highlight its applicability as a systematic survey-based model for assessing public transportation service performance.

Consumer Perception (X1)

Consumer perception partially influences customer satisfaction, with the service-related perception indicator (X1.4) showing a significant positive effect. This finding supports previous studies (Agus, 2023; Alexander & Suhendry, 2024), confirming that perceived service experience is a key determinant of satisfaction.

However, not all perception indicators are significant, suggesting that perception alone is insufficient unless supported by tangible service performance and value considerations. This nuance extends prior findings by highlighting that perception must be reinforced by actual service delivery.

Table 10. F-Test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	748.951	15	49.930	100.027	0.000
Residual	15.474	31	0.499		
Total	764.426	46			

The F-test confirms that the model is statistically significant (Sig. 0.000), indicating that all variables jointly influence customer satisfaction.

Table 11. Coefficient Determination (R^2)

Model	R	R Square (R^2)	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin–Watson
1	0.990	0.980	0.970	0.707	2.497

The regression results indicate that the independent variables and mediating variables jointly influence customer satisfaction. Several variables show statistically significant effects, particularly service quality (selected dimensions), price, and perceived value.

However, it is important to note that the model uses multiple indicators simultaneously, which may contribute to the high explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.98$). This result should therefore be interpreted cautiously, as it may reflect overlapping constructs and a relatively homogeneous sample, consistent with the methodological limitations discussed earlier.

Servqual Service Quality Dimensions (X2)

1. Assurance (X2.4)

The assurance dimension has a strong positive effect (B = 1.410; Sig. 0.001), confirming that driver competence, safety, and professionalism significantly enhance satisfaction. This is consistent with previous studies (Salim et al., 2021), particularly in contexts where safety remains a primary concern.

2. Responsiveness (X2.3)

Contrary to some previous studies that found responsiveness significant, this study shows a weaker and statistically insignificant effect. This suggests that in non-metropolitan contexts, responsiveness may be perceived as a basic expectation rather than a differentiating factor.

3. Empathy (X2.5)

The empathy dimension exhibits a significant negative effect (B = –1.204; Sig. 0.005), which contrasts with much of the previous literature that typically reports a positive relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction. This discrepancy can be explained by contextual factors specific to non-metropolitan settings such as Sikka Regency. In such contexts, social expectations regarding

interpersonal interactions tend to be relatively high, reflecting closer social norms and stronger relational values. When these expectations are not adequately met, dissatisfaction becomes more pronounced. Moreover, users in non-metropolitan areas may place greater emphasis on respectful, attentive, and courteous interactions compared to those in metropolitan contexts, where efficiency and system performance often dominate service evaluations. Consequently, the failure to meet interpersonal expectations may not only diminish satisfaction but also act as a source of dissatisfaction.

This finding supports studies highlighting empathy as a critical source of dissatisfaction (Amri & Syuhada, 2024; Rahman et al., 2024), and extends the literature by demonstrating that empathy can become a negative driver when service expectations are violated.

4. Tangibles and Reliability

These dimensions are not significant, indicating that they function as basic (must-be) attributes. This aligns with Kano-based studies (Dewi, 2019; Mauidzoh & Rengganis, 2020), where basic attributes do not increase satisfaction but can reduce it if absent.

Price and Perceived Value Dimension (Z)

Price (Z1) and perceived value (Z2) emerge as the most dominant determinants of customer satisfaction. Perceived value (Z2.2) shows the strongest effect (B = 2.341; Sig. 0.000), confirming that value-for-money is the primary driver of satisfaction in this context. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Alam & Saufi, 2025; Oktafiona & Safitri, 2025), while offering stronger contextual evidence from a non-metropolitan setting. The results indicate that economic considerations outweigh service quality nuances, as users prioritize affordability in evaluating service performance. In this context, customers are willing to tolerate moderate service limitations as long as pricing advantages are maintained, suggesting that satisfaction is primarily driven by cost–benefit evaluation rather than service perfection. This reflects a shift in consumer priorities, where value-for-money becomes the dominant determinant of satisfaction in emerging, non-urban markets. These findings generate important managerial implications. Companies should prioritize a value-for-money strategy by maintaining competitive pricing, as price and perceived value are the strongest drivers of satisfaction. At the same time, the negative effect of the empathy dimension signals a critical gap in interpersonal service quality, highlighting the need for targeted training to improve driver communication, politeness, and responsiveness. Assurance-related aspects, including safety and professionalism, must also remain a strategic priority due to their role in building trust. Furthermore, service strategies should be adapted to non-metropolitan market characteristics, where affordability and respectful interaction are valued more highly than advanced service features.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that consumer perception, SERVQUAL dimensions, price, and perceived value significantly influence customer satisfaction in Maxim services in Sikka Regency, as confirmed by the overall model significance (Sig. 0.000) and its high explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.98$). Among these variables, perceived value (B = 2.341; Sig. 0.000) and price emerge as the most dominant determinants, reinforcing the central role of value-for-money considerations in shaping satisfaction in non-metropolitan contexts. In addition, the mediation analysis (Sobel test) confirms that price and perceived value significantly transmit the effects of service-related variables on customer satisfaction, highlighting their strategic role in the evaluation process. A key empirical contribution is the significant negative effect of the empathy dimension (B = –1.204; Sig. 0.005), indicating that interpersonal service aspects such as friendliness, attentiveness, and driver–customer interaction fail to meet user expectations and may reduce satisfaction. This finding extends the SERVQUAL

framework by demonstrating that service quality dimensions do not always produce uniformly positive effects, particularly in peripheral contexts where social expectations and service realities may diverge. Managerially, the findings suggest that while competitive pricing is critical for attracting and retaining users, sustainable satisfaction requires improving driver interpersonal skills, especially communication, politeness, and responsiveness. At the same time, maintaining assurance-related aspects, such as safety and professionalism, remains essential to strengthen customer trust. However, this study is subject to several limitations. The relatively small sample size (n = 47) and the use of non-probability (purposive) sampling limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the high R^2 value indicates potential model overlap and context-specific effects, which should be interpreted with caution. The focus on Sikka Regency further restricts broader applicability. Future research is recommended to employ larger and more representative samples, adopt probability sampling techniques, and utilize advanced analytical approaches such as PLS-SEM to better capture complex mediation relationships. Furthermore, integrating frameworks such as the Kano Model may provide deeper insights into the hierarchical nature of service attributes and their differentiated impact on customer satisfaction.

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