

THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND PRICE ON CUSTOMER RETENTION MEDIATED BY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE OUTPATIENT UNIT OF RHC LAMPUNG CLINIC

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the increasing competition in the healthcare sector, especially clinics, which requires effective strategies in retaining patients. Stagnation and decline in the number of patients in 2023 are challenges for RHC Clinic in maintaining the level of visits, which are influenced by service quality and price. Customer retention is a crucial factor for the sustainability of the clinic, considering that the cost of attracting new customers is higher than retaining existing ones. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of service quality and price on customer retention with customer satisfaction as the mediation. With a quantitative approach and purposive sampling method, this study involved 90 outpatient respondents at RHC Clinic, and data analysis was carried out using linear regression and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) with WarpPLS 8.0 software. The results showed that service quality and price had a positive effect on customer satisfaction, which in turn had a positive effect on customer retention, with customer satisfaction as a significant mediating variable. These findings confirm that improving service quality and adjusting prices according to patient expectations play an important role in increasing patient satisfaction and retention. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for RHC Clinic management in designing more optimal health service strategies to increase customer retention.

Keywords : *Service quality, price, customer satisfaction, customer retention*

1. Introduction

The healthcare sector has experienced rapid growth after the Covid-19 pandemic, which has led to increased competition among various healthcare facilities, including clinics. Clinics have become the main choice for the public because they offer shorter waiting times, more affordable costs, and increasingly quality services. However, the increasing number of clinics requires a more effective strategy in retaining patients so that they do not move to other facilities. One of the challenges faced by the RHC Clinic in Lampung is the stagnation and decline in the number of outpatients in 2023, as shown in graph 1:

Graph 1. Number of Outpatient Visits at RHC Clinic in 2023



Source: RHC Clinic

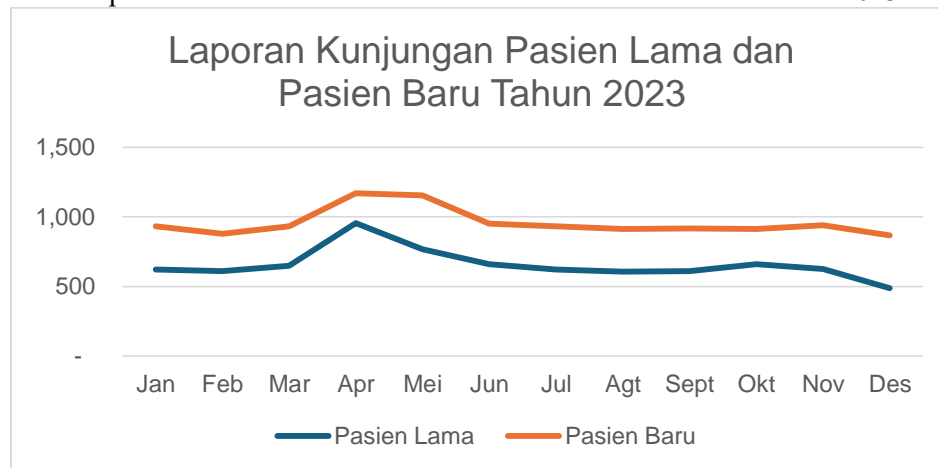
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Based on this graph 1, it shows a trend of stagnation and a decrease in the number of patient visits at the end of the year. This condition can have an impact on the sustainability of clinic operations if not addressed immediately.

Graph 2. Number of Old and New Patient Visits at RHC Clinic in 2023



Source: RHC Clinic

Furthermore, Graph 2 shows that the number of new patients at RHC Clinic is higher than the number of old patients, indicating that there are obstacles in retaining patients to continue using the clinic's services in the long term. Factors such as service quality, price, and patient satisfaction are thought to play an important role in patients' decisions to return or switch to another facility. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of service quality and price on customer retention with patient satisfaction mediation at RHC Clinic. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insight into the factors that influence patient retention and become a reference for RHC Clinic management in developing strategies to improve service quality and price adjustments that are more in line with patient expectations, in order to increase loyalty and the sustainability of the clinic in the long term.

2. Literature review

Customer retention

Customer retention is the tendency of customers to continue using a service in the future. According to Ranaweera and Prabhu (Wiryo, 2024), customer retention reflects an individual's loyalty to a service provider. Heinggi-Thurau (Jahroni and Arif, 2022) states that this strategy is effective in preventing customers from switching to competitors and maintaining business continuity. Kotler and Armstrong (Kaufman, 2015) emphasize that customer retention can be achieved by creating ongoing value and satisfaction, so that new customers can transform into loyal customers.

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an emotional response that arises after comparing expectations with actual experiences of a product or service. Kotler states that satisfaction can be positive or negative depending on the match between customer perceptions and product performance (Putri et al., 2022). Sangale (2015) added that customer satisfaction is measured by the extent to which a product or service is able to meet or exceed expectations. In line with that, Tjiptono et al. (2022) explained that customer satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment that arises based on a comparison between expectations and the results received.

Quality of service

Service quality is a measure of the extent to which the service provided meets customer expectations. According to Dewi et al. (2023), service quality indicates the conformity of services to the standards expected by consumers. Umbase et al. (2022) emphasize that service quality is determined by the difference between the service received (perceived service) and the service expected (expected service). Meanwhile, Handayani (2020) explains that service quality is reflected in the comparison between customer expectations and the performance of the service received.

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Price

Price is the value that must be paid by customers to obtain a product or service. Kotler and Armstrong (Hakim et al., 2022) define price as the total cost charged for a product or service. Oetoro (Sa'adah and Munir, 2020) added that price reflects an exchange value that is commensurate with the benefits received by customers under certain conditions. Meanwhile, Santoso (Suwitho, 2022) explains that price is the amount that consumers must pay to use or own a product or service.

3. Hypothesis

This study focuses on the analysis of the influence of service quality and price on customer retention with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. The following is a conceptual framework:

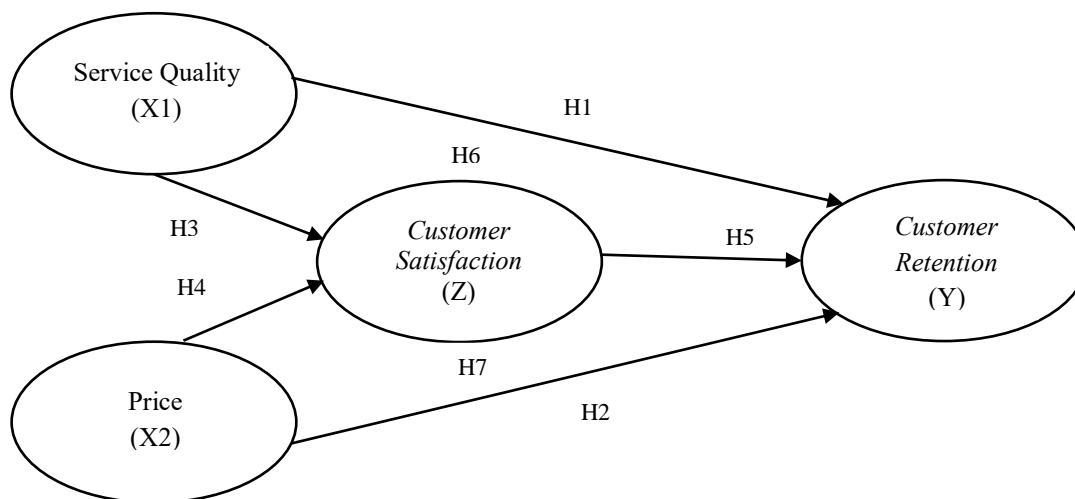


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Good service quality and appropriate prices can increase patient satisfaction, which ultimately contributes to customer retention, which can be formulated as follows:

H1: Service quality has a positive effect on customer retention in the outpatient unit of the RHC clinic.

H2: Price has a positive effect on customer retention in the outpatient unit of the RHC clinic.

H3: Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction in the outpatient unit of the RHC clinic.

H4: Price has a positive effect on customer satisfaction in the outpatient unit of the RHC clinic.

H5: Customer satisfaction has a significant positive effect on customer retention in the outpatient unit of the RHC clinic.

H6: Service quality has a positive effect on customer retention mediated by customer satisfaction in the outpatient unit of the RHC clinic.

H7: Price has a positive effect on customer retention mediated by customer satisfaction in the outpatient unit of the RHC clinic.

4. Research methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach with a population consisting of outpatient patients at the RHC Clinic. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which is a sample selection method when researchers do not have complete information about the population, but determine the sample based on certain criteria to be relevant to the research objectives, as explained by Abdillah and Jogiyanto (2015). Respondent criteria include patients who have visited the clinic at least once and are 17 years of age and over. The number of samples was determined using the Hair et al. formula, with a result of 90 respondents. Data collection was conducted through a Likert-based questionnaire to measure patient perceptions of the variables studied. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) with WarpPLS 8.0 software, which allows testing of direct and indirect relationships between variables in the research model.

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5. Research Results and Interpretation

Most of the characteristics of respondents (90 respondents) in this study consisted of women, reaching 66%, with the largest age group being over 40 years old, which was 53%, followed by the 26-32 year old age group which covered 21%. In terms of education, the majority of respondents had primary and secondary education backgrounds, each amounting to 28%, while 15% of respondents had never attended formal education. Regarding employment, the largest number of respondents were housewives with a percentage of 36%, followed by self-employed people at 22% and those who were unemployed reaching 18%. The frequency of visits to the RHC Clinic showed that most respondents, namely 59%, made 2-4 visits, while only 1% made more than 10 visits. Based on the results of the respondent variable analysis data using WarpPLS 8.0 with the linear regression method and bootstrapping resampling, the results obtained were:

The measurement model (outer model) is used to assess the relationship between latent variables and their indicators (Ghozali, 2020). In this study, validity was tested using loading factors, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and cross loading, while reliability was tested through Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. The results of the analysis show that all indicators have loading factor values above 0.5, which indicates that all indicators are valid. In addition, an AVE value greater than 0.5 confirms that the model meets convergent validity. Furthermore, the cross loading results show that each indicator has a higher loading on its construct variable compared to other variables, so the model is declared to meet discriminant validity. Reliability testing also shows that the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values of each variable exceed 0.7, which means that the research instrument has a good and consistent level of reliability in measuring the construct being studied.

Table 1. Loading Factor

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Information
KP	X1.1	0.654	Valid
	X1.2	0.789	Valid
	X1.3	0.634	Valid
	X1.4	0.654	Valid
	X1.5	0.767	Valid
PR	X2.1	0.777	Valid
	X2.2	0.795	Valid
	X2.3	0.747	Valid
	X2.4	0.650	Valid
CS	Z.1	0.752	Valid
	Z.2	0.809	Valid
	Z.3	0.720	Valid
	Z.4	0.715	Valid
CR	Y.1	0.748	Valid
	Y.2	0.835	Valid
	Y.3	0.749	Valid
	Y.4	0.551	Valid
	Y.5	0.813	Valid

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	AVE	Information
KP	0.703	Valid
PR	0.744	Valid
CS	0.750	Valid
CR	0.746	Valid

Table 3. Cross Loading

	KP	PR	CS	CR	Information
X1.1	0.654	-0.166	0.195	0.554	Valid
X1.2	0.789	0.166	-0.111	0.215	Valid
X1.3	0.634	0.200	-0.165	-0.860	Valid

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X1.4	0.654	0.500	-0.038	-0.754	Valid
X1.5	0.767	-0.620	0.117	0.660	Valid
X2.1	-0.132	0.777	-0.339	0.649	Valid
X2.2	0.348	0.795	0.209	-0.001	Valid
X2.3	-0.587	0.747	0.192	-0.442	Valid
X2.4	0.407	0.650	-0.071	-0.505	Valid
Z.1	0.492	0.511	0.752	-0.359	Valid
Z.2	-0.205	0.462	0.809	0.497	Valid
Z.3	-0.453	-0.422	0.720	-0.028	Valid
Z.4	0.170	-0.636	0.715	-0.157	Valid
Y.1	-0.090	0.105	-0.779	0.748	Valid
Y.2	-0.144	0.285	0.309	0.835	Valid
Y.3	-0.507	0.177	0.188	0.749	Valid
Y.4	0.083	-0.368	0.181	0.551	Valid
Y.5	-0.036	-0.302	0.104	0.813	Valid

Table 4. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite	Information
KP	0.740	0.829	Reliable
PR	0.729	0.831	Reliable
CS	0.740	0.837	Reliable
CR	0.794	0.860	Reliable

In the structural model (inner model) describes the interaction between latent variables based on the underlying theory (Ghozali, 2020). This model was tested using the coefficient of determination (R^2) with the results of Customer Satisfaction (CS) being 0.66, indicating that the independent variables are able to explain 66% of the variation in customer satisfaction, while the R^2 value for Customer Retention (CR) is 0.81, indicating a very strong relationship between latent variables.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Dependent Variable	R-square(R^2)	Interpretation
Customer Satisfaction(CS)	0.66	Moderate
Customer Retention(CR)	0.81	Strong

Hypothesis testing consists of two, namely direct influence and indirect influence (mediation). The hypothesis is accepted if the p-value < 0.05 . The results show that all hypotheses in this study are significant, including direct relationships and relationships mediated by customer satisfaction.

Table 6. Direct Influence

Influence	Coefficient	p-value	Information
KP→CR	0.342	0.001	Significant
PR→CR	0.297	0.008	Significant
KP→CS	0.221	0.015	Significant
PR→CS	0.624	< 0.001	Significant
CS→CR	0.336	< 0.001	Significant

From the test of table 8, the results obtained are:

1. Service quality has a significant positive effect on customer retention
2. Price has a significant positive effect on customer retention
3. Service quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction
4. Price has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction
5. Customer satisfactionsignificantly positive influence on customer retention

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Table 7. Indirect Influence

Influence	Coefficient	p-value	Information
KP→CS→CR	0.074	0.025	Significant
PR→CS→CR	0.209	< 0.001	Significant

The results of the table 8 test, then the results obtained:

1. Service quality has a significant positive effect on customer retention which is mediated by customer satisfaction.
2. Price has a significant positive effect on customer retention which is mediated by customer satisfaction.

6. Discussion

H1 : Service quality has a positive effect on customer retention

Service quality has a significant and positive effect on customer retention, with a path coefficient of 0.342 and a p-value of 0.001. This shows that high-quality service plays an important role in building long-term relationships between patients and healthcare providers. This finding is consistent with the research of Darmawan et al. (2020), which emphasizes that services that are in accordance with customer needs can increase their loyalty. Sari et al. (2023) also confirmed that improving service quality directly encourages customers to continue using the services provided. To retain customers, service providers need to measure patient satisfaction regularly, improve staff skills, and utilize technology to facilitate access to services. In addition, a quick and professional response to patient complaints will strengthen relationships and increase customer satisfaction in the long term.

H2: Price has a positive effect on customer retention

Price has a positive and significant effect on customer retention, with a path coefficient of 0.297 and a p-value of 0.008. This shows that competitive prices and prices in accordance with customer perceived value play an important role in maintaining their loyalty. Research by Ahmed et al. (2020) confirms that price is a key factor in building the relationship between customer loyalty and retention, where appropriate pricing can increase retention, while excessive price increases can damage loyalty. Jahroni and Arif (2022) also confirmed that price fairness has a significant effect on customer retention, emphasizing the importance of pricing strategy in maintaining long-term relationships. Therefore, service providers need to set prices that reflect the value of the service, avoid price changes too often, and conduct market analysis to understand customer expectations. With a competitive and consistent pricing strategy, clinics can increase patient loyalty, strengthen long-term relationships, and maintain competitiveness in the healthcare industry.

H3: Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.221 and a p-value of 0.015. This shows that the better the quality of service provided, the higher the level of customer satisfaction. This finding is in line with the research of Fadlilah et al. (2022), which revealed that quality service can increase patient satisfaction at the Al Fatah Pratama Clinic, as well as the research of Dahlia (2020) which showed a positive effect of service quality on inpatient satisfaction at Dr. H. Ibnu Sutowo Baturaja Hospital. When the service received meets or exceeds patient expectations, satisfaction will increase, encouraging them to return and recommend the service to others. To maintain customer satisfaction, service providers need to continuously improve service quality through staff training, monitoring patient feedback, and effective communication. Quick response to complaints and more personal interactions can also strengthen relationships with patients, increase loyalty, and strengthen the clinic's reputation in the eyes of the public.

H4: Price has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Price has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.624 and a p-value <0.001. This indicates that patient satisfaction increases when the costs incurred are comparable to the quality and benefits of the services received. Research by Fadlilah et al. (2022) confirmed that prices that are in line with patient expectations contribute to higher levels of satisfaction, while Dahlia (2020) emphasized that a mismatch between price and benefits can reduce customer satisfaction. Therefore, service providers need to implement flexible pricing strategies and consider patient segmentation. With a more personalized and patient-based pricing

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approach, clinics can increase satisfaction, build stronger relationships, and maintain patient loyalty in the long term.

H5: Customer satisfaction has a significant positive effect on customer retention.

Customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on customer retention, with a path coefficient of 0.336 and a p-value <0.001 . This shows that high satisfaction not only reflects the clinic's success in meeting patient expectations but is also a major factor in building long-term loyalty. Research by Primantari and Afriyeni (2024) revealed that customer satisfaction contributes directly to increased retention, while a study by Wiryono et al. (2024) confirmed that high satisfaction can retain customers in the long term. To strengthen retention, clinics need to continue to improve service quality, set fair prices, and ensure that patient experiences remain positive. Effective communication, quick response to complaints, and patient-oriented services will help maintain their loyalty in the long term.

H6: Service quality has a positive effect on customer retention which is mediated by customer satisfaction.

Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer retention through customer satisfaction mediation, with a path coefficient of 0.074 and a p-value of 0.025. This means that professional, responsive, and patient-expected service not only increases satisfaction but also strengthens long-term loyalty. Patients who are satisfied with the service tend to return to use the same service, thereby increasing retention. Suwitho (2022) emphasized that optimal service quality results in positive feedback and extends customer relationships, while Sari et al. (2023) stated that good service quality contributes to increased patient satisfaction and retention. To maintain patient loyalty, service providers need to adopt technology in the service system, such as digital queues and consultation applications, to increase efficiency and convenience. In addition, conducting regular satisfaction surveys can help identify and address patient problems, while demonstrating a commitment to providing better service.

H7: Price has a positive effect on customer retention which is mediated by customer satisfaction.

Price has a positive and significant effect on customer retention through customer satisfaction mediation, with a path coefficient of 0.209 and p-value <0.001 . This shows that reasonable prices and in accordance with the value perceived by customers can increase their satisfaction, which ultimately strengthens customer loyalty and retention. Tjiptono and Anastasia (2022) emphasized that satisfied customers tend to remain loyal and are more tolerant of price variations, even willing to pay more if the service received meets their expectations. In contrast, Hakim et al.'s (2022) study found that price perception did not always have a significant effect on retention, highlighting the importance of considering the industry context. In provider services, price transparency and conformity to service quality are essential to building patient trust. Therefore, regular satisfaction surveys can provide insight into price perceptions and service quality, assist healthcare providers in adjusting pricing policies, and improving patient satisfaction and retention sustainably.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study confirms that service quality and price have a positive and significant effect on customer retention, both directly and through the mediation of customer satisfaction. Optimal service quality increases patient satisfaction, which encourages them to continue using the same service. Likewise, competitive prices that are comparable to the benefits received contribute to increased satisfaction and strengthen patient retention. Customer satisfaction also plays an important role in strengthening the relationship between these variables, where satisfied customers are more likely to continue using the services provided rather than switching to other providers. Thus, improving service quality and setting appropriate prices are strategic steps in ensuring sustainable customer retention. Based on the research results, there are several suggestions that need to be taken to improve *customer retention* and ensure that the service and price meet their expectations. Here are some suggestions to consider:

1. RHC Clinic needs to consider implementing a reward and punishment system so that employees are more motivated to provide the best service. Rewards can be in the form of bonuses or training for those who perform well, while corrective actions such as warnings or retraining are given to those who need improvement. This system must be implemented fairly and transparently based on routine performance evaluations.

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2. Conduct periodic service rate evaluations to ensure prices remain competitive and in line with the quality provided. Appropriate price adjustments can increase patient satisfaction and maintain the clinic's competitiveness.
3. Conduct regular patient satisfaction surveys to evaluate their experience with the service, comfort, and attitude of the staff. Surveys can be conducted online or in person at the clinic with short, clear questions. The results must be followed up as material for service improvement so that patients feel appreciated and the clinic continues to grow.
4. Using attractive promotional strategies such as providing special rates at certain moments, such as World Health Day or the clinic's anniversary. This promotion can attract new patients and benefit existing patients with more affordable prices. Disseminating information through social media or direct notification to patients can increase the effectiveness of this strategy.

This research can still be developed further to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence patient satisfaction and retention. Here are some suggestions for further research:

1. Expanding research variables by adding factors such as patient waiting time variables and digital services in influencing satisfaction and retention.
2. Conducting a comparative study between private and government clinics to analyze differences in service quality, price, and patient retention.
3. Exploring other mediation models, such as the role of trust or loyalty in the relationship between patient satisfaction and retention.

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