

The Effect of Price and Promotion on Customer Satisfaction With Service Quality as a Mediating Variable at Leslie Rent Car in Medan

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of price and promotion on customer satisfaction with service quality as a mediating variable at Leslie Rent Car in Medan. The research was designed to identify the main factors that shape customer satisfaction in the car rental service sector and to test whether service quality acts as an important mechanism linking marketing variables to customer satisfaction. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from 382 active customers of Leslie Rent Car in Medan. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), including measurement model evaluation, structural model testing, and hypothesis testing. The results show that all indicators met the requirements of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability, indicating that the measurement model was acceptable. In the structural model, customer satisfaction was explained by price, promotion, and service quality with an R-square value of 0.510, while service quality was explained by price and promotion with an R-square value of 0.035. Hypothesis testing revealed that price had a positive and significant effect on service quality and customer satisfaction. Service quality also had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction and was found to be the strongest predictor in the model. In addition, service quality significantly mediated the relationship between price and customer satisfaction. However, promotion did not have a significant effect on service quality or customer satisfaction, and service quality did not mediate the effect of promotion on customer satisfaction. The study concludes that customer satisfaction at Leslie Rent Car is primarily influenced by fair and appropriate pricing as well as the actual quality of service experienced by customers. Service quality plays a central role in transforming price perceptions into customer satisfaction, while promotion alone is not sufficient to improve either service quality or satisfaction. These findings suggest that improving vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and special attention should become the company's primary strategic focus.

Keywords: Price; Promotion; Service Quality; Customer Satisfaction and Car Rental Services.

I. INTRODUCTION

The transportation industry, particularly the car rental industry, is experiencing rapid growth globally as people's mobility increases post-pandemic [1]. Global statistics show that global car rental market revenue is projected to achieve a stable annual growth rate through 2025 due to high tourism demand. At the national level, the tourism and business sectors in Indonesia are also driving the surge in demand for reliable and affordable land transportation services [2]. Fierce competition in this industry requires companies to formulate appropriate pricing and promotional strategies to attract customers. Customer satisfaction is a key indicator of service success, and is heavily influenced by these marketing strategies in the national market. Observing the regional context, North Sumatra Province is one of the largest centers of economic and tourism growth in western Indonesia. Medan, as the provincial capital, has a very high daily mobility rate, driving significant demand for car rental services [3]. Data from relevant agencies shows a significant increase in the number of rental vehicle fleets operating in this city to meet the needs of residents and tourists. The dynamic market conditions in Medan require car rental providers to continuously innovate by offering competitive prices and attractive promotions. Therefore, local car rental companies like Leslie Rent Car need to optimize their service quality to compete effectively in the North Sumatra market.

Theoretically, reasonable pricing and intensive promotions should be directly proportional to optimal customer satisfaction [4]. The concept of "das sollen" (good service) asserts that customers will be most satisfied when the quality of service received exceeds the cost incurred. However, the reality on the ground, or "das sein," shows a different phenomenon among some land transportation service providers. Preliminary

study data from various online reviews revealed customer complaints regarding discrepancies between promotional advertisements and actual vehicle conditions. Several previous studies also found that significant discounts are sometimes accompanied by lower standards of cleanliness and fleet maintenance [5], [6]. This discrepancy indicates that price and promotions alone are insufficient to guarantee satisfaction without excellent service quality. Empirical evidence from a preliminary survey of car rental service users in Medan noted that customers sometimes experienced delays in vehicle delivery. This data aligns with industry research findings that suggest transportation service customer complaints often stem from slow staff responsiveness [7]. Although the company has offered very friendly promotional rates, the challenge of driver professionalism still requires special attention. This fact demonstrates a gap between customer expectations for excellent service and the reality of daily operational services.

Failure to meet these service quality standards directly impacts fluctuations in customer trust in the company's brand. This situation emphasizes the need for a comprehensive evaluation of service strategies to bridge the gap between marketing promises and operational execution [8], [9]. Based on this background and gaps, the research problem formulation in this study focuses on the influence of price and promotion on customer satisfaction [10]. This study also examines in depth the role of service quality as a mediating variable linking marketing factors to satisfaction levels. This issue is crucial to investigate given the increasingly fierce competition in the car rental business, which requires a strong differentiation strategy. This study is particularly interesting because it provides comprehensive insight into the psychological mechanisms by which customers assess the value of a transportation service. A good understanding of the dynamics of these variables will help management formulate more targeted operational policies [11]. If these issues related to pricing strategy and service quality are not promptly resolved, the company risks losing valuable market share. Dissatisfied customers tend to switch to other competitors and share their experiences on social media [12]. The long-term impact of inadequate evaluation of these issues is decreased profitability and stagnation in overall business growth. Conversely, scientifically resolving these issues will provide strategic guidance for the company to sustainably maintain customer loyalty.

Therefore, an in-depth investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction is a crucial step for the sustainability of the car rental business [13]. This quantitative research will measure four main variables numerically using a Likert scale to ensure statistical accuracy [14]. Price will be measured through indicators of affordability, price-to-quality ratio, and market competitiveness. Promotion will be quantitatively evaluated based on message reach, promotional frequency, and the attractiveness of special offers. Service quality will be assessed using the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, converted into numerical instruments. Customer satisfaction, as the dependent variable, will be measured through the level of expectation congruence, intention to revisit, and willingness to recommend the service to others [15]. The novelty of this research lies in the placement of service quality as a mediating variable, focusing on the post-pandemic car rental industry [16]. Most previous studies have only examined the direct influence of price and promotion on satisfaction without specifically considering the operational mediation effect. This research also fills a gap in the literature by focusing on consumer demographics in Medan City, which has unique consumer behavior characteristics. The use of measurement instruments tailored to current digital preferences is also a key differentiator from previous research. Through this novel approach, the research results are expected to contribute new literature that is more relevant to the dynamics of the modern transportation market [17]. The dynamic business environment and increasing customer expectations emphasize the importance of integrating solid marketing and operational strategies.

Leslie Rent Car in Medan faces significant opportunities and challenges in aligning pricing and promotional policies with superior service quality. This business reality inspired the formulation of research on the impact of the marketing mix on customer satisfaction in a comprehensive manner. The title "The Effect of Price and Promotion on Customer Satisfaction with Service Quality as a Mediating Variable at Leslie Rent Car in Medan" closely reflects the context of the problem. This title summarizes all the key variables that interact to determine the success of transportation service companies in this highly competitive era. This affirmation culminates in the primary objective of the research, which is to empirically analyze the

significance of each variable's influence in a structured manner. This research aims to demonstrate whether service quality truly mediates the impact of marketing strategy on end-customer satisfaction. Another strategic objective is to provide valid, quantitative data-based recommendations to Leslie Rent Car's management. This objective evaluation is expected to optimize the efficiency of marketing budget allocation and continuously improve service standards. Ultimately, achieving this research objective will provide both academic and managerial contributions that will benefit the future development of the car rental industry.

Literature Review

Price

Price in car rental services represents the sacrifice customers make to obtain the benefits of vehicle use, comfort, and convenience of service. In this paper, price is operationalized through affordability, price-quality suitability, competitiveness, and flexibility. According to Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian, price is a marketing element that directly generates revenue while also signaling value to customers [18]. In the service context, Do, Kim, and Wang show that price fairness is closely related to evaluations of service quality and customer response after purchase [19]. Therefore, price at Leslie Rent Car needs to be understood not only as a nominal rate, but also as a determinant of perceived quality and satisfaction.

Promotion

Promotion is a marketing communication activity that explains the benefits of a service, persuades the target market, and reminds customers about the company's offerings. In this study, promotion is measured by ease of information, message appeal, promotional suitability, advertising affordability, and rewards. Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian positioned promotion as the primary means of communicating a company's value proposition to customers [18]. In an app-based transportation service in Indonesia, Katili, Robby, and Handayani found that the quality of information and the value of the loyalty program influenced customer satisfaction in using the GoClub program [20]. Thus, promotion at Leslie Rent Car is positioned as a means of forming initial perceptions before customers assess the quality of the service they receive.

Service Quality

As the research title suggests, service quality is positioned as a mediating variable that explains how marketing stimuli translate into service experiences. In this study, service quality is adapted to the rental car context through vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and special attention. The Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry framework remains relevant as a conceptual basis for assessing service quality because it emphasizes the gap between customer expectations and perceived performance [21]. Shah and Kubota and Ong et al. showed that in ride-hailing and motorcycle transportation services, service quality is positively related to satisfaction and continued usage intentions [22]. Therefore, service quality deserves to be treated as the primary mechanism linking price and promotion to customer satisfaction at Leslie Rent Car.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a customer's evaluation after comparing pre-purchase expectations with the actual service performance received. Following the established framework, customer satisfaction is reflected in loyalty, repeat purchases, word-of-mouth recommendations, and trying new services. Kotler and Keller assert that satisfaction arises when service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations [23]. Nilsson et al. and Valentino and Fitriyah show that in the transportation and rental car sectors, satisfaction is related to the quality of the service experience and favorable price perception [24]. Therefore, customer satisfaction in this study is seen as the ultimate outcome that explains the success of Leslie Rent Car's marketing strategy.

Hypothesis Development

The Influence of Price on Service Quality

According to Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian, a perceived fair price helps customers assess the value of an offering more positively [18]. Do, Kim, and Wang also show that price fairness works together with service quality evaluations in shaping customer responses in the service sector [19]. In rental car services, affordability, price-quality suitability, competitiveness, and flexibility can lead customers to

perceive that the vehicle's condition, punctuality, and staff professionalism are commensurate with the price paid. When prices are perceived as fair and flexible, customers tend to rate service quality higher. Based on these arguments.

H1: Price has a positive and significant effect on Service Quality.

The Influence of Promotion on Service Quality

Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian explain that effective promotions must convey clear, engaging, and relevant information to customers [24]. Nilsson et al. show that the quality of the experience and the customer's ability to process information influence the perceived quality of transportation services, so clear promotional communications can also inferentially improve quality assessments [24]. In the context of Leslie Rent Car, ease of information, message appeal, promotional suitability, advertising affordability, and rewards help customers understand the company's promises before the transaction occurs. The clearer and more engaging the promotion received, the more likely customers are to evaluate vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and special attention more positively. Based on this reasoning,

H2: Promotion has a positive and significant effect on Service Quality.

The Influence of Price on Customer Satisfaction

Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian assert that price is the most easily compared element by customers when assessing the value of a service [18]. Valentino and Fitriyah demonstrated in the context of car rentals that perceived price has a positive effect on customer satisfaction [25]. At Leslie Rent Car, affordability, price-quality suitability, competitiveness, and flexibility will make customers feel the benefits of renting a vehicle are worth the cost. When customers perceive prices as reasonable and competitive, the likelihood of loyalty, repeat purchases, word-of-mouth recommendations, and trying new services is greater. Based on these reasons,

H3: Price has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

The Effect of Promotion on Customer Satisfaction

Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian view promotion as a tool to build awareness, provide information, and encourage purchases through appropriate value communication [18]. Adawiyah, Askolani, and Patimah found that promotion had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction among Maxim online transportation customers in Tasikmalaya. In car rental services, ease of information, message appeal, promotional suitability, advertising affordability, and rewards can strengthen customers' belief that the company's offerings are profitable and easy to understand [26]. When customers receive informative and relevant promotions, they tend to be more satisfied and more open to repeat purchases and recommending the service to others. Based on this explanation,

H4: Promotion has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

Kotler and Keller explain that satisfaction is formed when service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations [4]. Shah and Kubota, as well as Ong et al., show that service quality has a positive influence on transportation user satisfaction [22]. At Leslie Rent Car, vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and special attention are tangible experiences directly felt by customers during the rental process. The better these five dimensions are perceived, the higher the likelihood of loyalty, repeat purchases, word-of-mouth recommendations, and trying new services. Therefore,

H5: Service Quality has a positive and significant influence on Customer Satisfaction.

The Influence of Price on Customer Satisfaction through Service Quality

Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian position price as a determinant of perceived value, but in services, customers typically do not simply assess fares [18]. Do, Kim, and Wang demonstrate that price fairness and service quality are interrelated in shaping customer behavioral consequences [19], while Shah and Kubota demonstrate that service quality drives transportation user satisfaction [22]. In rental car services, affordable, competitive, and flexible pricing can initially improve customer assessments of vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and special attention. These improved service

quality assessments then increase loyalty, repeat purchases, word-of-mouth recommendations, and the trial of new services offered, all of which contribute to customer satisfaction. Based on this relationship,

H6: Service Quality mediates the effect of Price on Customer Satisfaction.

The Influence of Promotion on Customer Satisfaction through Service Quality

Kotler, Armstrong, and Balasubramanian emphasized that good promotions must provide easily understood and valuable information to customers [18]. Katili, Robby, and Handayani found that information quality, service quality, and loyalty program value influence ride-hailing app user satisfaction [20], while Adawiyah, Askolani, and Patimah showed that promotion and service quality jointly increase customer satisfaction [26]. At Leslie Rent Car, clear promotions regarding rates, vehicle amenities, bonuses, and rental conditions create more realistic expectations regarding the quality of service received. When these expectations are confirmed by vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and good special attention, customers will be more satisfied, loyal, and more motivated to make repeat purchases and positive recommendations. Based on these arguments,

H7: Service Quality mediates the effect of Promotion on Customer Satisfaction.

II. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research type, because it aims to explain the causal relationship between price and promotion on customer satisfaction with service quality as a mediating variable at Leslie Rent Car in Medan [27]. The population in this study was active Leslie Rent Car customers in Medan. Of the 450 questionnaires distributed, only 382 met the criteria for research data, collected from October 2025 to January 2026.. The sampling technique can be stated as purposive sampling, namely the selection of respondents based on certain criteria, namely customers who actively use Leslie Rent Car services in Medan City and are considered capable of providing relevant information according to the research objectives. Respondent data were selected using a Likert scale of 5.0 [28]. The operational variables in this study consist of price as the first independent variable, measured through the dimensions of affordability, price-quality suitability, competitiveness, and flexibility; promotion as the second independent variable, measured through ease of information, message appeal, promotional suitability, advertising affordability, and rewards; service quality as a mediating variable, measured through vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and special attention; and customer satisfaction as the dependent variable, measured through loyalty, repeat purchases, word of mouth recommendations, and trying new services offered [29]. The research data were analyzed using SmartPLS because this method is suitable for testing simultaneous relationship models between latent constructs based on indicators.

At the measurement outer model analysis stage, tests were conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the construct through outer loading with ideal criteria ≥ 0.70 , Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70 , Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50 , and discriminant validity through HTMT which should be ≤ 0.90 ; Additionally, collinearity between indicators can be examined using the VIF, which ideally should be ≤ 3 and is acceptable up to ≤ 5 [30]. Next, a structural analysis of the inner model is conducted to assess the strength of the structural relationships between latent variables in the research model. The inner model evaluation includes testing for collinearity in the predictor constructs using the VIF, assessing the R-square (R^2) to determine the ability of exogenous variables to explain endogenous variables, the F-square (f^2) to assess the magnitude of the effect of each path, the Q^2 using a blindfolding procedure to test predictive relevance, and the SRMR as a measure of model fit, with values generally considered good if less than 0.08 or 0.10 [31]. Hypothesis testing is then performed using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS, as this nonparametric technique is used to test the significance of path coefficients, including direct and indirect effects in the mediation model. Hypothesis decisions are made based on the t-statistic and p-value. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted if the direction of the relationship is as expected and the p-value is < 0.05 . Thus, the SmartPLS analysis in this study includes three main stages, namely outer model evaluation, inner model evaluation, and hypothesis testing, to obtain a valid, reliable research model that can explain the relationship between variables comprehensively.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic & Characteristic Respondent Result

Table 1. Respondent Result Data

Demographic		n = 382	%	Characteristic		n = 382	%
Gender	Male	270	71%	How many times have you used services	1 time	111	29%
	Female	112	29%		2–3 times	145	38%
Age	< 20 Years	13	3%		4–5 times	89	23%
	20–25 Years	35	9%		5 times	37	10%
	26–30 Years	63	16%		Main Purpose of Using services	Personal Needs	34
	31–35 Years	78	20%	Work / Business		184	48%
	36–40 Years	102	27%	Tourism / Vacation		41	11%
	> 40 tahun	91	24%	Family Events		123	32%
Monthly Income (IDR - Million)	< 2	8	2%	Payment methods	Bank transfer	189	49%
	2,1 - 4	13	3%		Cash	121	32%
	4,1 - 6	87	23%		E-wallet	5	1%
	6,1 - 8	121	32%		QRIS	67	18%
	> 8,1	153	40%	How did you hear about Leslie Rent Car?	Social media	65	17%
Highest education	High School	89	23%		Friends / family	121	32%
	Diploma	62	16%		Online advertising	67	18%
	Bachelor's Degree	103	27%		Banners / flyers	37	10%
	Master's Degree	128	34%		Have you used Leslie Rent Car before?	92	24%
Occupation	Student	12	3%	Your most frequently used service types	Self-drive car rental	124	32%
	Private Employee	113	30%		Car rental with driver	45	12%
	Civil Servant	102	27%		Airport shuttle	34	9%
	Entrepreneur	121	32%		Daily rental	45	12%
	Housewife	34	9%		Weekly / monthly rental	134	35%

Source: Respondent survey regarding the use of Leslie car rental services in this study in 2026.

Table 1 shows that the characteristics of Leslie Rent Car respondents in Medan City are dominated by men, amounting to 270 people (71%), while women numbered 112 people (29%). Based on age, the largest number of respondents were in the 36–40 year group, amounting to 102 people (27%), followed by ages >40 years old, amounting to 91 people (24%) and ages 31–35 years old, amounting to 78 people (20%), so that the majority of customers are in the adult and productive age group. From an economic perspective, respondents were dominated by customers with a monthly income of >8.1 million, amounting to 153 people (40%) and 6.1–8 million, amounting to 121 people (32%), which indicates that most customers have relatively good purchasing power to use car rental services. The level of education is also relatively high, because many respondents have a masters degree (34%) and bachelor's degree (27%), while in terms of employment, the majority were entrepreneurs (32%), private employees (30%), and ASN (27%). In general, this profile indicates that Leslie Rent Car customers tend to be mature, economically stable, and educated consumers.

Therefore, their assessments of price, promotions, service quality, and satisfaction can be considered rational and experience based. Regarding service usage characteristics, respondents most frequently used Leslie Rent Car services two or three times (145 people) followed by one time (111 people) (29%), four or five times (89 people) (23%), and five times (37 people) (10%). These findings indicate that most respondents have had repeated experience using the service, making it relevant for more accurate assessments of customer satisfaction and service quality. The primary purpose of service use was work/business (184 people) followed by family events (123 people) (32%), indicating that Leslie Rent Car services are used more for functional needs and essential mobility than simply personal or leisure needs. In terms of payment, the most frequently used method was bank transfer (49%), followed by cash (32%) and QRIS (18%), indicating customer preference for practical yet conventional payment methods. Meanwhile, the largest sources of information came from friends/family (32%) and previous experience (24%), while the most frequently used service types were weekly/monthly rental (35%) and self-drive car rental (32%). This suggests that Leslie Rent Car's main strengths lie in repeat usage, word of mouth, and customer demand for flexible and long-term rental services.

Based on these findings, the demographics and characteristics of respondents strongly support this research model. The predominance of mature customers with high incomes and using the service for work purposes indicates that prices are likely evaluated based on fairness, competitiveness, and flexibility, rather than simply affordability. Furthermore, the strong role of friends/family and previous experience suggests that effective promotion for Leslie Rent Car is not just formal advertising, but also promotions that strengthen customer trust, recommendations, and positive experiences. The high level of repeat usage and the dominance of weekly/monthly rental services also indicate that service quality, such as vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and personalized attention, are crucial in shaping customer satisfaction. Thus, these respondent characteristics indicate that Leslie Rent Car customers are a relatively mature market, benefit-oriented, and sensitive to the overall quality of the service experience.

Results of the Analysis SEM PLS

Based on the attached SEM-PLS results, all indicators for each construct have shown an outer loading above 0.70, so that in general it can be stated that they have met convergent validity and are worthy of being retained in the measurement model [32]. In the Promotion variable, the outer loading value ranges from 0.795–0.924, with the strongest indicator being Rewards (0.924), while the lowest but still valid indicator is Ease_information (0.795). In the Price variable, all indicators are also very good, namely Affordability (0.821), Competitiveness (0.867), Flexibility (0.882), and PriceQuality_suitability (0.898), which indicates that the price construct is strongly reflected by all its indicators. The Service Quality variable has an outer loading between 0.815 and 0.915, with the most dominant indicators being Special Attention (0.915) and Vehicle Condition (0.913). Customer Satisfaction has an outer loading of 0.811–0.867, with Repeat Purchases (0.867) being the strongest indicator. Thus, the measurement model of this study demonstrates that all indicators adequately represent the constructs of promotion, price, service quality, and customer satisfaction.

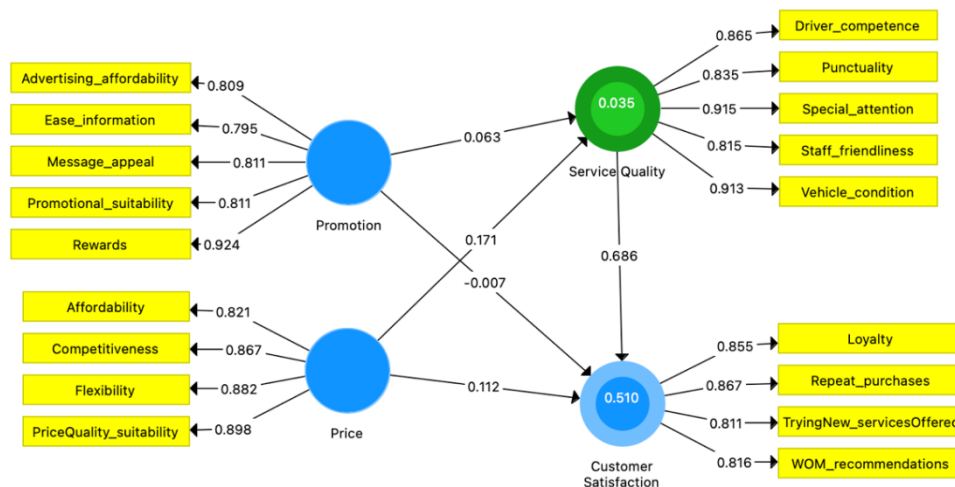


Fig 1. The results of the SEM PLS (Outer Loading)

From the structural model perspective, the figure shows that Service Quality has an R-square value of 0.035, meaning that Promotion and Price only explain 3.5% of the variation in Service Quality, making its contribution to service quality very weak. Meanwhile, Customer Satisfaction has an R-square value of 0.510, meaning that Promotion, Price, and Service Quality together explain 51.0% of the variation in customer satisfaction, thus categorizing the model for customer satisfaction as quite good. Judging from the path coefficient, the strongest influence is seen in the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction of 0.686, which indicates that service quality is the main factor that shapes Leslie Rent Car customer satisfaction. In contrast, the influence of Price on Customer Satisfaction is only 0.112, Price on Service Quality is 0.171, and Promotion on Service Quality is 0.063, while Promotion on Customer Satisfaction is -0.007, which means the direction of the influence is very weak and tends to be practically meaningless. However, to conclude whether all these relationships are significant or not, it is still necessary to look at the bootstrapping results, especially the t-statistic and p-value.

Table 2. Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composit Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Customer Satisfaction (Y1)	0.859	0.869	0.904	0.701
Price (X2)	0.891	0.916	0.924	0.753
Promotion (X1)	0.896	1.196	0.918	0.691
Service Quality (Z1)	0.919	0.933	0.939	0.756

Source: SEM-PLS Processing Results, 2026 (Processed by Researchers)

Based on Table 2, all constructs in this study met convergent validity, as each variable had an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.50 [33]. Customer Satisfaction (Y1) had an AVE of 0.701, Price (X2) of 0.753, Promotion (X1) of 0.691, and Service Quality (Z1) of 0.756, indicating that all indicators within each construct adequately explained the variance of their respective constructs. The highest AVE value was found for Service Quality (0.756), followed by Price (0.753), indicating that both constructs have very strong explanatory power. Meanwhile, Promotion (0.691) remained relatively good, despite its lowest value compared to the other variables, as it still fell above the minimum required threshold. Therefore, in terms of convergent validity, the measurement model in this study can be declared appropriate, and all variables adequately represent the constructs being measured. In terms of reliability, all variables also showed excellent results because they had Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70 [33]. The Cronbach's Alpha values for each variable were 0.859 for Customer Satisfaction, 0.891 for Price, 0.896 for Promotion, and 0.919 for Service Quality, indicating high internal consistency of the instrument. Similarly, the Composite Reliability values were in the range of 0.904–0.939, with the highest value for Service Quality (0.939), which means this construct is the variable with the strongest level of reliability in the model.

The rho_A value also generally supports construct reliability, although the Promotion variable was recorded at 1.196, which is technically unusual because it exceeds 1, so it is necessary to re-examine the possibility of overestimation or very homogeneous indicator characteristics. However, overall, based on the combination of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE values, it can be concluded that this research instrument has a good level of validity and reliability for use in SEM-PLS analysis. Based on Table 3, all Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values between variables in this study are below the general limit of 0.90, even still below the strict limit of 0.85, so it can be stated that all constructs have met discriminant validity [33]. The HTMT value between Price and Customer Satisfaction is 0.259, between Promotion and Customer Satisfaction is 0.061, and between Promotion and Price is 0.103, which indicates that the three constructs are empirically different from each other. Furthermore, the HTMT value between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction is 0.777, between Service Quality and Price is 0.185, and between Service Quality and Promotion is 0.074, which are also still within acceptable limits. These results indicate that each variable, namely promotion, price, service quality, and customer satisfaction, has different measurement characteristics and does not overlap excessively. Thus, the measurement model in this study meets the requirements for discriminant validity, so each construct can be declared to truly measure a distinct concept.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Value Results

Variabel	Customer Satisfaction	Price	Promotion	Service Quality
Customer Satisfaction				
Price	0.259			
Promotion	0.061	0.103		
Service Quality	0.777	0.185	0.074	

Source: SEM-PLS Processing Results, 2026 (Processed by Researchers)

More substantively, the highest HTMT value is found in the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction, at 0.777. This indicates that the two variables have the closest conceptual relationship compared to other pairs of variables but remain distinct enough to constitute separate constructs. This is understandable, as in the context of car rental services, service quality is indeed a crucial factor closely related to customer satisfaction. Conversely, very low HTMT values, such as between Promotion and Customer Satisfaction at 0.061 and between Promotion and Service Quality at 0.074, indicate that the promotion construct is significantly different from the other constructs in the model. These low values

confirm that the indicators in each variable do not experience excessive similarity, allowing the research instrument to clearly distinguish the dimensions of each construct. Therefore, based on the HTMT results, the SEM-PLS model used can be declared suitable for proceeding to the inner model analysis and hypothesis testing stage.

Table 4. Fornell-Lercker Criterion Results

Variable	Customer Satisfaction	Price	Promotion	Service Quality
Customer Satisfaction	0.837			
Price	0.233	0.868		
Promotion	0.056	0.087	0.831	
Service Quality	0.706	0.177	0.078	0.870

Source: SEM-PLS Processing Results, 2026 (Processed by Researchers)

Based on Table 4, the Fornell-Larcker Criterion results indicate that all constructs in this study meet discriminant validity. This is evident from the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values on the main diagonal, which are all higher than the correlations between the other constructs [33]. The diagonal values for each variable are: Customer Satisfaction = 0.837, Price = 0.868, Promotion = 0.831, and Service Quality = 0.870. Each of these values is greater than the correlation between the respective variables. For example, Price has a diagonal value of 0.868, which is greater than its correlation with Customer Satisfaction (0.233), Promotion (0.087), and Service Quality (0.177). Thus, each variable in the model—customer satisfaction, price, promotion, and service quality—can be said to be able to differentiate itself well from the other constructs measured.

In more detail, the inter-construct relationship shows that the highest correlation is between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction at 0.706, which means that the two variables have a strong relationship conceptually, but remain different empirically because the values are still lower than the square root of their respective AVE, namely 0.870 and 0.837. Meanwhile, the correlation between Promotion and other variables is very low, namely 0.056 with Customer Satisfaction, 0.087 with Price, and 0.078 with Service Quality, which indicates that the promotion construct has the most different characteristics compared to the other constructs. This low correlation between variables strengthens that there is no excessive overlap in measurement between constructs in the research model. Therefore, based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria, this research measurement model has met the requirements for discriminant validity and is suitable for proceeding to inner model analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 5. F-Square Value Result & R-Square Adjusted

Variable	F-Square				R-Square	
	CS	P1	P2	SQ	R ²	Adjusted
Customer Satisfaction (CS)					0.510	0.506
Service Quality (SQ)	0.928				0.035	0.030
Price (P1)	0.025			0.030		
Promotion (P2)	0.000			0.004		

Source: SEM-PLS Processing Results, 2026 (Processed by Researchers)

Based on Table 5, the R-Square value shows that the Customer Satisfaction (CS) variable has an R² value of 0.510 and an Adjusted R² of 0.506, which means that 51.0% of the variation in customer satisfaction can be explained jointly by Price (P1), Promotion (P2), and Service Quality (SQ), while the remaining 49.0% is explained by other variables outside the model. This value indicates that the model in explaining Customer Satisfaction is classified as quite strong or moderate, so that the constructs used already have good explanatory power. In contrast, the Service Quality (SQ) variable only has an R² = 0.035 and an Adjusted R² = 0.030, which means that Price and Promotion are only able to explain 3.5% of the variation in service quality. This value indicates that the explanatory model for Service Quality is still very weak, so there are likely other factors that are much more dominant in shaping Leslie Rent Car's service quality, such as operational conditions, fleet readiness, employee competence, service speed, or service management systems. The closeness between the R² and Adjusted R² values for both endogenous variables also indicates that the model is relatively stable and does not experience significant differences in estimates after adjustment.

The F-square analysis shows that the effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction is 0.928, indicating a large influence, making Service Quality the most dominant variable in explaining customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, the effect of Price on Customer Satisfaction is 0.025, and the effect of Price on Service Quality is 0.030, both of which are considered small influences. Conversely, the effect of Promotion on Customer Satisfaction is 0.000, and the effect of Promotion on Service Quality is 0.004, indicating that promotion contributes very little to the model. These findings indicate that Leslie Rent Car customer satisfaction is more determined by the actual service experience received than by promotions, while price provides only a limited additional contribution. Thus, if a company wants to increase Customer Satisfaction, then the main priority should be focused on strengthening Service Quality, because this variable is proven to provide the largest effect size in the research structural model.

Table 6. Model Fit Test Results

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.053	0.053
d_ ULS	0.488	0.488
d_ G	0.323	0.397
Chi-Square	762.675	762.675
NFI	0.840	0.840
rms Theta	0.183	

Source: SEM-PLS Processing Results, 2026 (Processed by Researchers)

Based on Table 6, the results of the model fit test indicate that this research model generally has a fairly good level of fit. This is particularly evident from the SRMR value of 0.053 for both the saturated model and the estimated model, indicating that the average residual correlation in the model is relatively low, so the model can represent the empirical data well. The NFI value of 0.840 also indicates that the model has sufficient fit, although it is not yet classified as very high, because the closer it is to 1, the better the model fit [33]. Meanwhile, the Chi-Square value of 762.675 in both models is more descriptive information in PLS-SEM and is not the sole basis for assessing model fit. Thus, based on key indicators such as SRMR and NFI, this research structural model can be stated to have demonstrated goodness of fit that is sufficient for use in further analysis. Based on Table 7, the results of the hypothesis testing show that of the seven hypotheses proposed, four hypotheses are accepted and three hypotheses are rejected.

Hypothesis H1 which tests the effect of Price (P1) on Service Quality (SQ) is declared accepted, with an original sample value of 0.171, t-statistics of 3.233, and p-value of 0.001, so it can be interpreted that price has a positive and significant effect on service quality. Hypothesis H3 which tests the effect of Price on Customer Satisfaction (CS) is also accepted, with a coefficient of 0.230, t-statistics of 4.405, and p-value of 0.000, which indicates that price has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, hypothesis H5 which tests the effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction is the strongest relationship in the model, with a coefficient value of 0.686, t-statistics of 18.801, and p-value of 0.000, so it can be confirmed that service quality is the main factor that shapes Leslie Rent Car customer satisfaction. Furthermore, hypothesis H6, which tested the indirect effect of price on customer satisfaction through service quality, was also accepted, with a coefficient of 0.118, a t-statistic of 3.182, and a p-value of 0.002, indicating that service quality mediates the effect of price on customer satisfaction.

Table 7. Hypothesis Relationship Results

Hypothesis Relation	Original Sample	Sampe Mean	Standart Deviation	T-Statistics	P-Value	Note
H 1 P1 → SQ	0.171	0.176	0.053	3.233	0.001	Accepted
H 2 P2 → SQ	0.063	0.069	0.069	0.908	0.364	Rejected
H 3 P1 → CS	0.230	0.233	0.052	4.405	0.000	Accepted
H 4 P2 → CS	0.036	0.043	0.061	0.594	0.553	Rejected
H 5 SQ → CS	0.686	0.687	0.037	18.801	0.000	Accepted
H 6 P1 → SQ → CS	0.118	0.121	0.037	3.182	0.002	Accepted
H 7 P2 → SQ → CS	0.043	0.047	0.048	0.904	0.366	Rejected

Note: P1 (Price), CS (Customer Satisfaction), P2 (Promotion), SQ (Service Quality)

Conversely, the hypotheses related to promotion (P2) all showed insignificant results. Hypothesis H2, regarding the effect of promotion on service quality, was rejected, with a t-statistic of 0.908 and a p-value of 0.364, indicating that promotion has not significantly improved service quality. Hypothesis H4, regarding the effect of promotion on customer satisfaction, was also rejected, with a coefficient of 0.036, a t-statistic of 0.594, and a p-value of 0.553, indicating that promotion has no significant effect on customer satisfaction. Similarly, the H7 hypothesis regarding the indirect effect of Promotion on Customer Satisfaction through Service Quality was also rejected, with a t-statistic of 0.904 and a p-value of 0.366, so Service Quality was unable to mediate the relationship between Promotion and Customer Satisfaction. Overall, these results confirm that in the context of Leslie Rent Car in Medan, customer satisfaction is more shaped by appropriate prices and especially by service quality, while promotions have not been the main determining factor in improving service quality or customer satisfaction. These findings indicate that Leslie Rent Car customers tend to consider the actual service experience, such as vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, and special attention, more than promotional activities carried out by the company.

Discussion

Hypothesis 1 (Price to Service Quality) was accepted. The path coefficient value of 0.171, t-statistic of 3.233, and p-value of 0.001 indicated that price had a positive and significant effect on service quality. This finding indicates that the more customers perceived Leslie Rent Car's rates as affordable, competitive, appropriate for quality, and flexible, the more favorably they evaluated the vehicle's condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and personalized attention. Theoretically, this result makes sense because in services, customers often read price as a signal of value and professionalism. This result aligns with Subawa et al. (2025), who found that price had a significant positive effect on service quality [34], and is also consistent with Do et al. (2023), who identified price fairness as a crucial element in the chain of service quality evaluation and customer satisfaction [19]. Hypothesis 2 (Promotion to Service Quality) was rejected. A coefficient of 0.063, a t-statistic of 0.908, and a p-value of 0.364 indicate that promotions have no significant effect on service quality. This finding indicates that the accessibility of information, message appeal, promotional appropriateness, advertising affordability, and rewards offered by Leslie Rent Car are not strong enough to change customer perceptions of actual service quality. In other words, customers appear to clearly distinguish between promotional activities and the actual operational experience they experience when using the service. This result differs from Subawa et al. (2025), who found that promotions have a significant positive effect on service quality [34], and is also inconsistent with Katili et al. (2024), who showed that the quality of information, service, and systems in ride-hailing loyalty programs can improve user satisfaction evaluations [20].

Hypothesis 3 (Price to Customer Satisfaction) was accepted. The path coefficient of 0.230, a t-statistic of 4.405, and a p-value of 0.000 indicate that price has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. This means that when customers perceive the rental rate as commensurate with the benefits received, they tend to be more satisfied, more willing to reuse the service, and more open to recommending it to others. In the context of Leslie Rent Car, customers appear to assess satisfaction not only from the low price, but also from the appropriateness of the rate to the comfort, fleet reliability, and quality of service interactions. This finding aligns with Khairani et al. (2024), who demonstrated that price could drive customer satisfaction in ride-hailing services [35], and is supported by Azizi et al. (2024), who found that price fairness has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction [36]. Hypothesis 4 (Promotion to Customer Satisfaction) was rejected. The coefficient value of 0.036, t-statistic of 0.594, and p-value of 0.553 indicate that promotions do not significantly influence customer satisfaction. This finding suggests that Leslie Rent Car customers do not consider promotions as the primary basis for determining satisfaction but rather place greater emphasis on the actual service experience. Practically, promotions may be effective in attracting initial attention, but they are not strong enough to create satisfaction if not followed by consistent service delivery. These results differ from Antara and Rastini (2022) in the context of car rental services, who found that sales promotions had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction [37], and differ from Adriansyah and Saputri (2020), who showed that sales promotions had a significant effect on Go-Food and Air Conditioner customer satisfaction [38], [39].

Hypothesis 5 (Service Quality to Customer Satisfaction) was accepted. A coefficient of 0.686, a t-statistic of 18.801, and a p-value of 0.000 indicate that service quality is the strongest determinant of customer satisfaction in this model. This means that the better the vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and personalized attention provided, the higher the customer satisfaction of Leslie Rent Car. The magnitude of this coefficient also confirms that in the car rental business, customers are more sensitive to the actual service experience than to promotional elements alone. This finding is consistent with Shah and Kubota (2022), who found that service quality increases ride-hailing user satisfaction [22], and is supported by Ong et al. (2024) and Ricardianto et al. (2024), who both demonstrated a positive effect of service quality on satisfaction with transportation services [40], [41]. Hypothesis 6 (Price to Service Quality to Customer Satisfaction) was accepted. The indirect effect value of 0.118, t-statistic of 3.182, and p-value of 0.002 indicated that service quality mediated the effect of price on customer satisfaction. This means that a price perceived as fair and appropriate does not automatically create satisfaction, but it is more effective when customers also perceive good service quality.

Thus, service quality is an important mechanism that translates price perceptions into actual satisfaction. This finding aligns closely with Subawa et al. (2025), who found that price indirectly influences customer satisfaction through service quality [34], and is consistent with Do et al. (2023), who placed price fairness within the service quality-satisfaction chain; although Asawawibul et al. (2025) demonstrated that the mediating power of service quality can be contextual and not always dominant in all service sectors [19], [42]. Hypothesis 7 (Promotion to Service Quality to Customer Satisfaction) was rejected. The indirect effect value of 0.043, t-statistics of 0.904, and p-value of 0.366 indicate that service quality is unable to mediate the effect of promotion on customer satisfaction. These results indicate that Leslie Rent Car's promotional activities are not strong enough to shape perceptions of service quality, so ultimately, they are also unable to increase customer satisfaction through indirect channels. Substantively, customers are likely more influenced by previous user experience, word of mouth, and actual service quality than by promotional messages. This finding differs from Subawa et al. (2025) who found an indirect effect of promotion on customer satisfaction through service quality [34], and inconsistent with Antara and Rastini (2022) and Adriansyah and Saputri (2020) who showed that promotion is positively related to customer satisfaction outcomes in the service context [37], [38].

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that price and service quality are the primary determinants of customer satisfaction at Leslie Rent Car in Medan. Hypothesis testing results indicate that price has a positive and significant effect on service quality and customer satisfaction, thus accepting Hypotheses 1 and 3. Service quality also proved to have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, thus accepting Hypothesis 5 and establishing the strongest relationship in the model. These findings address the research question: customer satisfaction is largely shaped by the appropriateness of price and service quality as perceived by customers during their use. Therefore, Leslie Rent Car customers tend to assess satisfaction based on tangible benefits received, rather than solely on marketing communications. On the other hand, promotion did not significantly influence service quality or customer satisfaction, therefore rejecting Hypotheses 2 and 4. These findings indicate that promotion is not yet a primary factor in shaping customer perceptions of quality or satisfaction in this car rental service context. Theoretically, these results suggest that in car rental services, customers rely more on actual experiences than promotional messages when evaluating service value. This situation reinforces the view of service quality theory that customer evaluations are primarily determined by evidence of service performance, such as vehicle condition, punctuality, staff friendliness, driver competence, and personalized attention.

Therefore, while promotions remain important for attracting initial interest, in this study they were not strong enough to displace the dominant influence of service experience in shaping satisfaction. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating that service quality only mediates the effect of price on customer satisfaction, but not the effect of promotion on customer satisfaction among Leslie Rent Car customers in Medan. These results suggest that the mechanism for shaping satisfaction in car rental services is better

explained by the logic of value for money and service quality than by the persuasive logic of promotion. In other words, customers will be satisfied when prices are perceived as reasonable, competitive, and flexible, and this perception is reinforced by reliable and personalized service. This finding extends the application of service marketing theory by demonstrating that the mediation pathway of service quality is selective: effective for variables directly related to perceived value, but weak for variables that are solely communicative. Therefore, this study provides an empirical contribution demonstrating that in the local rental car industry, service quality is not merely a supporting variable but rather a core mechanism that translates price perceptions into customer satisfaction.

For further research, a key area for development is to add other variables more closely related to service experience, such as trust, brand image, perceived value, customer experience, digital booking convenience, or customer loyalty. This suggestion is important because the R-square value for service quality in this study was still low, indicating that many other factors beyond price and promotion influence service quality. Future research could also expand the population to other car rental companies, other cities, or corporate customer segments for stronger generalizability. Furthermore, future researchers could compare direct effect, mediation, and moderation models to determine whether customer characteristics or frequency of service use strengthen the relationships between variables. With such developments, future findings will be better able to explain variations in customer satisfaction more comprehensively. For companies, the main implication of this research is the need to prioritize improving service quality as a core strategy for increasing customer satisfaction. Leslie Rent Car should focus resources on vehicle maintenance, timely service, staff friendliness, driver competence, and dedicated attention to customer needs. At the same time, pricing policies need to be kept affordable, competitive, and flexible, as price perception has been shown to influence satisfaction both directly and through service quality. Promotional strategies also need to be evaluated to ensure they are not merely informative but more connected to tangible service evidence, such as through customer testimonials, fleet quality assurance, and tailored offers. With these steps, companies can not only improve current customer satisfaction but also strengthen the likelihood of repeat purchases and positive recommendations in the future.

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