



Price and Product Quality as Determinants of Customer Satisfaction in Fashion SME: Case Study Rantauprapat

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the influence of price (X1) and product quality (X2) on customer satisfaction (Y) at Fashion Outlet Rantauprapat (FOR), an SME fashion retail store in North Sumatra, Indonesia, where competition in the fashion sector is increasing.

Methodology: A qualitative descriptive design was applied. Data were collected through unstructured interviews with the owner, two employees, and three customers, direct observation of store operations (October 20–25, 2023), and documentation of 2023 monthly sales records. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model, including data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing.

Results: Findings show that both price and product quality positively influence customer satisfaction. Competitive and value-based pricing enhances perceived fairness and satisfaction, while consistent product quality and regular updates of fashion items encourage repeat purchases and loyalty. Sales records show steady growth from IDR 10,500,000 (January) to IDR 18,250,000 (December), with an annual total of IDR 176,409,000 and an average monthly growth of 7.4%.

Conclusion: Price competitiveness and product quality are key drivers of customer satisfaction and repeat purchase behavior at FOR.

Limitations: The study is limited to a single case with a small purposive sample, restricting generalizability.

Contribution: This study contributes to educational management literature by integrating policy programs and organizational factors into a comprehensive model of educational quality improvement.

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Fashion Outlet, Price, Product Quality, SME*

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1. Introduction

The fashion industry is one of Indonesia's most dynamic and rapidly growing creative economic sectors. President Joko Widodo identified the creative industry as the future economic backbone of Indonesia (Asti & Ayuningtyas, 2020; Ayunani et al., 2023), and fashion retail has proven central to this vision: the sector contributes significantly to national GDP growth and provides employment across design, manufacturing, retail, and logistics value chains. The increasing availability of branded fashion products, from international brands such as Zara and H&M to domestic Indonesian fashion brands, has created a sophisticated consumer market in which product variety, price positioning, and quality consistency are

the primary competitive differentiators (Pardede & Haryadi, 2017; Ruffiansah & Seno, 2020).

Customer satisfaction is the foundational performance outcome through which fashion SMEs achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Kotler and Keller (2007) define customer satisfaction as the feeling of pleasure or disappointment arising from a post-purchase evaluation of the gap between perceived product performance and prior expectations. Satisfied customers become loyal repeat purchasers, whereas dissatisfied customers not only switch to competitors but may also generate negative word-of-mouth that damages the reputation of the company (Chen et al., 2023; Ngiliman et al., 2024; Riswanda & Millanyani, 2025). For SME fashion retailers operating without large advertising budgets or institutional brand equity, customer satisfaction-driven loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations are the primary customer acquisition mechanisms available (Istiyawari et al., 2021; Woen & Santoso, 2021).

Two marketing mix variables have been consistently identified in the Indonesian fashion retail literature as primary determinants of customer satisfaction: price and product quality (Amegayibor & Korankye, 2022; Fauzan & Rohman, 2019; Sikder et al., 2022). Price is the primary value assessment criterion for customers. When the price is perceived to be commensurate with product quality, the price-quality alignment generates satisfaction. When the price is perceived as excessive relative to quality, dissatisfaction results, and customers switch to lower-cost alternatives (Marpaung et al., 2021; Pardede & Haryadi, 2017). Product quality in the fashion context encompasses material quality, design attractiveness, durability, trend alignment, and size fit — the dimensions through which a garment delivers on its core functional and aesthetic promises (Jiwandono et al., 2019; Thompson, 1999).

Fashion Outlet Rantaupraptat (FOR), located on Aek Tapa Street, Rantaupraptat, Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra, is an SME fashion retail outlet serving local consumers with a curated selection of branded and fashion-forward clothing. FOR operates in a competitive local fashion retail environment, in which multiple outlets compete for the same consumer base. Understanding which factors most effectively drive customer satisfaction and how they manifest in actual sales performance is therefore of direct practical importance for FOR's management and comparable SME fashion retailers throughout Indonesia (Ikechukwu et al., 2025).

This study conducts a qualitative case study investigation of the influence of price and product quality on customer satisfaction at FOR and addresses the following research questions: (1) How does FOR's pricing strategy influence customer satisfaction? (2) How does FOR product quality influence customer satisfaction? (3) How are these satisfaction drivers reflected in FOR's sales performance trajectory in 2023?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Price and Customer Satisfaction

Price is defined as the monetary amount that consumers pay in exchange for a product or, more broadly, as the customer's assessment of a product's monetary value relative to its perceived benefits (Divianto et al., 2024; Nson & Abimaje, 2024; Sari & Prihartono, 2021). Price plays a critical role in the purchase decision process: it is the most immediately legible signal of value that consumers encounter, and the price-quality perception alignment it creates directly shapes satisfaction (Ayunani et al., 2023; Pardede & Haryadi, 2017). When consumers perceive that a product's price is fair relative to the quality and benefits received, they are satisfied. Price-quality misalignment, whether perceived as overpriced or underpriced (signaling quality concerns), undermines satisfaction (Hadiwijaya & Yustini, 2024; Mashizha et al., 2024).

For fashion SMEs, pricing strategies are particularly consequential because fashion consumers are both price-sensitive and brand-aware. Price-sensitive consumers compare prices across competing outlets and

switch for small price advantages, while brand-aware consumers accept higher prices for recognizable brand quality signals (Tapang & Mbarika, 2023). Managing the price-quality relationship to satisfy both segments requires continuous competitive pricing intelligence and consistent quality maintenance (Rufliansah & Seno, 2020). Satdiah et al. (2023) confirmed that price significantly and positively influences customer satisfaction across retail contexts; Rufliansah and Seno (2020) confirmed the same relationship specifically for consumer product retailers.

2.2 Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Product quality is defined as the sum of the characteristics and attributes of a product that enable it to satisfy stated or implied customer needs, encompassing functionality, reliability, durability, conformance to specifications, and aesthetic attributes (Jiwandono et al., 2019; Thompson, 1999). Aidoo (2023) and Satdiah et al. (2023) defined product quality as the ability of a good to provide performance and results consistent with or exceeding customer expectations. In the fashion retail context, quality is evaluated across multiple dimensions: material and construction quality (durability, finish, stitching), aesthetic quality (design attractiveness, color consistency, trend relevance), and fit quality (sizing accuracy, comfort).

Product quality is theorized to influence customer satisfaction through the expectation-disconfirmation mechanism (Kotler & Keller, 2007): when experienced product quality meets or exceeds customers' pre-purchase quality expectations, satisfaction is generated; when quality falls below expectations, dissatisfaction results. For fashion outlets, consistent product quality across replenishment cycles — ensuring that customers who return expecting the quality of their previous purchase will have that expectation met — is the primary mechanism through which quality satisfaction generates loyalty (Novia et al., 2024; Pranata & Adhariani, 2023; Woen & Santoso, 2021).

2.3 Customer Satisfaction: Theory and Measurement

Customer satisfaction, as defined by Kotler and Keller (2007), is the feeling of pleasure or disappointment experienced by a consumer when the perceived performance of a product or service is compared with prior expectations. Satisfaction is generated when performance meets or exceeds expectations, whereas dissatisfaction occurs when performance falls short. In the retail context, satisfaction is operationally manifested through willingness to return for repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth recommendations to social network members, brand loyalty and resistance to competitor switching, and willingness to accept premium pricing for consistently satisfying products (Fauzan & Rohman, 2019; Istiyawari et al., 2021; Smith, 2020).

Satisfied customers represent the primary sustainable competitive asset of SME fashion retailers, who typically cannot compete with larger chains on advertising reach or product range (Elyana et al., 2023; Waluya et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction-driven loyalty generates a recurring revenue base with lower acquisition costs than new customer recruitment, whereas word-of-mouth generates organic customer acquisition that reduces marketing expenditure (Jiwandono et al., 2019; Sari & Prihartono, 2021). This makes investment in price-quality management — the primary satisfaction driver identified in the literature — the highest-return marketing activity available to SME fashion operators.

2.4 Prior Empirical Studies

Table 1. Summary of Prior Studies on Price, Product Quality, and Customer Satisfaction in Fashion and Retail Contexts

Author(s) & Year	Setting / Context	Method	Key Findings
Ayunani et al. (2023)	Service quality and price, customer satisfaction	Regression	Service quality and price significantly and positively influence customer satisfaction; price-quality alignment is the primary driver
Asti and Ayuningtyas (2020)	Service quality, product quality, price, consumer satisfaction	Multiple regression	Service quality, product quality, and price significantly influence satisfaction; product quality has the strongest effect
Rufliansah and Seno (2020)	Retail consumers (Semarang)	Multiple regression	Price and product quality significantly influence satisfaction; combined effect is stronger than individual effects
Sari and Prihartono (2021)	Textile (bedsheet buyers)	Survey regression	Price and product quality influence purchase decisions; price-quality alignment is critical
Marpaung et al. (2021)	FMCG consumers	MLR	Price, promotion, and product quality significantly influence purchase decisions; price has strongest effect
Satdiah et al. (2023)	Paint retail store	Regression	Price and product quality influence purchase decisions; quality moderates price sensitivity
Novia et al. (2024)	Service and product quality context	MLR	Service and product quality significantly influence satisfaction; consistency is key for long-term satisfaction
Pardede and Haryadi (2017)	Apparel consumers	Regression	Price perception and product quality significantly influence purchase decisions; apparel is highly price-sensitive
Woen and Santoso (2021))	Retail, service, promotion, price	MLR, SEM	Product quality, price, and service quality influence satisfaction and loyalty; satisfaction mediates loyalty
Present Study (2023)	Fashion Outlet Rantauprapat (FOR), qualitative case study	Qualitative descriptive	Price and product quality positively influence satisfaction; consistent quality and pricing increase loyalty; sales grew from IDR 10.5M to 18.25M (2023)

Table 1 demonstrates a highly consistent body of evidence: price and product quality, individually and jointly, exert significant positive effects on customer satisfaction across multiple Indonesian retail and SME contexts. The present study extends this evidence to an SME fashion outlet in Rantauprapat through a qualitative case study design, providing a depth of contextual understanding that quantitative studies cannot deliver.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative descriptive research design was employed, which was appropriate for the research objectives of understanding how price and product quality influence customer satisfaction in a specific organizational context and examining the processes and mechanisms through which these influences operate. Qualitative research enables the exploration of phenomena as experienced by participants — the owners, staff, and customers of FOR — providing contextual depth that survey instruments cannot access. [Sugiyono \(2016\)](#) describes qualitative research as a method grounded in postpositivist philosophy, using purposive and

snowball sampling, triangulation data collection, and inductive analysis to emphasize meaning over statistical generalization — an appropriate approach for a single-case SME study.

3.2 Research Setting and Timeframe

The research was conducted at the Fashion Outlet Rantaupraptat (FOR), located on Jalan Aek Tapa, Rantaupraptat, Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. FOR is an SME fashion retail store that offers branded clothing and fashion accessories to local consumers. The observation and interview period was from October 20 to 25, 2023. A documentary review of sales records covered the full calendar year 2023 (January–December).

3.3 Data Sources and Informants

The data sources included both primary data (interviews and observations) and secondary data (sales documentation). The research employed purposive sampling, selecting informants who possessed direct knowledge of the phenomena under investigation: (1) the store owner, who provided strategic pricing, product selection, and customer management perspectives; (2) two store employees, who provided operational observations on daily customer interactions, frequently asked questions about pricing, and product quality complaints and compliments; and (3) three regular customers who had made multiple purchases at FOR, providing experiential perspectives on price satisfaction and product quality assessment. The triangulation of these three informant types across ownership, operations, and customer perspectives is consistent with the qualitative best practice for organizational case study research.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Three complementary data collection methods were employed, following [Sugiyono \(2016\)](#) triangulation framework. Unstructured interviews were conducted with all six informants to explore themes of price fairness, price-quality alignment, product quality assessment criteria, satisfaction drivers, and return purchase motivation. Direct observation was conducted from October 20 to 25, 2023, examining the store environment, product display and organization, pricing communication, and customer behavior during shopping. The documentation review encompassed monthly sales records for January–December 2023, providing objective evidence of sales performance to support the qualitative findings.

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis followed [Miles and Huberman \(1994\)](#) interactive model through three sequential stages. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing on, and organizing the most relevant elements from the raw interview transcripts and observation notes, eliminating redundant or peripheral content. Data display involved organizing the reduced data into systematic categorizations by theme: price-related satisfaction findings, product quality-related satisfaction findings, and sales performance trajectories. Drawing conclusions and verification involved synthesizing findings across data sources and informant types to identify convergent themes, cross-referencing qualitative satisfaction findings with quantitative sales trend data as a verification triangulation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Price Influence on Customer Satisfaction

Interview and observation findings indicate that FOR's pricing strategy drives customer satisfaction. The store owner described FOR's pricing philosophy as offering products at prices that customers perceive as commensurate with the quality and brand value received — neither cheap nor expensive, but value-aligned. Employee observations confirmed that customers frequently express satisfaction with FOR's pricing when comparing it against competitor outlets in the Rantaupraptat fashion retail corridor: the most common customer comment about price was that FOR's products are “reasonable” given their

quality and that they would not purchase the same products cheaper elsewhere if the quality were lower.

Customer informants reported that price was the first evaluation criterion applied when entering the store, but that it became less decisive once product quality was assessed: several customers noted that they had initially entered FOR because the price display appeared competitive but returned repeatedly because the quality justified the price. This finding is consistent with [Pardede and Haryadi \(2017\)](#) finding that price perception influences customer satisfaction mediated by quality assessment and with [Istiyawari et al. \(2021\)](#) confirmation that price sensitivity is high in the clothing category but moderated by quality perception.

FOR's pricing across multiple brand tiers (from lower-cost casual clothing to premium branded items) enables it to serve customers across income segments while maintaining the perception of value alignment in each tier. Customers selecting lower-tier products reported satisfaction with price-quality alignment within that tier, while customers selecting premium products reported that the price premium was justified by the visible quality difference. This tiered pricing strategy effectively manages the satisfaction expectations of a heterogeneous customer base with varying price sensitivity levels ([Salim et al., 2023](#); [Taufik et al., 2022](#)).

4.2 Product Quality Influence on Customer Satisfaction

Product quality emerged as the most frequently cited satisfaction driver in interviews with customers. All three customer informants spontaneously mentioned product quality before price when asked what makes them return to FOR, suggesting that quality functions as the primary loyalty driver once the price has passed the initial "reasonable" threshold. Specific quality attributes mentioned by customers included material feel and durability ("the fabric doesn't pill after washing"), consistent sizing across purchases, and alignment with current fashion trends ("FOR always has what's popular now") ([Lina, 2022](#); [Mahsyar & Surapati, 2020](#)).

The store owner described the product curation strategy as the primary operational priority: FOR actively monitors trending fashion through social media and industry channels, refreshes stock regularly to maintain trend relevance, and maintains quality control at the purchasing stage by selecting suppliers with consistent quality reputation. Employee observations confirmed that product returns and quality complaints are rare, suggesting that FOR's quality control practices effectively prevent quality-expectation gaps that generate dissatisfaction.

These findings align with [Novia et al. \(2024\)](#) conclusion that consistent product quality is the primary long-term customer satisfaction mechanism in fashion retail and with [Satdiah et al. \(2023\)](#) finding that quality perception moderates price sensitivity at the store level. FOR's combination of competitive pricing and consistent quality creates the price-quality alignment that [Kotler and Keller \(2007\)](#) identify as the fundamental mechanism for generating satisfaction.

4.3 Sales Performance as Supporting Evidence

Documentary analysis of FOR's 2023 monthly sales records provides objective evidence supporting the qualitative satisfaction findings. Table 2 presents the monthly sales trajectories.

Table 2. Fashion Outlet Rantauprapat (FOR) Monthly Sales Revenue 2023

No.	Month (2023)	Sales Revenue (IDR)
1	January	10,500,000
2	February	11,250,000
3	March	11,850,000
4	April	12,700,000
5	May	13,345,000
6	June	14,449,000
7	July	15,150,000
8	August	16,490,000
9	September	16,550,000
10	October	17,880,000
11	November	17,995,000
12	December	18,250,000
TOTAL		176,409,000
Average Monthly		14,700,750
Monthly Growth Rate (avg.)		≈ 74%

Source: FOR store sales documentation, 2023.

Based on Table 2, the sales data reveals a consistent, uninterrupted monthly revenue growth throughout 2023, from IDR 10,500,000 in January to IDR 18,250,000 in December — a 73.8% increase over the year and an annual total of IDR 176,409,000. The month-on-month growth is positive in every month without exception, with no reversal months that would indicate seasonal demand dips, customer dissatisfaction episodes, or competitive disruption. This uninterrupted upward trajectory is interpreted as documentary evidence of sustained customer satisfaction and loyalty, which the qualitative findings attribute to FOR's price-quality strategy.

The consistency of the growth pattern is particularly notable: the revenue increase is gradual and sustained rather than episodic, suggesting that satisfaction is generated through ongoing operational excellence rather than one-time promotional events. The H2 semester (July–December) shows accelerating growth relative to H1 (January–June), with H2 revenues averaging IDR 17,052,500 per month versus H1 averages of IDR 12,349,000 — a 38% second-half uplift consistent with word-of-mouth accumulation and loyal customer base growth that high-satisfaction retail operations typically exhibit over time.

4.4 Discussion

The convergent finding across interviews, observations, and documentation is that price and product quality work synergistically to generate customer satisfaction at FOR, as discussed below. Price creates the initial purchase decision threshold, and product quality sustains the post-purchase evaluation, which determines whether the customer returns. When both are well managed, as at FOR, the price-quality alignment generates not only momentary satisfaction but also the sustained loyalty that the sales trajectory demonstrates.

This integrated finding extends and localizes the theoretical framework of (Kotler & Keller, 2007). In the SME fashion retail context of Rantauprapat, satisfaction is not an abstract consumer psychology construct but a concrete commercial outcome that is visible in monthly revenue growth. The fact that no promotional activity was identified by informants as a significant driver of the 2023 growth trajectory — neither discount campaigns, advertising, nor loyalty programs were cited — suggests that the growth reflects genuine satisfaction-driven loyalty and word-of-mouth, consistent with the qualitative finding that FOR's price-quality positioning is intrinsically satisfying to customers.

These findings are consistent with the prior literature summarized in Table 1, particularly (Asti & Ayuningtyas, 2020; Ruffiansah & Seno, 2020; Woen & Santoso, 2021), all of whom confirmed joint significant effects of price and product quality on consumer satisfaction across Indonesian retail contexts. The present qualitative study adds the contextual depth that quantitative studies cannot provide: the mechanism through which price and quality generate satisfaction at FOR — through multi-tier price-quality alignment and consistent product curation — is now documented in informant-level evidence.

5. Conclusions

This qualitative case study examined the influence of price and product quality on customer satisfaction at Fashion Outlet Rantaprapat (FOR) through interviews with six informants (owner, employees, and customers), observation, and sales data analysis. Three main conclusions were drawn. First, price positively influences customer satisfaction through FOR's multi-tier pricing strategy that creates perceived value alignment across customer segments. Second, product quality also positively influences satisfaction, with consistent quality and trend-aligned product curation identified as the main drivers of customer loyalty. Third, these combined effects are reflected in FOR's 2023 performance, shown by steady monthly revenue growth from IDR 10.5M to IDR 18.25M, totaling IDR 176.4M with approximately 73.8% annual growth. Three practical recommendations are proposed. First, FOR should maintain price-quality alignment through regular competitive price benchmarking. Second, product quality control should remain a priority, including strict supplier selection and pre-stock quality checks. Third, the company is encouraged to implement structured customer satisfaction monitoring through periodic surveys to complement qualitative feedback and improve early issue detection.

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Author Contributions

DH conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, and drafted the manuscript. MJ contributed to data collection, literature review, data analysis, and manuscript revision. Both authors contributed to the interpretation of results, critically revised the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study. This research was conducted independently, and no financial or personal relationships influenced the results or interpretation of the findings.

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