

The effect of price perception and service quality on user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of price perception and service quality on user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services in Indonesia. A quantitative research design was employed using a survey method, with data collected from 96 users selected through purposive sampling. All research constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed to evaluate the relationships among the variables. The findings indicate that favorable price perceptions and high service quality significantly contribute to user satisfaction, suggesting that both economic and service-related considerations influence passengers' evaluations of public transportation services. The proposed model explains 38.3% of the variance in user satisfaction, indicating that additional factors may also shape users' experiences and perceptions. These results highlight the importance of maintaining affordable fare policies while continuously enhancing service quality to improve customer satisfaction and encourage public transportation usage. The study contributes to the literature on public transportation service management by providing empirical evidence from an emerging transportation system in Indonesia. However, the findings are limited to a single transportation corridor. Future research is recommended to incorporate additional explanatory variables and examine different modes or routes of public transportation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of user satisfaction determinants.

Keywords: Price Perception; Service Quality; User Satisfaction



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INTRODUCTION

Public transportation plays an essential role in supporting community mobility and promoting sustainable urban development. As urban populations continue to grow, the demand for accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation services also increases (Kasiani, 2023). In Indonesia, public transportation has become an important component of daily mobility, particularly in metropolitan areas where commuting activities are highly concentrated. Besides reducing traffic congestion and environmental impacts, public transportation contributes to improving social and economic accessibility by providing affordable travel options for the community (Detik Jatim, 2025). Therefore, maintaining user satisfaction has become a major concern for public transportation providers because satisfied users are more likely to continue using the service and recommend it to others (Kotler et al., 2022).

One of the public transportation services introduced by the East Java Provincial Government is Trans Jatim, which operates under the Buy The Service (BTS) scheme. Among its operational routes, Trans Jatim Corridor II connects Mojokerto and Surabaya, two cities with intensive daily commuting activities. The service offers relatively affordable fares while providing various supporting facilities, including air-conditioned buses, priority seating, and both cash and cashless payment systems. These features have made Trans Jatim Corridor II an attractive transportation alternative for workers, students, and other daily commuters. Nevertheless, increasing passenger demand has also created several service challenges, including crowded shelters during peak hours, waiting time issues, and limitations in supporting facilities. These conditions indicate that maintaining affordable fares alone is insufficient to ensure user satisfaction; service quality also plays an important role in shaping passengers' overall experiences.

Considering these conditions, this study aims to examine the influence of price perception and service quality on the satisfaction of Trans Jatim Corridor II users. Understanding the relationship between these factors is expected to provide a better understanding of the aspects that contribute to user satisfaction in public transportation services. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the existing literature on transportation service marketing and consumer satisfaction while providing practical insights for the management of Trans Jatim and related stakeholders in developing strategies to improve service quality and maintain affordable pricing that meets users' expectations.

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, AND HYPOTHESES

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT)

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), proposed by Richard L. Oliver, explains that user satisfaction is determined by the comparison between users' initial expectations and the actual performance of a product or service after its use (Oliver, 1980). Satisfaction occurs when the perceived performance meets or exceeds expectations, whereas dissatisfaction arises when the performance falls below expectations (Prawesty et al., 2022). In the context of this study, users' perceptions of affordable fares shape their expectations before using Trans Jatim Corridor II, while service quality reflects the actual performance experienced during the journey. Therefore, the consistency between users' expectations and their service experience is expected to influence their overall satisfaction.

Price Perception

Price perception refers to consumers' evaluation of whether the price paid for a product or service is reasonable compared with the benefits received (Kotler et al., 2022). Rather

than focusing solely on whether a price is low or high, consumers also consider affordability, value for money, and the consistency between price and service quality (Kotler et al., 2022). In public transportation, passengers are more likely to be satisfied when they perceive that the fare is affordable and reflects the quality of the service provided. Previous studies have also reported that a favorable price perception contributes positively to customer satisfaction (Putri & Supriyono, 2022; Nugraheni, 2024).

Service Quality

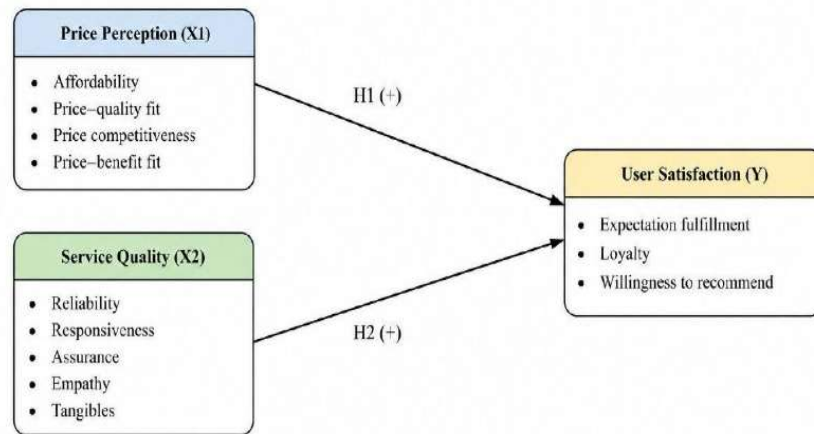
Service quality is defined as an organization's ability to deliver services that meet or exceed customer expectations (Kotler et al., 2022). In public transportation, service quality is reflected through reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible aspects of the service. These dimensions influence passengers' travel experiences and their evaluation of the service. Higher service quality is generally associated with greater customer satisfaction because users tend to compare the service they receive with their initial expectations (Tjiptono, 2020). Previous studies have consistently found that service quality has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction (Putri & Supriyono, 2022; Pratama et al., 2021).

User Satisfaction

User satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation of a service after users compare their expectations with the actual experience they receive (Kotler et al., 2022). Satisfied users are more likely to continue using the service, remain loyal, and recommend it to others. In this study, user satisfaction is measured through three indicators: fulfillment of expectations, loyalty, and willingness to recommend the service (Tjiptono, 2020).

Research Framework

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) explains that user satisfaction is influenced by the extent to which service performance meets users' expectations. In the context of Trans Jatim Corridor II, user satisfaction is expected to be influenced by two key factors, namely price perception and service quality. Price perception reflects users' evaluation of whether the fare is affordable and appropriate for the benefits received, while service quality represents users' assessment of the overall service performance. The proposed research framework illustrates that both price perception and service quality are expected to have direct effects on user satisfaction, which are further examined through the proposed hypotheses.



Source: Developed by the Authors, 2026

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical studies, this research proposes the following hypotheses to examine the relationships between price perception, service quality, and user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services :

H1: Price perception has a positive effect on user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services.

H2: Service quality has a positive effect on user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the effects of price perception and service quality on user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services. The research focused on passengers who had used the Mojokerto-Surabaya route. Because the total number of users could not be identified with certainty, non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique was applied (Ghozali, 2024). The sample consisted of 96 respondents who met the predetermined criteria, including being at least 17 years old and having experience using Trans Jatim Corridor II. The sample size was determined following Ghozali (2024) recommendation for PLS-SEM, which suggests using 5–10 observations for each research indicator. As this study included 12 indicators and applied a multiplier of 8, the required sample size was 96 respondents.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed directly to eligible respondents. In addition, interviews and supporting documents were used to complement the survey data and provide a better understanding of the research context. All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Ghozali, 2024) with SmartPLS 4. The analysis involved evaluating the measurement model through validity and reliability assessments, followed by the

structural model to determine the relationships among the research variables and test the proposed hypotheses (Ghozali, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 96 respondents who had previously used Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services. Based on gender, 58 respondents (60.4%) were female, while 38 respondents (39.6%) were male. The higher proportion of female respondents suggests that women tend to rely on public transportation because it is perceived as a safer and more convenient travel option, particularly for longer distances and congested traffic conditions.

Regarding user category, 50 respondents (52.1%) were classified as general passengers, while 46 respondents (47.9%) were students. The relatively balanced distribution indicates that Trans Jatim Corridor II serves diverse groups of users. However, general passengers represented a slightly larger proportion, reflecting the important role of the service in supporting daily commuting activities, particularly for work and other routine purposes.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model evaluation was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments before testing the structural relationships among the research variables (Ghozali, 2024). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Cronbach's Alpha assesses the internal consistency of the measurement items, while Composite Reliability measures the overall reliability of the latent construct. Values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability greater than 0.70 indicate satisfactory reliability (Ghozali, 2024). Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which measures the proportion of variance captured by a construct relative to measurement error. An AVE value of 0.50 or higher indicates that the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators, thereby demonstrating adequate convergent validity (Ghozali, 2024).

Table 1 presents the results of the reliability and validity assessment for all research constructs.

Table 1
Validity and Reliability

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Persepsi Harga	0.821	0.823	0.883	0.654
Kualitas Layanan	0.868	0.871	0.905	0.656
Kepuasan Pengguna	0.713	0.728	0.838	0.634

Source: Results of data analysis using Smart-PLS, 2026

All measurement indicators achieved outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. In addition, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs exceeded 0.70, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.50. These findings confirm that all constructs demonstrated adequate reliability and convergent validity.

Therefore, the measurement model was considered appropriate for further structural model analysis.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model evaluation was conducted to examine the relationships among the latent constructs and assess the predictive capability of the proposed research model (Ghozali, 2024). The evaluation included the coefficient of determination (R^2) and hypothesis testing. The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the proportion of variance in the endogenous construct explained by the exogenous constructs. According to Ghozali (2024), R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 indicate substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively. Hypothesis testing was performed by examining the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure. A hypothesis is accepted when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the proposed relationship is statistically supported (Ghozali, 2024). Table 2 presents the coefficient of determination (R^2) results for the endogenous construct.

Table 2
Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	R^2
User Satisfaction	0.383

Source: Results of data analysis using Smart-PLS, 2026

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to evaluate the explanatory power of the proposed model. As presented in Table 2, the R^2 value for user satisfaction was 0.383, indicating that price perception and service quality jointly explained 38.3% of the variance in user satisfaction. According to the classification proposed by Ghozali (2024), this value indicates a moderate level of explanatory power. The remaining variation may be explained by other factors that were not included in the present study.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine whether the proposed relationships among the research variables were supported. The evaluation was performed using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS by examining the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values (Ghozali, 2024). A hypothesis is considered supported when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05 at a 5% significance level. Conversely, a hypothesis is not supported if the t-statistic is below 1.96 or the p-value is greater than 0.05 (Ghozali, 2024). Table 3 presents the results of the hypothesis testing based on the bootstrapping procedure.

Table 3
Hypothesis Testing

Variabel	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standart Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ([O/STDEV])	P Values	Decision
KL → KP	0.574	0.577	0.064	8.941	0.00	Supported
PH → KP	0.310	0.301	0.145	2.134	0.033	Supported

Source: Results of data analysis using Smart-PLS, 2026

Table 3 presents the results of the hypothesis testing. Both proposed hypotheses were supported, indicating that price perception and service quality significantly influence user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services. Price perception was found to have a positive effect on user satisfaction, suggesting that passengers who perceive the fare as affordable and consistent with the benefits received are more likely to report higher satisfaction.

In addition, service quality demonstrated a stronger positive influence on user satisfaction than price perception. This finding indicates that reliable operations, responsive staff, passenger safety, and adequate facilities play a more important role in shaping users' overall satisfaction with the service.

The Effect of Price Perception on User Satisfaction

The findings indicate that price perception positively influences user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services. Passengers tend to be more satisfied when they perceive that the fare is affordable and corresponds to the quality of the services received. This suggests that users evaluate not only the affordability of the fare but also whether the benefits obtained are proportional to the cost incurred.

The descriptive analysis revealed that the highest-rated indicator of price perception was the consistency between the fare and service quality. Trans Jatim Corridor II offers affordable fares while providing various supporting facilities, including air-conditioned buses, priority seating, CCTV, cash and cashless payment systems, and onboard attendants. These facilities strengthen users' perceptions that the fare represents good value for money, thereby enhancing their overall satisfaction.

These findings support the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), which states that satisfaction is achieved when the actual performance of a service meets or exceeds users' prior expectations (Oliver, 1980). In this study, users perceived that the fares were reasonable and consistent with the quality of the services provided, leading to the confirmation of their expectations and higher satisfaction. The results are also consistent with the findings of Willy (2021), Hidayat et al. (2022), Rizky et al. (2021), and Boggy and Soebiantoro (2023), who reported that favorable price perception contributes to higher customer satisfaction. Therefore, maintaining affordable fares while ensuring service quality remains consistent is an important strategy for improving user satisfaction in public transportation.

The Effect of Service Quality on User Satisfaction

The results also demonstrate that service quality has a positive influence on user satisfaction and plays a more prominent role than price perception. This finding suggests that passengers place greater importance on the quality of services experienced during their journey than on fare considerations alone.

The descriptive analysis showed that reliability was the strongest indicator of service quality. Respondents perceived Trans Jatim Corridor II as a dependable transportation service because it operates according to schedule and provides greater certainty for daily commuting activities. However, the responsiveness and empathy dimensions received relatively lower evaluations, indicating that improvements in staff responsiveness, passenger assistance, and personal attention could further enhance the overall travel experience.

These findings are consistent with the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), which explains that satisfaction increases when the quality of the service received fulfills users' expectations (Oliver, 1980). Reliable operations, comfortable facilities, and

professional service contribute to confirming users' expectations, resulting in higher satisfaction. The findings also support previous studies by Willy (2021), Hidayat et al. (2022), Rizky et al. (2021), and Boggy and Soebiantoro (2023), which concluded that service quality is a key determinant of customer satisfaction. From a practical perspective, the management of Trans Jatim should continue improving operational reliability, staff responsiveness, and passenger comfort while maintaining affordable fares to strengthen user satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that both price perception and service quality play important roles in shaping user satisfaction with Trans Jatim Corridor II bus services. Affordable fares that are perceived as fair and consistent with the benefits received encourage users to have a more positive evaluation of the service. Likewise, reliable, responsive, safe, and comfortable services enhance passengers' travel experiences and increase their satisfaction. These findings contribute to the understanding of factors influencing satisfaction in public transportation and provide practical insights for service providers to improve service performance while maintaining affordable fares.

Future research is recommended to examine additional factors that may influence user satisfaction, such as brand image, accessibility, service innovation, or customer experience. Expanding the study to other Trans Jatim corridors or different public transportation services with a larger sample size may also provide more comprehensive findings and improve the generalizability of the results.

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