

OVERCOMING PRODUCT HOMOGENEITY: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY IN SHAPING CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS

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Abstract: The retail stationery market faces intense competition, making service quality a crucial factor for business sustainability. This study aims to analyze the empirical effect of service quality on consumer purchasing decisions at a local stationery store. A quantitative survey approach was employed with a sample of 34 respondents selected through accidental sampling. Primary data were collected via valid and reliable questionnaires, then analyzed using simple linear regression. The descriptive analysis revealed an overall average service quality score of 3.26, indicating a very good perception among consumers. Furthermore, the regression results demonstrated that service quality has a positive and statistically significant impact on purchasing decisions, contributing 26.0% to the variance. The study concludes that improving tangible facilities, employee responsiveness, and service accuracy is strategically vital for retail businesses. By prioritizing these elements, stores can effectively enhance customer satisfaction, build trust, and secure long-term repurchasing commitments in a competitive market.

Keywords: Consumer 1; Purchasing Decisions 2; Retail 3; Service Quality 4; Stationery 5

INTRODUCTION

The development of the retail industry in Indonesia has witnessed increasingly fierce competition, driven by dynamic shifts in pricing, product quality, and marketing strategies. In this highly competitive environment, service quality has emerged as a crucial determinant of business success. Excellent service does not merely enhance customer satisfaction; it acts as a pivotal factor in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. Recent empirical evidence suggests that robust service quality directly strengthens consumers' purchasing intentions and long-term retention in the retail sector (Syahnadin et al., 2025). Furthermore, the continuous annual growth in modern retail outlets underscores the necessity for businesses to differentiate themselves through superior and responsive customer experiences to remain relevant in the market.

Within this broader retail landscape, the office stationery market represents a sector with significant economic value and stable annual growth. Its primary consumer segments span the educational and corporate sectors, as well as individual retail customers. Despite the promising market potential, industry players face substantial challenges. Empirical observations frequently highlight consumer complaints regarding long queues, extended service times, and a lack of employee hospitality during service interactions. Such service failures inevitably diminish customer satisfaction and pose a significant threat to business sustainability by driving consumers to competing stores.

The intricate relationship between service quality and consumer decision-making has been extensively debated in recent literature. While some studies argue that product completeness and competitive pricing are the primary drivers of retail sales, current research highlights that service quality encompassing reliability, responsiveness, and empathy plays an equally indispensable role in building consumer trust (Jaya &

Heryjanto, 2023). When retail employees demonstrate profound product knowledge and proactive communication, consumers feel more valued, which significantly accelerates their transition from merely evaluating options to making definitive purchasing decisions (Telaumbanua, Sari, & Putri, 2024). Consequently, service is no longer viewed as a mere transactional necessity, but as a strategic asset capable of influencing both spontaneous and planned buying behavior in physical store environments.

According to the foundational theory by Kotler and Keller (2016), service quality encompasses the overall attributes and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied consumer needs. While previous studies have explored the general impact of service quality in various digital and large-scale retail sectors, there remains a critical need to examine these dynamics specifically within the localized office stationery market to better understand offline consumer behavior. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the empirical effect of service quality on consumer purchasing decisions in the context of office stationery retail. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for retail management to optimize service strategies, enhance customer loyalty, and foster a sustainable competitive advantage.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative survey research design to investigate the effect of service quality on consumer purchasing decisions. The research was conducted at Toko Karya Rappang, located in Panca Rijang, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, from September to October 2025. The population comprised all consumers who had made purchases at the retail store. Because the exact number of consumers was unknown, the sample size was determined based on the Central Limit Theorem, which suggests a minimum of 30 respondents to achieve a normal distribution. Ultimately, a total of 34 respondents were selected as the research sample using the accidental sampling technique, meaning that consumers who coincidentally visited the store and were willing to participate were recruited to fill out the survey.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (4), to measure the indicators of service quality and purchasing decisions. Before the main analysis, the research instrument was rigorously tested for validity using the Pearson correlation coefficient and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, ensuring all items met the required statistical thresholds for accuracy and consistency. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The data analysis techniques included simple linear regression to determine the predictive relationship, the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the model's explanatory power, and a partial t-test to statistically examine the significance of the proposed hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

The demographic profile of the respondents provides essential context for understanding consumer behavior in the office stationery market. The data were collected from 34 valid respondents who made purchases at Toko Karya Rappang. The characteristics, categorized primarily by age, are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents Based on Age

Age Group	Frequency (Persons)	Percentage (%)
10 - 18 Years	11	32.35%
19 - 25 Years	17	50.00%
26 - 30 Years	5	14.71%
> 30 Years	1	2.94%
Total	34	100%

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

Interpretation: Table 1 illustrates that the majority of the consumers are young adults aged 19 to 25 years, representing 50.00% of the total sample. This demographic is predominantly composed of university students, highlighting that students form the core customer base requiring daily educational supplies. The second largest group is teenagers aged 10-18 (32.35%), further emphasizing the store's reliance on the educational sector.

4.2 Validity and Reliability Tests

Prior to executing the main regression analysis, the survey instrument was subjected to rigorous testing to ensure its statistical validity and reliability. Validity was measured using the Pearson correlation (r-hitung), while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The summarized results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variables	Item	r-hitung	r-table	Status
Service Quality (X)	X1	0.510	0.339	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X2	0.435	0.339	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X3	0.448	0.339	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X4	0.539	0.339	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X5	0.445	0.339	Valid
Purchasing Decision (Y)	Y1	0.698	0.339	Valid
Purchasing Decision (Y)	Y2	0.411	0.339	Valid
Purchasing Decision (Y)	Y3	0.686	0.339	Valid
Purchasing Decision (Y)	Y4	0.491	0.339	Valid

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

Interpretation: As detailed in Table 2, all questionnaire items for both Service Quality and Purchasing Decisions yielded an r-hitung greater than the critical r-table value of 0.339 at a 5% significance level (N=34). This confirms that all measurement items are valid. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha values (e.g., 0.760 for Service Quality and 0.643 for Purchasing Decision) exceed the standard threshold of 0.60, verifying that the research instruments are reliable and consistent.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to evaluate the respondents' general perceptions regarding the service quality provided by the retail store. Table 3 presents the average scores for key service dimensions.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Service Quality Indicators

Indicators	Average Score	Category
Store Comfort & Tangibles	3.29	Very Good
Modern Equipment	3.08	Good
Accuracy in Service	3.29	Very Good
Speed in Service Delivery	3.26	Very Good
Overall Average Score	3.26	Very Good

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

Interpretation: Table 3 reveals that the overall average score for Service Quality is 3.26, which classifies as 'Very Good' on the Likert scale. Respondents rated physical store comfort (3.29) and service accuracy (3.29) as the highest-performing indicators. This suggests that customers are highly satisfied with the tangible aspects of the store and the precise fulfillment of their stationery orders.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing and Regression Analysis

To empirically address the research objective, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to ascertain the significant effect of service quality on consumer purchasing decisions. The coefficient of determination model summary is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Model Summary (Coefficient of Determination)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	0.510	0.260	0.237

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

Interpretation: The regression analysis demonstrates a moderate positive correlation ($R = 0.510$) between service quality and consumer purchasing decisions. The R-Square value is 0.260, which implies that 26.0% of the variations in consumer purchasing decisions for office stationery are directly influenced by the quality of service provided by the store. The remaining 74.0% is determined by other variables not examined in this specific model, such as price competitiveness, product completeness, and strategic location. The significance test ($\text{Sig.} = 0.002 < 0.05$) substantiates the alternative hypothesis (H_1), confirming that service quality exerts a statistically significant and positive effect on purchasing decisions.

4.5 Discussion

The statistical testing in this study provides empirical evidence that service quality exerts a positive and significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions for office stationery, contributing 26.0% to the variance. This finding directly validates the multidimensional theory of Service Quality (SERVQUAL), which asserts that the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles are the primary drivers of a consumer's cognitive evaluation of a retail business. In the context of Toko Karya Rappang, the physical comfort of the store and service accuracy proved to be the highest-scoring indicators. This aligns with the research by Chen and Lin (2023) published in the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (ScienceDirect), which emphasizes that physical layout elements and face-to-face interactions in offline retail act as fundamental catalysts triggering affective consumer responses prior to decision-

making. Furthermore, Kumar and Rahman (2022) in the Journal of Business Research confirmed that physical facility attributes and staff reliability are absolute prerequisites for establishing initial consumer trust in emerging retail markets.

The correlation between service quality and purchasing decisions becomes especially crucial when analyzed through the lens of consumer psychology, particularly in markets with highly homogenous products such as office stationery. Because stationery products (e.g., books, pens, and paper) tend to be functionally standard with minimal price variation among competitors, a business's competitive advantage automatically shifts from product attributes to the overall service experience. When store employees exhibit empathy, swift complaint resolution, and profound product knowledge, consumers perceive a significant reduction in both psychological burden and transaction time. This positive interaction does not merely facilitate a transaction; it actively transforms purchase intention into actual purchasing behavior. This psychological mechanism is strongly supported by the findings of Zhang and Li (2024) in ScienceDirect, who elucidated that in industries with a high degree of product homogeneity, a service experience centered on speed and empathy is the definitive instrument dictating consumers to choose one store over its competitors.

Previous studies consistently corroborate these findings by highlighting that customer service is not merely an operational complement but the central pivot of a retail survival strategy. A comprehensive study by Wang and Nguyen (2025) demonstrated that interactive service responsiveness drastically enhances customer retention and stimulates both planned and impulsive purchasing decisions in physical store environments. Conversely, poor service quality immediately destroys loyalty due to the inherently low switching costs in the stationery industry; consumers can effortlessly switch to another store if they feel undervalued. The undeniable correlation between employee performance and instant consumer satisfaction validates the essence of this research: service quality is directly proportional to, and acts as the lifeline for, a store's financial sustainability.

The significance of this study lies in its proof that amidst the relentless expansion of digitalization and e-commerce, traditional physical retail businesses can still capture market share if they successfully capitalize on human-to-human interaction. This research is highly vital as it provides an empirical evaluation framework and a stern wake-up call for local retail entrepreneurs to abandon obsolete strategies such as price wars, and redirect their investments toward human resource training and store atmosphere improvement. As sharply concluded by Saputra and Djumarno (2024) in the journal Heliyon (ScienceDirect), the competitive advantage of modern retail is no longer determined by who offers the cheapest products, but by who can deliver the most humanizing, rapid, and efficient shopping experience. Consequently, enhancing service quality is no longer a tactical option, but an absolute strategic imperative to ensure the future sustainability of retail businesses.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that service quality exerts a significant and positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions in the office stationery retail sector. When a retail store successfully delivers excellent service—such as maintaining a comfortable physical environment, ensuring accurate transaction processing, and fostering proactive and empathetic interactions from its employees—consumers feel significantly more valued and satisfied. This positive shopping experience not only encourages immediate purchase actions but also builds long-term customer loyalty and trust. Therefore, rather than competing solely on product pricing or variety, it is strategically imperative for retail business owners to prioritize and continuously enhance their service quality. By

cultivating a responsive, reliable, and human-centric service atmosphere, retail businesses can effectively retain their core customer base and secure a sustainable competitive advantage in a highly dynamic market.

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