e- ISSN 2722-4961

Analysis of Customer Journey on Customer Satisfaction in the Online Transportation Industry in Makassar

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received : November 22, 2025
Revised : January 16, 2026
Accepted : February 20, 2026

Keywords
Customer Journey
Customer Satisfaction
Online Transportation

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effect of the customer journey on customer satisfaction in the online transportation industry in Makassar City. The issue addressed concerns how customer experiences at each service touchpoint, from pre-booking to post-service, contribute to the formation of customer satisfaction. This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design. Primary data were collected through a survey using a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to 182 respondents selected through purposive sampling, namely online transportation users who had used the service at least twice in the past three months. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS software. The results indicate that the customer journey has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.721$; $p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.518. The travel experience and booking process dimensions are the most dominant factors in enhancing customer satisfaction. These findings suggest that the quality of interaction during the trip, as well as the ease and reliability of the application system, are key determinants in shaping satisfaction perceptions.This study concludes that optimizing the overall customer experience at every stage of service can significantly improve customer satisfaction. Practically, the findings provide implications for online transportation companies to enhance service quality and digital systems in order to maintain competitiveness. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the customer journey concept as a multidimensional construct in explaining customer satisfaction within the context of online transportation in a medium-sized Indonesian city.

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1. Introduction

Digital transformation in the transportation sector has reshaped mobility patterns globally. App-based ride-hailing services not only provide efficiency but also redefine customer experience through the integration of technology, digital payment systems, and dynamic pricing algorithms

(Agatz et al., 2024; Mogaji, 2025). Globally, the growth of these services has intensified competition based on service quality and perceived value, which ultimately determine customer satisfaction and continued usage (Vu et al., 2025; Lu & Shi, 2025). In Indonesia, the penetration of online transportation has increased significantly over the past decade, particularly in large and medium-sized cities such as Makassar, which has experienced rapid urban mobility growth and increasing reliance on ride-hailing applications for economic and social activities (Natalia & Musu, 2024; Kurniawan & Achjari, 2025).

In the local context of Makassar, online transportation services have become an integral part of the urban mobility system. Natalia and Musu (2024) show that ride-hailing contributes to changes in citizens' travel patterns, particularly in integration with other modes of transportation. However, various empirical reports and survey findings from developing countries indicate variations in customer satisfaction levels influenced by service quality, driver behavior, price transparency, and digital experience during the booking process (Addo et al., 2025; Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2024). Research in Indonesia also finds that SERVQUAL dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, and assurance significantly shape user satisfaction in online transportation services (Nurawalia & Ermawati, 2025). Complaints related to surge pricing, unilateral cancellations, and service inconsistencies indicate that the customer journey does not always proceed smoothly from the search stage to post-service evaluation.

Theoretically, the concept of the customer journey emphasizes that satisfaction is not formed by a single interaction point but by the accumulation of experiences at every touchpoint—from information search, booking, and travel, to post-usage evaluation (Agatz et al., 2024; Shaikh et al., 2024). In the ride-hailing industry, the quality of this experience is influenced by the interaction between platform technology and service actors (drivers), shaping perceptions of value, trust, and loyalty (Vu et al., 2025; Lu & Shi, 2025). Peng et al. (2024) highlight the importance of system-based service quality improvements to minimize gaps between customer expectations and perceptions. Therefore, analyzing the customer journey becomes essential to understanding how each service stage contributes to overall satisfaction.

Although numerous studies have examined service quality and satisfaction in the ride-hailing context, most focus on the direct effect of service quality variables on satisfaction or loyalty without comprehensively mapping the end-to-end customer journey (Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2024; Kurniawan & Achjari, 2025). Furthermore, studies specifically positioning Makassar as the research locus remain limited, despite its distinct socio-cultural characteristics and urban mobility dynamics compared to Jakarta or other metropolitan cities (Natalia & Musu, 2024). Hence, a research gap exists in understanding how the customer journey in Makassar's online transportation industry shapes customer satisfaction in a holistic and contextual manner.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the influence of each stage of the customer journey on customer satisfaction in the online transportation industry in Makassar. The focus includes identifying key service touchpoints, measuring customer perceptions at each stage, and quantitatively testing the relationship between customer journey experiences and satisfaction levels. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of service marketing and digital transportation management literature by integrating the customer journey perspective within the ride-hailing context of a medium-sized Indonesian city. Practically, the findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for online transportation providers in designing more consistent, responsive, and satisfaction-oriented customer experiences.

2. Literature Revies

The customer journey is a concept that describes the sequence of customer experiences at every interaction point (touchpoints) with a service provider, starting from the pre-purchase stage, during usage, and through post-purchase. Lemon and Verhoef (2016), in their conceptual framework—

which remains widely referenced in recent studies—state that customer experience is dynamic and formed through multi-channel interactions. In the context of online transportation, the customer journey includes searching for information through the application, the booking process, interaction with drivers, the trip itself, digital payment systems, and evaluation through ratings and reviews (Agatz et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2024). Meanwhile, customer satisfaction is defined as the customer's cognitive–affective evaluation of the congruence between expectations and the actual service performance received (Oliver, 2014). In recent ride-hailing studies, satisfaction is often associated with perceived service quality, ease of application use, price transparency, and system reliability (Vu et al., 2025; Nurawalia & Ermawati, 2025).

The relationship between the customer journey and customer satisfaction can be explained through Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) and Service Quality Theory (SERVQUAL). ECT posits that satisfaction is formed when the actual performance of a service meets or exceeds customers' initial expectations (Bhattacherjee, 2001). In ride-hailing platforms, customer expectations include response speed, travel safety, and fare clarity. When experiences at each touchpoint align with these expectations, satisfaction levels increase (Lu & Shi, 2025). On the other hand, the SERVQUAL model emphasizes five dimensions of service quality—reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles—which have been empirically proven to influence customer satisfaction in online transportation services (Nurawalia & Ermawati, 2025). Thus, each stage of the customer journey can be mapped as an operational representation of service quality dimensions that cumulatively shape satisfaction.

Several empirical studies support the positive relationship between digital service experience quality and customer satisfaction. Vu et al. (2025) found that perceived value and corporate image significantly influence satisfaction and the intention to reuse ride-hailing services in Southeast Asia. Peng et al. (2024) demonstrated that improvements in system-based service process quality (SPC-PCN method) enhance perceived quality and reduce customer complaints. Meanwhile, Wireko-Gyebi et al. (2024) confirmed that service quality dimensions directly affect satisfaction and customer loyalty in ride-hailing services in developing countries. However, some studies indicate that perceived risk and price uncertainty may reduce satisfaction even when service quality is relatively high (Lu & Shi, 2025), suggesting the presence of moderating variables in this relationship.

Although the literature on service quality and satisfaction in the ride-hailing industry is growing rapidly, most studies still treat service quality as a single construct without comprehensively mapping the end-to-end customer journey (Agatz et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2024). Furthermore, research in medium-sized Indonesian cities, particularly Makassar, remains limited compared to metropolitan areas such as Jakarta or Surabaya. In fact, the social characteristics, level of digital literacy, and mobility patterns of Makassar's residents may influence the dynamics of the customer journey differently (Natalia & Musu, 2024). Therefore, a research gap exists in integrating the customer journey concept as a multidimensional variable that is quantitatively analyzed in relation to customer satisfaction within the local context.

Based on the theoretical foundations and empirical findings, this study develops a conceptual framework that positions the customer journey as a multidimensional independent variable consisting of the pre-booking stage, booking process, travel experience, and post-service evaluation. Customer satisfaction is positioned as the dependent variable, measured through perceptions of expectation-performance congruence. This conceptual model refers to the integration of ECT and SERVQUAL, where experiences at each touchpoint are assumed to significantly contribute to the formation of satisfaction. This framework is expected to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how customer experiences in the online transportation industry in Makassar shape satisfaction in a holistic and sustainable manner.

3. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at examining the effect of the customer journey on customer satisfaction in the online transportation industry in Makassar. The explanatory design was selected because the study seeks to explain causal relationships among variables through statistical hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2022; Vu et al., 2025). The data used are primary data collected through a survey using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

The instrument was developed based on customer journey indicators (pre-booking, booking process, travel experience, and post-service evaluation) adapted from the transportation-enabled services framework (Agatz et al., 2024) and service quality dimensions (Peng et al., 2024; Nurawalia & Ermawati, 2025), as well as customer satisfaction indicators referring to the expectation-confirmation concept (Lu & Shi, 2025).

The study population consisted of all users of online transportation services (Gojek, Grab, Maxim, and similar platforms) in Makassar City. The sample was determined using purposive sampling with the criterion that respondents must have used online transportation services at least twice in the past three months. The minimum sample size was calculated based on the recommendation of Hair et al. (2022), which suggests 5–10 times the number of indicators for multivariate analysis. Accordingly, a minimum of 150 respondents was required to meet the requirements for multivariate analysis.

The research instrument was tested for validity and reliability. Construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a minimum factor loading threshold of ≥ 0.50, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptable value of ≥ 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022).

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, descriptive statistical analysis (mean, standard deviation, and percentage) was performed to describe respondent profiles and variable perceptions. Second, inferential statistical analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression or Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the effect of the customer journey on customer satisfaction (Peng et al., 2024; Vu et al., 2025). Hypothesis testing was performed at a significance level (α) of 0.05, with hypotheses accepted when the p-value < 0.05.

All data analysis procedures were carried out using IBM SPSS version 26 and/or SmartPLS 4 to ensure accurate parameter estimation and clear replication by future researchers.

4. Results And Discussion

This study involved 182 online transportation users in Makassar City who met the purposive sampling criteria. Based on descriptive analysis, the majority of respondents were aged 18–30 years (62%), with a service usage frequency of ≥3 times per month (71%). Descriptive statistical results indicate that the **customer journey** variable falls into the high category (Mean = 4.12; SD = 0.54), while **customer satisfaction** is also categorized as high (Mean = 4.08; SD = 0.59).

The dimension with the highest mean score is the **booking process** (Mean = 4.25), while the lowest is the **post-service evaluation** dimension (Mean = 3.94), indicating room for improvement in feedback mechanisms and complaint handling systems.

Validity testing shows that all indicators have factor loadings > 0.60 and AVE values > 0.50, meeting construct validity criteria (Hair et al., 2022). Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables

exceed 0.70, indicating good reliability. Pearson correlation analysis reveals a significant positive relationship between customer journey and customer satisfaction ($r = 0.684$; $p < 0.001$).

Multiple linear regression analysis indicates that customer journey has a significant effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.721$; $t = 12.438$; $p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.518. This means that 51.8% of the variation in customer satisfaction can be explained by the quality of the customer journey, while the remaining 48.2% is influenced by other variables outside the model. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that customer journey has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction is accepted.

Partially, the **travel experience** dimension ($\beta = 0.356$; $p < 0.01$) and the **booking process** dimension ($\beta = 0.298$; $p < 0.01$) contribute the most to customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, the **pre-booking** ($\beta = 0.154$; $p < 0.05$) and **post-service** ($\beta = 0.129$; $p < 0.05$) dimensions also have significant but relatively smaller effects. These findings indicate that direct interaction during the trip and the ease of the application system are dominant factors in shaping online transportation user satisfaction in Makassar.

The findings support **Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT)**, which posits that satisfaction is formed when actual experiences meet or exceed customer expectations (Lu & Shi, 2025). The dominance of the travel experience dimension reinforces the argument that direct interaction between drivers and customers is a crucial moment within the customer journey (Agatz et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the significant influence of the booking process indicates that application usability and price transparency are key factors in shaping perceived customer value, consistent with the findings of Vu et al. (2025).

These results align with Peng et al. (2024), who emphasize that improvements in system-based service processes enhance customer satisfaction. Similarly, Nurawalia and Ermawati (2025) found that reliability and responsiveness significantly influence online transportation user satisfaction in Indonesia. However, this study reveals a relatively smaller contribution from the post-service dimension compared to Wireko-Gyebi et al. (2024), who found that after-sales service strongly impacts loyalty. This difference may be influenced by the characteristics of respondents in Makassar, who prioritize travel efficiency over post-service interactions.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

Practically, these findings imply that online transportation companies should prioritize maintaining service quality consistency during the trip and optimizing application systems. Strengthening driver training related to customer service, safety, and effective communication can enhance the travel experience. Additionally, improving evaluation systems and responsiveness to customer complaints is necessary to strengthen the post-service dimension.

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating the customer journey concept as a multidimensional construct in explaining customer satisfaction within the context of a medium-sized Indonesian city.

Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which does not capture changes in customer perceptions over time. Moreover, other variables such as perceived risk, surge pricing, and customer loyalty were not included in the model. Future research is recommended to adopt a longitudinal approach or develop a more complex structural model by incorporating mediating or moderating variables to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the effect of the customer journey on customer satisfaction in the online transportation industry in Makassar City. Based on the regression analysis results, it was found that the customer journey has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, explaining 51.8% of the variance. Partially, the travel experience and booking process dimensions are the most dominant factors in shaping customer satisfaction, followed by the pre-booking and post-service dimensions. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that the customer journey has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction is accepted. These findings reinforce the Expectation-Confirmation Theory framework and service quality models that emphasize the importance of consistent experiences at every customer touchpoint.

Practically, the results indicate that online transportation companies should prioritize optimizing service quality during the trip and enhancing the ease and reliability of application systems. Strategies such as improving driver competencies, ensuring fare transparency, and providing rapid responses to customer complaints can serve as strategic policies to increase satisfaction and retain users. In the context of public policy, these findings also provide a basis for local regulators to encourage minimum service standards and strengthen service quality supervision in online transportation to ensure consumer protection.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which does not capture long-term changes in customer perceptions, and by the exclusion of other variables such as customer loyalty, perceived risk, and price sensitivity that may influence satisfaction. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ longitudinal approaches or more complex structural models incorporating mediating and moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of customer behavior in the online transportation industry.

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