Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Halal Certification: The Case of LPPOM MUI East Java Region

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the quality-of-service management at LPPOM MUI East Java in the context of halal certification using the SERVQUAL method. The research aims to identify gaps between customer expectations and the actual services received across five dimensions: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. Data were collected through surveys, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and observations involving 185 respondents. The findings reveal negative gaps in all dimensions, with the largest gaps in Tangibles and Reliability, indicating customers' demand for better facilities and more efficient certification processes. While staff responsiveness, competence, and empathy are generally perceived positively, improvements are needed in response speed, communication clarity, and personalized service. Addressing these gaps can enhance customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, strengthening LPPOM MUI East Java's reputation as a professional and reliable halal certification institution.

***Keywords:** LPPOM MUI, Halal Certification, SERVQUAL, Customer Satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the global economy, marked by the complexity of free trade and the intensification of competition across industries, has created an era of globalization that businesses can no longer avoid. Within this context, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in sustaining economic growth and development (Saifurrahman & Kassim, 2022). These enterprises are required not only to compete on the basis of product quality but also to pay close attention to customer satisfaction, which has become an essential determinant of long-term competitiveness. However, many businesses still face challenges in meeting consumer expectations, particularly in providing affordable prices and satisfactory services (Zafar et al., 2025).

Customer satisfaction has long been recognized as a source of competitive advantage. When customers are satisfied, businesses enjoy stronger relationships, improved loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth, all of which enhance market performance (Abror et al., 2025). Service quality is a major factor that influences satisfaction, as it reflects a company's ability to meet or exceed expectations through dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and

tangibility (Adhari, 2021). In the halal industry, where trust and compliance with Islamic principles are paramount, service quality becomes even more critical.

In Indonesia, the urgency of halal certification is underscored by Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance, which requires all food and beverage businesses to obtain halal certification by 2024. With over 231 million Muslims, Indonesia represents the largest Muslim population in the world, making halal assurance not only a religious necessity but also an economic imperative. Yet, the penetration of halal certification among MSMEs remains limited. Data from the Ministry of Finance (2021) indicate that out of approximately 65 million MSMEs in Indonesia, only about 1% have successfully obtained halal certification. The lack of awareness, insufficient dissemination of information, and low understanding of certification procedures have been identified as the primary barriers (Rafiki et al., 2024).

LPPOM-MUI East Java region, one of the institutions responsible for halal certification, has faced similar challenges in delivering its services. Despite its central role as a halal certification body, recurring issues have emerged, including unwelcoming staff attitudes, prolonged processing times, overlapping roles of officers and auditors, limited public awareness of service centers, and inadequate facilities such as parking areas. In the past three years, these weaknesses have contributed to a decline in certification revenue, from IDR 5.0 billion in 2021 to IDR 3.5 billion in 2023 and 4,5 billion in 2024 (LPPOM-MUI East Java, 2024).

Previous studies have highlighted the significance of halal labels in consumer decision-making, showing that certification strongly influences purchasing behavior and consumer satisfaction (Oktaniar et al., 2020; Sari & Kusumawati, 2022). Other research has emphasized the centrality of service quality in ensuring customer loyalty and sustaining organizational performance (Ibrahim & Thawil, 2019; Ulkhaq et al., 2017). These findings suggest that measuring

service quality using the ServQual framework, which evaluates tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, provides a useful basis for identifying service gaps and formulating improvement strategies.

While many studies have examined the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, relatively few have specifically addressed the context of halal certification services in Indonesia, particularly at the regional level such as LPPOM-MUI East Java. Existing studies tend to focus on consumer behavior toward halal labels or the general role of MSMEs in the economy (Hanifasari et al., 2024). However, less attention has been given to the operational service quality challenges faced by certification institutions themselves.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to analyze the alignment between customer expectations and service delivery in halal certification at LPPOM-MUI East Java using the ServQual model. It also aims to propose strategies for improving customer satisfaction in a sustainable manner. By addressing these objectives, the study is expected to reduce the service gap between LPPOM-MUI and its customers, while strengthening the institution's role in supporting the halal assurance policy.

The significance of this research lies in both its theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on service quality and customer satisfaction in the halal industry, providing insights for future scholarly work. Practically, it offers valuable recommendations for auditors and managers of halal certification services to improve their performance and responsiveness. Furthermore, it contributes to institutional knowledge and provides researchers with a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies for service improvement in a competitive and regulation-driven environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality (SERVQUAL) Concept

Service quality has been recognized as a critical determinant of customer satisfaction and long-term business success. (Ahmad et al., 2019; Parasuraman et al., 2002) introduced the ServQual model, which identifies five dimensions of service quality: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This model has become a widely adopted framework for assessing gaps between customer expectations and actual service delivery. Ulkhaq et al. (2017) emphasized that service quality is one of the most important factors influencing consumer loyalty, as high-quality service strengthens trust and commitment.
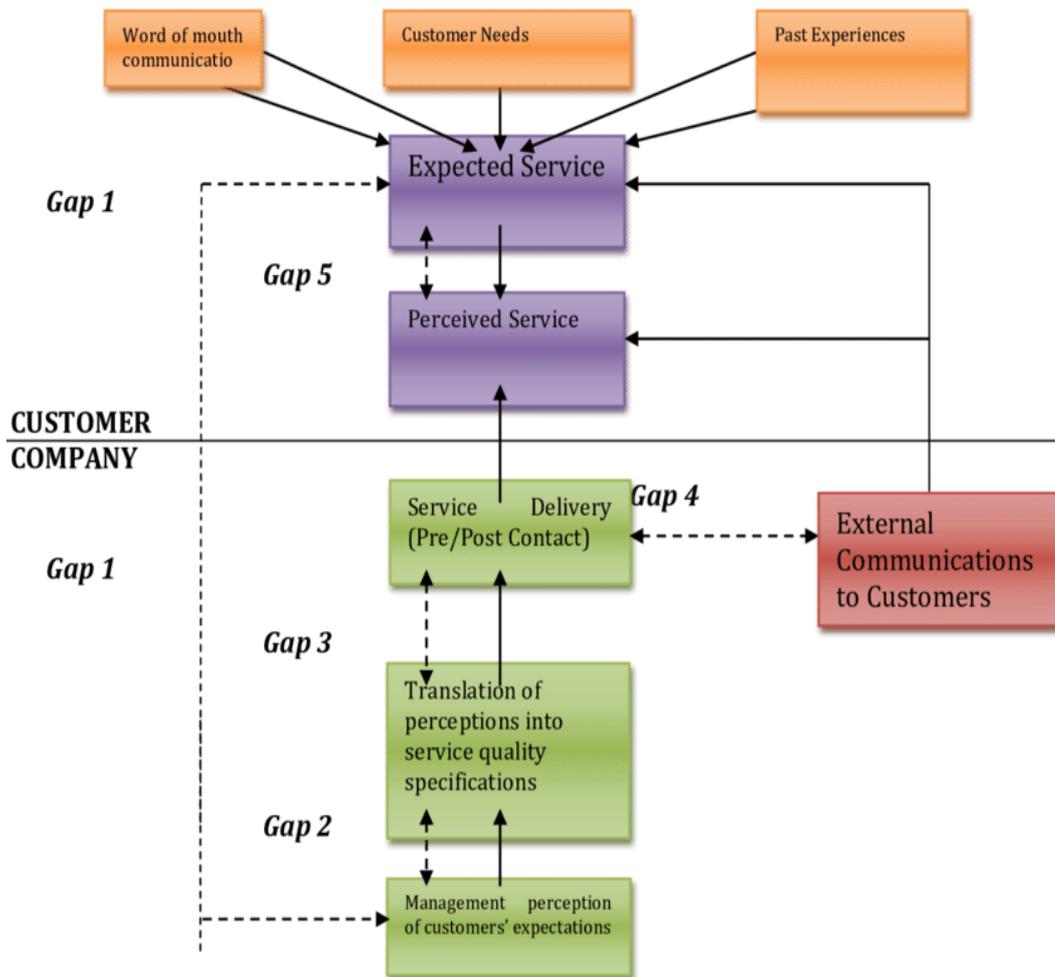
Picture 1. Servqual Model

In the context of service industries, Tjiptono & Diana,(2022) notes that customer satisfaction arises when perceived service meets or exceeds customer expectations. Conversely, service failures or unmet expectations often lead to dissatisfaction, reduced loyalty, and negative word-of-mouth. Setiawan et al., (2023) further highlights that customer satisfaction is positively correlated with service quality, particularly when businesses demonstrate responsiveness and empathy in addressing customer needs.

Customer Satisfaction and Its Determinants

Customer satisfaction refers to the degree to which consumer expectations align with the perceived performance of a product or service. In competitive markets, satisfaction is regarded as a strategic tool for differentiation Kotler & Keller, (2009). Rohmah, (2020) found that both price and

service play significant roles in shaping consumer satisfaction, with price sensitivity often driving purchasing decisions in small business markets. However, in sectors where trust is essential such as halal certification service quality becomes more critical than price competitiveness.

According to (Ibrahim & Thawil, 2019) service quality has a partial and significant influence on customer satisfaction, while pricing strategies act as complementary factors. They argue that well-trained and competent human resources are key to delivering effective services, especially in certification or inspection-based industries.

Halal Certification and Consumer Behavior

Halal certification has emerged as a central issue in predominantly Muslim countries. The halal logo not only represents compliance with religious obligations but also signals safety, cleanliness, and product integrity to consumers (Rukminingsih & Latief, 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated that the presence of halal labels influences consumer behavior. (Oktaniar et al., 2020) revealed that halal certification positively affects purchasing decisions and consumer trust. Similarly, (Kurniawati, 2018) reported a 20% increase in product sales after halal labels were introduced, confirming a significant link between halal certification and customer satisfaction.

From a macroeconomic perspective, halal certification is closely tied to the growth of SMEs and MSMEs. Susilawati et al., (2023) highlighted that MSMEs contribute 61.07% to Indonesia's GDP, yet most remain uncertified due to limited awareness and resources. The Ministry of Finance (2021) reported that only 1% of Indonesia's MSMEs hold halal certification, reflecting substantial challenges in policy implementation.

Challenges in Halal Certification Services

Despite its importance, halal certification in Indonesia faces systemic obstacles. Many MSMEs lack adequate knowledge of the certification process, while others are discouraged by the bureaucratic complexity and perceived costs (Wicaksono et al., 2023). LPPOM-MUI East Java, as one of the primary halal certification bodies, has received repeated complaints regarding unfriendly service, delays, and inadequate facilities. Such challenges indicate a service quality gap that directly affects customer satisfaction and institutional credibility.

The decline in halal certification revenue at LPPOM-MUI East Java between 2021 and 2023 demonstrates how service-related weaknesses can negatively impact performance. According to (Aslan, 2023) globalization requires service institutions to continuously innovate and improve service delivery to remain competitive. In this regard, the application of ServQual provides a useful diagnostic tool to identify weaknesses and propose corrective measures.

The Role of Service Quality in Halal Certification

The integration of service quality measurement in halal certification services is crucial to ensuring customer trust and satisfaction. ServQual dimensions can be directly applied to the certification process: tangibility (infrastructure and facilities), reliability (accuracy of certification procedures), responsiveness (speed in handling applications), assurance (competence and credibility of auditors), and empathy (customer-oriented service delivery).

Previous research supports this approach. (Ulkhaq & Barus, 2017) found that applying ServQual in public service institutions leads to higher consumer loyalty and institutional credibility. Similarly, Ibrahim & Thawil, (2019) emphasized the importance of competent human resources in strengthening service delivery and sustaining organizational performance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a Mixed Methods design, with an emphasis on a qualitative descriptive approach. Although quantitative components

are included, the primary focus lies on qualitative inquiry (Weyant, 2022). This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of customer perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward halal certification services provided by LPPOM MUI East Java. The qualitative component seeks to capture the ways in which customers perceive and evaluate service quality, often shaped by emotional and subjective factors that are difficult to measure quantitatively. Data were collected through in-depth observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), enabling participants to share their experiences with the certification process, while also engaging in collective reflection. This method provided insights into dimensions of service that might not emerge in individual interviews and allowed for the identification of shared themes.

To complement these findings, the quantitative component was employed to measure Service Quality (SQ) dimension's reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness using a structured survey with a Likert scale. While not the primary focus, the quantitative data served to validate and reinforce the qualitative insights, providing clearer trends regarding customer satisfaction.

According to (Bungin, 2013), population refers to a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects with certain characteristics, while (Yi et al., 2025) define it as the total collection of elements that share specific attributes for drawing conclusions.

The population of this study consisted of all users of halal certification services at LPPOM MUI East Java during the last five years, amounting to 345 individuals, comprising employees, business owners, and external users.

Table 1. Research Population

No	Population Group	Number (Persons)
1	Employees	100
2	Entrepreneurs	224
3	External Users	21

Following (Gwet, 2021), a sample is defined as a subset of the population that represents its characteristics. Considering the population size (N = 345), the study determined the sample size using a precision level of 5%. Based on this calculation, the required sample was 185 respondents. Sampling was conducted using Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling, ensuring representation across all sub-groups. The sample allocation was calculated as follows: Employees: (100/345) × 185 = 54 respondents, Entrepreneurs: (224/345) × 185 = 120 respondents, External Users: (21/345) × 185 = 11 respondents.

The research instrument consisted of structured questionnaires designed to measure the variables of Service Quality (SQ) and Customer Satisfaction in the halal certification process. A Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used to assess perceptions, attitudes, and experiences.

Table 2. Variables and Indicators

Variable	Dimension	Description
Service Quality	Tangibles	Physical aspects: facilities, equipment, environment
	Reliability	Consistency and timeliness of service
	Responsiveness	Speed and efficiency in addressing needs/complaints
	Assurance	Knowledge, competence, and credibility of staff
	Empathy	Personal attention and understanding of customer needs
Customer Satisfaction	Service Quality	Overall evaluation of service delivery
	Trust	Confidence in credibility of LPPOM MUI
	Loyalty	Willingness to reuse/recommend services
	General Satisfaction	Overall experience and expectations met
Variable	Dimension	Description

Data analysis was conducted through a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, with a particular emphasis on triangulation to ensure the validity and

reliability of the findings. Qualitative data, obtained from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and direct observations, were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to uncover recurring patterns and insights related to the dimensions of Service Quality (ServQual). These insights provided a deep understanding of customer expectations, experiences, and satisfaction factors.

Simultaneously, quantitative data collected through structured surveys were processed using statistical tools such as SPSS and Excel. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were calculated to capture overall trends in customer satisfaction and assess the impact of each ServQual dimension.

To strengthen the robustness of the results, the study employed triangulation, integrating both qualitative and quantitative findings. This approach allowed the researcher to verify whether the themes and insights derived from FGDs were reflected in the survey data. By cross-checking these two sources of evidence, the study ensured that conclusions drawn were accurate, reliable, and reflective of the actual experiences and perceptions of customers, ultimately supporting well-founded recommendations for improving halal certification services at LPPOM MUI East Java Region

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
ServQual is an instrument used to measure service quality in the service sector and is also commonly known as the Gap Model. The calculation of the gap involves comparing customer expectations of service quality with the actual service experienced by the customer (Firth et al., 2023).

Table 3. Gap Score Distribution

Instrument (X1, X2, dll.)	Epectation (Y)	Service Quality (X)	Gap (SQ = X - Y)	Gap Average	Category
X1	4.2753	3.6	-0.6753	-0.6753	High
X2	4.2498	3.65	-0.5998	-0.5998	High
X3	4.2414	3.59	-0.6514	-0.6514	High
X4	4.2589	3.62	-0.6389	-0.6389	High
X5	4.2491	3.55	-0.6991	-0.6991	High
X6	4.4919	3.75	-0.7419	-0.7419	Very High
X7	4.5027	3.80	-0.7027	-0.7027	Very High
X8	4.5265	3.85	-0.6765	-0.6765	Very High
X9	4.4729	3.82	-0.6529	-0.6529	Very High
X10	4.4946	3.78	-0.7146	-0.7146	Very High
X11	4.4892	3.85	-0.6392	-0.6392	Very High
X12	4.5146	3.90	-0.6146	-0.6146	Very High
X13	4.3562	3.70	-0.6562	-0.6562	High
X14	4.5116	3.92	-0.5916	-0.5916	Very High
X15	4.4304	3.85	-0.5804	-0.5804	Very High
X16	4.4375	3.90	-0.5375	-0.5375	Very High
X17	4.4484	3.95	-0.4984	-0.4984	Very High
X18	4.4970	3.95	-0.5470	-0.5470	Very High
X19	4.5454	4.00	-0.5454	-0.5454	Very High
X20	4.5317	4.10	-0.4317	-0.4317	Very High
X21	4.4930	3.95	-0.5430	-0.5430	Very High
X22	4.4427	3.85	-0.5927	-0.5927	Very High
X23	4.5500	4.00	-0.5500	-0.5500	Very High
X24	4.4556	3.90	-0.5556	-0.5556	Very High
X25	4.5513	4.05	-0.5013	-0.5013	Very High
Average	4.4935	3.85	-0.6432		

Based on the gap score distribution in the table above, it is observed that the average gap value from the 25 statements of the independent variable, namely Service

Quality, is negative. This indicates that most applicants for halal certification are still dissatisfied with the quality of halal certification services provided by LPPOM MUI East Java, as reflected in the gap values for each statement.

The quality of service provided by LPPOM MUI East Java was evaluated using the SERVQUAL model, which measures the gap between customer expectations and the actual service experienced (Sun et al., 2020). The analysis considered five dimensions of service quality: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy.

Service Quality Assessment Based on SERVQUAL Dimensions at LPPOM MUI East Java

Table 4. Average Gap Values for Each SERVQUAL Dimension

Dimension	Mean Expectation (YD)	Mean Reality (XD)	Gap (XD - YD)
Tangibles	4.2549	3.602	-0.6529
Reliability	4.4977	3.80	-0.6977
Responsiveness	4.4604	3.844	-0.6164
Assurance	4.4920	4.18	-0.3120
Empathy	4.4985	3.95	-0.5485

The analysis of service quality at LPPOM MUI East Java using the SERVQUAL dimensions revealed gaps between customer expectations and their actual experiences across all five dimensions. Tangibles exhibited an average gap of -0.6529, indicating that while customers find the physical environment, cleanliness, and office facilities satisfactory, these aspects do not fully meet their expectations. Improvements in office layout, comfort, and accessibility could better align the tangible aspects of service with customer needs.

Reliability showed the largest gap at -0.6977, suggesting that customers expect more consistent and accurate service delivery, particularly regarding timeliness and adherence to established procedures. Enhancing procedural compliance and overall reliability is crucial to increasing customer trust and satisfaction. Responsiveness had a gap of -0.6164, reflecting the customers' desire for faster and more efficient responses to inquiries and complaints. Improving response time and the efficiency of service delivery can directly elevate perceived service quality.

Assurance recorded a smaller gap of -0.3120, showing that customers generally trust the competence and professionalism of LPPOM MUI staff. However, providing clearer explanations and more comprehensive guidance during the certification process could further meet customer expectations. Empathy had a gap of -0.5485, indicating that although customers appreciate staff attentiveness, they expect more personalized and proactive attention to their individual needs. Strengthening empathetic interactions can enhance the customer-staff relationship and improve the overall service experience.

Overall, the findings highlight that while LPPOM MUI East Java provides a satisfactory level of service, targeted improvements in tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy are necessary to fully meet customer expectations and enhance overall service quality.

The Influence of Tangibles on Service Quality at LPPOM-MUI East Java Region

Physical environment, or Tangibles, plays a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions of service quality at LPPOM-MUI East Java, particularly in the context of halal certification services. Tangibles encompass elements such as the cleanliness and organization of facilities, office design, and the equipment used during the certification process. Although these factors do not directly affect the technical outcomes of certification, they significantly influence customers' overall perception of service quality.

In this study, Tangibles are considered physical evidence that can affect how customers evaluate other dimensions of service quality, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and surveys indicate that comfortable, organized, and modern facilities strongly influence customers' first impressions. Many participants reported that well-maintained facilities foster a sense of professionalism, thereby enhancing trust in the halal certification process. FGD participants emphasized that separate consultation rooms create a quieter and more private environment, allowing for more open and transparent discussions. One participant remarked:*"A comfortable consultation room makes me feel valued. Staff can provide more detailed explanations, and I can ask questions without feeling rushed."*

Cleanliness and organization were also highlighted as critical factors. A well-maintained environment signals attention to detail and reinforces positive perceptions of overall service quality. Additionally, modern testing facilities and equipment provide customers with a sense of security, indicating that their products undergo a thorough and standardized halal certification process. Survey results showed that 85% of 185 respondents were highly satisfied with the physical condition of the LPPOM-MUI office, demonstrating that tangibles significantly impact customer satisfaction. Physical conditions also positively influence other service quality dimensions:

Reliability: A comfortable and orderly environment strengthens customers' confidence that LPPOM-MUI can provide timely and accurate certification services. Clean and organized offices reflect the institution's commitment to its responsibilities.

Responsiveness: Well-designed service areas create efficient workspaces, enabling staff to respond more quickly and effectively to customer requests and complaints.

Assurance: Professional and modern facilities enhance customers' confidence in staff competence, signaling that the institution has adequate resources to manage the certification process expertly.

Empathy: Comfortable consultation rooms facilitate more personalized interactions, allowing staff to better understand and respond to customers' specific needs, strengthening interpersonal relationships.

Customer trust in LPPOM-MUI's certification services is closely linked to physical conditions. According to (Jia & Chaozhi, 2021) trust depends on reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles, such as clean, organized spaces and adequate equipment, create an impression of institutional reliability and professionalism. Similarly, (Salaheldeen et al., 2024) note that office interior and cleanliness can significantly impact customer perceptions, ultimately influencing their willingness to continue using or recommend services.

Physical conditions also affect overall customer satisfaction. (A. Singh et al., 2022) assert that satisfaction is influenced by perceptions of service quality, including tangible elements. At LPPOM-MUI East Java, cleanliness, comfortable service spaces, and modern equipment contribute to positive experiences that enhance satisfaction. (Suryawan et al., 2022) further highlight that the gap between customer expectations and actual service is a key indicator of satisfaction; improving tangibles can reduce negative gaps and increase customer loyalty.

Although current facilities at LPPOM-MUI are generally adequate, areas for improvement remain. FGD and survey feedback suggested enhancing accessibility for clients arriving by public transport or from remote areas. Additional parking spaces and clearer directions could further improve convenience and customer experience.

The Influence of Reliability on Service Quality at LPPOM-MUI East Java Region

Reliability is a critical dimension in the SERVQUAL model, reflecting an

institution's ability to provide consistent and dependable services. In the context of LPPOM-MUI East Java, reliability pertains to the timeliness and procedural accuracy of halal certification services. This includes the punctuality of certification processing, the thoroughness of product evaluations, and the consistency of providing accurate and transparent information. Reliability significantly affects customer satisfaction, particularly in the halal certification sector. Customers expect that LPPOM-MUI will deliver predictable, transparent services that strictly adhere to established procedures. Ensuring that halal certification processes are handled reliably provides customers with confidence that their applications will be treated seriously and result in valid certifications.

Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and surveys highlight that reliability is one of the main factors influencing customer trust in LPPOM-MUI. Customers who have used the halal certification services expressed satisfaction and confidence because the process consistently adheres to schedules and established procedures. One FGD participant noted: *"I am very satisfied because my product certification is always completed on time. This provides security for my business, especially when I need halal certification to meet fast market demands."*

Survey results further reinforce this perception, with 87% of 185 respondents expressing high satisfaction with the reliability of LPPOM-MUI services. Customers reported that halal certification applications were processed punctually, and information provided was accurate. While some respondents indicated that additional detail in certain communications could be beneficial, overall, the reliability of LPPOM-MUI had a positive impact on customer trust. Reliability also directly contributes to customer trust. In service industries, particularly in halal certification, where consistency and accuracy are critical, trust is developed when customers perceive that services are delivered consistently and according to clear standards. High reliability

ensures that customers believe their products are evaluated fairly and objectively. Consequently, customers are more likely to recommend LPPOM-MUI services to business partners, contributing to customer loyalty.

Reliability is closely linked to customer satisfaction. A consistent, timely, and procedural approach in service delivery enhances trust, which in turn increases satisfaction. According to (Abd Rahman et al., 2015) when customers can rely on an institution to fulfill its promises and meet their expectations, their satisfaction improves. At LPPOM-MUI, the consistent and timely handling of halal certification applications contributes to higher customer satisfaction, supporting long-term relationships and loyalty.

The reliability of LPPOM-MUI encompasses various aspects, including the punctuality of certification processing, adherence to established procedures, and the provision of clear and accurate information throughout the process. Given the multiple stages involved application, audit, laboratory testing, and certificate issuance high standards and procedural consistency are essential to ensure that customers feel confident in the services provided.

Timely and reliable service reduces customer uncertainty, which is particularly important for businesses that face strict deadlines to meet market requirements or international standards. Delays or procedural inconsistencies could result in significant losses, emphasizing the importance of reliability in shaping customer experiences and satisfaction.

Prior research underscores the importance of reliability in customer satisfaction and trust within service sectors. (Ahmed et al., 2019) identified reliability as a core dimension in evaluating service quality, noting that consistent and dependable services enhance customer satisfaction and trust, encouraging recommendations and loyalty. Similarly, (Marbun et al., 2022) highlighted that predictable and continuous services foster

greater trust, ultimately increasing satisfaction and loyalty.

Even studies in the healthcare sector reinforce this concept. (Iranmanesh et al., 2020) found that patients' perceptions of service quality improved when services were delivered punctually and according to established procedures. Although conducted in healthcare, these findings are relevant to LPPOM-MUI, where reliable certification processes are equally critical. (Julvirta et al., 2022) further assert that reliability strengthens institutional-customer relationships by providing security and assurance that expectations will be met.

In the context of LPPOM-MUI East Java, the reliability of halal certification services characterized by procedural adherence, timeliness, and accuracy enhances customer satisfaction, builds trust, and promotes repeated use of services. Ensuring high reliability is therefore essential for maintaining positive perceptions, fostering loyalty, and supporting the institution's credibility in the halal certification sector.

The Influence of Responsiveness on Service Quality at LPPOM-MUI East Java

Responsiveness is a crucial dimension in the SERVQUAL model, reflecting an institution's ability to respond to customer needs and complaints promptly, accurately, and efficiently. In the context of LPPOM-MUI East Java, responsiveness encompasses staff capacity to provide timely and precise answers to customer inquiries, handle complaints effectively, and deliver services that align with customer expectations. Responsiveness is a key factor in enhancing both customer satisfaction and trust in the institution.

Staff responsiveness plays a vital role in shaping the customer experience throughout the halal certification process. Customers often have numerous questions or concerns during this complex process, and the institution's manner of addressing these issues significantly influences their perception of service quality. Most customers expect rapid and adequate responses, especially when facing challenges related to certification procedures or product testing.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and survey findings indicate that staff responsiveness is one of the main determinants of customer experience in using halal certification services. One FGD participant commented: *"The staff at LPPOM-MUI always respond to my questions quickly and provide clear information regarding the status of my product certification. This is very important because it allows me to know exactly what needs to be prepared or corrected."*

Survey results from 185 respondents further support this finding, showing that 89% of respondents were satisfied with staff responsiveness. Customers reported that their questions and complaints were addressed promptly and clearly, which contributed significantly to positive experiences during the certification process. Timely responses and adequate solutions foster a sense of security and comfort, enhancing overall customer satisfaction.

While most respondents expressed satisfaction, some noted that more detailed explanations regarding technical or procedural aspects could help reduce confusion. Nonetheless, the overall perception is that LPPOM-MUI demonstrates sufficient responsiveness to customer issues. Responsiveness not only affects satisfaction but also significantly influences customer trust, a critical factor in service relationships. When customers perceive that LPPOM-MUI staff respond quickly and effectively, they are more confident that their products are handled professionally and seriously throughout the certification process. Increased trust fosters stronger, long-term relationships between customers and the institution.

Research supports the critical role of responsiveness in building trust. (Santoso et al., 2021) state that if customers feel prioritized and attended to, they are more likely to believe that the certification process is conducted according to high standards and established procedures. Similarly,(N. Singh

et al., 2022) highlight that fast responses to customer requests or complaints are directly correlated with customer satisfaction.

Other studies, such as emphasize that rapid response to customer issues enhances satisfaction by demonstrating institutional control over service processes and effective problem management. (Jonkisz et al., 2021)add that responsiveness influences perceptions of professionalism; institutions that handle inquiries efficiently are viewed as competent and reliable. In the context of halal certification, clear and timely responses strengthen customer confidence in the certification process.

Responsiveness is also a key determinant of customer loyalty. (Jonkisz et al., 2022) show that prompt and professional handling of complaints or requests fosters customer loyalty and encourages recommendations to others. Similarly, (Elwardah et al., 2024) report that customers who are satisfied with staff responsiveness are more likely to reapply for halal certification in the future. (Widyanto & Sitohang, 2022) further note that satisfaction resulting from high responsiveness enhances loyalty, contributing to customer retention and positive word-of-mouth.

At LPPOM-MUI East Java, responsiveness includes providing rapid answers to customer inquiries, efficiently resolving complaints, and explaining complex halal certification procedures clearly. FGD participants consistently identified staff responsiveness as a major factor in service satisfaction, with one participant stating: *"I am greatly helped by staff who respond quickly to my questions. Even when technical issues arise, they respond promptly and provide adequate solutions."*

Hastuti et al., (2024) emphasize that responsiveness is a key element of service success. When customers perceive quick and accurate responses, they are more likely to trust the institution's competence, enhancing both trust and satisfaction. Survey data reinforce this, showing that 89% of respondents were satisfied with staff responsiveness, which strengthened their confidence in LPPOM-MUI.

Staff responsiveness at LPPOM-MUI East Java significantly influences service quality. Timely and precise responses to inquiries and complaints not only enhance customer satisfaction but also build trust and loyalty. While most customers express satisfaction, improving detailed explanations for complex certification processes could further enhance service quality. By continuously strengthening responsiveness, LPPOM-MUI East Java can improve overall service quality, reinforce long-term customer relationships, and maintain its position as a leading halal certification institution in Indonesia.

The Influence of Assurance on Service Quality at LPPOM-MUI East Java Region

In service management, assurance is a key dimension in the SERVQUAL model, referring to an institution's ability to instill confidence and provide customers with a sense of security that the services offered meet established standards and are delivered by competent staff. At LPPOM-MUI East Java, assurance encompasses staff expertise, their ability to provide clear and accurate explanations, and the halal certification process conducted according to transparent and standardized procedures. This dimension is critical, as customers seeking halal certification require certainty that their products comply with the institution's requirements.

Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and surveys involving 185 respondents indicate that assurance plays a significant role in fostering customer trust and satisfaction. Customers who are confident in staff competence and the clarity of the certification process report more positive experiences throughout the certification journey. One FGD participant stated: *"The halal certification process at LPPOM-MUI gives me a sense of security because the staff explain all procedures in detail and transparently. I feel that they truly*

understand my product and can provide a fair assessment."

While the majority of customers expressed satisfaction with the assurance provided, some respondents noted that in certain cases, further explanation regarding unsuccessful certification or reasons for product rejection would help improve understanding. Therefore, clarifying rejection reasons and providing more in-depth guidance could enhance customer satisfaction even further.

Survey results show that 92% of respondents were satisfied with the assurance provided by LPPOM-MUI East Java staff. They expressed confidence that the halal certification process followed clear standards and was managed by knowledgeable staff. Customer trust in competent staff and transparent procedures is a key factor contributing to their satisfaction with the certification process.

However, a small portion of respondents indicated that although staff possess extensive knowledge, they occasionally seek more detailed explanations regarding technical aspects of halal certification, such as auditing processes or raw material testing. This suggests that while assurance is generally adequate, there remains room for improvement in communication and providing more in-depth explanations when necessary.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of assurance in enhancing customer trust and satisfaction, (Yang et al., 2025) note in the SERVQUAL model that assurance is a critical dimension shaping customers' perceptions of service quality. Staff expertise and their ability to provide clear, accurate information significantly influence customer trust in the institution. In this context, customer confidence in LPPOM-MUI East Java increases when they perceive that staff handling halal certification are knowledgeable and adhere to proper procedures.

Kim et al., (2025) also emphasize that assurance is crucial for strengthening customer trust in service quality. When staff demonstrate high competence and provide clear information, customers feel confident that they are receiving services that meet expected quality standards. This trust is strongly correlated with customer satisfaction and loyalty toward the institution.

Patattan, (2021) in the context of healthcare services, also highlights the relevance of assurance in improving customer satisfaction. Although conducted in a different sector, these findings are highly relevant for halal certification, where customers need assurance that their products are processed by professionals who understand applicable halal standards. Assurance provides transparency, fairness, and compliance with expected standards, creating confidence in the certification process.

The importance of assurance extends beyond short-term satisfaction; it also affects customer loyalty. (J. Kim et al., 2025) indicate that trust built through assurance strengthens the relationship between customers and service providers and enhances customer loyalty. Customers who perceive that services meet high-quality standards are more likely to continue using them in the future. Similarly, (Cesariana et al., 2022) found that services backed by strong assurance lead to higher customer loyalty. At LPPOM-MUI East Java, assurance in halal certification fosters deep trust among customers, encouraging them to continue using the services and recommend the institution to peers or business partners.

Studies by (Merdin-Uygur & Ozturkcan, 2025) also demonstrate that assurance significantly influences customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Therefore, LPPOM-MUI East Java must consistently maintain and enhance assurance at every stage of the halal certification process to strengthen trust, satisfaction, and loyalty, thereby consolidating its position as a trusted, competent, and recognized halal certification institution both nationally and internationally.

The assurance provided by LPPOM-MUI East Java plays a pivotal role in enhancing

customer satisfaction and trust. Staff expertise, the ability to provide clear explanations, and a transparent halal certification process are key factors in fostering a sense of security and confidence among customers. Findings from surveys and FGDs indicate that most customers are satisfied with the assurance provided, although there remain areas for improvement, particularly in offering more detailed explanations in specific cases.

Service Quality Management of LPPOM-MUI East Java Based on the SERVQUAL Method

The SERVQUAL method is widely used to assess service quality by measuring the gap between customer expectations and their perceptions of the actual service received. The primary aim of applying the SERVQUAL method at LPPOM-MUI East Java is to understand the extent to which the services provided align with customer expectations. In this approach, service quality is evaluated across five key dimensions: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. A larger gap indicates that the service received falls short of customer expectations, whereas a smaller gap, approaching zero, suggests that service delivery closely meets customer expectations. In this study, the gap analysis revealed predominantly negative gaps across the five SERVQUAL dimensions, indicating that while customers are generally satisfied, there are areas where service delivery does not fully meet expectations.

The first dimension, Tangibles, includes physical facilities such as service offices, equipment, and office cleanliness. The results showed a notable negative gap ranging from -0.60 to -0.70, suggesting that customers expect better, more comfortable, and more organized facilities. Although the gap indicates some shortcomings, it is not excessively large, implying that LPPOM-MUI East Java has adequately fulfilled most customer expectations regarding physical facilities.

The Reliability dimension measures the institution's ability to provide timely and consistent services in accordance with established procedures. The observed gap ranged from -0.65 to -0.74, indicating a discrepancy between customer expectations and the reality of service reliability. Customers desire that halal certification processes be handled swiftly and punctually, yet some procedures take longer than expected. Despite this, the gap suggests moderate satisfaction, though there is substantial room for improvement in terms of speed and punctuality.

Responsiveness assesses the institution's ability to respond quickly and efficiently to customer inquiries and complaints. The gap for this dimension was smaller, ranging from -0.58 to -0.65, indicating that customers perceive the staff as relatively responsive. Nevertheless, there remain areas for enhancement, particularly in addressing more complex or technical issues promptly, highlighting customer expectations for faster and more effective solutions during the halal certification process.

The Assurance dimension, reflecting staff knowledge and their ability to provide clear explanations regarding certification procedures, revealed a relatively small gap between -0.43 and -0.55. This indicates that most customers are confident in staff expertise, though some customers desire additional clarification or assurance regarding certain procedures. Competent staff who provide convincing explanations contribute significantly to customer trust in the halal certification process, even though opportunities exist to enhance communication depth.

The Empathy dimension, focusing on personalized attention and concern for customer needs, showed gaps ranging from -0.50 to -0.59. Customers generally feel valued and respected during the certification process, yet there are opportunities to improve more personalized and tailored communication. LPPOM-MUI East Java demonstrates an adequate level of courtesy and friendliness, though attention to

individual customer needs could be further enhanced.

Overall, the SERVQUAL gap analysis indicates that LPPOM-MUI East Java provides reasonably good service, despite several areas needing improvement. The larger gaps in Tangibles and Reliability suggest that customers desire better facilities and more dependable service processes. Meanwhile, smaller gaps in Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy imply that customers are relatively satisfied with staff responsiveness, competence, and attention received.

Based on these findings, LPPOM-MUI East Java should focus on improving physical facilities, enhancing the reliability of halal certification processes, and further developing responsive and in-depth communication regarding existing procedures. By addressing these areas, LPPOM-MUI East Java can further increase customer satisfaction and strengthen its position as a trusted and professional halal certification institution.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that while LPPOM MUI East Java provides adequate halal certification services, several areas still require improvement to fully meet customer expectations. The SERVQUAL gap analysis revealed negative gaps across all five dimensions, with the largest gaps observed in Tangibles and Reliability. Customers highlighted the need for better physical facilities, including waiting areas, parking accessibility, and overall comfort, as well as faster and more efficient certification processes to reduce delays and enhance service reliability. In addition, although customers generally perceive the staff as responsive, competent, and empathetic, there is still room for improvement in responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Some customers expressed a need for quicker responses to inquiries and complaints, more detailed explanations in complex cases, and a more personalized approach to their specific needs. Enhancing

staff proactivity and communication can significantly improve customer trust, satisfaction, and confidence in the halal certification process. Overall, addressing these gaps by improving physical facilities, streamlining certification procedures, increasing responsiveness, and providing clearer and more transparent assurance will enhance overall service quality. Implementing these improvements will not only elevate customer satisfaction but also strengthen LPPOM MUI East Java's reputation as a trusted, professional, and leading halal certification institution in both national and international markets.

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