

### THE ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY IN IMPROVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT EAGLE DECAL MSME

<sup>\*1</sup>Amelia Trisfiani, <sup>2</sup>Hersusetyati

<sup>\*1,2</sup>Universitas Sangga Buana YPKP

Email: <sup>\*1,2</sup>ameliatrisfiani28@gmail.com

#### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction at Eagle Decal, a Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) specializing in custom motorcycle decal stickers in Bandung Regency, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through direct observation, semi-structured interviews with the business owner, customer service staff, and three customers, documentation, and internal customer satisfaction surveys. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by source and methodological triangulation. The findings indicate that service quality was generally adequate across several dimensions. Reliability was reflected in order accuracy and timely completion, while assurance was demonstrated through secure transactions and customers' trust in online purchasing processes. Empathy was also relatively strong, particularly through personalized assistance concerning designs, materials, and pricing. However, responsiveness emerged as the weakest service-quality dimension, with customer satisfaction below 50%, primarily due to delayed responses to customer inquiries and chats. Documentation also showed that sales declined from IDR 715 million in 2021 to IDR 355 million in 2022, although the qualitative evidence does not establish a direct causal relationship between service quality and the decline. The study concludes that improving responsiveness through customer-service training, standardized operating procedures, and optimized digital communication is essential for strengthening customer satisfaction and supporting MSME business sustainability.

**Keywords:** service quality, customer satisfaction, responsiveness, MSMEs, creative industry, Eagle Decal, Bandung Regency

#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran kualitas layanan dalam membentuk kepuasan pelanggan di Eagle Decal, sebuah Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) yang berspesialisasi dalam stiker decal motor custom di Kabupaten Bandung, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi langsung, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan pemilik usaha, staf layanan pelanggan, dan tiga pelanggan, dokumentasi, serta survei kepuasan pelanggan internal. Data dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, yang didukung oleh triangulasi sumber dan metodologi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kualitas layanan secara umum memadai di beberapa dimensi. Keandalan tercermin dalam akurasi pesanan dan penyelesaian tepat waktu, sementara jaminan ditunjukkan melalui transaksi yang aman dan kepercayaan pelanggan terhadap proses pembelian daring. Empati juga relatif kuat, terutama melalui bantuan yang dipersonalisasi terkait desain, bahan, dan harga. Namun, responsivitas muncul sebagai dimensi kualitas layanan yang paling lemah, dengan kepuasan pelanggan di bawah 50%, terutama disebabkan oleh keterlambatan respons terhadap pertanyaan dan obrolan pelanggan. Dokumentasi juga menunjukkan bahwa penjualan menurun dari Rp 715 juta pada tahun 2021 menjadi Rp 355 juta pada tahun 2022, meskipun bukti kualitatif tidak menunjukkan adanya hubungan sebab-akibat langsung antara kualitas layanan dan penurunan tersebut. Studi ini

menyimpulkan bahwa meningkatkan responsivitas melalui pelatihan layanan pelanggan, prosedur operasional standar, dan komunikasi digital yang dioptimalkan sangat penting untuk memperkuat kepuasan pelanggan dan mendukung keberlanjutan bisnis UMKM.

**Kata kunci:** kualitas layanan, kepuasan pelanggan, responsivitas, UMKM, industri kreatif, Eagle Decal, Kabupaten Bandung

## Introduction

The development of the digital economy and the intensifying business competition have transformed the way companies build and maintain relationships with customers. Customers no longer evaluate a product solely based on its price and physical characteristics, but also based on the overall experience they gain throughout the process—from information search and consultation to ordering, production, and transaction completion. Under these conditions, service quality has become one of the strategic determinants in building *customer satisfaction*, retaining customers, and creating a competitive advantage. Recent empirical literature indicates that service quality remains a crucial construct in explaining customer satisfaction, both in service-oriented companies and in businesses offering products accompanied by personalized services. For example, research by Gonu et al. (2023) demonstrates a strong correlation between customer orientation, service quality, and customer satisfaction, while a study by Junaidi et al. (2023) confirms that service quality is a crucial element in shaping customer satisfaction amid increasingly intense business competition.

From the customer's perspective, service quality is essentially an evaluation of the extent to which the service received meets or exceeds expectations. The SERVQUAL model, which remains widely used in contemporary research, operationalizes service quality through the dimensions of *tangibles*, *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *assurance*, and *empathy*. A study by Slamet and Sulistiyowati (2022) shows that these five dimensions remain relevant for identifying service gaps and determining which attributes should be prioritized in service improvements. More recent findings also indicate that the dimensions of service quality do not always contribute equally to satisfaction. Widagdo et al. (2024), for example, found that *reliability* and *empathy* influence customer satisfaction, while other dimensions exhibit a more contextual influence. These findings indicate that the impact of service quality must be understood based on industry characteristics, patterns of customer interaction, and the nature of the services provided.

One dimension that is becoming increasingly important in a rapidly changing business environment is responsiveness—that is, a company's ability to respond quickly, accurately, and appropriately to customer needs, questions, requests, and complaints. Responsiveness is becoming increasingly strategic because customers today have high expectations regarding the speed of communication, particularly when transactions are conducted through digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, online marketplaces, and other communication platforms. Research by Ananda and Widagda (2024) shows that responsiveness has a positive and significant effect on

customer satisfaction and is further associated with repurchase intent. These findings indicate that response speed is not merely an operational aspect but can serve as a crucial mechanism linking service experience to customer behavior.

The relevance of responsiveness becomes even clearer in the context of businesses that produce products based on customer demand (*custom-made products*). Unlike mass-produced goods, which generally have standard specifications, custom products require intensive interaction between the seller and the customer. Customers must convey their preferences, choose designs, select materials, confirm sizes, discuss prices, and make revisions before the product is manufactured. Therefore, the quality of interaction and the speed of response can determine whether customers feel understood, well-served, and assured throughout the transaction process. In the context of MSMEs, this situation becomes even more complex because limitations in human resources, capital, information systems, and the standardization of service processes can cause the quality of responses to depend heavily on the individual handling the customer.

This urgency becomes even more critical because Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) face different competitive pressures compared to large corporations. MSMEs generally have more limited resources, so their ability to provide standardized service systems is not always on par with that of large corporations. However, their proximity to customers actually presents an opportunity for MSMEs to create a more personalized service experience. Research by Hana et al. (2022) on digital-based MSMEs shows that the SERVQUAL dimensions—including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles—can be used to evaluate the customer experience and determine priorities for service improvement. Meanwhile, Saad et al. (2022) demonstrated that responsiveness and quality are relevant to the competitiveness and customer loyalty of MSMEs, particularly when businesses face environmental changes and resource constraints.

More recent empirical evidence further strengthens the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction within the MSME context. Research by Anam and Mujib (2023) reveals a relationship between service quality, store image, customer satisfaction, and loyalty toward MSME products. Hudaya (2022) also demonstrates that product quality and service quality influence customer satisfaction and repurchase intent among MSMEs. Meanwhile, a study by Judijanto et al. (2023) reveals that service quality is one of the factors that must be considered alongside digital marketing strategies and organizational factors in shaping customer satisfaction among MSMEs in Indonesia. Thus, service quality cannot be viewed merely as a supporting function but as an integral part of MSMEs' competitive strategy.

However, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in MSMEs is not always homogeneous. The study by Nafisah et al. (2024) specifically shows that responsiveness and *perceived service quality* are important factors in shaping customer satisfaction at batik MSMEs.

Responsiveness in this study is understood as a business's ability to respond to customer needs and complaints quickly and appropriately. These findings have conceptual relevance for custom-product-based MSMEs because the service process requires two-way communication and rapid responses. In custom businesses, delays in responding can lead to uncertainty regarding design, price, production time, or order completion, thereby potentially reducing customer satisfaction.

Digital advancements have also expanded the scope of this issue. Consumers are increasingly accustomed to obtaining information and services quickly through digital channels. Research by Rosadi and Alfani (2023) indicates that information quality and service quality together make a strong contribution to consumer satisfaction in marketplace environments. Pradnyana (2023) also found that service quality and *e-service quality* positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction. Thus, in the contemporary business environment, service quality is not only related to face-to-face interactions but also encompasses the speed and consistency of responses through digital channels.

The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction also has implications for customer behavior after a transaction. Customer satisfaction can serve as the foundation for loyalty, *repurchase intention*, and positive recommendations. Soeharso's (2024) study shows that customer satisfaction acts as a mediator between service quality and repurchase intention in the context of online shopping. Similarly, research by Phan Thi Hang and Nguyen Kim Quoc Trung (2024) on SMEs shows that the five dimensions of service quality—*tangibility*, *reliability*, *assurance*, *responsiveness*, and *empathy*—have a positive effect on satisfaction, which in turn is linked to customer loyalty. This evidence demonstrates that investing in service quality can yield broader strategic consequences than simply increasing satisfaction for a single transaction.

This phenomenon is particularly relevant to Eagle Decal, an MSME in Bandung Regency that specializes in the production of *custom motorcycle decal stickers*. Established in 2018, Eagle Decal offers products that allow customers to customize designs according to their preferences, along with consultation services regarding design, materials, pricing, and product specifications. These business characteristics make service interactions an integral part of the value creation process. Products are not merely manufactured and sold but are developed through a process of communication between customers and the company. Therefore, the company's ability to understand customer needs, provide accurate information, respond quickly to inquiries, and handle revisions and complaints appropriately is a crucial part of the customer experience.

The empirical challenges at Eagle Decal highlight the urgency of this research. The company's internal data shows that revenue declined from Rp715,000,000 in 2021 to Rp355,000,000 in 2022, a decrease of approximately 50.35%. At the same time, an internal survey revealed that customer satisfaction with the speed of service response was below 50%. Although the decline in sales cannot automatically be attributed solely to service quality, this pattern serves as an important *empirical*

*signal* for investigating whether service quality—particularly responsiveness—is associated with customer satisfaction. This study therefore does not treat the decline in sales as causal evidence but rather as a business phenomenon that reinforces the need to empirically test the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

The context of Eagle Decal also differs from most previous studies. Research on service quality and customer satisfaction has largely been conducted in the banking, telecommunications, transportation, restaurant, hospitality, marketplace, and public service sectors. The study by Widagdo et al. (2024), for example, focused on IndiHome customers, while Rundengan et al. (2024) examined Pegadaian's services. Other studies have addressed hospitality, marketplaces, restaurants, and financial services. Meanwhile, research specifically examining service quality in creative industry MSMEs with products that are fully customized based on customer preferences remains relatively limited. In fact, the characteristics of *custom products* result in distinct service processes because purchasing decisions heavily depend on consultation, communication, response speed, and the company's ability to translate customer needs into tangible products.

This research gap is further reinforced by literature findings indicating that service quality measurements must account for contextual characteristics. Supriyati and Wiyatno (2023) emphasize the importance of measuring service quality and customer satisfaction in the SME sector as a foundation for identifying weaknesses and developing improvement strategies. Meanwhile, Amalia and Shafira (2025), through a literature review on Indonesian MSMEs, demonstrate that service quality and customer satisfaction are key components in building loyalty; however, there remains room to further explore the configuration of factors shaping the customer experience across different MSME contexts.

Recent research also indicates that service quality does not act in isolation when it comes to building satisfaction. Simarmata et al. (2025) found that service quality and the ease of digital payments influence customer satisfaction among MSME customers, with customer trust serving as a mediating mechanism. Kasih and Ardyan (2025) also demonstrated that service quality influences customer satisfaction and customer trust, while customer trust, in turn, is associated with customer satisfaction. These findings indicate a shift in research from merely testing direct relationships toward a more contextual understanding of how service quality generates valuable customer experiences.

Based on this *research gap*, this study offers three main contributions. First, the study expands the examination of service quality by situating it within the context of custom-product-based creative industry MSMEs, which feature more intensive customer interactions compared to standard products. Second, the study pays special attention to responsiveness as a strategic dimension of service quality, particularly in the context of consultation needs, design changes, customer inquiries, and complaint handling. Third, the study links theoretical issues to concrete business challenges at Eagle Decal,

including limited human resources, the use of third parties (*makloon*) in production, limited customer service training, and suboptimal standardization of service processes.

Thus, this study not only seeks to answer whether service quality influences customer satisfaction but also to identify the most critical service dimensions to improve in the context of custom-product MSMEs. This approach is important because strategies for improving service quality in MSMEs cannot fully adopt the practices of large corporations. Resource constraints require MSMEs to prioritize service aspects that have the greatest *customer impact*. In the context of Eagle Decal, responsiveness is a strategic priority because customers require certainty and communication throughout the entire process—from design through production.

Based on this rationale, this study aims to analyze the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction at Eagle Decal, a creative industry MSME in Bandung Regency. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) analyze the state of service quality provided by Eagle Decal based on customer perceptions; (2) identify the level of customer satisfaction at Eagle Decal; and (3) analyze the contribution of service quality—particularly responsiveness—to customer satisfaction. The research findings are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of service quality studies in custom-product-based MSMEs while also offering practical implications for MSME owners and managers in designing customer service training, developing *standard operating procedures* (SOPs), improving digital communication mechanisms, and enhancing the speed and accuracy of customer responses.

## **Research Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine how service quality contributes to customer satisfaction in a Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) operating in the creative custom-product sector. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand service experiences, customer perceptions, interaction patterns, and operational challenges from the perspectives of individuals directly involved in the service process. Rather than measuring service quality through numerical indicators, the study explored how service quality was experienced and interpreted by the business owner, customer service personnel, and customers.

The study was conducted at Eagle Decal, an MSME specializing in custom motorcycle decal stickers, located in Cinunuk Village, Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia. Eagle Decal was selected as the research site because the business had experienced a substantial decline in sales and indications of low customer satisfaction, particularly concerning the responsiveness of customer service. The case therefore provided a relevant empirical setting for examining the relationship between service delivery practices and customer satisfaction in a small-scale creative business. The

research was guided by five dimensions of service quality—reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles—while customer satisfaction was examined through customers' experiences and evaluations of the services received. Particular analytical attention was given to responsiveness because preliminary evidence indicated that response speed represented one of the most significant service-related problems experienced by the business.

### **Research Setting and Case Selection**

Eagle Decal was established in 2018 and provides customized motorcycle decal products based on individual customer preferences. The service process involves customer consultation, design selection or customization, material selection, price negotiation, and production coordination. The business context is characterized by relatively limited human resources and reliance on third-party production (makloon) for certain production activities. The selection of Eagle Decal followed a purposive case-selection strategy. The case was considered information-rich because it exhibited a clear discrepancy between the potential of its customized products and the observed decline in sales and customer satisfaction. Company records indicated that revenue declined from approximately IDR 715 million in 2021 to IDR 355 million in 2022. In addition, an internal customer survey indicated that satisfaction with customer-service response speed was below 50%. These conditions provided an empirical basis for investigating how service quality was implemented in daily business operations and how customers perceived the resulting service experience.

### **Participants and Informant Selection**

The study involved five key informants, consisting of the business owner, one customer service staff member, and three customers who had direct experience with Eagle Decal's products and services. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, whereby participants were intentionally selected because of their direct knowledge and experience relevant to the research questions. The business owner was selected because of his/her knowledge of organizational policies, operational procedures, sales performance, customer-service practices, and business challenges. The customer service staff member was included because of direct involvement in customer communication and service delivery. The three customers were selected because they had firsthand experience interacting with Eagle Decal and could provide experiential accounts of service quality and satisfaction. The use of multiple informant categories enabled the study to compare organizational and customer perspectives rather than relying exclusively on management accounts. This approach was particularly important for identifying potential discrepancies between intended service practices and customers' actual experiences.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

The combination of these techniques was intended to generate complementary evidence and strengthen the credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation. First, observation was conducted during the researcher's internship period and through direct visits to Eagle Decal. Observation focused on naturally occurring service activities, particularly customer communication, response patterns, consultation processes, coordination between customer service and production, and the general interaction between employees and customers. Field observations were documented systematically to capture behaviors and operational conditions that might not be fully expressed during interviews.

Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the five informants. The interview protocol was organized around the five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Questions also addressed customers' experiences, expectations, satisfaction, complaints, communication processes, and perceived weaknesses in service delivery. For the owner and customer service staff, interviews additionally explored operational constraints, human-resource limitations, customer-service practices, and challenges associated with third-party production. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while providing sufficient flexibility to explore emerging issues and informant-specific experiences.

Third, documentation was used to complement observational and interview data. Relevant documents included internal customer-survey results, sales records for 2020–2022, organizational structure, and other company documents related to service operations. Documentary evidence was used primarily to contextualize the qualitative accounts and identify consistencies or discrepancies between reported perceptions and available organizational records.

### **Research Instrument and Analytical Framework**

In qualitative research, the researcher served as the primary research instrument, while an interview guide, observation notes, and document-review framework were used as supporting instruments. The analytical framework was derived from the five service-quality dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Customer satisfaction was examined through customers' evaluations of their service experiences, including whether the services provided were perceived as meeting their expectations and needs. The framework was not used as a rigid coding structure that restricted the emergence of new findings. Instead, the five dimensions functioned as sensitizing concepts for organizing the initial analysis, while the researchers remained open to themes emerging inductively from participants' accounts and field observations. This approach enabled the study to examine both theoretically anticipated service-quality dimensions and context-specific problems encountered by Eagle Decal.



## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed an iterative qualitative process based on the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification described by Sugiyono (2022). The analysis began immediately after data collection and was conducted iteratively rather than treating data collection and analysis as completely separate stages. During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation records, and documentary materials were reviewed to identify information relevant to the research questions. Meaningful statements were coded and grouped according to emerging issues, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles, customer satisfaction, communication barriers, response delays, consistency of service, and operational constraints.

The second stage involved data display, in which the coded information was organized into thematic categories and comparative matrices. The analysis compared information obtained from the owner, customer service staff, and customers. Documentary and observational evidence were subsequently used to contextualize and corroborate the interview findings. The final stage involved conclusion drawing and verification. Themes were examined across data sources to identify recurring patterns, relationships, and contradictions. Particular attention was given to whether perceived weaknesses in service quality—especially responsiveness—were consistently reflected across interviews, observations, and company documentation. Conclusions were therefore not based on a single informant's statement but on patterns supported by multiple sources of evidence.

## **Trustworthiness and Data Validation**

To enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, the study employed triangulation and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the business owner, customer service staff, and customers. Methodological triangulation was achieved by comparing evidence from interviews, observations, and documentary records. The researcher also conducted member checking by returning relevant interpretations to informants to confirm whether the findings accurately represented their experiences and perspectives. Where discrepancies emerged, the researcher revisited the original interview statements, observation records, and supporting documents before establishing the final interpretation. These procedures were particularly important because perceptions of service quality can differ between service providers and customers. Comparing these perspectives allowed the study to identify not only areas of agreement but also potential gaps between the **company's intended service practices and customers' experienced service quality**.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The research adhered to fundamental principles of qualitative research ethics, including voluntary participation, informed participation, confidentiality, and responsible use of information.

Informants were informed about the purpose and scope of the research and their role as participants. Information obtained through interviews and observations was used exclusively for research purposes. The identity of individual informants was not disclosed in reporting the findings, and the analysis focused on service processes and organizational phenomena rather than evaluating individual employees.

### **Analytical Benchmark**

The primary analytical benchmark was the alignment between the five dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction. The analysis examined how reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles were manifested in Eagle Decal's service processes and how customers interpreted these experiences. Particular emphasis was placed on responsiveness, defined in this study as the ability of the business to respond promptly and appropriately to customer inquiries, requests, and complaints. This dimension was examined in relation to communication delays, customer-service availability, follow-up practices, and the ability of staff to provide timely information regarding designs, materials, prices, and production.

The analytical framework consequently allowed the study to move beyond a general assessment of whether customers were satisfied and instead explain why particular service practices generated satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The analysis also considered organizational factors—including limited human resources, customer-service training, standard operating procedures, and reliance on third-party production—that potentially shaped the consistency and responsiveness of service delivery. Overall, the methodological design positioned Eagle Decal as an information-rich qualitative case through which the study could explain the mechanisms connecting service-quality practices with customer satisfaction in an MSME operating within the creative custom-product industry. This design is particularly relevant because service quality in such businesses is shaped not only by the final product but also by consultation, communication, responsiveness, customization, and the consistency of interactions throughout the customer journey.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Overview of the Findings**

The findings indicate that the service quality of Eagle Decal was generally perceived positively across four of the five dimensions examined: tangibles, reliability, assurance, and empathy. However, responsiveness emerged as the most critical weakness in the service delivery process. This pattern was consistently identified through observations, interviews, internal customer-survey results, and company documentation. The qualitative evidence suggests an important distinction between the quality of the product and the quality of the customer interaction process. Eagle Decal was generally able to deliver customized products according to customer specifications and within the agreed production period. Customers also perceived the transaction and payment processes as secure and

appreciated the assistance provided during design and material selection. Nevertheless, delays in responding to customer inquiries created friction during the ordering process. Thus, the central service-quality problem was not primarily the inability to deliver the product, but the timeliness and consistency of communication before and during the transaction.

This finding becomes particularly important when considered alongside the company's sales trajectory. Although sales increased substantially from 2020 to 2021, the company experienced a marked decline in 2022. The qualitative evidence does not establish responsiveness as the sole cause of this decline; however, the convergence between the low responsiveness rating, customer dissatisfaction, and declining sales identifies responsiveness as an important area requiring managerial attention.

### **Tangibles: Adequate Physical Evidence with Room for Improvement**

The findings indicate that the tangibles dimension was relatively adequate. Direct observations showed that the Eagle Decal store was generally clean, orderly, and sufficiently maintained to support customer interactions. Products were packaged appropriately and presented in a visually attractive manner. These physical attributes contributed to a positive first impression and supported customers' perceptions of professionalism. However, the physical presentation was not yet fully optimized. In particular, the arrangement of product displays could be improved to make product categories, design examples, and material alternatives easier for customers to identify. This finding indicates that tangible quality at Eagle Decal is not a major source of dissatisfaction but represents an opportunity to strengthen the overall customer experience.

The finding also suggests that tangibles operate as a supporting rather than dominant dimension in the Eagle Decal case. Customers appeared to place greater emphasis on the interaction process, particularly communication and response speed, than on the physical appearance of the store. This distinction is important for a custom-product MSME because customers require consultation before making purchasing decisions. Consequently, physical improvements alone are unlikely to address the company's principal service-quality challenge.

### **Reliability: Consistent Fulfilment of Customer Expectations**

Reliability emerged as one of the stronger dimensions of Eagle Decal's service quality. Observational and interview evidence indicated that orders were generally completed within two to three days, consistent with the schedule communicated to customers. Customers also reported that the finished products were generally aligned with their specifications. The reliability of delivery was further supported by the company's use of the Shopee marketplace, which provided an established mechanism for transaction processing and order delivery. Customers perceived the delivery process as relatively predictable, reducing uncertainty regarding whether their orders would arrive as expected.

The evidence therefore suggests that Eagle Decal had developed an adequate operational capacity to fulfil orders once customers had completed the purchasing process. This is an important finding because it demonstrates that the company's service-quality problem was not uniformly distributed across the customer journey. Rather, reliability was relatively strong after an order had been confirmed, while communication responsiveness was weaker before and during order confirmation. This distinction provides a more nuanced interpretation of service quality than an aggregated assessment would provide. The company can deliver products relatively consistently, but delays in customer communication may create dissatisfaction before the reliability of the final product can be experienced.

### **Responsiveness: The Principal Service-Quality Deficiency**

Among the five dimensions, responsiveness was consistently identified as the weakest aspect of Eagle Decal's service quality. Although customer service personnel were described as polite, friendly, and willing to assist customers, their responses to chats and inquiries were frequently delayed. The internal customer-survey findings reinforced this qualitative evidence, with customer satisfaction regarding responsiveness recorded at below 50%. The consistency between the survey findings and interview accounts provides strong evidence that response time represents a substantive service-quality problem rather than an isolated customer complaint.

The problem was particularly relevant because Eagle Decal operates in a customized-product market. Customers frequently require clarification concerning design specifications, materials, prices, production schedules, and customization options before completing an order. Consequently, delayed responses can interrupt the customer's decision-making process and potentially create uncertainty regarding the status of the transaction. The findings further indicate that responsiveness should be understood not simply as speed of replying, but as the organization's capacity to maintain continuity in customer communication. A delayed response can affect the customer's perception of attentiveness, professionalism, and reliability, even when the final product is delivered correctly.

The qualitative evidence therefore identifies responsiveness as the most strategically important service-quality dimension for improvement at Eagle Decal. Importantly, however, the data do not demonstrate that responsiveness alone caused the company's sales decline. Instead, the findings indicate that weak responsiveness coexisted with declining customer satisfaction and declining sales, suggesting an important area for further managerial intervention and future empirical testing.

### **Assurance: Trust in Transactions and Service Security**

The assurance dimension was evaluated positively by customers. Customers reported feeling relatively secure when conducting transactions through online platforms. Payment mechanisms and delivery arrangements were perceived as sufficiently reliable, reducing concerns regarding transaction security. The use of established online marketplace infrastructure also contributed to

customer confidence. Customers were able to complete transactions through familiar payment and delivery mechanisms rather than relying exclusively on informal payment arrangements.

This finding suggests that Eagle Decal has successfully established a basic level of transactional trust. Customers did not identify payment or delivery security as major barriers to purchasing. Therefore, improving customer satisfaction does not necessarily require substantial changes to the company's transaction infrastructure. Instead, managerial attention can be directed toward the weaker dimensions, particularly responsiveness. The positive assessment of assurance is also significant because trust is particularly important for customized products. Customers often make purchasing decisions before physically seeing the final product. Confidence in the seller's transaction process therefore becomes an important component of perceived service quality.

#### **Empathy: Personalized Interaction as a Service Strength**

The findings show that empathy represented another relative strength of Eagle Decal's service delivery. Customer service personnel provided explanations concerning design alternatives, materials, prices, and customization options. Customers reported feeling appreciated and understood during these interactions. This finding is particularly relevant to Eagle Decal's business model because its products are customized according to individual customer preferences. Unlike standardized products, custom decals require a degree of consultation and personalization. Customers therefore expect the seller to understand their preferences and translate them into an appropriate product specification.

The evidence indicates that Eagle Decal's staff were capable of providing this personalized interaction once communication had been established. Thus, the problem is not fundamentally a lack of willingness to understand customers. Rather, the principal challenge concerns how quickly and consistently that interaction is initiated and maintained. This creates an important contrast between empathy and responsiveness. Eagle Decal demonstrates the capacity for customer-oriented interaction, but delays in initiating communication can prevent customers from experiencing that strength consistently. In practical terms, the company may possess the quality of interaction required for customer satisfaction but lack the speed of interaction necessary to deliver that quality consistently.

#### **Sales Performance: Evidence of a Substantial Business Decline**

Documentary analysis revealed substantial changes in Eagle Decal's sales performance between 2020 and 2022.

**Table 1.** Sales Performance of Eagle Decal, 2020–2022

| YEAR | SALES (IDR) | CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR |
|------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 2020 | 452,000,000 | —                         |

|             |             |        |
|-------------|-------------|--------|
| <b>2021</b> | 715,000,000 | +58.2% |
| <b>2022</b> | 355,000,000 | –50.3% |

Source: Eagle Decal company documentation, 2026.

The data demonstrate two contrasting phases. First, sales increased from IDR 452 million in 2020 to IDR 715 million in 2021, representing an increase of approximately 58.2%. Second, sales subsequently declined to IDR 355 million in 2022, representing a reduction of approximately 50.3% compared with 2021. The magnitude of this decline provides important contextual evidence for interpreting the service-quality findings. The sales reduction occurred in the same broader period in which internal customer-survey evidence identified dissatisfaction with responsiveness. Nevertheless, because the study employed a qualitative case design and did not statistically model sales determinants, the sales decline should not be interpreted as evidence that service responsiveness independently caused the decline. Instead, the findings suggest a potentially meaningful alignment between service-quality weaknesses and business-performance deterioration. This alignment warrants attention because customer dissatisfaction can become commercially consequential when it affects repeat purchasing, recommendations, or customers' willingness to continue interacting with the business.

### Customer Satisfaction Across Service-Quality Dimensions

The internal customer survey provided additional evidence regarding customers' perceptions of Eagle Decal's service quality. Overall, reliability, assurance, and empathy received relatively positive assessments, while responsiveness obtained the lowest level of satisfaction, with the reported satisfaction level remaining below 50%.

**Table 2.** Summary of Customer Satisfaction by Service-Quality Dimension

| <b>SERVICE-QUALITY<br/>DIMENSION</b> | <b>MAIN<br/>FINDING</b>       | <b>INTERPRETATION</b>                                                             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TANGIBLES</b>                     | Generally positive            | Store and product presentation were adequate, although displays could be improved |
| <b>RELIABILITY</b>                   | Positive                      | Orders generally fulfilled within 2–3 days and according to specifications        |
| <b>RESPONSIVENESS</b>                | <b>Below 50% satisfaction</b> | <b>Principal weakness; delayed responses to customer inquiries</b>                |
| <b>ASSURANCE</b>                     | Positive                      | Customers felt secure regarding payment and delivery                              |
| <b>EMPATHY</b>                       | Positive                      | Customers felt understood and received detailed                                   |

*Source: Observation, interviews, documentation, and Eagle Decal internal customer survey.*

The convergence of these findings is particularly important. The same dimension identified as problematic through direct observation and interviews—responsiveness—was also the dimension receiving the lowest customer-satisfaction assessment. This convergence strengthens the credibility of the finding because it is supported by multiple forms of evidence.

### **Cross-Source Synthesis of the Findings**

The triangulated findings reveal a distinct pattern in Eagle Decal's customer-service process. The company performs relatively well in delivering the product, securing transactions, and providing personalized assistance, but experiences difficulties in responding to customers promptly.

The findings can therefore be conceptualized as a customer-service sequence:

Customer inquiry → response/communication → consultation → order confirmation → production → delivery.

Eagle Decal's strongest performance appears to occur from order confirmation through delivery, particularly in reliability and transaction assurance. The critical weakness occurs at the beginning of the customer journey, particularly between the initial inquiry and effective communication with customer service. This pattern has an important managerial implication. Improving the final product alone may not sufficiently improve customer satisfaction if customers experience delays before they can place an order. Similarly, increasing customer-service friendliness without improving response speed may have limited effectiveness. The findings indicate that Eagle Decal requires a more integrated approach combining responsiveness, communication consistency, and existing strengths in empathy and reliability.

### **Key Findings**

Overall, the qualitative evidence generates four principal findings. First, Eagle Decal's service quality is not uniformly weak; rather, four dimensions—tangibles, reliability, assurance, and empathy—are relatively adequate. Second, responsiveness is the most salient service-quality deficiency, as evidenced consistently by observations, interviews, and internal survey results. Third, the company's substantial sales decline from IDR 715 million in 2021 to IDR 355 million in 2022 occurred alongside low customer satisfaction regarding responsiveness, although the qualitative design does not establish a direct causal relationship. Fourth, the contrast between strong empathy and weak responsiveness indicates that Eagle Decal's primary challenge is not an absence of customer orientation but an inability to deliver customer-oriented communication with sufficient speed and consistency.

Taken together, these findings indicate that responsiveness constitutes the critical leverage point for improving Eagle Decal's customer experience. The company already possesses several

service capabilities that can serve as organizational strengths—particularly reliable fulfilment, secure transactions, and personalized assistance. Consequently, service improvement should focus on strengthening the communication process through faster response mechanisms, clearer service procedures, and greater consistency in handling customer inquiries. This interpretation provides a more precise empirical explanation of Eagle Decal's service-quality challenge than treating customer satisfaction as a general consequence of overall service quality.

## **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that service quality constitutes an important component of the customer experience at Eagle Decal, although its contribution is not uniform across the five SERVQUAL dimensions. The evidence from observation, interviews, documentation, and the internal customer survey indicates that reliability, assurance, and empathy were relatively well established, whereas responsiveness represented the most salient weakness, with customer satisfaction with this dimension remaining below 50%. This pattern suggests that the principal challenge facing Eagle Decal is not the fundamental ability to produce and deliver customized decal products, but the consistency and timeliness of interactions throughout the customer journey. Such a finding is consistent with contemporary service-quality research showing that customer evaluations increasingly depend not only on the final service outcome but also on the quality, convenience, speed, and continuity of interactions preceding and accompanying the transaction (Tuncer et al., 2021; Kermanshachi et al., 2022). In retail contexts, service attributes such as reliability, error-free transactions, accessibility, and availability of assistance have been shown to play different roles in generating satisfaction, indicating that service quality should be interpreted as a multidimensional construct rather than as a single aggregate attribute.

The relatively strong reliability dimension at Eagle Decal provides an important indication that the business has established a reasonably effective order-fulfilment process. Orders were generally completed within two to three days, and customers reported that the products delivered were largely consistent with their specifications. This finding is theoretically significant because reliability represents the organization's ability to fulfil promises accurately and consistently. Contemporary evidence from service and logistics research similarly demonstrates that fulfilment accuracy and timeliness are central components of customer satisfaction. In logistics services, service quality has been found to influence customer satisfaction and subsequent reuse intention, while timely delivery and reliable service processes contribute to positive evaluations of the service provider (Lin et al., 2023). Earlier evidence from home-delivery services also indicates that service quality, perceived value, and trust interact in shaping customer satisfaction, particularly when customers depend on the provider to deliver a promised outcome within an expected time frame. The Eagle Decal findings therefore indicate that its production and delivery processes constitute an organizational strength that



should be preserved while attention is redirected toward the weaker communication component.

The assurance dimension was also perceived positively. Customers felt relatively secure when conducting transactions through online platforms, particularly regarding payment and delivery arrangements. This finding indicates that Eagle Decal has succeeded in establishing a minimum level of transactional trust despite operating as a relatively small business. Assurance becomes particularly important in customized-product businesses because customers often make purchasing decisions before physically observing the final product. Consequently, confidence in the seller, transaction mechanism, and delivery process reduces perceived purchasing risk. This interpretation is supported by research demonstrating that service quality and trust are interconnected in shaping customer satisfaction and subsequent behavioural outcomes. Kasih and Ardyan (2025), for example, found that service quality positively affects customer satisfaction and customer trust, while trust itself contributes positively to satisfaction. Similarly, research on home-delivery services demonstrates that trust and perceived value strengthen the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Thus, Eagle Decal's relatively strong assurance dimension represents an important relational asset that can support customer retention if accompanied by improvements in communication responsiveness.

The positive finding concerning empathy is equally important because Eagle Decal operates in a customized creative-product market. Customers reported receiving explanations regarding designs, materials, and prices and indicated that they felt understood and appreciated by customer-service personnel. This suggests that the business has a customer-oriented service culture at the interpersonal level. Contemporary research emphasizes that service quality increasingly involves the quality of interaction between employees and customers rather than merely the technical delivery of a product. Kermanshachi et al. (2022), for example, demonstrate that customer satisfaction in retail environments depends on both physical and interpersonal service attributes, while Tuncer et al. (2021) show that employee service quality, timeliness, facility conditions, and other dimensions collectively shape satisfaction and behavioural intentions. In Eagle Decal, empathy therefore constitutes a foundation upon which stronger customer relationships can be built. The managerial challenge is to ensure that this positive interpersonal quality is delivered consistently and without excessive delay.

The most consequential finding concerns responsiveness, which emerged as the weakest service-quality dimension and recorded customer satisfaction below 50%. Customers particularly identified delayed responses to chats and inquiries as a source of dissatisfaction. This finding deserves particular attention because Eagle Decal's business model involves substantial customer consultation before an order can be finalized. Customers may need information about design feasibility, material alternatives, prices, production schedules, and customization options. Consequently, responsiveness is not a peripheral attribute but an operational gateway through which customers access the other

dimensions of service quality. If the initial response is delayed, customers may not reach the stages at which reliability, assurance, and empathy can be experienced. This interpretation is consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of responsiveness and service accessibility in contemporary customer experiences. Research on online retail service quality identifies reliability, ease of use, customer-friendly policies, problem handling, and security as particularly important determinants of customer satisfaction, demonstrating that digital interaction has become an integral part of perceived service quality rather than merely a communication channel. Research specifically examining MSMEs in the Indonesian batik sector likewise places responsiveness at the centre of the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction, reinforcing the relevance of responsiveness within small-business contexts.

The importance of responsiveness is further strengthened by the internal customer-survey evidence, which converges with the interview and observational findings. Methodological triangulation shows that the problem was not identified through a single data source. Customers reported dissatisfaction with response speed, the researcher observed delays in customer communication, and the internal survey produced a responsiveness satisfaction level below 50%. This convergence increases the credibility of the finding and suggests that responsiveness represents a systemic service-process issue rather than an isolated complaint. Recent research using SERVQUAL and related approaches similarly demonstrates that service dimensions can have unequal effects on satisfaction. For example, a 2025 study applying SERVQUAL and the Customer Satisfaction Index found that responsiveness represented the largest service-quality gap and recommended improvements in service speed and responsiveness. This similarity is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that responsiveness can remain a critical weakness even when other dimensions of service quality are comparatively satisfactory.

The Eagle Decal findings also contribute to the debate concerning whether all SERVQUAL dimensions should be interpreted with equal strategic importance. The present case demonstrates that a business may perform adequately in reliability, assurance, empathy, and physical presentation while still experiencing customer dissatisfaction because one critical interactional dimension remains weak. This is consistent with evidence that different service attributes can occupy different positions in customers' satisfaction structures. Kermanshachi et al. (2022), using the Kano model, found that some service attributes function as basic requirements, whereas others generate proportional increases in satisfaction when improved. Likewise, Gopi and Samat (2020) found that tangibles, reliability, and assurance were significant predictors of customer satisfaction in food-truck services, while customer satisfaction subsequently had a significant relationship with loyalty. These findings suggest that service-quality management should prioritize the dimensions representing the greatest customer pain points rather than allocating identical resources to every dimension.

The relationship between service quality and customer loyalty is also relevant to interpreting the Eagle Decal case. Although the present study did not quantitatively test loyalty as a dependent variable, the substantial decline in sales from IDR 715 million in 2021 to IDR 355 million in 2022 provides an important business-performance context. Sales declined by approximately 50.3% between the two years. The temporal association between declining sales and low responsiveness satisfaction is noteworthy, but it should not be interpreted as evidence that responsiveness alone caused the sales decline. Other market, competitive, economic, product, and operational factors may have contributed. Nevertheless, the finding is theoretically consistent with research demonstrating that customer satisfaction represents an important pathway through which service quality can influence behavioural outcomes. Phan and Trung (2024), studying SMEs, found that the five SERVQUAL dimensions—tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy—positively influenced satisfaction, while satisfaction was connected to customer loyalty. Similarly, Bahtera and Munawaroh (2022) found that service quality positively affected customer satisfaction and that satisfaction contributed to customer loyalty.

The present findings are particularly relevant because Eagle Decal differs from the larger organizations frequently examined in service-quality research. Resource constraints are a defining characteristic of MSMEs, and limited personnel can make it difficult to maintain rapid and consistent customer communication while simultaneously managing production, design, administration, and delivery. This contextual factor helps explain why Eagle Decal can demonstrate strong empathy during direct interactions but still experience poor responsiveness overall. The problem is therefore not necessarily an absence of customer orientation; rather, it may reflect a mismatch between the volume of customer communication and the operational capacity available to handle it. Research on SMEs similarly emphasizes the importance of service quality for competitiveness while recognizing that smaller businesses operate under resource constraints that distinguish them from larger organizations. Phan and Trung (2024) explicitly situate service quality within the resource limitations and competitive pressures experienced by SMEs. Supriyati and Wiyatno (2023) likewise argue that systematic measurement of service quality allows SMEs to identify weaknesses and formulate improvement strategies suited to their operational conditions.

The findings also have implications for digital service quality. Eagle Decal receives customer inquiries through online channels, meaning that the traditional SERVQUAL framework needs to be interpreted alongside contemporary digital-service considerations. In online environments, responsiveness becomes intertwined with accessibility, ease of communication, problem handling, security, and information availability. Singh et al. (2024) identified reliability, ease of use, customer-friendly policies, problem handling, and security as important elements of online retail service quality. Similarly, Pradnyana (2023) demonstrated that conventional service quality and e-service

quality both positively affect customer satisfaction, illustrating that digital channels increasingly form part of the overall service experience rather than existing separately from it. For Eagle Decal, therefore, improving responsiveness should involve not only asking employees to “reply faster,” but redesigning the digital customer-service process through response-time standards, message prioritization, templates for frequently asked questions, and systematic follow-up procedures.

The findings have a further theoretical implication concerning the contextualization of SERVQUAL in creative MSMEs. Most conventional applications of service-quality models have examined sectors such as banking, transportation, hospitality, logistics, healthcare, and retail. While these studies establish the importance of service quality, the Eagle Decal case demonstrates that customized creative-product businesses possess distinctive service characteristics. Customers are not simply purchasing a standardized product; they are participating in a co-creation process involving consultation, design interpretation, material selection, pricing, and production. Consequently, responsiveness has a potentially amplified role because communication delays can interrupt the co-creation process before the customer even reaches the purchase stage. The finding extends contemporary research on SMEs and online commerce by demonstrating that service quality in creative MSMEs should be understood as a customer-journey phenomenon, in which communication, customization, fulfilment, and trust interact rather than operate independently.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that Eagle Decal should prioritize a responsiveness-oriented service improvement strategy. First, the company should establish a clear standard operating procedure specifying maximum response times for customer inquiries and complaints. Second, customer-service personnel should receive structured training in digital communication, particularly in concise responses, problem resolution, product explanation, and customer follow-up. Third, frequently requested information concerning prices, materials, design options, production periods, and delivery should be standardized through message templates or digital catalogues. Fourth, customer inquiries should be recorded and monitored so that unanswered messages do not become lost opportunities. Finally, the company should preserve its existing strengths in reliability, assurance, and empathy rather than treating responsiveness as an isolated intervention. These recommendations are consistent with contemporary evidence showing that service-quality improvement requires systematic identification of high-impact attributes rather than generalized improvement efforts.

Overall, the study contributes to the service-quality literature by demonstrating that service quality in an MSME creative-industry context is multidimensional but strategically asymmetric. Eagle Decal's experience shows that satisfactory product fulfilment, secure transactions, and empathetic interaction do not automatically compensate for slow customer response. The most important insight is therefore not simply that service quality affects satisfaction, but that the weakest

service dimension can disproportionately shape the customer's overall experience when it occurs at a critical stage of the customer journey. This finding strengthens the argument for context-sensitive service-quality management in MSMEs and provides a practical basis for developing lean, digitally supported customer-service systems. At the same time, because this research uses a qualitative single-case design, the findings should be interpreted as an explanatory case rather than as statistically generalizable evidence. Future research should test the proposed relationship using larger samples of creative-industry MSMEs and quantitative or mixed-method designs to determine whether responsiveness consistently emerges as the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction and whether improvements in responsiveness translate into measurable increases in repurchase intention, loyalty, and revenue.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that service quality plays a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction at Eagle Decal, a creative industry SME in Bandung Regency. The results indicate that the dimensions of reliability, assurance, and empathy have been implemented relatively well. Timely order fulfillment, transaction security, and staff members' ability to provide explanations and attention to customers are positive aspects that enhance the customer experience. Conversely, responsiveness is the weakest dimension, particularly regarding delays in responding to messages, questions, and customer needs. The satisfaction rate for this aspect is below 50%, making it a critical point that could potentially reduce satisfaction and repeat purchases. The decline in sales from Rp715 million in 2021 to Rp355 million in 2022 further underscores the importance of improving service quality, although the data from this study does not allow for a causal link between this decline and service quality alone. These findings confirm that SMEs with limited human resources and operational systems require adaptive service strategies. Priority for improvement should be directed toward customer service training, the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs), the allocation of service responsibilities, and the optimization of digital communication channels. By improving responsiveness without neglecting reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, Eagle Decal has the opportunity to strengthen customer satisfaction, maintain loyalty, and enhance business sustainability.

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