

# Strategic Implications of Price and Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in the Cellular Service Industry

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the strategic implications of price and service quality on customer satisfaction within the cellular service industry. Drawing on a quantitative approach, the research empirically examines the partial and simultaneous effects of price and service quality on customer satisfaction. Data were collected from respondents using a questionnaire and analyzed via simple and multiple linear regression. The findings reveal a significant positive influence of price on customer satisfaction, indicating its substantial individual contribution. Similarly, service quality also exerts a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, price and service quality jointly and significantly influence customer satisfaction. These results underscore the critical role of both pricing strategies and service delivery excellence in fostering customer satisfaction, offering strategic implications for cellular service providers aiming to enhance competitiveness and long-term customer relationships.

**Keywords:** Cellular Service Industry, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Strategic Implications, Price

## 1. Introduction

The dynamics of the modern market, characterized by intense competition and rapid technological advancements, have fundamentally transformed the business landscape. Consumers now have broader access to information and higher expectations, compelling companies to strategically adapt for sustainability and profitability (Porter, 1985; Kotler & Keller, 2016). In this context, the telecommunications service sector has become one of the most competitive and vital industries for global communication needs (Castells, 2010). With the rapid adoption of mobile devices and related services, this industry continues to evolve, creating both challenges and opportunities for service providers to attract and retain customers (Ching & Hsiao, 2015).

To cope with this increasing competitive pressure, companies need to formulate effective strategies to achieve customer satisfaction, which is recognized as a key driver of loyalty and long-term financial performance (Zeithaml et al., 2006; Rust & Oliver, 2000). Two crucial elements consistently identified in the literature as primary determinants of customer satisfaction are price and service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Bolton & Lemon, 1999). Price, as a representation of the monetary value exchanged, directly impacts customer perceptions of value received. Meanwhile, service quality, encompassing tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, shapes the overall customer experience and influences their satisfaction levels (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Although extensive research exists on price, service quality, and customer satisfaction in general, studies specifically examining the strategic implications of the interaction of these factors within the cellular service industry still require more attention (Chen & Chang, 2012; Kim & Ma, 2010). This industry possesses unique characteristics, such as rapid innovation, service complexity, and high price sensitivity, which may influence how price and service quality collectively shape customer satisfaction. Previous research indicates variations in how consumers evaluate these factors depending on the industry and market context (Wang & Lo, 2002). Therefore, understanding how cellular service providers can strategically manage price and service quality to enhance customer satisfaction is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge.

Based on this background, the present study aims to empirically analyze the partial and simultaneous influence of price and service quality on customer satisfaction in the cellular service industry. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable strategic insights for cellular service providers in designing optimal pricing policies and service standards to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction, which in turn will contribute to sustainable business growth.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

## 2.1. Customer Satisfaction in the Cellular Service Industry

Customer satisfaction is a cornerstone of successful business strategy, particularly in highly competitive and rapidly evolving sectors like the cellular service industry (Fornell et al., 1996; Oliver, 1997). It reflects a customer's overall evaluation of their consumption experience with a product or service, often defined as the extent to which their expectations are met or exceeded (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the telecommunications context, satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit loyalty, engage in positive word-of-mouth, and be less sensitive to competitors' offerings, ultimately contributing to a firm's long-term profitability and market share (Rust & Oliver, 2000; Anderson & Fornell, 2000).

The dynamic nature of the cellular service industry, characterized by continuous technological advancements, diverse service offerings, and intense competition, makes understanding the drivers of customer satisfaction critically important. Service providers must continuously innovate and optimize their value propositions to retain existing customers and attract new ones. Therefore, identifying the key determinants of customer satisfaction in this specific industry context is essential for developing effective strategic responses.

## 2.2. The Role of Price in Customer Satisfaction

Price is a critical component of the marketing mix and a powerful determinant of perceived value, directly influencing customer satisfaction (Zeithaml, 1988; Monroe, 2003). While often viewed from a cost perspective, price also carries significant informational value, signaling quality or prestige to consumers (Tjiptono, 2014). In the cellular service industry, where various pricing models (postpaid, prepaid, data packages) and competitive promotions abound, consumers' perceptions of pricing fairness, affordability, and value for money play a crucial role in their overall satisfaction.

Previous research consistently demonstrates a significant relationship between price and customer satisfaction. Affordable and transparent pricing, coupled with perceived value, tends to enhance satisfaction (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Conversely, unfair or exorbitant pricing can lead to dissatisfaction and customer churn. Therefore, strategic pricing decisions, encompassing price affordability, alignment with service quality, competitiveness, and perceived benefits, are vital for cellular service providers.

- Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>): Price significantly influences customer satisfaction in the cellular service industry.

## 2.3. The Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

Service quality is another fundamental driver of customer satisfaction, particularly in service-intensive industries like cellular telecommunications (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 2006). It refers to the extent to which a service delivery meets or exceeds customer expectations. High service quality builds trust, enhances perceived value, and fosters positive customer experiences, leading to greater satisfaction and loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

The seminal SERVQUAL model proposes five key dimensions for evaluating service quality: Tangibles (physical facilities, equipment, appearance of personnel), Reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), Responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence), and Empathy (caring, individualized attention provided to customers) (Parasuraman et al., 1988). These dimensions are highly relevant in the cellular service context, covering aspects from network reliability and customer service responsiveness to the clarity of communication and support provided by service personnel. Therefore, investments in enhancing service quality across these dimensions are expected to yield significant returns in customer satisfaction.

- Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>): Service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction in the cellular service industry.

## 2.4. Combined Influence of Price and Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

While price and service quality individually impact customer satisfaction, their combined effect often presents a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Caruana, 2002). Customers

often engage in a value assessment, weighing the perceived benefits (including service quality) against the costs (including price) when forming their overall satisfaction judgments. An optimal balance between price and service quality is crucial; customers may tolerate a higher price if the service quality is exceptional, or conversely, accept lower service quality for a significantly reduced price (Rust & Oliver, 2000).

In the competitive cellular service industry, companies must strategically manage both price and service quality to create a compelling value proposition that resonates with target segments. Failing to align these two factors can lead to customer dissatisfaction and a loss of competitive advantage. Thus, a holistic approach that considers the interplay between price and service quality is essential for driving strategic customer satisfaction.

- Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>): Price and service quality simultaneously influence customer satisfaction in the cellular service industry.

## 2.5. Conceptual Framework

This research proposes a conceptual framework illustrating the hypothesized relationships between Price (X<sub>1</sub>), Service Quality (X<sub>2</sub>), and Customer Satisfaction (Y).

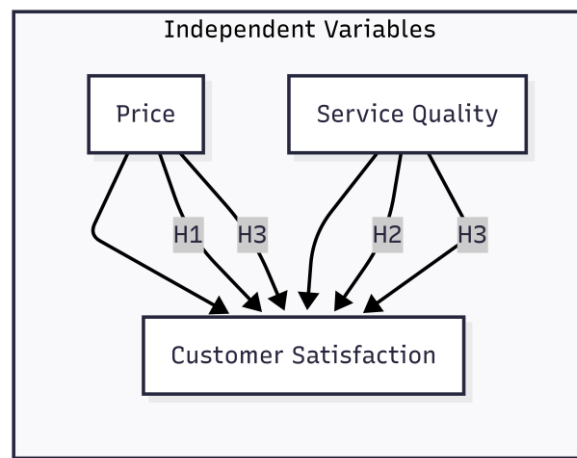


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework  
Source: Nabunome, 2022

## 3. Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the strategic implications of price and service quality on customer satisfaction within the cellular service industry. This section details the research design, population and sampling, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques utilized.

### 3.1. Research Setting and Timeframe

The data for this study were collected from consumers of a cellular service counter located in Atambua, Belu Regency, Indonesia. The research was conducted over a two-month period, from November to December 2021. While the data collection was localized, the theoretical implications and findings aim to provide broader insights relevant to the cellular service industry globally.

### 3.2. Population and Sampling

The population for this study comprised consumers who had made repeat purchases at the specified cellular service counter, indicating a level of engagement with the service. Due to the indeterminate size of this specific consumer group, a non-probability sampling technique, specifically accidental sampling, was employed. This method involved selecting respondents who were readily available and willing to participate at the time of data collection (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The sample size was determined using a commonly accepted guideline in quantitative research, where the number of indicators for all variables is multiplied by a factor of 5 to 10 (Hair et al., 2010). Given that the study

utilized 14 indicators in total (4 for Price, 5 for Service Quality, and 5 for Customer Satisfaction), a sample size of 70 respondents (14 indicators x 5) was deemed appropriate.

### 3.3. Data and Variables

This research primarily utilized quantitative data collected through a primary data source. The study involved two independent variables and one dependent variable:

#### 3.3.1. Independent Variables (X):

- Price (X1): Operationalized through indicators such as price affordability, price suitability with product quality, price competitiveness, and price suitability with product benefits.
- Service Quality (X2): Measured using the five dimensions of SERVQUAL: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy [Cite Parasuraman et al., 1988 or other relevant service quality scale].

#### 3.3.2. Dependent Variable (Y):

- Customer Satisfaction (Y): Assessed based on consumer perceptions of their overall experience and fulfillment of expectations.

### 3.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data were primarily collected using structured questionnaires. To ensure data robustness and a comprehensive understanding, interviews with key personnel or selected customers, observations of service interactions, and documentation of relevant company information were also utilized as supplementary data collection methods.

### 3.5. Research Instruments

The research instruments, specifically the questionnaire items, underwent rigorous testing for validity and reliability. Validity testing ensured that the instruments accurately measured the intended constructs, while reliability testing confirmed the consistency and stability of the measurements (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

### 3.6. Classical Assumption Tests

Prior to regression analysis, several classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the statistical models. These tests included:

- Normality Test: To assess whether the residuals are normally distributed.
- Multicollinearity Test: To check for high correlations among independent variables.
- Autocorrelation Test: To detect correlation between residuals in time-series data (if applicable to your data).
- Heteroscedasticity Test: To examine the constancy of the variance of the errors.
- Linearity Test: To verify the linear relationship between independent and dependent variables.

### 3.7. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Inferential analysis involved:

- Simple Linear Regression Analysis: To examine the individual influence of each independent variable (Price and Service Quality) on customer satisfaction.
- Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: To assess the simultaneous influence of Price and Service Quality on customer satisfaction.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used to measure the proportion of variance in customer satisfaction explained by the independent variables.

### 3.8. Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested using the following statistical methods:

- Partial Significance Test (t-test): Employed to evaluate the individual significance of Price ( $H_1$ ) and Service Quality ( $H_2$ ) on customer satisfaction. This test determines if each independent variable has a unique and statistically significant effect on the dependent variable, holding other variables constant.
- Simultaneous Significance Test (F-test): Utilized to determine the overall significance of Price and Service Quality together ( $H_3$ ) in explaining the variation in customer satisfaction. This test assesses whether the combined model is statistically significant.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Result

This section presents the empirical findings from the data analysis, encompassing instrument validation, classical assumption tests, descriptive statistics, and the results of hypothesis testing.

#### 4.1.1. Instrument Validation

- Validity Test: The validity of the questionnaire items for Price ( $X_1$ ), Service Quality ( $X_2$ ), and Customer Satisfaction ( $Y$ ) was assessed using Pearson product-moment correlation. All 13 items tested demonstrated a corrected item-total correlation value greater than 0.30, confirming their validity and suitability for subsequent statistical analysis.
- Reliability Test: Reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. The results indicated strong internal consistency for all constructs: Price ( $X_1$ ) at 0.784, Service Quality ( $X_2$ ) at 0.776, and Customer Satisfaction ( $Y$ ) at 0.778. As all values exceeded the generally accepted threshold of 0.70, the instruments were deemed reliable.

#### 4.1.2. Classical Assumption Tests

Prior to regression analysis, classical assumptions were verified to ensure the robustness and validity of the statistical models.

- Normality Test: The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to assess the normality of the residuals. The Asymp. Sig. value obtained was 0.439. Given that this value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, it is concluded that the data for all variables are normally distributed.
- Multicollinearity Test: Multicollinearity among independent variables was examined using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The Tolerance values for both Price and Service Quality were 0.641 (greater than 0.1), and their VIF values were 1.561 (less than 10). These results confirm the absence of multicollinearity in the regression model.
- Autocorrelation Test: The Durbin-Watson statistic was utilized to detect autocorrelation. A Durbin-Watson value of 1.541 was obtained. This value indicates no significant autocorrelation in the residuals.
- Heteroscedasticity Test: The scatterplot of residuals was analyzed to detect heteroscedasticity. The plot showed an irregular distribution of residual points, without forming any specific pattern, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity.
- Linearity Test: The linearity test, as observed from the ANOVA table output, revealed a significance value for 'Deviation from Linearity' of 0.064 for the relationship between Price and Customer Satisfaction. For the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction, the 'Deviation from Linearity' significance was 0.549. Since both values are greater than 0.05, it is concluded that a linear relationship exists between each independent variable and Customer Satisfaction.

#### 4.1.3. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the variables. Price (X1) had a mean of 20.28 (Std. Dev. = 1.967) with a range from 17 to 24. Service Quality (X2) showed a mean of 15.70 (Std. Dev. = 2.061) with values from 11 to 20. Customer Satisfaction (Y) had a mean of 15.92 (Std. Dev. = 1.835) ranging from 12 to 20.

#### 4.1.4. Hypothesis Testing and Regression Analysis

Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	F-value	Sig. (F)	Durbin-Watson	VIF	Tolerance
Simple Regression													
(Constant)	6,407	1,906		3,361	0,001								
Price (X1)	1,016	0,18	0,565	5,641	0	0,565	0,319	0,309	31,817	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
(Constant)	3,491	1,165		2,997	0,004								
Service Quality (X2)	0,808	0,069	0,819	11,783	0	0,819	0,671	0,666	138,828	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Multiple Regression													
(Constant)	2,466	1,393		1,77	0,081								
Price (X1)	0,206	0,155	0,115	1,326	0,189	0,824	0,68	0,67	71,066	0	1,541	1,561	0,641
Service Quality (X2)	0,74	0,085	0,751	8,687	0								

Source: Nabunome, 2022

##### ▪ Effect of Price on Customer Satisfaction (H<sub>1</sub>)

Simple linear regression analysis revealed a positive and significant influence of Price (X1) on Customer Satisfaction (Y). The regression equation was  $Y = 6.407 + 1.016X_1 + \epsilon_i$ . The coefficient for Price was positive (B = 1.016), indicating that a one-unit increase in Price is associated with a 1.016 increase in Customer Satisfaction. The t-test results ( $t = 5.641$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) confirmed statistical significance, as the p-value (0.000) is less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.565, indicating a moderately strong relationship between Price and Customer Satisfaction. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was 0.309, signifying that Price individually explains 30.9% of the variance in Customer Satisfaction, with the remaining 69.1% influenced by other unexamined variables. Thus, Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>) is supported.

##### ▪ Effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction (H<sub>2</sub>)

Simple linear regression analysis for Service Quality (X2) on Customer Satisfaction (Y) also demonstrated a positive and significant influence. The regression equation obtained was  $Y = 3.491 + 0.808X_2 + \epsilon_i$ . The positive coefficient for Service Quality (B = 0.808) implies that a one-unit increase in Service Quality is associated with a 0.808 increase in Customer Satisfaction. The t-test results ( $t = 11.783$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) confirmed statistical significance, as the p-value (0.000) is less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.819, indicating a strong relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction. The R<sup>2</sup> was 0.666, signifying that Service Quality accounts for 66.6% of the variance in Customer Satisfaction, with the remaining 33.4% attributed to other factors. Thus, Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>) is supported.

##### ▪ Combined Effect of Price and Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction (H<sub>3</sub>)

Multiple linear regression was performed to assess the simultaneous influence of Price (X1) and Service Quality (X2) on Customer Satisfaction (Y). The multiple regression equation derived was  $Y = 2.466 + 0.206X_1 + 0.740X_2 + \epsilon_i$ .

The F-test for the overall model significance yielded an F-statistic of 71.066 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that Price and Service Quality simultaneously and significantly influence Customer Satisfaction. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) was 0.824, signifying a very strong combined relationship between the independent variables and customer satisfaction. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> was 0.670, meaning Price and Service Quality together explain 67.0% of the variance in Customer Satisfaction, with the remaining 33.0% influenced by other variables not included in the model. Thus, Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>) is supported.

However, examining the individual t-tests within the multiple regression model, Service Quality remained a highly significant predictor ( $t = 8.687$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), while the individual effect of Price became non-significant ( $t = 1.326$ ,  $p = 0.189$ ). This suggests that while Price has an individual impact, its unique contribution to satisfaction might be largely overshadowed by the strong influence of service quality when both are considered together in the cellular service industry context.

## 4.2. Discussion

This section delves into the strategic implications of the research findings, linking them to existing literature and offering actionable insights for the cellular service industry.

### 4.2.1. Strategic Implications of Price

The finding that price significantly influences customer satisfaction ( $H_1$  supported) aligns with established marketing principles where perceived value, heavily influenced by pricing, is a critical determinant of consumer satisfaction. In the highly competitive cellular service industry, consumers are highly sensitive to price, constantly evaluating the cost against the services received. Affordable and transparent pricing, coupled with a perception of fairness, positively contributes to customer contentment.

**Strategic Implication:** Cellular service providers should strategically manage their pricing models beyond mere cost recovery. This involves developing value-based pricing strategies that consider not only competitive tariffs but also the perceived benefits and service bundles. Offering flexible plans, transparent billing, and clearly communicating the value proposition of different price tiers can enhance customer satisfaction and prevent churn. Discounts or promotional offers, when integrated thoughtfully, can also reinforce positive price perceptions.

### 4.2.2. Strategic Implications of Service Quality

The robust and highly significant positive influence of service quality on customer satisfaction ( $H_2$  strongly supported) underscores its paramount importance in the service-intensive cellular sector. This is consistent with service marketing theories, such as SERVQUAL, which highlight that the fulfillment or exceedance of customer expectations through service delivery is central to satisfaction. In an industry reliant on network performance, customer support, and seamless communication, superior service quality directly translates into enhanced customer experiences and satisfaction. Its sustained significance in the multiple regression model further emphasizes its dominant role as a driver of satisfaction.

**Strategic Implication:** Investment in service quality improvement must be a core strategic imperative for cellular service providers. This includes bolstering network reliability, enhancing customer service responsiveness and empathy (through training customer service representatives), ensuring efficient problem resolution, and continuously innovating service offerings to meet evolving customer needs. Proactive monitoring of service performance and gathering customer feedback for continuous improvement will be crucial for maintaining a competitive edge through service excellence.

### 4.2.3. Combined Strategic Influence of Price and Service Quality

The simultaneous significant influence of Price and Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction ( $H_3$  supported) underscores their synergistic relationship. Customers rarely evaluate these factors in isolation; instead, they conduct a holistic assessment of the value proposition, weighing the benefits (service quality) against the costs (price). The high adjusted  $R^2$  (67.0%) in the multiple regression model confirms that these two variables collectively explain a substantial portion of customer satisfaction variance.

The observation that Price's individual significance diminished in the multiple regression when Service Quality was included is particularly insightful for strategic planning. This suggests that while price is important, its impact on satisfaction might be largely contingent upon, or even overshadowed by, the level of service quality provided. Customers may be more forgiving of a higher price if the accompanying service quality is exceptional, perceiving better overall value. Conversely, even a low price may not satisfy customers if service quality is poor.

**Strategic Implication:** Cellular service providers must adopt an integrated and balanced strategic approach to managing both price and service quality. This means avoiding the trap of solely competing on price, which can erode profit margins and compromise service quality, ultimately leading to dissatisfaction. Instead, the focus should be on delivering an optimal value package:

- **Value Co-creation:** Involving customers in the design of services or pricing tiers to ensure offerings truly meet their needs and perceptions of value.
- **Differentiated Offerings:** Developing strategies that clearly link price points to distinct levels of service quality or premium features, catering to diverse customer segments.
- **Customer Relationship Management:** Fostering long-term relationships by consistently delivering on both pricing fairness and high service standards, thereby building loyalty that transcends minor price fluctuations or service glitches.

By effectively managing the interplay between pricing and service quality, cellular service providers can strategically enhance customer satisfaction, build stronger customer relationships, and secure sustainable growth in a highly competitive market.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study investigated the strategic implications of price and service quality on customer satisfaction within the cellular service industry. Based on the rigorous analysis of collected data, several key conclusions can be drawn, providing valuable insights for both academic understanding and practical application.

Firstly, the research unequivocally confirms that price significantly influences customer satisfaction in the cellular service sector. This finding aligns with established literature emphasizing the critical role of perceived value and fairness in pricing as determinants of customer contentment (Monroe, 2003; Zeithaml, 1988). For cellular service providers, this underscores the strategic imperative of not just competitive pricing, but also transparent and value-driven tariff structures that resonate with consumer expectations.

Secondly, and notably, service quality emerged as a highly significant and dominant predictor of customer satisfaction. This strong positive relationship reinforces the core tenets of service marketing theory, which posit that superior service delivery directly translates into enhanced customer experiences and satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 2006). The substantial explanatory power of service quality observed in this study highlights its crucial role in shaping customer perceptions and overall contentment in a service-intensive industry like cellular telecommunications. Strategic investment in robust network infrastructure, responsive customer support, and empathetic service delivery channels is paramount for fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Finally, the study demonstrates that price and service quality collectively and significantly influence customer satisfaction. While both factors are essential, the individual analysis within the multiple regression model suggested that the unique contribution of price might be overshadowed by the strong influence of service quality. This implies that in the cellular service industry, customers likely engage in a holistic value assessment where excellent service quality can mitigate the impact of price, making a higher price more acceptable. Conversely, poor service quality can quickly undermine satisfaction, even if pricing is competitive. This finding necessitates an integrated strategic approach where companies cannot solely rely on aggressive pricing or isolated service improvements.

In conclusion, for cellular service providers aiming for sustainable growth and a strong competitive position, the strategic focus must extend beyond mere price competition to encompass a relentless pursuit of service excellence. Optimizing the balance between perceived price value and superior service quality is crucial. Companies should prioritize delivering high-quality, reliable services that meet or exceed customer expectations, while simultaneously ensuring their pricing strategies are transparent and perceived as fair, thereby fostering long-term customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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## Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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