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## Coffee Joy Cafe's Customer Service Communication Strategy to Attract Customers

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the communication strategies implemented by customer service at Café Kopi Joy in attracting customers, particularly in the campus environment. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a constructivist paradigm. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving the café owner, manager, customer service staff, and customers. The findings indicate that customer service communication strategies prioritize interpersonal relationships rather than direct promotional efforts. The application of FIRO theory covering inclusion, control, and affection is reflected in friendly greetings, clear service explanations, and warm, empathetic interactions with customers. These strategies contribute to customer comfort, positive service experiences, and increased interest in revisiting the café. This study highlights the importance of customer service communication as a strategic element in attracting customers in a competitive café industry.*

**Keywords**– Communication Strategy; Customer Service; Café; Customer Attraction



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## **1. Introduction**

The development of cafés in campus areas of Telang, Bangkalan, Madura, Indonesia has increased significantly in recent years along with changes in students' activity patterns that position cafés as spaces for studying, discussion, and social interaction. This condition has intensified competition among cafés, requiring business owners to rely not only on products but also on service quality as a key strategy to attract and retain customers.

Such competition highlights service communication as an important factor in shaping customer experiences. Customer service acts as the frontline that directly interacts with customers from their arrival until the completion of service. The way staff greet customers, provide guidance, and demonstrate empathy influences customer comfort and their intention to revisit. Therefore, customer service communication strategies should not be viewed merely as operational activities, but as an integral part of customer attraction strategies.

Previous studies on cafés and service industries have largely focused on marketing communication strategies, digital promotion, and branding. However, studies that specifically examine customer service communication as an interpersonal communication process remain limited, particularly in the context of campus-area cafés. This research gap indicates the need to position service communication as a central focus in attracting customers.

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm, which views social reality as the result of interaction and meaning-making processes. This paradigm is relevant because customer service communication strategies are understood as social practices formed through interactions between staff and customers. To analyze these interactions, this study applies the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) theory proposed by William Schutz, which emphasizes three interpersonal needs: inclusion, control, and affection.

Café Kopi Joy in Telang, Bangkalan, Madura was selected as the research site based on its prominent customer service quality compared to other cafés in the area. Additionally, Telang represents a campus area with high café competition,

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making it a relevant context for examining service communication strategies. Therefore, this study aims to analyze customer service communication strategies at Café Kopi Joy in attracting customers by examining the fulfillment of interpersonal needs of inclusion, control, and affection based on FIRO theory.

## **2. Method**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm was chosen because it views social reality as multifaceted and constructed through interactions and individual interpretations of their social experiences Moleong; 2012, Cresswell; 2014 (Rasyida Fadhil Herdianto, 2022). In this paradigm, knowledge is not considered objective and static; instead, it is constructed through communication processes and social experiences (Wahyuningsih et al., 2019)

The descriptive qualitative approach was used to deeply explore the phenomenon of customer service communication strategies at Café Kopi Joy in attracting customers. This method allows the researcher to understand communication processes, behaviors, and meanings constructed by informants without relying on numerical data (Bogdan & Biklen, S. cited in Rahmat, 2009 cited in Yesi Asira, 2024). The focus of the research is directed toward understanding how communication strategies are applied in service and how customers interpret the interactive experiences they undergo.

The study involved 15 informants selected through purposive sampling. This technique was chosen because informants were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus, rather than randomly (Arikunto 2003 cited in Lenaini, 2021). The informants consisted of one owner of Café Joy, one manager, three service staff (barista, cashier, and waiter), and ten regular customers. The selection of informants was based on their direct involvement in the communication process of service and their repeated experiences of receiving café services (Lenaini, 2021). Data were collected through three techniques: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Semi-

structured interviews were used to explore the experiences, perspectives, and communication strategies applied by the café staff and interpreted by the customers (Sugiyono 2020;11 cited in ‘Aini, 2024). This technique provides flexibility for informants to elaborate on their experiences in greater depth.

Non-participant observation was conducted by directly observing the communication interactions between staff and customers without the researcher being involved in the service activities. This observation aimed to examine both verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body gestures of the staff during the service process (Sugiyono 2020;203 cited in ‘Aini, 2024). Meanwhile, documentation was used as supporting data in the form of photos of service activities and customer reviews, which served to reinforce and validate the data obtained from interviews and observations

Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Saldana 2013 cited in Neringa Kalpokaite, 2019). Data reduction was carried out by selecting and categorizing the data according to the research focus. The reduced data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate the interpretation process. Conclusion drawing was conducted progressively and verified continuously to ensure the consistency of the findings.

The validity of the data was maintained through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from the owner, manager, staff, and customers, while technique triangulation involved comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation (Sugiyono 2020 cited in Qomariah, 2021) Thus, the data obtained are highly reliable and capable of representing the research phenomenon comprehensively.

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### 3. Result and Discussion

#### *Results*

#### 1. Customer Service Communication Strategy as a Personal Relationship, Not a Promotion

The customer service communication strategy at Café Kopi Joy is interpreted as an effort to build personal relationships with customers, not as a direct promotional activity. Service communication is directed at creating comfortable and sustainable interpersonal relationships.

*"The most important thing is not selling, but how to make customers feel comfortable first." (Fawwaz Candra Samudra, Personal Communication, November 30, 2025)*

#### 2. Communication Style Adaptation Strategy Based on Customer Characteristics

Using a situational approach, café staff adjust their communication style depending on the characteristics of the customers they encounter, whether new, regular, or groups. Café staff regularly evaluate their service, ensuring that each interaction provides the best possible customer experience. For new customers, the communication style is very friendly and informative. Café staff provide a warm welcome, explain the menu, and recommend drinks. Meanwhile, with regular customers, interactions are more relaxed and personal. Some staff have become familiar with certain customers and even memorize their favorite menu items.

*"Perhaps they are friendlier, and sometimes, regular customers are more familiar with the staff." (Aldo Rivaldi, Personal Communication, November 30, 2025)*

#### 3. Familiarity Strategy as a Tool to Build Customer Sympathy

Familiar communication plays a crucial role as a customer service strategy in building customer sympathy at Café Joy. In a competitive business context, positive relationships with customers are crucial. Through warm and friendly interactions, customers are expected to feel more comfortable and valued.

*"It's important to attract customers not only through products, but also through good communication." (Fawwaz Candra Samudra, Personal Communication, November 30, 2025)*

#### 4. Complaint Handling Strategy as a Moment to Strengthen Relationships

Customer complaints at Café Kopi Joy are not avoided but rather accepted as part of the service interaction process. Café Kopi Joy staff demonstrate an open attitude when customers complain, providing an initial response of apology. This was conveyed by the Café Kopi Joy cashier, who stated.

*"Of course, if a complaint arises, the first step is to apologize. We must apologize first. If the error is ours, then we will correct it."*  
(Nanda Dwi Yuliyanti, Personal Communication, November 30, 2025)

#### 5. Impact of Interpersonal Communication Strategies on Customer Loyalty

The interpersonal communication strategies employed by Café Kopi Joy's customer service team have a direct impact on customer loyalty. This loyalty isn't formed through marketing strategies, either online or offline, but rather grows from the direct interactions between staff and customers in the daily service process.

*"The service is fast and friendly, so I feel comfortable coming here again."* (Ifan Iqbal, Personal Communication, November 30, 2025)

### **Discussion**

The research findings indicate that the customer service communication strategy at Kopi Joy Café is consistently oriented toward building interpersonal relationships rather than engaging in direct promotional activities. This communication pattern provides a primary benefit by creating a comfortable and non-pressuring service experience, allowing interactions to occur more naturally. These findings affirm that within the context of a campus café, service communication occupies a strategic position as a customer attraction factor, standing on equal footing with product quality and facility offerings.

From the perspective of William Schutz's Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) Theory, the effectiveness of the customer service communication strategy at Kopi Joy Café can be understood through the fulfillment of three basic interpersonal needs: inclusion, control, and affection (Griffin, n.d.). The need for inclusion is reflected in the way customer service staff

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welcome customers upon their arrival through friendly greetings and the use of the café's distinctive jargon. This practice makes customers feel acknowledged and accepted as part of the café's social environment. Fulfilling the need for inclusion is crucial, as customers who feel welcomed tend to develop positive initial impressions of the service, which ultimately influence their decisions to stay longer or return for future visits.

The need for control is evident in the ability of customer service staff to manage the service process professionally without exerting pressure. Staff members provide information and menu recommendations only when necessary and clearly explain service procedures while remaining flexible. This approach allows customers to maintain a sense of autonomy over their choices. Within the FIRO framework, an appropriate balance of control facilitates the development of comfortable relationships, as customers do not feel overly directed yet still receive clear and supportive service.

Meanwhile, the need for affection is manifested through consistent empathetic attitudes, friendliness, and personalized approaches. Smiles, warm tones of voice, and light interactions foster emotional closeness between customer service staff and customers. The fulfillment of this need for affection contributes to the formation of emotional bonds that make customers feel personally valued rather than merely treated as consumers. Such bonds serve as an important foundation for the development of long-term customer loyalty.

The findings of this study both reinforce and extend the results of (M. S. Putri & Heikal, 2023), who argue that service communication influences customer loyalty. Unlike that study, the present research emphasizes that loyalty does not emerge instantaneously but rather as a consequence of the continuous fulfillment of customers' interpersonal needs through customer service communication. In addition, this study complements the findings of (F. Z. Putri, 2021), which focus on baristas' interpersonal communication, by demonstrating that customer service personnel, as distinct actors, play a broader strategic role in establishing initial relationships and maintaining customer comfort.

When compared with the studies by (Ariyani, 2021) and (Zulfikar 2014, n.d.), which emphasize marketing communication and promotional strategies, this research reveals a significant difference. The communication focus at Kopi Joy Café is not directed toward sales persuasion but toward humanistic interpersonal relationships. This indicates a paradigm shift in which service communication is no longer understood merely as a supporting element of marketing but as a primary strategy for attracting customers, particularly in campus café settings that prioritize comfort and social interaction.

Customer complaint handling in this study can also be explained through the FIRO Theory. Empathetic responses, apologies, and the provision of solutions reflect a combination of fulfilling the needs for control and affection. Customers feel both attended to and that their interests are safeguarded, thereby increasing trust in the café. This strategy demonstrates that complaints are not merely operational issues but communication opportunities to strengthen interpersonal relationships.

The results of this study indicate that the customer service communication strategy at Kopi Joy Café is effective because it is able to balance the fulfillment of inclusion, control, and affection needs. Comparisons with previous studies highlight a novel contribution, namely positioning customer service personnel as key interpersonal communication actors in attracting customers. These findings offer a theoretical contribution to the development of FIRO Theory within the context of service communication, as well as practical implications for café managers in designing communication strategies oriented toward long-term relationships.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the communication strategy of customer service at Café Kopi Joy focuses more on building positive relationships with customers rather than merely conducting sales promotions. Friendly service, clear information delivery, and empathetic attitudes demonstrated by the staff make customers feel welcomed and comfortable during



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interactions. This finding is consistent with the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) theory, which emphasizes the fulfillment of inclusion, control, and affection needs in service communication.

The impact of this communication strategy is reflected in increased customer satisfaction and a stronger intention to revisit Café Kopi Joy. This study indicates that interpersonal communication carried out by customer service plays a significant role as a primary strategy in attracting customers and serves as added value for cafés amid intense competition in the campus environment. Furthermore, this research contributes to the field of service communication by highlighting the strategic role of customer service in building customer attraction

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