MIKAILALSYS
Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences

e-ISSN : 2987-2286
p-ISSN : 2987-3924

Index : Dimensions, Scilit, Crossref, Garuda, Semantic, Lens,Google Scholar,Base, etc

https://doi.org/10.58578/mikailalsys.v4i2.10040

Barista Interpersonal Communication Strategy in Increasing Customer Satisfaction at Coffee Shop Titik Koma Matcha Club Multatuli Medan

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Article Info:

Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Mar 25, 2026	Apr 22, 2026	May 4, 2026	May 9, 2026

Abstract

The rapid expansion of the coffee shop industry has intensified competition in delivering superior customer experiences, positioning interpersonal communication as a critical determinant of customer satisfaction. Although previous studies have examined communication in service contexts, limited attention has been given to integrated service systems in which baristas simultaneously perform multiple service roles. This study aims to analyze barista interpersonal communication strategies and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing their effectiveness at Titik Koma Matcha Club Coffee Shop, Medan. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and documentation over a four-week period. Seven informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of two baristas, four customers, and one field supervisor. The analysis was grounded in DeVito's five dimensions of interpersonal communication—openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality—and interpreted through customer satisfaction theory. The findings reveal that all five communication dimensions were consistently implemented across service stages, with empathy and openness

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emerging as the most influential factors in shaping customer satisfaction. Supporting factors included a positive work environment, continuous supervisory guidance, and an integrated service system that increased interaction intensity. Conversely, time constraints during peak hours limited communication depth, although this challenge was mitigated through structured task distribution. The study further demonstrates that effective interpersonal communication contributes to repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth behavior. This study concludes that interpersonal communication plays a strategic role as a core component of service quality in the coffee shop industry. These findings contribute to service communication literature and provide practical implications for developing communication-based service management strategies in customer-oriented food and beverage businesses.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication; Barista Communication; Customer Satisfaction; Service Quality; Coffee Shop

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of the coffee shop industry in Medan has significantly intensified competition, particularly in terms of service quality and customer experience. In this context, interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions and satisfaction. Coffee shops are no longer merely places to consume beverages, but also social spaces where interaction between service providers and customers becomes a key determinant of loyalty and repeat visits (Andayani & Zania, 2021)).

At Coffee Shop Titik Koma Matcha Club Multatuli Medan, baristas are not only responsible for preparing beverages but also actively engage in the entire service process, including greeting customers, explaining menu options, recommending products, and delivering orders directly to tables. This integrated service model increases the intensity of interpersonal interaction, making communication skills an essential competency. Interpersonal communication effectiveness is reflected through openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality as proposed by (DeVito, 2022). These dimensions are closely related to customer satisfaction theory by Kotler and Keller (2021), which states that satisfaction arises when service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of interpersonal communication in service industries (Anggraini et al., 2022). However, research focusing specifically on barista communication strategies within integrated service systems remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) analyze the interpersonal communication strategies used by baristas, and (2) identify supporting and inhibiting factors affecting these strategies. Coffee Shop Titik Koma Matcha Club Multatuli Medan prioritizes direct service through interaction between baristas and customers. Baristas are not only tasked with mixing and serving drinks, but are also involved in the entire service chain—from taking orders, explaining and recommending menu items, to delivering them directly to customers' tables. This intense involvement makes interpersonal communication a key element in building the customer experience and influencing perceived levels of satisfaction (Andayani & Zania, 2021).

Effective interpersonal communication includes conveying information clearly, being friendly, empathetic, open, and understanding customer needs. (Anggraini et al., 2022) emphasized that interpersonal communication in the context of service plays a crucial role in creating a positive relationship between service providers and customers. The rapid growth of the coffee shop industry in Medan has intensified service-based competition, making barista interpersonal communication strategies an important aspect that requires in-depth study (Ge et al., 2021). Based on initial observations, Titik Koma Matcha Club has unique service characteristics in the form of continuous barista-customer interactions from greeting to serving. This study aims to: (1) describe barista interpersonal communication strategies; and (2) identify supporting and inhibiting factors of these interpersonal communication strategies, in order to provide empirical and theoretical contributions to the development of interpersonal communication science in the field of service.

METHODS

1. Type, Approach, and Location

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach (Milanuari et al., n.d.) to describe interpersonal communication phenomena in depth based on field conditions. The research location was the Titik Koma Matcha Club Coffee Shop, Jalan Multatuli Indah Blok G No. 26–27, Medan City. Data collection was carried out over four weeks: the first week was

instrument preparation and permits; the second week was direct observation; the third week was in-depth interviews; and the fourth week was transcription and analysis.

2. Informants and Data Collection Techniques

Seven informants were selected through purposive sampling: two active baristas, four customers (at least two visits), and one field supervisor. Data were collected through: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews; (2) non-participatory observation; and (3) documentation. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Bagus et al., 2022): data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS

1. Coffee Shop Profile Titik Koma Matcha Club Multatuli Medan

The Titik Koma Matcha Club Coffee Shop is located at Jalan Multatuli Indah Blok G No. 26–27, Medan City, with a direct service concept that is communicative and personal. The integrated service character—the barista doubles as cashier and delivery person—creates a higher intensity of interpersonal interaction compared to the self-service model. This condition makes Titik Koma Matcha Club a very relevant location for the study of interpersonal communication in the context of coffee shop services.

Table 1. Informant Profile

No	Code	Name	Role	Key Information Excavated
1	B1	Diamond	Barista	How to greet, verbal & nonverbal communication strategies, customer handling, supporting & inhibiting factors
2	B2	Widi	Barista	Menu recommendation techniques, empathy in service, communication experience during rush hour
3	P1	Zikra	Customer	Perception of satisfaction, impression of barista communication, comfort of interaction, intention to revisit
4	P2	CIA	Customer	Barista attitude assessment, clarity of product information, overall service experience
5	P3	Reza	Customer	The impact of barista communication on return visits and recommendations to others
6	P4	Diki	Customer	Conformity of expectations with actual service performance received
7	SPV1	Sincere	Field Supervisor	Barista communication standards, forms of supervision & evaluation, supporting & inhibiting factors for service

Source: Research Data, 2026

Table 1 explains above presents a list of informants in a study examining interpersonal communication in a coffee shop setting, involving a total of seven informants divided into three distinct role groups. The first group consists of **baristas**, represented by two informants coded B1 and B2, named Diamond and Widi respectively. From Diamond, information was gathered regarding customer greeting practices, verbal and nonverbal communication strategies, customer handling approaches, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in service delivery. From Widi, the researcher explored menu recommendation techniques, the application of empathy in serving customers, and communication experiences during rush hours. The second group comprises customers, consisting of four informants coded P1 through P4, namely Zikra, CIA, Reza, and Diki. Each provided complementary perspectives: Zikra shared her perception of satisfaction, impressions of barista communication, comfort during interaction, and intention to revisit. CIA offered an assessment of barista attitude, clarity of product information, and the overall service experience. Reza focused on the impact of barista communication on customers' decisions to return and recommend the coffee shop to others. Meanwhile, Diki highlighted the degree of conformity between his initial expectations and the actual service performance he received.

The third group is the field supervisor, represented by a single informant coded SPV1 named Sincere. From his supervisory position, information was drawn regarding the communication standards applied to baristas, the forms of supervision and evaluation carried out, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors in maintaining service quality.

Overall, the composition of these informants reflects a comprehensive research approach, as it encompasses the perspectives of the service provider (baristas), the service recipient (customers), and the service overseer (supervisor). This triangulation of viewpoints enables a robust and well-rounded understanding of communication dynamics within the coffee shop context.

2. Research Informant Profile

The following is a complete profile of the seven informants selected through purposive sampling in this study.

Barista Informant



Figure 2. Intan (Barista 2)

Figure 1 explains An active barista at Titik Koma Matcha Club Coffee Shop in Multatuli, Medan, with direct experience in customer service. She possesses excellent interpersonal communication skills, particularly in greeting customers, providing menu recommendations, and explaining matcha products in detail.

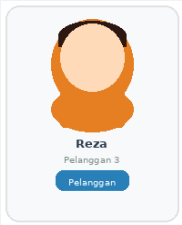
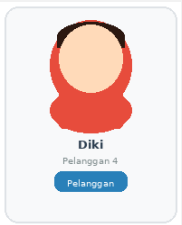


Figure 2. Widi Barista 2 (B2)

Barista 2 (B2)

Figure 2 explains An active barista with experience in menu recommendations and persuasive communication with customers. Known for her strong empathy, she consistently adapts her communication style to each customer's individual characteristic

Customer Informant

			
Zikra Customer 1 (P1) Customers who have interacted directly with a barista at least twice. Provides perspective on perceived satisfaction and comfort with the interaction.	Cia Customer 2 (P2) Repeat customers at Titikkoma Matcha Club. Rating the barista's attitude, clarity of product information, and overall service experience.	Reza Customer 3 (P3) Customers who provided ratings regarding the impact of barista communication on repeat visit decisions and word-of-mouth recommendations.	Diki Customer 4 (P4) Customers who provide perspectives on the suitability of expectations with the actual service performance received.

Field Supervisor Informant



Figure 4. Iklas — Field Supervisor (SPV1)

Supervisor (SPV1)

Figure 4 explains Iklas is an active Field Supervisor (SPV) at the Coffee Shop Titik Koma Matcha Club Multatuli Medan. As a supervisor, Iklas is responsible for overseeing the service process, evaluating barista performance, and providing guidance on interpersonal communication standards. The supervisor acts as a supporting informant, confirming service standards through a monitoring and evaluation perspective. In this study, Iklas played a crucial role in strengthening the validity of the data through source triangulation.

3. Application of the Five Dimensions of Effective Barista Interpersonal Communication

Openness

Openness is the first dimension most strongly manifested in barista communication behavior. This dimension is evident in baristas' willingness to share product information honestly, in detail, and transparently, and to respond openly to customer questions without becoming defensive.

Table 2. Findings of the Dimension

Aspect of Openness	Observation & Interview Findings	Implications for Customers
Active Preference Exploration	The barista (Intan & Widi) asked an exploratory question: "What would you like to drink today? Coffee? Matcha? Do you prefer matcha with a dominant tea taste (bitter) or one that is creamier and sweeter?"	Customers feel their needs and preferences are heard before the order is processed, reducing uncertainty about choice.
Time Information Transparency	The barista proactively provides a time estimate: "Please wait, Sis. We will prepare your order and deliver it to your table in about 5–7 minutes."	Customers can set realistic expectations, minimizing discomfort while waiting.
Feedback Reception	The barista responded to repeated questions about the menu patiently without any	Customers feel free to ask questions and provide

Aspect of Openness	Observation & Interview Findings	Implications for Customers
	expression of discomfort; open to customer suggestions.	feedback without hesitation, creating a healthy two-way dialogue.
Honest Recommendation	When a signature menu item is almost out of stock, the barista immediately informs you and offers relevant alternatives.	Barista honesty builds customer trust in the integrity of the coffee shop service.

Source: Observation and Interview Results with Intan (B1) & Widi (B2), December 24, 2025

Table 2 explains analyzes four aspects of openness in barista communication and their implications for customers.

a. Active Preference Exploration shows that baristas such as Intan and Widi asked exploratory questions before taking orders, helping customers feel heard and reducing uncertainty in decision-making.

b. Time Information Transparency highlights how baristas proactively communicated estimated waiting times, allowing customers to set realistic expectations and minimizing discomfort during the wait.

c. Feedback Reception demonstrates that baristas responded patiently to repeated menu questions without visible discomfort, creating a safe space for customers to ask questions and engage in open two-way dialogue.

d. Honest Recommendation reflects the barista's integrity in immediately informing customers when a menu item was nearly out of stock and offering suitable alternatives, thereby building trust in the coffee shop's service.

e. Overall, these four aspects collectively show that openness in barista communication goes beyond friendliness — it encompasses transparency, honesty, and genuine responsiveness that directly enhance the customer experience.

Empathy

Empathy was the most consistently identified dimension throughout the observations and was most frequently cited by customer informants as a factor contributing to their comfort. Baristas demonstrated empathy through their ability to detect customer distress and adapt their communication approach accordingly.

Table 3. Findings of the Empathy Dimension in Barista Communication

Forms of Empathy	Observation & Interview Findings	Implications for Customers
Customer Condition Detection	The baristas (Intan & Widi) were able to detect customers who looked confused (first time visitors) and immediately offered menu selection guidance without being asked.	New customers feel welcomed and assisted, rather than left to fumble, creating a positive first impression.
Adapting Communication Styles	Baristas adjust the level of formality and depth of information based on the customer's verbal and nonverbal responses during the conversation.	Customers receive information in the format that is most easily understood according to their background and needs.
Nonverbal Empathy	The barista maintained a friendly expression and did not show any fatigue even though the customer asked many questions about the menu for a long time.	Customers do not feel burdened and are comfortable exploring the menu before making a decision.
Cognitive & Affective Empathy	All customer informants (Zikra, Cia, Reza, Diki) stated that they felt "understood" and "appreciated" during their interactions with the barista, going beyond just a buying and selling transaction.	The formation of an emotional bond between customers and coffee shops that encourages repeat visits.

Source: Interview Results with Zikra (P1), Cia (P2), Reza (P3), Diki (P4) and Observations, 2026

Table 3 explains analyzes four forms of **empathy** demonstrated by baristas in their interactions with customers, along with the implications each form has on the overall customer experience.

a. Customer Condition Detection shows that baristas Intan and Widi were attentive enough to notice when customers appeared confused, particularly first-time visitors, and proactively offered guidance without waiting to be asked. This sensitivity ensures that new customers feel welcomed and supported from the very beginning, establishing a positive first impression.

b. Adapting Communication Styles highlights how baristas flexibly adjusted their level of formality and the depth of information provided, based on verbal and nonverbal cues received during conversation. This adaptability ensures that each customer receives information in a manner that is most suited to their background and level of understanding.

c. Nonverbal Empathy reflects the barista's ability to maintain a warm and friendly expression even when customers asked numerous questions over an extended period of time, without showing any signs of fatigue or impatience. This nonverbal consistency makes customers feel comfortable taking their time to explore the menu before arriving at a decision.

d. Cognitive and Affective Empathy is evidenced by the responses of all four customer informants — Zikra, CIA, Reza, and Diki — who expressed feeling genuinely understood and appreciated during their interactions, describing the experience as something that transcended a mere transactional exchange. This deeper level of empathy fosters an emotional bond between the customer and the coffee shop, ultimately encouraging repeat visits.

e. In summary, empathy in barista communication operates on multiple levels — from detecting customer needs and adapting communication styles, to sustaining positive nonverbal cues and creating meaningful emotional connections — all of which play a significant role in shaping customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Supportive Attitude

A supportive attitude is evident in the way baristas respond to customers' needs and questions using descriptive and non-judgmental language. This dimension creates a safe and comfortable communication environment for customers to express their needs or concerns.

Table 4. Findings of the Supportiveness Dimension in Barista Communication

Forms of Support	Observation & Interview Findings	Implications for Customers
Non-Directive Recommendations	When customers are unsure about choosing a menu, the baristas (Intan & Widi) explain the characteristics of each choice descriptively, helping customers find the best choice—not just pushing the highest-priced option.	Customers feel their decisions are respected; the menu selection process becomes a pleasant experience, not a stressful one.
Supportive Closing Sentence	At the serving stage, the barista says: "Please enjoy the Matcha/Coffee, Sis, if there's something missing, you can call us."	Customers feel free to voice complaints or additional requests without hesitation; opening up post-service communication channels.
Non-Defensive Response	Baristas respond to customer questions or complaints without being defensive; prioritizing resolving customer issues.	Customers feel heard and genuinely helped, increasing trust in the coffee shop's service standards.

Source: Observation and Interview Results of Intan (B1) & Widi (B2), 2026

Table 4 explains examines three forms of supportiveness displayed by baristas in their communication with customers, and the positive implications each form generates for the customer experience.(Zeqiri et al., 2025)

a. Non-Directive Recommendations illustrates how baristas Intan and Widi, when faced with an undecided customer, chose to descriptively explain the characteristics of each menu option rather than pushing the most expensive item. This approach demonstrates respect for the customer's autonomy in decision-making, transforming what could be a stressful choice into an enjoyable and pressure-free experience.

b. Supportive Closing Sentence highlights the barista's practice of ending the serving interaction with an open invitation, such as encouraging customers to call if anything is missing or unsatisfactory. This simple yet meaningful gesture effectively opens up a post-service communication channel, making customers feel comfortable enough to voice any complaints or additional requests without hesitation.(Kotler et al., 2022)

c. Non-Defensive Response reflects the barista's ability to receive customer questions or complaints calmly and constructively, prioritizing problem resolution over self-justification. This non-defensive stance makes customers feel genuinely heard and assisted, which in turn strengthens their trust in the coffee shop's overall service standards.

d. Collectively, these three forms of supportiveness demonstrate that effective barista communication is not limited to the moment of ordering, but extends throughout the entire service interaction — from guiding menu selection to welcoming post-service feedback — all of which contribute to a customer experience grounded in respect, openness, and trust.(Lolita, 2025)

Positive Attitude (Positiveness)

Baristas' positive attitudes are manifested in consistent energy, enthusiasm, and friendliness throughout the work shift. Observational findings note consistent positive attitudes even under high-pressure conditions such as rush hour.

Table 5. Findings of the Positive Attitude Dimension (Positiveness) in Barista Communication

Positive Attitude Indicators	Observation Findings	Implications for Customers
Energetic Opening Greeting	The barista says "Good afternoon, Sis" (at 2:00 PM WIB) in a cheerful and clear tone; immediately stops what she is doing when the door opens and gives her full attention to the incoming customer.	Customers feel a genuine welcome from the moment they enter; creating a positive atmosphere that defines the entire visiting experience.

Positive Attitude Indicators	Observation Findings	Implications for Customers
Consistency of Smile & Eye Contact	The barista maintained a warm smile and eye contact throughout the interaction, including when processing the transaction and calling out the change.	Customers feel valued personally, not just as a queue number or transaction value.
Consistency in Rush Hour	When the queue is long (4–8 people), communication becomes shorter but the barista still maintains politeness through an organized division-based task distribution system.	Customers do not feel a decrease in the quality of hospitality even though the shop is very busy.
Use of Affirmative Sentences	Baristas consistently use the phrases "Ready Sis", "Of course", "Thank you" and "Please" as markers of a positive attitude in responding to customer requests.	Customers receive a strong verbal signal that their needs will be met, increasing their sense of security and comfort.

Source: Observation Results, December 24, 2025 and Interview, 2026

Table 5 explains examines four indicators of positive attitude demonstrated by baristas in their interactions with customers, and the implications each indicator carries for the overall customer experience.

a. Energetic Opening Greeting describes how the barista immediately stopped her current activity upon a customer's arrival and delivered a cheerful, time-appropriate greeting. This attentiveness from the very first moment conveys a sense of genuine welcome, setting a positive tone that shapes the customer's entire visiting experience.

b. Consistency of Smile and Eye Contact highlights the barista's ability to maintain warmth and direct eye contact throughout the interaction, even during transactional moments such as processing payment and returning change. This consistency signals to customers that they are valued as individuals rather than being treated as merely a queue number or a transaction figure.

c. Consistency During Rush Hour demonstrates that even when the queue grew to between four and eight people, the baristas maintained polite and organized communication through an efficient task distribution system. This ensures that customers do not perceive any drop in hospitality quality, regardless of how busy the coffee shop becomes.

d. Use of Affirmative Sentences reflects the barista's habitual use of positive verbal markers such as "Ready," "Of course," "Thank you," and "Please" when responding to customer requests. These phrases serve as consistent verbal affirmations that the customer's needs

are being acknowledged and will be met, effectively increasing the customer's sense of security and comfort throughout the interaction.

e. Altogether, these four indicators illustrate that a positive attitude in barista communication is expressed both verbally and nonverbally, and must be sustained consistently — not only during quiet moments, but also under pressure — in order to deliver a reliably welcoming and reassuring customer experience.

Equality

The dimension of equality is manifested in the way baristas treat each customer with a consistent standard of hospitality, without discrimination based on appearance, age, or transaction value. This practice was confirmed by Iklas (SPV1) as part of the service standards that are regularly evaluated.

Table 6. Findings of the Equality Dimension in Barista Communication

Form of Equality	Observation & Interview Findings	Implications for Customers
Gender-Inclusive Greetings	Baristas greet female customers with "Kak" and male customers with "Bang/Kak" in accordance with local Medan culture, without differentiating the customer's appearance or background.	Every customer feels recognized for their identity and is treated with respect according to local social norms.
Non-Discriminatory Service Standards	Baristas provide the same quality of attention and friendliness to all customers, regardless of the transaction value.	Customers from all segments feel valued equally; no customer feels treated as a "second-class customer."
Supervisor Confirmation (Iklas/SPV1)	Iklas (SPV1) confirmed that equality of service is part of the regular direction and evaluation given to all baristas.	The implementation of equality is not just an individual barista initiative, but is structured in a standardized service management system.

Source: Observation Results, Interviews with Intan (B1), Widi (B2) and Iklas (SPV1), 2026

Table 6 explains examines three forms of equality practiced in barista communication and service delivery, along with their respective implications for customers.(Milanuari et al., n.d.)

a. Gender-Inclusive Greetings highlights how baristas used culturally appropriate forms of address — "Kak" for female customers and "Bang/Kak" for male customers — in line with local Medan culture, applied consistently regardless of a customer's appearance or background. This practice ensures that every customer feels personally recognized and respected from the very first moment of interaction. (Sugiat, 2025)

b. Non-Discriminatory Service Standards demonstrates that baristas maintained the same level of attention and friendliness toward all customers, irrespective of how much they spent. This consistency ensures that no customer feels overlooked or treated as less important than others, creating an inclusive environment where every individual — regardless of their economic background — feels equally valued.

c. Supervisor Confirmation adds an institutional dimension to the findings, as field supervisor Sincere confirmed that equality in service is not merely a personal habit of individual baristas, but is an established direction that is regularly reinforced through supervision and evaluation. This reveals that the equality observed on the floor is part of a structured and standardized service management system, making it a deliberate organizational commitment rather than a coincidental practice.

In summary, equality in this coffee shop context operates on two levels — the interpersonal level, through inclusive greetings and consistent service quality, and the institutional level, through structured supervision and standardized guidelines — both of which work together to ensure that every customer receives fair, respectful, and dignified treatment.

4. Application of Interpersonal Communication Dimensions per Service Stage

Table 7. Matrix of Implementation of Five Dimensions of Interpersonal Communication per Service Stage

Service Stage	Openness	Empathy	Support	Positive	Equality
Greeting	✓ Open and informative greeting	✓ Detect customer conditions	✓ Friendly welcome	✓ Smile and warm greeting	✓ Gender-inclusive greetings
Identify Needs	✓ Exploratory questions	✓ Understand customer needs	✓ Helps determine choices	✓ Friendly and enthusiastic response	✓ Equal treatment to all customers
Recommended Menu	✓ Transparent product information	✓ Adapt to customer tastes	✓ Non-directive descriptive explanation	✓ Positive and convincing language	✓ Recommendations without discrimination
Transaction Process	✓ Clear nominal mention	✓ Understand payment methods	✓ Assisting with the payment process	✓ Smile and eye contact	✓ Equal service without discrimination
Serving to the Table	✓ Supportive closing sentence	✓ Ensure customer satisfaction	✓ Invitation to report any deficiencies	✓ Friendly attitude when handing over orders	✓ Equal service to all customers

Table 7 explains presents a comprehensive mapping of how five core dimensions of interpersonal communication — Openness, Empathy, Support, Positive Attitude, and Equality — are applied across each stage of the barista service process.

During the Greeting stage, all five dimensions are simultaneously activated. The barista delivers an open and informative welcome, detects the customer's initial condition, extends a friendly reception, maintains a warm smile, and applies gender-inclusive forms of address in line with local cultural norms. This stage establishes the foundational tone for the entire interaction.

In the Identifying Needs stage, the barista poses exploratory questions to understand what the customer is looking for, responds with enthusiasm and friendliness, and ensures that every customer — regardless of background — receives equal and attentive treatment. This stage reflects a genuine effort to personalize the service experience from the outset.

During the Menu Recommendation stage, the barista provides transparent product information, adapts suggestions to match individual customer tastes, and delivers non-directive descriptive explanations rather than imposing choices. Positive and convincing language is used throughout, and recommendations are offered without any form of discrimination.(Anggraini et al., 2022)

In the Transaction Process stage, the barista clearly states the payment amount, demonstrates understanding of the customer's preferred payment method, and assists smoothly through the process. Eye contact and a consistent smile are maintained, and the same standard of service is applied equally to all customers regardless of transaction value.

Finally, during the Serving to the Table stage, the barista closes the service interaction with a supportive sentence that invites the customer to report any deficiencies, ensures satisfaction before stepping away, and maintains a friendly demeanor when handing over the order — once again applying equal and consistent treatment to every customer. (Rachmawati et al., 2022)

Taken as a whole, this table demonstrates that effective barista communication is not confined to a single moment but is woven consistently throughout every stage of the service journey. The simultaneous and sustained application of all five dimensions across each stage reflects a holistic and structured approach to service communication that is designed to maximize customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty.(Chesaria & Sunaryo, 2023)

5. Factors Supporting and Inhibiting Interpersonal Communication

Table 8. Factors Supporting and Inhibiting Barista Interpersonal Communication

No	Category	Description	Data source
SUPPORTERS	Positive Work Environment	A collaborative and supportive team atmosphere encourages baristas to maintain positive energy in interacting with customers throughout the shift.	Interview with Intan (B1), Widi (B2), and confirmation of Iklas (SPV1)
	Supervisor Supervision & Direction (Iklas/SPV1)	Field supervisor Iklas consistently monitors, evaluates, and provides feedback on barista communication performance, ensuring service standards are maintained.	Interview with Iklas (SPV1); confirmed by observation and interviews with Intan (B1) & Widi (B2)
	Direct Service Experience	Organically built work experience helps baristas develop interpersonal sensitivity and the ability to read customer situations.	Interview with Intan (B1) and Widi (B2)
	Integrated Service System	The barista character, who doubles as a cashier and delivery person, creates more communication touchpoints, enriching opportunities for building interpersonal relationships.	Direct observation; confirmed by interviews with Intan (B1), Widi (B2), Zikra (P1)–Diki (P4)
OBSTACLES	Rush Hour	Long queues (4–8 people) force baristas to shorten the duration of interactions per customer; the depth of exploration of needs and personalization of communication is reduced.	Observation December 24, 2025; interview with Intan (B1), Widi (B2), and Iklas (SPV1)
	Customer Temperament Variations	Customers with implicit expectations that are not verbally expressed require extra sensitivity from the barista to detect and respond to those needs.	Interview with Intan (B1), Widi (B2); confirmed by interview with Zikra (P1)–Diki (P4)

Source: Triangulation Results of Interview, Observation, and Documentation Data, 2026

Table 8 explains outlines the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the quality of barista interpersonal communication in the coffee shop setting.

Supporting Factors

a. Positive Work Environment — A collaborative team atmosphere helps baristas sustain positive energy throughout their shifts, which naturally reflects in the quality of their customer interactions.

b. Supervisor Supervision and Direction — Consistent monitoring and feedback from field supervisor Sincere ensures that communication standards are actively maintained and not merely established on paper.
c. Direct Service Experience — Repeated hands-on interactions organically develop baristas' interpersonal sensitivity and their ability to read and respond to varying customer situations.
d. Integrated Service System — The barista's dual role as cashier and order delivery personnel creates multiple communication touchpoints, enriching opportunities to build meaningful interpersonal connections with customers.

Inhibiting Factors

a. Rush Hour — Long queues force baristas to shorten interactions, reducing the depth of need exploration and the level of communication personalization offered to each customer.
b. Customer Temperament Variations — Customers with unexpressed implicit expectations require an elevated level of perceptiveness from baristas, placing considerable demand on their emotional intelligence and observational skills.

Overall, while the coffee shop has established strong foundations for effective communication, situational pressures and individual customer unpredictability remain key challenges that require ongoing attention and adaptive strategies to overcome.

6. Impact of Interpersonal Communication on Customer Satisfaction

Table 9. Summary of Customer Satisfaction Assessment Based on Interpersonal Communication Dimensions

Code	Name	Most Memorable Dimensions & Expressions of Satisfaction (Paraphrase)	Behavioral Impact
P1	Zikra	Empathy & Openness — Felt his needs were well understood; the barista explained the menu in detail without being asked.	Repeat visit; recommend to colleagues.
P2	CIA	Positive Attitude & Equality — Appreciates the barista's consistent friendliness; never feels treated differently from other customers.	Loyal; actively giving positive reviews to friends.
P3	Reza	Empathy & Supportiveness — Comfortable asking about unfamiliar menu items; baristas are patient and don't make you feel stupid.	Regular visits; bringing friends and family along.
P4	Diki	Openness & Positive Attitude — Satisfied with the transparency of wait time information and the barista's	Planning to make Titik Koma Matcha Club a

Code	Name	Most Memorable Dimensions & Expressions of Satisfaction (Paraphrase)	Behavioral Impact
		responsiveness; the barista's smile creates a positive mood.	regular meeting place.

Source: Interview Results of Zikra (P1), Cia (P2), Reza (P3), Diki (P4), 2026

Table 9 explains summarizes **the customer satisfaction responses of** four informants, capturing the communication dimensions they found most impactful and the behavioral outcomes that followed.

a. Zikra (P1) was most struck by the barista's empathy and openness, feeling that her needs were thoroughly understood and that menu explanations were offered proactively without her needing to ask. This experience led her to return for repeat visits and recommend the coffee shop to her colleagues.

b. CIA (P2) valued the barista's consistent positive attitude and equal treatment, appreciating that she never felt distinguished or treated differently from other customers. This sense of fairness and warmth cultivated loyalty, prompting her to actively share positive reviews with friends.

c. Reza (P3) highlighted empathy and supportiveness as the most memorable aspects of his experience, noting that he felt comfortable asking about unfamiliar menu items without ever feeling judged or made to feel uninformed. As a result, he became a regular visitor and began bringing friends and family along.

d. Diki (P4) was most satisfied with the barista's openness regarding wait time transparency and their overall responsiveness, adding that the barista's smile genuinely elevated his mood during the visit. This positive impression led him to consider making the coffee shop a regular meeting place.

Collectively, these responses demonstrate that different customers are drawn to different dimensions of communication, yet all four ultimately arrived at the same outcome — increased loyalty, repeat visits, and word-of-mouth recommendations — underscoring the significant role that quality interpersonal communication plays in driving customer retention and organic promotion.(DeVito, 2022)

7. Results of In-Depth Interviews with Customer Informants

The following presents the results of in-depth interviews with four customer informants (P1–P4) regarding their experiences and assessments of barista interpersonal communication at the Coffee Shop Titik Koma Matcha Club Multatuli Medan.

Informant P1 — Zikra (Customer 1)



Figure 5. Zikra Customer 1 (P1)

Customer 1 (P1)

Figure 5 explains Zikra is a customer who has visited Titik Koma Matcha Club more than twice. He considers this coffee shop a place to relax and spend time with colleagues. Zikra gave a positive assessment of the barista's greeting and communication during service.

Informant P2 — Cia (Customer 2)



Figure 6. CIA Customer 2 (P2)

Customer 2 (P2)

Figure 6 explains The dimension of equality is manifested in the way baristas treat each customer with a consistent standard of hospitality, without discrimination based on appearance, age, or transaction value. This practice was confirmed by Iklas (SPV1) as part of the service standards that are regularly evaluated.

I think the barista greeted me and communicated with me in a friendly and polite way, making me feel appreciated. The barista's attitude and language were good, using polite and easy-to-understand language". Cia also revealed that the barista's consistent friendliness without discrimination towards all customers is an added value that encourages her to continue giving positive reviews to the people around her.

Informant P3 — Reza (Customer 3)



Figure 7. Reza Customer 3 (P3)

Customer 3 (P3)

Figure 7 explains Reza is a frequent customer of Titik Koma Matcha Club with his friends. He admitted that he wasn't familiar with the matcha menu at first, but thanks to the barista's patient and communicative explanations, he became a loyal customer.

"The baristas greeted me in a friendly and professional manner, and they were also humble. Their communication was very helpful in understanding the products, especially those I wasn't familiar with". Reza emphasized that the barista's supportive approach to menu selection without feeling pressured creates significant comfort, especially for new customers. He's now actively recommending his friends to visit.

Informant P4 — Diki (Customer 4)



Figure 8. Diki Customer 4 (P4)

Customer 4 (P4)

Figure 8 explains Diki is a customer who uses Titik Koma Matcha Club as a relaxing spot. He appreciates the comfortable atmosphere and warm service from the baristas. Diki consistently gives positive reviews of the baristas' communication skills.

"The barista greeted me in a friendly manner and created a comfortable atmosphere. Good communication made me feel more satisfied. The service met my expectations". Diki emphasized that the barista's openness in conveying information and consistent positive attitude throughout all stages of service exceeded his expectations,

encouraging him to continue to return and recommend this coffee shop to people around him.(DeVito, 2022)

Overall, all customer informants—Zikra, Cia, Reza, and Diki—associated their satisfaction directly with the quality of the barista's interpersonal communication. This finding confirms Kotler and Keller's (2021) satisfaction theory proposition that customer satisfaction is formed when actual service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations. This satisfaction then results in positive behavior in the form of repeat visits and word-of-mouth promotion, in line with Adhari's (2021) findings.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that interpersonal communication plays a central role in shaping customer satisfaction within the coffee shop service industry. The consistent application of the five dimensions of effective interpersonal communication proposed by (DeVito, 2022)—openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality—demonstrates that communication is not merely a complementary skill but a core service component.

First, the openness dimension, as shown in Table 2 (Findings of the Openness Dimension in Barista Communication), indicates that baristas actively provide transparent and detailed information regarding menu options, waiting time, and product availability. This finding reinforces the study of (Sinaga & Pudjoprastyono, 2025), which states that transparency in interpersonal communication reduces uncertainty and strengthens customer trust. In addition, openness contributes to perceived service reliability, which is a critical determinant of customer satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2022).

Second, empathy emerged as the most dominant dimension, as presented in Table 3 (Findings of the Empathy Dimension in Barista Communication). Baristas demonstrated both cognitive and affective empathy by recognizing customer confusion and adjusting communication styles accordingly. This supports (Sunardiyah et al., 2022), who found that empathetic communication enhances emotional engagement and customer comfort. Furthermore, empathy functions as a relational bridge that transforms transactional interactions into meaningful service experiences (Munifa, 2022).

Third, the supportive attitude described in Table 4 (Findings of the Supportiveness Dimension) shows that baristas guide customers through non-directive and descriptive explanations rather than persuasive pressure. This aligns with customer-oriented service principles, where customers are empowered to make decisions independently, thereby increasing satisfaction levels (Iksan & Sanjaya, 2023). Similar findings were reported by (Wen-Jung Chang et al., 2023) , who emphasized that supportive communication fosters trust and long-term customer relationships.

Fourth, positiveness, as illustrated in Table 5 (Positive Attitude Dimension), highlights the importance of maintaining enthusiasm, friendliness, and positive energy during service interactions. Even during rush hours, baristas consistently demonstrated positive verbal and nonverbal communication. This finding supports (Kotler et al., 2022), who argue that positive service interactions significantly influence perceived value and emotional satisfaction. A positive communication climate also contributes to customer retention and loyalty (Surahman & Yuningsih, 2022).

Fifth, equality, as presented in Table 6 (Equality Dimension), ensures that all customers receive consistent service quality without discrimination. This practice strengthens perceived fairness and inclusivity, which are essential components of modern service quality. According to (Volle, 2022), equality in communication enhances mutual respect and strengthens interpersonal relationships, ultimately contributing to customer trust and satisfaction. (Bagus et al., 2022)

Furthermore, Table 7 (Matrix of Implementation of Five Dimensions per Service Stage) demonstrates that interpersonal communication is systematically integrated across all service stages—from greeting to serving. This indicates that communication is embedded within the service workflow rather than applied incidentally. Such structured communication practices reflect a mature service management system that prioritizes customer experience (Kotler et al., 2022).

From an operational perspective, Table 8 (Supporting and Inhibiting Factors) reveals that a positive work environment, continuous supervision, and accumulated service experience significantly support communication effectiveness. However, rush hour remains a primary constraint, limiting the depth of interaction. This finding is consistent with (Milanuari et al., n.d.), who identified time pressure as a major barrier to effective

interpersonal communication in service contexts.("Measuring Marketing Performance and Effectiveness," 2025)

Finally, Table 9 (Customer Satisfaction Summary) confirms that all customer informants directly associate their satisfaction with the quality of barista interpersonal communication. This finding strongly supports (Kotler et al., 2022) proposition that customer satisfaction is achieved when service performance meets or exceeds expectations. Moreover, satisfied customers tend to engage in repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth behavior, which are key indicators of service success (Surahman & Yuningsih, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, there are four main conclusions. First, baristas Intan and Widi at the Coffee Shop Titik Koma Matcha Club Multatuli Medan actively apply the five dimensions of effective interpersonal communication according to DeVito (2023)—openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality—at every stage of the service process, from greeting to serving orders directly to customers' tables.

Second, empathy and openness are the two most prominent and impactful dimensions. The barista's ability to actively explore customer preferences and adapt communications to their circumstances is a key differentiator, creating a personalized and memorable service experience. Third, key supporting factors include: a positive work environment, consistent supervision and direction from supervisor Iklas, an organically built service experience, and an integrated service system. The main inhibiting factor is rush hour, which forces abbreviated communication, although this can be mitigated through an organized division-based role division.

Fourth, all customer informants—Zikra, Cia, Reza, and Diki—linked their satisfaction directly to the quality of barista interpersonal communication, which encourages repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. This study recommends that management: (1) develop a systematic and ongoing interpersonal communication training program; (2) integrate communication competencies into barista performance evaluation; and (3) maintain a supervisor monitoring system as a mechanism for continuous service communication quality control.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of interpersonal communication science in the service context by empirically validating (DeVito, 2022) five-dimensional framework within a unique integrated service setting in Indonesia. The findings extend prior literature by demonstrating that the barista's dual role as cashier and server creates distinctive communication dynamics that amplify the impact of all five dimensions on customer satisfaction. This integrated service model represents a theoretical novelty not previously examined in the context of coffee shop communication research.

For future research, it is recommended that: (1) quantitative studies be conducted to measure the correlation between specific communication dimensions and customer satisfaction scores across a larger sample; (2) comparative research be carried out across multiple coffee shop brands with different service models to test the generalizability of the findings; and (3) longitudinal studies examine whether sustained interpersonal communication quality leads to measurable differences in customer retention rates over time.

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