

LAJENG COFFEE SHOP MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY THROUGH BARISTA IN INCREASING CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the marketing communication strategy of Lajeng Coffee Shop through baristas to enhance customer loyalty. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation. A purposive sampling method selected five informants, including two key informants and three supporting informants. Data validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal four stages in the barista-driven strategy: **Attention**, offering a warm welcome; **Interest**, explaining coffee beans; **Desire**, creating an emotional experience through coffee storytelling; and **Action**, building close relationships to foster loyalty. In conclusion, Lajeng Coffee Shop enhances customer loyalty through friendly, personalized service. Baristas create unique experiences by providing simple coffee explanations, offering recommendations, and sharing coffee origins. Warm interactions and a cozy atmosphere strengthen emotional connections and trust, encouraging customers to return and recommend Lajeng Coffee Shop..

Keywords: *Strategy, Communication, Barista, Loyalty, Customer*

INTRODUCTION

The coffee shop industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by changing consumer lifestyles, urbanization, and the increasing popularity of coffee culture worldwide (Euromonitor, 2023). In this competitive market, customer loyalty is crucial for sustaining business success and ensuring long-term profitability (Kim & Kim, 2018). Coffee shops must differentiate themselves not only through product offerings but also through effective marketing communication strategies that foster strong customer relationships (Hussain et al., 2019). In the highly competitive coffee shop industry, an effective marketing communication strategy plays a crucial role in building customer loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016). One key element in this strategy is the barista, who serves not only as a coffee maker but also as a brand representative, engaging customers through personalized service and storytelling. At Lajeng Coffee Shop, baristas create a unique experience by explaining coffee origins, offering tailored recommendations, and fostering warm interactions, which strengthen emotional bonds with customers. According to Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2018), service quality and customer experience significantly impact customer retention and brand loyalty. By implementing a barista-driven communication strategy, Lajeng Coffee Shop enhances customer satisfaction, encourages repeat visits, and builds long-term loyalty, making it a competitive player in the coffee industry. Lajeng Coffee Shop is one of the coffee shops that uses baristas as the front line in marketing communications. Lajeng coffee shop is a coffee shop that provides a unique service experience to attract customers. One of the methods they apply is through direct interaction with the baristas. During this interaction, the barista will provide an in-depth explanation about the various types of coffee beans available from various regions, such as Kintamani, Gayo, Kerinci, Tenjolaya, and many more. Apart from that, the barista also explained the various coffee bean processing processes available at the Lajeng Coffee Shop, including the natural process which

has fruit-like characteristics, the washed process which has a cleaner character, the honey process which has a sweet and fruity taste, and the semi-washed process which has an intense level of sweetness.

Several previous studies have explored marketing communication strategies and customer loyalty in the coffee shop industry. Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasized the importance of personalized service in enhancing customer retention. Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2018) highlighted how service quality and emotional connections influence customer loyalty. Meanwhile, Han and Hyun (2017) investigated the role of brand experience in fostering repeat visits in the hospitality sector. A study by Kim and Moon (2020) focused on barista performance and its impact on customer satisfaction, while Chen and Hu (2021) examined storytelling as a marketing tool in specialty coffee shops. Unlike these studies, which focus on general service quality or brand experience, this research specifically analyzes the role of baristas as key marketing communicators in customer loyalty-building efforts at Lajeng Coffee Shop. By integrating personalized interactions, storytelling, and customer engagement, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on how baristas influence long-term customer relationships.

Lajeng Coffee Shop implements innovative marketing communication strategies through the role of the barista. As a coffee shop that emphasizes personal interaction with customers, Toko Kopi Lajeng succeeds in offering a different experience from other coffee shops. They succeed in attracting customers' attention with friendly and informative service, maintaining their interest through detailed explanations about the coffee beans, arousing the desire to try high-quality coffee, and ultimately encouraging customers to buy their products. The purpose of this study is to analyze the marketing communication strategy implemented by Lajeng Coffee Shop through its baristas in enhancing customer loyalty. This research aims to identify the specific roles and communication techniques used by baristas to create strong customer relationships and foster repeat visits. A qualitative research method with a descriptive approach is employed to gain in-depth insights. Data collection is conducted through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation, with informants selected using a purposive sampling technique. To ensure data validity, triangulation and member checking are applied. The findings of this study will provide a deeper understanding of how baristas act as brand representatives, using personalized service, storytelling, and customer engagement to build loyalty, setting Lajeng Coffee Shop apart in the competitive coffee industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Communication Strategy

Marketing communication strategy is a comprehensive approach used by businesses to communicate their value proposition to customers effectively. It encompasses various tools and channels such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The primary objective of marketing communication is to create awareness, influence perceptions, and ultimately drive customer loyalty (Belch & Belch, 2018). In the context of coffee shops, strategic communication can be a differentiator in a highly competitive industry where brand loyalty is crucial for sustaining customer relationships (Hussain et al., 2019).

The Role of Baristas in Marketing Communication

Baristas play a pivotal role in the marketing communication strategy of coffee shops, serving as the frontline ambassadors of the brand. According to Bitner (1992), the "servicescape" — which includes employees' behavior and interactions — significantly influences customer perceptions and satisfaction. Baristas contribute to this by not only preparing beverages but also by engaging with customers, delivering personalized service, and enhancing the overall customer experience (Zhang et al., 2018). Effective communication through baristas can lead to increased customer satisfaction and, consequently, loyalty (Han & Hyun, 2017).

Customer Loyalty in the Coffee Shop Industry

Customer loyalty is defined as a customer's consistent preference and repeated purchase behavior towards a particular brand (Oliver, 1999). In the coffee shop industry, loyalty is influenced by multiple factors such as product quality, service quality, brand image, and customer experience (Chen & Hu, 2010). Research indicates that personalized customer interactions and emotional connections fostered by frontline employees, like baristas, can significantly enhance customer loyalty (Hwang & Hyun, 2012).

Marketing Communication and Customer Loyalty

Effective marketing communication positively impacts customer loyalty by shaping brand perceptions and building trust (Keller, 2013). In service-oriented businesses, personalized communication and relationship marketing are particularly effective strategies (Berry, 1995). Baristas, by engaging in meaningful interactions and delivering personalized experiences, serve as critical touchpoints that strengthen customer-brand relationships (Pizam & Tasci, 2019).

Previous Studies on Coffee Shop Marketing

Several studies have explored marketing strategies in the coffee shop industry. For instance, Lee et al. (2017) found that experiential marketing significantly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty in coffee shops. Similarly, a study by Ryu et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of ambiance and employee-customer interactions in enhancing customer experiences. However, limited research specifically examines the role of baristas as a strategic marketing communication tool in building customer loyalty, highlighting a gap that this study aims to address.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the marketing communication strategy of Lajeng Coffee Shop through its baristas in increasing customer loyalty. This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to explore the marketing communication strategy of Lajeng Coffee Shop through baristas in enhancing customer loyalty. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of human interactions, behaviors, and experiences, which are essential for analyzing how baristas engage with customers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive approach is used to systematically explain and interpret the communication techniques applied by baristas, such as personalized service, storytelling, and emotional engagement (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation, ensuring a rich and detailed understanding of real-life interactions. This approach is highly relevant to the study as it provides contextual insights into how baristas function as brand communicators, strengthening customer loyalty and differentiating Lajeng Coffee Shop in a competitive market.

1. Data Collection Methods

- In-depth Interviews:
 - Semi-structured interviews are conducted with three key groups of participants:
 - Management of Lajeng Coffee Shop: To understand the strategic perspective and objectives behind utilizing baristas as a communication tool.
 - Baristas: To explore their role, experiences, and communication techniques used to engage customers.
 - Customers: To gather feedback on their experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty towards Lajeng Coffee Shop.

2. Observation

- Non-participant observations are carried out within Lajeng Coffee Shop to observe real-time

interactions between baristas and customers.

- Aspects observed include communication styles, personalization, customer engagement, and overall service experience.
- Observational notes are documented to support and validate the findings from the interviews.

3. Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling is used to select participants who are directly involved and relevant to the research objectives:

- Management and Baristas are chosen based on their roles and experience in implementing marketing communication strategies.
- Customers are selected based on their frequency of visits and familiarity with the baristas, ensuring they can provide meaningful feedback on loyalty and experiences.

DISCUSSION

Attention

Baristas at the Lejeng Coffee Shop play an important role in marketing. The Baristas at Kedai Kopi Lajeng consistently demonstrate exceptional communication skills, ensuring that every customer is greeted with a warm and friendly attitude, reminding us of being welcomed into our own home. Subsequently, in collaboration with Lawrence D. Kincaid (1987), this term was refined to create a broader definition which states: "Communication is a dynamic process involving two or more individuals involved in the formation or exchange of information, which leads to a mutual and mutually beneficial relationship. deep understanding."

Attention is a crucial first step in a marketing communication strategy, as it captures customer interest and sets the foundation for engagement. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), attracting customer attention involves creating a positive first impression through visual appeal, ambiance, and service quality. In the context of coffee shops, baristas play a significant role in drawing customer attention by providing a warm welcome, maintaining a friendly demeanor, and showcasing their expertise in coffee-making. Research by Pizam and Tasci (2019) highlights that initial customer interactions significantly impact overall satisfaction and loyalty, emphasizing the importance of personalized greetings and attentiveness. Furthermore, a study by Han and Hyun (2017) in the hospitality industry found that first impressions formed through service encounters strongly influence repeat visits and customer retention. These findings support the idea that baristas at Lajeng Coffee Shop act as key communicators in capturing customer attention, setting the stage for deeper engagement and loyalty-building.

This activity always takes place when customers arrive, in order to create a comfortable and familiar atmosphere. This approach emphasizes the importance of providing a warm and pleasant experience, which makes customers feel better and more comfortable when interacting with the Barista. Greeting customers like guests also builds a good connection between the barista and the customer, so that interactions become more intimate and comfortable. Cangara stated four functions of communication, namely providing information, entertaining, educating, and forming public opinion.

Interest

Kedai Kopi Lajeng implements a marketing communications strategy that centers on barista expertise and a customer-centered approach. It is based on the basic premise of marketing, namely the idea that every interaction between two individuals involves an exchange. Everyone receives something in return for their contribution, either directly or indirectly.

One approach used is to explain the various types of coffee beans and the menu to customers in a simple and easy to understand way. Even though not all visitors have in-depth knowledge about coffee, the baristas at Toko Kopi Lajeng try to connect the taste of coffee with the taste imagination that visitors are already familiar with, such

as the fruity taste of the full Arabica coffee they use. Interest plays a vital role in marketing communication, as it bridges initial attention to deeper customer engagement. In the coffee shop industry, baristas generate interest by sharing knowledge about coffee, demonstrating expertise, and personalizing recommendations. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), businesses that create engaging and educational experiences enhance customer involvement and foster emotional connections. Research by Kim and Moon (2020) highlights that barista interaction, particularly in explaining coffee origins and brewing techniques, significantly increases customer interest and satisfaction. Furthermore, Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) emphasize that customer engagement is strengthened when service providers offer informative and interactive experiences, leading to greater brand attachment. At Lajeng Coffee Shop, baristas spark customer interest through storytelling, explaining coffee bean varieties, and offering tailored recommendations, which not only enrich the customer experience but also encourage repeat visits and long-term loyalty.

Desire

In the approach process carried out by the Lajeng Coffee Shop, namely in a simple but effective way in providing coffee recommendations to customers. Baristas always start the ordering process by asking the customer's preferences regarding two main choices: coffee with milk or without milk, and whether they want hot or cold coffee. Once this choice is determined, the barista then helps customers choose coffee beans that suit their tastes. This process not only simplifies ordering but also ensures that customers get exactly the drink they want. As stated by Sutisna (2022:272), an important aspect is that marketers must strive to build mutual understanding with consumers. It is based on the idea that when consumers view others who have similar product usage patterns, they are more likely to respond positively. Leveraging opinion leaders is usually quite effective in fostering a sense of commonality among consumers. Humans have a tendency to imitate the behavior of people they consider superior to them. (Sutisna, 2002:272).

Apart from that, the baristas at the Lajeng Coffee Shop routinely provide coffee bean recommendations to customers, especially when the customer wants to explore new flavors or new coffee that the customer has never tried. This approach is very helpful in creating a personalized and satisfying experience, because the barista can provide coffee choices that suit the customer's individual preferences. This shows that Lajeng Coffee Shop is committed to meeting customers' taste needs well, ensuring they feel satisfaction and convenience with the services provided. Desire is a crucial stage in marketing communication, where initial interest is transformed into a strong emotional connection that influences purchasing decisions. In the coffee shop industry, baristas play a key role in fostering desire by creating personalized experiences, sharing compelling coffee narratives, and building emotional bonds with customers. According to Schmitt (1999), experiential marketing enhances consumer desire by engaging their senses, emotions, and cognitive processes, making the brand more memorable. A study by Han and Hyun (2017) found that emotional attachment formed through personalized service significantly increases customer satisfaction and loyalty in hospitality businesses. Additionally, Hwang and Lyu (2020) highlight that storytelling and interactive service encounters strengthen customer desire, making them more likely to return. At Lajeng Coffee Shop, baristas cultivate desire by offering sensory-rich coffee experiences, sharing stories about coffee origins, and fostering emotional engagement, ultimately encouraging repeat visits and long-term loyalty.

Action

At the Lajeng Coffee Shop, interaction through coffee is considered part of everyday life, not a special action. Baristas at Toko Kopi Lajeng try to build close relationships with customers through coffee, by sharing stories about coffee beans, the brewing process, and the origins of Toko Kopi Lajeng. This approach reflects the values of familiarity and ease of interaction, making customers feel more comfortable and satisfied with their orders. Baristas also pay attention to every detail that customers want, from the type of coffee they like to the correct brewing method. Action is the final stage in the marketing communication process, where customers make purchasing decisions, revisit the brand, or recommend it to others. In the coffee shop industry, baristas play a crucial role in influencing customer actions by fostering personalized relationships, ensuring service consistency, and creating memorable

experiences. According to Kumar and Reinartz (2016), customer actions such as repeat purchases and brand advocacy are driven by emotional engagement and perceived value in service encounters. A study by Rather and Hollebeek (2021) highlights that interactive and personalized customer experiences significantly influence behavioral intentions, leading to stronger brand loyalty. Furthermore, Xie, Poon, and Zhang (2017) emphasize that positive service interactions increase customer satisfaction and the likelihood of revisits, particularly in service-based industries like hospitality and coffee shops. At Lajeng Coffee Shop, baristas encourage action by building emotional bonds, offering customized recommendations, and ensuring a welcoming atmosphere, which strengthens customer retention and brand advocacy.

The customer experience at the Lajeng Coffee Shop is often the main factor in attracting new visitors. Even though the barista does not directly ask customers to come back, the sincere reactions and expressions that emerge from customers while enjoying coffee show a high level of satisfaction. Many customers who initially come alone then invite their friends, or recommend Toko Kopi Lajeng to others. This shows that positive experiences at Toko Kopi Lajeng encourage customer loyalty and bring in new visitors through word of mouth recommendations.

In this case the Lajeng Coffee Shop, customer loyalty is built through various strategies that focus on customer experience. Baristas at Toko Kopi Lajeng play an important role in creating a warm and comfortable experience for customers, which in turn strengthens customer loyalty. By welcoming customers with friendliness and warmth, as well as providing consistent and quality service, baristas help build customer commitment to return to visit and enjoy the unique atmosphere offered by Toko Kopi Lajeng.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Research on Lajeng Coffee Shop Marketing Communication Strategies through Baristas in Increasing Customer Loyalty is that baristas have an important role in increasing customer loyalty through warm, friendly and personal interactions. Baristas are not only coffee providers but can be friends to share about coffee beans and the origins of the coffee. Create satisfying experiences, increase customer knowledge, and build strong emotional bonds. An experience supported by a place with a comfortable and calm atmosphere can encourage customers to return and recommend Toko Kopi Lajeng to others, thereby increasing loyalty and attracting new visitors.

Recommendation

Continuing to increase personal interactions with customers through a friendly and informative approach, regarding coffee knowledge and communication skills can help in providing a more satisfying experience for customers. Go deeper and understand the coffee preferences that customers want so that customers remain satisfied with the drinks provided to maintain the attractiveness of the Lajeng Coffee Shop itself.

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