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HANDLING GUEST COMPLAINT AT TOKIO COFFEE LAB IN MAKASSAR

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Abstract

This study aims to (1) identify the types of guest complaints at Tokio Coffee Lab in Makassar, and (2) examine the procedures used to handle those complaints. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and literature review. The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings reveal that the current complaint handling practices do not fully align with established procedures and often fail to meet customer expectations. Furthermore, many types of complaints remain unresolved by baristas and other staff members. This indicates a need for improvement in both understanding and implementing proper complaint handling protocols. The study recommends targeted training for employees on complaint resolution and the development of clear, standardized operating procedures (SOPs). These measures are expected to enhance service quality and increase customer satisfaction at Tokio Coffee Lab Makassar.
***Keywords**: Types of Complaint, Handling Complaint, Handling Procedure*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk (1) mengetahui jenis-jenis keluhan tamu di Tokio Coffee Lab Makassar, dan (2) mengetahui prosedur penanganan keluhan tamu di tempat tersebut. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan studi pustaka. Data dianalisis menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penanganan keluhan tamu oleh Barista dan karyawan lainnya masih belum sesuai dengan prosedur yang berlaku serta belum mampu memenuhi harapan pelanggan. Selain itu, jenis-jenis keluhan yang diterima belum sepenuhnya dapat diselesaikan secara efektif. Hal ini menunjukkan perlunya peningkatan dalam pemahaman dan penerapan standar operasional penanganan keluhan di lingkungan kerja. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pelatihan khusus bagi karyawan terkait penanganan keluhan, serta penyusunan prosedur tetap (SOP) yang jelas dan mudah dipahami agar mampu meningkatkan kualitas layanan serta kepuasan pelanggan di Tokio Coffee Lab Makassar.
Kata Kunci: Jenis-jenis Keluhan, Penanganan Keluhan, Prosedur Penanganan

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of coffee shops across Indonesia is not just a commercial trend, but also a social phenomenon. These cafés serve as public spaces that blend consumption with social interaction and identity expression (Muis, 2024). Unlike restaurants, which focus more on dining, coffee shops offer ambiance and experiences that cater to diverse customer preferences, especially among young urban populations.

In major cities such as Jatinegara and Pangkalpinang, research shows that service quality, product presentation, pricing, and café atmosphere significantly affect customer satisfaction, particularly among millennials and Gen Z consumers (Imelda Gultom & Alexander Samosir, 2021). Furthermore, facility maintenance plays a key role in shaping customer perceptions, as demonstrated by a study in Pare-pare where cleanliness and comfort were the most dominant factors influencing satisfaction (Winowatan et al., 2021).

While product and atmosphere are crucial, complaint handling also plays a vital role in service-based businesses. According to (Lim et al., 2022) effective resolution of customer complaints can positively influence loyalty, even if it is not the primary driver. This suggests that a structured complaint-handling protocol is essential to maintain service quality and retain customers in competitive industries such as the café business.

However, preliminary observations at Tokio Coffee Lab in Makassar revealed notable service shortcomings. Baristas often focused solely on beverage preparation and were inattentive to guest interactions, while menu explanations were minimal or absent. These findings reflect those of (Hwang et al., 2021), who reported similar service issues at local cafés due to a lack of staff training and unclear SOPs.

Operational issues further compounded guest dissatisfaction, with unresolved complaints regarding broken restroom facilities and lack of responsiveness from the staff. This gap between guest expectations and actual service delivery aligns with (Berry et al., 1988) SERVQUAL "Gap 5," which highlights discrepancies between expected and perceived service. Such findings reinforce the need for improved complaint management, staff training, and clear service standards to enhance customer satisfaction and business sustainability.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which focuses on exploring and understanding phenomena through non-numerical data such as written or spoken words and observed behaviors. The purpose is to describe how customer complaints are handled at Tokio Coffee Lab, located at Jl. Durian No. 33, Losari, Ujung Pandang District, Makassar, South Sulawesi 90113. The research was conducted from June to August 2024. Data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method, allowing the researcher to interpret real-life service interactions in depth and identify patterns in complaint handling practices.

Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and literature review. These were chosen to obtain a well-rounded understanding of the issue. The researcher interviewed a total of six informants, consisting of four employees (including baristas and waitstaff) and two customers who had previously submitted complaints. Observations were carried out during both peak and off-peak hours to capture a range of service conditions. The combination of these methods provided rich insights into the quality and consistency of complaint handling at the café.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Types of Guest Complaints at Tokio Coffee Lab in Makassar

The findings of this study, based on interviews and direct observation, reveal that customer complaints at Tokio Coffee Lab are primarily driven by dissatisfaction with service and facility standards. Common complaints include delayed food and beverage orders, inattentive waitstaff during busy hours, and a lack of responsiveness when taking orders. Additionally, guests have voiced discomfort with the music genre being played, inconsistent drink quality, and unclean restroom facilities. These complaints are not uncommon in food and beverage establishments, yet their recurrence indicates systemic service issues that require attention.

Guests expect timely service, consistency in taste, and a comfortable environment—any failure in these areas can result in dissatisfaction and impact customer loyalty. As shown in the interviews, several customers noted that their drinks did not meet expectations in terms of flavor or presentation. Others mentioned the lack of attentiveness from the staff, which diminished the overall café experience. Complaints regarding the air conditioning system not functioning properly and unmaintained restrooms further exacerbated the discomfort, especially during peak hours.

The data also suggest that complaint handling at Tokio Coffee Lab is inconsistent and often informal. For example, baristas are sometimes unresponsive or appear indifferent when guests raise concerns. In several cases, staff failed to offer sincere apologies or actionable solutions. This highlights a gap between customer expectations and actual service delivery. Although some complaints are addressed—such as offering drink replacements—there remains a need for a structured and consistent complaint resolution process that aligns with service standards.

3.2 Procedures for Handling Guest Complaints at Tokio Coffee Lab in Makassar

Effective complaint handling is essential in maintaining a positive brand image and ensuring customer satisfaction. Based on interviews with the manager and staff, the standard procedures currently in place at Tokio Coffee Lab include apologizing to the guest and offering immediate solutions, such as replacing drinks when a guest is dissatisfied. However, the application of these procedures varies depending on the individual employee's awareness and initiative, rather than consistent implementation based on established SOPs.

The findings indicate that while some basic procedures are known, such as apologizing and responding politely, employees—particularly baristas—often do not follow these steps properly. For instance, several guests mentioned being ignored or met with minimal empathy when voicing a complaint. This suggests a lack of formal training or reinforcement of complaint handling protocols. The management has a crucial role in ensuring that all employees understand and consistently apply these procedures, as they are directly tied to the guest experience.

To address these issues, management should provide ongoing training focused specifically on service recovery and complaint resolution. Employees, especially front-line staff like baristas, need to be equipped not only with technical skills but also with communication and empathy strategies to handle customer dissatisfaction professionally. Regular feedback and supervision should also be implemented to ensure that procedures are followed uniformly. Through these improvements, Tokio Coffee Lab can enhance both service quality and customer retention in a competitive café environment.

This study has important practical implications for the management of Tokio Coffee Lab and similar coffee shops. By identifying specific complaint types and gaps in complaint handling procedures, the research highlights areas where targeted employee training and clearer operational guidelines can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. Implementing these improvements can also enhance the café's competitive advantage and long-term sustainability. However, the study has limitations, including a relatively small sample size of six informants and a focus on a single location, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope by involving more cafés across different regions and incorporating quantitative measures to complement qualitative insights. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable groundwork for improving service quality and complaint management in the local coffee shop industry.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study has identified several key types of guest complaints at Tokio Coffee Lab in Makassar, including delayed orders, inattentive and unfriendly service, inconsistent drink quality, ambiance, and unclean facilities. These issues contribute to customer dissatisfaction and negatively affect the overall guest experience. The findings highlight that complaint handling at the café is still inconsistent and often falls short of customer expectations, with many complaints remaining unresolved.

Furthermore, the procedures currently implemented for handling complaints, such as apologizing and offering solutions like drink replacements, are not consistently applied by all employees. The variability in following established protocols indicates a gap in staff training and a lack of clear, standardized operating procedures (SOPs). This inconsistency undermines the effectiveness of complaint resolution and can harm the café's reputation and customer loyalty.

Therefore, it is recommended that Tokio Coffee Lab management prioritize comprehensive and ongoing training focused on complaint handling and customer service skills, especially for baristas and front-line staff. Additionally, developing and enforcing clear SOPs for complaint management will ensure uniformity in service delivery. By addressing these areas, Tokio Coffee Lab can improve service quality, enhance customer satisfaction, and strengthen its competitive position in the local café market.

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