

The Interpersonal Communication of Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations is an Effective Method for Maintaining Customer Loyalty in Medan, Johor

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of science and technology has undoubtedly spurred the emergence of many businesses, both in the service and manufacturing sectors. The laundry service industry is currently one of the fastest-growing businesses, in line with the increasing population growth. The coin laundry business is fiercely competitive. To win the race, businesses must excel in price, quality, excellence and knowledge development. The right marketing and communication strategy is essential for success. Hijrah Laundry Coin is one of the leading laundry coin businesses in Medan, Johor. Since opening its doors in February 2020, Hijrah Laundry Coin has been a dominant force in the coin laundry business, operating from Jalan Karya Wisata Ujung No. 23, gedung Johor, Medan Johor District, North Sumatra. Hijrah Laundry Coin can serve 35-50 customers a day with clothes dry cleaning services. Given its relatively short existence, Hijrah Laundry Coin has succeeded in gaining customer loyalty. This study aims to identify the interpersonal communication strategies employed by public relations, specifically the owner and employees of Hijrah Laundry Coin, to gain customer trust and establish customer loyalty. This research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology. Data are collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. In the context of intense competition for customer loyalty in Medan Johor, informant Anis has chosen to build a friendship relationship with her customers. Such a relationship can create internal and emotional bonds that persuade customers to remain loyal to Hijrah Laundry Coin.

Keywords: Interpersonal communication, public relations, customer relations, customer loyalty.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The incredible pace of scientific and technological advancement has given rise to a multitude of new businesses, both in the service and manufacturing sectors. The laundry service industry is currently one of the most exciting business opportunities around, growing strongly in line with the increasing population growth. The laundry industry is made up of six exciting segments: commercial, industrial, hospital, institutional, on-premises and laundry coin. And the best part is that prices vary depending on the type of service you choose!

The laundry coin business is a competitive one, with intense competition in terms of price, quality, excellence and the development of new knowledge. This is an exciting space to be in! The right marketing and communication performance can help laundry coin service businesses win the competition and increase their sales turnover. Medan City is home to a thriving number of coin laundry outlets, a testament to the city's vibrant growth and expanding population. The population of Medan Johor District is booming! According to data from medankota.bps.go.id, the district's population has grown from 136,069 in 2018 to an impressive 151,756 in 2020. In less than five years, the population in Medan Johor Sub-district has exploded, with an incredible 15,687 new residents! This brings the population density to a whopping 925 people per km².

This is great news for the coin laundry business in the Medan Johor area, which is seeing a surge in new businesses opening their doors to serve the growing population. From small, medium and large-scale coin laundry entrepreneurs, we have seen some amazing growth! This is a fantastic opportunity for coin laundry business owners to boost their sales! However, the facts on the ground tell a different story. The increase in population has led to a highly competitive market for laundry coin businesses in the Medan Johor area.

Hijrah Laundry Coin is one of the many fantastic laundry coin businesses in Medan Johor. This fantastic business started operating in February 2020 and is located at the intersection of Jalan Eka Surya, right next to the minimarket Indomaret Jalan Karya Wisata Ujung No. 23, Gedung Johor, Medan Johor District, North Sumatra. It's able to face the tight competition between laundry coin businesses head on! In just one day, Hijrah Laundry Coin can serve an amazing 35 to 50 customers who use clothes dry cleaning services! In just one month, it can rake in a whopping 25-30 million!

This is evident from its relatively young existence. Hijrah Laundry Coin has done an amazing job of gaining customer loyalty. In this study, researchers are excited to learn more about the interpersonal communication strategies that the public relations team, led by the owner and employees of Hijrah Laundry Coin, has used to build trust and establish customer loyalty. Based on the above, the author is thrilled to announce a research project entitled 'Interpersonal Communication of Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations in Maintaining Customer Loyalty in Medan Johor'.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Interpersonal Communication

The wonderful world of interpersonal communication (Sobur, 2014) is all about the amazing process of communicating within yourself. The amazing thing about communication is that it can happen within you. You can have a message, a channel, a receiver and feedback - all within you! All messages are created from within! We have the amazing ability to react to the messages around us based on our personal opinions! And that's what makes communication such an amazing, personal event! And it's always connected to our interactions with other people! Interpersonal communication is one of the most amazing things in the world! It's face-to-face interaction between two or more people, where the sender can deliver the message directly and the receiver can receive and respond directly.

According to De Vito (AW, 2011) explains that interpersonal communication is five positive attitudes that need to be considered when someone plans interpersonal communication, namely

1. Openness

The attitude of being able to accept input from others and not objecting to being able to open up to pour out information that is usually hidden, the attitude of openness is characterised by honesty in responding to any changes in communication.

2. Emphaty

The individual's ability to feel as others feel, to understand something that others feel, and to understand a problem from another person's point of view.

3. Supportiveness

An effective interpersonal relationship is one in which each communicating party has a responsibility to support an open relationship.

4. Positiveness

Forms of good behaviour. The point is that there must be positive feelings and thoughts, not prejudices, between people involved in interpersonal communication:

- a) Respect for others
- b) Positive thinking about others
- c) Tolerance
- d) Not being overly suspicious

5. Equality

It is a form of testimony or awareness, and willingness to put oneself on an equal footing (no one is high or low) with the other person when communicating, namely:

- a) Placing oneself on equal footing with others
- b) Recognising the value of other people's presence
- c) Not imposing one's will
- d) A familiar and comfortable communication atmosphere

2.2 Public Relations

Public relations or commonly abbreviated as public relations is a translation of the term public relations, in Indonesia it is common in society in the sense that the word has been widely used by departments, companies, agencies, institutions, organisations, and others.

So many definitions related to public relations (Liliwari, 2014) explain in the theory of Hugo A. de Roode, public relations / PR is a deliberate, planned and continuous effort to build and maintain mutual understanding between the organisation and its public.

2.3 Customer Relations

Customer relations (Delima & Luthfiyah, 2020) say that customer relations play a very important role in different companies. Customer relations in serving potential customers always try to attract by convincing potential customers to want to become customers of their company. In addition, customer relations must also be able to retain customers so that they remain loyal customers of the company.

Based on Smith's theory quoted from (Oktaviani, 2011), "customer relationship is an individual or group of individuals to whom you provide one or more products or services". Based on this definition, it can be interpreted that customer relations is an individual or group of individuals who use one or more products or services provided.

The role of communication in customer relations is to differentiate the products offered by a business actor from other business actors. To differentiate the same products, efforts are made to communicate to consumers that the products or services offered are different from the same type of product or service. Communication can also persuade consumers to enter into an exchange relationship; it can also be used to remind consumers of the existence of a product or service.

2.4 Customer Loyalty

According to Bothe (Carissa et al., 2014), customer loyalty is defined as customers who are satisfied with the company's products or services and become enthusiastic word-of-mouth advertisers.

According to Kotler and Keller (Sambodo Rio Sasongko, 2021), loyalty is a deep commitment to purchase or support a preferred product or service again in the future, even though the influence of the situation and marketing efforts have the potential to cause customers to switch.

Customer loyalty is an asset and plays an important role in an organisation. According to Griffin (Normasari et al., 2013), "Loyalty is defined as random purchases expressed over time by some decision-making units". Thus, based on this understanding, loyalty refers to the decision-making behaviour to continue buying goods or services from the selected company. The conclusion is therefore that loyalty arises from the experience of using a good or service.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research, which means the use of qualitative methodology in research procedures with the results obtained in the form of written words or verbally from people who are observed (Moleong, 2006). The research method used is case study which uses as much as possible different sources of data that can be used to explore, describe, explain comprehensively from different aspects of individuals, groups or an event. A case study is an empirical inquiry through investigation. In this study, data was collected in several ways, namely by conducting interviews with informants, namely Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations (owners and employees of Hijrah Laundry Coin), conducting observations and documentation, as well as data obtained from the research site. The results are in the form of interview transcripts, images or photographs.

According to Noeng Muhadjir (Rijali, 2019), the definition of data analysis as "an effort to systematically search and arrange records of observations, interviews and others to improve the researcher's understanding of the case under study and present it as findings for others. Meanwhile, in order to improve this understanding, the analysis must continue by trying to find meaning'.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

This chapter discusses and describes the data obtained from the field research using the data collection methods mentioned in the previous chapter. Here the researcher uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach.

Researchers conducted interviews with sources directly on how the interpersonal communication of Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations in maintaining customer loyalty in Medan Johor. Therefore, researchers need to conduct research to explore data based on what data sources say and do. Qualitative descriptive research is not what the author thinks, but based on the reality that happens in the field, experienced and imagined by the informant. This is how research becomes specific.

Thus, the problem to be answered in this chapter is to find out how the interpersonal communication of public relations of Hijrah Laundry Coin in maintaining customer loyalty in Medan Johor. Based on the explanation above, this research was conducted from 12 to 15 April 2023. In the interview process, the informants were given several questions using in-depth interview techniques to obtain clear and accurate information. The informants in this study are 2 (two) public relations people of Hijrah Laundry Coin, namely informant Anis (48 years old) as the business owner of Hijrah Laundry Coin and informant (Ima 38 years old) as an employee of Hijrah Laundry Coin who has been working for \pm 1.5 years. And also to see whether the interpersonal communication carried out by Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations in maintaining customer loyalty is directly proportional, the researchers also conducted interviews with 3 (three) customers of Hijrah Laundry Coin using probability sampling techniques and randomly selected, namely informant Dina (55 years old), informant Devika (21 years old) and informant Fahrizal (52 years old).

This research was conducted to find out how the interpersonal communication strategy carried out by Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations in maintaining customer loyalty in Medan Johor.

There are 5 (five) informants in this research: 2 (two) public relations of Hijrah Laundry Coin, namely the owner and employees of Hijrah Laundry Coin. And to find out whether the strategies carried out by the public relations of Hijrah Laundry Coin in maintaining customer loyalty are directly proportional, the researcher conducted interviews with 3 (three) customers of Hijrah Laundry Coin so that the researchers can find out and conclude the results of the study.

The observations and interviews that the author will examine are based on the problems described in Chapter I, namely to find out how the interpersonal communication strategy of Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations in maintaining customer loyalty in Medan Johor. In addition, the questions that the researchers asked the informants were taken from the theoretical description contained in Chapter II, and the questions were made with reference to the variables in the research categories contained in Chapter III.

Discussion

In this section the researcher will explain what will be the focus of the research chapter previously described, this is in the form of the results of interviews with informants related to the research title problem

that the author raises. Good interpersonal communication will be able to improve internal relationships and emotional relationships between entrepreneurs and customers, this must also be supported by the awareness of business people and employees who are key in a company.

During the research and observations made, the author saw that the interpersonal communication that Hijrah Laundry Coin's Public Relations did to its customers was very good. According to De Vito (AW, 2011) explains that interpersonal communication has five positive attitudes that must be considered when someone plans interpersonal communication, namely: (a) openness, (b) empathy, (c) supportiveness, (d) positivity, and (e) equality.

Hijrah Laundry Coin's public relations have implemented the five positive attitudes that must be considered. Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers in terms of openness, Hijrah Laundry Coin's public relations are very open regarding all matters and information. They also try to be honest with their customers such as returning items or money left in the customer's laundry.

In terms of empathy, it takes individual skills to feel as others feel, here I see that Hijrah Laundry Coin's Public Relations are very understanding in handling complaints from their customers. It can be concluded that they understand what their consumers feel. It can be seen from the results of the interview, they do not feel burdened if they have to replace consumers' lost clothes even though it is not their fault. This is what makes the growth of a close and emotional relationship between customers and business actors, because customers feel valued as consumers.

Supportiveness is that each communicating party has a responsibility to support the implementation of open relationships. If seen in terms of entrepreneurship, the attitude of support or support that Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations provides to their customers is in the form of free detergent soap, plastic, folding and also they provide rewards in the form of 10 free washes 1 time washing. This reward is also the main goal of their customers to continue using their services.

Not only that, Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations also provides moral support to their customers who have Home Industry businesses, by the way the owner of Hijrah Laundry Coin wants to be paid for his services with goods sold by his customers. This moral support is also what makes the relationship between business actors and customers closer and feel mutual need.

Positive attitude (positiveness) means that between individuals who are mutually involved in communication must have positive feelings and thoughts, not feelings of suspicion. This can be seen from the attitude of Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations in serving their customers. They are friendly and polite to their customers, considering customers as their own family, because the owner said that customers are an important asset of a company, without customers the company is unlikely to grow and develop. This can be proven from the results of interviews with Hijrah Laundry Coin customers who feel that the service at Hijrah Laundry Coin is very good and friendly and already feels close to them.

The last one is equality, which is an attitude to be willing to put oneself equal (no one is high or low) with the interlocutor when communicating. It can be seen from the results of interviews with Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations that they are always friendly with their customers, considering their customers as their own family, which in the end is like family.

In an undocumented conversation between the author and the owner, it is known that the owner of Hijrah Laundry Coin, informant Anis, participates in a lot of recitation, arisan and perwiritan with their customers, it can be seen that informant Anis has a high social spirit and is easy to get along with new people including her own customers. These friendships can create internal and emotional relationships that can persuade customers to continue to be loyal to Hijrah Laundry Coin, and also become a source of promotion for her business because by following it, we know many new people who previously did not know the existence of Hijrah Laundry Coin.

4. CONCLUSION

Interpersonal communication carried out by Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations in maintaining customer loyalty, Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations strives for various ways, such as being open to everything with its customers, providing the best service and quality to its customers. Hijrah Laundry Coin Public Relations also provides rewards to its customers in the form of a coupon for 10 free washes for 1 wash, which makes consumers interested in continuing to use the services/products of Hijrah Laundry Coin. Hijrah Laundry Coin's PR also tries to be close to its customers, such as communicating with customers even when the topic of conversation is outside of the buying and selling relationship. Uniquely, informant Anis, as the owner, often barter with her customers who have a food home industry, so that laundry services are paid for with products from the customer's home industry. This reinforces the sense of closeness between business actors and customers, as the customers feel valued for their existence. Informant Anis, as the owner, also tries to expand her network of friends through customers by participating in pengajian, arisan, perwiritan to be able to make close friendships so that customers can continue to make Hijrah Laundry Coin their first choice when using laundry products/services in Medan Johor.

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