

An Analysis of Service Communication by Sellers at INABA Canteen

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Abstract

Communication is a important aspect activities because it plays a role in delivering information and building good relationships between sellers and customers. This study aims to analyze the service communication used by sellers in serving student cudtomers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen. This research employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews and documentation involving two canteen sellers as research informants. The findings show that service communication is carried out through both verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication is used to provide information regarding menus, prices, and product availability to customers, while nonverbal communication is demonstrated through smiles, greetings, politeness, and patience in serving customers. The study also found several communication barriers, including noisy canteen conditions, customers speaking too softly or too quickly, and misunderstandings in receiving customer orders. To overcome these barriers, sellers reconfirm orders, apologize when mistakes occur, provide explanations, and immediately correct or replace inappropriate orders. The results indicate that effective service communication can enhance customer comport, reduce misunderstandings, and support the delivery of better service quality for students as customers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen.

Keyword : service communication, verbal communication, nonverbal communication, interpersonal communication, canteen service.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the important aspects of service because it plays a role in delivering information and building good relationships between sellers and customers. **According to Zahra (2025)**, effective service does not only depend on technical skills but also on verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication involves the use of polite, clear, and informative language, while nonverbal communication is reflected through facial expressions, body language, eye contact, and tone of voice. The study found that effective communication can increase customer satisfaction, strengthen relationships between sellers and customers, and reduce misunderstandings. Therefore, communication is an important factor that must be considered in every service process, including interactions between sellers and buyers.

In buying and selling activities, service communication plays an important role in creating comfort and ensuring smooth transactions. Sellers are not only responsible for offering product but also for providing information, answering customer questions, and delivering good service. Friendly, clear, and responsive communication can create positive customer experiences and help build strong relationships between sellers and buyers. This is in line with the study conducted by **Aulia, Pringgowati, and Permata (2024)**, which found that verbal and nonverbal communication play significant roles in the sales process by helping sellers convey information clearly, build positive relationships, and create customer comfort.

One place where service communication can be directly observed is the campus canteen. The canteen is a facility frequently used by students in their daily campus activities. In this context, interactions between sellers and buyers involve information exchange, service delivery, and responses to customer needs. The way sellers communicate while serving customers can influence students' comfort and satisfaction during the interaction and transaction process.

The canteen of Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) is one of the facilities frequently utilized by students in their daily activities. In this setting, direct interactions between sellers and buyers involve various forms of service communication. Based on preliminary observations, each seller demonstrates a different communication style when providing information and serving customers. Some sellers appear friendly, communicative, and responsive, while others tend to provide brief and limited service. These differences in communication styles may affect students' comfort and satisfaction during transactions. This finding is supported by Saputra and Hernawan (2023), who found that interpersonal communication and service quality influence customer satisfaction in transaction processes. Therefore, the service communication practiced by sellers becomes an interesting phenomenon to study in order to understand how service communication is implemented in serving student customers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Interpersonal Communication Theory

Interpersonal Communication Theory was developed by Joseph A. DeVito to explain the communication process that occurs between two or more individuals through direct interaction. According to DeVito (2016), interpersonal communication is a process of message exchange that allows immediate feedback between the communicator and the receiver. This theory emphasizes the importance of openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality in creating effective communication.

This view is supported by Anggraini et al. (2022), who state that interpersonal communication is face-to-face communication between two or more individuals that enables verbal and nonverbal interaction as well as direct feedback. Interpersonal communication plays an important role in building relationships and creating mutual understanding among communicating parties. In this study, Interpersonal Communication Theory is used to analyze how sellers communicate and interact with students as customers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen.

B. Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Theory

According to DeVito (2016), communication can be categorized into verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication refers to the process of delivering messages through spoken or written language. Meanwhile, nonverbal communication refers to the delivery of messages without words, such as facial expressions, eye contact, body movements, gestures, and tone of voice.

Both forms of communication play important roles in creating effective interactions and helping individuals understand the messages being conveyed. In this study, the theory of verbal and nonverbal communication is used to analyze how sellers communicate with students as customers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen.

C. Service Communication

Service communication is the process of delivering information by service providers to customers in order to fulfill their informational needs and establish positive relationships during the service process. According to Zahra (2025), effective service does not only depend on technical skills but also on verbal and nonverbal communication abilities. Communication that is clear, polite, and informative can improve service quality, strengthen relationships with customers, and reduce misunderstandings.

In this study, the concept of service communication is used to analyze how sellers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen provide information regarding menus, prices, and product availability to students as customers. Furthermore, this concept is used to understand how sellers build positive interactions through verbal and nonverbal communication during the service

RESEARCH METHOD

This Study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the service communication used by sellers in serving student customers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen. The object of this study was service communication occurring between sellers and customers, focusing on verbal communication, nonverbal communication, communication barriers, and the efforts made by sellers to overcome such barriers. The research was conducted at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen. The informants consisted of two sellers selected through purposive sampling because they were considered to have relevant experience and knowledge related to the research objectives.

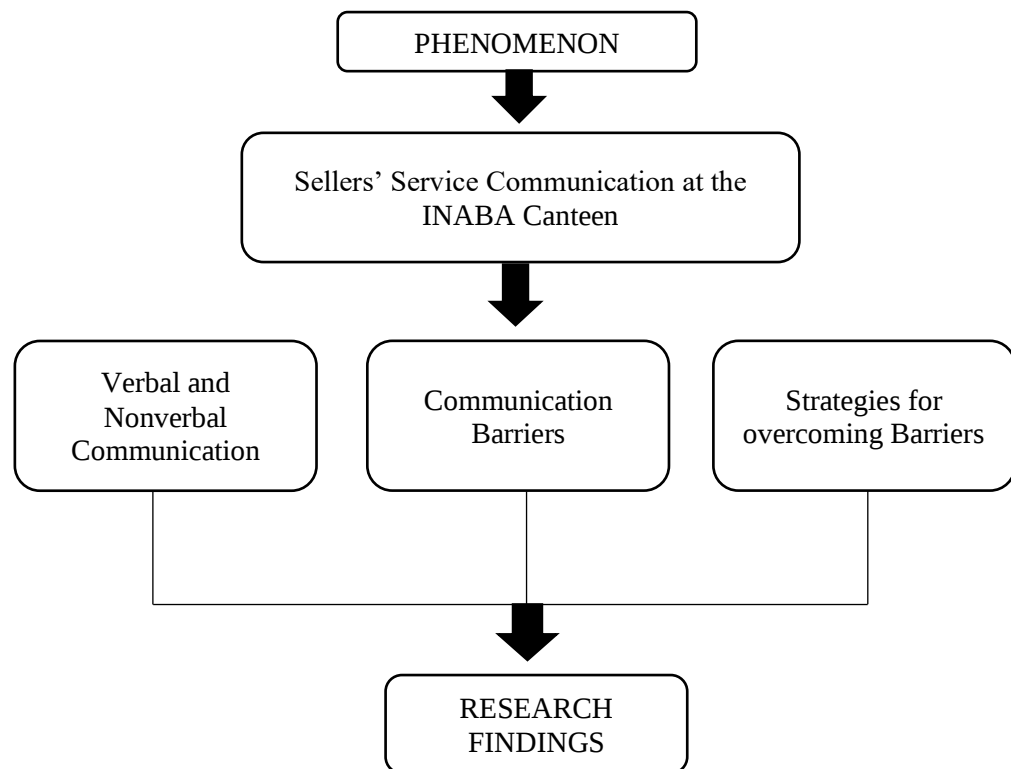
Data were collected through interviews and documentation. Interviews were conducted to obtain information regarding the communication practices used by sellers while serving customers, whereas documentation was used as supporting data for the study. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, which included data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was based on Interpersonal Communication Theory, Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Theory, and Service Communication concepts to explain the phenomenon of service communication practiced by sellers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen.

Previous Research

NO	Author (Year)	Title	Main Findings	Relevance to the Study
1	Naiza Aulia Zahra (2025)	The Importance of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Customer Service	Verbal and nonverbal communication play an important role in improving service quality and customer satisfaction.	Relevant because it discusses service communication. The difference is that this study focuses on sellers' service

				communication with student customers at the INABA canteen.
2	Duane Masaji Raharja (2022)	Communication (A Case Study of Seller-to-Buyer Communication in Ujungberung Market, Bandung City)	Effective communication helps sellers convey information and build relationships with buyers.	Relevant because it discusses communication between sellers and buyers. The difference lies in the research setting, namely a traditional market and a campus canteen.
3	Enggarayu Weningtyas and Miftahun Ni'mah Suseno (2012)	The Influence of Interpersonal Communication and Service Quality on Consumer Satisfaction	Interpersonal communication and service quality have a positive effect on consumer satisfaction.	Relevant because it discusses communication in service activities. The difference is that this study focuses on the effect of communication on consumer satisfaction, while the present study analyzes sellers' service communication at the INABA canteen.

Conceptual Framework



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interview conducted with two sellers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen, the findings show that service communication is carried out through both verbal and nonverbal communication in serving student customers. In terms of verbal communication, both informants stated that information regarding menus, prices, and product availability is delivered directly to customers. The first informant explained that customers can view prices through the available menu list, while direct communication is mainly used to inform customers about unavailable products or out-of-stock items. Similarly, the second informant stated that information regarding menus and prices is communicated directly to customers and that alternative menu options are offered when the requested products are unavailable.

In addition to verbal communication, both informants also apply nonverbal communication during the service process. The first informant stated that friendliness is demonstrated through smiling, greeting customers, and promoting available products. Meanwhile, the second informant explained that friendliness is expressed through smiling, polite language, and patience when serving customers. These findings indicate that nonverbal communication plays an important role in creating customer comfort during service interactions.

Regarding communication barriers, both informants reported different experiences. The first informant stated that communication difficulties mainly arise from customer-related factors and personal considerations. Some customers are less attentive to the information provided, while the seller sometimes feels uncomfortable reminding customers about unpaid purchases. In addition, crowded canteen conditions can affect communication, especially when serving new customers who are unfamiliar with the available products. The second informant explained that communication difficulties often occur when customers speak too softly or too quickly, making orders difficult to hear clearly. Furthermore, a noisy and crowded environment sometimes causes misunderstandings during the service process.

Both informants also reported experiencing misunderstandings in service delivery. The first informant described a situation in which a food order was served without the required seasoning, and the mistake was only discovered after the customer informed the deller. The second informant experienced a misunderstanding when a customer ordered a chicken breast portion, but a chicken thigh portion was prepared instead.

To address these communication difficulties and misunderstandings, both informants adopted similar strategies. They apologized to customers, explained the cause of the mistake, reconfirmed the correct order, and immediately corrected or replaced the inappropriate order. These actions demonstrate efforts to maintain service quality and customer satisfaction.

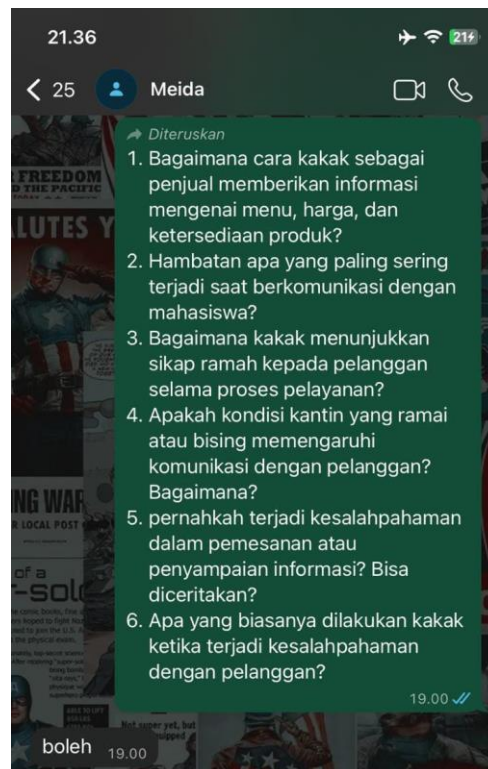
The findings indicate that service communication at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen relies not only on verbal communication but also on nonverbal communication such as smiling, greeting customers, politeness, and patience. These findings are consistent **with Aulia, Pringgowati, and Permata (2024)**, who argue that verbal and nonverbal communication play important roles in supporting customer interactions and service quality. Despite various communication challenges, sellers attempt to overcome them through order confirmation, apologies, and appropriate solutions to maintain customer comfort and satisfaction. The findings also support **Anggraini et al. (2022)**, who state that effective interpersonal communication helps build positive relationships and mutual understanding between communicating parties.

Figure 1. Interview with Seller 1 at the INABA Canteen



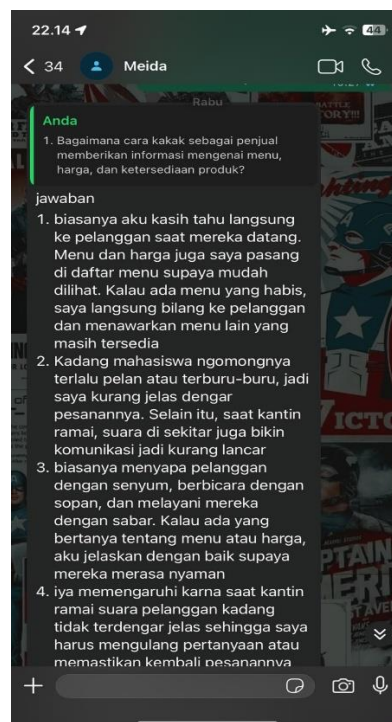
Source: Research Documentation, 2026

Figure 2. Interview with Seller 2 at the INABA Canteen



Source: Research Documentation, 2026

Figure 3. Interview with Seller 2 at the INABA Canteen



Source: Research Documentation, 2026

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate that sellers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen use both verbal and nonverbal communication when serving students as customers. Verbal communication is reflected in the way sellers provide information regarding menus, prices and product availability. Meanwhile, nonverbal communication is demonstrated through smiling, greeting customers, politeness, and patience during the service process. These findings are consistent with **DeVito's (2016) theory**, which states that verbal and nonverbal communication play important roles in creating effective interactions.

This study also found several communication barriers during the service process. The most common barriers were the crowded and noisy canteen environment and misunderstandings in interpreting customer orders. These findings are in line with **Cangara's (2018) theory**, which explains that physical and semantic barriers can affect communication effectiveness.

To overcome these barriers, sellers usually reconfirm customer order, apologize when mistakes occur, and immediately correct or replace inappropriate orders. These efforts demonstrate that effective communication can help maintain customer comfort and satisfaction throughout the service process.

CONCLUSION

Based on findings of this study, it can be concluded that sellers at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) canteen apply both verbal and nonverbal communication in serving student customers. Verbal communication is used to provide information regarding menus, prices and product availability, while nonverbal communication is demonstrated through smiling, greeting customers, politeness, and patience during service interactions.

The study also identified several communication barriers, including the crowded noisy canteen environment and misunderstandings in interpreting customer orders. These barriers may affect the smoothness of communication and the overall service process. To address these barriers, sellers reconfirm customer orders, apologize when mistakes occur, and immediately correct or replace inappropriate orders. Therefore, effective service communication plays an important role in creating customer comfort, reducing misunderstandings, and improving student customer satisfaction at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) Canteen.

IMPLICATIONS

The result of this study indicate that service communication plays a significant role in creating customer comfort and satisfaction at the Universitas Indonesia Membangun (INABA) Canteen. Clear verbal communication and friendly nonverbal communication help facilitate interactions between sellers and customers, allowing the service process to run more effectively. This study implies that good communication skills are essential for seller because they can reduce misunderstandings during service interactions. Furthermore, effective communication can improve service quality and help build stonger relationships between sellers and students as customers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of this study, effective service communication through verbal and nonverbal communication plays an important role in creating customer comfort and supporting smooth service processes. Therefore, sellers at the INABA Canteen are expected to maintain and improve their communication skills, particularly in providing clear information, demonstrating friendliness, and

reconfirming customer orders to minimize misunderstandings. In addition, future researchers are encouraged to further develop studies on service communication by involving more informants and diverse perspectives in order to gain a deeper understanding of communication practices within campus service environments.

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