

# Beyond Transactions: Exploring Employee-Customer Interaction in Retail Persuasion Scene

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of persuasive communication in shaping customer behavior within retail environments, focusing on in-store interactions between customers and retail employees. Using a qualitative approach, we employed discourse analysis to examine the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that influence customer decision-making and purchasing behavior. Data were collected from several retail locations across Indonesia, involving in-depth observations and recordings of employee-customer exchanges. The study highlights key persuasive techniques, including the use of urgency, social proof, and personalized recommendations, all of which were found to significantly affect customer engagement, perceived value, and purchase intent. Specifically, the findings reveal that communication strategies that align with customer interests and build a sense of urgency were most effective in encouraging immediate purchases. Moreover, the study identifies contextual factors, such as cultural nuances and the role of trust in the Indonesian retail context, that mediate the effectiveness of these persuasive techniques. These findings contribute to the broader understanding of how persuasion operates in retail settings, particularly in non-Western cultures. The research also has practical implications, suggesting that retail managers can enhance customer engagement and boost sales by training employees in specific communication strategies that foster trust and urgency. This study provides valuable insights into how persuasive communication can be optimized to influence consumer behavior and improve retail outcomes.

## 1. Introduction

Persuasive communication has become a pivotal tool in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in retail environments where purchasing decisions are shaped not only by the products themselves but also by how they are presented. In today's competitive retail landscape, businesses increasingly recognize that effective communication can significantly impact both sales and customer satisfaction. According to [Atifah et.al, \(2024\)](#), purchasing decisions represent a critical phase in the consumer journey, where the right communication strategy can tip the scales between a potential customer and a final sale. Retailers now understand that persuasive communication is no longer merely about providing information but is an active strategy that influences customer decisions. [Park and Yi \(2023\)](#) argue that persuasive communication shapes consumer perceptions and behaviors, thus driving sales outcomes. This is especially crucial in large retail chains, where the pressure to remain competitive necessitates the use of strategic communication to

foster customer loyalty and increase sales performance. Research suggests that persuasive communication influences not just the immediate decision to buy but also customer trust and engagement, which are key factors in fostering long-term loyalty ([Indrawan et al., 2020](#); [Johnson & Friend, 2015](#)).

In retail transactions, persuasive communication goes beyond merely completing a sale. It involves dynamic interactions designed to influence consumers toward making additional or unplanned purchases through techniques such as up-selling, cross-selling, and offering limited-time deals ([Indrawan et al., 2020](#); [Johnson & Friend, 2015](#)). The ability of retail employees to effectively employ these techniques is crucial, as their communication styles can either encourage or discourage customer buying intentions. For example, frontline employees who engage in self-disclosure about products can build customer trust and create a sense of intimacy, which positively impacts sales ([Park & Yi, 2023](#)).

This relational aspect of communication is particularly significant in smaller or less-exposed regions, where understanding the nuances of persuasive communication can offer valuable insights into consumer behavior and retail performance. Furthermore, the use of strategies such as cross-selling and up-selling is essential for maximizing revenue. Retailers that implement these strategies effectively often see increased transaction sizes and improved profitability (Li et al., 2013). These findings underscore the need for retailers to understand how persuasive communication not only drives immediate sales but also strengthens long-term customer relationships, particularly in regions with different cultural dynamics and consumer expectations from major urban centers (Park & Yi, 2023; Indrawan et al., 2020).

Despite the growing recognition of persuasive communication's role in influencing customer decisions, a notable gap exists in the literature regarding its application in retail environments, particularly in direct employee-consumer interactions. Much of the research on persuasive communication has been focused on broader marketing strategies or advertising, overlooking how these techniques manifest in day-to-day retail interactions. For instance, while Cialdini (2007) and Dahl et al. (2009) have explored the influence of persuasion in advertising and mass media, few studies address the specific persuasive techniques used in person-to-person interactions between retail employees and customers. Additionally, research in this domain has predominantly focused on Western markets, where consumer behavior may be influenced by different cultural norms and expectations. This raises the critical question of how persuasive communication strategies are adapted to the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts in developing countries like Indonesia, where local dynamics might alter how these strategies are received and implemented.

Although several studies have explored persuasive communication in marketing and advertising, few have specifically addressed how these strategies are applied in physical retail spaces. Gabbott and Hogg (2001), for example, examined interpersonal communication in service encounters but primarily focused on service quality rather than persuasion. Similarly, research on cross-cultural consumer behavior (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Ho, 2017) often overlooks the specifics of how retail employees use persuasive techniques in situational contexts. While some studies, such as those by Meng et al. (2009) and Lee & Chung (2023), have discussed communication in retail settings, they have mainly focused on developed markets, leaving a significant gap in the literature regarding non-Western contexts. This lack of understanding is particularly relevant for countries like Indonesia, where cultural, economic, and social factors can significantly influence consumer behavior. Chen

and Fiore (2023) provide insights into consumer behavior in Taiwanese pop-up retail environments, noting that cultural values heavily influence consumer responses. Their findings highlight the importance of considering local cultural context when developing persuasive communication strategies, yet this aspect remains underexplored in Indonesian retail contexts. Furthermore, studies on corporate social responsibility (CSR), such as those by Balakrishnan et al. (2014), have shown that CSR initiatives can influence consumer behavior, suggesting that cultural values may also affect how persuasive messages related to CSR are perceived.

The gap in understanding how persuasive communication is tailored to specific cultural contexts, particularly in Indonesia, underscores the need for further research. This study aims to address this gap by examining how persuasive communication is applied at the employee-consumer interaction level in retail environments in Kolaka Regency, Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the micro-level of direct customer engagement within the Indonesian retail context, which remains largely underexplored in academic literature. By focusing on Kolaka Regency, which has distinct socio-cultural characteristics, this study provides insights into how persuasive communication techniques may differ based on local context and cultural expectations. This research also examines the effectiveness of these strategies in influencing customer behavior, offering valuable information on how retailers can adapt their communication strategies to maximize sales and improve customer satisfaction.

The primary aim of this research is to explore the persuasive communication techniques used by retail employees at Alfamidi in Kolaka, how these techniques are influenced by local cultural factors, and how they impact consumer purchasing decisions. Additionally, the study investigates how employees' persuasive communication affects customer trust, perceptions of service quality, and the likelihood of repeat purchases. By addressing these aspects, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of persuasive communication practices in Indonesian retail environments, especially in regions outside major urban centers, where consumer behavior may differ from that of larger cities. This study is expected to provide insights that can help retailers develop more effective communication strategies tailored to regional consumer behaviors, ultimately enhancing customer engagement and loyalty.

The findings of this study are expected to offer practical recommendations for retail businesses, particularly in terms of training employees to effectively implement persuasive communication strategies. These strategies are not only crucial for driving immediate sales but also for cultivating long-term customer loyalty. Retailers who master persuasive communication techniques can differentiate

themselves in a competitive market by fostering deeper, more trusting relationships with their customers. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of adapting communication practices to local cultural nuances, which can lead to more effective customer interactions and better alignment with regional consumer expectations.

The structure of this paper is as follows: the first section provides a detailed review of existing literature on persuasive communication, particularly in the context of retail, to set the theoretical framework for the study. The methodology section outlines the research design, participant selection, and data collection methods used. The results section presents the findings, followed by a discussion that contextualizes these results within the broader literature. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes the study's contributions and offers practical recommendations for improving persuasive communication in retail settings, particularly in regions like Kolaka Regency. This study aims to fill critical gaps in the literature and provide actionable insights that can help Indonesian retailers optimize their communication strategies to meet the needs of their consumers more effectively.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Persuasive Communication

Persuasive communication seeks to influence others' attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors using various techniques. In advertising, the goal is to capture attention and affect attitudes and behaviors (Coppola & Camus, 2009). Aristotle's classical theory as mentioned in Bruss & Graff, (2005) identifies three key elements of persuasion: ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical reasoning) Bruss, K., & Graff, R. (2005). In retail, employees use ethos to build trust, pathos to create emotional connections, and logos to present reasons for purchases, such as promotions or product benefits. Gass and Seiter (2010) highlight strategies like "foot-in-the-door," "door-in-the-face," and reciprocity, commonly used by retail employees to encourage additional purchases. The Hovland-Yale model (Hovland et.al, 1953) stresses that persuasive communication's effectiveness depends on the credibility of the source, the relevance of the message, and the characteristics of the audience.

Despite extensive research on persuasive communication, gaps remain in understanding its application in everyday retail interactions, particularly in non-Western contexts. Most studies focus on marketing or advertising (Cialdini, 2007), overlooking the micro-level communication between employees and customers. Additionally, much of the research is based in developed countries, neglecting local cultural influences on persuasion. This study aims to address this gap by examining persuasive communication at Alfamidi in Kolaka Regency, Indonesia, where local

socio-cultural factors may shape how these strategies are perceived. The novelty of this research lies in exploring persuasive communication in a smaller, non-urban context, providing new insights into how cultural and social factors influence retail communication in developing markets.

### 2.2 Persuasive Communication in a Retail Context

In retail, persuasive communication goes beyond selling products; it enhances the consumer experience, which is crucial for building customer loyalty (Algesheimer, 2005). Further, Beatty et al. (1996) found that techniques like offering additional products or promotions can drive impulse buying, while Levin and Gaeth (1988) showed that emphasizing product benefits influences consumer decisions. Key strategies such as up-selling (promoting a more expensive product) and cross-selling (suggesting complementary items) increase sales and improve the shopping experience (Indrawan et al., 2020).

The store environment also plays a role in shaping persuasive communication. Turley and Milliman (2000) found that a comfortable atmosphere makes customers more receptive to persuasion, and Grewal et al. (1998) demonstrated that sales promotions enhance the perceived value of products. However, most research focuses on developed markets, with limited studies on non-Western retail environments like Indonesia. Bernritter et al. (2017) observed that in Indonesia, informal, friendly communication creates a positive atmosphere that influences consumer decisions, even without overt persuasion.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how persuasive communication functions in Alfamidi stores in Kolaka Regency, Indonesia. By considering local cultural and socio-economic factors, the research offers insights into how these factors shape retail strategies in developing markets. The findings will help retailers in Indonesia and similar regions tailor their communication practices to local consumer behaviors, boosting sales and customer loyalty.

## 3. Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive design to examine how persuasive communication is employed by employees during customer transactions, exploring its impact on consumer purchasing decisions. This design was chosen for its ability to capture natural, real-world interactions and explain how various persuasive techniques influence consumer behavior.

The research was conducted at several Alfamidi outlets in Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, selected for their diversity in serving customers from different socio-economic backgrounds. Kolaka's semi-urban context was chosen to provide a cultural contrast to larger Indonesian cities, offering insights into local persuasive communication practices.

Participants included [...] Alfamidi employees, selected for their role in customer interactions and at least six months of experience, and consumers involved in transactions during data collection. Purposive sampling was used to ensure employees had sufficient experience with persuasive techniques.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher directly observed employee-consumer interactions, noting the use of persuasive techniques like upselling, cross-selling, and promotions. In-depth interviews with employees explored their strategies and challenges, while consumers were interviewed to understand their perceptions of these techniques. Conversations during transactions were transcribed for analysis.

The researcher was the primary instrument, using open-ended interview guides, voice recorders for interviews, and field notes for observations. Data analysis was performed using a pragmatic discourse analysis approach, involving three stages: (1) **Data Reduction**: Sorting relevant data from observations, interviews, and documentation; (2) **Data Presentation**: Organizing data into transcripts and categorizing persuasive techniques (e.g., upselling, recommendations); (3) **Drawing Conclusions**: Synthesizing findings and linking them to the theoretical framework. To ensure validity and reliability, the study employed: (1) **Data Triangulation**: Using multiple data sources for cross-checking; (2) **Peer Review**: Having colleagues review the analysis to minimize bias; (3) **Member Checking**: Providing initial findings to participants for feedback and validation.

## 4. Result

The following is a presentation of the results of the qualitative analysis based on conversational exchanges between employees and customers at Alfamidi in Kolaka Regency. These interactions reveal various persuasive techniques and strategies employed by employees to guide consumer behavior, increase sales, and enhance the customer experience. Each example is provided in Bahasa Indonesia alongside its English translation.

### 4.1 Persuasive Techniques in Retail Transactions

The findings highlight key persuasive communication strategies, such as **upselling**, **cross-selling**, and **suggestive selling**, as well as the promotion of **discounts** and **special offers**. Each of these strategies was used to encourage customers to make additional purchases, even when they had not initially planned to do so.

#### a. Upselling Through Suggestive Selling

In **Conversation Data 1**, the employee uses suggestive selling to increase the total sale by prompting the customer to purchase cigarettes:



**Figure 4.1.** Research Documentation at Alfamidi on Jalan Pemuda, Balandete

#### Bahasa Indonesia:

**Employee:** "Jangan lupa beli rokok juga?"

**Buyer:** "Oh iya, saya ambil LA Purple dan Class Mild."

**Employee:** "OK, LA Purple dan Class Mild, ya!"

#### English Translation:

**Employee:** "Don't you also have cigarettes?"

**Buyer:** "Oh yes, I'll take LA Purple and Class Mild."

**Employee:** "OK, LA Purple and Class Mild, then!"

This is an example of **suggestive selling** where the employee casually introduces an additional item (cigarettes) to the customer's original purchase. By phrasing the suggestion as a question ("Don't you also have cigarettes?"), the employee encourages the buyer to consider adding the cigarettes without being pushy. The casual tone makes the suggestion feel like a natural part of the transaction. The customer responds positively, increasing the transaction value.

#### b. Cross-Selling Using Promotions

In **Conversation Data 3**, the employee uses a **promotion** to encourage the customer to purchase more than they initially planned:

#### Bahasa Indonesia:

**Employee:** "Ada promo beli dua gratis satu."

**Buyer:** "Kalau begitu, saya ambil dua paket."

#### English Translation:

**Employee:** "There's a promo: buy two, get one free."

**Buyer:** "Then I'll buy two packs."

The employee introduces the promotion of **buying**

**two, get one free**, which is a classic **cross-selling** strategy. The employee's suggestion encourages the customer to buy more of the same item (watermelon) by presenting it as a deal that offers more value. This offer motivates the customer to purchase two packs instead of one, thus increasing the sale.

### c. *Subtle Suggestive Selling in Regular Transactions*

In **Conversation Data 2**, the employee subtly encourages the buyer to reconsider the contents of their basket:

#### Bahasa Indonesia:

**Employee:** "Ada lagi yang mau ditambahkan?"

**Buyer:** "Enggak, cuma mie."

**Employee:** "Masa sih, bro?"

#### English Translation:

**Employee:** "Is there anything else to add?"

**Buyer:** "No, just noodles."

**Employee:** "Isn't that true, bro?"

This exchange is an example of a **gentle nudge** for suggestive selling. The employee uses informal language ("bro") and casually asks, "Isn't that true?" to nudge the customer into thinking they might have overlooked something. The employee's tone makes the suggestion feel like friendly advice rather than a hard sell. This technique works because it doesn't pressure the buyer but instead invites them to consider adding more to their purchase.

### d. *Direct Recommendations and Efficiency*

In **Conversation Data 1**, the employee uses a direct recommendation to make the payment process smoother for the customer:

#### Bahasa Indonesia:

**Employee:** "QR bisa, punya nomornya?"

**Buyer:** "Enggak ada."

**Employee:** "Kita buat barcode mie ya!"

#### English Translation:

**Employee:** "QR is possible, do you have the number?"

**Buyer:** "No."

**Employee:** "We'll make noodle barcodes!"

Here, the employee recommends a more efficient method of payment (QR code), which is a simple but effective way to improve the transaction process. The suggestion is made in a helpful, non-pushy manner. The employee ensures that the payment is processed smoothly, which ultimately enhances the customer experience. This is an example of **direct recommendation**, aimed at improving convenience for the customer.

## 4.2 Rapport-Building as a Critical Element in Persuasion

Beyond explicit persuasive techniques, **rapport-building** played a crucial role in making the persuasive strategies more effective. Employees at Alfamidi frequently used informal, friendly language to foster trust and create a positive environment, which encouraged customers to be more receptive to suggestions.

### a. *Informal Language and Personalization*

In **Conversation Data 2**, the employee used informal language to personalize the interaction and create a sense of familiarity:



**Figure 4.2.** Research Documentation at Alfamidi on Jalan Pemuda, Balandete Village, Kolaka Regency (June 23, 2024).

#### Bahasa Indonesia:

**Employee:** "OK, sis. *Totalnya* Rp 19.500."

**Buyer:** "Iya..." (*memberikan uang 20 ribu*).

#### English Translation:

**Employee:** "OK, sis. The total is IDR 19,500."

**Buyer:** "Yes..." (*handing over 20 thousand notes*).

The term "**sis**" (sister) is an informal and familiar way of addressing the customer, which serves to build rapport. It indicates that the employee is not just a service provider but someone who acknowledges the customer as a valued individual. The use of **informal language** helps reduce the transactional distance between the employee and customer, making the interaction feel more personal and less commercial.

### ***b. Establishing Comfort Through Casual Conversations***

In **Conversation Data 3**, the employee uses a casual and friendly approach to encourage further purchases:

#### **Bahasa Indonesia:**

**Employee:** "*Mau ambil satu lagi, om?*"

**Buyer:** "*Iya, ambil dua paket.*"

#### **English Translation:**

**Employee:** "Just one, uncle?"

**Buyer:** "Yes, I'll take two packs."

By using the term "om" (uncle), the employee establishes a sense of comfort and familiarity. This informal language makes the customer feel respected and valued, encouraging them to engage with the suggestion to buy additional products. The relaxed tone creates an atmosphere in which the customer feels open to considering more items, which is an effective way to introduce upselling or cross-selling.

### ***c. Using Gratitude as Social Reinforcement***

At the end of each transaction, employees reinforced the rapport by expressing gratitude, which strengthened the customer relationship and closed the sale on a positive note:



**Figure 4.3.** Research Documentation at Alfamidi on Jalan Pemuda, Balandete Village, Kolaka Regency (June 23, 2024).

#### **Bahasa Indonesia:**

**Employee:** "*Terima kasih.*"

**Buyer:** "*Sama-sama.*"

#### **English Translation:**

**Employee:** "Thank you."

**Buyer:** "You're welcome."

This exchange of gratitude is an important part of maintaining positive customer relations. It ensures that the customer leaves with a good emotional impression of the transaction, which increases the likelihood of return visits and future transactions. By thanking the customer sincerely, the employee further solidifies the bond between them, making the customer feel appreciated and valued.

## **4.3 The Impact of Cultural Context on Persuasion**

The cultural context of Kolaka Regency played a significant role in shaping the communication strategies used by employees. The informal language and friendly tone reflect local cultural norms, where personal relationships and familiarity are essential for successful retail interactions.

### **a. Language as a Cultural Norm**

The use of terms like "sis," "bro," and "uncle" reflects the cultural expectations in Kolaka, where informal, familiar language is valued in everyday communication. This approach helps create a welcoming environment, where customers feel respected and valued rather than treated as mere buyers. It also aligns with the local norm of creating close-knit relationships, even in professional settings, which increases the effectiveness of persuasive communication.

### **b. Rapport and Community Values**

In semi-urban areas like Kolaka, social rapport is not just a marketing tool but a reflection of community values. Employees are expected to engage with customers in a way that acknowledges their social and personal context. By using friendly, informal language and showing genuine interest in the customer's needs, employees help to build a relationship that goes beyond the immediate transaction. This cultural emphasis on personal connections is critical for making persuasive communication feel natural and effective.

### **c. Consumer Reactions and Effectiveness of Persuasion**

The customer reactions in these exchanges suggest that the persuasive techniques employed by the employees were generally successful. In Conversation Data 1, the buyer agreed to purchase cigarettes after the employee's suggestion, indicating that the upselling strategy worked. Similarly, in Conversation Data 3, the buyer responded positively to the promotional offer and decided to purchase two packs of watermelon, demonstrating the effectiveness of the cross-selling strategy. In Conversation Data 2, the buyer added noodles to their purchase after the friendly nudge from the employee, showing that even gentle persuasion can encourage a customer to make additional purchases. These reactions illustrate that the success of persuasive techniques is influenced not just by the product but by the rapport between the employee and the customer, which makes the customer more open to suggestions.

The findings from this study highlight the multifaceted nature of persuasive communication in retail. Employees at Alfamidi successfully employed upselling, cross-selling, and suggestive selling techniques, which were enhanced by their use of rapport-building strategies, informal language, and culturally appropriate behavior. These techniques were effective because they were aligned with local cultural norms, making the persuasion process feel natural and friendly rather than pushy. By understanding the cultural context and building positive relationships with customers, employees were able to increase sales and create a more satisfying customer experience. This study underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity, rapport-building, and subtle persuasion in achieving successful retail outcomes.

## 5. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate how persuasive communication techniques are employed by employees at Alfamidi in Kolaka Regency, particularly during customer transactions. The findings demonstrate that employees utilized several persuasive strategies such as upselling, cross-selling, suggestive selling, and the promotion of special offers. Furthermore, the study highlighted the important role of rapport-building, informal language, and cultural adaptation in enhancing the effectiveness of these persuasive techniques.

### 5.1 Persuasive Communication Techniques and Their Effectiveness

The results of the study show that employees at Alfamidi effectively used upselling and cross-selling techniques to increase the total value of transactions. Employees prompted customers to consider additional purchases through subtle suggestions, often introducing products the customers had not originally planned to buy. For example, in Conversation Data 1, the employee casually suggested the purchase of cigarettes by asking, "Don't you also have cigarettes?" This approach is consistent with [Astuti \(2017\)](#), who argued that persuasive communication aims to change people's attitudes and encourage them to take specific actions, such as purchasing additional items. By framing the suggestion in a non-intrusive way, the employee was able to increase the purchase value without pressuring the customer, aligning with [Gass and Seiter's \(2010\)](#) view that the most effective persuasive strategies are those that are subtle and integrated naturally into the conversation.

Moreover, the effectiveness of upselling techniques is supported by research indicating that the timing and framing of such messages can significantly influence consumer perceptions and decisions. [Guillet et al.](#) highlight that the joint influence of these factors can enhance the effectiveness of upselling strategies, suggesting that the way an upsell is presented can either facilitate or hinder customer acceptance ([Guillet et al., 2022](#)). This is further corroborated by [Heidig et al.,](#)

[\(2017\)](#) who discuss how cognitive effort and goal framing impact the persuasiveness of upsell offers, indicating that a well-framed upsell can lead to increased customer satisfaction and purchase intentions. Additionally, the emotional aspect of persuasive communication cannot be overlooked. Positive emotions have been shown to amplify the effects of persuasion on purchase intentions, which is crucial in retail settings where customer engagement is key. This emotional engagement can be strategically leveraged by employees to create a more compelling case for additional purchases, thereby enhancing the overall shopping experience and increasing sales, as supported by [Pappas et al. \(2017\)](#).

In Conversation Data 3, the employee used cross-selling by introducing a promotional offer, "Buy two, get one free," to encourage the customer to purchase more than they had planned. This strategy aligns with [Grewal et al. \(1998\)](#), who found that promotions can increase the perceived value of a product and lead to higher sales volumes. The employee's ability to present the promotion as an opportunity for the customer to get more value created an incentive for the customer to purchase additional items, thus increasing the total sale.

Additionally, the payment facilitation observed in these transactions, where employees offered customers the option of QR payments, plays a crucial role in the customer's overall experience. In Conversation Data 1, the employee quickly responded to the buyer's inquiry about QR payment methods, demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness to customer needs. This approach not only simplifies the transaction but also embodies a form of persuasive communication, as it reflects the employee's commitment to enhancing the customer's convenience. This aligns with the findings of [Hovland et al., \(1959\)](#), who argue that persuasive communication extends beyond merely promoting products; it encompasses fostering positive interactions and addressing customer needs. The significance of QR payments in enhancing customer experience is further supported by research indicating that consumers are increasingly inclined to adopt mobile payment services when they perceive these options as convenient and beneficial. For instance, [Humbani & Wiese \(2017\)](#) emphasize that service providers must effectively communicate the advantages of mobile payment systems to attract even the most hesitant consumers, thereby facilitating a smoother transaction process.

Furthermore, the study by [Eren \(2022\)](#) highlights that QR code mobile payments can significantly enhance customer experience by providing a seamless and efficient payment method, which is crucial in today's fast-paced digital economy. This suggests that the integration of QR payment options not only meets customer demands but also enhances their overall satisfaction with the service. Moreover, the role of persuasive communication in this context cannot be overstated. [Agustin \(2023\)](#) notes that persuasive communication techniques are vital for service

marketers, as they can influence customer behavior and enhance the likelihood of successful transactions. This is particularly relevant in the context of QR payments, where the ability of employees to effectively communicate the benefits and ease of using such payment methods can significantly impact customer acceptance and satisfaction.

Additionally, the research by [Zhao et al. \(2012\)](#) underscores the importance of service quality in fostering customer satisfaction, suggesting that effective communication about payment options is a key component of service quality that can lead to positive customer experiences. In conclusion, the facilitation of QR payments by employees not only simplifies transactions but also serves as a critical element of persuasive communication that enhances customer satisfaction. By effectively addressing customer needs and demonstrating flexibility, service providers can significantly improve the overall customer experience, which is essential for fostering loyalty and encouraging the adoption of mobile payment technologies.

## 5.2 Rapport-Building and Informal Language as Key Persuasive Tools

A major finding from this study is the significant role of rapport-building in enhancing the effectiveness of persuasive communication. Employees at Alfamidi frequently employed informal language, terms of endearment, and a friendly tone to create a comfortable atmosphere, which facilitated customers' ease in making additional purchases. The study found that using familiar terms such as “sis,” “bro,” and “uncle” fostered a sense of familiarity and trust between the employee and the customer. This aligns with [De Mooij \(2010\)](#), who argued that effective communication depends on cultural sensitivity and adapting one's approach to local norms and expectations. The importance of rapport-building is further supported by research indicating that rapport-building messages are frequently observed in various communication contexts, significantly enhancing trust and engagement, as seen in the patient navigation model where relational qualities are emphasized ([Strohbach et al., 2019](#)).

Moreover, the use of informal language and rapport-building strategies is not limited to retail environments; it extends to various fields, including healthcare and education. For instance, in healthcare settings, establishing rapport through informal communication has been shown to improve patient outcomes and satisfaction ([Butt, 2021](#)). Similarly, in educational contexts, rapport-building techniques have been linked to enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes ([Shane-Simpson et al., 2024](#)). The ability to create a comfortable and trusting environment through informal language is crucial, as it allows individuals to feel more at ease, thereby increasing their receptiveness to persuasive messages ([Page et al., 2020](#)).

Additionally, the effectiveness of rapport-building is often contingent upon the context and the communicative strategies employed. For example, in the hospitality industry, the management's ability to repair trust through rapport-building techniques has been shown to influence customer perceptions positively ([Ho, 2019](#)). This suggests that the strategic use of informal language and rapport-building can serve as powerful tools in various persuasive contexts, reinforcing the notion that effective communication is inherently relational and context-sensitive ([Ho, 2020](#)).

In Conversation Data 2, the use of informal language such as “sis” and “bro” created a sense of warmth and respect, making the customer feel valued and connected to the employee. This not only improved the customer's perception of the interaction but also facilitated a more receptive environment for persuasive suggestions. By using these familiar terms, employees were able to bridge the gap between a formal transaction and a more personal interaction, which is particularly important in semi-urban settings like Kolaka Regency, where relationships and social bonds are central to customer service.

The importance of rapport-building is underscored by the expressions of gratitude observed at the conclusion of customer transactions. Employees consistently expressed thanks to customers after completing sales, which served to reinforce the positive emotional connection between the employee and the customer. This practice aligns with the findings of [Mattila and Patterson \(2004\)](#), who argue that gratitude and politeness significantly contribute to a positive customer experience, thereby encouraging repeat visits and fostering long-term relationships.

Moreover, the role of rapport in service interactions has been extensively documented in the literature. [Fatima et al. \(2015\)](#) highlight that rapport significantly influences customer satisfaction, suggesting that the emotional connection established through positive interactions can mediate the relationship between customer commitment and satisfaction. This is further supported by the work of ([Kim & Baker, 2017](#)), who emphasize that rapport-building behaviors among employees are critical in inducing positive behavioral intentions, such as satisfaction and loyalty. The emotional competence of employees, as discussed by ([Delcourt et al., 2013](#)), also plays a vital role in shaping customer perceptions and experiences, reinforcing the idea that emotional connections fostered through gratitude and rapport are essential for enhancing customer loyalty.

In addition, the cultural context can influence the effectiveness of rapport-building strategies. [Sresnewsky et al. \(2020\)](#) argue that understanding customer segments within different cultural frameworks is essential for international brands to adapt their rapport-building strategies effectively. This adaptability is crucial, as rapport not only enhances

customer satisfaction but also positively impacts brand preference and word-of-mouth communication, as noted by (Hwang et al., 2021). Thus, the integration of gratitude expressions and rapport-building practices is not merely a transactional element but a strategic approach to cultivating enduring customer relationships across various service contexts.

### 5.3 The Role of Cultural Context in Persuasion

The cultural context of Kolaka Regency significantly influences the communication strategies employed by employees, particularly in retail settings like Alfamidi. In this semi-urban area, where community ties are strong, informal communication norms prevail. Employees at Alfamidi have tailored their communication styles to align with these local cultural expectations, utilizing informal language and fostering personal rapport with customers. This adaptation enhances customer interactions and builds trust, which is essential in a community-oriented environment. De Mooij (2010) emphasizes that cultural factors are pivotal in shaping communication strategies, necessitating that employees adjust their approaches based on local values and norms (Ahmad & Karim, 2019).

Moreover, the effectiveness of these communication strategies can be linked to the concept of symmetrical communication, which has been shown to enhance employee engagement and foster positive employee behaviors. Kang & Sung (2017) argue that symmetrical internal communication significantly affects employee perceptions of their relationship with the organization, reinforcing the importance of transparent and two-way communication (Kang & Sung, 2017). This aligns with the practices observed in Kolaka, where employees' informal communication not only meets cultural expectations but also promotes a sense of belonging and engagement among customers. Additionally, the impact of cultural diversity on organizational performance cannot be overlooked. Johnston et al. (2022) notes that cultural values positively influence organizational outcomes, suggesting that employees' responses to their environment are shaped by their cultural backgrounds (Johnston et al., 2022).

In the context of Kolaka, the informal communication style adopted by Alfamidi employees reflects an understanding of local cultural dynamics, which ultimately enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is consistent with Mishra's findings that highlight the importance of corporate communication in influencing customer loyalty through increased satisfaction (Mishra, 2022). The informal communication style, characterized by the use of familiar terms such as "sis" and "bro," is not merely a sales tactic but rather a manifestation of local cultural norms that prioritize personal relationships in service interactions. This approach aligns with the findings of Bojei et al., who emphasize that relationship marketing

tools, including personalized communication, are essential for retaining customers in retail settings (Bojei et al., 2013). By creating a welcoming and familiar atmosphere, Alfamidi employees are able to build trust, which is a critical component of customer loyalty (Parajuli et al., 2020).

In Kolaka, personalized communication plays a pivotal role in establishing trust and loyalty among customers. The use of informal language and personal touches is crucial in making customers feel valued and respected, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful persuasion (Losaura et al., 2022). This aligns with the concept of relationship marketing, which posits that personal connections can enhance customer retention and loyalty (Daulay, 2021). Furthermore, the informal communication style employed by Alfamidi employees allows them to effectively leverage rapport-building as a tool for influencing consumer behavior, ultimately leading to increased sales and customer loyalty (Zaid, 2020).

By aligning their communication strategies with local cultural norms, Alfamidi employees are able to create a unique customer experience that resonates with the community. This approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also fosters a sense of belonging among customers, which is essential for long-term loyalty (Moss et al., 2016). The role of communication in building customer loyalty is further supported by the work of Widijanto and Rachmat, who found that effective communication significantly impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty (Widijanto & Rachmat, 2019). As such, the informal communication style adopted by Alfamidi employees serves as a strategic advantage in cultivating lasting relationships with customers in Kolaka.

### 5.4 Gaps in the Study, Novelty and Contributions

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into persuasive communication in a semi-urban retail context, several gaps in the existing literature remain. One key limitation of the study is that it focuses exclusively on a single retail environment (Alfamidi) in Kolaka Regency. Future research could expand the scope by comparing persuasive communication strategies across different retail settings, such as supermarkets, convenience stores, and online retail platforms, to assess the generalizability of the findings. Another gap lies in the long-term impact of persuasive communication strategies. This study primarily observed immediate responses from customers during transactions, but it did not track customer behavior after the interactions. A longitudinal study could explore how these persuasive techniques affect customer loyalty and repeat purchases over time. Understanding the lasting effects of persuasive communication on consumer behavior could help retailers refine their strategies for sustained success.

Additionally, while this study focused on in-person communication, the rise of e-commerce warrants further investigation into how persuasive strategies are applied in digital retail environments. Future research could explore how persuasive communication is implemented in online shopping platforms, particularly through personalized recommendations, targeted ads, and customer reviews.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on persuasive communication in a semi-urban retail context, specifically in Kolaka Regency. Most research in the field has focused on urban or Western retail environments, leaving a gap in our understanding of how persuasive strategies are applied in smaller, less urbanized areas. By focusing on Kolaka, this study provides new insights into the cultural and social dynamics that influence persuasion techniques in a non-urban setting. From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the literature on persuasive communication by highlighting the role of rapport-building, cultural sensitivity, and personalized communication in retail environments. It expands on [Gass and Seiter's \(2010\)](#) framework of persuasion by showing how these techniques can be adapted to align with the local cultural context, where informal language and personal relationships play a key role in shaping consumer behavior.

Practically, the findings provide valuable guidance for retail practitioners, especially those operating in semi-urban or rural areas. Retail employees who understand the importance of cultural adaptation and rapport-building can use these strategies to enhance customer engagement, improve the shopping experience, and increase sales. Retail managers can implement training programs that emphasize the importance of personalized customer service and culturally sensitive communication to improve both sales outcomes and customer satisfaction.

Future research should compare persuasive communication strategies across socio-economic settings, such as urban and semi-urban retail environments, to uncover cultural and social influences. Longitudinal studies could examine the long-term effects on customer loyalty and behavior, offering deeper insights beyond initial transactions. As e-commerce grows, research should explore how persuasive techniques, like personalized recommendations and targeted ads, influence online shoppers. Additionally, quantitative methods could be used to measure the effectiveness of these strategies, providing actionable insights for retailers.

## 6. Conclusion

Based This study highlights the critical role of persuasive communication techniques used by employees at Alfamidi in Kolaka Regency, focusing on strategies such as up-selling, cross-selling, and promotion-driven selling to influence consumer

purchasing decisions. The findings demonstrate that these persuasive techniques are effective in encouraging customers to make unplanned purchases, particularly when employees leverage promotions or discounts. Moreover, the research reveals that these strategies are adapted to the local cultural context in Kolaka, where the use of friendly, informal communication fosters a sense of trust and comfort between employees and customers. Employees at Alfamidi tailor their communication style to match the social norms of the area, such as using informal language and adjusting their speaking pace, which enhances the persuasive impact of their interactions. This friendly and relaxed approach has proven effective in building positive customer relationships, making it easier for customers to accept persuasive suggestions like up-selling and cross-selling.

Additionally, the study shows that effective persuasive communication can contribute to increased customer loyalty, as customers who feel valued and respected are more likely to return for future purchases. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on a semi-urban retail context, offering insights into how cultural and social factors shape the effectiveness of persuasive techniques in non-urban environments. These findings have important implications for retail practices, suggesting that businesses should adapt their communication strategies to local cultural norms in order to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Future research could explore how persuasive communication varies between urban and rural settings, examine the long-term impact of these strategies on consumer behavior, or investigate how these techniques are applied in digital retail environments to better understand their broader relevance across different market contexts.

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