

## ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT AT THE REGIONAL PUBLIC COMPANY TIRTA HIDAYAH, BENGKULU CITY

Eti Arini<sup>1</sup>, Edo Dwi Anggara<sup>2</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Faculty of Economics and Business, Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, Indonesia  
[etiarini@umb.ac.id](mailto:etiarini@umb.ac.id), [edodwianggara23@gmail.com](mailto:edodwianggara23@gmail.com)

Corresponding email: [etiarini@umb.ac.id](mailto:etiarini@umb.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

Customer complaints are an important indicator in evaluating the quality of public services, including in the clean water supply sector. This study aims to analyze the implementation of customer complaint management at Regional Public Company of Tirta Hidayah, Bengkulu City, based on six indicators: commitment, visibility, accessibility, simplicity, speed, and fairness. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through interviews with six informants, consisting of three employees and three customers, as well as through documentation studies and direct observation. Data analysis techniques were carried out by data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The study results indicate that the company already has a complaint system with channels, such as WhatsApp services and direct complaints to the office. However, implementation in the field has not been optimal. Management commitment has not been fully accompanied by consistent follow-up; information visibility is still limited; access is not evenly distributed; simple procedures but less transparency in handling progress; inconsistent response speed; and all customers have not felt justice. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the system, increase human resource capacity, and implement a more open and responsive communication approach to increase customer satisfaction and trust.

### INTRODUCTION

Customers are vital to business continuity, particularly in the public service sector, such as the drinking water supply. The Regional Public Company of Tirta Hidayah in

Bengkulu City plays a strategic role in providing clean water, a basic public need. However, with the increasing number of customers and operational complexity, various customer complaints have emerged regarding service quality, such as unstable water distribution, substandard water quality, and slow service responses. This situation requires systematic handling through the implementation of effective complaint management.

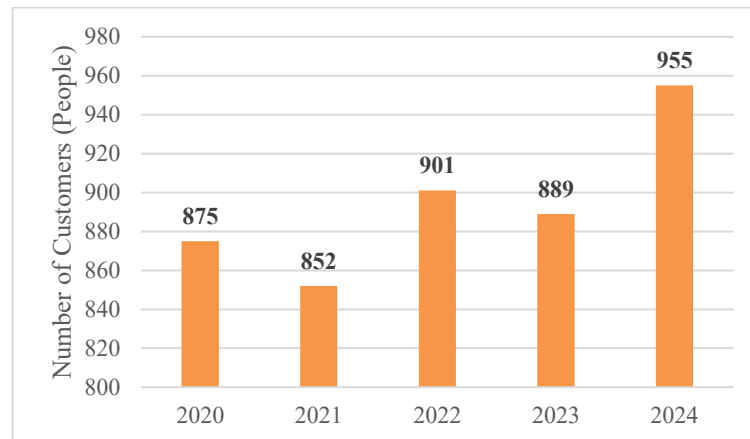
Complaint management is crucial in maintaining customer trust while improving the quality of a company's services. As Kotler (2021) states, good complaint management can help companies better understand customer needs, mitigate the risk of dissatisfaction, and increase customer loyalty. In the context of Tirta Hidayah, customer complaints should be viewed as valuable input for improving the company's service and operational performance.

Stauss and Seidel (2017) suggest that companies with a good complaint management system tend to have higher customer retention rates. This system involves steps such as complaint identification, root cause analysis, follow-up resolution, and evaluation of the success of complaint resolution. Implementing this system at Tirta Hidayah is highly relevant given the importance of maintaining good customer relationships amidst the increasingly complex challenges of providing clean water services.

A study by Mittal (2023) revealed that a complaint management process is crucial for organizations to learn from customer feedback, enabling them to identify internal deficiencies and develop effective remediation strategies. This process addresses complaints and facilitates continuous improvement in service delivery, ultimately boosting customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the organization's reputation. Similarly, research by Patle et al. (2023) in the education sector found that campus complaint management systems are designed to improve the efficiency of filing, tracking, and resolving complaints within higher education institutions, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability within the university community.

Various studies have shown that effective complaint management improves customer satisfaction and is an important indicator of corporate sustainability. Johnston and Clark (2018) explain that customers value companies that respond to complaints quickly and appropriately more than companies that never receive complaints at all. Therefore, this study is important to analyze how Tirta Hidayah manages customer complaints, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and provide recommendations for improving complaint management.

Tirta Hidayah, a Regional Public Company that distributes clean water to the people of Bengkulu City, receives numerous complaints regarding its services. Based on an initial survey of the Service Department of Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City, the number of customer complaints over the previous five years was as follows:



Source: Service Section of Tirta Hidayah, Bengkulu City, 2025

**Figure 1. Customer Complaints 2020-2024**

The above data indicates a persistently high number of customer complaints each year. Beyond theoretical aspects, the issue of customer complaint management at Tirta Hidayah is also related to government regulations. Based on Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 47 of 1999 concerning Guidelines for the Performance Assessment of Regional Drinking Water Companies, providing excellent service to customers, including responsive and accountable complaint management, is mandatory. Therefore, this research contributes to internal improvements at Tirta Hidayah and supports efforts to comply with regulations for quality public services.

This research analyzes customer complaint management at Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City. The specific objectives of this research are to analyze the commitment, visibility, accessibility, simplicity, speed, and fairness of customer complaint handling at Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Customer Complaints

A customer complaint is a form of feedback customers provide regarding a product or service they perceive as not meeting their expectations. According to Faradilla and Santoso (2024), complaints typically arise when customers feel that their experience with an organization or company does not align with their established expectations, whether in terms of quality, service, price, or other relevant aspects. In the business world, customer complaints are unavoidable, but they can be an opportunity for companies to learn, improve, and enhance the quality of their services.

According to Tjiptono (2024), a customer complaint expresses customer dissatisfaction due to a gap between customer expectations and perceived actual performance. Meanwhile, Kotler (2021) states that a customer complaint is a form of communication used by customers to convey their dissatisfaction, either directly or indirectly, to a company.

A customer complaint is a form of feedback from consumers to a company, generally negative. According to Bell and Luddington (2006), a customer complaint is

feedback from customers directed at a company that tends to be negative. According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2011), customer complaints reflect dissatisfaction with a company's products or services. This dissatisfaction can be caused by various factors, such as product quality that does not meet expectations, unsatisfactory service, or a discrepancy between expectations and the reality received. Customers hope the company will understand their problem by submitting a complaint and taking necessary corrective steps.

Complaints can come in various forms, such as verbally, in writing, or through social media. With the advancement of technology, it is increasingly easy for customers to convey their complaints directly to the company or publicly through digital platforms. Therefore, companies must have an effective complaint management system to handle complaints quickly and appropriately. For companies, customer complaints are a valuable source of information for improving product and service quality. By responding to and handling complaints effectively, companies can increase customer satisfaction, build loyalty, and improve their reputation in the marketplace.

### **Complaint Management**

According to Tjiptono (2024), complaint management is an organization's efforts to handle, respond to, and resolve customer complaints professionally and promptly. This action aims to restore customer satisfaction, prevent further negative impacts, and provide opportunities to improve business processes.

Kotler (2021) explains that complaint management is part of a marketing strategy to maintain long-term customer relationships. They emphasize that customer complaints must be handled effectively, as satisfied customers who have had their complaints handled effectively tend to have higher levels of loyalty. Good complaint management involves a prompt response, adequate solutions, and clear customer communication.

Furthermore, Zeithaml et al. (2017) state that complaint management is a systematic process involving collecting customer complaints, analyzing their root causes, developing solutions, and following up to ensure the problem does not recur. They also highlight the importance of recording and analyzing complaint data to improve an organization's internal processes.

Sujarwo and Subekti (2019) stated that an effective complaint handling process begins with identifying and determining the source of the problem that led to customer dissatisfaction and complaint. The source of the problem needs to be identified, followed up on, and efforts made to prevent similar issues from arising in the future.

According to Singgih and Sudibyo (2023), the assessment of effective complaint management is based on the following key characteristics:

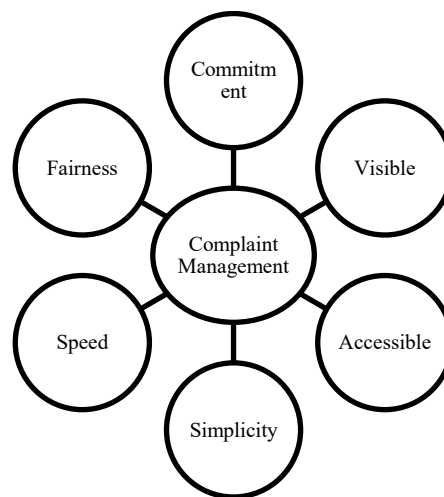
1. **Commitment.** Management and all other organization members are strongly committed to listening to and resolving complaints to improve the quality of products and services.
2. **Visible.** Management clearly and accurately informs customers and employees about how to submit complaints and who can be contacted.
3. **Accessible.** The company ensures customers can submit complaints freely, easily, and affordably by providing a toll-free telephone line or stamped envelopes.
4. **Simplicity.** The complaint procedure is simple and easy for customers to understand.

5. Speed. Every complaint is handled as quickly as possible. Customers are informed of realistic timeframes for resolution. In addition, any developments or progress in handling complaints being resolved are consistently communicated to the customers concerned.
6. Fairness. Every complaint is treated equally and fairly, without discrimination.

Based on the description above, this study uses complaint management indicators from Singgih and Sudibyo (2023): commitment, visibility, accessibility, simplicity, speed, and fairness. The researchers developed and operationalized these indicators in complaint activities at Tirta Hidayah, Bengkulu City.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework consists of deductive reasoning related to the aspects being studied. The conceptual framework for customer complaint management at Tirta Hidayah is as follows:



**Figure 2. Conceptual Framework**

### RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted at Tirta Hidayah, Bengkulu City, from March to April 2025. The focus of the study was on customer complaint management, so a qualitative descriptive approach was chosen. Through this approach, the researchers sought to comprehensively describe how Tirta Hidayah responds to and handles customer complaints and the factors that influence the effectiveness of their resolution.

The study's primary and secondary data sources were primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants. The criteria for primary informants were those with duties and functions directly related to complaint handling, a minimum of two years of service experience, and a broad understanding of the company's complaint handling system. From the company's perspective, informants included one head of the service sub-division and two operational staff members handling complaints. Additionally, three customers who had submitted complaints at least twice and were over eighteen years of age were involved

as supporting informants. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained by directly observing the complaint receipt and resolution process and analyzing internal documents such as customer complaint reports, complaint handling standard operating procedures (SOPs), service policies, and relevant academic literature.

Data was collected using three main techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews explored informants' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives regarding complaint management. Direct observations of field activities allowed researchers to understand the workflow and complaint resolution procedures. Documentation complemented these two techniques by providing written evidence to corroborate the interview and observation results. To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, researchers cross-checked information by requesting confirmation from informants regarding the interview summaries and research findings, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data obtained.

Data analysis was conducted using the qualitative analysis model developed by Miles et al. (2019). The analysis began with data reduction, sorting, and simplifying information relevant to the research focus. At this stage, customer complaints were categorized based on specific aspects, such as response speed, procedural simplicity, fairness, company commitment, accessibility, and visibility of the resolution process. Next, categorization was performed, where the reduced data were grouped according to emerging key themes. The next stage was data interpretation, which examined the relationships between categories to discover patterns and deeper meaning regarding the effectiveness of complaint management. The data was then presented as a thematic narrative that systematically and easily understood the research findings. The final stage was drawing conclusions, where researchers formulated key findings and developed strategic recommendations that can be used as material for evaluating and improving the complaint management system at Tirta Hidayah.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Informant Identity

This study involved six informants: three employees of Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City and three active customers. The identities of the informants participating in this study are as follows.

**Table 1. Informant Identity**

Name	Education	Age	Information	Date of Interview
Linda Marleni	Bachelor's Degree	48 years	Head of Customer Service Sub-Division	25/4/2025
Irana Renanda Putri	Bachelor's Degree	23 years	Customer Service Staff	16/4/2025
Putra Andika	Bachelor's Degree	31 years	Customer Service Staff	16/4/2025
Kevin	Diploma	31 years	Customer	12/5//2025
Amran	High School	70 years	Customer	12/5//2025
Syaiful	Bachelor's Degree	61 years	Customer	22/5//2025



## Commitment

Commitment is an aspect of customer complaint management that reflects how an organization demonstrates seriousness in receiving, responding to, and following up on every customer complaint. According to Singgih and Sudibyo (2023), commitment to complaint management is demonstrated through formal statements or written procedures, concrete actions, and consistently handling complaints quickly, accurately, and thoroughly.

The research results indicate that the management of Tirta Hidayah Kota Bengkulu's commitment to handling customer complaints is adequate, but not yet optimal. This commitment is evident in the established customer service system and organizational structure, including complaint forms and dedicated complaint handlers. However, in its implementation, obstacles have led to inconsistent responses to complaints. Linda Marleni, Head of the Customer Service Subdivision, stated:

*“Management's commitment to handling complaints is quite high, although implementation obstacles exist. Management provides direction to follow up on customer complaints immediately, but limited resources are often the main obstacle.”* (Interview with Linda Marleni, Head of the Customer Service Subdivision)

This statement indicates that structurally, management is aware and committed to serving customers better. However, implementation in the field is still less than optimal due to technical factors and limited personnel. Similarly, customer service staff member Irana Renanda Putri stated:

*“The commitment is there, but implementation is still inconsistent. We often receive repeated complaints due to late follow-up from the technical or distribution departments.”* (Interview with Irana Renanda Putri, Customer Service Staff)

This indicates that despite management's normative commitment, field implementers lack sufficient support to implement the system effectively. The lack of specific employee training in handling complaints also exacerbates the gap between planning and implementation. Meanwhile, Putra Andika, another service staff member, added:

*“Management pays attention to complaints, but the execution depends on cross-department coordination. Sometimes the process gets delayed because we have to wait for a response from the technical department.”* (Interview with Putra Andika, Customer Service Staff)

From the customer perspective, the impression of the company's commitment to handling complaints is more negative. Kevin, a customer, said:

*“I feel the company's commitment to handling complaints is still lacking. I've filed two complaints about water outages this month, but the handling takes a long time, and I have to ask myself repeatedly.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

A similar complaint was made by customer Amran, who said:

*“The water often goes off. I've reported it, but it's only been fixed after two days. There's no news, so I have to come to the office in person to ask.”* (Interview with Amran, Customer)

Even a customer like Syaiful, who is quite active and tech-savvy, said:

*“The company does try to handle complaints, but it's inconsistent. Sometimes it's quick, sometimes it takes a long time, depending on the type of problem.”*

These quotes demonstrate a gap between internal and external company commitment perceptions. While employees perceive the commitment as existing, albeit with limited implementation, customers highlight weak follow-up and communication as an indication of the company's lack of commitment. These findings suggest that procedural commitment has not fully translated into functional and emotional commitment, namely the willingness to be genuinely present, responsive, and empathetic to customer needs and complaints.

This misalignment between customer expectations and the organization's ability to respond to complaints results in a decline in public trust, increased repeat complaints, and a potential loss of customer loyalty. Therefore, commitment needs to be strengthened through policy and improving the quality of human resources, cross-divisional coordination, and a monitoring system that ensures every complaint is truly handled and resolved.

### ***Visible***

The visible aspect of complaint management refers to the visibility of information regarding the company's complaint procedures and channels. According to Singgih and Sudibyo (2023), visibility reflects the extent to which a company ensures that information about complaint procedures is known, understood, and accessible to all customers, both offline and online. In other words, this indicator measures the transparency and availability of complaint information to the public.

The research results show that Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City has provided several channels and information media for complaint submission. However, this information's visibility level is still limited and has not reached all customers equally, especially older people and those living in rural areas.

Officers stated that the company has provided information about complaint procedures through various media. For example, Linda Marleni, Head of the Customer Service Subdivision, said:



*“We communicate complaint procedures through information boards, brochures, and directly by service officers at the counter.”* (Interview with Linda Marleni, Head of Customer Service)

However, Irana Renanda Putri, a service staff member, noted that:

*“The information is quite clear for existing customers, but new customers or those living in remote areas often don't know how to file a complaint properly.”* (Interview with Irana Renanda Putri, Customer Service Staff)

This statement indicates that although information has been provided, its dissemination has not effectively reached all customer segments. The statement of Putra Andika, another service staff member, further supports this:

*“Some customers know from brochures and officers, but quite a few also find out from other customers or social media.”* (Interview with Putra Andika, Customer Service Staff)

Information visibility relies heavily on direct interaction and is not supported by more extensive and ongoing communication channels, such as mass SMS, bill infographics, or mobile apps. From the customer perspective, most customers admitted knowing how to file a complaint, but learned from unofficial sources or others, rather than through direct company communication. Kevin, a customer who filed a complaint, stated:

*“I found out about it via WhatsApp and also by coming directly to the office. I learned about it from the staff when the connection was first installed and also from a neighbor.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

Meanwhile, customer Amran stated:

*“I learned about it from the staff when the meter was installed. They said you can report it to the office or use your cell phone.”* (Interview with Amran, Customer)

This indicates that customers only learn about the complaint procedure when they first become customers, and after that, they receive no ongoing information from the company regarding this mechanism. Meanwhile, Syaiful, an older, digitally savvy customer, stated:

*“I learned about it from the internet, the company's social media, and also from neighbors who had already filed complaints.”* (Interview with Syaiful, Customer)

This indicates that customers seeking information have easier access to the complaint procedure. However, the company has not actively and regularly

communicated this information to all customers through official communication channels.

Based on the interviews above, the visible aspect of complaint management at Tirta Hidayah has not been optimized. While information regarding complaint procedures is available, it is not well-structured, integrated into a consistent service system, and does not reach all customer groups equally. This lack of visibility can lead to customer ignorance about their rights and how to file complaints, leading to dissatisfaction with the service and a backlog of unregistered complaints.

### ***Accessible***

Accessibility in complaint management relates to the ease with which customers can access and use the channels or mechanisms provided by the company. Singgih and Sudibyo (2023) emphasize that an effective complaint management system must ensure that all complaint channels are easily accessible to various customer segments, without discrimination, technical barriers, or administrative complexity.

The study results show that Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City has provided several complaint channels, including: visiting the office in person by filling out a manual form, sending a message via WhatsApp (WA), and contacting by telephone. However, this ease of access is still relative, depending on the customer's social background, age, and digital literacy.

Service personnel acknowledged that the company has provided various channels to facilitate customer complaints. Linda Marleni, Head of the Customer Service Subdivision, stated:

*“Customers can submit complaints via WhatsApp and directly to the service counter. Most are easy to use, but some elderly customers still have difficulty using digital channels.”* (Interview with Linda Marleni, Head of Customer Service)

Meanwhile, Irana Renanda Putri also revealed:

*“WhatsApp and in-person service at the office are the main channels. It's quite easy, although sometimes customers are confused about the correct WhatsApp format.”* (Interview with Irana Renanda Putri, Customer Service Staff).

This statement indicates that although the company has opened communication access, not all customers experience the same ease. Customers less familiar with digital technology often experience confusion when using WhatsApp, especially regarding the format and destination number. Meanwhile, according to Putra Andika:

*“Most customers can use WhatsApp, but elderly customers often prefer to come in person because they don't understand technology.”* (Interview with Putra Andika, Customer Service Staff)

In other words, accessibility is not only about the availability of channels but also about the channel's suitability to the customers' abilities and habits. From the customer

perspective, most stated that complaint channels are available and can be used. However, their experiences in accessing these services varied greatly. Kevin, a 31-year-old customer, stated:

*“It's quite easy, just send a WhatsApp message or fill out a form when you come to the office. But sometimes I don't get a quick response, so I feel ignored.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

Amran, a 70-year-old customer, offered a different perspective:

*“I'm not very familiar with WhatsApp, so I prefer to come to the office. For me, coming in person is easier, even though there are sometimes lines.”* (Interview with Amran, Customer)

Meanwhile, Syaiful, a 61-year-old customer who is more digitally savvy, said:

*“Yes, it's quite easy, especially for tech-savvy customers. But the company needs to provide other ways for customers who aren't familiar with WhatsApp.”* (Interview with Syaiful, Customer)

From these quotes, it can be concluded that the accessibility of complaint services is not yet fully inclusive. Younger and digitally native customers tend to adapt more easily to digital-based channels, while older customers or those with limited technology are more comfortable with conventional methods.

These findings indicate that while technically the complaint channels are comprehensive and easy to use, not all customers experience the same level of convenience. Accessibility is still limited by individual technological skills, procedural knowledge, and the company's response time. Poor accessibility for some customers, particularly older people or those with limited digital literacy, can potentially lead to complaints not being formally addressed or delayed in their handling. This can lead to frustration and erode public trust in the company.

### **Simplicity**

Complaint management simplicity refers to the ease of understanding and implementing the complaint submission procedure by customers, including the steps to be followed, the required documents, and the communication format used. According to Singgih and Sudibyo (2023), a good complaint management system should have a concise, uncomplicated procedure that can be implemented by all customers from various social backgrounds, education levels, and ages.

Based on research results, the complaint procedure implemented by Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City is relatively simple from an administrative perspective. However, weaknesses in the follow-up stage and unclear handling times cloud customers' perceptions of simplicity.

Employees generally agree that the current complaint submission procedure is not complicated and is easy for customers to follow. This was expressed by Linda Marleni, who stated:

*“The procedure is simply filling out a form and waiting for handling. However, the follow-up still needs improvement in terms of speed.”* (Interview with Linda Marleni, Head of Customer Service)

Irana Renanda Putri echoed this sentiment:

*“The procedure is indeed simple, but the follow-up process is often non-transparent, leaving customers wondering about the progress.”* (Interview with Irana Renanda Putri, Customer Service Staff)

Meanwhile, Putra Andika emphasized:

*“It's quite simple, just filling out a form or sending a WhatsApp message in a specific format. However, the lack of clarity regarding the handling time is a major customer complaint.”* (Interview with Putra Andika, Customer Service Staff)

The three employees concluded that although the initial complaint process doesn't require many requirements or documents, the lack of transparency regarding the handling process creates a barrier, which actually reduces the system's perceived simplicity in customers' eyes.

While the initial procedure isn't perceived as difficult, the uncertainty surrounding the subsequent process leaves them confused and frustrated. Kevin stated:

*“The procedure is simple, but after submitting the complaint, I'm confused about how long I'll have to wait, and I haven't received any further news from the company.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

Amran, a customer, stated:

*“Yes, I just need to fill out the form and wait for an officer. But I'm confused about when they'll arrive. There's no further information after I file a complaint.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

Meanwhile, Syaiful, a customer accustomed to using digital services, added:

*“The procedure is easy, just send a message or fill out a form. But there's no further information, so I'm confused about when the follow-up will be.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

These three customers emphasized that the initial procedure was simple, but the lack of transparency and slow follow-up made the system seem complicated to the user.

The findings above indicate that the simplicity aspect of Tirta Hidayah's complaints system is only formally fulfilled, but is not yet optimally functional and communicative.

The lack of follow-up information and clear timeframes for resolution leaves customers uncertain whether their complaints are being processed, followed up on, or even ignored. Simplicity doesn't just mean making it easy to file a complaint; it also includes following the process, getting clarity on the status, and finding a solution. If these components aren't met, the system is perceived as complex from a customer perspective, even if it appears procedurally simple.

### Speed

In a customer complaint management system, speed is one of the most crucial indicators determining customer satisfaction with post-complaint service. According to Singgih and Sudibyo (2023), speed refers to how quickly a company provides an initial response and fully resolves customer issues after a complaint is submitted. Consistent speed reflects the company's efficiency, responsibility, and commitment to maintaining service quality.

Research shows that the speed of response to customer complaints at Tirta Hidayah in Bengkulu City varies greatly, depending on the type of complaint and technical readiness in the field. Customers generally complain about the company's slow response in handling complaints, especially technical ones such as water outages or meter damage.

Internal stakeholders recognize that not all complaints can be resolved quickly due to limited resources regarding the number of technicians and available equipment. Linda Marleni stated:

*“It depends on the case, ranging from one day to more than a week. Administrative complaints can be handled quickly, but technical complaints require coordination with the field.”* (Interview with Linda Marleni, Head of Customer Service)

Irana Renanda Putri added:

*“It can take one day for minor issues, but if it involves technical repairs, it can take more than three days or even a week.”* (Interview with Irana Renanda Putri, Customer Service Staff)

Meanwhile, Putra Andika stated:

*“For minor complaints, it can be handled quickly, but sometimes we have to wait for our turn with the technical staff. If there's a queue in the field, customers have to wait.”* (Interview with Putra Andika, Customer Service Staff)

These statements indicate that the company does not yet have a standard timeframe for resolving complaints and has not yet established a priority system based on the urgency of the complaint.

Complaints about the length of time it takes to resolve complaints were a key theme that emerged in almost all customer interviews. Kevin, an active customer, stated:

*“It can take three to five days, depending on the complaint. I think this is too long, especially if my complaint is urgent, like a water outage.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

Amran, an elderly customer, also experienced a similar situation:

*“Usually, two to three days. Sometimes, if you don't ask, no one comes.”* (Interview with Amran, Customer)

Syaiful, elderly but digitally active customer, stated:

*“Usually, two to four days. But sometimes it takes up to a week. There's no fixed timeframe.”* (Interview with Syaiful, Customer)

All of these quotes reflect frustration with the slow follow-up and unclear handling times, which have led to a decline in customer trust in the company's service system.

The slow response time to complaints indicates that Tirta Hidayah lacks efficient operational management for complaint management, particularly regarding technician allocation, the handling queue system, and communication between departments. This irregularity creates the impression that the company is unresponsive and allows customer complaints to pile up without a quick solution. A further impact is that customers become passive or even reluctant to file complaints again, believing they have no impact.

### ***Fairness***

Fairness in complaint management relates to the equal treatment of all customers in submitting, handling, and resolving complaints without discrimination based on social status, personal relationship, age, or other backgrounds. According to Singgih and Sudibyo (2023), fairness encompasses procedural justice (consistent implementation of SOPs), distributive justice (equal outcomes or solutions provided), and interactional justice (the attitude and treatment of staff toward customers).

The study results show that, in principle, Tirta Hidayah Kota Bengkulu strives to implement fairness in service. However, there are still perceptions of unfairness in the field, particularly regarding the speed of handling and attention to customers with internal relationships with employees.

Employees stated that all customers are treated equally procedurally, and no special treatment is given based on personal relationships. However, they acknowledged a tendency for faster service to customers who come in person or have access to informal communication. Linda Marleni, Head of the Customer Service Subdivision, stated:

*“With the principle of non-discrimination, all customers are treated equally. We strive to handle each complaint in the order in which it is received.”* (Interview with Linda Marleni, Head of Customer Service)



However, Putra Andika admitted:

*“All complaints are recorded and followed up regardless of customer status. However, customers who come in person often feel more cared for.”* (Interview with Putra Andika, Customer Service Staff)

Irana Renanda Putri reinforced this:

*“We accept all reports regardless of customer background. But if customers come in person, we can coordinate directly, so they are handled more quickly.”* (Interview with Irana Renanda Putri, Customer Service Staff)

This statement demonstrates that the principle of fairness is applied formally. However, in practice, a process bias indirectly favors customers who are more active or physically closer to the staff.

Customers generally feel they do not experience overt discrimination, but they notice inequalities in the speed of service based on how they submit their complaints or their social connections. Kevin stated:

*“I feel I am treated fairly, not discriminated against compared to other customers. But I have to ask questions to get follow-up actively.”* (Interview with Kevin, Customer)

Meanwhile, Amran stated:

*“I don't think there's any difference in treatment. All customers are served the same, even if it's slow.”* (Interview with Amran, Customer)

However, Syaiful made an important note:

*“Yes, I don't think the company's service discriminates against customers. But perhaps some customers are handled more quickly if they know the staff directly.”* (Interview with Syaiful, Customer)

This statement indicates a perception that informal access to staff can expedite the handling process, potentially creating a sense of injustice among general customers.

The findings above show that fairness in complaint management at Tirta Hidayah is only implemented at the procedural level, not at the level of customer perceptions of service fairness. Customers don't feel mistreated, but the varying response speeds and reliance on customer initiative create the impression that the system isn't entirely fair, both distributively and interactionally. This perception is important because perceived unfairness can trigger dissatisfaction, reduce trust, and even spread negative opinions about the company.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research, the company has a structure and channels for receiving customer complaints, but its implementation is not yet fully optimal.

1. Management's commitment to complaint handling has been manifested in service procedures and policies. However, this commitment has not been fully accompanied by effective implementation in the field. Limited resources, suboptimal cross-departmental coordination, and the absence of ongoing evaluation have created a gap between policies and concrete actions.
2. Regarding the visibility of information about the complaint mechanism, the company has provided information through bulletin boards, brochures, and social media. However, this information has not reached all customer groups equally and has not been communicated actively and repeatedly.
3. Accessibility, or the accessibility of the complaint service, is considered adequate, particularly through WhatsApp, telephone, and in-person complaints. However, differences in customer capabilities in using technology and uneven distribution of services to remote areas make it difficult for some customers to access the complaint system.
4. The uncomplicated initial complaint procedure is simple. However, the lack of follow-up information regarding the progress of the handling process and standard timeframes for resolution make the system feel less straightforward from a customer perspective.
5. In terms of speed, the company does not yet have a consistent service time standard (SLA). Handling complaints, especially technical ones, often takes more than three days without clear notification to customers, thus reducing perceptions of the company's responsiveness.
6. The aspect of fairness or justice in service demonstrates that the company strives to treat all customers equally procedurally. However, service inequalities persist in practice, particularly regarding response speed and process transparency, creating a perception of a lack of fairness among customers.

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