

AI Chatbox in Handling Customer Complaints: A Case Study of KFC Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research explains the impact of implementing AI chatbot technology in handling customer complaints and its implications at KFC Indonesia. KFC seeks to improve customer experience through rapid response, reduced waiting times, and complaint handling using AI chatbots. This research has shown that AI-based chatbot technology has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and is capable of processing consumer behavior data which can then be used to design marketing strategies or loyalty programs. The results of the research evaluation show that a good chatbot not only improves operational efficiency but also establishes long-term strategic relationships between customers and brands. The findings reveal beneficial things for companies that are using AI to improve services in the digital era and emphasize the importance of technology in meeting current expectations.

INTRODUCTION

The fast food industry in Indonesia has also experienced rapid development in recent decades, along with the increasing number of outlets and food variants offered by major brands (Bernarto et al., 2022). One of the most recognized brands in Indonesia is KFC Indonesia. KFC Indonesia has managed to maintain its position as a market leader by optimizing innovation in products and services (Song et al., 2022). Due to increasingly fierce competition, KFC must remain consistent in not only providing the best product quality, but also fast, effective, and responsive customer service. Some factors influence customer perceptions of service quality, namely customer complaint management. Customer complaints can be an opportunity to improve service and create it with customers but if left unchecked, it will damage satisfaction levels and hurt the company's reputation. Therefore, the effectiveness of customer complaint management is one of the important points in making good relations between companies and customers (Chituru & Harcourt, 2018). Most companies, in the current state, are turning to artificial intelligence as a solution to manage customer complaints more efficiently. One form of AI technology that is widely used is chatbots. A chatbot is a form of AI used to provide automated responses to customers who make complaints. Chatbots are designed through machine learning algorithms and Natural Language Processing to identify, understand, and respond appropriately to complaints. KFC Indonesia can use a chatbot to respond more quickly to customer complaints (Liem et al., 2023). Because chatbots can respond to complaints even when the company is closed, so the level of speed with which complaints can be responded to is more guaranteed. Although chatbots have provided solutions in terms of waiting time for customers, the quality of chatbots is still far from expectations. Chatbots are proven to handle standard customer complaints but are less effective when customers write more complicated complaints, such as product mismatches or poor service that occurs at a particular outlet (Nguyen et al., 2023). The chatbot may not be able to provide adequate solutions or be unable to demonstrate the level of empathy required to assuage customer dissatisfaction. Although the chatbot responds to customers automatically, the speed of the response may seem "unfriendly".

However, while AI-based chatbots can improve efficiency and shorten waiting times for customers, the quality of interactions provided by chatbots often falls short of customer expectations. The quality of chatbot communication, particularly in recognizing the context of complaints, is often a major issue. AI chatbots are effective in handling common, predictable complaints, but struggle when customers encounter issues that are more complicated or require specialized attention. Several customers complain about more complex issues, such as product incompatibility or poor service that occurred in a store; chatbots may not be able to provide adequate solutions or be unable to show the empathy needed to ease customer disappointment. Although chatbots are capable of responding automatically, the speed of response is not always proportional to the quality of interaction, especially when customers want to have a conversation

with someone who can understand their emotions and offer appropriate solutions (Selamat & Windasari, 2021).

Another issue that arises is the reliance on machine learning algorithms which, while sophisticated, still have limitations in improving understanding of the desires and emotional nuances felt by customers. In many situations, chatbot answers that are too formal or not personalized enough can increase customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, while AI technology provides many benefits in terms of efficiency and reduced operational costs, there is a risk that chatbots are unable to offer an adequate experience in resolving more complicated issues. Well-managed complaint management can potentially increase customer loyalty. Research shows that customers who feel that their complaints are handled appropriately, through effective solutions and empathetic responses, generally have higher levels of loyalty towards that company. Conversely, if a customer complaint is not handled properly or does not get an appropriate response, it can reduce customer trust and damage the company's reputation. Therefore, it is crucial for KFC Indonesia not only to rely on an AI chatbot to resolve complaints but also to ensure that it can handle complaints with empathy and provide appropriate solutions.

While many studies have addressed the use of AI chatbots in customer service, there is still a lack of understanding of how chatbots can effectively handle customer complaints with a more humanized and empathetic approach, particularly in the context of the fast food industry in Indonesia. Previous studies tend to focus on the technical aspects of chatbots, such as response accuracy and operational efficiency, but less on how chatbots can improve customers' emotional experience and loyalty through personalized and empathetic complaint handling. Therefore, there is a need to examine in depth the challenges and constraints faced by KFC Indonesia in implementing an AI chatbot to optimally manage customer complaints.

KFC's success in addressing customer complaints with AI chatbots relies heavily on the ability of this technology to be refined to handle complaints more humanely and efficiently. This not only affects increasing customer satisfaction but can also be key in maintaining customer loyalty, which is vital in the face of fierce market competition. Therefore, improving the quality of the AI chatbot is an important step for KFC to create a more satisfying customer experience. By understanding the elements that influence customer complaints, it is hoped that KFC can identify the various challenges and obstacles faced by KFC Indonesia in using AI chatbots to manage customer complaints, so the researcher raised the title "AI Chatbot in Handling Customer Complaints: KFC Indonesia Case Study".

THEORETICAL REVIEW

AI Chatbot

The first chatbot was developed by Joseph Weizenbaum at MIT in 1966, and although today's technology has come a long way, chatbots remain relevant in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). A chatbot is an application that uses Natural Language Processing (NLP) to

interact with users. The conversational process between humans and computers occurs through scanning keywords from user input, generating responses that are deemed most appropriate based on data that has been entered in the program's database. A chatbot consists of two main components: the program bot and the brain file. The program bot is responsible for receiving and analyzing user input before sending it to the brain file, which serves as the chatbot's knowledge source. The brain file stores the chatbot's vocabulary, personality, and knowledge in the form of a simple text file. The more knowledge contained in the brain file, the larger the file size, which indicates the complexity and ability of the chatbot to provide relevant responses.

Customer Complaint Handling

Customer Complaint Handling is a customer complaint defined as an expression of consumer dissatisfaction with the product or service received. Complaints are a form of communication from consumers who feel that their wishes are not being met. Complaints can come in the form of direct, or indirect, both written and oral, and are very important for companies to pay attention to as material for evaluating service performance (Arifiyanto, 2022). According to Kabue (2019), customer complaint handling is a whole series of activities aimed at overcoming sources of dissatisfaction that trigger complaints from customers. Banga & Peddireddy (2023), also states that customer complaint handling is inevitable in every business, and proper handling is needed to ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty. Traditional approaches to handling complaints, such as manual processing by customer service teams via telephone, email, or ticketing systems, often take a long time. This approach may not be able to provide an appropriate or effective response, which in turn can lead to customer dissatisfaction and potentially customer loss. From some of these editions, it can be concluded that customer complaint handling is a set of steps taken by the company to respond to and handle customer complaints, which arise due to dissatisfaction with the product or service obtained. Customer complaints are a significant form of communication from consumers who feel their expectations are not met, and can be conveyed directly or indirectly, either orally or in writing.

Efficient complaint handling not only helps address the causes of dissatisfaction but is also instrumental in maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, companies must move away from traditional methods that are slow and inefficient, and start creating a faster and more targeted complaint management system. According to Simon J Bell and James A. Luddington (2006), customer complaints are usually due to problems such as:

1. Responsiveness

According to Lu et al (2015), responsiveness refers to the ability of service providers to respond to customer needs, requests, and expectations quickly, accurately, and kindly. Responsiveness describes how effectively and quickly KFC and institutions respond to consumers, including their attitude towards consumers and readiness to assist. Explains that responsiveness includes the attention, alertness, and speed of the team in responding to requests or

complaints from customers. Lack of responsiveness can indicate a lack of service quality (Berry et al., 1988).

2. Helpfulness

Helpfulness is a complaint from customers generally caused by issues such as lack of assistance from company staff, availability of goods, store or company rules, and improvements in service (Hisanuddin & Adwitya, 2023). According to Meldiana & Rahadi (2020), helpfulness reflects internal motivation and a sense of empathy towards customers. The Lack of interpersonal attention can reduce customer satisfaction and highlight the need for improvement in employee training to improve service quality.

3. Product Availability

Product availability is the availability of goods that indicates the extent to which consumers can get products when they need them and in the desired quantity (Martin, 2011). Product availability is an important element that affects consumer satisfaction. Absence leads to lost sales and dissatisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2013). The ability of a company to offer products or services that meet customer needs, both in terms of quantity, quality, time, and desired location. Availability of goods is a crucial factor in customer satisfaction and service standards because consumers usually feel disappointed if the product is not there when needed.

4. Store Policy

Lysenko-Ryba & Zimon (2021) state that store policy is a policy or marketing line strategy implemented by a company, which functions to plan the target market in such a way as to get optimal results in increasing consumers. Economics, Marketing, and Management include relational mastery including information technology, the use of decision support systems (SPK), and management support systems (SPM).

5. Service Recovery

According to Deka (2016), service recovery is a series of actions taken by the company to restore customer satisfaction who have experienced service failures. In service recovery, there is a very important handling to maintain company and customer relations, especially when there are differences in expectations and the reality of the services received. This recovery step includes a speedy response to requests received, the application of communication to customers, and the provision of compensation. These three things are part of what supports a positive attitude in consumer accounts towards the repair efforts made.

6. Customer Loyalty

According to Donnelly et al (2012), customer loyalty is a company's effort to build and maintain consumer loyalty to a particular product or brand. In this case, the brand is expected to build long-term relationships, and customers are expected to consistently support the brand, including making repeat purchases. Brand-loyal consumers or customers can make repeat purchases amid intense market competition. Customer loyalty grows from satisfaction. In this case, companies can increase loyalty through personalization, gifts, and good communication. According to Hutchinson et al (2015), customer loyalty that

occurs is a form of customer satisfaction with a product or service. This happens because they actively decide to make new repeat purchases rather than spend the product on competitors. Obtaining such loyalty from consumers certainly has a major positive effect on the company, especially increased sales from relatively stable repeat purchases and loyalty to certain brands, products, or services.

METHODOLOGY

The method in this research is a qualitative case study, which is a research strategy used to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon in a real and special setting. In qualitative case study research, researchers focus on analyzing one or several cases related to the subject of research, which can include individuals, groups, organizations, events, or certain situations. This method offers researchers the opportunity to gain deeper insight into the dynamics that occur in the context (Dewi & Hidayah, 2019). The subjects of this study are KFC Indonesia customers who have used the AI chatbot service to submit complaints, as well as KFC customer service staff involved in managing these complaints. Data was collected from approximately 15-20 purposively selected customers to obtain a variety of experiences, who had first-hand experience of using and managing an AI chatbot. Data was collected through several techniques, namely in-depth interviews with customers who have used AI chatbots to explore experiences, perceptions, and obstacles in using AI chatbots. Participatory observation of chatbot interactions with customers on the KFC digital platform to understand communication patterns and chatbot responses directly. Descriptive analysis will be used by researchers to describe the condition of the variables in this study, namely AI chatbot, Customer Complaint, and Customer Loyalty in KFC customers. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis with processes including transcription of interview and observation data, open coding to identify main themes related to the effectiveness of AI chatbots, aspects of empathy, and obstacles faced, grouping themes into broader categories to understand patterns and relationships between themes, and interpretation of analysis results in the context of relevant theories and literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of AI Chatbot in Customer Complaint Handling

AI chatbots are proving to play a major role in helping improve the efficiency of customer complaint handling. Thanks to its natural language understanding capabilities aided by Natural Language Processing (NLP) technology, the chatbot can understand the intent and feelings behind the words spoken by consumers by identifying important words used in the discussion. For example, one customer complained, "I've been waiting for more than 30 minutes, but my order hasn't arrived yet". The system can then react quickly, relevantly, and according to the type of complaint. Another advantage is that the chatbot can work around the clock 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, making it easier for customers to make complaints anytime without having to wait for business hours. In addition, with the brain files embedded in the chatbot system, it is possible to deliver product information, procedures, and policies accurately and

consistently. For example, when a customer asks, "What is the procedure for returning a product if there is a problem?", the chatbot can immediately provide a clear and complete explanation according to company policy. So chatbots are a viable and effective solution in serving consumer complaints on the frontline. Such a combination of speed, accessibility, and consistency makes chatbots a useful tool in modern customer service efforts.

Improvement of Key Dimensions in Customer Complaint Handling

Based on indicators from related literature, it was found that AI chatbot support service quality improvement in the following dimensions:

1. Responsiveness

KFC's AI chatbot was successful in providing quick responses to customer complaints, mainly due to its ability to work continuously for 24 hours without stopping. This is very beneficial as it allows customers to lodge complaints and get information even outside of normal customer service working hours. However, while chatbots show high efficiency in terms of speed, the quality of the responses provided is generally unsatisfactory. The answers are general, impersonal, and unable to adjust to the emotional nuances or complexities of new or sensitive complaints. In some cases, especially when customers are upset or angry, answers that sound too formal and "robotic" actually degrade the interaction experience. In another case, a customer stated, "The chatbot was quick to respond, but there was no empathy at all, so I felt ignored.". Thus, while customers may be answered promptly, the lack of empathetic touch and warmth in the communication makes them feel less understood, reducing the level of satisfaction and trust in the company's service quality.

2. Helpfulness

When it comes to assisting, KFC's AI chatbot is still a work in progress, especially in handling complaints that require a lot of empathy and personally tailored solutions. For example, a customer complained, "I was disappointed with how the staff at the store treated me, but the chatbot just told me to fill out a complaint form without any response that understood how I felt." In cases such as unpleasant experiences with store staff, order errors, or instances of unfriendly treatment, the chatbot only has a scripted solution path such as filling out a form or contacting human customer service without really being able to how an emotional understanding of the complaint. The response is flat and does not touch the psychological level of the customer who may be disappointed or upset at that moment. In another case, a customer stated "The chatbot only offers the option to contact human service but does not provide an immediate solution or sense of caring at all". These shortcomings mean that, although operationally efficient, chatbots cannot yet fully replace the role of humans in service scenarios that require interpersonal mode, emotional sensitivity, and flexibility in offering solutions. Therefore, the experience of customers in such situations may not be good and may make them feel that the company is not paying attention to them at the level it should.

3. Product Availability

A chatbot can announce the general availability of a product, such as which menu items are available first or which promotions are running first. While chatbots can announce whether a product is available in general, such as which menu items are available first or which promotions are running first, they still show limitations in addressing place-specific complaints. For example, a customer complained, "The app says fried chicken is available, but when I went to the store, it wasn't and the chatbot couldn't explain why there was this discrepancy". In another case, a customer stated, "The chatbot just gave a standard answer with no real solution when I asked why my favorite menu was not available in a particular store when it was in the app". In instances where the customer had a discrepancy between the menu availability on the app and the physical store visited and a particular product was available on the app but not in the store visited, the chatbot was unable to provide a more detailed explanation of the cause of the discrepancy and offer an adequate solution. This limitation leads to a feeling of disappointment from customers as they do not receive a full explanation or treatment from the AI-based system, which can then lead to a decrease in overall satisfaction with the service.

4. Store Policy

In conveying company policies, AI Chatbots are also good at conveying general company policies, such as refund policies, product exchange policies, and promotion terms, as they present information consistently and accurately. However, the delivery of these policies was stilted and lacked context. For example, a customer complained, "I had a specific problem with my order, but the chatbot only gave a standard answer about the return policy without considering my different situation." Because the chatbot operates from pre-written responses and rule-based logic, the chatbot's responses become too formal and inflexible, and customers feel that the chatbot is too "by the book" and unable to understand the nuances of their specific situation. This is particularly problematic when customers experience exceptional circumstances and expect some level of sympathy or discretionary flexibility-something that AI systems cannot yet provide. As a result, interactions with chatbots in such cases can leave customers unhappy or feeling unheard, which can affect their overall perception of the brand's level of customer service.

5. Service Recovery

KFC's AI-based chatbot is still not optimal in the service recovery dimension, especially in terms of severe complaints or negative customer experiences. For example, one customer complained, "I was disappointed that the chatbot only told me to contact human customer service without offering any compensation, whereas I was hoping for a coupon or direct replacement." In another case, a customer stated, "The chatbot responded quickly, but it couldn't solve my problem, so I had to wait a long time to talk to human staff." In such circumstances, the chatbot cannot yet provide any type of immediate compensation, such as coupons, order replacements, or other types of goodwill that can be used to remedy the customer's disappointment immediately. Instead, these systems are limited to providing a general response and then asking the customer to contact a human customer service team who then provide extra steps

and time to resolve the issue. The realization that a chatbot cannot solve or alleviate problems directly undermines the service recovery process. It creates the perception that customers have to take extra steps just to get a resolution to their complaint - when, ideally, it may have been handled efficiently and effectively during the first contact. This indicates that the bad experience was not fully resolved, which can reduce customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Limitations of Chatbots in the Context of Human Touch

While chatbots are very effective in terms of efficiency and consistency, especially when it comes to reacting quickly and accurately, there are some serious limitations, especially when it comes to handling complaints that are emotional, complicated, or decision-based and not standardized in the system. Many customers are still dissatisfied with chatbot services, especially if their expectations are not met and they need more personalized treatment. For example, one customer complained, "The chatbot responded quickly, but was cold and didn't understand my feelings when I complained about the wrong order." Another customer stated, "I need someone who listens and understands my problem, not a rigid automated answer." The inability of chatbots to show empathy or emotional interest usually leads to a clinical and robotic, sometimes even aloof, customer experience. This leads to frustration in customers, as they feel they are not getting the appropriate attention to their problem. The presence of a human element in the interaction becomes even more important in cases like this, where an emotional tone and a more flexible style can greatly affect the perception of the customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the company.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research shows that the use of AI-based chatbots in handling customer complaints at KFC Indonesia makes a positive contribution to the aspect of service responsiveness. The chatbot can provide fast and automatic responses, especially on standard complaints and in situations outside of operating hours. Time and cost efficiency are the main advantages of implementing this technology. However, this study also found that chatbots still have limitations in handling complex complaints, such as product mismatches, poor service at certain locations, or special requests from customers. Chatbots are less able to understand context and do not show empathy, creating a stilted and unsatisfying interaction experience for customers. If complaints are not handled properly, this can negatively impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, the effectiveness of AI chatbots in customer complaint handling is highly dependent on their ability to be integrated with human services, as well as improvements in the aspects of personalization and empathy based on the research findings, it is recommended that KFC Indonesia integrate the use of AI chatbots with human services to handle complex and emotional complaints, so that customers get a more personalized and empathetic response. In addition, the development of the chatbot's ability to recognize the context and nuances of customer emotions needs to be improved so that the responses provided do not seem rigid and robotic. Chatbots should also be equipped with immediate solution features, such as coupons or automatic

compensation, to speed up service recovery and increase customer satisfaction. Contextual refinement of information related to product availability and store policies is also important to reduce dissatisfaction due to inconsistent information. Regular training and monitoring of chatbots and customer service staff is necessary to maintain the quality of interactions. Finally, the development of interactive content and attractive promotions through chatbots can increase customer engagement and strengthen loyalty and sales. With these steps, KFC Indonesia can maximize the benefits of AI chatbot technology while overcoming its limitations to create a more satisfying and effective customer service experience.

FURTHER STUDY

Furthermore, comparative studies across industries can provide insight into the effectiveness of chatbots in handling complaints in various sectors. The user experience design aspect also needs to be studied to improve more engaging and satisfying interactions. Research on the impact of cultural factors will help understand how customer expectations vary across regions. Implementing a real-time feedback mechanism in chatbots can improve their performance based on customer interactions, and focusing on training and developing chatbots will strengthen their effectiveness in handling complaints. By addressing these areas, further research can provide a deeper understanding of the role of AI chatbots in customer service and their potential to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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