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Knowledge Sharing as a Stimulus for Improving Professional Competence of Coffee Shop Baristas

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Abstract

This research aims to understand the process, flow, and role of knowledge sharing among coffee shop baristas in improving their competence in the coffee shop workplace. The phenomenon in recent years is related to the Knowledge Sharing Culture, especially in the profession of baristas or coffee makers in coffee shops. Bandar Lampung itself has become a center for the growth of coffee shops before expanding to surrounding areas. In fact, there are very few baristas who have the legal certification or competence certificates in coffee brewing. However, due to the scarcity of certified baristas, many of them have formed discussion forums with the goal of sharing information among their fellow baristas. It is expected that by forming practical classes like this, it can enhance the competence of baristas in coffee brewing. This research uses a qualitative approach

with interview techniques with several baristas from three coffee shops, namely Akabay, Sinia, and Doesoen Coffee. The conclusions of this research include: 1) The knowledge acquisition process by baristas in coffee shops is crucial in influencing the quality of coffee service, contributing to sustainable businesses, and providing satisfying customer experiences; 2) The process of sharing knowledge within the practical community of coffee shop baristas plays a vital role in strengthening collaboration, improving knowledge quality, and creating an environment that supports professional development; 3) Knowledge sharing in enhancing the knowledge and competence of coffee shop baristas plays a crucial role in producing better coffee quality, improving customer service, and developing individual skills.

Keywords: Sharing Knowledge, Experiential Learning, Community of Practice

Introduction

The coffee industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth, with a staggering 250% increase over the past 10 years. Currently, Indonesia ranks as the world's fourth-largest coffee producer, following Brazil, Vietnam, and Colombia. The total coffee plantation area in Indonesia covers 1.25 million hectares, yielding a production of up to 761 thousand tons per year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the Indonesian coffee industry, but its prospects remain bright due to domestic production and consumption, as well as substantial export values. This sector still has the potential to be a driver of the national economy. The effects of the pandemic are evident from a survey conducted by the International Coffee Organization (ICO) from May 20 to June 1, 2020, among 16 coffee-exporting countries, including Indonesia. As many as 75% of respondents stated that the pandemic had a negative impact on their work, with 63% reporting adverse effects on their income.

This aligns with the statement from the Chairman of the Indonesian Coffee Exporters Association, Moelyono Soesilo, who mentioned that the pandemic has reduced the demand for coffee from upstream to downstream. In the upstream, the demand for arabica coffee has dropped to only 25%. Considering that arabica coffee is considered premium and high-priced, and with hotels, restaurants, and cafes, which are downstream consumers, being closed, this has had an impact. However, according to Moelyono, the demand for the cheaper robusta coffee tends to increase, driven by panic buying due to concerns over large-scale social restrictions (PSBB). Robusta coffee is usually sold in simpler coffee shops.

As a result, there has been a shift in coffee consumption among consumers from high-class cafes to more straightforward places. Sidewalk coffee shops with open spaces have gained popularity," he said during a discussion on the Indonesia Industry Outlook in early November. The survey results from Inventure Indonesia, in collaboration with the Alvara Research Institute, coincide with the increased demand for robusta coffee. About 48.4% of respondents admitted to consuming packet coffee, which is typically made from robusta beans, during the pandemic.



Sumber: Observasi Lapangan, 2019

Image 1: Growth of Coffee Shops in Bandar Lampung

The history of modern coffee shops can be traced back to America, where the hallmark is fast service and quick delivery. The food is typically pre-portioned on a single plate, commonly referred to as "ready on the plate," and the service style is known as American Service. These coffee shops fall into the category of informal restaurants and are often open 24 hours a day.

The proliferation of coffee shops in Bandar Lampung has compelled coffee shop owners to continually devise strategies to attract customers. Various offerings are provided by coffee industry entrepreneurs, ranging from specific promotions or discounts, both offline and through various platforms, to the comfort and amenities offered when visiting a coffee shop. However, there is still a significant gap among coffee shop owners who can recognize opportunities related to enhancing the company's performance through the concept of knowledge management integration.

As of early 2022, the presence of coffee shops in Bandar Lampung has reached approximately 250 coffee shops, whether they are active on social media or not (Info Kopi Lampung, 2022). Each growth in the number of coffee shops does not merely add to the coffee scene and disappear; owners and employees are required to improve all aspects of coffee shops, including product quality, price competitiveness, service levels, and ease of service. All of these aspects require substantial knowledge from various sectors within the business's internal structure. Knowledge Management, commonly known as Knowledge Management, is one of the alternatives in sustaining the business sector, especially in the coffee shop industry.

Knowledge, as an intangible asset, becomes a competitive factor within an organization. When intangible assets have been developed and owned by an organization, there is no direct ownership of knowledge/understanding by employees that can quickly become obsolete or outdated without acquiring new knowledge, and the expertise of employees can quickly vanish when they leave the organization (Riege, 2005) cited in (Winarno, 2010) [23]. If all knowledge is codified and made formal or explicit, the function of knowledge management will be less focused on

management and compliance.

Knowledge Management consists of the words "knowledge" and "management." Knowledge is the result of information from which decisions can be made, and these decisions can be referred to as knowledge. Management is the science and art of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the efforts of organizational members and the use of organizational resources to achieve pre-defined goals. Knowledge management is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all the information assets of a company. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and expertise that were previously individual experiences in the workforce. Nowadays, knowledge management within a company has become essential. Knowledge management greatly assists a company in making decisions in both the present and the future.

The knowledge possessed by an organization is a crucial asset that must be managed effectively to achieve the organization's goals efficiently, maintain its existence, and be beneficial as a competitive advantage (Fadilah & Izzati, 2018) [19]. This has become a phenomenon in recent years, especially in professions like baristas or coffee makers in coffee shops, related to the Knowledge Sharing Culture. Bandar Lampung itself has become a center for the growth of coffee shops before expanding to surrounding areas. In fact, there are very few baristas who have the legal certification or competence certificates in coffee brewing. However, due to the scarcity of certified baristas, many of them have formed discussion forums with the goal of sharing information among their fellow baristas. It is expected that by forming practical classes like this, it can enhance the competence of baristas in coffee brewing.

In line with the development of the coffee industry in the Indonesian archipelago, the enhancement of baristas' competence requires serious attention from various parties. This is not only to ensure that the coffee they brew becomes more enjoyable and diverse, leading to customer satisfaction, but also to enable the skills of Indonesian baristas to compete at both the national and international levels. The increasing trend of enjoying coffee as a lifestyle, coffee places as meeting locations, and the growing number of coffee enthusiasts have indeed sparked many positive movements in the local coffee industry. One of these is the growing popularity of the barista profession, the creators and servers of coffee-based beverages. This profession is increasingly in demand, especially with the emergence of specialty coffee varieties, a term dedicated to coffee beans with unique flavors due to their production in microclimatic plantation areas.

Currently, there are more than 500 coffee shops in Indonesia, supported by employees, 70% of whom are baristas. Through the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration Decree No. 370 of 2013, the barista profession is categorized as a job that requires competence in the form of specific skills and expertise in blending and serving coffee-based beverages (swa.co.id, 2023).



Sumber: mediakawasan.co.id, 2023

Fig 1: Peningkatan Profesi Barista dengan mengikuti agenda kompetisi

The author conducted a pre-observation with one of the owners of a coffee shop in Bandar Lampung, who also holds a professional license in the coffee industry. Riko Damona, the owner of Akabay Coffee, believes that having a professional license is essential in boosting self-confidence and responsibility in the coffee brewing industry. However, he also mentioned that it's not just a specific license or certificate that makes someone capable of working in the coffee industry. Nowadays, many people who are skilled in coffee brewing, whether as professionals or homebrewers, have the ability, thanks to the ease of knowledge transfer. In the province of Lampung, there is a platform for discussion and sharing experiences and knowledge among individuals involved in the coffee industry, regardless of their background.

Common understanding consists of context and experience. Context is the story behind knowledge, the conditions or situations that make knowledge understandable. Experience is the activity that produces mental models of how knowledge is used. Gupta, Sharma, Hsu (2008)^[3] argue that an organization's ability to transfer information and knowledge is a determining factor in its ability to maintain its competitive advantage.

The implementation of Knowledge Sharing in business shows that Knowledge Management is the process of implementing resource-based competitive advantage (Carter & Scarbrough, 2001). Similarly, in the performance of the barista profession in coffee shops, it will achieve maximum results when supported by knowledge based on the experience they possess.

Discussion

The concept of knowledge management (KM) involves strategies and practices used by organizations to collect, store, organize, manage, and share the knowledge they possess so that it can be effectively utilized by members of the organization. Knowledge is at the core of knowledge management, encompassing both explicit knowledge (written, documented) and tacit knowledge (experience, expertise). Knowledge can take the form of information, procedures, technical skills, best practices, perspectives, or insights that are beneficial to the organization. The process of knowledge collection involves identifying and acquiring knowledge from various sources. This can include surveys, interviews, observations, documentation, data analysis, or knowledge transfer from individuals or groups with relevant

knowledge.

The collected knowledge needs to be stored in a structured and easily accessible manner. This involves creating databases, information systems, or other digital platforms to store and organize knowledge. Storage methods may include indexing, tagging, classification, or the use of technologies such as knowledge databases or knowledge management systems. The stored knowledge should be accessible and usable by members of the organization. The process of knowledge dissemination involves sharing knowledge through various communication channels, such as collaborative systems, training, reports, presentations, or discussion forums. The goal is to ensure that relevant knowledge is available to those who need it at the right time. In the highly competitive coffee industry, it is important for a barista to have good soft skills and hard skills. With these skills, a barista can provide an exceptional coffee experience for customers, influence the quality of the coffee beverages served, and build a good reputation for the cafe where they work. Here are some examples of hard skills and soft skills required by a barista:

- a. Soft Skills that a coffee barista should possess:
 1. Communication Skills: Being able to communicate effectively with customers, colleagues, and management. The ability to listen attentively and articulate information clearly is crucial.
 2. Customer Service: The ability to provide friendly, efficient, and professional customer service. Maintaining a high work ethic and handling customer complaints effectively.
 3. Multitasking: Baristas often need to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, such as taking orders, brewing coffee, serving customers, and cleaning the workspace.
 4. Precision and Accuracy: It is essential for a barista to maintain consistent coffee quality, including coffee dosage, extraction time, and water proportion.
 5. Teamwork: The ability to collaborate with other team members to ensure smooth operations and efficient service.
 6. Resilience in Busy Situations: In a busy cafe environment, a barista must remain calm and organized to handle high work pressure.
- b. Hard Skills that a coffee barista should possess:
 1. Coffee Preparation: Understanding various methods and techniques for grinding coffee beans, brewing espresso, using espresso machines, and mastering other coffee brewing techniques such as V60, Aeropress, or French Press.
 2. Latte Art: Being able to create latte art for aesthetic purposes in coffee beverages, such as drawing heart shapes, leaves, or other patterns on the coffee crema.
 3. Equipment Maintenance: Having knowledge of espresso machine and other coffee equipment maintenance to ensure consistent coffee quality and prolong equipment lifespan.
 4. Flavor Recognition: The ability to recognize different flavors and aromas from various coffee bean types and understand the taste profile differences among different coffee varieties.
 5. Product Knowledge: Knowing the entire coffee menu and other specialty beverages, including the ingredients used in those drinks.

Effective soft skills help create a positive customer experience: Soft skills like good communication, friendly

customer service, and teamwork abilities contribute to creating a pleasant environment in the cafe. This allows baristas to interact well with customers, listen to their needs, and provide satisfying service. Hard skills influence the quality of the coffee served: Hard skills such as the ability to brew coffee properly, recognize the flavor and aroma of coffee, and create beautiful latte art affect the quality of the coffee beverages served. A barista skilled in hard skills will be able to serve coffee with consistent taste and appealing aesthetics. Baristas who possess a strong combination of both soft skills and hard skills have better opportunities for success in their careers. They can excel in their job, sharpen their skills, and even move up to management roles or start their coffee businesses.

The utilization of knowledge involves using existing knowledge to inform decisions, solve problems, improve performance, or support innovation. It involves the process of integrating knowledge into work practices, policies, procedures, or organizational systems. Knowledge management also encompasses the development of a culture and organizational environment that supports learning, sharing, and collaboration. This entails creating an atmosphere that encourages employees to share knowledge, learn from each other, and appreciate individual knowledge contributions. Knowledge management involves an evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of practices and strategies employed. Evaluation results are used to enhance the organization's knowledge management systems, processes, and practices and to improve and enrich existing knowledge.

Hospitality supported by knowledge sharing can strengthen customer relationships. Baristas who share their knowledge and experiences about coffee will create a stronger bond with customers. Customers will feel valued and attended to, which in turn can enhance customer loyalty and foster lasting relationships. Baristas can act as change agents by educating customers about the importance of sustainable coffee. They can explain sustainable farming practices, social equity in the coffee supply chain, and the environmental impact of coffee production. By raising customer awareness, baristas can encourage their interest in supporting sustainable businesses.



Image 2: The Barista Profession Culminates in National and International Competitions

Baristas can create partnerships and collaborations with local producers, community groups, or sustainability-focused organizations. This can involve organizing events or activities together that educate the community about sustainability and promote sustainable products. Sharing knowledge is one way to sharpen and develop the knowledge they possess. The benefits of sharing knowledge in honing knowledge for continuous growth include (Alavi

& Leidner, 2001):

1. Improving the quality of knowledge. By sharing knowledge, we can gain new information and insights from others. This can help enhance the quality of the knowledge we possess and broaden our horizons.
2. Accelerating learning. By sharing knowledge, we can learn from the experiences and knowledge of others who are more experienced. This can help speed up our learning process and reduce potential errors.
3. Enhancing collaboration skills. Sharing knowledge can also improve our collaboration skills with others. By sharing knowledge, we can build better relationships with others and work together to achieve common goals.
4. Boosting creativity. Sharing knowledge allows us to gain new ideas and different perspectives from others. This can help boost our creativity in problem-solving or creating new things.
5. Aiding in community building. By sharing knowledge, we can help build stronger and more cohesive communities. This can enhance a sense of togetherness and mutual respect among community members.

Therefore, sharing knowledge has many benefits in honing our knowledge for continuous growth. Additionally, by sharing knowledge, we can also help others learn and develop while building better relationships with them. Sharing knowledge plays a crucial role in building a sustainable business. Here are some roles of sharing knowledge in sustainable business:

1. Enhancing employees' skills and knowledge. By sharing knowledge and experiences, employees can acquire new skills and knowledge that can help them perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively. This can improve business performance and reduce the risk of errors.
2. Reducing costs and improving efficiency. Sharing knowledge can also help reduce costs and improve efficiency in business. By sharing knowledge and experiences, employees can find new ways to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively. This can reduce operational costs and enhance efficiency.
3. Strengthening customer relationships. By sharing knowledge and experiences, businesses can strengthen their relationships with customers. Businesses can provide better information about the products and services they offer, as well as provide solutions to any problems customers may face. This can help build stronger relationships and enhance customer loyalty.
4. Encouraging innovation in business. By sharing knowledge and experiences, employees can discover new ways to perform their jobs or create better products or services. This can enhance business competitiveness and strengthen its position in the market.
5. Enhancing the company's image. By sharing knowledge and experiences, businesses can build a better corporate image. Businesses can provide better information about their sustainable business practices and show that they care about the environment and the community. This can help build a better reputation and increase the business's attractiveness to customers and investors.

Therefore, sharing knowledge plays a crucial role in building a sustainable business. It can help improve business performance, strengthen customer relationships, drive innovation, and enhance the company's image. The Jacobson

Knowledge Sharing Model is a framework used to understand how knowledge or information can be shared and utilized among individuals and organizations. This model consists of four stages: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization. Let's relate this model to the importance of sharing knowledge in sustainable business.

1. Socialization.

The first stage in this model is socialization, which refers to the process where knowledge and experience are directly shared among individuals through social interactions. In sustainable business, sharing knowledge through social interactions can help strengthen relationships with customers and employees, as well as build a better company image.

2. Externalization

The second stage is externalization, which refers to the process of transforming knowledge and experience into an articulable form. In sustainable business, externalization can help drive innovation and communicate sustainable business practices more effectively to customers and employees.

3. Combination

The third stage is combination, which refers to the process of integrating different knowledge and experiences to create more complex knowledge. In sustainable business, combination can help reduce costs and improve efficiency by merging sustainable business practices with new technologies and business strategies.

4. Internalization

The fourth stage is internalization, which refers to the process where the shared knowledge and experiences are internalized and used by individuals in their day-to-day actions. In sustainable business, internalization can help enhance the skills and knowledge of employees in performing their jobs more effectively and efficiently.

Therefore, Jacobson's Knowledge Sharing Model (2008) can help understand how sharing knowledge plays a crucial role in building a sustainable business. By following the stages in this model, businesses can strengthen relationships with customers and employees, foster innovation, reduce costs and improve efficiency, as well as enhance the skills and knowledge of employees in their work.

Taking into account the elements in the Shannon Weaver and Barlo model (in Jacobson, 2008), sharing knowledge can be done effectively and efficiently to build a sustainable business. In knowledge sharing, it is important to consider the message conveyed, the chosen channel, as well as the abilities and characteristics of the recipients. When done well, knowledge sharing can enhance the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of employees and help achieve sustainable business goals. Knowledge sharing plays a significant role in the barista profession. Here are some reasons why sharing knowledge is important in the context of the barista profession:

1. Baristas who share their knowledge can help improve the quality of the coffee they serve. By sharing information about grinding techniques, coffee bean processing, proper extraction, and latte art, baristas can assist their colleagues in consistently producing a better cup of coffee.
2. Sharing knowledge enables baristas to continue learning and growing in their profession. By sharing knowledge about coffee bean varieties, roasting methods, various brewing techniques, and current trends in the coffee

industry, baristas can enhance their own understanding and expand their abilities as coffee experts.

3. Sharing knowledge fosters collaboration among baristas. By sharing knowledge about unique coffee recipes, experimenting with coffee-to-water ratios, or alternative brewing methods, baristas can inspire each other and drive innovation in creating new and exciting coffee beverages.
4. Baristas who share knowledge can provide better customer service. With a deep understanding of coffee and its presentation processes, baristas can confidently answer customer questions, provide appropriate recommendations, and deliver a more meaningful coffee experience.
5. Sharing knowledge also plays a role in enhancing the overall image of the coffee industry. By sharing knowledge and experiences among baristas, the coffee industry can continually improve quality standards and professionalism while educating the public about quality coffee and the processes involved in serving it.

Sharing knowledge is crucial in the barista profession because it helps improve coffee quality, expand individual understanding and skills, drive innovation, provide excellent customer service, and strengthen the overall image of the coffee industry. By enhancing baristas' knowledge of sustainable coffee aspects, they can grasp the importance of elements such as sustainable coffee sources, environmentally friendly farming practices, sustainable processing methods, and the significance of promoting fairness and ethics in the coffee supply chain. This allows them to choose coffee produced with care for the environment and society while conveying relevant information to customers.

Baristas can enhance their capacity in sustainable brewing skills. This includes understanding the efficient use of water, maintaining the right temperature, reducing waste, and using environmentally friendly materials, such as energy-efficient equipment and reusing coffee residues for compost or other purposes. With sustainable brewing skills, baristas can reduce their negative impact on the environment while providing quality coffee to customers.



Image 3: The Barista Profession is Not Just About Brewing Coffee but also Involves Substantial Management in the Coffee Shop

Increasing the capacity of coffee baristas also involves awareness of the importance of recycling and waste management. Baristas can learn about waste reduction

practices, the selection of recyclable or eco-friendly packaging materials, and how to manage coffee waste wisely. They can educate customers about these practices, including providing information on how to recycle coffee packaging or how to use coffee grounds as fertilizer or for other purposes.

Baristas with a strong capacity for knowledge and understanding of sustainable coffee can provide education to customers about the importance of supporting sustainable businesses. By sharing their knowledge of sustainable coffee, baristas can help raise customer awareness of social and environmental issues related to coffee production and encourage more sustainable purchasing decisions.

With increased capacity, coffee baristas can collaborate with sustainable coffee suppliers. They can build partnerships with coffee producers committed to sustainable farming practices and ensure a steady supply of quality and sustainable coffee. Such collaborations can help strengthen sustainable business relationships and mutual support throughout the coffee supply chain. With enhanced capacity in terms of knowledge, skills, and awareness of sustainable business practices, they can play a crucial role in driving positive changes in the coffee industry toward more environmentally friendly, fair, and sustainable practices.

Conclusions

1. The knowledge acquisition process gained by baristas in coffee shops is crucial in influencing the quality of coffee service, contributing to sustainable business practices, and providing a satisfying customer experience. Throughout their journey, baristas develop knowledge that encompasses various aspects of coffee, such as the origin of coffee beans, roasting techniques, brewing methods, and sustainable practices.
2. The knowledge sharing process within the practical community of coffee shop baristas plays a crucial role in strengthening collaboration, enhancing the quality of knowledge, and creating an environment that supports professional development. Through knowledge sharing, baristas can exchange experiences, brewing techniques, recipes, and coffee-related knowledge, contributing to both individual and collective growth within the practical community.
3. Knowledge sharing in enhancing the knowledge and competence of coffee shop baristas plays a crucial role in producing better coffee quality, improving customer service, and developing individual skills. In this context, the knowledge sharing process enables baristas to exchange information, experiences, and skills related to coffee.

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