

The Effectiveness of Tour Leaders' Interpersonal Skills with Tourists (A Case Study of Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel)

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Keyword:	Abstract
Tourists; Interpersonal Communication; Tour Leader; Effectiveness; Communication	Interpersonal communication is a key factor in determining service quality in the tourism industry, particularly in interactions between tour leaders and tourists, as it contributes to tourists' sense of security, comfort, and emotional connection. However, these interactions often encounter various challenges, including tourists' reluctance to express complaints, misunderstandings of information, and situational pressures during tours. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of interpersonal communication between tour leaders and tourists at Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel and to identify barriers encountered during the communication process. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with two tour leaders as primary informants and two tourists as supporting informants. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model and DeVito's five dimensions of interpersonal communication effectiveness: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. The findings indicated that effective interpersonal communication was demonstrated through clear information delivery, attentiveness to tourists' feelings, the creation of a sense of security, consistently friendly interactions, and equitable and participatory treatment. The identified communication barriers included tourists' reluctance to express complaints, misunderstandings arising from sudden schedule changes, difficulties in recognizing tourists' emotions in crowded situations, time constraints, emotional pressure, and the dominance of certain participants in group interactions. To overcome these barriers, tour leaders employed several communication strategies, including the use of digital communication channels, emotional validation, personalized communication approaches, and priority setting.

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication is a crucial aspect of shaping the quality of relationships between service providers and consumers. These interactions provide a platform for exchanging personal information, feelings, and expectations, which can significantly influence consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Communication can be considered effective when the message received by the recipient corresponds to the meaning intended by the sender (Aririguzoh, 2022; Choi & Park, 2022; Reems, 2023; Sana & Strinati, 2023; Yudhanto et al., 2023). Frequent and consistent communication can foster emotional closeness and mutual trust while creating a more meaningful interactive experience.

Interpersonal communication is particularly important in the tourism sector, which contributes significantly to the global economy. According to 2022 Statista data (Kurnia et al., 2024), revenue in the Travel and Tourism market was projected to reach US\$854.80 billion in 2023, with an annual revenue growth rate of 4.41% for the 2023–2027 period, resulting in a

projected market volume of US\$1,016.00 billion by 2027. Within the travel and tourism industry, travel agencies play a strategic role as intermediaries between tourists and various tourism service providers.

The success of a tour and travel company depends not only on the prices of its tour packages or the amenities it provides but also on the quality of interactions between tour leaders and tourists. Two-way communication forms an important foundation for effective service because it involves the reciprocal exchange of messages, including the delivery of information, responses, clarification, and feedback (Bamidele et al., 2025; Bin Abdullah, 2023; Chaturvedi, 2026; Maiwada, 2025a, 2025b; Rabiul et al., 2022). Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel is a travel agency that operates its own fleet of vehicles. The company employs tour leaders who play key roles in guiding tourists, facilitating smooth tour operations, and fostering a sense of security and comfort among tourists. A tour leader's ability to serve tourists professionally can contribute to a positive corporate image (Ayad et al., 2024; Chang et al., 2022; Erlyasari & Firdaus, 2026). Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel's experience in managing various domestic tour programs and the extensive direct interaction between its tour leaders and tourists, which constitutes an important aspect of its operations, provided the rationale for selecting the company as the research setting for this study.

Two-way communication between tour leaders and tourists is an important factor in fostering tourist loyalty. According to Zahra et al. (2024), two-way communication involves reciprocal interaction between the sender and receiver of a message, encompassing the exchange of information, responses, clarification, and continuous feedback. Effective interpersonal communication by tour leaders can strengthen relationships and enhance tourist satisfaction, which, in turn, can foster trust and loyalty toward the service provider. Setyaningrum et al. (2025), citing Brighita, noted that tourist satisfaction can result from high-quality service and the professional competencies of tour leaders and tour guides in providing knowledge and information about tourist destinations.

Rochmansyah and Adhrianti (2024) found that tour leaders at Permata Tour Lubuklinggau employed interpersonal communication strategies to create a sense of security, build rapport, and influence tourists' attitudes through verbal and nonverbal communication, thereby contributing to tourist loyalty. However, their study also indicated that tour leaders' interpersonal communication had not yet been fully optimized, resulting in some tourists using the travel agency's services only once. Meanwhile, Rohimat and Sudrajat (Rohimat & Sudrajat, 2023) found that tour leaders who provided professional, friendly, and patient service and consistently followed standard operating procedures (SOPs) could enhance tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat use of travel services, highlighting the importance of high-quality interpersonal interactions in shaping tourists' travel experiences.

These studies demonstrate that interpersonal communication is a crucial component of tourism services. However, previous research has primarily focused on service quality and its relationship with tourist satisfaction and loyalty rather than examining how tour leaders' interpersonal communication occurs during actual interactions with tourists. Furthermore, research specifically examining tour leaders' interpersonal communication within the context of travel agencies such as Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel remains limited. DeVito's theory of interpersonal communication provides an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding this phenomenon and examining the process of message exchange. According

to DeVito et al., (2024), communication involves the behavior of one or more individuals in the process of sending and receiving messages.

Based on the preceding discussion, this study examined the effectiveness of tour leaders' interpersonal communication when interacting with tourists during tours. In addition to conveying information, tour leaders play important roles in building rapport, providing guidance, understanding tourists' needs, and creating a comfortable and conducive travel environment. The effectiveness of tour leaders' interpersonal communication was examined using DeVito's dimensions of interpersonal communication effectiveness. However, interactions between tour leaders and tourists may encounter various barriers, including differences in personality, background, and expectations, as well as dynamic situations encountered during tours. Accordingly, this study focused on the effectiveness of tour leaders' interpersonal communication with tourists at Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel and the interpersonal communication barriers that emerged during these interactions throughout the tours.

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of interpersonal communication between tour leaders and tourists at Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel and to identify the barriers that emerged during the communication process. The study is expected to contribute to the development of communication studies, particularly research on interpersonal communication in the tourism sector, by enriching the literature on communication effectiveness between tour leaders and tourists and identifying barriers encountered during these interactions. The study also provides empirical evidence regarding the applicability of DeVito's interpersonal communication framework in the context of tourism services. Its findings are expected to serve as a reference for future research on interpersonal communication in service settings. From a practical perspective, this study provides insights for tour and travel companies seeking to improve tour leaders' interpersonal communication skills to enhance tourist satisfaction and loyalty and emphasizes the importance of warm, empathetic, and respectful communication in creating meaningful and memorable travel experiences.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the interpersonal communication between tour leaders and tourists at Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel (Sugiyono, 2022). Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with two tour leaders, Hartika and Kristina Wardhani, and two tourists, Hanisa Agustin Lukistiyani from Cirebon City and Tino Pramungkas from Cirebon Regency. The participants were selected to obtain perspectives from both tour leaders and tourists regarding their interpersonal communication experiences during tour activities.

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Sugiyono, 2023). The analysis focused on identifying patterns in interpersonal communication between tour leaders and tourists, particularly those related to communication effectiveness, tourist comfort and satisfaction, and communication barriers encountered during tour activities.

The analysis incorporated primary data from in-depth interviews and secondary data from relevant literature and scholarly journals on interpersonal communication and tourism. The collected data were reduced by selecting and organizing information relevant to the

research objectives and were subsequently presented narratively and, where appropriate, in tabular form. DeVito's interpersonal communication framework was used to analyze the findings based on the dimensions of openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from tour leaders and tourists, while the interview findings were also examined alongside relevant secondary sources to strengthen the credibility and interpretation of the findings.

The study was designed to contribute to the understanding of interpersonal communication in tourism services, particularly the effectiveness of communication between tour leaders and tourists. The findings were also intended to provide practical insights for tour and travel companies regarding the development of tour leaders' interpersonal communication skills to enhance tourists' comfort, satisfaction, and overall travel experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the interpersonal communication activities of tour leaders at Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel in their interactions with tourists, along with the barriers encountered in the communication process. The analysis refers to the dimensions proposed by Joseph A. DeVito regarding the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, which include openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality (Teguh et al., 2025). Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with two Cakrawala Perdana tour leaders, Hartika (30 years old) and Kristina Wardhani (35 years old), and two open-trip participants: Hanisa Agustin Lukistiyani (25 years old) from Cirebon City and Tino Pramungkas (30 years old) from Cirebon Regency. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from a review of scientific journal articles, books, and relevant theoretical references. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive model, with data validity ensured through source triangulation and techniques.

Interpersonal Communication Between Tour Leaders and Tourists

1. Openness

The tour leader practices openness by listening to tourists' questions in full before providing answers. Hartika explained that questions are "first listened to until the end, then answered in a pleasant tone and tailored to the need," and information is conveyed in "language that is easy to understand, without using jargon and kept simple." Critical or repetitive questions are addressed calmly, with focus maintained, and detailed explanations provided. Openness is also demonstrated through the transparent communication of rules and schedule changes. At the start of the trip, rules are communicated politely without giving the impression of controlling the tourists. If an issue arises, information is promptly provided to the group in a clear and timely manner, along with solutions and an estimated resolution time. Important information is conveyed accurately and without exaggeration.

From the tourists' perspective, Hanisa acknowledged that "the tour leader was easy to talk to. We asked questions and got answers," and "the language was easy to understand; sometimes they'd even explain things repeatedly." She felt at ease because the tour leader listened to her questions until she finished speaking without interrupting. Regarding the rules, everything was explained thoroughly at the start of the trip in a pleasant manner, so it didn't feel like they were being bossy. When changes occurred due to the weather, the tour leader clearly explained the reasons, and new information was sent to the group or communicated

directly. Hanisa acknowledged that the information matched the actual conditions on the ground; when one location couldn't be visited due to rain, the tour leader was honest about it and immediately found an alternative, so the disappointment didn't linger.

2. Empathy

The tour leader demonstrates empathy by understanding the physical and emotional conditions of the tourists. Hartika stated that a sensitive attitude toward the group's condition is essential, and if anyone appears tired or uncomfortable, their condition should be checked immediately. Fatigue is recognized by facial expressions and the way people walk: "If many people keep checking their watches or are complaining, it means they're starting to get tired." When tourists are tired, she offers them a break or speeds up the activity and replaces it with a rest period.

Empathy is also demonstrated through personal attention. Tourists' emotions can be read from the way they speak or their facial expressions, and if anyone seems uncomfortable, Hartika immediately addresses them personally. Assistance, such as providing medication or offering help when problems arise during the trip, is often provided. Understanding body language and facial expressions is key, and nonverbal communication—such as smiles and a pleasant tone of voice—is considered essential for maintaining a friendly atmosphere.

Hanisa, a tourist, experienced this sensitivity firsthand. "The tour leader was attentive to us; if anyone looked tired, they'd immediately let us rest—they didn't force us to stick to the schedule." This caring attitude was also evident when a participant wasn't feeling well; the tour leader would find them a seat or ask if they needed any medication. Activity adjustments were made flexibly, and Hanisa felt that if they had been forced to stick to the schedule, the atmosphere would not have been comfortable. She felt the empathy "through a subtle and personal approach," such as when the tour leader approached her gently and asked her questions privately without many people watching, making her feel cared for and at ease.

3. Supportiveness

The tour leader fosters a sense of security by regularly checking the number of participants, providing personal contact information, and responding quickly to requests for assistance. Hartika explained that the tour leader ensures no tourist is left behind by checking the number of participants, and personal contact information is frequently shared so that if anyone gets lost, they can immediately contact the tour leader. If anyone requests assistance, the tour leader arrives promptly and responds quickly. Assistance is most often provided when tourists feel ill, in which case medication is brought to them immediately. If an item is lost, coordination takes place with the hotel, the driver, or the tourist site.

Tourists also confirmed this; Hanisa observed that tour leaders frequently check the number of participants to ensure no one is left behind and provide contact numbers in case anyone gets lost or needs help, making the directions clear and giving participants a sense of being cared for. A sense of safety is considered to greatly influence travel satisfaction because it allows tourists to enjoy their trip to the fullest. The tour leader's response to requests for help is seen as prompt—for example, a participant feeling dizzy is immediately checked on, or if something is overlooked, it's addressed through coordination rather than being ignored. Although there are times when, due to crowds or tight schedules, participants have to wait briefly, the response remains positive. Hanisa recounted an experience where a participant lost an item. The tour leader did not show any signs of panic; the participant remained calm, was

asked for details of the incident, and was kept updated on developments. Although the item was not found immediately, this approach was considered effective because the participant was supported throughout and remained calm.

4. Positiveness

The tour leader demonstrates a positive attitude through friendliness and enthusiasm, which are maintained consistently throughout the trip. Hartika explains that friendliness is evident in smiling, greeting people, using their names once they've been memorized, and engaging in small talk. This attitude is maintained "from the very beginning to the very end—it must be consistent with enthusiasm." Positive energy is believed to be contagious; if the tour leader is friendly and enthusiastic, the atmosphere among tourists will become more relaxed, open, and lively. Language use is adapted functionally: formal when explaining rules, schedules, or official information; informal when speaking on the bus, joking, or engaging in icebreakers to lighten the mood. Most tourists prefer a relaxed yet polite and clear style because it creates a comfortable atmosphere without feeling stiff, while still being professionally guided. In difficult situations, emotions are managed by staying calm and not reacting immediately. The most emotionally challenging issues include delayed schedules, bad weather, or emotional complaints, and the strategy used is to focus on solutions and speak clearly in front of the group to keep the atmosphere calm.

This was confirmed by Hanisa, a tourist, who noted that the tour leader was friendly toward tourists from start to finish, joking around but not excessively. The tour leader made the atmosphere more pleasant and relaxed for the tourists with this attitude. Her casual yet polite manner of speaking made it comfortable to interact with her, without any stiffness or condescension. When faced with a participant who was upset due to a schedule change, the tour leader remained calm, apologized, explained the situation, and invited the person to speak privately. Hanisa said this was considered very professional because the tour leader was able to control themselves, preventing the situation from escalating and keeping the group in a positive and cooperative atmosphere.

5. Equality

All tourists are treated fairly by the tour leader. Hartika emphasizes that tourists must be treated equally; there should be no favoritism or comparisons. Differences in treatment arise only in cases of special needs—for example, giving extra attention to the elderly, young children, or those in poor health—which is an adjustment to their needs, not discrimination. Age influences the communication approach. Explanations are given more politely and slowly to older participants, while the tone is more relaxed with younger participants to avoid monotony. Opportunities to speak are distributed evenly by asking questions of the entire group, not just the same people. If someone is quiet, Hartika will approach them personally in a relaxed manner so they feel included. Travelers are involved in minor decisions. If there are changes to the itinerary, the situation is explained honestly, and, if possible, options are offered to the group—for example, changing the order of destinations or spending more time at a particular location. Decisions are made by majority vote while still taking conditions and time constraints into account.

As a tourist, Hanisa also observed that the tour leader treated all participants equally—both young and old—and paid attention to everyone. The only difference was in the way the tour leader spoke, which was adjusted accordingly; for example, the tour leader spoke more politely

to older people, without discriminating based on age, background, or status. Opportunities to speak were perceived as fair because all participants were given a chance to contribute. The tour leader encouraged participation by asking other participants questions, not just the dominant ones. Hanisa also admitted that she had been involved in minor decision-making, such as choosing a place to rest, and she felt comfortable and respected because her opinion was heard. If a decision had to be made quickly, the tour leader still provided an explanation to ensure that the participants continued to feel involved.

Barriers to Interpersonal Communication Between Tour Leaders and Tourists

1. Openness

The main challenge was found in the area of openness—specifically, tourists’ reluctance to voice complaints because they felt hesitant, embarrassed, or afraid of being seen as a nuisance. Kristina found that differences in tourism characteristics were one of the contributing factors. Some tourists do not dare to voice their opinions because they feel embarrassed or worried about bothering the tour leader. To address this, from the very beginning of the trip, she instructs tourists not to hesitate to express any discomfort, and she strives to create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. To ensure tourists feel heard, responses are not given briefly; instead, complaints are taken seriously and followed up on.

Misunderstandings resulting from itinerary changes are one of the issues that arise in interactions between tour leaders and tourists. Kristina explained that schedule changes can cause disappointment, especially when the destination leads to complaints from tourists because the actual trip differs from the itinerary that was previously provided. Some tourists even accuse the tour operator of being unprofessional because of these changes.

Tino, as a tourist, expressed his disappointment with the itinerary change. He said, “There was once a change due to bad weather. At first, I was disappointed because it was a destination I’d been looking forward to, but the tour leader immediately explained the reason clearly and offered an alternative itinerary.” Misunderstandings can also arise when changes occur suddenly and not all tourists have received the information yet.

In resolving the complaint, the tour leader provided an honest explanation and sought alternative travel arrangements. Tino said, “Because the tour leader explained the situation calmly and didn’t hide the reason for the change, misunderstandings were minimized so the situation didn’t escalate, and it was ultimately well received.” This finding shows that openness and the provision of alternatives by the tour leader can help address travelers’ disappointment so that issues do not escalate into conflicts.

2. Empathy

Tour leaders often struggle to accurately read tourists’ emotions, especially in crowded situations or after a long, tiring trip. As Kristina, a tour leader, acknowledges, tourists’ expressions are often mixed, making it difficult to tell whether they’re genuinely upset or just tired. Cultural differences, backgrounds, and on-site conditions—such as bad weather or a packed schedule—also make body language ambiguous. To address this, she usually asks politely directly or checks with fellow participants. Age and personality differences also pose challenges. Younger tourists tend to be quick to respond but lack discipline, while older tourists are more sensitive and require a more polite approach. The most challenging types are those who are overly reserved or think they “know it all” and like to compare things to their past

experiences. The strategy she uses is to adjust her speaking style—being more polite and speaking more slowly with older people, and more relaxed with younger people—and to use neutral language so that everyone feels understood and respected.

Inappropriate emotional responses from tour leaders are also one of the obstacles to providing good service to tourists. Exhausting travel conditions and the pressure during activities can affect how tour leaders respond. Kristina acknowledged that in certain situations, she has responded in an overly casual manner in an effort to ease tension. However, such responses actually made tourists feel that their situation was not being taken seriously.

Tourists also experienced this situation when the group was tired after a long journey. Tino explained that the tour leader had tried to lighten the mood by joking with the group. However, some tourists were offended because the humor was delivered at a time they considered inappropriate. According to Tino, this situation made the group's atmosphere even more tense because the tour leader's response was out of sync with the tourists' state of exhaustion.

After realizing that the tourists were uncomfortable, the tour leader immediately adjusted his communication style. He apologized and provided an explanation in a more polite manner so that the tourists would feel understood. These efforts received a positive response from the tourists. Tino viewed the tour leader's willingness to recognize and acknowledge his inappropriate response as a sign of professionalism in providing service.

The findings show that empathy is not only related to the tour leader's attention to the tourists' well-being, but also to the ability to adapt communication responses to the group's emotional state. Inappropriate responses can lead to dissatisfaction with the service. However, a willingness to apologize and adjust the communication approach serves as a resolution that helps restore the tourists' comfort.

3. Supportiveness

The findings indicate that empathy is not only related to tour guides' concern for tourists' well-being, but also to their ability to adapt their communication responses to the group's emotional state. Inappropriate responses can lead to dissatisfaction with the service. However, a willingness to apologize and adjust one's communication approach serves as a solution that helps restore tourists' sense of comfort.

This was confirmed by Tino, a tourist, who noted that when time was limited, the tour leader seemed overwhelmed, but still prioritized responding to participants and providing explanations. In crowded places, not everyone can hear the information, but the tour leader creates a central gathering point or shares updates through the group chat. When items go missing, the tour leader "remains calm and works with participants to find a solution together." According to Tino, the most important thing is consistent support: "Even if the item hasn't been found yet, the tour leader keeps providing updates. That way, participants still feel supported and don't feel left out."

4. Positiveness

Work pressure is the main challenge. Kristina says the most emotionally draining moments are when a major problem arises but tourists don't understand it, even though a solution must be found immediately. Her biggest challenge is "keeping her emotions in check while trying to provide the best service but still receiving negative feedback." Negative reactions arise when expectations aren't met due to traffic jams, fatigue, or hunger. To address

this, she first validates the tourists' feelings and then provides an explanation. Tense situations are managed by taking control of the situation, explaining calmly, and occasionally injecting a bit of humor.

Tino observed that, even under pressure, the tour leader still tried to speak politely and avoid coming across as intrusive. When participants got angry, the tour leader would apologize and ask to speak with them privately to prevent the situation from escalating. When tensions ran high, the tour leader focused on finding solutions and would occasionally inject some light-hearted humor, which usually helped defuse the situation.

5. Equality

The dominance of certain tourists in conversations poses a challenge. Kristina explained, "There's usually a dominant personality—someone who talks nonstop or tries to control the conversation"—which makes other participants uncomfortable and causes them to remain silent. To balance the situation, questions are redirected to more passive participants. A sense of being left out arises when decisions are made quickly in urgent situations due to time constraints. Differences in roles can make travelers reluctant to participate, so Kristina builds rapport from the start through casual introductions without formalities.

From the tourists' perspective, Tino acknowledged that there was one dominant participant who silenced the others. The tour leader was seen as always "encouraging other participants to speak up, so that it's not just one person who's heard." In urgent decision-making situations, even though Tino felt he wasn't included in the discussion, the subsequent explanation helped him understand better. The difference in roles created a sense of hesitation, but when the tour leader was relaxed and friendly, communication still felt close.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe the interpersonal communication activities of tour leaders and identify barriers that arise during interactions with tourists. The analysis was conducted based on the five dimensions of interpersonal communication effectiveness proposed by Joseph A. Devito in (Teguh et al., 2025), namely openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. The results of the study indicate that the application of these five dimensions is inextricably linked to service issues encountered during the journey.

In terms of openness, the tour leader's actions were evident in the way they listened to questions until the end, answered in simple language, and communicated rules and schedule changes transparently. However, obstacles arose from tourists who were reluctant to voice complaints and from misunderstandings resulting from sudden schedule changes that not all participants had been informed of. One example involved a schedule change due to weather conditions that prevented a visit to one of the destinations. This situation caused disappointment because there was a discrepancy between the itinerary and what actually happened on the ground. This disappointment was evident in the complaints from some tourists regarding the schedule discrepancies and their assessment that the service was unprofessional. Tino, as a tourist, also admitted directly, "At first, I was disappointed because I had been looking forward to that destination."



Figure 1. The tour leader's explanation of the travel rules to the tourists at the start of the trip.
Source: Tour leader's documentation, 2025.

Tourists' disappointment is more likely to turn into a misunderstanding when schedule changes are made suddenly and the entire group hears about them. The tour leader then gathered the participants and explained the reason for the change. An honest explanation was provided regarding the situation, and the tour leader then sought information from travel partners to determine alternative itineraries. Tino noted that the calm explanation, which did not conceal the reason for the change, made the situation acceptable and prevented it from escalating into a bigger problem.

According to DeVito, this situation relates to openness, as openness is not only about the willingness to provide information but also the readiness to respond to received messages. In the case of the schedule change, the tour leader listened to the tourists' complaints and explained the actual situation. The alternative schedule provided became part of the resolution to the itinerary change. This incident demonstrates that open communication helps the tour leader address tourists' disappointment, even though the cause of the itinerary change was unavoidable.

In terms of empathy, the tour leader strives to understand the tourists' condition through their facial expressions, manner of speaking, and body language. Tourists who appear tired are given the option to continue with the scheduled activities at a later time. The tour leader also approaches tourists individually when noticing a change in their expression or demeanor. This approach makes tourists feel more comfortable sharing how they are feeling.

However, the ability to understand tourists' states of mind isn't always accurate. With a large group that's tired after a long journey, it's hard to tell whether a tourist's expression indicates genuine anger or just exhaustion—this was evident when the tour leader tried to lighten the mood with a joke while the group was tired. Some tourists actually took offense, feeling that it wasn't the right time for jokes. Tino explained that tensions in the group flared up because the tour leader's response didn't match the tourists' state of exhaustion.

The tour leader realized that his response was inappropriate and immediately apologized and offered a more polite explanation. In light of DeVito's concept of empathy, this incident demonstrates that understanding tourists' feelings requires more than simply viewing the situation from the tour leader's perspective. The response must also be tailored to the tourists'

circumstances at that moment. The tour leader's willingness to adjust his tone after realizing a tourist had been offended exemplifies adapting communication to the tourists' feelings.

In terms of supportive attitudes, a sense of security is fostered by verifying the number of participants, providing the tour leader's contact number, and offering assistance when tourists encounter problems. The tour leader gives priority to tourists who are sick or lost. When an item is lost, the tour leader helps gather information about its last known location and coordinates with the hotel, driver, and the tourist attraction's staff. Even if the item is not found immediately, updates on the search are provided so that tourists do not feel abandoned.

Tourists perceive the support provided by the tour leader as part of their comfort during the trip. Hanisa stated that a sense of security influences travel satisfaction because tourists can enjoy the trip more comfortably. This indicates that tourist satisfaction in this study is not determined solely by the successful execution of the entire itinerary. The way the tour leader provides assistance and supports tourists when they encounter problems is also part of the service experience perceived by tourists.

Challenges in providing support arise when several tourists request assistance at the same time. Time constraints force the tour leader to prioritize which issues need to be addressed first. Additionally, the crowded atmosphere at the tourist site, unclear public address announcements, and tourists scattering to take photos mean that not all participants always hear the information. The tour leader manages these situations by designating a meeting point and repeating the information through a communication group created before departure.

In terms of positive attitudes, a tour leader's friendliness is evident in their habit of greeting others, smiling, striking up conversations, and using language appropriate to the group's situation. Formal language is used more often when explaining rules and schedules, while casual language is used on the bus or when the atmosphere of the trip is more relaxed. Tourists feel that a casual yet polite communication style makes interactions with the tour leader feel less stiff.

It becomes harder to maintain a positive attitude when a tour leader is under pressure. Delayed schedules, bad weather, traffic jams, and tourists voicing complaints in a raised tone can be quite emotionally draining. Nevertheless, the tour leader tries not to react emotionally right away. When a tourist is upset because the trip didn't meet their expectations, the tour leader apologizes first, explains the situation, and invites the tourist to speak privately so the issue doesn't affect the entire group.



Figure 2. The tour leader's friendly demeanor and smile, maintained consistently from the beginning to the end of the trip.

Source: Tour leader's documentation, 2025.

The way tour leaders handle angry tourists shows that a positive attitude isn't just evident in their friendliness when the trip is going smoothly. It's also evident in their ability to maintain a calm demeanor when handling complaints. According to DeVito's framework on positive attitudes, positive behavior can foster more comfortable interactions. In this study, the tour leaders' ability to control their emotions and steer the conversation toward problem-solving helped prevent the group's atmosphere from becoming even more tense.

In terms of equality, the tour leader does not discriminate against tourists based on age or status. The only differences are in the way they communicate and the individual needs of each tourist. Older tourists are given explanations in a slower and more polite manner, while communication with younger tourists is conducted in a more casual tone. Extra attention is also given to children, the elderly, or tourists who are ill, as they require assistance first.

Equality is also evident in the opportunities given to tourists to ask questions and express their opinions. However, there are some tourists in the group who are more dominant, causing other participants to remain silent. The tour leader tries to redirect questions to the more passive participants so that they still have a chance to speak. For minor decisions, such as choosing a rest stop or deciding how to proceed with the activities, tourists can be involved when circumstances permit.

In urgent situations, it is not always possible to involve all tourists. Bad weather or closed tourist sites require the tour leader to make decisions on short notice. These decisions may initially make tourists feel left out. However, an explanation of the reasons behind the decision is still provided once the situation is under control. This aligns with DeVito's principle of equality, which treats both parties as individuals who deserve respect in the communication process, even though the tour leader and tourists have different responsibilities during the trip.

Based on the research findings, DeVito's five dimensions of interpersonal communication were identified in the activities of tour leaders at Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel. However, their application does not always proceed without obstacles. Disappointment due to schedule changes, tourists' reluctance to voice complaints, difficulty in gauging emotional states, time constraints in providing assistance, pressure when handling complaints, and participants' dominance are all part of communication during the trip.

Cases of schedule changes show that tourists may feel disappointed when the trip they receive does not match their original plans. Similarly, when a tour leader's response is perceived as inappropriate given the tourists' circumstances, discomfort may arise even if the original intention was to lighten the mood. In such situations, honest explanations, offering alternatives, apologies, and a personal approach are the methods tour leaders use to resolve issues. Therefore, the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in this study is evident in how tour leaders manage communication while addressing obstacles that arise in their interactions with tourists. The way tour leaders handle complaints and provide support also influences tourists' comfort and satisfaction during the trip.



Figure 3. The participation of all tour participants in group activities as a form of equality.
Source: Tour leader's documentation, 2025.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, interpersonal communication between tour leaders and tourists at Cakrawala Perdana Tour and Travel was effective, as reflected in the application of DeVito's five dimensions of interpersonal communication effectiveness: openness, demonstrated through the delivery of clear and transparent information; empathy, demonstrated through an understanding of tourists' physical and emotional conditions; supportiveness, demonstrated through the creation of a sense of security and responsiveness to tourists' needs; positiveness, demonstrated through friendliness and consistent emotional management; and equality, demonstrated through equitable treatment and tourists' involvement in decision-making. However, several communication barriers were identified, including tourists' reluctance to express complaints, misunderstandings arising from sudden schedule changes, difficulties in recognizing tourists' emotions in crowded situations, time constraints, work-related pressure, and the dominance of certain participants in group interactions. To address these barriers, tour leaders employed strategies such as using digital communication channels, validating tourists' feelings, adopting personalized communication approaches, and establishing priorities. Thus, the effectiveness of interpersonal communication was reflected not only in the quality and continuity of interactions but also in the tour leaders' ability to manage communication and address barriers that emerged during tours, ultimately contributing to tourists' comfort and satisfaction. This study recommends strengthening tour leaders' interpersonal communication competencies through periodic training, providing responsive digital communication channels, and enhancing tour leaders' emotional sensitivity. Further quantitative research is also recommended to examine the effect of tour leaders' interpersonal communication on tourist loyalty across different travel agencies.

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