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Service Communication of BRT Trans Jateng in Fostering Passenger Satisfaction on the Semarang-Grobogan Route

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Abstract

This study examines how service communication relates to passenger satisfaction on the Semarang–Grobogan route of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Trans Jateng. A descriptive qualitative embedded single-case study with a phenomenological perspective involved five purposively selected informants: a service coordinator, a bus attendant, a dispatch officer, and two regular passengers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations at Penggaron Stop and along the Penggaron–Gubug journey, and operational documentation, then analyzed using interactive data reduction, display, and conclusion verification supported by source triangulation. Findings indicate that direct communication between personnel and passengers enabled explanations, immediate feedback, and assistance, reflecting the source, message, channel, and receiver components of service communication. Staff demonstrated responsiveness and empathy, particularly when guiding passengers unfamiliar with the route. Nevertheless, faded timetable information and inconsistent spoken stop announcements limited independent access to service information. One observed bus arrived approximately 12 minutes later than the SiAnteng schedule without a proactive delay notification. Complaint handling involved listening, explaining, and referral, but remained predominantly reactive. Passenger satisfaction was associated with courteous staff interactions and clear, timely operational information. Improvements should prioritize legible displays, routine announcements, and coordinated delay updates through SiAnteng and frontline personnel to reduce uncertainty during everyday travel and waiting.

Keywords: *BRT Trans Jateng, Passenger Satisfaction, Public Transportation, Service Communication, SERVQUAL.*

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INTRODUCTION

Public transportation has become an essential component of regional mobility systems, supporting economic participation, educational accessibility, and social interaction while creating increasing expectations for reliable, transparent, and passenger-oriented service delivery. The development of information-based transportation services has demonstrated that access to accurate travel information can reduce waiting times and improve the accessibility of public transportation networks, making communication an integral component of service effectiveness (Ashraf et al., 2023). The growing integration of digital technologies into transportation services has also changed passenger expectations, as the ability to access and interpret service information increasingly influences perceptions of transportation quality and satisfaction (Nilsson et al., 2025). Indonesian public transportation systems face similar demands, particularly in Bus Rapid Transit operations, where passenger satisfaction is influenced by operational reliability, shelter conditions, accessibility, and the consistency of service delivery (Simangunsong et al., 2023). Research concerning BRT Trans Jateng has further established that service attributes, transportation fares, and stop locations constitute relevant considerations in understanding passenger evaluations of regional public transportation services (Primasanti & Sebriana, 2024). Within Central Java, the Semarang–Grobogan route connects Penggaron Terminal in Semarang with Gubug and Godong in Grobogan Regency, serving passengers whose travel activities depend on the availability of accessible transportation and comprehensible service information. The effectiveness of this transportation service consequently requires attention not only to fleet availability and operational arrangements but also to how service personnel communicate schedules, routes, fares, disruptions, and passenger concerns throughout the transportation experience.

Contemporary research on public transportation satisfaction has increasingly recognized the multidimensional relationship between service performance, information accessibility, passenger experience, and institutional responsiveness. Empirical research on the Kuala Lumpur monorail system demonstrated that information provision, facilities, signage, and staff services contribute to passenger satisfaction, indicating that informational and interpersonal aspects of transportation services warrant attention alongside physical infrastructure (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Research involving public transportation systems in thirteen Chilean cities further examined the relationship between real-time travel information and passenger satisfaction under different operational quality conditions, emphasizing the importance of considering information availability together with actual transportation performance (Henriquez-Jara et al., 2025). Findings from TransJakarta provide a more differentiated interpretation, revealing that transportation fares, facilities, and security significantly influence passenger satisfaction, whereas aggregate service quality did not demonstrate a significant individual effect in the examined model (Herawati & Putri, 2025). Passenger experience has also been incorporated into broader explanatory models connecting service quality, satisfaction, perceived value, and loyalty, suggesting that transportation evaluations extend beyond immediate operational performance toward continuing relationships between passengers and service providers (Sangkoyo & Adiwijaya, 2024). These studies collectively indicate that passenger satisfaction cannot be explained exclusively through physical facilities or operational efficiency, although their different analytical approaches have not established a unified understanding of how direct interpersonal communication and mediated service information operate together within everyday public transportation encounters.

Despite the development of transportation service-quality research, a substantial analytical limitation remains concerning how communication processes are experienced by passengers and how these experiences contribute to satisfaction within specific regional transportation corridors. Investigations of BRT Trans Semarang have primarily examined operational characteristics, including shelter capacity, vehicle arrival intervals, stopping durations, and infrastructure conditions, providing important evidence concerning service performance without specifically examining communication exchanges between personnel and passengers (Simangunsong et al., 2023). Research examining the Solo–Sumberlawang BRT route has similarly concentrated on facilities, services, and convenience as determinants of passenger satisfaction, leaving the interpersonal characteristics of information delivery and passenger feedback outside its principal explanatory focus (Prihtiana & Triyanto, 2025). An investigation of BRT Trans Jateng Corridor 7 employed the Six Sigma approach to identify service complaints and operational improvement priorities, demonstrating the value of systematic service evaluation while placing comparatively limited emphasis on the communicative processes through which passenger concerns are understood and addressed (Primasanti et al., 2025). International evidence concerning real-time transportation information has established measurable accessibility benefits, but its technological orientation does not adequately explain the relationship between digital information, direct employee communication, and passenger interpretations of service encounters (Ashraf et al., 2023). The resulting research gap is therefore both contextual and conceptual, concerning the insufficient examination of how service communication is conducted, received, and evaluated by passengers using the Semarang–Grobogan route of BRT Trans Jateng. This limitation warrants an investigation that treats message clarity, communication channels, staff responsiveness, informational consistency, and complaint-related interactions as interconnected elements of the passenger experience rather than as isolated attributes within general transportation service-quality assessments.

The scientific urgency of examining service communication arises from the possibility that operationally available transportation services may still generate dissatisfaction when passengers encounter uncertainty, inconsistent explanations, or limited opportunities to obtain assistance. Research on real-time public transportation information indicates that the contribution of information accessibility to passenger satisfaction must be understood in relation to existing service conditions, suggesting that the usefulness of communicated information depends partly on its correspondence with actual transportation performance (Henriquez-Jara et al., 2025). Differences in passengers' digital competence also create practical considerations for public transportation operators because information systems relying heavily on digital platforms may not provide equally accessible communication experiences for all categories of passengers (Nilsson et al., 2025). The identification of recurring complaints regarding transportation reliability, comfort, and punctuality in BRT Trans Jateng demonstrates the operational relevance of passenger feedback and suggests that effective complaint

management requires clear communication between service providers and affected users (Primasanti et al., 2025). Evidence identifying information provision and staff services as important aspects of transportation satisfaction further supports the need to examine whether passengers receive understandable explanations, appropriate assistance, and timely responses throughout their journeys (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Investigating these communication practices is relevant to public service management because it may reveal specific weaknesses in information delivery and interpersonal responsiveness that conventional infrastructure assessments or aggregate satisfaction measurements cannot sufficiently explain.

The present study is positioned at the intersection of service communication, public transportation management, and passenger satisfaction, with particular emphasis on the social interactions through which public service experiences are constructed and evaluated. Previous research on BRT Trans Jateng has examined the relationships among service attributes, transportation fares, stop locations, and customer satisfaction, providing a foundation for understanding passenger evaluations without establishing service communication as a distinct analytical focus (Primasanti & Sebriana, 2024). Research on the Solo–Sumberlawang route has expanded the empirical understanding of regional BRT satisfaction through assessments of facilities, services, and convenience, although its primary emphasis remains on general service characteristics rather than the communication processes accompanying passenger interactions (Prihtiana & Triyanto, 2025). Evidence from TransJakarta indicates that conventional service-quality measures may differ in their explanatory significance relative to facilities, prices, and security, highlighting the need for more specific investigations of how passengers interpret individual service attributes (Herawati & Putri, 2025). The incorporation of passenger experience into models of service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty further demonstrates the analytical relevance of interactions occurring throughout the service encounter, although these relationships do not independently explain the communication mechanisms operating within particular transportation corridors (Sangkoyo & Adiwijaya, 2024). The proposed novelty lies in examining service communication as an integrated process involving direct interactions with transportation personnel, the clarity and accessibility of mediated information, responsiveness to passenger inquiries, and the handling of complaints within the specific operational environment of the Semarang–Grobogan route. This approach extends existing transportation satisfaction research by emphasizing the communicative dimensions of public service encounters and their relationship with passenger evaluations, while recognizing that communication operates alongside rather than independently of the broader conditions of transportation service delivery.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of service communication by BRT Trans Jateng in fostering passenger satisfaction on the Semarang–Grobogan route, with particular attention to the interaction between transportation personnel and passengers throughout the service experience. The investigation specifically seeks to identify the forms and channels of communication employed in conveying transportation information, including direct interpersonal communication and information disseminated through available service media. The analysis also examines how passengers evaluate the clarity, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, and consistency of information concerning schedules, routes, fares, stopping locations, and operational disruptions. Particular consideration is given to the responsiveness of transportation personnel in addressing passenger inquiries, providing explanations, handling complaints, and demonstrating attentiveness to passenger needs. The study further seeks to understand how these communication experiences relate to passenger satisfaction by examining the correspondence between information received, interpersonal treatment, service expectations, and perceived transportation performance. Its theoretical contribution is directed toward extending the application of service communication and passenger satisfaction concepts to regional public transportation, particularly by clarifying the role of communicative interactions within the broader evaluation of service quality. Its practical contribution is expected to provide an evidence-based foundation for improving passenger information systems, frontline communication practices, and complaint-handling procedures within BRT Trans Jateng, thereby supporting more responsive and passenger-oriented transportation service management.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design with an embedded single-case study strategy and a phenomenological perspective to examine how BRT Trans Jateng personnel and

passengers understood service communication and satisfaction on the Semarang–Grobogan route (Sutopo, 2002). The research was conducted at Penggaron Stop and other stops along the Semarang–Grobogan corridor, including on-board observations during bus operations between Penggaron and Gubug. Service communication was examined as an integral component of passenger experiences, consistent with previous assessments of operational performance and service quality in the Trans Semarang transportation system (Simangunsong et al., 2023). The research utilized primary data obtained from informants and observations, supported by documentary materials comprising service standard operating procedures, outreach materials, screenshots of the Trans Jateng SiAnteng application, photographs of route and information boards, and field notes. The examination of interactions between personnel and passengers was informed by previous research addressing service attributes and passenger satisfaction in BRT Trans Jateng operations (Primasanti & Sebriana, 2024). Five informants representing management, frontline personnel, and regular passengers were selected through criterion-based purposive sampling to provide perspectives on institutional communication practices, operational service delivery, and passenger experiences, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Informant Profiles

No.	Code	Role/Status	Informant Characteristics
1	I1	Management	Service Coordinator
2	I2	Frontline Staff	Bus Attendant
3	I3	Frontline Staff	Timer / Dispatch Officer
4	I4	Regular Passenger	Employee
5	I5	Regular Passenger	University Student

Data collection employed three complementary techniques consisting of semi-structured in-depth interviews with all five informants, direct observations of transportation service activities, and examination of relevant operational documents. Direct observations were conducted at Penggaron Stop at 07:15 Western Indonesian Time and during an approximately 30-minute journey from Penggaron to Gubug, while documentary evidence included SiAnteng application screenshots captured on September 13, 2026, photographs of information and route boards, and field notes. The examination of application-based information and physical communication media was informed by research highlighting the relevance of transit information accessibility to passenger experiences and transportation service effectiveness (Ashraf et al., 2023). Interview and observation materials were examined in relation to information delivery, staff responsiveness, and passenger evaluations, reflecting the significance of service information and interpersonal assistance in public transportation satisfaction (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, as presented by Sutopo (2002), encompassing iterative processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification to identify recurring communication patterns and relationships with passenger satisfaction. Data reduction employed the analytical codes KOM-1 (source and message), KOM-2 (channel), KOM-3 (receiver and feedback), SQ-RESP (responsiveness), SQ-EMP (empathy), SQ-REL (reliability and timeliness), KEP-1 (alignment between expectations and experience), and KEP-2 (expressions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction), while source triangulation was conducted by comparing management and frontline staff accounts with passengers' experiences to assess the credibility and consistency of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms and Processes of Service Communication in BRT Trans Jateng

Service communication within BRT Trans Jateng on the Semarang–Grobogan route was organized through interactions between operational personnel and passengers, supported by conventional information facilities and digital communication media. The Service Coordinator (I1) identified frontline officers as the principal communicators responsible for delivering operational information directly to passengers, particularly when immediate clarification was required. The coordinator explained that the service team "tries to ensure that the information passengers receive reflects actual field conditions," emphasizing the institutional expectation that communicated information should correspond to transportation operations. Urgent information was generally delivered

through direct staff interactions, indicating that interpersonal communication remained the principal mechanism for addressing immediate passenger information needs. This arrangement reflects the significance of communication sources, messages, channels, and receivers in determining whether information can be transmitted and understood effectively (Effendy, 2003). The organizational communication structure also demonstrates the relevance of frontline personnel as institutional representatives whose explanations influence how passengers interpret the quality of public services (Saleh, 2010). Nevertheless, the reliance on direct communication suggests that the effectiveness of information delivery depends substantially on staff availability, communication initiative, and the consistency of supporting information channels.

Face-to-face communication constituted an important component of daily service interactions, particularly when passengers required information concerning routes, destinations, and stopping locations. The Bus Attendant (I2) and Timer or Dispatch Officer (I3) explained that passenger inquiries were generally addressed directly, with additional explanations provided to individuals unfamiliar with the transportation route. This practice was supported by field observations conducted at Penggaron Stop at 07:15 Western Indonesian Time, when an officer approached two passengers who appeared confused about their intended journey. The officer provided route explanations in a friendly manner for approximately one minute without requiring the passengers to initiate the interaction. The encounter demonstrated that communication was not exclusively dependent on passenger inquiries because frontline personnel could recognize visible uncertainty and provide assistance proactively. Such direct exchanges illustrate the capacity of interpersonal communication to accommodate immediate feedback and adjust explanations to the informational needs of service recipients (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

The observed interaction patterns revealed a distinction between communication initiated by passengers and communication initiated by transportation personnel. According to I2 and I3, information concerning destinations and stopping locations was normally communicated when passengers requested clarification, particularly among individuals unfamiliar with the corridor. Staff-initiated explanations were also evident when passengers demonstrated uncertainty, suggesting that frontline communication combined reactive responses with situationally proactive assistance. These practices indicate that passenger information needs were identified primarily through verbal questions and observable behavior rather than through uniformly scheduled communication procedures. Research concerning communication channels emphasizes that the effectiveness of interpersonal exchanges is influenced by the relationship between communication media, operational circumstances, and the information requirements of participants (Kaneko, 2025). Direct explanations offered opportunities for immediate clarification, particularly when route information could not be interpreted easily through existing information facilities. The effectiveness of this communication pattern nevertheless remained dependent on the presence and initiative of personnel, creating potential differences in information accessibility between passengers who actively requested assistance and those who did not.

Supporting communication channels presented several limitations that affected the independent accessibility of transportation information. Field observation identified only one timetable board at Penggaron Stop, with faded lettering that made the morning departure times difficult to read. The condition of this information facility reduced the practical usefulness of written schedules for passengers attempting to identify departure information without assistance. During an approximately 30-minute journey between Penggaron and Gubug, no spoken announcements were heard at several stopping locations, indicating inconsistencies in the delivery of on-board route information. Regular passengers I4 and I5 reported obtaining information from staff and shelter displays, although their familiarity with the route meant that they had largely memorized its schedules and stopping locations. These observations raise concerns when considered against the information accessibility principles established in Indonesia's minimum service standards for road-based mass transportation, which provide a comparative benchmark for visible and audible passenger information (Kementerian Perhubungan Republik Indonesia, 2012).

Table 2. Observed Service Communication Channels and Field Evidence

Communication Channel	Empirical Evidence	Service Implication
Face-to-face communication	Officers answered passenger inquiries and proactively assisted two confused passengers at Penggaron Stop.	Enabled immediate clarification but depended on staff availability and initiative.
Printed timetable board	One timetable board was available at Penggaron Stop, with faded morning departure information.	Limited independent access to readable schedule information.
On-board verbal announcements	No spoken announcements were heard at several stops during the approximately 30-minute Penggaron–Gubug observation.	Reduced the availability of routine audible stopping-location information.
SiAnteng application	Three of eight observed waiting passengers checked bus locations through the application.	Provided an additional digital information channel, although its accuracy was not established by this observation alone.

The evidence presented in Table 2 demonstrates that different communication channels provided unequal opportunities for passengers to obtain transportation information during their journeys. Interpersonal communication offered immediate clarification, whereas the printed timetable and on-board announcements displayed limitations in providing accessible information without staff assistance. Digital communication through the SiAnteng application represented an additional information channel, as three of eight passengers observed while waiting used the application to check bus locations. This observation confirms the use of application-based information among some passengers but does not establish the frequency of application use across the wider passenger population. Previous research has demonstrated that real-time transit information can improve public transportation accessibility by enabling passengers to obtain information relevant to travel decisions (Ashraf et al., 2023). The practical contribution of SiAnteng to service communication consequently depends on the accessibility and accuracy of the information presented, although these characteristics cannot be established solely from the recorded application-use observation. The coexistence of interpersonal, printed, verbal, and digital communication channels indicates the importance of maintaining complementary information mechanisms rather than relying exclusively on passengers' technological familiarity or willingness to approach service personnel.

The communication process identified in the field can be interpreted through the source–message–channel–receiver framework, which distinguishes the institutional actors responsible for information provision from the mechanisms through which messages reach passengers. Service coordinators and frontline personnel represented the organizational sources, while information concerning routes, stopping locations, departure schedules, and operational conditions constituted the principal messages communicated to service users. Direct explanations, timetable boards, on-board announcements, and the SiAnteng application functioned as communication channels with different levels of accessibility and opportunities for interaction. Passengers represented the receivers whose ability to interpret messages depended partly on their previous travel experience and the clarity of the information available through each channel. The reciprocal character of public service communication was evident when passengers asked questions and staff responded with explanations adapted to their immediate needs, illustrating the relational characteristics of communication in service delivery (Saleh, 2010). The observed weaknesses suggest that successful interpersonal exchanges did not necessarily indicate the equivalent effectiveness of mediated communication, because information accessibility remained dependent on the condition and operation of individual communication channels.

Differences between experienced and unfamiliar passengers provided further insight into how communication needs varied within the same transportation service. Regular users I4 and I5 explained that repeated journeys had enabled them to memorize schedules and routes, reducing their dependence on formal information facilities during ordinary travel. I2 and I3 similarly observed that regular

passengers generally understood the route, whereas newcomers continued to request explanations concerning destinations and stopping locations. These accounts suggest that previous travel experience operated as an informal source of information that partially compensated for limitations in the available communication infrastructure. The distinction is consistent with media richness theory, which explains why ambiguous or unfamiliar information may require communication channels capable of immediate feedback and clarification (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Research on public transportation satisfaction also identifies digital competence as a relevant consideration in understanding how passengers evaluate service information and transportation experiences (Nilsson et al., 2025). Communication facilities that depend heavily on prior route knowledge or familiarity with digital applications may consequently provide unequal informational support to passengers with different levels of experience and technological competence.

The combined interview, observation, and documentary evidence indicates that the principal strength of service communication on the Semarang–Grobogan route was the ability of frontline personnel to provide direct explanations when passengers required assistance. The willingness of officers to approach confused passengers demonstrated an interpersonal communication practice that extended beyond merely responding to explicitly stated questions. Limitations were more apparent in supporting information channels, particularly the readability of printed departure schedules and the absence of audible announcements at several observed stopping locations. Previous research on BRT Trans Semarang has similarly emphasized the relevance of passenger perceptions and operational service characteristics when evaluating the performance of bus rapid transit systems (Simangunsong et al., 2023). The findings also correspond with contemporary transportation research recognizing that information accessibility constitutes an important aspect of service performance beyond the physical availability of transportation vehicles (Ashraf et al., 2023). Service communication on the corridor can therefore be characterized as interpersonally responsive but unevenly supported by independent information facilities, indicating a need for more consistent integration between frontline explanations, printed schedules, on-board announcements, and digital service information.

Effectiveness of Service Communication: Responsiveness, Empathy, and Information Reliability

The effectiveness of service communication on the Semarang–Grobogan route was examined through three interconnected dimensions of service quality: responsiveness, empathy, and information reliability. The Service Coordinator (I1) explained that complaints received by frontline personnel were referred to authorized officers when further handling was required, while problems within staff authority were addressed through direct explanations. The Bus Attendant (I2) and Timer or Dispatch Officer (I3) described a similar procedure, stating that they generally listened to passenger concerns before explaining the operational circumstances or referring unresolved matters to responsible personnel. Regular passengers I4 and I5 confirmed that officers were generally helpful when responding to questions concerning routes, stopping locations, and waiting times. These accounts indicate that responsiveness was demonstrated through accessible interpersonal communication and an established practice of addressing passenger inquiries rather than through a formally measured response-time standard. Such practices correspond to the responsiveness dimension of SERVQUAL, which emphasizes employees' willingness to assist service recipients and provide prompt attention to their needs (Parasuraman et al., 1990).

The implementation of responsive communication nevertheless encountered operational constraints that influenced the consistency of passenger assistance. I2 and I3 acknowledged that crowded buses made it difficult to provide lengthy explanations, particularly when personnel were simultaneously responsible for routine transportation activities. This condition suggests that communication responsiveness was influenced not only by individual staff willingness but also by the practical demands associated with service delivery. Passengers requiring detailed explanations during crowded journeys could consequently experience limitations in the time and attention available from frontline personnel. Research concerning public transportation services has identified service quality as a relevant consideration in understanding passenger satisfaction, emphasizing the significance of dependable assistance within transportation operations (Djami et al., 2025). Studies of BRT Trans Jateng have also demonstrated the importance of identifying operational deficiencies when developing service improvement priorities, although such assessments do not independently establish the communication burden experienced by frontline employees (Primasanti et al., 2025). The observed

constraints indicate that reliance on interpersonal communication alone may create vulnerabilities when staff workloads increase, particularly where alternative information channels are insufficiently accessible or consistently maintained.

Empathy emerged as another important characteristic of service communication, reflected in the attention provided to passengers experiencing uncertainty about transportation procedures. I2 and I3 reported receiving instructions concerning passenger assistance, polite behavior, and the importance of explaining information clearly during service interactions. Passenger I4 described the officers as helpful, explaining that questions about schedules and stopping locations were generally answered in an understandable manner. I5 similarly expressed appreciation for assistance concerning routes and destinations, indicating that direct communication supported the travel experience of a passenger who was relatively less familiar with the service. These accounts suggest that courteous communication was consistent with the institutional expectations described by operational personnel, although the available evidence does not establish the frequency or content of any formal staff training activities. The relevance of attentive staff assistance is consistent with transportation satisfaction research that incorporates passenger perceptions of service personnel and information provision into assessments of service quality (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

The relationship between empathy and responsiveness demonstrates that effective service communication involves both the provision of relevant information and sensitivity to passengers' immediate circumstances. Responsiveness was reflected in the willingness of personnel to answer questions and address complaints, whereas empathy was evident in the manner through which explanations were adapted to passenger uncertainty. The proactive assistance provided to two confused passengers at Penggaron Stop illustrated the interaction between these dimensions because the officer recognized an informational need and responded without requiring a formal request. Within SERVQUAL, empathy concerns individualized attention and consideration of customer needs, distinguishing interpersonal care from the promptness of service responses (Parasuraman et al., 1990). These practices are also relevant to Article 34 of Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, which establishes behavioral obligations for public service personnel, including courteous treatment and the avoidance of unnecessarily complicated service procedures (Republik Indonesia, 2009). Comparative research on TransJakarta has examined service quality alongside transportation fares, facilities, and security, demonstrating the relevance of assessing interpersonal service characteristics within broader passenger satisfaction evaluations (Herawati & Putri, 2025). The findings indicate that responsiveness and empathy constituted relative strengths of communication on the Semarang–Grobogan route, although favorable interpersonal treatment did not necessarily compensate for weaknesses in operational information delivery.

Information reliability revealed a more pronounced discrepancy between institutional explanations and passenger expectations concerning the availability of timely transportation information. I1 acknowledged that travel conditions were not always consistent because traffic congestion, operational delays, and technical difficulties could affect scheduled transportation services. Passengers I4 and I5 similarly reported experiencing buses arriving later than expected without receiving sufficient information about the reasons for the delays, indicating that uncertainty concerned both actual waiting time and the absence of explanatory communication. During field observation, a bus arrived approximately 12 minutes later than the schedule displayed in the SiAnteng application, while no corresponding explanation was communicated through a shelter announcement or application notification. This observation establishes a specific inconsistency between the displayed schedule, actual arrival, and available passenger notifications, although a single recorded occurrence cannot determine the frequency of such discrepancies across the corridor. Contemporary research distinguishing measured transportation reliability from customer satisfaction provides a relevant basis for interpreting why operational performance and passengers' understanding of that performance should be evaluated as related but analytically distinct service characteristics (Berggren et al., 2026).

Table 3. Service Communication Effectiveness Based on SERVQUAL Dimensions

Dimension	Field Evidence	Analytical Interpretation
Responsiveness	I1, I2, and I3 described direct responses to inquiries and referral of complaints beyond staff authority; I4 and I5 confirmed receiving assistance.	Staff generally addressed passenger concerns, although crowded conditions restricted opportunities for detailed explanations.
Empathy	I2 and I3 reported instructions emphasizing courtesy and assistance; I4 and I5 appreciated explanations concerning routes and stopping locations.	Interpersonal communication demonstrated consideration for passenger needs and familiarity with the route.
Information Reliability	A bus arrived approximately 12 minutes later than the SiAnteng schedule without an accompanying shelter announcement or application notification.	Discrepancies between operational conditions and communicated information created uncertainty concerning waiting times.
Complaint Handling	I1 described referral procedures, while I2 and I3 reported listening and explaining; I4 and I5 confirmed receiving responses to waiting-time complaints.	Complaint communication was accessible and responsive but primarily reactive, with no documented evidence of subsequent corrective outcomes.

The evidence summarized in Table 3 indicates that interpersonal responsiveness and empathy were more consistently demonstrated than the timely communication of operational changes. The observed discrepancy between the SiAnteng schedule and actual bus arrival illustrates a limitation in information reliability because passengers were not provided with an explanation corresponding to the recorded delay. Ministry of Transportation Regulation Number PM 10 of 2012 establishes minimum service requirements for road-based mass transportation, including regularity and passenger information, providing a regulatory reference for evaluating the visibility, accessibility, and clarity of service information (Kementerian Perhubungan Republik Indonesia, 2012). Its provisions concerning service regularity and delay information support the importance of communicating operational changes, although determining direct regulatory compliance would require confirmation of the applicable service classification and a broader assessment of operational performance. The use of SiAnteng by three of eight observed waiting passengers indicates that digital information was available to some users, but application access alone did not ensure that explanations of service disruptions were delivered. Research examining public transportation services across thirteen Chilean cities has addressed the relationship between real-time information and satisfaction under different service-quality conditions, reinforcing the analytical relevance of considering information availability together with transportation performance (Henriquez-Jara et al., 2025). Improving the consistency between digital schedules, actual service conditions, and direct passenger notifications would therefore address the specific information gap identified during observation without assuming that communication improvements alone could eliminate operational delays.

Passenger complaint handling represented an additional indicator of communication effectiveness because it demonstrated how transportation personnel responded when service experiences did not meet passenger expectations. I1 described a tiered procedure in which frontline officers addressed complaints within their authority and referred more complex matters to responsible personnel for subsequent handling. I2 and I3 explained that their initial responses involved listening to passenger concerns, clarifying the circumstances, and escalating matters that could not be resolved directly. Passengers I4 and I5 confirmed that complaints concerning waiting times had received explanations, supporting the consistency between institutional accounts and passenger experiences regarding immediate complaint responses. The distinction between complaint procedures, interpersonal treatment, and substantive outcomes corresponds to research on complaint-related justice, which differentiates procedural, interactional, and distributive evaluations of organizational responses (Tax et al., 1998). The available evidence supports an assessment of staff attentiveness and immediate

explanation practices but does not establish whether the reported complaints resulted in corrective operational measures or measurable improvements in subsequent service delivery (Davidow, 2003).

Source triangulation demonstrated considerable agreement between management, frontline personnel, and passengers concerning the accessibility of direct communication, the willingness of officers to provide assistance, and the general responsiveness of complaint handling. Management and staff accounts described communication procedures that were broadly consistent with the experiences reported by I4 and I5, particularly regarding explanations of routes, stopping locations, and waiting-time concerns. The clearest divergence concerned information reliability because management emphasized operational circumstances affecting schedules, whereas passengers emphasized the absence of timely explanations when delays occurred. This difference indicates that institutional awareness of service disruptions did not consistently translate into communication capable of addressing passenger uncertainty before complaints were expressed. Research on organizational responses to complaints through digital communication channels further illustrates the relevance of examining how service providers respond to dissatisfaction, although the present evidence concerns primarily face-to-face communication and application-based service information rather than social media complaint management (Istanbulluoglu & Oz, 2023). The combination of interview and observational evidence provides a contextual understanding of communication strengths and limitations, but the five-informant qualitative design does not permit conclusions concerning the statistical prevalence of these experiences across all Trans Jateng passengers. Service communication effectiveness on the Semarang–Grobogan route was consequently characterized by relatively supportive interpersonal interactions and established complaint-response practices, accompanied by weaker proactive notification mechanisms and inconsistencies in communicating schedule changes to passengers.

Passenger Satisfaction and Implications for Service Communication Improvement

Passenger satisfaction on the Semarang–Grobogan route was closely associated with how passengers interpreted interpersonal interactions, information accessibility, and the consistency between communicated schedules and actual transportation experiences. Passenger I4 emphasized that staff friendliness, clear information, and notifications concerning schedule changes were important considerations in evaluating the quality of transportation services. The respondent explained that receiving understandable information contributed to a calmer travel experience, particularly when transportation conditions differed from initial expectations. Passenger I5 expressed comparable expectations regarding the availability of assistance and the clarity of explanations concerning routes and stopping locations. These accounts indicate that satisfaction was influenced not merely by the physical provision of transportation but also by passengers' perceptions of whether service personnel acknowledged and addressed their informational needs. Research on public service expectations demonstrates the relevance of examining how citizens formulate expectations regarding institutional service delivery, particularly when evaluating the correspondence between anticipated and experienced performance (Bellé et al., 2025). The relationship between perceived performance and service expectations is also consistent with established satisfaction concepts, which recognize that favorable evaluations emerge when service experiences adequately fulfill the requirements and expectations of users (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016).

Passenger accounts further demonstrated that interpersonal communication contributed to evaluations of service comfort and the willingness to continue using public transportation. I4 stated that responsive staff and easily accessible information were important considerations in maintaining confidence when choosing BRT Trans Jateng for regular journeys. I5 similarly valued direct assistance from transportation personnel, particularly when explanations helped clarify unfamiliar routes and stopping locations. These statements suggest that favorable communication experiences contributed to positive passenger perceptions, although the available qualitative evidence does not establish a measurable causal relationship between communication quality and continued transportation use. Research examining BRT services on the Solo–Sumberlawang route has identified facilities, service characteristics, and convenience as relevant factors in passenger satisfaction, providing a comparative basis for understanding the interpersonal dimension of transportation experiences (Prihtiana & Triyanto, 2025). The relationship between service experience and passenger loyalty has also been examined in TransJakarta research, supporting the relevance of distinguishing immediate satisfaction from longer-

term behavioral intentions rather than treating the two outcomes as interchangeable (Sangkoyo & Adiwijaya, 2024).

The relationship between service communication and passenger satisfaction can be interpreted through the correspondence between anticipated service performance and actual experiences during transportation use. Positive evaluations were associated with direct assistance, courteous explanations, and staff willingness to respond when passengers encountered uncertainty about their journeys. Negative evaluations emerged primarily when buses arrived later than expected without sufficient information concerning the causes or anticipated duration of the delay. This contrast reflects the expectation–performance relationship described in satisfaction literature, where service experiences are assessed according to their capacity to meet previously established expectations (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016). Research on passenger satisfaction in public transportation also recognizes perceived value and service quality as relevant explanatory considerations, indicating that evaluations extend beyond isolated operational indicators (Subkhan et al., 2026). The present findings suggest that satisfaction involved differentiated judgments because favorable interpersonal experiences coexisted with dissatisfaction regarding information reliability. Such variation indicates that communication quality should be interpreted through its constituent dimensions rather than represented as a single uniform characteristic of transportation service performance.

Information reliability represented the clearest source of dissatisfaction because passengers associated unexpected waiting periods with uncertainty concerning actual transportation conditions. The Service Coordinator (I1) acknowledged that traffic conditions, technical difficulties, and operational disruptions could alter scheduled arrival times, demonstrating institutional awareness of circumstances affecting service regularity. Passengers I4 and I5 nevertheless emphasized that explanations concerning schedule changes were not consistently available before they requested clarification. Field observation documented a bus arriving approximately 12 minutes later than the time displayed in SiAnteng, without a corresponding shelter announcement or application notification explaining the discrepancy. The observation indicates that operational delays became a communication concern when passengers were unable to obtain timely explanations, although the evidence does not establish how frequently similar incidents occurred. Research examining real-time transportation information across thirteen Chilean cities supports consideration of information provision alongside actual service quality when interpreting passenger satisfaction under different operational conditions (Henriquez-Jara et al., 2025).

Unexplained waiting periods illustrate how communication deficiencies can influence the experience of transportation disruptions beyond the duration of the delay itself. I4 and I5 indicated that advance explanations would have made waiting more manageable because they could estimate the remaining time before a bus arrived. Their responses suggest that dissatisfaction was associated partly with uncertainty and the absence of information necessary for adjusting immediate travel expectations. The SiAnteng application represented an existing means of providing digital transportation information, although the observed delay demonstrated that displayed schedules were not necessarily accompanied by explanations concerning changing operational circumstances. Three of eight passengers observed while waiting accessed the application to check bus locations, confirming the use of this channel among some service users without establishing its adoption across the wider passenger population. Previous research on real-time transit information has identified benefits concerning waiting experiences, perceived uncertainty, and passenger access to transportation information, supporting the relevance of timely digital communication for public transport operations (Brakewood & Watkins, 2019). Research addressing digital competence and transportation satisfaction further indicates that technological information channels should be considered alongside differences in passengers' capacity to access and use digital services (Nilsson et al., 2025).

Complaint handling also contributed to passenger evaluations because the response received after an unsatisfactory experience influenced perceptions of institutional attentiveness and interpersonal treatment. I4 and I5 reported that complaints concerning waiting times had received explanations from transportation personnel, indicating that frontline communication provided an accessible mechanism for expressing dissatisfaction. The procedure described by I1, I2, and I3 involved addressing complaints directly when possible and referring matters beyond staff authority to responsible personnel, reflecting an established distinction between immediate explanations and subsequent organizational handling. The available accounts nevertheless did not establish whether complaints resulted in corrective operational

actions, meaning that the effectiveness of complaint resolution could not be assessed solely through evidence of courteous responses. Research examining customer engagement following service failures highlights the relevance of trust in understanding how service relationships develop after negative experiences, although the present study did not independently measure passenger trust (Honora et al., 2023). The findings consequently support an interpretation of complaint responsiveness as an interpersonal strength while leaving the substantive outcomes of complaint handling and their longer-term relationship with passenger satisfaction undetermined (Davidow, 2003).

The empirical findings indicate several service communication improvements that could be considered without requiring immediate changes to the transportation infrastructure or route structure. The faded timetable board at Penggaron Stop suggests the need to maintain clearly readable departure information so that passengers can obtain basic schedule details independently of frontline personnel. The absence of spoken announcements at several stops also supports consideration of more consistent on-board verbal information, particularly for passengers unfamiliar with destinations and stopping locations. For digital communication, the observed discrepancy between SiAnteng information and actual arrival conditions identifies a practical need to improve the coordination of displayed schedules, operational updates, and explanations concerning unexpected delays. Research on human-centered information systems in TransJakarta demonstrates the relevance of considering accessibility and user requirements when developing public transportation information facilities, although the effectiveness of particular improvements on the Semarang–Grobogan corridor would require subsequent evaluation (Pangastuti et al., 2026). Transportation performance research further supports assessing route operations through observable service characteristics, indicating that improvements in communication should complement rather than replace efforts to strengthen operational reliability (Fedujwar & Agarwal, 2025). An evaluation of Trans Jateng Corridor VI Semarang–Grobogan has identified operational and service-standard concerns, reinforcing the relevance of coordinating passenger communication improvements with broader transportation service management priorities (Nabila & Putro, 2025).

The findings establish a distinction between the interpersonal strengths of BRT Trans Jateng service communication and the limitations associated with the consistency, accessibility, and timeliness of operational information. Frontline personnel generally demonstrated responsiveness and empathy through direct explanations and complaint handling, whereas static information facilities, on-board announcements, and disruption notifications provided less consistent informational support. These differences indicate that passenger satisfaction was shaped by interactions between communication experiences and operational circumstances rather than by either component independently. Research on TransJakarta service quality has similarly examined how different dimensions of transportation services contribute to passenger evaluations, supporting the importance of distinguishing specific service attributes within satisfaction assessments (Indra & Suyanto, 2023). The qualitative evidence was derived from five informants, field observations, and supporting documents, limiting statistical generalization and preventing conclusions about the prevalence or causal magnitude of the identified relationships across the wider passenger population. The scientific contribution lies in identifying how interpersonal responsiveness, communicative empathy, information reliability, and complaint-related interactions jointly inform passenger evaluations within a regional BRT service, while the practical contribution concerns the development of more accessible, consistent, and proactive service communication practices on the Semarang–Grobogan route.

CONCLUSION

The study found that service communication on the Semarang–Grobogan route of BRT Trans Jateng operated through interactions among service personnel, passengers, and supporting information channels, reflecting the source, message, channel, and receiver components of the SMCR framework. Frontline personnel demonstrated generally responsive and empathetic communication by explaining routes, answering inquiries, and assisting passengers who appeared uncertain about their journeys. The observed proactive assistance at Penggaron Stop illustrated the value of direct interpersonal interaction in addressing immediate informational needs. Written and on-board communication channels were less dependable, as the timetable board was difficult to read and spoken announcements were absent at several observed stops. Information reliability represented the clearest weakness, particularly when an observed bus delay was not accompanied by timely explanations through shelter announcements or the

SiAnteng application. Complaint handling followed a recognizable procedure of listening, explaining, and referring unresolved issues, but remained predominantly reactive rather than proactively addressing passenger uncertainty. Passenger satisfaction was associated with staff friendliness, responsiveness, and the clarity and timeliness of operational information, indicating that communication quality contributed to passenger evaluations beyond the physical availability and punctuality of transportation services.

The findings emphasize the importance of integrating interpersonal communication, accessible information facilities, and proactive operational notifications to improve passenger experiences on the Semarang–Grobogan route. BRT Trans Jateng management should prioritize maintaining readable timetable boards, particularly at Penggaron Stop, and ensuring that route and departure information remains accessible to passengers unfamiliar with the transportation corridor. Frontline attendants and dispatch officers should provide consistent spoken announcements concerning upcoming stops, schedule adjustments, and operational disruptions to reduce passengers' dependence on individual inquiries. The SiAnteng application should be strengthened through more consistent schedule updates and timely delay notifications, allowing passengers to obtain relevant information when actual transportation conditions differ from published schedules. Management should also establish clearer procedures for communicating disruptions and documenting complaint follow-up, thereby improving information reliability and strengthening accountability in passenger service delivery. The study contributes to service communication research by demonstrating how interpersonal responsiveness, empathy, and information reliability interact in shaping passenger evaluations within a regional public transportation service. The findings remain context-specific because they were derived from five informants and limited field observations, suggesting that future research should involve more diverse passenger groups, including older adults and passengers with disabilities, and compare additional Trans Jateng corridors to assess the transferability of the identified communication patterns.

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