



BRANDING STRATEGY: A BRANDING EVALUATION AND PLAN FOR UMKM XYZ MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

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ARTICLE INFO

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Key words:

Brand Strategy, Brand Positioning, MSMEs

Website:

<https://idm.or.id/JSCR/index.php/JSCR>

Page: 1074 - 1084

ABSTRACT

For Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to stand out in competitive marketplaces and attract clients, a strong branding strategy is crucial. A strong brand identity for MSMEs not only draws attention but also fosters customer loyalty and trust. One MSME in Indonesia that is making progress in the culinary industry is UMKM XYZ, which produces multipurpose flour for culinary enterprises. This study uses Idris Motee's branding approach to assess UMKM XYZ's branding strategy. Observation, interviews, and literature analysis were among the data collection techniques used in this qualitative study. First, a brand positioning analysis was conducted, and then the branding strategy approach was evaluated. The results of the study show that based on three elements of branding, UMKM XYZ focuses too much on Customer Value and rely on only one advertising strategy. This could be a threat to UMKM XYZ because they do not use alternative advertising techniques. To overcome this, development suggestions for UMKM XYZ are also included in this article descriptively.

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INTRODUCTION

A type of economic activity that most individuals engage in to generate revenue is known as MSMEs (Suyadi et al., 2018). Although MSMEs are not categorized as large businesses, their role in driving the country's economic sector is very important (Hidayatullah, 2024). It is known that the role of MSMEs in driving economic growth in Indonesia can reach 60% (Ramadhan et al., 2024). However, most UMKM actors come from low-educated communities, they have to work hard enough so that their products can compete in the market. Therefore, efforts to develop UMKM businesses from various sectors are needed, especially in terms of branding, through scientific research.

UMKM XYZ is one of the MSMEs engaged in the production of multipurpose flour. UMKM XYZ is a local culinary brand that was just officially established in February 2021 with a production factory location in Solo. Their main products are Crispy Biang

Flour and Multipurpose Marinated Flour. Crispy Flour is a crispy flour that can be used in various foods with the advantage of being economical when used in large quantities, a crispy shape that cracks and a long-lasting crunch. Marinated Flour is the main seasoning for tenderizing various types of meat as well as a basic flavoring. This flour product is claimed to be able to be used to make various cakes without the need to add a developer. UMKM XYZ distributes its products through a network of MSMEs and close relatives. Within 6 months, the community-based communication network in the WhatsApp group has rapidly spread not only in Java, but also Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. The marketing strategy carried out by UMKM XYZ is to build a community of new entrepreneurs and coach various cooking recipes and sales tips, so that the main target of this product is culinary entrepreneurs. In this study, an evaluation analysis of packaging design was carried out on UMKM XYZ products, and how it impacts their brand strategy.

A brand strategy is a comprehensive plan that aligns an organization's brand identity, brand positioning, and marketing efforts to achieve specific business goals (Wardhana, 2024). This stage is a very important component of the overall strategic management of the organization, as it determines how the brand will be perceived and differentiated in the market (Rizki & Mulyanti, 2023) (Friyanni, 2021). From a consumer perspective, the easiest way to differentiate between one brand and another is of course from the appearance or visual of the product (Crilly et al., 2004). If there are several flour products, consumers will find it easier to recognize the differences between brands through the visuals of the product packaging (Garber et al., 2000). Then, consumers will tend to compare prices between brands (Ambler, 1997). Basically, consumers will definitely tend to choose a cheaper price. However, certain consumer groups will trust more expensive brands because they want the quality or taste they prefer. So, determining which consumers are the main target market becomes the next important thing, because it is also related to the packaging design that matches the target. This stage of determining consumers is also known as Brand Positioning (Thompson, 2004). Brand Positioning is the initial stage that needs to be analyzed before moving on to Brand Strategy.

The strategic process of giving a brand a unique and memorable location in the minds of its target market is known as brand positioning (Thompson, 2004). It outlines how a brand sets itself apart from rivals and conveys its special worth, advantages, and attributes to cater to the particular requirements or preferences of its clientele. A clear perception of the brand's identity, values, and purpose is produced by effective brand positioning, which guarantees that the target audience will connect with the brand and encourage brand loyalty. At the same time, in order to accomplish long-term objectives, a company must have a thorough plan that describes how it will create, convey, and preserve its brand identity (Ghodeswar, 2008). It includes the strategies and tactics a business does to influence opinions, set itself apart from rivals, and build a close emotional bond with its target market.

Unfortunately, what often happens to new SMEs is that they cannot differentiate their brand position among competitors (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Because they are not aware of their product position among other competitors, their branding strategy becomes less effective (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). As a result, starting from pricing, promotion strategy, packaging design, it becomes ineffective because they do not clearly know the target market for their products, and have difficulty finding the differentiator or advantages of their products among competitors.

In this study, an evaluation of the Branding Strategy of the UMKM XYZ multipurpose flour product will be conducted using the branding theory approach from Idris Motee. According to Motee, a brand is an intangible asset that exists in people's hearts and

imaginations (Mootee, 2013). It is characterized by people's expectations regarding both material and immaterial advantages that are created gradually through conversations and actions. According to Motee, the following four actions are necessary to create a successful brand: (a) Making a promise; (b) Communicating the promise; (c) Keeping the promise; (d) Strengthening the promise. So, we can conclude that the tangible aspect of a successful brand is a promise. This commitment becomes a fundamental component of the advertising pitch. We need to communicate effectively and creatively across a wide range of channels in order to claim it. And the way to communicate it is none other than the brand strategy itself.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted in a qualitative manner. Qualitative research is a systematic way to studying human experiences, actions, and views via in-depth inquiry (Lim, 2024). The data collection method used was by interview and study with literature data (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Interviews were conducted on several stakeholders who are actors in UMKM XYZ. The informants in this study can be seen in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Research Respondent

Respondent Code	Age	Position
<i>Informant 1_s</i>	55	UMKM XYZ Marketer
<i>Informant 2_s</i>	53	Reseller
<i>Informant 3_s</i>	49	Reseller

These three sources will provide relevant information related to the research object and will be presented descriptively in accordance with the discussion systematics. Meanwhile, the analysis method used refers to Idris Motee's branding concept (Mootee, 2013): (a) Brand Positioning Analysis using brand quadrants; and (b) Brand Strategy Analysis using a 3-element branding scheme, namely Customer Value, Brand Meaning, Brand Advertising. The last stage is the proposal of a branding program that matches the results of the brand strategy evaluation analysis of UMKM XYZ's multipurpose flour products referring to the branding theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

One of UMKM XYZ's flagship products is multipurpose flour consisting of 2 variants: marinated flour, and crispy flour. Both of these flours are premix flour types, namely types of flour that must be mixed again with additional flour before they can be used (Tawali et al., 2019). Both of these flours are packaged in 1kg packages with quite attractive plastic packaging as shown in **Figure 1**. When collecting data for this research, the product marketing strategy relies heavily on word of mouth (WOM). Because the main target of this flour product is culinary entrepreneurs, the marketing process is carried out by utilizing community networks.



Figure 1. UMKM XYZ Multipurpose Flour Packaging

Word of mouth marketing (WOM) is a powerful and cost-effective strategy that leverages customer emotions and experiences to influence purchasing decisions. To create a successful WOM, products must evoke emotional responses and have inherent qualities that inspire discussion (Irawan, 2023). However, WOM can also have a negative impact if the quality or value promised by the brand through the product does not match customer expectations, or changes, causing customer disappointment (Mason & Simmons, 2012) (Bughin et al., 2010). This is also in line with what Motee said that a good Brand Strategy is about keeping the promises made by the brand through the products marketed (Mootee, 2013). Otherwise, WOM can backfire on the brand itself.

Brand Positioning of UMKM XYZ

According to Philip Kotler (Shahid, 2019), brand positioning is the act of designing an offering and creating a company image to gain a place in the minds of its business target market. UMKM XYZ positions its business as a premium crispy seasoning flour whose crispy results are anti-fail, namely definitely cracked and crispy which lasts a long time. Because this flour product is classified as premium flour, they sell this flour at a higher price than other competitors, which is at a price of Rp. 70,000-80,000 per 1Kg package. Unlike flour products that are already widely available on the market such as Sajiku, Mamasuka, Kobe, and Sasa, they sell at a relatively affordable price of around Rp. 6,000-8,000 / small pack. That way, we can analyze the position of UMKM XYZ flour products using the Brand Positioning Map (Zareian et al., 2018). In the Brand Positioning Map, the horizontal axis represents price, while the vertical axis represents quality. Based on the market quadrant, the position of UMKM XYZ's multipurpose flour product is in a different quadrant from other flour competitors, namely in the upper right quadrant. UMKM XYZ's position is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

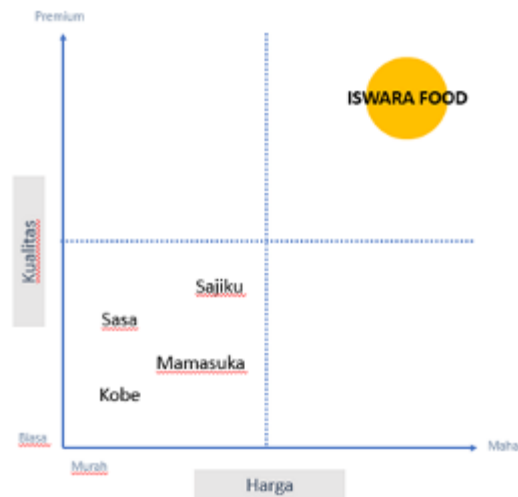


Figure 2. Brand Positioning Map of UMKM XYZ All Purpose Flour

It is known from the Brand Positioning scheme above, UMKM XYZ positions itself as a high-quality flour product with a fairly expensive price. The determination of a fairly expensive price is intended as a symbol of a premium product in the minds of consumers. However, as a product designed premium/professional, UMKM XYZ does not yet have a website or company profile on an online platform so that information about this product is only known to a limited circle.

Brand Strategy of UMKM XYZ

For marketing strategy, UMKM XYZ implements a community-based marketing strategy that aims to create internal engagement. Interaction between Iswara members is carried out through special class groups on the WhatsApp platform. Compared to a

massive advertising strategy, UMKM XYZ chooses to use an internal coaching strategy, namely training community members to be able to produce various culinary products with Iswara flour so that the results are good and marketable. The marketing strategy carried out by UMKM XYZ is to build a community of new entrepreneurs and coach various cooking recipes and sales tips, so that the main target of this product is culinary entrepreneurs. Therefore, it can be said that the core of their marketing strategy is centered on maintaining the community they have built. Based on these conditions, UMKM XYZ's brand strategy can be described in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3 is a comparison of the 3 dimensions of Idris Motee's brand strategy (Mootee, 2013), namely Customer Value, Brand Meaning, and Advertising. Customer value is the ratio of a product or service's perceived advantages to the expenses incurred in order to obtain it (Panjaitan & Panjaitan, 2021). The balance between perceived advantages (such quality, contentment, convenience, and emotional benefits) and consumer sacrifices (like cost, time, and effort) is what makes a customer valuable.

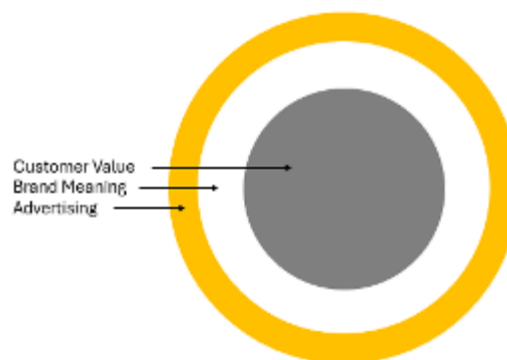


Figure 3. Current Brand Strategy of UMKM XYZ

In the case of UMKM XYZ, customer value is the biggest focus of their product branding strategy through maintaining the community they have formed. The collection of impressions and feelings that a brand arouses in the minds of customers is referred to as brand meaning (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021). The brand meaning dimension is carried out through the socialization of the superiority of UMKM XYZ flour products and their potential in the culinary MSME sector, but has not yet reached the stage of brand superiority. In other words, in this section, UMKM XYZ is still not aware of the superiority of the brand, but has realized the superiority of its products.

Next, the outermost layer is advertising. Advertising is a strategic communication method that companies, groups, or people use to market goods, services, concepts, or brands to a specific audience using a variety of media platforms. Informing, convincing, and influencing potential consumers to perform a desired action – like buying a product, signing up for a service, or embracing a specific belief or behavior – is the main objective of advertising (Czinkota et al., 2021). In this case, UMKM XYZ has not yet conducted open marketing, that is, it is not marketed in shops or online marketplaces. In fact, if this section could be developed more widely, UMKM XYZ would have alternative marketing channels if at some point a problem occurs with their community marketing channels.

Then, we conducted a deeper interview with all informants to find if any problem occurred to evaluate and validate our analysis. Based on interview, it turned out that the following challenges were found:

1. The company's management is still not good with the discovery of various missed communications. UMKM XYZ agents are spread across various locations in Indonesia and have never met face to face. Communication relies on WhatsApp

group chats and virtual meetings via Zoom. There is no clear sales SOP between agents, and there is no specific strategy for agents on different islands (regarding shipping policies). Consumers are confused when joining a WhatsApp group about whose instructions they should follow and who they should buy from.

2. Inconsistent in the appearance of product packaging. In the 4th month, there were orders in large quantities exceeding the company's standard production capacity. To meet consumer demand at the specified time, Iswara was forced to produce flour without standard packaging as in the promotional photos circulating. This turned out to have a negative impact on the experience and impression that reached consumers that this company was unprofessional. The changing logo on the packaging confused consumers with the identity of the product.
3. The selling price is quite expensive. When compared to its competitors such as Sajiku, Sasa, Mamasuka and Kobe crispy flour products, UMKM XYZ 's Krispy Flour is in the middle to upper price class. The price increases even more when orders come from outside the island which requires quite large shipping costs. This is a challenge for distributors in the area.



Figure 4. UMKM XYZ Flour packaging that has changed

Based on these problems, it can be concluded that the impression obtained in the minds of consumers is not in accordance with the company's expectations. This is due to various factors that have been mentioned previously, namely poor company management, changing logo images and packaging causing an unprofessional/non-premium impression that reaches the minds of consumers. Consumers are confused by the image of the UMKM XYZ Flour product. As a result, UMKM XYZ's fame in its community only increased at the beginning, but its market security (brand equity) tends to weaken due to low customer value.

The term "brand equity" describes how consumers view a company's worth and power in light of their affiliations, experiences, and loyalty. It stands for the value that a brand adds to a good or service above and beyond its practical advantages, impacting consumer choice and market performance (Rao et al., 2023). So, if the brand equity of this community-based market weakens while Iswara does not carry out general/global marketing, then it can be estimated that this brand will not survive for long. Moreover, UMKM XYZ does not yet have a second alternative marketing strategy, and relies heavily on marketing through its community. Overall, we can conclude that in this scheme (**Figure 3**), when the focus on customer value is too large but not balanced with good advertising, while brand meaning cannot be maintained properly, it can cause inequality. The inequality that may occur can be even greater because it only relies on a community-based WOM marketing model without any alternative marketing strategies.

Proposed Brand Strategy for UMKM XYZ

Branding is the art and science of identifying and fulfilling the physical and emotional needs of humans, by attracting attention, imagination and emotions in the long term so that money can be made from it (Guan, 2023). From the definition above, the element of "physical and emotional fulfillment" is obtained in the "long term" which means that a brand can not only produce products that are needed physically, but also emotionally. To be able to fulfill needs emotionally, a product must be able to create a positive and meaningful impression in the minds of consumers so that the element of "long-term" engagement can be realized. From the discussion of the UMKM XYZ Flour brand evaluation, it can be concluded that what is needed by the brand is strengthening the product identity so that good customer engagement is obtained.

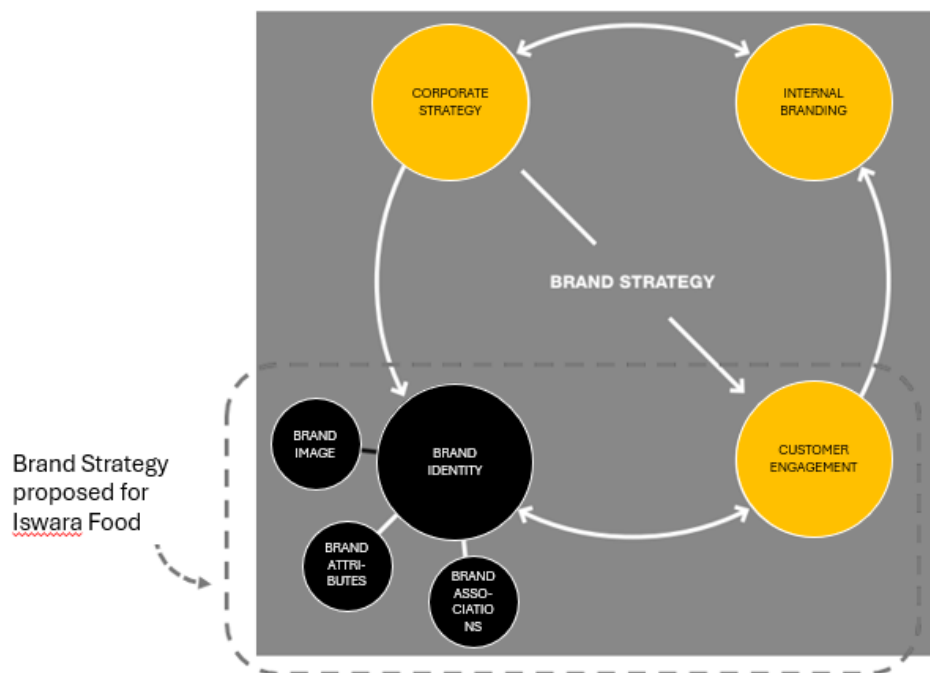


Figure 5. Brand Strategy proposed for UMKM XYZ

In Idris Motee's Brand Strategy scheme, there is a Brand Identity element which has a big influence on Customer Engagement. In this scheme, there are 3 elements that build Brand Identity, namely: *Brand Image*, *Brand Attributes*, dan *Brand Associations*. So, in this section, will be given suggestions for steps that can be taken by UMKM XYZ to strengthen its brand equity based on Idris Motee's Brand Strategy scheme as shown in **Figure 5**. Each component will be described below:

Brand Image

A brand logo is the main representation of a brand and its products, and is an important element in Brand Identity (Shao & Ngai, 2023). A prominent logo becomes important when paired with various marketing techniques, especially with an inclusive marketing model, as opposed to the exclusive marketing model that UMKM XYZ has previously implemented. The packaging used in UMKM XYZ 's are as shown in Figure 1 & Figure 4. From those pictures, it can be seen that the product name get the main attention. Also, the name is too long and very general, namely "*Bumbu Inti Pengempuk Daging*" while the UMKM XYZ logo tends to be ignored. As shown in **Figure 6**, the typography used in "Bumbu Inti" looks similar to that used on the "Kokita" product Bumbu Inti series, while the type of product logo used by Iswara is a Typography logo that uses the same font type as "Sajiku".



Figure 6. UMKM XYZ Flour packaging that has changed

This makes consumers tend to be confused about the image of UMKM XYZ flour products because it is difficult to find visual uniqueness on the packaging. On the other hand, the UMKM XYZ logo itself is almost ignored due to inappropriate placement and choice of color combinations. So, suggestions for developing this brand image are to redesign the packaging so that the UMKM XYZ logo stands out more and is easier for consumers to remember.

Brand Attributes

The distinctive traits, attributes, or features that set a brand apart from its competitors are known as brand attributes (Bian & Yan, 2022). These qualities encompass both material components, like packaging, and intangible components, such character traits, values, and emotional ties. When combined, they influence the audience's perception and memory of a brand.

The logo shown at product packaging plays a big role in sales success and can even influence how consumers view the product itself. UMKM XYZ packaging circulating in posters displays a 1kg flour packaging with thick, full-color plastic material (see **Figure 1**). The packaging looks quite exclusive and is in accordance with the price offered, which is around 70-80 thousand rupiah per package. When requests come from outside Java, the product packaging that arrives is different from the one shown on the poster (see **Figure 4**). The first impression that reaches consumers when opening the package is disappointment because it does not match what they see on the poster. The new packaging that arrives does not reflect a premium product and because of this inconsistency, customer value decreases. In fact, the appearance of the Product Packaging is the first impression that reaches the consumer's mind when they decide to buy the product or not because it is related to consumer expectations. UMKM XYZ needs to determine a special packaging design that they are able to mass produce and consistently. The consistency of the product's appearance affects the extent to which consumers remember the product. This is important so that consumers are not confused about choosing Iswara products among other competitors and are easy to find.

Next is a company profile. A company's history, mission, vision, values, goods and services, organizational structure, accomplishments, and target market are all included in a company profile, which is a thorough summary of the company. It is used to present the business to potential customers, investors, and partners, emphasizing its identity, reputation, and value proposition (Prihandini & Seba, 2022). Seeing the potential for the development of UMKM XYZ All Purpose Flour product marketing, consumers need a wider and easier-to-obtain information channel. Basically, a company profile is a form of professional introduction regarding the business being run by a company. In addition, the company profile will describe information about the existence of the Iswara business and the products offered. Through the company profile page, testimonials and various success stories from previous consumers or

partners can be displayed. This is very effective in growing brand awareness in the target market massively.

Brand Associations

The term "brand association" describes the associations or impressions that customers form of a brand as a result of their interactions, memories, and experiences with it. Customers' perceptions of the brand are shaped by these associations, which might include qualities like quality, dependability, emotions, or particular images (Choudhary et al., 2023). Based on the discussion above, brand association has been implemented well by UMKM XYZ, namely by forming a community-based consumer association. This is very important in growing brand engagement. Development suggestions at this stage are to plan virtual product demo events or prize contests that can be participated by all community members so that members become enthusiastic again in being active with Iswara products. Good community maintenance will foster strong engagement because customers really feel the benefits and core values of UMKM XYZ, which are not just business but also educating and developing together. The network strategy used by Iswara is through the MSME network, which is a very strategic strategy. MSME members are those who have a high enthusiasm for learning so they are very good to be partners in cooperation.

SIMPULAN

The study emphasizes the importance of branding in the success and sustainability of MSMEs, using UMKM XYZ as a case study. Though they have a lot of potential, UMKM XYZ 's multipurpose flour products struggle with marketing strategy, consumer perception, and branding consistency. Though initially successful, the company's dependence on word-of-mouth and community-based marketing has proven to be limited in its ability to maintain long-term brand value and broaden its market reach. To overcome this, suggestions are given to build based on the concept of Idris Motee's brand strategy. In this case, UMKM XYZ must focus on fixing Brand Identity first before being ready to balance large customer value with various advertising alternatives, as well as strong brand meaning. Some detailed suggestions include: redesigning packaging and logos to enhance visual uniqueness and professionalism, ensuring consistency in packaging quality to align with consumer expectations, creating a comprehensive company profile to improve visibility and credibility, organizing engaging community activities to strengthen customer relationships and loyalty, diversifying marketing strategies to include online platforms, virtual product demos, and alternative channels for greater reach. By implementing these strategies, UMKM XYZ can build a stronger brand identity, enhance customer engagement, and position itself as a leader in the premium flour market.

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