

## ANALYSIS OF BRAND IMAGE STRATEGY TO ENHANCE PURCHASE INTEREST IN CULINARY PRODUCTS



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### Abstract

One of the marketing strategies that need to be built by business actors is through marketing communications. One way to manage consumers and build consumer loyalty with brand image. This study aims to find out how the right brand image strategy is to increase interest in buying culinary products, especially in the city of Medan, and link this view with Islamic law. In this study, authors used a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques using observation and literature study, which is a data collection activity by conducting research through previous journals with environmental conditions of research objects that support research activities, so that a clear picture is obtained. about the condition of the research object. From this research it is known that the strategy to have a strong brand of culinary products is in five ways, namely: 1). Conduct brand assessment; 2) Develop a brand promise; 3) Create a brand blueprint; 4) Cultivate brand; 5) Increase brand advantage. This strategy is in line with business principles in Islam put forward by Hermawan Kartajaya who highly upholds consumer satisfaction, of course, based on Islamic law which consists of 10 principles that are all related to brand image strengthening strategies. With the characteristics of the Medan community that are diverse and dominated by nomads, the brand image strategy that is suitable for Medan City is a product image that can be accepted by all groups and certainly does not deviate from the rules or norms in society that are in accordance with current developments.

**Keywords:** Brand Image, Culinary Products, Medan

## INTRODUCTION

The development of a business is fundamentally determined by the entrepreneur's ability to build strategies, where the main function of strategy is to guide the direction of the company, shape a proactive future, and foster effective and well-directed team coordination. Through strategy, business owners can establish detailed objectives they want to achieve in their business. According to Kurniawan (2020), marketing strategy refers to the marketing mindset based on a business, aiming to achieve marketing targets. Marketing strategy is derived from the company's marketing budget or cost, marketing mix, and marketing allocation. Marketing mix refers to a set of tools used by the company in sales and marketing to achieve its goals.

One of the marketing strategies that business owners need to develop is through marketing communication. According to Setiadi quoted by Iga Mauliga, marketing communication is an activity that involves disseminating information, influencing, and persuading the target market about the business and the products being sold, with the aim of making them willing to accept, purchase, and be loyal to the offered products (Iga Mauliga, 2023:24). Therefore, customer loyalty is crucial to maintain in a business. That's why strategies are needed because loyalty doesn't simply appear on its own; it requires strategies to manage those customers. One way to manage customers and foster customer loyalty is through brand image. The brand image represents the overall perception of a brand and is formed based on past experiences and information about the brand. Brand image is closely related to attitudes, beliefs, and preferences toward a brand, and it ultimately increases the likelihood of customer purchases. The reference for brand image lies in the customer's memory scheme of a brand, which includes consumer interpretations or attributes, advantages, users, situations, users' associations, and characteristics of the marketer and/or the product/brand creator (Iga Mauliga, 2023:24).

According to Siti Aisyah et al. (2020), a brand is a name, set of rules, design, symbol, or anything that can serve as a means to identify a product, whether it be goods or services, and differentiate it from other sellers. The essence of a brand goes beyond merely introducing something to others or being recognized by others. Deeper than that, the essence of a brand reflects the strength of its persistence, the enduring relevance it possesses, its capacity to inspire, and its ability to influence and direct individuals' behavior.

Medan City is one of the creative economic cities located in North Sumatra, Indonesia. According to data from the Cooperative Office in 2023, Medan has a total of 27,753 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), with the culinary sector dominating the market. Many people in Medan seize the opportunity to become entrepreneurs in order to contribute to the economic revival. They continuously strive for innovation with the goal of attracting customers and remaining competitive in order to achieve profitability amidst competition with other market players.

The culinary industry is highly advanced as food is a primary necessity for the entire Indonesian population. The culinary business has seen rapid growth throughout Indonesia, with the emergence of dedicated street food areas where small-scale MSMEs market their food products. The public's interest in food consumption continues to increase, and this trend is evident in major cities across Indonesia, including Medan. The culinary industry thrives due to people's lack of time for cooking and the desire for a wide variety of food options that may not be readily prepared at home.

A successful example of a brand image strategy that has gained popularity across Indonesia is the brand image of Mie Gacoan. Mie Gacoan is a spicy noodle dish with different levels of spiciness. The concept promoted by PT. Pesta Pora Abadi, the company behind Mie Gacoan, is "affordable food". According to data from 2022, Mie Gacoan has successfully opened branches in 11 major cities, with multiple branches in each city, ranging from 4 to 6 branches (Kumparan.com). Remarkably, all branches and subsidiaries of Mie Gacoan are always bustling with customers and never experience a lack of buyers.

However, looking at several previous studies, such as a study conducted by Yudi Irawan Abi (2020), it was concluded that brand image and product quality have a positive influence on purchasing decisions for KFC products in Bengkulu. On the other hand, a study by Nurlalila & Nainggolan (2021) stated that brand image and product quality together have a positive influence on purchasing decisions for Indihome products by PT Telekomunikasi Indonesia in the Medan region. Similarly, a study by Pratama & Nurbaya (2018) showed that brand image and product quality have a significant positive influence on purchasing decisions at Distro Osing Deles Banyuwangi. However, there are also different results, such as a study by Putri et al. (2019), which indicated that brand image does not have a significant influence on purchasing decisions for La Tulipe cosmetic products in Padang. Another study by

Rachmawati et al. (2021) showed that product quality has a negative and insignificant influence on purchasing decisions for hijab products at Nadiraa Hijab Yogyakarta. Similarly, a study by Irfan & Irwan Padli (2023) revealed that brand image has a significant simultaneous influence on purchasing decisions, while partial brand image also has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Company management should be able to maintain the brand image that is already known by the public by preserving and improving its quality (Toha & Supriyanto, 2023).

Based on the above description, further research is needed to determine the appropriate brand image strategy to increase the purchasing interest in culinary products, especially in Medan, and to relate this perspective to Islamic religious principles. As mentioned by Marliyah (2023), the Indonesian government has proclaimed its goal to become the global center for halal industry by 2024. However, the competition in the halal industry now comes not only from Muslim-majority countries but also from non-Muslim-majority countries. Muslims rely on halal to ensure that the food they consume is acceptable according to their religious beliefs. Halal means “permissible” in Arabic, and this assurance is crucial to ensure high-quality food. It is essential to guarantee cleanliness, safety, and product quality at all stages of the production chain, and the halal supply chain in the food industry is an integrated activity that starts from purchasing raw materials, then transforming them through the production process, producing the final products, and finally delivering them to customers (Nurbaiti & Siti Aisyah, 2023).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the authors utilize a qualitative methodology, generating descriptive data. The research’s objective is to explore diverse strategies that can be employed to enhance brand image, with a focus on maintaining Islamic principles, specifically among the residents of Medan. The qualitative research is carried out through observational methods and a comprehensive review of literature, including documents, journals, and the examination of successful culinary businesses in Medan. Qualitative research involves describing and analyzing phenomena, social activities, events, perceptions, and thoughts within individuals or societal groups. By adopting this qualitative approach, the researchers aim to depict

naturally or artificially occurring events in society, allowing for an investigation of specific qualities, characteristics, and relationships among different phenomena.

The data collection techniques employed in this study encompass observation and documentation. These procedures involve gathering data by conducting research through relevant journals and existing literature, facilitating a thorough comprehension of the conditions associated with the research subject that the author investigates.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Strategies to Build a Strong Culinary Product Brand**

Based on the literature study conducted by the authors, according to Anang Firmansyah in his book titled “Product and Brand Marketing (Planning & Strategy)”, there are four strategies among them: 1) Conducting brand evaluations, when assessing a product brand, should be viewed as a subject rather than just an object. Therefore, as business practitioners, it is essential to understand the various associative factors associated with the brand as a subject; 2) Developing brand promises based on this strategy is how the brand can function as a consumer for business practitioners. Therefore, as business practitioners, it is crucial to study the inherent values within the brand, as outlined in the brand identity stage introduced by Aaker; 3) Creating a brand blueprint is essentially creating the brand’s identity itself. To make a brand beloved by its followers, business practitioners must establish a distinct identity for the brand, particularly for food products, so that it can be easily remembered by consumers; 4) Cultivating a brand, in the strategy of cultivating a brand, it is necessary to establish an emotional connection between the food business practitioners and the consumers. The purpose of this emotional bond is to create loyal customers for the marketed products. This can be achieved by providing benefits that touch the consumers’ emotions. For example, offering a free product as a reward, providing excellent service during the purchase, or giving rewards to loyal customers of the culinary business. Increasing brand profitability, the acquired and developed brand should be optimized to ensure that the business achieves profits while operating within healthy and ethical business practices.

The fourth point, which discusses brand cultivation, is in line with the research that will be discussed by the author and also the principles of a business from an Islamic perspective, as proposed by Hermawan Kartajaya, who highly upholds customer satisfaction

within the boundaries of Islamic principles. Some of these principles include: a) Love our customers as consumers and respect our competitors as business practitioners. This principle is also embodied in a Hadith narrated by Bukhari and Thabrani, which states as below:

*“Allah will not show mercy to those who do not show mercy to others.”*

The relevance of this Hadith is also found in the Quran, where it is mentioned: *“And let not your hatred of a people lead you to act unjustly.”* (QS Al Maidah: 8)

By practicing this, the values that can be derived are as follows. Firstly, competitors will undoubtedly expand their market because, without competitors, an industry can be considered stagnant. For example, a martabak seller who operates in a certain area, if there are no competitors selling in proximity, the market for martabak may not be significant. Therefore, it can also be said that your competitor will increase your market. Secondly, competitors need to be benchmarked, where we as business practitioners can learn and discern what is worthy and what is not. Things that are worthy can be emulated. In management terms, studying competitors is not wrong; in fact, it is encouraged. Thirdly, if we as business practitioners know that competitors are implementing a certain strategy, it does not necessarily mean that we should imitate it. Instead, we should differentiate ourselves by creating something different from what our competitors already have; b) Being sensitive to changes and ready for transformation, as progress is always occurring, including in the business landscape. The competition in the business, especially the culinary market, is increasingly high. Globalization and technological advancements make consumers more intelligent in analyzing culinary products. If we as business practitioners do not keep up with the developments, the business will be left behind. This aligns with a verse from the Quran that states.

*“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.”* (Quran, Surah Ar-Ra’d: 11);

c) Maintaining a reputation and being true to oneself. From the conducted investigation, it is evident that the name is crucial to be preserved. While it is important to safeguard the brand name, we must first protect our own name as business practitioners, as it will serve as a reflection of the future society; d) Customers are different, first go to those who need us as business actors, where in the Quran it has been stated:

*“O people, verily We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes, so that you may know each other,” Al-Qur’an Surah Al Hujuraat: 13.*

Therefore, when doing business, we as business people must be able to determine where the target market will go. Serve people who are really a priority in our culinary product marketing strategy, here the context is in the city of Medan; e) Always offer good offers at reasonable prices. In this principle, as a business actor, selling a product that is already bad can even be said to be a failure, especially at a high price, is strictly prohibited in the principle of business development. This is also in line with the hadith of Ibn Majah and Ibn Hanbal who reads

*“It is not permissible for a Muslim to sell defective goods unless he informs about it”.*

Therefore correct marketing is fair marketing where the prices and products offered are appropriate; f) Always make yourself have time and spread good news, basically the marketing principle is good news. If in the business that is being carried out and we as business actors carry out a monopoly or get a project with a letter of recommendation from an official, then this business will not last for a long time. Therefore, good marketing is very important to do; g) Get customers, take care of them, and develop with them. This principle teaches us that when we get customers, we as business actors must maintain good relations with consumers. Ensuring that customers are always satisfied with the services provided in the business being run, with these treatments’ loyalty will appear from consumers to the culinary products being marketed, when consumers are loyal to the product, our task is to develop together with consumers by increasing product value which is given. if there is an increase in the value of the product offered consumers will also develop, and automatically the value received will grow; h) Whatever business is being run, it is a service business, this principle teaches us about the soul of serving customers. In business, especially our culinary products and the employees we have must have that soul. This is in line with the hadith of the history of Abu Hurairah ra which reads:

*“Because the hand that is above or that gives is more important than the hand that is below, or that receives. And start with the person you are responsible for”.*

In doing business, we do not only do marketing but also pay attention to customer satisfaction (customer statistics); i) Always try to improve QCD (Quality, Cost, and Delivery), which is

in line with what has been stated and specified in the Al-Qur'an Surah Al Isra: 34 which reads,

*“And fulfill the promise, because the promise must be held accountable,”;*

j) Collect relevant information, but still use discretion in making the final decision, this principle reminds us as business people to always learn because developments that occur in the world will always change, if you become a businessman you cannot then just use an old approach, but must learn new approaches in accordance with the current developments and must be constantly updated.

### **Brand Image for Culinary Products in an Islamic Perspective**

“Brand, from an Islamic perspective, is considered a good name or a good identity. It can be owned by an individual or a company. In Islam, building a good brand identity involves aligning with Islamic principles and not conflicting with the established Shariah guidelines. This is done to ensure that the brand is trustworthy and reliable in the eyes of consumers. An example of a good image can be seen in the title given to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), *Al-Amin*, which means “the trustworthy”. In relation to business owners, they can take inspiration from this example by building a good brand image that creates a perception of trustworthiness among customers.

The following excerpt from the Quran, in Surah Ash-Shu'ara (verses 181-183), has a strong connection to brand image: “Give full measure and do not be of those who cause loss. And weigh with an even balance. And cause no loss to others, and do not ruin the earth spreading corruption”. This excerpt emphasizes the importance of ethics in maintaining consumer trust in a brand. It requires honesty and refraining from manipulative actions that could harm consumers. A common example is tampering with weights, which creates a perception of distrust among consumers and discourages them from making further purchases.

When building a brand image, honesty in branding practices must also be emphasized. Honesty is crucial in business and marketing. Establishing a good brand image generates a positive identity and quality from the consumers' perspective. Therefore, honesty regarding the condition and qualities of the culinary products or services being sold is essential. Weaknesses and strengths should be explained without exaggeration or downplaying. In other words, there are responsibilities that must be upheld within the brand.

This is stated in Surah An-Nisa (verse 58): “Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing”.

From this excerpt, trustworthiness implies having a sense of responsibility in fulfilling tasks. This applies to businesses as well, where business owners need to communicate the advantages of their culinary products to attract consumer attention. When consumers make a purchase, business owners must be able to fulfill the claims they have made.

Nasution has outlined several factors that business owners should consider when creating a brand, as quoted by Lilis Kayawati & Esa Kurnia in 2021. It is mentioned that to create a good brand in accordance with Islamic principles, business owners can apply the four qualities of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): *Shiddiq* (truthfulness), *Amanah* (trustworthiness), *Fathonah* (wisdom), and *Tabligh* (communicating effectively).

### ***Shiddiq***

*Shiddiq* can be interpreted as a person who is right, both in attitudes, actions, and utterances. In doing business, a business actor who upholds this attitude is someone who practices honesty and does not lie about the products he markets. With this characteristic, the first key to launching a business and attracting consumer interest is already open apart from being accompanied by other promotional efforts.

### ***Amanah***

Trustworthiness is a trait that is assigned to someone, which can also be interpreted as someone who can be trusted. Trust is a trust that has been given and then conveyed back to those who are entitled to receive it. This can be related to the wishes of consumers to producers, where producers can hold trust by not doing things that are contrary to the agreements that have been made because back again always hold the principle of truth.

### ***Fathonah***

The nature of *fathonah* can also be interpreted as intelligence or mastery of certain fields, in this case, the food industry. This trait also refers to all aspects fundamentally and comprehensively this intelligence includes emotional, spiritual and intellectual intelligence. This value is very necessary for a business actor in

developing his business so that it is in accordance with the vision and mission of the business that has been built by the business actor.

### ***Tabligh***

The nature of *tabligh* in creating a brand image is related to team performance, namely from the aspect of communication skills, improving existing human resources, leadership of a team that is owned, and developing the business itself. The basis of this trait is good and efficient communication. Having the right and compact marketing strategy due to clearly coordinated teamwork.

From the explanation regarding brand image from an Islamic point of view, it can be concluded that if a culinary product already has a good brand image in the eyes of consumers, this will greatly affect consumer buying interest.

### **Brand Image Strategy to Increase Interest in Buying Culinary Products in Medan City**

Several previous studies have examined various brand image strategies to increase purchasing interest in culinary products. In a study conducted by Nofha Rina & Ruri Wahyu Yuriadi in 2019, they investigated strategies to maintain the brand image of Amanda Brownies as a souvenir from Bandung. The results indicated that the concepts of product, place, price, and promotion significantly influenced and were suitable for maintaining the brand image of Amanda Brownies. They also engaged in reseller activities as a strategy to maintain their branding.

In another study by Putra Rahmat Hidayat in 2020, the research focused on the marketing strategies of Brothers Café in building brand image for visitors in Medan. The findings showed that Brothers Café utilized a European-themed atmosphere and conducted special events on important occasions to attract consumers. However, there were obstacles, such as rumors in Medan about the café using adulterated ingredients, which made the brand image-building process for Brothers Café more complex and time-consuming.

Additionally, Teddy Ricardo and Nasar Buntu Laulita conducted a study in 2022 on designing and implementing promotional strategies and building brand image through digital media and training for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Caukong. The research revealed that they created social media accounts, such as Instagram and Google Profile Business, as part of their brand image activities. Additional strategies included digital advertising through social media features and creating engaging video content to maximize

the potential of social media platforms for UMKM Caukong, with proper guidance on utilizing these platforms.

Lastly, a study by Nofrizal & Taufik in 2018 analyzed the influence of brand image on brand loyalty for Brother Jonn and Sons in Bandung. The results showed that brand image had a significant impact on brand loyalty at Brother Jonn and Sons, emphasizing the need to continuously monitor, enhance, and maintain the brand image.

Considering the diverse characteristics of Medan's population, mainly consisting of migrants, a suitable brand image strategy for the city would involve a product image that appeals to all segments of society and adheres to societal norms and standards while keeping up with current trends. Here are five potential brand image strategies that could be implemented in the culinary businesses in Medan:

#### **Determine a Unique Business Brand Name**

The first thing to start a brand image as a business actor is to analyze the name of the culinary business that will be used. The brand name should be relevant and easy for consumers to recognize. When talking about brand names, you can use names such as "Ayam Galau", "Kopi Kenangan", "Senada Kopi", "Mimi Cucu" and various types of catchy names for consumers who hear them. It doesn't stop there, to add to the business strategy, you can use unique menu names so that consumers can remember them, for example, "Coffee Memories", "Spicy Julid Chicken", "Ms Lonely Coffee" and various types of names that can be add to the plus points of the culinary business. Don't forget to pay attention to the taste in the food or drinks that are sold.

Because according to the concept that exists in humans when they hear or see something unique, it will be very attached to society. A brand name is also very influential on the marketing strategy and the selection of copywriting that will be used later as a follow-up step of the brand image strategy for a product, especially food products.

#### **Identitas Visual Yang Relevan**

Based on existing experience, most consumers tend to focus on and be highly interested in the visual presentation of a product, apart from its appealing name. Therefore, the visual aspect of the marketed food product also needs to be considered.

The visual aspects here include the logo, colors, and typography of the culinary business brand being marketed.

The design of the logo should align with the predetermined brand image. In the culinary business, the logo can incorporate color combinations that evoke warmth and stimulate hunger among viewers, such as combinations of red, yellow, orange, or other bright colors. Of course, the color choices should be suitable for the product being marketed.

### **Social Media Optimization**

The current important strategy to be implemented is optimizing promotion, particularly through social media. Promotion is an activity carried out by business owners to promote and introduce their products. The goal of promotion is to assess public reception and determine whether consumers are interested in the promotional branding conducted by the marketed culinary products.

Promoting food products through social media can be done via platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. Social media channels have a high potential in today's digital landscape, with many businesses using them as a strategy to develop their businesses and showcase their brand image. This applies to the development and promotion of culinary businesses, especially in Medan.

The benefits for culinary business owners in promoting their businesses on social media are as follows: 1) building and attracting a large community's interest, 2) expanding the marketing target beyond the local area to cover all areas in Medan, 3) increasing product sales, 4) reducing market research and conventional marketing costs, which can be quite expensive, and 5) offering flexibility in promotions as they can be conducted anytime, anywhere.

To further enhance engagement through social media promotion, business owners can collaborate with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) commonly known as influencers. Several culinary businesses have witnessed significant returns when using influencers as part of their brand image strategy, with profits exceeding 100%."

### **Brand Alignment with the Website or Application**

Aligning the brand with the official business website being operated is essential. It is even better if all aspects are predetermined and adjusted according to

the established logo. To create a landing page, it is advisable to seek the services of a reliable website developer. This is to demonstrate to customers that we, as business practitioners, are prepared to build a culinary business.

To attract more customers, business owners can register their culinary business and market it on platforms such as Go Food/Grab Food. The goal is to attract a larger customer base. Several culinary products have successfully garnered consumer interest by solely selling online through Go Food/Grab Food, such as the brands 'Sushi Yay' and 'Hangry Food All Variant'.

### **Promotional Adjustments and Discounts**

The final strategy, as a complement to complete the culinary business branding strategy, is to adjust promotions and implement discounts in line with the brand identity. Since most of the Medan population consists of migrants, including students and workers, it is essential to provide promotions that offer affordable discounts suitable for the budgets of students and workers residing in Medan at the present time.

## **CONCLUSION**

From this research, it is known that the strategies for having a strong culinary product brand are through four approaches: 1) Brand assessment; 2) Developing brand promise; 3) Creating brand blueprint; 4) Cultivating the brand; 5) Increasing brand profitability. These strategies are also aligned with the principles of business in Islam proposed by Hermawan Kartajaya, which highly uphold customer satisfaction within the boundaries of Islamic principles. These principles consist of 10 principles, all of which are related to strengthening brand image according to Islamic views. Furthermore, according to Islamic perspectives, creating a brand image can be achieved by embodying the qualities possessed by the Prophet Muhammad, such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, excellence, and communication. Considering the diverse characteristics of the society in Medan, which is dominated by migrants, the suitable brand image strategy in Medan would be to establish a product image that is acceptable to all segments while adhering to the societal norms and standards, incorporating concepts that are in line with the current trends and developments.

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