



**OPTIMIZING EVENT MARKETING STRATEGIES
IN INCREASING BRAND AWARENESS
AT ICHIGO DAIFUKU SURABAYA**

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the event marketing strategies used to increase brand awareness at Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative method and was conducted at Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya, which operates three outlets in and around Surabaya. The subjects of this research include the owner, employees, and customers of Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya. Data were collected using interviews, observation, documentation, and triangulation techniques. The data analysis process involved data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya implements event marketing strategies through the selection of strategic event locations, choosing relevant event vendors, and engaging directly with consumers. The company also optimizes its strategies by actively participating in events, using social media as a promotional support tool, and creating memorable experiences for customers. These strategies have proven effective in enhancing brand awareness and customer loyalty.

Keywords: Optimization, Strategy, Event Marketing, Brand Awareness

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of globalization has brought widespread cultural influence across various regions, reshaping local cultural landscapes. Globalization facilitates the rapid and broad dissemination of culture across nations, ultimately leading to the integration of foreign and local cultural elements (Edwar et al., 2024). One of the most apparent impacts of globalization is found in the culinary industry, where food, ingredients, and cooking techniques from different countries have become embedded in modern lifestyles.

Culinary globalization enables cross-cultural interactions through the distribution of food and culinary traditions from one region to another. In Indonesia, this phenomenon enriches the variety of food consumed by the public. Japanese culture is among the most prominent, particularly through the growing popularity of traditional foods such as mochi, which has gained increasing attention from Indonesian consumers, especially among younger generations (Andari et al., 2022).

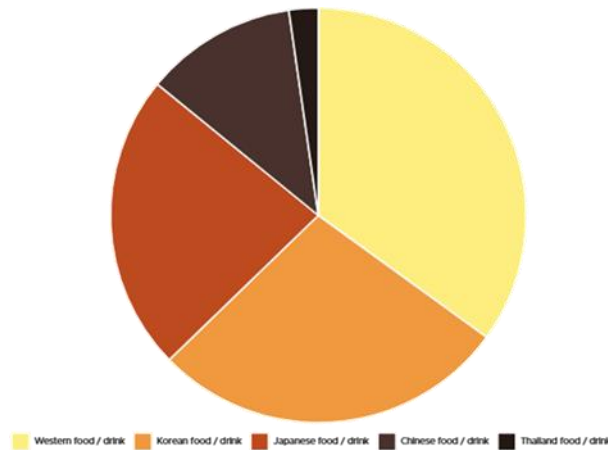


Figure 1
Preference Diagram of Foreign Snacks Favored by Indonesian Young People
Source: GoodStats Indonesia (2022)

According to data from GoodStats Indonesia (2022), Japanese food ranks among the most popular foreign snacks among Indonesian youth, with a preference rate of 23.2%. This trend reflects modern consumers' interest in new flavors and unique culinary experiences. Such preferences drive food industry players to innovate by offering products that are not only delicious but also visually appealing and aligned with contemporary lifestyle trends.

Amid digitalization, online-based marketing strategies have become a core foundation in business. However, event marketing still holds great potential to reach consumers through direct interaction. Belch (2021) defines event marketing as a promotional strategy in which brands are associated with themed events to deliver direct experiences to consumers. When combined with social media platforms, this strategy enables effective promotion and broader audience reach, particularly among the younger demographic, which is often the main target for innovative culinary products.

In the highly competitive culinary industry, brand awareness is a critical factor in business success. Kotler et al. (2020) define brand awareness as the ability of consumers to recognize and identify a brand, while Aaker (2020) emphasizes it as a form of consumer recall or recognition of a brand within a product category. Strong brand awareness enhances consumer trust and influences purchasing decisions.

For small and medium enterprises, building brand awareness is both a challenge and a necessity to remain competitive in the market. One UKM that actively leverages event marketing is Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya, a business specializing in traditional Japanese mochi products. Initially operating solely through online platforms, the business expanded by participating in various culinary events and later established multiple physical outlets. Active participation in events has become a primary strategy to broaden market reach and increase brand visibility.

Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya's strategy includes selecting strategic event locations, collaborating with credible vendors, and fostering direct consumer interaction. These efforts not only enhance brand visibility but also cultivate emotional connections that strengthen customer loyalty. Although event marketing holds significant potential, its effectiveness heavily depends on optimal planning and execution. Therefore, this study aims to analyze and optimize the event marketing strategies employed by Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya in order to enhance brand awareness. The findings are expected to provide data-driven strategic recommendations to support the growth of the business in the culinary sector.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Event marketing is a promotional strategy carried out through organizing an event, with the aim of creating a direct experience between brands and consumers. According to Gerritsen et al. (2020), this strategy is very effective in building emotional relationships with customers and increasing brand visibility amid market competition. Wrathall et al. (2022) also stated that event marketing combined with digital promotions can expand audience reach and strengthen brand impressions in the minds of consumers.

Brand awareness is the extent to which consumers recognize and remember a brand. Aaker (2020) explains that brand awareness includes the ability of consumers to recognize or remember a brand in a particular product category. This awareness is very influential on purchasing decisions, because consumers tend to choose brands that they already know. Kotler et al. (2020) state that brand awareness is the first step in the buying process, which then continues to assessment, preference, and loyalty to the brand.

In the context of UKM, an effective marketing strategy is needed to compete in an increasingly competitive market. Chaffey et al. (2021) mentioned that optimizing marketing strategies is important so that every activity carried out can provide maximum results. MSMEs need to utilize limited resources efficiently and choose promotional channels that best suit their market characteristics. In this case, event marketing is one of the right alternative strategies because the costs are more flexible, allow direct interaction with consumers, and have a significant impact on increasing brand awareness.

Previous research by Suryana (2023), Prasetyo (2024), and Julietta et al. (2023) show that well-designed event marketing can increase customer loyalty and strengthen brand

image. In addition, direct interaction during the event is also able to create a deep positive experience, which then becomes the main attraction for consumers to make repeat purchases.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the event marketing strategy implemented by Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to describe narratively and analytically the various factors that influence the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the marketing strategy. Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation, aimed at exploring perspectives from internal parties such as owners and employees, as well as external consumers. The data obtained was then analyzed qualitatively by emphasizing the process of data reduction, data presentation, and withdrawal.

According to Sugiyono (2020), the qualitative approach is flexible and allows adjustments to the dynamics of the field. Meanwhile, Creswell (2020) states that this approach provides a deeper understanding of individual experiences and views. This is important in the context of marketing strategies that are closely related to direct interactions between businesses and consumers. Denzin et al. (2020) also emphasize that qualitative research is able to capture the social and cultural complexities behind individual and group behavior.

Through this method, the research is expected to comprehensively identify the key factors that become strengths and challenges in the implementation of Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya's event marketing as an effort to increase brand awareness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya is a modern culinary brand that has gained popularity by offering Japanese-style mochi with fresh fruit and premium ingredients. Established in 2023, the business has expanded its reach through various promotional strategies, one of the most significant being active participation in curated offline events. This chapter explores how Ichigo Daifuku applies event marketing to build its brand, the role of vendor selection, the importance of brand awareness, the benefits of joining events, and the challenges they face.

Selecting the Right Event Vendors

One of the most crucial components in executing a successful event marketing strategy lies in vendor selection. Based on interviews with the business owner and event team, vendor credibility and experience are non-negotiable. Ichigo Daifuku prioritizes working with event organizers who have a proven track record in managing food and beverage events. These vendors are more familiar with booth layouts, crowd flow, and logistical needs specific to culinary brands.

Strategic location offering is also a deciding factor. Vendors who can secure spaces at shopping malls or culinary festivals are preferred because they offer direct access to large volumes of foot traffic. A vendor's ability to handle contracts, booth management, and visitor services in a professional manner significantly affects the brand's visibility and the overall customer experience. Challenges do exist, such as inconsistent vendor pricing and unclear

administration, prompting Ichigo Daifuku to always conduct prior research by comparing options and reviewing testimonials.

The Role of Brand Awareness in Business Success

Brand awareness plays a vital role in business growth. For Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya, building public recognition has been essential to gaining consumer trust and driving sales. Event marketing offers a hands-on way for customers to not just see the product, but also to taste and experience it. During interviews, customers stated that being able to try samples made them more inclined to purchase.

Ichigo Daifuku enhances brand memory by emphasizing premium quality, fresh ingredients, and a unique eating experience. Their presence in high-traffic event locations—like malls and culinary fairs—has proven effective in attracting customers who may not have been aware of the brand otherwise. Over time, customers develop loyalty through repeated interactions, especially after positive firsthand experiences.

Actively Participating in Events

Table 1.
Events Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya has Participated

No.	Event Name	Date
1	Event Japan Korea	11-13 August 2023
2	Bites Buffet	13-17 September 2023
3	Project X Market	6-8 October 2023
4	Creatopia	15 October 2023
5	Websvaganza	28-29 October 2023
6	Pergi-Pergi Kuliner	28 November -3 December 2023
7	Pergikuliner X Year of Dragon	30 January 2024 - 3 February 2024
8	Eh Market	8 - 11 March 2024
9	Mr Culinary	25 - 30 June 2024
10	Event internal Fakultas Bahasa UNESA	28 July 2024
11	Event internal Universitas Hayam Wuruk	31 August - 1 September 2024
12	Event Bank Jatim	9 November 2024

Source: Owner of Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya (2025)

Ichigo Daifuku has participated in numerous curated events, ranging from Japan-Korea cultural expos to university fairs and food festivals such as "Bites Buffet," "Websvaganza," and "Pergi-Pergi Kuliner." These events serve as strategic moments to introduce mochi to new audiences. By offering samples and engaging directly with eventgoers, the brand strengthens both emotional and sensory connections with potential buyers.

Customers interviewed during the study frequently mentioned the ability to try testers as a deciding factor in their purchase decision. The physical presence at events—combined with strategic booth location—enables Ichigo Daifuku to achieve rapid brand recognition. However, crowded booths and limited visibility at large venues sometimes hinder the

experience. Mochi production is done on-site to ensure freshness, but this causes delays when demand surges.

Challenges in Event Execution

Despite the overall success of the event marketing strategy, Ichigo Daifuku faces several internal and external challenges. From the owner's perspective, the biggest hurdle is staffing—finding committed and capable team members who can uphold the brand's standards is not always easy. During busy hours, long queues lead to delays, requiring staff to balance speed with quality.

Booth placement is another issue. In some cases, non-strategic locations within the venue reduce visibility, making it harder for potential customers to find the brand. Additionally, customers have expressed concern over product handling, such as moisture from strawberries when mochi is left at room temperature too long—something not always understood by the customer despite being a natural result of using fresh ingredients.

Digital promotion must also be consistent. The marketing team is responsible for maintaining event hype through Instagram and TikTok before, during, and after each event. Limited time and resources make it challenging to maintain consistent uploads. Still, social media remains a critical support system to amplify the event's reach.

Application of the 4P Marketing Mix at Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya

1. Product

Ichigo Daifuku focuses on mochi-based products with premium fillings such as matcha, chocolate, strawberry, taro, and more. The product line is kept simple but high in quality, offering Mochi Bites and Ichigo Daifuku variants. During events, freshness is prioritized and production is adjusted based on crowd demand. Customers often appreciate the chewy texture, unique fillings, and aesthetic packaging, which all contribute to a differentiated dessert experience.

2. Price

Prices start from Rp20,000, targeting dessert lovers, young professionals, and families. Event-specific promotions like bundle offers are frequently used to encourage bulk purchases. Customers value the affordability relative to product quality, which reinforces repeat buying behavior and increases the perceived value of the brand.

3. Place

The brand operates from three fixed outlets in high-traffic malls, complemented by flexible pop-up booths at events. This dual-location strategy allows Ichigo Daifuku to establish consistent branding while continuously exploring new market segments. The selection of event venues is based on alignment with consumer behavior and lifestyle trends, which helps maintain brand relevance across different locations.

4. Promotion

Ichigo Daifuku leverages Instagram and TikTok for content marketing and event promotion. Instagram is used for visuals and event announcements, while TikTok offers viral potential through fun, behind-the-scenes videos and customer interactions. The brand occasionally collaborates with micro-influencers to maximize visibility. This hybrid strategy ensures that promotion is both wide-reaching and cost-effective.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the event marketing strategy has proven to be a critical element in enhancing brand awareness for Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya. Participating in various events has positively impacted the brand's visibility and facilitated the establishment of stronger connections with customers. The relatively smaller scale of the events allowed consumers to focus more attentively on each booth, thereby contributing to an increase in brand awareness. A key success factor in this strategy was the careful selection of strategically positioned event locations and collaboration with appropriate vendors, both of which played significant roles in attracting potential consumers and delivering memorable customer experiences.

Additionally, this event marketing approach was reinforced through the use of social media platforms as a promotional tool throughout the event lifecycle—before, during, and after the events. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok were utilized by Ichigo Daifuku to promote event participation, share live moments, and feature customer testimonials. This approach proved effective in extending the promotional reach and fostering continued digital engagement beyond the conclusion of the events.

Direct customer feedback revealed that many consumers felt motivated to try the products after experiencing them in person at the events. Some customers even reported becoming regular patrons after attending one of the events, indicating that event marketing strategies not only serve as an effective method for product introduction but also contribute to cultivating customer loyalty through authentic, hands-on experiences.

However, despite the positive impact of event marketing on brand awareness, the study also identified several challenges that require attention. One significant challenge is the high operational costs associated with event participation, including registration fees, booth expenses, logistics, and labor. Moreover, the reliance on shifting market trends and changing consumer preferences introduces additional complexities in the development of future marketing strategies. Consequently, Ichigo Daifuku Surabaya must continue to optimize its event marketing strategies to achieve greater cost efficiency while maximizing the overall impact of its promotional efforts.

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