

Research Article

Traditional Culinary Marketing Communication Strategies in the Face of Foreign Culinary Trends

(Case Study of Haji Mahmud Chicken Noodles)

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Abstract. This study explores the marketing communication strategies employed by traditional culinary entrepreneurs in response to the growing dominance of global food trends. The focus of the research is a case study of Mie Ayam Jamur Haji Mahmud Medan. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the business implements marketing communication strategies through social media-based promotion, cultural narratives, and the strengthening of local identity. These strategies not only sustain the existence of cuisine but also add value through cultural storytelling and menu adaptation without compromising the original identity. The study emphasizes the importance of educational and persuasive communication in attracting consumers influenced by global trends. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how local culinary MSMEs can compete strategically amid the wave of gastronomic globalization, and highlight the significance of innovation in preserving Indonesia's traditional culinary heritage.

Keywords: Marketing Communication Strategy, Traditional Culinary, Digital Media, Consumer Loyalty

1. Introduction

In recent years, the trend of foreign food consumption in Indonesia has increased significantly, especially among the younger generation. This shows a shift in consumer tastes and lifestyles influenced by cultural globalization, social media, and exposure to foreign entertainment. Based on a 2022 survey by GoodStats Indonesia, Western food ranks first in the most in-demand overseas snacks, with 35% of respondents aged 18–34 years old expressing a preference for this type of food. It is followed by Korean food at 27.7%, Japanese food at 23.3%, Chinese at 11.8%, and Thai at 2.3%. This data indicates that foreign cuisine is increasingly dominating the culinary preferences of the Indonesian people, as well as a challenge for traditional culinary business actors to maintain their existence in the midst of this dominance (Shafina, 2023).

This condition poses its own challenges for traditional culinary business actors in maintaining the existence and competitiveness of their products in the midst of increasingly strong global trends. Traditional culinary is not only a provider of consumption needs, but also contains cultural values, history, and local identity. However, in practice, many traditional culinary business actors face difficulties in attracting the younger generation who are more familiar with the narrative of modernity and practicality of foreign food. This change in consumption patterns requires adaptation and innovation in marketing strategies, especially communication strategies that are able to package traditional products to remain relevant in modern society (Cas et al., 2024).

In this context, Haji Mahmud Medan's Mushroom Chicken Noodles is one of the interesting examples that shows how a traditional culinary business is able to survive in the midst of fierce competition with foreign cuisine. Haji Mahmud Mushroom Chicken Noodles is a pioneer of halal mushroom chicken noodles in Medan City which has been active for

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more than three decades since it was established by Haji Mahmud S. in 1988. Starting from a mobile cart business, Mahmud Haji Chicken Noodles is now a legendary culinary icon with two main menus that are still in demand, namely mushroom chicken noodles and dumpling chicken noodles. Thanks to its commitment to the quality of raw materials and authentic taste, this business has a place in the hearts of the community, until it succeeded in opening the first outlet in front of the Aljihad Mosque in Medan in 1990. Positive developments continued with the opening of a permanent outlet on Jalan Abdullah Lubis No. 57/71 in 2000, followed by expansion to various strategic locations in Medan such as Transmart Carrefour Medan Fair, Carrefour Citra Garden, Amaliun Foodcourt, and D'Loft Thamrin Plaza. Maintaining the consistency of taste and service quality, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud has successfully built consumer trust and expanded the market beyond the region, including Bekasi and Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan (Mahmud Chicken Noodles, n.d.).

The venture not only offers culinary products based on local recipes, but also adopts a dynamic marketing communication approach to reach a wider market, including the urban young generation. The communication strategy carried out is relevant to be researched considering the increasing competition with foreign food brands that have large capital, modern image, and aggressive digital strategies.

Considering the context and urgency of this phenomenon, the main focus of this study is to comprehensively examine the marketing communication strategies implemented by Haji Mahmud Mushroom Chicken Noodles in maintaining its existence in the midst of foreign food trends in Indonesia. This focus is expected to be able to make a theoretical contribution to the study of marketing communication, as well as a practical reference for traditional culinary business actors in designing adaptive and competitive communication strategies amid the dominance of food culture globalization.

2. Literature Review

In the face of increasingly competitive market dynamics due to the rise of foreign food trends, marketing communication strategies are an important element for traditional culinary business actors to maintain their existence. This literature review will review the main concepts underlying the research, by placing the theory of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) as an analytical framework in understanding the strategic approach applied by Mie Ayam Jamur Haji Mahmud. In addition, various previous studies on local product marketing communication amid the influence of cultural globalization will be examined to identify communication patterns, message adaptation, and the effectiveness of media used in reaching consumers. By examining the dynamics of local branding, responses to consumer preferences, and the challenges of culinary modernization, this study is expected to provide a solid theoretical basis to analyze the communication strategies carried out by traditional culinary business actors in maintaining their relevance in the midst of the dominance of foreign food.

Studies conducted by (Candra et al., 2023) entitled "The Existence of Traditional Food in the Midst of the Onslaught of Korean Food" shows that traditional Indonesian foods face significant pressure from foreign food consumption cultures. This research highlights the role of media in shaping public perception of foreign food as a symbol of modern lifestyle. Although it does not specifically review the communication strategies of traditional business actors, the study provides a contextual basis that the existence of local cuisine is now greatly influenced by the dynamics of globalization. In this context, the research on the marketing communication strategy of Haji Mahmud's Mushroom Chicken Noodles fills the gap by offering a more applicable approach and focused on the strategic response of business actors to foreign cultural flows.

Meanwhile, research by (Putri, 2022) shows the impact of fast food penetration on the existence of local culinary specialties in Palembang. The study provides an overview of shifting consumption patterns due to the ease of access, global image, and time efficiency offered by fast food. Although they have similarities in raising the issue of threats to traditional food, Putri's focus is still limited to changing consumer behavior without exploring adaptation strategies from local business actors. This research provides added value by exploring a form of marketing communication that not only maintains existence, but also repositions the image of traditional food in the midst of the currents of modernity.

Research by (Utami, 2018) Approach culinary issues from the perspective of cross-cultural communication by emphasizing the function of culinary as a symbol of cultural

identity threatened by global homogenization. The conceptual approach used in this study enriches the understanding of the symbolic meaning of traditional foods in social and cultural structures. However, the absence of empirical data makes the results of the study tend to be normative. On the other hand, this research offers a practical dimension by showing how cultural values in traditional foods can be strategically repackaged through marketing communications that are relevant to modern market segments.

In research (Last, 2022) raising the issue of marketing communication for culinary MSMEs in Medan in the context of adaptation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of this study is different in context, but it is still relevant in discussing the response of business actors to changes in market conditions. The research makes an important contribution in understanding the flexibility of MSME actors in facing the crisis, but has not touched on the issue of competition with foreign culinary directly. This research offers an expansion of dimensions by placing the challenges of globalization as the main focus, while presenting concrete case studies that highlight adaptive strategies against competition with foreign foods, especially in the aspects of digital media use and strengthening local narratives.

3. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen in this study to gain a deep understanding of the marketing communication strategies applied by traditional culinary business actors, especially Haji Mahmud Mushroom Chicken Noodles. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to examine how the form of communication used in maintaining consumer loyalty, reaching new markets, and packaging traditional values in marketing language that is relevant to the times (Fadli, 2021). This research will also explore the perception of business actors towards increasingly competitive market dynamics due to increasing public interest in foreign food.

The case study was chosen because it provides the flexibility of analyzing phenomena holistically and contextually, especially in observing marketing practices that are inseparable from cultural values, consumer perceptions, and responses to the increasingly strengthening flow of culinary globalization (Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021).

The primary data source was obtained through in-depth interviews with Mie Ayam Mushroom Haji Mahmud business actors, as well as an examination of promotional content on their official social media accounts, which represent a form of digital marketing communication (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The data analysis technique refers to the Miles and Huberman interactive model which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, as well as drawing conclusions and verifications to produce a sharp and systematic interpretation of field findings to ensure the validity and credibility of the data (Hardani et al., 2020). The researcher applied the source triangulation technique by comparing information from various sources and different forms of data. This approach not only improves the accuracy of interpretation, but also strengthens the reliability of analysis in understanding marketing communication strategies in the context of local and foreign culinary competition (Flick, 2020). The primary data source was obtained through in-depth interviews with Mie Ayam Mushroom Haji Mahmud business actors, as well as an examination of promotional content on their official social media accounts, which represent a form of digital marketing communication (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The data analysis technique refers to the Miles and Huberman interactive model which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, as well as drawing conclusions and verifications to produce a sharp and systematic interpretation of field findings to ensure the validity and credibility of the data (Hardani et al., 2020). The researcher applied the source triangulation technique by comparing information from various sources and different forms of data. This approach not only improves the accuracy of interpretation, but also strengthens the reliability of analysis in understanding marketing communication strategies in the context of local and foreign culinary competition (Flick, 2020).

4. Results and Discussion

Traditional Culinary Challenges in Facing Foreign Food Trends

In the era of globalization marked by cross-cultural penetration, Indonesia's culinary industry is facing a new dynamic in the form of a massive influx of foreign food that is slowly shifting the dominance of traditional culinary in the consumption spaces of urban communities. This phenomenon not only reflects a change in consumer preferences that are in-

creasingly open to global tastes, but also signals a serious challenge for local culinary businesses in maintaining the relevance and competitiveness of their products. Foreign foods often come with modern packaging, aggressive marketing strategies, and strong lifestyle narratives, making them more than just an alternative consumption but a symbol of a new lifestyle (S et al., 2024). In this context, traditional culinary business actors are required to not only survive functionally, but also to reposition strategically so as not to be marginalized by global trends that continue to move forward.

The trend of globalization has created a competitive culinary landscape, where foreign foods such as Korean, Japanese, and Western dishes dominate media exposure and attract consumer interest, but these results show a divergence from some previous studies that emphasized that traditional foods are increasingly losing market share due to the dominance of foreign foods. The management stated that culinary searches on search engines show that traditional foods still dominate daily consumption intentions, while foreign foods tend to be sought for references or lifestyles rather than as the main consumption choice. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud assesses that traditional food has a longer shelf life in the market and is evidenced by the sustainability of businesses that rely on local specialties. Judging from the fact that restaurants that sell foreign products tend to have a short operational life, while foods such as ayam penyet, meatballs, and fried rice continue to survive in the long term. This statement supports findings (Chen & House, 2022) that indicate that consumers in developing countries tend to turn to local foods in their final consumption decisions. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud responded that despite the onslaught of foreign food, traditional food still has a strong place in the hearts of the community, especially for market segments that prioritize local tastes and eating habits such as families, communities, and institutions. Instead of targeting seasonal markets or young generations who are prone to changing tastes following global food trends, they choose to target consumer groups who value consistency of taste, cultural values, and comfort in the dining experience so that they are less affected by foreign food trends. This approach not only strengthens the business position in the long term, but also becomes a form of strategic resistance to the dominance of foreign food that often comes with aggressive promotions but does not maintain consumer loyalty.

Nevertheless, relevance among the younger generation remains a significant challenge. In the face of digital native groups that are more responsive to visual and interactive lifestyles, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud develops adaptive and creative social media content. They produce drama-themed video content that is closely related to the lives of young people, such as light romance stories or social humor that are subtly inserted with product promotions. This strategy shows that traditional culinary can remain present in the digital space competitively, as long as it is able to respond to contemporary communication styles that are more emotional and entertaining (Nathania & Erdiansyah, 2024). This approach also expands the brand's reach without sacrificing the local values that are its main strengths.

On the other hand, the presence of foreign brands with large capital backing and an international franchise network creates structural pressures that cannot be ignored. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud faced the fact that they could not compete directly on a promotional or technological scale with global brands. In response, they built strategic collaborations with the local community and influencers of the city of Medan and created a promotional ecosystem rooted in social trust and emotional closeness. This collaboration is carried out periodically, where the restaurant gives full flexibility to influencers who are considered to have high social influence on the audience. This collaboration not only helps to increase exposure, but also confirms their presence as part of the city's culinary identity. In this regard, the community-based approach is proving to be a powerful adaptive strategy amid the dominance of global promotion (Roni & Budianto, 2023).

All of these strategies culminate in one main value: business resilience built on proximity and consistency. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud not only relies on product quality, but also builds personal relationships with customers and creates a familiar and warm dining experience. The presence of repeat customers who are personally known by the internal team indicates success in forming loyalty that is not easily replicated by foreign brands (Azizah Chairunnisa & Endang Ruswanti, 2023). With a long-term vision to become a barometer of chicken noodles and meatballs in Indonesia, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud emphasized that the strength of traditional culinary lies in its ability to be socially and culturally rooted while adapting intelligently to the dynamics of the times.

Haji Mahmud Chicken Noodle Marketing Communication Strategy

In the face of the increasingly complex competition intensity of the culinary industry, marketing communication strategies are a crucial element for business actors to build sustainable competitiveness. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud is a representation of local traditional cuisine that not only relies on taste as the main strength, but also applies an integrated and adaptive marketing communication approach to the dynamics of consumer behavior. In the midst of the onslaught of aggressive foreign food narratives and visualizations in the digital space, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud designs communication that is not only oriented towards product promotion but also builds emotional, relational, and cultural connections with consumers. This strategy is the main foundation in maintaining its existence, while also cementing its identity as a relevant local brand in the modern culinary landscape.

Table 1. Haji Mahmud Chicken Noodle Marketing Communication Strategy

Strategy	Interview Results	Description
Collaborate with local communities (offline)	"We get to know the communities... Like the sports community, e-sports, bloggers, content creators... We put them here, give them special packages, support their events."	Build relationships with local communities, especially the sports community to form a loyal network of customers through participation in offline activities. This strategy serves as a form of public relations (PR) that strengthens emotional engagement and expands market reach organically.
Cooperation with agencies and companies	"We always maintain good relations between agencies... If they have an event, we support, they can also use the meeting room, or we send food to their place."	B2B strategy through an institutional approach, namely building reciprocal relationships with government and private agencies. This model creates a stable and reliable promotional channel and strengthens the brand's positioning as a trusted food provider in formal and professional events.
Digital & social media optimization	"We use popular social media: YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp... We have a customer database... We send promo info via WhatsApp."	Full use of digital platforms and social media to convey promotions, build closeness, and maintain direct relationships with customers. WhatsApp is used for direct marketing, while social media plays a role in increasing engagement and brand awareness through relevant content for young audiences.
SEO and websites as a visibility tool	"We play in SEO... So if people are looking for "Chicken Noodles," we can show up at the top... It's important so that when people search, they immediately find us."	Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies are used to secure digital visibility in search engines. By targeting popular keywords such as "Mie Ayam Medan", Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud increases the

		chances of being found by new consumers who are looking for local culinary through the internet, thereby expanding customer acquisition organically.
Local influencer marketing	"We invite influencers every month... The important thing is that they review and their followers see... It could be that three people I followed, all of them reviewed this place, I finally came."	Using the power of local influencers to expand the reach of brand messaging through digital word-of-mouth. The repetition effect of many influencers increases the likelihood of exposure and conversion, as well as strengthens the brand's positioning among young consumers who are highly responsive to the recommendations of public figures on social media.
Trend-based creative content production	"The most lively content is drama content, especially bucin dramas... that connects to young people. Promotions and testimonials exist, but the most popular is still entertaining content."	Tailor communication styles to the tastes of young audiences through emotionally relevant entertainment content. This strategy utilizes storytelling elements to build consumer attachment to the brand, which indirectly encourages product promotion without feeling compelling, reflecting IMC's principles of creating compelling and consistent messages.
Customer testimonials	"Testimonials are mandatory... What we have been trying to show... It's not always viral, but it's still scheduled."	The testimonial strategy from real customers is used as a form of social proof, increasing brand credibility and the trust of new potential customers. While not always viral, the presence of testimonial content remains an important element in marketing communication based on real consumer experiences.

The marketing communication strategy implemented by Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud shows that there is a strong integration pattern between traditional and modern approaches in reaching consumers. Collaboration with local communities, especially the sports community, is proof that the company is not only focused on product-based promotion, but also on building sustainable social relationships. The community is positioned as a strategic partner in shaping the consumer loyalty ecosystem (Setiawan et al., 2022). Through support for community activities such as tournaments or regular meetings, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud has succeeded in creating engagement that is not purely transactional, but emotional and social in

accordance with the spirit Public Relations within the framework of Integrated Marketing Communication (BIM).

The B2B communication strategy is also one of the foundations that strengthens the position of Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud as a culinary business actor that is adaptive to institutional needs. Cooperation with government and private agencies shows their success in working on formal markets that have the potential for large-scale and repetitive consumption. The provision of meeting rooms and catering services strengthens the brand's positioning in a professional context, which not only adds economic value, but also social credibility. This is a form of strategic communication that expands the restaurant's function from just a place to eat to be part of a network of inter-institutional relations (Aulia et al., 2024).

The approach on the digital side of Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud is very progressive. The use of popular social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube as well as the optimization of WhatsApp for direct marketing shows awareness of the changing behavior of consumers who increasingly rely on gadget-based communication. This strategy shows how Direct Marketing, Social media Marketing and Advertisement can be integrated to achieve higher communication effectiveness. Their presence in Google's top search results through SEO strategies further confirms that digitalization is not only used for branding, but also for conversion, i.e. reaching new consumers who are actively looking for food recommendations online (Robby Aditya & R Yuniardi Rusdianto, 2023).

The success of Haji Mahmud's Chicken Noodles is also supported by the use of local influencers as a driving force word-of-mouth digital. Collaboration with public figures on social media is not just a cosmetic act, but is designed with a pattern of psychological repetition that increases the chances of exposure and conversion. This strategy reflects a deep understanding of how perceptions are formed in a digital society: through repetition, social associations, and external validation (Andonopoulos et al., 2023). Influencer marketing here is an instrument to amplify a consistent message, while building a narrative that their products are worth trying because they have been "socially verified" by trusted figures.

Content strategy is a striking distinguishing element. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud not only presents promotions and testimonials, but also produces creative content that follows trends, such as short dramas with the theme of young people's romance (Squirt). This content is strategically designed to create a psychological closeness to the most active audience segments on social media. This approach shows that marketing messages are no longer one-way, but interactive, entertaining, and emotional that are characteristic of modern marketing communication (Rahardja et al., 2019). Thus, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud not only managed to maintain its existence in the midst of the onslaught of foreign cuisine, but was also able to carry out a substantial and sustainable transformation of communication.

5. Discussion

The challenges of globalization in the culinary industry require traditional business actors to design adaptive communication strategies, especially in maintaining cultural identity while competing with foreign brands supported by large capital and the narrative of modernity. This study revealed that Haji Mahmud's Mushroom Chicken Noodles successfully integrated traditional values with a contemporary marketing approach that refers to the principle of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) presented by Kotler and Keller. IMC theory emphasizes message consistency, multichannel coordination, and building long-term relationships with consumers (Agustine, 2023). Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud adopts this principle through offline-online collaboration, SEO, and creative content, creating a synergy between the power of local culture and digital technology.

Collaboration strategies with local communities and agencies reflect the Public Relations in IMC, which aims to build trust through social engagement. This approach is in line with research (Last, 2022) about Medan MSMEs that use community networks to survive during the pandemic. However, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud expands on it by creating a loyalty ecosystem based on sports activities and institutional events that not only increase visibility but also strengthen the brand's identity as part of urban life. This shows the evolution from just crisis adaptation to a sustainable marketing strategy.

In the digital aspect, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud utilizes social media and SEO as a tool for new consumer acquisition. The implementation of SEO for the keyword "Medan chicken noodles" reflects the strategy Search Engine Marketing in IMC, which aims to optimize organic visibility. These findings reinforce the study (Candra et al., 2023) which highlights the

role of media in shaping consumer perception, but Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud adds a technical dimension by converting digital visibility into loyalty through hybrid content. For example, TikTok content with the theme of teen drama not only attracts engagement, but also embeds the value of togetherness that is closely related to Indonesian eating culture.

Collaboration with local influencers is a modern form of Influencer Marketing, which in the framework of IMC serves to strengthen brand credibility. This strategy is different from foreign brands that rely on Influencers national or global. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud chose figures relevant to the context of Medan to create an effect "Local endorsement" which is more persuasive for the regional segment. Study (Putri, 2022) revealed that fast food dominates the market through its global image, but Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud proves that the hyper-local approach is actually able to create competitive differentiation.

The use of WhatsApp for direct marketing shows the adaptation of IMC in the context of Indonesia's communication culture that prioritizes personal closeness. The broadcast feature and WhatsApp groups are used to deliver promos personally, combining technological efficiency with a family feel. This is an innovation of the concept Direct Response Marketing traditional, which is usually impersonal. This approach answers the findings (Utami, 2018) about the threat of global homogenization by offering a communication model that is global in medium and local in essence.

In terms of creative content, Haji Mahmud's Chicken Noodles adopts Storytelling trend-based as a way to grab the attention of the younger generation. The drama content of "bucin" (slave of love) is not only entertaining, but also establishes an emotional association between the product and the daily life of young consumers. This strategy is in line with the principles Content Marketing in IMC, where educational or entertainment value is packaged to influence consumer decisions indirectly (Kumar et al., 2023). Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud shows how creative content can be a tool for repositioning traditional culinary image.

The main challenge of Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud lies in the scalability of community-based strategies. If foreign brands can quickly expand through franchises, Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud must maintain the quality and consistency of taste in each outlet a critical factor revealed in the interview. This is reminiscent of research (Last, 2022) about the importance of consistency for MSMEs during the crisis, but Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud adds complexity by combining product standardization and communication flexibility.

The novelty of this research lies in the demonstration of how IMC is not only used for market adaptation but also as a tool of cultural resistance to global domination. Mie Ayam Haji Mahmud proves that the integration of traditional values (such as personal closeness and togetherness) with digital techniques (SEO, influencers, viral content) can create a sustainable business model. These findings go beyond previous studies that tend to dichotomize (separate) traditional and modern strategies (Candra et al., 2023; Utami, 2018). This research offers a new perspective on IMC as a bridge between cultural preservation and marketing innovation, as well as a reference for traditional business actors in the face of global lifestyle disruptions.

6. Conclusion

This research reveals that Haji Mahmud Medan Mushroom Chicken Noodles have managed to maintain the existence of traditional culinary in the midst of the dominance of foreign food through an integrated marketing communication strategy (IMC) that combines conventional and digital approaches. Collaboration with local communities, social media optimization, SEO use, and collaboration with regional influencers create a synergy between traditional values and technological innovation. This strategy not only strengthens consumer loyalty through emotional and cultural closeness, but also increases brand visibility in a competitive landscape. These findings confirm that locally-based IMC adaptations are able to bridge the challenges of globalization, while maintaining culinary identity as part of cultural heritage.

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