



LAPORAN HASIL PENELITIAN

**Is Brand Management Important to SMEs Product? A
Qualitative Investigation in the Context of Indonesia
Small Enterprise Environment**

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**LEMBAGA PENELITIAN DAN PENGABDIAN KEPADA
MASYARAKAT**

UNIVERSITAS PARAMADINA

JAKARTA, 2021

LEMBAR PENGESAHAN PENELITIAN MANDIRI

Penelitian dengan judul

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Telah disahkan oleh Direktur Lembaga Penelitian, dan Pengabdian Masyarakat dan diketahui Ketua Program Studi Manajemen Universitas Paramadina, pada:

Hari/Tanggal : Senin 14 Juni 2021

Yang mensahkan dan menyetujui:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to analyze the implementation of brand management in small, medium enterprises (SMEs) in three areas in Indonesia which specialized on craft, food, and fashion companies. The implementation of brand management addresses five main stages based Keller's framework of brand management including 1) developing brand positioning, 2) identifying and developing brand plans, 3) designing and implementing brand marketing programs, 4) measuring and interpreting brand performance, 5) managing brand equity. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data in Yogyakarta, Lombok, and Makassar. The study found that brand management is perceived to be important in supporting SMEs' performance. This study contributes the importance of brand management in the context of SME by applying the framework of brand management. The finding can help SME managers or owners formulate branding strategies that strengthen SMEs. However, the results also show that some respondents argued about the unimportance of brand management.

Keywords Brand management, Small medium enterprise

ABSTRAK

Studi penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penerapan pengelolaan merek usaha kecil menengah di tiga area di Indonesia yang memfokuskan pada kerajinan, makanan, dan fashion. Penerapan pengelolaan merek merujuk pada lima tahapan utama pada Keller yaitu mengembangkan brand positioning, identifikasi dan pengembangan perencanaan merek, desain dan melaksanakan program pemasaran, mengukur dan menafsirkan kinerja merek dan pengelolaan ekuitas merek. Metode penelitian menggunakan wawancara semi terstruktur sebagai koleksi data yang dilakukan di Yogyakarta, Lombok, dan Makassar. Berdasarkan analisis data, rerangka pengelolaan merek penting untuk mendukung kinerja usaha kecil menengah. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pengelolaan merek dalam konteks usaha kecil menengah penting untuk diterapkan karena bisa membantu pengelola usaha merumuskan pengelolaan merek dengan baik. Penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa beberapa narasumber menyatakan bahwa pengelolaan merek tidak penting.

Kata kunci: Pengelolaan merek, Usaha kecil menengah

JEL Classification Numbers: M310 Marketing

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Brand management is relatively closely related to the context of big business. SMEs typically lacked the capabilities, marketing power, and other organizational capacities (Knight, 2000) and then brand management literature has focused almost exclusively on vast and multinational brands. Capon et al. (2002) argued that in SMEs, the enterprise strategy was driven by senior management as the owner, consequently, the brand strategy was also dependent upon the top management. Powerful brands were not easy to build and were costly and complicated to develop and to maintain (Davis, 2002; Aaker, 2004). The attention of brand management in SMEs was focused only on big companies and multinationals (Krake, 2005). Wong and Merrilees (2005) argued that there was lack of support for brand orientation in the context of SMES, thus brands did not become an unseparated part of a firm's value and an important strategic asset. Furthermore, Wong and Merrilees (2005) also emphasized that SMEs would perceive, they did not have enough time or resources to conduct branding activities therefore they failed to invest business activities including advertising, information technology, and training. Kay (2006) argued that understanding branding in SME still remained underdeveloped and branding research was more emphasized in big brand corporates. Zhang et al. (2008) proposed the integrative theoretical framework about key attribute differentiate rapid growth firms from slow growth companies; the model did not discuss brand management. Baumgarth (2010) found that SMEs were at disadvantage in developing brand values, norms, artefacts and practices when compared to larger organizations. Branding has been missing from the literature on SMEs and entrepreneurship (Merrilees, 2007). Bresciani and Eppler (2010) compiled the unique context for brand studies of previously research such as the creation of a company with no established identity and reputation (Petkova et al., 2008); branding activities as the paramount importance for customer acquisition and for the survival of the company; (Boyle, 2003) start-ups typically with limited resources in terms of capital (Abimbola, 2001; Abimbola & Kocak, 2007); and time (Wong and Merrilees, 2005). SMEs with young and new entrepreneur hardly find the procedures of brand management in branding literature. The brand management addresses brand architecture and the elements of brand equity that is

more relevant in analyzing the brand in big companies (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2002; Kapferer, 2004). Gundala and Jack (2014) found that many SMEs did not practice branding strategies because of many barriers limiting the owner-manager of the SMEs from investing towards building stronger brands. The scarcity of finance is a significant obstacle, which prevents SMEs from aggressively competing in the fast changing and competitive. Unlike larger firms, SMEs do not have the ability to obtain enough financial support from the banks to fight. Odoom (2016) also argued that brand development was needed to influence the performance of SMEs.

Progressively, the time has changed. SMEs have shown a dramatic progress in their development. Many start-up businesses as SMEs have shown the professional management. They are initiated by the young workers who have started to work self-independently and can offer the qualified products. The growth of SMEs is getting more advanced. They are supposed to be supported by the government such as to accelerate the start-up business; to strengthen the financial access; to improve the supply chain management and to support the women's role. The progress of SMEs practically is encouraged by the progress of SMEs theoretically.

The importance of branding strategy in SMEs is also supported by the growth of the informal economic sector in Indonesia. The informal economic sector in Indonesia dominated by SMEs, were not significantly affected by the crisis and could survive well. Therefore, SMEs in Indonesia have played a major role in supporting the growth of entrepreneurship and the economic growth as well. The micro enterprises in Indonesia have dominated the current entrepreneurship progress in Indonesia. The data of State Ministry of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises showed that the number of Micro Enterprises in Indonesia is the largest of existing of SMEs (Bureau of Statistic Central, 2017). SMEs in Indonesia have provided the sources of employment. The government has provided facilities such as subsidized credit, human resource training, general management training, quality management, entrepreneurship, advisory extension workers, promotion facilitation, and implementation of an incubator system.

This study analyzed on the role of brand management process in SMEs. Odoom et al. (2017) have given significant contribution review of small and medium sized enterprise across several economies including branding strategies. At last, these brand instruments can have impact on the performance. This study highlights the brand management process proposed by

Keller (2013) in understanding the brand management implementation in SMEs. Keller (2013) addressed that strategic brand management involves the design and implementation of marketing programs and activities to build, to measure, and to manage brand equity as having four main steps 1) developing brand positioning, 2) identifying and developing brand plans, 3) designing and implementing brand marketing programs, 4) measuring and interpreting brand performance, 5) managing brand equity. The brand management process allows this research to make four contributions on the article. **First**, the study implements brand management process through strategic views. Strategic views here is related to the management functions anchored with the founder who manages the key function of corporate identity and branding so, it saves time and energy. Due to the small scale, Abimbola and Vallaster (2007) add that SMEs have a clear advantage over large companies due to the flexibility of structure and processes in managing brand management.

Second, strategic brand management here is also related a good branding at the beginning of the SMEs and can lead to a good reputation among existing players in the similar field. Goldberg et al. (2003) argued that small business viewed reputation as one strategy to obtain legitimation from a diverse stakeholder, to create good image management and to increase word of mouth advocacy or recommendation. Abimbola and Vallaster (2007) also addressed that SMEs are better able to create strong firm by integrating branding, reputation building, relevant and appropriate organizational identity, furthermore, is supported by being proactive, and creating brand value propositions within their identity and reputation in their dealings with customers. Vans Renburg (2013) argued that a strategy and capability of venturing with entrepreneurs to access brands and marketing know-how that possess disruptive value were critical. Juntunen et al. (2010) argued that small entrepreneurial brand firms are well placed to generate innovative new brand ideas so presenting the activities performed at the early stage is very important including branding in small business. Branding in small companies is an emergent aspect of the literature which to date has been explored from the perspective of customers but not SME management. Increasing understanding of branding is essential, given the impact of the entrepreneurial personality on SME branding, the need to create sustainable value, the emphasis of differentiation, and nurturing the generation of growth (Horan et al., 2011).

Third, it is argued that by analyzing brand management process in SMEs, this study will gain a better understanding of SMEs' performance. Wong and Merrilees (2005) also noted that branding had an important role in increasing the performance of SME. There was the

contribution of branding strategy on sales performance of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Agostini et al., 2014; Agostini et al., 2015; and Asamoah, 2014; Sandbacka et al., 2013). Agostini et al. (2014) also investigated the impact of brands on small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) performance in the fashion industry, by trying also to shed light on the different effect that corporate and product brands may produce through trademark as brand instrument. The study indicated that trademarks had a positive impact on SMEs' performance in the fashion industry and effective in producing a sales increase. Branding strategy is also available in B2B SMEs. The study of Hirvonen et al. (2016) found that brand orientation contributed to business growth through brand performance. Growing enterprises tend to adopt market and brand orientations to a greater extent (Reijonen et al., 2014). Reijonen et al. (2014) also argued that SMEs with varying growth intentions adopted market or brand orientation. Mitchell et al. (2012) emphasized that manager is central to the brand management function in SME retail firms. Renton et al. (2016) emphasized that highly brand oriented SMEs will have greater brand focus, better branding practices and improved brand performance, and leading to better financial outcomes.

Fourth, Odoom et al. (2017), also argued that there is a gap in methodological approach that lacks of mixed-method approaches in studies examining the brand-building and development process for SMEs. Only Roy and Banerjee (2012) conducted a process based on brand building and development from an Indian auto-component SME perspective. The qualitative studies need to be explored more to establish theories, model and framework.

To address the contributions as the research gaps related to brand management process, the objective of this study has been to explore the possible implementation of brand management process that determine SMEs' performance in Indonesia context. The article discusses the theoretical background for brand management process including 1) developing brand positioning, 2) identifying and developing brand plans, 3) designing and implementing brand marketing programs, 4) measuring and interpreting brand performance, 5) managing brand equity. The literature review is followed by a qualitative interview of the implementation of brand developments on SMEs in three regions of Indonesia.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Keller's framework of brand management (2013) also has some stages for developing brand, measuring, and sustaining. The first stage is *developing brand positioning*. Positioning is the act of designing a company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of target market (Ries and Trout, 2000). Keller (2013) developed a good positioning. Good positioning should be aspirational, should reflect a consumer point of view in terms of the benefits that consumer derived from the brand and contains the rational and emotional elements. SMEs should develop brand positioning to strengthen brand identity among the existing players. Points of difference based on certain attributes should be developed. Muhonen et al. (2017) argued that SMEs with strong and sustainable positioning, a brand is likely to compete successfully against the rival brands and ensure customer identification to the brand.

Identifying and developing brand plans as the second stage are initiated by crafting brand elements. Brand elements include brand identities that can stress the points of difference. Keller (2013) formulated the brand elements including brand names, URL, logo, symbol, slogan, jingle, and package. Brand name as the brand element is very important because it has key association with the central product. Brand names should be more easy, meaningful, different and distinctive. URL (uniform resource locators) specifies locations on the web or domain names. In the era of digital, the use of URL can identify the company easily. Logo and symbol as visual elements can play an important role in developing brand equity and for creating brand awareness. Logo is related to ownership or association and ranging from corporate names or trademark (word marks with text only). Slogan as the brand elements is the short phrase that communicates descriptive or persuasive information of the brand. Jingles are musical messages played around the brand. The last brand element is packaging. It is the activity of designing and producing containers for a product. The packaging is not only related to logistic matter but it helps the product attract attention and positively communicate the informational elements to the product (Silayoi and Speece, 2007).

Designing and implementing brand marketing programs as the third stage are supported by integrated marketing (Keller, 2013). The 4ps programs are the means corresponding

marketing programs including product, pricing, channel strategies and communication strategies. These programs provide interaction with company entities. Marketing activities of 4Ps are the tool to build brand equity. Product is the important element of marketing activities and related to market offering. Related price, price is a dimension that can be identified from the perspective of the customer as well as that of the retailer/manufacturer (Sivakumar, 2000). Distribution includes the activities in transferring good or services to the final users. Related to it, retailing as a part of distribution has two types. There are store retailers and non-store retailers. The retail marketing environment has changed dramatically. The use of technology can affect the way marketers to conduct their business through (Bradley et al., 2007). Related to communication, companies can communicate with their consumers through integrated marketing communication (IMC). Clow and Baack (2016) emphasized that coordination and IMC tools, avenues, and sources in the a company into a seamless program is designed to maximize the impact on customer and other stakeholders. Centeno et al. (2012) developed the conceptual model of SME brand building by stressing differences in marketing strategies.

Measuring and interpreting brand performance as the fourth stage elaborates the activity of marketer that traces the value creation process for their brand to better understand the financial impact of the marketing expenditures. There are two aspects to measure the brand performance through brand audit and brand tracking. Brand audit is a comprehensive examination of a brand to understand of the brand equity. The assessment is related to financial health. Keller (2013) argued that brand audit is more consumer focused and requires understanding the sources of brand equity from the perspective of both the firm and consumers.

Managing brand equity.

Keller (2013) argued that managing brand equity is related to managing brands over time. Marketing activities are always well planned to create consumers' brand awareness. These strategies are intended to create brand engagement with the existing customer. Hollebeek (2011) argued that brand engagement is the a part of brand interaction with the customer by activating the relationship. Brand reinforcement strategies can be implemented by 1) creating innovation in product design, manufacturing and merchandising through strengthening brand consistency or changing in marketing tactics and 2) relevance in user and usage imagery by protecting sources of brand equity. Brand revitalization can be implemented by identifying

additional opportunities to use brand in same basic way, identifying completely new and different ways to use brand, retaining vulnerable customer, and recapturing lost customers, identifying neglected segments and attracting new customers (Keller, 2013).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study was conducted in the context of emerging market of Indonesia. Indonesia is justified as being representative of an emerging country that has a lot of opportunities for SMEs to grow progressively. SMEs in Indonesia are currently dealing with new challenges including the rapid technological development, the existing competitors, and consumer demand. SMEs account for 99% of the total amount of enterprises that are operating in Indonesia and SMES can create a total of 107.6 million jobs in Southeast Asia's Largest economy. SMEs also have contributed 60.6% to Indonesia's gross domestics product. At the end, SMEs can act at the backbone of the Indonesian economy (Indonesia Investment, 2017). The growth of SMEs is also expected to be increasing in the manufacturing sector by 2019.

This study used purposive sampling. The resources were selected purposively. The purposive sampling may be used when analyzing a subset of a larger population, but enumeration will be impossible (Babbie, 2013). Purposive sampling for business players of micro enterprises to be interviewed would be most appropriate in this study. The data from a broad range of manufacturing companies at varied stages of development were gathered from secondary data such as the list of manufacturers in the website. The researcher attempted to obtain a sample in a small and medium scale enterprise that appeared to be representative of the population and to ensure that ranged from one extreme to the other was included and based some criteria. The respondents were entrepreneurs. They were selected because 1) they had a business on a regular basis; 2) had a business activity more than two years 3) focused on fabric small medium enterprises. The unit analysis was a company. The population was micro enterprises in Lombok Timur, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, and Makassar. The number of a company used in the study was two companies in Yogyakarta, five companies in Makassar and eight companies in Lombok. These areas were chosen based on the number of the existing SMEs in those regions. The growth of the SMEs in those regions is increasing. They become the target market of bank credit.

This study carried out a qualitative collecting method by having an interview. A sub-sample of entrepreneurs was selected from a sample of entrepreneurial organizations. The interview process was the primary method used to collect data. The interviews were semi-structured

that was a range of topics and specific questions served as a base. Interview questions were adapted from instruments used in the research. The interview process consisted of two parts. The first part included the collection of background data such as product, or service offered and answers to multiple-choice questions. The second part consisted of recording responses to open-ended, qualitative questions.

Brand management was measured with some aspects based on the stages of Keller's brand management and combined by Berthon et al. (1997) and Berthon et al. (2008) relating management of SMEs. Some of them are: Are brand correctly positioned? Does the brand understand what it means to the consumer? Does the company invest adequate resources in product improvements that provide better value to the customers? Does the company deliver benefits to customers? Does the company identify the attribute/benefit of a brand? Is pricing strategy based on the perception of value? Does brand has portfolio and hierarchy? Does the company use marketing tool? Is the brand given a proper support? Is brand still consistent? Does the brand stay relevant?

Each interview took around one and half hour. This interview was conducted by the researcher with the protocol allowing for the discussion with wide current issues. The respondents were interviewed at their own office. Before having an interview, the researchers asked for the permission from each owner to interview one of the managers or the owners themselves. Data collection occurred over a period of several months and was completed in mid-2017. The researchers collected responses by recording all the conversations. The recorded conversation were transcribed including the literal statements and cues given.

The long list of initial companies covered emergent, growing and established small and medium-sized firms. 16 companies viewed by the researchers had the competitive advantage. Table 1 provides demographic characteristics for 16 companies. Company anonymity was considered to be important to gain entry and cooperation from key managers in the sample. The age of the informants ranged between 19 and 54 years. 19 per cent of the informants were male, while 81 per cent of the informants were female. Female entrepreneurs became the dominant actors in SMEs. Further, 100 per cent of the informants' education was Senior High School. The industry of SMEs was 58 per cent of fashion; 12.5 per cent of food and 43.7 per cent of craft. The length of the business ranged from 1 to 19 years.

Table 1. SME Details

No	ID	Gender	Age	Formal Education	Company age	Industry
1.	001_Makasar	Woman	54	Senior High school	10	Food
2.	002_Makasar	Man	50	Senior High school	15	Food
3.	003_Makasar	Woman	40	Senior High school	4	Food
4.	004_Makassar	Woman	38	Junior High School	9	Food
5.	005_Makassar	Woman	34	Senior High school	10	Food
6.	006_Makassar	Woman	43	Junior High School	4	Food
7.	001_Jogja	Woman	43	Senior High school	10	Fashion
8.	002_Jogja	Woman	54	Senior High school	19	Fashion
9.	003_Jogja	Woman	30	Senior High school	16	Fashion
10.	004_Jogja	Man	38	Senior High school	10	Fashion
11.	005_Jogja	Man	29	Senior High school	7	Fashion
12.	C_Lombok	Woman	32	Senior High school	5	Craft
13.	D_Lombok	Woman	35	Senior High school	4	Craft
14.	E_Lombok	Woman	19	Senior High school	5	Craft
15.	F_Lombok	Woman	25	Senior High school	5	Craft

16.	G_Lombok	Woman	37	Senior High school	8	Craft
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Strauss and Corbin (1999) argued that data coding can use open, axial and selective coding methodologies. The main concept of brand management and the elements of brand element were generated and given names with open coding. The emergent concepts were labelled based on the concepts in the literatures by correlating the concepts emerging from the data collected with the concepts in the literatures. The researcher discovered relationship among the concepts from the data and deductively related to the existing literature. At the end, coding was applied to integrate the existing relationships among concepts.

CHAPTER IV

RESULT

The finding presented the most important supporting quotes that were relevant with the theoretical backgrounds.

Developing Brand Positioning

Brand management is critical because it can deliver some benefit to the customer. There are some advantages taken from the perspective of buyers including reducing customer search costs, identifying products quickly and accurately; providing an assurance of quality and consistency; reducing the social and psychological risks associated with owning and using the wrong product. The respondents gave the argument that brand can deliver a benefit to fulfill consumers 'need.

One respondent explained: "The brand is critical because consumers can differentiate among existing products. They are a lot of similar products offered by our competitors where consumers can easily choose. The brand can show quality though we have to afford more through asking so many people about products".

Another respondent: "The brand is critical because they have to compete with other products. They offer products that are difficult to differentiate".

The above descriptions show that small business is encouraged to adhere too many of branding and positioning principle because they will face an intensive competition. The small company will grow in the future. Companies follow the stages of product life cycle. In the introduction stage, the competition might be slow due to the limited number of involved players in the industry. Entering the growth stage, the competition is getting increased. The competition is indicated by the number of players in the same field. Agostini et al. (2014) also argue branding is an important competitive tool available to SMEs and will improve the performance of SMEs. Branding provides the differentiation between the competitive offerings and becomes one of the critical success factors for company performance (Muhonen et al. 2017).

Another respondent described similarly: "We don't have much resources in creating a good brand. We have a limited resources. But, we should find the right person to buy our product. The product can't be sold for all people. It should be specific".

Kotler and Keller (2016) argued that building brand is a challenge for a small business with limited resources and budgets. However, when resources are limited, focus and consistency in branding are still important. Here are some suggestions such as finding a compelling product or service performance advantage, focusing on building one or two strong brands based on one or two key associations, encouraging product or service trial in any way possible, and developing a digital strategy. Tavares (2015) also showed that SMEs' owner-managers approach brands in a different way and develop their own processes of branding, which allow them, in a simplified but relatively efficient way, to collect some of the benefits associated to brand building.

Identifying and Developing Brand Plans

The brand is critical to be a name for a product because it can identify the attribute. The brand is a promise between the company and consumers. It tries to meet consumers' expectation and to reduce the first. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as the name, term, sign, symbol, design and combination of them and intended to identify the goods and services of one seller of the group. It tries to distinguish the goods of one producer from those of another (Moore & Reid, 2008). The business start-up such as this small business needs brand as the first identity to enter the existing competition. The company needs to be recognized further. A majority of the interviews showed that brand identity is perceived to be important for customers to know the brand furthermore:

One informant argued that: "The brand is needed because the consumers need to know us. A brand identity can help our customer to recognize our product and can decide to purchase the product. Consequently, it has the impact directly on our profitability".

Another informant: "The brand is for the identity. I realized that owning brand identity cost costs money, but it will be more costly if I don't have visual identity. Logo can inform my consumers and avoiding the confusion of my consumers. We have to make our consumer not to be confused of conflicting messages that coming to their perception. They will be knowledgeable with us".

Another informant: "I develop brand identity and try to use it and help customers remember well my products. Our customers will see our brand and they can have an opportunity to have the interaction with us. The symbol and color can have a chance to make connection and will be easily memorable for them. Our customers can have better knowledge related our product. "

Marketers of small business can design their product offerings and marketing programs to create. In increasingly competitive marketplaces, marketers often must link or associate their brands with other people, places, things, or brands as a means of building or leveraging the knowledge that might otherwise be difficult to achieve more directly through product marketing programs (Keller, 2013). Marketing program can be implemented in the small business. Brand management becomes the critical issue in SMEs because it requires the manager to decide what role brands play for the company in creating customer value and shareholder value in the long run. The willingness to create brand knowledge of consumers related the existence of brand is supported.

Designing and Implementing Brand Marketing Programs

Meanwhile for entrepreneurs, brands play a function by making easier some of the tasks the entrepreneur has to perform. The results showed the implementation of brand marketing programs. The informants expressed their interest of the importance of brand marketing programs to make their customers recognize the brand well. In other words, marketing program can create consumer awareness, can support the entrepreneurs to fulfill the need of target market, and to value the price.

Another informant responded: “Communication of brand is to make our customer recognize us. They can see our brand name on a product, in an advertisement or any other another venue. They can understand our brand. At core of building brand equity is marketing programs or strategies. Marketing activities can create brand awareness as well as support the good brand image. Marketing activities such as event marketing through tradeshow, exhibition or direct marketing can be applied for promoting product. Besides, my company also sets the right pricing and choosing the most efficient distribution channel”.

Another informant said: “We have a limited budget; the use of internet will be much easier. This can be as a marketing channel of a brand. Furthermore, we use the regularly meeting among the entrepreneurs, so it can be the medium of word of mouth”.

One informant said: “Product is very important to make our consumer to fulfill the need but product has to create a bundle of benefit not only core benefits but also other utilities even lifestyle and consumer can decide to buy”.

An informant also said: “Pricing is another aspect to create brand image. Setting the right price is important if our consumer has product value and sensitivity to price. Price war should be avoided because it does not give any benefit for any parties”.

The marketing program can be the powerful tool to make consumers have experience with a brand. If consumers can have direct experience, eventually, it can lead them to make decision to buy. Odoom (2016) argued that a brand should be developed through marketing programs including integrated marketing communication. Renton (et al., 2015), SMEs can implement core and non-core marketing programs consistent with their brand, so SMEs are better able to create competitive advantages. The research of Centeno et al. (2012) also suggest that brand communication activities including event marketing and sponsorship, are available to SMEs to support the brand-building efforts.

Measuring and Interpreting Brand Performance

The informants provide some explanations that measuring brand performance is relatively important because it is more likely they can manage the brand to increase the strength and performance.

An informant argued: “We don’t ignore the use of tracking brand equity performance, but we don’t regularly monitor due to we don’t know how to measure well, but we can create brand knowledge of customers”.

Another informant who realized the importance of brand: “It is necessary to do review because we improve our performance, especially sales. Our product is too competitive, there are almost similar one another. Measuring the brand will be much better because we can adjust our strategy. But it is sometimes to be hard to execute the evaluation due to the limited resources in reviewing”.

Gromark and Melin (2011) argued that there has been an empirical support linking brand orientation directly to the profitability of firms. This confirms that evaluation of brand performance should be monitored because it is proven that brand orientation has contributed to profitability, market and financial performance. Asamoah (2014) argued that brand equity has the impact on SMEs’ performance in terms of sales growth and new product success. The process of measuring brand equity is important though it is just small companies. This is a part of becoming a bigger company in the future. SME’s manager can develop marketing strategies and manage them proactively in the long run.

Managing Brand Equity

14 of 16 informants of this study showed that maintaining good brand management is crucial in strengthening the performance of SMEs.

An informant argued: “This is the only way to support our life and others people who have working with us. They need this for life’s assistance. It is very hard not to manage the company seriously. One of actions is maintaining and supporting good brand strategy. Our competitors have been so aggressive recently. Even worse, the consumer preference is also demanding”.

Another emotional entrepreneurs said that “This business is a part of our life and part of our soul. We have been trying to struggle for years in keeping the brand alive. We must survive in this business. We need to innovate and provide something new and try to interact with consumers”.

Another informant argued that “It’s been 19 years, I and my wife have run the business since we were married. It needs the touch in managing brand. Our mission is achieving to survive. We try to provide something news and to use other media in promoting the product”.

SMEs needs to carefully manage the brand so it’s performance does not decrease. SMEs can consistently support the brand strategies in improving the performance year by year. 80% of the age of the company was more than 8 years. In terms of survival, the management has been trying so hard due to the willingness of the owners. Keller (2013) argued that effective brand management needs a long-term view of marketing decisions. A long-term view can have results in proactive strategies to enhance customer brand equity and encounter difficulties. SMEs should have the long-term perspective of brand management if SMEs will maintain the loyalty of customers and be able to revitalize the brands and to overcome the existing problems related to measuring and managing brands.

The Unimportance of Brand

This study also has some findings that show about the unimportant sides of brands. 2 of 16 argued that brand is unimportant. The study showed the number of finding related to the power of brand management including the positive side and negative side. The positive aspect emphasized that a brand was important. The brand was perceived to be correctly positioned. The brand was important because it was related to pricing strategies based on the perception of value. Meanwhile, from the negative side, the brand was perceived to be

unimportant. Based on the interview of the informants, they are some reasons why SMEs still do not have any concern of brand management as follows.

Less Sensitive to Brand

Consumers tend to be less brand sensitive because the product is not distinctive. Consumers are aware that there are substitutes for products. Consumers can easily compare the quality of alternatives. The product is assumed not to have prestige or exclusiveness. Products are not perceived to signal taste or status. The brand performance can be linked to an evolutionary trajectory from commodities, through branded goods and strong brands to open source brands. This study shows that the product was used to be as the commodities. Commodities are where the act of branding does little for either the buyer or the seller, as products are not differentiated by either the sellers or the buyers (Pitt et al. 2006).

One informant argued: “The product is targeted for the low segment, so the consumers are not sensitive to a brand, branding is complicated”.

The other one argued: “The product is original, the power of a brand is less important”.

The importance of brand is less important so that SMEs do not discuss any brand portfolio and hierarchy. A brand can't be stretched only so far. SMEs do not often need multiple brands to pursue these various segments. The brand portfolio is considered to be complicated because building a good brand portfolio requires careful thinking and creative execution. It seems that SMEs need to maximize market coverage so potential consumers cannot be neglected. The brand is not clearly differentiated and appealing to a sizeable marketing segment. Even more, SMEs do not use a branding strategy or brand architecture. SMEs do not decide how to brand new products is especially critical including developing new brand elements for the new product, applying some of its existing brand elements or combining of new and existing brand elements. Furthermore, SMEs do not have a mechanism to have brand monitoring.

More Investment

The small company considers that the brand management has to spend dollars on product and service as an investment in consumer brand knowledge (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The investment is a critical factor. The company will overspend on brand building. Branding has

emerged as a top management priority in the last decade due to the growing realization that brands are one of the most valuable intangible assets that firms have and need more investment (Mayer & Vambery, 2013).

The informant argued that “We can become bankrupt if there is a brand”.

The other informant showed that “We can still survive without managing brand professionally. We don’t have much resource to be allocated in brand”.

Focus more on Quality

Many consumers use price as an indicator quality (Verma and Gupta, 2004). Price and quality perception interact. The higher price is perceived to possess high quality. Consumers are continually looking for the best deal and do not have any perception to any brand. They don’t care which brand it is; they want to get the best possible value. Quality is the ability of the product to be able to satisfy the customers.

One argued that “We sell the quality; the price is easily understood”.

The other one argued that “We take the product from the supplier then we use the supplier’s brand”.

DISCUSSION

This study implements the framework of Keller’s brand management for SMEs including 1) developing brand positioning, 2) identifying and developing brand plans, 3) designing and implementing brand marketing programs, 4) measuring and interpreting brand performance, 5) managing brand equity. As time passes, little by little, SMEs have realized the essence of brand management to sustain their business in the long run. The findings presented here support the view that SMEs entrepreneurs should be developing brand management within their organizations. This is in line with Reijonen et al. (2014), SMEs with varying growth intentions have adopted market or brand orientation. Furthermore, Renton et al. (2016) also added that focusing on brand management will lead to better financial outcomes. As company grows, the performance of SMEs in the study is much better in some degree. The length period of company ranges from 4-19 years. The period of time running business is varying but this indicates that there is a high degree of entrepreneurial understanding of the brand

focusing strategies in SMEs strategies. The entrepreneurs of SMEs understand brand management as a means of emphasizing the product offering to their target market. In addition, the data of State Ministry of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises showed that the number of Micro Enterprises in Indonesia is the largest of existing of SMEs. The growth of SMEs is getting more advanced. They are supposed to be supported by the government such as to accelerate the start-up business; to strengthen the financial access; to improve the supply chain management and to support the women's role (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2016). The existing conditions have led to awareness and intent of these entrepreneurs in the study to devote resources to brand management.

Second, identifying and developing brand plans. Developing brand relates to brand identity; consequently, it has a role for the customer. The brand takes on personal meaning to consumers and becomes an important part of their identity (Ferraro et al. 2013). The evidence presented in this finding suggest that when consumers learn about brands through experience with the product and finding out which brands satisfy their needs and which do not, there should be brand identity that describes the visual aspect to signify the company. Fourteen companies in this study realized the identity can become the strategies to build brand equity including color, symbol, and logo. This is in line with Ataman (2008), a marketer should have brand equity drivers such as 1) the initial choices for the brand elements or identities making up the brand including brand names, URL, logo, symbol, character, spokesperson, slogan, jingle, package and signage; and 2) other association indirectly transferred to the brand by linking it to some other entity (a person, place or thing). Focusing brand identity is also a part of brand orientation that will relate to brand performance (Hirvonen et al., 2013). Hirvonen and Laukkanen (2014) argue that integrating brand identity with the SME brand orientation framework and empirically examine the relationship between these concepts, showing that brand identity has a positive effect on brand performance in SMEs. The performance as the result of brand identity is also confirmed by all companies of the study. Renton et al. (2016) also supported that there needs to be a sufficient emphasis on creating brand meaning, standardizing brand artefacts to avoid in the market place and finding the most cost-effective communication tools.

Third, designing and implementing brand marketing programs. The informants of this study recognize the importance of marketing program. The industry of food, fashion and craft need marketing program. Marketing programs include product, price, place and promotion. One informant said that product is the important element of marketing activities and the product

offering can be bundling as a part of product differentiation. Another informant argued that they do not provide the core benefit of the product, but they can also offer lifestyle when consumers wear products. Price is intended to communicate the value positioning of its product. Pricing is a dimension that can be identified from the perspective of the customer as well as that of the retailer/manufacturer (Sivakumar, 2000). This study shows that due to their position as SMEs, they have to decide a right strategy when setting a price. Consumers of their segments tend to be a price sensitive. Related to distribution as the activities in transferring good or services to consumer, they use both physical retail and internet as the media to have an interaction directly about product and services and have comparison. This is in line with Bradley et al. (2007), consumers can do comparison, review when making purchasing decision. Related to communication, the companies of this study can communicate with their consumers through integrated marketing communication (IMC) including tradeshow, exhibition, and direct marketing in order to maximize the impact toward their customer. Centeno et al. (2012) also confirmed that stressing in marketing strategies including brand packaging, sales activities, and channel distribution, point of purchase activities, brand communication and product development can create brand building strategy.

Fourth, measuring and interpreting brand performance. Fourteen companies recognize the benefit of measuring brand performance especially the sales as the indicator. This indicator signifies the easy measurement in the short-term. The indicator can also provide information concerning the performance of brand. This is also in line with Asamoah (2014), brand equity has the impact on SMEs' performance in terms of sales growth and new product success. The process of measuring brand equity is important though it is just small companies. This is a part of becoming a company in the future with a bigger scale. SME's manager can develop marketing strategies and manage them proactively in the long run. One informant of the study also argued that the measurement is not executed regularly due to the lack of good knowledge and resources for measuring. This study also supports the study of Gundala and Jack (2014), many SMEs did not practice branding strategies due to some barrier in investing towards building stronger brands. However, the others have agreed that measuring of brand performance can also support the ability of SMEs to adjust the strategy.

Fifth, managing brand equity as the way to achieve sustainability in the long run. When SMEs have already passed hard times and achieved the good results, SMEs recognized the importance of branding. Managing brand equity is relevant with achieving sustainability, survival and profit. One informant argued that managing brand equity is a part of the values

and emotional spirit of the owner. It is relevant with the mission which becomes the base line of the founding of the SMEs since the beginning. This study is relevant with the study of Duygulu et al. (2016), SMEs are increasingly pursued to develop strategies to increase their sustainability in order to gain financial and performance goals. Furthermore, related to mission, Duygulu et al. (2016), the mission statement is capable of influencing the performance and creating sustainable growth of SMEs in the long run. During a certain period, one informant recognized that they have to innovate, to provide something new and also to have interaction with the customers. Related to the interaction with the consumer, it is intended to create brand engagement with the existing customer. It is in line with Hollebeek (2011), brand engagement is the a part of brand interaction with the customer by activating the relationship.

Based on the research, this study has another finding. The following study also supports that the consumers were less sensitive to a brand. First, Hall (1995) argued that SMEs are more vulnerable to a changing competitive environment than larger firms. Businesses should prioritize with product quality, for market development, therefore, it could support the sustainability of business. Marketing management becomes the fundamental factor in promoting the business sustainability in the long run. Second, Gundala and Jack (2014) argued that SMEs were dependent largely on word-of-mouth. Consequently, they did not have to invest their time and money in carrying out marketing strategies. Third, Doole et al. (2006), SMEs have some problems related to inadequate cash flow, marketing incompetence, company size, customers and strategically related issues. Ohnemus (2009) also argued that limited resources can be financed time and knowledge of marketing in crafting branding.

The findings of the study support Keller's framework (2013). The entrepreneurs develop brand management based on the practical matters. They don't have understanding of brand management theories. The knowledge is obtained through discussion with the partners of existing industry. First is developing brand positioning. Kotler and Keller (2016) stated that no company can win if its product and service offering is unclear. Creating a compelling, well-differentiated brand position requires a keen understanding of consumer needs and wants, company capabilities and competitive action. SMEs in this study discover needs of customers and target them by satisfying in a superior way. The company can deliver high customer value and satisfaction. Companies from Jogjakarta may become the good example. The company has realized of the importance of a good brand positioning that can help company design marketing strategy and achieve customer preference differently. They feel

being intimidated in a competitive market place. The competition of the existing players in batik fashion industry is intense. The product and service should be unique. SMEs should compete by focusing differentiation. In Makassar, focusing services on brand can leverage agility and boost uniqueness. SMEs can make quick decisions and can be ready to start on delivering product. Implementing this uniqueness is relatively easy in Lombok. Hand-made craft should be promoted differently. The advantage of being unique is the easiness to be recognized by the customers. Fourteen companies argued that engaging positioning through uniqueness is as their weapon to compete with the big brands surrounding them. Related to brand identity, SMEs should have emphasis on creating unique brand identity, to avoid in the market place and finding the most cost-effective communication tools including tradeshow, exhibition, and direct marketing in order to maximize the impact toward their customer. SMEs should learn a lot and need assistance related to gaining good knowledge and resources for measuring brand performance. SMEs also anticipate the change of consumer preference through product innovation and providing for media interaction with the consumers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The research has found that there are two practices of the brand management in SME (brand is important, and brand is not important). In the case of a brand is important, the most of respondents agree that brand management is critical factor in supporting business performance. While in another side, SME said that brand is unimportant because a consumer is not sensitive to a brand. Here, there is perception that the brand building is only for large companies, and associated with cost, focusing on quality, using supplier brand, and having limited sources and budget.

For overall discussion, SMEs must develop the brand marketing program and create new ideas in developing marketing strategies. If it is analyzed with the product life cycle, it is recognized that most of in SMEs are positioned in the maturity stage. They should develop better branding strategy because they have to allocate their time and other resources in managing a product. The sale as one of the indicators of performance in the product life cycle becomes the determinants of firm sustainability. Consequently, the profit as the result can be allocated to other resources. The need of branding is still necessarily relevant. SMEs need more investment in crafting branding strategy so their target market. SMEs have to improve product quality and to add a new feature and to improve attribute by emphasizing brand. SMEs should shift from awareness to preference of consumers. By spending money on branding, SMEs can capture more market share to sustain the greater profit in the next stage.

Research Implication

The concept of branding should be discussed in various perspectives that can provide better understanding how to maintain SMEs in the future. It is possible to reinforce further calls for studies analyzing the performance effect of branding in different context including cultural and industry context. The next study also discusses the relationship between brand management to customer equity and evaluation of brand equity. In the small business literature, a call for studies is analyzing the branding orientation with strategic perspective. The study also discusses the marketing communication and other secondary associations on small business.

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