



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FORMING BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND AWARENESS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM COFFEE SHOPS IN MEDAN CITY

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Abstract

This research explores the role of social media in forming brand image and brand awareness, with a focus on coffee shops in Medan City. Using a historical approach, this research looks at the evolution of coffee shop marketing from the traditional era to modern social media. Analysis was carried out on the marketing strategies used by coffee shops, including the use of visual aesthetics, authentic narratives and active interactions with customers. The research results show that social media plays a very important role in increasing brand awareness and strengthening relationships with customers. Nonetheless, challenges in online reputation management and the need to continuously innovate marketing strategies were also identified. The conclusion of this research confirms that social media has become an effective tool for coffee shops in Medan to build a strong and memorable brand image amidst increasingly fierce competition in the coffee industry.

Key words: Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Coffee Shops, Marketing, Historical Perspective, Medan City

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought major changes to various aspects of life, including the way businesses interact with customers and promote their products (Avita et al., 2023). Social media, with its unique ability to reach and engage audiences widely and directly, has become an essential tool in modern marketing strategies. The role of social media in establishing brand image and brand awareness is becoming increasingly important amidst intense competition, especially for businesses that want to remain relevant and competitive (Sastradinata, 2024).

In the city of Medan, which is known for its cultural diversity, coffee shops have a special place in the social and economic life of the community. For a long time, coffee shops have been a place to gather, share stories, and take a break from the daily hustle and bustle. However, with the existence of social media, the role of this coffee shop is growing and becoming more dynamic (SARI, 2017). Coffee shops in Medan are now leveraging this digital platform to expand their reach, attract new customers and build strong communities.

Marketing strategies via social media start with understanding the audience and creating relevant and interesting content (O. H. Sari et al., 2023). Coffee shops in Medan often use photos and videos that highlight the aesthetics and uniqueness of their place and products. For example, an image of a cup of coffee with an artistic shop interior in the background can attract the attention of social media users and make them want to visit the place. Videos showing the coffee-making process or testimonials from customers can also increase brand appeal and credibility (PUTRI, n.d.).

Apart from visual content, narrative or storytelling, is a key element in social media strategy. Stories about how the coffee shop was founded, the values held by the owner, or the journey of the barista in developing his skills can create an emotional connection with the audience. Authentic and inspiring narratives not only help build a positive brand image but also increase customer loyalty. People tend to connect more with brands that have human and authentic stories (Raniya et al., 2024).

Direct interactions with customers

via social media also provide opportunities to strengthen relationships and build loyal communities (Sudirjo et al., 2023). Responding to comments, holding a Q&A session, or simply thanking you for a positive review can make customers feel appreciated and cared for. Coffee shops in Medan that actively interact with their followers often succeed in creating a loyal and enthusiastic customer base.

Collaboration with local influencers or public figures is another effective strategy for building brand image and awareness. Influencers who have loyal followers can help expand their reach and provide recommendations that their audience trusts (O. H. Sari et al., 2023). This kind of collaboration can take the form of product reviews, shop visits, or joint events posted on social media. The effects of this collaboration are usually seen in an increase in the number of visitors and social media followers within a short period of time.

The use of social media also allows coffee shops to run more flexible and adaptive marketing campaigns (Sukoco & Krisnaresanti, 2024). For example, seasonal promotions, special discounts, or new menu launches can be delivered quickly and effectively via social media. Coffee shops can respond to trends and changes in customer preferences more quickly compared to traditional marketing methods. This ability to adapt quickly provides a competitive advantage in an ever-changing market.

Data analysis from social media provides valuable insights into customer behavior and preferences. By monitoring metrics such as the number of likes, shares, comments, and engagement rate, coffee shops can evaluate the effectiveness of their content and make necessary adjustments. This data helps in planning marketing strategies that are more targeted and efficient, ensuring that every effort made produces maximum results.

However, success in utilizing social media also requires consistency and commitment. Managing social media accounts effectively requires a lot of time and effort. Content should be posted regularly, engagement with followers should be maintained, and the latest trends should always be followed. Coffee shops in Medan that are successful on social media usually have a team or individual dedicated to managing their online presence, ensuring that the strategies implemented are always

relevant and up-to-date.

Another challenge is handling negative feedback or criticism that appears on social media. Online reputation can quickly be affected by negative reviews or comments. Therefore, coffee shops must have a clear strategy to handle these types of situations with professionalism and transparency. Responding to criticism politely and constructively and taking concrete action to correct problems can help maintain a positive image and build customer trust.

Apart from that, coffee shops also need to be careful about maintaining their authenticity. In an effort to attract attention on social media, there is a risk that the focus may shift from the quality of products and services to simply pursuing online popularity. It is important for coffee shops to stay true to their values and quality standards, ensuring that real-world customer experiences match the image promoted on social media.

The success of coffee shops in Medan in utilizing social media can also provide inspiration for other businesses. With the right strategy, social media can be a highly effective tool for building a brand, increasing awareness, and forging strong relationships with customers (Leli et al., 2023). The digital transformation taking place in this sector shows that technology and innovation can go hand in hand with local traditions and culture, creating richer and more meaningful experiences for all parties involved.

Looking at the future, the potential of social media for marketing coffee shops in Medan looks increasingly promising (Mukhlis et al., 2023). With the continued development of technology and social media platforms, coffee shops have the opportunity to develop more creative and innovative strategies. The use of technology such as augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) in social media campaigns can provide a more interactive and engaging experience for customers.

Video content-based marketing, especially through platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, is also expected to continue to grow. Videos that show the process of making coffee, behind-the-scenes of store operations, or live streaming of special events can attract audience attention and increase engagement. Coffee shops that are able to capitalize on this trend will have an advantage in reaching a wider audience

and building closer relationships with their customers.

Overall, social media offers many opportunities for coffee shops in Medan to build brand image and increase brand awareness. With the right strategy, engaging content, and authentic interactions, coffee shops can create memorable experiences for their customers. This transformation is not only beneficial for the business itself but also enriches the coffee culture in Medan, making it more dynamic and connected to current developments.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding the role of social media in forming brand image and brand awareness in coffee shops in Medan City (Sutopo, 2006). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain in-depth insight through the interpretation of complex and contextual phenomena. In this effort, various data collection methods are used to gather rich and in-depth information (Sutopo, 2002).

First, in-depth interviews with coffee shop owners and managers in Medan were conducted to explore their understanding of the social media strategies they use. These interviews were designed in a semi-structured manner, allowing the researcher to explore various aspects related to the use of social media in marketing. The questions asked include motivations for using social media, the type of content created, and the perceived impact on brand image and awareness. This interview was conducted face-to-face, either in person or via a video call platform, depending on the respondent's availability and comfort (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

Apart from interviews, participant observation was also carried out in several selected coffee shops. This observation aims to understand how coffee shops present themselves on social media and how this is reflected in the shop's daily operations. Researchers observed activities in the shop, interactions between staff and customers, as well as visual and atmospheric elements, which were then promoted on social media. These observations help in contextualizing the data obtained from the interviews, providing a more holistic picture of the coffee shop's marketing strategy (Saleh, 2017).

To complement the data from interviews and observations, content analysis was carried out on social media posts from the coffee shop that was the subject of the research. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter were analyzed to understand the type of content posted most frequently, responses from users, and the themes or narratives built by the coffee shop. This analysis involves thematic coding to identify emerging patterns in social media content, such as the use of visuals, stories told, and interactions with followers.

Additionally, an online survey was also distributed to coffee shop customers to gather their perspectives on how social media influences their perception of the brand. The survey included questions about the frequency with which they viewed coffee shop content on social media, the types of content they found most engaging, and the influence that content had on their decision to visit a coffee shop. This survey provides quantitative data that can complement qualitative findings, providing a more complete picture of the effects of social media on brand awareness and image.

Data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach, where data from interviews, observations, content analysis and surveys were organized into main themes relevant to the research objectives. Each theme is analyzed to understand the relationship between social media strategy, image formation and brand awareness. Researchers also triangulated the data to ensure the validity of the findings by comparing data from various sources and methods used.

By using this qualitative method, this research is expected to provide in-depth and comprehensive insight into the role of social media in forming brand image and brand awareness of coffee shops in Medan City. It is hoped that the findings from this research will provide a valuable contribution to coffee shop owners and marketing practitioners in developing effective and impactful social media strategies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of Social Media in Brand Image Formation

Social media has become a very effective platform for building brand image,

especially for coffee shops in Medan City. From interviews with coffee shop owners and managers, it was revealed that social media such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are used strategically to display the uniqueness and values of their brand. Elements such as visual aesthetics, authentic narratives and active interactions are key to creating a strong and memorable brand image. One of the most prominent elements in a coffee shop's social media strategy is the use of visual aesthetics. Coffee shops in Medan often leverage the power of high-quality photos and videos to attract the attention of social media users. Artistic pictures of coffee drinks, aesthetic shop interiors, and special moments that occur in the shop are uploaded regularly. This visual content not only attracts attention but also helps build a consistent and attractive visual identity for the brand.

Table 1: Use of Visual Aesthetics in Social Media

Visual Aspect	Description
Quality Photos	Use of high-quality photos to display products and store atmosphere.
Creative Videos	Short videos showing the process of making coffee or the atmosphere of the shop.
Consistent Aesthetics	Consistent color palette and visual style across posts.

Apart from visuals, narrative or storytelling also plays an important role in forming a brand image. Coffee shops in Medan often tell the story behind their coffee making, the history of the shop, and the values held by the owner and staff. This narrative not only provides information but also creates an emotional bond with the audience. Authentic and inspiring stories can make customers feel more connected to a brand, which in turn increases their loyalty. Direct interaction with customers via social media is also a key component in building a brand image. Coffee shops that actively respond to comments, messages, and reviews from customers can create a more personal and close relationship

with their audience. Responding to positive feedback with thanks and handling criticism with professionalism shows that the shop values its customers. These interactions also create a sense of community and loyalty among social media followers. The combination of compelling visual aesthetics, authentic narrative, and active interaction with customers significantly contributes to the creation of a positive and memorable brand image. Research shows that coffee shops that successfully utilize these elements on social media are able to build a strong brand identity, increase brand awareness, and create higher customer loyalty.

The use of high-quality photos and videos creates a strong visual appeal, while authentic narration builds a deep emotional connection with the audience. Active interaction with customers shows that the coffee shop cares about and values its customers, which ultimately increases trust and loyalty. Social media plays a vital role in forming the brand image of coffee shops in Medan. With a strategy that involves a compelling visual aesthetic, authentic narrative, and active interaction, coffee shops can create a strong and memorable brand identity. The transformation from traditional to digital promotional methods shows how technology can enrich and expand the social function of coffee shops as vital public spaces. By continuing to adapt and innovate in the use of social media, coffee shops in Medan can remain relevant and competitive in an increasingly digital market.

2. Social Media as a Means of Increasing Brand Awareness

Social media has proven to be a very effective tool for increasing brand awareness for coffee shops in Medan City. The use of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter allows coffee shops to reach a wider and more diverse audience in a more efficient and interactive way than traditional marketing methods. From the survey conducted, it appears that many customers know about coffee shops through the content they see on social media. This shows that social media has a significant role in influencing brand awareness. Interesting and informative content is the main key to increasing brand awareness. Coffee shops in Medan often post photos and videos depicting

their products, such as specialty coffee drinks, cakes, and the atmosphere inside the shop. This content not only displays products in a visually appealing manner but also provides relevant information about the ingredients used, the manufacturing process, and the story behind each dish. This kind of content makes customers not only interested but also gets them to know and understand the brand better.

Table 2: Social Media Strategies to Increase Brand Awareness

Strategy	Description
Special Promotions	Discount offers or specials that are exclusive to social media followers.
Contests and Giveaways	Hold photo or story contests with attractive prizes for winners.
Reviews and Testimonials	Share positive reviews and testimonials from customers on social media accounts.

Special promotions and contests held through social media are also effective ways to increase brand awareness. Special discounts for social media followers, photo contests, and giveaways often grab users' attention and encourage them to follow the coffee shop's social media accounts. Through these promotions, coffee shops not only attract new attention but also encourage active participation from customers, which in turn increases brand visibility and awareness. Special promotions can be limited-time discounts or special offers only available to social media followers. Contests and giveaways usually involve customers posting their photos or stories related to the coffee shop, which the shop can then repost to increase engagement and exposure.

Positive reviews and testimonials from customers also play an important role in increasing brand awareness. Satisfied customers often share their experiences on social media, either through personal posts or reviews on the coffee shop's official page.

These positive reviews help build a good reputation and attract the attention of potential customers who may not be familiar with the brand. Coffee shops that actively share positive reviews on their social media accounts show that they value customer feedback. By sharing testimonials, coffee shops not only reinforce a positive image but also provide social proof that can influence potential customers' purchasing decisions.

The use of influencers and collaboration with public figures or local communities are also effective strategies for increasing brand awareness. Influencers who have large and credible followers can help introduce coffee shops to a wider audience. Collaborations with influencers usually involve posts featuring coffee shop products and their experiences when visiting the shop. Influencers are often considered trusted sources of information by their followers, so recommendations from them can have a big impact on brand awareness.

Collaboration with local communities, such as through events or social activities, can also increase brand visibility and awareness. Coffee shops that participate in community events or support social causes show that they care about the surrounding environment, which can attract the attention and sympathy of customers.

Social media is a very effective tool for increasing brand awareness for coffee shops in Medan. Through engaging and informative content, special promotions, positive reviews, and the use of influencers, coffee shops can reach a wider audience and create closer relationships with their customers. These strategies not only increase visibility but also build a good reputation and increase customer loyalty. In this digital era, good use of social media can provide significant competitive advantages for coffee shop businesses.

3. Historical Perspective in Coffee Shop Marketing Transformation

Coffee shops have long been an integral part of social and cultural life in various parts of the world, including in the city of Medan. The history of coffee shops in Medan reflects a long journey from being just a place to drink coffee to becoming a vital social center for the community. Looking from a historical perspective, the

transformation of coffee shop marketing from traditional methods to the digital era shows significant adaptation to technological developments and changes in consumer behavior (Watini et al., 2022). In the past, before digital technology, coffee shop marketing depended heavily on product quality and reputations formed by word of mouth (Y. Sari, 2020).

Coffee shops known for great coffee and a comfortable atmosphere tend to gain loyal customers through personal recommendations. Promotion is usually done through very simple methods, such as signage in front of the shop, flyers, or small advertisements in local newspapers. Direct interaction between shop owners and customers also plays an important role in building strong and personal relationships. During the colonial period, coffee shops in Medan not only functioned as places to drink coffee but also as meeting centers for various groups of society (Sukarja & Lubis, 2023). It provides a space for political, social and cultural discussions, making it an integral part of community life. The existence of this coffee shop creates a reputation that is built on direct customer experience, which is then spread widely through verbal communication. As time went by, coffee shops began to explore print media as a way to reach more customers. Advertisements in local newspapers, magazines and pamphlets began to be used to attract the attention of potential customers. This period also saw the beginning of the use of radio as a promotional tool, with some coffee shops running sound advertisements to attract listeners. However, its impact is still limited to a narrow geographic reach.

Print and electronic media give coffee shops in Medan the opportunity to promote themselves to a wider audience. However, cost and reach limitations remain a challenge. Advertisements placed in this medium are usually one-way and less interactive, so even though they are able to reach more people, the personal relationship with customers is not as strong as the word-of-mouth method.

With the advent of the internet at the end of the 20th century, the world of marketing underwent drastic changes. Coffee shops began to have their own websites to provide information regarding products, locations, and promotions. However, at this early stage, interactions are still passive, with

customers simply accessing the information provided without much room for reciprocal interaction.

The use of email marketing is also starting to be implemented as a way to reach customers more personally by sending newsletters, promotions and the latest information directly to their inbox. Even though it is more effective than print media, email marketing still has limitations in terms of direct interaction with customers.

The entry of social media at the beginning of the 21st century brought about major changes in coffee shop marketing strategies. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow coffee shops to interact directly and in real-time with customers. Social media not only functions as a promotional tool but also as a platform for building communities, interacting and collecting feedback from customers.

Coffee shops in Medan are starting to use social media to display photos and videos of their products, share behind-the-scenes stories, and hold contests or giveaways to engage customers. Visual aesthetics and a strong narrative are key elements in building an attractive and authentic brand image. Active interactions with customers through comments, direct messages, and reviews also increase customers' sense of closeness and loyalty.

In a historical context, the shift from traditional to digital marketing methods represents an important adaptation to technological developments and changes in consumer behavior. Social media allows coffee shops to reach a wider audience in a more efficient and personalized way. This transformation also reflects how coffee shops in Medan have succeeded in utilizing technology to enrich and expand their social function as important public spaces.

Successful use of social media also shows that although technology changes, the basic values of marketing – such as product quality, customer relationships and reputation – remain relevant. Social media has only expanded reach and provided new tools to communicate these values to a wider audience.

However, transformation into the digital era also brings its own challenges. Coffee shops must learn to manage their online reputation, handle criticism and

negative feedback in a professional manner, and maintain consistency and authenticity in their social media content. This challenge requires a mature strategy and sensitivity to digital market dynamics.

The use of social media also requires coffee shops to continue to innovate in their content and marketing strategies. Constantly changing social media trends and algorithms require coffee shops to stay up-to-date with the latest developments to remain relevant and competitive.

From a historical perspective, the transformation of coffee shop marketing from traditional methods to the digital era represents a significant evolution in the way businesses operate and interact with customers. Social media has opened up new opportunities to reach and interact with a wider audience, creating more personal relationships and increasing brand awareness and image. Coffee shops in Medan that have been able to adapt to these changes have succeeded in strengthening their position in an increasingly competitive market, while maintaining the traditional values that are the basis of their success.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the very important role of social media in forming brand image and brand awareness for coffee shops in Medan City. By analyzing the historical perspective of the transformation of coffee shop marketing, from the traditional era to modern social media, it can be seen how adaptation to technological developments has influenced the way coffee shops interact with customers and promote their brands. In the age of social media, coffee shops have successfully leveraged platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to showcase their products with a compelling visual aesthetic, tell authentic stories, and actively interact with customers. This strategy helps increase brand awareness, strengthen relationships with customers, and create a strong and memorable brand image. Although the transformation to the digital era brings many benefits, there are also challenges in online reputation management, content consistency, and the need to continuously innovate marketing strategies. However, the conclusion that can be drawn is that social media has become a very effective tool in

helping coffee shops in Medan build and strengthen their position in the competitive coffee industry. By continuing to pay attention to changing trends and customer needs, coffee shops can continue to develop marketing strategies that are relevant and successful in the ever-evolving digital era.

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