

Branding development in increasing the competitiveness of small businesses in the digital Era: Study on Kios Harmonis Larantuka, East Flores

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze and develop branding strategies to increase the competitiveness of Kios Harmonis, a small business that faces competitive challenges with other retail businesses. The research method used is Research and Development with a 4D model approach. This research collects data through interviews with owners and consumers to identify existing branding needs and potential. The results of the study show that the branding strategy developed includes the creation of a visual identity, the use of social media such as Instagram for promotion and interaction, and an emotional approach through personalized and friendly services. Although it is simple, it is able to bring real changes to business image and consumer satisfaction. The conclusion of this study is that Kios Harmoni has succeeded in improving its competitiveness by building a stronger and more reliable image, which not only relies on visual and digital aspects, but also builds closer and more meaningful relationships with customers. This branding strategy proves that small businesses can also compete in the digital era with measurable and adaptive measures.

Keywords: Branding Development; Competitiveness; 4D Model; Small Business; Digital Era

1. Introduction

Small businesses play an important role in the national economy because they contribute to the absorption of labor as well as the distribution of people's income. In the midst of increasingly fierce competition, the success of small businesses is not only determined by product quality, but also by the ability to build branding. Branding is not just a logo or visual identity, but encompasses the image, values, and experiences that are inherent in the consumer's mind. In the context of small businesses, strong branding serves as a key differentiator, builds customer loyalty, and strengthens competitiveness [1].

The Kios Harmonis in Larantuka District, East Flores Regency, is one example of a small business that faces this challenge. Before the presence of modern retail, Kios Harmoni had a strong position in meeting the needs of the local community. However, with the entry of big competitors such as Alfamart and Indomaret, the position of this stall is increasingly pressing. Modern retail comes with more professional branding, neat store governance, and digital technology support such as shopping apps and loyalty programs, shifting consumer preferences. This changing condition has triggered a shift in customer preferences who now prefer modern retail because of convenience and a more practical shopping experience. As a result, Kios Harmoni experienced a decrease in the number of customers and sales, as well as difficulties in competing in terms of price, ease of payment, customer service and store appearance. (2)

The main problems faced by Kios Harmonis are the weak brand identity, the lack of branding innovation, and the limited use of digital technology. This causes consumers to have difficulty recognizing or remembering the products offered. If not addressed immediately, Kios Harmonis risk losing market share and customer loyalty. Therefore, the development

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of digital-based branding is an urgent need so that Kios Harmoni is able to survive while increasing its competitiveness. This situation confirms the importance of developing a structured and digital-based branding strategy for Harmonious Kiosks. By strengthening the brand identity and making effective use of digital technology, Kios Harmonis can rebuild its appeal and increase competitiveness in an increasingly competitive market (3).

Development Branding It is crucial for the success of a business, including for small businesses such as Kios Harmonis in the middle of the modern market. Building a Branding has become an important part for a business, both large and small, to be able to compete with its market, by Branding business actors can display the image and value owned by the business so that fire can influence consumers' interest and purchasing decisions when choosing a product among the many options available (4).

The development of branding and brand identity is a key factor in strengthening the business's position in a competitive market. For small businesses like Kios Harmoni, branding strategies not only serve to differentiate themselves from competitors, but also to build an emotional connection with customers. Strong branding allows these kiosks to create a positive image and provide a memorable shopping experience for consumers, thereby increasing competitiveness and customer loyalty (5).

In addition, a clear brand identity helps Kios Harmoni in conveying its unique message and story to the public. Through effective communication, both on social media, digital promotion, and direct interaction at the kiosk, Kios Harmoni can strengthen the authentic image and local values carried. Narratives that highlight business history, product quality, and contribution to society will provide added value, as well as build emotional closeness between customers and brands. To answer the challenges of branding in the digital era, this study uses a Research and Development (R&D) approach to design an applicative and sustainable branding strategy. The strategy includes the development of visual identity, brand narrative, and the use of social media and e-commerce platforms as a means of promotion. Through the process of testing and refinement based on field data, the resulting branding model is expected to be able to improve Brand Equity, strengthen customer loyalty, and drive the sales growth of Kios Harmonis in a sustainable manner (6).

Seeing these problems, this research focuses on developing relevant, applicative, and sustainable branding strategies with a 4D approach. Through this method, the research not only identifies problems, but also offers solutions in the form of visual identity design, as well as the use of social media and digital platforms as a means of communication and promotion. This strategy is expected to increase brand equity, consumer loyalty, and strengthen the position of Kios Harmoni in the face of increasingly competitive market competition.

Although much of the literature emphasizes the importance of branding for small businesses in improving competitiveness in the digital age, there is still a lack of research focusing on the development of branding strategies based on local characteristics and digitalization because most studies tend to highlight medium and large-scale companies, so contextual and relevant branding approaches for small businesses based on local communities are still rarely studied. especially for small businesses such as Kios Harmoni in Larantuka, East Flores.

In addition, the use of Research and Development (R&D) approaches in branding research is still limited. In fact, this method has great potential to produce strategies that are not only theoretical, but also applicable and can be implemented directly as needed in the field. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by designing and testing relevant, measurable, and sustainable digital branding strategies. This approach is expected to strengthen the competitiveness of Kios Harmoni through the implementation of a branding strategy that is in accordance with local characteristics and digital market dynamics.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Material

2.1.1. Branding

Branding is one of the most important aspects in a business because it is able to provide added value to products or services. Branding is not only limited to a logo or name, but an overall identity that distinguishes a product from competitors [4]. Branding strategies include visual elements such as logos, colors, and slogans, to communication strategies through brand ambassadors or digital content (8). On an MSME scale, branding has great potential to turn small businesses into big brands if done consistently. The main challenge for MSMEs is limited capital and resources, so branding is often overlooked (9). In fact, strong branding can influence consumer purchasing decisions and increase

customer loyalty (10).’ Therefore, branding for Kios Harmoni is a crucial factor to create differentiation and build a positive image in the eyes of consumers.

2.1.2. Branding Development

Branding development is an effort to strengthen brand identity so that it is easier for consumers to understand and remember. This process includes designing a consistent logo, tagline, icon, and communication strategy (11).’ Branding development is closely related to innovation, both in the form of product innovation, process, marketing, and company innovation (12).’ In the context of Harmonious Kiosks, branding development must be carried out thoroughly by integrating aspects of innovation. Thus, branding is not just a symbol, but a strong identity that differentiates businesses in a competitive digital market.

2.1.3. Small Business

According to Law Number 20 of 2008, a small business is a productive business unit owned by an individual or business entity with a certain limit of net worth and annual sales, and is not a subsidiary or branch of a large business (13).’ Small businesses can be engaged in various sectors, ranging from trade, services, production, to agribusiness (14).’ The role of small businesses is very strategic because it is able to absorb labor, encourage local economic activities, and adapt to market changes. In the digital era, small businesses need to leverage their flexibility and proximity to consumers as a competitive advantage.

2.1.4. Business Competitiveness

Business competitiveness refers to the ability of a business to survive and thrive in the midst of market competition. Competitiveness is not only determined by capital or natural resources, but also innovation and creativity in building a brand image (15).’ MSMEs have a major contribution to the Indonesian economy, so increasing competitiveness is a priority to remain relevant in the global market (8). In this case, strong branding plays an important role as a differentiation tool, strengthens emotional relationships with customers, and creates added value over competitors (16).

2.1.5. Digital Age

The digital era has changed the business landscape through the use of the internet, information technology, and social media. Digital technology enables businesses to reach a wider market, accelerate interactions with consumers, and improve operational efficiency (17). Through social media and e-commerce, small businesses can compete inclusively with relatively low promotional costs (18). For Kios Harmonis, the digital era provides an opportunity to strengthen branding through direct interaction with consumers, creative promotions, and expanding market reach (19).

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Types and Approaches to Research

This research uses Research and Development (R&D) methods designed to produce new products or improve existing products to be more relevant to needs in the field. In this context, the products developed are in the form of digital branding strategies for small businesses. The research approach used is qualitative descriptive. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze social phenomena more broadly through descriptive data in the form of words, statements, and behaviors. With this approach, researchers can understand social realities from various perspectives, especially how branding plays a role in increasing the competitiveness of small businesses (20). The research model used in this study is 4D (Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate). At the definition stage, the researcher conducted a needs analysis and identification of problems faced by Kios Harmoni related to the weak brand identity and the lack of use of digital media. The design stage is then carried out by developing an initial branding strategy, starting from logo design, slogans, to digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, the development stage is focused on testing the branding design that has been made, where the researcher measures the effectiveness of the strategy through customer response, digital interaction, and its impact on sales. Finally, the disseminate stage is carried out to disseminate the results of development in the form of research reports, practical recommendations, and training for the owners and employees of the Kios Harmonis so that the resulting strategies can be implemented in a sustainable manner.

2.2.2. Research Time and Place

This research was carried out for three months, from May to July 2025, with the research location at Kios Harmoni, Larantuka District, East Flores Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. This location was chosen because Kios Harmoni

is one of the small businesses that is facing great challenges in maintaining competitiveness amid the presence of modern retail and the development of the digital era.

2.2.3. Research Design

The development research design used in this study serves as a framework that provides an overview of the data collection procedure and analysis steps taken. This design is prepared so that the research process takes place effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with the principles of applicable model development. With reference to the 4D model, this research is directed to produce a branding strategy that can be applied directly by Kios Harmonis and tested for effectiveness in the context of local and digital markets (21).

2.2.4. Research Objects and Subjects

The object of research in this study is Kios Harmoni, a small business that was used as a case study to develop a branding strategy. Meanwhile, the research subjects include business owners as the main decision-makers in branding management, as well as customers as indicators of acceptance, satisfaction, and loyalty to the branding strategies implemented. Customers were chosen because they were the spearhead in assessing the success of the branding carried out by Kios Harmonis.

2.2.5. Research Focus

The focus of the research is directed at digital-based branding development strategies that aim to increase the competitiveness of small businesses in the modern era. Aspects of concern include the use of social media as a means of promotion, creating a positive impression for consumers through friendly service, strengthening brand identity through visual designs such as logos and colors, and the use of digital technology to expand market reach and improve customer experience.

2.2.6. Research and Development Procedures

The research procedure follows the flow of the 4D model. In the definition stage, the researcher identifies branding problems through interviews with business owners, observation of kiosk activities, and reviews from customers. At the design stage, branding strategies are designed in the form of visual identities, promotional media, and digital campaign concepts. Furthermore, the develop stage is carried out by testing the strategy through a short digital campaign on social media. The effectiveness of a strategy is measured based on customer interaction, increased account followers, and its impact on sales. The last stage is disseminated, where the results of the research are disseminated through academic reports, practical guides, and digital branding training for kiosk owners, and distributed to other MSMEs as a reference in business development.

2.2.7. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and documentation (10). Observations are carried out by observing existing branding activities, interviews are conducted with owners and customers to dig into information in depth, while documentation is used to obtain written and visual data such as archives, sales records, and promotional materials.

2.2.8. Data Validity Checks

The validity of the data was tested through the triangulation method, which is comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. In this way, researchers can ensure the validity of information and reduce the likelihood of bias.

2.2.9. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction is done by filtering and selecting important information that is relevant to the focus of the research. The data that has been reduced is then presented in the form of narratives, tables, and graphs to make it easier to understand. In the final stage, the researcher draws conclusions from the results of the analysis to formulate an effective and applicable branding strategy for Harmonious Kiosks.

3. Results

In this study, the researcher chose to use the 4D model as a basis for development. The 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate) is a structured model to identify problems and design models to analyze problems. By implementing the 4D model, it is hoped that an effective branding model will be used by Kios Harmoni to increase competitiveness.

3.1. Definition Stage

Based on observations with owners and consumers, the development of the Kios Harmonis branding will focus on five main aspects, namely.

3.1.1. Social Media Platform Creation

The results of observations with the owners and consumers of Kios Harmonis show that there is an urgent need to strengthen branding to remain competitive in the midst of local retail competition. Key aspects that need to be developed include social media, customer experience, brand identity, visual identity, and the use of digital technology. Kios Harmonis does not yet have an active presence on social media, even though consumers consider platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp important for information and interaction. In terms of customer experience, the service is considered friendly, but it has not built emotional closeness.

3.1.2. Creating an Impression for Consumers

The service is considered friendly, but it has not left an emotional impression. Consumers expect personal attention, such as a delivery system if they buy a certain amount or a special greeting, to create a stronger emotional bond.

3.1.3. Strengthening Brand Identity

Currently Kios Harmonis does not have a clear branding concept. The business name is known locally, but the value and meaning behind it has not been communicated. Identity needs to be strengthened through value narratives such as honesty, family service, and support for local products. Brand identity has also not been clearly formulated, so values such as honesty and family service need to be raised through narratives and digital content.

3.1.4. Use of Visual Identity

Harmonic Kiosk doesn't have Visually, Kios Harmonis doesn't have a logo, distinctive colors, or consistent store look and attractive design makes it look like a regular store. Consumers suggest using unique visuals to make them easily recognizable and memorable.

3.1.5. Utilization of Digital Technology

The use of technology is still limited and less than optimal, because transactions and promotions are still manual. Consumers consider the use of payment QR codes to increase the convenience, efficiency, and effectiveness of promotions. By building digital technology, Kios Harmonis has a great opportunity to strengthen its image and competitiveness as a local brand that is trusted by the public.

3.2. Planning Stage

The design stage is focused on branding strategies designed based on field findings through interviews and observations. Key focuses in planning include

3.2.1. Social Media Platform Creation

Because one of the main aspects in this stage is the design of a social media platform that will be the digital face of Kios Harmonis. Based on the results of observations, many consumers question the absence of social media accounts that can be a source of information as well as a forum for interaction. Therefore, in this design stage, the strategy is focused on creating an Instagram account with simple but consistent visual content, such as daily product photos, promo information, and customer testimonials. The use of social media is designed not only as a promotional medium, but also as a means of two-way communication that builds a more intimate and open relationship with consumers, in addition to the creation of this Instagram account is useful for building two-way communication while expanding market reach.



Figure 1 Instagram Profile of Hamonic Kiosk

3.2.2. Creating an Impression for Consumers



Figure 2 Kios Harmonis Operational Vehicle

To strengthen emotional relationships, the strategy is designed based on consumer responses in filling out questionnaires. The design is also geared towards creating a strong emotional impression between the consumer and the brand. This is important considering that previous findings show that the interactions that occur are still functional, not yet touching the emotional side of the customer. In this design stage, several approaches were designed such as a simple loyalty system such as the delivery of products purchased by consumers to their respective residences, as well as a friendly welcome to customers when shopping. This strategy aims to form a more personalized shopping experience, so that Kios Harmoni is not only remembered as a place to shop, but also as part of consumers' daily lives. This aims to create a more personalized and memorable shopping experience.

3.2.3. Strengthening Brand Identity

Strengthening brand identity is also a focus in the design process of Harmonious Kiosk Identity designed to reflect the main values that have emerged in field findings, namely honesty in pricing and family service. In addition, social media content and visual elements are also designed to reflect the simple yet warm and honest character of the business. This value will be reflected in social media content, interaction with consumers, and a simple but warm business narrative.

3.2.4. Use of Visual Identity



Figure 3 Kios Harmonis Logo

Another aspect that is no less important is the use of strong and consistent visual identity. Based on direct observation, the physical appearance of the store today still does not reflect a typical brand. Therefore, in this design stage, visual elements are formulated such as a simple logo design that represents harmony and the selection of soft but attractive dominant colors. This visual branding is designed to strengthen a professional image and make it easier for consumers to recognize brands in various media. Figure 3 is the logo created for the Harmonious Kiosk in order to be its strong identity. This visual branding is expected to strengthen a professional image and make it easier for consumers to recognize brands in various media.

Utilization of Digital Technology



Figure 4 QRIS and EDC Kios Harmonis

The design stage also includes the functional use of digital technology. Considering that the transaction process at Kios Harmonis is still manual, the use of simple digital tools that are easy to apply by business owners, such as the use of EDC and QRIS machines for payments, is designed to be able to apply non-cash payment methods. This technology not only improves operational efficiency, but also makes it easier for consumers to make payment transactions. Figure 4 is the QRIS and Harmonious Kiosk EDC Machine that can be used to make payments easier for consumers. The use of these two payment systems shows that business owners are adapting to changes in consumer behavior. QRIS is suitable for digitally literate consumers, while EDC helps reach customers who are more comfortable using cards. This combination makes the business more inclusive, increases customer satisfaction, and strengthens the image of the business as a modern store that is ready to keep up with technological developments. This technology provides convenience, records transactions more neatly, and expands payment options for consumers with different needs.

3.3. Development Stage

The development stage is focused on testing and refining the branding strategy design to be relevant to real business conditions. This stage serves to test, adjust, and refine the branding strategy design so that it is ready to be implemented

in real terms and able to have a direct impact on consumer perception and loyalty. The main aspects developed are as follows

3.3.1. Social Media Platform Creation



Figure 5 Percentage of Impressions

Instagram accounts are activated with product content, promos, and testimonials. From the results of direct observation, for a full month during the period 1-30 June 2025, the Kios Harmoni Instagram account recorded a total of 2,052 impressions for all uploaded content. Of these, about 54.1% came from account followers, while the other 45.9% came from users who had not followed. This means that in addition to reaching loyal customers, the content uploaded is also quite successful in attracting the attention of new audiences outside the circle of followers. Of all the uploaded content, the "Mega Discount" promotional post is the most prominent. This interaction is proof that special price promos are one of the most powerful attractions for audiences, which not only make them see but also share the content.

The results of the analysis in the image above show that the content uploaded by Kios Harmonis is not only able to retain the attention of old customers, but also succeeds in reaching new audiences who have not previously been connected to the account. This condition indicates that the content strategy implemented has been quite effective in maintaining loyalty while expanding market reach.

3.3.2. Creating an Impression for Consumers

Personalization strategies such as greeting regular customers by starting to be implemented. On the aspect of the customer's emotional experience. The results showed a positive response, where consumers admitted to feeling more valued and cared for. Although simple, this approach has been proven to be able to add emotional value to the relationship between customers and businesses. The results of the questionnaire show that the majority of consumers feel very satisfied with the service, comfort, and personal attention provided, thus strengthening emotional closeness and loyalty.

In addition, Kios Harmoni also maintains close relationships with customers through attentive service. One form is to provide direct delivery facilities to the customer's location if they place a certain number of orders. For Kios Harmonis, this step is not only about delivering goods, but also a form of appreciation to consumers who have entrusted their needs to them. With this service, customers not only feel facilitated, but also feel personally cared for. There is a sense of closeness that is built, as if the relationship created is not just a seller and a buyer, but like friends who help each other. This kind of approach has proven to be able to strengthen consumer loyalty, as they see that Harmonious Kiosks are not only focused on transactions, but also on the satisfaction and convenience of their customers. This is one of the important indicators that branding development does not have to be done in an expensive way, but rather with a humanist and meaningful touch.

3.3.3. Strengthening Brand Identity

In terms of brand identity, Kios Harmonis began to organize itself to make it easier for customers to remember. The brand identity is compiled based on the main values of Kios Harmoni, namely honesty, price, and family service. This

value will be reflected in social media content, interaction with consumers, as well as a simple but warm business narrative that instills a positive image of honesty and family service.

3.3.4. Use of Visual Identity

From the use of visual identity, a logo is made. Logos that used to be just a simple design have now been applied to the field, present on social media digital profiles with distinctive colors that depict the main values of the business, namely honesty and closeness. Not only appearing in cyberspace, this logo has also been made in the form of a stamp affixed to each transaction note. Every time a customer receives a note with the logo stamp, there is a special impression created as if they are bringing home a good impression from the Harmonious Kiosk. This small touch makes the buying and selling process feel more personal, professional, and neat. Slowly but surely, customers began to memorize the shape of the logo and directly connect it with the Harmonious Kiosk. The majority of respondents found the visual appearance of the new kiosk and logo attractive and memorable. Consistent visuals not only beautify, but also differentiate Harmonious Kiosk from competitors as well as strengthen consumers' emotional connection with the brand. This is proof that a consistent visual touch not only beautifies the look, but also builds an emotional connection, distinguishes Kios Harmonis from other stores, and instills memories that are inherent in the minds of customers. The presence of this visual identity makes the brand more recognizable, adds to the professional impression,

3.3.5. Utilization of Digital Technology

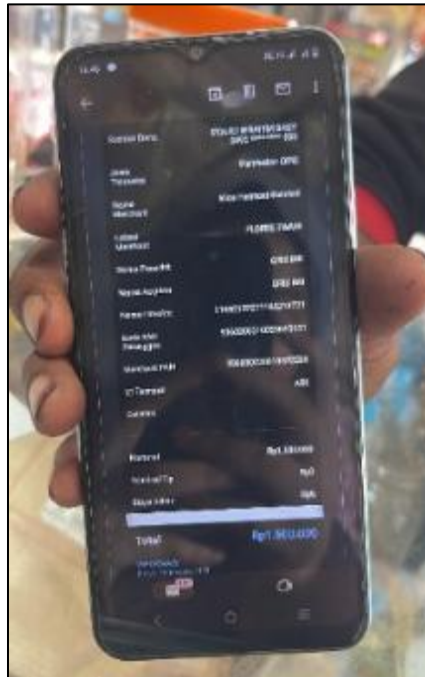


Figure 6 Proof of Payment Via QRIS

In terms of the use of digital technology, development is carried out gradually. QRIS began to be socialized to customers even though not all consumers are used to using it. Although it is not perfect, this initial step is an important point in the process of digitizing small businesses which has been all manual. These changes not only improve work efficiency, but also open up opportunities for more systematic collection of customer data. This also marks the first step in the digitalization of small businesses.

In general, the results of this development show that the previously designed branding strategy is quite applicable and has received positive responses from consumers. The implemented steps are considered relevant, realistic, and appropriate to the characteristics of small businesses such as Kios Harmonis. This process also demonstrates that a branding approach that touches on emotional aspects, supported by consistent visuals and aided by simple yet effective technology, can build a stronger and more trustworthy business image. This, in turn, indirectly contributes to enhancing Kios Harmonis's competitiveness compared to its competitors. This development stage serves as an important bridge connecting the design phase to real implementation. It involves processes of adjustment, evaluation, and reinforcement of the previously established strategies. Through this stage, Kios Harmonis not only develops its branding visually and digitally but also builds closer and more meaningful relationships with its consumers.

3.4. Stages of Dissemination

After the process of developing Kios Harmonis's branding strategy was successfully carried out through a series of trials on visual aspects, customer emotional experience, as well as the use of social media and digital technology, the next step is the dissemination stage. This stage aims to ensure that the tested development results do not stop at the research level, but can also be understood, owned, and independently applied by the business owner in the long term.

In this stage, the researcher directly presented the development results to the owner of Kios Harmonis through an open discussion. The presentation was conducted in a simple yet comprehensive manner, covering examples of implementing the new visual identity, such as the use of a logo on a stamp for transaction receipts, the utilization of an Instagram account filled with promotional content, and emotional service strategies such as greeting customers by name and offering home delivery service. All of these developments were demonstrated with concrete evidence in the form of visual documentation, Instagram insight data, and customer satisfaction questionnaire results showing a positive level of acceptance.

The business owner's response to this presentation was very positive. He admitted that he felt helped because many things that he had never considered before turned out to have a real impact on his business. For instance, he realized that simply greeting customers by their names could foster an emotional connection that makes customers feel more valued. Similarly, the use of social media, which was initially regarded as mere entertainment, proved to be an effective promotional tool that could attract new customers.

To support the sustainability of this branding strategy, the researcher also suggested that the business owner be more creative in managing the business so that the previously implemented developments could continue consistently. This includes ways to design promotional content, tips for maintaining the established visual appearance, and improving customer response evaluation. This effort aims to ensure that branding activities can continue sustainably without relying heavily on external parties.

With this dissemination stage, Kios Harmonis's branding strategy does not merely remain at the conceptual level but truly reaches the hands of the business owner as a guide for practical implementation. The owner also feels more confident in developing the business in the future, as he now has a clear picture, real experience from the trials, and valuable advice from the researcher. This shows that branding is not something complex or difficult but can be carried out simply, consistently, and meaningfully—as long as there is a willingness to learn and adapt.

4. Discussion

4.1. Branding Development

Branding development is a strategic step to build and strengthen a business identity so that it is known, trusted, and chosen by consumers. Branding encompasses the image, values, and customer experience, not just a name or logo. For small businesses like Kios Harmonis, branding plays an important role as a differentiator and driver of competitiveness in the midst of digital market competition (10). In the digital era, adaptation to digital branding strategies through social media is the key to market expansion and increased interaction. The development of the Harmonious Kiosk branding focuses on building a brand identity that is strong, consistent, and relevant to consumer needs in the digital era. Through the application of the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate), the branding process is carried out systematically starting from the identification of needs reasons and consumer loyalty (22).

Furthermore, strengthening brand identity is carried out by emphasizing the value of honesty, family service, and support for local product (23). Simple and consistent logos are applied to social media and transaction notes, creating a professional and mentor the implementation of strategies oriented to customer experience (24). Kios Harmonis developed an Instagram account as a means of product publication, promotion, and testimonials. As a result, market reach increased and two-way communication with consumers was established. Social media has proven to be effective in strengthening image and emotional closeness. Positive impressions are also created through personal services such as warm greetings, birthday greetings, and delivery services. This simple strategy builds customer loyalty and sets Kios Harmonis apart from its transactional competitors. Digital branding has been proven to accelerate the formation of positive importable impression. A strong identity increases the trust and competitiveness of the business. Visual identities such as logos, colors, and consistent designs strengthen brand recognition and professional image. Consumers find the visual appearance of Kios Harmoni attractive and easy to recognize, strengthening the emotional connection with the brand (21). Finally, the use of digital technologies such as QRIS and EDC accelerates business modernization

and increases transaction efficiency. This innovation not only makes payments easier, but also strengthens the image of Kios Harmonis as an adaptive and competitive small business in the digital era (17).

Research on the development of branding at Kios Harmonis proves that a simple strategy designed in stages can bring real changes to the business image and consumer satisfaction (25). Through a 4D (Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate) approach, branding that was previously almost invisible is now starting to form a clearer identity, both in terms of visual and emotional customer experience. So far, Kios Harmoni has been running in a fairly traditional way, relying on word-of-mouth promotion and service as it is without a clear pattern. This condition makes the business less likely to have a prominent differentiator from other kiosks, even though in fact the business owner has a fairly good relationship with some of his regular customers but is still not massive and consistent. This shows that branding is not something that can only be done by large companies with large capital, but can be realized by small businesses with measurable, consistent, and adjusted steps to real conditions in the field.

In the early stages (Define), the results of interviews with stall owners and some customers show that this business actually has a good emotional closeness with consumers, but it has not been managed systematically. Promotion is still limited to conventional means, namely through word of mouth, while daily services are carried out without a consistent pattern. This makes the image of Kios Harmoni not have a strong differentiator compared to similar businesses in the vicinity. In fact, from observations in the field, consumers are already comfortable with the presence of this kiosk because of the trust and friendliness of the owners. This means that the basic potential to build a brand actually exists, it only needs to be strengthened through the right strategy. The Design stage then becomes an important point in designing a branding strategy. In this stage, a simple visual identity in the form of a logo and stamp design began to be introduced so that the business had an easy-to-remember ID. In addition, the use of social media such as Instagram is chosen as the main medium in communicating products and promos to customers. This strategy was developed by considering that many consumers, especially the younger generation, have been more active in seeking information through digital media. At the same time, the emotional aspect is also taken care of through more personalized service, for example by greeting customers by name or offering assistance in delivering groceries directly to the home. These small steps are designed not just to improve the outward appearance of the business, but to build a positive experience that will be imprinted in the customer's memory.

Furthermore, at the develop stage, the strategies that have been designed begin to be tested on a limited basis. The results obtained are quite encouraging. Instagram insights show an increase in interaction after Kios Harmoni routinely uploads simple content, both in the form of product photos and promo information. Meanwhile, the questionnaire distributed to consumers gives an idea that service with a personal touch is highly appreciated by customers. The majority of respondents feel more comfortable shopping when business owners greet them by name or respond to needs quickly and friendly. These findings prove that branding is not only related to visualization, but also closely related to emotional interactions that are able to strengthen customer loyalty. The last stage, namely Disseminate, is an important process to ensure that this strategy does not stop at the research level, but can really be applied by business owners. The researcher explained the results of the development to the owners of the Kios Harmonis directly accompanied by concrete examples, ranging from visual designs, optimized Instagram accounts, to questionnaire results that reflect customer satisfaction. Business owners responded enthusiastically and felt helped because the strategies provided were easy to understand, did not require large costs, and were proven to have a real impact. He also realized that simple things that were previously considered trivial, such as greeting customers or uploading promos on social media, have turned out to have a big influence in building closer relationships with consumers. To support sustainability, the researcher also submitted practical guidance containing branding implementation steps, tips on managing social media content, and how to evaluate customer responses in a simple but effective method.

From all these stages, it can be concluded that the development of branding at Kios Harmonis has succeeded in providing a stronger identity and is able to increase positive interactions between businesses and consumers. Branding What was previously almost invisible is now starting to grow as a reflection of the values of closeness, friendliness, and openness. These findings also emphasize that small businesses are able to compete in the digital era as long as they have the awareness to utilize a branding strategy that suits their capacity. Branding is not just about creating a logo or symbol, but an experience that is directly felt by customers in every interaction. With a simple but consistent strategy, Kios Harmoni now has the foundation to develop further, adapt to market dynamics, while strengthening customer trust and loyalty in the future (16).

4.2. Increased Competitiveness

Business competitiveness is the ability of a business to maintain its existence, win competition, and create added value for consumers in the midst of dynamic market conditions. Businesses that have high competitiveness are able to display

advantages that their competitors do not have, In the context of small businesses, competitiveness is an important factor so that businesses are still able to survive and develop in the midst of the onslaught of large, more established products.

The digital era has significantly changed the appearance of business competition. Consumers are now easier to compare products, find reviews, and make transactions online. In the context of this study, Kios Harmonis faces challenges in the form of competition with other kiosks as well as the limitations of promotion that only rely on traditional methods. With a consistent branding strategy, small businesses can expand the market, build consumer trust, and deliver a sustainable competitive advantage.

The findings of this study are related to a number of previous studies. Among them are research affirming that brand identity can be strengthened through packaging branding and product diversification, which contributes to increased sales turnover (26). The similarity with this research lies in the goal of strengthening brand identity to increase competitiveness. However, the difference is research (27), focusing on the product aspect, while Kios Harmonis's research focuses on digital branding that utilizes social media and emotional services as the main strategy.

Furthermore, the research (28) highlighting strategic management with a SWOT approach on Buciso Florist MSMEs. The results of the study show that a well-designed strategy can maximize business opportunities and increase competitiveness. The similarity with this research is that it focuses on strengthening the competitiveness of MSMEs, while the difference lies in the analytical approach that focuses more on SWOT analysis, while the research of Kios Harmoni uses the 4D approach as a framework for developing branding that is more practical to be implemented directly by small business owners.

The research shows the importance of digital branding strategies through TikTok to build a competitive advantage for MSMEs (29). These results are relevant to the research of Kios Harmonis because both emphasize digital branding. The difference is that Novita et al.'s research focuses on one platform, namely TikTok, while Kios Harmonis's research adopts a broader strategy by combining visual identity, emotional interaction, and the use of social media such as Instagram as a means of promotion.

Then, the research who discussed the development of MSME branding in Hargorejo Village emphasized the importance of traditional branding elements such as logos, slogans, and packaging in increasing product awareness (30). This finding is in line with Kios Harmonis's research on the simple visual aspects of branding in the form of logos and stamps. However, the main difference is that Kios Harmoni's research focuses on branding transformation in the modern era, with emphasis on digitalization and personalization aspects of service to strengthen emotional relationships with customers.

Finally, research (6) which identifies digital marketing strategies such as websites, social media, and SEO as the main instruments to increase the competitiveness of MSMEs. The similarity with this research lies in the use of digital branding as an instrument to strengthen competitiveness. However, Maria et al.'s research is more general and not tied to specific cases, while the Kios Harmonis research directly applies digital branding to one real object of study, namely traditional kiosks that are transforming in the digital era

Overall, prior to the implementation of branding development, Kios Harmoni operated traditionally without a clear concept of brand identity. Promotion relies only on conventional methods from word of mouth, without the presence of social media or digital communication strategies. The store does not yet have a logo, dominant color, or visual elements that distinguish it from other kiosks, making it difficult for consumers to recognize and remember. Service activities are purely functional, not yet emphasizing emotional closeness to customers. In addition, the payment system is still done manually, causing limitations in transaction efficiency and a lack of modern impression on the business. Although the stall owner has a good relationship with regular customers, the business image has not been built systematically and consistently, which makes Kios Harmoni less competitive with minimarkets such as Alfamart and Indomaret.

Meanwhile, after the implementation of the branding development strategy, Kios Harmoni has undergone a significant transformation both in terms of identity, service, and operations. Businesses start to have a consistent logo and visual elements that reinforce a professional image and are easily recognizable. Official Instagram accounts were created as a means of publication and promotion of products, which has been proven to increase interaction and market reach. Services are also enhanced with personal touches such as direct greetings, birthday greetings, and delivery services that create emotional closeness with consumers. On the other hand, the application of digital technology such as QRIS and EDC machines makes the transaction process more efficient and modern. Overall, after the branding was implemented, Kios Harmoni was not only known as a traditional store, but developed into a modern small business that has a strong identity, emotional connection with customers, and high competitiveness in the digital era.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the digital branding strategy implemented at Kios Harmoni through the 4D model has succeeded in having a real impact on improving the image and competitiveness of the business. The creation of a social media platform in the form of an Instagram account has proven to be effective in expanding the reach of information, strengthening two-way communication, and increasing consumer engagement. Creating a positive impression is also able to foster customer loyalty through simple and personal interactions, thus making the shopping experience warmer and more memorable. Strengthening brand identity is successfully realized through the consistency of logos, business narratives, and core values that are communicated both digitally and directly to consumers. Additionally, the use of structured visual identities makes brands more recognizable and increases consumer trust. The use of digital technology through the implementation of modern payment systems also supports operational efficiency. Overall, the designed digital branding strategy not only builds a positive image, but also provides a strong foundation for Kios Harmonis to compete sustainably in the digital era.

This research shows that the development of branding at Kios Harmonis with 4D development methods (Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate), has succeeded in strengthening business identity, increasing emotional closeness with customers, and expanding reach through digital media and most importantly increasing the competitiveness of Harmonic Kiosks. Simple strategies such as logo use, social media optimization, and personalized service have been proven to have a positive impact on kiosk image and consumer satisfaction. With practical implementation, business owners now have provisions to implement and develop branding independently, so that Kios Harmoni is better prepared to compete in the digital era.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. All authors have contributed significantly to the research and writing process, and there are no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be construed as influencing the results or interpretation of this research.

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