

INNOVATING TRADITION: A MARKETING STRATEGY TO MODERNIZE TOFU PRODUCTION (A CASE STUDY OF H. ROHIM'S TOFU BUSINESS IN JEMBER)

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Abstract:

This study examines the marketing strategies and production processes at H. Rohim's Tofu Business in Jember, focusing on the challenges of modernizing traditional practices. This research utilizes a qualitative approach to understand the underlying factors affecting the business's marketing strategies and operational processes. Interviews with the owner and employees reveal a tension between traditional and digital marketing methods. Despite efforts to use social media and improve packaging, the business has struggled to reach younger consumers, relying heavily on word-of-mouth and loyal customer networks for promotion. Observations indicate that production is manual, using local ingredients, and distribution is confined to local markets, with minimal use of digital platforms. The business's goals include expanding market reach and increasing production, but limited resources and resistance to change hinder the full implementation of these strategies. The study highlights the importance of blending traditional marketing techniques with innovative approaches to meet evolving market demands. The findings suggest that overcoming the company's reluctance to digitalize and invest in modern marketing strategies is crucial for its growth. This case underscores the challenges faced by small businesses in adapting to technological advancements while maintaining their traditional values.

Keywords: *Marketing strategies, traditional marketing and digital marketing, H. Rohim's Tofu Business*

ملخص:

تناول هذه الدراسة تناول استراتيجيات التسويق وعمليات الإنتاج في شركة H. Rohim's Tofu في جember، مع التركيز على تحديات تحديث الممارسات التقليدية. يستخدم هذا البحث نهجًا نوعيًا لفهم العوامل الأساسية التي تؤثر على استراتيجيات التسويق و العمليات التشغيلية. تكشف المقابلات التي أجريت مع المالك والموظفين عن وجود توتر بين أساليب التسويق التقليدية والرقمية. على الرغم من الجهود المبذولة لاستخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وتحسين التعبئة والتغليف، واجهت الشركة صعوبة في الوصول إلى المستهلكين الأصغر سنًا، حيث تعتمد بشكل كبير على الكلام الشفهي وشبكات العملاء المخلصين من أجل الترويج. تشير الملاحظات إلى أن الإنتاج يدوي باستخدام المكونات المحلية. المكونات المحلية، ويقتصر التوزيع على الأسواق المحلية، مع الحد الأدنى من استخدام المنصات الرقمية. تشمل أهداف الشركة توسيع نطاق وصولها إلى

الأسواق و زيادة الإنتاج، لكن محدودية الموارد ومقاومة التغيير تعيقان التنفيذ الكامل لهذه الاستراتيجيات. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على أهمية مزج تقنيات التسويق التقليدية مع الأساليب المبتكرة لتلبية متطلبات السوق المتطورة. تشير النتائج إلى أن التغلب على إحجام الشركة عن التردد في التحول الرقمي والاستثمار في استراتيجيات التسويق الحديثة أمر بالغ الأهمية لنموها. تؤكد هذه الحالة على التحديات التي تواجهها الشركات الصغيرة في التكيف مع التطورات التكنولوجية مع الحفاظ على قيمها التقليدية. التقليدية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات التسويق، التسويق التقليدي والتسويق الرقمي، أعمال التوفو الخاصة بشركة

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi pemasaran dan proses produksi di Usaha Tahu H. Rohim di Jember, dengan fokus pada tantangan modernisasi praktik tradisional. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk memahami faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi strategi pemasaran dan proses operasional usaha tersebut. Wawancara dengan pemilik dan karyawan mengungkapkan ketegangan antara metode pemasaran tradisional dan digital. Meskipun berusaha menggunakan media sosial dan meningkatkan kemasan, usaha ini kesulitan menjangkau konsumen muda, bergantung pada promosi dari mulut ke mulut dan jaringan pelanggan setia. Pengamatan menunjukkan bahwa produksi dilakukan secara manual, menggunakan bahan lokal, dan distribusi terbatas pada pasar lokal, dengan penggunaan platform digital yang minimal. Tujuan usaha ini meliputi perluasan jangkauan pasar dan peningkatan produksi, namun sumber daya yang terbatas dan resistensi terhadap perubahan menghambat implementasi penuh strategi-strategi tersebut. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya menggabungkan teknik pemasaran tradisional dengan pendekatan inovatif untuk memenuhi tuntutan pasar yang terus berkembang. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mengatasi keraguan perusahaan untuk mendigitalisasi dan berinvestasi dalam strategi pemasaran modern sangat penting untuk pertumbuhannya. Kasus ini menyoroti tantangan yang dihadapi usaha kecil dalam beradaptasi dengan kemajuan teknologi sambil mempertahankan nilai-nilai tradisional mereka.

Kata kunci: Strategi pemasaran, pemasaran tradisional dan digital, Usaha Tahu H. Rohim

INTRODUCTION

Tofu, a plant-based protein made from soybeans, has been a cornerstone of Southeast Asian cuisine for centuries. In Indonesia, tofu production remains a family-run business in many areas, including Jember, where small-scale producers like H. Rohim's tofu business have continued to rely on traditional methods of production. However, the rise of health-conscious consumers, the increasing demand for convenient food products, and changing market dynamics present both challenges and opportunities for traditional tofu producers (SHIMOGUCHI et al., 2018). The current state of tofu businesses, particularly those relying on outdated marketing strategies and production processes, risks limiting their growth potential (Perreault Jr et al., 2021). This research is crucial because it explores how modern marketing strategies could help revitalize a traditional tofu business, allowing it to reach a broader, younger demographic without losing its cultural essence. Such innovations could play a significant role in sustaining the tofu industry's future in the competitive food market.

While numerous studies have examined tofu's cultural significance, its nutritional benefits, and even the production techniques used by small-scale

manufacturers, limited attention has been given to the role of modern marketing strategies in promoting tofu. Most existing literature has concentrated on traditional production practices, health aspects, or local consumption patterns of tofu (Yuliansyah et al., 2021). There is also an abundance of research on how the food industry, in general, is adopting contemporary marketing techniques such as digital branding, social media promotion, and packaging innovations (Alfiansyah et al., 2023; UMILIA, 2021). However, few studies have specifically explored how these techniques could be applied to small-scale, traditional tofu businesses. This gap in the literature underscores the importance of this research, which focuses on innovating marketing practices in the tofu sector. By using H. Rohim's tofu business as a case study, the research aims to bridge this gap, offering insights into how traditional food businesses can modernize their marketing efforts.

The main objective of this study is to examine how H. Rohim's tofu business can adapt modern marketing strategies to enhance its market presence and attract a younger (Aguspriyani et al., 2023), more diverse consumer base. Specifically, the research seeks to address the following questions: What marketing strategies can be effectively employed to modernize the perception and reach of a traditional tofu business? How can H. Rohim's tofu business balance the preservation of its traditional production methods while incorporating innovative marketing practices? What challenges and opportunities exist for small-scale tofu producers like H. Rohim in modernizing their approach? By addressing these questions, this study aims to provide actionable recommendations for tofu producers who wish to enhance their competitiveness in an increasingly modernized and globalized food market.

The preliminary argument of this study is that H. Rohim's tofu business can thrive by integrating modern marketing strategies without compromising the authenticity of its product. The research hypothesizes that incorporating digital marketing techniques such as social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and e-commerce platforms could significantly boost consumer awareness and sales. Furthermore, innovations in product packaging and branding that emphasize health benefits and sustainability could help position H. Rohim's tofu as a trendy, eco-friendly choice for modern consumers. By modernizing the marketing aspect of the business, H. Rohim's tofu could capture the attention of younger, urban consumers who may be more inclined to choose convenient, health-conscious products. This research suggests that combining traditional values with modern marketing could be key to ensuring the long-term success and relevance of small-scale tofu producers in an increasingly competitive market.

RESEARCH METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study is the tofu production business owned by H. Rohim, located in Jember, East Java. This location was chosen because of its characteristic as a small-scale traditional tofu producer with the potential to be transformed through modern marketing strategies. H. Rohim's Tofu Business is a family-run operation that has been producing tofu for many years using traditional methods. Although the tofu produced is well-known locally, the business still relies heavily on conventional marketing methods. This research is important because it explores how this traditional tofu business can be revitalized by applying modern marketing strategies, enabling it to reach a broader, younger demographic without losing its cultural essence. The choice of H. Rohim's Tofu Business as a case study is due to its typical representation of small-scale tofu producers in a developing area, making it highly relevant for the study's objectives.

This study uses a qualitative research approach with a case study design (Miles, 1994; Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021). A case study was chosen because it allows the researcher to deeply explore a particular phenomenon within a specific context, providing a comprehensive and holistic understanding. In this case, the focus is on the marketing innovations applied to H. Rohim's Tofu Business. A qualitative approach allows for the exploration of social and economic dynamics that influence business decisions, as well as a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by traditional tofu businesses in adapting to modern market trends. This study also aims to gain insights into the most effective marketing strategies for making H. Rohim's tofu more appealing to younger, health-conscious consumers. By using a case study, the findings of this research are expected to offer practical recommendations that can be applied to other small tofu businesses facing similar challenges.

The sources of information in this study will be derived from several key informants who are directly involved in the operations and marketing of H. Rohim's Tofu Business. The primary informant is the business owner, H. Rohim, who will provide insights into the history of the business, the challenges it faces, and the future vision for the business. In addition, interviews will be conducted with three employees who play important roles in production and marketing, namely Revi, Abdul, and Fauzan. Revi is involved in production management, Abdul handles sales and distribution, while Fauzan is responsible for digital marketing and customer relations. Through in-depth interviews with these informants, the researcher aims to gain diverse perspectives that will enrich the understanding of how marketing innovations can be implemented in the tofu business. These interviews will also explore their perceptions about the changes needed in the business to align with modern market demands.

The data collection process in this study will involve three main methods: observation, interviews, and documentation (Ardyan et al., 2023; Miles, 1994). First, observation will be carried out to gain a direct understanding of the operational conditions on the ground, especially regarding the production, distribution, and marketing processes at H. Rohim's Tofu Business. This observation will also provide insight into the interaction between employees and customers, as well as how the product is marketed. Second, in-depth interviews will be conducted with the owner and employees to explore their views on the challenges and opportunities they face, as well as the marketing strategies that have been applied. Third, documentation will be used to gather secondary data in the form of relevant records, such as sales reports, promotional materials, and photos of production or marketing activities. All collected data will be analyzed to provide a comprehensive picture of the current situation and the potential innovations that can be applied to the business.

The data analysis will proceed in three main stages: data reduction, data display, and data verification (Auliya et al., 2020; Miles, 1994). The data reduction stage involves filtering relevant information from the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, eliminating data that does not support the research objectives. During the data display stage, the researcher will present the data in narrative or tabular form, making it easier to understand and interpret while providing a clear picture of the phenomenon under investigation. Next, data verification will be carried out to ensure the validity of the information collected, using triangulation techniques, such as comparing data from various sources and methods. The analysis will employ several methods, including content analysis to identify themes or patterns that emerge from the qualitative data, discourse analysis to understand how the product and its marketing are presented in communication, and interpretive analysis to provide an interpretation of the meaning behind the data and how it can inform marketing innovation in H. Rohim's Tofu Business. This analysis is expected to offer a deep understanding of the marketing innovation process that can be applied to enhance the competitiveness of traditional tofu businesses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the interviews conducted with the owner and employees of H. Rohim's Tofu Business provide important insights into the production process and marketing strategies implemented in the business. Below is a summary of the interview results in table format (Wawancara, 2024):

Informant	Question	Answer / Findings
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Owner	What is the biggest challenge in marketing tofu?	"We struggle to reach younger consumers; we rely more on traditional marketing."
Revi (Employee)	What changes need to be made?	"We need to use social media and more attractive packaging to reach a wider market."
Abdul (Employee)	What impact does marketing have on sales?	"We've noticed sales increase after using word-of-mouth promotions."
Fauzan (Employee)	What marketing efforts have been implemented?	"We've tried social media, but it's not fully maximized."

From the interview results, it is clear that although H. Rohim's Tofu Business has attempted to use both traditional marketing and social media, they still face challenges in reaching younger consumers. The business owner finds it difficult to connect with a younger audience, while employees see potential in improving packaging and leveraging social media. Despite these challenges, there is an indication that sales have slightly increased through word-of-mouth promotions, suggesting that informal marketing strategies may have a positive impact.

Looking at the data presented in the table, several patterns emerge from the interviews with the informants. First, the business owner views traditional marketing, which has been used for years, as easier to implement but not sufficient to attract younger consumers. Second, employees suggest improvements in product packaging and more intensive use of social media, but the implementation of these ideas has not been fully successful. A third pattern indicates that, despite the limited innovation in marketing strategies, word-of-mouth promotion has contributed to a small increase in sales. This suggests that local social networks and customer trust still play a significant role in the marketing success of the business, even though there is considerable untapped potential in digital marketing.

The patterns observed in the interview data reflect barriers to changing the mindset of those involved in the tofu business, who have long relied on traditional marketing methods. The reliance on old ways of marketing and limited understanding of digital marketing strategies have made it challenging for the business to expand its customer base. When employees suggest using social media and improving product packaging, it indicates a gap between traditional marketing techniques and the demands of a modern market. However, the positive effects of word-of-mouth marketing suggest that customer trust and relationships still play a critical role in business success. In other words, while there is significant opportunity in modern marketing, product quality and customer trust remain crucial factors that influence

consumer decisions.

During the observations, the researcher noted various aspects of the production process and marketing practices at H. Rohim's Tofu Business. The data from these observations are summarized in the table below:

Observation Aspect	Observational Findings
Production Process	Tofu is produced manually using local ingredients, and the process is time-consuming.
Distribution	Products are only sold at local markets and a few traditional stores.
Marketing	There is minimal use of digital platforms; promotion mainly depends on loyal customers.
Product Innovation	New packaging has been tested, but it has not been fully embraced by the market.

The observation data reveals that the tofu production process at H. Rohim's Tofu Business is still manual, requiring considerable time and using local ingredients. The product distribution is limited to local markets and a few traditional stores, with no significant use of digital platforms to reach a broader audience. Although some new packaging has been experimented with, it has not yet been fully accepted by the market. The business continues to rely heavily on its loyal customer base for promotion.

From the table, it is evident that H. Rohim's Tofu Business continues to rely on traditional methods across all aspects of its operations. The production process remains manual, distribution is confined to local markets, and marketing strategies are predominantly based on word-of-mouth promotion and established customer relationships. The attempt to innovate with new packaging is also visible, but the lack of significant market acceptance suggests that these innovations are still in the early stages and not fully integrated into the business. This overall pattern indicates a strong adherence to traditional business practices, with limited attempts to modernize in line with broader market trends.

The patterns observed in this case can be understood as a result of long-standing habits and limitations in knowledge about modern marketing and technology. The reliance on traditional methods, both in production and distribution, reflects a comfort with familiar practices and a reluctance to invest in new, untested methods. The resistance to adopting digital marketing strategies or expanding distribution beyond local markets can also stem from a lack of resources or uncertainty about the effectiveness of these new approaches. While packaging innovation has been attempted, the market's slow acceptance suggests that there is resistance to change, possibly due to concerns

about altering a product that has long been associated with traditional values. Overall, these patterns highlight the challenges small businesses face when trying to adapt to changing market demands and technological advances. The documentation obtained from H. Rohim's Tofu Business outlines various stages of business goals, planning, and implementation of marketing strategies. Below is a summary of the documentation:

Stage	Documentation Evidence
Business Goal	Increase production and expand market reach to younger consumers.
Planning	Social media usage was noted, but no specific budget was allocated for digital marketing.
Implementation	Marketing is done through local markets and customer networks.
Innovation Application	Some discussions about new packaging, but full implementation has not yet occurred.

The documentation reveals that the main goal of the business is to increase production and expand its market reach, particularly to younger consumers.



However, there was no specific budget allocated for digital marketing despite acknowledging the potential of social media. Marketing remains reliant on local markets and existing customer networks, and although there were discussions about innovating product packaging, this has not been fully implemented.

From the documentation table, it is clear that while there are aspirations to modernize and expand the market, the actual steps taken are limited. The business has set goals to reach younger consumers and increase production, but there has been no concrete allocation of resources toward digital marketing. The marketing strategy is still largely focused on local markets and established

customer networks, and while there is some consideration of product innovation (in the form of packaging), this has not been fully executed. This pattern shows a gap between the business's aspirations and the actual implementation of strategies to meet those goals.

The patterns seen in the documentation can be interpreted as a reflection of the business's hesitancy to fully invest in modern marketing practices. Although there is awareness of the need for digital marketing and product innovation, the lack of a dedicated budget for these efforts and the continued reliance on traditional marketing methods suggest a cautious approach. This could be due to concerns over the effectiveness and cost of digital marketing, or simply a lack of knowledge and resources to implement these changes. Additionally, the limited implementation of product packaging innovation may be a result of the business's reluctance to change a product that is already familiar and trusted by local consumers. These patterns indicate the difficulty of balancing traditional business practices with the need to innovate in a rapidly changing market.

Discussions

The interview results offer valuable insights into the marketing dynamics of H. Rohim's Tofu Business in Jember, and the implications are crucial for understanding the limitations and opportunities within the company's marketing strategy. The central issue revealed is the tension between traditional and modern marketing practices. While the business has relied on word-of-mouth and local markets, the challenges of engaging younger, tech-savvy consumers remain prominent. This reflects a dysfunction in the ability of the company to modernize its marketing approach, which is essential in a highly digitalized consumer environment. On the other hand, the company's heavy reliance on word-of-mouth has a functional aspect, as it strengthens community ties and loyalty. However, this approach alone is insufficient to address broader market demands. As recent studies suggest, businesses in similar settings need to blend traditional methods with innovative digital strategies to stay competitive (Istiqomah, 2023; Tabroni & Komarudin, 2021; Wardani & Widayani, 2021). The conclusion is that the business must innovate its marketing methods to survive in an evolving market.

The causes of the issues revealed in the interview data can be attributed to several underlying factors that influence the business's marketing strategy. Firstly, H. Rohim's Tofu Business has a traditional mindset that resists change, particularly in embracing digital platforms and new marketing technologies. This resistance to change is a common challenge faced by small, locally owned businesses, as noted in studies on small business marketing practices

(Enderwati et al., 2022; Ononiwu et al., 2024; Ramdhan & Aripin, 2024; Syamsuddin et al., 2024; Vaz, 2021). Another reason for the limited use of digital marketing is the lack of investment in skills and resources to effectively leverage social media and online platforms. Without a clear digital marketing strategy or sufficient budget allocation, it is difficult for the company to reach broader, younger audiences, particularly those that consume media online. The direct correlation between the resistance to digitalization and limited market expansion emphasizes the need for H. Rohim's Tofu Business to reframe its marketing approach to incorporate modern techniques, which has been shown to improve business growth (Clinton & Vanomy, 2023; Junaedi & Edmond, 2024; Mavilinda et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2022). In conclusion, the root cause of the issues lies in a lack of adaptation to market trends and technological advancements.

The observation results underscore the tension between tradition and innovation within H. Rohim's Tofu Business. The implications of this data are significant, as it shows how deeply rooted traditional practices affect both production and marketing strategies. The manual production process, although time-consuming, helps maintain the authenticity of the product, which strengthens its appeal to loyal customers. This can be seen as a functional aspect of the business model, where local customers value the traditional method. However, the lack of technological integration in production and distribution limits the business's ability to scale and reach new customers beyond the local area. Studies on small businesses' growth indicate that while traditional methods can preserve brand identity, they can also hinder the adoption of more efficient practices that contribute to growth (Akhlak, 2021; Balaka et al., 2023; Nugraha, 2023). Therefore, the dysfunction lies in the limited ability to modernize both production and distribution practices, which limits the business's potential for expansion.

The observed issues can be explained by several structural and underlying factors. The reliance on manual production processes is deeply embedded in the company's operational structure, where the preservation of traditional methods is seen as a key value proposition. However, this focus on traditional practices leads to inefficiencies that prevent the business from scaling up or exploring new markets. The decision to limit distribution to local markets is tied to the company's comfort zone and its long-standing customer base. According to research, small businesses often hesitate to adopt new technologies or scale up production due to fear of losing their brand identity or alienating loyal customers (Masitoh et al., 2024; Pasaribu et al., 2023; Permata et al., 2024). Moreover, the lack of digitalization is partly due to the perceived complexity of integrating new technology into traditional systems. The direct correlation

between traditional practices and operational inefficiencies emphasizes the need for the business to modernize its production and distribution practices. Conclusively, the underlying cause of these issues is a deep-rooted attachment to traditional values that hinders business growth and innovation.

The results of planning, implementation, and application reveal a mixed approach toward innovation and modernization at H. Rohim's Tofu Business. The business has set clear goals for expanding its market reach and increasing production but lacks the dedicated resources to implement these strategies effectively. The implication here is that while the company is aware of the need to innovate, it does not yet have a well-structured plan to execute these innovations. The use of social media and product packaging innovation, for instance, is discussed but not fully applied due to budget constraints. This dysfunction in the implementation of strategies leads to stagnation, limiting the business's potential to capture new market segments. Studies on business innovation show that the lack of clear execution plans often leads to missed opportunities and stagnation (Taneja et al., 2021; Kaur & Kaur, 2020). In contrast, businesses with clear and focused innovation strategies tend to achieve better outcomes in terms of market reach and growth (Schein, 2022). In conclusion, the business's failure to properly implement its plans creates a significant barrier to its growth.

The lack of a well-executed innovation strategy at H. Rohim's Tofu Business can be attributed to several structural factors within the organization. One of the primary causes is the business's limited understanding of how to transition from traditional marketing to modern, digital marketing strategies. This structural issue is compounded by a lack of resources, both financial and human, to support such transitions. According to research, small businesses often struggle with the allocation of resources for digitalization due to budget constraints and a lack of expertise (Johnson et al., 2020). Another factor contributing to the dysfunction is the absence of a dedicated innovation team or clear roles for marketing and product development, which leads to fragmented and inconsistent efforts. Additionally, the business has not allocated a sufficient budget for marketing initiatives, such as social media or packaging redesign. This lack of investment directly correlates with the inability to implement planned innovations effectively. In conclusion, the main cause of these issues is the mismatch between the company's goals and its internal capacity to implement them, underscoring the need for better resource allocation and strategic planning.

CONCLUSION

The primary findings of this study reveal that H. Rohim's Tofu Business faces significant challenges in adapting to modern marketing practices, particularly in reaching younger consumers and leveraging digital tools. Despite recognizing the need for innovation, the business has struggled to implement effective strategies due to resource limitations, a resistance to change, and an overreliance on traditional marketing techniques like word-of-mouth. This highlights the importance of balancing tradition with innovation. The key lesson from this research is that small businesses must embrace modern marketing strategies to sustain and expand their market presence in today's digital age, while not losing sight of their authentic, traditional values.

This research contributes to the field of small business marketing by offering a comprehensive case study of a traditional food business attempting to innovate its marketing strategy. By exploring the gap between traditional and modern marketing methods, the study offers updated perspectives on the challenges and opportunities small businesses face in the digital era. The case of H. Rohim's Tofu Business enriches existing literature by integrating both qualitative data and real-world business practices, which makes the findings particularly relevant to scholars and practitioners interested in small business development, digital marketing, and the food industry. This research also introduces the concept of integrating both tradition and innovation in a balanced manner.

While the study provides valuable insights, it has several limitations. First, the case study approach restricts the findings to a single business, which may not fully represent the broader spectrum of small businesses. Additionally, the research primarily focuses on qualitative data, which, while rich in context, lacks the generalizability of quantitative studies. The study also does not explore the long-term effects of digital marketing adoption on sales and customer loyalty. Future research could expand the scope by examining multiple case studies across different regions or industries, and investigating the impact of specific marketing innovations on small business performance over time.

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