

Innovative and Creative Strategies for the Pempek Business in Penetrating the International Market

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Abstract. *The success of MSMEs in the internationalization process cannot be separated from business strategy, in the form of creative and innovative strategies which are the methods used by companies to expand and sell products/services outside their domestic market. This research aims to analyze the creative and innovative strategies carried out by Pempek Syamil Palembang. The research method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive research method. Facts in the field are the main focus in this research, by describing them in as much detail as possible based on these facts. Through this research, the author succeeded in finding that the creative and innovative strategies implemented by Pempek Syamil cover all dimensions of innovation and creativity, namely product, process and marketing. The hope is that through this research, Pempek Syamil Palembang can continue to expand its presence in the international market. In conclusion, innovative and creative strategies are not just a necessity, not just a trend, but an urgent need for modern business and are a necessity and also the main key to winning business competition and sustainability in the international market. By prioritizing innovation and creativity in every aspect of business, entrepreneurs can create significant added value, build competitive advantages, and achieve long-term success in this competitive entrepreneurial world.*

Keywords: *Innovative, creative, strategy, international market .*

INTRODUCTION

Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are not just a group of small businesses that operate separately from the larger business ecosystem. They are the foundation of the economy, contributing significantly to job creation, income growth, and overall economic expansion. They account for 97% of Indonesia's workforce and 61.07% of the country's GDP. <https://psike.id/inovasi-kreatif-untuk-mendukung-berjalannya-umkm-di-indonesia/>.

Therefore, achieving national economic development goals depends critically on the expansion and sustainability of MSMEs. MSMEs do, however, face significant challenges. They frequently work in a setting that is unpredictable, resource-constrained, and characterized by intense rivalry from both domestic and foreign sources. To compete in the destination country's local market, businesses must put the appropriate strategy into place (Nur, 2021). It is at this point the role of creative innovation strategies is becoming increasingly important.

Creative innovation gives MSMEs the opportunity to address these issues in novel and more efficient ways. MSMEs can develop new strategies for manufacturing, promoting, and

distributing their goods and services through innovation. They have the ability to identify gaps in previously unnoticed markets or even form entirely new ones. MSMEs can also benefit from creative innovation to boost productivity and efficiency. With the help of cutting-edge business procedures and technology, MSMEs can accomplish more with less.

Geographical boundaries no longer restrict market access in the current era of globalization and digitalization. MSMEs can connect with customers by using digital marketing techniques and online platforms. One of the main elements thought to support MSMEs' expansion and sustainability is creative innovation. MSMEs can increase their market reach by utilizing creative innovation. MSMEs face fierce competition in the age of globalization, from both domestic and foreign sources. SMEs can become more competitive by utilizing creative innovation to provide distinctive, eye-catching, and superior goods and services. MSMEs must create new goods and services. MSMEs can create goods and services that are both creative and responsive to market demands by utilizing the newest technologies and trends. MSMEs must also raise the caliber of their goods and services. MSMEs are able to implement strict quality controls and guarantee that their goods and services are equal to or exceed those of competitors. MSMEs must also build strong brands to differentiate themselves from competitors and increase customer trust.

MSMEs can become more profitable and sustainable through creative innovation. Because the offered goods and services are more appealing to consumers, sales may rise. The profitability of MSMEs will rise in tandem with increased productivity and efficiency. In addition, innovative creativity gives MSMEs the business resilience they need to overcome a range of obstacles. Creativity and innovation are the keys to the sustainability of MSMEs during the pandemic, apart from digital adaptation. MSMEs can access international markets through innovation and creativity. Innovation in products and markets is essential to adapting to fast-paced, fiercely competitive business developments. In today's business world, innovation is essential. MSME players must be able to think creatively and constructively in order to produce unique products. They must also be able to invent new ideas quickly in order for MSME products to grow and become essential to their business endeavors. To foster creativity and innovation among MSME, both the public and private sectors have offered a great deal of online and offline training and mentoring. (<https://smesco.go.id/berita/jelang-2022-ini-strategi-yang-umkm-lakukan>). In order to survive fierce competition, businesses seeking to enter foreign markets must develop and exhibit competitive advantages (Khairani et al., 2021). Similarly, MSMEs in the culinary (food) sector.

The national identity of the Indonesian people is diverse, as befits a multicultural nation with great diversity. Specialties from the area is one of them. Indonesia offers a wide variety of culinary experiences; in fact, every region has its own unique cuisine. Due to its distinctive and delectable flavors, Indonesian cuisine is beginning to spread throughout the world. Dishes that have unique qualities specific to a region are known as regional specialties. Food with its distinctive taste is part of culture (Utami, 2018). Some traditional Indonesian dishes are even well-known worldwide. Rendang, soto, meatballs, rawon, gado-gado, nasi Padang, and pempek are the most well-liked dishes. Fish is used to make the traditional Palembang dish called pempek. Pempek, also known as empek-empek, is a flavorful and appetizing dish that is typically served with a black sauce, called cuko.

This dish has gained national and even international recognition in addition to its local fame. Prof. Dr. Rindit Pambayun, a food technology professor at Sriwijaya University and the chair of the ASEAN Association of Food Technology Experts, on Tuesday, September 25, 2018, during a meeting to prepare the action plan for turning SNI Pempek into a world food standard at the Palembang Region BSN Technical Services Office stated that pempek really deserves to be worldwide for five main reasons. First of all, Pempek is indigenous to Indonesia, specifically Palembang, where it has shaped the people's history and culture. Even, according to Yenni Anggraeni, Chair of the Palembang Pempek Entrepreneurs Association (ASPPEK), Pempek was designated by the Indonesian Government (Ministry of Education and Culture) on October 17 2014 as an intangible cultural heritage. Pempek is particularly unique or special for a second reason: it can turn people who don't like fish into fans. Thirdly, due to its popularity among nearly all societal segments, including international travelers, Pempek is highly marketable or simple to market. Fourth, pempek is a functional food because it helps with growth and intelligence, especially in children, in addition to being nutrient-dense and high in protein. Even pempek or cuko vinegar has health benefits and can make kids eat more. The fifth reason is that pempek is a traditional food that is highly scientifically verifiable in terms of its health benefits and nutritional value. (<https://bsn.go.id/main/berita/detail/9679/5-alasan-pempek-sangat-layak-mendunia>)

Another source said pempek stole the world's attention. Pempek, according to this source, captured everyone's interest. Using fish as an ingredient, this traditional Palembang dish has managed to claim the title of best food on TasteAtlas. Pempek tops the list, followed by Tekkadon, otoro nigiri sushi from Japan, Shorshe Ilish from Bangladesh, Loimulohi from Finland, and Tekkadon. TasteAtlas describes pempek as a form of local community creativity

in serving fish-based dishes. (<https://www.tripzilla.id/pempek-palembang-kuliner-berbahan-dasar-ikan-terbaik/5473>)

The regional culinary specialty Pempek Palembang is already very well known in Indonesia, but unfortunately until now only a handful of producers are willing to enter the export market. Of the thousands of Pempek Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Palembang, only 6-7 entrepreneurs have dared to try exporting. That's also in small portions and not routinely. <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/2728693/saatnya-pempek-palembang-rambah-pasar-ekspor>

Farida & Setiawan (2022) findings show that business strategy has a positive impact on competitive advantage. Better business strategies increase SMEs' competitive advantage. Research (Dall'Olio & Vakratsas, 2023) Empirical application focuses on dynamic linear model analysis of 2,251 television advertising materials from 91 brands in 16 categories of consumer packaged goods. The findings show that in terms of function, creative advertising strategies in the form of experiential content have the greatest influence on elasticity, followed by cognitive and affective content. According to a study (Hapriyanto, 2024), alignment between business goals and innovative steps is the key to creating significant added value. The integration of business strategy with innovation creates a solid foundation for achieving competitive advantage in the digital era. One of the findings of research conducted (Pretorius & Krugerit, 2006) is that business managers consider themselves creative and their businesses innovative however, contrary to expectations, it was found that implementation orientation is still lacking. Meanwhile, research results (Hadiyati, 2012) prove that creativity and innovation simultaneously influence entrepreneurial marketing. Implicitly, there is still a gap between the two studies and there is still little research related to innovative and creative strategies simultaneously. This article aims to highlight this theme.

THEORETICAL STUDY

A marketing strategy is a well-thought-out plan created to help a business or organization meet its marketing goals. Gaining a competitive edge in the market and providing customers with added value are the two main goals of a marketing strategy. Market segmentation, identifying the target market, brand positioning, and the marketing mix—which consists of product, price, promotion, and distribution—are all important components of a successful marketing plan. In a world that continues to develop rapidly, innovative and creative marketing strategies have become the main key to business success.

Creativity and innovation are effective tools for MSMEs to set themselves apart from rivals in the face of intense competition. In essence, creative innovation goes beyond a simple idea or corporate plan. Underneath the seemingly complex and occasionally perplexing terminology, business travel is fundamentally about creative innovation, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. In the face of fierce and ever-changing market competition, MSMEs' growth and sustainability are propelled forward by creative innovation. By utilizing a creative and innovative approach, MSMEs can effectively navigate obstacles, seize opportunities, and fortify their market position. <https://psike.id/inovasi-kreatif-untuk-mendukung-berjalannya-umkm-di-indonesia/>

Through fresh ideas and unique solutions, MSMEs can design business strategies that attract customer interest.

1. Innovative strategy

Hills (2008), innovation is defined as an idea, practice or object that is considered new by an individual or other user unit. Innovation is the process of putting imaginative concepts into practice. Therefore, an innovative work will be defined as a work that is the result of innovation. Innovation strategy is the innovative direction of the company's approach to the choice of goals and methods and means to fully exploit and develop the company's innovative potential (Lendel & Varmus, 2011). The key to surviving and growing in the fiercely competitive world of international business is innovation and strategy modifications. According to Van de Ven (2016), innovation is characterized as a process that starts with idea generation and continues through production and marketing. Businesses that can generate innovation and creativity through a well-thought-out and efficient innovation process are those that are successful in gaining a competitive edge. Businesses may identify market trends, foresee impending changes, and provide value for their clients by being innovative. Businesses can use business innovation to stand out from the competition, adapt swiftly to shifts in the market, develop pertinent goods and services, foresee technological advancements, seize new opportunities, improve operational efficiency, fortify their positions in the market, and foster a strong innovation culture within the company. Keeley et al. (2013) stated that there are ten types of innovation popular and developed by Doblin Innovation Firm in Chicago. The ten types of innovation are divided into three big categories: configuration, offering and experience. Configuration is the inner workings of the business system, offering is the enterprise's main product or service and experience is the aspects that interact with customers.

Innovation strategy refers to theories about innovation developed by experts. Innovation theory develops in line with the needs of the industrial world and technological

developments. A study conducted by (Ojasalo, 2008) states that innovation is divided into three types, namely product innovation has the meaning of generating income, process innovation provides a means to maintain and improve quality and to save costs, while market innovation increases the target market mix and selects the best market, that must be served by the company.

2. Creative Strategy

Suryana (2003) states that creativity is: "Thinking something new". "Creativity as the ability to develop new ideas and to find new ways of solving problems in the face of opportunities." The capacity to generate fresh, innovative concepts that add value or solve problems is known as creativity. Individuals with creativity possess the ability to think creatively and generate novel solutions. All economic sectors and activities require creative skills, not just the creative industries (Hollanders & Van Cruysen, 2009). As for the opinion of Thompson & Choi (2006), creativity and innovation are seen as very important in many applied business fields such as business, science, engineering and art, however creativity is difficult to define and creative products are not universally valued by all experts.

Creative strategies are steps taken by every company in order to achieve marketing goals. Amabile (1983) identified three dimensions of creativity: the process, person, and product dimensions. MSMEs can employ a range of marketing techniques in international business marketing, including social media marketing, digital marketing, and business network marketing. MSMEs can promote their goods and services to a worldwide consumer base by using e-commerce platforms. In addition, MSMEs can participate in global trade shows to broaden their network of contacts and advertise their goods and services to prospective clients across the globe (Ibrahim and Syafira, 2023). Entrepreneurs construct their businesses using a variety of techniques or approaches. The ultimate outcome is determined by this approach or plan. The more creative people are in using existing opportunities, the better the results of the business they run.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article was prepared comprehensively using a qualitative descriptive research methodology. According to Sukmadinata (2017), descriptive qualitative is a method used to describe existing phenomena, both natural and human engineered, which pays more attention to characteristics, quality, and interrelationships between activities. Facts in the field are the main focus in this research, by describing them in as much detail as possible based on these facts. The object of this research is Pempek Syamil This research aims to analyze the creative and innovative strategies carried out by Pempek Syamil Palembang, "pempeknyo wong kito

nian”, which is located at Jl. KH. Wahid Hasyim. Lr. Damai no. 488 B, 7 Ulu Palembang. Pempek Syamil is one of the leading pempek producers in Palembang which has implemented an international business strategy in stages. The company was founded in 2016 and focuses on pempek and other processed fish foods, such as tekwan, laksan and celimpungan. Not only in Palembang, pempek syamil has also gone national with resellers spread across several cities in Indonesia and going international (Singapore and Malaysia) since 2019, although purchases are still made through their families in Indonesia. In collecting data to support the writing of this article, the author used data collection techniques carried out by interviewing the management of Pempek Syamil Palembang and the respondents' answers to the questionnaire that had been given, enriched by collecting various relevant data through a review of Pempek Syamil's social media, pempeksyamil_official IG account, pempeksyamilpalembang FB account, Pempek syamil Palembang YouTube account, literature, books, scientific articles, and research results related to the research topic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A pempek producer or seller will use a pempek marketing strategy, which is a set of actions and techniques, to market, distribute, and close deals with potential customers. Pempek marketing is a difficult. But with the correct approach and a blend of flavor, originality, inventiveness, and first-rate service, Palembang pempek will take off and become incredibly popular all over the world. The innovative and creative tactics used by Pempek Syamil Palembang to break into the international market are the main subject of this study.

To achieve success in marketing Pempek Syamil in penetrating the global market, which currently has only penetrated Singapore and Malaysia, there are several key strategies that have been implemented. The following is a marketing strategy for Pempek Syamil that can help expand market share and increase sales:

1. Create innovative products, including:
 - a. Black pempek,

Black pempek is made from a river fish called lampam fish (Palembang people call it betino fish), having a small body and many spines, this fish is disliked despite having a high nutritional value, according to research. This fish is abundant in the Musi River, Palembang. By carrying out the concept of empowering local fishing villages and women along the coast of the Musi River. Pempek Syamil processes this fish with the right methods and innovations so as to produce pempek with a delicious taste, rich in nutrition and high sales value (Youtube

Pempek Syamil Palembang and (<https://palpres.disway.id/read/634786/pempek-syamil-sulap-ikan-berduri-jadi-pempek-kaya-nutrisi>).

What's unique is that this pempek is processed manually, using a brass mill, so that the bones are not ground up and the pempek has a soft and smooth texture. This pempek is suitable for those who are allergic to sea fish.

b. Pempek Sehat Mocaf Gluten free is pempek made from mocaf flour / cassava flour or cassava flour which is soaked using enzymes without additional ingredients to produce flour that is gluten free. This mocaf healthy pempek has many benefits, namely gluten free, high fiber, low glycemic, high calcium and phosphorus so that people can still consume healthy but still delicious food (Youtube Pempek Syamil Palembang).

These two products are a competitive advantage for the Pempek Syamil business. Creative strategies are also carried out by Pempek Syamil. Pempek Syamil has also received halal certification and is committed to producing only halal food. Pempek Syamil is guaranteed to be halal and hygienic in the manufacturing process because it follows the production process in accordance with the Processing Feasibility Certification (SKP) and Indonesian National Standards (SNI). Pempek Syamil received an SNI certificate in 2021 precisely during the Covid-19 pandemic. In Palembang, only a few pempek producers have SNI. The effect is that Pempek Syamil is often prioritized by the government to participate in national and international events. Most recently, Pempek Syamil also has a distribution permit from MD BPOM (Food and Drug Supervisory Agency). Pempek Syamil received an award as the UKM with the most complete certificate, in 2021. The standardization of Pempek Syamil is also branding, both brand identity which differentiates the brand from competitors and provides a consistent experience for consumers, brand awareness, consumers recognize and remember the Pempek Syamil brand, as well as brand equity, a known, respected and reliable brand has a higher value in the eyes of consumers.

2. Competitive Pricing

Competitive pricing is very important in pempek marketing strategy. Pempek Syamil continues to innovate in packaging pempek, with various techniques that improve or demonstrate product quality. The price of Pempek Syamil is comparable to its quality and features compared to other pempek products. By offering competitive prices, Pempek Syamil has succeeded in capturing a wider market and competing effectively with similar products.

3. Creative promotion

Creative promotions are the key to increasing consumer awareness and interest in pempek. There are several creative promotional methods used by Pempek Syamil, including:

a. Active in exhibitions and national events.

Pempek Syamil is very active in participating in exhibitions both locally and nationally and also diligently participates in big events and competitions. These include the IKM SUMSEL AWARD 2021, the SNI MSE Product Festival at Thamrin 10 Creative and Park Jakarta, 26-27 March 2022, UMKM Week 2022 which will be held simultaneously at all customs offices throughout Indonesia. Pempek Syamil as an MSME assisted by BI South Sumatra participated in the exhibition at Beachwalk Mall Kuta Bali, 29-30 July 2022. Bank Indonesia South Sumatra collaborated with Bank Indonesia Bali to organize the Beachwalk Pempek Expo with the title "The Spirit of South Sumatra Pempek and Coffee MSMEs Towards Go Global and Support Indonesian Tourism. Tourists from various countries who attend Bali can taste the taste of pempek through this exhibition. (<https://mediaindonesia.com/ekonomi/511236/kenalkan-pempek-ke-mancanegara-upaya-bi-mendorong-umkm-naik-kelas>)

Participate in the Palembang Authentic Snacks Culinary Festival Expo, at Ciwalk Bandung 4-6 November 2022. Got the opportunity from the Palembang Cooperatives and UMKM Service to participate in the 2022 Cooperative, SME and TJSL Innovation Event at the Mega Mall Shopping Center Batam. Take part in the 24th Global Food Marketplace or Seafood International de L'alimentation (SIAL Interfood) at the Jakarta International Expo Kemayoran Jakarta 8-11 November 2023. And become the best Tenant at Inbis Ivapro-KP (Marine and Fisheries Product Innovation Business Incubation) . Taking part in the national exhibition held by the Malang City Government (Pemkot), entitled Investment, Trade, Tourism, Agriculture, Fishing (ITTAF). This bazaar will take place at the Malang City Point Mall Atrium from 22 to 25 February 2024. (More details can be seen on the pempeksyamil_official IG account).

b. E-commerce

Pempek syamil makes active use of social media such as Instagram pempeksyamil_official, Facebook, pempeksyamilpalembang and You Tube Pempek syamil Palembang to promote their products. By creating attractive content and following the latest trends, Pempek Syamil can attract the attention of social media users and trigger them to eat pempek, especially Pempek Syamil. Pempek Syamil also markets its products through market places, including Shopee, Blibli and Tokopedia. Pempek Syamil has also used Qris in its transactions.

c. Using the power of celebrities or influencers

Pempek Syamil also uses smart marketing strategies in marketing its products. Pempek Syamil often takes advantage of the power of celebrities or influencers or well-known figures on social media to try and recommend Pempek Syamil and this is an effective creative strategy in increasing the popularity and consumer trust in Pempek Syamil products. Through content shared by celebrities or influencers, Pempek Syamil can appear more attractive and be considered a food worth trying and to expand their market reach and build brand awareness. Several influencers and famous people who have reviewed Pempek Syamil, Ari Untung, Ust Salim A Fila, Fadli Padi, the Governor of South Sumatra Herman Deru and even the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Sandiaga Uno had the opportunity to eat Pempek Syamil at the Pempek Expo at the Creative Buy South Sumatra 2022 event, 16 -18 September 2022 at Summarecon Mall Serpong Tangerang supported by Bank Indonesia.

d. Often share educational content

One thing that needs to be understood is that now audiences are not only looking for entertainment content on social media, but also informative content. Pempek Syamil often creates informational and educational content to increase engagement with business followers on social media. Even when offering products, pempek syamil often provides educational reasons. That way, consumers have a strong reason to buy pempek Syamil. Pempek Syamil's creativity is also reflected in their approach to advertising and promotional materials. They created memorable advertisements that conveyed the brand's identity and values in addition to being entertaining by fusing powerful messaging with eye-catching visual elements. Pempek Syamil has been successful in holding audiences' interest, igniting dialogue, and solidifying its reputation as a daring and inventive brand with these campaigns.

e. Discounts and Special Offers

Pempek Syamil always provides special offers and discounts to consumers. Discounts usually cover purchases in large quantities or purchases together with other related products (bundling). Special offers are also often made regarding major holidays with terms and conditions applying. This method can attract consumer interest and encourage them to buy more.

4. Efficient Distribution

In the pempek marketing strategy, efficient distribution is also very important. Pempek Syamil focuses more on online sales, which can reach a wide market even abroad, while offline sales are more focused on exhibitions. Kartini, owner of pempek Syamil, stated that local sales are only 20%, while outside Palembang it is 80%. Pempek Syamil collaborates with retailers

(resellers) to open dropshippers to expand distribution reach and make it easier for consumers to obtain pempek Syamil.

Finally, the implication of this research, increasing organizational innovation and creativity for competitive advantage.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this research, the author succeeded in finding that the creative and innovative strategies implemented by Pempek Syamil cover all dimensions of innovation and creativity, namely product, process and marketing. The hope is that through this research, Pempek Syamil Palembang can continue to expand its presence in the international market. In conclusion, innovative and creative strategies are not just a necessity, not just a trend, but an urgent need for modern business and are a necessity and also the main key to winning business competition and sustainability in the international market. By prioritizing innovation and creativity in every aspect of business, entrepreneurs can create significant added value, build competitive advantages, and achieve long-term success in this competitive entrepreneurial world. Because this research only observed one pempek business unit, further representative research is needed. to describe the innovative and creative strategies of pempek businesses in general.

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