

# **BREAKING THROUGH: THE IMPACT OF BRANDING ON EARLY-STAGE BRAND SUCCESS**

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## **Abstract**

This research delves into the urgency and impact of branding strategies on early-stage brands, particularly emphasizing the vital role of effective social media utilization within limited budgets in today's rapidly digitizing global business landscape. Focused on Bimbelku, an Indonesian accounting and economy platform for students operating for less than a year, the study employs theoretical and experimental methods to analyze how branding strategies through social media contribute to business sustainability. By contrasting the challenges faced by brands lacking a coherent branding strategy with the success observed when guided by strong branding strategies, it highlights the importance of strategic social media use in fostering growth and ensuring longevity through customer engagement. Through this focused case study, practical guidance is offered for early-stage brands, illustrating how to optimize branding strategies and harness digital tools to establish a robust and sustainable presence. This exploration aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how early-stage brands can navigate the challenges of limited resources while building a strong and lasting brand presence in the digital era. Ultimately, the research aims to equip entrepreneurs with actionable insights, stressing the necessity of adopting robust branding strategies to not only drive profit but also advocate for customer needs in the fiercely competitive digital landscape.

**Keyword:** Branding Strategies; Social Media Marketing Strategies; Early Brands

## **1. Introduction**

One of the fundamental elements when starting a business is having a clear identity concept, which ensures the sustainability of the business by guiding its strategic decisions. This identity concept, known as branding, shapes the perception to potential and current customers, adding values to them, contributing to the business's long-term success. Branding differentiates products even within similar product lines by highlighting their unique values and messages, making it an essential strategy in business operations.

As time progresses, businesses must adapt to technological, socio-cultural, and digital developments, continuously innovating to enhance their value and growth potential. Digital branding involves creating a brand identity and presence in the digital realm. In today's online landscape, companies must consider various aspects of the internet when building a brand. From social media discussions to responses to online reviews and maintaining cohesive language and style across websites, digital branding demands careful attention. Thus, the role of social media as a branding tool is crucial, requiring a deep understanding to develop effective branding strategies.

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in entrepreneurship in Indonesia, fueled by advancing digitalization. This growth supports positive economic development and warrants further attention in areas such as operations, management, finance, marketing, and especially branding strategy to navigate the competitive market ecosystem.

New businesses face numerous challenges before becoming established and developing a solid track record. These challenges include limited capital, resources, branding strategy, and marketing in a competitive market environment. Early-stage brands, in particular, must creatively adapt and innovate despite these constraints. Social media offers a solution to keep up with digitalization.

The purpose of this study is to help early-stage brands navigate their branding using social media, addressing both traction and limitations. This study employs theoretical and experimental methods to analyze how social media branding strategies contribute to business sustainability. It includes the case of Bimbelku, an Indonesian early-stage brand providing accounting and economics education for high school and university students, which leverages social media to strengthen its brand perception and marketing strategy. The hope is that this study will offer valuable insights and knowledge for early-stage brands in the realm of digital marketing in Indonesia, emphasizing the urgency and positive impact of implementing branding strategies for sustainable business growth.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Branding Strategies**

Brands fundamentally transform how we manage an organization's identity, how we think of its culture and how we organize innovation. Brands bridge the gap between production and consumption for its long-run sustainability business process, two spheres that have been separated since the Industrial Revolution. They fundamentally change how we manage an organization's identity, think about its culture, and organize innovation. Brands also transform the politics, ethics, and aesthetics of consumption, linking production to lifestyle and back again.

Initially, brands may seem like mere products or superficial packaging. However, inspired by Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood's idea that commodities are not just for

practical use but also for thinking and creativity, brands become something much more significant. They act as a non-verbal medium for human creativity, adding depth and meaning to the products we consume.

The impact of branding facing digitalization utilized by social media is in hope to foster success in leveraging profits and sustainability. There are several branding strategies that is essentials in digital era:

### 1. Corporate Branding

Corporate branding plays a vital role for any organization, including non-profits like academic institutions. Establishing a strong corporate brand helps create a positive reputation, build trust with stakeholders, and distinguish the organization from its competitors. Key components of corporate branding include logo design, brand messaging, and brand identity. Maintaining consistency in branding across all communication channels and touchpoints is crucial. Moreover, implementing effective strategies to manage and sustain the corporate brand is essential for long-term success (Kingsnorth, 2022; Chaffey, & Ellis-Chadwick, 2018). For instance, Coca-Cola, a globally renowned beverage brand, has a strong identity with a widely recognized logo. Likewise, Apple is known for its innovative design and consistent brand identity.

### 2. Product Branding

Product branding is essential for creating a strong, memorable brand identity that differentiates products from competitors and builds a loyal customer base. Effective branding aligns with the target market's values and resonates with their needs. Thorough market research is crucial to understand the preferences and behaviors of the target audience. This allows companies to tailor their branding efforts effectively. A clear understanding of the target audience helps in developing a unique brand voice and visual identity. Consistency across all touchpoints, from packaging to marketing materials, is vital. Storytelling can enhance branding by sharing the brand's journey, values, and impact, fostering a deeper emotional connection and loyalty (Kingsnorth, 2022; Chaffey, & Ellis-Chadwick, 2018). Examples include Nike's strong image in sports apparel, Hermes' luxury branding, and Starbucks' unique customer experience.

### 3. Service Branding

Service branding is essential for service-based businesses to distinguish themselves in a highly competitive market (Skaalsvik, 2017). It focuses on communicating the unique value proposition and experience offered by the service to customers. Defining key attributes that differentiate the company's services and highlighting them in the branding strategy is crucial. Effective service branding involves creating a strong brand personality that aligns with the qualities and characteristics valued by the target audience. By understanding customers' emotional and practical needs, companies can tailor their brand messages and customer experiences to resonate deeply. Consistency in branding is equally important, encompassing everything from staff interactions with customers to the design of physical and digital touchpoints. Consistent quality and service reinforce customer trust and loyalty.

Storytelling also plays a significant role, as sharing success stories, testimonials, and customer experiences humanizes the service and creates emotional connections. Additionally, being adaptable and responsive to market changes is vital for maintaining a relevant and compelling brand in the service industry. By staying attuned to evolving customer needs and market trends, companies can continuously refine and enhance their service branding strategies. Successful service branding involves creating a distinct and appealing brand identity, delivering exceptional customer experiences, and remaining flexible to market dynamics (Kingsnorth, 2022; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2018; Skaalsvik, 2017; Wirtz, 2017; Mukherjee et al., 2012).

#### 4. Retail Branding.

Retail branding is crucial for business success, helping to create a strong, recognizable brand identity that stands out in a crowded market and builds a loyal customer base. Key elements include developing a unique brand personality, consistent visual elements like logos and color schemes, and a compelling brand story. Providing a seamless, memorable customer experience across all touchpoints is essential. Understanding and addressing the specific needs and desires of the target audience allows retailers to tailor their branding efforts effectively. Effective communication of the brand's value proposition and differentiation from competitors is vital. Overall, a comprehensive retail branding strategy fosters strong emotional connections with customers, leading to increased loyalty and business success (Kingsnorth, 2022; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2018; Sorrentino & Quintano, 2017; Khan & Rahman, 2015; Mathews-Lefebvre & Dubois, 2013).

#### 5. Online Branding.

In today's digital age, online branding is essential for businesses to connect effectively with their target audiences. A strong online presence through a well-designed website, active social media profiles, and tailored content is crucial for success in competitive markets. Managing a positive online reputation by responding to feedback and showcasing testimonials builds trust and credibility. Employing search engine optimization (SEO) strategies enhances visibility and drives organic traffic to company websites. Staying updated with the latest digital marketing trends and technologies ensures companies maintain a competitive edge (Kingsnorth, 2022; Veleva & Tsvetanova, 2020; Ianenko et al., 2020; Moncey & Baskaran, 2020; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2018; Bilro & Loureiro, 2016).

## **2.2 Importance of Brand in Terms of Marketing**

Recognition of a product by consumers is a fundamental aspect of marketing. This visibility distinguishes a product as a brand within a sea of similar offerings (Türk, 2004:58). The decision to brand a product and the type of brand chosen are critical considerations for business managers. Once a product is branded, the brand becomes inseparable from the product itself, influencing strategies related to product development and sales efforts. Companies invest in branding for several reasons (Türk, 2004:58):

### 1. Physical Specifications

Each product's unique physical attributes are crucial for product line management, transportation, storage, quality assessment, labeling, and inventory management.

## 2. Legal Protection

Brands are legally protected through trademarks, safeguarding the value associated with the product or product line.

## 3. Foundation of Marketing Efforts

A brand serves as a recognizable identifier for the product, facilitating the implementation of meaningful marketing programs and strategies.

Branding, therefore, not only enhances product recognition but also plays a pivotal role in shaping business strategies, ensuring legal protection, and driving marketing initiatives.

### **2.3 Social Media Marketing Strategies**

Social media marketing is a powerful tool for enhancing brand visibility and engaging with a company's target audience. To effectively utilize social media, it's essential to identify the platforms where the company's audience is most active and tailor the content specifically for each platform. This may involve creating visually appealing posts on platforms like Instagram, sharing industry insights on LinkedIn, or running targeted ads on Facebook. The objective is to maintain a consistent brand presence across all platforms while adjusting the strategy to suit the unique characteristics of each platform (Kingsnorth, 2022; Wardhana et al., 2021; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2018).

## **3. Material and Method**

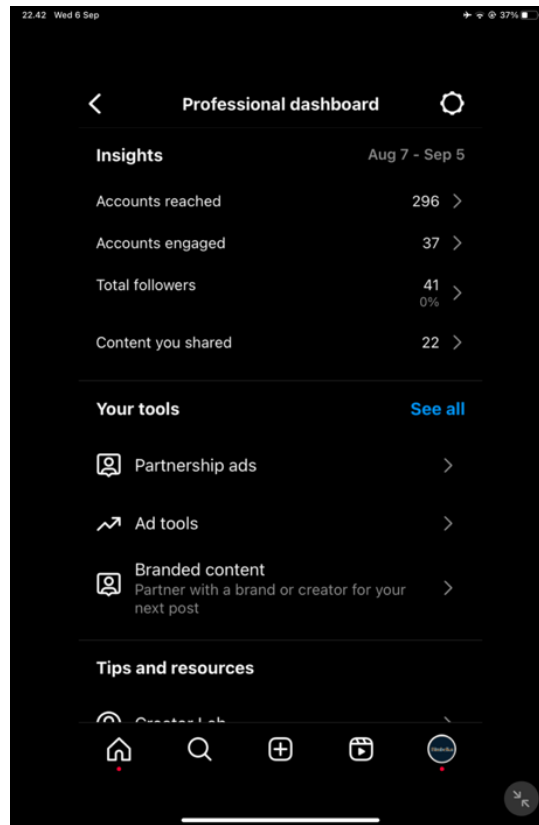
This research conducts theoretical and experimental methods to analyze how branding strategies through social media contribute to business sustainability.

### **3.1 Design Study**

This section outlines the process of collecting and employing data to address the hypotheses put forth. The study focuses on individuals belonging to the millennial generation in Indonesia who use digital banking services. Those eligible to complete the questionnaire are individuals who actively utilize digital banking channels, including but not limited to mobile banking, internet banking, or other digital platforms.

#### **A. Reviewing Early-Stage Branding Prior to Optimizing Strategies Using Social Media**

In its first month of operation with limited funding and before understanding branding concepts, Bimbelku utilized social media platforms and word-of-mouth as initial steps to increase marketing awareness. However, during this period, Bimbelku did not employ optimal branding strategies or effectively utilize social media as a marketing tool. This is evidenced by their sales performance, which only attracted one client.



(Professional dashboard of Instagram analytics before it applied branding strategies and comprehensive social media strategies)

## **B. Implementation of Branding Strategies Using Social Media**

The branding strategies employed involve a comprehensive approach that includes the use of a logo tailored to the target audience, strategic positioning, storytelling, a cohesive color palette, consistent typography, and content marketing driven by an inbound marketing approach.

### **1. Logo Design**

The logo is a crucial element in establishing a brand's identity. By designing a logo that resonates with the target audience, the brand ensures that its visual representation aligns with the values, preferences, and expectations of its potential customers. A well-crafted logo not only enhances brand recognition but also conveys the essence and personality of the brand at a glance.

### **2. Strategic Positioning**

Positioning is about defining where the brand stands in the marketplace and in the minds of the consumers. Effective positioning differentiates the brand from competitors and highlights its unique value proposition. By clearly communicating what makes the brand unique and why it is the best choice for the target audience, the brand can carve out a distinct niche in the market.

### **3. Storytelling Branding**

Storytelling is a powerful tool in branding that involves creating a compelling narrative around the brand. This narrative should reflect the brand's history, mission, values, and vision. By sharing the brand's story, companies can build emotional connections with their audience, making the brand more relatable and memorable. Storytelling also helps in humanizing the brand, which can foster deeper loyalty and engagement from customers.

#### 4. Cohesive Color Palette

The color palette used in branding is more than just a visual element; it plays a significant role in influencing consumer perceptions and emotions. By selecting colors that align with the brand's identity and message, and using them consistently across all marketing materials, the brand can create a cohesive and recognizable look. Colors can evoke specific emotions and associations, making them a critical component in conveying the right message to the audience.

#### 5. Consistent Typography

Typography involves the style and appearance of the text used in branding. Consistent use of typography helps in maintaining a uniform look across various platforms and materials. It enhances readability and contributes to the overall aesthetic of the brand. By choosing fonts that align with the brand's personality and ensuring their consistent use, the brand can reinforce its identity and professionalism.

#### 6. Content Marketing with Inbound Marketing Approach

Content marketing is a strategy focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and engage a clearly defined audience. By adopting an inbound marketing approach, the brand aims to attract customers by providing content that addresses their needs and interests. This approach involves creating high-quality content that educates, informs, and entertains the audience, thereby drawing them towards the brand organically. Inbound marketing is about building trust and establishing the brand as an authority in its field, which can lead to long-term customer relationships and loyalty.

In summary, the branding strategies involve a holistic approach that integrates visual elements, strategic positioning, and engaging storytelling to create a strong and relatable brand identity. By leveraging content marketing and inbound marketing techniques, the brand aims to attract, engage, and delight customers, ultimately driving growth and success.

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Branding Strategy Implementation Using Instagram for Service Marketing

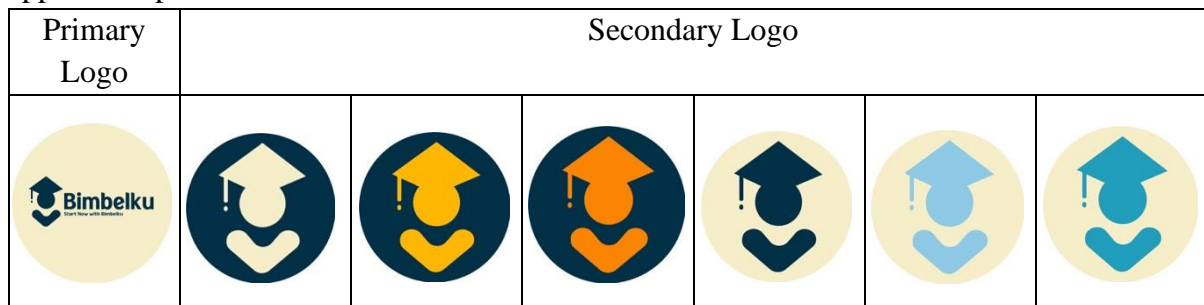
Implementing a comprehensive branding strategy is essential for establishing a strong presence and effectively engaging with the target audience. The branding strategy for Bimbelku, educational platform in accounting and economy that has been running less than a year, involves the thoughtful use of a tailored logo, strategic positioning, storytelling branding, a cohesive color palette, consistent typography, and content marketing driven by an inbound marketing approach. Instagram serves as the primary social media platform for marketing these services.

#### 1. Story-Telling Branding

Storytelling branding involves crafting a narrative that conveys the essence of Bimbelku. This strategy positions Bimbelku as a supportive platform for students struggling with their studies, particularly in accounting and economics. By sharing relatable stories and experiences, Bimbelku connects emotionally with students, showcasing the platform as a trusted ally in their academic journey.

## 2. Logo

The logos play a pivotal role in creating brand recognition and consistency. The primary logo is used across all major platforms and marketing materials, while the secondary logo is applied to specific contexts where a variation is beneficial.



## 3. Color Palette

The color palette is chosen to reflect the brand's personality, which is positive, trustworthy, and bright. It aligns with the target audience of high school and university students. The selected colors include variations of blue, orange, and yellow, which are vibrant and appealing to young learners, conveying both reliability and energy.



(Color palette as a branding strategy tool)

## 4. Typography

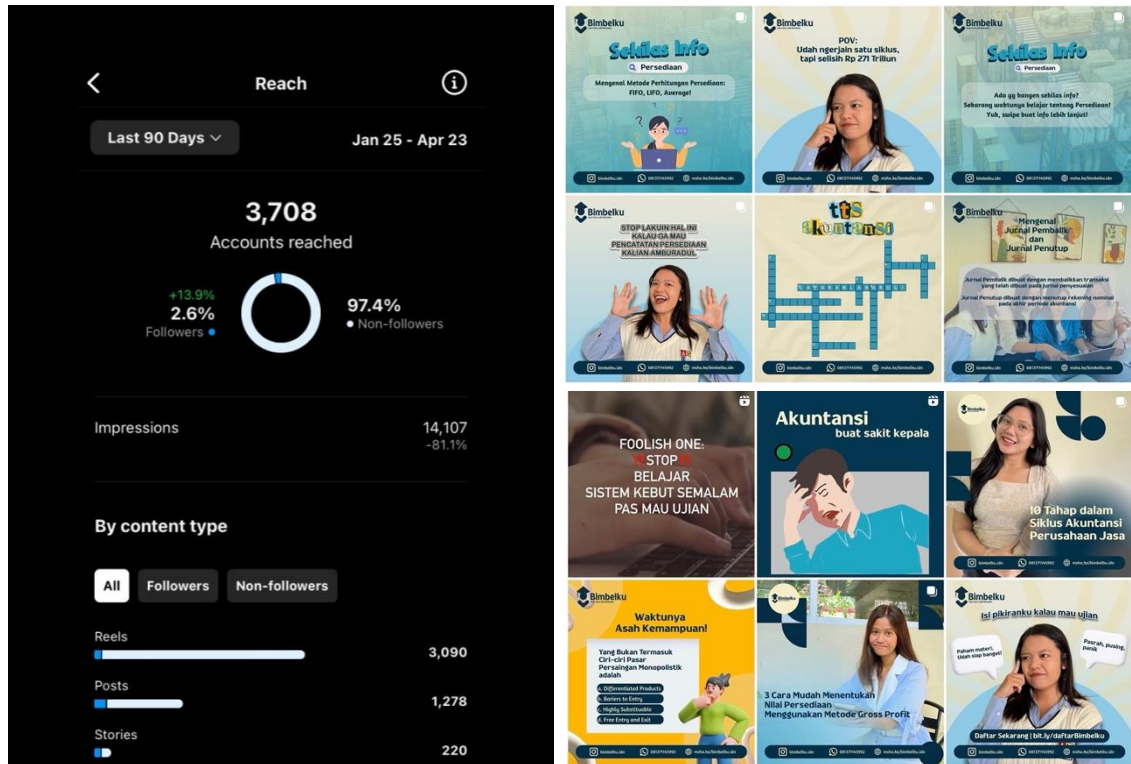
The typography used in Bimbelku's branding is selected to convey the desired brand perception. The fonts are chosen to be clear and readable while reflecting a modern and approachable feel that resonates with the target audience of students.

## 5. Content Marketing

Content marketing is tailored to meet the needs of the target audience by conducting social media audits and staying updated with current trends. The content is aligned with the brand's personality and aims to engage students through educational and motivational posts. This involves creating a mix of informative articles, engaging visuals, and interactive posts that resonate with students' interests and academic needs.

By implementing these strategies on Instagram, Bimbelku aims to create a cohesive and engaging brand presence that not only attracts but also retains the target audience. The use of storytelling, consistent visual identity, and targeted content marketing all contribute to building a strong, relatable, and trustworthy brand in the educational services sector.





(Content marketing using social media as its tool and how it gives impact to awareness converting to sales aligned with inbound marketing approach)

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