

ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand how micro-entrepreneurs in the bakery sector in West Java build and communicate their business identity as a strategy for marketing and branding. The research is motivated by the intense competition in the food industry, which encourages business actors to rely not only on product quality but also on the importance of communication identity. Using a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm, this study employs a case study method and the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) by Michael Hecht as the main theoretical framework. The theory analyzes identity through four layers: personal, enactment, relational, and communal. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 30 micro-bakery entrepreneurs in West Java, along with two supporting and expert informants. The findings reveal that business owners have become aware of the importance of shaping identity through social media and visual branding, although its implementation is not yet optimal. In the personal layer, entrepreneurs view themselves as individuals who run their businesses with a strong sense of familial values. The enactment layer is reflected in how they present their identity through digital language and visuals, such as using polite, informative, and persuasive communication. The relational layer emerges in the interpersonal relationships built with customers to foster loyalty. Meanwhile, the communal layer represents their engagement within the MSME community as a form of collective identity. This research affirms that communication identity is a crucial element in strengthening the competitiveness of micro-enterprises in the digital era.

Keywords: Communication identity, micro-entrepreneurs, bakery, digital media, MSMEs, Communication Theory of Identity (CTI).