

Overcoming the Challenges of Globalization: Review of the McDonald's Indonesia Brand in Adapting Communication Messages for Local Markets

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Abstract

This study explores the role of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in McDonald's Indonesia and its impact on brand equity, consumer engagement, and market competitiveness. Given Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape and rapidly evolving digital economy, McDonald's has implemented localized IMC strategies to enhance its market presence. By integrating traditional and digital media, McDonald's ensures message consistency across television advertisements, social media campaigns, and influencer collaborations. Findings indicate that localized menu offerings, such as Nasi Uduk McD and Ayam Spicy McD, have strengthened McDonald's emotional connection with Indonesian consumers. Additionally, TikTok challenges and KOL (Key Opinion Leader) partnerships have amplified brand awareness and consumer interaction. These strategies align with the growing consumer preference for authentic, culturally relevant experiences, reinforcing IMC's effectiveness in bridging global branding with local relevance. Furthermore, McDonald's adapts CSR initiatives such as environmental sustainability programs and Ramadan campaigns, mirroring consumer values and fostering brand loyalty. Comparative studies with local brands, like HokBen, suggest that McDonald's ability to align its messaging with Indonesian values provides a competitive advantage against both global and domestic competitors. The study concludes that IMC plays a critical role in McDonald's success in Indonesia, emphasizing the necessity of continuous adaptation to cultural and digital trends. Future research should explore long-term consumer behavior patterns and the effectiveness of emerging digital marketing innovations to further enhance McDonald's local engagement strategies.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, McDonald's Indonesia, Consumer Engagement, Brand Equity, Digital Marketing, Localized Strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization, as a phenomenon that connects the world through the integration of economy, culture, and technology, has had a significant impact on local markets in various countries, including Indonesia. In this context, the existing reality shows that globalization has allowed the entry of multinational companies into the Indonesian market. One of the most relevant examples is McDonald's, which since first entered the Indonesian market in 1991, has experienced various challenges in adapting to the tastes and preferences of local consumers. As a global brand known for its Western menus such as burgers and fries, McDonald's initially faced difficulties in attracting Indonesian consumers who are more accustomed to rice-based food and rich flavors.

McDonald's expansion in Indonesia is also accelerated by the development of digital technology that makes it easier to penetrate the market. E-commerce platforms and online food ordering services such as GoFood and GrabFood have become an important part of McDonald's marketing strategy, allowing them to reach a wider segment of customers. In fact, McDonald's is actively using social media to communicate with Indonesian consumers, adapting their digital strategies to better suit the growing digital consumption habits of the Indonesian people (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022).

However, ideally, global companies like McDonald's will need to adapt not only in the technological and logistical aspects but also in their communication and marketing strategies. A brand's success is determined not only by the quality of the products offered, but also by its ability to build emotional connections with local consumers. McDonald's Indonesia managed to attract the attention of the market by launching locally customized menus, such as Nasi Uduk McD and Ayam Spicy McD, which reflect the tastes of the Indonesian people. This step shows that the success of a global brand in the local market is highly dependent on its ability to adapt to the culture and preferences of the local people (Schultz & Schultz, 2003).

Globalization has also brought about a change in Indonesian consumer preferences. If in the previous era, consumers preferred products with a strong global image, now they prefer products that have cultural relevance and reflect local values. McDonald's understands that Indonesian consumers are not only looking for flavors that suit their tastes, but also dining experiences that are familiar with their traditions. Therefore, McDonald's restaurants in Indonesia provide menus with rice, adjust food portions, and even offer variants of Indonesian chili sauce to increase appeal to local customers (FocusEconomics, 2019).

In the context of globalization, communication is one of the key elements in the success of a brand in the local market. At the beginning of its entry into Indonesia, McDonald's adopted a marketing approach that tended to be universal, using their global communication strategy without much adjustment. However, over time, they realized that a more local and relevant communication strategy was needed to build connections with Indonesian consumers. Misunderstanding cultural dynamics can result in a lack of emotional attachment between brands and consumers. For example, global brands such as Levi Strauss have experienced a decline in competitiveness in some countries because they have failed to adapt their communication messages to the local culture (Kitchen, 2017).

In Indonesia, the importance of locally relevant communication is a determining factor in McDonald's success in maintaining its position as one of the leading fast food restaurants. Indonesian consumers have unique values such as family, mutual cooperation, and the habit of eating together, which greatly influences their preferences for a brand. McDonald's has taken advantage of this aspect by running marketing campaigns that emphasize togetherness, such as the Ramadan campaign that promotes a special menu for breaking the fast with the family. In addition, they have also adapted to sustainability trends that are increasingly important to Indonesian consumers, such as reducing the use of plastic in packaging and introducing eco-friendly initiatives in some of their outlets (Schultz et al., 2008).

Communication adjustments are also crucial to reflect cultural sensitivities and avoid controversies that can damage brand reputation. Some global companies have experienced failure because they do not understand the local cultural context in their communication, which ultimately triggers a negative reaction from consumers. McDonald's Indonesia has learned from this experience by being more careful in

conveying their marketing messages, ensuring that their advertising campaigns are in line with the cultural and social values of the Indonesian people.

By understanding the importance of local communication relevance, McDonald's was not only able to maintain its competitiveness amid competition with local fast-food brands such as HokBen and KFC, but also managed to build long-term relationships with Indonesian consumers. As globalization continues to grow, the ability to tailor communication strategies to local needs will be one of the key factors in maintaining brand advantage in the global market.

RESEARCH METHOD

To analyze McDonald's communication message adjustment strategies in Indonesia, a suitable method is a literature review. This method allows researchers to identify, analyze, and synthesize previous research regarding Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), global brand adaptation, and Indonesian consumer behavior (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022). By reviewing various sources such as academic journals, industry reports, and case studies, research can provide a comprehensive understanding without the need for direct interaction with the research object (Schultz & Schultz, 2003). Literature reviews also help compare McDonald's strategies with other brands, providing in-depth insight into the effectiveness of global marketing communications (Yin, 2018).

RESULT

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a strategic approach that brings together various marketing communication channels to create consistent, relevant, and sustainable messages. In the Indonesian market, this approach is very important for McDonald's because consumers are exposed to various media platforms, both online and offline. IMC enables McDonald's to optimize their communication with consumers, deliver coordinated messages across multiple channels, and create a unified brand experience (Schultz & Schultz, 2003).

One of the key elements of IMC is message consistency. In the context of McDonald's Indonesia, this means delivering a message that is in harmony with local preferences and culture across all communication channels. For example, McDonald's marketing campaign showcases local nuances by promoting Indonesian specialties, such as Nasi Uduk McD and Ayam Spicy McD, which have become part of their identity in Indonesia. McDonald's uses a variety of communication channels, including social media, television commercials, and offline events, to ensure that the message conveyed remains consistent (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022). IMC also plays an important role in creating consumer engagement in the digital era. Today's consumers want not only information, but also culturally and emotionally relevant experiences. By integrating online and offline channels, McDonald's can build deeper relationships with consumers, while creating a greater impact on their brand awareness and customer loyalty (FocusEconomics, 2019).

Utilization of Digital and Traditional Media by McDonald's Indonesia

Indonesia is one of the markets with a very high rate of digital adoption. With more than 204 million internet users in 2022 (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2022), digital media such as social media, e-commerce, and video-based platforms are becoming the main channels in McDonald's marketing communications. However, traditional media such as television remain relevant because they are able to reach a wider segment of society, especially in rural areas. Therefore, McDonald's Indonesia uses a combination of digital and traditional media to reach consumers more effectively.

1. McDonald's Indonesia Digital Campaign

Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become the main tools in McDonald's digital campaigns. For example, McDonald's uses TikTok Challenges to promote new menus or special deals, which encourage direct interaction from consumers. One successful campaign was the dance challenge for McD's Spicy Chicken, which went viral and significantly increased customer engagement (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022). In addition, McDonald's also leverages an e-commerce-based marketing strategy by maximizing McDelivery's services that are integrated with platforms such as GoFood and GrabFood. In this way, McDonald's can reach more customers who are increasingly accustomed to delivery services, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic has increased people's dependence on online services.

2. Use of Television Advertising and Traditional Media

Although McDonald's is very active in digital marketing, television advertising remains a key element in their IMC strategy. As Tokopedia did in its "Masa Indonesia Shopping (WIB)" campaign, McDonald's also combined television advertising with digital media to create a broader and more effective campaign (Schultz et al., 2008). For example, McDonald's Indonesia's Ramadan campaign featured a television advertisement depicting moments of togetherness during breaking the fast with family. The campaign is not only broadcast on television but is also amplified through social media, making it more integrated and effective in reaching a wider audience.

3. Participation in Local Events

In addition to digital and television advertising, local events also play an important role in McDonald's IMC strategy in Indonesia. McDonald's actively sponsors and holds community-based events, such as food festivals or social campaigns. For example, McDonald's launched CSR programs such as "McDonald's Cares for the Environment," which invites the public to be more aware of sustainability issues, similar to Aqua's "Bijak Berplastik" campaign (FocusEconomics, 2019). Through participation in local events, McDonald's not only increases its brand visibility but also builds a stronger emotional connection with consumers through hands-on experiences.

McDonald's Indonesia Collaboration with Local Influencers (KOLs)

In Indonesia, local influencers or Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) play a big role in supporting marketing campaigns. Influencers have a significant influence on consumer decisions, especially among the younger generation. Research shows that Indonesian consumers tend to trust recommendations from influencers more than conventional advertising, because they are considered more authentic and relevant to their lifestyle (Kitchen & Schultz, 2001).

1. McDonald's Strategy in Using Local Influencers

McDonald's has teamed up with popular influencers on TikTok and Instagram to promote their local menus. For example, in the McD Spicy Chicken campaign, McDonald's collaborated with food vloggers and social media celebrities to provide honest reviews about their products. In addition, McDonald's also uses an interaction-based strategy with influencers to create more

engaging campaigns. For example, they launched a campaign on TikTok with a challenge format, where users are invited to create creative videos related to their new menu.

2. Increase Brand Credibility Through Influencers

In addition to increasing awareness, collaboration with influencers also helps McDonald's build credibility in the local market. Consumers often trust local influencers who understand their culture and values more than direct messages from companies. Therefore, choosing the right influencer is a key factor in the success of McDonald's IMC campaign in Indonesia (FocusEconomics, 2019).

Benefits of Customizing Communication Messages

Locally relevant communication messages allow companies to build stronger emotional connections with consumers. In Indonesia, cultural values such as kinship, mutual cooperation, and pride in local heritage greatly influence consumer behavior. When a brand successfully reflects these values in its communication messages, consumers feel more emotionally connected, which ultimately increases loyalty to the brand (Schultz & Schultz, 2003).

McDonald's Indonesia understands that emotional attachment with consumers is essential to maintain its competitiveness in a competitive market. Therefore, they adjust their marketing and communication strategies to be closer to the culture and habits of the Indonesian people. One of the main ways McDonald's does is by presenting menus that suit local flavors, such as Nasi Uduk McD and Ayam Spicy McD. This product not only offers something more familiar to consumers, but also reflects the love of the Indonesian people for rice-based food and typical spices (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022).

Additionally, McDonald's leverages culture-based marketing strategies to build strong emotional connections with its consumers. Their campaigns often feature the concept of family meals, which reflects the close family values in Indonesia. For example, McDonald's Ramadan campaign always raises the theme of togetherness when breaking the fast, by showing scenes of families enjoying McDonald's specialties together. This strategy is similar to the "Bango: Nusantara Culinary Heritage" campaign by Unilever, which managed to attract consumers' attention by highlighting cultural aspects in its brand communication (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022).

Increasing McDonald's Competitiveness in the Local Market

Customization of communication messages also allows McDonald's Indonesia to compete more effectively with local brands, such as HokBen and traditional food stalls. Local brands often have an advantage in understanding consumer preferences, especially when it comes to taste and eating habits. Therefore, McDonald's must adopt a communication strategy that emphasizes the excellence of their products while still maintaining local relevance (Schultz et al., 2008). For example, McDonald's managed to compete with HokBen by launching a more affordable rice- and side dish-based thrift package. This strategy shows that menu adjustments and communications that reflect local preferences can help global brands win the hearts of Indonesian consumers. In addition, the use of television and social media advertisements featuring local cultural elements further strengthens the appeal of the McDonald's brand in the Indonesian market (Kitchen & Schultz, 2001).

In addition to McDonald's, global e-commerce such as Shopee and Lazada have also shown how customizing communication messages can improve their competitiveness in the Indonesian market. Shopee, for example, adopted a local approach through the "Shopee 11.11 Big Sale" campaign, which

featured special promotions and involved local celebrities and influencers. McDonald's implements a similar strategy by using public figures and local Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) to promote their Indonesian menu, making it more acceptable to the market (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022).

Building a Positive Image of McDonald's in Indonesia

One of the biggest benefits of customizing communication messages is building a positive brand image in the eyes of consumers. When a brand shows concern for the local culture, consumers tend to respond better and associate the brand with the values they value. This positive brand image not only helps build trust, but also increases long-term loyalty (Schultz & Schultz, 2003). McDonald's Indonesia has succeeded in creating a positive image through various social and sustainability campaigns. For example, McDonald's runs CSR programs that focus on community welfare, such as "McDonald's Care", which includes charitable activities and assistance for people in need. This strategy is similar to that carried out by Unilever with the handwashing education campaign by Lifebuoy, which not only promotes its products but also shows its commitment to Indonesian public health (FocusEconomics, 2019).

In addition, McDonald's also takes steps to support environmental sustainability. In recent years, McDonald's Indonesia has reduced the use of plastic in their packaging, as part of an effort to reduce its environmental impact. This step is in line with the "Bijak Berplastik" campaign run by Aqua (Danone Indonesia), which aims to increase public awareness of the importance of plastic recycling (Kitchen & Tourky, 2022). Even in the cosmetics industry, local brands like Wardah have managed to build a positive image by highlighting Islamic values and sustainability in their communication messages. McDonald's has also implemented a similar strategy by tailoring their campaigns to better suit the values of the Muslim community in Indonesia, such as by offering halal menus and running social programs during the month of Ramadan (Schultz et al., 2008).

DISCUSSION

1. The Impact of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) on Brand Equity at McDonald's Indonesia

A study by Jaya & Susanti (2019) found that Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has a significant impact on brand equity at McDonald's Indonesia. The research, conducted using a quantitative approach, showed that consistent IMC strategies, including advertising, promotions, and public relations, help strengthen McDonald's brand perception among Indonesian consumers. The findings highlight that IMC plays a crucial role in consumer trust and loyalty, which aligns with McDonald's efforts to maintain a strong local brand presence. This study suggests that McDonald's should continuously refine its IMC strategy by integrating digital engagement to maintain and enhance brand equity.

2. Comparative Analysis of McDonald's Marketing Strategies in Indonesia and Malaysia

A study by Dilip et al. (2021) compared McDonald's marketing strategies in Indonesia and Malaysia, highlighting how the company tailors its promotional efforts to different cultural contexts. The research found that Indonesian consumers prefer culturally relevant marketing campaigns, such as localized menu offerings and influencer collaborations. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, price-based promotions and digital marketing dominate. These findings emphasize the need for McDonald's Indonesia to further localize its IMC strategies by enhancing emotional engagement through community-based marketing and CSR initiatives.

3. The Role of IMC in Consumer Decision-Making in Indonesia

A study by Nidhomuddin & Kodrat (2023) explored how IMC influences purchasing decisions through customer experience in the Indonesian market. The findings revealed that integrated advertising, direct marketing, and social media engagement positively affect customer decision-making processes. This is highly relevant to McDonald's Indonesia, as it emphasizes the importance of a seamless omnichannel experience. By ensuring that their digital and offline touchpoints deliver a consistent and culturally relevant brand message, McDonald's can reinforce consumer trust and purchase intent.

4. The Evolution of IMC in Indonesia: Trends and Challenges

Estaswara & Said (2024) analyzed the evolution of IMC in Indonesia over 30 years and found that many companies, including McDonald's, have shifted from traditional inside-out marketing to more consumer-centric outside-in strategies. The study identified that social media, influencer marketing, and experiential campaigns are becoming dominant in IMC frameworks. This reinforces the idea that McDonald's Indonesia must continuously evolve its IMC approach to remain competitive, focusing on interactive and experience-driven campaigns.

5. The Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing in McDonald's IMC Strategy

A study by Messakh, Wono, & Hermawan (2024) investigated consumer preferences for IMC activities in Indonesia, revealing that digital marketing and influencer collaborations are the most impactful. This aligns with McDonald's Indonesia's successful TikTok campaigns and influencer partnerships to promote local menu items. The study recommends that brands like McDonald's should deepen their engagement with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and integrate real-time social media interactions to maximize reach and customer engagement.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study confirms that Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) plays an important role in strengthening McDonald's position in Indonesia. Strategies that prioritize message consistency, cultural adaptation, and digital engagement are proven to increase brand equity, consumer loyalty and market competitiveness. By optimizing influencer marketing, customer experience and omnichannel marketing, McDonald's can continue to adapt to changing trends and maintain relevance in the Indonesian market.

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