

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Marketing as Culture: an Applied Anthropological Study of Esteh Indonesia's Franchise Business Strategy

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Abstract

Franchise expansion in Indonesia's beverage sector has facilitated the dissemination of standardized business models across various cultural contexts in Indonesia. Nonetheless, everyday practices through which cultural differences are negotiated in franchise marketing remain under-theorized. Utilizing the perspective of business anthropology, which views culture as practice and meaning-making, this qualitative case study investigates the development, socialization, and enactment of marketing strategies at Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan (Makassar) and examines how these micro-processes influence the sales performance and customer loyalty. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 13 informants of different backgrounds, and supplemented with company documents and media sources. Through thematic analysis, we explored the transformation of strategic ideas into routines via internal communication, service meetings and training modules. The findings indicate that marketing functions as a culturally embedded practice, where socio-cultural differences are treated as dynamic interactional realities that shape service encounters and promotional decisions rather than as static segmentation categories. This strategy is maintained through ongoing internal discussions and standardized online training, ensuring consistent brand coherence while permitting localized reinterpretation that fosters trust and shared meanings with customers. This negotiated balance between standardization and local relevance contributes to increased consumer trust and higher food industry sales. The study advances applied business anthropology by elucidating how organizational culture serves as an operational guide that stabilizes frontline practice, mediates cultural differences, and supports growth in competitive franchising.

Keywords: marketing strategy, organizational culture, consumer loyalty, sociocultural factors, franchise beverage business, Esteh Indonesia

1. Introduction

Marketing strategy within the company is essential in increasing sales and earnings profits (Ali et al., 2024; Malicha, 2022; Terho et al., 2015). In preparing marketing strategies,

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each company has different ways and implementations to meet market needs (Morgan et al., 2025). One of the skills needed to run marketing optimally is the ability to conduct research, which aims to collect information about consumer interests through various methods, to realize the presence of products that can be representative of the wants and needs of the target market (Bera & Giri, 2024; Blasco-Arcas et al., 2022; Rachmad, 2020). According to Chandra (2016), a marketing strategy is a plan that describes the company's expectations for the impact of various marketing activities or programs on the demand for its products or product lines in a specific target market. Marketing programs include actions that can affect product demand, including changing prices, modifying advertising campaigns, designing special promotions, and determining distribution channel choices.⁴

Consumer assessment is an important aspect of the next marketing step. Therefore, market demand in a company or business is based on the high number of product usages, and how consumer responses to the product become a reference for the company's product development (Carrier, 2021; Svendsen et al., 2011). To obtain these components, it is necessary to understand and use the proper methods to describe the concepts of the market or consumer needs.

This concept can be found when good communication exists between the company as a provider and the consumer. Consumer behavior can be influenced by external environments such as culture and communication (Connell et al., 2023). In this case, anthropology can be used as a medium to understand the market and consumer behavior.

Anthropological theory can guide companies' components in understanding the meaning of consumption on the world economic stage (Carrier, 2021). Jordan (2010) said that the anthropological method contributes to increase a deeper awareness of a product's design as part of its contribution to meet consumer needs. In business anthropology, marketing is a series of activities to establish and market products based on the relationship between consumer wants and needs (Qu & Mardani, 2023; Woodall & Hiller, 2022).

Marketing activities are one of the methods for maintaining a company's existence. Marketing has experienced a shift in orientation, which was previously focused on product excellence, and then shifted focus to consumer needs and desires (Martin & Woodside, 2017). The change was referred to as an attachment by Khrisna (2011) that affects each other to the company's profits. The function and role of anthropology in this activity can broadly help companies to understand consumer needs, lifestyles, create products based on the prevailing culture, and play an essential role in regulating the company's organization (Nosratabadi et al., 2020).

Strategy is defined as the intention to achieve something, where the intention is the company's goal. Kotler & Keller (2014) noted that marketing is a social process in which individuals and groups get what they need and want by creating, offering, and freely exchanging valuable products with other parties. Furthermore, from an anthropological perspective, marketing strategy is the practice of "meaning management" based on cultural context, which aligns offerings products, prices, distribution, communication, services with the system of symbols, identities, and everyday practices of consumers so that brands gain social relevance and legitimacy (McCabe & Denny, 2019), (Douglas & Isherwood, 2021).

As one of the efforts to increase the attractiveness of the company's products, a marketing strategy was formed, making a collection of ideas and actions with a high chance of success its primary step. This step is not new in the business world. Marketing strategies began to be known in the 1950s and have been applied since the end of the World War II (Lukitaningsih, 2014). It is also explained that the involvement of anthropology in the preparation of marketing strategies came to the public knowledge since the 19th century (Malhotra, 2013).

Marketing strategies are widely applied across industries, including the rapidly growing food and beverage (F&B) industry. The F&B industry encompasses a broad range of enterprises, from small-scale street vendors to high-end restaurants, demonstrating its scalability and market potential (Mısır, 2024). However, this sector was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that the growth of the F&B sector dropped sharply from 7.78% in 2019 to 1.58% in 2020 (Tjia et al., 2021), with revenues declining by up to 92.47% □ a decrease greater than other industries due to large-scale social restrictions (Hurriyaturohman et al., 2022; Svendsen et al., 2011).

Consumer demand for food and beverages is rising, fueled by digital and media exposure to diverse culinary trends, which strengthens food and beverage marketing and franchising. In Q2 2021, franchise businesses grew by 2.95% and contributed 6.66% to Indonesia's GDP (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) 2022). Local brands such as Janji Jiwa, Xi Bo Ba, and Esteh Indonesia have gained traction by combining cultural authenticity with innovation. Esteh builds its identity around traditional tea and claims consistent taste, appearance, sanitation, and careful selection of raw materials. It also emphasizes the need for professional HR, quality control, and solid operational standards to compete and expand in a crowded market with many fast-growing competitors.

In addition to product innovation, Esteh builds partnership projects. To date, there have been as many as 900 Esteh partnership branches throughout Indonesia, one of which is Makassar City. As many as 24 Esteh partners, or what is commonly called 'gardens'

in this city, have been established. As a franchise business, each partner is responsible for their garden. This includes internal conditions, sales, marketing strategies and target markets. One of the gardens with the highest turnover in Makassar is Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan. Even though it is in a competitive location for the same type of business, it does not dampen the number of enthusiasts of Esteh products. Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan reaped a daily turnover of 5 million rupiah or a monthly turnover of 150 million with a net profit of 20% or around IDR 30 million (Azis, 2023).

While marketing strategy research has extensively discussed the marketing mix and performance outcomes, fewer studies explain *how* culture becomes actionable in strategy. That is to say how socio-cultural distinctions are translated into day-to-day organizational routines, internal communication, and frontline services in franchise settings. In rapidly expanding local F&B franchises, the critical challenge is not only designing a strategy but also ensuring that strategic ideas are effectively disseminated across outlet teams and adapted to local consumer meanings without losing brand consistency. Empirically, applied anthropological accounts of Indonesian beverage franchises at the outlet level remain limited, particularly those tracing the micro-process that links strategy formulation, internal socialization, and measurable sales/loyalty outcomes. This study addresses these gaps through a qualitative case study of Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan, focusing on (1) how marketing strategies are prepared, (2) how they are socialized to employees, and (3) how these practices shape the company's performance in a competitive local market.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach, where the data collected is mainly in the form of words, sentences, or images that have more significant meaning and can spur the emergence of a more real understanding (Creswell, 2012). This study used a case study approach, which is coherent with the type and approach used. Case study research can raise this phenomenon to the latest, unique, meaningful, and different problems from related studies.

This research was conducted at Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan, located on Perintis Kemerdekaan Street in Makassar, Indonesia. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, targeting individuals with direct involvement and knowledge of the company's marketing activities, including managers, team leaders, and front-line employees. Primary data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 13 key informants who were all members of the organization, allowing rich contextual insights, as shown in the following table:

Table 1 : List of Informant Names (Pseudonym)

No	Name	Age	Gender	Position	Ethnicity
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1	Reza Abidin	42	Male	Owner	Buginese
2	Burhan	28	Male	HRD Manager	Buginese
3	Mirna	30	Famale	Operations Manajer	Javanese
4	Rania Asyahra	28	Famale	Finance	Buginese
5	Fadlan	21	Male	Frontline Staff	Makassarese
6	Susi	20	Famale	Frontline Staff	Torajan
7	Jonatan	20	Male	Frontline Staff	Torajan
8	Rifki Nadim	20	Male	Frontline Staff	Makassarese
9	Junaid	20	Male	Frontline Staff	Makassarese
10	Sangkala	21	Male	Frontline Staff	Makassarese
11	hartono	23	Male	Kitchen Staff	Javanese
12	Suryanti	24	Famle	Kitchen Staff	Javanese
13	Jusriani	28	Famale	Kitchen Staff	Javanese

Secondary data were obtained through a systematic review of company documents, journal articles, and relevant media publications selected based on their relevance to Esteh's marketing strategies and organizational practices. Primary and secondary data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and themes. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, and the study followed standard ethical research protocols to ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation of the participants.

The data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's (1994) model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. All interview data were fully transcribed and manually coded using thematic analysis techniques. This systematic process allowed for the identification of dominant themes and recurring patterns in the informants' narratives.

3. Results

1.1. Preparation of Esteh Indonesia's Marketing Strategy

Marketing is 'the most efficient art or science linking production with consumption through distribution' (Stanton et al., 2004). Marketing is also considered as a discipline and/ or a practice, Lien, (1997) explained that the primary goal of marketing both as a discipline and as a practice is first, to obtain as much information as possible from consumers about their products and services; second, to know and understand the thoughts and actions of consumers when making purchase decisions; third, to strategically use both types of information obtained to develop new products.

The marketing program is responsible for the sales and introduction of products and brands

in the market. In franchise companies like Esteh, 80% of the formulation of marketing strategies is handled by the central party, and 20% is designed to meet partners' needs (Owner Interview, June 22, 2023). Marketing leads to the company's goals and becomes an overview of the company's vision and mission; therefore, marketing requires careful consideration. The following aspects were considered in formulating Esteh's marketing strategy: age, gender, sexual orientation, geography (regional differences), religion, and ethnicity.

1.1.1. Age

Marketing strategy planning requires an understanding of products and consumers. The goal is to ensure that the products produced are in accordance with market needs. One aspect of strategic planning that is of concern is the age of consumers. Normal individuals can be seen by the degree of anatomical and physiological development (Mathur et al., 2024).

Esteh views age group as an important aspect in designing a product and publishing a new program. This statement is the result of observations made by the marketing division during the overall product development whether the product is in accordance with the needs of the market, or the views of older people, or the tastes of younger people, and so on. By paying attention to the age range of consumers, product classifications become more diverse and memorable, making them easier to accept.

In this category, Esteh developed a model product development scheme as follows:

Tabel 2. Product Development Scheme Model

Component	Contribution
Target	Minimum age of 3 years, adolescents, adults, elderly.
Support	Raw materials are sourced from nature, premium, guaranteed quality, high standardization, safe for long-term consumption, halal certification.
Insight	Campaigns on social media, personalization through WhatsApp Messenger, monitoring <i>feedback</i> .
Promise	Original tea, Natural and preservative-free, Refreshing and beneficial for the health of the body, skin, etc.

The scheme was the initial design of Esteh's products, but along with market movements and lifestyle changes, Esteh's products underwent reformulation and began to adopt the theme of "timeless." Esteh has superior products in every age line. The decision to procure

products that can be consumed by all age ranges of Indonesian people initially came from market research conducted by the company. Haidar Wurjanto, the CEO and Founder of Esteh Indonesia stated that when making Esteh (<https://www.idxchannel.com/> 6-12-2024), think about presenting a basic product, which is simple and known to everyone. Some of the products launched considering the age category of consumers before being reformulated are as follows:

Tabel 3. Product Development by Age

Product	Age	Information
Original Series: <i>Original tea</i>		
<i>Jasmine</i>	Starting from 5 years old	The original variant uses 90% basic tea, contains more antioxidants, lighter taste does not cause nausea. Contains less sugar/fructose.
<i>Green Tea</i>		
<i>Lychee</i>		
<i>Lemon</i>		
Creamy Series: <i>Redvelvet</i>		
<i>Avocado</i>	Starting from 12 years old	The creamy variant uses 3 mixed ingredients so that it tastes heavier, has a thick texture, and contains higher sugar/glucose.
<i>Taro</i>		
<i>Thai</i>		

Currently, the development of Esteh products increasingly prioritizes customization to consumer tastes, making the 'timeless' label increasingly complex.

1.1.2. Gender

In its marketing activities, Esteh expresses its products in a complex way. Products and their components, such as content, packaging, and physical characteristics, can form special characters that affect consumer perception and meet consumer needs. There are differences in the needs and perspectives of men and women. Although insignificant, the company assesses that the two have different properties in understanding consumption actions.

The company strives to develop a general product. However, few products have been launched that consider the needs, desires, and viewpoints of both men and women. Male consumers are deemed to prioritize functionality over product aesthetics. The statement has also been adopted in marketing and product design, although only for specific points. In a study conducted by Geiselman et al. (1998), regarding the need for sweet foods, 63 out of 100 women chose to insert sweet foods in every meal. The general public's perception of women as soft and sweet individuals also leads companies to create products that represent them.

Sweet foods stimulate the production of serotonin in the brain, which can provide feelings of happiness and affect a person's mood (Qurrat-ul-Aen Inam et al., 2016). This is one of the reasons why there are many Esteh products with sweet, soft, and eye-catching flavors.

Basically, Esteh's products do not explicitly target the products they launch. However, through consumer feedback, the proportion of their products becomes dominant in one group. However, consumers can choose and experience the same Esteh products. To maintain its survival and increase sales opportunities, Esteh cannot create barriers to product design.

Under certain conditions, the understanding of the criteria for Esteh drinks can be influenced. This situation can be observed at events. Partners responsible for certain activities can deliberately determine the products to market. The selection of products will be adjusted to the location of the activity, considering the number, gender, occupation, or consumer status.

1.1.3. Sexual Orientation

According to the American Psychological Association, sexual orientation refers to a person's sense of identity based on attraction, related behaviors, and membership in other communities (Bhowmik & Bhattacharjee, 2024). Sexual orientation is a trait of a person's sexual identity that cannot be clearly visualized in marketing. Observing humanist actions, romanticization, and consumer interest is one way for companies to adjust their marketing.

This behavior can describe a person's attraction, words, responses between individuals, and situations between them. Happiness and love translate into sharing and caring. As a result, product and marketing actions reflect implicit meanings such as empathy, emotion, joy, affection, satisfaction, and other feelings. One way to implement these ideas is through subjective, emotional, aesthetic, and experiential products and marketing activities. A common concept to describe interest/relationship is visualized in the product, product naming, and other offerings enforced in each Esteh garden. One of them is the launch of a series "Cerita Cinta."

The "Cerita Cinta" series is one of several products that are present to celebrate Valentine's Day in 2023. This series consists of two new product variants: *Storyberry Romancheese* and *Storyberry Yourheart*. Both products raise the theme of Valentine's Day, which is synonymous with romance and love. The combination of pure white milk symbolizes holy and sincere feelings, while the sweet and fresh strawberry red/pink symbolizes hope for the future. In addition, the purpose of this promotion is to provide space for consumers to share their affection with their loved ones.

However, in marketing, Esteh generalizes all forms of social groups to avoid inequality does not occur. Esteh delves into the concept of friendship in a social group as a target

market because dependence in a group is quite intense compared to that in a family or oneself.

To manifest this concept in Esteh's marketing strategy, especially the independence pioneer garden, several promotional alternatives were held, and procurement was adjusted to the habits of the surrounding community. In the Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan area, consumers are dominated by student groups, office workers, and medical personnel, so it is suitable for filling time and activities carried out with friends, colleagues, and partners. Esteh sees the tendency of group consumption to dominate sales and has the potential to realize one of Esteh's mottos, namely, "*Everything will be esteh in time.*"

1.1.4. Geography (Regional Differences)

People living in an area have their own culture and characteristics. Every region in Indonesia has cultural elements that can be categorized into two types: observable elements, such as the characteristics of society, material art, food, language, and social order. The second element, such as beliefs, attitudes, values, perceptions, stereotypes, categorization, evaluation, expectations, memories, and opinions, cannot be observed directly. These cultural elements are interconnected and influence one another.

From a business perspective, understanding the cultural elements of a particular region is important. Bruno in MediaBeacon (Bruno, 2015) stated that the international equivalent company, Dunkin' Donuts, is reviewing its market so destination countries can more easily accept its products. One example found in the F&B company Dunkin' Donuts products in China is a variety of donuts with seaweed and grilled pork. In Korea, Dunkin' provides donuts with kimchi and jalapeno sausage. The product is a form of adjustment between the original product and the type of traditional food that tastes in the area, according to the local community's eating habits.

Regional differences cause inequality in people's needs. This is a challenge for companies to develop the right strategy. As one of the actively expanding franchise companies, Esteh is present in almost all major cities in Indonesia. By bringing the company's vision and mission to different towns, Esteh also pays attention to the local culture. The adjustments include product development, marketing activities, and company instruments to meet standards and consumer needs.

In 2021, after the pandemic began to subside, Esteh began to consider productions involving regional elements. Esteh partners are given the opportunity to design promos, products, and other marketing variables according to their regions. At this stage, the marketing department, SPV Area, and owner involvement accompany the partner's freedom in determining the design. Currently, Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan is one of the Esteh partners that provides local products and promotions.

In addition to being used as a promotional variable, regional differences are also important

for the availability of raw materials and the existence of gardens. This can be seen from the statements of customers who feel more satisfied with the services and products offered by Esteh. Thus, Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan is active and capable of organizing new products as the next promotion topic or the availability of raw materials to maintain consistency.

1.1.5. Religion

Marketing is considered the process of planning concepts, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas of goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals. In the concept of marketing, there are three views:

1.1.1.1 Traditional marketing

This concept assumes that customers are interested in the cost benefits of the products they purchase. Does the product they buy bring profit, and is the price relatively affordable? Customers prioritize the features, shapes, colors, fittings, and products they buy. The customer uses logic and rational thinking to consume the product. Every penny that customers spend is assessed for necessity and usefulness.

1.1.1.2 Emotional marketing

The company tries to touch the emotions, memories, and attraction of customers to the products it sells. In this case, the customer is irrational; they no longer think about how much it costs; the important thing is that they are emotionally interested.

1.1.1.3 Experiential marketing

The company strives to create an attractive impression on customers. This concept can be seen in restaurant and café marketing, where companies try to create a café atmosphere, service, taste, and music that give a deep impression to customers.

From this concept, the religious aspect can overshadow the three types of marketing. Indonesia has several religions, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Khong Hu Chu, and other religions. Although the religions in Indonesia are diverse, Islam is the religion followed by most of the Indonesian population, so producers take advantage of this momentum, for example, by providing products that represent the meaning of Sharia, Ramadan, *Halalan Toyyiban*, and so on.

Currently, the Indonesian people want every food and beverage product to be labeled halal by the Indonesian Ulema Council/MUI or other halal institutions. Any restaurant, café, or place to eat must be halal. Therefore, Esteh issued a policy by referring to the requirements

issued by the Halal Product Assurance Agency/BPJH, including: 1) using halal ingredients and producing halal products; 2) providing adequate resources in quantity and quality for the preparation, implementation, and continuous improvement of the halal product assurance system; 3) conducting, coaching, and improving competencies in the halal field according to needs; and 4) conducting socialization of halal policies to ensure that all personnel maintain the integrity of the halal.

Fealy & White (2008) explain that Islamic individuals consume products rationally. That means they will consume the products if they are of better quality, not simply because of religious sentiments. Furthermore, Reza Abidin, the owner of Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan, also conveyed the halal guarantee of Esteh's products and services as follows:

Regarding the halal assurance system of the central Esteh, there is nothing incriminating from partners such as pioneers who have been equipped with socialization from the center or from the owner. In my opinion, what is stated in the agreement is also weighty and appropriate for the convenience of consumers and partners (Interview with Reza Abidin, owner of Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan, March 18, 2023).

As an effort to realize the above policy points, Esteh continuously urges and represents knowledge about the policy to the crew and consumers through communication media, including posters and stickers that are often found in Esteh's buildings/work areas.

Although Islam is the center of product transformation, Esteh's company still adjusts its marketing by involving religious holidays. For example, Christianity celebrates Christmas, Hinduism celebrates Vesak, and Buddhism celebrates the Chinese New Year. Esteh celebrated by launching promotions that can represent the day of victory of certain religions so that the momentum can be in accordance with the company's vision, which is to become a product that always exists by #adaEstehdisetiapmomen jargon.

1.1.1.4 Ethnicity

Food is considered a cultural practice that distinguishes one culture from another (Albritton et al., 2013; Nurti, 2017). If you look at it in detail, it is clear that there are cultural differences that can be observed in the basic ingredients for making food, the way of preservation and preparation, the amount and variety available each time of eating the preferred and unpreferred tastes, customs and traditions of serving food, the equipment and utensils used, and certain beliefs about the properties of certain foods. Furthermore, the techniques used for food presentation and consumption also vary between cultures.

As a cultural component, food plays an important role in shaping the way individuals and cultural groups eat. At the individual level, food can describe self-identity and self-expression, whereas in a broader context, food reflects an identity that distinguishes one

culture from another (Mohan, 2023).

In multinational franchise companies such as Esteh, the local cultural element requires a separate segment. Although there are several marketing activities that raise the theme of local culture in promotional activities, on the scale of production, Esteh still refers to the perspective of most consumers in general. Esteh tries to collaborate between the taste, texture, and color/appearance of the product. This is considered one of the company's innovations in expanding consumer views of Esteh products. From several Esteh products, it was found that there is a unique formulation and that acculturation can be visualized between traditional and contemporary products. One of the statements from Esteh Indonesia Makmur provided the following description:

Most of us try to collaborate with fresh ones, such as the new strawberry and milk menu. Most consumers in the central Bogor outlet approved. Therefore, we are attempting to market it in other gardens. (Interview with Burhan, Esteh Indonesia Makmur Production Team, April 22, 2023)

Regarding the design of new products, it is necessary to understand the eating culture of specific groups. The Esteh team used a sample of people on the island of Java as a reference. Then it is known that it is necessary to pay attention to the value that corresponds to what is consumed. Food values are seen as a form of culture, representing ethnic, regional, and national identities. Eating habits have been used as an important or even decisive criterion for F&B companies to learn more about ethnic cultures.

Esteh's new products are also available at other Esteh gardens. Some of Esteh's new product innovations are marketed within a certain period. This was explained in an interview with the manager of Esteh Indonesia Makmur.

For product trials, the central outlet is for 1-3 months at the level of the production team and the local community. Then, move to other partners with a trial period of 3-5 months. Later, the field team submits a new sales report, and there are results related to the product. (Interview with Mirna, manager Esteh Indonesia Makmur, March 27, 2023)

Based on the interview, it was concluded that at the marketing stage, which affects the ethnicity of a region, Esteh authorized the domiciled Regional SPV and partners to conduct research and improvise strategies. Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan fronts the urban community of Makassar as a reference for a series of marketing activities, including competitions with the theme of local culture and participation in cultural exhibitions/F&B festivals held by the local government. For instance, recently, Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan took advantage of the viral momentum of the traditional game "*lato-lato*" as a promotional theme.

1.1 Marketing Components

Currently, these six key points are still important variables for Esteh in determining marketing and production strategies to maintain the quality and existence of central companies or partners who collaborate. In addition to the above, in the preparation of its marketing strategy, Esteh also pays attention to the universal marketing component. Dharmesta dan Irawan (2021) explained that the marketing component is a combination of four variables or activities that are at the core of a company's marketing system, namely products, price structures, promotional activities, and production sites.

3.2.1 Product

Esteh produces tea-based drink. Product manufacturing is carried out directly instead of using instant products and has a certain consumption period. All Esteh products are manufactured according to production standards approved by the authorities to ensure safety and cleanliness. In addition, Esteh Indonesia's products have the advantages of a strong taste and attractive appearance. This is obtained from the quality of Esteh's premium and high-quality raw materials.

Esteh maintains the quality of its products to ensure that they are always in accordance with the standards that have been set. Esteh also strictly prohibits its partners from using ingredients that are not approved by the company. In addition to aiming to maintain product quality, the use of raw materials outside Esteh's provisions can trigger company data leakage, damage the original taste of the product, and cause losses in the production of central raw materials.

In 2022, it was found that the circulation of sugar raw materials and lemon flavoring powder that did not come from the central product in the Esteh plantation was found. As a result of using these raw materials, the central company received complaints related to the taste of Esteh products that had changed. For this negligence, Esteh clarified its cooperation agreement, which states that if there is a violation related to the partner's raw materials, sanctions or termination of the partner agreement will be subject to sanctions.

3.2.2 Price

Esteh is a franchise company that is currently growing. This is due to the delicious, varied, and affordable nature of the products. Most of Esteh's products are in the price range of Rp. 7,000 to Rp. 24,000 of the ready-to-go cup variant, with price differences applicable to several regional categories: the Java Island area, outside Java Island, and the Papua region. Esteh also provides complementary menus, such as toppings and 1-liter bottle variants. In addition, Esteh releases food products in the form of snacks that are compatible with its beverage products.

3.2.3 Place

Esteh is a franchise company that attracts many young entrepreneurs. Its rapid movement in dominating the F&B franchise market has led to high demand for cooperation. To overcome this, Esteh issued a policy stating that the distance between gardens must be approximately 3 km. Franchise agreements are made for four years, and garden renewal occurs at least once a year to maintain the garden, which helps the branding process of Esteh.

Esteh also has several types of buildings: 1) Semi-Dine-in and Takeaway building types, 2) Special Takeaway building type 1, and 3) takeaway type 2. The three types of buildings have production rooms, bars, dine-in or takeaway areas, and inventory rooms. Most equipment and interiors use stainless steel, anti-rust, and heat-resistant materials for the production site. In addition, equipment, production areas, and consumer areas will undergo a general cleaning process every week to minimize product contamination with foreign objects.

Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan is an example of an Esteh garden outside Java Island that adopts type 1, which has a dine-in and outdoor area for takeout. The pioneer garden is in a strategic location likely to attract consumers; therefore, this type of building is considered appropriate. Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan holds garden grooming every week to keep the garden maintained and comfortable for consumers who come or online order drivers waiting for orders.

3.2.4 Promotion

Esteh markets its products online through social media, including Instagram, YouTube, and Esteh platforms. In promotional activities, Esteh often collaborates with third parties, such as public figures, influencers, government officials, activists, and event organizers. The activities carried out are also diverse, ranging from presenting collaboration products, presenting Esteh products in community activities, providing alternative packages for event activities, and attracting influencers to market products through video campaigns. Esteh actively promotes its products by striving for cooperation with influential figures, both millennials and others.

Esteh uses social media, such as YouTube, Instagram, and its website, to expand and increase product promotion. Moreover, social media can accommodate creative ideas that are difficult to implement with other marketing methods. The strength of Esteh is that the brand shows that this product is an original Indonesian product, utilizing the marketing system through social media as a means of promotion, can be consumed from various circles, has strategic business locations, continues to innovate in various flavor variants, and offers quite affordable prices and quality products.

Each Esteh Garden has its own way of marketing its products. For Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan, promotions are not only based on the segments provided by the core company. Promotional activities in Pioneer Gardens emphasize offline services, active participation in social activities, and local events. The pioneer garden is a branch of Esteh located in the educational and medical area; therefore, promotional activities are more related to these conditions. In addition to actively participating in campus activities, the Independence Pioneer Garden also received offers of cooperation to fill the events. By participating in many activities, indirectly helping to promote Esteh products, and providing good service, consumer loyalty to Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan can be maintained.

3.3 Marketing Strategy

In a company, strategy management is carried out to organize a series of processes of planning activities, decision-making, and determining long-term goals that are efficient and effective. Strategy management is also applied by Esteh Company with the following steps:

3.3.1 Analyzing the External Environment

Before designing a strategy, the Esteh team identifies the external environment (trends, society, culture, character) as a marketing variable. Companies can prepare products, promotions, costs, and backup plans by understanding these variables.

The digital era has caused people to actively consume information through social media. Social media consumers examine trends that serve as references for decision-making. Social media is a flexible, free, economical, and multi-interpretive information forum. Social media is a marketing area with broad reach. Esteh utilizes social media as an alternative to research, consumer services, and promotional media to adapt to current trends. For example, through the Indonesian iced tea website (<https://www.estehindonesia.com/>, https://www.instagram.com/es_teh_perintis, <https://www.tiktok.com/@estehindonesia>) they introduce the product, .

People's information consumption on social media is determined by algorithms that carry messages or spread trends. By utilizing influencers (, the company markets its products and persuades audiences to consume Esteh products by campaigning for their advantages of Esteh products so that they can become pioneers of Esteh drinks in every condition and situation. The more positive and active the content produced by influencers, the more the trend will increase the brand awareness of Esteh's products.

In addition to market trends, external environmental analysis also includes understanding the communities, competitors, and suppliers in the garden area. Of course, Esteh Indonesia Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan has many competitors as one of the plantations that operates in a densely populated area.

By maintaining employee performance and service and actively holding promotions, Esteh partners can maintain their presence. This study shows that in addition to the advantages of the products marketed, the company also needs to pay attention to and support its internal scope so that the company's goals can be achieved.

3.3.2 Analyzing the Internal Environment

A company is an organization run by people with different backgrounds. These differences can challenge a company's internal affairs. In response, the company introduced organizational culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that can be learned, channeled, and become solutions to problems faced by external self-adjustment and internal integration. Company culture is a crucial factor in increasing a company's competitiveness.

Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan is one of the companies that uses core company culture as a reference. However, in some respects, it is improvised according to the company's needs and interests. It is managed by 13 members, each with specific duties and responsibilities according to their positions.

The owner holds the highest position and has the authority to lead the company, manage funds, formulate regulations, and make decisions and policies. As the controlling shareholder, the owner of Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan is also active in the evaluation process.

In addition to the owner, the pioneer plantation also has HRD staffs that play an important role as the person responsible for financial management. They make monthly reports related to the plantation's income and expenses, spend on local raw materials in accordance with the terms and conditions of the central company, and conduct employee recruitment and evaluation. HRD decisions remain based on the owner's approval and will be socialized in internal meetings.

Furthermore, for other employees, Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan has one manager who oversees the coordination of all information and executive interests for the garden crew. The manager also plays a role in the inventory of goods and provides services directly to its consumers.

Although each position has different duties and responsibilities, under certain conditions, these duties and responsibilities can be assigned to employees or other position holders.

At this stage, inequality in the internal sphere can be seen through a series of inappropriate tasks and responsibilities. The relationship between power and cooperation between employees and company executives has become overlapping. Such behavior can affect the trust of company members regarding regulations that can govern the rights and obligations of company members for the benefit of certain groups or individuals. However, this does not dampen the loyalty and work spirit of the Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan.

The relationship between each member of a company plays an important role in maintaining balance and harmony in the work environment. The bond between the garden crew is stronger. This is due to the same work area, more meeting intensity, and cultural similarities among members. Currently, most of the Independence Pioneer Plantation Estehs are ethnic members of the same tribe, so the communication that is established provides family.

Differences in understanding are normal in an organization, but integrity and professionalism are needed to become a strong organization so that the company's values, vision, and mission can be achieved. In the organizational management process, Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan chooses a simple method in accordance with existing organizational procedures and structures.

4. Discussion

Building on the results above, Esteh Kebun Perintis Kemerdekaan illustrates how marketing in a franchise setting is not only a managerial technique but also a culturally situated practice. The strategy combines socio-cultural segmentation (age, gender, sexual orientation, regional differences, religion, and ethnicity) with the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion) and structured strategy management (external and internal environmental analysis).

This configuration matters because it shows that “culturally contextualized” marketing operates on two intertwined levels: (1) as market knowledge used to design products and promotions that resonate with local meanings (e.g., seasonal narratives, friendship/group consumption, halal assurances, and locally themed promotions), and (2) as an organizational mechanism that aligns staff roles, operational standards, and brand values to deliver consistent consumer experiences.

From a business-anthropological perspective, these findings reinforce the view that consumption is shaped by cultural meaning and that marketing practices function as ongoing processes of learning about consumers (Carrier, 2021; Lien, 1997). In this case, the central–partner division (a largely centralized formulation combined with partner-level improvisation) enables a form of controlled localization: standardization protects product integrity while local actors translate the brand into the cultural and competitive realities of the garden.

Age and gender considerations suggest that product development is organized around perceived differences in taste and aesthetic preference, yet the brand simultaneously pursues a “timeless” positioning through reformulation and customization. This indicates

that segmentation is treated less as fixed categories and more as flexible cues guiding iterative adjustment based on feedback and trend monitoring.

Religion and ethnicity function as trust infrastructures in the marketplace. The emphasis on halal assurance and the use of culturally recognizable moments (e.g., #adaEstehdisetiapmomen) indicate how symbolic legitimacy and regulatory credibility are leveraged to reduce uncertainty and strengthen consumer trust, especially in a highly competitive F&B context.

The external-environment analysis highlights the role of digital platforms and influencer collaborations as cultural intermediaries. Trends and algorithmic visibility are not merely promotional channels; they also shape what becomes desirable for consumers, thereby influencing product narratives and brand awareness.

For practice, the case implies that F&B franchises seeking sustainable growth should balance three elements: (a) non-negotiable standards (raw materials, hygiene, quality control), (b) structured internal coordination (clear task allocation and routine evaluation), and (c) regulated space for local experimentation (regional promos, community events, localized product trials) supported by training and guidance.

Finally, the manuscript would benefit from a clearer positioning of context boundaries because different place labels appear in different sections. Aligning the field-site description consistently across the abstract, method, and results would strengthen interpretability and make the discussion of cultural context more credible.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that Esteh's marketing success is not merely the outcome of applying a standard marketing mix but of treating marketing as a culturally embedded practice that is continuously negotiated in everyday interactions among managers, staff, and customers. Therefore, the socio-cultural variables identified should not be understood as "segmentation categories" alone, but as lived social differences that shape how products are interpreted, how promotions are trusted, and how brand relationships are maintained in specific local settings. In other words, the marketing strategy works because it aligns managerial decisions with local meanings, norms, and expectations that organize consumption in the community.

These findings clarify that organizational culture is not part of the organization's background; rather, it serves as a source of organizational operational guidelines that guide decision-making and service mechanisms. Internal organizational interactions, symbols, common meanings, and daily activities are the mechanisms through which strategic ideas are translated into consistent service practices. Training programs and external modules

provide standards for such practices without eliminating local adaptation. A balance between standardization for coherence and adaptation to local conditions is the basis for strategy implementation in the franchise context.

Applied studies in anthropology and marketing in the future are expected to suggest shifting the focus from studies that focus on the importance of culture to how culture becomes part of organizational strategy through communication practices, service meetings, and practical translation of values into routine work. It also highlights that measurable sales growth and consumer loyalty are best described as cultural outcomes generated by trust, perceived respect, and credible information rather than purely economic responses to prices or promotions. As a result, the study of franchise marketing in a similar F&B context should pay more attention to the micro-processes that link socio-cultural differentiation to managerial choices, since it is in this process that strategic effectiveness is generated, maintained and developed

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