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“EARLY ADAPTATION STRATEGIES AT A4 COFFEE AND SPACE IN RENGAT, INDRAGIRI HULU REGENCY, DURING THE FIRST 6 MONTHS OF OPERATION: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY”

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the adaptation strategies implemented by a coffee shop during its initial operational phase, specifically during the first six months of operation at A4 Coffee and Space, located in Rengat, Indragiri Hulu Regency. This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation, with the business owner, employees, and customers serving as the primary informants. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and systematic conclusion-drawing. The research findings indicate that the adaptations implemented include adjustments to product features, pricing, service quality, and promotional strategies. In practice, these businesses face a number of challenges, such as low brand awareness, fluctuating customer numbers, intense competition, and limited resources. The use of social media as a marketing tool has proven effective in increasing the business's visibility and attracting consumer interest. Additionally, the customer experience which is influenced by the atmosphere of the venue and the quality of service is a key factor in encouraging repeat visits.

Keywords: Strategy, Early Adaptation, Coffee Shop, Qualitative

INTRODUCTION

The coffee shop industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth in recent years, in line with changes in people's lifestyles, particularly among the younger generation. Coffee shops no longer serve merely as places to consume beverages, but also as social spaces, workspaces, and venues for creative activities (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This phenomenon is not limited to major cities; it is also beginning to take hold in regional areas, including Indragiri Hulu Regency.

The number of coffee shops in Indragiri Hulu Regency has been on the rise in recent years. This trend aligns with changes in people's lifestyles, which have turned coffee shops into spaces for socializing and productive activities. However,

the increase in the number of businesses has also led to heightened competition, particularly for newly established businesses.

In the early stages of operation, start-up businesses face challenges such as limited resources, market uncertainty, and low brand awareness (Ries, 2011). In this context, adaptation strategies are crucial for ensuring business sustainability. Adaptation strategies in a business context are linked to the concept of dynamic capabilities—an organization’s ability to respond quickly and effectively to environmental changes (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). In practice, adaptation can be achieved through adjustments to products, pricing, services, and marketing strategies. Additionally, advancements in digital technology have encouraged businesses to leverage social media as an effective marketing tool. Digital marketing enables businesses to reach a wide range of consumers at a relatively low cost (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In this context, customer experience also plays a key role in influencing purchasing decisions and customer loyalty (Schmitt, 2010).

However, most previous studies have focused primarily on quantitative approaches with outcome variables such as customer satisfaction and purchase decisions. In-depth studies examining the business adaptation process during the early operational phase, particularly in rural areas, remain limited. This phenomenon highlights the need for a more in-depth examination of the adaptation strategies employed by coffee shop operators during the early operational phase, particularly in areas such as Rengat, Indragiri Hulu Regency. Therefore, this study aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the adaptation strategies implemented by A4 Coffee and Space during its first four months of operation using a qualitative approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Entrepreneurship is a person’s ability to create something new and valuable through the use of ideas, creativity, and risk-taking in order to generate profit. (Melani et al., 2025)

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating value through innovation by capitalizing on existing opportunities and having the courage to take risks (Hisrich, Peters, & Shepherd, 2017). In the context of MSMEs, flexibility is a key strength because it allows businesses to adapt quickly to changes in the business environment (Tambunan, 2019). However, MSMEs also face various limitations, such as limited access to capital, human resources, and managerial capabilities. (Ninawati Ninawati et al., 2024)

B. Adaptation Strategies and Dynamic Capabilities

An adaptation strategy is a business’s ability to adjust to changes in a dynamic business environment. This concept aligns with dynamic capabilities, which emphasize an organization’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies (Teece et al., 1997). This adaptive capacity is particularly critical during a business’s early stages, when market uncertainty remains high and the business model is not yet fully established. (Harahap et al., 2026)

MSMEs' adaptation strategies in response to changing consumer trends in the digital age are implemented through three main approaches: digital marketing, product innovation, and technology-based services. These three strategies complement one another to ensure the survival of MSMEs amid increasingly fierce market competition. According to Alma (2018), the success of MSMEs is largely determined by their ability to understand the market and respond appropriately to consumer needs. (Fajriah, 2025)

C. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is the use of digital technology to create, communicate, and deliver value to consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Social media has become one of the primary tools in digital marketing because it can increase a business's visibility and interaction with consumers (Haryanto et al., 2024). For new businesses, digital marketing is an effective strategy because it is more cost-efficient than conventional marketing.

Digital marketing enables two-way interaction between companies and consumers. Unlike traditional marketing strategies, which tend to be one-way, digital marketing facilitates active communication between companies and consumers. (Fifian, 2025)

D. Consumer Behavior and Customer Experience

Consumer behavior is influenced by various factors, both internal and external, including the experiences perceived during interactions with products or services. (Hidayat et al., 2024)

In consumer behavior theory, Kotler states that purchasing decisions are influenced by four main factors: cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. This study focuses on two aspects: psychological and social factors. (Bayu & Arnold, 2025)

The concept of customer experience emphasizes that a customer's experience is determined not only by the product but also by the atmosphere, service, and emotional interactions (Schmitt, 2010). In the coffee shop business, atmosphere (ambience) and service quality are key factors in encouraging repeat visits from customers. (Dewi et al., 2025)

Customer experience is a customer's subjective reaction to their direct and indirect interactions with a company. Customer experience encompasses all aspects of customer interactions, from brand awareness to post-purchase. (Pratamah et al., 2025)

DATA ANALYSIS

This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method, focusing on A4 Coffee and Space in Rengat. The research informants consist of the business owner, employees, and customers, who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted in the following stages:

- 1. Data simplification*
- 2. Descriptive data presentation*
- 3. Drawing conclusions*

To ensure validity, source and technique triangulation were used, as well as reconfirmation with the informants.

DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the adaptation strategies implemented by A4 Coffee and Space are consistent with the concept of dynamic capabilities, whereby a business is able to respond to changing market needs by adjusting its products and prices. (Safitri et al., 2024)

The increase in the number of visitors each month indicates that adaptation strategies particularly digital promotion and customer experience—are beginning to take effect. The use of social media as a promotional strategy has proven effective in increasing the business’s visibility. This is evident from the significant increase in the number of visitors during the third and fourth months.

the types of adaptation strategies implemented by A4 Coffee and Space during its first four months of operation. The use of social media as a promotional tool also supports the finding that digital marketing is effective in increasing business visibility and attracting customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Furthermore, the importance of customer experience in this study is consistent with customer experience theory, which states that positive experiences can increase customer loyalty. (Sitompul et al., 2025)

In terms of products, the menu variety has been expanded to meet consumer demand. Regarding pricing, adjustments have been made to align with the purchasing power of the local community. Customer service is also a key focus, with a more personalized and friendly approach. When it comes to promotion, social media serves as the primary channel for increasing the business’s visibility. Content showcasing products and the ambiance of the venue has proven effective in attracting consumers’ attention. The challenges faced include low business recognition, fluctuations in visitor numbers, and limited resources. However, the business owners’ ability to respond to these conditions is a key factor in ensuring the business’s sustainability. The discussion shows that the success of a business in its early stages is heavily influenced by strategic flexibility and the ability to identify market needs.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the success of a coffee shop in its early stages depends heavily on its ability to adapt to market conditions. Strategic adjustments including those related to products, pricing, service, and promotion are key factors in overcoming business challenges. In addition, the use of social media has proven effective in building consumer awareness. The customer experience also plays a crucial role in fostering loyalty.

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