



From Local Identity to Global Reach: Enhancing MSMEs through Education and City Branding

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the implementation of BRK (Bondowoso Republic of Coffee) city branding in the management and marketing strategies of DOA Coffee MSMEs, and its impact on strengthening brand identity and the competitiveness of local products. The method used is a case study with a qualitative approach, involving interviews with business actors, coffee farmers, and related communities. The survey results indicate that implementing BRK city branding strengthens DOA Coffee's brand equity by increasing geographic legitimacy and fostering synergy among farmers, roasteries, and the tourism sector. Product differentiation strategies, storytelling, and digital marketing increase brand awareness and customer loyalty. In addition, glocal marketing and distribution through partnerships with tourist destinations and souvenir outlets expand market reach. The implications of this study indicate that BRK city branding can increase the competitiveness of coffee MSMEs by leveraging local identity and integrated marketing strategies. These findings contribute to the development of MSME strategies grounded in local potential and provide insights for business actors and the government in building a creative economy based on regionally superior products, with an emphasis on the role of education in enhancing MSME actors' capabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

The MSME sector in Indonesia has shown significant growth, driven by rising local and global demand for high-quality, premium products (Andrianata et al., 2024; Sutomo et al., 2025). One sector that has attracted attention is MSMEs focused on local products with a strong regional identity as a selling point (Cempaka et al., 2023; Aprilani et al., 2023). However, many MSMEs have not fully leveraged the potential of city branding in their business strategies, whether in brand management, market segmentation, or communicating local values to consumers. This is particularly evident in sectors that rely on city branding to

build market differentiation, as is the case in several regions that produce high-quality local products, including Bondowoso.

Bondowoso, as a producer of quality Arabica and Robusta coffee, has developed city branding through the "BRK" (Bondowoso Coffee Republic) concept, which aims to strengthen regional identity and position the region as a center for high-quality coffee production. This initiative has contributed to building the region's image at the national and international levels, while also emphasizing local culture and geography as advantages. However, the current trend suggests that many coffee MSMEs, including DOA Coffee, have not fully utilized the attractiveness of BRK city branding in their business strategies. The main problem lies in limitations in brand management, market segmentation, and how local values are communicated to customers.

Previous research on the Bondowoso "Republik Kopi" City Branding Strategy to encourage MSMEs and increase tourist visits (Muiz, 2023; Imaniah et al., 2024,) has provided essential insights into the potential of city branding in advancing the MSME sector. However, this study focused more on the tourism sector. It did not thoroughly examine how BRK city branding can be applied to the managerial and marketing strategies of coffee MSMEs at the micro level. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing how MSMEs, such as DOA Coffee, can integrate BRK city branding into their differentiation strategies, market positioning, and sustainable brand value development.

Education plays a crucial role in supporting MSME development, particularly in providing the knowledge and skills necessary to leverage city branding in their business strategies (Sutrisno et al., 2023; Lismayangingsih et al., 2024). Training programs that incorporate modern marketing concepts, brand management, and differentiation strategies can help MSMEs understand how to connect local identity with broader market needs. Therefore, strengthening the education sector for MSMEs is crucial in increasing their capacity and capabilities for long-term success (Junaidi et al., 2025; Hasyim et al., 2025). In this context, education can be key to accelerating the adoption of an effective city branding strategy.

The Bondowoso Regency Government has committed to strengthening the BRK city branding, particularly in the consolidation phase, which focuses on expanding product marketing and developing downstream industries, in accordance with the Bondowoso Coffee Cluster Roadmap (Bondowoso Regency Regional Development Planning Agency, 2021). To this end, the Bondowoso Regency Government is engaging various parties, from financial institutions to support farmer capital, to MSMEs in the downstream chain for product processing and marketing. These efforts aim to create an ecosystem that

promotes the sustainability and competitiveness of superior regional products, such as coffee.

Table 1. Bondowoso Coffee Cluster Roadmap
BONDOWOSO COFFEE CLUSTER ROADMAP

2011–2015 (Initiation)	2016–2020 (Growth)	2020–2025 (Consolidation)
Social Construction for Global Business Preparation	Consolidation of Sustainable, High-Quality Raw Materials Business	Expansion of Downstream Product Marketing
Raw Material Quality Improvement	Resource and Environmental Improvement	Tourism Industry Development
Strengthening the Supply of Good-Quality Raw Materials	Growth of Coffee Cluster Agrotourism	Maintaining the Sustainability of Coffee Industry Clusters
Raw Material Marketing System Improvement	Downstream Product Differentiation	Cluster-Based New Business Development
Downstream Industry Initiation	Incubation of Supporting Industry Growth and Investment Attraction	Brand Development
Importance of Intellectual Property Rights (IP) Protection	IPR (Brand) Development	

Source: Bondowoso Regency Regional Development Planning Agency 2021

This research begins with the assumption that DOA Coffee's success in increasing its competitiveness is influenced by its ability to integrate BRK city branding into its strategy and marketing management. Therefore, this article tests the hypothesis that strategic use of BRK city branding can positively impact DOA Coffee's marketing performance and brand position in the specialty coffee market. Using a case study approach and conceptual analysis, this research aims to identify strategic elements to replicate DOA Coffee's success in integrating BRK city branding into its business strategy.

This research is expected to provide both conceptual and practical contributions to the development of local brands based on regional advantages, as well as provide guidance for MSMEs in utilizing city branding as a strategic asset for sustainable business development. Therefore, this article aims to encourage the use of city branding to strengthen MSME competitiveness and demonstrate the importance of education in equipping MSMEs with the skills necessary to face the challenges of the global market.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the application of city branding in the business strategies of

MSMEs, specifically DOA Coffee. The choice of a case study approach is based on the exploratory nature of the research, which aims to explore strategic practices among MSMEs in the coffee sector. This approach allows researchers to examine specific contexts in depth and identify factors influencing strategic decisions and the impact of city branding on MSME business performance.

Bondowoso was chosen as the research location because this area has unique characteristics that support locally-based economic development, particularly in the coffee sector. With the strong city branding of "Bondowoso Republik Kopi" (BRK), Bondowoso has become a coffee production center with a strong comparative advantage, and ideal agroclimatic conditions support its coffee-farming ecosystem. The selection of Bondowoso as a research location underscores the need to examine how city branding interacts with local MSME business practices and offers a broader picture of the sustainability and effectiveness of regional branding in strengthening MSME competitiveness.

The data collection techniques used in this study include both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including DOA Coffee business owners, partner coffee farmers, and members of the local coffee community. These interviews aimed to explore managerial practices, marketing strategies, and business actors' perceptions of the implementation of BRK city branding. Secondary data was collected through official documents related to local government strategies, scientific articles, and mass media reports relevant to the development of the MSME sector and city branding in Bondowoso.

The data analysis technique in this study used the Miles and Huberman (1994) approach, which consists of three main stages: data collection, data reduction, and data presentation. In the first stage, data collected through interviews and documents were qualitatively analyzed. Next, relevant data were reduced by filtering out information unrelated to the research focus to obtain more specific findings. Finally, the data were presented by compiling the analysis results into a narrative that illustrates the relationship between city branding and MSME strategies. This analysis is expected to provide a clear picture of the impact of city branding on the performance and position of the DOA Coffee brand in the specialty coffee market.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of BRK City Branding at DOA Coffee

The implementation of BRK city branding has strategic implications for the development of the coffee MSME sector in the Bondowoso region, particularly in increasing competitiveness, strengthening product identity, and accelerating the creative economy based on local commodities. City branding is

a strategic communication instrument for shaping public perception of a region's unique value (Zahrah, 2023; Wan et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025). In the case of Bondowoso, the branding narrative emphasizes the region's position as a production center for high-quality Arabica and Robusta coffee.

The first implication lies in strengthening DOA Coffee's brand equity through geographic legitimacy and improving perceived quality. Regional branding provides DOA Coffee with a collective identity to build consumer trust, expand its market, and strengthen its bargaining position. Second, this branding encourages DOA Coffee to develop a coffee business ecosystem, including partnerships between farmers, roasteries, coffee shops, and tourism operators. This creates value chain synergy that supports increased productivity and innovation.

Third, city branding can strengthen coffee-based tourism by, for example, offering coffee plantation tours at DOA Coffee's plantations and participating in coffee festivals. Buhalis et al. (2023) and Kakeesh (2024) emphasized that branding success depends on tangible experiences felt by the public, thus potentially expanding the market and opening up investment opportunities. However, challenges arise regarding consistent quality, human resource capacity, and the need for ongoing support from the government and the community. Thus, the city branding "Bondowoso, the Republic of Coffee" has had a significant positive impact on DOA Coffee but requires an integrated implementation strategy to sustain the region's competitive advantage.

Implementation of Strategic Management for MSMEs at DOA Coffee

The implementation of strategic management at DOA Coffee has significant implications for business performance, competitiveness, and sustainability in the competitive coffee industry. Strategic management, as described by Gutiérrez-Broncano et al. (2024) and Kumar et al. (2024), is "the process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions to achieve an organization's long-term goals." In the context of coffee MSMEs, the implementation of this strategy serves as the basis for strengthening market position and operational improvements.

First, the product differentiation strategy and storytelling rooted in local coffee origins strengthen DOA Coffee's brand identity as a provider of high-quality coffee with authentic value. This aligns with Porter's (2008) view of differentiation as a source of competitive advantage. Second, the use of digital marketing and a community-based marketing approach increases brand awareness, expands market share, and creates emotional connections with consumers.

Third, implementing standardized production processes, quality control, and barista training can improve product quality consistency, which is key in the specialty coffee industry. Furthermore, continuous evaluation through sales indicators, customer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty strengthens the business's ability to adapt to market dynamics.

However, successful strategy implementation requires human resource support, access to quality raw materials, and the ability to innovate continuously. Therefore, implementing strategic management at DOA Coffee not only generates a competitive advantage but also strengthens the sustainability of coffee-based MSMEs by integrating product quality, brand identity, and community relationships.

Brand Image and Positioning at DOA Coffee

The implementation of brand image and positioning at DOA Coffee has strategic implications for increasing competitiveness and customer loyalty, as well as for developing a local coffee-based business ecosystem. Brand image is the consumer's perception of a brand, reflected in brand associations stored in memory (Jukić, 2023; Ahmadian et al., 2023). On the other hand, positioning is the effort to create distinct and relevant value in consumers' minds (Pituşcan & Ioncu, 2024; Duarte et al., 2024). At DOA Coffee, the brand image strategy is based on the quality of specialty coffee, the value of locality, and the authentic coffee consumption experience.

The first implication is strengthening product differentiation. By positioning itself as a provider of quality coffee from local farmers in Bondowoso, DOA Coffee's product differentiation strategy focuses on enhancing local identity as its primary added value. DOA Coffee positions its products as authentic Bondowoso Arabica and Robusta coffees, emphasizing not only taste but also storytelling, closely aligned with BRK's city branding. Differentiation is achieved through several elements, including: (1) the use of thematic packaging featuring local icons and geographic identity; (2) an emphasis on single origin, namely coffee sourced from specific regions and farmers on the slopes of Argopuro; and (3) communicating cultural and sustainability values, including environmentally friendly agricultural practices and the involvement of local farmers. This strategy not only differentiates DOA Coffee from mass-produced commercial coffee products but also creates an emotional connection with consumers. Through this approach, DOA Coffee strives to build a competitive advantage based on authentic value and non-price differentiation.

Second, consistent brand image implementation fosters customer loyalty and emotional attachment. Consumers are not just buying coffee; they are also purchasing the local cultural experience that the brand embodies. This strengthens the long-term relationship between DOA Coffee and its customers, in line with Ries and Trout's (2001) view that positioning is a "battle in the mind of the consumer." Third, strategic implications emerge in the form of increased market access and brand commercial value. A positive brand image supports expansion through community partnerships, coffee tourism collaborations, and broader digital marketing opportunities.

Table 2. DOA Coffee Products

No.	Name of Specialty Coffee	Coffee Types
1	Arabica Mosto Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
2	Arabica Honey Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
3	Excelsa Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
4	Arabica Natural Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
5	Fine Robusta Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Robusta
6	Arabica Fullwash Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
7	Arabica Bluemountain Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
8	Arabica Yellow Caturra Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
9	Arabica Wine Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Arabica
10	Arabica Lactic Coffee 100 Original Hyang Argopuro	Coffee Types

DOA Coffee's Arabica and Robusta product categories, aligned with their brand image and positioning, are available on the DOA Coffee Hyang Argopuro marketplace storefront (shopee.co.id/ofridaningsih#product_list, 2025). Thus, DOA Coffee's effective brand image and positioning not only improve marketing performance but also strengthen its business identity and sustainability and contribute to the development of the local coffee industry in Bondowoso.

DOA Coffee's Global Marketing Strategy

DOA Coffee's global marketing strategy, leveraging its BRK brand image, can be analyzed through several key aspects. First, a locality-based brand identity is used to differentiate and attract global consumers seeking authentic, sustainable coffee (sustainable, origin-based coffee). Second, global market segmentation and targeting, with a focus on specialty coffee consumers in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, New Zealand, Singapore, and Hong Kong (@doacoffee_official, 2025). Third, cross-cultural brand communication is conducted through visual narratives, internationally standardized packaging, and digital storytelling. Fourth, an international distribution strategy, initiated through digital platforms, export partners, and participation in exhibitions of

superior products. Fifth, adjustments to product quality standards and certifications, such as taste, food safety, and sustainability footprint, are the foundation for building DOA Coffee's positioning as a local product capable of competing in the global market through the strength of cultural values and quality.

DOA Coffee's active participation in international exhibitions has led to the company officially signing a cooperation agreement with Australia and AU and collaborating with buyers from Mecca and Medina (@doacoffee_official, 2025).

DOA Coffee's Local Marketing Strategy

DOA Coffee's local marketing strategy focuses on a community-based approach and strengthening geographic identity through the city branding BRK. DOA Coffee positions its product as a representation of Bondowoso's signature coffee, high-quality, and embodying local cultural values. This strategy is realized through several main steps, such as: (1) brand activation through participation in local events (coffee festivals, MSME exhibitions), (2) utilization of community distribution channels, such as souvenir shops, local coffee shops, and traditional markets, and (3) marketing communications based on local narratives, through social media, farmer stories, and packaging visuals that highlight regional icons. This strategy is strengthened by collaboration with local governments and coffee communities, thus forming an inclusive promotional ecosystem. With this approach, DOA Coffee not only markets products but also builds local consumer loyalty through emotional attachment and pride in regional identity.

DOA Coffee's participation in the Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival (BEC) exhibition from July 11-13, 2025, recorded the highest turnover among all participating MSMEs, with the "DOA Coffee" booth achieving Rp 853.63 million (Sodiqin, A. 2025). Furthermore, during the East Java Provincial Government and East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Provincial Government Trade and Investment Mission, DOA Coffee successfully secured a fantastic transaction selling 720 tons of coffee to the MPIG Arabica Flores Bajawa Cooperative in Ngada (Andi, N.R., 2025).

Facts related to DOA Coffee's local marketing strategy take place within the context of the growing creative economy ecosystem in Bondowoso, which seeks to strengthen the region's position as a producer of superior Arabica and Robusta coffee through the BRK city branding. The local government encourages strengthening local identity as a development strategy based on regional potential, which directly impacts MSMEs like DOA Coffee. In a social environment steeped in the values of community togetherness, DOA Coffee's

local marketing strategy adapts to local consumer preferences, which prioritize emotional closeness, social engagement, and regional pride. Marketing focuses not only on product promotion but also on strengthening social ties between the brand and the community. This creates a strategic opportunity for DOA Coffee to develop consumer loyalty through a personalized approach, local narratives, and active participation in community activities, which are key strengths of culture-based local marketing.

Distribution Strategy and Partnerships in Tourist Destinations

To expand its market reach and strengthen its brand presence, DOA Coffee has developed a distribution strategy through partnerships with local cafes and hotels in Bondowoso's tourist destinations, such as Ijen Crater, Blawan Waterfall, and Kluncing Coffee Village. This strategy aims to make DOA Coffee part of an authentic tourism experience, where consumers can enjoy Bondowoso's specialty coffee within the context of local culture and nature. DOA Coffee provides roasted and ground coffee products in special packaging for serving or selling as souvenirs. In addition to product distribution, DOA Coffee also collaborates on joint promotional activities, such as coffee tastings, educational tour packages, and integrated branding in the hospitality sector. This strategy broadens brand visibility, increases sales volume, and strengthens DOA Coffee's positioning as a representative of premium local coffee, inherent in the Bondowoso tourist destination image.

Distribution Strategy and Partnerships with Souvenir Outlets

DOA Coffee leverages BRK's city branding to develop a distribution strategy through partnerships with local souvenir outlets as a strategic marketing channel targeting tourists and travelers. The coffee products are exclusively packaged with designs reflecting regional identity and are intended as typical Bondowoso souvenirs. Partnerships with souvenir outlets strengthen product exposure in strategic tourist spots. This strategy is designed to increase product appeal through positioning as "a regional specialty coffee ready to take home." In addition to retail sales, these partnerships also include collaboration on integrated promotional materials and seasonal discount programs. Distribution through souvenir outlets not only expands the market but also strengthens DOA Coffee's perception as a representative product of Bondowoso's identity and pride.

Distribution Strategy and Partnerships with Community-Based Reseller Agents

DOA Coffee is developing an inclusive distribution strategy through partnerships with community-based reseller agents, as an effort to expand market penetration while empowering local social networks. This model utilizes

communities of housewives, youth, and local MSMEs as informal distribution partners, serving as extensions in reaching end consumers. This strategy is supported by product training, the provision of promotional materials, and a sales volume-based incentive system. By prioritizing a relational approach and shared values, DOA Coffee creates a distribution system that is not only efficient but also strengthens social loyalty to the brand. BRK City Branding also strengthens marketability within the community, as the product is positioned as a source of regional pride. This partnership serves a dual purpose: as a distribution channel and as a marketing strategy based on stories and direct experiences. This approach allows DOA Coffee to reach a broad micro-market at a low cost but with high impact.

DOA Coffee's active participation in community-based activities, reaching out to Gen Z's relationships and values of togetherness in the 2025 Muharram Festival, and the barista class community, as well as bringing DOA Coffee as a podcast guest on the Pecah Telur Channel (@doacoffee_official, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that implementing BRK city branding provides a strategic contribution to strengthening DOA Coffee's competitiveness by integrating local identity into brand management, positioning, and regional and global marketing strategies. The study's key findings confirm that the synergy between local narratives, product differentiation, and culture-based marketing communications is a source of competitive advantage that competitors cannot easily replicate. BRK city branding has been proven to serve not only as a symbol of regional identity but also as a collaborative tool connecting MSMEs, farmers, the government, and the tourism sector within an inclusive and sustainable business ecosystem.

From a theoretical perspective, this research validates the relevance of the resource-based view, city branding, and value-based local marketing as effective analytical frameworks for understanding MSME strategies grounded in regional identity. The qualitative case study method enables in-depth mapping of DOA Coffee's internal and external dynamics, including the social and cultural factors that shape managerial practices. Overall, this research successfully identifies and explains how city branding can be operationalized in concrete MSME business strategies. These findings provide practical guidance for MSMEs and policymakers in designing strategies to strengthen the creative economy by leveraging sustainable local potential.

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