Illustration Mascot of Onycha Cake as an Promotional Media

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Keywords

Abstract

One of the main drivers of Indonesia's economy is the MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) sector, which plays a vital role in supporting regional economic growth. A program called "Tumbas Mbois" was established through a collaboration between the Lowokwaru District and students from the Malang ASIA Institute of Technology and Business, as part of the Place Branding initiative for the city of Malang. One of the MSMEs participating in this program is Onycha Cake, a business that focuses on various types of traditional Indonesian cakes and is recognized for its high product quality and reliable service compared to its competitors. This study aims to create a mascot illustration for Onycha Cake with a strong visual identity and effective communication media. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach through interviews and observations to identify the needs of Onycha Cake and its consumers preferences. In the mascot design process, the method involves simplifying the main subject namely, the MSME owner while incorporating the colors and characteristics of its signature product, the pastel cake. This approach allows the mascot to convey an emotional connection and effectively reflect consumer preferences. This research contributes to the development of MSMEs within the regional economic sector and highlights the important role of visual communication design in shaping consumer experience and strengthening brand identity.

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are an essential sector in a country's economy. MSMEs are recognized as business actors that play a strategic role in creating employment opportunities, strengthening competitiveness, and promoting economic growth. They also form part of the informal sector that provides income for communities lacking access to formal markets. MSMEs typically start their operations with limited capital and human resources. As a result, they often face challenges in expanding their businesses and entering broader markets. Nevertheless, MSMEs possess advantages in terms of flexibility and innovation, enabling them to adapt quickly to market changes.

Onycha Cake is one of the MSMEs participating in the Tumbas Mbois program, offering a wide variety of traditional cakes, ranging from moist cakes to dry cookies. The business also excels in hospitality and quality. the signature product is pastel, a deep-fried pastry filled with savory vegetables. However, Onycha Cake faces challenges in establishing a strong visual identity. Therefore, a mascot was developed, inspired by a simplified representation of the owner, Mrs. Nia Pertiwi, combined with the pastel as a costume worn by the mascot. Therefore, this study aims to develop a mascot illustration for Onycha Cake that embodies a strong visual identity and functions as an effective medium for consumer communication. The motivation for this research lies in enhancing the brand's emotional appeal and consumer recognition through the integration of design elements derived from the owner's persona and the MSME's signature product.

1.1 Literature Review

Mascot is a marketing element that can reach out to consumers with its emotional character. A mascot is a character figure that can build identity and help create and express a brand's personality. By developing an emotional relationship with consumers, essentially, one is developing a relationship with them. Mascots have been found to be the most significant, relevant, inexpensive, and effective means of marketing a product (Kochhar & Singh, 2019).

According to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), an *icon* is a sign that resembles or imitates its object. The relationship between the icon and its object is based on similarity of form. Examples include a photograph that resembles the person depicted, or a map that mirrors the actual geographical layout.

Color is an essential element in design objects. Through color, one can convey the intended identity or image, whether in communicating messages or clearly distinguishing characteristics. Color is also one of the elements that can attract attention, enhance mood, represent a company's image, and more.(Anggraini & Nathalia, 2018)

MSMEs often lack access to effective visual identity systems due to limited resources and design literacy This gap highlights the importance of research that applies visual communication principles to MSME branding. Therefore, this study contributes by demonstrating how mascot design can serve as a bridge between product identity, cultural context, and consumer emotion aspect underrepresented in the literature on Indonesian MSME branding.

2. Research Methods

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to understand and visualize the needs of Onycha Cake's brand identity through direct engagement with the owner and consumers. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of design elements and emotional associations related to the brand.

Data Collection

Data were collected through:

- Interviews – conducted with Mrs. Nia who is the owner of Onycha Cake.

- Observations – conducted observed mostly through direct observation to the MSME's location.

- Documentation – includes previous studies, journals, and research related to Onycha Cake.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the STP analysis technique (Kotler & Keller, 2012), consisting of Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning:

Segmentation:

- Demographic: Consumers with 26-35 years of age range, middle to lower-middle income

- Geographic: Urban residents in the Malang area.

- Psychographic: Consumers who need cakes for quantity, quality.

- Behavioral: Consumers who often handling event.

- Targeting: Consumers within the Malang city who often handling event and need quantity and quality product.

- Positioning: MSME's who trustworthy, good hospitality, and offering a wide variety of traditional cakes

3. Results and Discussion

The findings reveal that Onycha Cake's brand image emphasizes warmth, home-cooked authenticity, and hospitality. However, its previous promotional materials lacked a unifying visual identity that could emotionally connect with consumers.

Mascot Concept

The resulting mascot is a stylized illustration of the MSME owner, characterized by soft facial features, a welcoming smile, the color palette draws directly from Onycha Cake's signature pastel cake, reinforcing brand consistency. From interviews, both the owner and consumers noted that the mascot serves as an effective brand ambassador capable of humanizing the business and making it more recognizable in the digital market. Compared to competitors, Onycha Cake's mascot-based identity provided a stronger visual recall, which is an important factor in consumer decision-making.

Cartoons are a form of television entertainment consisting of a series of moving images that create an engaging film. Cartoons were first discovered in 1883. Initially, cartoons served merely as children's entertainment due to their uniqueness and humorous appeal. As time progressed, cartoons also evolved—not only in the field of filmmaking but also in marketing. Therefore, many artists, particularly character designers, have developed distinctive visual styles to attract the attention of a wider audience (Fadhillah, 2023)

Planning and Ideas

The process began by taking references from the initial Onycha Cake logo found on Google and then addressing Mrs. Nia's request for a mascot resembling the original logo. Discussions were conducted regarding the necessary elements, including preferred color choices, the desired illustration style, and the expected final outcome. Throughout the process, the focus remained on fulfilling Mrs. Nia's requirements.

Thumbnails and Rough Layouts

After the planning stage, we proceeded to thumbnailing and creating rough sketches directly in front of Mrs. Nia, allowing her to choose the preferred pose for the mascot. We began with a T-pose for the character sheet of the mascot, followed by several pose variations, until the rough sketches were completed.

Putting Everything Together in the Final Design

After completing the thumbnailing process, we proceeded to the finishing stage, which included refining and strengthening the mascot's line work, applying the predetermined colors (using a pastel cake color palette), and adding the "Onycha Cake" text to the mascot design.

Testing the Design with the Owner

After the design was completed, we presented the final result to the owner of Onycha Cake, Mrs. Nia, to determine whether any revisions were needed. This review included assessing the stroke thickness, the selected colors and their alignment with the pastel cake palette, the chosen font, and the overall mascot design. If Mrs. Nia requested any revisions, they were addressed immediately on the spot.

Design Achievement and Results

The mascot design for Onycha Cake successfully achieved the main goals established at the beginning. It functions not only as a visual representation of the brand's identity but also as a marketing element that communicates the character, personality, and uniqueness of Onycha Cake. The development process

incorporated essential visual principles—clear line work, consistent color selection using a pastel cake palette, and a cartoon illustrative style—to ensure that the mascot effectively reflected the brand's warm and approachable image. The design process involved careful collaboration with the owner, Mrs. Nia, to ensure that every detail aligned with her expectations, starting from pose selection, color preferences, and stylistic direction, to the final visual expression of the character. Multiple stages—thumbnailing, rough sketching, refining strokes, and color application—were carried out with her direct feedback, allowing for immediate adjustments when needed.

The final mascot design is now ready to be implemented across various branding materials, including packaging, promotional content, and digital platforms. Its adaptable and recognizable appearance strengthens Onycha Cake's visual identity, helping the business appear more modern, professional, and memorable to customers. By presenting a cohesive and thoughtfully designed mascot, Onycha Cake can enhance customer engagement, build stronger brand recognition, and maintain relevance in an increasingly competitive market.

4. Conclusions

Mascot Illustration for the Onycha Cake MSME was successfully developed through a design thinking method. The mascot functions as both a visual identity element and a branding tool, representing the character and uniqueness of Onycha Cake. The design process emphasized consistent visual elements, including pastel-themed color palettes, clean line work, illustration style, typography integration, and overall character expression to ensure strong brand recognition.

The development involved close collaboration with the business owner, Mrs. Nia, who provided direct feedback during key stages such as thumbnailing, pose selection, rough sketching, coloring, and final refinement. Both static character poses and a mascot character sheet were created to make the mascot usable across various media formats, including packaging, promotional materials, and social media content.

Feedback from the owner confirmed that the mascot successfully reflected the brand's desired image—friendly, charming, and aligned with the aesthetic of Onycha Cake's products. The mascot demonstrates that visual communication design plays a significant role in supporting small businesses by strengthening brand identity and increasing customer engagement. A clear, appealing, and consistent mascot design enhances customer trust and improves the business's competitiveness within the market.

5. References

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