

Oswald's Marketing Semiotics Analysis: Cultural Elements in Marketing Communication at the "Bajawa Flores NTT" Café

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Abstract. *This study analyzes how Flores' cultural elements are used as a marketing communication strategy at Kafe Bajawa. Using a qualitative approach and Oswald's marketing semiotics analysis, the research explores the meanings embedded in cultural elements such as Komodo statues, woven fabrics, Sasando musical instruments, photographs of Flores residents, a map of Flores Island, and the collaboration of traditional music with modern genres. Data were collected through direct observation of both exterior and interior decorations, as well as customer interviews to understand their responses to the presented cultural elements. The findings indicate that Flores' cultural elements play a significant role in shaping the café's identity and appeal. Analysis based on Consumer Brandscape shows that cultural signs create an authentic and unique impression, while emotional territories indicate that these cultural elements build emotional connections with customers through a comfortable and dynamic atmosphere. There is no cultural tension between traditional and modern elements; instead, they harmoniously blend, particularly in interior design and the music experience. From the perspective of cultural categories, Kafe Bajawa successfully positions itself as a venue that embodies Flores' cultural heritage in a modern context. Data triangulation through customer interviews confirms that the displayed cultural elements reinforce the café's image as a space rich in local identity while remaining comfortable for an urban audience. The success of this strategy lies in balancing culture and modernity, creating an engaging experience that fosters customer loyalty.*

Keywords: *Flores Culture, Consumer Brandscape, Kafe Bajawa, Marketing Communication, Oswald's Marketing Semiotics*

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INTRODUCTION

Culture-based marketing has become an increasingly competitive strategy in the culinary industry, especially for cafes aiming to offer an authentic experience to customers. In the era of globalization, differentiation through cultural identity reinforcement serves not only as a branding tool but also as a strategy to create emotional attachment with consumers. Campos (2024) highlights the importance of narrative in building relationships between brands and their consumers, emphasizing that strong branding relies not only on visual elements but also on the stories built around brand identity. Every integrated element, from visual design and interior to menu curation, plays a role in creating a deep and unique customer experience. Sandriester and Pizzera (2024) state that culture-based marketing can enhance a place's appeal by integrating cultural elements into the customer experience.

Indonesia, as a country with extraordinary cultural wealth, has great potential to develop marketing strategies rooted in local identity. Each region possesses unique cultural heritage that can be utilized as a strategic asset in shaping the image and added value of a brand. One prominent region is Flores, known for its authentic coffee, traditional woven fabrics, the Sasando musical instrument, and the Komodo icon. These cultural elements have the potential to become key components in culture-based marketing strategies to build attractiveness and uniqueness in the culinary business (Oswald, 2012).

Culture-based marketing aims not only to create differentiation but also to build emotional attachment between businesses and their consumers. By integrating cultural elements into various aspects of the business—such as product design, services, and brand narratives—companies can foster stronger relationships with customers through more authentic experiences. This not only increases customer loyalty but also strengthens business competitiveness in an increasingly tight market. Cultural approaches in modern business build deeper relationships with stakeholders through more meaningful experiences (Panjaitan et al., 2024).

Kafe Bajawa Flores NTT is an example of a cafe that implements a culture-based marketing strategy by integrating various local elements into its branding and operational aspects. By blending ethnic symbols with modern designs, this cafe successfully creates an authentic atmosphere that not only highlights Flores' rich culture but also provides a comprehensive and memorable customer experience (Oswald, 2012). This strategy demonstrates how cultural values can be adapted and effectively communicated in a business context to create a stronger appeal.

The semiotic marketing approach developed by Oswald through the consumer brandscape system is used to analyze how cultural elements are translated into Kafe Bajawa's marketing communication strategy. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how cultural elements are used to build an emotional connection between brands and consumers. The analysis focuses on the interpretation of signs, emotional territories, cultural tensions, and cultural categories that emerge from the brand's interaction with customers (Oswald, 2012).

Kafe Bajawa has successfully created harmony between traditional and modern elements in its marketing strategy. The use of local cultural symbols, such as the Komodo icon, woven motifs, and distinctive Flores decorative elements, is combined with a contemporary design approach, resulting in a strong visual and emotional experience. This combination not only enhances aesthetic appeal but also strengthens customers' emotional attachment to the brand, thereby contributing to increased consumer loyalty (Pesoa et al., 2022).

The culture-based marketing strategy applied by Kafe Bajawa impacts not only brand image and loyalty but also has significant economic and social implications for the local community. By offering local products such as authentic Flores coffee and promoting cultural products like woven fabrics and the Sasando musical instrument, this cafe creates economic opportunities for local artisans and supports community empowerment programs. This initiative reflects how marketing strategies rooted in culture can contribute to community-based economic development and support social sustainability.

Culture-based marketing strategies in the culinary sector can be an effective approach to creating authentic customer experiences while strengthening brand positioning in the market. The use of traditional motifs, regional music, or culturally inspired interior design can enhance authenticity and reinforce customer loyalty (Sandriester & Pizzera, 2024). The Consumer Brandscape framework used in this study provides a deeper understanding of the role of cultural elements in shaping consumer perceptions and interactions with brands. Additionally, this research highlights the importance of culture-based marketing strategies in supporting the preservation of local heritage and promoting the sustainability of the culinary industry in the modern era (Oswald, 2012).

This strategy also plays a role in promoting tourism sustainability and strengthening the creative economy based on culture. By consistently showcasing Flores' cultural richness through

various visual elements and direct experiences, Kafe Bajawa not only optimizes the emotional attachment between the brand and consumers but also creates sustainable added value for the community. This approach strengthens the cafe's role as an agent of cultural preservation and opens opportunities for the development of creative businesses based on culinary experiences (Pessoa et al., 2022).

The integration of cultural elements in marketing strategies not only results in a more authentic customer experience but also has broad economic and social impacts. The findings of this study provide space for further innovation in developing marketing strategies oriented towards cultural values and serve as a reference for business practitioners and academics in integrating cultural elements into every aspect of brand communication to achieve competitive advantage in the era of globalization (Oswald, 2012).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using participatory observation and semi-structured interviews to understand how customers interpret the cultural elements presented in Kafe Bajawa. A qualitative approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the meanings, perceptions, and subjective experiences of customers (Miles et al., 2022). Data were collected through direct observations of the café's exterior and interior decorations, as well as customer interactions with the cultural elements present. Observations were conducted six times at different times of the day morning, afternoon, and evening to capture variations in customer experiences related to the displayed cultural aspects. The observed aspects included customer engagement with cultural decorations, such as Komodo statues, woven fabrics, and wood-based interior design; customer responses to sensory experiences, including traditional music and lighting; and customer interactions with semiotic elements in the menu, signage, and overall café atmosphere. In addition to observations, this study also utilized semi-structured interviews with 10 customers, consisting of both first-time visitors and regular patrons. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants had diverse experiences in interpreting the cultural elements displayed. Each interview lasted between 20 to 30 minutes, focusing on customers' perceptions of the café's cultural elements, the emotional impact of the cultural experience, and how these cultural elements contribute to brand identity and customer engagement. The collected data were analyzed using Oswald's (2012) marketing semiotics approach, which focuses on the concept of consumer brandscape. This analysis covers four key aspects: Signs (cultural symbols) reflecting visual representations such as decorations, logos, and interior design elements; Emotional Territories explaining the influence of cultural elements in creating customer emotional attachment; Cultural Tensions examining the balance between traditional vs. modern and local vs. global in the café's branding strategy; and Cultural Categories identifying the cultural identity conveyed and how it is communicated to customers. Ramírez (2018) emphasizes that the consumer brandscape strategy is not only relevant in the education sector but can also be effectively applied in the hospitality and culinary industries. Through this method, the study aims to understand how cultural elements in Kafe Bajawa shape customer experiences and contribute to an authentic and sustainable branding strategy

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The consumer brandscape model for Bajawa Café is developed to understand how various elements shape brand identity and experience. Using a triangular structure, this model illustrates how signs, emotional territories, cultural tensions, and cultural categories interact to create a unique image for Bajawa Café. As shown in the following image:

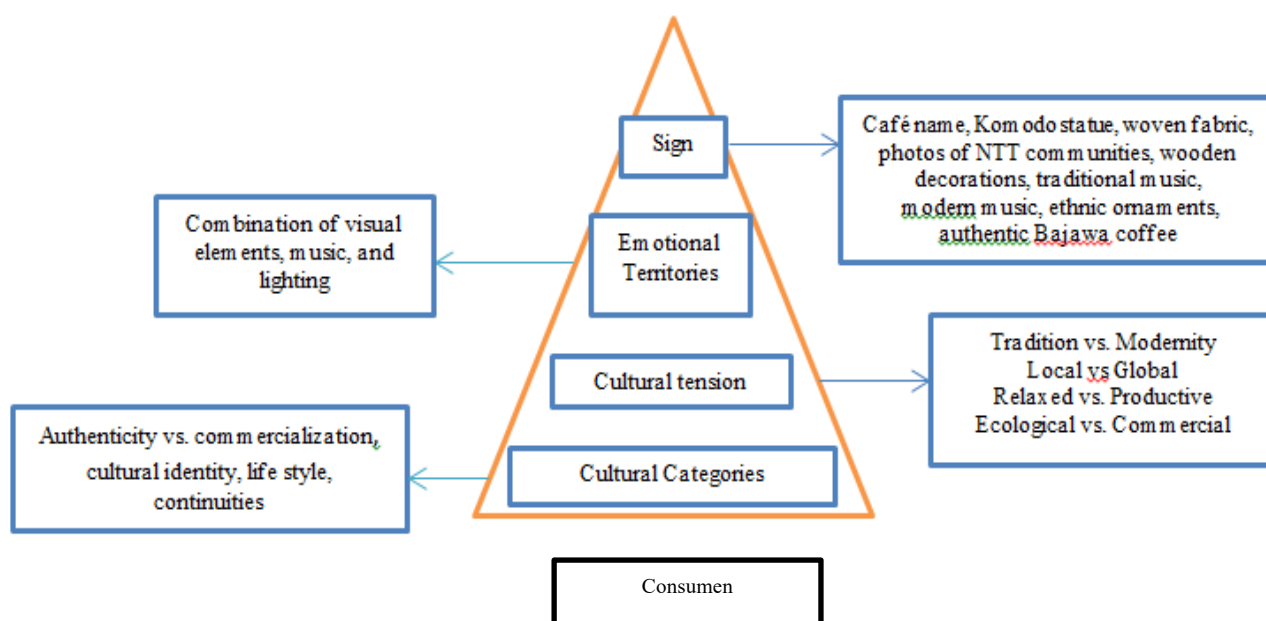


Figure 1. Semiotic Framework of Bajawa Flores NTT Café According to Oswald

Source: Adapted from Oswald (2012)

Each category reflects key aspects of building brand identity and customer experience, from how cultural elements are applied to how cultural tensions are managed. The triangular framework used in the semiotics model of Kafe Bajawa's marketing does not merely represent cultural categories and cultural tensions as static elements but also illustrates how these elements dynamically interact to shape the customer experience. When a customer first visits Kafe Bajawa, they immediately encounter visual and sensory signs that create an initial impression.

Elements such as the café's name, wooden decorations, traditional NTT woven fabrics, and Komodo statues contribute to the visual identity that establishes an association with Bajawa culture. The distinctive aroma of coffee greeting customers upon entry further reinforces the authentic experience the café aims to convey. Beyond visual cues, customers also experience an emotional atmosphere shaped by the combination of warm lighting and music that blends traditional elements with a modern touch. This creates a soothing ambiance and fosters an emotional connection between the customers and Bajawa culture.

However, underlying this experience is an inherent cultural tension that customers may subconsciously perceive. They might question whether the café truly represents Bajawa culture or merely commercializes it. Another emerging tension revolves around how local culture can endure amid modernization and globalization. As a result of their experience, customers ultimately form a personal understanding of Kafe Bajawa's identity and branding. Their decision to return or recommend the café to others is strongly influenced by how they perceive and interpret the cultural values being conveyed. Thus, this semiotic model is not just a static classification but a system that illustrates the dynamic interaction between signs, emotions, and cultural tensions in shaping the overall customer experience.

Table 1. Decoding Cultural Elements at Bajawa Café

Cultural Category	Tensions	Emotional Territories	Semiotic Cues
Authenticity vs. commercialization	Tradition vs. Modernity	Comfort, warmth, nostalgia, cultural experience	Café name, Komodo statue, woven fabric, photos of NTT communities, wooden decorations, traditional music, modern music, ethnic ornaments, authentic Bajawa coffee
Cultural Identity	Local vs Global	Cultural pride, connection to traditional roots	Authentic Bajawa coffee, barista in traditional attire, ethnic motifs in interior design
Life Style	Relaxed vs. Productive	Relaxation, gathering place, creative inspiration	Open seating area, green plants, flexible workspace concept
Continuity	Ecological vs. Commercial	Environmental awareness, support for local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises	Eco-friendly packaging, collaboration with local farmers, and donations for the well-being of the Flores community
Exclusivity	Premium vs. Affordable	Enjoyment, satisfaction, premium quality	Serving coffee with manual brew techniques, price reflecting quality, personal experience

Source: Research Findings, 2024

This table illustrates how elements of signs, emotional territories, cultural tensions, and cultural categories shape the brand experience and identity of Kafe Bajawa. In alignment with the development of the consumer brandscape model for Kafe Bajawa, this model follows Oswald's triangular consumer brandscape hierarchy while deepening each layer to be more specific to Kafe Bajawa. At the peak of the triangle, the element of Signs includes visual identity markers such as the cafe name, Komodo statue, woven fabrics, photos of NTT communities, wooden decorations, traditional and modern music, ethnic ornaments, original Bajawa coffee, logo, interior design, coffee packaging, and barista uniforms. Additionally, cultural symbols are represented through Bajawa-specific ornaments and traditional Indonesian color schemes. The aesthetics combine both traditional and modern elements to remain relevant to various customer segments.

The second layer, Emotional Territories, builds strong emotional connections with customers through various aspects such as comfort, warmth, nostalgia, cultural experiences, pride in cultural heritage, connection to traditional roots, relaxation, social gathering space, and creative inspiration. Additionally, environmental consciousness and support for local SMEs are key values. The exclusivity of Bajawa coffee is reinforced by its positioning as a premium and authentic product, offering not only a distinct flavor but also evoking emotions and pride among its consumers. The third layer, Cultural Tensions, reflects dilemmas between opposing aspects of Kafe Bajawa's identity. One such tension is tradition vs. modernity, where the cafe seeks to preserve cultural heritage values while keeping up with evolving coffee industry trends.

Another is local vs. global, where coffee consumption serves as a unique local tradition while also reflecting an increasingly universal global lifestyle. There is also the dynamic of relaxation vs. productivity, positioning the cafe as both a leisure space and a co-working environment. Additionally, the tension between ecological vs. commercial considerations balances environmental sustainability with business profitability for the NTT community. The final contrast, premium vs. affordable, highlights the challenge of maintaining Bajawa coffee's

exclusive image as a premium product while ensuring accessibility to a broader customer base. The foundation of this triangle is Cultural Categories, emphasizing how Bajawa coffee is a part of Indonesia's rich coffee heritage.

According to studies by Suriyanto et al. (2023), marketing strategies play a crucial role in consumer purchase decisions and brand loyalty, alongside product quality. Ethnic identity also influences customer preferences, linking Bajawa culture with the coffee-drinking experience. This model provides a deeper understanding of how various elements shape the brand identity and experience of Kafe Bajawa within the consumer brandscape framework. Friska and Girsang (2021) argue that the consumer brandscape approach fosters exclusivity and emotional connection with customers.

Signs (Cultural Symbols) in Kafe Bajawa Flores Marketing

In Oswald's marketing semiotics, signs or cultural symbols play a key role in shaping brand identity through visual symbols related to local culture (Oswald, 2012; Septyana2018). Kafe Bajawa Flores incorporates various cultural elements as primary signs in its marketing strategy, both in its exterior and interior design. According to Campos (2024), visual identity through design elements helps businesses differentiate themselves from competitors. On the exterior, the use of the inscription "Bajawa Flores NTT" with the letter "J" shaped like a Komodo serves as the main attraction, effectively communicating the café's cultural identity to customers. The Komodo-shaped "J" is not merely decorative but a powerful cultural symbol. The Komodo dragon is an icon of East Nusa Tenggara, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Walpole, 2001).

From a semiotic perspective, this sign falls into the iconic category, as its shape directly represents its intended meaning. Additionally, the presence of a Komodo statue at the entrance, depicting a large Komodo embracing a smaller one, creates a sense of familiarity and warmth, evoking the natural essence of Flores for visitors. This symbol not only strengthens the café's emotional appeal but also plays a crucial role in branding its local identity, distinguishing it from other establishments. Symbols in marketing communication play an important role in building a brand's modern and exclusive image (Sari, 2018). This aligns with Kafe Bajawa's strategy of blending cultural heritage and modernity in its branding. Various cultural elements are also incorporated to enhance the customer experience. Black-and-white photographs of the native NTT community displayed on the walls foster an emotional connection with customers, providing an authentic glimpse into traditional Flores life.

As part of the consumer brandscape strategy, these photos invite customers to immerse themselves in Flores' cultural values through visual representation. Additionally, the presence of Sasando musical instruments and NTT woven fabrics further reinforces the cultural atmosphere. The Sasando, a traditional musical instrument, represents Flores' rich musical heritage, while the woven fabric highlights the enduring wisdom of local craftsmanship. The map of Flores Island and an illustration of Komodo Island, displayed in earthy tones of beige and black, further solidify the café's cultural identity. Semiotic analysis categorizes these signs as indexical, as they guide customers toward the geographical and cultural context of Flores (Fiske, 2012). Overall, the integration of cultural symbols in Kafe Bajawa Flores is not merely decorative but forms part of a culture-based branding strategy. Cultural symbols contribute to brand meaning, a crucial aspect of semiotic-based marketing.

Brand meaning is not solely dependent on product attributes but also on how consumers interpret the embedded cultural signs in brand communication. Tawami et al. (2022) identified that brand meaning is strongly influenced by social and cultural elements integrated into marketing. These elements strengthen the cultural association with brand identity, which, in the consumer brandscape context, is key to creating a unique experience for customers (Oswald, 2012). The customers' perspective, the cultural elements incorporated into Kafe Bajawa contribute to building a strong and unique brand identity. The continuity of cultural elements within the café plays a key role in shaping an authentic and distinctive brand image. The café

is seen as successfully balancing traditional and modern aspects, offering an experience that is not only appealing to tourists but also to locals who want to enjoy the distinctive atmosphere of Bajawa in a more modern context. A regular customer, 30 years old, shared their perspective:

"I love how this café preserves cultural elements while still feeling relevant and comfortable for today's generation. It doesn't feel like a museum but rather a vibrant cultural space," said a regular customer, 30 years old.

This statement reflects how customers appreciate the café's ability to integrate tradition into a modern setting, creating an engaging and dynamic cultural experience rather than a static display of heritage.

Emotional Territories in Customer Experience

Emotional Territories refer to how visual signs influence customers' emotional reactions to a brand (Fiske, 2012). At Kafe Bajawa Flores, cultural elements play a vital role in creating a memorable, familiar, and immersive experience for visitors. One of the main aspects of emotional territories is how visual elements evoke warmth and nostalgia for customers. Many patrons feel an emotional connection to Flores' culture through the symbols present in the café. Cultural elements in public spaces can enhance customers' sense of pride and emotional attachment to a place. Additionally, customers frequently take photos with various cultural elements within the café, demonstrating the strong emotional appeal of these visuals, which is further amplified by experience-based marketing.

According to Mendonça (2023), packaging is not only a visual identity tool but also builds emotional attachment through the narratives and symbols used. Furthermore, Mick et al. (2004) found that consumer experiences can be enriched through meaningful semiotic signs, leading to deeper emotional engagement. The cultural elements incorporated into Kafe Bajawa contribute to building a strong and unique brand identity. The preservation and continuity of these cultural elements play a crucial role in shaping an authentic and distinctive brand image. The café is perceived as successfully balancing traditional and modern aspects, offering an experience that appeals not only to tourists but also to locals seeking to enjoy Bajawa's unique atmosphere in a contemporary context. A regular customer, 30 years old, shared their perspective:

"I love how this café preserves cultural elements while still feeling relevant and comfortable for today's generation. It doesn't feel like a museum but rather a vibrant cultural space."

This statement reflects how customers appreciate the café's ability to integrate tradition into a modern setting, creating an engaging and dynamic cultural experience rather than a static display of heritage. Many visitors view Kafe Bajawa as more than just a coffee shop it becomes a cultural space where they can connect with their roots in a way that feels both authentic and accessible. Emotional Territories refer to how visual signs and sensory elements influence customers' emotional reactions to a brand (Fiske, 2012). In Kafe Bajawa, cultural elements play a crucial role in creating a memorable, familiar, and immersive experience for visitors. Many customers feel a strong emotional connection to Flores' culture through the various cultural symbols present in the café. The presence of cultural elements in a public space also enhances feelings of pride and cultural identity, further strengthening customer loyalty to the venue. A regular customer, 32 years old, shared their thoughts:

"I always feel comfortable here; the atmosphere of this café is different from other places because of the strong cultural elements. The traditional music and wooden interior make me feel connected to something more than just a coffee shop."

This response highlights how sensory experiences—such as traditional music and natural materials contribute to the emotional depth of the café. Customers not only see cultural elements but also experience them through sound, texture, and ambiance, reinforcing a sense of belonging and nostalgia. Besides music, lighting also plays a crucial role in shaping customer experiences. During the day, bright lighting supports more open social interactions, while in the evening,

dimmed lights create a more intimate and exclusive atmosphere, often associated with premium experience branding (Lu et al., 2020). Through the combination of visual elements, music, and lighting, Kafe Bajawa successfully establishes a strong emotional association with customers, making it not just a place to drink coffee but also an immersive cultural experience. A first-time visitor, 25 years old, shared their impression:

"When I first came here, I felt that this place had a very distinct ambiance. The combination of warm lighting and music made me want to stay longer—it felt like experiencing Bajawa's culture in a modern form."

This statement highlights how sensory elements shape customers' overall perception of the café. The interplay of lighting and traditional music creates an inviting and immersive atmosphere that encourages customers to linger, reinforcing the idea that Kafe Bajawa is more than just a coffee shop. Overall, the cultural elements presented in Kafe Bajawa do more than serve as decoration; they foster a deep emotional connection with customers. The majority of regular customers express that the presence of cultural symbols creates a sense of comfort and nostalgia, particularly through the combination of traditional music and warm lighting. Meanwhile, many first-time visitors state that these sensory experiences leave a lasting impression, setting Kafe Bajawa apart from other cafés. By seamlessly blending visual aesthetics, sound, lighting, and cultural elements, Kafe Bajawa not only strengthens its brand identity but also crafts a memorable emotional experience for its customers.

Cultural Tensions Between Traditional and Modern Elements

Cultural Tensions refer to how cultural and modern elements interact within branding. In some cases, the fusion of cultural and modern elements can create cultural tension if they are not harmonized. However, at Kafe Bajawa Flores, no conflict between tradition and modernity was observed; instead, both elements blend seamlessly. One of the most striking examples of this cultural and modern harmony is seen in the collaboration between traditional and contemporary music. The DJ mixes traditional and modern music, and often wears traditional NTT attire as a dress code while performing, demonstrating that local culture can adapt to global trends without losing its essence. Tawami et al. (2022) highlight that incorporating cultural elements into marketing enhances customer engagement with products and services. A regular customer, 28 years old, shared their thoughts on this unique blend:

"I love how the DJ combines traditional and modern music—it feels fresh but still retains cultural depth. Seeing the DJ in traditional attire makes the experience even more special, as if modern entertainment and cultural heritage can exist side by side."

This response highlights how the café successfully integrates cultural identity into a contemporary entertainment format, making cultural appreciation feel natural rather than forced. The interior design elements also reflect a balance between tradition and modernity. Cultural elements such as woven fabrics and Komodo statues are paired with modern furniture and contemporary lighting arrangements, creating a unique aesthetic appeal. The use of technology in the café's services, such as a digital ordering system, further demonstrates how modern elements can be implemented without erasing the local cultural character. A first-time visitor, 27 years old, expressed their impression of the café's design:

"When I walked in, I was impressed by how the place felt both modern and deeply cultural. The combination of woven fabrics and sleek furniture creates an atmosphere that feels authentic yet stylish. It's not just about tradition—it's about how tradition can evolve."

In the context of semiotics, cultural tensions at Kafe Bajawa Flores are more accommodative than contradictory. Instead of creating conflict, the fusion of culture and modernity at this café enriches the customer experience, allowing them to appreciate traditional culture in a contemporary setting (Oswald, 2012). Through this approach, Kafe Bajawa successfully redefines cultural branding by presenting it as adaptable, dynamic, and inclusive.

Cultural Categories in Brand Positioning

Cultural Categories refer to how a brand is positioned within a specific cultural framework, distinguishing it from competitors (Oswald, 2012). Kafe Bajawa Flores positions itself as a culture-driven café rooted in Flores NTT's heritage, incorporating elements such as Komodo sculptures, woven textiles, and traditional-modern music collaborations into its brand identity.

The café's success in establishing a distinct cultural category lies in its ability to harmonize cultural heritage with modernity. Kafe Bajawa Flores is not just a place to enjoy coffee—it serves as a space that connects customers with Flores' culture, creating a deeper and more meaningful experience. With this strategy, the café has successfully built a strong brand identity and clear market differentiation, making it an effective application of Oswald's marketing semiotics in the consumer brandscape. A regular customer, 33 years old, shared their perspective:

"This café makes me feel connected to my roots. The decorations, music, and even the way the coffee is presented remind me of home. It's not just a café; it feels like a cultural space where tradition is still alive."

This response illustrates how customers perceive Kafe Bajawa not merely as a commercial establishment but as an environment that fosters cultural appreciation. The presence of cultural artifacts and design choices reinforces a sense of belonging, particularly among customers who have personal or ancestral ties to Flores. Another customer, 26 years old, emphasized the importance of cultural representation in modern branding:

"I think the balance between tradition and modernity here is well thought out. You can see the effort to keep the cultural essence while making it relevant to younger generations. It makes me want to come back and learn more about Flores."

This insight supports Kucuk's (2015) argument that semiotic-based marketing strategies can foster customer loyalty by strengthening a brand's cultural identity. The interviews indicate that customers are not only purchasing products but also associating themselves with the cultural values embedded in the brand. By integrating traditional symbols in a contemporary setting, Kafe Bajawa enhances its appeal to both nostalgic customers and those newly discovering Flores' rich cultural heritage. Each aspect of the semiotic framework contributes to the success of Kafe Bajawa's branding strategy in a complementary manner.

Signs, such as the café's logo, Komodo sculptures, woven fabrics, images of the NTT community, and wooden decorations, play a crucial role in shaping a distinctive visual identity. These elements immediately connect customers to Bajawa's cultural heritage, creating a strong brand association. Emotional Territories enhance customer engagement through lighting, music, and ambiance, fostering an emotional bond with the brand. This transforms the café into more than just a place to enjoy coffee—it becomes a cultural experience. A first-time visitor, 27 years old, shared their impression:

"I initially visited Kafe Bajawa because I was curious about its cultural concept, and the atmosphere turned out to be truly unique. The ambiance is so comforting, and I feel like this is more than just an ordinary café—it offers a whole experience."

Furthermore, Cultural Tensions, such as *Traditional vs. Modern* and *Local vs. Global*, illustrate how Kafe Bajawa successfully balances traditional cultural values with modern business strategies. This approach ensures an authentic yet contemporary experience for urban customers. Cultural Categories further strengthen the brand image by emphasizing sustainability, cultural identity, and the preservation of authentic values within the evolving culinary industry. By integrating these elements, Kafe Bajawa has successfully developed a culture-based marketing strategy that not only enhances brand appeal but also fosters deep emotional connections with customers. It is more than just a coffee shop it is a destination that offers an immersive cultural experience.

With this strategy, Kafe Bajawa Flores NTT has established a strong brand identity and clear market differentiation, making it an effective application of Oswald's marketing semiotics in the consumer brandscape. Kucuk (2015) argues that semiotic-based marketing strategies can build customer loyalty by reinforcing a brand's cultural identity. This aligns with the findings of this study, where customers do not merely purchase products but also associate themselves with the cultural values conveyed by the brand. Thus, Kafe Bajawa's semiotic marketing approach demonstrates how visual, sensory, and narrative elements can be leveraged to create a more meaningful and sustainable customer experience

CONCLUSION

The cultural-based marketing strategy of Kafe Bajawa Flores NTT effectively builds a strong brand identity by integrating local cultural elements into its visual design, customer experience, and brand communication. The seamless blend of traditional and modern aspects enhances customer emotional connection and loyalty. Beyond branding, this approach also supports local economic and social empowerment. Kafe Bajawa's model serves as a reference for other culinary businesses to leverage cultural elements as a competitive advantage in the global market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cultural-based marketing must carefully avoid cultural stereotyping or exploitation by ensuring that cultural elements are used respectfully and authentically, rather than solely for commercial gain. The fusion of tradition and modernity should preserve, not dilute, cultural values. Future research should explore ways to balance cultural promotion and authenticity. Kafe Bajawa Flores NTT should continue educating customers about Flores' culture meaningfully to maintain its integrity and impact,

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