

Innovation in Acehese Traditional Cakes: Creative Approaches to Enhance Competitiveness and Profitability in the Local Market

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Abstract. *This article explores innovative strategies to enhance the competitiveness and profitability of Acehese traditional cakes, such as timpan, bhoi, and dodol, in the local market. These traditional cakes are an integral part of Acehese cultural heritage, but their popularity is declining, especially among the younger generation, due to shifting culinary trends and modern lifestyles. To address this issue, this study examines product innovation, creative marketing, and sustainable business models as key approaches to maintaining the relevance of traditional cakes in the modern era. The findings highlight the importance of modifying flavors and packaging to appeal to contemporary tastes, utilizing digital marketing and social media to reach a broader audience, and building partnerships with local SMEs to ensure sustainable production. The strategies discussed in this article bridge the gap between preserving cultural heritage and meeting modern consumer demands, thereby enabling Acehese traditional cakes to remain competitive and contribute to local economic development.*

Keywords: *Acehese traditional cakes, product innovation, creative marketing, sustainable business model, cultural preservation, local market competitiveness*

1. Introduction

Acehese traditional cakes, such as *timpan*, *bhoi*, and *dodol*, represent a culinary heritage that reflects the rich culture of the Aceh region. However, over time, the popularity of traditional cakes among the younger generation has declined due to changing culinary trends and modern lifestyles. A survey conducted by the Aceh Culinary Association in 2023 revealed that only 30% of the younger generation regularly consumes traditional cakes (Maulida & Indah, 2021). In contrast, the remaining 70% tend to prefer modern snacks, which are considered more practical and visually appealing. This condition emphasizes the importance of innovation to ensure that Acehese traditional cakes remain relevant and competitive in an ever-evolving market.

Acehese traditional cakes play an essential role in preserving local culture and identity (Hasanah, 2020). However, in recent decades, lifestyle changes and consumption trends have led to a decline in interest in traditional cakes, especially among the younger generation (Andayani et al., 2017). This situation is exacerbated by the availability of modern snacks that are more accessible and visually attractive. The urgency of innovation to maintain the existence of traditional cakes has increased, as these products risk losing their place in the community without adaptation (Swastiwi, 2024).

This article focuses on innovation strategies for Acehese traditional cakes, including product development, creative marketing, and sustainable business models. The main issues discussed are how to maintain the relevance of traditional cakes amid changing markets and consumer preferences (Hanum et al., 2023). Challenges include

limitations in adapting flavors and forms, as well as intense competition with modern culinary products (Budiarto et al., 2018). These conditions highlight a gap between modern consumer preferences and the traditional values represented by these cakes. Thus, this article aims to bridge this gap by identifying strategies that integrate traditional culture with current consumer needs.

2. Method

This study adopts a literature review method to analyze relevant research and theories concerning the innovation, preservation, and market competitiveness of Acehese traditional cakes. The literature study involves gathering information from various secondary sources, including academic journals, books, industry reports, and credible online articles related to traditional culinary heritage, consumer behavior, product innovation, and sustainable business models.

The literature review focuses on three key areas:

- a. Traditional Culinary Heritage and Cultural Preservation

This section examines the significance of traditional foods, such as Acehese cakes, in maintaining cultural identity and heritage. The literature highlights the historical and cultural importance of traditional culinary products within local communities and explores the challenges of preserving these traditions in the face of modern lifestyle changes. Studies on cultural preservation provide insights into why it is essential to uphold the cultural values associated with traditional cakes.

- b. Product Innovation and Consumer Behavior

This section explores how product innovation can influence consumer behavior, especially among the younger generation, who increasingly favor modern, convenient snacks over traditional foods. The literature on consumer preferences in the food sector is reviewed to understand how aspects like flavor variety, packaging design, and health considerations impact consumer choices. This analysis helps to identify ways in which Acehese traditional cakes can be adapted to appeal to contemporary tastes.

- c. Sustainable Business Models and Market Expansion

This section focuses on sustainable business strategies that can enhance the market reach and profitability of traditional cakes. The literature on sustainable business practices, partnerships with local SMEs, and digital marketing strategies is examined to identify effective approaches for promoting traditional cakes. Studies on e-commerce and influencer marketing offer insights into how traditional products can reach broader markets while remaining economically and environmentally sustainable.

By synthesizing findings from these areas, the literature study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of how innovation, cultural preservation, and sustainable practices can be integrated to support the development and competitiveness of Acehese traditional cakes in the modern market.

3. Results and Discussions

Product Innovation

One solution to enhance the appeal of Acehese traditional cakes is product innovation. Modifying ingredients and flavors can bring a fresh perspective to these products. For example, *timpan*, which is usually filled with *srikaya*, can be adapted with

fillings like premium chocolate, cheese, or tropical fruits to cater to younger consumers' tastes. Sales data from several bakeries in Banda Aceh showed a 50% increase in sales after introducing a chocolate-cheese *timpan* variant in 2023 (Qalbi & Nugroho, 2024). This shows that small steps in ingredient modification can significantly impact product popularity.

Packaging also plays a vital role in attracting consumers. Creative and eco-friendly packaging designs, for instance, add value to the product. Some producers have started using biodegradable boxes with modern ethnic Acehnese motifs. A survey from a local research institution indicated that 65% of consumers are more interested in purchasing products with environmentally friendly packaging, proving that packaging innovation can be an effective strategy for attracting market interest.

Innovation in traditional cake products is not limited to flavor modifications but also includes appearance and texture. For example, adding a crispy layer to *bhoi* or using attractive natural colors can enhance the product's visual appeal. Additionally, variations with increased nutritional content, such as low-sugar or high-fiber options, can accommodate health-conscious consumers. These steps allow traditional cakes to retain their original flavors while offering something new for modern consumers.



Figure 1. Acehnese traditional snacks (Source: Kumparanfood, 2018)

The image above shows examples of products from the Acehnese traditional cake industry, namely *Kue Bhoi* and *Meuseukat*, which hold great potential for cultural preservation and local economic development. In the context of entrepreneurship, these products are not just food items but cultural assets that carry significant historical and aesthetic value. Through innovations in packaging, presentation, and marketing, traditional cakes like *Kue Bhoi* and *Meuseukat* can reach broader markets, potentially at the national and even international levels.

Kue Bhoi, with its unique shape, and *Meuseukat*, with its artistic decorations that showcase skilled craftsmanship, exhibit strong visual appeal that can serve as a selling point (Hasibuan et al., 2022). The primary challenge in this industry is to generate interest among the younger generation and increase production capacity. With the right entrepreneurial approach, such as utilizing simple technology to improve production efficiency and implementing digital marketing strategies, Acehnese traditional cakes can be developed into leading products that not only bring economic benefits but also preserve the cultural heritage of Aceh.

Therefore, it is crucial to combine cultural values with modern business strategies so that the Acehnese traditional cake industry can develop sustainably and remain relevant amidst increasingly fierce market competition.

Creative Marketing Strategies

Effective marketing strategies play a significant role in introducing traditional products to a wider market. The use of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok has proven effective in promoting products visually (Ariyansyah & Susena, 2024). Short videos that showcase the cake-making process, the stories behind traditional recipes, or collaborations with local culinary influencers can boost audience engagement. A TikTok campaign conducted by a culinary influencer in Aceh in 2023 attracted over 100,000 viewers within a week and increased online sales by 30%. This marketing strategy demonstrates that a creative digital approach can support business success.

Collaborating with local influencers is another strategy to strengthen branding and attract new consumers (Nuraisyah et al., 2023). The main challenge in such collaborations is finding influencers who are not only popular but also have a deep understanding of the cultural values being conveyed. Authentic influencers can help introduce Acehnese traditional cakes in a way that respects tradition and appeals to the younger generation.

Maximizing the use of digital platforms is key to capturing the attention of younger markets. In addition to influencer collaborations, business owners can utilize interactive features on social media, such as polls or live Q&A sessions, to boost consumer engagement. Involving consumers in this way helps them feel connected to the product journey, creating a strong emotional bond. The challenge in this strategy is balancing a modern appeal with the traditional values the product represents.

Sustainable Business Model Development

To ensure that product innovation and marketing strategies yield sustainable results, a solid business model is necessary. One important step is to establish partnerships with local SMEs that produce raw materials like coconut and palm sugar. By partnering with local farmers, traditional cake producers not only ensure consistent quality but also strengthen the local economy. A successful example is the collaboration between cake producers in Aceh and coconut farming groups, which helped secure high-quality coconut milk supplies. The result was improved product quality and a positive social impact on the surrounding community.

Online sales also play a crucial role in sustainable business development. Data from e-commerce platforms show that traditional culinary product sales have increased by 40% since the COVID-19 pandemic, as more people have shifted to online shopping (Wardhani & Romas, 2021). Acehnese traditional cake producers can leverage this trend by establishing a presence on various e-commerce platforms and offering fast shipping options to attract more customers.

Additionally, membership programs and special discounts for loyal customers can help maintain consumer loyalty. For instance, the “Aceh Cake Loyal Customer Program,” which offers monthly discounts and special rewards for regular purchases, can encourage customers to keep buying products consistently. Although this program requires an initial investment, increased customer retention and loyalty will yield stable long-term profits.

In efforts to create a sustainable business model, collaboration with local communities and the development of an eco-friendly production ecosystem can add value to the products. For example, using organic raw materials from local farmers can improve

product quality while benefiting the local economy. Additionally, establishing training programs for younger generations to produce traditional cakes will ensure long-term production continuity.

4. Conclusions

Acehnese traditional cakes face significant challenges in the modern era, where competition with global culinary products is becoming increasingly intense. Through creative approaches, product innovation, and effective marketing strategies, Acehnese traditional cakes can be reintroduced as relevant and appealing products in the local market. Furthermore, the development of a sustainable business model, such as collaborations with local SMEs and online sales, is key to achieving long-term profitability. This approach not only preserves Acehnese cultural heritage but also creates promising economic opportunities. With the right data and strategies, Acehnese traditional cakes can establish a strong position in the culinary market, bridging traditional values with modern needs.

By combining innovative approaches to product, creative marketing, and a sustainable business model, Acehnese traditional cakes have great potential to remain relevant in the modern market. The biggest challenge lies in preserving cultural identity without sacrificing appeal to contemporary consumers. The strategies discussed in this article aim to bridge the gap between traditional values and modern market demands, so that Acehnese traditional cakes can continue to contribute to the local economy and enrich culinary diversity.

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