



Marketing Strategy of Co-Branding at UNRIYO (A Case Study on UNRIYO’s Co-Branding Strategy through the Program “Ngopinya di TOMORO, Kuliahnya di UNRIYO” in Enhancing UNRIYO’s Brand Awareness)

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Abstract. This research aims to analyze the co-branding strategy conducted by Universitas Respati Yogyakarta (UNRIYO) through its collaboration with TOMORO Coffee in the program “Ngopinya di TOMORO, Kuliahnya di UNRIYO.” The study focuses on how this co-branding initiative contributes to enhancing UNRIYO’s brand awareness among potential students and the general public. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation of promotional activities. The findings indicate that co-branding with TOMORO Coffee provided UNRIYO with wider brand exposure by leveraging TOMORO’s popularity among youth and urban communities. The campaign created positive brand associations, strengthened engagement with prospective students, and positioned UNRIYO as a modern, innovative, and student-friendly institution. However, challenges such as limited promotional duration and the need for consistent follow-up strategies remain. This research highlights the potential of co-branding as an effective marketing strategy for higher education institutions to increase brand visibility and competitiveness.

Keywords: Optimal Portfolio, Data Envelopment Analysis, Single Index Model

INTRODUCTION

The competition among higher education institutions in Indonesia has intensified, requiring universities to develop innovative marketing strategies to attract prospective students. Traditional promotional methods are no longer sufficient to build strong brand awareness. Co-branding, a collaborative marketing approach between two brands, has emerged as a strategy that can enhance market reach and create mutual benefits.

Universitas Respati Yogyakarta (UNRIYO), as a private university in Yogyakarta, introduced a co-branding program with TOMORO Coffee under the tagline “Ngopinya di TOMORO, Kuliahnya di UNRIYO.” TOMORO Coffee, a rapidly growing coffee brand among youth, shares a similar target audience with UNRIYO, namely urban millennials and Gen Z. This initiative reflects UNRIYO’s effort to strengthen its positioning as a modern and youth-oriented campus. This study aims to investigate how UNRIYO’s co-branding strategy with TOMORO Coffee contributes to enhancing brand awareness, and what challenges and opportunities arise from this collaboration.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a post-positivistic paradigm, using a case study method. Case studies are descriptive in nature and focus on examining conditions, activities, developments, and key factors that influence the phenomenon under study. The results are analyzed and described to draw conclusions and research implications. The unit of analysis is UNRIYO's co-branding campaign with TOMORO Coffee. Data were collected through:

1. In-depth interviews with UNRIYO's marketing team, student representatives, and selected TOMORO Coffee customers.
2. Observations of the campaign activities and promotional content.
3. Documentation of campaign materials, social media content, and related press releases.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights related to the effectiveness of co-branding in increasing brand awareness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Strategy Implementation

- a. UNRIYO partnered with TOMORO Coffee to design a campaign featuring posters, digital content, and in-store promotions.
- b. The program highlighted lifestyle branding, connecting coffee culture with student life.
- c. Key message: studying at UNRIYO is modern, practical, and resonates with young people.

2. Impact on Brand Awareness

- a. Increased visibility of UNRIYO's brand among TOMORO customers.
- b. Social media engagement rose during the campaign, with higher reach and impressions.
- c. Students perceived UNRIYO as more innovative and closer to youth culture.

3. Opportunities

- a. Cross-promotion allowed UNRIYO to tap into TOMORO's loyal customer base.
- b. Strengthened UNRIYO's image as adaptive to market trends.

4. Challenges

- a. The collaboration was limited in duration, reducing long-term impact.
- b. Lack of continuous activation made the campaign less sustainable.
- c. Measurement of conversion from awareness to actual student enrollment was still limited.

Discussion

The co-branding strategy aligns with branding theories that emphasize associative value

in partnerships. By associating with TOMORO Coffee, UNRIYO successfully borrowed lifestyle elements attractive to Gen Z. However, sustainability requires integrated follow-up strategies, such as continuous digital engagement and extended collaborations.

The co-branding strategy between UNRIYO and TOMORO Coffee can be understood through the lens of **branding theory** and **co-branding frameworks**. According to Aaker (1996) and Keller (2013), co-branding enhances **associative value**, where one brand borrows equity, credibility, or lifestyle associations from another.

1. **Associative Value in Practice**

By collaborating with TOMORO Coffee, a brand already popular among **Gen Z and young professionals**, UNRIYO gains access to TOMORO's established brand image: youthful, trendy, and social. This association extends beyond product visibility; it conveys that UNRIYO shares similar values of modernity, accessibility, and community engagement. Students begin to perceive UNRIYO not just as a university, but as part of their lifestyle ecosystem.

2. **Lifestyle Branding and Youth Culture**

Coffee culture in urban areas, especially in Yogyakarta, has become a symbol of creativity, social interaction, and productivity. UNRIYO tapped into this cultural phenomenon, positioning itself as a university that understands and integrates with student life. Instead of a traditional "academic" image, UNRIYO presents itself as **student-friendly, relevant, and innovative**. This is in line with Blackett & Boad's (1999) notion that successful co-branding occurs when two brands **share overlapping audiences** and can deliver mutual benefits.

3. **Brand Awareness Enhancement**

The collaboration enhanced **brand visibility** by embedding UNRIYO's name in everyday activities like drinking coffee. For prospective students, seeing the tagline "Ngopinya di TOMORO, Kuliahnya di UNRIYO" repeatedly created **top-of-mind awareness**. Social media amplification further increased reach, with posts and stories from both TOMORO and students spreading the campaign organically. This aligns with Keller's concept of **brand salience**, where repeated exposure strengthens memory structures.

4. **Challenges of Sustainability**

Despite its initial success, the campaign faced challenges:

- **Short duration:** The campaign was time-limited, so the momentum faded quickly.
- **Weak conversion metrics:** While awareness increased, it was difficult to measure how many new students actually enrolled because of the campaign.
- **Need for continuous activation:** Co-branding efforts must be followed by sustained marketing activities (e.g., loyalty programs, ongoing social media collaborations, or campus events at TOMORO outlets) to maintain engagement.

5. **Strategic Implications**

For long-term impact, UNRIYO should:

- Develop **integrated marketing communication (IMC)** strategies, combining co-branding with digital marketing, campus events, and alumni storytelling.

- Extend the partnership with TOMORO into **annual campaigns** or **scholarship collaborations**, embedding UNRIYO deeper into the youth lifestyle.
- Establish **measurement tools** (such as tracking codes, enrollment surveys, or social listening) to link co-branding campaigns with actual student recruitment outcomes.

The co-branding with TOMORO Coffee provided UNRIYO with a valuable **image transfer effect**—borrowing TOMORO’s trendy, youthful image to position itself as a modern and attractive university. However, without strategic continuity and measurable follow-ups, the impact risks being short-lived.

CONCLUSIONS

The co-branding strategy between UNRIYO and TOMORO Coffee through the program “Ngopinya di TOMORO, Kuliahnya di UNRIYO” effectively enhanced brand awareness by creating positive associations with youth culture and lifestyle branding. The campaign successfully expanded UNRIYO’s visibility and strengthened its image as a modern university. Nevertheless, long-term effectiveness requires consistency and the development of measurable indicators for enrollment conversion. This study suggests that higher education institutions can adopt co-branding as a complementary strategy to traditional marketing efforts.

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