

Ingrid Tedjakumala, Ninis Agustini Damayani, Deddy Mulyana, Susie Perbawasari:  
Folklore, Branding, and Social Media: A Multifaceted Communication Approach to Marketing in  
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Cerita Rakyat, Branding, dan Media Sosial: Pendekatan Komunikasi dalam Strategi Pemasaran di  
Indonesia

## **Folklore, Branding, and Social Media: A Multifaceted Communication Approach to Marketing in Indonesia**

### ***Cerita Rakyat, Branding, dan Media Sosial: Pendekatan Komunikasi dalam Strategi Pemasaran di Indonesia***

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#### ***Abstract***

*This research examines in depth the complex relationship between folklore, branding and social media in Indonesia. Folklore, as an integral part of cultural heritage, has great potential in marketing communications, but this potential has not been fully explored in a modern context. This research will examine how folklore narratives, which are full of cultural values, local wisdom and the history of Indonesian society, can be adapted and integrated into digital marketing content. With the aim of creating brand stories that are not only informative, but also touch consumers' emotions, building a deeper sense of closeness and attachment. This research explores various storytelling formats—from visual content on social media to video campaigns—and how each format can reach different audiences. The case study used is Bangflo Coffee, a local coffee brand, which uses their Instagram account to reach technology-savvy millennials. By using storytelling as their Communication strategy, they use culture to build community, shared values, and brand loyalty. This research not only highlights the importance of emotional connections in navigating Indonesia's highly diverse and dynamic market, but also provides marketers with valuable insights into how to leverage the richness of folklore to create resonant and effective marketing campaigns. The findings of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of folklore in branding in the digital era, especially in Indonesia.*

***Keywords:*** branding, culture, digital marketing, folklore, storytelling coffee

#### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji secara mendalam hubungan yang kompleks antara folklor, branding, dan media sosial di Indonesia. Folklor, sebagai bagian integral dari warisan budaya, memiliki potensi besar dalam komunikasi pemasaran, namun potensinya ini belum

sepenuhnya dieksplorasi dalam konteks modern. Penelitian ini akan mengkaji bagaimana narasi-narasi folklor, yang sarat akan nilai-nilai budaya, kearifan lokal, dan sejarah masyarakat Indonesia, dapat diadaptasi dan diintegrasikan ke dalam konten pemasaran digital. Dengan tujuan untuk menciptakan cerita-cerita merek yang tidak hanya informatif, tetapi juga menyentuh emosi konsumen, membangun rasa kedekatan dan keterikatan yang lebih dalam. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi berbagai format storytelling—mulai dari konten visual di media sosial hingga kampanye video—dan bagaimana masing-masing format dapat menjangkau audiens yang berbeda. Studi kasus yang digunakan adalah Kopi Bangflo, merek kopi lokal, yang menggunakan akun Instagram mereka untuk menjangkau milenial yang mawas teknologi. Dengan menggunakan storytelling sebagai strategi Komunikasi mereka, mereka menggunakan budaya untuk membangun komunitas, nilai kebersamaan, dan loyalitas merek. Penelitian ini tidak hanya menyoroti pentingnya hubungan emosi dalam menavigasi pasar Indonesia yang sangat beragam dan dinamis, tetapi juga memberikan wawasan berharga bagi para pemasar tentang bagaimana memanfaatkan kekayaan folklor untuk menciptakan kampanye pemasaran yang resonan dan efektif. Temuan penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang peran folklor dalam branding di era digital, khususnya di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** *branding*, budaya, folklor, pemasaran digital, storytelling kopi

## Introduction

Previous studies have extensively examined the role of folklore across diverse domains, including social studies, education, tourism, design, media, and medicine. However, the intersection of folklore with marketing communication and strategies has received limited attention. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the connection between folklore, branding, and social media in Indonesia.

While research has thoroughly investigated the significance of folk narratives in various fields such as education (Alwi et al., 2019; de Bruijn, 2019; Devi & Wallang, 2022), tourism (Citraningtyas & Darminto, 2019), game design and animation (Min, 2021; Santosa et al., 2022), and medicine (Abbas et al., 2019; Sunday-Kanu, 2022), a largely unexplored area is the connection between folk narratives and brand identity, particularly within the realm of coffee brands.

## The Power of Instagram and Beyond in Indonesia

Achieving success in social media marketing is essential, especially considering the significant influence platforms such as Instagram have on consumer behavior. With a user base exceeding one billion worldwide, Instagram serves as a central hub for consumer engagement and decision-making. In 2018, the platform reached the milestone of one billion users, with a majority logging in daily. Notably, over 70% of these users rely on Instagram content to inform their purchasing decisions. This highlights the platform's crucial role in shaping consumer preferences and driving sales (Yang et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, Instagram has 83 million users, projected to grow by over 10% annually (Degenhard, 2021). Over 60% of users are aged 18-34 (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2023). Instagram's visual format makes it influential for brands, shaping consumer perception and engagement through content characteristics (Casaló et al., 2020);

Yang et al., 2020). In Indonesia, social media has emerged as a vital marketing tool, offering retailers better consumer access and aiding in brand equity development. Consumers are also using these platforms to build brand identity and awareness (Tedjakumala et al., 2022; Zamrudi & Il-Hyun, 2018).

### ***Bangflo Coffee and Indonesian Coffee Industry Dynamics***

In cultural contexts, food serves as a tangible expression of cultural identity, embodying societal values and preserving collective memories. Despite the acknowledged competitiveness and transactional nature of the coffee industry, there is a notable absence of comprehensive discussions on coffee culture within contemporary Indonesia. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to delve into the intricate relationship between folk narratives and the identity of coffee brands, thus enriching our understanding of the cultural dimensions of branding in the coffee sector (Changsong et al., 2021).

Jakarta's coffee industry has expanded significantly, offering a diverse range of brands to meet evolving consumer preferences. Despite offering affordability and taste variety, many brands lack a strong identity, which threatens their long-term sustainability. President Joko Widodo's support for local entrepreneurs aligns with the third wave coffee movement's focus on artisanal quality, improving opportunities for small businesses and global franchises (Tedjakumala et al., 2023). For instance, Bangflo Coffee sources beans from Flores and emphasizes farmer welfare. During the pandemic, the brand adapted its e-commerce model and leveraged digital communication to overcome challenges.

Bangflo uses social media and cultural narratives to promote responsible consumption, positioning itself strategically in the market. By incorporating the folktale "The Story of Sasando," the brand builds credibility and fosters strong consumer relationships, helping it stand out in a competitive market. Through the integration of cultural elements, Bangflo transforms into a cultural ambassador, offering an authentic Indonesian experience and going beyond simply supplying coffee to embody a deeper cultural significance (Latif et al., 2014).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Jakarta, such as Bangflo, employ social media and cultural storytelling to encourage responsible consumption and strengthen their market position (Bauman, 1992). Bangflo distinguishes itself by including the folktale "The Story of Sasando" to establish authenticity and connect with clients on a deeper level. This strategy enables Bangflo to serve as a cultural ambassador, providing consumers with a true Indonesian experience while elevating its brand beyond merely selling coffee (Latif et al., 2014)

### **Shaping Consumer Behavior: The Influence of Indonesian Millennials**

Indonesian millennials, born between 1970 and 2002 (Eastman et al., 2014; IDN, 2020), make up a sizable portion of the workforce and are increasingly aspiring to leadership positions. They are known as digital natives since they are technologically savvy and rely extensively on social media for their everyday activities. This generation is more socially concerned, prioritising products that benefit society and the environment.

Indonesian millennials are increasingly socially conscious consumers, particularly in Jakarta, drawn to product narratives, especially on social media, evoking emotional connections with brands. This generation, identified as the third-wave coffee consumers, values transparency in coffee production. They seek brands that contribute positively to society and the environment. As both consumers and entrepreneurs, Indonesian millennials are reshaping marketing strategies, emphasizing storytelling and conversational marketing to foster strong brand-consumer relationships. Further research on sustainable content in social media posts is needed to deepen consumer relationships beyond product sales, reflecting the diverse backgrounds and perceptions of Indonesian millennials (Tedjakumala et al., 2022).

### **Brand Humanization through Storytelling**

Human storytelling, stemming from ancient traditions, endures as an ageless method for entertainment, knowledge sharing, and cultural preservation (Sobur, 2014). Sobur (2014) states that stories from history, mythology, and religion have impacted various domains like psychotherapy and sports, showcasing their lasting influence. Despite cultural variations, universal mythological themes forge connections among societies, highlighting storytelling's profound significance. In today's world, storytelling remains a potent communication tool, meeting innate human needs (Nicoli et al., 2021), serving as a common ground for entertainment, education, and cultural transmission (Sobur, 2014), captivating audiences across different mediums and contexts.

Storytelling, as a potent tool in marketing, plays a crucial role in building emotional connections between consumers and brands, thereby facilitating deeper engagement (Brechman & Purvis, 2015; Dessart, 2018). Sequencing events chronologically, storytelling constructs cohesive frameworks that shape consumer interactions (Denning, 2013; Woodside, 2010). Effective use of storytelling enhances brand-consumer engagement and influences perceptions (Brechman & Purvis, 2015; Dessart, 2018; Nicoli et al., 2021).

To encapsulate a brand's essence and values, consumers shape brand narratives, and incorporating storytelling into brand communication enhances engagement. This approach not only facilitates connections and provides entertainment but also persuades and fosters new perspectives (Nicoli et al., 2021; Tedjakumala et al., 2023).

Narratives in brands are integral, reflecting their essence, products, and values (Brechman & Purvis, 2015). Co-created by consumers, these narratives establish a framework that defines a brand's significance and influences interactions and experiences (Nicoli et al., 2021). Hede and Watne (2013) explore Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) as innovative content for brand narratives, notably in craft breweries and coffee markets, underscoring storytelling's role in humanizing brands and facilitating market entry. Therefore, storytelling not only fosters emotional connections but also amplifies brand awareness, underscoring its importance in contemporary marketing strategies.

Dessart (2018) highlights storytelling advertising as a tool for emotional engagement. Anthropomorphism, extensively used in brand promotion, fosters brand love by humanizing brands. Consumers perceive anthropomorphized brands as complete entities, creating social ties and emotional attachments.

Millennials are receptive to tailored advertisements (Eastman et al., 2014). They prioritize functional and practical purchases, seeking products with authentic narratives (IDN, 2020). Indonesian millennials value products with strong stories and aesthetics, seeking meaning and inspiration in their purchases. For *Bangflo* Coffee, storytelling is integral to its brand philosophy, fostering deeper connections with customers (Shaw et al., 2013; Tedjakumala et al., 2023). Instagram narratives evoke emotional responses, enhancing brand-customer relationships and fostering a sense of belonging among followers.

### **Elevating Brand Humanization: A Strategic Framework**

As a consistent approach to building a strong, distinct, and memorable brand identity, Aaker (2012) emphasized the importance of managing a comprehensive sensory experience that encompasses all five sensory elements (Schmitt, 2012). This approach, emphasized in Aaker's concept, highlights the multifaceted nature of brands. A strategic framework is essential for brands to differentiate themselves and create compelling storylines. This method maintains consistency across numerous identity aspects, enabling brands and businesses to develop emotional connections with their customers and maintain a strong presence in competitive marketplaces (Aaker, 2012; Javalgi et al., 2005; Tedjakumala et al., 2023).

### **Folklore and Sustainable Development**

Beyond storytelling, folklore is a crucial means for societies to express emotions, navigate desires, and shape identities (Dorson, 1976; Dundes, 1989). Folklore is more than just entertainment; it is also an effective means of conserving cultural heritage and encouraging sustainable development. Through its complex histories, beliefs, and customs, it captures communities' collective wisdom, identity, and historical memory, reflecting their shared ethos (Bauman, 1971; Danandjaja, 1986; Dundes, 1989; Toelken, 1996).

Despite challenges, folktales in Indonesian culture remain significant cultural assets, conveyed through oral traditions and collective ownership, and taking both verbal and nonverbal forms (Bauman, 1971; Danandjaja, 1986). These folktales foster creative and mental growth (Bascom, 1965; Maulana & Prasetya, 2013; Zulkarnais et al., 2018). Incorporating folklore elements such as the "Hero's Journey" into modern branding allows firms to develop deeper ties with customers, portraying them as community builders and relationship enhancement factors, which aligns with current branding tactics (Dégh, 2001; Dorson, 1976; Dundes, 1989).

Online communities, fostered by social media in the digital age, act as global platforms that overcome geographical barriers (Peck & Blank, 2020). This is especially evident in Indonesia, where high social media engagement is shaping emerging cultures (Mulyana, 2023; Xie et al., 2020). Storytelling emerges as a powerful communication tool in this landscape, not only forging stronger bonds

between followers and brands but also igniting curiosity about brand origins, thus fostering sustainable content creation across platforms like Instagram and nurturing enduring consumer-brand relationships (Tedjakumala et al., 2023).

### **Bangflo Coffee's Sustainable Social Media Strategy in Brand Storytelling**

Social media, particularly Instagram, emerges as a powerful tool for brand storytelling. Instagram's influence on consumer purchasing decisions is significant, driven by creativity, positive emotions, and trust. Brand owners are encouraged to engage with consumers actively, turning them into participants in the brand story (Tedjakumala et al., 2023).

In the digital landscape, Bangflo Coffee strategically employs the honeycomb model to enhance engagement on Instagram, leveraging orienting, humanizing, interacting, showcasing, placemaking, and crowdsourcing tactics (McNely, 2012; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). By embracing diverse cultural perspectives, Bangflo Coffee creates compelling narratives that resonate with its audience, aligning with the Seven Building Blocks of social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Tedjakumala et al., 2023).

Bangflo Coffee effectively implements these building blocks: Orienting by providing informative content about coffee culture and origins; humanizing through personal storytelling involving farmers and the brand owner; interacting through active engagement with followers; showcasing the beauty of Flores and its coffee-making process; placemaking by creating a virtual space reflecting Flores' cultural richness; and crowdsourcing by involving followers in content creation (Kietzmann et al., 2011). This strategy not only fosters a strong emotional connection with the brand but also sets Bangflo Coffee apart in Indonesia's competitive coffee market, showcasing a modern approach to branding and engagement on social media.

### **Methods**

Rooted in transdisciplinary principles, this study uses action research methodologies to prioritize Group collaboration and ongoing investigation for practical solutions (McNiff, 2016; Coughlan & Brannick, 2014). Guided by Kurt Lewin's Action-Reflection Cycle, this study aims to generate practical knowledge for organizational improvement in social and cultural contexts (Mertler, 2024; Nzembayie et al., 2019). It emphasizes on the inclusion and versatility, encouraging dynamic interaction and continuous progress (McNiff, 2016; Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

By integrating Sasando folktale narratives into its brand identity, Bangflo Coffee's action research paradigm utilizes participant-driven, collaborative, and context-specific methodologies. This approach involves multiple cycles of engagement and evaluation, ensuring a thorough and iterative process (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002; Lewin, 1946). Using Kurt Lewin's Action-Reflection Cycle as its foundational framework, Bangflo Coffee adopts a participatory, multidisciplinary approach that aligns with the transformative nature of action research. This methodology enables iterative refinement of communication processes, marketing strategies, and online presence, contributing to both practical enhancements and

scholarly insights, thereby maintaining competitiveness in the evolving coffee industry landscape (McNiff, 2016; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Collaboration among stakeholders in planning, acting, and observing stages ensures a holistic approach to brand development and consumer engagement, fostering adaptability and innovation (Nzembayie et al., 2019; Tedjakumala et al., 2023).

To achieve complete insights, this research uses a variety of data gathering approaches. It starts with online surveys and questionnaires to collect varied perspectives. Observations, both online and on-site, provide background, whereas in-depth interviews give personal anecdotes from informants. Together, these methodologies combine quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive picture of the study topic.

Surveys are a key part of this process, focusing on Bangflo Coffee's Instagram followers. Purposeful sampling ensures diverse respondents who align with the study's objectives, and a snowball sampling effect extends reach through referrals on Instagram and WhatsApp. The survey includes 32 respondents from the Bangflo Coffee community. It gathers demographic information, such as gender, location, purchasing preferences, and social media use, with 20 questions in both multiple-choice and open-ended formats. This method ensures valuable data and insights from the community.

## **Results and Discussions**

In the contemporary marketing landscape, where traditional folklore experiences a decline, the significance of culture in shaping identity and fostering connections remains paramount (Bascom, 1965). Brands are increasingly recognizing the value of integrating cultural influences into their digital marketing strategies to establish authentic and meaningful connections with their audience. This is exemplified in the case of Bangflo Coffee, where cultural fusion with digital storytelling serves as a powerful mechanism for crafting a distinctive brand identity and enhancing consumer engagement (Kotler & Lane Keller, 2017)

Through strategic storytelling that incorporates cultural narratives, Bangflo Coffee delivers a memorable and engaging brand experience by integrating cultural elements into its digital marketing efforts. This approach enriches the brand's depth and authenticity while fostering a sense of belonging and connection among consumers. By transcending conventional marketing tactics, Bangflo Coffee cultivates lasting relationships with its stakeholders. Prioritizing engagement over passive consumption aligns with evolving consumer preferences and highlights the importance of experiential marketing in building enduring brand-consumer relationships. This model not only enhances brand loyalty but also positions Bangflo Coffee as a culturally relevant and socially conscious entity within the competitive market landscape.

### **Cultivating Brand Love: Folklore-based Digital Storytelling Model**

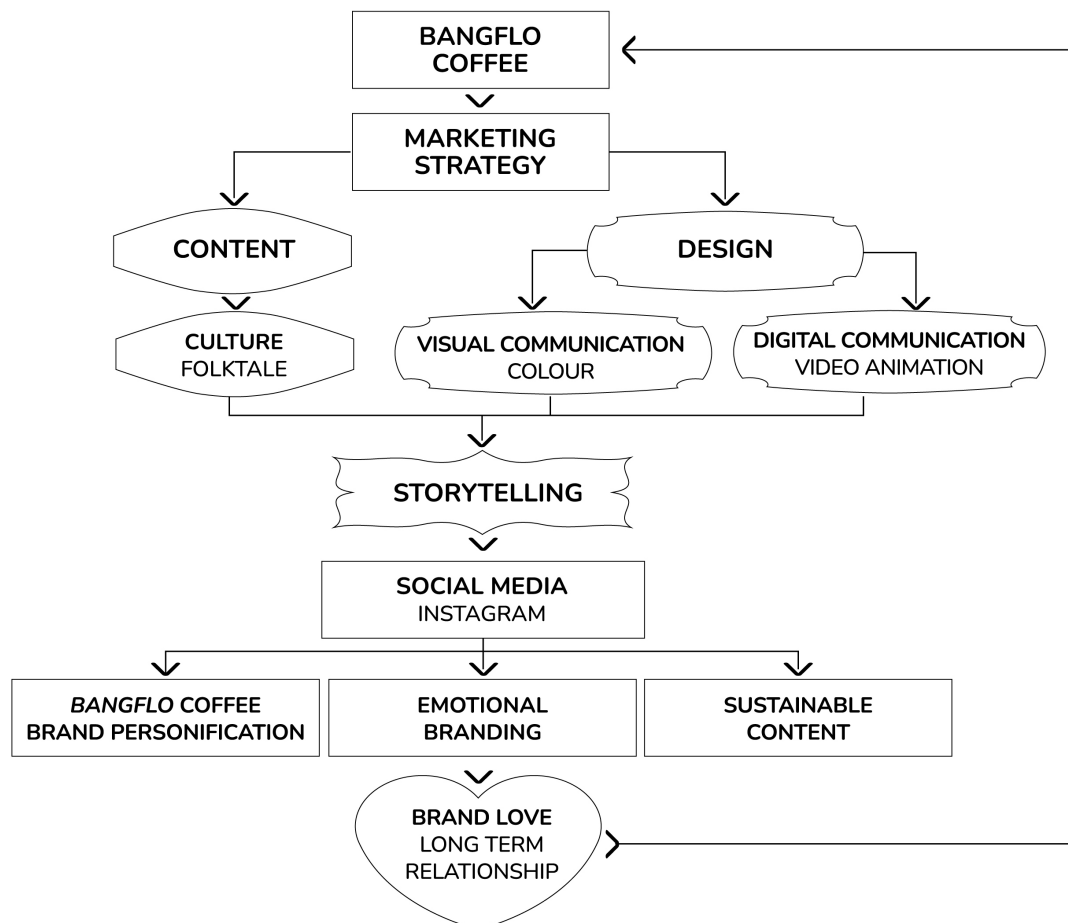
In the contemporary landscape, consumers are not merely users of products; they have transformed into active advocates, leveraging their experiences to endorse brands and foster connections. This shift from passive consumption to

active engagement signifies a deeper relationship between consumers and brands (Marc, 2001). It reflects a desire among individuals to align themselves with brands that mirror their values and beliefs, extending beyond product endorsement to encompass the entire ethos of the brand (Laroche et al., 2005)

Word-of-mouth advocacy, through the sharing of positive brand experiences, transforms consumers into influential agents who shape perceptions and encourage others to align with the brand's mission. This form of advocacy acts as a powerful catalyst for fostering and building the company's impact in the larger consumer community (Batra & Homer, 2004). As consumers rally around a shared brand identity, a sense of belonging and camaraderie emerges, establishing an emotional bond that transcends transactional relationships (Escalas, 2004)

This emotional connection forms the cornerstone of enduring brand-consumer relationships. As individuals feel a sense of kinship and mutual purpose with the brand, their commitment deepens, fostering sustained engagement and unwavering loyalty (Fournier, 1998; Chae, 2018). Beyond the allure of products, brand love emerges as a testament to consumers' alignment with a brand's values and their desire to be part of a community that resonates with their ideals (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). In essence, consumer advocacy in the digital age underscores the transformative power of shared experiences and communal affiliations in nurturing enduring brand relationships (Tedjakumala et al., 2023).





**Picture 1:** Folklore-based Digital Storytelling Model in Creating Long Term Relationship

## Conclusions

In summary, the thorough investigation of folklore, branding, and social media in Indonesia highlights the complexity of marketing approaches. It emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional knowledge while embracing contemporary strategies like storytelling and anthropomorphism. These insights are invaluable for marketers seeking to establish emotional connections with consumers in Indonesia's diverse market.

Bangflo Coffee exemplifies this approach by utilizing Instagram to engage consumers. By incorporating cultural narratives, the brand effectively connects with millennials, fostering a sense of community and shared values. This strategy aligns with modern branding principles, strengthening brand loyalty and resonating with today's consumers.

Future research should look at the impact of cultural storytelling on consumer behaviour throughout Indonesia's many regions, with an emphasis on how ethnic and cultural differences influence audience involvement. Given

Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape, such study might reveal regional preferences and modifications required for successful folklore-based branding. These insights would be useful for firms looking to create a stronger relationship with local communities while maintaining national appeal.

Future research should also explore how different age groups, like Gen Z, even the future Gen Alpha, respond to cultural narratives in marketing. Understanding these generational differences can help brands adapt their storytelling to better connect with each group while revealing whether folklore's appeal is universal or age specific.

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