

From Local Markets to Global Success: A Case Study on Scaling and Innovating in the Food Manufacturing Company

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the development process of a famous food manufacturing company that started only in local farmer markets aiming at snacks and agricultural products. Looking back at the different fiscal years, the company has acquired numerous accomplishments, hence attributing it to a strong focus on quality and innovation. There are several serious issues that a company faces while the strategies revealed above are to establish and consolidate a position in the rapidly growing food manufacturing industry. Some of these are the challenges of globalization, diversification of product portfolio, sustaining innovation, and building a strong and easily identifiable brand. In this paper analyzing the specifics of the company's development, its strategic directions, and defining the major issues and problem-solving approaches in responding to these complex challenges a certain group of questions will be highlighted. The paper discusses the factors that have facilitated the effectiveness of its strategic management concerning the achievement of the firm's goals and sustained growth amidst challenges. From the examination of the company's strategic choices, operating changes, and patterns of analyzing the market environment, this study has gone a long way in establishing the key dynamics underlying operation scaling within the food manufacturing industry. The lessons from this case suggest that to sustain a commitment and build a highly competitive mass-market business over time there is a need for flexibility, creativity, and vision.

Keywords: *Local Farmers' Markets, Strategic Planning, Market Adaptation, Scalability.*

1. Introduction and Background

Local markets serve as vibrant venues where regional producers can directly engage with consumers, offering a diverse range of products including fresh produce, meats, dairy items, and handcrafted goods. Typically held on a weekly or monthly basis, these markets are commonly situated in public spaces such as parks or town squares. They provide an opportunity for consumers to connect with local producers and gain insights into the origins and production methods of their food and other products. By facilitating the direct sale of goods from producers to consumers, local markets effectively bypass traditional intermediaries like wholesalers and retailers. This direct-to-consumer approach fosters a closer relationship between producers and buyers, enhancing community engagement and supporting local economies (Hinrichs, 2003; Low and Vogel, 2011; Waris & Arun, 2022). There are three main types of e-marketplaces: Business-to-Consumer (B2C), Business-to-Business (B2B), and Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C). These platforms function as neutral intermediaries, enabling interactions between the two parties involved (Cano et al., 2023).

Recent years have seen a growing focus on the development of local food markets as part of initiatives to foster sustainable and resilient food systems. Various factors influence their growth and sustainability, with consumer demand being particularly crucial. The rising interest in locally sourced and sustainable food has created a niche for local producers, leading to the establishment of direct-to-consumer channels.

Local markets act as vibrant hubs for families and entrepreneurs, offering a venue to enjoy local foods and crafts. These markets have a substantial economic impact, influencing employment, income generation, entrepreneurship, and community development. The advantages of shopping at local markets go beyond the fresh products and outdoor atmosphere. Active local markets significantly boost income for individuals and businesses, fostering economic growth. Throsby's (2001) research highlights that local markets and cultural industries positively affect income and economic development in rural areas. Supporting businesses at farmers' markets helps keep money within the community. Increased local purchasing encourages businesses to expand production, enhancing the local economy. Additionally, locally sourced foods often involve lower production

costs for farmers, eliminating extra delivery fees and preservatives. This enables farmers to offer fair prices, benefiting both consumers and producers.

Supporting local businesses at outdoor markets indirectly contributes to job creation. As vendors sell their goods, they often need to restock, which can require additional staff. Increased revenue from local shoppers enables small businesses to create more jobs. In addition to economic benefits, shopping at local markets has positive environmental impacts. Local foods from these markets come directly from producers, reducing transportation needs and conserving resources, which results in fewer emissions. Local markets also support the growth of micro and small enterprises by fostering direct connections between producers and consumers (Surya, et. al, 2021). They play a vital role in community development by encouraging social interactions and building social capital (Ghahtarani, Sheikhmohammady, & Rostami, 2019). Moreover, these markets preserve regional cultural identity by showcasing traditional crafts, local produce, and cultural products. This preservation can attract tourists and promote cultural tourism, as noted by Getz and Carlsen (2000) in their study on cultural tourism and sustainable local development.

The purpose of this case study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the food manufacturing company, covering its company profile, SWOT analysis, and key challenges. This study will explore the strategies implemented to overcome these obstacles and enhance the company's prospects. By examining the factors contributing to the company's success, this paper aims to extract valuable insights from its entrepreneurial journey. The objective of this study is to analyze the economic, social, and environmental impacts of local markets on community development, with a focus on how these markets contribute to sustainable food systems, support local economies, and foster community engagement. Thus, these analyses could offer guidance and applicable strategies for other SME businesses, particularly in the food manufacturing sector.

2. Methods

A case study approach has been chosen because the phenomenon being examined is novel, with few similar studies available, and the goal is to deepen researchers' understanding of it (Eisenhardt, 1989). Additionally, given that the objective is to explore strategic planning for scaling operations within the food manufacturing industry, a case study is a suitable methodology. Case studies can focus on either a single case or multiple cases (Yin, 1994). In this study, a single case has been selected: a local food manufacturing company that represents a successful small business in the food sector. This choice is also influenced by the limited number of small companies expanding globally and scaling their operations.

Yin (1994) identifies three types of case studies: descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory. This case study provides a detailed account of the strategies implemented and the outcomes achieved by the company, which has successfully made operational adjustments and adapted to the market. The analysis follows the process outlined by Eisenhardt (1989), which includes defining the analysis content, selecting relevant cases, analyzing collected data, and discussing implications. Specifically, the analysis focuses on understanding the company's strategic decisions in a competitive and evolving market. Information collected includes the company's goals, the obstacles encountered, and the results achieved. The chosen company is notable for its rare achievement as a small business expanding globally within the food sector, highlighting its success in innovation through scaling operations and market adaptation using social media and the web.

Various data collection methods can be used in case studies, including qualitative, quantitative, or combination. Given the novelty of the phenomenon and the study's goal of explaining the success of local markets, a qualitative approach has been used. Yin (1994) suggests employing multiple sources of evidence, known as data triangulation. For this case study, data was gathered through interviews with marketing and R&D staff, non-participant observation of the website, documentation, and archival resources.

3. Case Study: The Food Manufacturing Company

The company can be regarded as a family enterprise that is tightly connected to the major strengths which are great internal support and the united vision. The family nature of the company means that there is cooperation, people are motivated, and good decisions are made for the company to continue running well. This internal

consistency is necessary because it enables one to overcome existing challenges while at the same time exploiting existing opportunities. Everyone in the family agrees with the company's principles and goals as they all share a commitment to achieving its growth. Due to its cohesiveness, the company becomes more sturdy and agile, enabling it to adjust to changes in the market dynamics while ensuring long-term success. Aside from that, the company's employees benefit from a supporting network that includes long-term employee retention and a work-life balance that contributes to greater productivity and organizational motivation.

Moreover, the majority of the employees at the company have been working for over 50 years, resulting in the company having an experienced workforce. On the other hand, there is a very sound knowledge base and high levels of skill despite these years of service, thus warranting efficient, productive, and most of all, quality production. For instance, the policies the company has about break times include lunch and relaxation breaks from 12p.m-2p.m hence improves balance and lifts employees' spirits/ contentment. This way, there will be a little turnover of employees and the critical information is retained within an organization through the creation of dedicated and spirited employees.

Building a better online presence could help the business attract more customers from beyond the local area and reach as many potential customers as it could. Hence the business should have developed an effective online strategy, including an e-commerce platform for selling products, boosting sales, and creating brand awareness. By diversifying its customer base, the business is more stable. The company can enhance its product offerings and marketing strategies to maintain its market position.

The local market for traditional snacks may become saturated, thus restricting growth opportunities for the company within Malaysia. With an increasing number of players entering the market, differentiating products and maintaining a competitive edge can be challenging. Consequently, the company must focus on unique selling propositions and innovative product development to stand out in a crowded market. Furthermore, economic fluctuations and downturns can adversely affect consumer spending, particularly on non-essential goods like traditional snacks. Such economic challenges can lead to reduced sales and profitability for the company. Therefore, the company needs to implement strategic measures to mitigate the impact of economic downturns, such as diversifying its product range and exploring new markets. Moreover, changes in food safety regulations, halal certification requirements, and other governmental policies can pose a threat to the business. Adapting to new regulations can increase operational costs and require additional resources. Hence, the company must stay abreast of regulatory changes and ensure compliance to avoid potential legal and financial repercussions.

While expanding its market reach internationally, competing in global markets presents significant challenges. Different consumer preferences, local competitors, and varying regulatory requirements in foreign markets can pose hurdles. Therefore, the company needs to conduct thorough market research and tailor its products and marketing strategies to fit the specific needs of each international market. Additionally, the rapid pace of technological advancements in food production and marketing can be a threat if the company is unable to keep up. Falling behind in automation, online marketing, or e-commerce capabilities can disadvantage the company. Consequently, the company must invest in technology and innovation to enhance production efficiency and engage effectively with modern consumers. Lastly, any negative publicity related to product quality, safety, or business practices can severely damage the company's brand reputation. Maintaining high standards and effective crisis management are crucial to mitigating this threat. Therefore, the company must prioritize quality control and transparent communication to preserve its brand integrity and consumer trust.

4. Results & Discussion

As the company tries to grow and do well in the competitive food manufacturing industry, it faces several big problems that need to be dealt with in a planned way to ensure long-term success. These problems include going global, making more products, coming up with new ideas, building a brand, marketing, and keeping quality high standards to ensure customers are happy.

i) International Growth

International growth is defined as pursuing business opportunities beyond the domestic borders of a nation,

and it has established itself as an aspiration for companies worldwide (Anand, et. al., 2021). The very reason for expansion is simple: new opportunities, new markets, and the potential for companies to flourish (Buckley, 2020). The difficulty of going global is one of the biggest problems that the company has to deal with. When businesses expand to a new market, they have to deal with a lot of different regulations, each with its own rules and standards that businesses have to follow. This can be hard to do because when businesses do not follow these rules, they can position the company in trouble with the law due to delays in entering new markets, as well as damage the company's reputation. Furthermore, when examined closely, an entrepreneurial endeavor's origin seems irrelevant to the scale of growth and impacts made (Ng, & Ahmed, 2024). Regardless of their origins, small and big, national-based or internationally formed, the success of businesses often heavily depends on how timely innovations in services, products, or processes are introduced to the corresponding market. Additionally, the complicated rules for importing and exporting will create different levels of difficulty, necessitating a thorough knowledge of trade deals, tariffs, and customs regulations. Certain ASEAN countries like Singapore are also so strict in importing food and agricultural products since they are aware of the biohazard impact on their agricultural production.

ii) Product Diversification and Innovation

To maintain the growth of a business, different competitors often adopt different and impactful strategies: product innovation, market penetration, market development, and product diversification (Sohl, Vroom, & McCann, 2020). There are two strategies, in addition to the product innovation strategy, that are increasingly adopted and have been the subject of extensive research: product diversification and the product diversification strategy. The product diversification strategy is the practice of broadening the range of products offered to either current customers or new potential ones. Based on Kusumawardhany & Lukito, (2024), this strategy aims to capitalize on current market strengths to gain higher sales, market shares, and market power while making the barriers to entry higher for competitors. Product innovation can be defined as a product whose design, production processes, markdowns, or performance requirements were consciously changed (Geiger & Kjellberg, 2021). The motivation for product innovation can be considered as either demand-side motivation or supply-side motivation. In the food industry, which is always changing, keeping ahead means coming up with new products and styles all the time. But this also brings its problems. Putting money and time into research and development (R&D) is necessary, but it takes a lot of both. The need to keep coming up with new ideas can put a strain on budgets and cause risks if the new goods don't do well in the market. Products such as snacks, Bahulu that are mainly produced by the company are widely known in our market, which makes it easy to copy by other competitors. Hence, the idea of diversifying the options by improving the innovation of their products is brilliant. However, whenever they expand globally further R&D effort needs to be added due to changes in consumer taste from time to time.

iii) Brand Building and Marketing

According to Steenkamp (2020), brand building has become an integral part of marketing strategies. In a globalized world filled with options for numerous products and services, companies are striving hard to create a niche. It simply refers to creating an identity in the consumer's eye and the market. He claimed that the aim of building a good brand is to foster recognition and loyalty from consumers for a particular company or product. Brand building occupies a central position in marketing strategies as it helps in making the product or company stand out among competitors (Kosteljik, & Alsem, 2020). Apart from that, building a strong reputation and making the company more visible are very important to the company. However, achieving these goals will create risks. In building good marketing efforts, they need to know a lot about how people in the area behave and how to respect their culture. A marketing strategy that works for everyone can fail, so it's important to come up with localized plans that connect with specific groups of people. As is known, the company's efforts to build its brand reputation are not easy after more than 30 years of developing its business. To cultivate trust among consumers, entrepreneurs, and partners it takes a considerable amount of time. This is because a business entity must show efforts to convince other entities about each service or negotiation that is carried out.

iv) Quality Assurance and Customer Satisfaction

Meeting customer demands via meeting quality standards is crucial to enhance purchase decisions, loyalty, and recommendations to potential customers. Quality Assurance (QA) comprises systematic inspection processes including verification to ensure a certain level of quality (Ji., et. al. 2020). The company always has to work hard

to keep quality standards high and make sure customers are happy. When making food, strict quality control methods are needed all along the supply chain, from getting the raw materials to distributing the finished product. Making sure that these standards are always met can take a lot of work and needs a strong quality assurance system. Training employees is a key part of upholding these standards, but it requires ongoing investments in their growth and the use of effective problem-solving tools. Also, how well a company can respond to changing market needs affects how happy its customers are. Continuous feedback loops from customers give them useful information, but they need to be flexible and quick to act to use this information to improve products and run their business.

Discussion

SWOT Analysis

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Robust founding team ● Product Quality ● Social Responsibility Programs 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early Financial Challenges ● Operational Challenges
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Innovations of products ● Seasonal and Bulks buying ● Authentic Taste experience for tourist 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Changing Consumer Preferences ● Competitive Competitor

The company's strength is its diverse range of traditional snack products that appeal to a wide range of tastes and preferences. These products consist of a variety of "bahulu", "kuah pecal", "kuah rojak", a variety of crispy peanut snacks, and other products which give customers a diverse choice. This diverse product line not only appeals to a wide range of customers but also demonstrates the company's dedication to maintaining and encouraging traditional Malaysian flavors and culinary heritage. Furthermore, Halal certification from the Selangor Islamic Religious Council and JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) is a significant asset for the company. This certification guarantees that the company's products follow strict Islamic dietary laws, making them suitable for consumption by Muslim customers. This certification not only shows the business's dedication to quality and compliance, but it also opens up new market opportunities, both domestically and internationally.

The company's dedication to improving the community is admirable. It is because the company's employment of 30 permanent and temporary employees, as well as assisting single mothers and residents via a traditional snack product sales center, indicate an intense awareness of social responsibility and community engagement. The company assists single mothers in achieving financial independence and stability by creating job opportunities for them. The company also enhances their quality of life by providing them with a source of income, as well as the overall well-being of their families.

Regardless of its strengths, the company has several weaknesses that threaten its development and sustainability. One of the main flaws is its initial financial difficulties. With a starting capital of only RM10,000 and challenges obtaining loans and financing, the company's ability to scale operations and invest in critical resources has been limited. With such a tiny funding base, the founders had to be extremely frugal and resourceful in their financial management, making every ringgit count. Due to a lack of capital, the company is unable to invest in critical business elements such as advanced machinery, marketing, and skilled labor, all of which are required for growing operations and effectively competing in the market. Due to these challenges, the founders had to depend on their limited savings and reinvest any profits they made back into the company, slowing the rate of growth and progress.

One of the most pressing issues was handling unpaid consumer debts. In the early stages, the company most likely extended credit to attract and retain customers, but this caused cash flow issues when customers delayed or defaulted on their payments. This situation set off a vicious cycle in which the company struggled to maintain enough liquidity to purchase raw materials and continue operations. The increasing price of raw materials gave a further level of challenges. Changing costs made it difficult to forecast expenses and maintain consistent pricing for their products. This unpredictability might disrupt manufacturing processes and lower product

quality, affecting customer satisfaction and the image of the brand. To conclude, this company's early financial struggles and operational challenges evaluated the founders' resolve and resourcefulness. The company's ability to conquer these challenges through strategic planning and unwavering dedication have been critical in its transition from a small-scale operation to an established brand in the industry.

The company has the opportunity to innovate its products, exemplified by its approach to traditional Malay pastry. They have made it more relevant and increased demand by introducing various flavors such as Pandan, Chocolate Rice, and original flavor. Significant opportunities are presented through seasonal promotions and bulk buying options. By offering special promotions during festive seasons and to customers looking to purchase in larger quantities, this company can attract more customers and increase sales volume throughout the year. Furthermore, the company's customer base includes delegations and foreign tourists from countries such as Iran, the Netherlands, Indonesia, France, the United States, and others. Tourists looking for authentic traditional Malaysia 'Kueh' or pastries offered by the company. In addition, tourists could experience and see the production and process of making pastry and other products.

The first threat for the company is changing consumers' preferences based on cultural backgrounds or dietary restrictions. Traditional snacks like cake and crackers, which are sometimes thought to be rich in sugar or low in nutrients, may see a drop in demand as consumer awareness of and preference for healthy food options grows. Snacks that are organic, devoid of gluten, low in sugar, or manufactured with natural ingredients may be preferred by customers. These days, there are a lot of other companies, particularly in e-commerce, providing traditional pastries and snacks. The rivalry remains fierce. Prices and profit margins for the company may decline as a result. Businesses frequently participate in price wars in a competitive market to capture customers. Decreased profit margins for snacks and pastries will result from this, particularly if they are competing solely on price rather than on quality or unique pastry flavors selling propositions. Since the emergence of e-commerce, food manufacturing businesses have faced competition from easily accessible via the Internet in addition to local competitors.

Related Challenges

The case study analysis concludes that in overcoming growth-associated challenges for future continuation and profitability of the prospects, strategic methodologies can be used by the company customized according to every dimension linked with its expansion and operational improvement. Firstly, solving the challenges of global expansion requires meticulous planning to prepare for more stringent enforcement in the coming years. It may begin by creating and establishing teams that specialize or have an in-depth knowledge of various local-global standards as well as complying with requirements and protocols to navigate the import framework easily in other regions. Equally important is cultural adaptation; in-depth market research helps understand consumer behavior, taste, and culture which can be used to offer products that are localized as well as develop campaigns that resonate with the consumers authentically thereby driving acceptance.

Secondly, if product diversification and innovation are to be an avenue through which the company might overcome these challenges, it will require a significant commitment in terms of R&D and market testing. Resources are appropriate for R&D. While constant innovation in products requires resources that are put to purpose through a rigorous process of testing the market, which is vital, as it provides feedback on what needs something further.

Thirdly, enhancing brand-building and marketing efforts demands a nuanced approach to localization and reputation management (Felzensztein et al., 2019). Crafting localized marketing campaigns that align with cultural sensitivities and consumer behaviors enhances brand visibility and resonance. Building and maintaining brand trust through consistent delivery of quality products and responsive customer service establishes enduring customer loyalty. Proactively monitoring the online presence and promptly addressing customer feedback and issues further bolsters brand reputation and consumer confidence.

Lastly, ensuring high standards of quality and customer satisfaction entails implementing rigorous quality control measures throughout the supply chain. From sourcing raw materials to final distribution, stringent quality assurance protocols guarantee product integrity and reliability. Investing in employee training empowers staff to uphold these standards while enabling efficient problem-solving and customer engagement.

Continuous feedback loops from customers provide invaluable insights for ongoing improvement and adaptation to evolving market demands. By adopting these comprehensive strategies—focused on regulatory readiness, cultural adaptation, innovation excellence, brand integrity, and quality assurance—the company can fortify its position in the global market, capitalize on growth opportunities, and navigate challenges effectively, ensuring sustained success and market leadership in the food manufacturing sector.

Based on the key findings from the case study analysis, the company may adopt some sustainable practices to enhance its growth and operational effectiveness. Localizing the market research is one of the sustainable practices for tailoring products and marketing strategies. Perhaps, this approach fosters better consumer acceptance and brand loyalty. Besides, the company may allocate resources to research and development with a focus on sustainability. For instance, the products could be innovated to be more eco-friendly, whether through sustainable sourcing, reduced packaging, or lower environmental impact in production processes. In terms of brand building and marketing, the company should craft localized marketing campaigns that are culturally sensitive to resonate with a local audience. By maintaining brand trust through consistent quality and responsiveness will enhance the company's reputation. This approach therefore will build a positive reputation. Apart from that, since the company studied in this paper is from the food manufacturing sector, the company has to ensure high standards across the supply chain with strict quality control measures.

5. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

Looking ahead, the company possesses several promising prospects that can pave the way for its future growth and success in the competitive food manufacturing industry. Initially, the company has demonstrated a robust capability for international expansion, successfully entering markets in ASEAN, Europe, and West Asia. Building upon this foundation, prospects include further geographical diversification into new regions and countries, leveraging its established reputation for quality and innovation to capture additional market share and broaden its global footprint.

Furthermore, the company is well-positioned to capitalize on opportunities arising from product diversification and innovation. Initially focusing on snacks, rojak gravy, and agricultural products, the company can expand its product portfolio to include healthier alternatives, convenience foods, and specialized dietary options. By investing in research, the company can introduce new products that cater to evolving consumer preferences for the development of nutritious, sustainable, and ethically sourced foods, thereby enhancing market relevance and competitiveness.

Perhaps, the company's proactive approach to brand building and marketing presents significant opportunities for future growth. Leveraging digital platforms, social media, and targeted marketing strategies, the company can strengthen brand visibility and engagement both domestically and internationally (Mariani et al., 2016). Enhanced brand recognition will not only attract new customers but also foster brand loyalty among existing ones, driving sustained revenue growth and profitability.

Moreover, the company's commitment to maintaining high standards of quality and customer satisfaction serves as a cornerstone for future success. By continuously improving production processes, ensuring product consistency, and providing exceptional customer service, the company can reinforce its reputation as a trusted provider of high-quality food products. This dedication not only enhances customer retention but also supports premium pricing strategies and positions the company as a preferred choice in competitive markets.

Towards the end, embracing sustainability initiatives and responsible business practices can further differentiate the company in the marketplace. Patel (2023) claimed that by integrating environmentally friendly practices across its operations, from sourcing ingredients to packaging and distribution, the company can appeal to increasingly eco-conscious consumers and meet regulatory requirements for sustainability. This strategic focus not only aligns with global trends toward sustainability but also opens doors to new market segments and partnerships, driving long-term growth and profitability.

Based on its strong foundation, commitment to innovation, robust marketing strategies, and focus on quality and sustainability efforts, the company is poised to capitalize on future opportunities, expand its market

presence, and achieve continued success in the dynamic and evolving food manufacturing industry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the case study, the company is indeed providing valuable insight into the critical factors that drive the success of SMEs. Over the years, the company has demonstrated and proven how a combination of strategic vision, unwavering commitment to quality, and continuous innovation can transform a small startup into an internationally recognized brand.

It is necessary to stress that loyal customers and their retention depend on the quality and the level of their satisfaction. Some of the key success factors that have led to the actualization of the company's goal include the reliable production of quality goods. However, overcoming growth challenges through product diversification demands significant investment in research and development. Market testing and feedback are essential for continuous innovation to align with consumer needs. On the other hand, the company also maintains brand integrity by providing quality products and responsive customer service to foster customer loyalty. Lastly, by implementing rigorous quality control measures throughout the supply chain will ensure product integrity. In doing this, employee training and continuous customer feedback loops are vital to maintaining high standards and adapting to market changes.

In summary, to navigate growth challenges, ensuring profitability while sustaining the business requires the company to focus on regulatory compliance, culture adaptation, sustainable innovation, and rigorous quality assurance. Other SMEs can learn from the story of the company and apply similar strategic techniques in overcoming barriers and grasping developmental opportunities. The case shows that there exists an opportunity for SMEs and how such a global business may attain splendid success and indeed compete in the global market with vision, high determination, and proper planning.

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