

The Influence of Leadership and Business Strategy on The Competitive Advantage of Millennial Small Entrepreneurs in Medan City

Ritha F. Dalimunthe¹, Magdalena Linda Leonita Sibarani²

^{1,2}Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Email: ritha.dalimunthe@usu.ac.id¹, magdalenaleonita@gmail.com²

Correspondence Authors: ritha.dalimunthe@usu.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Millennial small entrepreneurs engaged in the culinary field are considered to be a generation that is actively working, innovative because they use digitalization, and have self-confidence and have a strong will to work. There is a difference between the millennial generation and the previous generation, namely the baby boom generation who were born in the 60-70s era. Therefore, there is a need for research on millennial small entrepreneur leadership. Small entrepreneurs have not entirely used information technology optimally (Dalimunthe, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on leadership and business strategies against the competitive advantage of millennial small entrepreneurs in Medan City. The results of research on the competitiveness of a small business company are the strengths that must exist for a company, namely the human resources who run the business so that their products can be superior and accepted by the market Dalimunthe (2018). The research objective is to analyze and explain the competitive advantages of a small business product which is the key to success in a product of millennial small entrepreneurs. Therefore, in this study, the researcher wants to conduct further research on discussing the factors that influence the competitive advantage of small business products born from the millennial generation (generation y) in Medan City. The results of research in 2016 were to have an entrepreneurial mindset for a small entrepreneur so that aspects of internal control are needed as well as challenges or obstacles which are lessons for business development. To see the entrepreneurial mindset in small businesses, this research is seen from the aspects of the characteristics of millennial leadership as well as from the aspect of business strategies seen from the product and product value and online marketing.

Keywords: *leadership, business strategy, competitive advantage, millennial small entrepreneurs*

INTRODUCTION

Currently, unemployment in Medan City has reached 5% of its population of Medan City, which is around 4 million people. The most unemployed people born in the 80- 90s era are called the millennial generation. One way to overcome unemployment is to try yourself namely, to become a small entrepreneur. Small millennial engaged in the culinary field are considered to be a generation that is actively working and innovative because they use digitalization, have self-confidence, and have a strong will to work. There is a difference between the millennial generation and the previous generation, namely, the baby boom generation, who were born in the 60-70s era. Therefore, there is a need for research on millennial and small entrepreneur leadership. Small entrepreneurs have not entirely used information technology optimally (Dalimunthe, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on leadership and business strategies against the competitive advantage of small millennial entrepreneurs in Medan.

Competitive advantage is the strength that entrepreneurs should have so that their products can be superior to those of other entrepreneurs who are the same in the market. Entrepreneurship is the application of creativity and innovation to solve problems and take advantage of opportunities faced by people every day (Thomas W

Zimmerer, 2013). Therefore, a small business owner must be able to compete by taking advantage of the opportunities that exist every day through creativity and innovation to meet market demands. Small businesses still need creativity to obtain a market niche that fits the target market that entrepreneurs do. The problems faced by SMEs include the lack of small entrepreneurs to make variations in product quality, the lack of ability to engage in online marketing to advance their business, and the lack of a larger market share (Dalimunthe, 2018).

This research is also the RIP of the University of North Sumatra, which aims to increase the creative economy, especially in the populist economy based on innovation in accordance with the USU's talent in the field of food and beverage processing based on local wisdom. This research examines research development related to the creative economy and the economy that supports tourism. The Creative Industry Development Plan in Indonesia, as well as strengthening regional competitiveness. Since 2018, the government has focused on mapping the potential of creative human resources to strengthen the competitive advantage of product creativity.

Products that have competitive advantages can easily enter the market so that they are easy to develop. Strategic management is a series of managerial decisions and actions produced through the process of formulating and implementing plans with the aim that the company can have a competitive advantage (Wheelen and Hunger, 2012). As is well known, the objective of strategic management is to exploit new and unique opportunities. Therefore, small entrepreneurs must have a leadership character to have a strategic viewpoint to become an economic buffer for a region. Exploring the potential of small entrepreneurs in an area needs to be researched, especially for millennial small entrepreneurs, so that the government can make policies for the millennial generation who have businesses in the culinary field. In addition, the University of North Sumatra as a State University in Medan City, must play a role in improving the welfare of the millennial generation in society.

Efforts must be made to make the role of SMEs very important so that an increase in the regional economy and community empowerment can be realized (Dalimunthe, 2018). As business leaders, small entrepreneurs need to increase their creativity and business strategies by using digital marketing to advance their business to gain a larger market share. Therefore, it is necessary to create a development model and increase the competitive advantage built in the long term in the millennial generation. Even though you face challenges in your business journey, you can still build a business that generates profits, provides business opportunities and benefits for many people, and is sustainable, so that a small culinary business can become a big business in the long run.

This research was conducted to examine the influence of leadership and business strategy on the competitive advantage of small millennial entrepreneurs in Medan. The purpose of this study was to examine and analyze the influence of leadership on competitive advantage and the influence of business strategy on the competitive advantage of millennial-generation small entrepreneurs in Medan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Millennial Generation

In the current era of globalization, it has given birth to a new generation called the millennial generation or Generation Y. One of the main characteristics of the millennial generation is increased communication through media and digital technology. Because they were raised through technological advances, the millennial generation is creative, informative, passionate, and productive. This generation has the ability to communicate openly as well as in social media users in their various life activities, and has the ability and willingness to always follow technological developments from political, social, and economic perspectives. Thus, the millennial generation appears to be very reactive to the environmental changes that occur around them. There are several work characteristics that millennial generations have:

- 1) Millennials in doing work do not receive a salary but also have set goals.
- 2) Millennials are more interested in self-development at work to learn something new, including skills, change their mindset, get to know the community, and take opportunities to achieve predetermined goals.

- 3) Millennials prefer subordinates and team members who have the freedom to carry out activities without being ordered or supervised.
- 4) Millennials carry out activities without the need for annual reviews, but they hope for continuous improvement.
- 5) Millennials think more about increasing their strengths.
- 6) Millennials, work is a part of life.

The existence of generation groupings in a job can lead to developments in human resource management. Mannheim (1952) was the first to study generational differences. According to Mannheim, generation is a social construction that is a group of people with the same age and historical experience. To see someone who is part of a generation, we look at the similarities of the birth year over a span of 20 years and having the same social and historical dimensions. According to Ryder (1965), generation is an aggregate that comes from a group of people who simultaneously experience various events. Meanwhile, William Strauss and Neil in their book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000) divided generations by means of birth equality and historical events in a time span.

Furthermore, Kupperschmidt (2000) classified individuals based on the year of birth, age, location, and events experienced by a group of individuals who are influential in their lives. According to Elwood Carlson in his book *The Lucky Few: Between the Greatest Generation and the Baby Boom* (2008), the millennial generation is Generation Y. This is also stated by Sezin Baysal Berkup, Gediz University, İzmir, Turkey (2014) that the millennial generation or Generation Y is someone who was born between 1980 and 2001. According to Hasanuddin et al. (2017), millennials were born between the years 1981 and 2000. The population of North Sumatra, a millennial generation born between 1981 and 2000 and aged 20 to 39 years, is 4,394,564 people or 30.18% of the total population in North Sumatra. The millennial generation workforce in North Sumatra is quite large, as people who can work productively

Millennial Leadership

Millennial leadership uses millennial-generation communication patterns that they lead. For example, millennial leaders do not hesitate to use social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or the latest communication channels that have become main stream in the lives of the new generation. Millennial leadership must encourage innovation, creativity, and the spirit of the new generation of entrepreneurship. All channels of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship must be well-designed and concrete. Do not just contain discourse but build a process that can truly be enjoyed by this millennial generation to develop themselves. For example, millennial leaders need to build a center of creativity in every city with the latest equipment and technology, the most advanced computer graphics, free high-speed internet networks, Millennial leadership needs independence, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Leadership Character

Millennial leaders should be highly creative, dare to take all risks for actions that have been taken, and be responsible for decisions and implementation of activities. Leaders must also be able to see out of the box, think tactically at all costs, and build integrity to face problems (Ali & Waqar, 2013 sets Setyaningrum, 2017). According to Bass (1997), leadership is a transformational leadership style model that can encourage and motivate subordinates to develop and improve performance more than previously thought. Transformational leadership goes beyond just exchanges or rewards for performance shown by subordinates, but is based more on commitment and trust. There are four dimensions of transformational leadership: charisma, which is characterized by a strong vision and mission so that it fosters pride and respect; inspirational, which includes the capabilities of a leader in being a role model for employees; individual consideration where a leader provides personal care; mentoring to improve employee performance; and stimulus intellectual property given by a leader so that employees like to come up with constructive ideas for the benefit of the organization.

Business Strategy

a. Product quality

According to Kotler in Sudaryono (2011:240), a product can be offered to the market to get attention, to be purchased, used, or consumed, so that it can fulfill wants and needs. Product quality is the overall characteristic of a product or service on the ability to satisfy stated/implicit needs. Improving the quality of a company's products. In addition to reducing product defects, the main objective of total quality is to increase consumer value.

b. Product Value

Product value is the set of benefits expected by customers from a particular product or service. Total customer costs are a set of costs that consumers expect to spend on evaluating, obtaining, using, and disposing a product or service. If the performance is below expectations, the customer is not satisfied, and if it meets expectations, the customer will be satisfied; if the performance exceeds expectations, the customer will be very satisfied and return to buy the products produced by the company. A company can increase value to be offered to consumers in several ways as follows: m Enhancing the usefulness (benefit), m mengurangi charge, m Enhancing usability and reduce costs, m Enhancing usability is greater than the increase in costs, m Enhancing usability smaller and subtraction cost

c. Online Marketing

Most entrepreneurs in Medan do not have sufficient knowledge and skills in e-commerce. This is one of the obstacles to business development, considering that every company is currently required to carry out online marketing to increase competitiveness and expand market coverage to national and international markets at a relatively low cost. With access to Internet connectivity that is adequate at this time, it is not difficult for small entrepreneurs in Medan to compete in the online market, but often because of limited ability and confidence regarding the use of media and technology, it makes them more focused on offline marketing and not optimal in taking advantage of the online platform. An optimal online platform is required to accommodate small entrepreneurs in Medan.

Entrepreneurs also need online media to expand their value chain networks, where women entrepreneurs are generally less aggressive than male entrepreneurs in terms of network expansion. Small entrepreneurs are influenced by several factors, including culture. The value chain network will help entrepreneurs create products that are more competitive in the market by obtaining an alternative supply of production factors and market potential through additional channels, with network expansion being one of the crucial issues in business development, in order to gain access to more production factors. varied and competitive outside Medan, which affects the value of the product moderately in terms of cost efficiency and additional product benefits. Collaborating with other, more established entrepreneurs who already have a wide network can be an option to expand the network.

Competitive Advantage

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014), a competitive advantage is an advantage over competitors obtained by offering lower value or by providing greater benefits because of a higher price. A firm occupies the position of competitive advantage because of its comparative advantage in resources, producing superior value at lower costs. A competitive advantage cannot be understood by looking at the company as a whole. Competitive advantage develops from the value it can create for its buyers, which exceeds the company's cost of creating it. A competitive advantage comes from the many different activities a company undertakes in designing, producing, marketing, delivering, and supporting its products. Each of these activities can support a company's relative cost position and create differentiation. According to Saiman (2014, p. 125), small entrepreneurs must be able to recognize various basic elements to achieve competitive advantage, namely price or value, pleasing consumers, consumer experience, notable product attributes, and unique service privileges. The description of the competitive advantages of small culinary entrepreneurs in Medan is as follows.

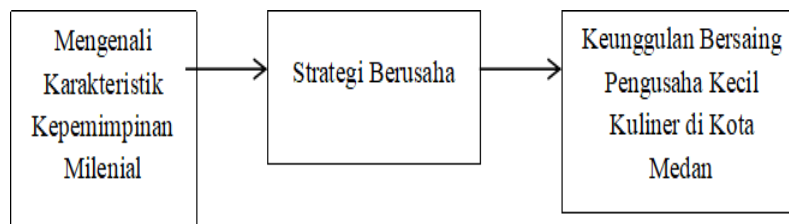


Figure 1. Competitive Advantages of Small Culinary Entrepreneurs in Medan City

METHODOLOGY

This research employs an experimental design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches, focusing on small millennial culinary entrepreneurs in the city of Medan. The purpose of this study is to analyze the empowerment of human resources and the utilization of social media in developing small culinary businesses managed by millennials.

The population and sample of this study consist of community administrators in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency, with a total of 117 respondents. The sampling technique was conducted using the snowball method, allowing each respondent to recommend subsequent participants to ensure more accurate and representative data. In addition, sampling was conducted by selecting administrators who were members of community-based organizations.

Based on the results of the data collection, most-small entrepreneurs have operated their businesses for more than five years, amounting to 65 respondents (55.6%). Meanwhile, 45 respondents (38.46%) had been in business for one to five years, and those established for less than one year are 7 respondents or 5.98%. This finding indicates that most respondents had gained considerable business experience in the culinary field.

The data collection in this study employed several methods, including questionnaires containing questions related to human resource empowerment and the use of social media in community activities around Medan. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain more detailed qualitative information, while Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were organized to explore further insights regarding the empowerment of human resources and utilization of social media in community-based entrepreneurial activities.

The FGD participants included community leaders and representatives from related institutions such as the Women's Empowerment Office of North Sumatra Province. The data obtained from these methods were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis techniques based on the results of the FGDs, allowing the researcher to draw conclusions about the patterns and effectiveness of empowerment efforts among small culinary entrepreneurs in the region.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Description of Small Entrepreneurs Based on Educational Background

Last Education	Frequency	Percent
Junior High	6	5.12%
Senior High	50	42.73%
Diploma	14	11.96%
Bachelor (S1)	41	35.04%
Master (S2)	6	5.12%
Total	117	100%

Based on the above table, the majority of respondents had completed senior high school education, totaling 50 people (42.73%). This indicates that most small entrepreneurs possess at least one secondary educational background.

Table 2. Description of Small Entrepreneurs Based on Years of Business Establishment

Years of Business Establishment	Frequency	Percent
< 1 year	7	5.98%
1–5 years	45	38.46%
> 5 years	65	55.6%
Total	117	100%

Based on the table above, it can be observed that the majority of entrepreneurs had operated for more than five years, totaling 65 respondents (55.6%). Meanwhile, seven respondents had been in business for less than one year comprise 7 respondents, representing 5.98% of the total.

Table 3. Description of Small Entrepreneurs Based on Business Capital

Business Capital (IDR)	Frequency	Percent
< 1 million	10	8.54%
1–5 million	43	36.75%
5–10 million	19	16.23%
> 10 million	45	38.46%
Total	117	100%

Based on the data above, it can be seen that most members have a capital of more than 10 million as many as 45 people or 38.46%, while the least number of members is less than 1 million, which is 10 or 8.54%.

Table 4. Description of Small Entrepreneurs Based on Leadership

Question	Never	%	Rarely	%	Sometimes	%	Often	%	Average	Category
Forward oriented	0	0.00	8	6.80	10	8.50	99	84.60	3.78	Often
Have creativity	0	0.00	11	9.40	12	10.25	94	80.34	3.70	Often
Dare to take risks	0	0.00	15	12.82	10	8.54	92	78.63	3.65	Often
Think tactically	0	0.00	8	6.83	18	15.39	91	77.80	3.70	Often
Have integrity	0	0.00	7	5.99	14	11.96	96	82.05	3.70	Often
Dare to innovate	1	0.85	10	8.54	10	8.54	96	82.05	3.71	Often
To be responsible	0	0.00	4	3.41	6	5.12	107	91.45	3.89	Often
Quickly deal with problems	1	0.85	24	20.51	19	16.23	73	62.39	3.40	Often
Positive thinking	0	0.00	2	1.70	6	5.12	109	93.16	3.91	Often
Work hard	0	0.00	2	1.70	5	4.27	110	94.01	3.92	Often
Have principles	0	0.00	1	0.85	8	6.83	108	92.30	3.91	Often

The results of the research presented in Table 4 describe the leadership behavior demonstrated by management, based on responses from 50 participants. The most frequently practiced behavior was working hard, as reported by 94.01% of the respondents. This was followed by positive thinking, which was shown by 93.16% of the respondents. On the other hand, the least frequently demonstrated behavior is the ability to quickly handle problems, with a percentage of 62.39%. These findings indicate that most leaders tend to focus on diligence and maintain a positive mindset, although their responsiveness in dealing with problems still requires improvement.

Table 5. Description of Small Entrepreneurs Based on Social Media

Question	Never	%	Rarely	%	Sometimes	%	Often	%	Average	Category
Get information	1	0.85	13	11.11	13	11.11	90	76.90	3.64	Often
Can use the internet	1	0.85	4	3.41	7	5.98	105	89.74	3.85	Often
Become a promotional tool	3	2.56	8	6.83	14	11.96	92	78.63	3.67	Often
Wearing fees	2	1.71	14	11.96	10	8.54	91	77.80	3.62	Often
Entrepreneurial page	2	1.70	9	7.69	15	12.82	91	77.80	3.67	Often
Determine the target market	6	5.12	22	18.80	21	17.95	68	58.11	3.29	Often

Based on the data in Table 4, it can be observed that most-small entrepreneurs in Medan City *often* utilize digital media in managing their businesses. The highest indicator was **the ability to use the internet**, with an average score of **3.85** (89.74%), followed by **using digital platforms as promotional tools** with an average of **3.67**. The lowest score was in **determining the target market**, with an average of **3.29** (58.11%). This indicates that although most entrepreneurs are familiar with and actively use the Internet for business activities, their ability to identify and target specific market segments still needs improvement.

Table 6. Description of Small Entrepreneurs Based on Business Strategy

Question	Never	%	Rarely	%	Sometimes	%	Often	%	Average	Category
Quality products	0	0.00	0	0.00	6	5.13	111	94.90	3.94	Often
Quickly make a decision	1	0.85	18	15.39	28	23.93	70	59.83	3.42	Often
Has a product value in terms of price	2	1.70	14	11.96	6	5.12	95	81.19	3.65	Often
Pay attention to customer satisfaction	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	4.27	112	95.73	3.95	Often
Have integrity	0	0.00	6	5.12	9	7.69	102	87.17	3.82	Often
Motivate employees	3	2.56	4	3.40	7	5.98	103	88.03	3.09	Often
Experience serving consumers	1	0.85	7	5.98	6	5.12	103	88.03	3.80	Often

The results in Table 5 show that most small entrepreneurs in Medan frequently demonstrate good business management abilities. The highest aspect is customer satisfaction, with an average score of 3.95 (95.73%), followed closely by quality products, with an average of 3.94. These findings suggest that entrepreneurs generally prioritize customer-oriented and quality-driven business practices.

However, the lowest score was found in the motivation-employee indicator, with an average of 3.09. This indicates that, while entrepreneurs tend to be committed to maintaining product quality and customer satisfaction, employee motivation and managerial decision-making processes still require improvement to strengthen overall business performance.

Table 7. Description of Small Entrepreneurs Based Competitive Advantage

Question	Never	%	Rarely	%	Sometimes	%	Often	%	Average	Category
Consumers give good value	2	1.70	7	5.98	8	6.83	100	85.47	3.76	Often
Consumers are happy	1	0.85	3	2.56	9	7.69	107	88.89	3.84	Often
Find out the consumer experience	5	4.27	9	7.69	10	8.55	93	79.49	3.63	Often
Has a unique service	7	5.98	26	22.22	31	26.49	53	45.30	3.11	Sometimes
Satisfied consumers	7	5.98	19	16.23	29	24.79	62	52.99	3.24	Sometimes
Low cost advantage	22	18.80	30	25.64	40	34.18	28	23.93	2.68	Sometimes

Table 6 shows that most small entrepreneurs *often* receive positive evaluations from consumers. The highest score is on the “Consumers are happy” indicator, with an average of 3.84 (88.89%), followed by “Consumers give good value,” with an average of 3.76. This shows that most entrepreneurs succeeded in providing satisfying experiences to their customers.

However, several aspects still fall into the “*Sometimes*” category, such as having a unique service (3.11), satisfying consumers (3.24), and low cost advantage (2.68). These findings indicate that while entrepreneurs generally achieve consumer satisfaction, innovation in service uniqueness and competitive pricing strategies still needs improvement to strengthen market competitiveness and long-term customer loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that small businesses in the city surrounding Medan were the longest-established businesses, at most > 5 years, namely 65 respondents from entrepreneurs (55.6%), while businesses that were established under one year were seven respondents from the business (5.98%). From the results of this description, it turns out that the other characteristics of small entrepreneurs are that this business is seen that the members have at most a capital of more than 10 million as many as 45 people or 38.46%, while the smallest are those who are less than 1 million, namely 10 or 8.54%. The most recent education of the majority of respondents was as high as 50 people (42.73%).

From the results of the description of the leadership carried out by the management, it is the most done thing is to work hard, which is equal to 94.01%, after that the thing that is done is positive thinking which is 93.16%. Meanwhile, the least number of things done by management is to quickly handle problems (62.39%). The results of the description of the use of social media show that 89.74% of business members can use the. As many as 78.63% of respondents used social media as a promotional tool. Meanwhile, only 58.11% of the respondents used social media to determine their target markets.

The description of business strategy shows that as many as 95% of respondents from entrepreneurs pay attention to customer satisfaction, and 94.9% of respondents have quality products. Meanwhile, 59.83% of respondents were quick to make decisions. The results of the description of competitive advantage showed that respondents most often made consumers happy (88.8%). Meanwhile, 85.4% of the respondents make consumers give good value to their products. Only 45.29% of the respondents had unique services.

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