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Branding, Legitimacy, and Trust in Early Growth: Cases Study Grassroots Coffee Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT:
This study explores how branding operates as a mechanism of legitimacy and trust formation within grassroots coffee entrepreneurship during the early growth stage. Situated within informal urban settings characterized by institutional voids and resource constraints, micro coffee ventures rely not only on financial capital but also on social embeddedness, relational legitimacy, and adaptive entrepreneurial practices. Using a qualitative interpretive approach with the Gioia methodology, this research examines four micro coffee enterprises operating for 23–25 months and categorized within the early growth phase in Bandar Lampung. Data were collected from eight informants, consisting of business owners and employees, to capture both strategic and operational perspectives.

The findings reveal three interrelated aggregate dimensions. First, brand identity and value proposition are constructed through personal narratives, community orientation, and product authenticity rather than formalized strategic planning. Brand identity functions as a symbolic representation of meaning, while the value proposition provides rational validation through affordability, product consistency, and local differentiation. Second, digital visibility plays a significant role in trust formation. Social media engagement enhances brand salience and mental availability, while user-generated content and repost activities generate social proof that substitutes for formal reputational mechanisms. Third, entrepreneurial adaptation under resource constraints is manifested through bricolage practices and incremental capability development.

The study contributes theoretically by integrating branding, legitimacy, and entrepreneurial bricolage within the micro-enterprise context. It demonstrates that branding functions as a socially embedded process enabling legitimacy construction *and trust accumulation. Practically, sustainable growth depends on relational credibility, digital consistency, and adaptive capacity.*

***Keywords**: Grassroots Coffee Entrepreneurship, Brand Identity, Legitimacy, Digital Visibility, Entrepreneurial Bricolage*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the development of grassroots coffee entrepreneurship has reflected a new dynamic of micro-entrepreneurship that is increasingly contextual and embedded within urban social structures, particularly amid institutional voids in the informal economic sector (Welter, 2011; Welter et al., 2017; Webb et al., 2020). This phenomenon illustrates the emergence of community-based business initiatives that grow out of resource constraints, characterized by low-cost structures and high operational flexibility, and grounded in social networks as primary sources of early entrepreneurial bricolage legitimacy (Desa, 2012; Korsgaard et al., 2015). Prior research emphasizes that in resource-constrained entrepreneurial contexts, business sustainability is shaped less by the intensity of financial capital and more by relational legitimacy, the accumulation of social capital, and the entrepreneur's adaptive capacity to build trust and strategically articulate business identity (Sutter et al., 2019). Prior research emphasizes that in resource-constrained entrepreneurial contexts, business sustainability is shaped less by the intensity of financial capital and more by relational legitimacy, the accumulation of social capital, and the entrepreneur's adaptive capacity to build trust and strategically articulate business identity (Iswari et al., 2023).

Entrepreneurship literature further highlights that micro-enterprise operating under uncertainty and constraints tend to rely on entrepreneurial bricolage, defined as the utilization and recombination of available resources to create new value (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010). Subsequent studies indicate that bricolage extends beyond a mere survival strategy; it also contributes to the formation of organizational legitimacy, particularly among new and informal ventures (Fisher, 2012; Salvi et al., 2023). Recent findings by Mateus & Sarkar (2024) demonstrate that bricolage enhances new venture capabilities through flexibility and strategic improvisation. Within micro-enterprise, legitimacy often evolves through resourceful action and socially embedded practice, rather than through formal institutional validation.

Beyond resource recombination and legitimacy building, the articulation of identity becomes central. Simultaneously, modern branding literature has shifted from a predominantly managerial orientation toward a social-constructivist perspective, conceptualizing brand identity as a system of meaning constructed through interaction and narrative processes (Iglesias et al., 2019). In micro-entreprise, brand identity often derives from the personal narratives of the owner, community values, and authentic experiences rather than from formally institutionalized differentiation strategies (Spence & Hamzaoui Essoussi, 2010). The notion of brand authenticity has thus become increasingly salient in micro-enterprise contexts, where consumers interpret authenticity and consistency as indicators of trustworthiness (Napoli et al., 2014). Accordingly, in micro coffee ventures, branding extends beyond mere visual representation and operates as a narrative construct that cultivates emotional connection and generates socially embedded meaning.

The rapid diffusion of digital technologies further amplifies these dynamics. Social media platforms enable micro-enterprises to enhance visibility without large-scale promotional investments. Digital marketing literature underscores that visibility increases brand salience and mental availability, both of which directly influence purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Moreover, digital interaction generates mechanisms of social proof, whereby consumers form credibility perceptions based on observing other customers' behaviors (F. Li et al., 2021a). Within the micro-entreprise context, digital presence often substitutes for formal reputation and accelerates the process of market legitimacy formation (Nambisan et al., 2019).

Despite these developments, existing research on micro-entreprises branding largely concentrates on differentiation strategies or brand equity, while legitimacy studies predominantly examine technology based start ups or social enterprise. Similarly, bricolage research tends to focus on innovation or survival without explicitly linking resource recombination to brand identity formation and market trust. There remains limited integration of branding, legitimacy, and bricolage perspectives within informal micro enterprises, particularly in the context of grassroots coffee entrepreneurship. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into how branding practices, legitimacy processes, and adaptive strategies intersect within micro enterprise settings characterized by resource constraints and dynamic market conditions.

2. METHODS

This study is grounded in the need to inductively develop a theoretical construction from empirical data derived directly from the lived experiences of micro coffee entrepreneurs in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. This methodology is widely employed in management and entrepreneurship research due to its capacity to balance interpretive depth with systematic rigor in theory development (Gioia et al., 2013). In the context of small and micro enterprises, this approach is particularly relevant as it enables researchers to capture the meanings subjectively constructed by entrepreneurs within their everyday practices (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Pratt et al., 2020).

This study involved four micro coffee enterprises, all classified as micro businesses and positioned at the early growth stage. Each enterprise was represented by two informants, consisting of the owner and one employee, resulting in a total of eight informants. The business owners (codes A, C, E, G) were selected due to their strategic roles in branding and promotional decision making, while the employees (codes B, D, F, H) provided operational perspectives and insights derived from direct interaction with customers. Case selection was conducted purposely to ensure that all units of analysis shared comparable characteristics, namely micro enterprises that had operated for more than one year, actively utilized social media, and were positioned in the early growth phase.

Table. 1 Profile of Micro Coffee Enterprises

No	Name	Business Type	Years of Operation (Months)	Business Cycle Stage	Owner Code	Employ ee Code	Total Informant
1	Zee Coffee	Micro-Bu siness	23	*Early Growth*	A	B	2
2	Coffee Campu s	Micro-Bu siness	25	*Early Growth*	C	D	2
3	Kopi Setapa k	Micro-Bu siness	24	*Early Growth*	E	F	2
4	Aduk Aren	Micro-Bu siness	23	*Early Growth*	G	H	2

Sources: Results of interviews and field observations, processed by researchers (2026)

The interpretive approach adopted in this research aligns with contemporary qualitative research trends emphasizing process based theorizing and contextual phenomenon exploration (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). This methodology is particularly effective for capturing organizational dynamics under conditions of change and uncertainty, especially among micro enterprises facing resource constraints and local competitive pressures (Gehman et al., 2018; Reay et al., 2019). Through first order coding, the researcher initially identified terms and narratives used directly by informants. This stage was followed by second order theorizing to develop conceptual themes, which were subsequently synthesized into aggregate dimensions. This procedure ensured a balance between empirical closeness and theoretical abstraction.

Regarding methodological rigor, the study adhered to principles of qualitative rigor that emphasize credibility, dependability, and analytical transparency (Bansal et al., 2018; Pratt et al., 2020). The strategies employed included source triangulation between owners and employees, systematic documentation of the coding process, and reconfirmation with informants through member checking. In addition, a cross case comparison approach was applied to enhance internal validity by comparing branding practice patterns across the four enterprises operating at the same stage of the business cycle. (Eisenhardt et al., 2016; Gehman et al., 2018). Accordingly, this research design is not merely descriptive but is directed toward systematic theory building that can be conceptually replicated in future studies of micro entrepreneurship within emerging urban contexts.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Brand Identity & Value Proposition

The findings indicate that at the first-order level, micro coffee entrepreneurs construct brand identity not through abstract strategic formulations, but through personal experiences and social contexts closely embedded in their everyday lives. Identity emerges from stories, life values, and reflections on their entrepreneurial journeys, which are subsequently translated into brand names, concepts, and product positioning. One informant stated, "*we took the name 'Zee' from our daughter Zivana…" (Informant A – Zee Coffee)*. This statement illustrates that brand identity is rooted in emotionally charged personal meaning. In another case, community orientation became the foundation of identity formation, as reflected in the statement, "*coffee campus was from the beginning aimed at university students… so it immediately connects with the target market." (Informant C).*

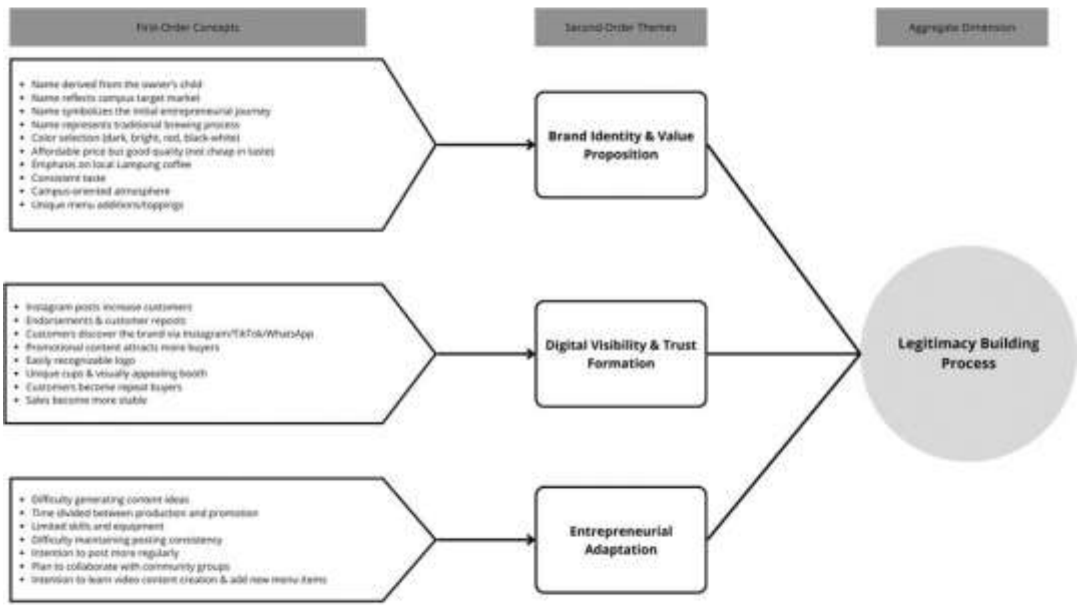

Figure 1.
Data Structure of Legitimacy Building Process

A symbolic dimension also appears in narratives of struggle and authenticity. An informant from Kopi Setapak explained, "*the name setapak has its philosophy... it represents our first step in starting this business."(Informant E)*, affirming that the brand embodies the entrepreneurial journey. Meanwhile, at Kopi Aduk Aren, identity is grounded in traditional processes, as expressed in the statement, "*I chose the name Aduk Aren because the coffee is still stirred manually and uses liquid palm sugar." (Informant G).* Thus, brand identity functions not merely as a label, but as a constructed system of meaning reflecting personal values, community orientation, symbolic struggle, and product authenticity.

However, this symbolic identity does not stand alone. Differentiation is reinforced through concrete and rational value propositions. An informant from Zee Coffee emphasized, *"the price is affordable, but the taste remains good...not cheap quality,"* indicating an effort to build a perception of quality within an accessible price range. At Kopi Setapak, differentiation based on locality was articulated as, *"we really highlight Lampung local coffee." (Informant E).* Meanwhile, Kopi Aduk Aren underscored the distinctive flavor, stating, *"we prioritize a strong and distinctive palm sugar taste." (Informant G)*, as well as consistency in consumption experience, as reflected by a customer's comment: *"the consistency of the taste... it doesn't change every time I buy it." (Informant F)*. These findings demonstrate that symbolic identity is consistently accompanied by rational proof in the form of affordability, taste quality, locality, and consistency. This pattern aligns with the brand identity system framework, which conceptualizes brand identity as a system of meaning encompassing symbolic, product, organizational, and relational dimensions (X. Li et al., 2024). In the context of micro coffee enterprises, the symbolic dimension is evident in the meaning attached to the brand name and business philosophy, such as; the product dimension is reflected in taste quality and the use of local coffee, the organizational dimension appears in the commitment to consistency, and the relational dimension emerges through proximity to based-college communities or surrounding neighborhoods. Identity in micro-enterprises develops through lived experience and direct interaction rather than through formal corporate planning.

Furthermore, the differentiation strategies employed by these entrepreneurs reflect the concept of value proposition articulated by Kotler & Keller (2016), which emphasizes alignment between market offerings and customer needs. Coffee Campus stresses price relevance and alignment with student lifestyles; Kopi Setapak promotes local pride; Aduk Aren offers traditional authenticity; and Zee Coffee balances price and quality. This pattern aligns with Ailawadi & Keller (2004) customer based brand equity framework, which asserts that brand associations are formed when consumers develop a clear understanding of the brand's identity, its promised value, and its distinctive attributes. The spontaneous mention of the brand name by customers signifies the development of brand salience at the level of consumer cognition.

From an organizational legitimacy standpoint, brand identity and value proposition operate as mechanisms of pragmatic legitimacy, defined as market acceptance grounded in perceived benefits. When customers voluntarily refer to the brand or associate it with specific product attributes, the brand identity has become cognitively internalized. In micro-enterprise contexts, legitimacy is not derived from formal institutional reputation but from authentic personal narratives, consistent product quality, social embeddedness, and price alignment with consumers' purchasing capacity. In this regard, brand identity functions as a narrative construct that generates meaning and emotional proximity, while the value proposition provides rational validation of that identity. The interaction between these elements produces a legitimacy cycle in which identity shapes meaning, value fosters trust, and their congruence reinforces differentiation and long term business sustainability.

3.2. Digital Visibility & Trust Formation

The findings indicate that micro coffee entrepreneurs utilize social media not as a complex branding strategy, but as a practical instrument to ensure that their businesses are "visible" and "remembered." Social media is positioned as a visibility tool that directly influences customer visits. One informant stated, *"usually after we upload something on instagram…more people come to buy."*

(Informant A – Zee Coffee). This statement underscores a perceived direct correlation between digital activity and increased transactions.

A similar view was expressed by another informant: "*some customers said they found us from instagram or tiktok." (Informant A)*, and "*when there's a promotion announced on Instagram, the place gets more crowded." (Informant C – Coffee Campus)*. In the case of Kopi Aduk Aren, an informant noted, *"some buyers said they knew about us from Instagram or from a friend's story." (Informant G)*. This phenomenon is reinforced by observations that customers often show social media posts at the point of purchase, as reflected in the statement, "*sometimes customers show their instagram story when they buy." (Informant B).* This empirical pattern reveals a recurring mechanism, such as; content uploads increase visibility, visibility generates awareness, awareness drives visits, and visits create the potential for repeat purchases. In this sense, social media functions as an exposure engine that extends market reach beyond the physical limitations of the booth location.

Theoretically, these findings align with the concept of brand salience within Ailawadi & Keller (2004) customer based brand equity framework, which emphasizes the importance of a brand's ability to be recalled at the moment of purchase decision. When informants report that after posting content the place becomes "more crowded", it indicates increased mental availability, meaning the brand is more readily recalled when consumers intend to buy coffee. In micro enterprise contexts that lack large billboards or extensive outlet networks, digital visibility substitutes for large scale physical promotion.

Beyond increasing brand awareness, social media also contributes to trust formation through the mechanism of social proof. The phenomenon of customers reposting content, discovering the café through friends, or showing posts at the time of purchase reflects the principle articulated by Li et al. (2021), which posits that individuals tend to trust something that has been validated by others. This dynamic is captured in the statement, "*when people buy, others automatically become curious." (Informant H– Aduk Aren).* Digitally displayed crowd presence creates perceptions of popularity and quality, transforming social media from a mere promotional tool into a space for social legitimacy construction.

Furthermore, digital marketing literature, including Kotler & Keller (2016) perspective, highlights that trust in digital environments is built through message consistency, social proof, and transparency of activity. In the context of grassroots coffee entrepreneurship, trust is constructed through posts showing crowded conditions, photos of the coffee making process, customer reposts, and indirect testimonials. The cumulative effect of these practices is reflected in statements such as, *"now more customers are coming back and becoming regulars."*

(Informant B), and "*branding and promotion help increase sales because customers trust us more" (Informant F)*. Trust is not generated through unilateral claims, but through public observation of ongoing and visible business activities.

In micro enterprise settings that lack formal certification, corporate reputation, or substantial advertising budgets, digital visibility functions as a substitute for institutional reputation. Routine activity on instagram, whatsapp stories, customer reposts, and support from micro influencers operate as informal digital legitimacy mechanisms. Consistent presence signals existence, credibility, and popularity. The more frequently a business appears in digital spaces, the stronger the perception that it is real, active, and trustworthy. The integration of empirical findings and theory demonstrates that in micro coffee enterprises, digital visibility operates as a trust formation mechanism grounded in brand salience and social proof. The process unfolds gradually, such as; digital exposure generates attention, social proof builds trust, and trust encourages repeat purchases, which ultimately reinforces sales stability. Thus, visibility is not merely a promotional activity, but a foundational mechanism of legitimacy and sustainability within the micro entrepreneurship ecosystem.

3.3. Entrepreneurial Adaptation

The findings indicate that micro coffee entrepreneurs conduct branding and promotional activities under structurally constrained conditions. Unlike established firms with dedicated marketing teams and planned budget allocations, micro entrepreneurs must simultaneously manage production, service delivery, and promotion. Limitations in time, skills, and capital are regarded as normal features of daily operations.

This condition is reflected in informants' statements such as, "*the challenge is time and content ideas... I have to divide my time between selling and editing content." (Informant A- Zee Coffee).* Another informant explained, "*sometimes we run out of ideas." (Informant C- Coffee Campus)*, and "*limited equipment and content editing skills." (Informant E-Kopi Setapak).* In the case of Aduk Aren, operational pressure was evident in the statement, "*sometimes we focus on service and production, so promotion gets skipped" (Informant G).* These accounts indicate three primary forms of constraint: human resource limitations, particularly minimal content production skills; time constraints, as owners perform multiple operational roles; and financial limitations, reflected in restricted promotional tools and facilities. However, these constraints do not halt branding activities. Instead, they stimulate gradual patterns of adaptation. Despite facing multiple challenges, informants consistently demonstrated a growth orientation. One stated, "*going forward, I want to post more regularly." (Informant A)*, while another expressed, "*I want to try collaborating with campus communities" (Informant C).* Capacity-building intentions were also evident in statements such as, "*I want to learn how to create video content." (Informant E)*, as well as plans for physical business improvements: "*If we accumulate enough capital, we want to add more chairs and improve the booth layout." (Informant E).*

This adaptation pattern is incremental and learning-oriented in nature. Rather than being derived from formalized strategic planning, adaptive strategies emerge through iterative experimentation, gradual refinement, and continuous alignment with existing resource capacities. Adaptation occurs within the limits of available resources rather than through aggressive expansion. Theoretically, this pattern can be explained through Baker & Nelson (2005) concept of entrepreneurial bricolage, which suggests that small entrepreneurs tend to make do with what is at hand by creatively utilizing available resources. In this context, smartphones function as content production tools, whatsapp stories substitute for paid advertising, and customer reposts serve as cost-free testimonials. Entrepreneurs do not wait for ideal conditions but instead optimize existing resources.

Moreover, this pattern reflects elements of dynamic capabilities as articulated by Teece (2018), namely the organization's ability to sense opportunities, seize them, and reconfigure resources. In micro coffee enterprises, recognizing that social media influences sales represents sensing; deciding to post content regularly reflects seizing; and learning video editing skills, adding menu items, or improving booth appearance constitute forms of reconfiguring. Although implemented on a modest scale, these processes demonstrate the presence of adaptive capability. Entrepreneurship literature further suggests that constraints often trigger necessity-driven innovation. The one statement of owner Kopi Setapak, *"once we accumulate enough capital, we will add more chairs" (Informant E.)* This illustrates an organic growth model based on internal accumulation. Adaptation occurs through micro adjustments, including content experimentation, gradual visual improvements, selective menu additions, and community collaborations, rather than through high-risk large-scale transformations.

Within micro coffee enterprises, resource constraints do not function as primary barriers but as structural conditions that shape strategic patterns. Adaptation unfolds through improvisation, learning, and incremental enhancement that sustain business stability. The process progresses from constraint to improvisation, from improvisation to learning, followed by incremental improvement, ultimately leading to growth stabilization. In this context, adaptation is not aimed at creating spectacular competitive advantage, but at ensuring sustainability within a dynamic and competitive business environment.

4. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that in the context of micro coffee enterprises, branding does not merely function as a tool for market differentiation, but as a mechanism for legitimacy and trust formation. These findings extend the micro-entreprise branding literature, which has largely emphasized positioning and value communication (Iglesias et al., 2019). Within micro enterprise settings, branding evolves as a relational and contextual social process, consistent with the view that brand identity constitutes a system of meaning constructed through social interaction and community embeddedness (Merz et al., 2018).

Branding as Legitimacy Mechanism

The discussion highlights that brand identity in micro coffee enterprises is not derived from formalized strategic planning but emerges through founder-centric narrative articulation and the symbolic framing of the entrepreneurial journey. This identity is further reinforced through campus-embedded relational positioning within the student segment and authenticity-oriented product positioning anchored in local provenance and traditional palm sugar. Such a configuration demonstrates how symbolic meaning is systematically integrated with substantive value, transforming personal narratives and localized product attributes into coherent market signals. This consistent with brand authenticity research, which emphasizes that authenticity grounded in lived experience and personal storytelling strengthens perceptions of credibility and consumer trust (Napoli et al., 2014).

From an organizational legitimacy perspective, legitimacy is established when an organization’s activities, practices, and underlying values are perceived as aligned with prevailing social norms and the expectations of the community in which it operates (Suddaby et al., 2017). In informal entrepreneurial settings, legitimacy does not primarily stem from formal certification or institutional endorsement, but from social proximity and perceived value relevance (Salvi et al., 2023). Within micro coffee enterprises, legitimacy is consolidated when consumers interpret and internalize the symbolic meanings embedded in brand narratives while repeatedly experiencing consistent product quality and price appropriateness. This indicates that legitimacy is constructed through the congruence between symbolic dimensions, expressed through narrative identity, and substantive dimensions, embodied in a credible and tangible value proposition. Accordingly, branding functions as a mechanism of pragmatic legitimacy, grounded in consumers' perceived benefits and evaluative judgments, and becomes central to the stabilization of early growth in resource-constrained contexts.

Digital Visibility as Trust Foundation

The discussion indicates that social media functions as a space for trust construction through visibility and social proof. Routine content uploads, customer reposts, and documentation of crowded conditions generate signals of popularity and credibility. These findings are consistent with digital marketing literature, which emphasizes that social media interaction enhances brand salience and influences purchasing decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Furthermore, the demonstrate that social media strategies strengthen trust perceptions through participation and social validation (F. Li et al., 2021b; Appio et al., 2024). In micro-entreprise contexts, digital visibility frequently substitutes for institutional reputation (Nambisan et al., 2019). This study extends the concept of mental availability by showing that in micro enterprises, digital visibility does not merely increase brand awareness but also constructs trust through public observation. Trust is not formed through unilateral claims, but through visible and shareable evidence of ongoing business activity. Consequently, digital presence serves a dual function: increasing awareness while simultaneously visibility-mediated legitimacy.

Constrained Entrepreneurial Adaptation

Another critical aspect concerns how resource constraints do not inhibit branding processes but instead shape incremental adaptation patterns. This finding is consistent with the concept of entrepreneurial bricolage, defined as the practice of leveraging available resources to generate creative solutions (Bacq et al., 2015). Recent research indicates that bricolage contributes to legitimacy building and capability development in new ventures operating under constrained conditions (Ciambotti et al., 2023). Moreover, within the context of digital transformation, small businesses demonstrate adaptive capacity despite lacking formal organizational structures (Zahra, 2021). The adaptive practices identified in this study are gradual and evolutionary, including learning content creation, incrementally improving booth design, selectively adding menu items, and expanding community collaborations. This pattern reflects dynamic capability processes at the micro level, in which entrepreneurs engage in sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring in simplified yet sustained ways (Teece, 2018).

Taken together, the findings suggest that brand identity construction, digital visibility, and adaptive bricolage function as interdependent mechanisms in a recursive legitimacy-building system. Narrative-based identity provides symbolic coherence, digital visibility amplifies public validation, and adaptive capability sustains consistency under constraint. Legitimacy reinforces visibility, visibility deepens trust, and adaptation preserves stability. Through this mutually reinforcing dynamic, early growth in micro coffee enterprises is stabilized not by capital intensity alone but by the systemic interaction between relational credibility, digital amplification, and adaptive recombination.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that within grassroots coffee entrepreneurship, branding operates as an integrated socio-economic mechanism that simultaneously constructs legitimacy, cultivates trust, and stabilizes early growth under conditions of institutional voids and structural constraints. Brand identity emerges organically from personal narratives, symbolic meanings, community embeddedness, and product authenticity, while the value proposition provides rational validation through affordability, consistency, and local differentiation, thereby producing pragmatic legitimacy grounded in perceived customer benefit. Digital visibility strengthens this legitimacy by enhancing brand salience and generating social proof through observable interactions, repost activities, and participatory engagement, transforming exposure into credibility and credibility into repeat patronage. At the same time, entrepreneurial adaptation under resource limitations sustains this entire process through bricolage practices, incremental capability development, and continuous learning, ensuring that branding efforts evolve despite time, skill, and capital constraints. The interaction among identity construction, digital trust formation, and adaptive recombination forms a recursive system in which legitimacy reinforces visibility, visibility deepens trust, and adaptation preserves stability, illustrating that sustainable early growth in micro coffee enterprises depends fundamentally on relational credibility, digital consistency, and adaptive capacity rather than capital intensity alone.

Beyond these findings, the study also indicates that branding in micro-enterprises should be understood as an embedded relational infrastructure rather than a standalone marketing function. In contexts characterized by informality and limited institutional support, legitimacy is accumulated gradually through repeated interactions, consistent value delivery, and visible engagement within both physical and digital communities. The recursive relationship between meaning construction and market response generates a feedback loop in which consumer recognition further strengthens identity coherence and strategic clarity. This dynamic suggests that early growth in grassroots ventures is not linear but iterative, shaped by continuous adjustment between internal identity articulation and external validation. Consequently, the sustainability of micro coffee enterprises depends on their ability to maintain coherence between narrative authenticity, operational consistency, and adaptive responsiveness, thereby transforming structural constraints into drivers of strategic refinement and long-term stability.

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