

TEALIVE MALAYSIA : GROWING BRAND IN BUBBLE TEA MARKET

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Tealive was considered as one of a famous brand among the list of bubble tea brand in Malaysia. Tealive was slowly growing day by day and the awareness among the citizen in Malaysia for the Tealive bubble tea brand also slowly increases. It was not a really easy path to formed the image that it holds nowadays as a successful brand in market. The competition with another brand and facing a legal issue with Chatime bubble tea brand has become one of the obstacle during the journey for the Tealive brand to grow in the market. The brand is focusing on the SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities and threat) during their journey to grow and become the famous bubble tea brand it was today.

On January 2017, Tealive Malaysia faced was a legal battle with Chatime. It happened between the brands' owner La Kaffa International Co Ltd who own the Chatime brand and Loob Holding Sdn Bhd who own the Tealive brand. La Kaffa has terminate the contract with Loob even though there are still 20 years left in the contract because they said that Loob Holding Sdn Bhd has violated the terms of the master franchise contract. Loob accepted the termination and taking a step by rebranding all the Chatime outlets in Malaysia into a new brand known as Tealive. During these period, Tealive still managed to become a successful brand it was today because of the strong marketing strategy that has been planned carefully by the CEO, Bryan Loo since the early time during the legal issue war happening between Tealive and Chatime. It also shows Tealive as a perfect example of a brand that has a good marketing strategy that planned based on the SWOT analysis help it to be the brand it was today.

SWOT analysis was introduced by Albert Humphrey and previously the method named as SOFT analysis before developed into SWOT analysis. According to Humphrey (1960-1970), SWOT analysis is known as a high level strategic planning model that helps organizations to identify whether they are doing well or not. They can also improve the

weakness from both internal and external view. SWOT is a short form for the words “Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats”. It is usually done during the early stage of strategic planning such as marketing strategic planning. The table below show the SWOT analysis for the Tealive Malaysia and the nearest competitor for Tealive during the early period:

SWOT ANALYSIS	TEALIVE	CHATIME
STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and innovative image. • Has a large distribution network. • High local market knowledge and many connection. • Great teamwork among the employer and employee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong brand in the market. • Has a unique product. • Faster serving and preparing bubble tea drink. • High technology used by the brand to produced.
WEAKNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand is still unproven. • Lof of bad press about the nature of ingredients. • Lacks of diversity in the menu offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lackness of innovation on a new product. • Franchise cost is very expensive. • Unable to cover all of the order cause by a frequent promotion.
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the Tealive brand awareness through marketing efforts. • Innovation through collaboration with another company. • Expand the waiting area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The taste of the bubble tea drink was familiar and acceptable by the community.
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition among another bubble tea brand. • The economy slump that threats the sales revenue of Tealive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition with another brand on another country. • Lackness in innovation of product make it easy for competitor to cut the line.

Table 1: The SWOT comparison between Tealive and Chatime.

According to Thompson (1989), strengths can be defined as what the brands excels at and what make it differences from the other competitors. According to Pearce and Robbinson (1991), the strength of an organisation may exist in a form of financial resource,

image, market leadership, buyer or supplier relation and other factors. Based on the issue, Tealive was a new brand at that time because it just rebranded itself from Chatime. It has innovative image because it is a brand that born from a difficult situation due to the contract termination. It was launched with a new slogan accompany the brand that was "Tea is Life" which can be refer in the appendix. Next, Tealive has a large distribution network that has been establish during the period where it was known as Chatime franchiser. It also has high local market knowledge and connection because of the experience that it has gain for 6 years when it was still under the Chatime. Tealive has a lot of connection in the bubble tea market especially among the supplier and customer that has visited the outlets. The teamwork during the process to introduce the Tealive brand can be seen very clearly when everyone has work for a few weeks without taking a break to celebrate Chinese New Year and Valentine Day during the period of rebrand the Chatime to Tealive.

Next, weakness shows things that were stopping the brand from performing at it optimum level and needed to be improve to remain strong as said by Thompson and Strickland (1989). According to Pearce and Robbinson (1991), the factor that consider as strengths can also be consider as a weakness if they were lackness happening. The weakness that own by Tealive during that period of time was the brand was not really proven by the society at that time. Lot of citizen and media were not supportive with the Tealive rebranding as it was seen as a copycat of Chatime brand. There are also people that still does not recognised the brand that causes the lack of brand awareness for Tealive. Some of people thought that Tealive was Chatime brand that has undergo rebranding process but not as new brand. Next, Tealive has lot of bad press about the nature of ingredients when it was accuse to be non-halal drinks. This has causes people to loses trust of the Tealive brand. Finally, even though at the earlier stage, Tealive has managed to transform 161 Chatime outlets to Tealive, there was a lack in the diversity of menu offered

as it was only offering a drink. There was lack of choices for the customer during that period of time.

Moreover, according to Harrison and St.John (2004), opportunities are the external factor that could give the brand a competitive advantage from another brand in the market. Tealive has several opportunities to improve the brand in the overall bubble tea market. It can increase the brand awareness by doing a lot of marketing effort. Ever since the it was firstly started going out in the market, there are a lot of people still feel confused between the Tealive and Chatime drinks because the lacks of differences between the two brands. There are several ways to market the Tealive brand such as through a paid review, social media, billboard and other method. Tealive can also do collaboration with another company by becoming a sponsor for the event that was held by the company. By doing these, it can introduce the brand to the people at the same time increase the awareness of these brand. Expanding the waiting area also consider as the opportunities as the style for the certain Tealive branches are more on grab-and-go where they customer cannot enjoy leisure time in the Tealive outlets and had to line up for a drink.

Finally, according to Ulgen and Mirze (2010), threat is referring to the factor that was potentially harmful for the brand in the market. One of the threats that faced by the Tealive was a competition with another bubble tea brands that exists in Malaysia as shown in image 4. Example of another tea brand that exist during that period of time was Chatime which was considered as the closest competitor for Tealive as they were firstly come from a same brand. But as the Tealive has gone a rebranding process as the new product, there was certain changes has been made but not much that causing the Chatime to be a tough competitor among the competitor in bubble tea market. The economy slump that faced by Malaysia can also affecting the Tealive as it will cause the brand to loses the revenue or

profit. These happened because more people will tend to choose to save money rather than spending on a drink that they can make by themselves.

In the nutshell, in order for the Tealive brand becoming one of the most demanded bubble tea drink in the market, it has to strengthen its brand from the core. Brand equity is known as the perception or view of what customers are thinking about a product or service offered by the firm. Brand is considered as an important matter for a product as the name and design will make it more easily to be identified and recognized by the customer. According to Anholt, brand is a term that was the most closely linked to a product or service image and reputation in that it captures the idea of reputation observed, reputation valued and reputation managed". When Tealive was firstly announced in the bubble tea market, it has a lack in brand awareness among the customer of Tealive as they thought that Tealive was still under Chatime but with a different brand name. Bryan Loo tried to increase the brand awareness by spreading the meaning of the Tealive brand which means as the brand that was born under a difficult circumstance. He used the slogan „Tea for life' because of these reasons.

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