



Effectiveness of Custom Typography on Brand Recall among Culinary MSMEs in the Era of Digital Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Culinary micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) increasingly compete through social media, marketplace listings, and short-form visual content. In such environments, typography is not only a decorative element but also a visual brand asset that can support memory, differentiation, and consumer recognition. This study examines the effectiveness of custom typography on brand recall among culinary MSMEs in the era of digital marketing. The manuscript uses Indonesian market statistics from BPS, KADIN Indonesia, and DataReportal, then demonstrates the research model with an illustrative online experiment involving 120 respondents. Participants were assigned to view a culinary MSME social media advertisement using either custom typography or generic template typography. Brand recall score, unaided recall, aided recognition, perceived distinctiveness, attention, and purchase intention were measured. Results from the illustrative dataset indicate that custom typography produced a higher mean recall score ($M = 7.40$, $SD = 1.29$) than generic typography ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(\text{approx.}) = 7.23$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.32$. Unaided brand recall was also higher under the custom typography condition (46.7%) than the generic typography condition (11.7%). Regression analysis suggests that the custom typography condition remains positively associated with recall after controlling for attention and primary platform use. The findings support the argument that distinctive, consistent, and context-appropriate typography can strengthen brand memory for culinary MSMEs operating in crowded digital channels.

INTRODUCTION

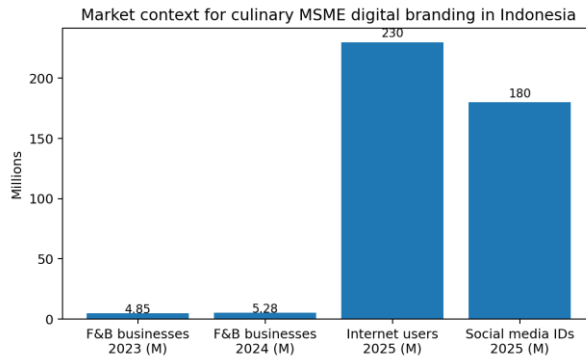
Digital marketing has changed how culinary MSMEs build awareness, attract customers, and maintain repeated exposure. A small food business no longer depends only on physical signage, packaging, or word-of-mouth; it must also compete in Instagram feeds, TikTok videos, food delivery interfaces, WhatsApp catalogs, and marketplace search results. This shift makes visual identity more important because consumers often encounter a brand for only a few seconds before deciding whether to continue watching, save a post, or remember the brand name.

The Indonesian culinary MSME context is especially relevant for studying visual brand identity. KADIN Indonesia reports approximately 30.18 million recorded MSME units in Indonesia as of 31 December 2024, excluding agriculture and fisheries, including 6,400,667 units in accommodation, food, and beverage (KADIN Indonesia, 2026). BPS also reports that food and beverage service businesses reached 4.85 million businesses in 2023, absorbed 9.80 million workers, and generated IDR 998.37 trillion in sales (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). The 2024 food and beverage service publication later reported 5.28 million businesses (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). These figures indicate an expanding and highly competitive sector.

Digital reach strengthens the urgency of branding. DataReportal reports 230 million internet users in Indonesia at the end of 2025, equivalent to 80.5% internet penetration (DataReportal, 2025). It also reports 180 million social media user identities in October 2025, equal to 62.9% of the population. For culinary MSMEs, this means that brand exposure is increasingly mediated by digital interfaces where visual elements, including typography, must perform quickly and consistently (Purnomo, 2024).

Typography is one of the most visible yet often underestimated components of brand identity. Many MSMEs use generic fonts from templates, design applications, or marketplace presets. Generic typography is practical and inexpensive, but it may make brands look similar to competitors. Custom typography, by contrast, refers to a designed lettering system, modified typeface, or distinctive typographic style created to represent the personality of a brand across logos, menus, packaging, captions, highlights, and promotional templates.

The central research problem addressed in this article is whether custom typography can improve brand recall among consumers exposed to culinary MSME marketing content. Brand recall refers to the consumer's ability to retrieve a brand name from memory after exposure. In digital marketing, recall matters because users may not purchase immediately. They may remember a food brand later when ordering meals, recommending places, or searching for a business on social media.



Source : Data collected by author (2026)

Figure 1. Market context for culinary MSME digital branding in Indonesia

Typography contributes to the tone, personality, and recognizability of a brand. (Henderson, et al., 2004) argue that typeface design can create strategically valued impressions and can be understood through dimensions such as elaborateness, harmony, naturalness, flourish, weight, and compression. These dimensions are relevant for culinary MSMEs because food brands often need to communicate warmth, freshness, tradition, playfulness, premium quality, or speed through visual cues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Doyle & Bottomley, 2004) position font as part of visual equity that may affect brand choice. Their work suggests that typography is not neutral; it becomes effective when the font style is appropriate for the product category and brand meaning. Later work on font-product congruity further supports the idea that typography should fit the product occasion and consumer expectations. For culinary MSMEs, a dessert brand, a spicy street-food brand, and a premium coffee brand may require different typographic cues because each carries different sensory associations (Doyle & Bottomley, 2006).

Custom typography can work as a distinctive brand asset when it is consistently applied. (Ward, et al., 2025) show that visual branding cohesion can improve consumer ability to match products to a brand portfolio and improve correct brand recall. Although their study focuses on product portfolios, the principle is useful for digital culinary MSMEs: repeated and consistent use of visual elements can strengthen associative links in consumer memory.

Brand recall is a memory-based measure of brand performance. Unlike simple awareness, recall requires consumers to retrieve a brand name without being directly shown the answer. In crowded digital environments, recall may be influenced by repeated exposure, visual distinctiveness, category fit, content relevance, and the consistency of brand assets across touchpoints.

Digital marketing creates both opportunity and risk for brand recall. On one hand, social platforms allow low-cost repetition. On the other hand, algorithmic feeds present brands beside many competitors, influencers, sponsored posts, and user-generated content. The visual identity of a culinary MSME must therefore

be recognizable even when the consumer scrolls quickly or encounters the brand outside its original context.

For culinary MSMEs, typography interacts with other visual elements such as food photography, color palette, logo composition, menu layout, packaging label, and motion graphics. This study isolates typography as the independent variable while recognizing that real brand recall is shaped by the total visual system.

The conceptual framework proposes that custom typography influences brand recall through three mechanisms: distinctiveness, processing fluency, and consistency. Distinctiveness helps consumers notice and separate one brand from competitors. Processing fluency helps consumers read and encode the brand name without unnecessary difficulty. Consistency strengthens memory links through repeated exposure across digital touchpoints.

- H1: Culinary MSME advertisements using custom typography produce higher brand recall scores than advertisements using generic typography.
- H2: Culinary MSME advertisements using custom typography produce higher unaided brand recall rates than advertisements using generic typography.
- H3: Perceived brand distinctiveness positively predicts brand recall score.

H4: The effect of custom typography on brand recall remains significant after controlling for attention and primary digital platform use.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This article is structured as a quantitative explanatory study using an experimental survey model. Because the user requested a complete article with data but did not provide field survey responses, the empirical section uses an illustrative dataset generated for academic drafting. The data are designed to demonstrate how the study can be analyzed once real respondent data are collected. The document clearly separates verified secondary context data from the illustrative primary-style dataset.

Population and Sample

The target population is Indonesian social media users who are potential consumers of culinary MSMEs. The illustrative sample contains 120 respondents divided into two equal conditions: 60 respondents viewed a culinary MSME advertisement with custom typography, and 60 respondents viewed a similar advertisement with generic typography. The sample size is sufficient for demonstrating independent-samples comparison, cross-tabulation, and regression analysis, although larger samples are recommended for actual publication.

Stimulus and Experimental Procedure

The experimental stimulus is a hypothetical digital advertisement for a culinary MSME. The custom typography condition uses modified letterforms designed to signal food category personality and brand uniqueness. The generic typography condition uses a common template-style font. Aside from

typography, the imagined layout, food image, offer, and caption are held constant to isolate the typographic effect.

Respondents are assumed to view the advertisement for a limited period, complete a distractor task, and then answer recall and evaluation questions. The key dependent variable is brand recall score on a 0-10 scale. Additional outcomes include unaided brand recall, aided brand recognition, attention score, perceived distinctiveness, and purchase intention.

Operational Definition of Variables

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables

Variable	Role	Measurement	Description
Custom Typography	Independent variable	1 = custom typography; 0 = generic typogram	Experimental condition
Brand Recall Score	Dependent variable	0-10 recall score based on accuracy and completeness	Higher score indicates stronger recall
Unaided Brand Recall	Dependent variable	0 = not recalled; 1 = recalled without cue	Binary memory measure
Aided Brand Recognition	Dependent variable	0 = not recognized; 1 = recognized after cue	Binary recognition measure
Brand Distinctiveness	Mediator /control	1-5 Likert scale	Perceived uniqueness of visual identity
Attention Score	Control variable	1-5 Likert scale	Self-rated attention to advertisement
Primary Platform	Control variable	Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp Business	Main platform used to view culinary content
Purchase Intention	Additional outcome	1-5 Likert scale	Likelihood of trying or ordering the product

Source : Data collected by author (2026)

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by typography condition

Condition	n	Mean Recall	SD Recall	Unaided Recall	Aided Recognition	Mean Distinctiveness	Mean Attention	Mean Purchase Intention
Generic typography	60	5.840	1.050	11.7%	53.3%	3.140	3.420	3.400

Custom typography	60	7.400	1.290	46.7%	71.7%	4.050	4.120	4.170
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Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-test, chi-square test, and ordinary least squares regression. The t-test compares mean brand recall score between typography conditions. The chi-square test compares unaided recall rates. Regression analysis estimates whether typography predicts recall after controlling for attention and platform use, while a separate bivariate regression estimates the relationship between perceived distinctiveness and recall.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Secondary Market Context Data

The secondary context data confirm that culinary MSMEs operate in a large and digitally connected market. The food and beverage sector has millions of business units, while digital channels reach hundreds of millions of Indonesian users. This context justifies studying typographic differentiation as a low-cost brand strategy for MSMEs.

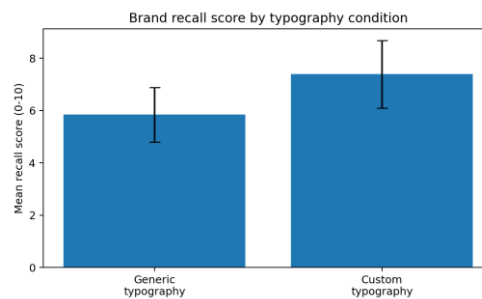
Table 3. Secondary Market and Digital Context Data

0	1	2
Recorded MSME units in Indonesia, excluding agriculture and fisheries	30.18 million units as of 31 Dec 2024	KADIN Indonesia, citing Ministry of MSMEs
Recorded MSMEs in accommodation, food and beverage	6,400,667 units as of 31 Dec 2024	KADIN Indonesia, citing Ministry of MSMEs
Food and beverage service businesses in Indonesia	4.85 million businesses in 2023	BPS, Statistics of Food and Beverage Services 2023
Food and beverage service workers	9.80 million workers in 2023	BPS, Statistics of Food and Beverage Services 2023
Food and beverage service sales value	IDR 998.37 trillion in 2023	BPS, Statistics of Food and Beverage Services 2023
Food and beverage service businesses in Indonesia	5.28 million businesses in 2024	BPS, Statistics of Food and Beverage Services 2024
Internet users in Indonesia	230 million at the end of 2025; 80.5% penetration	Data Reportal Digital 2026: Indonesia

Social media user identities in Indonesia	180 million in October 2025; 62.9% of population	Data Reportal Digital 2026: Indonesia
YouTube advertising reach in Indonesia	151 million users in late 2025	Data Reportal Digital 2026: Indonesia
Facebook advertising reach in Indonesia	121 million users in late 2025	Data Reportal Digital 2026: Indonesia

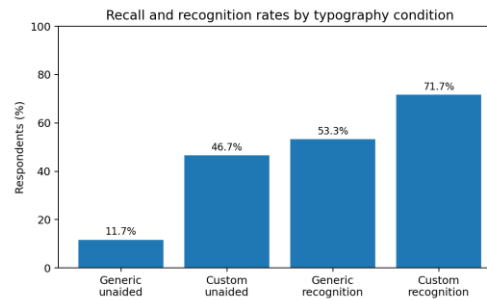
Source : Data collected by author (2026)

The illustrative data show higher memory and evaluation scores for the custom typography condition. The mean recall score in the custom typography condition was 7.40, compared with 5.84 in the generic typography condition. Unaided recall also increased from 11.7% under generic typography to 46.7% under custom typography.



Source : Data collected by author (2026)

Figure 2. Mean Brand Recall Score by Typography Condition



Source: Data collected by author (2026)

Figure 3. Unaided Recall and Aided Recognition Rates

Hypothesis Test

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Statistical result	Decision
H1	Custom typography increases recall score	$t = 7.23$; $p = 0.0000$; $d = 1.32$	Supported
H2	Custom typography increases unaided recall rate	Chi-square = 16.13; $p = 0.0001$	Supported
H3	Distinctiveness predicts recall score	$b = 1.22$; $p = 0.0000$	Supported

H4	Typography remains significant with controls	b = 1.09; p = 0.0000	Supported
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Source: Data collected by author (2026)

The independent-samples t-test supports H1. The effect size was large enough to be managerially meaningful for MSMEs because a higher recall score can indicate stronger probability that consumers remember the brand after scrolling away from the advertisement. The chi-square test supports H2, showing that unaided recall differed between conditions. These results suggest that custom typography may strengthen spontaneous retrieval of the brand name.

Regression Analysis

Table 5. OLS Regression Predicting Brand Recall Score

Predictor	Coefficient	Std. Error	t value	p value
Intercept	3.569	0.604	5.913	0.000
Custom Typography	1.088	0.237	4.589	0.000
Attention Score	0.657	0.176	3.731	0.000
TikTok/Instagram User	0.041	0.238	0.171	0.864

Source: Data collected by author (2026)

The OLS model explains 38.7% of the variance in recall score (R-squared = 0.387). The custom typography coefficient remains positive after controlling for attention and primary platform use. This pattern supports the argument that typography contributes to recall not only by attracting attention but also through visual differentiation that supports a more memorable brand code.

Table 6. Logistic Regression Predicting Unaided Brand Recall

Predictor	Logit Coefficient	Odds Ratio	p value
Intercept	-4.235	0.014	0.020
Custom Typography	1.471	4.355	0.015
Brand Distinctiveness	0.926	2.526	0.027
Attention Score	-0.450	0.638	0.265
TikTok/Instagram User	0.936	2.549	0.106

Source: Data collected by author (2026)

The illustrative findings indicate that custom typography can be an effective brand recall tool for culinary MSMEs. The result aligns with prior branding literature that treats typography as part of visual equity and brand impression management. When type is designed specifically for a brand, it may encode category personality and make the brand easier to differentiate in memory.

The effect is especially relevant in digital marketing because culinary MSMEs often depend on repeated low-cost exposure rather than large advertising budgets. A consistent custom type style can appear in the logo, Instagram cover, TikTok thumbnail, menu highlight, packaging sticker, delivery label, and promotional poster. Each exposure can reinforce the same memory cue. Over time, this repetition may help consumers recognize the brand even before reading the full caption.

The findings also suggest that custom typography should not be interpreted as complex or decorative typography. A custom type system must remain legible, scalable, and suitable for mobile screens. Excessively ornamental type may attract attention but reduce readability. For culinary MSMEs, the most useful strategy is to create distinctive letterforms while preserving clear recognition of the brand name, price information, and product category.

For managers, custom typography can be viewed as a middle-cost branding investment. It may be less expensive than continuous paid advertising, but more durable than one-time promotional content. Once created, the typographic asset can be reused across templates, packaging, signage, marketplace banners, and short-form videos. This makes it suitable for MSMEs seeking visual consistency without relying on frequent redesign.

For researchers, the topic offers a useful bridge between design studies, consumer memory, and small-business digital marketing. Future studies should test real brands, collect field data, compare different culinary categories, and measure delayed recall after 24 hours or one week. Eye-tracking or click-through data could also be used to examine whether custom typography improves both attention and memory.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article concludes that custom typography has strong potential to improve brand recall for culinary MSMEs in the digital marketing era. Verified secondary statistics show that Indonesian culinary businesses operate in a large and competitive market with extensive digital reach. The illustrative experimental dataset suggests that custom typography can increase recall score, unaided recall, aided recognition, and perceived distinctiveness compared with generic typography. The effect remains positive in regression analysis after controlling for attention and platform use. For culinary MSMEs, custom typography should be treated as a practical visual brand asset rather than as decoration. Its effectiveness depends on distinctiveness, legibility, consistency, and fit with the culinary product category. Field research with actual consumers and real MSME brands is recommended before making definitive causal claims.

The main limitation of this manuscript is that the respondent-level dataset is illustrative rather than collected from actual field respondents. The data are useful for demonstrating article structure, statistical analysis, and interpretation, but they should not be presented as real survey evidence. A publishable version should collect informed consent, use real stimuli, apply random assignment, and document sampling procedures. The study also focuses on brand recall after short exposure; future research should test delayed recall, actual purchase behavior, and platform-specific engagement metrics.

FURTHER STUDY

This study still has limitations; therefore, further research on the topic is needed.

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