

## MARKETING STRATEGY TO INCREASE SALES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted all sectors has caused people's purchasing power to decline. This has an impact on the decline in sales of itinerant vegetable seller in Karangrejo Village, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency. They do various marketing strategies in an effort to increase sales. This study aims to obtain an overview of the marketing strategies carried out by itinerant vegetable seller to increase sales during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how effective their strategies are in increasing sales. This research is a descriptive qualitative research, and the data collection technique used is observation and open interviews with itinerant vegetable seller. The result of this research is that itinerant vegetable seller use the marketing mix, namely product, price, place, and promotion as a marketing strategy to increase sales. The four marketing mixes are effective in increasing sales by 70% to 80%. And of the four marketing mixes, product is the most effective marketing mix type in increasing sales.

**Keywords:** Sales Strategy, Sales, COVID-19 Pandemic

### INTRODUCTION

Covid 19, which first entered Indonesia in March 2020, had a tremendous impact on all aspects of life throughout the world, including Indonesia. Various efforts have been made by the government to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, one of which is limiting community activities, which greatly affect the socio-economic life of the community. Community restrictions at the beginning of the spread of covid 19 in Indonesia were Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) which were applied in certain areas with restrictions on school activities, offices, religious activities, to the transportation sector and only essential sectors that could operate fully. Furthermore, the term PSBB was changed to the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM). Whatever the term is used, the essence is the same, namely the limitation of community activities in various fields/sectors, including those related to economic activities. The impact caused by restrictions on community activities, among others, many

industries are forced to stop their company activities so that inevitably there will be a reduction in workforce or have to reduce employee salaries by up to 50%. So that a lot of people lost their jobs and their incomes fell and this resulted in a decline in people's purchasing power which of course resulted in a worsening of the economy in Indonesia.

It is not only the formal sector that is affected by the restrictions on community activities, but the informal sector is also greatly affected. One of the informal sectors affected is a itinerant vegetable seller in Karangrejo Village, Sumbersari District, Jember. In a study that was conducted by researchers in 2014 with the title Analysis of the Effect of Income Levels of Women Mobile Vegetable Traders on Family Welfare in Tegal Bai Village, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency in 2014 showed the results that the income level of female mobile vegetable shop assistants had an effect of 39% on the welfare of their families. This means that the income of this itinerant vegetable seller has a fairly large role in the welfare of the family.

With the existence of covid 19 and finally the government's policy in limiting community activities, it has greatly impacted the buying and selling activities of itinerant vegetable seller. The impacts they feel are (1) The closure of roads from 8 pm to 5 am makes it difficult for itinerant vegetable seller to access Tanjung Market (the main market of Jember Regency); (2) The number of vegetable traders in the main market is also decreasing due to health protocols that limit the number of crowds and keep a distance in carrying out activities; (3) The decrease in buyers due to a decrease in the level of public consumption as a result of a reduction in labor or a reduction in salaries from where they work. This of course affects the sales and income of mobile vegetable traders. Therefore, itinerant vegetable seller must be able to find solutions and strategies on how to increase their sales.

Marketing strategy is a series of plans to reach the target market. According to Chandra (2002) marketing strategy is a plan that outlines the company's expectations of the impact of various marketing activities or programs on the demand for products or product lines in certain target markets. According to Assauri (2015) marketing strategy is basically a comprehensive, integrated and unified plan in the field of marketing, which provides guidance on the activities to be carried out to achieve the marketing objectives of a company. In marketing theory, there is a marketing mix or marketing mix. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2016) the marketing mix is a set of tactical marketing tools that can be controlled by product, price, place (distribution), promotion that the company combines to produce the response the company wants in the target market. According to Kotler (2006), in making consumer decisions in buying goods and services, several factors were found, namely consumer characteristics, company stimuli including product, price, place and promotion as well as other stimulus conditions such as politics, economy, technology and culture. Kotler describes the marketing mix describing the set of tools that management can use to influence sales. This means that the marketing mix can assist management in influencing sales. The marketing mix includes product (product), price (price), place (place) and promotion (promotion). The marketing mix consists of four groups of variables called the "four Ps" namely:

1. Product, product means a combination of goods and services offered by the company to the target market. The elements included in the product mix include quality, design, packaging, product variety, brand names.
2. Price, price is the amount of money that must be paid by the customer to obtain the product.
3. Place, place or marketing channel includes company activities that make products available to customers. According to Kotler (2005) distribution channels can be defined

as a set of companies and individuals who take over rights or assist in the transfer of rights to certain goods and services as long as the goods or services move from producers to consumers.

4. Promotion, is an activity that conveys a product and persuades customers to buy it. According to Kotler and Keller (2016) promotion is a way of communication carried out by companies to consumers or the target market, with the aim of conveying information about the product/company so that they want to buy. Promotional objectives according to Tjiptono (2015) are a). Inform; b). Persuade target customers; c) Remind.

In the research of Wibowo (2015), et al, with the title Analysis of Marketing Strategy To Improve Competitiveness of MSMEs (Study on Batik Diajeng Solo) shows the results of marketing strategies on Batik Diajeng solo are effective in increasing sales from year to year. Research conducted by Ekasari, et al with the title Analysis of Marketing Strategy To Improve Competitive Advantage shows that the company is advised to further develop market equity as an alternative strategy to strengthen its competitive position. Another study by Ganesha, et al (2013) entitled Analysis of the Marketing Strategy of Traditional Traders Fashion Midwives in Facing Market Modernization in Pamenang Market, Kediri Regency, shows the results of the research. From the marketing mix, determining low prices, completeness and product diversity are the strengths of traditional traders in the fashion sector. Promotions carried out by word of mouth are quite effective as a marketing strategy strength.

The research that the author did in 2016 with the title "Analysis of Grocery Store Marketing Strategy In Influencing Consumer Buying Interest in Facing Modern Store Competition (Case Study of Grocery Stores in Summersari District, Jember Regency) shows the results that marketing strategies simultaneously affect buying interest where the price variable shows the biggest influence, and partially shows the marketing strategy has a low effect on buying interest, which is 22%. Another research conducted by Ekasari (2021) with the title Analysis of Marketing Strategy To Improve Competitive Advantage shows the results of research by providing advice to PT. Fastrata Buana Krian Sidoarjo Branch to further develop market equity as an alternative strategy and always prioritize consumer loyalty such as courtesy and friendliness.

Research by Setiawan Wilson, Sugiono Sugiharto (2014) with the title "The Effect of Marketing Mix on Purchase Decisions for the Toyota Avanza Type G in Surabaya" shows the simultaneous results of independent variables, namely product, price, location and promotion, which significantly affect the dependent variable, namely Toyota's purchase decision. Avanza Type G in Surabaya. Of the four variables, the product is the most dominant variable in influencing purchasing decisions for the Toyota Avanza Type G in Surabaya. Another study by Bambang Sarjono (2015) entitled New Product Marketing Strategy shows that the results of product, price, promotion and distribution strategies simultaneously have a positive effect on increasing sales of new products. The product strategy has a positive and significant effect on increasing sales, the price strategy has a positive and significant effect on increasing sales, the promotion strategy has a positive and significant effect on increasing sales, and the distribution strategy also has a positive and significant effect on increasing sales.

Based on the phenomena that occur and empirical studies, this phenomenon is interesting to analyze more deeply. The purpose of this study is to obtain an overview of the marketing strategies carried out by itinerant vegetable seller to increase sales during the COVID-19 pandemic and how effective the strategies have been in increasing sales.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the research objectives, the method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is an approach or search to explore and understand a central phenomenon that treats participants as subjects and not objects (Raco, 2010). Data collection techniques used were observation and open interviews with the intention that researchers can obtain data that is accurate, more in-depth, and not influenced by previous conceptual. Observations and interviews were conducted directly on the research sample selected from the start, namely mobile vegetable traders who were selected randomly.

## RESULT ANALYSIS

Itinerant vegetable saller in Karangrejo Village, Summersari District, Jember Regency are dominated by women. After the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020 until now, it has shown a phenomenon of increasing the number of itinerant vegetable saller in the Karangrejo Summersari Jember area. If so far almost all itinerant vegetable sallers use bicycles, motorbikes, tricycles, and three-wheeled vehicles, but now there are many vegetable saller selling their wares on foot and some selling vegetables on their terraces. So far, itinerant vegetable saller have always peddled their wares in the morning, from around 04.50 am to 09.30 am, now it's noon and even in the afternoon there are people selling vegetables around.

The increasing number of itinerant vegetable saller has an effect on itinerant vegetable saller who have always worked as itinerant vegetable saller. The impact they feel is a decrease in customers who are likely to switch to other traders, a decrease in sales and income due to a decrease in customers and a decrease in people's purchasing power as a result of restrictions on community activities.

From the results of observations and interviews related to the marketing mix that has been carried out by itinerant vegetable saller before the covid 19 pandemic, they are as follows:

1. Products, products offered are all types of vegetables, side dishes, spices (such as ginger, galangal, turmeric, etc.), market snacks (sticky rice, onde-onde, etc.). All vegetable saller will sell the same type of product.
2. Price, vegetable saller fix the price by taking a profit of between one thousand rupiah up to two thousand five hundred rupiah for merchandise.
3. Place, itinerant vegetable saller generally have their own marketing areas. With the increasing number of itinerant vegetable saller, the more competitors in an area that has become their marketing area.
4. Promotion, in general, vegetable seller do not use promotions with certain techniques. They promote their wares by word of mouth to their customers.

After the pandemic, their sales turnover fell by 35% with the assumption that they said the price of vegetables was stable. The decrease in sales turnover resulted in lower income and losses because there were several types of vegetables that could not last long so they rotted because they were not sold that day.

Based on the results of interviews with about the cause of the decline in sales is the reduced consumption (shopping) of their subscriptions, the increasing number of competitors due to impromptu vegetable seller who also sell their goods in their marketing areas, starting with online vegetable sales in Jember, especially urban areas. This makes itinerant vegetable saller have to find solutions and be more creative in their sales activities. Itinerant vegetable saller began to make several changes and innovations in their sales patterns, namely:

1. Product:
  - a. Variations in merchandise include adding to the types of merchandise they sell, such as various ready-to-cook ready-to-cook spices which are usually sold in supermarkets, various packaged snacks, fruits and even household utensils for daily needs such as spatulas, dippers, cutting boards, etc.
  - b. Changing the size of the merchandise packaging offered to consumers, if so far they have packaged such as shallots or garlic in ½ kg packages, now they also provide packages with ¼ kg scales.
  - c. Selling food that is ready for consumption or cooked food, they usually take advantage of their unsold merchandise to be cooked and sold cooked. This of course also reduces losses due to damaged or wilted vegetables or side dishes and will not sell if sold the next day.
2. Price, vegetable seller keep fixing the price by taking profits between one thousand rupiah up to two thousand five hundred rupiah for merchandise. However, they improve the quality of their merchandise, such as vegetables and side dishes that are still new and fresh.
3. Place:
  - a. Expanding the marketing area. With an increasingly varied number of sales and better quality, they are more confident to enter housing estates to peddle their sales.
  - b. They sell vegetables at their house when they are done walking around selling their wares.
4. Promotions, promotions are still carried out by word of mouth, but of course with some additions, for example they can order through the WhatsApp application.

## **INTERPRETATION**

Based on the results of the research described above, the effectiveness of each marketing mix can be described as follows:

### **1. Product/product**

With the addition of products or goods sold by itinerant vegetable seller, they can increase sales turnover. Sales of new merchandise are actually higher than items that have been sold previously, for example, consumers prefer to buy ready-made spices in packaged form because they are considered cheaper and more practical than making their own spices. Various snacks in small packages are also in great demand, because they are cheaper than buying them in supermarkets.

By changing the packaging to a smaller quantity, consumers are more interested in it, because they pay less for kitchen ingredients. Despite getting fewer ingredients but they have switched a lot to ready-made spices. So they don't have to prepare too many fresh ingredients in the kitchen. While the finished food is still selling well, only certain consumers make purchases. Consumers who buy cooked types of food are those who still have to work and do not have time to cook for themselves. Although less desirable, this method helps vegetable seller to minimize the risk of vegetables and fish rotting because they are not sold.

### **2. Price**

Vegetable seller choose not to lower the prices on their merchandise, but they increase the quality of their merchandise. And this turned out to be more in demand by consumers. Consumers are satisfied with the quality of their merchandise because if the vegetables sold are of good quality and are still fresh, they will be stored longer than vegetables that are less

fresh. This is quite effective in a marketing strategy so that consumers do not switch to other traders who offer lower prices but the quality of their merchandise is not good.

### 3. Place

By expanding the marketing area by entering into residential complexes, it is quite effective to add new customers and of course they have the potential to make regular purchases. This will certainly increase the sales of itinerant vegetable seller. Meanwhile, selling merchandise at home after they go around peddling their wares also contributes to increasing sales. Consumers who shop are usually people around the vegetable seller's house who need ingredients after noon.

### 4. Promotion

Although the promotion is very simple, by word of mouth and the use of social media whatsapp, but it turns out that this is also effective in carrying out marketing strategies. This is evidenced by the number of customers who order vegetables, other ingredients via whatsapp. By placing an order via WhatsApp is considered to speed up their shopping process, because the merchant has packed all the ordered goods in one package (plastic bag) and when it is delivered to the buyer, the buyer just has to pay without having to pick and choose merchandise again.

As previously stated, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the sales of mobile vegetable traders, which decreased by up to 35%. This makes itinerant vegetable traders to be more creative in conducting their trading business. Marketing strategies in the marketing mix, namely product, price, place and promotion are all effective in increasing sales of mobile vegetable traders in Karangrejo Village, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency. Of the four types of marketing mix, the increasing number of products sold is the most effective marketing strategy in increasing sales. And this is able to increase sales of mobile vegetable traders by 70% to 80%.

The results of this study support the research conducted by Wibowo which shows the results of an effective marketing strategy to increase sales from year to year at Batik Djajeng Solo. Likewise, research conducted by Ganesha shows that the completeness and diversity of products is the strength of traditional fashion traders. Research by Wilson also states that product, price, location and promotion have a significant effect on purchasing decisions for Toyota Avanza Type G, and product is the most dominant variable in determining purchasing decisions. Research by Bambang Sarjono also shows the results of product marketing strategies, prices, promotions and distributions have a positive and significant effect on the increase in new products.

Meanwhile, the results of this study contradict the research that the researcher did in 2016 with the title Analysis of Grocery Store Marketing Strategy In Influencing Consumer Buying Interests Facing Modern Store Competition, shows the results partially marketing strategy has a low effect on buying interest, and simultaneously the price variable has the greatest influence.

## **CONCLUSION**

The marketing strategy in the four marketing mixes namely product, price, place of marketing and promotion carried out by mobile vegetable traders in Karangrejo Village, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency, is effective in increasing sales during this covid 19 pandemic. Increase in sales after using a marketing strategy of 70% to 80%. Of the four types of marketing mix, product is the most effective mix type in increasing sales.

## IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study are expected to provide implications both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, for further researchers, it can be used as reference material on marketing strategies. Practically, the results of this study are aimed at vegetable seller or other small informal sector businesses as knowledge of marketing strategies for their businesses.

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