



IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF MICRO, SMALL, AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMEs) AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN TERMS OF ASPECTS OF MARKETING STRATEGIES MEDIATED BY TECHNOLOGY IN PEMATANGSIANTAR CITY

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Abstract

The Asian Development Bank examined how the pandemic affected MSMEs in Indonesia and found that 88% of these businesses had run out of cash or savings and that more than 60% of these MSEs had cut staff. Due to COVID-19's consequences, global supply networks are now more susceptible to disruption due to limitations in numerous neighboring locations, a drop in commodity prices, and a higher danger of a global economic disaster. It utilizes quantitative research techniques in this investigation. SmartPLS and SEM analyses were used in this investigation. The results of the study show that marketing strategies, with technology serving as a mediator, have a positive and significant influence on MSMEs' performance in the food business. It indicates that MSMEs players, particularly those in the food business, have had to modify their marketing strategies as a result of the ecosystem changes brought on by the outbreak. Therefore, improving MSMEs' performance in the food sector both during and after the Covid-19 epidemic is one method to avoid the MSMEs sector from entering a condition of suspended animation. This demonstrates that the research's findings suggest that certain elements of marketing strategy may help MSMEs perform better during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy; Technology; MSMEs Performance

INTRODUCTION

Pematangsiantar, which offers cultural tourism, commerce, and unique tourist interest, is the second-largest city in North Sumatra Province after Medan City. Pematangsiantar serves as a popular transit point for visitors to Toba Lake. It is possible since the distance and time are long enough for travelers to stop and rest for a few hours. Most visitors to North Sumatra who are just passing through frequently only stay in Pematangsiantar for a short period and partake in few tourism activities (Arianto, 2020). According to information from the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs of The Republic of Indonesia, Pematangsiantar has 28,348 MSMEs in total. Following are the numbers of companies operating in the food industry that are divided into eight sub-districts:

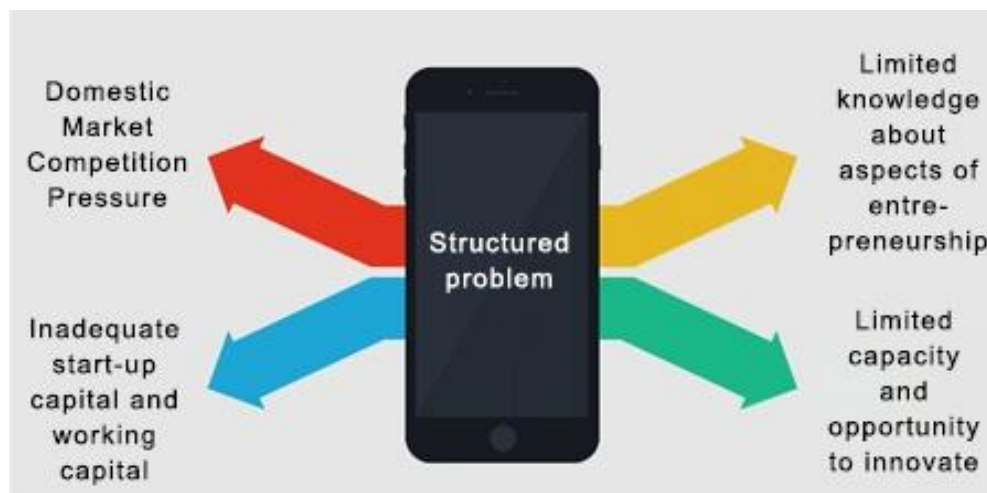
Table 1
Data of MSME in the Food Sector in the city of Pematangsiantar 2022

Districts	Number of attempts
Siantar Barat	68
Siantar Marihat	19
Siantar Marimbun	29
Siantar Martoba	35
Siantar Selatan	7
Siantar Sitalasari	27
Siantar Timur	68
Siantar Utara	119
Total	372

Source: (Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs of The Republic of Indonesia, 2022)

The overall number of MSMEs working in the food industry in Pematangsiantar is 372 throughout eight districts, with North Siantar having the highest concentration (119) and South Siantar having the lowest. The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically influenced the economy and many other sectors. Indonesia's corporate and economic sectors are suffering from the Covid-19 epidemic (Livana, Resa Hadi, Terri, Dani, & Firman, 2020). Due to obstacles preventing their firm from growing, many MSMEs is perplexed. As a result of the effects of COVID-19, supply chains have deteriorated globally, commodities prices have fallen, and the risk of a worldwide economic crisis has grown (Tjiptono, 2015).

The MSMEs performance phenomenon is visible in Pematangsiantar, a city whose economy is supported by the MSMEs industry in the food (culinary) sector (Juwita, Firdonsyah, Ali, Widodo, & Isnanto, 2022). It presents a challenge during the current Covid-19 outbreak because of low-performance capital. According to a study by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on how the pandemic has affected MSMEs in Indonesia, 88% of these businesses have run out of cash or savings, and more than 60% of these Regency/City Minimum Wage (UMK) have cut back on staff (Uyun, 2022). It must be acknowledged that the Covid-19 outbreak has diminished people's purchasing power since people are spending less time outdoors trying to stop the pandemic's spread. As a result, many customers remove themselves and make their purchases online (Arianto, 2020).



Source: (Arianto, 2020)

Figure 1
Structured Problems for MSMEs Pematangsiantar

In order to support the performance of MSMEs, it is necessary to have a good marketing strategy to optimize efficiency (Tirtayasa, Nadra, & Khair, 2021). A good strategy of an organization must pay attention to all aspects of product marketing activities to increase sales. However, MSMEs participants face challenges, including product strategies that only support one type of core product without supporting additional products or the expected product, as well as promotional strategies that are still ineffectively used by MSMEs players to promote their products in the promotional media (Tjiptono, 2015).

Another obstacle MSMEs face in the food sector from the existing monitoring is technology facilitating market improvement opportunities. An obstacle to MSMEs in the food (culinary) industry is technology literacy, such as these MSMEs agents' inability to use technological potential in the production process, financial management, promotional efforts, and distribution of products to customers (Kumalasari, 2017). The Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs of The Republic of Indonesia has accelerated the introduction of digital business practices amid COVID-19. This policy was implemented to encourage MSMEs digitization, centering the ministry's implementation program on raising MSME knowledge of digitalization (Hanum & Sinarasri, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to assess how the marketing strategy used during the Covid-19 epidemic affected MSMEs performance in the food business sector while leveraging technology and considering how local governments may assist MSMEs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

MSMEs performance is the result of work achieved by a business and can be completed with the individual's task within the company and at a certain period, and will be linked to the measure of value or standards of the company that the individual works for (Nataria, Dedi, & Sabarofek, 2019). Performance is a success that a person or business will attain to reach a particular objective. Performance is the accomplishment of strategic goals by an organization and is predetermined by the expected behavior of an organization (Siregar, Sugianto, & Marliyah, 2021). If MSMEs output performs well, it will be stronger and play a more significant role in the national economy, serving as the economy's foundation (Wijayanto, Wahyullah, & Aribawa, 2020). Micro Enterprises are profitable companies owned by people or legal organizations that satisfy the legal requirements for micro-enterprises. The criteria for assets are limited to IDR 50 million, while the criteria for turnover are limited to IDR 300 million annually. Medium Enterprises are profitable companies that operate independently, are run by people or organizations, and are not subsidiaries or branches of larger or smaller businesses. According to the law, they must generate a certain amount of sales revenue annually to be considered a Medium Enterprise (Ramadhani, 2021). The criteria for assets are limited to a maximum of RP 500 million – IDR 10 billion, while the criteria for turnover are >Rp 2

billion – IDR 50 billion per year. The following are indicators of MSMEs Performance (Martono & Riyanto, 2017): a) Sales Growth; b) Customer Growth; c) Profit Growth;

According to Kotler (Tirtayasa et al., 2021), marketing strategy plays a crucial role in a business or organization because it aids in determining the company's economic worth, whether the cost of goods or services. Marketing strategy is the primary approach that business units can use to achieve predetermined goals, including key decisions regarding the target market, market positioning of goods, marketing mix and the number of marketing costs needed (Waty, 2021). It follows that the idea of marketing strategy includes making decisions about marketing expenditures, marketing mix, distribution of marketing costs regarding environmental factors, and predicted competitive conditions.

Marketing strategy is also an essential factor for the success of a business. It describes several corporate strategies, such as promoting product outcomes that can draw potential customers, competitive prices, and quality that can satisfy customers' preferences. The subsequent step is the timely distribution and good service (Elwisam & Lestari, 2019). This requirement must be met consistently according to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The key decisions regarding the target market, product placement in the market, marketing mix, and the required level of marketing costs are mentioned in the marketing strategy, which is the main strategy that business units will use to achieve the primary goals (Gunardi, Rahayu, & Wibowo, 2020). The dimensions of the marketing strategy include product strategy, price, promotion and distribution.

This business model comes from a combination of digital technology and entrepreneurship, resulting in a new characteristic phenomenon in business (Giones & Brem, 2017). In this case, the role of digital technology has a significant influence on the new business units created. Emerging technological paradigms harness the potential of collaboration and collective intelligence to design and launch stronger and more sustainable entrepreneurship initiatives (Arianto, 2020). Even so, there are four dimensions related to digital entrepreneurship, namely digital actors (who), digital activities (what), digital motivation (why) and digital organizations (how) (Elia, Margherita, & Passiante, 2020).

The following conceptual framework is put together in light of the findings mentioned above:

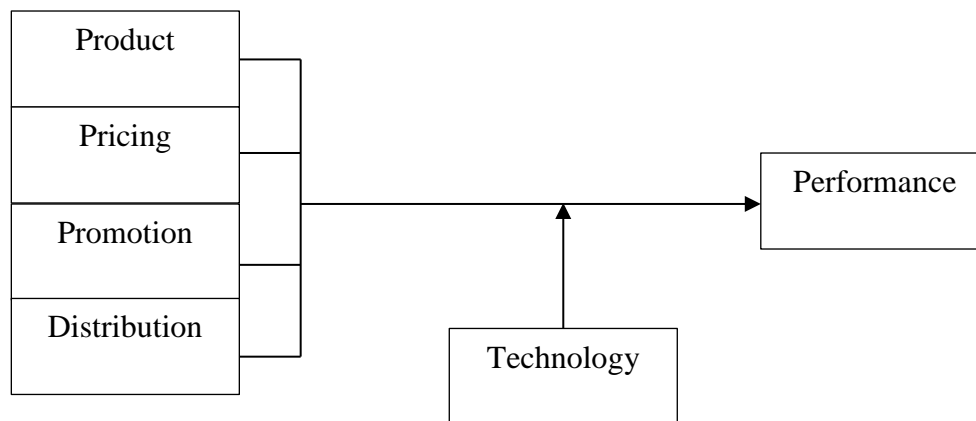


Figure 2
Conceptual Framework

The hypothesis built in this study is that marketing strategies have a direct and significant effect on improving the performance of MSMEs, and technology can moderate marketing strategies to further stimulate the performance of MSMEs. Improving the performance of MSMEs is expected to be an evaluation for improving the quality of MSMEs products, developing MSMEs production, and improving the skills of MSMEs members. The urgency of this study, based on the PRN Economic Growth theme, is in line with the RIRN's study of Economics and Human Resources on Entrepreneurship, Cooperatives, and MSMEs. In order for MSMEs to excel in the food business sector and stick in the public minds, this research can also benefit the arts and creative sectors, conserve local knowledge, and defend cultural values. "The City of Pematangsiantar is a Culinary City."

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses an explanatory research approach to explain the causal relationship between research variables and testing hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2017). The marketing strategy consists of product strategy, price, promotion and distribution are independent variables. The dependent variable is performance, while technology is the mediating variable. Quantitative research is based on a positive philosophy that examines a particular population or sample and takes random samples using tools to collect and analyze statistical data (Sugiyono, 2018). The process and stages of this research flow are carried out with a

solid basis for data collection, both in the initial observation process to look for phenomena and in the ongoing research process.

The population of this study is all MSMEs in the food business sector in Pematangsiantar City, with as many as 372 businesses. In contrast, the sample used in this study uses the convenience sampling method. Where this technique was chosen because it is the fastest method due to time constraints, and this method is anyone who does not accidentally meet the researcher can be used as a sample if it is considered suitable as a data source. Referring to (Firmansyah & Dede, 2022) and (Taherdoost, 2020), the number of samples can be determined from 10 times the number of indicators used in a single construct. Data collection techniques used in this study were documentation, interviews and questionnaires. The study uses a multivariate approach that uses more than two variables for statistical analysis of the study, using SmartPLS with SEM analysis, including statistical analysis for studies that use more than two variables for data management in this report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model Measurement

Table 2
Validity, Reliability and R-Square test

Variab les	Item	Outer loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Product strategy			0.811	0.945	0.923
	Product (SP1)	0.868			
	Price (SP2)	0.912			
	Place (SP3)	0.928			
	Promotion (SP4)	0.894			
Technolo gy			0.655	0.851	0.738
	Availability of Technological Facilities (TK1)	0.848			
	Technology Utilization (TK2)	0.789			
	Technology Benefits (TK3)	0.790			
Performa			0.747	0.922	0.889

nce of UMKM	Productivity (KUMKM1)	0.920			
	Quality (KUMKM2)	0.835			
	Punctuality (KUMKM3)	0.926			
	Resource Utilization (KUMKM4)	0.767			
R-Square					
			R-Square	R-Square Adjusted	
Performance of MSMEs			0.326	0.314	
Technology			0.174	0.167	

Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

In the validity test presented (See table 1), the value of each loading factor and AVE on the indicator of the marketing strategy variable (Yusup, 2018). Technology and performance of MSMEs are above 0.7 for the loading factor and above 0.5 for AVE. Furthermore, the value for each of the above reliability values obtained by the composite reliability for each research variable is also above 0.7. Furthermore, for the value of Cronbach's Alpha, the value for each variable is also above 0.60. It can be concluded that all research variables have good reliability values.

Furthermore, judging from the R-square value of the endogenous variables, the value obtained is 0.326 for the performance of MSMEs. It shows that the overall ability of the exogenous variables to explain the performance of MSMEs is weak. Then the R-square value of the following endogenous variable, namely technology, is 0.174, which means that the overall ability of the exogenous variable to explain technology is weak.

Hypotheses Test

Furthermore, a significance test was carried out to prove hypothesis testing, which was used to determine the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables (Sudirman et al., 2021). The significant criteria are seen from the p-value. With a significance level of 5%, if the p-value between the exogenous and endogenous variables is less than 0.05, the exogenous variable significantly affects the endogenous variable. On the contrary, if the value is more significant than 0.05, the exogenous variable has no

significant effect in building its endogenous variable. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in the following Table 3:

Table 3
Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Coefficients	t-Statistics	P-Value	Results
Product strategy → Technology (H1)	0.148	4.681	0.000	Accepted
Product strategy → Performance of MSMEs (H2)	0.303	2.668	0.008	Accepted
Technology → Performance of MSMEs (H3)	0.374	3.702	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

Based on the results of testing the first hypothesis (H1), obtained results that lead to positive and significant results between marketing strategy and technology. The results indicate that the marketing strategy has a positive effect on technology. It can be seen from the significance value of 0.000. Based on the results of testing the second hypothesis (H2), obtained results that lead to positive and significant results between marketing strategies and the performance of MSMEs in the food sector. It shows that the marketing strategy also has a positive and significant effect on the performance of MSMEs. It can be seen from the significant value of 0.008.

Based on the results of testing the third hypothesis (H3), we obtained results that led to positive and significant results between technology and the performance of food MSMEs. It shows that technology can encourage the increased performance of MSMEs in the food sector, as seen from the significance value of 0.000. Furthermore, a mediation test was conducted using an indirect effect approach to determine the effect of technology mediation on the relationship between marketing strategy and MSMEs performance. The explanation is presented in table 4 as follows:

Table 4
Mediation Test Results Based on Indirect Effect

Hypothesis	Coefficients	t- Statistics	P- Value	Results
Product strategy → Technology → Performance of MSMEs (H4)	0.156	2.601	0.010	Accepted

Source: Data Processing Results (2022)

Based on the results of processed mediation test data based on indirect effects, a conclusion can be drawn that technology variables can mediate the relationship between marketing strategies and MSMEs performance by proving the acquisition of a p-value of 0.010, whose value is below 0.05. This result proves that technology can encourage marketing strategies further to improve the performance of MSMEs in the food sector.

The Effect of Marketing Strategy on MSMEs Performance in Pematangsiantar City

The effects of the Covid Pandemic, especially in Pematangsiantar City, were a decrease in sales, difficulties in capital, obstacles to product distribution, many people who lost their jobs and other losses. The study result is the value of the coefficient of 0.303 and P-value of 0.008, which means that marketing strategies have a positive and significant effect on the performance of MSMEs in the food sector. In line with previous research (Gunardi et al., 2020), it was concluded that e-commerce in the food sector positively impacted the performance of small and medium enterprises in Pematangsiantar.

It has indeed become an innovative marketing alternative when the covid pandemic hits. Limited activities outside the home make people choose alternative food delivery services provided by e-commerce and online transportation services. Also, the implementation of direct marketing strategies in the current pandemic situation is choosing the right media for promotion and utilizing social media as the primary marketing channel (Arifqi, 2021). Respondents stated that the ease of access to ordering goods on social media and online delivery services became the primary means of promotion because these media provided accurate product details.

The Effect of Marketing Strategies on MSMEs Performance Mediated by Technology

The study's results can be seen in that the influence of marketing on the performance of MSMEs mediated by technology shows a result of 0.010 (<0.05), meaning that the relationship between these variables is positive and significant. Thus, technology mediates the influence of marketing on the performance of MSMEs in Pematangsiantar city. Based on the results above, the business performance of MSMEs in the food sector concerning direct marketing during the Covid-19 Pandemic was determined by the influence of technology used in the marketing process.

Food sector entrepreneurs stated that social media and online transportation services were essential as the primary marketing channel during the pandemic. It is because consumers responded more quickly to social media, and there was no need for direct interactions that indicated the spread of covid (Rosita, 2020). Although many entrepreneurs disagree that social media that uses engaging promotional content will captivate consumers, it cannot be denied that the role of social media and delivery services is huge in supporting the sustainability of the food business during the pandemic. It is also in line with previous research, which noted that the greater the use of social media, the greater the success of the business (Gumilar & Zulfan, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Pematangsiantar City cannot be underestimated, as many food businesses in this city have closed their outlets for a long time. It is because business actors are not accustomed to adapting to very significant changes with the application of health protocols and limiting the number of consumers who come to their place of business, thereby reducing purchasing power. However, in these conditions, it turns out that there is a role for technology that can mediate marketing carried out by affected business actors, be it social media or online delivery services (digital entrepreneurship).

Based on the analysis and discussion results, it is found that the influence of marketing strategy on the performance of MSMEs in the food sector is positive and significant, mediated by technology. It means that changes in the ecosystem due to this

pandemic have encouraged MSMEs actors, especially the food sector, to transform into the digital realm in their marketing strategies. It can be traced from the number of food sector entrepreneurs who use marketplaces on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp media and use Online Delivery Service Applications such as Go-Jek, Grab, and other digital service products.

The role of this digital platform has become the main focus for business actors and consumers during the pandemic and post-pandemic because this new habit makes it easier for consumers not to come to get food products from the business under study. Therefore, improving the performance of MSMEs in the food sector during the Covid-19 and post-pandemic can be an alternative to saving the MSMEs sector so that it continues to exist.

Maintaining MSMEs, especially the food sector in Pematangsiantar City, requires the involvement and support of local governments through the creation of economic policies in favor of these business actors. One form of support is that the government provides space to learn to realize technological literacy through socialization and training to business actors. MSMEs business actors in the food sector should realize that the interaction between salespeople and buyers is physically limited. Also, technology is the right solution to be used during the pandemic. It is due to changes in people's behavior during and after the pandemic, namely preferring food delivery using application media. Therefore, it is necessary to take advantage of new marketing strategies, actively producing goods that consumers can directly purchase for types of products that are on the rise during the pandemic. For subsequent researchers, developing technology in production, distribution, and direct marketing is better to refine the research by including other variables.

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