



# In the search of recovery: the 4ps for small and medium enterprises to recover after the pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

This article describes a set of solutions that small and medium-sized businesses might utilize to recover economically after the epidemic. This paper was written using a variety of strategic management principles and marketing mix concepts from the literature. The research technique used in this study is a literature study methodology that collects secondary data from the search page, and also interviewed small and medium business owner. This research suggests that a variety of tactics that small and medium-sized businesses might adopt should be evaluated, particularly marketing mix strategies developed before the pandemic and their relevance after the government declared the epidemic over. The benefit in regards to this study was to present preparation of small and medium-sized business owners when facing challenges, especially the unpredicted ones.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The increasingly tough business rivalry in the age of globalization must be handled by business players by executing strategic initiatives for the continuation of their firm. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought changes that have had a major impact so that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), restaurant businesses, and large-scale retail stores have experienced a decline in sales so that they have to close their businesses, but some other retailers, such as supermarkets as well as mini markets that are still running. The development of technology which continues to rise swiftly indirectly encourages the development of the economy in Indonesia, in the end it is able to enhance rivalry among service entrepreneurs, contemporary marketing that favors customers is expanding and giving rise to rivalry among manufacturers. This severe rivalry leads to the views of businesses to create better marketing tactics and increase quality in service. The architecture of the business models used by consumer services companies is significantly impacted by changes in customer purchasing behaviour. A novelty-centered business strategy is more likely to be inspired by changes in the buy item, purpose, and timing of customers, whereas changes in the purchase technique are more likely to be motivated by efficiency (Tao et al., 2022).

The Internet has become a medium that continues to increase in function; not only as a medium of information but also as a medium of marketing and communication media. Data from Internet World Stats reveals that over the period 2000 – 2012, the increase of internet users

worldwide reached 566% with Asia as the greatest contributor, accounting for 44.8% of all internet users worldwide. People's access to information material is endlessly enlarged with the arrival of the mobile Internet age, and the channel is infinitely handy (Lu & Nam, 2021).

Indonesia ranks in Asia as one of the country with high rank of internet penetration. In Indonesia, internet penetration is so vast and the quick rise in internet infrastructure in Indonesia, and this has driven the gradual growth of online sales systems or what is usually referred to as online commerce. Although Indonesia still have long way to go, according to data, at the beginning of 2023, Indonesia had 212.9 million internet users, or 77.0 percent of the population. In January 2023, there were 167.0 million social media users in Indonesia, or 60.4% of the whole population. Early in 2023, there were 353.8 million active mobile connections in Indonesia, which is comparable to 128.0 percent of the country's population (Das et al., 2016; Kemp, 2023).

But in order to speed up Indonesia's digital development, firms will need to rise to the occasion and undergo a profound self-transformation. Online business systems are simpler to operate and do not need huge expenditures both at the outset and throughout operation. It simply takes a strong internet connection as initial cash to begin an online business. The nature of the internet market is highly dynamic and requires quick changes (Dwivedi et al., 2021), needing the proper answers and measures so that a product or service can survive and win the competition, they may employ a marketing approach utilizing cheaper electronic media, particularly the internet, thus they can lower marketing expenditures and improve sales volume. By adopting this marketing strategy, a connection may be built between consumers and manufacturers.

Currently, the bulk of commodities or items that are the backbone of internet business are products linked to daily requirements, such as food, beverages, lifestyle such as fashion and apparel, beauty and health products, as well as technology and gadgets. Apart from utilizing personal platforms such as websites, internet companies also utilize social media platforms to sell their goods and services. One of the most prominent social media networks is Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter. The usage of social media influencers had a favourable and considerable impact on marketing performance, either directly or indirectly through mediated product positioning. For certain products that had to position their items in accordance with the personalities of the influencers engaged, product positioning mediation was required. The usage of this simple and affordable trend might be a viable alternative for all organisations to promote items, forge connections with clients, and generate interactions in the form of feedback. The chosen social media influencer was undoubtedly chosen with a variety of business product compatibility factors in mind so that the business positioning of the product was also in line with the target (Ardyan & Dharmayana Putra, 2022).

However, the options of which social media will be applied will depends on the corporate strategy. Strategy is the process of developing senior management plans that focus on long-term goals of the organization, followed by developing techniques or efforts to achieve these goals. A well-planned strategy will help to organize and allocate the company's resources in a distinctive and sustainable manner. For a business to reach virtuoso performance, business strategies are crucial. Business strategies concentrate on enhancing a firm's products and services' competitive position in a certain industry or market sector that the company serves. The company's goods can enhance performance via a competitive position, producing outstanding outcomes. In spite of the danger, a stronger business strategy may assist organisations in coming up with fresh concepts, opening doors for market entry, and carrying out trials. As a result, they may become market leaders by putting their long-term plans into action .

From the above perspective, the strategy can be seen as a plan designed by senior management to achieve the expected results. This plan includes objectives, policies and measures that an organization must achieve in order to maintain its existence and suppress competition, in particular companies or organizations with a competitive advantage. The marketing strategy is how a company behaves when influenced by external circumstances. Practically speaking, marketing strategies chart a course after analysing environmental conditions. For the purpose of carrying out its complete activity, including a number of tactics, the marketing policy sets its broad framework of operation (Purcarea, 2019).

According to Assauri (2004), marketing is an activity of human beings that aims to meet needs and aspirations through exchanges. Marketing is the key to attracting consumers' attention, acquiring customers' purchases, gaining customer satisfaction and loyalty, and maintaining small businesses' growth. Marketing is about discovering and responding to human and social needs. Finding profitable solutions to needs is one of the fastest appropriate marketing definitions. Companies must invest extensively in creating and implementing new technologies that enable consumers to contribute resources to the firm since effective engagement marketing depends on their capacity to recognise and utilise customer resources (Hargyatni et al., 2022).

Due to the COVID-19 issue, customers' purchasing habits have changed, and businesses must adapt their operations to accommodate these new preferences. For instance, during a financial crisis, consumers accentuate the products' durability, become more price-sensitive, cut their spending by buying items at reduced prices, and concentrate on buying inexpensive and reasonable products ((Dewi et al., 2022; Nikbin et al., 2022).

For businesses, products hold a significant significance since without them, they would be unable to do any business at all. things must be tailored to customers' desires or wants in order for product marketing to be effective since customers will only purchase things they believe are appropriate. In other words, the production of items is more in line with customer preferences or market demands (Ketut Suardika & Sari Dewi, 2021).

Understanding consumer behaviour is essential for business growth. A logical and systematic link between the industry and the customer cannot be established unless consumer behaviour is understood, and businesses and organisations that base their objectives, operations, and organisational structure on knowledge tend to be more successful. more consumers and clients adapt Customers may conduct continuous searches in this setting, and each action results in rapid feedback from the environment, which adds to the dynamic nature of the search process (Bozorgkhou & Alimohammadi Rokni, 2022). Therefore the aim of this research was to present techniques undertaken by small and medium business owner when dealing with pandemic as they have to recover themselves economically, through marketing mix.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

Researchers used a qualitative technique to conduct their investigation. The term method is derived from the Greek word methods, which means "way" or "path." Qualitative research methods are essentially research methods used to examine natural objects (rather than experiments) in which researchers are key instruments, data collection techniques are triangulated (combined), data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize the meaning of the generalization.

In general, research entails seeking knowledge on a topic. It may also be understood as a quest for knowledge. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena in depth by collecting detailed data. The goal of developing qualitative research methodologies employing data-gathering techniques is to get an objective study image (Creswell, 2005).

Data-collecting methods supplement or develop the chosen research method, allowing data to be obtained. There are several approaches or ways of data collecting that may be used. Data that is already accessible and may be gained by reading, seeing or listening is collected by researchers. Researchers use the following secondary data-gathering techniques: 1) Library Research, Researchers get data via library research by analyzing books and other textual materials pertinent to their topic. 2). Data from the Internet, Online data searches for data using online media or network media that offer online services. Researchers obtain this online data through the internet. This research also collect data for small and business owner through interview. The interview technique applied was through giving two small and medium business owner a template to fill in. Selected small and medium business owner was two person, where both of them runs moslem fashion business at Depok. The interview itself was conducted in June 2023, and took two days to complete the data collection. We then analyse the data using descriptive approach and manually presented as it is, since no tools were used during data analysis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Respondent Profile

As we have conducted interview process with two respective respondents held within two consecutive days (1<sup>st</sup> June and 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2023), the following paragraphs present respondents profile.

#### Savayla

Savayla was established in 2013 with 1 employee and located in the Puspita Loka area, BSD. Savayla's mission is to participate in preserving traditional fabrics and can be used for various events and by anyone. At the beginning of starting this business was gamis with variations of national fabrics such as batik, sasirangan, striated, hijab and so on. Sales carried out offline include renting kiosks in Thamrin City and also participating in events such as bazaars. Savayla promotes through social media such as Facebook. And around 2016 promotions were carried out using Instagram in the hope of reaching more customers

#### Alisha Hijab

Alisha hijab was established in 2015 with 1 employee and is located in the pamulang area, south Tangerang. Alisha Hijab has a vision that is hijab in style and its mission is to make hijab as desired by customers. Initially, it started by selling instant hijab with a re-branding system, namely hijab ordering products to suppliers and then labeling its own brand with the alisha hijab brand, and sold offline to colleagues and following bazaars. Alisha hijab promotes through social media such as Facebook and Instagram. Then with the increase in customers, not only made instant hijabs but also rectangular veils and also moslem dress known as *gamis*. Following the hijab trend, this business continually invent their hijab design through printing. Marketing is done through Instagram with a pre-order system, where customers can choose the design, size, and custom name. At the beginning of production several obstacles that occur in the selection of materials / fabrics, colors and also high prices compared to other competitors due to producing them in small quantities.

#### Results

Tabel 1. Data 4Ps

Situations	Company Name	Product	Price (Rp.)	Placement	Promotion
Before pandemic (<2020)	Savayla	Gamis	300.000	Offline bazaar	Offline (bazaar) Online (facebook, Instagram)
	Alisha Hijab	Hijab instant Gamis Hijab printing	Starting from 60.000 to 100.000	Instagram domisili	Offline (bazaar) Online (facebook, Instagram)
After pandemic (>2022)	Savayla	Gamis	300.000	Bazaar instagram	Offline (Bazaar) Online (Instagram)
	Alisha Hijab	Hijab printing	100.000	Domicile, as Store located Market place	Offline : store Online (marketplace, Instagram)

From table above we may summarize there was a shifting in placement and promotion undertaken by respondents. Change that was made by the business owner, according to their testimony, was in their effort to save their existence. However, the challenge from applying new placement and promotion was also another issue. Both of respondents share different perspective when they were asked about the challenges faced.

"...We were quite surprised when we focus more on Instagram rather than using Facebook and Instagram. Our customers are specifically came from adult, and most of them are between age 30 – 40 years old...at first we were also struggle with the person who will be in charge to manager the Instagram account, we, at that time have in our mind to recruit special staff, but, we don't have much to offer to them, so that I personally learn how to post and scheduled chat responds so that our customer would not disappointed" (Source: Savayla).

While, on the other findings, "...I remember I joined a seminar about marketplace, it was a well-known marketplace who send me the invitation, along with other small medium enterprises, I

learn about the possibility to sell my products through marketplace. Then they (the marketplace) offer me and other small medium enterprises an assistance to help us when encountering problems. It was a great opportunity for me to help my business back on the track..." (Source: Alisha Hijab).

Based on the interview, we may summarize, that changes made by the business owner might because of their own decision, but stimulated from their business urgencies, and it will become reality if they are supported by party (here in this case, other business just like in Alisha Hijab's case), and or they would like to learn how to work on new adventure in their business because they found they have weaknesses.

**Table 2.** Priorities

Situation	Brand Name	Priorities
Before pandemic (<2020)	Savayla	From Product / Price / Placement / Promotion which part is strengthened in running a business is the product. The reason: because they want to introduce their products first to customers.
	Alisha Hijab	From Product / Price / Placement / Promotion the reinforced part in running a business is the product. The reason is because the marketing carried out is still a lot of offline use, namely following the bazaar, then product design and product stock must be strengthened.
After pandemic (>2022)	Savayla	From Product / Price / Placement / Promotion which part is strengthened in running a business is promotion. The reason is because promotion through social media is now important to reach a wider market
	Alisha Hijab	From Product / Price / Placement / Promotion the reinforced part in running a business is promotion. The reason is that after the pandemic, many entrepreneurs use social media for promotion and product sales. So that promotion through social media must have more attention

Based on table 2., above, we may summarize that both of respondents sees their business priorities must be arrange from Product to Price, then placement and last is promotion. But however the experience of each respondents is quite vary. For instance, Savayla saw Product, Price, Placement and Promotion would emphasize more on product, and this was happened before pandemic, and this was when they were going to enter the market. But, when it was after the pandemic, Savayla saw promotion should be emphasized, although the process will remain the same. Therefore, there was a shifting on 4ps' priorities. Then, what we found from Alisha Hijab, though it was similar with the other respondent, but their point of view was about product availability, but then after pandemic, the priority was also change to promotion, although the arguments is quite different, while Savayla expect to wide their market, for Alisha Hijab is to maintain their social media established when it was pandemic.

## Discussions

Customers are more vigilant when picking and purchasing services. This might be applied for product such as offered by Savayla and Alisha Hijab. The pandemic, that was happened few years behind create a massive impact to all sectors in the world of business, and it will include small medium enterprises, because the willingness to buy from customer was decreased as they probably challenge with surviving from the virus. But not only customers that need to survive, but business also need to survive, and therefore, technology came to every business as a solution, through social media, as a medium for product marketing and even to create new market, that will be impossible if business owner only rely on offline store.

As we explore from two respondents voluntarily participated in this research, we found that the force to keep business alive made business owner state their priorities if applying the 4P's. Previously, research illustrate the meaning of each part of 4P's. Whereas all the effort that was set-up by business owner through 4Ps will create customer value. From this research we found out that 4Ps might still be applicable for small medium enterprise, as a simple model that can help them analyse their attention on their product, not just only the product itself, but also other attributes of the product.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought changes that have had a major impact so that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and large-scale retail stores have experienced a decline in sales. The development of technology which continues to rise swiftly indirectly encourages the development of the economy in Indonesia. The pandemic, that was happened few years behind create a massive impact to all sectors in the world of business. The willingness to buy from customer was decreased as they probably challenge with surviving from the virus. Nadyfah (2014), mentioned that customers are more vigilant when picking and purchasing services. This might be applied for product such as offered by Savayla and Alisha Hijab.

The main contribution found from this research is the ability for small business owners to set a priorities to be able to survive during the crisis caused by pandemic. However, although it seems simple, but the way the business owner act and decide the priorities shows resiliencies within their area.

This study also has limitations, first was all data based on interview only to business owners, therefore we need to explore more whether consumer's or markets also have confirm the effort that was made by the respondents. Second, marketing mix however may quite limited in explaining strategies should be taken in the future, although it shows approached that has been taken by small and medium business owner for the past few years when pandemic happened. Therefore we suggest future research must be able to elaborate marketing mix with marketing strategies and also people factor for instance resiliencies during crisis.

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