

## MARKETING STRATEGY IN EFFORT TO INCREASE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the influence of product, price, distribution channel and promotion on competitive advantage in small and medium enterprises in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency. The research design was a survey research with a quantitative approach. The population in this research were small and medium enterprises in OKU Regency which are 270 people. The samples used in this study used Slovin formula. the number of samples used in this research were 73 people. The analytical method used is multiple linier regression. The conclusion of this research shows that the variables of product quality, price, distribution channel and promotion have a positive influence on the competitive advantage of small and medium enterprises in OKU Regency. The implication of this research for the company by using marketing strategy can increase competitive advantage. Whereas for The government this research can improve the economy and also reduce the unemployment rate.

**Keywords:** competitive advantage, distribution channel, product, price, promotion

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### INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) had a very important role for national economic development, one of which was by providing a significant labour absorption rate (Hafni & Rozali, 2017). This data was strengthened through a report (Bappenas, 2014) which stated that MSMEs had contributed greatly to increase job opportunities and reducing poverty. The role of MSMEs actually did not only occur in the labour sector, it was noted that the micro, small and medium enterprises sector had contributed significantly to the increase in gross domestic product from 57,84 percent to 60,34 percent in the last five years as well as employment also increased, from 96,99 percent to 97,22 percent in the same period (Kementerian Perindustrian, 2016) These

conditions and facts were in line with the results of empirical research conducted (Sarfiah et al., 2019) which concluded that small and medium enterprises (small-medium enterprises) provided a very large contribution to the economic development of Indonesia.

The large contribution of MSMEs to the state needed to get attention and support from the government so that MSMEs had competitiveness and were able to survive in various situations including in business competition. Data from (Depkop, 2018) showed that currently micro, small and medium enterprises were experiencing growth in every region in Indonesia. In more detail, the growth of MSMEs was shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1. The Growth of Micro And Small Enterprises In Indonesia 2017-2018**

No	Indicator	Unit	2017		2018		Development in 2017-2018	
			Total	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)	Total	%
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1	Business Unit (A+B)	(unit)	62.928.077		64.199.606		1.271.529	2,02
	A. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)	(unit)	62.922.617	99,99	64.194.057	99.99	1.271.440	2,02
	Micro Enterprise (ME)	(unit)	62.106.900	98,70	63.350.222	98.68	1.243.322	2,00
	Small Enterprise (SE)	(unit)	757.090	1,20	783.132	0,09	2.075	3,54
	Medium Enterprise (ME)	(unit)	58.627	0,09	60.702	0,01	90	1,64

**Source: Depkop (2018)**

This growth will certainly lead to competition among MSMEs, as it is known that one of the weaknesses of MSMEs is the limited marketing of the products they sell (Suci et al., 2017). For this reason, a marketing strategy is needed for MSMEs in order to increase their competitive advantage. This strategy is part of how MSMEs adapt to their increasingly competitive environment. An analysis of adaptation in a competitive environment is needed by organizations to be able to take fast decision models (Reeves and Deimler, 2012).

To have a competitive advantage, small and medium enterprises must be able to distribute the products they sell to consumers. How to distribute these products can be done through the right marketing strategy, because marketing has an important role in communicating the existence of the company's products to consumers. Marketing itself means the activities of activities, various series of organizations and processes in communicating, delivering, creating and exchanging offers that have value to partners, clients, consumers and communities who are in a large scope (Cochoy, 2014). Marketing

itself has the main objective of understand customers so that the products or services we offer are in accordance with what the customers want so that in the future these products or services can sell themselves (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Good marketing for MSMEs should be supported by an effective and reliable strategy in achieving business goals. Effective marketing requires stages starting from a plan, a strategic concept of market segmentation, including a careful marketing strategy and planning (Martiman, 2014). Marketing strategy itself can be interpreted as a tool to achieve business goals and objectives by exercising a sustainable competitive advantage in the market where the company is located. Competitive advantage itself can mean the benefits or value created by a company that is different from other companies and offered to its consumers, where these benefits are far greater than the costs that must be incurred by these consumers (Curatman et al., 2016). There are many factors of competitive advantage that can be created by MSMEs in order to be a differentiating value against competitors, in

this study the factors of competitive advantage for MSMEs will be analyzed using a marketing mix.

Marketing mix elements can be used by companies including MSMEs to gain competitive advantage and influence consumer perceptions so that their market performance can be effective (Ibidunni, 2011). The marketing mix itself consists of products, prices, locations and promotions, which in its application requires a deep understanding of the company to combine these various factors so that the success of marketing activities can be maximized (Hintze, 2015). By combining the marketing mix with *tapat*, it will have the potential to accelerate the purchasing decision process by consumers (Utami and Firdaus, 2018).

Based on the results of various empirical studies and phenomena above, it can be seen that MSMEs can create competitive advantage through marketing strategies by maximizing the factors contained in the marketing mix (product, price, promotion, and place). For this reason, researchers are interested in conducting research on marketing strategies in an effort to increase competitive advantage in small and medium enterprises in Ogan Komering Ulu district.

There are four objectives of this study. They are analyzing the effect of the product on competitive advantage in Small and Medium Enterprises in OKU Regency, analyzing the effect of price on competitive advantage in Small and Medium Enterprises in OKU Regency, analyzing the influence of distribution channels on competitive advantage in Small and Medium Enterprises in OKU Regency, and analyzing the effect of promotion on competitive advantage on Competitive Advantage in Small and Medium Enterprises in OKU Regency.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Marketing Strategy

Companies need strategies to be able to seize market opportunities, in addition, strategies can also function in overcoming various internal and external threats. Strategy itself means different actions taken by a company compared to its competitors (Free-management, 2011). Through different and measured actions, the company is expected to be able to excel compared to competitors so that the company's goal of seizing market share can be realized. This strategy in fighting for market share is known as a marketing strategy which means a tool used by companies to achieve long-term goals and competitive advantage in the market (Putri, 2016). Marketing strategy can also be interpreted as a plan that describes in detail the goals the company wants to achieve with the demand for a product in a specific market (Wijayanto, 2013). Meanwhile, according to (Assauri, 2011), a marketing strategy is a plan made holistically and incorporated in the marketing field and contains various guidelines in carrying out activities in achieving company goals.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014) Marketing strategy is a marketing guide, determining the best combination of several marketing components in order to reach the desired market using strategies that include product quality, price, promotion and distribution channels. Based on the various definitions above, it can be seen that the marketing strategy is a series of goals and objectives that have been made by the company which contains policies and rules in providing direction to the company's marketing activities with plans, implementation and evaluation that are comprehensive and integrated in the marketing sector, and provide guidance on activities that will be carried out in order to achieve the marketing objectives of a company.

### **Product Quality**

Products are a set of attributes that can be in the form of features, benefits, functions and uses that can provide a sense of satisfaction to consumers (Kotler and Keller, 2016). It is also known that products can be used as a basis that can have an influence on consumption, these products can be various combinations of various ingredients and production processes (Pomering, 2017). Currently, consumers are increasingly critical in choosing products. One of the criteria for the product they choose must be quality and in accordance with the price paid. In this case, product quality is very important for companies to be selected by their target market consumers. Product quality itself means the ability of a product to carry out its functions which consist of product reliability, ease of operation, durability, accuracy, repair and various other attributes that have value (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Product quality has also been shown to affect customer satisfaction (Irawan and Japariato, 2013).

Based on the various literatures above, it can be described that product quality is the ability of a product to meet the wants and needs of its consumers in accordance with existing standards. If the product quality is in accordance with consumer expectations, the consumer will make repeated purchases. On the other hand, if the quality of the product is not in accordance with what consumers expect, then consumers will easily switch to other products that can meet the expectations they want. The product is considered appropriate if the consumer feels that the product has long durability, is not easily damaged, has a guarantee of quality and is able to increase the status of the consumer who uses it.

### **Price**

Price is the amount of money paid by consumers to get products sold by companies (Kotler, 2012). Price is also a single element of the marketing mix that can generate revenue

for the company (Wijaya, 2018). Price has its own perspective, so it can be used as a differentiation between the products offered by the company and competitors' products (Utami and Firdaus, 2018). Price also has an important role, although sometimes the total cost required to produce a product is rarely seen in determining the final price of the company (Pomering, 2017).

In the marketing mix, price is an element that is flexible or not fixed and can change quickly. Pricing is very important considering price is the only income generating element in the marketing mix. Price is also a very important element in determining the profit and sustainability of a company's operations in order to survive. Therefore, in determining the price, it will be closely related to the marketing strategy used by the company.

### **Distribution Channels**

Distribution channels were a group of stages for a product or service flow that must be followed after production which then ended and was used by end users (Kotler, 2012). Distribution channels also meant a combination of interdependent organizations to make products or services available and could be consumed and used by end consumers (Kotler, 2012). The distribution channel was the flow of goods through which it started from the producer through intermediaries until it ended at the end consumer (Prasetya and Widawati, 2016). The essence of the distribution channel was the relationship between the various activities that the company had to distribute the products they had to the end consumers.

### **Promotion**

Promotion was a medium in introducing and influencing consumers to make purchases and consume products offered by companies (Utami and Firdaus, 2018). Promotion was a form of information communication between sellers and buyers in a distribution channel

that functions to influence attitudes and behavior (Kotler and Amstrong, 2014). Promotion was a one-way flow of information created by companies to direct consumers or organizations to take action in creating marketing exchanges (Swastha and Handoko, 2012). Promotion as a marketing tool really required a variety of careful considerations to determine which media to choose to be able to influence buyers (Young and Burgess, 2015). The essence of promotional activities was that companies took various actions to introduce, educate, inform the products they had to offer to consumers.

### **Competitive advantage**

Competition between companies will increase if many of the same businesses compete with each other, which results in consumers being able to easily switch to choosing products because competing companies also provide many of the same product offerings (Forest, 2013). Competitive advantage can grow from the benefits or value provided by a company to its consumers, provided that the value provided to consumers must be greater than the costs (Curatman A., et al, 2016). Through a competitive advantage strategy, the company is able to improve its performance better (Riyanto, 2018). Competitive advantage can also be defined as the company's ability to make superior benefits and values in facing various competitions to get maximum profit (Merakati, et al, 2017).

### **Hypothesis Development**

The nature of product characteristics that affect the satisfaction of consumer needs that can be seen are also called product quality (Kotler, 2012). Product quality is very important because it relates to consumer confidence in the products created by the company (Singh, 2012). Product quality also has a significant effect on purchasing decisions made by consumers (Sari and Nuvriasari, 2018). If the quality of the product obtained by consumers is of good quality, it will directly

provide a positive perception of increasing the competitive advantage of products made by the company. Competitive advantage also has a positive effect on marketing performance (Merakati, et al, 2017). Based on the description above.

**H1: Product quality has a positive influence on competitive advantage.**

Price is a number of values provided by consumers to be exchanged for goods or services that provide a number of benefits, price is one of the most important attributes for consumers to make purchasing decisions (Handoko, 2017). According to (Kotler and Keller, 2016) there are four goals in determining the price that is adjusted to the advantages the company wants, the first goal is to survive, if the company experiences intense competition, excess capacity and faces fast changing consumer desires. The second goal is maximum profit, if the company is able to calculate costs and choose the right price alternatives. The third goal is to achieve maximum market share, if the company has an understanding that the higher the sales volume, the cheaper the price will be and in the long run will generate high profits. The last goal is market skimming pricing, when a new company applies new technology. Based on the literature.

**H2: price has a positive influence on competitive advantage.**

Distribution channels also mean a combination of interdependent organizations to make products or services available and can be consumed and used by end consumers (Kotler, 2012). Distribution channels are the flow of goods through which they start from producers through intermediaries to end at the end consumers (Prasetya and Widyawati, 2016), there are many alternatives that companies can choose for distribution channels for their products. However, the distribution channel chosen must be in accordance with the established strategy, so

that the company's goals are more focused and achievable (Karundeng, et al, 2018). With a distribution in accordance with the company's strategy, the product will quickly arrive in the hands of consumers. This is one of the company's advantages in marketing its products. On the basis of the various literatures above.

**H3: distribution channels have a positive influence on competitive advantage.**

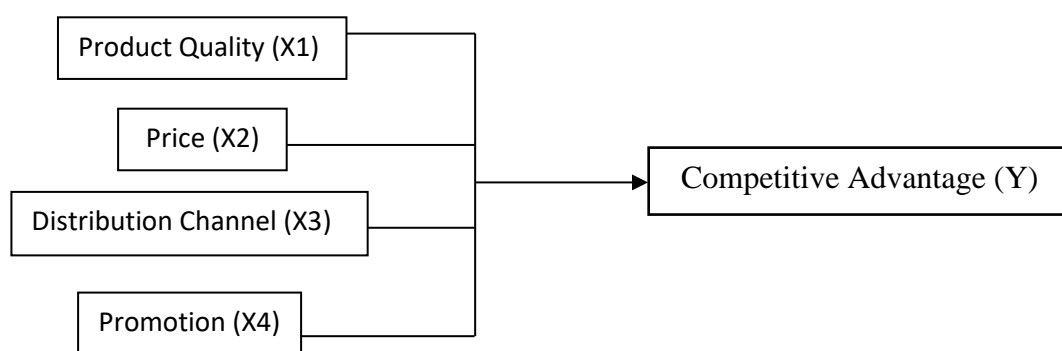
Promotion is an activity in communicating product information from a company to consumers or other parties that aims to influence attitudes and behavior (Perreault, et al., 2017). This means that the more intense the company provides the

promotion, the more consumers will be influenced and interested in buying products offered by the company. Promotion as part of the marketing mix was also found to have an effect on the company's competitive advantage, both partially and simultaneously (Chumaidiyah, 2014). Based on the various literatures above.

**H4: promotion has a positive influence on competitive advantage.**

**Research Conceptual Framework**

Referring to the theoretical framework regarding the correlation between variables as described in the formulation of the hypothesis, the framework in this research is as follows:



**Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework**

**RESEARCH METHOD**

**Type of Research**

The type of this research is a survey research. Survey research is research that takes a sample of a population using a questionnaire as the main tool (Sujarwadi, 2011). This method is also called the questionnaire method, because to obtain this data, a series of questions is usually asked which are arranged in a list.

**Population and Sample of Research**

The population in this study is the number of all Small and Medium Enterprise owners in Baturaja who are registered in the

Department of Industry and Trade which are 270 people. Sample of Research According to (Arikunto, 2019), "The sample is part or representative of the population under study". It is called sample research if we intend to generalize the results of sample research. According to (Sugiyono, 2017) to determine the number of respondents in the study, the Slovin formula is used:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \quad (1)$$

Where:

- n = the number of sample
- N = the number of population
- e = Deviation rate 10 % (0,1)

In research, the critical value used is 10% because with this value a sufficient number of samples will be obtained in research and it is a suitable standard for social research. The total population used are 270 people (owners of Small and Medium Enterprises in Baturaja) with a critical value (e) of 10%. So that the sample value (n) used is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = \frac{270}{1 + (270 \times 10\%)^2} = 72,97$$

So, the number of samples that will be used are 73 people.

### ***Method of Data Analysis***

The data is analysed using validity and reliability test to show the instrument accuracy and consistency. T test is used to test the hypothesis. The significance is at the level  $\alpha = 5\%$ .

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Validity Test**

Here is the result of validity tes for each instrument as the indicator of independent variable (product quality, price, distribution, and promotion).

**Table 2. Independent Variable Validity Test**

The quality of product (X <sub>1</sub> )			
Statement items	r-obtain	r-table	information
P1	0,710	0,230	Valid
P2	0,747	0,230	Valid
P3	0,767	0,230	Valid
P4	0,730	0,230	Valid
P5	0,710	0,230	Valid
P6	0,690	0,230	Valid
P7	0,578	0,230	Valid
P8	0,760	0,230	Valid
P9	0,710	0,230	Valid
P10	0,767	0,230	Valid
P11	0,678	0,230	Valid
P12	0,654	0,230	Valid
Price (X <sub>2</sub> )			
P1	0,600	0,230	Valid
P2	0,833	0,230	Valid
P3	0,400	0,230	Valid
P4	0,756	0,230	Valid
P5	0,718	0,230	Valid
P6	0,622	0,230	Valid
P7	0,543	0,230	Valid
P8	0,856	0,230	Valid
P9	0,646	0,230	Valid
P10	0,431	0,230	Valid
P11	0,858	0,230	Valid
P12	0,559	0,230	Valid
Distribution channel (X <sub>3</sub> )			
P1	0,800	0,230	Valid
P2	0,788	0,230	Valid
P3	0,668	0,230	Valid
P4	0,678	0,230	Valid
P5	0,435	0,230	Valid
P6	0,810	0,230	Valid
P7	0,623	0,230	Valid
P8	0,469	0,230	Valid
P9	0,835	0,230	Valid
P10	0,753	0,230	Valid
P11	0,673	0,230	Valid
P12	0,764	0,230	Valid



Promotion (X <sub>4</sub> )			
P1	0.760	0,230	Valid
P2	0.776	0,230	Valid
P3	0.701	0,230	Valid
P4	0.694	0,230	Valid
P5	0.762	0,230	Valid
P6	0.786	0,230	Valid
P7	0.760	0,230	Valid
P8	0.776	0,230	Valid

Based on the validity test table above, there were 73 respondents and based on that table it can be concluded that all of the statement items were valid because all of the correlation coefficients *Product Moment Person* (t-obtain) of all statement items from all of the independent variables were bigger than t-table. Table 3 show the result of dependent variable validity test (competitive advantage).

**Table 3. Dependent Variable Validity Test**

Competitive Advantage (Y)			
Statement items	r-obtain	r-table	information
P1	0,617	0,230	Valid
P2	0,784	0,230	Valid
P3	0,448	0,230	Valid
P4	0,785	0,230	Valid
P5	0,718	0,230	Valid
P6	0,654	0,230	Valid
P7	0,734	0,230	Valid
P8	0,546	0,230	Valid
P9	0,666	0,230	Valid
P10	0,536	0,230	Valid
P11	0,799	0,230	Valid
P12	0,624	0,230	Valid

Based on the table, all of the statement items were valid because all of the correlation coefficients *Product Moment Person* (t-obtain) of all statement items from all of the dependent variables were bigger than t-table. It means that all the instrument can measure the variable accurately.

**Reliability Test**

Table 4 show the result of reliability test for instrument used in this study. The reliability test use Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value.

**Table 4. Reliability Test**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpa Coefficients	information
Product	0,934	Reliable
Price	0,913	Reliable
Distribution	0,928	Reliable
Channel	0,860	Reliable
Promotion	0,917	Reliable
Competitive Advantage		

The table above showed that all of the variables were reliable, because all of the *Cronbach's Alpa Coefficients* > 0,60. This means all the instrument is consistent for measuring the the variable.

**T test**

**Table 2. Recapitulation of The Results t Table**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.	t	Information
1	(Constant)	10.085		
	Product	,368	,000	7,034 Significant
	Price	,193	,001	2,586 Significant
	Distribution Channels	,258	,000	4,780 Significant
	Promotion	,412	,002	4,814 Significant
R: 0,961		R Square: 0,924	F count: 277,799	Prob. F: 0,000

Based on the table above it could be seen that the sig. of the independent variables  $< 0,05$ . it means that all of the independent variables (product, price, distribution channels, and promotion) significantly influence the competitive advantage of small and medium enterprises in OKU Regency.

#### ***The Influence of Product, Price, Promotion and Distribution Channels on Competitive Advantage***

Based on the results of inferential statistical analysis, it is found that the product, price, distribution channels and promotion have an influence on competitive advantage. Each variable has an influence either partially or simultaneously. Small and medium enterprises should pay attention to product strategy, price, distribution channels and promotion as suggested by the research results. This study is supported by research conducted by (Ibidunni, 2011) which found that the use of marketing mix elements (product, price, promotion, place) can gain competitive advantage and influence consumer perceptions so as to get effective performance in the market.. Effort in building a marketing mix strategy undertaken by the company starts with the performance of its managers. Efforts to compare management functions (finance, human resources and production) with marketing management functions are studied in this empirical study. The results of this empirical study indicate that marketing is an aspect that is very supportive of other management

functions (finance, human resources and production) in creating competitive advantage. The marketing function in the form of a marketing mix (product, price, promotion, and place) is the company's main key in winning the competition.

Product quality has a positive and significant direct influence on the competitive advantage of small and medium enterprises. Product quality is the overall characteristic of a product or service to satisfy consumer needs. Consumers will feel satisfied when the results of the evaluation show the quality products they use. To face competition, company must be wise to determine the quality of their products. If the company wants to maintain its competitive advantage in the market, the company must understand the dimensions needed by consumers to differentiate the products the company sells from competitors' products.

Price has a positive and significant direct influence on the competitive advantage of small and medium enterprises, which means that if there is an increase in price, an increase in competitive advantage will be followed. This shows that the application of good prices can have a significant influence on competitive advantage through affordability, price compatibility with product quality, price competitiveness influencing consumers to buy products of small and medium enterprises.

Distribution channels have a positive and significant direct influence on the competitive advantage of small and medium

enterprises, the efficiency that is done is not too much use of intermediaries in terms of distributing products, so that it affects prices, and ultimately affects competitive advantage. The advantages possessed can be used as a source to improve company performance so that the company can be at the forefront of competition.

Promotion has a positive and significant direct influence on the competitive advantage of small and medium enterprises. If the company has a potential competitive advantage, the company must choose several strategies for promotion. The company aggressively promotes one benefit to the target market, promotion is depicted the more intensity of the promotional efforts undertaken by the company will provide more value to the competitive advantage for the company. Promotion is an important aspect, when companies want competitive advantage values.

#### CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion of this research, the following conclusions can be drawn: small and medium enterprises will gain an advantage over their marketing strategies. It gives an idea that the product strategy that is implemented has met consumer tastes. For the price variable, it is illustrated that the more important the effort to fix attractive prices for the products it sells by the company is more important, the more it can create competitive advantage. In the promotion variable, it is illustrated that the more intensity of the promotional efforts carried out by the company will provide more value to the competitive advantage for the company. Promotion is an important aspect, when companies want competitive advantage values.

The implication of this research for the company by using marketing strategy can increase competitive advantage. Whereas for the government this research can improve the economy and also reduce the unemployment

rate. The distribution channels variable shows that the business activities related to the distribution strategy have an influence on the company's competitive advantage. This illustrates that the role of retailers, agents or distributors in creating competitive advantage from the company has an influence on competitive advantage.

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