



Marketing Mix Strategy (4P) of MSME in The Pandemic Time of Covid-19

^{1*}Asriadi Arifin, ²Murtiadi Awaluddin, ³Amiruddin K. ⁴Irwandi, ⁵Andi Nur Annisa M

¹STAI DDI Sidrap, Indonesia

²UIN Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

³IAI DDI Polman Indonesia, Indonesia

^{4,5} Universitas Hasanuddin Makassar, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, E-mail: Asriadiarifin07@gmail.com

Abstract. This research aims to examine the marketing mix strategies implemented by MSMEs during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research method uses descriptive qualitative with a phenomenological approach to obtain an overview of the marketing mix strategy used by MSMEs in Makassar City with the concept of a *ghost kitchen* during the Covid-19 pandemic. Primary data was obtained directly from informants by conducting interviews with the owner of Kaku Food. In this study, secondary data was obtained from reference books, journals, articles, research, magazines, newspapers, and websites related to this research. Data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and documentation. The conclusion is Marketing Strategy of MSMEs during the Covid-19 Pandemic is carried out in accordance with the concept of the marketing mix. The marketing scheme is to offer products according to consumer needs at prices that are adjusted between capabilities and consumer economic conditions, and promotions are prioritized on online promotions. That way, MSMEs can maintain their stability and sustainability even though they are experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Marketing Mix, Marketing Strategy, MSMEs, Covid-19 Pandemic



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Introduction

When the Covid-19 outbreak hit the world that first appeared in China which caused an impact not only to disrupt human health but also to disrupt the economic health of the whole world. Ubaidillah, M. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic that occurred eroded various lines in human life, including in the economic field. It is true that the covid-19 pandemic is an outbreak related to human health, but because it spreads through social contact, eventually everyone must maintain social distancing. The government has also issued various policies to prevent the public from the disease outbreak. In Syifa, Y. I., Wardani, M. K., Rakhmawati, S. D., & Dianastiti, F. E. (2021), the government's policies are in conflict, ranging from *lockdown*, *social distancing* to the implementation of *the new normal*. Because of its restrictions on social relations of the community, it has an impact on the economy.

The implications of the pandemic have ignited a distraction on the community's economy, especially for MSME players. There are restrictions on social contact in the community, causing the economy to become, markets with no visitors, lack of entrepreneurial income and so on. MSME players have experienced a decrease in income due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In

Andayani, I., Roesminingsih, M. V., & Yulianingsih, W. (2021). The decline in consumer purchasing power from the traditional marketing sector with the closure of the tourism sector is a challenge for MSME players in running business production. Fortunately, the Government immediately took preventive measures in maintaining the stability of MSMEs.

The government has issued a policy in order to empower MSMEs in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. There are several MSME protection schemes carried out by the government, namely: (a) providing social assistance to poor and vulnerable MSME actors (b) tax intensive for MSMEs (c) relaxation and restructuring of credit for MSMEs (d) Expansion of MSME Work Model Financing (e) Provision of Product Buffers. To support government policies, several short-term strategies and long-term strategies need to be considered by the government. Anggraeni, W. C., Ningtiyas, W. P., & Nurdiyah, N. (2021).

MSMEs affected by Covid-19, especially for those who run their business conventionally. In contrast to businesses that take advantage of the power of modern digital such as social media marketplaces today. The development of technology should actually be able to encourage the increase of MSMEs, this is realized by Kaku Food as an MSME engaged in the online culinary business. According to Arianto, B. (2020), the development of digital-based MSMEs will encourage MSMEs to grow faster. This view is correct, that current technology is very possible for MSME players to reap sales success, especially in today's society, which is more likely to like everything that is instant, including food needs.

In 2019, Kaku Food is only managed with a concept like MSMEs in general, namely using boxes as sales outlets. However, over time, the *Ghost Kitchen* concept was invented so that the founders of Kaku Food began to implement the concept by initially building 5 *delivery* points at once. Running the *Ghost kitchen* concept by Kaku Food precisely in February 2020. The founder of Kaku Food first opened branches, namely in the Tamalate area and in the BTP area, Makassar. From here, the *Ghost Kitchen* concept became the beginning of the story of Kaku Food's business journey so that it can develop as it is today. As the concept suggests, *Ghost Kitchen* is one of the modern business models by utilizing the development of current technology. *Ghost Kitchen* sells on an online basis, where consumers can make intermediate orders through the grab food application and Gojek. For the online promotions used, Kaku Food focuses on digital platforms such as the Instagram application and the Tik Tok application. This is what drives Kaku Food to exist and be sustainable to this day.

Fitriyana, F., Nuryani, A., Rosyati, T., & Gusvia, Y. (2021), wrote that with the development of internet technology today, it can be used as a solution to facilitate the development and expansion of the MSME market. The solution to the problems faced by MSMEs today is the Marketplace design that can be used by the MSME community. The marketplace has the main function of a web in which there is a forum that can be used for the community to share information with each other. In addition, the Marketplace is a model that can make it easier for MSMEs to market the products produced and a model that provides MSME business information. The solution offered by the author will conduct research to design a Marketplace that is suitable and needed by the MSME community to develop the MSME business through marketing MSME products.

A marketer/businessman must be able to design a good and correct marketing strategy in order to ignite curiosity for consumers. Departing from this curiosity, consumers will try to make an initial purchase until later they can make repeated purchases. Marketing communication strategy is important for a company. Kotler and Armstrong (2008:116) suggest that corporate marketing communications are a specific combination of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal sales, and direct marketing tools that companies use to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships. *Marketing Mix* consists of a set of variables that can be controlled and used by companies to influence consumer responses in their target market. These variables or activities also need to be combined and coordinated by the company as effectively as possible in carrying out its marketing tasks / activities (Sofjan Assauri, 2014). Marketing is an important factor in the development of the company. Good marketing is done through product, *price, place, and promotion*. (Ulus, A. A. 2013).

In Abdillah (2020) it is stated that according to Ligthelm (2010) the sustainability of a business is supported by several factors so that a business can survive, namely the compilation of business plans, regular business plan updates, analyzing competitors, ease of entering new businesses, calculation ability or risk calculation. The marketing strategy set by Kotler is called the 4P marketing mix which contains product strategy, price, location and promotion. More specifically, this *marketing mix* strategy is discussed in this study to provide results of a study related to the strategies carried out by MSMEs in maintaining their existence and sustainability.

Method

In this study, the study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type of research. This study aims to explain and obtain an overview of how the marketing mix strategy used by MSMEs in Makassar City with the ghost *kitchen* concept during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this study, primary data were obtained directly from informants by conducting interviews with the owner of Kaku Food. In this study, secondary data was obtained from reference books, journals, articles, research, magazines, newspapers and websites related to this research. Data collection techniques used include observation, interviews and documentation. The data analysis techniques used to adopt the Miles and Huberman model include data collection, data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

This research is here to provide a more collective picture of Kaku Food's marketing communication strategy as one of the MSME business entities with the Ghost Kitchen model. By using the marketing strategy theory adopted from the 4 P marketing mix theory (*Product, Price, Place, Promotion*). Therefore, the results of the following research and discussion focus more on how Kaku Food makes marketing strategies in terms of the 4 P theory (Product, Price, Place, Promotion).

1. Product Strategy

A product is everything that is made for specific purposes. At least a good product must meet several elements such as quality, quantity, desain, model, size and so on. In determining the type of product sold on the market, there is something that must be done, namely market research. Through this market research, at least a businessman can get information about products that sell well in the market.

The best product in a business entity is a product that is liked by many consumers in various circles. Departing from this philosophy, it is appropriate that products that can exist in the middle of the market are products that can provide satisfaction and this satisfaction can only be obtained by meeting consumer expectations and expectations so that the product can be liked.

Based on the results of field observations, the author suggests that the products marketed by Kaku Food include food snacks that are processed by the frying and boiling method, including fried meatballs, fried dumplings, meatball tofu, crispy cireng, spicy pentol, chocolate bananas, wet dumplings, boiled tofu, fried bananas coupled with various chili sauces such as monster chili sauce, rojak sauce and peanut sauce. Based on this research, it shows that all products sold by Kaku Food are classified as snack products that are currently trending. However, sales among all products are impossible to be evenly distributed, based on the results of research that the products that are most in demand by consumers are fried dumplings, cireng, and fried meatballs. From here, the concept of product marketing carried out by Kaku Food is very effective because there is a compatibility between the type of product and consumer interests.

Fried dumplings are one of all the most ordered products by buyers, this is because this product is well known by buyers in general so that Kaku Food no longer introduces the product with more effort, just how the product can be in demand by buyers / consumers. Departing from the type of product being marketed which ultimately makes Kaku Food a business known by many consumers in Makassar City. As a result, the author sees that the rating of Kaku Food products in online motorcycle taxi applications always reaches the highest ratings.

In fact, Kaku Food is an MSME business engaged in culinary food or snacks based online in accordance with the times. Because it is a business, Kaku Food certainly has competitors / market competitors. From the researcher's search results, among the competitors are Yotta, Lazuna, Big Bananas and so on. Even so, Kaku Food still exists with the product strategy model it runs.

Market competitors are all manufacturers and sellers engaged in the same business with the same segment, allowing a struggle for market share. For Kaku Food, competitors are not only about the types of products sold the same, much more than that market competitors are those who provide products on the market based on the same needs.

In determining the product strategy carried out by Kaku Food, they see more that the products provided to consumers not only revolve around the issue of how the product has a trend value in the market, but also must entrust the sustainability of the product. Product sustainability for manufacturers can only be achieved by guaranteeing the feasibility of consuming the product. This is what is meant that products that sell well in the market should meet the elements of quality. In an effort to become product sustainability as well as become the brand image of Kaku Food, they strive to maintain the feasibility of consumption of the products they market to consumers,

Based on the strategy used by Kaku Food, products are determined through a fairly long journey. This is done for the maturity of the product concept to be marketed to consumers. Through previous experience, the owner of Kaku Food has succeeded in analyzing the types that are in great demand among consumers, especially food snack products. In the product manufacturing planning process, the most important thing is to recognize the market share or to whom the product will be offered. It is a non-sensing product that sells well in the market when the product offered is not in line with the want of market share. Thus, the market share targeted by Kaku Food is among women who like snacks or fried snacks

The market segmentation targeted by Kaku Food is among women who use online motorcycle taxi platforms. Initially, Kaku Food thought that the snacks would be consumed by the majority of adolescent girls, but after analysis, it was women among adults who were more consumers. According to the author, Kaku Food implements a marketing communication strategy by integrating the type of business it runs with the current development conditions. As the basic concept of marketing that everything offered should be in accordance with the needs of the market.

The market segmentation that has been determined by Kaku Food from the beginning is among adult women who have income. Although in reality there are also teenage women who buy snack products from Kaku Food, but if based on statistical figures, then women who consume more Kaku Food snacks. Based on reality, women are the most users of social media today. Because Kaku Food is aware of women, Kaku Food is right in taking marketing steps by utilizing current technological developments, which will be explained in more detail in the next discussion.

Segmentation and market needs entrust the strategy of how the product should be placed, the concept in this marketing strategy is referred to as *positioning*. This concept is very important, because in its journey if it fails, the products offered will definitely fail and the business will not reap success even before it develops. The author sees that Kaku Food is right to carry out the concept of this product marketing strategy well, where they have been able to determine market segmentation and launch the products needed by that segment. To be known among consumers, a good business is a business that follows the course of the times. On the other hand, a business that is unable to create compatibility with the times and maintain old products, it is impossible to reach the peak of success, let alone until it can survive (*sustainable*) as the marketing strategy carried out by Kaku Food.

In the science of product marketing strategy, it is not known the term type and packaging of the same product. However, to be able to develop, it also entrusts developments to the existing product concept. A marketer not only needs skills in creating products that sell well in the market at that time, but also needs skills to make products that are always in line with the needs and developments of the times, so in this case the business should not be stagnant, or otherwise the business will not be able to run stably.

This is what makes marketing strategy an art as well as a science in the field of economics. It is said to be art because in it a businessman must be able to create products that are always known in sharing the dimensions of time and time, while it is said to be a science because in reading the situation and conditions of the times requires science, especially in the field of marketing.

Thus, based on this description, it is explicitly stated that the product marketing strategy carried out by Kaku Food with the *Ghost Kitchen* business model is carried out by adjusting to current culinary trends by grouping market segmentation and market needs so that they are able to include product types in the midst of these segments and needs, in this case *positioning* what Kaku Food does is in line with the concept of marketing strategy.

2. Pricing Strategy

In a pricing strategy, this must be tentative and adapt to the capabilities of the consumer, or else the consumer will not want to make an exchange or purchase transaction. In this case, the ability of consumers can also be influenced by several factors, it could be because consumers did not have money at that time and it could also be because of natural economic conditions. That is, sometimes the consumer economy at certain times is in decline, and vice versa, and this happens because of habits in the economy that run from time to time.

In the economic habits of the Indonesian people in general, facts on the ground show that people's purchasing power is constantly fluctuating. The interesting thing is that the change in people's purchasing power becomes high, namely at the end of the year, while on the contrary at the beginning of the year people's purchasing power is actually very low, this is generally felt in January, February and March. In the month of Ramadan, in general, people's purchasing power will rise again in line with the consumption needs of the people in that month, especially for people from Muslim circles. At all scales businesses also feel this way, be it large business scale or small business. In such conditions, it is difficult to determine the right pricing strategy, especially with the condition that the price of product raw materials always increases from time to time.

The pricing strategy carried out by Kaku Food also follows the concept of pricing in general, which is if the projected profit has reached a percentage of 15-20. The profit obtained is the margin after all costs are accumulated so as to obtain the price difference between the cost and the selling price.

In marketing strategy, it is important to adjust the economic conditions of the community to obtain price determinations for the goods being marketed. Moreover, by relating the existence of the Covid pandemic since 2019 which has had a significant negative impact on the community's economy. The economic situation until now has not yet reached the point of fully recovering, but there are still several lines that must be adjusted. Thus, low prices and reachable to consumers are a necessity to acquire consumer interest and strong competitiveness.

Even if needed, one strategy that can be taken is to set the price much lower below the price stipulation imposed by competitors. The goal is to attract consumer interest in the price of the products offered. The estuary end of the strategy is to make consumers loyal to the product so that if the consumer is loyal, it is unlikely that the consumer will move to another product.

From the pricing strategy implemented by Kaku Food, so far the author sees that the strategy is well executed. The suitability of the price set with economic conditions is very possible for consumers to drop their choice and preference for Kaku Food products. As for the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had a lot of impact on other types of MSME businesses, this does not have much impact on Kaku Food, because the strategy set is to adjust the conditions and capabilities of consumers.

In general, the price set in online motorcycle taxi applications and other service applications is always higher than the price set on direct sales in outlet. At first glance, then a businessman should prioritize selling in outlet because it is easier and possible for consumers to reach it. However, considering the benefits of online applications today, it seems that the consumer's perspective is starting to be different. If in the past, consumers were more interested in low prices and tended to prefer to take purchases directly, then today consumers are actually more interested in purchases through delivery order applications. This is because the typology of consumers currently uses gadgets more in their daily lives, especially in pandemic conditions that require all people to stay indoors and limit themselves to leaving the house. Moreover, currently various online media buying and selling and delivery order platforms are able to create their own

charm, namely by only at home, a consumer can already make transactions where this is widely expected by the community today. No less important than all of that is to make consumers loyal. Consumer loyalty seems to be a long-standing theory of behaviourism and is still interesting to apply in business. Today Kaku Food still uses the concept and considers that even if the price set is expensive to loyal buyers, then it will not have any effect on his interest in buying products.

Thus, the pricing strategy applied by kaku is to adjust the ability to the consumer's economic condition. The price set on outlet sales with platform sales is higher because there are variable costs that must be borne, but even so, on the platform Kaku Food still applies a strategy of discounts of up to 30% and price cuts on purchases, what is interesting to note is that as long as the price is still in the range of profit margins between 15%-20%.

3. Place/Location Strategy

At the study site, the authors observed a lack of consumers who bought directly to the place or even ate on the spot, although restaurants provided a place to dine in at the time of the study there was only 1 consumer who bought directly to the place (*take away*), most of which were seen only online drivers from grabfood, shopeefood, and gojek who made purchase transactions. The process of purchase to payment if ordering through an online platform the author pays attention to being so systemized and very easy. When the order enters the seller's application, the crew immediately prepares the order, a few minutes later the driver comes to take the order without making a cash transaction (*cashless*) this happens because the deposit of money in the *delivery* driver's account will be automatically deducted every time the *driver* receives an order from the consumer, this money will also automatically enter the bank account of *the* restaurant.

The *ghost kitchen* business model is actually a business model that emphasizes online delivery orders, so to start this business it does not require too much capital, this is also a correlation with the beginning of the establishment of Kaku Food which applied the concept as found in the research results. To practice the MSME business, in addition to being easy to operate, it also basically does not require significant capital like other types of business groups. The characteristic of MSMEs is that they are easy to make and have lower capital than other types of businesses. Likewise for Kaku Food, because it is part of the MSME business so it does not require a large enough capital to build a business place.

If in general, businesses that stand more rely on investors, especially to hold outlets because distribution locations require a decent budget, Kaku Food actually stands without relying on investors, because it adopts the *ghost kitchen* concept which means that the business location is in the application. This is the business model that is trending in the current era. At least the use of online media in opening a business location does not require more budget to rent a location or shophouse. And more importantly than that, that the strategy of determining the location of distribution by relying on online delivery has the potential to contribute to the profitability of the business being run.

By relying on online business, where today's consumers are mostly users of online media, it is more likely that the products offered can be seen by others in greater quantity. This means that the opportunity to attract buyers is huge. After all, in an online business scheme, it does not require more energy to think about how the business should adjust a place where there is a lot of economic activity in the community.

In determining the location of business distribution also relates to the determination of branches. The more branches, the faster the capital turnover will also open up wider potential in adding sales value. However, in its application it also cannot be done immediately by opening many branches, because it also requires more management.

The author sees that the marketing strategy applied by kaku food, especially in determining business locations, does not emphasize too much that there must be many branches, although actually for kaku food opening branches in various locations is easy, but the strategy applied emphasizes optimization of existing branches only.

The management of Kaku Food views that establishing the current operational branches is much more important than just focusing on how the branches are added. In fact, the author sees that Kaku Food is not so focused on always adding branches, it can be seen that until now there

have only been 9 branches of Kaku Food, even though as explained at the beginning that Kaku Food adopts the *Ghost Kitchen* business model which in fact to open new branches is easy.

It has been discussed previously, that in addition to focusing on online sales, Kaku Food has also currently developed its business location by also focusing on direct sales, even so Kaku Food has not adopted a franchise business strategy as this concept is widely adopted by franchise businesses today. Instead of using the franchise concept, Kaku Food has more preference for the business model that is currently being run. The business model run by Kaku food is a merger between online and offline businesses.

Based on the results of the research obtained, it shows that bringing a franchise or *ghost kitchen* is a business model. It is right for every businessman to decide to use a business model based on the results of their analysis. These two business models are also related to the location determination strategy, where if the business adopts a *franchise* model, the more *franchises* the more markets that can be reached, and of course the wider the distribution of products into the hands of consumers. Today many franchise businesses adopt the franchise business model. Similar to the ghost kitchen business model, the more location points that are opened, the wider the distribution of products to consumers, it's just that the difference is that *the ghost kitchen* model is easier to open and online-based. Kaku Food sets a location point determination strategy based on the online ojek delivery application, be it grab or gojek. However, along with its development, Kaku Food is currently also concerned with direct outlet procurement, the goal is to cover the wishes of consumers who want to buy directly and take away.

Based on this hasl, the concept of determining the distribution location applied by kaku food is dual models, the first model is *ghost kitchen* and the second model is direct sales outlet. The implications of implementing this strategy for Kaku Food are very significant for the development of its business. That is why the development of Kaku Food to this day has always increased because the marketing strategy used is very strong, so according to the author, it is natural that kaku food is able to exist and be sustainable until now.

Based on the results of the research above, it shows that the strategy of determining the theme/distribution location implemented by Kaku Food is by opening 9 location points in the online ojek application that allows consumers to make purchases through the application, at the same time, Kaku Food also strengthens the attractiveness of buyers from outlet arrangements that are more likely also for consumers to buy directly, So it can be understood that Kaku Food's marketing strategy uses dual models.

4. Promotion Strategy

In this section, the results of the study are described based on the results of interviews with the owner of Kaku Food related to the strategies applied in promoting. Promotion is an effort made by business people in communicating their type of business to consumers with the aim of gaining consumer attention and even interest.

Based on the results of the study, the promotions applied by kaku food are very diverse according to time and conditions. The promotion strategy implemented is more specifically for online sales through online motorcycle taxi applications. This is considering the basic concept of the Kaku Food business which adopts the ghost kitchen model. Kaku Food applies a discount promo of up to 35% intended for buyers who make orders with online ojek application tools. Kaku Food must adapt to the application scheme that is widely applied by application service providers today. The majority of applications provide large discounts to consumers who use the application, so finally Kaku Food has to adjust to these conditions. After all, even though Kaku Food provides discounts of up to 35%, they will still make a profit because the previous pricing has been carefully determined.

It has been explained at the beginning that Kaku Food sets the market segmentation, namely among women who like social media, so the strategy applied by kaku food in promoting products is to utilize the ability of human resources to use social media applications that are widely used by consumers. Business progress can only be seen by utilizing existing technology facilities. Currently, the availability of these facilities can be enjoyed by various groups in communicating. Social media, in addition to bringing together two people to communicate, can also be used as a land to form and build a business.

In the current promotion scheme, there is an endorsement scheme that has begun to bumbling. Endorsement is a strategy in promoting products using the services of endorsers or well-known celebrities on the Instagram application and on Tik Tok. To make the business more developed, Kaku Food implements a promotion system using endorsement service tools.

Using endorsement services in online marketing strategies today has a significant positive impact on business development. Not only to introduce and sell the product that is being promoted, but can boost the company's *brand image* with the endorsement patterns that are carried out. To date, Kaku Food has hired endorsement services for more than 100 endorsers.

In addition to hiring endorsement services, Kaku Food is also active on social media creating educational content related to food and household financial management. Kaku Food realizes that its consumers are not only from teenagers, but more are from adult women, the majority of whom are married. Therefore, Kaku Food conceptualizes content that is educational in nature for them. Until now, the development of the concept of kaku food marketing has been wider, not only relying on online purchases, but also strengthening direct purchases. Thus Kaku Food presents outlet at Kaku Food location points where the outlet is used by buyers to buy Kaku products directly.

Promo is a form of marketing effort to increase transactions, and almost all culinary businesses ranging from small restaurants to large restaurants use promo strategies. This promo is very important because it will attract interest from consumers to buy the products offered. Thus, promos are a lighter so that consumers want to buy as soon as possible. Promo as a tool to trigger consumers to want to buy products immediately. In this case, what is talked about is a discount promo, which is why every promo carried out by every business has certain time or requirements.

Promotions implemented by Kaku Food apart from discounts, Kaku Food applies a promotional strategy in the form of discounted package prices for buyers who come directly in the outlet to make purchases. Kaku food also implements strategies such as giving a stamp to the buyer every purchase, until he gets 5 stamps, the buyer is entitled to a bonus from Kaku Food. In addition to buyers, Kaku Food also makes a target program for online motorcycle taxis, for online motorcycle taxis or drivers who have made package delivery transactions up to 35 packages, bonuses will be given. So each driver is given a subscription card and every order will be recorded on the card.

Kaku Food also implements a cash discount strategy from the price of snacks purchased by consumers and the most effective is the giveaway. Kaku Food implements a giveaway system to consumers, where consumers who win the giveaway will get prizes directly from Kaku Food, and this is considered very effective for the continuity of Kaku Food's business.

Basically, a promo or promotion is a marketing activity in providing information to consumers about the benefits obtained for consumers who make purchases at certain times or at certain purchase quantities. For example, kaku food applies discount promos of up to 30% until a certain time limit, so the goal is for consumers to make purchases as soon as possible. While the promo in the form of a special price for purchasing packages aims to attract consumers to want to buy products in large quantities.

Departing from the results of this research, so that we can conclude that Kaku Food runs a promotional marketing strategy by relying on all the existing potential with adjustments to the trending times that exist so that this business is difficult to recede because it is in line with the times. These are the forms of promotional strategies that have been implemented so far, but it does not mean that all these promos are run at the same time at once, but are based on existing situations and conditions, meaning that the promotions applied are adjusted to the situation and conditions.

Conclusions

The Marketing Communication Strategy of MSMEs during the Covid-19 Pandemic is carried out in accordance with the concept of the marketing mix. The marketing scheme is to offer products according to consumer needs at prices that are adjusted between capabilities and consumer economic conditions, and promotions are prioritized on online promotions. That way,

MSMEs can maintain their stability and sustainability even though they are experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic.

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