e-ISSN: 2722-8878



Vol. 6 No. 1 (2025) http://www.jiemar.org

MSMES MARKETING STRATEGIES ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE CASE STUDY OF MSMES IN SOUTH LABUHANBATU DISTRICT

Pristiyono^{1*}, Winda Ardiani², Anggie Yolanda Ritonga³,
Muda Pardamean Nasution⁴, Ezzah Nahrisah⁵

1,3,4 Faculty of Economics and Business, University Labuhanbatu Indonesia

2,5 Faculty of Economics, Labuhanbatu University Harapan Indonesia

*E-mail: paktio16@gmail.com

Abstract. The problems of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises after Covid-19 include increasing raw material prices, limited human resources, minimal capital, facilities and infrastructure and lack of access to product marketing. Of the many problems that attract the author in this article, access to marketing for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises products needs more attention from business actors or academics. The purpose of this study was to determine the concept of marketing strategies for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency and their impact on competitive advantage and purchasing decisions. The research is included in the quantitative descriptive research model and the author sets the sample to 100 respondents who are Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises that are scattered in South Labuhanbatu Regency. This research was conducted from September -December 2022. The sample withdrawal technique used a purposive sampling approach. All indicators in this study will be tested for validity and reliability. The data analysis technique uses the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) tool from the IBM SPSS AMOS package in hypothesis testing. Based on the analysis and discussion and testing of the research hypothesis, it was found that 33 respondents had used digital marketing including through social media such as fb, ig, tiktok, wa and others. Based on the results of hypothesis testing, the marketing strategy variable has the most dominant direct impact on competitive advantage and the competitive advantage variable hypothesis test has a direct impact on purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, the marketing strategy variable has no direct impact on purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Marketing strategy, Competitive Advantage, Purchase Decision, MSMEs.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises for the economic growth of a country is very important especially after Indonesia was affected by the impact of post-covid- 19 Local Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and other urban areas have increased. It seems that economic recovery has become faster since Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises have grown consistently to meet market needs. According to (Aslam et al., 2015) the role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in saving the nation's economy cannot be doubted. According to (Lin, 2021) that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are businesses that do not cooperate with any institution that is not connected to anyone, however, these Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are able to sustain the economy of a country. According to (Pristiyono, 2019) Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency is one of the new autonomous regions which is a division of Labuhanbatu Regency on July 21, 2008 in accordance with legislation as well as being a transit district from the East Cross Sumatra Island route so that this makes this Regency a strategic Regency because it is traversed by road.

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency, the economic growth rate in 2021 in Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency increased by 3.82 percent, an increase of 0.80 percent. In addition, the increase in economic growth in 2021 was contributed by

e-ISSN: 2722-8878



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the processing industry business field by 47.28 percent (BPS-Statistics of Labuhanbatu Selatan, 2018). According to (Mustapa et al., 2022) the problems faced by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, especially market competition in marketing their products, because at this time many businesses that run their businesses have difficulties in marketing. According to (Nikmatus Sholicha, 2021) in his research, the implementation of MSME marketing strategies is still carried out manually and is slow in marketing. According to (Lin, 2021) SMEs in Taiwan are starting to implement social media in order to meet marketing goals. Through various research literature, it is found that the problems of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises both domestically and abroad in the implementation and marketing strategy.

A strong phenomenon supporting this research according to (ILO, 2020) during covid19 the hardest hit sector is the small business sector, in addition to the business going bankrupt and the business also trying to survive and contribute to the global economy. The impact of covid19 not only disrupts market stability but has an impact on the marketing of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises after covid-19 begins to subside in early 2022. One problem is solved, a new problem arises, namely related to marketing issues. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises must struggle to start a marketing strategy after covid-19 begins to gradually recover and provide an opportunity to rise again. Even though the covid19 storm is under control, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises must restart their business from scratch in order to attract buyers. According to (Fadilah et al., 2021) the problems of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises after covid-19 include increasing prices for raw materials, limited human resources, minimal capital, facilities and infrastructure and lack of access to product marketing. Of the many problems that interest the author in this article, access to marketing for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises products needs more attention from business actors or academics.

After almost 14 years of being Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency, the community independently fulfills their lives as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises actors and does not depend on anyone to continue to stretch with their business. The proliferation of various Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency marks the strength of small communities to become entrepreneurs amid life and the difficulty of getting a job. According to (Dewi et al., 2020) one of the problems of MSMEs is expanding market access, from here it is increasingly understood that the problem is not only market access but how and product marketing techniques are the main obstacles. From observations of several Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Labuhanbatu Regency, it is more common to use simple marketing such as word of mouth and through social media (fb and ig), but this method is relatively new but from the author's point of view, it is found that the level of understanding of marketing strategies has not been maximized.

Based on the explanations that support this research, the purpose of this study is to determine the concept of marketing strategies for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency and their impact on competitive advantage and purchasing decisions. The marketing strategy of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises can be known from market surveys, product planning, determining prices, marketing to consumers and marketing communications. Meanwhile, the competitive advantages of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises include cost efficiency, scrutinizing the intended market, innovating, and responsibility for the system adopted in business. Finally, the purchasing decisions of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are measured through product choice, maintaining brand, marketing quantity, purchasing time process and purchasing attitude. Finally, the author is interested in conducting research through empirical studies in order to solve problems and contribute solutions regarding the marketing of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

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The aspect of business that has been debated until now is the marketing part as the spearhead of the business success of a product. Marketing according to (Aryadhe et al., 2021) is an activity process that is influenced by various social, cultural, political, economic and managerial factors. There are several parts of the understanding of marketing strategy, among others, according to ((Dimas Hendika, 2015), namely a process of determining the plans of top leaders who focus on the long-term goals of the organization. According to (Andi Haslindah et al., 2021) marketing strategy is an adhesive that aims to build and provide a consistent value proposition and build a distinct image to the target market. The indicators selected in supporting the marketing strategy variable include market selection, product planning, pricing, distribution system and marketing communication (Nasruddin, 2021).

Although the nature and scale of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are not as large as the size of large companies, the concept of competitive advantage for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises is no less important, this is because the competitive advantages of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises contain innovations and ideas in order to produce different products. According to (Violinda, 2018) competitive advantage is defined as a real action shown by business actors through their product excellence strategies. According to (Švárová & Vrchota, 2014); (Farida & Setiawan, 2022) competitive advantage is a set of factors that differentiate small companies from their competitors and provide a unique market position. According to (Ho & Ho, 2011) it is simpler that a competitive advantage is a strategy that a company can understand and use through its activities, design, production and marketing that support its sales. Indicators of the competitive advantage of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are cost efficiency, looking at the intended market, innovation, and responsibility (Mwasiaji, 2019).

The purchasing decision-making process in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises business, both companies in the form of products and services in general, will be influenced by evaluation actions to determine and purchase decisions. Purchasing decisions according to (Tenda et al., 2019) are related to a process consisting of several stages of needs, information search, evaluation of alternatives before purchase and evaluation. Purchasing decisions according to (Fabiana Meijon Fadul, 2019) are consumer decisions regarding preferences for brands in the selection pool. According to (Zainudin et al., 2021) purchasing decisions are closely related to the study of consumers and the mechanisms they choose to use, choose, sell goods and services including mental, emotional and consumer behavior. Indicators of competitive advantage used in research on product choice, brand maintenance, marketing quantity, purchase time process and purchase attitude (Handayani et al., 2022). The existence of competitive advantages in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises business is studied empirically and its impact on purchasing decisions in this study is measured through marketing strategies in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises business. The purpose of this conceptual framework is to become a reference for researchers to think about the variables to be tested, including:

Journal of Industrial Engineering & Management Research Vol. 6 No. 1 (2025) e-ISSN: 2722-8878



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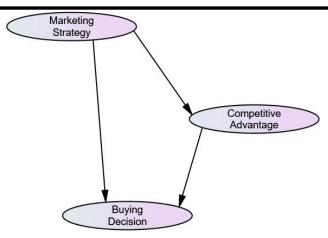


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Source: Amos Processed Data, 2022

Based on Figure 1. The conceptual framework above, the research hypothesis that will be tested can be presented, among others:

- 1. H1: Marketing strategy variables have a direct impact on the competitive advantage of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- 2. H2 : Competitive advantage variables have a direct impact on purchasing decisions for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- 3. H3: Marketing strategy variables have a direct impact on purchasing decisions for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Descriptively, this research will describe systematically and verification because the research aims to obtain information on the respondent's profile and test the hypothesis with statistical calculations. Then the research is included in the quantitative descriptive research model. The measurement model consists of three items measured as sample indicators between 100-200 or 5-10 times the number of parameters. In this study, the marketing strategy variable has 5 indicators, the competitive advantage variable has 4 indicators and the purchase decision has 5 indicators. Then the number of indicators is 14 indicators. So if it is summed up according to the rules (14 indicators multiplied by 7) to 98 respondents and the author sets the sample to 100 respondents, namely Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises actors who are scattered in South Labuhanbatu Regency. This research was conducted from September to December 2022. The sampling technique used a purposive sampling approach. All indicators in this study will be tested for validity and reliability. The data collection technique uses an online questionnaire or google form where the online questionnaire uses a Likert scale. The data analysis technique uses the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) tool from the IBM SPSS AMOS package in hypothesis testing. This is due to the use of this statistical tool to test a series of relationships between relatively complex constructs. The steps in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis include: developing theoretical models, constructing path diagrams, converting path diagram models to measurement models, conducting Goodness of Fit (GoF) tests including testing the assumptions of data normality, no outliers and non-multicollinearity, testing Goodness of Fit (GoF) criteria, interpretation and conclusions.

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3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the distribution of questionnaires to all respondents totaling 100 respondents using the google form online questionnaire. The author in distributing questionnaires directly to respondents of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises who are scattered in South Labuhanbatu Regency. So the respondent profile used in this study is education, type of business, length of business and marketing adopted. The description of the respondent's profile can be seen below:

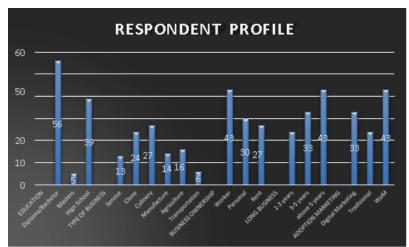


Figure 2. Respondent Profile Source: Data processed, 2022

Based on the figure above, it shows the distribution of respondent profile data which gets great attention in this study, the respondent profile based on the type of business is dominated by the largest respondent from the culinary business type by 27%. The respondent's profile based on business ownership is dominated by workers compared to individuals by 43% and the respondent's profile related to marketing is dominated by Word of Mouth (WoM) marketing by 43% and there are still Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises using traditional marketing which means relying on the concept of 4 P (product, promotion, price and place). Thus it can be concluded that the profile of respondents based on education that all respondents have a good education and another conclusion is that 33% of business actors have used digital marketing as a way of marketing their business.

3.1 Validity Test Results

In testing the causality of the instrument in the SEM model in this study, it is seen from the validity value of each variable which is the manifestation of the indicator, if the loading factor> 0.50 then the indicator is declared valid. The validity test results are shown below:

Table 1. Validity Test Standardized Regression Weights

		P-Value	Estimate	Description
X1.1 <	Marketing_Strategy	0,000	.677	Valid
X1.2 <	Marketing_Strategy	0,000	.717	Valid
X1.3 <	Marketing_Strategy	0,000	.741	Valid
X1.4 <	Marketing_Strategy	0,000	.581	Valid
X1.5 <	Marketing_Strategy	0,000	.563	Valid
Z1.5 <	Buying_Decision	0,000	.648	Valid



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Z1.4 <	Buying_Decision	0,000	.669	Valid
Z1.3 <	Buying_Decision	0,000	.443	Valid
Z1.2 <	Buying_Decision	0,000	.573	Valid
Z1.1 <	Buying_Decision	0,000	.513	Valid
Y1.1 <	Competitive_Advantage	0,000	.612	Valid
Y1.2 <	Competitive_Advantage	0,000	.754	Valid
Y1.3 <	Competitive_Advantage	0,000	.625	Valid
Y1.4 <	Competitive_Advantage	0,000	.650	Valid

Source: SEM Model Output, 2022

Based on Table 1, it shows that each indicator has a p-value (0.000) which means that the value means valid. While in the *estimate* column, each indicator has a *loading factor* value> 0.5, which states that all indicators used in this study are valid and tested for validity so that they can be used in this study.

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Description
Marketing Strategy	0,786	Reliable
Competitive Advantage	0,753	Reliable
Purchase Decision	0,711	Reliable

Source: Primary data processed by SPSS, year 2022

Based on Table 2. Above shows that all variables in the study are declared reliable, this is because all variables have a Cronbach Alpha value> 0.70 so that this research model meets the validity and reliability test requirements.

3.2 Goodness of Fit Model Test

Analysis of data processing results on the Full Model Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model is carried out by testing the suitability and statistical tests. The Goodness of Fit test results include:

Table 3. Goodness of Fit Test Results

Goodness of Fit	Cut off Value	Analysis Result	Model Evaluation
Chi-square	X ² is expected to be smaller than the <i>Chisquare</i> table 124,343		Fit
Probability	≥ 0.05	0,063	Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,052	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0,883	Marginal
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0,834	Marginal
CMIN/DF	\leq 2,00	1,263	Fit
TLI	\geq 0,90	0,941	Fit
CFI	\geq 0,90	0,952	Fit

Source: SEM Model Output, 2022

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Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the *chi-square* value (93.435) with a probability of p=0.063 and RMSEA, CMIN/DF, TLI and CFI show that the model can be accepted at a good level (fit) while the GFI and AGFI show that the model is accepted at a marginal level. Finally, the *chi-square* value in this study meets the requirements so that the entire model meets the Goodness of Fit or is said to be good.

3.3 Model Testing Results

In this section, the *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) model test fulfills the requirements of the model fit test and the causality significance test through the regression coefficient test, as can be seen below:

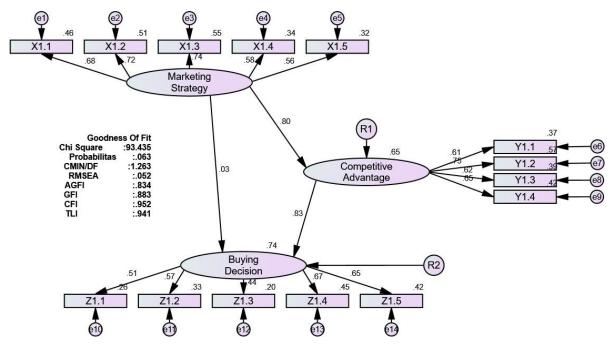


Figure 3. Full Model

Source: Amos Processed Data, 2022

Table 4. Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Competitive_Advant age	<	Marketing_Strategy	.796	.170	4.677	***
Buying_Decision	<	Competitive_Advantage	.860	.345	2.490	.013
Buying_Decision	<	Marketing_Strategy	.035	.273	.128	.898

Source: SEM Model Output, 2022

From Table 4 above, it is clearly visible and can be used as the main objective for testing the hypothesis in this study. The criteria used as the basis for decision making H_0 is rejected if the *critical ratio* (c.r) or *t-statistic value* ≥ 2.0 and the probability value (*p-value*) ≤ 0.05 .

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e-ISSN: 2722-8878



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3.4 Discussion

After testing the hypothesis in Table 5 above, the next stage is to discuss in detail and accurately supported by relevant research to obtain information that supports the research conducted. The discussion of this research is:

1) H₁: Marketing strategy variables have a direct impact on the competitive advantage of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Based on the results of testing the first hypothesis, the marketing strategy variable has a direct impact on the competitive advantage of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, this can be seen from the *critical ratio* (c.r) value of $4.677 \ge 2.0$ with a probability level of $0.000 \le 0.05$. So it can be concluded that the first hypothesis can be accepted because it meets the requirements. Through testing this hypothesis also that the variable marketing strategy of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and its indicators can support the creation of competitive advantages, the results of this study support research (Sari & Gultom, 2020) that companies need strategies to be able to measure market opportunities, besides that marketing strategies function in various internal and external threats, meaning that the marketing strategy itself becomes a competitive advantage of the company in this case Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. According to (Maksum et al., 2020) through his research demands that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises can pay close attention to every demand for market share and also consumers who want Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to continue to innovate product value, this means that the indicators of marketing strategy in this study are market selection, product planning, pricing, distribution system and marketing communication (Nasruddin, 2021). Among them, market selection and product planning are very important things to pay attention to and considered by business actors in implementing marketing strategies. So it can be concluded that the indicators used in measuring marketing strategies in research are appropriate in solving the problems faced by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in South Labuhanbatu Regency.

2) H₂: Competitive advantage variables have a direct impact on purchasing decisions for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Based on the results of testing the second hypothesis that the competitive advantage variable has a direct impact on the purchasing decisions of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, this can be seen from the *critical ratio* (c.r) value of $2.490 \ge 2.0$ with a probability level of 0.013< 0.05. So it can be concluded that the second hypothesis can be accepted because it meets the requirements. Through testing this hypothesis, it is also that the competitive advantage variable plays an important role in following up the purchasing decision process. According to the results of research that the concept of competitive advantage has received considerable interest in the research field, this means that the concept of competitive advantage in general does not only apply to large-scale companies, on the contrary, the concept of competitive advantage is more inherent to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. According to (Farida & Setiawan, 2022) that performance and innovation are important in increasing competitive advantage including in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency through indicators of competitive advantage, namely cost efficiency, looking at the intended market, innovating, and responsibility (Hosseini et al., 2018); (Lenggogeni, 2022) being indicators that must be studied in order to produce various product innovations and make them a competitive advantage for these Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. In addition, the indicators used in the study are appropriate because the concept of competitive advantage should not be so difficult to implement for small-scale companies.

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3) H₃: Marketing strategy variables have a direct impact on purchasing decisions for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Based on the results of testing the third hypothesis that the marketing strategy variable does not have a direct impact on purchasing decisions for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, this can be seen from the *critical ratio* (c.r) value of $0.128 \le 2.0$ with a probability level of $0.898 \ge 0.05$. So it can be concluded that the third hypothesis is rejected because it does not meet the requirements. The same research results are shown by (Cahyani et al., 2022) marketing communication strategies have no effect on perceived quality and do not influence purchasing decisions. In addition, according to (Rambing et al., 2015) green marketing does not directly influence purchasing decisions. According to other studies, digital marketing strategies are currently better than traditional marketing, especially for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Through the results of this study indicate that marketing strategies for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises should switch to digital marketing such as (Farro-Gómez De La Torre et al., 2022); (Hanaysha, 2022) that business people understand how a good marketing strategy will have an impact on consumer purchasing decisions. According to (Neupane, 2021) social media marketing (digital) has a significant influence on purchasing decisions for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. However, from another point of view, marketing strategies and sales strategies have different meanings where in marketing strategies Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises require methods that are considered appropriate in marketing products/services (Fattah AL-AZZAM & Al-mizeed, 2021). While the sales strategy refers to all activities of selling goods and services so that this difference in views can be a development of future research findings. So it could be that the indicators that support marketing strategies and indicators of purchasing decisions have not been able to realize the core of the research variables.

3.5 Implications

Based on the results of the research conducted, there are several important implications in this study, including:

- 1. Marketing strategy variables through research indicators are different from the marketing strategies commonly used in other studies so that the marketing strategy indicators adopted are the development of marketing strategy variables in accordance with the subjects studied by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Labuhanbatu Regency. Where the indicators of common marketing strategy variables usually refer to 4 P (promotion, place, price and product according to (Nasruddin, 2021).
- 2. The competitive advantage variable as one of the concepts of Porter's theory which is quite successfully applied in various large companies, it turns out that in this study the concept of competitive advantage can be applied to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. This is because the competitive advantage in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises is more precise and quick to adapt to market changes so that they have to innovate both physical and non-physical products. So this concept of competitive advantage according to (Dewi Ni Made Putri & Ni Wayan Ekawati, 2017) in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises is more independent and ready to face the competitive environment that occurs.

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Conslusion

Based on the analysis and discussion as well as testing the research hypothesis, it was found that 33 respondents had used digital marketing including through social media such as fb, ig, tiktok, wa and others. Based on the results of hypothesis testing, the marketing strategy variable has the most dominant direct impact on competitive advantage and the competitive advantage variable hypothesis test has a direct impact on purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, the marketing strategy variable has no direct impact on purchasing decisions.

Research Limitations

From the researcher's point of view, there are weaknesses in this research that can be taken into consideration for future research development by readers, researchers and marketing practitioners of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, including the concept of marketing strategy should be focused on digital marketing, this is interesting because currently the growth of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the Regency and regions continues to grow so that along with this growth it is better if the growth of technology, especially digital marketing, is studied more deeply to find the concept of digital marketing that is relevant to the growth of businesses that have now adopted artificial intelligence technology.

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