



The Role of Marketing Strategy in Increasing Sales: Case Study Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch

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Abstract: This study examines how marketing strategies increase sales at Pempek Nabil Express, Krakatau branch, an Indonesian culinary MSME in Medan, North Sumatra, highlighting the need to integrate digital and conventional approaches to strengthen brand awareness and drive revenue growth. Using a qualitative case-study design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with the owner, marketing staff, and customers, supported by field observations and document review. The analysis evaluates the deployment and performance of key digital channels (Instagram, TikTok, GrabFood, GoFood, ShopeeFood) alongside conventional tactics such as events, product sampling, and influencer collaborations. Findings indicate that Instagram is the most effective platform; an active follower base of over 14,300 substantially amplifies awareness and stimulates direct purchases. A grand-opening promotion offering a 50% discount triggered a sharp transaction surge and reinforced word-of-mouth diffusion. A quality-based pricing strategy, combined with periodic promotions, helps create positive value perceptions, while integration with online food-delivery marketplaces and partnerships with local influencers contribute to measurable sales growth. However, generalizability is limited by the single-branch focus, and long-term sustainability may be challenged by rising customer expectations about the price-quality trade-off and increasing demand for more frequent promotions.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Culinary MSME, Digital Marketing, Social Media, Food-Delivery Platforms

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis peran strategi pemasaran dalam meningkatkan penjualan Pempek Nabil Express cabang Krakatau, sebuah UMKM kuliner di Medan, Sumatera Utara, dengan menyoroti pentingnya integrasi pemasaran digital dan konvensional untuk memperkuat kesadaran merek dan mendorong pertumbuhan penjualan. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan pemilik, staf pemasaran, dan pelanggan, serta observasi lapangan dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis menilai implementasi dan efektivitas berbagai kanal digital (Instagram, TikTok, GrabFood, GoFood, ShopeeFood) serta taktik konvensional (event, sampling produk, dan kolaborasi influencer). Hasil menunjukkan Instagram sebagai platform paling efektif, didukung lebih dari 14.300 pengikut aktif yang meningkatkan *brand awareness* secara signifikan dan memicu pembelian langsung. Promosi *grand opening* berupa diskon 50% menghasilkan lonjakan transaksi dan memperkuat pemasaran dari mulut ke mulut. Strategi

penetapan harga berbasis kualitas yang dipadukan promosi berkala membentuk persepsi nilai positif, sementara integrasi dengan layanan pesan-antar dan kemitraan influencer lokal berkontribusi pada kenaikan penjualan yang terukur. Namun, generalisasi temuan terbatas karena fokus pada satu cabang di lokasi tertentu, dan keberlanjutan strategi dipengaruhi oleh ekspektasi konsumen terhadap keseimbangan harga-kualitas serta tuntutan promosi yang semakin sering.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Pemasaran, UMKM Kuliner, Pemasaran Digital, Media Sosial, Platform Pesan-Antar

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in the Indonesian economy, contributing significantly to 61.07% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing more than 97% of the workforce in Indonesia (Janah & Tampubolon, 2024). Recent official statistics show that food and beverage service activities remain a major component of Indonesia's enterprise landscape: BPS recorded 5.28 million food and beverage service businesses in 2024 (BPS, 2025). In 2023, these businesses employed 9.80 million workers and generated IDR 998.37 trillion in sales, underscoring the sector's capacity to support economic growth and job creation (BPS, 2024). Despite this significant contribution, culinary MSMEs continue to face various challenges, especially in adapting to the rapidly evolving digital business environment.

According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, although the government has targeted the digitization of around 30 million MSMEs players by 2024 as part of the national digital economy roadmap, most MSMEs in Indonesia still face obstacles in optimizing digital marketing. These challenges are mainly due to low levels of digital literacy and limited human resources in understanding digital marketing technology (Nofriansyah et al., 2025), resulting in many businesses being unable to effectively integrate marketing strategies to expand their market reach (Fatimah et al., 2025; Sawunggaling, 2025). This condition is increasingly critical because the era of digitalization has fundamentally changed the marketing landscape, where consumer behavior now increasingly depends on digital technology in searching for information and making purchasing decisions.

A survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) shows that around 70% of internet users in Indonesia actively use social media, making it a very promising platform for product marketing (Haidar & Fachrunnisa, 2025). This digital transformation opens up significant opportunities for MSMEs to expand their market reach from local to national and international scales through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, as well as digital marketplaces such as Tokopedia and Shopee, and online food delivery (OFD) services such as GrabFood and GoFood. However, this phenomenon also creates increasingly fierce competition, where MSMEs not only compete with fellow local businesses but also with larger players that have more robust financial and technological resources.

In this context, marketing strategy becomes a key managerial foundation. Kotler & Keller (2021) define marketing strategy as the marketing logic through which a company creates customer value and builds profitable relationships with target customers through creating, communicating, and delivering value to the target market (Sholihah & Cindoswari, 2024). Along with the shift in

market dynamics, marketing strategies no longer rely solely on conventional promotion, but increasingly integrate digital platforms. Digital marketing has become an essential component of modern marketing strategies, especially for MSMEs that have limited resources but require wide market reach. Empirically, appropriate marketing strategy analysis and alignment with the target market characteristics, supported by digital technology utilization, can contribute significantly to increasing MSMEs sales performance (Artika & Putra, 2024).

Sales growth itself is a key indicator of marketing success and business performance. Conceptually, sales growth can be understood as an increase in transaction volume, turnover, or number of customers over a certain period as a result of effective business and marketing strategy implementation; it is also reflected qualitatively in customer loyalty, brand awareness, and market segment expansion (Artika & Putra, 2024). In the digital era, sales growth is increasingly influenced by the ability of business actors to adopt and optimize digital technology for marketing and distribution. Studies show that digital marketing through marketplaces and social media can expand market reach and increase turnover (Budiarti et al., 2024), while OFD platforms help culinary MSMEs market and distribute products more widely (Az-zahra et al., 2021). In addition, elements of the promotion mix—such as advertising and sales promotion—can shape customer attitudes that positively affect purchase intention, indirectly supporting sales growth through consumer behavioral changes (Rahmawati & Aprianingsih, 2023).

For culinary MSMEs, the implementation of digital marketing strategies has distinct challenges despite the sector's promising nature as food is a daily necessity. Recent research indicates constraints including limited digital knowledge, limited access to technology, limited skilled human resources, and increasingly intense competition within the digital ecosystem (Pratama et al., 2025). Therefore, culinary MSMEs require clear and consistent strategies in utilizing social media to increase visibility, improve targeting, strengthen customer interaction, optimize e-commerce and OFD platforms, create high-quality content, adapt to trends, and build collaboration and networking (Regina, et al., 2025; Wibowo et al., 2025). Social media marketing has been shown to positively impact brand awareness and engagement across multiple platforms used by MSMEs (Maria et al., 2024), and it can also support access to digital education and community building around brands that contributes to retention and repeat purchases (Yuliana & Widhi, 2025).

Among social media platforms, Instagram and TikTok are notable for their strong influence in digital marketing ecosystems, especially through visual and short-video content supported by recommendation algorithms. TikTok is recognized for enabling viral and organic content through features such as duet, stitch, and trending hashtags (Jamal, 2025), while promotional strategies via TikTok content have been associated with increased brand awareness and customer visits through authentic storytelling such as product-making processes and testimonials (Rumambi et al., 2024). Instagram functions as a visual space for building brand identity, and integration with other digital channels can strengthen conversion (Maharani et al., 2025). In addition, influencer marketing has become an effective strategy because influencer credibility and closeness to audiences can shape purchasing decisions; key aspects include credibility, relevance, audience fit, and engagement rate. Studies in culinary marketing contexts also suggest influencers support brand awareness and consumer decisions through relatable content (Hardini et al., 2023), with evidence that micro-influencers may show higher engagement rates than macro-influencers.

Beyond promotion and channels, pricing remains a central issue for culinary MSMEs, especially regarding the balance between price competitiveness and product quality. Kotler & Keller (2021) emphasize pricing should consider perceived value, competitor prices, and marketing objectives rather than merely production costs (Purbohastuti, 2021). Value-based pricing strategies that highlight quality can become a differentiator when consumers are willing to pay more if expectations are met or exceeded (Artika & Putra, 2024). This is relevant to culinary MSMEs, where consumer expectations often include both affordability and quality consistency.

Specifically in Medan City, North Sumatra, culinary MSMEs have substantial potential, considering that the city is recognized as a culinary tourism destination with a wide variety of unique traditional products. However, studies indicate that most MSMEs players in Medan City still do not fully understand the concept and benefits of digital marketing; therefore, intervention from the local government is required to organize training and socialization regarding the importance of digital marketing (Brina & Siahaan, 2024). In this context, Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch stands out as one of the culinary MSMEs that has actively and systematically implemented digital marketing strategies, making it a relevant subject for in-depth study.

This study offers novelty in several important aspects. First, it uses a qualitative approach with an in-depth case study of Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch, enabling detailed exploration of how marketing strategies are implemented in practice—covering decision-making processes, operational challenges, and business actors' responses to market dynamics—an angle often not captured in prior studies that tended to be quantitative and focused on measuring variable impacts without deeply examining real implementation contexts. Second, this study integrates analysis of digital marketing strategies (Instagram and TikTok social media, OFD platforms, influencer marketing) with conventional marketing strategies (offline promotions, event participation, product testing) into a holistic framework, revealing synergy and complementarity between the two approaches.

Third, it specifically examines Instagram as the most effective platform for culinary MSMEs, including visual content strategies, interactive features (stories, reels, live streaming), and collaboration with local influencers in Medan as digital word-of-mouth. Fourth, it analyzes constraints specific to culinary MSMEs, namely high consumer expectations in balancing price and quality and expectations for more intensive promotions—issues that remain under-discussed in previous literature. Fifth, the Medan context enriches the literature on culinary MSMEs outside Java by offering a different regional perspective.

The urgency of this research is increasingly relevant given the Indonesian government's target to increase the digitization rate of MSMEs from 40% to 50% by 2025 (Faturrahman et al., 2025). In this context, research that examines the best practices of MSMEs that have successfully implemented effective digital marketing strategies is very important as a learning tool for other MSME players. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of literature in the field of marketing management and entrepreneurship, particularly in understanding how the competitiveness of culinary businesses can be improved through more effective and integrated digital marketing strategies. This research also enriches the understanding of the marketing mix concept in the context of MSMEs in the digital era, where the marketing mix not only covers the traditional 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) but also extends to aspects of digital marketing, experiential marketing, and customer engagement through digital platforms.

From a practical perspective, this study is expected to contribute to the development of an adaptive and sustainable MSMEs marketing model that combines social media, influencer collaboration, OFD platforms, and conventional promotional strategies into a mutually reinforcing marketing ecosystem. It may also serve as a reference for policymakers in designing more targeted MSMEs empowerment and training programs based on business actors' real needs in the field.

Based on the identified background and research gap, this study aims to analyze the role of marketing strategies in increasing sales at the Krakatau branch of Pempek Nabil Express, a micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSMEs). Specifically, this study focuses on: (1) identifying the main marketing strategies implemented, both through digital and conventional channels; (2) assessing the effectiveness of marketing media such as Instagram, TikTok, online ordering platforms, and collaborations with local influencers in expanding market reach; (3) evaluating pricing and promotion strategies in balancing product quality with affordability; (4) analyzing the impact of marketing strategies on sales growth, customer loyalty, and customer base expansion; and (5) identifying challenges faced and formulating strategic recommendations for culinary SMEs to optimize digital and conventional marketing strategies sustainably.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study approach involving direct observation of the Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch MSME. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the marketing strategies implemented and their impact on sales growth. According to Yin (2018) case studies are an appropriate method for researching contextual phenomena in depth by considering various relevant sources of information.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques, namely semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted based on a pre-designed questionnaire covering aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation of marketing strategies. The semi-structured interview technique allowed researchers to obtain in-depth data while remaining flexible to follow the flow of conversation (Moleong, 2019). Observations were conducted to directly observe operational practices and the implementation of marketing strategies, while documentation included sales reports, customer transaction data, social media content, and promotional materials used by MSMEs.

Research informants were selected purposively, namely those who were considered to be most knowledgeable and directly involved in marketing activities (Sugiyono, 2021). Informants consisted of business owners or managers, marketing staff, operational employees, and loyal customers of Pempek Nabil Express. The interview process was conducted face-to-face, with notes and recordings made after obtaining permission from respondents to maintain research ethics.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative-descriptive approach, following the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2018) which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The interview transcripts were converted into units of meaning, then inductive and deductive coding was performed to identify the main themes, such as the types of marketing strategies applied, the effectiveness of promotional media, the impact on sales growth, and the obstacles to implementation. Data validity was strengthened through

triangulation of sources and methods, namely by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as conducting member checks with key informants (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The entire research process was carried out in accordance with research ethics principles, whereby respondent information was kept confidential and the research results were presented in aggregate form to protect the identity of the participants

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the research objectives and relevant literature. The discussion highlights how Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch implements integrated marketing strategies—both digital and conventional—and how these strategies influence sales performance. It also addresses key challenges encountered in balancing conservation of product quality with market expectations in a competitive digital environment.

Implementation of Integrated Marketing Strategy Through Multi-Channel Marketing

The marketing strategy implemented by Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch shows an adaptive approach to consumer behavior developments in the digital era. Based on interviews and field observations, the marketing strategy focuses on integrating various marketing communication channels, both digital and conventional, to create optimal synergy in reaching consumers and increasing sales. Social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, has become the most effective marketing tool for Pempek Nabil Express in reaching consumers widely and efficiently. The Instagram platform, with more than 14.3 thousand active followers, is the most optimal promotional channel because it combines visual power, wide reach, and direct interaction with consumers. These two platforms were chosen because they have a high level of interaction, especially among young people, who are the main market segment for this product.

The content created is professionally packaged and visually appealing. Product photos are presented with appetizing lighting, while promotional videos show the pempek-making process, customer testimonials, and snippets of daily business activities that add to the authentic feel. The content strategy not only highlights the product, but also contains narratives that are close to consumers' daily lives. This storytelling-based approach makes promotions feel more natural and emotional, helping to build rapport with the audience. The use of interactive features such as Instagram Stories, Reels, and Live Streaming further strengthens the relationship with the audience (Jamil et al., 2022). Through these features, Pempek Nabil can interact directly with customers, answer questions, and even broadcast promotions in real-time. This approach creates two-way communication that increases consumers' sense of closeness and trust in the brand. The advantage of social media lies in its relatively low cost compared to conventional advertising, yet it has a large reach and viral potential. In addition, consistency in creating creative content that is relevant to trends also increases engagement and strengthens the emotional connection between the brand and customers.

The use of local influencers in Medan is considered an effective strategy in introducing products to a wide audience. By partnering with influencers who have a loyal following and match the target market, promotions feel more personal, authentic, and have a greater influence on consumer

purchasing decisions. This type of collaboration allows promotional messages to be conveyed in a more natural style than conventional advertising, thereby building consumer confidence in product quality (Shankar et al., 2022). Influencers with relevant followers in the culinary segment often help introduce products through honest reviews in the form of digital word of mouth, which has been proven to be more effective in influencing purchasing behavior. In addition, this collaborative content usually gets higher exposure because Instagram's algorithm prioritizes interactions between accounts with many followers. This strategy also strengthens the brand image of Pempek Nabil Express as a modern local product that is easily accepted by various groups.

In addition to social media, Online Food Delivery (OFD) platforms such as GrabFood, GoFood, and ShopeeFood are also considered highly effective in supporting marketing strategies. The presence of these digital platforms makes it easier for customers to place orders without distance or time restrictions, thus opening up wider market opportunities (Alfiyana et al., 2025). These media serve a dual purpose, not only as a means of sales but also as a digital promotional tool that expands market reach. Through the search and recommendation features available on the app, Pempek Nabil Express products can be easily found by potential consumers in various regions without the need to open new branches. This strategy reflects the efficient use of digital technology to expand distribution while increasing brand visibility in a competitive market. The integration of social media and OFD also strengthens the integrated marketing system that allows consumers to learn about products online and make purchases easily. Thus, digital marketing not only functions as a promotional medium but also as a distribution channel that strengthens the connectivity between businesses and consumers.

By combining digital and traditional promotions in a balanced manner, Pempek Nabil Express has successfully developed an efficient, adaptive, and relevant marketing communication strategy that meets current market needs. This approach also reflects the adaptability of small businesses in the digital economy era, where speed of information, interactivity, and ease of access are key to building long-term relationships with customers. Overall, the implementation of an integrated marketing strategy through multi-channel marketing has had a significant positive impact on sales growth and brand popularity, demonstrating that businesses are not only relying on conventional marketing methods but also leveraging technological advancements and social media as more effective and relevant promotional tools.

Promotional Program at Pempek Express Nabil MSME and Its Impact

Nabil Express Pempek MSME Krakatau Branch implements various promotional programs designed to attract new customers while retaining existing ones. These promotional programs are not only focused on attracting new customers, but also on retaining existing ones through regular promotional programs, such as discounts and special offers that are updated every month to maintain consumer enthusiasm and encourage repeat purchases. This strategy is supported by monthly promotional programs designed to maintain consumer interest. For example, in September, a promotion was held offering three free donuts for every purchase of a meal package. Programs like this not only attract new customers but also create added value for existing customers, which ultimately has a positive impact on increasing sales volume.

The positive impact of the marketing strategy was most evident at the grand opening, where the number of visitors and sales volume increased dramatically. Prior to the official opening, Pempek

Nabil Express had conducted an intensive promotional campaign through engaging video posts on social media. The content was designed to create curiosity and enthusiasm among potential customers, encouraging them to come directly to the outlet on opening day. A 50% discount during the initial period of operation was also a major factor in the increase in sales. This discount strategy successfully attracted widespread public attention and created strong word of mouth, with satisfied customers recommending the product to others. This tactic not only increased short-term sales but also accelerated the process of brand recognition in the local market. In a marketing context, this strategy reflects the application of effective sales promotion principles, as it was able to create a combination of attractive prices and a satisfying first consumption experience.

Customers have responded very positively to the various promotional programs carried out by Pempek Nabil Express. Every time this business launches a promotion, whether in the form of discounts, economy packages, or special offers, customers show great enthusiasm. The rapid response from consumers to these promotions can be seen from the increase in purchase volume shortly after the promotion information is announced, especially through social media and online food delivery platforms. This phenomenon reflects the success of the promotional strategy in capturing attention and directly influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Time-limited promotions also create a sense of urgency that encourages customers to make immediate purchases without much consideration. With consistent posting, a friendly communication style, and visually appealing content, this Instagram-based marketing strategy has proven effective in attracting new customers while retaining existing ones, as evidenced by the increase in transactions every time Pempek Nabil launches a promotion through social media posts.

Customer enthusiasm for promotions not only has an impact on short-term sales growth, but also strengthens the emotional connection between consumers and the brand. Through consistent and relevant promotions, Pempek Nabil Express has successfully built a positive perception of product value, where customers feel they are getting more out of every transaction. In addition, promotions that are communicated in an engaging way through social media also create a word-of-mouth effect, where customers voluntarily share their experiences with others. This expands the reach of promotions at no additional cost and reinforces Pempek Nabil Express' image as a friendly, affordable brand that is responsive to the needs of its consumers. Well-planned and consistent promotions, supported by the use of social media and attractive discount programs, have successfully built brand awareness while strengthening the business' position amid local culinary competition.

Product Strategy at Pempek Express Nabil MSME

Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch does not apply significant differences between its marketing strategies for new and old products. In general, all products are promoted through the same marketing channels, namely social media, online food delivery (OFD) platforms, and direct promotions at outlets. This uniform approach aims to maintain brand image consistency and ensure that all products receive equal exposure in the eyes of consumers. By using promotional channels that have proven to be effective, Pempek Nabil Express can optimize resources without the need to incur additional costs for promoting new products. This strategy also strengthens the integration of marketing communications, where every product, both new and old, remains part of the same brand narrative across various platforms. This approach reflects efficiency in product portfolio

management and consistency in building a strong brand identity.

However, special efforts are made when introducing new products, especially in the form of direct promotional activities at outlets. One strategy that is implemented is giving free testers or samples to customers. This practice is considered effective in attracting consumers' attention and arousing curiosity about newly launched products, such as when introducing the Pempek Nabil Express ice cream variant. Through the experience of tasting the product directly, consumers can assess its quality and taste without having to spend money first. This strategy has been proven to increase the chances of purchase, as positive experiences from testing can build trust and influence consumers' spontaneous purchasing decisions.

The experiential marketing approach is highly relevant to culinary businesses, where taste quality is a key factor in determining customer satisfaction. By giving consumers the opportunity to taste products directly, Pempek Nabil Express not only introduces new products but also builds trust through real sensory experiences. This strategy reduces the risk of negative perceptions and increases the likelihood of converting potential buyers into actual buyers. Thus, although in general there is no significant difference between new and old product promotion strategies, the tactical adjustment of providing testers is an effective form of marketing innovation. This shows that Pempek Nabil Express is able to utilize a simple but impactful strategy to build consumer trust while strengthening the position of new products in the market. This strategy also reflects a good understanding of the characteristics of the culinary industry, where direct experience is key in influencing consumer purchasing decisions.

In addition to promotional strategies, product quality consistency is the main foundation of Pempek Nabil Express's product strategy. The use of premium raw materials and a quality-controlled production process ensures that every product, both old and new, meets the same taste standards. This consistency is important for maintaining customer loyalty and building a long-term brand reputation. In the culinary industry, which is highly dependent on consumer satisfaction with taste, maintaining product quality standards is a fundamental strategy that supports the effectiveness of all other marketing activities. This approach ensures that every consumer interaction with Pempek Nabil Express products results in a consistently positive experience, which in turn strengthens loyalty and increases the likelihood of repeat purchases and positive recommendations to others.

Value-based Pricing at Pempek Express Nabil MSME

In determining the selling price of its products, Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch applies an approach that considers the balance between production costs, raw material quality, and consumer purchasing power. Pricing is determined by carefully calculating the costs of key raw materials, such as fresh fish and selected spices, as well as labor and production processes. The goal is to ensure that the prices offered not only cover operational costs but also provide reasonable profits for the business. This approach reflects a thorough understanding of the cost structure and the need for realistic profit margins. By calculating costs in detail, Pempek Nabil Express is able to set competitive yet profitable prices.

In addition to cost factors, product quality is the main basis for determining the selling price. Pempek Nabil Express prioritizes the quality of ingredients to maintain taste and customer satisfaction. The use of premium ingredients sets it apart from similar products on the market, so

that the price reflects the added value provided. This approach shows that this MSME is not only oriented towards low prices, but also towards the value received by consumers through taste and product quality. This quality-based pricing strategy is in line with the concept of value-based pricing, where prices are determined based on the perceived value received by consumers. By using high-quality raw materials, Pempek Nabil Express creates product differentiation that justifies prices that may be higher than those of competitors. This approach is effective in building a market segment that values quality and is willing to pay more for a superior consumption experience.

Value-based pricing strategies also contribute to the positioning of the Pempek Nabil Express brand in the market. By setting prices that reflect premium quality while remaining affordable, the brand positions itself as an option that offers value for money. This positioning is effective in attracting consumers who are looking for quality without having to pay excessively high premium prices, while also differentiating itself from competitors who compete purely on the basis of low prices and standard quality. This approach also creates space for Pempek Nabil Express to implement flexible promotional strategies. With reasonable profit margins, the business can offer discounts and special deals without compromising product quality or incurring losses. This flexibility is important in facing competition and maintaining the brand's appeal in the eyes of consumers, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the business through stable profitability.

Obstacles and Challenges Facing Pempek Express Nabil MSME

The biggest obstacle faced by Pempek Nabil Express Krakatau Branch in implementing its marketing strategy lies in consumers' high expectations regarding the balance between price and product quality (Tan et al., 2025). Many customers want affordable prices, but at the same time expect to get the same taste and service quality as premium products. This situation creates a dilemma for businesses because they have to adjust their pricing strategy without sacrificing product quality or profit margins. This challenge is further complicated by the fact that most consumers in the local market segment tend to be price-sensitive, meaning that purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by the size of promotions or discounts offered. In the context of marketing management, this obstacle highlights the importance of MSMEs' ability to maintain a balance between economic value and consumer perception, whereby businesses must be able to meet consumer expectations without sacrificing the financial sustainability of the business.

Customers also expect more frequent promotions and more attractive offers. This puts pressure on MSMEs, as overly intensive promotions can increase marketing costs and reduce profits. Therefore, Pempek Nabil Express needs to plan its promotions selectively and strategically so that they remain attractive to consumers without negatively impacting the financial stability of the business. This challenge requires a mature approach to promotion management, where on the one hand, too frequent promotions can erode profit margins and create consumer expectations that promotional prices are normal prices, while on the other hand, too infrequent promotions can reduce brand appeal and provide opportunities for competitors to capture market share. Pempek Nabil Express must find the optimal balance in the timing and intensity of promotions in order to maintain consumer interest without sacrificing business profitability.

Despite facing various obstacles, adaptive efforts continue to be made by adjusting the timing of promotions and aligning them with specific moments, such as holidays or peak sales periods. This

strategy allows Pempek Nabil Express to maximize the impact of promotions at a more efficient cost. By taking advantage of strategic moments, promotions can achieve greater effectiveness because consumers are already in the mood to shop or look for special offers. Pempek Nabil Express strives to maintain product quality as its top priority, while still offering competitive prices and regular promotions as a form of appreciation to customers. This approach reflects a realistic compromise strategy, where businesses adapt to market conditions without neglecting the principles of business sustainability. Focusing on product quality is a strong foundation for maintaining customer loyalty, even if it does not always meet the expectation of the lowest price. Thus, despite facing challenges in meeting diverse consumer expectations, Pempek Nabil Express demonstrates adaptability and consistency in maintaining its brand reputation and retaining customer trust amid fierce competition in the culinary market.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the marketing strategy implemented by the Krakatau Branch of Pempek Nabil Express MSMEs plays a significant role in increasing sales and expanding market reach. The strategy used is adaptive and integrated between conventional and digital methods. Through the use of social media such as Instagram and TikTok, Pempek Nabil Express is able to build direct interactions with consumers, strengthen its brand image, and expand its promotional reach at a relatively efficient cost. In addition, collaboration with local influencers also has a positive impact on increasing brand awareness and consumer trust because the content produced feels more authentic and closer to the current lifestyle of the community.

Regular promotional programs, such as discounts, free product samples (testers), and culinary events, are effective strategies for attracting new customers and retaining the loyalty of existing customers. In addition to promotion, consistent product quality and friendly service are important factors that support the marketing success of Pempek Nabil Express. However, this study also found that there are still several obstacles, such as limited human resources in managing digital marketing optimally and the need for product innovation to be able to compete in an increasingly competitive market. Overall, the marketing strategy implemented by Pempek Nabil Express has succeeded in increasing the competitiveness of the business and strengthening its position as one of the leading culinary MSMEs in the city of Medan.

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