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## DESCRIPTIVE OF QUANTITATIVE DATA | ARTICLE RESEARCH

## Analysis of Micro Business Marketing Strategy in Facing Competition

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**Abstract:** This study is motivated by the challenges faced in the development of micro-enterprises at Bukit Sion Market, largely due to the high level of competition. Many businesses struggle to determine appropriate financing models and product offerings, as the market is saturated with similar products offered by competitors. The objective of this research is to analyze the marketing strategies employed by micro-enterprises and identify the obstacles they face in dealing with competition at Bukit Sion Market, Lahomi District. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method. The findings reveal that all food stalls adopt marketing strategies that include market selection, product planning, pricing, distribution systems, and marketing communication. Effective marketing strategies, such as offering discounts, special promotions, or hosting promotional events, have been shown to significantly boost sales. However, the food stalls encounter several challenges, including intensified competition due to the emergence of similar businesses offering comparable products, a lack of product innovation and promotion, fluctuations in raw material prices, as well as issues with product quality consistency, customer service, and overall customer experience.

**Keywords:** Marketing Strategies, Market Competition, SME.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The activities of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (SME) represent an independent sector with the potential for growth and consistency in contributing to the national economy (Zahra, 2022). SME are expected to generate productive employment opportunities for the community. Although labor-intensive, SME require creativity, innovation, and the courage to initiate and develop their businesses. According to Anita and Sos (2023), entrepreneurship is the act of creating value from something that previously did not exist. Entrepreneurship involves capturing and realizing opportunities, regardless of existing resource limitations, and requires the courage to take calculated risks. As outlined in Law No. 20 of 2008, SME are defined as small businesses owned and managed by individuals or small groups with specific levels of wealth and income. SME contribute 28% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In Indonesia's economic development, SME have always been recognized as a critical sector, particularly due to the fact that a large portion of the population has low educational attainment and is engaged in small-scale enterprises, both in traditional and modern sectors. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a significant role in shaping this dynamic industrial landscape, driving innovation, and accelerating economic growth (Abid, 2021).

The substantial role of SME illustrates that there is considerable potential for further development, particularly in the marketing sector. SME will be able to sustain themselves if they apply sound management practices, especially in the areas of marketing, production, and human resources. The formulation of an effective marketing strategy is essential for enhancing the marketability of SME and expanding opportunities to improve societal welfare.

In maintaining business continuity, the intensity of competition demands that every company develop effective competitive strategies. The primary goal of business is not solely profit-seeking but also the creation and enhancement of value for consumers. By implementing well-crafted strategies, both large corporations and SME can compete more effectively and strengthen their market position. Field observations conducted by researchers revealed several challenges in dealing with market competition. In the same location, there are numerous food stalls offering similar products, and some larger, higher-quality restaurants, which intensifies competition. For small business owners, competing with larger companies that have substantial marketing budgets is undoubtedly a difficult task. Another issue is related to raw material supply. When raw materials are scarce or prices rise, food stalls struggle to maintain the consistency and quality of their menus. Moreover, price competition presents a frequent challenge for food stalls. If they cannot offer competitive prices, customers may choose to dine elsewhere. As micro-enterprises, food stalls often face limitations in resources, such as capital, labor, or infrastructure. These limitations can hinder their ability to compete with similar businesses that possess greater resources.

The food stall businesses (SME) in Bukit Sion, Lahomi District, implement marketing strategies by offering high-quality products at affordable prices. However, in the execution of these strategies, they face several challenges, particularly the high number of competitors with similar businesses. When starting or managing a food stall, it is crucial to understand the commonly used raw materials and their prices. These prices can vary depending on the location and season. Below is a general list of raw materials frequently needed for food stalls, along with their price range.

**Table 1. Raw Materials and Their Prices**

Raw Materials	Price
Rice	Rp.20.000/kg
Cooking oil	Rp.18.000/liter
Chicken	Rp.35.000/kg
Fresh Fish (catfish or tilapia)	Rp.35.000/kg
Chicken Eggs	Rp.60.000/pack
Vegetables (spinach, mustard greens, kale, carrots, and cabbage)	Rp.10.000/kg
Shallot	Rp.55.000/kg
Garlic	Rp.44.000/kg
Red Chili	Rp.70.000/kg
Green Cayenne Pepper	Rp.56.000/kg
Gula Pasir	Rp.16.000/kg
Salt	Rp.7.000/kg
Instant Coconut Milk	Rp.5.000/pack
Basic Spices (pepper, coriander, turmeric, ginger, galangal, bay leaf, lemongrass)	Rp.20.000/pack
Sweet Soy Sauce and Soy Sauce	Rp.15.000/ (300 ml)
Mie Kering /Mie Basah	Rp.15.000/ pack
Tofu and Tempeh	Rp.10.000/ pack
Liquid Milk	Rp.15.000/liter

Source: (Processed by Researcher 2024)

Based on Table 1, the prices of raw materials mentioned above are crucial components in determining the initial capital and daily operational costs for a food stall. By understanding the prices of raw materials and other necessities, food stall owners can better calculate the required capital and plan their budget more effectively to ensure the sustainability and success of their business. To calculate the revenue of a food stall based on the raw material prices, assumptions must be made regarding several factors, such as the selling price per portion, the number of portions sold per day, and other operational costs. The following table presents the monthly revenue results for food stalls in Bukit Sion, Lahomi District:

**Table 2. Income data of food stalls at Bukit Sion Market**

No.	Food Stalls	Income		
		March	April	May
1.	Warung Aurel	Rp.14.500.000	Rp. 13.700.000	Rp.10.300.000
2.	Warung keday mie Ayam prapatan	Rp. 10.800.000	Rp. 10. 100.000	Rp.9.500.000
3.	Warung Stabat	Rp. 51.500.000	Rp. 49. 650.000	Rp. 46.800.000
4.	Kedai mie pangsit daeli	Rp. 18.500.000	Rp. 17.200.000	Rp. 15.800.000
5.	Warung makan restu	Rp. 19.600.000	Rp. 17.150.000	Rp. 16.000.000
6.	Warung makan haga	Rp. 20.500.000	Rp. 18. 140.000	Rp. 17.900.000
7.	Warung makan vavorit	Rp. 21.000.000	Rp.19.700.000	Rp. 18.300.000
8.	Warung makan Niati Daeli	Rp. 31.500.000	Rp. 30.100.000	Rp. 28.700.000

Source: (Processed by Researcher 2024)

Based on Table 2, the revenue of food stalls at Bukit Sion Market, Lahomi District, has shown a declining trend. This is primarily due to the similarity between the products offered by these food stalls and those sold by competitors, resulting in a decrease in customer numbers. In light of this, food stalls at Bukit Sion Market need to implement appropriate strategies and efforts to maintain their businesses and compete effectively with similar enterprises. Marketing strategy involves activities such as planning, pricing, promoting, and distributing goods and services that satisfy and meet consumer needs. It can be understood as a series of methods to convince and gain the trust of customers. Effective strategies include offering high-quality products, engaging promotions, maintaining consistent taste, choosing strategic locations, and offering competitive pricing (Darsana et al., 2023). A marketing strategy is a form of planning within the marketing field. Generally, marketing is a social process in which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want by creating and exchanging products and value with others. In a broader sense, marketing seeks to generate a response to an offer (Arif et al., 2024)

According to Rambe and Aslami (2021), a marketing strategy is a set of objectives, goals, policies, and rules that guide a company's marketing efforts over time, across all levels, and in the allocation of resources, particularly in response to a constantly changing competitive environment. Haque-Fawzi et al. (2022) assert that the goal of marketing is to ensure that sellers thoroughly understand consumers, allowing the product or service to meet their needs and sell itself. As society evolves, consumer desires also grow. On the other hand, producers must develop specific measures and promotions to stimulate consumer interest in the promoted products as solutions to their needs.

According to Sulistiyani et al. (2020), a marketing strategy is a plan that outlines the company's expectations regarding the impact of various marketing activities or programs on the demand for its products or product lines in a specific target market. A marketing program includes actions that can influence product demand, such as adjusting pricing, modifying advertising campaigns, designing special promotions, selecting distribution channels, and other related activities. An effective marketing strategy is crucial for SMEs to build and maintain a strong market presence. A marketing strategy serves as a plan that integrates the organization's marketing objectives into a cohesive whole. In the context of creative SMEs, the strategy must be tailored to the unique characteristics of the industry, taking into account the visual and experiential nature of creative products. It is essential to align the marketing strategy with the organization's goals and prevailing market conditions (Yudityawati & Fitriyah, 2022).

Marketing is one of the critical aspects of running a business. Effective management is necessary to enable the business to grow optimally and compete with its rivals. One of the key elements in marketing is the marketing strategy and the marketing mix. A marketing strategy is essential for selecting market segments, determining target markets, and positioning the product accurately. To achieve marketing objectives, most business owners require capital as a foundation for operations.

Capital is crucial for entrepreneurs to maintain business continuity and fulfill other necessary needs (Naimah et al., 2020). According to Sharia principles, marketing activities must be driven by the spirit of worshiping God Almighty, striving for collective welfare rather than serving the interests of specific groups or personal gains.

Websites and social media have opened numerous opportunities for SME to expand their market reach, particularly in terms of promotion aimed at attracting their target audience. Another reason SME use websites and social media to market their products and services is the low entry barriers, which make it easier for them to promote their offerings through these platforms (Fadhilah & Pratiwi, 2021). The competitiveness of SME is influenced by various factors such as company strategy, structure, market competition, demand conditions, related industries, supporting industries, and external conditions. Understanding these factors is essential for SME in the creative industry to thrive in an increasingly global and competitive environment. Entrepreneurship also plays a crucial role in enhancing competitiveness, including in the market. Creative entrepreneurs not only contribute to economic growth but also enrich the cultural wealth of local communities (Sari, 2022). Examining the interplay between entrepreneurship, market orientation, innovation, and marketing strategy is key to understanding the holistic nature of SME competitiveness in the marketplace.

Previous studies, such as the research by Silaen et al. (2024), indicate that businesses implementing digital marketing strategies experience significant improvements in market penetration and revenue growth. Moreover, government policies aimed at empowering the local economy further emphasize the importance of such initiatives. Government Regulation No. 20 of 2022 concerning the Empowerment and Development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (SME) explicitly underscores the need for support in digital marketing to enhance competitiveness. The study by Sono et al. (2023) highlights the importance of product and service innovation as a strategy to remain competitive. Innovation helps SME differentiate themselves from competitors and attract new customers. Additionally, Sudirjo et al. (2023) argue that optimizing performance through the enhancement of human resources (HR) is essential, particularly in understanding marketing strategies such as online marketing, allowing SME to broaden the reach of their products.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative research method. A qualitative approach is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observed individuals or behaviors. According to Nasution (2023), qualitative research is used to study objects in their natural condition, where the researcher serves as the key instrument. Data collection is conducted through triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and the findings of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization. The objects in qualitative research are studied in their natural settings, which is why this method is often referred to as naturalistic research. Data collection in qualitative research is not guided by theory but by the facts encountered in the field during the research process. Consequently, data analysis is inductive, meaning the data gathered consists of words, images, and interview results rather than numerical data, as in quantitative research.

The type of research used in this study is descriptive research, a strategy in which the researcher investigates events or phenomena in the lives of individuals, then analyzes and systematically presents the facts, making them easier to understand and interpret. Research variables are attributes inherent to the research subjects. These subjects can include individuals, objects, transactions, or events collected from the research participants, each representing specific conditions or values. The term "variable" derives from the fact that certain characteristics can vary across objects within a population (Roflin & Liberty, 2021). In this study, the variable determined by the researcher is the Marketing Strategy of Micro-Enterprises in Facing Competition at Bukit Sion Market, Lahomi District. The research will be conducted at food stalls in Bukit Sion Market, Onolimbu Village, Lahomi District, West Nias Regency. The data sources for this study consist of both primary and secondary data.

Primary data are obtained directly from the field or research location through observation, interviews, and documentation. The primary data source for this study is the owners of food stalls at Bukit Sion Market, Lahomi District. Secondary data are gathered from existing literature such as books and journals, and they are used to support the primary data collected. Research instruments refer to the tools used to collect research data. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument by collecting data through field observation, interviews, and documentation. The instruments used in this study include an interview guide, which is verbally presented to the informants, and documentation tools such as a camera. The process of data collection in qualitative research is designed and organized by the researcher to ensure a systematic approach and produce valid data. The data collection techniques employed in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation.

According to Ulfah et al. (2022), data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and organizing data obtained from observations, interviews, field notes, and documentation. This process involves categorizing the data, breaking it down into units, selecting which information is significant and worth studying, and drawing conclusions that are easily understood by both the researcher and others. The data analysis techniques in this study include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

### 3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Research Results

The results of the field observations conducted by the researcher identified several challenges and issues related to market competition. One significant issue is the presence of multiple food stalls offering similar products in the same location, with some larger and higher-quality restaurants, which has intensified the competition. For small business owners, competing with larger companies that have bigger marketing budgets is undoubtedly a difficult task. Another challenge is the availability of raw materials. In response, each food stall strives to maintain stable income by implementing marketing strategies to cope with the competition. The strategies adopted by these food stalls include putting up banners, utilizing technology, and fostering collaboration between owners, employees, and customers.

Based on interviews and observations with the food stall owners, the researcher concluded that they carefully select their market in order to expand their business and increase profitability. The location of the business significantly affects the availability of products to the local consumers, which in turn supports the success of the business. A strategic business location can boost revenue by attracting more customers and increasing the volume of sales. With higher product sales, the business naturally experiences growth in revenue. Furthermore, interviews revealed that the food stall owners engage in thoughtful product planning. They generally tailor their menus and offerings to meet the needs and preferences of their customers by considering local tastes, eating habits, and culinary culture. For instance, the "Niati Daeli" food stall offers a varied menu including nasi uduk, B-1, B-2, fish, and vegetables. The owners strive to offer diverse menu options that appeal to a broad range of customers while maintaining high standards of quality and hygiene. They use fresh ingredients and ensure that the taste of the food remains consistent.

Pricing is the process of determining the selling price for each menu item offered. This process is crucial to ensure that the food stalls can generate profits, attract customers, and remain competitive. Based on interviews with the food stall owners, the researcher concluded that they determine their pricing by considering the cost of raw materials. Each ingredient is carefully calculated to ensure that the selling price covers the costs and provides a profit. The owners employ competitive pricing strategies to attract customers and maintain market share. Some of them use promotional strategies such as discounts or menu packages to draw in more customers. The prices they set also allow for flexibility in offering special deals without compromising profits. Additionally, the interviews revealed that the food stall owners implement a distribution system. They use a direct distribution system, selling their products directly to consumers. This approach enables them to maintain control over

sales and build strong relationships with their customers. The owners collaborate with local suppliers, such as farmers or local vendors, to secure fresh raw materials and maintain product quality. They also employ staff to deliver orders directly to customers. In terms of marketing communication, the interviews show that food stall owners use various strategies to attract customers. They rely on word-of-mouth marketing by providing high-quality service that leaves customers satisfied, encouraging them to recommend the products to others. Additionally, they create eye-catching banners to attract attention and use social media to engage with customers and the public.

The food stall owners also focus on providing friendly and personalized service to build good relationships with their customers. They offer affordable prices through various promotional methods to attract more customers. By combining high-quality food, friendly service, competitive pricing, and effective use of social media, the food stall owners at the market are able to develop an effective marketing communication strategy to attract and retain customers. Based on the results of field observations and interviews, several challenges were identified that food stalls face in competing with similar businesses in the market, including:

1. Increasingly intense competition with the emergence of similar businesses offering comparable products. This forces food stalls to work harder to retain and attract customers.
2. Product innovation and promotion. To compete with similar businesses, food stalls need to continuously innovate their menu offerings and implement attractive promotional strategies to capture consumer attention.
3. Fluctuations in raw material prices. The prices of raw materials, such as meat, vegetables, or spices, can fluctuate, affecting the selling price of food. This presents a challenge for food stalls in setting competitive prices.
4. Product quality and consistency. Maintaining the quality and consistency of food products is crucial to preserving customer trust. If the quality declines or becomes inconsistent, customers may shift to other businesses.
5. Customer service and experience. Friendly service and a positive customer experience are key factors in facing competition. Food stalls must ensure that their service satisfies customers in order to remain competitive with similar businesses.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that food stalls face significant challenges in competing within an increasingly competitive culinary market. To survive and grow, it is essential to implement the right strategies, such as improving product quality and service, utilizing technology for promotion and access to capital, and creating unique value propositions, such as the taste of homemade dishes and fostering close relationships with customers. These strategies can be powerful tools for competing and building customer loyalty).

### 3.2. *Research Discussion*

The researcher used triangulation techniques to analyze the data in this study. Through triangulation, data was collected from observation, interviews, and documentation, as previously outlined by the researcher, which were then analyzed and conclusions were drawn. The conclusions were derived from the results of the research conducted. The data analysis process began with a thorough review and evaluation of all data from various sources, including observation, interviews, and documentation, focusing on the food stall owners at Bukit Sion Market in Lahomi District as the subjects of the study. This data was continuously processed by the researcher throughout the study. The approach applied was qualitative descriptive, which provides a detailed description of events or locations documented during fieldwork.

Based on the observations and interviews conducted, information was gathered regarding the research on the analysis of marketing strategies employed by micro-enterprises in facing competition at Bukit Sion Market, Lahomi District. The informants in this study were the owners of eight food stalls in Bukit Sion Market. In this discussion, the researcher will present the findings and address the research objectives. The aim of this research was to analyze the marketing strategies used by micro-enterprises to compete at Bukit Sion Market, Lahomi District, and it was found that all eight food stalls employed marketing strategies to face competition with similar food stalls in the market. Based on the data obtained, it was found that nearly all food stalls implement the following marketing strategies:

*a. Market Selection*

Market selection is the process of identifying the right target audience for establishing a business by determining the products that are most favored by a specific group of customers. Based on interviews with food stall owners, the researcher concluded that these owners engage in market selection with the aim of expanding their businesses and increasing the chances of success through greater profitability. This is because the location of the business significantly influences the availability of products to the surrounding consumers, which supports the sustainability of the business. A strategic business location can boost revenue and increase the volume of sales, as products become more accessible and appealing to consumers in that area. Higher sales naturally contribute to increased business income.

*b. Product Planning*

Product planning is the process of designing and developing the right products to meet the needs and desires of the target market. Based on interviews with the food stall owners, the researcher concluded that they engage in product planning by adjusting their menu and offerings to align with the needs and preferences of their customers. The food stall owners understand the local tastes, eating habits, and culinary culture around the market. For example, the "Niati Daeli" food stall offers a variety of menus, including nasi uduk, B-1, B-2, fish, and vegetables. The owners strive to provide a diverse menu to attract customers from different groups while maintaining product quality and cleanliness, using fresh ingredients, and ensuring the consistency of the food's taste.

*c. Pricing*

Product planning is the process of designing and developing the right products to meet the needs and desires of the target market. Based on interviews with the food stall owners, the researcher concluded that they engage in product planning by adjusting their menu and offerings to align with the needs and preferences of their customers. The food stall owners understand the local tastes, eating habits, and culinary culture around the market. For example, the "Niati Daeli" food stall offers a variety of menus, including nasi uduk, B-1, B-2, fish, and vegetables. The owners strive to provide a diverse menu to attract customers from different groups while maintaining product quality and cleanliness, using fresh ingredients, and ensuring the consistency of the food's taste.

*d. Distribution System*

A distribution system is a network that connects producers with consumers through various channels and processes, encompassing all activities required to transport and store products from the point of production to the hands of consumers. Based on interviews with the food stall owners, the researcher concluded that they implement a direct distribution system. In this system, the food stall owners sell their products directly to consumers, allowing them to maintain control over sales

and build direct relationships with customers. The food stall owners also collaborate with local suppliers, such as farmers or local raw material collectors, to ensure the availability of fresh ingredients and maintain product quality. Additionally, some food stall owners employ staff to deliver products directly to customers who place orders.

*e. Marketing Communications*

Marketing communication refers to a series of activities and strategies undertaken by a business or organization to deliver messages to their target market with the aim of promoting products, services, or brands. Based on interviews with the food stall owners, the researcher concluded that they implement marketing communication strategies to attract customers through various methods, such as word-of-mouth marketing, aimed at ensuring customer satisfaction and encouraging them to recommend products or services to others. Additionally, the food stall owners create eye-catching banners to draw customer attention and encourage them to visit or purchase the food offered. They also build strong communication by responding promptly to customers and utilizing social media to engage with customers and the public. Providing friendly and personalized service is key to fostering good relationships with customers, while offering affordable prices through various promotional methods helps attract more customers. By combining high-quality food, friendly service, competitive prices, and effective use of social media, the food stall owners at the market are able to develop effective marketing communication strategies to attract and retain customers. Competition is a situation in which two or more parties strive to achieve the same goal using limited resources. In the economic context, competition typically refers to businesses competing for customers, market share, and profit. In facing competition from similar businesses in the market, food stalls often encounter various challenges that can affect the sustainability and success of their operations.

Based on the results of field observations and interviews, several challenges were identified that food stalls face in competing with similar businesses in the market, including:

- a. Intensifying competition due to the emergence of similar businesses offering comparable products. This forces food stalls to work harder to retain and attract customers.
- b. Product innovation and promotion. To compete with similar businesses, food stalls must continuously innovate their food offerings and implement attractive promotional strategies to capture consumer attention.
- c. Fluctuations in raw material prices. The prices of raw materials such as meat, vegetables, or spices can fluctuate, affecting the selling price of food. This poses a challenge for food stalls in setting competitive prices.
- d. Product quality and consistency. Maintaining the quality and consistency of food products is crucial to retaining customer trust. A decline in quality or inconsistency may lead customers to switch to similar businesses.
- e. Customer service and experience. Friendly service and a positive customer experience are key factors in facing competition. Food stalls must ensure that their service satisfies customers to remain competitive with similar businesses

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that food stalls face significant challenges in the increasingly competitive culinary market. To survive and grow, the right strategies are required, such as improving product quality and service, utilizing technology for promotion and access to capital, and creating unique added value, such as the taste of homemade food and close relationships with customers. These strategies can serve as effective tools for competing and building customer

loyalty. This research found that the marketing strategies employed by food stall owners in facing competition with similar businesses are crucial. By implementing marketing strategies tailored to market needs, food stalls can enhance their competitiveness, optimize sales, and build strong relationships with customers. A well-executed marketing strategy also helps retain existing customers. Offering special promotions or loyalty programs ensures customer loyalty. Effective strategies, such as discounts, special offers, or promotional events, can significantly increase sales, helping businesses grow and thrive, making them more competitive in retaining and attracting customers. The findings of this research align with the theory proposed by Riofita et al. (2024), which states that a marketing strategy is a marketing mindset used to achieve marketing goals, including detailed strategies for target markets, positioning, marketing mix, and marketing budget. Marketing strategy is a form of planning found in the field of marketing. In general, marketing is a social process where individuals and groups obtain what they need and want by creating and exchanging products and value with others.

According to Sope (2023), the definition of marketing strategy is the marketing logic through which a business unit seeks to create value and gain profit from its relationships with consumers. Marketing strategy is a fundamental tool designed to achieve a company's goals by developing sustainable competitive advantages across the markets it enters and through the marketing programs used to serve those target markets. Previous relevant studies, such as the research by Silaen et al. (2024), show that businesses implementing digital marketing strategies experience significant increases in market penetration and revenue growth. Additionally, government policies aimed at empowering the local economy further underscore the importance of such initiatives. Government Regulation No. 20 of 2022 on the Empowerment and Development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (SME) explicitly emphasizes the need for support in digital marketing to enhance competitiveness. Research by Sono et al. (2023) highlights the importance of innovation in products and services as a strategy to remain competitive. Innovation helps SME differentiate themselves from competitors and attract new customers. Furthermore, Sudirjo et al. (2023) argue that optimizing performance can be achieved by improving human resources through a better understanding of marketing concepts, such as online marketing, enabling SME to expand the reach of their products. Based on the observations, interviews, and documentation conducted by the researcher, implementing a good marketing strategy can improve business performance and help retain existing customers. Special promotions and loyalty programs allow food stalls to ensure customer loyalty. Effective marketing strategies, such as discounts, special offers, or promotional events, can significantly boost sales, helping businesses grow and become more competitive in attracting and retaining customers).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The research on the marketing strategies of micro-enterprises at Bukit Sion Market, Lahomi District, reveals critical insights into how food stall operators navigate a highly competitive environment. The study found that all food stalls employ fundamental marketing strategies, including market selection, product planning, pricing, distribution systems, and marketing communication. By adopting a marketing strategy tailored to market demands, these businesses not only enhance their competitiveness but also optimize sales performance and build robust relationships with customers. Specific strategies, such as offering discounts, special promotions, or hosting events, have been shown to increase sales significantly. Such practices enable these enterprises to grow and secure a stronger foothold in the market by retaining existing customers and attracting new ones. Nevertheless, the food stalls face several challenges due to the intense competition from similar businesses in the market,

emphasizing the need for continuous innovation in both products and promotional activities. Other notable challenges include fluctuating raw material prices, which can disrupt pricing strategies, and maintaining consistent product quality and excellent customer service to ensure a satisfactory customer experience. From the perspective of academic contribution and practical implications, this research offers substantial value both in terms of scientific understanding and real-world application. On the academic front, it contributes to the body of knowledge regarding micro-enterprise competitiveness in local markets, particularly within the food industry. The findings illustrate the significance of aligning marketing strategies with market dynamics, which holds important lessons for both scholars and practitioners interested in micro-enterprises, marketing, and competition. In practice, this study provides a roadmap for small business owners, highlighting effective marketing tactics that can foster resilience in a competitive market. Furthermore, the study serves as a strategic guide for policymakers, especially local governments, in developing frameworks to support SME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises). By focusing on competitive strategies, governments can enact policies that not only sustain these small enterprises but also encourage their growth, contributing to the overall economic health of local markets such as Bukit Sion. The originality of this research lies in its focus on the micro-level dynamics of food stalls in a localized market, offering a rare, in-depth examination of how small businesses can utilize strategic marketing to thrive in competitive settings.

The limitations of this research must also be acknowledged. Firstly, the scope of the study is limited to food stalls in Bukit Sion Market, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or industries. While the study provides valuable insights into the marketing strategies employed by these small businesses, it does not capture the broader spectrum of SME operating in other sectors or in markets with different competitive landscapes. Additionally, the research is based on qualitative methods, which, while rich in detail, may lack the empirical robustness of quantitative data. Future research could address this by incorporating a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative insights with quantitative analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of SME marketing strategies. There is also a need for further investigation into the long-term effects of the marketing strategies identified in this study. For instance, future studies could explore how sustained promotional efforts, market innovation, and customer engagement strategies impact the financial performance and longevity of micro-enterprises over time.

Lastly, the study could benefit from a deeper exploration of the external factors influencing SME competitiveness, such as regulatory frameworks, economic shifts, and technological advancements. These elements, while outside the direct control of the businesses, play a significant role in shaping the competitive environment. Understanding how external variables interact with internal business strategies would provide a richer, more nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by SME. Future researchers may also wish to examine the role of digital marketing and e-commerce platforms in enhancing the competitiveness of food stalls and other small businesses in local markets, particularly in light of the growing importance of online consumer behavior. As the business landscape continues to evolve, especially with the digital transformation brought about by technological advancements, it becomes crucial for small businesses to adapt and integrate modern marketing tools into their strategies. Therefore, exploring the effectiveness of digital platforms in conjunction with traditional marketing tactics could form a valuable area of study for future researchers.

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