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Analysis of Direct Marketing and Personal Selling Strategy at PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia

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Abstract: This study analyzes the Direct Marketing and Personal Selling strategies at PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia and their impact on sales and customer relationships. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. The results showed that Direct Marketing through email and social media is effective in reaching customers and increasing responses, despite challenges such as the perception of messages as spam. Personal Selling has been shown to build strong customer relationships, but is constrained by the lack of an accurate customer database, making it difficult to measure the success of the strategy. Both strategies contribute significantly to increasing sales and customer loyalty. The challenges identified, such as the need for improved digital infrastructure and sales force training, require special attention. Optimal implementation of both strategies can create more value for customers and drive the company's sales growth.

Keyword: Strategy, Direct Marketing, Personal Selling, Sales Target.

INTRODUCTION

PT Duta Merpati Indonesia, as a company engaged in the distribution and marketing of iron and steel products, faces increasingly complex challenges amidst tight industrial competition. PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia has 10 branches, including Lamongan, Gresik, Bojonegoro, Tuban, Jember, Probolinggo, Situbondo, Rembang, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, which are headquartered in Paciran, Lamongan. Although the company has built an extensive distribution network and offers quality products, achieving optimal sales targets is still a challenge. The company targets different monthly sales at each branch, but sales figures often vary each month, indicating significant fluctuations. This situation is one of the obstacles for the company in maintaining the stability of its marketing strategy, considering that changing targets can impact client trust and the effectiveness of the marketing team in achieving consistent results.

To face competition and maximize sales, PT Duta Merpati Indonesia implements several marketing strategies, focusing on *Direct marketing* and *personal selling*. *Direct marketing* is a marketing method that allows companies to send messages directly to target consumers without

intermediaries, in order to trigger a quick response or direct transaction from consumers (Kotler and Keller, 2016). *Direct marketing* allows companies to direct marketing messages directly to consumers without intermediaries, so that they can create more personal and responsive communication (Djakasaputra et al., 2021). In the iron and steel distribution industry, this strategy is important because it can reach customers more effectively and quickly. Through *Direct marketing*, PT Duta Merpati Indonesia can promote its products directly to companies that are their main targets in the B2B (business-to-business) business model, ensuring that the messages delivered are in accordance with the specific needs of each client.

Direct marketing strategy is implemented through *direct message marketing* and *social media marketing*. PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia uses one of the internal CRM platforms in delivering messages or approaches to customers. The customer database will be labeled in the form of a location that matches the branch area such as Tuban, Bojonegoro, Gresik, and so on. The delivery of this promotional message is done through a broadcasting system. Broadcasting will be done when a company branch experiences a decline in sales. This broadcasting message contains product offers that suit customer needs. Not only that, the approach taken is also soft selling such as asking for news or asking about the projects run by the customer.

direct marketing strategies through *social media marketing*, content is distributed through the TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and website platforms. In distributing content through social media, the company also has a concept that is applied to the content. The content concept applied is related to new products and also the completeness and advantages of the company's products. The company consistently distributes content every day to ensure that information about their products or services is conveyed well to customers and target audiences.

In addition, PT Duta Merpati Indonesia also implements a *personal selling strategy* that relies on salespeople to interact directly with customers or go to the customer's workshop. *Personal selling* is considered an effective approach in building long-term relationships with customers. This direct interaction allows salespeople to provide detailed explanations of products, respond to questions, and customize offers according to the specific needs of each client (Putra & Yusiana, 2023). This approach is relevant for PT Duta Merpati Indonesia because personalization in interactions can create a stronger bond between the company and customers, thereby increasing loyalty and the potential for repeat sales.

In implementing the *personal selling strategy*, the sales team of PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia faced obstacles because they did not have clear and accurate customer data. To obtain customer data, they still rely on mapping via Google Maps, which makes the process of identifying potential customers less effective and difficult to measure accurately. As a result, the success of the *personal selling strategy* cannot be evaluated properly, and the approach taken is often not in accordance with the actual needs or profiles of customers.

However, several external factors also affect the effectiveness of this marketing strategy. Month-to-month sales fluctuations indicate that factors such as stock availability, higher product prices compared to competitors, and high shipping costs are still major challenges. For example, in June 2024, sales increased sharply compared to the previous year, but in the following month, July 2024, there was a decline although it was still better than the same period in 2023. This fluctuation reflects inconsistencies in supply and price adjustments that can affect customer satisfaction and the company's competitiveness in the market.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Direct Marketing and Personal Selling strategies at PT Duta Merpati Indonesia and evaluate their effectiveness in achieving sales targets. In addition, this study will also identify obstacles that affect marketing results, both from internal factors such as limited resources and sales force training, as well as from external factors including price competition and high shipping costs. By understanding these challenges, it is hoped that the company can formulate more strategic steps in maintaining sales stability and increasing its competitiveness in this dynamic market.

METHOD

The approach used in this study is qualitative, which aims to explore the views, experiences, and perceptions of informants related to Direct Marketing and Personal Selling strategies at PT Duta Merpati Indonesia. This study is descriptive exploratory, which focuses on understanding the context and meaning of the phenomenon being studied, without trying to generalize the results.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected informants, namely marketing managers, salespeople, and customers who were considered to have relevant knowledge or experience with the implementation of the company's marketing strategy. Direct observation was conducted to obtain empirical data on behavior and interactions that occur in the marketing process, as well as to understand the context of the work environment at PT Duta Merpati Indonesia. In addition, documentation techniques were used to complement and strengthen data from interviews and observations, including the collection of related documents such as marketing reports, promotional materials, and records of interactions with customers.

Data analysis was conducted inductively, where the collected data was organized, coded, and interpreted to find certain themes or patterns related to the effectiveness of Direct Marketing and Personal Selling strategies. The analysis process followed the stages of thematic analysis which included identifying patterns, drawing conclusions, and re-checking (triangulation) to ensure the validity of the findings. Triangulation was conducted through a comparison of data from various sources (interviews, observations, and documentation) to minimize bias and strengthen the accuracy of the research results.

All procedures of this research were carried out with due regard to research ethics, where privacy, confidentiality, and informant consent were strictly maintained. Through this qualitative approach, the research is expected to provide a deep and comprehensive understanding of the implementation of Direct marketing and personal selling strategies at PT Duta Merpati Indonesia, as well as reveal the perspectives and experiences of informants in specific contexts that are difficult to reach with quantitative methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the Direct Marketing and Personal Selling strategies at PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia have a significant impact on increasing sales and customer relationships. The Direct Marketing approach through email marketing and social media marketing has proven effective in reaching customers and increasing response rates, especially with personalized messages. Meanwhile, *Personal Selling* plays an important role in building customer trust and loyalty through strong interpersonal relationships and a deep understanding of customer needs.

However, this study also identified challenges, such as technological limitations in support *Direct Marketing* and the need for increased sales force training to ensure consistency in strategy implementation. Improving digital infrastructure and advanced training are important steps to maximize marketing effectiveness at PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia.

Based on the results of the analysis, it is clear that both strategies, namely Direct marketing and personal selling, play an important role in increasing sales and building better relationships with customers. This is in line with marketing theory which states that the right approach can create more value for consumers, which in turn increases customer loyalty and satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Direct Marketing

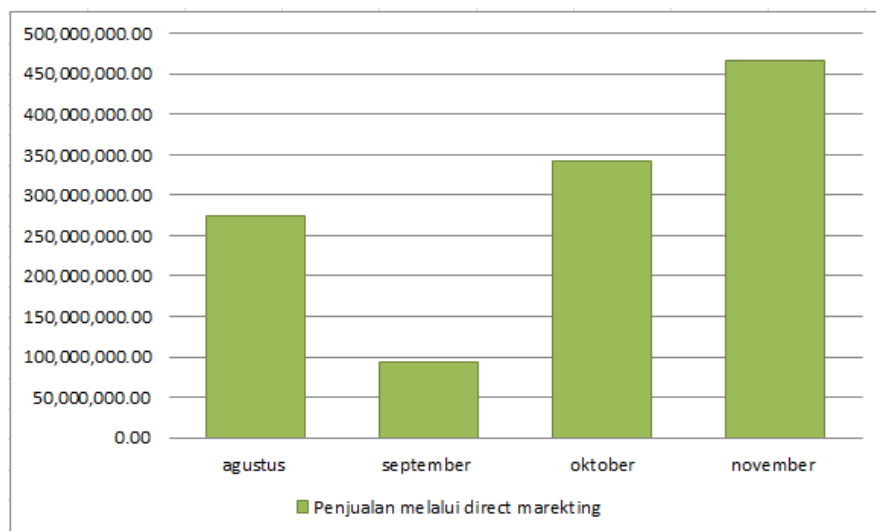
In the context of Direct marketing, companies utilize various digital channels, especially internal CRM applications and social media, to deliver direct marketing messages to

consumers. The use of direct message marketing through internal CRM applications that use a broadcasting system, namely the distribution of information through messages to all branches of the company, shows encouraging results. Although some customers feel that these broadcasting messages are considered spam, more of them consider that these broadcasting messages can help their needs. Research shows that information delivered according to customer needs and interests successfully attracts their attention. For example, offers that are specifically designed for a particular group of customers, based on previous purchasing behavior data, can increase the sense of relevance and urgency to buy. By grouping customers based on demographic and behavioral characteristics, companies can design more targeted and relevant campaigns.

In the use of Social Media Marketing, companies distribute marketing content through various platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Not only that, the company also optimizes the company's website which contains the company's products including specifications, advantages, and uses of the product. In distributing content through the company's social media, there is a concept determined by the company. The content concept determined is content containing the company's products along with their completeness and uses. The distribution of this content is carried out every day on the TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook platforms to ensure that information about their products or services is conveyed properly to customers and target audiences.

The implementation of direct marketing strategy in PT. DMI has a challenge, namely increasing new customers who are making their first purchase in all branch areas of the company. In addition, the challenge of the digital marketing team is to follow up on old customers who have not made transactions with the company for a long time, so that it can have an impact on increasing the company's sales. In getting new buyers / customers, the Digital Marketing Team carries out various optimizations on online platforms, including optimization of keywords (use of hashtags) searches on Tiktok and Instagram, and doing paid Ads on the meta platform (Facebook). In addition, the digital marketing team also optimizes search engines so that it is easier for new customers to find the company to make transactions with customer service directly (Direct).

The impact of conducting Direct Marketing by optimizing various social media platforms can be seen in the following diagram:



Source: Marketing Team of PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia

Figure 1. Sales graph through direct marketing

Based on the graph above, the implementation of the direct marketing strategy resulted in sales that were in line with the target, but in September there was a decline due to certain challenges or obstacles. This can indicate that the improvement efforts made by the digital marketing team have a positive impact, so that sales in October and November were able to increase significantly, thus driving the company's growth at the end of the period. The increase and decrease in sales that occurred during the period from August to November were influenced by several factors. In August, the digital marketing team managed to achieve the sales target because they followed up and broadcasted to old customers, as well as a large project that made a significant purchase. However, the decline in sales in September was due to the absence of broadcasting to old customers, as well as the website that was not yet optimal to attract customer attention. Sales increased again in October because the digital marketing team made improvements to Facebook and the company's website, which increased visibility and interaction with customers. The increase in sales continued in November, along with the success of website optimization which generated many leads. In addition, in November, purchases were also obtained through advertising on Facebook, which managed to attract many new customers who were more active in making purchases than old customers.

Personal Selling

In the implementation of personal selling, direct interaction between salespeople and customers is very crucial. Research shows that salespeople at PT Duta Merpati Indonesia are trained to recognize customer needs and desires more deeply. They not only sell products, but also function as consultants who provide solutions. This reflects the concept of relationship selling, where sellers build long-term relationships with customers based on trust and mutual benefit. When salespeople succeed in building good relationships and mutual trust with customers, customers feel more comfortable making purchases. For example, in a sales session, salespeople who are able to listen well and provide appropriate recommendations can increase customer satisfaction and encourage repeat purchases. This approach shows that personal selling is more than just a transaction process; it also builds an emotional bond between customers and brands, which is the core of the Customer Value Theory that emphasizes customer satisfaction and positive experiences.

Personal selling strategies are also carried out using catalog marketing. Catalogs as one of the indicators of personal selling are one of the most effective marketing communication tools, in addition to helping potential customers determine what kind of product they want, they also help companies get direct responses from potential customers (Wahida and Dedi, 2021). The use of product catalogs without listing prices by the sales team is a strategy that aims to encourage direct interaction between customers and the company. By not listing prices, customers who are interested in the product will feel the need to contact the company to get more information about prices and available offers. This provides several advantages, including creating opportunities to build more personal communication with customers. When customers contact the company to ask for prices, the sales team can immediately understand the customer's specific needs, provide more detailed explanations of the product, and offer solutions that suit their needs.

However, in implementing a personal selling strategy, one of the shortcomings faced by the sales team is their inability to manage and utilize an accurate customer database. A good and properly structured customer database is essential in a personal selling strategy because it allows the sales team to find out important information about customers, such as their purchase history, preferences, needs, and problems they face. Without complete and accurate data, the sales team has difficulty targeting the right customers, developing relevant approaches, and conducting effective follow-ups.

As a result, the success of a personal selling strategy is difficult to measure, because there is no clear benchmark of who has been contacted, what the results of their interactions are, and

whether they are potentially making a purchase. This makes evaluating and improving the sales strategy less effective, because there is no data that can be used as a reference to see trends, patterns, or areas that need improvement. Without an accurate database, the sales team may contact the wrong customers or miss opportunities with more potential customers, thus affecting the results and efficiency of the personal selling strategy itself.

CONCLUSION

Based on research results at PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia, the most effective strategy for increasing sales is Direct Marketing. This strategy has proven to be able to reach more customers efficiently through digital channels such as social media, email marketing, and website optimization. With a personalized and relevant approach, Direct Marketing has managed to increase sales significantly, especially after optimizing social media and the company's website. This can be seen from the sharp increase in sales in October and November, which shows the effectiveness of digital campaigns in attracting customer attention and generating new leads. In addition, Direct Marketing offers lower costs and more easily measurable results compared to Personal Selling.

However, Personal Selling still has an important role in building long-term relationships with customers, especially for high-value products such as steel and iron. Through direct interaction, salespeople can understand customer needs in depth and create strong loyalty. The main challenges in Personal Selling are the dependence on the skills of the salesperson and the lack of an accurate customer database, making its effectiveness difficult to measure.

Therefore, PT. Duta Merpati Indonesia should optimally integrate these two strategies by using Direct Marketing to reach new customers and increase product visibility, and strengthening Personal Selling to retain old customers and provide more personalized services. This combination will create a holistic approach and increase overall sales effectiveness.

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