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## Workforce and Performance: Mastering Property Sales and Enhancing Marketing Skills During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** The property sector contributed 2.77% to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product in 2019,. However, 2020 proved to be a challenging year globally due to the outbreak of COVID-19, which significantly disrupted various sectors, including the global economy. The extent of financial losses worldwide due to the pandemic has not been precisely quantified. This study explores the impact of the pandemic on the property market, specifically focusing on workforce dynamics, performance metrics, effective property sales strategies during the pandemic, and the enhancement of marketing competencies. Employing a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach, this research concludes that exceptional property sales during the pandemic require rigorous effort, high performance, and advanced marketing skills. Competence, diligence, and performance are crucial in enhancing the capabilities of individual salespersons and, consequently, boosting organizational profits. This study highlights that the diligent and performance-oriented behaviors of salespersons are pivotal for acquiring and applying knowledge in sales scenarios, which are essential for navigating the complexities of the pandemic-affected market. The resilience shown by property salespersons in terms of time dedication and sustained effort amidst failures underscores their critical role in sustaining business operations during unprecedented times.

**Keyword:** Workforce, Performance, Competency, Pandemic, Marketing

### INTRODUCTION

The real estate industry in Indonesia presents a compelling investment landscape, underpinned by robust growth potential and significant international investment. The strategic collaborations between global investors and local partners, well-versed in the domestic market conditions, underscore Indonesia's allure as an investment destination (World Bank, 2019). The real estate sector significantly contributes to the national economy,

evidenced by its 2.77% contribution to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product in 2019 (Statistik Indonesia, 2019). However, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has had a staggering impact globally, disrupting economic sectors, including real estate. The pandemic's economic fallout has been profound, with the Asian Development Bank (2020) estimating global financial losses to be between US\$ 5.8 trillion and US\$ 8.8 trillion.

The pandemic has necessitated rapid adaptations across all sectors, reshaping business operations and consumer behaviors (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020; Koonin, 2020; Sohrabi et al., 2020; Whitelaw et al., 2020). Indonesia's geographic proximity to countries heavily impacted by COVID-19 and heightened global interconnectivity has exacerbated the pandemic's effects on its economy, compelling sectors to implement stringent measures like social distancing and large-scale social restrictions (Alvarez, Argente, & Lippi, 2020; Nemteanu & Dabija, 2021).

In the context of employment and performance within the real estate sector, success hinges not only on skill and capability but also on dedication, perseverance, and integrity (Muttaqin et al., 2021). Employees' commitment to their roles and the value they place on their work are crucial for achieving exemplary outcomes (Nata, Suriani, & Darmawan, 2020). Mushtaque et al. (2021) argue that optimal performance is closely linked to the extent of employees' efforts, highlighting the importance of resilience and continuous engagement, especially in challenging conditions like those presented by the pandemic (Chulanova, 2019).

Property salespersons play a pivotal role in not only driving sales but also in educating the public about the benefits of property ownership. The profession demands high levels of performance and the ability to navigate the complexities of selling high-value assets, which requires meeting specific sales targets and entails significant effort (Pauser & Wagner, 2019; Pauser, Wagner, & Ebster, 2018). Additionally, the commitment of marketing employees to their tasks can influence operational efficiencies, as delays in reporting can impede business processes (Rooney, Krolukowska, & Bruce, 2020).

This study aims to delve into the dynamics of the workforce and performance within the property sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring effective sales strategies and the necessary enhancement of marketing competencies to adapt to and thrive in the evolving economic landscape.

## **METHOD**

This research adopts a qualitative methodology with a systematic literature review approach designed to enhance the understanding and elucidation of existing problems within the field. A systematic literature review meticulously identifies, evaluates, and synthesizes all available evidence on a given topic to address specific research questions that have been previously established. This method is conducted in a structured manner, adhering to a predefined protocol to mitigate bias and personal interpretations by the researcher, thereby ensuring objectivity in the review process (Gill & Johnson, 2010).

According to Sutton and Austin (2015), the data collection process in systematic reviews involves the examination of various written sources including books, magazines, official documents, regulations, diaries, journals, and prior studies. This broad spectrum of documentation ensures a comprehensive aggregation of knowledge and insights relevant to the research questions.

To ascertain the validity of the data, this study employs credibility criteria, which includes extending observations, persistent observation, and triangulation. These strategies enhance the reliability of the data by providing multiple perspectives and prolonged engagement with the data sources (Flick, 2014).

Data analysis in this study utilizes a descriptive analytical method. This approach involves detailed descriptions of the collected data, which may include textual information and visual materials, rather than quantitative data. By articulating the information gathered

from scripts, documents, and previous research, the study aims to clarify and interpret realities through triangulated evidence, thus providing a thorough understanding of the topic under review.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Workforce, Marketing Competency, and Performance**

Hard work and performance are integral to organizational success, where hard work entails directed efforts using personal energy, contributing significantly to employee resilience and stamina (Mandiq & Nolisal, 2020; Gellner & Veen, 2019; Makudza, Muchongwe & Dangaiso, 2020). Research shows that diligent employees who exceed their job descriptions not only enhance their personal performance but also positively impact overall organizational effectiveness (Gitonga, Kamaara & Orwa, 2016; Gomez & Palich, 2015). Similarly, marketing competence, encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, plays a pivotal role in consumer engagement and sales effectiveness. Effective marketing is characterized by the ability to provide actionable solutions, critical thinking, strategic relationship management, and the ability to communicate strategic outcomes effectively (Isa, Salleh & Aziz, 2016; Kang, Diao & Zanini, 2021; Al-Mamun & Fazal, 2018). Purkayastha & Sharma (2016) further elaborate that marketing competency includes not only technical skills and knowledge but also underlying personal attributes such as values, attitudes, and interests, which collectively contribute to a marketer's ability to navigate complex consumer interactions and achieve organizational goals.

### **Assessing the workforce and performance in order to effectively sell property during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Indonesia's property market presents substantial investment opportunities, particularly in the residential sector, which often sees a surge in development following political elections. Government policies aimed at infrastructure improvements—like new roads and bridges—tend to reduce transportation and commodity costs, indirectly benefiting the property sector despite stiff global competition (Muller & Peres, 2019). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the sector, with a significant decline in property transactions as consumer priorities shift (Jones, 2020). The pandemic has necessitated a reevaluation of business strategies, emphasizing the development of employee competencies while adhering to health protocols (Bolat, Kooli & Wright, 2016). Sales performance remains crucial, with companies focusing on maximizing profit through strategic sales and operational efficiencies (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Hard work, characterized by consistent effort and resilience, is vital for overcoming challenges in task completion, aligning with organizational goals for both individuals and the environment (Bae & Han, 2020; Azam & Waheed, 2018; Akinnusi, Sonubi & Oyewunmi, 2017). Performance metrics continue to focus on the tangible outputs of employee efforts, emphasizing the need for regular performance evaluations to foster improvement (Smith, Smith & Shaw, 2017; Ifeoma & Purity, 2020; Gomez & Palich, 2015). Yet, many property salespersons struggle with achieving targets due to insufficient motivation and competency, impacting customer recruitment and satisfaction negatively (Gellner & Veen, 2019).

### **Enhance Marketing Skills for Real Estate Agents**

Marketing extends far beyond mere sales activities; it encompasses a series of interrelated actions that begin well before production and continue after sales to foster repeat purchases and customer loyalty. Effective marketing requires meticulous planning of product offerings tailored to meet consumer needs and desires, followed by strategic communication and advertising to ensure product awareness. Once a product is sold, the focus shifts to engaging customers further to encourage repeat business, underscoring the significance of

marketing competence in delivering consumer satisfaction and fostering enduring market presence (Mihaela, 2015).

The real estate sector, driven by the essential need for housing, sees developers offering viable and affordable housing solutions through diverse models, pricing, and promotional strategies. These marketing efforts are critical in positioning products effectively within the market and achieving dominance, moving beyond product-centric approaches to ones that prioritize consumer satisfaction as a route to profitability (Ahmed, 2015; Gaikwad & Kate, 2016).

In the context of property sales, marketing competence encompasses a broad range of technical skills. Salespersons must possess thorough knowledge of product designs, specifications, applications, and functions, as well as understand company-enforced procedures to deliver satisfactory service and secure sales (Al-Mamun, Nawi & Zainol, 2016). Additionally, a deep understanding of industry trends, customer behaviors, market dynamics, and competitor strategies is essential for adapting to the evolving marketplace. Marketing in real estate not only aims to meet and exceed customer expectations for satisfaction but also supports the overall business's sustainability. As one of the key functional areas in any business organization, marketing competence is crucial for enduring success in the competitive business landscape (Al-Mamun, Fazal & Muniady, 2019). This study identifies several critical marketing competencies that property agents must possess, including: Product Knowledge, Customer Knowledge, and Competitor Knowledge.

This study effectively identified and enhanced the marketing proficiency of property salespersons, as demonstrated in the following table 1:

**Table 1. Upgrading Marketing Competency for Property Salesperson**

Indicators	Priority Aspects	Informations
Reliability	Performance Consistency	Able to convey information related to property sales correctly from the start
	Dependability	Accurately fulfill its promise in conveying property information according to the agreed schedule, storing property data correctly and sending accurate invoices (if agreed)
	Creativity and Innovation	Analyze and create strategies more effectively or efficiently so as to produce something different from the others
Responsiveness	Preparedness	Helping consumers and conveying property information quickly and accurately
	Readiness	Timeliness of service, speed of contacting customers again, and fast delivery of services in property buying and selling transactions
Capability	Skill and Knowledge	Mastery of skills and knowledge needed to be able to deliver services according to customer needs
	Operational Support	Knowledge and information management of property sales
	Persuasive and Negotiative	Customers who are targeted to then be prospected to establish agreement
Accessibility	Approachability	Ease of approaching customers
	Contact and Contract	Easy to contact, reach, and contract property purchase agreements
Courtesy	Attitude	Humble, respect, attention, and Kindness
Communication	Explanation and Information	Deliver information to customers in a language they can easily understand, and always listen to customer suggestions and complaints

Indicators	Priority Aspects	Informations
Credibility	Orientation	Hard selling versus soft selling approach
	Reputation	Competitive advantage, fame, and integrity
	Personal Characteristic	Workforce, worksmart, and good performance
Security	Physical Safety	Free from danger, risk or hesitation
	Financial Security	Security guarantees related to customer's finances
	Confidentiality	Privacy and Secret
Emphaty	Careness	Seek to understand customers and their specific needs, provide individualized attention, and get to know regular customers
Tangibles	Physic Facility	Infrastructure, assurance, and others
	Tools and Technology	Use of Smartphones, Websites, Internet, e-Documents, MoUs, etc
	Personnel	Good looking, smart, wise, optimistic, performance-oriented
	Stress Management	Decreasing stress and always be happy even got deadline and target

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this research underscore the necessity of rigorous hard work, high performance, and enhanced marketing competencies for property salespersons during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key competencies identified include reliability, responsiveness, capability, accessibility, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, empathy, and tangibles. These attributes are crucial in not only navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic but also in enhancing the overall capabilities of salespersons, thereby boosting organizational profits. The dedication and effort of property salespersons in overcoming various obstacles are vital for completing tasks effectively and demonstrate their overall business acumen and resilience, especially in terms of sustained work effort and perseverance through failures.

In terms of property marketing, a significant emphasis is placed on both the current and future commitments of human resources and funding necessary for long-term marketing strategies. Marketing strategies need to consider the dynamic interdependence between the company and its internal and external environments. Successfully implementing targeted marketing strategies that focus on quality, price, and competitiveness is crucial for winning in a highly competitive market.

During the pandemic, leveraging electronic media for marketing has proven effective, allowing for a broad reach while maintaining necessary health precautions by avoiding direct physical interactions between producers and consumers. However, the shift to remote engagements raises challenges in ensuring alignment between salespersons and organizational goals due to potential discrepancies in time and communication. Thus, management must actively support work motivation and commitment to sustain productivity and performance despite ongoing operational costs and the unique challenges presented by the pandemic.

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