

# Marketing Mix Strategy in Efforts to Increase Drug Sales at the Healthy Pharmacy in Gunungsitoli City, Produced by PT Kalbe Farma Tbk

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## ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by business developments which require every entrepreneur to combine marketing mix functions so that the company's business can run smoothly. Many argue that marketing should play an important role in determining the direction of a company's concept and strategy. This research aims to determine the marketing mix strategy in an effort to increase drug sales in healthy pharmacies in Gunungsitoli City. This research is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach with the research object being a healthy pharmacy in Gunungsitoli City. Data sources were taken from documentation, interview results and observation results. In this research, interviews with various questions about the research topic were conducted directly. The results of this research show that the healthy pharmacy in Gunungsitoli City has implemented the 7p marketing mix strategy in its business which has been running but is still not optimal/deficient and this has resulted in a decline in sales due to lack of promotion and increasingly tighter competition. Therefore, implementing the marketing mix strategy is able to increase sales volume.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing plays a crucial role in the survival, growth, and profitability of businesses. The success of achieving business objectives relies heavily on entrepreneurs' skills in various areas such as marketing, production, finance, and others. It is widely acknowledged that marketing should play a significant role in setting the direction and strategy of a company. Planning a company's concept and strategy is an effort to maintain its consistency with its business environment, with marketing traditionally serving as a catalyst between the company and its customers, distributors, and competitors (Lotfi et al., 2024). Generally, every sales endeavor aims to increase sales volume, enhance competitiveness, and minimize product costs to achieve maximum profit. Profit reflects the success of sales management and the sustainability of the business. Achieving maximum profit is not easy for a business, and marketing significantly influences this success (Schulze et al., 2024).

According to Kasmir (2010: 81), strategy is a series of comprehensive designs that illustrate how a company should operate to achieve its goals. The marketing objective is to understand consumer wants and needs so that products or services align with consumer preferences, thus

driving sales. Therefore, marketers must comprehend key issues in their field, provide clear guidance on company activities, and develop strategies to achieve company objectives (Kaiser et al., 2023). Marketing strategy plays a crucial role in business success and is instrumental in realizing business plans. This can be achieved if a company aims to maintain and increase sales of its products or services.

By implementing accurate marketing strategies through seizing opportunities to increase sales, a company can enhance or maintain its position in the market. Modern marketing implementation has a significant role in directly supporting increased company profits. Marketing strategies should provide clear and directed insights into the activities a company will undertake to maximize opportunities in several target markets (Nurlita, 2016). Marketing mix is a way for entrepreneurs to influence consumers, requiring careful planning and supervision, and actions regarding product, price, distribution or product placement, promotion, process, physical evidence, and people. These factors in the marketing mix are expected to create customer satisfaction, thus affecting consumer satisfaction in purchasing a product. Currently, there are numerous businesses opening in the healthcare sector, particularly pharmacies.

A pharmacy is a place where pharmaceutical services are provided by a pharmacist. Based on Law Number 25 of 1980, a pharmacy is a place where pharmaceutical work and drug distribution to the public are conducted. Pharmacies provide pharmaceutical dispensing services to the public, perform drug compounding, form conversion, drug mixing, and drug delivery. Pharmacies also serve as a place for pharmacists to dedicate their professional duties (Marc Lim, 2023).

Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli is growing and becoming more competitive in marketing various pharmaceutical products, including those produced by PT. Kalbe Farma Tbk. Facing competition in marketing these drugs, the pharmacy owner must choose appropriate strategies, one of which is marketing mix. The phenomena observed during the pre-research phase include Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli's less strategic location due to its central and congested city location. There is a lack of explanation or information from Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli regarding the types and uses of drugs sold (Sa'adah et al., 2021). The price of drugs produced by PT. Kalbe Farma Tbk and sold by Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli is relatively higher than other pharmacies. Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli has never implemented drug marketing through social media, requiring customers to visit the pharmacy directly. Limited communication between customers and Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli due to the absence of digital marketing strategies. Based on the above background, the focus of this research is: Marketing mix strategy in efforts to increase drug sales at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli produced by PT. Kalbe Farma, Tbk.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method employed in this study involves a qualitative descriptive approach, emphasizing analysis, processes, and meanings, particularly from the participants' perspectives. According to Sugiyono in (Cesariana et al., 2022) qualitative research is suitable for understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives. It is particularly useful for examining the conditions or situations of the research subject. The theoretical foundation guides the research focus appropriately. Data types, as categorized by (Mostaghel et al., 2023) include qualitative research, quantitative research, and combined research, where both qualitative and quantitative data are utilized.

In this study, qualitative descriptive research is utilized to gain an accurate understanding of the phenomena. The relationship is described descriptively using words and language, within a specific natural context, and employing various scientific methods for sharp and relevant research outcomes. The research location chosen is Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli, located at Jalan Sirao No. 137, Kota Gunungsitoli.

The research variables are crucial aspects studied by the researcher to gain information and draw conclusions. Following (Fedorenko et al., 2023) variables are attributes or objects with variations among them. This study employs single variables, focusing on the "marketing mix" concept, which aims to achieve business objectives by creating quality products, advertising through various channels, offering enticing promotions, and selecting accessible locations. Data sources encompass both primary and secondary data. Primary data, obtained directly from research subjects

without intermediaries, include interviews with key informants and staff. Secondary data are obtained indirectly, such as evidence, documents, reports, and supporting data regarding annual sales increases. Data collection instruments involve observation, interviews, and field documentation. The data collection technique aims to obtain accurate and systematic data for valid analysis. It includes interviews, documentation, and observation (Kocaman et al., 2023). Data analysis employs descriptive qualitative analysis techniques, involving data reduction, data presentation, triangulation, and conclusion drawing. These techniques ensure data validity and provide meaningful insights into the research problem.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Interview Results on Marketing Mix Strategies to Increase Drug Sales at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli**

##### **1. Market Selection**

Based on interviews conducted by the researcher at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli, it was found that the pharmacy's owner chose a location in the middle of a shopping center, which initially seemed strategic. However, with time, many other entrepreneurs opened pharmacies, offering significantly cheaper prices. Consequently, consumers are now divided not only by affordable prices but also by accessibility. It can be concluded that while Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli made the right market selection, there's a need to reevaluate strategies to reengage consumers (Kocaman et al., 2023).

##### **2. Product Planning**

Interviews revealed that when a product is unavailable at Apotek Sehat, customers are redirected to similar drugs. Additionally, the pharmacy offers various types of drugs with guaranteed quality and price, although some expensive drugs with low demand are not sold. Hence, it can be concluded that Apotek Sehat has effective product planning strategies (Sharma & Kayeser, 2024).

##### **3. Pricing**

The pricing set by Apotek Sehat is aligned with market standards, aiming not to maximize profits but to attract customers. If prices are unaffordable, customers are redirected to other options to prevent them from seeking alternatives elsewhere. Thus, it can be concluded that the pricing strategy at Apotek Sehat is appropriate.

##### **4. Distribution System**

While the distribution channel benefits the company, direct delivery to customers is not practiced due to lack of personnel and the lightweight nature of the products. However, the pharmacy's accessible location compensates for this. Hence, it can be concluded that Apotek Sehat has yet to optimize its distribution strategy.

##### **5. Marketing Communication**

Customer service at Apotek Sehat is commendable, with staff enquiring about customers' needs to ensure satisfaction. However, social media promotion is lacking. Therefore, it can be concluded that while Apotek Sehat provides excellent customer service, its promotional strategies need improvement (Xu & Smyth, 2023).

#### **Interview Results on Drug Sales Improvement at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli.**

##### **1. Achieving Sales Volume**

Despite efforts, Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli has not met its sales targets due to intense competition from similar businesses offering lower prices, resulting in decreased revenue.

##### **2. Profit Generation**

The pharmacy struggles to generate profits due to low pricing to attract customers, resulting in minimal profit margins. However, efforts are made to analyze high-profit products to sustain business.

##### **3. Supporting Company Growth**

To sustain growth and competitiveness, Apotek Sehat aims to procure products directly from distributors to offer more affordable prices to customers.

### Marketing Mix Strategies Used by Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli.

Interviews revealed that marketing mix strategies at Apotek Sehat are suboptimal due to employees' lack of understanding of their importance. While product strategies vary, pricing is generally in line with market standards. However, promotions are lacking, resulting in decreased sales. Excellent customer service is provided, but distribution strategies and digital marketing efforts are lacking. Physical evidence, however, is well-maintained (Scholdra et al., 2023).

### Marketing Mix Strategy in Drug Pricing at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli

Marketing mix strategies significantly influence drug pricing at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli. While prices are generally affordable, direct procurement from distributors allows for even lower prices, attracting more customers (Sharp et al., 2024).

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted by the researcher at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli, the following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the research results previously presented: The marketing mix strategy implemented by Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli, encompassing all its elements such as product, place, price, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence, has been executed well. However, it is still not optimal. For instance, promotional strategies, particularly the absence of social media promotions, hinder the pharmacy's ability to attract more customers. Moreover, there are still customers who are unaware of Apotek Sehat's existence, indicating a need for more visibility. Issues like inadequate parking spaces also pose challenges for customers intending to shop at Apotek Sehat. Pricing strategies also require further optimization. The marketing mix strategy in setting drug prices at Apotek Sehat Kota Gunungsitoli focuses on implementing prices that are affordable and aligned with market rates. This approach enables customers to access the prices easily, encouraging them to purchase from Apotek Sehat without comparing prices elsewhere. In dealing with challenges in increasing sales, more effective strategies are crucially needed.

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