



## CREATIVITY OF PROMOTIONAL MIX ON THE SALES-PERSON TEAM OF SMARTPHONE RETAIL COMPANIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, there has been a decline in sales of the smartphone market in Indonesia. IDC data shows smartphone sales in Indonesia fell by 18 percent year over year (YoY) in the first half of 2020. This decline occurred due to the social restriction policy set by the government in early 2020. During the Covid-19 Pandemic OPPO Cikarang controlled 28% of the market with the most sales force, which was 215 people. OPPO Cikarang uses the promotional mix as a way to attract consumers' attention and increase sales during the Covid-19 pandemic in the New Normal era. This type of research uses qualitative research and aims to be able to explain and describe the creativity of the promotional mix that is used as a product promotion tool marketed by the salespeople of the OPPO Cikarang smartphone retail company during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study concludes that personal selling is able to integrate several promotional mixes carried out by the company to become a medium of communication and information between sellers and buyers in the form of offline and online marketing creativity.

**Keywords:** *Promotional Mix, Creativity, Personal Selling, Pandemic Covid-19*

### INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a very big impact on the Indonesian economy, including smartphone sales which had fallen sharply in mid-2020, the condition of the smartphone market in Indonesia grew slightly throughout the end of 2020. According to IDC, the smartphone market in Indonesia has declined by around 19% year over year (YoY) in the first half of 2020. The decline was caused by the government's policy of implementing social restrictions to contain the pace and to stop the spread of Covid-19 which began to be enforced since 2020. The top 5 smartphone vendors in Indonesia are still inhabited by the

same players as in the previous quarters. However, some of them swap positions with each other. In the first position, Vivo is still dominated by a market share of 23.3 percent, only very slightly adrift of Oppo with a percentage of 23.2 percent and sitting in second place. Xiaomi is in third place with a market share of 15.3 percent, followed by Realme which crawled to fourth place with a market share of 14 percent. Samsung was actually thrown into the fifth position with a market share of 13.5 percent. IDC said that it was difficult for Samsung to compete in the mid-range category or cellphones with a price range of Rp. 3-6 million which was controlled by OPPO. The great achievement above certainly cannot be separated from the role of the Sales Team in the field who sells, serves and introduces OPPO products. Uniquely, OPPO is a manufacturer and at the same time a distributor as a retail company to market their own products. Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, there were many promotional activities carried out by the OPPO Cikarang sales team to score extraordinary sales figures, such as exhibitions at malls periodically and changing in every mall in the Bekasi district.

Canalys noted that the smartphone market leader in Indonesia is now occupied by OPPO, which recorded high growth and was able to beat the previous 'king', Vivo. Oppo controls the smartphone market share in Indonesia by 24 percent. In the second position, Samsung has managed to climb the rankings with a market share of 19 percent. Even so, Samsung still has a red report card at an average annual growth rate of minus 5 percent. During the Covid-19 pandemic, in the New Normal era, the promotional mix carried out by the OPPO Cikarang salesperson team certainly made many adaptations in the form of creativity carried out by the salesperson team in selling their products. As researchers see, before the pandemic, OPPO's promotion and sales techniques were very aggressive, such as holding a dance on the side of the road by calling motorists and passing cars, dancing inside the mall to create a crowd and limelight in order to attract customers to come to their exhibition. OPPO can also use dolls called Ollie as the mascot of their brand. Of course, this is a creativity that cannot be used during this time during the Covid-19 Pandemic considering the government's regulations from Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to change to "Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions" (PPKM) which is in effect in several parts of Indonesia. OPPO in Cikarang has the highest market share with a total of 28% and the largest number of salesperson teams there. The 215 people in the salesperson team certainly have different ways and creativity that use the promotional mix to promote and communicate products with potential buyers.

Personal selling as the spearhead of sales at OPPO Cikarang makes OPPO must be able to develop and adapt how to deal with the situation and conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic that did not exist before. Research owned by Mega Fareza Dellamita, Achmad Fauzi DH & Edy Yulianto (2014) would like to reveal the application of Personal Selling to increase Sales (Study at PT Adira Quantum Multifinance Point of Sales (POS) Dieng Computer Square Malang). The results of this study indicate that: 1) Implementation of Personal Selling as one of the right communication media in the company's marketing strategy which is carried out on target by Sahabat Adira (SA) to achieve a target that is met. 2) PT. Adira Quantum Multifinance Point of Sales (POS) Dieng Computer Square Malang has steps - steps taken by personal selling to attract buying interest in prospective customers, by conducting preliminary approaches, presentations and demonstrations, overcoming objections, closing sales. 3) By making visits to potential customers and existing consumers and by always providing explanations about the credit products and services offered, this is a step taken by Friends

of Adira (SA) to achieve increased sales of the company PT. Adira Quantum Multifinance Point of Sales (POS) Dieng Computer Square Malang. According to Research by Kusniadji (2017) personal selling is a communication method in marketing that has various advantages, needed in today's marketing activities. One of the specialties of the personal selling method is the ability to communicate from what was originally in the form of salesforce to being based on direct interaction with customers. According to Kotler (2012), the promotion mix is the core of the promotion itself and is related to how a promotion is carried out as effectively as possible.

According to Kotler (2012), the promotion mix is the core of the promotion itself and is related to how a promotion is carried out as effectively as possible. The promotion mix tool consists of personal selling, sales promotion, advertising, public relationship / publicity, event & experience, interactive online marketing, word of mouth marketing, and direct marketing. If the entrepreneur carries out the appropriate marketing mix, then the company can get consumers both for short and long term.

Moekijat (2011) defines sales as an activity that has the aim of finding potential buyers, influencing them and directing that prospective buyers can adjust their needs to the production of goods services offered and make agreements regarding prices or costs that are mutually beneficial. Mel Rhodes (1961) explained that creativity is a phenomenon regarding a person's ability to communicate about products obtained from the results of mental processes (processes) in generating an idea as an effort to meet needs based on the influence of ecological pressure. In the aspect of creativity, it consists of four things, namely person, process, press and product. Researchers tend to adopt a systems approach, emphasizing complex interactions between humans and their environment as elements for creativity to occur (Agnihotri et al., 2013). Continuous sales person dealing with factors such as changing customer needs, organization dynamics, government and regulatory influences, and complex competitive forces. Coelho et al. (2011) stated that creative employees are better in discovering customer needs, developing good customer relationships, and solving problems in creative and effective ways. In the domain of sales and job performance, creativity is one of the five critical but under-researched areas (Evans et al., 2012). One reason due to lack of research may be the contextual nature of creativity. Research shows that certain job and job characteristics situations can facilitate or hinder creative problem solving (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004).

As the researchers saw, several sub-districts in Bekasi entered the Black Zone in July 2020 and in June 2021, 18 sub-districts in Bekasi were included in the Covid-19 Red Zone. What makes a lot of restrictions in carrying out social activities for the affected community, including in this case, are sales,

This research is expected to provide a description and explanation of how the creativity of the promotional mix of the salesperson team of smartphone retail companies during the Covid-19 pandemic PT World Innovative Telecommunication (OPPO Cikarang).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This type of research is a quality that emphasizes more on a feeding process that is not rigorously studied or has not been measured. The weight point of qualitative research that corresponds to the real circumstances awakened by social life. This research paradigm is a constructivist who will be able to understand and open construction of the latest interpretations in line with the development of information technology and its sophistication so that

it can form a better and sophisticated construction through a natural dialectical process. It can form and create value for reality, so that it is easy to understand in various constructions and can include the values of participants with various respondent constructions to reveal the object of study (Egon G. Guba and Ivonna S. Lincoln: 2009).

The object of this study is the performance of the smartphone company salesperson team during the Covid-19 pandemic with the form of creativity in the promotion mix carried out by the salesperson of PT World Innovative Telecommunication OPPO Cikarang. The informants selected used the Purposive Sampling technique, which is the selection of samples according to special criteria. The party who became the informant of this research was the Team Leader consisting of An Assistant Manager, Regional Manager, Manager Trainer and Salesperson who was called a Promoter by the OPPO Cikarang team. In obtaining information by providing questions and observations that will be answered by the Informant with an attitude of appearance at work and the ability to be able to understand all questions, the ability to express his opinion, be confident and feel safe.

The data collection technique is by interviewing informants, observations in the field and also documentation. The informants involved in this study consisted of various strategic positions in the OPPO Cikarang company such as assistant general manager, Area Manager, Supervisor and Salespeople. Observations were also carried out at malls and mobile phone shops in the roadside area of the Bekasi Regency area by coming to the store and seeing the situation and conditions as well as the activities carried out by the salesperson to prospective buyers and seeing what activities were being carried out. done by the OPPO Cikarang sales team to get potential customers. Interviews are carried out in a structured and in-depth way so that they can dig up all the information needed to get answers from the research so that they can find the information needed in this study. Examination of the validity of this research data using Triangulation can be divided into four types, namely examination techniques using various sources, methods, investigations, and theories. To obtain the truth in the study, the researchers used triangulation techniques, sources, times, and methods. (Khairul Rahmat & Alawiyah, 2020). This research uses one case study at OPPO Bekasi Regency. The data analysis technique used in this study is pattern matching because this technique tends to analyze empirical patterns obtained from case studies developed by research propositions. Pattern matching using a structured, written research process as system planning based on detailed data from six evidentiary data sources.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research on OPPO Cikarang was carried out in the period from January 2021 to November 2021, the collection of this research data was carried out on an ongoing basis starting from the pre-research stage carried out in March 2021, namely by collecting data through the OPPO Cikarang team in Cikarang, Bekasi Regency. After getting enough supporting data, then an interview was conducted with 4 Key Informants who were considered the most relevant to the research focus in accordance with the criteria that had been set. This research focuses on how the creativity of the promotional mix of OPPO's salesperson team is in increasing sales during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The following is an excerpt from an interview that the researcher conducted to one of the area managers. *"We as a company must of course make policies in accordance with the Health protocol and we must adapt to the field conditions in our area. The creativity that we do is a Creative video making competition to create content related to the features that exist*

*in our products and we will judge it through the number of likes, shares and comments on each employee's social media. We also make it an obligation for all sales to follow up on previous customer data for 1 day at least 10 people are followed up, and during the pandemic because many customers don't dare to come to our store, we hold a Home Delivery service to make it easier for our customers to shop. And how many other promotions are still valid, such as Gifts and Discounts (Jonathan Pria Utama, Interview on November 04, 2021)".* From the results of the observations, the researcher saw the activities carried out by one of the personal selling who came to the customer's house to serve the purchase of cellphones, the researcher saw a lot of creativity in the conversation carried out by taking an approach that gave praise and convenience in transactions, providing access to information through social media.

And from the researchers gave several questions to get information to the Informants who were selected and in accordance with the needs of this study both from stakeholders at the level of Managers and and Field Sales who met directly with prospective Buyers, as for the Informants interviewed in Class A, namely Juvi as Assistant General Manager (1), Jonathan Pria Utama as Regional Manager Area A (2), Ayub Subandi as Regional Manager Area B (3), Tantawi as Training Manager (4), Siti Nurngajizah as Salesperson (5), Pai Shanbanah as Salesperson (6), Adhi Cipta Nugraha as Salesperson (7), Nadiyah Tama Laksono as Salesperson (8), Dwi Kristanto as Salesperson (9) and Suhendi as Salesperson (10). Research data is obtained through the interview process, company sales data and direct observation. From the questions given in the division into several stages of the marketing communication preparation process at OPPO Cikarang (Juvi – Assistant GM), the result is the team manager or stakeholder will have discussions related to several choices of promotion mixes and input from the salesperson team in the field so that it becomes a review material to determine more effective policies. In this stage, oppo leadership also collects some activities carried out by competitors and also health protocol policies issued by the government so that later the policies made by OPPO Cikarang do not conflict with the Health Protocols in Cikarang. implementation of promotion mix & form of creativity promotion mix in this implementation stage, the manager will conduct regular briefings and reviews about the activities that have been carried out so that the implementation of promotional activities will continue to be better by briefing each activity review. At this stage, all teams are free to give opinions on activities and managers do not close communication on every line and position so that the information received by managers or Top management will be very fast and therefore it will be very fast for improvements to occur.

Social media implementation of promotional mix at the OPPO Cikarang is determining what social media will be chosen to attract interest from potential buyers. This is considered important because it has to adjust what media is used by Oppo's target market so that all efforts carried out are in accordance with the target. The evaluation stage is carried out by OPPO Cikarang, whose goal is emphasized for the sustainability of the promotional program in the future by looking at the results and feedback from the sales figures and the salesperson team itself.

In adapting during the Covid-19 pandemic, of course, there are many challenges faced by salespeople at the OPPO Cikarang company to stay afloat and still achieve the specified target. In this case, of course, the OPPO sales team needs to look for something extra in terms of service and creativity in selling OPPO products. And in this study, researchers saw how the OPPO Cikarang company integrated the promotional mix that had been carried out and also adapted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

IMC is the process of building and strengthening a mutually beneficial relationship between employees, consumers and related parties. This is done by building and coordinating strategic communication in order to provide opportunities for them to carry out contracts with companies or product brands through various media channels (Tom Duncan in Estaswara (2008. p.72). Some of the promotion mix carried out by OPPO Cikarang are: The first stage, OPPO Cikarang Plan carries out several processes in planning, namely efforts in determining what will be achieved or in other words as the company's goal.

Furthermore, determine the stages that must be carried out to get results according to the company's goals when making a promotion strategy. At the stage of preparing the promotional planning OPPO has not carried out several strategies and discussions as follows: One, the evaluation of the previous program was carried out to check the success rate of the program that has been implemented, whether there are any improvement efforts and can be improvised in the next program.

Second, field survey. At this stage, OPPO Cikarang will collect some data related to competitor programs either to increase product knowledge training or ongoing promotional programs. Third, budgeting, OPPO Cikarang prepares a budget for each program carried out to be able to support the targets in the implementation of promotional programs to be carried out, budgeting needs that are prepared for the purposes of additional incentives, prizes for consumers and events at OPPO partner stores.

Fourth, issues and feedback. OPPO Cikarang collects issues and feedback from the field salesperson team. It can be as input or suggestions for improvements in the implementation of future strategies. Fifth, determining the objectives of the promotion program and health protocols. At the final stage of this planner, OPPO must really pay attention to government regulations and adapt to every ongoing policy so that all promotional programs can run smoothly in accordance with the objectives that have been prepared by the OPPO Cikarang management team. The second stage, implementation of the promotion mix and creativity of the promotion mix. At this stage, OPPO Cikarang uses several promotion mix that have been summarized by researchers from the results of interviews with informants. 1) advertising, such as hanging light boxes in malls in Cikarang, installation of billboards and shop signs in OPPO Cikarang partner stores, 2) sales promotion, as for what OPPO Cikarang does, namely by giving bundling gifts for every purchase, discounts whose promos take place nationwide, promotion of payments by credit card, or installments without using credit cards and additional incentives for OPPO partners and salespeople. 3) event and experience, during the covid-19 pandemic, OPPO continues to hold several events even with all the adaptations and limitations made to comply with health protocols.

OPPO events are held at partner stores on the curb that do not close stores or are allowed to open by the government when malls are imposed closures to break the chain of spread of Covid-19. OPPO Cikarang put up a music tent by distributing brochures, doing dances to attract the attention of people who passed the path either on foot or using motorbikes/cars. 4) personal selling, OPPO Cikarang itself makes personal selling as the spearhead of the company to carry out promotional activities in the field. It can be easily close and provide excellent service with potential buyers, as well as build good relationships with direct communication to increase the opportunity to increase sales and wider promotions.

OPPO also makes it easier for potential buyers to find information related to OPPO products. 5) direct marketing, OPPO Cikarang also makes direct sales using personal selling

who work from home so that they can contact potential buyers by offering products using the old customer database or what they get from online marketing. 6) interactive online marketing, with the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, OPPO Cikarang also transformed and adapted the salesperson team to carry out online marketing using social media so that salesperson activities that are usually only carried out offline marketing are now carried out online marketing with several social media used as the first 2 parts for brand development and parts to get potential buyers. 7) word of mouth marketing, OPPO also conducts this promotion by referring every customer who has purchased by being able to refer family members, relatives or the environmental community around their homes. From the eight promotional mixes proposed by Kotler and Keller (2012), only public relations and publicity were not carried out by OPPO Cikarang because the activity was carried out by the Head Office of OPPO Indonesia. Creativity of the promotion mix carried out by the salesperson team which is summarized by researchers through information sources from informants and field observations. First, sales promotion. Some of the activities carried out are the addition of additional incentives for partners and employees to motivate them to be encouraged to offer and sell products. Furthermore, for customers, they give additional prizes for every unit purchase, installments without a credit card, 0% installments and also the distribution of medical devices. Secondly, direct marketing, OPPO Cikarang has focused on selling directly through store partners both in stores and in malls with the current pandemic event OPPO Cikarang through partners and salespeople doing B2B cooperated with company / factory in Cikarang area at prices which is more competitive so that it is mutually beneficial. Third, event & experience, OPPO Cikarang conducted a partnership event with several partners on the side of the road to conduct a mini event to attract the attention of pedestrians, impurities and motorists who passed through the store line so that the salesperson there did a lot of activities such as dance, balloon installation, OPPO doll installation and distribution of other promotional materials such as flyers or pamphlets. Fourth, personal selling, OPPO Cikarang carries out several activities carried out by salespersons with the integration of other promotional patterns.

Implementation of promotion that OPPO has carried out are billboards, advertising malls, tv, direct sellers, etc. Almost every dimension of the promotion mix is carried out by OPPO. During the covid-19 pandemic, OPPO must also pay attention to budget and adaptation in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, OPPO conducted a video creator program for all employees, home delivery service and an additional incentive program of 1 day 1 cash for OPPO cooperation partners and employees. The video creator program is a form of OPPO communication to customers and potential customers to stay connected on social media. In the video creator program, OPPO makes videos related to activities by using the features on OPPO mobile phones. The video also attaches bundling promos such as discounts, purchase prizes and also the ease of installment payments, cash or online loan applications. With this, OPPO Cikarang wants prospective buyers to be convenient in shopping online and can be trusted. If you are interested, you can also be escorted directly by the salesperson to the house and it is free of charge with the cash on delivery (COD) payment system. The OPPO team added a free food program to the mall at the Cikarang wholesale center which will get a lottery with prizes such as rice and cooking oil. This program is what the OPPO Cikarang team added after the video creator program runs. Some salespersons add extra service to prospective buyers such as video

calls or add gifts such as masks and hand sanitizers as a form of concern for health protocols where this program is given by employees themselves to add and attract prospective buyers.

Through OPPO's video creator and online marketing program on social media, the benefits are greatly felt by the salesperson team where they can still maintain communication and also remain informative in conveying messages to the audience massively because it is done by many people whose teams reach 215 people. The sales program for partners enables them to get additional incentives with the terms and conditions issued by OPPO Cikarang. By following up data of 1 - 10 users per day, it will make buyers easier to make offline and online transactions. There are several additional policies regarding sales during WFH. If there is no sale on that day, you will get a bonus of Rp. 30,000 / day, if it does not reach the monthly target for 1 month then there will be penalties such as salary deductions, warning letters (SP) and even a reduction in employees.

At this stage, OPPO Cikarang chose Tiktok and Instagram as the main social media for sharing video creators and was created by the OPPO Cikarang team which was shared by all OPPO Cikarang teams as a whole. However, OPPO Team also does not prohibit the salesperson team from using other social media that are considered more effective to attract the attention of potential buyers. OPPO's team of marketers get a lot of feedback when posting on Facebook and Whatsapp Stories where potential buyers who are interested will immediately give a response asking for more detailed specifications, promos, and payment systems with installments. IG and Tiktok are used by OPPO which aims to improve brand image and massive campaigns on both social media which are widely used by young people in Cikarang. So, OPPO hopes to become a top of mind brand in Cikarang. Meanwhile, Facebook and Whatsapp stories are widely used by mothers or fathers and relatives of the salesperson team itself so that they easily follow up sales.

The OPPO team has conducted several evaluations related to programs and promotional activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, where there were many additions to activities during the program. Various feedbacks are gathered from the salesperson team, such as comfort and intimacy between sellers and buyers that must be built. Besides, the video creator program is only a means of information to the general audience, while to make sales and closing, the salesperson must make comfortable and intimate communication with the buyer by exploring the needs and in accordance with the budget owned by the prospective buyer.

## **CONCLUSION**

The creativity of the promotional mix in the sales team of the Smartphone retail company during the Covid-19 Pandemic is quite a lot of adjustments and creative adaptations of promotions to attract potential buyers to decide to buy products. This creativity arose from the situation that emerged with the unpredicted Covid-19 pandemic and must be done during this new normal period. OPPO Cikarang is also trying hard to do everything well and follow the health protocols to keep it going. The company uses a video creator which is used by salespersons to integrate the promotion mix used by the company using social media. OPPO salesperson team has built a good relationship with buyers and potential buyers because it already has a user data bank so that it can be used to follow up during the Covid-19 pandemic. Salespersons also do door to door selling, home delivery service, and broadcast messages. The company makes maximum utilization of personal selling to carry out several



promotions such as events and experiences, direct marketing, online marketing. the fulfillment strategy carried out by the management to provide rewards, punishments can cause fear and also decrease the motivation of the OPPO Cikarang salesperson team. Last, salespeople use fulfillment acquisition strategies to influence potential buyers until a purchase decision occurs.

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