



Marketing Strategy to Improve Ramen Product Sales (Case Study at Eat.Ramen Makassar)

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Abstract. This research aimed to formulate marketing strategies that could be used to increase sales at the Eat Ramen restaurant. The study combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to explain the appropriate marketing strategies for boosting sales at Eat Ramen. The qualitative approach was used to understand the external aspects of Eat Ramen using Porter's Five Forces analysis and competitor identification, while the internal aspects of Eat Ramen were understood through analysis (STP and mixed marketing). The results of the qualitative analysis were utilized in formulate marketing strategies through SWOT analysis with a quantitative approach. The data collection method in this study involved field observations. The findings indicated that the SWOT analysis quadrant for Eat Ramen was in quadrant II, suggesting that the marketing strategy included diversification strategies such as adding menu variations and ramen toppings according to local tastes, providing a better customer experience in terms of service speed and restaurant atmosphere, as well as creating discount programs or price reductions.

Keywords: Porter Five Forces, Competitor, STP, Market Mix, SWOT

1 Introduction

The rapid growth of the culinary business in Indonesia, especially restaurants and food stalls, has led many entrepreneurs to face intense competition in the culinary industry. This competition forces culinary business owners to develop the right strategies to survive and compete with other businesses. The competition includes both traditional Indonesian dishes and international cuisines. The culinary industry is one of the most dynamic and rapidly evolving sectors in Indonesia. A wide variety of cuisines from around the world have entered and found a place in the hearts of Indonesians, including Japanese food. Ramen, as a culinary icon of Japan, has become a favorite choice for many people in Indonesia. With its chewy noodles and flavorful broth, ramen offers a tantalizing culinary experience. The variety of toppings and flavor options that can be adjusted to local preferences has further fueled its popularity.

Ramen, initially imported from China in the 1800s, has become a staple dish in Japan. By the 1980s, its popularity expanded beyond Japan to gain global recognition, and it started to captivate the culinary enthusiasts in Indonesia. Ramen noodles are made from wheat flour, similar to the noodles commonly found in Indonesia. Ramen

is usually categorized based on its broth and toppings, ranging from chicken, pork, or beef broth, with toppings like scallions, vegetables, corn, and nori, creating a unique flavor profile. Ramen is typically sold in Japanese-themed restaurants or food stalls. Makassar, one of Indonesia's major metropolitan cities, has also embraced this culinary trend. In recent years, ramen stalls have sprung up across the city, making ramen part of the local culinary culture. Eat.Ramen is one of the establishments that cater to the growing demand for ramen in the city. Offering various ramen options, Eat.Ramen aims to provide an authentic Japanese dining experience while also catering to local tastes.

Eat.Ramen offers a variety of both Indonesian and Japanese dishes, with ramen being one of its signature items. The ramen served at Eat.Ramen is made from halal ingredients, with homemade seasoning and a substitution of pork with beef or chicken, while still maintaining a flavor close to traditional Japanese ramen. The taste is also adjusted to suit Indonesian preferences.

Every business needs to generate new customers in order to grow or at least continue operating. And to generate new customers, companies need to implement marketing channels. This also means that companies will need a well-designed sales channel that will effectively guide the target audience through the buying process and convert them into buying customers [1]. The establishment of this business was driven by the owner's desire to introduce Japanese food culture, particularly ramen, to the people of Makassar. This venture started in 2021 but had to temporarily close due to declining sales, mainly caused by inadequate marketing efforts. After two years of closure, Eat.Ramen received an investment to reopen at one of Makassar's popular malls. In 2023, the owner decided to relaunch Eat.Ramen at Trans Studio Mall Makassar.

The rapid development of technology, the digital world, and the internet certainly impacted the marketing landscape. Marketing trends shifted from conventional (offline) to digital (online). This digital marketing strategy was more promising because it allowed potential customers to obtain all kinds of information about products and to transact through the internet [2]. In the current digital era, social media and technology play a crucial role in marketing and sales. Utilizing platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok can help broaden the restaurant's audience reach. However, inadequate use of technology can result in a lack of exposure and brand awareness among potential consumers. Eat.Ramen needs to develop an effective digital marketing strategy to increase exposure and engagement with customers. Eat.Ramen is located on the third floor of Trans Studio Mall Makassar. The restaurant's interior is designed with an indoor Japanese-style ambiance and modern music, creating a comfortable space for dining with friends or family. Even though ramen is not an Indonesian dish, it has captivated the interest of food lovers in the country, particularly in Makassar. Since ramen is noodle-based, it feels familiar to local palates. Moreover, the wide variety of toppings such as katsu, eggs, and ebi tempura make it even more appealing to Indonesians.

A marketing strategy was a plan used by companies to select and analyze target markets, and to develop and maintain a marketing mix that could satisfy consumer needs [3]. To maintain the stability of a company, it had to be in a profitable state. Without profits, it was very difficult for the company to grow [4]. The increasing interest in ramen has led to the opening of many new ramen stalls in Makassar. These

stalls often offer unique features, including various flavor options, competitive pricing, and aggressive marketing strategies. Eat.Ramen faces competition from these stalls, each with its own appeal to consumers. Currently, there are seven ramen shops or restaurants at Trans Studio Mall Makassar, including Haraku Ramen, Marugame Udon, and Kimukatsu, among others. The large number of ramen outlets highlights the intensifying competition in this business. Eat.Ramen needs to find ways to highlight its uniqueness, whether through its product offerings, service, or marketing.

In response to these challenges, Eat.Ramen needs a well-thought-out and optimal strategy to retain customer loyalty and increase ramen sales. A suitable method to identify the right strategy is a SWOT analysis. By analyzing the internal and external environment of the business, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can be identified, forming the basis for the formulation of alternative marketing strategies.

A SWOT analysis is a flexible tool that can be adapted to meet the needs of a business or project, aiding in better decision-making and more effective risk management. This research will explore marketing strategies that can be applied by Eat.Ramen to boost sales and competitiveness in Makassar's culinary market. By identifying the factors that influence consumer purchasing decisions and analyzing the effectiveness of current marketing strategies, this study aims to provide practical recommendations that Eat.Ramen can implement. The findings of this research are expected to benefit not only Eat.Ramen but also other culinary businesses facing similar challenges. In line with the aforementioned phenomenon, the researcher is interested in studying marketing strategies to increase sales at ramen shops, using the case of Eat.Ramen Makassar.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Porter Five Forces Analysis

Porter's Five Forces, also known as the Five Forces Model, was a framework developed by Michael Porter to describe a strategy analysis tool used to evaluate the competitive environment and contribute to the competitive advantage and sustainability of a business [5]. The aspects discussed in Porter's analysis include (1) the threat of new entrants, (2) the threat of substitute products, (3) the bargaining power of buyers, (4) the bargaining power of suppliers, and (5) the intensity of rivalry among existing competitors [6].

2.2 Competitors

According to Friadi, as cited in Ishak et al. [7], competitors are individuals or companies that sell or produce products that are the same or similar to ours, whether in the form of goods or services, in terms of shape, benefits, or functions.

2.3 STP (Segmenting, Targeting, Positioning)

Segmenting, targeting, and positioning became important in current strategies. Market segmentation was essentially a strategy to understand consumer structure. Segmentation needed to group consumers according to specific characteristics. Next, determining targeting meant identifying which market segments were available to be the marketing targets, while positioning meant placing oneself in the minds and hearts of consumers [8]. STP, or Segmenting, Targeting, Positioning, is an approach or model used to develop messages and marketing strategies tailored to specific target audience segments. According to Kotler and Armstrong [9], market segmentation (Segmenting) involves analyzing the market to focus marketing efforts on smaller segments of buyers with different characteristics or behaviors. Market targeting (Targeting) involves evaluating the attractiveness of each market segment and selecting one or more market segments to enter. Product positioning (Positioning) involves arranging a market offering to occupy a clear, distinctive, and desirable place in the minds of target consumers relative to competing products.

2.4 Marketing Mix

According to Lupiyoadi, R., the 7P marketing mix is a combination of seven elements: product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence, which are managed in an integrated manner to meet customer needs and desires and achieve the company's marketing objectives [10]. According to Sulaiman, the marketing mix enhances consumer trust in the quality of the brand offered by the company, which in turn positively impacts the company's image in the eyes of consumers [11]. The marketing mix was a set of marketing tools used by companies to achieve their goals in meeting consumer needs and desires [12].

3 Research Methods

This research combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explain the appropriate marketing strategies for increasing sales at Eat Ramen. The qualitative approach was used to understand external aspects (Porter's analysis and competitors) and internal aspects (STP and marketing mix). The results of this qualitative analysis were then used in formulating marketing strategies using a SWOT analysis through a quantitative approach. The data collection method in this research involved field observation techniques.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Porter Five Forces

Threat of New Entrants. The culinary market in Makassar, particularly Japanese cuisine, was highly competitive with the emergence of new ramen shops. The relatively low investment required to establish a food business, coupled with the high interest of the public in Japanese cuisine, made the threat from new entrants quite

significant. New establishments could increase competition if they had strong marketing strategies and differentiation.

Bargaining Power of Buyers. Consumers in Makassar had many options for ramen dining. Due to the abundance of choices, buyers held significant power in selecting the establishments that offered the best quality, competitive prices, and satisfying experiences.

Bargaining Power of Suppliers. Although ramen ingredients were easy to obtain, Eat Ramen had to pay attention to the price stability of the raw materials they used. Increases in raw material prices could affect profit margins.

Threat of Substitutes. Substitute products from other Japanese dishes, such as sushi, udon, or local foods, could pose a threat. Therefore, Eat Ramen needed to maintain its product uniqueness, such as offering ramen variations that catered to local tastes or attractive promotions to retain customer interest.

Competitive Rivalry. This force analyzed the level of competition among existing companies in the industry. If the competition was very tight, businesses had to compete on price, quality, innovation, and service to attract customers, which could reduce profit margins. In Trans Studio Mall, where Eat Ramen was located, there were several strong competitors like Haraku Ramen, Marugame Udon, and Kimukatsu.

4.2 Competitors

Competing ramen shops like Haraku Ramen and Marugame Udon had aggressive strategies in terms of promotion and pricing. They offered a variety of interesting menu items, both in terms of taste and product variety.

4.3 STP

1) Segmenting

Eat Ramen targeted young people, office workers, families, and mall visitors interested in Japanese food and seeking a halal culinary experience.

2) Targeting

Based on the segmentation analysis, Eat Ramen's main target market was young people/students, office workers, and families. This target market was chosen because they had sufficient purchasing power and high interest in Japanese food and comfortable dining locations.

3) Positioning

The positioning that could be applied by Eat Ramen was as follows:

- a) Halal products with authentic Japanese taste.
- b) A unique and comfortable dining experience.
- c) A diverse menu for various preferences.
- d) Competitive prices in a strategic location.

4.4 Marketing Mix

Product. The products offered by Eat Ramen were various types of ramen that had been adjusted to Indonesian tastes and used halal ingredients. In addition to ramen, the shop also provided other menu items such as sushi, fried rice, coffee, and various mocktail drinks. These products combined the flavors of Japan and Indonesia, giving uniqueness to the offerings.

Price. Eat Ramen set competitive prices considering its location in Trans Studio Mall, Makassar. By maintaining competitive pricing, the shop attracted consumers from various demographics, including young people, office workers, and families. This competitive pricing strategy was part of their effort to compete with other ramen shops in the same location.

Place. The Eat Ramen shop was located in Trans Studio Mall, one of the largest shopping malls in Makassar. This strategic location supported a wide market reach.

Promotion. Eat Ramen's current promotion was still not optimal, particularly in terms of social media use. The shop needed to develop a better digital marketing strategy through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to reach more potential consumers.

People. The team working at Eat Ramen played an important role in providing a satisfying experience for customers. Friendly and fast service from the shop's staff could be a key factor in creating customer loyalty.

Process. The food serving process at Eat Ramen focused on efficiency and speed to meet customer expectations.

Physical Evidence. The shop's atmosphere, designed with a Japanese theme, provided an authentic feel for visitors. Unique interior design, the use of traditional Japanese decorations, and cleanliness and tidiness of the space served as physical evidence supporting a positive customer experience.

4.5 SWOT Analysis

Table 1. Analysis SWOT

<p>SWOT ANALYSIS</p>	<p><i>Strength.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The products were halal. 2. Local flavors were adjusted. 3. The restaurant had a diverse menu. 4. The strategic location was in the center of the crowd (TSM Makassar). 5. The atmosphere of the café/restaurant was comfortable. 6. It offered the best quality at competitive prices. 7. There were a variety of payment systems." 	<p><i>Weakness.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Eat Ramen brand was less known to the general public. 2. There was difficulty in building a strong brand in the market.
<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The high interest of the people of Makassar in Japanese cuisine. 2. The trend of Japanese food that continued to grow. 3. The need for food and drinks when visiting TSM Mall in Makassar. 	<p>SO</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Built a brand image around halal products with adjustments to local flavors. 2. Executed extensive digital marketing highlighting the restaurant's advantages, such as a comfortable atmosphere. 3. Created a menu display outside the restaurant so customers could see the menu. 	<p>WO</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intensified digital marketing regarding the restaurant's location. 2. Utilized social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to help reach a wider audience and build brand awareness.
<p><i>Threats.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intense competition from similar restaurants. 2. Threat from new entrants. 3. Consumer preferences that changed rapidly. 	<p>ST</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased menu variety and ramen toppings according to local tastes, which attracted more customers. 2. Provided a better experience for customers in terms of service speed and café atmosphere. 3. Created discount programs or price cuts." 	<p>WT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Made face-to-face/direct selling offers to customers in the vicinity of the restaurant

4.6 SWOT Matrix Analysis

Table 2. Analysis IFE-EFE

No.	Strategic factors	Scale	Rati	Score
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			ng		
Strength					
1	Halal product	0,2	3	0,6	
2	Adjustment of local flavors	0,2	3	0,6	
3	The restaurant had a diverse menu	0,1	2	0,2	
4	The strategic location was in the center of the crowd (TSM Makassar)	0,1	2	0,2	
5	The atmosphere of the café/restaurant was comfortable	0,2	4	0,8	
6	Offered the best quality at competitive prices	0,1	2	0,2	
7	A variety of payment systems	0,1	3	0,3	
Total		1,0		2,9	
Weakness					
1	The Eat Ramen brand was less known to the general public	0,4	2	0,8	
2	The difficulty in building a strong brand in the market	0,6	3	1,8	
Total		1,0		2,6	
Opportunities					
1	The high interest of the people of Makassar in Japanese food	0,3	2	0,6	
2	The trend of Japanese food that continued to grow	0,3	3	0,9	
3	The need for food and drinks when visiting TSM Mall in Makassar.	0,4	3	1,2	
Total		1,0		2,7	
Threats					
1	Intense competition from similar restaurants	0,5	3	1,5	
2	Threat from new entrants	0,2	2	0,4	
3	Consumer preferences that changed rapidly	0,3	3	0,9	
Total		1,0		2,8	

Based on the results of the IFE and EFE analysis in the market and marketing aspects, the findings were summarized as follows:

1. Total Strength score = 2.9
2. Total Weakness score = 2.6
3. Total Opportunities score = 2.7
4. Total Threat score = 2.8

Determining the coordinates for the diagram:

Internal Analysis Coordinate (X).

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Total Strength score} - \text{Total Weakness score} \\ &= 2.9 - 2.6 \\ &= 0.3 \end{aligned}$$

External Analysis Coordinate (Y).

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Total Opportunities score} - \text{Total Threat score} \\ &= 2.7 - 2.8 \\ &= -0.1 \end{aligned}$$

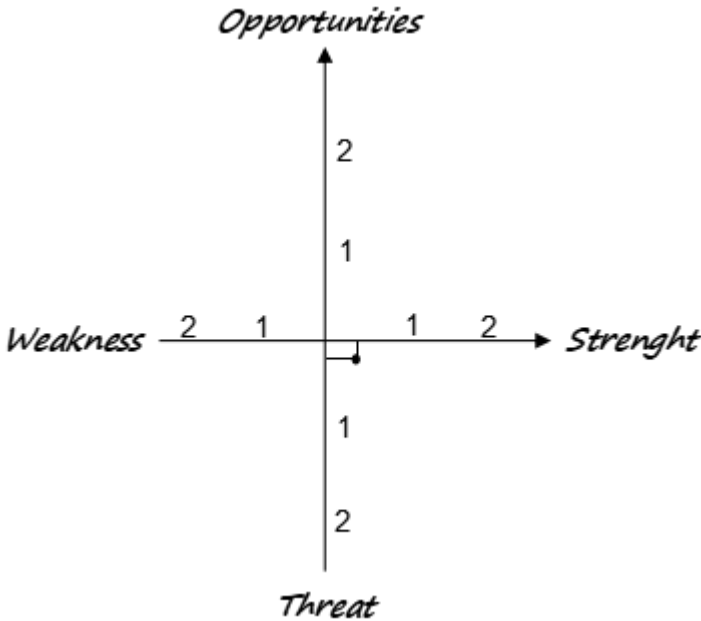


Fig. 1. SWOT Analysis Diagram

Based on the SWOT analysis, Eat Ramen decided to implement a diversification strategy as an effort to leverage its strengths and address the threats from market competition. This diversification strategy aimed to expand the range of products and services, as well as improve aspects relevant to consumer needs and preferences.

1. Added More Menu Variations and Ramen Toppings Tailored to Local Tastes

Reason: One of Eat Ramen's strengths might have been its ability to provide quality ramen, but by adding menu variations and toppings customized to local tastes, they could attract more customers, especially local ones who might be more interested in familiar flavors. For instance, adding typical Makassar toppings or incorporating local spices into the ramen created a unique appeal.

Benefit: This step helped to attract new customers while retaining existing ones by offering a wider and more enticing variety, thus increasing sales.

2. Provided a Better Customer Experience

Service Speed: In the food industry, service speed was an important factor influencing customer satisfaction. By improving service speed, Eat Ramen could serve more customers in a shorter time and reduce waiting times, which was often a major complaint in restaurants.

Restaurant Ambiance: Aside from the food, the ambiance inside the restaurant played a crucial role in creating a pleasant customer experience. Providing a comfortable and inviting atmosphere, such as through friendly interior design or

additional facilities like Wi-Fi, encouraged customers to stay longer and return for future visits.

3. Offered More Varied Discount or Price-Cut Programs

Reason: Discounts and promotions were always a major attraction for customers, especially in a highly competitive market. By offering more varied discount or price-cut programs, Eat Ramen could reach customer segments that were more price-sensitive, such as students or families.

Example: Programs like "buy one get one free," special discounts on certain days, or loyalty programs that rewarded frequent customers increased visit frequency and fostered brand loyalty.

4. Intensified Digital Marketing Through Social Media

Reason: In the digital era, social media was a highly effective tool for increasing brand awareness and reaching a wider audience. Eat Ramen took advantage of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok to share engaging content, such as photos and videos of new menus, promotions, and customer testimonials.

Benefit: With more intensive digital marketing, Eat Ramen not only attracted customers around its physical location but also built broader brand awareness, which impacted increased visits from customers farther away or even tourists.

Overall, this diversification strategy was designed to strengthen Eat Ramen's competitiveness in the market by expanding its product offerings, enhancing service quality, and maximizing the potential of digital marketing.

5 Conclusion

Based on the discussion outlined above, the following conclusions were drawn:

The marketing strategy that could be implemented, based on the SWOT analysis, was a diversification strategy. The form of diversification strategy implemented included (1) adding more menu variations and ramen toppings tailored to local tastes to attract more customers, (2) providing a better customer experience, both in terms of service speed and restaurant ambiance, and (3) offering more varied discount or price-cut programs. Eat Ramen could intensify its digital marketing through social media to help reach a wider audience and build brand awareness.

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