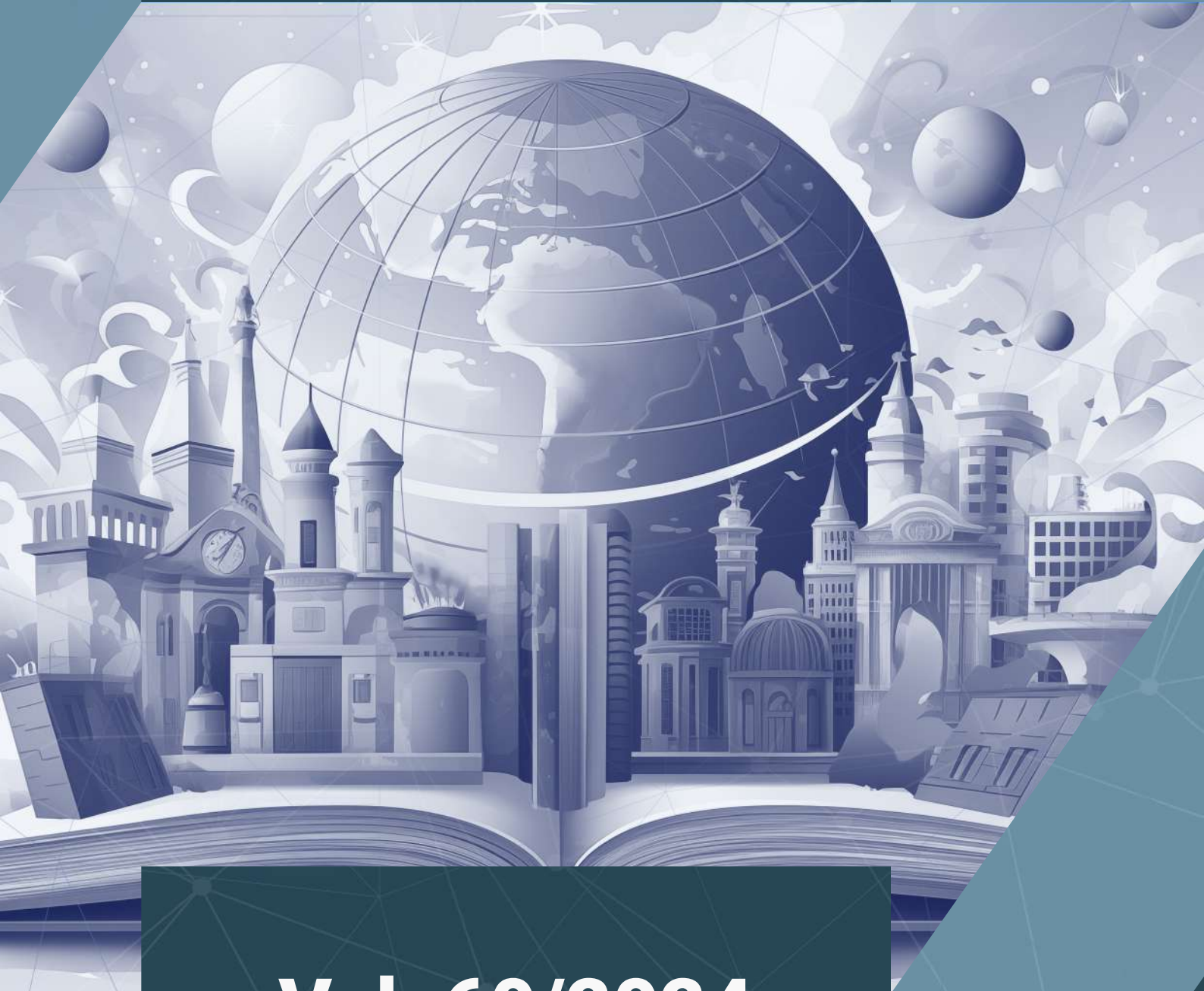




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Enhancement of Sales Competencies in Property Marketing Amidst the New Normal Era

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted various sectors, including the residential property market, which saw a reduction in sales across all housing categories—small, medium, and large (Bank Indonesia, 2020). This study was designed to assess the enhancement of sales competencies in property marketing during the transition to a new normal. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review, the research aimed to address the growing need to elevate the skills of salespersons in this field. Key competencies highlighted as essential included: entrepreneurial spirit; effective, honest, authentic, and integrity-based communication; expert negotiation skills; and versatility in strategy adaptation. Furthermore, the study detailed the comprehensive skill set necessary for property marketing professionals, encompassing the ability to manage consumer grievances; provide guidance on both legal and non-legal aspects of property transactions; demonstrate advanced negotiation capabilities; engage in precise targeting and marketing planning; perform accurate property valuations; deliver outstanding service; and support clients throughout the entire property buying and selling process.

Keywords. Competency, Business Competency, Salesperson, Marketing, Property

Introduction

The era of the new normal has emerged to ensure that communities and organizations can swiftly and effectively respond to evolving global crises and challenges. The new normal represents an adjustment to COVID-19, enabling regular activities in social health, economic education, and other sectors (Buheji & Buheji, 2020). COVID-19 has significantly impacted all aspects of life across various fields in numerous countries, including Indonesia. The economic impact felt by Indonesia has been substantial, with inhibited economic activities adversely affecting national income. This pandemic has resulted in a decline in demand-side performance, notably in consumption and purchasing power, subsequently disrupting production and trade processes. Additionally, this situation has precipitated new challenges, such as employment terminations and the risk of credit payment defaults.

The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has paralyzed key sectors like education and the economy, leading to school closures and reduced production activities in many

companies, with some even terminating employment (Buheji & Ahmed, 2020). Despite these challenges, businesses have adopted marketing strategies via social media and online platforms. However, it remains crucial to consider consumer purchasing power and sales patterns, as these are vital components of a company's performance. Developing countries, already grappling with unsustainable debt burdens, have been hit hard by COVID-19. By the end of 2018, the total debt stock of developing countries had reached 191% of their combined Gross Domestic Product, the highest level ever recorded.

The pre-existing debt crisis in developing countries, exacerbated by the COVID-19 shock, presents two notable issues in the context of post-pandemic debt reduction debates. Firstly, the ongoing debt crisis affects not just the poorest developing countries but spans all income categories. Secondly, it is generally driven not by domestic economic mismanagement but by mismanagement at the global economic, business, and financial levels. The residential property sector is one of the property businesses most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey on residential property prices indicated a contraction of -43.19% (YoY) in the first quarter of 2020, following a growth of 1.19% (YoY) in the fourth quarter of 2019 (Bank Indonesia, 2020).

The decline in residential property sales affected all house types—small, medium, and large. The Residential Property Price Index (2020) shows a slowdown in the Residential Property Price Index for medium and large houses. While there was an increase of 1.36% (YoY) and 0.86% (YoY) in the first quarter of 2020, this growth was slower than the previous quarter's 1.44% (YoY) and 1.03% (YoY). The pandemic also caused a decline in residential property sales, necessitating a policy response from the banking sector. To mitigate declining sales in small to medium-sized houses reliant on Public Housing Loans, banks lowered interest rates to boost sales.

The Primary Residential Property Price Survey results showed an annual slowdown in the first quarter of 2020, reflected in the IHPR of 1.68% (YoY), compared to 1.77% (YoY) in the fourth quarter of 2019 and 2.06% (YoY) in the same period the previous year. This slowdown also impacted residential property sales in the first quarter of 2020, which decreased by -30.52% (QoQ), deeper than the previous quarter's contraction of -16.33%. Consumers perceived mortgage interest rates as still relatively high during the pandemic, contributing to the slowdown in residential property sales despite the average mortgage interest rate decreasing to 8.92% in March 2020 from 9.12% in December 2019.

Despite the sluggish property market during the pandemic, Indonesia's economy is predicted to recover and improve in the coming years. Current property market stimulation can potentially drive purchases and significant market activity in the residential property sector (Wahyudi, 2013). Property remains a fundamental human need, with many individuals aspiring to personal ownership. Besides being a basic necessity, property is also a valuable investment (Rymarzak & Sieminska, 2012). Consequently, people must adapt to new conditions, leading to a new order of life or a new normal (Buheji, 2020a).

According to Buheji (2020b), the new normal entails behavioral changes to continue normal activities while adhering to health protocols to prevent COVID-19 transmission. The principle of the new normal is the ability to adapt to new life patterns. In this context, life activities will resume to pre-COVID-19 conditions, requiring people to adopt new habits and implement virus transmission prevention protocols during activities involving many people (Jadhav, Tandulwadkar & Vidya, 2021). In the increasingly competitive property sector, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, business actors must adopt strategic measures to ensure business continuity.

Competency, a unique integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, is crucial in this context (Ahmad et al., 2010). Competency involves the ability to perform a job or task based on required skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Lacoste, 2018). Buheji & Buheji (2020) define competency as a combination of skills and abilities. Rahadi & Yusup (2020) state that an individual is competent if they possess the necessary skills for a particular field. Competency encompasses qualitative and quantitative aspects of a person's qualifications or abilities (Hastjarjo et al., 2016).

Competence signifies proficiency in a specific field, characterized by professionalism and excellence, with indicators such as knowledge related to work, individual skills, and attitudes (Anjum, 2020). According to Agha, Alrubaiee & Jamhour (2012), personal competence development includes motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills. Apriyani, Haryono & Mustafa (2019) classify competencies into core, managerial, and functional categories. Core competencies align with organizational strategy, managerial competencies reflect required managerial activities, and functional competencies pertain to specific role abilities and professional or technical skills.

Property refers to any physical or intangible object owned by an individual, a group, or a legal entity (Too, Harvey & Too, 2010). In Indonesia, property typically refers to real estate, houses, land, shop houses, buildings, or warehouses. The property market will continue to exist because of its fundamental human need for security (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). The property business involves asset ownership, including land and buildings (Hastjarjo et al., 2016). Property ownership can be categorized into open access, common property, private property, and state property (Rymarzak & Sieminska, 2012).

Sales activities result in the flow of goods out of a company, generating revenue (Shi et al., 2017). Sales represent the total goods sold by a company over a certain period (Schwepker, 2019; Hartmann, Wieland & Vargo, 2018; Plank et al., 2018). Panagopoulos, Rapp & Ogilvie (2017) outline general sales objectives, including increasing total sales volume, maintaining an effective sales position, and supporting company growth. Chi (2015) describes the sales process as including prospecting, identifying customer needs, providing solutions and offers, completing transactions, and delivering after-sales service. This study aims to analyze the enhancement of salespersons' business competency in property marketing during the new normal era.

Materials and methods

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing a systematic literature review (SLR) method aimed at providing detailed information and elucidating existing problems. A systematic literature review is a methodical approach that identifies, evaluates, and interprets all findings on a specific research topic to answer predetermined research questions. This method is conducted systematically, adhering to stages and protocols that minimize bias and subjective interpretation by the researcher (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015). According to Snyder (2019), the data collection process in an SLR involves the documentation method, which investigates written materials such as books, magazines, documents, regulations, meeting minutes, diaries, journals, and previous research.

To ensure data validity, the study employs credibility criteria. The researchers enhance data credibility through 1) extension of observations, 2) persistence of observation, and 3) triangulation (Shenton, 2004). The data analysis is performed using a descriptive analytical method, which involves describing collected data in the form of words, images, and not numerical figures. Data from transcripts, documents, and previous studies are described to

provide clarity on reality using triangulation data. The qualitative data analysis process involves data reduction, data presentation, and verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

Systematic literature reviews are instrumental in synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying research gaps. They follow rigorous procedures to ensure comprehensiveness and reproducibility (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). In this study, the SLR method includes defining the research question, developing a protocol, systematic searching, screening for relevance, quality appraisal, data extraction, and synthesis (Moher et al., 2009).

Result

The real estate industry in Indonesia is appealing and holds significant potential. According to Huhtala, et. al. (2016), the presence of global investors who collaborate with local partners knowledgeable about domestic conditions is evidence of Indonesia's attractiveness and promising prospects, since they support the capital system and facilitate the entry of global capital. The real estate industry is a significant driver of economic growth in Indonesia. The property sector accounted for 2.77% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product in 2019. Property companies can achieve growth and advancement by adhering to the principles of efficiency and productivity in their company operations. As business development progresses, it brings about the emergence of more intricate challenges that developers must confront through effective management (Mulki, Caemmerer & Heggde, 2015).

Effective management of property marketing is crucial for the overall success and reputation of the company, both internally and externally. The corporation continues to promote its property products by highlighting its advantages, specifically offering various types of subsidized dwellings to attract new buyers. Property developers must possess the capability to furnish external communications pertaining to marketing in order to bolster the company's activities in the short, medium, and long run. Furthermore, the promotion of a product created by the developer serves as a vital source of information required by the broader community or other affiliated developers to bolster the company's worldwide operations (Mangus, et. al., 2017). Marketing necessitates a combination of theoretical and practical abilities that are valuable in facilitating the efficient functioning of marketing agents and the individuals who receive the information (Sunder, et. al., 2017).

When marketing a property, it is important to consider the allocation of human resources and the long-term financial commitment required for an effective marketing strategy. The marketing aspect can be observed from two-time frames, specifically the current and the future (Skiba, Saini & Friend, 2019). In the current day, the marketing aspect is perceived in terms of the reciprocal influence between the company and its internal and external environment, which are interdependent on each other. Undoubtedly, the construction of a property company organization can significantly influence the attainment of maximum profits. To secure victory in the competition, it is crucial to execute a marketing plan that precisely aligns with the desired standards of quality, price, and competitiveness for the items being offered (Badrinarayanan, Ramachandran & Madhavaram, 2019).

An effective business method for promoting items during the COVID-19 pandemic is to utilize electronic media, which allows producers and customers to connect without physical interaction and enables a broad marketing reach. The management of the organization should pay attention to the involvement of salespeople during the COVID-19 epidemic due to the potential lack of alignment between personnel and the organization caused by distance and time differences. Amidst the pandemic crisis, organizations require employees who are highly motivated and committed to their work in order to sustain productivity and performance.

However, it is important to acknowledge that operational costs will persist regardless of the circumstances.

Property firms must exert utmost diligence to endure the unpredictable circumstances of the epidemic. Generating sales is crucial for the organization to offset the incurred operating expenses. According to Hartmann, Rutherford & Park (2017), the challenges encountered by entrepreneurs in the property industry today can be summarized as follows: 1.) Insufficient knowledge and comprehension of the efficacy of marketing strategies in reaching consumers amidst intense competition and a declining economy; 2.) The pandemic has led to a surge in individuals being laid off and resorting to ad hoc selling, thereby intensifying business competition. 3.) The presence of intense rivalry necessitates partners to engage in innovation and develop successful property marketing tactics to attract consumers. The objectives of this promotion, as outlined by Badrinarayanan, Gupta, and Chaker (2020), are as follows:

1.) Sales targets should be explicitly specified by indicating the anticipated increase in sales of specific products resulting from the promotional activities conducted.

2.) Promotional efforts with predetermined promotional objectives must be directed towards specific target customers (audience) in order to achieve their intended goals. By establishing distinct target demographics, the company can precisely determine its intended message, delivery method, timing, location, and the individuals responsible for delivery. Additionally, this process clarifies and focuses the selection of media to be used, taking into account the associated costs.

When implementing the aims and objectives defined by the property company, it is necessary to choose which promotional elements will be selected as a means to accomplish the intended goals. Barnes, et. al. (2015) defined the promotional aspect as the promotional mix, comprising advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and publicity.

Advertising is a form of communication that is not targeted to specific individuals. It involves multiple expenses and is conducted through different channels by organizations, institutions, non-institutions, non-profits, and individuals.

Personal selling refers to the direct, in-person engagement between individuals with the goal of establishing, enhancing, managing, or sustaining mutually advantageous relationships with other parties. This interaction takes place verbally and face-to-face in the presence of potential purchasers, with the intention of promoting and selling goods and services.

Sales promotion refers to activities that are separate from personal selling, advertising, and publicity, but are designed to encourage consumers to make a purchase. Due to the influx of new brands in the market, the significance of sales promotion activities will be increasingly recognized. This instrument is extensively employed to stimulate sales of new brands. Consumer-oriented sales promotions are typically employed to stimulate demand or expedite the purchasing process, whereas distributor-oriented sales promotions are typically employed to incentivize greater orders.

Publicity refers to the dissemination of information about a person, thing, or organization to the public through the media, without any cost or oversight from a sponsor. Publicity serves as a valuable addition to other promotional techniques including advertising, personal selling, and sales promotion. Typically, the media is inclined to publish a story if the content is deemed sufficiently captivating or merits being reported.

From 2019 to early 2020, specifically from January to mid-March, the property market showed improvement, as evidenced by increasing absorption and occupancy rates across all property sectors, including housing, offices, malls, and industrial estates. However, in March 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia led to the implementation of Large-

Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to curb the virus's spread. In response to these changes and leveraging advancements in information technology and the internet, property business owners were compelled to adapt their strategies. The opportunities and challenges presented by online property marketing necessitated innovative approaches, as interactive internet media enabled a real-time reciprocal flow of information, allowing users to participate and modify content (Peesker et al., 2019).

Various strategies have been employed to maintain a competitive edge in the property market, which is currently viewed as a highly potential market for promoting services extensively. Property marketing applications facilitate marketing activities meticulously planned to align with agreed-upon strategies. Three key factors significantly influence the outcomes of marketing communication: the diversity and forms of media used, the attractiveness of the message, and the frequency of presentation. Property marketing aims to convey consumer transactions through various media and channels to induce changes in knowledge, attitudes, and actions desired by the company to achieve specific customer and consumer changes.

The first stage, changing knowledge, involves making consumers aware of a product, its purpose, and its target audience. Messages crafted at this stage aim to inform without prioritizing detailed information about the product. The second stage, changing attitudes, seeks to foster a positive shift in consumers' perceptions, ultimately leading to a desire to purchase the product. According to Walker and Madsen (2016), this stage involves three components: knowledge, affection, and conation. The final stage, changing behavior, aims to ensure consumers consistently use the product and do not switch to alternatives.

Many property entrepreneurs have faced delays in marketing their products, impacting their business development. Experts suggest that property companies must devise new strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic to develop novel approaches as a preparatory step towards establishing new norms or habits during the pandemic. A strategy is a series of planned actions that managers use to optimally utilize the company's core resources and competencies to gain a competitive advantage (Tuan & Mai, 2012). In developing a strategy, managers begin by examining the company's specific strengths and weaknesses, followed by analyzing the opportunities and challenges it faces. Understanding the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats enables managers to make informed decisions (Thompson et al., 2016).

Recent studies emphasize the importance of strategic agility in adapting to market disruptions like COVID-19. For instance, a study by Parnell et al. (2020) underscores the need for dynamic capabilities that allow firms to pivot quickly and effectively in response to unprecedented challenges. Similarly, Chen, Liang, and Lin (2021) highlight the role of digital transformation in enhancing firms' resilience and market responsiveness during crises. These insights align with the evolving landscape of property marketing, where leveraging digital tools and platforms can significantly impact business continuity and growth.

Discussion

Strategic management encompasses a series of managerial decisions and actions designed to shape an organization's long-term performance. This includes environmental scanning (both external and internal), strategy formulation (strategic or long-term planning), strategy implementation, and evaluation and control. Furthermore, the success of an organization is often influenced by ethical leadership, which should be rooted in the organization's core beliefs (Wheelen et al., 2018).

Property marketing, as defined by Wahyudi (2013), is a comprehensive system of business activities focused on planning, pricing, promoting, and distributing goods and services that meet the needs of both current and potential buyers in relation to the property being sold. According to Hastjarjo et al. (2016), property marketing activities are pivotal business endeavors that can create employment opportunities, offer extensive economic services to the community, increase income, stimulate economic growth, and contribute to national stability.

In the context of the property market, the current situation necessitates innovation from all players to survive and progress, addressing the prevailing stigma associated with property marketing. Table 1 illustrates these trends and challenges in detail.

Table 1. Differences in Property Marketing Stigma between Ideal Conditions and New Normal Conditions

Property Marketing Stigma Changes	
Ideal Condition	New Normal Condition
Human resources are considered more stable, effective, and efficient.	Human resources are considered less stable, tend to be ineffective, and inefficient.
Mobility and predictions of prospective property buyers increase due to high demand and direct marketing processes such as exhibitions, events, and so on.	The mobility and predictions of potential property buyers are reduced because the marketing process is carried out digitally and virtually.
Physical meetings and face-to-face direct communication between sellers and buyers	Optimizing online and virtual meetings and communication due to social distancing.
The design of new projects is carried out easily because of the large supply of raw materials and the high demand.	Designing a new project can be very difficult because raw materials are minimal and demand is declining.

(Source: Primary Data, 2021)

The property business must adapt to changing conditions, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. To handle economic paralysis and implement the New Normal scenario, property businesses in Indonesia are adopting strategic steps to maintain productivity while ensuring safety. One key strategy is leveraging online media, as more people spend time online during lockdowns, allowing properties to be advertised on widely accessed portals. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are also essential for maintaining communication and advertising property products effectively. Additionally, maximizing property advertisements on Google through paid Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Google Ads ensures high visibility on search results.

Direct communication through SMS and WhatsApp blasts allows targeted advertisements to reach potential customers directly. Television remains a valuable medium for advertising property products with good visuals, offering a wide reach and more convincing presentations. Due to movement restrictions and mall closures, property exhibitions are temporarily halted, with budgets reallocated to other advertising activities. Offering discounts

and flexible payment methods, such as Public Housing Credit through banks or direct installment plans with developers, attract buyers by providing financial ease.

To further stimulate interest, immediate gift offerings can encourage potential buyers to purchase property products. The strength of the sales team is crucial; motivating them with higher commissions, gift packages, and training on health protocols ensures they remain effective and comfortable during interactions with buyers. Lastly, embracing the trend of co-housing communities appeals to millennials, facilitating collaboration in finding, planning, designing, and living together. These strategies enhance the property market's resilience and adaptability, ensuring business continuity and growth amid challenging conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the property business, prompting companies worldwide to innovate for business continuity. Innovation is crucial to provide optimal services and support COVID-19 management in Indonesia. It drives faster growth, expands market segments, and enhances the competitive position of property companies. Increasing the competence of salespersons in property marketing is essential. Key competencies include an entrepreneurial spirit, effective and attractive communication (honesty, authenticity, integrity), negotiation expertise, and adaptability.

Salespersons must also handle consumer complaints, offer legal and non-legal property transfer advice, negotiate, conduct marketing prospecting, provide property valuations, deliver excellent service, and assist throughout the buying and selling process. Success in property marketing hinges on recognizing and addressing five types of consumer needs: stated needs (low prices), real needs (practical benefits), unstated needs (expectations of excellent service), delight needs (desire for bonuses or discounts), and secret needs (wanting to appear savvy to peers).

Salesperson competence impacts three types of marketing: responsive marketing (meeting stated needs), anticipative marketing (predicting future needs), and creative marketing (developing innovative solutions). This approach is particularly effective in marketing high-tech products and enhances overall marketing success.

The effectiveness of property sales and marketing in both urban and rural areas is closely tied to the expertise of salespersons, who are responsible for directing, educating, guiding, and directly engaging with consumers (the community). The community, as the primary consumers of property, plays a crucial role in meeting all their housing needs. The property development process involves various stages and downstream activities, as illustrated in table 2 below:

Table 2. Stages and Downstream of Property Development Process

Stages	Downstream Process
Bringing innovation and creativity	The emergence of ideas and ideas for development, development, to marketing Determine the target and market share Looking for funding sources Designing projects and providing rough estimates
Application of innovation and creativity	Checking zoning, access roads, and other infrastructure facilities Land condition checks, policy regulations, regulations, and financial conditions Approach with relevant stakeholders

Stages	Downstream Process
	Acquisition of land belonging to indigenous people at an appropriate price Cooperation with banks and other financial institutions
Conduct feasibility studies and analyzes the environmental impacts of property development and development	Research on feasibility studies and analysis of environmental impacts Property marketing research Planning and designing preliminary designs Manage all kinds of permits
Negotiation and Contract Agreement	Contract cooperation related to permanent loans Contract cooperation related to loans for construction Negotiations with stakeholders and financial institutions
Commitment and logical consequences	Signing the cooperation contract Establishing a detailed construction budget Determination of project implementation schedule
Construction execution	Implementation related to testing on the land to be built Construction of property structures and infrastructure Financing to contractors
Marketing	Advertising Promotion Exhibition
Asset and ownership management	Infrastructure utilization Maintenance management Setting and launching of the product (property) Property sale and purchase transactions Contract agreement with consumers Granting ownership rights to consumers

(Source: Primary Data, 2021)

Conclusion

The results of this study conclude that enhancing the competence of salespersons in property marketing is essential. Key competencies include an entrepreneurial spirit, effective and attractive communication (honest, authentic, and with integrity), negotiation expertise, and adaptability. Additionally, salespersons must be proficient in handling consumer complaints, providing legal and non-legal property transfer advice, conducting market prospecting, offering property valuations, delivering excellent service, and assisting throughout the entire property transaction process.

Improving salespersons' competence in property marketing involves more than just communicating goals and conducting transactions. It requires detailed planning and action to achieve set goals. Property companies must clearly define targets within specific timeframes and outline stages to meet marketing criteria before trading properties. During the feasibility study, a physical assessment determines soil conditions and strength, along with preparing architectural layouts to meet market preferences and government regulations. In the contract negotiation stage, all work agreements must be negotiated with involved parties before reaching a binding agreement.

Following contract negotiations, the commitment pattern stage involves signing contracts and meeting all requirements. The development process then progresses to the construction stage, where contractors are appointed, and the construction manager begins supervisory work. Upon completing construction, the project operation stage begins, culminating in asset management. Future research should focus on sustainable property marketing and management as investment/business forms, considering external factors like government regulations, competition, supply and demand, and consumer preferences. The main objective is to maximize investors' income and capital, manage the property's physical aspects efficiently, and prevent depreciation or damage to the property and its environment, ensuring long-term impact.

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