

The Importance Of Distribution Channels To Increase Sales Of P&G Products In South Papua

(Case Study Of Downy Fragrance Products At CV. Merauke Indah)

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Abstract. *Distribution channels in a company play a very important role in ensuring that products or services produced by producers can reach final consumers efficiently and effectively. CV. Merauke Indah is one of the Sub Distributors located in Eastern Indonesia, namely in South Papua. The recommended alternative to overcome these obstacles is to increase accessibility to remote areas. Collaborate with local logistics service providers such as SIKI express expeditions. The efficiency in logistics management. Optimize delivery routes to determine the most efficient path based on road and weather conditions to be more efficient. Regular market surveys can also be carried out to understand consumer needs in various regions and adjust stock in the warehouse according to the survey results. Improving distribution channels is also an important part. CV. Merauke Indah is advised to use multimodal transportation that combines land, sea, and air routes to overcome infrastructure limitations. Building warehouses in strategic locations such as Boven Digoel Regency and Mappi Regency will also speed up distribution and reduce dependence on poor road conditions.*

Keywords: *strategy, distribution channels, sales*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sales in Indonesia has shown a dynamic and positive trend in recent years. FMCG products, which include everyday necessities such as food, beverages, hygiene products, and personal care products, continue to experience increased demand in line with economic growth and changes in consumer consumption patterns. The factors driving the growth of FMCG in Indonesia are (www.compas.co.id., 2023)

In 2023, FMCG sales in Indonesia's e-commerce sector reached Rp57.6 trillion, an increase of 1.03% from the previous year. The number of transactions also rose by 2.75% with an additional 42 million transactions. This increase indicates that consumers are purchasing more FMCG products online, taking advantage of promotions and ease of access. Household consumption contributed 53.31% of Indonesia's total gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the second quarter of 2023, growing 5.32% year-on-year. Factors such as the celebration of religious holidays and the provision of holiday allowances (THR) have increased the purchasing power of the public, thereby driving growth in the FMCG sector.

Distribution plays a very important role in increasing product sales, especially in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods industry. (FMCG). Effective distribution channels ensure that products are available to consumers at the right time and in the right place. Procter & Gamble (P&G) in Indonesia has leveraged effective distribution to boost its product sales. With a strong

and extensive distribution network, P&G ensures that its products such as Downy, Pantene, and Gillette are available in various regions, including remote areas. Collaboration with major retailers and e-commerce platforms also allows P&G to reach more consumers and meet their needs quickly and efficiently. Effective distribution is key to increasing FMCG product sales. Through product availability, operational efficiency, enhanced customer satisfaction, flexibility to market demand, strengthening relationships with business partners, and market data collection, companies can ensure sustainable sales growth and strengthen their market position.

South Papua is one of the regions with significant economic potential in Indonesia. The stable population growth, along with the increasing consumption levels, coincided with the designation of this region as one of the new provinces in Indonesia. Thus creating significant opportunities for FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) companies to grow and expand their market share. CV. Merauke Indah, as one of the key players in the FMCG industry in this region, plays a crucial role in meeting daily consumer needs.

The FMCG industry has unique characteristics, where its products have a relatively short Product Life Cycle and high consumer demand. Therefore, efficiency in distribution becomes a key factor that influences the company's performance in meeting market demand quickly and accurately. In the context of South Papua, which faces geographical challenges and limited distribution infrastructure, effective distribution channel management becomes increasingly important. CV. Merauke Indah faces obstacles in optimizing its sales in Southern Papua. Factors such as location accessibility, transportation, and the need for better infrastructure can limit the company's ability to achieve success efficiently.

Through research on the importance of improving distribution channels in the context of FMCG, the main focus of this study is to identify the constraints faced by CV. Merauke Indah in managing distribution channels in South Papua, as well as formulating strategies that can help the company overcome these challenges. Thus, it is expected that the sales of CV. Merauke Indah can be significantly increased, while consumers in Southern Papua will gain better access to the FMCG products needed in their daily lives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Distribution Channels

In today's economy, most producers do not sell their goods directly to the end users. Companies usually collaborate with intermediaries to bring their products to the market. Marketing intermediaries form a distribution channel. The company needs to implement a good

and proper distribution channel so that the company's products can reach consumers accurately. The company needs in-depth knowledge of distribution channels to successfully bring its products to market.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008), distribution channels are interdependent organizations that help deliver available goods or services to consumers for use or consumption. According to Kotler and Keller (2008), distribution channels (marketing channels) are a group of interdependent organizations involved in the process of producing available or consumed goods and services. According to Lamb (2001), the term distribution channel (channel) comes from the Latin word *canalis*, which means canal. A distribution channel is a series of interdependent organizations that facilitate the transfer of ownership as products move from producers to business users or customers. According to Stanton (1993), the distribution channel (channel of distribution) is sometimes also referred to as the trade channel, which is the path used for the transfer of goods from the producer to the end consumer or users from the industrial sector.

The purpose of distribution channels

Distribution channels play a crucial role in ensuring that the products or services produced by manufacturers can reach the end consumers efficiently and effectively. According to Kotler & Keller (2012), the main objective of distribution channels is to ensure that products are available to consumers at the right location and time. This includes the placement of products in retail stores, online platforms, and other distribution points that are easily accessible to consumers. According to Coughlan, Anderson, Stern, & El-Ansary (2006), distribution channels allow producers to reach a wider market, including areas far from the production location. By using the existing distribution network, companies can expand their market coverage and reach more potential consumers. According to Weitz & Jap (1995), distribution channels help accelerate the sales process by providing ready-to-buy products at strategic locations. Consumers can easily find and purchase products without having to wait for long delivery times.

Types of distribution channels

Phillip Kotler (2005) explains that the basic forms of distribution efforts can be distinguished into two forms, namely direct and indirect. Companies that engage in direct distribution mean that the distribution effort is entirely carried out by the company producing the product directly to the consumer without any intermediaries. Meanwhile, indirect distribution is the distribution effort carried out through several intermediaries before reaching the consumer. According to Marius P. Angipora (2002), the process of delivering products to

the end consumer can use either a long channel or a short channel depending on the distribution channel policy that the company wants to implement. The distribution chain according to its form is divided into 2 types:

1. Direct distribution channel. The direct distribution channel is a form of delivering goods/services from producers to consumers without intermediaries. The forms of direct distribution channels can be divided into four types, namely:

- a. Selling at the point of production. This is a form of direct sales conducted at the production site. Example: a fruit farmer selling the fruits produced directly in their orchard to consumers.
- b. Selling at the producer retail store. This is sales conducted at retail outlets. In this form of sales, producers usually do not sell directly to consumers but through or by delegating to retailers.
- c. Selling door to door. This is sales conducted by producers directly to consumers by deploying salesmen to the consumers' homes or offices.

d. Selling through mail. This is sales conducted by companies using postal services.

2. Indirect distribution channels are distribution channels that use intermediaries and agents to deliver goods/services to consumers. What is meant by intermediaries are those who buy and sell those goods and own them. They operate in the field of wholesale and retail trade, whereas an agent is a person or entrepreneur who buys or sells goods for wholesale trade. (manufaktur). Agents only act on behalf of either the seller or the buyer in a transaction. Their income is based on a percentage of the goods sold or purchased.

Whereas what is meant by a distributor is an institution that engages in trade by providing services or special functions related to the sale or distribution of goods.

Sales

Sales is one of the most crucial aspects in the business world. Without effective sales, a company will not be able to survive, let alone thrive, amid increasingly fierce competition. Sales are not just a transaction between the seller and the buyer but involve various strategies and tactics designed to attract and retain customers. In a broader context, sales also encompass efforts to build long-term relationships with customers, understand their needs, and provide maximum value.

According to Samsul Arifin (2020), selling is giving something to another person (the buyer) in exchange for money or receiving money. Meanwhile, Kotler (2001) defines selling as a process where the needs of the buyer and the needs of the seller are met through the exchange of information and interests. Then, according to Sumiyati and Yatimatun (2021), the

definition of selling is the purchase of a (good or service) from one party to another in exchange for money from that party. Sales are a source of company revenue; the larger the sales, the greater the income received by the company. It can be concluded that sales is the process of providing something to others/buyers to obtain money as compensation or payment.

How to Increase Sales

Increasing sales is the main goal for many businesses, and various strategies can be applied to achieve this. According to Kotler & Keller (2012), ensuring that the products and services offered are of high quality and meet or exceed customer expectations can help increase sales. Satisfied customers tend to return and recommend the product to others. Besides the quality of the products and services, the sales staff must also be truly competent. According to Jobber & Lancaster (2015), investing in training and developing the skills of sales personnel can enhance their effectiveness in selling. This includes training on products, sales techniques, and communication skills. Additionally, according to Kumar & Shah (2004), developing customer loyalty programs can increase retention and repeat purchases. This program can include special discounts, reward points, and exclusive offers for members.

Increasing sales requires a holistic and sustainable approach that includes various marketing strategies, improving product and service quality, optimizing distribution channels, and enhancing the skills of the sales force. By effectively implementing these various strategies, the company can achieve significant and sustainable sales growth.

The Relationship Between Distribution Channels to Increase Sales

Distribution channels have a close relationship with sales volume. The optimal distribution channels from product suppliers will increase sales volume. (Jainuddin & Ernawati, 2020). Distribution channels provide an incentive for customers to build a strong relationship with the company, as quoted from a statement that says distribution channels are essentially a way to organize the work needed for the process of transferring goods from producers to consumers, to bridge various gaps that can separate goods and services from the people who can use them. The purpose of the distribution channel activities carried out by the company is none other than to provide convenience to consumers so that they can easily meet their needs (Djharuddin, 2017).

Kotler & Keller (2009) stated that distribution channels consist of zero-level channels (This type where producers can use their sales force to sell directly to end customers), one-level channels (this type where producers can sell to distributors who sell to end customers), two-level channels (the type where the manufacturer can sell through representatives of the

manufacturing company or its branches directly to customers or use it to sell through industrial distribution).

Well-designed and well-managed distribution channels have a significant impact on increasing sales. Through broader market access, increased product availability, reduced delivery times, and distribution costs. By understanding and optimizing these distribution channels, the company can ensure that its products are available in the right place, at the right time, and in the most efficient manner.

3. METHODS

The data collection techniques used are as follows:

1. In-depth Interviews

The author conducted in-depth interviews with relevant parties such as the management of CV Merauke Indah, distributors, retailers, and even end consumers. The author conducts this to deeply understand the challenges and opportunities in the distribution channels, as well as gain insights into their perceptions and experiences regarding the existing distribution process. This is important because the author will obtain in-depth information about specific issues that may not be revealed through other methods.

2. Document Review

The author reviews relevant documents such as sales reports, distribution reports, inventory data, and other logistics documents owned by CV. Merauke Indah and P&G to obtain historical data and trends related to the distribution and sales of P&G products. This can provide objective and historical data that can be analyzed to see distribution patterns and trends.

3. Field Observations

The author conducts direct observations of the distribution process in the field, including how P&G products are distributed from the warehouse to the end consumer, to directly see how the distribution operations run and identify any potential obstacles or inefficiencies that may occur. The author needs to do this to provide a realistic picture of the actual distribution practices, which may differ from the idealized procedures.

4. RESULTS

In the operationalization of a company, the management of distribution channels is one of the most crucial aspects, especially for companies operating in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector like CV. Merauke Indah. The effectiveness and efficiency of

distribution channels not only determine product availability in the market but also have a significant impact on sales and the continuity of the company's business.

CV. Merauke Indah, founded by Mr. Abdul Kholik in 2017 in Southern Papua, has shown a strong commitment to providing the best products and services to customers. However, like many other companies, CV. Merauke Indah also faces various obstacles and challenges that must be overcome to maintain and improve its business. The sales data of CV. Merauke Indah from 2021-2024 is as follows:



Figure 1. Sales of CV. Merauke Indah tahun 2021-2024

Source: CV. Merauke Indah

As shown in the sales table taken from the CV. Merauke Indah review document, the sales of P&G products, particularly the Downy brand, appear to fluctuate every month, especially in the first and second quarters.

In this chapter, the author will outline the main challenges faced by CV. Merauke Indah in managing distribution channels in Southern Papua. The main focus will be on three important aspects, namely infrastructure, regional accessibility, and logistics management. The author will discuss in detail how each of these constraints affects the Company's operations and provide insights into the steps that can be taken to address them.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this discussion is to provide a deeper understanding of the distribution problems faced by CV. Merauke Indah and to offer strategic recommendations to improve the company's distribution efficiency and effectiveness. Next, the author will clearly and

thoroughly outline these issues, starting with the infrastructure constraints faced by CV. Merauke Indah.

CV. Merauke Indah, as a company operating in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in Southern Papua, faces several obstacles in its distribution channels. These obstacles are primarily caused by three main factors: infrastructure, regional accessibility, and logistics management. Here is a more detailed explanation of these obstacles:

1. Infrastructure

Insufficient infrastructure is one of the main obstacles in product distribution at CV. Merauke Indah. Many roads in Southern Papua are in poor condition, often damaged, and unsuitable for heavy goods transportation. Poorly maintained roads can result in slow delivery of goods and increase vehicle maintenance costs. In addition, the limited warehouse facilities will hinder the efficient storage of goods. This will be particularly felt by stores in remote areas such as Boven Diguel Regency and its surroundings, which can only be accessed via a single land route often referred to as the Trans Papua road. If the road is damaged, then automatically the delivery of goods to that area will be delayed by one to two weeks. This limitation will greatly complicate their stock management efforts, especially during the high-demand season. The condition of the damaged roads in some areas can be seen in the following images:



Figure 2. The condition of the roads is damaged in several areas of Boven Diguel Regency

Source: Author's documentation

2. Regional Accessibility

The challenging geography of Southern Papua makes accessibility a major issue in the distribution of goods. Several aspects that affect accessibility include remote and isolated areas. Many regions in Southern Papua can only be reached by air or sea transport. This adds complexity and cost to the distribution process, as these transportation methods are more expensive compared to land routes. There are also extreme weather conditions such as heavy rain and floods that can cut off road access and disrupt delivery schedules. This exacerbates uncertainty in distribution and affects shipments.

In addition, the limitations of telecommunications infrastructure can also worsen distribution. In some remote areas, access to telecommunications services is still very limited. This hampers effective communication between the distribution center and delivery points, thereby slowing down the decision-making process and response to emergencies.

3. Logistics Management

Suboptimal logistics management is also a significant obstacle in the distribution channels of CV. Merauke Indah. Some challenges in logistics management include inter-departmental coordination; inefficient coordination between the operational, financial, and marketing departments can result in delays in decision-making and the implementation of distribution strategies.

Additionally, from the inventory management perspective, it will also affect distribution. The inability to manage inventory properly can lead to overstock or stock-out issues, which negatively impact product availability in the market. Inefficient inventory management also increases storage costs and the risk of product damage.

The Influence of Geographical and Demographic Factors on the Management of Distribution Channels at CV. Merauke Indah

Geographical and demographic factors play a significant role in determining the efficiency and effectiveness of the company's distribution. These factors also present unique obstacles and challenges in managing the distribution channels of CV. Merauke Indah in Southern Papua.

Southern Papua has a very diverse topography, including lowlands, mountains, and dense forests. The difficult terrain complicates the construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure, thereby hindering the distribution of goods to remote areas. In addition, Southern Papua has limited transportation routes. Many areas can only be accessed by air or sea routes due to the lack of adequate land roads. This causes transportation costs to be higher and distribution to be less efficient.

In addition, Southern Papua often experiences extreme weather that can disrupt transportation and cause delays in the delivery of goods. The impact of this weather will be very noticeable on sales. Based on the sales report of CV. Merauke Indah shows that on average, sales in the first and second quarters of each year tend to fluctuate. This is caused by very high rainfall from early to mid-year, especially in February. Due to the rainfall, strong winds, and high waves, stores that can only be accessed via sea routes will stop operating, and it can be ensured that sales in February will drop significantly. This will require continuous adjustments in logistics planning. South Papua has a low population density and a widely dispersed population. This increases distribution costs because each distribution point may require significant time and expense to reach.

Consumer needs and preferences will differ in each region. Products that are popular in one region do not guarantee popularity in another region. For example, the Downy brand in large bottles is in high demand in the Asikie region, but in contrast, the Boven Diguel region tends to prefer Downy in medium sizes or even sachets. This difference requires adjustments in marketing and distribution strategies to meet local needs. Understanding the varying consumption patterns is also one of these demographic factors. Analyzing these consumption patterns is important to avoid overstock or stockout. Moreover, the differing economic levels in various regions will certainly affect the purchasing power of the community. For example, in the remote area of Mappi Regency, the community does not have a stable income; the majority rely on government funds such as Otsus funds, which will impact sales in that area. Regions with low purchasing power will require a more economical and efficient distribution approach. Whereas, from an educational perspective, different levels of education will affect consumers' awareness and knowledge of the product. Areas with lower levels of education will certainly require simpler and more direct communication and marketing strategies.

Based on the various issues faced by CV. Merauke Indah mentioned above, it can be concluded that distribution channels play an important role in efforts to increase P&G product sales at CV. Merauke Indah, South Papua. Therefore, the author provides several problem-solving approaches to boost sales in a challenging region like South Papua as follows:

Improving Distribution Channels

Distribution channels are a vital component in the operations of CV. Merauke Indah, especially considering the various obstacles faced in South Papua. Efficient and effective distribution not only ensures that products reach consumers on time but also minimizes costs and enhances customer satisfaction. Here, the author explains the reasons why the distribution channel is very important to overcome the obstacles faced by CV. Merauke Indah:

1. Overcoming Infrastructure Limitations

Southern Papua has limited infrastructure, including poor roads and difficult accessibility. A good distribution channel can help overcome these challenges by using various transportation models and storage strategies. Such as the use of Multi-Modal Transportation, which combines land, sea, and air transport to reach hard-to-access areas.

The development of strategic warehouses involves building warehouses in strategic locations to facilitate the distribution of goods and reduce dependence on poor road infrastructure. For example, CV. Merauke Indah can build warehouses in several districts such as Boven Diguel and Mappi to expedite the distribution of goods to consumers and use sea transportation to send goods to coastal areas that are difficult to reach by land, such as Agats and Wanam.

2. Improving Accessibility to Remote Areas

Many areas in Southern Papua can only be accessed via special routes such as air or sea, making distribution more challenging. Therefore, CV. Merauke Indah needs to implement effective distribution channels to enable the company to reach consumers in remote areas. One of the strategies that can be implemented is by collaborating with local logistics service providers who have more knowledge and experience in optimizing distribution in hard-to-reach areas. They can help in selecting the best routes, and utilizing appropriate transportation means, thereby improving overall distribution efficiency.

The local logistics service providers that can be chosen are as follows:

Nama Ekspedisi	Rute	Total Armada	Harga	Gambar
SIKI Ekspres	Asiki	15 Unit Truck	3.550.000	
	Muting		3.400.000	
	Boven Diguel		5.000.000	
	Mindip Tanah		5.500.000	
Laskar Utama Indah	Muting	9 Unit Truck	3.600.000	
	Bupul		3.600.000	
	Asiki		3.750.000	

Figure 3. List of Vendors Collaborating with CV. Merauke Indah

Source: Field survey, processed by the author

3. Efficiency in Logistics Management

Poor logistics management can lead to delays, damaged goods, and high costs. Well-planned distribution channels can address these issues by increasing efficiency and reducing

costs, such as route optimization. Using route optimization to determine the most efficient delivery routes based on road and weather conditions.

4. Adjustment to Local Consumer Needs

As is known, the local market in Southern Papua has different needs and preferences, influenced by demographic factors. Flexible distribution channels allow for adjustments to consumer needs in each region. One of the strategies that can be implemented is market surveys and consumer segmentation. Conducting market surveys to understand consumer needs in various regions and adjusting the distribution strategy accordingly.

Next, adjust the stock in the warehouse, storing fast-moving products in each warehouse based on the market survey results. For example, suppose the survey shows that coastal areas need more Downy refill products, while mountainous areas need more Downy Sachet products. In that case, the company can adjust the warehouse stock according to these preferences.

By implementing these strategies, CV. Merauke Indah can improve the efficiency of its distribution channels, reduce operational costs, and ensure that products are available in the market on time and in good condition. This not only increases sales and customer satisfaction but also strengthens the company's competitiveness in Southern Papua. Effective and efficient distribution channels are key to overcoming existing obstacles and achieving long-term success for CV. Merauke Indah.



Figure 4. Proposed Distribution Strategy for CV Merauke Indah

Source: Author

Potential for Sales Increase

The implementation of the strategies recommended by the author to improve the distribution channel management of CV. Merauke Indah in Southern Papua has great potential to increase the sales of P&G products, especially the Downy brand. As is known, Downy sales in the first semester, from January to June each year, show unstable sales due to several obstacles faced by CV. Merauke Indah, such as geographical and demographic factors. If these issues can be resolved, it is expected that the sales of P&G products, particularly the Downy brand, could increase by 15-20%. Success in overcoming distribution barriers in this area will support the long-term business growth of CV. Merauke Indah.

CV. Merauke Indah is currently shipping to Asmat and Mappi regencies using maritime transportation, where the company employs a third party for the delivery. It is hoped that CV. Merauke Indah can acquire its ship to maximize sales and delivery of goods to Asmat and Mappi regencies.

As for the areas of Asiki, Muting, and Boven Digul Regency, the company collaborates with SIKI Express because, until now, stores in those areas have been picking up goods themselves from CV Merauke Indah using their vehicles/trucks. This has made it difficult to increase orders due to the limited number of vehicles/trucks owned by the stores in the Asiki, Muting, and Boven Digul areas. With the presence of SIKI Express, it is hoped that there will be an increase in orders from these areas.

CONCLUSION

CV. Merauke Indah is a Sub Distributor of PT. Borwita Citra Prima, operates in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods sector. (FMCG). Located in the Eastern Indonesia region, specifically in the South Papua Province. Its distribution area includes 4 regencies, namely Merauke Regency, Boven Diguel Regency, Mappi Regency, and Asmat Regency.

The issues faced include:

1. Infrastructure. Damage to main roads such as the Trans Papua road and limited warehouse facilities cause delivery delays of up to one or two weeks to certain areas like Boven Diguel and Asikie.
2. Regional Accessibility. The geography in this region is quite challenging, with many areas only accessible by air or sea transport, leading to increased distribution costs. In addition, extreme weather such as high waves also disrupts the shipping schedule, especially from January to February each year.

3. Logistics Management. Inefficient inter-departmental coordination and suboptimal inventory management lead to overstock or stockout issues, which will adversely affect the company's growth.

4. Geographical and Demographic Factors. The diverse topography of Southern Papua with its extreme weather conditions will affect the distribution of goods. In addition, brand images and consumer needs that vary in each region also require adjustments in marketing and distribution strategies.

Some forms of problem-solving to increase sales in challenging regions such as South Papua are as follows: A good distribution channel can help overcome these challenges by using various transportation models and storage strategies. Such as the use of multiple modes of transportation, which combines land, sea, and air transport to reach hard-to-access areas. The development of strategic warehouses involves building warehouses in strategic locations to facilitate the distribution of goods and reduce dependence on poor road infrastructure. CV. Merauke Indah needs to implement an effective distribution channel to enable the company to reach consumers in remote areas.

Flexible distribution channels allow for adjustments to consumer needs in each region. One of the strategies that can be implemented is market surveys and consumer segmentation. Conducting market surveys to understand consumer needs in various regions and adjusting distribution strategies accordingly.

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