

A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING FOR SMES A DURING PANDEMIC

Tuti Anggraeni^{*1}, Dodi Sukmayana^{*2}, Disman^{*3}, Puspo Dewi Dirgantara^{*4}
^{1,3,4} Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung
^{1,2} Universitas Winaya Mukti, Bandung
Email: tutianggraeni01@gmail.com, / tutianggraeni01@upi.edu,

Abstract: *Relationship marketing (RM) is an important issue in every business because it is a key component of long-term business success. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are an important business sector in economic growth. This study aims to find out how important RM is for SMEs during a pandemic. This study uses a literature review. Database from Pubmed, ProQuest, Ebsco, and Emerald databases. The keywords used in English are Relationship Marketing, SMEs, and Programs. The data obtained was manually extracted and analyzed descriptively, with the criteria of full text articles, research articles, and the last 10 years of publication period (2013-2022). Found 61 articles related to the research theme, in which RM can help improve the ability of SMEs to gain competitive advantage during the pandemic and discover their strengths and weaknesses to develop critical capabilities for high turbulence and dynamic situations in their environment, and therefore pave the way for improvement towards greater good. Programs that can be carried out to deal with the pandemic are: managing marketing strategies, innovating products, involving the role of the government, and promoting with social media. The results of the study show that RM has an important role in improving the capabilities of SMEs by managing the implementation of marketing strategies in the company.*

Keywords: *Literature Review, Pandemic, Relationship Marketing, UKM*

1. Introduction

Marketing (Relationship Marketing) is an important issue in every business. Knowing the customer and building, maintaining and enhancing long-term customer relationships are key components of long-term business success. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are an important business sector in economic growth both in terms of employment and increasing gross economic product in a country. Based on data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises (Kemenkop UKM) for March 2021, the number of SMEs reached 64.2 million with a contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of 61.07 percent or IDR 8,573.89 trillion. The sustainability of SMEs during the current pandemic has a very important contribution to sustaining family economic life, in which SMEs are the basic economy of a country.

The interesting thing about the sustainability of SMEs during this pandemic is inseparable from the problem of Relationship Marketing (Relationship Marketing), which is unique in nature, making SMEs able to survive during a pandemic where many other business

sectors are experiencing a downturn. Likewise SMEs that occur in other countries. Because of its unique existence, many researchers in the world have researched this UKM, including Cano L et al. 20 21 ; B., Hernita et al. 20 22 ; [Fattah, MA, et al 2022](#) , have highlighted the increasing relevance of marketing for the success of SMEs, noting that the adoption of both marketing concepts and practices can help SMEs achieve long term goals with a competitive advantage . In addition, certain patterns and approaches adopted by SMEs with regards to marketing activities have been recognized in various ways empirical studies (de Diego E 2022 ; Foti V 2022; Bolatan G 2022; Schleper, Martin C. 2021). Over the past decades, several phenomena, such as: globalization, increased competition and the financial crisis, led to important market changes, which in turn affected the behavior and ability of SMEs to compete.

In this case, there is a lack of systematic reviews that provide an in-depth understanding of how SMEs relate to their market. Several contributions have reviewed the existing literature focusing on specific marketing topics, such as market orientation (Anna Wójcik-Karpacz 2021), the role of networking in competition between SMEs (**Dogbe, CSK, 2020**) and the role of marketing in the internationalization of SMEs processes (Fabian Hänle 2021 ; O Dekel-Dachs and M Naida-Janoszka 2021). Other studies have focused on how SMEs relate to their markets, offering conceptual developments especially in entrepreneurship in the field of marketing (Markus Beckmann, Michael Garkisch & Anica Zeyen (2021), Sascha Kraus, Raj V. Mahto & Steven T. Walsh (2021)). It's been three years since we entered a pandemic, due to the spread of the corona virus that has hit the whole world. The occurrence of this pandemic has changed the order of human life. The blocking of regional roads in various places caused many sectors of the economy to suffer, but humans are required to make an effort so that they can survive. Amidst this critical condition, the UKM sector is a supporter of the family economy. At a time when there were layoffs in almost every company, SMEs appeared as life-wheel assistants for the community. This is an interesting thing for researchers to conduct research on the relationship between customers and SMEs. Because SMEs (in this case the food sector SMEs) can survive during the pandemic. To fill this gap, and see the uniqueness of relationship marketing (Relationship Marketing) in SMEs, the author tries to present a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of relationship marketing (Relationship Marketing) and SMEs during a pandemic. As for the research questions in the discussion of this study are:

- ✓ How important is relationship marketing for SMEs during a pandemic?
- ✓ What programs are needed in implementing relationship marketing for SMEs during a pandemic?

The identification of the problem under study is to find out how big relationship marketing (Relationship Marketing) is in SMEs, therefore it is necessary to know what relationship marketing programs (Relationship Marketing) can be carried out for SMEs so that they can survive in this pandemic era. While the objectives of this study are:

- ✓ To find out how important relationship marketing is for SMEs during a pandemic.
- ✓ To analyze programs in implementing Relationship Marketing for SMEs during a pandemic.

Hopefully this writing will provide insight into the practice of relational marketing (Relationship Marketing) for SMEs in particular and for future researchers.

2. Research Method

The method used in this study uses a qualitative approach to a systematic review of the literature review. The protocol used is the PRISMA flowchart and The Center for Review and Dissemination as well as the Joanna Briggs Institute Guideline in assessing research quality. While the strategy used in this literature search is to analyze articles based on inclusion and exclusion criteria that have been determined based on language, type of article, population and sample, and year of publication.

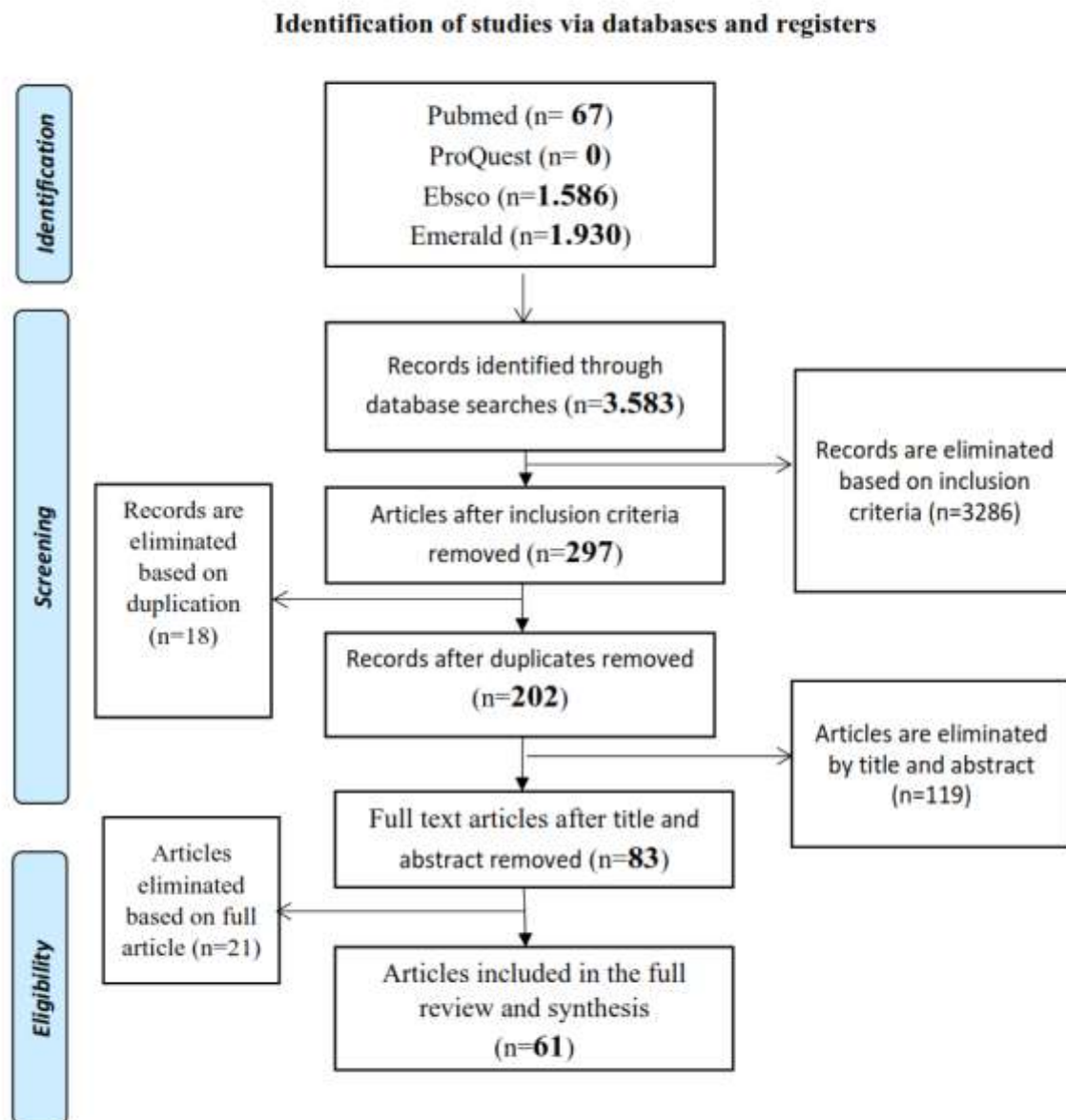
Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	inclusion	Exception
Language	English (Advanced Research)	No Indonesian
Article Type	<i>Full text, free and non-free access, research articles , and article reviews</i>	Abstract article, not research articles and not article reviews
Popular	SMEs in various countries during a pandemic	SMEs in various countries outside the time of the pandemic
Results	1. The importance of relationship marketing for SMEs during a pandemic 2. Programs needed in implementing marketing relationships for SMEs during a pandemic	1. Which is not related to marketing relationships for SMEs during a pandemic 2. Programs that are not needed in implementing marketing relationships for SMEs during a pandemic
Year of Issue	Last 10 years (2013 – 2022)	More than last 10 years

This study uses electronic databases, namely Pubmed, ProQuest, Ebsco, and Emerald. The keywords used in English are:

- RQ1: “Relationship Marketing OR Relationship Management” AND “Pandemic OR Corona Virus OR Covid 19” AND “SMEs OR MSMEs OR Entrepreneurs OR Enterprises OR Small Firm OR Small Business OR Family Firm”
- RQ2; “Progman OR Factors OR Component OR Element” AND “Relationship Marketing OR Relationship Management” AND “Pandemic OR Corona Virus OR Covid 19” AND “SMEs OR MSMEs OR Entrepreneurs OR Enterprises OR Small Firm OR Small Business OR Family Firm”

The data obtained was manually extracted and analyzed descriptively.



Source: Moher et al., 2009 *PRISMA Flow Diagrams*

3. Results and Discussion

The number of articles obtained is 3583 articles. Articles were adjusted according to the inclusion criteria so that 297 articles were obtained. Further duplications were made and the remaining 202 articles. After that, checking the title and abstract obtained 83 articles. For complete checking, 61 articles were obtained.

The research methodology carried out from the 61 articles is 80.3% or forty-nine articles carried out by conducting research based on qualitative. Data collection for this quantitative

study was mainly carried out using online surveys and panel data. While the remaining 19.7% or twelve articles used quantitative methods, most of them used interview data.

The researcher identifies and classifies the importance of relationship marketing for SMEs during a pandemic from the 61 articles that relationship marketing (RM) can help to enhance the ability of SMEs to gain competitive advantage during a pandemic and to discover their strengths and weaknesses to develop critical capabilities for situations with high and dynamic turbulence in their environment, and therefore provide a path for improvement towards a better direction. In the influence of network involvement on the level of internationalization makes SMEs stronger with increasing environmental turbulence. The findings of this study have practical implications for businesses operating in different countries, as well as for government organizations and educational institutions.

Meanwhile, what programs are needed to implement relationship marketing for SMEs during a pandemic, based on the 61 articles collected, can be identified in 4 categories, namely the first category, with 35 articles (57.4%) discussing programs that can be carried out in relationship marketing for SMEs in during a pandemic is to apply a marketing strategy that is different from other companies adapted to the culture/culture of the country, the type of product, the resource capabilities owned by the SMEs. For the second category, there are 17 articles (27.9%) discussing programs that can be carried out in relationship marketing for SMEs during a pandemic, namely by having product innovations that have their own unique characteristics, so that SMEs products are different from the others. In the third category, 5 articles (8.2%) discuss the role of the government, policy makers, international organizations in adopting measures to reduce the impact of the outbreak on SMEs. The fourth category is the last program put forward by the 61 articles as many as 4 articles (6.5%) suggest that it is better to carry out marketing through social media, SMEs must be able to learn and operate social media (such as Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) which can be used during a pandemic or after a pandemic in terms of the marketing sector, especially for the promotion sector.

Discussion

The researcher identified and analyzed the first category of 61 related articles which discussed programs that could be carried out in relationship marketing for SMEs during a pandemic, SMEs used the basis of collaborative relationships as a meta-strategy to respond to these special conditions as expressed by Markus Beckmann, Michael Garkisch & Anica Zeyen (2021). Kyal H in *IIM Ranchi journal of management studies*, (2022), 21-37, 1(1) suggests that there is a beneficial relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, business financing, management, market practices, and MSME growth performance. The results support the notion that government policy plays an important role as a full moderator. So that even though the MSME sector has government support, its implementation requires skilled leaders who can run business profitability.

In various countries, many SMEs carry out their business movements based on family strategies, this is very helpful for SMEs to survive in the era of the covid 19 pandemic as revealed by Dettori A in *The TQM Journal*, (2022), 39-53, 34(7), logistics service providers

(LSPs) have built their reactions and actions to the COVID-19 outbreak around five main themes: “creating revenue streams”, “increasing operational transport flexibility”, “implementing digitization and data management”, “optimizing logistics infrastructure” and “optimize personnel capacity.” These pillars build the foundation of LSP resilience that enables the supply chain to remain resilient during high-impact, low-probability external shocks. The results of the discussion regarding this first category are focused on discussing programs that can be carried out in marketing relations for SMEs during a pandemic, namely by implementing a different marketing strategy from other companies according to the culture of the country, type of product, resource capabilities possessed by the stakeholders. small business entrepreneur

As for the second category regarding programs that can be carried out by SMEs to overcome this pandemic, they have created product innovations according to what was expressed by Irina Dovbischuk, **Dogbe, CSK**, Idrees U, Tavoletti E. Kazemargi N, [Dekel-Dachs, O. etc.](#) [Where](#) there are product innovations that have their own unique characteristics, so that SMEs' products are different from others, this has made SMEs able to survive running their business in getting through this pandemic outbreak. In the third program category the researchers analyzed from 61 related articles 8.2% discussed the role of government, policy makers, international organizations to adopt measures to reduce the impact of the outbreak on SMEs as expressed by B., Hernita, H, Hsiao C, [Fountain, J.](#) (2021), [Fattah, MA](#), and Żukowska B, of course, the role of this government varies greatly according to the existing policies in each country. Whereas for our category today the role of social media is so strong but in the 61 articles collected the social media implementation program for SMEs ranks fourth with a range of 6.5% suggesting it is better to carry out marketing through social media, UKM actors must be able to learn and operate social media (such as Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) which can be utilized during a pandemic or after a pandemic in terms of the marketing sector, especially for the promotion sector, one of which was revealed by Isaías P, Carvalho L, and Cassundé F in a study entitled e-Business management assessment: framework proposal through case study analysis (2020) 18(2) 237-254.

4. Conclusion

The results show that relationship marketing (RM) can help to enhance the ability of SMEs to gain competitive advantage during a pandemic and to discover their strengths and weaknesses to develop critical capabilities for high turbulence and dynamic situations in their environment, and therefore provide avenues for improvement in a better direction. In the influence of network involvement on the level of internationalization makes SMEs stronger with increasing environmental turbulence. As for the programs that can be taken in overcoming the covid 19 outbreak, each country tends to be different from the country where the research was conducted, but researchers can conclude that the most important program that SMEs must implement in overcoming the covid 19 outbreak is by implementing a marketing strategy in companies that are adapted to the culture/culture of the country, the type of product, the capability of the resources owned by the SMEs entrepreneurs.

Researchers' suggestions for further research are how to optimize other programs, be it product innovation, the role of the government or the application of the role of social media in the current era of technological globalization. Where the role of SMEs as a whole can increase the income of a country, given that SMEs are the backbone of the community's economy, both in cities and in rural areas.

Thank-you note

Prof. Dr. Vanessa Gaffar, SE, Ak., MBA. As a lecturer at the Indonesian University of Education, thank you very much for your guidance in writing this article.

Reference

- Arslan A, Kamara S, Golgeci I, et al. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, (2022), 20-33, 30(7) <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-01-2021-2573> Civil society organizations' management dynamics and social value creation in the volatile post-conflict contexts pre and during COVID-19.
- Alonso A, Bressan A, Santoni *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (2022) 103 103201. Overcoming the unprecedented: Micro, small and medium hospitality enterprises under COVID-19
- Andrei A, Dincă V, Vătămănescu E *Management and Marketing* (2021) 16(3) 167-186. Connecting the Dots: Exploring the Knowledge-based Antecedents of SMEs' Profitability and Development via International Ventures.
- B., Hernita, H. , Salim, A., Suriani, S., Perwira, I., Yulia, Y., Ruslan, M., & Yunus, K. (2022). Travel-Business Stagnation and SME Business Turbulence in the Tourism Sector in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Sustainability* , 14 (4), 2380. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14042380>
- Ciasullo, Maria Vincenza *European Journal of Innovation Management*, (2022), 365-392, 25(6) <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-02-2021-0109>. An open innovation approach to co-produce scientific knowledge: an examination of citizen science in the healthcare ecosystem.
- Deming's tampering revisited: definition and future research agenda Magdalena Smeds. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, (2022), 37-51, 14(5) <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-03-2021-0041>.
- [Dekel-Dachs, O.](#) , [Najda-Janoszka, M.](#) , [Stokes, P.](#) , [Simba, A.](#) and [Tarba, S.](#) (2021), "Searching for a new perspective on institutional voids, networks and the internationalization of SMEs in emerging economies: a systematic literature review", *International Marketing Review* , Vol. 38 No. 5, pp. 879-899. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-12-2020-0303>

- Franco, Stefano *European Journal of Innovation Management*, (2022), 413-431, 25(6) <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-06-2021-0300> . Business model innovation and digital transformation in global management consulting firms. Boosting innovative business ideas through hackathons. The “Hack for Travel” case study.
- Fountain, J. (2021), *Journal of Tourism Futures* , Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-04-2021-0100> . "The future of food tourism in a post-COVID-19 world: insights from New Zealand".
- Fattah, MA , Morshed, SR , Hoque, MM , Rabbi, MF and Dola, IA (2022), *Frontiers in Engineering and Built Environment* , Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/FEBE-12-2021-0058> . "Impacts of COVID-19 outbreaks on the lower-income groups and attainment of SDGs: a study of the fast-growing commercial capital city, Chittagong, Bangladesh".
- Suoniemi S *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, (2022), 19-32, 37(13) <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-08-2021-0380> . CRM system implementation and firm performance: the role of consultant facilitation and user involvement.
- Syairozi, M. I., Aziz, K. F., & Taufiqurrachman, F. (2022). PENGARUH LIKUIDITAS, SOLVABILITAS DAN PROFITABILITAS TERHADAP PERTUMBUHAN LABA PERUSAHAAN (Studi Kasus: Terhadap Perusahaan Sektor Percetakan, Periklanan dan Media, Tahun 2016-2020). *Jurnal AKTUAL*, 20(2).
- Thomas A, *European Journal of Innovation Management*, (2022), 44-63, 25(6) <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-07-2020-0292> . Adoption of green innovations by SMEs: an investigation about the influence of stakeholders.