

Business Strategies during Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study at Unggas Bersama Sentosa Perkasa (Ltd.) Bondowoso Branch

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Abstract

Broiler chicken partnerships have been in decline since 2019. Businesses that provide broiler chicken supplies to the public have grappled with decreased prices in the market so that they do not reach the stability of the production cost, leading to losses that continue to persist until 2020. Over time, losses remain until 2020, causing the difficulties in growing due to the existence of Covid-19, which limits the space for sales to move so that income is not maximized. One of the partnerships that is engaged in providing broiler chickens is Unggas Bersama Sentosa Perkasa (Ltd.), Bondowoso Branch (UBSP Ltd.). The purpose of this study is to describe the implementation of the business strategies of UBSP (LTD.) Bondowoso Branch during the Covid-19 period. This research was conducted from August 2020 to January 2021. The research approach was qualitative phenomenological research. The results portrayed the competitive advantage of UBSP (Ltd.), Bondowoso Branch, in the PI bonus offer given to farmers compared to other partnerships or competitors. This makes farmers more interested in joining the company so that the company still gets farmers' trust to maintain continuous production.

Keywords: Partnership, Business strategies, Competitive advantage, Covid-19

I. INTRODUCTION

Unggas Bersama Sentosa Perkasa (Ltd.) Bondowoso Branch has existed since January 2018. The company's activity is to provide broiler chickens for public. Breeding for chickens is carried out by collaborating with farmers and selling chickens at a market price determined by the first party based on the agreed contract price. The contract price is used as the limit. If the market price is below the contract price, the farmer will still receive the selling price according to the contract, while the company bears the loss in the form of the difference between the contract price and the selling price in the market. The following is the agreed contract price:

Table 1.1 Contract Price of Chicken Plasma

Chicken Weight (Kg)	Price Rp/ Kg
>1.90 up	18.200
1.70 – 1.89	18.130
1.50 – 1.69	18.060
1.30 – 1.49	17.990
1.20 – 1.29	17.920
< 1.19	*Disapproved

Source: Secondary data from UBSP (Ltd.) 2019

The price regulations in the table above are based on the weight per chicken. The price development always fluctuates at any time, as seen from the price changes of chickens on daily basis. The poultry business therefore poses a high risk due to the market conditions. The emerging problem is that the average production cost is not proportional to the selling price during 2019 - 2020. The results of Ardika's (2018) research point out that accumulated costs are not a benchmark for determining selling prices, but the accumulated costs are only used to determine how much profit as well as losses company has to bear. Farmers do not need to provide seeds, feed, and medicines because are companies that work with suppliers are responsible for these. In addition, the company provides direction during the process of raising broiler chickens. Companies select suppliers in an effort to reduce inventory logistics costs and accelerate the availability of raw materials.

Reduced income due to lower prices has resulted in delayed payments for purchasing raw materials so that suppliers also reduce ratios for selling goods to the company. In addition, another impact was that the process of disbursement of farmer's share was slow. Several farmers stated that they had established other partnerships with parties whose business shares were disbursed more quickly. The presence of these competitors increases the competition between partnerships. The competitiveness of the chicken farming business will draw market attention to the potential advantages of competitors' business strategies. Therefore, it is necessary to have a competitive advantage over other competitors for future survival.

In addition to being affected by the decline in chicken prices, at the outset of 2020 the Covid-19 phenomenon appeared to have disrupted the pattern of human life, and cost all countries trillions in the world to change their mindsets and focus on a new phase of world civilization. Restrictions on the space for movement such as working at home during this pandemic actually complicated operational activities and the sales process. This situation made companies look for strategies to support production activities. Porter (1993, Safitri et al (2009: 46), points out that strategy is a competitive activity, which varies across companies in the eyes of consumers. This aims at adding value to operational activities carried out. The strategy deployed by a company will provide options for farmers to make decision on their partnerships. Porter (1996:5) sets forward that strategy means doing different activities from competitors or doing the same activities in different ways. Company strategies are usually carried out by paying

attention to existing strategies and then evaluated by paying attention to several differences according to company needs. Porter (1996:7) adds that the essence of strategies is in the activities undertaken. It is important to ensure whether the strategy chosen is similar to or different from those of competitors. Here is an overview of Porter's Five Forces:

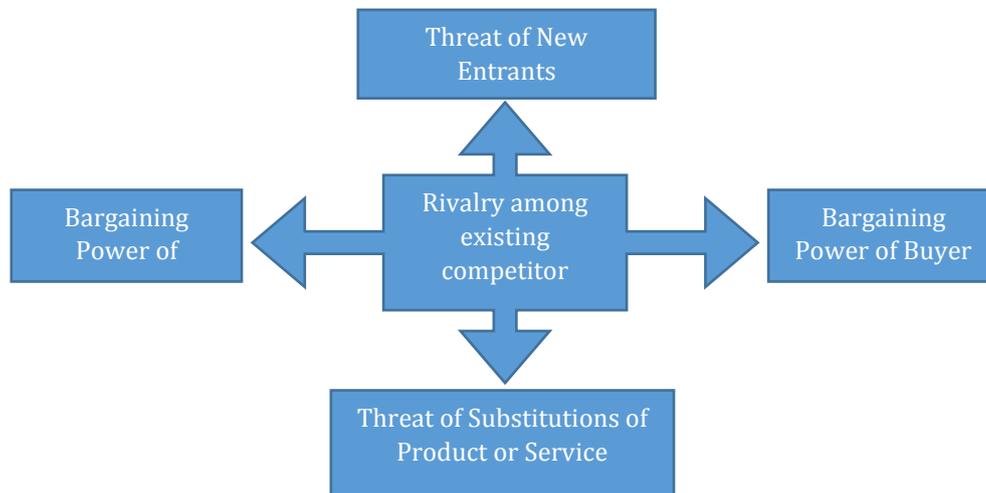


Figure 2.1 Porter's Five Forces (2008)

There are 5 Forces in Porter's concept in formulating strategies. According to David in Foris et al., (2015:737), Porter's Five-Force model of competitive analysis is an approach widely adopted to develop strategies in many industries. These five forces provide a measure for an industry that is looking to grow by taking into account the five points of competitive advantage.

II. Research Method

This research deployed qualitative phenomenological research. The researchers collected data and presented the results concerning the strategies of UBSP (Ltd.) Bondowoso Branch in dealing with the problem of market prices that are not proportional to the production cost during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researchers chose to use this method as the problem under study required the use of observations, rather than analysis on numerical data. Another rationale was to make it easier when dealing with reality, and there was a close emotional relationship between the researcher and the respondent, therefore producing in-depth data. The data under analysis were primary data and secondary data. Many primary data sources were obtained from the field, namely branch heads, field extension officers, farmers, and company policy makers. Secondary data in this study included the following:

- 1) Performance report of Unggas Bersama Sentosa Perkasa (Ltd.) Bondowoso branch from 2019 to 2020;
- 2) Data on chicken population in these two years;
- 3) Partnership contract;
- 4) Report of company's loss;

- 5) Maintenance activities;
- 6) Report of farmers' outcome;
- 7) Government policy.

The data were obtained through a series processes involving data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusion to explain the research findings. The data used in this study were primary data and secondary data. Data collection techniques in this study were interviews with 6 informants, followed by observation and documentation. This was followed by reporting data. The data analysis and presentation techniques used were interactive models developed by Mile, Hubberman, and Saldana, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion. In order to produce data with minimal errors, the research used data validity techniques with several steps taken, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

III. Results and Discussion

Chicken partnerships have been experiencing a slump due to persistent inflation. This led to the termination of the chicken partnership which hampered the competition between partnerships. Fortunately, UBSP (Ltd.) Bondowoso Branch was able to survive during 2019 and 2020 despite emerging pandemic, through several strategies as follow

A. *Strict Selection on Prospective Farmers*

The farmer record was an important aspect to analyze in order to further improve the quality of prospective farmers. Farmers who had good management had the potential to be more profitable. Selection was carried out by assessing farmers' record in the previous periods, specifically paying attention to the production index obtained after harvest. When PI (Production Index) is still above the standard, which is >240, then there is potential to do chick in. Alternatively, for those who are just willing to join, assessment is simply done by looking up their previous record in collaboration with other companies.

B. *Appropriation of Chick In*

Chick In is a term for a chicken farmer whose cage will be filled with chicks (DOC – Days of Chicken), which will allow him to join as a company partner. Efforts to reduce Chick In are a way to control the company's production activities by considering its finances. This control is also needed to adjust the price conditions for chickens at harvest time. The large number of chickens that are kept will affect the number of chickens to be harvested. The more chicks are available, the more stocks will be available, which leads to lower price.

C. *Increasing Chick in when DOC at affordable price*

Based on *Sapronak* data (Chicken Poultry Production Facility) from UBSP (Ltd.) Bondowoso Branch 2020, until July 2020, massive number of harvested chickens

resulted in the decline in chicken prices. Table 3.1 describes the average costs incurred from January to July 2020.

Table 3.1 Chicken Poultry Production Facility of UBSP (Ltd.) in 2020

Chicken Poultry Production Facility 2020							
Month	COGS (Cost of Goods Sold)	DOC (Days of Chicken)	Feed	CMV (Chemical Medicine & Vaccine)	Market Price	L / R	Number of chickens
January	Rp 15,475	Rp 3,777	Rp 7,066	Rp 504	Rp 18,728	Rp 3,252	44,300
February	Rp 16,671	Rp 5,068	Rp 7,084	Rp 685	Rp 13,693	Rp -2,978	59,200
March	Rp 19,176	Rp 5,619	Rp 7,031	Rp 593	Rp 12,183	Rp -6,993	31,200
April	Rp 15,091	Rp 1,358	Rp 7,149	Rp 578	Rp 18,822	Rp 3,731	80,700
May	Rp 16,200	Rp 2,750	Rp 7,109	Rp 493	Rp 21,705	Rp 5,505	19,000
June	Rp 17,445	Rp 6,834	Rp 7,127	Rp 435	Rp 15,961	Rp -1,485	73,800
July	Rp 17,113	Rp 5,800	Rp 7,112	Rp 402	Rp 12,919	Rp -4,194	90,200
Total	Rp 117,172	Rp 31,206	Rp 49,678	Rp 3,691	Rp 114,011	Rp -3,161	398,400
Average	Rp 16,739	Rp 4,458	Rp 7,097	Rp 527	Rp 16,287	Rp -452	Rp 56,914

Source: Secondary data in 2020

As shown in Table 3.1, the average price of chickens from 2020 to July is Rp. 16,287, while the COGS is Rp. 16,739. This incurs a loss of Rp. -452 per chicken. The company is projected to obtain a profit like in April and May, if the price of chicken is above the COGS and supported by the price of DOC being cheaper than the previous months. Meanwhile, if the price of DOC falls but it is not balanced with population control, then what will happen is a loss in July. The price of chicken on the market in July 2020 is Rp. 12.919, while the cost of production is Rp. 17.113. Chicken prices are above the COGS and DOC prices are cheaper than that in June, but the total population of UBSP (Ltd.) Bondowoso is 90.200. This means that if the price of DOC is balanced with the large number of chicken populations in the coop, it will reduce the production cost and can offset the market price. Given that the price of broiler chickens in the market changes every day, it is necessary to analyze the price fluctuation of DOC and chicken stock in the market.

D. Performing Ideal Harvesting

The ideal harvest policy will help minimize operational costs, especially for chicken feed which is relatively high. If the price conditions are not comparable to the COGS, then the difference that will be borne by the company will be bigger. Quite the reverse, the farmer will get a profit according to the agreed contract price. In addition, this policy is carried out to ensure that the company is able to survive and remain competitive.

In practice, the company managed to carry out the following strategies:

- 1) Not only selling chickens with a weight of more than 2 Kg, but selling chickens weighing 1.5 Kg to the market and making new contracts specifically for harvesting small chickens;

- 2) Long-term cooperation with slaughterhouses at a consented contract price;
- 3) Deploying marketing strategies to nullify public judgment that the chicken weighing 1.5 Kg is sick;
- 4) Explaining to the farmer the market price which is not conducive and how to adjust the price of chickens sold to partners to the market price in order to balance the income between farmers and partners.

The company has realized that it is not only selling chickens with a weight of more than 2 Kg, but also selling chickens weighing 1.5 Kg to the market and making new contracts specifically for harvesting small chickens. In consideration that chicken price remains above COGS, the director has appealed to all regional branch heads to carry out an ideal harvest because the price of chickens weighing 1.2 Kg to 1.5 Kg is equivalent to the price of chickens weighing 2 Kg. If the harvest keeps the chickens weighing up to 2 Kg, the company will have to bear higher production cost. Meanwhile, the cost mostly influencing COGS is the total purchase of feed and DOC. Therefore, to reduce the production cost and to balance the market price, simultaneously supporting company's survival, is to reduce the costs of DOC and feed. The cost of drugs and vaccines (CMV) does not have a significant impact on the total cost of goods manufactured.

E. Keeping PI at Minimum According to the Standard at 240

Every month there will be an evaluation of the Production Index carried out by the directors, for the sake of controlling the branches of the PI achieved. From the data above, the researchers saw that the average PI obtained by branches in 2020 was greater than that in 2019. This indicated that there was increased performance from 2019 to 2020 even though in that year the market price was still below the COGS. Bondowoso is the branch with the second largest PI advancement among these branches, with remarkable 281 PI. This means that the Bondowoso production team is able to control 3 components that affect PI, namely DOC, Feed, and CMV effectively and efficiently compared to other branch competitors. The results of the policies made are shown in Table 4.5. The table demonstrates that there is an increase in PI from 2019 to 2020. This was stated by Mr. Sugeng as Director of UBSP (Ltd.) during an interview in August 2020 at the office.

"The standard for my branches in order to improve management is seen from the production index. I set the benchmark at a minimum PI of 240. If after 3 months PI is below standard, the branch would be closed".

This policy is deemed capable of spurring each branch to be more optimal in carrying out production activities in the field. PI is calculated by using the following formula:

$$PI = \frac{BW \times \text{Life Expectancy} \times 100}{\text{Average Age} \times \text{Feed Ratio}}$$

From the interview in August 2020 above, we can see that PI is the benchmark for each branch. From this, we need to know that UBSP (Ltd.) Bondowoso Branch is

considered capable of improving its performance from 2019 to 2020. This policy will also have risks; if for 3 consecutive months PI remains below standard, the branch will be forced to close. The existence of this policy will ultimately lead to tighter competition between branches. This policy was made because the company wants to improve its performance in the eyes of investors and suppliers. That will attract suppliers and investors, stimulating the capability of maintaining good management. Globally, the comparison of PI in 2019 and 2020 signifies an increase. The three components that affect PI value are increasingly controlled to increase PI above average. The importance of PI for the company is a sign that the production management carried out by each branch is carried out efficiently and effectively because it is able to control the 3 operational components pertinent to DOC, feed, and CMV to be proportional to market prices.

The decline in the price of chicken meat coupled with the presence of Covid-19 has made the broiler chicken businesses even more vulnerable. The pandemic caused the trading activity to experience obstacles due to limited space and time, thus reducing people's purchasing power and consumption. The lock-down policy causes restrictions on community activities and access to transportation, leading to the decrease in consumption and the number of products purchased by the community. Restrictions on access to transportation hamper the movement of poultry farmers in distributing chicken meat between cities, resulting in disruption of the broiler chicken supply chain. This disruption causes imbalances in demand and sales of broiler chickens. Mr. Julianto (interview in August 2020) explained:

"The movement of chicken sales due to corona is slow, but we managed to maintain fine sales, despite slow process"

This slow sale rate also slows down income distribution and ultimately affects the company's revenue. In this regard, transactions carried out by the company and the supplier are limited by the payment due date. As a result of the company's declining payment ability, the company is making efforts to request an extension of payments. This means that the power of lobbying through communication will greatly determine the outcome of collaboration. Through lobbying with suppliers, companies are able to get goods with minimal costs but maximum results to meet the needs for raw materials for production. In addition, companies control payments by: 1) regulating inventory and logistics costs by controlling their stock; and 2) relying on more than one supplier.

Such a situation requires additional capital apart from income so that the company can continue to operate. Therefore, additional capital is needed to support the company's strategies in order to continue its production. Competition between partners is a challenge and a threat that is accepted by the company, so that competitive advantage is the determinant of the company's existence and survival. The advantages of the company can be seen from the visits made by the company three times a week and the greater PI bonus given to farmers than that of other competitors. This has led to stronger partnership between company and farmers, so that this will increase UBSP's (Ltd.) competitiveness.

Covid-19 appeared in Indonesia at the beginning of 2020, causing death to hamper all human activities in almost all countries in the world. Another impact resulting from this pandemic is that in the long term broiler farms are predicted to suffer losses, including a decrease in business productivity, a reduction in the number of workers in the broiler poultry sector, and the termination of poultry business activities. The Central Statistics Agency (2020) reported that, from January to May 2020, the food/restaurant group experienced inflation of 0.08% and transportation faced inflation of 0.87%. Deflation occurred in the food group, amounting to 0.32%. This indicates that people reduced their purchasing power and consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The PSBB (large-scale social restriction) policy causes restrictions on community activities and access to transportation, as a result of which there is a decrease in consumption and the number of products purchased by the community. Restrictions on access to transportation hamper the movement of poultry actors in the distribution of chicken meat between cities, resulting in disruption of the broiler chicken supply chain. This slow sale rate also slows down income distribution, which ultimately affects operational financing. As a result of the decline in the broiler chicken business, the company's strategy was to organize the company's management of each branch that still survived with PI above the standard. As for the achievement of the Production Index for each branch from 2019 to 2020:

Table 3.1 Production Index of UBSP (Ltd.) Branches

BRANCH	2019 PI	2020 PI	GROWTH
Kediri	250	215	-35
Blitar	238	266	28
Madiun	270	286	16
Banyuwangi	228	244	16
Jember 1	230	246	16
Jember 2	218	293	75
Malang	227	254	27
Bondowoso	231	281	50
Ngawi	305	298	-7
Bondowoso2	0	220	-
Average Annual PI	220	260	

Source: Secondary data in 2020

The table above shows PI achieved by each branch annually, which serves evaluative purposes for branches. In the table, the average PI in 2019 is 244. This requires companies to set a strategy so that PI of each branch increases. From the data above, the researchers saw that the average PI obtained by branches in 2020 was greater than that in 2019. This signified a performance growth from 2019 to 2020 even though in that year the market price was still below COGS. Bondowoso is the branch with the second largest PI advancement among these branches which achieved 281 PI. This means that the Bondowoso production team is able to control 3 components that

affect PI, namely DOC, Feed, and CMV effectively and efficiently compared to other branch competitors.

The efforts made by the company have to adjust to the current conditions. Adjustment to the Covid-19 is to develop a new-normal strategies so that company survives during difficult conditions. The new strategies relate to the following:

1. Structural Change

The structural change is carried out by adding a special division to control the purchases of DOC, feed and CMV. Each component of the production has critical limit that must be adjusted to financial situations.

2. Partners

Partners are the most important part in a partnership because partners are cooperating parties and as a driver of production for the partnership business. Partners in the broiler chicken partnership business consist of 2 partners, namely a chicken seller called a farmer and a chicken buyer called a reseller.

Flexibility in partnering with suppliers is another option. The impact of Covid-19 and unstable prices led to a scarce supply of raw materials for production from factories and was exacerbated by sinking income to buy raw materials. This risk forced farmers to switch to another supplier. As a corollary, the company lost the potential profit from the farmer. This is illustrated in the image below:



Source: Unggas Bersama Sentosa Perkasa (Ltd.) in 2021

As a result of delayed DOC, farmers looked for other partnership options. Some farmers eventually opted for leaving and establishing partnership with other suppliers. Communication was important to keep farmers more patient to understand this hardship. The strategy undertaken was to lobby the factory with a guarantee that the factory could provide rations.

3. Payment Control

The falling price of chicken was not balanced with the purchase price of raw materials for production. The branch head explained the details to this issue.

"The policy dealing with the chicken price is to reduce chick-in for reduced operational costs. To contrast, if the chick-in is reduced, our money circulation will be reduced while we still have a lot of debt. The supply of goods and logistics depends on the size of our population". (Mr. Rudi, Personal Communication, August 2020).

Reducing the population will reduce production costs. When the number of chickens decreases, the harvest stock decreases, which will ultimately affect the company's income. Efforts to reduce COGS will be more efficient if production costs are kept at minimum with specific control on the purchase of DOC and feed. Therefore, the strategy taken is to do an ideal harvest at a young age in order to reduce feed consumption. This situation will affect the accuracy of payments to suppliers. However, the risk is that the payment will exceed the due date and company will be blacklisted. An offer that can be made by the company is to ask suppliers to extend the payment due date. If this continues, it will have an impact on the availability of the next supply of goods and hinder the broiler production process. It is necessary to strengthen the cooperative relationship between these partners. Another strategy is to accelerate sales and collect debts with an advanced time limit to the collectors in order to immediately get income from the sale.

4. Advantage Competitiveness

Based on the research results, UBSP (Ltd.) Bondowoso Branch has superior competitiveness compared to other branches. Some of the strategies carried out before and during the Covid-19 period can be seen in the table below.

Table 3.2. Comparison of Business Strategies

Before Covid-19		During Covid-19
Purchases of raw materials made directly by superiors	E V O L U T I O N	Assigning logistics admin to control raw material purchases
Looking for potential farmers as many as possible by multiplying the chick in		Retaining existing farmers by building good communication
Increasing chick in when DOC is cheap		Chick-in adjusted to financial conditions, market stocks, and DOC prices
Payment due in accordance with the agreement with the supplier		Extending due date for payment
Choosing the best raw materials		Adjusting the raw materials affordable
Disbursement of farmers' shares in only 3 days		Disbursement of farmers' business shares in 60 days in installments
Cashback policy of Rp. 4000/Kg for all types of cages		Cashback policy shift, Rp. 3,000 open cage; Rp. 4.000 close cage
Harvesting at a weight of 1.9 – 2 Kg		Conducting an ideal harvest according to market prices

Source: Research Data in 2020

The strategies constitute a series of efforts made by the company between before and during Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, this effort was made due to problems that arose beyond the company's control. The strategy made is of course different from those of the competitors. This is to ensure superior strategy and keep farmers interested in continuous collaboration.

The company's superiority can be seen from PI bonus given to farmers. You can see the comparison in the table above. The advantage of JTF's (Ltd.) performance bonus on PI can be up to 45%, while SCT (Ltd.) has the advantage PI reaching 35%. Compared to the two establishments above, UBSP (Ltd.) is superior because farmers get a minimum bonus of 30% with PI less than 279. This means that the market bonus will be given starting from PI below 279, and this figure is greater than what other competitors, JTF (Ltd.) and SCT (Ltd.), offer. This makes farmers interested in establishing the partnership, so that this will increase UBSP's (Ltd.) competitiveness against the competitors.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research results, the present study highlights the following strategies operative during Covid-19 pandemic to help UBSP (Ltd.) remain competitive:

1. Communicating better with farmers to keep them interested in extending partnership;
2. Negotiating with suppliers in order to obtain raw materials;
3. Negotiating an extension of the payment due date with the supplier;
4. Negotiating the longer disbursement of farmers' shares due to the lack of company income;
5. Ensuring no substitute to the company's products as the most desired option by market;
6. Minimizing operating costs by adjusting chick-in so that COGS can be adjusted to market prices.

Based on research results, the researchers propose the following suggestions:

1. Sharpening the analysis of market conditions including the price and stock of DOCs as well as the selling price of chickens in the market to predict the price of chickens to be harvested;
2. Looking for financial solutions to fulfill obligations to farmers, such as distributing farmer shares in more timely manner;
3. Negotiating with suppliers regarding the extension of payment due dates and seeking several alternative suppliers;
4. Harvesting at the ideal age in order to match the selling price of chickens in the market.

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