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### GARMENT INDUSTRY COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE STRATEGY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the competitive advantage strategy used by the garment industry in dealing with the current COVID-19 pandemic situation. This type of research is descriptive. Sources of data were obtained directly from informants. This competitive advantage strategy was very influential during the COVID-19 pandemic because by applying one of the three strategies or combining several of these strategies, the company could survive during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study are in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the garment industry. Use a competitive advantage strategy where competitive advantage is a strategy carried out by a company to dominate the market and maintain its position. So that the company can also achieve the expected profits.

#### INTRODUCTION

UMKM (*Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises*) is one of the efforts that the government can do to empower the people's economy by involving various parties. This effort is also one of the government's efforts to overcome unemployment and poverty problems. One of the many MSMEs is the garment or convection business. Garment or convection in the Indonesian dictionary means a company that produces clothes. The garment industry is an industry that produces fabrics for ready-to-wear clothes. The garment industry is one of the industries that contributes the largest foreign exchange to the country after oil and gas or oil and gas (Strongno et al., 2019; Solórzano et al., 2020; Velázquez et al., 2020).

In the business world, competition is commonplace. This competition is getting tougher over time as customer demand increases. Companies must use

various ways to win the competition, such as increasing customer satisfaction through quality products, timeliness, cost efficiency, and service quality. Marketing is also important because the marketing of an appropriate location can have a positive impact on management in coordinating distribution planning so that the level of consumer satisfaction and company profits remains stable (Rifanda 2019; Widana et al., 2020; Najman et al., 2020).

At the beginning of 2020, the world was shocked by the outbreak of the coronavirus which originated from the city of Wuhan in China. The coronavirus has caused millions of casualties, of which the victims did not only come from residents of China. Then this virus developed in various parts of the world until it became a dangerous epidemic in various parts of the world because this virus can develop and spread quickly to the human body. This has resulted in calls from international organizations such as WHO (*World Health Organization*) to hold social distancing or social restrictions, which means that we are advised to reduce social activities with other people or humans (Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (*COVID-19*)). Furthermore, several cities in various countries have implemented lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The outbreak of the coronavirus has resulted in various losses and gaps in various aspects of life, especially in the economic sector. Many small, medium, and medium enterprises and companies businesses that were already classified as large were eventually forced to temporarily close their businesses. China also felt the economic downturn. China's economy also slumped due to the many companies that had to be forced to close. Considering that China is the second-largest economy in the world and a major trading partner of Indonesia. Then, the disruption of the Chinese economy greatly affects the world economy, including Indonesia (Susilo et al., 2020; Nyandra et al., 2018; Kustina et al., 2019).

The economy is one of the most important factors in human life. Humans in daily life always intersect with economic needs where their existence can meet human needs such as food, drink, and so on. One example of the economic sector is the trade sector, where the trade sector is the second largest contributor to tax revenue. However, trade sector tax revenues have decreased during this pandemic (Hanoatubun, 2020).

This pandemic also has an impact on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) due to the decline in people's purchasing power. Data from Bank Indonesia in 2016 explains that the MSME sector dominates business units in Indonesia and is a type of micro-business that absorbs a lot of labor (Hanoatubun 2020; Leyva et al., 2018; Praharsini et al., 2018). Meanwhile, with this pandemic, the Indonesian economy declined by 5% which could lead to a decline in the stock price index as well as a decline in all sectors such as health, trade, MSMEs, and also industrial businesses including all activities of buying and selling goods directly with consumers.

One of the industrial businesses that are affected is the garment. With the impact of this pandemic, there has been a decline in the trade sector. This is due to the decline in people's purchasing power so that the competition faced

by several garment industries is getting higher. Therefore, researchers want to do how the competitive advantage strategy carried out by the garment industry during the current COVID-19 Pandemic.

## **THEORETICAL STUDY**

### ***Strategy***

A strategy is a way that is done to help and make it easier to solve problems, besides that the strategy is concrete steps that can solve the problem. Henry Mintzberg said that strategy is, “Strategy as 5Ps, namely: strategy as *Perspective*, strategy as *Position*, strategy as *Planning*, strategy as *Pattern* of activity, and strategy as *Fraud* (Ploy)” which is a secret trick. As a perspective, where the strategy is in shaping the mission, the mission describes the perspective of all activities. As a position, were in search of options to compete. As a plan, in terms of strategy, determine learning performance goals. As a pattern of activity, in which one strategy has formed a pattern, namely feedback, and adjustment (Fitriyani et al., 2020). Therefore, the strategy is needed by the company to achieve the goals of the company. Also, the strategy can be a reference for the company to be controlled and directed so that it runs according to directions.

### ***Strategic Management***

Strategic management is a process of a series of activities in decision-making that is fundamental and comprehensive, accompanied by determining the method of implementation made by the leadership of the organization or company and implemented by all levels within the organization to achieve certain goals. Some experts define strategic management as the art or science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating various functional decisions that allow an organization to achieve its goals. Strategic management focuses on the process of setting goals for an organization, creating and developing policies and plans to achieve goals and allocating resources to implement policies and plan for achieving organizational goals. According to Yunus (2016), strategic management is the highest management activity that is usually prepared by the board of directors and carried out by the CEO and the executive team of the organization (Yunus, 2016; Wiardani et al., 2018).

The second element, strategic management is the study of how a company can beat other companies that are competitors. This is where the manager or superior's job is to create a competitive advantage or what is called a competitive advantage. The implementation of a good strategy and right on target is needed for any activity, especially in running a business. The right strategy and arranged in an organized manner will make it easier for an organization to carry out its mission to achieve its goals (Yunus, 2016). The concept of strategy continues to evolve. A good understanding of the concept of strategy and other related concepts will greatly determine the success of the strategy developed. There are two strategic concepts, namely distinctive competence and competitive advantage (Indraningsih, 2016).

### ***Distinctive Competence***

Distinctive competitive, if translated, will become a distinctive competency which is an action taken by a company to be able to perform activities better

than its competitors. Distinctive competence is owned by companies that have strengths or advantages that are not easily imitated by competing companies which can also mean the specific capabilities of an organization. Day and Wenshey identified distinctive competencies in an organization including workforce expertise and resource abilities because these factors cause the organization to be superior to its competitors. The ability to form special functions that are more effective than competitors comes from high human resource expertise. One example is a product that has better quality when compared to products on the market by understanding in detail what consumers want to be coupled with a better marketing strategy. This is where the company challenges to find out exactly what consumers want so that they can develop a better marketing strategy than its competitors (Miraza & Hafas, 2015).

### ***Competitive Advantage***

From the understanding of strategic management above, it can be concluded that one of the best strategies in the competition is to have a competitive advantage for the company and the products it sells. Increasing competitive advantage can be a market leader and maintain it. Michael Porter above stated that competitive advantage is the heart of a company that all companies must own and do. Porter also explained that if the company wants to win the increasingly fierce competition, the company must choose one of the principles of doing business such as high-priced products or low-cost products, not both. Based on this principle, Porter states that there are three general strategies, namely:

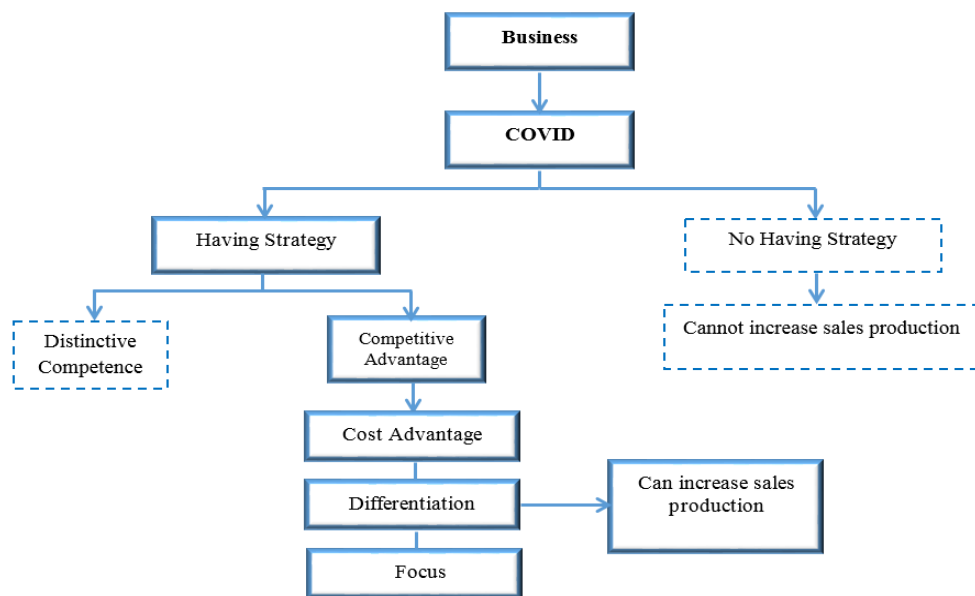
- 1) Cost leadership strategy or a low-cost strategy where this strategy emphasizes the effort to produce the same or standard product by reducing production costs. The target market for this product is consumers who are relatively easily affected by price shifts (*price-sensitive*) or make price a factor for making decisions.
- 2) Differentiation strategy or product differentiation strategy is defined as where the company can own or create its uniqueness in the target market. Different products make the company attract interest from their potential customers. The target market for this product is potential consumers who relatively do not prioritize price as a factor in making decisions (*price-insensitive*).
- 3) Focus strategy is very useful for building a competitive advantage in a narrower market segment. Potential consumers for this strategy are consumers who have relatively small needs and their decision-making factors to buy are relatively unaffected by price (*price-insensitive*) (Abdillah et al., 2018).

Philip Kotler (2000) stated that there are at least four types of competition in business, namely:

- 1) Brand or brand competition where companies usually tend to offer the same products or services to consumers and with almost the same quality and price.

- 2) The industrial competition where this competition is wider, that is, a company that will face competitors of all types of products from all other companies.
- 3) Form competition, which means that a company that competes with other companies makes products with the same function, even though of different types.
- 4) General competition or a condition in which a company assumes that all sellers are competitors because other sellers may influence consumers to buy a company's products or not.

The intense competition causes the company to try to win the competition by implementing an appropriate competitive strategy so that it can carry out and realize its goals as expected. Market success is achieved by firms best suited to the requirements of today's environment, namely the goods and services that people are ready to buy. Individuals, businesses, and even entire countries must discover how they produce marketable value. Therefore, companies must understand what consumers want today and for the future. So, the success and failure of a company depend on the competitive advantage or competitive advantage that the company has (Abdillah et al., 2018).



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

**METHOD**

This type of research is descriptive in the form of sentences and narratives about the competitive advantage strategy of the garment industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. The location of the research was carried out in a garment company in Gianyar Regency. This research was conducted in August 2020. The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach, where a qualitative approach can be interpreted as research that produces descriptive data in the form of sentences or words both in written and oral form (Suyanto, 2015). Sources of data are obtained through two types of data sources, namely primary sources and secondary sources. Primary data sources are data sources obtained directly from informants while secondary data sources are not directly obtained from informants but from documents, books

and literature (Suliyanto & Suliyanto 2017). In this study, the research informants were selected through a cluster random sampling technique which was taken randomly based on certain areas. The following are the names of the informants to be interviewed:

**Table 1** Table of Research Informants

No	Informant/Company Name	Region/Subdistrict	Address
1	I Ketut Karben Wardana Saraswati Konfeksi	Sukawati	Br. Sakih, Guwang, Sukawati - Gianyar
2	Ni Wayan Suci Bali Suci Garment	Gianyar	Jln. Tukad Goa No. 2 Br. Kaja Kauh, Beng - Gianyar
3	Rama Mayditha Brodins Garment	Blahbatuh	Jln. Pulau Bali No. 8 Blahbatuh,
4	Dewa Gede Raka Wiguna Raka Konfeksi	Tampaksiring	Jln. Dr. Ir. Soekarno Tampaksiring, Gianyar
5	I Wayan Krisna Wardana Kuwace Garment	Sukawati	Jln. Batuyang – Guwang, Sukawati

In qualitative research, the researcher is the researcher himself. Qualitative researchers as human instruments, function to determine the focus of research, select informants as data sources, collect data, assess data quality, analyze data, interpret data and make conclusions on their findings (Anggito & Setiawan 2018). Data collection techniques used in this study include interview techniques, observation techniques, and documentation techniques.

Interview technique with the informants. Barlian (2018), stated that qualitative interviews are carried out to obtain knowledge of subjective meanings that are understood by individuals regarding the topic being studied, as well as to explore issues that cannot be done through other approaches. The interview technique is also used as a data collection tool because of its high flexibility. Because the answers given by the speakers are developing so that more straightforward and complete information will be obtained. The following is a list of questions that will be used in the informant interview:

- 1) What is the planning process carried out by the company?
- 2) What is the process of formulating a work plan within the company?
- 3) What is the process of implementing the plan?
- 4) What is the evaluation process for the plans that have been determined?
- 5) What is the process of making and establishing policies when the company is faced with the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 6) What is the strategy in creating a competitive strategy when the garment industry is faced with a pandemic?
- 7) What is the management strategy in dealing with (in creating) brand competition?
- 8) What is the management strategy in facing industrial competition?
- 9) What is the management strategy in dealing with form competition?
- 10) What is the management strategy in facing general competition?

Observation technique is a method that underlies all research to obtain evidence that helps understand the context of the study. Observation requires recording, systematic recording of events, artifacts, and informant behavior, which occur in specific situations (Hamidi, 2010). The documentation technique is a data collection method in which information is in the form of notes or data obtained from other parties (Hamidi, 2010). The documentation technique in this study was carried out by collecting data from related documents.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

This research was conducted to determine the competitive advantage strategy of the garment industry during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bali. This research was conducted using interview techniques and the research informants were selected through the cluster random sampling technique which was taken randomly based on certain areas. The research results obtained are:

Saraswati Konfeksi is located at Jl. Pandu Br. Sakih, Guwang Sukawati was founded on June 17, 1989. Ketut Karben Wardana, who is the owner and manager of this convection, has developed his company into the computer embroidery field in 2006. This company produces clothes such as shirts, polo, shirts, jackets, hats and pants or training made from orders. But since 2009. Saraswati no longer produces orders because Saraswatieksi is one of the suppliers for a local gift shop which is known as the best quality for its t-shirts. Therefore, Saraswati is also well known for their quality in the garment market itself, which is also one of the keys to its success.

Brodins Garment was founded in 2015 by Rama Mayditha, located at Jl. Raya Bona, Gianyar. Brodins Garment focuses on producing t-shirts, polo, jackets with screen printing and embroidery. Brodins itself is well known among the youth community because of its competitive prices and satisfying results with the punctuality of production. Raka Konfeksi is located at Jalan Dr. Ir. Soekarno Tampaksiring Gianyar was founded in 2015 where Raka as the owner started this business by becoming a reseller. In 2017, Raka Konveksi has been on its own until now, it already has 1 workshop in Denpasar and 1 store with an office in Tampaksiring. Raka Confection produces t-shirts, polo, shirts, and jackets.

Kuwace Garment, which was founded in 2010, is located at Jl. Raya Guwang Batuyang, Sukawati was initiated by a man named I Wayan Krisna Wardana. Krisna started her business which was inspired by her parents, who are both engaged in convection. Kuwace itself already has a very good image of high quality and professionalism at work. The types of clothing done by this garment are very diverse, such as t-shirts, polo, shirts and jackets and also unusual clothes including dresses, vests, pajamas, and so on. The key to the success of Kuwace garment is professionalism in work so that it can provide the best quality, competitive prices, and timeliness in work.

### ***Strategy and Impact for the Company***

Saraswati Konfeksi is one of the oldest configurations in Sukawati sub-district because it was established in 1989 when at that time there was no confirmation in the area. Saraswati is a medium-scale garment with 100 employees and is divided into three workplaces, namely Garment, Embroidery 1, and embroidery 2. One of the strategies that have been implemented by Saraswati to date is the quality of clothes and the timeliness of production that has made Saraswati known to be trusted by one. a gift shop to become a supplier. Before this pandemic, Saraswati could produce up to 2000 to 3000 t-shirts per week, of which up to 10 thousand t-shirts a month. From this strategy, the problem faced from the start was simply rejecting production, such as holes in the shirts or stains that prevented the shirts from being sold or passed on to customers. In dealing with this problem, Saraswati always increases staff in the checking section to be more thorough in working to minimize these errors. However, after the pandemic, tourism plummeted and the PSBB (*lockdown*) was held which caused the gift shop to close so there were no deliveries which resulted in the stop of production of t-shirts for the shop. Karben finally racked his brains so that all his employees could still work and earn a living, making Saraswati switch production to the production of medical masks. Starting from a chat with the Director of Sanjiwani Gianyar Hospital, they ordered 3000 medical masks to Saraswati which was the beginning of the transition to Saraswati production. After an order from Rs. Sanjiwani, there are also several Puskesmas who order and several official villages in Sukawati sub-district. The competition faced by Saraswati is non-existent because almost all customers who have had a relationship with Saraswati have never looked for other garments so that during this pandemic, they came to order masks. After surviving from March to July by producing masks, Saraswati finally encountered a problem where cloth masks were no longer needed because disposable masks had returned to normal prices and were easily available. With this obstacle, Saraswati has no choice and finally chooses to vacuum or close temporarily.

Brodins Garment is one of the garments located in Blahbatuh district with satisfactory screen printing and competitive prices. Brodins garment is famous for its good and neat screen printing quality compared to its competitors. Brodins is also known as convection that can provide many promos such as free designs, free stickers, and other promos. The strategy used by Rama for his convection before the pandemic was to prioritize low prices with no less competitive quality and to add bonuses or promos. The target market for this convection is young people with limited budgets so they can have community clothes or events where at market standard prices, they already get extra stickers, design services, and other bonuses. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, Rama can no longer use the same strategy because almost all of the available garments have lowered the price of their products. Raka had time to close his garment from March to July because there were no orders and also the impact of PSB. Finally, in August Brodins garment returned to operation by still using the same strategy, namely maintaining competitive prices with more promos and bonuses such as adding bonus masks. The problem faced by Rama after implementing this strategy was a large number of new competitors because other confectioners were also implementing the same strategy, namely lowering prices. The next problem is that many employees or craftsmen have



already got new jobs. Therefore, finally, Rama evaluated by lowering the price again and reducing the bonus received by consumers or still getting the same bonus as the minimum order conditions. The next evaluation is to reduce the quality so that it can speed up the production process due to the reduced staff of production. Marketing promotions also do not forget to attract consumers. This strategy can finally make Brodins garment survive in this pandemic, where this strategy can get the appropriate market segment.

Raka Konfeksi is well known for its quality and competitive price so that orders from its customers keep coming. The peak is in March when the community and *banjar* orders for *ogoh-ogoh*. Usually, Raka can produce thousands with a minimum of a thousand pieces of clothes per month. After the pandemic, the condition of the company changed drastically where ever since the PSBB policy, orders from the community had disappeared and also because they were not allowed to hold events so that no orders were received. Another impact of this policy was the closure of schools and hotels which resulted in no orders from these agencies. The strategy used by Raka Konfeksi for the first time was looking for opportunities to survive, namely making masks. Then Raka collaborated with social media accounts such as InstaGianyar, GianyarPunyaCerita, InfoGianyar, HeloUbud, and 8 other social media to promote Raka Konfeksi. Another strategy that is carried out in addition to regular marketing promotions on social media is reducing prices and also promoting products or packages such as every purchase of a free mask t-shirt according to the color and design of the order. However, from this strategy, there are several obstacles faced by Raka, namely the increase in the cost of raw materials or fabrics due to increased shipping costs from China where the cloth comes from, then the long delivery time is due to the PSBB which also hinders the production process. From these two constraints, the production cost increases, but because previously Raka had lowered prices, there was a discontinuity here and ended in strategy evaluation. After the evaluation, Raka initiated a new strategy where he continued to hold promos like the one above but the prices were not too low with terms and conditions such as a minimum order quantity so he could get free masks. Market competition is not a problem for Raka because by implementing this strategy, Raka Konfeksi has almost no competitors in its market. According to Raka himself, all garments or confectionery already have their respective markets without any offense to one another.

Kuwace Garment is a subsidiary of Saraswati Konfeksi but with a different strategy and target market. Karben Wardana's son, Krisna Wardana, started this garment in 2010 after learning a lot from his father's company. From this experience, Kuwace Garment also applies high-quality standards and punctuality of work. Another advantage that Kuwace has is its professional staff designer so that Kuwace can produce whatever customers ask for, including formal dresses, vests, and so on. From this strategy, Kuwace can get very high images with high quality and satisfying results. Behind this strategy, the obstacle faced by Kuwace is the relatively higher price compared to its competitors because Kuwace maintains the quality and results of its products. The problems faced by Kuwace during a pandemic like this can be said to be the same as other confection companies, namely low orders because no agency

makes uniforms and there are no events requiring uniforms. Therefore, Krisna decided to use a different strategy. Starting with temporarily laying off several employees for the company's operational efficiency, then Krisna decided to manufacture his product and start selling online. Starting with making mask products with motifs and materials from local products such as masks with *endek* and *kebaya*. However, with the price of the face shield returning to its normal price, the masks from Kuwace no longer get to the market. Furthermore, Kuwace produced tie-dye pajamas according to the current trend. The obstacle that is faced is the amount of competition that comes from the lower class, such as the products of the souvenir art market whose quality is far below Kuwace's products. However, Kuwace still maintains its quality by pushing marketing such as starting to endorse artists and celebrities which ultimately increases sales and can compete in that target market.

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate these four factors in an educational institution (Maisah, 2016). SWOT-analysis helps organizations face growing challenges so that they can maintain stability and increase productivity (Oluwafemi et al., 2014). SWOT analysis is a powerful instrument in carrying out strategic analysis, its efficacy lies in the ability of the determinants of the organization's strategy to maximize the role of strength factors and opportunity utilization so that at the same time it acts as a tool to minimize weaknesses in the body of the organization, and reduce the impact of threats that arise and must be faced (Rangkuti, 2015). The tool used to compile the company's strategic factors is the SWOT matrix. This matrix can clearly describe how the external opportunities and threats faced by the company can be adjusted to the strengths and weaknesses it has. This matrix can produce four sets of possible strategic alternatives as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** The Matrix Produce Four Sets of Possible Strategic Alternatives

Internal factors	Strength (S)	Weakness (W)
External Factors	Internal strength factor	Internal weakness factor
Opportunities (O) External opportunity factor	S-O strategy Strategies that use strength to take advantage of opportunities	W-O strategy Strategies that minimize weaknesses to take advantage of opportunities
Threats (T) External threat factors	S-T strategy Strategies that use force to overcome threats	W-T strategy Strategies that minimize weaknesses to overcome threats

## DISCUSSION

The competitive advantage strategy is one of the best strategies in competing because it has a competitive advantage for the company and the products it sells. Increasing competitive advantage can be a market leader and maintain it.

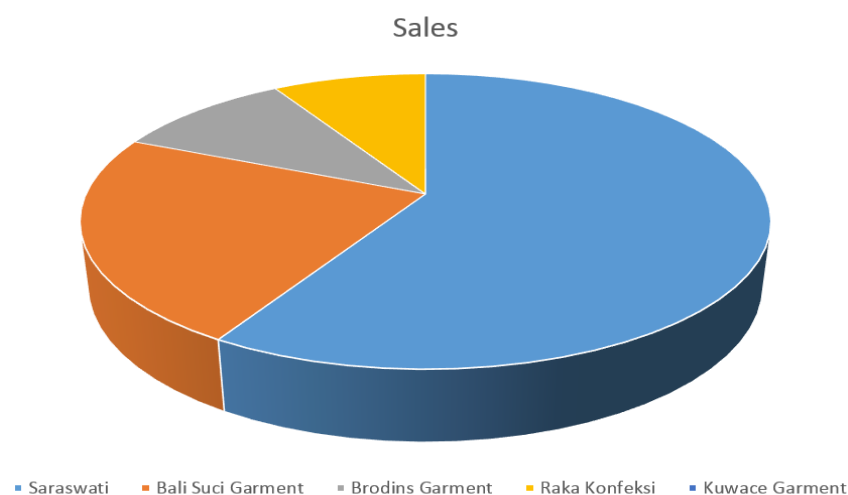
In a competitive advantage strategy, to determine its competitiveness, an organization can use one of three strategies, namely differentiation, cost leadership, or focus.

***The Following is a Description of the Strategy Applied by Informants from Saraswati Konfeksi.***

Saraswati Konfeksi applied a differentiation strategy for her company. Saraswati has its target market where quality is the main thing where the price is the second decision making factor after quality. But after being faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, Karben changed his strategy to Focus where the target market became narrower, namely government agencies such as hospitals that needed masks. However, relying on this competitive advantage strategy could not make Saraswati survive or survive in a pandemic like this.

The strategy was applied by the informant from Brodins Garment. From the beginning, Rama founded Brodins Garment using a cost leadership strategy that can be seen from the price of his products below market prices by providing additional bonuses such as design services, stickers, and so on to consumers. When facing the COVID-19 pandemic, Rama continues to use a cost leadership strategy by evaluating prices so that they remain under the direction of competitors and adding bonus masks. The strategy was applied by the informant from Raka Konfeksi. Raka uses a more cost leadership strategy for his company during the COVID-19 pandemic. Judging from how Raka lowered the price of his product and also gave bonuses in the form of masks on every order from consumers.

The competitive advantage strategy used by Kuwace garment before the COVID-19 pandemic was differentiation where Kuwace was more concerned with product quality and final results than concerned with low prices. However, during this pandemic, Kuwace could not rely on that strategy and changed his strategy to focus where Kuwace produced different masks from its competitors such as *endek* or *batik* masks to make tie-dye with high quality.



**Figure 1.** The Sales of Five Garments

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study are in facing the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the garment industry uses a competitive advantage strategy where competitive

advantage is a strategy taken by a company to dominate the market and maintain its position. So that the company can also achieve the expected profits. Thus in the competitive advantage strategy, to determine its competitiveness, an organization can use one of three strategies, namely differentiation, cost leadership, or focus.

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