Changes in consumer behavior PT. Telkomsel during the COVID-19 pandemic

Muhammad Dwi Sakti Effendie*, Faculty of Economic and Business, Telkom University, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia
Indira Rachmawati, Faculty of Economic and Business, Telkom University, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

*Email for Correspondence: dwisaktie@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted consumer behavior in Indonesia, leading to competition between service providers for internet services during work from home policies. Wifi network providers have emerged as an alternative, offering more affordable options, shifting cellular telecommunications shopping activities. This study aims to provide an overview of the transformation of consumer behavior in Malang Raya, focusing on the relationship between consumer knowledge and purchasing decisions. The research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, using purposive sampling techniques. Data collection and data sources use in-depth interview techniques and field observations to produce primary data. Secondary data are obtained using documentation techniques. Results showed that large-scale restrictions by the government affected internet use activities at home, with consumers using more WiFi connections than cellular/mobile connections. The study used case studies, interviews, participatory observation, and secondary data collection to analyze the composition of usage between cellular data and WiFi.

INTRODUCTION

An important need for Indonesian people today is the need for internet services. In today’s era of competitive business competition, internet service providers compete with each other to improve the quality of services, networks and create the latest innovations to provide the best products and services for customer needs and expectations. Service providers compete to attract people’s purchasing power to offers such as unlimited quotas at relatively low prices, quotas for using internet access and social media without slow signals, and other attractive offers. One of them is PT Telkomsel (Telekomunikasi Selular) which is a community internet service provider in Indonesia with a variety of service programs.

The development of the mobile internet industry and the current convergence, so that competition between mobile and fixed boardband internet is inevitable, PT Telkomsel (Telekomunikasi Selular) as a mobile internet operator and market leader of cellular operators in Indonesia. PT Telkomsel is committed to expanding its network to remote parts of the country such as in the East Java region. In the East Java area includes Malang.
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Customers of PT. Telkomsel (Telekomunikasi Selular) domiciled in Malang Raya (Batu City area, Malang Regency area, Malang City area, and surrounding areas) are 1.570,000 customers with a market penetration rate of 39.62% with the nearest competitor market penetration of 26.72%.
In addition, during the Covid-19 pandemic conditions that hit various countries, various policies have been implemented to reduce the spread and transmission such as total lockdown measures and prohibitions on foreign nationals from entering the country’s territory. This affects the availability of adequate mobile services or networks for people around the world without exception in Indonesia. Similar policies are carried out by the Indonesian government, namely limiting community mobilization, namely PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) to PPKM (Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities) so that a change in consumer behavior has emerged, one of which is a significant change in Telkomsel customer behavior. The trigger for behavior change is the policy from the government related to lockdown so that the trend of activities in the network or known as online becomes a form of behavior change in society. Activities that are mostly carried out online such as teaching and learning activities, doing work or Work From Home (WFH), and daily activities have changed consumer behavior. People use the internet more by using quotas as access to communicate during PPKM. All activities cannot be separated from the mobile internet which is more efficient and effective for virtual and remote communication.

Reviewing data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) related to community mobility during emergency PPKM, the percentage of community mobility is more than 4 (four) times 42% (before emergency PPKM) and 19% (during emergency PPKM). Community mobility 2-3 times has a percentage of 26% (before emergency PPKM) and 24% (during emergency PPKM), a total percentage of community mobility of 14% (during emergency PPKM) and 23% (during emergency PPKM) and community mobility that does not have a percentage of 19% (before emergency PPKM) and 35% (during emergency PPKM). The level of community mobility affects the availability of the internet, becoming an urgent need for various parties to complete activities that are hampered and can continue to be connected. According to previous research by Ramadati (2021), discussing limiting the use of quotas through distinguishing quotas for learning activities with the use of social media and the use of quotas due to desire. The separation of quota usage is related to consumptive behavior in internet data purchases during the Covid-19 pandemic. Social media is more widely referred to for entertainment media and adds insights such as Youtube, Netflix, Instagram, marketplace, and etc. Changes in consumer behavior are a challenge for PT Telkomsel (Telekomunikasi Selular) to always understand market demand for mobile internet service needs. Based on data on the movement of PT Telkomsel customers who are domiciled in Malang Raya (Batu City area, Malang Regency area, Malang City area, and surrounding areas) can be examined the level of internet access needs, changes in consumer behavior towards the needs of its customers.
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The Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to a new buying pattern for people which can be called consumer switching behavior. Based on the results of Permana's research, (2019) defines consumer switching behavior due to consumer considerations when choosing a more profitable service provider. Meanwhile, according to Grupta & Walter, (2004) defines consumer switching behavior as a consideration for service users to continue using the same internet service or prefer to move to other service providers that are considered more profitable.

There is previous research that has discussed the shift in consumer behavior to spending. In determining purchases, customers cannot be separated from the role of consumer behavior that has a positive influence. According to the American Marketing Association, consumer behavior as some changes in the interaction between the influence and level of awareness, action, and scope of exchange of aspects of community socialization (Saputri, 2016). Consumer behavior also illustrates the process of socializing society to consumers to obtain and consume a product (Wijaya et al., 2018). Consumer knowledge of a product's information has a very important role in information search behavior for customers. The initial knowledge obtained by consumers related to product information, how to use, benefits obtained and advantages of the product can reflect their level of knowledge to stimulate the purchasing process (M. Firmansyah, 2018).

The basic understanding of consumer behavior is "why do consumers do what they do." Along with the shifting times, literature related to consumer behavior has also undergone a transformation. Such transformations are like customer focus on factors that influence online shopping decisions. Factors that have an impact on choosing a decision using the consumption of a product, there are several factors as mentioned by Kotler (2002) "Factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior include cultural, social, personal, and psychological. There is previous research that has discussed the shift in consumer behavior to spending. Consumer switching behavior is influenced by promotional factors, brand image, and brand commitment, where brand image is the biggest factor in influencing the shifting behavior (Kawengian, 2015). The change in people's shopping behavior to online stores is due to time efficiency factors, the model of goods offered varies, goods are always up to date and cheaper than prices in conventional stores (Lisa, 2016). In addition, technology and innovation factors, demographic changes, brand image, perception, behavior, attitudes, loyalty, and advertising have a significant effect on consumer switching behavior (Thapa, 2020). Attractive product introduction is an important factor in encouraging consumers to switch to other products (Liu et al., 2016). The level of consumption efficiency is an important factor that supports changes in shopping behavior (Mahadin, 2018). While price and brand are other supporting factors that cause changes in shopping behavior. The identification carried out by marketers must be able to analyze consumer behavior in determining purchase decisions and the right estimates of the consumer decision-making process so that the right promotion strategy can be formulated (Widayat & Arifin, 2020).

Some of the results of previous studies aimed to determine the factors that influence consumer switching behavior in terms of several aspects of the product. This study specifically aims to get an overview of changes in people's shopping behavior due to the Covid-19 pandemic. What is the consumer's view on government policies in handling Covid-19? Will consumers sustainably change their consumption habits? Because of some...
of these phenomena, the urgency of the study is to investigate further. Referring to the consumer behavior model according to Kotler and Keller, the framework is expected to help readers gain more insight into changes in consumer behavior, consumer knowledge, and consumer decision making that occur at PT. Telkomsel. The following framework is a reference for work to be carried out on the following research.

**Changes in Consumer’s Behavior**
1) Technology transformation
2) Marketing and other stimulants
3) Consumer’s psychological state
4) Consumer’s characteristics

**Consumer’s Knowledge**
1) Marketing stimulant
2) Types of consumer’s knowledge
3) Product information

**Consumer’s purchase decision**

Figure 4. Research Framework

**METHOD**
This research used qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach that will describe in detail supporting information including the scope of research focus, research setting, informants and research subjects, data collection techniques and research instruments, data validity and data analysis. The stages and focus of the research are to conduct in-depth research on behavior changes that occurred during the pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic. This research was designed within 6 months starting with pre-observation activities from May 2022 to October 2022 and was carried out in the Malang Raya area, East Java. Purposive sampling techniques based on aspects represented by the content of information are used as a determination of respondents (population and sample) to a group of people who know more about aspects of behavior change that occur, especially related to changes in consumer behavior and their consumptive behavior.

Data collection and data sources use in-depth interview techniques and field observations to produce primary data. Secondary data are obtained using documentation techniques. The research instrument is using observation guidelines and interview guidelines (Indrawati, 2018). The research validation test used was using the Lincoln and Cuba methods. The validity test of the data in this study applies the Lincoln and Cuba methods consisting of tests, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Sugiyono, 2011). The method of deciphering the data used in this study refers to the concept of Milles & Huberman (1992), namely the interactive model (Including data reduction, data display, and generating conclusion).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**
Presentation of data in qualitative research using data mining conducted by observation in the field (in-depth interviews) requires validity, validity and reliability to draw research results. This data collection comes from various sources so it is necessary to combine the data so that the results of the research that has been carried out are valid and realistic. In general, data analysis methods that ensure data credibility are using triangulation methods. Data triangulation is a useful method for the validity of valid research, reality, and credibility in qualitative research (Indrawati, 2018). In this study using source triangulation and theory triangulation. The analysis of the results of this study uses a phenomenological approach, which is based on phenomena that occur from an experience (in-depth experience of variables in consumer behavior changes during the Covid-19 pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic) internet service needs. Dig into in-depth information related to consumer knowledge, factors that influence consumer behavior, and consumer purchasing decisions on internet service needs such as subscribing to Wifi or subscribing to a data package provider (Telkomsel). Consumers make purchasing decisions based on understanding a driving problem such as the problem of fulfilling internet services, especially the condition of the spread of the virus which has an impact on the death of the Covid-19 pandemic (which requires activities indoors, restrictions on socializing). This condition becomes a factor for consumers to explore product knowledge driven by environmental influences, individual characteristics, psychological factors and alternative assessments. The characteristics of respondents to collect data on variables of behavior change during the Covid-19 pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic are customers who subscribe to Wifi, employees or expert staff who work in Wifi services, Telkomsel provider customers, employees or expert staff who work at Telkomsel and sellers or internet service provider outlets.
**Consumer Factors in Decision Making**

The results of hypothesis testing regarding consumer knowledge and consumer behavior as a support for consumer purchasing decisions on variables of behavior change during the Covid-19 pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic revealed findings from the data collection process, participatory observation and documentation. Disclosure of research findings refers to the purpose of the study, namely carrying out important needs identification activities for customers of PT. Telkomsel to changes in customer behavior and can find out the form of efforts made by PT. Telkomsel to innovate in responding to the challenges of industry competition and customer needs. The findings revealed by customers who subscribe to Wifi are that the selection of internet network products between Wifi and Telkomsel quota is influenced by the price level and the need for large amounts of internet consumption. The Covid-19 pandemic factor has an impact on the use of a very large amount of internet service quota and connection stability to connect during online activities. After the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of quotas has become divided during activities inside the house and activities outside the home so that Wifi connections begin to decrease to save costs because Wifi networks are limited by distance or radius. Unlike the case with Telkomsel's network that can be reached anywhere, so when activities outside the home the Wifi connection is lost and Wifi customers have to buy internet quota packages such as using Telkomsel data packages. Employees or expert staff who work in Wifi services revealed findings that the Covid-19 pandemic factor has a significant impact on Wifi internet service providers, one of which is for First Media providers. The level of revenue and the level of internet service quality has increased due to the PPKM policy which requires people to stay at home or WFH (activities at home). Prioritizing customer demand and profitable business opportunities so as to provide revenue products to consumers to build competitive advantage. However, the New Normal era has an impact on decreasing the use of Wifi services such as inactivity submissions from consumers because consumers have begun to allocate some internet budgets because they have started outdoor activities.

Based on employees or expert staff working at Telkomsel, Telkomsel's analysis of changes in consumer behavior during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to New Normal conditions has shifted or changed that affects revenue levels to activities responding to profitable sustainable strategies. At the beginning of the pandemic, 40% experienced a decline, which means that it is a threat that must be considered to carry out a successful business strategy targeting opportunities from market segments. The emergence of competing providers such as Wifi and other brand operator networks that seek to dominate the market by building great opportunities requires strong sales operation analysis to increase market percentage again during the pandemic to the New Normal. Based on the results of interviews with Telkomsel customers who have been using Telkomsel products for 8 years, they prefer to use the orbit package compared to Wifi because of the flexibility factor for moving mobility. For changes in consumption patterns, it has changed during the pandemic to 4 times greater use than before the pandemic, and when the New Normal may have returned to what it was before the Covid-19 pandemic because there is internet use for online and offline. The condition of the Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on changes in consumer purchasing behavior to meet the needs of internet networks found by sellers or internet service provider outlets. The factor that causes is the purchasing power of the community so that there is an alternative selection of internet network fulfillment such as Wifi and determining the budget that must be spent on internet needs. At the beginning before the pandemic, purchases could be once every 2 weeks, during the pandemic until now purchases have become once every 1 month. Small quotas are in great demand by consumers for daily internet needs because offices and homes are already accessed using Wifi. The decline in sales at outlets was also influenced by retail competition and digital platforms that serve online purchases. To overcome so that outlets survive by providing the best service, product information, knowledge that cannot be explained directly by competitors, retail, or digital platforms.

**Customer Needs in Fulfilling the Needs of Internet Access to PT. Telkomsel**

Customer needs in fulfilling internet access needs are relative prices or affordable prices with large quotas (such as unlimited quotas), usage needs, easy access and can be used as alternative solutions to the situation. The occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic has seen people's behavior patterns prefer internet networks that can reach several devices at relatively cheaper prices, internet speeds, can be used on mobile and unlimited quotas. Wifi internet access has weaknesses in the coverage of the internet area which can only be used in one area and cannot be used mobile. This opportunity is an innovation of PT. Telkomsel in creating innovative products and services in responding to the challenges of the internet fix competition is by launching the Orbit package. However, most people still compare with Wifi. This is a challenge for PT. Telkomsel to aggressively build Orbit's brand image as a profitable alternative and win the internet network competition.

**CONCLUSION**

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted consumer behavior in Indonesia, leading to competition for internet services during work from home policies. Wifi network providers have emerged as an alternative, offering affordable and quality services. This study aims to provide insight into the transformation
of consumer behavior in Malang Raya during the pandemic. Environmental factors, income restrictions, and psychological factors have influenced the competition. Wifi providers are competing to offer affordable, stable networks and speeds. However, Wifi internet access has weaknesses in coverage and cannot be used mobile. PT. Telkomel has innovated by launching the Orbit package, aiming to build its brand image as a profitable alternative and win the internet network competition. However, competition remains a challenge for the company.

REFERENCES