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# “Retail Direct Order” to Support Logistics Management during the Covid-19 Crisis

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## Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world since early 2020 has had a considerable impact on the Indonesian economy, especially for business people. Through this paper, we can learn the right business strategy during Covid-19 through the application of "RDO" in Indonesia, so that the distribution prospects for the logistics sector plan. To support the presentation of the paper, we apply the SLR technique, where there are three important things (demonstration of RDO, the practice of this concept to reduce panic buying, and stop the retail system that is too long). There was a decrease in logistics distribution during the pandemic period due to cut-off supply chains. There are several things that the logistics sector can do, including choosing to open new products or updating their marketing systems, because businesses that can survive are businesses that are digitalized to their changing environment. Several things that can apply in a planned pattern are through the "RDO". Direct sales have decreased because of the pattern of people staying at home more. The weakness of this paper is that it does not use quantitative methods for supporting surveys or secondary data. There are no data collected officially by government institutions from time to time regarding disruptions to logistics, so it is very difficult to observe. We expect future studies that focus on similar topics to highlight how "RDOs" can be developed and evaluated for decision making. Marketing constraints in the retail sector in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic have not been explored, so there are no previous studies relevant to this topic.

Keywords: Retail direct order; Supply chain management; Covid-19; Digitization; Indonesia

## I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) is very pronounced in the business and economic world. In a fairly short time, the marketing pattern also changed, especially when social distancing and Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), implemented so that business actors in various sectors had to rack their brains and work hard to keep their business running (Lestari et al., 2019). Marketers must turn their brains to market their products or services to consumers, as a brand strategy to survive amid this pandemic. Business people optimize online marketing and digital branding as a means of communication with their target consumers (Maria et al., 2019).

From official data as of December 27, 2020, the number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia was 706,837 cases (WHO, 2020). To avoid the widespread spread of this global epidemic, the government urges the public to adhere to health protocols, one of which is staying at home, of course affecting many things, including small-scale businesses (Purwadi et al., 2021). The government always strives to suppress the spread of this global virus because it has the potential to have a direct impact on the economy including the sustainability of cooperatives, micro, small and medium enterprises (Ilmi et al., 2020).

Now, the government is also recording a crisis in the business sector which is experiencing raw material difficulties, production process constraints, and market demand that has dropped dramatically and then maps the impact of Covid-19 on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Based on the results of observations, the average MSME has experienced a decrease in turnover during this pandemic (Amalia et al., 2020).

Several business sectors that have the potential to experience a decline in sales are workshops, restaurants, salons, spas, property, mice, tours & travel, hotels, transportation, flights, malls, fashion, and several other business sectors. Even so, there are several business sectors that have the potential to be stable and experience an increase such as health products needed during a pandemic such as agriculture, e-commerce, minimarkets, grocery stores, pharmacies, herbal shops, internet providers, video conference service providers, home learning applications, and others (Yijo et al., 2021).

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Seeing this problem, brand players must respond quickly and precisely to change their sales strategy. It is hoped that there will be no significant drop in sales when social distancing is implemented (Kurniawan, 2020). To stay afloat in the midst of this pandemic, brand players must be able to work around it. Starting from focusing on digital marketing through websites that are used as e-commerce, social media, search engines, sales through the marketplace, and forming a reseller team to sell their products. Because not all problems cannot be resolved, in the midst of this pandemic there are both threats and opportunities. For marketers, of course, having to be able to seize this opportunity is an absolute must.

They predicted that the logistics industry in Indonesia will only grow 1.5% - 2% during the second quarter of 2020 because of the terrible impact of this pandemic. This prediction is actually better than the realization of logistics sector performance in the first quarter of 2020, where growth is around 1.27%. There was an increase in growth and it continued for the third quarter of 2020 and fourth quarter of 2020 because it was close to the achievements in 2019 and in line with the national economic recovery (Wismadi et al., 2020). So far, there has been no significant improvement in the activities of logistics actors during Covid-19. Industrial activities, producer goods, and wholesale trade were still hampered. These obstacles are experienced by many logistics actors who carry out business-to-business activities (Saragih et al., 2020).

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Moreover, at this time the victims of layoffs (PHK) due to the impact of this pandemic have reached more than one million people. The solution for layoff victims is to find other alternatives by becoming a reseller or seller of products needed during this pandemic. Meanwhile, for marketers, they can take social action by opening a pattern of business opportunities such as opening reseller, dropshipping, or other partnerships to massively sell their products to the public. In this pandemic, marketers must quickly adapt to the enactment of social distancing (Khalyubi et al., 2020). Because it certainly greatly influences major changes in consumer behavior trends in shopping.

The Indonesian government itself has set a period of emergency Covid-19 until May 29, 2021, or to be precise until the day of the Eid celebration for Muslims. Of course, marketers need to respond to this by making the right strategy, both during the pandemic period and after the pandemic ends (Rosmadi, 2021).

Studies that are very relevant in discussing the concept of "RDO" and how it is applied in developed and developing countries to the logistics sector have reviewed. Murfield et al. (2017) expanded the investigation on the impact of logistics service quality (LSQ) on customer loyalty and satisfaction at Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), USA. There is an extra effort to conceptualize LSQ in retail and examine the impact of LSQ on customer loyalty and satisfaction. Similarly, Yu et al. (2016) present supply chain management through the role of sophisticated E-commerce logistics from a practical point of view in logistics companies in Europe, Asia Pacific, and North America. There are perspectives and opportunities from practical implementation, so that companies engaged in logistics and E-commerce, can get evaluation and business guidance for the future. In Tunisia, it has not well-managed logistics performance in the retail sector. By involving 180 consumers, Ltifi & Gharbi (2015) have studied the role of logistics in retail stores to determine client outcomes such as satisfaction and happiness. As a result, happiness has a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Retail logistics performance also positively affects on satisfaction and happiness.

This paper examines the distribution business strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic through "RDO" support for Indonesia. We summarize this paper into five points. The first part includes an introduction and the literature review described in the second section. The third part is the method. Then, in the fourth part, the results are presented, and it continued the discussion with the confirmation of the conclusions for the fifth part.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

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Tyagi & Agarwal (2014) informs that a supply chain is a system where an organization distributes its production goods and services to its customers. This chain is also a network or network of various interconnected organizations that have the same goal, which is to organize the procurement and distribution of the goods as best as possible. Schroeder (2007) explains that the supply chain is a series of business processes and information that provide products or services from suppliers to companies and distribute them to consumers. In conclusion, the supply chain is a network system in a company that is connected, interdependent, and mutually beneficial in organizations that work together to control, regulate and develop the flow of materials, products, services, and information from suppliers, companies,

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distributors, stores, or retail, as well as supporting companies such as logistics service companies to customers as end-users.

Related to the era of digitization 4.0, something closely related to SCM to IoT applications, the use of advanced robotics, and the application of sophisticated analytics of big data in SCM. Placing sensors in everything with networks anywhere, automating anything, and analyzing everything to significantly improve performance, and customer satisfaction is a vital part of directing SCM to synergize with technology (Long, 2009).

The use of digital technology leads to positive economic effects, such as the economy of raw materials and energy resources, due to the rationalization of production and consumption, as well as in the perspective of environmental rehabilitation and restoration. All of this contributed to the formation of a new economic model called the circular economy. It is an economy based on reconstruction, optimization, and resource-saving processes, facilitated by digital technology that achieves non-waste production and consumption, sustainable economic growth, and socio-economy and environmental efficiency. The key concept of circular economy is the construction of closed-loop and sustainable supply chains.

The business models of some companies (such as Google, Amazon, Alibaba, Airbnb, and Uber) are primarily built on digital technology. Several other companies that have existed for five, ten, twenty, or even a hundred years, are indirectly forced to change and embrace digital technology in order to compete. This process has various names such as digitization or digital transformation (Sarkar, 2017).

Digitalization is making digital versions of analog or physical things such as paper documents, microfilm images, photos, sounds, and others (Rogers, 2016). So, the simple form is to convert something not digital (including other examples of signals, health records, location data, identity cards, and so on) to a digital format which can then be used by computing systems for a variety of purposes (Venkatraman, 2017).

As a result, humans get a continuous flow of information in digital form, which leads to the acceleration and improvement of operation accuracy and the required reduction of staff. Digitalization creates a foundation for operation automation and digitization. Digitalization means adding digitally to interactions, communications, business functions, and business models, often leading to a digital and physical fusion, as in omnichannel customer service, integrated marketing, or smart manufacturing with a mix of autonomous, semi-autonomous, and manual operations (Wallace & Kidder, 2019). So, digitization is the improvement of business functions and processes with digital technology and digital data. The basis of digital processes is the use of detailed analysis to manage the company's operations. Regarding the discussion about digitizing production or digitizing marketing, which means that many functions and operations will be carried out automatically without human participation.

Digitalization lays the foundation for the transition to digital business. Digital transformation is a transition to a digital business, a complex transformation of business activities, processes, models, and employee competencies to fully take advantage of digital opportunities. Oftentimes, digital transformation leads to the emergence of new markets, new consumers, and new businesses. A detail about the stages of digital transformation is presented in the study of Ardolino et al. (2017).

It aimed digitalization and digital transformation at achieving goals including the use of digital information, sensory interaction with devices, managing customer experience, providing cybersecurity, automating operations and decision making, and using external and internal social networks.

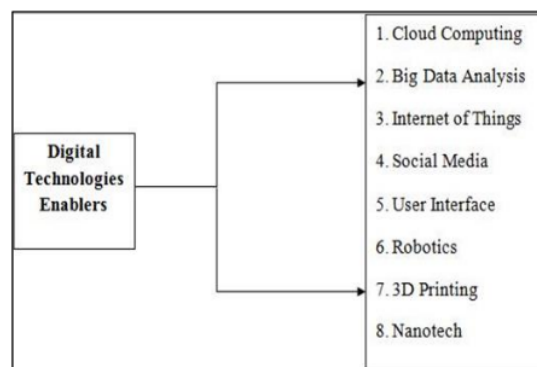
Broader global trends have affected companies of all sizes. Globalization and the evolution of e-commerce have opened up opportunities for growth, but present challenges, such as visibility and complexity of supply chains, at the same time. The widespread use of the internet has made customers increasingly impatient both in retail, which is a business-to-customer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) segment. The future comprises forecasting the impact of e-commerce on wholesale, retail, and distribution, as well as the blending of offline and online worlds, and the growing growth of home delivery alternatives. Future consumers do not want to wait for them to order and receive products as soon as possible, and companies must answer this challenge (Farahani et al., 2017). Consumer buying behavior and demand patterns are significantly influenced by high Internet penetration rates, constant accessibility of new information, and possible comparisons in terms of product features and prices (Accenture, 2015). High levels of internet penetration have significantly changed consumer purchasing behavior and demand patterns, placing heavy pressure on supply chain managers. Farahani et al. (2015) identified the following challenges and trends for the next few years: globalization and sales growth,

supply chain visibility, process standardization, and automation, supply chain collaboration, flexibility in responding to volatile markets, innovation, and new business models.

The rapid adoption and incorporation of new market requirements is the key to maintaining a competitive advantage in the future. It is important to understand trends and impacts on supply chain management in order to respond to change and optimize operations while leveraging emerging digital technologies. Supply chain managers are tasked with keeping their companies at the forefront of competition and this will be achieved by developing strategies that are built on capabilities and opportunities, in particular, in the context of digital supply chains. Digitalization is not only changing the way things work but also increases the rate of change facing companies. Emerging technologies such as 3D printing, IoT, and social media are having an important impact on current and future supply chain management models.

Emerging technologies are expected to provide answers to some of the most significant challenges in SCM leading to reduced costs and complexity, increased volume flexibility, or improved service level management. Figure 1 has shown some selected digital technology innovations that will have many impacts on SCM practices.

In today's competitive environment, businesses need to use modern technology to increase productivity and streamline their supply chains. Technologies currently used in SCM in Indonesia are electronic data exchange (EDI), barcode coding and scanning, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, radio frequency and identification (RFID), social media and electronic commerce, computerized shipping and tracking (Prashant et al., 2009). But this technology is saturated and insufficient to achieve a competitive advantage in today's global marketplace as excessive internet use has altered consumer buying behavior and demand patterns which creates immense pressure on supply chain managers. Hence, there is a need to shift to digital technology in order to remain competitive in this global market.



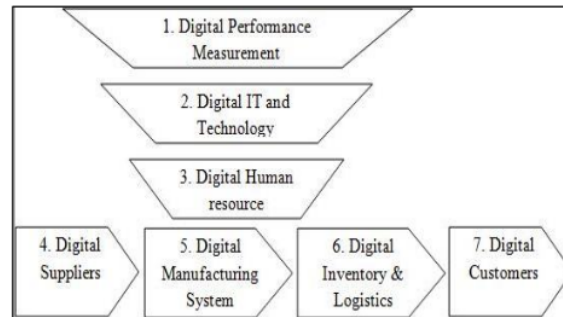
**Figure 1: New technologies enabling digital SCM transformation**

Source: (Agrawal & Narain, 2018).

Developing digital technology is a new technology that is developing or will develop over the next few years, which will substantially change the business and social environment. Digital supply chains can process large amounts of information and empower supply chain partners to move together to collaborate and communicate across digital platforms.

Hoberg et al. (2015) explain that digital transformation is a process of organizational change in which digital technology (such as cloud computing, 3D printing, internet of things, big data analysis) is used to change, how companies generate value in their products, how it interacts with suppliers, partners, and its customers and how it competes in the global market. Therefore, digital supply chain management can be defined as a powerful innovative technology capable of changing the traditional way of carrying out various supply chain processes such as supply chain planning, carrying out tasks, interacting with all supply chain participants, achieving integration among supply chain members and enabling new business models. Digital transformation is changing and therefore any organizational change initiative must manage with great care (Wade & Marchant, 2014). Digital transformation cannot be achieved with the efforts of one person, but rather a portfolio of initiatives that work together to achieve change.

As suggested by Farhani et al. (2017), each supply chain consists of various activities carried out for the procurement of raw materials, converting these materials into final products, storing them as finished product inventory, and ultimately sending them to the end customers. They divided SCM into seven dimensions namely supplier, production, inventory and logistics, customers, information technology, human resources, and performance measurement (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Seven dimensions in a digital SCM**

Source: (Agrawal & Narain, 2018).

The process covered includes scheduling shipments from suppliers, receiving, checking, and allowing payments for goods shipped by suppliers, selecting suppliers, evaluating supplier performance. SCM focuses on a reciprocal relationship between providers and customers to deliver highly optimal values to customers at a relatively low cost, while still providing overall supply chain advantages (Christopher, 2011).

According to Rutkowski et al. (2015), any company looking to digitize their current supply chain approach should explore the opportunities and challenges their current process faces. They also need to consider the digital transformation of the entire organization (including the organization of products, service and the interactions of partners, suppliers, and customers with their companies). Practicing SCM's digital transformation agenda is important, but how SCM can contribute to digitizing the business model is also important. The extent to which SCM has to transform itself will also depend on whether the company has entered the market with a digital business model from the start as a digital native, or later adopted it as a digital migrant.

Supply chain integration refers to the integration of regional supply chains into an integrated global supply network increasing sales growth and increasing supply chain visibility, enabling flexible response management.

Digital planning includes collaborative demand planning with customers and has started investing in redesigning their demand planning processes based on solutions and technologies, such as demand sensing (Beck et al., 2018).

Collaboration is the key to maintaining a competitive advantage. Analysis of sales patterns and buying behavior is of great interest to all industries, as it enables a better understanding of customer needs through sensing demand and up-to-date sales information. The digital business model suggests building a network of businesses and shares a common vision of bringing their key business partners on a platform that aims to create easy points of interaction. Managing supply chains effectively must adapt to new market needs rapidly implying maintaining a competitive advantage.

### III. METHOD AND DEMARCATION

The systematic literature review (SLR) approach was applied for this paper. We interpret the process flow in SLR in Figure 3 which is a research phase comprising three parts including planning, conducting, and reporting (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2017; Okoli & Schabram, 2010). First, the planning stage is the initial stage of conducting SLR. Next, enter the conducting stage, namely the implementation stage of the SLR and the third is reporting, which is the stage of writing SLR into a report.

The objectivity of this study is to cover the intensity of business actors in implementing the implementation of business strategies in the logistics sector. This step expects the disruption or threat to

the distribution of food and necessities during Covid-19. One of them is a system for procuring goods and transactions that can do digitally. The spread of the virus is quick and worrying, therefore business people need to prepare new business strategies in order to survive.



**Figure 3: Flow on a SLR**

*Source: (Apriliani et al., 2020).*

SLR will be very useful for synthesizing various study results that apply to a particular focused topic so that the facts presented to policymakers become more balanced, actual, and comprehensive (for example Sofaer & Strech, 2012; Peričić & Tanveer, 2019).

In Indonesia itself, government policies that limit physical contact between people have hit several businesses hard. The trade sector such as retail has also felt the impact of this policy. Several small retailers or grocery stores suffer losses because of a lack of buyers. The PSBB policy carried out by the government has disrupted the distribution system of goods. Not only small retailers, large retail companies such as department stores, supermarkets, warehouses, and hypermarkets have also experienced the same thing.

Because of excessive fear, people flocked to supermarket outlets and shopping centers to buy up various necessities such as rice, sugar, cooking oil, and instant noodles. The community also bought up various personal and household hygiene products. As a result, it completely depleted the stock of these products on the market. Even though it seems profitable, retail companies have limited ability to replenish used products. This panic buying phenomenon actually causes scarcity of products in retail outlets.

If the demand for products increases rapidly, there will be an economic law of supply and demand, which causes product prices to soar. If allowed to continue, this phenomenon will actually trigger inflation (Darma et al., 2018; Pusriadi & Darma, 2017), therefore a new business strategy is needed.

Meanwhile, retail managers are also making efforts to prevent the spread of the global epidemic among their workers. Fear of contracting Covid-19 has also forced retail managers to refuse a number of vendors or salesmen who supply products. They try to limit physical contact with the salesman who represents the distributor (Darma et al., 2020).

At the same time, retail companies must continue to reap profits. As a result, one of the business strategies that retailers take to save the business is to sell their products online. Selling products online is profitable, but what if the products sold have run out, while the retail manager stops several vendors who supply the product? There is only one solution, such as breaking the distribution chain with "retail direct orders".

After knowing the formulation of the problem, through SLR, questions can also be determined under study. There are three vital things that become a research question (RQ).

- RQ1: What is the concept of "retail direct order" ?;
- RQ2: How is the application of this method to overcome "panic buying" ?;
- RQ3: What does "retail direct order" look like to cut out limited retail through sales agents ?.

#### **IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

To prevent the transmission of Covid-19, the government should be more assertive in controlling transportation by optimizing freight transportation more focused on self-sufficiency per region in meeting basic needs (Grehenson, 2020). As for the slowdown in fulfillment of basic food and health services, there is no certainty about time, cost, and administrative constraints.

Therefore, to increase the speed of logistics distribution management of staple goods and health, it is necessary to increase information and technology (IT) literacy and optimize supply chain acceleration procedures. It is necessary to change the public paradigm to adapt to the situation and IT developments to facilitate services through digital procedure access services.

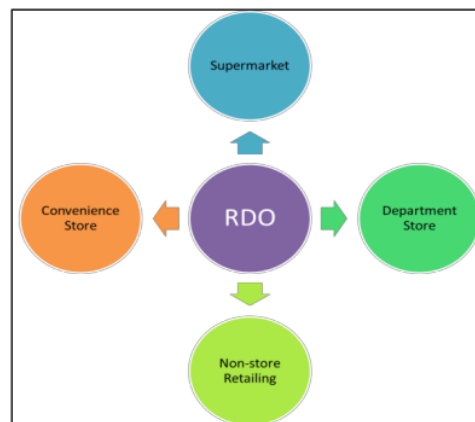
The distribution of staple food supplies between regions is also one of the crucial things that must be considered. With good and undisturbed distribution management, regions that have a surplus of certain commodities can distribute these commodities to surrounding areas that need them (Darma et al., 2020). The existence of PSBB from several provinces, regencies, and cities is indeed beginning to be disrupted so that it requires special handling.

Electronic products for example. They can open shopping services from home. Likewise, the retail business, according to Tri, can open message delivery services to be optimized. In fact, there are cosmetic companies that have launched hand sanitizer products that are directly marketed nationally through modern retail networks and marketplaces. Culinary players are now starting to switch to making ready-to-eat, ready-to-cook, and ready-to-drink and frozen food products that are marketed through the concept of delivery, reseller concept, and sales through the marketplace.

Meanwhile, for the education business, Aryanto (2020) identifies that they have now made learning services from home. Students are given access to study from home through applications that make it easier for students to learn. Likewise with the workshop business, which is now starting to develop home workshop services. For business training, now you can immediately adapt by creating training or webinars that can be accessed via video conferencing applications. Some hotel brands have also changed hotel room facilities as a resting place for medical personnel and so on. In the midst of this difficult situation, of course, brand players must be wise in allocating campaign funds. Creativity when branding is absolutely necessary, especially when working from home like this.

The branding activities carried out also vary, starting from CSR activities related to Covid-19, shopping campaigns from home, branding through online media, social media, official websites, creating online festivals by providing special discounts, and more. To make the marketing program successful at this time, principals are required to coordinate intensely with their distributors, agents, and retail sales network. This is done to achieve the expected target.

"RDO" is an application that can order products directly from distributors. This digital-based application is specifically designed to make it easier for retailers to manage the supply chain of products to various retail outlets. Because something is based on digital applications, of course, retail managers do not have to contact distributors (for example Dumrongsiri et al., 2014; Dobrota & Vujošević, 2014). One can also place orders and fill out increasingly rare products in no time. In addition, they can design all the tasks from just the smartphone screen. It is undeniable that retail outlets have become the vanguard that bridges producers and consumers. Therefore, retailers must also change the system they carry to be easier, cheaper, safer, and more efficient.



**Figure 4: "RDO" user parties**  
Source: (Author's own).

Some parties that are appropriate to connect to "RDO" are department stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, and non-store retailing (e.g. Paik & Lee, 2021). It included department stores in the category of large-scale retail companies. Department stores sell various types of products ranging from clothing,



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household furniture, necessities such as rice, cooking oil, beverage products to vegetables and meat which are also sold by this retail business (see Figure 4).

Department stores are also one of the retail outlets that are often invaded by buyers lately. To avoid scarcity of goods, department store managers can integrate the retail direct order application in the goods procurement system. "RDO" can also reach a tool that helps department stores place orders with the mobile order system. Department store managers can place orders from anywhere and, without having to wait for a sales associate to come to the store.

Not much different from department stores, supermarkets also provide various needs for the community. The difference is, the prices offered by supermarkets are usually cheaper with slightly lower quality than department stores. Supermarkets are in demand by the lower middle class. However, because in order to prevent the transmission of Covid-19, supermarkets are also the target of people who carry out panic buying (Darma et al., 2020). Not only the lower middle class, but the upper-middle class also buy up various products in supermarkets. To avoid product scarcity, supermarket managers should use practical and fast applications in placing orders. "RDO" is specially designed for entrepreneurs who want to get products in a relatively fast time.

All orders will enter the Distributor Management System (DMS) and are immediately processed at the same time by the distributor. Retailers and distributors can make an agreement to facilitate cooperation, for example, each order must enter the distributor system at least the day before. This agreement will certainly make retail and distributor cooperation more effective and efficient. These small shops or what is known as mini markets are scattered near residential areas. Even though they sell limited products, convenience stores are often the target of panic buying by the public.

As happened recently, health products such as hand sanitizers, masks, and vitamin products are barely leftover in most convenience stores. With this application, convenience store managers, those that are managed by themselves, can replenish products that have run out more quickly. Because they base something on an online application, retailers can find out the status of the goods ordered in real-time. This means that shop managers are no longer guessing whether the distributor has processed immediately the goods ordered.

As the name implies, non-store retailing runs without a physical store. They also included business people who sell their products online in the non-store retailing category. Even though it runs online, online store managers must ensure product availability. Especially nowadays consumers make purchases online. Online shops are also the target of panic buying from the public. In order to maintain the supply of goods in the online shop, "RDO" can place orders automatically.

Besides making it easier for retailers to buy products from distributors, Kho (2021) emphasized that the "RDO" application also has four benefits including providing various products quickly, online ordering, avoiding wrong orders, and practical application. This application can be used to order various products from distributors quickly. Because it is based on digital applications, retail direct orders can be executed from a mobile device. It will be easier to order various products that consumers need in a fast time.

In addition, "RDO" is specially designed for high mobility retailers who can place orders online from anywhere and anytime. Every businessperson can also check the availability of products before placing an online order so that orders are made more precisely and efficiently. Furthermore, there are no more product ordering errors. Through "RDO", all orders will be recorded and digitally recorded. If there is an order error, you can correct it immediately before forwarding the order to the distributor.

Currently, there are various applications that can be found on the market. One application that is often used is such as "SimpliDOTS retail". This online-based application is specifically designed to assist retailers in ordering goods. When a retailer orders a product, the order will automatically be processed through DMS. Orders that enter DMS will be processed immediately by the distributor on the same day, so all orders placed by retailers can be prepared more quickly.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper seeks to illustrate how logistics management and distribution systems can manage successfully, despite the extreme constraints of the global pandemic. As it was known, that the two types are different things. Logistics is a series of activities to retrieve and place goods from the planned place and time. Meanwhile, distribution is one aspect of marketing. This happened because of the decreasing activities

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carried out outside the home, difficulties in obtaining raw materials because of transportation constraints, and the decline in public trust in products that were outside, especially the culinary sector.

With "RDO", they always developed it as a positive response to the impact of PSBB. Its impact is very much felt on the real sector which has experienced a drastic decline, even distribution of staples, stagnant health, and budget allocations are unpredictable, causing confusion and panic in local government in managing the budget.

The contribution, originality, and novelty of the "RDO" concept expected to be material for evaluation and consideration for business people, governments, and various communities in the future that prioritize digital marketing aspects. The rest is for broad knowledge that has a significant impact on alternative solutions in preventing the limitations and scarcity of commodity stocks, especially emergency situations such as Covid-19.

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