

Consumer Preferences for The Quality of Product Attributes of Palm Sugar in Mataram City

M. Ilhamudin¹, Masrun²

^{1,2} Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Mataram, Indonesia

| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Article history:</p> <p>Received Sep 25, 2024 Revised Oct 11, 2024 Accepted Oct 24, 2024</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Preferences, Consumers, Palm sugar</p> | <p>This study aims to find out consumer preferences for the attributes of palm sugar products produced by West Lombok MSMEs sold in the traditional markets of Mataram city. The study population is all palm sugar consumers who come to make purchases in several predetermined traditional markets. This study uses a <i>survey sample</i> method, and uses a <i>purposive sampling</i> technique. Because the number of members of the research population is not known for sure, the number of research samples is determined to be 100 respondents. To answer the problems raised, the analysis tool used is the <i>Ideal-Point Model</i>, which is the evaluation of consumers on what they feel and what they want. This model measures the difference between what is perceived and what consumers want. The results of the study show that the attributes of palm sugar products are good. This is shown by the quality value being in the middle interval class, which means that the quality of the product is quite in accordance with consumer desires.</p> |

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Corresponding Author:

M. Ilhamudin
University of Mataram,
Jl. Majapahit No.62, Gomong, Kec. Selaparang, Kota Mataram, Nusa Tenggara Bar. 83115
ilhamudin@unram.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) open up greater job opportunities and businesses for the people of Indonesia. One of these SMEs is food processing SMEs that have been able to contribute to the national economy, indicated by the ability of this sector to absorb labor and the value of production produced.

One product that has high economic value so that it is very prospective in its development is palm sugar produced from palm plants. Palm plants, bah can be made into kolang kaling which is favored by Indonesian people in general. The leaves can be used as handicraft materials and can also be used as roofs, while the roots can be used as medicinal materials. From the stems, palm oil and skewers can be obtained that have economic value. In addition, the stems of young age can be taken from sago, while in old age they can be used as furniture materials. However, of all palm products, palm sap derived from male flower sleeves as an ingredient for palm sugar production is the most economically valuable.

West Lombok is one of the districts in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) that has a huge plantation potential in the development of the palm sugar industry. Palm sugar products produced by MSMEs in West Lombok make the city of Mataram the main target area for marketing.

Palm sugar consumption in the city of Mataram as the main marketing destination area will affect the survival of the sugar production business. All traditional market markets in Mataram City are used as places to sell palm sugar to meet the needs of consumers whose population is very large.

Research on consumer preferences for palm sugar attributes is very important to help business actors know what they want and maintain the trust that has been instilled in their consumers so far. According to Sumarwan (2003:123), consumers have a desire for a product according to their knowledge, so it is hoped that the product can provide benefits to consumers. If the product consumed is in accordance with what the consumer wants, then the consumer will make a purchase so that it can provide benefits for producers or marketers.

Product quality is an important aspect to always be considered by palm sugar producers. The quality of palm sugar that meets consumer expectations will help increase sales, and at the same time maintain the sustainability of palm sugar production in the future which is the source of livelihood for some people in West Lombok. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in presenting the results of the study entitled "Consumer Preferences for Palm Sugar Attributes in Mataram City".

2. METHOD

Types of Research

The type of research used in this study is descriptive. This method is called descriptive because it focuses on a step to solve problems that exist in the present or actual, then the data collected is first compiled, explained and then analyzed (Surakhmad, 1998: 140). The purpose of descriptive research is to make a systematic, factual and accurate description, description or painting of facts, properties and relationships between the phenomena being investigated. In this case, descriptive research is used to get an overview of consumer evaluation of the attributes of palm sugar products in Mataram City .

Research Location

In the study of palm sugar consumers, the researcher choose 3 traditional markets as the research location/place, namely: *first*, Ampenan market; *secondly*, Mandalika market because it is a group A (large) market where sellers and buyers inside and outside the city gather located in Cakranegara; and finally, Dasan Agung market, because it is located in the middle of a settlement in Mataram City.

Determination of Respondents

The population in this study is all palm sugar consumers who come to make purchases in one of the three markets. The respondent determination technique used in this study is *purposive sampling*, which is sampling according to the purpose of the research. When viewed by people who happen to be met, it is suitable as a source of data based on the following criteria in selecting respondents:

- a. Consumers who come to the sales location and make purchases.
- b. Adults, here adults are categorized as 17 years old or older or married, the researcher assumes that respondents who are 17 years old understand the questions asked. Respondents are decision-makers in the purchase of palm sugar.
- c. The assumption in relation to respondents is that in making decisions, consumers evaluate the attributes contained in palm sugar products.

Since the number of members of the research population is not known exactly, it was determined that the sample taken for the study was 100 people. This number has met the minimum number of samples, which is between 30 and 500 as stated by Roscoe in Wibisono (2003: 55). The determination of the sample size is also in accordance with the opinion of Guilford (1987: 125) who states that the research sample includes a number of elements (respondents) that are greater than the minimum requirement of 30 elements or respondents.

Data Analysis Procedure

According to Sumarwan (2003:164), to find out the attitude of consumers towards products, you can use the *ideal-point model*. In principle, the ideal number model provides information about consumers' evaluation of what consumers feel and what consumers want (ideally). This model measures the gap between what is ideal and what consumers actually feel.

The analysis procedure used in the study is as follows:

- a. To find out consumer confidence in palm sugar products, that is, consumers are asked to give an assessment of the attributes as they really feel.
- b. To find out the ideal properties that consumers want for palm sugar products, then use an analysis of the quality of the deal, namely consumer expectations/desires for the attributes of palm sugar products. Every consumer has the ideal nature of the product according to their own desires. The ideality of palm sugar products is assessed by looking at the difference point between ideal performance and trust in palm sugar attributes. According to Sumarwan (2011:181), the smaller the difference or difference between what is expected (the ideal) and the actual quality, the better the.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Consumer Interests in Buying Palm Sugar

Consumer interests are consumer statements regarding the order of importance of an attribute attached to palm sugar products. Consumers' decision to buy a product in advance will consider these attributes according to their interests. The attributes inherent in palm sugar will be an attraction for consumers to make purchases.

Table 1. The Importance of Mataram City Consumers in Palm Sugar Product Attributes

| No. | Attribute | ST (1) | TP (2) | C (3) | PT (4) | SPT (5) | Total | N | Free wi | Ranking |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|-------|-----|------------|---------|
| 1 | Price | | | 5 | 10 | 85 | 480 | 100 | 4,80 | 2 |
| 2 | Taste | | | 2 | 8 | 90 | 488 | 100 | 4,88 | 1 |
| 3 | Color | | | 15 | 11 | 74 | 459 | 100 | 4,59 | 5 |
| 4 | Aroma | | | 7 | 13 | 80 | 473 | 100 | 4,73 | 3 |
| 5 | Shape | | | 17 | 10 | 73 | 456 | 100 | 4,56 | 6 |
| 6 | Size | | | 10 | 13 | 77 | 467 | 100 | 4,67 | 4 |

Source: primary data processed

The results of the study showed that respondents made the highest purchase of palm sugar products due to taste with an importance level of 4.88 followed by price attributes with an importance level of 4.80 and aroma attributes of 4.73. Meanwhile, the attributes of size, color, and shape ranked 4th, 5th, and 6th, respectively, with a score of 4.67; 4.59; and 4.56.

Analysis of Consumer Ideal Quality in Palm Sugar Products in Mataram City

The analysis of the ideal quality of palm sugar sold in the city of Mataram is intended to illustrate whether the attributes attached to the product are in accordance with the wishes of consumers or not.

Table 2. The Ideal Quality Value of Palm Sugar in Mataram City

| It | Attribute | Ideal | Fact | Gap |
|----|-----------|-------|------|------|
| 1 | Price | 4,41 | 4,09 | 0,32 |
| 2 | Taste | 4,31 | 3,93 | 0,38 |
| 3 | Color | 4,55 | 3,70 | 0,85 |
| 4 | Aroma | 4,52 | 3,80 | 0,72 |
| 5 | Shape | 4,55 | 4,10 | 0,45 |
| 6 | Size | 4,50 | 3,90 | 0,60 |

Source: primary data processed

From the table above, it can be seen that the ideal quality of consumers for palm sugar attributes produced by West Lombok MSMEs. The attributes that best suit consumers' desires are price, taste, and shape. Meanwhile, the attributes of size, aroma, and color have not been ideal or have not met consumer desires.

Quality of Palm Sugar Sold in Mataram City Based on Consumer Preferences

The closer a product is to the ideal, the better it will be positioned. In palm sugar products, various attributes are consumer evaluation criteria when making purchases such as price, taste, color, aroma, shape, size, etc. The analysis of the quality of the product can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Abian Tofu Product Quality Body of Mataram City

| No. | Attribute | Interests | Gap | Quality |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|------|---------------|
| 1 | Price | 4,80 | 0,32 | 1,728 |
| 2 | Taste | 4,88 | 0,38 | 1,5844 |
| 3 | Color | 4,59 | 0,85 | 3,9015 |
| 4 | Aroma | 4,73 | 0,72 | 1,842 |
| 5 | Shape | 4,56 | 0,45 | 2,052 |
| 6 | Ukuran | 4,67 | 0,60 | 2,0081 |
| Jumlah | | | | 13,116 |

Source: primary data processed.

From the table above, it is known that the total quality value is 13,116, which means that consumers judge the quality of palm sugar produced by West Lombok MSMEs to be relatively very good. The high quality value is a reflection that the quality of the palm sugar is very good and has fulfilled their wishes. The quality value is in the top interval class, which is $0 < Ab < 22.56$ (very good), meaning that the quality of palm sugar products sold in Mataram City is very good or in accordance with consumer wishes.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that respondents made the highest purchase of palm sugar products due to taste with an importance level of 4.88 followed by price attributes with an importance level of 4.80 and aroma attributes of 4.73. Meanwhile, the attributes of size, color, and shape ranked 4th, 5th, 6th, and with a value of 4.67, respectively; 4.59; and 4.56. From the data analysis, it can also be known about the ideal quality of consumers for palm sugar attributes. The attributes that best suit consumers' desires are price, taste, and shape. Meanwhile, the attributes of size, aroma, and color have not been ideal or have not met consumer desires.

The quality measurement found that the total quality value was at 13,764. This figure shows the position of consumer perception on the overall quality of palm sugar products. This quality value is perceived very well by consumers because it is in the interval of $0 < Ab < 22.56$. In other words, the quality of palm sugar products sold in Mataram City is very good or in accordance with consumer desires/expectations.

4. CONCLUSION

The attributes on products that are in accordance with consumer desires are price, taste, and shape attributes, while the attributes of size, aroma, and color are not ideal or have not met consumer desires. The attribute that consumers consider when purchasing palm sugar produced by West Lombok MSMEs is the highest is taste, followed by the attributes of price, aroma, size, color, and finally the attribute of shape. The quality of palm sugar is relatively very good, which is shown by the high total quality value. This means that palm sugar products produced by West Lombok MSMEs are in accordance with consumer wishes.

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