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## **Analysis of Online Marketing of Palm Sugar (Case Study of Mutiara Labuah Gunuang Farmer Group, Lareh Sago Halaban District), Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatera, Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

Mutiara Farmers Group has marketed palm sugar products offline and online. However, online marketing is still not optimal. Therefore, this study aims to analyze online marketing and consumer responses to the Mutiara Farmers Group's palm sugar. The study was conducted in June-October 2024 using an interview method using a questionnaire and analyzed qualitatively. The results of this study obtained that 45 percent of respondents bought palm sugar online (WhatsApp) and 55 percent around the Payakumbuh and Pekanbaru areas offline. Online marketing is still limited because the distance of the palm sugar factory is far from the shipping location. All respondents chose palm sugar because it is pure palm sugar. Therefore, there needs to be a palm sugar storage warehouse near the shipping location.

**Keywords:** online marketing; palm sugar; Mutiara Farmers Group.

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## **1. Introduction**

Mutiara Farmers Group, Jorong Talaweh Nagari Labuah Gunuang is a farmer group consisting of 20 members engaged in the micro business of the palm sugar industry which was established in 2012. Jorong Talaweh is the largest producer of Nira as a local commodity in Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra Province. The Mutiara farmer group's micro business already has 5 product variants, namely round molded sugar, block molded sugar, liquid sugar, fresh nira, and ant sugar. The palm sugar products produced are pure and already have a P-IRT permit, halal certificate and guseta brand holder certificate. In 2018, the Mutiara farmer group received assistance from the government in the form of a palm sugar processing factory and other equipment Reference [1]. In 2023, through the 2023 Matching Fund program, the Payakumbuh State Agricultural Polytechnic, Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology of Higher Education, assisted the marketing of the Mutiara farmer group's palm sugar by improving product packaging to be more attractive and the guseta shop online store. The implementation of the program has been carried out well in efforts to increase the marketing of the Mutiara farmer group's palm sugar products [2]. However, the implementation of the Guseta Shop online store innovation faces the challenge of competition with similar palm sugar products that have been widely marketed in online marketing such as Tokopedia, Shopee, Lazada, and social media (Tiktok, Instagram, Facebook) at competitive prices. This study aims to analyze online marketing and consumer responses to the Mutiara farmer group's palm sugar.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This research was conducted for four months (June-October 2024) at the Mutiara Labuah Gunuang Farmers Group, Lareh Sago Halaban District. The research method was carried out descriptively qualitative. The data used are primary data. Primary data is the data obtained directly consumers of palm sugar, Mutiara farmer group by questionnaires.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### ***3.1. Overview of palm sugar consumers in the Mutiara farmer group***

Based on the results of interviews with 20 respondents, consumers of palm sugar consisted of 2 people buying palm sugar to sell at fresh palm sugar stalls, 1 person for a coffee shop, and 1 person for a cafe restaurant. In addition, 16 respondents bought palm sugar for personal consumption. Palm sugar products sold are molded palm sugar, fresh palm sugar, palm sugar, liquid sugar. There were 2 respondents who only bought fresh palm sugar to sell (fresh palm sugar stalls), 1 respondent bought fresh palm sugar to sell to Pekanbaru, 3 respondents bought molded palm sugar, 7 people bought molded sugar and palm sugar, 1 respondent bought molded sugar and liquid sugar, and 6 people bought molded palm sugar, liquid sugar, fresh palm sugar and palm sugar. This obtained results that the types of palm sugar demand varied greatly, but the largest demand was for molded palm sugar. Characteristics of palm sugar consumers of the Mutiara Farmers Group based on age are 60-65 years old, the highest age group consuming palm sugar, 7 respondents or 35 percent, and the lowest age group consuming palm sugar, 3 people or 15 percent (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Respondent Characteristics Based on Age

Age (year)	Number of Respondent
30-35	3
36-40	7
41-45	0
46-50	2
51-55	0
56-60	1
61-65	7
Amount	20

In addition, respondents of the Mutiara Farmers Group's palm sugar have the lowest education of 2 elementary school graduates and the highest of 15 higher education graduates (Table 2). Higher education with a focus on quality so that respondents choose the Mutiara farmer group's palm sugar compared to other palm sugar because the palm sugar is pure.

**Table 2:** Respondent Characteristics Based on Education

Education	Number of Respondent
Elementary school	2
Junior high school	0
Senior high school	3
Higher education	15
Amount	20

**3.2. Online marketing of palm sugar Farmer Mutiara Groups**

The Mutiara farmer group has partly conducted online marketing via telephone and WhatsApp chat. Based on the results of the questionnaire from respondents, there were 9 (45%) respondents who bought palm sugar online (WhatsApp) and 11 respondents (55%) bought offline. The online marketing is still around Payakumbuh and Tanjung Pati (Lima Puluh Kota Regency). The online marketing opportunities for the Mutiara farmer group's palm sugar are still open throughout Indonesia. The Mutiara farmer group tried to market on Facebook and Instagram and created an online store guided by the Payakumbuh State Agricultural Polytechnic. However, the marketing was not managed continuously by the Mutiara farmer group's palm sugar marketing team and the shipping costs were high from the palm sugar factory location to outside the province. In fact, competition for palm sugar products is high in the online market.

Based on the research results [3]the selling price of palm sugar for the Mutiara farmer group, namely molded sugar is IDR 37,456 per kg, liquid sugar is IDR 10,150 per bottle, fresh sap is IDR 4,300 per bottle (250 ml size), and palm sugar is IDR 51,068 per kg where the selling price does not include shipping costs. The average

shipping cost from the palm sugar factory location (Jorong Talaweh) to outside the province is IDR 30,000-50,000 per kg. Because, the location of the palm sugar factory is 30 km from the city of Payakumbuh. The location of the palm sugar factory is far from the city of Payakumbuh or from the location of the palm sugar product shipping expedition, so there needs to be a storage warehouse for palm sugar products in the city of Payakumbuh so that costs are more efficient and its palm sugar products can compete with palm sugar products in other regions.

The results of this study also obtained that 20 respondents stated that the quality of the product and service of the Mutiara farmer group's palm sugar was good (pure palm sugar product). This is in accordance with the study Reference [4] that online marketing has a positive effect on purchasing decisions, product quality and service quality. Online marketing is also influenced by the quality of the online store website, product quality [5] and service quality [6]. A quality online store website increases consumer trust in the online store so that purchasing interest increases. Product quality starts from the shape, benefits and content of the product, product durability, ease of use of the product, and attractive product/packaging design. Good service quality meets customer needs and customer satisfaction. The weakness is that online marketing is still limited to the Payakumbuh and Lima Puluh Kota areas.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that: [1] online marketing of Mutiara Farmers Group's palm sugar has opportunities, but has obstacles with the distance between the factory location and the shipping location, resulting in high shipping costs, [2] consumer response to Mutiara Farmers Group's palm sugar products is that the product quality is good (pure palm sugar).

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