

MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Marketing Mix Strategies and Challenges in Increasing the Income of Palm Sugar Artisans in Lombo Village, Pitu Riase District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency

Liska Lina Yanti ¹, Adam Latif ², Andi Riska Andreani Syafaruddin ³, H. Haslindah ⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Department of Digital Business, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, Sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia. Email: liskalinayanti@gmail.com¹, adamlatifsaja2017@gmail.com², riska.andreani93@gmail.com³, haslindahpratiwi7@gmail.com⁴

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of the marketing mix strategy (4P: product, price, place, and promotion) as an effort to increase the income of palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village, Pitu Riase District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi. Despite the significant potential of the local agribusiness sector, palm sugar artisans continue to face several challenges, including the remote location of plantations, the susceptibility of palm sap to fermentation, dependence on intermediaries, and the use of traditional word-of-mouth marketing practices. Therefore, this study aims to analyze existing market conditions and identify sustainable marketing mix strategies that can support increased sales and income among palm sugar artisans. This research employed a qualitative approach. Data were collected through observations, documentation, literature reviews, and interviews. The study involved 10 informants, consisting of 3 business owners and 7 customers. Data analysis was conducted through data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data were processed using NVivo 12 Pro software. The findings indicate that product quality is the most influential factor affecting customer satisfaction and repeat purchases, while promotion remains the weakest element due to the limited utilization of digital marketing and the continued reliance on traditional word-of-mouth communication. Based on these findings, the study recommends maximizing the use of social media as a promotional platform, investing in supporting production equipment, and maintaining consistency in the palm sugar production process to enhance competitiveness and increase artisans' income.

Keywords: Marketing Mix, MSMEs, Palm Sugar, Income Enhancement.

JEL Code: M31, L26, Q13, O18.

I. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in supporting economic growth and improving community welfare, particularly in rural areas of Indonesia. MSMEs are considered the backbone of the local economy because they promote economic independence and strengthen local economic structures (Puji & Nurofik Agus, 2020). One MSME sector with considerable economic potential is



the palm sugar industry. Palm sugar is a traditional product derived from palm sap through a simple boiling process until it solidifies into brown sugar (Merr & Manar, 2023). Furthermore, palm trees (*Arenga pinnata* Merr.) possess substantial economic value because they can grow under various environmental conditions and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural communities (Paransa & Pratama, 2024). In South Sulawesi, particularly in Lombo Village, Pitu Riase District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, palm sugar production has become one of the primary sources of income for local residents. Despite the considerable agribusiness potential of this commodity, palm sugar artisans continue to face various challenges in developing their businesses and increasing their income. Field observations conducted by the researcher revealed several key issues, including a limited customer base, inconsistent pricing practices, low product recognition beyond the local market, and insufficient business development efforts to expand market reach. Moreover, artisans remain highly dependent on traditional marketing methods and middlemen for product distribution. These challenges significantly hinder business growth and revenue enhancement. Limited market access, dependence on intermediaries, unstable pricing systems, and promotional activities that rely primarily on word-of-mouth communication reduce the competitiveness of palm sugar products. In addition, the remote location of plantations and the susceptibility of palm sap to fermentation create operational difficulties that affect product quality and consistency. These conditions highlight the importance of implementing an effective marketing mix strategy to strengthen business sustainability and improve the income of palm sugar artisans (Octa et al., 2024). To address these challenges, the adoption of an effective marketing strategy is essential for enhancing business competitiveness and long-term sustainability. One of the most widely recognized approaches in marketing management is the marketing mix strategy, which consists of four key elements: product, price, place, and promotion (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020).

The marketing mix serves as a strategic framework that integrates controllable marketing variables to influence consumer behavior and achieve organizational objectives. Through the effective implementation of marketing mix strategies, business owners can improve product quality, establish competitive pricing, optimize distribution channels, and enhance promotional activities. The marketing mix strategy is particularly important because it enables businesses to coordinate various marketing activities into a comprehensive approach that supports business growth. According to Fista Natasya and Kuswibowo (2023), the marketing mix is a strategic tool used to combine multiple marketing activities to achieve optimal business outcomes. Originally introduced by Neil H. Borden and later refined by E. Jerome McCarthy into the well-known 4P framework, the concept has become one of the most influential models in marketing management. In the context of palm sugar MSMEs, the implementation of the marketing mix is expected to enhance product competitiveness and increase artisans' income through more effective marketing practices. Several previous studies have examined the implementation of marketing mix strategies in MSMEs and their effects on business performance and revenue growth. However, most of these studies have focused on urban-based MSMEs or modern business sectors, while research on traditional palm sugar artisans in rural areas remains limited (Nurhadi et al., 2025). Existing studies suggest that product quality, pricing strategies, distribution channels, and promotional activities significantly influence business sustainability and financial performance. Nevertheless, the interaction of these factors within rural agribusiness environments characterized by limited resources, production constraints, and dependence on intermediaries has not been extensively explored. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating the implementation of marketing mix strategies among palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village (Albaar et al., 2022). Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the implementation of marketing mix strategies in increasing the income of palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village, Pitu Riase District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. Specifically, the study seeks to identify existing marketing conditions, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of current marketing practices, and explore sustainable marketing strategies that can enhance sales performance and business sustainability. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on marketing management within rural agribusiness MSMEs. Practically, it provides strategic recommendations for palm sugar artisans to improve marketing performance and increase their income (Nur Ida et al., 2024).

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Marketing Mix Concept (4P)

A marketing strategy is a conceptual framework that guides organizations in planning, implementing, and controlling marketing activities to achieve long-term objectives in a competitive market environment. According to Kotler (2018), as cited in Sundari (2024), a marketing strategy is a marketing mindset that encompasses target markets, positioning, the marketing mix, and budgeting to achieve organizational goals. Similarly, Tjiptono (2017) defines a marketing strategy as a plan that describes the expected impact of marketing activities on product demand within a specific market. The marketing mix is a strategic framework in marketing that refers to a combination of controllable tactical elements used by organizations to influence consumer behavior and achieve marketing objectives. The concept was first introduced by Neil H. Borden in 1953 and later simplified by E. Jerome McCarthy into four key elements, commonly known as the 4Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. According to Fista Natasya and Kuswibowo (2023), the marketing mix is a strategy that integrates various marketing activities to achieve optimal and satisfactory business outcomes. This concept enables businesses to coordinate their marketing efforts more effectively in response to market demands (Haris, 2020). The four elements of the marketing mix are interrelated and have a direct influence on business performance and revenue growth. Product quality affects customer satisfaction and encourages repeat purchases, while pricing strategies influence consumers' purchasing decisions and business profitability (Astuti et al., 2024).

Distribution channels determine product accessibility and market coverage, whereas promotional activities help businesses communicate product value and expand market reach (Salsabilla et al., 2024). Therefore, an effective combination of product, price, place, and promotion is essential for enhancing competitiveness and achieving sustainable business growth, particularly among rural MSMEs (Nur Laili Fikriah et al., 2024). The implementation of marketing mix strategies is important because it enables business owners to manage marketing activities in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Products should be developed according to market needs and consumer preferences, pricing strategies should consider purchasing power and market competition, distribution channels must ensure product availability and accessibility, and promotional activities should effectively attract and retain customers. Through this integrated approach, businesses can increase consumer interest, improve customer satisfaction, and strengthen their market position. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2020), the marketing mix consists of four primary dimensions: product, price, promotion, and place. Product indicators include quality, features, design, branding, and after-sales service. Price indicators involve pricing policies, discounts, and payment methods. Promotion indicators encompass advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and personal selling activities. Meanwhile, place indicators include distribution channels, business location, logistics, and transportation accessibility (Haque et al., 2022).

2.2. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are business entities operated by individuals, households, or small-scale organizations that contribute significantly to economic development. In Indonesia, MSMEs are regarded as the backbone of the national economy because they generate employment opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and promote community economic independence. The development of MSMEs has continued to expand due to government initiatives aimed at supporting business sustainability and strengthening economic resilience (Puji & Nurofik Agus, 2020). Palm sugar enterprises are categorized as rural agribusiness-based MSMEs because they utilize local natural resources and traditional production systems. However, rural MSMEs continue to face several challenges, including limited access to capital, technology, production facilities, and modern marketing systems. Consequently, strengthening marketing capabilities through the implementation of effective marketing strategies has become essential for

ensuring business sustainability and increasing artisans' income (Dwiningwarni & Amrulloh, 2020). Lombo Village is one of the rural areas in Sidenreng Rappang Regency where palm sugar production serves as an important source of household income. Most artisans continue to rely on traditional production methods and conventional marketing practices. Furthermore, limited transportation infrastructure and dependence on intermediaries create obstacles to market expansion and income growth. These socio-economic conditions make Lombo Village an appropriate setting for examining the implementation of marketing mix strategies within rural MSMEs and assessing their potential contribution to business development and income enhancement (Nur Ida et al., 2024).

2.3. Palm Sugar

Palm sugar is a traditional product with considerable economic potential in Indonesia. According to Mita (2022), as cited in Merr and Manar (2023), palm sugar processing has become a profitable business opportunity because palm sugar is widely used for both household and industrial consumption. Palm sugar is produced from palm sap through a boiling process until it thickens and solidifies into brown sugar (Mandar & Barat, 2022). In addition, the palm tree (*Arenga pinnata* Merr.) possesses substantial economic value because it can grow under various soil conditions, including clay, limestone, and sandy soils. This adaptability makes palm sugar production an important economic activity for many rural communities. Nevertheless, palm sugar artisans continue to face several challenges, including sap fermentation, weather-related constraints, limited production equipment, and reliance on traditional marketing systems. These challenges often affect product quality, production consistency, and market competitiveness (Angka, 2023). To address these challenges, artisans need to adopt more adaptive and innovative marketing strategies. Product consistency and quality assurance are essential for maintaining customer trust, while competitive pricing and broader distribution channels can improve market accessibility. Furthermore, the utilization of digital marketing platforms, such as social media and online marketplaces, has become increasingly important for rural MSMEs in strengthening competitiveness and increasing income (Nafie et al., 2025).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between marketing mix strategies and business performance among MSMEs. Asmira et al. (2021) found that marketing strategies play an important role in improving community welfare and supporting business sustainability during periods of economic instability. Armiya Yuniarti et al. (2023) reported that the implementation of marketing mix strategies contributes positively to market expansion and product competitiveness among palm sugar MSMEs. Furthermore, Astuti et al. (2024) demonstrated that marketing mix strategies and Electronic Customer Relationship Management (E-CRM) significantly enhance marketing performance among MSMEs in the digital era. Nur Laili Fikriah et al. (2024) also revealed that marketing capabilities and the utilization of social media positively influence MSME performance and competitiveness. In addition, Septianti and Khaeril (2024) found that product, price, promotion, and place significantly affect MSME sales performance in South Sulawesi. Despite these findings, studies specifically focusing on traditional palm sugar artisans in rural areas remain limited, particularly regarding the interaction between marketing mix strategies and structural challenges such as limited market access, production constraints, and dependence on intermediaries. Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by investigating the implementation of marketing mix strategies among palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village.

2.4. Revenue Increase Concept

Revenue increase refers to the efforts undertaken by business owners to improve business income and ensure long-term financial sustainability. According to Nurlaila Hanum (2017), revenue growth is influenced by several key factors, including capital, products, labor, profit generation, and business location. Furthermore, Dr. Nurrochmat (2024) explains that revenue growth can be achieved through efficient resource management, innovation, and the implementation of effective business strategies (Nabilah et al., 2025). The

relationship between marketing mix strategies and revenue growth can be observed in a business's ability to create value for consumers while maintaining a competitive advantage. High product quality encourages customer loyalty, competitive pricing attracts potential customers, effective distribution channels expand market coverage, and promotional activities enhance product awareness. Therefore, the integration of these four marketing mix elements is expected to improve business performance and support sustainable revenue growth among palm sugar artisans in rural areas (Armiya Yuniarti et al., 2023).

III. Research Method

3.1. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to analyze the implementation of marketing mix strategies in increasing the income of palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village, Pitu Riase District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena comprehensively within their natural settings and to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors through direct interaction. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research is a method based on a post-positivist paradigm that investigates phenomena in natural settings, with the researcher serving as the primary research instrument. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2022) state that qualitative research is appropriate for exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems. The case study design was considered suitable because this research focuses on a specific community of palm sugar artisans characterized by unique social and economic conditions. The research design was developed to address the primary research question concerning how marketing mix strategies are implemented and how these strategies contribute to increasing the income of palm sugar artisans. Therefore, data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation were specifically intended to explore the implementation of product, price, place, and promotion strategies, as well as their influence on business performance and income growth.

3.2. Research Location and Time

This research was conducted in Lombo Village, Pitu Riase District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research site was selected because palm sugar production constitutes one of the primary economic activities of the local community. Despite its economic potential, palm sugar artisans in this area continue to face various marketing and business development challenges, including limited market access, dependence on intermediaries, and the continued use of conventional promotional methods. The study was conducted from January to March 2025 and included several stages, namely preliminary observation, data collection through interviews, data verification, and data analysis.

3.3. Types and Sources of Data

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected directly through interviews and observations involving palm sugar business owners and customers. Interview data included information related to product quality, pricing strategies, distribution channels, promotional activities, business challenges, and efforts to increase income. Observation data consisted of field notes regarding production activities, marketing practices, and overall business conditions. Secondary data were obtained from books, scientific journals, reports, photographs, and other relevant documents related to marketing mix strategies, MSMEs, and palm sugar enterprises. All collected data were analyzed systematically to identify patterns, themes, and relationships relevant to the objectives of the study.

3.4. Informants

The informants in this study consisted of 10 participants, including 3 palm sugar business owners and 7 customers. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique because they were considered capable of providing relevant and in-depth information regarding the implementation of marketing mix strategies and efforts to increase business income. The business owners were selected based on their experience in managing palm sugar enterprises, while the customers were chosen based on their purchasing experience and familiarity with the product's quality and marketing practices. The number of informants was considered adequate because data saturation had been achieved, indicating that additional interviews no longer generated new information relevant to the research objectives. According to Sugiyono (2019), purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which participants are selected based on specific criteria and considerations aligned with the objectives of the research.

3.5. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques employed in this study included observation, interviews, documentation, and a literature review.

a. Observation

Observation was conducted to directly examine the production processes, marketing activities, and business conditions of palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village. Through this technique, the researcher obtained information regarding production methods, distribution systems, and promotional activities implemented by the artisans.

b. Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guidelines. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face at locations mutually agreed upon by the informants. To establish trust and obtain reliable information, the researcher first explained the objectives of the study, assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses, and encouraged them to share their experiences openly. The interviews focused on marketing practices, business challenges, and efforts to increase business income.

c. Documentation

Documentation techniques were used to collect supporting data, including photographs, business records, field notes, and other documents related to palm sugar business activities. These documents were used to strengthen and verify the information obtained through interviews and observations.

d. Literature Review

A literature review was conducted by examining books, scientific journals, and previous studies related to marketing mix strategies, MSMEs, palm sugar enterprises, and income growth. The literature review provided a theoretical foundation for the study and facilitated comparisons between the findings of this research and those of previous studies.

3.6. Research Instruments

The research instruments utilized in this study included interview guidelines, observation sheets, field notes, audio recorders, and documentation tools such as cameras and smartphones. The interview guidelines were designed to ensure that the data collected were relevant to the research objectives. Observation sheets and field notes were used to systematically record conditions, events, and activities observed during the

research process. These instruments assisted the researcher in collecting comprehensive and reliable qualitative data.

3.7. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis procedures employed in this study followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data collection was conducted through interviews, observations, documentation, and a literature review. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, organizing, and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives. The reduced data were subsequently presented in a systematic manner to facilitate interpretation and analysis. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified based on the patterns, themes, and relationships identified throughout the analytical process.

3.8. Data Processing Technique

To support qualitative data analysis, this study utilized NVivo 12 Pro software. NVivo was employed to organize interview transcripts, manage qualitative data, perform coding procedures, classify themes, and visualize relationships among concepts systematically. The analysis process began with importing interview transcripts, observation records, and supporting documents into the software. Subsequently, the data were coded and categorized according to the four elements of the marketing mix: product, price, place, and promotion. The coded data were then analyzed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships relevant to the research objectives. The findings generated through NVivo were interpreted to formulate conclusions regarding the implementation of marketing mix strategies among palm sugar artisans. The use of NVivo enhanced the efficiency, transparency, reliability, and accuracy of the qualitative data analysis process.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Results of Interviews and Observations

This study involved direct interviews and observations with individuals engaged in the operational activities of palm sugar businesses in Lombo Village. The interviews were conducted in two stages. The first stage involved business owners and aimed to obtain information regarding business strategies, operational conditions, and marketing practices implemented in palm sugar production. The second stage involved customers who had purchased palm sugar products and sought to understand consumer perceptions of product quality, pricing, accessibility, and promotional effectiveness. These interviews were conducted to explore the implementation of marketing mix strategies and their contribution to increasing business income (Merr & Manar, 2023). During the interview process, the researcher developed questions based on indicators derived from the four main elements of the marketing mix, namely product, price, place, and promotion, as well as indicators related to income growth (Nur Ida et al., 2024). The interview questions were adapted to the role of each informant, including business owners and customers, in order to obtain comprehensive perspectives on business performance and marketing practices. This approach enabled the researcher to compare the perspectives of producers and consumers in evaluating the effectiveness of existing marketing strategies (Utami Aria, 2016). The interview guidelines were designed systematically to ensure consistency in data collection and to facilitate a deeper exploration of the research issues. The questions focused on product characteristics, pricing strategies, distribution systems, promotional activities, customer satisfaction, and perceptions of business development. In addition, direct observations were conducted to examine production processes, packaging practices, marketing activities, and the business environment of palm sugar

artisans. The combination of interview and observation techniques enhanced data validity through triangulation of information sources (Irdamayanti et al., 2024). The findings from the interviews and observations indicate that palm sugar businesses possess several strengths, particularly in maintaining traditional product quality and customer trust. However, several limitations remain, especially in the areas of promotional activities, product innovation, and market expansion. Most business owners continue to rely on conventional marketing methods and interpersonal communication to attract consumers. As a result, opportunities to increase income and strengthen market competitiveness remain underutilized. The results of the interviews and observations served as the basis for a more detailed analysis of each component of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) and their influence on increasing the income of palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village.

4.2. Results of Marketing Mix and Income Growth Analysis

Following the completion of the interview data coding process using NVivo 12 Pro software, the next stage involved conducting further analysis using the Crosstab Query feature. This analysis aimed to identify the relationships between informants and each indicator of the marketing mix strategy, as well as the indicators associated with income growth. The visualizations generated from the Crosstab analysis were used to support the interpretation of the findings and served as the basis for formulating business development strategies that align with the elements of the marketing mix and the actual conditions observed in the field.

a. Marketing Mix Strategy

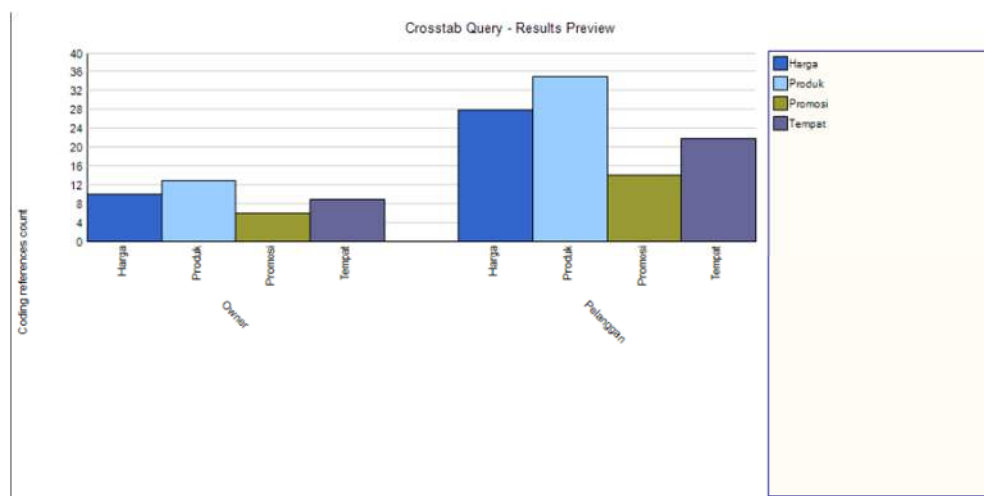


Figure 1. Data Processing of Variable X

Based on the results of the data analysis, it was found that both business owners and customers emphasized different elements of the marketing mix strategy according to their respective roles and experiences. Each group tended to focus on the aspects they considered most relevant to their involvement in the palm sugar business. The findings are presented as follows:

1) Price Indicator

For the price indicator, the percentage attributed to business owners was approximately 10%, while customers accounted for approximately 28%. This finding indicates that customers are more sensitive to pricing issues than business owners. For customers, price is an important consideration in purchasing

decisions, particularly in terms of affordability and its consistency with product quality. In contrast, business owners tend to view price as the outcome of production cost calculations and expected profit margins; therefore, they discuss this aspect less frequently than other business factors.

2) Product Indicator

The product indicator emerged as the most dominant factor for both groups, with business owners accounting for approximately 12% and customers accounting for approximately 35%. This finding suggests that product quality is the most important factor in the palm sugar business. Business owners focus on production processes, raw material selection, and maintaining product quality and taste. Meanwhile, customers pay close attention to taste, texture, color, and product authenticity. The strong emphasis placed on this indicator by both groups confirms that product quality is the primary strength of the business.

3) Promotion Indicator

The promotion indicator recorded the lowest percentage among all indicators, with business owners accounting for approximately 5% and customers accounting for approximately 14%. This finding suggests that promotional activities remain limited. Business owners continue to rely primarily on traditional marketing methods, such as direct selling and word-of-mouth recommendations. Similarly, customers rarely referred to promotional activities because they seldom encounter active marketing efforts, particularly through digital and social media platforms.

4) Place Indicator

For the place indicator, business owners accounted for approximately 9%, while customers accounted for approximately 22%. This result indicates that location and distribution play an important role in product sales. Business owners emphasize business locations that are close to raw material sources and supported by efficient distribution access. In contrast, customers focus on the ease of obtaining products through traditional markets, local retailers, or nearby vendors. The easier the product is to access, the greater the likelihood of purchase.

b. Income Growth

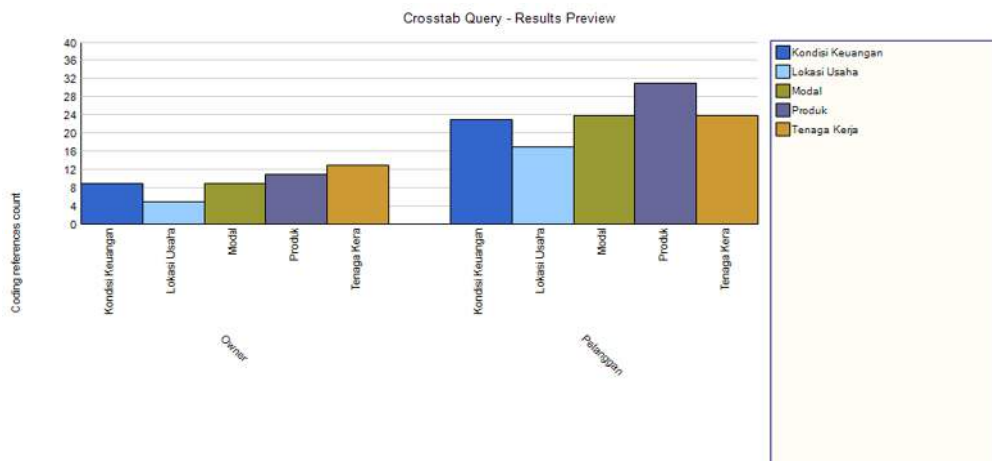


Figure 2. Data Processing of Variable Y

Based on the results of the data analysis, it was found that business owners and customers emphasized different factors associated with income growth. Each group highlighted the aspects they

considered most relevant based on their experiences and involvement in the business. The findings are presented as follows:

1) Financial Condition Indicator

The percentage attributed to customers was higher than that attributed to business owners. Customers indirectly associated financial conditions with product availability, business continuity, and product quality in the marketplace. This finding indicates that consumers perceive financial stability as an important factor influencing business performance.

2) Business Location Indicator

For the business location indicator, business owners accounted for approximately 5%, while customers accounted for approximately 16%. This result suggests that customers pay considerable attention to the accessibility of the business location when purchasing palm sugar products. Convenient access can positively influence purchasing decisions and customer satisfaction.

3) Capital Indicator

For the capital indicator, business owners accounted for approximately 8%, while customers accounted for approximately 24%. Business owners identified capital as the primary source of funding for purchasing production equipment and supporting operational activities. Customers also associated capital with production capacity, equipment quality, and the stability of product availability.

4) Product Indicator

The product indicator emerged as the most dominant factor for both groups, with business owners accounting for approximately 12% and customers accounting for approximately 35%. This finding demonstrates that product quality is a key determinant of income growth. Business owners focus on production processes, raw materials, and maintaining product quality, while customers emphasize taste, texture, color, and authenticity. The strong attention given to this indicator confirms that product quality is the main competitive advantage of the business.

5) Labor Indicator

For the labor indicator, business owners accounted for approximately 12%, while customers accounted for approximately 24%. This result indicates that labor plays a significant role in supporting production activities. Business owners highlighted task allocation among family members and the limitations of available labor resources, whereas customers associated labor availability with product availability and production continuity.

Table 1. Relationship Between Marketing Mix Elements and Income Growth

Marketing Mix Element	Main Findings	Impact on Income Growth
Product	High product quality, distinctive taste, and the use of natural ingredients	Strong positive impact
Price	Affordable and competitive pricing that aligns with consumers' purchasing power	Positive impact
Place	Distribution through local markets and intermediaries improves product accessibility	Moderate positive impact
Promotion	Promotional activities rely on word-of-mouth communication and limited digital marketing	Weak positive impact

Table 1 illustrates the relationship between the marketing mix elements and income growth among palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village. The findings indicate that the product element contributes most

significantly to income growth because consumers highly value product quality, distinctive taste, and the use of natural ingredients. The price element also contributes positively because the selling price is perceived as affordable and competitive within the local market. Meanwhile, the place element supports income growth through product distribution in local markets and the involvement of intermediaries, although its impact is relatively moderate. In contrast, promotion remains the weakest element because marketing activities continue to rely heavily on traditional word-of-mouth communication and have not yet fully utilized digital marketing platforms. These findings suggest that strengthening promotional strategies through social media and other digital channels is essential for expanding market reach, enhancing competitiveness, and supporting sustainable income growth among palm sugar artisans.

4.3. Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, the implementation of marketing mix strategies in palm sugar businesses provides a clear picture of current business conditions as well as opportunities for future development. Among the four main components of the marketing mix analyzed, namely product, price, place, and promotion, most have been implemented relatively effectively by palm sugar artisans. This is reflected in the quality of palm sugar products, which customers perceive as having a distinctive taste, natural ingredients, and satisfactory quality. In addition, pricing strategies are considered affordable and appropriate to the quality offered. Product distribution through local markets and intermediaries also contributes to improving product accessibility for consumers. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasized the importance of marketing mix strategies in enhancing MSME performance. Astuti et al. (2024) found that the implementation of marketing mix strategies significantly improves marketing performance and business sustainability among MSMEs. Similarly, Sucipto et al. (2025) reported that product, price, promotion, and place positively influence sales volume and the competitiveness of MSMEs in South Sulawesi. Furthermore, Fikriah et al. (2024) demonstrated that marketing capabilities and social media utilization contribute positively to business growth and market expansion. Therefore, the findings of this study reinforce previous evidence while providing a specific perspective on traditional palm sugar enterprises operating in rural areas. On the other hand, business management practices remain relatively simple but effective. The division of labor among family members and the utilization of raw materials sourced from privately owned plantations contribute positively to production continuity and operational efficiency. Customers also reported that the products meet their expectations in terms of taste, quality, and usefulness for daily consumption (Wijoyo & Hamzah, 2020). These findings indicate a strong alignment between the quality provided by artisans and consumer expectations in the marketplace.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the marketing mix theory proposed by Kotler and Armstrong (2020), which emphasizes that product quality is one of the most important factors influencing customer satisfaction and purchasing decisions. The dominance of the product indicator in this study suggests that consumers place substantial value on taste, authenticity, and consistency of product quality. Therefore, maintaining product excellence represents a strategic advantage for palm sugar artisans in sustaining customer loyalty and promoting income growth. However, several aspects still require improvement, particularly the promotional component. Promotional activities continue to rely heavily on traditional methods, such as word-of-mouth recommendations and direct selling in local markets. The utilization of digital media as a promotional tool remains limited, resulting in restricted opportunities for market expansion. This condition is influenced by several factors, including limited digital literacy, inadequate access to information technology, and a lack of experience in online marketing practices among artisans (Saputra, 2024). The findings indicate that promotion is the weakest element of the marketing mix strategy implemented by palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village. Therefore, strengthening promotional strategies through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp Business is highly recommended. Digital promotion can increase product visibility, expand market reach beyond local areas, and enhance customer engagement. In addition, collaboration with local MSME communities and participation in regional

trade fairs and exhibitions can serve as alternative promotional strategies to support sustainable business growth.

Overall, the implementation of marketing mix strategies among palm sugar artisans demonstrates that these businesses possess a relatively strong foundation, particularly in terms of product quality, pricing suitability, and customer relationships built through trust and repeat purchases. Palm sugar products are recognized for their distinctive and natural characteristics, which constitute their primary competitive advantage in attracting consumer interest. Furthermore, simple business management systems, including family-based labor utilization and the use of self-sourced raw materials, continue to support production sustainability. Nevertheless, strengthening promotional activities and expanding market access remain essential for enhancing competitiveness and supporting long-term income growth. Future research is recommended to explore the implementation of digital marketing strategies and evaluate the effectiveness of social media platforms in promoting traditional palm sugar products. In addition, further studies may examine consumer behavior, branding strategies, and product innovation to support the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of rural agribusiness-based MSMEs (Bima Prasetya et al., 2025).

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of marketing mix strategies plays an important role in supporting income growth among palm sugar artisans in Lombo Village, Pitu Riase District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The findings indicate that, among the four components of the marketing mix, namely product, price, place, and promotion, the product element is the most influential factor affecting customer satisfaction and repeat purchasing behavior. Palm sugar products are perceived positively because of their distinctive taste, natural ingredients, and consistent quality. Pricing strategies are considered affordable and appropriate for the quality offered, while product distribution through local markets and intermediaries enhances product accessibility for consumers. However, promotion remains the weakest component because marketing activities continue to rely heavily on conventional methods, such as word-of-mouth communication and direct selling, with limited utilization of digital media. Therefore, strengthening promotional strategies and improving distribution systems are essential for expanding market reach and supporting sustainable business growth. The findings of this study contribute theoretically to the development of marketing management literature, particularly regarding the application of marketing mix strategies in rural agribusiness-based MSMEs. This study provides evidence that product quality remains the primary factor supporting business sustainability and income growth, while limitations in promotional activities represent a significant challenge for traditional businesses. Furthermore, the study enhances understanding of how marketing mix strategies operate within rural business environments characterized by limited resources, simple management systems, and restricted market access. From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that palm sugar business owners should optimize digital promotional activities through social media platforms to expand market reach and improve competitiveness. Enhancing packaging quality, strengthening product branding, expanding distribution networks, and investing in supporting production equipment may increase sales opportunities and maintain customer trust. The integration of traditional business strengths with modern marketing approaches is expected to support sustainable business development and long-term income growth among palm sugar artisans.

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