MARKETING STRATEGY FOR WATER SPINACH AT DESA SANGGAOEN, KECAMATAN LOBALAIN, KABUPATEN ROTE NDAO

(Strategi Pemasaran Bayam Air Di Desa Sanggaoen, Kecamatan Lobalain, Kabupaten Rote Ndao)

Junaldi Sooai, Maria Bano, Siska Elvani
Agribusiness Department, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nusa Cendana
Corresponding author: junaldisooai@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Research on Marketing Strategies for Water Spinach Commodities in Sanggaoen Village, Lobalain District, Rote Ndao Regency aims to (1) identify internal and external factors in the marketing of water spinach commodities in Sanggaoen Village and (2) determine the marketing strategies for water spinach commodities in Sanggaoen Village. This research was conducted in September 2024 in Sanggaoen Village, Lobalain District, Rote Ndao Regency. The sources in this research consist of 45 water spinach farmers. The method used in data collection is the interview method guided by a questionnaire. To determine the marketing strategy, a SWOT analysis was used. The research results show that the factors determining the marketing of water spinach commodities include internal factors consisting of strengths such as a strategic farming location, having regular customers, owning transportation, and the entrepreneur selling directly, and weaknesses such as the product's short shelf life, inability to independently set the price of water spinach, and insufficient use of technology for promotion. External factors that influence include opportunities such as the presence of many restaurants, the use of social media for marketing, and a wide market share opportunity. Threats include fluctuations in water spinach prices, similar agricultural businesses, and diseases affecting water spinach. The marketing strategies implemented by farmers in Sanggaoen Village are (1) utilizing a network of regular customers, (2) providing incentives to regular customers, (3) conducting training for farmers to use digital technology, and (4) implementing a pre-order system.

Keywords: SWOT analysis, IFAS-EFAS, marketing strategy

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector is a mainstay in regional development, particularly when viewed through the lens of the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) of East Nusa Tenggara. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of NTT in 2023, the agricultural sector contributed 28.10% to the formation of NTT's GRDP in 2023 and was able to absorb 49.06% of the workforce. This indicates that agriculture remains a development priority in the East Nusa Tenggara region (BPS NTT, 2023).

The horticulture subsector is one of the key components of the agricultural sector, playing a vital role in farming. Among the various types of horticultural crops cultivated by farmers is water spinach (*kangkung*) (Jafar, 2023). Some of the most promising horticultural commodities cultivated by farmers in Rote Ndao Regency include bird's eye chili at 16,849.7 quintals, water spinach at 10,908.86 quintals, and eggplant at 10,175.7 quintals (BPS Rote Ndao Regency, 2022).

Sanggaoen Village, located in the Lobalain Sub-district, holds strong potential for the development of water spinach farming. Marketing is the activity that connects farming operations, consumers, and physical distribution services from agricultural production centers to consumption centers. Marketing functions to ensure that a product reaches the end consumer in good quality (Kemang, 2022). Marketing within the agribusiness system is also a critical aspect because when marketing mechanisms are properly managed, all parties involved can benefit (Setiawan, 2022).

In the process of selling water spinach in Sanggaoen Village, pricing is set by the farmers themselves. Typically, farmers sell directly to consumers at Rp 5,000 per bunch, while selling to traders at Rp 10,000 for three large bunches. However, farmers in Sanggaoen face several challenges in marketing their water spinach. One major issue is price fluctuation caused by simultaneous harvests and the presence of many sellers at the same time. Moreover, there is a lack of adequate selling spaces—when farmers bring their products to market, they often struggle to find space for storing and selling their vegetables. Most of the selling spots near the shops in Ba'a City and Metina Market are already occupied by established traders. As a result, many farmers

opt to walk around Ba'a City on foot to sell their produce directly.

Additionally, some farmers offer discounts to attract buyers. For instance, instead of selling three large bunches for Rp 10,000, they offer four to five bunches for the same price to attract more customers. However, not all of the harvested water spinach gets sold, leading to spoilage and financial losses for the farmers (Wanuh, 2019). Based on the background above, the objective of this study is to identify internal and external factors and to formulate appropriate marketing strategies for the farmers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research will be conducted in Sanggaoen Village, Lobalain Sub-district, Rote Ndao Regency, in September 2024. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Data collection will be carried out using a survey method through interviews with 45 respondents, questionnaires, and documentation (Arikunto, 2017). The research location was determined using purposive sampling.

Data Analysis

To address the first objective, which is to identify internal and external factors in the marketing of water spinach, the IFAS and EFAS matrices are used. The IFAS matrix is useful for identifying strengths and weaknesses in water spinach marketing, while the EFAS matrix is used to identify opportunities and threats. The formulation of the IFAS-EFAS matrix follows these steps:

- Determine the factors that can serve as strengths and weaknesses for the IFAS matrix, and the factors that represent opportunities and threats for the EFAS matrix.
- The next step is to assign a weight ranging from 0.0 (not important) to 1.0 (very important). The total weight assigned must not exceed a score of 1.0.
- The third step involves assigning ratings. Ratings are an analysis of the likelihood of an event occurring in the short term. Ratings are given on a scale of 1 to 4. A value of 1 (weak) is assigned if the indicator is declining, and a value of 4 (strong) if the indicator is improving. The rating is based on the influence of the factor on the condition being analyzed.

2. To achieve the second objective—determining the marketing strategy for water spinach in Sanggaoen Village—the SWOT analysis is used. This analysis helps identify internal (within) and external (outside) factors. A SWOT matrix is then developed and illustrated. The SWOT matrix provides various strategies that can be utilized in the development of a business unit. The four strategy types in the SWOT matrix include: SO (Strength-Opportunity), WO (Weakness-Opportunity), ST (Strength-Threat), and WT (Weakness-Threat) strategies (Rangkuti, 2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Internal Factors

A. Strenght

1. **Strategic Farming Location**
   The location of the water spinach farms is strategic because it is easily accessible by traders and consumers. This is due to the fact that the farms are situated along public roads and are close to the town center.
2. **Having Regular Customers**
   Farmers have established partnerships with traders in Metina Market and Ba'a City. This means they already have a clear market target. Having regular customers provides a significant advantage and plays a crucial role in the development and welfare of water spinach farmers.
3. **Ownership of Transportation**
   Water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen Village have their own means of transportation, such as motorbikes, to transport their produce. This is an advantage for Sanggaoen farmers, as farmers from other villages typically need to rent pickup trucks to transport their products to Metina Market and Ba'a City.
4. **Farmers as Direct Sellers**
   In addition to cultivating the crops, water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen also take part directly in the marketing process. As a result, they do not incur additional costs for middlemen or revenue sharing with

third parties.

B. Weakness

1. **Perishable Product**
   Water spinach is a highly perishable product. Once harvested, it typically lasts for a maximum of two days. If it is not sold within that time, it is either discarded or given to livestock. This results in financial losses for the farmers.
2. **Inability to Set Prices Independently**
   Water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen Village are currently unable to set their own prices independently and still rely on general market pricing. As a result, the selling price is set at Rp 5,000 per bunch, in accordance with the prevailing market rate.
3. **Limited Use of Technology for Promotion**
   Farmers in Sanggaoen Village have not yet been equipped with sufficient knowledge for online marketing. Although most farmers already own smartphones, they have not been able to utilize them effectively. Consequently, online promotion remains minimal and ineffective.

External Factors

A. Opportunity

1. **Numerous Eateries**
   The large number of eateries presents a significant opportunity for water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen Village to expand their market. Restaurants typically require a consistent supply of vegetables to meet customer demands. Especially those offering vegetable-based dishes such as stir-fried water spinach rely on regular deliveries, which creates stable demand and a valuable opportunity for farmers.
2. **Utilization of Media Social for Marketing**
   Using social media for marketing is an opportunity for farmers and entrepreneurs to leverage digital platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or online marketplaces to sell products more efficiently, quickly, and broadly. This technology provides farmers with easy access to promote their harvests directly to consumers without intermediaries.
3. **Opportunity for a Broad Market Share**
   A broad market share opportunity means that farmers have the chance to reach and serve a larger consumer base, both in terms of the number of customers and geographically. This opens up possibilities for scaling up their business beyond the local area. These external factors align with the findings of Luthfiana (2019) and Lenda (2018), which state that consumer demand for horticultural products is currently increasing.

B. Threaths

1. **Price Fluctuations of Water Spinach**
   Due to plant diseases that often damage or destroy crops, as well as the simultaneous selling of similar products, the price of water spinach tends to fluctuate. During crop failure, the price is fixed at Rp 5,000 per bunch and cannot be negotiated. However, when the harvest is abundant and sold at the same time, the usual price of Rp 5,000 per bunch can drop to Rp 5,000 for three to four bunches. This causes instability in farmers' income.
2. **Competition from Similar Agricultural Businesses**
   Most horticultural farms in Sanggaoen Village and neighboring villages in Lobalain Sub-district grow water spinach as their main commodity. This presents a competitive threat for Sanggaoen farmers. There are 45 water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen Village, in addition to those from outside the village, all of whom sell at the same locations—Metina Market and Ba'a City shopping areas. This intensifies market competition and poses a significant challenge for Sanggaoen farmers.

3. **Diseases Affecting Water Spinach**
   One of the diseases affecting water spinach is "white leaf," which attacks the leaves, turning them white. This disease causes crop failure because the affected spinach becomes unsellable and inedible, resulting in reduced sales and financial losses for the farmers.

Based on the various internal and external factors that have been identified, the following strategies have been

formulated:

1. **S-O Strategy (Strength-Opportunities)**
   This strategy combines internal strengths with external opportunities. It is designed to leverage all strengths to make the most of available opportunities. The SO strategy adopted by water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen Village includes: maximizing the strength of having regular customers and utilizing the opportunity created by the abundance of eateries to overcome competition. Farmers can build partnerships with restaurants by offering regular supplies of water spinach. This ensures restaurants receive high-quality produce while farmers benefit from a stable market, improving household income. Additionally, they can maximize the advantage of selling directly and make use of social media for marketing. Since they sell directly, farmers have full control over pricing, promotions, and direct customer communication.
2. **S-T Strategy (Strength-Threats)**
   This strategy combines internal strengths and external threats. It utilizes the farmers' strengths to address existing threats. The ST strategy implemented by water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen Village includes: maximizing the strength of owning their own transportation to overcome the threat of similar agricultural businesses. With their own transport, farmers can ensure timely delivery and maintain product freshness—advantages over competitors who rely on third parties (Maleachy, 2014). Another strategy is to use their established customer base to mitigate the threat of price fluctuations, by offering incentives like discounts, bonus products, or priority service to maintain customer loyalty even when prices vary.
3. **W-O Strategy (Weaknesses-Opportunities)**
   This strategy combines internal weaknesses and external opportunities and is applied by minimizing weaknesses through the use of external opportunities. The WO strategy for Sanggaoen farmers includes: addressing the weakness of limited technological promotion by leveraging the opportunity of potential market expansion through improved promotion. Farmers can attend training sessions to learn how to use digital tools and social media for marketing. Additionally, to reduce the weakness of product perishability, farmers can leverage the abundance of restaurants by establishing a fast and efficient distribution network, such as a daily pre-order system. Restaurants will receive fresh ingredients on time, reducing spoilage risk.
4. **W-T Strategy (Weaknesses-Threats)**
   This defensive strategy combines internal weaknesses with external threats and aims to avoid external risks while reducing internal shortcomings. The WT strategy adopted includes: reducing the lack of technological proficiency by countering the threat from similar businesses. Farmers can undergo intensive training in digital marketing to enhance competitiveness against more tech-savvy competitors. Furthermore, to address the perishability of the crop and the threat of price fluctuations, a pre-order system can be implemented to ensure that only the needed amount is harvested. This minimizes losses from unsold produce during price drops.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The strengths of water spinach farmers in Sanggaoen Village include: strategic farm location, having regular customers, ownership of their own transportation, and direct selling by the farmers. The weaknesses are: the product is perishable, farmers are not yet able to set prices independently, and there is limited use of technology for promotion. The opportunities available include: the presence of many eateries, the potential of social media for marketing, and a broad market share. The threats faced include: price fluctuations, competition from similar agricultural businesses, and diseases affecting water spinach.
2. The marketing strategies applied by farmers in Sanggaoen Village, Lobalain Sub-district, Rote Ndao Regency include:

   1. Utilizing regular customer networks to establish partnerships with restaurants.
   2. Providing incentives to loyal customers, such as discounts, bonus products, or priority services, to maintain customer loyalty despite price fluctuations.
   3. Conducting training for farmers on how to use digital technology such as social media to optimize product promotion.
   4. Implementing a pre-order system to ensure that crops are harvested according to demand, thereby

reducing the risk of losses due to unsold produce during price drops.

Recommendations:

1. Farmers should continue building partnerships with restaurants to help ensure a steady and reliable market for their water spinach harvest.
2. Farmers are also encouraged to set up small roadside kiosks along main roads or residential areas to increase visibility and direct sales.

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