

Research Article

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Management Strategy For UMKM Palm Sugar Smes Towards Increasing Competitiveness Through E-Commerce From An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract: *Cimenteng palm sugar from Cimenteng Village, Cijambe District, Subang Regency, West Java, is known for its high quality thanks to its distinctive sweet taste and soft texture. Since ancient times, palm trees have grown abundantly in this area, and local people have processed the sap into palm sugar. Initially, production was carried out traditionally, but with technological developments, processing using modern equipment has increased efficiency. The advantages of Cimenteng Palm Sugar include its distinctive sweet taste, soft texture, bright color, long shelf life and high nutritional content. Palm sugar plays an important role in the economy of Cimenteng Village, making a major contribution to income and employment. This research discusses strategies for managing palm sugar MSMEs through e-commerce in Cimenteng Village. Survey and interview results show that a lack of understanding of marketing strategies and minimal sales through e-commerce are the main problems for palm sugar MSME entrepreneurs in this village. Management strategies are designed to increase the competitiveness of palm sugar MSMEs, including improving product quality, market access through e-commerce platforms, and increasing knowledge about e-commerce. Supporting factors for the strategy involve government support, technological advances, public awareness, and Islamic values. However, limited skills, access to capital, market competition and consumer confidence are inhibiting factors. The conclusion highlights the potential for developing palm sugar MSMEs through an e-commerce strategy that takes Islamic values into account. Recommendations were submitted to the government to provide further support, while palm sugar MSMEs were encouraged to improve product quality, utilize e-commerce, and build consumer trust by implementing Islamic values. The community is expected to support the development of palm sugar MSMEs through awareness of the importance of e-commerce.*

Keywords: *Palm Sugar MSMEs, Competitiveness, E-Commerce, Islamic Perspective.*

Introduction

Based on Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution, it mandates that everything regarding the earth, land, water, natural resources, and other natural wealth within the territorial territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) is controlled, regulated, and managed by the State, and all management institutions to be used as a tool for the prosperity and well-being of the Indonesian people. This article must be read as a mandate that must be carried out by the government with all the tools at its disposal. Empowering society is the government's direct responsibility by collaborating with all the powers it has. The government's negligence in carrying out its obligations is a mistake and therefore the state must be present by carrying out humanitarian missions as well as community economic development. Improving community welfare, community prosperity and the country's economy is one of the main objectives of the PTSL program. If you draw a common thread, the relationship between land certification and community welfare is the capital problem faced. Land title certificates can be a golden bridge in accessing sources of capital/credit. No exception for MSMEs, land title certificates can be used to empower micro and small businesses, it is necessary to increase the ability of MSMEs to access capital in financial services, both banks and cooperatives.

The economic system in the current era of globalization that leads to market mechanisms is something that is difficult to avoid and is also a challenge for every country, including Indonesia. This system allows for free economic competition, not only competing with domestic economic actors but also with economic actors from other countries. For this reason, economic actors need readiness to be able to survive and face the challenges of globalization. Institutional capacity is an important factor in overcoming various development problems that have direct contact with society. Institutional capacity for community empowerment in development is an important factor, especially in development that is just and touches the interests of the people at large (Chalid, 2005).

The revival of the MSME sector can have an impact and accelerate Indonesia's economic recovery. As is known, this sector has become the backbone of the country. Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs states that the number of MSME business sectors in Indonesia in 2021 will reach 64.19 million with participation in gross domestic product (GDP) of 61.97 percent or IDR 8.6 trillion. The MSME business sector has a role in improving the Indonesian economy, as can be seen from its ability to absorb 97 percent of the workforce and integrate investment of 60.4 percent (Shavab, 2021).

The MSME sector is considered a business sector that is easier to survive, proving to be more resilient in facing the economic crisis that occurred in Indonesia since mid-1997, where many large-scale businesses experienced stagnation and even stopped their activities (Farida, 2011). The resilience of MSMEs can be seen from several characteristics of MSME actors including (Prawirokusumo, 2009) states: Flexible, that is, when facing obstacles in running a business, it will be easy to move to another business, not always dependent on external capital, but can also use its own capital to develop its business, returns Loans by traders can be made, MSMEs are spread throughout the region with businesses in various sectors, this makes it easy to distribute goods and services to meet community needs.

Buying and selling is a form of muamalah activity to seek sustenance to fulfill life's needs which can be worth worshipping. However, in Islamic law, buying and selling is not permitted to contain elements of fraud that result in loss and regret for one of the parties. The practice of buying and selling in Islam provides such rules, so as not to harm each other, bring justice and benefit, and avoid harm. Buying and selling in fiqh terms is called al-bai' which means selling, replacing, and exchanging something for something else. The pronunciation al bai' in Arabic is sometimes used for its opposite, namely the Assyrian word '(buy). Thus, the word al-bai' means selling, but at the same time it also means buying. QS. Al-Baqarah verse 188 which means: "And do not consume each other's wealth in a false way, and do not bribe the judges with this wealth to consume part of other people's wealth in a sinful way, even though you know."

The palm tree (*Arenga pinnata*) is a type of plant that has been known for a long time because almost all parts of the palm tree can be used and contribute to people's income (Saleh, 2014). Palm trees can be used from the trunk, which is used for various tools and flour, the fibers are used for building roofs, the young leaves are used to make broom stick crafts, and the palm fruit production can also be processed into ingredients for food and drink products.

National sugar needs, both for household and industrial scale needs, are influenced by the increase in Indonesia's population. On the other hand, (Murtado & Theresia., 2014) wrote that domestic sugar needs, both for direct consumption and supply to industry, have not been able to be met, so it is supplied from imports. It is recorded that national sugar imports have increased, where in 2014, sugar imports amounted to 2.97 million tonnes to 5.03 million tonnes in 2018 (Sholeha dkk, 2021). The uniqueness of palm sugar compared to other sugars is that it contains higher levels of sucrose (84%), compared to cane sugar (20%) and beet sugar (17%).

In developing palm sugar products, small industries really can develop these products, where the business process will involve the use of labor which can reduce unemployment, where small and medium businesses carry out the palm sugar production process from taking the sap raw material to processing it into sugar products. sugar palm that is ready to be distributed to the market or to consumers. Based on initial observations with sources from MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) business owners, Mr. Ikar, he stated that in palm sugar there is a tendency that palm sugar production results depend on the limited availability of palm sugar raw materials and lack of marketing.

In determining a marketing strategy, it is necessary to carry out an analysis first so that there are no errors in determining the marketing strategy, such as carrying out an analysis of the internal and external factors of a company which is carried out by considering all existing aspects. Based on the above, we are interested in researching the strategic analysis of palm sugar business management in MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). Palm sugar is expected to be able to predict and read the internal environment and the external environment to be able to develop a business that continues to exist in the business world.

Even though they have enormous potential, palm sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng village still face several problems, including Limited skills and knowledge in managing businesses and marketing products, limited access to e-commerce and information, tight competition with palm sugar products from other countries, and the price of palm sugar fluctuates.

Based on the Islamic perspective, there are 4 stages of management, namely planning (ahdap), implementation (tatbiq), evaluation (muhasabah), and supervision (ariqodah). Planning is (ahdaf) something that exists before running a company or organization and so on. Because without planning (ahdaf), a company or organization will have no direction and will not know what its goals are. So, in the company planning (ahdaf) must exist, so that the company knows the direction, movement, steps, and goals to be achieved. This is in accordance with the word of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Hasyr verse 18. It means "O you who believe, fear Allah and let everyone pay attention to what is planned for tomorrow (the afterlife), and fear Allah, verily Allah knows what you do (what was planned)".

Based on the problems experienced by palm sugar MSME entrepreneurs in Cimenteng Village, the researchers tried to explain these problems with research entitled "Aren Sugar Management Strategy for Increasing Competitiveness through E-commerce in an Islamic Perspective (Case Study of Palm Sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng Village)".

Method

This research seeks to analyze and describe palm sugar MSME management strategies to increase competitiveness through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective. The type of research used in this research is a descriptive analysis method. According to (Haris, 2023), descriptive analysis is empirical research that investigates a specific symptom or phenomenon in a real-life setting. The results of this research were collected using primary data and secondary data.

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach. According to Bogdan and Taylor in (Arifudin, 2023), a qualitative approach is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. According to (Saepudin, 2021) the method is to transcribe the data, then coding the notes in the field and interpreting the data to obtain conclusions.

This research uses qualitative research with field research methods (field research). According to (Sappaile, 2024) this approach is adapted to the main aim of the research, namely describing, and analysing

palm sugar MSME management strategies towards increasing competitiveness through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective. So that this method will be able to explain the problems of the research (Tanjung, 2023).

Determining appropriate data collection techniques greatly determines the scientific truth of a research. The data collection techniques used in this research are observation, interviews, and documentation.

Engineering can be seen as a means of carrying out technical work carefully using the mind to achieve a goal. Even though the study is an effort within the scope of science, it is carried out to collect realistic data systematically to realize the truth. Research methodology is a means to find a cure for any problem. In this case, the author collects information about management strategies for palm sugar SMEs towards increasing competitiveness through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective from books, articles, journals, theses, theses, ebooks, etc. (Saepudin, 2019).

Because it requires material from the library as a data source, this research utilizes library research. Researchers need books, scientific articles and other literature related to the topics and problems they explore, both print and online (Arifin, 2024).

Searching for information from data sources requires the use of data collection techniques. Amir Hamzah in (Arifudin, 2024) claims that data collection is an effort to collect information related to the subject under study. The author uses library research methods to collect data. Specifically, the author started with the library to collect information from books, dictionaries, journals, encyclopedias, papers, periodicals, and other sources that share views regarding palm sugar MSME management strategies towards increasing competitiveness through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective.

Furthermore, Amir Hamzah in (Nasem, 2018) said that data collection means various efforts to collect facts related to the topic of discussion that is being or will be explored. These details can be found in scientific literature, research and scientific writings, dissertations, these and other written sources. According to (Hanafiah, 2021) data collection can be carried out in various circumstances, using different sources, and using different techniques.

Observation is part of the research process directly regarding the phenomena to be researched (Saepudin, 2020). With this method, researchers can see and directly feel the atmosphere and condition of the research subjects (Kartika, 2022). The things observed in this research are about palm sugar MSME management strategies towards increasing competitiveness through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective.

The interview technique in this research is a structured interview, namely interviews conducted using various standard guidelines that have been established, questions are arranged according to information needs and each question is needed to reveal any empirical data (Rahayu, 2020).

Documentation is a technique for collecting data through existing documents or written notes. Documentation comes from the word document, which means written items. In implementing the documentation method, researchers investigate written objects, such as books, magazines, meeting minutes and diaries. According to Moleong in (Jumiati, 2024) the documentation method is a way of collecting information or data through examining archives and documents. Documentation strategies are also data collection techniques proposed to research subjects. The data collection method using the documentation method was carried out to obtain data about the state of the institution (research object), namely the palm sugar MSME management strategy towards increasing competitiveness through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective.

Muhadjir in (Tanjung, 2020) states that data analysis is the activity of carrying out, searching for, and compiling records of findings systematically through observations and interviews so that researchers focus on the research they are studying. After that, make the findings material for other people, edit, classify, and present it.

Results and Discussion

Palm sugar is an important commodity in the economy of Cimenteng Village. Palm sugar production makes a significant contribution to local community income. Apart from that, palm sugar is also a source of employment for many people in Cimenteng Village. Sugar palm farmers, palm sugar processors, and palm sugar traders are some examples of jobs related to palm sugar production.

Before carrying out the research, the researcher first conducted a survey and interviews regarding strategies for managing palm sugar MSMEs towards competitiveness through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective with palm sugar MSME entrepreneurs in Cimenteng Village, Cijambe District, Subang Regency. Most of the population work as farmers. The ratio of palm sugar MSME entrepreneurs in Cimenteng Village is very small compared to most farmers, for each hamlet there are only around one to two palm sugar MSME entrepreneurs. In accordance with surveys and interviews conducted, it appears that the problem experienced by MSME palm sugar entrepreneurs in Cimenteng Village is a lack of understanding of marketing strategies so that there are very few palm sugar sellers.

The results of the research show that as small and medium palm sugar entrepreneurs in Cimenteng District, they are very lacking in implementing management strategies using e-commerce because people get more sales from orders only in the village area.

Analysis of the strategy for managing palm sugar MSME entrepreneurs after identifying production factors and marketing results, the next step is to calculate the weight and rating which will be a reference in determining the position of the palm sugar business. Knowing the business position as a basis is very important for carrying out a strategy that is relevant to business conditions (Bairizki, 2021). In determining the weight value for each factor, it is based on its lowness with the total weight not exceeding the total score. The weight value is determined by the results of the author's interviews with experts who have mastered sugar palm in depth. Meanwhile, in determining the rating, it is assessed from 4 (outstanding) to 1 (poor). The rating value is given based on the results of interviews with sugar palm farmers as respondents.

Management Strategy for Palm Sugar MSMEs in Increasing Competitiveness Through E-Commerce in Cimenteng Village, Subang Regency

Palm sugar is one of the superior products of Cimenteng Village, Subang Regency. However, palm sugar MSMEs in this village still face various obstacles in increasing their competitiveness, such as: a) Inconsistent product quality: The quality of Cimenteng palm sugar still varies, making it difficult to compete in a wider market, b) Lack of access to markets : Palm sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng still have difficulty reaching wider markets, especially foreign markets, and c) Lack of knowledge about e-commerce: Many palm sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng do not understand how to use e-commerce to market their products.

Management Strategy in increasing the competitiveness of palm sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng Village, several management strategies need to be implemented, including:

- 1) Improving Product Quality: Carrying out training and assistance to palm farmers and palm sugar processors to improve product quality, building quality standards for Cimenteng palm sugar products, and implementing a palm sugar product certification system.

- 2) Increasing Access to Markets: Building a special e-commerce platform for Cimenteng palm sugar, promoting and marketing Cimenteng palm sugar through e-commerce, and participating in exhibitions and expos for MSME products at national and international levels.
- 3) Increasing Knowledge about E-Commerce: Carrying out training and education for palm sugar MSMEs on how to use e-commerce to market their products, as well as building collaboration with related parties, such as the government, universities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to help palm sugar MSMEs in utilizing e-commerce.

Implementation of Palm Sugar MSME Strategy Through E-Commerce According to an Islamic Perspective in Cimenteng Village, Subang Regency

Palm sugar is an important commodity in the economy of Cimenteng Village. Palm sugar production makes a significant contribution to local community income. Apart from that, palm sugar is also a source of employment for many people in Cimenteng Village. Palm farmers, palm sugar processors, and palm sugar traders are some examples of jobs related to palm sugar production and there are several strategies for implementing palm sugar SMEs, such as providing support to develop the potential of palm sugar SMEs.

- a. Government Support: The Subang Regency Government has shown its commitment to developing palm sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng Village, one of which is by providing training and assistance on e-commerce, and this is in line with Islamic principles which encourage leaders to help their people improve their standard of living.
- b. Technological Progress: The development of information and communication technology (ICT) in Cimenteng Village is getting better, making it easier for palm sugar MSMEs to access the internet and use e-commerce platforms, and this is in accordance with Islamic teachings which encourage its followers to utilize science and technology to progress.
- c. Community Awareness: The people of Cimenteng Village are increasingly aware of the importance of e-commerce to market their products, and this shows that people are starting to keep up with the times and are open to change.
- d. Islamic Values: Islamic values such as honesty, trust and responsibility can be a foundation for palm sugar MSMEs in running their business through e-commerce, and these values will increase consumer trust and build a positive image for palm sugar MSMEs.

Buying and selling is a form of muamalah activity to seek sustenance to fulfill life's needs which can be worth worshipping. However, in Islamic law, buying and selling is not permitted to contain elements of fraud that result in loss and regret for one of the parties. The practice of buying and selling in Islam provides such rules, so as not to harm each other, bring justice and benefit, and avoid harm. Buying and selling in fiqh terms is called al-bai' which means selling, replacing, and exchanging something for something else. The pronunciation al bai' in Arabic is sometimes used for its opposite, namely the Assyrian word '(buy). Thus, the word al-bai' means selling, but at the same time it also means buying. QS. Al-Baqarah verse 188 which means: And do not consume each other's wealth in a false way, and do not bribe the judges with this property to consume part of other people's wealth in a sinful way, even though you know. Hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari: "Whoever tries to seek what is halal, then he is among those who strive in the way of Allah."

Inhibiting Factors

- a. Skills and Knowledge: There are still many palm sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng Village who do not have adequate skills and knowledge about e-commerce, and this can be an obstacle in managing online stores and marketing their products effectively.
- b. Access to Capital: Lack of access to capital is one of the obstacles for palm sugar MSMEs to develop their business through e-commerce, and this can be overcome by collaborating with sharia financial institutions that provide business capital at low interest rates.
- c. Competition: Competition in the e-commerce market is getting tighter, so palm sugar MSMEs need to have the right strategy to be able to compete with other products, and this strategy can take the form of product differentiation, improving product quality, and good service to consumers.
- d. Consumer Trust: Building consumer trust is one of the main keys in maintaining a product.

Conclusion

Cimenteng palm sugar has several advantages compared to palm sugar from other regions, such as a distinctive sweet taste, soft texture, brighter color, longer lasting, and has a higher nutritional content. Palm sugar MSMEs in Cimenteng Village still face various obstacles in increasing their competitiveness, such as inconsistent product quality, lack of access to markets, and lack of knowledge about e-commerce. Implementing palm sugar MSME management strategies through e-commerce from an Islamic perspective can increase their competitiveness in the market. Several factors that support the implementation of this strategy are government support, technological advances, public awareness, and Islamic values. Several factors that hinder the implementation of this strategy are skills and knowledge, access to capital, competition, and consumer trust.

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