

## Seizing the Market Share of Watermelon Products During the Peak Harvest in Jaan Village Nganjuk

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Article Information		Abstract
Submission date	19 December 2024	<b>Research aim</b> : This research aims to identify effective strategies to capture market share for watermelons during the peak harvest. This research explores the factors that influence consumer preferences, farmers' marketing strategies, and the role of distribution in maintaining the selling value of watermelon. <b>Design/Method/Approach</b> : The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with watermelon farmers, and collectors. Additionally, field observations and secondary data analysis were conducted to triangulate findings. <b>Research Finding</b> : The study identified three key strategies adopted by stakeholders during the harvest season: direct-to-consumer sales, collaborations with collectors for urban market distribution, and the use of social media for marketing. However, challenges such as price instability, logistical costs, and limited market access persist. The findings suggest the need for integrated marketing systems and improved infrastructure to enhance competitiveness. <b>Theoretical contribution/Originality</b> : This research contributes to the literature on agricultural marketing by highlighting the interplay between local competition, marketing innovations, and market dynamics in rural agribusiness. It provides a nuanced understanding of how small-scale farmers navigate oversupplied markets. <b>Practitioner/Policy implication</b> : The study recommends the implementation of government-subsidized logistics during harvest seasons, training for farmers in digital marketing, and the establishment of cooperative models to stabilize prices and expand market reach. Policymakers are urged to invest in storage infrastructure to mitigate losses due to product perishability. <b>Research limitation</b> : The study is limited to the context of Jaan Village and focuses on watermelon as a case crop. Future research could explore comparative analysis with other regions or crops to generalize findings. Quantitative studies are also needed to validate the economic impacts of proposed interventions. <b>Keywords</b> : Market Share, Peak Harvest, marketing strategies
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### 1. Introduction

Jaan Village, Nganjuk, is one of the watermelon production centers in East Java. During the harvest season, the supply of watermelons increases drastically, which often causes prices

to plummet on the market. This condition creates challenges for farmers to maintain their income. In addition, lack of access to wider markets and limited product diversification efforts further exacerbate the situation. Jaan Village has natural advantages as an agricultural area, especially in watermelon cultivation. The fertile soil and favorable climate make Jaan Village known as one of the largest watermelon producers in East Java. In the last five years, watermelon production in this village has increased significantly, with an average harvest volume reaching 500 tons per harvest season [1]. However, this increase has not been matched by efficient marketing optimization.

In 2022, the contribution of watermelon from Jaan Village will reach 15% of the total watermelon production in East Java. However, this figure is not commensurate with farmers' income, which tends to stagnate or even decrease during the harvest season. The main cause is a saturated market due to an abundance of supply. During the peak harvest, the price of watermelon at the farmer's level can drop by up to 50%. This problem is further exacerbated by high watermelon production causing supply to far exceed market demand. Most farmers sell their crops through traditional markets which have limited absorption capacity. The limited distribution network makes watermelon difficult to reach by markets outside the region and watermelon is generally sold in fresh form without being processed into value-added products such as juice or chips or there are no derivative products from watermelon.

Traditional marketing strategies that are still dominant in Jaan Village include direct sales in traditional markets or through middlemen. Even though this method is quite simple, the results are often not optimal because farmers do not have strong bargaining power and the selling price of watermelon is regulated by middlemen, which is often detrimental to farmers. In contrast, modern marketing involving the use of digital technology such as e-commerce and social media has the potential to reach a wider market at lower costs. Several studies showed that digital marketing can increase profits by up to 30% compared to traditional methods [2][3].

### **1.1. Statement of Problem**

Although there are various studies on agricultural marketing, only a few specifically discuss marketing strategies for watermelon during the harvest season. Previous research focused more on main commodities such as rice, corn or coffee. This research offers novelty by focusing on the watermelon commodity as a case study. Explore integrative strategies that include product diversification, digital marketing, and distribution efficiency. Provide recommendations based on local data from Jaan Village.

### **1.2. Research Objectives**

This research objectives were to analyze the factors that influence market competition for watermelon, to assess the marketing strategies implemented by watermelon farmers in competing for market share, to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by business actors in expanding the watermelon market share, to evaluate the impact of the marketing strategy implemented on the sales volume of watermelon, and to develop marketing strategy recommendations to increase the competitiveness of watermelon products in the local market during the peak harvest.

## **2. Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type of research. This method was chosen to understand in depth the dynamics of watermelon marketing in Jaan Village during the peak harvest. Informants were selected based on various criteria (relevance, recommendation, readiness, and reassurance). The research informants in this research were

Watermelon Farmers, Middlemen and Distributors, Local and Regional Consumers, and Cooperatives and Agricultural Organizations. Data collection is carried out through in-depth interview, participatory observation, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out descriptively qualitatively with the following steps: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. With this approach, the research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of watermelon marketing during the main harvest in Jaan Village, as well as offer applicable strategic recommendations.

Interview samples also refer to market segmentation-based criteria, such as, Large-scale farmers vs. small farmers. Farmers who use direct distribution channels to consumers vs. those who rely on middlemen. Farmers who have access to product storage vs. those who do not. By dividing informants based on these categories, the resulting analysis can be more comprehensive and able to capture differences in strategies and obstacles faced in each segment. This approach will also increase the validity of the findings because it provides a more representative picture of real conditions in the field. The results of interviews and observations show that the main challenge during the main harvest is the distribution of harvests that is not balanced with market capacity, resulting in over-supply and falling prices. Farmers generally rely on middlemen with a non-transparent pricing system. In addition, limited storage infrastructure, such as cold storage, means that farmers have to sell their harvests immediately even though market prices are low.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Interview with informant 1 (Mr. Sumaji, 42<sup>th</sup>, Watermelon Farmers, 2<sup>th</sup> of December 2024, duration: 10 minutes, in Jaan Village)

Question: Good afternoon, Sir/Madam. Thank you for taking the time for this interview. Could you tell me a bit about your watermelon farming business in Jaan Village?

Informant 1: " Good afternoon. I've been farming watermelons for several years. Usually, we plant during specific seasons to align with the harvest period."

Question: During the harvest season, how is the watermelon market typically? Are there any challenges you usually face?

Informant 1: " During the harvest season, the price of watermelons usually drops because of the oversupply. The main challenge is selling the watermelons at a price that is still profitable"

Question: What strategies do you use to sell your watermelons effectively during the harvest season?

Informant 1: " We usually try to sell directly at local markets or collaborate with collectors. Some farmers also try selling through social media, although it's not very common yet."

Question: How do you perceive the competition with other farmers in this village or nearby villages?

Informant 1: " The competition is quite tough because all farmers harvest at the same time. Many offer lower prices, so we need to be strategic in finding buyers"

Data Excerpt:

"During the main harvest, the price of watermelon drops drastically, The main cause is abundant supply."

Interview with informant 2 (Mrs. Ratna, 36<sup>th</sup>, Collectors or Traders, 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2024, duration: 15 minutes, in Jaan Village)

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Question: What is the market condition for watermelons during the harvest season?

Informant 2: " During the harvest season, there is an abundance of watermelons. Prices drop due to the high supply, but the demand doesn't always increase significantly. "

Question: What strategies do you use to ensure your watermelons sell well and remain profitable?

Informant 2: " We usually look for larger markets, like in bigger cities. Additionally, we try to store the watermelons to sell them after the harvest season when prices stabilize."

Question: Are there any common challenges you face in marketing watermelons, especially during the harvest season?

Informant 2: " The main challenges are logistics and transportation costs. If the market is far away, the shipping costs can be very high, affecting our profit margins."

Question: In your opinion, what can be done to expand the market share of watermelons from Jaan Village?

Informant 2: " Promotion needs to be improved. If possible, the watermelons from here could be branded or given a unique identity to stand out. Additionally, exploring export opportunities could be beneficial."

Data Excerpt:

"During the harvest season, supply increases while demand is relatively stable. As a result, it is difficult for watermelon prices to rise, besides that collectors also sell directly outside the region."

**Dynamics of the Watermelon Market in Jaan Village:** During the harvest season, the supply of watermelons increases rapidly, resulting in a significant decrease in prices. This is due to the high supply of watermelon from various regions, including Jaan Village, which is one of the production centers. Based on observations and interviews, farmers often have difficulty determining a profitable selling price for watermelons, considering the very tight price competition. The raw data obtained shows fluctuations in watermelon production volume and selling prices over five months. In the reduction process, this data was filtered to focus on the peak harvest period (April), which is the month with the most abundant supply and lowest prices. Filtered Data: Highest Production Volume occurred in April, reaching 18,000 kg. The lowest selling price was recorded in April, namely IDR 3,500 per kg. More important information is how prices and production volumes affect farmers' total income, as well as how they respond to price fluctuations at harvest time.

**Strategies Applied by Farmers:** In facing intense market competition, watermelon farmers in Jaan Village use various strategies. Some farmers choose to increase sales volumes to a wider market, by collaborating with large traders to secure more stable prices. There are also those who are trying to introduce better quality watermelon products through farmer empowerment programs, such as training on environmentally friendly agricultural techniques.

**Marketing Strategy:** Watermelon traders in Jaan Village adopt various marketing methods to attract consumers, both local and from outside the area. The use of social media for promotions and discount offers is the main strategy used by traders to attract consumers. On the other hand, sellers in local markets rely more on direct promotions, such as discounted prices or product bundling. Data obtained from interviews with traders regarding marketing strategies shows that most traders in Jaan Village rely on digital channels [4]. The data reduction process filters information regarding the most effective marketing channels to attract

consumers. Most merchants (45%) prefer to utilize social media as their primary marketing channel, reflecting a shift towards digitalization of marketing in local markets. Direct sales in traditional markets remain dominant, but the use of social media shows a growing trend among traders [5].

**Role of External Factors:** Unpredictable weather conditions pose a major challenge for watermelon farmers, which directly affects crop yields and fruit quality. Apart from that, changes in public consumption trends which have shifted towards organic or healthier agricultural products have also influenced market demand for watermelon.

A decrease in prices during the main harvest is a phenomenon that often occurs in the world of agriculture, where abundant supply causes price competition between farmers and traders to become increasingly sharp. This is in accordance with the Law of Supply and Demand theory which states that the more goods available on the market, the price tends to fall [6].

Product differentiation strategy in response to falling prices, watermelon farmers can use product differentiation strategies to attract consumer attention even though prices tend to fall. In Competitive Advantage theory emphasizes the importance of differentiation as the key to creating added value that can attract consumers even though prices are higher [7]. In this case, watermelon with superior qualities, such as larger size, brighter color, or seedless, can be the consumer's choice.

Technology-based marketing strategy technology-based marketing, such as the use of social media and e-commerce platforms, allows watermelon sellers to contact a wider range of consumers. The use of digital technology in marketing makes it easier to reach a wider range of consumers at lower costs [8]. This is very relevant to the finding that traders in Jaan Village use social media to promote watermelon products with discounts or special packages.

The importance of distribution channels efficient and organized distribution channels are very important in maintaining price stability and product supply. According to past study, effective distribution can reduce the impact of price fluctuations and help farmers to access larger markets [9]. In Jaan Village, several farmers collaborate with large traders to reach big city markets and export markets, so that even though there is a decrease in prices, sales volume can still be maintained.

Price theory and perfectly competitive markets in markets with a high level of competition, such as the watermelon market during the peak harvest, prices will tend to move down when supply is abundant. This is in accordance with the theory of perfect competition which states that in a highly competitive market, sellers have little influence on prices, and prices are determined by supply and demand [7]. Therefore, it is important for farmers to look for ways to differentiate their products so that they do not rely solely on price.

Influence of weather and environmental factors external factors such as weather and climate change play a big role in the quality and quantity of agricultural products, including watermelon. A decrease in crop yields due to bad weather can cause uncertainty in production, which in turn affects prices and market stability [9].

Several previous studies have shown that product quality, efficient distribution channels, and use of marketing technology are key factors that influence farmers' success in winning market competition. Early study suggests the importance of innovation in product packaging and promotion to attract consumers [10], while other study emphasizes the need for cooperation between farmers and traders to increase product competitiveness [11].



Impact of consumption trends consumption trends shifting to healthier and organic products also have an impact on demand for watermelon. This shows that farmers need to keep up with changing market trends to remain relevant and attractive to consumers. According to past study, understanding consumer preferences is very important in developing effective marketing strategies [12].

Application of consumer behaviorism theory consumer behavior theory shows that consumer purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by psychological and social factors [8]. In the context of the watermelon market in Jaan Village, consumers who care more about health will prefer watermelons that are categorized as organic or have high quality. Therefore, farmers and traders need to understand consumer psychology to develop products that suit market preferences [13].

#### **4. Conclusion**

The decline in watermelon prices during the main harvest in Jaan Village can be minimized by implementing appropriate marketing strategies, such as product differentiation, strengthening distribution channels, and utilizing information technology. Even though market prices tend to fall, farmers' success in maintaining market share is highly dependent on product quality and their ability to adapt to changing market conditions. Through collaboration between farmers and traders, as well as the use of market research and technology, more effective and sustainable marketing strategies can be created. The ability of farmers to access alternative distribution channels such as selling directly to regional markets or through digital platforms. The presence of adequate storage infrastructure, which allows farmers to postpone sales until market prices are more stable. The strength of farmer networks and partnerships with the private sector (large distributors or cooperatives) greatly influence their bargaining position in the market. However, individual strategies carried out by some farmers are not enough to overcome structural challenges, such as high logistics costs and dependence on intermediary traders. Therefore, policy support from the government is needed.

Practical Recommendations and Policies, Local governments need to provide transportation and logistics subsidies during the main harvest to encourage efficient distribution of harvests to areas of high demand. On the other hand, the development of collective harvest storage centers (cold storage), either through BUMDes or cooperatives, will help farmers maintain product quality and delay sales until prices are profitable. Digitalization and Direct Marketing Programs, Training and mentoring for farmers on the use of digital platforms for direct marketing (for example through WhatsApp, Facebook Marketplace, or agricultural e-commerce) can expand market access and reduce dependence on middlemen. Strengthening Farmer Institutions, Strengthening cooperatives or farmer groups as liaisons between farmers and formal markets is very important. This institution can act as a product aggregator and joint infrastructure manager, as well as being a strategic partner in the procurement and distribution of agricultural products. Price Transparency and Market Information Systems, Local governments need to develop a market price information system that can be accessed by farmers in real time to prevent price manipulation practices by middlemen.

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