



Consumer Perceptions of Arak Kelapa in Telaga Tawang Village, Sidemen District, Karangasem Regency

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ABSTRACT

Coconut arak is a traditional Balinese alcoholic beverage made from distilled coconut sap. This study was conducted in Telaga Tawang Village, Sidemen District, Karangasem Regency, to evaluate consumer assessments of coconut arak. A total of 50 consumers who had consumed the product were surveyed using five indicators: taste, aroma, color, aftertaste, and alcohol content, measured on a 1–5 Likert scale. Results showed the highest rating for color (4.30), followed by alcohol content (4.18), aftertaste (4.10), aroma (3.48), and taste (3.44). The overall average score was 3.90, indicating positive consumer perception. The findings suggest coconut arak is well received and may serve as a foundation for improving product quality and developing innovations to meet market demands.

INTRODUCTION

Karangasem Regency, situated in the eastern region of Bali Island, encompasses an area of approximately 839.5 square kilometers, making it the third-largest regency on the island. The area is well known for its rich cultural traditions and artisanal products, among which arak kelapa—a traditional alcoholic beverage made from the fermented sap of coconut trees—holds significant cultural and economic importance. This beverage, often consumed during religious and ceremonial events, reflects the deep-rooted connection between local customs and agricultural practices.

Production of coconut arak in Karangasem is predominantly carried out by small-scale, home-based industries that form a vital part of the local economy. The Sidemen District, consisting of ten villages, serves as one of the main hubs for arak production in the region. Notably, three villages—Tri Eka Bhuana, Sidemen, and Telaga Tawang—are particularly active in producing this traditional spirit. The process begins with the harvesting of tuak, or coconut sap, which is then aged for several days using coconut husk to initiate natural fermentation. This is followed by a distillation process that transforms the fermented sap into arak kelapa, resulting in a final product with an alcohol content typically ranging from 30% to 35%.

This method of production, which harmoniously integrates ancestral knowledge with the sustainable use of locally available natural resources, serves not only as a mechanism for preserving cultural identity and traditional craftsmanship, but also as a catalyst for rural economic development. By maintaining time-honored techniques while adapting to contemporary quality standards, coconut arak production in villages such as Telaga Tawang exemplifies how indigenous practices can be transformed into value-added enterprises. Moreover, this approach fosters community resilience, promotes cultural tourism, and supports the intergenerational transmission of intangible heritage. As such, it holds significant potential for contributing to both cultural sustainability and localized economic empowerment within rural Balinese communities.

Telaga Tawang Village is home to approximately four producers of coconut arak. These producers have chosen to engage in coconut arak production primarily due to the village's proximity to forested areas rich in coconut trees. The arak produced is typically sold to the surrounding local community. This condition indicates a potential opportunity for these producers to expand product distribution, which could, in turn, increase their income. Therefore, a consumer assessment study is needed to better understand consumer perceptions of the coconut arak currently being sold in Telaga Tawang. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for evaluating the market readiness and acceptance of the product before expanding its distribution to a broader market.

The primary raw material for producing coconut arak is the sap, or tuak, extracted from mature coconut trees that are approximately 50 years old and over 20 meters in height. Each tree typically yields around 1 to 2 liters of coconut sap per day. The collection of this raw material generally takes place

over a period of 3 to 4 days. During this time, the sap is stored in a collection container, where coconut husk is added to aid the natural fermentation process. Once approximately 45 liters of fermented sap have been accumulated, the mixture undergoes a distillation process lasting around 10 hours. This process yields approximately 20 liters of coconut arak.

Coconut arak produced in Telaga Tawang Village is notably characterized by its crystal-clear, white appearance an attribute that reflects both consumer preference and the sophistication of its production process. This clarity is not merely aesthetic but serves as an indicator of product purity and the effectiveness of the distillation method employed. The adoption of stainless steel equipment in both the fermentation and distillation stages plays a pivotal role in achieving this outcome. Stainless steel components, including the sap collection vessels and distillation pipes, offer a non-reactive, durable, and easily sanitized environment, significantly reducing the risk of microbial contamination. Furthermore, stainless steel enhances thermal conductivity, allowing for more consistent temperature control and greater efficiency in the distillation process. These technological improvements result in a higher yield of arak and enable producers to exert greater precision over the final product's organoleptic properties—such as aroma, flavor, and clarity. Consequently, the integration of modern materials into traditional practices not only elevates product quality but also aligns with broader market demands for safety, consistency, and authenticity.

The adoption of stainless steel marks a significant evolution in arak production methods in the village. Traditionally, local producers relied on natural materials readily available in their environment. Coconut sap was stored in containers carved from the lower trunk of coconut trees, while bamboo tubes served as distillation pipes. While these traditional tools infused the arak with a distinctively strong coconut aroma and a yellowish to light brown hue, they also posed several limitations. The porous nature of bamboo and organic containers made them difficult to sanitize, prone to microbial contamination, and susceptible to physical degradation over time. Moreover, the rudimentary sealing methods allowed steam to escape during distillation, resulting in a lower yield of the final product.

The transition to stainless steel equipment in the production of coconut arak represents more than a mere technological advancement; it reflects a strategic adaptation to meet evolving consumer demands for consistency, product quality, hygiene, and safety. This shift marks a pivotal stage in the semi-modernization of traditional arak production in Telaga Tawang Village, where artisanal methods are now increasingly integrated with standardized practices and improved processing infrastructure. While the adoption of stainless steel may result in the diminished presence of certain traditional flavor characteristics—once imparted by natural materials such as bamboo and coconut wood—it offers significant advantages in terms of durability, sanitation, and efficiency. More importantly, producers are able to preserve the cultural and ceremonial significance of arak while simultaneously positioning the product for broader commercial appeal. This balance between tradition and

innovation enhances the product's competitiveness in both local and regional markets, signaling new opportunities for economic empowerment within the community and sustainable development of Bali's traditional beverage industry.

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia No. 63/M-IND/PER/7/2014 concerning the Control and Supervision of the Industry and Quality of Alcoholic Beverages, traditional alcoholic beverages are defined as those containing ethanol (C₂H₅OH), produced using local raw materials through traditional methods, and distributed within the regency or city of origin. These beverages are also often intended for religious or ceremonial purposes (Kemenperin, 2014). In Bali, coconut arak is one such traditional alcoholic drink, deeply embedded in the island's cultural and spiritual practices. Local communities have developed their own informal systems of distribution, often carried out independently or through small-scale, home-based production units, which leads to varied income levels among producers.

The legal framework surrounding traditional alcoholic beverages in Bali was strengthened by the issuance of Bali Governor Regulation No. 1 of 2020 on the Governance of Fermented and/or Distilled Beverages Unique to Bali. This regulation provides comprehensive guidelines on the protection, preservation, and utilization of traditional Balinese alcoholic beverages, including tuak Bali, brem Bali, arak Bali, artisanal products, and arak or brem intended for religious ceremonies (Baliprov, 2020). The implementation of this regulation has created a more supportive legal environment for arak producers, particularly in districts like Sidemen in Karangasem Regency. With formal recognition and legal backing, arak producers in villages such as Telaga Tawang are now more empowered to scale up production and distribution efforts.

Given this evolving legal and economic landscape, it becomes increasingly relevant to examine how consumers perceive coconut arak, particularly that produced and distributed from Telaga Tawang Village. Understanding consumer assessment not only provides valuable insights into product acceptance and market potential, but also serves as a foundation for quality improvement, branding, and regional development of traditional Balinese beverages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer evaluation of a product plays a crucial role in determining the success of both production and sales. Abdul (2016) defines consumer evaluation as the comparison between the perceived benefits or advantages and the sacrifices made by the consumer. Similarly, Wiradana (2018) explains that consumer evaluation refers to the difference between the total added value received and the total cost incurred by the consumer. Based on these expert views, it can be concluded that consumer evaluation reflects the perceived benefits and added value in relation to the expenses borne by the consumer.

According to Katsigris (2017), there are five key indicators for evaluating the quality of alcoholic beverages: presentation, aroma, taste, texture, and alcohol content. Presentation includes the visual appeal of the drink in terms of

color, clarity, and decoration. Aroma should be fresh and appealing, as it can stimulate appetite and enhance the drinking experience. Taste requires a balanced combination of sweetness, acidity, and bitterness to create a pleasant flavor profile. Texture refers to the mouthfeel of the beverage, which should be smooth, neither too watery nor overly thick. Lastly, alcohol content plays a crucial role in determining the overall flavor and quality excessively high or low levels may negatively impact the drinking experience. Meanwhile, Pranadewi (2022) proposes six indicators for evaluating arak, a traditional alcoholic beverage. These include aroma, taste, color, alcohol content, aftertaste, and complexity. Aroma and taste are influenced by the raw ingredients and the fermentation and distillation methods used – traditional tools such as bamboo and coconut trees may yield different results compared to stainless steel equipment. The color of arak is affected by the quality of the distillation apparatus, while alcohol content, typically ranging from 20% to 40%, is determined by the duration and volume of distillation. Aftertaste refers to the lingering flavor post-consumption, and complexity represents the harmony among the beverage's various elements. Based on both sources, this study adopts five indicators for evaluating arak: taste, aroma, color, aftertaste, and alcohol content.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to assess consumer perceptions of arak kelapa, a traditional Balinese alcoholic beverage made through the distillation of fermented coconut sap. The data used in the study comprise both quantitative and qualitative types. Quantitative data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires distributed to 50 respondents who had consumed arak kelapa in Telaga Tawang Village, Sidemen District. These questionnaires measured consumer evaluations across five indicators: taste, aroma, color, aftertaste, and alcohol content, following the assessment frameworks suggested by Katsigris (2017) and Ovihapsany (2022). The sample size was determined based on Malhotra's (2006) recommendation for consumer research, using a multiple of five to ten times the number of indicators. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews and documentation involving arak producers and sellers in the village, providing deeper insight into the production process and market context.

Data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative techniques, including frequency tabulation, mean calculation, and classification into five categories ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," based on a calculated interval scale. The mean scores for each indicator were computed using Microsoft Excel, and interpretation was conducted by comparing each score against the established classification. The combination of questionnaire results, interviews, and supporting documentation enabled a comprehensive understanding of how consumers evaluate the sensory and quality attributes of arak kelapa. The findings are expected to contribute to both academic research and the development of arak kelapa as a culturally significant and economically valuable product.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Coconut arak produced in Telaga Tawang Village is a traditional Balinese alcoholic beverage derived from the sap of coconut trees, locally known as tuak. The production process involves the fermentation of coconut husk over a period of three days, followed by a distillation phase that transforms the fermented liquid into arak. The raw materials used are sourced from the surrounding natural environment, reflecting a sustainable and locally grounded approach to production. Additionally, the distillation process still relies on traditional wood-fired heating, underscoring the preservation of ancestral methods and the integration of indigenous knowledge into contemporary practice.

One of the home-based coconut arak producers in Telaga Tawang Village, Sidemen District, Karangasem Regency, is Mr. Jana. He began producing arak in 2001, driven by both economic necessity and a desire to preserve the cultural heritage associated with traditional arak production. Telaga Tawang is characterized by its expansive hilly terrain and forested areas, which are densely planted with coconut trees. Mr. Jana owns his own coconut plantation, which allows him to maintain consistent oversight of raw material quality and ensures a steady supply of sap for arak production. The demand for arak within the village remains relatively high, particularly among local residents who consume it as a warming beverage during the rainy season. In addition to its recreational use, arak also holds ceremonial importance in local religious practices, especially in offerings during rituals related to Bhuta Kala. Mr. Jana sells his arak directly to the surrounding community, with customers typically purchasing the product from his residence. The arak is sold at a price of IDR 25,000 per 600 ml bottle, containing approximately 35% alcohol by volume.

The questionnaire was distributed to 50 respondents who are consumers of coconut arak in Telaga Tawang Village over a 14-day period, from April 29 to May 13, 2024. The data collection process was conducted through both online and offline methods to ensure broader accessibility and participation. The consumer evaluation focused on five key sensory indicators: taste, aroma, color, aftertaste, and alcohol content. Based on the responses, the taste indicator received a total score of 172, while aroma obtained 174. The color attribute was rated the highest, with a total score of 215, followed by aftertaste at 205, and alcohol content at 209. These results suggest that visual appeal and alcohol strength are highly valued by consumers, followed closely by flavor characteristics, highlighting specific aspects of consumer preference toward traditional coconut arak in the region.

Table 1. Summary of Questionnaire Results: Consumer Assessment of Coconut Arak in Telaga Tawang Village, Sidemen District, Karangasem Regency

No	Indicator	Total Score	Number of Respondents	Average Score	Category
1	Taste	172	50	3.44	Agree
2	Aroma	174	50	3.48	Agree

3	Color	215	50	4.30	Strongly Agree
4	Aftertaste	205	50	4.10	Agree
5	Alcohol Level	209	50	4.18	Agree
	Average	195	50	3.90	Agree

Source: Reasearch Findings (2024)

Table 1 presents the results of the consumer perception survey on coconut arak produced in Telaga Tawang Village, based on five key sensory indicators: taste, aroma, color, aftertaste, and alcohol level. The color indicator received the highest average score of 4.30, placing it in the "strongly agree" category, which suggests that visual clarity and appearance play a significant role in consumer preferences. The alcohol level and aftertaste indicators followed, with average scores of 4.18 and 4.10, respectively – both categorized as "agree". Aroma and taste received relatively lower average scores of 3.48 and 3.44, yet still fell within the "agree" category.

The overall average score across all indicators was 3.90, indicating a generally positive consumer perception of the product. This outcome highlights that while all evaluated sensory attributes are appreciated by consumers, certain aspects – particularly color and alcohol content – are perceived more favorably. These findings may inform producers about key quality dimensions that influence consumer satisfaction and can be leveraged for product positioning and marketing strategies.

DISCUSSION

Referring to Table 1, the results of the consumer assessment of coconut arak in Telaga Tawang Village, Sidemen District, Karangasem Regency reveal that, out of five evaluated indicators, one indicator received a “strongly agree” interpretation, while the remaining four indicators were rated as “agree.” The detailed breakdown is as follows.

The taste indicator for coconut arak produced in Telaga Tawang Village received an average score of 3.44, which falls under the “agree” category. This suggests that respondents generally agreed with the statement that the beverage possesses a detectable coconut flavor. The presence of this coconut taste is attributed to the raw material used – coconut sap or tuak – as well as improvements in the distillation equipment, which now incorporates stainless steel components in place of the previously used traditional materials. These enhancements have contributed to a cleaner, milder coconut flavor in the final product. According to Arnold (2014), a “good” taste in alcoholic beverages is the result of a balanced combination of sweetness, acidity, bitterness, and saltiness. Furthermore, the quality of the raw materials and the accuracy of the production techniques play a crucial role in achieving optimal flavor profiles. In the context of traditional arak production in Telaga Tawang, taste perception is also shaped by the artisanal nature of the process, where fermentation occurs naturally and varies slightly from batch to batch. This variability, while characteristic of

traditional practices, is balanced by local expertise that ensures consistency within an acceptable range. The moderate coconut flavor noted by consumers may also reflect the specific fermentation conditions, such as the duration of aging with coconut husk and the method of heat application using firewood. These traditional elements continue to influence the taste, preserving the cultural authenticity of the product while still meeting consumer expectations for quality and familiarity.

The aroma indicator of coconut arak produced in Telaga Tawang Village received an average score of 3.48, falling into the "agree" category. This suggests that most respondents acknowledged the presence of a distinct coconut aroma in the beverage. The aroma serves as a key sensory attribute that reflects both the quality of the raw materials and the effectiveness of the fermentation process. The use of fresh coconut sap, which undergoes a three-day fermentation process with coconut husks, contributes significantly to the retention and enhancement of the coconut scent. This traditional method allows volatile compounds from the coconut to be preserved in the final product, imparting a rich and authentic olfactory profile that distinguishes it from other locally produced spirits. The ability to maintain a strong coconut aroma in the final product highlights the producers' expertise in utilizing indigenous knowledge and locally available resources. In the evaluation of distilled alcoholic beverages, aroma plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions regarding authenticity and overall drinking experience. As Pacult (2015) emphasizes, complexity and smoothness in aroma are hallmarks of a high-quality spirit. Therefore, the notable coconut aroma in arak from Telaga Tawang not only enhances the sensory appeal of the product but also indicates a well-executed traditional process. This olfactory consistency contributes to the cultural and commercial value of coconut arak, positioning it as both a heritage product and a competitive offering in the evolving alcoholic beverage market.

The color indicator of coconut arak from Telaga Tawang Village received an average score of 4.30, which falls under the "strongly agree" category. This indicates that the majority of respondents perceived the beverage as having a clean and clear appearance a key visual cue of product purity and quality. The clarity of the arak is largely attributed to technological improvements in the distillation process, particularly the replacement of traditional tools with stainless steel components. Previously, the fermentation vessels were made from coconut tree trunks and the distillation pipes from bamboo. These natural materials, although culturally significant, were more prone to contamination and variability. The shift to stainless steel now used for sap collection containers and distillation apparatus has enabled producers to better control hygiene and thermal efficiency, resulting in a more refined final product. Color clarity is often perceived by consumers as a sign of cleanliness and sophistication, and in distilled spirits, it can reflect the effectiveness of the distillation and filtration processes. DeGroof (2010) argues that clear liquors typically indicate a distinct distillation and aging process compared to their colored counterparts. Clear liqueurs are often distilled using high-quality raw materials and aged in either oak barrels or stainless steel containers, both of which preserve the spirit's

transparency and purity. In the case of Telaga Tawang's coconut arak, the modernized equipment has allowed producers to achieve a visual standard that aligns with consumer expectations, thus enhancing the beverage's marketability while retaining its traditional essence.

The aftertaste indicator of coconut arak from Telaga Tawang Village received an average score of 4.10, categorized as "agree," indicating that respondents generally concurred with the statement that a bitter aftertaste is present upon consuming the beverage. This sensory characteristic is largely influenced by the use of sap derived from mature coconut trees. Older coconut trees typically yield sap with a lower sugar content and higher levels of tannins natural polyphenolic compounds known to contribute to bitterness. The resulting arak, therefore, retains a lingering bitter note that is noticeable after consumption. Anjani (2022) highlights the importance of raw material selection in determining the sensory profile of traditional alcoholic beverages. Specifically, she notes that the maturity of the coconut tree significantly impacts the aftertaste of the final product. Arak produced from older coconut palms tends to have a more pronounced bitter aftertaste compared to those made from younger trees. This is primarily due to the biochemical composition of mature coconuts, which contain elevated tannin levels and reduced fermentable sugars. While this bitter aftertaste may not appeal to all consumers, it is often associated with authenticity and traditional production methods by local drinkers. Consequently, the presence of this characteristic can serve as both a marker of heritage and a sensory preference shaped by cultural familiarity.

The alcohol content indicator of coconut arak from Telaga Tawang Village received an average score of 4.18, which falls under the "agree" category. This suggests that respondents generally accept and appreciate the alcohol strength of the beverage, finding it within a range that is enjoyable and not overly harsh. The coconut arak produced in the village typically contains an alcohol concentration ranging from 30% to 35%. This alcohol level is achieved through a distillation process that begins with approximately 45 liters of fermented coconut sap, yielding around 20 liters of distilled arak. The resulting alcohol content reflects a balanced and controlled fermentation-to-distillation ratio, contributing to a final product that retains both potency and drinkability. According to Putra (2007), the quantity and quality of raw materials used in the production of traditional alcoholic beverages significantly influence the final alcohol concentration. A greater volume of raw materials—especially those rich in natural sugars—provides more fermentable substrates for yeast activity, thus increasing the potential alcohol yield during fermentation. In the case of coconut arak, the use of large volumes of sap from mature coconut palms ensures a steady supply of fermentable sugars, which, when properly managed during the fermentation and distillation stages, results in a consistent alcohol level. This technical balance plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perception, as many associate moderate alcohol content with both tradition and comfort in consumption, particularly for local rituals and social gatherings.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the overall consumer assessment of coconut arak produced in Telaga Tawang Village is generally

positive. The evaluation was conducted using five indicators: taste, aroma, color, aftertaste, and alcohol content, resulting in an overall average score of 3.90. This score falls within the "agree" category, indicating that most respondents expressed favorable perceptions toward the characteristics of the coconut arak they consumed. The color indicator received the highest average score of 4.30, highlighting the importance of visual appeal to consumers. The clarity and cleanliness of the arak are perceived as strong indicators of product quality. This may be attributed to improvements in the distillation process, such as the use of stainless steel equipment that replaced traditional tools made from bamboo and wood. Such upgrades reflect more hygienic and professional production methods.

In contrast, the taste indicator received the lowest score, with an average of 3.44. While still categorized as "agree," this result suggests room for improvement, particularly regarding the expected coconut flavor profile. Variations in taste may be influenced by the quality of the coconut sap, the maturity of the coconut trees, as well as the fermentation and distillation techniques employed. Therefore, it is essential for local producers to re-evaluate their production methods to improve taste consistency and appeal. Moreover, the aroma, aftertaste, and alcohol content indicators also received relatively high scores. Aroma scored 3.48, suggesting that consumers could detect a distinct coconut scent. Aftertaste scored 4.10, indicating that consumers experienced a noticeable lingering flavor, while alcohol content received a 4.18, showing that the alcohol level was considered enjoyable and balanced. Together, these results indicate that the coconut arak provides a well-rounded sensory experience.

In conclusion, coconut arak produced in Telaga Tawang Village has successfully met consumer expectations in terms of visual clarity, aroma, aftertaste, and alcohol strength. However, further development in taste enhancement is recommended to elevate the product's overall quality and competitiveness in broader markets. These consumer evaluations may serve as a valuable foundation for continuous improvement and sustainable development in the traditional beverage industry.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion presented, it can be concluded that the results of the study involving 50 respondents indicate that, overall, consumer evaluations of coconut arak in Telaga Tawang Village, Sidemen District, Karangasem Regency fall under the "agree" interpretation. This suggests that respondents generally appreciated or liked the coconut arak, with an average score across all indicators of 3.90. The study employed five consumer evaluation indicators related to coconut arak in Telaga Tawang Village. Four of these indicators received an "agree" interpretation: taste, with an average score of 3.44; aroma, with an average of 3.48; aftertaste, with an average of 4.10; and alcohol content, with an average of 4.18. One indicator received a "strongly agree" interpretation namely, the color of the arak which achieved the highest average score of 4.30. This indicates that consumers particularly appreciated the clarity and visual appearance of the coconut arak.

In light of these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, producers should focus on maintaining and enhancing the product's visual appearance and refining taste and aroma aspects to meet broader consumer preferences. Traditional processing techniques should be preserved while being innovatively combined with modern methods to improve consistency and hygiene standards. Second, marketing strategies could emphasize the uniqueness and cultural value of coconut arak to increase consumer awareness and appeal. Lastly, further studies involving a larger and more diverse sample size are recommended to gain a more comprehensive understanding of consumer perceptions and to support the sustainable development of traditional alcoholic beverages in Bali.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study focused solely on consumer perceptions without exploring deeper socio-cultural, historical, or economic factors that might influence those perceptions. Subsequent studies may benefit from employing a mixed-methods approach or qualitative design to better understand the context, motivations, and values surrounding the consumption of arak kelapa in Balinese communities.

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