

## HOW IS THE TOURISM INFORMAL SECTOR RESILIENCE IN BALI?

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan memaparkan usaha dari para pekerja sektor informal untuk mempertahankan keberlangsungan bisnis mereka di masa sulit. Pandemi berkepanjangan tidak hanya berdampak pada merosotnya penjualan karena adanya penurunan turis, tetapi juga kompetisi yang tinggi karena tumbuhnya usaha sejenis yang dibentuk oleh pekerja formal yang kehilangan pekerjaan. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Responden merupakan aktor yang bergerak pada sektor informal, baik produsen, distributor, dan penjual. Temuan dalam penelitian ini adalah adanya pengembangan produk yang dijual oleh usaha informal yang disebabkan oleh tumbuhnya turis lokal. Dominasi dari masyarakat lokal dan domestik sebagai turis mengharuskan para aktor ekonomi informal untuk menyesuaikan produk sesuai kebutuhan dan keinginan turis tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** sektor informal, pariwisata, bali

### Abstract

*This paper aimed to identify and explain how informal sector workers in tourism were trying to maintain their business viability in difficult times. The prolonged pandemic not only had an impact on declining sales due to a decrease in the number of tourist arrivals but also high competition presented as a result of the emergence of similar traders who were occupied by those affected by layoffs. Research using a qualitative approach, involving actors in the informal tourism sector as respondents, both producers, distributors, and traders, found that there was a lot of product development sold in tourist destinations caused by the emergence of local people as tourists. The dominance of local and domestic communities as tourists in tourist destinations demands that economic actors selling products at tourist attractions and their surroundings in Bali always understand the development of consumer needs and desires, especially domestic tourists.*

**Keywords:** Informal Sector, Tourism, Bali.

### 1. introduction

Tourism as a highly reliable sector is experiencing a slump with global health problems (Hitka et al., 2021) which until 2022 cannot be completely resolved. The government has implemented various policies and actions (Adhi Wiguna et al., 2021) in dealing with health problems caused by the coronavirus, which of course also aims to ease the burden on the community. Prioritizing health and the economy is a difficult choice, considering that both are the basic needs of every human being. Economic activities that are identical to human movement, during pandemic conditions experience challenges, namely the existence of various forms of social restrictions that have an impact on the difficulty of achieving sales targets (Sumarni, 2020). This condition is felt most severely by tourism actors, both those who work in hotels, restaurants, managers of tourist attractions, and those who take opportunities as supporters of tourism activities that are included in the informal sector. In this case, tourism, which is likened to a billiard ball industry, is able to provide job opportunities for the wider community, including those who have limited capital (Widiastini et al., 2018), both social, economic and cultural capital.

The pandemic that is not over yet and has an impact on the still not recovering formal tourism sector, has implications for the emergence of local businesses (Arsa et al., 2021) with a domestic market by offering a variety of products and services. There is something interesting about tourism activities, namely the persistence of street vendors and traveling traders and small kiosk traders around tourist attractions. This phenomenon was discovered during the pandemic, although at the beginning of Indonesia being hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, these traders were very difficult to find, considering that the area where they traded was closed by the government with the aim of dealing with the spread of the corona virus

(Rosyada & Wigiawati, 2020). However, this condition did not last long, slowly the informal sector traders came back, enlivening tourist attractions, especially those with open access such as beach, lake and mountain tourism.

The presence of these traders is interesting to observe, considering their role which is not only for the sustainability of the economic life for themselves and their families, but also for other parties who have a role in producing raw materials for products, production and distribution of the products offered by them to consumers. The relationship between economic activities, adopting research results (Maestre et al., 2017), that there is a relationship between economic actors that can influence each other. Market linkage is a value chain that aims to maximize the use of resources in order to generate maximum profit for each actor in the value chain. Every economic actor involved in market linkage (Liverpool-Tasie et al., 2020) carries out economic activities, namely providing materials, semi-finished products, until the product is ready to be sold, which of course must run effectively to be able to generate a certain profit.

The involvement of many economic actors in producing products sold by wholesalers, traveling traders or small kiosk traders who enter as workers in the informal sector at tourist attractions and surrounding areas, causes many parties to experience economic problems if the products sold by them do not sell. The appearance of workers in the informal sector selling their wares at tourist attractions during the pandemic can be studied by approaching the linkages between economic actors as providers of products that are ready to be sold by these traders. Workers in the informal sector who have limited capital of course also have ways to maintain their business in the midst of high competition. Their resilience is certainly interesting to study in depth, considering their important role in marketing the products produced by the production chain before the products are offered to consumers.

The study of Mayer et al., (2016) has information that helps research on the survival of wholesalers and their relationships in understanding the involvement of parties in providing products that are ready to sell. In his study, it was found that there was a relationship between business actors in rural and urban areas, which in practice were able to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas, such as knowledge of the economic and market base. In the entrepreneurial relationship between rural and urban, they are able to develop sensitivity to consumer demand and evolving trends. In practice, both parties contribute to mutually taking advantage of their peripheral locations and at the same time building a sustainable economic relationship. This study has similarities with research conducted on the role of wholesalers in tourist attractions in Bali who also build relationships with product suppliers, benefiting from each of their places of work.

The interdependent relationship that occurs between rural and urban areas in Indonesia is carried out by Douglass (2006) with the aim of producing a regional network strategy that combines rural-urban linkages in five aspects, namely people, production, commodities, capital and information. It is explained through the research that each has several components and impacts. Commodities, as in the research of Mike Douglass (2006) in the form of production inputs, marketed rural products, non-durable goods and durable goods for final consumption. In this study it was found that each has a very different pattern of spatial relationships and varied benefits for rural and urban areas. This research is used as a reference for this paper because it has similarities with the aspects studied including commodities, capital and information on merchandise sold by traders at tourist attractions and their surroundings.

Andrian's thesis (2018) explains that there are many economic and social activities that affect urban life, which in this study is the market. The market as one of the economic activities in urban areas in practice is constantly developing both in terms of physical changes and developing trends, with the aim that the merchandise offered is always acceptable to consumers. The economic activities that occurred in the market, which in this case Andrian (2018) were specifically carried out at the Batu Mulia Rawa Bening Market, Jakarta, found that there were supporters who were able to maintain the existence of the market. Through his thesis, it is known that the factors supporting the existence of the market are the embodiment of values as a result of mutually beneficial relationships and synergies between actors in the value system, namely suppliers, organizations, channels, buyer value chains.

Entrepreneurial activities carried out informally position the activities of traders around tourist attractions as part of work in the informal sector. Retail traders who work offering their wares to consumers by raising their hand, small stall, peddling their wares using transportation as a form of entrepreneurship that is done by looking at opportunities. One can see from the notion of entrepreneurship as proposed by Gave in Sudrajat (2011) that according to The Fortable MBA in Entrepreneurship which explains 'Entrepreneurship is the person who perceives an opportunity and creates an organization to pursue'. the opportunity and then create an organization to take advantage of these opportunities. The characteristics of economic sector activities (Alma, 2006; Hidayat in Effendi, 1993), such as business activities are not well organized, peddling their wares while shouting or sometimes running towards consumers, and relatively small business capital. Informal sector work is also understood as an escape for job seekers who do not find employment in the formal sector, so that the informal sector as a creative entrepreneurial activity becomes an alternative choice that can be used as a survival solution. Informal sector workers should be taken into account, that the existence and continuity of informal sector activities in the contemporary economic system as a populist economic reality that plays an important role in community development and national development. The informal sector (Effendi in Mustafa, 2008) is a safety valve, namely the informal sector with all its shortcomings is able to act as a reservoir and alternative job opportunities for job seekers, especially during the current pandemic.

Work is a human obligation with the aim of maintaining life. Marx (Barker, 2014) provides an explanation that humans work in order to meet the various needs of their lives and for Marx work is the most basic human action in which human work can make itself real. Work, whatever the type, really determines one's existence in society as stated by Franz (2001), that work means that humans take the natural form of natural objects and give them their own form, in this case humans objectify themselves into nature through their work. The explanation of work in Marx's thought proposed by Franz (2001) above can be assumed, the persistence of traders in tourist attraction locations and their surroundings is a reflection that they are trying to rehabilitate themselves as individuals who always try to take every opportunity that exists. at the place, including making adaptations, namely selling products according to the characteristics of tourists who come, both in terms of product types and prices.

The theory used to review the phenomenon of the survival of informal sector workers during a pandemic in tourist attractions and surroundings is the theory of practice. Humans are agents or actors who act or carry out social practices in a social arena or in a space and time (Giddens, 2010; Takwin, 2009). Social practice always involves actors with different social status positions from one another. This social status is related to capital ownership, namely financial capital, intellectual capital, cultural capital or symbolic capital. Who controls the most capital will be in the upper structure, on the other hand those with the lowest capital are in the lower structure (Giddens, 2010; Takwin, 2009). People who are in the upper structure who have the largest capital at the same time have the power of attorney. Bourdieu's thinking is a very important idea in giving birth to a theory of social practice. Bourdieu formulates three important elements in order to give birth to a social practice, namely habitus, capital and realm. Bourdieu in particular pays more attention to the decisive power of social class as a structural barrier, and places habitus in the context of class-oriented habits into social construction (Barker, 2014). In this case, capital in Bourdieu's idea is a specific force in determining the position of each individual in an arena, in this case in a tourist area.

## **2. Method**

This qualitative research uses an ethnographic approach, describing a process of economic activity carried out by workers in the informal sector at several tourist attractions in Bali, which still survive peddling their wares during the pandemic. The dominant data in this study is qualitative data, in the form of descriptive information or information regarding the quality of the meaning or characteristics of a symptom obtained through interviews, observations, and literature studies. Information about traders in tourist attractions and their surroundings who are workers in the informal sector is the main thing in this study. The informants of this research are wholesalers, traveling traders and kiosk traders who are in

tourist attractions and their surroundings, as well as suppliers of merchandise who are met separately, namely at the place of product production. Informants in this study were determined by combining purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Sulistyo-Basuki, 2006).

Purposive sampling is used to obtain informants according to predetermined criteria, while snowball is used when in the field researchers get information about other informants from predetermined informants. The research instrument used in this study was an observation guide and an interview guide. As for the documentation, a recording device, camera, diary, and stationery are needed. The results of data analysis are presented informally in the form of descriptive-narrative or descriptions of words formulated and conceptualized by researchers based on scientific principles of cultural studies (Barker, 2005).

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### Meaningful Reasons for Informal Sector Workers Are Able to Survive in the Tourism Sector During a Pandemic

Generally, people will choose to have the best position or social status for themselves, including working in a place that enables them to give them a good socioeconomic status. The long pandemic situation, more than two years has resulted in many job losses in the formal tourism sector. This has implications for the necessity of humans to want to work anywhere, whatever the form of work, in order to maintain their life, which of course is accompanied by jargon as long as it is halal. Retail traders who sell their wares in tourist attractions and their surroundings are part of the informal sector, which is structurally considered inferior when compared to other informal sector jobs that have a special space for selling, or also micro and small businesses that can be found in almost every village. Moreover, compared to formal sector jobs which have space for an office, have permits, clear standard operating procedures, and clear working hours and salaries as well. The difference in views cannot be separated from the view that explains that the urban economic system is divided into two, namely the formal sector and the informal sector. These two sectors are not equal, but classy, namely the formal sector has a higher position than the informal sector (Mustafa, 2008; Rachbini & Hamid, 1994). Thus, usually people, especially those who already have a certain certificate or qualification as a result of the studies they have undertaken for a certain period, will first choose to enter the formal sector, if they fail, then to the informal sector.

Borrowing James C (1981) idea about the economic morals of farmers, it can be interpreted that formal tourism sector workers who are affected by the pandemic, especially those who have to accept layoffs by the hotel, for example, in order to survive they must immediately adapt to the opportunities that still remain. Many of them have turned into sellers of various merchandise, especially domestic needs in various places, including using online sales services. Seeing these conditions, the competition for retail traders in tourist attractions and surrounding areas does not only see it as a business development, but also as a business competitor. As James C (1981) idea about the principle of safety first, then continuing to sell as usual they did before the pandemic is considered a solution to defend their land and business. Although the number of tourists who attended was still very small, they chose to continue selling their wares. For them, not staying in the location where they sell is considered something that endangers their subsistence, so that no matter how small the risk they will accept, including getting very little sales, being able to maintain their place of sale is considered the best choice. With the hope, tourism will be able to recover and provide them with a better income in the future.



Figure 1. Informal Sector Workers at Pererenan Beach

Surviving in a difficult situation, where tourism conditions have not recovered well, and exacerbated by the current difficult economic situation, is carried out by most of the people impacted by the pandemic. Soukhathammavong & Park (2019), the attitude and willingness to sell mass-produced souvenirs is mostly owned by souvenir traders due to limited business resources. In another study (Truong, 2018) saw the low income obtained by rural communities from agricultural products, so that being a street vendor was considered better. The condition of street vendors who have slumped (Truong, 2018) looks increasingly depressed due to the ban from the government. It is thus suggested that the government can understand the reality on the ground and give a voice to poor traders, potential approaches to poverty alleviation and management of street vendors through tourism can become clearer. In this case, tourism is able to create jobs for the informal sector which in practice also supports tourism activities in a destination.

### **Types of Workers in the Informal Sector Who Are Still Trying to Survive in the Tourism Sector During a Pandemic**

There are various forms of actors in the informal sector who take advantage of the presence of tourism activities in Bali, namely as photographers, massage therapists, beverage and food traders with carts, beachside stall, meatball traders, hawkers who are better known as acung traders, and nail art. The types of merchandise offered are very varied, from the types of food, drinks, to the color of nail polish. Every actor in the informal sector takes economic opportunities according to their abilities, both based on their ownership of economic capital and their skills. This is implemented by understanding the principles of economics and risk (Obrenovic et al., 2020), which allows them to survive as well as their ability to bear the risks that may happen to them.



Figure 2. Nail Art at Penelokan, Batur Tengah Village, Kintamani

Becoming a nail art, not only requires economic capital but also skills to produce beautiful and beautiful nails. Likewise, they must also understand the evolving nail color and design trends (Zulaikha, 2020). Thus, they must always update information about trends that include fashion. Having a cell phone, an active internet and social media are also the best solutions for them to know the growing fashion. In addition, they also build cooperation with parties who are able to support them in providing materials and equipment to be used to sell nail art services, both fingernails and toenails. A nail polisher who sell nail art services is one of the informal sector actors who are still surviving during the pandemic and are still trying to profit from the presence of tourists in Batur Tengah Village, Kintamani, Bali.

Surviving in difficult situations, very limited economic capital, relatively few tourist visits, higher service demands, and increasingly stringent sales rules, have an impact on requiring every informal sector actor to innovate on the products offered, while being able to build good communication and smart to the tourist management. The increasing needs of tourists, both



in terms of quality and quantity (Aman et al., 2021) as well as government regulations at various levels (Saraswati, 2020), have implications for the difficulties of informal sector actors to survive. However, informal sector actors as *homo faber* as well as *homo laboran* (Borgias M, 2013; Nayuf & Simon, 2021), always have a solution to maintain their business in order to get some income.



Figure 3 . Vendors Around Kuta Beach

In Figure 3, it can be seen that traders peddle food that is usually consumed by the surrounding community. Realizing that most of the tourists who came both before the pandemic and during the pandemic were local tourists, the products sold were food and drinks that were usually needed by the surrounding community. In this case, during a pandemic, local people become their main tourists, so goods that are usually needed and consumed by local people are also served and sold by informal sector actors who offer their products in or around tourist attractions. Local people who visit tourist attractions are not only able to help informal sector actors survive with the products they buy, but are also able to create trends. In addition, foreign foods that are quite popular with local people are finally sold in different portions and presentation ways to be accepted by the local market, including takoyaki, sushi, and other foreign foods.



Figure 4. Japanese Food in Jimbaran Region, Bali

Picture 4 above is one of the shops selling Japanese food in the Jimbaran area, one of the famous tourist areas in Bali. Sales of various types of foreign or western food, such as takoyaki, sushi, burgers, pizza, ramen, and other foreign foods can be easily searched for by today's middle-low economy consumers. People's lifestyles that develop into opportunities by anyone who is able to take advantage of every moment of its development. Karl Marx on production (Fuchs, 2009) and consumption (Baudrillard, 2016; Fuchs, 2009) provide directions for producers to meet the lifestyle of a postmodern society. There is a real relationship between the food products produced and offered by the capitalist power with the consumption style of society which always gives a meaning to a product. Suyanto, (2013) about the capitalism

strategy can be a reference in understanding the strategies carried out by business actors, that capitalism has created a controlled consumption system and exploits mass consumption behavior. Thus, capitalism will always create food product diversification or product penetration from time to time so that consumers will be led to consume the latest products continuously.

### Economic Actors Selling Products in Tourist Attractions and Surrounding Areas

Product sales, regardless of product type and level of business, generally involve related parties in delivering the product to consumers. Practice, in the sale of a product, as well as merchandise sold by workers in the informal tourism sector, there are often parties involved in connecting the final consumer to the source of production. Anwar, (2011) describes supply chain management as integrating the activities of procuring materials and services, converting them into semi-finished goods and final products, and delivery to customers. Thus, there are parties providing raw materials, product makers, and distributions who are actively involved until the final product can be consumed by consumers.

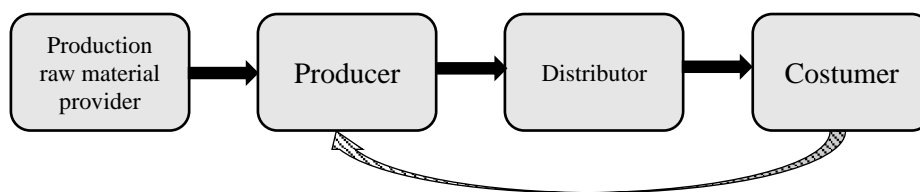


Chart 1. Sales of Products in the Tourism Informal Sector

There are various types of suppliers of raw materials for production, depending on the types of products offered and sold in tourist attractions and surrounding areas in Bali. Based on observations made during research at tourist sites and their surroundings, the products traded include cloth, clothing, knick-knacks, various foods and beverages, beachside massage services, medicure and pedicure services in Kintamani, photo services in Bedugul, and other products as well as other services which of course are offered in accordance with the wishes and needs of existing tourists. The availability of raw materials with a certain quantity and quality is of particular concern by producers with the aim that the production of their products can be carried out according to the specified target. Kolotzek et al., (2018) explains that producers have a special responsibility to ensure the sustainability aspect of their product production, so that raw materials and their supply chain are often the focus of attention, so producers may need to diversify their products. The increasingly fierce competition has an impact on the need for the ability of producers to develop their products, including diversifying products aimed at reaching the target market, especially during market penetration.

In the production process, producers experience a lot of pressure due to the large number of similar products on the market, resulting in a low bargaining value, requiring them to be able to present the advantages of the products they produce. To be able to produce products that are directly absorbed by the market and consumed by consumers, producers must understand the production strategy, whether engineer to order, make to order, make to stock or assemble to order (Gosling & Naim, 2009; Willner et al., 2014). Therefore, understanding the needs and wants of the market and the ability to build a product marketing network are competencies that must be possessed by a producer. Manufacturers should not assume that their products are the best, but must always understand developments, including competition. Likewise, producers are force to be able to provide good service to parties who help market their products, including traders who sell their products in tourist spots and their surroundings. In practice they, like wholesalers, are no different from sales promotion girls or sales promotion boys who are often found in supermarkets or malls, who offer products to tourists with the aim that the products they carry and offering can be accepted and bought by consumers.



Figure 5. Souvenir vendor in Kintamani queue and choose products that are brought by distributors to sales locations

Product sales cooperation between producers and distributors in the market chain is something that must be maintained with each other, with the aim that products entrusted to resellers, sales to consumers in this case tourists can achieve the target. Thus, trust becomes the main capital in the market chain. Social capital Plummer, (2011) as a network, closer relationships can create networks and bonds, which often shape the quality of life. Thus, trust as a social capital is very important in fostering cooperative relationships. In practice, each party certainly puts forward the principle of safety first (James C, 1981; Widiastini et al., 2018), with the aim of avoiding risk. Raw material providers, manufacturers, distributors, and resellers always try to receive income that is greater than the risk of loss. In fact, tourists as consumers also want the products, they buy to give them a certain value, so that they feel satisfied with the goods they consume, be it cultural, social, environmental, and health values. Thus, consumers also include parties involved in selling products, where their needs and desires are always a recipe for action on the part of producers in creating a product. Meanwhile, salesman always understand the needs and wants of consumers, whether it is providing input to producers about product trends and providing sales services that are able to provide satisfaction to consumers.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Becoming a business actor who is able to survive in difficult times, in times of high competition, as well as during a pandemic, of course requires various strategies, both in managing money capital, as well as the ability to understand market trends and build networks in product sales. Bali, which is known for its tourism activities, has experienced a very severe downturn from the economic side, especially those who depend on this sector for their livelihood, both as formal and informal workers. In practice, during the pandemic, when formal workers experience layoffs, they try to take various opportunities in order to maintain their lives, namely trying to keep on earning. One way out is to become actors in the informal sector, selling merchandise needed by the general public, including those who turn into local tourists in various tourist attractions in Bali. Thus, the competition faced by informal sector actors who are early in the profession is getting higher. In order to keep earning income and maintain their space for actualization, they must try to survive, namely selling products that are suitable for the type of tourists who attend and good service.

Informal sector work that was born in response to tourism, which has multiple opportunities, has implications for the various types of jobs that are occupied, especially by people with minimal capital. Capital in this case is not only economic, but also social capital and cultural capital, such as business relations and education. The open tourism industry provides many opportunities for those with minimal capital to take advantage of the presence of tourists in tourist attractions and their surroundings. Apart from selling products in the form of souvenirs, cloth, food, drinks and others, they also sell services such as beachside massage therapists, photographers, and nail art. In order for the products offered to be bought by consumers, namely tourists, they also learn about developing trends, for example, colors that are trending need to be known by nail polishers as a way for them to have an up-to-date image of themselves.

In order products can be delivered to consumers properly of course there are parties involved in producing products so that the product is enjoyed by consumers, which in this case are tourists. In this context, the parties involved who are economic actors in selling products in tourist attraction locations and their surroundings, of course have their respective roles. In



practice, every party, whether it is a provider of product raw materials, producers, distributors, to sellers who sell products directly to tourists, is required not only to be able to produce quality products and offer them well, but also to understand trends in both consumer needs and desires.

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