

COVID-19 AND TOURISM: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE STRATEGIES OF YOUTH MARINE TOURISM BUSINESS ACTORS ON DERAWAN ISLAND DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze the strategies of young entrepreneurs in the marine tourism industry on Derawan Island in facing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study employs a qualitative approach using purposive and snowball sampling techniques for informant selection. Data collection was carried out through interviews and field observations. The research applies James C. Scott's survival strategy theory to analyze the phenomena under investigation. The results of the study indicate that young entrepreneurs in the marine tourism sector on Derawan Island were a vulnerable group during the COVID-19 pandemic. To address these challenges, the young entrepreneurs engaged in several survival strategies, including returning to fishing and adjusting the pricing of tourism packages during the new normal period.

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INTRODUCTION

As we know that in December 2019 (in Wuhan, China) there was a new problem for the world. The problem is in the form of the emergence of viruses that are anomalous and distorted for the world. The virus is COVID-19. Due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus around the world, on March 2, 2020, the first case of COVID-19 appeared in Indonesia. Shortly after, on March 16, 2020) *World Health Organization* (WHO) announced that COVID-19 as a pandemic (Manguma, 2021). Through Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020, the government implemented Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) which led to community activities and interactions then being limited as a preventive measure to break the chain of spread *COVID-19* (Almuttaqi, 2020; Syafrida & Hartati, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic is present as a disaster for human life (Nations, 2020). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a shake in all aspects of society of various ages (OECD, 2020). One of the community groups affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of age is the youth group (Fujihara & Tabuchi, 2022; Richter, 2020).

According to the results of a survey from Deloitte Millennial Global in 2020, in 43 countries there are 48% of young people who are experiencing stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If it is related to the context of the reality faced by youth when the COVID-19 pandemic attacked, the condition of Indonesia since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the establishment of the PSBB policy, there has been a deterioration in the Indonesian economy. One of the sectors of the Indonesian economy that experienced a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic was the tourism sector (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020; Gunagama et al., 2020; Hoque et al., 2020).

According to the results of a survey conducted by the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS), there was a drastic decrease in foreign tourists visiting Indonesia in March 2020. The decrease was recorded at 64.11% when compared to foreign tourist visit data in March 2019 (Aditya, 2020). In fact, before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the tourism industry sector was predicted to be a commodity in the Indonesian economy after the mining/mineral industry sector (Nugroho, 1997). This statement is also supported by several previous studies that explain how promising the tourism industry sector is for economies in several countries (Amortegui et al., 2019; Indraningsih, 2019; Pillai, 2011; Pitana & Diarta, 2009; Primadany et al., 2013; Setiawan, 2015; Sofronov, 2018).

Referring to the explanation above, it can be concluded that the tourism industry has experienced an extraordinary setback due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This problem also occurred at the research location of this article, namely Derawan Island (Hidayah, 2021a). Derawan Island is one of the marine tourism attractions in Berau Regency. Topographically, Derawan Island is located in the archipelago area which has the potential to be used as a tourist attraction (Hidayah, 2021b; Mujiono, 2018). This potential includes the distribution of hard coral reef cover on Derawan Island by an average of 17.41%. Derawan Island also has a live coral distribution of 27.78%. In addition, Derawan Island is used as a stopover for Green Turtles and Hawksbill Turtles to lay eggs. Both types of turtles are rare (endangered) turtles (Mujiono, 2018).

As a result of the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the marine tourism industry on Derawan Island, Berau Regency. It was recorded that in December 2020 there was a decrease in foreign tourist and local tourist visits by 69.7% (ProKaltim, 2020). Even though the majority of Derawan Island residents depend on the marine tourism industry for their livelihoods.

Referring to the results of a study from Hidayah & Singh (2021), the majority of youth on Derawan Island choose to work in the marine tourism industry. This is a rational choice for the youth of Derawan Island because they see the potential that their homeland has (Hidayah & Singh, 2021). However, seeing the reality that occurred when the COVID-19 pandemic struck forced them to face the fact that their work had to be halted during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to survive during the COVID-19 pandemic, people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic need to carry out a survival strategy (Hardilawati, 2020; Manguma, 2021; Nuruddin et al., 2020).

Faster than Starring (in Official, 2005, p. 6) explained that survival strategies are a series of actions carried out by individuals and households that are included in the category of social and economic poverty. This strategy is carried out to get additional income and can also be done by minimizing expenses.

As a phenomenon, the study of the COVID-19 pandemic is the main issue discussed by academics today (Matthewman & Huppatz, 2020) including a study on the vulnerability of youth in the pandemic era. The first study that discusses the vulnerability of youth in the pandemic era is a study conducted by Exner-Cortens, et al (2022) which states that youth in Asia experience an increase in stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Exner-Cortens et al., 2022). Almost the same as the study conducted by Fujihara & Tabuchi (2022), youth in Japan are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely experiencing depressed/stressed psychological conditions (Fujihara & Tabuchi, 2022). Even subsequent studies conducted by Tüzün et al., (2022) stated that The majority of youth experienced depression during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tüzün et al., 2022). Some of the results of previous studies prove that youth are one of the groups considered vulnerable due to the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper is present in order to analyze how the strategies of youth marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island during the COVID-19 pandemic using the perspective of Scott (1983) regarding *survival strategies*. Therefore, this research is here to fill the gap in previous research on youth, the COVID-19 pandemic and its relationship with the tourism industry.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method carried out in marine tourism objects on Derawan Island, Berau Regency. Derawan Island, Berau Regency was chosen as the research location because the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been very influential on the marine tourism business community there. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was reported that there had been a drastic decline in tourism visits in Berau Regency. From January to December 2020, there were 202 foreign tourists and 91,008 local tourists who visited Berau Regency. In fact, in 2019 the number of visits by local tourists was 292,692 and foreign tourists as many as 8,323 (ProKaltim, 2020). This condition is the basis for this research to be conducted on Derawan Island, Berau Regency.

This study involved eight informants who are millennials (born in the 1980s to 2000s) and work as marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island, Regency Sigh. Informants were selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques to ensure suitability with the research criteria. The age range of informants ranged from 23 to 39 years, consisting of five males and three females. The types of businesses run include snorkeling and diving equipment rental services, homestay management, tour boat transportation providers, and local culinary businesses. The length of running the business varies between 3 to more than 10 years, with the educational background of the majority of high school graduates/equivalent, and a small percentage reach the university level high. These characteristics reflect the diversity of experiences and the role of the younger generation in maintaining and developing the marine tourism sector amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data was collected through interviews and observations in the field. After obtaining the data, the next process is to process the data so that it can be used as a research report and conclusion in this study. This study uses a *Interactive Analysis* from Milles and Huberman, namely (1) reducing data, (2) presenting data, and (3) making conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Youth Marine Tourism Business Actors on Derawan Island as a Vulnerable Group During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As previously explained, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Coronavirus Disease 2019) has shaken the world. Quickly, all country in the world focuses on the health problems of its citizens as well as on the socio-economic impact caused by (P et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, youth Business Actors marine tourism on Derawan Island is going through the most difficult period of their lives. Inevitably, young marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island must accept the fact that their businesses have experienced a significant decrease in income. Even though the tourism industry sector in Berau Regency is one of the mainstay economic sectors or economic support in Berau Regency (Ismadi, 2018).

Based on this reality, it can be concluded that young marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island can be classified as a vulnerable group when the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. The young marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island are informal workers who are classified as economically vulnerable in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The transportation service providers, guides, souvenir shopping places and manufacturers suddenly went bankrupt.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a devastating effect on the Indonesian people. The most damaging power is felt by people who rely on the informal sector such as economic activities (Sujito, 2020, p. 255) Where included in the informal sector is one of them are workers and business owners in the field of marine tourism. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the birth of a social and economic recession which has a direct impact on the weakening of the ability of marginalized groups to meet the needs of life (Mas'udi & Winanti, 2020). According to the researcher, young tourism business actors are also a new group that is vulnerable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the pandemic has closed all access to sources of income for tourism business actors.

When the COVID-19 pandemic took place, the Government responded by making various policies. However, various policies are issued instead of saving health, but not heeding or considering the economic and social fields, the Government of Indonesia seems to be setting aside it. As a result, young marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island are very vulnerable to the economy.

B. Comparison: Rereading *Survival Strategy Actions for Workers and Marine Tourism Business Actors in Berau Regency During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Each region certainly has mainstay resources that can be used for the livelihood of people who live and settle in a region. Such resources depend on the potential that the region in which we are located has. In this section, the researcher analyzes in depth the survival strategy actions carried out by workers and marine tourism business actors in Berau Regency during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adjusting to the discussion about the transition of work (survival strategy) to fishermen during the COVID-19 pandemic during the COVID-19 pandemic carried out by youth marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island, it can be concluded that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Derawan Island youth who work and have a business in the marine tourism sector rely on nature as a resource that can be used to survive. Why is that? Please note that when they become fishermen, they automatically use natural resources (sea) to search and catch fish.

This explanation is in accordance with the analysis of Scott (1983), in the midst of conditions that pinch an individual or society by being forced to carry out a survival strategy by tying a tighter belt. Adjusting to the results of this study, the act of tying their belts is tighter related to how to utilize their savings and reduce their standard of living during the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down their businesses. The results of this study are similar to the research conducted by Yuana et al., (2020) where the objects in these two studies were both carried out Survival Strategy by reducing expenses (Yuana et al., 2020). It is no different from what happened before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the youth of Derawan Island who work and have a business in the marine tourism sector also use nature as a mainstay resource to earn income. As is known that those who work and have businesses in the tourism sector take advantage of natural beauty to get jobs.

Therefore, if analyzed critically and in-depth, the conditions before the COVID-19 pandemic and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the people of Berau Regency who work and have businesses in the marine tourism sector both interpret nature as a mainstay resource both before the pandemic and during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, there is actually no difference in terms of interpreting nature. Although during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of them switched jobs to become fishermen, it can be concluded that actually these two conditions are the same in terms of interpreting nature as a mainstay resource to earn income for daily life. Therefore, the lesson of the COVID-19 pandemic that attacked the marine tourism industry on Derawan Island is that we understand that no matter how the conditions that attack them, basically the people who live in the marine tourism industry area of Derawan Island will still depend on the nature around them.

However, even though they both interpret nature as the main resource, we must not forget the fact that the form of survival strategy when the COVID-19 pandemic took place there was a setback of social change. The decline of social change is proven that before the COVID-19 pandemic, youth on Derawan Island who worked and owned a marine tourism business were classified as industrial communities, but because the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of all marine tourism industry activities on Derawan Island, they had to go back to the past, namely back to the maritime community who incidentally worked as fishermen.

According to the researcher, these two explanations are the unique side of one of the survival strategy actions carried out by the people of Derawan Island who work and have a business in the field of marine tourism because in the world under different conditions they still rely on natural resources around their environment to survive. In addition, there was a social change from those who had reached the stage of an industrial society, but when the COVID-19 pandemic hit they were forced to retreat back to become a maritime society.

Furthermore, young marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island also carried out other survival strategy actions by reducing the price of services and tour packages on Derawan Island during the new normal era. This is another form of survival strategy that can be carried out by youth on Derawan Island as business actors in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Presumably this has to do with economic law, where the principle of income is little more than nothing. This fact actually indicates the desperation of business owners whose income has actually stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the expenses are still as usual. That way, the choice of selling services at low prices instead of getting income even if small becomes an alternative. According to the researcher, this condition is manifested by its relationship with the psychological crisis of the population which is not due to a health crisis, but

because of a structured economic crisis due to government policies that are considered inappropriate and generalize the conditions in every region in Indonesia.

The findings in this study are relevant to previous studies conducted by Kaur & Kaur (2020). The results of the study stated that one of the strategies that many business actors do in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic is by providing a lot of promotions, Voucher or discounts on consumers (Kaur & Kaur, 2020). The strategy was also carried out by the informants in this study by making a policy of reducing the price of rooms per night at the inn or Cottage that they have.

C. Critical Analysis: *Survival Strategy as the First Step in Job Transition for Workers and Marine Tourism Business Actors in Berau Regency If the Pandemic Is Not Over*

Although now the Indonesian Government tends to be very concerned about the spread of the COVID-19 virus, until now there is no indication that this pandemic will end soon. Even Mietzner (2020) stated that the Indonesian Government tends to be less firm in overcoming this pandemic (Mietzner, 2020). It is evident that until the time this study was carried out, regulations regarding the handling of COVID-19 have often changed and the number of positive cases of the COVID-19 virus continues to exist every day.

Various forms of job transitions or survival strategies carried out by the people of Derawan Island who work and have businesses in the marine tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic are actually included in returning to old activities/jobs, some are included in new forms of activities/jobs.

According to the researcher, it can be ascertained that during the COVID-19 pandemic workers and marine tourism business actors on Derawan Island tend to lose money, so it can be predicted that there will be a job transition and the death of the Derawan Island marine tourism industry.

The pattern of job transition when the COVID-19 pandemic attacked the marine tourism industry area of Derawan Island indirectly taught the new pattern of the community of the marine tourism industry area of Derawan Island towards new economic activities. If we analyze it in depth, the strategy is very much in line with Scott's (1983) theory about the mechanism of survival strategies. Business actors in the field of marine tourism on Derawan Island try to position themselves by adapting to economic or social transitions and still be able to compete in it. If they do not carry out this strategy without any innovations made and only enjoy the remnants of the glory that has been achieved. The funds they get from the results of the strategy in the new normal era are intended so that they can continue their business sustainability. Because even though during the pandemic their business is not running, expenses such as electricity, water and maintenance are still running.

CONCLUSION

As previously explained, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Coronavirus Disease 2019) has shaken the world. Therefore, the marine tourism industry on Derawan Island is automatically affected by the presence of COVID-19. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is reported that there has been a drastic decrease in tourism visits on Derawan Island where the main object of this condition is Youth Marine Tourism Business Actors on Derawan Island.

Based on these conditions, inevitably there must be a form of survival strategy as an effort to deal with the attack of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The act of livelihood transition is carried out as a form of survival strategy for Derawan Island youth who work and have a marine tourism business. Scott (1983) stated that survival strategy is an effort to survive individuals and community groups in the midst of limited conditions. In this case, the limitation referred to in this study is the change in conditions caused by the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the marine tourism industry of Derawan Island. Some of the survival strategy actions carried out include becoming a fisherman and reducing the price of tour packages during the new normal.

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