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**The Analysis of the Challenges of Marketing Fish Products Faced by  
Traditional Fish Trader in the Covid-19 Era**

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**Abstract**

The Covid-19 related study aimed at analyzing the challenges in marketing and selling fish products faced traditional merchants during the pandemic crisis. Many studies proved that more marketing and selling of basic needs face various challenges caused by economic difficulties since the outbreak of Corona Virus 2019. To understand this specific problem, a series of data collection ranging from observation, online literature review, and in-depth interviews to several local fish traders have been successfully carried out. The proposed products are fresh fish including shrimp, oysters, and shellfish which are generally traded in traditional marketing method in Indonesia. To make the data collected understandable as proposed in this study, descriptive research methods under a phenomenological approach were applied to see whether the results of the study met the evidence of validity and reliability as needed in most scientific works. Referring to this research question, we have successfully investigated 7 challenges as follows: 1) restrictions on accessing wider customers, 2) Difficult to find new customers, 3) changing buyer behavior, 4) Tight competition, 5) Lack of innovation, 6) Financial and capital problems, 7) maintaining inconsistent sustainable. In order to be able to understand wider results, further complete related studies are needed in order to understand the business development mainly the challenges and opportunity of small fish marketing so that they can help developing this business which is in financially crisis and other limitations due to Covid-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Marketing Challenges, Fish Products, Covid-19 Era, Qualitative study, and Fish Merchant.*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the World Health Organization confirmed the spread of the Corona virus outbreak from the city of Wuhan spread throughout the world, fear and concern continues to increase from health problems to other complexities that have a direct impact on human life and other sectors such as government, community, economy and business in more than 235 countries around the world. (Dong et al., 2020; Wilder-Smith et al., 2020). Until now the Covid-19 problem which was originally only a global human health problem which according to many studies this time the Covid-19 problem is indeed still more global and the implications and impacts compared to the issue of SARS-CoV-2 or influenza pandemic where only a concern in some areas in some countries only Lai et al., (2020).

The implication and impact resulting from this pandemic The COVID-19 outbreak followed by the economic impact of a region will certainly affect the life of an area with challenges and complexity, as well as other life factors. Until now Covid-19 impacts has been becoming the need a lot of studies in order to understand its consequence that weigh on more communities. (Holmes et al., 2020). Recognized by many studies of the effects resulting Covid-19 and other pandemics which are global in nature but the resulting impacts are so localized that the handling effort must be local and multiple. Therefore, the prevention must involve many parties with various solutions and anticipations so that the effects and risks can be minimized as quickly as possible.

The real impact of this pandemic facing by many people besides the health sector is the economy which has implications for other parts such as education resulting obtaining people welfare. It is very logical prosperity where this impact will be difficult to achieve if the Covid-19 outbreak cannot be overcome, such as efforts to minimize the impact does not become greater which prevents people from making efforts to prosper their lives. Realistically, this economic impact is very high felt by the community especially from low-income groups or those who work in daily bases which is the majority in developing countries. (del Rio-Chanona et al., 2020).

Before responding the economic impact, it is very necessary to identify the potential risk arises from each nation or regional policy such as the sectors that are most impacted by stay home and keep distancing regulations anticipating the spread of epidemics. (Madhav et al., 2017). If we pay close attention, the first area of economic activity affected is the public service sectors because these sectors absorb the most labors. It is estimated that the small business and service sector in which a more people are working on this sectors such as fish traders where business directly meet consumers as transaction. These typical business activity require the

traders have to operate such in mobile way from one customer to another in different place. are becoming the priority of government attention where is national restriction policies be implemented such as keep long social distancing. As the result, the application of this regulation can prevent citizens from moving to getting the job to earn incomes. (Hafiz et al., 2020).

Rajindra , (2020) noted that the impact of policies such as social distance in a country like Indonesia where community economic activity is very large depends on the small business sector. So when the application of such rules will stop the wheels of small businesses. Many studies on the impact of Covid-19 suggest that the best solution such as the plight of small businesses during this outbreak is the provision and support of cash for groups affected such as cash for food and basic needs. For something that is almost similar, do not deny much help from the government and the community itself for the movers of small businesses. For example what Waddell, (2017) proposed that local and national aid agencies may help through capacity building and business insights and strategies to overcome the impact or pressures of capital difficulties, how to do business problem looks so complex in a difficult era can come with solution.

This business way can be easily found in the developing countries operating the business in such mobility door to door. Small businesses that suffer the most from economic hardships during the pandemic are one of the traditional fish traders who run businesses with the hawkers approach. Diao et al., (2020) revealed that such this hawk traders can easily be found in developing countries that operate businesses in such moving from one customer place to others. Looking from their business, it appears that their businesses are highly affected of current situation. Therefore, to understand what the difficulties and problems of this hawk fish business, the writer studied it. It is hoped that through this analysis there will be a bright insight as well as an effort to help communicating their problems heard as well as what experienced by other hawkers. This is the main purpose of this study conducted entitled what is the typical challenges of marketing fish products in the Covid-19 Era faced by traditional fish traders?

## **METHODS**

This paper is a phenomenological research with the main purpose was to analyze typical situation and story from the traditional fish traders in conducting their traders in daily bases during the pandemics in several regions in Indonesia. To help understanding these specific small business problems mainly the way they do marketing and trading, financial management and their customers behaviors changes, a serial data collection were conducted to gain the data such as interviewing some fish traders (voice recorder) together some their customers, online data searching, literature review, and field observation as required. After data was collected, another serial of simple analysis was also conducted started from data interview deductive and inductive coding, categorized coding, revision, and

theme interpretation before taking conclusion. (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). While the techniques of choosing participants were done in a purposeful sampling to those fish traders whom the researchers knew them very well.

Through the above approach, the process of collecting data up to the reporting stage will be very helpful in researching and reporting results following by practical methods. After analyzing the data and drawing final conclusions, it is necessary to look at these results if they meet the validity and reliability variables in answering research question. As additional, this data analysis process was also initiated by the application of research skills development framework approaches for higher education research activities in improving the quality from early stage to documentation reporting for all interdisciplinary learning programs at most higher universities and industrial research practices. (Willison et al., 2018).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This result section would be covering the analysis findings of whole research objective of analysis of the typical challenges faced by fish trades in marketing and selling their fish products in during the pandemics 2019. This report is done in a descriptive approach of data analysis of participants voice interviewees as follows:

### **Restriction Access**

Restriction was a serious handicap for delivering fish product and it could not be distributed as in normal situation before Covid-19 pandemics. Therefore, as that is happening, the condition of the fish began to be less quality because the fish was not equipped with preservation such as ice cubes like common fish treatment before consumption. The following is the interview result from one of fish trader over the research question that has been translated in English. – What is your opinion over some location restriction where outside visitors can enter the areas? The answer as follows:

*... People said lock-down – lock-down everywhere and I don't care it. I am just a fish selling person and I don't bring corona here but just selling fish to my costumers. Why the streets are blocked out.. They don't know I just work to earn my incomes. I let them know every day my fish stock left this restriction for outsiders. It is so difficult and I only know to do my only job selling fish for years in this city..." (Participant#1).*

### **Difficulty to find new costumers**

What the fish hawkers face is doing business in difficult conditions resulting from restrictions on the national community for work and other social interactions. It's also not about not building better communication with customers. Realistically, the condition with fish traders is that they are difficult to meet and serve their own customers on time. As a result, customers have to manage other ways to get fish from other traders in the market. Fish traders like not much can be done to attract new customers and build new business relationships.

In the following is an interviewee voice over their difficulty in finding new costumers during the pandemics. The question has been translated into English. Why is it very difficult to earn new costumers now? Here is the answer:

*...During this time selling fish entered a difficult atmosphere. Do not ask to get a new costumers, many old one can not be maintained for longer. There are those who have switched to new sellers in the market because we cannot deliver fish on time. Many areas and roads cannot be entered. It could be costumer does not buy fish every day. They are also the same like us. Maybe they also difficult in money like the day before Covid ..(participant#2)*

### **Changing Costumers behavior**

There are customers buying fish at fish pedestrian and there are also directly to large markets complex. Because there are many fish choices with lower prices as they have the opportunity to buy there. There are also buyers who have moved to other suppliers on the basis of the recommendation of friends to choose other traders with some reasonable reasons.

Here what the answer in the interview session over the question why and how the costumers change their habits to shop certain goods and services:

*... This is a difficult question I answer. Because it's hard to guess what is in the mind of the fish buyer. Some are because it's a bit expensive. There is also because we are late coming in fish supply. There is also a result of moving to another supplier. The point is that we see a lot of changes since the Corona issue. Some are afraid to eat fish. Some are afraid of being billed for old debts. Kind of reason. Anyway, many customers who moved suppliers later returned again.. We believe our incomes are from God, only through human..."(participant # 3).*

### **Tight business competition**

What and how competitors offer their products and serve the costumers with care with the strategic marketing solution is a serious matter here. In fact fish traders has understanding on business rivals, recognizing targeted users is also well done. They also know other business related strategic plan and management are also very dominant in current business practices when considering about competition. For most fish marketing people here are having difficulty in applying as now in difficult times. As a hawkers in Indonesia, merchandise is made by hawkers and street fish markets. They are allowed to arrange in the crowds of visitors and existing buyers. In addition, they mostly carry out marketing the fish in traditional business methods. This is an example what a fish trader's experience and perspective over the question on the tight business competition in difficult time. The following interview excerpts about the fierce competition in selling hawk fish:

*... The usual rival business story about capital. If there is enough capital traders yes can he easy to develop. So, enough capital then the merchandise is good and lots of it. Even so many sell without a service mark. So in my*

*opinion the most important thing is not to follow the way of people. We must have our own way. Indeed I see more and more new face sword. Automatic customer rations have been divided. That's where customers will choose anyone who can be healthy and profitable. It also occurred to what competed with sales during the Covid-19 outbreak that everyone was saving on buying...*

### **Lack of innovation**

Doing such a good business is a good way to practice economy in any situation. So, back to the result of this study, each business of fish shall have a strong motivation in running their jobs. In other word, motivation is a good driver to take then to earn more profitable trades. The fact that these fish traders were so motivated to do their business even during the Covid-19 time. Some of them as what they said in interview are working not a full time as a fish traders during andemics. They only do it as to response their basic needs. Here what he said:

*... I have been trading hawks for a long time. I think it's been around 10 but it's still like this. I want to be rich with businesses. Now I am in lazy sell fish because I play dirty every day. Tired and heavy job during Covid-19 time. But now I also realize it is not easy to open a business in such a difficult time. Finally, I sometimes hoard goods sometimes not. What's more when lock-down I don't sell for nearly a month. Now I need money so I go back...(participant#5).*

### **Financial and capital problems**

Even though capital is not just a money issue, business still makes money as capital. That is the result of this study in the mind of selling hawks, capital is a lot of money. so for that reason they are less successful in managing hawkish fish trade. in the worst conditions caused by the corona virus issue, all financial institutions strictly regulate funds for credit. The following excerpt from the interview:

*... if you ask a lot about capital, it is definitely the most important problem for us to sell fish even though hawks. Just to be honest, today's trading is hard to give, especially with a bank. Either because they are afraid we cannot return it or because the banks themselves don't have money. At the end of the business, we were forced to borrow high-interest money several times higher than the official bank. Inevitably that's the way there is. If this father wants to give me a loan I want ha ha... (participant#6).*

### **Maintaining inconsistent and sustainable**

The typical business that the future prospects is the one who can sustain long time. in other words, business that continues even though not much profit in the beginning run. Ramón Cobo-Benita et al., (2020) finding noted that its necessary to rearrange businesses in a collaborative to win the sustainability to move to better next generation business. Maybe all business people are skeptical

about how business can be profitable if the aim is to continue to be sustainable. Because in this way business people must start from scratch so that improvements can be continued. Next what participant said about sustainability management:

... which can take a long time, people keep on selling fish. People want to be a big boss so that it's not as difficult as hawker merchandise, every day playing around the village. I pray that my child will no longer becoming a sell fish. Let them work in style and lots of salary. Work hard like this but earning low income. So I can't hold on for long and don't plan for long on selling hawks...

## DISCUSSION

Restriction Access t for all of us in doing business is a serious problem for all business people who do trading door to door to meet the costumers. Based on Nicola et al., (2020) work on the impact and implications of the Covid-19 outbreaks, this first research finding over the limitation of access to meet loyal and potential customers experienced most fish traders due to a number of restrictions to the intended location such as to community housing complexes, fish traders began to experience difficulties in fulfilling and managing their fish sales has similar evidence with above study.

Alexander W. Bartik, Marianne Bertrand, Zoë B. Cullen, Edward L. Glaeser, Michael Luca, (2020) studied more small businesses were hard to adopt themselves in difficult time impacted by the covid-19. The did that as early evidence after conducting a survey. Finding new costumers is also a hard job to do currently. Many researches have been done to understand why business people have difficulty getting new customers. Some logic factors are poor service and attention for their customers and even for their own internal managerial business. However, what happens to fish traders is another factor, almost nothing to do with service and attention to customers.

Apart from finding new buyers of a business, understanding costumers situation is also so important here. According to Chauhan & Shah, (2020), there are no studies that can ascertain the causes and ways of business customers changing their buying habits both goods and other services in related Covid-19 condition. But based on the findings of literature and ask directly to customers. They changed the way to buy could be due to several things.

Concerning business competition, many studies on business competition have been carried out on utilizing business practices. For example, business organizers have to know and understand the competition. Baker et al., (2020) said that during pandemics, all business activities charge, some loss and other stay. Only those in higher level of motivation to compete will win. This study gave a closed connection and evidence to what most fish traders do during difficulty days impacted by pandemic.

Not many of business players understand the principle of having freedom on money in life. Boyer, (2020) suggested that having competition in any business



practice is a freedom in a social society in and pandemic of Corona virus time. Therefore, here everyone is having a freedom to earn money. But not fish traders learn and apply this philosophical advice as they work and do small business as their life working career. Kuckertz et al., (2020) working on capital issues is indeed very important and serious when starting a business. Without enough capital, businesses cannot be run under difficult conditions such as outbreaks and other conflicts times. Therefore, what happened to those fish sellers was they have very low-income as the result of owning small number of cash to capitalize their fish business. This condition is also caused by the bank policies do not easily response to people request for credit or business loan.

Sulkowski, (2020) noted that business that the future prospects is the one who can sustain long time. in other words, business that continues even though not much profit in the beginning run. But not all business people are aware of this. Because a business like that guarantees the prosperity and glory of business owners and workers. For business continuity to occur, every business person must understand the principles of his business and be able to apply them in real practices.

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze the business experiences of several local fish traders in managing small business during the economic difficult time as to response national Covid-19 protocol in Indonesia. In general, these study may report here with some main issue and points related to what typical difficulty and challenges faced by these hawkers fish selling management. Here are what study has succeeded to analyzed as follows; the fish trader got serious restrictions on accessing wider customers, the difficult to find new customers, the changing buyer behavior, the tight competition, the lack of innovation, the financial and capital problems, and lastly is the ability to maintaining business inconsistent sustainable so that their business may remain profitable business even in the Covid-19 pandemics.

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