

Developing Micro-Enterprises Based on Traditional Culinary in the Face of COVID-19 Pandemic Disruption: Insights from Indonesia

I Made Darsana^{1*}

¹*Institut Pariwisata dan Bisnis Internasional, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3097-512X>**

Abstract: The research aimed to develop a micro-enterprise business strategy in the traditional culinary field suitable for implementation during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Like many other business processes, traditional culinary micro-enterprises tourism sub-sectors in Indonesia have been affected by government policies for the last two years to curb the spread of COVID-19. However, the pandemic policy has a positive side. Business actors were forced to maximize their ability to innovate by transforming business strategies adaptable to conditions and changes in consumer behavior due to the pandemic. The qualitative approach using the library research data collection method was used in this study. The findings show that a micro business strategy appropriate during a pandemic in the traditional culinary field is characterized by three elements: locally sourcing ingredients and materials, using local traditional recipes, and the production process carried out according to local community cultural methods. This will be a form of empowerment based on locally available resources. This service concept can utilize digital technology support in product promotion, ordering, and distribution while adhering to strict health protocol standards. The theoretical implications resulting from the research can contribute to science in the field of tourism, especially those related to traditional food and beverage businesses. This study's importance lies in its practical relevance to traditional culinary micro-enterprises during situations similar to the COVID-19 pandemic, its emphasis on local empowerment and sustainability, and its integration of digital technology. The study will expand new business model for traditional culinary micro-enterprises that can be implemented during the pandemic.

Keywords: Micro Business, Traditional Culinary, Business Strategy, COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 Pandemic is having an impact on the tourism industry globally. The number of visits by foreign and domestic tourists has drastically decreased due to government policies implementing lockdowns in several countries and widespread social restrictions, leading to many tourism-related businesses' collapse (Karabulut et al., 2020; Milesi-Ferretti, 2021; UNWTO, 2020). In Indonesia, the number of foreign tourist visits during the January-October 2021 period was only 1.3 million people compared to the previous year January-October 2020, where the number of visits reached 3.7 million. The number of tourist visits to Indonesia in January-October 2019 reached 13.4 million people before the COVID-19 Pandemic (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021).

Traditional culinary micro-enterprises are included in the tourism industry sector, which is experiencing a slump due to the pandemic. Traditional cuisine, in a general sense, can be defined as food that is inherited and traditionally consumed from generation to generation (Almli et al., 2011; Guerrero et al., 2009; Kristbergsson & Oliveira, 2016; Guerrero et al., 2009; Saunders, 2010), showing the characteristics of an area and the values that exist within the area (Aprile et al., 2012; Guerrero et al., 2009). According to World Health Organization (2008), individual businesses, restaurants, small factories, and large-scale food processing industries can produce traditional food and beverages. The definition of micro business in the Law Number 20 of 2008 of the Republic of Indonesia is a productive business owned by an individual or an individual business entity with a net worth of a maximum of IDR50,000,000, excluding land and buildings where the business is located or has sales proceeds or an annual maximum revenue turnover of IDR300,000,000 (Republik Indonesia, 2008). Micro-enterprises in Indonesia have a very large role in the national economy. According to the 2019 data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises of the Republic of Indonesia, the number of micro-enterprises was 65.4 million or equivalent to 98.67% of the total business units, capable of absorbing over 8 million people, and contribution to gross domestic income (GDP) of 37.35% (Kementerian Koperasi dan Usaha Kecil Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2021).

Micro-enterprises in Indonesia, which sell a variety of regional specialities, besides generating income for their

livelihoods, also play an important role in preserving and introducing culture to foreign and domestic tourists visiting their area. Traditional culinary micro-businesses in Indonesia are generally located around tourist destinations, so the survival of businesses only relies on tourist visits to tourist destinations. As a result, many are forced to go out of business during the pandemic because no foreign or domestic tourists are visiting.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 Pandemic has a positive side for business actors. The spirit to survive difficult conditions and the creativity to adapt to the existing changes are needed. One of the changes that have occurred due to the COVID-19 Pandemic is changes in consumer or tourist behavior adapting to new normal conditions (Alsetoohy et al., 2021; Chebli & Said, 2020; Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia, 2021; Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Sigala, 2020). This requires business actors in the tourism industry to adapt immediately by transforming their business models to survive and thrive.

Several theoretical studies have examined how businesses in the tourism industry adapt and transform their business models to ensure survival and growth. For instance, Andrianto et al. (2022) proposed a business model innovation process (BMIP) specifically designed for tourism businesses. Their study involved a review of existing concepts and frameworks to develop the BMIP. Similarly, Sahebalzamani and Bertella (2018) focused on nature tourism and explored studies on business models with a sustainability perspective. They incorporated key findings from these studies to develop a conceptual framework for sustainable business models in nature tourism.

Another noteworthy study by Azmi et al. (2023) systematically reviewed and analyzed elements related to new tourism destination products. They highlighted the significance of sustaining the tourism industry and created a model for innovative tourism products. Additionally, Peñarroya-Farell and Miralles (2022) conducted a cross-case comparative analysis of ten micro and small firms in Spain's cultural and creative industries. Their research aimed to understand how these enterprises adapted their business models during the COVID-19 crisis. They identified various patterns of business model dynamics, including business model innovation, business model adaptation, and business model evolution.

Collectively, these studies contribute to the understanding of how businesses in the tourism sector can navigate challenges and seize opportunities by adjusting their business models.

Many research studies have discussed MSMEs during the pandemic, while the topics studied are the impacts experienced by MSMEs due to the pandemic (Aftab et al., 2021; Fairlie, 2020; Sonobe et al., 2021; Bartik et al., 2020), supply chain disruptions experienced by MSMEs (Alsetoohy et al., 2021; Fountain, 2021; Kumar et al., 2020; Ramanathan et al., 2021), government policies for MSMEs (Sonobe et al., 2021; Igarashi et al., 2021; Bartik et al., 2020), difficulties faced by MSMEs to survive (Igarashi et al., 2021), the efforts of MSME actors to deal with crises during the pandemic (Agarwal et al., 2021; Zaazou & Abdou, 2021; Watkins et al., 2007; Thukral, 2021, Tyas et al., 2021), application of digital technology by MSMEs during the pandemic (Cassalino et al. 2020; Kimuli et al., 2021; Nair, 2021). However, no research studies business strategies focusing on micro-businesses in the traditional culinary field amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This is important considering that currently, micro-enterprises in Indonesia are especially in the tourism sector, which needs support from various parties regarding ideas related to business management strategies to rise during the pandemic. Several studies review changes in business models during the pandemic. Still, the object of research focuses on large-scale manufacturing (Seetharaman, 2020) and MSMEs operating in the service industry (Gregurec et al., 2021), as well as research by Ibarra et al. (2020) on innovation. MSME's business model only focuses on consumers.

The objective of this study is to identify and propose a micro business strategy that can be effectively implemented by traditional culinary micro-enterprises in Indonesia during periods similar to the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the impact of government policies and changes in consumer behavior. This specifically includes:

- Assessing the challenges faced by traditional culinary micro-enterprises in Indonesia due to government policies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Exploring innovative approaches and strategies adopted by traditional culinary businesses to adapt to the pandemic conditions and changes in consumer behavior.
- Analyzing the potential benefits and implications of locally sourcing ingredients and materials, using traditional recipes, and employing production processes aligned with local community cultural methods.
- Investigating the role of digital technology in supporting traditional culinary micro-enterprises, specifically in terms of product promotion, ordering, and distribution while ensuring compliance with health protocols.
- Providing recommendations and guidelines for traditional culinary micro-enterprises to posit a micro business strategy that enhances resilience, sustainability, and growth during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Contributing to the theoretical knowledge in the field of tourism, particularly related to traditional food and beverage businesses, by expanding the understanding of effective strategies during times of crisis.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to offer practical insights and guidance to traditional culinary micro-enterprises, which can be used as a basis for consideration for policy making to rebuild tourism, especially the traditional culinary tourism sub-sector.

The theoretical implications resulting from the research can contribute to the academic understanding of the field of tourism, especially those related to traditional food and beverage businesses, and facilitate the growth and resilience of the traditional culinary sector when faced with a situation such as the COVID 19 pandemic.

Traditional cuisine is important always to be developed because it has the urgency to preserve ancestral culture in the form of regional specialties/drinks, as a support for the surrounding community's economy, and become special interest tours that can enrich tourist destinations in Indonesia. The fundamental findings are a new business model for traditional culinary micro-enterprises that can be implemented during the pandemic.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative methodology to investigate and comprehend the significance of various people or groups resulting from social problems. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research can generally be used to study topics such as people's lives, histories, behaviors, concepts or phenomena, social problems, and others. Academic journals, government reports, statistics, websites, and other supplementary sources were used in library research to gather data. The development of traditional culinary microbusinesses in Indonesia is supported by various factors, which are interpreted using the descriptive qualitative analysis method.

The significance of employing the qualitative methodology for this research lies in its ability to provide in-depth insights and a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the development of traditional culinary microbusinesses in Indonesia. By using descriptive qualitative analysis, the researchers were able to interpret and analyze the collected data, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the research subject.

In previous studies, Sahebalzamani and Bertella (2018) utilized a qualitative approach to explore studies on business models with a sustainability perspective in a study that focused on sustainability in nature tourism. Their study reviewed existing concepts and frameworks to develop a business model for sustainable nature tourism. Similarly, Azmi et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative research study to explore elements related to new tourism destination products examining small businesses facing economic hardships. Through studying documentation relevant to the study, they gained insights into the challenges and coping strategies employed by small businesses.

In this study, the findings obtained through the descriptive qualitative analysis shed light on the various factors that contribute to the development of traditional culinary microbusinesses in Indonesia. The qualitative approach allowed for a deep understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of individuals and groups involved in this context. By analyzing the data gathered from multiple sources, including academic journals,

government reports, and statistics, the researchers were able to provide valuable insights and contribute to the existing knowledge on the subject matter.

3. FINDINGS

The Indonesian government responded to the COVID-19 virus outbreak by issuing policies through Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions in the Context of Accelerating the Handling of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Republik Indonesia, 2020). The existence of this policy resulted in a decrease in income and the survival of the food and beverage business because the supply of raw materials from outside the region was hampered, sales decreased due to regulations limiting operating hours and seating capacity for consumers, as well as changes in consumer behavior that tended to switch to online purchases following the implementation of the instituted health protocols. Based on the research results, three fundamental aspects can be formulated as the basis for a business strategy to generate micro-businesses in the traditional culinary field during the pandemic.

3.1. Aspect 1: Based on Local Resources

Indonesia is a diverse nation with many different ethnic tribes and a wide range of industries and regional specialties. Generally, traditional regional cuisine in Indonesia adapts to the local people's culture, religion, and customs. Regional specialties are passed down from generation to generation without reducing or adding to what has been outlined. Therefore, regional specialties usually reflect the characteristics and identity of the people so that they are very easy to find and recognize.

During the pandemic, Indonesia's food and beverage industry experienced serious problems due to the several raw materials that had to be imported (Yanwardhana, 2021). However, traditional Indonesian cuisine is created from food ingredients available in the region (Harsana & Triwidayati, 2020; Rianti et al., 2018), dependence on raw materials from outside the region and even imports from abroad are not found in traditional culinary businesses in Indonesia. For example, coastal areas in Indonesia will have more typical foods with basic ingredients from marine resources such as fish, shrimp, squid, etc. Meanwhile, regional specialties from mountainous areas will be dominated by tubers, beans, and vegetables due to the cold mountainous climate. This makes regional specialties a form of culture with regional characteristics, specific, diverse and types that reflect the natural potential of each region. Processed from food ingredients available from the farm and the local market system.

Traditional culinary processing in Indonesia is carried out according to local culture and customs, all adapting to recipes, equipment, and methods that predecessors have passed down. Generally, the way of processing regional specialties and their taste is hereditary, and there is little innovation. More specifically, the following are the characteristics of regional specialties: 1) The food recipes obtained have been known and applied from generation to generation from their predecessors, which are the result of a combination of local mainstay spices; 2) The use of certain traditional tools in the processing of these dishes; 3) Cooking technique is a way of processing that must be done to get a distinctive taste and appearance of a dish. This makes traditional culinary products in Indonesia different in each region, resulting in various food products.

Traditional culinary businesses are usually carried out by small entrepreneurs or households who can easily produce products from locally available materials. Traditional culinary entrepreneurs can empower the community around their place of business by using local resources, including human resources. The existence of local entrepreneurs who have businesses in their regions means opening up employment opportunities that can benefit the local community as workers, which drives the economy in the region. Apart from being entrepreneurs and employees, the human resources empowered in traditional culinary businesses are farmers and fishermen whose harvests can be sold as raw materials, considering that traditional culinary arts use local raw materials to maintain food traditions and tastes (Wijaya, 2019; Hernández-Rojas & Huete Alcocer, 2021). There are traditional culinary micro business owners in Indonesia who double as employees carrying out all operational activities with other employees (Kusumaningrum et al., 2021); other employees are generally family members. Especially during the current pandemic, it is advantageous to have employees who come from kinship relationships because they will feel

they want to advance their business higher, as well as a sense of sacrifice (such as lowering wages and increasing working hours without pay) more than those from outside.

Based on the explanation above, the sustainability of traditional culinary micro-businesses cannot be affected by a situation like the COVID-19 Pandemic when using locally-based resources, like locally available raw materials (Sims, 2009; Zampier et al., 2022), like recipes and cooking techniques from ancestral heritage, to human resources by empowering local communities. Aspects of local-based resources become an important component in traditional culinary micro-businesses because they can preserve cultural heritage in regional specialties. Sims (2009) contends that the growing number of tourists interested in local culture and heritage presents a great opportunity for traditional food. One of the best ways to understand local culture and heritage is through traditional culture. Additionally, local resources can benefit the community (Nummedal & Hall, 2006; Okumus et al., 2007; Sims, 2009). Long (2010) stated that traditional culinary businesses could provide opportunities for local communities to supply their local harvest to produce quality food. According to Xiaomin (2017), using endogenous ingredients in cooking, such as distinctive and regional raw materials, is characteristic of traditional food. The flavors and aromas produced by the ingredients and spices are distinctive because they are unique. Local and traditional culinary practices are based on specific techniques and abilities that allow them to endure and be safeguarded against the onslaught of advanced industry or technological developments. Traditional food tourism serves to boost employment and absorb labor force. It must be preserved by being used, developed, and maintained.

3.2. Aspect 2: Implementation of health protocol

The Indonesian government implores the populace to adhere to the “5M” health protocol to prevent cases of the spread of COVID-19, which calls for the use of masks, maintaining distance, washing hands, avoiding crowds, and reducing mobility (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2021). The impact of health protocol implementation caused changes in consumer behavior in purchasing food and beverage products. Consumers tend to buy food that can last a long time and make savings during the current economic conditions; choose a place to eat that implements health protocols; choose take away and delivery services to minimize contact with other people as opposed to buying food and eating on the spot (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia, 2021).

Anticipating changes in consumer behavior, several culinary businesses in Indonesia have implemented health protocols, including mandatory mask areas, providing hand washing/hand sanitizers for consumers, reducing consumer seating capacity (Hafid, 2021), completing requests for delivery and takeout orders, using non-cash transactions to reduce the risk of transmission (Ezizwita & Sukma, 2021); and maintaining social distance. Business owners must also wear masks and gloves and make plastic barriers on the checkout counter to keep consumers and cashiers from transmitting COVID-19 through droplets (Antara News, 2020). According to Sianturi (2021), the government always prioritizes health protocols in running a culinary business, and sanctions in the form of forced closures of business premises will still be carried out if business actors commit violations amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, culinary business actors in Indonesia still violate health protocols (VIVA, 2021). It is observed that there are still violations, including physical distancing health protocols, supporting facilities for measuring thermo gun temperatures, restrictions on seating distances are not ideal, and The cashier barrier with visitors when paying is not universally adhered to. In serving the buffet meal, they have not provided hands glove/plastic gloves and still serve themselves one serving utensil (Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja Kabupaten Kulonprogo, 2020).

Aspect 2 explains the need for traditional culinary micro-businesses in Indonesia to implement health protocols when providing consumer services. The research findings found that the production process, consumer service, and the delivery of culinary business products must accommodate consumer behavior that changes following the pandemic (Wen et al., 2021) and government regulations on health protocols. Traditional culinary innovations in frozen food can be done to meet consumers who want durable food and low prices (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia, 2021).

3.2. Aspect 3: Digital Technology Support

People's technological needs change quickly due to the rapid development of technology and lifestyles. Digital technology is the primary option here. Digital technology prioritizes tasks completed by computers or other digital devices over those completed by humans. Still, it is typically more automated and has more complex operating systems (Danuri, 2019). The third aspect of the research is exploring the use of digital technology by traditional culinary micro businesses in Indonesia to support their business processes.

Traditional culinary micro businesses use digital technology as a promotional medium, and culinary businesses usually carry out several activities in selling on social media, such as uploading products, ordering procedures, product composition and prices. This method is easier and saves advertising costs compared to going offline and renting a place to sell. Social media that MSME actors often use to market their products are Facebook, Whatsapp, and Instagram (Andriyani et al., 2021), making videos of food processing processes to convince customers to choose raw materials, production or processing processes to consumers' hands (Antara News, 2020); using a variety of social media and online marketplaces to conduct business. Another tactic business actors employ involves using online marketplaces and social media platforms for trading. The use of online social media and marketplaces is the right choice for micro and medium-sized culinary business actors to conduct trade and marketing to survive and even have the opportunity to reach new market shares (Rakhmanita, 2021; De Souza et al., 2021).

Digital technology is also used as a means of ordering culinary products online. MSME actors can adopt a strategy by registering their culinary business with online transportation services such as Go-food, Grab-food or local couriers (Andriyani et al., 2021). Furthermore, digital technology can be used by traditional culinary micro-enterprises to optimize product and service delivery (Ezizwita & Sukma, 2021). The COVID-19 Pandemic is forcing people to stay at home to protect themselves from the threat of the virus spreading. Digital communication technology is the dominant bridge connecting businesses to carry out their routines and consumers ordering food. This can be seen from the increase in online delivery services from online platforms during the pandemic (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia, 2021).

Digital technology, the third fundamental aspect in the traditional culinary micro business strategy, plays an important role in communication with consumers during the pandemic because it is contactless and cost-effective. So it is suitable to be applied by traditional culinary micro-businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The role of digital technology in establishing communication with consumers is as a medium for business promotion via the internet, marketing culinary products online, and supporting product delivery services.

CONCLUSION

Many businesses in the tourism sector have collapsed due to government policies instituting lockdowns in several countries and large-scale social restrictions, so the number of visits by foreign and domestic tourists has decreased drastically. Traditional culinary micro-enterprises are included in the tourism industry sector, which is experiencing a slump due to the pandemic. Traditional culinary micro-businesses in Indonesia are generally located around tourist destinations, so the survival of businesses only relies on tourist visits to tourist destinations. As a result, many are forced to go out of business during the pandemic because no foreign or domestic tourists are visiting. Government policies contained in Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions as an effort to Accelerate the Handling of COVID-19 has a negative impact on the sustainability of this business model, so its existence needs to be pushed back so that it can rise and develop amidst the shocks of the pandemic in the last two years. Based on the research results, three fundamental aspects can be formulated as the basis for a business strategy to generate micro-businesses in the traditional culinary field during the pandemic. Traditional culinary micro-enterprises in Indonesia have a strategic role in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and in preserving the archipelago's cultural tourism. This research was limited to recommending three fundamental aspects for a business strategy to generate micro-businesses in the traditional culinary field during the pandemic. In this sense, and considering this limitation, it is suggested that the other micro-businesses sector can

be studied in future research. Also, for micro-businesses in other countries, since the COVID-19 pandemic impacts the tourism industry worldwide.

To further enhance understanding and address research gaps, future studies could explore the implementation and outcomes of the suggested business model in actual traditional culinary micro-enterprises. Additionally, investigating the impact of these strategies on the wider tourism ecosystem and the cultural heritage preservation efforts would be valuable. Further research could also focus on evaluating the long-term sustainability and scalability of the proposed business model and its implications for policy development and industry stakeholders.

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