
CHALLENGES AND DYNAMICS OF THE MERDEKA FISH MARKET IN TANJUNG TIRAM, BATUBARA REGENCY

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the challenges and dynamics faced by the Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency, with a focus on the problems of street vendors who sell on the shoulder of the road. Ethnographic methods are used to deeply understand the social, economic, and environmental conditions of the market. The results of the study show that the existence of street vendors causes congestion, conflicts with official traders, and poor waste management. In addition, the lack of access to technology and information is an obstacle to increasing the competitiveness of traders. The study also found that efforts to control traders by local governments are often ineffective due to the lack of adequate alternative solutions. Therefore, better market space arrangement, infrastructure improvement, and collaboration between the government and stakeholders are needed. Recommendations include empowering traders through skills training, sustainable market management, and improving the quality of service for consumers. By implementing these suggestions, the Merdeka Fish Market is expected to function more optimally, provide benefits for all parties, and improve the economic welfare of the surrounding community. This research contributes to the development of informal economic theory and traditional market management, as well as a reference for further research on market dynamics in other regions.

Keywords: Challenges, Dinamila, Fish Market, Coal

INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency, is one of the largest fish trading centers in North Sumatra. Located on the east coast of Sumatra Island, this market has a vital role in supporting the economy of the local community, especially for those who depend on the fisheries sector. Over time, the Merdeka Fish Market has experienced various challenges and dynamics that affect its performance, both in terms of social, economic, and environmental. One of the problems that sticks out in this market is the increasing number of traders selling on the shoulder of the road, thus causing various negative impacts on the community and the smooth running of trading activities in the market (Muhdafil, 2021). In the economic context, the Merdeka Fish Market not only serves local needs, but also becomes a fish distribution center for the surrounding areas. However, this does not mean without obstacles. Market dependence on marine catch is often influenced by weather conditions and seasons, which leads to fluctuations in fish availability and prices. In addition, more and more traders selling on the shoulder of the road cause congestion and disrupt the flow of traffic around the market (Mahasin, 2021). This condition slows down the distribution of goods and reduces consumer convenience, thereby potentially reducing sales volume and profitability for authorized traders in the market.

The Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency, is one of the vital trade centers for the local community, especially for fishermen and fish traders. This market not only functions as a place for economic transactions, but also as a social space that reflects the dynamics of people's lives. However, as time progresses, this market faces various challenges that affect its operations and sustainability. One of the main challenges faced is the presence of street vendors selling on the shoulder of the road, which creates disorder and disrupts the smooth flow of traffic. Research by (Rini, 2012) suggests that informal economies, such as street vendors, often emerge in response to limitations in the formal economy and strict regulation. In the context of the Merdeka Fish Market, this phenomenon reflects the choice of traders to avoid high rental costs and formal requirements that are difficult to meet. This is in line with the study (Magfirah & Sohrah, 2022) who researched traditional markets in Surabaya, where the existence of street vendors causes congestion and unfair competition with formal traders.

Further (Pratiwi, 2016) In his theory of urban ecology, he emphasizes the importance of environmental management in creating a quality of life in urban areas. In the Merdeka Fish Market, poor waste management, especially as a result of street vendor activities, has the potential to pollute the environment and damage the attractiveness of the market. Research by (Hakim, 2019) It also shows that inadequate waste management can have a negative impact on public health. In addition, research by (Kooiman, 2003) About Good Governance highlights the importance of collaboration between the government and the community in the management of

public resources. In the Merdeka Fish Market, the lack of collaboration between the government and traders results in ineffective control of street vendors, thus hindering the overall market growth. With a deep understanding of these challenges and dynamics, this study aims to provide a clear picture of the condition of the Merdeka Fish Market and offer recommendations for future improvements.

In addition, challenges in this market also arise from changes in government policies related to marine resource management and fish trade regulations. Some policies aimed at protecting the sustainability of fishery resources are sometimes considered a burden by fishermen and traders. For example, policies regarding restrictions on certain fishing gear or fishing regulations in certain areas are often seen as a threat to their survival. In this context, the problem of traders selling on the shoulder of the road further exacerbates the situation, because policies related to the arrangement of market space are often ignored. The role of local governments and related institutions in managing this market is also part of an interesting dynamic to observe. The Batubara Regency Government has made efforts to improve market infrastructure and provide training to fishermen and traders on sustainable practices. However, the implementation of the policy still encounters various obstacles, especially related to the control of street vendors who sell on the shoulder of the road. This control often does not go smoothly because there are protests from traders who feel dependent on the location to earn their daily income.

The lack of access to more modern technology and information is another challenge at the Merdeka Fish Market. Many fishermen and traders still use traditional methods in doing business, so they often fall behind the development of the wider market. The reliance on old ways is also seen in how street vendors choose to sell on the shoulder of the road, which while more practical and easy, is not sustainable in the long run. Without proper structuring, the potential for market development can be hampered by conflicts of interest between formal and informal traders. Even so, the Merdeka Fish Market still has great potential to grow. Its strategic location and the availability of abundant marine resources around Batubara Regency provide opportunities for this market to become a larger and more organized fish trading center. However, this potential can only be realized if problems such as congestion caused by traders on the shoulder of the road can be solved completely. Collaborative efforts are needed between the government, fishermen, traders, and the general public to face various existing challenges, including market spatial problems.

The challenges in the management and development of the Merdeka Fish Market are also closely related to the welfare of fishermen and official traders. As the backbone of the market economy, they often feel disadvantaged by the existence of street vendors who sell in informal

places. On the other hand, these informal traders also face difficult economic conditions so they choose shortcuts to earn daily income. Local governments need to find fair and wise solutions to reorganize this market, including providing enough space for street vendors so that they can sell without harming others. Competition between markets in the surrounding area also exacerbates the problems that exist in the Merdeka Fish Market. The region has several other fish markets that also operate on a large scale, so the Merdeka Fish Market needs to be more competitive in attracting buyers. The existence of traders on the shoulder of the road who often do not comply with the rules actually lowers the image of this market in the eyes of consumers. If this condition is not overcome properly, the Merdeka Fish Market has the potential to lose its advantage compared to other markets.

On the social side, the existence of street vendors also creates its own dynamics. Although they are often seen as part of the market layout problem, they are also an important part of society that makes a living in the way they deem most efficient. Social interactions among these market players, both formal and informal, create complex relationships. Sometimes there is solidarity between them, but conflicts are also inevitable, especially when there are conflicts of interest regarding the location of sales and access to consumers. In an effort to solve this problem, a holistic and sustainable market development strategy is needed. Better market space arrangement, including providing a dedicated area for street vendors, should be a priority (Ramadan, 2015). In addition, there needs to be an effort to increase awareness among traders about the importance of obeying the rules and selling in the right place. With better management, the Merdeka Fish Market can be an example of how traditional markets can operate in a modern way without sacrificing the needs of the wider community.

Environmental problems caused by the accumulation of garbage on the shoulder of the road should also be a serious concern. The government and the community must work together to create a better waste management system, in order to reduce the negative impact on the surrounding environment. Awareness of the importance of maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability needs to be instilled among all market players, including informal traders who sell in informal places. Overall, the Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency, is a reflection of the challenging local economic dynamics. By solving problems such as congestion and roadside sales, this market can become more efficient and profitable for all parties. Strong support from the government as well as good collaboration between all stakeholders are key to overcoming these challenges and taking the Independent Fish Market to a better level in the future.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses ethnographic methods to understand the challenges and dynamics of the Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency, especially related to the problem of traders selling on the shoulder of the road. The ethnographic method was chosen because this approach allows researchers to be directly involved in the daily lives of traders, fishermen, and consumers in the market, thus gaining an in-depth picture of the social interactions, habits, and dynamics that occur in the field.

1. Ethnographic Approach

The ethnographic method aims to explore social phenomena from the internal perspective of market participants through participatory observation and direct interaction (Spradley, 1997). With this method, the researcher seeks to understand how traders and consumers see, understand, and overcome the various challenges they face in trading activities at the Merdeka Fish Market. This research will also explore the social dynamics between official traders and street vendors who sell on the shoulder of the road.

2. Research Location

The location of the study focuses on the Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency. This market was chosen because of the complexity of the problems faced, especially related to the dynamics of street vendors occupying the shoulder of the road and its impact on market governance and overall trading activities.

3. Research Subject

The research subjects include various actors who play a role in market activities, namely:

- Authorized traders who sell in the market,
- Street vendors who sell on the shoulder of the road,
- Fishermen who supply fish to the market,
- Consumers who shop at the market,
- The local government and related officials are responsible for market management.

Research subjects are selected based on their role in the market and their interaction with the dynamics that occur, either directly or indirectly (Sugiyono, 2010). Subjects will be selected purposively (based on research objectives) to obtain diverse and representative views.

4. Data Collection

Data collection is carried out through the following techniques:

- Participatory Observation: The researcher will be directly involved in the daily lives of traders and market visitors for some time to understand the daily activities at the Merdeka Fish Market. This observation will include buying and selling activities, interactions between traders and

consumers, relationships between traders, and dynamics between official traders and street vendors who sell on the shoulder of the road.

- **In-Depth Interviews:** Interviews will be conducted with official traders, street vendors, consumers, fishermen, and local governments responsible for the market. These interviews are semi-structured, focusing on their experiences related to market governance issues, the role of government, interactions between market actors, as well as their views on street vendors selling on the shoulder of the road.
- **Documentation:** The researcher will collect various relevant documents, such as market regulations, market management records from local governments, and media reports on the problems of the Merdeka Fish Market. Visual documentation, such as photos and videos, will also be used to support descriptions of field conditions and activities in the market.
- **Field Journal:** Researchers will record experiences, observations, and interactions while in the field. This journal serves as a reflective record that will assist researchers in analyzing data and understanding the existing social context (Jogiyanto Hartono, 2018).

5. Data Analysis Process

The data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation will be analyzed qualitatively with an interpretive approach. This analysis involves several stages (Wijaya, 2018):

- **Data Coding:** Each data collected will be coded based on themes or topics that arise during the research, such as roadside sales issues, interactions between traders, conflicts and cooperation between authorized and street vendors, and consumers' views of the market.
- **Theme Analysis:** Once the data is coded, relevant themes will be identified to understand the social patterns and dynamics occurring in the market. This theme includes views on market management, spatial issues, and conflicts of interest between official traders and street vendors.
- **Data Triangulation:** To ensure the validity of the results, data from various sources (observations, interviews, documentation) will be compared and synthesized. This aims to get a more holistic picture and reduce bias that may arise from just one data collection method.
- **Ethnographic Reflection:** Researchers will reflect on their positions and roles during the study, including how their interactions with the research subjects may affect the data obtained. This reflection is important to maintain sensitivity to subjectivity in data interpretation.

6. Research Ethics

This study pays attention to ethical aspects that are very important in ethnographic research, namely:

- **Informed Consent:** Before conducting observations or interviews, the researcher will ask for consent from each participant, explaining the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and their right not to participate if they feel uncomfortable.

- Confidentiality: The identity of the participants will be kept confidential, and the information obtained will only be used for the purposes of this research.
- Non-intervention: The researcher will maintain neutrality and will not interfere with the activities of traders or other parties in the market during the study.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This research was conducted using ethnographic methods to understand the challenges and dynamics of the Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency. The main focus of this research is the problems faced by the market, especially related to traders who sell on the shoulder of the road, as well as their impact on market governance, social interaction, and economic life of official and informal traders.

1. Overview of Merdeka Fish Market

From the results of participatory observation and in-depth interviews, the Merdeka Fish Market is known as the main center of economic activity in Tanjung Tiram. This market is a meeting point between fishermen, fish traders, and consumers from various regions. However, one very striking problem is the increasing number of street vendors selling on the shoulder of the road. These street vendors, who are mostly small fish traders, choose the shoulder of the road as a place to sell because of easier access to consumers and lower costs compared to renting stalls inside the market. However, this practice causes traffic congestion around the market, creates inconvenience for consumers, and raises tensions with authorized traders who feel disadvantaged.

2. Social Dynamics at the Merdeka Fish Market

The social dynamics between official traders and street vendors are quite complex. Based on the results of the interviews, the official traders complained that traders who sell on the shoulder of the road have a negative impact on their income. This happens because street vendors have faster access to consumers, who are often reluctant to enter the market due to congestion and uncomfortable environments. Meanwhile, street vendors admit that they are forced to sell on the shoulder of the road due to limited capital and the high cost of renting stalls in the market. They feel they have no other choice but to use public spaces to maintain their daily income. They also feel that the government is not enough to provide effective solutions, such as providing special places for affordable small traders.

3. Merchant-Consumer Interaction

Observations show that many consumers choose to shop at street vendors because of easier access, although the location on the shoulder of the road often causes inconvenience. Traffic congestion and cleanliness are the main issues for consumers who shop in this market.

Consumers stated that they were often bothered by the chaotic road conditions due to the large number of unorganized traders, as well as the lack of adequate parking spaces around the market.

Table 1. Summary of Consumer Views

| Key Issues | Percentage of Consumers Who Complain | Description |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Congestion | 80% | Traders on the shoulder of the road cause traffic flow to be stalled, making it difficult to park. |
| Market Cleanliness | 60% | A lot of garbage and smell around the market area, especially from fish remains. |
| Accessibility | 50% | It is easier to shop at street vendors, although it is not convenient. |

4. Fishermen's Views on the Market

The fishermen interviewed stated that the Merdeka Fish Market is the main place to sell their catch. However, they also complained about fluctuations in fish prices that are often unstable, especially in certain seasons. In addition, they see that competition between official traders and street vendors also affects the distribution of fish, where often fish sold on the shoulder of the road sells faster because the location is more strategic and easily accessible.

5. The Role of the Government and Market Management Policies

The fishermen interviewed stated that the Merdeka Fish Market is the main place to sell their catch. However, they also complained about fluctuations in fish prices that are often unstable, especially in certain seasons. In addition, they see that competition between official traders and street vendors also affects the distribution of fish, where often fish sold on the shoulder of the road sells faster because the location is more strategic and easily accessible.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide in-depth insight into the challenges and dynamics faced by the Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency, with the main focus on the problems of street vendors who sell on the shoulder of the road. This discussion will integrate research findings with relevant theories and previous research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

1. Street Vendor Irregularities and Their Impact on Market Infrastructure

One of the main findings of this study is the increase in the number of street vendors selling on the shoulder of the road, which causes traffic congestion and reduces consumer

comfort. This phenomenon is in line with the theory of informal economy put forward by (Muhtar, 2024), which explains that the informal economy often develops in response to economic limitations and strict regulations in the formal economy. Street vendors choose to sell outside the formal market due to easier access and lower operational costs, although this has a negative impact on the market infrastructure.

Previous research by (Tahir & Riskasari, 2015) in Makassar Market also found that the existence of street vendors causes congestion and unfair competition with formal traders. This shows that similar problems do not only occur in the Merdeka Fish Market, but also in other traditional markets in Indonesia. This irregularity of street vendors shows the need for more effective market space arrangement to accommodate the needs of all parties without sacrificing market infrastructure.

2. Competition between Authorized Traders and Street Vendors

The dynamics of competition between official traders and street vendors in the Merdeka Fish Market reflects the conflict between the formal and informal economy. Official traders complained of a negative impact on their income because street vendors have faster access to consumers. This phenomenon is in line with Bertrand's Theory of Competition, which states that competition among traders offering similar products can lead to price drops and profit margins (Bertrand, 1883). In this context, competition between formal traders and street vendors can result in decreased service quality and economic instability for formal traders.

Study by (Arifianto, 2006) in the Tegal Traditional Market shows that competition between formal traders and street vendors often causes tension and conflict, similar to those found in the Merdeka Fish Market. These conflicts exacerbate social dynamics in the market and reduce solidarity between traders, which in turn can hinder the overall growth of the market.

3. Waste Management and Environmental Impact

The study also highlights the problem of poor waste management around the Merdeka Fish Market, especially caused by street vendors. Organic waste such as fish residues and plastics accumulate, creating unpleasant odors and polluting the environment. These findings are consistent with the theory of Urban Ecology which emphasizes the importance of environmental management in maintaining quality of life in urban areas (Pratiwi, 2016). Poor waste management not only damages the aesthetics of the market but also negatively impacts public health and aquatic ecosystems in Tanjung Tiram.

Research by (Rahim *et al.*, 2024) shows that inadequate waste management can cause water and soil pollution, as well as reduce market attractiveness for consumers. This emphasizes that improving the waste management system is a crucial step to improve the quality of the market environment and the sustainability of market operations.

4. The Role of the Government in Market Management

The results of the study show that local governments try to control street vendors, but these efforts are often met with resistance due to the lack of adequate alternative solutions. This is in line with the theory of Good Governance which emphasizes the importance of community participation and collaboration between the government and stakeholders in decision-making (Kooiman, 2003). The unsuccessful control of street vendors at the Merdeka Fish Market shows that the market management policy has not been fully inclusive and does not consider the needs and economic limitations of street vendors.

Study by (Kudri *et al.*, 2024) found that the success of structuring the market relies heavily on the active involvement of all stakeholders, including street vendors. More comprehensive solutions, such as the provision of affordable sales spaces and supporting facilities for street vendors, can help reduce conflicts and improve the efficiency of market management.

5. Access to Technology and Information

This study identifies the lack of access to modern technology and information as a challenge for traders in the Merdeka Fish Market. Many traders still use traditional methods in doing business, so they are lagging behind the development of the wider market. This phenomenon is in accordance with the Innovation Diffusion Theory by Rogers in (Kisno & Fatmawati, 2023), which explains that the adoption of new technologies can improve efficiency and competitiveness, but the adoption process is influenced by factors such as awareness, persuasion, and the ability to implement innovation.

Research by (Oktavia *et al.*, 2024) shows that merchants who adopt modern technologies, such as digital payment systems and online marketing, are able to increase sales and expand their market reach. At the Merdeka Fish Market, increased access to technology and related training can help traders increase their productivity and competitiveness, both in formal and informal markets.

6. Holistic and Sustainable Market Development Strategy

To address the challenges identified, the study recommends a holistic and sustainable market development strategy. This includes better market space arrangement, provision of special facilities for street vendors, improved waste management infrastructure, and provision of training and access to technology for traders. This strategy is in line with the concept of Sustainable Urban Development which emphasizes a balance between economic growth, social justice, and environmental sustainability (Lubis *et al.*, 2024).

Research by (Iqbal Arraniri *et al.*, 2024) in Bandung Traditional Market shows that an inclusive and sustainable market development approach can improve market operational

efficiency, reduce conflicts between traders, and increase consumer satisfaction. The implementation of a similar strategy in the Merdeka Fish Market can help create a more harmonious and productive market environment for all stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This ethnographic research provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and dynamics faced by the Merdeka Fish Market in Tanjung Tiram, Batubara Regency, especially related to the problem of street vendors selling on the shoulder of the road. This phenomenon causes various problems, including traffic congestion, inconvenience for consumers, conflicts with official traders, and poor waste management. In addition, there are tensions between official traders and street vendors related to unfair competition that has an impact on their economic welfare. The existence of street vendors outside the formal market space illustrates the growth of the informal economic sector resulting from limited access to decent facilities and the high cost of renting stalls. Competition between authorized traders and street vendors leads to imbalances in the market, which ultimately decreases the operational efficiency of the market. This condition is exacerbated by poor infrastructure, especially in terms of waste management and adequate public facilities. This study also shows that local governments are trying to control street vendors, but often encounter obstacles because there are no adequate alternative solutions for the relocation of traders. Budget limitations and less comprehensive policies also affect the effectiveness of market management. Therefore, better market structuring, infrastructure improvement, and collaboration between the government and stakeholders are urgent solutions to create a more orderly, efficient, and environmentally friendly market. From the perspective of urban ecology and informal economy, market environmental management, especially in terms of waste management, plays an important role in maintaining the quality of life around the market. Better waste management systems and more adequate infrastructure will help reduce negative impacts on the environment and create a more convenient market for consumers. In conclusion, the Merdeka Fish Market has great potential as a fish trading center in the Tanjung Tiram area, but faces significant challenges related to the irregularity of street vendors, competition with official traders, and environmental issues. Efforts to improve the welfare of traders, fishermen, and consumers through holistic and sustainable market development strategies are essential. Governments, traders, and all stakeholders need to collaborate to create fair, inclusive, and sustainable solutions, so that these markets can develop optimally and provide benefits to all parties.

SUGGESTION

1. Arrangement of Street Vendors

One of the main steps that needs to be taken is the arrangement of street vendors so that they no longer sell on the shoulder of the road. Local governments must provide adequate and affordable special areas for street vendors. This arrangement must be carried out fairly by involving dialogue and deliberation between street vendors, official traders, and the government. The relocation of street vendors can be equipped with basic amenities such as clean places to sell, clean water, and access to crowded markets.

2. Market Infrastructure Improvement

To create a comfortable market for traders and consumers, it is necessary to improve market infrastructure. This includes repairing public facilities such as parking lots, access roads, and drainage systems to address flooding problems. In addition, better waste management by providing adequate waste disposal sites and integrated waste management programs must be implemented. With better infrastructure, the market can operate more efficiently and environmentally friendly.

3. Empowering Traders through Training and Technology

Empowering formal and informal traders through business and management skills training needs to be done regularly. Local governments or related organizations can provide training programs to help merchants improve their competitiveness, including the introduction of digital payment technology, online marketing, and financial management. This increase in skills will help traders face the challenges of the modern market and increase their income.

4. Collaboration between the Government and Stakeholders

Long-term solutions require stronger collaboration between governments, traders, and other stakeholders. The government needs to be more proactive in involving traders in the planning and decision-making process regarding market management. Dialogue forums between governments and traders can be a means to find mutually beneficial solutions and support inclusive market management policies.

5. Sustainable Market Management

The management of the Merdeka Fish Market needs to prioritize the principle of sustainability. Local governments must consider policies that support the environment, such as market cleanliness campaigns, reducing the use of plastic, and empowering communities to be involved in waste management independently. Sustainable management will not only improve market conditions but also maintain the surrounding environmental ecosystem.

6. Improving the Quality of Service for Consumers

To attract more consumers, Pasar Ikan Merdeka must improve the quality of its services. This can be done by providing better facilities such as clean public toilets, seating for consumers, and improving the layout of the market so that consumers feel comfortable when shopping. In addition, promotional campaigns regarding market superior products can be carried out to attract local tourists and consumers from outside the region.

7. Fair and Transparent Enforcement of Regulations

Local governments need to enforce market regulations in a fair and transparent manner. Rules governing street vendors, market levies, and the use of public spaces should be implemented without discrimination, with strict supervision. Consistent enforcement of regulations will help create a more orderly market and reduce conflicts between legitimate traders and street vendors.

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