



Pandemic, Tourism, and the *Ngejot* Tradition (A Socio-theological Review of Local Wisdom Based on Multiculturalism in Navigating the New Normal Era as an Alternative Path to Overcoming Economic Sluggishness)

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ABSTRAK Bali, sebagai salah satu tujuan wisata utama dunia, juga mengalami situasi serupa dengan daerah atau negara lain yang menjadi tujuan wisata. Perekonomian yang lesu, akibat tidak adanya pendapatan bagi operator pariwisata, memaksa mereka untuk bertahan di tengah pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus yang spesifik dan monologis yang mengkaji satu fokus masalah, mengharuskan peneliti untuk berhati-hati, meminimalkan potensi kesalahan dan misinterpretasi, serta memperluas peluang untuk mengakses data sebagai bukti penelitian. Konteks ini membantu peneliti melihat realitas peneliti dalam situasi pandemi dan menggunakan kerangka ini untuk memeriksa kondisi dan penggunaan dasar sosio-teologis masyarakat Bali. Cara menciptakan situasi yang kondusif selama pandemi adalah melalui aktualisasi diri dan kebutuhan sosial, yang merupakan kebutuhan manusia tertinggi. Dari perspektif fungsionalis, motivasi wisatawan untuk melarikan diri sementara dari kegiatan rutin mereka berfungsi untuk memulihkan harmoni dalam masyarakat, sehingga pariwisata dapat dilihat sebagai bentuk terapi sosial. Tradisi "ngejot" sebagai bentuk kearifan lokal yang didasarkan pada prinsip sosio-teologis lintas budaya dan agama tentu merupakan fenomena menarik untuk diteliti secara sosiologis, guna memahami perilaku individu dalam kerangka struktur dan konsensus sosial, sekaligus bertahan di era pandemi. Dengan mengadopsi tindakan "ngejot", itu berarti bahwa di ranah sosial, kita telah memperkuat aset modal sosial kita, saling membantu dalam segala bentuk tindakan. Dengan demikian, semua elemen masyarakat mampu secara kolektif mengatasi situasi saat ini, bergandengan tangan, tanpa memandang perbedaan latar belakang.

ABSTRACT Bali, as one of the world's top tourist destinations, is also experiencing similar situations to other regions or countries that are tourist destinations. The sluggish economy, a consequence of no income for tourism operators, forces them to survive amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. This research uses a specific, monological case study approach that examines a single problem focus, requiring the researcher to be careful, minimize potential errors and misinterpretations, and expand opportunities to access data as research evidence. This context helps researchers see the reality of researchers in the pandemic situation and use this framework to examine the conditions and use of the socio-theological basis of Balinese society. The way to create a conducive situation during a pandemic is thru self-actualization and social needs, which are the highest human needs. From a functionalist perspective, tourists' motivation to temporarily escape their routine activities serves to restore harmony in society, thus tourism can be seen as a form of social therapy. The tradition of "*ngejot*" as a form of local wisdom based on socio-theological principles across cultures and religions is certainly an interesting phenomenon to examine sociologically, in order to understand individual behavior within the framework of social structure and consensus, while also surviving the pandemic era. By adopting the action of "*ngejot*", it means that in the social arena, we have already strengthened our social capital assets, helping each other in all forms of action. Thus, all elements of society are able to collectively overcome today's situation, hand in hand, regardless of differences in background.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current global Covid-19 pandemic, which has shaken the world, is a fascinating topic because all fundamental aspects of human life have become "paralyzed." One aspect that has been significantly impacted by this pandemic is the economic sector. This sector is a vital element because it is directly related to the accumulation of financial capital in meeting people's primary needs (clothing, food, shelter, education, and healthcare). The rapid and unlimited spread of the virus necessitates limiting human physical mobility as well. The limitations on human movement have negatively impacted tourist destinations, as both domestic and international travelers are unable to visit various places offering exotic natural or unique cultural destinations. Bali, as one of the world's top tourist destinations, is also experiencing similar situations to other regions or countries that are tourist destinations. The sluggish economy, a consequence of no income for tourism operators, forces them to survive in this difficult situation. According to Kompas.com on November 28, 2020, at 10:15 PM WITA, it was stated that tourism in Bali had come to a standstill, directly impacting the economy and other sectors in Bali. Tourism is the backbone of Bali's economy. According to data from the Bali Tourism Industry Association, the growth in foreign tourist arrivals in April 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 decreased by almost 100 percent. Bali's Deputy Governor, Tjokorda Oka Sukawati, stated that Bali is one of the areas most severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. This is because around 60 percent of Bali's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) comes from the tourism sector. In GIPI data, in January 2020, the number of foreign tourists to Bali temporarily increased by 11 percent. Then, the number of foreign tourists decreased in February 2020 by 18 percent. At this time, all flights to and from China have begun to be delayed. The decline became increasingly drastic in March 2020. The decline reached 42.32 percent.

Indonesia places its hopes on tourism as an "export commodity" that is expected to replace the role of oil and gas. This hope is quite reasonable, as Indonesia indeed has great tourism potential, both in terms of nature and socio-cultural aspects. In the second quarter of 2020, Indonesia's economic growth experienced a significant contraction, reaching -5.32 percent. In fact, Finance Minister Sri Mulyani called the coronavirus pandemic a "perfect storm" that devastated the Indonesian economy. If economic growth contracts again in the third quarter, Indonesia will be confirmed to be entering a recession, just like Singapore and Australia. The tourism sector is one of the hardest-hit sectors due to the pandemic. Temporarily closed to tourist visits, Bali has reopened to domestic tourists since July 31st. However, the Island of the Gods is still closed to foreign tourists (*wisman*) who usually spend the most money during their vacation there. Bali, which was touted to open its doors to foreign tourists on September 11th, ultimately did not do so. The government reasoned that it was still evaluating the situation and conditions of the spread of the coronavirus regarding the reopening of tourism visits for foreign tourists. The Head of the Bali Provincial Tourism Office stated that Bali is experiencing a loss of Rp. 9.7 trillion per month due to the closure of the tourism sector. This figure is derived from foreign tourist visits. In a year, the number of foreign tourists visiting Bali can reach 6.3 million people. The Director of Regional Destination Development II at the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) stated that the current state of tourism in Bali is the worst in history. Bali itself has been designated by the government as a pilot project for the implementation of the CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, Environment) program as an effort to recover the tourism sector. A tourism creative strategy expert stated that the coronavirus pandemic has shifted the tourism paradigm from a focus on quantity to quality. With the right marketing and service strategies, tourist spending can be significant even if not as high as the number of visitors.

The reciprocal relationship between tourism, economic capital accumulation, and all sectors involved is a fascinating topic, especially when viewed from the perspective of sociology, particularly the sociology of tourism. By examining the reality of tourism thru the lens of tourism sociology, especially tourism activities that are currently shaken by the pandemic, we will find a common thread: Bali is highly dependent on the presence of tourists, a very strong pattern of social relations has formed between tourists and the local community, there is an exchange of capital within that relationship, and what activities can. Sociological studies on tourism developed rapidly in the 1970s, leading to the publication of a collection of writings that became a "standard" in tourism studies, namely *Tourism: Passport to Development?* and *Host and Guest: The Anthropology of Tourism*. However, until the second half of the 1970s, sociological and anthropological studies of tourism were only a small part, just an "appendix" to larger studies, which generally emphasized physical and economic aspects (Gannon et al., 2021; Nunkoo & So, 2016). The 1980s saw rapid advancements in the sociological study of tourism, with the application of various sociological perspectives, both empirical and theoretical. The perspectives of sociologists on tourism also vary. Some view tourism as a form of escape or rejection of modernity, as a modern pilgrimage, as the development of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism, as ego-enhancement, and so on (Boukamba et al., 2021; Erul & Woosnam, 2022).

Bali, as one of the world's top tourist destinations, an island more commonly known as the "Island of the Gods," offers nature and culture as its main attractions to draw local and international tourists to experience and enjoy the exoticism of this island, also known as the "Island of a Thousand Temples." Of course, it's the exotic nature of Bali that motivates tourists to vacation there. Motivation is a very fundamental aspect in the study of tourists and tourism, as it is the trigger for the tourism travel process, although this motivation is often not fully realized by the tourists themselves (Carrillo & Barbieri, 2024; Thyne et al., 2022). Analysis of motivation is becoming increasingly important when linked to tourism as a phenomenon of modern society, where people's behavior is influenced by a very complex interplay of various motivations, not just for survival, as travel motivation was in simple societies. Studies on tourist motivation are

shifting from viewing motivation as a brief process for understanding tourist travel behavior, toward a greater emphasis on how motivation is influenced by psychological needs and long-term plans, recognizing intrinsic motives (such as self-actualization) as a very important component (Canosa et al., 2018; Fan et al., 2023; Ohe, 2022)

So, what can be done in this pandemic era (read: the new normal era)? If Sri Mulyani, as Minister of Finance, states that in the second and third quarters, the Indonesian economy experienced such a severe contraction, even threatening to plunge our economy into the abyss of recession. In other words, Indonesia's economic recovery will take a considerable amount of time to fully recover. This research formulates two research questions: a) How can a conducive situation be created in this new normal era? b) how to realize concrete actions in the new normal era based on cross-cutting affiliations? The purpose of this research is to provide an analysis of the form of social capital accumulation based on multiculturalism as reflected in the local wisdom of the Balinese people, known as ngejot.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method within a case study framework. The specific, monological nature of a case study, which examines a single problem focus, requires a researcher to be cautious, minimize potential errors and misinterpretations, and expand opportunities to access data as research evidence. A single case study is a research design in case studies that attempts to describe two things: using a holistic design and using a fixed unit of analysis. Meaning, this approach attempts to provide answers in static conditions. A constant answer is obtained when a case exhibits certain conditions, such as rare or unique circumstances, tests specific theories, and research actions in a longitudinal dimension. This context helps researchers see the reality of researchers in the pandemic situation and use this framework to examine the conditions and use of the socio-theological basis of Balinese society.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Bali, as one of the world's top tourist destinations, is also experiencing similar situations to other regions or countries that are popular tourist spots. The sluggish economy, a consequence of no income for tourism operators, forces them to survive in this difficult situation. According to Kompas.com on November 28, 2020, at 10:15 PM WITA, it was stated that tourism in Bali had come to a standstill, directly impacting the economy and other sectors in Bali. Tourism is the backbone of Bali's economy. According to data from the Bali Tourism Industry Association, the growth in foreign tourist arrivals in April 2020 compared to the same period last year decreased by almost 100 percent. Bali's Deputy Governor, Tjokorda Oka Sukawati, stated that Bali is one of the areas most severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. This is because around 60 percent of Bali's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) comes from the tourism sector. In GIPI data, in January 2020, the number of foreign tourists to Bali temporarily increased by 11 percent. Then, the number of foreign tourists decreased in February 2020 by 18 percent. At this time, all flights to and from China have begun to be postponed. The decline became increasingly drastic in March 2020. The decrease reached 42.32 percent.

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The reciprocal relationship between tourism, economic capital accumulation, and all sectors involved in it is a fascinating topic, especially when viewed from the perspective of sociology, particularly the sociology of tourism. By looking at the reality of tourism from the perspective of tourism sociology, especially tourism activities that are currently shaken by the ongoing pandemic, we will find a common thread: Bali is highly dependent on the presence of tourists, a very strong pattern of social relations has formed between tourists and the local community, especially with the exchange of capital in that relationship, and what activities can be done in this new normal era so that all components of society can get thru these difficult times together.

Discussion

Creating a Conducive Environment in the New Normal Era

The motivation of tourists to gain an authentic experience is also receiving significant attention, as the issue of authenticity, in the perception of tourists from developed countries, can only be found in traditional societies that are still genuine and live simply. In reality, what tourists mostly get is staged authenticity, because true "authentic" authenticity is still kept backstage by the local community. Furthermore, vacationing abroad is a means of developing modern human identity and increasing self-awareness, as the modern world has made people feel alienated in their own homes. Basically, people travel motivated by a few things (Kim et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2024). From the various motivations that drive travel, these motivations can be grouped into four main categories, including: (a) physical or physiological motivation, such as for relaxation, health, comfort, participating in sports activities, leisure, and so on; (b) cultural motivation, which is the desire to learn about the culture, customs, traditions, and arts of other regions. This also includes interest in various cultural heritage objects (historical monuments); (c) social motivation or interpersonal motivation, such as visiting friends and family (VFR, Visiting Friends and Relatives), meeting business partners, doing things considered prestigious (prestige value), pilgrimage, escaping boring situations, and so on; (d) fantasy motivation, which is the fantasy that in other regions, one can escape the tedious daily routine, and ego-enhancement that provides psychological satisfaction. Also known as status and prestige motivation (Jiang et al., 2022; Xiang et al., 2021).

A person's travel motivation is influenced by the traveler's internal factors (intrinsic motivation) and external factors (extrinsic motivation). Intrinsically, motivation is formed due to the needs and/or desires of the human being itself, in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow's concept of a hierarchy of needs, starting from physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, prestige needs, and self-actualization needs, has been used as a basis for researching tourist motivation. This research has found, among other things, that a tourist's travel motivation can change over time in a dynamic process (Lexhagen et al., 2023; Uyar et al., 2023). Maslow's theory in researching tourist motivation found that self-actualization and social needs are ranked highest. From a functionalist perspective, tourists' motivation to take a break from their routine activities serves to restore harmony in society, so tourism can be seen as a form of social therapy. From a social-action theory perspective, this motivation is very important because it views tourists' behavior individually in relation to the wider society (Lai & Li, 2022; Williams & Balaz, 2015).

The above narrative, when viewed theoretically, gives us an understanding that tourists travel for various reasons. Borrowing from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, one of the factors that motivates a tourist to travel to a destination is that the chosen tourist spot guarantees safety for all tourists in carrying out their tourism activities (Bai & Chen, 2024; Tucker et al., 2017). The security in question is diverse, ranging from security against physical attacks to security in terms of health. Contextualizing this with the current situation, the motivation of a tourist to travel to a tourist destination has somewhat decreased, considering safety aspects, particularly in terms of health safety. As we all know, the world today, including Bali, is experiencing an economic downturn due to a deficit in tourist arrivals. The Covid-19 attack is still ongoing, and even now, Indonesia is experiencing a significant increase in cases. As of November 29th, there were 534,266 confirmed positive cases of Covid-19 infection. Certainly, this quantum data serves as the basis for health considerations that potential tourists are thinking about. Although Bali is currently a priority for economic recovery, especially in the tourism sector, if the upward trend in cases remains high, especially since Bali had an additional 109 new cases of Covid-19 infection as of November 28, 2020. Of course, this will be an obstacle to bringing tourists to Bali. Beside health factors, the still-unrecovered economic aspect also makes the financial aspect of potential tourists a consideration when planning a visit. Where, the money they have will certainly be prioritized in meeting their primary needs (Asero et al., 2016; Awaworyi Churchill & Nuhu, 2018).

Realizing Concrete Actions in the New Normal Era Based on Cross-Cutting Affiliation: Implementing Ngejot

Ngejot is a deeply rooted tradition in an enclave in Pegayaman Village, Sukasada, Buleleng, Bali. From a historical context, *ngejot* is a social interaction that serves as a form of social capital accumulation, offering a treat between Hindu and Muslim communities. The intense interaction between Hindu and Muslim *Nyama* (siblings) resulted in the mutual exchange and acceptance of integrative values between them. This can happen, according to Nasikun and Geertz, because of an agreement on fundamental cultural values. Balinese people, based on the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*, with the slogan "*belahanpanne, belahan payuk celebingkah batan biu, gumi linggah ajak liu ada kene ada keto*". This means there are many differences we must be able to accept, or lower-level multiculturalism philosophically and theoretically, and that integration between religious communities can lead to social integration. The concepts of *Nyama Bali* and *Nyama Selam* are forms of cultural acceptance in Bali. Social integration between the Balinese community (*Nyama Bali*) and the Islamic community (*Nyama Islam*) has strengthened due to their ability to coexist, as seen in the *subak* organizations which include both Hindu and Islamic farmers, such as in *subak Pancoran*, *Tegalinggah*, *Pemogan*, and *Banyubiru Jembrana*. The success of Muslims coexisting in Bali can also be interpreted as the preservation of social capital, a strategic component in creating social integration. For example, there is the tradition of *ngejot* when Hindus hold religious ceremonies such as *Galungan* and *Nyepi*. At that auspicious time, Muslims offer fruit or snacks, and vice versa. During *Eid al-Fitr*, the Hindu community *ngejot* fruit to their Muslim brothers and sisters.

The tradition of *ngejot* as a form of cross-cultural and cross-religious local wisdom is certainly an interesting phenomenon to observe sociologically. The actions within that tradition are very interesting if examined using the scalpel

of sociology. The practice of *ngejot* is very relevant when correlated with Anthony Giddens' theory. Giddens introduced the theory of social structure. The author sees this tradition as a form of individual behavior within the consensus of social structure. In social analysis, structure refers to the structuring elements that enable the binding of time and space within social systems (Kobayashi, 2023; Sadka et al., 2023). These elements allow for the existence of similar social practices across a wide range of time and space, while also giving these social practices a systemic form. To say that structure is the "true order" of transformative relations means that social systems, as reproduced social practices, do not have "structure," but rather precisely exhibit "structural elements." This also means that structure exists, as a presence in space-time, only in its manifestation in these practices and as traces of memory oriented toward the behaviors of intelligent human agents (Bernardo et al., 2021; Delitz, 2018).

This conception does not mean that we should not consider structural completenesses to be hierarchically organized according to the spatiotemporal extension of those organized practices. For the structural completenesses that are most deeply rooted and involved in the reproduction of societal totality, I call them structural principles. Meanwhile, practices that have the greatest spatiotemporal extension within such a totality can be called institutions (Nielsen, 2018; Yilmaz & Saribay, 2019). The tradition of *ngejot* as a form of philanthropy becomes a vehicle for action in the social arena. This tradition is a very well-institutionalized practice. Thus, cross-cultural and religious behavior is internalized within the morphological structure of society. Giddens, in his theory, already mentioned that the structures of structuration are bound in space and time, are reproduced, and are systemic. Similarly, the existence of the *ngejot* tradition, where agents bind themselves in a multi-ethnic consensus, institutionalize the action within the social system, and form systemic patterns. The existence of social practices within this tradition is an important asset in the present era. Why is it important? This tradition is able to explain, demonstrate, and represent that the will to love human existence is not only carried out within intra-group settings, but also in inter-group social settings. Thus, in the era of the pandemic, with the reality of economic downturn, each individual is still able to implement avenues of action to help each other and work together to overcome these difficult times (Celikates, 2019; Celis & Mugge, 2018).

One thing that can be done is to adopt the tradition of *ngejot*, and then apply it to the wider community, helping each other regardless of their ethnic, religious, racial, or social background. The point is that we are able to lighten the burden of others' lives by sharing, whether in the form of financial or social assistance. The internalization, institutionalization, and adoption of actions within the *ngejot* tradition in a broader arena become a form of social capital grounded in the spirit of diversity or multiculturalism in this new normal era. Sociologically, social capital is a reality that describes how individuals within a social institution share values and norms, using them as guidelines for interacting with each other, so that each member of the community bound by the relevant social institution will feel trust or build trust. So, a social institution that can survive in regulating its individuals within a certain status in the existing system, so that the rules within that social institution become knowledge in the minds of its individuals and are used as a source for understanding their environment, this knowledge is the social capital of the relevant society (O'Byrne, 2012; Romero, 2020; Srbiljinovic & Bozic, 2014).

Forms of social capital are essentially formed from two types of solidarity as individuals' efforts to group together: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity can be understood as a form of solidarity that binds individuals together within a social group due to a sense of community and the existence of rules for grouping regardless of the social status of the individuals within the community. Typically, mechanical solidarity is found in rural areas, while organic solidarity refers more to the differences between individuals with their respective expertise who are connected as a single social group, as each individual requires the abilities of others. This usually involves a division of labor and is generally a characteristic of urban societies (Edling & Rydgren, 2016; Sovacool & Hess, 2017).

According to Durkheim, the guidelines used as a reference are essentially a collective idea. This collective idea originates from individual ideas, so each individual has ideas, and some similarities between those ideas can be combined into a collective idea that can serve as a guide for interacting with each other within a social collective. Individual ideas essentially stem from human nature itself, which has knowledge and insight into its social environment. These individual ideas have the potential to be used as a common guide, so this group of ideas unconsciously shares a common vision, making the individuals involved unaware that the collective idea will ultimately govern their individual actions (Chen & Hamilton, 2015; Makela et al., 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

The pandemic that once occurred, and the resulting collapse of tourism, necessitates a middle ground or alternative path to ensure the reality of social life can still continue. By adopting the action of *ngejot*, it means that in the social arena, we have already strengthened our social capital assets, helping each other in all forms of action. Thus, all elements of society are able to collectively overcome today's situation, hand in hand, regardless of differences in background.

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