

THE ROLE OF THE BETTA FISH HOBBYIST COMMUNITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FISHERIES-BASED CREATIVE ECONOMY IN THE CITY OF PALEMBANG

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of the betta fish hobbyist community in the development of a fisheries-based creative economy in Palembang City. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through a questionnaire completed by three respondents: a betta fish breeder, an accessory supplier, and a non-business hobbyist, selected using purposive sampling. The results indicate that the community's role remains very limited, with low involvement of respondents in community activities such as contests or online discussions, and minimal contribution to improving cultivation knowledge, business promotion, and market access. Two respondents generated an income of IDR 1-3 million per month from their betta fish business, but the community was deemed insignificant in supporting creative product development or branding. The economic and social impacts were also weak, with minimal influence on sales, business networks, and the promotion of Palembang's local culture. Key challenges included a lack of capital and limited information, with suggestions for increasing contests to increase community visibility. This study demonstrates the need to strengthen community structures and activities to support a fisheries-based creative economy.

Keywords: Betta Fish, Creative Economy, Fisheries, Hobbyist Community

INTRODUCTION

Betta fish (*Betta splendens*) is a popular freshwater ornamental fish commodity, both domestically and internationally, due to the beauty of its diverse body, fin, and tail colors, as well as its diverse species. This uniqueness makes betta fish have high economic value and a wide marketing area, including in Palembang City, which is known as one of the trading centers in western Indonesia. Betta fish cultivation is not only a hobby, but has also developed into a promising business opportunity, in line with the concept of the creative economy that emphasizes the use of creativity, innovation, and individual skills to generate economic value. Amid this development, the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang plays a significant role in encouraging the development of a fisheries-based creative economy, which not only increases the income of business actors but also contributes to the local economy. This study aims to examine the role of the betta fish hobbyist community in supporting the development of the creative economy in Palembang City, by considering aspects of cultivation, marketing, and product innovation (Adawiyah, 2017).

Creative economy, as defined by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia (2020), is the creation of added value based on knowledge, creativity, and innovation derived from cultural wealth, technology, and natural resources. The fisheries sector, particularly ornamental fish farming such as betta fish, has great potential to be developed as part of the creative economy because it involves aesthetic aspects, technical skills, and innovative marketing strategies. In Palembang, betta fish are not only seen as



ornamental fish, but also as a symbol of local cultural diversity that can be integrated with economic activities, such as betta fish contests, aquatic exhibitions, and the development of derivative products such as aquarium accessories and fish food. Betta fish hobbyist communities in Palembang, such as betta fish and aquascape enthusiast groups, have become a driving force in popularizing betta fish farming as a promising economic venture, especially amidst the economic challenges following the COVID-19 pandemic (Afrianti, 2018).

The betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang plays a strategic role in building a fisheries-based creative economy ecosystem. They focus not only on cultivation but also on community development that supports education, training, and marketing. This community frequently hosts activities such as betta fish contests, exhibitions, and workshops aimed at increasing public knowledge about betta fish cultivation, care, and marketing techniques (H. Harris & Syarief, 2024). The event also served as a platform to showcase innovations in aquarium design, the development of new betta fish varieties, and digital marketing strategies utilizing social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and online marketplaces. Thus, this community not only increased public interest in betta fish but also created new business opportunities that supported the local economy. For example, the Deputy Governor of Bengkulu, Dedy Ermansyah, stated in 2020 that ornamental fish communities such as betta fish could help alleviate poverty through creative economic activities, an approach also relevant to the Palembang context.

Betta fish farming has advantages over other fishery commodities because it does not require a large area of land, requires relatively small initial capital, and requires a short maintenance period. Furthermore, market demand for betta fish continues to increase, both for hobby and competition purposes. In Palembang, betta fish farming has become a potential alternative for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), especially for young people who are creative in developing betta fish varieties with unique colors and shapes. Betta fish hobbyist communities serve as a forum for sharing knowledge about breeding techniques, water quality control, and optimal feeding, such as *Daphnia* sp., *Tubifex* sp., and special pellets, all of which affect the growth and beauty of betta fish. Research by (Ananda, 2020) shows that the right type of feed can increase the growth of betta fish, which ultimately increases its selling value in the market.

Beyond cultivation, the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang also plays a role in advancing betta fish marketing through digital approaches. In the digital era, the use of online platforms has transformed betta fish marketing from conventional to more modern and far-reaching. This community actively promotes betta fish through social media, enabling businesses to reach international markets. Furthermore, the community educates its members about the importance of branding and attractive product packaging to increase competitiveness in the market. This approach aligns with research findings in Ambon City, which showed that consumer preferences for fishery products are influenced by factors such as taste, price, product color, and packaging. In the context of betta fish, aesthetics and packaging are crucial factors in attracting consumers (H. Harris, 2019).

Palembang, as a city rich in fish-based culinary traditions such as pempek, kemplang, and tekwan, also has the potential to integrate fishery waste into the creative economy value chain. Research by (Harris et al, 2024) this study demonstrates that fish waste from traditional food processing in Palembang, such as bones, heads, and offal, can be processed into fishmeal with high economic value for animal feed and fish pellets. Betta fish hobbyists can capitalize on this opportunity by developing betta fish feed based on local waste, which not only reduces waste but also lowers production costs. Innovations like this demonstrate how hobbyists can

contribute to a circular economy, where resources previously considered worthless are transformed into value-added products.

The role of the betta fish hobbyist community is also closely linked to the social and cultural aspects of Palembang. This community not only serves as a gathering place for betta fish enthusiasts but also serves as a platform for building social networks, strengthening local identity, and raising public awareness about the importance of preserving fishery resources. Activities such as betta fish contests are often held in conjunction with local cultural festivals, attracting tourists and increasing exposure for betta-based MSME products. This approach aligns with the concept of community-based ecotourism, as implemented in Bukit Rimbang-Bukit Baling, Riau, where economic activities are linked to the preservation of the local environment and culture. In Palembang, the betta fish hobbyist community could adopt a similar approach by promoting betta fish cultivation as part of cultural and environmental-based tourism (E. Harris, 2017).

The main challenges facing the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang are lack of access to modern cultivation technology, limited capital, and competition in the global market. However, through collaboration with local governments, universities, and the private sector, this community can overcome these challenges by developing cultivation technology training, access to financing, and more targeted marketing strategies. The South Sumatra Provincial Government, for example, has demonstrated support for the development of fisheries-based MSMEs through training programs and exhibitions, which the betta fish hobbyist community can utilize to increase their capacity. Furthermore, collaboration with universities such as Universitas PGRI Palembang can support research and development of more competitive betta fish varieties in the market (H. Harris & Syarief, 2024).

Overall, the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang has great potential to become a key driver in the development of a fisheries-based creative economy. By leveraging creativity, innovation, and technology, this community can create added economic value, strengthen local MSMEs, and support the conservation of fisheries resources. This research is expected to provide in-depth insights into how the betta fish hobbyist community can be optimized to support creative economic development in Palembang, while also providing strategic recommendations for stakeholders such as the government, business actors, and academics. Therefore, this research is relevant to support sustainable local economic development based on the potential of fisheries resources.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze the role of the betta fish hobbyist community in the development of a fisheries-based creative economy in Palembang City. The quantitative approach was chosen to produce measurable data that can be statistically analyzed to describe the phenomenon under study objectively. The study population was betta fish business actors and hobbyists in Palembang, with a sample of three respondents consisting of betta fish breeders, accessory suppliers, and non-business hobbyists. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, with the criteria being that respondents were directly involved in betta fish-related activities, either as business actors or hobbyists. The data collection technique used a closed-ended questionnaire designed to measure research variables, including the role of the community, contributions to the creative economy, economic and social impacts, challenges, and additional information. The questionnaire contained questions with nominal, ordinal, and multiple-choice scales, allowing for the collection of quantitative data such as frequency of participation, income level, and perceptions of the community's role. The questionnaire was distributed directly to



respondents, with a completion time of approximately 10-15 minutes, and all data was guaranteed confidentiality for research purposes. The collected data was analyzed descriptively using clustering and tabulation techniques to identify patterns and trends, such as the average score of respondents' perceptions of community contributions. Despite the limited number of respondents, this analysis provides a preliminary overview of the role of the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang, which can serve as a basis for further, larger-scale research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research result

Based on questionnaire data from three respondents, the role of the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang appears to be limited. Of the three respondents, only one (Agung Harcules) is a member of the community, while the other two (Chandra Wijaya and Tio Waseso) are not members of the community. The frequency of participation in community activities is also low, with Chandra and Agung rarely participating (1-2 times per year), and Tio never participating. The activities they participate in vary, with Chandra and Agung preferring betta fish contests, while Tio prefers online discussions via WhatsApp or Instagram groups. However, the community's role in improving knowledge of betta fish cultivation was rated low, with an average score of 2 across all three respondents, indicating that the community is not particularly helpful in terms of spawning or care techniques. Regarding business promotion, Chandra gave a score of 3, while Agung and Tio gave a score of 1, indicating that the community has made very minimal contributions to promoting the betta fish business through contests, social media, or networking. However, all respondents stated that the community organizes activities that support innovation, such as food development or aquarium design, although no specific examples were mentioned. Collaboration with other parties, such as the government or business actors, is also rare, with two respondents (Chandra and Agung) stating that collaboration only occurs sporadically, and Tio stating that there has never been any collaboration.

The community's contribution to the development of a fisheries-based creative economy in Palembang also appears limited. Two respondents, Chandra and Tio, generate income from betta-related activities, with an average monthly income of between Rp 1 and 3 million, while Agung, a non-business hobbyist, generates no income. Chandra's creative economy product is the sale of betta fish, while Tio focuses on fish food. However, the community's contribution to developing creative products or services was rated low, with Chandra scoring 1 and Tio scoring 2. Agung did not answer because it was irrelevant to his status as a hobbyist. In terms of market access, Tio scored 3, while Chandra scored 2, indicating that the community makes a moderate to low contribution to increasing market access through contests, exhibitions, or online platforms. Promotion of betta fish as a creative economy product was also rated low to moderate, with Chandra scoring 3 and Tio scoring 2, indicating that the community has not optimally utilized branding or exhibitions to increase the economic value of betta fish.

The economic and social impact of the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang is also relatively small. In terms of sales growth, Chandra and Tio gave low scores (1 and 2), indicating that the community does not significantly influence the sale of betta fish or related products. Business network expansion was also rated low, with all respondents giving a score of 2, indicating that the community does not significantly contribute to connecting respondents with buyers, suppliers, or other business actors. In terms of workforce, Chandra employs 1-2 people in his business, while Tio employs no one, and Agung is irrelevant as he does not run a business. In the context of promoting Palembang's local culture through betta



fish, all three respondents gave a score of 2, indicating the community's minimal contribution to promoting local culture through activities such as contests or exhibitions. Regarding business sustainability, Tio gave a score of 3, while Chandra and Agung gave a score of 1, indicating that the community is not sufficiently active in supporting education on conservation or aquaculture waste management.

The main challenges identified by respondents in developing a betta fish business in Palembang were lack of capital (Chandra) and limited information (Agung). No respondents mentioned market competition, limited technology, regulations, or lack of market access as key challenges, suggesting that the challenges are more individual in nature. Regarding the community's challenge in supporting the creative economy, Agung cited limited information, while Chandra cited a lack of communication. Tio did not provide a specific answer to this question. Agung suggested increasing the number of contests in Palembang to enhance the community's role, while Chandra and Tio did not provide specific suggestions. This suggests that respondents perceive activities such as contests as a way to increase community visibility and involvement in the creative economy.

The use of online platforms for marketing varied among respondents. Chandra used all types of social media to market his betta fish, Tio used WhatsApp, while Agung did not use any online platforms because he did not run a business. However, the role of the community in assisting with the use of online platforms for marketing was rated very low, with Chandra and Tio giving a score of 1, and Agung giving a score of 2. In terms of support from the government or other institutions through the community, only Chandra stated that he had received support in the form of capital, while Tio and Agung stated that they had not received any support. This suggests that the community has not been an effective channel for connecting members with external resources such as training or capital from the government or other institutions.

2. Discussion

Based on analysis of questionnaire data from three respondents, the role of the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang in developing a fisheries-based creative economy appears to be very limited. The respondents' low involvement in community activities, both in terms of frequency and type, reflects a lack of cohesion and organized activity within the community. Only one respondent was a member of the community, and they participated in activities such as contests or online discussions only sporadically. This aligns with the findings of Santoso et al.(2019) which states that hobbyist communities in Indonesia often face challenges in creating consistent member engagement due to the lack of a strong organizational structure and minimal incentives for active participation. In this context, the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang appears to be unable to become an effective platform for sharing knowledge, such as spawning or care techniques, which were rated low by respondents (average score 2). In fact, research by (Wulandari, 2020) shows that hobbyist communities that are active in training and discussions can increase the technical capacity of members, which ultimately supports business innovation and productivity.

In terms of contribution to the creative economy, the community played a minimal role in promoting betta fish businesses or related products, such as food and aquariums. Two respondents who generated income from their betta fish business (averaging Rp1-3 million per month) indicated the potential for a creative economy, but the community did not provide significant support in product development or market access. This contrasts with the findings in (Pratama, 2021) which found that the ornamental fish hobbyist community in Yogyakarta successfully increased market access through exhibitions and online platforms, thereby



strengthening the branding of local products. In Palembang, the community's low contribution to promotion (score 2-3) and market access (score 2-3) may be due to limited collaboration with external parties, such as the government or business actors, which is only carried out sporadically. Research by (Nugroho, 2018) emphasized the importance of cross-sector collaboration to strengthen the creative economy, especially in utilizing social media and exhibitions to expand market reach.

The economic and social impact of the community also appears weak. There is no significant impact on increasing sales or expanding business networks, as indicated by the low scores from respondents (1-2). This contrasts with the study by (Sari & Widodo, 2022), which found that hobbyist communities in Jakarta were able to create strong business networks through contests and exhibitions, which not only increased sales but also promoted local culture. In the context of Palembang, the community failed to capitalize on betta fish as a symbol of local culture, with a contribution score of only 2. Furthermore, support for business sustainability, such as conservation education or waste management, was also rated low, even though this is a crucial aspect of a sustainable fishing industry (Lestari, 2020).

The main challenges identified, such as lack of capital and limited information, reflect structural barriers commonly found in micro-enterprise development in Indonesia (Hidayat, 2019). Lack of communication within the community, as mentioned by respondents, is also a inhibiting factor, in line with the findings of (Santoso et al., 2019) about the importance of effective communication within communities to support innovation and collaboration. The suggestion to increase contests, as suggested by one respondent, could be a strategic step to increase community visibility and engagement, as has been proven effective in other cities (Primary, 2021). In terms of online platform utilization, although two respondents used social media and WhatsApp, the community did not provide significant support, indicating untapped potential for maximizing digital marketing.

Overall, the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang has the potential to support the creative economy, but currently faces challenges in organization, collaboration, and promotion. To enhance the community's role, efforts are needed to strengthen its organizational structure, increase the frequency and quality of activities, and establish collaborations with external parties. This research confirms the importance of the community as a catalyst in the creative economy, as supported by the literature, but also highlights the need for strategic interventions to address existing challenges.

CONCLUSION

Based on analysis of questionnaire data from three respondents, this study concluded that the role of the betta fish hobbyist community in Palembang in developing a fisheries-based creative economy remains very limited. The community has not been able to effectively serve as a platform for improving technical knowledge of cultivation, promoting businesses, or developing creative products and services, such as food or aquarium designs, with contributions rated low by respondents (average score 1-3). Member involvement in community activities, such as contests or online discussions, was also minimal, with only one respondent joining the community and most participating rarely or never. In terms of contribution to the creative economy, although two respondents generated income from their betta fish business (Rp1-3 million per month), the community did not provide significant support in terms of market access, promotion, or product branding. The community's economic and social impact was also weak, demonstrated by its low influence on sales, business network expansion, and promotion of Palembang's local culture, as well as minimal support for business sustainability, such as conservation education. Key challenges identified



included a lack of capital, limited information, and ineffective communication within the community, with recommendations for increasing contests to increase visibility. The use of online platforms for marketing has not been optimally supported by the community, and only one respondent received external support in the form of capital through the community. Therefore, to enhance the community's role, strengthening the organizational structure, increasing the frequency and quality of activities, and more intensive collaboration with external parties, such as the government and business actors, is needed to support the development of a fisheries-based creative economy in Palembang.

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