

Does Shadow Economy and Informality Exist in Local Tourism?

Conceptual Review About Tourism in Gorontalo City

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ABSTRACT

The local tourism industry increases the formal sector and informal and its labor and presents the symptoms of the shadow economy. Shadow economy practices include: 1) use of uneducated and unskilled workers who legally or illegally profit from tourism; 2) irresponsible use of natural resources and the environment that affects the quality of destinations and damages the development of the tourism industry base; 3) unilaterally determining the prices of tourism goods and services that are sold or rented at an unreasonable price rate; and 4) bad behavior that ignores safety and security aspects of tourism. This paper aims to identify the existence and characteristics of the shadow economy in local tourism. Using qualitative approach where labels, categories and tourist sentiments towards the research focus are obtained from digital platforms and then validated by interviews and FGDs. The research concludes that the shadow economy existed in local tourism in Gorontalo City. Types of informality and the shadow economy are boat taxis, diving equipment rental, fresh-seafood sellers, motorcycle taxis, car rentals, homestays, individual parking services, tour guides, restaurants and retailers. This study confirms that social restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have caused the activities of the informal sector and the shadow economy in local tourism to be identified. Many have collapsed due to the closure of tourism industry activities and depend on the government's cash and food assistance. Coordination, protection and empowerment after the COVID-19 pandemic from all tourism stakeholders is an alternative solution.

Keywords: *Shadow, Economy, Informality, Local, Tourism, Gorontalo.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as the largest industry globally and an integral component of economic development in the last half-century. The reliability of this industry is proven to be able to generate foreign exchange income, attract international investment, create new jobs and reduce poverty [1]. It becomes an incentive for developing countries to promote tourism as an engine of economic growth [2]. The development of local tourism with its labor-intensive structure is an economic sector that can help solve the problem of unemployment in underdeveloped areas. Tourism directly or indirectly affects other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, trade, construction, accommodation, food-beverage, communications, banking, and health services due to spillover effects [3] [4]. Generally, tourism leakage tends to increase

when the local economic community is weak and fails to produce goods and services required by the tourism industry [5]. The shadow economy symptom that accompanies tourism sector in Gorontalo City is indicated by the growth and development of works types that are not monitored by the number of people involved and how much compensation are obtained. In addition to the negative economic impact because it does not contribute to regional original income or PAD, this type of work tends not to be covered by adequate legal protection aspects.

Occupancy workers have the following characteristics: a) Does not have fixed working hours and days, does not have a nominal standard of wages for labor services and/or nominal rental of product items; b) Not having tourism standard equipment of health and safety; c) Not tied to formal institutions such as cooperatives or specific companies, so that they are not burdened with income tax and or value-added tax; d) The flexibility to enter and leave the pattern of living like this makes casual informal workers avoid government intervention so that they are minimal or even untouched by the coaching or empowerment program.

Types of work related to the tourism sector that are relatively unmonitored in terms of amount, working time, and wages received are hourly rental car drivers who serve routes from Jalaludin Airport to each leading tourist attraction and tourist objects or city shopping centers. The condition of tourism human resources in hotels and restaurants, cafes, fitness centers and swimming pools, is still very limited in number, lack of experience, intellectual capacity, vocational skills and foreign languages. Based on the experience of many countries and regions, the development of local tourism is not supported by adequate information about the economic costs and benefits of the policy [6]. Although contributing to the economy and development, the tourism sector also has the potential to become fertile ground for the growth and development of the shadow economy, but the locus, variant and quantity have not been detected and identified.

The growth in the number of units of hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues as well as recreation and sports in Gorontalo City has not significantly absorbed local workers, so that the development of the tourism industry, especially the micro, small and medium business sector, wholesale and retail trade, as well as the transportation and communication sector is filled with informal workers. relatively unmonitored activities and the economic benefits they derive. The economic activity of local tourism which grows and develops but is relatively unmonitored and unreachable by local economic statistics causes the results, benefits and impacts to be obtained to be undetected and not included in the calculation of the regional economic balance. It means that the tourism sector's increase in visits and volume is neither recorded nor reported in the regional

economic development. Based on this condition, it is reasonable to suspect that the shadow economy has interfered with the development of the tourism sector in Gorontalo City. Some previous studies have shown that the shadow economy can act to stimulate economic activity and employment in the short term. However, over a longer time, a persistent shadow economy tends to destroy social norms and values, ultimately leading to an economic slowdown or even a recession [7].

The shadow economy has become a major concern for tax authorities as well as policymakers and academics because the value of the informal economy has reached a sizeable amount and share for the economy of the country and region. The shadow economy tends to be immune to repressive government actions but is very responsive to economic crises, and is impossible to eradicate. Regardless of the level of economic development, political system or geographical position, every country or region faces the challenge of measuring, treating, and suppressing the growing informal part of the economy. The shadow economy of tourism is a growing symptom in both developed and developing countries, emphasizing informal workers [8] [9]. The majority of tourism and hospitality industries in developing countries are in the form of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and many operate in the informal sector and involve informal workers. This paper aims to identify the existence and the characteristic of shadow economy on local tourism in Gorontalo City.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The shadow economy has become a very serious problem with multiple dimensions across all income groups of the country and has a significant effect on economic development [10]. Behavior that reflects the shadow economy easily spreads across all levels of society in the world, from the lowest to the highest levels. Anyone who is involved in shadow economy activities, both formal and informal labor, how often the activity is carried out and what size the shadow economy is, is also important to know. Until now, it is quite difficult to obtain accurate information about underground activities or the shadow economy, because all the individuals involved in it tend to be difficult to identify.

Shadow economy is generally define as the market-based production of goods and services, whether legal or illegal, that escapes detection in official estimates of Gross Domestic Product [11]. It includes legal and illegal market activities as well as monetary and non-monetary transactions that are not the calculation of GDP [12]. Shadow economies are deliberately hidden from public authorities for the following reasons [7]: 1) to avoid paying income tax, value-added or other taxes; 2) payment of social security contributions; 3) certain legal labor market standards, such as minimum wage, maximum working hours, safety standards; and 4) certain administrative obligations, such as completing statistical questionnaires or other forms of administration.

People are motivated to enter and engage in the shadow economy [11] when they: 1) able to save a significant amount of money by working outside the formal sectors; 2) working in the shadow economy category has been widely accepted by the community, especially in developing countries; 3) carry the low risk of being detected, monitored or caught, especially in remote and isolated areas; and 4) accept the payments for goods and services in cash usually in tourism-related businesses. Informal sector includes the use of undocumented workers, counterfeiting, ticket sales, unregulated drug sales, unregistered business and/or tax evasion, tourism trade, counterfeit/imitation goods, insertion/violation of environmental regulations and labor, and often street vendors [13]. Three reasons for the lack of scientific attention to the shadow economy in tourism [7] are the highly fragmented and complex structure of the tourism business significantly expands the scope of research, the spatial dispersion of tourism regarding business entities and activities makes research difficult to operationalize, social sensitivity on this topic,

especially regarding remote and isolated tourist areas.

3. METHOD

Qualitative research tries to describe the reality or phenomena that exist in society from the point of view of the informant or the person who participates in the research [14] [15] [16]. The main focus of qualitative research in tourism is to collect information or data related to activities, events, and behavior in a social context and to seek an understanding of actions, problems, and processes in society in a social context, especially those related to tourism. This study uses a qualitative approach with content and sentiment analysis because it intends to find, understand, explain and obtain an overview of the shadow economy symptom that accompanies tourism in Gorontalo City [17] [18].

Use of these two analytical tools also allows the results of this study to reveal the forms of involvement and behavior of local communities and treatment of the environment in the development of the tourism industry and tourism economy. Data collection through online media in this case web tripadvisor.com is also carried out as part of the operationalization of content and sentiment analysis. The era of digitalization and information technology has caused tourism activities to flood the website. All forms of individual tourist expressions that can be accessed online are recorded symbolic content, including permutations of written documents, photos, moving images or video recordings, and audio tapes. As a test of the validity of online reviews by key informants, validation actions were carried out through interviews and focus group discussions on supporting informants with the following details.

Table 1. Characteristics and Number of Supporting Informants in Interviews and FGDs

No.	Institutional Elements	Region	Number of informants
1.	Government Tourism Office	Gorontalo City	15
2.	Development Planning Agency	Gorontalo City	15
3.	Undergraduate students of tourism department	State University of Gorontalo	15
Total			225

4. RESULT

Gorontalo City is the provincial capital with an area of 79.59 km² or 0.71 percent of Gorontalo Province, which has 9 districts and 50 sub-districts.

Based on the BPS’s publication [19], the population in 2020 is 198,539 people with an average annual population growth rate of 0.95 percent for the period 2010 to 2020. The population density is

2,495 people per km², the highest is in Kota Selatan District reaching 7,168 people per km² and the lowest is in Hulontalo at 1,141 people per km². Human Development Index reached 77.13 (the highest in Gorontalo Province), with a life

expectancy of 72.49 years, the average length of schooling of the population is 10.26 years and the population-adjusted per capita expenditure is Rp. 12,278,000 per capita per year.

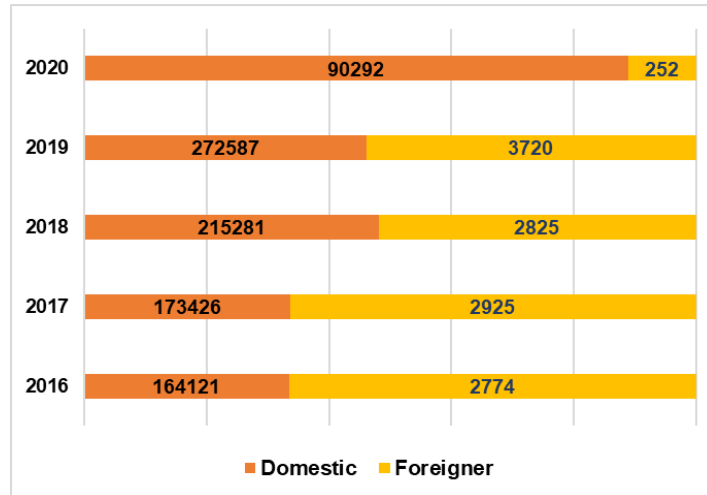


Figure 1. Inbound Tourism Trend of Gorontalo City, 2016-2020

Throughout 2020, tourists' average length of stay occurred in November, which was 1.96 days and the lowest was in May, which was 1.12 days. The highest length of stay for foreign tourists in July reached 5 days, while for domestic tourists in November 1.94 days. The tourism industry of Gorontalo City is relatively more complete and grows faster than the surrounding districts. Apart

from being the center of government, Gorontalo City is also a center for trade and services, including education and tourism. The formal tourism sector shows a positive trend, including an increase in the number of accommodation, hotels and other lodging services, followed by an increase in restaurant facilities, entertainment and recreation areas.

Table 2. Informal Sector Categories and Types of Work Related to Local Tourism

Tourism Informal Sector	Type of Work
Agriculture	Supplier of food ingredients to local tourism as sharecroppers, smallholders and farm laborers.
Fisheries	Supplier of fish as a side dish for local tourism as capture fishermen, aquaculture fishermen, sellers of various fresh, unprocessed seafood, boat taxi services and rental of diving/snorkeling equipment
Food and drink preparation	A shop/warung/cart that provides various types of ready-to-eat snacks for local tourism
Small trade	Retailer of various personal daily necessities with a fixed or mobile means for local tourism.
Other services	Provider of motorcycle taxi transportation services, car rental, lodging/homestay service, individual freelance parking services, engine repairs, and freelance tour guides

The majority of supporting informants agreed that informal tourism work tends to be difficult to identify how many actors are involved in it, the intensity of the activity and how much economic benefit is obtained. In the tourism industry, shadow economy practices include: 1) the use of uneducated and unskilled workers who legally or illegally profit from tourism services; 2)

irresponsible use of natural resources and the environment that affects the quality of destinations and damages the development of the tourism industry base; 3) unilaterally determining the prices of tourism goods and services that are sold or rented at an unreasonable price level and are detrimental to tourists; and 4) bad behavior that

ignores the safety and security aspects of tourism services.

The characteristics of informal businesses in the tourism sector in an area that tend to "turn on" the shadow economy can be traced with a qualitative approach, namely phenomenologically. It is logical because shadow economy activities tend to be hidden and escape the attention of the government

and policymakers, especially in the economic field. It is difficult to collect data on how many business actors, the volume of business activities and the nominal financial benefits obtained from shadow economy activities are. Therefore, a qualitative approach utilizing big data through digital platforms is an alternative way that can be taken to identify the existence of the shadow economy of the tourism sector in Gorontalo City.

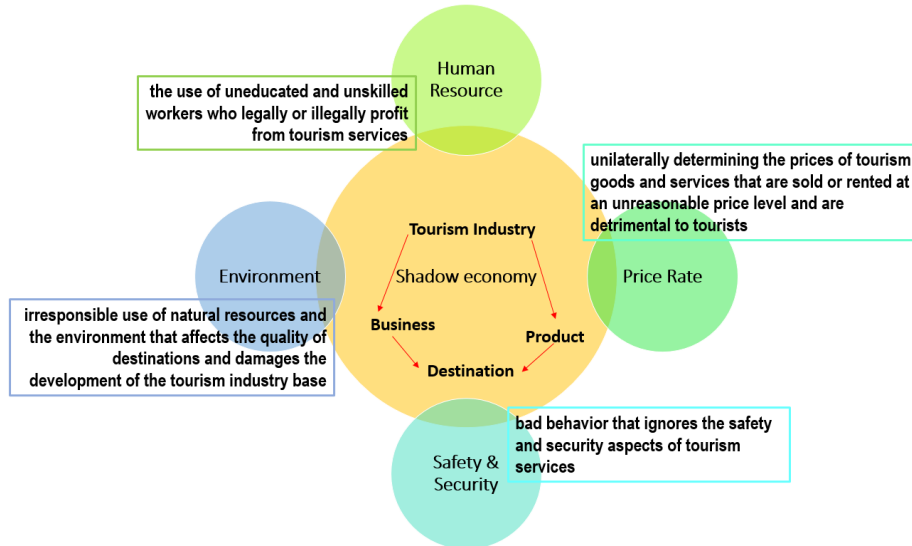


Figure 2. Map of Shadow Economy Category in Tourism Industry of Gorontalo City

From the total of 47 reviews about Gorontalo City tourism workers or human resources, tourists most often mention "check, service, room and

good". It means that the service performance of hotel employees in Gorontalo City gets special attention from visitors.

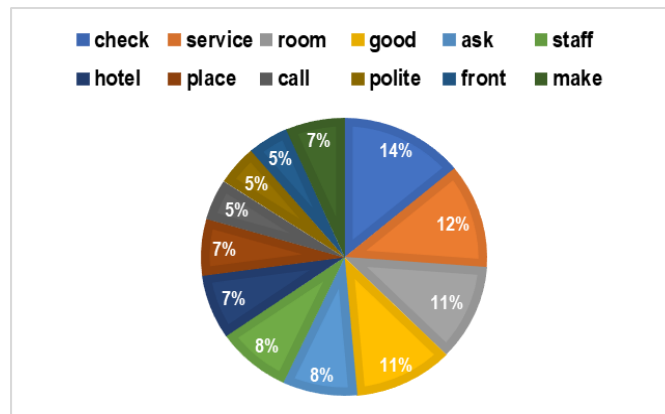


Figure 3.

The tendency of shadow economy behavior by formal workers in the tourism sector is as follow:

a. We took the room with promo, there was a huge sign in front of the hotel. But when we checked-out we were not given the discount. then what

they explained was because we did not request it

b. Too many meetings and many people eat while the place and location of breakfast is very limited, breakfast limited of menus and not all menus can be enjoyed

c. *Housekeeping and maintenance definitely left much to be desired. no floor mat provided, dusty closet, locked safe deposit box, no coffee nor tea bags*

The quote above shows that hotel employees carry out the shadow economy of tourism in Gorontalo City. The three items indicate the absence of persuasive information from hotel workers related to room rate promotion policies and service facilities, breakfast arrangements when there are too many meeting agendas and guests crowd the hotel restaurant, and complaints about “housekeeping and maintenance”. The shadow economy behavior was confirmed during interviews and FGDs with the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association of Gorontalo Province. The chairman of PHRI said that professional hotel management and employees are usually more alert and agile in handling abnormal conditions. They have creativity and innovation to maintain service quality to avoid guest complaints and

inconvenience. PHRI continues to improve the quality of human resources through standardization and certification. This requires process, effort, time and money. The Head of the Gorontalo City Tourism Office stated that the quality of human resources is the most important factor in leveraging tourism, which will positively impact tourism in the surrounding districts. Standardization and certification are absolute requirements so that local tourism can excel and have an international reputation or at least at the national level. The high bad impression of hotel staff caused negative sentiment to reach 61.7 percent, then 36.17 percent positive and 2.13 percent neutral. From a total of 38 reviews about the price rate of tourism products and services in Gorontalo City, tourists most often mention about “hotels, prices, rooms and rates”. Comparison of prices and hotel facilities and services is the main indicator for visitors regarding the prevailing price rate.

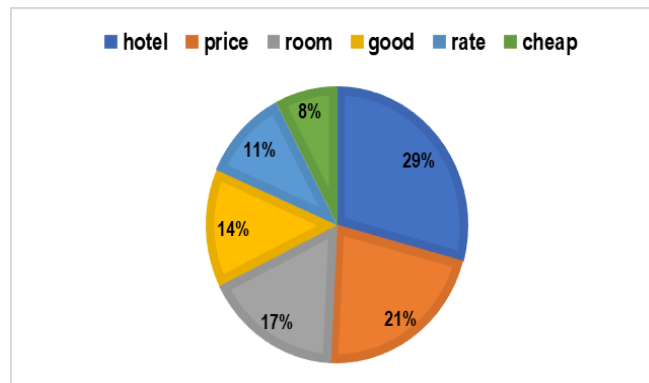


Figure 4.

Visitors' online reviews about the shadow economy which have a relationship with the price level of tourism products and services in Gorontalo City are as follows:

- a. *Be careful in buying, a lot of merchandise has been increased many times from the original price, especially to foreigner*
- b. *Small town with very expensive souvenir prices, especially for foreigners*
- c. *The breakfast so simple, there isn't bar or resto inside or nearby the hotels quite expensive for the mediocre food served*

The four review items revealed that there was a unilateral price determination by MSMEs selling souvenirs and souvenirs as well as eating and

drinking services. This is also triggered by the relative lack of competitors for local products so that the pattern of price games among local entrepreneurs with the status of market leaders. Visitor reviews about price levels for tourism products and services in Gorontalo City are 57.89 percent positive, 13.16 percent neutral and 28.95 percent negative.

Regional Development Planning Agency revealed that the government and tourism business actors must pay attention to the price rate for products and services considering that Gorontalo City is a center for business, trade and services, accommodation, transportation and various entertainment facilities. Price rates that are too high and not in line with consumer expectations will have an impact on decreasing tourist consumption

interest and investment and increasing the negative impression of local tourism. Prices tended to be out of control caused by the behavior of informal tourism workers who were free to determine prices unilaterally.

Apart from being located around objects such as Otanaha Fort, some of them are scattered in various locations in Gorontalo City. Their livelihood status is odd, namely as motorcycle taxis and bentor (approximately 31 men), food and drink shops (11),

homestay (4), retail (14), freelance tour guide (5) and rental cars (5). In many tourist attractions, several buildings for eating and drinking shops and retailers used by business actors are located on state land (or regional assets) with unclear status as to whether they are leased or borrowed. From a total of 22 online review items regarding the condition and use of the environment for tourism in Gorontalo City, travelers most often mention "hotel, place, water and city".

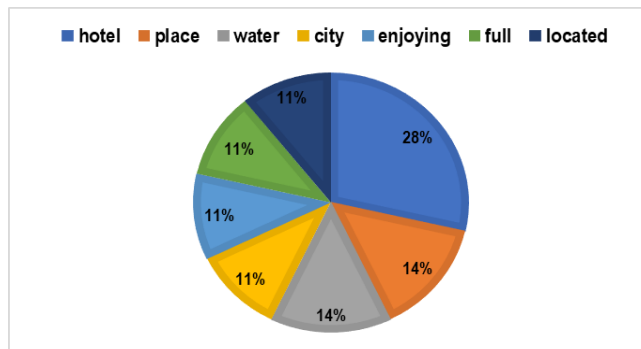


Figure 5.

Visitors' online reviews about the environmental conditions of Gorontalo City attractions which tend to be unkempt and vulnerable to the shadow economy:

- a. *There's garbage everywhere and no staff were seen around. no guide or whatsoever*
- b. *The handrails mainly were broken and the steps was full of goat poo*

Apart from being a center for business, trade and services, Gorontalo also relies on Otanaha Fortress as a historical tourism destination. The lack of maintenance of several facilities and

unmanaged waste caused a negative impression of 41 percent which is comparable to positive sentiment, the remaining 18 percent stated that it was neutral.

The existence and uniqueness of Otanaha Fortress strongly support the development of Gorontalo Province geopark tourism. Cultural, historical and rock sites are important components and must be addressed immediately regarding facilities, cleanliness and beauty. From a total of 29 online reviews about the safety and security aspects of Gorontalo City tourism, the most revealing about "hotels, room, water and staff".

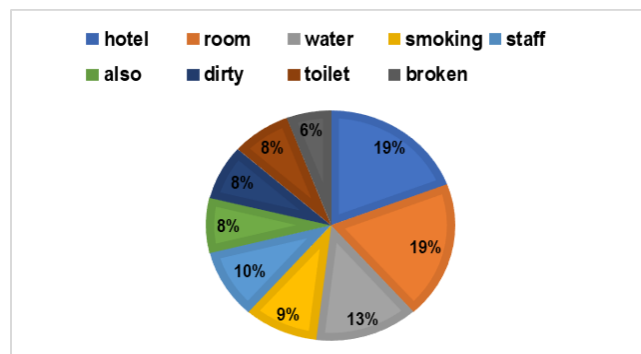


Figure 6.

Aspects of security and comfort are absolute for tourism, and when this is not fulfilled there is a

tendency for shadow economy activities to take place as identified below:

- a. *At some local gift centers, some employees force tourists to buy their products at prices that tend to be unreasonable. they continued to follow where we walked. what an uncomfortable situation*
- b. *The water in the swimming pool tasted weird, sort of sour. we thought there's too much chemical in the water. Also, the water in the hotel room was dirty. there's small black thing floating in it*

The high number of tourist complaints related to safety and security ultimately resulted in a negative impression which reached 93 percent and 3.45 positive and neutral respectively.

One of a supporting informant who drives bentor around Otanaha said that informal tourism businesses around the object have increased dramatically in the last three years (2017-2020). Local residents of informal tourism businesses are seasonal and not permanent, they run or leave their business activities irregularly (free entry and free exit), including location and working hours. Besides bentor drivers, the most common types of work are small/retail traders, food stalls and internet credit counters. Informal tourism business actors are "shrewd" in taking advantage of market opportunities to reap big profits from price games, especially food and souvenir products. Travelers' online reviews reveal that the food stalls do not provide any information about the price of the food offered, thus charging foreign tourists almost two times more than domestic tourists. A number of shops and centers selling souvenirs do not put a price tag, and charge high prices to tourists. Informal tourism business actors are also "dodgy" in utilizing unused vacant land for small trades and food and drink stalls. During low season visitors they easily dismantle the building, but during high season they operate again. This traveler's online review is validated by interviews and FGDs and invites negative sentiment for the environmental use category.

5. DISCUSSION

Existence of groups, units or individual business actors whose lives are highly dependent on tourist visits is proof of the existence of the tourism industry. The tourism industry is available for the formal sector and opens up space for the informal sector. This sector is synonymous with unregulated,

unregistered, unorganized, and a place for poorly educated and trained workers with low productivity and wages [20]; [21]. Number of micro and small-scale business units is quite large so that it often disturbs the order and stability of the economy. Other characteristics are ownership by individuals, using very simple technology, and difficulty accessing capital from financial institutions. Informal business actors related to the tourism industry in Gorontalo City consist of boat taxis, rental of diving/snorkeling equipment, fishing fishermen including fresh-seafood sellers, motorcycle taxis, car rentals and homestays. Results of data processing confirmed by interviews and FGDs found that there were four categories of shadow economy tourism: human resources (labor), price rate, environmental utilization, and safety and security.

Shadow economy of the product price category is the existence of traders and souvenir centers that display and sell their products without a price tag. In this way they have the opportunity to sell it at a high price especially to foreign tourists. A shop or food stall without a brochure or a price list for the food menu. Foreign tourists are being targeted to double the price. Shadow economy in the labor category, namely the tour guide determines the fee for services is more expensive than the normal rate. Family or individual travelers have experience with choosing a guide service over large numbers of tourists. In the environmental use category, the number of free riders in the use of regional asset land for small trading businesses and shops/restaurants without clarity on rental or borrowing status accompanied by tax avoidance measures. In the safety and security category, tourists deplore the negligence of hotel management and employees in Gorontalo City for excessive chemicals in swimming pools. Shadow economy of labor, price rate, environmental exploitation and disruption of the safety and security of tourists has the potential to weaken and even kill the local tourism sector.

Common household-scale micro-enterprises and easy to find production and marketing centers are: 1) types of snacks such as pies, sticks and chips; 2) types of woven handicraft souvenirs such as skullcap baskets (local said: *upiya karanji*), mats (*amongo*); 3) types of clothing souvenirs such as shirts, dresses and filigree embroidered sarongs (*karawo*); 4) the type of culinary business of *milu siram* or a kind of corn soup (*binthe biluhuta*).

These four types of household-scale micro-enterprises that enter the informal sector in a number of online reviews by tourists are called selling products (souvenirs and food) without labels or price lists. They set prices at will, especially for foreign tourists, even though their type of business

can also be a separate attraction, namely culinary tourism, shopping tourism and cultural arts. In order to limit and erode their shadow economy behavior, it is necessary to have to coordinate, protecting and empowering efforts.

Table 3. Details of Coordination, Protection and Empowerment for informal business as a Solution to Minimize the Shadow Economy in Local Tourism

Coordination	Protection	Empowerment
Registration and administrative arrangement	Incidental Aid of Food, Medicine, and Clothing	Government Business Empowerment with capital sourced from the State Budget/Regional Budget
Personal and family identity	Regular Aid of Food, Medicine, and Clothing	Business Empowerment with capital sourced from State/Private-Owned Enterprises in the Corporate Social Responsibility Scheme
Clustering Business Type	Health and Labor Insurance for informal worker	Low interest rate of business stimulant loans from local banking
Average income (Rupiah per week or Rupiah per month)		Production and Marketing Training and Assistance
Location, ownership status of the place of business and building, quality of the building		Guidance on Business Development and Digitalization.
Establishment of associations of informal tourism business sectors		

6. CONCLUSION

Shadow economy were existing on local tourism development in Gorontalo City. Types of informality of the shadow economy are boat taxis, rental of diving/snorkeling equipment, fishing fishermen (fresh-seafood sellers); motorcycle taxis, car rentals, homestays, individual parking services, tour guides; shops/restaurants and retailers. The involvement of tourism stakeholders is absolutely necessary to reduce the negative impact and long-term shadow economy of tourism. This paper reveals that in the short term and the micro/individual impact, the shadow economy creates employment and income for informal tourism business actors and their families but in the long term, the macro/collective impact will kill the local tourism industry. This is due to its massive tendencies: the involvement of unskilled and professional workers, profiting haphazardly from legal/illegal activities; price levels (sales and rentals) that are unfair and unregulated to the

detriment of tourists; exploitation of the environment that damages the basis of the tourism industry, as well as behavior and actions that interfere with security and comfort damage the reputation of local tourism.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

This study confirms that social restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have caused the activities of the informal sector and the shadow economy in local tourism to be identified. Many have collapsed due to the closure of tourism industry activities and depend on cash assistance and food assistance from the government. Coordination, protection and empowerment after the COVID-19 pandemic from all tourism stakeholders is an alternative solution.

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