



## Informal business empowerment strateg strengthening the weakness aspects of business

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### ABSTRACT

Informal businesses have an important role and contribution to the national economy and development. Although they are also a vulnerable group and can give birth to a new number of poverty. Strategies to strengthen informal business actors need to be carried out so that they continue to develop and become the forerunners of large-scale formal businesses. So they can absorb more labor and reduce poverty. Strengthening informal businesses can be done by identifying the weaknesses experienced and then implementing strategies so that these weaknesses can be avoided. This study aims to analyze the strategies for strengthening informal entrepreneurs with an approach to the aspects of the weaknesses they face. The research was conducted using descriptive-qualitative analysis methods and techniques. The research data consists of primary data (survey using the ghost shopping method and unstructured interviews) and secondary data through literature studies. The results of this study conclude that there are several efforts that need to be made to increase the empowerment of informal businesses, namely through strengthening business capital, utilizing technology, and developing innovation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Most Indonesian people work in the informal sector. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2019 shows that there are more workers in the informal sector than workers in the formal sector. The number of workers in the informal sector reached 70.50 million people, while only 56.02 million people in the formal sector. Workers in the informal sector are those who are self-employed. Either as casual workers/daily laborers or business actors such as street vendors, small stalls or hawkers, motorcycle taxi drivers, drivers, and others (Masduki et al., 2021). Informal workers can also be defined as small-scale economic activities (Mahendra, 2018).

Characteristics of informal workers include low access to financial institutions, simple business management, no attention from the government and are even considered a disturbance of order (Nasution, 2016). Nonetheless, workers in the informal sector have a very important role to play in creating jobs while reducing unemployment, even potentially creating new entrepreneurs (Suyadi, 2017), who can contribute to national development (Wauran, 2012). But on the other hand, some of the workers in the informal sector belong to the marginalized community (*dhuafa*) which has the potential to contribute to the growth of poverty. In this community group, there are also many people who are of unproductive age and do not have homes, so they are vulnerable to becoming unemployed, and even becoming beggars (Masduki et al., 2021).

Seeing its sizeable contribution to development, the informal sector, especially business actors, needs attention and strengthening. Strengthening informal business actors includes strengthening finance through increasing access to formal financial institutions, this effort while minimizing dependence on non-formal financial institutions such as moneylenders (Winanto & Rapini, 2016). In addition, strengthening informal businesses can also be carried out in the aspects of business management, marketing and mastery of technology (Kurniawan, 2019). Besides strengthening social capital, government assistance, product or service innovation, and cooperation with other parties.

The results of a literature study show that the strategy that must be implemented to increase informal businesses is to improve marketing strategies (Armansyah & Taufik, 2020). Among the marketing strategies that can be implemented is through online business *transformation*. Empirically, businesses with *online strategies* have an effect on increasing sales and income of business actors (Hardilawati, 2020). *Online* marketing can be done through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, or connecting with businesses *online* such as Go Food, Grab Food, and Shopee Food (Zulhijahyanti et al., 2021). However, not all informal business actors understand *online* marketing strategies. This is due to the low capacity and skills of business actors and the technology used is still simple (Bastidas & Acosta, 2019).

In addition to marketing, informal business actors are also often faced with capital problems. Most informal business actors cannot access capital from banks. The alternative is to use non-formal financial institutions (loan sharks) to meet business capital needs. This alternative was taken because it was considered more effective and no other economic costs were incurred (Wauran, 2012). Strengthening business capital is a strategic effort in increasing business profitability and a reflection of business success (Ginting, 2018). In addition, other strategies that can be carried out by informal business actors are to set low prices, improve services, increase business hours, choose business locations and timeliness and improve product quality (Khoiria & Lukiyanto, 2022).

Most of the previous studies only revealed the strategies carried out by informal entrepreneurs in maintaining and increasing business income. Efforts to increase the capacity of informal business strategies through approaches to the weaknesses encountered have not been fully discovered. This study seeks to fill the void in the literature to complete the literature on strategies for strengthening informal businesses through a weakness approach faced by informal entrepreneurs. The results of this study can also be a reference for subsequent studies in the same scientific field. As well as being able to test the indicators or variables that have been found in this study.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Location and Research Object

The research was conducted on 15 informal business actors in South Tangerang City. The criteria for informal businesses are individual businesses (not having workers/employees), capital and business turnover outside the criteria for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and large businesses.

### Research data

Primary data were obtained from observations/surveys and informal interviews, surveys and interviews were conducted by 36 visitors who acted as *ghost shopping*. From the primary data obtained the weaknesses faced by informal business actors in South Tangerang City. While secondary data was obtained from the results of a literature review (literature study). Literature study to strengthen findings from primary data as well as to find strategies to overcome weaknesses/obstacles faced. The literature study was carried out through a literature search on the Google Scholar database, both national and international articles with a span of the last 10 years with the keywords "weaknesses/barriers to informal businesses", and "strategies for strengthening informal businesses".

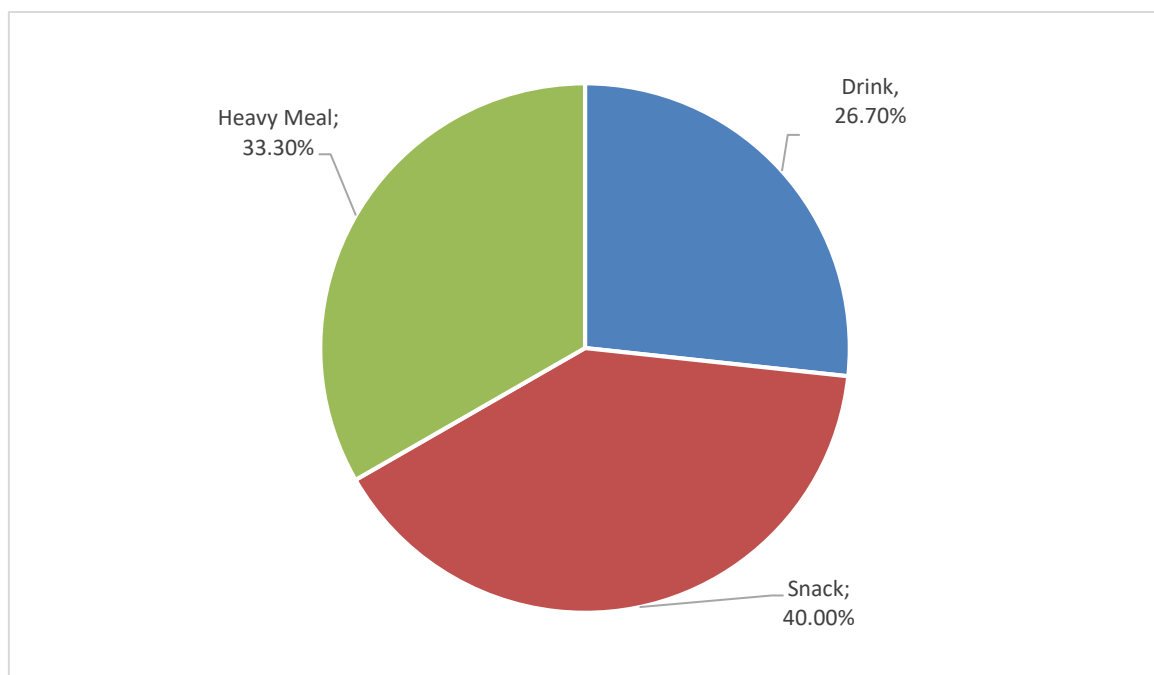
#### Analysis Techniques

Data analysis technique with a qualitative descriptive approach. Descriptive method to explain and answer questions about phenomena that occur in society (Arifin, 2012). A qualitative approach is the process of systematically searching for and compiling data obtained from interviews, notes (field observations), and other materials, so that they can be easily understood, and the findings can be informed to others. In the process, qualitative data analysis can be carried out before entering the field, while in the field, and after completion in the field (Sugiyono, 2018). In this study, data analysis techniques were carried out through the following stages: identifying problems (observation, and informal interviews), and finding strategies to solve problems (literature study).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Characteristics of Respondents

Research respondents are informal business actors who are domiciled in South Tangerang City selected purposively. The number of respondents was 15 actors in the culinary business sector (food and beverage). All businesses run more than one year. If grouped, business actors consist of the beverage business group, the heavy food business group with relatively large business capital, and the snack food business group with relatively small business capital. The following is a classification of respondents/business actors based on three categories.



Source: data processed, 2023

**Figure 1.** Respondents' business classification

As shown in Figure 1, there are 4 business actors engaged in the beverage sector (coffee, jelly drinks, iced soda and avocado ice). This number represents 26.7% of the total number of registered business actors. There are 5 business actors focusing on heavy food (chicken soup, chicken meatballs/noodles, and grilled chicken). This number reflects 33.3% of the total number of business actors or respondents. Meanwhile, respondents in the category of snack food business actors are 6 people or 40% of the total business actors (dimsum, toast, and fried banana).

### Identification of Business Weaknesses

We have identified the weaknesses of informal enterprises. This data was obtained from the results of observations and assessments of visitors (surveyors) through *ghost shopping*. The following is the result of identification of problems faced by informal entrepreneurs (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Identification of Problems in Informal Businesses

Businessmen Drink	Businessmen Heavy meal	Businessmen Snack
1. No parking space	1. Few menu variations	1. <i>Packaging</i> is less attractive
2. Comfort Place	2. Parking space is less extensive	2. Don't have your own logo yet
3. Narrow place	3. Facilities (equipment) are simple	3. Minimal innovation
	4. Don't take advantage of technology	4. Limited menu
	5. Hygiene issues	5. There is no aesthetic presentation
	6. Limited waiting space	6. The place is not strategic
		7. Unfriendly service
		8. Expensive price
		9. Eligibility of cookware

Source: *Primer*, 2023

There are three problems faced by beverage business actors in South Tangerang City based on the results of observations (*ghost shopping*). This problem refers to the places used by business actors, which are simple and usually use or take advantage of simple and small places and low costs. Efforts were made to achieve efficiency and due to limited business capital. This condition makes business actors have no choice in determining their place of business, such as choosing a large parking area and a comfortable place of business. They choose according to the budget they have.

The characteristics or problems faced by these business actors are commonly encountered due to problems or limited business capital. Capital usually only comes from personal, family or relatives whose number is limited because they cannot access banking or are not *bankable* Wauran, 2012) dan (A. P. Nasution, 2016). These business actors are also characterized by locations or places of business that are not fixed, use their own homes or rent and move around (Suryani, 2021), and often occupy locations that are not strategic. Even though a location that is not strategic can hinder customer accessibility and limit the potential for new customers. Choosing the right location, with good traffic and close to your target market, can help increase your business' visibility and attractiveness. They are also often connoted as a weak, informal society, and careless administration (Dieter-Evers, 1991).

For informal business actors in the heavy food sector, we identified six problems. Of these six, we focus on menu variations and the use of technology and hygiene issues. Whereas informal business actors are characterized by limited menu variants. This is due to the limited knowledge and *skills* of business actors and the fear of trying new things dan (Bahri, 2021). In addition, informal actors are also characterized by not using technology properly. The reason is that besides requiring a lot of money, there is also no relevant technology to help businesses be more effective and efficient.

Another problem that is often faced by informal entrepreneurs is cleanliness. Many business people ignore cleanliness, especially since it is considered normal by consumers.

Business actors in Indonesia are indeed different from developed countries that already use technology. Business actors in Indonesia generally use traditional/simple and manual equipment (Suryani, 2021). The limited use of technology not only makes production limited in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality making it difficult to compete (Risnawati, 2018). Another aspect that is often neglected by informal entrepreneurs is the issue of cleanliness. Even though cleanliness is a strength for business actors if they pay attention (Suryani, 2021). Because cleanliness is a factor that can maintain consumer loyalty and increase customers (Afandrianti Maulida & Habiburahman, 2022).

In addition to the beverage and heavy food businesses, we also identified problems faced by informal businesses in the snack business sector. There are nine weaknesses which we summarize into four weaknesses, namely: First, the packaging is less attractive and does not have its own logo. Unattractive packaging can make the product less prominent in the market and less attractive to potential consumers (Apriyanti, 2018). Attractive packaging can increase product attractiveness and help differentiate from competitors (Widiati, 2020). While the logo is a visual identity that distinguishes a brand from the others. Without their own logo, businesses lose the opportunity to build a strong brand image and communicate messages to consumers (Listya & Rukiah, 2018).

Second, minimal innovation so that the menu is limited. Lack of innovation in products or services can make businesses fall behind market trends and unable to meet the growing needs of consumers. Continuous innovation is needed to maintain competitiveness and business growth (I. Lestari et al., 2019) because it will attract more customers (Suhaeni, 2018) and increase customer satisfaction (Aditi, 2018). Meanwhile, having a limited menu can limit consumer choices and make potential customers look for other alternatives. Menu diversification with wider variations can increase attractiveness and provide a wider variety of experiences to customers (William & Alfian, 2020).

Third, there is no aesthetic presentation and less friendly service. Presentation that is less aesthetically pleasing can reduce consumer satisfaction and reduce the value of the food experience. An attractive appearance can increase consumer tastes and desires to try products so they can compete with competitors (Suherlan et al., 2018). Meanwhile, services that are less friendly or less responsive can make customers feel unappreciated and have the potential to reduce loyalty. Good and friendly service is essential for building good relationships with customers and creating positive experiences (Malik, 2017).

Fourth, the high price and feasibility of cookware. High prices can be a barrier for potential customers and make them look for more affordable alternatives (Melpiana & Sudarajat, 2022). Determining the right price, taking into account the quality of the product and the value provided to customers, is important for maintaining business attractiveness (Jumakil et al., 2021). Consumers tend to be attracted to low prices (Satria, 2017). Even so, high or low prices must be able to provide satisfaction for consumers (Prasetio, 2012). Meanwhile, the condition of cooking utensils that are inadequate or poorly maintained can affect the quality and consistency of the products produced, and has the potential to cause many bacteria that cause disease (Sutoko et al., 2019). Good and well-maintained cookware is essential to achieving the quality standards expected by consumers.

### **Business Performance Strengthening Strategy**

From the identification of the problems or weaknesses of informal business actors as explained earlier, we found several aspects that need to be considered by business actors in improving their business performance, namely the financial aspect (strengthening business capital), the use of technology, and the development of innovation. By paying attention to these three aspects, informal business actors can improve their business performance and sustainability. Attention to financial

aspects, strengthening technology, and developing innovation are important steps in facing challenges and achieving success in a competitive business environment.

### **Strengthening venture capital**

Recognizing the importance of good financial management, business actors need to pay attention to this aspect. They must have a good understanding of managing income, expenses, and optimizing existing financial resources. By looking at finances effectively, business actors can make the right decisions in allocating funds, controlling costs, and ensuring stable business continuity.

Strengthening business capital is the process of increasing or strengthening the financial resources available to a business. This can be done in various ways, including:

1. Additional capital injection

Business actors can seek additional funding from various sources, such as investors, business partners, or financial institutions (Pradhana & Nafik H.R, 2017). By obtaining additional capital, business actors can increase their liquidity and ability to develop or expand business operations. So that the business carried out will be greater (Alves & Soeaidy, 2015).

2. Increased revenue

One way to strengthen business capital is to increase income. This can be done through an effective marketing strategy (Arianty & Masyhura, 2019), looking for opportunities to increase sales, or exploring new markets (Mustikowati & Tysari, 2015) dan (Bhegawati et al., 2022) through utilizing digital media (Bambang & Abdur, 2019)(Bambang & Abdur, 2019) By increasing revenue, business actors can allocate more funds for business development.

3. Financial management efficiency

Business actors need to evaluate and improve their financial management. By identifying and reducing inefficient costs (Handayani et al., 2022), improving inventory management, or optimizing cash flow, businesses can generate higher profits from their operations (Tanan & Dhamayanti, 2020). This profit can be used to strengthen business capital.

4. Good financial planning

It is important for business actors to have mature financial planning. This includes preparing budgets, projecting income and costs, and managing financial risks wisely (Fadilah & Purwanto, 2022). By having good financial planning, business actors can optimize the use of their capital and avoid financial crises and increase in business (M. D. Nasution & Wulandari, 2021).

5. Take advantage of government subsidies or assistance: Sometimes, the government or other institutions provide subsidies or financial assistance programs for business actors. Business actors can seek information and take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen their business capital.

Strengthening business capital aims to provide financial stability and flexibility needed for business continuity and growth, as well as increasing business profits (Ramadhan & Sukmana, 2020). By having sufficient and efficient capital, businesses can run their operations better, invest for business development, and face challenges and opportunities that arise in the market. Strengthening business capital can solve the problems of business actors as previously identified. For example, it can be used to rent a better place, innovate, buy technology, upgrade equipment, and so on.

### **Technology Utilization**

In an increasingly connected and evolving world, strengthening technology is of paramount importance. Business actors must pay attention to the use of technology that is relevant to their line of business. This includes the use of software or systems that assist in managing inventory, ordering,

payment and other operations. Strengthening technology can also involve utilizing social media, online marketing, and electronic communications to reach a wider target market (Atmojo, 2022).

Utilization of technology can provide various benefits in improving business performance. Following are some of the ways in which technology can be used to improve business performance:

1. Business process automation

Technology can be used to automate various business processes that were previously done manually. For example, the use of the right management software or system can automate tasks such as processing orders, inventory management, or generating financial reports. By reducing dependence on manual work, businesses can save time and resources, increase efficiency, and reduce the risk of human error. Business actors can take advantage of technology such as financial software to record sales and financial reports more accurately and quickly (Suryadi, 2020). Business automation is needed to make decisions faster so that businesses can grow (Achadiyah, 2019).

2. Digital marketing and promotion

Utilization of digital technology such as social media, websites, and online advertising can help businesses reach and interact with their target market more effectively. Through the right digital marketing strategy, businesses can increase visibility, reach potential customers (Friadi, 2022) at lower costs (Rafiah & Kirana, 2019), and better track and analyze campaign results.

### **Innovation development**

Innovation is key in maintaining business competitiveness and growth (Sofyan, 2021). Business actors need to develop new ideas, improve existing products or services, and adapt to changing market trends. By innovating, they can create added value for customers (E. R. Lestari, 2019), differentiate themselves from competitors, and attract new market attention. Innovation development is the process of creating new ideas, changing or improving existing products, services or business processes, with the aim of increasing added value and providing a competitive advantage for business actors (Husnah et al., 2022). Innovation development is key in creating competitiveness, increasing efficiency, and dealing with changes in the market (Hartini, 2012).

The following is an explanation of the development of innovation for business actors:

1. Identify opportunities

Business actors need to identify new opportunities that can provide added value to customers or solve existing problems so that businesses can develop in the future (Makkulawu et al., 2022). This effort involves an in-depth understanding of the market, trends and needs of potential customers, as well as the use of information technology (Setiawan & Fadillah, 2020). By understanding the wants and expectations of customers, businesses can develop relevant and interesting innovations including through legal protection (Fibrianti et al., 2022).

2. Creative thinking and exploration of ideas

Business actors need to encourage creative thinking within their teams to produce innovative ideas (Noerchoidah et al., 2022). This can be done through brainstorming sessions, market research, or collaboration with partners or external parties. It is important to create an environment that supports the exploration of new ideas and encourages controlled risk taking. Creative thinking and exploitation of ideas can not only encourage business development but also encourage the creation of new jobs, increase income and welfare (Pelamonia, 2020), but can also trigger the surrounding economy including the regional economy (Boccella & Salerno, 2016; Saksono, 2012).

3. Partnership and collaboration

Business actors can take advantage of mutually beneficial partnerships or collaborations with other parties, such as universities, research institutions, or industry partners, communities and media (Ardianto & Asngadi, 2022; Jezamin Setiawan et al., 2020.) to obtain additional knowledge and resources so that increase business competitiveness (Khouroh et al., 2021; Marjukah et al.,

2021). Through collaboration, innovative ideas can be enriched and further developed with different knowledge and experiences.

Development of innovation is a must for informal business actors in improving performance and competitiveness. This aspect can help businesses solve problems such as the lack of innovation, limited menu variants, unattractive *packaging*, and *price issues*.

## CONCLUSION

Beverage business actors face problems such as lack of parking space, cramped business premises, lack of technology utilization, hygiene problems, and limited waiting space. This problem arises because informal entrepreneurs have limited capital and limited choices of places to do business. Heavy food businesses face problems such as a small variety of menus, lack of technology utilization, and hygiene problems. Limited knowledge and skills of business actors as well as financial constraints are the main factors causing this problem. Snack food businesses face problems such as unattractive packaging, lack of innovation in menus, lack of aesthetic presentation, unfriendly service, high prices, and appropriateness of cooking utensils. Informal business actors need to pay attention to these aspects to increase the attractiveness of their products and services. In dealing with these weaknesses, informal business actors need to strengthen business performance by focusing on financial aspects, technology utilization, and innovation development. Strengthening business capital through injecting additional capital, increasing income, efficient financial management, good financial planning, and utilizing subsidies or government assistance is an important strategy. In addition, business actors also need to pay attention to the use of relevant technology and develop innovations in products, services and presentation. By strengthening business performance, informal entrepreneurs can overcome challenges and achieve business sustainability in a competitive business environment. Nonetheless, the limitations of this study are the limited data used, both from the business actors surveyed and from the number of respondents. For this reason, further research is needed with more data, new variables or indicators and different methods used.

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