International Journal of Economics and Management Research

E-ISSN: 2830-2508
P-ISSN: 2830-2664

Research Article

An Exploratory Study on the Income of Bentor Drivers : A Comparison Between Maxim-affiliated and Conventional Transport Services

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the differences in income levels between online (Maxim) and conventional motorcycle taxi drivers, and to identify the factors influencing the economy of online (Maxim) and conventional transport drivers. The research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach.The findings reveal a noticeable difference, where the average income of online motorcycle taxi drivers is higher than that of conventional drivers in Gorontalo City. Then, several factors influence the economy of those drivers, particularly the conventional drivers that switch to online transportation, including the utilization of technology and application access, flexible working hours, operating cost, tariff, total number of passengers, service quality, and distance.

Keywords : Conventional Transportation; Income; Online Transportation

1. Introduction

Economic development in a city requires sufficient and adequate transportation services. Without transportation as a supporting facility, it is impossible to achieve satisfactory results in efforts to develop a country's economy. The need for transportation services, also known as transportation, is a derived demand resulting from economic, social, and other activities. Transportation plays a crucial role in economic development because it is directly related to the distribution of goods, services, and labor, and is at the heart of economic movement in urban areas. The primary activity of transportation is moving goods (commodity of goods) and passengers from one place (origin or port of call) to another place (port of destination). In this regard, transportation providers produce transportation services, or in other words, generate service output for communities needing to move or deliver goods (Gunawan et al., 2023).

Transportation is an essential means of mobility in daily life. Its importance is reflected in the growing demand for transportation services due to the increased need for mobility of people and goods as a result of population growth and urban development. The existence of transportation in everyday life is undeniable; it has become a primary need, and jobs in the transportation sector have become an alternative choice for people to meet their daily needs (Kadir Abdul, 2006). In reality, although there are many productive potentials in residential environments that could generate income, these potentials are often neglected due to the limited skills and abilities of the local community (Mahmud & Popoi, 2019).

Received: May 05, 2025
Revised: May 19, 2025
Accepted: June 03, 2025
Online Available: June 05, 2025
Curr. Ver.: June 05, 2025

Technological advancement is an integral part of societal dynamics. In this era of globalization, technological mastery is considered a prestige and an indicator of a country's progress. One form of technological development is transportation. The word "transportation" originates from the Latin word “trans” meaning across or to the other side, and “portare,” meaning to carry or bring. Therefore, transportation means carrying or bringing (something) to the other side or from one place to another. Transportation can be defined as an effort and activity to transport goods and passengers from one place to another. The existence of transportation is essential to support various human daily activities. A concrete example of technological advancement in transportation is the emergence of motorized rickshaws.

Motorized rickshaws (locally known as bentor) are a form of public transportation that differs from regular two-wheeled motorcycles. A bentor has three wheels and is different in design, where passengers sit in the front of the driver, similar to a traditional pedal-powered rickshaw. Bentor has long been used in several regions in Indonesia. In terms of its benefits, bentor not only reaches destinations quickly but also serves as an alternative mode of transportation for areas not accessible by other public transport such as angkot, busway, minibuses, and others. Data on the number of bentor in the Kota Tengah sub-district, Gorontalo City, is presented in the table below :

Table 1. Number of Bentor in Kota Tengah Sub-district, Gorontalo City (2020–2023)

No	Sub-district Name	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	Kota Tengah	318	468	535	648	2,724	2,528	2,329

Source: Department of Transportation, Communication, and Informatics, Gorontalo City

In Kota Tengah sub-district, Gorontalo City, conventional transportation such as bentor has been a mainstay for local residents for many years. However, the emergence of online transportation services, including Maxim, poses a significant challenge for drivers of conventional transportation, especially bentor. The shift in the transportation system in this area has brought a direct impact on economic and social aspects, particularly in urban areas where online transportation affects job availability, income, and community mobility. The high level of resident mobility for work, education, and recreation has increased the demand for more practical transportation services.

The rising number of online bentor users in Kota Tengah, Gorontalo City, has opened up broader employment opportunities for conventional bentor drivers who have transitioned to become online drivers. The community in Kota Tengah appears quite enthusiastic in welcoming the presence of online bentor transportation (Maxim), as it is increasingly used by the public. This is driven by the convenience of the digital system offered, such as ordering via application and both cash and non-cash payment systems. With easy access and the comfort offered, online bentor (Maxim) is assumed to be used more frequently than conventional

bentor. This difference in usage levels is likely to affect the income levels of drivers from both online and conventional services. Therefore, the transition from conventional bentor transportation to online platforms has become an interesting issue to be studied and understood more deeply. Most previous research has focused on online motorcycle or car services such as Grab and Gojek. This study will explore the income differences between online bentor (Maxim) drivers and conventional bentor drivers in Kota Tengah sub-district, Gorontalo City. Thus, the author is interested in conducting a study entitled: "Exploratory Study of the Income of Online (Maxim) and Conventional Bentor Drivers in Kota Tengah Sub-district, Gorontalo City."

2. Literature Review

2.1. Transportation

2.1.1 Definition of Transportation

Transportation is defined as the movement of goods and people from their origin to their destination. This activity involves three essential elements: the cargo being transported, the vehicle used as a means of transport, and the road or route that can be passed through. The process begins with movement from the point of origin and ends at the point of destination. Through the movement of goods and people, transportation becomes both a promoting sector and a servicing sector in economic activities. Therefore, transportation plays a crucial role in supporting the economic development of a region or country. Transportation development in Indonesia has progressed significantly since the Dutch colonial era. During this period, transportation began using modern machinery and equipment. The Dutch brought more advanced means of transportation into Indonesia. Transportation became an integral part of society's daily life at that time. This advancement led to a major transformation in the mobility and distribution systems for both people and goods. Transportation is a vital element in a country's development. It serves as one of the main foundations for economic growth and social development. The availability of transportation also supports the growth of industrial sectors across various regions. Transportation advancements stimulate economic activities and the development of an area or nation. Moreover, it serves as an important tool in facilitating human interaction and the movement of goods.

b. Elements of Transportation

In general, the basic components of transportation modes are classified into five elements: human, goods, vehicle, road, and organization. First, humans as the party in need of transportation services. Second, goods that people need to move from one place to another. Third, vehicles that serve as the means of transport to move people or goods. Fourth, roads or transportation routes that allow vehicles to pass through. Fifth, organizations that manage the operation of the transportation system (Nasution, 2004). According to Morlok (1985),

there are four main components in transportation: transportation facilities (vehicles), terminals, infrastructure (roads or tracks), and operations (management and regulation). Transportation facilities include all types of vehicles used to move people and goods. Terminals function as nodes or connection points in the transportation network. Infrastructure refers to the paths or routes that the vehicles travel on, such as highways, railroads, or waterways. Operations involve planning, regulating, and controlling the entire transportation system.

2.2 Types of Transportation

Transportation can be grouped based on its mode and operation. Based on the mode, transportation is divided into land, sea, and air transportation. Based on the type of operation, transportation is divided into conventional transportation and online-based transportation.

2.2.1 Conventional Transportation

Conventional transportation refers to transportation modes that are operated manually or directly by drivers without being connected to digital applications. This type of transportation is commonly found in both urban and rural areas and includes pedicabs, motorcycle taxis (ojek), public minibuses (angkot), and taxis. Although its use has declined due to digital transformation, conventional transportation is still relied upon in areas with limited internet access or where online-based transportation services are not available (Haryati, 2018).

2.2.2 Online-Based Transportation

Online-based transportation is a form of transportation service that utilizes digital applications to connect drivers and passengers. This transportation system emerged as a response to advances in information and communication technology. Companies such as Gojek and Grab have developed platforms that make it easier for users to order transportation services through smartphones. Online transportation has become popular because of its practicality, speed, and ability to estimate travel costs directly through the application (Saragih, 2021). Online transportation offers several advantages, such as transparent fare systems, digital payment options, and real-time tracking of driver locations. However, it also presents challenges, including regulatory issues, safety concerns, and competition with conventional transportation. The presence of online transportation has changed the pattern of urban mobility and significantly influenced the transportation industry in Indonesia (Yuliana, 2020).

2.3 Income

Income is the result or reward obtained by individuals or groups from their participation in economic activities, such as labor, business, or investment. According to Sukirno (2006), income can be interpreted as the remuneration received by production factors used in the production process. Income is also a reflection of one's ability to meet their needs and is an indicator of economic welfare. Mubyarto (1997) states that income is the result received by households or individuals in the form of money or goods for the contribution of their work or ownership of production factors. This income can come from wages, profits, interest, and

rent. The higher a person's income, the greater their purchasing power and access to a better standard of living.

According to Todaro and Smith (2006), income plays a central role in development economics because it influences consumption, savings, investment, and poverty levels. Therefore, income distribution is an important concern in economic development to reduce inequality and social disparities. Unequal income distribution can lead to social and economic instability. In the context of transportation, income greatly influences the demand for transportation services. People with high incomes tend to choose more convenient and faster transportation modes, such as private cars or online transportation, whereas those with lower incomes tend to use public or conventional transportation (Morlok, 1985). Thus, income not only affects individual mobility but also transportation policy and infrastructure planning.

2.4 The Influence of Transportation on Income in Urban Areas

Transportation plays an important role in supporting the economic growth of urban areas. Efficient and accessible transportation systems can open up opportunities for employment, improve market access, and increase labor mobility. According to Button (2010), transportation infrastructure is a key element in supporting productivity and income growth, especially in urban areas where economic activities are concentrated. Good transportation access can reduce travel time and costs, thereby increasing work efficiency and productivity. For workers, the availability of affordable and timely transportation can expand access to job opportunities in different areas. According to Litman (2012), improved transportation systems contribute to increasing income levels by expanding the reach of job markets and reducing barriers to accessing economic resources.

In urban areas, the presence of online transportation has become an alternative source of income for many people. Online transportation platforms such as Gojek and Grab not only provide employment opportunities but also offer flexible work schedules, making them attractive to job seekers, especially those from the informal sector (Putra & Astuti, 2020). This phenomenon shows how the development of transportation technology can directly affect people's income. However, the impact of transportation on income is not always evenly distributed. Inadequate transportation infrastructure in some urban areas can hinder access to economic opportunities, especially for low-income communities. According to Rodrigue (2020), inequality in transportation access can exacerbate economic inequality and reduce the chances of income improvement for marginalized groups. Therefore, to optimize the positive impact of transportation on income, it is necessary to implement inclusive and sustainable transportation development policies. These policies must ensure that all community groups, especially the lower middle class, have access to safe, affordable, and efficient transportation so that they can participate more actively in economic activities and improve their welfare.

3. Proposed Method

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, which is grounded in post-positivist philosophy (Sugiyono, 2018). The descriptive method aims to portray and interpret the actual conditions of the subject as they truly occur in the field. This study focuses on transportation in the city of Gorontalo, particularly on motorized pedicab (bentor) drivers and their passengers. Data collection in this research involves two main techniques: interviews and documentation. The interview method used is unstructured interviews, allowing researchers to explore the perspectives and experiences of informants in depth, without relying on a rigid or predetermined question guide. In total, the research includes one key informant and twenty supporting informants. Additionally, documentation is used as a complementary method, where the researcher examines historical records, written materials, and relevant photographs to support and strengthen the findings. These documents vary in form, from simple notes to more detailed archives, and even physical objects that relate to the topic being studied. This combination of techniques ensures a comprehensive understanding of the bentor drivers' income and conditions in comparison to conventional transportation providers.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the research focus, which explores the income of online motorcycle rickshaw (bentor) drivers (Maxim) and conventional bentor drivers in the Central City District of Gorontalo City, the data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The researcher obtained information regarding the income of both Maxim-based online bentor drivers and conventional bentor drivers, as well as the economic factors influencing both types of transportation in the Central City District of Gorontalo City. Below is a summary of interviews with several informants who participated in the data collection process. The research was conducted from February to April 2025, involving bentor drivers in Gorontalo City and including responses or feedback from bentor passengers. The research data was collected directly through interviews. The profile of informants is presented in the table below :

Table 2. Informant Profile

No.	Informant Name	Status / Occupation
1	Sa	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
2	Mu	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
3	Ro	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
4	Pe	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
5	Ri	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
6	Su	Online bentor driver (Maxim)

7	Lu	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
8	Ah	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
9	Az	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
10	Rm	Online bentor driver (Maxim)
11	Al	Conventional bentor driver
12	Ad	Conventional bentor driver
13	Am	Conventional bentor driver
14	Jo	Conventional bentor driver
15	Id	Conventional bentor driver
16	Iw	Conventional bentor driver
17	Is	Conventional bentor driver
18	Ri	Conventional bentor driver
19	Ti	Conventional bentor driver
20	Al	Conventional bentor driver

4.1 How is the Income of Online Bentor (Maxim) Drivers Compared to Conventional Bentor Drivers?

Bentor (motorized pedicabs) are the most widely used mode of transportation by the people of Gorontalo City for various travel needs. They are easy to find, whether waiting at designated stands or operating on the roads. People without private vehicles generally prefer bentors over other public transport options due to their accessibility, making it relatively easy for bentor drivers to get passengers.

Along with the rapid development of technology, a new innovation in public transportation services has emerged in the form of online-based transportation. This development has influenced the operational system of bentors, with some drivers transitioning to online-based services. The presence of online bentors has caused some conventional bentor drivers to feel disadvantaged, prompting many to join online platforms. This is due to the ease of access to online bentors and the variety of supporting features offered, which attract users to prefer this service.

Based on interviews conducted by the researcher with Maxim online bentor drivers and conventional bentor drivers in the Central City District of Gorontalo City, it is evident that there is a difference in income. Drivers who switched to online services (Maxim) experienced an increase in income, with average daily earnings starting from IDR 150,000. In contrast, conventional bentor drivers reported daily earnings around IDR 50,000. This change occurred following the rise of online bentor services such as Maxim.

These findings are consistent with the study by Lutfia et al. (2024), which found a significant difference in earnings between online and conventional bentor drivers, with online

drivers generally earning more. This is understandable given that the mobility and number of online bentor users tend to be higher than those using conventional services.

4.2 Factors Affecting the Economy of Online Bentor (Maxim) Drivers

This study revealed a significant difference between the income of online and conventional bentor drivers. The difference is influenced by six main factors: technology and app access, flexible working hours, operational costs, fare and number of passengers, service quality, and distance traveled.

a. Use of Technology and App Access

The use of technology is a dominant factor in determining driver income. Apps like Maxim allow drivers to receive orders quickly, in real-time, and integrated with navigation systems. This technology provides convenience in finding passengers without having to move around. Conventional drivers still rely on traditional methods such as waiting at stands or searching on the streets, which consumes more time and energy with uncertain earnings.

Drivers utilizing digital platforms have a higher income potential due to improved efficiency and wider market access.

b. Flexible Working Hours

Flexibility in work hours is a key advantage of the online system. Maxim drivers can adjust their work time to suit personal needs or peak hours. In contrast, conventional drivers must be active in the field as long as possible to find passengers, even in bad weather or off-peak hours. This dependency limits their rest time, which can negatively impact health and productivity in the long run.

According to Rida et al. (2022), flexibility in online transportation increases drivers' quality of life by allowing them to align work with their life rhythm.

c. Operational Costs

Online drivers face transparent deductions from apps (around 10–15% per order) and are not obligated to pay fixed daily deposits. In contrast, conventional drivers often pay fixed deposits to vehicle owners, regardless of how many passengers they get in a day. These costs reduce net income and make saving difficult. The lighter and more flexible cost structure allows online drivers to better manage daily expenses and optimize earnings.

d. Fare and Number of Passengers

Online systems use dynamic and transparent fares calculated by the app, making customers feel more secure and comfortable. Online drivers typically serve more passengers daily because they don't have to wait long. Conventional drivers often deal with unstandardized fares, which can discourage potential passengers.

Transparent and efficient fare systems increase consumer trust and loyalty toward online services compared to conventional transportation.

e. Service Quality

Service quality is key in retaining customers. Apps like Maxim offer a rating/review feature that encourages drivers to be more courteous, punctual, and maintain vehicle cleanliness. Conventional drivers lack a direct passenger feedback system, resulting in inconsistent service standards.

Asmidayanti (2021) stated that customer satisfaction in online services is determined by service consistency, contributing to increased customer numbers and driver income.

f. Distance Traveled

Distance affects efficiency and driver income. Maxim drivers can choose or reject orders based on distance and estimated fare, allowing them to align effort and earnings. If the distance is too far for the fare offered, they can opt for more profitable trips.

On the other hand, conventional drivers lack automated fare calculations and may travel long distances for low fares due to negotiations or limited bargaining power. This creates an imbalance between effort and income.

Asmidayanti (2021) also found that online drivers tend to avoid economically inefficient routes, while conventional drivers are often forced to accept any route to avoid having no income.

These six factors indicate that online bentor drivers are better adapted to current market demands. App usage, time flexibility, efficient costs, more passengers, and better service quality are the main reasons for higher income among Maxim drivers compared to their conventional counterparts.

5. Comparison

Based on the results of research conducted on online bentor (motorized pedicab) drivers using Maxim and conventional bentor drivers in Kota Tengah District, Gorontalo City, there were notable differences in income, working hours, and the use of technology. Online bentor drivers tend to have more fluctuating but potentially higher incomes compared to conventional drivers. This is due to the fare-sharing system based on apps, certain incentives, and ease of obtaining passengers through digital platforms. Conversely, conventional drivers have more stable but generally lower incomes because they rely on street hails or regular customers, whose numbers are limited. In terms of working hours, online bentor drivers have greater flexibility. They can choose when to work according to their needs or personal availability, while conventional drivers must operate during peak hours to maximize earnings. Technology

is a major differentiating factor. Online drivers use apps to find passengers, but they also face challenges such as commission deductions by the platform, phone credit costs, and internet access. Conventional drivers, on the other hand, still rely on traditional methods without depending on technology, although this puts them at a disadvantage in terms of service speed and passenger reach.

Other factors influencing drivers' income include fuel costs, vehicle maintenance expenses, and competition among drivers. Additionally, shifting consumer preferences toward digital services affect the sustainability of conventional bentor drivers. Many members of the public view online transport as more modern, efficient, and secure, making it more attractive, especially to younger generations. These findings are consistent with previous studies. Rahman (2021), in his study in Makassar, found that online motorcycle taxi drivers earn relatively higher daily income than conventional drivers, even though commissions are deducted by the companies. Fitriani and Nugroho (2020) also noted that online transportation offers time flexibility but creates new dependencies on digital systems. Yusriadi et al. (2022) emphasized that conventional transport is under heavy pressure due to a shift in public preference toward app-based services. Meanwhile, Wulandari (2019) pointed out that barriers to accessing technology and low digital literacy hinder conventional drivers from transitioning to online platforms. In conclusion, the presence of online bentor services like Maxim presents significant economic opportunities for drivers, but it also introduces challenges related to operational costs and dependence on technology.

On the other hand, conventional bentor drivers still play a crucial role, particularly among communities not yet familiar with or lacking access to digital services. These changes indicate a shift in the structure of the informal transport economy, which should be addressed by both government and industry stakeholders.

6. Conclusions

Several factors influence the economic conditions of online (Maxim) and conventional bentor drivers. First, the use of technology and access to the application significantly ease the process of finding passengers without the need to move from place to place. In contrast, conventional drivers still rely on traditional methods such as waiting at terminals or searching on the streets, which often consumes more time and energy without guaranteed income. Second, flexible working hours become a major advantage for online drivers. Maxim drivers can adjust their working hours according to personal needs or peak demand times, while conventional drivers must stay active in the field for as long as possible, even during unfavorable weather or low-demand hours. Third, operational costs differ, where online drivers face transparent deductions from the app, typically around 10–15% per order. Fourth, fare systems and passenger volume also play a role. Online services apply dynamic and transparent pricing

calculated directly by the application, which makes passengers feel safer and more comfortable. Fifth, service quality is critical in maintaining customer satisfaction. Applications like Maxim provide features such as ratings and reviews, which motivate drivers to be friendlier, more punctual, and maintain vehicle cleanliness. Conversely, conventional drivers lack a direct feedback system, resulting in inconsistent service standards. Lastly, travel distance affects the efficiency and income of drivers. Maxim drivers can accept or reject orders based on distance and estimated fare, allowing them to balance their income with the energy and time spent.

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