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PRESERVING SABAH'S HERITAGE: CHALLENGES AND PRACTICES IN MUSEUM COLLECTION MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION (2014- 2016)

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Abstract: This study examines the management and conservation of cultural artifacts at the Sabah Museum, Malaysia, focusing on the procedures, practices, and challenges involved. The research aims to explore how the museum acquires, categorizes, and preserves its collections, which encompass Sabah cultural and heritage. The research is guided by the following objectives: (1) to analyses the acquisition and categorization of artifacts at the Sabah Museum, (2) to examine the conservation methods employed, including environmental factors affecting preservation, (3) to highlight the cultural significance of artifacts through Ethnology Storage Unit. This qualitative study employs an ethnographic research methodology, incorporating field observations, interviews with museum staff, and document analysis. The findings reveal that while the museum has structured conservation practices, it faces significant challenges in expertise, funding, and infrastructure. The study underscores the importance of preserving cultural artifacts for future generations and contributes to a broader understanding of museum collection management within a diverse cultural setting like Sabah.

Keywords: Artefact Management, conservation practices, cultural heritage preservation, museum collections, Sabah Museum

1. INTRODUCTION

Museums have evolved to encompass a variety of institutions dedicated to education, conservation, research, and exhibition. According to ICOM (2007), a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution that acquires, preserves, and shares both tangible and intangible heritage while being open to the public for learning and engagement. This broad definition extends beyond traditional museums to include archaeological sites, botanical gardens, zoological parks, aquariums, science centers, and non-profit art galleries. Additionally, conservation institutes, nature reserves, library and archive exhibition spaces, government agencies, and cultural centers that safeguard heritage are also recognized as part of the museum sector.

Based on Kiyai and Tugang (2020) museums are established to serve as institutions for collecting historical, artistic, and cultural artifacts, preserving and conserving them, conducting research, exhibiting, documenting, and educating the public. The origins of museums can be traced back to antiquarianism in Europe before the 19th century, where the practice of collecting ancient objects played a significant role. This practice involved gathering rare, unusual, and often mystical artifacts, primarily led by royalty and the aristocracy, as a symbol of social status and a space for discussions on art, ancient objects, and scientific specimens. This tradition of collecting eventually gave rise to the concept of Cabinets of Curiosities, which is considered the foundational model for modern museums. Early museums were characterized by their focus on collecting and displaying unique, rare, and valuable specimens. Over time, museums evolved into institutions with a more academic and scholarly approach, emphasizing the collection of artifacts with historical and cultural significance.

In response to this, Januszewska (2020) examined a new definition of museums based on the ICOM convention held in Kyoto in 2019, which states:

"Museums create democratic, inclusive, and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the past and future. They acknowledge and address contemporary conflicts, act as guardians of artifacts and specimens entrusted to them by society and preserve diverse memories for future generations. Museums ensure equal rights and access to heritage for all people. As non-profit institutions, they operate transparently and collaboratively with communities, actively engaging in collecting, preserving, researching, interpreting, and exhibiting to enhance understanding of the world. Their ultimate goal is to

contribute to human dignity, social justice, global equality, and the well-being of the planet” (Januszewska, 2020).

Museums have long been established as institutions that collect, preserve, and showcase historical, artistic, and cultural artifacts. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), traditional museum functions include conservation, documentation, research, and education. However, as societies evolve, the role of museums has also transformed to meet contemporary needs. The revised museum definition proposed by ICOM in 2019 at the Kyoto convention emphasizes inclusivity, participation, and social responsibility. This new definition highlights museums as democratic spaces for dialogue, social justice, and sustainability. The Sabah Museum, as a key cultural institution in Malaysia, embodies these evolving principles through its commitment to heritage preservation, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability.

The modern definition of museums emphasizes inclusivity, recognizing them as spaces where diverse voices are acknowledged. The Sabah Museum plays a crucial role in fostering dialogue among the various ethnic communities of Sabah, including the KadazanDusun, Bajau, Murut, and many others. By featuring exhibitions and programs that celebrate the traditions and histories of these indigenous groups, the museum ensures that their cultural narratives remain relevant and accessible. Additionally, community participation in curatorial efforts allows local voices to shape the museum’s storytelling, ensuring that heritage is preserved in an authentic and representative manner.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of a museum is to safeguard the cultural and historical memory of a society. The Sabah Museum achieves this through its extensive collection of ethnographic artifacts, archaeological finds, and historical documents. The museum serves as a custodian of objects that represent the collective heritage of Sabah’s people, from ancient tools and traditional textiles to ritualistic objects and religious artifacts. By preserving and interpreting these materials, the museum helps to maintain a link between past and present, allowing future generations to understand their cultural roots. This aligns with the ICOM definition, which emphasizes the role of museums in protecting diverse memories for the benefit of future generations. This study will explore how the Sabah Museum acquires and classifies artifacts, examine the conservation methods used (including environmental factors affecting preservation), and emphasize the role of artifacts in preserving Sabah’s cultural heritage.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 *History of the Sabah Museum*

The earliest documented reference to a museum in Sabah appeared in the British North Borneo Herald on August 1, 1886. The article described a proposal by Sir D.D. Daly to establish a museum in Sandakan, called the North Borneo British Museum, which was to be managed by J.W. Wilson. However, this initiative faced numerous challenges, and the museum closed in 1905, with much of its collection lost or destroyed during its abandonment.

In 1923, efforts were made to re-establish the museum in Sandakan, with H.G. Keith assuming management in 1925. Unfortunately, World War II caused further devastation, as the Japanese invasion led to the destruction of the museum's collections and records. After the war, in 1947, Governor Sir Edward Twining initiated efforts to revive the Sabah Museum by establishing a fund to manage its archival materials. However, the committee formed to oversee this revival disbanded after producing only an initial report due to internal challenges. Despite these setbacks, the Sabah Society, a local organization, advocated for the establishment of a museum dedicated to preserving Sabah's heritage. After World War II, the British continued to manage the museum, and David McCredie was appointed to oversee its operations while awaiting the completion of a new building (Patrcia Regis,1990: Sintiong,2015).

In 1965, the Sabah Museum was officially handed over to its first curator, E.J. Berwick, who served until 1966. He was succeeded by a number of curators, including R.J. Brooks (1966-1968), Gordon Noris (1968), Michael Pike (1968-1973), Datu Stephen Lee (1972-1974), and Datuk Hendry Mosiun (1974-1975), with Joanna Datuk Kitingan currently serving in the position. In 1966, the Archives Department was merged with the museum, but this arrangement ended in 1972 when the two entities became separate. As the museum's collections grew, it moved to the third floor of Nasmal Court in 1969. The enactment of the Antiquities Enactment in 1969 granted the museum greater control over its preservation efforts. To accommodate the growing collection, additional space was acquired in the building.



Figure 1: Newspaper article reporting on the Sabah Museum site (Source: The newspaper article was sourced by the researcher from the Sabah State Archives Department in 2015).

Recognizing the importance of cultural heritage, the state government decided to relocate the museum to a larger site in 1970. The new location at Bukit Istana Lama was chosen, and the museum's new complex, covering 16.69 hectares, was completed with a construction budget of RM 31.2 million. The museum officially opened on April 11, 1984, with Sultan Hj. Ahmad Shah Al-Mustain Billah, the 8th Yang Di-Pertuan Agong, presiding over the ceremony.

The Sabah Museum's history began in 1888, under the directive of the British Governor, and continued until 1905. During this time, the British administration collected items for the museum, although these efforts lacked systematic research or detailed documentation. The museum, along with its collections, was destroyed during World War II, halting efforts to establish a permanent museum in Sabah. In 1925, following pressure from the Sabah Society and inspired by the development of similar institutions in British Malaya, Governor Sir Edward Francis Twinning revived the museum (Sabah Museum Annual Report 1991, 1995 and 1996). After World War II, the management of the Sabah Museum was heavily dependent on external experts. E.J. Berwick, who also served as the Director of Agriculture in Sabah, became the museum's first curator. Under his leadership, the museum's collections were stored in Tuaran, alongside the agricultural research center. In 1966, when Berwick returned to Britain, the museum was placed under the Ministry of Communications. During this time, it was managed by British officers and qualified local personnel, with David W. McCredie being appointed as curator in 1970. McCredie's tenure lasted until 1980, with his contract extended for an additional three years. The following is a list of curators who served at the museum until 1965:

- i. E.J. Berwick
- ii. R.J. Brooks

- iii. Gordon Noris
- iv. Michael Pike
- v. Datu Stephen Lee
- vi. Henry Mosiun
- vii. Justin Mak
- viii. David W. McCredie

Although the Sabah Museum is now administered by local personnel, its ongoing reliance on external expertise is still evident. This is particularly noticeable in specialized disciplines, such as archaeology, where advanced knowledge and skills are necessary. Despite the museum's increasing autonomy, external input remains vital for the preservation, research, and expansion of its collections (Sabah Museum Annual Report, 1996)

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing ethnographic field research and participant observation to examine artifact management at the Sabah Museum. The methodological framework integrates in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the museum's management practices and decision-making processes regarding artifact curation and conservation.

The primary data collection method involves structured and semi-structured interviews with key informants, including senior museum staff such as Peter Khoon and Peter Molijol, who are experts in artifact management and pioneers in the development of the museum's collection. Additionally, interviews will be conducted with the previous Director of the Sabah Museum, Puan Joana Kitingan, to gain insights into the museum's administrative strategies for artifact preservation, classification, and exhibition priorities. These interviews will focus on critical aspects such as artifact selection criteria, Sabah's role as a significant contributor of artifacts at the national level, administrative and preservation strategies, and exhibition planning.

To strengthen the reliability of findings, the study also incorporates non-participant observations in the conservation laboratories and storage units. Observing conservation techniques firsthand allows for a deeper understanding of preservation challenges and the impact of limited resources. Furthermore, the study will document how artifacts are handled, stored, and treated, providing visual evidence of conservation techniques through field notes and photographic documentation.

The research also relies on two types of data sources: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary data will be gathered through interviews with relevant stakeholders at the Sabah Museum, providing firsthand information on the museum's policies and procedures regarding artifact management. Additionally, artifact conservation reports and unpublished internal documents from the Sabah Museum will be reviewed to supplement interview findings.

Secondary data will be obtained from existing literature, including academic references from the publish journal (relevant with this topic). Comparative insights into best practices in museum artifact curation and management will also be drawn from international case studies and publications from institutions such as the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and UNESCO. This triangulated research approach ensures a holistic analysis of artifact management practices at the Sabah Museum, contributing to a deeper understanding of heritage preservation and museum curation strategies.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Acquisition and Categorization of Artifacts at the Sabah Museum

The Sabah Museum, established in 1965, serves as the primary repository for cultural, historical, and natural heritage artifacts in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. As an institution dedicated to preserving and showcasing the region's diverse cultural heritage, the museum's artifact acquisition and categorization processes play a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of its collections. This essay examines the acquisition methods employed by the Sabah Museum and the classification system used to organize its artifacts.

i. Donations

Many of the museum's artifacts are donated by individuals, families, or institutions. These donations often include heirlooms, traditional costumes, ritual objects, and personal collections of historical significance. The image 1 depicts an artifact donated by the Fedrick family from Penampang to the Sabah Museum. The object in question is a *Bangkawan*—a human skull—which holds significant cultural value as a family heirloom passed down through generations. According to Fedrick, the *Bangkawan* was historically used by their ancestors in agricultural rituals aimed at ensuring the protection of the harvest, as well as for other ceremonial purposes. Each year, a ritual offering of food would be made to the *Bangkawan* in order to appease its spirit and prevent any potential harm or misfortune from befalling the family.



Figure 2: Bangkawan a donation from Fedrick family from Penampang to the Sabah Museum in 2011 (Sources: Fieldwork, 2011)

However, over time, the relevance and function of the Bangkawan have evolved, and the Fedrick family found themselves unable to continue the ancestral practice. Since the passing of their grandmother, the ritual of offering food to the Bangkawan has ceased, and the artifact has remained neglected. Fearing that the artifact might eventually be lost due to changing circumstances, the family made the decision to donate it to the Sabah Museum. They entrusted the museum with the responsibility of preserving this cultural heritage, confident in the institution's ability to safeguard and maintain such items for future generations. Alongside the Bangkawan, the family also donated other ritual objects, including the Tajau and Talam, which were integral to the ceremonies.

Before the donation, the Fedrick family performed a ritual known as Mamason, which was meant to convey a message to the spirit of Gompi Bangkawan. The ceremony, overseen by two females Bobohizan (traditional spiritual leaders), required all family members and relatives to first participate in a thanksgiving feast. Once the feast concluded, the ritual began, with the Bobohizan donning distinctive black attire and utilizing ritual items such as a sword, koumbongo, gondong, and two black chickens placed near the Bangkawan. This ceremony highlights the continuing importance of ritual practices, and the cultural significance of the objects associated with them.

Apart from the Frederick family, two former members of the Second Ranger Regiment, namely Ranger Regiment Captain Abdullah @ Abdul Karim Mohd Yossop, who led the plaque presentation ceremony for the regiment, donated two ranger plaques and three ranger engine motors, as well as a book on the history of the Ranger Regiment from 1862 to 1992 and thirty original photographs taken between 1963 and 1968. Among the operations participated in by this Ranger Regiment were

the Confrontation incident on December 1, 1966, in Pulau Sebatik, Tawau, Operation Gonzales on April 23, 1974, in Sungai Siput, Perak, Operation Ngelaban in Ulu Oya, Sarawak, and Operation Kota Charlie/Delta in Gubir, Sik, Kedah, in 1987 (interview with informant Puan Siu Chin Sindih)

ii. Field Collection and Ethnographic Research

Museum researchers actively engage in fieldwork to collect artifacts from indigenous communities, particularly in rural and interior regions of Sabah. This process includes detailed documentation of the objects' cultural context and use. In 1987, Professor John Landgraph of New York University formally transferred a collection of Murut artifacts to the Sabah Museum, comprising materials from the British colonial period in Sabah.

The collection includes printed documents from 1947, eight canisters, a government microfilm from 1955, ethnographic records on Murut cultural traditions, and approximately 2,000 black-and-white film negatives. Additionally, the donation features artifacts crafted from bamboo, wood, and silver, as well as traditional Murut adornments and attire. Professor Landgraph noted that these materials were accumulated during his research, conducted under a British government grant in North Borneo. He emphasized that the artifacts should be returned to their rightful custodians and expressed hope that the collection would serve as a valuable resource for the study and preservation of Murut heritage in Sabah.

The Sabah Museum Department has acquired several significant collections over the years, each contributing to the institution's role in preserving and documenting the region's cultural, historical, and natural heritage. Among these collections are The Pamol Collection, The Philip Collection, The Longfield Collection, and The Woolley Collection, each of which reflects different aspects of Sabah's past.

The Pamol Collection comprises Chinese ceramics dating from the 10th-century Song Dynasty to the 12th-century Yuan Dynasty, alongside a complete set of imperial Chinese family bedroom furnishings. These artifacts were discovered in 1976 by plantation workers at a palm oil estate in Pamol, Kimanis, highlighting the presence of historical trade networks that connected Sabah to broader Asian maritime exchanges. The Philip Collection, donated by the Philip family in April 1978, consists of various species of coral found in the shallow waters of Kota Kinabalu and Tanjung Aru. This collection is now housed in the Natural History Gallery on the second floor of the museum, serving as an important reference for the study of Sabah's marine biodiversity. The Longfield Collection is an extensive photographic archive documenting British colonial administration in Sabah. It was generously donated by

the family of J. Longfield, who had been residing in Sabah since December 1978. This collection provides valuable visual records of life during the colonial period, offering researchers and historians insights into the sociopolitical landscape of the time.

Among the most significant contributions to the museum's foundational collections is the Woolley Collection. This was the first official collection acquired by the Sabah Museum, forming the cornerstone of its early development. Donated by G.C. Woolley, a colonial administrator for the British North Borneo Chartered Company, the collection includes cultural artifacts, photographs, books, journals, and administrative documents related to the Chartered Company's governance in Sabah before World War II. The Woolley Collection remains an essential resource for understanding the colonial history of Sabah and its impact on indigenous communities. Each of these collections represents a crucial component of the Sabah Museum's mission to safeguard the region's tangible and intangible heritage. Through these acquisitions, the museum continues to serve as a repository of knowledge, ensuring that the rich history and biodiversity of Sabah are preserved for future generations.

The Sabah Museum houses one of the most comprehensive ceramic collections in Southeast Asia. Across Sabah, particularly along the East Coast, which historically served as a major maritime trade route for Chinese merchants, ceramics have played a significant role in regional trade. The export of Chinese ceramics to Borneo dates back approximately 1,200 years, with major trade emporiums established in southern Borneo, notably in Santubong, at the mouth of the Kuching River in Sarawak, and in Brunei at Kota Batu.

Although the Sultan of Brunei is believed to have embraced Islam in the early 16th century, archaeological findings indicate that trade between China and Brunei predates this period, as evidenced by the discovery of ceramics at various archaeological sites. According to Othman Mohd. Yatim (1981), ceramics and storage jars played a crucial role in the cultural practices of indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak. It is believed that their introduction to ceramic ware and storage jars was incidental, occurring through maritime trade in the early 16th century. Chinese traders, who ventured into this region in search of forest products such as rattan, spices, damar resin, and other valuable goods, initially used storage jars for food preservation and as ballast for their ships. This practicality caught the interest of indigenous communities, leading to the development of a barter trade system that facilitated the exchange of goods. Due to increasing local demand, Chinese traders expanded their ceramic trade, introducing a variety of storage jars in

different shapes, colors, and decorative styles to appeal to indigenous buyers. Consequently, ceramic scholars suggest that these pottery items were specifically produced in southern China for the indigenous communities of Sabah and Sarawak (interview with informant Peter Molijol in 2015)



Figure 3: Ceramic collection in Sabah Museum (Sources: Fieldwork, 2011)

The following is a list of ceramic and storage jar collections currently displayed in the Ceramics Gallery on the second floor of the Sabah Museum:

- i. European Pottery (19th and 20th Century)
- ii. Japanese Pottery (17th and 19th Century)
- iii. Vietnamese Trade Ceramics (14th to 19th Century)
- iv. Siamese Trade Ceramics (14th to 19th Century)
- v. Late Qing Dynasty Trade Ceramics (1796–1912 AD)
- vi. Qing Dynasty Trade Ceramics (1644–1912 AD)
- vii. Late Ming Dynasty Trade Ceramics (1566–1644 AD)
- viii. Ming Dynasty Trade Ceramics (1368–1644 AD)
- ix. Yuan Dynasty Trade Ceramics (1279–1368 AD)
- x. Song Dynasty Trade Ceramics (960–1279 AD)
- xi. Ceramics from the Simpang Mengayau Shipwreck Site, Kudat

Beyond ceramics, *tajau* (large storage jars) are an integral part of the exhibition at the Sabah Museum's ceramics gallery. These jars have been acquired through donations from local communities, fieldwork, and direct purchases by the museum. Within Sabah's indigenous societies, *tajau* hold deep cultural and historical significance, playing a vital role in both daily life and traditional practices.

For the Dusun and Murut communities, *tajau* are regarded as valuable heirlooms, passed down from one generation to another. These jars serve multiple functions, including their use as burial vessels for the deceased, storage containers for *Tapai*

(fermented rice wine), and bridal dowries in marriage ceremonies. Among the Murut people of Pensiangan, the exchange of tajau is a crucial part of wedding traditions, particularly within a practice known as Antalang, which involves the collection of bridal gifts (berian). The Murut wedding system is often regarded as one of the most complex among Sabah's indigenous communities, with tajau playing an essential role. In a ritual known as Tiluan, the groom's family is required to present tajau to the bride's family as part of the marriage negotiations.

Beyond their ceremonial importance, tajau are also used in weather-related rituals. During periods of drought, communities place tajau and large storage jars in designated locations while performing rain-calling ceremonies. It is widely believed that failing to care for or properly maintain these jars could result in misfortune for their owners, often in the form of persistent illness. To prevent such occurrences, a ritual cleansing is performed to "appease" the tajau. This involves a sacrificial offering, where the blood of a chicken or pig is sprinkled over the jar's surface in a symbolic act of purification. Among the most significant tajau housed in the Sabah Museum are the Blue and White Jar and Tabu Lita, both of which are prominently displayed in a dedicated section of the ceramic's gallery. Tabu Lita, in particular, is regarded as one of the most exceptional tajau in the collection, distinguished by its vivid coloration and well-preserved intricate patterns. Additionally, the gallery features various other ceramic artifacts, including items excavated from Pulau Eno in Labuan. Based on research, these ceramics date back to between the 10th and 20th centuries, underscoring the region's long-standing ceramic tradition and its historical connections to maritime trade.



Figure 4: Tabu Dita- a Nobel ceramic in indigenous material culture (Sources: Fieldwork, 2015)

4.2 Conservation and Preservation of Artifacts in Museums

Conservation and preservation play a crucial role in ensuring the longevity of artifacts in museums. These processes involve a series of spontaneous actions aimed at cleaning, treating, repairing, and restoring artifacts while maintaining their original form. The primary objective of conservation is to strengthen and stabilize artifacts to prevent further deterioration, ensuring their historical and cultural significance is preserved for future generations. Artifacts in the Sabah Museum rarely experience serious damage. According to informant Tan, common treatment methods for artifacts include dust suction, cleaning active bacteria attached to metal and copper artifacts such as gongs, betel nut sets, and krises, as well as reassembling ceramics using special adhesives. Additionally, other conservation methods involve the use of chemicals such as ethanol, wax, highly flammable substances, and Ajax Chemical.

For artifacts that cannot be repaired, they will be returned to their respective units. In museum conservation, the handling of artifacts requiring chemical treatment must follow strict protocols to ensure both artifact preservation and environmental safety. A specialized isolation chamber is utilized to contain hazardous chemicals, preventing cross-contamination with other artifacts in the collection. Artifacts that typically undergo chemical treatment include metal-based objects such as gongs, krises, and items made from copper, iron, and other alloys. Prior to treatment, these artifacts are first relocated to a designated isolation area to minimize exposure to external factors.



Figure 5: Researcher's Observation in the Conservation Laboratory of the Sabah Museum Department in 2015 (Source: Fieldwork, 2015).

The conservation process begins with thorough documentation, including high-resolution photography to capture the artifact's condition before intervention. Detailed records of existing damage and the appropriate treatment methods are then compiled. Once the preliminary assessment is completed, the artifact is carefully transferred to the conservation laboratory, where necessary treatments are conducted in a controlled environment to restore its structural integrity while preserving its original form. The museum conservation unit follows strict procedures when conducting artifact treatments to ensure both staff safety and the preservation of cultural objects. All conservation personnel are required to wear laboratory coats, gloves, and protective eyewear to prevent injuries and avoid contamination of artifacts. These safety measures are essential in minimizing potential risks associated with handling hazardous chemicals and fragile materials. Compliance with these procedures is mandatory for all conservators when carrying out treatments, ensuring that artifacts are restored under controlled and secure conditions while maintaining professional conservation standards.

4.3 Ethnology Storage Unit: Preserving Sabah's Indigenous Cultural Heritage

The Ethnology Storage Unit plays a crucial role in safeguarding the material culture of Sabah's indigenous communities, ensuring the continuity of their traditions and way of life. This facility houses a diverse collection of cultural artifacts that reflect various aspects of traditional existence, including religious practices, healing rituals,

craftsmanship, weaponry, traditional attire, and household tools. The storage unit is organized into two main sections: Ethnology Storage 1, which contains non-organic materials, and Ethnology Storage 2, which focuses on textiles and adornments from different ethnic groups in Sabah. The acquisition of these artifacts follows three main channels—purchases, fieldwork, and donations from individuals or community members.

The conservation and maintenance of these collections are overseen by Mr. Jaimol and a team of four museum staff members, who ensure that proper preservation measures are in place. In Ethnology Storage 1, strict environmental controls are implemented to prevent deterioration. The storage area is kept at a consistent temperature of 23°C with a relative humidity level of 41%, similar to zoological storage conditions. These measures are critical in preserving artifacts, many of which date back hundreds of years. To minimize damage caused by light exposure, the storage area remains darkened, with artificial lighting used only when conservation staff or researchers conduct inspections and documentation. This careful management of environmental conditions helps prolong the lifespan of these irreplaceable cultural objects.



Among the collections in the Ethnology Storage Unit are artifacts related to traditional healing practices of the Visaya community, particularly from Papar and Membakut. The Visaya people, like many other indigenous groups in Borneo, continue to practice ancestral healing traditions and uphold beliefs in both benevolent and malevolent spirits. These artifacts provide insight into their medical and spiritual heritage. The collection also includes human skull specimens, known as Bangkawan among the Kadazan Dusun, as well as ritual objects used by the Bobohizan, the spiritual leaders of the Kadazan Dusun people. Many of these items were obtained through donations or purchases. According to Mr. Jaimol, it is customary for previous custodians of these sacred objects to perform cleansing and purification rituals before surrendering them to the museum. This practice acknowledges the spiritual significance of the artifacts while facilitating their transition into museum care.



Beyond indigenous cultural artifacts, the Ethnology Storage Unit also houses a collection of colonial-era cannons, reflecting the military and historical influences of Sabah's past. These cannons, which vary in design and craftsmanship, were recovered through fieldwork across Sabah and are now stored in Ethnology Storage 1, where they are carefully maintained for future research and conservation. Meanwhile, Ethnology Storage 2 serves as a repository for traditional textiles and personal adornments from Sabah's diverse ethnic groups. The number of recognized ethnic groups in Sabah varies, with official records listing 32 ethnic groups, while the

Sabah National Registration Department acknowledges 41 ethnic groups. However, in 2007, the Sabah Museum recorded a total of 72 ethnic groups, reflecting the extensive cultural diversity within the state.

The preservation of traditional textiles and accessories in Ethnology Storage 2 follows a meticulous process to ensure their longevity. Each textile or adornment is stored in large drawers and wrapped in soft white paper to protect them from fungal growth and bacterial contamination. Additionally, each storage drawer is labeled with a catalog entry or registration code, ensuring efficient artifact management and facilitating conservation efforts. Through these systematic preservation techniques, the Sabah Museum plays a vital role in documenting, safeguarding, and maintaining the material culture of Sabah’s indigenous communities. This careful stewardship ensures that future generations can continue to study and appreciate the rich heritage and traditions that define the region’s diverse cultural landscape

Table 1: Ethnology Storage in Sabah Museum (Sources: Fieldwork, 2015)

Artefacts	Details
	Artifacts used by the Visaya (or Bisaya) ethnic group in Sabah, particularly in the Membakut and Papar regions, hold significant ritual and healing purposes in traditional practices. These cultural objects serve as spiritual mediums, bridging the connection between humans and supernatural forces. Their role extends beyond material function, embodying indigenous knowledge systems, beliefs, and sacred traditions that have been passed down through generations.
	The Sindavang is a sacred ritual object crafted from thin sheets of copper, shaped into small bells. It features perforations that allow it to be strung together using cords, which are then attached to a handle traditionally made from turtle bone or pig bone. This object plays a vital role in the spiritual practices of the Bobohizan, the ritual specialists of the Kadazan Dusun community. During ritual ceremonies, the Sindavang is shaken to produce a

	<p>distinct sound, believed to ward off malevolent spirits. As the Bobohizan chants sacred mantras, the rhythmic ringing of the Sindavang serves as both a spiritual signal and an invocation tool. It is thought to attract benevolent spirits to the ritual site, inviting them to partake in the offerings prepared for the ceremony. The Sindavang's role extends beyond its physical form, embodying the indigenous cosmology and spiritual practices of the Kadazan Dusun people, ensuring a connection between the human and supernatural realms.</p>
	<p>Inavol Rungus is a traditional handwoven cotton textile adorned with human, floral, and animal motifs, crafted by the Rungus people of Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia. This textile is deeply embedded in the Rungus community's cultural identity, serving both ceremonial and everyday purposes. Characterized by its rich colors and symbolic patterns, Inavol Rungus incorporates at least four primary colors: black, red, yellow, and white. Among these, black is the dominant color, as it is regarded as a symbol of power and authority in Rungus beliefs. The intricate motifs woven into the fabric represent the community's connection to nature, spirituality, and ancestral heritage.</p>
	<p>This image showcases a storage facility for traditional woven baskets and other handcrafted items, likely part of an ethnology collection in a museum or cultural centre in Sabah, Malaysia. The</p>

	baskets are neatly arranged on metal shelves, preserving various styles, shapes, and designs unique to Sabah's indigenous communities. The baskets appear to be made from natural materials such as rattan, bamboo, and pandan leaves, reflecting the traditional craftsmanship of Sabah's ethnic groups, including the Kadazan-Dusun, Murut, Bajau, and Rungus. Many of these woven items serve functional purposes such as fish traps, storage containers, winnowing trays, and hats.
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4.4 Challenges in Managing Artifacts and Cultural Specimens at the Sabah Museum

Since its establishment, Sabah Museum has relied heavily on foreign experts for research, excavation, and conservation. Despite operating for over 50 years, the institution continues to depend on international researchers such as Tom and Barbara Harrison and Peter Bellwood for artifact analysis. This reliance stems from a shortage of local experts, underscoring the need to enhance training programs and academic collaborations to build local capacity and reduce dependence on external institutions.

Archaeological studies in Sabah face cultural taboos and beliefs held by local communities. Some groups believe that disturbing ancient burial sites may bring misfortune, posing challenges to excavation efforts. Additionally, the looting of underwater artifacts by treasure hunters threatens the preservation of Sabah's historical heritage. To address these issues, Sabah Museum must strengthen public awareness campaigns on the significance of archaeological research and reinforce law enforcement measures against illegal excavations.

A critical challenge faced by Sabah Museum is the lack of a fully equipped conservation laboratory and essential preservation tools. Consequently, many artifacts must be sent to institutions such as Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) for proper analysis and restoration. Outdated conservation methods, including the use of formic acid on metal artifacts, have also caused damage. Therefore, investment in modern conservation equipment and specialized training is imperative to ensure artifacts are preserved according to international standards.

Despite rapid advancements in museum technologies worldwide, Sabah Museum still employs traditional methods for documenting and analysing artifacts. The absence of modern techniques such as carbon dating, spatial analysis, and digital archiving has forced the museum to rely on external institutions for in-depth analysis. By investing in modern technology, the museum can conduct independent research, enhance efficiency in artifact management, and align itself with global best practices in museology.

Sabah's rich ethnic diversity presents another challenge in cultural documentation. The increasing number of sub-ethnic groups seeking recognition as distinct entities has led to inconsistencies in ethnographic records, complicating systematic artifact categorization. To address this, Sabah Museum must collaborate with local scholars, cultural organizations, and indigenous communities to ensure more accurate and structured ethnographic documentation. Establishing a standardized classification framework will not only preserve Sabah's diverse cultural heritage but also facilitate more effective curation and representation of its communities in the museum's collections and exhibitions.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The acquisition of artifacts at the Sabah Museum occurs through donations, field collections, and purchases. The manuscript highlights instances where families, such as the Fedrick family, donate heirlooms to ensure their preservation. Additionally, significant collections such as the Pamol Collection and Woolley Collection provide valuable historical insights. While the museum has successfully preserved cultural artifacts through systematic acquisition, categorization remains a challenge due to the evolving recognition of new sub-ethnic groups. This issue complicates ethnographic classification and requires a more structured documentation system. A standardized framework for artifact classification, developed in collaboration with indigenous communities and researchers, would improve the museum's documentation processes. Digital archiving and interactive databases could further enhance accessibility and accuracy.

One of the major concerns in conservation is the museum's reliance on traditional techniques and external institutions such as Universiti Sains Malaysia for artifact restoration. The lack of a fully equipped conservation laboratory and the continued use of outdated conservation methods further hinder the preservation of artifacts. While temperature-controlled storage for textiles is a step in the right direction, there is an urgent need for modern conservation technologies and infrastructure. Investment in conservation laboratories and staff training in contemporary preservation methods would enhance the longevity of artifacts. Additionally, the adoption of eco-friendly conservation practices would align the museum with international sustainability standards.

Despite operating for over 50 years, the Sabah Museum continues to depend on foreign experts for research, excavation, and artifact analysis. This reliance, while beneficial for knowledge exchange, limits the museum's ability to conduct independent research and conservation efforts. Establishing partnerships with local universities for specialized museology and conservation programs would empower local researchers. Government support in funding research projects and training programs is also necessary to build expertise within Sabah. Strengthening these academic collaborations would reduce dependency on external institutions and foster a self-sufficient research environment.

Community engagement remains a critical aspect of museum curation, yet the manuscript highlights limited public participation in museum activities. Cultural beliefs sometimes act as barriers to archaeological studies and conservation efforts, making it challenging to obtain community cooperation. The lack of awareness and socio-economic barriers also restrict access to museum resources and education. To enhance inclusivity, the museum should implement community-based exhibitions where local voices shape curatorial content. Digital platforms and outreach programs in rural areas could further democratize access to heritage knowledge. Engaging with indigenous communities through participatory research and interactive exhibitions would strengthen the museum's role as a cultural hub.

In terms of technological advancements, the manuscript indicates that the museum still relies on traditional documentation methods, lacking advanced techniques like carbon dating, spatial analysis, and digital archiving. The absence of modern technologies limits the museum's ability to accurately date and analyze artifacts, affecting research quality. By incorporating advanced documentation technologies, such as 3D scanning and blockchain-based provenance tracking, the museum can ensure accurate artifact records and facilitate global research collaborations. The integration of modern technology would also improve conservation efforts, ensuring that artifacts are properly preserved and studied in a non-invasive manner.

Sustainability in museum practices is an essential factor in long-term conservation efforts. The manuscript briefly mentions the museum's role in promoting environmental awareness through its Natural History section but does not elaborate on sustainable conservation practices. While the museum acknowledges environmental concerns, it lacks a structured approach to sustainable artifact conservation. The adoption of sustainable conservation practices, such as using non-toxic materials and implementing controlled environments for artifact storage, would improve the museum's ecological footprint while ensuring long-term preservation. Furthermore, integrating traditional environmental knowledge from indigenous communities could provide valuable insights into sustainable heritage conservation.

The Sabah Museum is a key institution in the preservation of Sabah's cultural heritage. However, challenges related to conservation, expertise development, community engagement, and technological advancement hinder its full potential. Addressing these issues through structured documentation, investment in conservation facilities, local capacity building, and inclusive curatorial practices will ensure that the museum remains relevant and effective in the future. Strengthening research collaborations, embracing modern technology, and fostering sustainable conservation methods will further enhance the museum's ability to protect Sabah's rich cultural history for future generations.

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The Rich Legacy of Iban's Tattoo Motifs on Contemporary Craft

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Abstract: The Iban people, are one of the main ethnic groups in Sarawak. The Iban people have a unique tattoo culture. The influence of modernity and conflicting religious beliefs pose an increasing threat to this tradition, which is deeply rooted in the tattoo culture. However, the tattoo tradition will endure as people persevere in integrating tattoo motifs into contemporary handicrafts. The fashion industry, which includes both apparel and accessories, is a popular field that involves traditional tattoo motifs. Therefore, we view this study as a significant documentation endeavor, striving to preserve the cultural heritage that forms the core of ethnic pride in Sarawak. The study employs qualitative research methodologies, notably utilizing surveys and interviews with Sarawakians in different regions. The research also seeks to identify tattoo motifs incorporating traditional into contemporary craftwork. Through this study, it inspired local small businesses to increase their enthusiasm for creating and promoting modern crafts that incorporate traditional motifs. In addition, this study also encourages all ethnic groups, including young generations to persist in preserving their traditional cultures, customs, and traditions through contemporary craftwork that will be appropriate for remaining pertinent to the modern era. The enduring nature of traditional tattoo motifs can be utilized in several ways beyond their use on the skin.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Iban's tattoo motifs, Identity and Contemporary craftworks

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Cultural Significance and Symbolism of Iban's Tattoo*

The Iban people in Sarawak have rich customs and an individual cultural heritage that influences many elements of daily life. It encompasses everything from birth to death, marriage, way of life, planting, and beliefs. However, this study focuses solely on the tattoo culture, that has been practiced since childhood. Tattoos among the Iban people are not merely for aesthetic purposes but are deeply rooted in tradition, religion, social status, and as an honor to special abilities (Hartanto, 2023). These tattoos are more than just body art; they represent a form of toughness, strength, and cultural identity (Irwin, 2001). The motifs used in Iban tattoos imitate the environment and traditional beliefs of the community, showcasing their cultural heritage and wisdom (Joseph et al., 2021; Osman et al., 2021).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 *Cultural Heritage*

According to the National Heritage Act 2005 in Law of Malaysia Act 645; cultural heritage includes the tangible or intangible form of cultural property, structure or artifact and may include a heritage matter, object, item, artifact, formation structure, performance, dance, song, music that is pertinent to the historical or contemporary way of life of Malaysians, on or in land or underwater cultural heritage of tangible form but excluding natural heritage. "Tangible cultural heritage" includes areas, monuments, and buildings. While "intangible cultural heritage" includes any form of expressions, languages, lingual utterances, sayings, musically produced tunes, notes, audible lyrics, songs, folksongs, oral traditions, poetry, music, dances as produced by the performing arts, theatrical plays, audible compositions of sounds and music, martial arts, that may have existed or exist concerning the heritage of Malaysia or any part of Malaysia or concerning the heritage of a Malaysian community. Figure 1 below is a visual mapping of the National Heritage Act 2005 in Law of Malaysia Act 645.

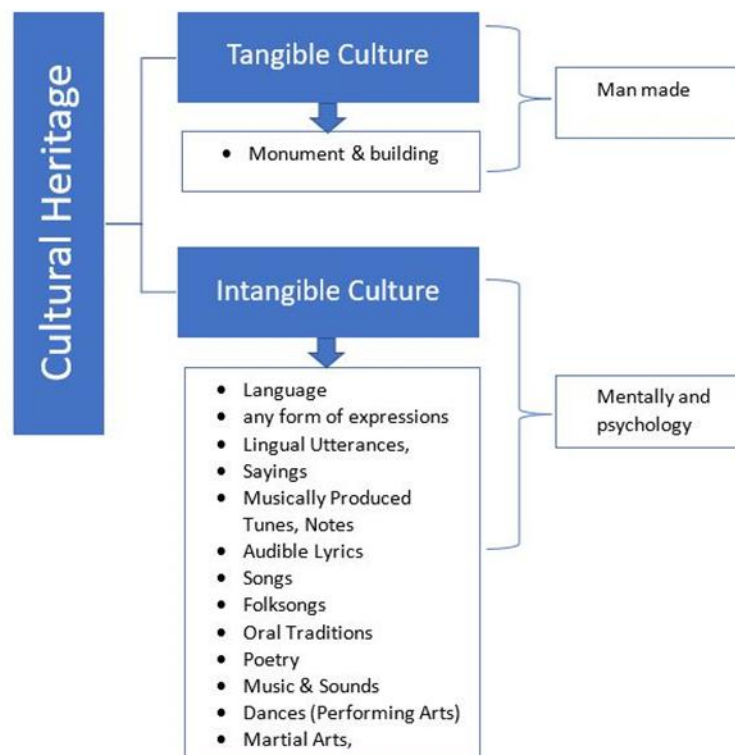


Figure 1. Visual mapping of National Heritage Act 2005 by Gladys T. et al., (2024)

In addition, according to a prior study conducted by Asadi (2023), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has stated that cultural heritage includes both tangible and intangible elements of cultural or historical significance.

Nevertheless, tangible cultural heritage encompasses physical objects which include buildings, places, and artworks, while intangible cultural heritage comprises practices, knowledge, and expressions that are transmitted from one generation to the next by inheritance (Xiao,2022). Moreover, It plays a vital role in local sustainable development by contributing to the identity and cultural diversity of communities (Gravagnuolo et al., 2021).

Traditional tattoos are intangible cultures that are a form of skin expression. This is evident from the visual mapping previously mentioned. Preserving the traditional tattoo motifs is crucial for the preservation of cultural heritage, as seen in the efforts to maintain the art forms of various Indigenous communities worldwide. Tattooing culture among the Iban would eventually fade away and fade away due to Christian and Islamic demands in Sarawak. Thus, integrating tattoo motifs into various types of media

representations serves as a method for preserving and revitalizing ancient traditions, preventing them from becoming obsolete over time.

The intricate designs and motifs in textiles, such as Pua Kumbu in Sarawak, face challenges due to the complexity of symbols that may deter interest, especially among younger generations (Wahed et al., 2022). UNESCO plays a vital role in international cultural heritage preservation, extending its efforts to protect traditional art forms like Batik and Wayang in Indonesia (Nuraeni & Putri, 2017). The conservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional tattoos, require innovative approaches like digital technology and gamification to disseminate and safeguard these living expressions of heritage (Singh, 2024; Idris et al., 2016).

The significance of tattoos among the Dayak community extends beyond mere body adornment; it reflects important values, beliefs, and cultural identity (Hartanto, 2023). The intricate designs and motifs of Dayak tattoos carry deep meanings that adorn the body and serve as a form of cultural expression and storytelling (Hartanto, 2023). Contemporary craft, influenced by traditional tattoo motifs and cultural heritage, often involves the re-actualization of traditional themes through hybrid aesthetics, blending traditional elements with new creative approaches (Ernawati, 2024). Additionally, the incorporation of traditional motifs into contemporary craft practices serves as a bridge between the past and the present, preserving cultural heritage while fostering innovation and creativity (Gaddi, 2023).

2.2 Traditional Motif of Iban's Tattoo

This study concentrates exclusively on 'Kelingai motif and 'Bunga Terung' motif which was two primary motifs that are the most renowned and commonly utilised in the creation of handicrafts in Sarawak. These motifs are believed to carry spiritual power and are often used in religious ceremonies and rituals. The strength of community cohesion within the Iban people is a testament to their ability to function and develop in a harmonious atmosphere, recognizing the social equality of each individual.

Tattooing in Iban civilisation is closely associated with the death cult and the historical practice of headhunting. The cessation of headhunting among the Iban adversely impacted the tradition of tattooing. This is due to the enemy's head (antu pala) being seen as a trophy in the headhunting expedition. Furthermore, certain significant occasions necessitated the presence of the enemy's head as esteemed trophies, specifically during the ceremonies of the leader's death, the birth of a child, particularly a male, "Bejalai" missions of tribal warfare and as a symbol of valour on the battlefield that conferred prestige to the victorious warrior.

2.3 Meaning of 'Kelingai Motif'

Traditional Iban tattoo motifs or cultural also known as 'Kelingai Motif,' are deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Iban community in Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo (Gladys et al., 2020). These motifs, including the fern motif, are not only found in tattoos but also in various art forms like architecture, paintings, ceramics, jewelry, and textiles, showcasing the intricate connection between art, culture, and tradition (Zulkipli et al., 2022, Gladys T. et al., 2020). The Iban community's affinity for the natural world is seen in their traditional tattoo designs, which frequently integrate aspects from their natural surroundings, including flora and fauna. (Awang-Kanak, 2021).

According to Gladys T. et.al (2020), the Kelingai motif is a unique motif that symbolizes a master craftsman of Iban's in the art of carving. Furthermore, Iban's tattoo motif served as a representation of courageous individuals and also served as a commemoration of specific locations they had previously visited. In addition, some Iban legend from other districts says that 'Kelingai' means the decoration motif of 'kala' (scorpion) and that is why, it has to come with the beauty of curves, decoratively.

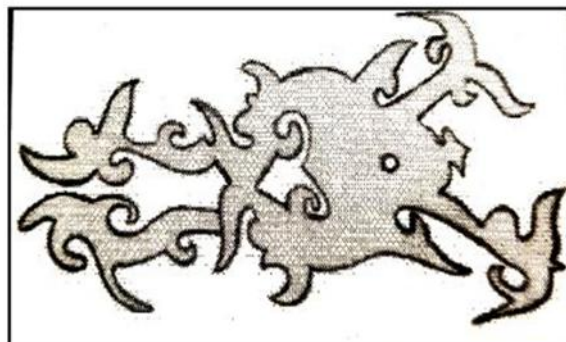


Figure 2. Kelingai motifs, sources from Gladys T.et.al (2020)

2.4 Meaning of 'Bunga Terung' / 'Bungai Terong' Motif.

The Dayak people also embrace the eggplant flower motif, widely known as the 'Bunga Terung' as another form of traditional tattoo design. (Hartanto, 2023). These motifs often reflect elements from nature and indigenous beliefs, showcasing the creativity and cultural richness of the Iban community (Osman et al., 2021). In certain regions of Sarawak, "Bunga Terung" is referred to as 'Bungai Terong' or commonly known as Borneo Rose. Nonetheless, all these titles denote the same design.



Figure 3. Design of 'Bunga Terung'. Sources from Robinson.M (2014)

'Bunga Terung' tattoo are floral-shaped tattoos that inscribe or presenting on the front of men's shoulders. They can be located on the back, buttocks or chest and even on the calf. In the past, the Iban people believe 'Bunga Terung' tattoo motifs must come out with in pairs to avoid the tattoo wearer going interrupted by forces of evil spirits.

In some areas, 'Bunga Terung' tattoo designed with the spiral line at the middle, meanwhile, in some areas there was no spiral line in the centre of the eggplant flower petals pattern. The spiral line symbol was based from the belly of tadpoles, which symbolized the meaning of the life cycle. In addition, the 'Bunga Terung' tattoo with a spiral line at the centre also known as 'Tali Nyawa' which means the rope of life and is identical to the underside life of a tadpole which symbolizes the beginning of a new life. The 'Bunga Terung' or eggplant petals symbols is believed not only to protecting the wearer from any demonic interference in daily life, but also become powerful spiritual shields fro wearer.

The application of Iban tattoos follows a specific sequence, with certain tattoos like the isi ginti (fish hook) worn first, followed by the 'Bunga Terung', and then other tattoos like the 'Pantang Rekung' (neck tattoo) (Jumpe & Bebit, 2020). This sequential application of tattoos reflects a cultural tradition and ritualistic process among the Iban people. Figure 4 below shows that the application of 'Bunga Terung motif' on the left and right shoulder with 'pantang rekung' (neck tattoo)



Figure 4. 'Bunga Terung' motif and 'Pantang rekung' tattoo. Gratitude to Bulit anak Jimbun, sources from Gladys T. et.al collections (2024)

Each design holds a specific meaning, reflecting aspects such as bravery in headhunting expeditions, protection, spiritual guidance, and connection to the natural world. These tattoos represented a visual story of the bearer's life experiences and their interaction with society. The Iban people have the belief that spirits coexist with them in all aspects of life daily. Consequently, they have the belief that tattooing an object or creature onto their body can attract powerful, invisible energy and provide protection against these supernatural beings. (Sellato B. 1992).

The Iban community's strong sense of community cohesion and recognition of individual social equality have contributed to the preservation and evolution of these traditional tattoo designs. Remarkably, the traditional tattoo motifs of the Iban people have also influenced the designs of other ethnic groups in Sarawak, serving as an inspiration and identity of Borneo, Sarawak. Overall, the traditional tattoo motifs of the Iban community and other races in Sarawak serve as a testament to the region's cultural diversity and the enduring significance of these artistic expressions in shaping individual and collective identities.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

3.1 *The Evolution and Adaptation of Traditional Tattoo Motifs in Contemporary Crafts Through Different Mediums: - Textiles and Fashion*

In recent years, the fashion industry and textiles have had a growing trend in designing modern clothes by incorporating traditional tattoo motifs. This trend represents a fusion of cultural heritage and contemporary fashion, aiming to preserve and showcase the unique symbols and artistry of various ethnic groups. Research, such as The Exploration of Mentawai tattoo designs being applied to garments, has been conducted by Zulfa (2024). Meanwhile, Qilu (2023) emphasizes the use of traditional elements to enhance the cultural importance and aesthetic worth of contemporary clothing. This study focuses on implementing Naxi ethnic clothing elements in modern designs. These initiatives not only preserve cultural traditions but also foster creativity in fashion design by combining heritage with contemporary trends. In addition, a study by Hashish A. (2022) explores the fusion of traditional crochet motifs with innovative scarf designs, creating a competitive market by blending traditional and contemporary elements in modern fashion products.

Overall, the integration of traditional tattoo motifs into textiles and fashion represents a harmonious blend of cultural heritage and modern design sensibilities. By leveraging these motifs, designers can create unique and culturally rich pieces that resonate with consumers seeking both aesthetic appeal and a connection to tradition. In conclusion, the integration of traditional tattoo motifs into textiles and fashion not only preserves cultural heritage but also fosters creative innovation and combines past and present aesthetics.

3.2 *Traditional Motif on Accessories*

Craftsmen are designing contemporary jewelry such as bracelets, necklaces, and rings with engraved Iban motifs. These pieces serve as a beautiful homage to traditional designs while offering a sophisticated charm. In addition, the traditional beadwork of the Iban, often used in ceremonial attire, is finding a place in modern jewelry collections. These vibrant, detailed pieces are being appreciated anew for their craftsmanship and symbolic meanings.

This trend to convert tattoo designs into batik fabrics appears to be a potential option for inheritance and cultural continuity. By incorporating ancient tattoo motifs into batik, craftsmen hope to preserve the legacy of Mentawai tattoos and pass them down to future generations (Rosana, A. 2023). Many of these craftspeople use tattoo motifs as

their complete or partial designs, especially in producing 'Pua Kumbu' or other crafts. They are inspired by the simplicity and originality of the tattoo motifs and use them when designing their crafts. This fusion not only preserves the cultural legacy of the Iban community but also imparts a distinctive style to contemporary handicrafts.

4 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

4.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative was selected for this research which was going through observation and collecting data via online questionnaire using Google Form. Consequently, part A consist of demographic question, which is about age and gender of respondents. Meanwhile the rest of the question are directly focuses on the motifs of tattoo, the knowledge of respondent and finally it requires the opinion of the respondent about tattoo and its application into craft. A total of 36 participants voluntarily participated in this research, representing various age groups and regions. The demographic data of respondents participated in this study is illustrated in Table 1 and 2 below. The results clearly indicate that the majority of respondents are female and 20 years old.

Table 1: The Demographic (Age of respondents)

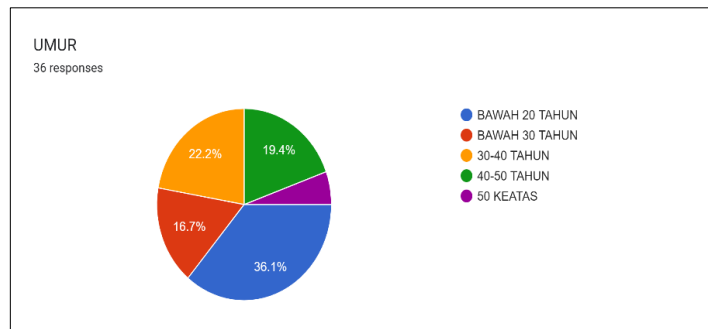
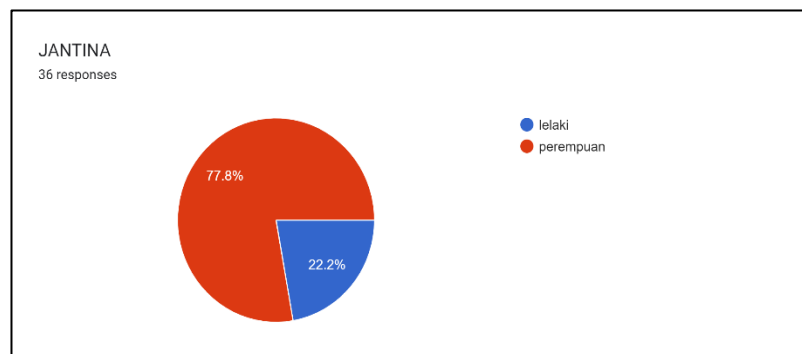


Table 2: The Demographic (Gender of respondents)



4.2 Observation

Moreover, the selection of the observation method is determined by the characteristics of the study related to societal, cultural, belief, and traditional aspects of visual communication. These observations and informal interview were conducted among Iban's community at different area. In first phase of observation is in Kampung Gayau Pantu, Sri Aman Sarawak and second phase is in different communities and longhouses in Sarawak. In this context, observation is carried out via interviews with family members and relatives who are the owners or artists of the craft.

According to Waladt (2020), observation in social science requires a researcher to actively engage with study subjects, as it allows researchers to obtain firsthand insights and get involved in the social context. By observing and documenting behaviours, researchers can reveal hidden patterns, norms, and meanings not easily discernible through other methods (Mohajan, 2018). By that methodology, the researcher can directly observe and experience genuine problems and circumstances without any uncertainty.

5 EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Data was collected through open-ended online questionnaires that were distributed randomly among Sarawakians in any location and province. Furthermore, the qualitative method in this study has the advantage of enabling most respondents to proudly share their images and ideas with the researcher. Therefore, the data and photos included in this study are legitimate and originated from primary sources.

Table 3: The Use of Traditional Tattoo Motifs on Craftwork

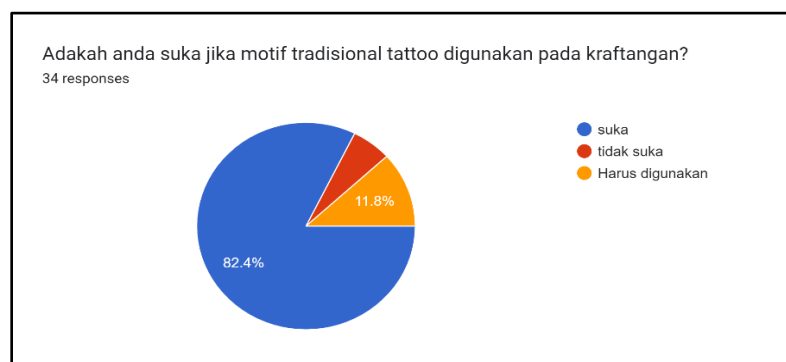


Table 4: The Justification for Employing Conventional Designs

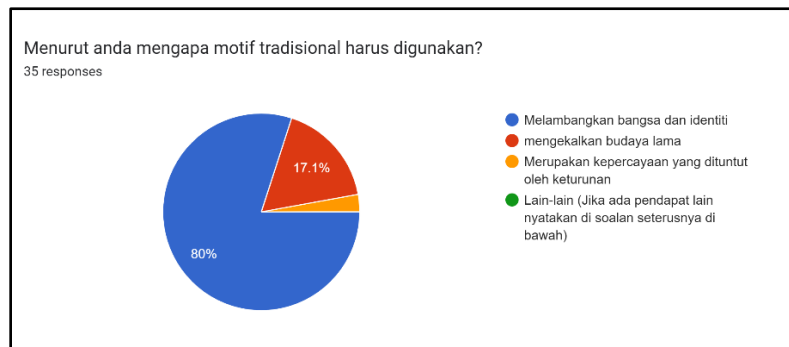


Table 5: The Market of Craftwork Using traditional motifs compete with existing product



Based on Table 3 above, 82.4% of respondents, they would prefer to see traditional motifs implemented at a craftwork. Moreover, 11.8% of respondents stated that modern crafts must incorporate traditional motifs. Meanwhile, Table 4 shows the justification for employing conventional design. 80% of respondents expressed their opinion that incorporating traditional symbols, particularly tattoo motifs, serves as a representation of nationalism and identity. An additional, 10% of participants agreed that applying traditional elements into contemporary crafts serves as a means of preserving Sarawak's traditional culture. Ultimately, Table 5 revealed an overwhelming majority of 91.4% of participants believed that contemporary crafts that use traditional motifs have the potential to compete with existing products on the market.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Contemporary Craftwork

Weaving Patterns: Iban motifs are being creatively woven into textiles, including scarves, shawls, jackets (for men), and a traditional weaving skirt of Ibans well known

as 'Kain Tating'. 'Kain Tating,' illustrated in figure 5, is crafted via the hand-weaving technique. The intricate designs lend a captivating look to the fabric, embracing the cultural richness of the Iban heritage. The observation indicates that embroidered 'kain tating' is presently more popular and produced in more of it than conventional weaving methods due to the simplicity of the embroidery technique. The traditional technique is challenging and necessitates significant expertise in weaving. Moreover, the medium and technique for creating this craftwork have undergone substantial changes due to the intricate components utilized in the previous process, which are not inherited or transmitted to the present generation. Below are samples of craftwork that implemented traditional tattoo motifs generated through several techniques and materials.



Figure 5: Weaving 'Kain Tating'. Source from Gladys T. et.al Collections, (2024)



Figure 6: Kelingai motif on crochet 'Baju Burung'(men's jacket), sources from Gladys T. et.al collections (2024).



Figure 7: Kelingai motif on embroidery "Selampai" (women's traditional shawl) sources from Gladys T. et.al collections (2024).



Figure 8: The motif of 'Bunga Terung' on embroidery 'selampai'. Sources from Gladys T. et.al collections (2024).

Moreover, modern fashion designers are incorporating tattoo motifs into their collections, translating traditional designs onto dresses, jackets, and accessories. This integration allows traditional symbols to be celebrated in everyday wear.

This study indicates that the utilisation of the 'Kelingai' pattern and 'Bunga Terung' motif in contemporary textile crafts serves solely as a representation of

preference, pride, and magnificence for users. The data gathered from the questionnaire indicates that most respondents believe that traditional patterns on both conventional and contemporary attire represent the nation and a distinctive identity acknowledged globally.



Figure 9: 'Kelingai' motif on 'Burie' skirt. Gratitude to Angelyn Uchie Anak Martin, sources from Gladys T. collections (2024)

Figure 9 above shows a contemporary craft piece that skilfully incorporates traditional tattoo motifs into 'Burie' skirt design. It prove that the traditional tattoo motif as a form of craftwork to embellish women's garments, in line with contemporary trends. 'Buri' is a type of seashell that is meticulously organized and stitched onto fabric. It is believed that it originated from Batang Rajang. The 'Buri' outfit is presently a fashionable trend and is worn for formal or special occasions. Integrating traditional motifs or themes has become a prominent preference in contemporary design. It is adaptable for use in many materials and media, based on the designer's and their followers' preferences.

As conclusion, Iban tattoos are more than just ink on the skin; they are living representations of tradition, strength, identity, and cultural resilience in Iban culture. The motifs and activities linked with Iban tattoos represent a visual language, connecting people to their heritage, beliefs, and communal values.

The intricate tattoo motifs of the Iban community not only represent artistic expressions but also embody cultural values, traditions, and histories that continue to influence and inspire contemporary craft practices. By integrating traditional tattoo motifs into modern craft, designers pay homage to their

heritage while creating unique identities and culturally rich artworks that resonate with our society nowadays.

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The Impact of Aesthetic Cognition on Audiences' Emotional Experience in Experimental Immersive Art Exhibitions

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Abstract: With the development of science and technology, art exhibitions in various countries now pay more attention to innovation and cross-border cooperation, integrating different art forms and concepts. Emerging technologies such as digital art and virtual reality are also being used in art exhibitions. In addition, some exhibitions present social issues, political issues or environmental themes to trigger thinking and discussion among the audience. Art exhibitions are also increasingly focusing on sustainability and inclusivity in an attempt to engage a wider audience. For the same art work, the audience's unclear interpretation and aesthetic standards have always triggered research and discussion by many scholars. However, some researchers have identified the impact of aesthetic education and aesthetic cognition on the creation of art workers, and few studies have analyzed art from the audience's perspective. Organizers are making conscious efforts to engage a broader audience by creating spaces that welcome diverse voices and perspectives. This trend underscores the importance of accessibility in the art world, as well as the need for exhibitions to resonate with varied demographic groups. Therefore, this study aims to think about the impact of aesthetic cognition on the exhibition experience/emotional experience from the audience's perspective. importance. The research work used methods such as ground theory which including of using questionnaires, visiting interviews, and meeting analysis to

conduct research on the artistic works of the June graduation exhibition of the School of Experimental Art and Science and Technology of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in China. This provides a certain theoretical basis for artists and curators to create experimental art works.

Keywords: experimental art, aesthetic cognition, exhibition experience, emotional experience.

1.INTRODUCTION

This article primarily focuses on the controversies and public opinion surrounding the graduation exhibition pieces of Chinese art schools in June 2024. It aims to conduct a case study and research on the resulting social hotspot.

1.1. THE SUBJECTS "SUPER HIVE" CREATED BY THE SCHOOL OF EXPERIMENTAL ART AND TECHNOLOGICAL ART OF THE CENTRAL ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

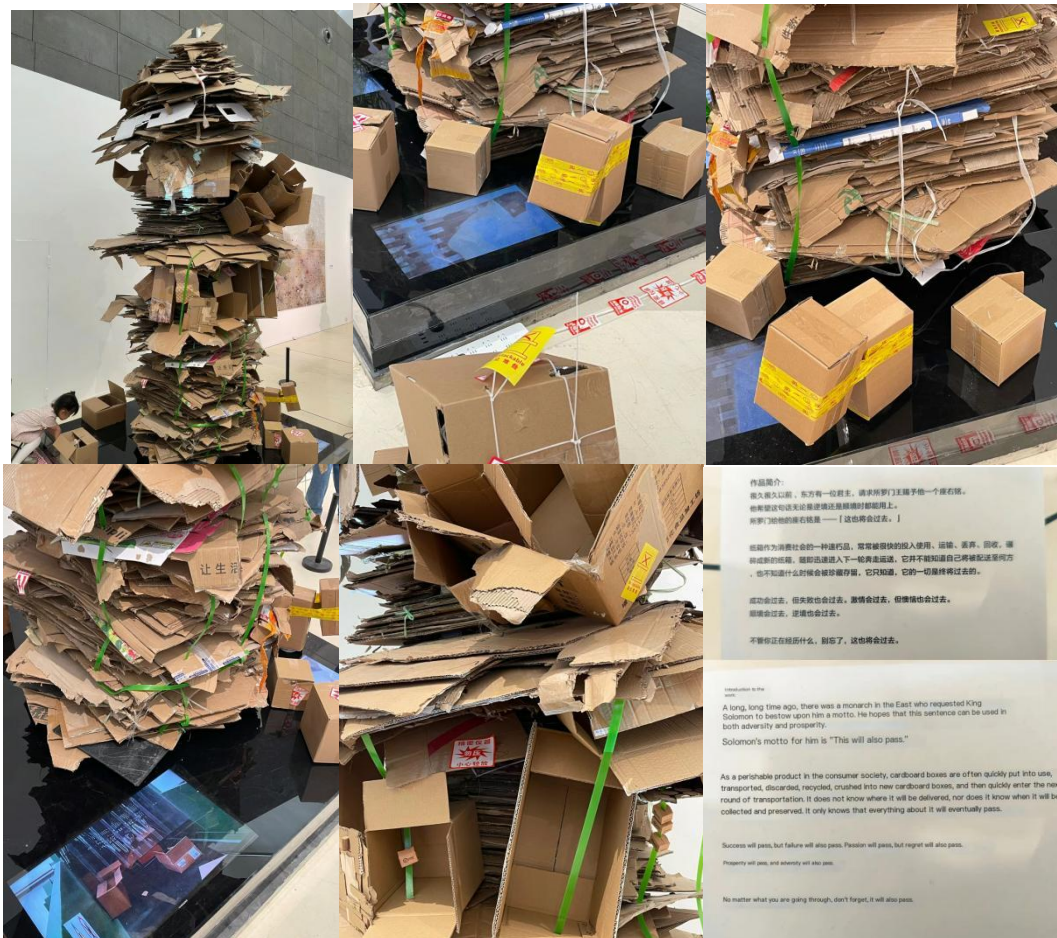


Figure 1. "Super Hive" by the School of Experimental Art and Technological Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts

Artwork Description (Figure 1):

According to the creator, this piece draws inspiration from the symbol of ephemeral products in today's consumer society—the cardboard box. Beneath the cardboard box, an LED screen displays a continuous loop of the box being discarded, recycled, remanufactured, reused, discarded again, and recycled once more, showcasing its mechanical cycle of life and death. This symbolizes that no matter what one goes through, there is always a chance to start anew and that everything will eventually pass. Additionally, a projector uses angle techniques to cast an

image of two hands onto the cardboard box. These hands grasp at everything but ultimately hold onto nothing, conveying the idea that success seems within reach, yet it often proves to be elusive. The title "Super Hive" is derived from a cylindrical building in Beijing, which houses over 8,000 migrant workers. People constantly move in and out, much like the fate of the cardboard box. This artwork reflects on the fleeting nature of human life, paralleling it with the transient nature of cardboard boxes, and it prompts contemplation on the current state of work and the pursuit of upward mobility

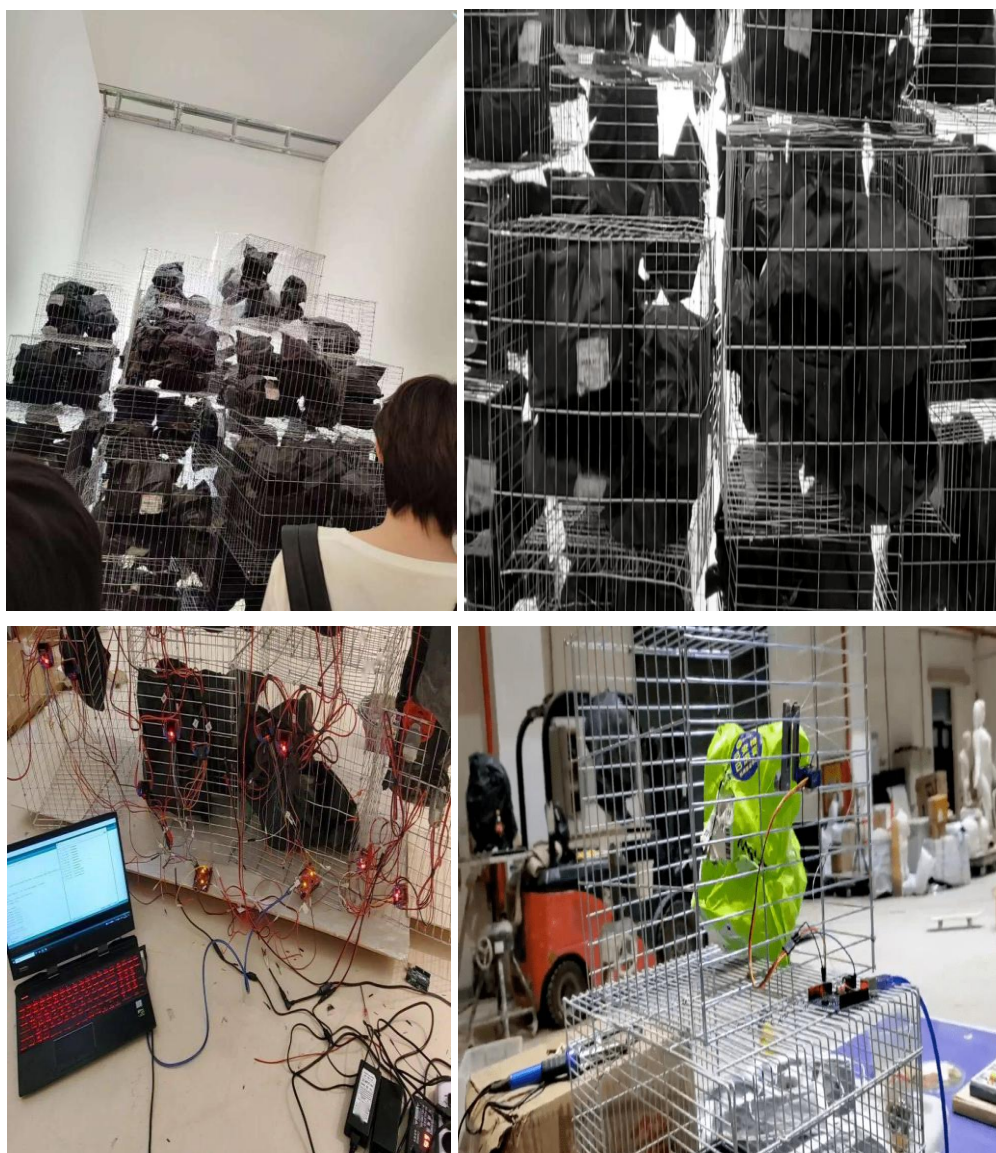


Figure 2. *"The crows in my heart"* by the School of Experimental Art and Technological Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts

Artwork Description (Figure 2):

This graduation work titled "The Crows in My Heart" by an undergraduate from the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts evokes the moment of unboxing a package, a thrill brought on by consumerism. However, this fleeting pleasure is not without its dangers;

it seems to conceal a threat that could engulf us, trapping us in an invisible cage. The piece employs familiar objects combined with unexpected visual impact, prompting the audience to reflect on the essence of consumer culture while appreciating the artwork.

In today's society, consumption has become a significant way of life, and in the relentless pursuit of novelty and satisfaction, people gradually lose themselves in a torrent of materialism. "The Crows in My Heart" deeply questions this phenomenon, making us aware that beneath the surface pleasure lies a void concerning identity and value. Through its visual shock, the artwork provides a space for extended imagination, allowing viewers to awaken and reconsider their relationship with consumption.

Additionally, the piece offers profound contemplation through its form. Those cardboard boxes, once regarded as simple items, are now imbued with new meaning by the artist. They are not merely vessels of consumption; they reflect our state of existence. Through this contrast, the audience is led to explore where true fulfillment lies in this fast-paced era.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. EXPECTATIONS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRECONCEPTIONS OF THE AUDIENCE

Even before entering the exhibition hall, audiences have already started participating in the process of exhibition critique. Audiences habitually enter the exhibition space with expectations. Their mindset before viewing an exhibition is not a blank slate; rather, it is filled with psychological preconceptions. These preconceptions are complex, formed by the accumulation of memories and emotions, and influenced by the promotional information about the artwork, such as the prestigious title of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Additionally, these preconceptions are shaped by the audience's directed expectation framework, and even by broader national and communal public expectations.

These diverse and rich psychological preconceptions indirectly affect the standards by which audiences judge artists and their works. Due to their complex social backgrounds, cultural levels, and cognitive abilities, audiences possess complex and individualized aesthetic expectations. Age gradually stabilizes an individual's aesthetic expectations, forming a directed expectation framework. This framework directly influences the audience's aesthetic experience and can even lead to differences in aesthetic appreciation.

2.2. EXAMPLE OF PAST ARTWORKS

From the perspective of the impact of aesthetic objects on aesthetic individuals, a good painting will make the audience feel the same and immerse themselves in it. Picasso's 1905 work "Girl on a Ball"(**Figure 3.**) is a prime example of this. This painting marked a turning point in Picasso's artistic creation, where the interplay between organic and geometric forms dominated the early development of Cubism. In a barren plain, solitary figures beg, and circus performers and other civilians wander this alien world. The juxtaposition of spheres, cubes, and

human forms in the painting symbolizes the contrast between innocence and maturity in society, provoking thoughts on the inequality within social work. The contrast between the naivety of youth and the worldly old acrobat prompts the audience to reflect on societal disparities. The artist's belief that he has completed his feelings in painting does not represent the "final" completion of a painting. Only when he finds an object to pour over and an audience who can communicate with the artist through the painting can the painting be truly completed in a sense.

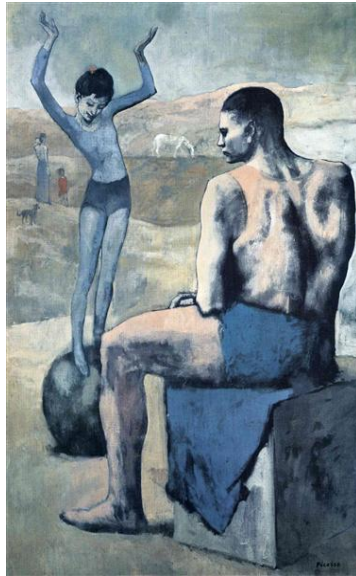


Figure 3. 《Girl on a ball》



Figure 4. 《child with dove》

Similarly, in Picasso's *Child with a Dove*, created during his Blue Period, we see a deep exploration of emotional resonance and social commentary. The solitary child, with a melancholic expression and a dove in hand, evokes feelings of vulnerability and innocence. The blue tones create an atmosphere of sadness and reflection, inviting viewers to empathize with the child's plight. The dove symbolizes hope and peace, contrasting the child's isolation in a harsh world. This artwork, much like *Girl on a Ball*, encourages the audience to confront themes of social inequality and the loss of innocence, illustrating Picasso's belief that a painting achieves completion not only through the artist's expression but also through the emotional connection it fosters with its viewers. Only when an audience can communicate with the artist through the painting can the artwork be truly complete in a sense.



Figure 5. 《le radeau de la méduse 》

Figure 6. 《Skrik》

As material living standards improve, people's cultural life needs also increase. Many people choose to go to art galleries and other places full of artistic atmosphere to "listen or talk" on weekends or in their free time. (Some of them do it out of hobbies, and some do it to relax.) Some do it out of hobbies, while others do it to relax. After a person's spiritual world improves, his aesthetic requirements will gradually increase, and he will inevitably require paintings to meet his own aesthetic needs. The French painter Théodore Géricault's Romantic painting "The Raft of the Medusa" (**Figure 5.**) depicts the various states of the shipwrecked victims suffering from hunger and thirst, groaning in agony, and is suffused with a suffocating atmosphere of tragedy. The Norwegian painter Edvard Munch's Expressionist work "The Scream" (**Figure 6.**) uses extremely exaggerated techniques to fully convey emotions of suffocation, anxiety, and loneliness, brimming with a cry of terror and despair towards life. If a viewer goes to an art gallery with an irritable mood and sees the above two works, then these dull, complicated paintings that express the author's intense psychological struggle will make him more depressed and the psychological burden will be more serious. At this time, the viewer should make a choice that suits him or her, make good use of his or her aesthetic ability, and choose a painting or paintings that can make him feel relaxed and happy.

2.3. CONTROVERSIES TRIGGERED BY READYMADES

The term "readymade" first appeared in 1915, associated with Marcel Duchamp's first readymade artwork, "Roue de bicyclette" (**Figure 7.**), which was created in 1913. It refers to the practice of taking existing objects from reality and combining or reconstructing them to directly form a new work of art. The selection of objects in readymades is typically related to human life and often consists of utilitarian items with practical functions, such as a bicycle wheel, a snow shovel, or a wooden door.

The main distinction between readymades and traditional artworks lies in the ambiguous and elusive nature of the meaning constructed within readymades. Unlike traditional artworks, which often feature narrative systems and visually striking color compositions, readymades do not rely on these elements to convey their significance.

Marcel Duchamp aimed to reduce the absolute boundaries between beauty and ugliness in art, without relying on sensory impact to please the eye for artistic enjoyment. An example of this approach is his work "Fountain"(Figure 8), which diminishes the visual impact typically associated with artworks.

"Fountain" breaks through the limitations of material and location; Viewers don't necessarily have to visit an art gallery to appreciate a piece; they can also grasp its appearance through descriptions from others, since a urinal is a familiar everyday object. On the other hand, the viewer's interpretation of the work is partly free from reliance on the secular. In addition, the work itself cannot be attached to the recording background, nor does it have cultural connotation. It does not have any practical object in the nature of a work of art. From a "visual" point of view it almost loses its meaning, thereby eliminating the meaning of the boundary between beauty and ugliness.



Figure 7. Roue de bicyclette



Figure 8. 《Fountain》

2.4 SUPER HIVE

The use of raw materials and the overly straightforward stacking arrangement of this piece sparked controversy among viewers. Many expressed confusion and disdain, saying things like, "I don't get it," "Is this just a pile of trash?" "Is this the level of students from the Central Academy of Fine Arts?" and "This piece feels very perfunctory." (However, some netizens noted that despite its lack of maturity, they could see the artist's attempt to convey a satire on consumerism.) However, some netizens pointed out that, despite its immaturity, they could recognize the artist's effort to convey a satire on consumerism. Faced with the wide array of online comments and discussions, the creator of the piece, Ms. Qiao, issued an apology to the audience regarding the controversy. She explained that the misunderstanding arose because the artwork looked like a pile of garbage, but her intention was not to make people think that contemporary art is just a chaotic jumble of wild ideas.

The artist explained that the motor beneath the piece is functional and that each layer of cardboard was meticulously cut and assembled by hand, combined with acrylic panels to ensure the structure could bear its weight. She mentioned that the process even resulted in accidental injuries, highlighting the high cost and personal effort invested in the creation. The inspiration for this piece came from her grandmother, who used to collect garbage, filling an entire room with such waste paper. However, the money earned from recycling these items was barely enough to cover the artist's basic daily living expenses in Beijing. Despite this, her grandmother remained enthusiastic, seemingly unaware of how far behind she had fallen in terms of contemporary consumer standards. This mirrors the artist's message that both cardboard boxes and humans are transient.

(Despite the artist's apology, the controversy continued to stir debates online. To address the aesthetic understanding gap between art creators and viewers, this article conducts a series of investigations.) The artist's apology did not quell the ongoing controversy, which continued to spark discussions online. To bridge the aesthetic understanding gap between art creators and viewers, this article undertakes a series of investigations.

3.METHODOLOGY

3.1. AUDIENCE SURVEY RESEARCH PROCESS DESIGN AND RESULT ANALYSIS

This survey takes the Central Academy of Fine Arts Experimental and Science and Technology Graduation Exhibition and its audience as the research object, and conducts case investigation and analysis using non-interventional observation and interview methods to verify the audience's aesthetic psychology and understanding of the artwork during the audience experience. degree of difference.

3.2. RESEARCH PROCESS DESIGN

3.2.1.BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATION DESIGN

Behavioural observation of the audience will be conducted from May 26 to June 2, with time periods ranging from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The observation time is distributed in the morning and afternoon, weekdays and weekends to eliminate the influence caused by the particularity of the time period.

During the research process, observers used non-interventional observation methods, pretending to be spectators, and recorded the visitors' visiting time, stopping points and visiting behaviours during the visit. The reasons for using non-interventional observation are as follows:

1. The most authentic and reliable data can be obtained by observing without the subject knowing.

2. On-site observation and data recording can avoid errors or omissions. During the research process, observers designate the exit or entrance of the exhibition hall as the starting point for the investigation. When selecting participants, they focus on a random visitor encountered at the starting point. Using a stopwatch and pre-printed forms, they record the visitor's time spent in each exhibition area, number of stops, and other behaviours such as taking photos or engaging in conversations. The timing concludes as the visitor exits the exhibition hall. Observers should avoid contact with or detection by the subjects to ensure accurate recording of their true visiting behaviours.

The data recorded during observation includes the visitor's gender, age group, accompanying group, total duration of visit, duration of visit in different exhibition areas, number of stops, engagement in conversation, reading of exhibition descriptions, photography or selfies, viewing of videos, and interaction with exhibits. Visitors who complete the entire exhibition hall route are considered valid samples. Visitors who leave the exhibition hall before visiting less than half of it are categorized as invalid samples.

3.2.2. QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW DESIGN

This questionnaire includes a total of 2 modules. The first is a closed questionnaire, that is, the audience only needs to choose the options.

The selection is the basic information of the visitors. The second part is to conduct interviews with the visitors to collect the visitors' opinions and experience survey on the exhibition.

3.2.3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus group discussions with the audience will be conducted from Jun4 to June 12, This schedule includes both weekdays and weekends to minimize any time-related biases. The participants will be invited to engage in discussions about their experiences in the exhibition. The focus group sessions will be structured to encourage open dialogue, allowing participants to share their thoughts on their visiting behaviors, emotional responses, and interpretations of the artwork.

3.2.4. PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATION

This research employs participatory observation as a method to gather in-depth insights into visitors' interactions and experiences during the exhibition. In this approach, the researcher actively engages with the audience while observing their behaviours and emotional responses.

It will involve two main components. First, the researcher immerses themselves in the exhibition environment, acting as both an observer and a participant. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of how visitors interact with the artworks and with each

other. The researcher may take part in discussions or activities, facilitating a more authentic connection with the audience.

The second component involves detailed documentation of observed behaviours. This includes noting the time spent at different exhibits, the number of stops made, and specific interactions, such as conversations or reactions to the artworks.

4. DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE SURVEY SAMPLE

For visitors who spontaneously visit the graduation exhibition of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, the visiting needs can be roughly divided into the following categories:

Learn and seek knowledge. Some professional art workers and students from related majors will come with specific purposes. This kind of audience will be attentive and serious when visiting. Some people will even bring paper, pens, cameras and other tools to record the exhibits in detail. Learning audiences will focus more on the exhibits themselves;

In addition to such professionals, some studious visitors will visit with the purpose of expanding their knowledge or educating future generations.

Leisure and entertainment. There are mostly parents with children and young people accompanying the elderly.

Many visitors come for recreational or social purposes, either alone or with friends, to pass the time. This type of audience values the visiting experience more than the educational value. (The travel and tourism audiences come from a variety of professions. Some come here because of popular online works, while others just check in and take photos, and most of them use mobile phone cameras to record.) The audience for travel and tourism includes people from various professions. Some are drawn here by popular online content, while others simply stop by to take photos. Most of them use their mobile phone cameras to capture their experiences.

As for the audience's motivation for visiting, the author analyses it from two aspects. First, a questionnaire was used to investigate the motivations of the audience for the visit. In addition, by analysing the behaviour of the observed samples, they were divided into professional art people and non-professional entertainment people for interviews.

According to the statistics of visitors to the exhibition in this questionnaire, professional visitors who are learning and seeking knowledge account for 44% of the total; visitors for leisure and entertainment account for 35%; visitors who accompany family or friends account for 15%; visitors who are tourists account for 6%.

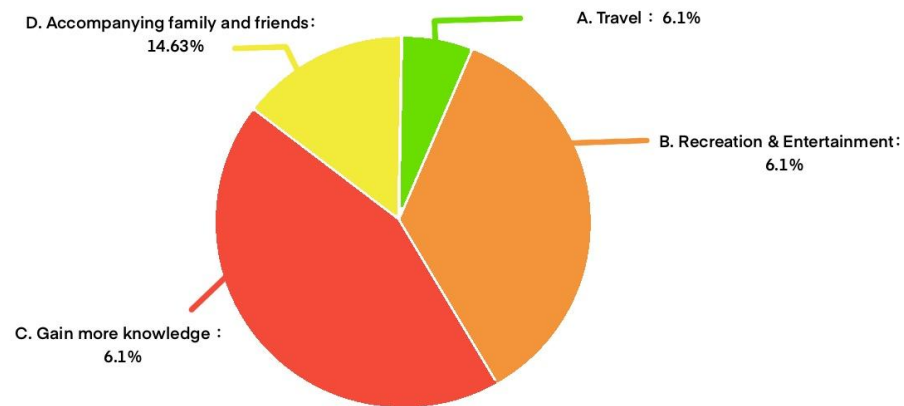


Figure 9. Distribution chart of visiting motivations of questionnaire samples

9.1 Differences in audience emotions and behavioural responses under different natural features:

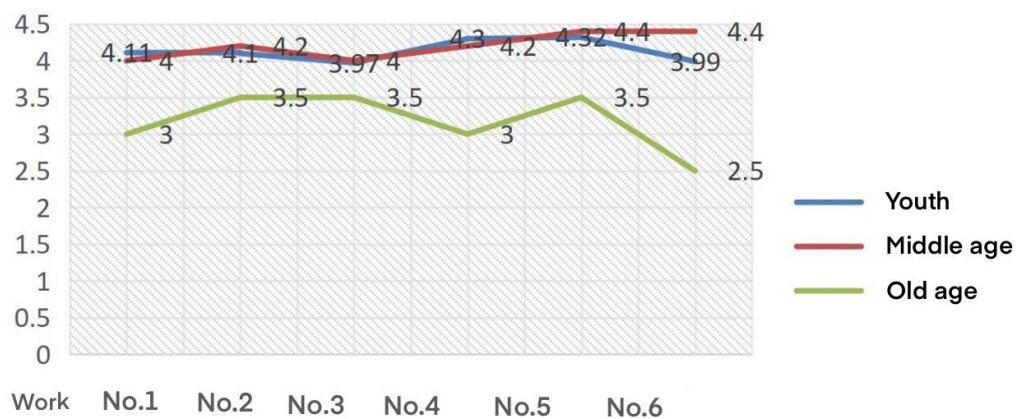
Table 1: Comparison of emotional and behavioural responses between audiences of different genders

Comparison of Emotional Response Differences between Gender Audiences		
	male	female
Emotional pleasure level	3.79	4.28
Emotional arousal	3.76	4.27

Comparison of Behavioral Response Differences between Gender Audiences		
	male	female
Average number of stops	18.8	27.6
Average visiting time	13	19.6

As can be seen from the figure above, the positive emotional response of male viewers is much lower than that of female viewers. The emotional response of female viewers is also more positive than that of male viewers. Most male visitors stay in the exhibition hall for a shorter time on average, and their behaviour is characterized by browsing the exhibits at will. To this end, we selected the proportion of female viewers to be greater than that of male viewers to conduct interviews and surveys.

Table 2: Age Difference-Emotional Pleasure of Works



The curve of emotional pleasure varies consistently across different age groups, indicating that age does not affect the emotional pleasure of the audience. Therefore, age differences will not be considered during the sampling process for interviews.

5.DISCUSSION

5.1. PART 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

According to the questionnaire, the author integrated and selected effective interviews with 30 audiences, including 15 audiences who had received professional art education and 15 non-art workers, including 8 women and 7 men each.

5.2. PART2 INTERVIEW

The interviewed audiences expressed their own opinions on the work "Super Beehive" and. Through interviews with offline audiences, some understandings from the audience's perspective were compiled:

Audience 1: This work itself is created using ready-made products. Duchamp also did this a long time ago. It is not a new thing. It is impossible to say how high the author's intention is. Put it among a group of graduation works. It's also ordinary.

Some data show that most of the audience is similar to the audience. They have been art practitioners for many years and have watched the creative works of graduate students as teachers. They have a certain understanding of the development of art history, so they do not have too many expectations.

Audience 2: The reason why the work caused controversy on the Internet is because it was mistaken by viewers as a pile of garbage cardboard boxes. Of course, if the ready-

made materials of this kind of garbage cardboard are replaced with acrylic moulds, glass or the like, the controversy will be much smaller. But if you do this, the creation cost will be much higher, which is actually unnecessary for an ordinary graduate. After all, the work is enough if it is meaningful.

Audience 2, as a non-art practitioner, expressed his interest in art and shared some similar artworks to express his own judgment standards.



Figure 10. Pictures from audience's mobile phones

Audience 3: The most outrageous and controversial thing about this work is the author's "apology." Originally, the work itself is controversial, and it is understandable that different audiences have different opinions. Just feel free to say it and comment on it. However, when the author stood up and "apologized" instead of explaining, things went in the other direction. The "apology" itself revealed the author's unconfidence and lack of firmness in his work. Secondly, this author Why don't the instructors and the college to which he belongs stand up and speak out, allowing a graduate in his early twenties to stand in the spotlight of public opinion?

Audience 4 is a photographer and media worker: In fact, this is a very good contemporary artwork: 1. The shape of the stacked cardboard boxes by the author refers to a real-life tube building in Beijing, which is densely packed with 8,000 households in Beijing. Drifting, like a honeycomb. 2. Below the work, there is a video showing "carton production, recycling, shredding, and recycling", which means "quick-perishable goods - constantly experiencing the impermanent cycle of being needed and being rejected." 3. The third part of the work is the projection of hands that are constantly climbing up, which means that both the "rich nest" and the "honeycomb" will pass one day, and points to thinking about the current working status and the meaning of climbing up. 4. The overall combination conveys the feeling of people constantly struggling and climbing up in reality. What makes people feel sad is that such an excellent work was biased by some unscrupulous media and attracted a lot of criticism. The author himself was forced to apologize to the "public" under pressure. The media can maliciously and one-sidedly report in order to attract eyeballs; bloggers can mislead the public at will in order to gain traffic. Everyone should have their own aesthetic taste and value orientation. Don't follow someone's lead and make others take advantage of them. Profit-making chess pieces... This will allow more people who don't know what to

do to get involved, and the result will be more negative emotions and distorted values to this society.

Audience 5: Many viewers are not actually art majors. They can only comment based on their impressions of appreciation and cannot fully understand the work. However, they must give full respect to the work and the author no matter what. Creating something is inherently embarrassing and personal. Not everyone can sympathize with or understand it. At this time, it's not a bad idea to stick to yourself. However, the topics raised by the work itself and the author's apology seem to constitute a so-called "performance art", which is somewhat interesting.

6.CONCLUSION

Finally, we integrated and summarized the relevant data and conclusions from the interviews and discussed them with the students and professors participating in the exhibition in the form of a meeting. After experiencing this storm, the author himself has some thoughts: "Because artistic expression always moves forward in thinking, this experience made me think a lot. I resisted and reflected. This feedback allowed me to gain more perspectives from the audience." Sample, artistic creation is to use the language of art to communicate with the audience. From this, I can also see that the final presentation method of my work does not allow most audiences to understand the expression of the creative concept. I will adjust and simplify my creation in future creations. language to form more effective communication with more audiences and art lovers.

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PUSH THE BOUNDARIES: THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA'S HANDBAGS IN 1925-1937

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Abstract: The woman's handbag is a symbolic consumer artifact imbued with multiple layers of meaning. This object reflects and intertwines ideologies, economics, culture, social statuses, and personal identities. However, current academic literature lacks a clear focus on this ubiquitous and meaningful artifact. In China, the early 20th century marked an important turn in the history of Chinese women's clothing, with a shift from wide robes with large sleeves to tight-fitting cheongsams. The cheongsams made it impossible to hide women's belongings, and bags and accessories gradually came to the forefront of people's attention. However, several researchers have identified the historical evolution of Chinese handbags during this period of transformation of the dress phenomenon. Therefore, this study applies the historical research method based on the data of Chinese women's magazines during the period of 1925-1937, aims to clarify the development of Chinese bags during the period of 1925-1937, and to analyze the evolution of the appearance of Chinese bags in the early twentieth century. This study contributes to the Chinese bag history by offering a analysis of its evolution. It serves as a valuable reference for future scholars in this field, enhancing our understanding of the cultural and social significance of Chinese bag history.

Keywords: Handbag, Chinese fashion, Women, Evolution, History.

1. INTRODUCTION

If one asks any lady about the single most coveted item in her closet, she will most likely tell you about the cherished handbag. The women's bag has a special concept in the field of fashion; it is an iconic item with multiple meanings. It encompasses the ideology, economy, and culture of society, embodies the identity and status of an individual, what's more, it has a special connection and symbolism with the female community (Ribeiro, Miguel, Pereira, Lucas, & Trindade, 2015). According to Skyquest's data on handbag market size, share, and growth analysis in April 2024 ("Handbag Market Size, Growth & Trends Report | 2031," 2024), Handbag Market size was valued at USD 49.12 billion in 2019 and is poised to grow from USD 52 billion in 2023 to USD 81.79 billion by 2031, growing at a CAGR of 5.8% in the forecast period (2024-2031). In a way, bags are no longer just a fashion accessory, but a representation of power dressing and practicality, spawning a multi-billion-dollar industry that continues to grow. The handbag is a product that has permeated everyone's life, not only as an accessory, but also as a style statement, with its versatile appearance and practical function for many occasions and uses. However, current academic literature lacks a clear focus on this ubiquitous and meaningful artifact (Rosenberg, Turunen, Järvelä, & Arnould, 2022).

In 2023, the British Museum organized an exhibition on the resilience and innovation of 19th-century China—China's hidden century, and this hidden history of the art of dress was opened a new page in public (H, 2023). At the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese society was in a period of violence and turmoil, and it was also a period of drastic transformation. It was experiencing a leap from a traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial society, and from a feudal society to a modern society. Especially in the 1920s, as the influence of the May Fourth Movement gradually expanded, nationalism in Chinese society was on the rise, which promoted a re-examination of local culture. The outbreak of social movements led to the liberation of women's thoughts and prompted women to seek a more independent and liberated lifestyle (Chen, 2005). At the same time, it also marked an important turning point in the history of Chinese women's clothing, from wide robes and large sleeves to tight cheongsams (Zhang, 2012). This transformation made it impossible for women to hide their belongings. Bags, as an emerging fashion and functional accessory, followed this trend and gradually became the focus of people's attention. In addition, the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 put China's economy into recession. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, most factories were forced to stop production or

relocate, and the fashion industry was forced to simplify in the wartime environment, which also set a clear end point for the period of this article. However, while Chinese fashion history has studied the transformation of clothing during this important period, there is little research on the history of Chinese handbags (Rosenberg et al., 2022; Li, 2001).

In addition, driven by international trade, Shanghai has become an important commercial and financial center and an important gateway for Western fashion culture to enter China. The entry of foreign capital and the rise of the emerging middle class provided an economic foundation for women's fashion and consumer culture. The rise of Shanghai cheongsam has led to the rapid popularization of bags in this region, especially among the upper class and the emerging middle class, becoming an important symbol of identity, status and personality expression. At the same time, Shanghai's unique cultural atmosphere has promoted the diversification of bag design and innovation of function. Therefore, this study focuses on the Shanghai region of China, but also recognizes that there are cultural and social differences in the use and development of bags in other parts of China (such as Guangzhou and Beijing). Future research can be further extended to these regions to analyze the regional differences in the popularity and evolution of bags.

Therefore, in this study, based on the data of Chinese women's magazines during the period of 1925-1937, the author applies historical research methods and image research methods to clarify the development of the Chinese bag especially in Shanghai during the period of 1925-1937, and to analyze the evolution of the Chinese bag in the beginning of the twentieth century and the social significance that it has given to the Chinese society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Handbag describing principles

It seems that a bag can be described in many ways, shape, pattern, color, style etc. can be used to describe it. If we analyze the anatomy of a bag from the perspective of design and production, it can be composed of handles, closures, flap, sides, corners, bottoms, pockets and interior (Fashionary, 2016). Certainly, the way of expression of the constituent parts of different bags is different. For example, Hermes' platinum bag closes the bag space by fixing the front piece of the bag with a lock, while LV's bucket bag closes the bag by pulling the drawstring.

The details become more apparent when a handbag is dissected. There are the key terms anatomy from the top to the bottom from outside to inside (Blumenthal, 2011) :

Piece Good (material that a bag is mostly composed of), Trim (any material that is used decoration), Handle, Seam (the line for piece goods stitched together), Closure (any zip or frame for close the bag), Hardware (any metal, plastic or jewel that acts as a connector, clasp, or decoration), Bag Body, Flap, Gusset (an extra piece of fabric that makes bags roomier), Feet (pegs placed on the bottom of a bag to add stability and protect), Interior, and Lining.

Therefore, the authors use the above principles to describe the development of bags in this study. However, whether the bag is in line with the fashion trend is more concerned by the designers. The bags designed for the brand should be in line with the brand's style and match coordination with a more attractive set of look. For studying and describing handbags from the last century, given their simpler production and materials, it seems overly detailed to approach them from a modern perspective focused on sophisticated design and manufacturing. Therefore, based on the research of the above scholars, the author will analyze the evolution of Chinese historical bags from these four parts: structure, material, function and coordination.

2.2 Bag in China

The history of handbag usage in China, if considered as a container, can be traced back to the dawn of human civilization; however, if viewed as an accessory, this history is relatively short (Ribeiro et al., 2015). In the history of Chinese dress, due to the wide and loose design of clothing, small objects that needed to be carried around were often hidden in pockets on the cuffs of the sleeves or in the pockets in front of the lapel, which were not easy to be found. Bags were mostly tied around the waist as decorative accessories, called purse (Yang, 2004).

This traditional and ancient bag used as a decoration can be found in many works of art, when bags took different forms and held a variety of objects. In the Tang Dynasty (618–907 ce), more and more purse accessories were worn around people's waists, such as purses for spices, purses for jade and purses for knives, etc. There were so many things hanging around the waists that it was necessary to have a belt with a lot of small rings to hang them, which was known as the "Diexie Seven Things" (Figure 1).



Figure 1. "Diexie Seven Things"

The custom of wearing a purse on the waist continued until the late Qing Dynasty (around 1912). During the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), the purses used at the court were often made into sets according to the purpose of the items, and a set of purses had almost the same fabric and pattern, but each had its specific function and also changed with daily habits.

For example, this set of small purses (Figure 2) was used as accessories for the wedding of Emperor Dezongjing of the Qing Dynasty (Yan, Fang, & Yin, 2010). The set consists of nine pieces, including a pair of purses, a tobacco purse, a dalian (a type of square bag worn around the waist or shoulders), a watch cover, a fan cover, a betel nut bag, a finger guards purse, and a glasses case. The beaded design is raised on the surface of the base fabric, giving a solid relief effect. This set almost covers the main varieties of purse work from the Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, and the inclusion of mirror covers, powder boxes, and other items also broadens the concept of traditional purses.












Figure 2. Purse Set for Emperor Dezongjing's Wedding

However, the function of traditional Chinese bags is not limited to holding objects but also has a narrative meaning. The patterns of folk bags are rich in creative themes and metaphors, often expressed in the form of embroidery on the bag. For example, to express the theme of love between men and women, often with double fish, double dragon, and double butterfly to symbolize. Flowers as a metaphor for women and butterflies for honey picking as a metaphor for men. For example, to celebrate the birth of a child, the grandmother is to be embroidered a purse patterned with tigers and lions, they are symbols of bravery and might, implying the protection of the child's healthy growth.

In addition to the patterns, the structure of bag forms also has a symbolic meaning attached to it, for example, Yuanbao shape, Ruyi shape, heart shape, and auspicious cloud shape. The author catalogs the primary types of bags from the Qing Dynasty and analyzes their characteristics from three perspectives (Table 1). This analysis serves

as a foundation for identifying the development of bags during the Republican Period from 1925 to 1937.

Table 1: Types of Bags from the Qing Dynasty

Factors Bags					
Structure	Square without cover, top opening	Square shape with covers on both sides	Drawstring bag	Drawstring heart shape bag	Gourd shape
Materials	Silk	Silk	Rope weaving	Fabric	Silk
Function	For coins and small items	For coins and small items	For snuff bottle	For spices	For storing tobacco
Factors Bags					
Structure	Oval shape	Long strip	Round shape	Square shape with six pockets	
Materials	Fabric and beading	Silk	Silk	Silk and fabric	
Function	For glasses	For fans	For coins and small items	Wearing inside boots, use for storing letters	

From the above, it can be seen that in the Qing Dynasty, although there were many kinds of bags, each bag had a specific function. Small purses were mainly square and round, with various patterns and symbolic meanings. Functional purses were mostly shaped to fit the items themselves, such as fan covers and glasses covers. The way purses were hung around the waist was in line with the traditional Chinese clothing of the time, which was wide robes and with big sleeves. Traditional Chinese clothing was mostly cut in straight lines, hiding the waist and blurring gender. Under the etiquette-

based clothing system, an extensive set of intricate clothing rules restricted women's dress and constrained their thoughts (Zhu, Wu, & Tang, 2022). However, early communist leaders successfully organized support for the New Culture Movement (1915–1921), which advocated for the abolition of prostitution and polygamy as well as the freedom choice in marriage and divorce (Leung, 2003). This was regarded as China's first women's movement and was a period of social and political awakening for many (Leung, 2003). During this period, restrictive clothing practices that constrained women, such as foot binding and chest binding, gradually disappeared. Aesthetic preferences shifted towards natural and healthy forms, becoming the mainstream. In 1920s, there was growing concern that wide and loose robes obscured women's femininity and made gender distinctions difficult. This led to the evolution of the cheongsam, which fit closer to the body, showcasing a balanced physique and redefining the boundaries between man and woman (Ng, 2015).

In a sense, it can be said that the emergence of cheongsam has promoted the development of handbags. The belt around women's waists disappeared. The one-piece cheongsam from top to bottom showed the curves of women, and there was no place to hide the small items carried with them. Women's bags could no longer be hung on the belt around their waists, so handbags appeared in the history of Chinese clothing. However, few scholars have studied this important turning point. Therefore, this study analyzes the evolution of handbags through pictures in historical magazines.

3. METHODOLOGY

To answer these research questions, qualitative historical research method is applied to solved. The chosen data are relevant to the research during that time. For the historical study of the development of bags, this study focuses on using visual materials of Chinese women as the main research data. This is because photographs provide precise records of the material data in front of the lens when the shutter is pressed (Ahmad, 2021). Therefore, local publications are observable objects. The author collected the photographs and historical "traces" from *Pictorial Weekly of the Eastern Times* and *Ling Long* during 1925-1937.

Pictorial Weekly of the Eastern Times is the first photography supplement of a newspaper in China. It was published once a week in the early period and twice a week in the later period, mainly in news and photos of people. *Ling Long* was a popular women's fashion magazine at that time. It was published once a week from its founding in 1931 to its closure in 1937. It mainly includes articles and photos related to fashion and beauty, domestic and foreign movie stars, and advertisements for women's daily

necessities. Zhang Ailing said in "Talking about Women": "In 1930s, every female student had a "*Ling Long*" magazine."

The author read 1145 issues of available data from these two publications to select images of women who carrying bags. The Pictorial Weekly of the Eastern Times provides 4,374 pages of data from 1925 to 1937, with 245 pages meeting the criteria for female images. Ling Long offers 11,666 pages of data from the same period, with 144 pages in criteria. However, the inevitable limitation is that in China in the 1920s and 1930s, printing technology at the time could not meet modern standards, resulting in lower image clarity, so it became difficult to track the details of the bags. There were some images published small or the shape of the bag cannot be recognized, therefore the author conducted a secondary selected to reducing data, and the two publications have a total of 101 pages.

In the original publication, photographs are usually attached to text, such as the title or description of the photograph. Therefore, based on the original text, the author reads and codes the images, and according to Literature Review to descriptions and terminology of the bag design details are referenced and organized to justify the features and components of the bag evolution.


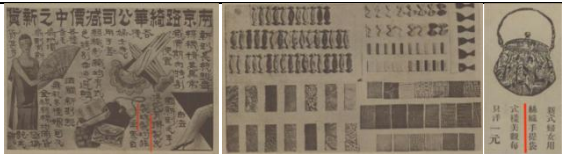

The bag evolution in this study is a historical and culturally oriented process that describes the transformation of bag appearance by considering how people themselves use bags to construct and interpret their social experience. A review of relevant literature, such as books, journals, magazines, articles, and papers, was conducted to identify the research context of the era and serve as descriptive data to demonstrate the factors that led to the bag changes in this study.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the Chinese bag evolution during 1925-1937 was pushing the boundaries (Table 2). In the way of wearing, Chinese bags have moved from the waist to women's hands or underarms. In the bag types, transfer to handbag, clutch, purse, clasp purse, can be hand-held, hand-carried, wrist or clip in the armpit use. Bag types to the development of geometric shapes, square bags and frame bags become the mainstream, while gourd, clouds, treasure and other figurative bag type become less. The pattern on bag surface compared to the Qing Dynasty bags were simpler, although meaningful patterns still exist, occasionally with leaves, flowers and other botanical patterns can be seen in the bag. During this period, women gradually turned from complex traditional accessories to simpler, modern designs. This trend reflects

Chinese women's pursuit of increasingly modern and independent social roles and reflects the influence of industrialization and modern aesthetics.

Table 2: The Evolution of China's Handbags in 1925-1937

PRINCIPLES	<p>STRUCTURE</p> <p>Clutch, Purse, Clasp purse, Handbag</p> <p>Handle : Top handle, Metal chain strap</p> <p>Closures : Kiss lock closure, Purse frame, Bamboo lock closure, Full-flap front, Half-flap front, Flap with hidden magnetic closure, Flap top with squeeze-lock closure, Flap top with push-lock, Flap top with front strap</p> <p>Bag Side: Gusset, Accordion</p> <p>Bag Bottoms: Square studded bottom</p>	
	<p>MATERIAL</p> <p>leather, silk and metal materials</p>	
	<p>FUNCTION</p> <p>Daily use, Military use, Medical use, Travel, Photography, Office use</p>	

	<p>COORDINATION</p> <p>Spring and Summer : Cheongsam, Ru skirt or Western-style dresses</p> <p>Autumn and Winter : Fur coats or Western-style windbreakers over cheongsam</p>	
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From the advertisements published can be seen that most bags were made of leather, silk and metal materials. The popularity of leather handbags is closely linked to the development of technology of industrial. In the 1880s and 1890s, officials from the Self-Strengthening Movement established a number of modern textile enterprises (Zhang & Yang, 2021). In the early 20th century, China's leather industry entered a period of rapid development. In 1919, a tannery was established in Fengtian Beiguan, specializing in the production of leather and its products for the China Northeast Army. During this period, some tanneries were also established in other parts of China, and the leather products produced began to be exported to other country (Wang, Chen, & Xie, 2006). Therefore, the advancement of China's leather production technology is the basis for promoting the development of bags.

Most bags in the Qing Dynasty were small with single function. However, bags between 1925 and 1937 were more inclusive and functional. Women could carry multiple items in one handbag. The professionalization of women, referring to their shift from household tasks like sewing and farming to taking on professional roles in society, led to handbags becoming more functional for social life, such as military messenger shoulder bags, medical waist bags, and briefcases. The data obtained show that, in addition to travel cases, most box products are used in some specialized fields, such as shoulder photography boxes, hand-carry record boxes, etc., which have a built-in camera or movie player.

From the perspective of clothing matching, the bags at that time were mostly matched with cheongsam, Ru skirt or Western-style dresses in spring and summer, and with fur coats or Western-style windbreakers over cheongsam in autumn and winter. The popularity of the cheongsam after 1925 marked a significant shift in Chinese women's fashion. The cheongsam gradually replaced the traditional wide-sleeved robes, becoming the most fashionable clothing style of the time (Liu, 2020). At the same time,

Western clothing styles also spread rapidly due to the opening of China's trading ports after the Opium War. Students who returned from studying abroad and intellectuals who received new-style education in China became the disseminators of Western fashion. They not only accepted Western clothing concepts, but also integrated these concepts into their daily lives and work, promoting changes in China's fashion.

5. CONCLUSION

Bags play an indispensable role in women's lives. They are not only practical items, but also symbols that integrate culture and history. The turning point of Chinese fashion in the early 20th century had a profound impact on the evolution of bags. With the change of the times, clothing styles broke through the boundaries of traditional clothing, which promoted the change of bag shape structure, from traditional waist-worn cloth bags to exquisite leather handbags. These bags not only have a new look in appearance, but also carry rich social status and gender connotations. They are both essential tools in the workplace and luxurious accessories in leisure time, reflecting the multiple roles and identities of women in different scenarios. The functional changes of bags not only reveal the liberation of Chinese women's consciousness and transcend the restrictions on women in feudal society, but also inject new vitality and fashion into the history of Chinese clothing in the turbulent early 20th century. Their evolution is not only a follow-up to fashion, but also a witness to social progress and cultural change, giving the expresses for women's independence and empowerment.

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PRESERVING DUSUN FOLKLORE: INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES INTO MODERN DIGITAL MEDIA

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Abstract: The preservation and digitalization of Dusun folklore have been the focus of numerous studies, highlighting the significance of preserving cultural heritage in the midst of modern influences. This research aims to address the challenges posed by globalization and technological advancements that threaten traditional storytelling practices and cultural identity. By integrating innovative digital preservation strategies with archetypes theory within the context of cultural studies, this study seeks to develop effective methods for preserving and representing Dusun folklore. The methodology involves in-depth interviews, observation, document analysis, thematic analysis, and visual analysis of Dusun narratives. The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to both academic discourse and practical preservation efforts, ensuring that Dusun cultural narratives are translated into contemporary visual forms and remain relevant in the digital age.

Keywords: Archetypes, cultural heritage, digital preservation, Dusun folklore, participatory culture

1. INTRODUCTION

The Dusun culture is characterized by several symbolic and thematic elements, which are prominently included in their folk narratives. This tale provides a fresh perspective while also evoking admiration and respect for cultural traditions and practices of the people involved. However, the current depiction and understanding of these situations in academic discussions and artistic creations are excessively restricted. Converting these oral narratives into visual representations is a substantial challenge. Although these stories possess cultural wealth and the capacity to inspire, they are seldom shown in visual arts and contemporary cultural media. This study aims to rectify this inadequacy by investigating the challenges posed by globalization and technological advancements that threaten traditional storytelling practices and cultural identity. Furthermore, it utilizes co-creation approaches with the aim of converting these tales into visual artwork.

Sabah, a state in East Malaysia, is home to over sixty languages, with over thirty of these languages belonging to the indigenous Dusun, Murut, and Paitan language families (Pugh-Kitingan et al., 2018). Kadazandusun is the most prevalent of the thirteen languages that comprise the Dusun language family (King and King, 1984). The Kadazandusuns are the largest cultural group in the state, comprising approximately 17.97% of the total population of Sabah (Puyok and Bagang, 2011). They typically reside in inland freshwater environments and west-coastal environments, where they share a common heritage that includes oral history, law and order systems, morality programs, agricultural practices, material culture, ceremonies, and distinctive religious and cultural traditions (Pugh-Kitingan et al., 2018).

The Kadazandusun language is further divided into five primary subdialect groups in Tambunan: Liwan, Tagaas, Tambunan, Tuhauwon, and Kuruyou. Although these names are less prevalent today, they are still significant in terms of history. About 150 years ago, the Liwan relocated from Ranau to Tambunan. The Kuruyou are the ancestors of the Kuijau people, who can be found in Keningau, south of Tambunan. The Tuhauwon people have a history of planting tuhau roots close their houses, and the Tagaas people are renowned for constructing homes from Tagaas trees. The Tambunan group, which was named after the thatching of roofs with tolidus leaves, now denotes the district. However, the original subdialect is still spoken in a number of traditional communities, including Lumandou, Maras-Karas, Tibabar, Noudu, Botung, Timbou, Karanaan, and Lintuhun (Pugh-Kitingan et al., 2018).

According to Pugh-Kitingan et al. (2018), the people of Tambunan, like other Dusun tribes, attribute their oral history to Nunuk Ragang, a historical site located near Ranau. They regard Mount Kinabalu as the residence of their ancestral spirits. They have a dual descent system and have traditionally resided in longhouse villages. Their primary source of sustenance is rice, which is predominantly cultivated in hill terraces and flatland paddy fields. They also rely on carabaos (buffaloes) for transportation, cultivation, agriculture, festivities, and dowries.

The Dusun ethnic group in Sabah's diverse folklore is a fundamental component of their cultural heritage, reflecting their history, beliefs, values, and legacy. Before the 1980s, it was a common leisure activity for them to recount folktales, legends, and mythology. Tangon is the term used to refer to folktales among the Tambunan Dusun (Low & Sim, 2020). According to Low and Sim (2020), tangon is a term in the Dusun Liwan language that denotes "stories from a long time ago." Parents frequently read these stories to their children at bedtime or as a popular pastime with companions in the evening following a long day of labor in the fields.

Evans (1923) and Rutter (1930) were among the earliest to document Dusun myths and legends, as interest in accumulating and documenting North Borneo traditional narratives began during the British colonial period (Pugh-Kitingan et al., 2018). The study of tangon in Tambunan Dusun remains uncommon, despite these initial efforts. The categorization and interpretation of these folktales have been facilitated by recent comprehensive analyses conducted by researchers such as Pugh-Kitingan, Gallus, and Low, which have revealed universal themes and distinctive cultural insights (Low & Sim, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital Preservation of Folklore

Folklore encompasses narratives, melodies, practices, and rituals that are passed down from one generation to the next within a family. It mostly expresses the values and ideals of societies. In this respect, the digital preservation of folklore has emerged globally as an important strategy for sustaining all these narratives amidst change and changing technologies. This literature review shall discuss initiatives beginning from historical to modern, starting right from global examples down to Malaysian efforts.

Most digital preservation efforts around the globe are driven by the need to save and immortalize cultural heritage in the face of erosion. Ajani et al. (2024) relate a number of international efforts, including the Indigenous Digital Archive, based in South Africa,

that works in collaboration with communities in the digitization of oral histories, songs, and cultural artifacts. Such stories, once made accessible online, foster awareness and appreciation among people, which helps preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage. The Sankofa Digital Archive in Ghana is working to preserve digitally the stories, proverbs, and agricultural practices of Akan traditions while developing increasing digital literacy among locals and empowering local communities to take part in heritage preservation. It is also mentioned in the research of Ajani et al. (2024), project works in East Africa have led to development in the creation of the Ntongato app in Tanzania and Learn Yoruba in Nigeria. These apps have been worked upon towards accessible and interactive means of language learning to help keep the local languages going with modern usage through mobile and digital technologies. Another outstanding example is the Kenyan Community Mapping Project, which let the Maasai map essential resources with the use of GIS technologies in an effort to preserve environmental knowledge and practices for future generations. Such synergy across global efforts stands as a testimony to how digital tools transform the process of preserving languages, practices, and folklore of the indigenous people (Ajani et al., 2024).

The Malaysian approach has thus been to reinterpret these stories into digital media. There have been various attempts to make folklore accessible to young audiences while setting aside the cultural core of traditional stories themselves. One discussion regarding this aspect was led by Omar, Ishak and Mustafa (2019) about Sususan Kreatif Sdn. Bhd. with Cerita Rakyat, a 13-episode animated series that started in 2005 and was aired in 2006 on RTM, bringing the traditional stories into the screens of television viewers. Furtherment to this in 2011, when the same company, Les' Copaque Productions, created Pada Zaman Dahulu, a 3D animated series that hit the small screens via channels Astro Ceria and TV Al-Hijrah, made folklores so much fun and visually stimulating that the masses became spellbound. In the same year, DBP introduced Cerita Nenek in digital replica format on its portal, offering access to multimedia versions of folktales and increasing user interaction (Omar et al., 2019).

Omar et al., (2019) discussed that this was further cemented between 2014 and 2015 when a number of Malaysian digital initiatives for the preservation of folklore came to the fore. In 2014, DD Animation Studio launched the Didi & Friends animated series through YouTube, which is an animation based on music, combined with folklore themes that will attract young children to appreciate the cultural heritage of Malaysia in a more fun way. This was followed by Pekaka Bercerita, a mobile app developed by DBP with sound-enhanced stories. Meanwhile, Unik Edu Solution Sdn. Bhd.'s free downloads of the interactive Cerita Rakyat Lite on Google Play enable readers to select both the narrative and text, background music, and the voices of characters. In

the research of Omar et al. (2019), it is further informed that in 2015, Big Tent Entertainment and Glue Studios released an award-winning interactive e-book with the title 'Anak-anak & Bongkoron', which managed to win the Best Children's e-Book Award at the Kota Buku Festival, showing how digital media could give life anew to traditional stories.

The research of Santano (2017) demonstrates that the indigenous Mah Meri have a rich folklore tradition, intrinsically attached to their wood mask carvings, such as the "Moyang Siamang" and "Moyang Ba'ai" represented in Figure 1, passed on through rituals and sculptures. The researchers used carvers to authenticate the veracity of these narratives before transforming them into animatics for the purpose of introducing immersive storytelling. Another instance of this phenomenon may be seen in the practice of Iban women in Sarawak, who integrate their traditional stories and beliefs into the creation of Pua Kumbu textiles. These textiles have been used to depict significant historical figures and events, which have been reinterpreted and documented as visual art. Through this approach, they showcase the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.



Figure 1. Snapshot of Moyang Siamang (Gibbon Spirit) and Moyang Ba'ai (Sea Spirit) from Peter Crowe's book (Source: Santano, 2017)

Notwithstanding this effort, care for and preservation of intangible cultural heritage remains an uphill task. According to Santano (2017), the poor interest of younger generations in oral traditions and the gradual disappearance of traditional storytellers weigh in the balance for the urgent need for innovative approaches to preservation. While digital media is certainly providing a great platform for contemporary audiences, innovation needs to be weighed against authenticity to retain core cultural values embedded in those stories.

2.2 Techniques and Technologies for Digital Preservation

Malaysia utilizes digital preservation technologies to preserve the culture's narratives and cultural heritage. The strategies include interactive game design, animation, outline mapping, and captivating narratives. An instance of how game design may captivate consumer attention and enlighten them about narrative and cultural encounters is by generating income from digital games including folk tale characters such as Toyol (Figure 2). These digital games have been used to document and preserve historical and cultural occurrences. Furthermore, they promote education together with entertainment by facilitating a deeper comprehension of the favourable changes occurring in society. Games such as "Food Force" demonstrate the ability of digital media to successfully educate and involve people in matters of humanity (Ali & Ng, 2018). The digital revival of traditional Malaysian games such as "Batu Seremban" and "Congkakcraze" serves as an illustration of their continued relevance in contemporary Malaysia (Ali & Ng, 2018). By using advancement of technology like animation and projection mapping, the static tales may be converted into attractive visual forms that evoke the emotional feelings. Augmented reality and virtual reality technologies able to enhance the experiences of the narrative, increase the emotional appeal of personal stories. These methods not only meet the needs of technologically advanced societies, but they also guarantee the preservation and authenticity of cultural heritage, which in turn fosters appreciation and knowledge of other cultures.



Figure 2. The main menu and user interface of the game application called Greedy Toyol (Source: Ali & Ng, 2018)

Digital technologies have become increasingly important in folklore's survival. Two significant projects of Renganathan and Kral (2018) illustrate this impact, with the first focusing on youth empowerment through filmmaking using available technology such as Kodak Playsport cameras. The Semai youth documented their cultural practices and with that they are gaining both technical skills and cultural practices. Guided by the Tok Batin, these narratives reflect their views and collectively they become 'knowledge holders' for the next generation. This process not only reinforces community relationships but, in some sense, instils pride in their culture.

The project further augments the cultural preservation effort by compiling a comprehensive, critically edited volume that incorporates video recordings, digital stills, and audio narratives from Semai elders. Such initiatives are committed to bilingual and multilingual documentation so that Semai culture becomes more accessible to an enlarged audience, with a view toward the revitalization of languages and pride in culture. It locks in their legacy, archiving these materials at the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Culture to continue showing through digital documentation how to effectively empower communities and redefine cultural identity in these modern times (Renganathan & Kral, 2018).

With both projects, collaboration and community involvement are the key to success, stressing that this is something that needs to be contributed to collectively in order to preserve the Semai cultural traditions. According to the research by Renganathan and Kral (2018), the Tok Batin was a village chief who played a significant role in guiding the process of content selection, ensuring that the narratives captured were culturally authentic and reflective of the values of the community. This kind of leadership ownership and pride further motivated the participants to actively contribute to this effort of documentation. Besides, the projects made available the intergenerational transfer of knowledge by bringing together elders who shared their stories and cultural practices with the youth who recorded them. It was an interaction that not only enriched the content created but also strengthened community bonds, making younger members learn directly from the experience of the elders in such a way that reinforces the continuity of Semai cultural traditions for generations to come.

2.3 Case Studies on the Authentic Translation of Indigenous Narratives into Contemporary Visual Forms and Cultural Identity

The study by Khalis and Mustaffa (2017) showed the impact of Malaysian culture on the design of animation characters by art and design students, with a focus on the traditional elements of costume and symbols in narratives. Digital preservations protect cultural elements by incorporating traditional Malaysian elements such as

Wayang Kulit, traditional attire, and local mythology through animations (Khalis & Mustafa, 2017). Consequently, these cultural elements are not lost; rather, they are incorporated and maintained in contemporary media through animation. Utilizing this framework, education is then emphasized as a critical instrument for the preservation of culture. Moreover, the findings of the analysis of student artworks that incorporated these elements illustrated how instructing students to draw inspiration from heritage enables them to preserve and transmit these traditions through contemporary digital media. However, the fact that they will animate certain aspects of tradition will also expose these cultural features to a broader audience, thereby enabling animation to serve as a powerful instrument for cultural preservation and education.

Nevertheless, it also highlights the obstacles to the preservation of these cultural elements as a result of the animative domination of Western and Japanese cultures. These have a significant impact on local animators, necessitating the conscious integration of traditional Malaysian culture amid these broader influences. In the digital era, it is imperative to maintain the relevance and excitement of traditional elements through continuous innovation in content creation (Khalis & Mustafa, 2017).

Similarly, the article by Jabbar and Hassan (2020), which endeavours to define and categorize the visual characteristics that would define a Malaysian comic book art style that could potentially establish a unique Malaysian comic art identity. The objective of digital preservation is to systematically identify and document the visual characteristics associated with framing style, panel composition, and narrative structure, as well as other visual elements, in comparison to American and Japanese comics. The current documentation functions as a digital archive, preserving these unique features for the next generation.

In fact, the research by Jabbar and Hassan (2020) is able to emphasize the distinctiveness of Malaysian visual culture in an international context by contrasting it with the American and Japanese styles. Analysing comic art using well-established theoretical frameworks are beneficial in gaining a comprehensive grasp of certain characteristics and conducting a complete review. Researchers in the field of preservation must study the problem of content depletion. It occurs when artists consistently use the same methods, topics, and ideas in their artwork. In order to guarantee that the art form remains pertinent and vital, it is essential to innovate within the cultural context. Additionally, Malaysian identity is endangered by global comic styles. The necessity of establishing a Malaysian comic identity is indeed crucial for the implementation of global trends (Jabbar & Hassan, 2020).

Therefore, any program that aims to promote and equip young people for creative careers must include traditional stories and folklore into its educational framework. Recording and incorporating traditional cultural elements into contemporary visual media is essential for preserving and advancing the Malaysian identity. The research by Jabbar and Hassan (2020) emphasizes the importance of the aspect of innovativeness that must be instigated within the cultural context to maintain traditional elements and the threats they face due to the presence of global influences. By documenting and popularizing the integration of traditionalism into folklore, the traditional aspects will be maintained and cultivated in modern media. In order to maintain the relevance and uniqueness of these cultural elements in the digital age, it is imperative to engage in continuous innovation that allows for a balanced blend of global influences.

2.4 Current State of Dusun Folklore Digitization

Among many of their cultural inheritances, the people of Sabah have inherited a treasure trove of oral traditions. One of the traditions that has been handed down over the years is the creation of tangon, which are folktales that combine aspects of mythology, folklore, and legends (Low & Sim, 2020). Stories of this nature have been transmitted orally through generations as a means of preserving the historical, cultural, social, and value traditions of the community. However, the oral traditions of the Dusun have encountered significant obstacles in recent decades. The practice of conventional storytelling has been reduced as a result of modern influences such as technological advancements and globalization, which have a tendency to undermine traditional storytelling methods (Juanis et al., 2022).

Initiatives for the preservation and digitization of Dusun folklore have been attempted by these more powerful influences. This will be implemented in order to both mitigate the extinction of their culture and to address these critical driving forces. Academic researchers, cultural organizations, and technology developers all made efforts to document, analyse, and transcribe these oral narratives into a digitized format. Of course, the ultimate objective is to preserve the cultural legacies of the Dusun in a manner that is both engaging and accessible for future generations. These would be achieved through multimedia applications that facilitate interactivity, audio and video recordings, and digital archives. The objective of this conservation work is to integrate the practices of the past with those of the 21st century through the use of contemporary technology, thereby providing a dynamic environment for the Dusun community to trace their ancestral origins.

Two notable examples of the digitization and preservation of Dusun folklore are the analysis of birth, initiation, and death motif in Tambunan Dusun folktales (Low & Sim, 2020) which examined the importance of cultural preservation and morality. On the other hand, is the development of the Kimaragang folklore game application, "E' Gadung" which used an interactive digital game to engage younger audiences in traditional storytelling (Lee, Pangayan and Kordmodanlou, 2022). These initiatives are specific examples of how preservations are being implemented in the digital era to ensure that Dusun folklore is not overlooked or lost in the rapidly evolving global environment.

Dusun folklore has been digitized as a result of an initiative to collect oral narratives and convert them into written, audio, and digital formats. During the early 1920s, the products were maintained by numerous academics and cultural organizations for the purpose of research and preservation. These materials have been digitized in the form of text documents, audio recordings, video recordings and digital archives.

These efforts, through the use of such technological enablers, ensure that Dusun tangon is continuously preserved and that such a preservation is not exclusively for any academic value but to serve the future generations who will have the opportunity to explore and appreciate such a highly cultural product.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative interpretive approach suited to the interdisciplinary exploration of cultural narratives and their artistic representation. This research design was based on archetype theory by Carl Jung, whereby the Dusun folklores are analysed based on universal symbols and themes from that concept. By focusing on archetypal analyses in this paper, this research aims to reveal how such motifs may reverberate within the Dusun community and how they can be preserved and reinterpreted in digital media. Furthermore, this approach will help in building a deeper cultural identity as well as indigenous narratives, understood from within in contemporary formats.

The primary approaches used in this research include in-depth interviews, observations, video and audio recordings, and thematic analysis; all of these contributed greatly to capturing the traditional form of Dusun folklore and its possible digital transformation. In-depth interviews with members of the community provided both a personal and cultural look into symbolic themes contained within the folktales themselves.

These interviews were used to provide rich narratives that allowed participants to relate the importance of certain archetypes, such as the hero, the trickster, and the wise elder, in their storytelling traditions. For instance, many of our participants related the hero archetype to resilience - a quality they believe lies at their cultural core. Such insights contribute toward understanding how universal themes within Jungian archetypes reflect the values and beliefs of the Dusun people. Observational methods were beforehand applied to document the settings in which Dusun narratives usually are shared and the storytelling practices, including the environment informing these cultural expressions. Observations were made in natural settings where participants told stories, allowing researchers to observe the performative aspects of Dusun folklore. Such observations documented how the Jungian archetypes are expressed and reiterated within communal storytelling in accentuating the collective experience and reinforcing solidarity of the community with these symbols.

Video and audio recordings were used to better enhance the authenticity of the oral narratives. These are essential resources to study vocal expressions, pauses, gestures, and emotions that add depth and meaning to their stories. Hence, the study of the foregoing details within an archetypal perspective uncovers the connection between the Dusun people and the expression of universal symbols within their oral traditions. These recordings also support the making of accurate digital representations for preservation and maintenance of cultural integrity as the narratives are fitted into new formats.

Thematic analysis was employed to examine data from interviews, observations, and recordings to identify recurring patterns and archetypal motifs. Core elements in the stories, as represented through such themes as heroism, transformation, and wisdom, are induced through this structured analysis into close resonance with the Jungian archetypes. In relating these archetypal motifs to cultural values, thematic analysis has identified how archetypes like the hero and wise elder shape personal stories and bind collective cultural identity within the Dusun community.

Apart from the thematic analysis, there was a visual analysis of artworks inspired by those narratives that have been collected in terms of representation of archetypal themes, style, and symbolism on the level of representation. This visual aspect brings insight into how traditional stories could be transformed into digital forms but remain true to their archetypal core, therefore being more relevant for modern audiences. These allow the research to develop an inclusive understanding of Dusun folklore and its archetypal significance. This approach therefore ensures that when Dusun cultural elements are integrated into digital media, they would be done so in a way that

respects their authenticity and would permit these narratives to continue serving as a source of cultural identity and pride within the digital landscape.

4. FINDINGS

The analysis of the Dusun folklore reveals the essential insight into the cultural and emotive dimensions embedded in the narrative and archetypal structures deeply resonating within the Dusun community. These are early findings from the thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with the community members, which highlight the importance of characters and symbols in representing core Dusun values. Each one of those story elements reflects universal themes, theorized by Carl Jung, which blend into speaking with the community's collective identity on themes of resilience, wisdom, and self-discovery.

Based on thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, one of the Dusun folklores, named Bamboo Turali (Figure 3), which the main character Otu in the folklore can be identified as the protagonist and embodied the hero archetype. His journey of loss and grief in the animated representations echoes the Dusun value commended in times of hardship that participants often relate to their own lives. Empathetic about Otu's transformation, the community members identify in his character a vehicle for both personal and collective courage, an embedded trait in Dusun identity. In fact, these archetypal stories do not only tend towards preserving cultural values, but also serve as accessible pathways for the younger generations to understand and connect with their heritage, especially when it is represented in visual or digital form. As Eliade (1954) expressed it, the archetype links contemporary man with his ancestors, and allows such stories to "speak to the existential struggles" of each new generation.



Figure 3. Primary informant Mr. Phillipus Jani demonstrating the Turali

Through thematic analysis, other major themes involve loss, transformation, and creative expression throughout the story. Participants identified Otu's parents dying as the turning point. This is a tragic event embodying the Shadow archetype, confronting Otu with the grimmer aspects of life: grief, fear and mortality. As Campbell (1949) noted, confrontation with shadow elements is structurally in the Hero's Journey; this is the indication of the essential growth that enables one to confront his fears and rise above them. This insight reinforces the Dusun perspective on resilience in the face of life's inevitable struggles, providing a compelling connection between traditional narratives and modern digital storytelling, which can evoke these complex emotions in engaging ways.

The creation of the bamboo flute, Turali, is an important juncture in Otu's journey and a symbol of the Creator archetype. It is an artistic expression that enables him to transform his devastation into music which also reflects how art can serve as an agency of healing and recovery. Creativity and the artistic expression are viewed as "mediating forces" in enabling an individual to work through complex and contradictory emotions, traumas being worked out as growth (McNiff, 1992). This would be extended further by digitally reimagining the Turali flute, as well as Otu's making process, into apps or animated representations such as projection mapping, which can take this emotional journey into broader circulation and solidify grief and resilience as a universal cultural reality.

Beyond this, the symbolic function of the Self archetype emerges in Otu's journey of movement toward inner balance and integration, through the creation of the flute. This archetype represents a process of individuation, whereby inner and outer worlds are united in the service of a single self (Jung, 1966). Digital storytelling can powerfully tell this journey of self-discovery, allowing the modern audience to experience first-hand the emotional transformation of the protagonist and the Dusun cultural values of balance and emotional reconciliation. Capturing these aspects digitally can make the greatest story of Bamboo Turali potentially touching with empathy and deeper values among the young generation of Dusun.

These findings indeed outline the potentiality of modern digital media in bridging traditional narratives to contemporary cultural preservations. Research associated with digital storytelling presents the work of translation of indigenous stories to forms that are both interactive and visual, maintaining cultural identity while making heritage "accessible to diverse audiences," (Lim, Khan & Picinali, 2021). A study on Bamboo Turali with the use of Jungian archetypes provides this paper with a theoretical structure that adds to academic discourse, while it also reflects practical and preservative undertakings toward ensuring narratives keep echoing down through the

ages. These stories are integrated into digital forms today, reaching new audiences, fostering cultural pride, and providing a sense of continuity in a world challenging traditional storytelling through modernization and globalization (Lenzerini, 2011).

5. CONCLUSION

This research illustrates that the best way to preserve Dusun folk narrative traditions incorporates traditional stories into modern digital forms. Through an archetypal approach to analyse the stories of the Dusun, this research demonstrates that core elements of survival, wisdom-related journeying, and self-discovery create deep resonances among the Dusun people. These archetypes give meaning to the deepest notions of the Dusun community, reflecting values which are really vital to the very survival of the cultural identity.

The study explores the translation of those narratives into digital media-applications, visual representations, audio-visual recordings, among other forms - and illustrates the way in which new media can provide access to and make relevant Dusun cultural heritage for a younger generation. The research findings bring forth how digital media can work not only as a tool for the preservation of culture but also for people to continue holding their heads high as members of a community with pride and continuity in the face of globalization and modernization pressures.

Future research should continue to consider the impact of digital preservation on cultural identity over the long term, including the authenticity of adapted narratives and their significance in maintaining the Dusun culture. For this research will provide the basis for future innovations in the field of cultural preservation and enhance the need to balance global influences with traditional values to avoid losing the richness of folklore among the Dusun in the digital era.

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ANALYSING SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF TOP HIJAB BRANDS IN MALAYSIA: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF ENGAGEMENT METRICS AND FOLLOWER DEMOGRAPHICS FOR EFFECTIVE BRANDING STRATEGIES

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Abstract: This research aims to thoroughly investigate the social media engagement strategies employed by the leading hijab brands in Malaysia, focusing on comprehensively analysing engagement metrics and follower demographics to derive insights crucial for formulating effective branding strategies with the pervasive influence of social media on consumer behaviour. Understanding the intricacies of engagement strategies becomes imperative for hijab brands seeking to enhance their market presence. The research employs a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative analysis of engagement metrics (such as likes, shares, and comments) in social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X and others in a range of qualitative analyses of follower demographics using media analytic platform and also brand's social media audience characteristics. This study aims to uncover patterns that contribute to successful online branding. The targeted hijab brands represent a diverse spectrum within the Malaysian market, allowing for a nuanced understanding of industry-specific dynamics. The research not only delves into the quantitative aspects of engagement but also explores the qualitative dimension and scrutinises follower demographics. This dual approach provides a comprehensive view of how engagement strategies resonate with distinct audience segments. The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to social media marketing and branding, providing hijab brands

with actionable insights to refine and optimise their strategies. Additionally, the research may offer theoretical contributions to the broader literature on social media engagement and its intersection with cultural and religious contexts. As hijab brands navigate the evolving landscape of social media, this research aims to equip them with evidence-based strategies to foster meaningful connections with their audience, enhancing their overall brand positioning and impact in the Malaysian market.

Keywords: Branding Strategies, Engagement Strategies, Social Exchange Theory (SET), Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

1. INTRODUCTION

The background of the study serves as the contextual basis and justification for the research, setting the stage upon which the research questions arise. In today's marketing and brand management field, the widespread impact of social media is unquestionable. With the growing reliance of businesses on digital platforms for brand promotion, it is crucial to comprehend the intricacies of social media interaction. This study examines the hijab industry in Malaysia, which is a specialised and rapidly changing sector influenced by cultural, religious, and socio-economic variables. The decision to investigate hijab brands is motivated by their distinct position at the crossroads of fashion, identity, and cultural expression. The study focuses on analysing the social media interaction techniques used by the leading hijab brands, with a particular emphasis on the Malaysian market. This market is chosen due to its broad client base and cultural subtleties. An investigation of this nature is especially pertinent in a globalised setting, where the virtual domain plays a crucial role as the main platform for brand-consumer engagement. This research aims to explore the complexities of social media engagement within the hijab industry, providing valuable insights for developing effective branding strategies. Additionally, it seeks to contribute to the academic discussion on digital marketing and fill a significant gap in the existing literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media

Today, social media platforms have garnered significant public attention, as people utilize them for entertainment and information. Consequently, many companies are beginning to leverage these platforms to promote their brands and products. Consequently, it is essential for fashion brands to adapt their marketing strategies and fully leverage these social media platforms to ensure better future growth for their brands (Wenxi Wu, 2024).

With a vast number of viewers, social media platforms demonstrate significant commercial value, shaping the way products are promoted. They have evolved into not just a free tool for public relations but also a vital link between the market and potential buyers. In recent years, marketing has become increasingly crucial for fashion brands. Implementing effective marketing strategies is essential for gaining both reputation and sales for these brands. Many fashion houses have begun utilizing social media to generate content prior to an event or show, yielding numerous benefits. Thus,

understanding how social media platforms influence brands' marketing strategies is vital (Wenxi Wu, 2024).

As Matt Ahlgren noted in 2023, if Facebook were treated as a country, it would have the largest population globally. YouTube and WhatsApp have a user base of approximately 2 billion each. WeChat, boasting over 1 billion active users, is the leading non-US brand in popularity. TikTok, QQ, Douyin, and Sina Weibo are among the top 10 non-US brands. Current trends indicate that prominent social media platforms will persist in attracting users. Leading brands possess the capacity and advanced technologies to sustain their superiority.

Data from datareportal.com in 2024 indicates that a survey of internet users worldwide aged 16 to 64 found that the primary motivation for using social media is to maintain connections with family and friends. This figure represents 48.6% of the total number of internet users worldwide. Additional factors include using spare time (36.3%), perusing news articles (35.2%), seeking amusing or interesting material (30.9%), staying informed about ongoing discussions (29.3%), seeking inspiration for creations and purchases (27.5%), and searching for products to purchase (26.1%). There are further factors that can be added to the list.

Influencer marketing is recognized as a social media strategy that targets specific key individuals (Ali and Morshed, 2024). Forbes (2023) reports that approximately 4.9 billion people use social media globally, and this figure is expected to rise to around 5.85 billion by 2027 (Salhab H. 2024). Notably, 88% of Millennials value the authenticity of the influencers they follow, which should inform marketers in shaping their strategies to promote various brands (Jreissat et al., 2024). The growing use of social media influencer marketing by companies as a strategy effectively attracts their target audience (Ramadan and Morshed, 2024).

At the beginning of 2024, Malaysia had 33.59 million internet users, with an internet penetration rate of 97.4 per cent. In January 2024, Malaysia had 28.68 million social media users, accounting for 83.1 per cent of the country's population (datareportal.com, 2024).

Malaysians have a higher propensity to utilise Facebook and WhatsApp for social, educational, and career-related objectives, hence generating a favourable influence on society as individuals employed and enrolled in educational institutions (Saleh, N., & Rosli, M. (2020). As a form of social media, Facebook effectively promotes environmental awareness in Malaysia. Customer satisfaction is influenced by the quality of the system, service, and information provided (Mahat, H., Hussein, S., Saleh, Y., Hashim, M., Nayan, N., Said, Z., & Kurniawan, E. (2023).

In the vibrant landscape of Malaysian fashion, hijab brands have emerged as influential and integral players, catering to Muslim women's diverse needs who seek modesty and style. With a rich tapestry of cultural influences and a penchant for innovation, Malaysia has become a hub for hijab fashion, attracting both local talent and international recognition.

2.2 Top Hijab Brand

Among the myriad hijab brands that adorn the Malaysian fashion scene, several have risen to prominence, captivating the hearts of women across the nation and beyond. From timeless elegance to contemporary chic, these brands offer a spectrum of designs and styles, reflecting the multifaceted identities of modern Muslim women. Distinguished by their commitment to quality, creativity, and cultural sensitivity, these brands have redefined the concept of modest fashion and become symbols of empowerment and self-expression for millions of women.

From traditional to contemporary designs, each brand has its unique story and philosophy, catering to its customers' diverse needs and preferences. Let's delve deeper into the world of hijab fashion in Malaysia by exploring five of the most popular hijab brands in the country.

With 968k followers on Instagram, Naelofar seems to be a popular brand, possibly focusing on fashion and hijabs. Founded by Malaysian celebrity Neelofa, Naelofar Hijab offers a wide range of hijab styles and accessories. The brand has gained popularity not only in Malaysia but also internationally. Naelofar Hijab is a prominent Malaysian hijab brand and a well-known Malaysian celebrity and entrepreneur. Since its establishment, Naelofar Hijab has become one of the leading hijab brands in Malaysia and has also gained popularity internationally.

This brand has 558k followers on Instagram. The dUCk Group, often referred to simply as dUCk, is a prominent Malaysian lifestyle brand founded by entrepreneur Vivvy Yusof. It offers diverse products including scarves, apparel, bags, cosmetics, and stationery. dUCk is particularly well-known for its luxurious and stylish scarves, which come in various materials and designs, catering to different preferences and occasions.

With 525k followers on Instagram, Alhumaira is a prominent Malaysian hijab brand that offers a wide range of modest wear options for Muslim women. The brand offers a diverse range of hijabs, including square scarves, shawls, instant hijabs, and inner hijabs, in various colours, prints, and fabrics. Alhumaira is known for its attention to detail, quality craftsmanship, and commitment to providing comfortable and stylish hijab wear for its customers.

This brand has 697k followers on Instagram. Calaqisya is a popular Malaysian hijab brand that offers a wide range of modest wear for women. The brand is known for its

elegant and contemporary designs, catering to modern Muslim women seeking fashionable yet modest clothing. Calaqisya offers a variety of hijabs, modest dresses, tops, skirts, and accessories, all designed with modesty and style in mind. The brand uses high-quality materials and craftsmanship to ensure comfort and durability for its customers. Calaqisya has gained a significant following in Malaysia and has expanded its reach to other countries as well, making it a well-respected name in the modest fashion industry.

A brand with 938k followers on Instagram, Ariani is a well-known Malaysian hijab brand under the Ariani Group, which specializes in producing and retailing a wide range of scarves, shawls, and hijabs for women. Established in 2008, Ariani has quickly become a prominent name in the modest fashion industry in Malaysia and has gained recognition internationally as well.

2.3 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally developed by Homans (1958), posits that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process in which individuals assess the costs and benefits of their interactions. This theory has been widely applied in various fields, including marketing and digital communication, where it serves as a framework for understanding the reciprocal nature of brand-consumer relationships on social media platforms (Blau, 2017). In the context of hijab brands, SET is highly relevant, as it offers a theoretical lens to analyze how brands and followers interact. Brands provide valuable content, such as fashion tips, product updates, or culturally resonant messages, which serve as the "cost" in this exchange. In return, they anticipate benefits in the form of increased engagement metrics—likes, comments, shares, and, ultimately, brand loyalty from their followers (Cook & Emerson, 1987). This cost-benefit dynamic aligns well with the principles of SET, making it a suitable framework for examining digital engagement strategies in this study.

The concept of reciprocity, a central element of SET, is particularly useful for understanding social media interactions between hijab brands and their followers. Reciprocity implies that when one party offers something of value, the other party is likely to respond in kind, creating a cycle of mutual benefit (Molm, 2010). In the case of hijab brands, they provide content that followers perceive as valuable, such as aesthetically appealing posts, product promotions, or community-building initiatives. This, in turn, motivates followers to reciprocate by engaging with the brand through likes, comments, shares, or by purchasing products. This reciprocal interaction fosters a stronger bond between the brand and its audience, which is essential for building brand loyalty and trust over time. Recent studies indicate that brands that consistently provide valuable content and establish a sense of community online see higher levels of engagement and trust from their followers (Huang et al., 2022; Rai & Dahal, 2024).

SET also helps explain how follower demographics can influence social media engagement. Different follower groups may perceive the value of content differently based on their cultural, religious, or personal identities. For example, followers with particular cultural or religious affiliations may find hijab-related content more meaningful, thereby perceiving greater benefits in engaging with it. Tailoring content to resonate with specific demographic groups—such as creating posts that emphasize identity affirmation or cultural relevance—can increase engagement levels among these groups. This supports the idea that SET can be used to understand how diverse audiences interact with brands on social media, emphasizing the importance of perceived benefits in driving engagement and loyalty (Zhu & Chen, 2015).

This theory is well-suited for analyzing the engagement between brands and followers on social media platforms, as it posits that social behaviour is a result of an exchange process where individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their interactions. In this case, hijab brands aim to create valuable content (cost) for their followers, expecting engagement in return (benefit), such as likes, comments, shares, or brand loyalty. The followers engage with brands based on the perceived value of content, such as product promotions, cultural relevance, or identity affirmation, which satisfies their needs and encourages further interaction.

2.4 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) continues to be highly relevant in the study of social media engagement due to its emphasis on the active role of users in selecting media to fulfill their needs. Developed initially by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), the theory has been adapted in digital contexts to explain how users engage with content that serves specific purposes, such as entertainment, social interaction, or information-seeking. UGT offers a valuable framework for exploring why followers of hijab brands engage with their content, identifying the gratifications they seek, and understanding how these motivations influence their interactions. For hijab brands, the application of UGT highlights the importance of providing content that resonates with the cultural and social needs of their audience, such as identity affirmation, fashion inspiration, or community belonging (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

UGT allows researchers to categorize and study diverse gratifications that social media users seek when engaging with branded content. For followers of hijab brands, motivations may include informational needs (e.g., updates on new styles or trends), social interaction (e.g., connecting with a like-minded community), or emotional gratifications (e.g., the affirmation of religious or cultural identity). This diversity in engagement motivations is crucial for understanding how brands can tailor their content to better meet the needs of their audience. By recognizing that followers are active participants in shaping their media consumption experiences, UGT provides

insight into how hijab brands can build more effective engagement strategies, encouraging deeper interaction and long-term loyalty (Bayer et al., 2020).

The practical implications of UGT in the context of hijab brands extend to improving social media strategies by aligning content with the specific gratifications followers are seeking. For instance, brands that effectively tap into gratifications such as cultural resonance or identity representation are more likely to foster strong connections with their audience. This approach also enables hijab brands to create content that is not only relevant but also highly engaging, leading to increased likes, shares, comments, and overall engagement. By applying UGT, hijab brands can better understand the motivational drivers behind follower behavior, thereby refining their digital marketing efforts to cater to the needs of their target audience (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021).

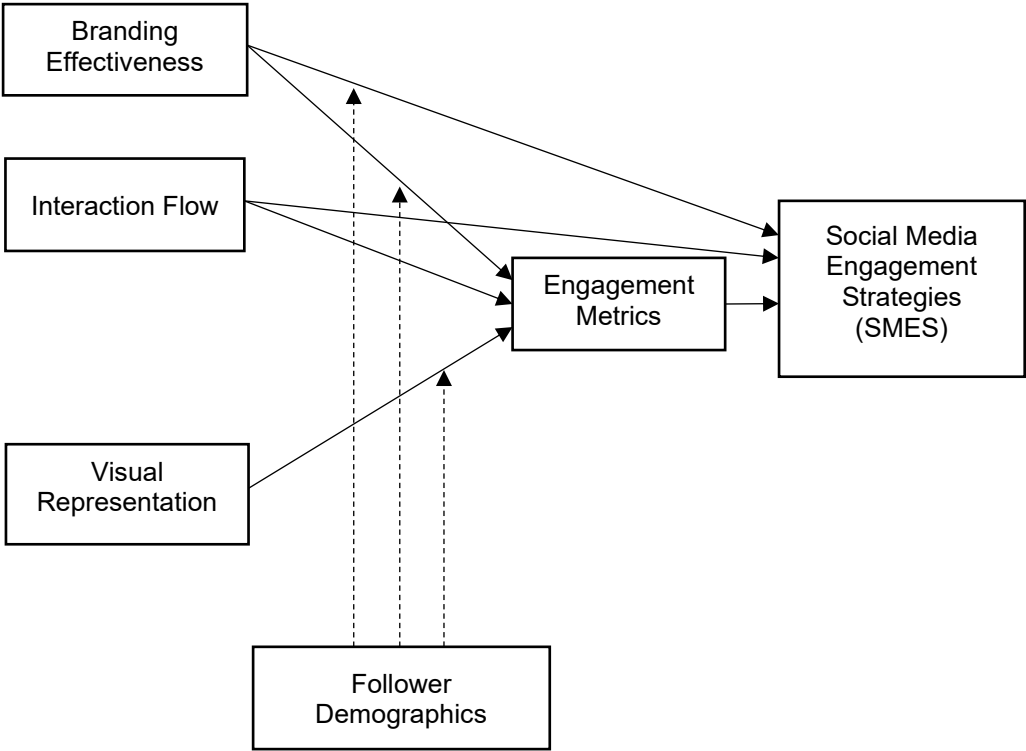


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Social Media Interaction

The research strategy for the study on the social media interaction techniques of leading hijab brands in Malaysia employs a quantitative approach, using PLS-SEM software. This design facilitates a thorough investigation of the research topics by integrating the advantages of quantitative data analysis. The quantitative research instrument will involve social media analytics tools such as Facebook Insights and Instagram Insights, which will be used to collect numerical data on engagement metrics, including likes, shares, comments, and follower growth. This data will provide a quantitative foundation for analysing social media engagement strategies.

Table 1: Research Method

Category	Details
Population	Leading hijab brands active in Malaysia using SPSS for data collection
Demographic Count	Social media followers of selected hijab brands
Sampling Size	200 respondents
Subject of Study	Must have a social media account and be exposed to social networking sites (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, X/Twitter); focus on women and shopping through social networks
Age Range	18 years and above
Sampling Methods	Simple random sampling, online questionnaires or online survey

To facilitate the collection and analysis of engagement metrics, various social media analytics tools and platform insights will be utilized. These tools, such as Instagram Insights and Facebook Analytics, will allow for the extraction of relevant quantitative data, which will then be analysed using statistical software such as SPSS or SmartPLS. This method ensures that data is systematically analysed to identify key engagement trends, enabling a robust understanding of how different social media strategies influence audience behaviour. The sampling procedure for selecting the top hijab brands will be guided by predefined criteria, ensuring that the brands chosen are representative of the larger Malaysian market.

Using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), this study used the G*Power analysis to determine sample selection. G*Power is a statistical test power analysis application that is frequently used in the biological, behavioural, and social sciences. G*Power can accurately analyse statistical power for tests of means, mean vectors, variances, and proportions to calculate the minimum sample size (Faul et al., 2009).

The qualitative research instruments will include interviews, surveys, and content analysis. Additionally, online surveys distributed through relevant platforms will gather

qualitative insights from a larger sample of social media followers, incorporating both closed-ended and open-ended questions to explore follower demographics and opinions on social media engagement strategies. Content analysis will involve a systematic examination of comments, posts, or images shared by followers on the selected hijab brands' social media profiles to identify recurring themes, sentiments, and cultural nuances embedded in user-generated content. Integrating these quantitative and qualitative variables during the analysis will provide a holistic understanding of how engagement metrics correlate with follower demographics, cultural factors, and preferences. Quantitative variables will be analysed using statistical tools to identify trends, patterns, and correlations, while qualitative variables will undergo thematic analysis, content analysis, or other appropriate qualitative research methods. This mixed-methods approach aims to offer a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the social media engagement strategies employed by top hijab brands in Malaysia.

By combining quantitative and qualitative measurements, this study will uncover not only the numerical effectiveness of various engagement strategies but also the underlying factors that drive follower engagement. This dual approach is expected to yield rich, actionable insights that can inform more effective social media strategies tailored to the unique demographic and cultural landscape of hijab brand followers in Malaysia.

4. DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Social Media Platforms

In the present day, brands are progressively utilising social media platforms to entice purchasers and engage in communication with their clientele. Social media is a cost-effective method for contacting new clients, especially when compared to traditional means. When considering conventional approaches, the expenses for reaching 2,000 individuals are as follows: \$150 for radio broadcasting, \$500 for magazine articles, and \$900 for direct advertising campaigns. Nevertheless, the expense of social media marketing is about \$75 to target an equivalent audience, representing a 50% reduction compared to the most economical conventional approach (Matt Ahlgren, 2023).

The Instagram platform excels at swiftly sharing content and facilitating impactful communication. According to global advertising data, Instagram had a minimum of 1.440 billion users globally as of July 2022 (datareportal.com, 2022). Studies indicate that Instagram provides additional avenues for advertisers to interact effectively with their customers.

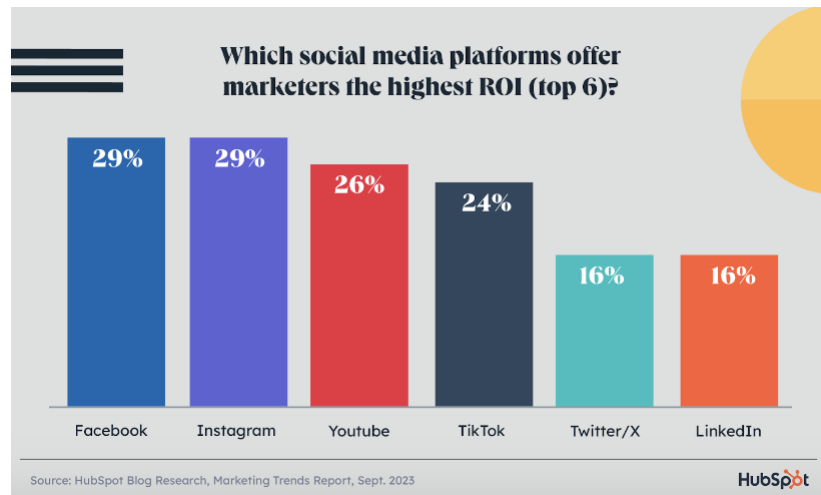


Figure 2. Facebook and Instagram both lead with 29% of marketers identifying these platforms as offering the highest ROI, but engagement has become more competitive each year. (Source: sproutsocial.com, 2024).

According to Matt Ahlgren's research in 2023, Instagram has the highest engagement rate for marketers at 81%, surpassing Facebook's general engagement rate of 8%. Furthermore, according to Matt Ahlgren's research in 2023, a significant 44% of Instagram users engage in weekly product buying, with 28% of these shopping endeavours being premeditated. The total count of active Instagram users in Southeast Asia is 168.0 million, placing it in the third position worldwide according to data from datareportal.com in 2022.

Influencer marketing is a contemporary marketing strategy that involves leveraging popular social media users to promote businesses or services on social media platforms. Over the past few years, influencer marketing has become increasingly popular due to the ability of social media users to be easily drawn to and trust the advertisements promoted by influencers on their own accounts.

4.2 Modest Fashion Brand Comparison

Distinguished by their commitment to quality, creativity, and cultural sensitivity, these brands have not only redefined the concept of modest fashion but have also become symbols of empowerment and self-expression for millions of women. From traditional to contemporary designs, each brand has its unique story and philosophy, catering to the diverse needs and preferences of its customers. Let's delve deeper into the world of hijab fashion in Malaysia by exploring five of the most popular hijab brands in the country:

Table 2: Modest Fashion Brand Comparison on Social Media. (Source: Brand Social Media, 2024)

Social Media/ Brands	Galeri Ariani	The duck Group	Sugarscarf	Naelofar	Alhumaira	Calaqisya
Facebook	1.5m	43k	442k	222k	862k	235k
Instagram	938k	557k	499k	968k	524k	701k
Tiktok	295k	27.4k	46.3k	84k	57.7k	41.1k
Youtube	40.5k	1.58k	7.77k	33.4k	111k	4.54k
X	3.2k	2.7k	2.1k	-	-	12.4k
Threads	56.4k	-	32.1k	-	-	48.1k

In the competitive landscape of modest fashion brands on social media, Galeri Ariani emerges as the standout leader. With an impressive presence across various platforms, Galeri Ariani boasts the highest overall popularity among its peers. On Facebook, it commands a substantial following of 1.5 million, indicating a robust community engagement. This strong presence extends to TikTok, where it garners 295,000 followers, showcasing its appeal among younger demographics. Additionally, Galeri Ariani maintains a significant presence on Threads, with 56,400 followers, demonstrating its reach in niche markets.

While Galeri Ariani excels across multiple platforms, Naelofar emerges as a notable competitor, particularly on Instagram. With a staggering 968,000 followers on this platform, Naelofar showcases strong engagement and influence within the modest fashion community. However, Naelofar's absence on X and Threads suggests a narrower focus compared to Galeri Ariani's comprehensive multi-platform strategy.

Alhumaira, another key player in the modest fashion sector, commands a substantial following on Facebook with 862,000 followers and maintains a presence on YouTube with 111,000 subscribers. Despite its strength on these platforms, Alhumaira's lack of presence on X and Threads limits its overall reach compared to Galeri Ariani.

Other brands like The Duck Group, Sugarscarf, and Calaqisya possess moderate followings across social media platforms but do not match the extensive reach and engagement levels of Galeri Ariani. These brands may cater to specific segments within the modest fashion market but do not command the broad, cross-platform appeal that Galeri Ariani enjoys.

In conclusion, Galeri Ariani emerges as the most popular and engaging brand in the modest fashion industry, leveraging its strong presence across Facebook, TikTok, and Threads, alongside substantial engagement on Instagram. Naelofar proves to be a formidable competitor, particularly dominant on Instagram. The competitive landscape

underscores the importance of multi-platform presence and engagement strategies in capturing and maintaining a loyal audience within the modest fashion community.

4.3 Social Media Engagement Strategies

The rise of social media has changed how brands engage with consumers, especially in the fashion industry. For hijab brands in Malaysia, social media plays a key role in building brand awareness, loyalty, and a strong brand image within a culturally and religiously influenced market. Effective social media strategies—such as choosing the right content types, platforms, visual aesthetics, and interactive features—can drive higher engagement and enhance brand identity for these brands.

Engagement strategies, including content types, platform selection, and interactive features, strongly impact key engagement metrics like likes, shares, comments, and follower growth. For hijab brands, these metrics reflect how well the audience is responding, which helps increase brand visibility and build a community around the brand. In Malaysia, where social media usage is high, creating thoughtful and platform-specific content can capture audience interest and foster a strong connection.

Visual appeal and multimedia content are also essential for attracting engagement. Hijab brands using high-quality images, color schemes that resonate culturally, and multimedia formats (such as videos) capture audience attention and create a unique, recognizable brand image. For example, platforms like Instagram thrive on visual content, and these aesthetic choices help set hijab brands apart, making their posts more shareable and engaging.

Interactive elements, like polls, Q&A sessions, and influencer collaborations, play a crucial role in encouraging active participation from the audience. These features drive higher levels of engagement, such as comments, shares, and direct messages. For hijab brands, interactive content fosters a sense of community, allowing followers to express their opinions and feel connected to the brand. This deeper engagement goes beyond visibility, strengthening the audience's emotional connection with the brand.

High engagement metrics, including likes, shares, comments, and follower growth, contribute positively to branding effectiveness, improving brand awareness, loyalty, and image. When hijab brands achieve strong engagement, it signals that the audience is genuinely interested, which builds awareness and trust. Brands with high engagement tend to see more customer loyalty, as followers are more likely to interact with and return to brands that regularly engage them. This engagement also enhances brand image, portraying the brand as popular and trustworthy within the market.

Certain types of engagement, like comments and shares, are especially valuable for building brand loyalty and consumer connections. These interactions indicate a stronger commitment from followers, showing they're more than just passive viewers;

they're actively supporting the brand. For hijab brands, this type of engagement reinforces brand credibility, fostering a loyal audience that contributes to long-term growth.

Follower growth and positive comment sentiment are also tied to higher brand awareness and a favorable brand image. When follower numbers and positive feedback increase, the brand's visibility and reputation strengthen. Hijab brands that focus on maintaining a positive tone and nurturing a supportive online community can improve their brand image, aligning it with the values of their audience and establishing themselves as trusted choices.

Engagement metrics act as a bridge between social media strategies and branding effectiveness. The success of engagement strategies in increasing brand awareness, loyalty, and image relies on these metrics, which serve as indicators of the brand's appeal and relevance. For hijab brands, understanding this connection is essential in designing strategies that not only engage followers but also strengthen the brand.

Additionally, the impact of social media strategies on brand awareness is influenced by the level of audience interaction, especially through comments and shares. When followers actively participate in spreading the brand's message, brand awareness grows. For hijab brands in Malaysia, where word-of-mouth and community endorsement are influential, high audience interaction can significantly enhance brand reach and perception.

The relationship between social media engagement strategies and engagement metrics is further shaped by follower demographics, such as age, cultural background, and religious beliefs. These factors influence how followers engage with content and understanding them helps hijab brands tailor their strategies to fit the demographics of their audience, maximizing engagement.

Cultural and religious factors have a substantial effect on the effectiveness of social media strategies, with culturally resonant content achieving higher engagement and stronger branding outcomes. In Malaysia, where culture and religion strongly influence consumer behavior, content that aligns with these values fosters a closer connection with the audience. Hijab brands that emphasize cultural heritage, modesty, and local aesthetics are more likely to connect with their audience, resulting in enhanced engagement and loyalty.

In summary, effective social media strategies, including visually appealing content, interactive features, platform selection, and cultural relevance, are essential for hijab brands in Malaysia. These strategies not only increase engagement metrics but also improve brand awareness, loyalty, and image. By understanding and leveraging these

elements, hijab brands can build a loyal following, strengthen connections with their audiences, and establish a prominent place in the market.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. *Latest Marketing Techniques*

Through this study, the researcher suggests that new researchers can expand the research topic by analyzing the latest marketing techniques that can be used by merchants or advertisers as current guidelines. Additionally, an analysis of the effectiveness of user engagement, such as the number of 'likes', comments, and shares, can provide insight into how well these marketing techniques or creative content receive positive responses from the community on Instagram and other social media platforms. This is a crucial indicator in assessing the effectiveness of advertising. Instagram is known for its focus on visual content. This study can help identify the visual impact of advertising on the audience, especially in product contexts such as hijab brands that are often associated with aesthetic values and style.

This study can also help merchants evaluate the extent to which investments in advertising on Instagram or other social media platforms yield positive returns. Through Return on Investment (ROI) analysis, merchants can determine the effectiveness of every ringgit invested in marketing through selected social media platforms. The research revealed that Instagram remains the dominant platform for engagement among hijab brands in Malaysia, with its ability to facilitate impactful communication and visual storytelling. Brands such as Galeri Ariani and Naelofar have demonstrated exceptional prowess in leveraging Instagram to cultivate large, engaged audiences, indicative of the platform's effectiveness in fostering community and brand loyalty.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis underscores the pivotal role of social media in shaping brand identity and consumer engagement within the hijab fashion sector in Malaysia. By leveraging platforms like Instagram effectively and understanding the nuances of audience demographics, brands can not only enhance their visibility but also foster lasting connections with their communities. As digital landscapes continue to evolve, continuous adaptation and innovation in social media strategies will be essential for hijab brands to maintain relevance and competitive advantage in the marketplace. This study not only enhances our understanding of social media dynamics in the context of hijab branding but also paves the way for future research and strategic developments aimed at further enriching consumer-brand interactions in the digital age.

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APPLICATION OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE VLADIMIR PROPP AND EDMUND BURKE FELDMAN OF HORNBILL SYMBOL THROUGH ENSERA WAT BUJANG SUGI FOLKLORE

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Abstract: This research was conducted to examine the effectiveness of Vladimir Propp's narrative structure and Edmund Burke Feldman theory on the Hornbill symbol through folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. The method used in this study is based on the morphological theory of Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman theory as a second. The objective of this study is to carry out an academic study on how the narrative structure of Vladimir Propp and Feldman theory implemented toward Hornbill symbol in the folklore of Iban Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. To analyze the data, the researcher classified the scene according to 3 important elements, namely setting, character and theme. 4 experts in Iban folklore and 4 visual artists were interviewed. Data collection was conducted from interviews and documentation. The study uses descriptive qualitative methods and narrative analysis.

Keywords: Narrative Analysis, Vladimir Propp, Edmund Burke Feldman, Iban Folklore, Hornbill Symbol

1. INTRODUCTION

Your Folklorists and researchers often create digital archives to preserve, protect, and organize folklore materials. This is to provide a systematic and accessible way to manage various elements of folklore such as folklore, myths, legends, folk music, customs, and other traditional expressions (Abd Rahim, 2014). As we all know, Malaysia is a diverse country with a rich cultural and tradition tapestry, and each state has its own collection of folklore that reflects local traditions, beliefs, and customs. In this study, folklore is important to preserving and passing the cultural heritage to the new generation today. In this new era, they serve as a unique form of storytelling that encapsulates the values, beliefs, traditions, and wisdom of culture including Borneo legend folklore as known as Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi.

The *Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi* (Folklore) or the Legend of Wat Bujang Sugi is a popular Iban epic in the form of a traditional song chanted by an experienced bard either for entertainment or for healing a critically sick person. The epic has been recorded in Radio Malaysia Sarawak and Tun Jugah Foundation. It has also been published into books in its poetical format and has been converted into a novel by an author, Jantan Uambat of Tun Jugah Foundation upon which this research is based.

In the folklore, Hornbill Festival or *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* is the highest and a major significant of traditional festival celebrated by the Iban people until today. Hornbill Festival is associated with the Iban's traditional animistic beliefs and involves the celebration of the especial harvest season, complete with various rituals and ceremonies. Hornbill Festival also part of a celebration deeply embedded in the cultural, spiritual, and social fabric woven such as *Pua Kumbu* of the Iban community in Sarawak. It serves as a reminder of the community's roots, a time for gratitude for the harvest, and a vibrant expression of cultural identity. These narratives usually involve on recounting the historical, events, genealogies, and moral lessons.

As mentioned by Constantinou and Andreou (2022), as a storyteller, it is their scope to bringing the folklores alive. In Sarawak folklore, the storyteller, and the artist play an important role in maintaining the vitality of their culture and tradition by ensuring that the culture heritage is not lost and keep alive. This folklore of Wat Bujang Sugi must be appreciated by future generation like the others folklore such as *Apai Saloi*, *Bujang Berani*, *Pak Kadok* many more. In Iban culture and tradition, Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi only well known among certain society and group. But in contemporary world today, the folklore are allowed to be more advance as the traditional writing and technology has been use for documentation towards preservation such as folklore in written, digital forms such as animation and visualization whereas intangible to tangible form. Despite of technology changes, the essence of traditional folklore remains a vital part of many

societies. As folklore is a dynamic and part of the living cultures, it's always allowing the creativity, adaption, and reinterpretation over time to the artist as a main medium in interpreting the visual of the folklore alive. As far as folklore transmission relies on memory, oral performance, and community participation, this was making the folklore as fundamental part of the cultural heritage in the Iban society.

Moreover, in this folklore of Wat Bujang Sugi, the symbol of hornbill is a vital visual and play an important role in Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. A symbol, part of the powerful tools for communication, cultural expression, emotional connection, and the conveyance of complex ideas. The hornbill symbol also helps in shaping the individuals as a Iban and the societies understand and interact with the world around them. Through this research, the audience will be able to understand the symbol of Hornbill *Burong Kenyalang* in Wat Bujang Sugi folklore, that representing via contemporary artwork as installation art.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term of Hornbill Festival is associated with the indigenous people of Sarawak, a state in Malaysia on the island of Borneo. The Hornbill Festival is a significant cultural and religious celebration among the Iban people, who are one of the major ethnic groups in Sarawak. This festival is deeply rooted in the traditional animistic beliefs of the Iban community. The Iban people also belief in symbol that referring the God. In their belief system, there are symbols and motifs that hold significance and are often associated with their understanding of the divine or the spiritual realm. As humans and creativity are deeply rooted in our nature, cultural diversity, and the evolving landscape of social and technological developments. This dynamic interplay continues to shape the way individuals and societies experience, interpret, and engage with the world around them.

According to Sarah (2021), a symbol is a form that gives meaning to every word or sentence contained in a literary work. This also referring to the symbol in folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. Apart from that, the symbol also contributed to the combination of "ritual" and "language" in the context of ritual languages often imparts specific traits that distinguish them from everyday language use. Mohamed et al. (2021) defined that the term "ritual" carries the meaning of holy and sacred, usually related to the spiritual matter. According to Bakhir et al. (2018), Traditional folklore is also including folk music and song, bardic legends, animal fables, ghost stories, epics, fairy tales, symbolic lore, and mythologies. In this folklore, characters, setting, and storyline has its unique set of strengths. Meanwhile, Michalopoulos and Xue (2019), traditionally held beliefs, customs, and stories of a community are collected and passed down from

generation to generation through oral tradition. Understanding the historical and cultural context in which folktales were created enriches the interpretation of these narratives. They become windows into the past, offering insights into the worldview, values, and challenges faced by the people who crafted and shared these timeless stories.

According to Telban (2022), in essence, narratives in folklore serve as a fundamental means of human expression, communication, and understanding. They can be factual or fictional, traditional or contemporary, and they come in various forms, each with its own unique characteristics and purposes. Whether rooted or steeped in imagination, narratives play a crucial role in shaping cultures, preserving histories, and entertaining audiences. There are many ways to present a narrative, such as through a series of spoken or written words, still or moving images, or any combination of these, as well as in the context of a healing process. Dibaba (2021), defined that narrator is derived from the Latin verb *narrare* (to tell), which is itself derived from the adjective *gnarus* (to narrate) or (knowing or skilled). Along with argumentation, description, and exposition, the four rhetorical modes of discourse include narrative in its broadest sense. In other words, it is a fiction writing technique where the narrator speaks with the reader directly and without intermediaries. It was also explained that a narrative is simply an account of an event sequence that takes place in space and time, rather than a collection of events.

Their development is not random but rather follows an ordered sequence of events linked together by the logic of cause and effect. It is likely that narratives predate the dawn of civilization on earth. Cave art has been linked to visual storytelling for at least 30,000 years, according to historical sources. People also used to tell each other stories before writing them down. According to previous research by Scalise Sugiyama (2001), the design of narrative is unlikely to have evolved by coincidence. It is a species-typical, reliably developing, complicated cognitive activity. Furthermore, the folklore record demonstrates that narrative content remains consistent across cultures. Meanwhile Cragoe (2016), narrative has been used to pass culture down through generations, help people understand their surroundings, and provide a sense of community and identity through telling and listening, as well as the unique characteristics of the characters and stories by themselves.

Folklore and mythology are the most common surviving stories that connect us to our ancestors. Folklore can reveal information about history, experience, life perspective, culture, religion, politics, dreams, wishes, and any other activity in the area. This demonstrates how folklore influences reality by describing the state of society in the past. Society's previous lives play an essential role in determining its future lives. The history of human society has been characterized by the release of restrictions and the acquisition of freedom through improved capabilities (Cardoso da Silva et al. 2021).

Through folklore, a culture can learn from its ancestors' life to enhance their own lives

in the future. Lesmana et al. (2015) has stated that the advantages were their interesting package, story and illustration.

Apart from that as explained by Wicaksono and Macaryus (2019) the folklore, reflecting local wisdom passed down orally at first, had educational values, according to the author. Despite from that Nanda et al. (2021) describe how teaching moral ideals to youngsters through folklore is more effective since it is understandable and grasps the implicit moral lessons. The researcher is also found that, there are values that can improve our characters, namely: religion, independence, curiosity, hard work, responsibility, honesty, creativity, and the spirit of working hard (Chamalah 2019).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 *The application Structure Narrative of Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman theory*

In this study, the main methodology applied in the study of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi's was from Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman. The first theory of Vladimir Propp was used as a main method to define the 31 morphology components to gather the data before interview. The data finding was obtained during the interview session with 4 visual artists and even 4 folklorists were interviewed to obtain data. From the data findings, the researcher produces a visual of the findings which is the hornbill symbol. In fact, researchers have held exhibitions of the results of these findings.

In this research is more focusing on the narratives from the participants which collected through semi-structured interviews. The guided interview merely through interviewing namely the informal conversational interview, semi-structured interview and the standardized open-ended interview. The most significant advantage of this qualitative method allows actual participants to communicate and convey their thoughts and experiences about Iban folklore directly from own perspectives, without intertwine from third party such as interpreter. When conducting interview with semi structured approach, the interview structure is flexible and allow conversation progress naturally and gather more information that unfamiliar or have been discussed effectively.

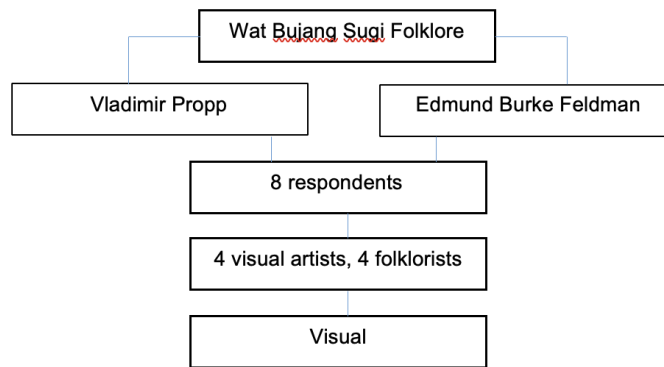


Figure 1: The flow of the methodology analysis Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi

4. DATA FINDING AND ANALYSIS

This study shows that the theory of Vladimir Propp is significant to apply in this folklore, Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi. Propp's even states that the function in the story will produce setting, characters and theme. Through the 3 based element namely setting, character and theme, the audience will know the outcome and moral values that can be taken from the whole story. Based on the analysis that has been carried out from the research, the respondent data was accurate and most of them was stated and mentioned that in the folklore, Hornbill Festival was the end of the scene and main outcome from the data finding. The research also come out with the visual of hornbill symbol according to the interview data. Benedict Sandin the Iban researcher was mentioned about that *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* was one of the highest festivals in Dayak community, Iban dan Bidayuh. The main reason of *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* has been held because to honor the hero of the Iban after their success in war expedition. According to Kreditsu (2023), Hornbill Festival has led to a resurgence of pride in our indigenous heritage thereby revitalizing celebrations of traditional indigenous festivals.

This festival is important for Iban community. This shows that Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi has a religious and spiritual significance such as in sacred meanings. In the folklore, the hero, Wat Bujang Sugi was the main character in the folklore. Through the journey of the hero, he has gone through a lot of challenges until the war expedition. In the folklore, the war expedition that led by the hero has won. Sugi's reputation as a warrior grew tremendously. The folks unanimously made him the leader at a big meeting to plan a raid against their traditional enemy across the expansive sea, Raja Ribai. Mentioned about the symbol of the hornbill, symbols hold profound religious and spiritual significance in the Iban community. They can represent deities, spiritual concepts, or rituals. The folklore, religious symbols are used in worship, prayer, and

religious art, serving as a means of connecting individuals to their faith especially in Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore.

4.1. *The Visual of Hornbill Symbol from Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi Folklore*

In artwork, symbol is one of the main objects or images and it is providing artist with a powerful mean in communication and expression. In Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore, the hornbill symbols contain complex ideas, emotions and concepts into visual representations that easily understood by the audience. Apart from that, symbol also serve as a visual language and allowing artist to convey the meaning in more universally and accessible way. Therefore, by using symbol also the artist can use it to carry cultural r historical significance. The artist also can use them to connect with their work in a broader context. The artists also can communicate the ideas that resonate with specific communities or reference historical events, traditions, or belief systems through symbol.

In this research, the researcher uses hornbill symbols to infuse the artwork with personal and emotional meanings. The hornbill symbol to the research holds a deep significance for the artist, serving as a visual representation of experiences, beliefs, and feelings. This has allows for a more personalized connection between the artist and the audience. In summary, hornbill symbols in artwork serve as powerful tools for communication, expression, and interpretation. They allow artists to convey meaning, establish connections with cultural and historical contexts, and engage viewers on multiple levels of ages. The use of symbols enriches the artistic experience by providing depth, layers of meaning, and a bridge between the artist and the audience. There are scenes within a story, which is part of the narration. A scene is described as a place where something occurs or a setting in a story or folklore in which one or more people interact through action or speech. By applying the theory of Vladimir Propp, the folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi abstract the potential scenes that contain three of the most important elements, namely setting, character, and theme in an interesting way.

Propp's theory is a fundamental structural analysis, and it is possible to find it in its original form in folklore after it has gone through several transformations. But folklore has always maintained the same structural framework, even when it has been transformed into various forms. Even though Propp's theory is based on Russian folklore, these functions can be found in a variety of other types of stories, including comedy, myth, epic, romance, and stories in general, among other things. As a result, the Propp research model can be applied to the analysis of the Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi narrative.



Figure 2: The interpretation of Hornbill symbol in Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi through Visual

The figure 2 shows the visual of hornbill symbol that representing the whole folklore as a main subject. Folklore, as a multidimensional cultural expression, takes various forms that can be visually represented. For example, paintings can capture the vibrant traditions and stories passed down through generations, showcasing the rich tapestry of folklore. In this visual, the hornbill symbol was place at *ruai* or veranda. *Ruai* or Veranda was a meeting point for any celebration and events at the longhouse. In the Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore, the Iban people held the *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* at the veranda of the longhouse. This symbol was implemented from the bird of hornbill as an iconic to Sarawak people.

Benedict Sandin was one of the Iban expert in cultural and Iban tradition, saying that the *Gawai Burong Kenyalang* was one of the highest festivals in Iban community. This festival is to honor the successful of the hero who winning in the war expedition. According to Kreditsu (2023), Hornbill Festival has caused a resurgence of pleasure in our indigenous historical past thereby revitalizing celebrations of conventional indigenous festivals. For Sarawak people, *Burong Kenyalang* as known as Rhinoceros Hornbill and that is part of National Bird in Borneo. In addition, the visual of the hornbill also represent the tradition of the Iban people and highlighting the celebration of the cultural diversity. To understand the methodology that behind folklore of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi, installation art has been used and applied in this research.



Figure 3: The Installation Art from The Data Finding and The Interview Data

Figure 3 shows that the whole visual of the installation artwork from Wat Bujang Sugi folklore. The small cube represents the first journey of Wat Bujang Sugi until the end of the expedition according to the Vladimir Propp theory. The main data was on the wall, the symbol of the Hornbill that took place at the *ruai* or veranda, meeting point for the Iban people.

By using flowcharts or visual in this research, it can help to illustrate the process of identification, documentation, and the analysis of the folklore. This also depicting the steps taken by folklorists to study underrepresented groups and Iban cultural expressions. Another visual representation also could be timeline that depicted the evolution of the folklore over time, showing the transition from traditional form of transmission as like oral storytelling to modern form as means as written text and digital form.

These visual representations also not only providing a snapshot of folklore and its various aspects of side but also helps aid in comprehending the complex methodology that employed by folklorists and the artist. The visualization of folklore and its methodology is crucial in capturing its multidimensional nature and understanding the processes involved in studying it (McGregory, 2016). By visually representing folklore and the methodology behind it, more comprehensive understanding of its multidimensional nature and the processes are involved in studying and it can be

achieved. Visual representations of folklore and its methodology are essential in capturing the multidimensional nature of this cultural expression and understanding the processes involved in studying it.

4.2. The Visual The 3 Element That Influence the Finding

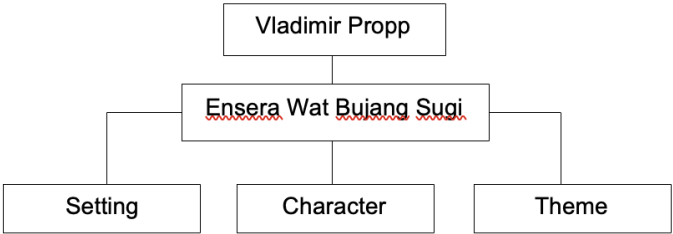


Figure 4: The 3 Important Elements in the Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi Finding

5. DISCUSSION

In the discussion, that based on the analysis by using Propp morphology theory, the narrative of structure Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi resulting that the application of Propp narrative structure using hornbill symbol through Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi folklore was successful. Therefore, the positive moral values also and were obtained from the story of Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi are contained in the whole story. In addition, the young generation should learn and inherit their tradition and culture and the positive moral values in the story. Through these various themes, folklore plays a vital role in transmitting moral values, cultural norms, and societal expectations from one generation to another. Folklore serves as a dynamic and accessible means of instilling ethical principles and shaping the moral compass of individuals within a community.

6. CONCLUSION

In a conclusion, the use of Propp's morphology has been use in wide range of narrative by all discipline and academicians that not only specific to folklore only. In *Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi*, the theory significance extends far beyond and have the potential applied in the narrative thereby making it an important point for reference in the research of folklore as well as interpretation. Meanwhile, Edmund Burke Feldman theory helps in visualization of the finding of the folklore in term of visualization. The research also provides a comprehensive and reflective synthesis of the research finding, interpreting all the scene through both theories Vladimir Propp and Edmund Burke Feldman theories. In term of practical implications, this research able to demonstrate the interesting visual. Apart from that, the researcher able to understand the folklore especially from Betong area. The researcher also contributes meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge in the field of folklore and visual for future research especially for Tun Jugah Foundation reproducing the *Ensera Wat Bujang Sugi* Folklore in second edition of novel.

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DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING CULTURAL HERITAGE LEARNING USING VIRTUAL REALITY TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract: This study explores the outcomes of digital cultural learning, with a focus on the limitations observed in informal cultural heritage learning settings despite extensive scholarly investigation. Recognizing that cultural heritage learning encompasses more than cognitive knowledge transfer, including emotions, attitudes, behavior, engagement, enjoyment, and interaction, this research underscores the growing relevance of virtual reality technology as a learning medium, particularly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research objectives are: (1) to identify an appropriate learning approach for cultural heritage learning through virtual technology, and (2) to propose a conceptual framework for cultural heritage learning using VR technology. The methodology involves a comprehensive literature review on cultural heritage learning and validation of proposed learning concepts by five experts, incorporating experiential learning, discovery learning strategy, and motivational learning theory. Findings reveal that cultural heritage learning emphasizes interactivity, enjoyment, integrating assessment and self-directed learning features in virtual applications to enhance user participation and effectiveness in cultural heritage learning. Expert reviews affirm the relevance and compatibility of the proposed features, suggesting they enhance the effectiveness of cultural heritage learning. This positive feedback supports the validity and potential impact of the conceptual framework,

confirming its suitability for virtual environment applications in cultural heritage learning. This research contributes to making cultural heritage content more accessible, enjoyable, and educationally valuable through innovative VR applications.

Keywords: Cultural heritage learning, Digital learning, Effective learning, and Virtual reality technology

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2020, scholars have extensively explored the outcomes of digital cultural learning, particularly through cognitive components and technological mediums designed for classroom settings. However, some studies, such as Chen et al. (2022), have found no significant outcomes for informal cultural heritage learning. The research underscores that cultural heritage learning goes beyond mere knowledge transfer, encompassing emotions, attitudes, behaviors, engagement, enjoyment, and interaction. The shift toward digital learning was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated innovative learning approaches and highlighted the growing relevance of virtual reality (VR) technology as a medium. This study aims to (1) identify an effective learning approach for cultural heritage education using virtual technology and (2) propose a conceptual framework for cultural heritage learning via VR technology. To achieve these objectives, the research integrates learning theories such as experiential, discovery, and motivational learning, which align with the interactive and immersive nature of cultural heritage education. These theories emphasize hands-on experiences, participation in cultural activities, and emotional engagement, which enhance appreciation and understanding (Caroline Dike et al., 2023). Furthermore, Bachiller (2023) argues that such theories foster user engagement, self-directed learning, and exploratory knowledge development while promoting learning motivation.

The methodology involves a comprehensive literature review on cultural heritage learning and validation of the proposed framework by five field experts. Each learning theory is systematically analyzed for its attributes and role in shaping virtual environment features tailored to cultural heritage education. These theoretical insights inform the design of VR applications, ensuring they effectively support engaging and meaningful cultural heritage learning experiences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)*

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is a significant theory that underscores the value of learning through direct experience (Rajendra, 2020), particularly relevant when applied to Cultural Heritage Learning (CHL) concept. This review seeks to establish a connection between ELT and CHL by highlighting its pivotal role in realizing a concept of CHL. Additionally, this review examines main previous studies in CHL and correlates this learning concept to offer a comprehensive understanding of cultural learning approaches.

One prominent model within experiential learning is Kolb's Learning Model (KLM), developed by David Kolb. This model posits that learning unfolds through a cycle of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Morris, 2020). According to Kolb's model, individuals exhibit preferred learning styles influenced by their cognitive and affective traits, as well as the learning context's demands. The model delineates four learning styles:

- i. Diverging (feeling and watching): Learners who prefer learning through concrete experiences and reflective observation, often imaginative and adept at generating new ideas.
- ii. Assimilating (watching and thinking): Learners are inclined towards abstract conceptualization and reflective observation, characterized by logical analysis and adeptness in constructing theoretical models.
- iii. Converging (doing and thinking): Learners who favor abstract conceptualization and active experimentation, emphasizing practicality and application of theories to solve problems.
- iv. Accommodating (doing and feeling): Learners who thrive in concrete experiences and active experimentation, intuitive and adaptable in dynamic situations, and effective in collaborative settings.

Kolb's model asserts that understanding one's preferred learning style, shaped by personal traits and learning contexts, can optimize learning experiences and outcomes. This learning theory encompasses key components such as active participation, reflection, feedback, and application. The theory finds application across diverse educational settings, including formal education, workplace training, and personal development. It enhances engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, and fosters lifelong learning (Kolb, 1984).

Drawing from this learning theory, several key attributes can enhance the effectiveness of cultural heritage learning through virtual reality technology. This includes designing interactive exhibits for hands-on exploration, providing opportunities for critical reflection through interactive prompts, offering instant feedback and personalized guidance, facilitating practical knowledge application via virtual tours, and customizing experiences based on individual interests. These elements collectively create a more engaging and immersive learning environment that fosters deeper engagement with cultural heritage. By integrating these ELT attributes into virtual reality application design, a more engaging and personalized learning environment can be created, aligning with cultural heritage learning principles as shown in Figure 1. This approach promotes interactive, self-directed learning experiences that enhance user engagement, knowledge retention, and enjoyment, fostering a deeper appreciation and learning of cultural heritage.

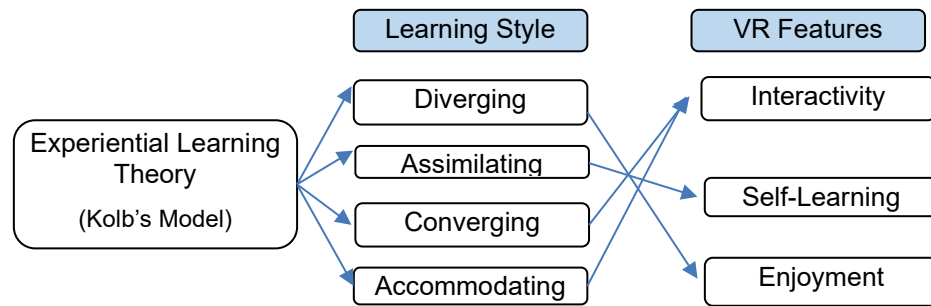


Figure 1. Derived Product Characteristics from ELT

Virtual reality applications can enhance the effectiveness of cultural heritage learning by catering to different learning styles through tailored features. For learners with a diverging style, immersive VR environments offer visually captivating experiences that stimulate their imagination and enhance enjoyment while exploring cultural heritage. Those inclined towards assimilating information benefit from VR applications that provide detailed, interactive learning materials and simulations, facilitating self-directed exploration and deep understanding. Users with a converging learning style engage effectively with VR applications featuring hands-on activities and interactive challenges, promoting practical application of knowledge and problem-solving skills. Accommodating learners benefit from interactive VR environments that encourage active experimentation and real-time decision-making, enhancing personal engagement and enjoyment. By aligning these learning styles with features such as interactivity, self-directed learning opportunities, and enjoyable experiences, VR applications can effectively support diverse learning preferences and maximize the educational impact of cultural heritage learning experiences.

2.2 Discovery Learning Strategy (DLS)

Derived from constructivist learning theory, Discovery Learning Strategy (DLS) emphasizes problem-solving situations, enabling learners to construct new knowledge based on prior information and experiences (Ozdem-Yilmaz & Bilican, 2020). Introduced by Bruner in 1961, this approach encourages learners to test hypotheses and discover knowledge independently, moving away from traditional teacher-centered methods (Martaida et al., 2017). DLS, also known as "constructive interaction," provides valuable insights into user thinking processes including perception, responses, interactions, and emotions during learning tasks as illustrated in Figure 2

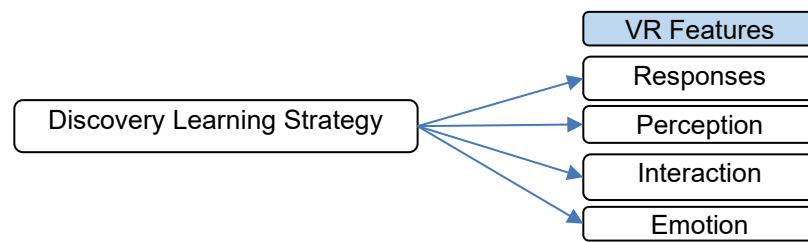


Figure 2. Derived Product Characteristics from DLS

Novantri highlights DLS's role in education, where it fosters active student participation in knowledge development through creating experiments, solving problems, and developing strategies (Novantri et al., 2020). This approach not only engages students actively but also enhances learning outcomes significantly, with studies showing up to a 56% improvement compared to non-DLS methods (Anggraeni et al., 2020). In cultural heritage learning contexts, DLS proves effective in fostering creative knowledge acquisition and intellectual development through independent, problem-based learning (Rashidov, 2023). Therefore, integrating DLS into cultural heritage learning frameworks promotes problem-based learning characteristics and effective learning performance. This learning strategy is aligned with constructivist principles that support self-directed learning, where learners take ownership of their learning processes. Moreover, its emphasis on active, problem-solving learning enhances engagement and enjoyment, contributing to a more fulfilling educational experience.

2.3 Motivational Learning Theory (MLT)

The ARCS Model of Motivational Design, developed by John M. Keller (1987), stands as a well-established theoretical framework utilized to enhance motivation within educational contexts. Its application to Cultural Heritage Learning (CHL) provides a structured approach to fostering motivation and engagement, pivotal components in the realm of cultural heritage learning. This literature review examines the implementation of the ARCS Model in CHL, focusing on its impact on motivation and its role in enhancing cultural learning performance. The ARCS Model comprises four essential components: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction, collectively guiding educators in designing and delivering motivating learning experiences (Chen et al., 2022). Within CHL, capturing learners' attention proves crucial, particularly given the diverse and intricate nature of historical and cultural content. Effective strategies such as immersive storytelling, multimedia presentations, and interactive simulations are employed to ignite curiosity and engage learners with cultural heritage topics (Pisoni et al., 2021).

In multicultural educational settings, cultural heritage learning may initially appear distant or irrelevant to learners. The ARCS Model encourages virtual reality technology to underscore the relevance of cultural heritage by linking it to learners' identities and experiences. Inclusive curricula that emphasize personal and community histories contribute to fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing personal relevance (Van der Hoeven & Brandellero, 2015).

Given the complexity inherent in CHL, including understanding historical contexts, interpretation, and critical analysis, the ARCS Model advocates for scaffolding the learning experience to bolster learners' confidence. This entails providing structured guidance, opportunities for skill development, and clearly defined learning objectives. Gradually increasing task complexity while offering adequate support enables learners to cultivate the self-efficacy needed to engage deeply with cultural heritage content (Thompson et al., 2022).

Ensuring learners' satisfaction with cultural heritage learning involves creating a supportive and encouraging learning environment. Regular feedback, positive reinforcement, and opportunities for personal achievement or recognition play pivotal roles in this process. These elements not only bolster learners' commitment but also enhance overall learning performance and experience (Filgona et al., 2020).

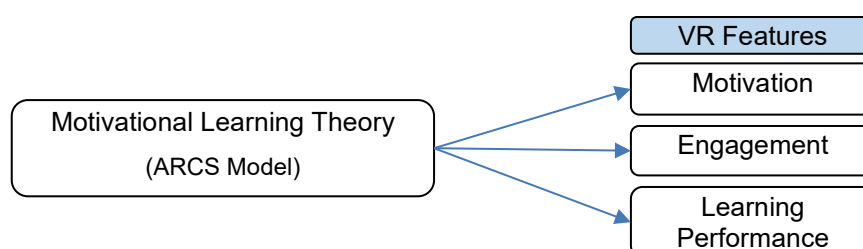


Figure 3. Derived Product Characteristics from MLT

By applying the ARCS Model in CHL, the virtual reality application enhances motivation, engagement and contributes to improved cultural learning performance as illustrated in Figure 3. Addressing the components of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction makes cultural heritage content more captivating, meaningful, accessible, and rewarding for learners. Integrating these principles into the design of assessment features within virtual environments can further enhance engagement, relevance, and satisfaction, thereby supporting deeper cultural understanding and fostering appreciation among learners.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this research comprises two main phases. The first phase involved a content analysis through a comprehensive literature review. This phase focused specifically on three prominent learning theories: Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), Discovery Learning Strategy (DLS), and Motivational Learning Theory (MLT). These theories were selected based on their alignment with the conceptual characteristics of cultural heritage learning. They were critically examined to propose suitable features for virtual reality applications tailored for cultural heritage learning. This phase was instrumental in achieving the first research objective.

The second phase of the methodology focused on obtaining expert validation for the proposed conceptual framework of virtual reality features aimed at enhancing learning performance in cultural heritage education. Five experts participated in this review: two specialists in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), one in Multimedia, one in Virtual Reality (VR), and one in Cultural Heritage Learning Education. Using a structured questionnaire incorporating Likert scale ratings and short-answer responses, the experts provided critical insights and suggestions, ensuring a thorough evaluation of the framework (Abubakar et al., 2013). The selection of these five experts, deemed sufficient for theoretical framework validation as suggested by Al-Aidaros (2017), was based on their diverse areas of expertise. This multidisciplinary approach ensured a holistic review, with their feedback proving instrumental in affirming the framework's potential to enhance learning performance in cultural heritage education.

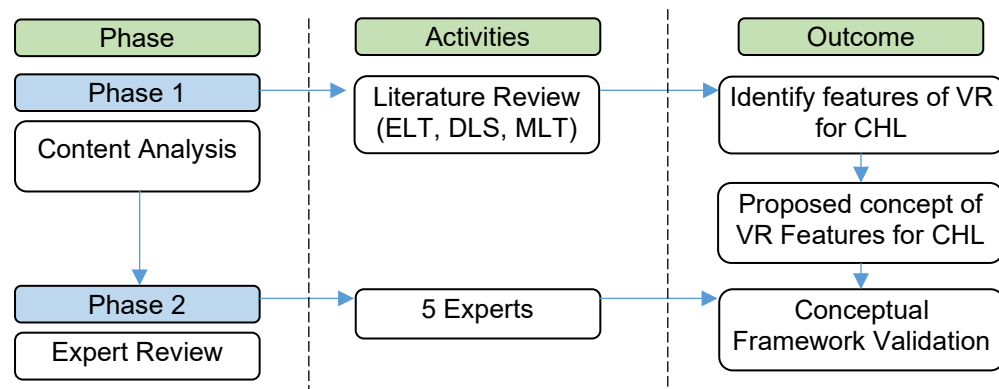


Figure 4. Methodology phases

The flow of these two phases is visually represented in Figure 4, illustrating the sequential process of validating the conceptual framework through literature analysis and expert feedback. This methodological approach ensures both rigor and comprehensiveness, providing a strong theoretical foundation while ensuring the

practical applicability of the proposed virtual reality features for cultural heritage learning.

4. DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Virtual Reality Application Features for Effective Cultural Heritage Learning

The study explores three prominent learning theories (Experiential, Discovery, and Motivational learning) as discussed in the literature review section. The research meticulously examines the attributes associated with each theory to identify essential elements for seamless integration into framework components, particularly within the context of virtual environments for cultural heritage learning. The research establishes a significant link between these learning theories and the features required in virtual applications, as depicted in Figure 5.

Experiential learning emphasizes the importance of interactivity and self-directed learning of virtual reality technology within cultural heritage contexts. Discovery learning similarly prioritizes interactivity and enjoyment as critical features. Motivational learning stresses the incorporation of assessment and interactivity features in virtual applications to foster user participation and enhance the effectiveness of cultural heritage learning. These findings collectively set the foundation for developing prototype features that draw inspiration from the unique features of each learning theory to promote effective cultural heritage learning.

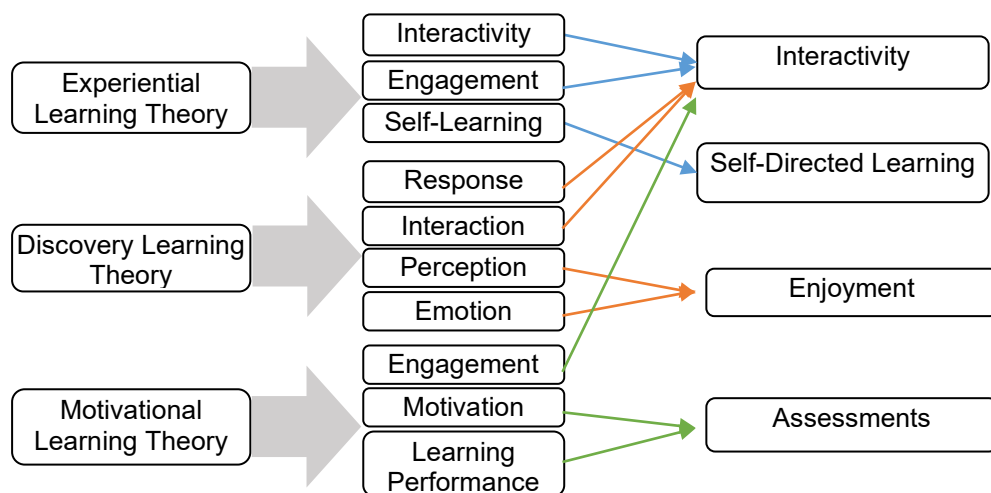


Figure 5. Derived Virtual Application Features from Learning Theories

As a result, these identified virtual reality features have been utilized to propose an effective conceptual framework for virtual environment applications in cultural heritage learning. Figure 6 illustrates this proposed conceptual framework, which aims to achieve the second objective of the research.

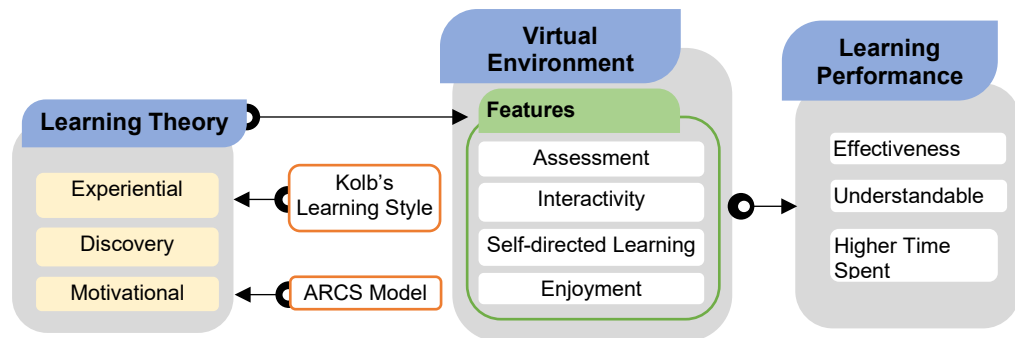


Figure 6. Conceptual Framework of Virtual Environment Application for Effective Cultural Heritage Learning

The prototype development involved several stages, including storyboard design, content collection, and integration. Storyboards served as a guide for design refinement, incorporating feedback throughout the process. The development integrated elements from the proposed framework, such as 3D model artifacts, 360° panoramic images, cultural heritage quizzes, and rich media like images and videos. This approach ensured the creation of a cohesive and immersive virtual museum experience, aligning with content delivery, aesthetics, and user engagement objectives.

4.2 Conceptual Framework Validity

The proposed conceptual framework underwent a comprehensive validation process following its development. Initially informed by an extensive literature review and prior investigations on cultural heritage learning, the framework was refined using an expert review method. This review involved soliciting feedback from specialists in relevant fields. The data obtained from the expert review were systematically organized and presented. The outcomes of the expert evaluation, conducted using a Likert scale, were visually represented through clustered column charts, as shown in Figure 7. This data analysis provided a detailed overview of response frequencies, offering insights into the compatibility and relevance of the proposed framework.

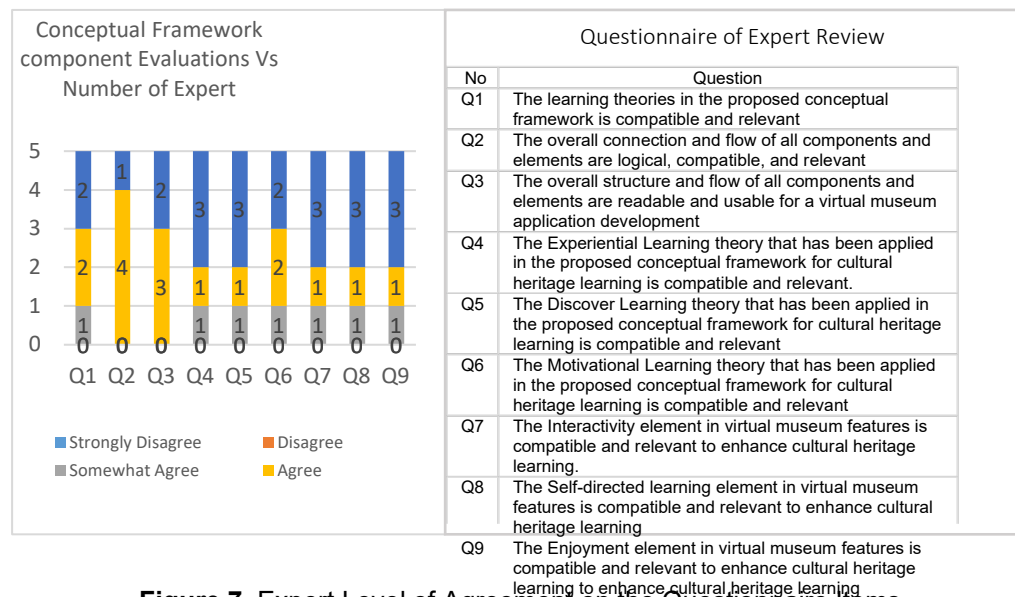


Figure 7. Expert Level of Agreement on the Questionnaire Items

The table summarizes the expert review feedback on the proposed conceptual framework for virtual environment applications in cultural heritage learning. The responses to nine questions (Q1 to Q9) are categorized into five levels of agreement: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. For Q1, most experts (4 out of 5) either agreed or strongly agreed, indicating a general approval of the statement associated with this question. Q2 shows an even stronger consensus, with all experts agreeing or strongly agreeing, reflecting a highly positive reception. Similarly, Q3 received unanimous agreement, with a notable lean towards strong agreement, suggesting robust approval. Q4 and Q5 exhibit similar patterns, with most experts strongly agreeing. This trend continues in Q6, where most responses fell into the agree or strongly agree categories, showing positive feedback. Q7, Q8, and Q9 also reflect this pattern, with most experts strongly agreeing, indicating consistent positive views across these questions.

Overall, the responses indicate a strong positive consensus among experts. There were no instances of Strongly Disagree or Disagree, suggesting that the proposed framework did not receive any negative feedback. The data reveals that experts found the proposed features relevant and compatible, likely enhancing the effectiveness of cultural heritage learning. This positive feedback supports the validity and potential impact of the conceptual framework, confirming its appropriateness for virtual environment applications in cultural heritage learning.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. *Enhancing Cultural Heritage Learning through Virtual Reality*

This study's exploration of three prominent learning theories (Experiential, Discovery, and Motivational learning) has provided critical insights into the essential features for effective VR applications in cultural heritage learning. The meticulous analysis of the theory's attributes has enabled the identification of key elements that can be integrated into VR environments, ultimately enhancing cultural heritage learning.

Experiential learning emphasizes interactivity and self-directed learning. Within the context of cultural heritage, these features are crucial as they allow learners to actively engage with the content and explore it at their own pace. VR applications that incorporate interactive elements, such as virtual tours and hands-on activities, can immerse learners in cultural heritage sites and artifacts, making the learning experience more dynamic and memorable. Self-directed learning enables learners to take control of their educational journey, fostering a deeper and more personalized understanding of cultural heritage.

Discovery learning highlights the importance of enjoyment and exploration. VR applications that prioritize enjoyable experiences can captivate learners' interest and encourage continuous engagement with cultural heritage content. Elements such as gamified learning, immersive storytelling, and interactive simulations can make the process of discovering cultural heritage both fun and educational. Enjoyment in learning is particularly important for sustaining long-term interest and motivation, which are essential for deepening cultural knowledge.

Motivational learning underscores the necessity of incorporating assessment features within VR applications. These features can provide learners with feedback on their progress and understanding, helping to maintain their engagement and motivation. Assessments, such as quizzes and interactive challenges, can enhance the learning experience by offering measurable goals and rewards. This approach not only keeps learners engaged but also reinforces their knowledge and skills related to cultural heritage.

5.2 *Contributions to Effective Cultural Heritage Learning*

The findings and expert validation suggest that the proposed conceptual framework significantly contributes to effective cultural heritage learning through VR applications. By integrating essential elements from Experiential, Discovery, and Motivational learning theories, the framework provides a comprehensive approach to designing VR environments that are engaging, interactive, and educationally effective.

The interactive and self-directed learning features, aligned with Experiential and Discovery learning principles, ensure that learners can deeply engage with and explore cultural heritage content. The emphasis on enjoyment and assessment features, as highlighted by Discovery and Motivational learning theories, helps maintain learner motivation and provides valuable feedback on their progress.

This comprehensive approach enhances the learning experience by making cultural heritage content more accessible, enjoyable, and educationally valuable. The proposed framework supports the development of VR applications that not only engage learners but also improve their understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage.

5.3 Future Research Directions

While the proposed framework has received positive feedback and validation from experts, future research should focus on empirical testing and user studies to further refine and optimize the VR application features. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term effectiveness of these features in enhancing cultural heritage learning. Additionally, exploring the integration of emerging technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI), could offer new dimensions to the framework, further enriching the learning experience.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the proposed conceptual framework, grounded in Experiential, Discovery, and Motivational learning theories, provides a validated and effective approach for developing VR applications in cultural heritage learning. The strong consensus among experts highlights its relevance and potential impact, setting the stage for future advancements in the field and significantly contributing to the preservation and appreciation of cultural heritage through innovative educational technologies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: FOR ORANG ULU'S HANDICRAFT PRODUCTS PROMOTION

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Abstract : This paper deliberates on references of digital marketing strategies by utilizing social media marketing to promote Orang Ulu's Handicraft products. The findings of this paper can significantly enhance the visibility and market reach of Orang Ulu's handicraft products. This research involved 200 respondents who answered the research questionnaires. The data collected from the fieldwork were analyzed using SPSS version 26. The measures used in this article are methodically descriptive frequency analysis. The results of the descriptive means of all the analyzed items highlight and summarize the significance of social media platforms in marketing Orang Ulu's handicraft products.

Keywords: Handicraft Products, Social Media, Marketing, Promotion, indigenous, Orang Ulu

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *The Orang Ulu*

One of the ethnic groups living in Sarawak is the Orang Ulu. This ethnic group comprises 20 various sub-ethnic groups that are known as the Orang Ulu community. These sub-ethnic groups are from Krayan-Kelabit, Apo Duat, and Apo Kayan (Sim, 2019). But then, in 2015, it was reported that there are 26 distinct sub-ethnic groups, including Kenyah, Kayan, Kajang, Kelabit, Murut, Saban, Penan, Ukit, Punan, Sian, and others. (Wan, Renganathan, & Philip, 2015).

Most Orang Ulu live longhouses with a distinct culture, such as intricate beadworks, detailed tattoos, rattan weaving, and unique music with distinctive sounds from the sape. The Orang Ulu are a distinct and culturally rich group of indigenous peoples in Sarawak. Their unique traditions and artistic expressions significantly contribute to the cultural diversity of the region.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Handicrafts Products*

Handicrafts are a crucial part of intangible cultural heritage, as an image and expression of a nation's symbol and identity. They are formulated with lofty concepts and ingenuity (Farreira et al., 2019; Mokhtar, 2018). It is a work that requires precise and consistent planning to produce something of high quality. Additionally, they are frequently involved with producing clothes, decorations, handicraft products, and other products. Handicrafts represent the intellectual ideas from previous societies passed down to the present generation. Handicrafts and other forms of intangible cultural heritage possess significant heritage value, turning them into art objects that require sustainable (Kamaruddin, 2020). Like other cultural components, handicrafts play an essential role in representing the identity of a country and its society. Thus, it is crucial to maintain the continuous preservation of handicrafts as it is closely associated with preserving a nation's traditions and culture.

2.2 *Digital Marketing*

A digital marketing channel works like a traditional marketing channel, delivering products and services from their source to the customer through a specific type of supply chain. As one of the most effective marketing methods, digital marketing offers cost-effective online sales and low search costs, with easy price comparisons, spreading of user reviews, brand differentiation, and more effective customer relationships. Furthermore, leveraging social media channels such as broadcasts can

further enhance the value of your brand. Businesses significantly benefit from digital marketing tools because they target value chain intermediaries, create focused valued propositions, and have less extensive personal interactions. Digital channels make it convenient for business customers to engage with content and technology (Venkateswaran et al.,2022).

2.3 Social Media Marketing

Social Media platforms can be utilized for marketing purposes in several forms. The conventional Facebook approach entails substituting the notion of a human “friend” with a brand or actual goods or establishing a page or group (Facebook,2022). When a user chooses to express their approval or affinity towards a product or brand, they effectively promote this association throughout their personal network of contacts. This Principle can also be applied to other forms of social media.

i. Facebook

Facebook is a social media company owned by Mark Zuckerberg that has features for its business account. The Facebook marketplace is also increasingly open and accessible for buying and selling transactions. It has an AdSense feature that helps business people sell their products (Kusumo Bintaro et al., 2022), or marketing purposes can manifest in several forms.

ii. Instagram

Instagram is a popular social media platform that shares photos and videos online. Many online shops use it for promotion, and it has an AdSense feature. Influencers also use Instagram to promote products, making it a popular platform for enthusiasts. Instagram's hashtags help users find products based on their interests. The platform offers exciting features like filters, making it attractive for businesses. Users can upload various product photos to engage consumers and encourage them to buy. Instagram attracts attention from all circles, especially teenagers, and despite new trends like TikTok, it remains a popular platform for marketing. The AdSense feature on Instagram is also helpful for reaching customers and increasing sales of products or services. Therefore, Instagram is a crucial social media for businesses looking to grow (Kusumo Bintaro et al., 2022). Facebook is a social media company owned by Mark Zuckerberg that has features for its business account. The Facebook marketplace is also increasingly open, and it is easy to make buying and selling transactions. It has an AdSense feature that helps business people sell their products (Kusumo Bintaro et al., 2022)




iii. Tiktok

TikTok has emerged as a contemporary phenomenon within the adolescent demographic of the present era. Since the onset of the epidemic, this particular social media platform has garnered a substantial following. Nevertheless, comprehending the complexity of the TikTok algorithm remains challenging, as it operates according to its own set of regulations for business activities. Using social media as a business strategy has demonstrated notable effectiveness and efficiency. One of the most notable advantages is facilitating communication between vendors and consumers. Social media has revolutionized how individuals communicate, enabling them to engage in interpersonal interactions regardless of geographical constraints and temporal limitations. Within digital marketing, sales promotion activities serve as a means for customers to effectively entice a larger audience to purchase items or services offered by a given corporate entity. The promotions in this context facilitate direct connections between sellers and product segments and enable two-way communication (Kusumo Bintaro et al., 2022).

2.4 Case Study On Social Media Marketing

current digital landscape important to incorporate social media marketing into the promotion of Orang Ulu's handicraft products. In addition to increasing visibility, this strategies also encourages interaction with contemporary consumers. From the benefit contribution of previous study that give deeper understanding on social media marketing activities among local entrepreneur definitely motivate them to have a strong social media presence on various platforms for promoting their products across Malaysia and international market. The researcher find the related previous study on Social media Marketing of Handicraft products by Guha et al., (2021) have been conducted a study on The social media marketing strategies and its implementation in promoting handicrafts products: a study with special reference to Eastern India. The study examined Social Media Marketing activities related to handicraft products by four dimensions which is interactivity, informativeness, trendiness, and Word of Mouth. The outcome indicated that all four constructs contribution to the Social Media Marketing activities of handicraft products on a various of social media platforms. Therefore, This study also contributes to the existing literature on Social Media Marketing by establishing a connection between Social Media Marketing activities on handicraft products and branding objectives (Yadav and Rahman's , 2017).

Table1. Orang Ulu's Handicraft Products

Products	Description
1. Beads Accessories	
	Orang ulu beads have certain motifs according to the pattern of the ulu people and become a symbol of luxury, symbolizing the status of the wearer and a treasure for handicraft arts.
Sources: Google Image	
2. Weaving & Basketry	
	Orang Ulu rattan bag, traditionally known as 'Ajat.' Ajat has various types according to the local river flow; some have patterns and no motifs. Usually, the patterns used are inspired by woven mats, which are "fruits and flowers" patterns.
Sources: Sarawak Craft Council Image	
3. Traditional Music	
	Sape is made from wood, usually softwood, such as Meranti wood. Ropes used to be made from the Sago tree but are now replaced with nylon rope. Sape is played in festive ceremonies and regular shows.
Sources: Google Image	

4. **Woven Rattan Mat** Local Name: Bat or Pat



Mats are handicrafts made from woven rattan, bemoan, bamboo or pandan among the Ulu people. Mats refer to rectangular woven rattan. They are usually used for bedding and seating.

Sources: Google Image

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using quantitative methods, such as developing questionnaires based on the research objectives and distributing them to 200 respondents via random sampling. The Cronbach's Alpha value for items in the questionnaire overall is 0.7, which is 12, which is good and acceptable. The data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26, using descriptive statistics of percentages and frequency.

4. DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

There are 148 Females (74.0%) and 52 (26.0%) males involved, and most of the 101 (50.5%) are from the Youth group, which is 18 to 25 years old. Then, there was a group aged 36 and above: 69 people (34.5%), 26 years to 36 years old, a total of 30 persons (15.0%), and 36 to 40 years old, a total of 44 persons (11.7%).

Based on the data analyzed, the researchers discussed the highlighted effectiveness and preferences for social media platforms in marketing handicraft products.

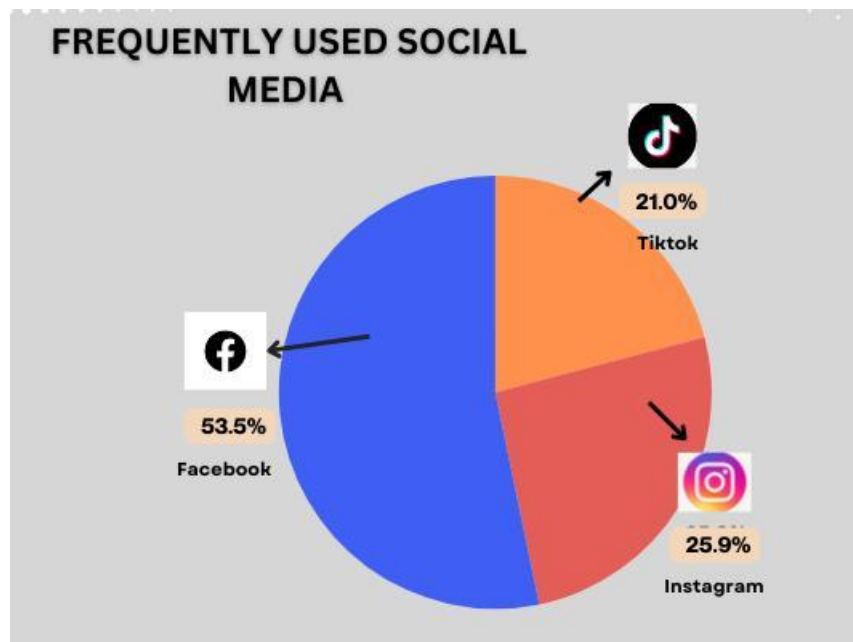


Figure 1. Frequently Used Social Media

Facebook is the most frequently used social media platform among the respondents. 53.5% of the participants reported using Facebook regularly. This indicates a significant preference for Facebook, highlighting its dominance in the social media landscape. Instagram ranks as the second most popular social media platform; 25.9% of the respondents said that they use Instagram frequently. Instagram's visual-centric approach and engagement features make it popular, especially among younger demographics. While TikTok is also a notable platform among users, mainly known for its short-form video content. 21.0% of the participants reported frequent use of TikTok. (Kalinová & Kovaříková, 2023), Businesses identified Instagram as the most commonly used social network, primarily for promoting their company. Following Instagram, companies utilize Facebook to sell products or attract new employees. Social networks were also used as communication channels with employees or customers in business activities.

Factors that encourage customers using social Media



Figure 2. Factors that encourage customer's using social media

Figure 2 shows that the primary reason customers use social media is online mobile facilities, accounting for 47.5% of the responses. Additionally, 28.0% of customers use social media to find information, while entertainment purposes drive 22.5%. This data highlighted the significant role of mobile accessibility and information obtained in social media engagement, with entertainment also an essential factor. (Cutshall et al., 2020), explain that social networking websites play a significant role in marketing by allowing users to share information about products and connect with other users and their interests. For instance, the multifaceted nature of consumer behaviour in social commerce emphasizes the importance of trust, perceived usefulness, social influence, and ease of use in shaping consumers' participation in online shopping activities.

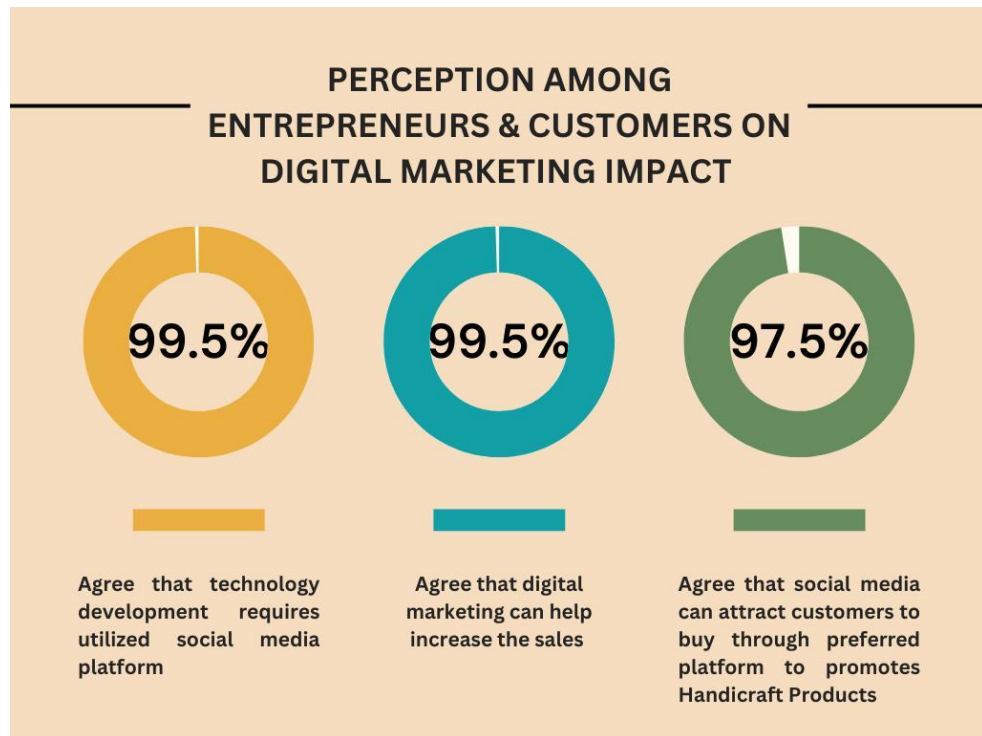


Figure 3. Perceptions among Entrepreneurs & Customers on Digital Marketing Impact

Figure 3 illustrates a high level of agreement among entrepreneurs and customers on three critical perceptions of digital marketing. Nearly all respondents (99.5%) agree that technology development is necessary for using social media platforms. Similarly, 99.5% of the participants agree that digital marketing can significantly enhance sales. A slightly lower percentage, but still a majority (97.5%), agree that social media platforms are effective in attracting customers to buy handicraft products through preferred social media platforms. According to (Conti et al., 2023), digitalization has significantly impacted marketing, increasing productivity and customer engagement, emphasizing the importance of technology and skills for competitiveness.

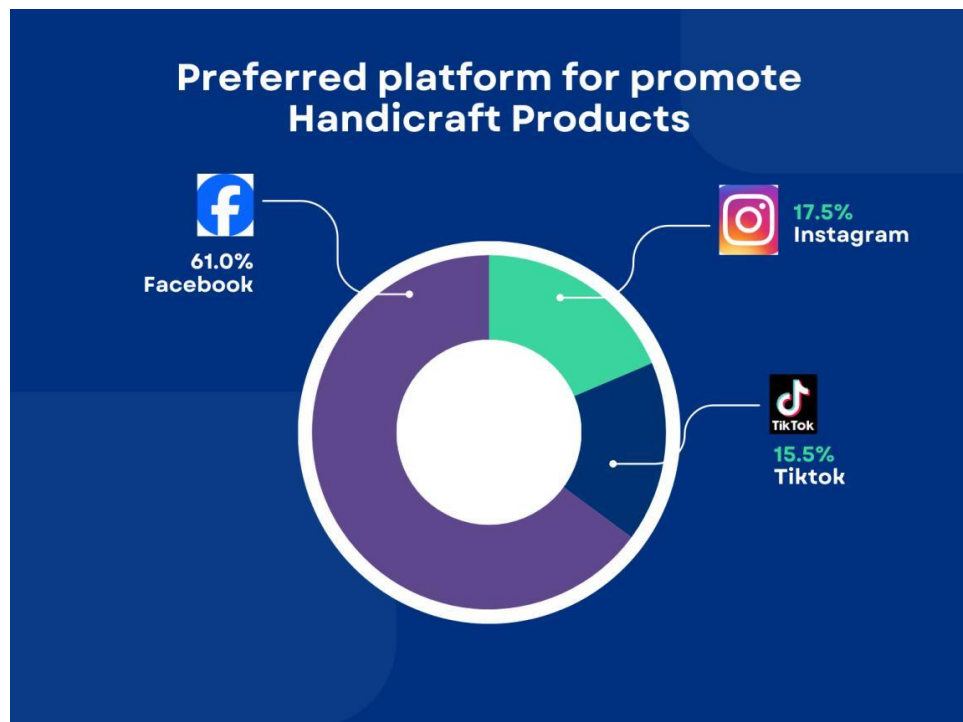


Figure 4. Preferred Platform for Promote handicrafts Products

Figure 4 displays that Facebook is the most frequently used platform, with a significant majority of respondents (61.0%) saying they use it regularly. This shows that Facebook remains the dominant platform for social media engagement, likely due to its wide range of features, user-friendly interface, and extensive network of users. In contrast, Instagram, which is the second most popular platform among the respondents, is used regularly by 17.5% of the participants. With 15.5% of respondents using it frequently, TikTok ranks third in preferred social media platforms. Facebook was identified as a potent platform for carrying out promotional activities, leading to a noticeable boost in product sales, and particularly those implemented on Facebook have the potential to directly reach target audiences efficiently and effectively (Jain, 2021).

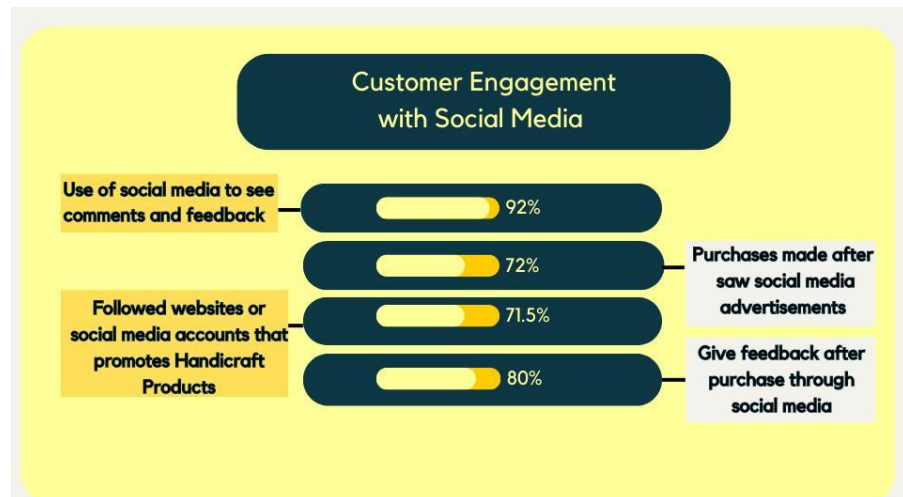


Figure 5. Customer engagement with social media

Figure 5 displays that the use of social media to see comments and feedback is the highest, 92.0% of the significant majority of customers who use social media platforms to view comments and feedback on products or services. Meanwhile, purchases made after seeing social media advertisements represent 80.0% of many customers who are influenced by social media advertisements when making purchases. Followed websites or social media accounts that promote handicraft products 72.0%, and some customers follow specific websites or social media accounts that focus on promoting handicraft products. Giving feedback after purchase through social media represents the lowest at 71.5% in customer engagement in social media. Social media platforms are essential tools for customer engagement, showcasing how customers interact with brands online. Monitoring and analyzing customer engagement on social media enhances marketing strategies, improves brand perception, and builds stronger customer relationships. By understanding and leveraging social media interactions, businesses can tailor their content and communication to understand their target audience better, ultimately bringing up engagement and loyalty (Jayasingh & Venkatesh, 2015).

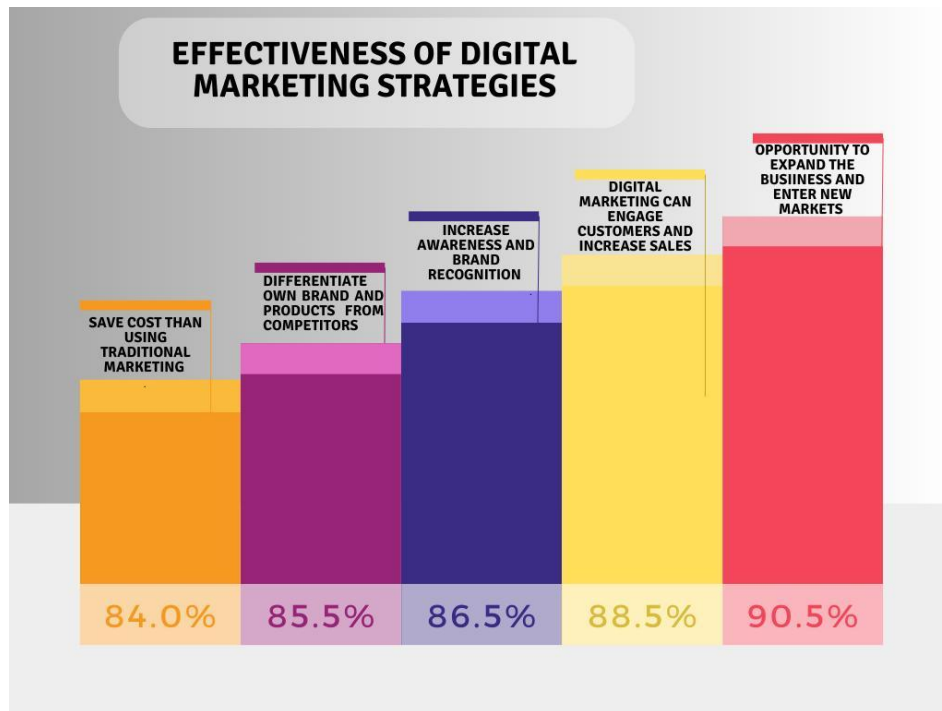


Figure 6. Effectiveness of digital marketing strategies

Figure 6 displays that the opportunity to expand the business and enter new markets records the highest of the respondents agree, which is 90.5%. The second highest is 88.5%, who agree that digital marketing can engage customers and increase sales. Then, 86.5% of respondents agree digital marketing increases awareness and brand recognition. 85.5% agreed that they can differentiate their brands and products from their competitors. Then, The least respondents who are 84.0% of respondents agree with saving costs using traditional marketing. Digital marketing provides unparalleled opportunities for businesses to expand their reach and enter new markets. According to Tiago and Veríssimo (2014), digital marketing allows firms to overcome geographical barriers, making it easier to target global audiences with tailored marketing campaigns. The scalability of digital platforms enables businesses to test new markets with minimal risk and investment, facilitating international expansion and market diversification (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, are indispensable for promoting Orang Ulu handicraft products. Entrepreneurs can establish connections with a broad audience that would be challenging to reach through conventional marketing channels due to the broad reach of these platforms. A sense of community and loyalty is fostered by the capacity to engage directly with customers through comments, messages, and posts, which improve customer satisfaction and

relationships. Social media marketing is cost-effective, making it accessible to small businesses and individual artists who may have limited marketing budgets. The strategic significance of digital marketing in fostering business growth and establishing a competitive advantage was shown by the high engagement rates on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Leveraging these platforms is essential for the success of Orang Ulu handicraft businesses, as most individuals in numerous regions have social media accounts and are active on various social media platforms. The essential influence of digital marketing social media on promoting Orang Ulu's handicraft products. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are crucial for enhancing visibility, engaging consumers, and broadening the market reach. The data-driven approach improves entrepreneurs' overall effectiveness, helping them customize marketing strategies better to meet the requirements and desires of their target audience.

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FUNCTION ANALYSIS OF THE SIX-TUBE BOTTLE FROM THE HUSI KILN IN SONG DYNASTY CHINA

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Abstract: The Husi kiln is an important discovery in the history of Hubei ceramic archaeology, and its porcelain has extremely high archaeological, cultural and economic values. The lack of research on the ceramic culture of Husi Kiln has brought difficulties to the revitalization of cultural heritage, and even the academic community cannot determine the function of the six-tube Bottle as a representative work. From the perspective of design and ethnoarchaeology, this article discusses the functions of the six-tube bottle of the Husi kiln. After sorting out the evolution and development history of the six-tube bottle, combined with the background, economic culture, politics, and ideas of the Song Dynasty, the article discusses the functions of the six-tube bottle, which may include funeral objects, vases, incense burners, and candle holders. It is believed that the six-tube bottle of the Song Dynasty from the Husi kiln is likely to be a funeral object or a vase, and it is unlikely to be an incense burner or a candle holder.

Keywords: Husi Kiln, Function Analysis, Multi-tube Bottle, Six-Tube Bottle, Song Dynasty

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, a large number of porcelains have been unearthed through archaeological excavations at the Husi Kiln Sites in Jiangxia District, Wuhan. The products excavated are diverse, predominantly comprising daily-use ceramics, with bluish-white glazed ceramics being the primary type. Remarkably, among all the porcelains excavated across the Husi Kiln complex, only two bluish-white glazed six-tube bottles were found.(Liu, 2019) In the 2023 Wuhan Museum Husi Kiln Special Exhibition, the six-tube bottle was labeled as "Six-Tube Incense Burner".(Xu, 2023) The author will raise objections to this labeling through this article. The origin of multi-tube bottles can be traced back to the Eastern Han period, evolving over time from their function as funerary objects to serving other purposes.(Dong, 2009) Based on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, the six-tube bottle, as an important cultural artifact, not only possesses various functions and values but also holds symbolic and cultural significance. It showcases the cultural capital of its participants and, through social interactions and cultural consumption, reproduces cultural customs and social norms.(Swartz, 1997) This article aims to explore the function of the Husi Kiln's six-tube bottle by integrating the evolution of multi-tube bottles, the economic and cultural context of the Song Dynasty, and comparisons with similar multi-tube bottles produced by contemporaneous kilns. This analysis seeks to uncover the cultural connotations embodied in these artifacts, thereby showcasing the aesthetic and artistic value of the Husi Kiln's porcelains.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Husi Kiln is located in Jiangxia District, Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, and flourished more than 1000 years ago during the Northern Song Dynasty and was discontinued in the early Ming Dynasty.(Qi, 2007) The excavation of the Husi Kiln site fills a gap of over a thousand years in the ceramic history of the Hubei region, possessing immense historical significance and research value. The rise of the Husi Kiln coincided with the pinnacle of bluish-white porcelain firing techniques. The representative works from this kiln, specifically the Liangzi Lake series of bluish-white porcelain, exhibit their unique artistic charm. These porcelains not only embody superior firing skills but also embody rich cultural connotations, thus holding great value for cultural preservation and research potential. After the rescue excavation, a large number of bluish-white porcelain and kiln utensils were unearthed, and only two six-tube bottles were unearthed (Figure 1), which bears a high research significance, meriting an exploration into its design elements such as structure and function. Academic research on the Husi Kiln can be divided into two main types. The first type includes review articles that provide an overview of the Husi Kiln. For instance, Qi

Jingang's "Overview of the Ancient Husi Kiln in Jiangxia" details the discovery, distribution, product types, characteristics, and firing techniques of the Husi Kiln, and discusses its significance.(Qi, 2007) Liu Zhiyun's book, "Archaeological Discoveries and Research on the Husi Kiln Site in Jiangxia, Wuhan," covers almost all archaeological reports on the Husi Kiln.(Liu, 2019) The second type focuses on the artistic features of Qingbai porcelain. Scholars have examined Qingbai porcelain from the Husi Kiln site to explore its aesthetic forms during the Song dynasty.(Qi, 2010) In "Aesthetic Forms of Jiangxia Husi Kiln Qingbai Porcelain," Duan Yan suggests that the six-tube bottle from the Husi Kiln is a combination of a flower vase and an incense burner.(Duan, 2021) The Wuhan Museum's special exhibition labels it as a "six-tube ceramic incense burner," though this claim is viewed with caution due to insufficient evidence.

Regarding multi-tube bottles, research mainly focuses on the Eastern Han to Western Jin periods, with less attention to their development after the Western Jin. multi-tube bottles originated in the Eastern Han and evolved from funerary objects to other functions. Dong Jianli's "Preliminary Discussion on Five-Spouted Jars" outlines their characteristics and development, linking them to the Five Elements theory.(Dong, 2019) Cheng Xiaozhong argues that the spouts were for souls to enter and exit. In "On the Reasons for the Functional Transformation of multi-tube bottles from funerary objects to Flower Vases," scholars discuss this transformation during the Song dynasty, considering religion, floral arrangement, and design.(Jiang, 2021) Current research on multi-tube bottles is limited, with consensus on their funerary function but fragmented views on their daily use, indicating a need for further study.



Figure 1. Six-tube bottle unearthed from Husi Kiln of Song Dynasty (Wuhan Museum)



Figure 2. Replica of six-tube bottle (Made by Author)

3. METHODOLOGY

This article primarily employs the literature review method, examining relevant literature to understand the knowledge about multi-tube bottles, trace their development, and clarify the current state of research. This approach is combined with theories related to the political, economic, and cultural context of the Song Dynasty to provide insights and references for this study.

Additionally, the interdisciplinary research method is utilized, integrating theories, methods, and findings from history, ethnoarchaeology, and design studies to conduct a comprehensive study of six-tube bottles from the Hushi Kiln.(Ye, 2021) A key focus of this article is the application of ethnoarchaeological methods, a methodological discipline combining ethnology and archaeology, is employed here using a comparative phenomenological approach. By examining the economic, cultural background, and customs of the Song Dynasty, this article analyzes the evolution of multi-tube bottles, focusing on the relationship between human behavior and the social environment. The function of the six-tube bottle is assessed from the perspective of the cognition and behavior of Song Dynasty people.

4. THE EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SIX-TUBE BOTTLES

The six-tube bottle belongs to the category of multi-tube bottles, which originated in the Eastern Han Dynasty and has undergone continuous evolution from the Three Kingdoms to Qing dynasty, becoming one of the uniquely characteristic varieties of ancient Chinese porcelains.(Dong, 2009) Since the Han Dynasty, the practice of elaborate burials became prevalent, rooted in the belief that the soul persists and resides in another realm after death. The origin of multi-tube bottles is intertwined with the burial customs. Among the burial objects were provisions and funerary objects, including a type known as the Five-Spouted Jar (Figure 3). Characterized by a central vessel appended with four smaller ones around its belly, these jars fulfilled the practical purpose of storing grain within the tomb. The "five" in the Five-Spouted Jar corresponds to the Five Elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) in ancient Chinese philosophy. The theory of the Five Elements is an essential part of traditional Chinese culture, influencing the understanding of the universe, nature, and life. The Five-Spouted Jar filled with grain symbolizes the deceased balancing the Five Elements in the afterlife, maintaining harmony and tranquility, while also achieving the balance of yin and yang, ensuring peace and happiness.

From the middle of the Eastern Han Dynasty onward, the form of the Five-Spouted Jars began to increase in height, with their bellies adorned by added depictions of

human figures, animals, and architectural motifs.(Shen, 2016) These jars gradually transformed into Spirit Jars and Piling up Sculpture Jars, on which buildings became principal adornments with birds and mythical creatures like dragons and tigers perched atop, symbolically guiding spirits to heaven (Figure 4).

In the Tang Dynasty, in the Wu and Yue areas, numerous multi-horned bottles and pour-spouted bottles were unearthed, which functionally served as substitutes for Spirit Jars for storing grain. In the local Wu and Yue dialect, "guo"(角 horn) sounded similar to "gu"(谷 grain), implying these were funerary objects containing grains. The multi-horned jar, as suggested by its name, featured a stepped, pyramid-like body with multiple tiers adorned with horned protrusions, a design evolution from the earlier decorated Piling up Sculpture Jar (Figure 5). (Zhang, 2023)



Figure 3. Five-Spouted Jar from East Han Dynasty



Figure 4. A Celadon Piling up Sculpture Jar from Western Jin Dynasty



Figure 5. A Celadon Multi-Horned bottle from Tang Dynasty Yue Kiln

During the Northern Song Dynasty, society and the economy flourished, and aesthetic thought advanced significantly. Due to the threat from northern nomadic tribes, many artisans migrated south. The southern regions, including the Hushi area, were rich in forestry resources and porcelain clay, with access to the Yangtze River for transportation. This facilitated the development of kilns like the Hushi Kiln.

The Hushi Kiln produced large quantities of ceramics, meeting local and external demands. During this period, the ceramics industry thrived, and the techniques for firing multi-tube bottles improved significantly. Kilns such as Hushi, Longquan, Yue, Fanchang, and Hutian actively produced multi-tube bottles, contributing to the craft's prosperity and development (Figure 6).

Burial customs, mirroring societal norms, reflect changes in folk funeral practices and the evolving demands for burial objects. This context led to a diversified range of forms for multi-tube bottles to accommodate different burial customs, including those with four, five, six, seven, or even up to fifteen tubes(Wang, 2000). Entering the later period

of the Southern Song Dynasty, production of multi-tube bottles gradually ceased, supplanted by loong-tiger bottles (Figure 7), which became the new choice for funerary offerings. Concurrently, the function of multi-tube bottles has also undergone changes.



Figure 6. six-tube bottle of Hutian kiln in the Northern Song Dynasty



Figure 7. Loong-tiger bottle of Longquan Kiln in the Northern Song Dynasty

5. THE FUNCTION OF SIX-TUBE BOTTLE OF HUSI KILN

5.1 *The Funeral Function As a Funerary Objects*

In the minds of ancients, death was not an endpoint, but rather the beginning of passage to another world where the soul, eternal and indestructible, continued. Rooted in such primal beliefs and ideas, funerals became major societal events with funeral customs evolving alongside society, developing varied functions and meanings. The contents of burial object symbolized the deceased's former life and status(Jiang, 2019). The development of Five-Spouted Jar led to the evolution of Soul Bottle, which served as burial items and embodied certain religious beliefs. They originated from Five-Spouted Jar.(He, 1991) By the Song Dynasty, multi-tube bottles were frequently discovered alongside pour-spouted flasks and handled pots, with multi-tube bottles filled with grains and pour-spouted pots with wine, reflecting the belief in the undying soul's need for sustenance. (Xu, 2021)

During the Northern Song Dynasty, kilns such as Yue Kiln, Longquan Kiln, Fanchang Kiln, and Hutian Kiln were all engaged in the production of multi-tube bottles. Notably, the six-tube bottles produced by Hutian Kiln and Fanchang Kiln bear similarities to the six-tube bottle unearthed at the Husi Kiln. The five-tube bottles made by Longquan Kiln in the Song Dynasty also served as funerary utensils for storing grain. The Longquan Celadon Porcelain Museum houses a five-tube bottle from the Shenzong period of the Northern Song Dynasty, inscribed on its inner lid: "A woman named Wuniang, owns this grain barn; the palace of heaven welcomes her, the earth beneath welcomes her; Blessing Descendants with Longevity and Prosperity." The above examples can

support the role of multi-tube bottles including six-tube bottle from Hushi kiln as burial objects in Song Dynasty.

5.2 As a Function Of Vase Furnishings

Since the 5th century AD, the Chinese began to keep flowers in water-filled containers. In Buddhism, presenting fresh flowers before Buddha was referred to as "offering flowers," with "vase offering" being one method.(Huang, 2017) The "History of Southern Dynasty" mentions, "Those who offered lotus flowers to the Buddha, the monks used bronze pots filled with water to soak the stems, ensuring the flowers wouldn't wilt." This is the earliest historical record of "vase offerings" in Chinese Buddhism.(Jiang&Zhang, 2021).

In TaoGu's "Qingyi Lu (Record of Exotic Happenings)" from the Five Dynasties period, mentioned an innovative copper flower-arranging vessel called the Zhanjing Pan (Scene-Arranging Plate). As depicted by Huang Yongchuan in his book "History of Chinese Flower Arrangement" based on the description of Zhanjing Pan, "Zhan" (占) implies standing upright, while "Jing" (景) refers to scenery. Thus, the Zhanjing Pan was an arranger that enabled flowers to stand upright, forming exquisite landscapes (Figure 8). This invention marked a significant advancement in the art of flower arrangement and was later adapted onto vases.

By the Song Dynasty, ceramic versions resembling the Zhanjing Pan emerged as flower holders (Figure 9), with similar artifacts unearthed from different Kilns. Many vases integrating the design and function of the Zhanjing Pan appeared, such as the five-tube vase from the Northern Song. In addition to the five-tube flower arrangement, there are also six holes, nineteen holes, and even thirty-one holes (Figure 10), all of which are the evolution forms of Zhanjing Pan. The five-tube bottles of the Southern Song Dynasty in Longquan Kiln were discovered in the cellar of Jinyu Village, suggests it was likely not used for funerary object. Furthermore, intact multi-tube vases preserved in the National Palace Museum in Taipei and recovered from the XinAn Shipwreck indicate their probable use as decorative items in residences.



Figure 8. Zhanjing Pan (Painted by Huang Yongchuan)

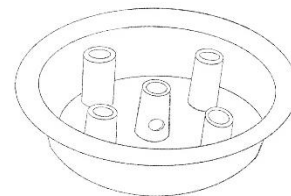


Figure 9. Longquan kiln green glaze five-tube flower insert(Painted by Author)



Figure 10. Thirty-one hole porcelain flower ware of Northern Song Dynasty
(Painted by Author)

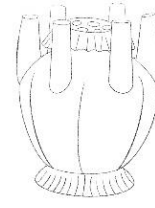


Figure 11. Husi kiln six-tube bottle
(Painted by Author)

During the Northern Song Dynasty, there were no fixed vase shapes, any vessel suitable for holding flowers could serve as a flower container. The multi-tube vase was an adaptation inspired by the Zhanjing Pan. Hence, the exquisitely crafted form, appropriate height, and long tubes attached to the body of the six-tube vase from Husi Kiln all conform to the criteria for a flower vase. Although this six-tube vase from Husi Kiln is a defective piece, measurements reveal a belly diameter of 11.8cm, a base diameter of 6.3cm, and a height of 12.5cm. If fired intact, its height would have been approximately 20cm (Figure 11). This type of six-tube vase not only features a ring of tubular structures above the belly for inserting flowers but also has holes in the lid that facilitate flower arrangement, further confirming its function as a flower vase.

5.3 As a Practical Function Of Aromatherapy

China boasts a long-standing culture of incense use, which, together with tea culture and flower arrangement, constitutes three major cultural phenomena in the country. The culture of incense embodies the Chinese people's pursuit of elegance and refined taste. (Tian, 2018) In ancient times, common types of incense materials included both animal and plant-based fragrances. The Song Dynasty boasted over a hundred varieties of incense ingredients, including ambergris, frankincense, sandalwood, and clove. Among these, the literati of the Song, who pursued refined atmospheres, favored and most used fatty or oleaginous incense materials, which produced less smoke and emitted gentle aromas. (Yu, 2015)

In the Song Dynasty, censers for incense burning were categorized into various styles such as tall-footed cup censers, lotus censers, Gaoshi censers, Boshan censers, and spherical censers. In terms of design, they were further divided into biomorphic shapes, landscape-inspired plant forms, and replicas of ancient utensils. Compared to the heights of censers from the Tang Dynasty, Song Dynasty incense burners generally measured around 10 centimeters in height, indicating a trend towards miniaturization, aligning well with the Song people's pursuit of elegant and intricate lifestyles.

Regarding the six-tube bottle unearthed from the Husi Kiln, its height does not match the average height of typical Song Dynasty incense burners. Being too tall hinders the

dispersion of fragrance effectively, and its large overall volume renders it less delicate when placed on a desk or table, falling short of the refined aesthetic desired by the Song people. In terms of design and functionality, compared to the small and intricately shaped Song Dynasty incense burners, the Husi six-tube bottle appears somewhat cumbersome. Practical operation of the replica of six-tube bottle (Figure 2) reveals that, while the six tubes and the holes in the bottle's lid could serve as outlets for the incense smoke, the small lid opening and excessive height make it difficult to manually place incense ash and charcoal inside the bottle, even with the aid of tools. The need to invert the bottle for cleaning out burnt ash, due to the tubes being connected to the body, risks scattering ashes from the six tubes, complicating the cleaning process and potentially creating a chaotic scene, which is incongruous with the Song people's rational, restrained, and refined manner of handling matters.

In summary, the likelihood of the Husi Kiln's six-tube bottle being used as an incense burner is relatively low.

5.4 As a Function of Candle Holder

During the Han Dynasty, pottery oil lamps were favored by the common people. The oil lamp contains liquid fuel; therefore, the design of the lamp pan is crucial and must adopt a bowl-shaped or cylindrical style with a mouth edge and volume. Some scholars propose that the multi-tube bottles of the Song Dynasty were utilized as lamps, with the method involving filling the bottle with lamp oil and using wicks that went through the multiple tubes. However, the six-tube bottle from the Husi Kiln appears oversized for such a purpose, requiring many times the amount of oil compared to conventional lamps. By the Song Dynasty, more oil-efficient lamps had already emerged (Figure 12), measuring around 5cm in height, whereas the tubes of the six-tube bottle are positioned much higher, over a dozen centimeters from the base. If a wick were to slip down, retrieval would prove extremely difficult. Therefore, the author believes that the argument as a lamp is not valid and will not be discussed too much here. Some scholars have also proposed that the multi-tube bottle is used as a candlestick, and the six tubes of the bottle are used to place candles, which can be discussed.

After the Three Kingdoms and the Jin dynasties, due to the widened source of porcelain clay raw materials and the development of the ceramics industry, the market share of porcelain lamps gradually exceeded that of pottery lamps because of their low price. During the Qin and Han dynasties, candles were used as a lighting tool. The candle holder held candles, which were slender solid fuels and would not easily move, so there was no need for a lamp tray like oil lamps. During the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern dynasties, there were animal-shaped candle holders and hollow tube-type candle holders, which were divided into single-tube and multi-tube candle holders. The single-

tube candle holder was mostly in the shape of animals or humans, with a tubular candle insert standing on its back. The multi-tube candle holder had three or four tubes, with candle tubes on top and a base on the bottom (Figure 13). During the Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties period, lamps were widely promoted among the common people. Porcelain lamps and candle holders became the main types of lamps used by the middle and lower classes. The use of candles increased during the Tang Dynasty. With the emergence of high tables and chairs at that time, the height of household items tended to decrease. The design of Tang Dynasty candle holders was unique, with the single-tube hollow type being the main type. This type of candle holder was usually composed of four parts: a wash-shaped plate, a lamp column, a lamp tray, and an outer high ring foot. The structure was clear, and the function was practical. The lamp tray was a shallow disc like an oil lamp, with a hollow tube in the center, specifically for inserting candles (Figure 14).



Figure 12. Pottery oil saving lamp from Song Dynasty



Figure 13. Rosette candle holder from Northern Wei Dynasty



Figure 14. Coiled dragon candle holder from Tang Dynasty

The porcelain candle holders of the Song Dynasty continued to develop based on the Tang Dynasty, mostly in the form of single-tube hollow candle holders. The porcelain candle holders of the Song Dynasty were mostly two-tiered. For example, this blue glaze porcelain candle holder is composed of a plate, a tray, and a base, with a total height of 13.5 cm, exquisite and small (Figure 15). This bluish-white glaze candle holder is also two-tiered, with a cylindrical middle part and two small shallow bowls on top and bottom. (Figure 16). There were also candle holders with handles, such as this plate-shaped single-handle candle holder, (Figure 17) which is composed of a chassis, a post with string patterns, a small lamp tray on the post, and a handle on the side of the post, forming a beautiful shape.(Qing, 2008) It can be seen that the shape of the candle holder of the Song Dynasty generally has two tiers, with the upper tier being the position for placing candles, and the open mouth facilitating the placement of candles and the collection of wax oil after burning. Overall, the height is also relatively low. In terms of volume, the volume ratio of the Husi Kiln six-tube bottle to the tube body is not

suitable for use as a candle holder for inserting candles. The tube body is too small, and the tube mouth is too thin. Moreover, scholars and elegant people of the Song Dynasty preferred exquisite and small candle holder decorations. The tube body of the Husi Kiln six-tube bottle is too thin, and the tube body is connected to the bottle body. When a candle is placed in the tube, there is a section that cannot be burned, and it is also inconvenient to clean and remove, which easily causes waste and does not conform to the setting of a candle holder. Finally, in terms of shape, the Husi Kiln six-tube bottle does not have the characteristics and functions of a Song Dynasty candle holder, and there is no place to receive the wax oil produced after burning. Therefore, the author believes that the claim that the Husi Kiln six-tube bottle is a candle holder is invalid.



Figure 15. Porcelain candle holder from Song Dynasty



Figure 16. Bluish-white glaze printing candle holder from Song Dynasty



Figure 17. Single-handle candle holder from Song Dynasty

5.5 Summary

According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, the six-tube bottle from the Song Dynasty, as an exquisite craft, represents a form of material cultural capital. Its materials, craftsmanship, and decorative style reflect the owner's wealth and social status, showcasing their taste and cultural capital. Fine porcelain items or those with specific functions, such as six-tube flower vases, illustrate social stratification. Families possessing these elegant bottles were typically part of the upper class. However, in the Song Dynasty, a highly developed socio-economic era, people from all walks of life tended to imitate the taste of literati and scholars. The six-tube bottles likely played a role in various cultural activities and ceremonies, such as religious rituals or scholarly gatherings, where it was used as a flower vase. These cultural practices, through continuous repetition and reinforcement, became internalized as social norms and cultural habits among members of society, leading to the widespread use of six-spouted jars in daily life.

6. CONCLUSION

The discovery of the Husi Kiln site is of great significance for studying the development of the ceramics industry in Hubei, as well as for researching the economy, population, and culture of Jiangxia during the Song Dynasty. This article examines the functions of the six-tube bottle, exploring hypotheses regarding its use as a funerary object, a vase for flower arrangements, an incense burner, or a candlestick. Through these investigations, the study clarifies the specific historical uses of these artifacts, enriching our understanding of ancient Chinese craftsmanship. This research allows for a deeper understanding of the multifunctionality and cultural significance of the six-tube bottle, revealing the diversity of material culture and social practices during the Song Dynasty. It provides a more comprehensive view of ancient Chinese lifestyles and ceremonial customs. This investigation goes beyond exploring the functions of the six-tube bottle, it delves into the process of ceramic industry and cultural development in Jiangxia during the Song Dynasty. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will inspire more scholars to explore Husi Kiln ceramics, promote archaeological efforts to gather more evidence, and enhance societal awareness of the Husi Kiln and its cultural significance, thereby fostering the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

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CRAFTING NEW RITUALS THROUGH INTERRITUALITY: A COMMUNITY CASE FROM MALANG, INDONESIA

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Abstract: This article examines how a citizen group in East Java, Hurip Hurup Handarbeni (H3), designs “new rituals” to care for local springs. We use “new ritual” to mean a community-built ceremony that recombines familiar symbols and steps and turns environmental aims into clear, shared rules of conduct. Building on the idea of interrituality, the blending of elements from different ritual repertoires, we show how H3 joins Javanese processions, multi-faith prayer, and civic/disaster signage to make water care visible and actionable at Sumber Wutah. The study draws on seven months of ethnographic, including participant observation and in-depth interviews. Findings indicate that the ritual script does more than raise awareness: it widens participation (officials, elders, youth, visitors), encodes simple rules through color-wrapped trees and banners (“quiet area,” “soap-free,” extraction etiquette), and supports ongoing site maintenance between events. Conceptually, the case clarifies how performance and interrituality can give grassroots initiatives moral authority without large budgets. Practically, it offers a portable template, clear route, cues, and signs that other communities can adapt to protect small water sources. We conclude that carefully crafted ritual can translate cultural heritage into everyday stewardship and help coordinate behavior at sensitive ecological sites.

Keywords: Water conservation; ritual; culture

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1. INTRODUCTION

Around the world, growing environmental pressures are pushing communities to use cultural practices to address local problems (Crate, 2011). Many studies show how long-standing rituals can support conservation (Fariss et al., 2023). By contrast, scholar has paid relatively limited attention to describe how communities create or crafting new rituals to meet today's needs. This article responds to that gap by examining the Hurip Hurup Handarbeni (H3) community in Mangliawan, East Java, Indonesia, which designs new rituals to protect local springs.

In this study, we observe that the H3 community responds to local challenges by creating new rituals to promote environmental awareness, with particular attention to water preservation. The term new ritual refers to a ritual form composed by combining elements from existing ceremonies, drawing both from practices within the community and from other communities. Following Hornborg (Hornborg, 2017), we describe the practice of composing new rituals by blending multiple ritual repertoires as interrituality.

We use "new ritual" to mean a community-made performance that (a) recombines familiar symbols and sequences, (b) sets new environmental aims, and (c) turns those aims into simple, shared rules of conduct. In H3, this "newness" appears in the blend of Javanese ceremony, multi-faith prayer, and contemporary environmental messages. These performances do more than raise awareness: they build solidarity, invite people from different backgrounds to join, and help set everyday norms for how water sources should be treated.

This study asks how H3's new ritual practices support community engagement, practical conservation, and local knowledge around spring preservation in Mangliawan. Treating ritual as performance, we pay attention to route design, sensory cues, role assignment, and ritual visuality to see how symbols become clear guidance at the spring site.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rituals within a culture are often seen as highly structured activities, governed by intricate rules and precise procedures. This perception has led many to view rituals as static and resistant to change, serving primarily to reinforce established cultural norms (Brown, 2003). Through their repetition and formalism, rituals appear to safeguard values and transmit them across generations.

However, Eric Hobsbawm challenges this static view. Hobsbawm's account of the *invention of tradition* demonstrates that what is presented as continuity is often assembled, formalized, and redeployed to serve contemporary political, economic, or moral purposes, while retaining the appearance of antiquity and authority (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012). On this reading, tradition functions as a flexible repertoire rather than a fixed inheritance.

In addition, Grimes argues that ritual formation is not the exclusive domain of religious specialists; lay actors have long adapted, combined, and at times, devised ceremonial forms of their own (Grimes, 1992). In urban and peri-urban contexts, neighborhood associations and civic groups routinely stage commemorations, blessings, and place-based observances that attach moral claims to specific sites (Dell'Aglio, 2025). This perspective provides a basis for treating grassroots initiatives, such as the Hurip Hurup Handarbeni (H3) community as legitimate producers of ritual.

Bell sharpens the mechanism by which such legitimacy is secured. She conceptualizes ritualization as a strategic way of marking action as special through stylization, repetition, and framing, thereby authorizing values and coordinating behavior (Bell, 1992). Non-elite actors can, in this view, secure recognition by adopting recognizable forms, repeating them publicly, and embedding cues that guide conduct. Communities do not merely inherit rituals; they actively ritualize practices to address present needs.

Performance oriented approaches further shift attention from belief to enactment. Turner and subsequent performance theorists understand ritual as an event that organizes bodies, space, and time; roles, pacing, and sensory cues cultivate shared meaning and solidarity (Turner, 1980). Turner's model of social drama: breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration or schism offers a processual lens for moments when communities mobilize ceremonial forms to repair social and moral order (Turner, 1979).

The concept of interrituality, introduced by Moyaert (2019) and Hornborg (2017), is central to this analysis. Interrituality refers to the process by which elements from different rituals and traditions are combined to create new practices that resonate with contemporary social, cultural, or ecological needs. In this research, interrituality provides a lens to examine how the H3 community blends traditional Javanese symbols, environmental messages, and modern ritual practices to foster greater community awareness and responsibility for water preservation.

Building on these strands, this study employs two working concepts. New ritual refers to community-authored performance that recombines familiar symbols and sequences,

ties them to explicit contemporary aims, and translates those aims into clear rules of conduct. Interrituality denotes the purposeful blending of elements from distinct repertoires (e.g., Javanese cosmology, multi-faith prayer, and civic/disaster iconography) to broaden participation and render instructions legible. Together, invention, performance, and interritality provide a coherent framework for analyzing how H3 designs and enacts new rituals that link cultural continuity to practical stewardship of local springs.

A complementary point comes from recent work on water itself. Water is not only a resource but a relationship that asks for responsibility. Research on sacred sites and community water governance shows that ceremony help people remember rules, set boundaries of use, and carry duties across time (Diver et al., 2022). New studies on drinking water governance describe how communities can bridge state systems with local norms to keep water safe and accessible (Acharibasam et al., 2024), while work on Indigenous water relations reframes care as a duty to a living presence (Martinez-Cruz et al., 2024). The H3 case fits this evidence by putting respect, restraint, and routine maintenance at the heart of everyday encounters with the spring.

Taken together, this literature shows that ritual is not a fixed inheritance but an active repertoire that communities can assemble for present needs. Invention and ritualization help lay actors give familiar forms a new purpose and public authority, coordinating conduct around shared places and. A performance view explains how sequences, roles, and sensory cues turn values into collective action and help repair social life when tensions arise. Interrituality clarifies how H3 blends Javanese symbols, multi-faith prayer, civic markers, and environmental messages to widen participation and keep instructions clear. Finally, work on water governance grounds these choices in an ethic of responsibility, showing how ceremony and local rules sustain safe and respectful use of springs over time. Guided by these insights, this article uses the working ideas of new ritual and interritality to read H3's design as a bridge between cultural continuity and everyday stewardship.

3. METHODOLOGY

Our project began as a plan to produce a documentary film on water preservation in the city of Malang. During production, we followed the H3 community, which patiently designed rituals to promote environmental awareness. We observed their activities, conducted interviews, and took part in community events. The filmmaking process was accompanied by ethnographic fieldwork carried out over a period of seven months.

We combined ethnographic methods with the collection of visual materials, which proved highly valuable for examining perceptions and behavior in a study of ritual

performance (Jaimangal-Jones, 2014). Our original goal was to document the community's environmental conservation efforts, particularly around the water sources in Mangliawan District, Malang Regency. However, as the research progressed, our focus expanded to investigate how the H3 community employs newly created rituals to respond meaningfully to environmental challenges.



Figure 1: Research team documenting ritual activities of the H3 community in Mangliawan, Malang

Participant observation was our primary research method. Over seven months (January–July 2024), we participated in and closely observed 4 ritual events and community gatherings. Our observations focused on key elements such as spatial arrangements, sensory experiences (including the use of incense, prayer chants, and symbolic offerings), and embodied practices that reinforced community solidarity and environmental messages. By immersing ourselves in daily interactions and communal activities, we gained insights into the deeper significance and symbolic meanings embedded in these rituals. Participant observation was very useful for noticing the planned details of the ritual. It allowed the researcher to record embodied practices such as gestures, speech, posture, rhythm, and the sequence of actions (Cain & Scrivner, 2022).

We conducted in-depth interviews with 11 community members, consisting of two community members, two founding members who shaped the vision of H3, one ritual coordinator who managed ceremonial proceedings, one woman involved in ritual preparations, and five regular participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to

90 minutes. These interviews provided personal narratives, revealing individual motivations, interpretations, and emotional connections to the rituals, thus enriching our understanding of how traditional and contemporary practices are woven together to address pressing environmental issues.

Additionally, we collected and analyzed various audio-visual materials, including photographs and video recordings from past ritual events and community activities. Analysis of these visual archives provided evidence of the evolution of H3's environmental advocacy, highlighting how visual documentation reinforced the community's message and facilitated broader public engagement. Through the triangulation of these methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and audio-visual analysis, we demonstrate how rituals serve not only as effective tools for environmental advocacy but also as vital mechanisms for preserving and revitalizing cultural heritage within contemporary contexts.

Because the public life of the ritual depends on being seen, we used a visual ethnography approach to trace how visibility is created and how it travels beyond the event (Malafaia et al., 2025). Filming and still photography functioned as research tools rather than simple records. We mapped vantage points, crowd lines, and sightlines to the spring, and noted the placement of signs, color wraps, offerings, incense, and banners that draw attention and guide movement. We gathered wide shots and close observations to follow gestures, rhythm, smoke, and sound as cues that organize perception. We then used short video clips and photographs in interview elicitation so participants could comment on what they noticed, remembered, and felt.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Living Among the Springs

Nestled on the western edge of Malang Regency, Mangliawan is a village in East Java, Indonesia, blessed with abundant springs that flow from the rocky cracks of the surrounding mountains. This natural wealth has long supported the local community's way of life, providing fresh water not only for farming and household needs but also as a draw for visitors seeking the beauty of clear, flowing streams.



Figure 2: rice paddies that once shaped daily life now stand alongside newly built houses and roads, reflecting how villagers balance farming traditions with rapid urban growth.

Mangliawan Village lies on the eastern fringe of Malang Regency, a landscape once dominated by rice paddies nourished by a network of perennial springs. In recent years, however, many fields have been replaced by housing clusters and small commercial buildings, while infrastructure such as a cellular tower now punctuates the skyline. More buildings not only change the view but also add pressure on the shallow groundwater that feeds the springs H3 wants to protect.

Farmers we spoke with reported declining water discharge during the dry season, a change they attribute to shrinking recharge areas and increased runoff from newly paved surfaces. In this situation, H3 sees its rituals as warnings. They remind people that every new roof or paved road affects the water, and that everyone must work together to protect it.

Despite its blessing of numerous water sources, Mangliawan today faces serious challenges. Pollution and accumulating waste threaten the springs' sustainability, creating deep concern among residents and environmental advocates (Kewuel & Aileen, 2023). The H3 community has taken these issues to heart, watching with worry as climate change and rapid spatial changes in Malang which urbanization and the conversion of green spaces bring added risks. Growing populations and expanding

infrastructure have reduced water catchment areas, raising fears of future water shortages (Mahendra & Pradoto, 2016).

Amid these pressing challenges, H3 members see themselves not only as beneficiaries of Mangliawan's springs but also as custodians, committed to preserving this invaluable resource for generations to come. In H3's view, the ceremonies function as public warnings and as invitations to collective care, an approach that aligns with our earlier framing of new ritual as a performance crafted by the community that links cultural continuity to practical stewardship.

4.2 History of the Hurip Hurup Handarbeni

The community was formed by individuals who loved venturing into local villages and exploring the surrounding natural landscape. They came from diverse professional backgrounds but were united in their joy of traversing footpaths, fields, rice paddies, and forests. Through these shared experiences, they found a simple happiness in discovering nature's beauty, offering them a momentary escape from daily routines.

Over time the group saw that the places they loved were under strain. Conversations about climate change and shifts in land use resonated with what they observed on their walks: litter along banks, muddied channels, and fewer areas where water could soak into the ground. They chose to learn more about disaster mitigation and to take practical steps to care for these sites.

From this decision came a new name, Hurip Hurup Handarbeni (H3). The change signaled an intention to align environmental protection with cultural tradition. Members began to weave local wisdom into their activities, designing ceremonies and practices that could speak to both heritage and present ecological needs. Through H3 they hoped to encourage a wider sense of responsibility for water while honoring the cultural forms that shape village life.

The name itself carries that message. In Javanese, *handarbeni* refers to a felt sense of ownership, one that implies duty to nature, culture, and community. It suggests that ownership is not only material but also moral and emotional. *Hurip* means life, and *hurup* evokes brightness, a reminder of the vitality they wish to sustain in the places they protect.

Logo design became part of this effort to communicate clearly. Mr. Orien, one of the founders, adapted the emblem of Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana, BNPB). Guided by the ideal of *Memayu Hayuning Bawono*—enhancing the beauty of the world—the logo adopts a triangular

form familiar from BNPB, places a *gunungan* from *wayang kulit* to suggest the cosmos, and adds a handshake above the motto *Dulur Tunggal Banyu* (“Water Kin”).



Figure 3: Indonesia’s National Disaster Management Agency Logo and Hurop Hurup Handarbeni (H3) Logo

This design choice is both symbolic and strategic. By echoing the BNPB emblem, H3 situates its work within a language of public responsibility that is recognized at the state level. The *gunungan* brings local cosmology into view, joining official disaster preparedness with Javanese signs of order and care. Together these elements give the logo a double function: it lends legitimacy when H3 engages officials and it carries cultural meaning within ritual practice at the spring.

4.3 Crafting the New Ritual

An interview with one founding member, Mr. Junaedi, underscored a deliberate decision to safeguard springs near the settlement. That conviction set the community on a path to design a new ritual that would draw attention to local waters and teach appropriate conduct at the site. The process unfolded in four phases that echo our literature on ritualization and performance: observing, deliberating, arranging, and performing.



Figure 4: Members of the H3 community walk in procession across the rice fields toward Sumber Wutah spring. Bright green, yellow, orange, white, and black flags lead the group, drawing the eye and marking the path to water, while women carry offerings behind the flag bearers.

4.3.1 Observing

In early 2023 the group undertook *tilik banyu*, a walk to locate potential sources. They identified a vigorous spring that they later named *Sumber Wutah*, a term that denotes abundance. The spring sits near the meeting of two rivers, locally called a *tempuran*, a place long treated as sacred in Javanese cosmology. Although once used for meditation, the area had become neglected, partly because it lies behind housing and receives little day-to-day attention. Litter was visible along the banks, and paths showed signs of erosion. These observations clarified both the ecological pressures and the pedagogical aims that a new ritual would need to address.

In Javanese, *tilik* means to pay a visit, often used for visiting someone who is ill at home or in the hospital. Such a visit is not only to check a person's condition but also a gesture of care and empathy. The H3 community uses the phrase *Tilik Banyu*, "visiting the water," to show the same attention toward a spring. In practice, *Tilik Banyu* moves volunteers to clean the site: they remove litter, cut back weeds, and tidy the area so the spring does not look abandoned. Working together in the spirit of *gotong royong*, they improve the condition of Sumber Wutah.



Figure 5: Volunteers pause in a shaded grove near Sumber Wutah after cleaning the spring. Sitting in a circle, they raise their hands in prayer before a shared lunch arranged on banana leaves.

4.3.2 Deliberating

Informal discussions at the community office followed. Members invited academics, local historians, and tradition bearers to test ideas and to place *Sumber Wutah* within a wider cultural frame. During their discussions on the form of the ritual, the H3 community gathered many sources to design a new practice that fits the present. They first needed to set the date for the ceremony at Sumber Wutah. In Javanese tradition, a ceremony day is often chosen by finding a good day in the Javanese calendar. In addition, the H3 members also looked at the international calendar, especially dates related to the environment. They searched for information on the internet using Google. After deliberation, they agreed to hold the ritual on World Environment Day, 5 June. This choice was meant to link tradition with environmental preservation.

In the discussions, H3 also noted Mangliawan's historical status in Javanese records and pointed to the region's position relative to Mount Arjuna, Mount Kawi, and the Bromo Tengger Semeru area. The spring was proposed as a cultural site that could anchor learning about water. These exchanges provided what Bell (1992) calls authorization through practice. They also illustrate the invention of tradition in Hobsbawm's sense (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012), since references to the past were recomposed to serve a present environmental purpose.

Sumber Wutah spring lies near an archaeological site that shows traces of a civilization that existed before the Majapahit kingdom. In several historical records, the old village of Mangliawan is described as a beautiful place with many very clear springs. Among these springs stood rows of settlements and many temples (Galeswangi, 2025). For the H3 community, these records are a valuable source of inspiration for crafting new rituals around Mangliawan.



Figure 6: H3 member pray in front of a split yoni stone and an antefix. A yoni is a pedestal in Hindu temple architecture that symbolizes feminine generative power. The site stands beside the Sumber Wutah spring.

4.3.3 Arranging

The H3 community then converted discussion into a repeatable script. The route begins upstream and slows at marked thresholds where incense and flowers cue reverence. Elders lead prayers in Javanese and Arabic, and moments of silence allow participants to register sounds of water and birds. A system of colors on wrapped trees introduces a hierarchy of water use: white signals a basin for ritual respect, yellow indicates domestic filling with etiquette, and a black and white checkered cloth signifies that the water is available for everyday use, but it must be treated with due respect. Banners display a triangular mark adapted from the national disaster agency alongside the *gunungan* and short directives such as “quiet area,” “free of soap,” and “ritual use only.” Taken together, these elements function as environmental semiotics. They translate affect into instruction and give newcomers clear guidance without the need for constant verbal explanation.

In designing the new ritual at Sumber Wutah, the H3 community paid close attention to the visual elements they would show. They made a *tumpeng*, rice shaped into a cone and colored with butterfly pea flowers extract (*Clitoria ternatea*). The blue *tumpeng* was made to stand out and was arranged with offering flowers and fragrant incense. The *tumpeng* and offerings were placed near the spring as part of the ritual, symbolizing a request for forgiveness from the ancestors for having neglected a precious water source. Javanese people call this blue *tumpeng* as “Tumpeng Kapuranto” (Ababil et al., 2021)



Figure 7: Tumpeng made with butterfly pea flower sits on a leaf-lined tray, surrounded by flower offerings and gentle incense smoke near Sumber Wutah spring

4.3.4 Performing the ritual

After cleaning the site and placing signs, H3 convened a public ceremony. Those present included village officials, elders, a customary council, scholars, youth groups, and visitors from neighboring communities. The village head welcomed the gathering and thanked H3 for restoring the spring as a green and sacred space. A representative of the local water company spoke about the value of community action for clean water. Traditional leaders then recognized *Sumber Wutah* as a place for *patirtan*, that is ritual purification. The sequence that followed layered prayers, flower offerings, and incense. One academic participant crossed himself before and after praying. Such moments illustrate interrituality in practice, since diverse repertoires were held in a single space with shared purpose.



Figure 8: H3 community members offer prayers in traditional Javanese clothing while burning incense at the Sumber Wutah spring.

Members also wrapped nearby trees in agreed colors so everyone could see the hierarchy of water use. The event ended with a shared meal featuring *dawet*, a Javanese drink of soft green jelly made from rice flour and tapioca, flavored and colored with pandan or suji, and served in coconut milk with palm-sugar syrup. In many villages, *dawet* is offered when a new well is opened, together with rice and side dishes prepared by local women. Eating together strengthened ties and gave organizers a chance to invite volunteers for future maintenance.

Viewed through our framework, the H3 script operates as a new ritual authored by a grassroots community. It recombines familiar symbols, secures local authorization through public repetition, and encodes rules that can be remembered and followed. The ceremony functions as redressive action, since it marks conduct as special and coordinates behavior at a sensitive site. It is also an instance of the invention of tradition, because references to the past are assembled to serve present stewardship. In practical terms, the design standardizes clean-ups, establishes zones that are free of soap, clarifies extraction etiquette, and sustains attention to the spring beyond the day of the event.

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined how the Hurip Hurup Handarbeni community designs new ritual forms to care for local springs. Over seven months of fieldwork, combining participant observation, interviews, and visual analysis, we documented how H3 assembles processions, prayers, offerings, and site markers into a repeatable ceremony at Sumber Wutah. The ritual draws on familiar symbols and clear environmental messages, and it is staged in ways that participants from different backgrounds can understand and carry forward.

The findings point to concrete effects on awareness and participation. The ceremony brought together officials, elders, youth, and visitors from nearby communities. It did more than state ideals. It introduced rules that were visible and easy to remember. Colors on wrapped trees signaled a hierarchy of water use. Banners marked quiet areas and zones free of soap. Short messages clarified how to draw water with care. Between events, participants kept paths and signs in good order and corrected inappropriate behavior. In this way, performance helped turn concern into shared routines at the spring.

These results speak to broader debates in cultural and environmental studies. The case makes new ritual a workable concept for analyzing community action, showing how cultural continuity can support practical stewardship. It also gives substance to interterritoriality by demonstrating how elements from different repertoires can be blended to widen recognition and lower barriers to participation. Finally, it shows that new ritual can be a strategy through which nonelite actors mark conduct as special and coordinate behavior at a sensitive site.

The study meets its objectives by explaining how H3's ritual design enables community engagement, practical conservation, and local knowledge building around spring preservation in Mangliawan. Theoretically, it refines the vocabulary for studying community authored ritual in contemporary settings and clarifies how blended symbolism gains authority through repetition and public uptake. Practically, it offers a template that other small communities can adapt, with simple cues, portable signs, a clear sequence of acts, and regular events that anchor low cost maintenance and peer learning. The approach fits collaboration with local authorities and does not depend on large budgets.

6. CONCLUSION

The H3 case shows how a community can turn ceremony into a practical form of care and local governance, not just a symbol. By blending familiar forms with clear cues at Sumber Wutah, the group translates shared values into simple rules people remember and follow. Volunteers keep paths, markers, and signs in good order between events, which helps the script travel from one gathering to daily use. Because the format is public, repeatable, and low cost, it offers a template other small communities can adapt to protect springs. This reading fits work that frames ritual as nature-based governance (Herrmann-Pillath, 2024) and as collaborative care that returns attention, labor, and authority to those closest to place. It helps explain why H3's design stabilizes everyday conduct and strengthens collective stewardship.

A second point is about how people relate to water. Water is not only a resource but a relationship that asks for responsibility. Studies of sacred sites and community water governance show that ceremony and teaching help people remember rules, set boundaries of use, and carry duties across time (Diver et al., 2022). New work on drinking water governance describes how communities can bridge state systems with local norms to keep water safe and accessible (Acharibasam et al., 2024), while research on Indigenous water relations reframes care as a duty to a living presence (Martinez-Cruz et al., 2024). The H3 case matches this evidence by placing respect, restraint, and routine maintenance at the center of everyday encounters with the spring.

There are limits to what we can claim here. This is one village and one cycle of design and performance. Future work should follow the ritual across seasons, compare similar edge-of-city settings, and pair ethnography with measures of flow, water quality, and rule compliance. Even so, the lesson is clear. Carefully crafted ritual can act as everyday governance at sensitive sites, linking cultural continuity to practical stewardship and widening participation without large budgets. Tracking ecological indicators and institutional uptake will show how durable this approach can be over time.

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THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL IDENTITY ON THE LOCAL BRAND OF GUILIN, CHINA: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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Abstract : In today's global tourism and urban development context, the relationship between cultural identity and place branding has become a key area of research. This study explores the intricate interplay between cultural identity and place branding strategies using Guilin, a city renowned for its natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage, as the primary case study. This study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of how cultural identity influences place branding strategies and outcomes. The study adopts a qualitative approach, primarily through in-depth interviews with Guilin residents, tourists, and stakeholders, and supported by secondary data analysis. The findings are expected to highlight the important impact of cultural identity on place branding, enhance brand equity, promote place attachment, and influence stakeholder engagement. This study aims to facilitate the development of more authentic, culturally resonant, and effective place branding plans to enhance Guilin's global competitiveness and promote the long-term sustainability and preservation of its cultural assets and traditions.

Keywords: Cultural identity, Local brand, Guilin, China

1. INTRODUCTION

In destination marketing and tourism, place branding has received widespread attention as cities and regions strive to stand out in a competitive global environment. Place branding encompasses the essence, values and unique attributes of a destination, shaping its identity and influencing the perceptions of potential tourists and stakeholders (Kavaratzis, 2005). Cultural identity is a fundamental component of a destination's characteristics and plays a vital role in this branding process. Cultural elements such as traditions, customs, history and local practices contribute to the uniqueness of a place. They are key drivers in attracting tourists and fostering a sense of belonging among residents (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003).

Guilin, located in China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, offers a compelling case study for exploring the relationship between cultural identity and place branding. Famous for its stunning scenery, including the iconic karst mountains and the winding Li River, Guilin has long been renowned for its natural beauty. Beyond its picturesque charm, Guilin also boasts a rich cultural heritage characterised by unique customs, ethnic diversity, and historical significance. The city's cultural identity, which is deeply rooted in its local traditions and values, has the potential to greatly influence its place branding efforts and shape the perceptions of domestic and foreign tourists. Despite the recognised importance of cultural elements in destination branding, there is limited understanding of how to integrate these elements into place branding strategies, particularly in the context of Guilin. Existing literature tends to focus on the economic aspects of tourism or general branding principles while neglecting the subtle interplay between Guilin's unique cultural characteristics and place branding (Freeman, 1984). As China continues to position itself as a leading global tourism destination, there is a growing need to explore its cities' and regions' unique cultural attributes to develop effective and sustainable place branding strategies.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Influence of Cultural Identity on Place Branding

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of cultural identity on the Guilin's place brand. By examining the perceptions, experiences, and narratives of key stakeholders, including residents, cultural experts, and tourism professionals, this study aims to reveal how cultural identity influences Guilin's place branding. By adopting a qualitative research approach that includes in-depth interviews and document analysis, this study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between Guilin's cultural identity and place branding.

The theoretical basis of cultural identity covers multiple frameworks, including consensus theory, symbolic interaction theory, and language theory. Cultural identity is a deep sense of belonging and identification with specific cultural elements influenced by historical, social, and geographical factors. It profoundly affects individuals' self-cognition and group cohesion and is important in shaping and spreading local brands. In Guilin, China, how cultural identity affects its brand shaping and dissemination has become a topic worthy of in-depth discussion.

On the other hand, place branding involves creating a recognisable identity for a place and using that identity to advance various ideals, such as financial investment and political capital. The formation and development of place brands rely on unique natural resources, historical traditions, and cultural heritage. Guilin's cultural identity, characterised by its rich history, natural landscapes, and cultural customs, provides unique resources for its place branding. This paper explores the impact of cultural identity on the place brand of Guilin, China, by combing through relevant literature.

Cultural identity often serves as a foundation for local branding strategies. Brands strategically integrate cultural elements to create a connection with the local population, fostering a sense of authenticity and belonging. For instance, the use of local symbols, folklore, or historical references in branding can create a strong association with the cultural heritage of a place. This practice is evident in the branding of cities like Guilin, China, where local symbols such as the Li River and traditional Chinese aesthetics are central to its identity as the "Heartbeat of China" (Zhou, 2021). By leveraging these cultural symbols, Guilin's branding resonates with both locals and tourists, enhancing its appeal as a culturally rich destination.

Language and communication are also critical components in integrating cultural identity into branding. Brands that incorporate local dialects, proverbs, or culturally relevant narratives in their advertising are often perceived as more relatable. This strategy not only improves brand recall but also deepens the emotional connection between the brand and the consumer (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Moreover, brands that emphasise traditional craftsmanship or local production methods appeal to cultural pride, particularly in industries like fashion, food, and artisanal products. For example, Peruvian fashion brands such as Kuna emphasise the use of traditional Andean materials and designs, which not only appeal to local pride but also attract international consumers interested in authentic, culturally rich products (Garcia & Tellez, 2019).

Local festivals and events offer another avenue for brands to embed themselves in the cultural fabric of a community. Participation in or sponsorship of these events allows brands to be seen as a part of the local culture, leading to enhanced visibility and positive associations. Starbucks in China exemplifies this strategy by integrating

traditional Chinese architectural styles into its stores and offering localised menu items during significant cultural events like the Mid-Autumn Festival (Lin, 2020). This localisation strategy has led to strong brand acceptance and growth in the Chinese market, demonstrating the effectiveness of cultural integration in branding.

The integration of cultural elements into branding significantly influences consumer attitudes and behaviours. When a brand authentically represents cultural elements, it is often perceived as more trustworthy and authentic. This perception fosters consumer loyalty, as consumers are more likely to support brands they believe align with their cultural values (Aaker, 1997). Cultural relevance also plays a crucial role in evoking feelings of pride and identity affirmation. Consumers who see their cultural identity reflected in a brand are more likely to develop a strong emotional connection with it, leading to increased brand advocacy and positive word-of-mouth promotion (Holt, 2004).

Moreover, cultural relevance directly influences consumer purchasing behaviour. Brands that resonate with a consumer's cultural identity are more likely to be preferred over those that do not. This preference is particularly pronounced in markets where cultural preservation is valued, and consumers seek products that reflect their heritage (Schmitt, 2012). However, brands must be cautious in their approach to cultural integration. A failure to respect or understand local cultural nuances can lead to significant backlash. Cultural insensitivity, or worse, cultural appropriation, can result in negative publicity, boycotts, and long-term damage to a brand's reputation (Warren, 2018).

While the benefits of integrating cultural identity into branding are clear, there are several challenges that brands must navigate. One significant challenge is balancing modernity and tradition. Brands must strike a balance between honouring traditional cultural elements and appealing to modern sensibilities. An overemphasis on tradition can make a brand seem outdated while ignoring it can alienate the local market (De Mooij, 2019). Additionally, multinational brands often face the challenge of adapting their global identity to local cultures without losing their core brand essence. Successful localisation requires a deep understanding of the local culture and strategic integration of cultural elements that align with the brand's global image (Levitt, 1983).

Moreover, cultural appropriation poses a significant risk for brands. Appropriation occurs when cultural elements are used in a way that is disrespectful or insensitive, often for commercial gain without understanding or honouring the cultural significance behind them. This can lead to significant backlash and damage to the brand's reputation, as seen in numerous cases where brands have been accused of exploiting cultural symbols or traditions for profit (Root, 1996).

Cultural identity is a powerful force in shaping local brand perception. Brands that successfully integrate cultural elements into their branding strategies can enhance consumer attitudes, foster deeper connections, and positively influence purchasing behaviours. However, this integration must be done with authenticity and respect for local traditions to avoid negative consequences. As global markets become increasingly interconnected, the ability of brands to navigate cultural nuances will be crucial to their success. By understanding and respecting cultural identity, brands can position themselves as genuine parts of the local cultural fabric, leading to long-term brand loyalty and market success.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

In the context of exploring the impact of cultural identity on the local brands of Guilin, China, the development of hypotheses is a crucial step in the research process. Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, several hypotheses have been formulated to guide the conceptual study.

Hypothesis 1: CULTURAL IDENTITY INFLUENCES BRAND PERCEPTION

Cultural identity shapes individuals' perceptions and interpretations of their surroundings, including local brands. In Guilin, where tourism is a significant industry, cultural identity is likely to influence how locals and tourists perceive local brands. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1.1: Local cultural identity positively correlates with the perception of local brands in Guilin.

Hypothesis 1.2: Tourists' cultural identity affects their perception of Guilin's local brands differently compared to locals.

Hypothesis 2: CULTURAL IDENTITY INFLUENCES BRAND LOYALTY

Brand loyalty is often driven by emotional connections and cultural resonance. Cultural identity can play a pivotal role in fostering or hindering such connections. Hence, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 2.1: Stronger local cultural identity leads to higher brand loyalty towards Guilin's local brands.

Hypothesis 2.2: Differences in cultural identity between locals and tourists may result in varied levels of brand loyalty towards Guilin's local brands.

Hypothesis 3: CULTURAL IDENTITY SHAPES BRAND POSITIONING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Local brands often leverage cultural elements to differentiate themselves from competitors and appeal to specific target markets. Cultural identity, therefore, plays a

crucial role in shaping brand positioning and marketing strategies. It is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3.1: Local brands in Guilin incorporate cultural identity elements into their brand positioning to resonate with the local community.

Hypothesis 3.2: Local brands in Guilin adjust their marketing strategies based on the cultural identity of their target tourists to enhance appeal and engagement.

Hypothesis 4: GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION CHALLENGE LOCAL BRAND IDENTITY

Globalization has led to the spread of Western consumer culture and the homogenization of cultural identities. This phenomenon may challenge the uniqueness and identity of local brands in Guilin. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 4.1: The increasing influence of globalization and cultural homogenization threatens the distinctiveness of Guilin's local brands.

Hypothesis 4.2: Local brands in Guilin must adapt and innovate to maintain their cultural identity in the face of globalization.

Hypothesis 5: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY IN PRESENVING LOCAL BRAND IDENTITY

Governments and communities often play pivotal roles in preserving and promoting local cultural identities and brands. In the context of Guilin, their efforts can significantly impact the local brand landscape. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5.1: Government policies and initiatives support the preservation and promotion of local brand identity in Guilin.

Hypothesis 5.2: Community engagement and support are crucial for maintaining the cultural identity of local brands in Guilin.

These hypotheses provide a structured framework for investigating the impact of cultural identity on the local brands of Guilin, China. By testing these hypotheses, the research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how cultural identity influences brand perception, loyalty, positioning, marketing strategies, and the challenges posed by globalization.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the relationship between Guilin's cultural identity and local brand. The research content includes in-depth interviews - Guilin residents, tourists, cultural scholars and tourism industry professionals are widely invited to participate. Through in-depth exchanges, the aim is to fully capture and deeply understand their unique insights and rich experiences on Guilin's unique cultural charm and local brand value, so as to provide rich and

profound first-hand information and unique insights for the construction of brand-building strategies and cultural communication paths. In-depth dialogue with local authorities and key stakeholders aims to comprehensively analyse the challenges and potential opportunities faced in deeply integrating Guilin's cultural characteristics into the local brand through the collision of collective wisdom. Such discussions not only help us grasp the overall situation but also accurately identify key factors, providing strong support for the formulation and implementation of brand strategies.

This research also includes literature analysis, which is a systematic literature review covering Guilin's local brand promotional materials, extensive online review feedback, and rich cultural heritage literature. This process aims to supplement and enrich our original data collection, thereby achieving a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of Guilin's local brand strategy and providing a solid knowledge base and theoretical support for the strategic planning of brand development.

5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 LEVERAGING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN GUILIN: LOCAL BRAND SUCCESS STORIES

Guilin, a city renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage, is often referred to as the "Heartbeat of China." This cultural richness has provided fertile ground for local brands to develop strong identities by leveraging unique elements of Guilin's culture. This essay explores examples of local brands in Guilin that have successfully integrated cultural identity into their branding strategies, analyses the impact of this integration, and discusses the broader cultural context of Guilin in comparison to other regions in China and globally.

A particularly striking example is the flagship product of Guilin Sanhua Co., Ltd., Guilin Sanhua Liquor. This brand cleverly incorporates the essence of local culture into its logo. It has not only become the most iconic specialty of Guangxi, but is also known as one of the "Three Treasures of Guilin", and can be regarded as a shining name card of Guilin. The brand not only focuses on inheriting the traditional winemaking culture and exquisite craftsmanship, but also emphasizes the unique use of the unique natural resources - The high-quality groundwater resources of the Li River and the unique karst caves of Guilin serve as the natural storage environment. These natural gifts can give Sanhua Liquor unparalleled excellent quality. With its mellow and delicate taste and rich aroma, Guilin Sanhua Liquor has become a model of Chinese rice-flavored liquor. It is known as the king of rice wine and has become a treasure that the people of Guilin are proud of. Its packaging design also closely integrates Guilin's natural scenery and profound historical and cultural heritage. This

close connection with the local natural beauty and cultural heritage has not only won the favor of local people, but also made Guilin Sanhua Liquor a popular souvenir collected by tourists from all over the world, greatly expanding its market influence. (Zhou, 2021)



Figure 1. Guilin Sanhua Co., Ltd. has a wine cellar with a history of more than 100 years hidden in the cave of Elephant Trunk Hill.— Image source: Baidu



Figure 2. Elephant Trunk Hill Wine Cellar (entrance): The annual cellar opening ceremony — Image source: Guilin Sanhua Co., Ltd. official website



Figure 3. Cave Wine Cellar—Image source: Guilin Sanhua Co., Ltd. official website



Figure 4. Guilin Sanhua Liquor packaging incorporates local cultural elements——
Image source: Guilin Sanhua Co., Ltd. official website

Another successful case is the Guilin Lijiang Tea Factory Co., Ltd., which is not only deeply rooted in the region's long-standing tea culture, but also committed to becoming the guardian and inheritor of Guilin's unique traditional tea-making skills, and has carefully launched a series of boutique teas derived from local high-quality teas, such as the local specialty osmanthus tea. The brand emphasizes its connection with Guilin's ancient tea culture, and its packaging often features traditional Chinese calligraphy and patterns related to the history of the region. This approach has helped the Guilin Lijiang Tea Factory maintain a strong presence in the domestic and international markets, attracting consumers who value authenticity and cultural heritage. (Lin, 2020).



Figure 5. The brand highlights the unique advantages of Guilin's tea garden base.—
—Image source: the website of Guilin Lijiang Tea Factory Co., Ltd.



Figure 6. The brand emphasizes the inheritance of exquisite traditional tea making technology——Image source: the website of Guilin Lijiang Tea Factory Co., Ltd.



Figure 7. Osmanthus tea packaging that emphasizes Lijiang culture. ——Image source: the website of Guilin Lijiang Tea Factory Co., Ltd.

Among the many successful brand examples, Guilin Mi Fen stand out, and they have driven the brand's booming development by cleverly using cultural identity. Guilin is a city known for its specialty staple Mi Fen, which has a history of more than a thousand years. Guilin Mi Fen brands not only fully demonstrate the essence of traditional production techniques, but also highlight the unique flavor of Guilin dishes. In particular, well-known brands such as Huaqiao Rongji have successfully promoted Guilin Mi Fen to the international stage. In 2017, CNN selected 14 foods that most touched the Chinese people's homesickness, and Guilin Mi Fen won the fourth place for its unique charm. These brands cleverly combined the legend of Guilin with the historical heritage of food, and formed a deep emotional connection with residents and tourists who are eager to taste the authentic Guilin flavor. (Wang, 2018).



Figure 8. Guilin Mi Fen with local characteristics - Image source: Huaqiao Rongji official website



Figure 9. Pictures of the plot of "Huaqiao Rongji", a literary treasure and a heavyweight cultural IP with the theme of Guilin Mi Fen - Image source: Huaqiao Rongji official website

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 The Impact of Cultural Identity on Branding Strategies

These examples illustrate how deeply ingrained cultural elements can serve as powerful tools in branding. By integrating cultural identity into their strategies, these brands have established strong emotional connections with consumers rooted in pride and belonging. Consumers are drawn to brands that reflect their cultural values and heritage. The use of local imagery, traditional production methods, and historical references not only differentiates these brands in the market but also creates a narrative that resonates with both local and global consumers (Holt, 2004).

The success of these brands is a powerful example of the effectiveness of integrating cultural identity into branding strategies. For example, Guilin Sanhua Winery has

greatly enhanced its appeal in the local market and become a tourist favorite by virtue of its close connection with the iconic Li River scenery and karst caves. Similarly, Guilin Lijiang Tea Factory Co., Ltd. successfully attracted consumers who seek authenticity by focusing on traditional tea-making techniques and highlighting the unique natural environment of the tea gardens. And Guilin Mi Fen have won wide recognition by cleverly capitalizing on the growing interest in local specialties around the world by focusing on its culinary traditions and the historical stories behind them. (Schmitt, 2012).

6.2 Broader Cultural Context Of Guilin And Comparison With Other Regions

Guilin's cultural identity is distinct, shaped by its unique geographical features and historical significance. The city's iconic karst mountains and the Li River have not only defined its landscape but also influenced its cultural practices, such as traditional fishing methods, rice cultivation, and local festivals. Guilin's cultural identity is closely tied to nature, reflected in its local products and brands that often emphasise this connection (Zhou, 2021).

When compared to other regions in China, such as Beijing or Shanghai, Guilin's branding strategies focus more on preserving and promoting its natural and cultural heritage. Major metropolitan areas in China might emphasise modernity and innovation in their branding, while Guilin's approach celebrates tradition and the timeless beauty of its environment. This difference highlights the diversity within China's cultural landscape, where each region has its unique identity and approach to branding (De Mooij, 2019).

Globally, Guilin's focus on cultural heritage aligns with a broader trend in branding that emphasises authenticity and sustainability. As consumers worldwide become more interested in products that tell a story and are rooted in tradition, Guilin's brands are well-positioned to appeal to this market. This global trend can be seen in other regions with strong cultural identities, such as Tuscany in Italy or Kyoto in Japan, where local brands similarly leverage their cultural heritage to create a unique brand identity (Warren, 2018).

Guilin's local brands, such as Guilin Sanhua Liquor, Guilin Osmanthus Tea, and Guilin Mi Fen, illustrate the powerful impact of cultural identity on branding strategies. By integrating elements of Guilin's cultural heritage into their branding, these companies have successfully differentiated themselves in the market and established strong connections with consumers. Guilin's cultural identity, deeply rooted in its natural landscape and historical traditions, provides a rich foundation for branding that resonates both locally and globally. As the global market continues to value authenticity and cultural heritage, Guilin's approach to branding offers valuable

insights into the potential of leveraging cultural identity to create enduring brand success.

6.3 Limitations of The Study Findings and Their Possible Implications

This study not only reveals that cultural identity has a profound and significant positive impact on Guilin's local brands, but also deeply recognizes the limitations of the research results and the multi-faceted impacts they may bring, including sample limitations, changes in the market environment, and cultural differences, all of which may limit the general applicability of the research conclusions. Therefore, when applying the research results to Guilin's brand strategic planning, it is necessary to comprehensively consider the actual situation, carefully evaluate and flexibly adjust the strategy to ensure that the brand can continue to develop steadily and stand out in the global market.

In summary, cultural identity has a profound and significant positive effect on Guilin's local brand. By deeply exploring and inheriting Guilin's unique regional cultural essence, it can not only strengthen consumers' cultural identity and loyalty to the brand but also significantly enhance the international recognition and reputation of Guilin's brand through diversified communication channels and clever cross-cultural strategies. Looking to the future, in-depth analysis of the detailed research on the mechanism of the role of different cultural identity dimensions on local brands will provide a more solid theoretical foundation and rich practical cases for brand building and communication strategies and further promote the brilliant bloom of Guilin's brand on the global stage.

This study highlights the centrality of cultural identity in the planning and implementation of Guilin's local brand strategy. By providing practical insights and strategic recommendations for destination marketing experts, policymakers and academia, this study aims to promote the construction of a more effective and culturally resonant brand strategy blueprint. In the long run, this will effectively enhance Guilin's competitiveness on the global stage, promote sustainable development, and strengthen the cherishment and protection of its valuable cultural assets and traditional heritage.

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EVALUATION OF GIG ECONOMY AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE CREATIVE MEDIA DESIGN STUDENTS: STUDY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: The process of digitalization has had a profound impact on the business landscape. The realm of employment has transitioned from a traditional approach to a more adaptable and smooth manner. The emergence of a gig economy has facilitated the development of more design professional opportunities, resulting in an increase in overall designer employment. Opportunities that have subsequently enhanced the country's design economy. This alternative occupation is commonly known as "freelancing", which involves working on a project-by-project basis. In Malaysia, there is a deficiency in awareness and knowledge regarding this topic, necessitating further study and investigation. Prior research conducted in Malaysia has identified various obstacles that the gig economy encounters, including issues related to work stability, safety measures, protective policies, appropriate platforms, and effective distribution. Therefore, further research is necessary to investigate more effective strategies for the growth and execution of gig communities. numerous researchers about the topic. This study seeks to investigate awareness and knowledge among undergraduate creative media design students in Malaysia with Focus Group Discussion (FGD) methodology. The findings will expedite the creation of enhanced platforms and communities for a gig economy. They will offer valuable insights on the benefits of gig and enhance the existing data and information available to policymakers, employers, and design practitioners.

Keywords: gig economy, awareness, knowledge, undergraduate student, creative media design

1. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia setting, gig economy views as a progressive industry. This type of employment refers to the utilization of digital platforms for the execution of temporary tasks by freelancers or self-employed individuals in exchange for financial remuneration including designers. Propelled by technological progress and evolving patterns of employment the gig economy of design industry in Malaysia has been steadily expanding. The increase in the technology sector is mostly driven by the emergence of digital platforms such as Fiver, Grab, FoodPanda, and freelance websites, which have encouraged the expansion of gig employment. Due to Covid19 pandemic, there is a high need for flexibility in work arrangements, with both employers and workers desiring the ability to have flexible schedules. Employees value the independence and diverse prospects, while businesses gain advantages in terms of cost reduction and the flexibility to easily adjust to different scales of operation. The gig economy offers an alternate means of earning money for individuals impacted by economic recessions or seeking to augment their income. Nevertheless, the concerns over job security, safety protocols, protective regulations, suitable platforms, and efficient distribution persist. Gig workers frequently may not have access to the benefits and safeguards that are typically available to full-time employees, such as health insurance and retirement plans. Earnings may fluctuate and be uncertain, resulting in financial instability. The legal framework concerning gig work is now in a state of development, with ongoing discussions over the classification of workers and their rights. Gig workers face restricted availability of social security plans, unemployment benefits, and other types of social protection. To effectively address these difficulties, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of the awareness and knowledge around the gig economy at all levels (Roy, 2020). The understanding and involvement of gig economy stakeholders are crucial in ensuring that gig economy initiatives and growth can benefit the Malaysian economy and its citizens. Thus, this study aims to address the following objectives: 1) to examine awareness of gig economy among Malaysian undergraduate, 2) to investigate knowledge of gig economy among Malaysian undergraduate and 3) to propose strategies on gig economy development

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gig Economy in Malaysia

The Malaysian government is implementing various measures, such as policy development, to enhance the regulation of the gig economy and safeguard the rights of workers. The Self-Employment Social Security Scheme implemented by SOCSO seeks to offer a certain degree of safeguard to gig workers in terms of Social Security.

Training and Development: Initiatives are being implemented to promote the employability and revenue potential of gig workers by providing them with various training programs to improve their skills (Herrmann, et al., 2023). The gig economy is thriving in various sectors in Malaysia. Ride-hailing and delivery services are dominated by companies such as Grab and Foodpanda, which provide employment opportunities to a large number of Malaysians. Freelancing platforms such as Upwork and Fiverr have empowered Malaysians to provide a wide range of skills, including graphic design, writing, and programming. E-commerce has led to a significant increase in gig opportunities for logistics and delivery services due to the growing popularity of online shopping (Anggarini, 2022) (Jacques, 2019)

The Ministry of Human Resource of Malaysia has adopted a proactive strategy on the Gig economy since 2019. This policy focuses on the endeavour of "Futurizing the Future of Work" (Uchiyama, et.al, 2022). Technological progress and innovation have a profound impact on every facet of human existence. In addition to individuals, changes in work patterns can have an impact. It is essential to comprehend the gig economy's environment in relation to the development of youth under the Twelve Malaysian Plan (RM12) (2021-2025). This plan aims to reset the economy, enhance security, promote well-being and inclusivity, and advance sustainability (Amirah, 2022) (Doshi, 2020). The Malaysia MADANI method focuses on promoting economic and financial initiatives, with a particular emphasis on youth, including raising awareness among students in higher education institutions. In contemporary times, students are increasingly inclined towards engaging in freelance work or project-based employment, such as designing, event crew, part-time modelling, or even becoming social media influencers (Anggarini, 2022) (Kaine, 2019).

2.2 Awareness of Gig economy amongst Designers

Research conducted in Malaysia has revealed a significant lack of awareness among Malaysians regarding the gig economy of design industry. This text lacks a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of the gig economy, the rights of gig workers, the expectations of both workers and employers, the role of platforms, the relevant legislation and regulations, and the methods involved (Basavaraj, 2021). Given the expansion of the gig economy, it is crucial for undergraduate creative media design students to be aware about the potential advantages and disadvantages it presents. Given the prevailing economic circumstances, there is a significant increase in the number of graduates who are currently unemployed (Bajwa, 2018). Graduates should seize every chance available in the gig economy to get valuable experience, whether it is as a supplementary source of income alongside a full-time employment or as their primary professional pursuit (Syarfina Abu Bakar, 2024).

2.3 Knowledge of Gig economy amongst Designers

The expansion of the gig economy has contributed to the overall growth of the national economy. The primary concerns revolve around the welfare considerations and financial safety nets pertaining to gig labour. There is a scarcity of literature regarding the current level of understanding and quantification of the growth of the gig economy. By identifying the essential characteristics that distinguish various types of non-employee labour, such as independent contractors, self-employed business owners, and on-call workers, we may better understand the defining qualities of professions that align closely with gig work (Speak, 2019). Studies conducted in Malaysia revealed that gig workers had a limited knowledge of employee protection measures such as provident funds, regulations, benefits, welfare, and the establishment and execution of these measures (Speak, 2019) (Ghazali, 2021).

It is critical for research and development to enhance public awareness of all relevant aspects of the gig economy and to acquire the knowledge necessary to stay updated on any developments (Ghazali, 2021) (Aziz & Rusli, 2023). Particularly within the art and design sector, both current and prospective gig workers are still in the phase of lacking expertise in many facets of the gig economy. This deficiency consists of a lack of awareness on the actual opportunities available to artists in the fields of freelance design work, customization, content creation, and so on (Aziz & Rusli, 2023). This study aims to examine the state of awareness and knowledge among undergraduate students regarding the gig economy. By doing so, it will identify any existing gaps and suggest strategies that can be used to enhance the gig economy among undergraduates. Additionally, the study will provide valuable insights for policymakers to develop effective policies and procedures (Syarifina Abu Bakar, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative data collection strategy through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). FGD can be utilized to encompass four separate phases or stages of a scientific inquiry, each with its own specific purpose, role, and objective (Sujianto, & Sukarji, 2023). The perspectives gathered from undergraduate creative media design students of Faculty of Arts & Science, Universiti Malaya-Wales that located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. FGD chosen for its ability to yield comprehensive insights into participants' awareness, knowledge, experience, ideas, and perspectives, which are valuable to the researchers. It is crucial to acquire the most up-to-date knowledge on a certain matter or to explore a novel concept or further investigation. A focus group is a crucial instrument for comprehending the emergence of a specific issue and how it is seen within the context of group discourse. A total of 13 undergraduate students (n=13) were chosen to participate in the focus group discussion in Quarter 4 of year 2023. The

session lasted around 2 hours, starting at 11.00 am and ending at 1.00 pm. The data obtained from the focus group interviews were done in real-time at the laboratory and subsequently transcribed. The researchers initiated a process in which they employed codes to establish categories for the purpose of organizing the data into themes. The researchers analyzed the transcripts and extracted codes, which led to the identification of themes and sub-themes. Highlighted sections of the text in the transcripts were categorized into the relevant topics and sub-themes.

4. DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Theme 1: Awareness of gig economy

The discussion of “awareness” and “knowledge” in these findings were derived from Table 1 that consisted of the interview questions, theme and sub themes. From the overall discussions, the researchers identified six important sub themes of “awareness” highlighted by most of the participants. The sub themes are (a) recognizable (b) Internet search tool, digital networking site (c) web-based platform, mainstream media (d) flexible supplementary earnings (e) unrecognizable (f) uncertain.

Table 1: Awareness on Gig Economy

Theme 1: Awareness	
Question	Sub Theme
Have you heard about gig economy? Freelance Designers? Giggers? Remote/Contract Worker? When does this term occur?	Recognizable
Do you know about Gig economy on any platform?	Internet search tool, digital networking site
Have you come across in any media about gig economy?	web-based platform, mainstream media
Do you know the reason why citizens jump into the gig economy?	flexible supplementary earnings
Do you know that the government has implemented gig economy forces? (Guideline etc.)	Unrecognizable
If you are in gig economy, do you feel secure in this work pattern?	uncertain

4.1.1 Recognizable

Most of the participants were acquainted with the terms "freelance" and "part-timer," commonly used to describe non-traditional employment arrangements. However, they were not familiar with the concept of the "Gig Economy," which refers to a labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. The Gig Economy encompasses a wide range of activities and

roles, often facilitated by digital platforms, such as ride-sharing, delivery services, and freelance marketplaces.

4.1.2 Internet Search Tool, Digital Networking Site

The majority of participants acquire information about the gig economy through various internet search tools and digital networking sites. They frequently use platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to stay updated on trends and opportunities within the gig economy. These social media platforms serve as valuable resources for discovering insights, sharing experiences, and connecting with others involved in gig work. Additionally, participants reported utilizing job search platforms like Jobstreet and 'Fast Gig' to apply for gig opportunities.

4.1.3 Web-based Platform, Mainstream Media

Respondents mentioned, "I have come across information about the gig economy in various media sources. I frequently see discussions and posts about it on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, as well as articles on job search websites like Jobstreet and 'Fast Gig'." Additionally, mainstream media such as television news, newspapers, and magazines often cover stories about the gig economy, providing insights into its growth and impact.

4.1.4 Flexible Supplementary Earnings

According to participants, one of the main reason's citizens jump into the gig economy is for the flexible supplementary earnings it offers. Many people appreciate the ability to work on their own schedule and supplement their primary income. This flexibility allows them to balance other responsibilities, such as family, education, or pursuing personal interests, while still earning additional money.

4.1.5 Unrecognizable

Participants mentioned that they are aware that the government has implemented guidelines and measures to support gig economy workers. These efforts include providing frameworks for fair treatment, ensuring worker rights, and offering resources to help gig workers navigate this type of employment. However, many people may not be fully familiar with these initiatives or how they are being enforced.

4.1.6 Uncertain

Honestly, "I'm not entirely sure" answered by majority of participants. On one hand, the flexibility and opportunities for supplementary earnings are great. On the other hand, the lack of job stability and benefits makes me feel a bit uncertain about the long-term security of this work.

4.2 Theme 2: Knowledge of gig economy

Eleven sub-themes have been highlighted under the “knowledge” of the gig economy (refer Table 2), which are (a) a different option or choice (b) available whenever needed or requested (c) easy Income (d) harmonious relationship between work and personal life, stability and protection in one’s financial situation (f) significant change, behavior (g) employment opportunity, economic growth (k) risk.

Table 2: Knowledge on Gig Economy

Theme 2: Awareness	
Question	Sub Theme
What do you understand about the gig economy?	A different option or choice
What types/examples of giggers that you know?	Available whenever needed or requested
Why do you think the gig economy is relevant in the current economic situation?	Easy Income
What are the differences between a permanent job and a freelance/gigger?	Harmonious relationship between work and personal life, stability and protection in one's financial situation
When do you notice the rapid transition of gig economy development? How big is the gap between the era of the 80s 90s and now?	Significant change, behavior
Does the gig economy have any impact on Malaysian work patterns?	Employment opportunity, economic growth
How about financial security for gig economy practitioners? (business setting, accounts, office documentation, etc.)	Risk

4.2.1 A Different Option or Choice

Most of participants give understand that the gig economy offers a different option or choice for work. It allows people to take on short-term, flexible jobs instead of traditional, long-term employment. This can be a great way for individuals to earn money on their own terms and schedules.

4.2.2 Available Whenever Needed or Requested

The participants know several types of gig workers who are available whenever needed or requested. For example, ride-share drivers, food delivery couriers, freelance writers, graphic designers, and virtual assistants. They all work on-demand and can take on jobs as they come up.

4.2.3 Easy Income

Participants mentioned that “I think the gig economy is relevant because it provides easy income opportunities. People can quickly find gig jobs to earn money without the

lengthy hiring processes associated with traditional employment”. This is especially important in times of economic uncertainty when many are looking for flexible and immediate ways to supplement their income.

4.2.4 Harmonious Relationship between Work and Personal Life, Stability and Protection in One's Financial Situation

Majority of participants mentioned in a permanent job, there's often a more structured balance between work and personal life, which can help maintain harmony. You also tend to have more stability and financial protections, like benefits and steady paychecks. On the other hand, as a freelancer or gig worker, you might enjoy more flexibility in your schedule, but there can be fluctuations in income and fewer traditional job protections.

4.2.5 Significant Change and Behavior

“I've noticed a significant change in the development of the gig economy recently. Back in the 80s and 90s, traditional employment was more common, with people seeking stable, long-term jobs. Now, there's been a notable shift in behavior towards more flexible, short-term gigs”. This change reflects a growing preference for independence and the ability to work on one's own terms, which has transformed how many people approach work today compared to several decades ago.

4.2.6 Employment Opportunity and Economic Growth

According to participants it is absolutely has significantly influenced Malaysian work patterns by providing increased employment opportunities across various sectors. It has enabled individuals to participate in flexible work arrangements tailored to their skills and preferences. Moreover, the growth of gig work has contributed to economic growth in Malaysia, fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and expanding the overall job market.

4.2.7 Risk

Majority of participants mentioned on financial security in the gig economy can be a concern due to the inherent risks involved. Unlike traditional jobs with structured business settings, accounts, and office documentation, gig economy practitioners often manage their finances independently. This includes handling business transactions, maintaining records, and ensuring compliance with tax and regulatory requirements. The flexibility of gig work is attractive, but it also requires careful financial planning and risk management to maintain stability and security.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Awareness of gig economy

The discussion section of a research article is a critical component where the findings of the study are interpreted, contextualized, and compared with existing literature. In the discussion, participants demonstrated varying levels of familiarity with the gig economy, recognizing terms like "freelance" and "part-timer" but less so with the broader concept of gig work characterized by short-term contracts and facilitated by digital platforms. They rely heavily on internet search tools, social media platforms, and job search websites to stay informed about gig opportunities. Mainstream media also plays a significant role in shaping their understanding of the gig economy's impact and growth. The appeal of flexible supplementary earnings emerged as a key motivator for joining the gig economy, allowing individuals to manage their own schedules while balancing other commitments. Despite government efforts to support gig workers through guidelines, uncertainties persist among participants regarding job stability and benefits, reflecting a nuanced perspective on the potential benefits and risks associated with gig work.

5.2 Knowledge of gig economy

The discussion section of a research article is a critical component where the findings highlighted participants' recognition of the gig economy as a versatile alternative to traditional employment, offering opportunities for short-term, flexible work arrangements that suit individual schedules and preferences. They identified various types of gig workers, from ride-share drivers to freelance writers, who operate on-demand and respond to immediate job requests. Participants emphasized the gig economy's appeal in providing easy income, especially beneficial during economic uncertainty. They noted contrasts between the structured balance and financial protections of permanent jobs versus the flexibility and independence of gig work, acknowledging both advantages and risks associated with each. The evolution towards a preference for flexible gigs over stable, long-term employment was evident, reflecting changing behaviors and preferences in the modern workforce, particularly in Malaysia where gig work has significantly influenced employment patterns and contributed to economic growth through innovation and entrepreneurship.

5.3 Opportunities and Challenges for Arts and Design

The gig economy presents significant opportunities by offering flexible work arrangements that cater to individual preferences and schedules, facilitating easy income generation and expanding employment opportunities across sectors, particularly contributing to economic growth and fostering entrepreneurship. Exclusively for individuals involved in the fields of art and design. The prospects lie in

the fields of freelance design, customisation, working on various projects, building portfolios, and gaining exposure to a global market. Gig work's flexibility allows individuals to effectively manage several projects and actively pursue their creative pursuits.

On the other hand, it also brings challenges such as financial insecurity due to income variability and lack of traditional job benefits, concerns about job stability amidst temporary contracts, regulatory uncertainties impacting worker protections, and potential work-life balance issues. They may face obstacles such as uncertain client acquisition, pricing pressure, intellectual property issues, and market saturation. Balancing these opportunities and challenges is crucial for gig workers and policymakers alike to ensure sustainable and equitable participation in the evolving labor market landscape.

6. CONCLUSION

This research employed Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to explore the nuances of awareness and knowledge regarding the gig economy among undergraduate creative media design students of Faculty of Arts & Science, Universiti Malaya-Wales that located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Through rigorous thematic analysis of FGD transcripts, the study unveiled participants' varying levels of familiarity with terms such as "freelance" and "part-timer," contrasting with their limited understanding of the comprehensive scope of the gig economy, characterized by short-term contracts and facilitated by digital platforms. Participants demonstrated a heavy reliance on internet search tools, social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, and specialized job search websites such as Jobstreet and 'Fast Gig' to access information and opportunities within the gig economy. The influence of mainstream media in shaping perceptions was also evident, with television news and online articles further informing their views on gig work's growth and societal impact.

The findings underscored several opportunities and challenges inherent in the gig economy. On the one hand, participants valued the flexibility and autonomy offered by gig work, allowing them to manage their schedules and earn supplementary income swiftly, particularly appealing during economic uncertainties. However, concerns regarding job stability, financial security due to income variability, and the lack of traditional job benefits such as healthcare and retirement plans were prevalent among participants. Moreover, regulatory uncertainties surrounding gig work and its implications for worker protections emerged as critical concerns. Art and design gig workers should prioritise cultivating robust customer connections, consistently enhancing their abilities, and utilising web platforms and forums for assistance and prospects. This study emphasizes the need for comprehensive policies that balance

the flexibility and entrepreneurial spirit of gig work with robust protections to ensure the well-being and stability of gig workers in Malaysia's evolving labor market landscape.

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THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF CULTURE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF SARAWAK MALAY DRUMS

PROSES EVOLUSI BUDAYA DALAM PERSEMBAHAN GENDANG MELAYU SARAWAK

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Abstract: Gendang Malay Sarawak, or 'bergendang,' remains a cultural practice within some segments of the Malay community in Sarawak. Historically, bergendang and mukun were highly entertaining performing arts, particularly among the youth. However, the frequency of these drumming performances has significantly diminished over time. This research investigates the factors contributing to the decline in popularity, which has brought this art form to the brink of extinction, particularly due to the dwindling involvement of younger generations. Drawing on Charles Darwin's (1859) theory of cultural evolution, which posits that cultures must exhibit resilience to survive in modern times, this study examines the current state of bergendang. Despite its reduced presence, this traditional art form can still be found on the radio and cultural stages. Through interviews with practitioners, this study explores the transformations in bergendang performance and its struggle for survival in contemporary society.

Keywords: Gendang Sarawak Malay, cultural evolution, Malay culture, performing arts

Abstrak: Gendang Melayu Sarawak atau bergendang merupakan satu aktiviti yang masih diamalkan oleh sebahagian masyarakat Melayu di Sarawak. Bergendang dan bermukun merupakan aktiviti kesenian yang sangat menghiburkan

terutama dalam kalangan anak muda pada zaman dahulu. Namun kini, persembahan bergendang ini jarang diadakan mengikut keperluan seperti dahulu. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini berusaha untuk meneroka penurunan populariti sehingga berada di ambang kepupusan kerana kekurangan lapisan belia. Charles Darwin (1859) mempercayai evolusi budaya iaitu budaya itu sendiri mestilah mempunyai daya tahan atau kebolehan mempertahankan diri agar dapat meneruskan kewujudannya pada zaman moden seperti mana spesies hidupan mempertahankan diri untuk terus hidup. Dalam konteks kontemporari, seni ini masih terdapat di radio atau pun dipersembahkan di pentas kebudayaan. Kajian ini menemubual beberapa orang yang mengamalkan bergendang untuk dapatan revolusi yang berlaku dalam persembahannya.

Kata Kunci: Gendang Melayu Sarawak, evolusi budaya, budaya Melayu, seni persembahan

1. PENGENALAN

Penciptaan alat muzik gendang sedikit sebanyak mempengaruhi kewujudan kesenian dan kebudayaan dalam kalangan masyarakat zaman dahulu. Tambahan pula, kebijaksanaan manusia sejagat pada zaman dahulu telah mendorong mereka untuk mencipta sesuatu berasaskan alam semula jadi; ciptaan yang mampu menghasilkan bunyi sekaligus menghiburkan mereka. Pada dasarnya, muzik memainkan peranan penting dalam menggambarkan identiti sesebuah kaum atau etnik selain berfungsi sebagai 'welten schnaung' atau pandangan umum bagi sesebuah masyarakat tersebut. Sarawak merupakan negeri contoh yang mempunyai pelbagai kaum dan suku. Kepelbagaian kaum dan suku ini menjadi pencetus kepada kepelbagaian kesenian dan kebudayaan di Sarawak. Salah satu kesenian dan kebudayaan yang terkenal di Sarawak ialah Gendang Melayu Sarawak. Meskipun melalui peredaran masa yang deras, seni persembahan Gendang Melayu Sarawak tidak ketinggalan turut mengalami perubahan mengikut kesesuaian dari semasa ke semasa.

Gendang Melayu Sarawak meliputi beberapa elemen dalam persembahannya dan merupakan salah satu seni persembahan yang dianggap sebagai satu aktiviti seni yang melambangkan keharmonian sejagat. Fitrah semula jadi manusia sememangnya mengagungkan sesuatu yang boleh menghiburkan jiwa dan perasaan mereka. Sebagaimana manusia mengagumi keindahan dan kesenian, maka secara tidak langsung naluri menyukai hiburan sememangnya sudah wujud dalam diri manusia kerana cinta manusia terhadap seni sudah wujud sejak zaman dahulu. Hal ini turut diujahkan oleh Sidi Gazalba (1977) di dalam bukunya *Pandangan Islam Tentang Kesenian*, yang menyatakan bahawa kesenian adalah sebahagian daripada kebudayaan yang dicetuskan oleh manusia yang mempunyai fitrah semula jadi mencintai seni melalui lima pancaindera. Seni persembahan Gendang Melayu Sarawak ini merupakan salah satu seni tradisi yang telah menjadi sebahagian aspek penting dalam kehidupan sosial masyarakat Melayu di Sarawak. Seni persembahan bergendang ini tidak terhad kepada kumpulan bergendang yang dianggotai oleh etnik Melayu Sarawak sahaja, namun turut diamalkan oleh pelbagai etnik lain di Sarawak iaitu etnik Iban, Melanau dan etnik Kedayan di Miri. Dendangan pantun pula akan didendangkan dalam bahasa Iban, Melanau dan Kedayan.

Seni persembahan bergendang kini telah melalui perubahan ketara akibat daripada arus pemodenan yang deras. Jika diteliti, terdapat penambahan dari segi peralatan muzik dalam seni persembahan bergendang ini. Persembahan Gendang Melayu Lama dipercayai telah bertapak di Sarawak sebelum kedatangan Rajah Putih ke Sarawak. Kini, dengan munculnya Gendang Melayu Baru berikutan terdapat penambahan peralatan seperti biola, gong, akordian, dan keyboard. Malah, dengan wujudnya corak persembahan yang lebih urban dan mengikuti arus perdana, maka tujuan asal seni

persembahan Gendang Melayu Sarawak telah jauh menyimpang kerana kini seni persembahan ini lebih tertumpu ke arah hiburan sosial selain menjadi salah satu sumber pendapatan para penggiat seni persembahan ini.

Jika dahulu masyarakat Melayu Sarawak sering mengadakan pertandingan bergendang (Gendang Melayu Sarawak) sebagai persembahan popular dalam sesebuah upacara perkahwinan, disebabkan lokasi telah berubah dan kos telah bertambah, maka kini bergendang tidak lagi menjadi sebuah persembahan popular dalam sesebuah majlis perkahwinan. Jika acara penting seperti majlis perkahwinan tidak lagi mengadakan seni bergendang ini, apatah lagi acara keramaian yang lain, contohnya majlis berkhatan, cukur jambul, dan sebagainya. Hal ini demikian kerana seni persembahan ini bukan sahaja menjadi media hiburan bahkan juga merupakan salah satu bentuk falsafah seni budaya bangsa yang popular dalam kalangan warga emas bagi memancarkan nilai-nilai murni, ideologi, sikap, malah turut menjadi wadah atau platform citra bangsa Malaysia yang jelas terdiri daripada pelbagai kaum, etnik dan keturunan. Situasi ini turut dipengaruhi oleh kadar penerimaan orang muda terhadap seni persembahan bergendang ini. Hal ini demikian kerana, apabila kurangnya pendedahan seni persembahan ini terhadap para belia atau remaja, maka tidak hairanlah jika golongan ini tidak menjemput para kumpulan bergendang sebagai salah satu persembahan di majlis persandingan mereka. Stigma golongan ini yang lebih menganggap seni persembahan ini adalah hiburan warga tua sedikit sebanyak menjadi penyebab mengapa mengapa persembahan bergendang dianggap hiburan para nenek atau seusia dengan mereka.

Kajian ini dijalankan bagi mendapatkan penemuan berpaksikan tiga objektif utama iaitu mengenalpasti elemen persembahan yang wujud dalam seni persembahan bergendang. Objektif kedua adalah menganalisis proses evolusi budaya yang terdapat dalam bergendang, dan yang ketiga meneliti penerimaan penggiat seni persembahan bergendang terhadap perubahan yang berlaku dalam persembahan bergendang.

2. SOROTAN KAJIAN

2.1 Sorotan Persembahan Bergendang dan Teori Evolusi Budaya

Gendang Melayu Sarawak dipercayai berasal daripada pengaruh yang dibawa oleh pedagang Arab ke Sarawak pada zaman pemerintahan Rajah Putih iaitu sekitar tahun 1925. Pada awal kemunculan persembahan bergendang ini adalah untuk mendidik dan menyemai nilai murni yang menjadi tiang utama keperibadian masyarakat Melayu ketika itu. Persembahan bergendang yang diiringi alunan pantun dan tandak menyelitkan pemikiran kasih sayang terhadap manusia sejagat. Walau bagaimanapun, tema atau pemikiran kasih sayang tersebut tidak terhad kepada pasangan lelaki dan

perempuan sahaja tetapi juga merangkumi kasih sayang antara ibu dan anak, sahabat handai atau kekeluargaan.

Menyoroti kajian pertama, Mohd Fauzi Abdullah et.al., (2002) iaitu Pemikiran Cinta Bermukun Dalam Gendang Melayu Sarawak membincangkan gambaran pemikiran yang terkandung dalam persembahan seni bergendang atau bermukun. Kajian mereka mendapati tujuan mukun yang dilafazkan secara spontan adalah untuk mendidik, mengkritik dan menghiburkan masyarakat secara halus melalui bait-bait pantun mengikut tema majlis. Kajian mereka juga menyatakan bahawa setiap bait pantun yang dilafazkan lebih menjurus ke arah cinta yang menggambarkan kepelbagaian pemikiran. Selain itu, kajian tersebut juga turut menyentuh tentang cinta insani yang menjadi dukungan manusia yang sememangnya dilahirkan dengan emosi dan perasaan yang kompleks yakni perasaan cinta terhadap pertiwi, seni dan juga ketuhanan. Namun begitu, kajian mereka tidak menyentuh pemikiran sosial atau permasalahan yang berlaku dalam kalangan anak-anak muda. Hal ini kerana, pengkaji melihat dari aspek sosial yang pada anggapan pengkaji turut menjadi kayu ukur terhadap kelestarian seni persembahan ini.

Hujahan Mohd Fauzi Abdullah et.al (2002) cuma terhad kepada pemikiran cinta bermukun dalam Gendang Melayu Sarawak serta pantun dan irama yang didendangkan dalam seni persembahan tersebut. Berdasarkan kajian tersebut, persembahan bergendang secara dasarnya berfungsi untuk menghiburkan penonton melalui pantun serta bunyi paluan gendang. Hal ini demikian apabila metafora, kiasan, dan ibarat yang terdapat di dalam bait pantun umpama nuansa yang hadir tepat pada masanya. Malah, pemikiran cinta dalam persembahan bergendang menurut kajian tersebut diibaratkan sebagai gambaran mata dunia masyarakat yang memperihalkan pelbagai ragam di dalamnya.

Perbincangan mengenai Gendang Melayu Sarawak tidak lari daripada berbincang tentang elemen pantun yang terdapat di dalamnya. Justeru, sorotan kajian kedua ialah melalui kajian Robson (1995) yang bertajuk *Gendang Melayu Sarawak : A Pantun Exchange of the Sarawak Malay Community* yang pada dasarnya mengkaji tentang pertukaran pantun Gendang Melayu Sarawak. Robson secara terperinci melihat puisi Melayu tradisional dan seni tradisi bergendang di Sarawak iaitu meneliti latihan, penyanyi dan penari dan juga alat muzik yang digunakan. Robson juga dengan teliti menentukan maksud persembahan bergendang dan mengkaji pertukaran pantun tersebut merupakan salah satu komponen dalam persembahan bergendang. Selain itu, Robson turut memerhati dan meneliti teknik persembahan yang digunakan. Apa yang pengkaji dapat nyatakan, penelitian yang Robson lakukan menjadi titik tolak kepada kajian ini kerana pengkaji melihat aspek pantun adalah aspek utama yang

menggerakkan seni persembahan ini. Pengkajian Robson lebih kepada menganalisa teks pantun itu sendiri dan bukannya persembahan Gendang Melayu Sarawak secara keseluruhan.

2.2 Sorotan Evolusi Budaya

Terdapat beberapa penulisan yang menyentuh tentang evolusi budaya dan dapat dirujuk, contohnya penulisan oleh Muhammad Irfan Nyia Abdullah et. al. (2013) iaitu Rodat: Budaya Tradisi Yang Berevolusi. Dalam penulisan tersebut, rodan juga mengalami evolusi dalam tradisi persembahan. Kesenian rodan mengalami proses evolusi dari segi fungsi, kostum, lirik dan juga struktur persembahan. Perkara ini berlaku adalah disebabkan perubahan zaman serta keengganan anak muda mewarisi kesenian rodan ini. Penulisan tentang rodan ini sedikit sebanyak mempunyai persamaan dalam kajian pengkaji, maka penulisan ini menjadi garis panduan terhadap hala tuju ini walaupun pengkaji mengkaji persembahan yang berbeza dan mengaplikasi teori yang berbeza untuk menganalisis proses evolusi budaya yang berlaku dalam sesebuah persembahan kesenian.

Sorotan kajian seterusnya ialah pengkajian oleh Bartok (1972) yang menyebut bahawa evolusi ialah sesuatu yang sama tetapi melibatkan perkembangan yang melalui proses semula jadi daripada sesuatu yang pernah wujud sebelumnya yang telah berubah. Seperti yang dikatakan oleh Bartok (1972) bahawa, “perkembangan dalam kesenian sama ada cepat atau perlahan adalah kepentingannya mencetus evolusi, bukannya revolusi.” Bartok (1972) juga berhujah bahawa komposer yang telah mencapai pencapaian yang tinggi sepanjang dekad ini tidak merobohkan revolusi, sebaliknya berlaku kerana evolusi perkembangan seni telah berada pada satu tahap yang stabil dan berterusan. Beliau turut menyatakan bahawa Stravinsky juga melalui pelbagai evolusi dengan memulakan octet untuk beberapa alat muzik. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa Stravinsky mempamerkan ketulusan dalam prinsip evolusi.

Mesoudi (2015) pula memberikan gambaran keseluruhan tentang teori budaya evolusi, teori yang disebarkan secara sosial dan berkembang mengikut cara yang dikemukakan oleh Darwin dalam *The Origin of Species*, iaitu ia terdiri daripada sistem variasi, kesesuaian pembezaan dan pewarisan. Mesoudi juga mengkaji bagaimana kaedah filogenetik telah digunakan untuk membina semula makroevolusi budaya, termasuk evolusi bahasa, teknologi dan organisasi sosial.

3. METODOLOGI

Dalam kajian ini, pengkaji menggunakan pendekatan kajian secara kualitatif. Kajian kualitatif digunakan secara meluas dalam kajian sains sosial. Hal ini demikian supaya

penyelidik dapat mengkaji fenomena, dan sosial sesebuah budaya atau masyarakat melalui tindakan pemerhatian terhadap perasaan atau emosi, pemikiran, kepercayaan, dan juga tingkah laku masyarakat. Sumber data kualitatif mencakupi pemerhatian dan kerja lapangan, temu bual, soal selidik, dokumen dan teks serta reaksi penyelidik.

Pengkaji mengaplikasikan kaedah temubual untuk kajian ini. Kaedah temubual adalah kaedah yang sesuai untuk mencari jawapan dan perkongsian terutama daripada pengamal-pengamal seni budaya. Selain itu, kaedah temubual merupakan kaedah paling relevan untuk mendengar sendiri pendapat dan perkongsian daripada responden yang sudah uzur. Kaedah temubual terhadap individu-individu yang dipilih merupakan kaedah yang sangat penting dan seringkali digunakan oleh penyelidik kualitatif kerana melalui kaedah ini pengkaji dapat mengetahui apa yang ada dalam fikiran mereka dan bagaimana perasaan mereka secara tepat. Kajian ini juga secara kritis bertujuan untuk mengumpul maklumat-maklumat berharga daripada pemukun, penandak, dan ahli akademik secara khusus tentang Gendang Melayu Sarawak. Antara responden yang terlibat dalam sesi temubual untuk dapatan kajian ini ialah individu sebagai pemukun, individu selaku penandak atau tekong, individu selaku Seh Gendang, dan individu-individu selaku ahli akademik. Oleh itu kaedah kualitatif akan menjadi penemuan yang lebih tepat kerana orang yang ditemubual akan memberikan jawapan atau pendapat yang lebih jujur dan padat melalui interaksi peribadi dengan penemubual.

4. DAPATAN KAJIAN

4.1 Elemen Penting dan Proses Evolusi Budaya Dalam Persembahan Gendang Melayu Sarawak

Temubual dalam kajian ini membabitkan beberapa responden untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang terperinci tentang persembahan bergendang. Kajian ini telah memperoleh maklumat dikehendaki melalui responden yang mewakili penggiat persembahan bergendang, ahli akademik, dan seh gendang. Sebagaimana seni persembahan yang lain, persembahan Gendang Melayu Sarawak juga tidak lari dari keunikannya kerana mempunyai elemen-elemen persembahan tersendiri. Hal ini termasuklah dari segi lemah gemalai gerak tari penandak, bait-bait halus pantun yang dilontarkan serta kuat dan rancak pukulan gendang atau rebana persembahan bergendang. Menurut Ramdi Bujang (2022), terdapat empat elemen utama dalam persembahan bergendang. Empat elemen tersebut ialah rebana, seh gendang, pantun, dan pemukun. Tanpa salah satu daripada empat elemen ini, maka tidak terjadi sebarang persembahan bergendang. Rebana (gendang) Melayu merupakan salah satu alat muzik yang popular yang wujud dalam semua budaya masyarakat Sarawak. Peranan gendang pada waktu itu hampir sama dalam semua kaum yang ada di

Sarawak. Namun, bentuk dan rentak gendang adalah berbeza dari segi tukuk (pukulan) gendang tersebut. Sejarah penggunaan gendang pada zaman sebelum pemerintahan Rajah Putih lebih kepada upacara ritual atau perubatan (Ab Samad Kechot et.al, 2017). Hal ini turut diakui oleh penggiat seni ini iaitu Ramdie Bujang dan Jamal Johari (2022). Walau bagaimanapun, penggunaan gendang juga tidak lari daripada kegunaannya sebagai alat muzik yang digunakan ketika persembahan pencak silat bagi kaum Melayu dan Melanau. Malah, kaum Iban menggunakan gendang ini sebagai alat perang. Namun demikian, dalam konteks kajian ini, perbincangan tentang gendang menjurus kepada gendang yang digunakan sebagai alat muzik untuk persembahan hiburan bagi kaum Melayu di Sarawak khususnya.

Elemen kedua yang perlu ada bagi melengkapkan sebuah persembahan bergendang ialah kehadiran Seh Gendang. Seh Gendang terdiri daripada gadis-gadis yang belum berumahtangga. Seh Gendang akan menukuk (memalu) rebana (gendang) mengikut tingkah kaki penandak. Seh gendang perlu mempunyai vokal yang mantap. Ramdi Bujang ketika ditemubual di kediamannya mengatakan bahawa pada zaman dahulu Seh Gendang juga digelar Lela Suara kerana kelunakan suara Lela Suara ini dikhabarkan mampu menarik perhatian penduduk kampung sehinggakan penduduk dari kampung sebelah pun mampu mendengar suaranya. Jarak antara kampung pada ketika itu juga dikhabarkan jauh daripada satu sama lain, iaitu lebih kurang tujuh tanjung. Ketika seh gendang menukuk (memalu) rebana bererti persembahan pun bermula. Ramdi Bujang ketika ditemubual:

“Dalam bergendang ini mesti ada seh gendang, mesti ada bermukun. Bermukun ialah berpantun. Pantun hanya dilantun oleh seh gendang apabila pantun dijawab, inilah dinamakan bermukun”

Elemen seterusnya dalam persembahan bergendang ialah pantun yang akan dilantunkan oleh Seh Gendang. Sekiranya ada penandak yang membalas pantun maka tindakan tersebut dinamakan bermukun (37 tahun, Penandak). Pantun pula dilontarkan secara spontan mengikut hukum pantun iaitu pantun dua kerat dan pantun empat kerat dan dilagukan dalam bahasa Melayu Sarawak sesuai dengan tema majlis. Sebagai contoh, jika bergendang dipersembahkan ketika majlis perkahwinan, maka pantun yang dilontarkan bertemakan cinta. Berbeza pula dengan maklumat yang diperoleh dari temubual bersama dengan Jamal Johari iaitu seorang penggiat seni persembahan bergendang. Menurut Jamal Johari (2022), elemen bergendang tidak lari daripada tiga aspek utama iaitu lagu irama, tandak dan tukuk. Lagu irama merujuk kepada jenis irama lagu yang dimainkan semasa persembahan bergendang diadakan. Antara contoh lagu irama yang selalu dipersembahkan dalam persembahan bergendang ialah Samsudin, Selendang Mayang, Cinta Beraie, Sayang Sarawak, dan sebagainya.

Elemen seterusnya ialah tandak. Tandak pada ketika itu terbahagi kepada beberapa jenis tandak. Menurut Ramdi Bujang (2022), setiap tandak ada maksudnya. Setiap gerak langkah tandak mesti mempunyai maksud sesuatu dan bukan “kosong”. Terdapat juga penandak yang menutupi wajahnya kerana enggan diketahui identitinya. Penandak yang menggunakan kain untuk menutupi wajahnya digelar sebagai penopeng. Penopeng menggunakan topeng untuk menutup wajahnya kerana bimbang identiti terdedah. Sepertimana lagu irama, tandak juga mempunyai pelbagai jenis, antaranya ialah Tandak Saok dan Tandak Teter. Menurut Jamal Johari (2022), tandak juga berlainan mengikut trend sesebuah tempat. Sarawak ialah negeri yang dikenali sebagai negeri jajahan Brooke selain Brunei. Semasa dalam tempoh jajahan Brunei, para bangsawan datang ke Sarawak dan telah mempengaruhi persembahan bergendang.

Elemen ketiga menurut Jamal Johari lagi ialah pukulan gendang. Persembahan bergendang tidak akan sempurna tanpa “tukuk” dari rebana oleh Seh Gendang. Jenis pukulan pada gendang adalah mengikut tingkah tukang tandak. Jika lagu irama Sayang Sarawak, maka pukulan pada gendang adalah lemah lembut dan sopan namun masih kuat tingkahnya. Jika lagu irama Selendang Mayang maka pukulan pada gendang berubah menjadi rancak dan laju. Walau bagaimanapun, beliau tidak bersetuju jika elemen gendang pada waktu pemerintahan Brooke dahulu mesti berpantun. Hal ini demikian kerana menurut beliau, pada zaman mula-mula kewujudan persembahan bergendang ini, pantun dalam bergendang belum wujud. Pada ketika itu persembahan bergendang hanyalah terdiri daripada gendang dan tandak sahaja. Ketika ini juga primadona Seh Gendang mengeluarkan atau melontarkan pantun mengikut gerak geri atau gerak tari penandak. Penandak tidak berbalas pantun tetapi hanya mencampakkan duit kepada Seh Gendang di sebalik tabir. Justeru, berdasarkan temubual yang telah dijalankan, terdapat pandangan yang berbeza tentang elemen persembahan yang terdapat dalam sesebuah persembahan bergendang. Walaupun terdapat perbezaan pendapat tentang elemen wajib dalam persembahan bergendang, namun kedua-dua responden mengakui terdapat evolusi dalam persembahan bergendang kini berbanding dahulu.

4.2 Evolusi Fungsi Persembahan Bergendang

Dalam kajian ini, pengkaji menemui terdapat tujuh aspek evolusi dalam persembahan bergendang. Fungsi bergendang telah melalui perubahan yang ketara selari dengan peredaran zaman. Salah satu aspek tersebut ialah evolusi dari segi fungsi persembahan bergendang. Menurut responden, fungsi persembahan bergendang pada masa dahulu ialah untuk merawat dan mengubati pesakit yang mengalami

penyakit misteri. Gendang akan ditabuh untuk memanggil semangat yang “tidak nampak”.

“Pertama-tama dolok, gendang air. Gendang air tok nang pakei orang berubat. Tujuannya memang perubatan ajaklah. Pukulannya pun slow (perlahan), mendayu-dayu. Pantunnya memanggil, semangat akan ditunggah. Lelaki akan dirasuk semangat. Nya yang embak gerak ya macam berkuntor. Kuntor tok macam silat. Waktu itulah mereka berubat”. (Ramdi Bujang, 2022).

Tujuan gendang air diadakan adalah untuk mengubat pesakit yang mengalami gangguan sihir, makhluk halus, dan sebagainya. Selain itu, fungsi lain persembahan bergendang pada zaman dahulu ialah untuk mencari jodoh. Lelaki bujang akan menyertai persembahan tersebut dan mula mengintai seh gendang yang berselindung di sebalik tabir (langsir). Pada ketika itu, jika terdapat keramaian, maka para lelaki bujang dan para gadis-gadis tidak akan melepaskan peluang untuk mencari jodoh. Walau bagaimanapun, sejak kedatangan Islam ke Sarawak pada waktu itu, maka sedikit sebanyak mempengaruhi respon masyarakat terhadap pergaulan di antara lelaki dan wanita. Menurut Ramdi Bujang (2022) sejak kedatangan Islam penduduk atau masyarakat sangat mementingkan agama sehinggakan Seh Gendang dijaga sebaik mungkin oleh pengawal kerana bimbang menjadi mangsa intai penandak. Pada waktu itu, keadaan “tangkap salah” boleh menjadi keadaan yang sangat rumit sehinggakan tindakan pasangan atau lelaki dan wanita yang bertukar kain perca atau sapu tangan di antara satu sama lain boleh dijatuhkan hukum atas kesalahan “tangkap salah”. Bukan itu sahaja, penandak yang hadir ke persembahan tersebut turut dijaga oleh pengawal kerana bimbang takut terjadinya perbalahan antara satu sama lain.

Sebagai tambahan, fungsi lain persembahan bergendang pada masa dahulu ialah sebagai salah satu platform untuk mencari jodoh. Setiap kali persembahan bergendang diadakan, para lelaki bujang tidak akan melepaskan peluang untuk berkenalan dan bersua dengan gadis-gadis pada ketika itu. Kelunakan suara Seh Gendang ketika melantunkan pantun menarik perhatian mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, mereka tidak boleh salah langkah kerana bimbang akan ditangkap salah. Selain itu, pada masa dahulu, persembahan bergendang juga diadakan apabila sesebuah keluarga tersebut memperoleh atau menuai padi dengan banyak pada musim menuai pada atau beranyi. Persembahan bergendang pada waktu ini lebih kepada mensyukuri rezeki yang datang melimpah ruah. Malah, apa yang menariknya, persembahan bergendang juga diadakan ketika proses menggantung kelambu pengantin yang bakal berkahwin oleh penduduk kampung. Proses menggantung kelambu ialah proses atau langkah awal menuju ke majlis perkahwinan dan proses ini merupakan simbolik kepada pasangan pengantin yang bakal berkongsi kehidupan selepas itu. Berdasarkan penemuan ini, pengkaji melihat fungsi persembahan bergendang telah berkembang daripada berfungsi sebagai medium perubatan kepada

fungsi-fungsi lain yang berkaitan dengan amalan seharian atau acara rasmi yang diadakan boleh masyarakat kampung.

4.3 Evolusi Penggunaan Alat Muzik

Persembahan bergendang juga mengalami evolusi dari aspek penggunaan alat muzik. Pada ketika bergendang berfungsi untuk tujuan perubatan, alat muzik yang digunakan dalam persembahan bergendang ialah gendang sahaja dan tidak dicampur aduk dengan pelbagai alat muzik lain. Namun begitu, apabila fungsi bergendang telah berkembang terutama ketika digunakan untuk menghibur para tetamu di acara-acara atau majlis-majlis rasmi, terdapat campuran dalam penggunaan alat muzik dan bukan bergantung dengan gendang semata-mata. Seiring dengan perkembangan semasa, kini persembahan bergendang bercampur dengan penggunaan beberapa alat muzik lain. Antara contoh alat muzik lain yang digunakan bersama-sama dengan gendang ialah biola. Menurut Ramdi Bujang (2022), penggunaan biola dalam persembahan bergendang bermula semasa zaman pemerintahan Brooke lagi namun tidak semua tempat. Hanya sesetengah tempat sahaja menggunakan biola pada waktu itu.

“Biola datang bersama dgn kehadiran Inggeris dan digunapakai dalam gendang Melayu sebagai pengiring pukulan gendang semasa zaman tersebut” (Jamal Johari, 2022).

Terdapat juga kumpulan menggunakan gendang dan selain menggunakan gong. Variasi penggunaan pelbagai jenis alat muzik ini menghasilkan alunan tabuh atau tukul yang lebih harmoni. Semakin zaman menginjak ke arah kemajuan, kini terdapat juga persembahan bergendang yang menggunakan gitar dan keyboard. Gitar dan keyboard akan mengiringi paluan gendang. Walaupun persembahan bergendang kini telah mempunyai variasi dalam penggunaan alat muziknya, namun alat utama yang menjadi nadi dalam persembahan bergendang wajib ada kerana itu merupakan keaslian yang cuba dikekalkan dan dipelihara hingga kini.

4.4 Evolusi Busana / Kostum

Selain mengalami evolusi dari segi elemen persembahan dan fungsi, persembahan bergendang juga mengalami evolusi dari segi busana yang dipakai ketika persembahan berlangsung. Buku tulisan Suhana Sarkawi et.al. (2018) menyatakan bahawa busana yang dipakai oleh Penandak, Seh Gendang dan pemukun mengenakan baju harian seperti baju Melayu, kain pelikat, seluar panjang, baju kurung, serta kain sarung sebagai kelubung kepala. Walau bagaimanapun, pakaian penandak masih seperti biasa iaitu berbaju Melayu, yang dipadankan dengan sabok

atau kain sampin. Penandak juga akan mengenakan songkok tinggi sebelum membuat persembahan.

Walau bagaimanapun, temubual bersama dengan penggiat persembahan bergendang memberitahu sebaliknya. Temubual bersama Ramdi Bujang (2022) mengatakan bahawa tidak ada spesifik busana atau pakaian yang wajib dipakai semasa membuat persembahan bergendang. Hal ini demikian kerana pada waktu itu iaitu pada zaman sebelum Sarawak diperintah oleh Rajah Putih (Brooke) masyarakat masih hidup dalam serba kekurangan. Maka, mereka akan memakai apa yang ada sahaja. Jadi berdasarkan penemuan ini penulis melihat secara logik persembahan bergendang diadakan semasa aktiviti bergotong-royong sewaktu majlis atau acara besar berlangsung. Ketika itu tentunya penduduk mengenakan pakaian yang sesuai untuk bekerja berat jadi pakaian pada waktu itu tidak menjadi aspek penting yang perlu dititikberatkan.

Namun begitu, selepas era pemerintahan Rajah Putih (Brooke), maka pakaian mula menjadi elemen penting dalam sesebuah persembahan. Semasa zaman pemerintahan Rajah Putih, dikatakan bahawa penandak mengenakan pakaian seakan-akan pakaian yang dipakai oleh orang putih iaitu baju kot, bow tie, dan kasut barrette. Menurut Jamal Johari (2022), pakaian persembahan dipakai mengikut trend semasa. Pada zaman kebangkitan era Pop Yeh Yeh, penandak akan mengenakan baju dan seluar bertemakan pakaian Pop Yeh Yeh iaitu seluar berkaki besar dan baju kemeja. Begitu juga dengan kebangkitan zaman Rock and Roll, penandak mengenakan baju denim dan seluar jeans untuk bertandak semasa persembahan bergendang. Walakin itu, kedua-dua penggiat ada menyentuh tentang pakaian asal orang Melayu Sarawak iaitu penandak mengenakan baju Melayu lebar, sabok (sampin) dua jari serta songkok senget. Pada ketika itu tiada istilah penandak mengenakan tanjak dan terompah. Penandak lelaki hanya mengenakan kasut *barrette* atau hanya sekadar berkaki ayam. Tanjak hanya digunakan selepas Sarawak menyertai Malaysia pada tahun 1963 lantaran daripada pengaruh bangsawan Melayu dari Semenanjung Malaysia. Sebaliknya, busana yang dipakai oleh Seh Gendang pula hanyalah berbaju kurung dan mengenakan keringkam sejak dari dahulu lagi.

4.5 Evolusi Penyertaan Anggota Kumpulan

Pada waktu yang sama, persembahan bergendang turut berubah dari segi anggota yang menganggotai sesebuah kumpulan bergendang. Jika pada waktu dahulu Seh Gendang hanya dianggotai oleh gadis-gadis yang belum berumahtangga, kini tidak lagi. Hal ini demikian kerana seperti yang telah disentuh dalam perbincangan awal, persembahan bergendang adalah *medium* atau landasan untuk para lelaki dan wanita mencari pasangan hidup. Seh Gendang hendaklah terdiri daripada gadis-gadis yang

masih belum berkahwin. Maka, wanita yang sudah berkahwin tidak digalakkan menjadi Seh Gendang kerana bimbang isu gangguan sosial. Secara tidak langsung, jika Seh Gendang terdiri daripada para gadis, maka peratusan untuk persembahan tersebut mengundang penonton adalah lebih tinggi kerana ada nilai tarikan yang tersendiri. Hal ini berbeza pula dengan keadaan persembahan bergendang pada hari ini. Kini seh gendang tidak semestinya dianggotai oleh gadis yang belum berkahwin, bahkan wanita yang sudah berkahwin, dan berusia juga dibolehkan untuk menjadi Seh Gendang. Berdasarkan fenomena ini pengkaji melihat betapa terdesaknya persembahan bergendang untuk mendapatkan pelapis seterusnya demi kelangsungan seni tradisional ini. Begitu juga dengan penandak, jika dahulu penandak lebih terbuka kepada lelaki yang belum berkahwin, kini sesiapa sahaja boleh jadi penandak asalkan individu tersebut mempunyai bakat mencipta pantun secara spontan, mempunyai vokal yang mantap, serta daya tahan yang tinggi kerana perlu berpantun, sambil bertandak.

4.6 Evolusi Bentuk Persembahan

Persembahan bergendang juga telah berubah dari segi bentuk persembahannya. Pada masa dahulu, masyarakat Melayu Sarawak sangat berpegang teguh dengan ajaran Islam sehinggakan perbuatan saling bertukar sapu tangan di antara lelaki dan wanita yang bukan muhrim juga boleh membawa kepada jenayah tangkap khalwat. Malah, sekiranya lelaki dan wanita berbual di jendela berdua sahaja dengan keadaan wanita di dalam rumah, lelaki di luar rumah, jika dilihat oleh penduduk kampung maka penduduk kampung boleh terus membuat laporan kepada ketua kampung dan kedua-dua lelaki dan wanita tadi akan dihukum. Justeru, pegangan teguh terhadap agama Islam menjadikan persembahan bergendang ketika itu mengasingkan lelaki dan wanita menggunakan tabir (langsir). Tabir akan digantung dan menutup ruang atas dan bawah namun hanya meninggalkan ruang yang minima untuk memperlihatkan wajah Seh Gendang. Dek kerana inilah maka wujudnya tandak jenis “tandak saok” iaitu tandak untuk memikat seh gendang agar tertarik dengan penandak tersebut. Malah, evolusi dari segi bentuk persembahan ini tidak mewajibkan lagi Seh Gendang mesti disembunyikan di sebalik tabir yang tinggi dan tertutup dan hanya meninggalkan sedikit ruang untuk wajah seh gendang.

4.7 Evolusi Jenis Tandak / Tarian

Aspek terakhir yang mengalami evolusi ialah jenis tandak. Jenis tandak pada masa dahulu lebih kepada tandak jenis saok dan tandak jenis teter. Gerak tari tandak saok biasanya digerakkan dengan meletakkan kedua-dua tangan di belakang sambil

menggerakkan jari-jemari seolah-olah memanggil Seh Gendang. Badan akan dibongkokkan hampir setengah pinggang agar dapat menilik di sebalik tabir yang menyembunyikan Seh Gendang. Menurut Jamal Johari (2022), gerak tari tandak pada masa dahulu lebih kepada bunga silat. Jika dibandingkan dengan gerak tari pada masa kini, gerak tari bergendang telah berasimilasi dengan gerak tari joget. Malah, gerak tari bertandak kini juga lebih kepada kreativiti penandak untuk menggerakkan badan dan berinteraksi dengan Seh Gendang sepanjang persembahan.

5. PERBINCANGAN

Setelah mengkaji evolusi yang berlaku dalam persembahan bergendang, maka dapat disimpulkan bahawa evolusi yang berlaku terhadap persembahan ini berpunca daripada kesan perkembangan atau peredaran zaman yang meliputi ruang lingkup masa dan penduduk. Sub-topik seterusnya membincangkan penerimaan para penggiat terhadap evolusi budaya yang berlaku dalam persembahan bergendang. Gendang Melayu Sarawak mempunyai kumpulan dan penggiat yang tersendiri. Jika tiada yang lama maka tiadalah yang baru. Penyataan ini menunjukkan pentingnya bagi kita memastikan agar seni persembahan ini terus bertahan. Persoalannya, apakah evolusi yang berlaku itu dapat diterima oleh penggiat-penggiat yang sekian lama memperjuangkan seni persembahan bergendang ini? Bagi mendapatkan jawapan kepada soalan ini, pengkaji menemubual penggiat yang sekian lama berkecimpung dalam bidang persembahan bergendang ini. Hasil temubual tersebut menunjukkan bahawa mereka bersetuju dan menerima akan proses evolusi budaya yang berlaku terhadap persembahan bergendang. Temubual bersama dengan Ramdi Bujang (2022) menyatakan bahawa bagi memastikan sesebuah budaya mampu bertahan, maka kebudayaan itu wajar bertahan lama seiring dengan peredaran masa. Maka, situasi ini bertepatan dengan teori evolusi budaya yang telah diperkenalkan oleh Darwin (1859) bahawa sesebuah kebudayaan perlu menerima evolusi yang berlaku dalam sesebuah persembahan.

Selain itu, Jamal Johari (2022) mengatakan bahawa beliau bersetuju agar persembahan bergendang ini mengalami evolusi namun mesti mengekalkan ciri-ciri asal persembahan bergendang. Hal ini kerana, bagi memastikan sesebuah kebudayaan tersebut bertahan dengan utuh, maka kita harus berani menerima perubahan seiring dengan peredaran masa.

“Jangan jadikan pentas itu sebagai pentas orang mati. Kita menghiburkan orang bukan suruh orang tidur.”

Perubahan perlu diterima, asalkan tidak meninggalkan elemen atau asas yang utama dalam persembahan bergendang, yang asal kita kekal, yang moden kita tambah.

Selain itu, kewajaran evolusi terhadap persembahan bergendang juga meliputi keperluan untuk memelihara seni ini agar ia dapat diwarisi oleh generasi muda pada masa akan datang.

6. KESIMPULAN

Secara umumnya, dapat dilihat dengan jelas bahawa sesebuah kebudayaan akan mengalami proses evolusi dalam mempertahankan kewujudannya di zaman yang sering berubah mengikut arus kemodenan. Seni kebudayaan seperti Gendang Melayu Sarawak mengalami proses evolusi demi kelangsungannya untuk bertahan dalam zaman moden. Hal ini demikian kerana cabaran besar untuk kesenian bukanlah teknologi atau zaman itu sendiri, tetapi cabaran dari masyarakat itu sendiri. Selain itu, kesenian dan kebudayaan yang kita miliki mungkin akan lenyap begitu sahaja jika tiada daya dan usaha kita untuk mengekalkannya. Pihak kerajaan dan masyarakat perlu berganding bahu dalam memastikan kesenian dan kebudayaan seperti ini terus mekar dan hidup walaupun terdapat banyak elemen yang telah berubah. Oleh yang demikian, usaha yang berterusan dan konsisten perlu dijalankan oleh semua pihak untuk lebih terus kreatif dan inovatif dalam membangunkan sesebuah kebudayaan dan kesenian terutamanya dalam konteks negara ini yang mempunyai masyarakat berbilang bangsa dan agama.

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