

CULTURAL IMMERSION OF IBAN TRADITIONS CULTURE IN KERANGAN PINGGAI: A 3-DAY, 2-NIGHT PROGRAM

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Abstract

The Iban community, one of the largest ethnic groups in Sarawak, has origins deeply intertwined with longhouse settlements and continues to preserve and actively incorporate their cultural heritage into daily life. However, the limited availability of tourism packages to longhouses has contributed to a need for more awareness among external communities regarding the unique cultural practices of the Iban people. This challenge highlights the need for effective strategies to promote and preserve their rich cultural heritage. This study aims to design a comprehensive package to promote Iban culture in Kerangan Pinggai. The study involved 112 respondents selected using simple random sampling techniques and data analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicate that respondents generally preferred a package price within the range of RM100 to RM200, with 43% expressing a likelihood of utilising flexible payment plans. These results suggest that Kerangan Pinggai has significant potential to emerge as a new tourist attraction, supported by the positive reception of promotional videos and brochures. Furthermore, the proposed package promises to foster stronger connections between tourists and the local community. This study faced several limitations, primarily constrained by a limited timeframe of 14 weeks allocated for site visits and report preparation. Future studies are encouraged to employ qualitative methodologies further to explore Iban culture in Sarawak. The findings of this research contribute to the academic literature by providing meaningful insights into the development and promotion of travel packages centred on Iban cultural heritage.

Keywords: Culture, Iban, Package.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Malaysia has grown year to year after the pandemic era. Since the pandemic, tourists' main attraction is more to nature. In this case, other than getting the attraction from tourists, the sustainability of tourism can be continued. A lot of rural areas in peninsular Malaysia are known among tourists. Sustainable development is one of the most frequently mentioned strategies for increasing a community's resilience. For sustainability, it can decrease deforestation, pollution, and global warming from happening. Others from Peninsular Malaysia, such as Sabah and Sarawak, also have sustainable tourism in Borneo.

In Sarawak, there are a lot of rural areas that tourists have never explored. This is because of a need for more marketing from the local community, especially the Iban community. The Iban community, one of the largest ethnic groups in Sarawak, has origins deeply intertwined with longhouse settlements and continues to preserve and actively incorporate their cultural heritage into daily life. They have their village and long house where they live. Tourists have already recognised some longhouses in Sarawak.

Kerangan Pinggai, the project's authentic historic longhouse, must be appropriately conserved for preservation purposes to remain sustainable. Homestays are the most effective way to preserve the longhouse's originality as a landmark structure. Even though there is an increasing number of

Malaysian homestays, they are not competitive and cannot attract foreign and local guests. The main reason for decreased homestay receipts in Sarawak is the low quality of homestay service by Bernard (2020). This statement indicates that in order for numbers to increase, homestays must be well-versed in customer service techniques for Kerangan Pinggai Longhouse to get worldwide recognition. Tourists have already recognised some longhouses in Sarawak.

However, the limited availability of tourism packages to longhouses has contributed to a need for more awareness among external communities regarding the unique cultural practices of the Iban people. This challenge highlights the need for effective strategies to promote and preserve their rich cultural heritage. This challenge highlights the need for effective strategies to promote and preserve their rich cultural heritage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture is an encompassing term that relates to the intangible aspects of social life, including values, beliefs, semantic systems, communication strategies, and community-wide activities. Sociologists define culture as a collective framework determining society's behaviour and identity. It reflects an inheritance of traditions passed down through the generations, acting as a mechanism for cohesiveness in society and continuation. However, culture is not static; it is vulnerable to modification through processes such as modernisation, which can alter or reinterpret long-held customs and values. This dynamic character emphasises the interaction between preserving culture and adaptation in response to societal changes (Cole, N. L., 2024)

According to White, L.A. (1959), culture is a concept that exists only in the mind. Some anthropologists believe that culture is made up of ideas, while others believe that it comprises observable objects and events in the outside world. The concept of culture remains that societies today are human structures of groups that may have unequal access to and control over resources and benefits. In addition, different social science fields hold different opinions, such as the sociological concept of stratification, which states that all societies exhibit individual differences (Gomeseria, Ronald., 2019). Every culture establishes methods for assigning each individual to a specific social group, and stratifications are an inherent aspect of social life (Oyekola, Isaac & Eyitayo, Oyeyipo., 2020).

Societies include a range of cultures. The types offer a unique insight into how people or societies function and operate. Culture can be classified into numerous kinds, which emerge directly or indirectly in communities, regions, or organisations. Culture is a dynamic system composed of people, places, and activities. People develop cultures through shared behaviours in specific locales, and culture influences how individuals engage in activities and build places. Previous academics identified and studied numerous sorts of cultures.

According to Habbi, Joginder, and Gopal (2024), folk cultures are typically produced from a community's or region's traditional behaviours, beliefs, and customs, which include diverse forms of expression such as music, dance, art, and oral traditions. It should be sustained as the age evolves. Based on Kuang, J., He, L. (2022) and Li (2023), traditional songs are part of culture and heritage since they contain valuable historical and cultural knowledge but represent national and regional identity. Based on (Guangchao, Liu, & Lee, Yok Fee & Ab Razak, Ratna Roshida & Majid, Arfah., 2024), globalisation and modernisation also have an impact on culture and heritage.

Unlike many other indigenous cultures, the Iban people have an extensive cultural heritage comprising a wide range of knowledge, beliefs, values, and tangible things. This cultural resource is

passed down orally from generation to generation, creating a living and evolving reservoir of tradition. Iban culture is defined by its language, a strong spirit of collaboration and rivalry, hill rice farming traditions, and the celebration of many traditional festivals. They also practice different arts and crafts, traditional marriage rites, longhouse living styles, and other forms of oral expression, like songs and symbolic chanting (Saleh, R. M, 2014).

Community life, spirituality, and artistic traditions frequently address the Iban culture. Ibans live in the longhouse (rumah Panjabi), and the long house is a cultural heritage centre, symbolising unity and community identity. Miring ceremonies and Gawai Dayak celebrations highlight the Ibans' strong religious ties with the natural world as their ancestors. Iban art, including pua kumbu textiles and tattoos, has symbolic implications for their beliefs and achievements. Modern studies show globalisation and tourism activities affect the Iban culture, emphasising their resilience and efforts to maintain their legacy in a changing world.

The foundation of Iban society is based on customs and is frequently regulated by adat (customary law). According to Sandin (1980), the adat provides rules for solving disputes, inheritance management, and marriage practice regulation. Ngajat is a cultural tradition performed during festivals such as Gawai Dayak and as a form of storytelling. Cultural performances are accompanied by traditional instruments such as the sape (a stringed instrument) and engkerumong (gongs).

Rituals and spirituality constitute a part of the Iban culture. Miring (offering ceremonies) are examples of Iban ritual traditions that demonstrate religious devotion and belief in petra (deities) and antus (spirits). Freeman (1970) stresses the significance of the Manang (shaman) in healing ceremonies and spiritual instruction within Iban mythical creatures.

According to E.B. Taylor (1965), animistic beliefs originate from the word animal, which signifies belief in supernatural animals. Apart from that, this belief in the paranormal and spirits is an essential component of early religious ideas, which dominated human thinking in ancient times since humans did not yet realise the tide of technology and modernisation. In the past, the Iban performed headhunting (ngayau), symbolising bravery and social protection. Although discontinued, this element of the Iban legacy continues to exist in oral history and ritual symbols (Sather, 1994). The parang ilang, or traditional weapon, is a significant cultural artifact.

Iban culture is a tapestry of rules, traditions, and artistic expressions that demonstrate their deep connection to nature, community, and spirituality. The current study indicates the importance of protecting these traditional values because they are essential to the Iban people's identity and place in Malaysian cultural history.

RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative research method was used to promote and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Keranggan Pinggai through 3D2N programs. The questionnaire was designed and distributed using the Google Forms tool, and the URL hyperlinks were attached and given to the respondents to collect the data. The study involved 112 respondents selected using simple random sampling techniques and the data collected were analyzed using descriptive means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations computed from the data set using SPSS (27.0).

The respondents involved are polytechnic students with a Diploma in Tourism Management and workers in the tourism industry. The sample was chosen because they had experience using travel packages. Therefore, the sample would have the capability to answer the questionnaires. The simple random sampling techniques were determined to achieve the objective of this study. This

study used the Likert-type scale question with five scales (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neither, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Were 112 respondents involved in this study; 75.9% were female, and 24.1% were male. The respondents comprised 78.6% of students, 20.5% employed, and 0.9% unemployed. The majority of the respondents chose the package price RM100-RM200 (44.6%), followed by RM200-RM300 (30.45%), below RM100 (13.4%), and RM300 and above (11.6%). Respondents were likely to choose payment methods using flexible payment plans (43.8%) followed by payment upon arrival (29.5%).

Table 1. Demographic Data

Items	Categories	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	75.9
	Male	24.1
Occupation	Students	78.6
	Employed	20.5
	Unemployed	0.9
Pricing Suggestion	Below RM100	13.4
	RM100-RM200	44.6
	RM200-RM300	30.4
	RM300-above	11.6
Payment method	Flexible Payment Plans	43.8
	No Upfront Payment Required	2.7
	Payment Upon Arrival	29.5
	Discounts for full upfront payments	14.3
	instalment payment options	9.8

Table 2. Package and product quality

Package		
NO	ITEMS	MEANS (M)
1	I like the package.	4.00
2	The package is affordable for everyone.	4.08
3	The information provided in the package was clear and helpful.	4.13
4	The activities are suitable for releasing stress.	4.16
5	The package can build a bond between tourists and the local community.	4.21
Product Quality		
1	The brochure was informative.	4.03
2	The promotional video is exciting.	4.03
3	The package allowed me to experience the local culture.	4.11
4	The brochure gives good explanations about Kerangan Pinggai.	4.09
5	Kerangan Pinggai has the potential to rise as a new tourist attraction based on the promotional videos and the brochure given.	4.18

Table 2 indicates the comprehensive agreement with ten items for both questionnaire variables. The dimension package's highest mean score, "The package can build the bond between tourist and local community" (M=4.21), suggests that the package's design aims to generate income for local communities while promoting interaction with tourists. The item "The activities are good for

releasing stress" (M = 4.16) indicates that the respondent enjoys cultural and outdoor activities. For item "the information provided in the package was clear and helpful" (M=4.1), demonstrating that the brochures provided by the researchers are thorough and informative for the respondents. The lowest mean score is "I like the package" (M=4.00), indicating the package is interesting but needs to add more activities that can attract tourists to come and buy the package.

The highest dimension of product quality shows that "Kerangan Pinggai has the potential to rise as a new tourist attraction based on the promotional videos and brochure given" (M=4.18). This is because the activities in the brochure and the promotional video motivated respondents to travel there to experience for themselves. The item "I felt that the package allowed me to experience the local culture" (M=4.11) indicates that the tourists would gain an understanding of the local culture. This is due to some activities emphasising cultural activity. The item "The brochure contains good explanations about Kerangan Pinggai" (M=4.09), "The brochure was educational" (M=4.0), and "The promotional video is very interesting" (M=4.03). This three-item list reveals that the brochure and video must be informative and attractive to promote the Kerangan Pinggai.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to create a comprehensive package to promote Iban culture in Kerangan Pinggai. Based on the results, the respondent's attitude toward the package could have been more favourable and favourable. According to the demographic results, respondents suggested pricing for this package between RM100 and RM200. This demonstrates that the researcher must make the package more attractive and include more cultural value to attract tourists to take part in this package. The findings indicate that the package can strengthen the link between tourists and the local community by engaging and generating more revenue for the longhouse people.

This study had several constraints, the most significant of which was a time limit of 14 weeks for site visits and report production. Future research should use qualitative approaches to allow for a more in-depth investigation of the Iban culture in Sarawak. The results of this study contribute to the academic literature by offering meaningful insights into the development and promotion of vacation packages focusing on Iban cultural heritage.

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