TAMU: ITS ROLES AS A MEDIUM OF CULTURAL IDENTITY PRESERVATION AMONG SABAH'S ETHNIC IN THE ERA OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION 4.0

[1]HALINA SENDERA MOHD. YAKIN, [2]ANDREAS TOTU, [3]CHIEW TUNG MOI, [4]SURAYA SINTANG [5]SITI AIDAHLOKIN

Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning Universiti Malaysia Sabah
E-mail: [1]halina_sendera@yahoo.com, [2]andreast@ums.edu.my, [3]chiew@ums.edu.my, [4]suraya@ums.edu.my, [5]sitiaida@ums.edu.my

Abstract - This paper aims at studying the roles and challenges of Tamu as a medium of cultural identity preservation among Sabah ethnic groups in the era of industrial revolution 4.0 by focusing on the commercialisation of Kadazandusun's traditional foods, namely tuhau and bambangan. Thus, the objectives of this paper are to examine the existing and future functions of Tamu, the impact of industrial revolution 4.0 and the advancement of information technology towards the role of Tamu in the commercialisation of traditional foods and preservation of cultural identity among Kadazandusun people. Both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered through participant observation, interviews and surveys. Respondents and informants are consist of Kadazandusun traditional foods retailers and consumers at various Tamus in Sabah. The findings show that the role of Tamu institution is still relevant and pertinent in commercialising traditional foods and preserving the cultural identity of the Kadazandusun people, particularly in the rural areas. At certain localities, such as those adjacent to the city and tourist attractions, Tamu still plays an important role in commercialising traditional foods, although some retailers have already utilised various types of social media as a method to promote and expand their sales specifically those who are operating as part-timers. Media and internet accessibility have been identified as contributing factors towards the change in the marketing approach. Other contributing factors include time and budget constraints and business location. Hence, Tamu is still relevant and significant in the context of commercialisation of traditional foods and preservation of cultural identity among the Kadazandusun people in Sabah in the era of digital revolution.

Keywords - Tamu; Commercialization; Traditional Food; Kadazandusun; Cultural Identity Preservation; The Fourth Indusrial Revolution; Information Technology

I. INTRODUCTION

The post-modern world which is characterized by industrial digitalization and information technology has penetrated and eventually affected various aspects of our lives especially in economic sector. The term industrial revolution 4.0, which originates from Germany can be described as the intelligent networking based on integration between the business and manufacturing processes together with people who are involved in the chain of production that include both suppliers and customers (Andreja Rojko, 2017). Today we are witnessing a growing tendency for people, traders and customers alike, in Asia and around the globe, to use online business in line with the advancement of technology. However, traditional business approach through face to face encounter or communication still predominates business landscapes among the community in certain areas. In Sabah, Malaysia, there is an institution which is popularly known as Tamu that plays multiple roles within the state and local communities. Tamu is not only significant in the economic, political and social aspects, it is also very important in the cultural development of a community.

Tamu in itself can portray an ethnic cultural identity which can be defined as a sense of belonging that based on value sharing among the community. It covers both material and nonmaterial cultural elements such as history, cosmology, worldview, belief system, values, norms, customs and rituals, social organization, language and communication pattern, artefacts (technologies, tools and vehicles) as well as techniques and skills (the ways in which a society utilized their artefacts). Cultural identity can manifest, signify and shape one's behaviour and community's image and provides broad guidelines in dealing with everyday life (Halina Sendera, 2008). Cultural identity can also be portrayed through the community's traditional foods because food is the most basic of all social codes, which simply means that food can signify and identify the identity of an ethnic (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

In Sabah, Malaysia, the diversity and uniqueness of the ethnic traditional foods reflects Sabah as a melting pot state which has diverse ethnic compositions, that include among others the Kadazandusuns, Bajaus, Muruts, Melayu-Bruneiens, Bisayas and Bugis. For example, the West Coast Bajaus is famous for their concept of duangand foods such as kalas and pinjaram whereas the East Coast Bajaus is known for its putu and sagol; the Kadazandusuns is known for its hinavaandnonsom; the Muruts is popular with linopot andumbus; the Melayu-Bruneians and Bisayas are associated with ambuyatand kolupiswhereas Bugis is famous for their

burasak and berobok. This paper focusses only on the Kadazandusun's traditional foods, namely tuhau and bambangan.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT, OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The prime issue that the authors aim to highlight here is, in today's era of the fourth industrial revolution, where people seem to be invaded or dominated by gadgets and advanced technologies including in trading and business transaction, is Tamu still relevant and significant in playing its roles as a medium of cultural identity preservation particularly pertaining to the promotion and commercialisation of traditional foods among the Kadazandusun people in Sabah? This is because nowadays, e-commerce activities have become popular means of shopping in which people can buy and get many things from consumer electronics and appliances to household goods and groceries in just a click away. Thus, the specific objectives of this paper are to examine the existing and future functions of Tamu and to study the impact of the fourth industrial revolution and the advancement of information technology towards the role of Tamu in the commercialisation of traditional foods and preservation of cultural identity among the Kadazandusun people in Sabah.

This paper contemplates to offer significant contributions in the epistemological aspects of cultural heritage, particularly in the area of cultural identity preservation. It is hoped that this study will be able to contribute towards economic enhancements among the Kadazandusun people and able to assist in the effort to promote local knowledge through the documentation of traditional foods in Sabah.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The signification behind traditional food particularly in Sabah is not universal but culture specific and arbitrary.Preliminary literature reviews that have been conducted show that a comprehensive research pertaining to the roles of Tamu and relationship between cultural identity among Sabah ethnic through traditional food with commercialization issues are quite limited. A research that focuses on preservation and transformation of traditional food in acculturation and assimilation contexts among sojourners has been conducted byRosmaliza et al. (2016). The research which has been done using Malaysian respondents in United Kingdom found that the difficulties in preserving the authenticity of traditional food is due to the lack of resources in getting the original ingredients. This eventually cause them to make modification in order to survive in a foreign land. Contrastingly, a study related to communication field particularly in advertising has been done by Andreas and Halina Sendera (2016). Their research focuses on the relationship between advertising and food choice pattern among children in Sabah. The study showed that advertising contributes towards the health problem, i.e obesity among children.

Previous studies on Sabah's ethnic traditional foods have been conducted by several researchers. Ng (2006) focused on the Kadazandsusun's, Suraya (2007) centred on Bugis's whereas Halina Sendera (2018) and Halina Sendera&SaidatulNornis (2008) concentrated on Bajau's. Ng (2006) discussed the fermentation of bambanganand also highlighted the community's perception towards the production, preparation quality, commercialization and marketing strategy of bambangan. Ng found that the unproductive promotion and unattractive packaging quality have contributed towards the decline of market expansion of bambangan. Meanwhile Suraya (2007) focussed on the importance of traditional food towards the belief system and culture among the Bugis people. Although there were similarities with Suraya's in term of food as cultural identity, Halina Sendera&SaidatulNornis (2008) on the other hand concentrated on a different ethnic group. The latter studied the Bajau people, who are well known with the concept of duang dan ngeduang during death custom ceremony. The study showed that traditional foods in duang have implicit meanings that related to the cultural life of the Bajaus. Similarly, Halina Sendera (2018) has conducted a thorough study pertaining to the relationship between traditional food and the cosmology and worldview, in her thesis on semiotics in Bajau death custom. Apart from highlighting the significations of symbols, her study also discusses the transformation and modification of duangpreparation due to the modernisation and the needs of the contemporary society.

Meanwhile, thorough studies on Sabah's Tamu have been conducted by quite a small number of researchers such as Chong Han San & Low Ai Fuah (2008), Yamamoto (2002) and Rimmer (1999). Chong Han San & Low Ai Fuah have supplied the historical aspect and general knowledge regarding Tamuparticularly around the west coast of Sabah including Kota Belud, Tuaran, Tamparuli, Papar, Donggongon and Kudat in their book entitled "The Tamu: Sabah's native market" whereas Rimmer only covered some basic documentation about the TamparuliTamu scenario through her published drawings and illustrations based on her experiences while staying at Sabah during 1970s and 1980s. On the contrary, Yamamoto centered his study on the formation of the Kadazandusun identity in the 1950s by focusing on the harvest festivals which also contained knowledge pertaining to the roles and significance of Sabah's Tamu during the middle of 20th century. Apart from that, studies pertaining toTamu trade systemat other Borneon continent has been done by Langub (2013) who focussed on the historical landscapes ofTamuamong the Penan of Sarawak and their encounter and the policies attached

to it and the people during the Brooke government as well as the later colonial and post-colonial governments. He concluded that

Based on those literature reviews, it can be concluded that study pertaining to Sabah's native market particularly Tamu in relation to cultural identity preservation and commercialization through ethnic traditional food have not been covered widely among researchers. Thus, this paper was initiated to fill in the gap by researching both cultural and economic landscapes which specifically touch on Sabah's ethnic traditional foods in the era of the fourth industrial revolution.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research combines both qualitative (as a primary method) and quantitative (as a secondary method). Qualitatively, participant observation as well as in-depth interviews have been applied to collect primary data. The participant observation has been carried out at several Tamu locations around Sabah which covers the south west coast zone (Kota Kinabalu, Penampang, Tuaran, Tamparuli, Kundasang and Ranau), north west coast zone (Kudat, Sikuati and Kota Marudu) and also upper inland or rural zone (Tambunan, Keningau, Tenom, Nabawan and Sook). Data have been obtained through visual recordings in the form of pictures and videos to get the real scenarios of Tamus and the commercialisation landscape of traditional foods among the Kadazandusun particularly tuhau and bambangan.In-depth interviews have also been implemented involving 20 informants from various districts which consists of both retailers and consumers to get more information particularly pertaining to their experiences, knowledge and perceptions in traditional foods, Kadazandusun identity, business or marketing strategy as well as the significance of Tamu. In terms of quantitative method, it only covers a small part of the data collection in which simple quantification procedure (to get percentage) have been utilized using the survey technique which basically gathered the general information regarding the business landscape and the roles of Tamu. Thus survey forms have been distributed and collected among respondents during the fieldwork.

V. KADAZANDUSUN OF SABAH

Sabah is one of the 13 states in Malaysia which located at Borneo, the third largest island in the world. Sabah is not only famous for its beautiful and breathtaking flora and fauna, it is also known for its cultural diversity with various ethnic languages, dialects and sub-dialects. In fact, it has the highest number of indigenous ethnic groups in Malaysia. Sabah has more than 40 different ethnics and sub-ethnics. Sabah population is dominated by the Kadazandusuns (17.7%), which appeared to be the largest indigenous ethnic group in Sabah, followed by the Bajaus (14%), Brunei-Malays (5.8%), Muruts (3.2%) and other bumiputera as well as non-bumiputera groups. Each ethnic group has their own distinctive ways of life, language and dialect, norms and moral values, beliefs and religions as well as customs and traditions, which contribute to the development of their cultural identities. Apart from those main ethnic groups, Sabah is also occupied by various immigrants from all over the world especially from Phillipines, Indonesia and other Asian countries. Every ethnic group has its own cultural uniqueness.

The Dusunic cluster comprises of 13 primer languages and scattered around the inland, north and west coast of Sabah (Pugh-Kitingan, 2016). They can be categorized into several different sub-ethnic groups based on the names of tree,river and hill. Nowadays, most of the Kadazandusun are Christians although some of them have embraced Islam whereas a small number of them remains as Pagan.

VI. KADAZANDUSUN TRADITIONAL FOOD:TUHAU AND BAMBANGAN

The Sabahan traditional foods not only consumed to provide nutritional support and serve as decorations during social events or gatherings, but they can also portray an ethnic cultural identity. The passage of time and globalisation that hit our post-modernism world apparently unable to eliminate the traditional foods particularly among the Kadazandusun which are abundant and can be easily found at shops, markets, countryside stalls, cultural events and of course Tamu. Among the famous traditional foods of Kadazandusun are hinava, nonsom, pinaasakan, lihing chicken soup, bambangan and tuhau. This paper focusses only on tuhau and bambangan because these are among popular foods which can be found atTamu and have undergone a certain degree of modification processes for the sake of commercialization.

Tuhauand bambanganare both plants and fruit respectively. Tuhau is scientifically termed as etlingera coccinea. It is categorized as a wild ginger plant that has sharp-tasting and distinctive smell and can be found mainly at the edges of Borneo jungles. Tuhau can be prepared in various cooking method and normally served as a condiment or pickle and eaten with rice. Traditionally, the soft inner stem is either minced and mixed with chilies, onions and/or garlic, salt and lime juice or fried with salted fish or stewed with braised fish popularly known as pinasakanamong the Kadazandusun. Tuhauis believed to has medicinal properties associated with high blood pressure reduction and blood purification. Similarly, bambanganor scientifically named asmangiferapajang can also be found in Borneo but unlike tuhau that can be found all year round,

bambangan on the other hand is a seasonal fruit which is categorized as a wild mango. Because of that, it can be eaten just like mango when it ripens. Bambangancan also be served in multiple ways. Traditionally, the unripe flesh bambanganis made as pickle mixed with its grated seed as well as chilies and salt or cooked with fish whereas the ripe bambangan is normally fried with salted fish.

Nowadays, in order to promote, commercialize and expand the sales of both traditional foods, the method of preparing or serving tuhau and bambanganhas been diversified and modified to make it more appealing or interesting to others especially the non-local or Kadazandusun. Due to the intercultural influence with the Malays, the locals also make spicy sambal tuhauand sambal bambangan[1] that can lasted for months if kept in fridge. Apart from that, tuhauis also modified into dried tuhau flossor famously known in Malay as serunding.

VII. TAMU: ITS FUNCTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN CULTURAL IDENTITY PRESERVATION AND TRADITIONAL FOOD COMMERCIALIZATION

Terminologically, the word 'Tamu' derives from the Malay word 'temu' which literally means 'meet'. Tamu is Sabah's traditional native market which held periodically at various towns and districts. Basically, it is known as a meeting place in which people gather at a designated place to buy and sell (or exchange) local products. In Sabah, the concept of Tamu has come into existence for centuries. It is claimed that Tamualready exist before the legacy of British administration ruled Sabah (Sabah Museum, 2007) or before the emergence of European power at the beginning of the 19th century (Chong Hai San & Low Ai Fuah, 2008)[2]. The Tamuof the past was characterized by the barter trade concept in which local people exchange goods (land, rainforest and sea products) such as rice, fruits, herbs, woven baskets, tobacco, meats and fish as well as services (massages and traditional treatments) among them for fulfilment of needs and sustenance. The term Tamuas a native market or a place to do trading is not only popular in Sabah but other places in Borneo also use the same term[3].

Historically, Tamu serves economic, social and political functions among Sabahan community. It plays a vital role to undertake business transaction among the consumers and retailers or traders. It helps the community to improve their living standards in an appropriate and acceptable manner which in a long run can benefit the government and country as a whole. Nowadays, Tamu has become a tourist attraction where they can buy local products, handicrafts as well as souvenirs and at the same time experience the local culture. Apart from its economic function, Tamu also has a social role due to the fact that it is a hustle and bustle place where people of all ages and walks of life can encounter and mingle around. Interestingly, some people perceived it as a venue to promote and inculcate social equilibrium as well as social unity among the multi ethnic Sabah society (Yamamoto 2002; Budianto 2011). In this way, Tamu develops a rendezvous setting, which eventually promote intercultural relations through various activities such as business dealings, sporting events, beauty pageants, and cultural performances etc. Previously, Tamu was also regarded as an important meeting place where people of different ethnic groups can met and undertook barter trade in peace and harmony. It was claimed that during the colonial era, the chiefs and headmen of different ethnic groups assembled and did their negotiation activities to bring about peace among them at Tamu by carrying out rituals, sacrifices and oaths which later sealed by erecting a stone known as batusumpah. It was believed that violating the oaths or the peace within the Tamugrounds will ultimately bring harm or misfortune (Chong Han San & Low Ai Fuah 2008; Sabah museum 2007). Beside these two aspects, Tamu also has a significant meaning in the political aspect. During the British administration, Tamu was used to attract local people to join various activities in conjunction with state ceremonies such as the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937 and 1953. Tamu festivals was also used as a ground to give away social recognitions and acknowledgements. In this understanding, the locals or the natives joint those activities such as sporting competition and beauty contest in order to be recognized or acknowledged not only among the locals but also among the government credentials.

Besides these three essential functions, Tamu is perceived to serve a cultural function as well, specifically in the promotion and preservation of cultural identity among the Sabah ethnic groups. As mentioned before, the ethnic cultural identity can be identified simply through their traditional foods. Tuhau and bambangan are among Kadazandusun's traditional foods which can be found abundantly and sold domestically at various tamusin Sabah especially those areas or districts dominated by Kadazandusun people.

However in order to suit and meet the current demand due to the influence of information technology, especially in the era of industrial revolution 4.0 that we are facing nowadays, some retailers have already

[1]Sambal tuhau or bambangan is basically a fried chili sauce or paste made with either red, white or/and green chillies, onions, garlic and other ingredients such as salted fish, shrimp and anchovy.

[2]It was stated that a British anthropologist, Ivor H.N.Evans had explicated the Tamu scene in the Tempasuk district back in the 1915 (Chong Han San & Low Ai Fuah, 2008: 29).

[3]According to Langub (2013), who have studied the trade system among the Penan in Sarawak, the word *tamu* also refers to the institutionalized barter trade.

step forward in modifying and diversifying their marketing strategy by utilizing several types of social media as a new approach to attract buyers as well as to promote and expand their sales. Among the famous social media recorded are whatsapp, facebookand instagram. Quite surprisingly, tuhau and bambanganare also available online at various shopping sites or marketplaces. The most popular e-commerce platforms used are Lazada and Shopee. The main reason is to target wide coverage of consumers from all over the world. Moreover, both products can last for months and suitable for extended shipping period if handled properly. Most of the informants and respondents who use social media are those who are operating as part-timers. Meaning to say, they have permanent jobs but involving themselves in this business to get extra incomes.

Nevertheless, up to this day, based on participant observation, in depth interviews and surveys conducted at various Tamu around Sabah, it can be concluded that, Tamu still plays an important role in commercialising traditional foods not only at remote places far from town areas such as Tambunan, Nabawan, Sook, Tenom, Keningau, Kota Marudu and Kudat but also to those locations adjacent to the city centre and known as tourist attractions such as Kundasang, Ranau, Kota Kinabalu, Penampang, Tuaran and Tamparuli. But at certain localities which are apparently far from city or crowded community such as Tambunan, Sook, Nabawan and Sikuati, most of the retailers of traditional foods particularly tuhau and bambangan are operating domestically or use the traditional ways of doing business.

Based on the analyses, social media and Internet accessibility have been identified as significant contributing factors towards the change in the marketing approach. Other contributing factors include time and budget constraints and business location. Geographically, Sabah is known for its mountainous nature and some remote areas have no Internet access. At places with no available Internet access or slow coverage and high Internet subscription fees, Tamu becomes an importance venue to sell and buy products including traditional foods. At tourist attraction areas such as Kundasang and Ranau, which are known for its cold climate and beautiful scenery and also Kota Kinabalu as the city centre, Tamubecomes more important because it is considered as one of the tourist spots in which tourists can get local produces and souvenirs and are able to experience local culture and atmosphere. From the local consumers' point of view, Tamu is regarded as a place to socialize, to catch up with friends and relatives and get stuffs they need quite conveniently with reasonable prices and a very good bargain. Tamuis also perceived as a leisure spot or a routine pastime in which people, friends or a family members can gather and enjoy their activities or weekend together.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study shows that Tamu has various functions economically, socially and politically. Apart from that, Tamu also has cultural function. Up to this day, Tamu remains among the great cultural institutions of Sabah and has continued to be an integral mechanism in portraying the image of Sabah's cultural diversity. Even though the world nowadays is tremendously driven by global competition and influenced by the fourth industrial revolution in which has affected business landscape of many countries, in certain parts of the world, traditional business approach that basically characterized by face-to-face encounter or meeting remains unchanged and still popular among the community. This is the reality of Sabah traditional native market which is broadly and prominently known as Tamu. IndeedTamu still plays an essential role in supporting Sabah people in commercializing their local products such as traditional foods particularly in the rural areas. At certain localities, such as those adjacent to the city and tourist attractions, Tamu still plays an important role in commercialising traditional foods, although some retailers have already utilised various types of social media as a method to promote and expand their sales specifically those who are operating as part-timers. Media and Internet accessibility have been identified as contributing factors towards the change in the marketing approach. Other contributing factors include time and budget constraints and business location.

This study offers both sociocultural and socioeconomic significances which is surrounded by the concept of the interconnected relationship between cultural identity preservation and commercialization that focusses on Kadazandusun traditional foods and the roles of Tamu. From this perspective, an ethnic cultural identity is portrayed through the signification of their traditional foods by commercializing the cultural products. Indirectly, the commercialization of traditional foods and the documentation pertaining to this aspect also help to expand the cultural knowledge of others beyond the cultural horizon and at the same time elevating the image and uniqueness of Sabah Tamuin the eyes of the world. Suffice to say, Tamuis still relevant and significant in the context of commercialisation of traditional foods and preservation of cultural identity among the Kadazandusun people in Sabah in the era of digital revolution or industry 4.0.

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