

## The Process Linkages in the Marketing of *Terendak Igan* for Tourism in Sarawak

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**Abstract:** The *terendak Igan* is the Melanau conical sun hat that has become tourist collectible items in Sarawak. The fate of the *terendak Igan* in terms of its market demand and price as a collectible tourism items is unknown. Thus, using a qualitative approach of in depth interview, this paper investigates how the items are marketed from its source point, the village to the end points at urban areas and the demand its price. The findings show that the process linkages from the source to the end points differ for different types of consumers. The items are mainly marketed by middlepersons. In terms of price, the item is more expensive as it gets further from the source point which implicates a higher net profit to the middle persons and shop owners, while the producer lose out. The implication is that low price paid for the products has diminished the interests of younger generations to sustain the traditional business. In the long run, there is a danger that *terendak Igan* cannot sustain its production due to the aging guardians who sustain its production.

**Key words:** Traditional cultural arts • Culture and tourism • Rural tourism and marketing • Rural development

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### INTRODUCTION

Cultural development focuses on the development of cultures and cultural capacities. This terminology encompasses a vast range of issues pertaining to cultural policy, cultural industry and socio-cultural development. The objective of cultural development is culture - as a sociological dynamic in which society grows and changes; as a powerful sector of the economy; as a professional environment inhabited by skilled creators, artists and craftspeople; as a transmitter of aesthetic expression, ideas and values. Cultural initiatives which harness the indigenous skills and cultures of communities can be powerful drivers for social or economic growth, the promotion of global cultural diversity and sense of cultural self-confidence - all of which can have positive impacts on the broader development of a community, country or region such as being promoted as a tourist collectible cultural item.

The strong relationships between tourism and the development of handicraft industry cannot be denied. Many research studies have shown that tourism has a role in developing local arts and handicrafts and indirectly generate more income to the local people who are mostly

small-scale producers. Deitch's study [1] on the impact of tourism on the arts and crafts of the Southwestern Indians showed the phenomenal growth of the Indian handicrafts market brought about by the exposure to the rest of the nation through tourism. The abundance of Indian arts such as rugs, pottery, jewelry, *kachinas* and baskets is also due to the increase of awareness to preserve their heritage that was once in danger of vanishing. The development of handicrafts industry is not only to preserve local tradition and ethnic identity [2] but also a good way to alleviate poverty [3]. In terms of marketing, those who directly sells their products tend to do so in an informal manner, such as the Mayan of Guatamela who sell handicrafts to tourists are mostly mobile retailers or what Little [4] referring as 'peddlers'. While for the rests who live in remote rural areas, they still heavily depend on the middle person to market their products.

In the rural areas of most developing countries, those who work in the handicraft industry continue their legacy despite the often meager incomes that they receive from such economic activities [5]. The continuous commitment is usually influenced by the appreciation of the traditional cultural heritage and family traditions, seldom driven by

profit-making. In the recent years, handicraft products have increased in value in the broader economy, marketed as unique traditional arts for tourist consumption. Traditional art therefore becomes a potential sector that the rural areas can harness which also has the multiple advantages towards maintaining socio-cultural sustainability and at the same time contributing towards the economic livelihoods of the rural poor, especially women. To what extent are this trend true? The demand for collectible tourist items may increase in their value but will it really benefit the producers who are mainly poor and predominantly living remote from the tourist urban market.

The Melanau is one of the indigenous ethnic groups in Sarawak, mainly living in the coastal areas, traditionally working as fishermen and farmers. The study focuses on a coastal village called Igan, a small fishing village located at the mouth of the Rejang River, in the Third Division of Sarawak. The *terendak Igan* is part of an important traditional attire of the Melanau. Traditionally, apart from its function as a cultural attire, it has a utilitarian purpose, protecting the users from the harsh tropical sun and occasional drizzle, while working, such as tending sago palms, rice fields, collecting wild games and jungle products and fishing in the sea. Throughout the years, its purposes has changed, mainly as tourist collectible items or cultural arts. Not only that, it has become the cultural symbol of Sarawak's identity. This is reflected by buildings in Sarawak designed literally inspired by the *terendak*, particularly their roofs. A prominent example is the Mukah mosque.

The fate of the *terendak Igan* is unknown in terms of its market demand and price as a collectible tourism items from Sarawak. Thus, this paper will examine the process linkages in the marketing of the *terendak Igan* from its source point in Igan to the various end points, the market place. An understanding of this process is crucial before any intervention at the ground level can be made by the policy-makers to sustain the production and utilize the potential of the products for income generation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research uses a purely qualitative approach which includes in-depth interviews and informal group discussion. The research area covers the source point. The source point is a place where the *terendak* are being produced at the village of Igan. The end points are distribution centres or marketing areas. The end points have different levels, from rural growth centre like Mukah; to the nearest town, Sibuan; city, the highest level of the end point which is in Kuching. The sampling is based on a purposive sampling, with two categories of respondents-those from the source points and end points. At the source points, the respondents are the *terendak* makers and the local middleperson. Out of the 327 households in Igan, only 58 households are involved in the *terendak* production, whereby 22 are involved full time and only 36 part time. All of the 58 *terendak* makers who are still active in producing the products are interviewed. 269 households are not involved in the *terendak* making. There is only one active middleperson in the area, the rests are not focusing on *terendak* items and only buy the items according to demand. Six of the *terendak* makers market their products directly to the nearest end point 1 (Mukah) and end point local, the Melanau areas.

At the end points, the respondents are the owner of souvenir shops and middle person from outside the source point. In Mukah, there are two shops selling the *terendak*, a non permanent stall in the Mukah market and a shop selling various products including *terendak* as part of them. In addition to that, one middleperson are also interviewed in Mukah. At the next end points, Sibuan, which serves as a gateway to various tourist destinations in the district, three shop owners and 5 middle persons are interviewed. Lastly, the end point is Kuching, the capital city and also one of the major destinations for tourist in Sarawak. There are more than ten souvenir shops at the Kuching water front. However, only three shops sell *terendak*. All of the three are interviewed. Thus, the total number of respondents are 73 (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Respondents in Relation to Source and End Points

	Source point	End Points		
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	Igan:	Mukah:	Sibu:	Kuching:
	58 <i>terendak</i> makers	2 shop owners	3 shop owners	3 shop
Number of sampling	1 middleperson	1 middleperson	5 middleperson	owners
73	59	3	8	3

The questions for the in-depth interviews are mainly based on the profiling of the respondents, process in the marketing of the products, problems of marketing and demand and supply of the products. In-depth interviews and group discussion are transcribed and analyzed using content analysis through a cyclical process, which is done continuously during the course of data collection in the field and after the verification process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All of the *terendak* makers are female with an average age of 45. Most learn the art of making *terendak* from their mothers and some from friends. The mean income from selling the product is very low, only at 200 Malaysian Ringgit. Those working full time have higher incomes from selling *terendak*, which can be as high as 450 Ringgit Malaysia, while those producing it part time can earn as low as a meager 30 Malaysian Ringgit. Regardless whether there are full or part time, their incomes are still well below the Sarawak Poverty Level Index.

In terms of production, they can produce an average of 47 units per month. The most that a respondent can produce is 60 units. The production depends on the size and types of *terendak* made. There are two types of *terendak* produced depending on the complexity and intricacy of the design. The one with a more refined, complicated and intricate geometric patterns is called *terendak halus*. The *terendak halus* are mainly used for



Picture 1: The *terendak* (Big and Fine)

decoration and souvenirs. There are produced in two sizes, big and small. The other type has simpler pattern and coarse design and known as *terendak kudi*. *Terendak kudi* retain its purpose as head gear in their daily routine and economic activities. However, there are also made into small *terendak* for a cheaper souvenirs. *Terendak halus* is more expensive than the *terendak kudi*. Thus, *terendak halus* are mainly sought after by the middle person.

Diagram 1 shows the process linkages of marketing the *terendak* from its source point to the various end points - end point local, end point1, end point 2 and end point 3. End point local is the areas predominantly populated by the Melanau, which include Mukah, Dalat, Oya, Matu, Daro, Rejang and Belawai, located along the coastal areas around Igan. There are two ways to market the *terendak* through a middle person or direct selling.

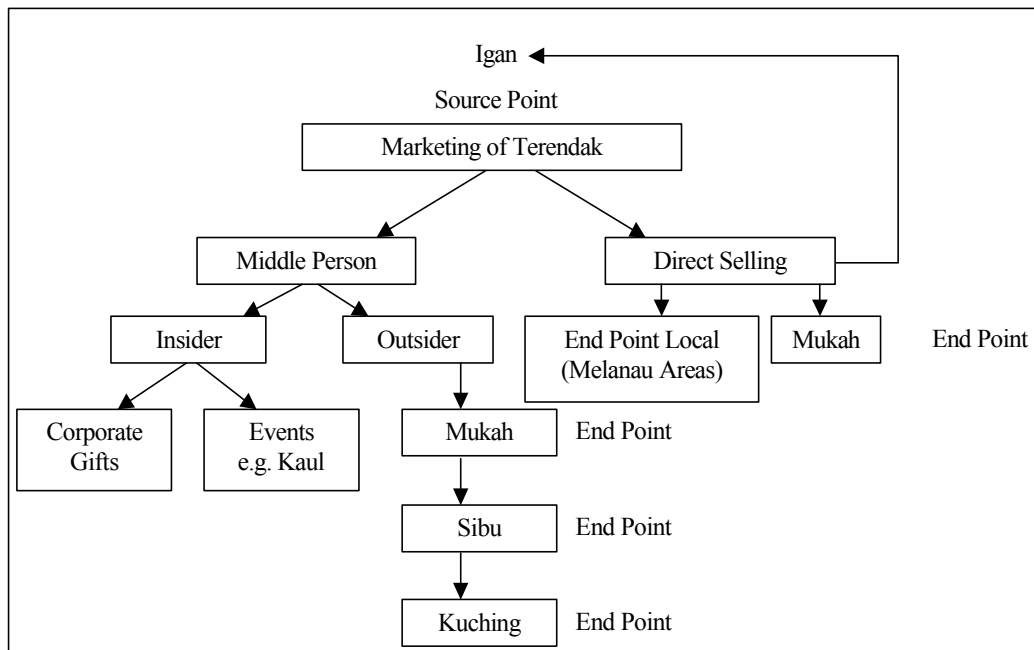


Diagram 1: Process Linkages in the Marketing of Terendak

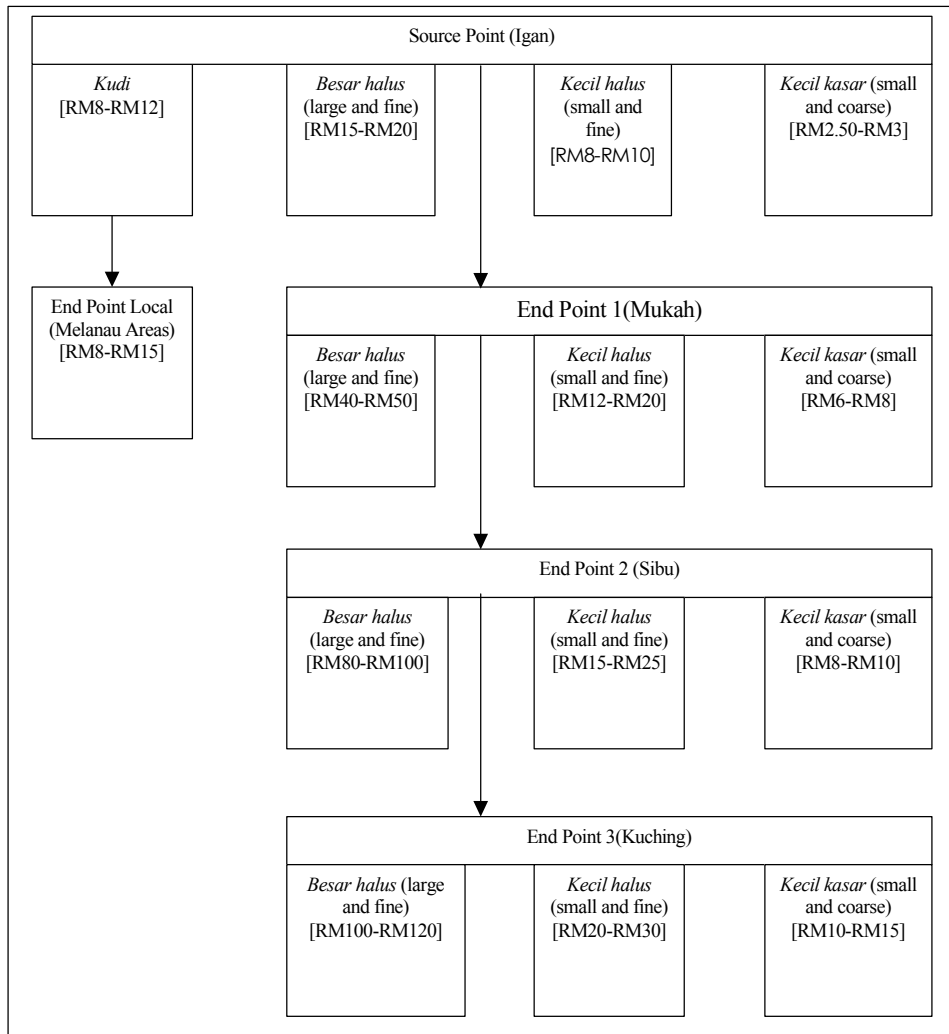


Diagram 2: Changes in the Prices of *Terendak* at Different End Points

There are two types of middle person, the outsider and insider. Most of the middle persons are outsiders, about six to seven of them who regularly come to the source point, every fortnight to collect the *terendak*. There is only one very prominent middle person in the source point. The rests of them (only three) buy *terendak* when there is demand or special request for the products. Their main business is selling fish products, textile or groceries.

Out of the 22 *terendak* makers who produce the items on a full-time basis, six market their products directly to the local shops at the source points or to the nearby Melanau areas (end point local). The type of *terendak* mainly marketed for the end point local is the *kudi*, usually consumed by the locals. The outsiders market the *terendak* from end point 1 in Mukah, a rural growth centre about one hour from Igan; end point 2 in Sibu which is

about six to 7 hours by boat to the source point; and end point 3 in Kuching which is about 14 hours by boat to the source point. End point 1 and 2 mainly catered for local tourists, while end point 3 caters for international tourist. The insider mainly cater for the corporate gift markets demanded by public sectors and also for cultural ritual events like *Kaul*. *Kaul* is an annual event whereby the Melanau community will "feed the spirits of the sea or rivers", in return for a better harvest, especially from the sea. It is animistic ritual that continues to be celebrated although the event has become less ritualistic and becoming more of a platform for the local politicians to meet the community.

Diagram 2 shows the changes in the prices of *terendak* from its source point to the various end points. The four types of *terendak* have different prices, the cheapest is *kudi*, followed by small and coarse; small and

fine and the most expensive are big and fine. The prices vary from 2.50 Malaysian Ringgit to as expensive as 120 Malaysian Ringgit. For corporate gift, the price can go up to RM 500, depending on the size and intricacy of the geometric design. The changes of prices at different levels of end points shows that the price of the *terendak* increases as distance from the source point increases. This shows that the producer loses out in terms of profit and the middle person gains the most, apart from the shop owners.

In terms of marketing the product, all of the respondents said that there are no problems. As a matter of fact, there is more demand than supply. All of them cannot meet the demand for *terendak*. Despite that, they do not have any bargaining power when negotiating for the price of the *terendak*. Those who manage to sell their products directly realise this. However, the six of them who sell directly to the nearest growth centres are empowered in terms of mobility and they have also been exposed to the urban market. For those 52 who depend on the middle person, they cannot ask for a higher price because the middle person threatens to buy from another producer, afraid of losing potential buyers they are happy with the low price. The insiders buy their products even cheaper than the outsiders. However, they still sell to the insider because the insiders are connected to them through kinship and also provides them with a continuous demand and market for the *terendak*.

### CONCLUSION

Despite the demand for *terendak* as a tourist collectible item and the favourable prices at the end points, the producer of the *terendak* only obtains a meagre income from the production. The process linkages which are not straightforward and of various structural levels contribute to the deviation in the price of *terendak* at the end points compared to the source points. The implications to the producers is that the low price paid for their products has diminished the interests of younger generations in the village who have obtained skills from

formal education and are exposed to alternative livelihoods outside the village. Those who used to produce the items also slowly leave the business, especially when they have discovered alternative incomes that pay more. In the long run, there is a danger that the *terendak Igan* will no longer be able to sustain its production due to the aging guardians who preserve and sustain the production of the traditional cultural arts. One way to save the products is by reducing the process linkages between the source to the end points, so that the producers will benefit from a more favourable price that will provide an incentive for them to sustain the production of the *terendak*.

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