

The Link Between Seller and Supplier for Creating Business Model of Etak - The Heritage Food Revival Sustainability in Kelantan, Peninsular Malaysia

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Abstract. This study examines the creating business model of Asian clam (*etok*) from seller's perspective and their link with supplier in Kelantan, which has been considered as the food heritage of the state. The research was conducted in order to understand a deep insight into business activities as an initial stage for further investigation to develop a sustainable *etok* business model. These include *etok* branding, marketing and proposing the new strategy on promoting and sustaining this heritage food. A total of 108 *Etok* sellers from ten districts in Kelantan which are Gua Musang, Bachok, Kota Bharu, Pasir Mas, Tumpat, Tanah Merah, Machang, Kuala Krai, Pasir Puteh and Jeli involved in the study. The data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The descriptive of study found that the majority of respondents agree that they have difficulty in getting *etok* from supplier. Most of the seller get the *etok* from the outside of Kelantan. They also have to booked *etok* from supplier earlier to get the *etok* for their business with a reasonable price, good *etok* quality and quantity also punctual when supply the *etok* to them. This signifies that the industry is still viable and provides a substantial income to those involved in the business. Expectantly, this study will pave a way of comprehensive exploration of *etok* business in proposing better strategy, promoting and sustaining business in the state of Kelantan.

INTRODUCTION

The scientific language of Asian clam or *etok* known as *Corbicula fluminea* is native to the fresh waters of Eastern and Southern Asia. In Malaysia, *etok* can normally be found in the freshwater rivers at the base of the river or canal. It can also be seen living in the around of the river estuary near delta or sea. However, *etok* exists more in the river near paddy fields. They are part of river species that are seen to favour a quiet and muddy area of water. Mostly *etok* with the small size commonly inhabit the rivers in tropical countries such as the eastern coastal states of Malaysia such as Kelantan and Terengganu. In addition, *etok* also occupies in the east coast of Thailand. Apart from that, the dry season between March and August is seen as the best season to harvest for *etok*. In Malaysia, *etok* is popularly consumed and found only in Kelantan, due to this, *etok* is known as unique heritage food of Kelantan. Kelantanese for centuries has enjoyed eating *etok* salai or smoked *etok* regardless of social and economic status. Kelantanese

people, etok has become one of the snacks categories like crackers (keropok) that are enjoyed while relaxing watching TV or picnics. Smoked etok, which can be eaten by itself or as snack is the most preferred etok amongst consumers in Kelantan. Besides, etok is so synonymous with Kelantan people because it is a special snack while enjoying rice dishes or 'nasi kerabu'.

The searching or harvesting job for etok is commonplace, especially among the residents who live along the Kelantan River. Previously, it was very easy to find etok along the river in the state of Kelantan. However, that was all just history. Nowadays, etok industry is under threat due to social change, an increase in health awareness and shortage in supply of these clams. Hence, revitalising etok business is important because it does not only provide employability through entrepreneurship, but it can also safeguard or preserve this local heritage, where irretrievable loss of heritage should be avoided. Etok sellers play a significant role to ensure the sustainability of this heritage food. However, a model in developing economic community development and sustainability is needed in ensuring the sustainability of this business. Hence, evidence related to sellers' profile, needs, nature of business, business performance and linkages with etak supplier inside and outside of Kelantan is very crucial. Investigating the whole value chains of the industry, including sellers' business location, the supply of raw material and sales are vital. Sellers' business activities towards smoked etok are important because it does provide not only a broad and thick descriptive analysis of the traditional food of Kelantan but also answers pertinent questions related to the nature of the industry and how this business helps to sustain economic activities for Kelantanese community. Despite of hardship and challenges in getting raw etok, the fact that this business has contributed to the income of Kelantanese communities over 40 years ago is proven. In fact, the business has been inherited from one generation to other generation. Thus, this indicates that etok contributes to the economic activity of the community of Kelantan. To explore further, we conducted the study to investigate the sellers of etok in Kelantan and relationship with supplier in gaining a understandable of their business activities and background towards developing a sustainability model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food heritage contributes to identity, prosperity, international identification and reputation of a country as well as is able to provide a positive influence on the economy [1]. It is also presented as a set of tangible and intangible features identity of food culture that has been shared by the local community [2] and some elements of food heritage can be employed to sustain the traditional food identity for future generations. Besides, the food heritage is not only limited to production techniques of food products, it also incorporates the technology and consumption practices of the consumer [3]; thus it will help sellers to recognise the need of the consumers towards etok as Kelantan food heritage. On the other hand, traditional food is defined by several scholars as the cuisines that have unique recipes that are passed down from one generation to other generations, commonly from mothers to daughters with the process of informal learning at the kitchen as the mode of transmission the knowledge practices [4-6]. To what extend traditional local foods can be preserved and available may be affected by many factors, and among of those factors are the availability of raw materials, agricultural habits and location [7]. Heritage food is continuously changing depends on traditional and modernity as presented by [8] in the concept of interchange between tradition and modernity heritage. This heritage concept leads to the connection of traditional, modernity and ideology of conservation as well as adaptation. After reviewing past literature, it is very scant of socio-economic study that has been conducted in Malaysia with regard to etok, particularly towards developing the sustainability model. Etok has long been considered as Kelantan's heritage food because it is not widely available in other states in Malaysia. Etok business is considered as a form of an informal economy. Etok business provides self-employment to local folks, especially those who stay along the Kelantan River. Realising etok business is deteriorating and under threat, comprehensive investigation of etok and socio-economic factors related is utmost important. Failure to do so, we are not only losing our heritage but also fail to document the socio-economic values that revolve around this traditional food industry. Indeed, the background scenario of the industry will provide a platform to revive the industry. Food business in Malaysia and elsewhere, in general, are under threat due to increasing challenges and threats in a highly competitive environment, which lead difficulty to sustain their operations [9-11]. This includes the threat of heritage food and products [11]. Etok industry in Kelantan in particular also facing these challenges in sustaining the business.

Sustainability is crucial confronting most of the businesses today regardless of their size or location or type of business [12]. Sustainability has become one of the essential strategies in the fourth industrial revolution era. Thus, Etok business demand for a model in sustaining the business. Additionally, Etok business used to provide self-employment opportunity for the community. Looking at the social-economic and plethora of current scenario, the

prospect of etok business is not so promising. Immediate effort need to be taken to revitalise the industry, otherwise, it is almost impossible to sustain etok business. We need to protect this etok business in order to preserve it as one of the Malaysia food heritages. Realising etok business is under risk, a thorough investigation of socio-economic factors pertaining to etok business and stakeholders around the business are timely, urgent and paramount importance. A extensive research that has been planned will equip a deep-seated into generous of the associated elements of this traditional industry. In other words, the proposed study provides a baseline for action and initial towards developing a sustainability model by linking the seller and supplier of etok in Kelantan. The supplier development for sustainability is emerging as the main approach to managing supply chain sustainability issues but also associated with other actions such as supplier selection or evaluation [13]. In turn, a viable solution can be proposed to regenerate this industry. A number of studies in other countries show traditional business can be revitalised and still relevant in the current context if the needs and wants of customers are fulfilled. Moreover, a sustainability model help as a guide for the businesses towards sustaining their business [14]. A model help to provide new insights into business sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 108 etok sellers from ten districts namely Gua Musang, Kota Bharu, Bachok, Pasir Mas, Tumpat, Tanah Merah, Machang, Kuala Krai, Pasir Puteh, Jeli in Kelantan involved in this study. Subjects of this research were individual etok sellers who conducted etok selling activities regardless of any business premises. Studying samples rather than an entire population leads to more reliable results, mainly because fatigue is reduced, as well as performed fewer errors in collecting data [1]. Sampling also reduces cost, time as well as resources. The surveys were conducted within two weeks in April 2017. Questionnaires were administered to etok sellers in Kelantan with the aid of appointed enumerators. This research employed a convenience sampling technique to obtain basic data and trends regarding the study. During the fieldwork, each of the enumerator groups was monitored and supervised using group chatting online and site visits by the senior researchers. The processing of data began after all of the required data had been gathered accordingly. Prior to the analysis, central editing was conducted to ensure only complete data were included. The data set was coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Respondents' Profile

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents. Consistent with the nature of micro business in Kelantan dominated by women, females are the dominant group of etok sellers which is 72.2% of the respondents are females in this study. This is a common feature of the micro-business trend for most of the Kelantan area in which female entrepreneurs dominate the total of micro business entrepreneurs in Kelantan. In terms of age, majority of the respondents were above 41 years old representing 50% of the respondents, about 15.7 % of respondents with the age of 31-35 years old, followed by 36-40 years representing 15% and for age 26 – 30, 21-25 years old and age below 20 years representing 6.5% equally. A majority of the respondents were married, which representing 83.3%; single 14.4% and 1.9% were divorced. The majority of etok sellers obtained the Lower Secondary Assessment (Penilaian Menengah Rendah - PMR) or the Lower Certificate of Education (Sijil Rendah Pelajaran - SRP) and held the Malaysian Certificate of Education (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia - SPM) with 28.7% respectively, followed by primary school education level 24.1%, non-formal education 8.3%, Diploma 9.3% and Bachelor Degree representing 0.9% respondents. As this business is traditionally dominated by the Malay Kelantanese, majority of Etok sellers were Malay representing 98.1% of the respondents, and the remaining were Chinese and Thai (Siam) which represent 0.9% equally. Interestingly, majority of etok Sellers were from Pasir Puteh district representing 28.7%, followed by Tanah Merah district 13.9%, both Pasir Mas and Tumpat 12.0%, Bachok and Jeli 9.3% accordingly, Machang 6.5% and the other three districts Gua Musang, Kota Bharu and Kuala Krai with 2.8%.

TABLE 1. Respondents profile.

| Demographic (N=108) | | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Sex | Male | 30 | 27.8 |
| | Female | 78 | 72.2 |
| Age | < 20 years old | 7 | 6.5 |
| | 21 - 25 years old | 7 | 6.5 |
| | 26 - 30 years old | 7 | 6.5 |
| | 31 -35 years old | 17 | 15.7 |
| | 36- 40 years old | 16 | 15 |
| | > 41 years old | 54 | 50 |
| Status | Single | 16 | 14.8 |
| | Married | 90 | 83.3 |
| | Divorced | 2 | 1.9 |
| Education | Non-formal education | 9 | 8.3 |
| | Primary school | 26 | 24.1 |
| | PMR/SRP | 31 | 28.7 |
| | SPM | 31 | 28.7 |
| | Diploma | 10 | 9.3 |
| | Degree | 1 | 0.9 |
| Race | Malay | 106 | 98.1 |
| | Chinese | 1 | 0.9 |
| | Thai | 1 | 0.9 |
| District | Gua Musang | 3 | 2.8 |
| | Bachok | 10 | 9.3 |
| | Kota Bharu | 3 | 2.8 |
| | Pasir Mas | 13 | 12.0 |
| | Tumpat | 13 | 12.0 |
| | Tanah Merah | 15 | 13.9 |
| | Machang | 7 | 6.5 |
| | Kuala Krai | 3 | 2.8 |
| | Pasir Puteh | 31 | 28.7 |
| | Jeli | 10 | 9.3 |

Supplying of Etak to Sellers

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for the supply of etak to sellers business. This study used seven items regarding etak supplier to seller during the survey. The majority of etak sellers in Kelantan were strongly disagreed that they are easy to get etak from supplier 27.8 percent and 35.2 percent disagree with that statement. They said that the supply of etak is difficult due to the increasing number of sellers in this business and the limited supply of the etak to them, while another 28.7 percent agree that they easily get supply from suppliers. In terms of source of the supplier, the majority of the supplier are etak are outside Kelantan 49.1 percent, and 33.4 percent they get supplier from Kelantanese. On top of that, to make sure they continuously get a supply of etak for their business, they agree (64%) to make an early booking from the supplier to get the etak while 14.9 percent did not book etak from supplier to get the stock. Seller has to booked etak from suppliers due to competition among sellers to get the etak for their business. Besides, majority of the seller agree that the supplier offers a reasonable price (71.3%) for them and 5.6 percent disagreed with that statement when they bought the etak. In terms of the satisfied with the quality etak supplied by the

supplier, most of the etak seller 78.7 per cent agree that suppliers are supplied a quality etak that satisfied for their business. But only 4.7 percent seller does not accept with supplier quality of etak. The seller also was asked about the sufficient quantity of etak supplied by the supplier. Majority of seller 48.1 percent agree that the supplier is provided a sufficient quantity of etak for their business. But 26.9 percent have disagreed with the statement, and they think the supplier did not provide enough etak for them. In term of punctuality of the supplier the etak to the seller, the majority of the seller agree that the supplier provides etak on time when they need the etak for their business. It showed that 75.9 percent agree for that statement.

TABLE 2. Seller Perception Towards Supplier.

| Items | | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Seller easy to get etak from supplier | 1= Strongly Disagree | 30 | 27.8 |
| | 2= Disagree | 38 | 35.2 |
| | 3= Not Sure | 9 | 8.3 |
| | 4= Agree | 28 | 25.9 |
| | 5= Strongly Agree | 3 | 2.8 |
| Supplier Outside Kelantan | 1= Strongly Disagree | 10 | 9.3 |
| | 2= Disagree | 26 | 24.1 |
| | 3= Not Sure | 19 | 17.6 |
| | 4= Agree | 41 | 38.0 |
| | 5= Strongly Agree | 12 | 11.1 |
| Early Booking of Etak | 1= Strongly Disagree | 2 | 1.9 |
| | 2= Disagree | 14 | 13.0 |
| | 3= Not Sure | 19 | 17.6 |
| | 4= Agree | 64 | 59.3 |
| | 5= Strongly Agree | 9 | 8.3 |
| Supplier Offer Reasonable Price | 1= Strongly Disagree | 6 | 5.6 |
| | 2= Disagree | 4 | 3.7 |
| | 3= Not Sure | 14 | 13.0 |
| | 4= Agree | 77 | 71.3 |
| | 5= Strongly Agree | 7 | 6.5 |
| Satisfied Etak Quality | 1= Strongly Disagree | 2 | 1.9 |
| | 2= Disagree | 3 | 2.8 |
| | 3= Not Sure | 9 | 8.3 |
| | 4= Agree | 85 | 78.7 |
| | 5= Strongly Agree | 9 | 8.3 |
| Sufficient Quantity of Etak | 1= Strongly Disagree | 10 | 9.3 |
| | 2= Disagree | 29 | 26.9 |
| | 3= Not Sure | 13 | 12.0 |
| | 4= Agree | 52 | 48.1 |
| | 5= Strongly Agree | 4 | 3.7 |
| Punctuality | 1= Strongly Disagree | 1 | .9 |
| | 2= Disagree | 2 | 1.9 |
| | 3= Not Sure | 13 | 12.0 |
| | 4= Agree | 82 | 75.9 |
| | 5= Strongly Agree | 10 | 9.3 |

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study provides an interesting insight into understanding the sellers and supplier linkages of this heritage food towards contributing their economic sustainability. The sellers business evidence and the supplier of raw etak are crucial in developing the economic development and sustainability model for Asian Calm (etok) industry, particularly in Kelantan, Malaysia. Preserving etok business in Kelantan requires detailed information and documentation of

sellers' and supplier of etak for their business, which in turn this valued statistical data plays an exceptionally meaningful role in helping them for marketing purposes, such as defining the right market for smoked etak and at the same time deciding on the appropriate techniques to employ, to increase consumption and to target a certain group of consumers. Overall, this study on sellers' business perspective and supplier linkages postulates an esteemed finding of the etak business in Kelantan. The establishment of etak business in Kelantan is more than five decades, and some of the sellers started their business since before Malaysia independence day it depends on the accessible to get raw etak from the supplier. The finding shows that an economically, etak business plays an extremely significant role in developing the economics of Kelantanese society and at the same time help to sustain their income when they easily get the supply. Based on our pilot study before, a vast number of Kelantanese still eat etak, in fact, one of the sellers in Kelantan successfully sold their etak in Kuala Lumpur by aeroplane [15]. This indicates that etak business has a very promising prospect to venture in and proven can help the Kelantanese women, especially for their income sustainability for the future in this industry.

Despite challenges in getting raw etak, it's not an obstacle for sellers to sustain in this business for a long decade since etak business can consider as a fulltime business or career. Even though, most of the supplier of the etak to the sellers in Kelantan is from outside but they can easily get the supply through booking in advance at the reasonable price. From the sellers profile it has shown by a number of etak sellers doing their business on full-time basis and, majority are females' group or women sellers. The finding in this study also The finding in this study also affirm that the supplier was provided a quality etak at the sufficient quantity and punctuality to make sure the freshness of etak. On top of that, etak sellers in Kelantan manage to earn a very stable income and profit for them to survive and support their family due to sufficient quantity and quality supply by supplier in their daily business. This signifies that selling etak is one of the main economic activities as well as main sources of income to support Kelantanese community family. We cannot deny etak business is one of the viable tools that can be utilised for poverty eradication agenda. In conclusion, the findings of sellers' business of etak in Kelantan and the link with supplier, provides a positive insight into etak business in Kelantan. It shows very bright signs of the viability of the business. Looking at the current trend, they need a model in sustaining their business for the future unpredicted challenge faced in business. Further investigations using qualitative approach might help to gain precise information pertaining to etak business in Kelantan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was conducted using a Trans-Disciplinary Research Grant Scheme (TRGS) awarded by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (R/TRGS/A01.00/00280A/008/2016/000392).

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