



**ICT ADOPTION AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION AMONG
KADAZANDUSUN COMMUNITY IN SABAH, MALAYSIA**

By

FANG YI XUE

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2024

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The KadazanDusun community faces significant challenges in preserving its cultural heritage as a result of modernization and globalization. This study aims to determine the impacts of ICT adoption on cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community. This study was conducted in Penampang and Ranau, Sabah, Malaysia where majority of the KadazanDusun community reside. A mix method approach using sequential explanatory research design was employed to achieve the research objectives. The quantitative method was used to (i) measure the level of ICT adoption for cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community, (ii) determine the relationship of ICT adoption and cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community, (iii) identify the factors that influence the ICT adoption for cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community, and (iv) examine the relationship between moderating variables such as gender and age in adopting ICT for cultural preservation. Descriptive analysis was used to describe data on demographic background, quantifying the mean of the factors of ICT adoption and its impacts on cultural preservation. Secondly, correlation and multiple regressions analysis was

found to be the primary and suitable procedure, to identify the factors that influence the ICT adoption on the cultural preservation of the KadazanDusun community. Additionally, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted using PROCESS Macro for SPSS to test the relationship between moderating variables such as gender and age in adopting ICT for cultural preservation. Lastly, the qualitative method was used to explore the impacts of ICT adoption towards the culture of the KadazanDusun community. The findings showed the mean score of ICT adoption on cultural preservation is moderately good. The impacts of ICT adoption on cultural preservation showed the highest mean score on ethnic festival. All the factors of ICT adoption (Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions) were correlated with cultural preservation, with effort expectancy has the strongest correlation value. The findings suggested that social influence (SI) has the strongest significant influence compared to all the other four factors ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.000$). Gender only influences the relationship between Effort Expectancy and cultural preservation, where male inclines to adopt ICT for its ease to preserve the culture compare to KadazanDusun female. The qualitative data revealed five main themes across the entire data set related to how ICT impacts on the cultural preservation which are (i) accessibility and dissemination, (ii) cultural promotion and preservation, (iii) cultural learning, (iv) intergenerational transmission, (v) community engagement and participation, and (vi) challenges. This study underscores the significant role of ICT in influencing various facets of cultural preservation, with social influence emerging as a crucial determinant. The study not only contributes nuanced insights into the relationship between ICT adoption and cultural preservation but also unveils gender-specific variations and the importance of addressing the digital divide in facilitating the adoption process.

Keywords: Cultural Preservation, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), KadazanDusun, Sabah, UTAUT

SDG: GOAL 4: Quality Education, GOAL 10: Reduced Inequalities, GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENGUNAAN ICT DAN PEMELIHARAAN BUDAYA DALAM
KALANGAN MASYARAKAT KADAZANDUSUN DI SABAH, MALAYSIA**

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Masyarakat KadazanDusun menghadapi cabaran besar dalam mengekalkan warisan budayanya disebabkan faktor pemodenan dan globalisasi. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kesan penggunaan ICT terhadap pemeliharaan budaya dalam kalangan masyarakat KadazanDusun. Kajian ini dijalankan di Penampang dan Ranau, Sabah, Malaysia di mana majoriti masyarakat KadazanDusun menetap. Pendekatan kaedah campuran menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan penerangan berurutan telah digunakan untuk mencapai objektif kajian. Kaedah kuantitatif digunakan untuk (i) mengukur tahap penggunaan ICT bagi pemeliharaan budaya dalam kalangan masyarakat KadazanDusun, (ii) menentukan hubungan penerimaan ICT dan pemeliharaan budaya dalam kalangan masyarakat KadazanDusun, (iii) mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penggunaan ICT untuk pemeliharaan budaya dalam kalangan masyarakat KadazanDusun, dan (iv) mengkaji hubungan antara pembolehubah penyederhana seperti jantina dan umur dalam menerima pakai ICT untuk pemeliharaan budaya. Analisis deskriptif digunakan untuk menghuraikan data tentang latar belakang demografi, mengukur min faktor penggunaan ICT dan

kesannya terhadap pemeliharaan budaya. Kedua, analisis korelasi dan regresi berganda didapati sebagai prosedur utama dan sesuai, untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penggunaan ICT terhadap pemeliharaan budaya masyarakat KadazanDusun. Selain itu, analisis regresi berganda hierarki telah dijalankan menggunakan PROCESS Macro untuk SPSS untuk menguji hubungan antara pembolehubah penyederhana seperti jantina dan umur dalam menerima pakai ICT untuk pemeliharaan budaya. Akhir sekali, kaedah kualitatif digunakan untuk meneroka kesan penggunaan ICT terhadap budaya masyarakat KadazanDusun. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan skor min penggunaan ICT terhadap pemeliharaan budaya adalah sederhana baik. Kesan penggunaan ICT terhadap pemeliharaan budaya menunjukkan skor min tertinggi pada perayaan etnik. Kesemua faktor penggunaan ICT (Jangkaan Prestasi, Jangkaan Usaha, Pengaruh Sosial, dan Kondisi Kemudahan) dikaitkan dengan pemeliharaan budaya, dengan jangkaan usaha mempunyai nilai korelasi yang paling kukuh. Dapatan kajian mencadangkan bahawa pengaruh sosial (SI) mempunyai pengaruh signifikan yang paling kuat berbanding keempat-empat faktor lain ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.000$). Jantina hanya mempengaruhi hubungan antara Jangkaan Usaha dan pemeliharaan budaya, di mana lelaki cenderung untuk menerima pakai ICT untuk memudahkannya memelihara budaya berbanding wanita KadazanDusun. Data kualitatif mendedahkan lima tema utama merentas keseluruhan set data yang berkaitan dengan bagaimana ICT memberi kesan kepada pemeliharaan budaya iaitu (i) kebolehcapaian dan penyebaran, (ii) promosi dan pemeliharaan budaya, (iii) pembelajaran budaya, (iv) transmisi antara generasi, (v) penglibatan dan penyertaan komuniti, dan (vi) cabaran. Kajian ini menggariskan peranan penting ICT dalam mempengaruhi pelbagai aspek pemeliharaan budaya, dengan pengaruh sosial muncul sebagai penentu penting. Kajian itu bukan sahaja menyumbangkan pandangan

bernuansa tentang hubungan antara penggunaan ICT dan pemeliharaan budaya tetapi juga mendedahkan variasi khusus jantina dan kepentingan menangani jurang digital dalam memudahkan proses penggunaan.

Kata Kunci: Information and Communications Technology (ICT), KadazanDusun, Pemeliharaan Budaya, Sabah, UTAUT

SDG: MATLAMAT 4: Pendidikan Berkualiti, MATLAMAT 10: Mengurangkan Ketidaksamaan, MATLAMAT 11: Bandar dan Komuniti yang Mampan



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The rapid development of ICT over the last decade that continues to have an immeasurable and deep impact on the cultures and communities of the world's Indigenous peoples, nations and tribes, the majority of whom remains living in extreme poverty without the access to basic provision for food, water, shelter, electricity and other basic infrastructure (United Nations, 2003). The native communities across the world have been facing tremendous issue varying from land rights, language, and other cultural aspects, while at the same time being discriminated when it comes to integration into a globalization culture in accessing to technological tools (Ashraf, Grunfeld & Quazi, 2015). Similarly, the KadazanDusun community struggles with cultural preservation due to modernization (Chong, 2015), language shift (Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2000), external influences, and intergenerational disconnection (Cosmas et al., 2019; Adam et al., 2021). Despite increasing research on ICT adoption in developed countries, there is limited understanding of its impact on cultural preservation within the KadazanDusun community, particularly concerning UTAUT in developing countries like Malaysia (Olushola & Abiola, 2017).

Culture and development have to interact with one another in order to ensure the survival of humans. The rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which often labeled as a double-edge sword has brought about impact to indigenous cultural survival. It has been suggested that ICTs have the potential to be both constructive and destructive in terms of cultural production and

preservation (Grace, Kenny, & Qiang, 2004). According to Mustafa (2006), the human beings are facing an identity crisis due to the impact of globalization in which identity construction has become increasingly complicated due to rapid innovations of ICT. On contrary, communication technologies, particularly social media both present opportunities and challenges for minority language preservation and revitalization (Lackaff & Moner, 2016). However, the fact remains that with ICT advancement, the community can benefit better in terms of learning about different cultures while at the same time, promoting and preserving their own culture through this technological platform. Ashraf, Grunfeld, & Quazi (2015) draw our attention the usefulness of ICTs that have the potential in addressing disadvantages faced by the indigenous community in terms of land rights, cultural aspects, which is to reconstruct what has been eroded and facilitating integration into non-indigenous societies.

The Geneva Declaration of the Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and Information Society (2003) stated that:

“Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be used to support and encourage cultural diversity and to preserve and promote the language, distinct identities and traditional knowledge of indigenous people, nations and tribes in manner which they determine best advances these goals.” (United Nations, 2003, p.6)

The United Nations has highlighted that the indigenous peoples are the keepers of knowledge, with many years of generations passing rich sets of knowledge about the natural world, health, technologies and techniques, rites and rituals and other cultural expressions.

1.2 Cultural Preservation

The concept of preservation is often related to cultural heritage, as in order for one's cultural heritage to survive, it must have been passed on by previous generations and safeguarded by the current generation. The idea of cultural preservation is widely debated in the community as there is a growing search for identity as a result of the cultural globalization processes that occurred all over the world (Hosagrahar, Soule, Girard, & Potts, 2016).

Despite cultural globalization making waves in this information age, cultural identity is more than just a collection of accumulated thoughts, beliefs, traditions, languages, and behaviors; it is the result of a cultural selection process in which individuals or social actors respond to external stimuli across different time frames. As a result, this explains why some cultures thrive while others become extinct, and why some appear to be practiced as a norm by a larger modern society (Morin, 2016).

Every community has its distinct traditions, values, and norms. Over the years, culture changes and develops from time to time, in terms of innovation for cooking utensils, and communication purpose and other material support. Culture is dynamic as human beings are capable of adapting to changing conditions due to the push and pull factors – economic, climatic, political, or ideological. Thus, human progress along one line of development.

The importance of incorporating culture into development has gained traction in both local and global contexts. The United Nations has placed a strong emphasis on integrating culture into development because culture is a critical human factor in

achieving sustainable development. The agenda for the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage was introduced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) after the World War Two. Five UNESCO Conventions underlie its efforts to safeguard heritage: the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, the 2001 Underwater Heritage Convention, the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 1970 Convention on Preventing the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property and the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols.

Due to the destruction from the war, the agenda of safeguarding heritage was mainly focused on material culture like heritage sites until recently in 2003, UNESCO has acknowledged the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as it carries the identity of the community and ensure cultural continuity. Consequently, the United Nations has called upon the global nations to carry out the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development include an explicit heritage target, Target 11.4, calls for cities and human settlements to be more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (United Nations, 2015).

Malaysia is a country with a diverse populations of ethnic, religions, beliefs systems and community cultures. Malaysia, like any other country, is embroiled with the impact of modernization which leads to adverse impact on its cultural heritage. As a member of the global community, Malaysia had ratified the UNESCO's Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, on 7 December 1988, which called upon each states parties to identify potential sites and their role in

protecting and preserving the cultural and natural heritage; to integrate heritage protection into comprehensive regional planning programmes and give this heritage a function in the community life (UNESCO, n.d.). At the national level, Malaysia has established its own National Heritage Act, 2005 to provide for the conservation and preservation of National Heritage, natural heritage, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, underwater cultural heritage, treasure trove and for related matters. Besides, the current launching of National Culture Policy 2021 by the Prime Minister (a continuation of the previous policy established in 1971) based on the five principles of Keluarga Malaysia is used as guidelines and reference in planning the development of the country's arts, culture and heritage sector (Bernama, 2021).

Despite various government initiatives, most cultural preservation work in safeguarding the cultural heritage is mainly focused on tangible cultural heritage and has not expanded significantly on intangible cultural heritage (Suaib, Ismail, Sadimon, & Yunos, 2020). The importance of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) was outlined by UNESCO as cultural transmission and identity work takes place not solely depends on the material culture, but also relationship with the people.

1.3 The KadazanDusun Community

The KadazanDusun community are the largest native ethnic group in Sabah. The community was made up of 30 or more subgroups and had a population of between 20 and 33 percent of Sabah's population (West, 2010). Based on the Department of Statistics Malaysia report released on 2022, Sabah's population stood at roughly 3.6 million, making up the top five most populous state in Malaysia. The largest indigenous ethnic group, which forms 19.4 percent of the population, is the

KadazanDusun which is approximately 698,400. Eventually they are considered as minorities in the context of the whole country. They, like all other indigenous minorities, are still grappling with development issues, political control, and political marginalisation (Puyok et al., 2011).

The issue of minority and indigenous cultures is not only a local one, but it has also drawn massive attention around the world (Minority Rights Group International, 2016). In relation to the scope of this study, the KadazanDusun community's culture has also faced challenges due to local and global modernization.

In comparison to their current state, the KadazanDusun community was a homogenous society because they shared a common language, culture and religious belief (Appell, 1965). According to Pugh-Kitingan (n.d.), change and globalization have impacted on Sabah's intangible cultural heritage. Sintang (2003) highlighted that the KadazanDusun community has become more complex due to various factors such as culture change, adaptation to different ecosystems, and the impact of foreign culture, which has resulted in the formation of diverse culture that we can see today. The entry of foreign culture was due to the white man, who triggered all these changes by introducing their superior technology and political organization during the colonial era, and who were the first to establish education, infrastructure, and Christianity. Nevertheless, on the basis of modernity, the KadazanDusun are more positive and welcome the different form of modernity brought by the foreign culture than that promoted by Malaysia, but not at the expense of cultural homogenization and loss of cultural uniqueness (Barlocco, 2010).

Although previous studies have highlighted the challenges faced by the KadazanDusun community in adapting to the local and global modernization, I would suggest that the KadazanDusun community embraces development and is capable of transforming the threat of globalization into opportunity and bring about birth to its cultural uniqueness today.

1.4 ICT Development in Malaysia

The Malaysian government has spent great amounts of money and resources in promoting the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance people's intellectual levels. The determination of the government in developing the digital community can be seen clearly as the ICT development programmes are significantly highlighted in each Malaysian Plan. The latest 2021 budget has also allocated RM9.4 billion to develop the national digital strategy across industry sectors and the people (Bernama, 2020). The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has also established the PRIHATIN network programmed which cost RM1.5 billion to benefit 8 million in the B40 group. The MCMC is also allocating RM7.4 billion for 2021 and 2022 to expand broadband services in the rural area (MCMC, 2020).

According to Hootsuite Digital 2019 report, Malaysia was ranked top five internationally and highest in Southeast Asia for mobile social media penetration, (The Sun Daily, 2019). According to the survey, internet penetration in Malaysia is at 80% with users spending an average of eight hours and five minutes online per day. The findings are consistent with those of a survey of Internet users conducted by MCMC (2017). As of 2016, there were approximately 21.9 million social media users. As of

fourth quarter of 2021, Malaysia mobile broadband penetration rate has surpassed 124.1% while in Sabah is 88% which is the lowest among all states in Malaysia.

At the Sabah state level, the state government has introduced a new Sabah ICT Blueprint with the aim of fully digitalized the state by 2025. It was also reported that an enormous allocation of RM21 billion allocation for the National Fiberisation and Connectivity Plan (2019-2023) by the former Deputy Prime Minister (Daily Express, 2020). These clearly indicated that both the state and federal governments are serious in addressing the digital divide in Sabah which has the lowest penetration rate among all states.

Following the rapid innovations of ICT, the Malaysian government has addressed the needs of the people by spending great amount of money and resources in enhancing the accessibility to ICT across rural and urban areas throughout Malaysia. This has also indicated that digital divide remains prevalent amidst the enormous allocation of budget for ICT development and positive reporting on the current Internet penetration in Malaysia. Conscious of this dilemma, the government has invested substantially to overcome the digital divide in order to ensure a holistic development of ICT in order to build a robust and well-rounded digital community in Malaysia. All of these are very important issues that need to be deliberated upon as the government gears up to build a viable and competitive digital community in Malaysia.

1.5 Statement of Problem

The central problem to this proposed study is mainly on the cultural sustainability of the KadazanDusun community in Sabah. In this era of modernization, the survival of

traditional knowledge including craftsmanship, local natural resources and creative industries has faced several challenges (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016; Hosagrahar et al., 2016; James, 2014). The KadazanDusun community, being the largest indigenous ethnic group in Sabah, has faced numerous challenges in keeping up their cultural identity due to modernization. According to Lasimbang and Kinajil (2000), language loss can be observed in the KadazanDusun community as early in 1980s due to modernization and development.

Another research conducted by Chong (2015) found that the KadazanDusun traditional musical instruments are slowly fading off due to the rising of modern instruments. Cosmas, Sombuling, Melai, & Poninting (2019) highlighted the efforts to keep the KadazanDusun tradition alive has not be forgotten by the community and various organizations should play a role in raising awareness among the younger KadazanDusun generation about the importance of preserving the values of KadazanDusun traditional costume and traditional musical instruments.

Another research conducted by Adam et al. (2021) on approaches and challenges of indigenous knowledge transfer among the Dusun and Bajau in Kota Belud, discovered that the indigenous people, particularly the youth, have developed dependency on technologies which have exposed them to foreign, non-indigenous culture and dogmas through mass media, in which has discouraged them from learning about their own culture (Tang & Gavin, 2016).

The development of ICT has resulted in changes to the community's cultural settings. Nevertheless, cultural heritage faces both imminent benefits and threats due to the

rapid advancement and technological impact into the society. While modernization introduces new technology that may impede the cultural aspect a community, technology can also aid in the preservation of the community's cultural heritage. A research by Machidon, Duguleana & Carrozzino (2018) on cultural heritage and Virtual Reality applications has technically improve human interaction and engagement in giving a new breath in learning the cultural heritage. However, there is no comprehensive study conducted on the role of ICT in the preservation and transmission of culture, specifically on intangible heritage (Alivizatou-Barakou et al., 2019).

Digital technology contributes significantly to the fulfilment of every Sustainable Development Goals (ITU, 2021). Sustainable development aspires to ensure everyone's basic needs are met as well as given the opportunity to fulfil a good quality of life. According to a report by World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), the basic needs also include rights of all to preserve the cultural identity, and their right to not be alienated by the society as well as the community. It has become an essential role in assisting communities to increase their overall well-being through community development.

Documentation of intangible cultural heritage is one of the form of safeguarding, following with the transition of intangible expression to digital cultural heritage. According to UNESCO (2018), "safeguarding" includes a variety of measures aimed at ensuring the long-term viability of intangible cultural heritage, such as identification, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and transmission,

particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of various aspects of such heritage.

A research discovered that the largest Orang Asli community in Malaysia, which is the Semai tribe, has experienced language, cultural knowledge and traditions to be in endangered and towards the verge of disappearing (Sumathi & Inge, 2018). The research also highlighted the importance of documentation in order to ensure the cultural survival of the indigenous minorities.

The diffusion of technology which transformed almost every part of human lives has also reinforced the growing concern of digital inequalities in modern societies. A recent study conducted by McKinsey and Company (2020) found out some 2.5 billion people were remained offline while the business of building advanced networks and innovating frontier technologies like high-band 5G are in the works. According to a report by UNDP (Opp, 2022), 60% of the world's population who is now online are from developed countries, while in less developed countries, online one in five people are online. The similarities of both developed and non-developed countries are the indigenous communities continue to be underserved, as they are among the least likely to be connected to the Internet and frequently lack equal access to the digital skills required to make the most of ICTs. The digital divide issue usually dichotomize between genders, geographical areas and socio-economic classes due to lack of IT context, lack of ICT accession and ownership, lack of time and expertise in the use of ICT, lack of innovation requirements, lack of critical thinking and lack of English language skills (Ghobadi & Ghobadi, 2015; Yaman, 2015).

The majority of indigenous people live in rural and remote areas that become a major contributor to digital divide issues (Intahchomphoo, 2018). For example, a study conducted by Singleton et al. (2009) found that the indigenous communities in Australia who live in the remote area could not get good quality of Internet connectivity. This also applies to the same for indigenous peoples living in the remote areas of the United States (Filippi et al., 2013).

Previous research conducted by Sarjit *et al.* (2012) which focused only on the six ethnic minorities in Peninsular Malaysia, found that ethnic minorities view ICT as an important tool in sustaining their cultural identity. Even though the ethnic minorities in Peninsular Malaysia view ICT as an important tool to safeguard their cultural identity, they are still experiencing digital divide, mainly because most native villages still do not have easy access to facilitate and encourage aboriginal people to use ICT (Sarjit *et al.*, 2009).

While Malaysia is at the forefront of ASEAN ICT development with 124.1% of mobile broadband penetration rate, the issue of digital divide persists, particularly in rural areas such as Sabah. The Sabah Assistant Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ruddy Awah said the internet services in the urban areas were just as poor as those in the rural areas even though hundreds of ringgit had been spent on unlimited services and mobile data to internet service providers (ISPs) every month (News Strait Times, Feb 2022).

The digital inequalities have brought about challenges to the life of the Sabahans. The most recent local and international news headlines report on a Sabahan, Veveonah

Mosibin who is living in a rural village had to go extra miles by camping on top of the tree to get better internet connection in order to sit for her online university exams (The Star Online, 2020). A study conducted by Mohd Hamdan (2017) found out that the Sabahans from different background living in different localities were expecting that the broadband penetration can be expanded quickly and the quality of transmission and service can be enhanced. It was also highlighted that the lowest income group of people were willing to subscribe to broadband for their own benefits despite their financial limitations. A study conducted by Jol et al (2020) on mobile learning adoption among Form Six students in Sabah, Malaysia has revealed that the acceptance of any new technology is highly dependent on the facilitation conditions.

From the theoretical perspective of ICT adoption, most of the study on ICT adoption identified the critical factors and contingencies related to the prediction of behavioral intention use of a technology. Nevertheless, the literature on ICT and cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community in Sabah is quite limited. While a few studies have explored the use of technology for cultural preservation, they primarily focus on the application of ICT rather than the experiences of the indigenous communities as active participants in preserving their culture (Yatim et al., 2022; Ding, 2017).

So far, however, there has been little discussion about ICT adoption by the native community, specifically the KadazanDusun community for cultural preservation. To what extent the adoption of ICT affect on the sustainability of KadazanDusun cultures in Sabah? While ICT becomes an important tools for the well-being of the community,

how can the KadazanDusun community adopt ICT for cultural preservation when in the first place having accessibility difficulties?

1.6 Research Questions

These research questions had been identified from the problem statement in this research:

- 1) What is the level of ICT adoption for cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community?
- 2) What is the relationship of ICT adoption and cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community?
- 3) What are the factors that influence the ICT adoption of the KadazanDusun community?
- 4) What is the relationship between sociodemographic factors (age and gender) in adopting ICT for cultural preservation?
- 5) What is the impact of ICT adoption towards the cultural preservation of the KadazanDusun community?

1.7 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to determine the impacts of ICT adoption on cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community. Thus, the specific objectives are:

- i. To measure the level of ICT adoption for cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community.
- ii. To determine the relationship of ICT adoption and cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community.

- iii. To identify the factors that influence the ICT adoption for cultural preservation among the KadazanDusun community.
- iv. To examine the relationship between moderating variables such as gender and age in adopting ICT for cultural preservation.
- v. To explore the impacts of ICT adoption towards the culture of the KadazanDusun community.

1.8 Significance of Study

As the theme of this research focuses on ICT adoption and cultural preservation, it is therefore important to highlight digital inclusion, which facilitates ICT adoption by the natives in Sabah, in order for them to adopt it for cultural preservation.

It is undeniable that ICT has progressively become a crucial factor in human life, influencing the daily activities of humans, and thus promoting a wholly different way of life. However, before we talk about the importance of adopting ICT skills, it is important for us to look into the level of digital access of the people to ICT, which has become such a vital basic need.

Therefore, in the scope of this research that focuses on ICT proficiency among KadazanDusun communities in Sabah (a topic that has seen only little research), it is important to study the impact of ICT adoption, and how ICT has impacted on their cultural preservation.

Furthermore, this research is particularly important in providing a better understanding to help policy makers, practitioners and implementers in enhancing ICT development and bridging the digital divide in Malaysia.

1.9 Definition of Key Concepts

This section explores the definitions of two key concepts in this study: ICT adoption and cultural preservation.

1.9.1 ICT Adoption

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a technological tools consists of both hardware and software to has influenced and enabled humans to carry out their daily functions from simple daily communication to complex organizational purposes. The development of ICT has long been introduced to human civilizations back in the premechanical period and until today, it has evolved into different devices, technologies and processes that made an impact to human life today. Hence, ICT has been adopted by human even before the era of internet preceded.

A new technology that clocks in into a society, it must go along and familiarize with the existing social order of hierarchies, power relationships and a body-of-knowledge. Individuals or groups who have access, adapt and adopt a technology can intensify their position in the society while those who denied or reject the new technological ideology will remain at the disadvantaged side. This will eventually widen the gaps between class, gender and generational gaps in the process of digitalization (Harris, 2005). For example, the young people are more competent in adopting the new ICT as compared to their parents. The digital gap between the urban and rural dwellers, across genders has put a constrained towards achieving a sustainable ICT development. Another issue related to ICT adoption is the fact that technologies were perceived to primarily cater for the industrialised societies (Harris, 2005). It has eventually caused frustrations among the rural communities for desperately wanting to be part of the

development process. In the developing country, the availability of the technology resources affects the capability of the people in adopting ICT for their daily use.

In the past, the study on ICT adoption has been very much focused on the behavioural and intentional use of technology among an individual, groups or organization but was not conducted exhaustively among the native communities. To address this gap, this research has integrated the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) proposed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis (2003) that has been popularized in various Information Technology adoption research.

Four main variables adopted from UTAUT were examined in this study, namely Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), and Facilitating Conditions (FC).

Performance Expectancy

Conceptual Definition: Performance expectancy construct is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance. For instance, when the user perceives that a technology will improve their efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity, they will be most likely to adopt it.

Operational Definition: In this study, performance expectancy was measured reflecting the KadazanDusun community in Sabah in adopting ICT towards cultural preservation. There is a wide range of ICT tools, encompassing both software and hardware, that can be utilized to safeguard and maintain cultural heritage. The

increasing popularity of smart devices, such as smartphones and tablets, equipped with high-speed internet has led to the widespread availability and accessibility of various platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others. These digital platforms might assist the KadazanDusun in efficiently learning, finding information, recording, disseminating, promoting, and preserving their cultural practices. This was supported by a study that posited that through digital transformation, smart culture contributes to the preservation, safeguarding, and promoting cultural heritage (McKenna, 2016). As a result, it could enhance the citizen's well-being through better cultural accessibility and inclusion (Fanea-Ivanovici & Pana, 2020).

Effort Expectancy

Conceptual Definition: The effort expectancy construct refers to the level of ease that is associated with using the system. When the user perceives a technology as easy to learn and user-friendly, they are highly likely to adopt it.

Operational Definition: The variable measured the extent to which the native community adopted information and communication technology (ICT) for the purposes of learning, promoting, sharing, and preserving their culture.

If the tools are easy to learn and use, even individuals with limited technological proficiency, such as the elderly, may be more likely to use them. For example, user-friendly digital platforms can facilitate greater participation from individuals in documenting oral histories, sharing cultural practices online, or participating in virtual cultural events. On the other hand, if the tools are perceived as intricate or challenging to utilize, there might be opposition, particularly from older generations, which could

impede the preservation endeavors. The results of a study by Guner & Acarturk (2020) suggested that the perception of usefulness and ease of use greatly influences attitudes and acceptance of ICT for both young and elderly adults. Consequently, it can be inferred that the elderly and younger adults both prioritize the usefulness and user-friendliness of ICT when considering its adoption. Besides, Estriegana et al. (2019) found that perceived ease of use positively impacted undergraduate students' perceived usefulness of online learning tools, while Yang and Xiangling (2019) demonstrated a similar positive influence on students' intentions to use machine translation in their learning processes. These studies suggest that ease of use generally encourages the adoption of technology across different groups. The question remains: does this established relationship between ease of use and technology adoption apply similarly to the KadazanDusun community in the context of cultural preservation? Could perceived ease of use of ICT tools similarly drive the community's engagement with technology for preserving their cultural heritage?

Social Influence

Conceptual Definition: Social influence construct is defined as the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should use to new system.

Operational Definition: In a communal society such as the KadazanDusun, where there is a strong emphasis on respecting community leaders and relationships, the support and encouragement from these influential individuals can greatly inspire the use of ICT for the purpose of preserving culture.

Social influence is of paramount importance in the adoption of ICT for cultural preservation in a communal society such as the KadazanDusun, where strong social ties and reverence for elders and leaders prevail (Lajuni et al., 2022). If cultural leaders, esteemed elders, or influential members of the community endorse the utilization of technology for cultural preservation, it is probable that other individuals within the community will also adopt this approach. This collective endorsement has the potential to expedite the acceptance and utilization of ICT tools, establishing a standard within the community for the use of technology in cultural documentation and dissemination. Social influence can also drive initiatives such as community-wide digital archives or the utilization of social media to enhance cultural events promotion, thus bolstering cultural preservation endeavors. Hence in this study, social influence such as family, relatives, friends, community, government, and religion were included to study the influence on the adoption of ICT for cultural preservation.

Facilitating Conditions

Conceptual Definition: Facilitating conditions refer to the extent to which an individual believes that there is an organizational and technical infrastructure in place to support the use of the system (Vankatesh et al., 2003).

Operational Definition: In this context, facilitating conditions is described as to what extent the KadazanDusun community believes organizational and technical support is in place to preserve their culture. Facilitating conditions encompass factors such as internet accessibility, skill training, technical support, and government intervention that could enable the successful adoption of ICT for cultural preservation. In their study, Marto et al. (2019) discovered that the user's behavioral intention to use

Augmented Reality in Archaeological Sites is influenced by facilitating conditions. The facilitation proposed by Marto et al. (2019) encompasses essential knowledge, resources, technological compatibility, and provided support. In a separate study conducted by Wen et al. (2023), it was discovered that facilitating conditions play a significant role in the acceptance and utilization of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies in cultural heritage sites. In this study, financial, tools, time, skill, internet connectivity and opportunities of access were identified as the facilitating conditions which could influence the adoption of ICT for cultural preservation.

Moderating Variables – Age

This study has also considered age as a moderating variable that may influence the relationship between ICT adoption and its impact on cultural preservation. Age is defined as the number of years lived by an individual, which can exhibit the level of familiarity and comfort using modern technologies. It is hypothesized that the younger generations, who are being more technological savvy compared to the older generations, may find it easier to adopt ICT for cultural preservation. Hence, age could might strengthen or weaken the relationship between technology adoption and cultural preservation. Adoption is generally faster among individuals in the general public who exhibit characteristics such as being more inclined to take risks, less traditional in their beliefs, well-integrated into society, younger in age, higher in educational attainment, and more financially prosperous (Rogers, 2003).

Moderating Variable – Gender

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, and identities that societies consider appropriate for men, women, and other gender identities. In this study, gender is examined as a binary variable (male and female). It is hypothesized that gender moderates the relationship between all the factors of technology adoption (PE, EE, SI, and FC) and cultural preservation. This was supported by previous research which indicates that men and women exhibit different attitudes towards technology, with men perceived technology to be more useful and require less effort to use compared to women (Kamberidou, 2020). Marto et al. (2019) found that gender did not moderate performance expectancy and user's intention to use augmented reality on archaeological site. However, it moderate effort expectancy on user's intention to use the tools, where effect is weaker for male, and particularly for higher technology connoisseurs.

1.9.2 Cultural Preservation

The effects of globalization have impacted on the local and global community, from individual to community and to a broader society. It has transformed the development of local cultures within the communities. Many scholars debated on the impact of globalization could pose a threat to local culture while some on the other hand claimed it can promote cultural convergence and at the same time preserve the cultural heritage of a community.

The United Nations have emphasized on the importance of preserving the culture of the indigenous communities as they have been suffering from gradual threat and loss of lands and territories which led to the extinction of their culture (United Nations,

n.d.). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), cultural heritage can be tangible, such as buildings and surroundings, or intangible, such as local customs and way of life. Cultural heritage, in its broadest sense, encompasses the entire eco-environment that depicts the activities and successes of humans in the past that cannot be replaced (Feilden & Jokileht, 1998). Furthermore, efforts to preserve cultural heritage should aim to conserve not only physical objects like buildings and their surroundings, but also intangible things like arts, languages, and customs (Indara Syahrul Mat Radzuan, 2014).

Following World War II, UNESCO supported a number of world heritage initiatives, which were classified into three distinct heritage lists. The lists are the Tangible Heritage List, the Natural Heritage List, and the most recent, the Intangible Cultural Heritage List (Smith, 2006). Most of the initiatives taken by the global community focused much on the material cultures like monuments, structures, historical sites and so on. The importance of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) was outlined by UNESCO as cultural transmission and identity work takes place not solely depends on the material culture, but also relationship with the people.

In order to safeguard ICH, the heritage must be relevant and practiced within the cultured community. As such, UNESCO (2003) has proposed five broad domains of ICH for the purpose of manifestation,:

- i. Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- ii. Performing arts;

- iii. Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- iv. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;and
- v. Traditional craftsmanship.

Cultural diversity and its preservation is one of the main assets of the human race. This aspect is very relevant for country like Malaysia that consist of multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual society.

Culture consists of both material and non material culture, is the patterns of learned and shared behaviors and beliefs in which becoming a collective life for an individual to enable social mobility within its own community. Non-material culture is made up of thoughts or ideas and does not include any physical objects or artifacts. In contrast, the material culture consists of things created by human. Cultures as described in anthropology, is made of independent traditions.

In order to ensure the survival of one's culture, it has to be passed on from one generation to another. An individual can easy learn about their own culture when he or she socializes in the community in which culture is extensively practiced. Thus, the process of cultural transmission is seen as a natural process and it can happen unconsciously.

In order to preserve the tradition of culture, it must stand on two conditions: it has to be transmitted from one individual to another and to be widely distributed in space and time (Morin, 2016). To measure a successful transmission, a culture must be faithfully followed, or committed by an individual. The survival of culture takes into

account of both quantity and quality of transmission. The advancement of rapid technological inventions, it can improve the accessibility of individuals who are connected between generations and help to facilitate on the process of cultural transmission.

Hence, this study highlights the importance of cultural preservation for the KadazanDusun community and how the ICT adoption can be used for the function of cultural preservation.

1.9.2.1 Social Capital

In community development, the concept of social capital is essential for reinforcing communal bonds, promoting resilience, and enabling collaborative efforts (Nyamari, 2024). This concept of social capital was developed by Bordieu (1986), is strongly connected to different societal fields, which serve as arenas for the social praxis of actors. According to Bourdieu's framework, social capital is defined as the resources and advantages one obtains from their social networks. This social capital plays a role in various social domains, influencing individuals' actions, positions, and power within those fields.

Particularly in cultural preservation, social capital serves as a key mechanism for sustaining shared cultural knowledge, values, and practices by fostering interactions and exchanges across generations and diverse groups within a community. Cultural preservation involves protecting and maintaining the identity, customs, rituals, and values of a community, especially within indigenous or native communities, where it ensures the continuity of their way of life. It also facilitates the transmission of

ancestral knowledge and traditions to future generations. Social capital theory provides an insightful lens to understand the process of cultural preservation within community development. The theory highlights the critical role of social networks, relationships, and trust in supporting and facilitating the ongoing preservation of cultural heritage. By leveraging both bonding and bridging forms of social capital, communities can maintain cultural continuity while also adapting to new challenges and influences.

Putnam (2000) introduced a network-based approach to social capital, distinguishing between bonding and bridging networks. Bonding networks connect individuals who are similar in key aspects, while bridging networks link people who differ from one another (Putnam & Goss, 2002). These networks are essential in sustaining cultural traditions and practices within indigenous and native communities.

Bonding social capital within closely-knit groups are essential for passing down cultural knowledge and practices between generations (Martikke, 2023). Within indigenous communities, the elderly frequently referred to as the knowledge keeper of cultural wisdom, encompassing oral traditions, language, rituals, and artistic manifestations (Shrestha et al., 2023). The establishment of strong and close connections within familial and communal units is crucial for the transmission of cultural knowledge from elders to younger generations. For instance, the KadazanDusun community in Sabah, Malaysia, depends on strong familial bonds to transmit ancestral wisdom regarding traditional healing methods, oral traditions, and rituals that have shaped the community's cultural heritage for hundreds of years.

Communities become better at protecting their cultural heritage and making sure it survives through inheritance when they cultivate and maintain these close ties.

Bridging social capital refers to connections between individuals or groups who differ in terms of social identity, culture, or background. In the context of cultural preservation where the community's shared identity is vital, bridging social capital is crucial for integrating modern technological tools like Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the preservation of culture. ICT can help connect different segments of the community, including those living in urban areas or diasporas, who may not have direct access to traditional cultural practices (Li, 2024). These technologies, such as digital archives, social media platforms, and online cultural events, allow for the sharing and dissemination of cultural knowledge beyond geographic boundaries (Charfeddine & Umlai, 2023).

Bridging social capital allows diverse groups within a community to participate in cultural preservation efforts, creating opportunities for collaboration and mutual exchange. For instance, the younger generation in a community may be more familiar with modern technology and can use this knowledge to document and share cultural practices online (Dzator et al., 2023). This creates a link between the older generation, who holds traditional knowledge, and the younger generation, who possess the technological skills to preserve and promote it (Zort, 2023). ICT also helps communities engage with a broader audience, including researchers, cultural enthusiasts, and other indigenous communities, thereby strengthening the global recognition and appreciation of their culture (Li, 2024).

At the macro level, another form of social capital is linking social capital, which involves relationships with institutions that hold the power to provide resources or influence decisions (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004), such as government agencies, NGOs, or international organizations (Healy, 2002). In order for the community's cultural preservation efforts to be successful, they must rely on both internal and external resources, such as finance, expertise, and legal safeguards for their cultural practices and knowledge (Rohaini et al., 2020). Linking social capital enables communities to connect with these institutions and gather the resources required to support their preservation efforts. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have the potential to play a vital role in providing support for cultural preservation initiatives (Pratala et al., 2024). These institutions assist the community in adopting ICT for the preservation of cultural heritage by offering financial assistance, technical training, and infrastructure. Linking social capital also involves communities having a say in policy-making processes that impact their cultural rights and ability to use technology. External support from a top-down approach, especially through government intervention, is frequently essential in overcoming obstacles like the digital divide, which can impede the use of ICT for cultural preservation in economically disadvantaged communities.

The UTAUT framework continues to be the primary tool for comprehending the adoption of ICT within the KadazanDusun community. Social capital plays a crucial role in explaining how relationships and networks offer essential support, influence, resources, and foster trust, ultimately leading to the intention to utilize technology for cultural preservation.

Performance expectancy refers to the belief that using ICT will effectively facilitate individuals in attaining desired outcomes, such as the preservation of cultural heritage. Social capital, particularly in the form of bridging and linking social capital, can facilitate the connection between individuals and communities with institutions and experts who can effectively showcase the advantages of adopting ICT for cultural preservation. Sharing success stories and best practices through social networks can increase the perceived value of technology in preserving cultural practices, rituals, and knowledge.

Effort expectancy involves the perceived ease of using technology. Bonding social capital, enhances the exchange of knowledge within tightly-knit community networks such as the KadazanDusun community. Older or less tech-savvy members of the community may feel more inclined to embrace ICT tools when they receive guidance from trusted family members, peers, or community leaders. This can bridge the gap between those who have access to digital technology and those who do not, thereby ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from these tools and resources.

In UTAUT, social influence refers to the degree to which people's social networks influence their use of technology. This is directly associated with both bonding and bridging social capital. The prevailing social norms frequently have an impact on a community's acceptance or rejection of technology. Key figures in the community, custodians of culture, or external organizations (through the use of social connections) can promote the use of ICT by emphasizing its significance in safeguarding cultural heritage.

Facilitating conditions refer to the degree to which an individual believes that there is sufficient infrastructure and support to use ICT effectively. Establishing connections and relationships with government bodies, NGOs, and technology providers is crucial in this field. These external sources of support can offer the essential infrastructure, training, and legal frameworks required to successfully adopt and implement ICT for the purpose of cultural preservation.

Social capital theory underscores the significance of social networks, relationships, and trust in maintaining cultural heritage by emphasizing the role of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. ICT plays a significant role as a resource tool to improve social capital and support cultural preservation in today's world. By integrating social capital with UTAUT, the researcher can better understand the community-level dynamics that influence ICT adoption, especially in contexts like cultural preservation where communal identity, heritage, and collective efforts are paramount.

1.10 Research Limitation

This research has a number of limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the findings of this research were derived from a mixed method approach. The quantitative findings in identifying the factors influencing the adoption of ICT in cultural preservation were limited to the KadazanDusun community as the respondents. Therefore, the generalization of the findings is limited only to the sample assessed which includes the KadazanDusun in Penampang and Ranau, thus the inability to generalize for all Sabah groups. Despite the fact that issues concerning native communities in Malaysia are basically similar, it is still challenging to apply these findings to other developing countries without conducting additional research.

As for the qualitative approach, the findings were derived based on twelve key informants who had experience in adopting ICT for cultural preservation. Hence, the research makes no claim that the findings from this research could be extrapolated to accurately represent the entire KadazanDusun community in Sabah. This is because generalizability of findings is not the aim of most qualitative research since typically it aims to study specific issues in a specific context (Merriam, 2009; Leung, 2015), including this research. In this research, the qualitative findings were able to explore the impacts of ICT adoption on the cultural preservation based on the inputs from the twelve key informants.

Second, the researchers also faced challenges in identifying respondents based on the ethnic groups, as some of the Sabahans are stateless, and refuse to reveal their identity. The researchers have to take strategic steps to identify the respondents' identity when conducting the survey.

The theoretical and conceptual framework which adopted from the UTAUT model only covers four factors of variables explicitly. Having to state that there are possible limitations of the variables from other competing and relevant ICT adoption models excluded from the scope of the study.

Besides, this research also faced challenges in determining the accuracy of the data collected based on the response of the respondents. Respondents may not be telling the whole truth or may offer inaccurate information due to impatience while answering the questionnaires, thus suggesting that some of the data collected might not be reliable.

1.11 Chapter Organization

In general, this chapter begins with the background of the study. The current development issues faced by the KadazanDusun community were highlighted to be addressed in determining the empowerment of KadazanDusun in participating in the development process. The research objectives were established in answering the research questions followed by the significance of this study. Furthermore, this chapter also presented the terminology definition that will be used in this thesis.

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