



An Assessment of Petronas Eid Ads in the Context of Modernization and Tradition in Malay Society

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Abstract

Modernity has penetrated practically every facet of life, making it impossible for society members to escape. Moreover, in the former western colonized region, the enlightenment era's western worldview is inevitable. Accordingly, Pre-modern Malay societies are crushed and forced to adapt. Within this understanding, this study used Anthony Giddens' concept of time, place, risk, and trust to examine the Malay society's modernity within existing Petronas Eid ads. The findings showed that Malay culture is strongly influenced by modernity, however, it demonstrated the resistance to modernization at some extent by preserving its heritage and Islamic beliefs in all aspects.

Keywords: Advertisement, Modernity, Malay Society, Tradition Values,

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1.0 Introduction

The emergence of modernity as a global phenomenon can be dated to the 17th and 18th centuries, when western nations began to create colonies around the globe, including the Malay Archipelago. It has strong roots in the enlightenment age viewpoint, which introduced concepts like self-improvement, independence, and equality and this novel idea made possible by the flow of wealth from colonial regions (Giddens, 2009). Even though this region has achieved independence, colonization played a significant role in molding the society there and has continued to do so in some respects into the modern era.

In understanding modernization impact on the Malay society, there are several features of modern society that can be looked into in order to distinguish the social changes happened in the traditional Malay society. According to Giddens (2009), features of modern societies can be seen from a few aspects. The first one is the mode of working and a place of working. Modern societies basically working in a factory, offices or shop rather than agriculture or any other primitive way, such as hunting or gathering. Almost 90% of the population lives in town or city where the city promises job opportunities and creates new job. In Malaysia, most offices, shop and factories situated in Klang Valley, which consist of major areas such as Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Gombak, Hulu Langat, Klang and Petaling. This urban conglomerate areas covering about 2,832km and most of the job can be found here. In addition, city was bigger in size compare to the pre-modern civilization and this can clearly distinguish by looking at the congested road and building in a major city in Malaysia such as Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Bharu.

When it comes to social life, Giddens (2009) claims that it becomes impersonal and anonymous when we day by day encounter with the strangers and this is regarded as normal in the modern era, contrasting with the pre-modern times, when people typically live within their tribe or communities. The emerges of large-scale organizations such as business corporations also an important aspect of modernization when this type of corporations were the main forces of globalization. Another prevalent characteristic of modernization is the intensive political system, compared to the Malay pre-modern era. Transportation and communications also become rapid, which makes everything interconnected. This can be traced back at the time when the railway was introduced for the first time in the Malaya in 1880s thus shift the interior of the country's landscape progressively until now. The nation-states are the most prominent aspects of modernization where this idea has never been developed in the pre-modern time. Another two important features that Giddens explained was, as the prominent modernization characteristics including the influence of laws that frame by the governments and the development of industrial technology for the advancement in life: including weaponry.

As a mode of communication, the advertising might be perceived as the reflection of the society, which is a general perception of many people. The advertisement reflects what is the ideology, values and outlook of the society within specific time and space. Edward T. Hall (1976), writing in the late 1970s, claimed that each person's identity is a product of their culture. Words, actions, postures, gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions all play a part in this culture's comprehensive framework for communication.

According to research on culture values and advertising in Malaysia, there are two issues that shape advertising industry in Malaysia. The first one is related to governments regulations and the other one is related to culture and religion (Waller, D. S., & Shyan Fam, K. 2000). Advertising Code for Television and Radio (1990) clearly stated the national aspirations for advertising to promote Malaysian identity and culture and adheres to the values of Islam which is the national religion of the state. It is evident that governments are aware of how advertising may have a significant influence on a country's ideals. Most Malaysians and the Malaysian government believe that in order to build a decent society, not merely a consumer culture, advertising needs to be harnessed (Frith K.T, 1987). As argue by David S. Waller and Kim Shyan Fam, (2000), the purpose of this advertising code is to protect consumers and advertising from the effect of foreign cultural norms. The exhibit of certain western influences can be harmful when considering controversial advertisement arises on the media that touch religious, culture and racism issues. Previous studies have demonstrated that a subject's impression of what is controversial and why it is controversial depends on their gender, age, and religion (Waller and Fam, 2001).

Even modernization struck Malay societies, there are strong initiative to keep the tradition alive. The English word "tradition" derives from the Latin *traditio* and *tradere*, the latter of which originally meant "deliver, betray." It came to refer to processes of handing over or handing down more broadly after the Renaissance. In ordinary terms, "tradition" encompasses a wide range of contents, including all material and spiritual cultural heritages from the past (Xinzhong, Y. 2015). The terms "tradition" and "traditional" are used to describe and explain the recurrence in roughly identical form of conduct patterns and belief structures over many generations of members or over a long period of time within single societies, as well as within corporate bodies and over regions that extend across several bounded territorial discrete societies (Shils, E. 1971).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Malay Tradition

It has been an identity for the Malay people to be associated with the Islamic practices since the 9th century when Islam come to the Malay world (Musa, H. H,2009). For the Malays, it is not just a religion but Islam is a way of life. In 2021, it is estimated that Malaysian population were 33,519,406 (July 2021 est.) which comprised three major ethnic groups; Bumiputera 62.5% (Malays and indigenous), Chinese 20.6% and Indian 6.2% (IndexMundi.Com,2023). The Malays are the biggest ethnic group in Malaysia where mostly inhabitant scattered around Peninsular Malaysia. Article 160 clause 2 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution states that Malay means "person who profess the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, and conforms to the Malay custom". Whatever the foundational aspects of a nation for a westerner may be, for the Malays, their culture, language, and adherence to Islam have always been more significant contributors to their unique identity (Kim K. K,1974). It is necessary here to defines what is culture to

get the whole picture of the theses arguments. Culture itself is a broad terminology as Hofstede (1980) defines it as a set of norms, values and belief of a particular group or community. From Western viewpoint It encompasses a wide range of aspects of a person's life, including their religion, rituals, language, and ethnic group affiliation (Awang, Maros & Ibrahim, 2012) includes ideas, values, and ways of living (Eberle, 1992).

For the Malay, Islam is perceived as an all-encompassing religion or *ad-din*. There are five (5) pillars of Islam; started with the pronouncement of "there is no God but Allah" and the second part is "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah", performing five (5) times prayer at the specific time – starting from dawn until nighttime. The Muslims also need to fast during Ramadhan (a month in a Islamic calendar), paying zakat (a sum of money obligatory for individual depending to his wealth) and the devoted Muslim is hope to do a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a life time if they can afford. These are the pillars of Islam which govern the Muslim life regardless of identity and location of the individuals. Malay historiography is a complex sphere where colonialism has been a part of the landscape that may have influenced the culture and value system of the Malays. Although Islam is widely recognized as the religion of the Malay ethnic group, other religious influences have also been noted, creating the Malay culture and values (Ahmad M.B., 2010). Even though Islam has been a major influence in the construction of Malay society's values, there are still pre-Islamic tradition practicing in the communities. According to Zainal Kling (1995), some aspects had been classified as non-Islamic or, in the case of traditional elements, as *adat* due to Islam's dominant position. The Arabic word "*adat*" serves as a distinction between pre-Islamic and Islamic facets of Arabian society (jahiliyah). Pre-Islamic practices, beliefs, and customs are referred to as *adat*. *Adat* and Islam have evolved to serve as complementary structural elements in Malay society, which is how society is arranged. The structure of fundamental social institutions in politics, the economy, kinship, family, and stratification reflect this (Kling Z, 1995).

2.2 Time and space

It is critical to implement Anthony Giddens' discussion on the most intrinsic qualities of modernization, which are (a) time and space and (b) trust and risk. This gives a clear picture of how to comprehend society developments. Giddens (1990) contends that the pre-modern world must be considered when examining the relationship between time and place. In the premodern era, time was connected to events that occurred in specific locations. He argues that the development of the mechanical clock was crucial in separating space and time. People all throughout the world celebrate the same "new year" and other events due to the standardized calendars used by different geographical areas. In the premodern age, when people were locally attached to their area and time of their local community, this phenomenon was nonexistent. Giddens stated that the basis for the control of space is the cooperation throughout time. When uniformity in the social structure of time was matched by a mechanical clock, the local no longer adheres to their regional customs and practices. He argues that this phenomenon contributes to open up diverse possibilities of changes by breaking free from limitations of local customs and practices (Giddens, 1990).

The society that we have today is so different from the past because in the past there are three (3) types of practices – hunting, agrarian, pastoral and traditional society which emerges in many section of the world. This type of society however was destroyed by the emerges of industrialization which consist the machine production (from steam and electricity). Malay civilization in pre modern era characterize as medium- to high-density populations, hierarchical structures, and a predilection for consanguineal (relative) marriages are characteristics of the Malayic tradition (both Melayu and tribal-Malay). Efficiently minimizes the structural significance of affinal interactions. The local residents have a tendency to be more focused on the nontribal outsiders with whom they conduct trade than on their own tribe members in other towns (Benjamin, G., & Chou, C. (Eds.). (2002).

The three primary strategies of environmental appropriation in the area—foraging (nomadic hunting and gathering), horticulture (semisedentary swidden-farming), and collecting—appear to be the fundamental cause of this tripartite patterning (the gathering of natural products for trade with outsiders). These have been the main driving forces behind the emergence of the various social organization types in the Malay World, either independently or in combination. Although some of the constituent populations' lifeways mixed the patterns to varied degrees, it appears that the majority of the populations preferred to let one mode predominate. (Benjamin, G., & Chou, C. (Eds.) (2002).)

2.3 Trust and Risk.

The second aspect of social transformation is what Giddens refers to as "*disembedding*," which is defined as "lifting out" social interactions from local settings of interaction and re-organizing them over illimitable time-space intervals. Giddens provides "symbolic tokens" and "expert systems," which further combine these two to form an "abstract system," as two crucial elements in addressing contemporary society through *disembedding*. He defends the symbolic token as an interchangeable medium that may be used independent of the distinctive traits of the people or organization using it and money is the obvious symbolic token that everyone in this period recognizes among other.

The essence of expert system he believes, means "systems of technical accomplishment or professional knowledge that structure enormous sections of the materials and social environments in which we live today". Expert systems *disembed* similarly to symbolic tokens by guaranteeing expectations over remote time-space. He contends that in the age of globalization, no one can opt out of the impersonal structures regardless of any particular trait of the people or organization managing them.

According to Giddens (1990) the character of modern institution is fundamentally bound up with the process of trust in abstract systems; specifically trust in expert systems. The definition of trust is to believe in the dependability of a person or system, with respect to a certain set of outcomes or occurrences, where such confidence implies a faith in the goodness or affection of another, or in the truth of general principles (technical knowledge). He believes that the dynamism of contemporary social institutions is the result of

transformative human action, not divine intervention, and that faith exists in the knowledge of the technical influence caused by human activities in the context of modernity.

He argues that experiences at access points are likely to have a significant impact on attitudes of trust, or lack thereof, towards particular abstract systems. This is in addition to, of course, to updates of knowledge made available for both laypeople and technical experts via the communications media and other sources. Since access points are areas where lay skepticism and professional competence collide, they are recognized sources of vulnerability for abstract systems.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Descriptive Study

Table 1: The Popular Petronas Eid Celebration Ads

No	Ads	Year	Viewers
1	<p>Raya 365 mini-series: Hari ke 123</p> 	2022	9.4 million
2	<p>Syukur Raya</p> 	2021	13.0 million
3	<p>Antara Dua Jendela</p> 	2020	5.9 million
4	<p>Rendang Soraya</p> 	2019	8.4 million
5	<p>Misi Riuh Raya</p> 	2018	2.1 million

In order to investigate the impact that "modernization" has had on Malay culture; a descriptive qualitative study was carried out within the Eid celebratory advertisement that

was developed by Petronas Malaysia. Petronas Malaysia is a state-owned oil and gas company in Malaysia which was established in 1974 and owned entirely by the Malaysian government. In general, majority of Malaysians are looking forward to the annual production of an advertisement for the Eid celebration that be produced by the Petronas Malaysia. Petronas Malaysia started making the commercial advertisement for Eid celebration since the 1997 for approximately five minutes in length. Every year, their advertisements received recognition for conveying a message of togetherness. In this article the researcher studying 5 Petronas Eid celebration ads for the past five (5) years to identify the modernization and tradition encounter in the ads produced by the company. The chosen ads were presented in Table 1.

3.2 Contextual Review

All 5 Petronas Eid celebration ads firstly collected and further be analyzed based on concept established by Anthony Giddens' which are time, place, risk, and trust.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 A Contextual Review Data Outcomes

The findings of the modernization impact in the said advertisement based on Gidden's concept illustrated in the table below:

No	Ads	Time and Place	Risk and Trust
1	<i>Raya 366 mini-series: Hari ke 123</i>	- Working in office - Working in city	- Bus (expert system) - Schools / teacher (expert system) - Communication technology (expert system)
2	<i>Syoknya Raya</i>	- Working in city	- Money (symbolic token) - Communication technology (expert system).
3	<i>Antara Dua Jendela</i>	- Working in city	- Doctors (expert system) - Communication technology (expert system).
4	<i>Rendang Soraya</i>	- Working in restaurant/hotel - Working in city	- Bus (expert system) - Communication technology (expert system).
5	<i>Misi Rihuh Raya</i>	- Working in city	- Bus (expert system) - Communication technology (expert system).

4.2 Time and Place

Out of all, the most prominent features of the modernization show in advertisements is location related to office, shops or factories; indicates the modernization of the Malay

societies which inevitable even though agricultural sectors has always been long associated with the Malay society in the pre-modern era. In the “2019 – *Rendang Soraya*”, The modernization can be seen when Soraya, a young single woman probably in her late 20's is working in a restaurant (or hotel) wearing her chef's attire with a man (her superior) then reminded her to be careful not to missed her flight. The following year ads “2020 – *Antara Dua Jendela*” also showing a young woman, Syasya, also in her late 20's working as a doctor. Even didn't show the place explicitly, the outfit of the doctor is clearly shown where during that year (2020), the Covid-19 was a main outbreak and most healthcare officers need to wear PPE during their duties in hospital. From the analysis, almost all advertisements have shown the representation of adult working in city or live in the city. The portrayal of living in a city for a better life has highlighted the supremacy of city compared to the living in the rural area at certain point.

4.3 Risk and Trust

In “*Rendang Soraya*”, Soraya is working as a chef in the Kuala Lumpur and she is going home for Eid celebration in Seremban, a state capital of Negeri Sembilan, situated in the west coast peninsular Malaysia. Soraya was using a bus for transportations means – one of the expert systems exist in the modern era. Soraya, just like many other laypersons in the societies, clearly has no comprehensive ideas of technicality or engineering aspects of the said transportation but clearly putting her trust on the system in taking her to the most special occasions in Muslim events. The bus symbolizes as the main choice of transportation during Eid celebration when it also repeatedly appears in 2018 – *Misi Rihuh Raya* and 2022 – *Raya 2022:366 Hari Ke 123* ads respectively.

Teacher is another expert system appear in the ads “*Raya 2022: 366, Hari Ke 123*”. Ayu, a passionate teacher, is showing teaching a kid in school in rural area, explicitly show the situation in a classroom, where kids listen attentively to Ayu's lecture. Further notion of Pojie, his boyfriend who cancelled his plant to propose to Ayu who determined in pursuing her dream in advancing education system (afraid of marriage will become a hindrance of her dream) shows the respect for the important of education areas, even he has to let go of his loved one.

In “*Antara Dua Jendela*”, Syasya who works as a doctor, one of the expert systems that appears in the modern times. Syasya were portray as an expert wearing her Covid-19 PPE clothing, was working overtime due to the outbreak at that time. Further notion of strengthen the trust on the abstract system appear when her father says “I am really proud of you,” referring that his daughter – on being part of the respectable entity in the critical time. Doctors are one of the expert systems existed through modernity. The layperson relies entirely in expert system as in Malaysia, the medical institution in 2019 International Living Annual Global Retirement Index were ranked the first in the Best Healthcare in the world category, scoring 95 out of 100 (www.nst.com.my). The PPE outfit that appears in the ads also appear to the layperson that the expert knows exactly the dangerous of the outbreak and eventually gaining the trust from the laypersons. People in pre-modern times could disregard the pronouncements of priests, and go about their daily lives, but this will not

happen in the modern society, due to respect to expert knowledge, especially in the healthcare industries. The most prevailing proof happened during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, the Director – General of Ministry of Health at the forefront, appears in the mainstream media, dominating the news and steer governments action during the critical time.

No	Ads	Tradition Values: Beliefs	Tradition Vales: Local Practices	Tradition Values: Lifestyles
1	<i>Raya 366 mini-series: Hari ke 123</i>	- forgiveness - honoring the guest - respecting the eldest	- Wearing Baju Kurung and Baju Melayu (traditional clothes)	- Living in a village
2	<i>Syoknya Raya</i>	- forgiveness - respecting the eldest	- Cooking Rendang (traditional dish) - Wearing Baju Kurung and Baju Melayu (traditional clothes)	- Living in a village
3	<i>Antara Dua Jendela</i>	- forgiveness	- Chicken hunting - Gathering and chatting	- Living in a village
4	<i>Rendang Soraya</i>	- love / respecting the eldest	- Cooking Rendang (traditional dish) - Wearing Baju Kurung and Baju Melayu (traditional clothes)	- Living in a village
5	<i>Misi RiuH Raya</i>	- respecting the eldest	- House Decorating - Wearing Baju Kurung and Baju Melayu (traditional clothes)	- Living in a village - Cherishing extended family tradition

Communication was also the most dominant features in the ads when almost all ads exhibit the said features. The rapid development of transportation and communication making more integrated community where these features are not possible in pre modern times specially to travel to another place in short period of time. In 2018 – *Misi RiuH Raya*, Pak Long using his cellphone calling out of somewhere in the middle of the road when his motorbike broke down. This shows the ease of communication technology where we basically can connect with everyone else beyond distances and rapidly. The same type of communication also appears in the year of 2021 – *Syoknya Raya* when Pojie was using his cellphone to called his mother at the villages to informed that he couldn't come home for Eid celebration. In the same ads, Mak Jah, his neighbor, using “WhatsApp” application in her phone to tell everyone on the “WhatsApp group” that her cooking gas running out – implies the Malaysian context when the normal application use for communication in Malaysia is 2021 was WhatsApp. In 2020 - *Antara Dua Jendela*, there's video call scene in the ads between Pak Tam, Mak Dara, Syasha and Fadhli, implies another communication

technology where people can still interact with each other using smartphones, and it becomes meaningful when communication becomes the only way for family bonding in the certain circumstances such as pandemic outbreak.

Money as a symbolic token in an abstract system also appear implicitly in the advertisements especially in 2021 – *Syoknya Raya*. Pojie, a food rider calling her mother, asked if she had enough money for Eid celebration preparation and Pojie on the Eid day is still working – signifying that the important of money regardless of it was during the public holiday in Malaysia. This particular *disembedding* mechanism has change the way of living in the modern era. The money enables person to “owned” something and the struggle to have a good standard of living has forcing these youngsters to live in the city, to earn more money, for it has promise a better life.

Even though the modernization struck the Malay society, tradition remains at the heart of the local as the Eid advertisement content has exhibit. Among tradition values that encounter including beliefs, local practices and lifestyles. Below are the tradition values encounter in the advertisements chosen:

4.4 Tradition Values: Beliefs

Traditional values such as beliefs is still strong in analyzed advertisements. It is clear in the ads that Islamic values of forgiveness, respects for the eldest, honouring the guest were exhibit in the advertisements. In “2020 – *Antara Dua Jendela*” shows Pak Tam, a grumpy old man, who hates his neighbor Mak Dara at the end of the commercial comes to the house to handed a sugar to her, signify the value of forgiveness. Pak Tam in the previous scene has been portray as cold-hearted grumpy old man who hates Mak Dara’s large family everytime the family is coming from the city for an Eid celebration because big family of Mak Dara is sure be making a lot of noise when they are gathered together. The value of forgiveness also appears in 2021 – *Syoknya Raya* when Mak Jah, the hostile neighbour to Pojie, who hates Pojie regardless of whatever good things being done by him comes to his house in Eid celebration to give him “*rendang*”; a traditional dish made specially for Eid celebration in Southeast Asia county such as Malaysia and Indonesia. *Raya 2022: 366 Hari Ke 123* also shows Pojie, asked for forgiveness from his mother during Eid celebration which is a normal practice in the Malay society; an act related to Islamic values. Respecting the eldest are the most prevalent theme in all advertisement exhibit when this pattern of act is synonymy associated with the Malay culture. In 2021 – *Syoknya Raya* Pojie shows respect to Mak Jah by doing his best to help her even though she doesn’t like him. The issues of respect for eldest can be seen as a main component in conforming the family bonding in the Malay societies through the analyze advertisement. Honouring the guest is the most important aspects in the Malay tradition where in *Raya 2022: 366: Hari Ke 123* Pojie was seen arranging *dim sum*; a special Chinese dishes for his non-Muslim friends which come to his house during the Eid celebration. Even though he is not a part of the Malay society, there seems a mutual understanding for Malaysian to visit each other and

sharing food during festive celebration and this has manifested in the advertisement as well.

4.5 Tradition values: Local practices

When looking at the tradition values of the local practices, the tradition which still exist in “2020- *Antara Dua Jendela*” is the act of chicken hunting by men. In Malay tradition, chicken was rear naturally in the home compound and will be slaughtered for its meat. The meat will be used for variety of dish but the most common is “*rendang*”, where it is used to serve together with a “*ketupat*” – one of the traditional dishes. This tradition always keeps alive by the Malay society and it was originally from the Indonesia, “*ketupat*” itself coming from the java phrase; “ngaku lepas” or “kupas”. “Ku” means confess and “Pat” refer to mistakes, which *ketupat* from the beginning invites people to aware of the mistakes and the rice symbolizes pure hearts, basically referring to the white features of it (www.mstar.com.my). Technological invention has made *ketupat* were sell in more modern and sophisticated way but the Malay society keeping the tradition alive. “Rendang” also appear in many advertisements as a traditional value. For example, in “Rendang Soraya”, Rendang as a special dish during Islamic celebration symbolizes the love between mother and daughter when Soraya finds out the Rendang is not only a special dish prepared by her late mother, but have a deep root connection with her mother’s routines and friends when she still alive. In “Misi Rih Raya”, the practice of house decoration among Malays are accentuated, together with donning the beautiful traditional clothes - *baju kurung* and *baju melayu* for the whole family members. In fact, almost all advertisement examines exhibit the traditional clothes as a symbol of tradition values of local practices. The ads itself appreciate the uniqueness of the tradition which is it has become the main symbols of the Eid celebration.

4.6 Tradition values: Lifestyles

The lifestyles as tradition values clearly signify that the villages is still dearest to the Malay society even when the globalization impact has bring modernization the core of everyone life. The nostalgic life of village is still component that touch many. Almost all advertisement in this study shows that the village is still important aspects for the Malay societies when it comes to Eid celebration. 2018 – *Misi Rih Raya* shows that the whole family going through various struggle just to come home in the village for Eid celebration. The happiness of family members when they’re doing activities together were stressed in the advertisements. Even generally modern Malay living in typical nuclear family, the advertisements show the possibility of cherishing extended family when they’re coming together for Eid celebration with many family members.

5.0 Conclusion

The preserving of tradition in all analyzed Eid advertisement can be said as a resistant to the modernization theses of the western outlook in the Malay society. Even when the modernization influences can be seen in many other areas, the preserving of tradition which

is dearest to the Malay signifies that religiosity, the prevalent aspects of Malay people have been clearly preserve in the Eid advertisements – which reflects the society's outlook through the strong elements of Islamic ideas exhibit especially on the respect for the eldest, the value of forgiveness and honoring the guest. While all classical sociological theorist – Marx, Durkheim and Weber theorized that religion will loses it grasp on the society, things has proven otherwise in the Malay societies. The tradition and Islamic outlook growing stronger side by side with the modernity and becoming intertwined as a fundamental component of the Malay society regardless of modernization's turbulence.

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Article Contribution to Related Field of Study

The data presented in this article has contributed to the social sciences and humanities studies on modernization and tradition within Malay society.

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