Humanities and Social Sciences Communications

Article in Press

https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-026-07551-y

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Received: 16 June 2025

Accepted: 29 April 2026

Cite this article as: Shaik Hussain, S.A., Othman, M.K., Sahari, F. *et al.* Willingness to contribute cultural artefacts to the Sarawak Museum: psychosocial determinants among Sarawakian Malays. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* (2026). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-026-07551-y

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Willingness to Contribute Cultural Artefacts to the Sarawak Museum: Psychosocial Determinants among Sarawakian Malays

Abstract

Cultural heritage conservation is vital for preserving historical continuity and community identity. It examines the motivations, barriers, and expectations that may inspire or hinder the Malay community in Sarawak, Malaysia, from donating artefacts to the Sarawak Museum. A quantitative survey of 400 Malay respondents was statistically analysed using regression and factor analysis, revealing significant generational differences among the groups. Older participants (ages 55+) favoured donation or 'cultural pride', whereas younger individuals leaned towards loans or selling, driven by a focus on financial gain and appeal to digitally engaged consumers. Money played a lesser role than institutional trust, which emerged as the most significant predictor of intent to contribute ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$). Both socioeconomic status and the level of transparency regarding procedures influenced participation, while symbolic acknowledgement (e.g., recognition of family name) bolstered the motivation to contribute among low-income groups. Through a detailed examination, the study highlights the limitations of universalist tenets in cultural economics by underscoring the need for context-specific approaches, such as hybrid incentive systems and decentralised curation, that resonate with the Malay cultural context. Contributions to global heritage discourse include integrating Southeast Asian perspectives into participatory conservation models and implementing policies that balance institutional practices with community-driven stewardship.

Keywords: *Cultural heritage preservation, artefact donation, institutional trust, generational dynamics, socioeconomic factors, community engagement, Sarawak Museum*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage preserves collective memory, helps societies bridge divides, build shared identity, and pass values (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006). Museums protect physical and intangible heritage, with institutions like the British Museum and Louvre expanding collections through colonial-era acquisitions, donations, and state-funded archaeological expeditions, often reinforcing contested ownership narratives (Boast, 2011; Caloiero, 2024; Stoler, 2022). East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea emphasise benefaction, with citizens donating family possessions to museums as patriotic acts, supported by state subsidies and social norms (Acabado, 2020; Kawamura & Yamasaki, 2023; Sham, 2015). This tension, stemming from colonial extraction, spiritual concerns, and legal issues, illustrates wider heritage governance dilemmas, where global participatory models conflict with local values, marginalising societies like Sarawak.

Sarawak, a Malaysian state on Borneo, presents a compelling case study of these dynamics. Home to more than 40 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, including the minority Malay population (23% of the total), its cultural landscape is profoundly shaped by intersecting identities, colonial legacies, and socioeconomic pressures (Ibrahim, 2009; King, 1993). The Sarawak Museum, established in 1891 under British rule, historically prioritised Indigenous Dayak artefacts, marginalising Malay heirlooms and perpetuating a narrative of Malay identity as imported from Peninsular Malaysia rather than rooted in Borneo (Yong, 2024). This bias, compounded by postcolonial distrust and shifting cultural values, yields a stark paradox: while 89% of surveyed Malays recognise museums as heritage custodians, only 34%, fewer than half, are willing to donate family heirlooms like keris (ceremonial daggers) or songket (woven textiles) (Shaik Hussain et al., 2022).

This discrepancy echoes global patterns in Scandinavian and Southeast Asian contexts but is uniquely mediated by Sarawak's reciprocal social norms and spiritual concepts. Central to this is barakah, a concept of divine blessing or spiritual essence often believed to inhabit heirlooms, requiring owners to maintain spiritual stewardship rather than treating objects as mere commodities. Furthermore, transfer decisions are complicated by the intersection of adat (customary laws and norms) and faraid (Islamic inheritance jurisprudence). While faraid mandates specific fractional inheritance shares, adat often favours communal or matrilineal custody, creating legal and ethical friction for heirs considering museum donation (Isamail et al., 2025; Mat, 1985; Nagata, 1974). As minorities in a bumiputera framework dominated by Dayak majorities, Sarawakian Malays navigate fluid inter-ethnic ties, contrasting Peninsular rigidities where such norms underpin constitutional privileges (Kessler, 1992).

Sarawakian Malays' reluctance to participate in heritage preservation highlights tensions between global museum practices and local ethics. While UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) supports community-led conservation, its implementation often neglects postcolonial socioeconomic and psychosocial realities (Alivizatou, 2016; 2024; UNESCO, 2015). For example, European studies link digitisation and financial incentives to artefact contribution (Blaschitz et al., 2022; Bonacchi et al., 2019), contrasting with Sarawakian Malay fears (61% rejection) that digitising sacred objects damages their spiritual essence, a concept absent from Western views (Shaik Azahar et al., 2021). Additionally, donation intent varies sharply between generations (82% among elders 55+; 41% among youth 18–34), exceeding disparities in Indonesia's batik transmission (22%) and signalling weakening custodianship norms amid minority hybridity (Isamail et al., 2025). These differences reveal the limitations of universalist models in multicultural heritage contexts.

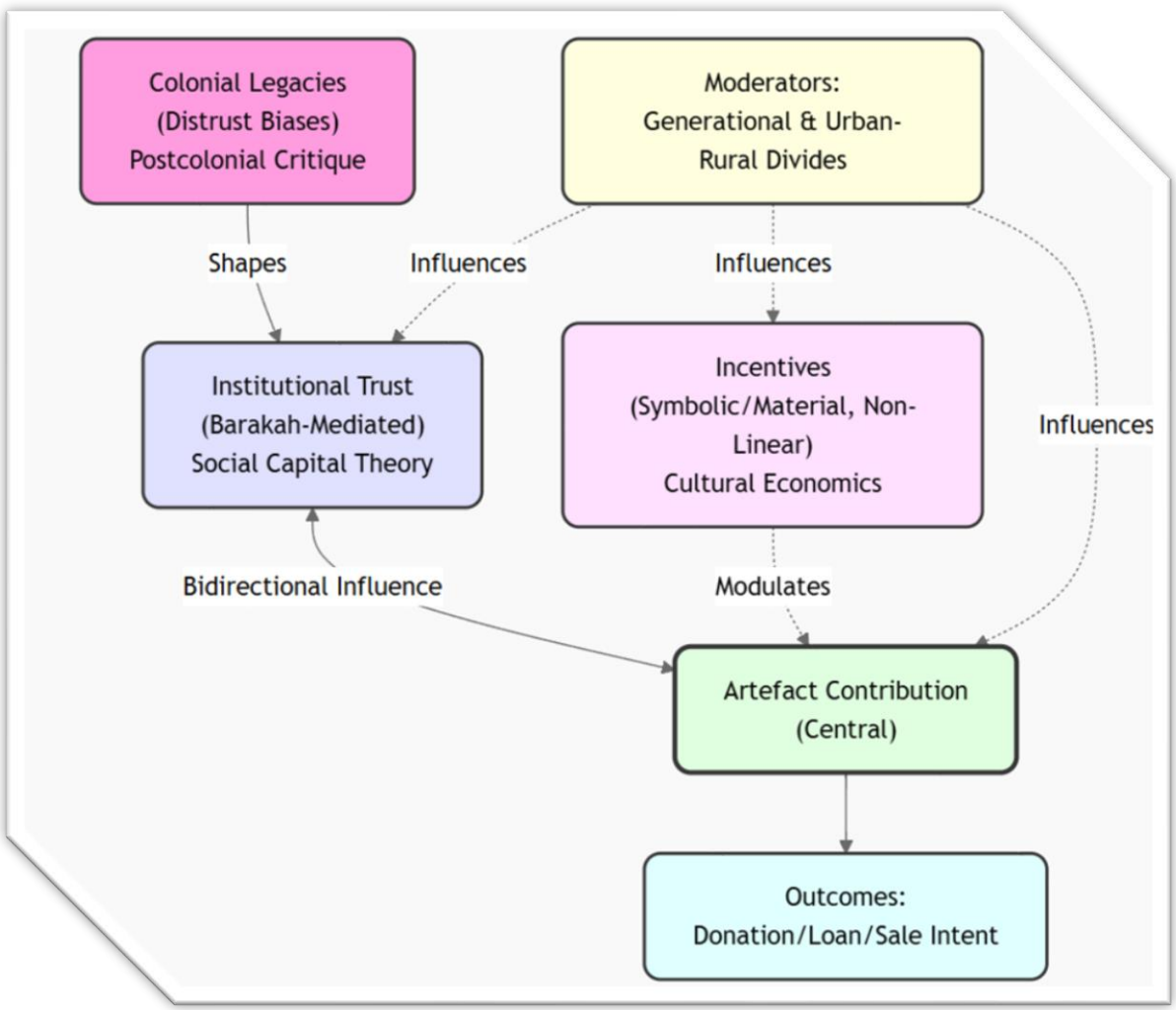
This study emphasises the importance of understanding artefact-sharing behaviours and highlights the influence of historical legacies, institutional trust, and cultural values. Colonial extraction practices, especially the British administration's possession of artefacts without consent, linger in collective memory, fostering scepticism towards museums, often viewed as imposing positivist interpretations (Stoler, 2022; Yong, 2024). Data from Shaik Hussain et al. (2021, 2024) show that urban Malays, particularly those with tertiary education, are 3.2 times more distrustful of museums than their rural counterparts ($p < 0.01$), attributing this to perceived misappropriation and a lack of contextualisation. The study also identifies *barakah* (spiritual blessing) as a culture-specific form of trust, where artefacts embody ancestral holiness. This spiritual accountability, rare in Eurocentric heritage literature, offers a fresh perspective on institutional value and alignment with Malay ethical paradigms (Mat, 1985; Milner, 2008; Sidek et al., 2018).

1.1. **Theoretical Framework**

This research combines postcolonial critique, social capital theory, and cultural economics into SAHS (Spiritually Accountable Heritage Stewardship) in Figure 1, directly addressing the paradox by blending colonial memory with spiritual trust and by using non-linear incentives to explain disengagement. Postcolonial critique (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Smith, 2006) exposes Eurocentric hegemony and advocates decolonisation. Social capital theory (Ostrom, 1990) elucidates trust/reciprocal participation in communal societies, extended via *barakah* as spiritual capital. Cultural economics (Frey & Jegen, 2001) reveals non-linear incentives in which partial payments clash with sedekah norms ($\beta = -0.22$, $p = 0.12$), whereas full payments align with "fair" ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.08$; Shaik Hussain et al., 2024). Figure 1 visually illustrates the dynamic interplay: colonial legacies feed into trust, which bidirectionally drives contributions, modulated by incentives and moderated by generational/urban-rural divides, ultimately yielding behavioural outcomes. The model serves as the conceptual backbone for the study, linking historical power imbalances

(RQ1) to psychosocial mediators (RQ3) and adaptive policies (RQ2). This model posits SAHS as the synthesis: colonial memory mediates spiritual trust, shaping incentive responses in postcolonial pluralism.

Figure 1: Integrated SAHS Model



1.2 Sarawakian Malay Identity in Context

Home to over 40 ethnic groups (Ibrahim, 2009; King, 1993), Sarawakian Malays embody a distinct Bornean hybridity, unlike Peninsular Malays, often homogenised under national narratives of Islamic-Malay supremacy shaped by post-colonial policies and bumiputera privileges (Kessler, 1992; Nagata, 1974). Their identity blends local *adat* with Javanese-Bugis migrations, fostering fluid inter-ethnic ties amid

multiculturalism and resistance to Peninsular assimilation, where "Malay" is rigidly tied to constitutional supremacy (Dwijayanto et al., 2023; Nagata, 1974). Post-colonial policies have contributed to misrepresentation by overshadowing Sarawak's unique forms, perpetuating Dayak-centric views. A community-driven museum collection would support more accurate interpretation, affirming hybrid epistemologies over homogenised portrayals.

This study investigates three research questions:

RQ1: What is the impact of colonial legacies and historical acquisitions on contemporary Malay perceptions of the Sarawak Museum?

RQ2: How can comparative policy approaches from explicit benchmarks (e.g., Norway's Allmenning commons, Indonesia's *adat* integration) be adapted to enhance the contribution of artefacts in Sarawak?

RQ3: What psychosocial determinants, aside from socioeconomic status, explain the willingness to donate, loan, or sell cultural artefacts among the Malays of Sarawak?

This research fills key empirical gaps in heritage studies through a mixed-methods approach, including a stratified survey of 400 Malays and advanced statistical modelling (PCA, CHAID decision-tree analysis). The results identify four participant types: Traditional Custodians (55+, rural/non-urban), Pragmatic Youth (18–34, urban), Trust-Driven Donors (35–54, previous museum visitors), and Hesitant Heirs (all ages, inter-familial contention). These categories underscore the intersection of age, residency, education, and legal insecurity shaping contribution behaviours, complicating homogenised policy approaches.

This study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it offers a Southeast Asian perspective on the "participatory heritage" discourse, highlighting the spiritual and community trust aspects often overlooked in Western literature (Harrison, 2013; Song et al., 2023). It also suggests strategies such as hybrid incentive systems, community heritage hubs for decentralised curation, and mediation between *faraid* (Islamic inheritance) and *adat* (customary law) to align policies with Malay cultural values. With the Sarawak Museum undergoing a RM80 million revitalisation, these prescriptions can transform it into a more active, representative archive of Sarawakian identity, moving beyond a colonial-centric curatorial approach.

This research examines heritage preservation in a multicultural, postcolonial context and contributes to international discourse by promoting culturally sustainable models that affirm local epistemologies and foster equitable community-institution partnerships.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural heritage safeguarding is influenced by historical, sociocultural, institutional, and economic factors, making it a multidisciplinary topic. Our review includes global and regional studies to understand artefact contribution behaviours, with a focus on the Malay community in Sarawak. Drawing on postcolonial studies, cultural economics, legal anthropology, and participatory heritage discourses, this section summarises current knowledge, debates, and the gaps the research aims to fill.

2.1 Global and Postcolonial Heritage Dynamics

The preservation of cultural heritage has shifted from Eurocentric, object-focused methods to participatory models emphasising community agency. Seminal work such as Smith's (2006) Uses of Heritage criticises traditional exclusionary practices and sees heritage as a dynamic process shaped by power relations.

UNESCO supports community inclusion for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) (UNESCO, 2015). However, participatory approaches are uneven, especially in former colonies with ongoing power imbalances (Alivizatou, 2016; Ferrer-Yulfo, 2022). Historical extraction practices still cause distrust, as major European institutions like the British Museum built large collections via colonial acquisitions (Boast, 2011; Caloiero, 2024; Stoler, 2022). Ethical sourcing challenges extractive models and promotes restitution, as exemplified by the Benin Bronzes controversy, which highlights power disparities (Cohen et al., 2023; Kazeem, 2018; Sarr & Savoy, 2018). Conversely, systems like Japan's "Living National Treasures" promote artefact donations through nationalism and state incentives (Acabado, 2020; Kawamura & Yamasaki, 2023; Sham, 2015). These contrasting approaches reveal tension between institutional authority and community ownership, especially in multi-ethnic, postcolonial areas like Sarawak (Ibrahim, 2009; Yong, 2024).

2.2 Colonial Legacies and Institutional Doubt

Postcolonial scholarship critiques Western museums, advocating for inclusive approaches that respect formerly colonised communities (Ashcroft et al., 2013). It highlights how colonial archives favoured Eurocentric narratives, often excluding indigenous voices. In Sarawak, the colonial focus on Indigenous Dayak artefacts marginalised Malay heritage, which was more closely linked to Peninsular influences than to its Sarawakian roots (Ibrahim, 2009; Yong, 2024). Stoler's (2022) analysis of colonial archives as power tools relates to institutional distrust in many postcolonial contexts. Research shows scepticism towards museums among some Malay groups, citing misappropriation and lack of context (Shaik Hussain et al., 2024, 2021). Artefacts hold *barakah*, requiring spiritual accountability absent from secular models, a dimension that connects with legal pluralism through *faraid-adat* tensions (Mat, 1985; Milner, 2008; Sidek et al., 2018; Wallén & Docherty-Hughes, 2022).

2.3 Incentives, Legal Barriers, and Policy Comparisons

Cultural economics offers a lens for examining the motivations behind contributions to cultural artefacts, often challenging simplistic views of monetary incentives. Frey and Jegen's (2001) motivation crowding theory suggests that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivations linked to cultural values or altruism. Research shows the relationship between financial rewards and willingness to donate heritage objects is not always linear (Bonacchi et al., 2019). For instance, in Sarawak, partial payments may conflict with cultural norms about charity, thereby reducing donations, whereas full market-value compensation might be seen as a fair exchange (Shaik Hussain et al., 2024). Tax incentives (e.g., Malaysia's RM1M heritage donation deduction; Inland Revenue Board, 2021; PwC, 2023) also influence giving. These findings highlight that cultural logic plays a key role in mediating economic incentives, emphasising the need to consider complex interactions beyond Western paradigms. Legal pluralism, such as *faraid-adat* tensions, also affects heritage transfers (Mat, 1985; Sidek et al., 2018).

2.4 Comparative Policy Frameworks

To justify the policy adaptations in RQ2, we compare Norway's and Indonesia's models (Table 1). Norway's Cultural Heritage Act (1978) enacts Allmenning, a commons-based stewardship that protects sites through community-state partnerships and reduces losses via shared agency (Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, 2023). Indonesia's Law No. 11/2010 incorporates *adat* into ICH conservation, while the 2023 Indigenous Peoples Bill simplifies protections for customary practices such as batik custodianship (AP Law Solution, 2023). These hybridise formal and informal governance, adaptable to Sarawak's pluralism, unlike rigid Western universalism (Isamail et al., 2025; Mat, 1985; Ostrom, 1990).

Table 1: Comparative Policy Frameworks

Aspect	Norway (Allmenning)	Indonesia (*Adat* Integration)	Sarawak Adaptation Potential
Governance	Commons-state partnerships	Customary law in national ICH	Community hubs blending *faraid/adat*
Incentives	Shared access, subsidies	Community mediation, tax relief	Hybrid symbolic/material + *barakah*
Focus	Site protection, loss prevention	Indigenous heritage transmission	Artefact donation amid distrust

2.5 Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature highlights a 'missing link': participatory models overlook integrating colonial memory, spiritual trust (*barakah*), and legal pluralism (*faraid-adat*) into cohesive frameworks (Alivizatou, 2016; Ferrer-Yulfo, 2022). Western incentives neglect nonlinear cultural logics; postcolonial sourcing debates underexplores spiritual mediation (Cohen et al., 2023; Kazeem, 2018; Sarr & Savoy, 2018). In Sarawak, this gap shows in Malay disengagement, which Peninsular lenses fail to address. Transitioning from the identified gap, where siloed lenses overlook SAHS integration, our empirical results ground an extended framework linking colonial legacies (RQ1) to psychosocial mediators (RQ3) and policies (RQ2). This study investigates determinants of artefact contribution among Sarawakian Malays, using a mixed-methods approach and drawing on postcolonial critique, social capital theory, cultural economics, and legal anthropology to understand factors influencing the donation, loan, or sale of cultural artefacts, thereby supporting culturally sustainable heritage frameworks.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a multi-stage methodology to explore motivations, barriers, and expectations affecting artefact contribution among Sarawak's Malay community. A mixed-methods approach integrated a qualitative pilot (15 interviews conducted in June 2023) with a quantitative survey, including open-ended items to enhance qualitative depth (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The pilot identified themes such as *barakah* fears, *adat-faraid* clashes, and identity erasure, which shaped the variables (trust scales from Ostrom, 1990 and incentives from Frey & Jegen, 2001). Grounded in a pragmatic framework, the convergent parallel design offered a comprehensive view relevant to global conservation and local contexts. Details on the research design, data collection, measurement, and analysis ensure transparency and academic rigour.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design to explore a wide range of attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours related to the contribution of heritage artefacts at a single point in time (Bonacchi et al., 2019). While this approach facilitates the examination of relationships between variables through multivariate analysis, such as assessing the link between institutional trust and donation intent via regression, it is recognised that it limits the ability to infer causality. To gain a more nuanced understanding and augment the quantitative findings, the study incorporated mixed-methods elements by including open-ended questions within the survey instrument. These qualitative responses aimed to provide contextual depth, interpret quantitative patterns, and generate potential post-hoc hypotheses for future research (De Oliveira & Bizerra, 2024). This convergent parallel approach ensures qual themes (pilot-derived) triangulate quantitative patterns, addressing sufficiency concerns**.**

3.2 Target Population and Sampling Strategy

The target group included Malay Sarawakians aged 18+ who owned or had inherited cultural artefacts such as *keris, songket,* or ancestral documents. This ensured participants had direct experience with the key cultural objects.

A stratified random sampling approach ensured the participant pool reflected the demographic diversity of the target population in age, education, residency, and artefact type.

1. Age: Participants were divided into three cohorts: young adults (18–34), middle-aged individuals (35–54), and elders (55+).
2. Education: The strata included individuals with primary, secondary, and tertiary educational backgrounds.
3. Residency: Geographic diversity was captured by categorising participants based on their residence in urban areas (e.g., Kuching, Miri) and rural communities (e.g., Betong, Spaoh).
4. Artefact Type: The strata represented owners of ceremonial objects, textiles, and documentary works. According to a recent census report estimating a population of about 10,000 (DOSM, 2024), a minimum sample size of 384 was calculated using Cochran's formula to achieve statistical precision. To offset non-response, 400 participants were targeted, and all completed the survey.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

In rural areas, recruitment relied on community trust by partnering with village leaders (*Ketua Kampung*) and mosque committees, making access easier and encouraging participation. Surveys were usually face-to-face in familiar places like village halls. For sensitive topics such as inheritance disputes, a word-of-mouth referral system involving trusted community members was used. In urban areas, a mixed approach included sharing digital survey links via QR codes on community boards and social media (Facebook, WhatsApp). Bilingual research assistants administered a survey, while trained enumerators conducted face-to-face interviews in rural areas, ensuring that questions were clearly understood and that complex terms were simplified using everyday language. Urban participants mainly completed digital surveys. We ensured culturally sensitive content by including survey items relevant to the Sarawakian Malay context, such as questions on *barakah* (spiritual blessing) associated with artefacts and tensions between *faraid* (Islamic inheritance law) and *adat* (customary law) in decisions about artefact ownership and transfer. The survey was pilot-tested with 30 community members, who represented the target population. Feedback led to refinements in question wording for cultural appropriateness and clarity, especially for sensitive concepts such as "fair compensation" and "procedural transparency." A certified linguist translated the survey into Malay, and local experts reviewed key terms for relevance across generations and educational levels. Ten enumerators received training in ethics, respectful handling of sacred objects such as *keris*, and in explaining research clearly. Discussions about sacred objects or sensitive topics occurred only when volunteers initiated them.

3.4 Operationalisation and Measurement

Key variables were operationalised and measured using the survey instrument to capture the factors influencing artefact contribution behaviours.

3.4.1 Dependent Variables

Willingness to contribute artefacts was assessed through categorical responses on readiness to donate, loan, or sell, as well as a probabilistic estimate of the likelihood of engaging in these actions (0%-100%). We used both binary (Yes/No) and probabilistic approaches, based on pilot fears and on literature such as Bonacchi et al. (2019). For example (bilingual: Malay original / English translation):

- *"Saya berminat untuk meminjamkan artifak warisan budaya saya kepada Muzium Sarawak"* / "I am interested in loaning my cultural heritage artefact to the Sarawak Museum" (5-point Likert; assesses loan willingness).
- *"Saya akan menderma artifak budaya material kepada kerajaan negeri supaya ia dapat dijaga dengan baik di Muzium Sarawak"* / "I will donate cultural artefacts to the state government for safekeeping at the Sarawak Museum" (5-point Likert; measures donation intent).
- *"Saya bersetuju untuk menjual artifak budaya material kepada kerajaan negeri untuk disimpan di Muzium Sarawak"* / "I agree to sell cultural artefacts to the state government for storage at the Sarawak Museum" (5-point Likert; assesses sale intent)..

3.4.2 Independent Variables

Several independent variables were measured. The demographics captured included Age, recorded both categorically (18–34, 35–54, 55+ years) and as a continuous variable (in years); Education Level, categorised as primary, secondary, or tertiary; and Residency, recorded categorically (urban vs. rural) alongside a continuous measure of years lived in Sarawak. Institutional Trust was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; α=0.82), incorporating statements such as:

- *"Saya bersetuju bahawa Muzium Sarawak harus mempunyai koleksi artifak budaya material yang pelbagai"* / "I agree that the Sarawak Museum should have a diverse collection of cultural artefacts" (Ostrom, 1990, for institutional social capital; pilot-validated on rural barakah fears).
- *"Saya faham bahawa sumbangan artifak budaya material kepada Muzium Sarawak adalah satu cara untuk menyokong pembangunan seni dan budaya Sarawak"* / "I understand that contributing cultural artefacts to the Sarawak Museum is a way to support the development of arts and culture in Sarawak" (Shaik Hussain et al., 2021, on urban distrust).

Past Participation was measured as a binary (Yes/No) indicator of prior visits to museums or heritage events (pilot on familiarity reducing scepticism; Ostrom, 1990). Preferred Incentives were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (12 items total), with underlying dimensions subsequently examined through Principal Component Analysis during the data analysis phase (pilot-based on legacy/honour; Frey & Jegen, 2001). For example:

- Symbolic Recognition: *"Saya mengharapkan nama saya atau nama keluarga saya dipamerkan di Muzium Sarawak sebagai penghargaan atas sumbangan saya"* / "I expect my or my family's name to be displayed at the Sarawak Museum as appreciation for my contribution" (loading 0.82; pilot-derived from rural elders' emphasis on honour; Frey & Jegen, 2001, for non-monetary motivators).
- Material Incentives: "*Saya berharap kerajaan memberikan pampasan kewangan kepada sumbangan saya kepada Muzium Sarawak"* / "I hope the government provides financial compensation for my contribution to the Sarawak Museum" (loading 0.88; from literature on crowding effects; Shaik Hussain et al., 2024).

Furthermore, culturally specific variables were operationalised using culturally relevant statements, Likert scales, or direct questions to gauge perceptions of barakah, faraid, and adat. For example:

- *Barakah*: "*Saya merasa artifak wang lama yang saya miliki memiliki nilai sejarah dan boleh disumbangkan kepada Muzium Sarawak*" / "I feel that the old currency artefacts I own have historical value and can be donated to the Sarawak Museum" (5-point Likert; Li et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2021, on spiritual accountability; pilot-validated on rural anxieties).
- *Faraid/Adat: "Saya merasakan tanggungjawab moral atau budaya untuk mempertimbangkan menyumbangkan dokumen sejarah atau surat-surat lama milik keluarga kepada Muzium Sarawak supaya ia dapat dipelihara untuk generasi akan datang*/ "I feel a moral or cultural responsibility to consider donating family historical documents or old letters to the Sarawak Museum so they can be preserved for future generations." (binary agree/disagree and open-ended; Li et al., 2023, on inheritance barriers; from pilot family disputes).

3.4.3 Control Variables

The study also accounted for potential confounding factors by including various control variables. These included family size, the type of artefact owned or inherited (categorised as ceremonial, textile, or document), and participants' self-reported income level (categorised as low, medium, or high).

Note: The full bilingual survey instrument is available upon request.

3.5 Data Analysis Strategy

Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed to answer the research questions. Quantitative data were mainly examined using SPSS v28 and RStudio. The analysis aimed to identify predictors and explore relationships between variables. Initial steps included calculating descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to summarise demographics and key variables, such as artefact ownership and donation intent. Reliability testing with Cronbach's Alpha assessed internal consistency of scales, such as the institutional trust scale (α=0.82 in pilot testing). Bivariate analysis used chi-square tests to examine associations between categorical variables, such as urban/rural residency and age cohort, with willingness-to-contribute measures. Multivariate techniques included logistic regression to identify predictors of dichotomous outcomes, such as willingness to donate, and ordinal regression for ordinal outcomes, such as perceived cultural responsibility. PCA identified underlying dimensions within the incentives scale. CHAID decision tree analysis was used to segment participants into profiles based on demographic and attitudinal variables that predicted key behaviours or attitudes. Complementing the quantitative findings, qualitative data from open-ended survey questions underwent a thematic review. This analysis aimed to explore underlying concerns and provide contextual insights, particularly regarding motivations and barriers that closed-ended questions may not fully capture. The thematic analysis involved familiarisation with the data through multiple readings of responses, generating initial codes, searching for patterns across codes to develop potential themes, reviewing and refining these themes, and finally defining and naming the core themes presented in the results, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). To enhance trustworthiness and ensure consensus, themes were reviewed and discussed among a team of three researchers. Any discrepancies or points of divergence were resolved through team deliberation and reference back to the original data. This qualitative analysis enriched the interpretation of the quantitative results.

3.6 Addressing Biases and Limitations

Efforts were made to minimise potential biases. Social desirability bias was addressed with neutral questions and anonymous IDs. Non-response bias was reduced through follow-ups in urban areas, raising participation from 65% to 78%, and community endorsements in rural areas, with a 12% refusal rate. As a

cross-sectional study, findings show associations, not causality. We acknowledged that unmeasured factors, like emotional attachment, might influence decisions.

3.7 Ethics and Cultural Accountability

The authors' institutional ethics review board approved the study, ensuring informed consent, participant anonymity, and data privacy. Cultural accountability was key; protocols respected local *adat* (customary laws) during rural interactions, and sensitivity training ensured respectful handling of sacred objects like the keris, discussed only if initiated by participants. Digital data was encrypted with AES-256, and physical records were kept in locked, secure locations. Raw data was de-identified and restricted to the research team.

3.8 Methodological Contributions

This research makes methodological contributions by creating one of the first quantitative measures of barakah (spiritual trust) related to heritage engagement, using culturally relevant survey items. It employs a decentralised data-collection approach that combines rural community-based strategies with digital urban methods, offering a replicable model for diverse demographic representation in multicultural contexts. Additionally, integrating historical legacies, spiritual values, economic incentives, legal frameworks, and generational dynamics within a single study provides a novel framework for understanding heritage contribution in postcolonial settings.

4.0 RESULTS

This section analyses survey data from 400 Malay respondents in Sarawak using descriptive statistics, PCA, regression models, and CHAID decision trees. Findings reveal demographic and behavioural patterns and identify key relationships influencing artefact contribution behaviours.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics: Demographic and Behavioural Overview

This section offers a descriptive overview of the sample's demographic and behavioural characteristics, laying the groundwork for analyses.

Table 2 shows the demographics of 400 participants: 38.0% aged 55 and over, 34.0.0% aged 35–54, and 28.0 % aged 18–34. Education levels included 41.0% primary, 37.0% secondary, and 22.0% tertiary. Most lived in rural areas (58.0%), while 42.0% lived in urban areas. Artefact ownership was highest for ceremonial objects (34.0%), textiles (28.0%), and documents (19.0%), with 19.0% owning multiple types. Overall, 72.0% of the surveyed Malay population reported owning or having inherited cultural artefacts.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–34 years	112	28.0%
	35–54 years	136	34.0%
	55+ years	152	38.0%

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Education	Primary	164	41.0%
	Secondary	148	37.0%
	Tertiary	88	22.0%
Residency	Urban	168	42.0%
	Rural	232	58.0%
Artefact Ownership	Ceremonial (keris)	136	34.0%
	Textile (songket)	112	28.0%
	Documents	76	19.0%
	Multiple	76	19.0%

4.2 Inferential Analysis: Predictors of Contribution Likelihood

This section discusses Research Questions 1 and 3 and presents findings from a binary logistic regression predicting the likelihood of artefact donation. The model (Table 3) included factors like Institutional Trust, Prior Museum Visits, Age (55+ vs. 18–34), Education (Tertiary vs. reference), and Residency (Rural vs. reference). The regression was significant ($\chi^2 = 68.3$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 41% of variance (Nagelkerke R^2). Significant predictors included Institutional trust ($\beta = 0.47$, OR = 1.60, $p < 0.01$), with each one-unit increase in Institutional trust raising donation odds by 60%. Prior museum visits also significantly increased odds ($\beta = 0.32$, OR = 1.38, $p = 0.03$). The 55+ group was significantly more likely to donate than the 18–34 group ($\beta = 0.85$, SE = 0.15, OR = 2.34, $p < 0.01$), and rural residents were more likely than urban ($\beta = 0.29$, OR = 1.34, $p = 0.04$). Tertiary education was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -0.18$, OR = 0.83, $p = 0.12$).

Table 3: Binary Logistic Regression – Predictors of Donation Likelihood

Variable	β	SE	Odds Ratio (OR)	p-value
Institutional Trust	0.47	0.12	1.60	<0.01**
Prior Museum Visits	0.32	0.09	1.38	0.03*
Age (55+ vs. 18–34)	0.85	0.15	2.34	<0.01**
Education (Tertiary)	-0.18	0.11	0.83	0.12
Residency (Rural)	0.29	0.08	1.34	0.04*

Model Fit: Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.41$, $\chi^2 = 68.3$, $p < 0.001$

4.3 Principal Component Analysis (PCA): Incentive Constructs

The findings pertinent to Research Questions 2 and 3 are presented here, outlining the underlying dimensions of preferred incentives identified through PCA and analysing preference patterns by age group.

To identify the underlying dimensions (Table 4), a Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on the 12-item preferred incentives scale. The analysis revealed three components with eigenvalues greater than 1, which together accounted for 67.0% of the total variance.

The rotated components were interpreted as:

1. Component 1: Symbolic Recognition (Eigenvalue = 3.12, 26.0% variance explained), featuring high loadings for items such as family name recognition and cultural honour certificates.
2. Component 2: Procedural Transparency (Eigenvalue = 2.87, 23.9% variance explained), with strong loadings for items such as clear preservation guidelines and transparent ownership terms.
3. Component 3: Material Incentives (Eigenvalue = 2.05, 17.1% variance explained), featuring high loadings for items associated with financial compensation and tax benefits.

Figure 2 shows preferences for Symbolic Recognition and Material Incentives by age group. Symbolic recognition increases with age, while material incentives peak among the young and decline afterwards.

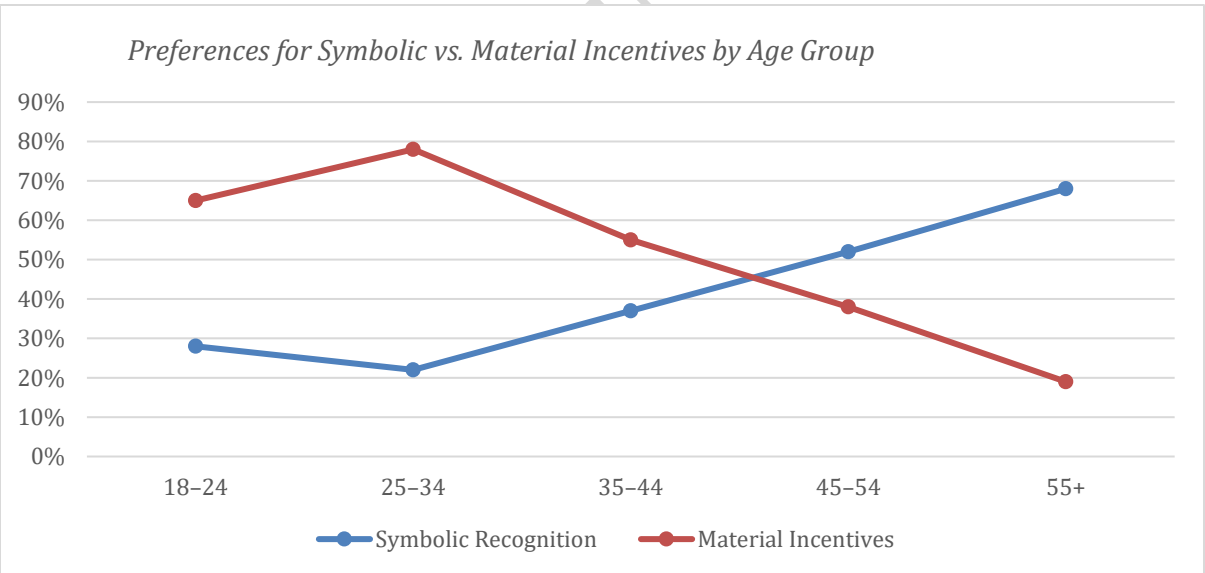


Figure 2 shows that motivations for cultural heritage contributions differ among Sarawak's Malay age groups. Using five age bands (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55+), it highlights a clear divide between those who prefer symbolic recognition and those who favour material incentives. Respondents aged 55+ (68% for symbolic) lean toward gestures like family name displays or ceremonies, reflecting cultural pride and a sense of responsibility. Their willingness to donate artefacts underscores a deep-rooted connection to heritage, emphasising emotional and spiritual values over material gains.

Younger generations prioritise material rewards, peaking at 65% (18-24) and 78% (25-34), viewing cultural artefacts mainly as economic utilities, possibly due to socioeconomic pressures or distancing from traditional norms. Around 35-44, preferences balance at 45%, then shift as symbolic value rises to 52%

(45-54) while material interest drops. This gradient highlights the need for tailored engagement, older people may respond to legacy-focused initiatives, while younger ones need clear, tangible benefits.

Figure 2 contextualises themes of institutional trust and postcolonial scepticism discussed in the study. The older respondents' preference for symbolic recognition reflects wariness of museums as colonial institutions, where exploitation fostered distrust. Symbolic acts, such as co-curation or public recognition, may help rebuild trust by affirming communal agency. Younger respondents, focused on material incentives, display a transactional worldview shaped by urbanisation and globalisation, where heritage preservation competes with economic needs.

Furthermore, the data highlights the non-linear dynamics of incentives within Malay cultural logic. Moderate financial compensation was found to diminish donation intent among certain groups, as it conflicts with the cultural principle of sedekah (charitable giving). However, higher material incentives paradoxically increased willingness by reframing contributions as equitable exchanges rather than acts of charity. This nuanced interplay between cultural values and economic pragmatism emphasises the need for hybrid models that blend symbolic and material incentives while respecting local ethos.

Figure 1 summarises the study's main point: successful heritage preservation in Sarawak's multicultural setting requires strategies tailored to different generations and cultures. By combining symbolic reverence with material pragmatism, institutions like the Sarawak Museum can promote inclusive participation, making heritage conservation a living practice rather than just static curation.

Table 4: PCA Results – Incentive Constructs (Varimax Rotation)

Item	Symbolic Recognition	Procedural Transparency	Material Incentives
Family name recognition	0.82	0.12	0.09
Cultural honour certificates	0.78	0.15	0.07
Clear preservation guidelines	0.14	0.85	0.11
Transparent ownership terms	0.09	0.79	0.13
Financial compensation	0.08	0.10	0.88
Tax benefits	0.12	0.07	0.76
Eigenvalue	3.12	2.87	2.05
Variance Explained	26.0%	23.9%	17.1%

Cumulative Variance Explained: 67.0%

The research uncovered differences in why people contribute family heirlooms. For older rural generations, recognition of cultural heritage was key, accounting for 26% of their willingness to participate. They valued preserving their legacy and having their contributions acknowledged.

A different picture emerged among urban, younger residents. For those 18-34, practical benefits and material incentives influenced about 17% of decisions. This divide shows how motivations for cultural preservation vary by experience and environment. The contrast reveals a tension in heritage conservation—between valuing cultural recognition and responding to tangible rewards. This insight can help museums and institutions tailor strategies to diverse demographics.

Table 5 shows preferences for Symbolic Recognition and Material Incentives across age groups, matching Figure 2. Symbolic Recognition rises with age from 28% (18-24) to 68% (55+). Material Incentives follow an inverted pattern, peak at 78% (25-34) and then drop to 19% (55+).

Table 5: Incentive Preferences by Age Group

Age Group	Symbolic Recognition (%)	Material Incentives (%)
18–24	28	65
25–34	22	78
35–44	37	55
45–54	38	52
55+	68	19

Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of respondents in each group preferring the incentive type (not mutually exclusive; n=392).

4.4 Advanced Analyses: Predictors of Perceived Cultural Responsibility

To address Research Question 3 and inform Research Question 2, a CHAID decision tree analysis was conducted to identify distinct participant profiles based on the variables influencing contribution behaviours.

An ordinal regression was conducted to identify predictors of perceived Cultural Responsibility (Table 6). The model included Residency Duration, Family Size, and Artefact Type (Textile vs. reference) as predictors. The proportional odds assumption was satisfied ($\chi^2 = 12.1$, $p = 0.21$).

Significant predictors of perceived Cultural Responsibility included:

1. Residency duration was positively associated with perceived cultural responsibility (Coefficient = 0.42, SE = 0.09, OR = 1.52, 95% CI [1.27–1.82], p = 0.01). This indicates that for each additional year of residency in Sarawak, the odds of reporting a higher level of cultural responsibility increased by 52%.

2. Family size was negatively associated with perceived cultural responsibility (Coefficient = -0.31, SE = 0.11, OR = 0.73, 95% CI [0.59–0.91], p = 0.04). This implies that for every additional family member, the odds of reporting a higher level of cultural responsibility decreased by 27%.

3. The Artefact Type (Textile) was not statistically significant as a predictor in this model (Coefficient = 0.25, SE = 0.08, OR = 1.28, 95% CI [1.10–1.50], p = 0.06).

Table 6: Ordinal Regression – Predictors of Perceived Cultural Responsibility

Variable	Coefficient	SE	OR	95% CI	p-value
Residency Duration	0.42	0.09	1.52	[1.27–1.82]	0.01*
Family Size	-0.31	0.11	0.73	[0.59–0.91]	0.04*
Artefact Type (Textile)	0.25	0.08	1.28	[1.10–1.50]	0.06

*Proportional odds test: $\chi^2 = 12.1$, p = 0.21. Note: $p < 0.05$.

The CHAID decision tree categorised participants into four groups based on age, residency, museum experiences, and family dynamics (Table 7). This explains why Sarawak's Malay community varies in donating, loaning, or selling cultural artefacts.

Traditional Custodians, mostly older rural residents, have a deep connection to their heritage. Nearly 75% are willing to donate heirlooms like keris or songket, seeing it as their duty to pass on traditions. For them, cultural pride outweighs money. Museums can encourage participation by publicly honouring their contributions, such as naming exhibit sections after their families.

Pragmatic Youth, usually younger city residents, see artefacts as assets rather than sacred objects. Two-thirds prefer loaning or selling, often needing incentives. Programs such as temporary loans with digital ownership certificates (NFTs) might align with their practical needs and museum goals.

Trust-driven donors are middle-aged adults who have visited museums before. Their decisions rely on trust in these institutions. Most are willing to donate if they believe museums will care for artefacts. To maintain their trust, museums could hold open workshops on preservation or use QR codes so donors can track their items.

Hesitant heirs face family disputes over artefacts, worsened by Malaysia's complex inheritance laws, discouraging donations. Legal support, such as mediation panels that blend Islamic inheritance rules (*faraid*) with traditional (*adat*) rules, can clarify ownership.

Table 7. Participant Profiles from CHAID Decision Tree Analysis

Profile	Description	Key Statistics	Implications
Traditional Custodians	Older adults (55+ years), mostly living in rural areas. Motivated by cultural pride and a duty to preserve heritage for future generations.	72% willing to donate artefacts (e.g., keris, *songket*).	Target with symbolic recognition (e.g., family names in exhibits) to honour their cultural values.
Pragmatic Youth	Younger adults (18–34 years), urban residents. Focused on practical benefits and financial security.	65% prefer loaning or selling artefacts over donating.	Engage with financial incentives (e.g., payments and digital ownership models such as NFTs).

Profile	Description	Key Statistics	Implications
Trust-Driven Donors	Middle-aged adults (35–54 years) who have visited museums before. Trust institutions to preserve artefacts.	58% are willing to donate if they trust the museum's preservation practices.	Strengthen transparency (e.g., through workshops and digital tracking) to maintain trust.
Hesitant Heirs	Mixed ages, often facing family disputes over artefact ownership. Reluctant to engage due to legal conflicts.	41% avoid donating or loaning artefacts due to ownership disagreements.	Provide legal mediation (e.g., hybrid *adat-faraid* panels) to resolve disputes.

This analysis shows that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Older generations need cultural respect, youth want practical benefits, and conflicted families require legal help. Tailoring strategies to these groups helps museums and policymakers better preserve Sarawak's heritage and meet community needs.

4.5 Qualitative Insights: Exploring Concerns

This section presents qualitative findings from open-ended responses that detail key concerns regarding artefact contribution, adding depth to Research Question 3 and providing insights for Research Question 2. Qualitative data from open-ended survey questions provided additional insight into the concerns influencing willingness to contribute artefacts. The thematic review revealed two major themes, following Braun and Clarke (2006), with triangulation to quantitative results for enriched interpretation.

1. **Spiritual Apprehensions**: Many participants, particularly rural elders, expressed profound worries about the spiritual well-being and perceived loss of power of sacred objects if they were placed in secular museum settings without culturally appropriate protocols. For example, one 62-year-old man stated, "How can a glass case preserve the *barakah* [divine blessing] of our keris if no prayers are said over it?". A 58-year-old woman added, "The soul [roh] leaves when it's taken from home without ritual, it is like burying a relative without farewell" (rural elder). These apprehensions interpret the 61% rejection of digitisation (Shaik Azahar et al., 2021) as *barakah* erosion, triangulating with symbolic preferences (26% variance, Table 4).
2. **Inheritance Conflicts**: Participants from various age groups frequently identified unresolved family disputes regarding the ownership and inheritance of artefacts as a significant barrier to potential institutional contributions. A 29-year-old woman commented, "We are too busy arguing about who owns grandma's songket to think about donating it." A 41-year-old father noted, "*Faraid* splits everything equally, but adat says it stays with the women, museums do not understand this pull" (urban, family size >5). This echoes the negative family-size effect (OR=0.73; Table 6), highlighting psychosocial barriers.
3. Identity Misrepresentation: Participants decried institutional biases, echoing national homogenisation. "Museum shows us as Peninsular clones, ignoring our Borneo roots, why donate to erasers?" (29F, urban). This theme interprets urban distrust (OR=1.34, Table 3) as resistance to post-colonial multiculturalism, grounding SAHS's decolonised call.

These themes, triangulated with quantitative predictors (e.g., the family-size effect in Section 4.4), highlight culturally embedded barriers that require tailored interventions (see Discussion 5.3).

5.0 DISCUSSION

Building on the synthesis of colonial memory and spiritual trust, this study investigates the complex factors influencing Malay Sarawakians' willingness to contribute cultural artefacts to institutional collections. The findings illuminate the unique dynamics of heritage preservation in a postcolonial, multicultural context and offer insights with both theoretical and practical implications. By investigating the impact of colonial legacies, uncovering adaptive strategies, and examining psychosocial drivers, the research fills important gaps in postcolonial and Southeast Asian heritage scholarship.

5.1 Colonial Legacies and Institutional Trust

The findings underscore the lasting association between colonial-era practices and contemporary attitudes towards cultural preservation. Urban Malay communities, particularly those with higher levels of education, display heightened scepticism towards institutions compared to their rural counterparts. This scepticism appears consistent with postcolonial tensions regarding heritage representation (Alivizatou, 2016; Ferrer-Yulfo, 2022). Regression analyses emphasise the importance of institutional trust, with confidence in museums emerging as a significant predictor of donation intent. Urban scepticism manifests colonial bias via generational/spiritual logics: elders' preferences for symbolic recognition appear to mediate distrust through *barakah*, extending postcolonial critique beyond archives to lived psyches (Stoler, 2022; Yong, 2024). This suggests that addressing historical power imbalances and implementing decolonised curation practices, such as equitable representation and community-led stewardship, may help rebuild fractured relationships. Furthermore, longer residency duration in Sarawak was associated with a stronger sense of cultural responsibility, highlighting how deep-rooted connections to place, shaped by historical context, intertwine with perceptions of heritage stewardship (Stoler, 2022).

5.2 Psychosocial Determinants of Contribution Behaviour

The study reveals that psychosocial drivers of participation extend beyond socioeconomic status, aligning with social capital theory (Ostrom, 1990). The significant role of institutional trust and prior museum visits as predictors of donation likelihood supports the notion that familiarity and confidence encourage engagement. The segmentation analysis illustrates this complexity, identifying distinct participant profiles such as Traditional Custodians and Pragmatic Youth. It is important to note that these profiles are analytical groupings based on observed patterns rather than fixed or homogeneous social identities; individuals may exhibit characteristics that overlap across categories depending on context.

Generational and geographic divides emerged as key dimensions of difference. While elders often prioritise traditional stewardship and value symbolic recognition, younger urban residents appear more receptive to material incentives or digital engagement models, signalling a shift towards more economically pragmatic approaches to heritage engagement. This spatial and generational asymmetry highlights how proximity to cultural roots and varying life experiences influence attitudes, with urbanisation potentially fostering detachment from traditional communal preservation norms (Isamail et al., 2025; Mat, 1985).

Culturally specific values and legal ambiguities further mediate participation, along with the related quantitative results, indicating that familial ownership disputes pose a significant barrier, reflecting underlying tensions between Islamic inheritance laws (*faraid*) and customary practices (*adat*) (Ibrahim, 2009; Mat, 1985). Simultaneously, participants expressed profound spiritual concerns, particularly regarding the perceived loss of *barakah* (divine blessing) and the need for culturally appropriate rituals if sacred objects are placed in secular museum settings. These findings underscore the limitations of purely secular frameworks (Milner, 2008; Wallén & Docherty-Hughes, 2022) and emphasise that effective engagement must navigate both the complexities of legal pluralism and the deep-seated spiritual dimensions of heritage value. Profiles and qualitative themes reveal spiritual social capital: *barakah* revises Ostrom (1990) by infusing trust with sacred reciprocity rather than secular bonds. Youth's material tilt complicates

economics, *sedekah* norms yield non-linear effects, where "fair exchange" trumps partial crowding (Frey & Jegen, 2001; Shaik Hussain et al., 2024). *Adat-faraid* disputes underscore the psychosocial toll of legal pluralism. Here, barakah acts not as a synonym for trust, but as a moral–spiritual mediator through which institutional trustworthiness is evaluated; an institution that fails to respect barakah cannot be trusted.

The analysis of preferred incentives further complicates a purely economic view, challenging Eurocentric cultural economics models (Frey & Jegen, 2001). While factor analysis identified distinct dimensions, such as symbolic recognition, procedural transparency, and material incentives, the influence of monetary rewards appears nonlinear and context-specific. Partial financial compensation may clash with norms of altruistic giving, while framing contributions as “fair exchange” through full market-value compensation may resonate more with specific groups (Shaik Hussain et al., 2024). This highlights the need for transparency about economic equity and reinforces the importance of non-material motivators.

5.3 Towards Culturally Sustainable Policy Approaches

The diverse motivations, barriers, and segment-specific preferences identified underscore that effective policies must move beyond universalist assumptions and actively embrace culturally sustainable frameworks (Harrison, 2013) that affirm local epistemologies and foster equitable partnerships (Smith, 2006). Drawing on comparative models such as Norway’s Allmenning and Indonesia’s integration offers useful heuristics (Isamail et al., 2025; Ostrom, 1990; Song et al., 2023), our findings suggest specific, context-sensitive strategies for Sarawak. These should be viewed as analytical benchmarks rather than proven solutions ready for immediate transplant into Sarawak. For instance, Norway's commons-state partnerships could inspire decentralised heritage hubs (e.g., *Rumah Warisan Melayu*) to empower Traditional Custodians. Similarly, Indonesia's integration of customary law suggests that mediation mechanisms blending adat and faraid could resolve inheritance conflicts for Hesitant Heirs.

These frameworks move beyond universalism by attuning to the Spiritually Accountable Heritage Stewardship (SAHS) model proposed in this study. It is crucial to clarify that while SAHS offers a robust framework for understanding the Sarawakian Malay context, its applicability to other postcolonial settings would require further empirical testing to account for local spiritual and historical variances (Alivizatou, 2016; Ferrer-Yulfo, 2022).

Policy strategies should likely focus on decentralised, collaborative heritage management. Community heritage hubs can empower local custodians and ensure exhibits reflect hybrid narratives. Digital co-curation platforms can further broaden participation, creating multiple entry points for engagement that accommodate both traditional and digitally native preferences. Community-driven models, such as *Rumah Warisan Melayu* hubs, which empower local custodians and ensure exhibits reflect hybrid narratives, facilitating accurate Malay interpretation amid post-colonial forces and ethnic policies that homogenise identities (Kessler, 1992; Nagata, 1974).

The prominence of spiritual concerns indicates that institutions should develop protocols aligned with barakah for sacred objects, potentially involving religious leaders or traditional practitioners to advise on conservation. Addressing legal ambiguities and familial disputes requires mediation mechanisms that integrate faraid and adat principles to provide clear, culturally appropriate pathways for artefact transfer. Finally, tailoring incentive structures to segment preferences suggests implementing hybrid incentive systems that combine valued symbolic recognition (e.g., family name galleries, heritage titles) with tailored material or digital benefits (e.g., tax deductions, digital exhibition platforms) for younger demographics (Inland Revenue Board, 2021; PwC, 2023).

5.4 Integration and Theoretical Contributions

The findings illustrate how heritage engagement is shaped by historical legacies that influence trust and scepticism, while psychosocial factors such as age, residency, prior experience, family dynamics, spiritual beliefs, and incentives differentiate participant profiles and their willingness to engage. These points underscore the need for tailored, culturally sensitive policies. Qualitative insights provide crucial depth, emphasising nuances such as *barakah* and *faraid-adat* tensions that should inform practical strategies, complementing quantitative predictors such as trust and incentives.

This study focuses on Sarawak, empirically extending Postcolonial Critique by showing how historical extraction and institutional bias manifest in contemporary psychosocial determinants of engagement mediated by generational and spiritual logic. It enhances Social Capital Theory by examining trust and social dynamics outside the West, incorporating *barakah* as a cultural moral obligation in heritage care, which is often missing in secular views. It refines Cultural Economics with evidence of non-linear, culturally influenced incentives, emphasising altruism, "fair exchange," and non-material recognition, challenging universalist ideas (Frey & Jegen, 2001). By connecting Southeast Asian scholarship on reciprocity and legal pluralism (*adat-faraid*), SAHS promotes layered frameworks that reflect community nuances and offer global relevance.

5.5 Practical and Policy Implications

This study offers actionable insights for heritage institutions to boost engagement and artefact contributions in postcolonial multicultural communities like Sarawak. To engage diverse groups, they should adopt strategies that enhance recognition and value, such as Family Name Galleries or *Warisan Tokoh* titles, providing symbolic recognition for donors, especially older generations, who value legacy and cultural stewardship.

Beyond symbolic gestures, it is vital to customise incentives and engagement strategies. This might involve exploring tax deductions for cultural donations, inspired by models like Norway's Allmenning, to incentivise preservation. Additionally, creating digital platforms (e.g., apps for virtual exhibitions) can offer accessible, engaging ways for urban, tech-savvy youth to participate and share heritage stories.

Besides institutional efforts, empowering communities via decentralised stewardship is vital. Supporting community heritage hubs like *Rumah Warisan Melayu* in semi-urban and rural areas shifts curation power to local custodians, enabling community-led preservation akin to Indonesia's rumah budaya model. Digital co-curation platforms can also broaden participation beyond physical sites.

Addressing legal and spiritual barriers is vital. Establishing mediation mechanisms incorporating *faraid* and *adat* principles can resolve family ownership disputes that block contributions. Institutions should also develop culturally sensitive protocols for caring for sacred objects, involving religious leaders or traditional practitioners (*bomoh*) to advise on prayers or digitisation, and to preserve *barakah* (spiritual blessing). These approaches highlight the need to balance global practices with Sarawak's cultural and legal uniqueness.

5.6 Limitations

This study has limitations. The cross-sectional design allows for identifying associations but precludes causal inference; future longitudinal designs could address this by tracking pre-/post-intervention changes. While stratified random sampling was employed to enhance representativeness across key demographics, the findings are based on a specific sample of Malay Sarawakians (n=400) and may not be generalisable to all communities in Sarawak or other postcolonial contexts, e.g., Iban or Chinese groups warrant parallel studies. The data relied on self-reports, which are subject to social desirability and recall bias; however,

efforts were made to mitigate these issues through anonymous coding and neutral phrasing. Furthermore, although several variables were controlled for, unmeasured factors, such as the specific history of interactions each family had with institutions or the intensity of emotional attachment to individual artefacts, could also affect contribution decisions sensitivity analyses in future work could incorporate these by incorporating qualitative follow-ups.

5.7 Future Research

Future research could build on this study in several ways. Longitudinal studies might track changes in attitudes and behaviours over time and assess the causal impact of specific interventions. Deeper qualitative or ethnographic research could offer richer insights into the cultural and spiritual meanings of *barakah* in relation to artefact custodianship and explore the dynamics of *faraid* and *adat* negotiations within families in greater detail. Comparative studies in other postcolonial or multicultural settings could test the transferability of the identified determinants and policy implications. Additionally, research might evaluate the effectiveness of specific tailored interventions proposed here (e.g., different hybrid incentive structures, mediation services, community co-management initiatives) on artefact contribution rates and community engagement levels. Additionally, parallel inquiries in Peninsular Malaysia could test attitudinal variances tied to majority-minority dynamics (Nagata, 1974).

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study uncovers the subtle interplay of historical, cultural, and institutional factors that shape contributions to Sarawak artefacts, and provides a replicable model for postcolonial heritage preservation. By prioritising Malay voices through mixed-method insights (e.g., 68% symbolic preference among elders, Table 5), it challenges universalist approaches and advocates hybrid strategies that honour *barakah*, resolve *faraid-adat* tensions, and blend incentives for generational equity. The recommendations, therefore, balance global standards with local conditions and realities, ensuring that the Sarawak Museum develops into an inclusive, dynamic repository of Malay identity through hybrid incentives, decentralised curation, and spiritually accountable practices. Unlike hypothetical Peninsular studies (greater trust via majority status; Nagata, 1974), Sarawak's minority hybridity requires contextual nuance, offering global lessons for decolonising heritage. Such insights are valuable in multicultural contexts worldwide, providing a methodology to transform heritage sites from colonial remnants into equitable, community-driven institutions, ultimately fostering warisan as a bridge, not a barrier, across generations.

FUNDING:
We acknowledge the P-Ramlee Research Chair for the funding F03/PRC/2175/2021

Data Availability Statement: The raw datasets generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to ethical restrictions and third-party agreements with the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry & Performing Arts Sarawak (MTCP). Participants were explicitly informed during the consent process that their data would not be shared publicly. To support transparency in the research, the interview/questionnaire items are provided in the Supplementary Information. Inquiries regarding the study can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethical approval: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (HREC/NM/2023(2)/95)

Informed Consent: Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants. This method was chosen to facilitate a more open dialogue within the professional and cultural context of the study and to align with the administrative nature of the Ministry project. The consent process was audio-

recorded at the start of each interview. Participants were explicitly informed that their data would remain confidential, would not be shared publicly, and would only be accessible to the researchers and the project funders (MTCP). A copy of the verbal consent script is provided as a Supplementary File.

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