

**An Exploration Of The Cultural Beliefs Of The Indonesian And Chinese People
In Relation To The Business Of Swallow Farming**

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Abstract-This research is basic research that explores the public's trust in swallow farming business. Swiftlet nest is believed to have many benefits for health. Indonesia is the largest producer of swallow's nest in the world. Almost some of the swallow nest produced is exported abroad, especially to China. The purpose of this study is to discuss the reasons behind the belief that is expected to bring information to many people. So that people are able to think wisely and open in every business especially swiftlet nest business. While the method used by the author is qualitative methods by means of interviews, observation and analysis of documents in order to support the validity of the data. The main objects of the research are breeders, collectors and consumers of Swallow nest. The scope of this research is on cultural beliefs in Swallow farming based on Indonesia and China perspective. On the basis of the findings obtained during the study, researchers found that not all swallow nest businessmen believed in the belief. some of them might believe the impact of Swallow farming business but based on different reasons. It has been found not only from the Indonesian perspective but also in Chinese perspective.

Keywords: Culture, Beliefs, Swallow nest, and Business

INTRODUCTION

Swallow nest, so called „Yàn Wo” is recognized as a prestigious and superior health food. This functional food is actually the tiny nest of male swallows during the breeding and nesting season (Langham, 1980), and is composed of saliva from Swallow, as well as other materials. Swallow nest is a common thing in the history of world trade. It has been traded since the Tang dynasty (618-907 BC). The nest was one of the mandatory menus in the Emperor’s list (Iswanto, 2002). China became the largest export destination of a Swallow nest from Indonesia. During 2015, swallow nest export to China amounting to 500 tons. There, besides consumed as food, Swallow nest is also used as a medicine and cosmetics (WartaAgro.com, Surabaya, Wednesday (03/16/2016)).

In Indonesia itself, the businessmen of Swallow nest has begun to evolve from year to year due to profit-promising, especially for those who can dominate the Chinese market as the first consumers (see table.1.1). According to Eddy Purnomo, Head of Public Relations of the law and the Agricultural Quarantine Agency further argued that the potential production of Swallow nests Indonesia amounted to 400,000 kg per year, the potential value of exports per year could reach Rp 4.8 trillion.

Swallow farming is an important case to analyse because of semi-domesticated nature of the birds and their liminal status in cities, disrupting the categories of “wild” and “domesticated” (Colasanti et al., 2012: 348). Mostly people think that Swallow farming as an exploitation of natural potential which owned by Indonesia as the largest producer of swallow nest (Lim and Cranbrook, 2002). Because of exploitation, the people believe, especially for those who are unfamiliar with the business that swallow farming will effect to disruption of swallow life cycle. They have perception that the disruption will cause any disaster to the farmer’s generations (<https://www.wihara.com/topic/35815-rumah-walet-di-dalam-tempat-tinggal/>). Therefore, the researcher interested in conducting an in-depth research to get

fuller understanding to obtain knowledge of a phenomenon which is based on the responses of some people from Indonesian and Chinese.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- **The Theory of Beliefs**

According to Rousseau et al (1998), beliefs is a psychological territory that are of concern to accept what is based on expectations of good behavior from others. Consumer confidence is defined as the willingness of the parties to accept the risk of the other party action based on the expectation that the other party will be an important act for parties who believe, regardless of the ability to supervise and control the actions of the trust (Mayer et al, 1995). Doney and Canon (1997) that the initial creation of partner relations with customers based on trust.

- **The Fundamentals of Feng Shui**

The concept of yin-yang mainly originates from the classic of ancient philosophy – I Ching (the Book of Changes) and Laotsu, and the concept of the Five Elements is primarily from Hongfan in the Book of History, the two of which are generally called theory of “yin-yang and Five Elements” by later generations. And the common source of both is “Heluo Culture”. The theory of “yin-yang and Five Elements (which defined as Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water)” talks about the pursuit of balance through the changes of yin and yang of the whole universe and the search of development through the mutual generation and restriction of the Five Elements, so as to achieve the goal of pursuing good fortune and avoiding disasters (Yap J., The Science And Art Of Classical Feng Shui).

- **The Theory of Karma**

Karma is regarded as a fundamental law of nature that is automatic and mechanical. It is not something that is imposed by God or a god as a system of

punishment or reward, nor something that the gods can interfere with (Castro, November, 2013). The word of karma refers primarily to "bad karma" - that which is accumulated as a result of wrong actions (Castro, November, 2013). Bad karma binds a person's soul (atman) to the cycle of rebirth (samsara) and leads to misfortune in this life and poor conditions in the next. The moral energy of a particular moral act bears fruit automatically in the next life, manifested in one's class, disposition, and character. Hindu texts also prescribe a number of activities, such as pilgrimages to holy places and acts of devotion, that can wipe out the effects of bad karma. Such positive actions are sometimes referred to as "good karma." Some versions of the theory of karma also say that morally good acts have positive consequences (as opposed to simply neutral) (Castro, November, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

the researchers chose to use qualitative research methods to determine how to find, collect, process, and analyze data from the research. Qualitative research can be used to understand social interactions, such as by in-depth interviews that will be found clear patterns. Through qualitative research, the researcher aims to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions about swiftlet farming that drive it with reference to specific topics and the result will be descriptive rather than predictive.

In this study, the researcher uses exploratory research. Exploratory research is research conducted in order to explain what Indonesian and Chinese perception towards Swallow industry. In this study, the researcher uses the result of interview from collectors from Indonesia, farmers from Indonesia, and consumers from China. All information given from the interviewee will guide the researcher to find out the phenomenon which appears. the secondary source which is used is document such as

literature, previous research, website about Swiftlet farming, historical data and information.

Samples are part of the population. The sampling technique used in non-probability sampling. The type of non-probability sampling that used is purposive sampling, which is in this sampling technique, the sample obtained by prioritizing the characteristics quality of the sample. The interviews conducted in this research is in-depth interview which continued to use the interview guide. The interview will be conducted with six informants which consist of collectors, farmers, and customers. For supporting the result of interview, the researcher comes up with the idea by doing some documentation video during the interview. Further, the observation is needed to select several potential informants.

Triangulation incorporates multiple methodologies to study the same phenomenon (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). When the assumptions, the power, or both are not properly addressed by the researcher, the validity of the results can suffer.

RESEARCH RESULT

- **Beliefs of Indonesian People**

Local Indonesian beliefs regarding the nature of Swallow farming holds that the business can lead to mental disability or illness or be dangerous to children. However, while the effect is generally solidly believed by local Indonesians the reason for such negative effects is where beliefs vary with some believing that the negative effects of Swallow farming was due to a lack of charity - a „just reward’ while others believed it was due to matter of hygiene. Some interviewees held that the nature of the business could harm the birds natural life cycle and wanted to avoid the industry accordingly while others believed that no harm would come to the swallows if the business was run correctly. Some Indonesians believed that

acquisition/ownership of a swallow nest house was a gift from God while others believed it was a matter of luck that the opportunities came.

- **Beliefs of Chinese People**

While Indonesia has mystical or superstitious beliefs regarding the Swallow nest business, no such beliefs are held by the Chinese. Instead, the concept of Feng Shui is a belief that is held to explain cause and effect in business. It is believed by the Chinese that cohabitation with the birds by humans in the Swallow house is bad business and to be avoided because of the relationship of Yin/Yang according to the principles of Feng Shui. The prohibition on living with the swallows is actually reasonable given that the requirements for rearing Swallows are quite contrary to human health and well being. A bird house has poor air circulation and little sunlight due to the need to keep the house closed. Also, a swallows nest has high humidity by necessity leading to easy and fast disease incubation. Finally, poultries and birds are known to most easily pick up and transmit the rubella virus which can attacks a mother's womb or damage a person's nervous system.

ANALYSIS

The Chinese and Indonesians both hold the same view of the business side of swallow nest farming - that it is a good and lucrative business. Firstly, it is not a time consuming business to operate meaning another business can be run alongside the Swallow nest business. Secondly, traditional Chinese culture has Swallow nest soup as a delicacy to be consumed on numerous special occasions allowing for constant levels of sales. Next, the very ‚function‘ of Swallow nest consumption - the perceived health benefits which the Chinese are keen to buy into. Finally, the worldwide adoption of Swallow nest soup consumption which has increased the market considerably allowing plenty of room for participation with profit. Thus,

cultural beliefs, while an influence on the swallow nest business among both Indonesians and Chinese in terms of operation, the business considerations outweigh cultural concerns.

There are clear differences between the beliefs of the Chinese and Indonesians in regard to Swallow farming. Indonesians do believe that bad things are associated with the industry especially potential harm to the breeders offspring while the Chinese deny any such belief in such „bad things.’ Indeed, the Chinese tend to focus on the positive aspects of the industry which spans many benefits, lucky, and hope that can be generated. The Chinese also focus more on the functions of Swallow nest consumption toward human’s health that can be given to many people. Second, Indonesian believe that Swallow nest business is related to the Karma theory, since people believes good Karma brings good result and bad Karma brings bad result. They believe Swallow farming can cause a “curse” to the breeder’s next generation because the harvesting disturbs the the bird’s life cycle.

Meanwhile, the Chinese believe that the Swallow nest business is related to Feng Shui which explains that the architecture of Swallow’s building is not appropriate for humans’ living because will harm human’s health especially children. Thirdly, some of Indonesian believe that the development of Swallow’s house could be pursued by using alternative methods such as magical objects or with rituals while the Chinese believe that the development of Swallow’s house should be pursued by good construction of the building architecture as set down by the principles of Feng Shui.

By finding the different beliefs between Indonesian people and Chinese people related to the Swallow farming, there are some impacts on the business either positive impacts or negative impacts. First, the impact of Indonesian beliefs regarding mental disability. The author noted that there are divergent perspectives in Indonesian culture. On the one hand, some Indonesians avoid the Swallow farming industry

because of these fears while others who do engage with the subject of Swallow nest farming tend not to hold to the local superstitious beliefs too rigidly and are open to new data which explains the facts regarding apparent cause and effect in a more scientific fashion.

Second, there is the impact of the belief in Karma or Feng Shui. The concept of Karma can be seen as a positive influence in that those who believe in a cause and effect process beyond state sanction are more inclined to conduct their business in such a way as to avoid any negative impact for others. The belief in Feng Shui also has a positive contribution to the process of Swallow farming though in a more material and less ethical fashion; namely, by ensuring health and hygiene.

Third, the impact on the belief about the development of Swallow farming. The positive side of these values include: togetherness, thoroughness, mutual cooperation, and religious belief. The value of togetherness is shown by the gathering of most members of the local community in a place, eating together and praying together for the sake of common safety. This is a sense of togetherness in living together as one in the local environment. The rituals also reflect togetherness as a community that has the same shared areas, customs and rituals.

Fourth, the impact of beliefs toward Indonesian entrepreneurs and the consumption of Swallow nests in China. The export-import between Indonesia and China which has been established still can be run properly as stated by some of the interviewees. Most of those interviewed had a positive mind set regarding the Swallow farm business even where there were perceived there is an issues behind Swallow farming. Most also believed that any tragedy that befell one generation of the farmers was more due to an unhealthy environment created for Swallow houses or virus and diseases which emerged from farming process. Even because of the positive reaction which comes up from the people, in the fact Swallow farming activity has positive impacts. Not only in business aspect but also another aspects such as

improving the exploration of Indonesian natural resources, improving the development of Indonesian technology, improving Indonesian economics, and exploring Indonesian culture.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The uniqueness of both Indonesian and Chinese cultures has direct consequences on the Swallow farm businesses, particularly in regards to the breeding of the Swallows and cultivating the nests leading to differing opinions across the cultures.

Relating between business and local wisdom, one key result of local culture is the tendency for many Indonesians to avoid the Swallow farming business due to local beliefs about the perceived negative consequences both mentally and physically of the farming process on their offspring. Conversely, however, while many Indonesians see the business of Swallow farming as a threat to their lives, others believe that the business is actually and literally a Gift from Almighty God and those who are given the opportunity to engage in the business are blessed.

The Chinese do not believe that running a Swallow farm can harm their offspring but they do hold to the belief that the principles of *Feng Shui* are needed for the business to prosper. The beliefs pertaining to Feng Shui seem to be beneficial in that principles of Feng Shui prohibits co-habitation with the swallows in the breeding house or in nearby the breeding grounds, thereby preventing disease contagion. What unites Indonesians and the Chinese is the believe that the Swallow nest business is lucrative and will benefit both parties financially as the nests are expensive and, as such, provides a lot of profit opportunities. The Chinese, however, particularly believe in the medicinal properties of Swallows' nests.

Based on the conclusion and the limitation of the study, the recommendations of this study is for the future researchers, it can be explored to other type of quantitative study, either descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory study about what people believes in Swallow farming. However the focus of research can also be extended, not only on the cultural beliefs but also can discuss more deeply about the function of Swallow nest consumption itself. The author also could analyzed in the development of Swallow nest business for the future with specific method such as by using social media. On the other hand, researcher can use more informants from several countries who also conducting this business to collect more information regarding Swallow nest business.

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