

## Saweran Symbolism and Interaction in Live Music Performances at TipTop and Kobo Cafe

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**Abstract:** This research discusses the *saweran* tradition when the performance takes place at the TipTop restaurant and Kobo cafe in the city of Medan. With this tradition, interaction is created between music performers and visitors in the form of symbolism in the form of *saweran*. The researcher's selection of restaurants and cafes aims to determine the social level of cafe and restaurant visitors. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through observation. During the performance, interviews were conducted with music performers and visitors as well as restaurant or cafe owners and video documentation of the interaction taking place. The research results show that the *saweran* tradition that occurs is a symbol of appreciation for music performers who fulfill visitors' wishes to perform songs of their choice at the TipTop restaurant. This *saweran* also often reflects the social status of visitors by the number of *saweran* given during the transaction. Meanwhile, something different was found at Kobo cafe where interaction and appreciation in the form of *saweran* was very rare. This is influenced by the characteristics and interests of visitors in enjoying the musical performances performed at the cafe.

**Keywords:** TipTop Restaurant, Kobo Cafe, *Saweran*, Music Presenter, Visitors.

### INTRODUCTION

Cafes in modern times have become one of the places that has increasingly developed in recent years, which has encouraged capital owners to compete to get involved in businesses that prioritize service, especially in the field of live music performances (Ihsan *et al.*, 2023: 66). This statement was in line to Christy (2016). She stated that the increasing number of various types of food and beverage businesses such as restaurants, fast food restaurants, cafés or coffee shops is proof of the intense competition in the business industry. A cafe is a place to enjoy food and soft drinks or special foods where visitors usually have social interactions, a place to 'hang out', chat with friends or family. Currently, cafes in the city of Medan have developed into places to enjoy live musical performances or what is called live music. Various types or genres of music are performed in one evening by one or two musical groups. Cafes are also places where economic value transactions can be exchanged, namely the buying and selling of beverage products, snacks, and musical performances that support these economic transactions.

Furthermore, cafes currently have various concepts ranging from cafe concepts that emphasize more on spatial aesthetics, cafe concepts with unique food and drink menus, to cafe concepts that provide musical performances. Thus, the cafe concept is an idea or notion to create a unique characteristic of a cafe with the aim of making customers more interested in visiting the cafe.

Nowadays, various styles of cafe music performances have become one of the crucial forms of facilities provided by cafes for their customers. This is to meet the consumer behavior needs of today's society, who generally dare to pay more to enjoy more entertainment and services. This opinion is in line with the quote from Suryani and Kristiyani (2021:194) who wrote that urban people who are busy with work experience leisure time so that they can relieve fatigue after a long day of work by looking for entertainment such as hanging out and relaxing in cafes (Pradita *et al.*, 2016).

The author conducted research at TipTop Restaurant, Medan. TipTop has consistently held music performances for more than 10 years every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. The author made observations on Wednesday, January 24 2024 and found that visitors usually start filling the cafe before dinner at around 18.00 and usually the seats are full around 20.00. Those who just want to enjoy live music tend to come at 20.00, often just ordering drinks and snacks while enjoying the music being served.

*Saweran* is often associated with giving money to groups or individuals by the audience as a form of expression of joy, appreciation, or simply appreciation for the efforts that have been made. In the context of performing arts, money is given directly to the presenter of the work or placed in a special container that has been provided. *Saweran* is one of the responses in the form of appreciation as the interaction process between two or more

individuals shows the support of visitors or fans of the work. The interactions that occur during *saweran* activities create meaning for both the perpetrator and the recipient. The concept that humans act based on meanings obtained from social interactions with other people is very relevant in understanding the dynamics of interactions and experiences in the context of music shows in cafes. These meanings continue to develop and be refined through the process of social interaction that occurs during musical performances and *saweran*.

*Saweran* is synonymous with money as an object given from a person or group to another person, but everything given from a person or group is not always said to be *saweran*. For example, in the context of a busker singing a song at a street food stall, the busker sings the song in the hope that restaurant visitors will give the busker money. However, not all visitors listened to the music from the buskers, although there were some visitors who gave money to the buskers. Of course, this can be seen again, whether visitors are just giving money and intending to give alms, or whether they really enjoy the music and the interaction between buskers and restaurant visitors, thus *saweran* and giving alms certainly have different meanings.

Furthermore, *saweran* generally occurs spontaneously by a person or group enjoying a performance, in contrast to giving alms which is generally planned and may occur without a live performance. *Saweran* in a quote from Syukur (2023) which says that in a performance which involves the presenter receiving money by throwing it or giving it directly by visitors or guests watching the performance, in this case *saweran* means "gift" because the visitors have watched the performance. Furthermore, Mauss (2002) regarding exchange theory, revealing that there are aspects of giving, receiving and reciprocating which are one unit as motivation and inspiration in giving gifts. Referring to Douglas's opinion, *saweran* - in the context of gifts - is the meaning of an exchange of objects that builds good relationships between individuals and other individuals. In other words, someone giving *saweran* to the presenter of an arts performance is considered to be appreciating, appreciating and giving appreciation which is a form of exchange value. But not only that, *saweran* cannot be separated from the social status of a person or individual. The author made observations in several cafes in Medan and found various *saweran*

incidents, one of which was the number of *saweran* obtained by cafe musicians. In the theory of social stratification developed by Max Weber, it is divided into three aspects, namely wealth, prestige (social status) and power. Thus, *saweran* does not just happen but there is a complex process behind it. Therefore, the author is interested in researching *Saweran* in Live Music Performances in Medan City: Symbolism and Visitor Interaction.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative research method. Qualitative research according to Sugiyono (2010:14) is a research method that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc., holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and with utilize various natural methods (Kusumastuti, 2006; Setyobudi, 2016; Ahyar, 2020). This research method was conducted with data collection techniques through observations at several cafes that are research locations, interviews with cafe music performers and cafe visitors, and documentation such as taking pictures and videos as evidence of research implementation. The places where the research was carried out were TipTop Restaurant and Koboi Cafe Medan. The research was conducted from February 2024 to May 2024. The data analysis techniques used were data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and confirmation of conclusions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. TipTop

Established since the Colonial period and still occupying the same building, this restaurant still serves food and drink menus like before with tastes that have not changed. The location of TipTop in the past and present remains the same, namely in the area often known as Kesawan.

TipTop was previously named "Jang Kie" in 1934 after the name of its owner, Jang Kie Yap. At that time Kesawan was the business center in Medan City. Many government offices and foreign company offices are located in the Kesawan area. Tip-Top was originally built as a bakery business. Later, this bakery was developed into a restaurant.

At that time, Dutch people from plantations and the government liked to enjoy breakfast or just drink a cup of local Robusta coffee from Sidikalang. This restaurant is also a silent witness to Indonesia's independence. Over time, Tip-Top

began to be visited by local residents, especially from the middle to upper classes. To adapt to local demand, new menus have emerged, including Indonesian and Chinese food. Apart from the new food and drink menu, TipTop also features live country-style music performances. TipTop Restaurant has two rooms, namely a semi-open room specifically for visitors who want to enjoy live music and a smoking area and a second room for those who want to enjoy food and drinks intimately with family or friends with a soundproof room design and non-smoking area.

The Kwint Akustik is a band from Medan that is often found in cafes, restaurants and at weddings. The Acoustic Kwint consists of 5 instrument personnel, namely guitar, bass, drums and saxophone. For more than 10 years, The Kwint Akustik has been playing songs in various genres ranging from country, bostonova, pop, reggae, blues, dangdut, to rock, this is also a benchmark for The Kwint Akustik's expertise as musicians at TipTop for more than 10 years to date. Music performances are presented every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday featuring various types of songs and it is not uncommon for TipTop guests to also sing along.

TipTop visitors who come specifically to enjoy the music that is presented generally arrive at 19.30 when the music performance starts. The music performed also has a characteristic, namely a minimal sound system which makes the acoustic sound of musical instruments sound more organic. Visitors who enjoy music generally sit not far from the music stage, this indirectly facilitates interaction between visitors and the musicians.

Interaction occurs starting from the TipTop visitors starting to enjoy the music that is presented, which is generally a song with a cheerful tempo which can cause a feeling of wanting to dance to the music. This interaction is marked by light body movements starting to follow the music. When the atmosphere started to warm up between the visitors and the musicians, the musicians also offered visitors not to hesitate to sing together or just request songs to be played. It is not uncommon for visitors to accept this offer to sing together.



**Figure 1.** Interaction between visitors and TipTop musicians

When the audience sings together with the musicians it also creates wider interaction, involving other visitors so that it is not uncommon for them to join in dancing and plunge into the euphoria of the place. Furthermore, with the lively atmosphere of singing and music, the next interaction is the giving of *saweran* to the musicians as a form of appreciation and satisfaction with the music that has been presented. The *saweran* given has different meanings depending on the point of view. For visitors, *saweran* is a form of appreciation for musical performances, it is not uncommon for *saweran* to be given to show the social status of the singer, as is the content of Max Weber's theory of social stratification. This can be seen from how much *saweran* is given to the musicians and the intensity of the *saweran* given. Based on the results of interviews with TipTop waiters and the author's observations, there are visitors who come almost every Saturday to enjoy music and provide *saweran* in quite large numbers. Based on the results of interviews with musicians, the amount of *saweran* obtained can reach Rp. 500,000 or even more with Rp. 50,000 and Rp. 100,000 denominations. The number of *saweran* is of course not always the same, sometimes the *saweran* you get is less than IDR 400,000, this depends on the number of visitors who come. The number of visitors on Saturdays is generally much greater than on other days when live music is performed. This also causes the large number of *saweran* obtained. Furthermore, TipTop visitors, apart from the local people of the city of Medan, are also often visited by foreign tourists from Singapore, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Australia, Scotland and various countries from the European continent. It is not uncommon for foreign tourists to also enjoy the music being performed to create interaction.

The results of interviews with musicians found that foreign tourists danced and interacted when fast-paced music was played. Batak pop music is also no less a favorite for foreign tourists. It is not uncommon for several songs that are well known abroad to make tourists sing along, such as the songs "Alusi au", "Sitogol", "Pulo Samosir". After dancing, dancing and singing together, the next interaction was a showdown from foreign tourists to the music presenter. The *saweran* phenomenon by foreign tourists is a form of appreciation for the music that has been performed. The number of *saweran* can also be large, because several things such as great appreciation for musical performances, foreign tourists who have excess money, and the conversion of foreign currency to Rupiah are factors in this happening. In this case, foreign tourists are categorized as having a fairly high social status as measured by the number of services provided.

*Saweran* in large quantities is not only obtained from foreign tourists, the local people of the city of Medan also rarely give *saweran* in large quantities. From the research results, it was found that local visitors to the city of Medan who work as high-ranking officials who have certain positions or entrepreneurs also often enjoy food, drinks and live music at TipTop Medan with colleagues and family. The interactions that occur also start from singing and dancing together to *saweran*. The author discovered something unique, namely when a large family requested a song and sang it in turns, then one of the families performed the *saweran* in turns too, to the musician and the family who were singing. This creates a busy atmosphere at TipTop so that it becomes the center of attention of other visitors so that interactions within the scope become one. This phenomenon shows that the exposure of social status through *saweran* takes turns in one family.

TipTop Restaurant has been famous for a long time as a place to serve food for officials and high-ranking officials in the colonial era, until now the local people of Medan think that TipTop Restaurant is an elite food place that has historical value. Thus, in terms of location, it can be assessed that TipTop is visited by people with upper economic levels which of course influences all the contents of the place such as service, food presentation, food and drink menus, as well as live music which is performed professionally.

*Saweran* as a form of appreciation given by visitors will later be shared equally with other

musical instrument personnel, this is what makes *saweran* very valuable. *Saweran* money that has been divided equally can be taken home and as an addition to the honorarium given by the cafe or place where live music takes place, therefore it is not uncommon for cafe musicians to hope for *saweran*.

From the results of the interviews, it was found that the reason *saweran* is something that musicians have been waiting for is that it can help fulfill their personal and family lives. It is not uncommon for the results of *saweran* to upgrade musical instruments or buy new instruments so as to improve the performance of music playing.

*Saweran* also creates a sense of enthusiasm for playing music, although visitors have also given appreciation in the form of other things to musicians, such as ordering drinks or food during break sessions. Thus, *saweran* as a symbol of appreciation of musical performances by visitors is of very valuable value. *Saweran* is not just giving money to use and take home, but has a meaning that can generate motivation and enthusiasm in a musical performance.

## 2. Koboï Cafe

Koboï Cafe is a cafe located on Jalan Bromo Medan which has an interior concept resembling a Cowboy-themed cafe. The interior is dominated by wood and indoor garden decorations, giving a modern impression but still leaning towards the aesthetic style of the American Wild West era. Koboï Cafe was founded two years before Covid-19 spread in Indonesia, namely in 2018. The challenge of Koboï Café, namely Covid-19, at the beginning of 2020, which required restrictions on operating hours, resulted in this cafe experiencing a period of significant losses, leading to the implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM Covid-19) began to be relaxed two years later. Covid-19 at that time resulted in many cafes in Medan City having to close down due to several factors such as operational costs not being covered by the cafe's income, as a result the owner reluctantly had to close the cafe. Koboï Cafe was able to weather the Covid-19 storm that hit many culinary industries. Until now, Koboï Cafe has begun to create innovations ranging from food and drink menus, interior design, training and additional services, as well as facilities to meet visitors' requests. One of these innovations is the provision of live music which can be enjoyed every Wednesday and Saturday from 20.30 to 23.00.

Koboi Cafe has three rooms, namely, indoor 1st floor, semi outdoor 2nd floor, and VIP Room (non-smoking area), and for visitors who want to enjoy live music performances the room is on the 2nd floor. The dining room on the 2nd floor is designed to be quite soundproof with the concept minimalist semi-outdoor, this ensures that the sound of the music remains in the room and does not spread outside.



**Figure 2.** The live music performance took place on the 2nd floor room

Twister Sister Band or often known as TS Band is a local band from Medan City which was formed during the Covid-19 era. The results of interviews with band personnel stated that the TS Band was recruited directly by the owner of Koboi Café while they were performing at an event. Based on the partner contract, TS Band joined and started music performances in late 2022, at which time the Covid-19 PPKM began to be relaxed. TS Band was formed in the past 5 years, but the professionalism of playing music is no longer in doubt because the personnel were previously session players who had joined other bands. IB, the initials of one of the band members and also the band leader, said that TS Band is a band that focuses on the Classic Rock genre which follows the music style of the 80-90s. Songs that are often sung include the song God Bless - Black Ants, music from the band Dewa 19, Bumerang, Power Metal, Bon Jovi. These 80-90s rock themed songs have become iconic for TS Band every time they explore the cafe stage in Medan City.

TS Band with the Classic Rock concept has 4 instrument personnel, namely vocalist, guitar, bass and drums, each of whom is a fan of 90s rock music. However, the musical instruments played can be increased according to the cafe management's requests, such as the addition of electric piano and saxophone musical instruments.

Focusing on one genre can create an identity that makes the band famous for its idealism. However,

it cannot be denied that as a group involved in the world of entertainment and entertainment, following and being open to developments in music genres is certainly very important. The author observed that several visitors requested songs that were currently viral. This shows that some visitors have references and tastes in the latest pop music. TS Band personnel also confirmed this that adding musical references known as the Top 50 is very necessary, studying and entering other genres does not mean eliminating TS Band's identity. Adding music references also opens up opportunities to enter other music performance stages, such as at weddings, open houses, birthday events, and others. Opportunities like this are important in the world of music stages, because increasing musical references is directly proportional to the possibility of being able to play on many other stages.

Music in a cafe has the aim of attracting visitors. Therefore, the cafe management always provides notifications via social media ranging from menu advertisements, food and drink discounts, to live music schedules. Based on the results of an interview with the leader of Koboi Cafe's waiters, the aim of holding live music is to attract customers and the interest of visitors who are currently starting to look for cafes that provide music facilities to be able to sing or just listen to music. Furthermore, the development of music facilities in cafes is almost complete. Cafes with facilities such as live music and karaoke are generally more popular than cafes that only serve food and drinks. However, of course visitors can choose the type of cafe they like and what the main purpose of coming to the cafe is.

TS Band in its musical performances is very happy when interaction occurs between visitors and musicians. Based on the results of research at Koboi Cafe, the author found that interaction can occur if the musician first greets the visitors. At first the band vocalist will open with greetings and welcome as a start before playing several songs. After two or three songs were sung, the vocalist returned to greet and offer to the visitors if anyone wanted to make a request or sing on stage.

Based on the results of interviews, the author found that visitors were less enthusiastic about interacting with musicians. There have been various attempts to lighten the atmosphere, such as the vocalist coming to the tables of the visitors, saying hello and offering songs to play, but these efforts rarely produce results. Visitors generally

just smile or simply refuse the offer from the vocalist. It doesn't stop there, the choice of music is also done to lighten the atmosphere and create interaction, such as choosing fast-paced music, music that is currently viral, or improvising music to get the attention of visitors. However, once again, it is rare for visitors to join in the euphoria of the music being performed.

From the results of observations, the author found that visitors were less responsive so that interaction was also difficult to occur. This has a big influence on the appreciation that musicians get. Based on the results of interviews, it is said that visitors' appreciation for musical performances, especially in the form of *saweran*, rarely occurs at this cafe. In contrast to other cafes where TS Band performs music, *saweran* appreciation is still often obtained in varying nominal amounts.

Research conducted by the author on May 8 2024 witnessed *saweran* after the vocalist offered to sing together to a visitor. Coinciding with that day, the visitor was also celebrating a birthday at Kobo Cafe, so before the visitor sang, the musician played the song "Happy Birthday" which was a song requested by the visitor. *Saweran* activities are carried out after the visitors sing with the musicians. *Saweran* is put in a box specially provided for *saweran*.



**Figure 3.** Visitors and Musicians Sing Together

On that day, from the start of the live music performance until it ended at 23.15, the author observed that there was only one person performing *saweran* with an amount of less than Rp. 100,000. "We will divide the *saweran* obtained in whatever amount equally or according to a mutual decision, whether it is held by one of the band members until at a certain time it will be divided equally, or immediately divided equally among the band members on the same day after the music performance is finished," said one TS Band member when interviewed.

For TS Band, *saweran* is the highest form of appreciation given by visitors. *Saweran* also has a very valuable meaning because the collected *saweran* money can be used to upgrade musical instruments and then be used to meet life's needs. Thus, *saweran* is not just a gift of money, but means appreciation and motivation in it. IB and other band members regret that there are still many people who are less than enthusiastic about giving appreciation. Instead of giving greetings, appreciation such as clapping or singing along is also rarely found. However, as professional musicians, TS Band does not only focus on appreciation, but rather the musician spirit that has been cultivated for a long time makes TS Band continue to work on stage with songs from the 80-90s era.

From the author's observations during research at Kobo Cafe, the majority of visitors who come are people whose homes are not far from the cafe. Visitors who are generally families or teenagers sometimes just enjoy food and drinks and WiFi facilities for playing games, in this case enthusiasm for the presence of live music is still lacking. The lack of visitor interest in live music also certainly affects the number of *saweran*.

From the research that has been carried out, the author found that the history and location of a cafe or restaurant can influence the number and prestige of visitors. This also underlies how the cafe or restaurant musician will be *saweran*.

TipTop Restaurant is a place to enjoy food and drinks that date back to the colonial era. In general, visitors are from the upper middle class who have status and position in their work. This influences how visitors respond and respond to the meaning of giving appreciation, especially *saweran*. Furthermore, social stratification by Max Weber states that knowledge standards have an influence on levels of social status. People who have higher education generally have the ability to manage ways of thinking regarding appreciation of other people's efforts and expand knowledge references.

Next, the socio-economic status of visitors influences the choice of places to visit. Visitors choose TipTop not only for the food and drinks, but also because of the prestige the place offers. TipTop was famous as a place visited by officials and conglomerates at that time, this idea is still embedded in society today.

In the context of *Saweran*, visitors with upper social status do not only interpret it as appreciation

but as an exposure of social status. The number of *saweran* and the intensity in which it is given can be interpreted as a symbol of wealth and royalty. *Saweran* creates an influence on the views of other individuals, the more *saweran* they give, the more they are seen as having more money by others. This is also a fact found in the field that it is impossible for people who have little money to do *saweran* with large amounts. On the other hand, for those who have a lot of money, it is certainly not difficult to give large amounts of *saweran*.

This has not been found at Kobo Cafe. Kobo Cafe visitors are considered to lack interaction and giving appreciation in the form of *saweran*. Before arriving at *saweran*, interactions such as wanting to sing along with the musician, physical responses such as dancing to the rhythm of the music are also rarely found. This is influenced by visitors' interest in listening to music, visitors' references to the music being played, and the main purpose of visitors in coming to the cafe.

Interaction and interaction are things that cannot be separated. As long as the musical performance lasts until it's finished, *saweran* only occurs once in a relatively small amount. In the context of social status and needs, people will fulfill basic needs before moving on to further needs. In this case, visitors are still at the stage of fulfilling these basic needs so that *saweran*, which is the next need in the context of social status, is not fulfilled.

*Saweran* in cafe music which has meaning as a form of a person's social status does not occur in Kobo Cafe. This is influenced by factors such as employment, education and visitor income. The majority of visitors to Kobo Café work as traders, ordinary employees and school students. Based on the theory of social stratification by Max Weber, Kobo Cafe visitors are of middle to lower social status, this can be seen from the number of *saweran* and the intensity of the *saweran*. Furthermore, based on the results of interviews with musicians, *saweran* rarely occurs at Kobo Cafe. Generally, visitors enjoy food and drinks and just enjoy live music without any interaction. The next social status can be seen from the vehicles of visitors, the majority of whom use two-wheeled vehicles and live not far from the cafe location.

Thus, it can be seen that there are differences in the social status of visitors to TipTop and Kobo Cafe. Visitors interpret *saweran* as a form of exposure to social status, which often occurs among people with upper economic status, this is

in line with fulfilling the individual's needs. Individuals who have limited money will consider doing *saweran* and prioritize their daily needs. In contrast to individuals who have stable finances, *saweran* is interpreted as a place to expose social status and wealth without worrying about thinking about their daily needs.

From the perspective of The Kwint Akustik and TS Band as cafe musicians, *saweran* has a very valuable meaning. The *saweran* given by visitors is motivation and encouragement for the cafe musicians to keep working. Furthermore, for professionals who work in the music sector, *Saweran* Cafe is the most awaited thing. *Saweran* can be taken home to meet living needs and children's school fees. Money from *saweran* can also be used to upgrade musical instruments to improve performance on stage.

In some cases, *saweran* is also an attraction for those who want to enter the world of cafe music entertainment. This happens because it is not uncommon for cafe musicians to make ends meet as a permanent job using *saweran* money. However, to become a full time cafe musician you need perseverance, patience and playing on more than one stage. Cafe musicians hope to continue to be supported through appreciation in any form because this job requires special skills and skills. Apart from that, café musicians also create a lively atmosphere in the cafe where it is not uncommon for visitors to be entertained by the musical performances. *Saweran* is a very valuable appreciation for cafe musicians regardless of how much is given.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research shows that the history and location of a cafe or restaurant influences the number and prestige of visitors, as well as the actions of the musicians. TipTop Restaurant, which has been operating since the colonial era, is often visited by upper middle class people with high social status and positions. Visitors to TipTop interpret *saweran* as a form of display of social status and a symbol of wealth, in accordance with Max Weber's theory of social stratification which emphasizes that the standard of knowledge and education influences a person's social status. *Saweran* at TipTop often occurs because rich visitors do not hesitate to give *saweran* in large quantities. In contrast, at Kobo Cafe, visitors who generally come from the lower middle class are less involved in interaction and socializing. Kobo Cafe visitors, such as traders,

regular employees, and students, are more focused on meeting their basic needs, so *saweran* is rare and usually in small quantities. Interviews with musicians show that *saweran* is of great value to them, providing motivation and financial support for subsistence needs and improving the quality of musical instruments. Although *saweran* is an important form of appreciation, the difference in social status of visitors to TipTop and Koboï Cafe causes differences in the frequency and amount of *saweran* given.

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