



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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Wan Juliana Emeih Wahed, Halina Amin, Asmah Alia Mohamad Bohari, Chrisna Pindah, Safrina Azmi

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i10/14950> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i10/14950

**Received:** 14 August 2022, **Revised:** 16 September 2022, **Accepted:** 28 September 2022

**Published Online:** 10 October 2022

**In-Text Citation:** (Wahed et al., 2022)

**To Cite this Article:** Wahed, W. J. E., Amin, H., Bohari, A. A. M., Pindah, C., & Azmi, S. (2022). Malaysian Batik, Our Pride: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(10), 942 – 955.

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Vol. 12, No. 10, 2022, Pg. 942 – 955

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## Malaysian Batik, Our Pride: A Systematic Literature Review

Wan Juliana Emeih Wahed<sup>1</sup>, Halina Amin<sup>2</sup>, Asmah Alia Mohamad Bohari<sup>3</sup>, Chrisna Pindah<sup>4</sup>, Safrina Azmi<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,4,5</sup>College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Sarawak, 94300, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia, <sup>3</sup>Kolej Pengajian Alam Bina, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Sarawak, 94300, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

Email: wanjuliana@uitm.edu.my, alina520@uitm.edu.my, asmahalia@uitm.edu.my, chrisna@uitm.edu.my, safrina\_azmi@uitm.edu.my

### Abstract

The world is rapidly changing into a more modern era with the availability of technology and according to the current generation's needs. One of the main challenges in preserving culture is for the current generation to maintain the culture and tradition established in the community. The culture is crucially essential to any society in the works stipulated under SDG 11, which calls for efforts to protect the world's culture and heritage. Thus, this paper aims to highlight the importance of protecting Malaysian batik by reviewing published articles that focused on design motifs and characteristics of Malaysian batik. This paper adopted systematic literature review analysis using PRISMA 2009 framework to identify Malaysian batik's current design motifs and characteristics. Many of the identified scholars have attempted to produce and innovate new and contemporary batik design motifs for the Malaysian landscape. The outcome of this paper may help enlighten the relevant stakeholders such as the policymakers, industry players, researchers, and non-governmental organisations to research on this subject matter further. All stakeholders should work together to raise the profile of Malaysian batik on a global scale, which will lead to the protection and maximisation of benefits for future generations.

**Keywords:** Batik, Design Motifs, Malaysian Batik, PRISMA, Safeguard, Systematic Literature

### Introduction

Batik textiles is not a new concept. Batik production in Malaysia began in the 1920s (Mokhtar, 2018) and was tied to the Javanese people of our neighbouring country, i.e., Indonesia (Sharifah et al., 2017). According to Shaharuddin et al (2021), the term "batik" was derived from Javanese words "ambatik" or "tritik." The suffix 'tik' in each word means "making small dots". The term was created based on the dripping or dropping of the wax action onto the cloth when the batik artisans designed the preferred motifs.

Looking at the Malaysian landscape, the batik textile only begun in the 20th century through the design motif of *Pucuk Rebung*, or bamboo shoot, which monopolised in 1930 (Mokhtar, 2018). More applications of design motifs inspired by flora and fauna are being added to batik

design motifs. With the arrival of Islam in the 13th century in Malay Archipelago, more abstract motifs were being introduced by batik artisans. Compared to Indonesian batik artisans, fewer abstractions of design motifs were introduced, but more of direct imitations. Relatively, the Malaysian community, especially the females were fond of the use of batik as the daily attire, particularly in their homes. Its loose, light, and cottony type material makes batik the number one choice for Malaysian women, especially housewives. Batik continuously evolves not only in its function as an everyday attire for women, but also products, furniture, craftwork, and souvenirs items.

Throughout history, two techniques dominated the Malaysian batik industry: hand-drawn batik and stamping batik. A hand-drawn batik is a piece of white cloth stretched taut on a frame so that specific motifs can be drawn onto it with a *canting* (stylus), brush dipper, or poured with wax. A copper stylus (*canting*) filled with hot and melted wax is used to carefully apply hot wax to the white cloth in fine lines to create the outline of the design or pattern. The coloured dyes are applied to the cloth with a brush, which necessitates both care and skill. Usually, the background colours are applied first (Silah et al., 2021). Meanwhile, block printing, stamping techniques or *terap* (applying) of batik cloth with metal, copper, or even wooden blocks are used to produce block-printed batik. According to Naser and Khairi (2020), the batik block is typically made of copper or brass due to its heat-driving properties and is used to print hot wax on fabric.

The evolution of design motifs in Malaysia is generally tailored to meet current demands. Traditional design elements, on the other hand, maintain their uniqueness because each motif has its own meaning and aesthetic element. Samin and Legino (2020) stated that the most popular design motifs used by the community are leaf and flower motifs. There are also fauna motifs, but are rarely seen as Islam forbids the use of animal images in design elements, particularly on clothing. Nevertheless, design motifs employing the butterfly theme are accepted by some communities (Samin & Legino, 2020). The motifs, designs, forms, and functions of textiles all contribute to their beauty and uniqueness. Design motifs not only showcase beautiful visual art, but also emphasise on the importance of design. In some textiles, motifs serve as recognitions, symbols, and messages from artisans (Kari et al., 2020). Apart from Malaysia, batik textiles exist too in other regions of the world, including Southeast Asia such as Indonesia (Prayitno, 2020), Thailand (Khwansuwan, 2021), and China (Chen et al., 2021). Among the various names of batik designs are *Kawung*, *Batik Parang Rusak*, *Batik Truntum*, *Batik Jlamprang*, *Burung Hong*, *Liong*, *Qilin*, *Lok Tjan*, *Meru*, or *Gunungan* with other types of design motifs associated to cultural influences.

Several significant studies on batik that have been conducted examined its history, techniques, types, materials, usage, design elements, design motifs, and other aspects. However, in order to comprehend the true phenomena of Malaysian batik patterns and origins, this study aimed to review the design motifs and characteristics of Malaysian batik. This idea corresponded to the research question, “*What are the characteristics of Malaysian batik design motifs?*” Accordingly, at the end of this review paper, the directions for future research are offered.

## Methodology

A systematic literature review analysis was used to synthesise relevant articles for the topic being studied. The papers were collected, reviewed, and summarised in a systematic manner. The authors conducted a systematic literature review using the PRISMA 2009 framework and records were discovered from Scopus and Google Scholar databases. This approach was

utilised to conduct the systematic reviews, eligibility and exclusion criteria, review process steps (identification, screening, and eligibility), as well as data abstraction and analysis.

### PRISMA Method

The review was conducted in accordance to the PRISMA Statement (Moher et al., 2009) which offers unique benefits. These benefits include 1) identifying specific research topics that allow systematic inquiry, and 2) determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Lastly, 3) the approach attempts to examine a vast database of scientific publications within a certain time (Sierra-Correa & Kintz, 2015). This method enabled a thorough search of terms associated with the characteristics of Malaysian batik design motifs from distinct viewpoints. Lastly, the method was able to track the global preservation practises by various scholars for Malaysian textiles in contemporary days.

### Resources

As the principal journal databases, Scopus and Google Scholar were used for this analysis. In this investigation, keywords were utilised to extract data from over a thousand pieces of peer-reviewed literature. Finally, each database contained diverse subject areas, such as social sciences, arts, and humanities.

### Eligibility and Exclusion Criteria

The eligibility and exclusion criteria were based on the key values of a comprehensive literature study by eliminating extraneous criteria. As an initial step, relevant publications from journals were selected for inclusion in this systematic review. Review articles, book series, theses, and book chapters were not included in the selection process. For the second part of this procedure, only articles published in English were considered. This was done to avoid misunderstandings and consider the necessity of translating the texts. Third, a seven-year window was selected to monitor research and publishing output, specifically from 2016 to 2022. For the purpose of this study, papers indexed in social sciences that focused on design motifs were chosen because the analysis relied on Malaysian batik (Table 1).

*Table 1*

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Database	Inclusion	Exclusion
Scopus, Google Scholar	Year	2022 – 2016
	Language	English
	Article type	Article journals and conference proceedings
	Subject area	Social Sciences
		Article reviews, book series, book, theses, chapters in books, lectures, and monographs
		Hard Science, Engineering, Mathematics

### Systematic Review Process

The systematic review technique involved three key phases: identification, screening, and eligibility procedures. In June 2022, the search procedure began with keyword identification. Previous research generated a search string based on keywords related to 'design motifs,' such as 'design patterns' and 'design elements.' These items were syndicated using the terms

'textile' or 'cloth' and 'Malaysian batik' or 'Malaysia Batik,' resulting in 18 published articles from Scopus and 131 articles from Google Scholar databases (Table 2).

*Table 2*

*The search string*

Database	Keywords used	Findings
Scopus	((“design motifs” OR “design elements” OR “design patterns”) AND (“textile”) OR (“cloth”) AND (“Malaysian batik” OR “Malaysia batik”))	18 results
Google Scholar	“Design motifs” OR “design elements” OR “design patterns” AND “textile” OR “cloth” AND “Malaysian batik” OR “Malaysia batik”	131 results

The screening technique was devised in the second phase to narrow the search string and focus on the study's goal. As a result, similar keywords to 'design motifs and 'textile' were eliminated. At this point, a total of 101 documents were eligible for evaluation, including ten from Scopus and 68 from Google Scholar. The screening process included selecting papers published in English from peer-reviewed publications in the fields of social sciences, as well as arts and humanities. However, only research journals and conference proceedings were chosen, with review journal articles being excluded (Table 3).

*Table 3*

*The search string for screening*

Database	Keywords used	Findings
Scopus	((“design motifs”) AND (“textile”) AND (“Malaysian batik” OR “Malaysia batik”))	12 results
Google Scholar	“Design motifs” AND “textile” AND “Malaysian batik” OR “Malaysia batik”	89 results

The documents' eligibility was thoroughly examined. Four Scopus articles and twenty-two Google Scholar articles were examined in this approach. The eligibility process discovered twenty-seven unrelated documents, twenty-three duplicates, and ninety articles from Scopus and Google Scholar repositories that could not be accessed. Six articles could not be appraised because they were written in languages other than English. The eligibility process determined that only four articles from Scopus and 22 articles from Google Scholar databases were suitable for inclusion in the following phase (Table 4)

*Table 4*

*The eligibility process*

Database	Articles Excluded	Findings
Scopus	Not related: 2 No access: 4 Duplicate records removed: 2	4 results
Google Scholar	Not related: 25 No access: 15 Duplicate records removed: 21 Non-English: 6	22 results

The qualitative synthesis contained eight articles from Google Scholar. Figure 1 presents a flow diagram of the systematic paper selection under review.

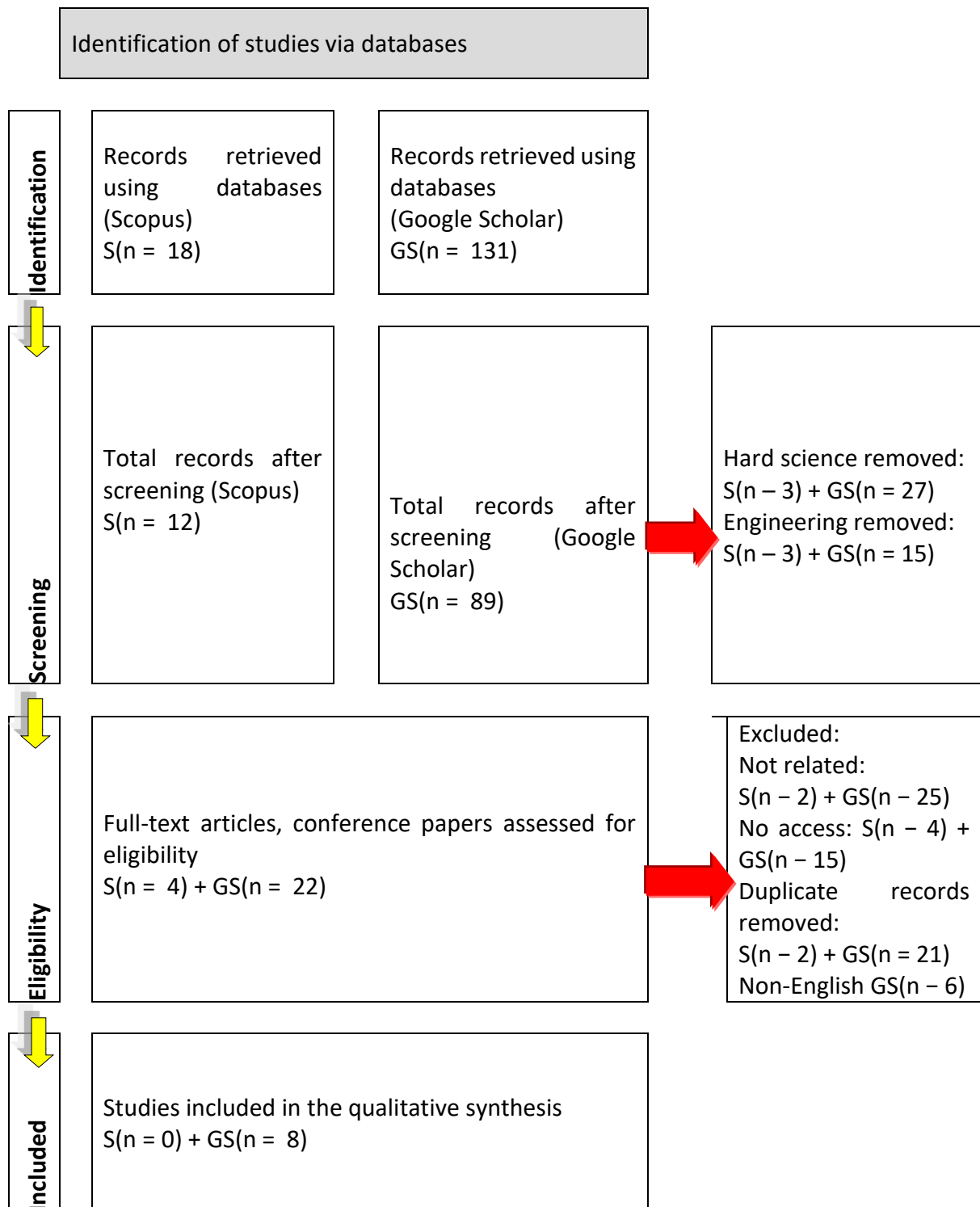


Figure 1: The flow diagram of the systematic review

## Results

There are certain similarities and differences in the nine studies. These similarities and differences were divided into five outcome sections: subjects, categories, and locations;



identification of the study objective; methods; research findings; and gaps between all studies.

### **Subjects, Categories and Locations**

The meta-analysis of the eight articles identified that the subject was divided into few categories, which are commercial batik (Wan Bakar et al., 2021a), contemporary batik (Wan Bakar et al., 2021b), batik Tulis (Abdullah, 2020; Abdullah & Samin, 2020), batik Sarong (Sobri & Legino, 2020), batik block (Kari et al., 2019, 2020; Mustapha et al., 2020), and commercial batik (Shaari & Abd Rahman, 2017). These research projects examining the batik design originated from different locations in Malaysia (Mustapha et al., 2020), including Melaka (Wan Bakar et al., 2021a, 2021b), Klang Valley (Abdullah, 2020; Abdullah & Samin, 2020), and Terengganu (Kari et al., 2019, 2020; Sobri & Legino, 2020) (see Table 5).

### **Identification of the Issues and Study Objectives**

Overall, the eight studies identified several interesting issues related to batik characteristics, which were the primary reasons for conducting the studies. One of these issues was the lack of unique identity that exists in Malaysian batik compared to Indonesian batik (Abdullah & Samin, 2020). According to Abdullah and Samin (2020), most Malaysian batik do not uphold their own distinctive designs compared to our neighbouring country, Indonesia. The study was performed to identify batik Tulis design motif and patterns. Meanwhile, a study by Abdullah (2020) identified that batik Tulis located in the Klang Valley lacks identity and new features. Thus, by exploring the development of the batik Tulis industry in the Klang Valley, Malaysia from 2000–2018, one can understand the batik design motifs phenomena (Abdullah, 2020).

A subsequent study examined the distinction between flora (Kari et al., 2020) and fauna (Kari et al., 2019) in batik block design motifs. To comprehend the interpretations of the symbols and meanings conveyed by the design motifs, the public were required to have an appreciation for batik's design motifs. Another study explored the different issues pertaining to batik motif designs. According to Bakar et al (2021b), batik was explored in a different context, i.e., the incorporation of batik design motifs that are more modern and versatile. The design motifs were recommended to be incorporated into the interior design of any local corporate space or anything pertinent (Bakar et al., 2021b). A similar study by Sobri and Legino (2020) was found in this systematic literature review which involved design motifs, colours, and structure of batik Sarong. The contemporary and modern designs of batik design motifs were introduced and at the same time they still preserve the authenticity of the Malay textile arts (Sobri & Legino, 2020).

A study by Bakar et al (2021a) discovered that Malaysia is lacking in its own identity. Thus, integrating batik and Jawi writing is a good effort to preserve Malaysian batik. To understand further on the connection between batik and Jawi writing, an ethnomathematics in designing batik was used in the study (Bakar et al., 2021a). Several contemporary batik designs inspired by Jawi writing innovated by Mr Junaidi Awang, of UiTM Kelantan, Malaysia were explored. Next, Mustapha et al (2020) revealed that Malaysian batik design needs more innovative ideas to meet the demand of designing Malaysian batik. Malaysian batik is famously known for its design motifs of leaves, flowers, and some geometrical shapes like spirals (Mustapha et al., 2020). However, by having an innovative design, it can enhance the visibility of Malaysian batik design motifs (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Data extraction table referring to included studies*

Author(s)	Issue	Objectives	Location	Method	Findings		Conclusion and Recommendation
					Batik Types	Inspiration/Concept	
Wan Bakar et al. (2021a)	Malaysia is lacking in its own identity. Thus, integrating batik and <i>Jawi</i> is a good effort to preserve Malaysian batik.	Ethnomathematics in designing Batik	Melaka	Systematic observation and review	Contemporary Batik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the characteristic stripes, squares, and rectangles of <i>Sarong Pelikat</i> in create a newly design batik</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Jawi</i> writings can be illustrated as a motif on batik design.</li> <li>In the future, more <i>Jawi</i> letters in different arrangements can be used as batik motifs.</li> </ul>
Wan Bakar et al. (2021b)	<i>Sarong Pelikat</i> patterns on batik designs can be analysed using geometrical concepts in Ethnomathematics.	To explore the <i>Sarong Pelikat</i> design as the Batik design motifs.	Melaka	Observation, analysis, interview. Case study	Contemporary Batik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the patterns of stripes, squares, and rectangles from <i>Sarong Pelikat</i>, a new motif of Batik is created.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modern batik designs can be incorporated into to the interior design of any local corporate space or any.</li> </ul>
Abdullah (2020)	In Klang Valley, Batik <i>Tulis</i> lacks identity and new features.	To explore the development of the Batik <i>Tulis</i> industry in the Klang valley from year 2000 – 2018.	Klang Valley, Malaysia	Interviews, observations and photo documentation.	Batik <i>Tulis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abstract design.</li> <li>Fauna designs: inspired by peacock, butterflies, bees, bird motifs, cock, peacock, deer, and mousedeer.</li> <li>Geometrical form: triangles, curved lines, straight lines, and undulating lines.</li> <li>Colour: purple, orange, green, yellow, dark red, and pink.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Batik designs and identities preserve flora and fauna motifs, but are more modern.</li> <li>Batik <i>Tulis</i> design must be publicised to preserve Malay textile arts.</li> <li>Contemporary and modern design.</li> </ul>
Sabri and Legino (2020)	Malaysia's traditional batik <i>Sarong</i> is being replaced by imitation batik.	To examine imitation batik <i>Sarong</i> designs, including motifs, colours, and structure.	Terengganu, Malaysia	Fieldwork, observations and interviews.	Batik <i>Sarong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Malaysian batik is based on nature, particularly plants or florals.</li> <li>Flora: blooming flowers that have many petals, such as Roses, Sunflowers, Hibiscus, <i>Bunga Cempaka</i> and <i>Bunga Pecah Lima</i>.</li> <li>Vegetal motifs: Yam leaves, water spinach.</li> <li>Fauna: sea turtles (represent the community identity), bees and butterflies' motifs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Future study should define how the role of innovation can continue, and the traditional batik flourishes without shading off the batik tradition.</li> </ul>
Kari et al. (2020)	Malaysia's traditional batik block designs are under threat due to the development of high-tech modernisation.	To classify the various types of local block motifs and flora design motifs.	Peninsular Malaysia	Fieldwork, and interviews.	Batik Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The motifs reflect the close relationship between Malays and their environment.</li> <li>Flora: herbs for healing and prevention, food, offerings, ornament and memorial.</li> <li>The block batik maker produced the motifs based on tradition, inventiveness, and intuition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The design motifs highlight the innovative local motif identity.</li> <li>The modern batik lacks a distinct identity because block batik on the market lacks a floral design.</li> </ul>
Kari et al. (2019)	A study has been carried out in Kelantan and Terengganu to establish a standard for the design of traditional batik block motifs.	To classify the various types of local block motifs and fauna design motifs.	Kelantan and Terengganu	Secondary data search, fieldwork, and interviews.	Batik Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fauna design motifs.</li> <li>There are five animal classifications: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.</li> <li>Myth: Phoenix motif.</li> <li>Birds are the most commonly used motif.</li> <li>The Malay identity was distinguished by insect motifs.</li> <li>The predominant faunal motif: marine life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current local batik does not have a strong identity, mainly in fauna design motifs.</li> <li>The design motif of fish is the most dominant type of fauna.</li> <li>Other types of motifs: birds (hornbills), fish, insects (spiders), reptiles (lizards), myths (phoenix), and mammals (horses).</li> </ul>
Abdullah and Samin (2020)	Malaysian batik lacks a unique personality compared to Indonesian.	To identify the Batik <i>Tulis</i> design motif and patterns	Klang Valley, Malaysia	Interview, observations, and photo documentation, case study.	Batik <i>Tulis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fauna: Peacock, butterfly design motifs.</li> <li>Flora: Bamboo, orchid flower and <i>Ketam Guri</i> flower.</li> <li>Geometric: triangles, circles, straight lines, and undulating lines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Batik products in the Klang valley are focusing on the concept of modern designs.</li> </ul>
Mustapha et al. (2020)	Malaysian batik design needs more innovation.	To introduce an application of abstract mathematical concepts, visually and physically.	Malaysia	MATLAB and Adobe Illustrator were utilised for design purposes.	Batik Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the geometrical shape and created a new design motif – 'Kock Snowflake'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Koch snowflake has significant promise as a motif for Malaysian batik due to its elegance and simplicity.</li> </ul>



## Method

All eight studies used a qualitative approach, in which three of them conducted fieldwork (Kari et al., 2019, 2020; Sobri & Legino, 2020) and one study used MATLAB and Adobe Illustrator for design purposes (Mustapha et al., 2020). Meanwhile, another two utilised case studies (Abdullah, 2020; Abdullah & Samin, 2020) and one utilised systematic observation (Wan Bakar et al., 2021a).

For data collection, all the studies used observational approach. Furthermore, five studies employed interviews (Abdullah, 2020; Abdullah & Samin, 2020; Wan Bakar et al., 2021b; Kari et al., 2019, 2020; Sobri & Legino, 2020), and only one employed the powerful mathematical software, i.e., MATLAB (Mustafa & Saleh, 2017) to innovate a Koch Snowflakes Batik Design.

## Research Findings

The study by Bakar et al (2021a) identified several contemporary batik design motifs inspired by *Jawi* writing, innovated by Mr. Junaidi Awang, of UiTM Kelantan, Malaysia. These creative and unique designs can be appreciated and analysed through the lens of ethnomathematics, which studied the culture of the community. According to the study, by arranging the three *Jawi* letters into two symmetrical axes of  $x$  and  $y$ , one can inspire the more contemporary batik design motifs. Modern batik designs that are based on *Jawi* writings is a new idea that can be shared both locally and internationally.

In another study undertaken by the same authors who were Bakar et al (2021b), the relationship between arts and mathematics in the organisation of geometrical patterns of Sarong Pelikat design was examined in detail. The Indian Muslim design was included into the vertical and horizontal stripes of contemporary Malaysian batik design. In addition, the rectangle shapes are organised in tessellation order. The study indicated that the philosophical concepts underlying the construction of the *Sarong Pelikat* pattern on contemporary batik patterns are tied to the piety of Muslims towards Allah SWT and their responsibilities to the society. It also demonstrates the assimilation of Indian-Muslim and Malay cultures.

In addition, Abdullah's (2020) study emphasised on the most significant findings, namely birds, insects, flowers, and geometrics such as vertical lines, circles, and triangles, as well as predominant types of flora, fauna, and abstracts used in contemporary batik *Tulis* design motifs. These can be adopted to form the guidelines in designing motifs of a batik *Tulis* identity in Malaysia. Moreover, these discoveries can serve as a valuable design repository for batik *Tulis* manufacturers who wish to create new patterns based on traditional motifs.

According to findings by Sobri and Legino (2020), Malaysia's traditional batik Sarong is being replaced by imitation batik as a result of technology. This has become a significant issue in the batik industry, particularly in Kelantan and Terengganu. Due to adaptation and mimicry of design and wax stain, the findings revealed that the similarity between the imitation batik and the traditional batik is nearly close. Nonetheless, there are differences in the originality and character of the design motifs. Thus, the industry and policymakers must pay close attention to the authenticity of Malaysian traditional batik so that it can be preserved for a long time (Sobri & Legino, 2020).

Another study by Kari et al (2020) revealed an interesting finding in which the floral motif of Malaysian block batik has a distinctive characteristic of identity. This is likely to assist significantly in reinforcing the local character and sustainability of the block batik industry. It was suggested to Malaysia's block batik makers to emphasise on fresh designs and motifs based on local identity. To preserve the local identity, it was suggested that the uniqueness

of plant motifs in each village, especially in Kelantan and Terengganu, Malaysia, is to be employed (Kari et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Kari et al (2019) identified fauna design motifs as one of the identities of Malaysian batik design production. The most prominent features of the fauna category are from the large groups of birds (hornbill), fishes, insects (spider), reptiles (lizard), myths (phoenix), and mammals (horse). However, the current local block batik in Malaysia lacks a strong identity, owing primarily to fauna design motifs. Thus, it was suggested that a guideline for designing fauna motifs category based on the Malaysian identity to be introduced. The guideline should consider abstraction form which abides the Islamic requirement that prohibits real-life figures.

Another study discovered that batik *Tulis* production in the Klang Valley has shifted from traditional patterns to modern concepts of identity, such as in the use of colour, fabric type, layout, and composition (Abdullah & Samin, 2020). According to the finding, Klang Valley batik is more likely to use contemporary colours, abstract, geometric, and a bit of flora and fauna design motifs. Mustapha et al. (2020) explored a significant way to introduce a new batik design motif using the mathematics geometry shape called Koch Snowflakes. It demonstrated how the Koch Snowflakes design motifs can be adapted and used as an inspiration on any Malaysia Batik fabric in the near future (Mustapha et al., 2020).

### **The Gaps in the Studies**

After reviewing the papers, three significant correlations were determined between the current and previous studies. They are as follows:

- i. Malaysian batik lacks a distinct identity in terms of depicting a wealth of local characteristics in design motifs (Abdullah, 2020; Abdullah & Samin, 2020; Wan Bakar et al., 2021a).
- ii. More contemporary and innovative designs should be introduced into the Malaysian batik setting (Wan Bakar et al., 2021b; Kari et al., 2019; Mustapha et al., 2020).
- iii. Safeguarding Malaysia's traditional batik needs urgent attention from the government and policymakers to ensure the sustainability of this tangible heritage (Kari et al., 2020; Sobri & Legino, 2020).

The gaps in these eight studies highlighted the dissolution direction of Malaysia's traditional batik design motifs. So, policymakers, industry players, and communities can help to minimise the gaps by encouraging social integration and empowering contemporary and innovative design creations. Malaysia's batik design should be intricate with a "*Malaysia Batik signature design*" that simultaneously attaches and connects to Malaysia's local environment, people, arts, and culture. These positive impacts will gradually lead to Malaysia Batik's global preservation and protection of the intellectual property rights of communities concerning their design originality and authenticity.

### **Discussion**

This review revealed an expanding body of literature devoted to various types of research aimed at characterising and, to a lesser extent, innovating Malaysian batik design motifs. Several issues were raised in response to the study's findings, indicating practical strategies for identifying Malaysia's distinctive batik design motifs. Scholars have discussed this issue, but there is still lack of research to identify the local characteristics' 'look' symbolising Malaysian batik design motifs that differ from the batik of neighbouring countries. Although batik makers are open to new innovative design motifs, Malaysian batik design motifs remain

ambiguous and unrecognised. Hence, to bridge this gap, this paper proposed two sophisticated approaches to safeguard Malaysia's batik design motifs, in line with those suggested in this review by several scholars.

### ***Promoting the "signature" designs of Malaysia's Batik***

Many people have failed to recognise Malaysian batik design motifs due to lack of exposure and knowledge about them (Naser & Khairi, 2020). Surprisingly, this phenomenon persists despite the fact that Malaysian batik has been established in this country since the early twentieth century (Mokhtar, 2018). With the goal of promoting batik as a whole, batik makers have introduced many new approaches, techniques, and designs to the Malaysian setting over the years (Shaharuddin et al., 2021). According to Jay (2019), despite the fact that Malaysian batik is rich in designs and colours, it lacks a distinct identity. Some of them have been changed so much that the patterns and colours no longer portray the Malaysian culture (Jay, 2019).

Mustapha and colleagues (2020) stated that the Malaysian batik design needs more innovation, especially in the design motif selections. The design motifs in the market nowadays are combinations of many elements, such as flora, fauna, and geometrical design patterns (Kari et al., 2019, 2020; Sobri & Legino, 2020) which do not have any specific design motifs that are simultaneously attached and connected to Malaysia's local environment, especially the Malay people, arts, and culture. The Malays, who are also the indigenous people of this country, are famously known for the making of batik textiles. Since its introduction from Indonesia to Malaysia, the Peninsular Malay race has inherited this handicraft (Elliott, 2013). Although the batik production was first assembled in the east coast area of Malaysia (Kelantan and Terengganu), nowadays, the batik production has penetrated successfully throughout Malaysia (Pesol et al., 2016).

The speed of batik production reflects the dynamism of demand (Syamwil, 2018). Due to the ambiguity of the design motifs use and knowledge barriers, it is difficult for consumers to determine whether it is Malaysian batik or vice versa, especially against the imitation batik in the market (Sobri & Legino, 2020). Significantly, the patterns of Indonesian batik are based on regions and locations, and each part has a deep philosophical meaning. The most frequently used colours in the designs are brown, gold, and black. Meanwhile, batik from China, Vietnam, and Thailand mostly use geometrical designs such as double spiral (Dzulkifly, 2021).

Therefore, this study proposed that batik makers innovate Malaysian batik design motifs based on the geographical areas or locations of the batik origins, as reflected in the state's signature or significant landmark. To promote and preserve the Lasem culture among the younger generation, Basiroen and Lopian (2016) used the design thinking process to create new batik *Lasem* designs inspired by the town of Lasem in Rembang, Indonesia (Basiroen & Lopian, 2016). According to Barbu's (2012) research, using cultural patterns and motifs on tangible products will result in the creation of a brand identity based on culture, as well as the development of a cultural identity. As a result, cultural tourism products will be promoted globally.

For instance, the design motifs of Malaysian batik can be identified regionally, depicting different design motifs widely by region. It would be interesting to implement the abstraction

form of Malay popular art, culture, food, customs, traditional houses, or even weaponry as batik design motifs in the most subtle and sophisticated way. By composing the design motifs creatively with the combination of appropriate colours that represent Malaysia as a multi-racial society, it will increase the visibility of Malaysian batik design and attract the younger generation to purchase and own this tangible cultural heritage.

### **The Government, Policymakers, and Industry Players' Effective Support**

The dynamic supports from the government, policymakers, and industry players are needed to ensure this Malaysia handicraft be given the right recognition. According to Palar (2017), Indonesian batik has received a global appreciation when its government took a countermeasure effort by registering their batik motifs with the UNESCO. In 2009, they were selected by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (Palar, 2017). The Indonesian government has taken extra measure to lift the Indonesian batik to another level by commemorating a National Batik Day in Indonesia.

The government's role is critical in preserving this tangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, the Malaysian Prime Minister is bolstering support by declaring December 3 as Malaysia Batik Day, with the hope that the declaration will encourage all citizens, including the private sector and the multiracial community to wear Malaysian batik. The date was chosen to honour the late wife of Malaysia's fifth prime minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Endon Mahmood, for her support and interest. Endon Mahmood founded the Malaysian Batik-Crafted for the World movement on December 3, 2003, with the goal of bringing local batik to the international stage (Bernama, 2021). It is hoped that the government's initiative will serve as a catalyst to strengthen Malaysia's batik craft industry and production chain.

### **Conclusion**

This concept paper outlined the pattern of recent studies on the characteristics of Malaysian batik design motifs and recent design innovation. Major findings revealed that the batik textile industry in Malaysia is expanding, particularly in terms of designing motifs inspired by the natural surroundings; flora and fauna. Despite the fact that there are numerous batik designs in the Malaysian industry, the dynamic approaches and findings of the scholars have revealed that Malaysian batik still lacks a sense of local identity and a "signature look." Furthermore, findings show that many scholars have attempted to create and innovate new and contemporary batik design motifs for the Malaysian landscape. However, these efforts have yet to result in significant changes to Malaysian batik. As a result, policymakers, industry players, and non-governmental organisations must collaborate to ensure Malaysia's tangible cultural heritage's sustainability. It is suggested that all stakeholders work together to raise the profile of Malaysian batik on a global scale, which will lead to the protection and maximisation of benefits for future generations. Finally, Malaysian batik represents not only the Malay cultural heritage, but also Malaysian national pride. It will take some time to spread the design motifs of Malaysian batik around the world, but if everyone works together, Malaysian batik will grow in a unique and interesting way.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to thank the reviewers for their time, comments, and suggestions, which contributed to the preparation of the final version of this paper for publication. Our gratitude also goes to the management of Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Sarawak, for their ongoing assistance in enabling us to complete this research. This research would not

have been possible without the contribution and support of the Research Excellent Entities group member; Bornery. Thank you.

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