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**Sustainability of Malay Traditional Silverware
in the East Coast region of Malaysia**

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Abstract

The traditional Malay silverware industries in Malaysia that have existed for more than 200 years began to deteriorate from time to time. Silverware is a craft field with its uniqueness and almost extinction hereditary since 1948 on the East Coast of Malaysia. In this context, innovation and sustainability play a vital role in the design and product development. This study is to investigate and identify the current development of Malay traditional silverware and its relation to Sustainable Design Goals parallel with the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030. The silverware industry growth is significant among the local community to sustain for gloomy future.

Keywords: Malay Traditional Craft; Silverware; Sustainability

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1.0 Introduction

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainability has become a buzzword. This development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their demand. Furthermore, UNESCO ensures that the role of culture is recognized through most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, it is vital to sustain the creative industries by relating sustainability with social and culture. This paper focuses on Malay traditional silverware that has been relevant to social, economic, cultural, and environmental.

Silversmithing in Kelantan was brought into the Malay Peninsula in the 17th Century by foreign traders for its intricate and delicate designs. The craftsmanship produced repousse chasing, filigree work, and nielloware. Traditional Malay silverware is a local craft product with high artistic value and traditional craftsmanship that involves a lot of creativity and elaborate artistry: Regalia proper equipment, functional silverware, exclusive gift, and many more (Chumiran & Zainal Abidin, 2021; Zainal Abidin, Sigurjónsson, Liem, & Keitsch, 2008). In the current situation, silverware has become one of the dying heritages that represents the culture of Malay for so long. According to Maliki Yusof (2021), a silversmithing artisan at Kg. Morak Kelantan, there is no longer a future generation to continue and be interested in producing traditional Malay silverware. Only three to four artisans are still practicing silversmithing in Kg. Morak, Kelantan. This study investigates the current development of Malay traditional silverware and the significant issues in sustaining the local economic growth. In

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addition, this study outlines the findings related to the development of Malay traditional silverware with Sustainable Design Goals by UN agenda 2030.

As referred to by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture Malaysia, YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Haji Shukri (2021), silverware is a craft field that has its uniqueness and is almost extinct. The silverware industry has been inherited since 1948 in Terengganu and Kelantan during her visit to creative endeavors. Furthermore, traditional craftsmanship is almost extinct because the young generation is not interested in continuing this valuable conventional legacy. Many factors have contributed to this situation; firstly, globalization has introduced many foreign cultures, leading the younger generation to lose interest in their cultural heritage (Mohamad, 2011).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Sustainability

The concept of 'sustainability to traditional crafts and craftsmanship is strongly connected to environmental, cultural, and economic concerns (Raj Isar, 2004). The vital aspect of sustainability is in our life; Stanley (2012) explains that there are four pillars related to sustainability. They are sustainable in the environment, economy, society, and culture. Radically, sustainability is defined as achieving a culture's environmental, economic, social, and values without risking future generations' abilities.

Furthermore, sustainability needs to emphasize the community's values to include discussions about cultural sustainability in ways that do not damage our ecosystem, environment, and social well-being. Finally, the strategies of sustainability need to be inclusive and holistic. A combination of policies and designs covering all four sustainability pillars is required to make this world a better place. The concept of 'sustainability with traditional crafts and craftsmanship is strongly connected to environmental, cultural, and economic concerns (Raj Isar, 2004). Besides the importance of sustainability, traditional Malay silverware is part of creative industries that have lots of value that need to be revived and preserved for future generations (Abdul Aziz, Abidin, & Anwar, 2019).

According to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implemented by the United Nations in 2015, which built on the principle of "leaving no one behind," the new Agenda emphasizes a holistic approach to achieve sustainable development for all. Therefore, sustainable development, or sustainability, is now pervasive and multidimensional (Ross, 2009). The creative industry is viewed as potential with a possibly high impact on economic achievement (Romero-Gázquez et al, 2020). Through creative industry, Malaysia strives to achieve by promoting the Sustainable Design Goal: sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all communities.

In addition, sustainable development thinking should be dovetailing totally to strengthen the value and viability of craft practice economically. Nowadays, technological development has changed individual and community expression and approaches. The feel and sense of touch in arts, crafts, tangible, and intangible heritage have affected. (Ghouse Nasuruddin, 2017). Undoubtedly, traditional metalware has a long, unbroken history and the potential for a vigorous new flowering in the future. Unfortunately, many craft design is not only of great value but also very unusual, even unique in certain respects. They are the evolutionary link between the art of present-day Malaysia and centuries of tradition.

2.2 Malay Traditional Craft

The East Coast Region of Malaysia involves three states: Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, and some parts of Johor. It is formed to focus on the region's socio-economic and industrial development. For more than 200 years, traditional Malay crafts have existed in the Malay community. According to an article in Kosmo online (July 2021), the states of Kelantan were the first trading activities and fabricated metalware, especially brass and silverware, through the straits of Malacca.

The preservation of traditional crafts has covered the direction for the sustainability of the Malay cultural heritage in the region through the continuity of craft industries with local and fresh inspiration. Furthermore, to sustain the existence of traditional craftsmanship, the government created Kraftangan Malaysia. Kraftangan Malaysia was established in 1979 (PKKM, 2010) to provide adequate assistance to craft entrepreneurs throughout Malaysia. Furthermore, it was also to develop new ideas for their advancement and apply new techniques to supplement traditional methods. It has also continuously conducted several development programs to drive local craft entrepreneurs towards better achievement and competitiveness.

2.2 Silverware

In the past, the artisans from Kelantan produced silverware inspired by local elements that reflect artistic values. Furthermore, the viability of artisans became necessary when the King supported and empowered the local artisans as royal artisans. The artisan fabricates crafts and arts in the palace and produces for royal needs (Shariff, 2010).

According to recent studies by Oxford Languages (2021), silverware is a product, merchandise, and craft that is produced from a specific combination of metals. There are many types of silverware, and it is divided into two categories which are functional and non-functional. Generally, most silverwares are functional items such as for dining, cooking, storage, ceremonial, cultural customs, precious royal objects, and many more. For non-functional items, primarily, it is used for decorative items and symbolic objects (Mohd. Kassim, 2008). Many silverware artisans are old, and some of them have passed away. This is at the alarming stage whereby the present Malay artisans need to sustain and build their interest in silverware production. Nowadays, the cultural heritage seems critical because the young

generation is less interested and unable to develop high practical skills. In this situation, the dying heritage should be preserved and sustained (Shariff, 2010).

3.0 Methodology

This research investigates the sustainability of Malay traditional silverware, specifically in Kg. Morak, Palekbang, 16040 Kota Bharu, Kelantan, located in north-eastern Malaysia with a total land area of 14,922 square kilometers. This area is known as one of the most culturally rich silverware industries. Research information is collected through field research: direct observation, participant observation, ethnography, qualitative interviews, and case studies (see Abidin, Christoforidou, & Liem, 2009). In addition, this study is supported by previous studies in scholarly journals, books, documents, and reports from relevant sources, local government agencies, newspapers, and other reliable website sources.

This study focuses only on empathize mode from the design thinking method to understand the situation of the practitioner of silverware industries (see Kamil, Abidin & Hassan, 2019; Toyong, Abidin & Mokhtar, 2021). An unstructured interview was conducted with two local artisans with open-ended questions to collect the data regarding previous and current development of the silverware industry in Kg. Morak, Kelantan. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify and report the repeating coding themes gained from the interview session. As described, below is the chart showing the whole process of research involved (see Figure 1).

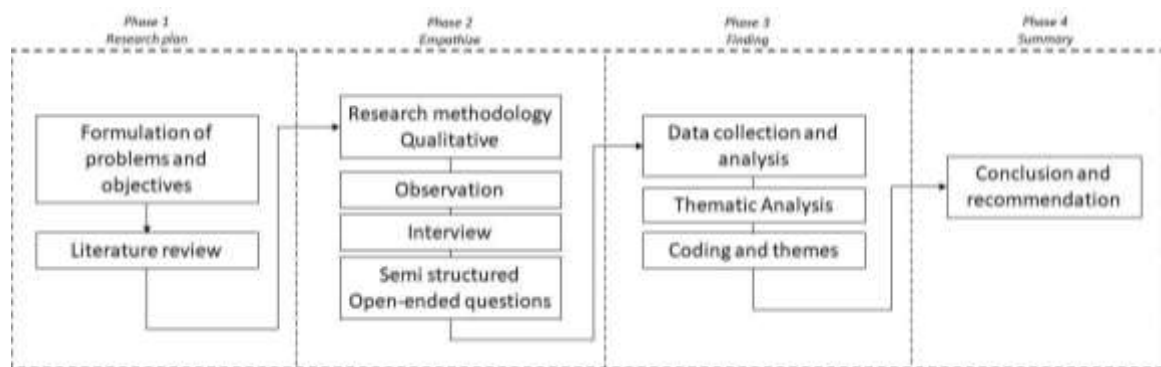


Fig. 1: The qualitative research method process

4.0 Findings

The findings of this study through observation site visits at the Industrial Cooperatives Silverware initiated by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture in the early 2000s were abandoned ten years ago. After economic issues, politics, and the loss of artisans, the industry closed permanently. Most existing artisans created separate individual workshops or mini spaces at home to continue working.

Two local artisans currently remain active in Kg. Morak, Kelantan are involved in the interview session, which are Maliki Bin Yusof, also known as Liki, 53; and Muhammad Bin Sulaiman, who is also known as Pak Demad, 68. Below is the existing artisan now practicing silversmithing in Kg. Morak, Kelantan (see Table 1).

Table 1: Name list of existing silver artisans in Kg. Morak, Kelantan

No.	Name	Nickname	Age
1.	Maliki Bin Yusof	Liki	53
2.	Mohd Ariffin Bin Wook	Pok Wi	72
3.	Muhammad Bin Sulaiman	Pok Demad	68
4.	Suhaimi Bin Yusof	Unknown	65

The artisans were still receiving one-off projects from local clients, which was very limited. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most of their job were lost, and they only received three to four projects or orders per year. Besides that, no younger generation is interested in continuing the legacy of silverware craft practice in Kg. Morak, Kelantan. Most of them cannot sustain themselves being an artisan and lose their interest in this field. This industry needs time and lots of practice to be experienced enough to produce it. The design and artisans of metalware need a sense of touch with the feeling of looking through aesthetic elements.

However, the data collected from the interview session were organized through thematic analysis to find the main theme in Kelantan's current development of the silverware industry. This data mainly synchronizes with the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and cultural. In addition, it is also related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implemented by the United Nations. The data shows that financial management and production efficiency were mapped to economic development, parallel with SDG target 8.3 in developing policies, entrepreneurship, supporting micro-enterprises, and financial services. Furthermore, the sub-theme linkages, collaboration, marketing, and motivation were splendidly concerned with SDG target 9.2 related to promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization. Next, the mapping of Preservation, awareness of the craft industry, and niche market contribute to the design development of the silverware industry. Finally, the theme of design development refers to SDG target 11.4 in strengthening the efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (see Table 2).

Table 2: Analysis of coding subtheme to the main theme

Description	Sub-theme	Main theme
Low budget and profit	Financial management	Economic development
Debt issues		
Equality and equity		
Precious and fine product	Production efficiency	
Intricate craft work		
Experienced artisan		
Wasted facilities		
Dying profession		
Less demand		
Government and individual dependent	Linkages and collaboration	
Insufficiency technology		
Unknown talent		
Inheritance young adults and lose interest.		
Well known industry	Utilize marketing strategies and demand	Initiative execution
Produce for important events		
Dying profession	Reviving the dying profession	
Government and individual dependent		
Less proactive	Preservation and awareness	
Impatient among the young generation		
Independent talent and skills		
Flora and fauna motif and form	Nature-inspired	
Ergonomic and practicality		
The design aesthetic and precious	Niche design	Design development
Religious and cultural beliefs		
Practice-base	Precious craft industry	
Precious metal		
Handmade		

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, the silverware craft industry is facing a bleak future with no implementation of the proper measure. It should be concerned that the sector will one-day face extinction. In this context, innovation and sustainability play a vital role in the design and product development. Tradition should be integral to the innovation exercise in the product's design aspect, function, and manufacturing process. To ensure the metal craft industry is highly competitive with other craft forms, thus successfully making its way to appeal to a larger and more sophisticated consumer market. The thematic analysis shows that the three elements of economic development, initiative execution, and design development are the main priority to be taken seriously to sustain the industry for future growth.

As for recommendations, to reflect the Sustainable Design Goals and Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, authorities and concerned parties should start to take the initiative in developing the silverware industries in Malaysia. The most important parties to take off the efforts are the government bodies, the local community, and the higher education level to initiate collaboration programs on sustaining the Malay traditional silverware industries to the next level. As concerned, a focus group discussion is needed to see and fulfill the needs of the industry, consumers, and future generation.

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