Volume 3 (2025)

RMU4U e-Bulletin

Research Management Unit
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

eISSN : 2805-47 5X

Published by : Universiti Teknologi MARA
08400 Merbok, Kedah Malaysia

Printed by : Perpustakaan Sultan Badlishah
Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Kedah
08400 Merbok Kedah

e ISSN 2805- 47 5X

9772805 475 000

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Embracing New Horizons: A Fresh Start for 2025

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, I welcome you to RMU4U Third Edition (January 2025). The start of a new year symbolizes renewal, an opportunity to recalibrate our aspirations and refresh our collective commitment to academic excellence, research endeavours, and impactful scholarly contributions.

The year 2024 saw significant progress within our academic and research community. It was a testament to the passion, perseverance, and creativity of all members of the UiTM Kedah family. As we reflect on those accomplishments, let us also look ahead with determination to elevate our efforts in research, publication, and innovation. Let 2025 be the year we chart new pathways for discovery and collaboration, bringing our work to greater heights.

This year, I encourage all of us to reaffirm our scholarly goals by setting clear, measurable targets for research outputs, impactful writings, and knowledge sharing, aiming to contribute meaningfully to society both locally and globally. Let us strengthen research collaborations by building networks across disciplines, faculties, and institutions to foster cross-disciplinary solutions to real-world challenges. At the same time, we must focus on innovation by exploring new ideas, embracing digital tools, and pioneering creative solutions that align with global trends and local needs. Above all, let us support each other by sharing expertise, mentoring the next generation, and collaborating to overcome challenges, creating a thriving research ecosystem where everyone uplifts one another.

Let this be a year where we balance ambition with reflection, passion with purpose, and innovation with impact. The Research Management Unit (RMU) remains steadfast in supporting your research journey through resources, platforms, and opportunities for growth.

As we embark on this new chapter, I wish each of you the strength to pursue your aspirations and the resilience to overcome any obstacles. Together, let us make 2025 a year of breakthroughs, achievements, and shared successes.

Here's to a productive and inspiring year ahead.

Sincerely,
Prof. Dr Roshima Said
Acting Rector, UiTM Kedah

A Message from the Chief Editor

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to announce the return of the RMU4U Bulletin with Volume 3, showcasing a diverse array of academic inquiries and professional perspectives across multiple themes. This edition continues our commitment to facilitating intellectual exchange and presenting research that engages with contemporary issues.

In this volume, the Law & Policy theme stands out with the highest number of contributions, featuring 14 papers that explore significant aspects of governance, justice, and societal well-being. These papers highlight the role of legal frameworks and policies in addressing current challenges and contributing to societal development.

Highlighted works include topics such as "Enhancing Access to Justice: The Role, Challenges, and Future of Small Claims Courts in Malaysia" and "Environmental Public Interest Litigation: Broadening Locus Standi to Safeguard Collective Interests," which examine the evolving landscape of legal rights and public interest. Additional discussions, such as "Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Islamic Banking and Finance in Malaysia" and "Balancing Nature and Faith: Protection and Conservation of Water Resources from the Perspective of Islamic Law," shed light on the interplay between ethics, faith, and law in addressing societal challenges.

In addition to the focus on Law & Policy, this issue covers a range of topics that contribute to understanding innovation and societal change. Articles such as AI-Driven Recommendations in Mobile Shopping Apps, Podcasts, Animations & Gen Z: Revamping Organizational Behavior Learning, and The Role of Social Media in Shaping Islamic Entrepreneurship explore the intersections of technology, education, and culture in today's world.

This edition represents the collaborative work of our contributors, whose insights and expertise have shaped the content of this bulletin. We encourage readers to engage with these ideas and consider their implications for further research and practical applications.

I would like to thank the authors, reviewers, and editorial team members who made RMU4U Bulletin Volume 3 possible. We hope this publication serves as a resource for understanding key issues and inspires further exploration.

Thank you for being part of this endeavor. Let us continue to learn and exchange ideas

Warm regards,

Dr Azyyati Anuar
Chief Editor, RMU4U E-Bulletin

THE ROLE OF BLOCKCHAIN IN MITIGATING FINANCIAL FRAUD: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Image Source : Canva

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In the modern financial landscape, the prevalence of financial fraud continues to undermine trust, transparency, and the credibility of institutions worldwide. According to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) (2024), global organizations lose approximately 5% of their annual revenues to fraud, amounting to trillions of dollars each year. The interconnected nature of global markets and the digitization of financial processes have created vulnerabilities for fraudulent activities such as asset misappropriation, financial statement manipulation, and cyberattacks. Traditional accounting and auditing systems, while evolving, often struggle to keep pace with the sophisticated tactics employed by fraudsters. These challenges have prompted researchers and practitioners to explore innovative technologies, with blockchain emerging as a potential game-changer in mitigating financial fraud.

Blockchain technology, with its decentralized, immutable, and transparent architecture, offers significant potential to address systemic weaknesses in accounting and fraud prevention. By securely recording transactions on a distributed ledger, blockchain eliminates the risk of unauthorized modifications to financial records. Its ability to provide real-time audit trails and enforce compliance through smart contracts enhances its appeal as a tool for building trust and accountability in financial systems. Moreover, blockchain's applications extend beyond fraud detection, enabling advancements in financial reporting, supply chain accounting, and regulatory compliance. Despite its promise, blockchain adoption faces several barriers, including technical complexity, regulatory uncertainty, and the need for interoperability with existing systems.

The adoption of blockchain in accounting within Malaysia has been gaining traction, especially as businesses aim to address financial fraud and streamline operations. A recent study by Sabri et al. (2023) highlighted that blockchain is increasingly recognized for its ability to enhance transparency and data integrity in financial reporting processes. Malaysian firms in the finance sector are among the early adopters, with initiatives supported by the government's National Blockchain Roadmap (2021–2025). This roadmap focuses on fostering blockchain innovation, particularly in traceability and secure financial transactions, which are critical for accounting practice.

Despite growing awareness, the implementation of blockchain technology in the accounting sector is still in its infancy (Sabri et al., 2023). The Malaysian business landscape has a notable deficiency in awareness of blockchain technology due to the deficiency of ability in the field of cryptography (Teoh et al., 2021). This is partly due to barriers such as limited technical expertise and concerns over regulatory frameworks. However, blockchain has the potential to strengthen the accounting profession by decreasing the expenses of maintaining and reconciling ledgers, as well as offering perfect assurance regarding asset ownership and history (ICAEW, 2018). As a result, blockchain could assist accountants get clarity over their organization's available resources and liabilities, as well as free up resources to focus on planning and valuation rather than recordkeeping (ICAEW, 2018). These benefits highlight the need for Malaysian businesses, particularly in accounting, to accelerate blockchain adoption. This would not only address issues like fraud prevention but also position the country competitively within the global digital economy. The efforts to align blockchain applications with industry standards will likely yield long-term benefits for financial accuracy and corporate accountability.

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DATABASES FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS: A QUICK GUIDE

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Bibliometric analysis has become an essential tool for evaluating research outputs, uncovering trends, and charting the scientific landscape across disciplines. This review highlights key databases commonly used in bibliometric studies, emphasizing their importance in terms of scope, coverage, and functionality. Selecting the most suitable database ensures that bibliometric analyses are accurate and comprehensive, enabling researchers to draw reliable conclusions and insights.

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach used to assess and analyze scholarly output, including academic publications and citation patterns. It aids in evaluating research performance, identifying key studies, and detecting emerging trends within various fields. The success of bibliometric research largely depends on selecting the right database. This paper reviews two prominent databases frequently used in bibliometric analysis: Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus.

1 Web of Science (WoS)

WoS offers several notable advantages for bibliometric research. Its comprehensive citation index spans numerous academic disciplines, providing reliable and extensive data for researchers (Clarivate, n.d.). The long-term coverage, which includes data from decades of publications, makes it an essential tool for tracking citation trends and assessing the impact of scholarly work over time. WoS is also known for its consistency and rigorous quality control, ensuring that the citation analysis conducted is accurate and reproducible (Pranckutė, 2021). Moreover, WoS enables in-depth analysis of citation networks, helping researchers to identify key works and track the development of fields over time.

Despite its strengths, WoS has some limitations. Its coverage tends to favor journals from Western countries, potentially creating biases in global research visibility (Abramo et al., 2019). Additionally, WoS excludes certain types of publications, such as conference papers, books, and regional journals, limiting its usefulness for fields that rely on these sources (Dai et al., 2021). In comparison to Scopus, WoS often reports lower citation counts in some disciplines, affecting the comprehensiveness of citation metrics (Pranckutė, 2021). Finally, WoS is a subscription-based platform, which may limit access for institutions with restricted financial resources (Worrall & Cohn, 2023).

2 SCOPUS

Scopus is one of the largest citation and abstract databases, offering several key benefits for bibliometric research. It provides a comprehensive citation index across various subject areas, including the sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities, making it ideal for multidisciplinary research (Elsevier, n.d.). Scopus indexes an extensive range of publications, including journals, conference papers, book series, and trade publications, enabling more detailed and inclusive bibliometric analysis across diverse fields (Pranckutė, 2021). Additionally, Scopus offers user-friendly tools for analyzing citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and research impact metrics, providing valuable insights into research collaborations and productivity (Abramo et al., 2019). Furthermore, Scopus often provides higher citation counts than other databases, which is advantageous for researchers seeking to demonstrate the impact of their work (Pranckutė, 2021).

Despite its advantages, Scopus has several limitations. Its historical coverage is not as extensive as that of Web of Science (WoS), as Scopus citation records generally only extend back to the 1990s, limiting the ability to conduct long-term citation trend analyses (Pranckutė, 2021). Scopus also tends to underrepresent certain fields, such as the humanities and regional studies, due to its focus on internationally recognized journals (Aksnes & Sivertsen, 2019). Another significant limitation is that Scopus is a subscription-based service, potentially limiting access for institutions with restricted financial resources. Additionally, while Scopus citation counts are generally accurate, they can sometimes be affected by issues such as duplicate entries or author name inconsistencies in author name formats (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016).

Conclusion

Bibliometric analysis is a vital method for assessing research outputs and identifying trends across various fields. This review underscores the importance of choosing the right databases for conducting thorough and precise bibliometric studies. Web of Science (WoS) provides a dependable citation index with extensive long-term coverage, which is beneficial for tracking citation patterns over time. However, it has some limitations, such as a bias toward Western journals and the exclusion of certain publication types. Conversely, Scopus offers broader coverage across diverse publication types and subject areas, including the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. However, its historical data is less extensive than that of WoS, and it may underrepresent certain fields, such as regional studies. Both WoS and Scopus offer useful tools for analyzing citations, co-authorship networks, and research impact, though their access is often limited due to subscription costs. To improve the inclusiveness and scope of future bibliometric analyses, researchers could benefit from using multiple databases or incorporating open-access alternatives.

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Image Source : Canva

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF GENERATION Z: WHY THEIR EXPECTATIONS ARE KEY TO FUTURE WORKPLACES

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Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is often reproached for having demands that are considered too high and for their desire to be introverts at work. However, as the authorities have deemed them problematic, this aspect of their behaviour is often ignored. Moreover, as more and more representatives of this generation actively enter the labour market, it becomes crucial to understand the values and perspectives they hold, especially due to the high speed of the current process.

One clear grievance regarding Gen Z is their emphasis on flexibility and work-life balance. Is it correct to say that such expectations are unrealistic? Research confirms that these desires stem from a healthy state of mind. In fact, 49% of the Gen Z population is most likely to choose work-life balance as their top priority when selecting an employer, reflecting a growing trend of prioritizing work satisfaction over financial gains (Deloitte, 2023).

Moreover, Gen Z is a generation of digital natives who expect and demand digital working environments. Having grown up in a generation in which technology is fast embracing nearly all aspects of life, they want technology to complement their lives smoothly.

The second area of conflict is Gen Z's desire for inclusion and diversity in the workplace. Some may view this as ingratitude. However, this motive is deeply rooted in the culture that diversity and social justice policies are central to their upbringing. A study shows that 83% of Gen Z candidates believe any employer they choose must have a strong policy regarding diversity and inclusion (FDM Group, 2023). This expectation also places pressure on companies to implement changes that ensure fairness for all, elevating the entire workforce. Although some people may think that Gen Z is not good at cooperation because they are shy, it is critical to note that they value quality over quantity. As a result, organizations can foster stronger working relations among employees through their preference for open and honest communication (British Council, 2024).

Therefore, Gen Z's expectations should not be viewed as a problem but as an opportunity to drive change in the current workplace. The flexibility, integration of technology, embracing diversity and culture, authentic communication, and other values provide the key to unlocking the potential of this generation to enhance organizational growth and development. These values can help create a vibrant and fruitful organizational culture. It is not that Gen Z is asking for too much, rather the challenge lies in whether we are willing to adapt and grow in line with the demands they have set forth.

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CRACKING THE GEN Z CODE: MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Image Source : Canva

Yong Azrina Ali Akbar, Wan Shahrul Aziah Wan Mahamad & Ramli Saad
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The most recent generation entering the labor sector is Generation Z, which includes those born between 1995 and 2012. They are also called Gen Z or Gen Zers, iGen, Digital Natives, and Homelanders. Employees from Gen Z offer a fresh perspective to the table, having grown up in a world defined by fast technological breakthroughs, social activism, and worldwide interconnection. Knowing the generation's beliefs, tastes, and work patterns is essential for managing them effectively. Let us examine the positive attributes of Gen Z employees, the potential challenges they may present, and the most effective strategies for managing them.

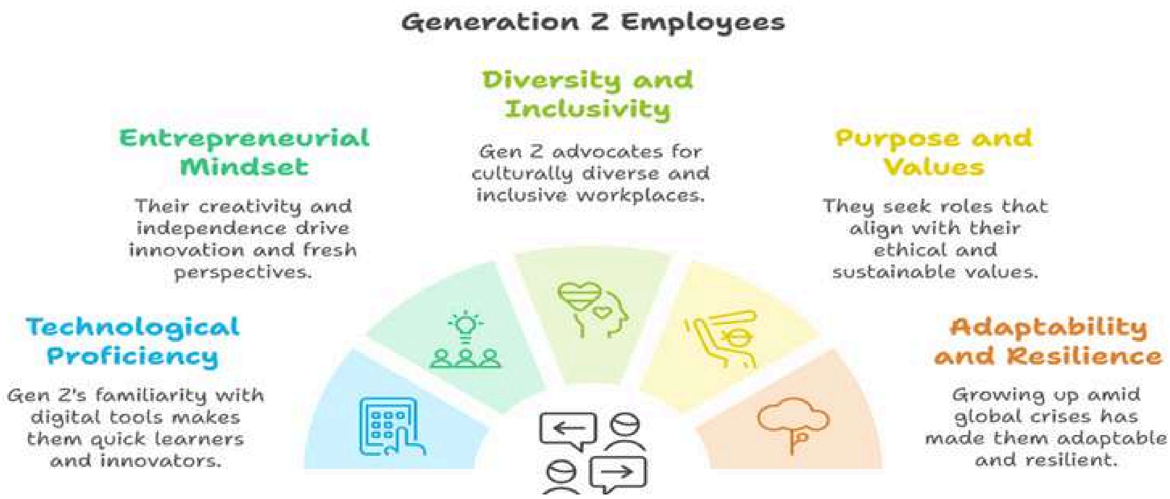

Figure 1: Strengths of Generation Z Employees

Challenges in Managing Generation Z Employees

High expectations for work-life balance
Work-life balance is highly valued by Generation Z employees, who commonly request flexible working hours, remote work opportunities, and mental health support. While these expectations can promote a healthier workplace, they may be difficult for organisations used to traditional, strict work systems (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Job hopping and a lack of loyalty
This generation is recognized for valuing personal development and possibilities over long-term commitment to single employment. As a result, organizations may face significant turnover rates, especially if employees believe their future potential is limited or see better opportunities elsewhere (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020).

Preference for instant feedback
Gen Z thrives on consistent feedback and appreciation. They are accustomed to the immediacy of social media and want a comparable response in the job. Traditional annual performance assessments may not match their requirements, necessitating managers to adopt a more dynamic and ongoing feedback strategy (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Mental health concerns
Generation Z is particularly concerned about their mental health, with many reporting higher levels of stress, worry, and burnout than preceding generations. Managers must take a proactive approach to building friendly settings and providing resources to treat mental health issues, which can put a strain on organizational costs (Adedeji et al., 2023).

Dependence on technology
Although their technological expertise is an asset, it may also be a burden. Overreliance on technology may impair interpersonal communication, reduce critical thinking, or cause professional distractions. Managers must discover ways to balance the use of technology and the development of soft skills (Pichler et al., 2021; Permana & Sudrajat, 2024).

Demand for social responsibility
Employees from Generation Z expect organizations to take strong positions on social and environmental concerns. This can be difficult for businesses that operate in industries with major environmental effects or that are hesitant to take activist stands. Meeting these expectations may necessitate considerable adjustments to corporate policy and public relations initiatives (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Approaches for Handling Gen Z Employees

Adopt adaptability
Providing flexible work options, such remote work and adjustable scheduling, can help Gen Z reach their objectives for work-life balance. Organizations should invest in technology that allows for smooth communication and cooperation in remote areas (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Promote inclusivity and diversity
It is essential to cultivate an inclusive work environment where all staff members are respected and feel represented. Organizations should actively encourage diversity programs and ensure that leadership reflects a variety of viewpoints (Pichler et al., 2021; Permana & Sudrajat, 2024).

Ensure continuous feedback and recognition
Creating a culture of regular feedback can make Gen Z employees feel appreciated and supported. Managers should prioritize constructive criticism, recognizing accomplishments, and commemorating milestones (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Align work with purpose
Employers should express how company mission and values are aligned with larger societal goals. Giving employees the opportunity to participate in meaningful projects, community service, or environmental activities can boost workplace satisfaction and retention (Pichler et al., 2021; Permana & Sudrajat, 2024).

Promote mental health and wellbeing
Investing in mental health resources, providing employee assistance programs, and encouraging open discussions about mental health can all help to build a welcoming atmosphere for Generation Z employees. Promoting work-life balance and decreasing workplace pressures can also help to improve mental health outcomes (Adedeji et al., 2023).

Balance technology and interpersonal Development
While exploiting Gen Z's technological expertise, organizations should also give employees opportunities to improve interpersonal and leadership skills through team-building activities, workshops, and mentorship programs (Pichler et al., 2021; Permana & Sudrajat, 2024).

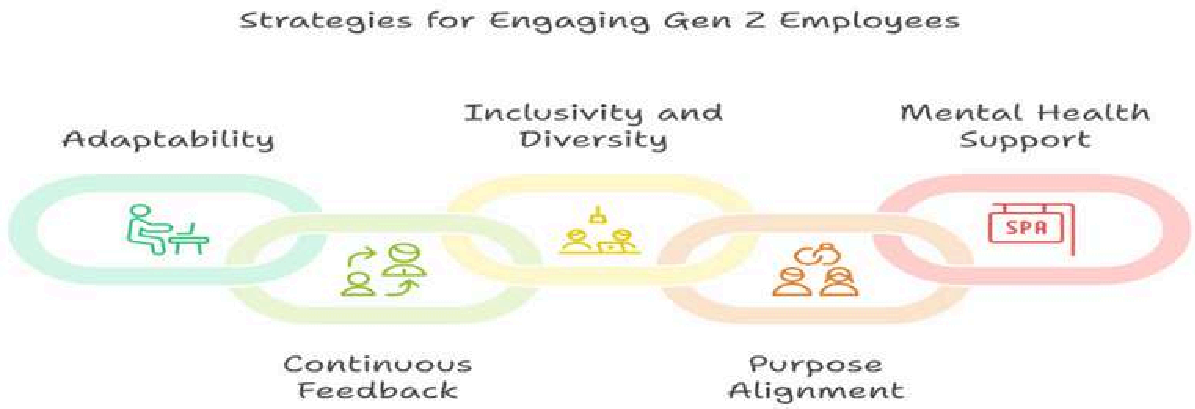

Figure 2: Approaches for Handling Gen Z Employees

Conclusion

Gen Zers contribute unique capabilities to the workplace, such as technological knowledge, creativity, and dedication to values-driven work. However, due to their distinct preferences and challenges, such as high expectations for flexibility and care for their mental health, organizations must modify their management practices. Employers may capitalize on Gen Z employees' potential while tackling the issues they present by promoting inclusion, providing ongoing feedback, and connecting work with purpose. This allows organizations to develop dynamic, inventive, and sustainable workplaces that benefit all generations.

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AI-DRIVEN RECOMMENDATIONS IN MOBILE SHOPPING APPS: BENEFITS AND RISKS TO CONSUMERS

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Mobile shopping apps have fundamentally reshaped the way people shop, establishing themselves as a cornerstone of modern digital commerce. These apps make shopping more convenient than ever, allowing consumers to browse, compare, and purchase products seamlessly from their smartphones. In 2023, mobile commerce represented nearly 8% of all retail transactions, and this share is expected to exceed 10% by 2025, reflecting its swift adoption worldwide. Features like personalized promotions, one-click purchases, and integration with mobile wallets enhance the shopping experience, making it more intuitive and engaging. As a result, retailers are prioritizing mobile-first strategies, with reports showing that more than half of mobile users engage with shopping apps several times each week (Marnewick, 2023).

At the heart of this transformation is artificial intelligence (AI), which has become a game-changer for personalized recommendations. AI harnesses vast amounts of consumer data to analyze preferences, deliver tailored product suggestions, and simplify decision-making. These innovations not only boost customer satisfaction but also significantly improve conversion rates for businesses. The synergy between AI and mobile shopping apps demonstrates the immense potential of technology to create personalized, efficient, and engaging shopping experiences that cater to individual consumer needs (Stanley 2024).

Benefits and Risks of AI-Driven to consumers

Enhanced Personalization

Enhanced personalization in mobile shopping apps leverages tailored product suggestions to align closely with individual consumer preferences, thereby creating a more relevant and engaging shopping experience. By analyzing user behavior, purchase history, and real-time interactions, AI algorithms generate curated recommendations that resonate with each consumer. This targeted approach not only reduces decision fatigue but also increases user satisfaction and enhances the likelihood of conversions. For example, personalized recommendations often highlight items similar to previous purchases or products that align with a user's browsing patterns, making the shopping journey more intuitive and enjoyable (Stanley, 2024; Marnewick, 2023).

Increased Convenience

Increased convenience in mobile shopping apps refers to features that simplify product discovery and reduce the effort required for users to search for desired items. These apps employ intuitive interfaces, smart search functions, and AI-driven tools to streamline the shopping process. For instance, AI-powered search engines and filters allow users to quickly find products based on specific preferences, such as size, price, or style. This reduces the time and cognitive load traditionally associated with browsing large inventories (Marnewick, 2023; Stanley, 2024).

Cost Savings

Cost savings in mobile shopping apps stem from features like personalized deals, targeted promotions, and efficient price comparison tools. These apps use AI-driven analytics to identify user preferences and purchasing habits, enabling retailers to offer discounts and promotions that are specifically tailored to individual shoppers. For example, consumers might receive personalized coupons or flash sale alerts based on their browsing history, which incentivize purchases while helping them save money (Stanley, 2024; Marnewick, 2023).

Improved Decision-Making

Improved decision-making in mobile shopping apps is achieved through the integration of reviews, ratings, and context-aware suggestions, empowering consumers to make more informed choices. User-generated reviews and ratings offer social proof, helping shoppers evaluate the quality and reliability of products based on the experiences of others. This transparency builds trust and reduces uncertainty, which are crucial factors in online shopping (Stanley, 2024; Marnewick, 2023).

Risks

Privacy Concerns

Privacy concerns in mobile shopping apps arise primarily from extensive data collection and the potential misuse of personal information. These apps often gather data on users' browsing habits, purchase history, location, and even device information to enhance personalization and improve recommendations. While these practices provide a more tailored shopping experience, they also raise questions about how securely this data is stored and whether it is being shared with third parties without user consent (Stanley, 2024; Marnewick, 2023).

Filter Bubbles and Limited Choices

Filter bubbles and limited choices in mobile shopping apps occur when algorithms reinforce users' existing preferences, narrowing their exposure to diverse options. These AI-driven recommendations often rely on analyzing past behaviors, such as browsing history, purchases, and clicks, to suggest products that align closely with known preferences. While this creates a more personalized shopping experience, it can inadvertently limit consumer choice by repeatedly promoting similar items or brands, effectively trapping users in a "bubble" of familiarity.

Ethical and Psychological Impacts

Mobile shopping apps have raised ethical and psychological concerns due to their use of manipulative tactics, which can lead to impulsive buying and overconsumption. Features like limited-time offers, scarcity cues (e.g., "only a few left"), and gamification elements are strategically designed to trigger emotional responses and create a sense of urgency. These tactics exploit cognitive biases, encouraging users to make unplanned purchases that may not align with their needs or budgets, ultimately fostering consumer guilt or regret.

Accuracy and Bias

Accuracy and bias in mobile shopping apps arise from the reliance on AI algorithms that curate recommendations based on user data. While these algorithms aim to enhance personalization, they can sometimes produce biased or incorrect suggestions. Bias may stem from the data used to train the algorithms, which might overrepresent certain demographics, preferences, or purchasing behaviors. This can result in recommendations that fail to cater to diverse users or unintentionally prioritize certain products or brands, reducing the overall fairness and inclusivity of the shopping experience

In conclusion, mobile shopping apps have revolutionized digital commerce by offering enhanced personalization, increased convenience, and features that simplify decision-making and deliver cost savings. These benefits are made possible through advanced AI algorithms, which curate tailored recommendations, streamline search processes, and provide targeted promotions.

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THE HUMAN EDGE **IN A HIGH-TECH WORLD**

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Artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and automation are rapidly transforming the workplace in today's fast-paced world. These technologies are revolutionizing business operations and task execution, from AI-powered customer service to self-driving vehicles. Machines excel at performing repetitive tasks; however, as technology evolves, a critical question arises: What is the role of humans in a tech-driven society? Despite advancements in AI and automation, human skills remain essential. AI can process data and perform repetitive duties, but it cannot replicate human creativity, emotional intelligence, or critical thinking. Human creativity is the driving force behind innovation, enabling companies to solve problems in creative ways, particularly in industries like marketing and design, where technology alone cannot generate original ideas (Choi et al., 2016).

Another crucial human trait is emotional intelligence (EI), the ability to identify, understand, and regulate our own emotions and those of others. Goleman (2013) argues that EI is essential for leadership and team dynamics, enabling leaders to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and inspire trust. While AI can assist with data analysis, it cannot navigate the complexities of human emotions or build relationships. Human empathy remains essential for fostering a positive workplace culture and creating strong, collaborative teams. Furthermore, automation cannot replace the skill of adaptability. As technology evolves, employees must adapt to new tools, processes, and challenges. Westerman (2018) asserts that success in the modern workplace depends on the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn. Humans possess the flexibility to adapt quickly and adjust strategies in the face of uncertainty, a trait that machines lack.

The future of work is not about humans versus machines; it's about finding ways for both to enhance one another. Organizations that effectively integrate technology with human talent will reap the greatest rewards. For example, AI systems can efficiently process large datasets, but humans provide the context and insight necessary to make strategic decisions based on that data (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). By combining AI's capabilities with human creativity and judgment, businesses can improve decision-making, innovate, and stay competitive in an increasingly dynamic digital world. The partnership between AI and human expertise is particularly valuable in fields like healthcare. While AI tools assist with analyzing medical images and recommending treatments, human doctors bring the necessary context, empathy, and ethical considerations to make well-informed decisions (Davenport & Kirby, 2016). This collaboration enhances both the quality of care and the efficiency of the healthcare system. Similarly, other industries reliant on creative problem-solving, critical thinking, and ethical judgment benefit from the combination of human talent and technological capabilities.

The integration of technology into the workplace brings challenges, such as a decline in critical thinking and decision-making due to over-reliance on automation. As AI takes on more tasks, employees may become passive recipients of automated solutions rather than active decision-makers. Moreover, excessive dependence on digital tools can weaken interpersonal relationships, essential for organizational culture and team collaboration. To address these challenges, organizations must prioritize continuous learning and upskill employees to adapt to new technologies. Building a culture of learning, where employees develop both technical and interpersonal skills, such as communication, leadership, and creativity, ensures that employees thrive and continue to drive innovation and success (Westerman, 2018).

Ultimately, in a high-tech world, the human edge remains essential. While AI, robotics, and automation can execute tasks with precision and efficiency, human creativity, emotional intelligence, and adaptability are the factors that truly set organizations apart. As technology continues to advance, businesses must recognize the value of human skills and invest in their development alongside the adoption of new technologies. By striking the right balance between technological advancements and a focus on human talent, organizations can foster an environment where both technology and human skills contribute to growth and success.

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PODCASTS, ANIMATIONS & GEN Z: **REVAMPING ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR LEARNING**

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With Gen-Z being the electronic generation, traditional methods of education are being reshaped by tools that keep students engaged in more depth and dynamism. Podcasts and animation, known as the two most prominently discussed, occupy the frontlines of this bottom-up transformation and create new spaces for learning within the field of Organizational Behavior.

Podcasts can give students a voice and help students practise explaining complicated ideas and developing critical skills of communication. Podcasts motivate students to make discussion episodes and push students to be creative in creating materials that affect listeners. In contrast, students could create interesting episodes that influence listeners about workplace motivation, leadership styles or ethical dilemmas, which refer to concepts within the immediacy of narrative and discussion. After students complete this activity, they tend to remember the content as it places the subject in a random, but relatable context outside traditional boundaries of classroom.

Likewise, animation enables students to visualize concepts, deconstructing theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs or types of influence tactics into visually engaging stories. This is an impactful method to transform abstract theories into concrete narratives that easily digest the stories. Moreover, by creating animations, students reflect on the content and think about how to present the content to the audience. It also indirectly teaches the students to plan, arrange and execute their content in an interesting way, thus making the future lesson when in the classroom more interesting and interactive - well, the fun and the brain should support each other!

Together these approaches provide an interactive learning environment, with the students taking an active part in creating knowledge instead of just receiving it. This implies that learning becomes a two-way process between the learners and the educators instead of just - sit back and enjoy. Now students get to rediscover the world of Organizational Behavior with both theory and creativity combined because the usage of podcasts and animations keep the learning experience fun and surprising.

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THE EVOLUTION OF SOCMED

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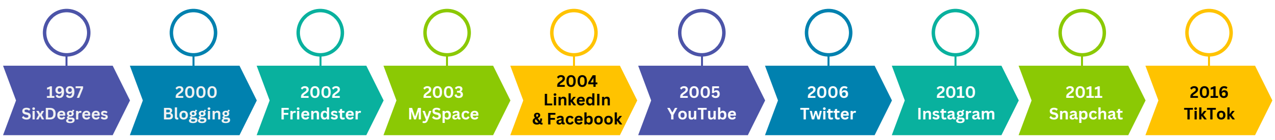
The evolution of social media (coined as socmed) has grown from simple online platforms in the 1990s to complex ecosystems with profound societal and business impact. Here's a breakdown of key milestones and distinctions in its evolution.

THE BIRTH OF SOCMED

The journey began in 1997 with SixDegrees, one of the first social networking sites, which introduced a platform for creating profiles and connecting with others based on the concept of six degrees of connection. Over time, this model evolved with platforms like Friendster and MySpace in the early 2000s.

THE ERA OF BLOGGING

Blogging became popular in the early 2000s, enabling individuals to share ideas and experiences online. It allowed diverse voices to be heard, supporting citizen journalism, activism, and niche communities. Blogging also sparked content marketing, where businesses used valuable content to engage audiences, build expertise, and connect personally with customers. This form of digital expression has greatly influenced social media, with features like "posts" now common on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.



THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

Friendster, the first modern social networking site, launched in 2002, followed by MySpace in 2003 and LinkedIn, a professional networking site. Facebook launched in 2004 as a college networking platform and soon became a global social media giant with over two billion active users. Other platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram followed, each with unique features. YouTube, a video-sharing site, launched in 2005, and Twitter, a popular microblogging site for real-time news, debuted in 2006. LinkedIn has reshaped job hunting and professional networking.

THE EXPLOSION OF VISUAL CONTENT

With smartphones featuring high-quality cameras, visual content surged in popularity, leading to the launch of Instagram in 2010 and Snapchat in 2011. Instagram, originally a photo-sharing app, has become a major influence on fashion, lifestyle, and pop culture. This shift towards visual content has transformed digital marketing, with brands using these platforms to display products in engaging ways. Research shows that social media posts with visuals have more engagement and generate more leads than text-only posts.

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THE DOMINANCE OF VIDEO CONTENT

Video content has become central to social media with platforms like TikTok, launched in 2016, and expanded video features on Instagram and Facebook. TikTok's focus on short, edited videos has made it especially popular, particularly among younger users, earning it a "phenomenon" status in social media. Facebook, launched in 2004, remains one of the largest platforms, allowing users to connect and share photos and videos. Instagram, launched in 2010, emphasizes visual content and is widely used by influencers and brands for promotion.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS

Social media has changed both communication and business. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are essential marketing tools, using influencers and user-generated content to reach wide audiences. Besides, social commerce where products are sold directly on social media, has transformed e-commerce, with tools like Facebook Marketplace and Instagram Shopping enabling direct buying and selling. Thus, the growth of smartphones and mobile internet has fueled this evolution. In fact, social media marketing allows businesses to reach diverse audiences, with 73% of marketers finding it effective. Benefits include real-time customer engagement, cost-effectiveness, and targeted advertising. However, challenges like standing out in a crowded market and adapting to changing algorithms make it complex. Despite these challenges, social media remains a valuable tool for any business.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING ISLAMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ETHICAL INSIGHTS AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

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The development of digital platforms can be characterized as a fundamental transformation in the understanding of entrepreneurship and all the practices related to it. Social networks as a specific category of such tools give modern entrepreneurs great chances to create a brand, promote it, and engage customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nonetheless, concerns connected with digital entrepreneurship that raise the questions of misinformation or false representation, consumer exploitation, or lack of concern for the environment have incited world discussions for the better handling of these technologies. For the Muslims, it is important to highlight the relevance of Islamic ethics in this particular area to ensure a robust and values-based ecosystem of entrepreneurship. The concept of falah and the principles of business transparency and justice, which are inherent in Islamic business ethics, work in such respect, especially in this computer age.

In order to tackle the ethical dilemmas and operational difficulties encountered at the crossroad of social media, business and Islam, some measures can be put into practice. The authors advocate for such approaches from Islamic ethics and core principles of the modern world. For the first, a clear and just way of doing business is an absolute requirement. Islam on the other hand does not condone deception (adl), dishonesty, or lack of clarity in business transactions (Qur'an 2:282). They are expected to, for instance, avoid ambiguous and misleading marketing about their product. Making customer reviews available is an excellent reputation-building tool. Another approach is the need to incorporate ethical content creation into business practices. One thing that can be noted is that social media platforms often place high premiums on controversial engagement, however Islamic businesses should embrace the production of content that reflects the essence of decency, honor and truth. Selecting influencers that have the same core ethical principles will greatly improve the persuasiveness of messages the company puts out.

Third, combating digital consumerism is necessary. The profit-driven nature of social media can foster unsustainable consumer habits, which contradict Islamic principles of moderation (wasatiyyah). Entrepreneurs should promote responsible consumption, sustainability, and quality over disposable trends. Fourth, leveraging technology like blockchain and AI can ensure accountability and transparency. For example, blockchain can track halal certification, giving consumers confidence in their purchases. Fifth, educating entrepreneurs on Islamic ethics through training and workshops can help align business practices with Islamic values. Finally, fostering ethical digital communities and building strong legal frameworks can ensure businesses adhere to Islamic ethical standards, encouraging responsible entrepreneurship.

To sum up, the role of social media within entrepreneurship has helped in enhancing creative progress, fostering international interaction, and also facilitated global economic development. Nevertheless, it brings new issues like the rise of unethical practices, digital consumerism, and possible inconsistency with Islamic morals. These problems may be solved effectively through Islamic entrepreneurship, which is rooted in such concepts as adl, wasatiyyah, and maslahah.

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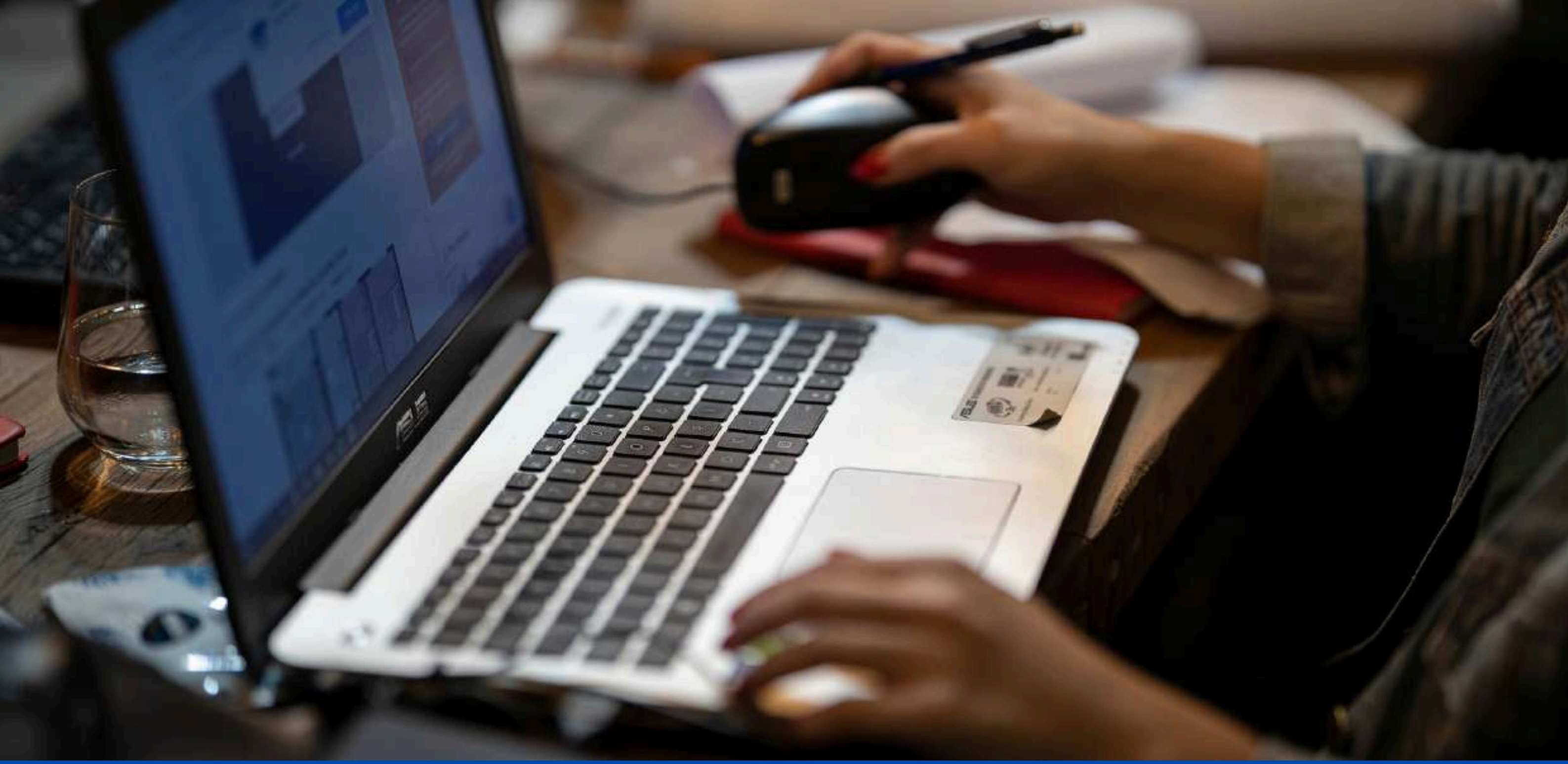

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR) IN ISLAMIC BANKING AND FINANCE IN MALAYSIA

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Malaysia's Islamic banking and finance industry relies heavily on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), which provides a flexible, efficient, and cost-effective alternative to traditional litigation, helping to maintain harmonious relationships, ensure confidentiality, and achieve Shariah-compliant resolutions (Dahlan, 2018). The Civil Courts in Malaysia also rely on the Shariah Advisory Council (SAC) for authoritative rulings on Shariah matters, ensuring that decisions align with Islamic principles within the broader legal framework.

Malaysia's framework for settling disputes involving Islamic finance has been significantly enhanced and is now in line with contemporary advancements (Oseni & Ahmad, 2024). Arbitration, mediation, conciliation (sulh), negotiation, and consultation (shura) are some of the ADR processes that are especially pertinent in Malaysia's Islamic banking and finance industry (Rusni et al., 2022).

In arbitration, parties to a dispute present their arguments to an impartial panel of arbitrators. After reviewing the facts, the arbitrator renders a ruling that, if accepted by the parties, is legally binding (Dahlan, 2018). The confidentiality, speed, and finality of this approach make it highly sought after. Because it may resolve intricate financial issues and guarantee that the results adhere to Islamic law, arbitration is frequently chosen. For example, arbitration can be used to settle a disagreement over a Murabaha contract between an Islamic bank and a business client; the arbitrator's ruling is final and enforceable.

In a similar vein, Dahlan (2018) states that mediation is a voluntary process carried out by an impartial mediator with expertise in Islamic finance. Mediation is especially successful because it promotes cooperation and understanding, two fundamental tenets of Islamic transactions; the mediator facilitates discussion and negotiation without imposing a decision, enabling the parties to reach a resolution that satisfies their financial and religious commitments. For instance, partners in an Islamic investment venture can use mediation to settle disputes over profit sharing.

Likewise, conciliation, also known as sulh, is a traditional Islamic method of resolving disputes in which a conciliator actively suggests solutions to the parties. In Islamic banking, sulh is used to resolve disputes in a way that encourages mutual respect and reconciliation while making sure that the resolution complies with Islamic ethical standards. If the parties choose to use the Sulh method, the Sulh officer will consult with the Shariah Advisory Council of Bank Negara (Dahlan, 2018). For example, a customer and an Islamic bank may use sulh to settle disagreements over the terms of repayment that are stipulated in an Ijarah agreement.

Additionally, negotiation is an intuitive and informal process in which disputing parties communicate with one another directly to come to a mutually agreeable solution. Negotiation is crucial in Islamic finance because it enables parties to settle disputes amicably and cooperatively, which reflects the Islamic principles of justice, integrity, and reciprocity. Finding common ground and understanding the opposing party's point of view is essential for successful negotiation. For instance, because of the borrower's financial issues, an Islamic bank and the borrower may discuss restructuring a financing arrangement.

Furthermore, consultation, or shura, is a collective decision-making process where parties seek advice and guidance from trusted individuals or experts. This method is profoundly rooted in Islamic practice. In the context of Islamic banking, shura can be employed to solve disputes within financial institutions or between clients and banks, promoting a sense of shared responsibility and mutual respect. For instance, an Islamic financial institution may seek guidance from a group of Shariah scholars and financial experts to address a complex issue related to a Shariah-compliant financial product.

To sum up, ADR procedures offer useful mechanisms for resolving conflicts in Malaysia's Islamic banking and financial industry. Parties can reach equitable, effective, and Shariah-compliant agreements by using these strategies, promoting a more balanced and collective financial environment.

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ADVANCING WORKERS' WELFARE:

FLEXIBLE WORK, UNION GROWTH, AND INCLUSIVE POLICIES IN MALAYSIA

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Malaysia is witnessing transformative changes in its labour landscape, driven by progressive policies aimed at enhancing workers' welfare, union empowerment, and workplace inclusivity. These efforts reflect the government's commitment to fostering equitable and sustainable workforce practices, ensuring that Malaysia remains competitive in the global economy while addressing the needs of its diverse labour force.

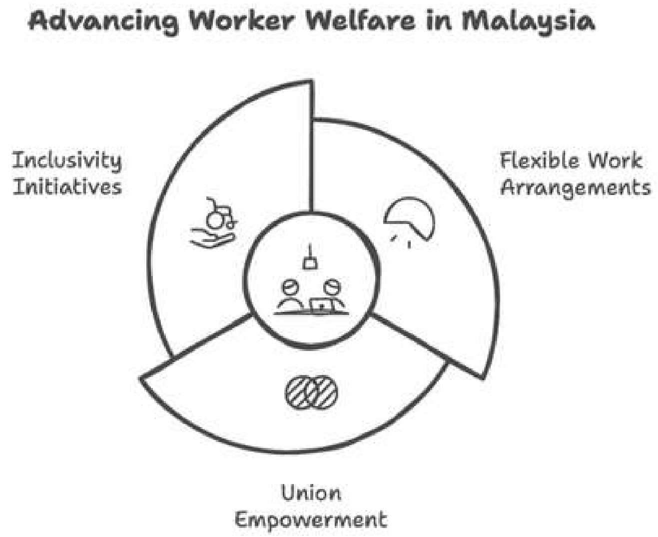

Figure 1: Advancing Worker Welfare in Malaysia Framework
Sources: Author's data

Flexible work arrangements (FWA) represent a significant milestone in Malaysia's labour policies. Introduced through Sections 60P and 60Q of the Employment Act 1955 in January 2023, FWA allows employees to request adjustments to their work hours, days, or location. Employers are obligated to respond to these requests within 60 days, providing an avenue for better work-life balance. This initiative positions Malaysia ahead of its regional peers, including Singapore, which is set to implement a similar policy later. FWAs have proven effective in enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity (Eshak, 2021; Yamin & Pusparini, 2022). However, challenges such as employer resistance and a lack of awareness among workers remain (Daniarsyah & Rahayu, 2020). Strengthening enforcement mechanisms and promoting dialogue between stakeholders will be crucial to ensuring the policy's success.

Labour unions are critical in advocating for workers' rights and promoting industrial harmony. Despite their importance, Malaysia's unionisation rate stands at a mere 6%, far below the government's ambitious target of 50% by 2030 (The Star, 2024). The low rate is attributed to structural barriers, such as the multiplicity of unions within workplaces. This provision, which allows the formation of rival unions, often leads to prolonged disputes over representation rights, delaying collective bargaining processes. Reforming trade union laws and streamlining the recognition process are essential steps towards empowering unions (Rogers, 2018). The benefits of unionisation are clear. Unionised workers typically enjoy better wages, improved welfare, and enhanced job security (Chen & Islam, 2023). Additionally, unions foster collaborative relationships between employees and employers, contributing to workplace stability and productivity. By addressing legal and institutional challenges, Malaysia can harness the full potential of unions to advance workers' welfare.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become central to Malaysia's workforce policies. The Life at Work Awards (Lawa) 2024, themed "Celebrating Excellence in DEI for a Sustainable Work, Workplace, and Workforce," highlighted the growing emphasis on inclusive practices (The Star, 2024). Government initiatives, such as the Madani Economy framework, aim to increase women's workforce participation to 60%, addressing longstanding gender disparities. Anti-discrimination protections and policies to close income gaps are also gaining traction. Corporate leaders in Malaysia have set benchmarks for inclusive practices (The Star, 2024). These companies demonstrate that prioritising DEI not only promotes fairness but also enhances organisational performance, reducing turnover and boosting employee engagement.

While these advancements are commendable, implementation challenges persist. Employers' reluctance to embrace reforms, inadequate awareness among workers, and gaps in enforcement mechanisms hinder progress. To overcome these hurdles, the government must enhance stakeholder engagement, ensuring that policies are effectively communicated and implemented. Public-private partnerships can further drive innovation in workforce development, while targeted training programmes can equip workers with the skills needed for an evolving labour market.
Malaysia's focus on flexible work, union growth, and inclusivity marks a significant shift towards a more equitable and sustainable labour environment. By addressing challenges and fostering collaboration, the nation is poised to become a regional leader in advancing workers' welfare, setting a precedent for others to follow.

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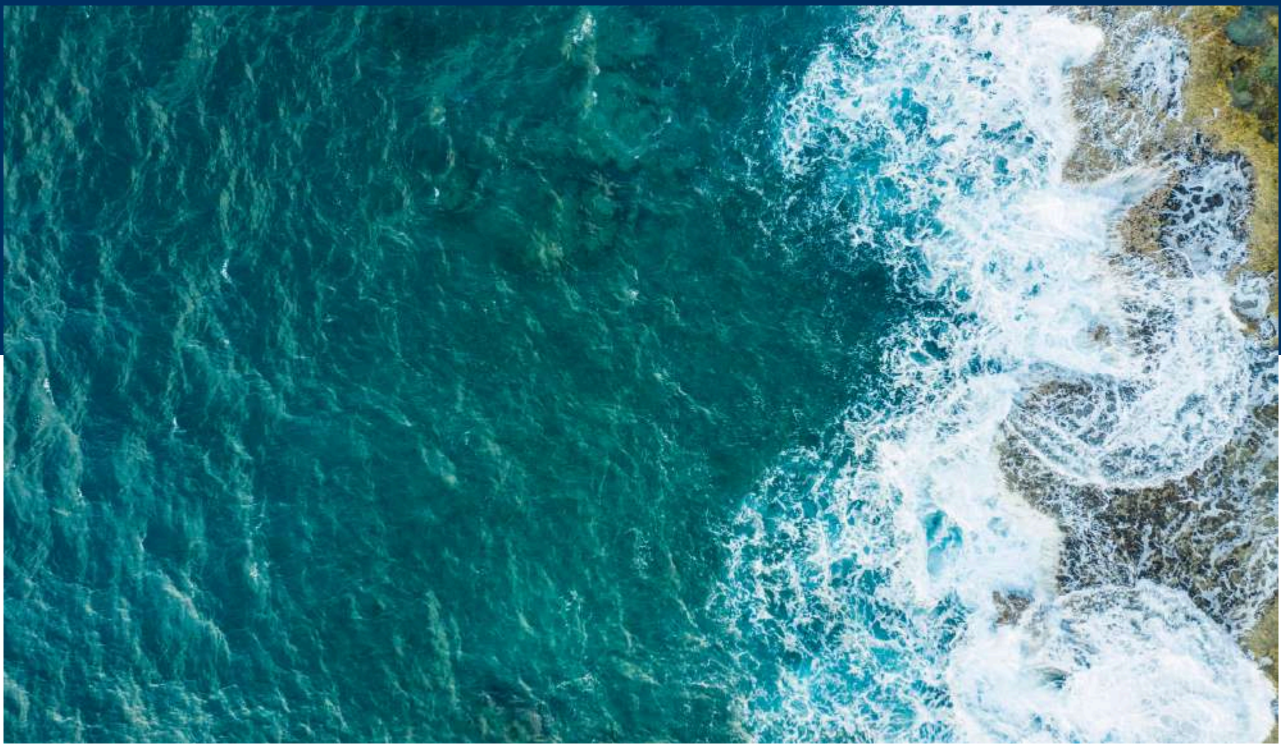

BALANCING NATURE AND FAITH: PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF WATER RESOURCES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC LAW

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Water is indispensable to life, a resource critical for the survival of all living beings and the sustenance of ecosystems. In Islam, water holds both practical and spiritual importance, regarded as a blessing from God and a shared trust that must be protected, conserved and equitably distributed.

Rooted in the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Islamic principles emphasize water as a communal resource, its management as a collective responsibility, and its preservation as a moral obligation.

This article emphasises on the crucial importance of water in Islam, focusing on Islamic legal principles for managing water resources, and their relevance and application to the current challenges. With its base on Islamic teachings, it provides insights into fostering sustainable water resource management rooted in faith, equity, and environmental stewardship from the Islamic viewpoint.

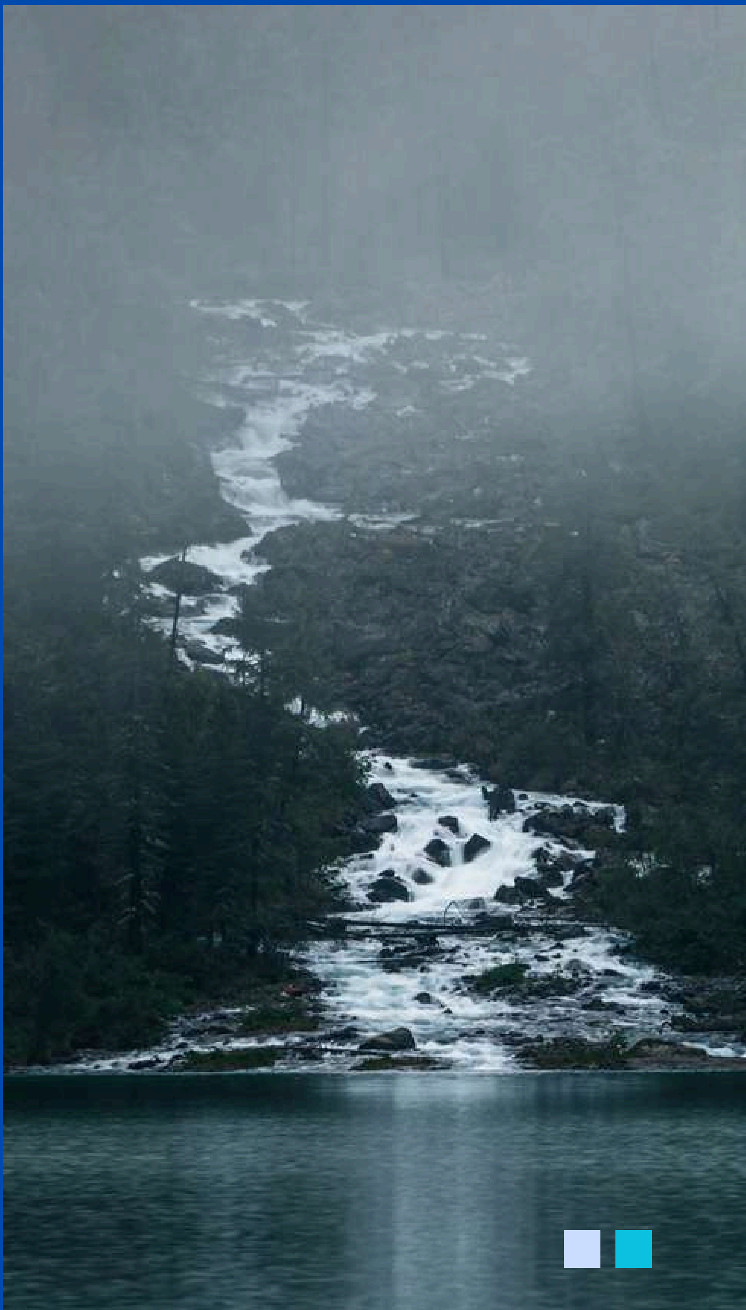
The Importance of Water in Islam

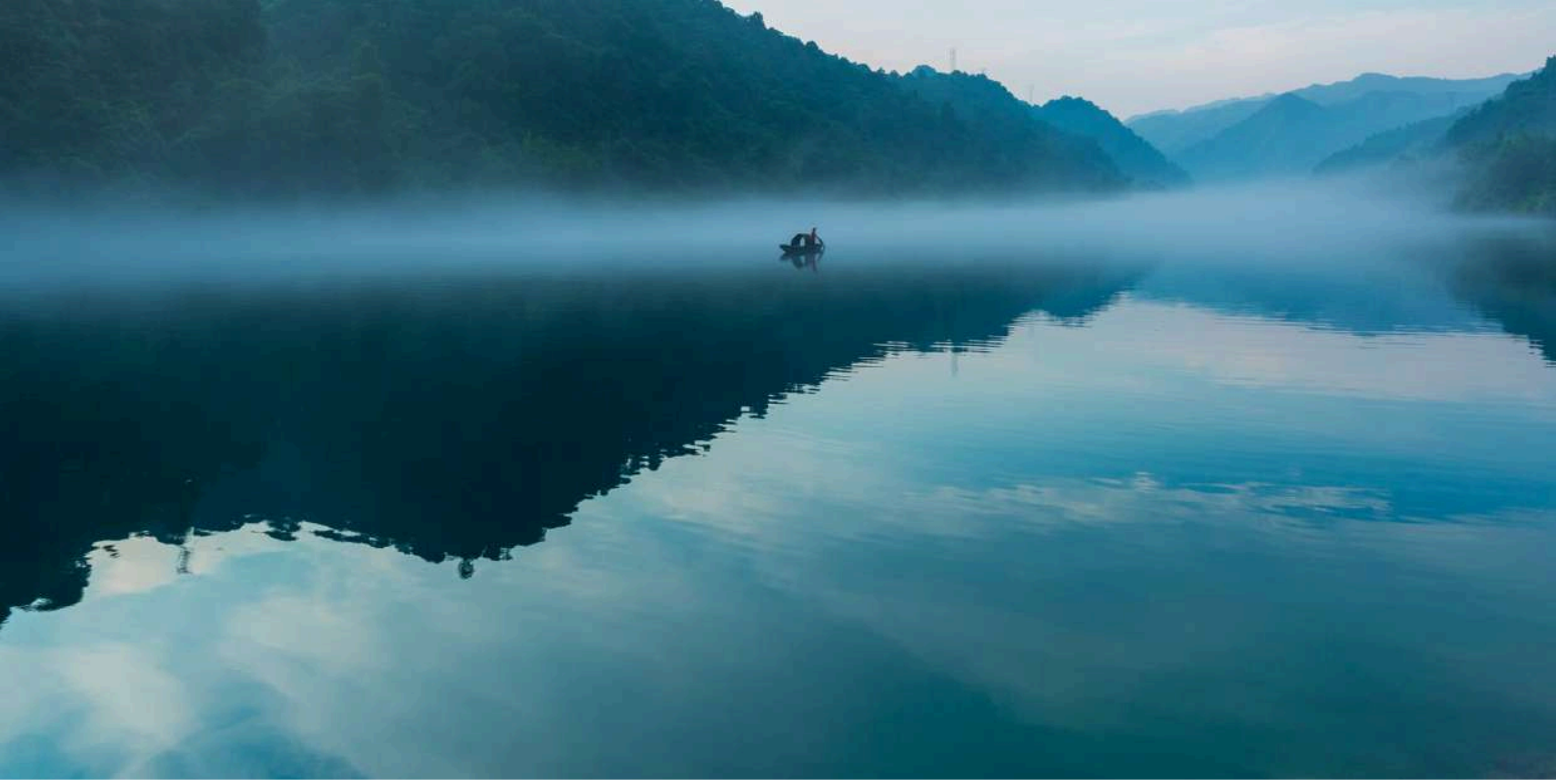
Water, indeed holds a truly vital place in Islam, as it symbolises life, purity, and divine mercy. It also carries some immense spiritual and practical significances. The Arabic word for water "maa" has been mentioned for multiple times in the Qur'an, underlining its essential role in sustaining life and shoring up human civilization. The Qur'an, in many instances, repeatedly draws attention to the miraculous properties of water, as seen in various verses such as: " Do not the Unbelievers see That the heavens and the earth Were joined together (as one Unit of Creation), before We clove them asunder? We made from water Every living thing. Will they Not then believe?" (Surah 21:30).

In Islamic tradition, the concept of water surpasses its physical properties, encompassing into the spiritual realm and law. The term Shari'ah, often translated as Islamic law, literally means "the path to a watering place or source of water." This linguistic meaning truly highlights the idea that divine guidance guides believers to the source of truth i.e. ultimate truth.

The importance of water is further emphasised through its integral role in acts of worship. Water as a way of cleansing and purification, for wudu(ablution) and ghusl (full body purification), is a prerequisite for performing ibadah (worship). These practices highlight how much physical cleanliness is being stipulated in Islam as a foundation for spiritual purity. Additionally, Islam places a strong emphasis on hygiene, with its teachings that often urge upon washing of hands, face, and other parts of the body regularly with water. Thus, this not only reflects concern for personal health but also concedes water as a purifying component.

In the Qur'an, the stories of the Prophets further illustrate the profound connection between faith and water. Prophet Nuh (Noah) is remembered for the great flood, a symbol of divine power and mercy. Prophet Musa (Moses) is linked to the parting of the Red Sea, which demonstrates God's intervention and deliverance. Even Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is connected to the well of Zamzam, a miraculous water source that continues to quench the thirst of millions of pilgrims in Makkah. Through these examples, Islam not only presents water as a physical necessity but also a spiritual metaphor. Its presence in the Qur'an and its role in the daily lives of Muslims reflect its profound significance in nurturing a connection between humanity, creation, and the Creator.





Islamic Legal Principles on Water Resources

Due to the significance of water in Islam, Islamic law provides a comprehensive framework for managing and protecting water resources, rooted in the principles of equity, conservation, and shared responsibility:

1. Water Resources as Public Property

Water, in its natural state and as a natural resource, is considered a common property in Islam, belonging to all humankind and other living creatures. It cannot be monopolized or privately owned unless effort has been invested to collect, move, or store it—for example, water contained in pool, pond, or a private well. Even in such cases, access to water cannot be denied to those in need (Nadwi, 2020). The state holds water resources in trust for the community, ensuring equitable distribution and preventing monopolization. This is echoed in the Qur'an's reference to the people of *Thamud*: " *And tell them that The water is to be Divided between them : each one's right to drink Being brought forward (By suitable turns)*." (*Surah* 54:28). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further emphasized the communal nature of water in his saying: "*Muslims [humankind] are co-owners in three things: water, fire, and pasture*." (narrated by Muslim).

2. Water Rights

Islamic law recognizes the rights of individuals and animals to access water. These rights are not absolute but are balanced to ensure survival and livelihood (Hashmi et al, 2024). Humans have precedence over animals in water usage, and drinking water and domestic uses take priority over agricultural irrigation. This hierarchy ensures that life-sustaining needs are met first.

3. Water Equity

Islam promotes fairness and proportionality in allocating water resources. The prioritization of usage follows a structured order: i) Quenching thirst (humans and animals), ii) Domestic uses, iii) Irrigation for agriculture. Water use for irrigation is often restricted only to amounts necessary for the specific areas being cultivated, ensuring that resources are not wasted and are distributed equitably.

4. Prohibition of water pollution

Apart from that, preservation of water quality is a key principle in Islam. The religion distinguishes different water types and their uses, ensuring that water remains uncontaminated and safe for consumption. Acts which can pollute water, as seen in defecating or urinating near water sources, are explicitly prohibited (ur Rahman, 2021). These measures are meant to safeguard public health and preserve ecological balance.

5. Conservation of Water Resources

Conservation is fundamental in Islamic law, as the preservation of water is often considered to be essential for the continuation of life. The principle that "what is indispensable to preserve life is itself obligatory" underscores the magnitude of safeguarding water resources. The Islamic practices such as the establishment of Hima (protected zones) and Harim (sanctuaries) are substantial conservation strategies. Hima areas are set aside for grazing and biodiversity protection (Gari, 2006). Meanwhile Harim zones protect water sources by prohibiting activities like digging wells near existing canals or water bodies, preventing overexploitation and ensuring the sustainability of groundwater (Abdullah et al, 2024).

6. Prohibition of Wastefulness

Extravagance and wastefulness in water usage are strictly forbidden in Islam. The Qur'an cautions and is truly against excess as seen in this verse: "O children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess for God loveth not the wasters." (Surah 7:31). The teachings encourage moderation, even when water is abundant.

Water, as the essence of life, occupies a central place in Islamic teachings, both as a divine blessing and a shared trust. For its fair distribution, sustainable management, and conservation, the Qur'an and the Sunnah provide a strong moral and legal foundation on this matter. In the legal principles of Shari'ah, Islam emphasises, among others, the sacred duty to protect and responsibly utilise this vital resource

The Islamic approach to water management harmonises between environmental sustainability and social equity. It also recognises water as a public good while at the same time balancing individual rights and community welfare. Its prioritisation of essential needs, prohibition of wastefulness, and establishment of protected zones reflect a deep commitment in preserving water resources for all living beings.

As our world today is still grappling with issues like water scarcity, pollution, and inequitable access to water resources, the wisdoms embedded in Shari'ah principles could provide valuable insights and guidance. By integrating Islamic principles of conservation, fairness, and stewardship, policymakers and communities can address today's challenges while fostering a sustainable future for the next generations.

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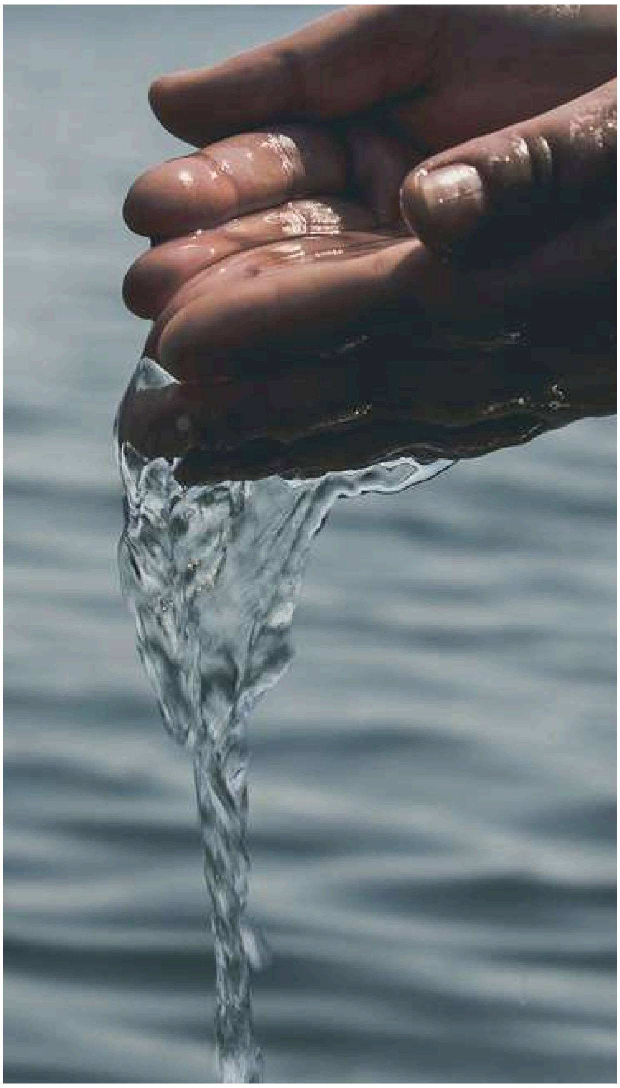

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ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE:
THE ROLE, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE OF SMALL CLAIMS COURTS IN MALAYSIA

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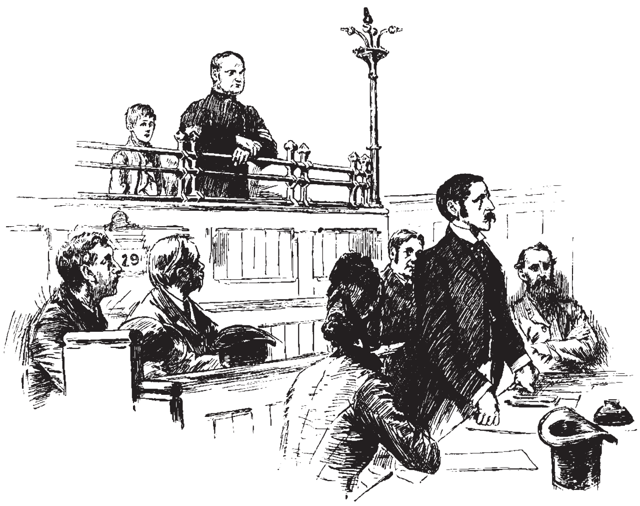
Small Claims Courts are designed to offer a straightforward and budget-friendly way for people to resolve minor disputes, especially those involving small amounts of money, without navigating the complexities of traditional legal procedures or incurring high costs. These courts focus on everyday issues such as disagreements over contracts, unpaid bills, or disputes between consumers and businesses. They provide a simple, efficient process that allows individuals to present their cases without needing a lawyer. The primary aim of Small Claims Courts is to ensure that justice is accessible and affordable, removing financial and procedural hurdles that might otherwise prevent people from pursuing legal solutions.

Establishing the Small Claims Court in Malaysia reflects a broader trend observed in various jurisdictions to enhance access to justice. The court's design allows individuals to pursue claims without the need for legal representation, which is particularly beneficial for those who may not have the financial means to engage in lengthy and costly litigation processes (Niblett & Yoon, 2017). This accessibility ensures that justice is not solely reserved for those with substantial resources, thus promoting a more equitable legal environment (Niblett & Yoon, 2017).



The Small Claims Court is purposefully designed to address minor disputes, providing a straightforward and cost-effective avenue for individuals and small businesses to resolve conflicts without the need for expensive legal processes. In Malaysia, the jurisdiction is limited to monetary claims of up to RM5,000, as stipulated under the Subordinate Courts Act 1948. This cap ensures the court focuses on manageable cases such as unpaid debts, consumer complaints, and contract breaches while excluding more complex matters like criminal law, family disputes, or claims exceeding the monetary threshold.

What sets the Small Claims Court apart is its emphasis on accessibility. Its simplified procedures and informal structure make it easier for ordinary citizens to navigate, and the general prohibition of legal representation further reduces costs and complexity for claimants and defendants. This carefully defined jurisdiction highlights the court's vital role in enhancing access to justice, particularly for underserved communities and small enterprises seeking an affordable solution to their grievances.

The procedures in the Small Claims Court are specifically designed to be simple and accessible, ensuring that even individuals without legal expertise can navigate the process with ease. The process begins with the claimant filing a statement of claim and the necessary supporting documents at the appropriate court, which manages these cases under relevant legislation. Following the filing, the defendant is notified and must respond within a specified timeframe. If the defendant fails to respond, the court may issue a default judgment in favour of the claimant (Pujiyono et al., 2021).

Moreover, the emphasis on mediation and negotiation aligns with broader trends in alternative dispute resolution (ADR), which aim to reduce the burden on courts while providing parties with more control over the decision of their disputes. Studies have shown that mediation can lead to higher satisfaction rates among parties since it allows for more flexible and tailored solutions than traditional litigation (Chen & Lin, 2010). By streamlining these steps, the Small Claims Court offers an effective and affordable alternative for resolving disputes quickly, making it particularly beneficial for individuals and small businesses.

The structure of the Small Claims Court is designed to facilitate access to justice by streamlining the litigation process. By allowing individuals to represent themselves, the court reduces the costs of hiring legal counsel, which can be prohibitively expensive for many (Ismail & Osman, 2019). This affordability ensures that justice remains within reach for individuals and small businesses, removing the financial barriers that often deter people from pursuing traditional litigation.

Moreover, the court's simplified procedures and informal hearings allow for quicker resolutions, making it an ideal choice for those seeking timely redress. Additionally, by handling minor cases, the Small Claims Court significantly reduces the caseload of higher courts. This alleviation enables the judiciary to allocate resources more efficiently and concentrate on complex matters that require more in-depth legal analysis. The streamlined processes of the Small Claims Court ensure that minor disputes are resolved quickly, which is essential for maintaining the effectiveness of the legal system as a whole. This efficiency is crucial in preventing the backlog of cases in higher courts, allowing them to focus on more significant legal issues that demand greater judicial scrutiny.

The Small Claims Court, though undeniably beneficial, faces several challenges that can hinder its overall effectiveness. A notable limitation is its monetary jurisdiction, which is capped at RM5,000 in Malaysia. This cap often excludes cases that, while not excessively large, surpass the threshold but are still too minor to justify the costs associated with full-scale litigation. Another significant issue lies in the enforcement of judgments, as claimants frequently encounter difficulties in collecting payments from defendants who fail to comply with court orders. Urban courts also grapple with overcrowding, causing delays and compromising the court's goal of offering swift resolutions. Furthermore, while the absence of legal representation helps to minimise costs, it can unintentionally put some individuals at a disadvantage, particularly those who may need more confidence or ability to effectively present their case, especially when faced with a more prepared or articulate opponent.

Addressing these challenges requires key steps to ensure the Small Claims Court can operate at its full potential. Raising the monetary limit to better align with current economic realities is essential, as it would allow the court to handle a broader range of cases without excluding disputes that exceed outdated thresholds. Strengthening mechanisms to enforce judgments is equally essential, ensuring claimants can recover payments from non-compliant defendants effectively. In addition, well-designed public awareness campaigns can play a crucial role in helping individuals and small businesses better understand the court's processes and benefits. By providing clear and accessible information, these efforts can encourage more people to use the court effectively and take full advantage of its services. Together, these measures can enhance the court's accessibility and efficiency, solidifying its role as a practical solution for resolving disputes.

In conclusion, the Small Claims Court in Malaysia is a vital resource for resolving minor disputes practically and affordably. By prioritising accessibility and simplicity, the court enables individuals and small businesses to address straightforward issues, such as consumer disputes and minor contractual disagreements, without the burden of lengthy litigation or costly legal representation. Its streamlined processes, informal hearings, and emphasis on mediation make it an essential avenue for those seeking timely and cost-effective justice.

However, certain challenges, including the limited monetary threshold, difficulties in enforcing judgments, and delays in high-demand urban courts, highlight areas for improvement. To enhance the court's efficiency, reforms such as increasing the monetary cap, improving enforcement mechanisms, and promoting public awareness are critical. These measures would ensure that the court continues to fulfil its role as a cornerstone of Malaysia's legal system. By addressing these challenges, the Small Claims Court can unlock its full potential as a fair, accessible, and effective platform for resolving disputes.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION:

BROADENING LOCUS STANDI TO SAFEGUARD COLLECTIVE INTERESTS

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In Malaysia, our legal system operates under common law, which shapes the accessibility of civil litigation, particularly in environmental cases. An important principle to recognise is locus standi, which indicates that only individuals or entities with a significant interest or stake in a matter are eligible to seek judicial remedies. Understanding this concept is crucial in the context of legal proceedings. In addition, this principle aims to ensure that the right people are involved in legal proceedings; it can limit opportunities for redress, especially in cases concerning environmental damage.

As awareness of the need to protect our environment continues to grow—especially given the increasing environmental crises we face—there's a pressing need to balance development with conservation. Countries like Malaysia, navigating the path toward development, often struggle between economic growth and environmental protection. Unfortunately, the environment, the actual victim in many of these scenarios, lacks a voice in legal matters to express its grievances. This is where public interest litigation holds promise for advocacy. Granting the public locus standi empowers concerned citizens to take a stand on environmental issues, as these concerns resonate with the greater good, impacting everyone in our society.

Locus standi refers to individuals' right to bring cases before the court. However, issues related to standing often prove to be a significant hurdle in public interest litigation. Typically, only those whose personal interests have been infringed can bring matters before the court. Yet, this needs to reflect the realities of environmental issues. Dedicated individuals—like environmental advocates and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)—often raise concerns about government actions that could harm our environment. The challenging aspect is that this ownership of the legal process frequently acts as a barrier, making it difficult for these advocates to seek justice or hold authorities accountable.

One significant case demonstrating the stringent application of locus standi is the Government of Malaysia v Lim Kit Siang, United Engineers (M) Berhad v Lim Kit Siang [1988] 2 MLJ 12. The court concluded that Lim Kit Siang did not possess the requisite locus standi to challenge the legitimacy of the government's award of the tender to UEM. The decision indicated that an individual only has locus standi to sue if he can prove "that he has suffered special damage peculiar to himself". A similar approach was emphasised in Ketua Pengarah Jabatan Alam Sekitar & Anor v Kajing Tubek & Ors [1997] 4 CLJ 253, in which the court held that the respondents lacked locus standi to institute the action. However, a more hopeful development arose from the Federal Court's decision in Malaysian Trade Union Congress & Ors v Menteri Tenaga, Air dan Komunikasi & Anor [2014] 3 MLJ 145, which marked a significant shift in the interpretation of locus standi. This decision reinvigorated public interest litigation in Malaysia by recognising the genuine concern of the Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) regarding the Minister's refusal to grant access to important documents. The court acknowledged that MTUC demonstrated a genuine and legitimate interest, marking a critical step forward in allowing public interest cases to make headway in our legal system.

Malaysia's evolving environmental law landscape presents a positive outlook for future developments. By acknowledging the value of public interest litigation and embracing a broader interpretation of locus standi, we can empower individuals and groups to pursue environmental justice. This reflects a growing recognition that the health of our planet is a shared concern for us all, and everyone should have a voice in advocating for its protection. Together, we can work toward a future where environmental issues can be addressed, ensuring a healthier planet for generations to come!

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Home, Private, and Formal Education in Malaysia: Which Option Do You Prefer?

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Home Schooling, Private Schooling and Formal Schooling

Home education, often known as home schooling, is an alternative educational approach in which parents teach their children at home rather than sending them to formal school (Ray, 2000). Many parents decide to homeschool their children for various reasons, such as adapting to the children's pace of learning and needs. The setting is chosen by parents, and it depends on the suitability for learning purposes.

For parents who have chosen to homeschool, this is a huge commitment to monitor their children's progress. Importantly, it requires persistent efforts from the parents to make sure that their children can develop the necessary skills which are not offered in the formal school. It is therefore advisable to have a thorough understanding of children's needs before opting to homeschooling. The existing factors should be taken into consideration, such as the adaptation of the new lifestyle, cost, commitment, and strategic planning for the future.

Due to rapid changes in technology, home education can also be done virtually, such as via online learning. These platforms require parents to fully handle their children. The parents can also opt for private tuition or a learning center for different courses. Interestingly, this approach is able to expose them to the new environment and to interact with other kids.

Other available choices are private schooling. Parents who are financially advantaged may send their children to private school. There are many types of private schools in Malaysia. At the elementary level, the available options are private academic schools, international schools, and private/state-funded schools. Formal schooling is a formal education system under the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Why Do Parents Home Schooling or Private Schooling Their Children?

Home schooling has become a feasible choice among educated parents to fulfill their children's needs (Mohd Yusof, 2023). Among the reasons considered by parents are the ability to provide their children with learning flexibility, gaining necessary skills that are not available in formal schools, bullying issues, syllabus density, children with special needs, and many other factors.

Apart from home schooling, parents who are financially advantaged will send their children to private school. A lower staff-to-student ratio allows for a more comprehensive education system (Ray, 2000). It provides an opportunity for children to have more concentration during the learning process.

Benefits of Home Schooling

Despite having different views on this matter, parents have the right to opt for an outstanding education for their children. This is because homeschooling allows both parents and children to personalize their education based on unique needs. Moreover, it offers a unique syllabus, flexibility, safety, and family bonding.

Which Option Do You Prefer?
Comparison Between Homeschooling, Private Schooling, and Formal Schooling

Consideration	Home education/ Homeschooling	Private Schooling	Formal Schooling
• **Environment**	• Home or in a variety of other settings chosen by both parents and children • Depending on the suitability of learning purpose	• School building with structured classrooms	• School building with structured classrooms
• **Curriculum**	• Adaptable to the children's pace of learning and needs • Can use syllabus from Ministry of Education (MOE) • Can choose SPM or IGCSE	• Standardized curriculum by the MOE (SPM) or designed by the school such as British syllabuses (IGCSE)	• Standardized curriculum by the MOE (SPM)
• **Schedule**	• Highly flexible / can set their own time • Ratio 1:1	• Fixed schedule • Structured and routine-based, providing consistency.	• Fixed schedule • 2 sessions a day (morning session and afternoon session)
• **Socialization**	• Requires proactive efforts by the parents. • Can join homeschooling community activities, clubs and so on.	• Daily interaction with classmate	• Daily interaction with Classmate (typically, a single class comprises 20, 30, 40, or even more students)
• **Cost**	• Less cost / varies widely depending on the chosen curriculum and activities. • Sometimes it involves a high cost for sending to private center/clubs and so on.	• High cost	• Subsidized by the government
• **Learning Duration**	• Depending on the suitability and readiness of the children	• Around 6 hours per-day	• Around 6 hours per day. • It does not include extra class for UPKK (Ujian Penilaian Kelas KAFA)

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JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH: UNDERSTANDING THE INSANITY DEFENSE IN MALAYSIA

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Introduction to the Defence of Insanity

Defense of insanity refers to a defense that can be raised by an accused who was insane at the time of the crime. All modern legal systems have a version of the defense of insanity, and Malaysia is no exception. This dialogue begins by addressing the historical development of the defense of insanity, then followed by a discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of such defense that seeks to draw a distinction between treatment and punishment, illness and evil, and misfortune and culpability. The aim is to educate readers about the medical, cultural, and social contexts of mental disorders. In so doing, it is hoped that the lawfulness and ethicality of a non-insane person receiving treatment will be clear.

Legal Provisions and Criteria for Insanity Defence in Malaysia

The plea of insanity, or defence of insanity, in Malaysia is covered under two main legislations: the Criminal Procedure Code and the Penal Code. There is limited literature exploring this plea, and no specific literature that gives comprehensive details on the plea and its validity except in the general sense. Not only that, there are no laws and other legislative documents that support the existence of mental disorders.

Under the Criminal Procedure Code, the High Court is the only court permitted to determine this matter by referring the suspect to a government psychiatrist or any other expert. Under the Penal Code, this matter is predetermined and must be pleaded by the Attorney-General. A person is insane when the entire process of mind, reason, and will are impaired to such an extent as to render the person incapable of valuing the moral quality of the act or conforming their conduct to the requirements of the law. By contrast, in Malaysia, a person is considered insane when such a mental disorder displaces the ability of the suspect to: firstly, appreciate the nature and quality of the act, and secondly, to know whether the act done is wrong and unlawful.

The following criteria must be satisfied before a person can be considered insane:

1. where, in connection with the act resulting in death, there is delusion or hallucination, and the delusion or hallucination is substantial enough to render the act lawful or justifiable from a psychiatric point of view;

2. where the condition is temporary in nature and time-limited psychosis;

3. where the temporary insanity is of the bipolar affective type.

As a general rule, the burden of proving insanity is embraced by the defence, which then possesses a legal burden. The distinction between permanent insanity or continuous insanity and temporary or passing insanity is crucial for the determination of legal capacity in an individual. It shall be incumbent upon the accused to raise this defence in their plea. Once proven, it will move onto the defence of insanity. The procedure from duress to insanity will be directed and arranged by the court accordingly.

Domestic legislation in Malaysia sets out and opposes the above international legislation. It is an individual duty under the Criminal Procedure Code to raise a defence and to prepare psychiatric or psychological reports and allow relevant evidence to be presented to the trial court. The relevant provisions with respect to the insanity defence are found under section 94 of the Criminal Procedure Code. He is not entitled to lodge a defence along with the Attorney-General in any case. These findings lead to the legal regime transitioning from a wrong diagnosis to the appearance of lynching.

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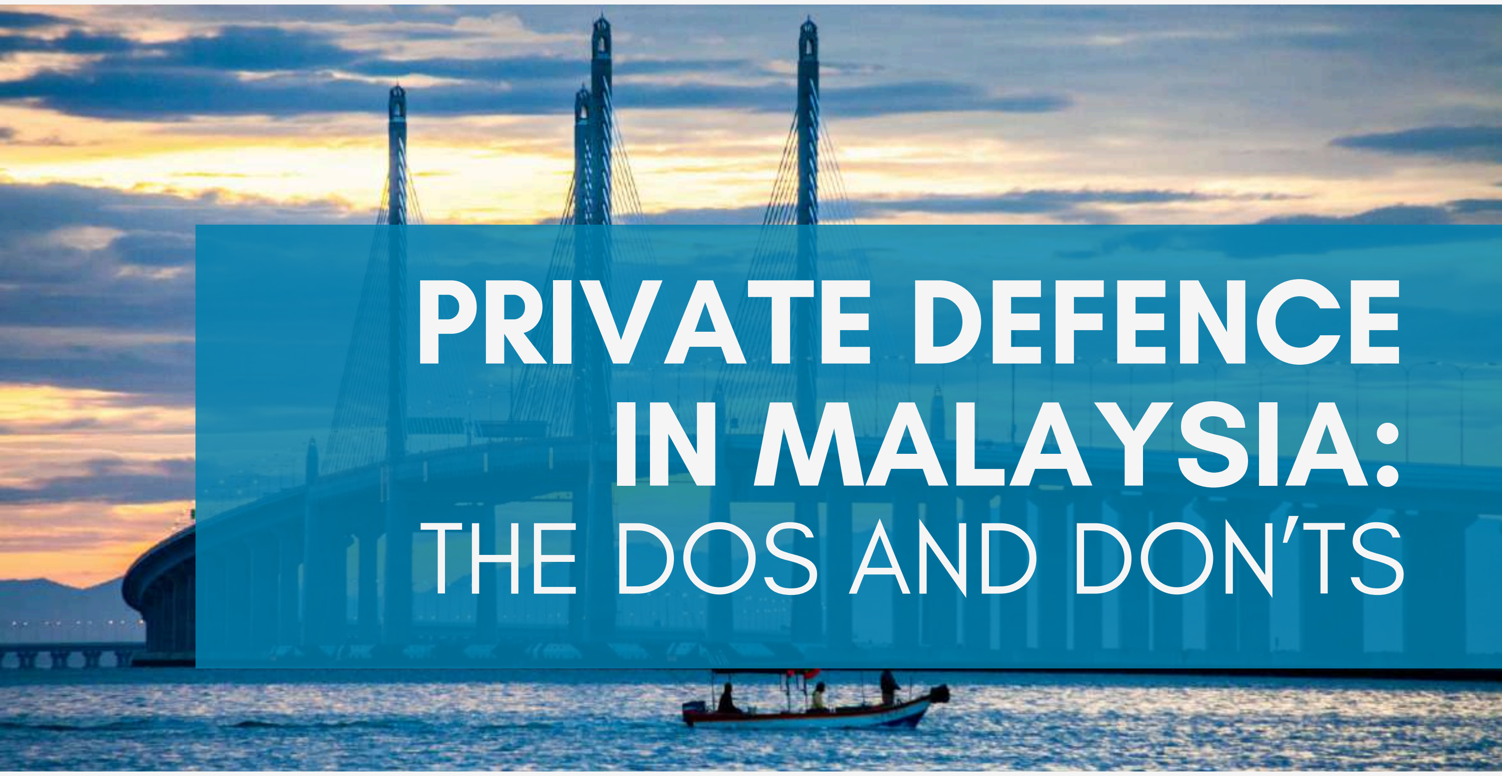

PRIVATE DEFENCE IN MALAYSIA: THE DOS AND DON'TS

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What is Private Defence?

Private defence is a vital legal right in Malaysia, designed to protect individuals from harm when faced with unlawful threats. Provided in Sections 96 to 106 of the Penal Code, this right allows people to defend themselves, others, or their property when immediate danger arises. However, the law is clear that this right is not absolute. It can only be used when there is a genuine and imminent threat, and the actions taken must be reasonable and proportional to the danger.

Notably, private defence cannot be used as a pretext for retaliation or planned aggression or in cases where other options, like involving the authorities, are available. By setting these boundaries, Malaysia's legal framework ensures that private defence is a means of justice, empowering individuals to act in critical moments without crossing ethical and legal limits. This balance protects both personal safety and the integrity of the legal system, preventing the misuse of private defence as an excuse for excessive force or vigilantism.

The Do's in Private Defence

Exercising the right of private defence in Malaysia comes with clear responsibilities to ensure such actions are legally justified. First and foremost, individuals should only act when there is an immediate and imminent threat to their life, safety, or property. Any defensive action must be reasonable and proportionate to the level of danger faced. For instance, responding to a minor disagreement with lethal force would go beyond what the law permits.

Private defence should always be a last resort, used only when no other options, such as escaping or seeking help from authorities, are available. Furthermore, it is crucial to promptly report the incident to the police, providing a truthful account along with any evidence or witness statements to substantiate the defensive actions. By adhering to these "DOs," individuals can act confidently within the boundaries of Malaysian law, protecting themselves while ensuring they remain accountable to legal and ethical standards.

The Don't's in Private Defence

Although the right to private defence is firmly protected under Malaysian law, it comes with clear boundaries, and certain actions must be avoided to remain within legal limits. Individuals cannot use excessive or disproportionate force when defending themselves, as the law only permits reasonable actions given the threat level. For example, using deadly force against someone committing a minor theft or trespassing without violence would go far beyond what is justified.

The right to private defence also cannot be used as a cover for retaliation or revenge; it applies strictly to immediate and unavoidable dangers. Similarly, provoking an aggressor to create a reason for self-defence is considered an abuse of this right and can lead to criminal charges. Once the threat has been neutralized, the use of force must cease, as the right to private defence ends the moment the danger subsides. Furthermore, when these options are available, individuals are expected to explore other legal alternatives, such as retreating from the situation or seeking help from law enforcement. Ignoring these "DON'Ts" not only weakens the legitimacy of a self-defence claim but could also result in prosecution under the law.

Some cases under private defence in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the judiciary has consistently reinforced the boundaries of the right to private defence, rejecting claims where actions exceed what the law allows. For instance, in the case of Alandu a/l Santhanasamy v PP, the appellant struck the victim on the head with a gun, causing the victim to fall unconscious. Despite this, the appellant continued his attack, stabbing the victim twice in the neck, which resulted in the victim's death. The appellant was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. Such cases underscore the judiciary's firm approach in curbing the misuse of private defence to justify disproportionate or retaliatory violence, emphasising that the right must be exercised strictly within its intended boundaries (Ashgar Ali Ali Mohamed & Muhamad Hassan Ahmad, 2023).

In contrast, PP v Moo Hee Seng & Anor, the first and second accused, a father and son, faced charges after an incident involving an attempted robbery at their home. The victim had attempted to rob the wife of the first accused and the mother of the second accused, injuring her hand with a knife during the struggle. Acting in self-defence, the two accused apprehended, restrained and struggled with the victim. The pathologist determined that the victim died due to chest injuries caused by a blunt object, leading to contusions in both lungs. The court held, based on the circumstances, that both accused were protected by the right of private defence (Ashgar Ali Ali Mohamed & Muhamad Hassan Ahmad, 2023).

Conclusion

The right to private defence is an essential legal safeguard in Malaysia, designed to protect individuals in critical situations. However, it must be exercised responsibly and within the limits of the law. Following the principles of proportionality, immediacy, and necessity ensures this right is not misused. These principles preserve private defence as a legitimate protective measure rather than a tool to justify excessive or retaliatory actions. Failing to understand or apply these principles correctly can lead to serious legal repercussions, as shown in cases where courts have dismissed claims of private defence due to misuse or violations. Individuals are encouraged to seek legal advice to avoid such consequences if they are ever uncertain about their rights or actions. Consulting a legal professional provides clarity and ensures that decisions made are aligned with the law, protecting both individual rights and the broader justice system. Ultimately, using private defence responsibly reflects a careful balance between safeguarding personal safety and maintaining societal order.

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REVITALISING WAQF THROUGH GOLD: **MODERN PERSPECTIVE ON AN AGE-OLD PRACTICE**

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Introduction

Waqf, a cornerstone of Islamic philanthropy, has historically been pivotal in supporting community welfare while fostering development. Traditionally, waqf assets have encompassed immovable properties like land and buildings, as well as movable assets such as cash and shares. Recently, there has been a growing interest in diversifying waqf assets to enhance their sustainability and impact. Among these, gold emerges as a unique and valuable asset with the potential to revitalise waqf practices.

Gold as a Unique Asset for Waqf

Gold possesses intrinsic value and has been a symbol of wealth and stability throughout history. Its durability and universal acceptance make it an attractive asset for waqf purposes. Incorporating gold into waqf portfolios can offer several advantages:

Hedge Against Inflation: Gold has historically served as a safeguard against inflation and currency devaluation, ensuring the preservation of waqf capital over time.
Liquidity and Flexibility: Gold is a highly liquid asset, facilitating easier conversion into cash when needed for charitable activities.
Shariah Compliance: The use of gold in waqf aligns with Islamic principles, as it is a tangible asset that can be utilized for charitable purposes without involving interest (riba) or uncertainty (gharar).

Modern Applications of Gold-Based Waqf

The modern era has witnessed innovative approaches to integrating gold into waqf practices, enhancing both its financial sustainability and social impact. One notable application is the establishment of gold-backed waqf funds, where gold is contributed as a waqf asset and utilised to generate income through Shariah-compliant investments such as sukuk (Islamic bonds) or halal businesses. This approach ensures waqf funds' perpetual growth and productivity while preserving the core asset.

Furthermore, the rise of digital gold platforms has enabled fractional contributions, allowing individuals to donate small portions of gold to waqf institutions, thereby democratising participation and fostering community engagement. Technologies such as blockchain have also been employed to enhance transparency and trust in managing gold-based waqf, providing secure and traceable records of donations and asset utilisation

Additionally, gold can be mobilised to support diverse waqf initiatives, including education, healthcare, and disaster relief, ensuring a lasting impact on society. These modern applications demonstrate the adaptability of gold-based waqf in addressing contemporary socio-economic challenges while remaining rooted in Islamic principles.

Social Impact of Gold-Based Waqf: Supporting Education, Healthcare, and Poverty Alleviation Programs

Gold-based waqf offers significant potential to support essential social welfare programs, addressing key challenges such as education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. Using gold as a sustainable and stable asset, waqf institutions can generate consistent funding for scholarships, school construction, and educational resources, fostering long-term community empowerment through learning. Similarly, the income derived from gold-backed investments can finance healthcare services, including the establishment of clinics, the provision of medical equipment, and subsidised treatments for underprivileged groups. In poverty alleviation, gold-based waqf enables the creation of employment opportunities, microfinance programs, and direct assistance to vulnerable populations, helping to break the cycle of poverty. These initiatives not only fulfil the charitable objectives of waqf but also contribute to achieving broader socio-economic development goals.

Conclusion

Revitalising waqf through gold presents a compelling opportunity to merge traditional Islamic philanthropic practices with modern financial innovations. Gold's intrinsic value, stability, and universal acceptance make it an ideal asset to enhance the sustainability and impact of waqf institutions. By leveraging gold-backed funds, digital platforms, and Shariah-compliant investment opportunities, waqf institutions can address contemporary socio-economic challenges while preserving their ethical and religious foundations. This modern perspective on an age-old practice underscores the potential of gold to transform waqf into a more inclusive, resilient, and impactful system, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness for future generations.

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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN THE MALAYSIAN WAKAF MADANI INITIATIVE

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The Malaysian Wakaf Madani initiative seeks to utilise the waqf asset for the benefit of the communities, and for the growth of Islamic social finance across the country by 2030. Nonetheless, certain obstacles need to be addressed to achieve its maximum effectiveness.

One of the primary causes is the absence of a uniformity of law governing waqf assets in all states in Malaysia. Hakimah et al. (2022) state that each state has waqf laws, which cause different handling and loopholes for asset management. Such a legal milieu creates several hurdles for governance and the evolution of holistic waqf management approaches. Having a standard legal frame will enable the management of waqf assets to have a better fit with its purpose more effectively (Syibly et al., 2022)

Governance issues are also raised as blockages. Lack of effective management will result in mismanagement and inefficiencies that challenge the goals of the Wakaf Madani program (Kamaruddin & Hanefah, 2021). This will attract professional expertise to waqf management based on transparent and accountable governance practices. Competent managers and solid governance frameworks have been shown to increase the waqf project's sustainability and impact on the community (Abdullah, 2018). Professionalising the management of waqf and equipping the managers with skills and training can improve accountability and governance practices (Kamaruddin & Hanefah, 2021)

Lack of awareness about the potential of waqf is minimal (Uula, 2023), thus, raising awareness of successful waqf projects through educational campaigns can change public perception and increase participation of schools and universities effectively. According to Taqwiem & Rachmadi (2022), they emphasize that waqf is effectively supported by schools and universities as these institutions can shape students' perceptions on waqf through specific education, creating a culture of giving and active involvement.

Financial sustainability is another important challenge in waqf projects. Most initiatives do not have sustainable financial support (Pratama, 2023). By creating waqf-based businesses in affordable issuances and healthcare sectors, we are helping to liberate waqf from its financial dependency. Additionally, a profitable investment of its existing waqf funds can be used for sustainability so that these projects can continue to grow and benefit communities (Maulina, 2023).

Stakeholder collaboration is necessary, but it is not enough. Due to the lack of synergy, resources can be wasted, and opportunities for beneficial initiatives can be overlooked (Umar & Aliyu, 2019). Waqf is a highly innovative and transformative model for sustainable development that reflects the local community needs; therefore, building collaborations between government, commercial, and non-profit sectors can create synergies, encourage knowledge transfer and increase the impact of waqf projects.

To conclude, the establishment of the Wakaf Madani initiative can contribute significantly to Malaysia's community and economic development. It creates a conducive environment for growth by resolving legal, managerial, and financial challenges. With the combined efforts of the government, private sector, NGOs, and the community, this initiative will run optimally, and waqf will be one of the most robust tools for empowering society.

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UNDERSTANDING THE ELEMENT OF UNDUE INFLUENCE THAT MAY RENDER A CONTRACT VOIDABLE

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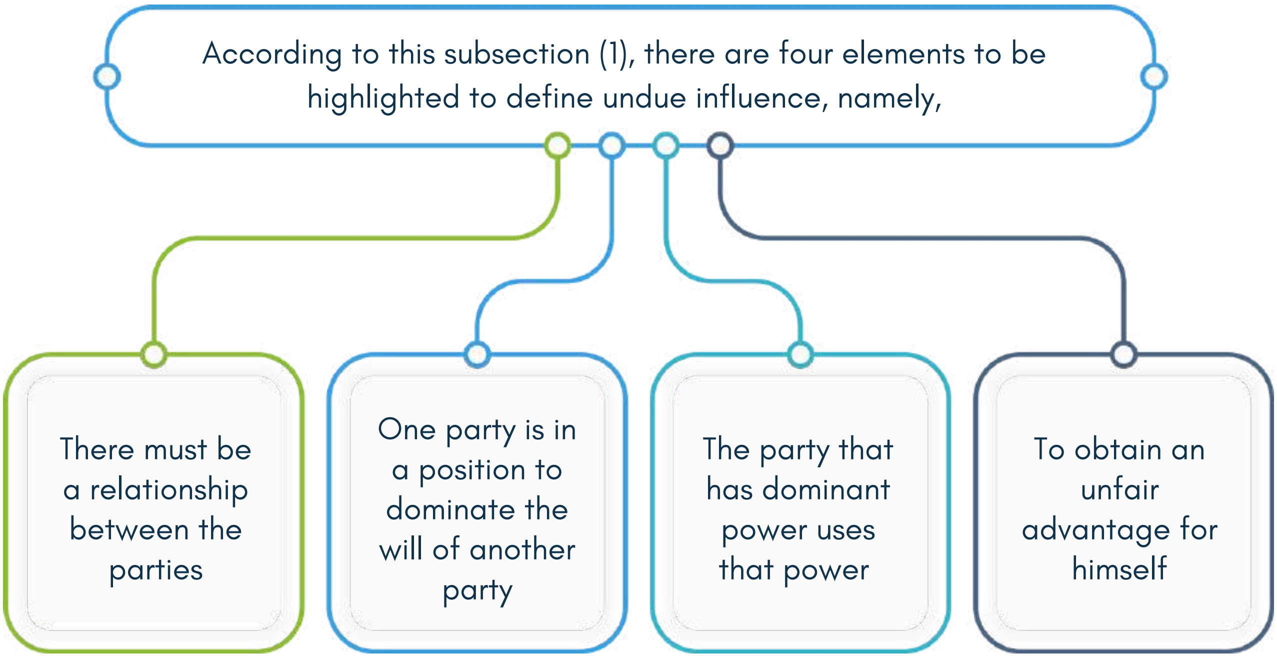
An agreement becomes a contract when the contracting parties have free consent and are competent to enter into a contract. This is provided for under section 10 of the Contract Act 1950 (hereinafter referred to as 'the Act'). According to section 14 of the Act, consent is free when it is not caused by coercion, fraud, misrepresentation, undue influence or mistake. The elements of coercion, fraud, misrepresentation, and undue influence may render a contract voidable while a mistake may render a contract void.

To understand the meaning and implication of undue influence on a contract, reference should be made to section 16 of the Act and the decided cases.

Section 16(1) provides that "a contract is said to be induced by "undue influence" where the relations subsisting between the parties are such that one of the parties is in a position to dominate the will of the other and uses that position to obtain an unfair advantage over the other".



For instance, parents and children, lecturers and students, employers and employees, lawyers and clients, doctors and patients, etc. If a lecturer sells textbooks to his/her students in his/her capacity as a lecturer, not a seller and he/she dominates the will of his/her students, therefore the contract is voidable as the students are induced to buy the textbooks. "Induce" means, someone is led to enter into a contract due to undue influence of another party.

Section 16(2) provides two categories of people in a position to dominate the will of another party. The section states that "in particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing principle, a person is deemed to be in a position to dominate the will of another.

(a) where he holds a real or apparent authority over the other, or where he stands in a fiduciary relation to the other; or (this paragraph refers to the abovementioned relationship where one party has dominant authority)

(b) where he makes a contract with a person whose mental capacity is temporarily or permanently affected because of age, illness, or mental or bodily distress". (this paragraph refers to a relation between a normal person with another person who has mental incapacity, for instance, senility, terminally ill, psychopathic disorder, and so on and so forth.

Section 16(3) provides that "where a person who is in a position to dominate the will of another, enters into a contract with him, and the transaction appears, on the face of it or on the evidence adduced, to be unconscionable, the burden of proving that the contract was not induced by undue influence shall lie upon the person in a position to dominate the will of the other".

According to this subsection (3), the burden of proof is cast upon a person who has dominant power or is in a position to dominate another person's will. He/she has to prove that he/she does not use that power to induce the other party to enter into a contract. If he/she fails to discharge the burden of proof, a contract will be voidable.

This principle is illustrated by the case of Datuk Jaginder Singh v Tara Rajaratnam [1983] 2 MLJ 196. In this case, the respondent, who was the owner of the land, claimed that she was induced by the undue influence of the appellant to transfer her land to the appellant. The court held that the appellant and the respondent were in a solicitor-client relationship. The transaction was unconscionable, and therefore, the burden was on the appellant to rebut the presumption of undue influence. Since the appellant had failed to discharge the burden, the contract of transferring the respondent's land to the appellant was set aside.

When a contract is voidable, the innocent party has an option either to rescind the contract or claim damages only. This is provided for under section 20 of the Act.

"When consent to an agreement is caused by undue influence, the agreement is a contract voidable at the option of the party whose consent was so caused. Any such contract may be set aside either absolutely or, if the party who was entitled to avoid it has received any benefit thereunder, upon such terms and conditions as to the court may seem just."

In conclusion, a contract may be rescinded when one of the contracting parties is induced to enter into a contract by another party who is in a position to dominate the will of another party.

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UTILISING WAQF FOR SUSTAINABLE FLOOD MITIGATION IN MALAYSIA

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Flooding is one of the most severe problems in Malaysia, causing significant loss of lives, properties, and socio-economies due to extremes of monsoonal rains. In response, scholars are investigating the possibility of using waqf (the Islamic endowment) as a sustainable flood management tool as it can provide long-term local solutions. For centuries, waqf has supported religious, educational, and health institutions. However, in environmental management, its applicability is better known as an alternative to flood mitigation.

WAQF AS A TOOL FOR FLOOD MANAGEMENT

The permanent nature of the assets reflects the design of the waqf system, which is meant to create permanent assets that will benefit communities. Waqf assets are perpetually dedicated to community projects, which means they have a continuous funding source for life once developed. Waqf could maintain local infrastructure projects for flood mitigation, such as retention ponds and reinforcement of riverbanks, so that the community is always proactive instead of reactive during a disaster (Yaacob et al., 2017). One such application could see communities creating retention ponds funded by waqf to contain excess rainwater during floods, not flooding the rivers or streets and making them available as water resources in drier months (Salleh et al., 2020).

LEARNING FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Incorporating ideas such as designs used in the Netherlands, which incorporate nature-oriented solutions with infrastructure by developing floodplains and wetlands to absorb water from floods, into Malaysia's waqf-based flood mitigation methods are synonymous with waqf (long-term focus and local community-centred), (Pitchay et al., 2018). Flood shelters in Bangladesh funded by local communities save lives during floods, indicating the potential of waqf to support shelters for needy locals and provide immediate assistance in disasters while promoting mutual collaboration (Thaker et al., 2018).

IRRIGATION WAQF FOR FLOOD MITIGATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This is a valid perspective, but widening the scope of waqf to embrace flood management presents regulatory and administrative hurdles. This is because waqf in Malaysia primarily serves religious and educational purposes, which means legal adaptations are needed for waqf to participate fully in environmental projects (Ambrose et al., 2015). For this purpose, better partnerships can be established among waqf institutions, ecological specialists and local authorities to hasten the process that would allow funds from waqf for high-risk flood areas (Abdullah et al., 2023)

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE THROUGH WAQF

The permanence of waqf is one of its main strengths. Not only does waqf-funded infrastructure provide timely relief, but it also creates an asset that the next generation can use. Such investment in waqf, for example, could address drainage systems or rainwater harvesting facilities, which may contribute to flood control and integrated water management (Chowdhury et al., 2012). Education programs related to water conservation and flood preparedness funded through waqf can supplement these projects that aim to promote sustainable practices (Haniff et al., 2023)

ENGAGING COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH WAQF

One of the main advantages of using waqf for flood projects is that it engages communities. Waqf-funded projects are mainly based on local needs that create ownership. Say, an initiative to strengthen riverbanks from a waqf could use the local workforce and resources. This promotes ownership behaviour among residents as they strive to maintain it. Local community involvement, including educating them about following flood preparedness, can be a part of the community initiative (Perai, 2005).

CONCLUSION

With its long-term funding model and community focus, waqf presents a promising framework for flood management in Malaysia. As flood risks increase, integrating waqf into environmental planning could create sustainable, resilient communities equipped to handle natural disasters. This approach could serve as a model for other flood-prone nations, fostering resilience throughout Southeast Asia.

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WATER MANAGEMENT IN PENANG: LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS TO CRISIS

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Introduction

Water scarcity has become a pressing issue for many cities (Adnan, 2022), including Penang, Malaysia. With over 1.7 million people, Penang relies on limited water sources under stress from prolonged dry weather and rising consumption. Due to these conditions, the state prioritises short-term relief and long-term planning to secure water supplies. Air Hitam and Teluk Bahang dams currently have 27.6% and 25.2% capacity, respectively, causing Penang's water supply crisis. Tens of thousands of households and businesses across the state are threatened by this shortage. Since late 2023, Penang has experienced low rainfall, compounding the water crisis and increasing the risk of future shortages. A lack of rainfall has resulted in local water authorities being under increasing pressure to implement robust solutions to avoid a full-blown water shortage (Penang2030, 2024).

Penang's Water Contingency Plan 2030 (WCP 2030) stated from Penang2030 (2024): In response to these challenges, the Penang government has launched the Water Contingency Plan 2030, a comprehensive initiative designed to strengthen the state’s water infrastructure and supply security.

Four key projects are outlined in the plan:

Infrastructural Development: Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) prioritises infrastructure development, upgrading the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and extending pipeline systems across the island and mainland. Penang Island and Seberang Perai are expected to benefit from these improvements by increasing water transfer efficiency and enhancing supply stability.

Water conservation measures: The PBAPP promotes water conservation practices among residents and businesses, emphasising water-saving techniques in order to reduce the demand for existing water supplies. In addition, the document recommends that non-essential water use, such as car washing, and alternative plant watering methods be adopted to minimise residential water consumption (Buletin Mutiara, 2024).

The Penang government has invested RM1 billion in water infrastructure to ensure a stable water supply. The funds also aim to support broader water management reforms that will ensure sustainability for Penang residents in the coming decades (Penang2030, 2024).

In order to achieve long-term sustainability, Penang's multifaceted approach to water management emphasises the need to integrate infrastructure, conservation, and funding. Focusing on high-impact infrastructure projects will enhance the state's ability to cope with weather variability and increased demand (Liu, et al, 2023). To ensure long-term water security, the public is being encouraged to practice water-saving practices, which emphasise the importance of community participation in conservation efforts (Marin, 2020). It is also possible that Penang's substantial financial commitment may serve as a benchmark for other Malaysian states, demonstrating the importance of proactive investment in managing natural resources.

Penang's proactive measures under the Water Contingency Plan 2030 reflect a comprehensive approach to urban water management, balancing infrastructure investments with public conservation efforts (Penang2030, 2024). In light of the challenges facing other regions in Malaysia and beyond related to urban water supply, Penang's strategies may provide valuable insights into developing resilient and sustainable water systems. There is a critical need for forward-looking policies to address immediate water concerns and to plan for future demands and environmental factors.

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WATER POLLUTION IN MALAYSIA: PENALTIES UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT 1974

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Water pollution is a significant issue in Malaysia and has serious implications for biodiversity, humans, and the economy. The country's growing industry, urbanisation, and agricultural activities have increased river, lake, and other water body pollution, negatively affecting the environment and the people. The Environmental Quality Act 1974 is the most important legal tool that Malaysia has employed, particularly in regulating wastewater. This Act is a set of rules that enforce control mechanisms against water pollution by establishing water quality standards, liability of offenders, and stringent punishment by way of penalty for an infraction of the law. Court decisions have also influenced how Malaysia's water pollution laws are enforced.

OVERVIEW OF WATER POLLUTION IN MALAYSIA

Some sources of water pollution in Malaysia are oil spills, plastic waste disposal, untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and agriculture run-off. Domestic wastewater, the entry of agricultural chemicals and untreated or inadequately treated industrial steel into rivers have resulted in pollution. This has left many areas prone to health issues like water-borne diseases and degraded aquaculture, tourism, the ecological niche, and the continuation of life around bodies of water, as many people depend on the water bodies for drinking purposes, tourism, fishing, and agricultural activities.

Malaysia's main environmental pollution legislation is the Environmental Quality Act 1974. It applies to the prevention, reduction and control of pollution in the whole environment, including releasing pollutants into lakes, rivers and other bodies of water. The Act allows the Department of Environment far-reaching authority to regulate and supervise water quality, set pollution discharge limits and impose sanctions.

Certain sections in the Act specifically cover water pollution and control measures. For example, section 11 authorises the Department of Environment to regulate the release of contaminants into water bodies. Industries should have a license to discharge their effluent before releasing wastewater into rivers or other bodies of water. Under section 21, the Minister has the power to regulate the emission, discharge, and deposit of pollutants, which are necessary with the condition.

PENALTIES FOR CAUSING WATER POLLUTION IN MALAYSIA

Offences under the Environmental Quality Act 1974 for causing pollution are punishable by different penalties. These penalties are intended to prevent future deterioration of Malaysia's water resources and to act as a deterrence to possible polluters. According to section 25, pollution in inland waters, including rivers, canals, and lakes, is restricted and prohibited without a license. Anyone who breaches this section faces a maximum fine of RM100,000, a maximum imprisonment sentence of five years, or both.

The Act, via section 34B and section 27, further prohibits garbage or scheduled wastes from being discharged into Malaysian waters and the discharge of any oil or oil-containing mixture. Violations of both sections are criminal offences punishable by conviction to a maximum fine of RM500,000, a maximum imprisonment of 5 years, or both.

Taken together, these sections prohibit the unauthorised disposal of waste, oil or contaminants into water in Malaysia, underscoring the importance of compliance with the laws to safeguard the environment. The penalties are proportionate to the seriousness of these offences and are a powerful deterrent against potential offenders.

Despite providing a relatively solid legal foundation for pollution control, the Environmental Quality Act 1974 has been put to the test in several court cases. A truck driver was fined up to RM100,000 by the Johor Bahru Session Court in November 2023 for illegally disposing of scheduled waste in Sungai Kim Kim, Pasir Gudang, Johor, in 2019, thereby creating pollution. The offender was charged under section 25, and the court imposed the maximum fine on him. The same court had also ordered a company, a party to the same case, to pay a fine of RM40,000 for each of the eight charges, amounting to RM320,000. On appeal in June 2024, the High Court raised the punishment to RM80,000 for each charge, for a total of RM640,000 for breaking the Environmental Quality Act 1974. The case reaffirmed that companies and industries should be responsible for polluting the environment and highlighted the need for strict industrial waste rules.

Conclusion

The Environmental Quality Act 1974 is an essential legal tool in Malaysia's fight against water pollution, providing a framework for legal regulation of water quality and a system of sanctions to discourage violations. With heavy fines and imprisonment terms, the Act comes with tough penalties to prevent that from happening in any inland water in Malaysia. These stringent regulations show Malaysia's dedication to sustainable water usage and the maintenance of aquatic habitats for future generations.

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CURVES THAT HEAL AND INSPIRE

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Curves are fundamental elements in both nature and design, representing smooth, continuous lines that can vary in complexity and form. They are essential in various fields, from the graceful arcs seen in architecture to the intricate paths in computer graphics. In the realm of computer graphics and animation, one of the most powerful tools for creating smooth and intricate shapes is the **Bézier curve.** A **Bézier curve** is a smooth, mathematically defined curve constructed using a set of points known as **control points**. These control points may not necessarily lie directly on the curve, but they significantly influence its shape and trajectory.

For example:

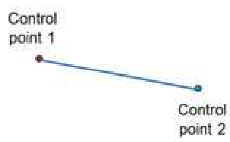


Figure 1: A straight line is produced using two control points.

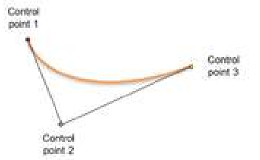


Figure 2: A smooth curve (parabola-like) is produced using three control points.

Bézier curves, first conceptualized by Pierre Bézier in the 1960s for the automotive design of Renault cars (Laurent and Sablonniére, 2001), have since become fundamental in various fields due to their flexibility and mathematical simplicity. These curves are now integral to animation, computer graphics, and medicine. Many design tools, such as Adobe Illustrator, allow users to manipulate Bézier curves visually by adjusting the control points, making it intuitive to create complex shapes and paths.

Bézier Curves in Animation

1) Motion Path Design

Bézier curves allow the users to create **intricate and customizable motion paths.** For example, Bézier curves with control points are utilized to determine both global and local paths for mobile robots, allowing them to navigate through obstacles and avoid collisions (Bulut, 2023).

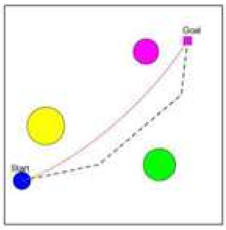
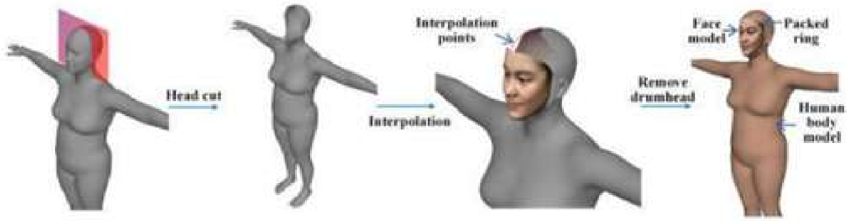


**Photo from (Bulut, 2023)*

2) Animation

Bézier curves are employed to model **facial expressions** in character design. Control points corresponding to facial features, such as the eyes and mouth, are used in the design process. Subsequently, Bézier curves are utilized to interpolate animation, smoothing the boundaries of the facial features (Fang et al., 2021).

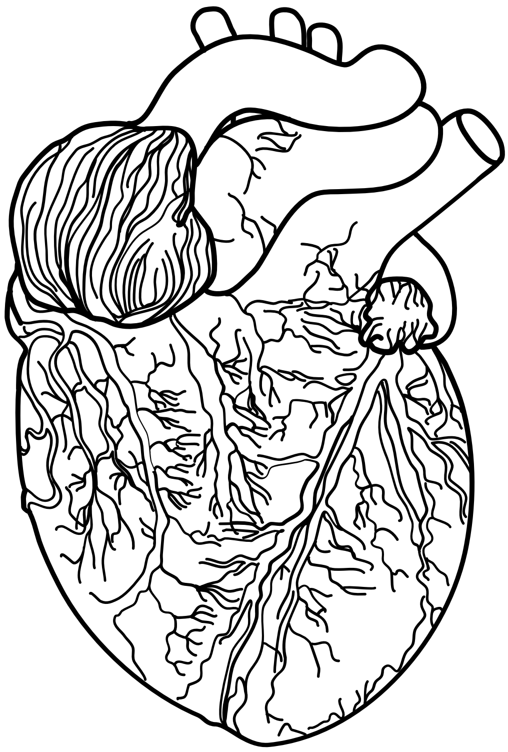


Bézier Curves in Medical Applications

1. *Contour Detection and Modeling*

Bézier curves are used to delineate and annotate anatomical structures in medical images, for example in X-rays, MRIs, and CT scans. In MRI segmentation, a Bézier curve can outline the shape of a tumor or an organ, creating a precise, smooth boundary for further analysis (Chen et al., 2021). In an MRI scan of a brain, the outer edge of the brain can be approximated using a Bézier curve. The curve would smoothly follow the contours of the brain, helping doctors better understand its shape and size for diagnosis or surgery. Bézier curves are also used to outline anatomical structures in medical images.

For instance, in cardiology, Bézier curves are often employed to model the intricate shapes of heart chambers and the branching patterns of blood vessels. Their ability to adapt to varying curvatures and provide high levels of detail ensures precise visualization, aiding in diagnosis, surgical planning, and the development of computational models for medical research (Maqsood et al., 2020).



2. *Biomechanics*

Motion analysis in biomechanics uses Bézier curves to track and model joint movements. These insights improve rehabilitation strategies and the development of assistive devices. For instance: Plotting the smooth motion of a limb during physical therapy to evaluate the range of motion (Norman-Gerum & McPhee, 2018)

Real-World Application

Bézier curves facilitate smooth and predictable movements of robotic arms in robot-assisted and tele-controlled ultrasound scanning systems for three-dimensional imaging. The Bézier interpolation algorithm is employed to reconstruct volume image data from the ultrasound scanner, resulting in more accurate and efficient 3D volume construction (Huang and Lan, 2019). This technology also enables clinicians to design patient-specific implants, thereby improving surgical outcomes. Another notable application of Bézier curves is in font design. TrueType and PostScript fonts utilize Bézier curves to define the shapes of letters and characters, enabling smooth and scalable text rendering.

In summary, Bézier curves, a mathematical marvel, have revolutionized a wide range of applications across various fields, particularly in animation and medicine. Their precision and adaptability empower artists and scientists to push the boundaries of creativity and innovation. From crafting lifelike animations to designing life-saving medical tools, Bézier curves epitomize the confluence of art and science. As technology evolves, their applications will undoubtedly expand, shaping the future of diverse industries.

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BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF A LIBRARY CONTENT CREATOR

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"Have you ever wondered how much time is spent behind every social media post?"

These days, libraries aren't just places to borrow books; they're all over social media too! According to a recent piece by Taylor and Francis (2024), libraries are getting creative with posts to promote events, manage collections, reach out to the community, and even boost learning experiences. Crafting each post takes a bit of thought—from the initial brainstorming to the posting, to looking back to see what worked best. This three-part process—planning, posting, and reviewing—helps make each post even better next time around!

Planning

When it comes to the planning phase, library content creators aren't just zeroing in on a single post; they're envisioning the entire vibe of their profile page, like an Instagram grid! This approach not only appeals to the eye but also invites engagement from viewers, whether they're loyal followers or new faces. That's why maintaining standardization and consistency, especially with cover images, is super important. A well-curated grid not only looks good but also encourages more interaction from everyone who stumbles upon it!

Figure 1: Example of colour-coordinated and classic grid (Jade, 2024)

Then, as they get into creating individual posts, library content creators focus on crafting posts that really resonate with their audience to boost engagement. Take orientation week, for example—rather than starting with a deep dive into database tutorials, libraries might kick things off with a simpler, welcoming post as a warm-up. But here's the tricky part: figuring out what each unique audience likes isn't easy. There's no "one-size-fits-all" post that appeals to everyone!

o make posts even more relatable, some libraries introduce mascots or characters. Imagine a series where Mr. Whisker, the library's beloved mascot, goes on little "book-hunting" adventures—suddenly, the posts become more than just info snippets; they're stories viewers can connect with. And here's why I'd call these content creators "Jack of all trades"—they're usually librarians or library staff, not outside marketers. They do it all: coming up with concepts, crafting the posts, and even handling the tech!

This job can be time-consuming; a 15-second video might mean hours of filming and editing. That's why these creators turn to user-friendly tools like Canva and CapCut to streamline the process. And, of course, some solid copywriting with a call-to-action is key to nudging viewers to interact.

Figure 2: Examples of posts during orientation week (Sunway JB Library and Learning Commons, 2024)

Posting

Content should be posted when people are most active on each platform. Luckily, this can be figured out by using built-in tools like Instagram Insights, or even paid software, to find the best times to post. While the best days and times might differ from platform to platform, a good rule of thumb is to aim for lunchtime (around 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.), except on weekends (Glover, 2024). Of course, the timing should also match up with the library's schedule or any events happening at the institution. Timing really is everything!

Reviewing

The depth of the reviewing process really depends on the library. Some might go all in, cross-checking how their social media posts directly relate to actual library usage, while others might keep it simple and just focus on the reach and engagement each post receives. Every library has its own way of measuring success!

Conclusion

In the end, social media marketing is just as important as any other role in the library. A strong online presence can make all the difference, especially if the content really connects with viewers or followers. That's why library content creators need to focus on every part of the process, especially the brainstorming and creating phases, to ensure their efforts truly resonate.

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FAKE NEWS, REAL PROBLEMS: A BATTLE FOR TRUTH

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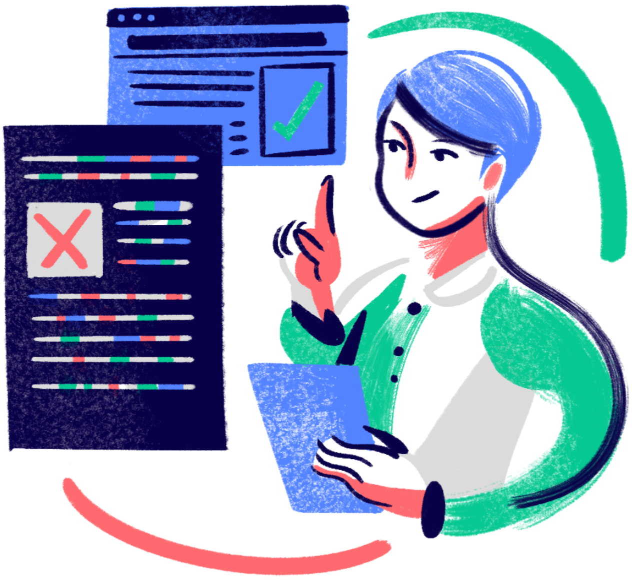

The era of Industry Revolution 5.0 has shown many advancements in AI, robotics, and data analytics. This era has drastically changed how information is created, shared, and accessed. While these technologies have improved access to information, individuals are fuelled with the spread of fake news. Rand and Pennycook (2021) stated that people often neglect accuracy when sharing information, distracted by the fast-paced nature of social media.

Fake news is becoming a bigger problem in Malaysia. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has reported 2,125 fake news between 2021 and April 2023 raising worries for national unity and public safety. Due to this issue, the MCMC is creating legislation to deal with information that jeopardizes racial and religious peace and fake news which will have an impact on Malaysians.

One of the most essential practices for avoiding fake news is to verify the source of information. In the age where content is readily accessible across multiple platforms, users must assess the credibility of the source before accepting any information as true. It is important to check if the information comes from a reliable and well-established news outlet or if the source is credible. Websites that lack transparency, have unclear authorship, or present exaggerated claims are often red flags for misinformation. Van Gool et al. (2015), stated that there were numerous users sharing information or news on social media without verifying its authenticity.

The basic technique against fake news is to check from several sources to ensure the accuracy and authoritativeness of information. An individual who just relies on a single source can sometimes result in a limited and potentially inaccurate understanding of a problem and misinformation. In the IR 5.0 era, where information is frequently personalized to individual tastes by AI algorithms, echo chambers can readily arise, reinforcing preexisting bias. Therefore, it is crucial for cross-referencing news from many sources, readers may guarantee that they are obtaining accurate and balanced information. If numerous trustworthy sources describe the same facts, the information is more likely to be reliable.

Another technique is applying AI technology which is using fact-checking tools. This technique has become increasingly important in combating fake news. The advancement of AI technology is playing a major role in filtering and prioritizing content and it is essential to take advantage of tools designed to verify claims and data. In this regard, AI is affecting decision-making in an increasing number of sectors and could be utilized to increase the effectiveness of timely detection and identification of fake news (Gupta et al., 2021). Furthermore, AI-based tools are becoming more sophisticated in analyzing the quality of content for accuracy to identify unreliable information in real-time. Users can quickly discern whether a story is true or a fabrication.

The critical thinking is a foundational practice that empowers individuals to avoid being misled by fake news. This method practises the evaluation criterias to be applied in evaluating information. In the IR 5.0 era, information flows rapidly, and it is easy for sensational headlines or emotionally charged content to sway people's opinions. Therefore, individuals must develop the ability to critically evaluate information before forming conclusions.

This involves asking questions such as:

1. Is the information supported by evidence?
2. Are there logical fallacies or emotional manipulations present?
3. Does the information offer sources or references to back up its claims?

By engaging in this type of reflective analysis, individuals can avoid falling prey to false information.

With the rapid development of digital technology, it is also important for digital literacy skills. The skills to evaluate and analyze information are needed along with the evolving information technology.

The Malaysian government launched an initiative to promote digital literacy among Malaysians which is Digital Literacy for All Programmes. Among the goals of this programme is about the importance of digital safety and security. This module includes skills on how to protect personal information online, how to avoid scams and how to identify and report cyberbullying as well. This is because technological improvements have made it easier for fake news to proliferate, necessitating more comprehensive information literacy training (Jang, 2019).

Furthermore, people should be warned of the dangers of deepfake technology, which use artificial intelligence to create hyper-realistic but wholly faked movies and audio recordings. As deepfakes become more convincing, viewers must exercise caution while viewing media material. Finally, community-driven verification can help against fake news. Users on social media sites frequently flag and report dubious content, allowing communities to collaborate in discovering and deleting incorrect information. Moreover, by participating discussions and sharing credible information through online can help to slow the spread of fake news. It is essential to verify content as an effective method for holding individuals and organizations accountable for the information they publish.

In conclusion, it is crucial to adopt a range of practices to avoid fake news and its harmful consequences in the era of IR5.0. The rapid dissemination of information in many media platforms both verified and unverified, from both professional and non-professional content providers has fostered the spread of fake news (Tandoc et al, 2018). As technology continues to shape the information landscape, it is our responsibility to equip ourselves with the tools and skills needed to combat fake news and foster a more informed society.

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TECH-SAVVY LIBRARIES: THRIVING IN THE ERA OF INDUSTRY 5.0

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Libraries have always been a foundation of our communities by providing access to books, research materials, and educational resources. But, as digital technologies have rapidly advanced, libraries have had to adapt. The traditional image of libraries filled with rows of bookshelves is evolving into digital spaces where information is constantly growing and shared. In IR 5.0, libraries are not just about physical books anymore—they are becoming hubs for digital learning, offering a wide range of online resources, e-books, multimedia content, and more. This transformation is not just about using new technology; it is about reshaping libraries to meet the changing needs of a digital world.

Technology has a major impact on how libraries function, making them more efficient and effective in their daily operations. Automated systems now handle tasks that were once time-consuming, like cataloging books or checking out materials. This frees up librarians to focus more on what matters: helping people find the information they need, curating relevant resources, and offering support in navigating an increasingly complex digital landscape. For libraries, this shift is more than just adopting new tools—it is about reimagining the role they play in society and how they can best serve their communities. As a result, librarians are stepping into new roles, and how we access and share knowledge is evolving in profound ways.

The Fifth Industrial Revolution (IR 5.0) is bringing a wave of change, transforming how we interact with knowledge and information. In this new era, advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and data analytics work alongside human creativity and empathy to create exciting new possibilities. These technological advances do not just make things run more smoothly—they also help libraries become more interactive and accessible, offering a faster user experience that is more personalized and more responsive to the diverse needs of the communities they serve.

To adapt to these changes, librarians need to be more tech-savvy than ever. They are no longer just custodians of books; they're becoming digital curators, guides, and navigators, helping users find their way through a sea of information. Whether it's helping someone find a book, assisting in research, or teaching digital literacy skills, librarians are still the trusted guides they've always been.

But now, their role is also about helping people make sense of vast amounts of digital content. They're experts in organizing information, showing people how to evaluate resources, and teaching the skills necessary to find reliable, credible information in an online world where misinformation is all too common.

In addition to knowing how to manage digital platforms, librarians must advance with the latest emerging technologies, such as AI, machine learning, and augmented reality, which could reshape how libraries operate and how users engage with information. In a rapidly evolving tech landscape, librarians need to continuously adapt and learn to ensure they can offer the best service possible and help patrons navigate the digital world with confidence.

At the same time, library users are becoming more proactive in their search for information. With the help of technology, they can now take control of their learning and research, creating personalized reading lists, exploring new areas of interest, and accessing information from anywhere. Libraries are no longer just places to passively consume knowledge, they become interactive spaces where people actively engage with information and use it to make decisions, solve problems, or learn new skills. In other words, librarians also shift their roles from information providers to guides, teaching users how to navigate digital spaces and empowering them to become more self-sufficient in their quest for knowledge.

This new relationship between librarians and users is also about collaboration. In IR 5.0, libraries are not just about storing books or providing quiet spaces for study but they are about fostering connections. Librarians help people build networks, share ideas, and collaborate on projects by using technology to create spaces where people can learn together, whether through digital platforms, virtual discussions, or interactive tools. Through this new relationship, libraries are helping to build stronger communities, where people can access information and also engage with it in meaningful ways.

Librarians are also increasingly responsible for managing the vast amounts of data that are generated in the digital age through library service delivery. As more content is digitized, libraries are taking on the important role of organizing and preserving this information so that future generations can access it. This involves curating content and ensuring it remains searchable and usable, even as technology changes over time. Preserving digital resources is an essential responsibility that requires librarians to be tech-savvy and forward-thinking. Librarians play a key role in ensuring that digital information remains safe, accessible, and usable far into the future.

In conclusion, the Fifth Industrial Revolution is bringing profound change to libraries and those working in them. As technology advances, libraries are evolving from traditional physical spaces to dynamic digital hubs that provide access to a vast range of resources. Librarians are taking on new roles as digital curators, guides, and mentors, helping users navigate an increasingly complex information landscape. They are embracing new technologies and adapting to the diverse needs of their communities. Through workshops, digital resources, or community outreach, librarians will empower individuals and help communities navigate the complexities of the digital age. Libraries are now spaces where people can learn new skills, explore fresh ideas, and gain the confidence they need to thrive.

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ARABIC PROVERBS AND LITERATURE: THE ANIMAL CONNECTION

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Introduction

In proverb and literary aspects, animals have always been a great part of the Arabic culture and literature as animals have similar attributes as humans in terms of behaviors, characters and societal norms. These animal images are created in the context of the language used and customs of the people, as they show the closeness between man and animals and his environment. Some of these animals include wolves, lions and sheep which may represent power, cleverness and submissiveness respectively depending on the social or dialectical context (Salamh & Maalej, 2018).

This phenomenon of linking animals to human attributes is found in Arabic literature from the period of the birth of our religion to the present, including texts, fairy tales, and ethnographic materials. Proverb not only makes sense in awfully constricting and expanding concepts which teaches lessons but also explains the environments where that animal was found (Issawi, 2021). Animals in Arabic proverbs also help explain the culture and social order of the various Arab societies as well as how their proverbs have been preserved through oral tradition.

Symbolism of Animals in Arabic Proverbs

Animal imagery in Arabic proverbs demonstrates the interplay between language and culture. Animals in Arabic proverbs are also associated with specific human characteristics and social norms or traits. For instance, the wolf is often associated with danger and shrewdness while innocence and helplessness are usually associated with the sheep. Such animal imagery is also shaped by the sociocultural as well as geographical factors of the Arab World. These images do have some slight regional variations within the Arabic-speaking world, but their essential symbolism has not changed (Al Rabee' & Al Khanji, 2024).

Metaphor is one of the salient features of Arabic proverbs that uses animals to refer to similar characteristics of the human; thus, one may find animals such as lions representing courage, camels representing patience, and dogs representing either loyalty or subservience. Such encodings, however, are not only linguistically encoded but also culturally contextualized in the Arab world both in historical texts as well as in the proverbs of the ordinary people (Issawi, 2021).

The Role of Animals in Arabic Folk Literature and Stories

The position of animals in Arabic folklore and narrative shows that they are the main representatives that help communicate simple morals, cultures, and the societies at large. For instance, in many Arabic fables, animals are anthropomorphized to portray a particular human trait and also as a lesson, for example, courage or intelligence. Such narratives emphasize the notion of bonding between the human and the animals or plants; in such cases, the animal or plant is used as the reflection of the environment and the human behavior towards it (El-Shamy, 2018).

Moral stories, especially the ones for kids, also have animals as characters especially in folk literature. Usually, they depict moral values like that of a camel depicting patience or dog representing loyalty and are used to teach moral lessons. In this case, the presence of animals as characters helps to present the situations within the transformations of people's inner worlds, allowing each and every one of the readers to appreciate the very essence of the story (Muhammad, 2022).

For centuries, the depiction of animals in Arabic traditions has encompassed narratives that shed light on appreciating historical and cultural values. Such animal oriented narratives depict the bedouin way as well as the full arabic bearing focusing on the aspects of survival, creativity, and socialization (McDonald, 1988).

Cultural and Regional Variations in Animal Proverbs

Variations in anthropological distribution of animal proverbs examines how societies incorporate animals in sayings. Since these sayings are metaphorical in nature, they provide clues or hints on the ways members of a given society relate with their surroundings. There are such differences even in one's saying about lions, which in their culture is force and courage but, in others mean terror and oppression (Landmann, 2023).

Research on proverbs across different cultures, including but not limited to the Uzbek and Malay languages, shows that concepts such as the fox or the wolf can be used to portray entirely different ideas in different regions (Yuldashev, 2020). These variations emphasize global patterns in the interaction between man and animals and also some aspects of cultures in which these patterns are embedded.

Similarly, in the environment of Al-Bahah, animal imagery is often deeply eco-linguistic in nature, reflecting the relationship between people and their environment (Alghamdi, 2019). The cultural context and the socio-pragmatic use of animals in Arabic proverbs further enrich the language, emphasizing its connection to socio-pragmatic practices.

Conclusion

To conclude, the use of animal related Arabic proverbs mirrors the intrinsic cultural, social, and environmental landscape of the Arab world. Animals such as wolf, sheep, lion and many others have been employed in these proverbs to depict human behavior and characteristics comprising courage, cunning and submission, proving that Arabic literature is rich in symbolism.

The employment of figurative constructs such as imagery involving animals in proverbs has historical and religious perspectives as well as linguistic aspects and this justifies the quest to understand that these concepts have an ecological and cultural explanation. The analysis of animal-related sayings in different regions and traditions not only suggests some common ideas and themes but also relatively clear differences, which means these sayings can be transmitted without major changes for a long period of time.

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PETFLUENCERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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A rise of "petfluencers" has taken over social media, where furry ones with thousands of followers sway trends and consumer behaviour in the digital world just like any other human influencer by promoting products and services. According to Smith and Johnson (2023), a petfluencer is usually an animal (a cat, dog, or other domestic pet) that has gained considerable attention and influence through social media platforms. These pets are often managed by their owners, who curate content that showcases their personalities, behaviours, or specific niches, creating a digital persona that resonates with audiences worldwide (Williams, 2022). The appeal of petfluencers lies in their ability to evoke positive emotions, often through cuteness, humour, or relatability. The rise of petfluencers is mainly due to the viral nature of social media, especially on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, X, and YouTube, where visual content plays a big role in attracting attention. In this digital space, pets are not just featured in content but actively shape trends and build communities (Carter and Holmes, 2022). As a result, these pets have become more than just internet sensations—they are now cultural icons, influencing consumer habits and lifestyle choices with their cuteness (Davis and Lee, 2024).

The Grumpy Cat, who managed to penetrate social media for its grumpy facial expression, sadly passed away.

The famous Pororo from Indonesia has gone viral for its steady behavior in front of the camera and collaboration with various brands.

This "cuteness effect" is especially strong in social media surroundings that are typically dominated by emotional content (Henderson and Lee, 2022). Pets that display endearing behaviours or have striking physical features become symbols of innocence and joy, which increases their ability to foster deep emotional connections with followers (Griffiths and White, 2024). This emotional connection with consumers is so important in the world today because research has proven that consumers are more likely to connect with brands or make purchasing decisions when they are connected or engaged with the content personally or emotionally (Kumar, Singh, and Patel 2023). As for petfluencers, that's where the cuteness factor not only translates to engagement such as likes and shares through reposts or user-generated content, but also turns into better brand loyalty. The petfluencers are widely used in digital marketing strategies as the craze for petfluencers continues to grow among brands and is highly easy to gain traffic. From pet products to lifestyle items, consumers tend to project the emotional gratification they receive from adorable pet content onto brands, leading to better click-through rates and increased revenue (Miller and Thompson, 2024).

To summarise, petfluencers have emerged as a distinct and influential force in the digital marketing landscape. They serve as powerful tools to engage closely with the audience. They are potent growth drivers across the pet industry as well as across various consumer industries, creating new ways for brands to connect with consumers. Credit to owners of petfluencers and the main character—the pet itself—the economic ripple effect extends to them, who often generate substantial income through brand partnerships, paid content, and affiliate marketing, thereby contributing to the broader gig economy (Jones, 2022).

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LOVE IN ARABIC NOVELS: CULTURAL NARRATIVES AND LITERARY EXPRESSIONS

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Introduction

Love has manifested itself in numerous ways in Arabic literature for centuries and continues to be one of the most loved themes. Most of the love in the arabic literary desert travels unexplored with more than rather romance. Most importantly, the recent works of Arabic literature have included the third dimensional love espoused in the female gaze. This is especially the case in modern Arabian, where the re-reading of the traditional notions of love has taken place through the relaying of nation building, modernity and cultural identity concepts (Oghia, 2015). Such novels usually oscillate between the utopic view of love as presented in the classical Arabic love poems and the reality of the current Arab world (Radwan, 2023).

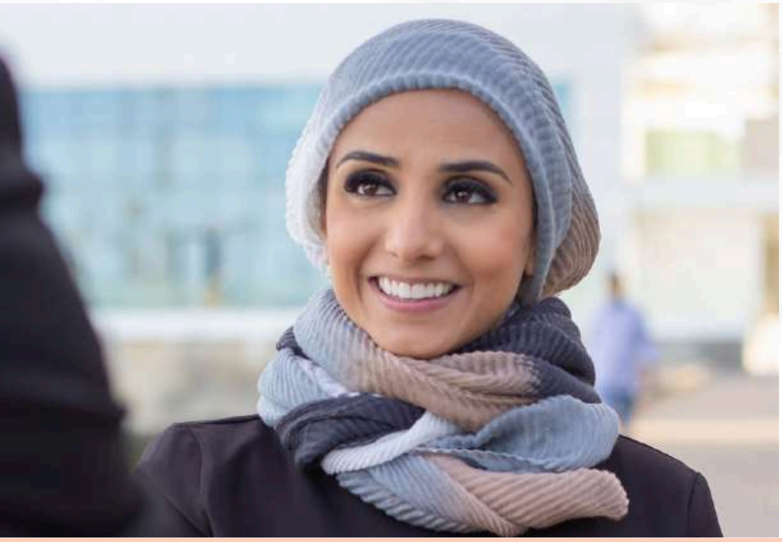
Through these love stories, the authors address the concerns of the age regarding the relationship between tradition and modernity. Literature therefore explores the ways personal feelings intertwine with the feelings of society at large. Love in Arabic novels is integrated with issues of politics and history, which makes such literature transform, instead of simply narrate, aspects of Arab culture (Ouyang, 2012). This paper will consider the manifestations of love within the framework of Arabic novels, focusing on love as a literary expression of culture that creates a bridge between private experience and public, rather national and cultural, feelings.

THE ROLE OF LOVE IN SHAPING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ARABIC NOVELS

As in the case of Arabic literature, love is often considered as a major theme of personal and national identity. It looks at the emotional and psychological states of the characters in the evolving nation. Characters and societies interact through the representation of love.

Love in this context is often associated with the development of a nation or the political upheavals of history. In novels during colonial or postcolonial eras, love interplay is used to explore issues of tradition and change, national self and colonialism.

For instance, Ouyang (2012) notes that the Poetics of Love in Arabic Novels shows how love should not only be viewed as a private phenomenon, but indeed very much represents the quest for the enveloping identity and shape of the country. In addition, there are examples in literature of women like Assia Djebar, who will include love whereas unlike many women's writers it is rarely for romantic purposes – it is for the sake of National liberation which many women are a part of – thus it is political as well as personal (Fayad, 1995). These examples also deal with, among others, gender, race and ethnicity, love goes beyond the self even in such examples and becomes larger than the individual and the couple and works permeating to include the society and the nation (Najm & Islam, 2021).



Romantic Love as a Cross-Cultural Theme in Arabic Literary Traditions

The Arab heritage abounds in cross-cultural dimensions of romantic love because it is laden with cultural aspects of the Arab world as well as the cultures of many other countries. Historically, Arabic poetry has been largely based on love and has represented a spectrum of love ranging from idealistic to forbidden loves (Allen, 2023). As it is evident from the fact that modern Arabic novels are written in this genre, cross-cultural intercultural interactions are frequently depicted, especially the intermingling of Arabian culture with the West. These narratives suggest the existence of some conflict between old values and new ones in a number of situations such as for example… emigration or colonialism.

For instance, talking about cross-cultural romances in Arabic literature, there are many female characters in their male counterparts, as in Arabic novels set in London and other big cities such as Cairo. The tension between the two cultures is evident in the relationships as Arabs and Westerners relate to one another causing conflict, which occupation and war tend to mask. Put simply, this helps to explain the existence of identity and belonging as social structural elements and that personal love stories do intertwine with such themes (Amrieh & Rahmouni, 2023). On top of that, of course, different cultures have different and often even contradictory ideas about romantic relationships simply because different societies have different morals (Karandashev, 2017).

The Evolution of Love Poetry and its Impact on Modern Arabic Novels

Over the centuries, love poetry which is prominent in Arabic literature has proved to be essential in the writing of modern Arab novels, both in terms of themes and styles. Classic Arabic love poetry especially from the Abbasid era, was the first to pave ways for deep attachment and other romantic themes which are still alive today in literature (Nasser 2020).

Since the earliest records of creative writings, wherever Arabic culture has appeared, the love poem has been, reinforcing even the most obdurate traditions such as that of courtly love. Such a legacy has served as a context for contemporary Arabic, as well, love narratives in this context serving more often than not as facilitators of other themes such as social, political, or national (Allen, 2023). Love themes confined to classical poetry have matured to engage their contemporary audience and fused with the novel in especially the post colonial years when love themes are allied with national and cultural identity issues (Ouyang, 2012).

This poetry and novel dichotomy and its harmony is one of the factors that enrich contemporary Arabic literature, as it outlines one's experiences in love in a way that every other literature does not.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the depiction of love in Arabic literary works is an integral part of the cultural and literary history of the region. Grounded in an elaborate history of poetic expression, love is characterized not only as an internalized felt experience but also as a communication tool for other social phenomena including political aspects. The development of the motives of love, largely based on writings from Arabic poetic history, as well as the contemporary Western art, is a remarkable example of the coexistence of the old and the new in the traditions of bourgeois Arab authors. Love is an important part of literature in the Arab world owing to the fact that Arabic novels still leverage this theme as a plot for questions related to identity, nationalism, and social change.

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TURNING PAGES, CROSSING CULTURES: LIBRARIES AS GATEWAYS TO EDU-TOURISM

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For the travellers that venturing into uncharted places, it is their curiosity that leads the way. Imagine they are stepping into a space where culture, history, and knowledge meet, where learning transcends textbooks and tourist guides, and where your surroundings themselves tell stories of a region's past, present, and future. This is the allure of edu-tourism, which is a unique form of travel that intertwines exploration with education. Defined simply, edu-tourism (educational tourism) is travel centred around learning. It is a journey to places with the intent of gaining knowledge, whether through structured programs or immersion in historical, cultural, or environmental aspects of a destination.

The authors as information professionals always look at a library that UNESCO defines as an organization, or part of an organization, whose main goals are to build and maintain a collection and to facilitate the use of such information resources and facilities as are required to meet the informational, research, educational, cultural, or recreational needs of its users, as a pivotal site for edu-tourism. This article delves into libraries' significance as locations for inspiration, education, and cultural exchange and therefore can enhance knowledge sharing globally. We can see how libraries, such as the beautiful Starfield Library in Seoul, South Korea, and other monuments in China and Japan, are influencing the landscape of edu-tourism.

In the evolving landscape of edu- tourism, libraries have transformed from mere repositories of books into vibrant cultural hubs that offer travellers immersive educational experiences. By hosting diverse programs such as exhibitions, author talks, and historical tours, libraries like Seoul's Starfield Library and Tianjin Binhai Library in China provide visitors with deep insights into local histories and literature, fostering active engagement with regional customs and narratives. These institutions also house invaluable cultural artefacts, rare manuscripts, and extensive archives, serving as gateways to a nation's cultural heritage and facilitating cross-cultural dialogue. Another example is the Nakanoshima Library in Osaka Japan which houses archives and collections that detail Osaka's history and culture, including documents that reflect Japan's evolution through the 20th century.

For tourists interested in Japan's cultural and literary heritage, Nakanoshima Library provides a meaningful journey through Japanese literature, calligraphy, and local history. The library also hosts exhibitions and cultural events that educate visitors about traditional Japanese arts, such as haiku poetry and woodblock printing Architecturally, iconic libraries such as Seoul's Starfield Library, China's Tianjin Binhai Library and Nakanoshima Library in Osaka Japan captivate tourists with their stunning designs, blending intellectual enrichment with visual splendor. Modern libraries have become central to tourism through these multifaceted offerings, inviting travellers to explore and appreciate the rich tapestry of global cultures.

Integrating libraries into edu-tourism involves leveraging their resources, services, and cultural significance to provide enriching learning experiences for travellers. The following conceptual framework outlines how libraries can be embedded into edu-tourism, enhancing both educational outcomes and tourism development. Libraries can serve as cultural and educational hubs, providing tourists with access to local history, literature, and art through exhibitions, workshops, and lectures. They can also collaborate with tourism agencies to enhance these offerings.

Specialized edu-tourism programs, such as guided tours, archival research opportunities, and cultural events, can attract tourists. Libraries can also collaborate with educational institutions to offer joint programs, such as study abroad programs, internships, and workshops. Digital resources can be enhanced by developing digital collections and virtual tours, allowing libraries to reach a global audience. Effective marketing and promotion strategies, such as using social media, travel blogs, and partnerships with tourism boards, can highlight unique programs and resources available to tourists. Libraries may need to adapt their infrastructure and services to accommodate tourists, including multilingual resources, flexible visiting hours, and amenities catering to international visitors.

Feedback mechanisms can help libraries assess the effectiveness of their edu-tourism initiatives, providing insights into tourist satisfaction and areas for improvement. By embedding libraries into the edu-tourism framework, they can become pivotal in promoting cultural understanding and lifelong learning among tourists, enriching the tourist experience, and elevating their role in the community and the broader tourism industry.

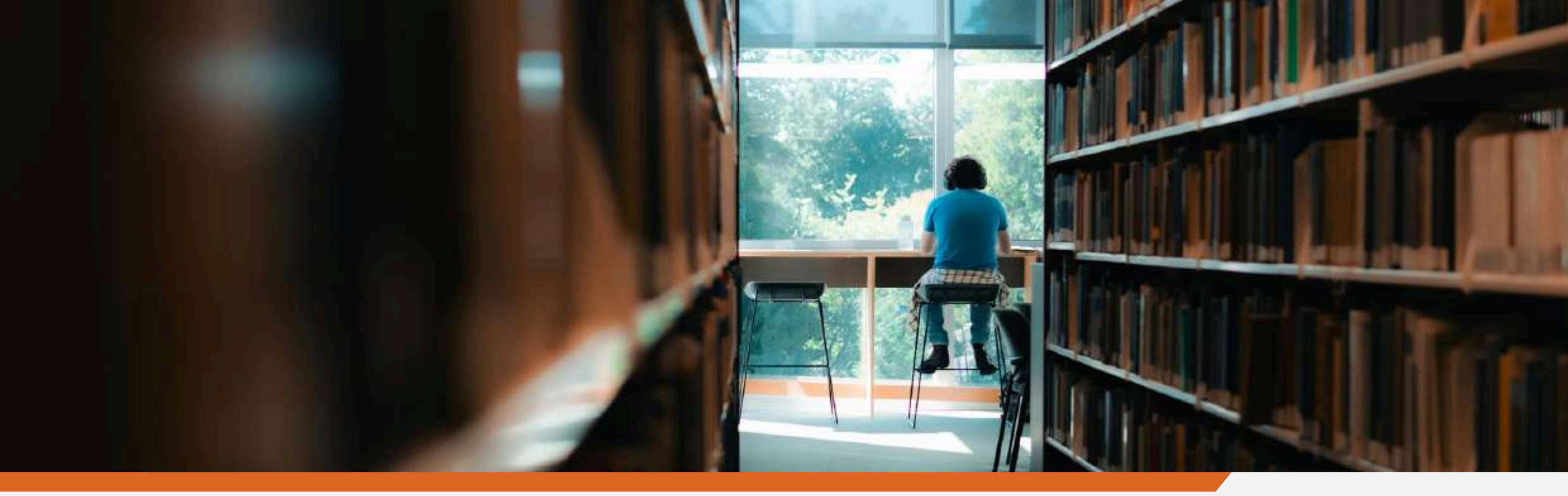
Libraries in Malaysia are also pivotal in advancing edu-tourism by serving as cultural and educational hubs that offer tourists insights into the nation's heritage. Initiatives like the Edu+ program by the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, launched in October 2024, exemplify this commitment by targeting young international students for short-term educational programs that integrate cultural immersion, thereby promoting Malaysia as a premier edu-tourism destination (MTPB, 2024).

Some libraries in Malaysia support edu-tourism for example Raja Tun Uda Library, which is under Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Selangor (PPAS) has been listed as one of Asia’s most beautiful libraries (Sukoco, 2024). Furthermore, the transformation of libraries into dynamic community centres underscores their relevance in the digital age, ensuring they meet the evolving information needs of society while contributing to tourism development. By offering resources and programs that highlight local culture and history, Malaysian libraries effectively attract educational tourists, fostering cultural exchange and supporting the nation's broader tourism goals.

Where Knowledge Meets Wanderlust: Libraries in Edu-Tourism

Each library, from Starfield’s innovative open space, Tianjin Library to Nakanoshima’s cultural intimacy, and some of the libraries in Malaysia have showcased the unique ways libraries are embracing edu-tourism. They illustrate how libraries can transcend their primary function of information storage to become vibrant spaces for cultural exploration, historical preservation, and digital innovation. In the sphere of edu-tourism, these libraries provide invaluable opportunities for cross-cultural learning, offering programs, archives, and architectural beauty that enrich travellers' experiences and broaden their understanding of different cultures.

In an age where travel is more accessible than ever, tourists yearn for experiences that are both enriching and transformative.



Libraries, as exemplified by these remarkable institutions in South Korea, China, and Japan, have emerged as key players in edu-tourism, offering visitors not only a chance to learn but a space to reflect and connect with the past and present of the cultures they visit. By combining architecture, digital engagement, cultural programs, and historical preservation, libraries have carved a niche in the world of edu-tourism. They invite travellers not just to see but to experience and understand, providing a rare blend of education and inspiration. Whether through a modern marvel in China, an open-space library in Seoul, or a historical institution in Japan, libraries continue to open new chapters in the global story of edu-tourism as one traveller, one story, and one library at a time, and

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HERITAGE TRAIL: THE HISTORICAL PURI SAREN AGUNG IN BALI INDONESIA

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Ubud Palace, also known as Puri Saren Agung, is a must-see attraction in downtown Ubud. It has been home to Ubud's royal family since the late nineteenth century. This palace is currently a significant historical site in Bali, serving as a museum and cultural centre for the island's traditional arts. It was a noteworthy structure in the 1800s, when prominent Balinese painters flocked to Ubud to showcase their talents. As a result, this is one of the most ornately built structures on the island. Due to its small size, walking around the palace will take approximately 15 minutes; nonetheless, one should take their time and pay attention to the details/nuances

The walls and doorways of the Ubud Palace are carved with stunning frog-like demon faces, and a door at the back of the courtyard houses some of the best artwork, including gold winged flowers and stone monkey carvings.



The palace has well-designed structures of aesthetic value. It also features unique stone carving designs, and there is, of course, a temple inside the palace. One can roam about and soak in the intricacies of the palace and as well as the subtleties of each object from Balinese traditional culture. For those who love photography, Ubud Palace is definitely Instagram worthy! The palace features an auditorium and a banyan tree that provides shade from searing sun. One should be advised that this is a royal family's home, therefore, some portions of the grounds are not accessible to visitors, and the on-site temple is permanently restricted to tourists. However, it is a fantastic destination to visit if one admires art and architecture, looking out for demon-like toad faces carved into the nooks of many walls and doorways.

To immerse oneself and broaden cultural experiences, witness the traditional Balinese dance performance at night, which lasts about 1.5 hours. The palace is open from 8am to 6pm and the traditional dance performances start from 7.30 pm to 9pm with tickets costing 100,000 IDR per person. The Legong Mahabharata dance is performed on Sunday, the Legong Dance on Monday, the Ramayana Ballet on Tuesday, the Legong and Barong on Wednesday, the Legong Trance on Thursday, the Barong on Friday, and the Legong Dance on Saturday.

The most popular performances are Legong and Barong. Legong is derived from the words "leg" (supple or flexible dance motions) and "gong" (gamelan). Gamelan accompanying the Legong dance is known as Gamelan Semar Pagulingan. Legong is arguably the most popular contemporary Balinese dance. It is a dance-drama, performed typically by three girls. Legong was developed at the turn of the eighteenth century by blending components from older traditions such as gambuh and the sanghyang dedari trance dance, which features numerous archaic animal movements. Often carried out in ceremonial events, the Barong Dance is among the few artistic forms connected with spirituality. Representing the age-old conflict between "good vs. evil," the dance is among the well-known performances on the island. Barong is a character in Balinese mythology who takes the form of a lion and stands as the King of the Spirits. One can describe Barong as a 'guardian angel'. The Barong Dance reflects life's two characters engaged in an endless struggle. Barong, like the Chinese lion dance, shows the lion in action by two persons dancing in coordinated motions.

Witnessing a traditional Balinese dance performance could help one better understand Bali and the Ubud area. Thus, Ubud Palace is the perfect place to learn about the rich culture and tradition of the Balinese people.

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"LOVERS ARE POETS": A REFLECTION ON LOVE AND POETRY

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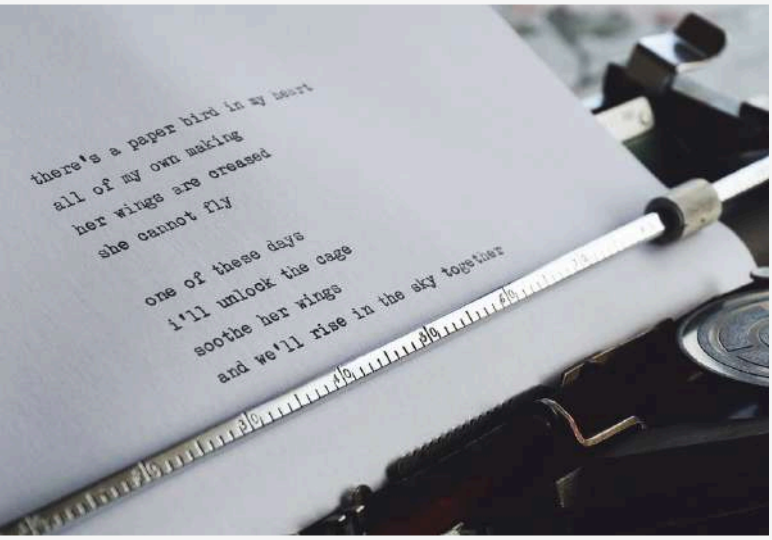
Do you agree with the quote that says, 'Lovers are poets' duo'? Love, oh love! When you're in love, your words become a bit poetic. Your feelings become a little more romantic, and your words take on a rhythm while your thoughts drum into a rhyme. Unintentionally, you turn into a poet, and your words become poetry. The moment you can sit down with a pen in your hand is a moment of joy. This is when you will pen down all your expressions, which are an expression of your romantic thoughts. This is when you breathe metaphors, and your whole universe is onomatopoeia. You make your poems dance, sigh, bow, sing, laugh, and cry." Perhaps it was just an exaggeration, but there might be some truth in it. When you're in love, you become a poet. A poem requires both the writer and the reader to slow down and breathe in the emotions. Therefore, the discussion will focus on why poetry is the preferred language for expressing love and how a poem's conceits help to tame this sometimes uncontrollable emotion.

> "
> Poetry is an expression of the true and undefined self, which a true lover and a deep thinker can comprehend

Poetry, with its unique ability to encapsulate complex emotions in a few carefully chosen words, serves as a bridge between the heart and the mind. It allows lovers to articulate feelings that might otherwise remain unexpressed, transforming raw emotion into art. As Pablo Neruda beautifully illustrates in his "Sonnet XVII," love can be an all-consuming force that defies conventional expression. The rhythm and meter of poetry can mirror the heartbeat of love, creating a musicality that resonates deeply with both the writer and the reader.



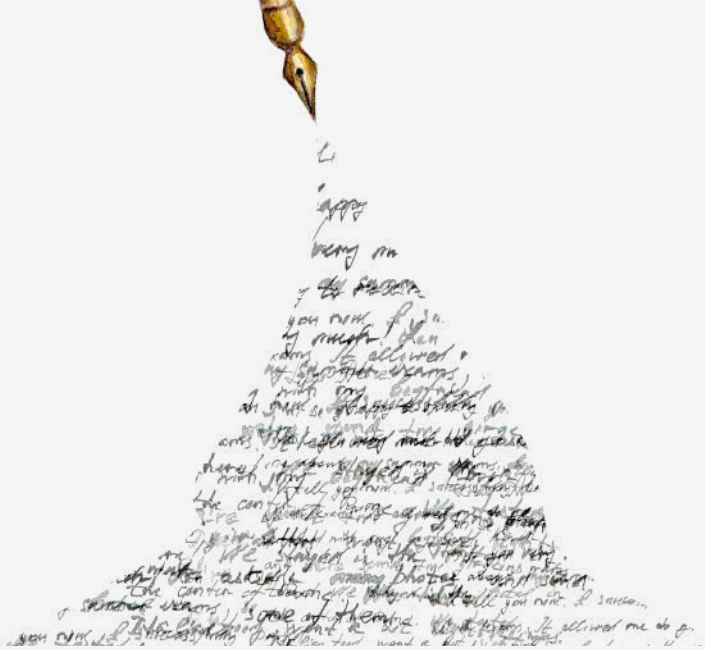
Moreover, the use of metaphors and similes in poetry provides a framework for understanding love's intricacies. For instance, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's famous line, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways," invites us to explore the multifaceted nature of love. John Keats' notion of "a thing of beauty" reminds us of love's enduring and uplifting qualities. These literary devices allow us to draw parallels between love and other experiences, making the abstract more tangible. Comparing love to a journey, as Robert Frost does in "The Road Not Taken," can help convey the ups and downs that come with it. Likening it to a flame, as in William Blake's "The Clod and the Pebble," can illustrate its warmth and intensity.

In this way, poetry not only captures the essence of love but also offers a means to navigate its challenges. It encourages introspection and reflection, allowing individuals to process their emotions and gain clarity. Ultimately, poetry becomes a sanctuary where lovers can explore their feelings, share their vulnerabilities, and celebrate the beauty of their connection, much like the timeless verses of Shakespeare, who reminds us that "the course of true love never did run smooth."

Poems represent the feelings of lovers, whether expressed verbally or not. It's best to describe the emotional depth of true love. The intensity of feelings associated with love may prompt lovers to express themselves more creatively through poetry. Nezami, a famous Persian poet, beautifully described the emotional depth of the love story of Layla and Majnun. He even pronounced his heroine's name as "Layli," emphasizing the sweetness of her name. Nezami's tale focuses on absence, denial, and spiritual longing, with the lovers separated for long periods of time. Unlike Shakespeare's, Nezami's portrayal of Layla and Majnun offers a deeper and more reflective emotional journey, often seen as an allegory of Sufi spirituality.

Imagery and metaphor are best conveyed through poetry. The unique experiences of love can lead to fresh perspectives and creative expressions of metaphor. Rabindranath Tagore, in his poem "Shah Jahan," reflects on the themes of love, loss, and the transient nature of beauty through his expressions of "emeralds, rubies, pearls are all, but as the glitter of a rainbow tricking out empty air." Tagore refers to forgetfulness as a liberating path, stating, "that even today it has not escaped by the liberating path," referring to the memories we carry after the death of a loved one.

A profound expression of love can also be found in the words of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who compared his love for his wife, Aisha (RA), to a strong, unbreakable knot. When Aisha (RA) once inquired, "How is your love for me?" the Prophet replied, "Like the rope's knot," illustrating a love that is secure, enduring, and intense. In a playful exchange, Aisha (RA) would occasionally ask, "How is the knot?" to which the Prophet would respond, "As strong as the first day you asked" (Hiya al Awliya). This metaphor highlights the depth and stability of true love.



Ultimately, love is a complex and multifaceted emotion, and poetry often captures its essence by creating vivid imagery that brings the inexpressible to life. In essence, love is poetry, and poetry is love. Poems are the words of lovers, a medium through which feelings are shared and emotions are mutually expressed. By celebrating the beauty of love and the stories of lovers, poetry has the power to inspire and enchant readers, offering them a glimpse into the profound universe of human connection.

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Sharina Saad is a dedicated lecturer and writer deeply committed to exploring the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous folktales in Malaysia and Nusantara Archipelago. She is also a poet whose creative poetries have been published in many publications. She has also won many awards in international poetry competitions. At present she is the chief editor of Voice of The Soul, a poetry anthology. She holds a Master's degree in TESL Education from Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris Tanjung Malim, Malaysia and has a profound interest in traditional arts and folklore. Sharina has authored several publications, shedding light on the diverse cultural traditions and practices of Malaysia's ethnic communities. Sharina's work is driven by her passion for preserving and promoting the unique cultural identity of the Indigenous Semai people in Malaysia.

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DECONSTRUCTING THE FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

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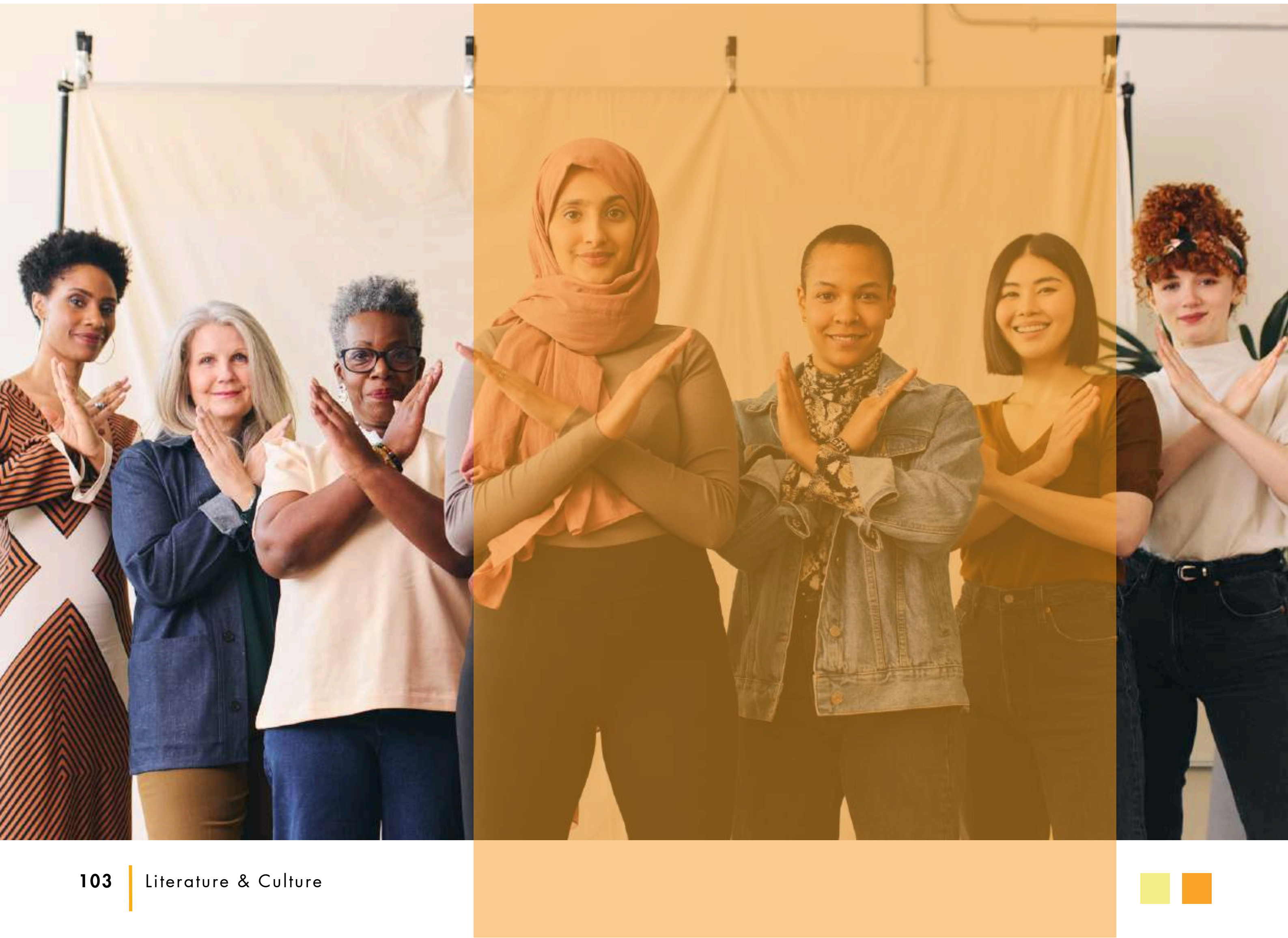
Emma Watson is a famous Hollywood actress mainly acclaimed for her role as Hermione in the Harry Potter movie series. She has been chosen as a Goodwill ambassador for the United Nations since 2014 to act as a campaigner for UN Women's HeForShe campaign in supporting gender equality (UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson, n.d). When one of the students in my class showed a video of Emma Watson delivering a speech on feminism and how generally people perceive the topic negatively, I felt compelled to write about this misguided conception based on my foray into feminist studies for the last twenty years. In the video, she voices her concern about how battling for women's rights has always been seen as synonymous with man-hating.

Feminism has its formal scholarship anchored in the West mainly with the writings by Mary Wollstonecraft published in 1792. Wollstonecraft contends that women are not inherently inferior to men but seem so only due to a lack of education. She further encourages treating both men and women as rational individuals and envisions a society built on the principles of reason. From thereon, feminism grew as a movement promoting political, economic and social equality of the sexes.

Until today, the different phases of feminism and how they grow are termed feminist waves. The first wave of feminism transpired in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Western countries, principally targeting to create opportunities for women, with a strong focus on securing women's suffrage. The second wave, covering the 1960s to the 1980s, sought to challenge cultural inequalities, dismantle gender norms, and promote an egalitarian role for women in society, emphasising the importance of self-awareness among minority groups. The third wave, arising as a response to the second wave, spanned the 1990s to the 2000s and encompassed a wide range of feminist movements and activities, reflecting greater diversity in its approaches. The fourth wave of feminism begins around 2012, offering a new paradigm that hinges on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, among others (Mohajan, 2022).

The proliferation of these waves has benefited various minority groups, particularly women, who were historically marginalised due to the patriarchal forces that dominate as a hegemonic power in the world. However, until today, despite the elevation of female status everywhere due to the feminist movements, the term man-hating is still ubiquitously used to describe feminism.

For a Muslim woman of colour in a postcolonial site, feminism has opened my eyes to a variety of situations of power abuse, inequality and injustice against women. Feminism has taught me to listen to muted female voices and how these suppressed voices should be given agency, and not just limited to uncovering female experiences so that their stories can be heard. I have also learned that feminism heightens one's sensitivity to seek understanding in other people's unspoken pain and suffering.



Hence, acknowledging feminism as a tool to lead one to understand the marginalised and the subaltern is something that should be strongly considered. Feminist scholarship has also made me aware that one type of feminism will not work to explain the different female experiences I go through compared to white women in the West. The kind of feminist consciousness that will be useful to explain my experiences will be the one that is related to my identity as a Muslim, Asian, and Malaysian. Therefore, not all types of feminism can simply be used to describe one's lived experiences. Feminism is never one-size-fits-all. To comprehend the type of feminism that can effectively address individual differences, one must examine their own identity and context.

Developing a feminist consciousness is commendable, as it helps us understand the power structures within society. It also empowers us to find a voice and agency that aligns with our identity and personhood. The various types of feminism such as radical feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism are just some of the different schools of feminism. Generally, none of these schools claim that feminism is a man-hating movement but all these groups believe that basically, women have been unfairly treated due to the power imbalance and structure in society.

Thus, having a feminist consciousness makes one cautious about alleging that feminists are man-haters or that they simply follow Western ideologies. Feminists are people who believe in improving women's lives everywhere in all aspects of life. Feminists listen to women's stories and amplify their thoughts and voices so that they can be heard. We also respect men for the complementary roles they play in society. Hence, respect for women should be returned so that everyone may live equitably.

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SILAT CEKAK MALAYSIA:

A PATHWAY TO EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH TRADITION, DISCIPLINE, AND HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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Silat Cekak Malaysia (or Silat Cekak), a traditional Malay martial art, is not just a method of self-defense but a dynamic framework for physical, mental, and spiritual empowerment. Originating from Kedah, Silat Cekak has its roots in Malay history, evolving from the era of pre-Langkasuka grandeur through the challenges of Thai imperialism in 1821.

Beyond its historical significance, Silat Cekak integrates practical techniques with cultural and spiritual values, providing women with a powerful pathway to self-discovery and resilience. Its profound impact is evident in the ways it blends historical legacy, practical application, mental fortitude, and spiritual enrichment into a holistic art form (Janudin & Yusoff, 2021).

Silat Cekak is a martial art deeply rooted in both spiritual and practical dimensions, reflecting the values of harmony, discipline, and self-improvement. Inspired by movements in Islamic prayer (Solat), its techniques align with natural human motions, such as "Kaedah A" from the act of Doa, "Kaedah B" from Qiam, "Kaedah C" from Rukuk, and "Kaedah D" from Takbir (Silat Cekak Malaysia, 2024). This thoughtful design ensures simplicity and accessibility, making it suitable for individuals of all ages and genders. Organized into a systematic three-tier curriculum, Silat Cekak emphasizes efficient learning within a short timeframe, prioritizing self-defense with a philosophy of 99% defense and only 1% offense, where attacking is a last resort for personal safety. Beyond combat, Silat Cekak fosters a balance between physical and spiritual growth through religious and community activities, embedding moral and cultural values. This holistic and lifelong learning approach enables practitioners to serve their religion, community, and nation, embodying the noble essence of Silat Cekak.

Practical Techniques for Modern Empowerment

At its core, Silat Cekak is designed for practical self-defense, relying on efficient, direct techniques rather than acrobatics or brute strength. This emphasis on precision and leverage ensures accessibility for women, as the art prioritizes strategy over physical power. Halim et al. (2024) underscores that the stability of Silat Cekak's combat techniques enables practitioners to neutralize threats effectively, making it an empowering tool for personal safety and self-reliance. Such techniques resonate with broader studies on the practicality of martial arts, which highlight their ability to foster independence and confidence in individuals, especially women (Halim et al., 2024). By mastering Silat Cekak, women not only gain practical self-defense skills but also develop a profound sense of empowerment that transcends physical safety.

The Impact of Silat Cekak on Women's Mental and Emotional Empowerment

Silat Cekak provides women with significant psychological and emotional benefits that extend beyond physical training. The art's emphasis on discipline, focus, and consistency helps practitioners develop mental resilience, equipping them to manage stress effectively and maintain emotional balance. Practicing Silat Cekak can boost self-confidence, enhance emotional control, and strengthen decision-making skills, providing essential tools for tackling both personal and professional challenges. These benefits align with broader evidence on the mental health advantages of martial arts, which highlight their role in reducing stress and fostering composure under pressure.

What sets Silat Cekak apart is its incorporation of spiritual growth, an essential element that complements its practical and psychological focus. By teaching values such as humility, discipline, and inner peace, Silat Cekak offers women a deeper connection to their personal values and a sense of balance in life. This spiritual dimension enriches the overall experience, transforming it into a holistic practice that integrates physical training with moral and emotional development.

Furthermore, Silat Cekak's foundation in Malay cultural traditions provides a unique source of empowerment for women. By engaging with its heritage, practitioners find a meaningful sense of identity and belonging. For women, this connection to cultural values like respect and humility enhances their self-concept and reinforces ties to their community. The combination of practical self-defense, mental resilience, spiritual growth, and cultural pride makes Silat Cekak an empowering pathway for women, enabling them to embrace personal growth while preserving and celebrating their heritage. This synergy of tradition and modern application ensures that Silat Cekak remains a powerful tool for women's empowerment today.

Challenging Gender Stereotypes

Silat Cekak challenges conventional gender roles by empowering women within a traditionally male-dominated space. Through its inclusive approach, women learn self-defense while redefining societal perceptions of strength and capability. This shift has both symbolic and practical implications, inspiring others to challenge stereotypes and embrace their own potential. The involvement of women in Silat Cekak underscores its transformative power, as female practitioners become role models for resilience and empowerment in their communities.

Silat Cekak offers a unique, holistic pathway to empowerment, blending practical self-defense, mental discipline, cultural heritage, and spiritual growth. Its relevance spans historical preservation and modern adaptability, providing women with tools to navigate the complexities of contemporary life with confidence and resilience. For women seeking to discover their inner strength, reconnect with their heritage, and achieve holistic personal growth, Silat Cekak is more than a martial art, it is a journey worth undertaking, a legacy worth preserving, and a practice worth mastering.

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WHEN THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE (ULAMA) FADES

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Introduction

In the Islamic tradition, knowledge is revered as a guiding light, illuminating paths of righteousness, justice, and understanding. Scholars, or ulama, are entrusted with preserving, interpreting, and transmitting this knowledge, acting as pillars of ethical and spiritual guidance. The diminishing presence of ulama today raises concerns about the potential consequences on moral direction, unity, and intellectual depth within the Muslim community. This paper explores the vital role of ulama and the effects their absence could have, drawing on recent interpretations of classical teachings to underscore the significance of maintaining this "light of knowledge."

1. Loss of Moral and Ethical Guidance

The ulama serve as custodians of Islamic ethical values, shaping the moral landscape of communities by drawing on the Qur'an and Sunnah. According to recent scholarship, "The erosion of traditional scholarly influence leaves a vacuum that may lead communities toward moral relativism and uncertainty" (Zarkasyi, 2023). Without the teachings and guidance of ulama, communities may risk straying from ethical foundations essential to Islamic principles.

2. Decline in Knowledge Transmission

Ulama not only preserve religious knowledge but ensure its accurate transmission across generations. Contemporary scholars emphasize that "the gradual loss of trained scholars disrupts the chain of transmission, leading to potential distortions in understanding" (Hamdeh, 2021). This erosion threatens the continuity of core teachings, as interpretations may lose authenticity and depth over time.

3. Rise of Misinterpretation and Extremism

Without the qualified interpretation provided by ulama, untrained individuals may misinterpret Islamic texts, often leaning toward more radical or extreme views. This trend has been observed as a pressing concern in modern contexts, with scholars noting, "The absence of classical guidance can lead to simplified, and often distorted, readings of texts, fostering extremism" (Hussain, 2023). The role of ulama in maintaining a balanced approach to Islamic law and ethics is crucial to prevent such misinterpretations.

4. Impact on Spiritual Development and Unity

Ulama contribute significantly to the spiritual depth and unity within the ummah, nurturing an understanding of Islam that emphasizes inner growth and community. Recent studies highlight that "A lack of scholarly presence contributes to a rigid, surface-level interpretation, diminishing the religion's spiritual richness" (El-Ghamari, 2024). Their absence could lead to divisions within the ummah, as fewer figures remain to guide toward inclusive and holistic Islamic practices.

5. Reduced Emphasis on Intellectual Pursuits

The ulama inspire the pursuit of knowledge as a form of devotion, fostering intellectual development within the Islamic sciences and beyond. Scholars in recent years have argued that "Without the influence of traditional scholarship, communities may experience intellectual stagnation, reducing the incentive to pursue deep knowledge" (Sahin, 2019). The decline in scholarly figures could thus weaken the intellectual and scientific advancements traditionally encouraged in Islam.

Conclusion

The ulama serve as vital bearers of the "light of knowledge," safeguarding ethical standards, fostering unity, and inspiring intellectual growth. Their diminishing presence poses serious challenges: erosion of moral guidance, increased risk of extremism, spiritual decline, and intellectual stagnation. To ensure the resilience of Islamic teachings, efforts must be made to preserve the legacy of the ulama and encourage new generations to take up this mantle of knowledge. Recent scholarship underscores the need for continued scholarly influence to maintain the integrity of the Islamic tradition, ensuring that the light of knowledge does not fade.

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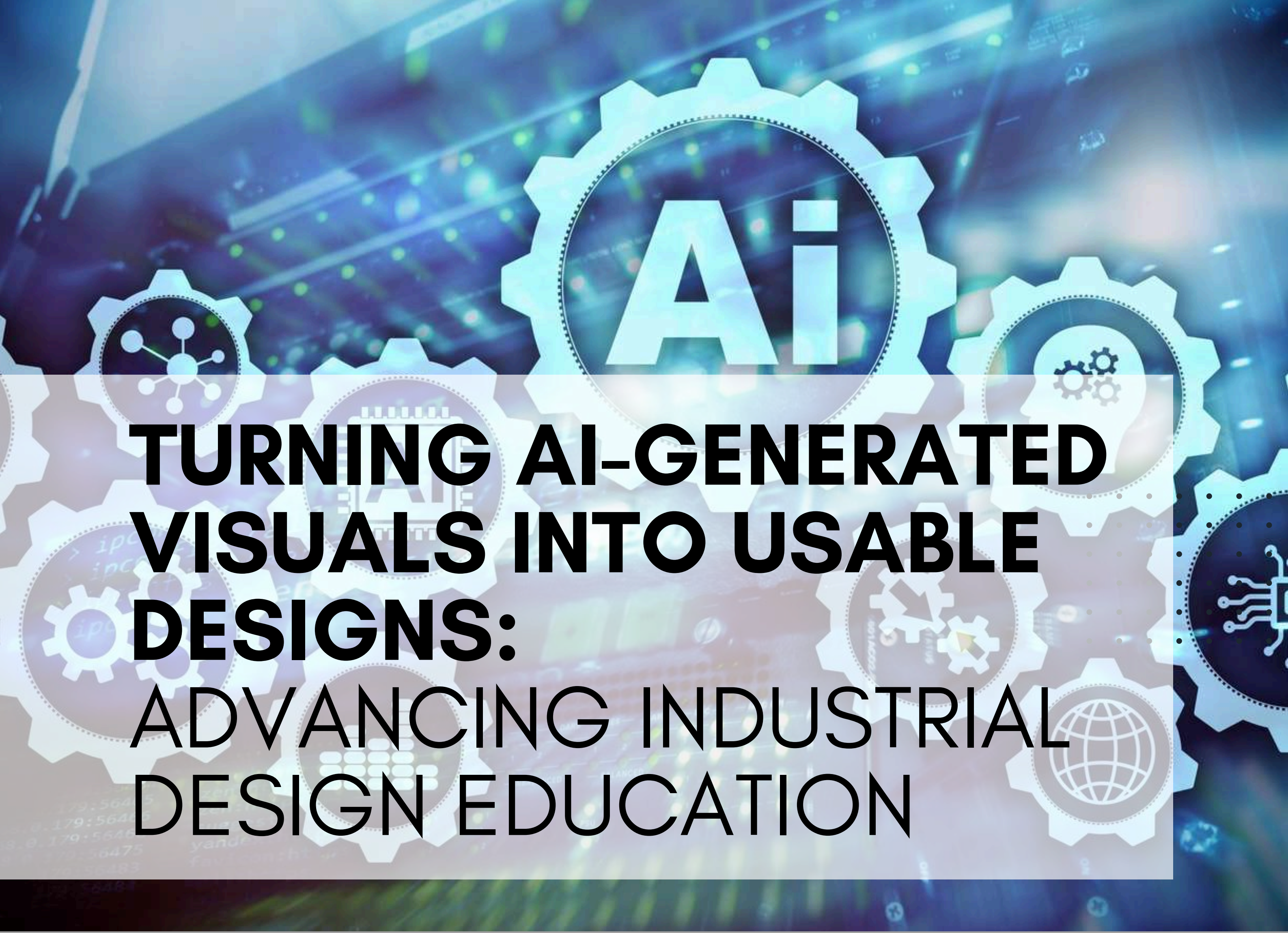

TURNING AI-GENERATED VISUALS INTO USABLE DESIGNS:
ADVANCING INDUSTRIAL DESIGN EDUCATION

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Introduction

In industrial design, coming up with fresh ideas and turning them into real, usable designs is a key skill. However, many students find it tough to bring their early ideas to life in a way that is creative and practical. AI-based text-to-image tools, such as Ideogram, Stablecog, and Bing, allow students to create visuals from text descriptions, helping them visualise ideas more clearly. Research supports that these tools enhance early-stage design ideation, allowing students to evaluate feasibility sooner (Liu and Hu, 2023). By enabling students to create visuals from simple text descriptions, these tools provide clearer representations of their ideas, fostering cognitive skills in design. This article explores how AI-generated visuals can be adapted into workable designs, the steps involved, and the benefits and challenges of using these tools in industrial design education. AI-generated text-to-image tools make it easier for students to turn their ideas into visuals right away. By typing in descriptive prompts, students can quickly produce rough images that give them a first look at their concepts. This helps students to break free from just sketching by hand and instead see their ideas in new ways, expanding possibilities in styling and functionality (Lee and Chiu, 2023). Visualising ideas early in the design process also helps students understand design feasibility.

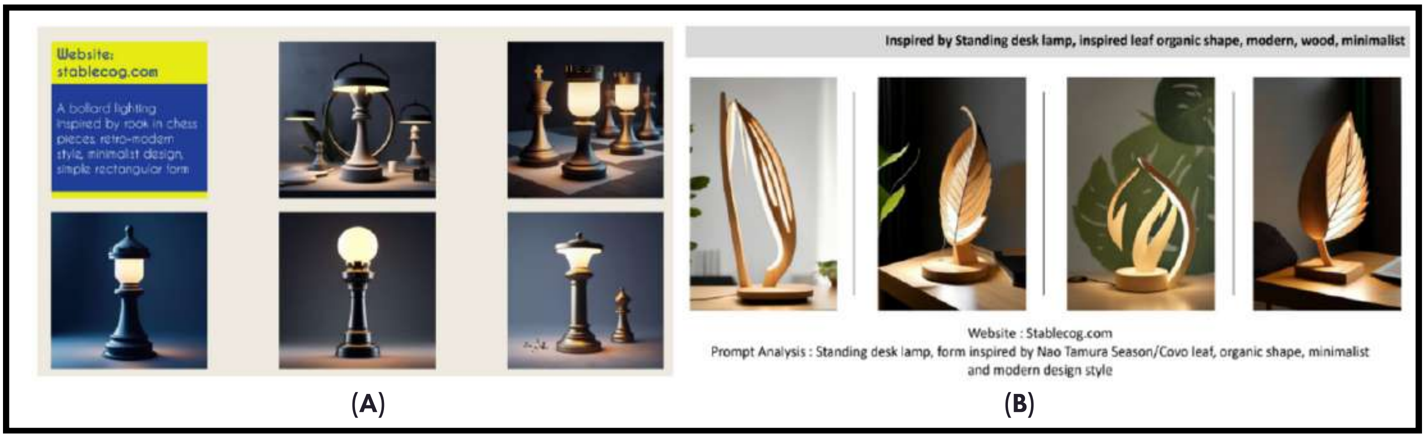

Figure 1: Example of text prompt to an AI-generated visual (A) & (B) based on lighting product designs.
(Source: Bachelor Industrial Design students, College of Creative Arts)

How AI Tools Help Visualize Ideas

Using AI-generated images as a starting point, students can explore different directions in their designs, expanding their creative possibilities. These visuals can serve as a useful first draft that students can later refine into more detailed sketches. This way, students practice their ability to turn rough visuals into designs that work in the real world, learning to tweak and improve their ideas as they go. In transforming an AI-generated image into a functional design, students need to consider various aspects of usability, practicality, and structural feasibility.

This process requires them to analyse the AI-generated output critically, identifying which elements are viable in a real-world context and which require modification. For instance, a conceptual AI image may incorporate exaggerated or abstract shapes that are visually striking but lack ergonomic or functional considerations. While students create sketches based on these AI visuals, they learn to refine and reshape these elements to fit practical design standards. The transition from AI visuals to sketches also teaches students to adapt their designs based on real-world constraints. Students need to assess material choices, ergonomics, and production feasibility while preserving the core aesthetic generated by the AI. By iterating on these AI-generated visuals, students develop essential skills in balancing creativity with functionality, a key competency in product design (refer to Figure 2).

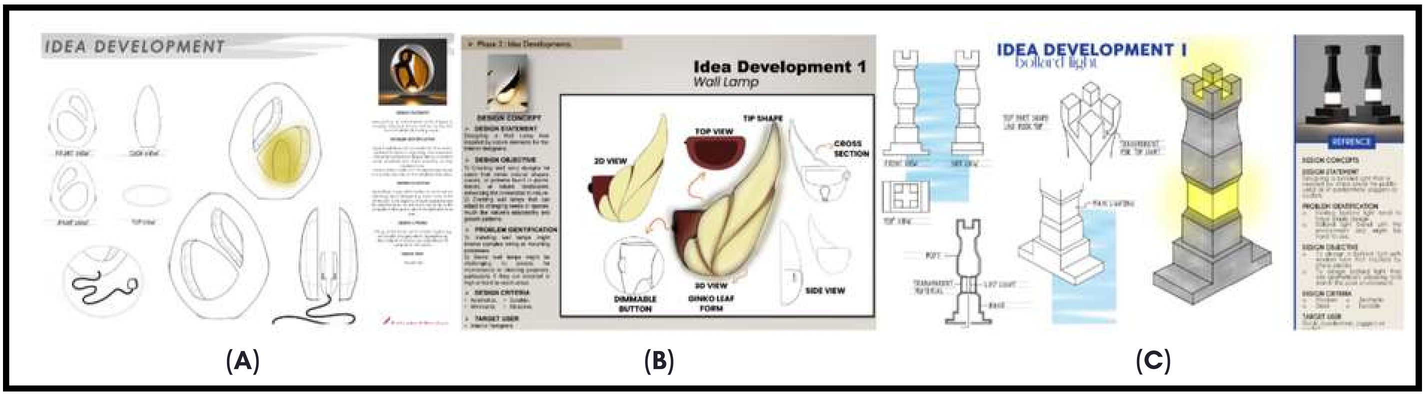

Figure 2: Example of text-to-image output next to a refined sketch in (A), (B) and (C) lighting product design.
(Source: Bachelor Industrial Design students, College of Creative Arts)

Enhancing Design Thinking Through AI-Generated Integration

Using AI-generated visuals as a foundation encourages design students to broaden their perspectives and expand their creative boundaries. The act of refining AI images into practical designs fosters design thinking as students question the initial output, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and make necessary adjustments. The ability to modify AI-generated images allows students to explore diverse design possibilities, incorporating personal style while adhering to industrial design principles. This iterative process also supports critical thinking by requiring students to decide which AI-generated elements are worth retaining and which need revision. Through trial and error, students become adept at evaluating design features for usability, sustainability, and visual appeal, leading to more innovative and well-rounded final designs (refer to Figure 3).

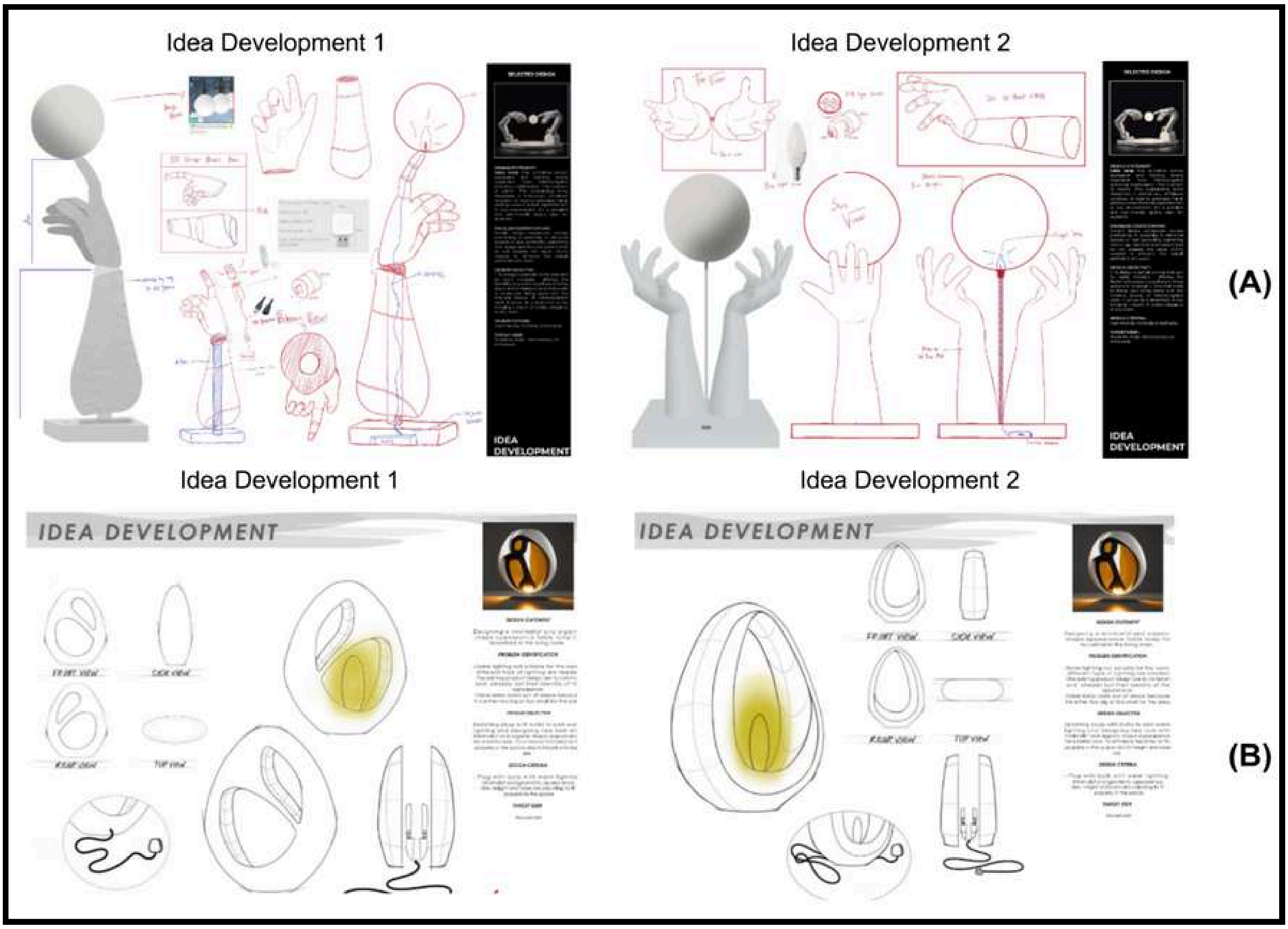

Figure 3: A sequence of sketch variations for a single AI-generated concept in participant (A) & (B) to illustrate how students experimented the forms and components placement
(Source: Bachelor Industrial Design students, College of Creative Arts)

Challenges and Considerations in Educational Application

While AI tools offer many benefits, there are some challenges when integrating them into design education. One concern is that students might rely too heavily on AI, using it as a shortcut rather than as a tool to boost creativity. Over-reliance on AI-generated images could lead to fewer original designs and weaken students' independent idea generations. To address this, educators can encourage students to see AI as a helper, not a replacement, and use it as a starting point for developing their own ideas.

Students also need to recognise the limitations of AI-generated visuals. While these images may look impressive, they often lack practical considerations needed for real-world production or everyday usability. By learning to critically evaluate AI outputs, students develop the skills to adapt AI-generated visuals into realistic, functional designs, balancing creativity with practical design requirements.

Conclusion

The integration of AI-generated text-to-image technology in industrial design education has great potential to enhance how students develop and visualise ideas. By transforming AI-generated visuals into functional designs, students build both their creative skills and their understanding of practical design principles. This process allows them to experiment with innovative ideas while learning essential skills in critical analysis and design adaptation. As the field of industrial design education continues to evolve, AI can play a key role in preparing students for industry challenges, fostering innovation while keeping designs practical. Moving from AI-generated visuals to usable, real-world designs helps students strengthen their technical abilities and nurtures their creative thinking, which is crucial for future success in design.

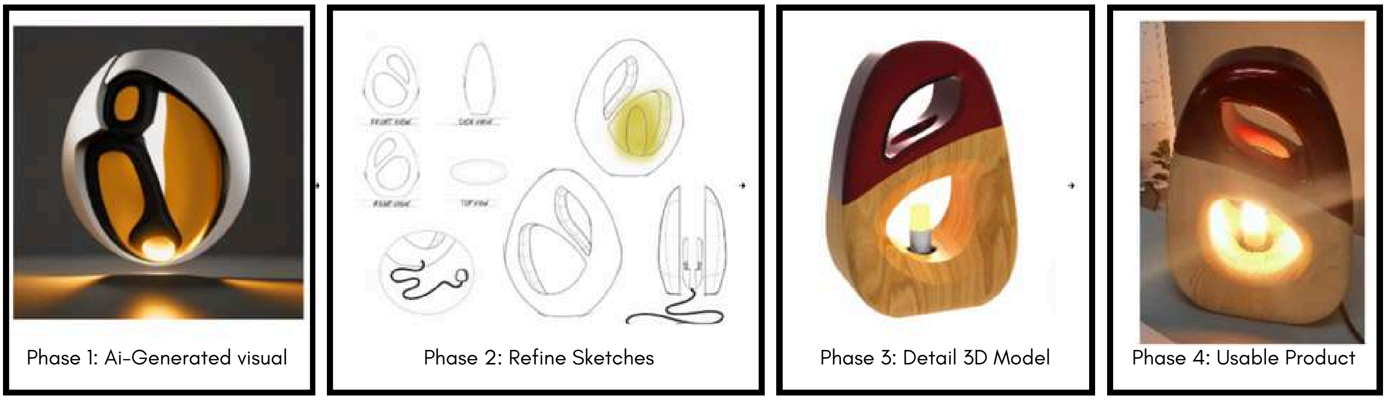

Figure 4: Final images summarising the process from an AI-generated visual to a refined sketch, a 3D detailed product design, and a usable final product.
(Source: Bachelor Industrial Design students, College of Creative Arts)

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CROSSROADS OF FAITH AND CREATIVITY IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT, INDUSTRIAL DESIGN, AND TECHNOLOGICAL ART

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Islamic thought has significantly influenced various fields, including art, science, and technology, shaping modern industrial design and technological art. At the core of Islamic art and design traditions are values such as balance, harmony, and beauty, which reflect a worldview where creativity is closely linked to spiritual responsibility. This perspective continues to influence contemporary design practices by prioritising ethical considerations, sustainability, and aesthetic values in innovation (Riasat Islam, 2020).

During the Golden Age of Islam (8th to 14th centuries), art, design, and science developed in parallel, with scholars like Al-Khwarizmi and Ibn Sina bridging creative expression and technological advancement. Islamic geometric patterns and calligraphy became central to artistic forms, while architectural masterpieces such as the Alhambra and the Suleymaniye Mosque exemplified the convergence of faith and creativity. This period underscores the longstanding relationship between art and science in Islamic thought (Ruggles, 2016).

The philosophy of Tawhid (the unity of God) is central to Islamic design thinking, viewing creativity as a form of worship that reflects divine beauty and order. The Qur'an encourages exploration and rationality, while Islamic principles emphasise that creativity should benefit society, uphold justice, and promote sustainability. This ethical approach continues to influence contemporary industrial design, where moral responsibility is integral to problem-solving (Sardar, 2018).

In today's design landscape, Islamic principles guide eco-friendly and sustainable practices, particularly in architecture and technological art. Designers in the Middle East and Southeast Asia are incorporating Islamic values into functional, environmentally conscious designs, such as solar energy technology and green architecture. Additionally, the intricate patterns of Islamic geometry influence digital technologies, with applications in algorithmic design and 3D art, ensuring that technological advancements align with ethical standards and societal well-being (Sardar, 2018; El Amrani, 2021).

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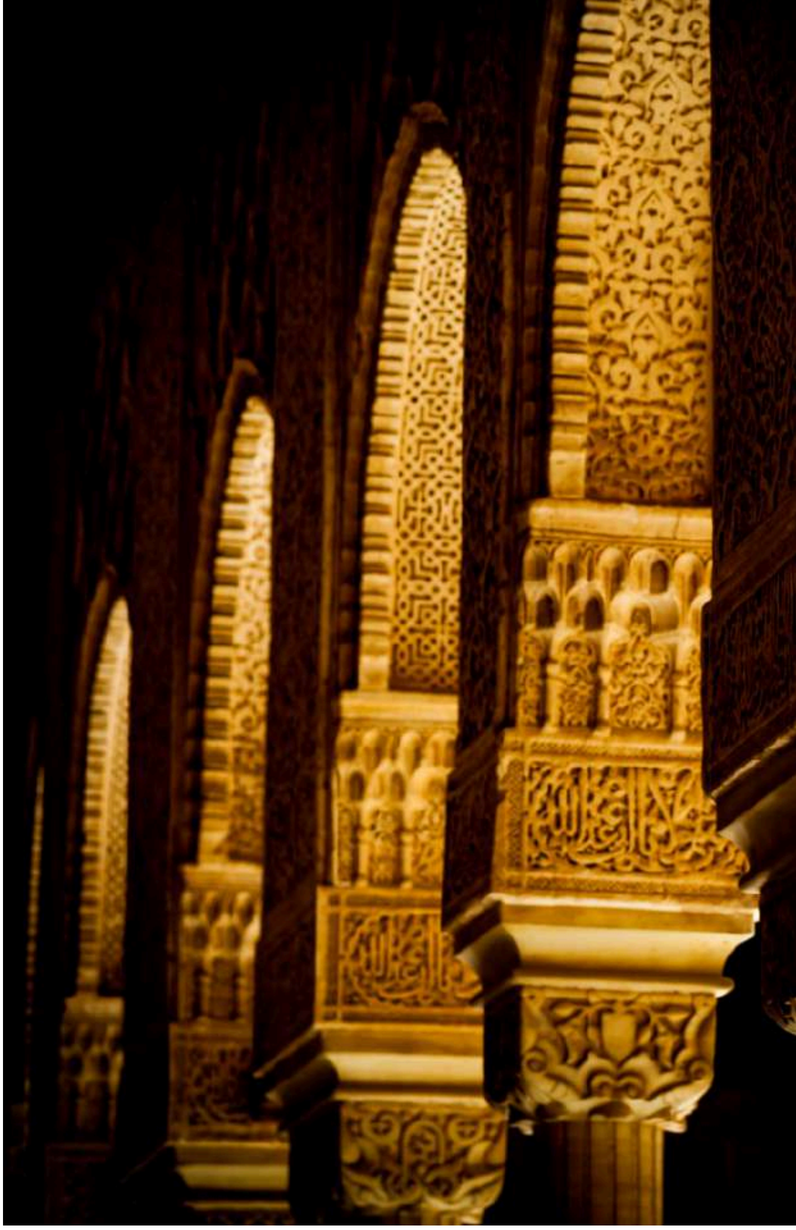

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Nazirul Mubin bin Awang Besar is a passionate researcher, writer, and academician in the field of graphic design. Holding a Master's degree in Visual Communication and New Media from UiTM, his work focuses on exploring what more can be done with design, art, technology, and the field of Islam. Nazirul has extensive experience as an art director in top agencies in Kuala Lumpur, and he now dedicates himself to teaching and mentoring future designers. His commitment to community service is evident through his involvement in charitable initiatives, where he uses art to empower and educate marginalised groups. Driven by a love for culture and creativity, Nazirul is deeply focused on exploring innovative intersections between design, art, technology, and Islamic thought, seeking new possibilities for creative expression and cultural impact.

Qatrunnisa Shariff holds a Master's degree in Visual Communication and New Media from UiTM Shah Alam. She also has 10 years of working experience in industries such as theme parks and animation. She has a profound interest in character design, illustration, and social media marketing. Currently, she works as a lecturer in UiTM Kedah. She is looking forward to nurturing character design into social media persona.

BRIDGING CULTURES: MALAYSIAN-JAPANESE INSPIRATIONS IN POP-UP DESIGN STORYTELLING

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Entrepreneurship Beyond Sales: Creating Experiences through Design Narratives

Entrepreneurship extends beyond simple product sales, encompassing the development of experiences that personally and emotionally connect with individuals. Design is pivotal in defining experiences, and for young entrepreneurs in Malaysia, narrative through design acts as a potent means of differentiation.

Image source:
https://www.pinterest.com/pin/22588435624156661/

This concept is shown by Japan's Poppu Appu Shoppu (pop-up shop), which incorporates narrative into its design, providing insights for Malaysian entrepreneurs to develop memorable brand experiences. Japanese pop-up stores transcend mere retail functionality; they include a narrative, a vision, and a distinct purpose. Every component, from the materials employed to the architectural configuration, is designed to envelop visitors in the brand's narrative. A Japanese tea pop-up shop may elicit tranquillity and nostalgia with bamboo accents, subdued lighting, and traditional motifs, establishing an immersive tea house atmosphere. Malaysian entrepreneurs can use this methodology by integrating local narratives and cultural history into their designs. A pop-up exhibition featuring regional artisanal crafts may emphasise the artists' narratives, elucidating material acquisition, creative methodologies, and the cultural relevance of each item, so cultivating profound ties with patrons.

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Design Storytelling: Importance above Visual Appeal

Design narrative encompasses not just aesthetics but also significance. Japanese pop-up shops frequently prioritise simplicity, maintaining the narrative as the central element. This clarity can motivate Malaysian businesses to create pop-up booths that emphasise narrative significance rather than superfluity. A presentation incorporating pictures, interactive components, or symbolic designs can create a memorable impact without inundating the audience. A Malaysian entrepreneur advocating for traditional food may employ cultural elements, including songket patterns, traditional cooking implements, and a visual chronology of ancestral recipes to narrate a tale of heritage and pride. This method provides clients with a more fulfilling and significant experience.

Enhancing Engagement via Narrative Design

An essential component of storytelling is the development of interactive settings that captivate visitors. Japanese pop-up shops frequently promote active engagement, including customers into the narrative. For instance, via workshops or sensory encounters, these environments completely engage visitors in the brand narrative. Malaysian entrepreneurs may implement analogous tactics. A pop-up booth featuring eco-friendly beauty items may incorporate a DIY station for clients to craft their own scrubs or oils, exemplifying the narrative of sustainability and self-care. This participatory experience enhances the narrative and offers guests enduring memories.

Image source:
https://www.pinterest.com/pin/22588435624156661/

Genuineness and Cultural Identity

Authenticity is fundamental to an impactful design narrative. Japanese pop-up shops synchronise every aspect with the brand's identity, generating trust and emotional connection. Malaysian entrepreneurs might incorporate personal narratives or cultural components to create authenticity. A young entrepreneur committed to conserving local traditions may create a pop-up that mimics a traditional village cottage, using wooden panelling, vintage furnishings, and cultural exhibits. This design elicits nostalgia and pride, forging a profound emotional bond with guests.

Sustainable Design Narratives

Sustainability is becoming increasingly essential to design narratives. Japanese pop-up shops showcase environmental stewardship through the utilisation of eco-friendly materials and versatile designs. Malaysian entrepreneurs can emulate this approach by integrating sustainability into their brand narratives. A pop-up offering handmade eco-friendly bags may utilise recycled wood for displays, natural fabrics for backdrops, and potted plants for decoration. This not only attracts environmentally conscious clients but also strengthens the brand's dedication to sustainability.

Ultimately, design-orientated storytelling seeks to elicit emotional resonance. An expertly designed pop-up booth goes beyond mere physicality, evolving into an experience, a memory, and a moment of connection. This gives Malaysian entrepreneurs an opportunity to inspire and engage through design, creating a lasting influence on their audiences. By pulling inspiration from Japan's Poppu Appu Shoppu concept and adapting it to local circumstances, Malaysian companies may create pop-up booths that not only display items but also convey narratives, cultivate emotional relationships, and convert business concepts into memorable experiences.

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DESIGNING FUTURES:

THE INTERSECTION OF PATTERN DESIGN AND OKU EMPOWERMENT IN THE BATIK CHEMPAKA INITIATIVE

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Pattern design plays a pivotal role in shaping various art forms, from architecture to textiles. It forms the foundation for intricate motifs, structures, and compositions that influence design aesthetics.

In traditional arts like batik, understanding elements such as shape, rhythm, proportion, and colour is essential for creating meaningful designs. Patterns can range from geometric and floral to ethnic and expressive, each embodying unique cultural and artistic values (A Brief History of Pattern Design, 2021).

However, access to design education and involvement in creative industries remains limited for persons with disabilities (OKU).

Despite growing recognition of the contributions marginalised populations can make to the design process, little research explores how and why OKU individuals engage in such activities (Safari, Wass, & Thygesen, 2023). This paper presents the Batik Chempaka project, conducted under the University Social Responsibility Program (USR), which provided OKU trainees from Pertubuhan Pemulihan Dalam Komuniti Merbok (PPDK Merbok) with training in batik motif design (refer Figure 1).

Figure 1: PPDK Merbok trainees' training on data collection

As part of the Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program, pioneered by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and implemented through Malaysia's Social Welfare Department (JKM), this initiative aimed to equip disabled individuals with the skills needed to create and market their own textile products. By engaging OKU individuals in the creative process, the project sought not only to empower them but also to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse design landscape, where OKU designers can help create environments that are more welcoming and accessible for people of all abilities (Wojciechowski et al., 2019).

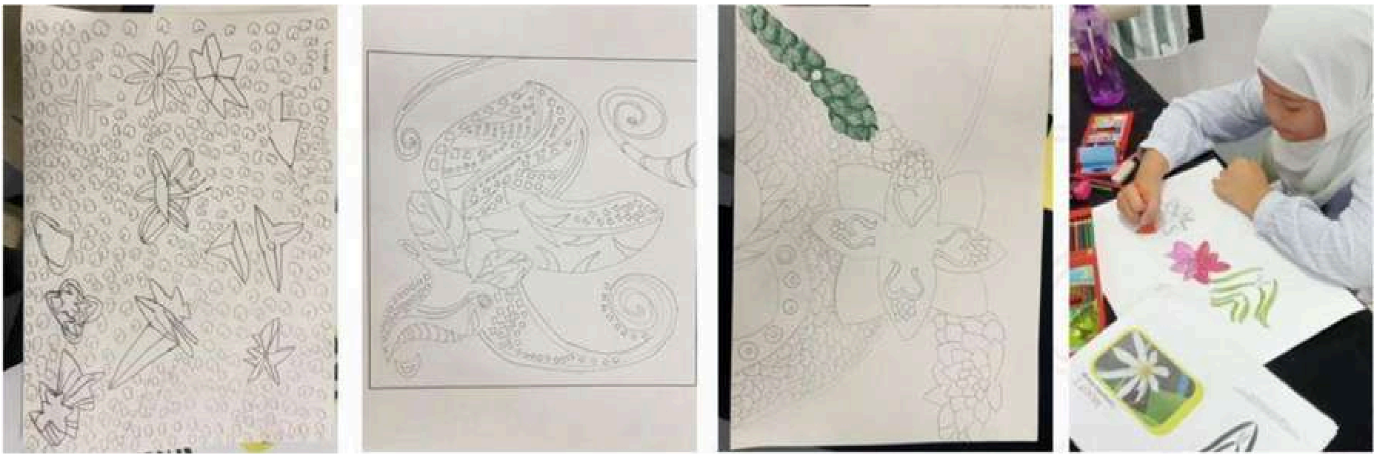

Figure 2: Development of patterns

The outcomes of the Batik Chempaka project were highly promising. Through a structured program of training and design exploration, participants successfully developed unique batik patterns, blending traditional motifs with innovative design techniques (refer Figure 2). Their work was recognised nationally, with the project securing 2nd place at the National KIK competition (refer Figure 3). This recognition not only highlighted the creative potential of OKU individuals but also demonstrated the value of inclusive design processes. The high quality of their designs shows that OKU participation can lead to improved, marketable products with the potential to boost the local economy. Furthermore, the success of Batik Chempaka suggests the potential for expanding such initiatives to other CBR programs, fostering greater inclusion, creativity, and economic opportunities for marginalised communities.

Figure 3: Second place at the National KIK competition

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EMPOWERING MALAYSIAN GEN Y AND GEN Z:
HARNESSING DESIGN THINKING FOR FASHION RETAIL INNOVATION AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

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The Malaysian fashion retail industry is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by rapid digital advancements, globalisation, and shifting consumer preferences (Tan, 2022; Lee and Teoh, 2021). Today, the industry is shaped by the demands of two key generational groups: Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z.

Both generations bring fresh perspectives, each with distinct expectations surrounding personalisation, cultural relevance, and a strong commitment to uphold social and environmental responsibility (Amin, 2020; Wong and Tan, 2023).

Gen Y and Gen Z seek shopping experiences that reflect their values and identities, demanding brands to demonstrate authenticity, social consciousness, and environmental stewardship (Azman and Shamsudin, 2021; Lim, 2022). Design thinking provides a strategic, human-centred approach that places consumers at the heart of retail innovations (Brown, 2009).

This methodology allows brands to innovate with purpose by understanding and addressing the genuine needs of their consumers (Brown, 2009; Liedtka, 2018). In the Malaysian context, design thinking offers fashion retailers a powerful tool to stay in sync with global trends while tailoring offerings to the unique preferences of Gen Y and Gen Z (Goh and Tan, 2022). These generations are highly digital-savvy, seeking seamless shopping experiences that blend global fashion with local relevance (Mohamed and Chen, 2020).

By embracing design thinking, brands can create meaningful interactions and build connections that resonate deeply with these generations (Kaur and Azman, 2021).

The primary goal of this paper is to explore how design thinking can be applied to the Malaysian fashion retail sector to enhance customer engagement, align with the values and expectations of Gen Y and Gen Z, and ultimately foster brand loyalty (Bakker and Govaert, 2023). Through this exploration, we aim to identify ways in which retailers can create meaningful experiences, drive innovation, and gain a competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving marketplace (Koh, 2022).

Design thinking provides a robust framework for meeting the specific expectations of Malaysian Gen Y and Gen Z, whose behaviours are shaped by distinct preferences and values (Tan, 2022). Both generations are highly digitally native, seamlessly navigating online platforms and digital communities that play an essential role in shaping their fashion choices (Singh and Lee, 2022). For Gen Y, this digital fluency often combines with established brand loyalty, while Gen Z tends to seek novel, trend-driven experiences that reflect their personal values (Lee and Tan, 2021). Gen Y and Gen Z share a strong sense of cultural pride and prioritise ethical, sustainable practices in the brands they support (Lim, 2021; Mohamed and Chen, 2020). Design thinking proves particularly impactful in this context, as it enables retailers to create user-centred experiences that align with these values (Brown, 2009). By integrating cultural relevance and eco-consciousness into product development, brands can create offerings that resonate with the identity of these generations (Amin, 2020). For instance, design thinking allows brands to design culturally inspired styles or eco-friendly collections that reflect the authentic identities of Malaysian consumers (Wong and Tan, 2023).

Social media also plays a significant role in shaping purchasing decisions (Goh and Tan, 2022). Both Gen Y and Gen Z view social media not only as a source of inspiration but also as a platform that validates their fashion choices (Azman and Shamsudin, 2021). Retailers who leverage design thinking can tap into these digital communities, gathering insights and fostering real-time feedback loops that help refine product offerings (Mohamed and Chen, 2020).

By incorporating Gen Y and Gen Z at the heart of the creative process, design thinking enables brands to create experiences that are authentic and deeply personal, thus enhancing the overall brand experience (Kaur and Azman, 2021). Through empathy-driven insights, design thinking helps retailers understand the unique characteristics of Gen Y and Gen Z in Malaysia. By recognising their pride in cultural heritage and their desire to blend traditional and modern aesthetics, brands can design products and experiences that cater to these preferences (Tan, 2022). This is particularly effective for Gen Z, who seeks brands that align with their personal identity, and Gen Y, who values cultural relevance (Singh and Lee, 2022). Through a digital-first approach, design thinking empowers retailers to create mobile-friendly websites and interactive catalogues that reflect local weather, seasonal events, and cultural symbols, personalising the shopping experience for these generations (Bakker and Govaert, 2023).

The iterative nature of design thinking allows retailers to prototype and refine products quickly, adapting to the fast-changing tastes of Gen Y and Gen Z (Liedtka, 2018). With data-driven insights, brands can develop personalised features, such as "shop the look" recommendations, augmented reality (AR) try-ons, and style suggestions based on current trends in Malaysia (Lee and Teoh, 2021). As Gen Y and Gen Z are trend-driven and constantly seeking for personalised experiences, design thinking enables brands to rapidly release limited collections, inspired by real-time feedback from social platforms like TikTok and Instagram. This agility keeps the brands relevant and are always connected to their consumers, encouraging sustained engagement and fostering brand loyalty (Lim, 2022).

Sustainability is an essential value for Malaysian Millennials and Gen Z, who increasingly support brands that adopt eco-friendly practices and are transparent about their production processes (Mohamed and Chen, 2020). Design thinking's iterative approach empowers retailers to experiment with sustainable materials such as organic cotton and recyclable packaging, aligning with the environmental values of these generations (Tan, 2022). Through design thinking, brands can build transparency into their operations, providing a clear message about sourcing, production processes, and ethical labour practices (Kaur and Azman, 2021).

This transparency fosters trust and strengthens the connection between the brands and these value-driven consumers (Wong and Tan, 2023).

Gen Y and Gen Z also value immersive shopping experiences, and design thinking encourages retailers to create interactive and experience-driven environments that blend digital and physical elements (Bakker and Govaert, 2023). Through features like VR mirrors and interactive product displays, retailers can captivate the tech-savvy nature of these generations (Lim, 2021). Design thinking also inspires brands to host pop-up events, styling workshops, and influencer-led gatherings, transforming retail spaces into vibrant community hubs where Gen Y and Gen Z can connect socially (Goh and Tan, 2022). These experiences deepen brand loyalty and offer these generations a platform for self-expression, making the brand part of their personal identity and social lives (Kaur and Azman, 2021). AR and VR technologies also play a significant role in enhancing the shopping experience (Bakker and Govaert, 2023).

Gen Y and Gen Z expect convenience, engagement, and innovation from brands. Design thinking encourages retailers to incorporate AR features, such as virtual try-ons, allowing customers to visualise how products might look before purchasing the products (Lee and Tan, 2021). This meets Gen Z's demand for interactive shopping and reassures Gen Y by providing the confidence they need in their purchasing decisions. By adopting an omnichannel approach, retailers can create a seamless brand experience that spans online and offline platforms, delivering a cohesive shopping journey that resonates with Gen Y and Gen Z (Lim, 2022).

In conclusion, design thinking offers a transformative framework for fashion retailers in Malaysia to engage Gen Y and Gen Z effectively. By placing empathy at the core of the creative process, retailers can create culturally relevant and personalised experiences that resonate deeply with these generations. Through rapid prototyping, sustainable practices, and immersive experiences, brands can stay agile and responsive to the evolving preferences of Gen Y and Gen Z, ensuring sustained engagement and fostering brand loyalty. Ultimately, design thinking empowers retailers to build authentic connections with these generations, positioning themselves for long-term success in a highly competitive marketplace (Brown, 2009; Liedtka, 2018).

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ART APPRECIATION FOR BEGINNERS

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Art appreciation is about learning to look at, understand, and connect with art in meaningful ways (Barry, 2020). It entails honing the abilities to scrutinise and interpret various art forms while also comprehending the historical and cultural circumstances that shaped their creation. By engaging with art in this way, individuals can deepen their understanding of themselves and the world around them. For beginners, it involves observing, interpreting, and valuing art in a way that is personal and enriching. Through art appreciation, individuals can also gain a greater appreciation for the creativity and expression of artists, as well as the diverse perspectives and emotions that art can evoke. This process allows for personal growth and a deeper connection to the beauty and complexity of the human experience.

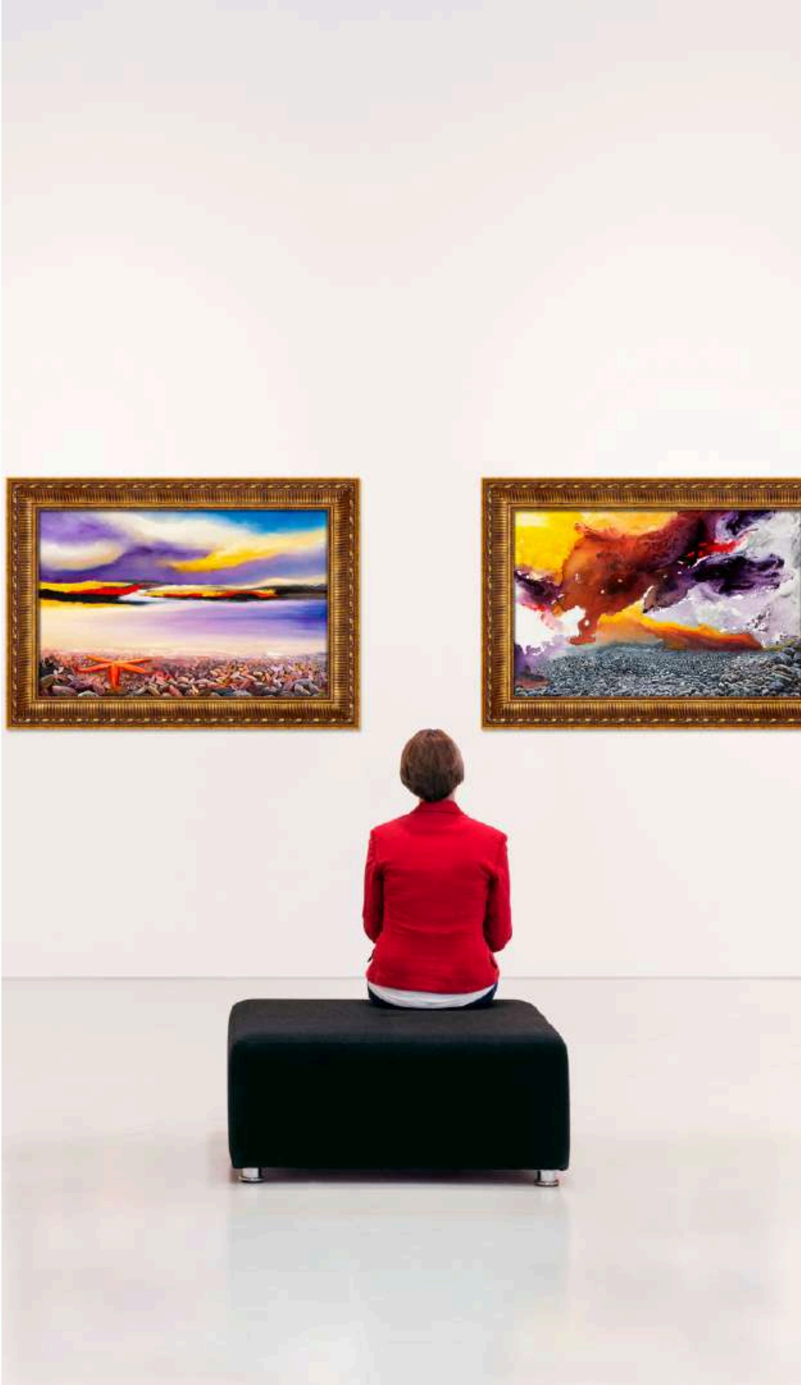
Art can come in many forms—painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, or digital media. According to Van Geert and Wagemans (2020), each form offers a unique opportunity for individuals to explore different themes, styles, and techniques, expanding their artistic horizons.

- **Tailored Coverage**: Offering personalized plans tailored to your individual requirements.
- **Affordable Rates**: Competitive pricing that maintains high quality standards.
- **Expert Support**: Access to professional guidance from seasoned agents.
- **Fast Claims**: Streamlined and trouble-free claims procedures for rapid assistance.
- **Customer Satisfaction**: Committed to providing exceptional service and safeguarding our clients.

Meanwhile, Gustlin and Gustlin (2023) have compiled a list. From this perspective, they have identified five key elements of art appreciation:

- **Cultural Context:** Art provides insight into the values and beliefs of societies by reflecting the culture and time period of its creation.
- **Materials and Techniques:** The choice of materials and techniques conveys meaning and affects the interpretation of art.
- **Beauty and aesthetics:** Concepts of beauty vary significantly across cultures and are crucial to understanding diverse art forms.
- **Symbolism and Purpose:** Art often contains symbols and serves purposes beyond mere decoration, like storytelling or ritual.
- **Artistic Expression:** Each piece of art is a unique expression of the artist's inner world and experiences, revealing personal and collective identities.

By engaging with a variety of art forms, individuals can cultivate a more well-rounded and nuanced appreciation for the richness of human creativity and expression. A beneficial first step in appreciating art is to slow down and really look at it. Notice the colours, shapes, textures, and lines. Consider the arrangement and interaction of these elements. Is there symmetry, or does it seem unbalanced? Is it realistic or abstract? Paying attention to these aspects helps you understand what the artist might be trying to convey. Additionally, delving into the historical and cultural context of the artwork's creation can yield valuable insights into its meaning and significance. Furthermore, seeking opportunities to discuss and analyse art with others can lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation for different perspectives and interpretations.



The next step is interpreting what you see. Ask yourself: What is the subject of the artwork? Does it tell a story or evoke a feeling? Art often has a purpose, and understanding it can deepen your appreciation. By considering the techniques and materials used by the artist, you can gain a better understanding of their creative process and intentions. Engaging with art through various forms of media, such as books, documentaries, or museum exhibitions, can also enhance your knowledge and appreciation of different artistic styles and movements. It could serve to celebrate beauty, communicate a message, or challenge viewers to think in a new way.

Understanding the context of art's creation is a crucial aspect of appreciating it. Knowing the artist's background, the time period, and the culture can help you see the work through a new lens. This deeper understanding can enhance your overall enjoyment and appreciation of the artwork, allowing you to connect with it on a more profound level. Additionally, engaging with art can also lead to meaningful conversations and connections with others who share your interest in creativity and self-expression. For example, Vincent van Gogh's swirling, emotive brushstrokes make more sense when you learn about his struggles with mental health. In contrast, a piece of Japanese woodblock art may reflect the beauty of everyday life in the Edo period, which valued simplicity and nature.

Finally, remember that art appreciation is a skill that grows over time. Although it's normal to feel unsure at first, seeing more art will help you understand what you like and why. Visit museums, look at art books, or explore online galleries to expose yourself to different styles and artists. And above all, trust your own reactions. Art is a deeply personal experience, so don't be afraid to form your own opinions and interpretations. The more you engage with art, the more enriched your life will become as you discover new perspectives and emotions through different pieces. Art is meant to be felt as much as it is seen, so let yourself connect with it on a personal level. Through this journey, you'll discover that art appreciation is not about understanding everything perfectly; it's about opening yourself up to experience something new.

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THE ART OF DESIGN: HOW BUILDING BLOCKS CAN TRANSFORM INTO AN AUTISTIC TEEN'S DREAM CAREER, INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS THROUGH TEACHING

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Art is a beautiful reflection of our diverse cultures, rich histories, and the unique personal styles that make each of us shine. It is a universal language, uniquely created and appreciated by every culture and individual, celebrating the beauty of human expression in countless forms.

Despite its diversity, art is a universal human activity found in every society and deeply rooted in human nature. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can present challenges in communication, including speech delays and non-verbal expression. Art serves as a valuable tool for individuals with ASD to express themselves. Research indicates that neurodivergent individuals, as highlighted by Nadal and Chatterjee (2019), possess unique cognitive processing styles that allow them to interpret and understand information in ways that differ from neurotypical individuals.

People can understand things in different ways. This shapes how they see the world and how they interact with others. AS, an autistic teenage boy, beautifully expresses his creativity by transforming his observations into stunning designs with building blocks. Research indicates that visual cues significantly aid memory retrieval in individuals with ASD (Anger et al., 2019).

Figure 1: Avenger's Tower by AS

By recognizing and nurturing these passions, caregivers, educators, and therapists can develop targeted strategies that empower individuals with ASD to succeed and thrive. This suggests that fostering and encouraging these interests can significantly enhance their skills and abilities. AS's initial interest in superhero movies grew, inspiring him to create various designs. He explored a range of projects, including superhero minifigures, Avengers Tower, and multiple versions of the Batmobile, among others. He brings his vision to life by constructing his dream house using building blocks. This demonstrates that building blocks can be an effective medium for fostering creativity, particularly for individuals with autism. Hashmi et al. (2020) suggest that engaging in imaginative play can lead to improvements in social and cognitive skills over time.

Although learning disabilities pose challenges in ASD, an effective teaching technique can ignite interest and transform it into strength. Studies indicate that individuals with ASD can leverage their unique personal interests to develop and enhance their strengths.

According to Quintin (2019), personal interests often serve as a foundation for skill development and can significantly enhance motivation and engagement. This ultimately leads to positive outcomes in various areas of life, including social interactions and vocational skills.

Figure 1: Avenger's Tower by AS

By recognizing and nurturing these passions, caregivers, educators, and therapists can develop targeted strategies that empower individuals with ASD to succeed and thrive. This suggests that fostering and encouraging these interests can significantly enhance their skills and abilities. AS's initial interest in superhero movies grew, inspiring him to create various designs. He explored a range of projects, including superhero minifigures, Avengers Tower, and multiple versions of the Batmobile, among others. He brings his vision to life by constructing his dream house using building blocks. This demonstrates that building blocks can be an effective medium for fostering creativity, particularly for individuals with autism. Hashmi et al. (2020) suggest that engaging in imaginative play can lead to improvements in social and cognitive skills over time.

AS expresses his love for designing with building blocks and aspires to become a tutor to inspire others through their passion. He states, “When I grow up, I want to be a teacher. I want to teach kids to play Lego.” Sharing these skills within the community promotes collective empowerment and bridges the gap between neurodiverse individuals and society (Fenn & Scior, 2019). When individuals passionately share their talents—through creative endeavours, teaching, or other avenues—they not only highlight their unique gifts but also inspire others to celebrate diversity. Celebrating their unique strengths and achievements empowers individuals to embrace their individuality, fostering self-confidence while honouring their contributions to their communities and future workplaces.

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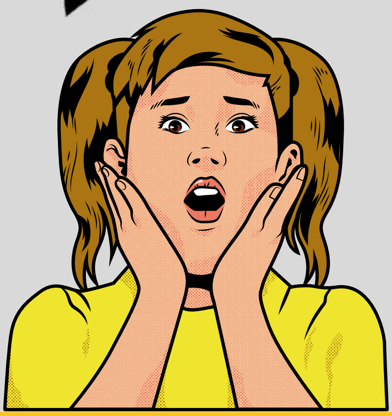
STRIKING THE PERFECT BALANCE:

NAVIGATING CREATIVITY AND FUNCTIONALITY IN A COMIC DESIGN



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O'Sullivan (2023) notes that designers widely recognise the challenge of balancing creativity and functionality, particularly in the realm of comics. A comic artist must juggle artistic expression with the need to communicate effectively, capturing the reader's attention and advancing the storyline. Each decision about layout, colour, typography, and character design must be intentional, serving both an aesthetic purpose and the practical goal of storytelling.

At the heart of comic design is the tension between creative freedom and the structured demands of narrative flow. Comics often have specific conventions, such as panelling and speech bubbles, which serve functional roles by guiding readers' eyes across the page in a particular sequence, Gavaler (2022). Breaking these conventions can create dramatic effects, but it risks confusing the reader if overdone. Therefore, a comic artist must find a balance, using creative layout choices that enhance, rather than hinder, the reading experience.

For instance, highly detailed artwork can immerse readers in a visually rich world, showcasing the artist's creativity. However, an overly intricate background or too many visual elements might detract from the central action or dialogue. Cluttered visuals can confuse readers, pulling them away from the narrative. According to Poon (2022), simplifying backgrounds or using strategic focus on characters in critical moments can maintain clarity without sacrificing creativity. A comic artist must decide when to add or subtract detail to serve the story effectively.

01 LAYOUT

02 COLOR

03 TYPOGRAPHY

04 CHARACTER

Similarly, colour choices in comics serve both aesthetic and functional purposes. Vivid colours can evoke specific emotions, set the tone, and highlight particular scenes, enhancing storytelling by guiding readers' emotional responses. However, excessive or inconsistent colour usage can confuse readers or dilute the impact of key scenes. By selecting colors that align with the story's mood or switching to black-and-white for specific effects, comic artists strike a balance between creative expression and functional storytelling.

Typography and font choices also play a key role in balancing creativity and functionality. Unique or hand-drawn fonts can convey a character's voice or a particular setting, but they must remain legible. Overly stylised fonts may be artistically pleasing, but they can disrupt the reading flow if readers struggle to interpret the text. Many comic artists opt for custom fonts that retain a unique feel without sacrificing readability, ensuring the story remains accessible to all readers.

Ultimately, a successful comic combines artistic creativity with functional clarity, allowing the story to resonate both visually and emotionally. The designer's dilemma lies in knowing when to push creative boundaries and prioritise readability and clarity. When done effectively, this balance not only tells a compelling story but also leaves a lasting impression on the reader, showcasing the true artistry behind comic design.

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PROJECTING AN IMAGE: HANDBAG AS A PR MACHINE

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Similar to personal technology devices, handbags have become integral to the "everyday carry" for many individuals, seamlessly meeting daily functional and stylistic needs. However, even handbags with limited practices continue to be highly sought-after items. This trend indicates that handbags possess significant symbolic and aesthetic value, often surpassing functionality and drawing consumers who seek expressions of social standing, identity, and cultural significance.

Although handbags have been extensively analysed within cultural and fashion studies, particularly concerning gender roles and consumer behaviour (Entwistle, 2015; Crewe, 2020), less attention has been given to handbags as strategic tools of self-presentation. Veblen's (1899) theory of "conspicuous consumption" initially presented luxury items as markers of status, while more recent research (Luvaas, 2021; Abidin, 2020) examines fashion's role on social media in constructing personal narratives. This study builds upon these insights by examining handbags as vehicles for managing public perception, integrating theoretical perspectives from both fashion studies and public relations.

Applying the Jobs-to-be-Done (JTBD) framework from user experience (UX) and business strategy offers an analytical lens to understand how handbags serve multiple roles beyond mere practicality. Although designed primarily to carry personal items, handbags fulfil complex emotional and social functions, such as signalling status, personal branding, and aesthetic expression.

Handbags, akin to clothing, function as extensions of the self. According to Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation, individuals consciously manage how they are perceived in social contexts, using objects and symbols to project their desired identities.

Hermès Birkin 30 White Himalaya Matte Niloticus Crocodile Palladium Hardware, 2016

Birkin with diamonds

Diamond Birkin Bag

Within this framework, handbags serve as strategic assets, particularly in settings where appearance holds considerable weight. For example, luxury handbags can communicate affluence and social standing, whereas artisanal designs may reflect creativity or a commitment to sustainability. These selections are deliberate choices within a broader cultural narrative and constitute elements of personal public relations.

In Malaysia, handbags have similarly evolved from mere fashion accessories to prominent tools of public relations (PR) for both individuals and brands. With the rise of digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, handbags' visibility and influence have been amplified, especially among Malaysian influencers, celebrities, and social media users. For urban Malaysian women, particularly in metropolitan areas like Kuala Lumpur, luxury handbags from brands like Hermès, Chanel, and Louis Vuitton are not only functional but also key symbols of sophistication, affluence, and success. In the age of "Instagram culture," these handbags are frequently featured in posts—whether at glamorous events or in everyday settings—to enhance one's perceived lifestyle and social identity, often increasing online visibility and following. Given the role of social media in Malaysia for networking, self-promotion, and lifestyle portrayal, luxury handbags have become essential PR instruments. Furthermore, in Malaysian consumer culture, handbags convey messages that extend beyond wealth.

Handbags may represent modernity, independence, or cultural identity. Malaysian influencers and celebrities skilfully adopt global fashion trends, often localizing them to align with Malaysian cultural norms. For example, a celebrity might pair a luxury handbag with modest fashion, appealing to both contemporary urbanites and more traditional communities. Additionally, handbags are linked with broader social causes in Malaysia. Luxury brands such as Chanel and Louis Vuitton, popular among the Malaysian elite, are associated with values like philanthropy, sustainability, and women's empowerment.

When Malaysian influencers and high-profile individuals carry these handbags, they may signal alignment with these global values while also promoting wealth. In some cases, Malaysian women may choose specific handbags to express support for movements like sustainable or ethical fashion, contributing to the rise of socially conscious consumerism. This creates a strategic opportunity for luxury brands. In the hands of prominent Malaysian influencers or celebrities, handbags become cultural symbols beyond luxury, embodying ideals like success, independence, and social awareness. Brands capitalise on this by ensuring their products are associated with individuals who align with their desired brand image. By aligning handbags with these larger cultural narratives, luxury brands expand their influence beyond fashion, reaching into lifestyle and values in the Malaysian market.

CROSS-CULTURAL INNOVATION:
Enhancing the Japanese Moku-zogan Technique

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Moku-zogan, a traditional Japanese wood inlay technique, exemplifies meticulous craftsmanship through the inlaying of various woods into surfaces to create intricate designs. Originating from a deep-rooted heritage of Japanese artisanship, this technique not only showcases the precision in woodworking but also embodies significant cultural values, particularly in regions renowned for their skilled artisans like Hakone and Kyoto (Tanaka, 2015). In the modern era, Moku-zogan has embraced significant technological transformations, particularly through the integration of sophisticated algorithms in computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM). These advancements facilitate the creation of more complex and precise designs, employing algorithms to optimize the fit and arrangement of inlays, thus bridging traditional skills with high-tech methods (Sato & Thompson, 2018).

In a groundbreaking fusion of cultural identities and craftsmanship, we developed a series of ten console tables utilizing the traditional Japanese Moku-zogan technique, tailored to embody a harmonious blend of Malaysian and Japanese aesthetics. The design process was meticulously structured into several phases, beginning with ideation, where initial concepts were inspired by the unique cultural symbols of both nations.

This phase transitioned into idea development, where designs were refined and aligned with functional requirements, ensuring each piece resonated with both cultural narratives. The final phase, design development, involved the intricate application of Moku-zogan, where skilled artisans meticulously inlaid diverse woods to craft the detailed, culturally-rich patterns. This project not only showcased the exquisite precision of Moku-zogan but also successfully merged Malaysian and Japanese identities, creating a line of furniture that stands as a testament to the innovative potential of cross-cultural collaboration in design.This integration of technology enhances not only the efficiency but also the creative potential of Moku-zogan, enabling it to merge with different cultural elements and spawn innovative design philosophies globally. For instance, Western designers have incorporated these algorithm-enhanced Moku-zogan techniques into furniture and decorative arts, blending them with local styles to create globally appealing products (Johnson, 2020). Such algorithm-driven cross-cultural innovations are crucial as they ensure the survival and relevance of traditional crafts in the contemporary design landscape, promoting a mutual exchange of ideas and techniques that enrich both the heritage and future of design (Global Design Innovations, 2021). By leveraging advanced algorithms, Moku-zogan transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, underscoring the expansive potential of traditional crafts to adapt and flourish in a globalized art world.

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e ISSN 2805- 47 5X
9772805 475 000
Volume 3 (2025)

RMU4U e-Bulletin

Research Management Unit
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah