

MALAYSIAN IDENTITY IN DESIGN EDUCATION: FURNITURE AND JEWELLERY PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Abstract – Incorporating issues of Malaysian identity in design education has become an important goal for educators in Malaysia recently. From the perspective of design students, many of them are constantly facing the dilemma of how to integrate identity in their design works. This paper reviews the literature that focuses on Malaysian identity. It begins with the development of education design in Malaysia followed by a review of furniture and jewellery design in Malaysia. This paper highlights a number of selected design works of furniture and jewellery design taken from the most recent winners of design competitions and students' project designs which carry the Malaysian identity in their designs. This paper concludes that design students as well as manufacturers have the responsibility of ensuring that furniture and jewellery products from Malaysia have the inherent look that is Malaysian by using local raw materials, applying Malaysian symbols and incorporating the cultural activities of Malaysians into the products. Besides bringing awareness in matters related to the Malaysian identity, this paper is also useful for design students, designers and manufacturers as a guideline to incorporate national identity into their designs.

Keywords: *furniture design, jewellery design, university curriculum, design education, Malaysian identity*

1.0 Introduction

Many researchers in the field of Art and Design have indicated that it may be possible to relate the design activities in Malaysia with the early activities of the local craftsmen in the states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Malacca who traded their traditionally hand-made crafts and pottery (Ibrahim, 1999). After gaining independence from Britain, Malaysia has experienced significant improvements in the living standard and the tremendous development has occurred in the manufacturing industries to meet consumers' demand. In the 1960s, the importance of design for industries was first witnessed when the Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak called for the need for a national design identity, urging local designers to explore the utilization of new technology that will help reduce the nation's reliance on imported product dependency (Ibrahim, 2001). In 1971, a New Economic Policy was established with the main aim of encouraging local manufacturers to assemble and manufacture product to fulfill this aim (Ibrahim, 2001).

In the 1980s, the importance of design and industrial design began to be recognized and was highlighted through two successful mega-projects: (1) the image of National trains, and (2)

the design of the Malaysian national car, Proton Saga (Ibrahim, 2001). In 1990, the country had largely met the criteria for a Newly-Industrialized Country (NIC) status (30 percent of exports to consist of manufactured goods) (Ibrahim, 2001). The progress of Malaysian industrialisation had also received a new impetus with the government's commitment to convert the nation into a fully-industrialised country by the year 2020 (Ibrahim, 1999).

2.0 Design Education in Malaysia

According to Ibrahim (1995), the formal training for designers in Malaysia began as early as 50 years ago with the establishment of the Department of Art and Design in 1967 as an integral part of the School of Applied Arts and Architecture, Institut Teknologi MARA. The Department, staffed by only two full-time and one part-time lecturers (all United Kingdom trained), started a one-year Foundation Course for 33 students. In 1968, three year specialized Diploma courses in Fine Art, Graphic Design and Textile Design were offered to 30 students who had successfully completed the one-year Foundation Course, while a new batch of 40 students were taken into the Foundation Course. In 1972, the Department of Art and Design was separated from the School of Applied Arts and Architecture to become the School of Art and Design, which amongst the courses offered were Industrial Design (specialisation in Furniture Design) and Fine Metal Design (specialisation in Jewellery Design). In the early years of the formation of the Department of Industrial Design, only nine students were enticed to enroll and in 1973, only seven of the nine students had graduated. They became the first batch of industrial design graduates in Malaysia and due to limited domestic expertise, they became pioneers in the development of industrial design in Malaysia. In line with the Malaysian government's aspiration which focuses on industrial design education, UiTM is no longer the only university to date that offers courses in industrial design. Other universities, polytechnics and colleges also offer similar courses in industrial design.

3.0 Countries and Its' Identity

Since the last 20 years, many researchers have put interest in studying the relationship between national identity and design (Narotzky, 2013). The countries in Europe; for example, are still struggling to define national identities which are solely based on culture and history even though in the 1980s formal characteristics that can identify a particular product as French, Spanish, Italian, German and so on had emerged (Narotzky, 2013). According to Engineer (2000), 'identity' means 'the state of being identical, absolute sameness' and identity is most commonly based on shared sense of history, culture and language. Therefore, he added that identity plays quite an important role "in the formation of a nation's common language, culture and sense of a shared history".

In the context of product designs, Nakatani (2011) mentioned that products always express something and are interpreted in some ways during the perception process and in use. Product characteristics are affected by different cultural backgrounds and socio-cultural history; for example, between Europe and Asian countries. Taking Japan for instance, from a historical point of view, it has been closed to foreign commerces for more than two hundreds years ago to prohibit the Christianity and to manage national politics. By establishing a closure of country, the original Japanese industry and the culture were developed and they got matured. In a sense, the closure of country contributed to the maintenance of Japanese identity. On the other hand, Finland's identity, which was built on an idealization of people and landscape of the Finnish interior as well as from folklore gathered on the periphery, was created quickly and centrally during a period of semi-independence, which lasted until the Russian Revolution and Finland's independence.

The identity of a nation is often talked about and sometimes becomes a controversial topic of discussion. Malaysia too is not exempted from this discussion as it is a potpourri of people from diverse backgrounds and religious upbringings, languages, cultural and lifestyle differences that are varied and unique. Due to these unique differences and to prevent the disintegration of ethnicity among the multiracial people and unity of arts and culture, the Malaysian government introduced the National Arts/Cultural and Heritage Policy in 1971 (Deraman, 1994). This policy is the foundation stone for the interpretation and formation of a national identity which is acceptable to all Malaysians. It is based on historical facts and development of the region and the position of the nation as a focal meeting point for various ethnic civilizations and trade groups for thousands of years. There are three main principles in the policy. They are:

- i. Based upon the region's ethnic cultural origins
- ii. Accept other cultural norms which are suitable and appropriate
- iii. Islam becomes the most important source in building a national culture.

Other than that, the government has also introduced ideologies through the Rukun Negara, the New Economic Policy which aims to correct the economic imbalance between the races, National Education Policy, Bahasa Melayu (now Bahasa Malaysia) as the national language and the formation of the Department for National Unity (Jabatan Perpaduan Negara).

4.0 Towards a Design That is Malaysian in Identity

The infusion of the Malaysian identity has arisen long ago in Malaysia without many people being even aware of it. This can be seen in the design of buildings, arched entrances into towns and cities, statues, street lights, consumer goods including crafts such as pewter ware, gold and silver jewellery. The MARA building (Figure 1) along Raja Laut Road Kuala Lumpur is symbolic of the design that is Malaysian in identity. The podium block is designed like a Malay boat whereas the murals on the exterior walls of the building have bamboo shoot motifs and moving clouds (awan larat) which have been blended to form the motif for borders of songket cloth, a traditional art form of the Malays. This motif is also knitted into the mengkuang mats that portray the Malay identity in Malaysia. The National Library (Figure 2) situated along Tun Razak road in Kuala Lumpur also portrays the Malaysian identity via its design based on the traditional head gear worn by Malays.



Figure 1 : MARA building



Figure 2 : National library

There are also several statues found in Selangor and Malacca modelled and designed based on the shape of the keris and the traditional Malay head gear. The traditional Malay head gear (tengkolok) symbolizes royalty and a kingdom under the patronage and rule of a King whilst the keris is a symbol of strength and power of the Malay race. Designs that are Malaysian in identity are also very obvious in the design of lamp posts of the street lights in Putrajaya which originate from the crescent or half moon-like kite shape as its subject of design. These kite shaped designs with their intricate design of golden like intertwining shoots and vines depict a high standard of arts and crafts in the Malaysian community especially in the artistic works of the Malays. The crescent kite shape is also the symbol of Malaysia Airline System (MAS) which is the national air carrier for Malaysia.

5.0 Theories of National Identity

In our review of literature, the best overview of the theories of national identity was from Wan and Vanderwerf's (2009) article. Based on Smith's (1998) suggestions, Wan and Vanderwerf (2009) classified national identity into four main theories: 1) Primordialist, 2) Perennialist, 3) Ethno-symbolic and 4) Modernist as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Theories of national identity

Theory	Description
Primordialist	Theories that are essentially primordial, i.e. that view national identity as emerging from kinship, cultural or historical ties that are enshrined in the collective memory of the culture.
Perennialist	
Ethno-Symbolic	
Modernist	A constructivist approach that views national identity as an elusive socially constructed and negotiated reality, something that essentially has a different meaning for each individual.

Based on the framework of Smith's (1998) theories of national identity, two models were developed namely 1) Model of Nation (Figure 3) and Model of Identity (Figure 4). Model of Nation suggests national identity based on the "stuff" under the cultural umbrella, but it recognizes that cultural characteristics are subjected to self-definition and changed by the group itself. On the other hand, Model of Identity integrates Primordialist and Modernist theories of national identity (Wan & Vanderwerf, 2009). This model has two parts; nuclear core which consists of specific socio cultural values that have persisted over time (e.g. language, customs, myths, and religion), and a continually changing expression of national identity related to the core, like protons circling the nucleus.

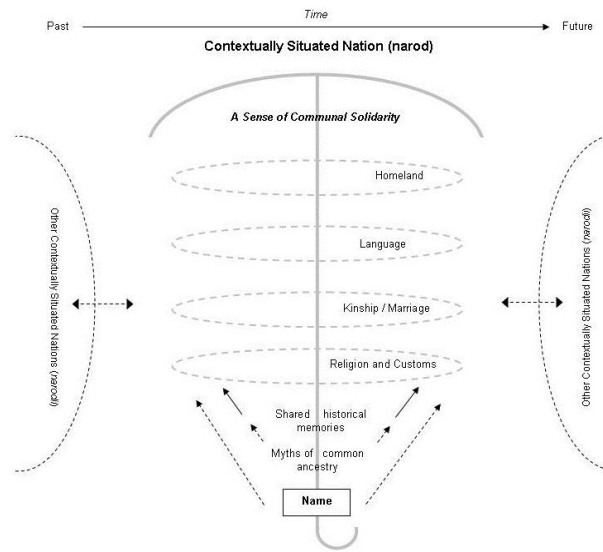


Figure 3: Model of nation

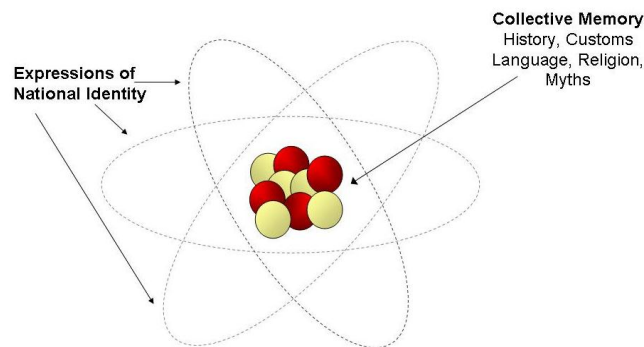


Figure 4: Model of identity

The researchers believe these two models are useful for this study and almost similar to the concept of nation and identity in the context of Malaysia as discussed earlier in this paper.

6.0 Focus of the Paper

The focus of this paper is in the field of Art and Design. It highlights a number of selected design works from two major areas of Art and Design namely furniture and jewellery design. All selected designs are the works of UiTM students only. This is due to the fact that UiTM Malaysia is the only university in Malaysia that offers Jewellery Design programme at Diploma until Degree or Master level. In the case of Furniture Design area, UiTM is a pioneer for this area through courses and projects under the supervision of industrial design and interior design. Other than the selected design works, this paper also focuses on the product of the manners of design competition that carries the Malaysian identity in their design. The products are usually granted by individual, public and private institution of higher learning education or design agencies. The furniture and jewellery were selected for this paper since it has been prioritized as a key area of growth for Malaysian industries.

7.0 Furniture and Jewellery Design in Malaysia

7.1 Furniture Design

History has shown that the manufacture and export of Malaysian furniture began very slowly with the mushrooming of small scale furniture factories in the late 1970s. According to Ibrahim (2008), the Malaysian furniture industry only entered the export market in the mid 1980s with a total export amounting to only RM25 million in 1985. The Malaysian furniture export market continued to grow aggressively reaching RM2.078 billion in 1995. In 1997, it increased to RM3.094 billion and by 1999, it had almost reached to RM5 billion marks that was RM4.923 billion.

*Table 2:
Malaysia trade of furniture 2002-2014*

	EXPORT		IMPORT	
	RM MIL	Change%	RM MIL	Change%
2002	5,539.0	8.9	650.0	71.4
2003	6,009.0	8.5	723.0	11.2
2004	7,050.6	17.3	1,082.9	42.9
2005	7,054.7	6.4	1,254.3	21.4
2006	8,083.7	7.7	1,319.5	5.2
2007	8,241.4	2.0	1,331.3	0.9
2008	8,692.6	5.5	1,460.3	9.7
2009	7,622.7	-12.3	1,092.0	-25.2
2010	7,959.2	4.4	1,311.0	20.1
2011	7,670.3	-3.6	1,340.1	2.2
2012	8,002.1	4.3	1,396.2	4.2
2013	7,358.3	8.1	1,547.8	10.9
2014	8,013.1	8.9	1,670.2	7.9

A recent report by Furniture and Furnishing Export International (2017) [see Table 2] showed that Malaysian furniture was exported worldwide and was valued at RM8 billion in 2014 with 2.3 billion exported to the United States. As shown in Table 3 below, until the end of 2014, the United States of America was still the largest importer of Malaysian furniture, followed by Japan, Singapore and Australia.

*Table 3 :
Malaysia furniture export by country 2014*

	RM MIL	Share%	Change%
TOTAL EXPORT	8,013.1	22.0	8.9
USA	2,301.7	28.7	9.6
JAPAN	603.6	8.5	1.4
SINGAPORE	523.0	8.2	10.4
AUSTRALIA	544.8	7.6	1.5
UK	278.5	4.5	17.7
CANADA	203.8	3.5	28.2
UAE	241.0	3.4	4.0
INDIA	196.0	3.0	13.4
SAUDI ARABIA	132.2	2.0	13.5
PHILIPPINES	93.2	1.6	25.0
KOREA	95.5	1.5	17.8
GERMANY	76.3	1.5	41.6
RUSSIA	83.8	1.5	12.4
CHINA	71.7	1.3	42.4
CHILE	75.2	1.3	2.2
OTHERS	1,771.2	1.1	4.6

The future prospects of the furniture industry are very bright indeed, although Malaysia is forced to compete with neighboring countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and China. Similarly, these neighboring countries are also increasing their efforts to penetrate the export market and find new markets for their furniture products. In the case of Malaysia, continuous efforts are being made to search for new markets such as in North and South America and several other potentially rich markets for furniture exports specifically.

Furthermore, Malaysian furniture manufacturers have given greater emphasis on product finishing, design and quality for products produced under own-brand. Report by MATRADE (MATRADE, 2013a) shows that recently, Malaysian Furniture Promotion Council (MFPC) has introduced Malaysia Pride Quality Mark as a symbol of quality for the local furniture industry. The Malaysia Pride Quality Mark will become a branding tool and catalyst for the industry to differentiate Malaysia in order to compete effectively and put our stamp onto the highly competitive and cluttered global marketplace.

7.2 Jewellery Design

According to Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE 2013b), the jewellery industry in Malaysia has progressed from its humble beginnings comprising of family-owned small-scale businesses catering to the local market, to being one of the major exporters of jewellery in the Asian region. The local jewellery industry can be broadly categorized into two segments: 1) precious metals and gemstone jewellery, and 2) costume or imitation jewellery. In terms of major exports of jewellery, MATRADE 2013 has recorded that exports of jewellery in 2011 grew by 1.7 per cent to RM7,164.7 million compared with RM7,045.9 million in 2010 (Table 4). This sector was ranked the 13th largest contributor and accounted for 1.5% share of total exports of manufactured goods in Malaysia.

Within the individual markets, the UAE remained the largest export market for jewellery in 2011, which recorded a growth of 5.8% to RM3.86 billion or 53.9% share of total exports of jewellery. Singapore was Malaysia's second largest export (20% or RM1.43 billion) while Thailand came in the third with export value of RM572.5 million or 9.3% of total share of exports of jewellery in 2011. According to MATRADE 2013, the jewellery industry will continue to face keen competition from low-cost producers such as India, Thailand, Indonesia and China. Therefore, Malaysian companies are suggested to increase its quality of products as well as to strengthen their value added activities such as designing and marketing in order to sustain competitiveness. The industry has the potential to successfully compete against the

luxury goods industry and preserve its traditional domination of the consumer's spending. The industry needs to position jewellery as a category and explore newer markets.

Table 4: Major exports of jewellery

Description	2011			2010		
	Value (RM mil)	Share (%)	Change (%)	Value (RM mil)	Share (%)	Change (%)
Total Exports	7,164.7	100	1.7	7,045.9	100	23.9
Jewellery of Gold, Silver, Platinum	5,841.1	81.5	8.8	5,368.4	76.2	12.1
Articles of Precious Metal	1,307.7	18.3	-21.4	1,664.10	23.6	90.3
Imitation Jewellery	15.9	0.2	19.1	1.3	0.2	-41.6

As for the jewellery design, Ali (1990) showed that the history of jewellery in Malaysia has started since ancient times. It is closely related to the history of gold in Malaysia and started growing in the golden age of the Malacca Sultanate. The jewellery is used as personal ornaments of the King and Queen. For example, ornaments for head, ears, hands, feet and body use the material of gold, silver and copper. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud Shah, the son of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah ordered that only the royal family and the chiefs were allowed to wear jewellery because it symbolises luxuries and wealth. The public began to wear and give attention to jewellery when the market price of gold soared around 1977 to 1980. They became interested and looked back into old jewellery for their own savings or to be sold.

8.0 Malaysian Identity in Furniture and Jewellery Designs

Furniture and jewellery design with Malaysian identity is still in the early stages. As mentioned by Abdullah (2003 pg.148) who studied on Malaysian made products:

“It is not possible to identify a product as Malaysian as it does not have a particular identity. Only the Made in Malaysia logo identifies it as Malaysia even though we have vast materials and motifs that can be used to express a Malaysian identity; it is not applied in full by consultants or designers on the basis that it is not marketable. As a result, Malaysian made products are not having an identity that can be classified as well known by consumers like Italian furniture, Germany cars or Japanese electrical equipment”.

With regard to the incorporation of a Malaysian identity in furniture designs, it is not encouraging. Furniture with a Malaysian identity is still a fresh and new idea even though the suggestion to create furniture with a Malaysian identity was first mooted twenty two years ago by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammed (Ibrahim, 2008). At the official opening of the Malaysian International Furniture Fair 1995, he urged all local furniture manufacturers to give focus to the effort of fulfilling the objective of creating Malaysian unique design by referring to the cultural heritage of various races and ethnic groups in the country. New, attractive and original furniture designs for the international market are the basic qualification in Malaysia’s development towards the objective of industrialised nation (NST 9th March 1995).

In recent development, German furniture designer, Klaus Kummer, Chief Judge of Malaysian International Furniture Fair 2013 (MIFF2013) Furniture Design Competition believes that Malaysia furniture lacks identity (Ling, 2013). He stated that, “Malaysia has done great achievements already in architecture, arts, fashion, fabrics and all sorts of creative elements of society where designers are needed except in furniture industry. The only area which is completely undeveloped is furniture. All the furniture you make today is Western furniture”. He then questioned the reasons why the Malaysian furniture industry continues to look to the West for inspiration and instead urged everyone to look for their own ideas. He understood that Malaysia does not have a history in furniture but regretted that Malaysians are not really educated to design for their own culture. He then suggested manufacturers and designers to look at the past and consider what the society needs, what people need in their homes and how to earn from our lifestyles to create innovative products. He added to his opinion that the future will be in Asia because it has such a rich culture and valuable heritage.

However, there is no doubt that there has been an approach to ensure the Malaysian identity stays fresh and continues to be the basic element in the creation of new product designs in the market. One of the best approaches is by incorporating the Malaysian identity through design competitions. The incorporation of a national identity has been successfully implemented through this approach. For example, the MIFF Furniture Design Competition which is held annually in conjunction with the MIFF has managed to come up with various designs based on Malaysian identity. Known as the Furniture Excellent Award, the competition was initiated in 1988 to raise the standard of designs in the MIFF series and the industry, as well as an avenue for all Malaysians to freely explore and display their best ideas in furniture design and to show awareness of the importance of Malaysian identity in furniture design.

Both pictures below display the winner of MIFF Furniture Design Competition who had successfully applied the identity of Malaysia in their furniture design.



Figure 5 : Ketupat table



Figure 6 : Just like old times

Ketupat table by Priscilla Lok Ai Fang - MIFF2013 (Figure 5) was the art translation of ‘ketupat’ that is a traditional food favoured by all Malaysians. The ‘Just Like Old Times’ design by Sim Chia Yi – MIFF2012 (Figure 6), on the other hand, was inspired by rice winnow.

As for jewellery design, the incorporation of a national identity has been successfully implemented through Malaysia's Jewellery Design Awards, held each year in conjunction with the Malaysia International Jewelry Fair (MIJF) in collaboration with the Federation of Goldsmith and Jewellers Association of Malaysia that was able to show a variety of designs based on the identity of Malaysia. The competition was initiated in 2011 for the promotion of creative talent available in Malaysia jewellery industry worldwide. The pictures below (Figure 7 & Figure 8) illustrate among the designs that have succeeded in winning several national design competitions and most of these creations have been commercialised. The design of the jewellery displayed here endeavor to highlight local identity through the choice of motifs, local materials and weaving techniques.



Figure 7 : Life spring eternal



Figure 8 : Dreamy fantasy

Both pictures belong to the winners MIJF Competition who have successfully applied the Malaysian identity in jewellery designs. Life Spring Eternal (Figure 7) was inspired by butterfly that is a flying common sight insect in Malaysia while the design named 'Dreamy Fantasy' (Figure 8) was inspired by KLCC Twin Tower, an outstanding and well-known landmark of Malaysia capital, indicating that Malaysia is doing its parts towards becoming an advanced country.

9.0 Incorporating the Malaysian Identity through Design Education

Product designs which include furniture and jewellery are universal in its usage by people all over the world. But the issues faced by today's Malaysian design students are how to put national character into a product without trivialising either the product or the character. The matter has been clarified by Bullis (1996) as he stated that one way to maintain cultural continuity is by adapting ancient cultural images in new forms – old wine in new bottles, so to speak. Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) through the Faculty of Art & Design has made furniture and jewellery design as one of their sub-fields in the program offered. One of the objectives for offering this field is to produce furniture and jewellery designers who are capable of appreciating and incorporating the Malaysian identity into suggested designs. By incorporating the Malaysian identity, these furniture and jewellery designed by UiTM students are different from the designs made by students from other universities (either local

or international) where most are more inclined to styles that are modern and contemporary which at the same time neglect national identity.



Figure 9: Bamboo shoots



Figure 10: Keris

Furniture and jewellery created by UiTM students have evidently achieved a high standard of recognition and have continually won main prizes in design competitions; national and internationally. The pictures below are parts of quality designs by students who enrolled in the program sub-field of furniture (Figure 9 & Figure 10) and jewellery design (Figure 11 & Figure 12).

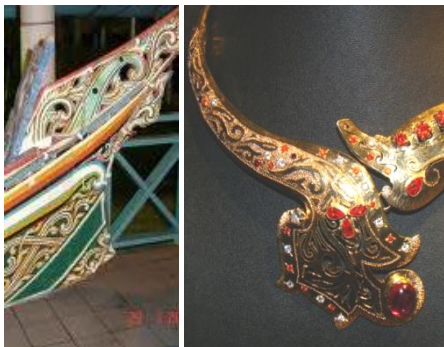


Figure 11: Bangau



Figure 12: Pending

Based on the above products, it clearly shows that the Malaysian identity is not neglected in this furniture and jewellery design. The Malaysian identity is clearly seen through the use of local materials, weaving technique, local subject matter (e.g. bamboo shoots and keris) and incorporation of motifs in the creation. Steps taken by UiTM to incorporate the Malaysian identity through design education should be given praise and serious attention. The parties who are directly involved in this industry and as well as buyers who are indirectly involved should take similar steps to ensure furniture and jewellery design with Malaysian identity have a good place in the local market and is able to compete in the international market.

10. Suggestions

As discussed earlier, it is difficult to clarify products with certain Malaysian product identity as Malaysians are made up of various races with different cultures and religions. However, today, most furniture and jewellery manufacturers have realised that they cannot depend solely on current approaches but must move ahead by producing local furniture and jewellery that are more competitive and have identity that is highly regarded and individual. As suggested by Abdullah (2003), Malaysian manufacturers have to ensure that Malaysian products with good demand abroad are recognised as Malaysian by their design. He added that Malaysian manufacturers have the responsibility to ensure that products from Malaysia have the inherent look that they are Malaysian by: a) using raw materials that cannot be obtained elsewhere, b) applying Malaysian symbols and motives in certain products, and c) incorporating the culture or cultural activities of Malaysians into products to give it a Malaysian identity. In response to the three ideas and thoughts by Abdullah (2003), these are three recommendations to ensure that the future products of furniture and jewellery are recognized as the products of Malaysian identity.

(i) Using Local Raw Materials

In furniture design, the use of local raw materials which are difficult to obtain in other countries but easily available locally like rubber wood, rattan, coconut, sago palm and areca-nut (*pinang*) should be encouraged. Other materials like clinogyne/donax grandis (*bemban*), fragrant screw-pines (*pandan*) and pandanus tectorius (*mengkuang*) leaves can become secondary material or as complementary material for furniture that is being produced.



Figure 13 : Malaysia rock crystal



Figure 14 : Local citrine

In the field of jewellery, the optimum use of raw material can be achieved and applied by the combination of metal such as gold and silver with local gems which can be remarkably stunning. The examples of gems that can be utilized are agate, rock crystal (Figure 13), amethyst and citrine (Figure 14).

(ii) Applying Malaysian Symbols

The use of national symbols that may be interpreted as symbolizing the Malaysian identity as a whole without siding any race or ethnic group can also be incorporated in furniture and jewellery produced in Malaysia. The use of national symbols for instance, may be interpreted as symbolizing the Malaysian identity as a whole without siding any race or ethnic group.

Symbols like the *hibiscus rosa-sinensis* (bunga raya) (Figure 15), Malaysia's national flower or moon kite (wau bulan) (Figure 16) can be worked to suit the furniture and jewellery that is being created.



Figure 15 : *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*



Figure 16 : Moon kite

The hibiscus is literally known as the "celebration flower" in Malay. The red of the petals symbolizes the courage, life, and rapid growth of the Malaysian, and the five petals represent the five *Rukun Negara* of Malaysia. On the other hand, the moon kite got its name from the crescent moon-like shape of its lower section. It is an intricately designed Malaysian moon-kite (normally with floral and fauna motifs) that is traditionally flown by men in the Malaysian state of Kelantan. The logo of Malaysia Airlines (MAS) is also based on this kite. Given the right colour, moon kite apparently resembles a rising crescent moon when flown. To make it more distinctive, moon kite is normally decorated with large, strong-coloured patterns. The fine patterns of flowers and leaves symbolised the 'strength'. The flower and moon kite can be found imprinted on the notes of the Malaysian ringgit.

(v) Incorporating Cultural Activities

Various traditional articles were produced by Malaysian communities through several activities long ago. Traditional activities like traditional games have produced traditional articles like the *congkak* (Figure 17) and top *gasing* while hunting activities have produced some unique articles like *bubu*, trap (*jerat*), cage (*sangkar*) and blow-pipe (*sumpit*). Activities like self-defense have been connected to weapons like the dagger (*keris*), sword (*pedang*), lance (*tombak*) etc. whereas playing traditional musical instruments has been connected to the small gong (*canang*), gong, viol (*rebab*) and tambourine (*rebana*) (Figure 18).



Figure 17: Congkak



Figure 18: Rebana

All these articles have their own uniqueness and high aesthetic values of Malaysian identity which cannot be denied. Therefore, it is sad if this heritage is left and lost without any recognition. One of the ways to conserve this heritage is by making these articles as ideas and subjects which need to be researched thoroughly by taking into consideration the shapes, symbols, motifs, signs or colours of these traditional items. These aspects may become the inspiration that can be incorporated into furniture and jewellery designs. In this way, the Malay cultural and heritage will be conserved and at the same time it clearly shows the project with the Malaysian identity.

11.0 Conclusions

Looking at the current scenario, this is not an insurmountable problem that requires a high budget to be implemented. Malaysian identity can be made obvious and showcased through a variety of means such as using local raw materials, applying Malaysian symbols and incorporating the cultural activities of Malaysians into products. It indirectly will portray the Malaysian personality and give a rise of love and loyalty towards Malaysia and all Malaysia made products.

The design of a product that depicts the national identity of a nation is very important. The infusion of a Malaysian identity in the design can bring forth many advantages especially with the ever changing technology found in the current global markets. Manufacturers of local products can no longer stay in the comfort zone. They must be forward looking to manufacture products that are more competitive and possess a distinct national identity that is both aesthetic in design and value. To design, create and produce final market products that have a Malaysian identity is likened to preserving the national heritage and portraying Malaysia to the eyes of the global world. In this manner, the Malay cultural and heritage will continue to be preserved and at the same time, the Malaysian identity will be clearly seen through the designs of products invented, manufactured and marketed globally.

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