

Wear the past in the present for the future

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Abstract:

The way we dress affects our mood and also self-esteem. It may also affect others around us. Batik fashion is well known among Malaysians and there exist various types of batik based on region and ethnic influence. Traditionally batik is generally known as either Batik Malaysia or Batik Indonesia. Later other more localized groups of batik became popular such as Batik Kelantan, Batik Pahang and Batik Terengganu. Lately, one of the regions coming up with their own unique batik is Borneo commonly called Batik Borneo. Batik Borneo capitalizes on the traditional design motifs popular among prominent indigenous groups of Borneo. In 2008, Malaysian government introduced the policy of wearing batik on Thursdays for civil officers in order to support the batik industry. The main purpose of this paper is to expose Batik Borneo among fashion community and also as a tool for preserving and conserving cultural heritage while also support the local economy. This paper discusses about the possible roles of librarians and libraries in applying fashion for the promotion of the traditional cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations. Highlights of the beauty and uniqueness of Batik Borneo will also be shared in a short video presentation. This paper also shows that library users feel comfortable when dealing with staff wearing batik. Batik is a good wear for library staff because it provides positive feeling not just to themselves but also library users.

Keywords: Batik Borneo, wear batik policy, Batik fashion

1.0 Introduction

Batik is a technique of producing cloth designs using wax as dye repellent to exclude areas of the cloth where dye is not wanted. This is the traditional definition which could be found in many articles and books about batik. Nowadays, especially for Malaysians, the definition of batik is much larger than the simple process for its production. To them batik refers more to certain design characteristics and particular motifs used for cloth designs.

Batik fashion is well-known among Malaysians and there exist various types of batik based on region and ethnic influence. Traditionally batik is generally known as either Batik Malaysia or Batik Indonesia. Later, more localized groups of batik become popular such as Batik Kelantan, Batik Pahang and Batik Terengganu. Batik Borneo was introduced to the market quite recently, probably less than 10 years ago. Batik Borneo capitalizes on the traditional design motifs popular among prominent indigenous groups of Borneo.

The classification of batik based on place of production is widely used in Malaysia. It makes communication between sellers and buyers simpler. Since the way groups of people at a particular locality dress is strongly associated with their local culture, thus categorizing batik by a place's name relieve the need of lengthy explanations.

Practitioners tend to classify batik based on the techniques used for making them. By doing so they came up with categories including batik *cap* (block printed with wax), batik *tulis* (hand-drawn designs) and batik *pelangi* (tie-dyed *pelangi*).

Batik can be both an art and a craft, which is also gaining popularity and better known in the West especially for its creativity. The art of decorating cloth in this way, using wax and dye, has a long history spanning hundreds of years.

1.1 The Process of Making Batik

To make a batik, areas of the cloth where dye is unwanted are waxed by brushing or drawing liquid hot wax over them, and the cloth is then dyed. The parts applied with wax resist the dye and maintain its original colour. Repeating the process of waxing and dyeing can create more elaborate and colourful designs. After the final dyeing and drying, the wax is removed and the cloth is ready for wearing or showing.

Contemporary batik is significantly different from the more traditional and formal styles batik. Contemporary artists may use etching, discharge dyeing, stencils, different tools for waxing and dyeing, wax recipes with different resist values and work with silk, cotton, wool, leather, paper or even wood and ceramics. The variety of techniques available offers the artist the opportunity to explore a unique process in a flexible and exciting way.

1.2 History of batik

Evidence of batik were found in the Far East, Middle East, Central Asia and India from over 2 millennia ago. The craft spread from Asia to the islands of the Malay Archipelago and west to the Middle East through the caravan route. Batik was used in China during the Sui Dynasty (AD 581-618). These were silk batiks and these were discovered in Nara, Japan in the form of screens and ascribed to the Nara period (AD 710-794). They use motifs derived from trees, animals, flute players, hunting parties and mountains.

In India, frescoes found in the Ajunta caves depict head wraps and garments which resemble batik. Temple ruins in Java and Bali contain figures whose garments are decorated with batik-like motifs. The Yoruba tribe of Southern Nigeria and Senegal in central Africa also practice resist dyeing using cassava and rice paste for centuries.

1.3 Batik-Wearing in Line with the Government's Policy

In 2008, the government of Malaysia implemented the policy of wearing batik on Thursdays for civil service officers to support the batik industry. They are required to wear batik as official garment during working hours. Batik is also required when attending official events and considered as one of the formal attires. This decision helped the promotion of batik and many entrepreneurs joined the industry as the demand for batik increased significantly.

1.4 Discover of beauty and uniqueness of Batik Borneo

According to Cheng & Lai (2000), "Borneo is a large island in Southeast Asia contains Sabah, Sarawak (Malaysia), and Kalimantan (Indonesia)".

Batik Borneo as craft and art is distinct from Batik Kelantan or Batik Terengganu. The uniqueness of its pattern from ethnic motifs makes Batik Borneo unique compared to other batik. This paper will highlight the beauty and uniqueness of Batik Borneo with the types of Batik Borneo.

Batik Borneo is classified according to its place of origin either Sarawak, Sabah or West Kalimantan. Even though all three regions consist of mostly similar ethnic groups but localization has made their batik differ from each other.

1.4.1 Sarawak

1.4.1.1 Pua Kumbu



Figure 1: Puak Kumbu motifs in Batik Borneo

Based on Augustine (2001), "Pua Kumbu is ritual clothes or blankets of various types and importance woven by Iban Ladies". Recently, the design was famous among Malaysian and most of local designer takes the opportunity to adapt the motifs into batik.

1.4.1.2 Orang Ulu



Figure 2: Batik Orang Ulu motifs

Orang Ulu is one of native tribes in Sarawak that living in Northern Sarawak. The motifs refer to carved hook (Kalong Kelawit-lawit) of plants, where the carving has a shape like a plant linkage that can be used or linked to any part of the motifs.

1.4.2 Sabah

1.4.2.1 Batik Orang Utan



Figure 3: Batik Orang Utan motifs

Based on Oxford dictionaries (2018), The Orangutans can be found both in the islands of Borneo and Sumatra. From the uniqueness of Orangutans, Sabahan adapt the element of the Orang Utan into their Batik design.

1.4.2.2 Batik Linaudsilad



Figure 4: Batik Linaudsilad motifs

Motifs Linaulau is from Murut ethnic group in sabah. Murut is the second largest indigenous people in Sabah. Linaudsilad refers to plant elements, and then silad is a big size of leaf that can be used for medical purpose. (Ismail, 2007)

1.4.2.3 Batik Tinungkusan



Figure 5 : Batik Tinungkusan motifs

Tinungkusan means heritage, the motifs in Batik Tinungkusan reflects the Kadazandusun, Murut and Rungus ethnic groups identities. The tinungkusan batik is popularly used during the Harvest Day celebration for Unduk Ngadau beauty pageant contestants in Sabah.

1.4.3 West Kalimantan

1.4.3.1 Batik Dayak



Figure 6: Batik Dayak motifs

The typical Batik Dayak in West Kalimantan is also known as Batik Pontianak. The batik motifs of West Kalimantan are also influenced by ethnic Malay pattern. Their designs are full of lively elements and bright colors. The patterns found in many Dayak motifs of West Kalimantan are usually the pattern of Arowana fish and flower pattern.

1.5 Library staff role in Batik Borneo

Library staff should play their role in preserving cultural heritage. We can help to preserve our Batik Borneo such as by wearing batik for any occasion, organizing batik exhibitions, having batik making workshops at the library among others.

1.5.1 Sports



Figure 7: Batik For Sports

One of Sarawak State Library staff wearing Batik sports attire with Sarawak Orang Ulu motive at Sukan Perpustakaan Awam Se-Malaysia (SPASM) 2017 in Kuala Lumpur.

1.5.2 Dinner



Figure 8: Batik for Dinner

One of Sarawak State Library staff wearing Batik for Annual Dinner event.

1.5.3 Formal Event



Figure 9: Batik for formal events

Wearing Batik for formal events or functions such as award presentations.

1.5.4 Formal Parade



Figure 10 : Batik in Formal Parade

Wearing Batik for parade such as religious procession.

1.5.5 Workplace



Figure 11: Batik for work

Batik is also suitable for library staff at their workplace.

2.0 Method

This paper adopted the survey methodology. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A covering demographic information and Section B for the main questions. The questionnaires were distributed to library staff and library patrons in Malaysia.

5 level Likert scale was used to measure respondents attitude on the following:

- a) Batik is beautiful.
- b) How do you feel when you see others wearing batik?
- c) Batik is suitable for any occasion.
- d) Wearing batik motifs make me feel happy.
- e) Wearing batik helps preserve our cultural heritage.

The survey questionnaires were distributed online as well as in prints.

3.0 Research Finding

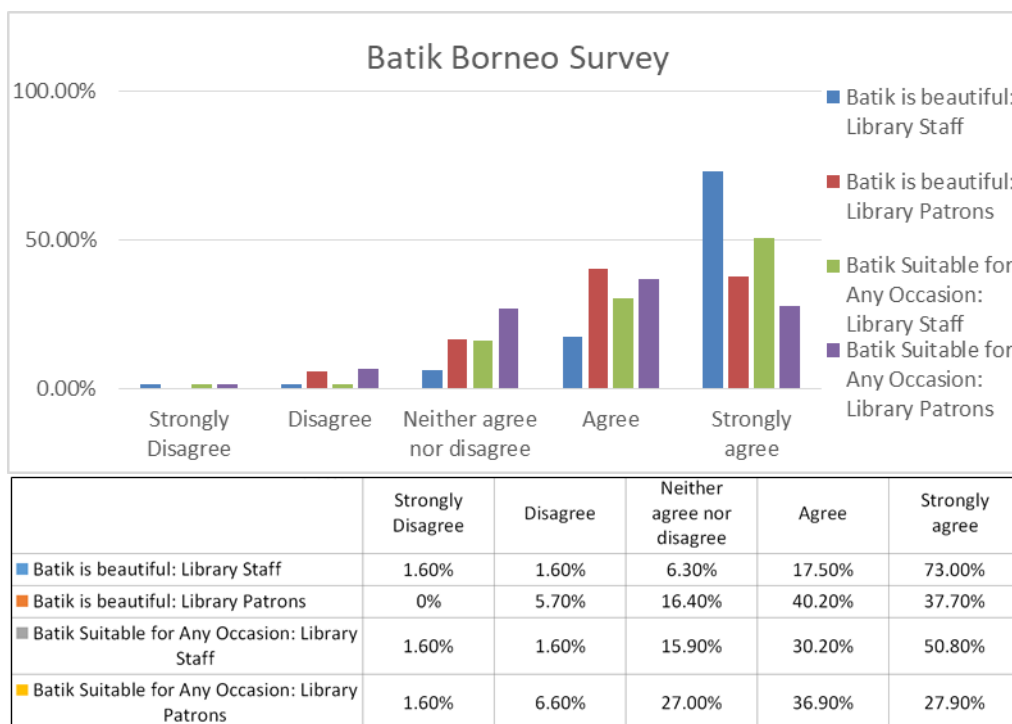


Figure 12: Library staff and library patron's feedbacks

Figure above shows the result collected from responses of library staff and library patrons. Library staff has the highest responds on the question of "Batik is beautiful" by 73%. On the other hand, library patrons answered the most on the scale agree. On the question "Batik Suitable for Any Occasion" 50.80% library staff strongly agreed and the library patrons only at 27.90%.

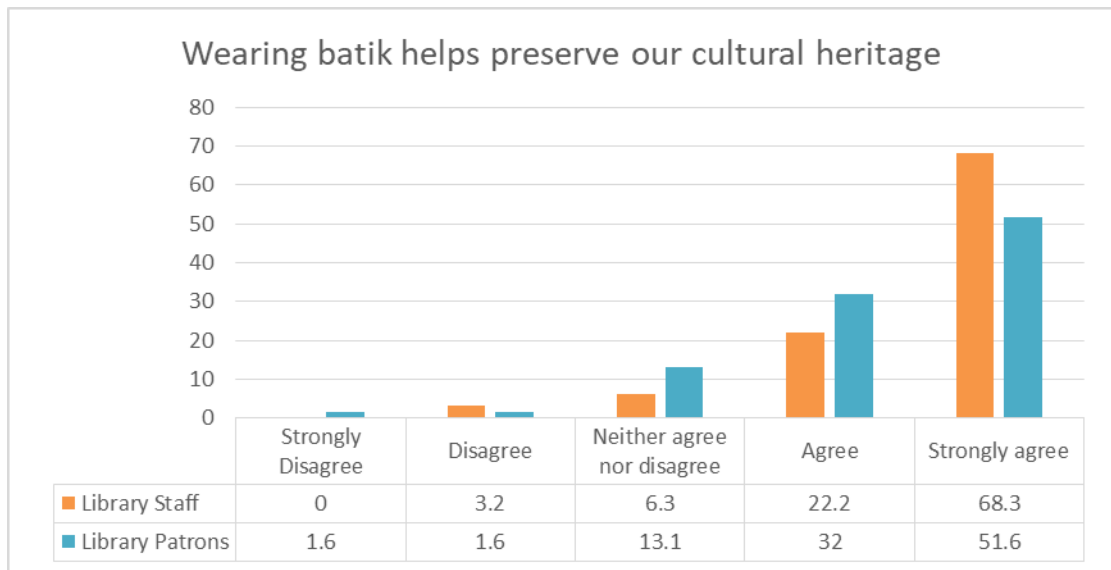


Figure 13: Survey on Wearing batik helps preserve our cultural heritage

Figure above shows that the results of the question “Wearing Batik helps preserve our cultural heritage”. Both library staff and library patrons strongly agreed.

4.0 Conclusion

Batik Borneo is the pride of indigenous groups in Sarawak, Sabah and West Kalimantan. This uniqueness is priceless and symbolizes the people in Borneo. The local people also support the government’s initiative towards supporting local economy especially batik industry. It could be seen in a survey that majority of the respondents strongly agree to wearing batik helps preserve our cultural heritage.

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