Research Article

Establishing the Design Identity of UiTM Kelantan's Batik Block: Inspiration from the Kemuning Flower

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Abstract: *This research explores the identity development of UiTM Cawangan Kelantan (UiTMCK) through a batik block product inspired by the landmarks in the Machang area in Kelantan and specifically the Kemuning flower (Murraya paniculata), a native Malaysian plant symbolising purity, resilience, and cultural heritage. The objective is to create a unique batik motif that reflects the local identity and aesthetic values of Kelantan, especially in the Machang area, while reinforcing UiTM's institutional branding through design innovation. A team of textile designers from the Art and Design faculty employed a qualitative, practice-based approach involving motif exploration, block design, and traditional batik stamping techniques. The varieties of Kemuning flowers were stylised into motifs suitable for batik making, preserving their organic essence while adapting them to contemporary textile design. The novelty of this project lies in the formal integration of a region-specific flora—the Kemuning flower—into a registered batik block series that embodies UiTMCK's cultural and geographical identity, creating a first-of-its-kind institutional batik branding initiative. The outcome is a distinct batik block that not only highlights the cultural richness of Machang, Kelantan, but also strengthens UiTM's visual identity. This study contributes to the preservation of local heritage, promotes the use of indigenous elements in modern design practices, and presents new opportunities for commercialisation and cultural engagement.*

Keywords: Batik Block; Kemuning Flower; Cultural Identity; Local Heritage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysian batik is mainly produced in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang, featuring nature-inspired motifs like leaves and flowers (Indie Batik, 2024). Batik block, also known as batik *terap*, is a technique where a carved block is soaked in hot wax and stamped onto fabric to create decorative patterns (Samin & Zakaria, 2022). From early 2018 until 2025, UiTM Cawangan Kelantan aims to preserve and promote local identity through creative and academic exploration of traditional crafts. This study focuses on developing a batik block product inspired by the landmarks in the Machang area

in Kelantan and specifically Kemuning flower species **(*Murraya Paniculata*)**. *Murraya Paniculata*, known as *kemuning* in Malay, has various English names like mock orange and orange jessamine. The genus *Murraya* honors Johan Andreas Murray, an 18th-century German-Swedish herbalist and student of Linnaeus (Sarah Nabila, 2018). *Murraya Paniculata* was a native plant symbolic of the Malaysian landscape and often associated with heritage and resilience. *Murraya paniculata* is primarily grown as an ornamental plant for its attractive and fragrant flowers. It is also used for oil extraction and in traditional medicine. However, the species shows morphological variations across different geographic regions (Weerasinghe, 2020).

UiTM Cawangan Kelantan's location inspires the proposed KEMUNING brand in a culturally rich region known for batik, silver craft, and natural resources. Its identity is further strengthened by its placement in the Kemuning constituency and local icons linked to the Kemuning name, such as Tok Kemuning, Jalan Tok Kemuning, and Kampung Kemuning, whose name originates from the Kemuning tree. The objective is to create a unique batik motif that reflects local identity and embodies the values and aesthetics of Kelantan's culture while strengthening UiTM Cawangan Kelantan's brand identity through design. Another intention in this production is to modernise the batik block that can attract new groups, especially UiTM staff, and align with current trends, fostering interest in the art form.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the growing global recognition of batik, many contemporary designs lack regional or cultural specificity. As such, the traditional batik industry in Kelantan is challenged to remain relevant while preserving authenticity. There is also a lack of academic documentation and product development based on local flora, like the Kemuning flower. Siti Sumiyah Saripu Baharin**,** a writer in an article, suggests that, to advance the batik industry, the government should intensify research and development (R&D) efforts more aggressively. Government agencies, including public and private institutions of higher learning (IPTAs and IPTSs), are also encouraged to play a vital role in elevating Malaysian batik to a higher level (Sinar Bestari, 2025). This study addresses the need to create a distinctive, meaningful batik block design that symbolises UiTMCK and contributes to cultural sustainability.

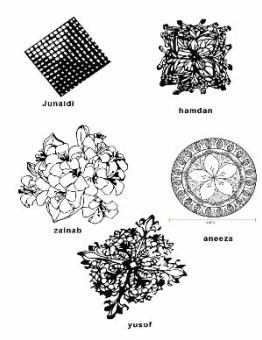
3. OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the symbolic and aesthetic qualities of the Kemuning flower.
2. To design and produce a batik block motif that embodies the identity of UiTMCK.
3. To promote cultural appreciation and branding through locally inspired batik designs.

4. METHOD & MATERIAL

This practice-based research uses a qualitative approach involving visual analysis, motif exploration, pattern development, prototype development, and a real product. The process began with research on the Kemuning flower's botanical structure, cultural meaning, and symbolic associations. Sketches and motif iterations were developed and refined through design thinking stages. Several batik block samples were carved and tested on textile materials using traditional hand-stamping (block printing from cooper) techniques. The batik is produced using a variety of fabrics, including cotton, silk, and satin. Cotton is the most commonly selected material among UiTM staff, primarily due to its affordability and comfort. Colour choices are generally influenced by customer preferences and are determined by the artist or designer, taking into account current fashion trends and market forecasts. Feedback was collected through market-tested interviews and critiques with local artisans, lecturers, and design experts.

Table 1. Batik Block Process

Methodology	Description	Photo
Visual analysis	Research on the Kemuning flowers from the internet source or observation on real flower around the Machang area.	 **Figure 1**. Murraya paniculata (orange jessamine); Flowers, fruit and leaves. Kula, Maui, Hawaii. September 2007
Sketches and motif development	Motif development done by free-hand sketch or Computer Aided Design (CAD)	 **Figure 2**. Motif Creation, Kemuning Collection Photos, 2024
Batik Block Samples -carved and tested	Method used is traditional hand-stamping (block printing from cooper) techniques.	 **Figure 3**. Block Cooper (*sarang*), Kemuning Collection Photo, 2022  **Figure 4**. Hand-Stamping on Dairah Motif, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2023

5. FINDINGS

UiTM Cawangan Kelantan (UiTMCK) has registered a trademark for this product under the Kemuning brand. This brand encompasses two primary product lines: Kemuning Batik and Kemuning Logam. The present study focuses exclusively on the production of block batik inspired by the Kemuning flower species. The final batik block design effectively incorporates the natural curves and petal structures of the Kemuning flower, reinterpreted through contemporary stylisation to suit textile applications. To make this product an income-generating product for UiTMCK, five block batik designers from the Textile Design Department lecturers have been appointed to study various species of Kemuning flowers, including Kemuning Hitam, Kemuning Emas, Kemuning Pulau, Kemuning Kuning, or Kemuning Limau. This team of designers possesses extensive experience in the field. One of the designers is a recipient of the National Creative Award in both 2011 and 2013 and currently serves as a permanent judge for prestigious international competitions, including the Piala Seri Endon Batik Competition. The other designers are also highly accomplished, having previously participated in the Piala Seri Endon and Piala Seri Iman competitions, with several of them being former winners.

Table 2. List of Design from Kemuning Flower

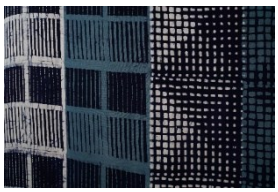
Product Name	Write-up	Design
Al-Maliki Series	The Al-Maliki Series represents the inaugural collection within the Kemuning Batik Block Series. It was designed by Junaidi Awang, a lecturer in the Faculty of Art and Design at UiTMCK and a practicing textile designer. His batik design embodies Islamic aesthetic principles by emphasising elements such as lines, geometric shapes, and textures, all of which are inspired by the Kemuning plant.	 **Figure 5**. Al-Maliki Series, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2021
Kemuning Jawharra	Kemuning Jawharra is part of the Kemuning batik block series and was designed by Yusof Daud@Ismail, a textile designer and lecturer in the Faculty of Art and Design at UiTMCK. The design is inspired by the Bunga Pecah Lapan motif, a prominent element in traditional Malay decorative arts. Utilising a symmetrical composition technique commonly found in Islamic design, the batik reflects the cultural and spiritual identity of Kelantan, a state often referred to as Negeri Serambi Mekah (the Verandah of Mecca).	 **Figure 6**. Kemuning Jawharra, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2021
Min-a-Min	Min-a-Min is a shawl collection within the Kemuning batik block series, designed by Zainab Anuar, a young textile designer and lecturer in the same faculty at UiTMCK. The motif and composition of the shawl are inspired by the Bunga Kemuning species, also known as Kemuning Sanggul, named for its floral cluster that resembles a bouquet. The label Min-a-Min is a traditional name for the Kemuning flower, reinterpreted through a contemporary lens. The design embraces a modern aesthetic, featuring soft pastel tones and a minimalist arrangement that pays homage to its classic origins.	 **Figure 7**. Min-a-Min, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2022

Table 3. List of Design from Kemuning Flower

Product Name	Write-up	Design
Da'irah Series	The *Da'irah* Series is a collection within the Kemuning batik block series, designed by Aneeza Mohd Adnan, an Art and Design lecturer at UiTMCK and a developing textile designer. The series draws inspiration from the Bunga Kemuning motif arranged in a circular (*da'irah*) pattern, symbolising the unity and cultural identity of the Kelantan Muslim community. The use of contrasting colours within the circular design enhances visual focus and emphasises the theme of cohesion in the composition.	 **Figure 8**. Da'irah Series, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2023
Kemuning Salju	In 2024, Hamdan Haji Lias, a senior lecturer in the Textile Department at the Faculty of Art and Design, UiTMCK, meticulously handcrafted the Batik *Kemuning Salju* pattern. Drawing inspiration from the Kemuning flower, this design symbolises purity, elegance, and softness, capturing the sophisticated essence of the wearer.	 **Figure 9**. Kemuning Salju, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2024

It evokes a strong connection to heritage while being versatile enough for contemporary batik items like scarves, clothing, and souvenirs. The motif embodies purity, local beauty, and strength - values that resonate with UiTMCK's identity. Additionally, the design provides a unique alternative to mass-produced patterns, fostering local pride and inspiring creative innovation.

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Figure 10. Batik Uniform for Units/Faculties/Departments, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2022

During the initial design phase, the Kemuning committee proposed to the UiTM Cawangan Kelantan (UiTMCK) Jawatankuasa Eksekutif Negeri (JKEN) the creation of a uniform incorporating the Kemuning batik motif, aiming to promote the product within the UiTMCK community and across UiTM Malaysia. To support this effort, the UiTMCK management issued a directive mandating all staff

to wear the official UiTM, faculty, or department uniforms on Thursdays, aligning with the government's initiative to encourage batik attire.

As a result, the Kemuning brand has achieved recognition not only among UiTM staff but also within the broader public, thanks to promotional activities conducted both inside and outside UiTM, including on international stages. These initiatives feature sales and exhibitions beyond UiTMCK, partnerships with off-campus UiTM programs, global promotions in countries like China, and sales events held in Thailand during the Yala Malay Day celebration



Figure 11. Sale and Marketing Outside the UiTMCK, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2023



Figure 12. Ministry of Finance Malaysia Uniform, Kemuning Collection Photo, 2025

The support from UiTMCK staff is highly valued, particularly as the Kemuning batik attire is often worn at official UiTM events at the international level. Additionally, social media has played a significant role in expanding the visibility and reach of the brand. Other public universities and government agencies have also adopted Kemuning batik products as official gifts and uniforms. Notably, the Ministry of Finance Malaysia has placed an order for Kemuning batik to be worn during the presentation of Budget 2025. As of this year, the Kemuning product continues to receive strong demand, with sales reaching RM16,269.00 annually as of October 2024.

6. DISCUSSION

The development of the Kemuning-inspired batik block product represents a strategic effort to embed cultural identity into contemporary textile design while strengthening institutional branding.

This study confirms that integrating regional elements—specifically local flora like *Murraya paniculata*—can create a distinctive visual language that resonates with both the local community and a broader audience.

The findings demonstrate that batik, though deeply rooted in tradition, can evolve through informed design processes without losing its authenticity. The collaboration between experienced and emerging designers at UiTM Cawangan Kelantan has resulted in a diverse yet cohesive collection of motifs, each reflecting unique interpretations of the Kemuning flower. For instance, the *Al-Maliki* Series and Kemuning *Jawharra* and *Da'irah* Series emphasise Islamic geometric influence and traditional Malay symbolism, while Min-a-Min and Batik *Kemuning Salju* show the flower's adaptability to modern tastes through minimalism and pastel tones.

These designs serve not only aesthetic and symbolic roles but also act as instruments for cultural education and the development of identity. The batik blocks produced through this project go beyond decorative patterns; they carry the stories of Kelantan's heritage, UiTMCK's regional identity, and the historical significance of the Kemuning flower. This supports the institution's wider mission to promote cultural preservation and sustainable creative practices.

Furthermore, the initiative effectively connects academic research with commercial success. The official use of the Kemuning batik uniform by UiTMCK staff, along with its growing visibility on national and international stages, demonstrates strong support from both the institution and the market. The branding of "Kemuning" as a cultural and economic product, acknowledged by external organisations like the Ministry of Finance, highlights the initiative's achievement in integrating traditional craft into contemporary contexts.

Importantly, the research methodology, which emphasises qualitative and practice-based design, has proven effective in generating meaningful results. It highlights the significance of visual research, collaboration with stakeholders such as local artisans and lecturers, and an iterative design process as essential tools for creating culturally meaningful artifacts.

However, the project also highlights the challenges traditional crafts face, especially in maintaining regional uniqueness within a rapidly globalising design environment. With mass production prevailing in the textile industry, initiatives like this provide alternative approaches that emphasise local stories and expert craftsmanship.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on cultural preservation through design. By embedding local flora into batik block design, this project not only celebrates Kelantanese identity but also strengthens UiTM Cawangan Kelantan's role as a cultural and educational hub. The batik block product has potential for commercialisation, enhancing community engagement and supporting local artisans.

The originality of this research lies in its distinctive incorporation of the Kemuning flower, a native and culturally important plant of Malaysia, into a batik block design. This design not only represents the landmarks and heritage of Machang, Kelantan, but also strengthens UiTM Cawangan Kelantan's institutional identity through modern textile innovation. Unlike traditional batik motifs that often lack specific regional symbolism, this project transforms local flora into a formal visual language for branding and cultural storytelling. The result is a registered trademark product that connects tradition with contemporary design while supporting cultural preservation, academic engagement, and commercial opportunities.

8. CONCLUSION

The Kemuning flower provides rich cultural and visual value to batik making as a source of design inspiration. Through this research, a meaningful and representative batik block design was developed, reinforcing UiTMCK's identity. This approach can be expanded to other local elements, fostering sustainable and locally rooted creative industries.

In conclusion, the Kemuning batik block project exemplifies how heritage-based design can be revitalised through academic research, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and institutional support. It serves as a replicable model for other institutions and communities aiming to preserve cultural identity while innovating within traditional art forms.

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