

Reconstruction of Artefacts and Visitor Experience: Evaluation of the Traditional Malay Kelantanese Jewellery Exhibition at Taman Emas Malaysia Gallery

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the reconstruction of artefacts and visitor experiences at the Traditional Malay Kelantanese Jewellery Exhibition held at the Taman Emas Malaysia Gallery. The main objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the exhibition and identify iconic replica artefacts as symbols of the state's heritage. The study adopts a three-phase research design involving field research at museums, authentic reconstruction of artefacts with local craftsmen, and evaluation of visitor experiences through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings indicate that most visitors, particularly youths and students, provided positive feedback regarding the location, gallery layout, and artefact information. Replicas such as Cucuk Sanggul, rings, and Kerongsang Berantai received the most attention. The study suggests improving promotional strategies, employing interactive technology, and strengthening cultural narratives to enhance the exhibition as a state heritage edu-tourism destination.

Keywords: Traditional Jewellery, Visitor Perception, Product Evaluation, Cultural Heritage

INTRODUCTION

The history of jewellery in Malaysia dates back to ancient times and is also closely related to the history of gold in Malaysia. Bellina et al. (2014) explain that the history of the arrival of gold and silver jewellery in Southeast Asia remains unclear. However, the Thai-Malay Peninsula, better known as the "connecting bridge" along the Maritime Silk Route, played an important role in the early supply of luxury goods from the west to the southern coastal areas of mainland Southeast Asia. Mohd Kassim Hj Ali, as cited by Marzuki Ibrahim et al. (2017), stated that traditional Malay jewellery is also believed to have originated from trade, regional politics, and migration.

Although various types of jewellery are made from different metals, gold remains the choice of women as its sparkle completes, enhances, and elevates femininity to appear more confident in public. It also signifies the wearer's status among the surrounding community. Daud, M. Z. et al. (2021) state that jewellery worn by the wearer can serve as a symbol of power or material belief. It can be said that gold personal adornments are a symbol of status and the position of their owner (Wilde, D. & Marti, P., 2018).

Jewellery can be divided into seven main categories based on their location of wear and function (Olver E. 2002, Anuar et al. 2025). First, adornments on the hair and head such as earrings, hairpins, cucuk sanggul, and crowns that serve to enhance appearance. Next, adornments on the neck such as necklaces and pendants which

are often used as symbols of style or status. Arm adornments include armlets, bracelets, and wrist clasps usually worn to complement formal or casual looks. Hand adornments such as rings are often associated with personal or symbolic meanings. In addition, body adornments such as body piercings and brooches function as additional decorations on clothing. For the feet, adornments such as anklets and toe rings give a unique touch. Finally, there are adornments that serve special functions such as amulets, membership pins, animal tags, pendants and belt buckles which are not only decorative but also serve specific purposes.

This study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To evaluate visitors' perceptions of the effectiveness of the main exhibition elements at the Taman Emas Gallery, including location, gallery layout, accuracy and clarity of artefact information, and the effectiveness of the promotional strategies implemented.
2. To identify three types of replicas with high potential to be elevated as symbols of the heritage identity of Kelantanese jewellery, based on visitors' interests and preferences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Malay Jewellery

Traditional jewellery is personal adornment that has been worn by humans for thousands of years. It can be made from various materials including precious metals, gemstones, and natural materials such as shells or beads. Traditional Malay jewellery reflects the richness of cultural heritage and the refinement of Malay craftsmanship, which is often inherited through generations. This jewellery does not only function as an aesthetic accessory but also carries deep symbolic meaning, often linked to social status, customs, and spiritual beliefs (Jureerat, 2015).

As described by Anuar et al. (2022) and Sejjahan (2021), in traditional Malay culture, jewellery is important in expressing personal style and identity and showing social status and cultural heritage. The functions of traditional Malay jewellery can be broadly categorised into three main aspects: aesthetic, symbolic, and social. Certain types of jewellery may also be specific to cultural or regional traditions, expressing identity and cultural heritage. Art as a cultural element, including traditional jewellery, serves as a defence for local identity, providing space for creative expression and profound experiences of cultural values inherited from generation to generation (Saputra et al., 2024).

For centuries, society has recognised gold as the metal most associated with women. The wearing of jewellery has long been an important aspect of Malay women's attire. This jewellery is worn for aesthetic purposes and reflects cultural and religious values. Therefore, a study on the potential of the Traditional Malay Kelantanese Jewellery Exhibition is necessary as documentation of traditional Malay Kelantanese jewellery artefacts, as well as to understand public perceptions and to propose jewellery representing Kelantan's identity.

Visual Identity of Traditional Jewellery as The Cultural Symbol of Kelantan

This study will explore the visual elements, materials, manufacturing techniques, and the usage context of traditional Kelantanese jewellery to identify how these aspects contribute to the formation of a distinctive cultural identity for this state. The heritage of Kelantanese jewellery has a long history influenced by trade, migration, and regional politics. Located along the Maritime Silk Route, Kelantan played an important role as a centre of cultural exchange, which in turn influenced the local craftsmanship and jewellery designs. These pieces were often used to signify social status and roles in customary ceremonies such as weddings and cultural celebrations, reflecting the interaction between various ethnic groups.

Kelantanese jewellery is rich in symbolism, often using natural motifs such as flowers, leaves, and vines. Floral motifs usually symbolise femininity, beauty, and fertility, while plant motifs represent growth, prosperity, and protection. This symbolism strengthens cultural identity and the continuity of heritage.

Kelantanese jewellery, renowned for its intricate carvings and traditional designs, is a cultural heritage that has survived for centuries, reflecting the identity and craftsmanship skills of the local community. The uniqueness of this jewellery lies not only in its aesthetic value, but also in the symbolic meanings embedded in every motif and pattern, reflecting the beliefs and socio-cultural narratives of the Malay Kelantanese community and their aspirations for prosperity.

According to Anuar et al. (2021), Kelantanese jewellery such as cucuk sanggul, kerongsang, pending, and bracelets are unique visual cultural symbols of strong identity. Each design carries cultural narratives and social roles, making them more than mere adornments. The reconstruction of these artefacts and their display in exhibitions enable modern society to rediscover and appreciate the heritage and reinforce local identity in the global era.

RECONSTRUCTION OF TRADITIONAL MALAY KELANTANESE JEWELLERY

The National Heritage Act 2005 under Section 23 states that heritage refers to physical remains, namely historical objects or artefacts that include (a) ethnographic materials (household utensils, personal adornments), (b) artworks (carvings, sculptures, paintings, architecture, textiles, musical instruments, weapons), (c) manuscripts, coins, banknotes, medals, badges, insignias, coats of arms, flags, weapons or shields, and (d) vehicles, ships and boats that are no longer in production. According to Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (2017), the definition of artefact refers to man-made objects that are relics of a particular era.

The collection of replica jewellery displayed in the Taman Emas Gallery was the result of a reconstruction project based on in-depth research of original artefacts at the National Textile Museum, Kuala Lumpur. This research identified various types of traditional Malay Kelantanese ornaments that are becoming extinct and rarely found in their original form, especially head, body, and foot adornments which have intricate carvings and high symbolic value.



Figure 1: The research process of original artifacts at the National Museum and the National Textile Museum, Kuala Lumpur. (Source from the researcher)

Through visual documentation, morphological analysis, and artefactual comparison, the researchers successfully identified key elements in traditional designs including structure, manufacturing techniques, and motifs. Based on these findings, the reconstruction process was carried out in collaboration with local goldsmiths, using traditional materials and techniques aligned with their original identity.

The following is the complete list of 12 reconstructed traditional Malay Kelantanese jewellery artefacts based on in-depth research at the National Textile Museum and currently exhibited at the Taman Emas Malaysia Gallery. These artefacts include rings, kerongsang bersiri, dokoh, kerongsang berantai, belts, perhiasan baju 13, crowns, pending, cucuk sanggul, combs, anklets, and bracelets. The reconstruction process not only involved recreating their physical form, but also emphasised restoring the cultural narrative and original functions of each artefact in the context of Malay Kelantanese customs and rituals.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Public exhibitions function as the main medium to transfer knowledge, symbolic values, and cultural narratives directly to society. Studies in Malaysian cultural museums show that aesthetic, interactive, and visual narrative elements play a significant role in enhancing satisfaction and heritage awareness (Zakir, M. I. M. et al., 2025; Ab Rahman, S. A. et al., 2025).

The National Museum, through the Raja Kita Exhibition in 2024, received positive feedback for its well-organised layout, realistic displays, and family-friendly facilities, despite facing space constraints due to increasing visitor numbers. In line with the findings of the Department of Museums Malaysia, local cultural museums are recognised as having high educational value, with a need for improvements in management and interpretation. This shows that visitor experience can be enhanced through strategic curatorial approaches, effective spatial management, and interactive narratives. (Sukri, S. et al., 2024).

At the international level, experience-based exhibitions effectively instil cultural empathy, enrich visitor understanding, and foster relationships between communities and their heritage (Roppola, T., 2012). In addition, interactive visitor-oriented exhibitions can increase youth engagement, create opportunities for informal learning, and build community support ecosystems for heritage preservation (Gobbato, V., 2023). Therefore, the implementation of innovative and holistic public exhibitions not only expands cultural heritage outreach, but also strengthens collective ownership and the sustainability of local identity in the long term (Ibrahim, F., Zainin, N. M., & Jamal, S. A., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study is divided into THREE PHASES as follows:

Phase 1: Field Research at Museums

Two main locations, the National Museum and the National Textile Museum in Kuala Lumpur, were selected for research and fieldwork. The focus was on traditional Malay Kelantanese jewellery such as perhiasan baju 13, pending, dokoh, bracelets, anklets, kerongsang berantai, kerongsang bersiri, crowns, cucuk sanggul, gemstone rings, belts, and combs. The fieldwork involved visual observation, photography, and typological classification based on form, function, fabrication techniques, and decorative motifs. The data collected became an important basis for the precise reconstruction of the artefacts.

Phase 2: Reconstruction of Traditional Jewellery

Based on the documentation from the first phase, twelve types of traditional jewellery were selected to be reproduced using traditional craftsmanship techniques. The fabrication process was carried out by a UiTM research team, consisting of lecturers from the Faculty of Art & Design (FSSR) and the Faculty of Business Management, UiTM Kelantan Branch, in collaboration with local metal craftsmen. The process involved using metals such as silver, red copper, yellow copper, and gold plating to ensure each final product appeared authentic, high quality, and exclusive. Each replica was produced according to the original form, design, and traditional motifs, accompanied by visual analysis and consultations with craftsmanship experts. This approach ensured the accuracy of aesthetic values, artistic refinement, and heritage authenticity in every outcome.

Phase 3: Exhibition Implementation and Data Collection

The final phase involved the implementation of the Traditional Malay Kelantanese Jewellery Exhibition at the Taman Emas Malaysia Gallery, Kota Bharu, which also owns all the replicas produced. The gallery space was professionally designed to highlight cultural narratives and the historical value of each artefact. In this phase, all replicas were exhibited to the public, while data were collected through questionnaires distributed to visitors

to assess their interactions with the artefacts during the opening ceremony of Taman Emas Malaysia. Triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the findings and to provide a comprehensive understanding of public perceptions of the exhibition and the traditional jewellery displayed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis for this study was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which enabled systematic and detailed data processing. The analysis process involved the use of descriptive statistics to identify the demographic distribution of respondents and their tendencies in answering the study items. In addition, advanced analytical methods such as inferential tests were also applied to examine the relationships, differences, and significance levels between the variables involved. This approach ensured that the findings produced are valid, reliable, and relevant to the study objectives, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of visitors' perceptions and experiences of the exhibition.

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Demographics		Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Age	20–30	35	58.3
	31–40	7	11.7
	41–50	10	16.7
	51–60	7	11.7
	60 and above	1	1.7
Gender	Male	23	38.3
	Female	37	61.7
Education Level	SPM	5	8.3
	Diploma	35	58.3
	Degree	13	21.7
	Master's	6	10.0
	PhD	1	1.7
Occupation	Students	32	53.3
	Government Staff	5	8.3
	Private Sector	15	25.0
	Professionals	2	3.3
	Others	6	10.0

This study involved 60 respondents, covering aspects of age, gender, education level, and occupation as summarised in Table 1.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 20 and 30 years old (58.3%), followed by the 41–50 age group (16.7%), 31–40 (11.7%), and 51–60 (11.7%). Only one respondent (1.7%) was aged 60 and above, indicating more active participation among the younger generation. Regarding gender, most respondents were female (61.7%), while males comprised 38.3% of the total participants. This balance allowed for more precise gender-based comparisons.

In terms of education level, more than half of the respondents had a Diploma qualification (58.3%), followed by Degree holders (21.7%), Master's (10.0%), and SPM (8.3%). Only one respondent (1.7%) had a PhD. This shows that the majority had a mid-level tertiary education background. Regarding occupation, students formed the largest group (53.3%), followed by those in the private sector (25.0%), others (10.0%), government staff (8.3%), and professionals (3.3%). This shows strong participation from individuals still undergoing formal education, providing early insights into the respondents' focus in the context of this study.

Respondents' Perceptions of Exhibition Aspects

Table 2: Respondents' Perceptions of Exhibition Aspects

Exhibition Aspects	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Location	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.3%)	20 (33.3%)	36 (60.0%)
Gallery Space	–	–	23 (38.3%)	37 (61.7%)
Artefact Information	–	1 (1.7%)	20 (33.3%)	39 (65.0%)
Promotion	1 (1.7%)	4 (6.7%)	24 (40.0%)	31 (51.7%)

Four main exhibition aspects were evaluated by the respondents: location, gallery space, artefact information, and promotion. This evaluation used a four-point scale: Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree, as summarised in Table 2.

For the location aspect, most respondents gave positive feedback, with 60.0% stating “Strongly Agree” and 33.3% “Agree”. Only a small number disagreed (3.3%) or were neutral (3.3%). This shows that the exhibition location was considered strategic and easily accessible by most visitors.

The gallery space aspect also received positive feedback, with 61.7% “Strongly Agree” and 38.3% “Agree”, without any negative responses. This reflects full satisfaction with the comfortable and appropriate exhibition layout for public visits.

For artefact information, most respondents rated this aspect positively, with 65.0% “Strongly Agree” and 33.3% “Agree”. Only one respondent (1.7%) was neutral. This indicates the effectiveness of the artefact information delivery, including visuals and easily understandable texts.

The promotion aspect received slightly varied perceptions. Although most respondents stated “Strongly Agree” (51.7%) and “Agree” (40.0%), a small number were neutral (6.7%) and disagreed (1.7%). This suggests that the current promotional strategy has reached its main targets but still has room for improvement in terms of outreach or visibility to the public.

Overall, all exhibition aspects received high levels of satisfaction from respondents, especially regarding gallery space and artefact information. These findings provide strong justification for the effectiveness of the exhibition planning from the user experience perspective.

Selection of 12 Types of Traditional Malay Kelantanese Jewellery Replicas

Table 3. Selection of 12 Types of Traditional Malay Kelantanese Jewellery Replicas

No	Replicas	Selected	Not Selected	Total	Selected (%)
1	Cincin	22	38	60	36.7
2	Kerongsang	17	43	60	28.3
3	Gelang Tangan	7	53	60	11.7
4	Gelang Kaki	14	46	60	23.3
5	Sisir	18	42	60	30
6	Cucuk Sanggul	24	36	60	40
7	Pending	17	43	60	28.3
8	Mahkota	12	48	60	20
9	Tali Pinggang	5	55	60	8.3
10	Perhiasan Baju 13	14	46	60	23.3
11	Kerongsang Berantai	19	41	60	31.7
12	Dokoh	11	49	60	18.3

Table 3 shows the analysis of the selection of 12 types of traditional Malay Kelantanese jewellery replicas reproduced based on in-depth research at the National Textile Museum, Kuala Lumpur. The analysis involved 60 respondents who were exhibition visitors at the Taman Emas Gallery. The most selected replicas were Cucuk Sanggul (40.0%), followed by Rings (36.7%), Kerongsang Berantai (31.7%), and Combs (30.0%). Meanwhile, the Belt replica was only chosen by 8.3% of respondents, making it among the least favoured.

These findings provide a significant overview of visitors' tastes, aesthetic values, and preferences towards reconstructed heritage artefacts. The high selection of cucuk sanggul, rings, and kerongsang berantai shows that these ornaments have striking beauty, unique designs, and remain relevant to contemporary fashion. The public's familiarity with their functions — for example, kerongsang still used in traditional attire such as kebaya — also contributes to their popularity.

Conversely, the low selection of belts may be related to their more specific function and less suitability for modern use, as well as their relatively large size and less practical nature for daily wear. This shows that although all replicas were reproduced based on historical accuracy and traditional craftsmanship, their suitability to current needs and users' perceptions of their commercial and symbolic value also influenced their choices.

Overall, this analysis not only provides an early indicator of the effectiveness of the reconstruction of traditional Malay Kelantanese jewellery but also contributes to a deeper understanding of aesthetic elements, functionality, and heritage value perceptions among modern society. These findings can serve as a reference to strengthen efforts to re-establish traditional Malay Kelantanese jewellery as a highly valuable cultural heritage asset.

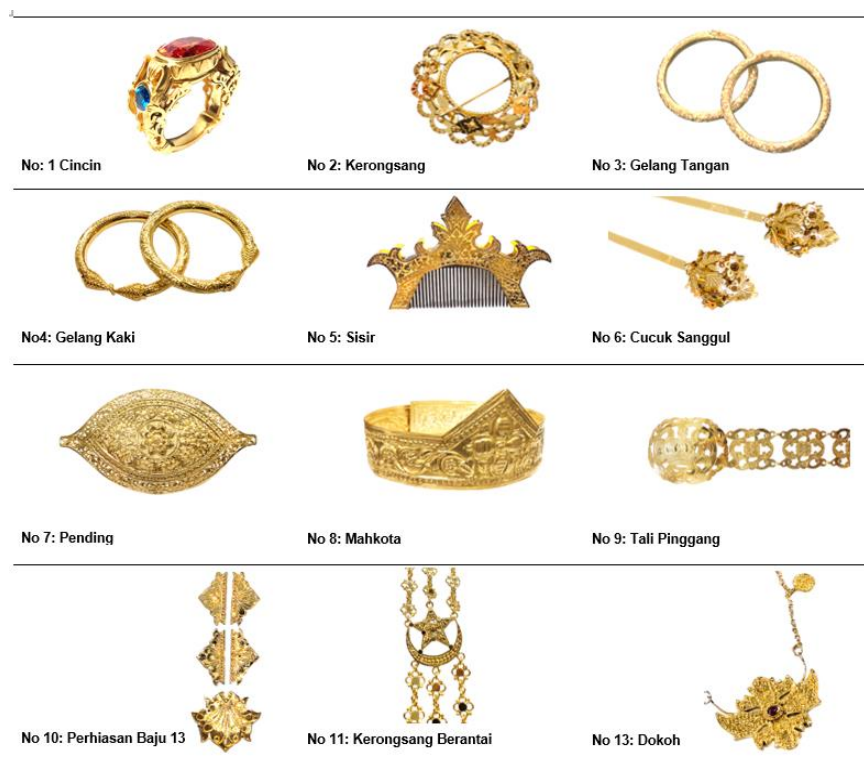


Figure 2: 12 Reconstructed Replicas of Traditional Kelantan Malay Jewelry Artifacts.

(Source from the researcher)

CONCLUSION

Roppola's (2012) study at the international level emphasizes that experience-based exhibitions are capable of instilling cultural empathy, enriching visitors' understanding, and fostering connections between communities

and their heritage. The emphasis on the experiential aspect aligns with the findings of Sukri et al. (2024), which indicate that cultural museums in Malaysia are recognised as having high educational value, yet require improvements in management and interpretation to further enhance visitor experience through strategic curatorial approaches, effective spatial management, and interactive narratives.

In line with both findings, the study on the traditional Malay Kelantanese jewellery exhibition at Galeri Taman Emas also demonstrates the effectiveness of exhibition elements in influencing visitors' positive perceptions of the location, gallery layout, and clarity of artefact information, thereby affirming its potential as a medium for the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage values as well as a significant edu-tourism attraction in Kelantan. This comparison shows that experience-based approaches, strategic curatorial practices, and clear information delivery are universal factors that support the effectiveness of heritage exhibitions in fostering cultural understanding and enhancing visitor engagement.

The preference for replicas such as the Cucuk Sanggul, rings, and Kerongsang Berantai highlights the symbolic and aesthetic strength in local identity. However, the findings also indicate the need for improvements in terms of promotion, the integration of interactive technology, and the strengthening of cultural narratives to further enhance the attractiveness of the exhibition, particularly for the younger generation and students. Research, innovation, and strategic collaboration with educational institutions and local communities are essential to continuously strengthen the efforts of documenting and preserving traditional goldsmithing craftsmanship. The success of this exhibition simultaneously affirms the role of Galeri Taman Emas as a prestigious heritage reference centre capable of elevating Kelantan's cultural heritage to a higher level in the era of globalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To further enhance the effectiveness of the Traditional Kelantanese Jewellery Exhibition, the gallery is encouraged to intensify promotional and communication strategies, especially through more interactive social media targeting various visitor segments. This step will ensure that information about the exhibition can be disseminated more widely, effectively, and attract visitors from various community levels.

In addition, the integration of new technologies such as gamification elements and augmented reality (AR) applications should also be considered to enrich visitor experiences, especially among the younger generation. This approach can increase entertainment and interactivity elements, making the exhibition more relevant and aligned with current technological developments.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors declare that there are no personal interests in the publication of this article. The first author was responsible for conducting the literature review, developing the methodology, analysing the data, improving the conclusion and recommendation sections, and reviewing the references. The second and third authors also contributed to the writing of the literature review. Next, the fourth author improved the methodology section, followed by the fifth author who conducted the questionnaire and field data collection. The sixth author

summarised the conclusion and formulated recommendations for future studies, while the seventh author carried out a comprehensive review of sentence structure, analysis, and discussion to ensure the quality and accuracy of the writing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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