

An Analysis of Malay Folklore Characters: Preserving Tradition with Scented Candles

Nurul Atiqah Abdul Rafeaie¹, Norfadilah Kamaruddin^{1*}

¹ *Creative Visual Exchange Group (CREaTE), College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, 42300 Puncak Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA*

*Corresponding Author: norfadilah@uitm.edu.my

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/rmtb.2024.05.01.113>

Article Info

Received: 31 March 2024

Accepted: 30 April 2024

Available online: 30 June 2024

Keywords

Malay Folklore, Scented Candles

Abstract

Folktales are a part of culture and tradition and serve as a symbol of the identity of a community. The purpose of this study is to examine how Malay folklore figures can be immersive and creatively portrayed using scented candles or candles with hidden messages inside. By using carefully selected scents, the candles were designed to evoke the essence and individuality of each character, creating a multi-sensory experience that encourages cultural heritage and sparks Malaysians' curiosity. Visual analysis and interviews have been employed as methods in this qualitative research project. Through this study, the researcher hopes to raise awareness of Malaysia's cultural heritage, encourage everyone to participate in a unique concealed scented candle experience, and honor the rich traditions of Malay folklore. This product is intended for tourists, folklore enthusiasts, and gift-shoppers.

1. Introduction

Every nation in this world has their own cultural and heritage (Asmidah Alwi, Harryizman Harun and Azliza Othman, 2019). In basic, culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts (Pappas and McKelvie, 2022). Therefore, heritage is indispensable because it carries the lineage of past generations to the present. With this, it shows that culture is part of the heritage as it holds the lineage of the ancestors.

Folktales are one of the more prevalent aspects of Malay culture within Malaysia's cultural and heritage preservation projects. Folktales are a part of culture and tradition and served as a symbol of the identity of a community. Folklore is abundant in Malaysia and is typically transmitted orally from one generation to the next (Asmidah Alwi, Harryizman Harun, and Azliza Othman, 2019). Folktales like "Bawang Putih, Bawang Merah," "Mahsuri," "Nenek Kebayan," "Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa," "Puteri Santubong," and other stories are passed down orally from our ancestors to the children in every household, even before television, phones, or the internet existed. This is due to the fact that each story has moral lessons that others should be taught in addition to serving to maintain our native Malay culture.

Furthermore, folktales are typically transmitted from generation to generation through storytelling. Regretfully, younger generations especially teenagers are progressively losing touch with this practice (Asmidah Alwi, Harryizman Harun, Azliza Othman, 2019). Therefore, it would be very important to make it as innovative as possible in order to preserve the Malay culture in folklore. Not only can teenagers learn it, but tourists who have visited Malaysia can as well. Additionally, this would make those interested in learning more about Malaysian culture happy with the narrative and ultimately increase their appreciation for it.

Within this view, candles could be considered as a luxury treatment to us, a mainstay in many homes, and a tradition in many cultures. Furthermore, the limbic system, which houses our memories and emotions, is stimulated by the scent of scented candles. As a result, the connection between memories, emotions, and

fragrances affects our emotional state. In sum, we may find particular smells appealing due to the memories connected to us.

Taking the potential of scented candles controlling our emotion, this study aims to preserving the local folktales into a creative scented candle product with varieties of Malay folklore characters. In the context of the study, folktale's character from movie 'Upin & Ipin: The Lone Gibbon Kris' is an ideal choice to be selected as a reference. All those characters will be providing with the short story on the wrapped label of the scented candle. With this approach, tourist who bought the candle not only can smell the uniqueness of the candle, but also can learn the Malay folklore.

2. Background Studies

2.1 Malay Folklore

Folk music and song, bardic tales, animal fables, ghost stories, fairy tales, epics, symbolic wisdom, and mythology are all included in Malay folklore. Characters, settings, and storylines are the strong points of each story. Malay folklore has a very lengthy history. According to the chronology at the time the stories were written, it was based on Malay culture as well as environmental influences (Othman Puteh, 1984; Md Sidin Ishak, 2005; Hadijah Hamat, 2006). Malay folklore was created for a variety of purposes, including amusement, fulfilment, education, history, place naming, and teaching. Each story has a purpose and meaning of its own (Roslina Abu Bakar, 2013). Due to the lack of technology at the time, Malay folklore has therefore become popular among the peasants. Even if the stories were narrated and occasionally altered, their fundamental themes and objectives remained the same, making the moral lessons and good values clear and understandable.

There is a wide range of intriguing characters in Malay folktales that could be turned into enduring cinematic characters. In order to depict the diversity of Malaysian culture in a film, a significant number of characters from Malaysian folktales were utilized. The findings showed that Keris Siamang Tunggal had depicted thirty Malay cultural elements, including famous Malay folklore characters, royal language, and traditional weapons, literature, performing arts, classical words, slang, forms of address, and food identity. Six (6) of the 30 things were the royal language, seven (7) were the iconic figures taken from Malay traditional folklore, and seventeen (17) were other cultural artefacts (Wan Halizawati Bt. Wan Mahmood, 2021).

3. Methodology

Through this study, qualitative methods are used to answer the research questions. Firstly, the researcher needed to identify a number of Malay folklore characters existed in the Upin Ipin: The Lone Gibbon, and further conducted a visual analysis on each of characters. Then, an interview was conducted to determine how the scented candle with hidden message were made in order to create a new product development for this research. That is to create an interesting way for people or tourist in getting to know Malay cultures with hidden characters in scented candles

4. Data Collection

As there are two methods that be used by the researcher for this research project, below are the findings for each method.

4.1 Visual Analysis on The Malay Folklore Characters from Upin Ipin: The Lone Gibbon

The visual analysis was analyzed about 5 (five) characters inside the movie; Upin Ipin: The Lone Gibbon as it relates with the visualizes character of the Malay folklore characters. The characters named as *Mat Jenin*, *Raja Bersiong*, *Belalang*, *Bawang Putih*, *Bawang Merah*, and *Si Tanggang*. Below is the characters (see Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Fig. 4 and Fig. 5) and the detail of analysis done on each characters (see Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5).



Fig. 1 The Character of Mat Jenin

Table 1 Visual Analysis on Mat Jenin Character

Character Name	Mat Jenin
General	A merchant in Inderaloka who was later appointed as a king of Inderaloka
Characteristic	A daydreamer
Color	Orange Blue
Special Features	A young man that wears a bandana, striped shirt, normal pants and a classic 'sampin'

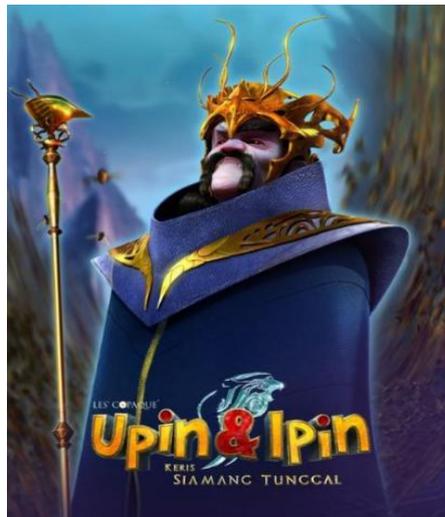


Fig. 2 The Character of Raja Bersiong

Table 2 Visual Analysis on Raja Bersiong Character

Character Name	Raja Bersiong
General	The character is adapted from "Hikayat Raja Bersiong". The Fanged King is a well-known barbarian and rogue ruler who is at odds with the Sultan of the Inderaloka realm
Characteristic	Greedy and powerful
Color	Dark blue Gold Purple
Special Features	The fangs, gold crown, heavy and long robe



Fig. 3 The Character of Bawang Putih & Bawang Merah

Table 3 Visual Analysis on Bawang Putih & Bawang Merah Character

Character Name	Bawang Putih & Bawang Merah
General	The two sisters which has different personalities, there are story that these stepsisters hate each other and labeling Bawang Merah as an evil sister, while Bawang Putih as the nicer ones
Characteristic	Bawang Putih: Kind hearted Bawang Merah: Regretful
Color	Red & White
Special Features	Red indates Bawang Merah White indicates Bawang Putih



Fig. 4The Character of Belalang

Table 4 Visual Analysis on Belalang

Character Name	Belalang
General	The son of Pak Belalang who is a government astrologer while being a carrier of foreign government messengers to Inderaloka.
Characteristic	A smart and witty kid
Color	Green Yellow Brown
Special Features	Wooden slingshot

**Fig. 5** The Character of Si Tanggang**Table 5** Visual Analysis on Si Tanggang

Character Name	Si Tanggang
General	The persona was based on the legendary figure of Mak Deruma's ungrateful son, who does not want to acknowledge his mother and the stoned figure was the result of Mak Deruma's curse
Characteristic	Ungrateful
Color	Stone
Special Features	Stoned ship with a figured-like man on top

Based on the visual analysis, each of the characters revealed different characteristics, color and special features. Based on these findings, the development of the scented candle products were making. The process of making the scented candle products explaining in the following section.

4.2 The Making of the Scented Candles Product

All those scented candle products were gone through the same process of making which involved 6 (six) simple steps. The first steps are more on how the raw dried flowers been compressed in order to get the flower thin. Following step 1, the flowers be aligned on every corner of the jar (step 2). Then Wick the jar right in the middle (make sure it doesn't touch the flowers). After that pour melted wax into the jar and add fragrance that suit to the characters. Lastly, let it hardened for 2 days.

Table 6 *The Process of Making Scented Candles Product*

Steps	Detail works
	<p>Compressed the dried flowers between pages of a book in order to get thin flowers. (Leave it there for 2 days)</p>
	<p>Aligned the flowers on every corner of the jar</p>
	<p>Wick the jar right in the middle (make sure it doesn't touch the flowers).</p>
	<p>Pour melted wax into the jar and add 20% fragrance. Once the candle has fully hardened, adds in the alphabet beads correctly</p>
	<p>Lastly, pour in second layer of the wax enough to cover up the beads. Then, let it hardened for 2 days.</p>
	<p>An example of candle jar</p>

4.3 The Product Label and Packaging Based on the Characters

The color identity and the characteristic of the characters revealed in the visual analysis was present in every packaging for these scented candles product. Because the candle jars are the same for each figure, the only way for customers to tell them apart is by color. Furthermore, color is the best technique to visually establish communication and messaging. Colors can express emotions, characteristics, or messages. Bright and brilliant colors, for example, may convey energy and excitement, but soft pastel shades may imply peace and purity. Thus, the researcher used color psychology to elicit specific emotions and connect with target audience.

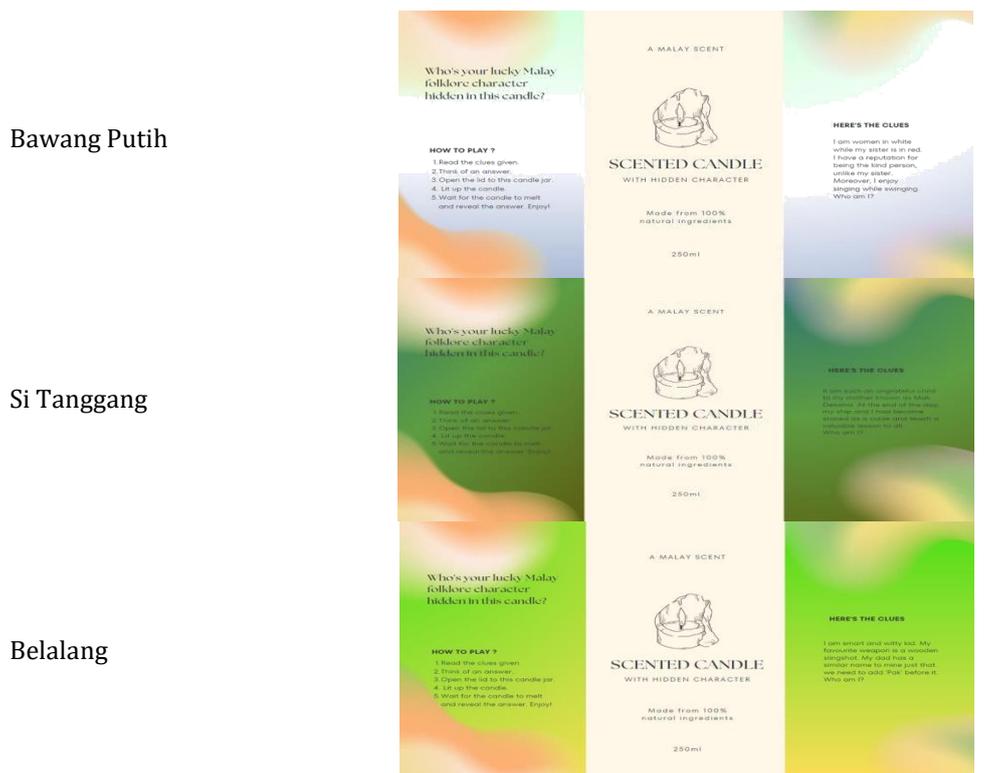


Fig. 6 The example of Candle jar label and packaging based on folklore character in 'Upin & Ipin: The Lone Gibbon Kris' movie

In summary, the colour, the indicators, and the usage instructions for this scented candle are the three most crucial aspects of any container. Each colour of the box represents a character that is hidden within, and each color's clues varies according to the character's colour identification. In the meanwhile, there are no different smells available for this scented candle. The candles will only smell like traditional Malay perfumes, such as pandan and jasmine rice, if they have "a Malay scent." Here is the packaging label for folklore character in 'Upin & Ipin: The Lone Gibbon Kris' movie.

Table 6 The Process of Making Scented Candles Product

	The Characters	The Jar's Label		
Raja Bersiong		<p>Who's your lucky Malay folklore character hidden in this candle?</p> <p>HOW TO PLAY ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the clues given. 2. Think of an answer. 3. Open the lid to the candle jar. 4. Light up the candle. 5. Wait for the candle to melt and reveal the answer. Enjoy! 	<p>A MALAY SCENT</p> <p>SCENTED CANDLE WITH HIDDEN CHARACTER</p> <p>Made from 100% natural ingredients</p> <p>250ml</p>	<p>HERE'S THE CLUES</p> <p>I am the legendary character written in the ancient Malay document "Hikayat Melayu Mahawangsa" or "Kedah Annals". Though there are different versions of the tale, most of it narrates how I develop threat for blood. Oh! Hee-ee-hee-hee. I do have fangs. Who am I?</p>
Bawang Merah		<p>Who's your lucky Malay folklore character hidden in this candle?</p> <p>HOW TO PLAY ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the clues given. 2. Think of an answer. 3. Open the lid to the candle jar. 4. Light up the candle. 5. Wait for the candle to melt and reveal the answer. Enjoy! 	<p>A MALAY SCENT</p> <p>SCENTED CANDLE WITH HIDDEN CHARACTER</p> <p>Made from 100% natural ingredients</p> <p>250ml</p>	<p>HERE'S THE CLUES</p> <p>I am woman in red clothing, and I definitely have a sister. Most of the tales describe how badly I am, unlike my sister. Who am I?</p>



5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the preservation of cultural history is enhanced by the creation of aromatic candles with a little game of guessing the hidden characters and are based on Malay folktales characters. By making these characters and their tales more widely known and by promoting discussions on Malaysia's rich folklore traditions, it helps keep these characters and their tales alive. Additionally, these covert scented candles give Malaysians and tourists alike a chance to see and appreciate the variety of Malay folklore characters. Therefore, they can contribute to a broader and more inclusive depiction of the nation's cultural history by making candles that reflect a variety of characters from various Malaysian regions or traditions.

Acknowledgement

This research is made possible through monetary assistance by Universiti Teknologi MARA.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results:** Nurul Atiqah Abdul Rafee **draft manuscript preparation:** Norfadilah Kamaruddin. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

References

Abu Bakar, Roslina (2012) *Sfera keindahan dalam penyampaian cerita rakyat Melayu oleh penglipur lara Ali Badron*. In: Perspektif dan Paradigma Kebahasaan. Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor, pp. 228-246. ISBN 9789673443178

Alwi, A., Harun, H., & Othman, A. (2019). Safeguarding Malaysian folktales through adventure game. *Jurnal Komunikasi Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 35(2), 448-464.

Hadijah Hamat (2006) *Peranan dan Perkembangan Sastera Kanak-kanak*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

- Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak (2005) *Perkembangan Sastera Kanak-kanak di Malaysia*. Shah Alam: Cerdik Publications Sdn. Bhd.
- Milligan, M. (2019, November 6). 1st Malaysian Oscar-Qualifying Toon 'Upin & Ipin' to Screen in LA. *The Animation Magazine*. <https://www.animationmagazine.net/2019/11/1st-malaysian-oscar-qualifying-toon-upin-ipin-to-screen-in-la/>
- Othman Puteh (1984) *Sekitar Sastera Kanak-kanak dan Remaja*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Pappas, S., & McKelvie, C. (2022, October 17). What is Culture? *LiveScience*. <https://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html>
- Wan Mahmood, W. H. (2021). Keris Siamang Tunggal: Unveiling Malay Artistic Culture. *International Journal of Language, Literacy and Translation*, 4(1), 28–44. <https://doi.org/10.36777/ijollt2021.4.1.041>