



Development of Comparative Photobook on Indonesian and Malaysian Batik: A Visual Analysis of Motifs and Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a comparative photobook on Indonesian and Malaysian batik as an informative and educational visual medium for understanding the differences in motifs and philosophies between the two. The method used is an applied method with an MDLC (Multimedia Development Life Cycle) framework that includes six stages, namely concept, design, material collecting, assembly, testing, and distribution. In addition, this study also uses a qualitative approach through interviews with 30 respondents to obtain feedback on the results of the photobook that has been developed. The results show that this photobook is considered to have an attractive visual appearance, a neat layout, and an informative combination of text and images, making it effective in helping the audience understand the philosophical meaning and cultural values of Indonesian and Malaysian batik. The majority of respondents also considered this photobook suitable as an educational medium. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of visual media in cultural education, particularly in introducing batik heritage through creative and aesthetic approaches. For further development, it is recommended that this photobook be developed into an interactive digital format or animation to make it more attractive, adaptable to technological developments, and able to reach a wider audience.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term batik comes from the Javanese word “ambatik” or “tritik,” with the suffix -tik meaning “to make small dots.” This term describes the creative process of creating batik motifs, which involves dripping liquid wax onto the surface of the fabric as part of the dyeing technique (Syed Shaharuddin et al., 2021). Batik has been an integral part of Indonesian culture since the Majapahit, Solo, and Yogyakarta kingdoms. In 2009, UNESCO designated batik as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and since then, National Batik Day has been celebrated every October 2 as a form of appreciation and preservation of this cultural heritage.

Early batik motifs were made with several kinds of motifs or patterns created by each culture (Deli & Christine, 2022). The diversity of batik motifs in Indonesia reflects the rich culture and philosophical values of each region. To date, there are more than 30 types of batik motifs, each with its own characteristics and meanings (Trixie, 2020). Traditional batik motifs are rich in philosophical meaning, reflecting the cultural, moral, and spiritual values of Indonesian society (Wesnina et al., 2025). On the other hand, batik in Malaysia has developed with distinctive visual characteristics, using block printing (cap) or writing (canting) techniques as the main methods. Malaysian batik production began in the 1920s and has close ties to Javanese batik in Indonesia. Traditional Malaysian batik design elements retain their uniqueness with motifs such as leaves, flowers, and butterflies, although modern design trends have also been adopted to meet market demand (Wahed et al., 2022; Samin & Legino, 2020).

Although batik has significant meaning in both countries, comparative research on the visual elements, philosophy, and socio-cultural functions of Indonesian and Malaysian batik is still very limited. Most existing studies tend to focus on one country without delving deeper into the fundamental differences between the two. For example, a study by Handayani (2023) explores the history of Indonesian batik but does not include a visual comparison with Malaysian batik. In fact, a deeper cross-cultural understanding is needed to strengthen appreciation for each country's cultural heritage (Bin Silah et al., 2021).

To strengthen this cross-cultural understanding, a medium is needed that is not only capable of presenting information textually, but also displays clear visualizations of batik motifs and philosophy. Visual media plays an important role in cultural education because it can present information in an interesting, contextual, and memorable way. For example, research by Farrar et al. (2024) shows that visual literacy supports the development of critical and creative thinking through images. Furthermore, Zhang (2024) in his research on the visual reconstruction of historical and cultural communication shows that visual methods make history and culture more interesting and instructive, and dramatically increase user interaction. The study proves that from 2012 to 2019, the audience for digital historical content experienced tremendous growth from 1.35 million to 26.18 million—an 18.38-fold increase. This reinforces the argument that visualization serves not only as a complement, but as the primary medium in shaping cultural perception and understanding. More specifically in the field of cross-border education, a study by Prameswari et al. (2023) compared the levels of visual literacy comprehension between teachers and students in Indonesia and Malaysia. The results showed that Indonesian respondents tended to give more concrete visual interpretations, while Malaysian respondents were more general in their interpretations.

Until now, most batik research has been presented in the form of academic papers or descriptive documentation, which can sometimes be difficult to attract the interest of a general audience. Therefore, a more interactive, aesthetic, and easy-to-understand medium of representation is needed so that the differences and similarities between Indonesian and Malaysian batik can be conveyed more effectively to the wider community. As a visual medium, photobooks allow for the combination of photographic art with harmonious visual narratives, providing space to explore cultural elements in depth, including the aesthetics, philosophy, and social values of the documented objects (Pratama & Cai, 2022).

According to Gu and Dewan (2024), photobooks are not merely static objects, but should be understood as spaces that document encounters between creators and readers/viewers, and generate new types of encounters. With a predominance of photos and minimal explanatory text, photobooks are able to attract the audience's attention while conveying information effectively (Wulan, 2021; Susanto & Irwandi, 2020).

In this context, the author aims to develop a comparative photobook on Indonesian and Malaysian batik using the MDLC framework and qualitative methods involving interviews, in order to bridge the literature gap and provide a new, in-depth perspective on the differences in motifs and philosophies between the two countries. In addition to serving as a medium for documentation, this photobook is expected to become an educational tool that raises cross-cultural awareness.

2. METHODS

This study uses two methods: applied and qualitative. The applied method uses the MDLC (Multimedia Development Life Cycle) framework, which is flexible and iterative, allowing developers to adjust the process according to project requirements and user feedback. MDLC consists of six main stages, namely concept, design, material collecting, assembly, testing, and distribution (Prasetyo & Steny, 2021). Then, a qualitative method was used by conducting interviews to determine whether the photobook developed could increase the audience's understanding of the differences in motifs and philosophies of Indonesian and Malaysian batik.

2.1. Development Method

At the development stage, the photobook development will be made using the steps of the 6 stages of the MDLC (Multimedia Development Life Cycle) model in Figure 1.

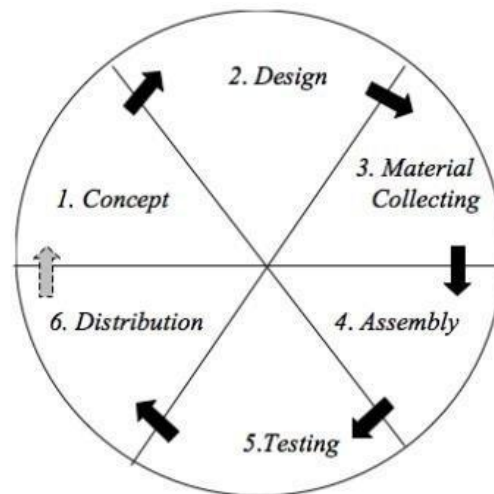


Figure 1. Multimedia Development Life Cycle

At the concept stage, the author designed the initial concept for a photo book focusing on comparisons between Indonesian and Malaysian batik. The concept stage aimed to determine the basic direction of the project as a whole, in terms of objectives, target audience, and the form of media to be developed. Next, at the design stage, the structure and appearance of the photobook were designed. This process involves creating a storyboard to visualize the content, planning the combination of text and images, and selecting graphic design elements such as typography, layout, and color. The author then collects the necessary materials, such as photos of batik, to ensure the visual quality and accuracy of the information that supports the development of the photobook. After collecting all the materials, they will be integrated into the photobook format.

The creation and design of the photobook is based on a storyboard that has been created in advance using software such as Canva to produce high-quality images and visually appealing layouts. The photobook will be double-checked to ensure there are no errors. Testing is also carried out to ensure that the photobook that has been designed is in accordance with the storyboard that was created in the previous stage. Based on the results of testing in the previous stage, the designed photobook is confirmed to be ready for publication and meets the research objectives. At this stage, the comparative photobook on Indonesian and Malaysian batik will be distributed to the audience. The file will be distributed via Google Drive as educational and reference material.

2.2. Analysis Method

Data collection in this study was conducted using qualitative methods with interviews focused on evaluating the photobook that had been developed. This stage was carried out after the photobook development process was complete. Interviews were conducted with 30 Generation Z respondents in Batam City as the main target. Based on qualitative research guidelines, the number of participants is not determined precisely, but is adjusted to the research objectives, the complexity of the topic, and the need to achieve data saturation. Warren (2002), as cited in Bekele and Ago (2022), also states that for a qualitative interview study to be publishable, the minimum number of interviews required ranges from 20 to 30. This indicates that the use of 30 respondents is at the upper limit of the minimum range

acceptable in the academic community, which indicates sufficient data to produce credible findings. Therefore, the number of 30 respondents used in this study is considered representative to obtain an optimal balance between depth of analysis and the ability to achieve data saturation, without producing too much data that is difficult to analyse in depth and effectively. The interview questions were designed to explore the audience's responses to the content, visual design, and ease of understanding the information presented in the photobook. The following is a list of interview questions for the evaluation stage:

Table 1. Interview Questions

No	Questions
1.	What do you think about the visual presentation of the photobook in displaying Indonesian and Malaysian batik?
2.	Do the text and images presented in the photobook help you understand the philosophy behind Indonesian and Malaysian batik motifs?
3.	In your opinion, does the layout used in this photobook make it easier to convey information?
4.	Is this photobook effective as an educational medium? If so, what makes it effective, and if not, what needs to be added to improve it?

After obtaining all the data from the interviews, the author will process the data by transcribing it verbatim to ensure that every piece of information is recorded accurately. Read the transcripts thoroughly to understand the context and main messages of each respondent. Next, data coding is carried out to identify themes, patterns or recurring statements, and categories that emerge from the interview data. After coding, the main themes are identified, such as the effectiveness of visual design, the audience's understanding of the philosophy of batik, and responses to the narrative elements of the photobook. The identified themes are further analysed to understand the relationships between themes and the deeper meaning of the data obtained. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of a structured narrative, supported by direct quotes from respondents to reinforce the findings and provide conclusions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Concept

At this stage, researchers designed the initial concept for a photobook focusing on a comparison of Indonesian and Malaysian batik. This concept included an overview of the media format to be used, content structure, and visual themes to be featured in the photobook. To enrich the concept, various references were explored through literature on batik motifs and philosophies from both countries. This stage serves as the creative foundation that guides the entire photobook development process, in terms of design, content, and technology used, as well as opening up potential for further development as an educational and reference medium in the future.

3.2. Design

In the Design stage, the author arranges each element in detail to obtain a comprehensive overview of the photobook to be developed. This planning is carried out by establishing a neat and organized content structure and page layout so that it is easy for readers to understand. A storyboard is created as a guide in the visual design process so that each page has a consistent and harmonious presentation flow. The photobook storyboard design can be seen in the following image:

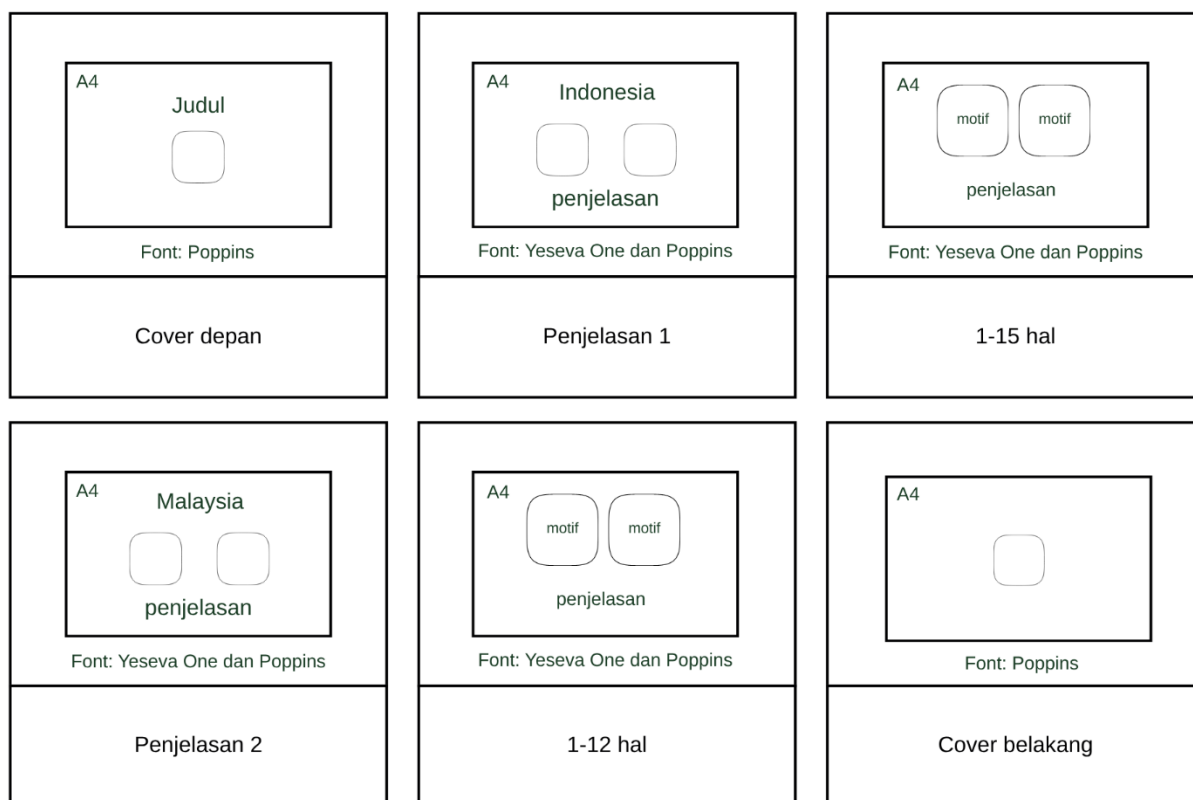


Figure 2. Storyboard Photobook

3.3. Material Collecting

The Material Collecting stage involves gathering all the assets needed for the development of the photobook. At this stage, the author collects various visual and textual materials that support the concept and content of the photobook. The materials collected include photographs of Indonesian and Malaysian batik motifs obtained from open sources and journals, as well as supporting information about the motifs, philosophy, and meaning of batik from various books and scientific articles to strengthen the explanatory content.

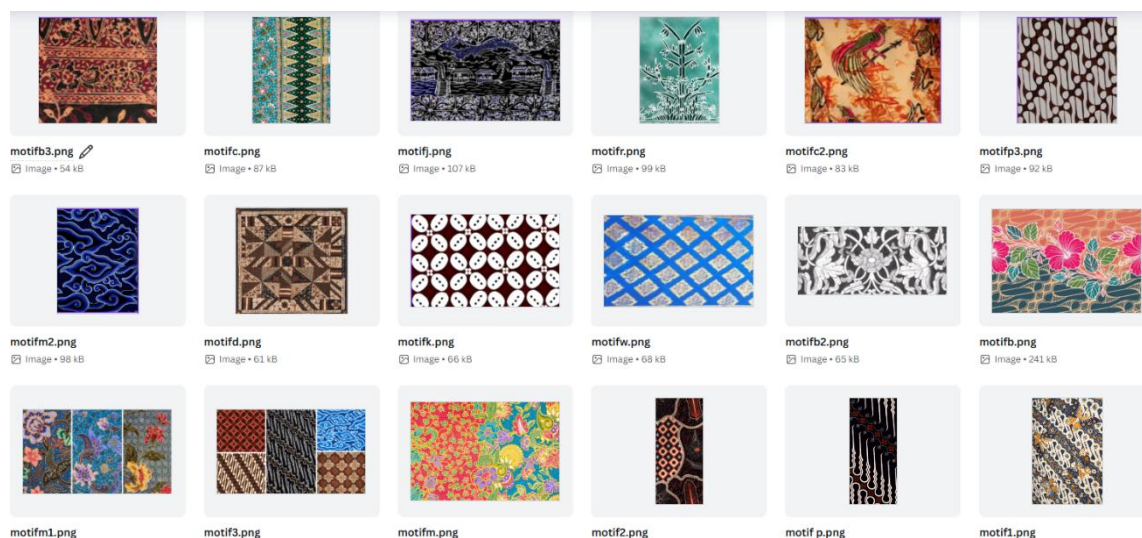


Figure 3. Material Photobook

3.4. Assembly

At the Assembly stage, the author began to assemble all the elements that had been collected previously into a complete photobook. This process was carried out based on the design that had been prepared at the Design stage so that the final result was in accordance with the initial concept and research objectives. The photobook was created using the Canva application, which was used to harmoniously arrange the layout of images, text, and graphic elements. Each page is arranged based on a pre-designed storyboard, paying attention to the visual balance between image and text elements.



Figure 4. Front and back covers

The front and back covers of the photobook are designed to reflect the overall visual concept of the project. The front cover features illustrations of three figures as symbolic representations of Indonesian and Malaysian culture, with batik motifs as decorative elements. Meanwhile, the back cover features a collage of various batik motifs from both countries arranged symmetrically. Both cover designs were created using the Canva application to ensure a balance between image and text elements, as well as to maintain design consistency with the other pages of the photobook.

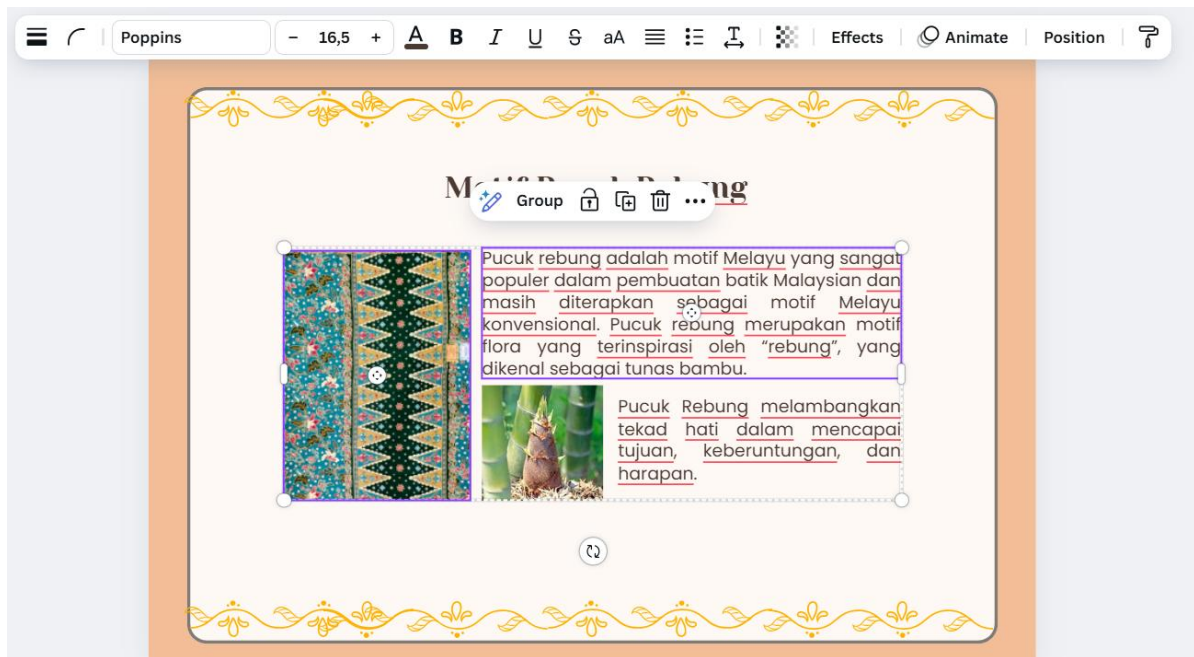


Figure 5. The process of creating a layout

The layout process is carried out by placing visual and text elements in a balanced manner so that information is conveyed effectively. The author arranges the position of motif images and reference photos on the left side to attract visual attention, while the explanatory text is placed on the right side so that it is easy to read and follows the reader's natural line of sight. This process ensures that every design element, both images and text, is arranged harmoniously in accordance with the storyboard that has been designed beforehand.





Figure 6. Explanation of motifs and philosophy

This section presents the final results of the main part of the photobook, which contains explanations of Indonesian and Malaysian batik motifs and philosophies, accompanied by visual descriptions and philosophical explanations related to cultural values and symbolic meanings. The layout of this section balances text and images, with color consistent with the previously created layout.

3.5. Testing

At the testing stage, the photobook on Indonesian and Malaysian batik was reviewed thoroughly to ensure there were no visual or textual errors. The testing process aimed to verify that the final design aligned with the storyboard and concept developed in the previous stages. This includes checking the accuracy of text descriptions, the consistency of font usage, image placement, and color harmony throughout all pages.

3.6. Distribution

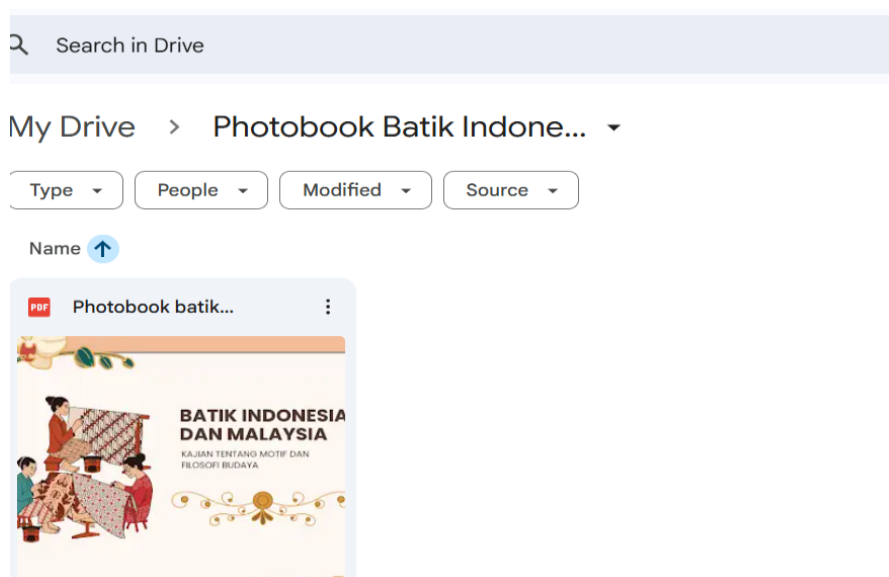


Figure 7. Photobook Distribution via Google Drive.

Based on the results of testing in the previous stage, the photobook that has been designed is confirmed to be ready for publication and meets the research objectives. In this final stage, the comparative photobook on Indonesian and Malaysian batik will be distributed to the audience. The file will be distributed via Google Drive as educational and reference material.

3.7. Analysis

After the photobook was developed, researchers interviewed 30 respondents to obtain feedback on visual quality, clarity of information, and the effectiveness of the photobook as an educational medium. The interviews aimed to evaluate the extent to which the comparative photobooks on Indonesian and Malaysian batik were able to convey information in a clear, interesting, and meaningful manner. The results of these interviews showed predominantly positive responses, with the following key findings:

1. **Visual presentation of the photobook in displaying Indonesian and Malaysian batik:** Most respondents considered the photobook's visual appearance to be attractive, aesthetic, and professional. The choice of color and photo layout was considered to highlight the beauty and uniqueness of batik from both countries. Approximately 87% of respondents mentioned that the images used were of high quality and in line with the cultural theme. Several respondents highlighted that the lighting and composition of the images made the motifs look elegant. However, a small number of respondents suggested that the contrast between the text and background should be clearer and the design more varied so that it did not feel monotonous.
2. **Text and images presented in the photobook help you understand the philosophy behind Indonesian and Malaysian batik motifs:** The majority of respondents (85%) stated that the combination of text and images in the photobook helped them understand the philosophy and meaning behind Indonesian and Malaysian batik motifs. Several respondents mentioned that the concise and succinct explanations, accompanied by representative visuals, made it easier for them to associate symbolic meanings with motif shapes. The combination of text and illustrations was considered to strengthen understanding of the cultural values and history of each batik motif.
3. **Layout used in this photobook make it easier to convey information:** The majority of respondents (90%) felt that the photobook layout was well organized, neat, and easy to follow. The placement of text close to the images was considered helpful in allowing readers to understand the content of each page without confusion. Several respondents felt that the consistency of the layout, the balance of white space, and the logical order of information made the photobook comfortable to read. However, some respondents suggested that the layout design be made more dynamic and resemble a professional photobook to make it more aesthetically pleasing.
4. **Photobook effective as an educational medium:** Almost all respondents considered this photobook to be an effective educational medium, as it harmoniously combines visual elements and information. Attractive visualizations are considered to be able to attract readers interest in learning more about batik culture. Several respondents suggested adding elements such as a map of motif distribution, QR codes linking to videos of the batik-making process, or interviews with batik craftsmen to increase the educational value and enhance the learning experience. However, there were also

different views, such as one respondent who argued that in the digital age, media such as photobooks may be less practical than online media.

4. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the development of a comparative photobook of Indonesian and Malaysian batik as a visual and educational medium to enhance understanding of the motifs and philosophies of both cultures. Using the MDLC (Multimedia Development Life Cycle) framework and a qualitative approach through interviews, this study evaluates the visual quality, layout, and effectiveness of photobooks as a medium for cultural learning. The results of the study show that most respondents gave positive responses. The photobook was considered to have an attractive visual appearance, clear layout, and a balanced combination of text and images, enabling it to effectively convey the philosophical meaning and cultural value of batik. This photobook is also considered an informative and interesting medium for introducing and preserving cultural heritage.

This study confirms that visual media plays an important role as an alternative medium in cultural education. Through a combination of aesthetic and informational aspects, this photobook has successfully become an effective medium for introducing and deepening cross-cultural understanding of Indonesian and Malaysian batik. For further development, it is recommended that this photobook be supplemented with an interactive digital format or animation, so that the presentation of information becomes more interesting, dynamic, and adaptive to technological developments and is able to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

The author sincerely thanks you for your time and attention in reading this work. This article is a manifestation of the author's curiosity and dedication in exploring the visual and philosophical aspects of Indonesian and Malaysian batik. The completion of this work would not have been possible without the support, inspiration, and encouragement from various parties throughout the writing process. The author hopes that this research can provide meaningful insights into understanding and appreciating culture, as well as contribute to the

development of design education. The author gladly welcomes constructive criticism and suggestions for future improvements. May this work not only be a source of reading material, but also an inspiration to continue learning, creating, and preserving cultural heritage.

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