

# Malay Wedding Door Gifts as Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Conceptual Framework for Craft-Based Design Safeguarding and Contemporary Innovation

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## ABSTRACT

Malay wedding door gifts are widely practiced cultural elements for matrimonial rituals. However, currently they are increasingly shaped by commercialization, standardization, and short-life consumption patterns that risk weakening their cultural meaning and craft-based origins. Despite their recurring role in social exchange and ritual reciprocity, these artefacts remain under-theorised within intangible cultural heritage (ICH) discourse. This study aims to reconceptualize Malay wedding door gifts as living ICH and to develop a conceptual framework for safeguarding craft-based design that supports contemporary innovation. Adopting a theory-driven conceptual methodology, the study systematically reviews and synthesizes literature on Malay wedding practices, ICH safeguarding, craft knowledge transmission, and design collaboration. The findings propose a framework in which craft-based design mediation integrates community participation, tacit knowledge exchange, cultural translation, and sustainable material strategies. The study contributes to heritage and design scholarships by positioning everyday ritual artefacts as micro-heritage systems and highlights opportunities for culturally grounded, sustainable innovation in wedding-related craft products.

**Keywords** — Intangible Cultural Heritage, Malay Wedding Practices, Craft-Based Design, Cultural Product Innovation, Sustainable Craft Design

## INTRODUCTION

The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is increasingly shaped by global pressures arising from market expansion, sustainability imperatives, and evolving governance frameworks. While the 2003 UNESCO Convention reframed heritage as living practice rather than static artefact, contemporary scholarship notes that safeguarding efforts must navigate tensions between cultural continuity and commodification. Effective safeguarding requires more than documentation or legal recognition; it demands context-sensitive mechanisms that sustain transmission, community agency, and adaptive creativity (Blake, 2023). At the same time, legal and policy debates continue to question the adequacy of intellectual property regimes in protecting collectively held cultural knowledge without privatizing shared traditions (Ubertazzi, 2022). Recent analyses further reveal that national safeguarding agendas increasingly emphasize digital documentation, legal codification, and economic valorization (Hu et al., 2024), sometimes at the expense of deeper community-based transmission processes. In parallel, research in design and craft studies demonstrates that sustainability-oriented craft–design collaboration depends critically on the circulation of tacit knowledge across actors and domains, reinforcing the view that safeguarding is inseparable from structured processes of knowledge exchange, reinterpretation, and innovation (Guo & Ahn, 2023). Meanwhile, sustainability research in the events sector highlights persistent challenges associated with waste intensive celebratory consumption (Baydeniz and Özdoğan, 2024). This perspective positions ritual contexts as significant sites where heritage continuity intersects with environmental responsibility. Taken together, these discussions suggest that small scale ritual practices, which are often overlooked in policy and research, may represent important yet insufficiently theorized arenas for safeguarding through design.

In Malaysia, this concern is compelling since marriage remains a central life-cycle institution. In 2024 alone, 190,304 marriages were registered nationwide, of which 72.3% were Muslim marriages (Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM], 2025). The demographic frequency of Malay–Muslim wedding ceremonies means that associated material practices are reproduced continuously across communities. Wedding-related artefacts are therefore not occasional or peripheral cultural expressions but recurring components of everyday heritage transmission. Malaysia’s latest periodic report under the 2003 UNESCO Convention records 1,638 inventoried ICH elements across domains including social practices and traditional craftsmanship (Department of National Heritage Malaysia, 2024), reflecting structured institutional commitment to heritage safeguarding. Yet while national inventories recognize major ritual forms and craft traditions, smaller ceremonial artefacts embedded within wedding practices remain conceptually underexplored.

Among these artefacts, the Malay wedding door gift represents a particularly revealing case. Traditionally manifested in forms such as *bunga telur* and other symbolic offerings, door gifts function as ritual tokens of gratitude, fertility, and social bonding. Ethnographic research has documented the symbolic role of food and gift items within Malay wedding ceremonies, noting both their communicative significance and their gradual adaptation to changing social preferences (Muhammad et al., 2013). Historically, many of these items were prepared through household effort or community-based craft labor, embedding the act of giving within local knowledge systems and shared social responsibility.

However, contemporary Malay weddings increasingly reflect broader patterns of consumerism. Studies demonstrate that wedding celebrations are shaped by class signaling, themed aesthetics, and purchasable commodities, with souvenirs and decorative elements functioning as markers of taste and distinction (Sallehuddin et al., 2020). Related research shows that commercial wedding industries increasingly normalize outsourcing and intensify consumption pressures, thereby accelerating the shift from community-based preparation toward standardized market solutions (Sallehuddin and Sukimi, 2016). More recent analyses identify new cultural mediators, including commercial providers and lifestyle imaginaries, that actively influence wedding consumption decisions (Sallehuddin, 2023). Empirical studies on wedding expenditure also place door gifts within increasingly complex spending structures in contemporary Malay wedding practices (Husin et al., 2020, 2022). At the same time, national waste data report 3.77 million tonnes of solid waste disposed in 2024 in states implementing Act 672, with per capita generation estimated at 1.17 kg per person per day (Ministry of Housing and Local Government Malaysia [KPKT], 2025). These figures underscore the environmental implications of short-life consumer goods commonly associated with celebratory events. Collectively, this body of research indicates that Malay wedding door gifts are not trivial decorative items but elements of a living ritual practice undergoing market-driven transformation.

Despite these insights, a significant conceptual gap persists. Malaysian scholarship has examined wedding rituals primarily through lenses of symbolism, consumerism, expenditure, and social stratification. Heritage research, meanwhile, concentrates on formally recognized craft traditions or nationally listed ICH elements. Micro-ritual artefacts such as wedding door gifts, although widely practiced and socially meaningful, have not been systematically theorized as living ICH embedded within craft-based knowledge systems and design processes. Likewise, design scholarships addressing craft innovation often focus on product development or creative industry models without situating small ceremonial objects within safeguarding discourse. This fragmentation obscures the ways in which every day ritual artefacts mediate between heritage continuity, market transformation, and sustainability challenges.

This study addresses that gap by proposing a reconceptualization of Malay wedding door gifts as living intangible cultural heritage situated at the intersection of social ritual, traditional craftsmanship, and contemporary design practice. Rather than treating door gifts as disposable wedding commodities, this paper conceptualizes them as micro-heritage systems that contain tacit craft knowledge, symbolic meaning, and relational ethics. It argues that craft-based design collaboration can function as a safeguarding mechanism, mediating between community knowledge and market demand, tradition and innovation, continuity and environmental responsibility. The study therefore pursues two objectives: first, to reposition Malay wedding door gifts within the theoretical framework of ICH as dynamic social practice; and second, to develop a conceptual framework that integrates craft knowledge and design collaboration as pathways for culturally grounded and sustainable innovation.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 situates Malay wedding door gifts within the broader socio-cultural and ritual context of Malay matrimonial practices, examining their symbolic, relational, and material dimensions. Section 3 aligns the practice with contemporary ICH theory and safeguarding debates. Section 4 analyzes the pressures of commercialization, material standardization, and event-related consumption that challenge craft continuity. Section 5 proposes a conceptual model of craft-based design mediation for safeguarding and innovation. The article concludes by outlining theoretical contributions to ICH and design scholarship and by discussing implications for designers, craft communities, and cultural policy in Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Intangible Cultural Heritage and Safeguarding Craft-Based Design in Contemporary Innovation

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) scholarship has progressively shifted from preservationist logics toward a dynamic understanding of heritage as lived practice. The 2003 Convention reframed heritage as practices, skills, and knowledge systems continually re-created by communities rather than as static artefacts requiring conservation. Contemporary scholarship reinforces this orientation by arguing that safeguarding should prioritize transmission ecosystems and community agency rather than rely solely on formal recognition or legal instruments (Blake, 2023). At the same time, critical analyses caution that institutional safeguarding strategies, particularly those centered on inventories, legal codification, and intellectual property frameworks, may risk freezing heritage or reifying cultural forms that become detached from everyday practice (Ubertazzi, 2022; Hu et al., 2024).

This tension between vitality and formalization becomes especially evident in craft domains. Craft traditions rely on tacit knowledge, which consists of embodied and experiential skills that are difficult to fully codify. As Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge suggests, much of what is known in craft cannot be fully articulated; it is learned through doing and social interaction. Recent empirical work confirms that sustainability-oriented craft–design collaboration depends on structured mechanisms that enable tacit knowledge exchange between artisans and designers (Guo & Ahn, 2023). Safeguarding, therefore, is not only about protecting symbolic identity but also about sustaining knowledge circulation and adaptation processes.

Parallel research in ICH-oriented product development further highlights the risk of “transmission bias,” where cultural elements are superficially extracted and recontextualized in contemporary products without preserving their embedded meanings (Li et al., 2024). This suggests that contemporary innovation in craft products requires more than aesthetic referencing. It requires design methodologies that can mediate between cultural meaning, the integrity of traditional techniques, and market viability. In this context, design functions not merely as a commercial tool but as a safeguarding mechanism that shapes how heritage is interpreted and translated into contemporary applications.

In addition, sustainability scholarship in the events sector highlights the environmental implications of short-life consumer goods commonly associated with celebratory practices (Baydeniz & Özdoğan, 2024). Ritual consumption contexts thus emerge as critical sites where heritage continuity and environmental responsibility intersect. When ritual artefacts become disposable commodities, cultural continuity may persist symbolically, but material and knowledge systems risk erosion.

Within this broader discourse, Malay wedding door gifts represent a particularly underexplored yet strategically significant case. Unlike nationally listed craft traditions, door gifts are micro-ritual artefacts embedded within recurring matrimonial practices. They embody social reciprocity and aesthetic expression while historically incorporating elements of local craft knowledge. Their significance lies not in singular uniqueness but in repetition: each wedding reenacts a gift-giving practice that reinforces cultural codes. Conceptualizing them as living ICH requires shifting analytical focus from the object itself to the ritual practice and knowledge systems that produce it.

Thus, safeguarding craft-based design for contemporary innovation must be understood as a socio-material strategy. It operates at three levels: (1) sustaining ritual meaning, (2) enabling tacit knowledge transmission, and (3) embedding sustainability within product design. In the context of Malay wedding door gifts, safeguarding

through design becomes a question of how ritual exchange can remain culturally legible while adapting to contemporary aesthetic expectations and environmental constraints.

## **Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Malay Wedding Door Gifts as Living ICH**

To ground this study conceptually, several complementary theoretical perspectives are relevant.

### **Practice Theory and Living Heritage**

Practice theory conceptualizes social life as constituted through repeated, socially organized activities. Applied to ICH, heritage persists not through preservation of objects but through repetition of practice. Malay wedding door gifts fit this framework: their cultural significance derives from continuous enactment within matrimonial rituals. This perspective clarifies why even small artefacts can constitute living heritage when embedded in socially recognized practice.

### **Gift Exchange Theory and Ritual Reciprocity**

Gift exchange theory provides a powerful lens for interpreting door gifts as relational acts rather than commodities. Gifts generate obligations, recognition, and social cohesion. In Malay weddings, door gifts function as tokens of gratitude and markers of social acknowledgment. This relational dimension distinguishes ritual gifting from ordinary consumer transactions. However, when commodification intensifies, the symbolic economy of reciprocity may be displaced by market logic, altering the meaning structure of the practice.

### **Tacit Knowledge and Craft Transmission**

Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge illuminates why craft-based door gifts are culturally significant beyond their appearance. The knowledge embedded in embroidery, weaving, or decorative arrangement resides in embodied skill. Contemporary craft research demonstrates that safeguarding requires sustaining environments where such knowledge is practiced and shared (Guo & Ahn, 2023). Door gifts produced through craft collaboration can therefore function as micro-sites of transmission.

### **Commons Governance and Community-Based Safeguarding**

Ostrom's theory of commons governance challenges individualized intellectual property models by emphasizing collective stewardship. Many craft motifs and ritual practices are collectively held cultural resources. In this context, safeguarding Malay wedding door gifts may require participatory governance mechanisms that ensure community benefit and prevent exploitative appropriation.

### **Co-Creation and Participatory Design**

Co-creation frameworks emphasize value generation through collaboration among stakeholders. In heritage contexts, co-creation involves artisans, designers, communities, and users jointly shaping meaning and form. Participatory design positions designers as mediators rather than authors, enabling translation between heritage knowledge and contemporary product systems. Applied to wedding door gifts, this framework supports craft-based collaboration as a safeguarding pathway rather than mere stylistic innovation.

Together, these theories establish a multi-layered analytical structure: practice theory explains *why* door gifts qualify as living heritage; gift theory explains *how* they produce social meaning; tacit knowledge theory explains *what* must be safeguarded; commons governance explains *who* holds cultural rights and responsibilities; and co-creation theory explains *how* contemporary innovation can occur ethically and sustainably.

## **Research Gaps, Synthesis and Critical Insights**

Although ICH scholarship has expanded significantly, three interrelated gaps remain evident in the Malaysian context.

First, there is a conceptual gap in the area studied. Malaysian wedding studies have examined symbolism, expenditure, and consumerism, demonstrating how weddings increasingly reflect market logics and class signaling. However, these studies rarely interpret wedding artefacts as living ICH. Heritage research, conversely, focuses primarily on formally recognized crafts and major ritual domains. Micro-ritual artefacts such as wedding door gifts remain theoretically marginal despite their frequency and cultural embeddedness.

Second, there is a mechanism gap. Craft–design collaboration research provides insights into tacit knowledge exchange and sustainable innovation, yet little work applies these mechanisms to wedding consumption systems. Wedding door gifts present unique characteristics: they are recurrent, socially charged, and vulnerable to rapid commodification. A tailored safeguarding framework is therefore necessary.

Third, there is a sustainability integration gap. Event sustainability literature identifies waste-intensive consumption patterns, but this is rarely connected to ICH safeguarding debates. In Malaysia, high waste generation rates highlight the environmental consequences of disposable celebratory goods. Door gifts thus represent a nexus where cultural continuity, craft revitalization, and environmental responsibility converge.

Synthesizing these strands suggests a critical insight: safeguarding Malay wedding door gifts requires reframing them as micro-heritage systems rather than disposable commodities. Their significance lies in the ritualized practice of giving, the embedded craft knowledge historically associated with their production, and their potential to mediate between tradition and innovation. A craft-based design safeguarding model can re-anchor door gifts within community knowledge systems while addressing contemporary sustainability imperatives.

This synthesis leads directly to the need for a conceptual framework that integrates ritual practice, craft knowledge, design mediation, and sustainability outcomes. The next section develops such a framework, proposing how Malay wedding door gifts can be repositioned as living intangible cultural heritage through craft-based contemporary innovation.

Table 1: Summary of Key Literature Supporting Living Intangible Cultural Heritage Through Craft-Based Contemporary Innovation

Author(s)	Year	Title	Methodology	Key Findings
Sallehuddin	2023	New Mediators in Consumerism Activity on Malay Wedding	Qualitative; in-depth interviews with 19 low-income Malay brides and families	The emergence of new cultural mediators, including commercial actors and influences from the wedding industry, shapes the idea of the “ <i>dream wedding</i> ” and intensifies consumer-oriented choices. This context helps explain why door gifts increasingly shift from community made tokens toward standardized market commodities.
Husin et al.	2022	<i>Prioriti Dalam Perbelanjaan Urusan Perkahwinan Masyarakat Melayu Menurut Syarak</i>	Qualitative; content analysis using documentation in fiqh of consumerism, family fiqh, and Malay cultural practices	Door gifts are explicitly identified within the expenditure categories of Malay marriage practices, with an argument that spending should be prioritized in accordance with Islamic objectives, such as <i>hajiyyat</i> and <i>tahsiniyyat</i> , rather than being driven by trends. This perspective frames door gifts as a recurring ritual economic practice that is subject to ongoing normative debates regarding appropriate expenditure.

Husin et al.	2022	Antecedents of Wedding Expenditure Management: A Document Analysis	Document analysis (secondary sources synthesis)	Synthesizes drivers of rising wedding costs and the need for structured expenditure management; supports positioning door gifts within broader expenditure escalation and social expectations surrounding weddings
Zakaria et al.	2025	Preserving Heritage through Participatory Design Process: Sustainable packaging for traditional Orang Asli game <i>kerchang</i>	Qualitative; interpretive & participatory; co-design sessions; participant groups reported; thematic analysis	Participatory design and design thinking can function as safeguarding mechanisms that enhance cultural visibility and strengthen community ownership while enabling innovation oriented towards contemporary markets. This perspective offers a transferable approach for understanding door gifts as craft-based ICH micro-artefacts
Guo & Ahn	2023	Tacit Knowledge Sharing for Enhancing the Sustainability of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Crafts	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews (Aug–Dec 2022) with artisans (ICH inheritors) & academics; knowledge-management framing	The study proposes a structured knowledge sharing process comprising accumulation, expression, diffusion, and reflection to support the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage crafts through collaboration between artisans and designers.
Li, Wang, & Li	2024	Research on narrative design of handicraft intangible cultural heritage creative products based on AHP–TOPSIS method	Model-based design method; integrates cultural-level theory, semiotics, <i>kansei</i> engineering, factor analysis, and TOPSIS; validated via product case	Addresses the issue of transmission bias by explaining how cultural features can be systematically selected and translated into contemporary products. This perspective is relevant for ensuring that innovation in door gifts does not reduce or simplify their symbolic meanings.
He et al.	2024	Construction of digital creation development model of intangible cultural heritage crafts in China	Grounded theory; textual data (2016–2022) from official ICH sources & databases; theoretical model building	Identifies key enabling conditions for innovation in intangible cultural heritage, including governance capacity, training, community collaboration, and platform development, and links these factors to broader safeguarding needs. This perspective supports the argument that innovation should not be viewed as an additional element but rather as a necessary process for sustaining heritage continuity.
Baydeniz & Özdoğan	2024	New perspective on sustainable practices in the events industry	Systematic review; large-scale bibliographic dataset analysis (WoS)	Consolidates evidence that events are sustainability-critical consumption sites; supports integrating environmental criteria (materials, waste, life cycle thinking) when re-designing short-life celebratory items such as door gifts.

As shown in Table 1, across the Malaysia-facing wedding literature, the strongest through-line is that weddings operate as repeated, high-frequency social institutions in which material choices increasingly reflect

consumerism, mediation by market actors, and escalating expenditure norms. Sallehuddin (2023) clarifies how “new mediators” shape preferences and intensify commodified wedding consumption, while Husin et al. (2022) explicitly position door gifts within the expenditure architecture of Malay weddings and frame them in normative debates concerning prioritization versus trend-driven spending. When considered together, these studies support the interpretation of door gifts not as peripheral décor, but as routine ritual artefacts embedded in social exchange, obligation, and status signaling. These characteristics align with the concept of living heritage, in which cultural meaning is reproduced through repeated social practice rather than through singular artefacts.

The ICH and design scholarship provides the necessary conceptual bridge by demonstrating that safeguarding is not limited to preservation but can be enacted through structured design processes. Guo and Ahn (2023) show that sustaining ICH crafts depends on systematic tacit-knowledge sharing within craft–design collaboration, underscoring that safeguarding must engage with embodied skills rather than rely on surface-level stylistic references. Li et al. (2024) extend this discussion by addressing the risk of cultural “transmission bias” and proposing systematic approaches for translating cultural features into contemporary products without eroding their symbolic integrity. This insight is particularly relevant to door gifts, which often condense cultural meaning into small and easily standardized objects. He et al. (2024) further demonstrates that innovation trajectories are shaped by governance capacity, training infrastructures, and community collaboration, reinforcing the argument that contemporary innovation can function as a condition of continuity rather than a threat to heritage vitality.

Finally, synthesis work in event sustainability (Baydeniz & Özdoğan, 2024) confirms that celebratory contexts are legitimate intervention sites for environmental responsibility, thereby supporting the integration of material circularity and waste reduction into a safeguarding framework for Malay wedding door gifts.

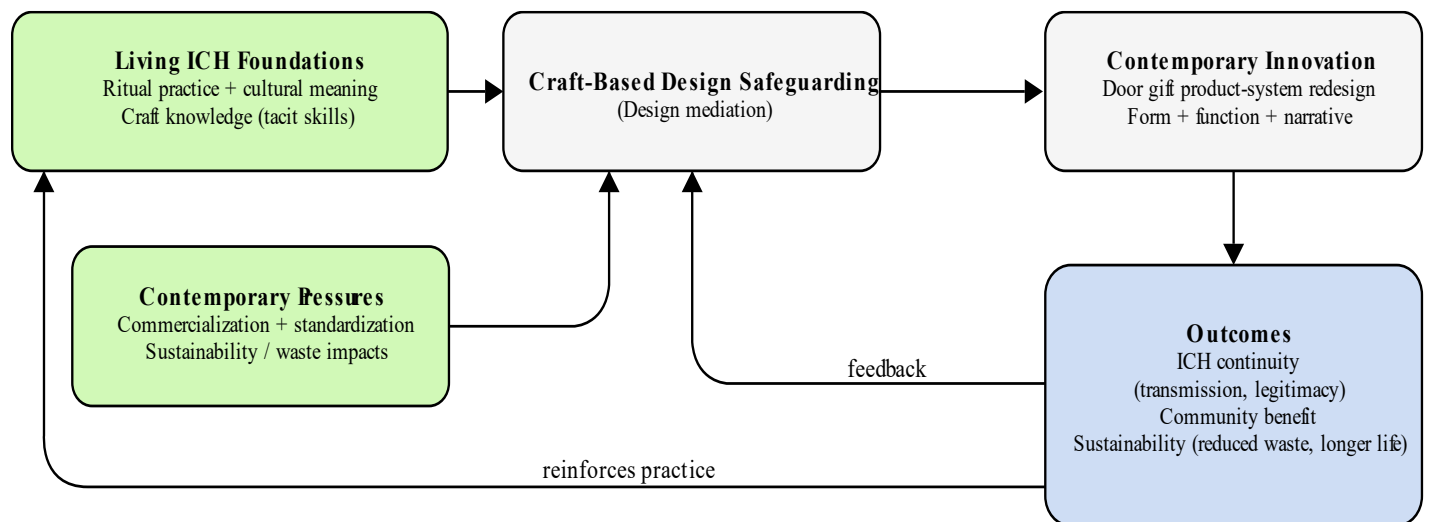


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework that positions Malay wedding door gifts as a *living ICH practice* shaped by the interaction between (i) Living ICH foundations (ritual meanings and craft-based tacit knowledge) and (ii) contemporary pressures (commercialization, standardization, and sustainability concerns). Consistent with safeguarding scholarship that prioritizes transmission ecosystems and community agency (Blake, 2023), the model treats craft-based design safeguarding as the central *mediating mechanism* through which heritage is sustained while enabling innovation. This mediation addresses governance and community-benefit tensions commonly raised in ICH–IP debates (Ubertazzi, 2022) and operationalizes safeguarding through structured tacit knowledge exchange within craft–design collaboration (Guo & Ahn, 2023). The framework links safeguarding to contemporary innovation outcomes (new door-gift product-system designs) while explicitly managing risks of cultural distortion during translation into modern products (Li et al., 2024). It also incorporates evidence that celebratory contexts are sustainability-critical and often waste intensive (Baydeniz & Özdoğan, 2024) and acknowledges market mediation in Malay wedding consumption (Sallehuddin, 2023). Finally, the feedback loops indicate that outcomes (ICH continuity, sustainability, and community benefit) reinforce ongoing safeguarding capacity and strengthen the underlying living practice over time.

In practice, this safeguarding mediation may involve collaborative design activities such as co-design workshops with craft practitioners, knowledge sharing between artisans and designers, culturally informed material selection, and the development of sustainable door gift product systems that translate traditional craft knowledge into contemporary wedding contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design and Conceptual Orientation

This study adopts a theory-driven, non-empirical research design appropriate for a conceptual paper. Rather than generating primary data, the study develops an integrative theoretical framework through critical analysis and synthesis of existing scholarship. Conceptual research is particularly suitable when a phenomenon is under-theorized, fragmented across disciplinary domains, or insufficiently integrated within a coherent explanatory model. In this case, Malay wedding door gifts have been discussed within sociocultural, consumer, and religious expenditure studies, while intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and craft-based design safeguarding have evolved within heritage, policy, and design research. However, these bodies of knowledge have not been systematically connected.

The study is grounded in an interpretive and constructivist orientation, recognizing heritage as socially constructed and dynamically reproduced through practice. It positions Malay wedding door gifts as a living socio-material practice rather than a static object category. The conceptual orientation therefore draws on heritage theory, craft knowledge studies, design collaboration models, and sustainability discourse to develop a structured explanatory framework. The objective is not to test hypotheses but to clarify conceptual relationships, define constructs, and propose a theoretically grounded model that can inform future empirical inquiry.

### Literature Identification and Selection Process

A structured literature search was conducted to identify peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and recent scholarly publications relevant to three interrelated domains: (1) Malay wedding practices and consumer culture; (2) intangible cultural heritage safeguarding and governance; and (3) craft-based design collaboration and contemporary innovation. Searches were performed using academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and institutional repositories. Keywords and combinations included: *Malay wedding, door gifts, cenderamata perkahwinan, intangible cultural heritage, ICH safeguarding, craft-based design, design mediation, tacit knowledge in craft, participatory design and heritage, and sustainable event consumption.*

The selection criteria prioritized publications from the past five to seven years to ensure contemporary relevance, while also incorporating foundational theoretical works where necessary (e.g., tacit knowledge, gift exchange, commons governance). Only peer-reviewed journal articles and academic monographs were included to ensure scholarly credibility; websites, non-reviewed sources, and purely descriptive reports were excluded unless used for contextual statistical data.

Following identification, the literature was screened in two stages. First, abstracts were reviewed to determine conceptual relevance to the study's focus on ritual practice, heritage safeguarding, design collaboration, or sustainability. Second, full texts were assessed for theoretical contribution, methodological clarity, and relevance to the proposed framework. Studies were then categorized into thematic clusters: (i) wedding consumption and expenditure; (ii) ICH safeguarding theory and governance; (iii) craft knowledge and transmission; (iv) participatory design and innovation models; and (v) sustainability in event-based contexts. This thematic grouping enabled systematic comparison and cross-domain integration.

The literature identification process prioritized conceptual relevance rather than exhaustive systematic enumeration. A total of 17 core scholarly sources were retained for analysis, including theoretical works on intangible cultural heritage, craft knowledge transmission, design collaboration, and wedding consumption practices. These sources provided the conceptual foundation for synthesizing the framework proposed in this study.

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## Conceptual Analysis and Theoretical Synthesis

The analytical process followed a structured thematic synthesis approach. Rather than merely summarizing prior findings, the study compared theoretical assumptions, identified conceptual tensions, and extracted transferable constructs across domains. Three analytical steps were undertaken.

First, key constructions were identified from each thematic cluster. From wedding studies, constructions such as ritual reciprocity, consumer mediation, and expenditure escalation were extracted. From ICH scholarship, constructs including living practice, transmission, community agency, and governance were identified. Craft-design literature contributed to constructs such as tacit knowledge exchange, co-creation, and cultural translation, while sustainability research provided constructs related to material circularity, lifecycle thinking, and event-based consumption impacts.

Second, relationships among these constructions were examined. For example, wedding consumerism literature highlighted commercialization pressures, which were then interpreted as external forces acting upon living ICH practice. Craft-design safeguarding models were analyzed as potential mediating mechanisms capable of addressing such pressures. Sustainability scholarship was integrated to extend safeguarding beyond cultural continuity toward environmental responsibility.

Third, overlapping theoretical lenses, including practice theory, gift exchange theory, tacit knowledge theory, commons governance, and participatory design, were comparatively examined to determine their explanatory contributions. This comparative synthesis enabled the study to move beyond descriptive reporting toward deeper conceptual integration. The analysis produced a multi-layered understanding of Malay wedding door gifts as a socio-cultural practice situated at the intersection of ritual exchange, craft knowledge, market mediation, and sustainability considerations.

## Development of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was developed through iterative structuring of the synthesized constructs in alignment with the research objectives. The first objective, which is to reconceptualize Malay wedding door gifts as living intangible cultural heritage, required positioning ritual practice and craft knowledge as foundational constructs. These elements were therefore defined as the core components of the model.

The second objective, which is to propose craft-based design safeguarding as a mechanism for contemporary innovation, guided the identification of design mediation as the central intervening construct. Drawing on participatory design and tacit knowledge theories, safeguarding mechanisms were organized into several subcomponents, including community participation and governance, knowledge transmission, cultural translation in design, and sustainable material strategies.

External pressures identified in literature, such as commercialization, standardization, and environmental impacts, were incorporated as contextual forces influencing the living practice. These pressures provide an explanatory basis for why safeguarding interventions are necessary.

Finally, the framework was structured to illustrate directional relationships in which living ICH foundations and contextual pressures converge on craft-based design safeguarding mechanisms, which subsequently generate innovation outputs and safeguarding outcomes. Feedback loops were incorporated to reflect the dynamic nature of heritage reproduction; whereby successful innovation strengthens practice continuity and community capacity.

The resulting framework provides a coherent theoretical structure that integrates heritage theory, craft knowledge, design mediation, and sustainability discourse. It offers a systematic explanation of how Malay wedding door gifts can function as living intangible cultural heritage while adapting through contemporary craft-based innovation.

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## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study reconceptualizes Malay wedding door gifts as a form of living intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and develops a craft-based design safeguarding framework that links ritual practice, craft knowledge, and contemporary design innovation in order to support cultural continuity. The central finding is that door gifts should not be understood merely as decorative wedding commodities but as recurring ritual artefacts embedded within systems of reciprocity, social obligation, and culturally encoded aesthetics. Their significance derives from repetition within matrimonial practice and from their historical connection to community-based craft knowledge. When these foundations are subjected to commercialization, standardization, and waste-intensive consumption patterns, the ritual may persist symbolically, yet the underlying knowledge and sustainability dimensions risk erosion. The proposed framework therefore positions craft-based design safeguarding as a mediating mechanism that integrates community participation, tacit knowledge transmission, cultural translation, and sustainable material strategies to enable innovation without cultural dilution.

These findings align with contemporary scholarship on intangible cultural heritage, which emphasizes living practice, community agency, and transmission as central elements of safeguarding (Blake, 2023). The analysis extends this body of literature by demonstrating how micro ritual artefacts, which are often overlooked in national inventories, can function as meaningful sites of heritage reproduction. In dialogue with craft–design collaboration research, the study supports the argument that tacit knowledge exchange and structured mediation are necessary to prevent superficial appropriation during product innovation (Guo & Ahn, 2023; Li et al., 2024). At the same time, the integration of event sustainability literature underscores that safeguarding must address material and lifecycle implications, especially in high-frequency celebratory contexts (Baydeniz & Özdoğan, 2024). By synthesizing these strands, the paper reframes contemporary innovation not as a threat to tradition but as a potential condition of continuity when guided by ethical design processes and community-oriented governance.

The study contributes theoretically by extending ICH discourse into the domain of everyday ritual consumption and by articulating a multi-layered conceptual model that bridges heritage theory, gift exchange, tacit knowledge, commons governance, and participatory design. It advances the notion of “micro-heritage systems,” demonstrating that small-scale artefacts embedded in recurring practices can play a strategic role in heritage vitality. Furthermore, it contributes to design scholarships by positioning design as a safeguarding infrastructure rather than merely a commercial styling activity. This reframing situates craft-based product innovation within a broader cultural and sustainability framework.

Practically, the framework offers guidance for designers, craft communities, policymakers, and wedding industry stakeholders. For designers, it highlights the importance of cultural translation and lifecycle responsibility when developing wedding-related products. For craft communities, it suggests pathways for embedding local skills into contemporary markets through collaborative production models. For policymakers and heritage institutions, it underscores the value of recognizing everyday ritual artefacts within safeguarding strategies. Finally, for sustainability practitioners, it identifies wedding door gifts as viable intervention points for reducing short-life consumption and encouraging circular design solutions.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, as a conceptual study, the framework has not been empirically tested within specific Malay wedding contexts or artisan collaborations. Second, while the literature synthesis incorporates Malaysian scholarship and international ICH research, it may not capture the full diversity of regional practices within Malaysia. Third, the framework assumes the feasibility of craft–design collaboration and community governance mechanisms, which may vary depending on economic resources, institutional support, and stakeholder willingness.

Future research should therefore empirically examine the proposed framework through case studies involving artisan communities and wedding industry actors. Comparative regional studies within Malaysia could explore variations in door gift practices and craft integration. Quantitative assessments may evaluate consumer acceptance of craft-based sustainable door gifts, while design-based research could prototype and test product-system innovations informed by the framework. Additionally, longitudinal studies would be valuable in assessing whether craft-based interventions meaningfully enhance transmission and reduce environmental impact over successive wedding cycles.

In conclusion, Malay wedding door gifts represent more than ephemeral celebratory items; they are recurrent ritual expressions situated at the intersection of culture, craft, and consumption. By positioning them as living intangible cultural heritage and by articulating a craft-based design safeguarding model, this study demonstrates how heritage continuity and contemporary innovation can be reconciled. Such reconciliation is essential not only for sustaining cultural meaning but also for ensuring that everyday ritual practices evolve responsibly within modern socio-economic and environmental realities.

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