

**TOWARDS A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AUTOMOTIVE  
DESIGN CURRICULUM: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK  
INTEGRATING LIFESTYLE, AESTHETICS, AND MALAYSIAN  
CULTURAL IDENTITY**

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**Abstract:** Design education in Malaysia's higher education institutions faces a significant curricular gap: automotive and industrial design programmes largely draw on Western aesthetic frameworks that inadequately account for Malaysian cultural values, social identity, and Islamic aesthetic sensibility. This conceptual paper addresses this gap by proposing the Lifestyle–Aesthetic–Design (LAD) Framework, an integrated curriculum model that positions automotive aesthetics as culturally situated knowledge relevant to design teaching. Drawing on aesthetic preference theory (Berlyne, 1971; Hekkert et al., 2003), consumer behaviour models (Ajzen, 1991; Maslow, 1943), and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969), the framework proposes three core constructs, Lifestyle Orientation, Aesthetic Dimensions, and Design Response, mediated by Malaysian-specific cultural variables including collective social identity, Islamic aesthetic sensibility, and modernisation aspiration. The paper identifies three curricular implications for automotive design programmes: integration of culturally situated aesthetic theory, embedding of consumer behaviour and cultural psychology, and repositioning of sustainability as an aesthetic challenge. The LAD Framework provides design educators with a theoretically grounded, empirically testable model for curriculum development in the Malaysian higher education context.

**Keywords:** Automotive design education, design curriculum, aesthetic dimensions, Malaysian culture, conceptual framework, Islamic aesthetics.

## INTRODUCTION

Curriculum development in design higher education is increasingly challenged by the gap between globally standardised design pedagogy and the culturally specific demands of local markets and communities. In Malaysia, automotive and industrial design programmes housed within universities such as Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) are producing graduates who will enter an automotive sector shaped by distinctively Malaysian consumer expectations. However, the theoretical frameworks underpinning design education in these institutions remain largely imported from Western Modernist and East Asian design traditions (Shaari & Ahmad, 2016). This curricular misalignment has practical consequences: graduates may be ill-equipped to design vehicles that genuinely resonate with Malaysian consumers' aesthetic values, cultural identities, and lifestyle aspirations.

The urgency of this problem is amplified by the rapid transformation of Malaysia's automotive landscape. With over 32 million registered vehicles and one of the highest vehicle-to-population ratios in Southeast Asia (Road Transport Department Malaysia [JPJ], 2022), car ownership in Malaysia is deeply intertwined with social status, cultural identity, and personal aspiration. Malaysia recorded a total industry volume of 799,731 vehicles in 2023, the highest in the country's automotive history, and consumer surveys consistently indicate that exterior design aesthetics rank among the top three vehicle purchasing criteria for Malaysian buyers, alongside price and fuel efficiency (Malaysian Automotive Association [MAA], 2023). The government's National Automotive Policy (NAP) 2020 and Low Carbon Mobility Blueprint have further accelerated the transition toward electric vehicles (EVs), introducing new design vocabularies that consumers are associating with modernity and environmental

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responsibility (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry [MITI], 2022). Design educators must equip students to navigate these shifts, yet current curricula rarely incorporate the cultural, behavioural, and sustainability dimensions of automotive aesthetics.

This paper responds to this challenge by proposing the Lifestyle–Aesthetic–Design (LAD) Conceptual Framework, a curriculum model that integrates lifestyle theory, aesthetic preference research, and Malaysian cultural analysis into a coherent pedagogical structure for automotive design education. The framework is grounded in three established theoretical traditions: aesthetic psychology, consumer behaviour theory, and cultural theory. The framework extends them by incorporating Malaysian-specific cultural mediating variables, most notably Islamic aesthetic sensibility and collective social identity, which have not previously been theorised in the automotive design education literature.

The objectives of this paper are: (1) to identify the curricular gap in automotive design education in Malaysian higher education; (2) to review the theoretical foundations relevant to culturally situated design pedagogy; (3) to propose the LAD Framework as a structured curriculum model; and (4) to identify concrete implications for curriculum design, delivery, and assessment in automotive design programmes. The paper is structured as follows: the literature review examines the relevant theoretical and empirical foundations; the framework section presents the LAD Model and its constructs; the implications section translates the framework into curriculum recommendations; the discussion situates the contribution within the broader design education literature; and the conclusion identifies directions for future empirical research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Design Education and Cultural Responsiveness*

The relationship between cultural context and design pedagogy has been a persistent concern in curriculum studies. Cross (2011) argues that design thinking, the cognitive and cultural practices through which designers understand problems and generate solutions, must be grounded in contextual knowledge, including an understanding of the social and cultural meanings that consumer products carry. Lawson (2006) similarly emphasises that design expertise involves not only technical mastery but cultural intelligence, the capacity to read and respond to the symbolic and aesthetic expectations of specific communities. Despite this theoretical consensus, design curricula in Southeast Asian higher education institutions have been slow to embed culturally situated aesthetic theory, continuing to rely on canonical Western design history and Modernist aesthetic principles as their primary theoretical frameworks (Shaari & Ahmad, 2016).

In Malaysia specifically, Shaari and Ahmad (2016) found that design programmes in public universities frequently treat Islamic and Malay aesthetic traditions as supplementary or elective content rather than as foundational theoretical frameworks, despite the fact that these traditions are directly relevant to the cultural contexts in which Malaysian design graduates will practice. This marginalisation of local aesthetic knowledge constitutes a curricular gap that the present paper seeks to address through the LAD Framework.

### *Automotive Aesthetics as Pedagogical Content*

Product aesthetics has been established as a primary driver of consumer evaluation and choice in industrial design research (Bloch, 1995; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). Bloch's (1995) foundational model identifies product aesthetics as a central mediator between design input and consumer response, proposing that aesthetic reactions influence approach and avoidance behaviours, satisfaction, and brand loyalty. Creusen and Schoormans (2005) extended this model cross-culturally, identifying six roles that product appearance plays in consumer judgement: aesthetic, symbolic, functional, ergonomic, attention-drawing, and categorisation. For high-involvement products such as automobiles, the aesthetic and symbolic roles are particularly salient, as consumers invest significant psychological meaning in design attributes such as form, surface finish, proportion, and colour (Desmet & Hekkert, 2007).

Norman's (2004) three-level model of emotional design provides a further foundation for automotive design pedagogy. Norman distinguishes between visceral responses (immediate, pre-cognitive attraction to visual form), behavioural responses (pleasure of interaction), and reflective responses (symbolic meanings and identity implications of ownership). This framework is directly applicable to curriculum design in automotive education:

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students who understand the psychological mechanisms underlying aesthetic preference are better equipped to make design decisions that resonate across diverse consumer segments. Berlyne's (1971) psychobiological aesthetic theory, further operationalised in the MAYA (Most Advanced, Yet Acceptable) model of Hekkert et al. (2003), establishes that the balance between novelty and typicality governs consumer aesthetic preference. This is a principle that has direct instructional value in automotive design studio teaching.

### ***Lifestyle, Consumer Behaviour, and Automotive Design***

Lifestyle has been theorised as a patterned mode of living that reflects and shapes an individual's values, attitudes, and consumption choices (Valentine, 2000). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) provides a behavioural bridge between lifestyle orientation and purchasing action, proposing that intentions are shaped by attitude, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioural control. In Malaysia, the subjective norm component of this model is particularly influential given the collective social structures that characterise Malaysian society across its Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities (Mokhlis, 2009). Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs complements this framework by situating automotive aesthetics within a motivational hierarchy that extends from basic transportation utility to higher-order needs for esteem and self-actualisation, a progression particularly relevant to Malaysia's growing middle class (Dittmar, 1992). Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) further contextualises car ownership as a meaning-making practice through which social identity and cultural affiliation are communicated.

### ***The Malaysian Automotive Aesthetic Context***

Malaysia's automotive market presents a distinctive cultural context. Consumer surveys by the Malaysian Automotive Association (2023) consistently indicate that exterior design is ranked among the top three purchasing criteria for new vehicle buyers, alongside price and fuel efficiency (MAA, 2023). A culturally significant but underexplored dimension is the potential influence of Islamic design values. With approximately 60% of Malaysia's population identifying as Muslim, Islamic aesthetics, historically emphasising geometric order, surface restraint, and organic pattern (Crill, 2015), may shape consumer evaluations of automotive form in ways that existing Western frameworks do not capture. It is important to clarify that Islamic Aesthetic Sensibility, as proposed in the LAD Framework, is not treated as a deterministic cultural attribute but rather as a probabilistic cultural influence: its salience is likely to vary across generations, levels of religious practice, and individual consumer profiles, and it should not be conflated with a homogeneous 'Muslim consumer' stereotype (Mokhlis, 2009). Research on Malaysian consumer behaviour in design-intensive industries has nevertheless noted a tendency to replicate Western theoretical models without adequate cultural adaptation, resulting in findings with limited local validity (Hanafi et al., 2022). This gap is consequential for design education: curricula that seek to prepare students for the Malaysian market are better served by frameworks that account for these cultural specificities while remaining sensitive to intra-cultural diversity.

### ***Research Gaps***

The literature review identifies three primary gaps. First, automotive design aesthetics research is predominantly based on Western European, North American, or Northeast Asian consumer contexts, with limited attention to Southeast Asia (Bloch, 1995; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). Second, the intersection of Islamic aesthetic sensibility, collective identity, and automotive design has not been theorised in the design education literature. Third, the implications of automotive aesthetic research for design curricula in Malaysian higher education have not been systematically addressed. The LAD Framework proposed in this paper directly addresses these three gaps.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Key Theoretical Studies Informing the LAD Framework*

| Author(s)            | Year | Focus                                          | Contribution to LAD Framework                                                                                       |
|----------------------|------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bloch                | 1995 | Product aesthetics and consumer response       | Establishes aesthetics as primary mediator of consumer evaluation; foundational for Aesthetic Dimensions construct. |
| Creusen & Schoormans | 2005 | Roles of product appearance in consumer choice | Six-role typology (aesthetic, symbolic, functional) informs operationalisation of Aesthetic Dimensions.             |

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|                  |      |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Desmet & Hekkert | 2007 | Framework of product experience                                                     | Multi-level experience framework (aesthetic, meaning, emotion) operationalises Aesthetic Dimensions for curricula.                                                                                                                                                         |
| Hekkert et al.   | 2003 | MAYA: Typicality and novelty in aesthetic preference                                | MAYA principle provides instructional basis for teaching novelty–typicality balance in automotive design studio.                                                                                                                                                           |
| Norman           | 2004 | Emotional Design: Visceral, behavioural, reflective levels                          | Three-level model provides pedagogical vocabulary linking visual form to identity; applicable to studio critique.                                                                                                                                                          |
| Ajzen            | 1991 | Theory of Planned Behaviour                                                         | Explains lifestyle–purchase intention link; grounds consumer behaviour module within design curriculum.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Shaari & Ahmad   | 2016 | Islamic design elements in Malaysian design education                               | Identifies marginalisation of Islamic aesthetics in Malaysian design curricula; directly motivates cultural mediating variables.                                                                                                                                           |
| Hanafi et al.    | 2022 | Purchase intention on cars among Malaysian consumers: The role of design aesthetics | Identifies inadequacy of Western frameworks for Empirical study of Malaysian car purchase intention; finds design aesthetics the highest-impact variable among four factors tested, underscoring the centrality of aesthetic dimensions in the Malaysian consumer context. |

Table 1 presents the key theoretical studies informing the LAD Framework. Collectively, these works establish the product aesthetics tradition (Bloch, 1995; Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Desmet & Hekkert, 2007), the aesthetic preference mechanisms applicable to design teaching (Hekkert et al., 2003; Norman, 2004), the consumer behaviour models that bridge lifestyle and purchasing (Ajzen, 1991), and the specifically Malaysian cultural context that motivates the framework's original contributions (Hanafi et al., 2022; Shaari & Ahmad, 2016).

### *The Lifestyle–Aesthetic–Design (LAD) Conceptual Framework*

**Framework Overview.** The LAD Framework, presented in Figure 1, proposes that effective automotive design curriculum in Malaysia must be structured around the dynamic interaction of three core pedagogical constructs: Lifestyle Orientation, Aesthetic Dimensions, and Design Response. These constructs are mediated by three Malaysian-specific cultural variables, Collective Social Identity, Islamic Aesthetic Sensibility, and Modernisation Aspiration, and produce four curricular implications that can directly inform programme structure, content delivery, and assessment design in automotive design education.

**Figure 1**  
*The Lifestyle–Aesthetic–Design (LAD) Conceptual Framework*

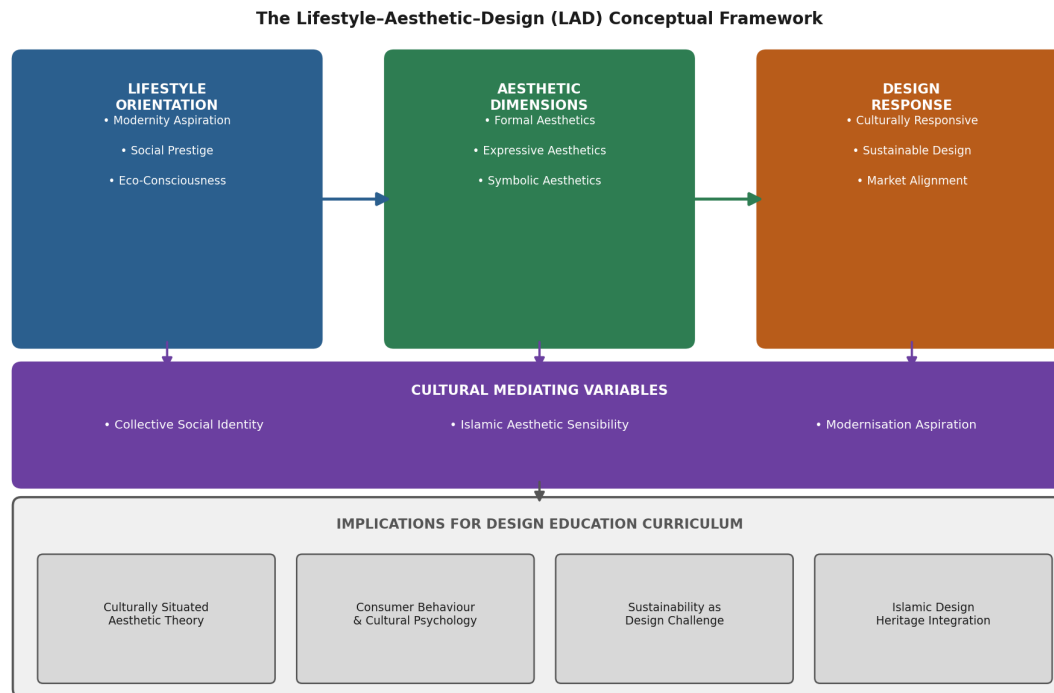


Figure 1. The Lifestyle–Aesthetic–Design (LAD) Conceptual Framework

**Construct 1: Lifestyle Orientation.** Lifestyle Orientation refers to the patterned values, social aspirations, and cultural identities that shape how Malaysian consumers relate to and evaluate automotive design. Drawing on Valentine's (2000) lifestyle segmentation model, this construct encompasses three dimensions: (a) Modernity Aspiration, the degree to which consumers seek vehicles that signal contemporary global design values; (b) Social Prestige Orientation, the extent to which vehicle choice is motivated by the desire to signal social status within Malaysian cultural norms; and (c) Environmental Consciousness, the emerging consumer orientation toward sustainable and eco-responsible vehicle choices, reinforced by the NAP 2020 policy framework (MITI, 2022). For design curricula, this construct provides the analytical lens through which students learn to segment consumer populations and align design briefs with specific lifestyle profiles.

**Construct 2: Aesthetic Dimensions.** Aesthetic Dimensions encompass the formal and sensory properties of automotive design that consumers evaluate during the purchase decision process. Following Desmet and Hekkert (2007), this construct is organised around three levels: (a) Formal Aesthetics, visual properties such as proportion, surface quality, colour, and silhouette; (b) Expressive Aesthetics, the personality and emotional character communicated through design, including sportiness, elegance, and robustness; and (c) Symbolic Aesthetics, the cultural and social meanings that design features carry within a specific consumer context. In automotive design studio teaching, this three-level taxonomy provides a structured vocabulary for design critique and reflection, enabling students to evaluate their work at formal, expressive, and cultural levels simultaneously.

**Construct 3: Design Response.** Design Response refers to the automotive design output as shaped by the interplay of consumer Lifestyle Orientation and Aesthetic Dimensions. The LAD Framework proposes that Design Response is most effective when it reflects an accurate understanding of local Lifestyle Orientation and Aesthetic Dimensions, rather than uncritically replicating global design trends. This construct has direct curricular implications: design projects and studio briefs should require students to demonstrate how their design decisions are grounded in an explicit analysis of the target consumer lifestyle and aesthetic expectations, producing graduates capable of contextually appropriate design responses that balance global competitiveness with local cultural resonance.

**Cultural Mediating Variables.** A distinctive feature of the LAD Framework is its incorporation of three Malaysian cultural mediating variables. First, Collective Social Identity reflects the role of family, community, and ethnic group norms in shaping individual aesthetic evaluations in Malaysian society (Mokhlis, 2009). Second, Islamic Aesthetic Sensibility proposes that the visual design preferences of Malaysia's Muslim-majority population may be influenced by Islamic aesthetic traditions emphasising geometric order, surface restraint, and organic pattern (Crill, 2015; Shaari & Ahmad, 2016). This variable constitutes the most original contribution of the LAD Framework, as Islamic aesthetic sensibility has not previously been operationalised in the automotive design or design education literature. Third, Modernisation Aspiration reflects the tension between traditional cultural values and cosmopolitan modernity that characterises consumer behaviour in rapidly developing economies. Within design curricula, these variables should be taught as explicit analytical categories that students apply when conducting consumer research and developing culturally responsive design proposals.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGN EDUCATION CURRICULUM

### *Curricular Implication 1: Culturally Situated Aesthetic Theory*

Design programmes in Malaysian higher education should incorporate culturally situated aesthetic theory as a foundational component of their curricula, rather than treating it as supplementary or elective content. Currently, aesthetic theory in Malaysian design programmes draws heavily on Western Modernist traditions, with limited attention to the aesthetic values embedded in Malaysian cultural traditions, including Islamic geometric design, Malay visual arts, and vernacular craft (Shaari & Ahmad, 2016). Integrating these traditions into automotive design education, structured through the Symbolic Aesthetics dimension of the LAD Framework, has the potential to equip students with a richer aesthetic vocabulary and a more nuanced understanding of local consumer expectations. Practically, this implies the inclusion of dedicated modules on Malaysian design heritage, Islamic visual principles, and cross-cultural aesthetic analysis within the automotive design curriculum.

### *Curricular Implication 2: Consumer Behaviour and Cultural Psychology*

Consumer behaviour and cultural psychology should be embedded as core knowledge domains within automotive design programmes, not confined to elective modules or treated as exclusively marketing-discipline content. The LAD Framework demonstrates that effective automotive design in the Malaysian context requires an understanding of how lifestyle orientations, social norms, and cultural identities shape aesthetic evaluation. Design educators can draw on the theoretical frameworks reviewed in this paper, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Norman's emotional design model, and Symbolic Interactionism, to structure curricula that develop students' analytical competencies alongside their technical design skills. Specifically, design studio projects should require students to conduct structured consumer lifestyle analysis as a precondition for initiating the design process, establishing the habit of market-grounded design thinking from the earliest stages of undergraduate education.

### *Curricular Implication 3: Sustainability as an Aesthetic Challenge*

Design education programmes should engage more systematically with sustainability not only as an engineering or environmental challenge but as an aesthetic and cultural challenge. The growing consumer interest in EV aesthetics in Malaysia, evidenced by increasing EV registrations following the NAP 2020 incentives (MITI, 2022), signals that students must be prepared to design vehicles in which environmental responsibility and aesthetic appeal are seamlessly integrated. Cross's (2011) argument that design thinking must be grounded in contextual knowledge is particularly relevant: students who understand the cultural and motivational dimensions of sustainable design are better positioned to generate solutions that achieve both environmental and aesthetic goals. Curricular integration of the Environmental Consciousness dimension of the Lifestyle Orientation construct, for example through project briefs requiring students to develop sustainable vehicle concepts that maintain aesthetic appeal for specific Malaysian consumer lifestyle segments, would operationalise this implication directly.

### *Curricular Implication 4: Islamic Design Heritage Integration*

Given the significance of Islamic Aesthetic Sensibility as a cultural mediating variable in the LAD Framework, automotive design curricula in Malaysian institutions should formally incorporate Islamic design heritage as a source of aesthetic knowledge and formal vocabulary. This does not imply the direct literal application of Islamic motifs to vehicle surfaces but rather the development of students' literacy in the aesthetic principles underlying Islamic design, geometric order, pattern modularity, proportional harmony, and surface restraint, and their capacity to translate these principles into contemporary automotive design language. This integration has the potential to

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distinguish Malaysian automotive design education from comparable programmes and may support the development of graduates with a differentiated professional identity, grounded in both global design competencies and local cultural intelligence.

## PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR EMPIRICAL VALIDATION OF THE LAD FRAMEWORK

### *Research Design*

The LAD Framework, as a conceptual contribution, does not report primary data. However, the framework is designed to be empirically tested, and the following proposed methodology is provided to facilitate replication and extension by future researchers. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) is recommended, in which quantitative survey data is collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative in-depth interviews that contextualise and deepen the quantitative findings.

### *Population, Sample, and Sampling*

The target population for the proposed empirical study consists of registered vehicle owners in Malaysia aged 18 years and above. Stratified random sampling will ensure representation across income brackets, age groups, ethnicity, and geographic regions. A minimum sample size of 300 respondents is recommended based on power analysis considerations for the multivariate statistical techniques proposed (Hair et al., 2019).

### *Instrumentation and Analysis*

The quantitative phase will employ a structured questionnaire incorporating validated scales. Aesthetic Dimensions will be measured using a modified Aesthetic Experience Questionnaire (AEQ) (Leder et al., 2004), adapted for the automotive context and supplemented with items addressing Symbolic Aesthetics. Lifestyle Orientation will be measured using scales adapted from Valentine's (2000) Lifestyle Segmentation Model and the Environmental Self-Identity Scale (van der Werff et al., 2013). Content validity will be assessed through expert review; internal consistency will be evaluated using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Data will be analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) via AMOS or SmartPLS to test the hypothesised relationships among LAD constructs. The qualitative phase will employ semi-structured interviews with 20–30 purposively selected respondents, analysed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), to contextualise and deepen the quantitative findings.

## DISCUSSION

The LAD Framework advances the design education curriculum literature in three respects. First, by situating the analysis explicitly within the Malaysian higher education context, the framework responds to the documented gap in culturally specific curriculum research for automotive and industrial design programmes (Hanafi et al., 2022; Shaari & Ahmad, 2016). The incorporation of Islamic Aesthetic Sensibility as a cultural mediating variable is a particularly original contribution. Islamic aesthetic principles have been extensively studied in architecture, textile design, and decorative arts (Crill, 2015). However, their application to automotive design education remains unexplored, a gap that is notable given the demographic profile of Malaysia's consumer market and the composition of its design graduate workforce.

Second, the framework's integration of multiple theoretical traditions, aesthetic psychology (Berlyne, 1971; Hekkert et al., 2003), consumer behaviour theory (Ajzen, 1991; Maslow, 1943), and cultural theory (Blumer, 1969), provides a more comprehensive curriculum scaffold than any single theoretical perspective can offer. This integrative approach is consistent with Cross's (2011) argument that design education must draw on multiple disciplinary traditions to develop the complex competencies required of professional designers.

Third, the framework's explicit articulation of four curricular implications – culturally situated aesthetic theory, consumer behaviour and cultural psychology, sustainability as aesthetic challenge, and Islamic design heritage integration – translates theoretical insights into actionable curriculum development recommendations. This translation from theory to pedagogical practice is relatively rare in the design education literature, which tends to theorise design knowledge without providing structured guidance for curriculum implementation (Lawson, 2006).

From the perspective of JuKu's interdisciplinary focus on curriculum and teaching, the LAD Framework demonstrates how domain-specific research, in this case, automotive design aesthetics, can be translated into curriculum knowledge through the systematic application of consumer behaviour theory, cultural analysis, and aesthetic psychology. This translation process itself constitutes a model of curriculum theorising that may be applicable across other design disciplines and cultural contexts in the Asia-Pacific region.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Several directions for future research follow from the LAD Framework. Most immediately, the proposed empirical study should be conducted to test the hypothesised relationships among the framework's constructs and generate statistical evidence to evaluate the model's validity and explanatory power. Of particular interest is the empirical operationalisation of the Islamic Aesthetic Sensibility variable, which will require the development and validation of a purpose-built measurement instrument.

A curriculum intervention study that embeds the LAD Framework within an automotive design programme and evaluates its effects on student aesthetic literacy, cultural sensitivity, and design quality would provide direct evidence of the framework's pedagogical utility. Comparative extension of the LAD Model to other ASEAN automotive markets, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, would establish whether the Malaysian-specific cultural variables generalise across the region or require market-specific adaptation. Finally, the rapid development of EV design aesthetics presents a timely research opportunity: as EVs introduce new formal vocabularies, investigating how Malaysian consumers evaluate these designs through the lens of their cultural values and lifestyle orientations is both practically important and theoretically compelling.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed the Lifestyle–Aesthetic–Design (LAD) Conceptual Framework as a culturally responsive curriculum model for automotive design education in Malaysian higher education institutions. The framework addresses a significant gap in design education curriculum: the absence of culturally situated aesthetic theory, Malaysian-specific consumer behaviour analysis, and Islamic design heritage content in automotive design programmes. By integrating aesthetic psychology, consumer behaviour theory, and cultural theory, and by incorporating three Malaysian-specific cultural mediating variables, Collective Social Identity, Islamic Aesthetic Sensibility, and Modernisation Aspiration, the LAD Framework offers design educators a theoretically grounded and empirically testable model for curriculum development that is both locally relevant and internationally rigorous.

The four curricular implications identified – integration of culturally situated aesthetic theory, embedding of consumer behaviour and cultural psychology, repositioning of sustainability as an aesthetic challenge, and formal integration of Islamic design heritage – provide concrete, actionable guidance for programme directors and curriculum developers in Malaysian design education. The framework is offered as a conceptual foundation for an empirical research programme that will test, refine, and extend its propositions. It is anticipated that this research programme will contribute to both the international literature on design education curriculum and the practical development of automotive design programmes in Malaysia and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

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