

Panggung

Volume 36

Number 2. Visual and Performative Semiotics in Contemporary Art and Cultural Practices: Article 4
Signs, Embodiment, and Identity across Tradition and Screen Media

June 1, 2026

Design Ethnography In Developing Batik Motifs as Village Visual Identity: A Study of Ketapanrame Village, East Java

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Recommended Citation

Juniati, N., Megawati, V., Hananto, H., Benarkah, N. Design Ethnography In Developing Batik Motifs as Village Visual Identity: A Study of Ketapanrame Village, East Java. *Panggung*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://jurnal.isbi.ac.id/index.php/panggung>

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how design ethnography can be used to develop *batik* motifs as a visual identity for a tourism village. The research was conducted in Ketapanrame village, East Java, using a qualitative ethnographic approach combined with design thinking. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation across five iterative development cycles from 2019 to 2022, with follow-up observations until 2025. The study demonstrates how ethnographic insights into daily practices, coffee culture, village landscapes, and clothing habits were systematically translated into visual design through mood boards, prototyping, product-use evaluation, reflection, and iterative adaptation. The findings reveal that *batik* motifs function not only as visual products but also as cultural artifacts embedded in social practices, as reflected in their adoption in village uniforms, *udeng*, *sarongs*, home décor, and tableware. This study contributes by proposing a model of artwork creation that translates ethnographic data into design outcomes through an iterative design thinking process, highlighting how visual identity is formed through social adoption rather than purely aesthetic considerations.

Keywords:

Design ethnography, *batik* motifs, tourism villages, human-centered design.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism villages in Indonesia have developed significantly, particularly following the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI) program, which encourages villages to develop their local potential, strengthen economic capacity, and foster collaboration among stakeholders. Within this context, visual identity plays a crucial role in differentiating tourism villages and supporting destination branding strategies.

Ketapanrame village, located in Trawas district, Mojokerto regency, is one of the tourism villages that has experienced rapid development. Despite its achievements at the regional and national levels and the success of its village-owned enterprise (BUMDesa) (Fatmawati & Prathama, 2021, p. 4816), initial observations in 2019 revealed the absence of a distinctive visual identity that differentiates the village from others in the same area. This condition highlights a fundamental issue: tourism village development does not always coincide with the development of a strong, culturally grounded visual identity.

Previous studies on tourism village development have emphasized destination branding through community empowerment, the promotion of local values, and participatory management (Andreani et al., 2025, p. 225). In this context, *batik*, as a material culture, has the potential to represent social practices and cultural values while strengthening village branding (Setiawan & Widjaja, 2025, p. 993; Suherlan et al., 2023, p. 3750). Historically, *batik* has developed through both traditional and contemporary contexts. While classical *batik* followed *keraton* standards, contemporary *batik* has evolved more flexibly, influenced by social needs and market dynamics (Wirasanti & Mahirta, 2024, p. 599). *Batik* motifs—ranging from geometric, flora, and fauna to figurative forms—function not only as decorative elements but also as cultural identity markers across Indonesian visual traditions (Kudiya, 2019, p. 8).

Understanding the development of *batik* motifs in contemporary contexts requires an approach that integrates cultural, social, economic, artistic, and user perspectives. Ethnography enables researchers to explore social practices, habits, and meanings through direct engagement with communities (Grehenson, 2010; Sidiq in Mahendra et al., 2024, p. 160). This approach is rooted in a phenomenological perspective that emphasizes the relationship between culture, human behavior, and meaning construction (Zuchdi & Afifah, 2019, p. 84). Ethnographic inquiry allows researchers to uncover the deeper cultural logic behind everyday practices, including how objects are used, interpreted, and integrated into social life.

In parallel, design thinking provides a structured yet flexible framework for transforming insights into design solutions through stages such as defining problems, conducting research, ideating, prototyping, implementing, and evaluating (Ambrose & Harris, 2010, p. 33). Although initially conceptualized as a linear process, design thinking has been reconceptualized as an iterative and reflective practice that evolves through continuous interaction with users and context (Felder et al., 2023, p. 2). This perspective aligns with Cross (2023, pp. 8, 17), who argues that designers develop an understanding of problems and solutions simultaneously through

adaptive processes that respond to users' practices and meanings.

From the perspective of design anthropology, design is not merely a functional or aesthetic activity but is embedded in social and cultural practices (Clarke, 2010, p. 78; 2023, pp. 3, 10). This perspective emphasizes human-centered approaches that engage directly in everyday life. Furthermore, the more-than-human-centered design approach situates design within broader socio-cultural and ecological interdependencies, allowing innovation while maintaining cultural continuity (Rosén et al., 2022, pp. 21, 25). These perspectives highlight the potential integration of ethnography and design thinking to bridge cultural insights and design production.

Various ethnographic studies on *batik* and cultural products in Indonesia have revealed strong interconnections between motifs, cultural values, workspaces, and production processes (Hudaepa & Murwaningrum, 2020; Kumala Widyasari et al., 2021). Other studies have examined motif patterns and sources of inspiration within local environments (Machdalena et al., 2023) and explored cultural structures through approaches such as ethnomathematics (Permita et al., 2022, p. 22). While these studies provide important insights into cultural meaning and context, they generally remain at the interpretive level and do not explain how ethnographic findings are operationalized within design processes to produce new visual forms.

This limitation indicates a research gap in understanding the mechanism by which ethnographic insights transform into design outcomes, particularly in the context of developing *batik* motifs as a visual identity. Moreover, existing studies rarely address how such design outcomes are socially adopted and integrated into everyday practices, which is essential for establishing a sustainable visual identity in tourism villages.

This study addresses this gap by examining how ethnographic data are translated into *batik* motif design through an iterative design thinking process in Ketapanrame village from 2019 to 2022, with follow-up observations until 2025. The study focuses on how design emerges from social practices and how visual identity is formed through processes of community adoption.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with an ethnographic approach to examine the development of batik motifs in Ketapanrame village from 2019 to 2022. The researcher collected data through literature review, interviews, documentation, and participatory observations. Participatory observation was employed to enable the researcher to engage directly in community activities and identify patterns that provided additional insights into the social and cultural context of the study (Zuchdi & Afifah, 2019, p. 84).

The research informants consisted of members of the Ketapanrame village community and were grouped into four categories: village officials, administrators of BUMDesa Mutiara Welirang, tourists, and residents living around the Sumber Gempong tourist area in Juwok hamlet.

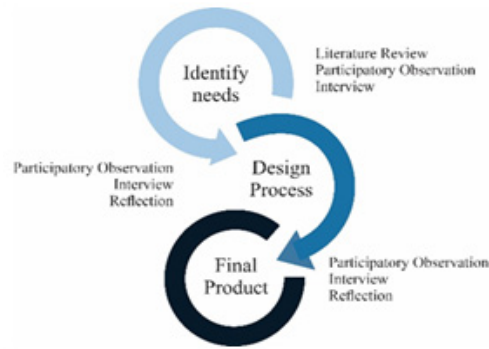


Figure 1. Cycle design methods based on ethnographic data and adaptation of design thinking

The research design combined ethnographic approaches and design thinking, grounded in the seven-step theory of Ambrose and Harris (2010). The researcher combined the first three stages into one: **Define brief** → **Research background** → **Ideate solution**, merging them into a **single ethnographic stage** through participatory observation, interviews, and reflection. Through participatory observation, the researcher acted simultaneously as a researcher and designer, conducting interviews and observations while engaging directly in the activities of the community members who were both participants and users of the design outcomes. The creative process of motif stylization involved an ethnographic stage spanning five cycles over four years (2019 to 2022).

Each cycle consisted of three stages: (1) Need identification through a literature review, participatory observation, and interviews; (2) Design development, in which ethnographic data were analyzed and translated into design prototypes prior to mass production; and (3) Final product development.

The researcher, as a designer, explored the use of these final products through participatory observation, interviews, and reflection on their success in accordance with, or not, the identification of community needs.

Each cycle began with the identification of community needs during the researcher's design assistance program in Ketapanrame village, particularly the development of distinctive batik motifs to support the outputs of key annual programs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The name of Ketapanrame is derived from two words meaning "hermitage" and "crowd." In the past, the villagers and wider community recognized this area as a hermitage centered on a *punden* that attracted many hermits. This historical narrative has been preserved by the community as a symbolic reminder of the village's origins, while the *punden* has continued to function as a ritual site passed down across generations. The village community also views it

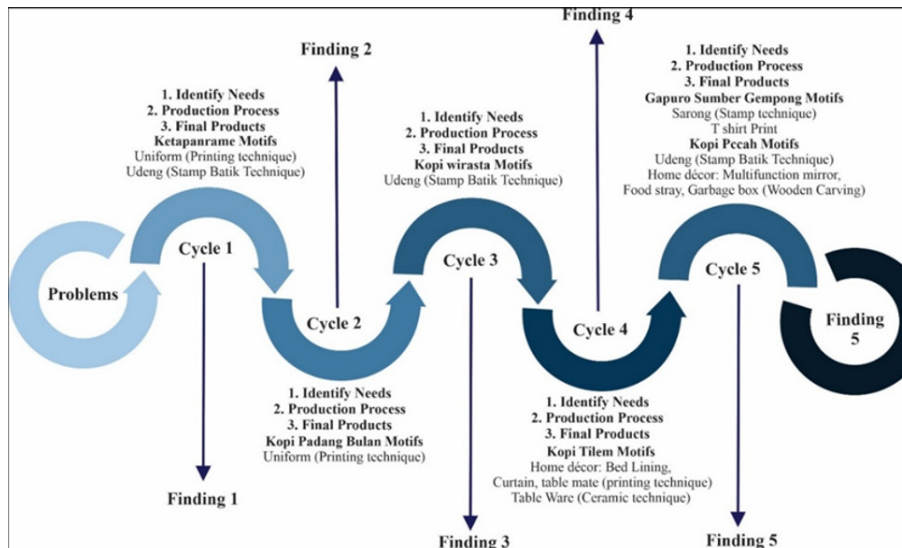


Figure 2. Adaptation of ethnographic cycles in development batik motifs, Ketapanrame Village

as a sacred *punden* that has long been part of the history of Ketapanrame village’s formation. Furthermore, the researcher’s role as a designer, carried out through a series of collaborative design activities, contributed to the development of batik motifs distinctive to the village. The research data presented includes the community’s needs, the use of *batik* motifs, philosophical meanings, and the application of the results from each activity cycle.

The research team provided mentoring and design assistance for tourism development programs in Ketapanrame village from 2019 to 2022. The development of *batik* motifs in Ketapanrame village began with the need for *batik* cloth featuring unique, specialty motifs for the uniforms of the village officials. Until 2022, the developed *batik* motifs were applied not only to uniforms but also to *sarongs*, *udeng*, and home decorations and interior products for guesthouses and homestays in Sukorame hamlet, Ketapanrame village, Trawas district, Mojokerto regency, East Java.

The adaptation of the design method used in each cycle of *batik* motif development in Ketapanrame village is illustrated in Figure 2.

The five development cycles illustrated in Figure 2 do not merely represent a chronological sequence of design activities but reveal an iterative and adaptive design mechanism grounded in ethnographic engagement. Each cycle consists of three interconnected stages: identifying needs, the production process, and final products, which continuously evolve through feedback from real-world use contexts.

The process begins with problem identification rooted in ethnographic observation, in which community practices, habits, and cultural contexts serve as the primary sources of design insight. This stage demonstrates that design problems are not predefined but emerge from social interaction and lived experiences.

The second stage, production and design development, reflects the role of design thinking as a mechanism for translating ethnographic insights into visual forms. Ethnographic data are transformed into visual forms through stylization, material selection, and production techniques such as stamping and printing. This transformation is not linear but iterative, as each cycle reinterprets previous findings into new design variations. The third stage, final product realization, is not the end of the process but a point of evaluation. The use of products in real contexts generates new feedback, which becomes the basis for the next cycle. This feedback loop indicates that design evolves through continuous negotiation between the designer's intention and the user's practice.

Across the five cycles, Findings 1–5 demonstrate a gradual shift from the identification of community needs to the establishment of batik motifs as a sustainable visual identity for the village.

Initial design experimentation (Cycle 1)

This progression shows that visual identity is not produced in a single design phase but emerges through repeated cycles of interaction, evaluation, and adaptation. The diagram, therefore, represents a dynamic model of ethnography-driven design, where cultural insights are continuously translated into design outcomes and validated through community use.

The researcher, as a designer, developed and stylized *batik* motifs to meet the uniform needs of village officials, the Village council, and BUMDesa Mutiara Welirang. Interviews revealed users' preference for motifs that represent Mojokerto while remaining distinct from those of other villages. Observations indicated that this distinctiveness derives from Ketapanrame's local wisdom, leading to contemporary motifs applied to *udeng* and men's *batik* shirts. To fulfill the demand for 250 meters of cloth and 50 *udengs*, the motifs were applied to the headcloths using copper stamps. For shirt production, the researcher used screen printing with *plankan* (large screens) to reduce costs compared to copper stamps.

The Ketapanrame motif (EC00201975220) consists of a border and a main element. The designer deformed floral ornaments in temple carvings in Mojokerto and the Surya Majapahit symbol to stylize the main motif. The border motif was derived from the stylization of Piala Ghanjuran, a tourism icon symbolizing achievement and recognition. Designers applied this motif as a *tumpal* in *sarongs*, as a cloth border, and as an edge ornament for men's *udeng*. (Megawati et al., 2019).

This typical *batik* motif was applied to shirt uniforms worn at village formal events, and the motif became mandatory from the end of 2019 to 2021. However, users rarely wore the *udeng* and remain reluctant to adopt it despite informal socialization.

Interviews and further observations in 2020 indicated a sense of unfamiliarity with wearing *udeng*, as they are accustomed to wearing a *songkok* (a skullcap). For villagers, wearing *udeng* is more difficult, even with the tutorial. They expressed a preference for ready-to-wear *udeng*.



Figure 3. (Left) Development of the border motif, (Right) Development of the Middle motif.
(Megawati et al., 2019)

Product-use evaluations showed that people rarely wore the *udeng*, which hinders the formation of this habit. To address this issue, the designer team served **as role models** by consistently wearing the *udeng* during visits to Ketapanrame and pairing it with both casual and formal attire to demonstrate its flexibility and cultural respect.

Contextual integration into daily practices (Cycle 2–3)

In 2021, the tourism development policy prioritized the development of facilities and infrastructure to support Sumber Gempong rice field tourism as a new destination. To support tourism development in Sumber Gempong, the research team seeks to improve service quality at Juwok homestay in Sukorame hamlet, near the Sumber Gempong rice fields. Juwok homestay provides a competitive alternative to the many hotels, guesthouses, and inns in Trawas. It offers tourists opportunities to interact with villagers while enjoying local food and drinks and the village atmosphere. Participatory observation, interviews, meetings, and village activities identified the *sarong* as an essential item of daily wear, particularly for male residents, who wear it with loose pants in agricultural settings.

Based on this finding, the designer team developed *batik* motifs for *sarongs* and *udeng* by stylizing local wisdom into ornamental forms, including coffee plants on the slopes of Mount Welirang, coffee beans associated with Kopi Banggoel by BUMDesa Mutiara Welirang, the rice field landscape of Sumber Gempong in Sukorame hamlet, and the Padang Bulan festival as a cultural event featuring Banggoel coffee.

Based on the conclusions described earlier, the design team compiled a mood board, an arrangement of inspirational images made using the collage technique. The designer drew keywords from the mood board: the atmosphere of the night of the moon and the tranquility of enjoying brewed coffee. The designer depicted colors, tranquility, and a full-moon night, all drawn from the mood board.

The designer named these colors based on an online color search website developed by



Figure 4. The Mood board

(Mood board was made based on the image in www.pinterest.com, 2021)



Figure 5. Kopi Wirasta motif (Juniati et al., 2021)

Mehta Chirag (2007). The designer used a mood board continuously as a guide in creating *batik* motifs during activities in Ketapanrame village.

The mood board-based development process produced the Kopi Padang Bulan motif (EC00202136001). This motif drew inspiration from the Piala Ghanjaran monument in Ghanjaran Park, the Banggoel coffee plant, and the village's local potential. Designers created it to support the Padang Bulan coffee festival, held every full moon, to revive tourism in Ketapanrame village after the Covid-19 pandemic. (Juniati et al., 2021). The Kopi Padang Bulan motif, applied by screen printing, is now used on the uniforms worn at every village formal event and has become mandatory for the village council and BUMDesa Mutiara Welirang.

Designers developed the other motif, kopi Wirasta motif (EC00202180134) from a mood board, stylized the coffee bean shapes and leaves with bold lines, and added a full moon symbol. This motif represented Banggoel coffee as a signature commodity of Ketapanrame



Figure 6. Ketapanrame tourism guide with Kopi Wirasta motif
(Photo by Juniati, December 12th 2021)



Figure 7. Udeng as Merchandise for guests at events held by Ketapanrame Village
(Photo by Juniati, December 12th 2021)

village, suitable for both casual and formal settings, while the strong lines convey philosophical meanings of strength and constancy.

Designers initially created the Kopi Wirasta motif for an udeng as a distinctive element of Ketapanrame style. Because the motif allowed multidirectional and ondo-ende (alternating arrangements), they applied it to shirt fabrics, sarongs, and jarik (batik cloth).

Diversification into multiple product forms (Cycle 4),

The Kopi Tilem motif (EC00202144360), inspired by coffee beans and leaves, is arranged in an alternating pattern on a dark-and-light background (*ondo-ende*) resembling a chessboard. This motif represents Ketapanrame's typical Banggoel coffee, a drink enjoyed during recreation and family togetherness after activities throughout the day. (Juniati et al., 2021).

The Kopi Tilem motif reflects the philosophy of enjoying coffee as a form of relaxation before bedtime, to support the quality of rest and readiness for the next day. The designer developed the Kopi Tilem motif for bedding and home décor applications.

The team produced the Kopi Tilem motif using screen printing to reduce costs and improve efficiency. They applied this motif to bed linen and home décor items such as curtains and tablecloths.



Figure 8. The Kopi tilem motif appears in two colors: Burnt Umber (#8A3324) and Elm (#1E8B72).
(Juniati et al., 2021)



Figure 9. Curtains with patchwork, plain fabric, and Coffee tile motif fabric.
(Photo by Juniati, October 22nd 2022)

Designers further simplified the Kopi Tilem motif for tableware at Sumber Gempong guesthouse to enhance service standards. The tableware served not only practical functions but also acted as a display medium. The sculpture, featuring coffee bean and leaf elements, created visual appeal and promoted Ketapanrame's coffee tourism and local products.

These tableware items have Industrial Design certificates: glasses (A00202200132), coffee cups (A00202200133), bowls (A00202104261), and plates (A00202104260). The village management decided to mass-produce them to support services at Griya Tetedan café and to complement guest merchandise.

Follow-up participatory observations showed that the café primarily uses the coffee cups, while staff reserve the other items for special guests, welcome drink sets at the guest house, and hampers for village events.

The F&B development assistance program for tourism actors in Ketapanrame village provided complete serving equipment, including coffee cups. Initially, staff served coffee in these coffee cups as part of the standard treat. After several months, however, serving practices changed. Staff often place the cups on mismatched coasters because visitors frequently move or replace the original placemats based on their drinking habits. Observations and follow-up interviews confirm that this practice reflects visitor behavior rather than the competence of the café staff at Griya Tetedan Sumber Gempong.



Figure 10. Coffee cups were among the souvenirs at an event held by Ketapanrame Village.
(Photo by Juniati, December 12th 2022)

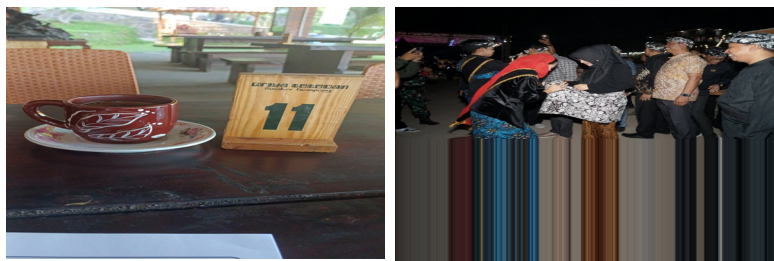


Figure 11. Improper use of a coffee cup and coaster.
(Photo by Juniati, September 10th 2023)

Stabilization of visual identity through social adoption (Cycle 5).

The Gapuro Sumber Gempong motif (EC00202282277) stylized various forms of coffee beans and incorporated the Sumber Gempong gate icon. Designers combined this motif with full moon elements, coffee leaves, and diverse *isen-isen* ornaments. The Designer arranged the motif in a single direction, making it suitable for the *tumpal* of *sarongs* and the edges of *jarik*, and adapted it for T-shirts through screen printing. The Kopi Pecah motif (EC00202282278) stylized Arabica and Robusta coffee beans from Ketapanrame. Designers used outline and blocking techniques to depict the beans' cross-sections. (Ramadhani et al., 2022).

Designers adapted the Kopi Pecah motif to creative products, including a carved tray (A00202300160) and a multifunctional wall clock (A00202300161), both of which obtained Industrial Design certificates. The wall clock functioned as a timepiece and a reflective surface via a mirror element, while the tray served to carry plates or display local culinary products. The carved *batik* motifs emphasized coffee as the primary identity and as a potential souvenir of Ketapanrame village, Trawas, Mojokerto.

Field findings show that the development of *batik* motifs in Ketapanrame village does not begin with the exploration of visual forms alone, but with the exploration of the community's daily practices through participatory observation and in-depth interviews. The study interpreted residents sipping coffee directly from the coaster not as a misuse of tools but as a cultural practice reflecting social habits of coffee enjoyment (Figure 11).

This material practice became essential ethnographic data for understanding the community's cultural context. The study viewed ethnographic data not merely as information but as representations of relationships among people, objects, and social habits that shape society. This perspective emerged from the shift in the coffee cup's meaning from simple F&B equipment to a symbol of coffee tourism practices in Sumber Gempong. Unlike most *Batik* studies that stop at symbolic meanings, this study further processed ethnographic findings through design thinking.

The designer compiled the mood board from observations of the night atmosphere of *Padang Bulan* (full moon), the landscape of rice fields, Banggoel coffee, and residents' habits, serving as a bridge between cultural data and the creation of visual motifs. This process showed that design thinking functioned as a translation mechanism, transforming social practice into visual inspiration, ornamental forms, and products adopted by the community.

A mood board isn't a visual aid; it's a conceptual tool that translates cultural context into design language. The researcher, as a designer, applied a human-centered design as an element by combining ethnographic approaches with design thinking.

The ethnographic approach to every product's manufacturing process enables exploration of information over time, in every detail. The results of this research were inspired by cultural, natural, and economic icons in Ketapanrame village. They were distinctive *batik* motifs, such as kopi Padang Bulan, Kopi Wirasta, Kopi Tilem, Gapuro Sumber Gempong, and Kopi pecah. Five cycles from 2019 to 2022 show that the design process does not proceed linearly, as Felder et al. (2023) stated. Each motif is born of an evaluation of the previous use of motifs in society.

The use of motifs on village uniforms, merchandise, tableware, and souvenirs indicates a continuous feedback loop between designers/researchers and the community. This process demonstrated the character of iterative, reflective design thinking, in which understanding of problems and solutions develops simultaneously in response to the user's context.

The study found initial community resistance to *batik*-patterned *udeng*. Forcing the design to be treated as a purely visual product would likely have led to rejection. Instead, the research team used participatory education and role modeling, which led the community to accept the *udeng* and adopt it as a cultural symbol when welcoming guests. This change demonstrated human-centered design in practice, where designers adapted to users' habits, comfort, and social acceptance, making design part of everyday life rather than merely a visual artifact.

Participatory observations in Ketapanrame village, most recently in September 2024, showed that the developed *batik* motifs had become a village icon and fostered new cultural practices. Village officials, village council, BUMDesa management, and tourism guides began wearing the *udeng* daily, while the *udeng* and cloth also served as symbols of respect during the Kopi Padang Bulan event. The community adopted this practice as a customary tradition for welcoming guests at major village events and for daily wear.

The community's acceptance of Ketapanrame's *batik* motif was evident in its use during



Figure 12. The activity of wearing Udeng and batik, which is currently mandatory for guests in Ketapanrame Village.

(Photo by Juniati, September 19th 2024).



Figure 13. A contemporary Kebaya collection by local designers using Kopi Wirasta motifs

(Photo taken from Instagram @_decanella_, 2025)

village events. Producers consistently favored the kopi Wirasta and Kopi Pecah motifs for shawls and udeng. The design team chose the *batik* stamping technique because it offered low cost and rapid production.

In 2025, local designers incorporated these ornaments into kebaya collections, showing that they extended beyond textiles into everyday fashion style practices. Documentation in Figure 13 showed that the community had accepted these *batik* motifs as visual expressions of Ketapanrame' s cultural identity, appreciated even beyond the village.

Designers applied these motifs to a range of products, including *batik* fabrics, village uniforms, home décor, and tableware. The ethnographic approach focused not only on exploring visual motifs but also on embedding local culture into the resulting creative products. For the researcher, acting as the designer, participatory engagement with users through in-depth interviews, documentation, and direct observation was essential for generating rich and accurate design data. The combination of ethnographic approaches and design thinking for product design is highly useful.

The proposed model of artwork creation is derived from empirical findings across five

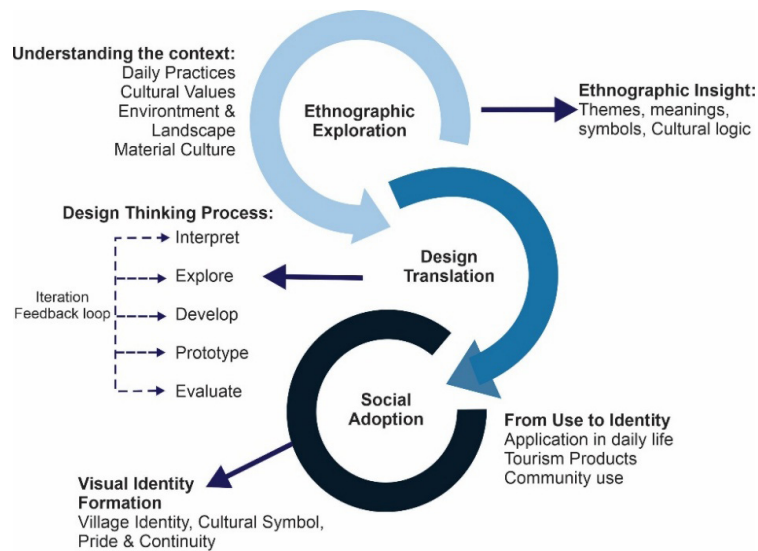


Figure 14. Model of Artwork Creation based on Design Ethnography

iterative development cycles conducted between 2019 and 2022. Each cycle provided insights into how ethnographic data were translated into design outcomes and subsequently adopted by the community. Rather than representing each cycle individually, the model synthesizes recurring patterns across cycles, particularly the continuous interaction among ethnographic exploration, design translation, and social adoption. This abstraction allows the model to function not only as a description of the Ketapanrame case but also as a conceptual framework applicable to other contexts of design ethnography.

The findings of this study showed that the design ethnography approach not only explored the cultural meaning of *batik* motifs but also provided a conceptual framework for processing cultural data, using design thinking, into visual solutions that are accepted and practiced by the community. Thus, this study filled a gap in previous *batik* studies, which generally end with the analysis of symbolic meaning, by offering a model for creating specialty *batik* motifs, grounded in ethnography and human-centered design, to shape the visual identity of tourist villages. However, this approach has a drawback: the research duration, which significantly affects the required data accuracy. Combining ethnography and design thinking is a highly recommended approach for researchers and designers focused on human-centered design.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that designers did not develop distinctive *batik* motifs in Ketapanrame village through visual exploration alone but through a long-term design ethnography embedded in daily community practices. The researcher processed ethnographic data on social customs, coffee culture, village landscapes, and dress practices through an iterative, reflective design-thinking process. Five development cycles from 2019 to 2022 demonstrated how designers

and users refined problems and solutions through continuous interaction, with follow-up observations continuing into 2025. Mood boards, prototypes, usage evaluations, and product adaptations illustrated how design thinking translated cultural practices into ornamental forms applicable across products.

The study found that social acceptance, rather than visual quality alone, determines the success of these ornaments as a village's visual identity. Initial resistance to *batik*-patterned *udeng*, changes in the use of coffee cups, and the adoption of *udeng* to welcome guests showed how design became part of everyday practice. Ultimately, Ketapanrame's *batik* ornaments evolved beyond textile motifs into collective symbols applied to clothing, merchandise, home décor, and tableware. Although the lengthy research duration posed challenges for data accuracy, this study addressed gaps in ethnographic research on *batik*, *wastra*, and cultural arts by offering a model for developing ornamental varieties through ethnography and design thinking to build a sustainable visual identity for tourist villages.

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