

# From Motif to Meaning: Digital Batik Storytelling and Brand Identity in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Indonesian batik brands increasingly use Instagram and official websites to circulate heritage narratives, motif references, and commercial collections. However, the cross-platform process through which motif references become coherent brand meaning remains insufficiently specified, particularly in relation to arts management and cultural stewardship. This study introduces motif-to-meaning translation as a conceptual lens for explaining how motif references in brand-authored digital artefacts are connected to communicated identity claims across websites and Instagram. Using a qualitative multiple-case digital artefact analysis, the study examined 150 official artefacts from five Indonesian batik brands, comprising 25 website pages and 125 Instagram posts and reels published between 1 January 2024 and 1 October 2025. The analysis showed that Instagram was dominated by campaign-led storytelling and episodic heritage narration, whereas websites more often anchored institutional legitimacy, heritage explanation, formal documentation, and sustainability commitments when present. Across the corpus, motifs were translated into meaning through recurring narrative moves that linked motif references to value statements, lifestyle framing, participatory invitations, and craft-process legitimacy. The five brands also differed in their communicated identity profiles, reflected in distinct configurations of heritage legitimacy, craft authority, market-facing identity, and responsibility cues. The findings suggest that coherent digital batik communication depends on coordinated curation and interpretive governance across platforms, highlighting platform strategy as a salient concern for arts management.

## KEYWORDS

motif-to-meaningtranslation; heritage branding; digital heritage communication; arts management; multimodal thematic analysis

## Introduction

Batik is more than a decorative textile. In Indonesia it functions as a visual language in which motifs and compositional structures convey social memory, ethical orientations, and place-based identity. UNESCO's recognition of Indonesian batik as Intangible Cultural Heritage underscores batik as living heritage reproduced through practice and interpretation (UNESCO, 2009). Recent studies read motifs as semiotic systems grounded in nature and cosmology (Saidi et al., 2025) and show how compositional development shapes perception and recontextualization (Budiman et al., 2024).

This cultural density is increasingly managed in digital environments. On official websites and Instagram, batik brands circulate motif references through images, short videos, captions, collection narratives, educational pages, and interaction prompts. These affordances may widen access to cultural knowledge, but they also intensify interpretive risks because motif meanings can be simplified, selectively

reframed, or decontextualised when adapted for platform visibility and branding objectives. Digital storytelling therefore does more than promote products. It converts symbolic resources into recognisable identity cues that can shape perceived authenticity, heritage legitimacy, and cultural value across touchpoints (Campagna et al., 2023; Södergren, 2021). Heritage branding scholarship shows that tensions emerge when brands modernise while claiming heritage authority (Shen, 2022), and research on cultural communication further indicates that Instagram is used to curate fast-moving narratives of cultural value and public engagement (Villaespesa & Wowkowych, 2020). Indonesian scholarship likewise shows that batik continuity depends on linking local specificity with contemporary lifestyles and market expectations (Benyamin & Prasetia, 2015a, 2015b).

Yet cross-brand evidence remains limited on how motif references are translated into coherent digital identity narratives across websites and Instagram. Existing research has advanced understanding of batik semiotics, design development, ethical framing, authenticity, and heritage branding (Rusnalasari & Hermansyah, 2025; Saidi et al., 2025; Shen, 2022), but less is known about how brand-authored digital artefacts connect motif references to communicated identity claims across platforms. This gap matters for arts management because digital batik storytelling involves cultural stewardship, curatorial authority, stakeholder accountability, and the governance of symbolic capital in market-facing cultural organisations (Lee & Lee, 2023).

This article addresses that gap through a cross-brand, cross-platform qualitative analysis of Indonesian batik brand communication. In this study, motif-to-meaning translation refers to observable narrative moves through which motif references, including names, visuals, origin stories, and process cues, are linked to communicated identity claims such as heritage legitimacy, craft authority, lifestyle positioning, and responsibility in brand-authored digital artefacts. The study is guided by four research questions concerning how brands translate motif meanings across websites and Instagram, which storytelling functions and multimodal artefacts are most salient across brands and platforms, how storytelling constructs communicated identity cues and identity coherence, and what strategic arts-management cues emerge when heritage motifs are curated and circulated through platform-mediated branding. The article then outlines the methodology, presents the results, and discusses theoretical and arts-management implications.

## Methods

This study used a qualitative multiple-case digital artefact design to examine how Indonesian batik brands translate motifs into culturally meaningful narratives and communicated identity cues across official websites and Instagram. The protocol specified transparent case selection, comparable sampling quotas across brands and platforms, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria for motif- and meaning-oriented storytelling, and an auditable extraction log containing archived URLs, screenshots, and retrieval dates. This design was consistent with qualitative case study logic and netnographic principles for studying online meaning-making in publicly accessible digital environments (Kozinets, 2015; Yin, 2018).

## Research Type

This research employed a qualitative multiple-case study design situated in a digital field context and informed by netnographic principles for studying cultural meaning-making in online environments (Kozinets, 2019). Analytically, the study combined a multimodal discourse orientation with reflexive thematic analysis. The multimodal orientation was used because digital batik branding communicates heritage, authenticity, and cultural value through the interaction of language, imagery, motif references, colour, composition, and recurrent aesthetic cues (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). Reflexive thematic analysis was used to construct patterns across cases and to compare how storytelling functions, identity cues, and arts-management cues were articulated across brands and platforms (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). This combination was selected because a multiple-case approach enables systematic comparison of storytelling strategies across different brand positions while preserving sensitivity to the cultural and visual specificity of batik communication (Yin, 2018).

## Population and Sample

The population comprised publicly accessible, brand-authored materials published on the selected brands' official websites and Instagram accounts between 1 January 2024 and 1 October 2025. Five Indonesian batik brands were purposively selected to capture variation in organisational scale and market positioning: Danar Hadi, Iwan Tirta Private Collection, Sejauh Mata Memandang, BT Batik Trusmi, and Batik Keris. The selection considered differences in retail footprint and public market presence, heritage-institution versus contemporary lifestyle orientation, limited or private collection versus broader retail positioning, and the visibility of sustainability programming in official communication (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The unit of analysis was a single digital artefact. A website artefact was defined as a webpage presenting brand story, values, cultural positioning, heritage narration, motif explanation, sustainability commitments, or related institutional framing. An Instagram artefact was defined as a post or reel whose caption, visual composition, or on-screen text referenced motifs, symbolic meanings, heritage, craftsmanship, locality, authenticity cues, sustainability, or other meaning-oriented cultural claims. The final corpus totalled 150 artefacts, comprising 25 website pages and 125 Instagram posts or reels. Website materials were sampled at five pages per brand, while Instagram materials were sampled at 25 artefacts per brand using maximum variation across motif education, collection campaigns, heritage narration, artisan stories, programming, and sustainability narratives. The Instagram accounts analysed were @danarhadi\_id, @iwantirta\_batik, @sejauh\_mata\_memandang, @btbatiktrusmi, and @batikkerisofficial, and all included artefacts were retrieved and archived within the observation period.

## Research Location

The study was situated in a digital field setting comprising the selected brands' official websites and Instagram accounts, where batik motifs are curated, narrated, and circulated to publics. The broader context was Indonesia's creative and cultural economy, in which batik operates simultaneously as a visual art form, a heritage practice, and a market offering. This digital setting was treated as a field of organisational communication because websites and Instagram accounts function as official spaces where brands make cultural claims, organise visibility, and communicate identity to audiences.

### Instrumentation or Tools

A structured data extraction sheet was developed to record metadata and analytic notes for each artefact. The sheet captured brand name, platform, URL, publication date when available, content type, concise synopsis, motif references, cultural meaning statements, identity cues, preliminary codes, retrieval date, and archive status. Screenshots of webpages and Instagram artefacts were archived to support an audit trail. Qualitative coding and theme development were managed in NVivo, which served as the primary environment for code application, memo writing, retrieval of coded segments, and comparison across brands and platforms.

### Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using a protocol designed to ensure consistency across brands and platforms and to support replication of the study (Kozinets, 2015; Yin, 2018). Each brand's official website and official Instagram account were first identified and verified through cross-referencing among brand-owned channels. The observation period was set from 1 January 2024 to 1 October 2025, and retrieval dates were recorded for transparency.

For websites, five pages per brand were collected when they explicitly conveyed brand story, values, cultural positioning, heritage narration, motif-related explanation, sustainability commitments, or institutional identity framing. Each page was archived through screenshots or PDF capture and logged in the extraction sheet. For Instagram, content published within the observation period was screened, and 25 artefacts per brand were selected using inclusion criteria that prioritised motif- or culture-related storytelling. Included artefacts contained explicit or implicit references to motif meanings, heritage narratives, craftsmanship, locality, authenticity cues, sustainability framing, programming, or cultural participation. Maximum variation was used to represent different storytelling functions across posts and reels. Each included Instagram artefact was documented through its URL and screenshot, paraphrased in the extraction sheet, and annotated for salient visual cues relevant to motif representation and cultural framing, including key visual frames or thumbnails for reels when needed. Artefacts that were purely transactional, such as discount announcements without cultural narration, were excluded unless they contained substantive meaning-oriented storytelling that directly addressed the research questions.

### Data Analysis

Analysis was conducted through iterative coding, theme construction, and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018). First, an initial open coding phase was applied to a preliminary subset of website and Instagram artefacts drawn from more than one brand. This phase identified narrative and visual cues related to motif-to-meaning translation, including heritage claims, authenticity markers, craftsmanship framing, locality references, cultural pride discourse, modern lifestyle positioning, campaign framing, sensory detail, programming, and sustainability or ethical narratives (Nowell et al., 2017). Visual-oriented analytic notes were guided by social semiotic and multimodal approaches to meaning-making, focusing on motif representation, repeated symbols, colour and stylistic cues, framing, visual hierarchy, and the articulation of cultural context (Jewitt et al., 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021).

Second, these provisional codes were consolidated into a refined codebook with operational definitions,

inclusion indicators, and decision rules for assigning one primary storytelling function to each artefact. For descriptive comparison, five storytelling functions were used throughout the corpus. ST1, motif and meaning education, was assigned when an artefact explicitly explained motif symbolism, named meanings, or technique-related knowledge. ST2, campaign-led storytelling, was assigned when the dominant function was collection launch, collaboration, store communication, seasonal promotion, or navigational framing toward current offerings. ST3, heritage narration, was assigned when origin stories, institutional milestones, provenance, tradition, or historical legitimacy formed the main narrative emphasis. ST4, aesthetic and sensory immersion, was assigned when the artefact foregrounded visual detail, materiality, atmosphere, or production imagery without extended explanatory narration. ST5, sustainability narratives, was assigned when the dominant frame concerned upcycling, waste reduction, accountability practices, policy commitments, or responsible production. When an artefact combined multiple cues, the primary code was determined by the dominant narrative purpose across caption, on-screen text, and visual emphasis.

Third, focused coding was applied across all artefacts using the software environment specified above. Before full-corpus coding, the codebook was reviewed and refined through author discussion on preliminary cases to clarify borderline distinctions, especially between ST1, ST2, and ST3 and between ST4 and process-based legitimacy cues. The first author conducted the primary coding and cross-case synthesis, while the second author contributed to codebook refinement and visual-cultural interpretation of motif-related cases. Because the study used a reflexive thematic analysis orientation, the aim was not statistical intercoder agreement but transparent coder calibration, consistent application of definitions, and an auditable record of analytic decisions (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Themes were then constructed to explain recurring storytelling logics and communicated identity constructions across brands, followed by cross-case comparison and platform comparison to identify shared patterns and distinctive strategies among the five brands. Trustworthiness was enhanced through platform triangulation, systematic archiving and coding documentation, reflexive memos, and negative case analysis to examine artefacts that did not align with emerging thematic patterns.

### Ethical Approval

This study analysed publicly accessible, brand-authored materials and involved no direct interaction with individuals or collection of private data. Accordingly, institutional ethics review was not sought. To reduce potential harm, the analysis focused on organisational communication practices rather than personal profiling, avoided identifying private individuals appearing in posts, used only minimal excerpts when illustration was necessary, and handled screenshots and quoted material in line with internet research guidance and contextual integrity considerations (Franzke et al., 2020).

## Result and Discussion

Across the 150 artefacts, four headline findings emerged. First, the corpus showed clear platform differentiation, with Instagram concentrating campaign-led storytelling and episodic heritage narration, while websites more often anchored heritage explanation, institutional

framing, and a proportionally stronger presence of sustainability cues. Second, motif-to-meaning translation operated through four recurring practices, namely values-based translation, lifestyle translation, participatory translation, and process-based legitimacy. Third, the five brands shared a common market-facing baseline but differed in their communicated identity profiles, especially in the prominence of craft mastery, heritage legitimacy, and responsibility cues. Fourth, strategic arts-management cues were distributed asymmetrically across platforms, with websites more often carrying governance and portfolio architecture cues and Instagram carrying most programming and partnership cues. Tables 1 and 2 establish the descriptive platform baseline. Table 3 develops the motif-to-meaning translation results for RQ1, Tables 4 and 5 develop the format and storytelling-function results for RQ2, Tables 6 to 8 develop the brand identity results for RQ3, and Tables 9 to 11 develop the strategic arts-management results for RQ4.

Consistent with qualitative reporting practice, this section presents descriptive distributions alongside concise cross-platform thematic summaries (Paulus et al., 2017). The corpus comprised 150 digital artefacts from five Indonesian batik brands, namely Batik Keris, BT Batik Trusmi, Danar Hadi, Iwan Tirta Private Collection, and Sejauh Mata Memandang, including 25 website artefacts and 125 Instagram artefacts published between 1 January 2024 and 1 October 2025.

Table 1 shows that Instagram storytelling was dominated by campaign-led storytelling (ST2; 62/125) followed by heritage narration (ST3; 35/125). Motif and meaning education (ST1; 17/125) appeared consistently across brands, whereas aesthetic and sensory immersion (ST4; 7/125) and sustainability narratives (ST5; 4/125)

Table 1. Instagram Artefacts by Brand (n = 125)

Case	Brand	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4	ST5	Total
BK	Batik Keris	7	11	4	3	0	25
BT	BT Batik Trusmi	4	13	7	1	0	25
DH	Danar Hadi	2	12	10	1	0	25
IT	Iwan Tirta Private Collection	3	13	6	2	1	25
SJ	Sejauh Mata Memandang	1	13	8	0	3	25

Table 2. Website Artefacts by Brand (n = 25)

Case	Brand	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4	ST5	Total
BK	Batik Keris	0	2	3	0	0	5
BT	BT Batik Trusmi	0	1	4	0	0	5
DH	Danar Hadi	1	3	1	0	0	5
IT	Iwan Tirta Private Collection	1	1	2	0	1	5
SJ	Sejauh Mata Memandang	0	1	2	0	2	5

Table 3. Motif-to-Meaning Translation Practices and Representative Artefacts (RQ1)

Translation Practice	Operational Description (Descriptive)	Typical Locus	Representative Artefacts (Examples)
<b>Values-based translation</b>	Motifs were explained through explicit virtues, philosophical statements, or symbolic keywords attached to the motif name.	Instagram (ST1) and selected website education pages	DH_IG_05; BT_IG_18; BK_IG_12; IT_WEB_03
<b>Lifestyle translation</b>	Motif meaning was reframed through styling advice, situational use, or everyday-wear scenarios, linking meaning to lived experience.	Instagram (ST1/ST2)	BK_IG_11; BT_IG_22; DH_IG_14; IT_IG_10; SJ_IG_10

were comparatively limited. This indicates that Instagram functioned primarily as the high-frequency arena where motifs were attached to campaigns and brief heritage cues rather than to extended explanatory narration.

Table 2 shows that websites were anchored in heritage narration (ST3; 12/25) and campaign or navigation framing (ST2; 8/25). Compared with Instagram, websites contained proportionally more sustainability cues (ST5; 3/25), concentrated in Iwan Tirta and Sejauh Mata Memandang. Relative to Instagram, websites therefore stabilised motif meaning through institutional and documentary framing, which made them more likely to anchor legitimacy than to carry time-bound visibility. No website artefacts were coded as ST4 in this corpus.

RQ1. From Motif to Meaning: Translating Motifs into Narrative Frames

RQ1 examined how batik motifs were translated into narrative meaning across platforms. Table 3 summarises four recurring translation practices that answer this question.

Table 3 addresses RQ1 by showing that motif-to-meaning translation was not limited to direct motif explanation. Values-based and lifestyle translation appeared across all brands in Instagram artefacts, participatory translation was most visible in Sejauh Mata Memandang, and process-based legitimacy was most explicit on dedicated educational pages and behind-the-scenes content. The table therefore shows that motifs became meaningful through recurring narrative moves that connected symbolic references to values, use contexts, participation, and visible craft processes.

Translation Practice	Operational Description (Descriptive)	Typical Locus	Representative Artefacts (Examples)
<b>Participatory translation</b>	Meaning was conveyed through invitations to participate, learn, or co-make, with the narrative anchored in involvement and community experience.	Instagram and program pages where available	SJ_IG_21; SJ_IG_22
<b>Process-based legitimacy</b>	Motif meaning was supported through technique, production discipline, craftsmanship demonstrations, or "how it is made" storytelling.	Websites (education pages) and selected reels/posts	DH_WEB_02; IT_IG_07; BT_IG_16; BK_IG_14

Table 4. Instagram Artefact Types by Brand (n = 125)

Case	Brand	Post	Reel	Total
BK	Batik Keris	23	2	25
BT	BT Batik Trusmi	15	10	25
DH	Danar Hadi	18	7	25
IT	Iwan Tirta Private Collection	24	1	25
SJ	Sejauh Mata Memandang	16	9	25

Table 5. Storytelling Functions by Instagram Artefact Type (n = 125)

Storytelling Function	Post	Reel	Total
ST1	14	3	17
ST2	49	13	62
ST3	25	10	35
ST4	5	2	7
ST5	3	1	4

Table 6. Brand Identity Cue Clusters by Brand (n = 30 artefacts per brand)

Brand	Craft Mastery and Knowledge (ST1+ST4)	Market-Facing Identity (ST2)	Heritage Legitimacy (ST3)	Responsibility and Sustainability (ST5)	Total
BK (Batik Keris)	10	13	7	0	30
BT (BT Batik Trusmi)	5	14	11	0	30
DH (Danar Hadi)	4	15	11	0	30
IT (Iwan Tirta Private Collection)	6	14	8	2	30
SJ (Sejauh Mata Memandang)	1	14	10	5	30

Table 7. Brand Identity Cue Clusters by Platform

Platform	Craft Mastery and Knowledge (ST1+ST4)	Market-Facing Identity (ST2)	Heritage Legitimacy (ST3)	Responsibility and Sustainability (ST5)	Total
Instagram (n = 125)	24	62	35	4	125
Website (n = 25)	2	8	12	3	25

Table 8. Cross-Brand Communicated Identity Profiles and Representative Digital Artefacts

Brand	Concise Communicated Identity Profile (RQ3)	Representative Website Cues (Examples)	Representative Instagram Cues (Examples)
<b>BK</b>	Craft mastery cues were prominent, supported by market-facing identity and heritage legitimacy cues; responsibility cues were absent in this corpus.	Institutional heritage and values framing (BK_WEB_01; BK_WEB_02; BK_WEB_03) and official channel framing (BK_WEB_04).	Store access and distribution updates (BK_IG_05; BK_IG_21) and technique education content (BK_IG_16).
<b>BT</b>	Market-facing identity and heritage legitimacy cues were dominant; craft mastery cues were present; responsibility cues were absent in this corpus.	Organizational background and cultural mission framing (BT_WEB_01; BT_WEB_02) and commerce access interface (BT_WEB_03).	Collaboration and festival-oriented campaign content (BT_IG_01; BT_IG_09; BT_IG_19) plus store-location guidance (BT_IG_08).

Brand	Concise Communicated Identity Profile (RQ3)	Representative Website Cues (Examples)	Representative Instagram Cues (Examples)
DH	Market-facing identity cues were dominant, with sustained heritage legitimacy cues; craft mastery cues were limited; responsibility cues were absent in this corpus.	Cultural destination framing and portfolio structure (DH_WEB_01; DH_WEB_05) plus brand extension framing (DH_WEB_03).	Annual show and exhibition positioning (DH_IG_03; DH_IG_21), schedule and invitation posts (DH_IG_13; DH_IG_19), and collaboration showcase (DH_IG_07).
IT	Market-facing identity cues were dominant, accompanied by craft mastery and heritage legitimacy cues; responsibility cues were present but limited.	Mission and legacy framing (IT_WEB_01), lifestyle extension framing (IT_WEB_04), and sustainability positioning (IT_WEB_05).	Collaboration and event presence (IT_IG_04; IT_IG_08), curated invitation content (IT_IG_16), flagship location update (IT_IG_25), and upcycling narrative (IT_IG_09).
SJ	Market-facing identity cues were dominant, accompanied by heritage legitimacy cues; responsibility and sustainability cues were the most visible among the brands; craft mastery cues were minimal.	Brand purpose framing (SJ_WEB_01) and circularity programs and public commitments (SJ_WEB_04; SJ_WEB_05).	Garment care and circular-fashion prompts (SJ_IG_02; SJ_IG_03), collaboration releases (SJ_IG_04; SJ_IG_23), and arts-led programs and exhibitions (SJ_IG_14; SJ_IG_19; SJ_IG_22).

Table 9. RQ4-Linked Artefacts by Brand and Platform

Brand	Website	Instagram	Total
BK (Batik Keris)	5	3	8
BT (BT Batik Trusmi)	5	6	11
DH (Danan Hadi)	4	5	9
IT (Iwan Tirta Private Collection)	3	8	11
SJ (Sejauh Mata Memandang)	3	12	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>54</b>

Table 10. Distribution of Strategic Cue Types by Brand within the RQ4-Linked Subset

Brand	C1 Governance and Institutional Framing	C2 Portfolio and Channel Architecture	C3 Access and Distribution	C4 Programming and Partnerships	C5 Sustainability Operations	Total
BK	4	2	2	0	0	8
BT	4	0	2	5	0	11
DH	1	2	1	5	0	9
IT	3	1	1	4	2	11
SJ	3	0	0	6	6	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>54</b>

Table 11. Distribution of Strategic Cue Types by Platform

Cue Type	Website	Instagram	Total
C1 Governance & institutional framing	9	6	15
C2 Portfolio & channel architecture	5	0	5
C3 Access & distribution	2	4	6
C4 Programming & partnerships	1	19	20
C5 Sustainability operations	3	5	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>54</b>

Across brands, values-based translation appeared when motifs were paired with explicit meaning statements in motif education posts. Danan Hadi framed Laras Madya through symbolic values (DH\_IG\_05), BT Batik Trusmi connected the Naga motif to strength (BT\_IG\_18), and Batik Keris linked Peksi Mardika to a named symbolic narrative attached to product identity (BK\_IG\_12). In parallel, Iwan Tirta’s website foregrounded batik philosophy and motif meaning as part of craft identity articulation (IT\_WEB\_03). In these artefacts, motif naming

did not function only as product description. It served as a semiotic anchor that connected visual form to an evaluative claim about value, identity, and cultural continuity.

Lifestyle translation appeared when motif references were made intelligible through use context and styling guidance rather than through extended symbolic exposition. This occurred in posts that combined motif cues with wearable scenarios or quick styling frames, such as Batik Keris’ styling guidance that connected motif meaning to outfit coordination (BK\_IG\_11) and BT Batik Trusmi’s

GRWM-style framing of batik as an everyday styling option (BT\_IG\_22). Dinar Hadi and Iwan Tirta also used lifestyle-oriented captions that framed batik as part of contemporary wardrobe practice (DH\_IG\_14; IT\_IG\_10). In this pattern, motif meaning was translated into a practical and recognisable lifestyle vocabulary.

Participatory translation was most visible in artefacts that invited audiences into shared cultural practice. Sejauh Mata Memandang's workshop invitation positioned meaning through participatory learning and community knowledge circulation (SJ\_IG\_21), while its partner-oriented programming post presented cultural work through a network of collaborators (SJ\_IG\_22). These artefacts show that motif meaning can be communicated not only through explanation, but also through invitations to learn, encounter, and take part in cultural activity.

Process-based legitimacy was foregrounded when meaning-making was supported by explicit craft process descriptions and behind-the-scenes labour cues. Dinar Hadi's educational webpage explained batik processes to support authenticity and cultural value (DH\_WEB\_02), while Instagram reels and posts highlighted production work and material detail as visible craft evidence (BT\_IG\_16; BK\_IG\_14; IT\_IG\_07). Taken together, Table 3 and the accompanying examples show that Instagram more often compressed motif meaning into symbolic, lifestyle, and participatory cues, while websites more often supported philosophical explanation and process-oriented legitimacy.

## RQ2. Storytelling Functions: Cross-Brand and Cross-Platform Patterning

RQ2 examined how storytelling functions (ST1 to ST5) were distributed across brands and platforms and how Instagram formats, namely posts and reels, related to these functions. Table 4 addresses the brand-level format composition of the Instagram corpus, while Table 5 addresses the distribution of storytelling functions across those two formats. This format comparison matters because Instagram meaning-making can be shaped by visual packaging, pacing, and circulation mode (Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

Table 4 shows that posts dominated the overall Instagram corpus (96/125), but brands varied in their reliance on reels. BT Batik Trusmi and Sejauh Mata Memandang used reels more frequently, with 10 and 9 reels respectively, while Iwan Tirta Private Collection relied predominantly on posts (24/25). This suggests that reels were used selectively rather than uniformly, especially by brands whose Instagram presence foregrounded public-facing events, collaborations, and time-sensitive programming.

Table 5 shows that campaign-led storytelling (ST2) dominated both posts and reels, while reels were comparatively more common within heritage narration (ST3) than within motif education (ST1). Aesthetic and sensory immersion (ST4) remained limited and appeared in both formats. For RQ2, this indicates that format choice did not displace the dominance of campaign storytelling, but reels offered somewhat greater room for episodic heritage narration than for motif explanation.

Across platforms, campaign-led storytelling (ST2) was most concentrated on Instagram (Table 1), confirming that Instagram carried the most time-bound and market-facing batik communication in the corpus. Across brands, ST2 appeared as collection launches, store expansion announcements, seasonal gifting frames, and collaboration communication. Examples included Batik Keris' store arrival announcement (BK\_IG\_21), Dinar Hadi's collection framing (DH\_IG\_08), Iwan Tirta's

seasonal and event-linked collection communication (IT\_IG\_02), and Sejauh's collaboration launch framing (SJ\_IG\_23). This distribution aligns with marketing research that observes branded social content frequently integrates promotional objectives with creative narrative framing (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), and it remains compatible with strategic perspectives that view social media as a channel for coordinated marketing actions (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Heritage narration (ST3) was visible on both Instagram and websites but was particularly prominent on websites (Table 2). Website-based ST3 frequently appeared in about pages, milestone narratives, or heritage-oriented institutional descriptions, such as Dinar Hadi's positioning of batik within a cultural-retail destination narrative (DH\_WEB\_01) and BT Batik Trusmi's organisational heritage framing (BT\_WEB\_02). On Instagram, ST3 also appeared in heritage-linked commemorative posts and culturally anchored collection frames, including BT Batik Trusmi's Independence Day positioning (BT\_IG\_24) and Sejauh Mata Memandang's heritage-oriented storytelling posts (SJ\_IG\_22).

Motif and meaning education (ST1) was primarily concentrated on Instagram posts (Table 5) and typically appeared as short motif explanations, technique cues, and meaning statements, as seen in DH\_IG\_05, BT\_IG\_18, BK\_IG\_12, and IT\_IG\_07. Websites contributed ST1 mainly through dedicated education or philosophy pages in Dinar Hadi and Iwan Tirta (DH\_WEB\_02; IT\_WEB\_03). Aesthetic and sensory immersion (ST4) appeared only on Instagram and was expressed through detail-forward images and behind-the-scenes reels that emphasised craftsmanship, production work, and material finishing, as seen in BK\_IG\_14, BT\_IG\_16, DH\_IG\_17, and IT\_IG\_05. Sustainability narratives (ST5) were comparatively rare across the corpus and appeared in small numbers on both platforms (Tables 1 and 2), concentrated in Iwan Tirta and Sejauh Mata Memandang. These narratives appeared as upcycling and waste-reduction framing (IT\_IG\_09), sustainability positioning pages (IT\_WEB\_05), explicit policy commitments (SJ\_WEB\_05), and participatory workshop invitations (SJ\_IG\_21). Overall, RQ2 shows that platform and format worked together to shape narrative tempo, with Instagram posts and reels carrying most campaign and episodic heritage communication, while websites supported slower explanation and institutional anchoring.

## RQ3. Brand Identity Cues and Communicated Identity Profiles Across Brands and Platforms

RQ3 examined how brand identity cues were articulated across the five Indonesian batik brands and how those cues formed distinct communicated identity profiles across websites and Instagram. For descriptive synthesis, the five storytelling functions were consolidated into four brand identity cue clusters: craft mastery and knowledge (ST1 + ST4), market-facing identity (ST2), heritage legitimacy (ST3), and responsibility and sustainability (ST5). Tables 6 and 7 address the aggregate distribution of these clusters, while Table 8 presents concise brand-level profiles illustrated with representative artefacts.

Table 6 shows that market-facing identity cues (ST2) formed the largest cluster for all five brands, indicating a shared commercial baseline in brand-authored digital communication. Variation appeared in the secondary cue clusters. Batik Keris most strongly foregrounded craft mastery and knowledge, BT Batik Trusmi and Dinar Hadi more strongly foregrounded heritage legitimacy, and Sejauh Mata Memandang showed the strongest presence of responsibility and sustainability cues. Iwan Tirta Private Collection presented a more layered profile that combined market-facing identity with craft, heritage, and a limited

sustainability component. For RQ3, these patterns indicate distinct communicated identity profiles within the corpus rather than audience-perceived market differentiation.

[Table 7](#) shows that Instagram carried most craft mastery cues and most market-facing identity cues, whereas websites contributed a more concentrated share of heritage legitimacy and responsibility cues relative to their smaller corpus size. This indicates that Instagram more often reinforced identity through campaign circulation and visible craft snippets, while websites more often stabilised legitimacy through provenance, institutional framing, and accountability-oriented communication.

Across brands, communicated identity on Instagram was most often expressed through campaign announcements, collaboration releases, episodic collections, and selective process-oriented content. On websites, communicated identity was more often anchored in structured about pages, mission statements, milestone narratives, and sustainability positioning when present. Identity coherence in this corpus was therefore achieved less through identical content across platforms than through recurring cue alignment across different platform roles.

[Table 8](#) makes these profiles more concrete. Batik Keris combined a relatively strong craft-and-knowledge profile with institutional heritage framing and store-access cues. BT Batik Trusmi and Danar Hadi relied more heavily on communicated heritage legitimacy alongside market-facing promotion. Iwan Tirta Private Collection presented the most layered profile, combining market-facing identity with legacy, craft authority, and limited sustainability cues. Sejauh Mata Memandang remained market-facing but stood out for responsibility and sustainability cues, visible in both website commitments and Instagram prompts related to circularity and public programming. Taken together, the five brands shared a market-facing baseline, but they differed in how they weighted craft authority, heritage legitimacy, and responsibility within brand-authored communication.

#### RQ4. Strategic Arts-Management Cues Across Brands and Platforms

RQ4 examined the strategic arts-management cues visible in the digital storytelling corpus, particularly cues related to how brands communicated governance, channel architecture, access design, partnership activity, cultural programming, and sustainability operations. The RQ4-linked subset ( $n = 54$ ) was organised into five descriptive cue types: C1 governance and institutional framing, C2 portfolio and channel architecture, C3 access and distribution design, C4 programming and partnerships, and C5 sustainability operations and accountability. Tables 9 to 11 address this question by showing the distribution of RQ4-linked artefacts by brand and platform, the distribution of strategic cue types by brand, and the distribution of strategic cue types by platform.

[Table 9](#) shows that RQ4-linked material appeared on both platforms, with Instagram contributing the larger share of the subset (34/54). Sejauh Mata Memandang contributed the largest number of RQ4-linked artefacts, followed by BT Batik Trusmi and Iwan Tirta Private Collection. This indicates that strategic arts-management cues in the corpus were not confined to formal webpages, but were also communicated through high-frequency Instagram materials, especially where brands foregrounded programming, collaborations, and responsibility-related activity.

[Table 10](#) shows that strategic cue types were unevenly distributed across brands. Batik Keris concentrated on governance, portfolio, and access cues; BT Batik Trusmi

and Danar Hadi concentrated on programming and partnership cues; Iwan Tirta Private Collection combined programming with a smaller sustainability layer; and Sejauh Mata Memandang showed a dual concentration in programming and sustainability operations. For RQ4, this suggests that strategic arts-management communication was brand-specific rather than generic, with different organisations making different aspects of governance, public programming, and responsibility visible.

[Table 11](#) shows that websites were used more frequently for governance and portfolio architecture cues, whereas Instagram carried the majority of programming and partnership cues. Access and distribution cues appeared across both platforms, and sustainability operations cues were visible on both platforms but concentrated in fewer brands. This indicates that websites more often functioned as institutional infrastructure, while Instagram more often functioned as the outward-facing interface for programming, collaborations, and public engagement.

Across the RQ4-linked subset, C1 governance and institutional framing was typically conveyed through mission statements, values, milestones, and formal positioning pages. C2 portfolio and channel architecture was almost entirely website-based, appearing through official channel lists, sub-brand mapping, and portfolio structure. C3 access and distribution design appeared through store interfaces and location-related announcements across both platforms. C4 programming and partnerships was concentrated on Instagram posts and reels that announced events, schedules, exhibitions, annual shows, and collaboration-based releases. C5 sustainability operations and accountability appeared through circularity initiatives, garment-care prompts, take-back programmes, upcycling narratives, and explicit public commitments. Taken together, these patterns show that digital batik storytelling also communicated organisational priorities related to governance, access, programming, and accountability, not only symbolic or promotional meaning.

This discussion argues that platform affordances shape how batik motifs become communicated identity cues in brand-authored digital artefacts. Across the five-brand corpus, Instagram concentrated campaign-led storytelling, episodic heritage narration, collaboration announcements, and programme visibility, while websites more often anchored heritage explanation, institutional positioning, provenance, and formal documentation. Read together, these patterns show that motif-to-meaning translation depends not only on symbolic content, but also on how brands allocate interpretive work across digital environments. Instagram supported rapid circulation and recurring visibility, whereas websites provided slower contextualisation and institutional anchoring. This platform division is central to the article's argument because it shows that digital batik storytelling is a curatorial and managerial process, not merely a promotional practice (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017; O'Halloran et al., 2016).

#### Summary of Key Findings Across the Research Questions

Across the 150 artefacts, platform differentiation was clear. Instagram carried the highest concentration of campaign-led storytelling (ST2) and episodic heritage narration (ST3), confirming its role as a high-frequency interface for visibility, campaign circulation, collection updates, and brief heritage reinforcement. Websites more often concentrated heritage explanation, institutional framing, provenance cues, and a proportionally stronger presence of sustainability commitments, indicating that they supported slower and more documentary forms of meaning-

making (Highfield & Leaver, 2016; Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

For RQ1, motif-to-meaning translation operated through four recurring moves: values-based translation, lifestyle translation, participatory translation, and process-based legitimacy. Instagram most often compressed values and lifestyle meanings into short captions, styling cues, visual prompts, and quick symbolic frames, while websites more often supported process explanation, batik philosophy, heritage contextualisation, and institutional legitimacy. These findings show that motif meaning was not simply presented to audiences as fixed information. Instead, it was actively reconstructed through platform-specific combinations of text, image, format, and institutional voice.

For RQ2 and RQ3, the corpus showed a shared market-facing communication baseline across all five brands, but the brands differed in their communicated identity profiles. Batik Keris more strongly foregrounded craft mastery and knowledge, BT Batik Trusmi and Danar Hadi more strongly foregrounded heritage legitimacy, Iwan Tirta Private Collection presented a layered profile combining craft authority, heritage legitimacy, and limited sustainability cues, and Sejauh Mata Memandang stood out for responsibility and sustainability cues. Instagram reinforced these profiles episodically through campaigns, collaborations, and programming, while websites stabilised them through mission framing, provenance explanation, channel architecture, and accountability-oriented content (Yang, 2021; Yoo, 2023).

For RQ4, governance, access, partnership, programming, and sustainability cues appeared alongside promotional storytelling. This shows that digital batik communication in the corpus also functioned as public cultural work. Brand-authored digital artefacts were used not only to circulate products, but also to organise legitimacy, participation, responsibility, and public engagement across platforms. This finding extends social media and heritage communication scholarship by showing that arts-management concerns can be embedded in routine brand storytelling, rather than being limited to separate institutional statements or formal reports (Cui et al., 2023).

#### Theoretical Contribution: Motif-to-Meaning Translation

Based on the five-brand corpus analysed in this study, motif-to-meaning translation specifies a recurring mechanism through which motif references become communicated identity claims across websites and Instagram. In this formulation, motifs are not treated as decorative surfaces alone. They are treated as semiotic resources whose meaning becomes legible when names, visuals, origin stories, process cues, and contextual references are linked to values, provenance, craftsmanship, lifestyle relevance, cultural participation, or responsibility in brand-authored artefacts. Translation is therefore intersemiotic and iterative because meaning is continually re-articulated across modes and platforms rather than simply transferred intact from tradition into marketing discourse (O'Halloran et al., 2016).

The corpus suggests a three-part mechanism. First, semiotic anchoring identifies or cues the motif through naming, repeated visual emphasis, product association, or contextual reference. Second, narrative framing connects the motif to a broader story, such as heritage, craftsmanship, community participation, collection logic, styling practice, or sustainability commitment. Third, identity alignment links the framed motif to a recognisable claim about the brand, such as heritage legitimacy, craft authority, lifestyle positioning, market-facing identity, or responsibility. The theoretical contribution lies in specifying

motif references as the unit of translation and in showing how their meaning is reorganised across two platform types within one digital brand ecosystem (Pecot & Barnier, 2018).

A concrete illustration can be seen in how the corpus handled motif references differently across platforms. Instagram posts by Danar Hadi and Batik Keris compressed motif references into symbolic values and styling cues that could circulate quickly, while Iwan Tirta's website anchored motif meaning in batik philosophy and craft identity through slower contextualisation. This is why motif-to-meaning translation can be understood as platformed resemiotisation. Instagram concentrated campaign-led and episodic narration, while websites more often served as institutional anchors and documentation spaces. The coordination issue is therefore practical as well as theoretical, because brands need to preserve interpretive consistency while adapting motif references to different attention rhythms, narrative lengths, and legitimacy functions (Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

This perspective also reframes authenticity and heritage cues as semiotic outcomes rather than fixed brand properties. Heritage becomes more persuasive when motifs, provenance claims, craft cues, programme narratives, and institutional statements remain coherent across touchpoints. Authenticity similarly emerges from repeated alignment among these signs, rather than from origin claims alone (Pfannes, 2021; Rindell & Santos, 2021). Taken together, motif-to-meaning translation offers a transferable vocabulary for analysing craft and cultural branding in digital settings while keeping attention on stewardship, interpretive authority, and accountability.

#### Implications for Arts Management

In this dataset, digital batik branding functioned not only as market promotion but also as cultural stewardship, identity governance, and audience development. Instagram most often operated as the public-facing interface for campaigns, collaborations, cultural programmes, and time-sensitive visibility, whereas websites more often served as institutional memory for heritage explanation, provenance, organisational positioning, and sustainability documentation. A practical implication is that arts managers can strengthen coherence by differentiating platform roles and ensuring that time-bound Instagram narratives point towards stable website pages where interpretive context is documented (Cui et al., 2023; Foroughi et al., 2023). Such role differentiation can be treated as an organisational capability for maintaining coherence across evolving digital touchpoints (Teece, 2018).

Motif-to-meaning translation also suggests that curation is an interpretive governance task. When motifs carry sensitive histories, locality claims, artisan knowledge, or community associations, organisations need shared motif lexicons, attribution notes, and lightweight review routines involving designers, artisans, curators, or cultural experts. These practices can reduce inconsistency between promotional captions, educational explanations, product narratives, and formal sustainability claims. They also align with heritage communication scholarship that emphasises participation, accountability, and contextual integrity (Foroughi et al., 2023; Yuliati et al., 2023).

The prominence of programming and partnerships on Instagram further suggests that audience development can be designed through cultural participation rather than product promotion alone. For batik brands, this may involve connecting campaign cycles with workshops, exhibitions, partner events, craft education, garment-care initiatives, and circularity programmes, while using websites to document programme scope, institutional commitments, and longer-term accountability. Coordinated curation across platforms

therefore becomes part of how cultural value is publicly managed, not only how products are marketed.

Limitations and Cautions how cultural value is publicly managed, not only how products are marketed [Alnasser & Yi, 2023](#); [Li et al., 2024](#); [Rodríguez-Vera et al., 2024](#)).

Several limitations delimit the scope of inference in this study. The corpus was intentionally bounded to five Indonesian batik brands and to two official channels, namely websites and Instagram posts and reels, within the period from 1 January 2024 to 1 October 2025. The patterns reported here therefore should not be read as representative of the entire batik sector, other digital platforms, marketplace environments, or offline cultural work. Instagram communication is also shaped by platform affordances and algorithmic visibility dynamics, and the analysed artefacts reflect what brands published and what remained publicly accessible at the time of capture rather than a complete or stable archive.

For cross-case comparability, each artefact was assigned one primary storytelling function even though many artefacts combined multiple cues. As a result, hybrid storytelling forms may be under-represented in the descriptive frequency summaries. Although a structured codebook, systematic coding process, author discussion, reflexive memos, and audit-oriented dataset register were used, qualitative interpretation remains sensitive to coder judgement and contextual reading ([Nowell et al., 2017](#); [Paulus et al., 2017](#)). The frequency tables should therefore be understood as descriptive supports for qualitative interpretation, not as statistical generalisations.

Finally, because the analysis relies on publicly available, brand-authored materials, it cannot directly establish managerial intent or audience effects. Motif meanings are also culturally situated and potentially contested, especially when motifs are linked to locality, heritage claims, or community memory. The findings should therefore be read as descriptions of platform-mediated framing and communicated identity construction, rather than definitive accounts of batik symbolism or causal claims about audience reception ([Pecot et al., 2019](#)).

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research may build on this study by testing the transferability of motif-to-meaning translation across a larger and more diverse set of batik and craft-based organisations. Comparative studies could include additional digital venues such as TikTok, YouTube, marketplace storefronts, and offline programmes that are only partially visible online. A broader corpus would help assess whether the translation moves identified in this study remain stable across different organisational scales, regional batik traditions, and audience-facing communication strategies.

Longitudinal designs with systematic archiving would also be valuable for examining how platform affordances and visibility dynamics shape which heritage narratives persist, change, or disappear over time ([Chandrasapth et al., 2022](#); [Cotter, 2019](#)). Because social media content is dynamic and often shaped by algorithmic circulation, future studies could trace how motifs, campaign narratives, and sustainability claims are repeated, revised, or abandoned across multiple campaign cycles.

Methodologically, future research could combine multimodal artefact analysis with interviews or ethnographic observation involving designers, artisans, curators, communication teams, and brand managers. Such approaches would clarify how interpretive authority, attribution practices, governance routines, and brand heritage strategies are negotiated behind the scenes

([Balmer & Burghausen, 2019](#)). Audience-oriented studies, including comment analysis, surveys, reception studies, or experiments, could further assess how different translation moves influence perceived authenticity, cultural learning, trust, and willingness to participate in cultural programmes ([Pecot et al., 2019](#); [Cui et al., 2023](#)).

Finally, future work should examine the ethical dimensions of digital heritage communication more directly. Important questions include how motif meanings are attributed, whose histories are represented, how artisan or community knowledge is acknowledged, and how accountability is documented when cultural motifs are adapted for platform-mediated branding. This is particularly important as social media increasingly mediates public encounters with heritage, craft knowledge, and cultural value.

## Conclusion

This study examined how Indonesian batik brands translate motifs into communicated brand meaning across official websites and Instagram. Based on 150 digital artefacts from five Indonesian batik brands, the analysis showed that motif-to-meaning translation operated through recurring moves that linked motif references to values, lifestyle contexts, participatory invitations, and craft-process legitimacy. Instagram concentrated campaign-led storytelling, episodic heritage narration, collaborations, and programme visibility, whereas websites more often anchored heritage explanation, institutional positioning, provenance, and formal documentation.

Conceptually, the article advances motif-to-meaning translation as a mechanism through which motif references become communicated identity claims through semiotic anchoring, narrative framing, and identity alignment. The findings show that motifs do not become brand meaning through visual presence alone. They become meaningful when brand-authored artefacts connect motif references to heritage legitimacy, craft authority, lifestyle relevance, participation, or responsibility across platform-specific forms of communication.

For arts management, the key implication is that coherent digital batik communication depends on platform role differentiation and interpretive governance. Instagram can function as the public-facing interface for campaigns, programming, and participation, while websites can stabilise provenance, craft knowledge, institutional memory, and accountability. Digital batik branding therefore involves not only promotion but also cultural stewardship through coordinated curation across platforms.

## Author contributions

Arus Reka Prasetia conceptualised the study, developed the research design and codebook, led dataset construction, conducted the primary qualitative coding and cross-case synthesis, and drafted the manuscript. Muhammad Firdaus Benyamin contributed to the visual-cultural interpretation of batik motifs and multimodal artefacts, supported codebook refinement, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript. Both authors approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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