



Tapis Lampung as a Medium of Cultural Communication

Sari Romundang Wulan

Institusi Seni Indonesia Padang, Indonesia

Correspondensi e-mail: Sariromundang@gmail.com

Article History

Manuscript submitted:

08 April 2026

Manuscript revised:

17 Mei 2026

Accepted for publication:

28 Juni 2026

Keywords

Tapis Lampung, Semiotics,
Cultural Communication,
Traditional Motifs

Abstract

Tapis Lampung is one of Indonesia's textile cultural heritages that possesses not only aesthetic value but also a complex system of meanings. This study aims to examine Tapis motifs as a medium of cultural communication through a semiotic approach. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted using a semiotic framework based on the theories of signs proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. The findings reveal that Tapis motifs function as a system of signs representing the social, religious, and cultural identity values of the Lampung community. The motifs serve not merely as visual ornaments but also as a medium of symbolic communication that conveys cultural messages across generations. These findings highlight the importance of preserving the symbolic meanings embedded in Tapis amid the forces of modernization, which tend to reduce cultural functions to purely aesthetic purposes.

How to Cite: Wulan, S. R. (2026). Tapis Lampung as a Medium of Cultural Communication. *Journal of Arts and Culture: Sucilpa*. 2(1). 16-27. <https://doi.org/10.71094/sucilpa.v2i1.236>

Introduction

Tapis Lampung is a form of textile cultural heritage that embodies not only aesthetic qualities but also a complex and multilayered symbolic system. Within Lampung society, Tapis is more than a handicraft product; it serves as a medium that represents identity, social status, and philosophical values transmitted across generations. This traditional textile is commonly used in various customary ceremonies, including weddings and traditional rituals, demonstrating its close connection to the social and cultural system of the Lampung people (Totton, 2009).

Upon closer examination, each motif woven into Tapis cloth is not merely a decorative element standing independently. Rather, these motifs contain specific messages that can be interpreted by members of the community who understand the cultural symbols embedded within them. In this context, Tapis may be viewed as a form of nonverbal communication operating through a visual sign system. In other words, Tapis is not only observed but also "read" as a cultural text.

However, contemporary social dynamics have transformed the way people perceive and interpret Tapis. Modernization, globalization, and the expansion of the creative industry have shifted the function of Tapis from a cultural artifact rich in symbolic meaning toward an object increasingly valued for its aesthetic and commercial appeal (Hartono, 2004). Although this transformation is not entirely negative, it raises concerns regarding the potential erosion of the cultural meanings embedded within the motifs. When motifs are understood solely as visual ornaments devoid of symbolic significance, their communicative function gradually diminishes.

At the same time, younger generations, as inheritors of this cultural tradition, face challenges in understanding the philosophical values embedded in Tapis motifs. Broader access to cultural information does not necessarily lead to deeper comprehension. Consequently, a gap has emerged between the inherited cultural forms and the meanings understood by contemporary generations. This condition underscores the need to reexamine Tapis as a medium of cultural communication capable of bridging traditional values and contemporary contexts.

Within cultural communication studies, symbols play a crucial role in the transmission of meaning. Hall (1997) argues that cultural representation cannot be separated from the system of signs through which people



Copyright © 2025, The Author(s).

This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA license.

understand social reality. In this regard, Tapis motifs can be positioned as part of such a representational system. Through a semiotic approach, Tapis motifs can be analyzed as signs that establish relationships between visual forms and the meanings they represent.

Semiotics enables researchers to explore meanings embedded behind visually observable symbols. By employing the theoretical frameworks developed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, Tapis motifs can be understood as a system of signs that not only represent particular objects but also generate interpretations shaped by cultural contexts. Through this perspective, the analysis extends beyond the description of visual forms to a deeper exploration of cultural meaning.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to answer the question of how Tapis Lampung motifs function as a medium of cultural communication and what meanings are embedded within them. The primary objective is to uncover the system of signs contained in Tapis motifs and to explain their role in conveying the cultural values of the Lampung community.

This research is expected to contribute in two significant ways. Theoretically, it enriches the field of cultural semiotics, particularly within the context of Indonesian traditional textiles. Practically, the findings may serve as a foundation for cultural preservation efforts that focus not only on the physical form of cultural artifacts but also on the symbolic meanings they embody. Therefore, Tapis should be preserved not merely as a cultural artifact but also as a living medium of communication that continues to function within society.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a semiotic orientation to explore the symbolic meanings embedded in Lampung Tapis motifs. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of social and cultural realities, particularly in relation to symbolic meanings that cannot be adequately measured through quantitative methods (Creswell, 2013). Through this approach, the study focused not only on the visual description of motifs but also on the interpretation of meanings constructed within the cultural context of the Lampung community.

Conceptually, this research is grounded in a semiotic framework that views motifs as systems of signs representing cultural values. In this perspective, signs are understood as relationships between visual forms and meanings generated through interpretive processes (Saussure, 1916; Peirce, 1931). This framework is particularly relevant to Tapis as a cultural artifact containing complex and multilayered symbols (Barthes, 1986; Eco, 1976). Accordingly, the research design was developed to reveal the relationship between signifiers (motif forms) and signifieds (cultural meanings), while also examining how such meanings are interpreted within social contexts.

The object of the study focused on traditional Lampung Tapis motifs that continue to be used within cultural contexts, both in customary practices and handicraft production. The research objects were selected purposively based on the diversity of motif categories, including geometric, floral, faunal, and symbolic motifs. These motifs were chosen because they strongly represent cultural values, as demonstrated in previous studies (Khasanah, 2021; Auralia, 2025). Furthermore, the selection considered the continuity of motif usage within society, ensuring that the analysis remained not only historical but also contextual.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through direct observation of Tapis motifs and in-depth interviews with artisans, cultural practitioners, and individuals possessing extensive knowledge of Lampung Tapis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide informants with the flexibility to explain the meanings of motifs based on their experiences and cultural understanding. This approach enabled the researcher to capture subjective perspectives that are essential in cultural semiotic studies (Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

Secondary data were collected from various scholarly sources, including academic journals, books, theses, and documents related to Lampung Tapis. These sources were used to strengthen the analysis and provide relevant theoretical contexts. Previous studies conducted by Martini (2025), Liem (2024), and Novialista (2019) served as important references in understanding the symbolic meanings of Tapis motifs and their functions in cultural communication. In addition, studies examining the transformation of Tapis functions and meanings in contemporary contexts were utilized to understand ongoing cultural dynamics (Hartono, 2004; Khairunnisa et al., 2025).

Data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation involved direct examination of Tapis motifs found on textiles used in traditional ceremonies as well as on contemporary handicraft products. Interviews were conducted to uncover meanings that are not immediately visible, including philosophical and symbolic values embedded within the motifs. Documentation involved the collection of photographs, field notes, archival materials, and other relevant records related to

Tapis motifs. The combination of these techniques facilitated data triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, information relevant to the research focus, particularly concerning symbolic meanings, was selected and organized. In the data display stage, the reduced data were systematically presented through narratives and motif categorizations. Finally, conclusions were drawn through the interpretation of motif meanings using a semiotic framework.

The analytical process involved identifying the relationships between signifiers and signifieds within each motif while examining the interpretations emerging from their cultural contexts. The analysis extended beyond denotative meanings to include connotative meanings associated with social values, ideologies, and cultural beliefs (Barthes, 1986; Piliang, 2003). Furthermore, the analysis considered the broader context of cultural communication, in which Tapis motifs function as media for conveying nonverbal messages and cultural knowledge (McLuhan, 1994; Hidayat, 2015).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed both source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants and documentary sources, while methodological triangulation was achieved through the integration of observation, interviews, and documentation. These procedures were essential for ensuring that the interpretations produced were not solely subjective but were supported by multiple credible sources.

Overall, the research methodology was systematically designed to uncover the symbolic meanings of Tapis motifs as a medium of cultural communication. The combination of qualitative inquiry and semiotic analysis enabled a contextual and comprehensive examination of cultural symbols. Consequently, the findings are expected to contribute significantly to the fields of cultural studies, semiotics, and cultural communication, particularly in relation to the preservation and interpretation of Indonesia's traditional textile heritage.

Results and Discussion

Identification of Tapis Motifs

The identification of Lampung Tapis motifs in this study was conducted through a combination of visual observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with artisans and cultural practitioners, enabling a comprehensive understanding of both the visual structures and the meanings embedded within the motifs. This process emphasized not only the recognition of motif forms but also the social and cultural contexts underlying their creation and use. Such an approach is consistent with qualitative research frameworks that regard cultural objects as living systems of meaning that continuously interact with social practices and community experiences (Creswell, 2013).



Picture 1: Tapis Textile

The findings indicate that Lampung Tapis motifs can be broadly categorized into four principal groups: geometric motifs, floral motifs, faunal motifs, and symbolic motifs. These categories demonstrate that Tapis motifs are not randomly arranged decorative elements but rather components of an organized visual system that reflects cultural values and collective knowledge. Each motif category possesses distinctive visual characteristics while simultaneously representing specific social, philosophical, and cultural meanings.

Geometric motifs constitute one of the most dominant categories found in various types of Tapis. These motifs are characterized by repetitive arrangements of lines, triangles, diamonds, and other symmetrical patterns. Visually, such patterns create impressions of balance, order, and harmony. Within the cultural context of Lampung society, geometric motifs symbolize social stability, communal harmony, and the orderly structure of social relationships. Previous studies have similarly emphasized that geometric patterns in Tapis function

not merely as decorative elements but as representations of social values and cultural principles embedded within the community (Khasanah, 2021).

Floral motifs represent another significant category within the decorative repertoire of Tapis. These motifs commonly depict stylized forms of flowers, leaves, and other plant elements inspired by the natural environment. Their presence reflects the close relationship between the Lampung people and nature. Symbolically, floral motifs are often associated with fertility, prosperity, growth, and the continuity of life. They embody cultural aspirations for abundance and harmony, illustrating how natural elements are transformed into visual symbols that communicate collective values and beliefs.

Faunal motifs, although less prevalent than geometric and floral patterns, also occupy an important place within the visual language of Tapis. These motifs portray various animals that hold symbolic significance within local cultural traditions. Their inclusion reflects the cultural understanding of the relationship between humans and the animal world, often conveying ideas related to strength, protection, wisdom, or spiritual beliefs. In many cases, faunal motifs are integrated with other decorative elements, creating complex visual compositions that enrich the symbolic content of the textile.



Picture 2: South Lampung Ship-Motif Tapis Cloth

Among the identified categories, symbolic motifs exhibit the greatest depth of cultural meaning. One of the most prominent examples is the ship motif, which occupies a central position within the visual tradition of Lampung Tapis. Beyond its literal representation as a vessel, the ship motif symbolizes life journeys, social mobility, migration, and the relationship between humans and the spiritual realm (Auralia, 2025). In many Tapis designs, the ship motif serves as a focal element, highlighting its significance within the cultural worldview of the Lampung community. Its recurring presence reflects collective memories, historical experiences, and philosophical understandings that have been transmitted across generations.

The findings further reveal that these motifs do not function independently. Instead, they are arranged in interconnected compositions that generate broader systems of meaning. The combination of geometric, floral, faunal, and symbolic motifs creates multilayered visual narratives in which each element contributes to the overall cultural message conveyed by the textile. This structural organization demonstrates that Tapis should be understood not simply as an artistic product but as a sophisticated visual communication system.

Additionally, the study identified variations in motif usage influenced by social contexts and contemporary developments. While traditional motifs continue to be preserved within customary ceremonies and cultural practices, certain adaptations have emerged in response to modern aesthetic preferences and market demands. These adaptations often involve modifications in motif arrangements, color schemes, and applications across various creative products. Nevertheless, the fundamental symbolic elements of the motifs remain largely intact, serving as markers of cultural identity and continuity. This finding supports earlier observations that Tapis has undergone processes of transformation while maintaining its essential cultural significance (Hartono, 2004; Khairunnisa et al., 2025).

Overall, the identification of Lampung Tapis motifs demonstrates that each motif category possesses distinctive visual characteristics and symbolic meanings deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the Lampung people. The classification of motifs into geometric, floral, faunal, and symbolic forms provides a foundation for understanding Tapis as a structured system of signs. These findings constitute an important basis for subsequent semiotic analysis, enabling a deeper exploration of the relationship between visual representation and cultural meaning embedded within Lampung Tapis motifs.

Semiotic Analysis of Tapis Motifs

The semiotic analysis of Lampung Tapis motifs in this study is grounded in the understanding that every visual element embedded within the textile functions not merely as a decorative feature but as a sign that conveys cultural meanings. Drawing upon both structural and interpretive semiotic frameworks, Tapis motifs are examined as a system of signs operating through the relationships among visual forms, cultural references, and

interpretive processes within society. This approach enables the identification of meanings that are not immediately visible but are embedded within socially constructed symbolic structures.

From Ferdinand de Saussure's perspective, Tapis motifs can be understood through the relationship between the signifier and the signified. The signifier refers to the observable visual forms of motifs, such as lines, geometric patterns, floral stylizations, or ship symbols, while the signified refers to the concepts and meanings associated with those forms (Saussure, 1916). The findings reveal that the relationship between signifiers and signifieds in Tapis motifs is conventional and culturally constructed through collective agreements transmitted across generations. For instance, geometric motifs are not interpreted merely as repetitive visual patterns but as symbols of social order, harmony, and balance within community life (Khasanah, 2021). This relationship demonstrates that the meanings of motifs do not arise naturally from their visual forms; rather, they are produced through ongoing social and cultural processes.

The symbolic significance of geometric motifs reflects broader cultural principles embedded within Lampung society. Their symmetrical structures and repetitive arrangements communicate ideas of stability, cohesion, and collective responsibility. Such meanings emerge from cultural interpretations rather than from the motifs themselves, illustrating Saussure's argument that signs derive meaning through socially established conventions. Consequently, geometric motifs function as visual expressions of the values that regulate social interaction and communal life.

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework further enriches the analysis through his triadic model consisting of the representamen, object, and interpretant (Peirce, 1931). Within the context of Tapis, the representamen corresponds to the visible motif on the textile, the object refers to the concept or reality represented by the motif, and the interpretant refers to the meaning generated in the minds of individuals or social groups. The findings indicate that interpretations of Tapis motifs are not fixed but vary according to cultural knowledge, personal experiences, and social contexts.

The ship motif provides a particularly illustrative example of Peirce's triadic relationship. Visually represented through stylized depictions of vessels, the motif refers to concepts such as life journeys, migration, exploration, and human interaction with the natural and spiritual worlds. However, the meanings generated by interpreters differ according to context. Within traditional cultural settings, the ship motif is commonly understood as a symbol of life's journey and ancestral wisdom. In contemporary contexts, however, it may also be interpreted as a representation of social mobility, modernization, and cultural transformation (Auralia, 2025). These varying interpretations highlight the dynamic and contextual nature of meaning production within semiotic systems.

The findings further demonstrate that Tapis motifs function as cultural signs capable of generating multiple layers of interpretation without losing their symbolic relevance. Such interpretive flexibility contributes to the endurance of Tapis as a cultural medium, enabling traditional symbols to remain meaningful despite changing social conditions.

A deeper examination using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach (1986) reveals that Tapis motifs operate simultaneously at denotative and connotative levels of meaning. At the denotative level, motifs are recognized as identifiable visual forms, such as geometric arrangements, floral patterns, or symbolic figures. At the connotative level, however, these motifs convey broader cultural meanings associated with values, ideologies, and collective worldviews.

For example, the use of gold thread embroidery in Tapis textiles carries significance beyond its decorative function. Denotatively, gold thread serves as a material element enhancing the visual appearance of the cloth. Connotatively, however, it symbolizes prosperity, honor, prestige, and social status within Lampung society (Totton, 2009). Through this symbolic association, the textile communicates social meanings that extend beyond its material form. In this sense, Tapis functions not only as an artistic object but also as a medium through which cultural hierarchies and social values are expressed and reproduced.

Barthes' framework also highlights how cultural myths become embedded within visual symbols. Certain motifs have acquired meanings that are so deeply integrated into cultural consciousness that they appear natural or self-evident to members of the community. These symbolic associations contribute to the preservation of cultural narratives and collective identities, reinforcing the communicative role of Tapis within social life.

Eco (1976) argues that signs exist within broader systems of signification that allow for multilayered interpretation. This perspective is highly relevant to the analysis of Tapis motifs, which derive meaning not only from their visual forms but also from the contexts in which they are produced, displayed, and used. The findings indicate that the same motif may communicate different meanings depending on its social setting and function.

For example, a motif displayed within a traditional ceremonial context may signify cultural legitimacy, ancestral continuity, and adherence to customary values. The same motif, when incorporated into commercial

products or contemporary fashion designs, may communicate ideas of cultural identity, artistic innovation, or regional branding. These variations illustrate that meaning is not static but emerges through interactions between signs and their social environments. Consequently, Tapis motifs should be understood as components of a dynamic semiotic system rather than as fixed symbolic entities.

The contextual nature of meaning is particularly evident in contemporary cultural settings where traditional motifs circulate across diverse media and audiences. As motifs move beyond their original cultural environments, new interpretations emerge, enriching but also complicating their symbolic significance.

Piliang (2003) expands this discussion by emphasizing that signs may undergo shifts in meaning as a result of social change, technological development, and cultural transformation. The findings of this study indicate that such processes are also evident in the contemporary evolution of Lampung Tapis motifs. The increasing incorporation of Tapis motifs into fashion, digital media, creative industries, and contemporary visual arts has generated new forms of interpretation and cultural consumption.

While these adaptations contribute to the visibility and sustainability of Tapis, they also create the possibility of meaning displacement. In many contemporary contexts, motifs are appreciated primarily for their aesthetic qualities rather than for their symbolic significance. As a result, cultural meanings that were once widely understood within traditional communities may become less recognizable to broader audiences. This phenomenon reflects a process of decontextualization, whereby signs become detached from the cultural systems that originally produced and sustained their meanings.

Nevertheless, the reinterpretation of motifs should not be viewed solely as a form of cultural loss. The findings suggest that adaptation can also serve as a mechanism for cultural continuity, allowing traditional symbols to remain relevant within changing social environments. Through reinterpretation, Tapis motifs continue to function as communicative symbols, although the meanings they convey may evolve in response to contemporary realities.

Overall, the semiotic analysis demonstrates that Lampung Tapis motifs constitute a complex system of cultural signs characterized by multiple layers of meaning and interpretation. Through the theoretical perspectives of Saussure, Peirce, Barthes, Eco, and Piliang, the motifs can be understood as dynamic symbolic forms that communicate social values, cultural identities, historical experiences, and collective worldviews. Their meanings are continuously negotiated through cultural practices and social interactions, reinforcing the role of Tapis as both a cultural artifact and a medium of cultural communication.



Figure 3: Tapis

Nevertheless, the findings of the analysis indicate that Tapis motifs continue to function as a medium of cultural communication. From McLuhan's (1994) perspective, media do not merely transmit messages; they also shape the ways in which people perceive and understand reality. As a traditional visual medium, Tapis motifs remain capable of conveying cultural values, although their forms and meanings have undergone various transformations over time. Their continued existence within both traditional and contemporary contexts demonstrates their enduring communicative function and cultural significance.

In this regard, Hidayat (2015) argues that cultural symbols play a crucial role in constructing and maintaining local identity. Tapis motifs serve as symbolic markers through which the Lampung community expresses its cultural distinctiveness and collective heritage. Despite the social and cultural changes brought about by modernization and globalization, these motifs continue to function as recognizable symbols of belonging and cultural continuity. Consequently, the presence of Tapis motifs extends beyond aesthetic expression, serving as an important means of preserving and reinforcing the cultural identity of the Lampung people.

Furthermore, this study finds that the meanings of Tapis motifs are not produced solely by their creators but are continuously constructed through interactions between individuals and the broader community. This finding highlights the socially negotiated nature of meaning-making processes. Rather than being fixed and immutable, meanings emerge through ongoing dialogue among cultural actors who interpret and reinterpret symbols according to their experiences, knowledge, and social contexts.

This process demonstrates the dialogic nature of cultural meaning, whereby interpretations evolve alongside social transformation. As communities encounter new cultural influences, technological developments, and changing social realities, the meanings associated with traditional motifs may be reconsidered, expanded, or redefined. Such developments do not necessarily diminish the significance of the motifs; instead, they illustrate the adaptability and resilience of cultural symbols in responding to contemporary challenges. Through these processes of reinterpretation, Tapis motifs continue to function as active components of cultural communication rather than as static relics of the past.

In this sense, Tapis motifs operate as communicative spaces in which negotiations between tradition and modernity take place. They provide a symbolic platform through which cultural heritage can be preserved while simultaneously accommodating new interpretations and contemporary expressions. The coexistence of traditional meanings and modern understandings reflects the dynamic nature of cultural communication, where continuity and change occur simultaneously.

The findings also suggest that the communicative role of Tapis extends beyond the transmission of cultural messages. By facilitating interactions among generations, social groups, and cultural perspectives, the motifs contribute to broader processes of cultural reproduction, identity formation, and collective memory. Through their symbolic content, Tapis motifs enable communities to maintain connections with their historical roots while adapting to evolving social environments.

Therefore, the semiotic analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that Lampung Tapis motifs constitute a complex and multilayered system of signs. The relationships among signifiers, signifieds, and interpretants create interconnected networks of meaning that not only reflect cultural values but also reveal the dynamic processes of social and cultural change. These symbolic networks illustrate how meanings are continuously produced, interpreted, and renegotiated within cultural contexts.

Ultimately, the application of semiotic theory in this research contributes not only to uncovering the symbolic meanings embedded in Tapis motifs but also to providing a broader understanding of how culture is communicated through visual symbols. The findings affirm that Tapis motifs function as powerful cultural texts through which values, identities, beliefs, and collective memories are transmitted across generations. As such, Tapis should be understood not merely as a traditional textile artifact but as an active medium of cultural communication that continues to shape and reflect the cultural life of the Lampung community.

Tapis sebagai Media Komunikasi Budaya

Pembahasan mengenai tapis Lampung sebagai media komunikasi budaya berangkat dari pemahaman bahwa motif yang terkandung di dalamnya tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai elemen visual, tetapi juga sebagai sarana penyampaian pesan yang sarat makna. Dalam konteks ini, tapis dapat diposisikan sebagai sistem komunikasi nonverbal yang bekerja melalui simbol-simbol visual yang telah disepakati secara sosial. Motif tapis tidak sekadar dilihat, melainkan dibaca dan ditafsirkan oleh anggota masyarakat yang memahami kode budaya yang melingkupinya.

Dalam perspektif komunikasi budaya, representasi visual memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk dan menyampaikan makna. Hall (1997) menegaskan bahwa budaya bekerja melalui sistem representasi yang memungkinkan individu memahami realitas sosial melalui simbol. Dalam hal ini, motif tapis berfungsi sebagai medium representasi yang menghubungkan pengalaman budaya dengan ekspresi visual. Setiap motif yang disusun dalam kain tapis membawa pesan tertentu yang berkaitan dengan nilai, norma, dan identitas masyarakat Lampung.



Figure 4: Penggunaan Dalam Konteks Adat

The findings indicate that Tapis motifs communicate a wide range of cultural messages, encompassing social values, religious beliefs, and philosophical perspectives on life. For instance, geometric motifs, which reflect order and balance, can be interpreted as representations of harmony within social life (Khasanah, 2021). Likewise, ship motifs convey messages related to life journeys, social mobility, and the relationship between human beings and the spiritual realm (Auralia, 2025). Through these symbolic representations, Tapis functions as a medium through which the worldview of the Lampung people is communicated.

Within communication theory, McLuhan (1994) maintains that media do not merely serve as channels for transmitting messages but also shape the ways in which those messages are understood. As a traditional visual medium, Tapis possesses distinctive characteristics because it communicates through symbols rather than explicit verbal expressions. Consequently, interpreting the meanings embedded in Tapis motifs requires cultural knowledge and familiarity with the symbolic system from which they originate. The communicative process facilitated by Tapis is therefore highly contextual and dependent upon the cultural competence of the audience.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the communicative function of Tapis extends beyond the transmission of messages to include the construction and reinforcement of cultural identity. Hidayat (2015) emphasizes that cultural symbols are essential elements in the formation of local identity. In this regard, Tapis motifs function as markers of identity that distinguish the Lampung people from other cultural groups. The use of specific motifs within customary contexts may signify social status, community roles, and an individual's connection to cultural traditions.

In addition, Tapis serves as a medium for transmitting cultural values across generations. Through motifs that have been inherited over time, cultural knowledge and social values are preserved and communicated to subsequent generations (Martini, 2025). This process demonstrates that Tapis functions not only as a medium of communication within contemporary social settings but also as a bridge connecting the past with the present. In this capacity, Tapis plays a significant role in maintaining cultural continuity and collective memory.

However, the findings also reveal that the communicative function of Tapis has undergone transformations in response to contemporary social changes. Modernization and globalization have influenced the ways in which Tapis motifs are produced, utilized, and interpreted. In some cases, Tapis motifs have shifted from functioning primarily as media of cultural communication to becoming aesthetic products oriented toward commercial markets (Hartono, 2004). This transformation has contributed to a decline in public understanding of the symbolic meanings embedded within the motifs.

The phenomenon of motif reinterpretation in contemporary contexts, including fashion design and street art, illustrates the ongoing transformation of Tapis as a communicative medium (Khairunnisa et al., 2025). On one hand, such adaptations enable Tapis to remain relevant within modern society. On the other hand, they introduce the risk of decontextualization, whereby motifs lose their original cultural significance and become understood primarily as decorative visual elements. This situation presents a significant challenge in balancing cultural preservation with innovation.

Despite these challenges, the study finds that the role of Tapis as a medium of cultural communication has not disappeared entirely. In specific contexts, particularly within customary and ceremonial practices, Tapis motifs continue to serve as vehicles for conveying meaningful cultural messages. This finding suggests that Tapis possesses the capacity to adapt to changing social conditions without completely losing its communicative function. In this sense, Tapis can be understood as a dynamic medium that continuously negotiates the relationship between tradition and social change.

Moreover, the communicative process associated with Tapis involves interactions among artisans, users, and observers. The meanings of motifs are not determined solely by their creators but are also shaped by how they are interpreted and understood within society. This process highlights the dialogic nature of cultural communication through Tapis, where meanings are continuously constructed and reconstructed through social interaction.

Therefore, Lampung Tapis may be understood as a complex and multilayered medium of cultural communication. The motifs embedded within the textile not only convey symbolic messages but also shape the ways in which individuals understand and articulate their cultural identities. In the face of ongoing social transformation, the primary challenge lies in ensuring that the communicative function of Tapis remains preserved, allowing the cultural meanings contained within its motifs to endure, evolve, and remain relevant within contemporary society.

Discussion

The discussion of Lampung Tapis as a medium of cultural communication cannot be separated from the dynamics of social change that influence the production, distribution, and interpretation of this cultural artifact. The findings of this study reveal a significant tension between efforts to preserve the symbolic meanings embedded within Tapis motifs and the increasing commercialization driven by the creative industry. This tension represents a crucial point of analysis for understanding the contemporary position of Tapis within an evolving cultural landscape.

In its traditional context, Tapis motifs function as a system of signs deeply rooted in the social structure and cultural values of Lampung society. The meanings embodied in these motifs are not interpreted solely at the individual level but are collectively constructed through recurring cultural practices and shared social experiences. Through customary ceremonies, social interactions, and intergenerational transmission, Tapis motifs have historically served as communicative devices that reinforce cultural norms, social identities, and collective memories. Their significance extends beyond visual representation, functioning as an integral component of the cultural knowledge system maintained by the community.

However, processes of modernization have significantly altered the ways in which Tapis is produced, consumed, and understood. Hartono (2004) demonstrates that the transformation of Tapis from a cultural symbol into an economic commodity has affected the meanings traditionally associated with its motifs. As Tapis increasingly enters commercial markets, aesthetic appeal and market value often become more influential considerations than symbolic significance. Consequently, the cultural functions that once defined the production and use of Tapis may become secondary to economic objectives.

This transformation has given rise to a phenomenon of meaning reduction, whereby motifs that once carried profound symbolic significance become perceived primarily as decorative visual elements. From a semiotic perspective, this condition may be understood as a process of decontextualization, in which signs become detached from the cultural systems that originally generated and sustained their meanings (Piliang, 2003). Tapis motifs incorporated into fashion products, commercial branding, or contemporary design practices frequently lose their connection to the cultural values and historical narratives they originally represented. As a result, the communicative function of the motifs becomes weakened, and their role as carriers of cultural knowledge may gradually diminish.

Nevertheless, not all forms of transformation should be interpreted as threats to cultural sustainability. The adaptation of Tapis motifs into contemporary media, including street art, graphic design, and modern fashion, demonstrates ongoing processes of reinterpretation that allow these symbols to remain relevant in changing social contexts (Khairunnisa et al., 2025). From a communication perspective, such developments may be viewed as forms of cultural rearticulation, whereby traditional symbols are reintroduced and reconfigured to engage contemporary audiences. Through this process, cultural symbols acquire new meanings while maintaining connections to their historical origins.

Accordingly, cultural change should not automatically be equated with cultural loss. Instead, transformation may represent a form of negotiation between tradition and modernity. By adapting to new contexts and modes of expression, Tapis motifs can continue to function as communicative symbols capable of engaging broader audiences. Such adaptability is particularly important in an era characterized by rapid technological development and increasingly diverse forms of cultural interaction.

Despite these opportunities, the process of reinterpretation requires careful consideration to ensure that the fundamental meanings embedded within the motifs are not entirely lost. Without adequate understanding of the cultural context from which the motifs originate, reinterpretation may produce meanings that are disconnected from their traditional foundations. Under such circumstances, cultural symbols risk becoming superficial aesthetic elements rather than meaningful expressions of collective identity and cultural memory.

Therefore, innovation should be situated within a framework of cultural preservation, ensuring that adaptation strengthens rather than diminishes the symbolic significance of Tapis.

From the perspective of cultural representation, Hall (1997) argues that meaning is never fixed but is continuously produced and reproduced through social practices. This perspective suggests that the meanings of Tapis motifs are shaped not only by historical traditions but also by the ways contemporary communities interpret and utilize them. Consequently, shifts in meaning should be understood as natural aspects of cultural development rather than as anomalies. Cultural symbols remain meaningful precisely because they are capable of responding to changing social realities while retaining connections to their historical roots.

The findings further reveal a notable gap in the interpretation of Tapis motifs between older and younger generations. Older generations tend to possess a deeper understanding of the symbolic meanings associated with the motifs because they have direct experience with the cultural practices surrounding Tapis. Their knowledge is often derived from participation in customary ceremonies, family traditions, and community rituals where the symbolic functions of Tapis remain visible and meaningful.

In contrast, younger generations are more likely to encounter Tapis as a visual or commercial product without fully understanding the philosophical values embedded within its motifs. While they may recognize Tapis as an important cultural symbol of Lampung identity, their engagement is often limited to its aesthetic dimensions. This situation highlights a significant challenge in the process of cultural transmission, where inherited values are not always communicated effectively to future generations.

Within the framework of cultural communication, this phenomenon can be understood as a disruption in the processes of encoding and decoding cultural messages (Hall, 1997). The creators and custodians of Tapis may encode specific cultural meanings into the motifs, yet contemporary audiences do not necessarily decode these meanings in the intended manner. The effectiveness of Tapis as a medium of cultural communication therefore depends largely upon the existence of shared cultural references between message producers and receivers. When such shared references weaken, the communicative capacity of the motifs may be reduced.

Globalization further complicates this situation by introducing alternative cultural influences that shape perceptions of local traditions. Exposure to global cultural products and values often encourages new forms of cultural consumption that may compete with local cultural expressions. In some cases, traditional artifacts such as Tapis are perceived as less relevant than contemporary cultural products that align more closely with global trends and lifestyles. This development presents a significant challenge for maintaining the relevance of Tapis as a medium of cultural communication rooted in local values and traditions.

At the same time, globalization also creates opportunities for cultural visibility and dissemination. Through digital platforms, social media, and international cultural exchanges, Tapis motifs can reach audiences far beyond their traditional geographical boundaries. This expanded visibility provides new possibilities for cultural promotion, education, and revitalization. Therefore, globalization should be understood not only as a source of cultural pressure but also as a potential avenue for cultural sustainability and innovation.

Despite these various challenges, Lampung Tapis continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience as an adaptive cultural artifact. Its ability to transform while maintaining core aspects of its identity illustrates its potential to remain relevant across different social and historical contexts. This adaptability suggests that Tapis should not be viewed as a static cultural object but rather as a dynamic cultural system capable of responding to changing circumstances while preserving essential elements of its heritage.

Overall, this critical discussion demonstrates that the position of Lampung Tapis as a medium of cultural communication is characterized by complexity and contradiction. On one hand, commercialization, globalization, and shifting patterns of cultural consumption pose significant threats to the preservation of symbolic meanings. On the other hand, processes of reinterpretation, adaptation, and innovation create opportunities for cultural revitalization and continued relevance. The central challenge lies in maintaining a balance between preserving symbolic meanings and adapting to contemporary realities. Addressing this challenge requires the collaborative involvement of communities, scholars, cultural institutions, policymakers, and creative industry practitioners. Through such collective efforts, Tapis can continue to function as a living and meaningful medium of cultural communication, capable of connecting cultural heritage with the realities of contemporary society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study confirms that Lampung Tapis is not merely a traditional textile product but a complex and multilayered system of signs that functions as a medium of cultural communication. Through a semiotic approach, Tapis motifs can be understood as representations of the social values, religious beliefs, and philosophies of life of the Lampung people, which have been transmitted across generations. Each visual

element embedded within the motifs does not stand independently; rather, it is interconnected within a structure of meaning shaped by cultural conventions and continuously reproduced through social practices.

The findings reveal that Tapis motifs possess the capacity to communicate cultural messages symbolically, both within traditional settings and in the context of contemporary society. In customary practices, Tapis continues to maintain its communicative role as a marker of identity, social status, and cultural values. At the same time, processes of modernization and commercialization have contributed to shifts in meaning, whereby Tapis motifs are increasingly perceived as aesthetic elements rather than as culturally significant symbols. This phenomenon illustrates an ongoing transformation that affects not only the visual forms of the motifs but also the ways in which they are interpreted and understood by society.

Despite these changes, the study also demonstrates that Tapis possesses a remarkable capacity for adaptation, enabling its continued relevance within changing social and cultural environments. The reinterpretation of Tapis motifs across various contemporary media indicates that Tapis remains a meaningful medium of cultural expression, even while facing challenges associated with the potential reduction of symbolic meaning. In this regard, Tapis should be understood as a dynamic cultural artifact that continuously negotiates the relationship between tradition and modernity.

Based on these findings, more systematic efforts are required to safeguard the symbolic meanings embedded within Tapis motifs. Cultural preservation should not focus solely on the physical form or visual appearance of the textile but should also encompass the cultural values and philosophical principles that underlie its symbolic representations. Cultural education represents a particularly important strategy, especially for younger generations, to ensure that they not only recognize Tapis as a cultural product but also understand the meanings and values embedded within its motifs.

Furthermore, the integration of Tapis motifs into digital media and creative platforms may serve as an effective strategy for expanding the reach of cultural communication. However, such innovations should be undertaken with careful consideration of cultural contexts to prevent the loss of symbolic meanings that constitute the essence of Tapis. Collaboration among scholars, cultural practitioners, educational institutions, policymakers, and creative industry actors is therefore essential to create a sustainable framework in which preservation and innovation can coexist harmoniously.

Ultimately, the sustainability of Lampung Tapis as a medium of cultural communication depends upon society's ability to maintain a balance between preserving traditional values and adapting to contemporary change. In an era increasingly shaped by globalization and technological advancement, Tapis possesses significant potential to remain a living and meaningful cultural expression. This potential can only be realized if the symbolic meanings embedded within its motifs continue to be understood, preserved, transmitted, and reinterpreted responsibly across generations. Through such efforts, Tapis will not only endure as a cultural heritage artifact but also continue to function as an active medium through which cultural identity, collective memory, and local wisdom are communicated and sustained in contemporary society.

References

- Auralia, D. F. (2025). Filosofi kapal dalam kain tapis Lampung. *Kabuyutan: Jurnal Budaya Nusantara*. <https://ejournal.lintasbudayanusantara.net/index.php/kabuyutan/article/view/376>
- Barthes, R. (1986). *The semiotic challenge*. Hill and Wang.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Eco, U. (1976). *A theory of semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. SAGE Publications.
- Hartono, L. (2004). Perubahan fungsi, motif, dan makna kain tapis Lampung. Universitas Gadjah Mada. <https://etd.repository.ugm.ac.id/penelitian/detail/24170>
- Hidayat, R. (2015). Kebudayaan dan identitas lokal di Indonesia. *Besaung: Jurnal Seni Desain dan Budaya*. <https://ejournal.uigm.ac.id/index.php/Besaung/article/view/6105>
- Khairunnisa, A., et al. (2025). Motif tapis Lampung dalam street art kontemporer. *Besaung: Jurnal Seni Desain dan Budaya*. <https://ejournal.uigm.ac.id/index.php/Besaung/article/view/6105>
- Khasanah. (2021). Motif geometris tapis sebagai representasi nilai sosial. *Jurnal Etnomatematika Indonesia*. <https://cibinstitute.id/index.php/causa/article/download/920/806/2616>
- Koentjaraningrat. (2009). *Pengantar ilmu antropologi*. Rineka Cipta.
- Liem, E. J. (2024). Semiotic analysis of tapis tuho cloth. *Humanitatis: Journal of Language and Literature*. <https://journal.universitasbumigora.ac.id/index.php/humanitatis/article/view/3632>
- Loviana, S. (2020). Etnomatematika pada kain tapis Lampung. *Jurnal TAPIS*. <https://ejournal.metrouniv.ac.id/tapis/article/download/1956/1535/6684>

- Martini, M. (2025). Makna simbolik kain tapis Lampung sebagai identitas budaya. *Punyimbang: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*. <https://jurnal.pbs.fkip.unila.ac.id/index.php/punyimbang/article/view/825>
- McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. MIT Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Novialista, M. (2019). Pesan dakwah dalam motif kain tapis Lampung. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung. <https://repository.radenintan.ac.id/6028>
- Peirce, C. S. (1931). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Harvard University Press.
- Piliang, Y. A. (2003). *Hipерsemiotika: Tafsir cultural studies atas matinya makna*. Jalasutra.
- Saussure, F. de. (1916). *Course in general linguistics*. McGraw-Hill.
- Totton, M. L. (2009). *Wearing wealth and styling identity: Tapis from Lampung, Sumatra*. University of Hawai'i Press.