



DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING BUGIS CULTURAL VISUAL IDENTITY THROUGH BOMBANG MOTIF ORNAMENT ON THE PHINISI SHIP AS A MARITIME TOURISM MEDIUM

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Article Info

Article History
Received: Juni 2026
Approved: July 2026
Published: August 2026

Keywords:

Visual Identity, Bugis Culture, Phinisi Ship, Cultural Tourism, Maritime Tourism

Abstract

The Phinisi ship is a maritime cruise vessel accessible to both local and international tourists and currently sails to Bali and Labuan Bajo. This research intends to create design recommendations to integrate bombang lipa' sabbe motif in designing Phinisi ships to strengthen Bugis maritime cultural identity and design based cultural tourism. This study incorporates design theory and theory of visual identity, culture-based design, and the experience economy. The researcher intends to provide a system of design recommendations and the bombang motif as a consistent visual identity semantic system in the Phinisi ship's exterior, interior, textile, and sail elements; a bilingual visual verbal communication design for cross-lingual cultural communication; and 4E based experience design to facilitate more participation and presence of authentic Bugis maritime cultural experience on the vessel. It is also hoped that this research can encourage other related researchers to develop the entire Bugis maritime cultural visual identity system in the range of lipa' sabbe motifs applicable to other maritime tourism activities.

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ISSN 2252-7516
E-ISSN 2721-8961

INTRODUCTION

The post-pandemic era of travel has led to the emergence of design based cultural tourism. Post pandemic travelers, especially millennials and Generation Z, have a preference for travel that is more experiential and culturally immersive. In this regard, design has the potential to go beyond aesthetics. This potential lies in design as a cultural communication system that links travelers to a host culture's heritage.

From a Visual Communication Design (VCD) perspective, South Sulawesi's Bugis and Makassar traditional heritage, which includes the lipa' sabbe (Bugis silk sarong) and phinisi ship, has the potential to become South Sulawesi's cultural tourism identity system.

Cultural transformation has the potential to extend beyond government lead heritage preservation programs. Non-formal educational encounters and informal cultural symbols in daily life or recreational settings may be as important as classroom-based instruction for tourists who engage with a culture for a short period and on their own initiative. Considering this perspective, while the phinisi ship has the function of a tourism vessel, the ship may also be considered an informal educational system focused on bombang (pattern) motifs and becomes a non-formal educational system to build the cultural understanding of visitors while requiring no guided instruction.

This study develops design recommendations for the potential integration of these two cultural assets, focusing specifically on the application of the bombang (wave) lipa' sabbe motif as ornament on the Phinisi ship. Three design questions are posed: (1) What application principles and specifications should guide the use of the bombang motif ornament to strengthen the visual identity of Bugis culture? (2) What visual communication design guidelines can position an ornamented Phinisi ship as an effective medium of cross lingual cultural communication? (3) What design recommendations can support the Phinisi ship's contribution to experiential, design based maritime cultural tourism?

To address these questions, the Results and Discussion section is organised so that each design question is developed into a specific set of design recommendations: DQ1 is addressed through the proposed application specifications for the

bombang motif summarised in Table 1, formulated against Wheeler's (2009) and Sachari's (2007) indicators of visual consistency, distinctiveness, and cultural meaning; DQ2 is addressed through design guidelines for the ship as a communication medium and a proposed bilingual, cross lingual communication design; and DQ3 is addressed through design guidelines developed using Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E framework, summarised in Table 2. This structure will make explicit the connection between each design question, the criteria, precedent data used, and recommendations rather than leaving this connection implicit.

Cultural Visual Identity

According to Wheeler (2009), visual identity is a system of consistent visual signs that communicates the character, values, and vision of an entity. In a cultural context, visual identity is the visual representation of a collective identity of a group. Merung et al. (2024) point out that in the age of globalization, local cultural visual identities will be overrun by the global visual cultures if they do not have proper strategies to be actively communicated. Sachari (2007) states that cultural visual identity comprises distinctive motifs and ornaments, cultural color patterns, traditional artifacts, and a community agreed sign system. These elements must be consistently used in different media to create a strong and distinctive visual identity. In this study, Wheeler's (2009) brand identity framework is not used to treat Bugis culture as a commercial brand; it is applied as a set of design criteria, originally developed for organisational visual identity, to formulate recommendations for how a consistent visual sign system such as the bombang motif can be designed to communicate a cultural identity. The bombang motif is accordingly positioned as a cultural visual identity marker to be developed through design, and its relevance to tourism branding is treated as one possible implication of that positioning rather than as its primary conceptual status.

Experience Economy and Tourism

Pine & Gilmore (1999) introduced the concept of the 'experience economy', in which economic value shifts from commodities, products, and services toward experiences. In a

tourism context, visitors no longer simply purchase transport or accommodation they purchase experiences and the quality of those experiences is determined by their immersiveness, authenticity, and meaningfulness. Design plays a central role in creating immersive experiences: every visual element surrounding the visitor architecture, ornament, colour, typography, guide uniforms forms part of the designed cultural 'mise en scène' (Thinkwell Group, 2013). Ching (2007) similarly argues that built and spatial forms communicate meaning through the deliberate organisation of form, space, and order; applied to a vessel, this suggests that ornament is not incidental decoration but a spatial communicative element that shapes how the space itself is experienced and interpreted by its occupants. The application of bombang motif ornament throughout the Phinisi vessel is therefore proposed as a design strategy to create a comprehensive Bugis cultural mise en scène aboard the ship, in which the ornament is designed to function simultaneously as spatial organisation and as cultural signification.

The Ship as a Communication Medium

In media studies, a ship constitutes a unique space, it is a moving medium that carries visual messages from one context to another. Being an enclosed space, the Phinisi immerses guests in the medium throughout the journey. This provides an optimum environment for cultural communication. Audience is contained in a single, static 'text' for hours at a time (Fiske, 1990). In this case, the bombang motif is a sign that is defined by cultural convention in the context of its semiotics. The form and meaning of the motif are integrated through the culture as it is not arbitrary. The sign is reinforced through the repetition of its presence across different surfaces of the vessel and is consistent, thus meaning is stabilized through the redundancy of the system (Barthes, 1977; Sobur, 2009). In this context, the Phinisi, visiting thousands of guests at top maritime destinations such as Bali and Labuan Bajo, may be a crucial touchpoint for Bugis maritime culture. Bugis culture can be communicated through sustained exposure to a visual sign that is designed in a consistent manner. This cannot be easily achieved through a static exhibit or a printed publication.

METHODS

This study will use qualitative research design and incorporate literature and precedent studies with design studies. The main design objective is to design Sipuliyang Phinisi. The design object is Sipuliyang Phinisi ship. Data were gathered through three approaches: (1) a literature review on Bugis cultural visual identity, Indonesian maritime tourism, and experience design theory, used to establish the design criteria applied below; (2) a precedent study of photographic and documentary records of existing bombang motif application on the vessel, used to identify current practice as a basis for the proposed specifications; and (3) a contextual study of the two maritime tourism destinations where the Phinisi operates, namely Bali and Labuan Bajo, used to ground the recommendations in their intended context of use. The unit of design is each documented instance of motif application, categorised by placement (exterior, interior, textile, sail) and by visual attribute (form, colour, composition, and scale). Wheeler's (2009) visual identity framework was applied as a set of design criteria, consistency, distinctiveness, and cultural meaning, against which the application specifications proposed in Table 1 were formulated, while Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four dimensions of experience (4E) model was applied as a design framework used to generate the experience design guidelines summarised in Table 2, rather than as a measurement of actual visitor experience. The credibility of the resulting design recommendations was supported through triangulation of three sources: the precedent documentation of the vessel, the literature on Bugis cultural visual identity and *lipa' sabbe* motifs, and contextual information on Bali and Labuan Bajo as maritime tourism destinations; each proposed recommendation was checked against all three sources before being finalised below.

The design process followed three stages adapted from Creswell's (2014) qualitative research stages to a design context: data reduction, in which documented visual instances of existing motif application were organised and coded by placement and visual attribute to identify current practice; design formulation, in which the coded precedent data were translated into the proposed

application specifications and guidelines organised in Table 1 and Table 2; and verification, in which the resulting design recommendations were checked against the design criteria drawn from Wheeler (2009) and Pine and Gilmore (1999) described above. This staged procedure is intended to make the path from precedent data to the design recommendations presented in the Results and Discussion section auditable, rather than leaving the design process implicit. As with any design proposal formulated through desk-based research, the recommendations below are best treated as a starting specification for expert review, prototyping, and stakeholder validation prior to full implementation, rather than as a finalised design.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Design Recommendation: Positioning the Phinisi Ship as a Bugis Cultural Visual Identity Touchpoint

Within the visual identity framework, a touchpoint is any point of contact between an entity and its audience. It is recommended that Bugis cultural tourism treat the Phinisi ship, operating as a cruise vessel at Bali and Labuan Bajo, as a strategic design touchpoint, for three reasons: (a) the high volume of visitors it can reach; (b) the extended contact duration visitors are likely to spend, from hours to several days, aboard the vessel; and (c) the diversity of visitor origins it is likely to reach, including international tourists.

It is recommended that these three reasons be mapped onto distinct stages of the visitor journey when designing the motif's application. At embarkation, the exterior bombang ornament should serve as the visitor's first point of contact with the vessel's visual identity, designed at a scale that reads clearly from a distance before visitors board. During the voyage itself, the interior textile and wall applications of the motif, together with the bilingual information panels, should provide sustained, close-range exposure over the hours or days spent aboard, allowing initial recognition to develop into deeper familiarity. At points of external visibility, such as when the vessel is docked, sailing in view of other vessels, or photographed by visitors and shared externally,

the sail application should extend the motif's reach to audiences beyond those physically aboard. Designing the motif's application around these three journey stages, rather than treating the touchpoint as a single undifferentiated contact, is recommended because each stage relies on a different physical and temporal mode of exposure; the identity system depends on the same motif remaining recognisable and consistently applied across all three.

It is recommended that the application of bombang motif ornament be designed to transform every surface of the ship into an element of a single visual identity system. Borrowing Wheeler's (2009) brand identity framework only as a design tool, the ornamented Phinisi should be designed to function like a 'brand experience touchpoint', communicating Bugis cultural identity consistently across surfaces, comparable to how a well-designed retail environment communicates a brand's values through material and spatial detail. This analogy is intended to guide consistency in the design; it does not imply that the bombang motif or Bugis culture should be treated as a commercial brand.

Design Precedent: Ship Ornamentation as Cultural Tourism Practice

The Phinisi is not the only Indonesian maritime vessel in which craftsmanship and ornamentation can be positioned as part of the tourism appeal, and this precedent usefully informs the design recommendations proposed here. Suparman et al. (2022) document how the traditional building process of the Phinisi itself, carried out by the Punggawa (master shipbuilders) of Bira Village in Bulukumba, is bound up with customary knowledge and ritual practice that gives the vessel cultural value independent of its ornamentation. This suggests that any design recommendation for the bombang motif should treat it as one layer within a broader system of cultural meaning already attached to the Phinisi, rather than as an isolated design intervention. Comparable dynamics can be observed in other Indonesian maritime and craft-based tourism contexts, where traditional boatbuilding, weaving, or carving practices are similarly positioned as tourism attractions in their own right; designers seeking to extend the recommendations in this

study to other vessels or motifs are advised to identify and design around this kind of existing cultural value, rather than treating ornament as a standalone addition. This precedent is included here as a contextual basis for the design recommendations rather than as a systematic comparative analysis, since a rigorous cross case comparison was outside the scope of the present study.

Design Recommendation: Cross Lingual Communication Design

A key advantage of visual communication over verbal communication is its capacity to transcend language boundaries. It is recommended that the bombang motif be designed and consistently applied so that it can be 'read' as a visual element by visitors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, recognising that comprehension will naturally vary in depth: visitors unfamiliar with Bugis culture are expected to appreciate the visual beauty of the motif, while those with deeper contextual knowledge, or access to supporting information, are expected to grasp its cultural meaning.

It is recommended that bilingual information panels (in Indonesian and English) be designed and positioned at strategic points throughout the vessel, serving as 'captions' that elevate visual reading to the verbal level and help visitors understand the cultural narrative behind the ornaments they encounter. This two-layered communication design (visual and verbal) is proposed to facilitate the transmission of cultural messages, particularly to international visitors. As this study does not include visitor perception or comprehension data, the actual communicative effectiveness of this design recommendation should be confirmed through future audience research or piloting before full scale implementation.

Beyond specifying where the bombang motif should be applied, its visual functioning informs how it should be designed. This pattern is made from a continuously repeated undulating line that interacts with elements of visual literacy outlined by Dondis (1974). In particular, this pattern's rhythmic and repetitive elements invoke the movement of the sea.

Table 1. Recommended Application Specifications for the Bombang Motif by Touchpoint

Figure	Stylization	Precedent Photograph	Design Recommendation
			It is recommended that this motif be applied to the exterior of the vessel, at a scale legible from a distance, to strengthen visual identity and aesthetic appeal.
			Within the interior, it is recommended that the bombang motif be incorporated into the bedding textiles and wooden wall surfaces at a smaller scale and higher density, suited to close, sustained viewing.
			It is recommended that the bombang motif also be applied to the vessel's sail, using specialised sailcloth with a simplified, high contrast rendering for legibility at a distance and in motion.
			It is recommended that supporting information on the bombang motif concept be made available to visitors alongside its application on Pinisi vessels.

As a result, this motif brings the Bugis maritime identity closer to the pattern. As Wong (1993) and Sanyoto (2010) describe, the elements of design, in this case, the repetition of a wave line unit, helps a visual form achieve perceptual and emotional cohesion. Therefore, the maritime association and the motif should be consistent across all surfaces. For the exterior of the vessel, at a large scale and with a low density, this motif should be used to create a distance-readable silhouette to signal the vessel's identity to observers on land and other nearby vessels. For the textiles and wall surfaces of the interior and with a small scale and high density, this motif should be used to accommodate the longer viewing periods that vessel visitors may engage in. For the sail, high contrast color and a simplified version of the motif should be used to maintain legibility and visibility of the motif from a distance and when in motion. A consistent palette and the repeated use of the wave form should be used to satisfy Sachari (2007), and the intentional use of varying scale and density across the motif in the exterior, interior, and sail should be used to satisfy the varying viewing distances and contact times. Read this way, Table 1 specifies not only where the motif should be applied but also the formal design basis for its contribution to visual identity, addressed in Dq1.

Design Recommendation: Colour and Material Guidelines

Beyond forms and patterns, the use of color is a good way to further distinguish the bombang motif's identity. Sanyoto (2010) notes that color has both perceptible and non perceptible levels of meaning. At the perceptible level, color influences the reading level and the order of importance in the image. At the non perceptible level, there is a learned meaning that differs based on culture. According to the precedent study, the bombang motif should be considered with a combination of deep blue or teal along with gold or ochre. This study did not conduct research on the deep blue or teal and gold or ochre combination with the Bugis community, blue tones conventionally read as maritime and are consistent with the sea wave subject of the motif, while gold accents are widely used in South Sulawesi textile traditions, including lipa' sabbe, to signal status and ceremonial value

(Sadapotto et al., 2023), making this palette a reasonable design default. In order to develop the identity system, this palette (or similar) should be used consistently on the exterior, interior, textiles, and sails of the ship. Color, along with form, is one of the ways that a motif can be recognized in multiple situations and conditions. Because this study was based on theory of visual design, the palette should be adopted based on the Bugis textile specialists and/or the cultural specialists to better understand the community.

Design Recommendation: 4E Experience Design Guidelines

Using Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E framework Aesthetic, Educational, Escapist, and Entertainment as a design framework rather than a measurement instrument, this study proposes design guidelines intended to enrich the tourism experience across all four dimensions. In the aesthetic dimension, it is recommended that culturally meaningful ornament be used to enhance the visual quality of the vessel. In the educational dimension, it is recommended that visual media and information panels be designed to give visitors the opportunity to gain knowledge of Bugis culture. In the escapist dimension, it is recommended that the ornament be designed to create a Bugis cultural atmosphere that can help visitors feel more immersed in the world of Bugis seafarers. In the entertainment dimension, it is recommended that the visual richness of the ornament be designed to add value to the journey. As no visitor survey, interview, or behavioural observation was conducted, these are proposed design guidelines rather than a measured increase in visitor experience, and their effectiveness should be evaluated once implemented.

Implications for Design Practice and Creative Economy Policy

These design recommendations also carry implications beyond the immediate case of the Phinisi vessel. Indonesia's creative economy sector, of which tourism-oriented craft and design form part, has been identified as a strategic contributor to regional economic development, with recent policy oriented research emphasising the need to strengthen linkages between local cultural assets and the tourism sector so that

cultural value is retained by, rather than extracted from, originating communities (Maharani & Laily Nisa, 2024). In this light, Bombang-ornamented Phinisi can be a Visual Communication Design case study to support the connection between local motif and tourists. The design approach can make local motif visible and legible without cultural background. Given this design approach, cultural appreciation can become a stepping stone to other Bugis motifs and other maritime tourism vessels. While establishing this approach in practice involves multiple stakeholders in collaboration, like local artisans and cultural experts, design appropriately in the Bugis motif (lipa' sabbe) without watering it down or reducing to a purely decorative level. This is a concern cited in many case studies about culture-related motifs in the commercial tourism sector.

Table 2. Recommended Application Specifications for the Bombang Motif by Touchpoint

Experience Dimension	Current Condition (Without Ornament)	Recommended Design (With Bombang Ornament)
Aesthetic	Standard visual appearance of wooden ship	Bombang motif ornament on exterior, interior, and sails
Educational	No cultural information elements	Bilingual information panels explaining the bombang motif philosophy
Escapist	Generic sailing experience	Authentic Bugis seafarer experience immersive cultural atmosphere
Entertainment	Maritime natural scenery only	Scenery combined with cultural narrative woven into every element of the ship

Recommendations for a Bugis Maritime Cultural Visual Identity System

Continuing with the design recommendations in the previous section, this study suggests that there is a need to create a more holistic Bugis maritime cultural visual identity system. This system should comprise (1) the design of ornamentations using the diverse range of lipa' sabbe motifs beyond bombang to be applied flexibly on different types of Phinisi in various design contexts; (2) the extension of the system to other touchpoints of maritime tourism, such as piers, visitor lounges; (3) the development of a visual identity guide ensuring consistency of application across all touchpoints; and (4) the establishment of a cultural interpretation programme that trains crew members to serve as effective cultural narrators for visitors. Maintaining consistency across vendors and vessel operators will also be important when building this system considering that most Phinisi vessels used for tourism are built and maintained by different owners; without a common visual identity guide, the same motif could be applied differently with regard to scale, color, and positioning, thus weakening rather than strengthening the desired identity system.

This could be a gradual, phased process rather than a single large phase. The first phase could be focused on standardizing and documenting the existing bombang application. The precedent study states that this is the most consistently used motif of the touchpoints, making it a good starting place as a template. The second phase would be to provide the same kind of documentation and consistency to the other lipa's sabbe motifs. The third phase would be to conduct a pilot of extending the visual identity to some adjacent touchpoints for example, a single pier or visitor's lounge to identify and resolve consistency issues before a complete rollout to all vessels or all destinations. The fourth phase would be the introduction of the crew training and cultural interpretation program coordinated so that crew members would be able to explain and interpret the visual identity system in a consistent way. The overall strategy is to provide a sequence that would make the recommendations more actionable, rather than aspirational, and to anticipate that consistency across multiple vessel operators would be the most difficult to achieve in practice.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations qualify the design recommendations above. First, the study relies on a qualitative, desk-based design research method combining literature review, precedent study, and design formulation; it does not include prototyping, expert review, or user and visitor testing, so the recommendations should be read as a proposed starting specification rather than a validated final design. Second, the precedent study is limited to the bombang motif as currently applied on the Phinisi vessel operating in Bali and Labuan Bajo; the recommendations may need adaptation before being extended to other lipa' sabbe motifs, other vessel types, or other maritime tourism destinations. Third, because visual design reasoning inherently involves interpretation, the specifications for form, rhythm, colour, and composition proposed here, while grounded in established visual design theory, represent one plausible design solution among others that a different designer applying the same criteria might develop differently. These limitations point directly to the future work outlined below, particularly the need for prototyping, stakeholder consultation, and visitor- based evaluation to test, rather than assume, the design recommendations advanced in this study.

CONCLUSION

Based on literature review, precedent study, and design formulation, this study proposes a set of design recommendations for applying bombang lipa' sabbe motif ornament on the Phinisi ship as a VCD strategy serving two simultaneous objectives: strengthening Bugis cultural visual identity and contributing to the quality of experiential tourism. Designed and consistently applied as recommended, the Phinisi, as a moving medium reaching a substantial number of visitors at premium maritime tourism destinations, can function as a strategically valuable visual identity touchpoint for Bugis culture.

The proposed 4E design guidelines (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) are intended to enrich tourism experience value across all four dimensions; these are design proposals rather than measured outcomes, since visitor experience data were not collected. The ornamented Phinisi, as designed, could transition from a transport ship to a vessel

for offering complete cultural experiences, as prevalent in the current tourism trends.

The opportunity exists to create a comprehensive Bugis maritime cultural visual identity and harness the potential of the existing lipa' sabbe to strengthen Bugis culture's place on the world stage of tourism. Future studies should concentrate on test and pilot the designs recommended, conduct surveys on visitors to assess the visual identity system, and introduce lipa' sabbe as a unifying concept for other Bugis cultural domains.

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