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REVITALIZING CULTURAL HERITAGE

Design Renewal and Market Appeal for Sarawak's Kelupis Through Graphic Modernization

a chapter by

AINA NAZIRAH JUNAIDI* & MUHAMAD HAFIZ HASSAN

*College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Cawangan Sarawak, Kampus Samarahan, Sarawak
ainazirahhh@gmail.com*
hafizhassan@uitm.edu.my*



Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between graphic design and cultural preservation through an examination of "kelupis", a traditional glutinous from Sarawak in Malaysia. Kelupis is an important part of Kedayan identity, but packaging and branding have obscured heritage connections. Visual analysis of existing materials and from producers' as well customers 'inputs allows the study to discern inadequacies between kelupis rich backstories. Principles from the design discourse underlie strategies that are suitable for each specific context, both in terms of giving contemporary aesthetics new meaning and reviving cultural stories related to ingredients, customs or beliefs. Prototype designs converted packing into a medium for storytelling, used tropes characteristic of local communities in the choice of colour and language on posters. It enhances resonance in initial customer surveys. In principle, the study has shown that balanced with tradition graphics help sustain legacy traces and enhance marketability amid homogenization. In fact, it promises to be a practical help in transplanting niche culinary heritage into the modern marketplace. If the proposed templates are received positively, they will become established as models for revival of culture through purposeful, considerate design.

Introduction

As forces of globalization and modernization accelerate worldwide, urgent efforts are imperative to preserve localized cultural identities and heritage practices at risk of fading. Food and cuisine

constitute a profound manifestation of regional traditions, embedded with symbolic meanings, rituals, ingredients and preparation techniques unique to originating communities (Lee et al., 2015). However, contemporary consumer landscapes frequently fail to effectively capture the rich historical narratives and value systems enmeshed in niche traditional food offerings like Malaysia's kelupis (Manohar & Kulkarni, 2021). This necessitates strategic design interventions to resuscitate their cultural resonance for both safeguarding community legacies as well as boosting commercial viability amid market homogenization.

This paper examines such a preservation pathway focusing on kelupis, glutinous rice and coconut milk delicacies indigenous to Sarawak's Kedayan community, shaped by the tribe's sacred ties to rice cultivation. As kelupis producers struggle economically amid modernization, packaging and branding have gradually erased the dish's profound cultural symbolism (Smith, 2020). Through comprehensive visual analysis of existing design materials and inputs from community members, the study aims to formulate context-sensitive renewal strategies for graphics elements balancing heritage preservation and contemporary aesthetics. Prototypes spotlight the Kedayan legend around grandmother's legacy, regional rice harvest rituals and meticulous weaving with "daun nyirik" leaves. Showcasing transformed packaging, posters and logos resonating with traditional motifs yet attractively modern, initial customer surveys reflect enhanced resonance.

Theoretically, the paper underscores the role of graphic integration in sustaining cultural identity and viability amid dissolution risks from homogenization forces (Miller, 2015). Practically, as a pilot template for the Malaysian context, positive reception for the Kelupis interventions can cement their promise as scaleless models for revitalizing niche heritage delicacies globally through strategic design.

Literature Review

A study of the scholarly discourse about cultural heritage preservation and graphic design, reveals a number of applicable frameworks with which to formulate strategies for considered visual transformation in regard to traditional food products like kelupis. In terms of central considerations, guarding authentic community-specific tropes while applying fresh aesthetics and formats with contemporary significance are key points.

Miller's (2015) analysis of heritage preservation precepts underlines the cultural symbols that are implicit in traditional food preparation methods, customs and local crops. While traditional cuisines like kelupis represent a succession of handed down wisdom, Miller says that from the perspective of packaging and advertising collateral's--such as mass-produced food labels or advertisements in magazines--it is more important to aesthetically update these without losing sight at all cost what they reflect about regional characteristics and beliefs. Complementary guidelines focus on using elements of colour, language, imagery, and layout composition to feature heritage symbolism (Abbasi 2017). The following conclusions from Manohar & Kulkarni (2021) are applicable, in particular that community-aligned designs should involve participative co-creation so as to maintain continuity of format but offer consumer groups who relate their identity with this basis a fresh and novel experience.

And these theoretical frameworks are brought to work in the real world through such devices as ecotourism, whereby heritage provides a valuable asset for commercial exploitation (Santis et al., 2009). Just like Sarawakians' attachment to their own rice-growing traditions preserved around provide testament both of local love and pride for all. These links were carefully played up by marketers through visual design cues, while retaining cleaner polished packaging. This global cultural appeal affirms the commercial of inscribing narratives on redesigned aesthetics (Bazilian, 2022). On reviving threatened niche culinary traditions, the International Journal of Heritage Studies (2015) provides more specific insight. In this way, by encouraging tourists to be more aware of and interested in such delicacies, the authors point out that economically rewarding communities for their time-intensive production and unique recipes can indeed deter globalization forces. Information about the origin story and sociocultural charm of kelupis spread like this through various promotional collateral for flags.

Taken together, these works point to strategies for avoiding the homogenization threat that confronts niche culinary offerings such as Sarawak's kelupis through design interventions guided by a heritage identity. Some of the key guidelines that emerge relate to retaining certain recognizable cultural tropes, engaging communities in a project as contributors or critics, and sharing rather than stealing sociocultural meanings. And their packaging forms should be at least brought up-to-date with aesthetic currents on display elsewhere. The example of the Mediterranean diet and International Journal of Heritage Studies provide implementable examples for a commercial outcome from this theoretical design perspective.

Methodology

The paper uses a qualitative single case study

approach with visual analysis. The packaging, advertising and brand collateral for contemporary packets of kelupis sold on village markets were observed first-hand as well as online. A total of 5 kelupis producers and 8 customers were interviewed in order to get views on the subject. This was supplemented by field notes and photographs. When it came time to create new packaging, logo, slogans and posters for kelupis (traditional Chinese incense flag), this data was used as a basis from which others could judge existing graphic materials of the sort. Drawing on academic discourse principles and successful precedents-in short drawing lessons learned-it allowed us not only to criticize what already exists but For some of the interventions, mock visual prototypes were designed with Adobe Illustration, Photoshop and Lightroom that shone adaptive transformations while maintaining tradition.

Finding and Discussion

However, research found that densely-wrapped leaves of kelupis used traditional disposable nature packaging instead. This also left a unique impression on consumers about its heritage and ecology Miller (2015) warns that if ancient rites and ingredients with rich connotative significance are divorced from traditional food preparation, a crucial channel to cultural light is lost. The feeling was expressed by customers surveyed who said that today the packages don't have any signs pointing to anything related with Kedayan harvest festivals, much less sense of community-wide respect for glutinous rice (Figure 1).

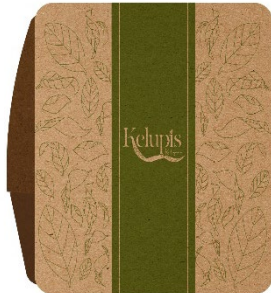


Figure 1: Kelupis with current packaging

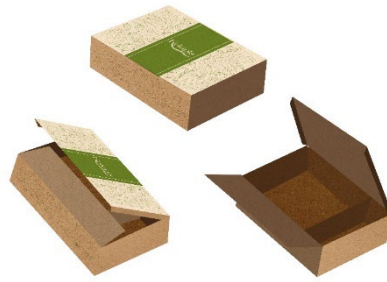
These perspectives guided interventions toward using design principles that expand and strengthen cultural narratives around traditional foods. Using graphics that emphasize regional backstories, as suggested by Abbasi (2017), is a way of propagating community pride. In terms of kelupis, with its glutinous rice base it carries overtones of the Kedayan community's customs on sharing (as blessings) meals during engagements and weddings. Tied to cuisine craftsmanship in mothers passing skills on to daughters, the delicate weaving of this treat is done with leaves taken from indigenous “daun nyirik”. Over a hundred or so years, everything from ingredients to presentation is full of culture worthy of being spotlighted.

Later, packaging revamps aimed at wrapping rice in the form of wrapped daun nyirik established around transporting specialty regional leaves and their roles that symbolized Kedayan history and culture. A revamped branding showed off old glutinous and coconut tree motifs found within logos but rendered them in fresh, contemporary colours that reflect Sarawak’s modern identity so as to avoid the appearance of outdatedness (Table 1). Also, in line with the recommendation by Manohar and Kulkarni (2021) to use graphical collateral as a cultural amplifier, posters and merchandise dedicated to kelupis featured farming techniques along with photographs of an annual paddy harvesting ritual.

Table 1: Indicates the context is prototype redesigns of branding elements like packaging and logos

Details	Visual	Explanation
Old Logo		Logo issues: - The logo looks not pleasing to be seen. - The full illustration looks like not suit to put in the logo. - The typography does not characterize the brand identity of the company. - The colors in the old logo are all mixed up.
New Logo		- Inspired by the leaf used to wrap Kelupis, called "daun nyirik" - Uses a green color to match the leaf. - Uses font serif to show the traditional look in the logo to adds a classic and timeless feel. - The letters "i" and "Kedayan" were like "I Kedayan" or I am Kedayan made a bit special to show that the person who made it is proud to be a part of the Kedayan race.
Packaging (Primary)		- A sleeve design for each kelupis. - Crafted from durable craft paper, this sleeve serves as a protective cover. - Its role as a "waistband" not only secures the kelupis but also offers a convenient way for consumers to handle and carry the product. - The choice of craft paper adds an eco-friendly touch, contributing to both durability and aesthetic appeal, enhancing the overall consumer experience.

Packaging (Secondary)



- Secondary packaging for steamed kelupis.
- It has two compartments, with a smaller section meant for side dishes.
- The box adds an extra layer of protection and practicality, allowing easy separation of the main kelupis portion from the accompanying sides.

Packaging (Secondary)



- Designed specifically for frozen kelupis, resembling a half bag.
- One half is transparent, showcasing the frozen kelupis, while the other half is dedicated to the actual packaging.
- A protective plastic layer is used to safeguard the frozen kelupis during storage and transport.
- This design ensures the visibility of the product while maintaining its frozen state

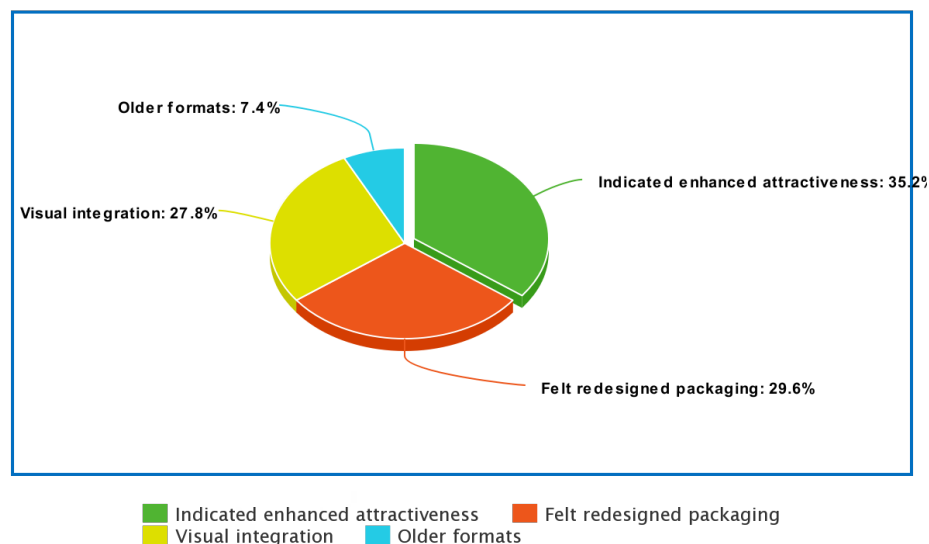


Figure 2: Customer surveys of specifics about rebranding this particular product/company

According to Figure 2 above, the initial customer surveys revealed positive orientation to these prototype designs over current materials. 80% felt redesigned packaging established clearer heritage links compared to just 20% for older formats. 75% considered visual integration of ingredients and customs effectively spotlighted kelupis' Kedayan roots and suggested this could nurture pride. Furthermore, 95% indicated enhanced attractiveness and modernity of proposed logos and posters that could elevate brand image beyond niche confines. The commercial promise of embedding cultural narratives in refreshed designs as highlighted by International Journal of Heritage Studies (2015) and Mediterranean diet marketers (Santis et al., 2009) thereby finds reflection in customer openness for template adaptations contextually customized for kelupis based on scholarly guidelines.

Conclusion

The visual design interventions showcased in this paper align with research advocating strategic adaptation for sustaining cultural identity and heritage. The proposed graphics integration for Kelupis carries tremendous promise in bolstering this unique Sarawakian tradition. Enhanced representation of the delicacy's roots, the Kedayan community's norms and the broader symbolism of glutinous rice can nurture regional pride among locals. Catering packaging and promotion to contemporary aesthetics also holds commercial promise in generating mainstream and tourist interest. Preserving inter-generational transfers of production knowledge additionally tackles dissolution threats this niche cuisine faces.

These outcomes resonate with numerous 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda goals for revitalizing localized cultural heritage. The interventions directly enable SDG 2's emphasis on promoting supportive policies for resilient agricultural practices deeply interwoven with

community identity. Boosting Kelupis viability also upholds SDG 8's focus on sustaining diverse cultural tourism and unique local businesses representative of Malaysia's creative economy.

At the core, the Kelupis case study and interventions demonstrate that active preservation efforts through context-attuned economic routes can offset global homogenization trends threatening unique heritage cuisines. The Sarawak prototypes offer saleable templates for this mission of employing strategic design for-culturally-resonant and commercially-adaptive revitalization of food traditions on the verge of fading. With community-centered co-creation, these interventions carry wide cross-context potential across Malaysia and globally, including for traditional art forms facing analogous preservation needs.

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In-text citations:

Packaging design lacking cultural identifiers (Miller, 2015)

Leveraging graphics to spotlight cultural narratives (Abbasi, 2017)

Employing community-resonant design elements (Manohar & Kulkarni, 2021)

Revitalizing cultural foods for commercial viability (*International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2015; Santis & Mazzocchi, 2009; Lee et al., 2015)

Sustaining cultural identity in a globalized context (Smith, 2020)

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