



A semiotic analysis of Ganep Tradisi Solo visual identity and packaging modernization strategy

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Abstract.

The visual identity of traditional product packaging plays a significant role in maintaining brand relevance amid changing consumer preferences and intense market competition. This study analyzes the visual identity of the 90-gram Roti Kecik plastic pouch from Ganep Tradisi Solo as a basis for formulating a modernization strategy that remains rooted in cultural values. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research employs a structural semiotic framework (Roland Barthes' denotation and connotation) integrated with social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar) and heritage branding theory to explore the typography, color, illustration, and packaging structure elements. The analysis focuses on how these elements construct symbolic meaning, traditional narratives, and brand positioning in the contemporary market. The results demonstrate that while Ganep's visual elements effectively function as denotative markers of Surakarta's cultural heritage, the connotative delivery is visually fragmented and lacks the structural simplicity preferred by Generation Z. This study contributes to the field by establishing a "Neo-Traditional" design strategy as the primary conceptual framework for bridging heritage values with modern market demands.

Keywords: Visual Identity, Packaging Design, Modernization, Traditional Products, Branding Strategy, Heritage branding, Semiotics

Introduction

The acceleration of globalization and the homogenization of market standards have paradoxically sparked an urgent imperative to preserve local cultural identity in brand communication. As global modernism dominates the marketplace, the city of Surakarta (Solo), recognized as the cultural heart of Java, faces the distinct and critical challenge of maintaining the relevance of its traditional culinary heritage. Within this landscape, souvenirs are no longer viewed merely as consumable products, but as symbolic representations of regional identity that tourists carry home. In recent years, the shift of consumer behavior among younger generations, particularly Generation Z, has significantly influenced the way traditional products are perceived and consumed. Contemporary consumers are increasingly attracted to products that are visually engaging, emotionally relatable, and capable of delivering cultural value through modern presentation. As a result, traditional souvenir brands can no longer rely solely on historical legacy or product authenticity, but must also communicate their identity through packaging design that is adaptive to current visual trends and market expectations. In this context, packaging functions not only as protection for the product, but also as a medium of storytelling that connects heritage values with contemporary consumer lifestyles.

This condition creates a complex design paradox: how to modernize traditional products in order to remain competitive without diminishing the authenticity and cultural roots embedded within the brand itself. Palimbong and Pasulu (2021) strengthen this argument by stating that "kemasan yang menarik dan fungsional menjadi kunci dalam menarik minat konsumen dan meningkatkan daya saing

produk.” Their statement emphasizes that packaging plays a strategic role in shaping consumer attraction and positioning products within increasingly competitive markets. Furthermore, Palimbong and Pasulu explain that many MSMEs still encounter challenges in developing packaging that is capable of increasing product appeal and sustaining long-term business competitiveness.

Therefore, the redesign of traditional souvenir packaging should not be understood merely as a visual modernization effort, but as a strategic cultural approach that enables local heritage products to remain relevant amid globalization. Through adaptive packaging design, traditional brands are able to preserve cultural identity while simultaneously building stronger emotional engagement with modern consumers.

Nevertheless, the modernization of traditional products presents a significant challenge in balancing market adaptation with cultural preservation. Failure to negotiate this tension risks not only economic stagnation for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), but also the gradual erosion of intangible cultural heritage embedded within traditional products themselves. In contemporary branding scholarship, this phenomenon is best understood through the lens of Corporate Heritage Brand Management. Unlike standard commercial brands, heritage brands such as Ganep Tradisi Solo, which has operated continuously since 1881, must navigate specific and rigorous precepts to maintain their relevance and legitimacy (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Sammour et al., 2020). These brands are characterized by their historical continuity, longevity, and deeply rooted core values, all of which require continuous renegotiation in response to rapidly evolving consumer expectations and market dynamics (Urde et al., 2007).

Furthermore, Bansal et al. (2025) explain that brand heritage should not be perceived as static, but rather as a dynamic strategic asset that requires adaptive antecedents, including visual modernization, to stimulate customer-brand engagement and prevent brand obsolescence. In this context, translating nearly a century and a half of historical legacy into a contemporary visual identity becomes more than a purely aesthetic exercise. Instead, it represents a strategic negotiation between preserving authenticity and fulfilling contemporary commercial expectations, allowing heritage brands to sustain both their cultural significance and market competitiveness in an increasingly globalized environment.

This negotiation is further complicated by a seismic shift in the demographic landscape, now increasingly dominated by Generation Z. For this cohort, purchase intentions are directly impacted by the quality of information provided, expectations of hedonic outcomes, and self-efficacy (Huwaيدا et al., 2024). Erlyana and Lim (2025a) further emphasize that unlike previous generations, Generation Z places a significantly higher emphasis on creativity and originality, necessitating distinct branding strategies. Recent findings by Laurretta and Anggraeni (2025) on Indonesian Gen Z consumers further confirm that aesthetic appeal in packaging significantly enhances perceived value, which in turn acts as a primary driver for purchase intention in local brands (Belliza & Kusumawati, 2024).

Furthermore, as commerce shifts definitively toward digital and internet-based interactions, the "public sphere" of consumption has evolved, requiring brands to communicate more effectively and instantaneously through visual media (Abolafia, 2025; Wibowo & Zainudin, 2024). Today, consumers view products as more than just functional items; they critically assess the visual aspects, packaging, and the story behind a brand to determine its legitimacy and relevance (Ginting & Erlyana, 2025; Pecot et al., 2018). For heritage brands, the inability to speak this modern visual language is not just a missed opportunity, it is an existential threat. Erlyana et al. (2026) argue that packaging must be recognized as the primary tool for communicating with consumers; beyond its utility as a product holder, it functions as a sophisticated visual communication medium. Within this framework, the strategic integration of cultural symbols into packaging design is essential for delivering deep cultural messages and fostering brand identification among modern audiences. This is particularly crucial as contemporary consumers increasingly seek a 'cultural soul' in their everyday consumption, demanding that heritage brands successfully deconstruct and modernize their historical narratives to remain resonant in a competitive urban market.

Currently, Ganep Tradisi Solo stands at a critical strategic crossroad. Despite its deep historical roots and status as a culinary icon, sales are disproportionately dominated by consumers over the age of 30, signaling a dangerous disconnect with the future market. Its packaging retains an "old style" that fails to resonate with younger segments, rendering the brand's rich history virtually invisible to the modern eye. Observations indicate that current visual elements do not optimize cultural storytelling; the design relies on a singular, static parang batik motif and lacks harmony in color and composition across different product sizes. This visual disconnect results in the brand's historical value being lost in translation, creating a significant barrier to entry for younger consumers, particularly Generation Z. Resolving this crisis requires a more sophisticated semiotic approach to packaging design, as traditional packaging no longer functions solely as a protective container but also as a communicative medium that conveys cultural identity, historical authenticity, and brand value. In heritage products, visual elements such as color, typography, imagery, and layout operate as symbolic signs that shape how consumers interpret and emotionally connect with a brand. This becomes increasingly important in contemporary consumer culture, where packaging often serves as the first point of interaction between consumers and products. As competition intensifies within modern retail and digital markets, packaging has evolved into a strategic marketing instrument capable of influencing visibility, consumer trust, and purchasing behavior. Gomes and Malafaia (2020) as well as Shukla et al. (2022) explain that packaging functions as a system of signs in which visual elements construct meaning and influence consumer perception. Similarly, Espineda et al. (2025) argue that packaging increasingly shapes consumer perceptions, purchase decisions, and sustainability considerations within modern marketplaces.

This phenomenon is particularly relevant for heritage snack products, where purchasing decisions are frequently influenced by immediate visual impressions rather than extensive product evaluation. Empirical studies demonstrate that visual attributes such as color, logos, typography, and graphic composition significantly affect consumers' perceived product quality and brand preference (Shahwar et al., 2024). However, these elements do not operate independently. Liu et al. (2025) emphasize that visual components collectively shape the overall "brand experience," which becomes a dominant predictor of purchase intention for low-involvement products such as snacks and tea products (Ghorbani & Westermann, 2025). Within the context of heritage brands such as Ganep Tradisi Solo, this creates a critical challenge in balancing cultural authenticity with contemporary visual expectations. Packaging that remains excessively traditional risks appearing outdated to younger consumers, while overly modernized packaging may weaken the perception of heritage authenticity. Therefore, a semiotic approach is essential because it enables the reinterpretation of cultural symbols into contemporary visual forms without eliminating the historical values embedded within the brand identity.

In addition, cross-cultural design strategies, such as the use of cultural symbols, contextual narratives, and language localization, further enhance brand identity and consumer engagement, particularly for products with cultural significance like tea (Ling et al., 2025). However, designers must be cautious of misinterpretation and superficial commercialization of traditional symbols, which can weaken brand authenticity and reduce the effectiveness of consumer engagement (Huo et al., 2025). Recent research highlights that capturing consumer attention now requires a multifaceted approach: integrating bold visual elements and unique opening mechanisms to create a memorable customer journey (Branca et al., 2024; Erlyana & Hanifah, 2024); adopting emerging trends in smart packaging technologies (Habib et al., 2024); and shifting toward business models that prioritize sustainability as a core driver of value (Pavón Losada et al., 2025). In this context, tea packaging can also function as a medium for cultural communication and sustainable innovation, combining circular material systems, craft-technology integration, and collaborative design strategies to strengthen both ecological performance and consumer identification (Zang et al., 2025).

Recent empirical research by Wang et al. (2023) on snack food packaging confirms that among various design characteristics, "image" and "color" are the most significant factors influencing consumer purchase decisions, often outweighing technical manufacturing aspects. As argued by

Gomes & Malafaia (2020), cultural analysis provides invaluable tools for deconstructing these everyday objects, allowing brand narratives to be understood within their broader sociocultural contexts (Hu & Cong, 2024). By applying this lens, historical elements are not merely repeated, but are reinterpreted to create new relevance, similar to how 'Neo-Victorian' readings revitalize luxury fashion narratives, a 'Neo-Traditional' approach can bridge the gap between Solo's heritage and modern consumers.

Previous studies in the Indonesian context have demonstrated that the implementation of a proper visual identity and rebranding strategy is essential for local traditional products to survive market competition. For instance, the redesign of Yangko Pak Prapto in Yogyakarta demonstrated that using packaging as the primary media for visual identity renewal can effectively strengthen a traditional brand's market position while preserving its cultural essence (Wijaya & Erlyana, 2022). Similarly, research on MSMEs indicates that packaging remains a primary "weak point" that requires professional, strategic intervention to improve brand image and competitiveness (Pertiwi et al., 2025; Suherlan & Widiyanti, 2021).

Despite the prominence of heritage branding studies and the recognized importance of packaging design, a critical gap remains in the existing literature. Most previous studies examine these dimensions separately, focusing either on the management of corporate heritage brands (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Sammour et al., 2020), the purchasing behavior and visual preferences of Generation Z consumers (Huwaida et al., 2024), or general snack packaging characteristics (Wang et al., 2023). Consequently, there remains limited research that systematically integrates heritage branding, structural semiotics, and visual design principles into a unified analytical framework for the modernization of traditional souvenir packaging, particularly within the cultural context of Surakarta.

To address this gap, this study positions Corporate Heritage Brand Management as the primary conceptual foundation for understanding Ganep Tradisi Solo as a heritage brand that must preserve historical continuity, cultural authenticity, and brand legacy while remaining relevant in a contemporary marketplace. Building upon this foundation, structural semiotics is employed to interpret the denotative and connotative meanings embedded within the packaging's visual signs, while social semiotics through Visual Grammar is used to examine how layout composition, typography, color, and illustration construct consumer perception and contemporary brand experience. Subsequently, visual design principles such as hierarchy, contrast, balance, and unity are applied as practical guidelines for translating these cultural meanings into a contemporary visual language that aligns with Generation Z aesthetic preferences.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrated methodological, theoretical, and practical approach. Methodologically, the study combines heritage branding theory with structural and social semiotics within a sequential analytical framework for packaging evaluation. Theoretically, this research proposes the "Neo-Traditional" strategy as a conceptual model that bridges cultural preservation with visual modernization in heritage packaging design. Practically, the study offers a contemporary packaging direction for Ganep Tradisi Solo that maintains symbolic cultural authenticity while increasing visual relevance and competitiveness in the modern market. By positioning visual identity analysis as the conceptual bridge between heritage branding, semiotic interpretation, and contemporary visual design, this research seeks to transform Ganep's packaging from a passive container into a strategic communication instrument capable of sustaining the cultural relevance and market competitiveness of traditional heritage brands without abandoning their cultural roots.

Methods

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in the discipline of Visual Communication Design. This methodology was selected to conduct an in-depth visual and conceptual analysis of Ganep Tradisi Solo packaging, positioning it as a significant cultural heritage artifact. The research follows a case study design, focusing on how a heritage brand negotiates its visual

representation in a modern market. The analytical process is centered on a “Neo-Traditional” strategy framework, utilizing a dual-layered semiotic approach that integrates structural semiotics through the concepts of denotation and connotation (Barthes, 1972) with social semiotics through Visual Grammar theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020). These integrated frameworks are employed to examine the typography, color, illustration, and packaging structure elements in order to interpret how cultural meanings, heritage values, and contemporary visual identities are constructed and communicated through packaging design.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through a triangulated approach to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the packaging system. The data sources were:

1. **Primary Visual Data:** The primary object of analysis is the packaging for Ganep’s signature best-selling product, namely the 90-gram plastic pouch of Roti Kecil. This specific variant was selected because it represents the brand’s most recognizable and widely distributed packaging format, making it the most relevant visual artifact for examining Ganep’s contemporary brand identity and market representation. In addition, the pouch serves as a primary consumer-facing package frequently encountered by tourists and younger consumers within the competitive souvenir market. Systematic visual observation was employed to document key design elements through a dual-layered semiotic framework, integrating Roland Barthes’ (1972) structural semiotics through denotation and connotation with Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2020) social semiotics through Visual Grammar. This process involved capturing high-resolution documentation of the typography (URW Wood Type, Arial Rounded, and related typefaces), the purple-and-orange color palette, asymmetrical layout, and the Batik Parang background illustrations.
2. **Key Informant Interview:** A semi-structured interview was conducted with the Human Resources Manager of Ganep Tradisi Solo, selected through purposive sampling due to their involvement in maintaining the company’s institutional history, corporate values, and internal brand communication. This position also provided strategic insight into the company’s historical development and organizational perspective regarding brand adaptation in contemporary markets. The interview generated strategic qualitative data regarding the brand’s 1881 founding, the philosophical significance of its visual identity, and internal management challenges in navigating the “Neo-Traditional” paradox to attract Generation Z consumers.
3. **Secondary Data:** Desk research involved an extensive literature study of Surakarta’s cultural history and contemporary branding journals, alongside documentation from the Indonesian cultural heritage database (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI). Following the recommendation to enhance methodological replicability, this secondary data was processed through a systematic thematic coding process. Data were categorized into three analytical codes:
 - a. **Historical Authenticity:** Verifying the 145-year track record and royal associations.
 - b. **Cultural Symbolology:** Cataloging the traditional motifs and heritage colors used in Surakarta’s visual culture.
 - c. **Market Competitiveness:** Identifying packaging constraints faced by Indonesian MSMEs to increase competitiveness, as highlighted by Palimbong & Pasulu (2021)

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through a multi-staged operational framework designed to assess the “Neo-Traditional” potential of the brand. To ensure theoretical consistency and methodological rigor, the analysis followed these four integrated steps:

1. **Formal Visual Analysis:** The initial stage involved a technical evaluation of the packaging components (typography, color, layout, illustration, and structure). These were assessed against five fundamental design principles: balance, contrast, emphasis, hierarchy, and unity, as established by Erlyana & Ressiani (2020). Systematic visual observation was conducted to document and categorize dominant visual characteristics, compositional inconsistencies, and

areas of visual fragmentation. This stage identified the “visual fragmentation” and “dated” appearance that creates a barrier for modern consumers.

2. Dual-Layered Semiotic Interpretation: This study utilized two distinct but complementary semiotic lenses:
 - a. Structural Semiotics (Barthes, 1972): This approach was used to identify literal visual signs through denotation and interpret deeper socio-cultural meanings through connotation. The analysis focused on symbolic visual elements embedded within the packaging, including the illustration positioned above the “1881” marker, which represents the silhouette of Roti Kecik pieces and reinforces the brand’s historical identity, heritage value, and cultural authenticity. The findings were then categorized into broader interpretive themes related to authenticity, tradition, and cultural continuity.
 - b. Social Semiotics & Visual Grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020): This approach was applied to analyze how layout composition, spatial arrangement, visual hierarchy, and graphic organization construct meaning and shape consumer perception. The analysis specifically examined how the visual structure of the 90-gram pouch packaging communicates brand identity and creates a contemporary brand experience that aligns with Generation Z aesthetic preferences and consumption behavior.
3. Heritage Branding Evaluation: The final stage evaluated the brand’s heritage value using the Heritage Quincunx Model. The analysis focused on three primary dimensions consisting of track record, longevity, and core values in order to assess Ganep Tradisi Solo’s position as a heritage brand with strong cultural significance. Findings from the previous analytical stages were synthesized and mapped into these heritage dimensions to determine which visual elements should be preserved, simplified, or modernized within the proposed “Neo-Traditional” strategy. The synthesis of these findings formed the conceptual basis for developing a modernization strategy that bridges historical continuity with contemporary consumer expectations and market competitiveness.

Data Validation

To ensure credibility, this study applied source triangulation by cross-checking findings from the physical packaging artifacts, key informant testimony, and historical cultural databases. This process verified the consistency between the observed visual “paradox” (uncommunicated heritage) and the strategic need for a modernized, “Neo-Traditional” visual identity that remains authentic to Surakarta’s identity while resonating with Generation Z’s preference for visual harmony and minimalist aesthetics.

Result and Discussion

The results of this study are derived from the analysis of primary visual data and contextual data related to Ganep Tradisi Solo’s packaging system. The study examines the visual elements found in the 90-gram Roti Kecik packaging, including typography, color, layout, illustration, and packaging structure, through the five fundamental principles of design consisting of balance, contrast, emphasis, hierarchy, and unity. However, the analysis is not limited to identifying visible formal characteristics alone, but also interprets these visual elements as strategic sign systems that communicate cultural identity, historical continuity, and brand positioning within the contemporary souvenir market.

Following the formal visual analysis, the study applies a denotative and connotative semiotic approach to examine how packaging elements function as cultural signs that construct meaning beyond their aesthetic appearance. Through this dual-layered analysis, the research investigates how visual composition shapes perceptions of authenticity, heritage value, and modern relevance among contemporary consumers, particularly Generation Z. Consequently, the discussion moves beyond descriptive inventory toward interpreting how Ganep’s packaging negotiates the tension between

preserving traditional cultural identity and adapting to contemporary visual expectations within an increasingly competitive market environment.

Analysis of Typography in Ganep's Roti Kecil Packaging

The visual documentation highlights a typography driven identity in Ganep's Roti Kecil packaging. As illustrated in Figure 1, the typography used on the front and back packaging shows a variety of typefaces, each applied with specific communicative intentions. These variations aim to create hierarchy, emphasize certain messages, and convey meanings ranging from tradition and authority to warmth and cheerfulness, as detailed in Table 1.

However, through a heritage branding lens, this typographic diversity lacks a unified system, resulting in visual fragmentation. The coexistence of URW Wood Type, ITC Bookman, and Arial Rounded without a clear typographic anchor creates a 'dated' appearance that may weaken brand competence in the eyes of contemporary consumers. For Generation Z, who prioritize minimalist aesthetics and visual cohesion, this lack of typographic restraint diminishes the brand's perceived credibility. While the existing choices possess individual symbolic value, they fail to form a structured visual narrative. Therefore, a strategic modernization is required to transform these fragmented elements into a more cohesive typographic system that bridges Ganep's historical legacy with modern professional design standards.



Figure 1. Analysis of Typography in Ganep's Roti Kecil Packaging
Source: Researcher's documentation and visual analysis (2026)

Table 1. Analysis of Typography in Ganep's Roti Kecil Packaging

Text	Typography	Denotation (Formal Characteristics)	Connotation (Cultural Meaning)
1. "Traditional Snacks" (product category label)	The word "Traditional" uses URW Wood Type. The word "Snacks" uses ITC Bookman	The text is curved and positioned to align with the visual flow of the brand name. The letterforms appear decorative, with noticeable serifs and traditional typographic detailing.	The use of wood type and serif typography conveys a sense of tradition and vintage aesthetics. Wood typefaces are historically associated with traditional craftsmanship, which reinforces the perception of the product as long-established and culturally rooted
2. "Ganep" (brand name)	The brand name "Ganep" is presented in a custom handwritten-style logotype used as the main visual identity of the brand.	The lettering appears in a script style with curved and flowing strokes. The form is slightly slanted and connected, creating a dynamic and organic appearance with a vintage character.	The handwritten and vintage style conveys a sense of tradition, authenticity, and long-established heritage. The slightly upward slant suggests continuity and enduring presence, reinforcing Ganep's identity as a traditional brand.

3. “1881: A tradition since 1881” (founding year marker)	The numbers 1881 are shaped from the silhouette of roti kecil, resembling finger-like and sawo kecil forms in two sizes. The descriptive text below uses Arial Rounded.	The stylized numbers function as a distinctive visual element, while the rounded sans serif typeface underneath ensures clarity and readability.	Using the shape of roti kecil to form the numbers reinforces Ganep’s product identity. It symbolically connects the founding year with the traditional snack that defines the brand’s heritage.
4. Product information, including net weight, production date, and location	The text uses Arial Rounded	The rounded sans serif typeface improves clarity and legibility while creating a softer and more approachable visual impression.	The rounded form conveys a sense of warmth and cheerfulness. Research by (Celhay et al., 2020) confirms that typographic complexity can signal history, but excessive variation often reduces perceived brand competence. It reflects Ganep as a snack brand that has carried joy from the past to the present.
5. “Apa itu Roti Kecil?” (descriptive heading)	The words “Apa itu” use Lucida Handwriting, while “Roti Kecil” uses Arial Rounded.	The combination of a handwritten script and a rounded sans serif creates visual contrast. The script adds expressive character, while the rounded type maintains clarity and balance.	The mixed typography draws attention and invites curiosity. The handwritten style suggests a personal and traditional touch, while the rounded form keeps the tone friendly and accessible.
6. A brief product history paragraph	The text uses Arial Rounded	The rounded sans serif typeface improves clarity and legibility while creating a softer and more approachable visual impression.	The rounded form conveys a sense of warmth and cheerfulness.
7. Ny. Auw Liek No as Nyah Ganep (Brand Founder)	The name and title use the Springloved display font.	The typeface has a playful and expressive style while maintaining clear legibility. Its decorative form makes the text visually stand out.	The cheerful style emphasizes the importance of the founder as a central figure of the brand
8. Susuhunan Pakubuwono X (historical reference)	The name uses Bodoni MT Black.	This typeface belongs to the Modern Serif (Didone) category, characterized by high contrast strokes and the bold weight creates a strong visual presence.	The firm and formal appearance emphasizes authority and historical significance. The contrast with the founder’s more playful type treatment differentiates royal reference from brand origin

Source: Researcher’s own analysis (2026)

Analysis of Color in Ganep’s Roti Kecil Packaging

Color functions as the primary visual stimulus that influences consumer perception and emotional response. Based on the observation of Ganep’s Roti Kecil packaging, the chromatic strategy relies on a dual-tone combination that attempts to balance two opposing narratives: the vibrancy of a modern snack and the solemnity of a heritage brand. As detailed in Table 2, the packaging utilizes a dominant contrast between Orange and Purple.

The application of Orange serves as a strategic effort to capture attention on the shelf. In the context of food packaging, warm colors like orange are known to stimulate appetite and evoke feelings of warmth and sociability (Rustan, 2019b, 2019a). Denotatively, its high visibility makes the product stand out; connotatively, it communicates "friendliness" and "creativity," suggesting that Ganep is an adaptive brand ready to engage with the energy of a younger market.

Conversely, the inclusion of Purple provides a necessary counter-narrative. As a low-intensity, deep hue, purple is culturally associated with wisdom, spirituality, and in the Javanese context, often

linked to nobility or maturity. This color anchors the brand's identity, signaling that behind the friendly exterior lies a "long historical journey" and "enduring tradition."

However, the interaction between these colors on the current packaging weakens the visual hierarchy due to an imbalanced contrast intensity and inconsistent placement across the package surfaces. The current findings suggest that the hierarchy is compromised because the proportion of Orange and Purple is distributed almost equally, creating 'visual competition' rather than a clear focal point. Furthermore, the lack of a dominant 'anchor color' on different sides of the packaging leads to a fragmented information flow, where the 'Heritage' (Purple) and 'Modernity' (Orange) narratives overlap and obscure key product information. To effectively target Generation Z, who value visual harmony and aesthetic appeal (Wang et al., 2023), this color combination requires a more refined ratio—utilizing color as a tool to guide the eye through a structured sequence of information rather than merely as decorative elements

Table 2. Analysis of color in Ganep's Roti Keci Packaging

Color	Denotation (Formal Characteristics)	Connotation (Cultural Meaning)
	Bright and warm color created by mixing red and yellow, appearing vivid and highly visible.	Orange is associated with energy, friendliness, creativity, and freshness, suggesting that despite Ganep's long history, the brand remains adaptive, modern, and open to change.
	Deeper, low-intensity color that conveys a calm, heavy, and elegant visual impression.	Purple conveys spirituality, depth, and maturity, reflecting the brand's long historical journey, enduring traditions, and heritage that has been tested over time.

Source: Researcher's own analysis (2026)

Analysis of Layout in Ganep's Roti Keci Packaging

Layout plays a critical role in guiding consumer attention and establishing the hierarchy of information. In the case of Ganep's *Roti Keci* packaging, the layout strategy differs significantly between the front and back panels to serve distinct communicative functions. As shown in Figure 1, the front display utilizes an asymmetrical balance to create a dynamic visual impression. The upper section is relatively open, utilizing negative space to direct immediate focus toward the brand logotype, while the lower section is densely packed with product attributes. This composition creates a clear hierarchy, prioritizing brand identity ("Ganep") over specific product details ("Roti Keci"). The contrast is established not only through the orange-purple color split but also through scale; the brand name dominates the visual field, asserting authority. However, as noted in Table 3, while the color palette attempts to unify the design, the lack of a cohesive grid system and the variation in typographic styles result in a fragmented unity that may appear cluttered to modern consumers.

Table 3. Analysis of Layout in Ganep's Roti Keci Packaging Front View

Design Principle	Analysis	Application	Denotation	Connotation
Balance	Balance is the principle of visual equilibrium between elements in a composition.	The application of balance in this packaging is asymmetrical. The upper section contains fewer elements, but it provides more empty space, while the lower section is more	The bottom area appears visually denser due to the amount of information, while the upper area is more open. This composition directs immediate attention to	Asymmetrical balance creates a sense of dynamism and avoids a rigid appearance. It can be interpreted as an attempt to make the design feel

		densely filled with information.	the large “Ganep” logo placed at the center of the packaging.	more lively and less formal.
Contrast	Contrast creates visual distinction to highlight differences between elements.	Contrast appears using bright orange in the upper section and dark purple in the lower section. There are also noticeable differences in typographic size between the “Ganep” logo, the “1881” element, and the product information text.	The variation between light and dark colors and the differences in text size are clearly visible. The main elements stand out more prominently than the supporting information.	The strong color contrast creates a bold and assertive impression. The combination of warm and dark tones may suggest a balance between energy and tradition.
Emphasis	Emphasis creates a focal point in the design.	The “Ganep” logo functions as the primary focal point due to its large size and central placement in the upper area of the packaging.	The logo appears more dominant than other elements. The viewer’s eye is naturally drawn to the brand name first.	This emphasis reinforces brand identity as the core visual message. It highlights the importance of the brand’s name and heritage.
Hierarchy	Hierarchy organizes elements in a logical reading order.	The visual sequence begins with the “Ganep” logo, followed by the product category, then the “1881” founding year marker, and finally the product information at the bottom. Differences in size, placement, and color help establish this order.	Variations in scale and positioning create a readable visual flow.	The hierarchy prioritizes brand identity and historical legacy over technical product details, strengthening the heritage positioning of the brand.
Unity	Unity ensures that all elements feel visually connected as one coherent system.	Unity is achieved through the repeated use of orange and purple and the consistent background motifs. However, the use of multiple typefaces reduces typographic cohesion.	The colors and graphic elements are visually repeated, but the typography varies significantly.	While there is an effort to build a consistent identity through color, the lack of typographic restraint may give the impression of a less integrated and less contemporary visual system.

Source: Researcher’s own analysis (2026)

In contrast to the front, the back panel shown in Figure 1 employs a symmetrical, vertically structured layout. The primary objective here is to convey an educational narrative. Emphasis is placed on the title “What is roti kecil?”, which serves as an entry point into the brand’s history. As outlined in Table 4, this layout highlights key historical markers specifically the names “Nyah Ganep” and “Susuhunan Pakubuwono X” through typographic weighting. This reinforces the brand’s legitimacy and its connection to the royal court. However, the density of this text block creates a ‘visual burden’ that significantly hinders user engagement. From a cognitive perspective, this structural clutter disrupts “scanning behavior”—the rapid eye movements consumers use to filter information—making it difficult to quickly isolate the brand’s core message. This “heavy” load undermines the information hierarchy, as the lack of adequate white space prevents the eyes from resting or prioritizing content. Consequently, this layout fails to meet Generation Z’s communication expectations, as they generally prefer ‘concise’ information and visual efficiency. For this demographic, text-heavy layouts without clear and quick navigation flows are often perceived as accessibility barriers, potentially leading to a mismatch between the brand’s legacy narrative and consumer interests.

Table 4. Analysis of Layout in Ganep's Roti Kecil Packaging Back View

Design Principle	Analysis	Application	Denotation	Connotation
Balance	Balance is the principle of visual equilibrium between elements in a composition.	Balance is symmetrical and vertically structured. The text blocks are arranged in a centered and orderly manner, with the upper section containing the heading and the middle section densely filled with paragraphs.	The layout is stable and formal, with text distributed evenly in a vertical flow. The middle area is more text-heavy, while the top and bottom sections are lighter.	This balanced and structured arrangement creates a serious and informative impression, reinforcing the credibility of the product's history and background.
Contrast	Contrast creates visual distinction to highlight differences between elements.	Contrast appears using color as differences in font size between the heading "Apa itu roti kecil?" and the body text. Additional contrast is created by presenting the names Ny. Auw Liek No (Nyah Ganep) and Susuhunan Pakubuwono X in a distinct type treatment.	The heading appears larger than the body text, while certain names within the paragraph are visually distinguished through different font styles or weight. The background color separation between orange and purple also reinforces sectional contrast.	The typographic contrast highlights key historical figures, emphasizing their importance in the brand narrative. It reinforces legitimacy and heritage by visually elevating the founder and royal reference above the rest of the informational text.
Emphasis	Emphasis creates a focal point in the design.	The heading functions as the main focal point because of its larger size and placement at the top of the layout.	The eye is first directed to the title before moving downward to read the detailed information.	This emphasis highlights the importance of educating consumers about the product, suggesting that storytelling is central to the brand identity.
Hierarchy	Hierarchy organizes elements in a logical reading order.	The information flows from the heading to the product explanation, then to the historical origin, and finally to factual and legal details at the bottom.	The arrangement clearly guides the reader step by step from general information to specific details.	This structured order reinforces the idea of heritage and legitimacy, presenting the product as both culturally rooted and officially recognized.
Unity	Unity ensures that all elements feel visually connected as one coherent system.	Unity is created through consistent background colors, repeated visual motifs, and typographic alignment.	The colors and layout structure are consistent with the front packaging, creating continuity between both sides.	This visual consistency strengthens the perception of Ganep as a cohesive heritage brand, although the dense text may reduce the sense of modern simplicity.

Source: Researcher's own analysis (2026)

Illustration Analysis in Ganep's Roti Kecil Packaging

The visual narrative of the packaging is anchored by background illustrations inspired by the *Parang* batik motif, as presented in Figure 2. The *Parang* is one of the most widely recognized classic batik motifs originating from Javanese culture, holding close historical associations with the royal palaces, including the distinct style of Surakarta. Visually, this motif is characterized by a continuous, repeating diagonal pattern resembling the shape of a knife (*parang*) or rolling waves.

In the semiotic context of this packaging, the *Parang* motif serves a dual purpose: as a decorative aesthetic element and a potent cultural symbol. Denotatively, the motif functions as a repeating diagonal texture that creates visual rhythm and fills the negative space of the packaging surface.

Connotatively, however, this motif carries deep symbolic weight, representing the cultural identity of Solo, adherence to traditional values, and the concept of historical continuity.

By utilizing this specific motif, the packaging reinforces Ganep's positioning as a heritage brand deeply rooted in the local culture of Surakarta. This visual strategy communicates to the consumer that *Roti Keci* is not merely a culinary product, but an artifact of cultural significance.

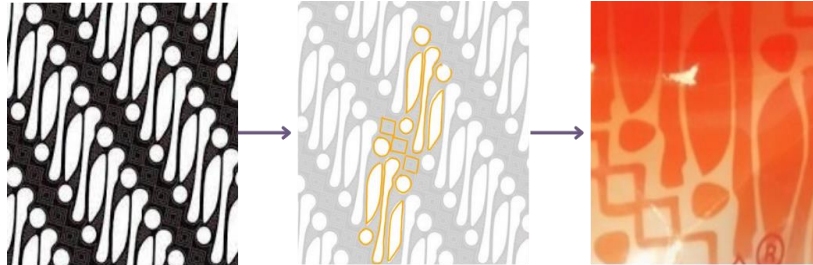


Figure 2. Ganep's Roti Keci Packaging Illustration
Source: Researcher's documentation and visual analysis (2026)

Packaging Structure Analysis in Ganep's Roti Keci Packaging

The physical configuration of Ganep's Roti Keci packaging utilizes a standard flexible plastic pouch that prioritizes functional visibility and technical protection, as detailed in the structural analysis shown in Figure 3. The overall pouch format is divided into distinct zones. The top (header) and bottom (footer) sections are printed, opaque areas utilizing an orange background with traditional batik motifs. As noted in the diagram, these zones serve the primary denotative function of Brand Identification, housing the logo and product name clearly above and below the product window.

From a utilitarian perspective, the structure is designed for high-efficiency retail environments. The top edge features a Die-Cut Hanging Hole (annotation point), facilitating standard peg-board display in stores. Below this is a Hermetic Seal (labeled point), ensuring the product is airtight for initial transport and display. The central and most dominant section of the pouch is a large, Prominent Transparent Window. This is annotated as the key signifier of Honesty & Authenticity, where the brand uses product visibility, the direct viewing of the actual Roti Keci bread pieces, as a trust-building device. This element maximizes the denotative function of product visibility while simultaneously conveying the connotative message that the brand has nothing to hide regarding the quality or appearance of the snack. The structure is finalized at the bottom edge with a second Hermetic Seal, fulfilling the critical technical requirement of Product Protection and securing the entire pouch contents.

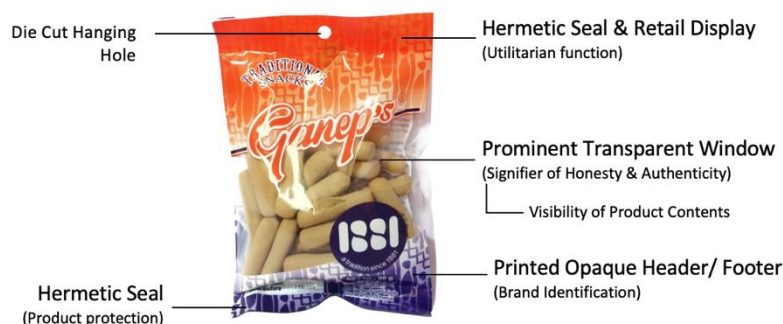


Figure 3. Ganep's Packaging Structure Analysis
Source: Researcher's documentation and visual analysis (2026)

Branding Heritage Analysis in Ganep's Roti Keci Packaging

The heritage branding of Ganep Roti Keci can be analyzed through three main elements proposed by Urde, Greyser, and Balmer (Urde et al., 2007): track record, longevity, and core values. These elements

help explain how Ganep functions not merely as a commercial product, but as a cultural brand embedded in the historical identity of Surakarta.

In terms of track record, Ganep was established in 1881 in Surakarta and is widely recognized as one of the oldest bakery businesses in the city. Historical documentation from the Indonesian cultural heritage database (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia) records Ganep as a long-standing family business known for its signature product, *roti kecil*. Since its early years, *roti kecil* has become closely associated with traditional culinary culture in Surakarta. This long and documented history demonstrates that Ganep is not a newly constructed nostalgic brand, but a business with a continuous historical presence. The packaging of Ganep Roti Kecil, therefore, does not merely function as a container, but as a visual continuation of a historical narrative that has existed for more than a century.

The second element, longevity, further strengthens Ganep's status as a heritage brand. Operating continuously since 1881, Ganep has survived major socio-political and economic transformations in Indonesia, from the colonial period to the contemporary global market. This endurance reflects institutional continuity and intergenerational management within the family business. Longevity in this context is not only a matter of age, but evidence of sustained relevance. The packaging becomes a strategic medium to communicate this long-standing existence, often through the explicit display of the founding year and traditional visual cues that signal historical depth.

The third element, core values, refers to the consistent values maintained by the brand over time. Ganep's core value lies in its positioning as a traditional souvenir brand of Surakarta. The brand identity consistently emphasises authenticity, tradition, and local cultural attachment. Roti kecil itself is not marketed as a modern snack innovation, but as a preserved traditional product. This stable positioning reinforces Ganep's cultural legitimacy within the city. In packaging terms, visual elements such as traditional motifs and heritage-oriented typography function as symbolic representations of these core values. They communicate that Ganep's identity is rooted in tradition rather than trend-driven reinvention.

Through the integration of track record, longevity, and core values, Ganep Roti Kecil packaging can be interpreted as a strategic articulation of heritage branding. The packaging operates as a visual mediator between historical continuity and contemporary consumption, ensuring that the brand's past remains visible and meaningful within the present market context.

Discussion

The Paradox of Uncommunicated Heritage

The results of the visual analysis confirm that Ganep Tradisi Solo possesses robust heritage assets, specifically a documented track record since 1881, multi-generational longevity, and core values rooted in Javanese authenticity (Urde et al., 2007). However, a significant gap exists between these internal branding assets and their external visual articulation on the packaging. While the current design contains the necessary *signs* of heritage (the founding year, batik motifs, historical figures), the semiotic delivery of these signs results in a fragmented, complex visual load that fails to resonate with contemporary consumer preferences.

This phenomenon aligns with established research indicating that packaging often remains a primary weak point for Indonesian MSMEs due to a limited understanding of brand image and visual appearance (Erlyana & Jeremy, 2023; Oktavianus & Erlyana, 2024; Pertiwi et al., 2025; Vinsensia et al., 2023). In Ganep's case, the results show that while the individual visual elements carry symbolic value, they require integration into a cohesive visual system where color, typography, and layout function collectively to mediate brand experience (Liu et al., 2025). For Generation Z, whose purchase intentions are directly impacted by the quality of information provided and expectations of hedonic outcomes (Huwaida et al., 2024), this discrepancy creates a perception of the brand as obscure and unengaging, regardless of its objective authenticity (Ginting & Erlyana, 2025; Ligaraba et al., 2024).

Visual Redesign as Strategic Intervention

Resolving this crisis necessitates transforming the packaging from a simple functional container into a strategic and communicative visual instrument. Gomes and Malafaia (2020) argue that cultural analysis provides the tools to deconstruct everyday objects, allowing brand narratives to be revitalized within their sociocultural context. Applying this perspective, the intervention proposed for Ganep is not intended to eliminate its heritage identity, but to reinterpret its visual signs in ways that harmonize cultural authenticity with contemporary consumer expectations. The following redesign recommendations are derived from two complementary sources: empirical findings obtained from the visual and semiotic analysis of Ganep's existing packaging, and broader strategic directions informed by contemporary packaging and consumer behavior literature.

1. **Typographic Streamlining for Credibility:** The denotative analysis (Table 1) revealed the use of eight distinct typefaces across the package surface. From a denotative perspective, this creates visual inconsistency, while connotatively it produces an impression of clutter and fragmented communication rather than heritage authenticity. This finding directly supports the recommendation to simplify the typography into a more unified typographic system in order to strengthen hierarchy, readability, and brand coherence. The strategic rationale for typographic restraint is further supported by Wibowo and Zainudin (2024), who explain that contemporary visual credibility is frequently associated with clarity, consistency, and minimalist typographic organization.
2. **Chromatic Rebalancing for Market Engagement:** The recommendation regarding color restructuring is also grounded in the empirical reading of Ganep's current packaging. The visual analysis demonstrated that the application of orange and purple lacks a clear hierarchical balance due to inconsistent proportion and placement across different package surfaces. As a result, the color system creates visual competition rather than directing consumer attention through a structured information flow. This finding supports the recommendation to rebalance the orange-to-purple ratio so that purple consistently functions as the primary heritage anchor while orange operates as an accent for appetite appeal and contemporary energy. The broader strategic relevance of visual harmony for Generation Z consumers is supported by Wang et al. (2023), while Rustan (2019a) explains the psychological role of warm colors such as orange in food packaging contexts.
3. **Structural and Storytelling Modernization:** The recommendation to simplify the informational structure of the packaging emerges directly from the empirical layout analysis of the back panel (Table 4), which revealed a dense visual composition and excessive textual load that potentially reduces readability for digital-native consumers. Based on these findings, the study proposes transforming lengthy historical descriptions into shorter and more visually digestible storytelling formats to improve cognitive accessibility and engagement. The concept of "bite sized" narrative communication is further reinforced by Abolafia (2025), who highlights the importance of concise storytelling structures within contemporary visual communication practices.
4. **Functional Modernization of Structure:** In contrast, the recommendation regarding resealable systems and enhanced material structures is not directly derived from the visual analysis of Ganep's existing packaging, but rather constitutes a broader strategic suggestion informed by contemporary packaging literature and evolving consumer expectations. Previous studies explain that modern consumers increasingly value packaging functionality, sensory interaction, and practical usability as part of the overall brand experience (Erlyana & Hanifah, 2024; Huwaida et al., 2024). Furthermore, Erlyana and Lim (2025b) argue that Generation Z consumers are more attracted to brands offering sensory novelty and distinctive physical interaction. Therefore, the proposal to adopt resealable packaging structures functions as a forward-looking strategic recommendation intended to strengthen both functional value and perceived product quality within the contemporary souvenir market.

Synthesizing a "Neo-Traditional" Identity

By positioning the Heritage Quincunx Model as the conceptual foundation, this research transforms Ganep's packaging from a passive container into a strategic communication instrument capable of negotiating heritage preservation and contemporary market relevance. Based on the findings, this study proposes a "Neo-Traditional" aesthetic as a conceptual framework for the modernization of heritage packaging design. Rather than eliminating traditional identity, the framework emphasizes the reinterpretation of cultural symbols through contemporary visual language in ways that maintain historical authenticity while improving market adaptability.

The "Neo-Traditional" framework is characterized by three primary principles. First, cultural continuity, which involves preserving high-equity heritage signifiers such as traditional motifs, historical markers, symbolic color palettes, and core brand narratives that reinforce authenticity and historical legitimacy. Second, visual simplification, which focuses on reducing visual fragmentation through clearer hierarchy, restrained typography, balanced composition, and more cohesive information flow in order to align with contemporary aesthetic preferences, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Third, functional contemporization, which emphasizes the integration of modern packaging structures, usability, and consumer-oriented experiences without disconnecting the product from its cultural roots.

Through these characteristics, the "Neo-Traditional" strategy functions not merely as an aesthetic recommendation for Ganep Tradisi Solo, but as a transferable conceptual model for heritage brands facing similar tensions between cultural preservation and market modernization. The framework positions packaging as a mediating interface where historical continuity, symbolic meaning, and contemporary consumer expectations can coexist within a unified visual identity system.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the visual identity of Ganep Tradisi Solo's *Roti Kecil* packaging as a conceptual basis for formulating a structured modernization strategy. Through an integrated analysis combining visual design principles, structural semiotics, and heritage branding theory, the results demonstrate that Ganep packaging powerfully represents its positioning as a heritage brand rooted in the cultural identity of Surakarta. The strategic utilization of parang batik motifs, the explicit inclusion of the establishment year 1881, and the consistent logo and brand colors serve as vital symbolic markers of tradition and authenticity. These findings align with the Heritage Branding framework, which emphasizes track record, longevity, and core values as the foundational dimensions of a heritage brand (Urde et al., 2007).

However, the analysis also identified critical limitations within the existing visual system that hinder engagement with contemporary markets. Although existing color consistency supports brand recognition, excessive typographic variation reduces coherence and weakens the impression of a contemporary design system. Furthermore, while the functional, transparent, flexible plastic packaging structure effectively communicates product honesty, it simultaneously creates a conventional and less premium impression compared to current packaging trends that prioritize material quality and user experience (Erlyana & Hanifah, 2024). From a Barthesian semiotic perspective (1972), the denotative elements successfully convey the meaning of tradition, yet at the connotative level, the visual system has not been fully optimized to reach younger consumers—such as Generation Z, who are highly responsive to visual simplicity, readability, and integrated brand experiences.

Therefore, the modernization of Ganep Tradisi Solo packaging must be perceived not as a substitution of the established identity, but rather as a strategic visual adjustment to maintain relevance in the modern era. The redesign strategy must carefully preserve symbolic continuity while strengthening typographic consistency, clarifying layout hierarchy, and improving packaging structure. By positioning visual identity analysis as the foundation of the modernization strategy, this study

confirms that heritage values and contemporary market demands can coexist within a unified visual system. In this context, redesigned packaging functions as a strategic bridge connecting historical legacy with contemporary consumer expectations, ensuring that Ganep's cultural identity remains relevant, competitive, and meaningful amid changing patterns of consumption.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its focus on a single packaging variant and its reliance on qualitative visual analysis without direct consumer response testing. Future research may expand the study by incorporating comparative analyses across multiple heritage brands, conducting experimental consumer perception studies involving Generation Z audiences, or evaluating the effectiveness of redesigned packaging prototypes through user-centered testing methods. Such directions would further strengthen the development of "Neo-Traditional" design strategies within heritage branding and packaging design scholarship. Future research should conduct empirical consumer perception tests with Generation Z to validate the effectiveness of this Neo-Traditional design strategy.

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