Design paradigm and syntagm of woven bamboo packaging (besek)

Paradigma dan syntakmatik desain kemasan anyam bambu (besek)

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ABSTRACT
Communication becomes a powerful means of cultural diffusion and an alternative choice for the community. Recently, modern society has been observed to be highly consumeristic, where the image becomes a consideration in the decision-making to purchase. Visual design on the packaging has an effect on consumers’ purchasing decisions. The traditional woven bamboo packaging (besek) has an exciting phenomenon in modern society today (urban). The qualitative approach was used with narrative construction or textual descriptions of phenomena. Formal analysis and sign interpretation were used to answer research problems. The formal analytical method was used to identify the way syntagmatic shapes produce paradigms in meaning. The alternative modern packaging that follows the recent developments does not significantly replace the presence of besek as a medium to come to the collective memory of the target audience. Besek is a small part of existing past cultural products that compete with the modern packaging paradigm. Every past cultural product that successfully maintains its existence enables the establishment of an image and becomes a bridge to collective memory in the contemporary era.

KATA KUNCI
paradigma, esensi, memori kolektif, desain, kemasan

ABSTRAK
Komunikasi menjadi sarana difusi budaya, sekaligus alternatif pilihan bagi masyarakat. Fenomena pada masyarakat modern kapitalis adalah konsumerisme yang sangat tinggi, dimana citra menjadi preferensi dalam menimbang sebuah keputusan untuk membeli. Visual desain pada kemasan memiliki pengaruh kepada konsumen dalam keputusan pembelian. Kemasan produk masa lalu (besek) memiliki fenomena menarik di masyarakat modern kini (urban). Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dalam konstruksi naratif atau deskripsi tekstual atas fenomena. Analisis formal dan pendekatan interpretasi tanda digunakan untuk menjawab permasalahan penelitian. Metode analisis formal yang digunakan guna untuk mengetahui bagaimana bentuk secara syntakmatik yang akan menghasilkan paradigma dalam makna. Medium produk budaya masa lalu (besek) yang memiliki alternatif kemasan dengan wujud yang konvensional, mengikuti perkembangan ternyata tidak secara signifikan mengantikan kehadiran sebagai medium untuk masuk kedalam memori kolektif khalayak sasaran. Besek merupakan bagian kecil dari produk budaya masa lalu yang eksistensinya masih bertahan dengan segala pradigma kemasan modern yang bersaing. Produk budaya masa lalu dalam wujud apapun yang eksistensinya bertahan, secara esensial sangat memungkinkan membentuk citra dan menjadi jembatan kedalam memori kolektif di era kontemporer.

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Introduction

In Indonesia, the popular traditional packaging uses plants. As a tropical country, Indonesia owns numerous types of flora that can be processed and used as food packaging. This green packaging offers distinction and also artistic value for the food. However, with our rapid development, traditional green packaging is now replaced by synthetic packagings, such as the ones made from plastics, papers, styrofoam, and so forth.

In addition, as part of its culture, Indonesia also has various traditional food that is currently being preserved. A culture illustrates human behaviors and the results obtained through the practice of culture and every element organized in a society. It is a perfect type of unexplainable abstract within the audience's mind, realized in the form of thoughts, ideas, norms, religions, and so forth (Koentjaraningrat, 1989, p. 186). A population establishes specific technology, and material or physical culture required by individuals to comprehend their surroundings, thus, following the urgency of the member of the population (Gultom, 2019; Martha et al., 2020; Naim, 2017; Soemardjan & Soenardi, 1964).

Packaging is practiced by society in safekeeping the comestibles. Historically, safekeeping was carried out using the ancient method, such as by placing the food into any media. Safekeeping aids humans in meeting their needs. In the past, people used natural ingredients, such as leaves, rind, tree bark, fronds, shells, and animal skins for packaging. The packaging was simple and functioned to carry the food to other places (Cenadi, 2000; Naufalina, 2020; Sucipta et al., 2017; Suryani & Yulius, 2017).

The green packaging used in the past was commonly made from bamboo, wood, and leaves. An example of those traditional packaging is besek (woven bamboo packaging), a small rice bowl without cover. Besek form is similar to a cube with no cap, with an average height of 4-8 cm and side length ranging from 25 to 40 cm, depending on its size. Besek is made of braided bamboo, forming a woven pattern (Lukitasari, 2016). Previously, only the inside part of the bamboo was used for the woven bamboo, but, recently, it can be made from any part of bamboo and is given distinctive colors. Up to recently, we can find besek packaging in many conventional markets and stores. Each attribute of besek, including its label, color, texture, fastener, and entire packaging, reflects consumers' contention, including their experience, hope, willingness, and other perceptions attached to the products (Komariyah, 2018; Herawan, 2014; Lukitasari, 2016).

Initially, the packaging is seen as an uncomplicated means, preventing food damages caused by weather or other natural phenomena. Besides, packaging also expedites the expedition process. Even if traditional foods are not affected by the habits of a specific group of people (Novidji, 2015; Nurviana et al., 2015), Indonesian people have a particular characteristic in the traditional food packaging technology. Winarno (2007) defines dining as eating the local food full of the surrounding cultures. The traditional foods are generally obtained from and consumed by the particular ethnic group in an area (Winarno, 2007), with recipes passed from generation to generation. Traditional cuisine usually uses local natural sources. Thus, its exclusive ingredients and recipes
illustrate singular regional characteristics, representing the traditional image of an area.

Humans are inseparable from the culture in regulating living. A group of society is established by individuals bound by the social-cultural unit. Society establishes, organizes, cultivates, and develops culture. Thus, there is no human with no culture, and there is no society without culture. Meanwhile, modern society presents a lifestyle that illustrates their behavior, wealth, values, and social status. This group of people owns the essence of their self-existence and prestige for their lifestyle and individualism (Chaney & Martin, 2004; Martha et al., 2020; Yeremia, 2013).

Modern society is often correlated with the consumptive society. Interestingly, consumptive people tend to select the woven packaging, considering the visual aspects that affect their motivation. Among various techniques, forms, and types of woven packaging, bamboo woven packaging for traditional foods is seen as a great manifestation of the past cultural product. This manifestation is full of persuasive language from the immense cultural identity. Baudrillard (2011) explains that economic factors and rational choice affect consumptive behavior, while the cultural and social systems influence the selection of commodity (Baudrillard, 2011, p. 74).

Consumer preference presents the priority of the existing services and products. In modern, especially the urban, society, their selection of traditional goods is essential. The consumptive behavior and the growing capitalistic system demand the shopper to be the absolute consumer within consumerism.

The products of past culture have to preserve the local potential to maintain their traditional image and identity in modern society. Their attributes form a visual image with a positive impression, establishing a mean. With the rapid technology growth, besek (woven bamboo packaging) has faced substantial transformation from its original essence of packaging mean. Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach in the paradigm and syntagm was used to describe the meaning of visual imprints in the besek packaging design. This study focused on the effects of besek paradigm and syntagm on modern society preference.

Method

This study used the qualitative method with narrative analysis and Saussure's semiotic approach to interpret the obtained data and present the meaning. This approach's characteristics were suitable for obtaining data in images, inscriptions, verbal opinions from the relevant sources, and observation results. Nasution (1996, p. 128) suggested that the data in the form of words are classified as qualitative data. In addition, this qualitative approach was selected since we recognized the social condition and phenomena that affected each other and induced another phenomenon.

The data were gathered using four techniques. The first technique was direct observation of the observed subjects because there have been only limited studies have investigated the existence and essence of besek. The second technique was the interviews, followed by documenting and document analysis. The samples were target users and consumers of besek packaging. The obtained data were (1) packaging design
elements, (2) consumers' opinions related to the packaging product selection, (3) the opinion of the sellers (relevant to the selection of culinary product and packaging design).

**Results and Discussion**

The historic packaging (*besek*) creates a unique phenomenon within the urban society since it is successfully maintained its presence in the present time. In the visual context, the persuasive message (one of the aesthetic elements) of woven bamboo packaging affects the consumer's decision to buy the product. In the modern capitalistic society, consumerism is observed to be eminently high, with the visual aspect becoming the starting point where consumers weigh their decision. The lifestyle of contemporary society defines their behaviors, values, revenues, and social position. This society carries the meaning of individualism, self-existence, and dignity (Chaney & Martin, 2004; Swastha & Irawan, 2002).

*Besek* contains crannies which allow the air to come in and get out freely, maintaining the food’s quality for longer time. It is a manifestation of a traditional product popular in the Hindu-Buddha communities in Indonesia. This bamboo packaging shows that society wisely used bamboo in the past. The bamboo processing resulted in *besek*, which was historically used as part of the offering for the Almighty God. In the 12-15 centuries, after Islam came to Indonesia, people started to use *besek* as a food container (Noviadji, 2015).

The packaging's visual attributes affect their decision-making process. It was confirmed that the consumer's buying decision is highly influenced by the visual design (Clement, 2007; Harminingtyas, 2013). Besides, the packaging design also affects the consumers emotionally (Shidiqy, 2016). The continuous presence of past cultural products requires adaptation toward the current situation, involving the changes on its essence of structural form.

Saussure characterizes the communication situation by categorizing the signs, divided into signifier and signified. In the simple term, signifier represents the meaning in the material perspective, while signified is the mind or psychological reflection of perspective (Sobur, 2004, p. 125). For Saussure, the sign has an arbiter nature so that the combination between signifier and signified can be interpreted promptly (Saussure, 1959, p. 67). Besides, the natural association between signifier and signified is not observed. Similarly, there is also no essential explanation of why some goods are given an appropriate name. Genuinely, each appearance of sign used by the society is from the collectivity or convention attitude (Culler, 1990; Saussure, 1959).

**Syntagm of besek design**

Its current presence signifies *besek* success in survival. The signs from the past cultural product always carry meanings. Similarly, *besek* also has implications that can be observed from its structured syntagm. In the research of shape, the term 'face' is defined by Sanyoto as a particular feature of a form (Sanyoto, 2010, p. 83). Thus, the face of an area can be defined as a unique feature of an area confined by particular lines. Sanyoto (2010) divided the face of an area into three, namely geometrical face, non-geometrical face, and combined face of an area. This study used a four-axis braid
bamboo woven structure, which is the basic bamboo braiding technique with four holes in the irregular octogen or octagonal pattern. Besides, this study used besek packaging from *Gigantochloa apus* bamboo.

The besek texture is originated from its woven pattern. In the limited interpretation, artistry focuses on the shape assimilated through the sensing, involving both structure and color. Besides, artistry also represents the natural aesthetic that conveys someone's artistic experience related to the entire or partially absorbed experience (Kartika, 2004, p. 3). Meanwhile, in Javanese society, the choice of color, shape, and structure is related to the transcendence stage. Thus, artistry can be observed in the appearance of besek visual form. As illustrated in Figure 1, besek constituent structure, including the pattern, material, and the harmony between the container and the cover, can be categorized as the sign of besek packaging.

![Figure 1. The constituent structure of besek](Source: Observation documentation)

A packaging design bears visual aspects that influence consumers' decision-making to purchase. Studies from Clement (2007) and Harminingtyas (2013) identify the robust effects of packaging design on consumers' decisions to buy the product. Additionally, packaging also affects consumers' emotions (Shidiqy, 2016).

![Figure 2. Creative besek](Source: Observation documentation)

To maintain its existence, creative besek is the current besek version that has undergone several transformations. However, this type of besek is also observed to own numerous art elements with particular features and the same pattern as traditional besek. The design in creative besek invention represents elegance concept in Javanese aesthetic system since it remains a traditional product. Creative besek was developed
with the same essence of its constituent structure, such as woven pattern, with the additional label as for the identity symbol that remains appropriate and alluring. The design of a product can accurately disclose a brand. It verifies the design function in producing desire or emotion and the sensory experience (Gobe, 2006).

The social transmission produced by industrialization, the market economy, and information dissemination has shifted the function from the past cultural product to commercial product. In addition, other forms of arts, such as rites, have also changed and started to lose their meaning. However, it does not signify that we will lose all traditional products. Some of the conventional and artistic products maintain their existence through creative transformation, to survive the current modernization.

The example of *besek* use as the packaging of *peuyeum* or *tape* (fermented cassava) from Bondowoso, Indonesia, is presented in Figure 3.

In the syntagmatic perspective, aside from *besek*, the packaging of fermented cassava from Bondowoso, Indonesia, also uses the label, banana’s leave, and raffia string. The attribute of this packaging has a robust relationship. *Besek* represents ecological packaging since it is made from natural materials. The label functions as the media for the product and brand information display. The string of raffia is used as a fastener to identify the weight of the packed product. Lastly, the banana’s leave functions to aid the cassava fermentation process. Meanwhile, the product itself, *peuyeum*, is made of boiled cassava and yeast. The entire association of the products creates a traditional meaning and image of the product, as a characteristical culinary product from Bondowoso, Indonesia.

The additional value of traditional packaging from woven bamboo (*besek*) in the *peuyeum* packaging uses an identity image. The products use *ndeso* (traditional) images with relatively simple labels without additional visual elements. The formed aesthetic gives no affirmation to the packaging’s image. However, the business owner explained that the label is only used as a differentiator from other brands and functions as the identifier. Fundamentally, the label can also explain the product, the producer, the production place, the content, and the means to use the product comfortably and safely (Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2017).
Aesthetically, traditional food packaging should never transform and adapt to modern values. Modern values, such as a combination of papers or plastics, reduce the aesthetic value of conventional packaging. Thus, the bamboo packaging, for instance, should not transform from its origin. Essentially, traditional packaging also serves to carry a cultural identity from their origin area. Products being sold are conceptualized through a medium, such as packaging. Thus, in addition to being a container, packaging also carries additional functions (Mukhtar, 2015).

Indonesia is well-known as a country with numerous cultures, ethnicities, and tribes. With great cultural affluence, a nation should not act anciently, but it should use the culture as a potential new product beneficial for the current lifestyle. The craftsman of besek packaging is frequently seen as the old generation, failing to follow modernization. However, we must respect the people who keep using besek packaging since it is made from natural material. It can be one of their means to provide examples of the proper behavior and attitude to preserve the environment. The surrounding people create technology or material culture required to comprehend their surrounding following their resistance and urgency (Soemardjan & Soenardi, 1964).

**The paradigm of besek design**

As the outcome of consumerism and capitalistic culture, we are habituated to buy small gifts or souvenirs for our relatives, friends, and colleagues as physical evidence that we have visited a particular place. The current transportation and mobility facility has made people frequently visit a site, resulting in economic benefits for the visited area since the visitors will surely purchase souvenirs.

Consequently, traditional foods have become one of the probable souvenirs that carry a conventional image. Traditional cuisine is defined as a course representing the characteristics and values of a particular place. The alluring power of traditional food is not only shown in its ingredients but also its packaging. In the process, packaging also functions as media of persuasive communication and advertisement for the product. Without this communication function, the consumer will only assess the product from its visual before deciding to purchase it (Robertson, 2016, p. 4-5).

The local culture offered in traditional foods is highly potential to be used by the capitalistic agent, such as for the exclusive souvenirs from a particular area. Interestingly, modern packaging does not always positively influence traditional food’s impression.

![Figure 4. Alternative modern packaging of besek](Source: Observation documentation)
Figure 4 shows the packaging of Tape Singkong Bondowoso 82, a traditional fermented cassava product that uses modern packaging. However, most consumers choose the besek packaging product since it is considered unique and more conventional. Additionally, the product’s labeling is also essential. The label design in the besek packaging is relatively simple with minimum composition. The persuasive message and store identity are delivered procedurally. From besek to modern packaging with great packaging design, the packaging transformation carries no positive effects on the company's profit since people mostly purchase the traditional perception rather than the packaging function. In product promotion, the sellers mostly communicate the product to attract consumers to buy their products (Peter & Olson, 2000, p. 180). In popular culture, the consumptive people do not purchase a product following their mere needs, but their purchase is also affected by promotion and prestige (Hidayat, 2016).

One of the peyeum (fermented cassava Bondowoso 77, Indonesia) producers stated that besek has numerous functional advantages. In addition to the traditional image, besek gives the product a typical flavor and aroma. One of the consumers also supported this idea that the particular aroma is not found in the product with cardboard packaging made through the modern technological process. Fundamentally, the packaging does not substantially affect the food product’s content. However, the consumers’ tendency to consider the packaging’s visuals should be acknowledged as an essential factor in deciding the use of besek since the use of other packaging brings no positive effects on the company’s revenue. Ideally, the products in the market have unique features, such as their color, packaging, the producer’s or seller’s prestige, and the advertisement to the consumers (Kotler, 2002, p. 430). Therefore, a product is made to fulfill the consumers’ needs and wishes.

In the current modern production era, many producers want to use a more modern label and material, resulting in the non-consistent implementation of the label and the product’s non-consistent persuasive message and image. The change of design is frequently associated with the identity need. Meanwhile, many consumers do not perceive the packaging design as an essential matter. They instead assess the visual packaging design as a whole through a perception constructed from the structure, meaning, and paradigm. Most consumers assume that the identity written within the label is sufficient to establish a perception, even if attributes of label design should also be acknowledged as a substantial, informative attribute for consumers. The culture in traditional food packaging has an exotism viewpoint. The use of culture in the unique product’s packaging potentially stimulates emotion. This representation is capable of awakening a nostalgic past memory (Hall & Du Gay, 2003; Nurviana et al., 2015).

In addition, consumers also tend to choose ‘ndeso’ (traditional) label than the label that follows the current development, the more contemporary and modern packaging design. Generally, most audiences are indifferent toward the persuasive form and labeling message, but they still select the product with label design relevant to the packaging. The old design with vernacular image perceived traditional carries positive impression due to its traditional image. Once the packaging is changed into a more modern form to enhance the revenue obtained from the product, the overall product’s attractiveness decreases. The consumeristic society prefers traditional packaging (besek), since it has a more natural color, texture, and shape. Besides, besek gives a
particular flavor and aroma to the product. The interest in buying is a part of the behavioral component of a consumptive behavior. It represents the consumers' urge before they decide to purchase (Kinnear & Taylor, 1995, p. 306).

Packaging's construction meaning of besek

Packaging construction using natural material carries extraordinary power in constructing aesthetic and the practical experience that can not be found in modern packaging. Therefore, the traditional packaging trend has been growing along with modern packaging. Further, traditional packaging can also be easily obtained in the extensive area of Indonesia at a low price while also can be efficiently produced. Besides, natural materials carry no adverse effects on the environment (environmentally friendly). Recently, the Indonesia government has instructed the reduction of plastic use. Thus, besek can be the alternative since it can be re-used and has no negative environmental effects (Ayu, 2020).

Up to recently, there has been no industry that massively produced besek. Besek packaging is still made by artisans who are mostly live in rural areas. However, besek holds a special place among the consumers since modern packaging cannot replace besek, a traditional packaging full of conventional values. Most traditional food businessmen use this phenomenon to attain the customers' interest and increase their revenue. With its traditional feature, traditional packaging has been used for a long time.

As one of the old cultural products, traditional packaging was also made to maintain the local culture characteristics by still considering the local identity. Modern society perceives the remaining past product as a bridge to access the local product. Besek packaging is one of the cultural products that is seen as ancient has facilitated the contemporary and modern urban society to get back to the past and establish their collective memory. The collective memory generated through the visual form of besek gives the traditional image. Collective memory is constructed through society's integrity bonds that become a cultural movement (Sutrisno & Putranto, 2005).

The formal aesthetic experience is bridged by collegial memory to the metaphysic experience in the form of rites. The example of consumerism of culture in modern society is attending the rites that can be the authentic evidence for their visit to particular places. The aesthetic element and the practical experience in modern society with consumerism culture are used by the capitalist agent as a strategy to involve the traditional atmosphere through the collective memory. With the rapid mobility of modern society, they tend to form a modern culture with visioner and progressive mindset. The presence of past product packaging, which is seen as traditional or left behind, essentially carries aesthetic and empirical aspects in establishing people's memory.

The product of past cultures, such as besek, is still desired by modern society. The values, meaning, and persuasive aspect of the ontologically established memory compellingly come to society's collective memory and form the traditional image in the recent era. However, this conventional packaging has been processed modernly. For example, the besek has been labeled as the identity display full of visual perception, persuasive message, and meaning, resulting in a new perception on the packaging. The
presence of past cultural products in the modern is established by something traditional, considering that the modern aspects essentially come from traditional knowledge and wisdom.

Conclusion

Technology transformation, development, and advancement affect all aspects of our lives. Even in the modern society with capitalistic perspective, the traditional bamboo woven packaging, besek, remains to have a place since the people perceive besek as a manifestation of past culture product with numerous substantial attributes with a traditional image that becomes a medium to come to the collective memory. Empirically, even the modern packaging is not significantly capable of replacing besek because it serves as a bridge to establish and come to the audience's collective memory. Besek is a small part of past cultural products that remains existing up to now. Any past cultural product capable of surviving can potentially establish the traditional image in the contemporary era.

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