

CULTURAL MEMORY AND VISUAL BRANDING IN TRADITIONAL CULINARY DISPLAY OF URBAN BANDUNG

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Abstract: This study investigates Padang Ampera restaurants in Bandung as visual archives of Minangkabau cultural memory, navigating urbanization and consumer culture through visual branding. Using a qualitative interdisciplinary approach integrating cultural memory, visual branding, and urban design, it examines design elements like façades, paluang, and ornamentation in Bunga Tanjung, Salero Bagindo, and Saudara Kembar. Findings reveal that these elements enhance authenticity and emotional resonance, preserving Minangkabau identity while appealing to urban lifestyles. The study proposes a cultural branding model that weaves memory, identity, and storytelling, contributing to design practices that balance heritage and modernity. This model supports sustainable cultural preservation in urban culinary spaces but is limited by its focus on Bandung, suggesting broader regional studies. The research advances understanding of how visual branding and culinary display sustain cultural heritage in dynamic urban contexts.

Keywords: culinary display, cultural memory, urban design, visual branding

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji restoran Padang Ampera di Bandung sebagai arsip visual dari memori budaya Minangkabau yang beradaptasi dengan urbanisasi dan budaya konsumsi melalui branding visual. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif interdisipliner yang mengintegrasikan konsep memori budaya, branding visual, dan desain perkotaan, penelitian ini menganalisis elemen desain seperti fasad, paluang, dan ornamen pada restoran Bunga Tanjung, Salero Bagindo, dan Saudara Kembar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa elemen-elemen tersebut mampu meningkatkan kesan autentik dan resonansi emosional, sehingga dapat mempertahankan identitas Minangkabau sekaligus menarik bagi gaya hidup masyarakat perkotaan. Penelitian ini mengusulkan model branding budaya yang menggabungkan memori, identitas, dan storytelling, yang berkontribusi pada praktik desain yang mampu menyeimbangkan antara warisan budaya dan modernitas. Model ini mendukung pelestarian budaya yang berkelanjutan dalam ruang kuliner perkotaan, namun penelitian ini masih memiliki

keterbatasan karena hanya berfokus pada konteks Bandung, sehingga membuka peluang untuk studi yang lebih luas di wilayah lain. Penelitian ini juga memperluas pemahaman mengenai bagaimana branding visual dan tampilan kuliner dapat mempertahankan warisan budaya dalam konteks perkotaan yang dinamis.

Kata kunci: *branding visual, desain perkotaan, memori budaya, tampilan kuliner,*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of urbanization and cultural convergence, traditional culinary spaces serve not only as sites for food consumption but also as powerful media for cultural expression and identity preservation. Padang Ampera restaurants small-scale eateries rooted in Minangkabau culinary tradition have emerged as important cultural signifiers within cities. These spaces visually communicate cultural memory through architectural façades, decorative elements, and the distinctive food display known as paluang.

While much scholarly attention has been given to the gastronomic, migratory, and economic aspects of Padang restaurants, relatively little has been explored in terms of their visual language and branding strategies. Yet, in an age where visual identity plays a critical role in shaping consumer perception and cultural relevance, these elements become essential in understanding how traditional values survive and thrive within modern urban environments. Buschgens et al. (2024) demonstrate that visual elements such as color, form, patterns, and materials are strategically employed in brand aesthetics to reinforce diasporic identity, serving as a form of visual storytelling that bridges heritage and contemporary contexts. The importance of heritage branding in multicultural societies by embedding cultural narratives that remain relevant and resonate with contemporary audiences (AhmadTaha & Abdelfattah, 2023).

Building on contemporary discourse in visual branding, Purnamasari and Affandi (2025) explore how coffee shops and street food vendors in

Indonesia employ semiotic elements in logo design to communicate authenticity, cultural symbolism, and brand differentiation. The necessity of cultural and communication-aware design approaches, which underscores the importance of integrating cultural understanding into visual branding strategies (Yudhanto et al., 2023).

This phenomenon is especially evident in Bandung, a creative and culturally diverse city where the food industry intersects with youth-driven visual trends, digital culture, and lifestyle branding. As one of Indonesia's design capitals, Bandung offers a unique setting where tradition meets experimentation. Padang restaurants in this city face growing pressure to differentiate themselves visually, while maintaining a sense of authenticity that resonates with both Minangkabau diaspora and broader urban audiences.

The study focuses on three selected Padang Ampera restaurants in Bandung Bunga Tanjung, Salero Bagindo, and Saudara Kembar each of which demonstrates a distinct approach to cultural visual representation. Through observation and analysis of key visual elements such as façade design, ornamentation, and the paluang display, the research aims to identify how visual branding becomes a vessel for cultural storytelling.

By integrating theories from visual communication, branding, and cultural studies, this study proposes a model of cultural branding that foregrounds memory, identity, and narrative. Ultimately, it contributes to the growing discourse on how traditional forms are negotiated and sustained in the face of modernity especially within the post AI urban design landscape.

Based on these gaps, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How does visual branding serve as a medium of cultural storytelling in Padang Ampera restaurants in Bandung? (2) How can these practices inform the development of a cultural branding model that both

preserves heritage and engages with contemporary urban lifestyles? Addressing these questions allows the study to connect visual analysis with broader discourses of memory, identity, and design innovation.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative interdisciplinary method that integrates visual communication analysis, cultural studies, and branding theory. Data were collected through visual observation, photographic documentation, and in-depth interviews with owners and staff of selected Padang Ampera restaurants in Bandung, West Java. The scope of this research is limited to three Padang Ampera restaurants in Bandung and should be understood as illustrative case studies. The findings aim to highlight patterns of visual branding in an urban context rather than to generalize across all Padang restaurants in Indonesia.

The selection of case studies was conducted using purposive sampling, focusing on three restaurants Bunga Tanjung, Salero Bagindo, and Saudara Kembar due to their active use of Minangkabau visual elements in spatial and branding practices. Each restaurant represents a distinctive approach: Bunga Tanjung emphasizes traditional display with its prominent paluang, Salero Bagindo incorporates vibrant Minangkabau color palettes and ornamentation, while Saudara Kembar combines traditional motifs with contemporary branding features.

While the purposive selection of three restaurants allows for an in-depth exploration of their visual strategies, the small sample size represents a limitation of this study. These cases are not meant to be statistically representative but serve as illustrative examples of how cultural memory is visually expressed in urban Bandung. Thematic analysis was conducted through iterative coding of visual and interview data. Codes were categorized

into broader themes related to cultural representation and branding functions. Reliability was maintained through repeated cross-checking of codes and validation of emerging themes against interview transcripts and field notes.

These samples were also selected for their urban setting, providing insight into how traditional culinary spaces adapt visually within modern city environments. Their accessibility for documentation and openness to being observed contributed to their inclusion. This small sample does not aim to represent all Padang restaurants, but to provide illustrative cases.

The analysis focuses on key visual elements including façade design, interior display (particularly the paluang), ornamentation, and color schemes. Thematic coding was conducted manually. A semiotic framework was used to interpret how these visuals function as cultural signifiers and branding tools. The process included coding of visual patterns, thematic categorization, and interpretation within the context of cultural representation and visual branding strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that Padang Ampera restaurants utilize specific visual strategies that function both as expressions of Minangkabau cultural memory and as tools for branding in urban contexts. These strategies are evident in the physical and spatial arrangement of the restaurants, particularly the use of traditional visual elements such as the paluang (a tiered food display rack), decorative motifs inspired by rumah gadang, earthy color palettes, and ornamentation reflecting Minangkabau philosophy, notably *alam takambang jadi guru*.

To enhance analytic rigor, the observational and interview data were processed through a systematic coding procedure. Initial open coding was applied to identify recurring visual elements across cases, which were then grouped into categories such as “cultural symbolism,” “branding differentiation,” and “aesthetic adaptation.” These categories were subsequently refined into broader themes abundance, authenticity, and hybridity that guided the interpretation of findings. Validation was achieved through repeated cross-checking between field notes and interview transcripts, ensuring consistency and credibility of the thematic analysis.

Field observations in urban centers such as Bandung show a consistent use of these elements, despite contextual adaptations. The *paluang* display, for instance, not only organizes food efficiently but also visually communicates abundance, generosity, and tradition attributes associated with Minangkabau hospitality. Façades often replicate vernacular forms, providing a visual identity that distinguishes these eateries from others, while reinforcing authenticity. Field observations were conducted at three Padang Ampera restaurants in Bandung such as; Bunga Tanjung, Salero Bagindo, and Saudara Kembar. There are to examine how visual strategies reflect Minangkabau cultural memory and support branding efforts.

The Bunga Tanjung restaurant prominently displays a *paluang* (tiered food display) near the entrance, which immediately communicates traditional abundance and hospitality (Figure 1). In Salero Bagindo, the use of red and yellow exterior motifs reflects Minangkabau symbolic color codes and draws attention to its cultural identity (Figure 2). Saudara Kembar adopts a hybrid approach, combining traditional facade ornamentation with modern typography in signage showcasing the blending of tradition and urban aesthetics (Figure 3).



Figure 1. Paluang display at Bunga Tanjung symbolizing abundance and tradition
Source: Personal Documentation (2024)



Figure 2. Blue and yellow Minangkabau color usage at Salero Bagindo
Source: Personal Documentation (2024)



Figure 3. Visual hybridity: traditional ornament meets modern signage at Saudara Kembar
Source: Personal Documentation (2024)

Interviews with restaurant owners indicate that visual choices are often intentional and tied to identity. The inclusion of specific colors, motifs, and arrangements aims to evoke emotional responses such as nostalgia, trust, and cultural pride among customers especially those with Minang heritage. Meanwhile, younger or urban customers perceive these visuals as “authentic” and “exotic,” reinforcing their appeal in the competitive food market.

Table 1 Visual Elements in Padang Ampera Restaurants: Cultural and Branding Functions

Visual Element	Cultural Function	Branding Function
Paluang (food display)	Symbol of abundance & Minangkabau tradition	Unique identity, visual attraction
Ornamental motifs	Representation of rumah gadang heritage	Authentic aesthetics, visual differentiation
Red-Yellow-Black colors	Sacred colors in Minangkabau culture	Evokes emotion & builds brand trust

Source: Field Observation (2024)

The analysis of visual elements across the observed Padang Ampera restaurants reveals a consistent use of symbolic components that serve both cultural and branding purposes (Table 1). The most prominent is the paluang, a tiered food display structure placed near the front of the restaurant. Traditionally, the paluang symbolizes abundance, hospitality, and communal eating, values deeply rooted in Minangkabau culture. From a branding perspective, its imposing and colorful presentation also acts as a distinctive visual identifier, drawing customers through visual appeal and familiarity.

In addition, various ornamental motifs often inspired by Minangkabau architecture, especially the rumah gadang decorate walls, windows, or signboards. These motifs not only preserve cultural memory but also contribute to authentic aesthetics, helping the restaurant stand out among competitors by emphasizing cultural uniqueness. This aligns with Purnamasari and Affandi’s (2025) findings on semiotic-driven branding in Indonesian

culinary contexts, as well as Yudhanto et al.'s (2023) argument for culturally informed design practice.

The color palette commonly used in these restaurants, particularly red, yellow, and black, carries symbolic weight in Minangkabau tradition. These sacred colors reflect courage, prosperity, and strength. In a visual branding context, their bold combination creates strong emotional resonance with both Minangkabau-origin customers and broader urban audiences, enhancing brand trust and recognition. This dual role of visual elements as conveyors of cultural memory and as branding tools—demonstrates how Padang Ampera restaurants actively balance tradition with strategic visual communication to remain relevant in the contemporary urban foodscape.

From a branding perspective, these visual elements become embedded in the restaurant's identity, creating strong brand associations rooted in culture. They serve as semiotic tools that communicate meaning beyond the culinary product. This aligns with previous theories of cultural branding, where authenticity and storytelling are key differentiators in urban markets. This aligns with Nugroho's observation that "visual identity in traditional culinary spaces often encapsulates symbolic cultural narratives that resonate with local identities" (Nadra et al., 2025), reinforcing how the ornamentation and paluang in Padang Ampera's visual branding function as narrative devices.

The study identifies a pattern where traditional cultural elements are selectively retained, stylized, or adapted to suit contemporary tastes without losing their symbolic value. This balancing act reflects what can be called "visual hybridity", a condition where tradition and modernity coexist through design. Such hybridity allows the restaurant to remain culturally anchored while being responsive to urban design aesthetics and consumer behavior.

This cultural branding model can be seen as a living system, dynamically adjusting yet anchored in heritage. It also demonstrates how design decisions in small-scale culinary spaces contribute to larger narratives of cultural preservation, economic identity, and the future of urban expression. These results contribute to a growing discourse in visual communication and design innovation, especially in how traditional identities are expressed, negotiated, and sustained through everyday visual environments.

These findings resonate with recent studies on cultural branding and urban identity, which highlight how local traditions are selectively adapted to contemporary consumer environments (Handriyotopo et al., 2024; Velasco et al., 2015). In particular, the concept of “visual hybridity” aligns with Watson and Waterton’s (2010) argument that heritage narratives are constructed through a negotiation between continuity and change. The emphasis on symbolic colors and ornamentation also echoes Ye and Tussyadiah’s (2011) exploration of visual imagery as a driver of cultural authenticity in tourism and hospitality branding. By situating the present findings within this scholarly discourse, the study contributes to an ongoing debate on how cultural memory is mediated through design in competitive urban markets.

These findings are consistent with Buschgens et al.’s (2024) analysis of how visual aesthetics facilitate diasporic identity through the harmonization of traditional and modern elements in branding. This also reinforces Ahmad Taha’s (2023) perspective, which highlights how heritage branding can provide cultural relevance within multicultural societies.

In conclusion, the Padang Ampera restaurant is more than a place to eat it is a space where design, culture, and commerce intersect. Its visual language becomes a medium through which Minangkabau identity is preserved and reimagined in the urban foodscape.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Padang Ampera restaurants in Bandung function as vital cultural and visual spaces where Minangkabau heritage is preserved, expressed, and recontextualized through strategic branding practices. The use of traditional elements such as the paluang food display, ornamental motifs inspired by rumah gadang, and sacred color schemes goes beyond aesthetic considerations. These visual components serve as active signifiers of identity, authenticity, and cultural continuity in a modern urban context.

The novelty of this study lies in articulating a cultural branding model that explicitly integrates memory, identity, and storytelling into the visual strategies of small-scale culinary spaces. Unlike previous approaches that primarily emphasize economic or gastronomic dimensions, this model foregrounds the role of visual communication in sustaining cultural heritage within urban design practices. Its implications extend to both scholarly debates on cultural hybridity and to practical strategies for restaurant branding, where heritage can be positioned as a source of competitive identity in contemporary cities.

From a branding perspective, these elements are not passive decorations but tools of differentiation, storytelling, and emotional engagement. They help establish a strong cultural narrative that appeals to both heritage-conscious consumers and a broader urban audience seeking authenticity. The observed cases Bunga Tanjung, Salero Bagindo, and Saudara Kembar demonstrate varying approaches in negotiating tradition and modernity, resulting in visual hybridity that reflects the adaptability of cultural identity within competitive culinary markets.

The proposed cultural branding model, based on memory, identity, and storytelling, illustrates how traditional forms can remain relevant when

integrated thoughtfully into contemporary design. As cities like Bandung continue to evolve as creative hubs, such culturally grounded branding strategies offer a valuable blueprint for sustaining heritage through design.

This study is limited by its small sample size of three restaurants and by its focus on Bandung's urban context, which restricts the generalizability of its findings. Future research could expand this inquiry by including a larger number of Padang restaurants across multiple Indonesian cities, or by applying the cultural branding model to other forms of traditional culinary spaces. Such comparative approaches would provide a deeper understanding of how cultural memory is negotiated across diverse urban landscapes and could further test the applicability of the proposed framework.

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