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Submission date: 19-Jun-2020 01:12PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1346391684

File name: ik_Apparel_Hetty_Karunia_Tunjungsari_Tarumanagara_University.doc (79.5K)

Word count: 3123

Character count: 17773

Brand Name Evaluation on Batik Apparel: Case of Javanese Batik in Indonesia

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Abstract: Product brand name will differentiate one from its competitors, create emotional engagement with consumers, and even set up the road from small business into the global giant. Increasing competition among brands, especially in the apparel industry, has become more complicated as the number of foreign brands increase in developing markets. This study aims at investigating how different language use in brand name creates different consumers' preference and perceived quality, especially Javanese Batik apparel. A survey on 265 Batik consumers confirmed that not all hypotheses in our study were statistically supported. Our research confirmed the name-pronunciation effect on consumers' product preference but we did not found the effect on consumers' perceived quality of Batik. In the mean difference tests on consumers' brand name preference and their perceived quality of Batik, confirmed that even consumers prefer Batik with Javanese brand names, they evaluate Batik with foreign name as having higher perceived quality. This study gives the first evidence on how consumers evaluate brand name for Batik apparel in Indonesia and gives insight how Batik marketer should manage their brand name wisely.

Keywords: Javanese Batik, brand name, consumer's product evaluation, small and medium enterprises

1. Introduction

As an Indonesian heritage product, Batik has now become a continually adapting fashion trend. Within the wide variety, Batik in Indonesia has undergone many developments, in terms of design motifs, production processes, product design, to extended marketing reach. Batik apparel is one of the typical creative industry areas which have a high potential to be developed to support higher economic stability of the country. Quoted from the Chairman of the Indonesian Textile Association, the apparel industry in Indonesia has a positive outlook on the future, even in the current global crisis (<http://industri.kontan.co.id>). Endorsed by the high consumption of apparel products both for domestic and export markets in Indonesia, Batik occupies a fragment that needs to bear in mind.

The development of the Batik industry in Indonesia can be found widely and Batik producers constantly innovate extensively. The term "batik" itself comes from the Javanese language that represents a series of processes in producing garments (Krevitsky, 1964). Javanese batik was first introduced into the international world by Dutch traders who imported Batik to Europe in the 17th century (Hitchcock, 1991). Until today, Batik is widely recognized as the product of Javanese culture, or the heritage product of Indonesia. In

international markets, we can find many of Batik producers such as Danar Hadi Batik, Batik Keris, Batik Semar, Batik Aneka Sandang, and Batik Pria Tampan, which successfully markets their products in China, the Middle East, U.S., Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands and South Korea (Surakarta Trade Office, 2009). Thus, there is no doubt that Batik in the apparel industry has the potential to get higher market successes, not only at local market but also be able to intensify its manifestation internationally.

Mostly, Javanese brand names are commonly used as Batik brand name for decades, since Java is the origin of Batik and giving a Javanese brand name will make consumers easier to identify that the product is "made in Java". Even in the developing trend of the apparel industry in Indonesia, not many manufacturers named their brand using foreign languages to create the impression of 'modern' and 'international' for the products that it markets. However, recently there are small number of newer generation Batik producers which endorse Batik as modern apparel and represents world class standard (Alleira Batik, Camelia Batik, Batik Gies, etc.). This particular phenomenon in Batik brand naming is very interesting to be explored, especially to further understand whether there are any different consumer's product evaluations between having Javanese (local) brand name or foreign brand name.

The decision to use local v.s. foreign Batik brand name must be made carefully to enhance long term market success. Consumers in developing markets possess various motives for purchasing foreign brands, including higher prestige and higher satisfaction. Previous research confirmed that Indonesian consumers put higher evaluation on perceived quality and product satisfaction on foreign brand name compared to the local ones (Tunjungsari, 2011). Although numerous research on local v.s. foreign apparel brand names have been widely noted in the literature, research has not been done in the one of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage product, Batik. Extensive research need to be done to investigate the underlying motives behind this purchase decisions since the findings will support a better understanding of why consumers in developing countries, especially Indonesia, choose to purchase foreign brands instead of local brands.

Researches can analogously bring forth from name-pronunciation effect literature, which demonstrated that name-pronunciation can influence a person's judgment under several circumstances (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2008;

Laham, Koval, & Alter, 2012; Mehrabian, 2001). Easy-to-pronounce names will be liked more than the difficult-to-pronounce names (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2008) as well as their perception of quality (Laham, Koval, & Alter, 2012). Since local brand names might represent easier-to-pronounce names, the aim of our study is to prove that local brand names will get more positive evaluation than foreign brand names which are more difficult-to-pronounce.

Tunjungsari (2011) proved that Indonesian consumers perceived foreign brand names will lead to higher satisfaction. A number of studies in various motives of consumers purchase decisions in developing countries have concluded that one of the reasons which make consumers more likely to choose a foreign brand is that foreign brand is perceived to be able to provide higher prestige and satisfaction than local brands (Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden, 2002; Wong & Zhou, 2005). Although there have been many studies of local v.s. foreign brands, insignificantly done to examine how Batik's consumer's form product evaluation from its brand name. Within the context of name-pronunciation-effect, our study will examine the effect applying local v.s. foreign brand name in Javanese Batik case, regarding to consumer's product liking and and consumer's perceptions of product quality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. SME's Branding Practice

The Indonesian government has been actively encouraging SMEs to develop product branding. Brand development for SMEs is expected to increase the marketability of the product as well as the opportunity to grow bigger into the global market. News from The Indonesian Ministry of Industry stated that the use of brand name by local SMEs is expected to increase consumer's buying interest and rising product's prices. The existence of a trademark will allow consumers to recognize such products, so that they can search in a faster way and find the exact product they want in the future. (<http://www.kemenperin.go.id>).

Brand management is one of the important factors in organizational success, particularly for small organizations (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2007). In marketing their products, SMEs often focus on product and price, using highly oriented brochures and sales activities which create such impression that building a strong brand is not a priority issue (Krake, 2005; Bunnett & Smith, 2002; Hill & Wright, 2001). Researches in brand literature within the scope of SMEs are still very limited (Ahonen, 2008; Krake, 2005; Muyimba, 2009). Nevertheless, a number of studies emphasize the importance of brand for SMEs and underline that using brand name will create differentiation value for SMEs (Inskip, 2004).

2.2. Brand Name and Consumer's Product Evaluation

Brand name represents a variety of function both for producers and consumers. The simplest function of brand name is a label for companies to identify and promote their products and services for consumers (Friedman, 1985). Levy (1978) stated that the brand name represents the rich

configuration of symbols and meanings inherent with product, which even has its own meaning and existence. The brand name can affect the interpretation and evaluation of consumers through linguistic characteristics or its associations (Peterson and Ross 1972). Large world-class companies even make their brand name as company's most valuable assets (e.g. Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Levi's, etc.), because these labels are able to be quickly identified by consumers, even when the company sell new products under the same brand name they will be more easily accepted by consumers (Levy, 1989).

Lately, more and more marketers are placing careful attention on the creation of effective name branding strategy (Argo, Popa, & Smith, 2010). A number of strategies produces brand name that explicitly transfer the information about the product and/or attributes (e.g., auto Diehard battery) (Keller, Heckler, & Houston, 1998). Another strategy produces a name which is not directly related to product features. Several marketers use sound symbol (phonetic symbol) that can have an impact on the linguistic structure of brand names on consumer perceptions (e.g. Prozac brand communicates confidence through the letter z) (Klink, 2000; 2001). Research also shows that the linguistic characteristics of the brand name can affect product evaluations consciously, such as the brand Coca-Cola, Hubba Bubba, Tutti Frutti, Jelly Belly, Kit Kat, Bits and Bites, Lululemon, and Tostitos which are capable of creating positive feelings when being spoken (Lowrey & Shrum, 2007; Yorkston & Menon, 2004).

It is generally known that name can provide a variety of information, ranging from diagnostic tools of social categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class (Kasof, 1993), to form specific impression in a group of attributes include success, warmth, morality, popularity, happiness, and masculinity vs. femininity (Mehrabian, 2001; Mehrabian & Piercy, 1993). Name is also able to activate a of information on which to make consumers' assessment (Etaugh, Bridges, Cummings-Hill, & Cohen, 1999; Kasof, 1993). Etaugh et al (1999) concludes that a woman who uses her husband's name is seen as less eligible to mediate and more collective than those who maintain a personal name. The name also activates a number of semantic information such as a person's age, intellectual competence, ethnicity, and social class that can shape one's impressions and evaluation (Kasof, 1993). Meanwhile, Laham, Koval and Alter (2012) proved the existence of name pronunciation effect, where the easy-to-pronounce name is being evaluated more positively and became more preferable compared with the difficult-to-pronounce name.

Extending the possible implications of name pronunciation effect from previous research, researching product brand name as a company asset which also embedded with specific values the company needs to communicate might lead to similar conclusion as name itself. Customers may sometimes make an evaluation of each product they are considering to purchase based on the product brand name. Consequently, we propose our hypotheses on brand name pronunciation as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Brand names' ease of pronunciation affects consumer preferences on Batik apparel.

Hypothesis 2: Brand names' ease of pronunciation affects consumer perceptions of Batik apparel's quality.

2.3. Local v.s. Foreign Brand Name in Marketing

Previous studies addressed the difference on the consumer evaluation of the brand based on local vs. foreign brand name. Marketers put some effort to create an international image for their brand, **3** at the use of foreign brands as well as launching a **global brand positioning strategy through advertising** (Alden et al., 1999). Furthermore, **3** den explains that associate the brand with a foreign image is one of common dimensions that are relevant to the brand placement strategy in the international market. Frimpong (2011) found that consumer in Ghana have a more positive attitude on foreign apparel brands than the local brands. Consumers perceived foreign brand name's apparel has superior durability, higher quality, more attractive, and more stylish, thus they have a higher tendency to purchase imported apparel. There is also research on consumers' shopping behavior in Indonesia, which proved that Indonesian consumers gain higher satisfaction on products with foreign brand name than the ones with local brand name (Tunjungsari, 2011).

The use of local v.s. foreign brand names is vividly clear in the Batik apparel industry. As a local product of Indonesia, it is very common that until today most of Batik apparels have Javanese brand name, since the term "batik" is derived from Javanese Batik and is internationally well known as a traditional product of Java or Indonesia (Hitchcock, 1991). A number of Batik manufacturers - inclusive those who have successfully market their product internationally - apply 'Javanese name' that directly represents identity as a product of Java (Danan Hadi Batik, Batik Keris, Batik Semar, Assorted Batik Clothing, etc.). In the literature of the country of production (COP), specifically discusses that brand communicates an implicit reference regarding the country of origin of a product and consumer often associate it with the country where the product originates (Samiee, 1994; Thakor and Kohli, 1996). In other words, giving the Javanese language name expresses Batik as a product of Java or Indonesia, both in domestic and international markets.

Referring to brand-COP congruity we suggest that since Batik in local or international market is known as product of Java or Indonesia, consumers will have better preference on brand name which expresses its country of origin, those with Javanese or Indonesian language. Hence, from the discussion of local v.s. foreign brand name and the concept of brand-COP congruity, we then propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Consumer will have higher preferences on Batik with Javanese brand name than Batik with foreign brand name.

Hypothesis 4: Consumer will have higher perceived quality

on Batik with Javanese brand names than Batik with foreign brand names.

3. Research Methodology and Findings

3.1 Research Population and Sample

The population of our study is the batik apparel consumers in Jakarta. 300 employees from several offices in Jakarta were asked to fill research questionnaire voluntarily during February-March 2013 and 265 questionnaires were feasible to be further analyzed. We developed the questionnaires by adapting scales from Laham et al. (2011). In the pilot study we collected 20 Javanese names and 20 foreign names and confirmed the grouping in an FGD which involved of 30 Batik consumers from different gender and ages ranging from 20 – 60 year old. From the discussions we then picked 10 Javanese brand names and 10 foreign brand names which then become our brand name lists in the questionnaire. Each group of brand name was also tested regarding of their ease of pronunciation **4** n. Therefore, in the Javanese brand name lists we have 5 **easy-to-pronounce** and the other 5 **difficult-to-pronounce names**, so does the foreign lists. Put in random order, the 20 brand names were then evaluated according to three dimensions: their ease-to-pronounce (1 = very difficult, 5 = very easy), how much consumer's preference (1 = not at all, 5 = very much, and how consumers perceived their quality (1 = very poor, 5 = very good).

3.2 Research Findings and Discussions

As predicted, correlation analysis showed significant correlation between brand name's ease of pronunciation and consumer's product preference ($r(265)=0.554$; $\rho<0.01$). Further regression analysis also revealed the significant impact of brand name's ease of pronunciation on consumer's product preference ($\beta=0.0449$, $t(265)=9.975$, $\rho=0.05$). Consequently, consistent with the first hypothesis, brand name's ease of pronunciation affects consumer's product preference. Thus, the more difficult-to-pronounce a brand name is, the less will be consumer's preference of the product. On the contrary, the second hypothesis was not supported, while there is no significant impact of brand name's ease of pronunciation and consumer's perceived quality.

The calculation of mean differences between consumers' rating of local and foreign brand name's product preference resulted reversely with the third hypothesis ($\mu_{loc} = 3.21654$, $SD = 0.052351$; $\mu_{fm} = 3.53195$, $SD = 0.74616$). Thus, Batik's consumers have higher preference on foreign brand name than Javanese brand name. However, mean differences between consumer's product's perceived quality on local and foreign brand name was consistent with the last hypothesis ($\mu_{loc} = 3.36226$, $SD = 0.76218$; $\mu_{fm} = 2.78792$, $SD = 0.70480$). This result means that Batik with Javanese brand name is perceived having higher quality than foreign brand name.

Our research findings rigorously supports and extending previous studies on name pronunciation effect, that brand name pronunciation can also bring impacts consumers' evaluation on Batik apparel (Laham et al, 2012; Mehrabian

& Piercy, 1993). The fact that there is inconsistency findings on brand-COP concept in the forming of consumers' perceive quality by applying Javanese v.s. foreign brand name in Batik apparel can be explain by the possible manifestation of consumers' perception that foreign brand name has superior durability, higher quality, more attractive, and more stylish (Frimpong, 2011; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden, 2002; Tunjungsari, 2011; Wong & Zhou, 2005). However, since consumers have higher preference on Batik with Javanese brand name than one with foreign brand name, we can still conclude that there is also brand-COP effect in the Batik apparel branding practice (Samiee, 1994; Thakor and Kohli, 1996).

context of research samples, different products, and different source of languages.

4. Conclusions

The aim of our study was to investigate the evidence of name-pronunciation effect and brand-COP congruency in Batik apparel branding strategy. There is significant impact of brand name's ease of pronunciation on consumers' Batik preferences. In other words, we can conclude that the easier-to-pronounce Batik brand name is, consumer will prefer more on that Batik. Furthermore, there is also brand-COP congruency effect which shown from the fact that consumers' rate higher preference on Batik with Javanese brand name than Batik with foreign brand name.

However, we also found inconsistent support in consumers' perceived quality on Batik with Javanese brand name v.s, Batik with foreign brand name. While name-pronunciation effect predicted that consumers will have higher perceived quality on Javanese brand name as well as predicted in the concept of brand-COP congruity, our study bring to forth different findings from previous studies.

5. Implications and Further Studies

Our study contributes in extending the literature of name-pronunciation effect into the domain of brand name strategy and brand-COP congruity. The consistent findings with previous studies showed greater implication for Batik apparel marketers, especially for SMEs who want to expand their existing market locally or internationally (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2007; Ahonen, 2008). SMEs should better discover how their targeted consumers form Batik's preferences and perceived quality from the desired brand name. However, we need to further investigate since consumers in our research showed that foreign brand names have higher perceived quality. We need to further explore the reason of this circumstance by researching different group of consumers (i.e. tourists from abroad, professionals, or civil servants).

Since previous studies that use names as indicators of social category membership (Kasof, 1993; Laham, 2012), marketers must carefully develop their brand name strategy to create perfect stimuli on pronunciation ease. Marketers must also take into consideration on the evidence of developing country consumers perception on foreign brand name apparel (Frimpong, 2011; Tunjungsari, 2011), which also shown in this research by higher consumers' perceived quality of foreign brand name Batik. In order to get generalizability of the study, research on this brand name pronunciation effect must be done widely in different