

The Customers' Perception on English for Branding: A Study in a Non-English Speaking Area

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Abstract

Language is still believed as a tool to connect people which can be shown both verbally and non-verbally (Pan: 2014). In marketing world nowadays, marketers and costumers demonstrate positive trends in engaging each other. This research presents the perception of the customers towards the use of English for branding in one of non-English speaking areas in Aceh, Indonesia. 33 randomly-chosen respondents of 11 males and 22 females participated in this study. They were provided with a set of questionnaire consisting of a series of question. The result presented that most of the participants show positive responses towards the issue of using English for branding. 63.64% of respondents agree that the use of English for branding may increase their English vocabularies. In addition, 51.52% of them feel curios towards the products offered in the store of English branding. However, 45.45% of the respondents seems disagree that the use of English for branding may influence the cost and profits of the stores. Shortly, most participants provide positive comments toward the issue of this study.

Keywords: language, branding, customers.

Introduction

The creation and development in marketing world has reached precious era. The battle of brands in marketing has shown positive trends among marketers and customers. People may use the same word for the brand, but it contains different meaning. The most important key here is to manufacture the product by engaging actively the customers as many as possible. Many customers, at this point, is more interesting to try new product from new brand. To be successful, the brand's image must be based on a clear understanding of the 'feelings, ideas and attitudes' of the target consumer and 'the effort to differentiate the brand is psychologically rather than physically based' (Hankinson, 2001: 127).

What people do with language, then? It is an ordinary question leading to many perceptions. Language is a symbol which is used as a tool to build an interaction among people. The language used interprets the intention of both sides, speaker and listener. Sometimes, someone does not need to speak verbally to convey messages; it can be translated by reading the available language, the so-called non-verbal language. This is similar to what Pan (2014: 2627) explains that verbal and non-verbal

communication are 2 techniques to exchange information among people. Therefore using appropriate language is very essential to connect people.

In terms of marketing section, the use of language seems to be important to attract people. Labeling the store in foreign language, especially English provides various meanings. Within a non-English speaking area, it is interesting to identify the customers' perception on English for branding. This also can be one of the strategies to persuade new customers. Many unique names were labeled on the store presenting different meanings. What is more, in business, branding is more likely to transmit signal for the world as well as to measure financial value (Hasan, 2014: 201). Each brand should represent the product offered. This is also intended to motivate and encourage the owner/marketer to be better in providing the service for the customers.

Furthermore, the customers may put trust (Dennis, et. al, 2009: 1124) on the product offered through language that can influence the rate of marketing. Like language itself, marketing and its various elements shape-shift with the times. Another important aspect regarding the use of language as a brand is value. The marketers should pay more attention on this issue to satisfy the customers. A satisfied customer tends to stay loyal to the company for a long period of time and to buy more and more often than other, not so loyal, customers do (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996: 20). The use of language, thus, should be selected properly in order to impress the customers which consequently increase the market prices.

Literature Review

Language and Branding

A language is an innate ability the humans have which constitutes verbal sounds and used to express ideas. Although only 2-3 hundred languages are available with written forms, there are some 5 to 7 thousand spoken-languages in the world today in which each of it has different kinds or types within itself. The differences within a language furthermore, depend on the speakers and the purpose and situation. As with the language in the other fields, the language in marketing also has different form from the common language. Monigala (2018) states that not only the business is run mostly on figures (numbers) on bank balance sheets, but also needs for the language in promoting it such as advertisement (publicity). Besides, though the usual icons, models and color combination put into the design of the 'logo' and the other means of advertisement like jingles, movie slots on TV, hoardings and so forth, the language still plays an important role both in catching the eye of the customer and in explaining the qualities of the product (Monigala, 2018). This shows that marketing communication relies much on language.

Among other languages, English has become the first choice of language in marketing world. It can be proved that in many non-English speaking countries, English is heavily used for branding neither name of products or stores. Mezek's (2009) study on the influence of foreign language on the local language, particularly in the field of economy, finds that 58% of advertisements utilize English while only 23% of street advertisements are in Slovene. This phenomenon has revealed different causes and consequences in many countries. Martin (2002), for instance, found that French advertising specialists use English lyric songs as "mood enhancing strategy" (p.17). Griffin (2004) asserts that the strikingly wide use of varied range of English words on window shops, doors, or shop signs is obvious in the streets of Rome signifies that English is mostly used for commercial purposes.

To more extent, there is a correlation between wealth and English proficiency which is somewhat reflected in elements of branding. Using English for branding is hint at a degree of intellect and international status of the marketers or customers. Therefore

a strong relationship is paramount among client, brand and the audiences it serve (Vincent, 2012, p.3) in order to earn more profits.

Research Methods

This paper has an attempt to get insight into the customers' perception on English for branding. The research took place in Langsa, Aceh, Indonesia, which is a non-English speaking area. The participants of the research were 33 customers consisting of 11 males and 22 females. The data was obtained through questionnaire, consisting of 8 questions and was analyzed by using SPSS program. Those questions were formulated in Indonesian language to ease the customers in understanding the issue as well as to avoid the bias that might arise.

Results and Discussion

The result of the research showed various answers from different customers. The initial used on the table means SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Doubt), DA (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree). The entire data obtained can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The percentage of questionnaires

No	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	DA (%)	SD (%)
1	Penggunaan bahasa asing, terutama Bahasa Inggris sebagai nama/label pertokoan di kota Langsa semakin marak (the use of foreign language, especially English, as the name of the stores has been mushrooming in Langsa)	21.21	54.55	18.18	6.06	-
2	Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris sebagai nama toko dapat mempengaruhi minat pembeli (the use of English as the name of the stores may influence the customers' interests)	12.12	48.48	21.21	18.18	-
3	Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris sebagai nama toko dapat mempengaruhi penjualan dan pendapatan (the use of English as the name of the stores may influence the costs and profits)	9.09	15.15	27.27	45.45	3.03
4	Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris sebagai nama toko dapat meningkatkan persaingan bisnis (the use of English as the name of the stores may raise business competition)	21.21	42.42	24.24	12.12	-
5	Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris sebagai nama toko dapat meningkatkan rasa keingintahuan pembeli terhadap barang yang ditawarkan lebih besar (the use of English as the name of the stores may raise the customers' curiosity towards the goods offered)	18.18	51.52	18.18	12.12	-
6	Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris sebagai nama toko dapat menambah wawasan masyarakat terhadap kosa kata yang digunakan (the use of English as the name of the stores may	15.15	63.64	15.15	6.06	-

	improve the customers' vocabularies in English)					
7	Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris sebagai nama toko merupakan symbol modernitas (the use of English as the name of the stores is as the symbol of modernity)	27.27	48.48	12.12	12.12	-
8	Membeli produk dari toko dengan label berbahasa Inggris dapat meningkatkan harga diri / gengsi (purchasing goods from the stores with the English name may increase self-confidence)	24.24	30.30	12.12	12.12	21.21

The above table clearly shows about the customers' ideas regarding the use of English as the name of the stores in Langsa. The first question shows that most customers, stood at 54,55%, agree that the use of foreign language, especially English for the name of the stores is mushrooming these days in Langsa. This is followed by 21, 21% of them declares absolutely agree (*sangat setuju*) for the statement. Around 18% of the customers is still doubt about the question, while the rest of 6% of them disagree that the use of English as the name of the stores has been a trend in Langsa nowadays.

Regarding the use of English for the store's name may influence the customers' interest, 48.48% of respondents agree and 12.12% of them agree strongly. This indicates that the respondents as the customers as well, believe that English language plays an important role in influencing their interest to purchase goods. Only around 21% of them feel doubt about the statement and the rest of 18% customers disagree with this.

Surprisingly, almost half of the respondents or about 45.45% disagree that the use of English as the name of the stores may influence the cost and profits. Only 9.09% of them strongly agree with this statement. At this point, it is believed that the use of language does not have any correlation with both outcome and income in a business of marketing. It should be noted, however, that both marketers and the customers should have a strong relationship to run the business. Therefore the marketers should provide an interest strategy in order to engage the customers' loyalty to increase the profits (Fleming, 2015, p. 2).

In terms of business competition, the use of foreign language can be as one of alternatives for marketing reason. This can be seen that 42% customers prefer to select this opinion. Although some of respondents are still doubt (24.24%) and even disagree (12.12%) with this, in fact language has a positive impact on customers' point of view. This is related to the next statement in which 51.52% of the respondents agree that the use of English for branding might raise the customers' curiosity towards the goods offered. It means the more they are curious the higher purchase can be produced. As has been mentioned above, marketers should create an emotional circumstance to attract the consumers' focus by providing proper product in order to match the consumers' needs. This strategy is also necessary to increase their trust.

The above table, in addition, also represents the information which is related to the consumers' ability in mastering some vocabularies in English. This is confirmed by more than half of respondents (63.64%) agree that the use of English for branding may enrich their vocabulary. This indicates that the language used has a positive influence towards the consumers' knowledge. The percentages of participants who are strongly agree and doubts are similar, which is 15%. The consumers who disagree with the statement, on the other hand, are 6% only.

Another option which is related to modernity, moreover, is also interesting to be clarified in this paper. Almost half of respondents (48.48%) agree and 27.27% of them strongly agree that the use of English as the name of the stores is as the symbol of modernity. Even though the customers are living in a non-English speaking area, they realize that nowadays, English is applied in all aspect of lives. The more they use of English, consequently, the more familiar they will be. This condition, surely, ease the customers to have interaction with the others wherever they do shopping. In this option, 12% of the participants are still doubt and disagree.

Purchasing goods from the stores with the English name may increase self-confidence is the last statement for this questionnaire. Each category of opinion is filled with little different percentage. It can be seen that 30% of participant put checklist on agree section and 24% other is on strongly agree. On strongly disagree line, additionally, has slightly different percentage with that of strongly agree one, which is 21.21%. The respondents who are doubt and disagree with this idea constitute at 12.12% each. In this category of statement, it implies that the participant does not really concern on self-confidence which is related to marketing section. It can be stated that self-confidence is not arisen from buying things in the English store branded.

Conclusions

Many perceptions have been drawn by the customers (as a part of the participant in this study) towards the use of English for branding for different reasons. Variety of opinion was collected through the questionnaires representing their ideas. Most respondents react positively on the phenomena of using English for the name of the stores in Langsa, yet some of them, undeniably, have different point of view regarding the issue. 54% of the respondents believe that the use of English for the name of the stores is mushrooming these days in Langsa. 63.64% of them agree that the use of English as the name of the stores may enrich their vocabularies in English.

That category of reason is the highest percentage among other statements. This phenomenon describes that the customers are enthusiastic to use English for their daily life. At least they are trying to be more familiar with that language while shopping. Besides, 48.48% of the consumers agree that the use of English as the name of the stores is as the symbol of modernity. It seems that the consumers in Langsa realize that English is really important in all aspects of life. In the contrary, 45% of the respondents disagree if the use of language is connected to the cost and earning value of the store, and 27% of them is also doubt about it. In short, the research finding reveals variety of participants' responses towards the use of English as the name of stores in accordance to its influence on both marketers and customers.

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