ETHNIC GROUPS' ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION: THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE IN PACKAGING

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Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled "Ethnic Groups' Attitude and Behavioral Intention: The Impact of Language in Packaging" is to the best of the author's knowledge that of the author except where due reference is made.

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ABSTRACT

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The main aim of this study is to determine the impact of language in packaging toward different ethnic group’s attitude and behavior intention. Besides, it intends to show the reaction of respondents toward product package that imprinted with their ethnic language and their second language. The scope of this study is limited to Malay and Chinese in Malaysia. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to 300 respondents (150 Malay and 150 Chinese) that were selected from the population. However, there were only 277 questionnaires collected. The results of Bonferroni correction for one-tailed t-test showed that there were significant differences exist between the variables. However, there was no significant difference between the independent variables and the attitude toward the company. Therefore, this study imply that there a distance exists between the company background and the product. This study suggests that the characteristics and the features of product are more important than the company background. In addition, other issues raised from this study include the issue of adaptation and standardization, global marketing, speech accommodation theory, distinctiveness theory and theory of attitude-toward-the-object. From the discussion, this study also suggests that marketer should recognize the existence of market segment rather than viewing countries as being totally homogeneous.
ABSTRAK
SIKAP DAN TINGKAH LAKU KUMPULAN ETNIK: KESAN BAHASA PADA BUNGKUSAN

Oleh
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter details the research background, problem statement, objective of the research, the significance of research, conceptual framework, and the scope of the study.

1.1 Background of the Research

Malaysia is a multiracial and multicultural society, with Malays, Chinese, Indian and numerous indigenous people living side by side (Abraham, 1999). The population in Malaysia in 2003 was 24,753,100 people, where Malay form the largest community (12,518,500 people) followed by Chinese (5,990,700 people) and Indian (1,759,400 people) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2003). As a multiethnic country, therefore various types of languages are spoken by the communities in Malaysia (Khoo, 1991; David, 2003).

The main spoken languages in Malaysia are Malay, Chinese, Indian, and English language (Gannon, 2001; David, 1999). However, Malay language has been adopted as the national language and is taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools (Maier, 1996; Asmah, 1983; David, 2003). Although Malay language has been adopted as the national language, Chinese, Tamil, and English are still widely used (Gannon, 2001; Khoo, 1991; David 1999). For example, the Chinese in Malaysia speak many different dialects and they have consistently placed
high priority on Chinese schools and opportunities for education in Mandarin (Heng, 1996). Besides that, Tamil language is also widely used (Balasubramaniam, 1989; David 1999). For instance, there are varieties of Tamil dialects spoken by Tamil in Malaysia and there are 530 Tamil medium primary schools available in Malaysia (Balasubramaniam, 1989; David 1999). Furthermore, there are three types of Tamil newspapers can be found in Malaysia and Tamil movies are also shown often on television (David and Naji, 2000). In addition to that, English language is also widely spoken by the communities in Malaysia (Gannon, 2001). For example, most urban Tamils use English in their daily communication (Balasubramaniam, 1987). Moreover, in national education, Math and Science are taught in English from primary grade one onwards since 2003 (Yaakub, 2003).

Therefore, most Malaysians are bi-lingual and even some are tri-lingual (David, 1999; David, 2003; Khoo, 1991). Thus, a Malaysian that speaks more than one language is comfortably switches between more than one language in one sentence (Gannon, 2001; David, 2000; David and Noor, 1999). For example, the first two words may be Tamil, the next three English, the next three Malay, and the last one Chinese (Gannon, 2001). This language shift is the socio-cultural process of individuals changing from the habitual use of one language to that of another (Weinreich, 1970).

Therefore, advertisements and product packages in Malaysia can be found in various types of languages (Parker, 1982) (refer to Appendix F). Different languages are widely used because language plays an important role to persuade people to buy
products and services (Dyer, 1982). Furthermore, people belonging to different cultural and speech communities have particular way of ‘seeing things’ and be influenced by the language of that group (Paul, 1993). Therefore, this study intends to examine the impact of different languages in product packages toward the reaction of Malay and Chinese respondents in Malaysia.

**The Importance of Languages in Marketing**

Language is often described as the most important element of cultures and used to communicate and to interpret the environment (Hall and Hall, 1987; Terpstra and Sarathy, 1997). Language is also one of the most formidable barriers that international advertisers need to surmount (Kotabe and Helsen, 1998). Therefore, firm that do business in multilingual societies need to decide what languages to use for product labels or advertising.

Foreign language may imply different patterns of thought and different customer motivation (Hollensen, 1998). A slogan or advertising copy that is effective in one language may mean something different in another language (Hollensen, 1998). For example, Coca-Cola had enormous problem in China as Coca-Cola sounded like ‘kooke koula’ which translate into ‘A thirsty mouthful of candle wax’. They managed to find a new pronunciation ‘kee kou kee le’ which means ‘joyful tastes and happiness’ (Doole and Lowe, 1999).

Therefore, using an appropriate language in the product labels or packages is important in order to deliver an effective message to the consumers. Although
English may be widely spoken (Gannon, 2001), and may even be the official company language, speaking and using local language may make a dramatic difference (Kotabe and Helsen, 1998). For example, firms that translate promotional materials and information are seen as being serious about doing business in the country (Hollensen, 1998).

For the Asian market, the ideographic nature of Asian languages must be taken into account in the creation of corporate and brand names and in marketing communication created to promote the company and its products. The way an Asian perceives and evaluate writing differ significantly from the way a Westerner views writing (Schmitt and Pan, 1994). Therefore, trade names, sales presentation materials and advertisements used by firms in their domestic markets have to be adapted and translated when used in other markets (Hollensen, 1998; Kotabe and Helsen, 1998).

1.2 Problem Statement

Cultural differences and especially language difference have a significant impact on the way a product may be used in a market, its brand name and the advertising campaign (Doole and Lowe, 1999). Numerous promotional efforts have misfired because of language related mishaps (Kotabe and Helsen, 1998). Therefore, particular attention needs to be paid when using different languages in advertisement or in product package.
Since language is important to persuade people to buy products and services, therefore some companies are increasing their investment in language training (Dyer, 1982; Hagen, 1992). Furthermore, recent study showed that language does influence the effectiveness of advertising (Laskey et al., 2000). However, whether the use of different language in product package will cause positive or negative effect toward different ethnic groups is the problem that needs to be considered. This is because an advertisement that is effective in one language may mean something different to different ethnic groups with different language (Hollensen, 1998).

Consumers may react favorable or unfavorable feeling toward the language used in product packages. Therefore, whether language in packaging has any impact on consumer's attitude and behavioral intention is the research question for this study. This study will look into two types of languages; Chinese and Malay, and determine the reaction of respondents.

1.3 Objective of the Research

To determine the different languages on packaging that impact on respondents’ attitude toward the company, attitude toward the product, and behavioral intention.

1.4 Significance of Research

This study contributes to managerial decision and provides knowledge of how multi-lingual person like Malaysians react to product package with different types of
languages. It also gives information to manager of respondents’ attitude toward the product and their attitude toward the company. Therefore, this study provides ideas and decisions of how managers can change the consumer’s attitude before the launching of a new product package.

Furthermore, this study is important to provide knowledge of how consumers react to product packages that imprinted with their native language and their second language. Consumer may respond positively or negatively toward product package that is not in their ethnic language. Besides that, this study is also important to show the effect of adapting one ethnic group’s language and the reaction of other ethnic group that is not adapted. Therefore, it provides a path to managers in designing and creating product package in multi-racial countries and do different branding for their products.

In addition, purchase intention as one of the variables in this study can be used to make a variety of managerial decision. Through the purchase intention measurement, it helps manager to predict the major shifts of consumer buying so that the manager can adjust their product packaging, production and marketing plans accordingly. Besides that, marketer will be able to predict whether consumer will buy the product that its package imprinted with consumer’s first language or second language. It is also useful in estimating demand for new products that employ different types of languages in packaging.
Furthermore, this study is also important as a reference for future research. The results and the findings can be used as a comparison with future research. Therefore, it is able to extend and widen the knowledge of consumer behavior in Malaysia.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Speech Accommodation Theory

Speech Accommodation Theory framework shows how those speakers that can communicate in different languages adjust or accommodate their linguistic style to their audience (Giles et al., 1973). This theory allows an investigator to envision an audience through communication (Giles et al., 1973). The theory has two parts, the convergence part and divergence part.

Adaptation to another’s use of language is called linguistic convergence (Giles et al., 1973). Linguistic convergence is the act of accommodating the audience to obtain a favorable response (Giles et al., 1973). Convergence is a linguistic strategy whereby individual adapt to each other language by means of a wide range of
linguistic features, including language rates, pauses, pronunciation and so on (Giles et al., 1987). Figure 1 posits that once respondents are accommodated by the language on packages, he or she will tend to have favorable attitude toward the company and the product.

On the other hand, the accentuation of differences is called linguistic divergence (Giles et al., 1987). Language divergence is a tactic for maintaining intergroup distinctiveness (Giles et al., 1987). People use language divergence to maintain their identity, ideological focus, cultural pride and distinctiveness (Giles et al., 1987). Figure 1 posits that once respondents are not accommodated to the language on packages, he or she will tend to have negative attitude toward the company and the product.

Speech style is an important subjective and objective clue to social group and it is a way to make themselves different from others (Giles, 1977a, 1977b; Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor, 1977; Giles, Taylor, Lambert, and Albert, 1976). Therefore, speech accommodation theory is a good basis for this study because the theory deals with those cognitive, motivational, and affective processes (Giles, et al., 1987). However, this study will determine whether the respondents will have positive or negative attitude and behavioral intention if they are targeted with different types of languages in the product package.
1.6 Scope of the Study

This research aims to determine the impact of language in packaging among the Chinese and Malay respondents that from various states in Malaysia. In this research, Malay language and Chinese language were tested only. The significant difference on the attitude toward the product, the attitude toward the company and behavioral intention between the respondents who view Malay package and respondents who view Chinese package were identified. The population of this research was limited to Malay and Chinese in Malaysia who are above 20 years old only. This study utilized 150 Malay and 150 Chinese as the respondents as suggested by previous research (de Run, 2004; de Vaus, 1996).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the important concepts regarding to the topic of this research based on previous research studies. The meaning of culture and its influence on consumer behavior, the meaning of acculturation, ethnicity and ethnic identity, the impact of language on consumer behavior, product packaging and the function of packaging, and target marketing are reviewed. The hypotheses are also constructed in this chapter.

2.1 Culture

Malaysia is a multicultural society with various types of ethnic groups living side by side (Abraham, 1999; Khoo, 1991). Malay, Chinese and India are the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia (Khoo, 1991). Since this study focuses on two ethnic groups (Malay and Chinese) with different cultures, it is important to define the meaning of culture and its influence on consumer behavior.

Anthropologist and sociologist define culture as the way of living and developed by human beings that are transmitted from one generation to another (Keegan, 1999). Similarly, some researchers define culture as the pattern of learned behaviors, value and attitude that are shared and transmitted by members of a particular society (Linton, 1945; Rein, 1982). Culture may differ in demographics,
language, nonverbal communication, and value (Wills, Samli, and Jacobs, 1991; Samli, 1994). Aside from the definition, culture can also be described in some characteristics (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1997).

One of the characteristics of culture is prescriptive (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1997). This means that culture determines the kinds of behavior that is acceptable in the society. For example, smoking is not acceptable because of the health hazard it would cause to our bodies (Kobayashi and Moore, 2000).

Culture is also socially shared (Hall, 1976). This characteristic of culture means that culture cannot exist by itself. It must be shared and accepted by the member of the group in a society. For example, the Chinese communities in Malaysia share the belief of Confucianism and Yin and Yang relationship (Kiu, 1990).

Culture is learned (Linton, 1945). This characteristic of culture means that a person is not born to inherit cultural behavior from his or her parents. It must be learned and acquired. Enculturation occurs when a person learns the culture in which he or she is raised (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1997). In contrast, if a person learns the culture other than his or her own culture, the process of acculturation occurs (Yinger, 1985).

Culture is also enduring (Harrell and Frazier, 1999). This means that culture is shared and passed down from generation to generation. People tend to maintain their
own heritage although the world is changing. For example, Chinese view a large family as a blessing and they assume that the children will take care of their parents in the future (Kiu, 1990).

The characteristics of culture that mentioned also can influence the living styles and the consumption patterns. There are numerous of studies indicates that culture has a significant influence on consumption behavior (Hirschman, 1981; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983; Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu, 1986; Schaninger, Bourgeois, and Buss, 1985). For example, the Chinese in Malaysia do not consume beef because they believe that it is unacceptable to eat cattle that work in the farm (Kiu, 1990). On the other hand, Muslim or Malay in Malaysia do not use alcoholic beverage and they do not purchase foods unless the foods are halal (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1997).

Therefore, it is clear that culture does influence how consumers behave. Furthermore, others argue that consumers prefer products images such as packaging that are congruent with their culture and their own self-images (Landon, 1974; Green et al., 1969). For example, Chinese consumers prefer red package rather than other color because in their culture, red is always the color of happiness and good fortune (Wolf, 2003). Therefore, the features of product and packaging are tightly connected to consumer culture and lifestyle (Usunier, 1996). Moreover, the theory of attitude-toward-the-object suggests that if consumers hold positive feeling toward the features of the product that are congruent with their culture and lifestyle, they will likely to purchase the product (Fishbein, 1963). Therefore, some researchers have
focus on cultural variables such as the degree of ethnicity and the value of the consumers' culture that may influence the effectiveness of language used in advertising (Koslow et al., 1994).

However, the cultures and the characteristics of consumers are different between countries and even regions in the same country (Fisher, 1984; Kotler, 1986; Walters, 1986). Therefore, some argue that marketer should not view the market as being totally homogeneous (Hill and Still, 1984). They should recognize the existence of market segment (Hill and Still, 1984). In addition, the opponent of standardization approach argue that separate advertisement should be used in different market due to insurmountable differences in cultural, languages, and economics between the markets (Kotler, 1986; Walters, 1986). However, some argue that humanity possessed certain common attributes and concluded that it was possible to standardize advertisements across countries (Brown, 1923).

2.1.1 Acculturation

The idea of acculturation was described as practical adjustment between groups (McGee, 1898). Acculturation was used in the area of sociology, psychology and social psychology after 1960 (Huang, 1992). There are various definitions of acculturation.

Acculturation can be defined as the phenomenon which groups of individuals with different cultures get into continuous personal contact, with later changes...
occurs in the original cultural patterns of either or both group (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, 1936). Acculturation can also be defined as the process by which an individual or a cultural group learns other culture (Yinger, 1985). However, this definition does not assume a loss of the original cultural during the process of learning new ones.

The cost of acquiring something new is inevitably the losing of something old (Taylor and Simard, 1975). This means that the new cultural pattern may replace many of the old patterns little by little (Kim, 1988). The most obvious of acculturation in Malaysia are the people such as ‘Baba and Nyoya’ integrated into Malay lifestyle.

### 2.2 Ethnicity

Malay, Chinese and Indian are the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia (Khoo, 1991). Malays are the largest ethnic group followed by Chinese and India (Khoo, 1991). Ethnic subcultures can be defined as those whose members’ unique shared behaviors are based on a common racial, language, or nationality background (Hawkins, Best, and Coney, 1998).

The meaning of ethnicity is different from the meaning of ethnic identity. Ethnicity is an objective description and it is refers to a group with common national or religious background (McGuire et al., 1978). In contrast, ethnic identity is more subjective (Cohen, 1978; Hirschman, 1981; Minor, 1992) and it is a self-designation