BRAND ORIGIN CONFUSION EFFECTS ON BRAND PREFERENCE AND BRAND PURCHASE LIKELIHOOD

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of brand origin confusion (BOC) on consumers preference and consumers purchase likelihood of local versus foreign brands in Indonesia. Come up from country-of-origin (COO) literatures and brand origin recognition accuracy, this study would like to confirm whether there are significant effects of BOC to brand preference and purchase likelihood. It intended to describe whether BOC really affected brand preference and purchase likelihood in developing markets, such as Indonesia.

Pilot study was conducted and 24 brands (12 local and 12 foreign) which exist in Indonesia were selected. One hundred and fifty respondents evaluated some variables such as brand origin, brand knowledge, brand preference, and brand purchase likelihood. For the data analysis, simple and multiple regressions were conducted.

The result of this study mostly supported the hypotheses. Specifically, the results showed that in a high level of BOC, local brands are likely to have advantage and foreign brands are likely to have disadvantage. Meanwhile, brand knowledge was not found to have moderating role of BOC effect to brand preference.

Keywords: Country of origin, Brand origin recognition accuracy, Brand awareness, Brand Equity, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Brand's country-of-origin (COO) has been revealed as one important factor underlying brand equity, consumer judgments, and choice processes (Samiee, Shimp, and Sharma, 2005). Many researchers on country-of-origin effect has found that foreign brands are preferable than local brands especially for consumers in developing countries (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999, cited in Zhuang, Wang, Zhou, and Zhou, 2008, p. 442).

Having the fact that consumers in developing countries prefer foreign brands to local brands, more and more local companies are using foreign characteristics in their marketing strategy in order to make their brands being perceived as foreign brand. Corporations take advantage of such image-enhancing effects by positioning their brands as global in their communications, using

foreign message elements such as brand name, logo, advertising visual and themes, etc. (Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden, 2003).

However, these uses of foreign brand names and foreign advertising elements by local companies have brought consumers into confusion about the origins of brands in terms of local or foreign brands. Zhuang *et al.* (2007) argued that local brands had received advantages by this confusion (perceived as foreign brand). Zhuang *et al.* (2007) examined the asymmetric effects of brand origin confusion (BOC) on consumer preference and the purchase of local versus foreign brands. It was found that BOC positively affected consumer preference of local brands and negatively affected the preference of foreign brands in China.

Therefore, this study would like to confirm whether there are the same effects found in different country, Indonesia or even has a greater effect than it was in China. The consumer knowledge moderating role to the effect of brand-origin-confusion toward the brand preference for local brands also discussed in this study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

This study would like to investigate how the confusion of consumers about the origin of a brand might affect brand preference and purchase likelihood in the context of local and foreign brand competition. Furthermore, this study also would like to see whether brand knowledge might affect the relationship of consumers' confusion to their preference of local and foreign brands. The model for hypotheses is shown below in figure 1.
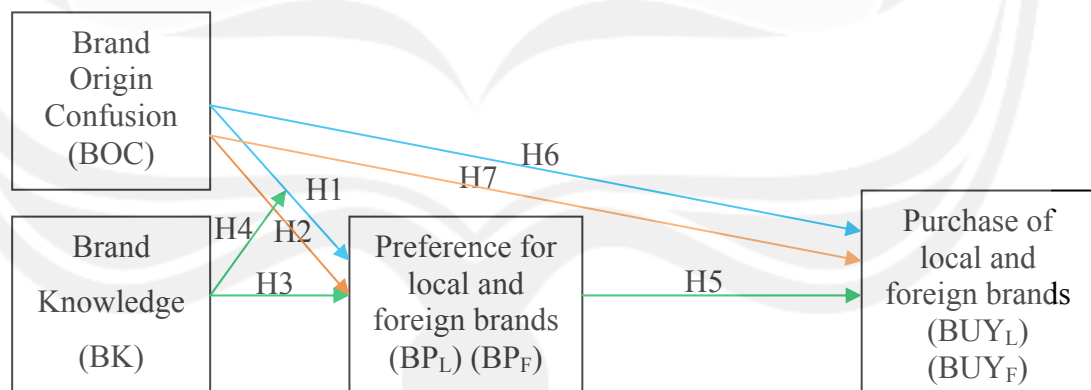

Figure 1
Conceptual Model

Brand Origin Confusion to Brand Preference

Prior research in country-of-origin had argued that consumers had limited knowledge of the origins of many (even well-known) brands and that they frequently categorized a brand to the wrong COO (Samiee *et al.,* 2005; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2011). This issue was important because "if consumers

associate a brand with the wrong COO, their brand evaluations (and subsequent buying decisions) could differ from what they would have been if the correct COO had been identified" (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2008).

There are at least two factors which might cause such confusion or the misclassification of brand origin. Firstly, consumers' cognition processes, such as their cognitive ability, attention paid to the brand and its origin, and memory, might influence the amount of confusion they experience (Zhuang *et al.,* 2008). Secondly, a company might intentionally attempt to mislead consumers about company's brand origins. Zhou *et al.* (2010, p. 204) observed, "The origin information for most brands may not be readily accessible either because global marketers have the desire to mask the origins of their brands or the globalization of firms and the cross-border acquisition of brands complicate the nature of brand origin".

Based on the literature in brand origin effect in developing countries, it could be argued that Indonesian consumers prefer foreign brands to local brands because of the brand origin stereotype. Foreign brands from more developed countries are perceived as having higher quality, more advanced technology, and more fashionable (Zhou and Belk, 2004). Hence, consumers would have a positive preference for local brand if it is perceived to be a foreign brand (consumers misjudge the brand origin). Then, we could propose a hypothesis:

H1:   In Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' confusion about the origin of local brands is related positively to their preference for local brands.

Consequently, if consumers perceive a foreign brand as a local brand, the brand origin stereotype effect might not be working anymore. It would decrease the consumers' preference as it is perceived as local brand. Therefore we could propose another hypothesis:

H2:   In Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' confusion about the origin of foreign brands is related negatively to their preference for foreign brands.

Brand Knowledge

Brand knowledge is composed of stored information about the brand in memory, and includes all descriptive and evaluative brand-related information (Keller, 2003). Such knowledge could become one factor in forming brand preference (Kotler, 2012). Therefore a hypothesis could be developed:

H3:   Brand knowledge is related positively to the preference for both local and foreign brands.

Zhuang *et al.* (2008) argued that the more knowledge that the consumers had of a brand, the more likely it was that they would be able to distinguish it among other brands. It is clear that if consumers have more knowledge about the brand, they may not misperceive the origin of the brand. Hence, brand knowledge may weaken the positive relationship of BOC to the local brand preference. If consumers with higher knowledge really like the brand, their preference for the brand should be due more to the characteristics connected with the brand than to the BOC effect. In other words, the BOC effect on consumers' preference for

local brands is weaker for the local brands that consumers have grater knowledge. In conclusion, brand knowledge should play a moderating role in the relationship between BOC and brand preference and we could propose a hypothesis:

> H4:   In Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' knowledge of local brands negatively moderates the relationship between consumers' confusion about the origin of local brands and preference for local brands.

Besides, Zhuang *et al.* (2008) argued that the moderating effect of brand knowledge of foreign brands could not follow the same logic like the local one. As mentioned before, the more knowledge consumers have the less consumers would misjudge the origin of the brand. Thus, when consumers with more knowledge of foreign brand do not like the brand, it is unreasonable to say that their lower preference to it is because of the characteristic of the brands rather than to the BOC effect. It is against the concept of how consumers in developing countries prefer foreign brands to local ones. In conclusion, it is not appropriate to put brand knowledge as a moderating variable in the relationship between consumers' confusion about the origin of foreign brands and preference for foreign brands.

Brand Origin Confusion to Brand Purchase Likelihood

In order to test the conceptual model, it is very important to look how brand preference affect brand purchase likelihood. Banks (1950) found that brand preference was almost identical with purchase intention, for about 96 per cent. In order to confirm this statement, we could state a hypothesis:

> H5:   Brand preference is related positively to the purchase likelihood

Furthermore, Steenkamp *et al.* (2002) observed how perceived brand globalness affected brand purchase likelihood. They found that in developing countries, perceived brand globalness positively associated with both perceived brand quality and prestige which gave a strong effect on purchase likelihood. Hence, consumers would have a higher purchase likelihood level for local brand if it was perceived to be a foreign brand (consumers misjudge the brand origin). Then, next hypothesis could be proposed:

> H6:   In Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' confusion about the origin of local brands is related positively to their purchase likelihood of local brands.

In reverse, if consumers perceive a foreign brand as a local brand, the perception of foreign brand of superior quality and high *prestige* would be diminished. The purchase likelihood therefore would be negatively affected. Therefore we could propose another hypothesis:

> H7:   In Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' confusion about the origin of foreign brands is related negatively to their purchase likelihood for foreign brands.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Context

This study was a modified replication of Zhuang et al. (2008) research which studied about consumers' confusion effect to their preference and purchase of local and foreign brands and also how brand knowledge took a role as mediator variable in brand origin confusion and brand preference.

There are some modifications in variables which were used in this research. One variable in conceptual model which was "brand value" was not included in this research because the original article did not mention the meaning of "brand value" in their context and also did not describe how to measure it. Furthermore, the variable of "purchase of local or foreign brands", different from the original article, was measured based on the consumers' intention or likelihood, not the actual purchasing. Different product categories might have different standard frequency of buying in certain period that could make a bias in analysis. Moreover, the effect BOC might decrease if consumers just recently buy the product, and it would affect the analysis.

This study used 5 categories of products which comprised 24 brands, with each category containing equally distributed 4 or 6 local and foreign brands. Different from the original article which brought about 67 brands, this study only used 24 brands to simplify the study.

Sample and Data Collection Method

In this research, 150 members of universities in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta were selected and work as the sample for the study. In this research, one category of nonprobability sampling which was convenience sampling was used. The data collection method used was the personally administered questionnaires. Each respondent answered a questionnaire that includes questions on background demographics and questions covering perception of brand origin, brand knowledge, preference of the brand, and purchase likelihood. Moreover, the respondents needed to evaluate 24 different brands in 5 categories in respect of brand origin confusion to their preference and purchase intention. The researcher selected 5 categories of personal care, food, beverages, unisex fashion item, and laptop.

Pilot Study

Following the previous studies (Batra *et al.,* 2000; Steenkamp *et al.,* 2003; Zhuang *et al.,* 2008), the researcher visited supermarkets and department stores and recorded all of the available brands in these 5 categories and then found it online to indicate whether the brands were foreign or local. Finally, the researcher found 50 brands in 5 categories. Those brands were selected according to some criteria. The brands should have higher consumer knowledge but should not the market leader of each category in order to increase the BOC effect. The brands should also have certain brand origin. Some brands may have dual origin which potentially blurs the finding of the research.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted a pilot study to select brands which were appropriate for this study among selected 50 brands. 30 respondents were asked about their knowledge of the brands and finally 24 brands were selected.

Pretest

In order to test whether multi-item measurement or single-item measurement which was appropriate for this study, a pretest was conducted. The pretest was conducted by spreading 150 questionnaires using the multi-item measurement to see the response rate and the bias possibility. All of the items were taken from previous studies such as Batra *et al.,* (2000) and Steenkamp *et al.* (2003). With so many questions listed in the questionnaire, it was found that multi-item measurement for this study led to low response rate, errors, and many missing values. The repeated questions were one reason why missing values were spotted many times. Hence, the researcher finally followed the previous study (Zhuang *et al.,* 2008) which used single-item measurement and it meant each variable was measured by only one question.

Data Measurement Method

The 24 brands were listed on the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to evaluate each brand using 7-likert scale in terms of brand knowledge, preference for the brand and purchase intention. Moreover, the item to measure the brand origin confusion variable was evaluated by two available answers, foreign or local and was calculated as misjudgment ratio.

This study was done in the context of brand level, not in consumer level. Therefore, before the data analysis, the averages of brand knowledge, brand preference, and brand purchase likelihood for each of the 24 brands, as well as the misjudgment ratio were calculated. A total of 24 observations were obtained and the data analysis of this study was based on the 24 observations with 12 observations for local brand and 12 observations for foreign brand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test the hypotheses, both the simple and multiple regression analysis were used. Brand preference (BP) was the dependent variable and brand knowledge (BK), brand origin confusion (BOC), moderating variable (BOC*BK) were the independent variables. Moreover, in the next model, the brand purchase likelihood (BUY) was used as dependent variable with the brand preference (BP) and brand origin confusion (BOC) as the independent variables. Note that regression analysis was conducted separately for local and foreign brand data.

Misjudgment Ratio

The brand origin confusion variable was measured by the percentage of respondents inaccurately perceived the origin of the brand which later was called as misjudgment ratio. The misjudgment ratios of all the brands are presented in table 6 and 7. From the table below, the misjudgment ratio for local and foreign brands were distributed from very low ratio (So Nice (6%) and Giordano (7.33%)) until very high ratio (Delfi (87.33%) and Bata (74%)). High misjudgment ratio

represented the low accuracy of respondents in judge the origin of the brand. Meanwhile, low misjudgment ratio represented the high accuracy of respondents in judge the origin of the brand. To get high representation, this study needed to have both high and low misjudgment ratio.

The Effect of Brand Origin Confusion to Brand Preference

This first and second regression analysis was done to test the first and second hypothesis and the result are presented in table 1. From the table, the t value for both models were statistically significant at $\alpha < 0.01$. The value of the beta was higher than 0 which indicated that the local brand origin confusion has a positive effect to the dependent variable (local brand preference). Meanwhile, the value of the beta for the second model was less than 0 which indicate that the foreign brand origin confusion has a negative effect to the dependent variable (foreign brand preference). Moreover, the adjusted R-squared was considered high as it was higher than 60%. Therefore, this result is in line with H1 and H2.

Table 1
Regression Analysis of BOC on Brand Preference

Variable	Beta	t		Adjusted R Square	F	
		Value	Sig.		Value	Sig.
Local Brand Origin Confusion	0.481	0.885	.000***	0.762	36.270	.000***
Dependent variable: **Local Brand Preference**						
Foreign Brand Origin Confusion	-0.812	-4.400	.001***	0.625	19.363	.001***
Dependent variable: **Foreign Brand Preference**						

In conclusion, the more local brand is perceived as foreign brand, the more the preference is toward that brand. This conclusion was also in line with the previous studies (Batra, *et al.,* 2000; Steenkamp *et al.,* 2003; Zhou and Hui, 2003; Zhou and Belk, 2004; Kinra, 2006). It could be concluded that if local brand is perceived as foreign brand, then it is more preferable.

Moreover, if the foreign brand is perceived as local brand, the preference of the brand is lower. Therefore, if what happen is in the reverse, which a foreign brand is perceived as local, then the brand preference is lower. It also confirmed the result of Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2011) which found that COO misclassification had negative consequences for brand image evaluation.

The Effect of Brand Knowledge to Brand Preference

Before examining the moderation effect of brand knowledge to the relationship between brand origin confusion to brand preference, it was needed to analyze the direct relationship of brand knowledge to brand preference as it was stated in the third hypothesis.

Table 2
Regression Analysis of Brand Knowledge on Brand Preference

Variable	Beta	t		Adjusted R Squared	F	
		Value	Sig.		Value	Sig.
Local Brand Knowledge	.945	9.164	.000***	.883	83.987	.000***
Dependent variable: **Local Brand Preference**						
Foreign Brand Knowledge	.860	5.331	.000***	.714	28.417	.000***
Dependent variable: **Foreign Brand Preference**						

It was clearly stated that both model was statistically significant ($\alpha < 0.01$) with the beta was larger than 0. It indicated that in both context of local and foreign brands, brand knowledge positively affect the brand preference. In conclusion, H3 is supported. This result is in line with Kotler (2012) and Samiee *et al.* (2005) which indicated that knowledge could become one factor in forming brand preference.

Brand Knowledge as the Moderating Variable of Brand Origin Confusion Effect to Brand Preference

Brand origin confusion was shown to affect the local brand preference positively and brand knowledge also positively affected it. However, logically, if consumers have more knowledge about the brand, they may not misperceive the origin of the brand. Hence, brand knowledge may weaken the positive relationship of BOC to the local brand preference, like it was stated in H4. Its detail is stated in the table below.

Table 3
Regression Analysis of Moderating Variable on Local Brand Preference

Variable	Beta	t		Adjusted R Squared	F	
		Value	Sig.		Value	Sig.
Local Brand Knowledge	.641	4.990	.001***			
Local Brand Origin Confusion	.448	.557	.593	.980	184.230	.000***
Moderating Variable (BOC*BK)	-.018	-.020	.984			

Dependent variable: **Local Brand Preference**

From the table above, it was clearly seen that although moderating variable negatively affected the relationship of local brand origin confusion to

local brand preference ($\beta < 0$), t value of moderating variable was not significant ($\alpha < 0.1$). Moreover, the local brand origin confusion variable also found to be insignificant to local brand preference in this model ($\alpha < 0.1$), only local brand knowledge which proven to positively affect brand preference ($\alpha < 0.1$).

It could be concluded that the brand knowledge does not proven to negatively moderate the relationship of local brand origin confusion to local brand preference. Hence, H4 is not supported. This result indicates that although the consumers have greater knowledge to the brand, it does not mean that they could accurately recognize the origin of the brand. They may still believe it is a foreign brand. Thus, brand knowledge does not weaken the positive relationship of local brand origin confusion to local brand preference.

The Effect of Brand Preference to Purchase Likelihood

Before analyzing the effect of brand origin confusion to brand purchase likelihood, it was better to test the model by making sure that brand preference would affect purchase likelihood like it was stated in the H5. The result is shown in the table 4.

From the table, both the local and foreign brand model had very significant t value ($\alpha < 0.01$) and very high R-squared (0.997). Therefore H5 is supported. This result confirmed what previous research had found which was brand preference was almost identical with purchase intention (Banks, 1950).

Table 4
Regression Analysis of Brand Preference on Purchase Likelihood

Variable	Beta	t		Adjusted R Squared	F	
		Value	Sig.		Value	Sig.
Local Brand Preference	0.999	65.378	.000***	0.997	4274.234	.000***
Dependent variable: **Local Brand Purchase Likelihood**						
Foreign Brand Preference	0.999	58.180	.000***	0.997	3384.869	.000***
Dependent variable: **Foreign Brand Purchase Likelihood**						

The Effect of Brand Origin Confusion to Purchase Likelihood

The next regressions were conducted to test the sixth and seventh hypothesis. The regression analysis results are shown in the table below.

Table 5
Regression Analysis of BOC on Local Brand Purchase Likelihood

Variable	Beta	t		Adjusted R Squared	F	
		Value	Sig.		Value	Sig.

Local Brand Origin Confusion	0.876	5.733	.000***	0.743	32.870	.000***
Dependent variable: **Local Brand Purchase Likelihood**						
Foreign Brand Origin Confusion	-0.801	-4.226	.002***	0.605	17.860	.002***
Dependent variable: **Foreign Brand Purchase Likelihood**						

For local brands, the t value of the model was statistically significant at α < 0.01. The value of the beta was higher than 0 which indicated that the local brand origin confusion has a positive effect to the dependent variable (local brand purchase likelihood). Meanwhile, the value of the beta in the second model was less than 0 which indicated that the foreign brand origin confusion has a negative effect to the dependent variable (foreign brand purchase likelihood). Moreover, the adjusted R-squared was considered high as it was higher than 60%. Therefore, this result is in line with H6 and H7.

In conclusion, if the local brand is perceived as foreign brand, the purchase likelihood toward the brand is higher. In contrast with previous study, the researcher found evidence that the misperception of local brand is a foreign brand will increase the purchase likelihood of that brand. This result is in line with Steenkamp *et al.,* (2003) about how brand origin affected brand purchase likelihood.

Moreover, if the foreign brand is perceived as local brand, the purchase likelihood toward the brand is lower. This conclusion was different from the original study. However, Steenkamp *et al.* (2003) and Batra *et al.* (2000) found evidence that brand origin might influence the purchase intention. In line with it, this study found evidence that the misperception of foreign brand is a local brand will decrease the purchase likelihood of that brand.

CONCLUSION

This study was a modified replication study from Zhuang *et al.* (2008) titled "Asymmetric Effect of Brand Origin Confusion". However, this study made some modification in terms of variables used and the number of brands and respondents. The variable of "brand value" was deleted because there was no exact measurement for the variable. The number of brand used was 24, 12 for local and 12 for foreign brands.

This research was done to find the effect of brand origin confusion on brand preference and brand purchase likelihood, and to take a look the brand knowledge moderating power to the relationship of brand origin confusion and brand preference. The study was done in the context of brand level and it meant we changed our point of view, not in the perspective of consumers but in the brands.

It was found that in Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' confusion about the origin of local brands is related positively to their preference for local

brands, and their confusion about the origin of foreign brands is related negatively to their preference for foreign brands. This result proves how country-of-origin still become a matter in Indonesia. Still, foreign brand is preferable to Indonesian consumers. The recognition accuracy of origin of the brand may bring the consumers to different brand preference.

Moreover, in Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' knowledge of local brands does not significantly moderates the relationship between consumers' confusion about the origin of local brands and preference for local brands. In Indonesia, although a consumer is aware about the local brand, it does not mean they could perceive the origin of the brand accurately that makes them change their preference. This indicates that brand knowledge does not weaken the positive relationship of brand origin confusion to brand preference of local brands.

Lastly, in Indonesia, all else being equal, consumers' confusion about the origin of local brands is related positively to their purchase likelihood of local brands and their confusion about the origin of foreign brands is related negatively to their purchase likelihood for foreign brands. This result also proves how country-of-origin still become a matter in Indonesia. Because foreign brand is preferable to Indonesian consumers, their purchase likelihood is affected also. The recognition accuracy of origin of the brand may bring the consumers to different brand purchase likelihood. However, the effect of brand origin confusion to brand purchase intention will be not significant compared to brand preference.

Managerial Implications

Considering the results of the study, it is beneficial for both local and foreign companies to employ the "BOC strategy". Both companies could formulate their branding strategy and marketing strategy to enhance the BOC effect. In order to gain the advantage of BOC effect, local companies could mask their origin and at the same time enhance the foreignness of their brand by for instance naming or advertising their brands with foreign characteristics. This strategy could, according to the findings of this research, lead to greater consumer preference and purchase intention for the brands of these companies (Zhuang *et al.*, 2008).

Moreover, foreign companies also could do the same thing by enhancing their foreign element of the brands. From sales perspective, brand adaptation or localization which reduces the foreign characteristic of the brand may not be good strategy because of the BOC effect might reduce the brand preference and brand purchase likelihood. Foreign companies should emphasize their brand origin in their marketing to decrease consumers' confusion about the origin of the brand.

Furthermore, this study does not find any evidence in support of the moderating role of brand knowledge. It indicates that the accuracy of brand origin perception is not related to the more knowledge the consumers have. Hence, in Indonesia both local and foreign companies do not need to reduce the brand knowledge of their brands, but even they need to enhance consumers' knowledge because brand knowledge found to give a positive direct impact to brand preference.

A new finding is developed that BOC also play a role in affecting brand purchase likelihood. In sales perspective, this finding is very important as it is proven that BOC could affect the purchase intention. Nevertheless, BOC which found to affect the preference and purchase intention toward the brands should not be exaggerated, because consumers' preference and purchase intention for local and foreign brands also depends on the brand knowledge and direct brand preference.

Limitations of Research and Suggestions

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First of all, in this study, the sample respondents were universities students. Although the categories of brands which were used in this study were actually used by the respondents, they may not be accurate representatives of ordinary consumers in Indonesia. Hence, a wider sample could be used for future studies.

Secondly, this study only used 24 brands to find the BOC effect on brand preference and brand purchase likelihood. Because this study is in the context of brand level and in the data analysis it separated foreign and local brands, by only have 24 brands, low number of data was obtained. A low number of data might create some problems about the findings. Hence, the more brands used for future research would be crucial because this research is done in the context of brand level.

Thirdly, this study did not find any evidence of brand knowledge moderating effect. Because this study used single-item measurement, the general meaning of brand knowledge was used. However, brand knowledge had many dimensions in it such as brand awareness, brand quality, brand image, etc. Therefore, the rejection of H4 might be caused by this measurement. In the next research, brand knowledge variable measurement should be reevaluated.

Lastly, although it was proven that brands that are perceived to be foreign are considered as more preferable than local one in developing countries (Batra *et al.,* 2000), in some cases, this conclusion may not be true. In Indonesia for instance, a category like traditional herbs or it is called as *jamu* is well-known in Indonesia. Indonesian consumers might prefer local brands for this category than traditional herbs from foreign companies. As this BOC effect may not be acceptable for all categories, other variables such as brand extensions, "sub-categories" or ethnocentrism should be considered for future research.

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