

Ethnocentrism Bias on Consumer Perception of Service Quality and Intention to Buy

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Abstrak. Tujuan percobaan ini adalah untuk melihat apakah persepsi konsumen terhadap kualitas layanan dan intensi membeli dipengaruhi oleh latar belakang budaya mereka. Berdasarkan interaksi antar budaya konsumen, peneliti yakin terdapat perbedaan pada cara konsumen memandang kualitas layanan yang mereka terima dan intensi mereka untuk membeli. Suku Sunda dan Surabaya merupakan suku budaya yang diteliti dalam penelitian ini sebagai sampel budaya Indonesia yang direpresentasikan melalui dialek dalam stimulus eksperimental berupa rekaman audio. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kuantitatif dan desain kuasi eksperimen dengan dua kelompok perlakuan untuk post-test saja. Sejumlah 100 mahasiswa S1 di Yogyakarta, berusia 17-23 tahun, memiliki keturunan Sunda dan Surabaya berpartisipasi dalam penelitian eksperimental ini. Mereka juga harus bersekolah di SD hingga SMA di Bandung atau Surabaya. Dari hasil interaksi antara budaya konsumen dan frontliner, diperoleh temuan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan persepsi konsumen terhadap kualitas layanan dan intensi membeli. Dalam kajian lintas budaya ini, ditemukan bahwa bias etnosentris mempengaruhi persepsi dimana masyarakat meyakini budayanya sendiri lebih unggul. Konsumen dari Bandung lebih menyukai frontliner dari Bandung dibandingkan Surabaya, dan sebaliknya. Ditemukan pula bahwa tidak terdapat dampak interaksi budaya terhadap intensi membeli.

Keywords: etnosentrisme; persepsi konsumen; kualitas pelayanan; intensi membeli

Introduction

Increasingly competitive intercompany competition raises challenges for the company to survive and exist in the market. Global economic challenges that affected the economic slowdown of several

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countries did not affect Indonesia's economic condition (Limanseto, 2024). Data from Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian reveals that Indonesia achieved economic growth of 5.05% in Q2-2024. This economic growth is shown through the increase in production businesses offset by increased consumption by the community. In an attempt to maintain existence in the market, the company carries out marketing management.

Marketing management is the process of planning, executing thought, pricing, promotion, and channeling of ideas, goods, and service to create exchanges that meet individual and organizational goals (Kotler, 2008). Marketing mix is a marketing tool used to achieve marketing objectives in the target market which includes product, price, promotion, and place (4P) (Kotler, 2000). The four P components play a role in product marketing, but what we will discuss in this study is the promotion component. Promotion is a communication from sellers to buyers derived from precise information that aims to change the attitude and behaviour of buyers, who were not familiar with the product, so they get to know and keep in mind the product or even become buyers (Laksana, 2008).

Promotion is considered as an effort made by companies so their products can be further recognized and have an impact on consumers to choose the goods offered (Nendi et al., 2022). Business owner or the marketing staff has the way to promote their product. Promotion can be done through advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, and sales force who called frontliner.

Frontliner has the duty to promote the company's products through face to face services by conveying information to potential customers and direct them to buy the product. Frontliner's working condition has been regulated in the standard working procedures (Reni & Asmawati, 2016). The standard covers: mastery of information about products and transactions, transaction processing speed, bank frontliner tidiness, frontliner courtesy banks, and frontliner friendliness. Reni & Asmawati (2016) also convey, if the frontliner can meet work standards as well as provide the best service, it will lead to consumer satisfaction. Frontliner with good performance meets consumers' expectation will bring satisfaction to the quality of service.

Service quality is a customers' evaluation of the services they received at a particular point (Parasuraman et al., 1988). According to Goetsch & Davis (2015) service quality is something related to the fulfilment of customer expectations or needs, where service is said to be of quality if it can provide products and/or services (services) in accordance with the needs and expectations of customers. Quality of service according to Parasuraman et al. (1988) in Purnamawati (2008) is how far the difference between reality and expectations of customers for the service they obtain or receive.

Service quality is determined based on service dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). They put forward five dimensions of service quality, namely: (1) Reliability: the ability to realize reliable services promised to be reliable and accurate. (2) Responsiveness: the willingness to help consumers by providing fast and accurate service. (3) Assurance: includes knowledge, ability, and decency or kindness from personal, as well as the ability to gain trust and desire. (4) Empathy: giving individual attention to consumer needs. (5) Tangible (direct evidence): includes physical appearance, equipment, prices, and

written materials.

Service quality is related to the concept of perception and expectation (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Service quality is the difference between services perceived by consumers as perceptions, and the service what consumers want as expectations (Hartanty, 2015). Consumers' evaluation on service quality is a function of magnitude and direction gap between customer expectations of service and assessment (perception) of customers for the services actually provided. Consumer perceptions of service quality are derived from comparisons between expectations before being given a service with experience after services are provided (Naik et al., 2010).

Expectation is consumers' belief that the products or services have attributes desired by consumers (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016). Perception is a process carried out by individuals selecting, organizing, and interpreting stimuli into meaningful images and makes sense (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). Also perception is a process in which information senses are translated into something meaningful (Matsumoto, 2004). In addition being influenced by information that consumers have just received, perceptions are also influenced by previous experiences and beliefs held by consumers.

The experiences and beliefs that influence these perceptions come as a result that there is cultural diversity. Indonesian society consists of various kinds different cultural backgrounds that can give rise to perception differences. To some extent these characteristics significantly determine consumer behaviour (Kwok et al., 2016). It's interesting to do the research considering tribes and cultures in Indonesia, associated with consumer behaviour regarding perceptions.

Alignment with a particular culture is explained through theory ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism was first introduced by Sumner (1906) which has a definition of a view of something where the group itself as the center of everything and everything else is measured and looked at with group reference (Chang & Cheng, 2011). Ethnocentrism is the tendency to see the world only through one's own cultural point of view (Matsumoto, 2004).

Ethnocentrism allows consumers to have a different view it's different if you get service from a frontliner who has a background different culture. Culture according to Hofstede (2010) is a combination of norms and cognition in a group that form attitudes, behaviors, ways of life, and symbols which are then passed down from generation to generation. Cultural background manifested in language. Sundanese and Surabaya cultural tribes have accents different languages.

The cultural representation by the frontliners' accent is thought to influence consumer perception. Consumers build perceptions of service quality through the consumer imaging. Consumer imaging is consumer perceptions of all product, service, and brand components, and how consumers evaluate the quality of a marketer's offering (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015).

A positive image will bring intensity to buy for consumers. Intention to buy is a state that arise in consumers after receiving stimuli about the product, that's where the interest arises to try the product until the desire arises to buy in order to have the product (Kotler, 2008). There are indicators of buying intensity according to Ferdinand (2002) namely: (1) Transactional Interests: The tendency of

consumers to buy products; consumers already have the intention to purchase a particular product which are desired. (2) Reference Interests: The tendency of consumers to refer products to people other; consumers advise people around him to too buy the same product. (3) Preferential Interest: The tendency of consumer behavior that has a primary preference on the product; preferences can only be overridden if something happens on the product. (4) Explorative Interests: The tendency of consumer behavior that seeks information about the product of interest.

Previous experimental about consumer ethnocentrism of service quality and intention to buy has never be done in Indonesia. That's the novelty point of this research. Muhari & Nuryanto (2022) analysed ethnocentrism based on the demographic factor of Indonesian Consumer. Andriyanty & Wahab (2022) reviewed the generation Z consumer ethnocentrism on food and beverage product.

There's similar research about implication of consumer ethnocentrism to Korean consumers' service quality perception but they use survey for the method (Oh et al., 2020). They analysed the aspects of service quality that have significant relationship to consumer ethnocentrism, namely Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy.

The cultural tribes selected in this study, namely Sundanese and Surabaya, as samples of culture in Indonesia which represented through the dialect. This selection is based on character society is the opposite. People know the Sundanese as a polite and friendly person that can be seen through Sundanese language whose use is based on the level of base steps (Nugraha, 2006). The uniqueness of people with a cultural background in Surabaya can be seen from the peculiarities of the *Suroboyoan* accent which means various communications circles and become a universal language in their culture (Dedayev, 2017). According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Indonesian economy is still dominated by islands Java 58.65% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). The two cultures that are in Java Island is the dominating actor and market economy.

This study aims to see whether cultural backgrounds differ in their influence on consumer perceptions of service quality and intention to buy. Promotions carried out by frontliners with Sundanese and Surabaya cultural backgrounds were reviewed to see their influence on product sales. The results of the study can be taken into consideration for business owners in marketing in hiring frontliners to promote their products. The hypothesis proposed in this study is whether there are differences in consumer perceptions of service quality and intention to buy in terms of the interaction between consumer and frontliner culture?

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach by quasi-post-test only design experiment with two treatment groups. Quasi experiment is an experimental design that does not involve randomization process in the placement of subjects into treatment units (Shadish et al., 2002). The dependent variable

in this study is consumer perceptions of service quality and intention to buy, then the independent variable used in this study is the difference culture between Sundanese and Surabaya.

Undergraduate students with Sundanese and Surabaya ancestry, aged 17 to 23, participated in this research, as well as the criteria that the participants live in Bandung for group one and Surabaya for group two at least from Elementary to High School. Selection of participants from the two areas is not intended to be a case study of the culture, but participants from the area as a sample of the cultural variations that exist in Indonesia. Non-probability sampling with a convenient procedure is the sampling strategy used. This sampling method does not give each component or member of the group a fair chance to be chosen as a sample (Sugiyono, 2016).

The amount participants in this study were 50 people for Sundanese participants as well as 50 people for the Surabaya participants, so that the total number of participants was 100 people; with the percentage of 38% of the subjects was male and 62% of the subjects were female. Sundanese participants with 33 people who are female while 17 men. The number of participants in Surabaya for female gender is 29 people while men 21 people.

This study uses audio as stimulus and psychological scale. The audio stimulus contains frontliner service recordings in a silent shopper context that has been validated through the expert judgement validation. Experts are three people from each culture who have Sundanese are fluent in the regional language or accent. The experts gave scores (1-5) with the following aspects: (1) how well the recording represents the regional accent, (2) the sound quality of the recording, and (3) how informative the content of the frontliner conversation is when explaining the product. Three experts from Sunda rated 4.1 for the Sundanese frontliners and three experts from Surabaya rated 4.63 for the Surabaya frontliners. Thus, the recordings suitable to be the research instrument as the experimental stimulus.

Researcher used two psychological scale, namely SERVQUAL adapted from (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and Intention to Buy adapted from Ferdinand (2002). Those scales use semantic differential model with 0-10 range scale. The validity coefficient of the scale uses expert judgment techniques. Resulting in content validity ratios ranging from 0.67-1 for both scales, with a CVI of 0.84 for the Service Quality Scale and 0.83 for the Intention to Buy Scale. Aitem with $CVR \geq 0.5$ indicates that the items used have met good content validity (Lawshe, 1975). In testing the reliability of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient obtained is 0.938 for 21 items of Service Quality Scale. Then, Intention to Buy Scale Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of obtained is 0.858. ($\alpha = 0,6$; $N = 100$).

Participants who have agreed on the schedule came to the location to take part in a series of experiments. At first, they listened to the sound recording stimulus through a headset connected to a laptop. The sound recording stimulus contains frontliner with Sundanese and Surabaya accents explaining and offering products to the silent shopper consumers. Then, in order to run the counterbalance test, the experimental group was divided into two groups. Group A listened to the frontliner's sound stimulus from the same culture, then the frontliner's voice from a different culture. In contrast, group B listened to the frontliner's sound stimulus from a different culture first and then

the frontliner's voice from the same culture. Counterbalancing is a procedure that allows the researcher to control for the effect of an interference variable in a design in which the same participant is repeatedly exposed to a condition, treatment, or stimulus (Allen, 2017). In other words, counterbalancing is used to handle the order effect due to repeated stimuli in the study.

In testing the research hypothesis, researchers conducted data analysis with IBM SPSS Statistics v.21 software in the form of Three-ways Anova. Three-ways ANOVA was carried out to see whether there is an influence of interaction between consumer and frontliner cultural backgrounds towards perception of service quality and intention to buy based on frontliner service or not.

Result & Discussion

According to the Three Ways Anova test results (Table 1), there was no difference between consumers' perception of the quality of the services they received and their intention to buy based on their cultural background ($p=0.590$; $p=116$ $p>0.05$). Consumer views of service quality and intention to buy are unaffected by frontliner cultural background ($p=0.948$; $p=422$; $p>0.05$). The analysis's findings also indicate that there are no appreciable differences in service quality or purchase intent due to customer and frontliner cultural interactions

Table 1.

Results of Three Ways Anova and t-Test

Measurement Tools	SERVICE QUALITY F/t (p)	Intention to Buy F/t (p)
Main effect: Consumer	0.291 (0.590)	2.492 (0.116)
Main effect: <i>Frontliner</i>	0.005 (0.944)	0.683 (0.409)
Main effect: Gender	1.588 (0.209)	0.110 (0.741)
Interaction	0.634 (0.639)	0.563 (0.690)
SUNDA GROUP: Sunda vs SUB	0.376 (0.541)	0.304 (0.583)
GROUP SUB: Sunda vs SUB	0.669 (0.415)	0.356 (0.552)
Sunda-Sunda vs SUB-SUB	0.031 (0.861)	1.983 (0.162)
Sunda-SUB vs. SUB-Sunda	0.006 (0.937)	0.113 (0.738)
Sunda-Sunda vs. SUB-Sunda	0.324 (0.571)	0.809 (0.371)
Sunda-SUB vs. SUB-SUB	0.717 (0.399)	0.783 (0.378)

Figure 1 below shows that Surabaya consumers rate the service quality of Surabaya frontliner higher than Sundanese frontliner. Sundanese consumers also gave higher ratings to Sundanese

frontliner than Surabaya frontliner. On average, the service quality ratings of Surabaya frontliner are higher by consumers from both cultures when compared to the service quality of Sundanese frontliner.

Figure 1.

Interaction Effect of Service Quality

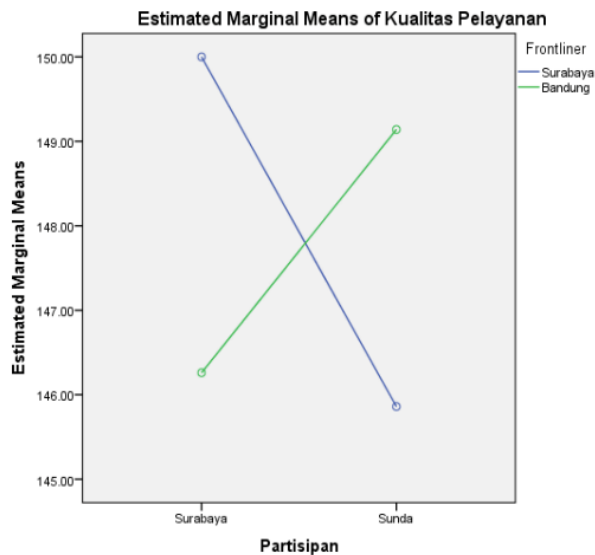
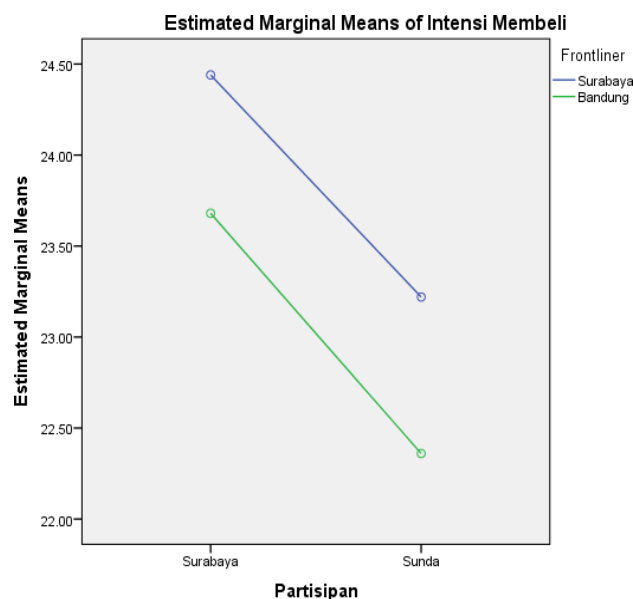


Figure 2 shows that purchase intention due to the service provided by Surabaya frontliner is higher based on the assessment of consumers from both cultures. Surabaya and Sundanese consumers both rated the intention to buy products through Surabaya frontliner's services higher. Consumers from both regions are more interested in buying products through Surabaya frontliner, although Figure 2 does not show the interaction effect of purchase intention.

Figure 2.

Interaction Effect of Intention to Buy



The behavior of individuals as consumers in buying products is directed by patterns of cognition, as Hofstede (2010) argues that culture shapes cognition and individual behavioral norms so it shapes cognition and individual behavioral norms so that it creates a pattern of thought that directs a person's behavior. The hypothesis in this study states whether there are differences in consumer perceptions of service quality and intention to buy in terms of the interaction between consumer culture and frontliner culture or not is rejected. Opposing cultures do not cause differences in perceptions in assessing service quality and intention to buy. The interaction of consumer culture with frontliner culture determines the perception of service quality but does not determine intention to buy.

In this study, consumers rated the service quality of frontliner who came from the same culture higher than frontliner with a different culture. This indicates the existence of ethnocentrism which provides a certain bias in the formation of consumer perceptions. People in different cultures have different descriptions of themselves and their relationships with others (Bawono, 2016). It can be said that this research is in line with the notion of ethnocentrism.

Consumer ethnocentrism is defined as the beliefs held by consumers regarding the moral appropriateness of buying foreign products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Wei, 2008). Individuals with high ethnocentrism will perceive their culture as better than other cultures. Previous research conducted proved that consumers in Indonesia have a high level of ethnocentrism that makes them not choose unfamiliar products or services (Hamin & Elliot, 2006; Pratminingsih & Astuty, 2017). This is also evident in the Indonesian cultural specifications that were sampled in this study where Sundanese consumers will rate Sundanese frontliner higher than Surabaya frontliner service quality and intention to buy, and vice versa.

The language accents of the two different cultures can make consumers feel unfamiliar in receiving information in the form of services provided by frontliner whose culture of origin is different. Although the language used in the delivery of information by frontliner is standard Indonesian and in accordance with standard operating procedures, but the accent still represents the culture of the frontliner. A familiar accent makes them comfortable and close when interacting, which results in higher scores. Dissimilar others, characteristic of the market place, are basically a collection of strangers (Sundararajan, 2015). Preference for one's own culture is higher than for other cultures indicates the consumer ethnocentrism (Boennawan & Wuisan, 2021)

According to Shiraev & Levy (2020), ethnocentrism narrows our perception of other social groups. Align with Tantray (2018), ethnocentrism leads to an increase in a group conformity and loyalty and highly depends upon the nature of social group, in this context is culture. Each consumer will tend to choose frontliners from the same culture because they feel comfortable and close with the accent of each culture when interacting.

The characteristics of Surabaya people who are known to be firm and speak as they are is inversely proportional to the Sundanese people whose speech is subtle. Sundanese accent is used in daily conversation as the language of instruction in the family and in public places (Harsojo, 1983; Melalatoa,

1995). On the other hand, the Surabaya dialect is assertive and rude, so it cannot always be used as a medium of instruction. Surabaya language is used to show the intimacy of a relationship (Sriyanto & Fauzie, 2017)

Sundanese and Surabaya cultures with their own distinctive characteristics have expectations that are in accordance with these cultural characteristics. Different cultures show different understandings (Trnka & Lorencova, 2022). Expectations held by Sundanese consumers in the form of frontliner services that are friendly and gentle. Surabaya consumers who are accustomed to communicating frankly expect frontliner services that seem familiar without degrees. The findings in this study show that different intercultural expectations are less fulfilled. Sundanese consumers rated the service quality of frontliner from Surabaya are lower than the frontliner from Sunda. Likewise, Surabaya consumers rated the service quality of Sundanese frontliner lower than frontliner from Surabaya. This finding is in line with research conducted by Armstrong et al. (1997) which suggests that each cultural group has its own expectations and there are differences in service quality between two different cultures. From the results of the study that showed ethnocentrism bias, each culture has high expectations of its culture.

Service quality perceived by consumers in this study does not affect intention to buy. There is no interaction on intention to buy in this study. This research is not in line with research conducted by Wijaya (2005), who found that purchase intention is significantly influenced by perceptions of service quality and consumer satisfaction in retail businesses. Likewise, research conducted by Wibowo et al. (2013) at Gramedia bookstore. Based on the results of the study, it is known that service quality has a positive and significant influence on intention to buy.

Previous studies which proved that service quality has a positive effect on intention to buy, are different from the findings of this study. It is because this study does not condition consumers as product buyers. Another factor is the stimulus form is only audio, so the consumers do not get a visual stimulus that shapes perceptions which allows emerging intention to buy. By only listening to voice recordings and not seeing the shape of the product directly does not make consumers have the intention to buy the product, in contrast to previous studies that provided the physical form of the product in their research.

Consumers do not immediately have the intention to buy just by listening to the frontliner service recording. There are four stages in determining intention to buy known as the AIDA model (Kotler, 2008). The following are the stages: 1) Assessing whether the product or service is in accordance with the needs and consumers who study the product or service offered, 2) Interest where consumers are starting to be interested in making a purchase transaction after getting the information needed about the product or service, 3) Desire where consumers think and discuss the product or service because of the emergence of high intentions to buy goods, and 4) Action where consumers feel confident to buy. The non-occurrence of the interaction effect of buying intentions by frontliner services is due to the existence of these stages.

Frontliner as the 'front line' who directly meet and interact with consumers include the attention stage where consumers receive information about products or services, study it, then assess whether it

suits their needs or not. Consumers will not reach the action stage where consumers are convinced to buy without going through the previous stages, therefore frontliner plays an important role in promoting the company's products. Therefore, the application of the AIDA model is ideally carried out by companies to be able to gain basic attention, then interest, desire, and ended up with buying actions (Heriansya & Arini, 2023).

Promotion carried out by frontliner as one of the product marketing mix needs to be considered carefully by the company. The existence of ethnocentrism in the market makes marketers consider culture as a factor that can shape consumer perceptions. Marketers may consider the decision to hire frontliners who have similar culture background to their consumers. Although the results did not show a relationship between service quality and intention to buy, consumers indicated that they were comfortable being served with a similar cultural accent. Ideally, effective marketing can be carried out so that company profits increase can be achieved by preparing frontliner who can create good consumer perceptions, so that positive consumer imagery is formed which can lead to the emergence of intention to buy for consumers.

The limitation in this study is that the research participants are students aged 17-23 years so that the generalization of the research results can only be used for the millennial generation. Culture in this study is only represented by Sundanese and Surabaya accents, there is no neutral comparison. Then the researcher only used audio stimuli, the assessment of service quality and intention to buy through frontliner could be different if using audiovisual stimuli or even participants came to the field and interacted directly with frontliners. Researchers also do not control whether participants will buy the product or not, and there is no consideration of cognitive aspects in intention to buy.

Conclusion and Suggestion

There is no difference in consumer perceptions regarding service quality and intention to buy based on frontliner and consumer culture. Crossing culture does not give rise to differences in consumer perceptions on the assessment of service quality and intention to buy through the frontliner. Consumer perceptions of frontliner services from their own culture are higher, influenced by ethnocentrism bias.

Consumers still favor their own culture because of cultural expectations. In this research culture represented by the dialect. Consumers who live in the environment with certain cultural value and custom expect appropriate service what they are accustomed to their culture. Value and habit from the culture of each consumer is used as a norm to shape perceptions.

In the presence of ethnocentric bias, service quality of frontliner from the same culture is perceived more positively because their expectations are met, compared to frontliner from different cultures. Service quality from the frontliner does not influence intention to buy. Intention to buy does not appear just like that, but need to go through the stages of attention, interest, desire, and action.

Frontliner in serving consumers plays an important role, because they interact directly with consumers in an effort to promote company's products and direct consumers to buy the product.

Next research can be developed by generalizing the audio stimulus as an audiovisual stimulus. The cultural representations used are also not only local dialect. A neutral Indonesian accent is also required as a comparison. Cognitive aspects need to be measured in this study especially in the purchase intention variable. Companies can implement marketing more effective by looking at more specific dimensions of service quality influenced by culture that can determine effective marketing with pay attention to ethnocentrism which turns out to have a certain influence in formation of consumer perceptions.

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