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Dialect: A Way of Branding and Promoting Business

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Abstract: This paper examines the use of local dialect for labelling. The business name is a style that becomes the overview of a business. It should be attractive and leaves a lasting impression on the user's memory. The study focused on a business-oriented dialect in Terengganu and data were generated using observations (business premises, products and websites) and interviews. The findings show that the use of local dialect in the business name is useful in attracting consumers to the premises, mainly due to its unique features and user-friendly terms. This study highlights an alternative method of business promotion using local dialects. It is hoped that the local dialect will be used widely in naming businesses as it could enhance the economy especially Small Medium Enterprises (SME) and it plays an important role to strive forward in the waves of modernity.

Keywords: dialect, branding, promotion, business and small and medium enterprise.

INTRODUCTION

Dialect is one of the minor parts of the Malay language spoken in different states in Malaysia. The dialect is spoken by a group of speakers from the local community, deviate from the standard language in pronunciation, grammar, and specific vocabulary. Dialects are often regarded as a language which is inferior, low status and are associated with the bucolic (Chambers *et al.*, 2002: 3). This is due to dialect is not a form of formal language that can be used for official purposes. Nevertheless, the dialect is a language community which is a group of people who are in close relationship. The use of dialect in daily communication not only serves as a tool to communicate, therefore, shows the level of intimacy between speakers. The advantages of this dialect function have been implemented in today's business branding either in the form of a business name or product. The nature of the dialect seemed friendly and relaxing, so that most of the business owners, especially in Terengganu initiated the use of dialect in their business. In addition, the Malay language was accelerated to the top of the linguistic hierarchy to define and unite contemporary Malaysians of all ethnolinguistic groups (Albury & Aye, 2016).

Terengganu dialect is the main focus of this research as it is one of the states that uses their own dialect for business and product labels. This phenomenon became viral because of its funny tone pronunciation, draw attention and catchy to all customers to visit these places. The attractiveness of using dialect is one of the business strategies in promoting the brand and the product itself. Business branding is essential to highlight the image of a business and to market its products, it also functions as an introduction to a business. The language elements in business cannot be slightly taken because the use of good language, easily pronounced, and interesting are vital in promoting the business to attract new customers and to keep the existing customers.

Branding is one of the important components for companies in order to stay competitive in the market. Keller (2009) states the benefits of structure a strong brand image are it may create greater customer loyalty, larger margins, less vulnerability to competitors and marketing crises and improved perceptions of product performance. San Seong (2010) states that there are various factors that drive the selection of a name for a business, including owner's personal factors, belief in something, appreciation for family services, the values of humanity and the family origin. This illustrates the selection of a business name has its own implicit meaning to the business owner. Different people perceives different meaning of the business name. Hence, business owners should examine and consider significant aspects before naming a particular business.

There are a bundle of research carried out on the precision of the ability in business branding. One of the researches had been done by De Run, Ernest Cyril, Yee, The Chin and Khalique, Muhammad (2002) entitled *'It's not just a brand name. The impact of language on consumer attitude and behaviour'* which focused on the consumers' responses regarding the different languages used for the product branding. Their research basically is on the usage of Bahasa Melayu, Chinese language and English in product branding which is based on the same product category that is coffee. Among the product names that became the main objects of the research were 'Aik Cheong', 'Kopimas', and 'Power Root'. It was found that the usage of the product name in Chinese language and English had no difference at all if compared with Bahasa Melayu which was more favourable. Thus, the research showed the business name had given effects to the consumers' purchasing power.

Based on the research by Noor Rohana Mansor, Noraien Mansor and Normaliza Abd Rahim entitled *'Dialek Melayu Terengganu: Pendokumentasian dan Pengekalan Warisan Variasi Bahasa Tempatan'* had analysed and explained the unique characteristics of the dialects in Terengganu as well as the strategy in keeping the heritage of various local languages in context of using coastal district local language. Based on the research carried out, it focused more on the documentation and preservation as well as heritage retention of various languages specifically for Terengganu dialects in order to avoid from local languages extinction. This descriptive qualitative method oriented research which the data had been collected consisted of people from four selected places in Kuala Terengganu coastal district. The data were collected from a wide spectrum of categories such as the village community in general, the government and private employees and also coffee stall customers.

Based on the result, it showed that the uniqueness of Malay dialect in Terengganu coastal areas have their own characteristics in aspects of phonology and vocabulary in their conversation. Some characteristics affect the terms of pronunciation such as vowel sound, consonant, diphthong, morpheme, and vocabulary which involve the silence, replacement, shortening, word stressing and also the local vocabularies styling.

Accordingly, this study not only examines the uniqueness of Terengganu dialect in the marketing process but also in business rebranding as it is one of the efforts that can be done to remain, preserve and conserve the language heritage, culture and the community of Terengganu specifically as well as for Malaysia holistically. The research was conducted in order to promote not only Terengganu dialect spoken in everyday conversation, it even capable of functioning as the language used in the marketing.

TERENGGANU

Terengganu is one of the states located in East Coast, Peninsular Malaysia. This state is known as domestic coastal heritage because there are many famous islands with its distinctive beauty. The state lies between longitudinal 102.25 with 103.50 and latitude 4 to 5.50.

In the north and north-west is bordered by the state of Kelantan, while in the south-west is bordered by the states of Pahang. The immensity of the state now is about 1,295,638.3 hectares / 1.295,512.1 hectares. The coastal strips advanced as far as 225 kilometres from the north (Besut) to the south (Kemaman).

There are a few stories associated with the name of Terengganu. Terengganu name associated with “terangnya ganu” and “taring anu”. The origin story of Terengganu name involves people outside Terengganu (Kelantan and Pahang) and also the people of Terengganu. Meanwhile, “terangnya ganu” is associated with an event of some Kelantanese students who arrived at Kuala that now called Kuala Terengganu to see the rainbow. They said “terang sungguh ganu di sini”. Upon returning to Kelantan they said the neighbouring state was very “terang ganunya”. “taring anu” on the other hand reputedly originated from the story narrated by Sultan Terengganu the ninth namely Baginda Omar (1839–1876). Before embodying Terengganu name, a delegation from Pahang came to hunt in the upstream. When they arrived at Sungai Terengganu Mati, a member of delegation spotted a canine. He asked his friend, what is this? One of them said - “taring anu”. When the delegation returned to Pahang, “taring anu” became the talk and gradually known with Terengganu.

There are eight districts in Terengganu namely Kuala Terengganu, Hulu Terengganu, Besut, Setiu, Marang, Dungun, Kemaman and Kuala Nerus. Each district has its own unique dialect in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexical. There are four subdialects in Terengganu such as Kuala Terengganu, Hulu Telemong, Hulu Dungun and Hulu Nerus.

The use of subdialect by the people of Kuala Terengganu perceived as subdialect which represents Terengganu. Major parts of Terengganu districts use the same subdialect excluding Besut and Hulu Telemong. Besut subdialect similar to Kelantan dialect as it is located near the border of Kelantan-Terengganu. Meanwhile, Hulu Telemong subdialect diverged from Kuala Terengganu subdialect and did not influence by any external elements. Hulu Telemong is an area located in Terengganu upstream between Kuala Terengganu and Hulu Terengganu. The diversity of dialects in Terengganu can strengthen relationship among the locals and the dialect usage is applied in business branding especially in food and clothing.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses field approach as data collection method by observing over the business premises and products in Kuala Terengganu in terms of the name of the business and products. Besides that, online data collection also has been done involving websites and social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and blogs.

Furthermore, this study also involving 10 informants consisting of five females and five males (youths and adults) who live in Kuala Terengganu to obtain feedback on this matter.

FINDINGS

Based on the observation, this study managed to collect 10 business brand data that use local dialects in Kuala Terengganu covering the business name and product name in foods and clothing. These data are divided into two categories, the first one is business brand in the food business and second data is in the clothing business. The business name is annotated in standard Malay language placed in parentheses (.). The following data shows the business name using Terengganu dialect in the business based on food and clothing:

Food business branding

1. *Cafe avok ite (kedai puak kite)* Our Cafe
2. *Lepeng nyor (lempeng kelapa)* Coconut Pancake
3. *Bira pata (tepi pantai)* Seaside
4. *Air buoh gelah beso (air buah gelas besar)* Big Glass Juice
5. *Air kocok (air kocak)* Drink Shake
6. *Warung Pok Nong (warung Pak Nong)* Pak Nong's Stall
7. *Mok Cik Gemok (Mak Cik Gemuk)* Fat Aunt

Clothes business branding:

1. *Hungga (datang dengan tergopoh-gopoh)* Hurry
2. *Bekki (baiki)* Alter
3. *Robok clothing (rumit clothing)* Complicated Clothing
4. *Berat (66) Nanang (terlalu teruk)* Very Bad

Studies have shown that there are five ways to use Terengganu dialect in business or product branding, namely:

1. Variant pronunciations and spellings
2. Meaning varieties
3. Vocabulary varieties
4. Mixture of pronunciation and vocabulary varieties
5. Mixing English and local dialect

Among the brands that use different pronunciation and spelling from the standard language are *mok cik gemok*, *bekki*, *air kocok*, *air buoh gelah beso*, *warung Pok Nong*. Despite the difference, the name of the brand can still be understood. There are cases where standard language is mixed up with local dialect. For instance, *warung Pok Nong* consists of the spelling of standard language which is *warung*. Informants also mentioned that, funny pronunciation and interesting sound are more attractive such as *mok cik gemok* and *bekki* as well as *air kocok*.

Business branding such as *cafe awok ite* brings different meaning to different people. The word *awok* refers to the second person of whom we are referring to when it comes to the standard Malay language. However, in Terengganu dialect, the word is referring to a group of people. They also use English word such as the word “cafe” in their business brand as well as changing the standard spelling of the word *kita* to *ite* according to Terengganu dialect.

The distinction of the words usage can be seen in the process of business branding such as *bungga*, *robok clothing*, *berat (66) nanang*, *bira pata*. However, such words can only be comprehend by the locals. As a result, people would find the business name as unique and only can be found in Terengganu, despite the fact that no one can understand and describe the meaning of the words. Hence, it clearly proves the use of dialect as a business branding can attract the customers’ attention because of interesting sounds although it is incomprehensible.

Despite making Terengganu become much more well-known, product and label that are based on Terengganu dialect can help the economy development of our country. Few shirt brands that use Terengganu dialect are *berat nanang* and *robok*. *Berat nanang* means very bad while the word *rohok* means complicated. For instance, ‘Rohok clothing’ produces variety of t-shirts that attract the customer. As a result, individuals who wear t-shirts produced by ‘Rohok Clothing’ actually help to bring the identity of Terengganu. This is because the word *robok*, which is printed on the clothes are actually introducing people to the dialect of the Terengganu. In general, naming a brand based on Terengganu dialect can help widespread the dialect of Terengganu itself. If this continues, the impact on the knowledge of the language as well as its culture can be recognised globally.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

All businesses that named their brands using Terengganu dialect fall in the category of small and medium enterprises (SME). Apparently, businessmen in the industry prefer to use this approach because their main consumer is the local community. Besides that, SME also helps boost production domestically by importing and exporting food-based products. It shows that Bumiputera entrepreneurs not only need to be eloquent in business management but also skilled in product development and marketing. Therefore, this study is an attempt to analyze dialect-based business branding and products aside from the fact that this approach could highlight local identities thus creating a bigger impressions in the international market.

Moving on, this study also shows the evident efforts in developing and commercializing the Terengganu dialect through products and labelling. It is undeniable that the dialect has its own unique characteristics, namely sound aspect, semantics, morphology as well as unique and distinctive formic in terms of meaning. As such, the idea triggered from this research is to encourage the usage of dialect widely as it could enhance the economy especially Small Medium Enterprises (SME). Here we can see that the Terengganu state itself plays an important role to always strive forward to avoid drowning in the waves of modernity.

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