

TYPOGRAPHY AS BRAND IMAGE TO SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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Abstract — Typography is one of basic elements in Visual Communication Design. Almost every promotional tools and media are using typography as a message conveyer. It is also has become an important yet attractive branding feature from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) or *Industri Mikro, Kecil dan Menengah* (UMKM) in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the lack of knowledge and understanding from the SMEs on how to build their brand has been camouflaged by the use of typography to represent a brand. There are at least 11.610 of Small Medium Enterprises available in the City of Semarang nowadays. This usage of typography as a brand representation is shown from packagings of apparel products, snacks, and processed foods comes from local plantations. These products will not be able to compete with any other modern day packaged products if not interfered by the knowledge on how to build a brand using visual communication design. The purpose of this research is to provide brand building knowledge bridging for SMEs in Indonesia. There are several tendencies that can be found from this research; (1). Most of the character of the typography being used is not conveying the character and content of the product, (2). The typefaces being used is not readable and having low legibility, (3). Product information is not using typography, (4). The typefaces being used are tend to copy other typefaces used in other product.

Keywords – *i.e.* Brand Image, Typography, SMEs in Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises is playing quite an important role in current Indonesia economy. Many of these SMEs boosts regional revenues. Even so, products generated by SMEs in Indonesia can not compete well with global products. This is happening because the SMEs does not know how to introduce their products.

Typography is often being used by SMEs to represent their brand. The ease of choosing an

electric typefaces or fonts from personal computer has built an instant brand building mindset among the SMEs business owners, especially on how to label their product. These fonts can easily be found in almost any packaging of a product comes from SMEs. According to Julianti (2014,15), packaging is used as a medium to increase the value as well as functional feature of one product. This lack of brand knowledge and understanding has created a trend of a deficient, scanty, and poor packaging design among Indonesian SMEs.

Yet, a well-designed packaging should be able to represent an informative and qualitative business profile of any SMEs, let alone from the usage of the right typefaces and typography.

A crucial element to be examined from this research is how typography being used to represent a business profile. Observation is used to acquire primary data of SMEs product in Semarang, as well as interview with the Head of Bureau of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises Semarang City to obtain data regarding the increasing amount of SMEs. A literature study is generated to explore how typography and packaging supports one and another, as a ground theory to observe the usage trend of typography on SMEs product packaging in Semarang.

2. Typography being used on an SMEs product packaging is part of brand building process.

Typography is a design element (Tinarbuko, 2009, 25) that can not be separated from an SMEs product packaging. Therefore it can be said that typography is providing a significant function to leverage brand building process of SMEs products.

As stated by Syamsurizal (1992, 15), branding is a process of image embedding inside the mind of customers. Along that process, it requires a specific interest and attention generated by business owners. There are many things can be considered as a materials to build a brand. Almost every activities done by business owners are part of image construction process. By interviewing Mrs. Yuanita Rani, Chief Section of Entrepreneurships of Bureau of Cooperatives and Small-Medium Enterprises Semarang, on April 6th 2015, a number of 11.610 SMEs are located and in operation within the jurisdiction of Semarang city. The majority of these SMEs are food related business owners. This staggering amount of SMEs is supposed to be a constructive asset for competing against overseas products. Then again, with no strong brand, an SMEs product will be doubted by the customers (Julianti, 2014, 24).

Based on observation in SMEs Expo and Exhibition on April 22nd 2015 in Semarang Cityhall as well as studying literature of Semarang's SMEs product catalogue in the past three years, it can be concluded that typography is a main feature of design being used to represent a brand. This being confirmed by Mr. Yoga Tamtomo, Chief Section of Production, Technology and Marketing of Bureau of Cooperatives and Small-Medium Enterprises Semarang, on an interview conducted on April 6th 2015.

From the above case, therefore a typography is confirmed as the main tool to communicate a brand to its audiences. There are four trends of typography usage that can be seen as phenomenon from SMEs packagings:

2.1 The Typography character is not representing the character of the product.

Every typeface family has its own character. There are at least four categories; (1). Serif, (2). Sans Serif, (3). Script, and (4). Decoratives (Anggraini dan Natalia, 2014, 58-63). First indication shows this categories are not known by the business owners. knowing the character of the product and choosing the right typeface for this product is important (Klimchuk & Krasovec 2007, 88). For example, the character of cassava products have a strong character, but less precise by implementing a script typeface that has the character of beauty and softness.



Figure 1. The Typography character is not representing the character of the product (Documentation 2015)



Figure 3. Typography is not used to inform the product (Documentation 2015)

2.2 Low readability and legibility from the typography.

Two main principles of typography are readability and legibility (Rustan, 2011, 74). In the case of SMEs products, the layout of the typefaces has creating a confusion for the customers to understand the products being offered. Typeface, scale, placement position, layout, color and design everything must be serves to communicate the personality of the product (Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2007, 100).



Figure 2. Low readability and legibility from the typography (Documentation 2015).

2.3 Typography is not used to inform the product.

A product requires an information shown on the packaging of the product (Julianti, 2014, 14). In packaging design, typography is the main medium to communicate the name, function, and the fact the product for consumers (Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2007, 87), especially a food related product from SMEs. The very least informations need to be shown on a packaging are expiry date, production date, flavor, ingredients and netto, to reassure the customers on buying a specific product.

2.4 Typefaces being used are a copy of other existing product.

There are no variations among one product category, produced by SMEs business owners. This has lead to a phenomenon where many SMEs are copying the type of the font being used by their competitors to boost the product sales. Whereas packaging can also act as a distinguishing feature in a product marketing (Julianti, 2014, 12). A brand name and the name of product is what makes consumers related to a product mentally and emotionally, so that typography which was used should unique and distinctive belonging to that product (Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2007, 97).



Figure 4. Typefaces being used are a copy of other existing product (Documentation 2015).

3. RESULT

Typography play a very important role in leveraging brand building process for SMEs. Business owners of Small and Medium Enterprises need to have an awareness about this importance, especially concerning the image of their products. The usage of typography on an SMEs product packaging should consider the degree of typefaces' characteristic similarity from any other competing products. Other than that, the usage of typography as an informational conveyor should be taking into consideration. Copying other products' typefaces will not do any good for brand building process of an SMEs product. Readability and legibility also need to be thought carefully, for these two main feature of typography are determinant factors.

This research is a preliminary research, conducted to identify the usage of typography as a brand image building factor of an SMEs product. Therefore a further research about the relationship of typography being used by Small and Medium Enterprises in Indonesia with other design elements is needed to provide guidelines for Indonesian SMEs to compete with other global products.

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