

## Product Image And Ethnocentrism Factors In Influencing Knowledge Of Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students

Adelina Lubis<sup>1</sup>, Siti Anggiani Syahvira<sup>2</sup>, Aulia Sofiea Putri<sup>3</sup>, Zul Azmi Mutahajjid<sup>4</sup>, Andi Reza Syahputra Lubis<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Universitas Medan Area, Indonesia

Email Corresponding: [adelina@staff.uma.ac.id](mailto:adelina@staff.uma.ac.id)

**Abstract.** *This study aims to analyze the influence of product image and ethnocentrism factors on knowledge about Uis Karo, a traditional cloth typical of the Karo people, among students of Medan Area University. Product image refers to students' perceptions of the quality, beauty, and relevance of Uis Karo as part of local culture, while ethnocentrism refers to the tendency to prioritize and value local products over foreign products. The research method uses a quantitative approach with data collection through questionnaires distributed to 98 students. The results of the analysis show that product image has a significant influence on students' knowledge of Uis Karo, where positive perceptions of the quality and aesthetics of Uis Karo increase students' interest in learning about this cultural product. In addition, ethnocentrism factors have also been shown to have a significant influence; students with high levels of ethnocentrism tend to be more interested and have better knowledge about Uis Karo. These findings imply the importance of promotional strategies that strengthen the image of Uis Karo products and strengthen ethnocentrism attitudes to increase understanding and pride in local culture among the younger generation.*

**Keywords** *Product Image, Ethnocentrism, Uis Karo, Cultural Knowledge, Students*

### INTRODUCTION

Uis Karo is one of the cultural heritages of the Karo tribe which has important historical and symbolic value for the Karo people in North Sumatra (Juliyanti et al., 2023). Uis Karo is not only used in traditional events, but also in everyday life as a cultural identity (Siagian et al., 2021) (Nasution et al., 2024). However, knowledge about Uis Karo among the younger generation, especially students, is still relatively low (Sitepu, 2023). Many of them do not understand the meaning and philosophy behind Uis Karo, and tend not to be interested in using it in their daily lives.

The image of products related to local culture, such as Uis Karo, is often influenced by people's perceptions of its aesthetic value, function and uniqueness. On the other hand, the ethnocentrism factor also plays an important role in influencing people's interest in getting to know and using local products (Utomo et al., 2023). Ethnocentrism reflects the tendency of individuals to support local products because they feel they are part of their cultural identity (He & Wang, 2015). Therefore, it is important to examine

the influence of product image and ethnocentrism on knowledge about Uis Karo among students.

This research has an interesting background, namely the combination of local cultural identity (Uis Karo) with the influence of globalization reflected in the product image. Several factors that underlie this research include Uis Karo as a cultural heritage that is full of local values and wisdom (Pardosi et al., 2024). However, over time, knowledge about Uis Karo, especially among the younger generation, tends to decline. A strong product image can influence consumer perceptions of a product, including products related to culture (Kaynak & Kara, 2002) (Barqah et al., 2024) (Lubis, Effendi, & Rosalina, 2023) (Sari et al., 2024). In this context, the product image associated with Uis Karo can influence students' interest in learning more about the culture. Ethnocentrism, namely the tendency to judge one's own culture as superior to other cultures, can also influence a person's perception and knowledge of other cultures (Bizumic, 2020).

The issue of preserving local culture is increasingly becoming a concern, especially in the midst of strong globalization. The combination of product image and ethnocentrism in the context of knowledge about local culture is a relatively new study. The results of this study can contribute to efforts to preserve Karo culture, develop culture-based products, and effective communication strategies to increase public awareness of local cultural values..

Based on the background above, the formulation of the research problem is:

1. How does the product image associated with Uis Karo influence the knowledge of Universitas Medan Area students about Karo culture?
2. Is there an influence of ethnocentrism on the knowledge of Universitas Medan Area students about Karo culture?
3. How is the interaction between product image and ethnocentrism in influencing the knowledge of Universitas Medan Area students about Karo culture?

This study will refer to previous studies that discuss the influence of brand image, ethnocentrism, and consumer knowledge. However, this study is unique because it focuses on local culture (Uis Karo) and the context of college students. This study

specifically discusses Karo culture, which is a cultural heritage of Indonesia. This study combines product image and ethnocentrism variables to analyze their influence on knowledge of local culture.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Product Image**

(Tanady & Fuad, 2020) states that product image is a consumer's perception of a product, which is formed through experience, information, and expectations. A positive product image can help build customer loyalty and strengthen the product's position in the market. Product image is closely related to brand equity (Rafhdian et al., 2017). That product image is built through consistent and relevant associations, including quality, unique features, and benefits. If the product image is bad, brand equity will decline, causing a negative impact on sales. (Kapferer, 2012) Kapferer in the book *The New Strategic Brand Management* emphasizes that product image is part of a brand strategy that must be managed carefully. He added that product image can be a differentiator in a competitive market and can drive added value to consumers. (BABU & BANANA, n.d.) Consumer Behavior, Babin and Harris discuss that product image is not only influenced by intrinsic factors of the product itself (such as quality and features), but also by marketing communications, including advertising, publicity, and consumer reviews.

Research on Karo ulos tends to lead to cultural preservation and the development of a creative economy based on handicrafts. The focus of the research includes documentation of motifs, traditional coloring techniques, and the influence of ulos in strengthening the cultural identity of the Karo tribe. Several studies also highlight the role of government and cultural institutions in maintaining the sustainability of the ulos industry, through providing support to local craftsmen and promoting products to international markets. Overall, ulos Karo has an image that is rich in cultural and aesthetic values, as well as the potential to be developed as a superior product from North Sumatra. The challenge ahead is how to preserve this cultural heritage while continuing to innovate to remain relevant in the modern era.

### **Ethnocentrism**

(Shahzad, n.d.) ethnocentrism is a person's tendency to judge other cultures or groups based on their own cultural values and norms. Their research highlights that in

multicultural societies, ethnocentrism can be a major challenge in efforts to create social cohesion. They argue that the tendency towards ethnocentrism can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices between ethnic groups, thereby exacerbating social conflict. In the context of marketing, Sharma et al. (2021) studied the impact of ethnocentrism on consumer preferences (Trivedi et al., 2024). They found that consumers with high levels of ethnocentrism tend to prefer local products over foreign products. This is because local products are considered more in line with their cultural identity and support the national economy. This study shows that ethnocentrism can have an impact on consumer decisions and marketing strategies in various countries.

(Tandelilin et al., 2022) discuss how ethnocentrism can affect education, especially in countries with diverse cultures. According to them, teachers who hold ethnocentric views may unconsciously highlight one culture over another in teaching, which can lead to cultural discrimination. They emphasize the need for an inclusive and ethnocentric approach to education to reduce the negative impacts of ethnocentrism. (Maryufani, 2022) highlights that ethnocentrism is often used as a political tool to strengthen national or group identities. According to Bakti, in some cases, politicians use ethnocentric sentiments to build support by promoting certain cultural values as superior. This can lead to the marginalization of minority groups and increase the potential for ethnic conflict.

### **Knowledge**

(Goldman, 2021) an epistemologist, states that knowledge is a true and justified belief. He added that in the digital era, the biggest challenge for epistemology is how to assess the truth of information that comes from various sources. (Snow, 2021) also discusses that in the post-truth era, knowledge requires a more holistic approach by considering the emotional and social aspects in forming beliefs . Knowledge is no longer only seen as a logical product, but also involves emotional and social processes. (Brooks et al., 2021) focuses on the role of knowledge in learning, stating that students' knowledge is not only measured by what they know, but how they can use that knowledge in relevant contexts. Hattie emphasizes the importance of "knowledge transfer" in education, where students are able to apply what they learn to new situations. (Krajcik & Shin, 2023) emphasize that knowledge must be learned in a deep way, where knowledge is not

just memorized, but understood and applied. This approach allows students to integrate their knowledge with life experiences and real-world contexts.

## **METHODS**

Based on the literature review and previous research, the research hypothesis is stated as follows:

H1: Product Image on Knowledge of Uis Karo Among Students of Universitas Medan Area.

H2: Ethnocentrism on Knowledge of Uis Karo Among Students of Universitas Medan Area.

H3: Simultaneous influence between Product Image and Ethnocentrism on Knowledge of Uis Karo Among Students of Universitas Medan Area.

The approach used in this study is quantitative with a survey method. Data will be collected through questionnaires distributed to students of Universitas Medan Area. Data analysis will use multiple linear regression techniques to determine the effect of product image and ethnocentrism on students' knowledge of Uis Karo. This modeling allows researchers to see how much each variable affects the dependent variable (knowledge of Uis Karo). Research Population: 98 College students are an important group in preserving culture. This study uses a combination of primary and secondary data, Likert scale, multiple linear regression analysis, and t-test and dominance test to determine the effect of variable X on variable Y.

## **RESULTS**

Product Image and Ethnocentrism have a significant influence on Knowledge of Uis Karo in Universitas Medan Area Students. This is indicated by the calculated F value (158.361) which is much greater than the F table (3.09) and the significance level of the calculated F (0.000) which is much smaller than the significance level of  $\alpha$  (0.05). Product Image and Ethnocentrism have a positive relationship with Knowledge of Uis Karo in Universitas Medan Area Students. This means that the better the Product Image and ethnocentrism, the higher the Knowledge of Uis Karo in Universitas Medan Area Students. Product Image, and ethnocentrism are important factors that can increase Knowledge of Uis Karo in Universitas Medan Area Students. Product Image and Ethnocentrism are two key factors that complement each other in influencing Knowledge

of Uis Karo in Universitas Medan Area Students. By utilizing Product Image effectively and establishing competitive ethnocentrism, and ultimately increasing sales. If Product Image and Ethnocentrism are constant, Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students will increase by 2.321 points. Product Image has a positive and significant influence on Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students. Improving Product Image will increase Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students by 0.465 points. Ethnocentrism has a positive and significant influence on Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students. Improving Ethnocentrism will increase Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students by 0.521 points.

Determination Coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) The R value of 0.904 shows a very strong relationship between Product Image, Ethnocentrism, and Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students. This means that the relationship between Product Image, ethnocentrism, and Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students is very complex and influences each other.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Product Image Towards Knowledge About Uis Karo Among Universitas Medan Area Students**

Product image is the perception that consumers have of a product that is formed through experience, information, and communication received (Lubis, Effendi, Syahbudin, et al., 2023) (Lubis et al., 2021). Product image can be influenced by product quality, design, packaging, brand, and promotion (Segara et al., 2024) (Segara et al., 2023). It is one type of traditional cloth from the Karo tribe in North Sumatra that has high cultural value. Students' knowledge of ULOS Uis Karo includes an understanding of history, meaning, function, and how to use it in everyday life. A positive product image will increase students' interest in seeking more information about ULOS Uis Karo. If students see ULOS as a quality product with an attractive design, they tend to be more interested in learning more. Good promotional activities, such as exhibitions, seminars, or social media, can help improve the image of ULOS Uis Karo and at the same time increase students' knowledge about the cloth. Discussions and interactions with communities that care about Karo culture can strengthen product image and increase students' insight into ULOS Uis Karo.

Increasing knowledge about ULOS Uis Karo can increase students' cultural awareness of the importance of preserving traditional fabrics. Students who have good knowledge about ULOS Uis Karo tend to prefer to use or buy the product compared to other products. A good product image plays an important role in increasing students' knowledge about ULOS Uis Karo. Through a positive image, students are more motivated to get to know and understand more about the traditional fabric, so that they can contribute to the preservation of local culture. By improving the image of ULOS Uis Karo products, it is hoped that students' knowledge and appreciation of Karo culture can be maintained and developed.

### **Ethnocentrism towards Knowledge of Uis Karo in Universitas Medan Area Students**

This study shows that ethnocentrism has a significant effect on the knowledge and attitudes of Universitas Medan Area students towards Uis Karo. Although there is recognition of the importance of cultural diversity, there is a tendency to judge other cultures from the perspective of one's own culture (Wu & Keysar, 2007). Therefore, it is recommended to improve educational programs and cultural interaction activities on campus to broaden understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, including the Uis Karo tradition.

### **Simultaneous influence of product image and ethnocentrism on knowledge about Uis Karo among Universitas Medan Area students**

Regression analysis shows that simultaneously, product image and ethnocentrism have a significant influence on students' knowledge about Uis Karo. The  $R^2$  value (coefficient of determination) shows that these two independent variables can explain most of the variation in knowledge about Uis Karo. This study concludes that product image and ethnocentrism simultaneously have a significant influence on students' knowledge about Uis Karo. This shows the importance of creating a positive product image and increasing awareness of ethnocentrism among students to preserve local culture (Kaynak & Kara, 2002).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to analyze the influence of product image and ethnocentrism on knowledge about UIS Karo among students of Universitas Medan Area. Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that:

1. Influence of Product Image: Product image has a positive and significant influence on students' knowledge about UIS Karo. This shows that the better the image of the UIS Karo product in the eyes of students, the higher their level of knowledge about the product. A positive product image can create a good perception and increase students' interest in learning more about UIS Karo.
2. Influence of Ethnocentrism: Ethnocentrism has also been shown to influence students' knowledge about UIS Karo. Students with high levels of ethnocentrism tend to appreciate and explore local products more, including UIS Karo. Ethnocentrism can encourage students to better understand and know the culture and products that come from their own region.
3. Interaction between Product Image and Ethnocentrism: There is a significant interaction between product image and ethnocentrism in influencing knowledge about UIS Karo. This shows that the combination of positive image and pride in local products can increase students' knowledge about UIS Karo more effectively.
4. Practical Implications: This study suggests that UIS Karo should focus more on building a positive product image among students and promoting ethnic and local values that can foster a sense of pride in the product. Through appropriate marketing strategies and increasing cultural awareness, it is hoped that knowledge about UIS Karo among students can increase.

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