

Global Prestige and Local Pride: A Phenomenological Study of Indonesian Consumer Experience of Foreign Brands Manufactured Locally

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Abstract

Global brands increasingly manufacture inside the emerging markets where they sell, and Indonesia is one of the countries experiencing it. Country of origin, consumer ethnocentrism, and xenocentrism each assume a consumer can place a product on one side of a foreign-local divide, yet a foreign brand made at home collapses that divide into a single object. This study examines how consumers in North Sulawesi experience that fusion. Using a transcendental phenomenological design, we interviewed 20 footwear and apparel buyers and analysed 398 meaning units through the seven Van Kaam stages, with Social Identity Theory as the interpretive lens. Six themes emerged: consumption evaluation, social identity, local legitimacy, origin cues, social influence, and brand trust. Consumers accept locally made foreign brands as legitimate when quality, pricing, and local benefits are clear; otherwise, the locally made label may weaken the brand

Keywords

Phenomenology; Conditional Local Legitimacy; Country Of Origin; Social Identity Theory; Made In Indonesia; Indonesian Consumers



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INTRODUCTION

Global brands increasingly manufacture inside the emerging markets where they sell (Holgado & Niess, 2023). In Indonesia, a consumer who buys footwear or apparel now routinely handles a product that carries a foreign brand name and a Made in Indonesia label at the same time, and Indonesia ranks among the largest footwear producers in the world, so this pairing attaches to a substantial share of the branded goods its consumers buy (Tamara et al, 2021; Wicaksono et al., 2023). A shopper choosing shoes for campus or work, within a budget of a few hundred thousand rupiah, settles a small question with each purchase: whether a foreign brand made at home counts as a foreign product, a local one, or something the existing categories do not name.

Marketing theory struggles with that question. Country-of-origin research treats origin as a quality cue that consumers read off a label (Bilkey & Nes, 1982;

Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Marković et al., 2023). Consumer ethnocentrism refers to the normative preference for domestic goods (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), and consumer xenocentrism refers to the opposite pull toward foreign ones (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016). Each construct assumes the consumer can place a product on one side of a foreign-local split, and foreign brand manufactured domestically sits on both sides at once.

Indonesian studies on brand origin sits mostly on the quantitative side, with studies show that digital marketing and brand image drive purchase intention for local fashion (Silalahi et al., 2022), that perceived quality mediates the effect of Generation Z ethnocentrism on local sneaker purchase intention (Dhewi & Oktaviani, 2023), and that brand image and product features predict sneaker purchase among young consumers (Fritz et al., 2024). Ethnocentric Indonesian consumers report stronger intention toward local fashion brands (Trisatya & Absah, 2022). Interpretive work is scarce. Susilo (2022) found the meanings users attach to Air Jordan sneakers, and Sudarmanto and Pujiyanto (2023) analyse sneaker fetishism in youth lifestyle, but neither examines the case in which the brand is foreign and the making is domestic. This work measures how much origin matters and says little about what the foreign-local distinction means to the consumer who lives it.

Research on global and local brands treats perceived globalness and localness as separate sources of value: globalness signals quality and prestige (Steenkamp et al., 2003; Marković et al., 2023), while local iconness delivers cultural resonance (Özsomer, 2012; Xiao et al., 2025). In developing markets, a non-local origin can raise brand attitudes among status-sensitive consumers (Batra et al., 2000; Akgün et al., 2022). Brand origin affects trust in Advertising and Attitudes towards advertising, yet perceived local production can also build identification-based trust in foreign brands (Han et al., 2023). Brand trust research shows that consumers rely on accumulated evidence and credible signals to judge whether a product is genuine, a judgment that tightens where counterfeits circulate (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Morhart et al., 2015; Silkoset, & Nygaard, 2025). Social influence works through conformity and through information the consumer weighs on its values, and it presses hardest on publicly worn goods such as branded footwear (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Akgün et al., 2022).

Social Identity Theory supplies the primary interpretive lens (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). People draw part of their self-concept from group membership and act to keep their in-groups positively distinct, and consumption is one arena where this plays out, since possessions extend the self (Belk, 1988) and brands mark belonging.

A foreign brand offers affiliation with a globally admired out-group; local production offers solidarity with the domestic in-group; a foreign brand made locally offers both at once. Reading 20 consumer accounts through this lens, the study advances one central contribution, conditional local legitimacy: consumers grant a foreign brand made at home the standing of a genuine domestic contribution only when they can see who benefits from the production. Three questions guide the inquiry. First, how do consumers describe their experience of foreign brands manufactured locally? Second, what meanings shape their reading of the Made in Indonesia label? Third, how do feelings about global brands and the local economy combine to shape acceptance of a foreign brand made in Indonesia?

METHODS

The study follows a transcendental phenomenological design, which describes the essence of a lived experience as participants report it rather than testing a prior hypothesis (Moustakas, 1994). The approach suits a question about meaning, since it asks how consumers experience foreign brands made locally before it asks how common any response is. Throughout analysis the researchers practised epoché, setting aside prior assumptions about ethnocentrism and brand prestige so that informants' own framing could surface (Dodgson, 2023).

Purposive sampling recruited 20 informants in North Sulawesi who buy footwear, bags, or apparel and could speak to their experience of foreign and local brands. Recruitment required recent purchase in these categories and willingness to reflect aloud on the reasoning behind a choice. The sample comprises university students and working adults of varied backgrounds. Interviews continued until no new meaning units emerged, with saturation reached during the final interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006); 20 information-rich cases satisfy the principle of information power, under which dense cases reduce the number needed (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016), and fall within the range Creswell (2013) recommends for phenomenology. Informants are labelled P1 to P20 in the order of the source transcripts. Table 1 summarises the profile as disclosed; occupation appears only where the informant stated it.

Table 1. Informant profiles (as disclosed)

Code	Occupation	Meaning units
P1	Student	22
P2	Student	18
P3	Worker	28
P4	Student	28
P5	Worker	24
P6	Student	21
P7	Student	26

P8	Worker	22
P9	Worker	17
P10	Not stated	28
P11	Student	20
P12	Worker	24
P13	Student	16
P14	Not stated	11
P15	Student	11
P16	Not stated	9
P17	Student	16
P18	Student	21
P19	Not stated	23
P20	Student	13

Source: interview transcripts, this study.

Data came from semi-structured interviews conducted in the everyday Manado dialect of Malay, allowing informants to speak in the register they use when they shop. Questions covered purchase habits, reactions to foreign and local brands, the meaning of a Made in Indonesia label, views on who benefits from local production, and the social pressures around a choice. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Quoted material keeps the original dialect with an English gloss, following a meaning-based translation procedure that treats the translator as an interpreter of cultural sense rather than a word-for-word converter (Temple & Young, 2004).

Analysis followed the seven stages of the Van Kaam method as formalised by Moustakas (1994). The researchers listed and grouped every relevant expression, reduced these to invariant meaning units, tested each unit against the transcripts for whether it was necessary and sufficient to the experience, and clustered the survivors into themes. From 20 transcripts the process yielded 398 meaning units, coded into 18 codes, 12 categories, and 6 themes. Individual textural and structural descriptions were written for each cluster and then synthesised into a composite account. The four interpretive lenses were applied at this synthesis stage and did not pre-code the data; themes were built from the transcripts first and situated in the literature afterwards. Trustworthiness rests on the four criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility came from verbatim transcription and from grounding every theme in informants' own words. The coding audit trail, preserved in a workbook that maps each meaning unit to its code and theme, supports dependability and confirmability. Thick description of the North Sulawesi setting lets readers judge transferability to other contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Six themes describe how these consumers experience a foreign brand made in Indonesia. Table 2 reports the themes and their weight in the interview material,

measured as the share of meaning units. Consumption evaluation dominates, followed by social identity; local legitimacy, origin cues, social influence, and brand trust follow in turn. Figure 1 sets out the conceptual framework, with the six themes feeding a central experience that four interpretive lenses help to read.

Table 2. Thematic structure and weight in the interview material

Theme	Meaning units (n)	Share (%)
Consumption evaluation	129	32.4
Social identity	96	24.1
Local legitimacy	61	15.3
Origin cues	55	13.8
Social influence	30	7.5
Brand trust	27	6.8
Total	398	100.0

Source: coding workbook

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the experience of foreign brands made in Indonesia.

Source: developed by the authors.

Consumption evaluation

Before any question of origin or identity arises, these consumers test a product as a product. Quality, comfort, durability, and design decide whether a shoe is worth considering at all. P6 described a pair as *nyaman digunakan, bahannya bagus, dan sangat kuat* (comfortable to wear, good material, and very strong), the plain checklist that opens most accounts. Price enters as a paired judgement rather than a separate one. Informants want quality and price to match and read a mismatch as a reason for distrust, consistent with the means-end account of perceived value (Zeithaml, 1988; Shaw et al., 2025). A specific expectation attaches to local production. P5 reasoned that *kalaupun diproduksi dalam negeri kan pasti yang harusnya harganya lebih murah* (if it is produced domestically then the price should be lower), a price script that makes a locally made product at import pricing feel wrong. This theme sets the gate every product passes before identity or trust matters.

Social identity

Once a product clears the practical gate, it carries meaning about who the wearer is. Foreign brands read as premium and current. P2 said that between two similar models, *saya akan lebih pilih yang asing branded karena kan itu kayak lebih premium, hype* (I would choose the foreign branded one because it feels more premium, hype), which puts the foreign name in the service of status and peer standing. The same informants express pride when a good product turns out to be Indonesian. P3 described feeling *bangga* (proud) on learning that domestic quality could match a globally known brand, and P10 said plainly, *lebih bangga sih kalau pakai*

brand lokal karena itu dibuat dalam negeri sendiri (I feel prouder wearing a local brand because it is made in our own country). Foreign affiliation and local solidarity work as two identities the same consumer holds, matching the account in which the salient group shifts with context (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987).

Local legitimacy

The clearest new pattern concerns how consumers decide whether a foreign brand made at home counts as a local contribution. Local production first reads as employment. P11 accepted a foreign brand made in Indonesia because it *bisa membuka lapangan pekerjaan* (can open jobs), and P2 felt that buying it *secara tidak langsung* (indirectly) helped the people working in the factory. Acceptance is not automatic, though. It turns on who the consumer believes actually gains. P6 drew the line exactly: *pekerja lokal mendapat keuntungan, tetapi perusahaan asing mendapat keuntungan yang lebih besar* (local workers gain, but the foreign company gains more). P12 held both ideas together, accepting local manufacture for the jobs it brings while still preferring to support local firms so that Indonesian products might reach an international market. The standing of a foreign brand made locally, in these accounts, depends on a visible beneficiary. When informants can see local workers and local supply benefiting, they extend the product the legitimacy of a domestic contribution; when they judge the foreign company to be the main beneficiary, they withhold it. This is what the study names conditional local legitimacy: a conditional judgement keyed to the perceived beneficiary of production rather than a fixed attitude toward foreign or local goods. It sits between the normative rejection that defines ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) and the deference to foreign producers that defines xenocentrism (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Mahmoud, Mallen-Ntiador, & Andoh, 2021), and neither construct predicts it.

Origin cues

Consumers infer origin before they verify it, reading brand name, design, and advertising as signals. P4 saw a shoe as American *karena saya banyak kali melihat iklan ataupun di film-film* (because I often see it in advertisements and films), an origin judgement built from media exposure rather than any label. The Made in Indonesia label itself carries three readings, selected by the brand it sits on. For some it reads as positive, a mark of domestic capability; P7 trusted a locally made product *karena torang so tau buatan sini* (because we know it is made here). For others the label is neutral, subordinate to quality; P2 said origin does not matter *yang penting kualitasnya bagus* (as long as the quality is good). For a third group the label raises suspicion. P6 said that a supposedly foreign shoe found to be locally made would make him *mempertanyakan keaslian* (question its authenticity) and worry it was counterfeit, or

KW in local retail slang. The brand's expected origin, rather than the label alone, decides which reading prevails, which specifies at the level of experience the cue ambivalence that aggregate country-of-origin studies report (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Sharma, 2011).

Social influence

Peers shape choice, but not uniformly. For some informants the group sets the standard. P7 said friends' opinions matter *karena kan torang mo pakai for bakumpul deng dorang* (because we wear it to gather with them) and feared being teased for the wrong choice. Others assert independence. P6 said simply, *saya memiliki prinsip diri sendiri* (I have my own principles), and P18 said friends do not decide what he wears because the wish to wear something comes from himself. The two responses appear in almost equal measure across the sample, which cautions against treating young Indonesian consumers as uniformly trend-driven and matches the split between normative and informational influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Bearden & Etzel, 1982).

Brand trust

Trust is built from evidence and withheld under doubt. Informants weigh promotion, reviews, and price signals, and they discount claims that fail a plausibility test. P7 noted that discounts are often illusory: *dorang ja tatulis diskon tapi pas di scan tetap harga normal* (they mark it as a discount but at the scanner the price is normal). What earns trust is transparency about production. P10 said a brand must be honest about where and how it makes its goods and must show that it *benar-benar peduli dengan tenaga kerja lokal* (really cares about local workers), and P11 tied trust to keeping quality up and pricing fair. Where counterfeits are common, transparency about local manufacture is the evidence that separates an official local product from a suspected fake (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Morhart et al., 2015).

Synthesis: negotiation and the two currencies of value

Read together, these themes describe an experience of negotiation rather than choice. The consumer first tests the product, then reconciles its two origins: the foreign name promises status and quality, the local making promises jobs and pride, and the same local making can threaten the promise of the foreign name. Global prestige and local pride act as two currencies, and the consumer works to hold both rather than spend one to buy the other. Identity here operates at two levels. A national identity expresses itself as economic solidarity, the wish to support Indonesian jobs and firms. A regional identity surfaces in the Manado dialect the informants speak and in their attachment to place, a layer a national-versus-foreign framing would miss. Conditional local legitimacy is the mechanism that settles the

negotiation: acceptance follows when local benefit, visible quality, and fair pricing line up, and refusal follows when the local label reads as a crack in the brand's story. The essence of the experience is a consumer holding a negotiation with himself over a single object that is at once foreign and local, and settling it on the evidence of who gains.

CONCLUSION

The three questions can now be answered. Consumers experience a foreign brand made locally as a layered evaluation that begins with a practical test of quality, comfort, and price and moves to identity, legitimacy, and trust only for products that pass it. They read the Made in Indonesia label in three ways, as pride, as neutral information, or as a warning about authenticity, with the brand's expected origin deciding which reading holds. Their feelings about global brands and the local economy combine as a negotiation rather than a contest, and a foreign brand made at home wins acceptance when visible quality, fair pricing, and a visible local beneficiary let global prestige and local pride be satisfied together.

For brands manufacturing in Indonesia, four lessons follow. Make the local contribution visible, since consumers audit who benefits and reward transparency about employment and suppliers. Respect the price script the local label creates, because a domestically made product at import pricing invites the value scepticism the data record. Protect authenticity through official channels and clear communication, since the counterfeit inference is the most damaging reading of a local label. Do not rely on trend pressure alone, because half of this sample buys on quality and comfort rather than hype. For local Indonesian brands, the pride documented here is real and available, and clearer origin communication could claim ground that consumers do not yet know is domestic.

The study makes one central and three supporting theoretical contributions. Its central contribution is conditional local legitimacy, a candidate construct defined as the standing consumers grant a foreign brand made locally as a genuine domestic contribution, conferred when the beneficiary of production is visible and withheld when the foreign company appears to gain most. The supporting contributions extend three literatures: Social Identity Theory, by showing identity operating at national and regional levels at once; country-of-origin research, by showing one label carrying three readings that the brand's expected origin selects; and the ethnocentrism-xenocentrism pair, by showing the two orientations coexisting as situational pulls within individuals rather than sorting consumers into types.

Three limitations bound these claims. The sample sits in North Sulawesi, and consumers in other regions may experience the foreign-local distinction differently, so the regional-identity finding in particular needs testing elsewhere. Demographic detail was recorded only as informants disclosed it, which limits analysis of how age, income, and occupation shape the experience. The study describes meaning rather than measuring prevalence, so the theme frequencies report the weight of talk in these interviews, not population estimates. Future work could test conditional local legitimacy across Indonesian regions, develop a measure of it centered on the perceived beneficiary, and examine how disclosure of production location, price, and transparency interact to shape trust and purchase intention for foreign brands made at home.

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