

# DETERIORATING ASSIMILATION/CATEGORIZATION EFFECT: AN EFFORT TO RETALIATE COMPETITORS.

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**ABSTRACT:** An assimilation/categorization effect occurred when some products were positioned surrounding a dominant product (in a scheme). It was believed that the assimilated/categorized products sales would increase. On the contrary, the dominant product sales would inevitably decrease. The occurrence absolutely did not make the producer of the dominant product was happy. It should be terminated. How to eradicate the effect? The study demonstrated that sales promotions, particularly rebate, sweepstake and premium, could lead to the alteration of attitude. Data were analyzed by employing Amos

16.0 and SPSS 16.0. The findings were not far from the expectation, that after the promotion of the dominant product, the assimilation/categorization effect did no longer exist. The customers' intention to buy the dominant product really increased. In addition, hypotheses relating with assimilation/categorization effect and the behavioral intention were supported.

**KEYWORDS:** assimilation/categorization effect, attitude, behavioral intention, customer sales promotions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) proclaims that the emergence of an intention is triggered out by an attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control, which in turn generate a behavior. A lot of researchers support the phenomenon, such as Jyh (1998), Okun & Sloane (2002), Martin & Kulinna (2004), Wiethoff (2004), Marrone (2005), Kouthouris & Spontis (2005). Likewise Santosa's studies (e.g. 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2015, 2016c, 2016d, 2017a, 2019).

An assimilation/categorization effect is created when a positive image of a particular object is applied to assess another object, in which the outcome is supposedly positive too (Sherman *et al.*; 1978). Some experts have the same idea (*i.e.* Carpenter & Nakamoto, 1989; Sujan & Bettman, 1989; Martin, Seta & Crelia 1990; Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1993; Lehmann & Pan, 1994; Ghoshal *et al.*, 2012). The utilization of the finding has applied to a lot of studies such as Herr, Sherman, & Fazio (1983), Strack, Schwarz, & Gschneidinger (1985), Herr (1986, 1989), Lombardi, Higgins, & Bargh (1987), Manis, Nelson, & Shedler (1988), Shimp, Stuart & Engle (1991), Lynch, Chakravarti, & Mitra, (1991), Bickart, (1993), Raghunathan & Irwin, (2001), Santosa (2009d).

The generation of intention which is activated by the assimilation/categorization effect has been investigated by Santosa (2018). He asserts that the effect influences customers in developing attitude and subjective norm. In another study (2016b), concerning with the effect of attraction, sales promotion and intention, he infers that when sales promotion is applied, the effect has no longer power. Likewise, in the next study (2017b) he also finds that a compromise effect has no power anymore when sales promotion is operated. Consequently, it is supposed that the assimilation/categorization effect has no longer control on attitude and subjective norm, when sales promotion is employed. Thereby, the aim of the study is to explore the work of assimilation/categorization effect of a particular product, whether before or after an operation of sales promotions.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

### 2.1 The Relations Between the Assimilation/Categorization Effect (EAK) and Attitude (AbB1) and Between EAK and Subjective Norms (SNB1).

A cognitive system allows information and evaluation simultaneously operate in the same direction. The information generate meaning which in turn develop conviction (Peter & Olson, 2002). Both have important contribution in making judgment which is inevitably influenced by subjectivity. A subjective judgment of a particular brand will carry out a value of the brand when he/she believes that the brand has a perceptive atribut in a certain product category (Pan & Lehmann, 1993). However, the perceptive atribut is actually only in mind, it is not concrete. Therefore, others could have distinct judgment.

In making a judgment an individual might classify the information, integrated with the past experience, allowing to a conclusion in form of a response (Peter & Olson, 2002). The subjective judgment itself occurs through a learning process of attribute dimensions, comparing one brand to others, and probably decreasing the attribute dimensions to a few. In addition, it is developed and applied based on cognitive capacity limitation (Bettman, 1979; Newell & Simon, 1972). While the brands and attributes are many, it is difficult to integrate and analyze the information. Consequently, consumers make it easy through the subjective judgment or a belief to the particular brand.

Examples of studies about price denote that consumers compare a brand's price to others which leads to price perception (Shin, 1985; Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993; Alford and Biswas, 2002; Jiang and Rosenbloom, 2005; Munnukka, 2008; Han and Ryu, 2009). Likewise, in the studies of Dodd *et al.*, (1991) and Monroe & Petrosius, (1981) the price perception affects quality, value perception and intention to buy.

Supposed a particular focal product has clearly been indicated possessing consumers' good perception. The rationale underlying the opinion is that the focal position relates to a dominant market share. The perception is frequently implemented to judge others which are similar or close in the same product category. Consequently, the similar products which are close in the same product category are likely supposed having the same quality (Ghoshal *et al.*, 2012). Some studies (Lehmann & Pan (1994), Santosa (2005; 2009d) shows that assimilated products become easily considered. The subjective judgment as a result of synthesizing belief and evaluation obviously develops an attitude.

The subjective norms which generated from normative beliefs and motivation to comply are also subjective. While the increasing favor of the subjective norms is always corresponding with an inner motivation to comply of close people's opinion, the opinion is actually parallel with the individuals' opinion which also affected by the assimilation/categorization effect. Santosa (2018) confirms that the assimilation/categorization effect really has a control of attitude and subjective norm. Therefore, 2 (two) hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

- H1: The assimilation/categorization effect (EAK) influences the attitude development (AbB1).
- H2: The assimilation/categorization effect (EAK) influences the subjective norms development (SNB1), when others are also under control of the assimilation/categorization effect.

2.2 The Relations between Sales Promotions and Attitude (AbB2) and Between Sales Promotions and Subjective Norm (SNB2) when promotions are carried out.

Customer sales promotions commonly are designed as a well-informed marketing communication whether through mass media or non-mass media to generate customer's interest, which in turn will drive an establishment of intention (Santosa, 2016a). The creation of interest and intention is not on individuals, but hopefully has an effect on market as well. The growing of interest and intention itself obviously refers to attention. Therefore, not only individual but also market has attention of the product promoted. The activation of attention will inevitably lead to a generation of attitude as well, since attention is a component of attitude (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2008).

Commonly, promotions offer something different than others, included such low price (discount, rebate, and coupon), hope (sweepstakes), and prize (premium), which arouse happiness. The good feeling actually cannot be split from individuals' affective system, which later on affects individuals' cognitive system (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). The result is an appearance of knowledge, meaning and belief (Peter & Olson, 2002). In fact, both affective system and cognitive system belong to a process of developing individuals' attitude (Peter & Olson, 2002).

Kim & Hasher (2005) suggest that interest has substantial contribution of alternative decision. Hedgcock & Rao (2009) state that a decoy will lessen an occurrence of asymmetric domination. Santosa (2019) finds a significant influence of affective response to attitude. He also asserts that discount and rebate influence an increase of attitude (2016b; 2017a). Further, premium also has a power whether to attitude or subjective norm (2017a). Thereby, some hypotheses could be formulated as follows:

- H3: Discount (Dis) influences attitude (AbB2)
- H4: Discount (Dis) influences subjective norm (SNB2)
- H5: Rebate (Rab) influences attitude (AbB2)
- H6: Rebate (Rab) influences subjective norm (SNB2)

Correspondingly, similar hypotheses could be proposed as well as follows:

- H7: Coupon (Kup) influences attitude(AbB2)
- H8: Coupon (Kup) influences subjective norm (SNB2)
- H9: Sweepstakes (Sweep) influences attitude(AbB2)
- H10: Sweepstakes (Sweep) influences subjective norm(SNB2)
- H11: Premium (Prem) influences attitude(AbB2)
- H12: Premium (Prem) influences subjective norm(SNB2)

2.3. The relations between the assimilation/categorization effect (EAK) and attitude (Ab) and between EAK and subjective norms (SN) after sales promotions.

The employment of sales promotions leads the dominant product is going to be more attractive. It is assumed that the assimilation/categorization effect will not work. Misra *et al.* (1993) find that an appealing offer of sales promotions will induce consumer's motivation to choose the promoted product. Kim & Hasher (2005) suggest the contribution of interest to alternative decision. Hedgcock & Rao (2009) state that a decoy will lessen an occurrence

of asymmetric domination. Santosa (2019) finds a significant influence of affective response to attitude. Santosa's study about the context effect (2016b) finds that a similar effect as assimilation/categorization effect, *i.e.* attraction effect, has no longer power after sales promotions of the dominant product. A similar finding (2017a) also demonstrates that compromise effect has no power anymore after sales promotions. Consequently, some hypotheses could be stated as follows:

- H13:Sales promotions of the dominant product will deteriorate the assimilation/categorization effect (EAK) to the pre-promotion attitude (AbB2).
- H14:Sales promotions of the dominant product will deteriorate assimilation/categorization effect (EAK) to the pre-promotion subjective norm (SNB2).

2.4. The Relation Between attitude (Ab), subjective norms (SN), and behavioral intention (BI).

The relations of whether Ab or SN with BI actually are in accordance with whether the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), or the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). So, if hypothesized, it just wants to implement the theories to the case of the study. In addition, such studies (Jyh, 1998; Okun & Sloane, 2002 ; Martin & Kulinna, 2004; Wiethoff, 2004; Marrone,2005; Kouthouris & Spontis, 2005; Santosa,2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2015, 2016b, 2016c, , 2016d, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2019) also apply the theory of planned behavior to a particular case. Consequently, such hypotheses can be generated as well:

- H15:Before sales promotions: the more favorable attitude toward behavior (AbB1), the more behavioral intention (BIB1) will be.
- H16:Before sales promotions: the more favorable subjective norm (SNB1), the more behavioral intention (BIB1) will be.
- H17:After sales promotions: the more unfavorable attitude toward behavior (AbB2) of the assimilated/categorized product, the more unfavorable behavioral intention (BIB2) will be.
- H18:After sales promotions: the more unfavorable subjective norm (SNB2) of the assimilated/categorized product, the more unfavorable behavioral intention (BIB2) will be.
- H19:After sales promotions: the more favorable attitude toward behavior (AbA) of the dominant product, the more favorable behavioral intention (BIA) will be.
- H20:After sales promotions: the more favorable subjective norm (SNA) of the dominant product, the more favorable behavioral intention (BIA) will be.

RESEARCH MODEL

Based on the hypotheses proposed, a research model could be drawn as at Fig. 1.

III. METHODS

Sample is drawn through convenience and judgment technique (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Data collected by questionnaires, distributed to respondents who whether have bought a number of coffee brands or are familiar with them. After being examined based on data completion, 100 questionnaire forms are successfully admitted out of 106 forms (94.33% response rate), which supposed meet the sample adequacy (Ghozali, 2008; Hair *et al.*, 2019) and liable to be

further administered. The Likert scale is operated corresponding to a five-point scale ranging from 1 (= completely disagree) to 5 (= completely agree). The instrument, which indicates to indicators, will be justified through confirmatory factor analysis, construct reliability and variance extracted test, Further, data are analyzed by employing Amos22.0.

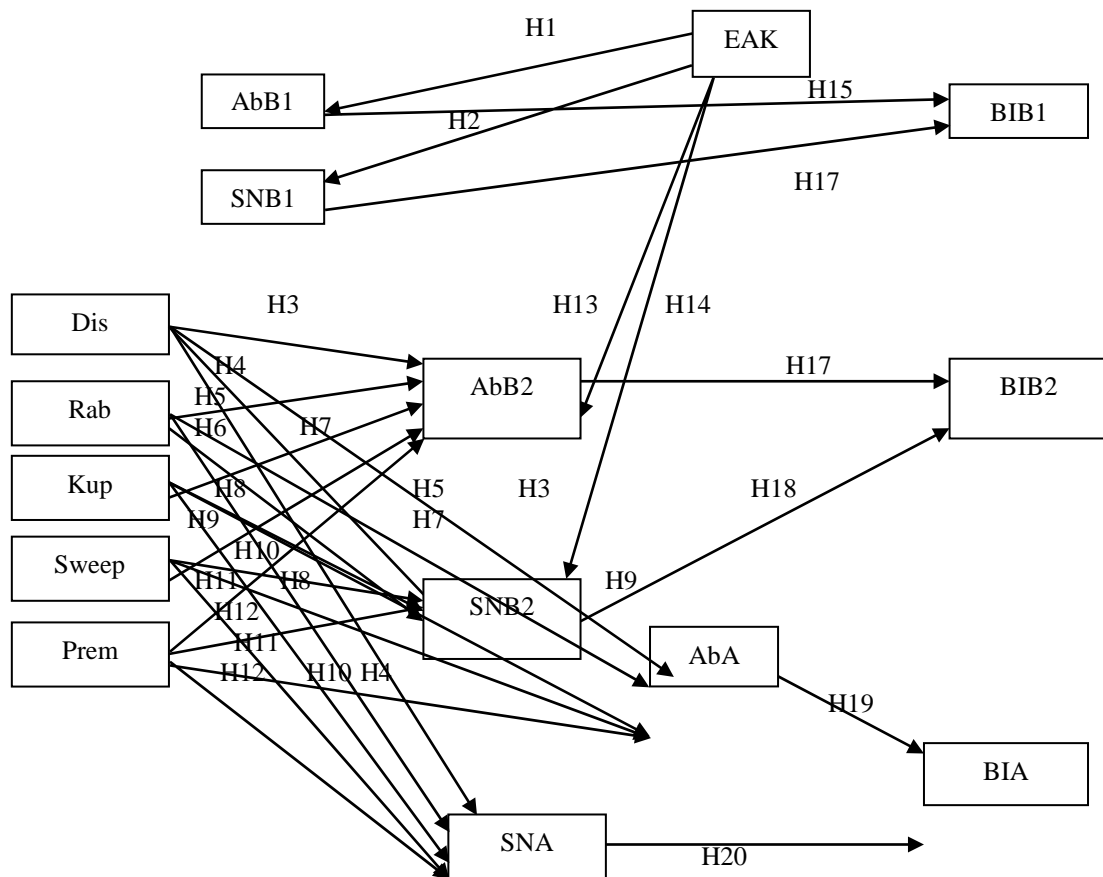


Figure 1. Research Model

Some abbreviations could be clarified as follows:

- EAK :Assimilation/categorization effect
- AbA :Attitude toward A (dominant product)
- SNA :Subjective norm of A (dominant product)
- BIA :Behavioral intention of A (dominant product)
- Dis :Discount
- Rab :Rebate
- Kup :Coupon
- Sweep :Sweepstakes

- Prem :Premium
- AbB1 :Attitude toward B (assimilated/categorized product- before sales promo)
- SNB1 :Subjective norm of B (assimilated/categorized product- before sales promo)
- BIB1 :Behavioral intention of B (assimilated/categorized product- before sales promo)
- AbB2 :Attitude toward B (assimilated/categorized product- after sales promo)
- SNB2 :Subjective norm of B (assimilated/categorized product- after sales promo)

**IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULT**

4.1 Test of Validity

The confirmatory factor analysis produces output as follows: factor loading of indicators such as Ab *i.e.* b and ev; SN *i.e.* NB and MC; BI *i.e.* BI1, BI2, BI3 BI4 are above the upper limit *i.e.* 0.5 (TABLE 1). Thereby, all are valid (Ghozali, 2008). Meanwhile, factor loading of EAK, Dis, Rab, Kup, Sweep, and Prem are not detected since the variables are only measured by one indicator.

Table 1. Factor Loading of b, ev, NB, MC, BI1, BI2, BI3, BI4

Indicator	Factor Loading	Cut-off	Criteria
b	0.926	0.5	Valid
ev	0.921	0.5	Valid
SN	0.903	0.5	Valid
NB	0.881	0.5	Valid
BI1B2	0.815	0.5	Valid
BI3B2	0.803	0.5	Valid
BI4B2	0.778	0.5	Valid
BI2B2	0.825	0.5	Valid

Source: Amos output

4.2 Test of Reliability

Exercising construct reliability and variance extracted test deliver results as follows: variable Ab, SN and BI denote that all have a good performance. Construct reliability test shows that those variables' scores are above the upper limit. Likewise, the result of variance extracted test (TABLE 2).

Table 2. The Result of Construct Reliability and Variance Extracted Test

Variable	Construct Reliability		Variance Extracted	
	Test Score	Cut-off	Test Score	Cut-off
Ab	0.89	0.70	0.795	0.50
SN	0.89	0.70	0.803	0.50
BI	0.88	0.70	0.65	0.50

Source: Data analysis

4.3 Allowing a Goodness of Fit Model

Indicators of the first model do not indicate a good performance (TABLE 3). It should be modified in accordance with modification indices. The modification leads to the second model (Fig. 2). Its indicators approximately meet the criteria of goodness of fit, particularly Cmin/df, TLI and RMSEA (TABLE 3).

4.4 Test of Hypotheses

The influences of exogenous constructs to endogenous constructs are demonstrated at TABLE 4. It shows that the influence of EAK to Ab is significant (p = 0.000). Likewise, the influence of EAK to SN (p = 0.000). Therefore, H1 and H2 are empirically supported.



SNB1 <--- EAK	11.689	2.524	4.630	***	par_27
SNB2 <--- EAK	-.097	2.826	-.034	.973	par_43
AbA <--- Dis	1.260	5.633	.224	.823	par_50
SNA <--- Dis	2,921	5.735	.509	.611	par_51
AbA <--- Rab	10.645	4.640	2.294	.022	par_52
SNA <--- Rab	-.717	4.723	-.152	.879	par_53
AbA <--- Kup	6.079	4.891	1.243	.214	par_54
AbB2 <--- Sweep	9.792	4.172	2.347	.019	par_12
SNA <--- Sweep	-2.765	3.610	-.766	.444	par_56
AbA <--- Prem	8.976	4.269	2.102	.036	par_57
SNA <--- Prem	4.304	4.346	.990	.322	par_58
SNA <--- Kup	16.374	4.979	3.289	.001	par_69
BIB1 <--- AbB1	.015	.005	2.967	.003	par_7
BIB1 <--- SNB1	.038	.007	5.797	***	par_8
BIB2 <--- SNB2	.012	.006	1.924	.054	par_24
BIB2 <--- AbB2	.025	.005	4.525	***	par_25
BIA <--- AbA	.028	.005	5.403	***	par_48
BIA <--- SNA	.016	.005	2.959	.003	par_49

Source: Amos output

The power of sales promotions is also revealed when the assimilation/categorization effect is no longer control toward pre-promotions attitude and subjective norm. EAK’s influence to AbB2 (p = 0.066) and SNB2 (p = 0.973) are not significant. Thus, H13 and H14 are empirically supported. Meanwhile, before sales promotions, whether the influence of attitude or subjective norm to behavioral intention is significant. The AbB1’s influence (p = 0.003) and SNB1’s influence (p= 0.000) to BIB1 are significant. So, H15 and H16 are empirically supported.

After sales promotions, the influence of unfavorable attitude (AbB2) and subjective norm (SNB2)- in the case of assimilated/categorized product, really give significant effect to unfavorable behavioral intention (BIB2) (p= 0.000 and p = 0.054). When it is toward the dominant product (product A) the influence of both (AbA and SNA) to behavioral intention (BIA) are also significant (p = 0.000 and p = 0.003). Thus, H17, H18, H19 and H20 are really empirically supported.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The influence of assimilation/categorization effect whether to attitude or to subjective norm is in line with Santosa’s finding (2018). While it is supposed as a new finding if no such exploration before, it should be appreciated as a fact into theoretical development. It might be interpreted that the effect can lead to subjective judgment in which through an integration of beliefs that the behavior leads to certain outcomes and evaluation of the outcomes, in turn will develop attitude. Hopefully, it will provoke science community to carry out further study.

The insignificant assimilation/categorization effect whether to attitude and subjective norm after sales promotion indicates that the assimilated/categorized product is no longer attractive. Consumers prefer the promoted product. It looks like to refer Schiffman & Kanuk’s (2008) and Santosa’s (2015b, 2017b) studies in which affective has high contribution to develop attitude. The finding is also in accordance with the finding of Misra *et al.* (1993), Hedgcock & Rao (2009), Kim & Hasher (2005), and Santosa (2016b, 2017).

Supporting the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the findings confirm that attitude and subjective are really good predictors of intention. They absolutely are consistent with the findings of Jyh (1998), Okun & Sloane (2002), Martin & Kulinna (2004), Wiethoff (2004), Marrone (2005), Kouthouris & Spontis (2005), Santosa (2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b).

## 6 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

### 6.1 Conclusion

The finding of assimilation/categorization effect really gives an important contribution of enhancing sales. Empirical evidences support the influence of the effect whether to customer’s attitude or customer’s subjective norm, in which, both are predictors of customer’s intention to buy. Therefore, the growing of whether attitude or

subjective norm will lead to the growing of intention.

However, the power of assimilation/categorization effect could be weakened even be dismissed, when the dominant product operates sales promotions. The empirical data support the influence of coupon to subjective norm, and the influence of rebate, sweepstakes and premium to attitude. After sales promotion, in the case of assimilated/categorized product, the assimilation/categorization effect does not affect anymore whether to attitude or to subjective norm. As a consequence, both have no power to generate intention to buy the assimilated/categorized product. On the contrary, attitude and subjective norm significantly influence intention to buy the promoted product.

## 6.2 Managerial Implications

The effect at least correlates with two points of view. Firstly, from a company who has particular dominant product. When competitors launch products similar with its product and an assimilation/categorization effect happens, the company's performance will obviously be damaged. The operation of sales promotion strategy will overturn the situation. Hopefully, the sales performance will return as before.

Secondly, from firms launching assimilated/categorized products. The assimilation/categorization effect is practically beneficial to small up to medium firms which their products up till now are likely not popular and their sales performance is poor. It is suggested to create new products by designing specification and characteristic seemingly close to a particular dominant product. A lot of studies give evidence that sales performance will increase. At that time, the firms should fully optimize the favorable situation of their assimilated/categorized products. It is recommended to enhance the promotion and communication which is aimed to get a position as market challenger. If it is realized, the firms have no worry anymore when the company of the particular dominant product develops sales promotions. They should be more consistent, by innovating new superior features. However, it needs an inclusive plan that should be taken into account a couple of months before by utilizing some findings of studies;

otherwise the firms would be easily broken when the company of the particular dominant product carries out sales promotions.

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