

Virtual Linguistic Landscape on Social Media: Brand Image Construction of Japanese Beverages in Japan and Indonesia

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Abstract: This Study examines how Japanese beverage brands construct brand images through language use on Instagram across Japanese and Indonesian markets. Drawing on the concept of the virtual linguistic landscape (VLL), it investigates how linguistic choices foreground “Japaneseness” and how this emphasis varies across brands and market contexts. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, combining thematic analysis of promotional content with an examination of noun frequencies and Japan-related lexical items. Data comprise captions published on the official Japanese and Indonesian Instagram accounts of Pocari Sweat and ITO EN’s Oi Ocha between November 2025 and April 2026. The findings reveal distinct patterns of brand positioning. In Indonesia, Oi Ocha combines its green tea as an authentic Japanese beverage suited to a contemporary lifestyle. Pocari Sweat Indonesia emphasizes hydration and functional benefits through references to local routines and religious observances, with little explicit emphasis on Japanese origin. In Japan, Oi Ocha foregrounds international sports endorsements and Japanese tea identity, whereas Pocari Sweat emphasizes photography, youth, and everyday lifestyles. These findings suggest that Japaneseness functions as a selective branding resource whose prominence varies according to product positioning and market context.

Keywords: Virtual linguistic landscape, digital branding, Japaneseness, Country of origin effect, Japanese beverages

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INTRODUCTION

Linguistic Landscape (LL) is a subfield of sociolinguistics that examines the visual representation of language in public spaces. The most widely cited definition of LL was formulated by Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 23), who state that the term refers to “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region.” Based on this definition, LL studies conventionally focus on analyzing language displayed on physical media within public domains, such as shop signs, traffic signs, information boards, and billboards. The primary objective of this field of study is to contextualize how written communication and linguistic interactions occur within a physical space.

However, along with the rapid development of information technology, human social interaction has expanded from the physical realm to the virtual realm. This phenomenon has given rise to the concept of the Virtual Linguistic Landscape (VLL). Unlike the conventional Linguistic Landscape (LL), which focuses on physical text in urban public spaces, VLL analysis centres on language use within digital spaces, such as social media and other digital platforms.

By adapting Edward Soja’s (1996) theory of “Third Space,” the digital realm is no longer merely a “virtual world” detached from the reality of human life. It has transformed into a social space where people live, express emotions, shape identities, and engage in social action. Consequently, digital activities can no longer be viewed as “unreal.” In cases of cyberbullying, for instance, the trauma experienced by victims is felt very tangibly. Thus, the

digital space has become a genuine ecological, sociocultural, and politico-economic arena within daily life and society.

Within this digital area, commercial advertising serves as a clear example of how language choices are strategically deployed to shape customer perceptions. A prominent strategy in global marketing is leveraging the "country-of-origin effect" (Bilkey and Nes, 1982). In Indonesia, Japanese products generally enjoy a highly positive brand image characterized by high quality, innovation, and credibility and prestige. However, to fully understand how these digital marketing strategies operate, it is essential to examine why and how brand images are constructed differently across distinct market contexts. In the domestic Japanese market, "Japaneseness" is naturally an implicit baseline (promotional discourse naturally prioritizes product functionality and immediate consumer utility rather than the national identity). Conversely, in a target market like Indonesia, Japanese origin acts as valuable symbolic capital, encouraging brands to deliberately use explicit linguistic markers and cultural imagery. Investigating and comparing these two contrasting contexts is therefore crucial to determine whether digital branding strategies reflect a standardized corporate identity or a context-dependent semiotic manipulation designed to capitalize on local consumer perceptions.

Using the Virtual Linguistic Landscape (VLL) approach, this study examines and compares language use in digital advertisements for Japanese brands or products, specifically those targeting the Indonesian market versus the domestic Japanese market. Do Japanese products marketed in Indonesia deliberately highlight linguistic elements or a "Japaneseness" image to enhance their marketing appeal? Furthermore, how do these digital marketing strategies differ from those applied to the same products in their country of origin (Japan), where the domestic market does not require an emphasis on the product's national origin but instead focuses more on functionality.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research was chosen because it captures phenomena in their natural state as they occur and is textual in nature, with results presented in words (Croker, 2009). Furthermore, the study examines phenomena arising from social interactions on social media in everyday life, this aligns with the qualitative method's focus on studying social meanings within daily life (Yin, 2011). Consequently, the qualitative method is consistent with the research objective, which centres on analyzing the use of "country-of-origin" imagery in products featured on social media.

Instagram is a globally prominent social media platform (Vinaika and Manik, 2017), widely adopted across the world, including in Indonesia and Japan. The data for this study was sourced from the official Instagram accounts of Japanese products marketed in Indonesia, Pocari Sweat and Oi-Ocha. Both are popular beverages manufactured by Japanese companies. However, they are marketed not only in Japan but also in various countries worldwide, including Indonesia. Pocari Sweat is a beverage produced by the major Japanese pharmaceutical company Otsuka Pharmaceutical. It was first launched in Japan in 1980 and entered the Indonesian market in 1989, becoming a health drink widely recognized by the Indonesian public. Meanwhile, Oi-Ocha is a Japanese tea beverage produced by a company called ITO EN, in 1889. Oi-Ocha entered the Indonesian market in 2013. Although not yet as popular as Pocari Sweat, Oi-Ocha is easily found in supermarkets across major Indonesian cities.

The data were collected from the official Instagram accounts of Pocari Sweat and Oi Ocha, covering posts published between November 2025 and April 2026 across both their Japanese and Indonesian official handles. The primary object of analysis is the written text within the post captions, rather than text embedded in images or videos. Captions were selected because several video posts lack textual content entirely. To facilitate systematic analysis, the collected caption data were compiled into a structured spreadsheet.

To address the research questions, the data analysis followed a structured content analysis approach adapted from Virtual Linguistic Landscape (VLL) methodological frameworks (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009). First, the author conducted a thematic analysis across the social media post to identify primary promotional narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Second, Japanese lexical items occurring in the caption of the official Indonesian Instagram accounts were

identified and categorized (3& Woldemariam, 2014). Third, the occurrence frequency of these lexical items was measured to evaluate linguistic salience and visibility within the digital space (Backhaus, 2007; Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Subsequently, a cross-contextual comparative analysis was conducted against the official Japanese Instagram accounts to determine whether similar linguistic and semiotic patterns emerged (Barni & Extra, 2008). Finally, the author synthesized the analytical findings to directly address the established research questions

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of Indonesian and Japanese Oi-Ocha's official Instagram accounts

1.1 Oi-Ocha Content Theme

Table 1 below presents content themes and their frequency of appearance on the official Oi-Ocha Japan and Indonesia Instagram accounts during the observation period. This table provides an initial overview of the differences in the image projected by Indonesian and Japanese Oi-Ocha's official Instagram accounts.

Table 1. Themes featured in the official Instagram content of Oi-Ocha Japan and Indonesia

Japan		Indonesia	
Themes	Number of posts	Themes	Number of posts
Sports (Baseball)	7	Daily Life	34
Entertainment	3	Education and Information	16
Promotions and offers	1	Active Lifestyle	15
Product Marketing	1	Product excellence	11
		Japanese Culture	6
		Promotions and Offers	5
		Activities and Events	4
		Recipes	3
Total	12	95	

Before delving into the specific themes, a stark contrast in content volume over the same period is immediately apparent. The official Japanese Oi-Ocha Instagram account posted significantly less content than its Indonesian counterpart, with a ratio of nearly one to eight. This disparity is likely driven by factors such as brand awareness and market maturity.

Regarding brand awareness and market maturity, Aaker (1991) categorizes levels into a four-tier pyramid, unaware of brand, brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind awareness. Oi-Ocha has been present in Japan since 1989 and is widely recognized by the Japanese public. According to the official Japanese Oi-Ocha website, cumulative sales in Japan had surpassed 45 billion bottles by 2024, and the brand maintains a leading market share of approximately 36% in the unsweetened green tea sector. Given this status, Oi-Ocha has achieved "top-of-mind" awareness in the Japanese market; consequently, social media promotion serves primarily as a visual portfolio, a platform for major campaign announcements, or a means to maintain the brand's image. The situation differs in Indonesia, where Oi-Ocha was introduced only in 2013. As a relatively new entrant to the Indonesian market, the brand still needs to frequently "show itself" (Keller, 1993). Furthermore, Indonesian consumers are not yet

accustomed to packaged beverages without added sweeteners, meaning the product must compete against sweetened beverages that already enjoy greater popularity in the country.

Furthermore, an analysis of the themes used in the content across the official Oi-Ocha Instagram accounts reveals a striking difference. Content on the official Japanese Oi-Ocha Instagram account is dominated (accounting for more than half of the total) by sports related themes, specifically baseball; this is due to the brand's appointment of Shohei Ohtani, a top Japanese baseball player active in the United States, as its brand ambassador. Additionally, three posts feature a Japanese idol audition event sponsored by Oi-Ocha products, while the remaining two posts focus on product promotion and marketing. These findings indicate that the Japanese Instagram account primarily utilizes famous figures, such as baseball players and idols, in its content.

In terms of thematic diversity, the Indonesian account incorporates a substantially broader spectrum of themes than the Japanese account. While the Japanese feed is restricted to four main themes, sports (baseball), entertainment, promotions and offers, and product marketing. The Indonesian account spans nine distinct categories, daily life, education and information, active lifestyle, product benefits, Japanese culture, promotions and offers, activities and events, recipes, and motivational quotes.

Approximately 30% of the Indonesian content centres on daily life, highlighting aspects that deeply resonate with the routines of urban Indonesians, such as working alongside a bottle of Oi-Ocha or observing Ramadan traditions like suhoor (the predawn meal) and iftar (breaking the fast). Although these posts emphasize personal narratives and everyday habits, each narrative element is strategically linked to the consumption of Oi-Ocha products.

This theme was followed by educational and informational content spanning various aspects of daily life. A significant portion focused on health awareness, particularly regarding sugar-free beverages and diabetes prevention—by contrasting the benefits of unsweetened tea with the health risks of frequent sugary drink consumption. Furthermore, the account provided content on healthy exercise habits and the historical background of tea.

Ranking third, with a relatively balanced share, is the theme of an active lifestyle. Content in this category highlights various sports activities, ranging from badminton, yoga, padel, running, and pilates to baseball. Although both feature sports, the approach taken by the Indonesian account differs fundamentally from that of the Japanese account. The Japanese account focuses exclusively on baseball, showcasing world-class athletes, five of its seven posts highlight Shohei Ohtani, while the remaining two feature MLB star Fernando Tatís Jr. In contrast, the Indonesian account does not feature world-class athletes. Instead, it showcases local young people leading active lifestyles through a variety of sports.

Product benefits rank fourth among the content themes featured on the Indonesian account. Consistent with its health-focused educational content, the key product advantage highlighted on the Indonesian Instagram account is the absence of sweeteners, which helps prevent conditions such as diabetes. While most packaged beverages in Indonesia are high in sugar, many urban Indonesians have become aware that high sugar consumption is detrimental to health.

Another frequently featured theme is Japanese culture. Although content with this theme accounts for only 6 out of the total 95 items, it reflects a marketing strategy aimed at introducing Japanese culture. The culture showcased in this content encompasses not only traditional Japanese practices but also modern cultural elements, such as the Japanese style of celebrating Valentine's Day.

The next four categories cover promotions and offers, activities and events, recipes, and motivational quotes. The promotions and offers category include announcements regarding collaborations with other products, retail locations, and giveaways. The activities and events category focuses on announcements about events organized through partnerships involving Oi-Ocha. Finally, the recipes category feature dishes that pair well with Oi-Ocha beverages.

A comparison of content themes between the official Japanese and Indonesian Oi~Ocha accounts reveals distinct digital marketing strategies tailored to the characteristics of their respective target markets. The Japanese account employs a celebrity endorsement strategy, featuring global public figures—such as world-class baseball players and idols—to reinforce the brand's image. In contrast, the Indonesian account utilizes a strategy focused on content localization and emotional connection by highlighting themes of daily life (comprising approximately 30% of total content) and providing health education. Additionally, the Indonesian account leverages the "country-of-origin effect" by showcasing Japanese culture to enhance the product's appeal. The diverse range of themes on the Indonesian account aims to boost engagement and educate a developing market. Consumers in such markets require more contextual touchpoints to facilitate the acceptance of new products (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). These findings align with the perspectives of digital marketing experts such as Laudon and Traver (2021), Miles (2021), Turban et al. (2017), Strauss and Frost (2014), and Taken (2012). They assert that companies use digital marketing to gain a deeper understanding of customers, provide added product value, expand distribution reach, and increase sales through content that resonates with the target market's preferences.

1.2 Vocabulary Choices on the Official Oi~Ocha Instagram Account

This section examines the brand image each account seeks to project by analyzing high-frequency nouns across their content. Subsequently, a comparative analysis is conducted to identify the use of Japanese-flavoured vocabulary (such as loanwords and cultural terms) that are strategically highlighted. Through this approach, the study evaluates the extent to which a "country-of-origin image" is leveraged within the products' digital marketing strategies.

1.2.1. Vocabulary Selection by Oi~Ocha Indonesia

This section discusses the image that the official Oi~Ocha Indonesia Instagram account aims to project, based on the frequency of noun usage. Additionally, it analyzes whether there is a deliberate use of prominent Japanese-nuanced terms. Through this analysis, it is possible to determine whether the official Oi~Ocha Indonesia Instagram account leverages its country-of-origin image in its product marketing strategy. Table 2 below lists the nouns used and their respective frequencies of occurrence.

Table 2. Most frequently occurring nouns in Oi~Ocha Indonesia content.

<i>Oi~Ocha</i> ([‘Product name’]) 40	<i>Jepang</i> (‘Japan’) 21	<i>Gula Darah</i> (‘Blood Sugar’) 14	<i>Momen</i> (‘Moment’) 8
<i>Gula</i> (‘sugar’) 32	<i>Teh</i> (‘Tea’) 20	<i>Pemanis</i> (‘Sweetener’) 11	<i>Pilihan</i> (‘Choice’) 7
<i>Kalori</i> (‘Calory’) 27)	<i>Minuman</i> (‘Beverage’) 16)	<i>Orang</i> (‘People’) 11	<i>Rasa</i> (‘Taste’) 5)
ITO Friends (‘[Brand community identifier]’) 23	<i>Hari</i> (‘Day’) 15	<i>Tahun</i> (‘Year’) 11	<i>Teman</i> (‘Friend’) 5

An analysis of the nouns appearing in captions on the Indonesian Oi~Ocha Instagram account reveals that the term "Oi~Ocha" (40 occurrences) is the most frequent. "Oi~Ocha" is the noun representing the product's name. Additionally, the word "teh" (tea) appears frequently (20). The combined use of "Oi~Ocha" and "teh" reinforces the product's fundamental identity as a green tea beverage. However, the use of these specific nouns does not fully convey the image that the Oi~Ocha brand aims to project.

The official Oi~Ocha Instagram account consistently demonstrates an effort to cultivate an image of an "authentic, healthy beverage for a modern lifestyle." This is evident from the high frequency of specific terms, as shown in Table 2; words such as “Gula” sugar (32), “Kalori” calories (27), “Gula darah” blood sugar (14), and “Pemanis” sweetener (11) predominate. The use of this vocabulary indicates that Oi~Ocha positions its product not merely as a thirst quencher, but as a beverage solution for a healthy lifestyle. This emphasis shapes the brand's image as a healthy

alternative for consumers seeking to avoid risks associated with diabetes, "sugar crashes," and excessive calorie intake.

Beyond projecting an image of a healthy beverage, there is also a discernible tendency to leverage the "country-of-origin effect" strategy. The noun "Jepang" Japan appears twenty-one times, never in isolation. It is paired with terms such as "ocha", "sakura", and "hanami". The use of these Japan-related terms is not merely ornamental but constitutes a deliberate marketing strategy designed to capitalize on the positive reputation of the country of origin. To Indonesian consumers, Japanese-made products are perceived as having high quality standards. The word "Japan" frequently appears alongside "ocha" to associate the product with the healthy tradition of Japanese tea consumption. Furthermore, phrases like "Teh hijau No. 1 di Jepang" (No. 1 Green Tea in Japan) are commonly used to substantiate the product's quality and build consumer trust. Meanwhile, the inclusion of terms like "sakura" and "hanami" offers Indonesian consumers a cultural experience. It is as if they are being invited to purchase not just tea, but also the aesthetic and atmosphere of a Japanese lifestyle.

1.2.2. Vocabulary Selection for Oi~Ocha Japan

Table 3 presents the most frequently occurring nouns and their frequencies within the captions of the Japanese Oi~Ocha Instagram account. Based on these data, an analysis was performed to identify the core brand image Oi~Ocha constructs through its Instagram marketing.

Table 3. Most frequently occurring nouns in Oi~Ocha Japan content.

世界('World') 21	大谷翔平 ([Baseball Player Name] 9	応援('Support') 5	World Baseball Classic (3)
JAPAN 14	エビアン(['Product name']) 9	野菜('Vegetable') 4	ビジュアル('Visual') 2)
お茶('tea') 14	お~いお茶(['Product name']) 8	コラボ('Collaboration') 4	未来('Future') 2
日本('Japan') 14	伊藤園(['Product name']) 8	タティスJr ('Tatis Jr) 3	サンリオ(['Character name']) 2
抹茶('Matcha') 11	Matcha (7)	店舗('Store') 3	キャンペーン('Campaign') (2)
選手('Athelete') 10	シール('Seal') 6)	練習生('Trainee') 3	

Based on the data analysis of the Japanese version of Oi~Ocha presented in Table 3, the most frequently occurring nouns are 世界 (*sekai* 'word', n=21), 日本 (*nihon* 'Japan', n=14) and the Latin-script "JAPAN" (n=14), お茶 (*ocha* 'tea', n=14), 抹茶 (*matcha* 'matcha, n=11), the Latin-script "Matcha" (n=7), and 大谷翔平 (Ohtani Shohei, n=9). These usage patterns indicate that the Japanese version of Oi~Ocha aims to position the product as an ambassador of Japanese tea culture on the international stage. The fact that terms such as 世界 (*sekai*), "JAPAN", お茶 (*ocha*), 日本 (*nihon*), and 抹茶 (*matcha*) Occupying the top five positions underscores that Oi~Ocha views its product not merely as a domestic Japanese offering, but as a piece of Japanese cultural heritage that commands the global market.

The construction of a world-class brand image is further reinforced by the strategic inclusion of elite baseball players' names within Oi~Ocha Japan's captions. The frequent references to Shohei Ohtani (n=9) alongside mention of the World Baseball Classic (WBC) and MLB star Fernando Tatís Jr. position the product as a premium, health-oriented beverage endorsed by world-class athletes.

Furthermore, the use of the kanji characters for *matcha* (抹茶) alongside the word written in the Roman alphabet demonstrates how the traditional tea product has been rebranded into a cool, modern beverage that appeals to consumers outside of Japan.

1.3 Comparison of Oi~Ocha Indonesia and Japan

An analysis of the two Oi~Ocha Instagram accounts reveals that the primary focus of Oi~Ocha Japan differs significantly from that of Oi~Ocha Indonesia. While the Indonesian account centers on health education (specifically regarding sugar consumption and sugar-related ailments), the Japanese account focuses on a worldclass, international product strategy.

The Japanese account consistently pairs the word "Japan" and 日本 (*nihon* 'Japan') with 世界 (*sekai* 'world') to cultivate the perception that Oi~Ocha represents the global gold standard for green tea. In Japan, unsweetened green tea is already a familiar part of daily life; consequently, there is no need for Oi~Ocha to promote the health benefits of sugar-free tea. Instead, Oi~Ocha Japan aims to build an image of cultural prestige. Furthermore, the brand features world-class Japanese athlete Shohei Ohtani to showcase national pride and highlight a local product that has achieved global success.

In contrast, Itoen Indonesia employs Japanese terminology twenty-one times as a means of building trust. Among Indonesian consumers, Japanese products are stereotypically associated with high quality. This stereotype is leveraged to convince consumers that the bitterness of Oi~Ocha (achieved without added sugar) is a hallmark of authentic, healthy Japanese tea.

2. Analysis of Indonesian and Japanese Pocari Sweat's official Instagram accounts

2.1 Japan Pocari Sweat Content Themes

Table 4 presents data mapping content themes and the number of posts on the official Pocari Sweat Japan and Indonesia Instagram accounts during the observation period. This summary provides an initial overview of the differences in the image cultivated by each account.

Table 4. Themes featured in the official Instagram content of Pocari Sweat Japan and Indonesia.

Japan		Indonesia	
Themes	Number of posts	Themes	Number of posts
Photography	41	Education and Information	49
Sports	23	Promotions and Offers	3
Promotions and Offers	9	Sports	2
Activities and Events	7	Activities and Events	1
Health	5		
Entertainment	1		
Life Style	1		
Total	87	55	

Data regarding Pocari Sweat reveals a clear difference in content volume over the same period. The Japanese account features approximately 30% more content than the Indonesian account. Although Pocari Sweat has been established in Japan for a longer time, it has also been present in the Indonesian market for over 30 years.

Furthermore, according to the official Pocari Sweat Indonesia website, the product is manufactured at two local facilities and enjoys nationwide distribution. These factors have fostered strong brand awareness and market maturity within Indonesia. Applying Aaker's (1991) theory, Pocari Sweat has achieved the highest level of brand awareness and market maturity, "Top of Mind" status. At this level, the brand does not need to maintain a constant presence to boost awareness or market maturity. However, the higher volume of content on the Japanese account presents an anomaly, given that the brand has been established in Japan for a longer period.

An analysis of content volume on the Japanese Instagram account demonstrates that publication frequency does not always correlate directly with brand awareness or market maturity. As shown in Table 4, the high volume of posts on the Japanese Pocari Sweat account is largely driven by its thematic focus, with nearly half of the content centered on photography. This material primarily features aesthetic imagery sourced directly from public Instagram accounts, a classic implementation of User-Generated Content (UGC) marketing (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). By curating and showcasing creative photography from young consumers, the brand exponentially scales its digital communication while bypassing the higher costs and longer production timelines associated with in-house content creation. The strategic integration of UGC is further illustrated in the captions accompanying these posts, as discussed below.

皆さんもポカリスエットの写真を撮って「#ポカリフォト」で投稿してくださいね♪素敵な投稿は
@pocarisweat_jp で紹介させていただきます♪ 投稿のシェアもお待ちしております
(Come on, you guys also take a photo of Pocari Sweat and upload it with hashtag #pocarisweat_jp ya♪
Interesting posts will be displayed on @pocarisweat_jp♪ Please share your posts too♪)

In Japan, Pocari Sweat has already reached the peak level of brand awareness and market maturity. Consequently, the role of its Instagram account is no longer to explain "what Pocari Sweat is" or "what its benefits are," but rather to foster an emotional connection—or "brand love." Aesthetically pleasing photos featuring Pocari Sweat's signature blue-and-white color palette are used to nurture community engagement and maintain aesthetic appeal.

Sports-related content ranks second in frequency on the Japanese account, covering a wide variety of themes. One category features sumo wrestler serving as brand ambassadors captions accompanying this content state 「汗もポカリも水分と電解質でできています。稽古で汗をかいたら、#ポカリのまなきゃ！」 (Both sweat and Pocari are made of water and electrolytes. When you sweat during training, #HarusMinumPocari! (you gotta drink Pocari!)) Additionally, the account showcases sports events sponsored by Pocari Sweat.

The remaining 23 pieces of content covered themes such as promotions and offers (9), activities and events (7), health (5), entertainment (1), and lifestyle (1). These findings indicate that Pocari Sweat's Instagram communication strategy largely focuses on an aesthetic photographic approach and an active lifestyle to engage the audience.

In contrast, four major themes were identified on the Pocari Sweat Indonesia account: education and information, promotions and offers, sports, and activities and events. Among these, the education and information theme was the most prevalent, accounting for nearly 90% of the content. All content within this category focused on health education regarding body fluid hydration. These findings suggest that, despite Pocari Sweat's presence in Indonesia since 1989, the brand continues to reiterate the product's function due to factors such as health literacy levels and Indonesia's climatic conditions. Unlike the photography-focused content on the Pocari Sweat Japan account, producing health education content requires significant effort, as it involves graphic design, material research, and the creation of accessible medical copy. Consequently, the total volume of content on the Pocari Sweat Indonesia Instagram account is lower than that of the Japanese account.

Sports-themed content also features on the Indonesian account; however, the content itself differs from that of the Japanese account. While the Japanese account utilizes sumo wrestlers as brand ambassadors for its sports content, the Indonesian account does not feature brand ambassadors in this role. The sport highlighted is marathon running. In Indonesia, Pocari Sweat is a highly popular organizer of marathon and running events.

2.2 Vocabulary Choices on the Official Pocari Sweat's Instagram Account

1.2.1. Vocabulary Selection by Pocari Sweat Indonesia

Table 5 below presents data on the usage and frequency of nouns in Pocari Sweat Indonesia's Instagram posts. Based on these calculations, an analysis was conducted to identify the image Pocari Sweat Indonesia aims to cultivate through the marketing strategy on its official account.

Table 5. Most frequently occurring nouns in Indonesia's Pocari Sweat content.

Pocari Sweat ([‘Product name’]) 115	<i>Puasa</i> (‘fasting’) 26	Ramadan 19	DBD (‘dengue fever’) 8
ION (‘ion’) 104	<i>Sahur</i> (‘Sahoor’) 24	<i>Ibadah</i> (‘worship’) 14	<i>Mudik</i> (‘homecoming’) 8
<i>Tubuh</i> (‘body’) 32	Commuting 21	<i>Cairan</i> (‘fluids’) 10	<i>Cuaca</i> (‘weather’) 8

An analysis of the nouns appearing in the captions of the Indonesian Pocari Sweat Instagram account reveals that "Pocari Sweat" (115) is the most frequent term. "Pocari Sweat" is a noun representing the name of the beverage product. These results indicate a reinforcement of the product's brand identity.

An analysis of high-frequency vocabulary reveals that Pocari Sweat Indonesia positions the product not merely as a refreshing beverage, but as an essential health drink. This strategic framing is evidenced by the frequent occurrence of terms such as "ION" (‘ion’, n=104), *tubuh* (‘body’, n=32), and *cairan* (‘fluid’, n=10). Notably, the term "#ION" (‘ion’) primarily functions within the branded hashtag #JagaIONTubuh (Maintain Body Ions), underscoring a strong educational focus on the product's physiological benefits. Contextual analysis further demonstrates how Pocari Sweat constructs its brand identity as an everyday health solution. The product is framed as a remedy across diverse physical and situational contexts, ranging from daily fatigue, hot weather, and long travel during the *mudik* (annual homecoming) season, to clinical recovery support for Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever, all linked through the consumption of Pocari Sweat and the #JagaIONTubuh campaign message.

Lexical analysis reveals a pronounced cluster of terms associated with major Islamic observances in Indonesia, specifically *puasa* (‘fasting’, n=26), *sahur* (‘pre-dawn meal’, n=24), and “Ramadan” (n=19). The integration of these terms reflects a pragmatic brand localization strategy designed to align with Indonesia's sociocultural calendar. By embedding its messaging within these religious milestones, Pocari Sweat fosters affective resonance, positioning its hydration narrative within the culturally embedded daily routines of local consumers.

By tapping into this local cultural context, Pocari Sweat seeks to build an emotional connection, making its message more relevant to the daily lives of Indonesian consumers. Furthermore, this strategy positions the product as an essential need during the fasting period, emphasizing the narrative that consuming water alone at *suhur* (the pre-dawn meal) is insufficient without ion intake to prevent lethargy and dehydration.

An analysis of the vocabulary used reveals no evidence that Pocari Sweat's marketing strategy in Indonesia leverages a country-of-origin image. Terms associated with a Japanese image, such as *Jepang* (Japan in Indonesian), Japan, or *Sakura*, or the kind of vocabulary found in Oi-Ocha content, do not appear at all in Pocari Sweat Indonesia's Instagram captions. While the word "Tokyo" does appear twice. It is not used to capitalize on a Japanese identity. Rather, it simply denotes the location of the Tokyo Marathon, an event in which Pocari Sweat Indonesia's brand ambassador influencers participated.

2.2.2. Vocabulary Selection by Pocari Sweat Japanese

The use of nouns and their frequencies in the captions of Pocari Sweat Japan's Instagram account are presented in Table 6 below. Based on these calculations, an analysis was conducted to determine the image projected by Pocari Sweat Japan in its marketing on its official Instagram account.

Table 6. Most frequently occurring nouns in Japanese Pocari Sweat content.

ポカリ pocari ['Product name'] n=485	コメント komento 'comment' n=40	水分補給 suibunhokyu 'Hydration' n=22	女子 jyoshi 'girl' n=15
ポカリスエット pokarisuetto ['Product name'] n=170	カメラ kamera 'Camera' n=35	汗 ase 'sweat' n= 21	笑顔 egao 'smile' n=14
ポカリフォト pokarifoto ['campaign name'] n=126	世界 sekai 'world' n=35	キッズ kizzu 'kids' n= 21	紅葉 kouyou 'autumn foliage' n=13
投稿 toukou ('posts') 108	冬 fuyu ('winter') 31	カラダ karada 'body' n=20	秋 aki 'autumn' n=13
写真 shashin 'photo' n=105	空 sora 'sky' n=29	サウナ sauna 'sauna' n=19	風呂 furou 'baths' n=12
イオンウォーター ionwootaa 'ion water' n=60	ファインダー faindaa 'Viewfinder' n=27	応援 oen 'cheering' n=19	ウィンターカップ wintaakappu 'winter cup' na=8
水分 suibun 'fluids' n=47	アオハル aoharu 'youth' n=24	光 hikari 'light' n=17	桜 sakura 'cherry blossoms' n=6
チアリーディング chiariidinngu 'cheerleading' n=45	春 haru 'spring' n=22	電解質 denkaishitssu 'electrolytes' n=16	夏 natsu 'summer' n=5

As evidenced by the frequent use of specific nouns, Japan's Pocari Sweat positions itself not merely as a beverage offering health and athletic benefits, but as an "element of lifestyle and a companion of youth." An aesthetic image is constructed through vocabulary related to photography—such as ポカリフォト (pocari foto 'pocari Photo', n=126), 写真 (shashin 'photo', n=105), カメラ (kamera 'camera', n=35), ファインダー (faindaa 'viewfinder', n=27) and 光 (hikari 'light', n=17). These terms suggest that the Pocari Sweat packaging (featuring a blue and white color scheme) serves as an aesthetic photographic subject, integrating the product into the consumers' daily aesthetic visuals. Meanwhile, the image of a youthful lifestyle is conveyed through terms such as 女子 (jyoshi 'girls', n=15) or キッズ (kizzu 'kids', n=21) and アオハル (aoharu, 'youth', n=24). These words link the consumption of Pocari with positive energy, the cheerfulness of school life, bonds of friendship, and joyful moments of youth.

Pocari Sweat cultivates an image as a hydration beverage essential throughout the year, across all seasons. This is evident in the use of season-related nouns such as 冬 (fuyu, "winter", n=31), 桜 (sakura, 'cherry blossoms', n=6) and 春 (haru, 'spring', n=22), among others. These terms position the product as a year-round hydration solution that also offers an aesthetically pleasing visual context. This image is reinforced by vocabulary emphasizing the body's need for fluids, such as イオンウォーター (ionwootaa 'ion water', n=60), 水分 (suibun 'fluids', n=47), 水分補給 (suibun hokyu 'hydration', n=22), and 電解質 (denkaishitssu 'electrolytes', n=16).

There is also the use of sports vocabulary such as チアリーディング (chiariidhinggu 'cheerleading' 45) and ウィンターカップ (wintaa kappu, Japanese national high school basketball championship, n=8). However, the

number of uses is not as much as the vocabulary of nouns that indicate daily activities. This shows that Pocari Sweat does not limit its product to the post sports context. Instead, it has expanded the use of its product to everyday activities. The image of the product is no longer a sports drink, but an “everyday health drink”.

2.3 Comparison of Pocari Sweat in Indonesia and Japan

A comparison of vocabulary usage on the Indonesian and Japanese Instagram accounts of Pocari Sweat reveals differing communication strategies for building product image. Pocari Sweat Indonesia employs a functional and localized marketing strategy that capitalizes on specific local moments. Its communication focuses on everyday health education, utilizing vocabulary that highlights product functions, such as ‘ion’, ‘body’, and ‘fluid’. These terms are framed within the #JagaONTubuh (#MaintainBodylons) campaign, positioning the product as a means to restore stamina during illness (such as dengue fever), hot weather, or the traffic congestion associated with the *mudik* (homecoming) season. This approach is reinforced by a strategy of cultural localization, incorporating terms related to religious observances like fasting, *sahur* (the pre-dawn meal), and Ramadan to foster an emotional connection with Indonesian consumers, while simultaneously positioning ions as a vital necessity during the fasting period. Conversely, Pocari Sweat Indonesia makes no use of the country-of-origin effect, as Japanese-themed vocabulary is entirely absent from its product image-building efforts.

In contrast, Japan's Pocari Sweat positions its product beyond just a functional (health) drink, namely as a visual lifestyle element and an emotional friend of youth. The product image is built through the aesthetic dimension of photography through the use of vocabulary such as ポカリフォト (*pocari foto* ‘pocari Photo’), 写真 (*shashin* ‘photo’), カメラ (*kamera* ‘camera’), ファインダー (*aindaa* ‘viewfinder’), and 光 (*hikari* ‘light’), as well as making the Pocari Sweat packaging bottle an object of visual art. In addition, the emotional aspect is strengthened by the vocabulary アオハル (*aoharu* ‘youth’), 女子 (*jyoshi* ‘girls’), and キッズ (*kizzu* ‘kids’) which associate the product with youth, friendship and the dynamics of school life.

Both the Indonesian and Japanese Instagram accounts target daily activities and aim to expand the market beyond sports-related occasions. This is evident in the use of seasonal hydration cues (冬 *fuyu* ‘winter’/ 春 *haru* ‘spring’) and functional terms, such as イオンウォーター (*ion wootaa* ‘ion water’ and 水分補給 (*suibun hokyuu* ‘hydration’), on Pocari Sweat Japan’s Instagram. However, Pocari Sweat Japan prioritizes an aesthetic, visually narrative approach centered on photography, whereas Pocari Sweat Indonesia relies more on health related problem solution relevance tailored to local consumers.

3. Marketing Strategy for Japanese Beverage Products in Japan and Indonesia within the VLL Framework

A comparative study of Visual Language Landscape (VLL) on Instagram reveals that the Japanese beverage brands Oi-Ocha and Pocari Sweat employ distinct communication and product image strategies across their domestic (Japanese) and overseas (Indonesian) markets. Both brands share the overarching similarity of adapting their digital presence to market maturity, brand awareness, and local socio-cultural context. However, they differ fundamentally in their core appeal: while Oi-Ocha consistently leverages cultural identity and lifestyle aesthetics, Pocarisweat balances emotional lifestyle branding with functional health utility depending on the target market.

In their domestic Japanese market, both brands operate within a highly mature environment where product familiarity is already established, yet they adopt different thematic approaches. For Oi-Ocha, the Japanese market employs “Global Prestige” and endorsement strategies dominated by sports (specifically baseball) and entertainment themes. The brand leverages international baseball star Shohei Ohtani alongside mention of the World Baseball Classic and MLB Star Fernando Tatis Jr. to cultivate an image of globally recognized national pride and position the beverages as an ambassador of Japanese tea culture.

Meanwhile, for Pocari Sweat, the strategy implemented in Japan focuses on an "Aesthetic Lifestyle & Youth Connection," dominated by photography-based themes. Rather than focusing on national pride or educating consumers about product benefits like Oi~Ocha, Pocari Sweat Japan seeks to foster an affinity for the brand through aesthetic visuals and the emotional resonance of youth. Despite these stylistic differences, both brands share the commonality in Japan of omitting basic product explanation, as domestic Japanese customers already fully understand the function of green tea and isotonic drinks.

In contrast, when examining the Indonesian market, both brands pivot significantly toward localization, though they diverge in how they build consumer trust. Oi~Ocha Indonesia adopts a strategy rooted in the "Country-of-Origin-Effect" and lifestyle appeal. Content focuses on daily life, active lifestyles, and specific product benefits such as the "sugar-free" claim. As a high-quality, unsweetened green tea with a naturally bitter profile (distinct from the sweetened teas Indonesian consumers typically prefer), Oi~ocha leverages Japanese cultural elements and terms like "Japan", "ocha", "sakura" and "hanami" to reassure consumers that the bitterness signifies authentic, healthy Japanese tea, while simultaneously promoting a modern, stylish lifestyle.

On the other hand, Pocari sweat in Indonesia shifts away from aesthetic lifestyle imagery to focus almost entirely on selling its functional attributes and health benefits. Unlike Oi~Ocha, which capitalize on Japan's cultural prestige, Pocari Sweat recognizes that Indonesian customers do not purchase its product simply because of its national origin, but because they need a quick remedy for health-related issues. Nearly 90% of Pocari Sweat Indonesia's content is dedicated to health education. Though its solution-oriented approach and campaigns like #JagaIONTubuh, the brand positions itself as essential remedy for everyday concerns, addressing physical weakness caused by Dengue Fever, hot weather, travel fatigue during mudik (homecoming), and hydration needs during Ramadhan.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the Virtual Linguistic Landscape (VLL) on Instagram for Oi~Ocha and Pocari Sweat reveals that the deployment of linguistic elements and "Japaneseness" imagery in Indonesia is highly selective, mediated by product category constraints and target market familiarity. Oi~Ocha strategically leverages "Japaneseness" through localized loanwords and cultural terms such as Jepang (Japan), ocha, sakura, and hanami. Because unsweetened Japanese green tea remains relatively novel to the Indonesian palate, this strategy legitimizes the product's distinct flavour profile as an authentic health tradition. Furthermore, by invoking a "country-of-origin effect", anchored by the claim "No.1 Green Tea in Japan", Oi~Ocha provides both quality assurance and an aspirational, modern lifestyle aesthetic. Conversely, Pocari Sweat systematically bypasses "Japaneseness" in favor of pragmatic localization. Its digital discourse prioritizes functional and medical education, employing terms like "ION", tubuh "body", and cairan "fluids" within the #JagaIONTubuh campaign, while contextualizing product usage around pervasive local health challenges, including Dengue Fever, tropical heat, mudik travel fatigue, and hydration management during Ramadan fasting.

Despite these contrasting semiotic choices regarding "Japaneseness", both brands converge on shares overarching emphasis on health and wellness within the Indonesian digital space. Oi~Ocha frames health through the lens of natural wellness and authentic, sugar free green tea benefits, positioning its product as a healthy alternative for daily consumption. Meanwhile, Pocari Sweat constructs a functional health discourse centered on active body recovery, fluid maintenance, and disease prevention. This shared health-oriented narrative underscores that establishing clear, tangible health value serves as a crucial in the Indonesian market.

Conversely, there are clear differences and shifts in focus when comparing the digital marketing strategies for these two beverage products with those used in their home market, Japan. Having already achieved peak brand awareness (Top of Mind) in Japan, digital communication there no longer focuses on explaining basic product functions, instead, it centers on fostering emotional bonds, brand affinity, and a modern lifestyle. For Oi~Ocha in Japan, the strategy emphasizes "Global Prestige & Endorsement" by highlighting terms such as 世界 (*sekai* 'world'), 日本 (*nihon* 'Japan'), and JAPAN, alongside partnerships with international athletes like Shohei Ohtani to cultivate an

image of globally recognized national pride. Meanwhile, Pocari Sweat in Japan adopts an "Aesthetic Lifestyle and Youth Connection" approach, positioning the bottle as an object of photographic art #ポカリフォト (pocarifoto 'pocari photo') and a symbol of youthful nostalgia (アオハル *aoharu* 'youth'). Thus, this study concludes that the image of "Japaneseness" is utilized in Indonesia only when relevant to shaping perceptions of product taste and quality, whereas the domestic Japanese market prioritizes lifestyle aesthetics, emotional connections, and global prestige.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work the authors used OpenAI's ChatGPT-4o in order to enhance readability and perform grammar checking. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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