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The Language of Luxury: Advertisers' Language Choices Evoke Different Reactions

Multinational companies advertising luxury goods abroad should consider advertising those goods in English, whereas ads for necessities might be more effective in local languages, according to a new study in the [*Journal of Consumer Research*](#).

Authors Aradhna Krishna (University of Michigan) and Rohini Ahluwalia (University of Minnesota) examined the role of language in advertisements in India. The results of their study indicate that multinational corporations marketing products to bilingual populations should pay special attention to language. The authors found that participants' perceptions of ads changed significantly when different languages were used.

"We find that while the Hindi language is associated with "belongingness" (close, personal, friendly, family), English is associated with "sophistication" (global, cosmopolitan, urban, upper class)," the authors write.

Participants associated "belongingness" with necessities, such as detergent, and the researchers found that ads for detergent were more effective when the ads were partially or fully in Hindi.

In contrast, when the product being marketed was a luxury item—chocolate in the case of this study—participants reacted more favorably to ads that were in English.

The authors also found that study participants responded favorably to mixed-language advertising, when words from both languages were found in the advertising slogans.

"Results of this experiment suggest that multinational corporations need to be more cognizant about language choices in global bilingual markets, and it would be ill advised for them to simply follow the choices that appear to be working for the local corporations," the authors conclude.

Aradhna Krishna and Rohini Ahluwalia. "Language Choice in Advertising to Bilinguals: Asymmetric Effects for Multinationals versus Local Firms" *Journal of Consumer Research*: December 2008.



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