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DRILLING DOWN

For Every Sales Pitch, the Right Words

By ALEX MINDLIN

In countries where most people speak English and a second language, which one should multinational companies use in their ads? A study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* finds that companies should use English when advertising luxury goods, but use a hybrid of English and the local language for household necessities.

The researchers asked 122 college students in New Delhi to rate, on a seven-point scale, advertisements for detergent or chocolate, supposedly placed by multinational companies, and written in English, Hindi or a mix of the two.

For chocolate ads, the students preferred English or an English-rich hybrid; for detergent, they preferred a Hindi-rich hybrid.

Aradhna Krishna, an author of the study and a marketing professor at the [University of Michigan](#), said the reactions were probably a result of students associating different languages with different aspects of their lives.

“English is the language which is global and cosmopolitan and upper class,” she said. “You associate your first language with family, with warmth, with belongingness.”

Other studies, described in the same paper, found that multinational companies fared badly with ads that were written entirely in Hindi, as opposed to a mixture of Hindi and English. “It backfires,” said Professor Krishna. “It’s like, ‘Who is this guy using Hindi?’ ”

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