

SAJAforum

September 15, 2008

ADVERTISING: Hinglish vs. Hindi vs. English in Indian ads

University of Michigan marketing prof **Aradhna Krishna** is getting press on multiple fronts these days. Last week, *US News & World Report* reported on a joint study she conducted, comparing the experience of drinking from a stiff cup versus a flimsy cup. The study...

"found that consumers with a high need for touch rated water served in a stiff cup as tastier than the same water served in a flimsy cup. Subjects with a lower need-for-touch didn't let the cup's stiffness influence their opinion of the beverage. The results were detailed earlier this year in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. Consumers obviously rely on their senses of sight, and sometimes smell or hearing or taste, to determine what products to buy, but research on the role of touch has been sporadic."

Krishna also organized the first Sensory Marketing Conference. We see great wealth in her future.

But for our purposes, what's more interesting is her other study (in the forthcoming *Journal of Consumer Research*), on advertising to bilingual consumers. From *The New York Times*:

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.

The moral of the story is that well-off Indian consumers associate English with modern, cosmopolitan lifestyles, but Hindi (or presumably other local languages) has its own uses. More from her paper (pdf):

"Further, unlike the negative associations of inferiority and lower socioeconomic status associated with Spanish for Hispanics in the United States... in India, the Hindi language tends to have several positive associations, such as solidarity, pride, nationalism, family, and belongingness, and is not necessarily associated with lower social status..."

The study also considers the use of Hinglish, and finds that for multinational corporations (MNCs) it can often make more sense than using English, and especially better than Hindi, which somehow makes viewers very conscious of the fact that it's a big corporation trying to seem local:

"...localization of the ad language may be a good strategy for necessities (for which belongingness is important), but MNCs need to be cautious about going completely local and might be better off using mixed language ads for bilinguals."

Here are the stimuli for the study:

Chocolate:

- Mostly Hindi: "Kyaa mazaa! Fantastic!"
- Mostly English: "What fun! Lahjawaab!"
- Hindi: "Kyaa mazaa! Lahjawaab!"
- English: "What fun! Fantastic!"

Detergent:

- Mostly Hindi: "Bilkul clean kapde!"
- Mostly English: "Absolutely saaf clothes!"
- Hindi: "Bilkul Saaf kapde!"
- English: "Absolutely clean clothes!"

Read the rest of Aradhna Krishna's study here--it's quite interesting, if somewhat laden with statistical language.

Posted by Arun Venugopal at 10:37 PM in Advertising, by Arun Venugopal, India, Language | Permalink

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