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Bilingual Hindi-English ads make most impact in Indian markets

Submitted by [Nina Sahu](#) on Thu, 09/18/2008 - 10:48 [Washington](#) [Aradhna Krishna](#)

Washington, Sept 18 : Advertisements in Hindi are more appealing to the Indian audience as it gives them a sense of 'belongingness' than the ones in English, which are in contrast, associated with 'sophistication', says a new study by Indian origin researchers.

The research team involving Rohini Ahluwalia, an associate professor of marketing at the Carlson School of Management at University of Minnesota and Aradhna Krishna of the University of Michigan focussed on how advertising language affects the response of consumers.

In the study conducted in India where much of the population is fluent in English and Hindi, and both languages were viewed favourably, they found that while the Hindi language is associated with "belongingness" (close, friendly, familiar), English is associated with "sophistication" (global, hip, upper class).

The ads for a necessary item like laundry detergent are better off in the native language for its reliability, while luxury items, which can range from chocolate to a brand new car, a mixed-language approach will be more effective.

"The issue of bilingual consumers is increasingly crucial for multinational corporations," said Ahluwalia.

"To someone in Spain, an advertisement for a luxury item from a foreign firm could have a more positive impact if delivered in English or "Spanglish" than if it were delivered in only Spanish. Conversely, if the advertised product was a necessity, the native language may be more persuasive.

"People expect mixed language from local companies. But from multinationals, it is unexpected, so a customer's attention is grabbed by the second language in the ad. It makes the ad's language stand out.

"The consumer's focus on the language makes them think about the associations of the language used that is, what does it seem to convey? Sophistication, modernity or closeness? This effect could be very favourable for a foreign company selling a discretionary or luxury product."

However, Ahluwalia suggests that the safest bet is to use mixed-language ads in the bilingual markets.

"From a foreign firm, English-only ads may not be as effective, and ads in the local language may backfire, invoking scepticism in the consumer. The safest bet is to use mixed-language ads when working with bilingual markets," she added. (ANI)

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