

# Do Transliterated Ads Impact Ad-Liking: Evidences From A Multi-Cultural Society

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**Abstract -** *The study was intended to find the impact of transliterated ads on ad liking using two sets of language advertisements. The study used a 2 (English language and Regional language) x 2 (English written in Regional language and Regional language written in English) experimental design to test the effect of transliteration on ad-liking. Hair shampoo a medium involvement product was selected as a stimulus to do the experiment. To control any confounding effects of brand familiarity a fictitious brand was used in the current study. The study revealed that transliterated global language advertisements were better liked and had a greater positive attitude compared to a regional transliterated advertisement.*

**Keywords:** *Transliterated ads; Language mixing, ad-liking; integrated marketing communication; code-switching*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communicating ideas and concepts. Despite English being the vehicular language spoken by people who do not share a common native language (Mauranen, 2003), with more than half of the world's population being bilingual (Grosjean, 2010) the practice of using a foreign language in advertising have increased. The language used in advertising is perceived to be creative, complex and attention getting (Banarji et al., 2013) and must convey the uniqueness of the product. Extant studies have shown the effectiveness of using a foreign language and local language in advertisements (Ahn and La Ferle, 2008; Bishop and Peterson, 2010; Carroll and Luna 2011, Luna and Perrachio 2001, 2002, 2005a and 2005b). Many linguistic devices are used by advertisers to grab the attention of the customers. These devices include pun, grammatical, phonological, graphological and lexical deviations. Other techniques include borrowing, code-switching and transliteration. Borrowing is using a word as it is from one language to another. Code-switching is the alternation between two or more languages in the same conversation (Bishop and Peterson, 2010) whereas transliteration is writing a language using the font of another. A burgeoning body of literature examines the impact of code-switching on processing ads, on persuasion, cognitive and affective ad involvement, ad recall, brand name and body copy message (Bishop, 2010; Bishop and Peterson, 2010, 2008; Ahn and La Ferle, 2008; Gupta 2007, Wei-Yu Chen, 2006; Luna and Peracchio, 2005a, 2005b.). Majority of these studies have been done among languages that do not share the same alphabetic scripts. Therefore, this study has been undertaken in the South Indian market where mixing of two languages

English and the regional language Malayalam is commonplace yet the alphabets used differ from the Roman Alphabets to the Dravidian script.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Markedness Model*

Markedness model of Myers (1993) explains the social-psychological motivation for codeswitching. In a multicultural society by using a particular language in a particular social setting, the speaker is showing her awareness of her role in the context and this is a marked choice. The listener in this social setting is able to recognize the embedded language choice based on the embedded language code and perceptual salience and interpret the social meaning. According to Luna and Perrachio (2005a) when a person code switches the switched element becomes marked as it stands out in contrast with the rest of the language conveying a specific intended meaning. They conclude that the direction of codeswitching from minority to majority language results in greater persuasion than majority to minority.

### *Language Mixing*

Language mixing is a common phenomenon among educated people and leads to a hybrid form of language. It can convey important social meanings in certain domains where using a single code is insufficient (Kanthimathi,2016). Language choice for bilinguals are based on social motivation and is contextual (Bhatia, 2011). Language hybridization or code-switching expands the speaker's options rather than limiting it (Anderson-Finch,2011). Code-switching is a linguistic habit among bilinguals around the world (Grosjean 1982) and is an outcome of two languages coming in contact, co-existing and overlapping with one another (Gardner-Chloros; 2009). The meaning of the inserted word can be more easily processed than the word in the non-native language (Carroll and Luna, 2011). Code switched language is a shared form of communication among people of different groups (Anderson- Finch, 2011). Recall of the code switched element is higher when the code switched language differs from the language of the medium (Bishop and Peterson, 2008, Ahn & La Ferle; 2008), moreover the code switched element being marked stands in contrast with the rest of the language thus communicating the specific intended meaning (Luna and Peracchio, 2005a). Studies have been shown code-switching has a positive effect on persuasion (Koslow, Shamdasani and Touchstone, 1994 and Luna and Peracchio, 2005a,2005b). Code switched ads also help to reach out to a large audience (Gupta, 2007). The native language in advertising elicits thoughts related to Friends, Family, Home and Homeland thus leading to positive attitudes, emotions, perceived cultural sensitivity and behavioral intentions (Noriega and Blair. 2008; Puntoni et al., 2008; Koslow, Shamdasani and Touchstone, 1994)

Transliteration is a method of writing the text of one language in the script of another thus as far as possible preserving the sound of the text (Knight and Graehl,1998). This also preserves the flavor of the language and helps the people who cannot read the language in the original script understand it. It is typically used for representing words of languages that are written in a script other than roman (Gupta, Choudhury, and Bali, 2012). English transliteration of Indian languages is a very popular medium especially on social media and blogs (Soumya et al,2010). A reason for this is very few millennials can read and write their vernacular though they can speak it fluently (Rajeevan,2009). In transliteration the origin of the embedded language will contrast (in script) with the represented language though the base and represented language are not different. In this study the Dravidian alphabets are attributed to the Malayalam language and can easily trigger the Malayalam language Schema. So we hypothesize that the presence of the Dravidian alphabet used to write the English words is likely to activate both English and Malayalam language schemas simultaneously. The way people respond to transliterated taglines depends on the valence of attributes from the activated language (Luna and Perrachio, 2005b). Malayalam is the state language of Kerala. The state with the highest literacy rate (2011 census), English is also widely spoken and is

positively associated with global status, prestige, sophistication, modernity and cosmopolitan image. In a culturally diverse country like India to reach out to the rural masses, the local language is important. MNC's marketing luxury goods can use English ad slogans whereas when marketing a necessity product, a mixed language can be used (Krishna and Ahluwalia, 2008). Hence, we hypothesize that :

H<sub>1</sub> Regional language ads are better liked than Global language ads.

#### **Ad liking**

Studies have also found that code switched ads leads to greater persuasiveness if the matrix language of the advertisement matched the language of the medium where the advertisement is placed (Bishop and Peterson, 2010). This also facilitates easier language processing and the advertisers are perceived as more culturally sensitive (Luna and Peracchio, 2005). Hence we propose

H<sub>2</sub>-Transliterated regional language ads are better liked than regional language ads.

H<sub>3</sub>- Transliterated global language ads are better liked than global language ads

### **III. OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of the paper is to investigate the process of transliteration undertaken in the Indian market and to assess its impact on ad liking. The research contributes to linguistic literature related to advertising by introducing transliteration as a new technique advertisers use to attract bilinguals. Transliteration is a method of writing the text of one language in the script of another thus as far as possible preserving the sound of the text (Knight and Graehl,1998). This study is conducted in Kerala (A southern state in India). The study theoretically follows the Markedness Model (Myers-Scotton, 1993) that suggests when the embedded language (eg. Regional language -malayalam) is different from the base language (e.g Global language- English) the embedded language becomes salient and activates positive or negative language schema. By investigating the role of transliteration in advertising effectiveness the findings of the study offer theoretical and practical implications of transliteration for researchers and advertisers.

### **IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The purpose of the study was to find the impact of ad liking on two sets of language advertisements. We used a 2 (English language and Regional language) x 2 (English written in Regional language {E2M} and Regional language written in English{M2E})experimental design for the study. Hair shampoo a medium involvement product was selected as a stimulus (Joseph and Sivakumaran,2008). To control any confounding effects of brand familiarity a fictitious brand was selected. A professional agency was used to develop a print ad with a picture and a message about the brand. Four sets of ads were made. The first advertisement used the regional language (MO), the second global language (EO) only, third was regional language written using English script (M2E) and fourth had the global language written using the regional (E2M).

Seven hundred and fifty graduate students (56 percent of females with an average age of 22.3 years) from a reputed B-school in Kerala participated in the study. Fluency in English (written and spoken) and in the regional language Malayalam was the criterion for selection. They participated in the experiment in exchange for class credit. The participants were randomly distributed among the two experimental conditions and were given a copy of the ad (any one of the two ads) as experimental stimuli. They were given five minutes to read, understand and process the information in the advertisement. After exposure to each of the ads, the respondents evaluated the ads. Evaluations on Ad liking (Artz et al.,1993) were on a nine-point scale (eg: Bad/ Good, Unattractive/ Attractive, Negative/ positive etc). Higher ratings indicated more favourable responses.

### **V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

We find that Regional language ads were better liked than Global ads ( $H_1$ ) The mean scores [Mean  $MO$ - 4.6530, Mean  $EO$ - 4.2251,  $F$ = 10.886,  $p$ < .001]. The results are summarized in Tables below.

**Table 1** Anova results for ad liking with respect to regional and global language

| ANOVA |                |                |     |             |        |      |
|-------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
|       |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
| AD_ik | Between Groups | 17.403         | 1   | 17.403      | 10.886 | .001 |
|       | Within Groups  | 612.257        | 383 | 1.599       |        |      |
|       | Total          | 629.660        | 384 |             |        |      |

Source: SPSS Result

**Table 2:** Anova results for ad liking with respect to transliterated regional language ads and regional ads

| ANOVA |                |                |     |             |        |      |
|-------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
|       |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
| AD_ik | Between Groups | 23.108         | 1   | 23.108      | 15.751 | .000 |
|       | Within Groups  | 564.832        | 385 | 1.467       |        |      |
|       | Total          | 587.940        | 386 |             |        |      |

Source: SPSS Result

**Table 3:** Anova results for ad liking with respect to transliterated global language ads and global language ads

| ANOVA |                |                |     |             |        |      |
|-------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
|       |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
| AD_ik | Between Groups | 24.915         | 1   | 24.915      | 19.023 | .000 |
|       | Within Groups  | 472.832        | 361 | 1.310       |        |      |
|       | Total          | 497.747        | 362 |             |        |      |

Source: SPSS Result

Transliterated global language advertisement were better liked than global language advertisement ( $H_3$ ) [Mean  $EO$ -4.2251, Mean  $E2M$ - 4.7500,  $F$ = 19.023 and  $p$  <.00]. Transliterated global language advertisements were better liked than the regional transliterated advertisement. Transliterated regional language advertisements were less liked than regional language advertisements [Mean  $MO$ -4.6530, Mean  $M2E$ -4.1616,  $F$ =15.751,  $p$ <.000]. The direction of language flow is from English to the regional language and when one switches from one language to another the second language becomes marked (Luna and Peracchio, 2005). Here too there is a switch from one code to another, English to the regional language. The regional language choice for the advertisement matches certain salient features or arouses certain associations in the consumer (Luna and Peracchio, 2005a; Myers-Scotton 1991). The medium or choice of language used to write these ads forms the basis of ad liking. The regional language medium used was able to easily access certain associations and memories (Noreiga and Blair 2008).

Kerala (Southern state of India), has the highest literacy rate in the country. Malayalam the state language and the regional language used in the experiment is the dominant and official

language, though English is the second official language. Though English is the preferred language of advertising among bilinguals, our finding does correlate with earlier findings that the English language was never an acceptable substitute for foreign language advertising (Coffey, 2012). The regional language in the advertisement increased the perceived cultural sensitivity of the advertiser (Koslow et al.,1994). The regional language medium used for the global language forms the basis of liking the advertisement thus bringing positive associations with it and making the advertisement more likable. The dominant language in the advertisements targeted to bilinguals creates in them an affinity towards the ad. Foreign language is preferred for marketing a luxury good but the regional language is preferred in the ad when marketing a necessity good (Krishna and Ahluwalia,2008). Code switched ads lead to a positive attitude towards ads. Transliteration like code-switching also makes use of two codes. In global transliterated ads, the words used in the ads follow the English code but the script used to write the English code is Devanagari (Malayalam).

### *5.1 Integrated Marketing Communication Implications and Scope for Future Research*

In multilingual societies, transliteration makes the advertisement appear more creative and also lends to comprehension. Using the regional language to write the global language or vice versa can be helpful to bilinguals who can speak the language but not read and write it. For marketers advertising on social media, transliteration helps them overcome the word count limitations that regional languages face. Transliteration gives the flavor of two languages. In culturally diverse countries, transliteration can be used for product promotions and taglines can be transliterated to bring in the local flavor. Thus helping those who cannot read the local script at least understand it.

Transliteration can help maintain group identity hence useful for those consumers especially millennials or even migrants who can't read and write the regional language/ global language but understand it.

A single transliterated ad can cater to a large and varied customer base thus reducing the cost considerably for marketing activities. With two languages in a single tagline, it will appeal to the sensitivities of the bilingual. The study was limited to print advertisements alone and visual advertisements were not studied. The study was conducted in B-School in southern India among bilinguals. With the increase in multilingual, there perhaps could be a change in perception. A luxury product or a necessity product might also bring in a change in the evaluation. The psycholinguistic aspect of these advertisements is a fertile area of study. The impact of transliterated code-switching is also an area of research. The impact of transliterated advertisements may differ across cultures and would be an interesting area of research.

## **VI.CONCLUSION**

Unlike code-switching, Transliteration can be seen only in written form but gives the benefit of both languages. Transliteration makes the ad appear more creative and also leads to comprehension. It gives the product the benefit of both languages. In a linguistically and ethnically diverse country like India brands would benefit if they customize the ads according to the regional for effective persuasion. Transliteration is also a reflection of an evolving written code among youngsters who though cannot write and read the regional language can speak it fluently. By retaining the local flavor of the language it gives the advantage of both worlds at the same time.

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