

Different Ethnicities: An Impact of Ethnic Language on Consumer Response to Price-Off Advertising

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ABSTRACT

Many researchers try to explain the impact of ethnic language in advertising and prove that it does affect consumers' attention. However, there are some important issues that remain unsolved. First, whether the impact comes from just noticeable difference of the alphabets or from the language per se. The other is whether different consumers who have different language systems (ideographs versus alphabets) will have the same perception on ethnic language stimuli in price-off promotion message or not. This paper proposes research propositions and provides research tools in order to answer these issues.

INTRODUCTION

Language has been one of the main topics in consumer behavior literature for many years. A lot of consumer behavior researchers during the past decade pay attention to how language in advertising can affect consumers in many contexts. For example, in a subculture context, one of the main research in this area is the work of Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone (1994), they did research on how ethnic language in advertising can influence Hispanic consumers in the US by using accommodation theory, and they found that ethnic language had positive impacts on the perception of Hispanic consumers. Another example of the context that had been studied quite a lot in the language field is bilingual consumers; such as the works of Zhang and Schmitt (2004); Luna and Peracchio (1999, 2001, 2002, 2005); Noriega and Blair (2008); as well as Puntoni, Langhe, and Osselaer (2008). All of these research papers focused on how bilingual consumers react to bilingual advertisements. Although they focused on different based theories, they found that bilingual advertisements have different impacts on the consumers' perception compared to those using only English language to communicate. A language study in consumer behavior research is one of the main topics in the field that gain more interest from researchers during the past decade, not only because language is part of everyday-life communication, but also because of the overcrowded communication message surrounding consumers that make marketers and marketing researchers try to find alternative methods to communicate to their consumers more effectively, and the use of language to create salient message is one effective way to do it.

Every firm always tries to communicate something to their customers. One kind of marketing messages that has been widely used is price-off promotion message. Firms, especially retail business, mainly use this kind of message to communicate and to gain more buying intention from their customers and potential customers that they currently have low price promotion for their products or particular stores (Anderson and Duncan, 1998). Many marketing scholars (e.g. Kalyanaram and Winer (1995); Neslin (2002); and Howard and Kerin (2006)) also try to do research to maximize the efficiency for this kind of message, in order to gain customer attention as an outcome. Most of the researchers focused on how each sentence and a combination of sentences in price-off promotion can affect customers' attention; such as the roles of sale sign, reference prices, and limited time availability on customers' attention. And they found that almost every combination can create a positive impact on the shopping intention.

However, when tactic of ethnic language to the combination of price-off promotion message is applied, it may not a straight forward successful method to gain a positive reaction from all consumers in every ethnicity, because language is a very sensitive issue, and there are many aspects of these issues that can lead to different reactions when apply to different groups of ethnicity. Some of the issues that remain unclear are; first, the impact of ethnic language in advertising, whether it comes from just noticeable difference of the alphabets or from the language per se. The other is whether the two ethnicities that have different language systems (ideographs versus alphabets) will have the same perception on ethnic language stimuli in price-off promotion message. Moreover, there is no research paper that particularly focuses on what will be the consumers' reaction when ethnic language to the price-off promotion message is applied.