

Language Choice in Advertising to Bilinguals: Asymmetric Effects for Multinationals versus Local Firms

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We examine the role of language choice in advertising to bilinguals in global markets. Our results reveal the existence of asymmetric language effects for multinational corporations (MNCs) versus local firms when operating in a foreign domain, such that the choice of advertising language affects advertising effectiveness for MNCs but not local companies. Also, different language formats (e.g., the local language vs. English or a mix of the two languages) are shown to vary in their advertising effectiveness for different types of products (luxuries vs. necessities). Our results indicate that language choice for advertisements is an important decision for MNCs. Also, MNCs cannot mimic local companies in their choice of advertising language.

Several countries in Southeast Asia (e.g., Singapore, Japan, and India), Europe (e.g., Holland, Belgium, and many Western European nations), North America (e.g., United States), and North Africa (e.g., Morocco, Algeria, Chad, and Tunisia) have bilingual populations. Many of these populations are fairly fluent in a “foreign” language (typically English or French) as well as at least one local or native language. Advertising to these populations includes an additional layer of complexity, that is, the choice of language for advertising. A number of options exist: the ads could be in either one of the primary languages or could have a bilingual format containing a mixture of the two languages (e.g., Spanglish, Hinglish, or Singlish, which combine English with Spanish, Hindi, and Malay/Cantonese, respectively). This issue is becoming increasingly crucial for multinational corporations (MNCs) that need to weigh the advantages of single language use (e.g., English) across markets versus the complexities of communicating

their message in the local language or a mixed language ad. One option may be to follow the lead of local companies in making advertising language choices. Our research sheds some light on the feasibility of this decision rule.

Even as MNCs make inroads into bilingual markets, there is a paucity of research that specifically addresses the increasingly consequential issue of advertising language. Although a significant body of research in consumer behavior has examined the cognitive structures, memory, and organization of information by bilinguals (e.g., Tavassoli and Han 2001; Zhang and Schmitt 2004), few researchers have focused on the role of language in the persuasion process for consumers (see Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone [1994] and Luna and Peracchio [2005a, 2005b] for exceptions). Importantly, the extant persuasion research examining bilinguals has been conducted within contexts (e.g., Hispanics, French, and Singaporeans) in which one language (majority language or the language spoken by the group that holds power and prestige, e.g., English or French) has positive associations for the audience, while the other (minority language or the language spoken by those low in power and prestige, e.g., Spanish) has negative associations, such as inferiority (e.g., Koslow et al. 1994; Luna and Peracchio 2005a, 2005b; Platt and Weber 1984). Notably, in addition to favorability-related associations, bilinguals are also likely to have other language-specific perceptions (e.g., global, sophisticated, friendly, and sense of belonging) in their language schemas (e.g., Myers-Scotton 1999, 2002). However, it is difficult to cleanly separate out the effects of language favorability from language perceptions in the context of majority-minority languages since favorability is often con-

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founded with language perceptions. Our research, therefore, uses a bilingual context in which both languages are viewed positively (urban India) and focuses on language perceptions rather than on language favorability.

Prior research has also focused on mixed languages (e.g., Luna and Peracchio 2001, 2005a). This is not surprising given the increasing popularity of mixed languages like Spanglish in the American marketplace. Our research investigates both mixed as well as single language messages.

Using the existing literature in this area (e.g., Luna and Peracchio 2001, 2005a) as a starting point, we attempt to build a conceptual framework for examining the broader issue of language choice in persuasion of bilinguals. Two important moderators of the impact of language choice on persuasion are identified and integrated in a model of language effects: the country of origin of the company and the product category of the brand. Specifically, given the global context of this decision, our research attempts to understand the extent to which MNCs can replicate the strategies being used by local companies regarding language usage. Additionally, we study language choice for MNCs versus local firms as it pertains to different product categories (luxuries vs. necessities).

We begin in a pilot study by examining the characteristics of the bilingual Hindi-English speaking population, their choice of language in various contexts, as well as their primary perceptual associations with the two languages (English and Hindi). This is followed by a discussion of our conceptual framework and past research in the area of bilingual language processing (e.g., the Markedness Model, Luna and Peracchio 2005a; Myers-Scotton 1999). The next two studies test this conceptual framework—study 1 tests the hypotheses for local firms versus MNCs using single language ads; study 2 focuses on MNCs and tests for the effect of single versus mixed language advertisements. We conclude with theoretical and managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

Our results reveal the existence of asymmetric language effects for MNCs versus local firms, such that the choice of advertising language affects advertising effectiveness for MNCs but not for local corporations. Also, different languages are shown to vary in their advertising effectiveness for different types of products (luxuries vs. necessities). The results indicate that language choice for advertisements is an important decision for MNCs and also that they cannot blindly mimic local companies in this choice.

PILOT STUDY: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONTEXT

The Indian Context

In middle and upper class urban India, children typically learn Hindi (or their regional language, e.g., Tamil) first and learn English later when they start going to school. In most schools, either the language of primary instruction is English or English is taught as a second language from the kindergarten year onward. Both Hindi and English are spoken in

informal social settings. Bollywood movies (which are in Hindi) and Hindi language music are popular throughout the country. Popular television serials are in Hindi, but several from the United States (e.g., *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Desperate Housewives*) are also very popular. Among the younger generation, Cartoon Network and MTV are as well liked as Bollywood music, local music videos, and local television channels (which are primarily in Hindi). Thus, people in India are exposed to both English and Hindi all the time.

One thing to note is that in urban India, even when the ad language is Hindi or mixed (Hindi and English), the written script is typically roman for both languages, especially when the ad appears in an English language magazine. Examples of Hindi and mixed ads using the roman script are given in figure 1.

A review of the literature suggests some generalizable language-related associations in bilingual cultures that use English as the second language. Use of English in ads has come to suggest a social stereotype—a symbol of modernity, progress, sophistication, and a cosmopolitan identity (e.g., in Japan, Korea, Germany, and India; Bhatia 2000; Piller 2003; Takashi 1990a, 1990b). However, the primary (or first) language is likely to have high levels of belongingness associations, which connote a stronger sense of closeness and in-group associations (e.g., Myers-Scotton 1999, 2002). For instance, Koslow et al. (1994) found that the use of Spanish was associated with respect for, sensitivity toward, and association with the Hispanic community. In other words, there may be a higher level of belongingness associated with Hindi, while English may symbolize sophistication and modernity in India.

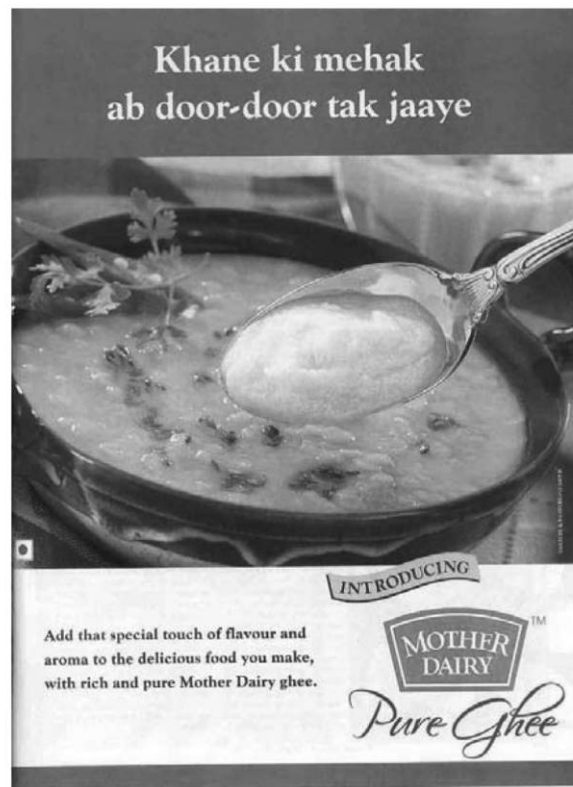
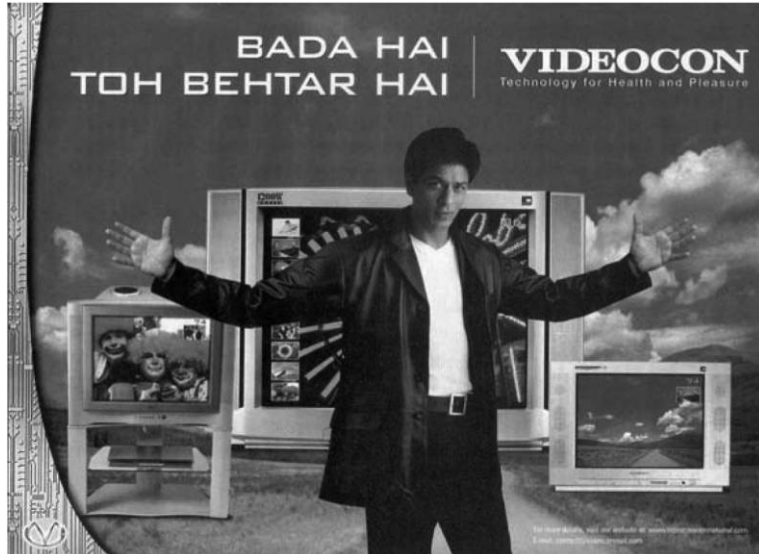
Further, unlike the negative connotations of inferiority and lower socioeconomic status associated with Spanish for Hispanics in the United States (e.g., Luna and Peracchio 2005a), in India, the Hindi language tends to have several positive associations, such as solidarity, pride, nationalism, family, and belongingness, and is not necessarily associated with lower social status (Bhatia 2000). We, therefore, expect associations for both languages to be primarily positive. The pilot study is designed to test the specific associations of Hindi and English in India and the overall perceived favorability for both languages, in a systematic manner within our target population, the urban, educated consumer in India.

Methodology

Forty-six undergraduate students from Delhi University participated in the study as a requirement for a class. The medium of instruction in Delhi University is English, and the questionnaire was in English following the norm for research on bilingual populations (e.g., Luna and Peracchio 2005a). The questionnaire included items that attempted to assess (i) whether the subject population met the criteria of bilingualism, (ii) the perceived favorability of both languages, and (iii) specific perceptions associated with each language.

FIGURE 1

EXAMPLES OF HINDI AND MIXED LANGUAGE MAGAZINE ADVERTISEMENTS IN INDIA



NOTE.—Color version available as an online enhancement.

TABLE 1
LANGUAGE USE AND PROFICIENCY

	Mean
Media and language use ^a	
What type of music do you listen to?	2.760
What type of movies do you watch?	2.587
What language newspapers and magazines do you read?	4.152
In what language do you watch TV?	2.783
What language do you use in the following situations? ^a	
At home	2.435
At school	3.500
With friends	2.891
What medium of instruction have you had in your schooling? ^a	4.130
How proficient are you in English in the following areas? ^b	
Speaking	3.84
Writing	4.21
Reading	4.50
How proficient are you in Hindi in the following areas? ^b	
Speaking	4.14
Writing	3.30
Reading	3.80

^aThese questions used 5-point scales anchored at 1 = Hindi and 5 = English; $n = 46$.

^bThese questions used 5-point scales anchored at 1 = very low and 5 = very high; $n = 44$.

Bilingualism. One set of questions was designed to test whether the target population met the criteria for bilingualism by demonstrating proficiency in both languages. Several of the questions in this section were adapted from Luna and Peracchio (2005a). A few additional questions pertaining to media habits were also included (see table 1 for the items). Additionally, subjects were asked to state their self-assessed proficiency in Hindi and English.

Language Favorability. A set of questions attempted to assess subjects' evaluations of the two languages. An open-ended question asked them to write down all the thoughts, images, and feelings that came to their minds when they heard someone talking in English (Hindi). The open-ended responses were coded by two independent judges (blind to the hypotheses) for favorability (favorable, unfavorable, and neutral thoughts). Interrater reliabilities across the scored items were 99%.

Subjects also provided their ratings for Hindi and English. They rated their overall feelings toward the use of Hindi and English on two 7-point scales anchored by extremely unfavorable/extremely favorable and extremely negative/extremely positive (coefficient alpha = .81 for Hindi and .82 for English). Two additional 5-point questions (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) specifically focused on language-based negative (inferior, embarrassing) associations for Hindi and English separately (e.g., I feel inferior when I use this language).

Language Associations. Finally, a last set of questions attempted to understand the specific perceptual associations related to each language. A list of words that denote be-

longingness (family, closeness, sense of belonging, personal, distant, and caring), sophistication and modernity (globalness, exclusivity, cosmopolitan, prestige, and professionalism), class association (middle class and upper class), and tone of voice (polite and stern) were included in the study. Subjects were asked to assess the extent (on 5-point scales anchored at 1 = strongly associated and 5 = not at all associated) to which they felt that Hindi and English were associated with each of them.

Results

Bilingualism. Our data reveal that the target population is fluent in both languages and fulfills the criteria for bilingualism (e.g., Francis 1999). The mean responses related to language use are reported in table 1. Overall, it appears that subjects are schooled more in English and, as such, read and write more in English versus Hindi. However, they speak more in Hindi with friends and family and get more of their entertainment in Hindi versus English. In other words, they appear to be well versed in both languages.

Language Favorability (Open-Ended). An index of total positive and total negative thoughts was computed for the open-ended responses. Analysis revealed that for both Hindi and English the mean number of positive thoughts per subject was significantly larger than the mean number of negative thoughts per subject ($M = 2.67$ vs. $.93$ for Hindi; $F(1, 45) = 238.6, p < .01$; $M = 2.17$ vs. $.28$ for English; $F(1, 45) = 108.16, p < .01$).

Language Favorability Ratings. Consistent with the findings from the open-ended responses, subjects reported that feelings toward both languages were favorable (the neutral midpoint = 4; English = 6.01; Hindi = 5.41; both different from 4.00 at $p < .01$). For the two negative assessments (inferior and embarrassing), both languages got low scores (midpoint = 3; English = 1.51 and 1.37; Hindi = 1.80 and 1.49; all four different from 3.00 at $p < .01$) indicating that neither language is thought of in a negative manner. Thus, both languages appear to be evaluated favorably in the Indian context. A summary of language favorability, both open-ended and ratings based is given in table 2.

Language-Specific Associations. Please refer to table 3 for the mean associations of both languages with the de-

TABLE 2
LANGUAGE FAVORABILITY

Measure	English	Hindi	Significance
Open-ended:			
Total positive thoughts	2.17	2.67	$p < .05$
Total negative thoughts	.28	.93	$p < .01$
Ratings based:			
Language favorability rating (scale)	6.01	5.41	$p < .01$
Inferiority rating	1.51	1.80	$p > .10$
Embarrassing rating	1.37	1.49	$p > .30$

TABLE 3

EXTENT TO WHICH EACH LANGUAGE IS ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN IMAGES AND FEELINGS

Variable	Mean for Hindi	Mean for English	F
Globalness	2.68 ^a	3.60	92.03
Family	3.54 ^a	2.00	75.39
Exclusivity	2.29 ^b	2.86	6.58
Cosmopolitan	1.91 ^a	3.30	58.33
Closeness	3.41 ^a	2.15	54.06
Sense of belonging	3.59 ^a	2.66	53.45
Professionalism	1.78 ^a	3.78	153.33
Prestige	2.22 ^a	3.46	35.17
Polite tone of voice	3.09	2.96	.32
Stern tone of voice	2.01	2.41	2.39
Personal	3.29 ^a	2.54	14.73
Distant	1.98 ^a	2.98	21.50
Caring	3.26 ^a	2.67	10.81
Middle class	3.26 ^a	2.15	40.74
Upper class	1.91 ^a	3.48	75.35

NOTE.—All variables measured on 5-point scales anchored at 1 = strongly associated and 5 = not at all associated; $n = 46$.

^aMeans for English versus Hindi different at $p < .01$.

^bMeans for English versus Hindi different at $p < .05$.

scriptors provided to the subjects. As the table reveals, English (as compared to Hindi) has significantly stronger associations ($p < .05$) with globalness, exclusivity, cosmopolitan, prestige, and professionalism (all terms that denote sophistication). Hindi as compared to English, however, conveys a significantly greater sense of family, caring, closeness, belonging, and being personal and is perceived as significantly less distant ($p < .01$), which is indicative of its association with belongingness.

Interestingly, English is associated more strongly than Hindi ($p < .05$) with upper class, while Hindi is perceived as more middle class than English ($p < .01$). The languages, however, do not differ in the extent to which they are perceived as polite or stern (both p 's $> .10$).

Discussion

This pilot study reveals that both languages are evaluated favorably (using both open-ended thoughts and scaled responses) and that the subject population is fairly fluent in both languages. Further, the Hindi language is associated with belongingness (close, personal, friendly, and family), whereas English is associated with sophistication (global, cosmopolitan, urban, and upper class). The findings from this study are useful in developing the conceptual framework for understanding the effects of language use in advertising to bilingual consumers (next section), especially in the Indian context.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Language Expectancy

Whether people pay attention to the implications of a particular element of the message is in large part determined

by the extent to which it is expected in that specific context since unexpected elements tend to receive a disproportionate share of attention. When a language is less expected in a particular context, its use is likely to garner increased attention focused on the language choice and trigger the associations that it is strongly related to. This argument is consistent with the implications of the Markedness Model, which has been used extensively in the context of bilingualism. The Markedness Model suggests that the expected (unmarked) language may be processed literally, with the perceiver focusing on the message content; however, use of a marked (unexpected) language is likely to focus attention on the language per se and trigger perceptions associated with it (e.g., Luna and Peracchio 2005a, 2005b; Myers-Scotton 1999).

Country of Origin

In most bilingual societies, expectations regarding language use are based on perceptions of the speaker's background. In particular, these expectations tend to differ for locals versus foreigners (Lawson 2004; Lawson and Sachdev 2000; Myers-Scotton 1999, 2002). For instance, Indians are generally surprised when a Caucasian speaks fluent Hindi since they expect Caucasians to speak English or another European language. Similarly, we expect there to be differences in the expectancies from advertising language for companies based on their country of origin. For a foreign company, English is the expected language since it is the dominant language of communication with foreigners and is also the formal language in urban India, as evidenced in the pilot study. Formality is expected of foreigners or the out-group (Myers-Scotton 1999). The mixed language format (combination of English and Hindi) appears to be the most informal mode of communication with in-groups (e.g., see Lawson and Sachdev 2000; Myers-Scotton 1999) and would, therefore, be marked for a foreign company, making the perceiver more aware of what the communicator is attempting to convey via this choice of language. Similarly, the local language is also likely to be marked since it is an informal means of communication (pilot study) and is less expected from foreigners. Thus, if an MNC uses any amount of Hindi in its advertising slogan (pure Hindi or any form of mixed language), consumers will likely direct their attention to the implications of the language used.

For local companies, however, not only is the local language expected in communications but so is mixed language. The mixed format is considered to be the language of choice for locals who have received a Western education (Myers-Scotton 1999, 2002). As such, only the English language will be marked or unexpected for these companies. Thus, it is possible that consumers might focus their attention on the language implications of an English message from a local corporation. However, past research suggests that when the message source is an in-group member (who shares the social group with the audience, e.g., same school, gender, political party, or country in the current research context), people demonstrate a strong sense of favoritism or

bias in processing the message (e.g., Fleming and Petty 2000; Mackie, Worth, and Asuncion 1990). More important, messages from in-group members are known to promote systematic processing, focusing attention on the message content instead of the peripheral message elements, such as number of arguments or language choice (e.g., Mackie and Queller 2000; Nelson and Garst 2005). It would follow then that consumers in general (*a*) are more likely to scrutinize the language implications of the ad slogans associated with foreign corporations (vs. local firms) and (*b*) are likely to be more sensitive to the linguistic perceptions conveyed by language choice for foreign (vs. local) firms.

Language Associations for Different Product Categories

An important question that follows is when and which associations elicited by the marked languages are likely to influence ad evaluations. In the context of ad evaluations, the retrieved language-related perceptions would be used as an input to the extent they are relevant for evaluating that product category.

Products can be broadly categorized as necessities versus luxuries. Necessities are possessed by everybody, while luxuries have an element of exclusivity associated with them (Bearden and Etzel 1982). By definition, the need for necessities is met before the need for luxuries. As such, one is provided the necessities of life by one's family (when one is a dependent) and provides the necessities of life to others who are dependent on oneself. Past research demonstrates that familial influence is likely to be very high in the realm of product and brand decisions in the domain of necessities, whereas peer influence is likely to dominate in the domain of luxuries (e.g., Childers and Rao 1992). In fact, a high level of intergenerational brand transfer (using the same brands that parents and other family use and trust) has been uncovered with necessities but not with luxuries, for which image and exclusivity are more important (Childers and Rao 1992). Furthermore, research conducted with everyday necessity products (e.g., detergents, peanut butter, pasta sauce, and soap) reveals that when making decisions in these product categories, consumers tend to choose brands that they are most familiar with and, therefore, feel a sense of comfort or closeness with (akin to the concept of belongingness; e.g., Fournier 1998; Hoyer 1984), even if they are lower in quality (e.g., Hoyer and Brown 1990). Together, these streams of research suggest that necessities relate to basic needs for which one trusts one's family, and, therefore, when evaluating them, consumers tend to be heavily influenced by their family or others they trust; their feelings of familiarity toward the brand and the sense of comfort and family-like closeness they feel with it (in other words, belongingness) are likely to influence their brand choices. However, exclusivity and sophistication are likely to matter more in the domain of luxuries.

Thus, the two languages under consideration (English and Hindi) are likely to differ in the extent to which their strong

associations (as revealed in study 1) are relevant for the evaluation of products in these categories (luxuries vs. necessities). Specifically, Hindi is associated with the family and with being close and friendly, or in other words, a sense of belongingness; therefore, Hindi would be more relevant for evaluating necessities, as discussed above. In contrast, the sophistication, upper class, and exclusivity associations of English (as revealed in study 1) are relevant for the evaluation of luxury products. In other words, the associations of the English language are likely to be relevant for evaluating luxury products, while the associations elicited by Hindi are relevant in judgments relating to the necessity type of products.

Note that we focus on belongingness and sophistication associations of language and not of products. In other words, it is not essential that all necessities (e.g., detergents) have a strong association with belongingness; it is just proposed that belongingness (e.g., as conveyed via language) is likely to be an important criterion when consumers evaluate necessities.

The Role of Different Language Forms for a Foreign Corporation

Given that the ad's slogan is not only the most salient element of advertising but also one that is most strongly associated with the brand (due to high levels of media exposure, e.g., magazine and television advertising, outdoor advertising, product packaging, and in-store displays), it offers a strong context for examining language-based advertising effects. Therefore, consistent with past research in the area of advertising language effects (e.g., Luna and Peracchio 2005a, 2005b), we focus on the impact of language on slogan effectiveness. These effects, however, should be reflective of advertising in general since the same underlying principles regarding markedness of language are likely to be invoked.

Two language formats are available to companies in bilingual markets: single language (e.g., English only or Hindi only) and mixed language (e.g., primarily English with some Hindi words or primarily Hindi with some English words). In the following paragraphs, hypotheses relating to the use of each of these language combinations will be developed, first for an MNC and then for a local company.

English. As stated earlier, using a different language form relative to what is expected in a particular context contributes to a message's markedness (Myers-Scotton 1999). For an MNC, English is the expected language and hence is not likely to be marked. Consumers, therefore, are less likely to focus attention on the perceptions associated with the slogan's language in this message version, as compared to other language versions. We treat English as the baseline condition for understanding the implications of language choice in the domain of MNCs.

Hindi. As argued earlier, Hindi's strong associations (belongingness) are relevant for assessing products that are

necessities. Therefore, we expect that for an MNC, Hindi's language-based associations will enhance an ad slogan's evaluation (compared to the baseline English language condition) when the product is a necessity. However, when the product is a luxury good, the belongingness associations are not relevant. Hindi has weak and somewhat negative associations with the sophisticated image (pilot test) that is being sought by luxury products and, therefore, is expected to lower the slogan evaluations for this product category (as compared to English).

Mixed Language. Mixed language messages typically involve code switching, in which a word or expression from one language is inserted into a slogan that is primarily in another language (Luna and Peracchio 2005a, 2005b; e.g., "Uses the best quality *masala* for its products"; "masala" is Hindi for "spice"). We have stated earlier that because of its informality, a mixed language is marked for MNCs. Therefore, we expect that exposure to a code-switched slogan from an MNC will direct attention to its language, enhancing the likelihood that the associations or schemas for both languages (Hindi and English) will be activated (Myers-Scotton 2002).

Since the sophistication associations of English are desirable for luxury products and the belongingness associations of Hindi are relevant for everyday necessities, using a code-switched format of any form (mostly Hindi or mostly English) is likely to lead to favorable slogan evaluations for both types of products. Note that when two language schemas are retrieved, the stronger and most salient language associations elicited are likely to dominate. For example, in the context of a luxury product, the positive, strong sophistication associations of English should dominate the weak associations that Hindi has with this variable. Additionally, both code-switched formats (mostly Hindi and mostly English) are likely to lead to equivalent slogan evaluations.

- H1a:** For a foreign company marketing an everyday necessity, any use of Hindi (only Hindi or a mixed language) is likely to be evaluated more favorably than a purely English slogan.
- H1b:** Belongingness perceptions will mediate the effect of ad language on slogan evaluation for MNCs marketing an everyday product.
- H2a:** For a foreign company marketing a luxury good, a Hindi slogan is likely to be evaluated less favorably than an English and a mixed language slogan.
- H2b:** Sophistication perceptions will mediate the effect of ad language on slogan evaluation for MNCs marketing a luxury product.

The Role of Different Language Forms for a Local Corporation

Recall, as argued earlier, that the mixed language format is the most informal mode of communication for locals who

have received a Western education. The local language is also commonly used for communication by natives. Thus, neither of these will be marked for a local company. Although the English language ad slogan may conceivably be marked when it is used for a local company, given an in-group bias (as discussed earlier), it is unlikely that consumers will focus on the implications of language choice when the ad is sponsored by a local corporation. Hence, we propose that:

- H3:** For a local company no differences are expected to emerge in the evaluation of the ad slogan, as a function of language choice, for either luxuries or necessities.

Summary

In sum, our framework suggests that when the language of the slogan is marked, the audience is likely to focus its attention on language-based associations. If these associations match the product category, slogan evaluation is enhanced. Importantly, differences are expected in which languages are marked for MNCs versus local companies. For an MNC, local and mixed language slogans are expected to be marked; however, none of the language formats are expected to draw attention to the slogan's language for a local firm. Therefore, we expect language-based advertising effects, as described next, to emerge for foreign corporations but not for local companies. These hypotheses are tested in the context of the Indian marketplace.

Specifically, Hindi (or the local language), which is strongly associated with belongingness, is expected to match or have favorable implications for the evaluation of necessities for MNCs. However, the sophistication-related associations of English are relevant for and, therefore, likely to enhance evaluations of luxuries for MNCs. Notably, mixed language slogans are likely to evoke perceptions associated with both languages. They are, therefore, expected to lead to favorable slogan evaluations for both luxuries and necessities.

PRETESTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF STIMULI

Pretest 1: Language Expectations

Forty undergraduate students from Delhi University responded to a questionnaire that asked them to rate their expectancy (two 7-point scales, anchored by unexpected/expected and unlikely/likely) that an ad slogan from either a local company or an MNC would be in English, Hindi, or a mixed language (Cronbach's alphas for all three language types $> .75$). Subjects reported a significantly higher likelihood of expecting an English slogan from a foreign corporation ($M = 5.63$; scale midpoint = 4), as compared to one in Hindi ($M = 4.0$; $p < .05$) or a mixed language ($M = 4.4$; $p < .055$). However, from a local corporation, Hindi ($M = 5.62$) and a mixed language ($M = 6.1$) were

both equally expected ($p > .20$), but English was less expected, with a mean significantly lower than both of the other languages ($M = 4.18$; both p 's $< .01$). Therefore, consistent with our hypotheses, the data suggest that Hindi and mixed languages are likely to be the marked languages for an MNC, and English is likely to be the marked language for a local corporation.

Pretest 2: Relevance of Belongingness and Sophistication Associations

To test the relevance of belongingness and sophistication associations for evaluating necessities/luxuries, we ran a pretest ($n = 20$) with undergraduate students from Delhi University. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which belongingness (closeness and friendliness) and sophistication (sophistication and global) associations were important when they were evaluating either a necessity ($n = 10$) or a luxury ($n = 10$). For necessities, subjects rated belongingness ($M = 5.30$) as significantly more important than sophistication ($M = 3.90$; $p < .01$); however, for luxuries the reverse pattern emerged, with sophistication ($M = 5.45$) being rated as significantly more important than belongingness ($M = 4.55$; $p < .05$).

Pretest 3: Product Categories

Thirty-eight different participants from the same student group were asked to rate eight products (detergent, chocolate, ketchup, house paint, shampoo, cold drinks, bath soap, and ice cream) on a 6-point luxury-necessity scale (1 = luxury for everyone; 6 = necessity for everyone), following Bearden and Etzel (1982). Based on the scores obtained, two product categories were selected for the main experiments: chocolate and detergent. Both were (i) frequently purchased packaged goods (and not products that often have homemade substitutes) and (ii) cost about the same amount of money, but importantly, (iii) one was perceived as a luxury (chocolate = 2.93), while the other was rated as a necessity (detergent = 5.42; $p < .01$), and (iv) their product categories did not have dominant country-of-origin associations. Popular brands of chocolates in India are Cadbury (MNC) and Amul (local); popular detergents are Surf (MNC) and Nirma (local).

Also note that although chocolate may not seem like much of a luxury product in some Western nations, in the Indian context where per capita income is \$719 (slightly higher in urban India; *Financial Express* 2007), this product category qualifies as a luxury. In this context, nearly all pre-prepared food, including bread, is likely to be perceived as more of a luxury than a necessity (most consumers tend to cook inexpensive daily meals from scratch). The necessities are basic goods such as flour, raw vegetables, lentils, and clothing and basic cleaning products (detergent, soap, and toothpaste).

Pretest 4: Advertising Slogans

Four advertising slogans each were developed for the two product categories (chocolate and detergent), with help from two bilingual advertising experts (native speakers of Hindi who were very fluent in both languages). Two of these slogans were in a single language: Hindi or English. The other two were mixed language slogans: one primarily in Hindi with an English code-switched term and the other primarily in English with a Hindi code-switched term (e.g., "Absolutely *saaf* clothes"—where *saaf* means "clean" in Hindi). In order to ensure that the different language versions of the ads were correctly translated and conveyed the same meaning, the standard technique of back translation (Hui and Triandis 1985) was used to arrive at all versions of the ad. Additionally, the slogans were not only translated from English to Hindi and then back to English, but they were also translated the other way around (starting with Hindi) to ensure that the ads themselves conveyed the same meaning.

The final versions of the slogans were then pretested with 40 subjects from Delhi University. The participants rated these advertising slogans on 7-point scales assessing their clarity, appeal, and the perceived flow of the slogan. Each participant provided evaluations for two slogans—one from each product category (detergent and chocolate) in the same language format (e.g., English). Analyses revealed that there was no difference between the four versions of the chocolate as well as detergent slogans in terms of their perceived flow (chocolate, $F(3, 37) = 1.22$, $p > .30$; detergent, $F(3, 37) = .79$, $p > .50$), the extent to which they clearly communicated their meaning (chocolate, $F(3, 38) = .33$, $p > .80$; detergent, $F(3, 38) = .11$, $p > .90$), and the extent to which they were appealing to the audience (chocolate, $F(3, 38) = .41$, $p > .70$; detergent, $F(3, 38) = 1.12$, $p > .30$). See table 4 for the ad slogans.

STUDY 1: TESTING THE FRAMEWORK

Goal

This study attempted to test our basic framework, using the context of single language ads for multinational versus local corporations.

TABLE 4
STIMULI FOR STUDIES 1 AND 2

Slogan	
Chocolate:	
Mostly Hindi	Kyaa mazaal! Fantastic!
Mostly English	What fun! Lahjawaab!
Hindi	Kyaa mazaal! Lahjawaab!
English	What fun! Fantastic!
Detergent:	
Mostly Hindi	Bilkul clean kapde!
Mostly English	Absolutely saaf clothes!
Hindi	Bilkul Saaf kapde!
English	Absolutely clean clothes!

Methodology

Participants and Design. Subjects were students from an evening MBA program in New Delhi, who participated as part of a course requirement but also received Rs 100 (approximately \$2) at the end of the study for their cooperation. A 2 (corporation: multinational vs. local) \times 2 (slogan language: Hindi vs. English) \times 2 (product type: luxury vs. necessity) between-subjects design was administered. Only the single language slogans from table 4 were used in this study.

Procedure. Subjects ($n = 198$) were presented with a short paragraph describing the company that was advertising (the two versions differed only in one detail—whether the corporation was described as a local firm or a multinational). This description was followed by an ad slogan (one of the four versions—English chocolate, Hindi chocolate, English detergent, Hindi detergent) and the dependent measures.

Covariates. We considered two covariates in our analyses. One of these was fluency (read, write, and speak scale) used for English in study 1. However, this fluency covariate was not significant ($p > .50$) and was not used in further analyses. Subjects' overall favorability for both languages was also assessed, using the scales from study 1. A measure of net language favorability was computed (difference between reported evaluations of English and Hindi). This second covariate would help control for any remaining effects of language favorability in this study. This covariate was significant and was retained in the study.

Dependent Variables. Slogan evaluation was measured using two 7-point scales (good/bad and like/dislike). Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Results

Slogan Evaluation. A 2 \times 2 \times 2 ANOVA was conducted on the slogan evaluation measure. Net language favorability was used as a covariate in all the analyses. A significant three-way interaction effect emerged ($F(1, 189) = 4.68, p < .05$; see cell means in table 5). The product by language interaction ($F(1, 189) = 11.05, p < .01$) was also significant, and the firm by product interaction approached significance ($F(1, 189) = 3.11, p < .10$). A main effect of product emerged ($F(1, 189) = 15.59, p < .01$), suggesting that across the different conditions, the detergent ad was evaluated more favorably than the chocolate ad. The covariate net language favorability was also significant ($F(1, 189) = 11.61, p < .01$).

Further analysis of the three-way interaction was conducted to examine support for the hypotheses. When the company was an MNC, the interaction between product and language was significant ($F(1, 189) = 13.88, p < .01$). Examination of the pattern of cell means reveals that when the product was a luxury good (chocolate), subjects evaluated the English slogan more favorably than the Hindi slogan ($M = 3.73$ vs. 2.4; $F(1, 189) = 9.53, p < .01$); however, for

TABLE 5

STUDY 1: SLOGAN EVALUATION RESULTS

	Multinational corporation		Local firm	
	Chocolate	Detergent	Chocolate	Detergent
English	3.73	2.94	3.22	4.21
Hindi	2.40	4.08	2.84	4.16

a necessity (detergent), a reverse pattern emerged, with the Hindi slogan being evaluated more positively than the English slogan ($M = 4.08$ vs. 2.94; $F(1, 189) = 4.85, p < .05$). This pattern of results is consistent with hypotheses 1a and 2a.

When the company was described as a local firm, the product by language interaction failed to approach significance ($p > .30$), indicating that the role of language is likely to be fairly limited for these corporations. This is consistent with hypothesis 3.

Discussion

Overall, the findings suggest that consistent with our theorizing, MNCs have a lot at stake when choosing ad language, whereas the local company does not. For the MNC, the choice of language might be extremely important for positioning the product. For instance, if one wants to position one's brand as a luxury, English may be better to use than Hindi. However, when one wants to position it as a necessity, Hindi or a mixed language would be better to use compared to English. Given the strong language effects and implications for MNCs (and none for local firms), in the next experiment, we will examine the effects obtained for MNCs in more detail with a view to understanding the underlying processes. The next study further examines how the use of mixed language affects slogan appeal in different contexts.

STUDY 2: THE UNDERLYING PROCESS

Design and Procedure

One hundred and twenty-two students from Delhi University participated in the study for course credit. They were randomly assigned to a 4 (language: English vs. Hindi vs. Hindi majority mixed vs. English majority mixed) \times 2 (product: luxury vs. necessity) between-subjects design. The cover story and procedure followed study 1. All the ad versions listed in table 4 were included in this study. All subjects read the company description pertaining to an MNC.

Dependent Variables

Slogan Evaluation. The key dependent variable was the slogan evaluation measure used in study 2 (dislike/like and bad/good; coefficient alpha = .94).

Cognitive Responses. Subjects were also asked to list all the thoughts that came to their minds when they were exposed to the slogan. Two judges coded these thoughts for language-related cognitions (any thoughts related to language usage as well as language-related perceptions, e.g., appears to be a sophisticated product, felt a sense of closeness, friendly tone, interesting language choice, and why Hindi). The interrater reliability was .96.

Language Association Ratings. Subjects' perceptions of the slogan on dimensions of belongingness (three 7-point scales anchored by impersonal/personal, distant/close like family, and formal/friendly; coefficient alpha = .70) and sophistication (three 7-point scales anchored by rural/cosmopolitan, middle class/upper class, and local/global; coefficient alpha = .80) were also assessed.

English Fluency and Language Favorability Ratings. Additionally, as in study 1, English proficiency and favorability evaluations of English and Hindi were assessed.

Results and Discussion

The two covariates from study 1—English fluency and net language favorability—were also tested with these data. Neither was significant (p 's > .20). However, to be consistent with study 1, net language favorability was retained as a covariate for the study 2 analyses. Sixteen of the 122 subjects had missing values for the covariate and hence were not included in the reported analysis. It is important to note that analyzing the data with those subjects included (analyses without the covariate) yielded the same pattern of effects.

Cognitive Responses. An ANOVA was conducted with language-related thoughts as the dependent variable and product and slogan language as the independent variables. The ANOVA revealed only a significant main effect of slogan language ($F(3, 97) = 4.29, p < .05$). As expected, there were significantly lower numbers of language-related thoughts elicited in the English condition as compared to all the other language modes (English = .21; Hindi = 1.19; mostly English = .68; mostly Hindi = .84; all p 's < .05, except mostly English at $p < .10$). In other words, the inclusion of any amount of Hindi in the slogan seemed to direct attention to the language, while the pure English slogan was least likely to invoke thoughts related to the language choice.

Language Associations Ratings. The belongingness and sophistication ratings were subjected to a two-way ANOVA. A significant main effect of language emerged for sophistication ($F(3, 96) = 8.66, p < .01$), and the product by language interaction was marginally significant for belongingness ($F(3, 97) = 2.26, p < .10$; see the means in table 6). No other effects were significant (p 's > .15).

The main effect for sophistication ratings reveals that, across both products, these associations were significantly lower when the slogan was in Hindi ($M = 2.65$) as compared to in English ($M = 4.38; F(1, 100) = 26.07, p < .01$) and as compared to both mixed language versions

TABLE 6

STUDY 2: RESULTS

	No. of language-related thoughts	Slogan evaluation	Sophistication	Belongingness
Chocolate:				
Hindi code switch	.78	3.96	3.79	3.95
English code switch	.60	4.30	3.47	3.58
Hindi	1.27	2.46	2.79	3.43
English	.00	4.15	4.07	3.93
Detergent:				
Hindi code switch	.88	4.50	3.31	4.00
English code switch	.77	3.81	3.05	3.59
Hindi	1.08	3.55	2.47	3.43
English	.42	2.67	4.60	2.64

(mostly Hindi = 3.54; $F(1, 100) = 7.70, p < .01$; mostly English = 3.27; $F(1, 100) = 3.79, p < .06$). Sophistication ratings for the mixed language versions did not differ from each other ($p > .40$) but were significantly lower than the English slogan ($p < .01$). Thus, as expected, English is most associated with sophistication, and Hindi is the least associated with it, with the two mixed language versions falling in between.

In light of the product by language interaction, the effect of language on belongingness associations was examined separately for each product. Slogan language emerged as a significant factor for detergent ($F(3, 97) = 4.01, p < .05$) but not for chocolate ($p > .60$). The lack of any belongingness effects with chocolate might reflect the extent to which this association is perceived as irrelevant in the evaluation of this product category.

Contrasts revealed that for detergent, English is significantly lower in belongingness ($M = 3.64$), as compared to both mixed languages (mostly Hindi = 5.00; $F(1, 97) = 11.55, p < .01$; mostly English = 4.59; $F(1, 97) = 5.18, p < .05$), and marginally lower than Hindi ($M = 4.43$; $F(1, 97) = 3.23, p < .10$). The mixed language forms do not differ from each other or from Hindi ($p > .19$). Thus, in the context of a necessity, English is least associated with belongingness.

Together these data suggest that English has strong sophistication-related associations—any use of English is better than pure Hindi for conveying sophistication, with pure English having the strongest association. Hindi, however, is associated with belongingness, especially when this attribute is relevant for the product category—any use of Hindi is better than pure English for communicating this trait (for necessities). More important, both mixed language forms elicit perceptions related to English as well as Hindi (belongingness associations are significantly higher as compared to the English version for detergent; sophistication associations are significantly stronger than the Hindi slogan). Notably, the two mixed language forms do not differ from

each other in terms of their sophistication and belongingness associations ($p > .20$).

Slogan Evaluation. The two-way ANOVA for the slogan evaluation measure yielded a significant interaction between language and product ($F(3, 97) = 2.76, p < .05$) and a significant main effect for language ($F(3, 97) = 2.76, p < .05$). Follow-up tests showed that, as expected, the simple effect of language was significant within each product (chocolate, $F(3, 96) = 4.13, p < .01$; detergent, $F(3, 96) = 2.92, p < .05$). Planned contrasts were conducted to test the hypotheses.

When the product was a luxury (chocolate), the Hindi slogan ($M = 2.46$) lowered the slogan evaluation significantly compared to the English ($M = 4.15$; $F(1, 97) = 6.75, p < .05$), mostly Hindi ($M = 3.96$; $F(1, 97) = 7.14, p < .01$), and mostly English ($M = 4.30$; $F(1, 97) = 9.31, p < .01$) versions. The two mixed versions had similar evaluations, and neither was significantly different from English (all p 's $> .70$). Consistent with hypothesis 1b, Helmert contrasts comparing Hindi to the mean of the other three language modes also showed a significant difference ($F(1, 97) = 11.87, p < .01$). This pattern of data is very consistent with findings obtained for the two measures reported earlier (cognitive responses and language association ratings) and is strongly supportive of the hypotheses. Note that although the English slogan was perceived as higher in sophistication than the mixed language versions, subjects exposed to the English slogan were less likely to generate language-related cognitive responses.

As predicted, for the detergent slogan, any use of Hindi was better than the English version ($M = 2.67$). Evaluation of the mostly Hindi slogan was significantly higher ($M = 4.50$; $F(1, 97) = 8.37, p < .01$), and mostly English was marginally higher ($M = 3.81$; $F(1, 97) = 3.22, p < .10$), while the Hindi version was not significantly different from the English version ($M = 3.55$; $F(1, 97) = 1.52, p < .20$). The two mixed language ads did not differ significantly from each other ($p > .20$). Helmert contrasts comparing English to the mean of the other three language modes also showed a significant difference ($F(1, 97) = 5.97, p < .02$). This is consistent with hypothesis 1a.

Although hypothesis 1a was supported, an interesting but unexpected finding was the relatively weak performance of the Hindi slogan for the detergent (necessity) category. It is possible that the increased opportunity given to subjects to elaborate via listing of cognitive responses in this study may have enhanced critical evaluation of the ads. Enhanced elaboration is known to increase counterarguments, especially if there is an enhanced focus on the persuasion tactics of the ad sponsor (Friestad and Wright 1994; Shiv, Edell, and Payne 1997). This is most likely if an execution element is highly salient and draws attention to itself (e.g., Ahluwalia and Burnkrant 2004; Shiv et al. 1997). The cognitive response results reveal that the Hindi version, whose language is highly unexpected from an MNC (pretest 1), directs the most attention to the role of language in the ad (cognitive response results). Hence it may be likely to evoke cognitions

related to the advertiser's motive, or why Hindi was used (e.g., attempting to look Indian, trying too hard; see Friestad and Wright 1994; Wright 2002), undermining the slogan's effectiveness. In other words, subjects exposed to the Hindi version might have generated more counterarguments than those who viewed the other marked (mixed language) versions, when afforded the opportunity to elaborate further on the slogan. To test this possibility, cognitive responses for the detergent ad in the three marked conditions were recoded by the same judges to reflect the number of counterarguments (any thoughts that dealt with persuasion tactics or were unfavorable toward the content, tone, and language of the slogan; interrater reliability = .91).

Counterarguments. A one-way ANOVA on the counterarguments generated in response to marked versions of the detergent ad resulted in a significant main effect of language form ($F(2, 40) = 5.27, p < .01$). Contrasts revealed significantly more counterarguments generated in response to the Hindi version ($M = 1.67$) as compared to both mixed language ads (mostly Hindi = .81; mostly English = .62; both p 's $< .01$). These findings support the line of reasoning proposed above and suggest that under conditions of increased elaboration, use of a Hindi slogan for necessities might backfire.

Mediation Analyses. We hypothesized (hypotheses 1b and 2b) that belongingness (sophistication) perceptions would mediate slogan evaluations for necessities (luxuries). Mediation analyses (Baron and Kenny 1986) were run separately for the two product categories (luxuries or chocolate; necessities or detergent).

Mediation for Detergent. Ad language emerged as a predictor of slogan evaluation ($\eta^2 = .186$; $F(3, 57) = 4.35, p < .01$), as well as belongingness perceptions ($\eta^2 = .145$; $F(3, 57) = 3.23, p < .05$). When both slogan language and belongingness perceptions are used in the same regression equation to predict slogan evaluation, the effect of language was not statistically significant ($\eta^2 = .091$; $F(3, 56) = 2.33, p < .10$), while belongingness perceptions emerged as a significant predictor of slogan evaluation ($\eta^2 = .083$; $F(1, 56) = 6.36, p < .05$). These analyses suggest mediation of the effects of language on slogan evaluation by belongingness perceptions for the detergent product category.

Similar mediational analysis was conducted for the sophistication perceptions. Slogan language emerged as a predictor of sophistication perceptions ($\eta^2 = .284$; $F(3, 36) = 7.42, p < .01$). When both language and belongingness perceptions are used in the same regression equation to predict slogan evaluation, the effect of language continues to remain significant ($\eta^2 = .276$; $F(3, 55) = 7.12, p < .01$), and sophistication perceptions are also a significant predictor of slogan evaluation ($\eta^2 = .084$; $F(1, 55) = 6.48, p < .05$), suggesting that sophistication perceptions do not mediate slogan evaluations in the detergent product category.

Mediation for Chocolate. Ad language emerged as a predictor of slogan evaluation ($\eta^2 = .136$; $F(3, 57) = 2.98,$

$p < .05$) but not belongingness perceptions ($\eta^2 = .038$; $F(3, 57) = .75$, $p > .50$). When both language and belongingness perceptions are used in the same regression equation to predict slogan evaluation, the effect of language continues to remain significant, although it drops a little in effect size ($\eta^2 = .111$; $F(3, 56) = 2.77$, $p < .05$); belongingness perceptions are also a significant predictor ($\eta^2 = .112$; $F(1, 56) = 8.37$, $p < .01$), suggesting belongingness is unlikely to mediate language effects for this product category.

Ad language, however, emerged as a significant predictor of sophistication perceptions ($\eta^2 = .128$; $F(3, 57) = 2.78$, $p < .05$). When both language and sophistication perceptions are used in the same regression equation to predict slogan evaluation, the effect of ad language is no longer significant ($\eta^2 = .071$; $F(3, 56) = 1.68$, $p > .18$), while sophistication perceptions emerge as a significant predictor of slogan evaluation ($\eta^2 = .071$; $F(1, 56) = 5.03$, $p < .05$). These analyses suggest that the effects of language on slogan evaluation are mediated by sophistication perceptions for luxury products. In sum, the mediational analyses suggest that in generating their evaluations, consumers tend to use only the perceptual associations that are relevant for or match the product category (sophistication for luxuries and belongingness for necessities).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This article focuses on the role of advertising language in countries where the population is fluent in two languages and neither language is viewed negatively. The pilot study establishes the urban Indian population as being proficient in both English and Hindi, perceiving both languages favorably. Additionally, English was strongly associated with sophistication, while Hindi had its strongest associations with items that denoted belongingness. We develop and test our theoretical framework using this backdrop. Given our goal to focus on language-specific associations, we attempted to control for language favorability of English versus Hindi not only by choosing a context in which both these languages are evaluated favorably (India) but also by using net language favorability as a covariate to control for any remaining differences.

It is important to note that although these data were collected in India and are helpful in establishing the validity of the research context, they reveal a set of associations that appear to be globally generalizable. Past research conducted in several countries (Japan, Korea, Germany, and Singapore) has revealed similar types of associations with the local language (strong sense of closeness and belongingness; e.g., Myers-Scotton 1999, 2002) versus English (modern, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan; e.g., Piller 2003; Takashi 1990a, 1990b), suggesting generalizability of the chosen context and the underlying language perceptions.

Study 1 tests the role of company (local vs. MNC) in advertising language choice, using single language ads. Consistent with our conceptual framework, the findings reveal that language choice is likely to matter to a significantly greater extent to MNCs than to local companies. As such,

across the two product categories tested in our research (detergent for necessities and chocolate for luxuries), language did not influence ad evaluations for the local company. However, English emerged as a more effective choice for luxury goods, and Hindi led to more favorable evaluations of necessities, when the company was an MNC. Results of this experiment suggest that MNCs need to be more cognizant about language choices in global bilingual markets, and it would be ill advised for them to simply follow the choices that appear to be working for the local corporations. Thus, the choice of advertising can be extremely important for MNCs, especially for positioning the product.

Study 2, consequently, was designed to provide deeper insights into the role of language for MNCs. It attempted to (a) zero in on the processes underlying language effects on ad evaluations and (b) extend the scope of research from single language slogans to mixed language advertising. The results revealed that consumers tend to use the perceptual associations of languages that are most relevant for evaluating the product category (sophistication for luxuries and belongingness for necessities; i.e., mediation analyses).

Our research provides several novel and interesting insights about language use for MNCs—relating to both single language as well as mixed language ads. It identifies an important caveat relating to the use of local language by an MNC. As study 2 reveals, the unexpectedness of Hindi language choice by an MNC focuses a lot of attention (more than even the mixed languages) on the language of the ad (largest number of language-related cognitive responses), heightening the perceiver's skepticism, as reflected in the increased counterargumentation, thereby, reducing the ad's persuasiveness. This outcome appears to be more likely as the level of slogan elaboration increases (e.g., study 2 vs. study 1). As such, the belongingness advantage that is implied by the use of Hindi for necessities might be wiped out for consumers who elaborate extensively on the slogan. These data appear to suggest that MNCs should observe caution in the use of local language, even in the domain of necessities (our findings suggest that use of local language is clearly expected to backfire in the domain of luxuries). In other words, 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.

In this regard, our findings highlight an important advantage of mixed language messages for MNCs—they are able to capitalize on the favorable associations of both languages without drawing excessive attention to the language choice and, therefore, present the “safe bet” option for advertising products that fall in the category of necessities, in global bilingual markets. Mixed language ads, in addition, might be the most feasible (and low risk) option, if a product does not clearly fall in the luxury/necessity distinction, since they are likely to elicit relevant and favorable associations for both languages. They are also likely to be relatively effective in the domain of luxuries, as study 2 demonstrates.

It is important to note that the two mixed language forms did not differ from each other in terms of their perceptual associations (sophistication and belongingness) as well as overall persuasiveness (slogan evaluation) for the two product categories tested in this research.

An interesting finding from our studies is that local firms do not necessarily have to use English to market luxuries in India. While this seems to be the prevailing practice in India, our results show that language choice, even for luxuries, has little impact for local firms.

It is, however, important to note that the effects obtained in this research (especially those related to the mixed language ads) may only generalize to contexts in which the salient associations for both languages are primarily positive. Thus, if the two languages fall in the majority-minority category, one being perceived as favorable and the other having predominantly unfavorable associations, the language of the code-switched term is likely to play a more important role (e.g., see Luna and Peracchio 2005a, 2005b). A useful avenue for future research may be to examine the role of different language formats, when both favorability and language-specific associations vary, by taking the joint influences of both into account.

A possible limitation of our study is that the hypotheses were tested in the context of a single product category of luxuries (chocolates) and one category of necessities (detergent). Future research could attempt to replicate our results using other product categories of luxuries and necessities. However, selecting these categories will require several critical considerations to rule out potential confounds, such as the cost differential in the products, country-of-origin effects in the category, whether it is a packaged good or not, and the prevalence of branded items in the category. We have examined belongingness and sophistication associations of language. Future research could also look at these associations for products by using a sophisticated product and a belongingness product.

Another limitation of our research is that consumers in the studies were well-educated individuals for whom both English and Hindi may be regarded as favorable and for whom sophistication might be a desirable brand attribute. Given our relatively homogeneous sample, these findings should be generalized with caution to other segments of the Indian population, for example, rural India where education levels tend to be significantly lower.

Additional research should examine the generalizability of these findings across different types of media. One interesting finding of our pilot study was that the Indian participants were more likely to read and write in English (vs. Hindi) but were more likely to engage in conversations as well as seek entertainment (e.g., movies) in Hindi (vs. English). Therefore, it is possible that language-based effects may vary with the media of communication (e.g., print vs. broadcast).

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