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Publisher: Routledge

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International Journal of Advertising: The Review of Marketing Communications

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rina20>

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Published online: 20 Feb 2015.

To cite this article: Margherita Pagani, Ronald Goldsmith & Andrea Perracchio (2015): Standardization vs. adaptation: consumer reaction to TV ads containing subtitled or English dubbed ads, International Journal of Advertising: The Review of Marketing Communications

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2015.1009349>

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Standardization vs. adaptation: consumer reaction to TV ads containing subtitled or English dubbed ads

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(Received 26 November 2013; accepted 5 August 2014)

The aim of this study is to gain a better insight into the effect of using linguistically standardized (in English) TV adverts as opposed to two types of linguistically adapted commercials (dubbed in the local language or subtitled in the local language) on attitude-towards-the-ad and attitude-towards-the-brand. We ran a between-subjects experiment in three countries (Italy, Germany, and Spain) with three different versions of commercials (English only, dubbed in the local language, and subtitled in the local language) and assessed the effect of three different versions of the ads on attitude-towards-the-ad and on attitude-towards-the-brand. Results indicate that English-only adverts were less preferred than the alternatives and led to lower brand attitudes as well. This result was consistent for three advertised products (mobile phone, canned drink, and automobile) and replicated in all three countries, showing that this effect is robust.

Keywords: advertising standardization; advertising adaptation; TV ads; language

Introduction

Among the many different aspects of television advertising that may influence consumer response, relatively little attention has been paid to the impact of language choice (Gerritsen et al. 2010). Although TV advertising is pervasive throughout the world and multinational companies use many of the same adverts in different countries, few studies have considered the effects on consumers of using a foreign language in a TV advert instead of a local one. It should be noted that even if many different foreign languages are used in advertising, English is the one that occurs most often (Bhatia 1992). Because TV advertising is so expensive and because it has such a widespread influence on consumers around the world, it is important to determine whether using English is more or less important to the success of the advert in influencing consumers.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to gain a better insight into the effect on attitude-toward-the-ad (ATAD) and attitude-toward-the-brand (ATBR) of the use of linguistically standardized (in English) TV adverts, as opposed to two types of linguistically adapted commercials – dubbed in the local language or subtitled in the local language – two common alternatives to English-only adverts. Consequently, this study assesses consumers' responses to two alternative methods of language adaptation (dubbing and subtitling). After reviewing the relevant literature, we formulate hypotheses and test them through an experiment with three different versions of TV ads (one linguistically standardized and two adapted). In order to enhance the generalizability of the findings, we replicate the treatment across three different types of products: a car, a drink, and a mobile phone.

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Language differences in advertisements

Many studies show that English is widely used in product advertising in non-English speaking European countries (Aldea 1987; Berns 1995; Cheshire and Moser 1994; Fink 1975, 1977, 1979, 1995, 1997; Gerritsen 1995; Gerritsen et al. 2000; Gerritsen et al. 2007; Graddol 1999; Haensch 1981; Martin 2002; Piller 2001; Pratt 1980; Sella 1993). This is because a large number of global companies today need to communicate with a growing number of national and international stakeholders. In the communication with consumers, advertising is an important tool for companies. When businesses advertise in many different markets, they have to choose between standardization and adaptation of their campaigns. In recent decades, the question of standardization versus adaptation has taken centre stage in both academic debates and international advertising practice (Backhaus and van Doorn 2007; Taylor 2005). When it comes to advertising, the standardization–localization debate has centred on whether the company’s communication should be adapted to the specificities of the local environment of the hosting countries (Hornikx, Van Meurs, and De Boer 2010).

International advertising standardization refers to utilizing the same or similar advertising messages across different countries or areas (Okazaki et al. 2006), whereas international advertising adaptation is defined as using different advertising messages in separate markets (Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2013; Wang and Yang 2011). A standardized campaign allows the creation of a more homogeneous image of the firm and its brand in multiple markets. Moreover, potential economic benefits related to cost savings and the abilities to implement a coordinated strategy and to appeal to cross-market segments are also believed to be advantages of standardization (Taylor and Okazaki 2005). Advertisers today commonly use two main forms of language transfer: subtitling and dubbing (Mera 1998). Subtitling allows maintaining the original soundtrack and the integrity of a holistic performance. Despite a lack of complete linguistic comprehension, the flavour of the language, the mood, and the sense of a different culture come across clearly (House, Quigley, and de Luque 2010; Mera 1998). Therefore, subtitles create a different form of communication that can convey much more information than a literal translation alone.

In contrast, dubbed programmes are easy to follow because viewers do not have to read while viewing (Koolstra, Peeters, and Spinhof 2002). Typical ‘dubbing countries’ are Austria, Italy, Spain, France, and Germany, while typical ‘subtitling countries’ are Denmark, Finland, Greece, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, the UK, and Luxemburg (Koolstra, Peeters, and Spinhof 2002). Opinion polls have shown that viewers in typical dubbing countries prefer dubbed TV programmes, while viewers in typical subtitling countries would rather watch subtitled TV shows (e.g., Kilborn 1993; Luyken et al. 1991). However, today, there is a trend in Western European countries (especially in Italy, Germany, and France) towards an increased use of subtitling (European Commission 2007; Georgakapoulou 2012). This is because the content providers and broadcasters want to reach the widest audience as quickly and as cheaply as possible. Indeed, subtitling can be a cost-effective alternative to dubbing (Luyken et al. 1991).

The theory of standardization has, however, received criticism. Many empirical studies (Cui et al. 2012; De Mooij 2005; Han and Shavitt 1994; Hoeken et al. 2003; Terlutter, Diehl, and Mueller 2010) find that advertising in order to be successful and effective has to adapt to the needs and tastes of the local culture that differ in terms of value hierarchies (De Mooij and Hofstede 2010). Hornikx and O’Keefe (2009) show that culturally adapted messages are more persuasive and better liked than standardized ones. Focusing

specifically on language, Gerritsen et al. (2000) study whether Dutch consumers comprehend commercials that contain English, and if they appreciate them. In this case, the findings show that the subjects had a rather negative attitude toward the TV advertisements in English, and only 36% of them were able to comprehend the English that was used. Gerritsen et al. (2007) examine both consumers' attitude towards and comprehension of advertising messages with English words compared to those in the local language in three European countries (Germany, Holland, and Spain). They find that respondents have neither a positive nor a negative attitude towards the use of English in advertising, meaning that the consumers consider English a neutral advertising language. Ahn and La Ferle (2008) study the effects of using English in advertising on the brand recall and recognition variables. They find that recall and recognition are higher for the body copy in Korean than for the English one. Puntoni, De Langhe, and van Osselaer (2009) show also that consumers perceive messages expressed in the local language as more emotional than messages expressed in English. Finally, Gerritsen et al. (2010) study the effects of using English in product advertising in France, Holland, Belgium, Spain, and Germany. They report that the target groups did not understand 40% of the sentences used in six paper ads.

The literature contains little evidence as to whether standardized ads with English are evaluated more or less positively than ads with the local language, although a recent advertisement in *Fortune* magazine ('Success in any language', Special Advertising Section, *Fortune*, 24 February 2014, S1–S5) quotes a market researcher with Common Sense Advisory, a market research firm, who says, referring to websites, that there is 'a clear desire among the world's consumers to be addressed in their own language'. In this study, we consider two target groups characterized by the use of dubbed advertisement and subtitles and consider the effect of different languages on attitude-towards-the-ad and on attitude-towards-the-brand. However, given the limited findings of previous studies, we hypothesize that consumers prefer either dubbed or subtitled TV adverts to English-only adverts.

H1 : Consumers give higher attitude-towards-the-ad ratings to dubbed and subtitled TV ads than they give to English-only TV ads.

ATAD is one of the most widely used indicators of consumer response to adverts. Its content reflects an affective reaction towards the immediate stimulus. Because adverts are most often for specific brands, their intent can vary, from striving to stimulate an immediate specific outcome, such as a trial, to creating positive brand associations and images. In most instances, the intent of the advertisement is to shape positive brand attitudes among viewers and readers in the attempt to persuade consumers that the brand is desirable, valuable, attractive, and so forth. This concept of ATBR has a long history of use in market and consumer research (Spears and Singh 2004). This history reflects the usefulness of the concept to understanding the influence of advertising on brand selection and purchase (e.g., Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Newell 2002). For the purpose of the present study, we follow the definition of ATBR proposed by Spears and Singh (2004, 55): 'attitude towards the brand is a relatively enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior'. The scale we used to operationalize ATAB in this study reflects this definition, as described below.

Because ATAB is conceptualized partially as an outcome of exposure to an advert, when consumers respond positively to an advert, they should consequently develop a positive attitude towards the advertised brand (Spears and Singh 2004). This presumption that ATAD is positively correlated with ATBR has been well supported by empirical

studies of TV advertising (Pham, Geuens, and De Pelsmacker 2013) and in print advertising experiments (e.g., Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Newell 2002). Thus, because we speculate that the effects of advert type on ATBR will mirror the effects of advert type on ATAD, we propose the second hypothesis:

H2 : Consumers give higher attitude-towards-the-brand ratings to dubbed and subtitled TV ads than they give to English-only TV ads.

Method

Country selection

We carried out the study in three Western European countries: Italy, Germany, and Spain. These three countries were selected because TV ads are shown in all three countries in both native languages, English only, dubbed in the local language, and in English subtitled with the local language. These countries also present wide variations in the proficiency levels of English among them (European Commission 2006, 2012; Lee 2012). The Eurobarometer 386 (European Commission 2012) shows that the percentage of people who believe they can hold a conversation in English is equal to 56% in Germany, 34% in Italy, and 22% in Spain. In addition, the rate of citizens who state they can follow the news in English on radio or TV is 33% in Germany, 24% in Italy, and 12% in Spain.

The samples give the study a broad sample of the variability in the comprehensibility of the English used in the commercials, which might affect the attitude that viewers develop towards them. In other words, German citizens might comprehend the English version of the commercials better than Italians could, and Italians might comprehend them better than the Spanish could; these differences in terms of comprehension of the commercials might have an effect on the attitude that viewers develop towards them. For instance, Gerritsen et al. (2000) report that participants' attitude towards the use of English in the commercials grows more positive when their comprehension is higher. Finally, Hornikx, Van Meuers, and De Boer (2010) show that easy-to-understand English slogans are better appreciated than difficult ones. These findings empirically support the existence of a relationship between language comprehension and appreciation of the advertisements.

The second reason why we selected these countries was that the most widely spoken mother tongue in Europe is German (16%), followed by Italian (13%), English (13%), French (12%) and Spanish (8%) (European Commission 2012). The prevalence with which languages are spoken as the mother tongue broadly reflects the population distribution within the EU. It seemed therefore appropriate to study the countries with the largest population in Europe. However, we excluded France from the sample because it is an example of a country that resists the foreignization or anglicization of the local language in advertising messages (Mueller 2011). Any English-speaking country was then included in the sample given that the purpose of this study was to research the attitude of the respondents towards the advert and the brand when either linguistically standardized (in English) or adapted (in the local language) versions of TV advertisements are presented to them.

Sample

The respondents were 482 students (182 in Italy, 151 in Germany, and 149 in Spain) studying at a university and between 18 and 25 years of age. The main reason for

selecting this age group is that, as found by Gerritsen et al. (2000) and Gerritsen et al. (2010), advertising agencies claim that commercials containing English are aimed at young people. Other researchers seem to agree with their findings: De Mooij (1994) states that the better-educated people throughout Europe, as well as the youth, can be reached with English. Especially young and well-educated people were therefore chosen as respondents, as they could be representative of the target group of the advertising messages conveyed in English. Moreover, younger people between 15 and 24 are very likely to rate their level of ability in English as 'very good' (European Commission 2012). A cross-tabulation showed that males and females were distributed evenly across the three countries.

Commercials

The three commercials that were selected for the study were broadcast (in their dubbed version) on one of the nationwide TV channels across the three target countries during the 12 months preceding the research. Apple iPhone 5 (a smartphone), Red Bull (an energy drink), and Renault Clio (a car) commercials were chosen as the stimuli for the experiment. For each of the selected adverts, three different versions (one linguistically standardized and two adapted) were used. The standardized advert was completely in English, while the adapted commercials were either dubbed or subtitled in the local language. Both the standardized and the dubbed versions of the TV adverts were found on the file-sharing website YouTube (iPhone 5: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOM3qzZkVw0>; Renault Clio: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mGup-jvVi8>; Red Bull: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nGf_A7r668); the subtitled versions were developed by the authors with the help of native speakers of the target languages. The manipulated versions of the commercials used in the experiment consisted of uniform messages with no modifications of images, illustrations, or words except for either translation or the insertion of subtitles.

We chose the iPhone 5, Red Bull, and Renault Clio commercials because they were broadcast simultaneously across the three target countries and they might have been of interest to all subjects in the target group given the nature of the products. The choice of the three ads was also driven by opportunity reasons since it was necessary to identify a linguistically standardized and three dubbed versions (in the language of the target countries) of the commercials, that had to be identical except for translation.

Survey procedure and questionnaire

We conducted a between-subjects experiment online through the Qualtrics online web platform (<http://www.qualtrics.com/>). The commercials and questionnaires were posted on the Qualtrics website, and then the anonymous link generated by the software was sent out using the social media and the personal email of one of the authors. Referral sampling was used for this study; respondents were requested to extend the invitation to participate to other people. Upon clicking on the invitation link, the participant was randomly directed to one of three types of ads for the three brands: English only ads, dubbed ads, and subtitled ads. Table 1 presents the number of participants from each country and the number who viewed each advert. The three advert types were almost uniformly distributed across the three countries.

The subjects' attitude towards the commercials (ATAD) was measured in the following way: the subjects were shown a commercial and immediately afterwards they were

Table 1. Advert type and country cross-tabulation.

Country	English	Dubbed	Subtitled	Total
Italy	66	59	57	182
Germany	52	50	49	151
Spain	50	48	51	149
Total	168	157	157	482

Note: $\chi^2 = 0.42, p = 0.981$.

asked to indicate, on three 7-point bipolar adjective scales, to what extent they felt that the commercial was ‘good/bad’, ‘favourable/unfavourable’, and ‘pleasant/unpleasant’. After asking for opinions of the ad, an item asked, ‘Have you seen the TV advert before?’ (yes or no), in order to assess the effect of prior exposure on the advert evaluation. The same questions were asked again after showing the second and the third commercials selected. The order of the ads in the questionnaire was varied to mitigate any effect of order. Following the ATAD measures, the respondents’ attitude-towards-the-brand was gauged using three 7-point bipolar adjective scales anchored with ‘good/bad’, ‘favourable/unfavourable’, and ‘satisfactory/unsatisfactory’. These short scales are the same used by Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Newell (2002) and are similar to those proposed by Spears and Singh (2004).

It should be noted ‘when data are collected via anonymous Internet surveys ... data quality can be a concern’ (Meade and Craig 2012, 437). In fact, numerous studies (Buchanan 2000; Johnson 2005) show that a lack of environmental control could lead to a decrease in data quality, and, even more importantly, these data ‘could lead to spurious within-group variability and lower reliability’ (Clark, Gironda, and Young 2003), which, in turn, ‘will attenuate correlations and potentially create Type II errors in hypothesis testing’ (Meade and Craig 2012, 437). In order to assess whether respondents paid attention to the questionnaire, we included an instructed response item (‘To monitor quality, please respond with a 2 for this item’) and a self-report measure (‘It is vital to our study that we only include responses from people that devoted their full attention to this study. Otherwise, months of effort (the researchers’ and the time of other participants) could be wasted. In your honest opinion, should we use your data in our analyses in this study?’ – yes or no; Meade and Craig 2012) so that we could screen out careless respondents.

Results

Preliminary analyses

The first preliminary analysis examined the two quality-control items used in all three surveys. All 482 survey participants responded with a ‘2’ to the first item as instructed, and all 482 responded with a ‘yes’ to the second item. These responses indicated that the participants paid attention to the questionnaire items and provided valid responses to the substantive questions. Qualtrics recorded the time participants took to complete the questionnaire. Owing to an issue with the program, these start and stop times were only recorded for 475 of the 482 participants. Because they were able to begin the questionnaire, stop for a while, and return later, 12 participants took more than 1 hour to complete it. When we set these 12 responses aside we found that the time taken for 463 participants to complete the questionnaire ranged from 1 minute, 28 seconds to 21 minutes, 30

seconds, with a mean completion time of 5 minutes, 37 seconds (SD = 2 minutes, 42 seconds). For these participants, there were no statistically significant differences in mean time of completion between genders, countries, or advert types, nor were there any statistically significant correlations between completion time and any of the dependent variables. Thus, the time participants took to complete the questionnaire did not seem to be related to any of the other variables in the study. Performing the hypothesis tests with only the 463 participants who took less than 1 hour to complete the survey yielded results identical to using the entire sample, so the latter is reported below.

We then conducted initial data analyses to verify the psychometric properties of the dependent variable measures, ATAD and ATBR. To this end, we used confirmatory factor analysis to assess the unidimensionality and internal consistency of the scale for each of the product categories: iPhone, Red Bull, and Renault Clio. These analyses revealed that the items all loaded significantly on their respective factors (convergent validity) and were substantial in size (> 0.8). The fit statistics all verified that the model fit the data for each ad very well ($p > 0.05$). Finally, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was very large (> 0.6) and higher than the squared correlations between the two constructs, verifying discriminant validity. Thus, we tested the hypotheses using the average scores of the measure of ATAD and ATBR for each advert, where higher scores indicated more positive responses.

Hypothesis 1 test

To test the hypothesis that dubbed and subtitled adverts yield more positive ATAD than English ones, we used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the mean scores for ATAD across the three ad types: English only, dubbed in the local language, or subtitled in the local language (see Table 2). In order to control for the possible influence of having seen the ad prior to the experiment, we included whether the respondent had seen the ad prior to the experiment (yes or no) as a control variable. Because our interest was not in

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of attitude-towards-the-ad and attitude-towards-the-brand for the Italian sample ($n = 182$).

Variable	ATAD			ATBR	
	n	M	SD	M	SD
<i>Apple iPhone</i>					
English only	66	5.6 ^a	1.2	5.1 ^a	1.5
Dubbed	59	6.1 ^b	0.76	5.7 ^b	1.0
Subtitled	57	6.2 ^b	0.85	5.9 ^b	0.91
<i>Red Bull</i>					
English only	66	5.0 ^a	1.1	4.4 ^a	1.3
Dubbed	59	5.4 ^b	1.0	5.0 ^b	1.1
Subtitled	57	5.7 ^b	0.91	5.2 ^b	1.2
<i>Renault</i>					
English only	66	5.0 ^a	1.0	4.5 ^a	1.2
Dubbed	59	5.5 ^b	1.1	5.1 ^b	1.1
Subtitled	57	5.4 ^b	0.91	5.3 ^b	1.1

Note: Means with different subscripts are statistically different ($p < 0.05$) by Bonferroni tests. ATAD, attitude-towards-the-ad; ATBR, attitude-towards-the-brand; M, means; SD, standard deviations.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of attitude-towards-the-ad and attitude-towards-the-brand for the German sample (n = 15).

Variable	ATAD			ATBR	
	n	M	SD	M	SD
<i>Apple iPhone</i>					
English only	52	5.5 ^a	0.92	4.7 ^a	1.1
Dubbed	50	5.7 ^{a,b}	1.1	5.3 ^b	1.2
Subtitled	49	6.0 ^b	0.84	5.7 ^b	0.74
<i>Red Bull</i>					
English only	52	5.0 ^a	0.92	4.6 ^a	1.0
Dubbed	50	5.5 ^b	0.94	4.9 ^a	1.0
Subtitled	49	5.4 ^{a,b}	1.1	4.9 ^a	1.0
<i>Renault</i>					
English only	52	4.7 ^a	1.0	3.8 ^a	1.1
Dubbed	50	5.5 ^b	1.1	4.8 ^b	1.0
Subtitled	49	5.5 ^b	0.92	4.8 ^b	1.1

Note: Means with different subscripts are statistically different ($p < 0.05$) by Bonferroni tests. ATAD, attitude-towards-the-ad; ATBR, attitude-towards-the-brand; M, means; SD, standard deviations.

outcome variable selection or ordering, or in variable system structure, and because we had only two dependent variables (Huberty and Morris 1989), we performed univariate ANOVA to test the hypotheses for each product separately. In addition, we had to test each product separately to control for prior advert exposure. Our interest was in whether the type of language used in the ad influenced ATAD with the effect of prior exposure controlled, so we focused only on the statistical effect of the advert treatment and ignored whether the interaction or the main effect for prior exposure was statistically significant. Table 2 presents the results of running the ANOVAs and performing a post-hoc test (Bonferroni) on the mean differences. We chose the Bonferroni test because, given our relatively small but nearly equal cell sizes, we wanted conservative control over Type I error rates, and the number of comparisons was small (Field 2009, 374).

An examination of the results in Table 2 reveals that for the Italian sample, the mean ATAD scores for the English-only adverts for all three products were lower than those of the both the subtitled and dubbed versions. Note that these results were after controlling for prior advert viewing. Thus, the findings support H1 for the Italian sample. Looking at the results of replicating the study in both Germany and Spain, found in Tables 3 and 4, shows similar findings. In the case of each product and for both countries, the English-only ad scored lower than at least one of the other two adverts. This is evidence that the Italian finding is robust across two other European countries with different levels of English proficiency.

Hypothesis 2 test

The second hypothesis proposed that dubbed and subtitled adverts yield more positive ATBR than do English adverts. We used the same ANOVA as in testing H1. As might be expected given the positive correlation often seen between ATAD and ATBR (Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Newell 2002; Pham, Geuens, and De Pelsmacker 2013), the results were similar, supporting the hypothesis. For the Italian sample, the English-only advert scored

Table 4. Means and standard deviations of attitude-towards-the-ad and attitude-towards-the-brand for the Spanish sample (n = 149).

	ATAD			ATBR	
Variable	n	M	SD	M	SD
<i>Apple iPhone</i>					
English only	50	5.4 ^a	0.87	5.1 ^a	0.80
Dubbed	48	5.9 ^b	0.92	5.7 ^b	0.83
Subtitled	51	5.9 ^b	1.3	6.1 ^b	0.76
<i>Red Bull</i>					
English only	50	4.7 ^a	0.91	4.2 ^a	0.71
Dubbed	48	5.1 ^{a,b}	1.4	4.8 ^b	1.3
Subtitled	51	5.4 ^b	1.0	4.5 ^b	1.3
<i>Renault</i>					
English only	50	4.8 ^a	0.77	4.3 ^a	0.79
Dubbed	48	5.7 ^b	0.96	5.2 ^b	0.96
Subtitled	51	5.5 ^b	1.1	5.3 ^b	1.1

Note: Means with different subscripts are statistically different ($p < 0.05$) by Bonferroni tests. ATAD, attitude-towards-the-ad; ATBR, attitude-towards-the-brand; M, means; SD, standard deviations.

lower than both the dubbed and subtitled adverts for all three products (see Table 2). The replications for the German and Spanish samples yielded similar results (see Tables 3 and 4), with the exception of the German Red Bull adverts.

Discussion

The results show that that many European consumers have more negative attitudes towards viewing TV adverts in English than they do for the same ads either dubbed or subtitled in their local languages. In fact, considering that viewers no longer seem to have a negative attitude towards subtitling, advertisers could find it convenient to embrace the cheapest form of language adaptation. However, it should be noted that each adaptation method has pros and cons that should be carefully considered when deciding whether to dub or subtitle a TV advertisement. For example, even when the sound of the television is drowned out by other noises in the room, subtitled programmes can still be followed (Koolstra, Peeters, and Spinhof 2002). On the other hand, listening to spoken text is evidently not very demanding mentally because viewers do not need to be reading at the same time (Koolstra, Peeters, and Spinhof 2002). Additionally, in subtitled programmes, the original voices can be heard, but the screen is 'polluted' with lines of texts that partially cover the picture (Koolstra, Peeters, and Spinhof 2002).

The results of the present study confirm, however, the fact that, today, the two forms of language adaptation can be considered valid alternatives (each with its own pros and cons), and advertisers should choose from time to time which one to adopt. Considerations such as the target audience or the goal of the campaign should guide them in their choice.

In reality, few companies have developed linguistically standardized campaigns. The 2013 World of Red Bull commercial is one of few examples of a TV ad that was broadcast in Europe in the original English language without the insertion of subtitles.

Marketers should also be aware of the fact that ATAD directly influences ATBR, which some research (Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Newell 2002) shows is positively related to customers' purchase intention. Marketers should make sure that customers have a positive attitude towards the commercials they create, given that ATAD has been found to influence the bottom line of the company's balance sheet. Consequently, advertisers should pre-test the ads with groups of consumers who mirror the target audience and, in particular, monitor the attitude that viewers develop towards the ad. By using pre-tests, advertisers can find out whether the consumers' ATAD is positive or not and eventually take corrective actions, before the commercials are aired.

Conclusion

The frequent use of the English language in international advertising raises a number of questions, such as to what extent the use of this global language is an effective choice, and whether its use is appreciated by consumers or not. Moreover, even when a language adaptation strategy is chosen, and thus the ads are translated into local languages, it is not clear which form of language transfer should be preferred.

These questions were addressed in this study by focusing on the issue of possible differences in preference for English or a local language as well as for dubbing or subtitling in TV advertising. In particular, the present research shows how the language choice and the language adaptation method influence consumers' attitude-towards-the-ad and attitude-towards-the-brand.

Results showed that viewers have a rather negative attitude towards the use of advertisements in English and seem to develop more negative attitudes towards the brand when linguistically standardized commercials are shown to them. However, the target group (which belongs to typical dubbing countries) did not show a more positive attitude towards the dubbed advertisements than towards subtitled ones and, therefore, the two forms of language transfer seem to be equally liked and accepted.

The fact that the consumers' attitude towards the commercials in English was found to be significantly more negative than their attitude towards linguistically adapted messages could have been because the viewers found it difficult to understand the TV adverts conveyed in English. In their studies, Gerritsen et al. (2000), Gerritsen et al. (2010), and Hornikx, van Meurs, and De Boer (2010) find that the consumers often do not comprehend the adverts in English and therefore develop a negative attitude towards them. For example, Gerritsen et al. (2000, 28) claim that 'the subjects may think that they understand the English used but when they are asked to explain what is meant, it turns out that only 36 percent are able to do so'. Gerritsen et al. (2010) find, then, that 39% of all English phrases contained in three adverts selected for their study were not understood. This lack of understanding is not of little consequence, as explained by Pieters and Van Raaij (1992). Indeed, they claim that consumers' correct understanding of the message is a prerequisite for the ad to achieve the desired communicative effect (Pieters and Van Raaij 1992). The commercials in English used in this study could have therefore not achieved their communicative effect because the viewers did simply not comprehend them properly.

However, the main finding of this study is that dubbing and subtitling seem to be both well accepted and liked across the target countries, given that the viewers developed similar attitudes-towards-the-ad and attitudes-towards-the-brand regardless of the language adaptation method used. These results are not consistent with the findings of previous studies. For example, Luyken et al. (1991) studied the preferences of viewers in relation

to the language transfer method and found that in Germany and Holland, 80% or more of the viewers preferred the method that was common in their own country. Kilborn (1993) also found that viewers in typical dubbing countries show a preference for dubbed TV programmes.

The results of the present study could be because the growth of Internet-based video has made it increasingly common for subtitles to accompany streamed and downloaded content. Moreover, nowadays, global TV channels like MTV or Eurosport often broadcast subtitled interviews with famous people, and subtitled TV programmes (an example is the famous American reality television series *Jersey Shore*, which ran on MTV from 3 December 2009 to 20 December 2012). It is therefore likely that the viewers are more used to subtitling than in the past and willing to accept both adaptation methods. This would be great news for advertisers since dubbing is a much more expensive process and can cost as much as 10 times more than subtitling (Luyken et al. 1991). Moreover, subtitling is also faster than dubbing, and this can be an important aspect when advertisers are given little time to develop a new campaign.

This study indicates not only that the language and the form of language adaptation play an important role in consumer evaluation of advertisements, but also that the attitude that consumers develop towards the advertisement seem to have a direct effect on perceptions of brand. One suggestion derived from these findings is that creating adverts with little linguistic content, relying instead on visual elements, might be a simple solution to the problem. Future research could extend this study by also considering different countries (i.e., those in Asia, Europe, Africa and America).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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