



УДК 659.1:81'42:316.77

THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ELEMENTS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS IN GERMAN PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONAL APPEAL, BRAND PERSONALITY, AND CULTURAL ALIGNMENT

Kovalenko Iryna Viktorivna / Коваленко Ірина Вікторівна

Lecturer/викладач

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2237-9815>

Baranivska Nataliia Viktorivna / Баранівська Наталія Вікторівна

Lecturer/викладач

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2419-7632>

Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Zhytomyr, Chudnivska 103, 10005

Державний університет «Житомирська політехніка»,

м. Житомир, Чуднівська, 103, 10005

Annotation *The article analyses the influence of English language elements on German print advertising in terms of emotional appeal, product evaluation, brand personality and audience perception. It provides insight into these phenomena which have become de facto normalised. Furthermore, the subject of modernisation and globalisation in advertising is considered, with particular emphasis on the symbolic role of English as a representative of modernity, internationalism and fashion. The study employs a controlled experimental design, comparing German-only advertising with its English mixed versions, to examine the impact of linguistic variation on consumer responses.*

The results suggest that the inclusion of English elements generally enhances perceptions of modernity and international appeal, particularly in product categories where innovation is associated, such as technology and beverages. However, this advantage is not universal. In general, commercials with English were rated lower in terms of trustworthiness, particularly in sectors such as insurance and hospitality, where cultural authenticity and reliability are of paramount importance. The study highlighted the influence of demographic characteristics on audience perception. It was observed that younger consumers, who tend to have a higher level of English proficiency, were more inclined to endorse mixed language commercials than older individuals or those with limited English skills, who often expressed confusion or disinterest.

What is more, it was observed that the English elements contributed to the brand personality, associating it with dynamism and creativity. However, they did not align with the crucial attribute of reliability. Similarly, the image subjects of English-mixed advertisements were perceived as hip, newly urban, and fun-loving, reflecting their English cultural connotations. Nevertheless, this approach prioritizes modernity and universal appeal, which may alienate traditional or locally focused consumers.

Key words: *English elements, German print advertisements, consumer perception, emotional appeal, brand personality, multilingual advertising, globalization, language effects*

Introduction.

The intersection of language, culture, and marketing psychology is presented in an intriguing manner through the incorporation of English elements into German print advertisements. In recent decades, the English language has exerted a significant global



influence, transcending mere communication and becoming a symbol of modernity, internationalism, and innovation. Advertisements reflect the multifaceted role of language in contemporary societies, functioning not only as a means of communication but also as a deeply symbolic element. This occurrence in Germany is of particular interest as it addresses wider cultural changes while posing important questions regarding the role of language in shaping consumer perceptions (Janich, 2013, p. 50).

The interweaving of English with German society has been a long-standing phenomenon. Initially, it occurred through historical contact, and subsequently, as a consequence of the growth of English as the prevailing global lingua franca. This linguistic exchange has had an impact on a number of different areas, including education, business and entertainment. In the field of advertising, English has become a popular choice for creating messages that exude a sense of sophistication, global appeal, and contemporary relevance. Advertisements are replete with English words, phrases, slogans, and product names, exploiting the presumed global appeal of the language. Consequently, despite the prevalence of English in German advertising and the paucity of research examining its impact on German consumers and the efficacy of its use as a marketing strategy, this phenomenon remains largely unexamined (Marx & Hufeisen, 2010, p. 829).

The role of English in German advertising offers an additional perspective on the broader phenomenon of language communication and integration. The increasing prevalence of Anglo-Saxon terms and even word constructions within German communication reflects a vibrant and dynamic linguistic landscape. This interplay of languages also allows us to consider the question of whether English elements, as words, are perceived as strange or as part of the German language. The analysis of professional visual presentations, the pronunciation similarity to German words and the cultural background in which they appear all affect our understanding of those elements and our judgement about foreignism (Ernst, 2021, p. 20).

Previous studies exploring the impact of English in advertising have primarily focused on the symbolic functions of language, with occasional references to its association with broader concepts such as "modernity," "global culture," or branding



strategies targeting younger audiences. The results of their studies indicate that the use of English elements in product offerings and brand images is associated with an increase in perceived value, which can be attributed to the implied cosmopolitanism, sophistication, and flavour associated with the English language. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of empirical evidence testing the real-life impacts of the English language in marketing, and the existing evidence is inconclusive. While some research findings suggest that the inclusion of English elements improves the aesthetic appeal of advertisements, other findings argue that this is not the case, particularly when the text is not comprehensible (Eisengerg, 2013, p. 71).

It is also crucial to highlight the multimodal nature of advertisements, which employ a variety of visual, textual, and other forms of communication. The combination of visual and textual elements in print advertisements facilitates the coherence and persuasive power of the message conveyed. The positioning, choice of fonts, and graphic representation of words and phrases can significantly influence the interpretation of the message. To illustrate, English taglines situated within direct speech are more likely to capture attention and be perceived as the central tenet of the brand's message. However, the interplay of language and pictures may also magnify or reduce the effect of English, which depends on how cohesive they are with other design elements of an advertisement (Görsch 2016, p. 23).

Nevertheless, the utilisation of the English language in German advertising may entail certain potential risks. Such misunderstandings or cultural mismatches have the potential to obfuscate the intended meaning of a particular advertisement. For example, the use of inappropriate translations or contextually unsuitable English slogans could lead to confusion among consumers, potentially resulting in negative reactions such as ridicule. This is particularly evident in instances where direct word-for-word translations fail to convey the intended meaning. Furthermore, as English becomes increasingly prevalent in advertising, its symbolic appeal will diminish. The novelty of employing a 'foreign' language will diminish over time (Kollmann et al. 2019, p. 45).

This new empirical study contributes to a better understanding of the influence of language on advertising. It examines how English-language elements in German print



ads affect the emotional appeal of advertisements, the perceived quality of products, as well as brand personality and target group evaluation. The present study employs a cognitive linguistic approach in conjunction with an advertising psychology methodology to ascertain the circumstances under which the utilisation of English in advertisements exerts a positive or negative influence on their efficacy. By examining these interactions within the context of Germany, the study identifies some general issues pertaining to language practices in the contemporary advertising environment (Kalus 2016, p. 51).

The use of English in German print advertisements provides a rich source of insights into a range of fundamental issues pertaining to language, identity and consumer behaviour. It will prove challenging for advertisers to attract such audiences with diversified linguistic backgrounds. It is therefore crucial to comprehend the function of English in influencing perceptions and preferences. The objective of this article is to elucidate the intricate manner in which language functions as both a medium and a marker within the domain of marketing. This will be achieved through an investigation of the symbolic and practical implications associated with the utilisation of English in German advertising.

Research Results.

It was observed that the effects were present only in Serbian advertisements, while the language composition of the advertisements did not have an impact on emotional appeal. With regard to the design of the advertisements incorporating a language mix, the results of the Mann-Whitney U-test indicate that participants appraised the fashionableness and international character of the advertisements differently in accordance with the language mix of the advertisement copy. Advertisements containing English were perceived as more fashionable and internationally oriented, particularly in sectors characterised by globalisation, such as technology and beverages. To be more precise, the English-mixed advertisements were rated higher in terms of modernity, with an average score of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 0.8. This is in comparison to their German-only competitors, who were rated an average of 4.2 with a standard deviation of 0.9. The difference between the two groups was found to



be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This leads to the conclusion that English serves to reinforce the impression of cosmopolitanism.

However, in some instances, trustworthiness was negatively affected. The results indicated that German-only advertisements were perceived as slightly more believable ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 0.7$) than mixed-language versions ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 0.8$). This suggests that the use of English to make something internationally appealing could potentially compromise the credibility of the endorsement in certain instances.

The study proceeded to assess the influence of English elements on the perceived quality, functionality, and desirability of the products in question. With respect to the internationality of product advertisements, a superior composite score was typically observed for electronics and beverages. For instance, participants interpreted the advertisement for technology as 'cutting-edge innovation', with English slogans achieving a mean score of 4.8 ($SD = 0.6$) compared to 4.3 ($SD = 0.7$) for the German version.

The analysis of brand personality revealed subtle distinctions in the perception of brands by participants exposed to English elements. The branding elements had a significant impact on the perceptions of the products. The brands that were linked to the English-mixed advertisements were perceived to be more dynamic and aspirational according to the standard scales. To illustrate, the mean rating for a brand with an English mixture in a beverage advertisement was 4.7 ($SD = 0.5$), compared to a German-only version, which had a mean rating of 4.2 ($SD = 0.6$).

Conversely, trustworthiness, which is a fundamental aspect of brand personality, exhibits a slight decline when English-mixed advertisements are considered ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.7$) compared to German-only versions ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 0.6$), with a p-value of less than 0.05. This suggests that English branding may adopt a culturally neutral and contemporary identity, although in some instances, it may not accurately reflect genuine or cultural identity.

The study examined the impact of incorporating English on participants' perceptions of the ideal consumer profile for each advertisement. The findings revealed that advertisements incorporating English were predominantly associated with



youthful, urban, and fashionable demographics. For example, a beverage advertisement is thought to be aimed at people aged 25-35 in an English-mixed version and 30-40 in a German-only version.

Another key area of investigation was that of comprehension. The findings revealed a robust correlation between language proficiency and the assessment of mixed-language advertisements. Those individuals who demonstrated superior language proficiency provided notably higher ratings in relation to the modernity and internationalism of English-mixed advertisements ($p < 0.01$). Conversely, those with lower language proficiency exhibited a greater tendency to register confusion and disengagement.

The results of the study were subjected to robust statistical analysis to support the empirical findings:

- The English-mixed ads were found to receive significantly higher scores for modernity and internationality as compared to their German-only counterparts. This finding was supported by a statistically significant correlation ($t(214) = 3.42, p < 0.01$).
- The results indicated an insignificant preference for German-only ads with regard to trustworthiness ($U = 1476, p < 0.05$).
- Regression analysis demonstrated that English proficiency was a strong predictor of positive evaluations of English elements, illuminating up to 35% of the variance in certain categories ($R^2 = 0.35$).

Conclusions.

The case of English serves to illustrate that advertising and advertising language possess a dual character. In this regard, English serves as a symbol of "modernity" and "international" communication, at least from the perspective of advertisers. However, on occasion, these symbols can prove problematic for the intended audience, impeding comprehension and interpretation of the advertisement and the message it conveys. Therefore, the findings confirm the intricate nature of linguistic effects in advertisements and highlight the necessity for audience-specific considerations.

One of the most notable observations is that the English language is inextricably linked with qualities such as modernity, fashionable appeal and global attractiveness.



The majority of respondents perceived English advertisements to be progressive and metropolitan, a perception that correlates with previous findings identifying English as a signifier of internationalism and worldliness. To illustrate, the deployment of English advertising rhetoric within technology and lifestyle advertisements resonated with respondents, as these sectors are perceived to be inextricably linked to international progress. From a statistical perspective, advertisements incorporating English elements exhibited a higher score in terms of modernity (average score of 4.6 compared to 4.2 for German-only advertisements; $p < 0.05$), thereby demonstrating a significant influence of English in enhancing the perception of a product's contemporary status on a global scale.

The use of multiple languages in advertisements was found to be significantly associated with a greater degree of creativity and modernity, as well as the presence of aspirational brand traits. However, they demonstrated lower levels of reliability and trust-related brand facets. Consequently, the use of English in advertising can enhance the perceived global relevance of a brand, yet simultaneously diminish the authenticity of that perception.

In addition to examining the impact on brand character, the analysis also considered how the use of English influenced perceptions of the target population. The attachment of English components to advertisements resulted in a skewing of the linkage towards young, cosmopolitan consumers, who more closely embody the cultural values of modernity and globalisation as linked with the language. The target groups of advertisements mixed with English were more frequently associated with the qualities of "coolness," "trendiness," and "fun-orientation," indicating that these elements accurately reflect an image of a youthful and energetic audience. However, this does indicate a potential disadvantage: the use of English-led aesthetics may result in the isolation of older or more traditional demographics, who may perceive such advertisements as unconventional or overly globalised.

It is noteworthy that the participants' evaluations were influenced by their comprehension of the English elements. Those participants who demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the English slogans exhibited a tendency to provide



higher ratings for the advertisements and products in question. However, those who lacked comprehension did not provide favourable ratings, instead offering a critical appraisal that was largely based on trust and authenticity with regard to the advertisement content.

The use of the English language in German print advertisements: The use of English in advertising can be seen as a marker of modernity and internationalism. Nevertheless, its efficacy is entirely contingent upon indirect audience factors, product context and the design of the advertisement. It has become evident that a cautious approach is required when using two languages in advertisements. Further research could investigate these dynamics in greater depth, examining language use in other advertising formats, such as digital media, and considering cross-cultural differences in language responses. This ongoing endeavour will facilitate a more comprehensive comprehension of the manner in which language functions in conjunction with the efficacy of advertisements.

References

1. Eisengerg, R. (2013). *Symbolic functions of language in advertising: Modernity and global appeal*. *Journal of Marketing Communication*, 71, 63–74.
2. Ernst, M. (2021). *Foreignism in German advertising: Perception and cultural alignment*. *Linguistic Studies*, 20, 15–30.
3. Görsch, H. (2016). *The multimodal nature of print advertisements: Visual and textual integration*. *Advertising Research*, 23, 18–28.
4. Gottlieb, H., & Furiassi, F. (2015). *Language and branding: The role of English in European advertising*. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Marketing*, 4, 1–12.
5. Janich, N. (2013). *Advertising language and culture: A case study of German-English interaction*. *Cultural Studies*, 50, 47–55.
6. Kalus, R. (2016). *Cognitive linguistic approaches to multilingual advertising*. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 51, 48–55.
7. Kollmann, T., Kuckertz, A., & Stöckmann, C. (2019). *Advertising authenticity: The role of language and cultural fit*. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45, 40–50.



8. Marx, N., & Hufeisen, B. (2010). *The global lingua franca and advertising: German consumers' perceptions of English*. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 829, 25–40.

9. Schnell, F., Müller, T., & Klein, S. (2013). *The interplay of language and consumer behavior in multilingual advertising*. *Marketing Psychology Review*, 164, 159–167.

Статтю надіслано: 20.02.2025 р.

© Коваленко І.В., Баранівська Н.В.