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Language Effectiveness in print media advertisements of Multi-national Fast Food chains

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Abstract

Print media advertising is area specific and tailored for a specific target market. The customer preference of language content used in advertisements of fast food chains is not gauged once they are printed and sent out to the consumers. Only pre-launch studies are conducted, but fast food chains for specific areas do not collect post-launch data. To study the advertisements of fast food multinational companies in print media one needs to identify the vocabulary that is liked and disliked by the consumers of these fast food chains. This language feedback will enhance the effectiveness of the future advertising campaigns, consequently enhancing the sales of the product in Islamabad. Printed advertisements were collected for language assessment. Researcher observations, and a survey was conducted through random sampling, to study the script, tag lines and slogans used by multinational fast food chains, namely, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds in their print media advertisements. It focused on the popular vocabulary, whether it was effective, and how it affected the consumer behaviour towards advertising in the capital city Islamabad. It was found that the targeted consumers mostly preferred a contemporary mixture of English and Urdu scripts and enjoyed those tag lines and slogans, which they could relate to their cosmopolitan lifestyle. KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds' marketing departments can use this valuable data to tailor their future advertising strategies in print media according to the preferences of their consumers in Islamabad, which can, consequently have a positive effect on their product sales.

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Keywords: Language; advertising; consumer behaviour; assessment; MNCs.

1. Introduction

This research dealt with effectiveness of the language content in print media advertisements of multi-national fast food chains. The multinational corporations (MNCs) selected for this study were



Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds outlets functioning in Islamabad, Pakistan. The focus was on the advertising carried out via print media in the capital. It aimed to find out if the language used in print media advertisements of multi-national fast food chains was appropriate to the demographics of the target audience in Islamabad. It studied the language effectiveness/appropriateness of the printed advertisements according to age, gender, ethnicity/race, society/culture, politics/religion, educational background, geographical location, message, level of formality, level of language, use of jargon and grammar/spelling. Other factors may also count in making an impact on the consumer. For example, the selection of holidays and other specific days to advertise on, on which there will be more target audience reading the advertisements, especially in newspapers and via flyers and brochures, will also make a difference to the impact of the ads. Even the page and the spot on the page to advertise will also have an impact on the effectiveness of the ad. The message and text within the ad, its length, the punch-line, slogan or tagline given, the competitive edge and comparisons with other products, and deals with customer benefits will also make a difference to the impact of the advertisement.

1.1. The print media

The print media would refer to all paper based publications in the country. Magazines, newspapers, flyers, newsletters, scholarly journals and other materials that are physically printed on paper are examples of print media (Reference.com 2016). The Printed product packaging may also be included in print media advertising. Print media includes those media of communication, which are controlled by space rather than time. It can be read at any available time and can be kept for record (mass.pakgalaxy.com 2016). That gives it an edge over the electronic media for the consumers of multinational fast food chains. The rules of communication demand that five specific goals should be addressed for effective communication, namely, the message to be conveyed, the target audience, the reaction the company wants to promote and the audience might have, and the access and affordability of the channels of communication available to the audience (Ganguly 2016). Other factors may also count in making an impact on the consumer. For example, the selection of holidays and other specific days to advertise on, on which there will be more target audience reading the advertisements, especially in newspapers and via flyers and brochures, will also make a difference to the impact of the ads. Even the page and the spot on the page to advertise will also have an impact on the effectiveness of the ad. The message and text within the ad, its length, the punch-line, slogan or tagline given, comparisons with other products, and deals with customer benefits will also make a difference to the impact of the advertisement.

1.2. The Pakistani target market

Pakistani culture and society is tuned pre-dominantly by its religious values. Although moderate Islamic trends are catching on but still, culturally, the behavioural traits and practices of the Pakistani population are essentially Islamic in nature. The Pakistani society/community, although not as conservative as a decade ago, still is able to tolerate mostly those trends, which are close to religion.

Fast food has not always been popular in Pakistan in the past. There was a time in Pakistan, about a

decade ago, when eating out was not a custom and was restricted to parties or special occasions only. Islamabad has a unique ambiance with reference to language and culture due to its affluent diplomatic residents and therefore, differs from other cities in Pakistan. Now not only children, teens and adults but the older generation also likes to eat out, and all of them may be considered the target audience for the fast food ads. Hence, a diverse audience has to be catered to in the ads of MNCs. Multi-national companies spend massive budgets on pre-launch surveys and advertising based on them, but no studies have been conducted to find out how effective the ads were and what the consumers receiving and reading them have to say about their effectiveness.

1.3. Effectiveness of print media

The advantages of advertising through print media can be more than those of advertising through electronic media. The singular visual appeal of the message and language content conveyed through print media, as opposed to the electronic media, where audio-visual messages are conveyed, seems to be more effective. The printed advertisements are sure to catch the eye of the reader subconsciously even when the reader is not consciously looking for them. As Sorce and Dewitz (2007) remark ... people who were exposed to the printed newspaper ad had higher recognition scores for its advertising content than those who received the online version. Printed ads are more structured and therefore, will trigger controlled responses in the minds of the audience/reader. Print media provides the consumer with an affordable and portable choice of reading (CareerRide.com). The lack of dependency on electronic modes of communication and easy availability gives print media an edge over electronic media. Newspapers, flyers and product packaging reaches the consumers residence through newspaper vendors and home delivery, and they purchase magazines based on a conscious choice on their part, unknowingly bringing home the ads which the sponsors of the magazine aim to promote. While many businesses have completely migrated their advertising efforts to the web because of its cost effectiveness, exposure potential and convenience, print still maintains its stance as a powerful and necessary component of an ad campaign (Forbes.com). Tangibility remains to be an advantage for the customer. To hold, feel and see the product visual has a strong positive effect on decision-making behaviour of the buyer. It established the credibility of the brand and reinforces the brand loyalty of the customers. Target marketing is easier and more effective as print media can take its effect as soon as a consumer opens a product packaging, magazine, newspaper, flyer, newsletter or a scholarly journal. Whether he wants to see the ad or not his gaze will cross it in the course of his scanning for the reading material he is actually looking for. He cannot flick the channel or click to remove the ad from sight like he could in electronic media. Print media has a longer engaging power, which holds the viewer/reader's interest till he turns the page. The trend of reverting to electronic media by most companies has actually made print media advertising more effective because, due to less demand of printed ads there is more space available in newspapers etc and bigger and better ads can be available to catch the attention of the consumer. In the past, where there used to be several small ads cramped to appear on the front pages, now one or two large ones may be seen in larger and more effective printing.

1.4. The post print analysis as an indicator

Customarily the consumer behaviour related to the effect of the advertisements was not recorded and no post-ad studies were carried out, as from the companys' perspective they might seem like a waste of time, effort and money. The companies sent out the ads to the public and just moved on to study their impact based on increase or decrease in sales. The improvement in the product sales may not be solely the true indicator of the effectiveness of the ads. Lauterborn (2012) remarks, there are others factors like the consumer wants/needs, cost and convenience to buy a product, which might also affect sales. The product, placement and pricing can also be indicators for the improvement in sales. Communication/promotion is a separate set of components from the marketing mix. Hence, it becomes important to follow-up the impact of advertisements (Communication/promotion) separately and specifically to assess the popularity of the product in the target market. The brand loyalty of customers and their retention is closely related to the communication the brand initiates and maintains with their customers. Status branding, brand attitude... self-concept and reference groups were found to have positive effects on ... consumer buying behavior (Zeb 2011). In a competitive environment...the firms that will survive will be those who research and understand their customers well---what values customers are seeking and how they judge and find those values in the market place. Thus researching customer behavior is critical for marketing success (Newman et. al. 1998). Assessing the language effectiveness of print media ads and its effect on consumer behaviour is the focus of this study and can prove to be valuable information for the fast food companies to base their future print media advertising strategies on. This research seizes an opportunity to study post advertisement consumer behaviour, which may be more useful for product sales and marketing than feasibility data collected before the advertisement is screened or printed.

2. Problem Statement

Print media advertising is area specific and tailored for the specific target market. The customer preference of language used in advertisements of fast food chains is not gauged once they are printed and sent out to the consumers in a particular city. Only pre-launch studies are conducted but fast food chains for a specific area do not collect post-launch data. No post-ad studies are ever carried out. This research addresses this issue and assesses the consumer acceptance of the various language related aspects in the advertisements of KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds.

3. Research Questions

1. What is the advertising vocabulary used in fast food print media advertisements in Islamabad?
2. Is it effective/appropriate according to the customer feedback for this target market?

4. Purpose of the Study

To study the print media advertisements of fast food multinational companies to identify the

language content that is liked and disliked by the consumers of these fast food chains. This language content feedback will help to enhance the effectiveness of the future advertising campaigns, consequently enhancing the sales of the product in Islamabad.

5. Research Methods

The observations focused on a collection and analysis of the language content used in the print media advertisements of KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds. These were collected from local newspapers, popular local magazines, their product packaging, flyers and brochures circulating in Islamabad. They were studied closely to find out the advertising vocabulary used in these fast food print media advertisements. It focused on the message/script, the text within the ad, its length, the punch-line, slogan or tagline used by multinational fast food chains. The selection of holidays and other specific days to print and advertise on, on which there will be more target audience reading the advertisements, especially in newspapers and via flyers and brochures of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds and Hardees were also taken into account. The placement of the ads on the appropriate page and the spot on the page used for the advertisement were also observed as they contributed to the popularity of the ads and made a difference to their total impact on the reader/audience. The competitive edge and the product comparisons of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds and hardees with other products and the various deals with customer benefits offered in the advertisements of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds and Hardees were also observed to gauge the popularity of the ads. The information gathered from these observations was used to design a questionnaire for the survey.

The survey studied the language content effectiveness/appropriateness of the printed advertisements according to age, gender, ethnicity/race, society/culture, politics/religion, educational background, geographical location, weather and the financial status of the target audience. It also accounted for the language appropriateness of the message, its length, level of formality, level of language, use of jargon and grammar/spelling. The language appropriateness of the punch-line, slogan/tagline, the competitive edge/comparisons and other attractive deals in the advertisements, the appropriate day to print and the appropriate printing spot selection were also gauged in the survey through the responses of the target audience as shown in Table 1.

The survey was conducted through random sampling, to find out if the language used in their print media advertisements was effective according to the customer feedback for the local target market of KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds. The data was collected from the consumers at all the KFC fast food outlets in Islamabad, namely, in sectors F6 and F10, and the Centaurus Mall. The consumers at the two McDonalds outlets in the city, namely, in sector F9 and the the Centaurus Mall, and Pizza Hut outlets in sectors F7 and F10, and the Centaurus Mall were the respondents for the survey. Hardees outlets in sector F7 and the Centaurus Mall were also the sites for collecting this data. The customers dining at all the outlets of the four fast-food outlets in the city filled a hundred questionnaires commenting on each franchise. The four hundred questionnaires that were filled, focused on the language content used in their ads and on whether it was effective/appropriate to the consumer

demographics. It showed how their print media advertising affected the consumer behaviour towards advertising in the capital city, Islamabad.

6. Findings

Islamabad has a unique ambiance with reference to language due to affluent diplomatic residents and therefore, differs from other cities in Pakistan. Generally, it was found that the consumers of these multinational companies mostly preferred a contemporary mixture of English and Urdu scripts and enjoyed those tag lines and slogans, which they could relate to in their cosmopolitan lifestyle. Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut and McDonalds were the most favored ones with reference to the language effectiveness of their print media ads, whereas the language used by Hardees in print media advertising was not very appropriate and therefore, mostly unacceptable to the consumers in Islamabad.

The detailed composite findings of the survey conducted among 400 consumers of Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds at their outlets are shown in Table 1 and its discussion below:

Table 1. Language effective/appropriate to demographics of the target audience in print media advertisements of KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds in Islamabad

| | Language appropriateness | KFC | Pizza Hut | Hardees | McDonalds |
|----|---|-----|-----------|---------|-----------|
| A. | Age appropriate | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| B. | Ethnicity appropriate | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| C. | Race appropriate | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| D. | Society appropriate | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| E. | Culture appropriate | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| F. | Religion appropriate | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| G. | Geographical location appropriate | No | No | Yes | No |
| H. | Weather appropriate | No | No | Yes | No |
| I. | Financial status | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| J. | Educational background | No | No | No | No |
| K. | Appropriate Message | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| L. | Appropriate message length | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| M. | Level of formality | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| N. | Level of language | No | No | No | Yes |
| O. | Use of jargon | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| P. | Grammar/spelling. | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Q. | Appropriate punch-line, slogan/tagline | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| R. | Attractive competitive edge/comparisons | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| S. | Appropriate day selection | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| T. | Appropriate printing spot selection | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| U. | Attractive deals | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

According to the findings of the survey titled ‘Language effective/appropriate to demographics of the target audience in print media advertisements of KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds in Islamabad’, the four hundred questionnaire revealed that the majority found the ads of KFC, Pizza Hut and McDonalds language appropriate with reference to age, ethnicity, race, society, culture and

religion, whereas the ads if Hardees were not found appropriate. With reference to the language appropriateness, considering the geographical location and weather KFC, Pizza Hut and McDonalds print media ads were considered inappropriate, while the ads of Hardees were considered appropriate by the consumers. Language was considered as appropriate for the Financial status by the majority of consumers for all four food chains but the language was considered inappropriate by them for the educational background of the consumers of all the four food chains. The majority of the consumers believed that the language of the message and the level of formality was effective in the print media ads of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds but not for Hardees. They asserted that the level of language, use of jargon and the grammar/spellings were appropriate in KFC, Pizza Hut and McDonalds ads but not appropriate in Hardees ads. The selection of holidays and other specific days to print and advertise on, on which there will be more target audience reading the advertisements, especially in newspapers and via flyers and brochures were in favour of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds but not for Hardees. Majority of the respondents even appreciated the placement of the ads on the appropriate page and the spot on the page used for the advertisement. These factors contributed to the popularity of the ads made a difference to the impact of the ads. Considering the language, the message and text within the ad, its length, the punch-line, slogan or tagline given in the ads, KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds were acceptable to the target audience and consumers but not for Hardees. The competitive edge and comparisons of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds and Hardees with other products were favoured by the consumers and had a positive effect on the effectiveness of the ad. The various deals with customer benefits in the advertisements of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds and Hardees were liked by the target audience added to the popularity of the ads.

According to the respondents the ads of KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonalds were mostly acceptable and compatible to the Pakistani language and culture. Most of the language issues were found in the print media advertisements of Hardees. They seemed to be advertising through a culturally and socially inappropriate language content, which did not match the cultural, religious, ethnic and racial background of the target market in Islamabad. Even the message and language, and its level was deemed as inappropriate by the respondents. Generally, it was found that the consumers of these multinational companies mostly preferred a contemporary mixture of English and Urdu scripts and enjoyed those tag lines and slogans, which they could relate to in their cosmopolitan lifestyle.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, after assessing the effectiveness of the language used in the advertisements of KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds, it was found that Hardees did not rise up to the expectations of the consumers in most areas of language appropriateness. Whereas, the respondents found only minor issues in the language effectiveness/appropriateness in the ads of KFC, Pizza Hut and McDonalds. This research seized an opportunity to study post advertisement consumer behaviour, which may be more useful for product sales and marketing than data collected before the advertisement is screened. KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardees and McDonalds' marketing departments can use this valuable data to tailor their

future advertising strategies in print media according to the preferences of their consumers and target market in Islamabad.

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