The Placement of Code-Switched Ads Within a Medium: Investigating Reciprocal Effects of Ad and Media Involvement

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This research demonstrates how the structure of code-switching in advertising interacts with the language of the medium in which the ad is inserted to influence cognitive and affective ad involvement. Study 1 shows that both types of involvement are increased when the main language of the ad matches that of the medium. Involvement in media content that follows exposure to a code-switched ad is also increased when the ad’s main language matches the medium’s language. Study 2 employs lengthier code-switches rather than single word switches to neutralize most of the effects found in Study 1, except for cognitive ad involvement.

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Watchers members who were at varying stages of their weight loss journeys. We followed Burawoy’s (1998) suggestion to thematize participation in the social world and use theory to guide our inquiry.

Our findings center on the three processes, hope anchoring, hope reframing, and hope bolstering, grounded in social relationships and interactions that cultivate hope for weight loss through the membership in the Weight Watchers support group. Hope anchoring represents one process through which hope is cultivated. Hope anchoring focuses on connecting members’ immediate hope for weight loss through the Weight Watchers--the support group represented by its members and the practices within the group–to a nexus of other mutually reinforcing hopes to uphold the hope for weight loss. Hope reframing, on the other hand, focuses on rendering an individual pursuit for weight loss through the Weight Watchers organization into a more meaningful and broader collective endeavor. Finally, hope bolstering focuses on practices that routinely take place at the Weight Watchers weekly group meetings that strengthen the individual’s hope for achieving weight loss through participation in these practices.

Our contributions are the following. First, we advance sociological theorization on the role of emotions in consumption absent from consumer research. Converging on the sociology of emotions tradition (Hochschild 1975; Kemper 1978; Thoits 1989), our findings reveal, in line with Durkheim’s (1912/1965) theory of collective sentiments, that hope is a collective product grounded in symbolically charged social interactions and relationships. Second, we also advance a branch of institutional theorizing on emotions in Consumer Culture Theory. Specifically, our findings show that Weight Watchers, as the world’s largest support group, specifically focuses on the emotion of hope; it houses, orchestrates, and perhaps even rationalizes the experiences of its members’ emotions. The Weight Watchers anchors members’ hope to lose weight in the support group and fosters connections to other reinforcing hopes to improve physique, self-esteem, self-control, and health. Third, complementing the psychological theory of goal setting and goal striving (Bagozzi and Dholakia 1999), our research contributes by advancing consumer culture theoretic work on goals. In particular, our research informs understanding of how consumers address their failures to reach goals. Our findings suggest that having failed at a weekly weight loss goal, consumers leverage on fellow members’ experiences. Other members’ experiences in the perspective of a shared “Weight Watcher” identity offer an additional energy reservoir that boosts Weight Watchers’ attempts at losing their own weight. Hearing other members’ stories of successes as well as of failures seems to energize members, propelling them to continue on their weight loss journeys despite failures. Our findings contrast directly with the recent psychological research, which suggests that when consumers default on their goals, they are more likely to abandon those goals altogether (Soman and Cheema 2004). Thus, rather than provoking consumers to abandon their goals, our findings indicate that the shared identity and the social interactions within the group may act as antidotes to salient failures to reach goals.

Selected References


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Code-switching in advertising —the practice of alternating between two or more languages in a single message—is gaining attention among marketing practitioners and academics. However, little is known about how the use of language in general impacts message involvement. Involvement concerns the personal relevance of a stimulus, and is often cited as being composed of two dimensions—the cognitive and the affective. Cognitive involvement addresses informational processing activities whereas affective involvement stresses
emotional processing activities (Zaichkowsky 1994). Involvement is important for advertisers because when individuals are more involved in ad content, they are more motivated to process ad information (Swasy and Munch 1985). Thus, the purpose of this study is two-fold: to examine if and how the language of the medium and the main language of a code-switched ad interact to influence cognitive and affective involvement in 1) the ad itself and 2) media content that surrounds the ad. These issues are dealt with from an information processing perspective with testing among Spanish/English bilinguals.

**Media Language and Ad Involvement**

In terms of language, messages presented in a bilingual’s lesser known language are harder to process (Luna and Peracchio 2001). Regarding code-switching, Spivey and Marian (1999) provide evidence that by switching back and forth between two main (or “matrix”) languages in a conversation, processing difficulty is increased. They demonstrated through neuroscience that when the matrix language of a conversation changes, a complete deactivation of one language occurs in order to activate another, resulting in increased cognitive processing demands. However, when a second language is alternated to only briefly—as in single word switches rather than entire matrix language switches—the brain does not deactivate one language to process another. In other words, a complete deactivation/activation process does not occur, thus lightening cognitive demands.

In terms of code-switched ad research, when ad information is presented primarily in a language that differs from the medium, it is proposed to be more taxing for the individual to process. This should lower evaluations of cognitive involvement with the ad. Further, Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles, Taylor and Bourhis 1973) states that the more effort the message sender is seen as putting into accommodating the message receiver, the more favorable he will be perceived. Thus, by keeping the main language of a code-switched ad the same as the medium, the advertiser will be perceived as more accommodating, increasing affective ad involvement.

**Ad Language and Media Involvement**

Although there is considerable debate over how media involvement influences ad involvement (Lloyd and Clancy 1991), how ad involvement affects media involvement is much less in the spotlight. It is examined here whether increasing (decreasing) involvement with an ad, involvement in the medium can also be subsequently increased (decreased). Media content that both precedes and follows exposure to a code-switched ad is addressed to examine this issue.

In the pre-ad exposure stage, the language of the media content (i.e., magazine article) that comes before a code-switched ad sets the stage for language processing as it establishes the original matrix language of the medium. At this stage, the message receiver has only been exposed to content in a single language—which language this is should not make a difference. Therefore, differences in evaluations of cognitive involvement in the media content that precedes ad exposure should not occur in any of the experimental conditions (to be discussed) as the individual has not had to change matrix languages to process information.

However, media content that is viewed *after* exposure to these materials may subject message receivers to increased processing demands in cases where they are required to alternate between matrix languages to process information. For example, if an individual originally reads an article in English, then a code-switched ad that primarily is written in Spanish, and then reads the following article in English, the bilingual has changed matrix languages three times (from English to Spanish to English) in one setting to process the information. In cases such as this, lower cognitive involvement (as processing difficulty is greater) as well as lower affective involvement (as the principle behind Speech Accommodation theory has not been met) should result in media content that follows ad exposure.

**Study 1**

122 bilingual Hispanics viewed either a code-switched ad composed primarily of English with brief, one-word switches to Spanish or the reverse. The ad was placed between two articles written in either all-English or all-Spanish. Cognitive and affective involvement were measured for both the articles and the ad based on Zaichkowsky (1994). Results showed that cognitive and affective involvement in the ad and in the article that followed the ad were lower when the main language of the ad differed from that of the medium (all *p* < .05). No differences were found in involvement in the article that preceded the ad, as predicted. In sum, this study shows that by keeping the main language of a code-switched ad the same as that of its medium, cognitive and affective ad involvement can be increased. Furthermore, involvement in the media following ad exposure can also be increased, pointing towards important implications for media planners.

**Study 2**

The purpose of this study was to examine lengthier code-switching in advertising to investigate its effects on both ad and surrounding media content involvement. It is proposed that code-switching entire phrases rather than single words (as in Study 1) entails more cognitive effort on the part of the message receiver, thus nullifying the effects based on ease of cognitive processing and speech accommodation. Results from this study nullified most of the effects of Study 1, such that there were no differences in affective ad involvement and affective and cognitive media involvement across conditions. However, cognitive ad involvement was still significantly higher (*p* < .05) when the main language of the ad matched that of the medium despite the lengthier style of code-switching.

**Study 3**

To extend the results of Study 1, a third study is in progress investigating the effects on involvement when the main language of a monolingual ad does not match that of the medium.

**References**


Thinking Makes Me Hungry: Differences in Restrained and Unrestrained Eating Behaviors in a Rich Food Environment

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Researchers are concerned with the over-consumption of food and its negative effects on society. This paper synthesizes research from the field of psychology in the area of dietary restraint with research on how marketplace and product cues influence overeating, particularly of unhealthy as compared to healthy foods. Using these two research streams as a platform, we examine the differences between how some consumers, those classified as restrained eaters, respond to consumption cues. Specifically, we propose that the cognitive demands of perpetual restraint may make diet conscious consumers more susceptible to some triggers to overeat and less susceptible to others. Understanding these differences has important public policy implications because food packaging and labeling may not have the intended effect for restrained eaters, resulting in more, rather than less, consumption for this group. In addition, understanding how the behaviors of restrained eaters differ may help nutrition advocates better educate these consumers.

The characteristics and behaviors of restrained and unrestrained eaters have been widely explored in the field of psychology over the past 40 years (Herman and Mack 1975; Herman and Polivy 1980; Heatherton, Striepe, and Wittenberg 1998). Restraint is the perpetual “cognitively mediated effort that an individual makes to combat the urge to eat and restrict food intake to control body weight” (Herman and Mack 1975). Restrained eaters constantly monitor and regulate the food they eat through “self-imposed dietary rules and restrictions” (Ward and Mann 2000, 755). However, this constant focus on food does not result in dietary perfection. In fact, the continuous attention and effort required to restrain ones’ eating behavior despite the plethora of temptations faced daily, often results in dietary lapses and overeating by this group (Herman and Mack 1975). By contrast, unrestrained eaters spend less time and cognitive effort focusing on food; they eat when they feel hungry or want the food and generally stop eating when they are full. This important distinction may make restrained eaters more likely to rely on product cues such as package size, specific product claims such as “low-fat” or “high fiber” or their own health beliefs such as the perceived healthfulness of one restaurant as compared to another to determine how much they should eat rather than their own body’s signal of satiety.

Research on the role of marketplace and product cues in consumption has increased our understanding of how package size (Scott et al. 2008), serving size (Rolls, Morris, and Roe 2002), serving dishes and utensils (Wansink and Cheney 2005) and product assortment and variety (Kahn and Wansink 2004) influence how much consumers eat. We have also learned more about the underlying factors that prompt eating behaviors. For example, Scott et al. (2008) explore the emotional response of restrained eaters to food. By prompting restrained eaters to consciously think about the food they would consume as nonfood objects, these researchers were able to reverse the consumption differences between restrained and unrestrained eaters (Scott et al. 2008).

Beyond their emotional response to food, restrained eaters are susceptible to dietary lapses whenever outside factors interfere with their ability to devote the cognitive attention required to restrict what they eat. Consumption differences have been attributed to the depleted cognitive (Ward & Mann 2000) or self-control (Baumeister 2002) resources restrained eaters possess due to their continuous efforts to regulate their behavior. One challenge restrained eaters face is the steady stream of daily activities that require their cognitive attention and self-control resources. Recent research shows how the act of continuous decision making during a shopping trip actually reduces both the accuracy and persistence consumers display in subsequent cognitive tasks (Vohs et al. 2008). Similarly, constant pursuit of specific eating goals by restrained eaters may deplete their self-control resources, leading to choices that conflict with their restraint goals.

A wide variety of cues in the marketplace may prompt similar differences in the amount of food restrained and unrestrained eaters consume. This research explores how the variety and assortment of foods may stimulate different consumption patterns. Research by Kahn and Wansink (2004) shows that increasing the variety and assortment increases consumption by enhancing the anticipated pleasure consumers expect to derive from eating more. Similar to the response of restrained versus unrestrained eaters to smaller package sizes (Scott et al. 2008), we expect restrained and unrestrained eaters to respond differently to an increased variety and assortment of food choices. We hypothesize that like the larger package sizes, restrained eaters will anticipate the danger increased variety and assortment present and exercise more vigilance in restraining their consumption. By contrast, we expect unrestrained eaters to follow the pattern Kahn and Wansink (2004) observed, eating more as variety and assortment increase. We also investigate how restrained eaters respond to variety and assortment changes when they are placed in a cognitively taxing situation. Lastly, this research explores how the addition of healthy choices to the variety and assortment of food affects the consumption decisions of restrained eaters. Wilcox and his colleagues (2009) find that the mere presence of healthy choices among less healthy alternatives may actually increase indulgence. We hypothesize that while large assortments of unhealthy foods, such as sweets and snacks, prompt restrained eaters to concentrate on fighting the temptation placed before them, large assortments of foods they view as healthy choices, such as fruits and vegetables, will license restrained eaters to let their guard down resulting in increased consumption of both types of foods.