

ANNE-SOPHIE LENOIR

Are You Talking to Me?

Addressing Consumers in a Globalised World



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Heb je het tegen mij?

Het aanpakken van consumenten in een geglobaliseerde wereld

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Table of contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 1: Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1. The challenges of addressing consumers..... | 1 |
| 1.1.1. Marketing in a globalised world | 2 |
| 1.1.2. The importance of language | 3 |
| 1.1.3. Reaching out to diverse consumers | 5 |
| 1.2. Outline of the dissertation | 7 |
| Chapter 2: The impact of brand warmth and competence on consumer response to formal and informal address..... | 11 |
| 2.1. Introduction | 11 |
| 2.2. Conceptual framework | 12 |
| 2.2.1. Language and personal pronouns in consumer behaviour | 12 |
| 2.2.2. The T/V distinction..... | 13 |
| Brand warmth and competence..... | 15 |
| 2.3. Summary of predictions and overview of studies..... | 18 |
| 2.4. Empirical studies..... | 19 |
| 2.4.1. Study 1: Address preferences | 19 |
| 2.4.2. Study 2: Choosing between slogans..... | 27 |
| 2.4.3. Study 3: Consequences for consumer response | 29 |
| 2.4.4. Study 4: Address and country-of-origin | 35 |
| 2.4.5. Study 5: The moderating role of address perceptions | 43 |
| 2.4.6. Study 6: Communication context as a boundary condition..... | 49 |
| 2.5. General discussion..... | 51 |
| 2.5.1. Theoretical contribution | 53 |
| 2.5.2. Managerial implications | 54 |
| 2.5.3. Limitations and directions for future research..... | 55 |
| 2.6. Conclusion..... | 58 |
| Chapter 3: Generational status as a boundary condition for minority targeting strategies..... | 61 |
| 3.1. Introduction | 61 |
| 3.2. Conceptual framework | 62 |
| 3.2.1. Ethnic identity priming..... | 62 |
| 3.2.2. Featuring same-ethnicity spokespeople..... | 63 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 3.3. Empirical studies..... | 63 |
| 3.3.1. Study 1: Generational status and ethnic identity priming | 63 |
| 3.3.2. Study 2: Generational status and spokesperson ethnicity | 69 |
| 3.4. Conclusion..... | 80 |
| Chapter 4: Heritage congruence effects in service encounters: Boundary conditions and processes | 83 |
| 4.1. Introduction | 83 |
| 4.2. Conceptual framework | 85 |
| 4.2.1. Heritage congruence in the service interaction..... | 85 |
| 4.2.2. Assessing the salesperson's motives..... | 85 |
| 4.2.3. Similarity and trust..... | 86 |
| 4.2.4. Identity salience and generational status..... | 87 |
| 4.2.5. Attitudinal similarity and preference heterogeneity..... | 88 |
| 4.3. Summary of predictions and overview of studies..... | 89 |
| 4.4. Empirical studies..... | 90 |
| 4.4.1. Study 1: The impact of generational status..... | 90 |
| 4.4.2. Study 2: The role of product category | 99 |
| 4.5. General discussion..... | 109 |
| 4.5.1. Theoretical contribution | 110 |
| 4.5.2. Managerial implications | 111 |
| 4.5.3. Limitations and future research | 112 |
| 4.6. Conclusion..... | 113 |
| Chapter 5: General discussion..... | 115 |
| 5.1. Summary of main findings | 115 |
| 5.2. Directions for future research..... | 116 |
| 5.3. Conclusion..... | 118 |
| References..... | 121 |
| Nederlandse samenvatting..... | 137 |
| Résumé en français | 139 |
| Acknowledgements | 141 |
| About the author | 143 |
| ERIM PhD Series | 145 |

List of tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: List of the 100 strongest brands in the Netherlands (Kruk et al. 2013) used in Study 1 | 21 |
| Table 2: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations obtained in Study 1 | 68 |
| Table 3: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations obtained in Study 2 | 77 |
| Table 4: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations for the priming manipulation in Study 2 | 78 |
| Table 5: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations obtained in Study 2 | 106 |

List of figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1: Relationship between address preference ratings and brand warmth ratings in Study 1..... | 24 |
| Figure 2: Relationship between address preference ratings and brand competence ratings in Study 1 | 25 |
| Figure 3: Address preference ratings obtained in Study 1..... | 26 |
| Figure 4: Warmth by competence interaction for address choices in Study 2..... | 29 |
| Figure 5: Brand personality by address interaction for attitude towards the hotel in Study 3..... | 34 |
| Figure 6a: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Formal German Condition).38 | |
| Figure 6b: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Formal Spanish Condition).39 | |
| Figure 6c: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Informal German Condition) | 40 |
| Figure 6d: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Informal Spanish Condition) | 41 |
| Figure 7: Address by country-of-origin interaction for attitude towards the slogan in Study 4. | 42 |
| Figure 8: Perceived warmth and competence associated with formal and informal address in Study 5..... | 45 |
| Figure 9: Moderated mediation effects tested in Study 5..... | 47 |
| Figure 10a: Same-ethnicity spokesperson stimulus used in Study 1..... | 65 |
| Figure 10b: Cultural identity prime used in Study 1 | 65 |
| Figure 11a: Generational status by priming condition interaction for attitude towards the ethnic spokesperson in Study 1 | 66 |
| Figure 11b: Generational status by priming condition interaction for identification with the ethnic spokesperson in Study 1 | 67 |
| Figure 12a: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Minority condition) | 71 |
| Figure 12b: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Majority condition)..... | 72 |

Figure 13a: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the ad in Study 273

Figure 13b: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the organisation in Study 274

Figure 13c: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the spokesperson in Study 275

Figure 13d: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for willingness to support Study 2.....76

Figure 14a: Scenario and stimulus used in Study 1 (Majority condition).....92

Figure 14b: Scenario and stimulus used in Study 1 (Minority condition)93

Figure 15: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the recommended product in Study 1.....95

Figure 16: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity interaction for perceived salesperson trustworthiness in Study 197

Figure 17a: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Minority condition, utilitarian product).....101

Figure 17b: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Majority condition, utilitarian product)101

Figure 17c: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Minority condition, hedonic product)102

Figure 17d: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Majority condition, hedonic product)102

Figure 18a: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity for attitude towards the recommended product in Study 2 (Utilitarian condition)104

Figure 18b: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity for attitude towards the recommended product in Study 2 (Hedonic condition)104

Figure 19: Model tested in Study 2107

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. The challenges of addressing consumers

Today's global marketplace is one of unprecedented cultural and linguistic diversity. In 2012, for instance, an estimated 1.7 million people who were previously residing outside of the European Union immigrated into one of the EU Member States, and a further 1.7 million emigrated from one Member State to another (Eurostat, 2014). Each year, the number of international migrants worldwide increases, and it is estimated that more than half of the world's population is bilingual – that is, uses two or more languages or dialects in everyday life. From a practical perspective, the diversity of consumers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and its implications for marketing deserves to be investigated more thoroughly.

Existing literature has pointed out the importance of cultural aspects for the effectiveness of marketing communication, highlighting strategies such as featuring same-ethnicity models when targeting minority consumers or using the target consumer's native language as ways to achieve cultural resonance. This line of research continues to hold heritage culture as the most important factor to take into account when developing targeting strategies. In this dissertation, I argue that in a globalised world this position is overly simplistic.

Politeness and appropriate address in communication is one aspect of marketing communication that tends to be perceived as very culture and country specific. As such, it seems obvious that address choices would need to be tailored to individual linguistic contexts, and so many brands do not see the point of developing a global address strategy. It is true that the culturally expected form of address for a particular context may vary from one country to another. However, in this work, I aim to show that overarching effects can nonetheless be found. For instance, I discuss the impact of brand personality on consumer response to address across linguistic and cultural contexts. Such an effect would highlight the need to approach some aspects of linguistic behaviour from a cross-cultural perspective, and suggest the possibility of developing broader address strategies.

In contrast, minority consumers have often been considered as members of homogeneous groups. Marketers tend to assume that members of minority groups

are, for all intents and purposes, similar, and that therefore targeting strategies relying on identity cues will affect everyone in a community in a similar fashion. This work suggests that individual factors such as generational status and identification affect consumer responses to these strategies and can have important consequences for the effectiveness of this type of communication.

From a business perspective, linguistic and cultural diversity should be an asset: a source of wealth, creativity, and cognitive flexibility – not conflict. Marketing has a part to play in making this possible by leveraging the benefits of diversity and making each consumer feel valued and included. In a globalised world, assumptions that consumers can simply be grouped according to their country or larger cultural context are no longer valid. It is essential to conduct research that helps the business world develop effective strategies to successfully approach a complex, diverse consumer base. With this in mind, the objective of this work is to gain a better understanding of the impact of the linguistic and cultural choices marketers encounter when addressing consumers in a globalised context.

1.1.1. Marketing in a globalised world

Globalisation is a powerful force. It can support economic development, promote tolerance and understanding through greater cultural exchange, and provide improved availability of information. From a marketing perspective, globalisation has led to a reduction in the cost and complexity of operating overseas thanks to more efficient communication, transport, and distribution. Companies now have access to a broader market of people with disposable income to buy their goods and services, and the tastes of consumers throughout the world are converging. Over thirty years ago, Levitt (1983) argued that technology would drive the world towards a converging commonality and a new commercial reality – a global marketplace. Consumers everywhere desire the same phones and garments, watch the same shows, and listen to the same music. A global, more homogenous consumer culture has arisen – one that can transcend economic, social, political, and even cultural borders. Why, then, should we study the consequences of diversity for marketing?

Globalisation does not equal a single, universally accepted view of the world. In many countries, cultural diversity, as well as the use of English as lingua franca,

have increased dramatically in recent decades. In other countries, fast economic development has caused people to witness rapid and considerable changes in their surroundings. In parallel with these processes, the rise of a global consumer culture has forced consumers to go through an acculturation process (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). As globalisation gives rise to a "global village", it can cause confusion, loss of identity, and a sense of disorientation – which in turn result in dissatisfaction, social conflict, and the emergence of various kinds of identity politics (Eriksen, 1999). Frable (1997, p. 139) defines identity as “the individual’s psychological relationship to particular social category systems”. As many fear that their way of life is under threat, they respond to the changes in their environment by defending their uniqueness – their culture, their language, their interest group, or their faith system. In a globalised world, consumers' diverse identities are becoming more salient, not less.

Consumers purchase products in part to construct their self-concept and develop, as well as reflect, their identities (Belk, 1988). Minority consumers, for instance, can use products to move between their cultural identities (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard, 2005; Oswald, 1999). This means that understanding these identities is especially important for marketing.

1.1.2. The importance of language

Language is an important carrier of social identity: acting as a cultural prime, it can be used to activate separate identities, stored in separate knowledge structures (Ross et al, 2002.) Changing language can, for example, have an impact on the decision-making strategies consumers use to make choices, causing individuals to be more likely to choose caution or compromise options, or to defer decisions (Briley, Morris, and Simonson, 2005). Studies dealing with the consequences of grammatical and structural differences between languages on a psycholinguistic level have investigated the role of characteristics such as grammatical gender-marking (Yorkston and De Mello, 2005), classifiers (Schmitt and Zhang, 1998), phonetic effects (Yorkston and Menon, 2004) or writing system (Schmitt, Pan, and Tavassoli, 1994), as well as the impact of language as a whole on thought processes (Noriega and Blair, 2008.)

Bilingual and bicultural consumers have also caught the attention of marketing researchers looking to better understand the role of proficiency (Zhang and Schmitt, 2004), frame-switching (how individuals switch between cultural frames in response to their environment; Luna et al., 2008) as well as the consequences of language choice in advertising (Luna and Peracchio, 2001 and 2005; Krishna and Ahluwalia, 2008; Puntoni, De Langhe, and van Osselaer, 2009) or in international market research (De Langhe et al., 2011). In the service context, research has tackled the role of language accommodation and preferences (Callahan, 2006; Holmqvist, 2011), as well as code-switching (speakers switching between two or more languages within a single conversation; Schau, Dellande, and Gilly, 2007). It is not as simple as heritage language use always resulting in more positive evaluation among minority consumers: the impact of code-switching depends on the positive or negative connotations associated with the language (Luna and Peracchio, 2005.) For instance, using a minority language in an advertisement may increase perception of understanding and respect for the minority culture, but may also arouse insecurities about language use (Koslow, 1994.) Consumer responses to bilingual code-switching are also moderated by identity (Tong, Hong, Lee, and Chiu, 1999). In addition, marketers should not underestimate the importance of context and processing fluency for language appropriateness. Some concepts are more accessible in a particular language, whether minority or dominant, leading to more positive responses in that language (Carroll and Luna, 2011.) That said, when properly matched with its context, code-switching used in contexts such as advertising can have a positive impact on both recall and perceived cultural sensitivity (Bishop and Peterson, 2010.)

Beyond the realm of bilingualism, marketing scholars have also investigated the consequences for consumer response to the use in marketing communication of foreign languages that the target consumer does not necessarily speak (e.g., Sherry and Camargo, 1987). These are often used to convey cultural references or brand personality traits in contexts such as branding (Zhang and Schmitt, 2001) or advertising (Koslow et al., 1994; Kelly-Holmes, 2000; Piller, 2001). In doing so, they have highlighted the importance of the symbolic value of languages. The consequences for marketing of the rise of English as a lingua franca, however, remain comparatively unexplored.

So far, consumer researchers' interest in sociolinguistic factors has, with some exceptions (Lerman, 2006; Kronrod, Grinstein, and Wathieu, 2012a and 2012b; Sela, Sarial-Abi, and Wheeler, 2012; Packard, Moore, and McFerran, 2014), been relatively limited. In particular, the impact of pronominal formal and informal address for consumer behaviour still remains largely to be understood – even though it constitutes an essential feature of communication for billions of consumers globally. Until now, studies dealing with politeness have been conducted within the realm of linguistics and have remained descriptive. The default form of pronominal address for a specific marketing context varies widely among languages that possess a T/V distinction (from the Latin pronouns *tu* and *vos*) – a contrast between forms of addressing others that reflect different levels of politeness and formality. For example, the formal *vous* is systematically used in French advertisements, whereas Dutch advertising favours the informal *je*. The same applies to service encounters. In 2010, Jansen and Janssen insisted that experiments in which language users would directly evaluate the use of politeness through the perception and evaluation of the sender and message were necessary to gain more insight into the effectiveness of politeness strategies. This is particularly relevant in the case of marketing communication.

1.1.3. Reaching out to diverse consumers

Cultural diversity may be alive and well – but it manifests itself differently than it did just a few decades ago, and it is more complex to approach. Global consumer culture increases communalities across countries, but it also reduces the homogeneity of consumer behaviour within countries. As a result, the conventional approach that relies on using countries as a cultural unit of analysis becomes less and less valid as each country becomes more multicultural (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). In fact, the idea of a single homogeneous mass market – even within a single country – has passed into the realm of fiction. Individual identities – including those attached to gender, age group, lifestyle, sexual orientation, and even dietary preferences – have become more present in the marketplace. Thanks to technology and globalisation, marketers are now better able to address the individual needs and preferences that are associated with each of these identities. They can engage in niche strategies, offer customized experiences, and develop targeted communication to meet each consumer's identity requirements. Understanding the consequences of

increased consumer diversity has therefore become an essential component of a successful marketing strategy. As such, it also represents a key research priority for marketing scholars.

Let us consider minority consumers in particular. Even within a single community, there are various degrees to which people identify with and adhere to given cultural norms (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). Second-generation, bicultural minority individuals are in a particularly challenging situation. Self-definition may be particularly complex for them (Verkuyten, 2005) as they have to develop their own identity while simultaneously dealing with the issues associated with belonging both to their family's culture of origin and the culture of the society in which they reside (Vedder, van de Vijver, and Liebkind, 2006). They may also be torn by conflicting social and cultural demands. This can lead to acculturation stress and a feeling of "living at the crossroads". Depending on the conditions in the larger society, the second generation may even find itself less adapted than first-generation migrants. This is an aspect of the "immigrant paradox" – the stalled progress and declining academic achievement and aspirations associated with immigrants' children compared to their parents (Sam, Vedder, Ward, and Horenczyk, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Rhoes, and Milburn, 2009). Disidentification, which reflects repulsion towards the country of residence and negatively affects purchase of products made in the domestic country or by domestic firms (Josiasen, 2011), is a possible consequence of this phenomenon.

Identification is an important variable mediating the impact of ethnicity on shopping behaviour (Donthu and Cherian, 1994). For some consumers, ethnic identity is situational, and is affected by the situation in which choices are made (Stayman and Deshpandé, 1989). The primes found in ethnically targeted advertisements (e.g., spokesperson's name or ethnicity, language, cultural symbols) influence identity salience and can impact minority consumers' response to communication (Forehand and Deshpandé, 2001; Forehand et al., 2002.) Targeted advertising also gives minorities validation by publically legitimizing them as consumers. This in turn results in increased self-empowerment (Tsai, 2011.) Collective self-esteem within an ethnic in-group is positively correlated with psychological well-being in contexts where the group's ability to express its positive distinctiveness is undermined (Verkuyten, 2010.)

As ethnic and cultural diversity increases rapidly in many countries, it has become essential for marketers to better understand minority consumers. This necessity has led to the emergence of an area of consumer research known as ethnic marketing. Major research questions in this domain include the effect of featuring models or spokespeople with the same ethnic background as the targeted group (e.g. Aaker, Brumbaugh, and Grier 2000; Antioco, Vanhamme, Hardy, and Bernardin, 2012; Brumbaugh and Grier 2006; Deshpandé and Stayman 2004; Green 1999; Grier and Brumbaugh 1999; Grier and Deshpandé 2001; Martin, Lee, and Yang 2004; Whittler, 1991) as well as the impact of ethnic identity primes on responses to targeted advertisements (e.g. Forehand and Deshpandé, 2001; Forehand, Deshpandé and Reed, 2002; Chattaraman, Rudd, and Lennon 2009; Dimofte, Forehand, and Deshpandé 2003). However, the consequences of individual consumer characteristics such as generational status and identification for the effectiveness of these strategies had not until now been investigated.

1.2. Outline of the dissertation

In a world where globalisation and growing cultural diversity have increasingly important consequences for marketing, the goal of this dissertation is to develop a better understanding of the consequences of practitioners' address decisions for consumer response. In particular, it aims to help marketers determine how to best leverage culture-related factors such as a language and identity cues when approaching consumers. As such, it focuses on two broad areas. First, I discuss issues related to language effects in the marketplace. I demonstrate that despite their differences, consumers across cultures can respond similarly to linguistic strategies. I show examples of these similarities by investigating the impact of brand personality on consumer responses to formal and informal address (e.g., *tu* and *vous* in French, *du* and *Sie* in German) across a range of linguistic and marketing contexts. In most of the world's major languages, marketers and service providers have to choose whether to use formal or informal pronouns to address consumers. This research will be the first to investigate how consumers respond to these address choices. Second, I highlight the fact that marketers cannot assume homogeneity of consumer behaviour within countries and even within specific communities. In particular, I consider marketing strategies that rely on cultural cues to target minority consumers.

In two papers, I identify boundary conditions for the effectiveness of several types of standard minority targeting strategies in different marketing contexts.

The first part of the dissertation highlights the role of language as an important component of cultural diversity and an essential feature of marketing communication. Language colours and changes consumers' experiences - even subtle differences in the way words are used can significantly impact consumers' reactions (e.g., Sela, Sarial-Abi and Wheeler, 2012; Packard, Moore, and McFerran, 2014; Patrick and Hagtvedt, 2012). In Chapter 2, I demonstrate that perceived brand personality, and, in particular, perceived brand warmth and competence (Aaker, Vohs and Mogilner, 2010; Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone, 2012), affects consumer response to the use of formal and informal address in marketing communication. Informal address is more likely to be preferred and elicits more positive responses when used in conjunction with a warmer brand, whereas formal address is more likely to be preferred and elicits more positive consumer responses when used in conjunction with a more competent brand. I replicate this effect across several linguistic contexts. I also show that the effect is mediated by consumers' perceptions of formal and informal address as competent and warm and highlight the role of personal or impersonal communication context as a moderator.

In the second part of the dissertation, I examine marketing strategies targeting minority consumers. I identify boundary conditions that affect the effectiveness of various marketing strategies in different marketing contexts and investigate the importance of differences within a single minority. In particular, I highlight the role of generational status (first vs. second-generation). Second-generation, bicultural ethnic minority consumers constitute a growing proportion of the population in many countries, sometimes constituting up to ten per cent of the population. In two chapters, I show that their profile is very different from that of their parents and that this has consequences for their response to traditional minority targeting practices.

In Chapter 3, I show that ethnic identity activation has a more positive impact on responses to ethnic advertisements among second-generation than first-generation minority consumers, whereas ethnic spokespersons have a more positive impact in first-generation than in second-generation ethnic minority consumers. This is explained by differences in level of identification with the heritage culture. In Chapter 4, I explore how heritage congruence (shared ethnic background) between

customer and salesperson affects minority consumers' response. I show that the presence of a same-heritage minority service provider leads to more positive attitudes towards the product recommended by the salesperson in first-generation, but not in second-generation, minority consumers. I highlight the mediating role of the service provider's perceived trustworthiness and show that the effect of heritage congruence on consumer response is stronger for hedonic products than for utilitarian products.

Chapter 2:

The impact of brand warmth and competence on consumer response to formal and informal address¹

2.1. Introduction

In marketing, address choices are everywhere. A service provider or direct marketer, for example, has to decide whether to call their customer Jane or Ms. Doe. Today, unless they are performing Shakespeare, English speakers rarely wonder whether it would be more appropriate to say *you* or *thou* to one another. But in almost all other languages, different address pronouns are used in formal and in informal situations: for instance, the French *vous* and *tu*, the German *Sie* and *Du* or the Russian *вы* and *ты*. This is not limited to European languages: globally, among the 10 languages counting more than 100 million native speakers – a list which includes languages as diverse as Mandarin Chinese (您 and 你), Castilian Spanish (*usted* and *tu*), Hindi-Urdu, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese and Punjabi – Modern English is the only one, together with some dialects of Arabic, that does not require its speakers to make such a choice.

In many of these languages, the choice is not obvious: while one pronoun may be more commonly used than the other, both formal and informal address are used in marketing interactions, such as advertising and service encounters. For billions of consumers worldwide, formal and informal address pronouns constitute an omnipresent feature of communication in the marketplace, and marketers have to decide which one to use in every context they communicate in. However, marketing researchers have yet to understand the consequences of formal and informal address use for consumers' attitudes and behaviours. A possible explanation for this lack of research is the fact that most academic research has been conducted in English-language contexts where pronoun use is not an issue.

¹ This chapter is based on a working paper (Lenoir, Puntoni, and van Osselaer, 2015) currently in preparation for submission. We are thankful to Yi Han, Aris Kampourakis, Valérie Denys, Elena Smolenskaya and Guido Nuijten for their help with data collection.

Prior, purely descriptive, research in linguistics suggests that marketers tend to stick with default pronoun use when making address choices, occasionally taking into account characteristics of the target customer (Smith, 2004). In this paper, we argue that this practice is suboptimal. Not only the characteristics of the target customer, but also those of the brand itself have an impact on consumers' reactions to address, including attitudes and willingness to buy. Specifically, we argue that there is a relationship between brand personality and the desirability of different forms of address. We show that informal address is more likely to be preferred and results in more positive consumer response when used by a brand that is perceived as warmer, whereas formal address is more likely to be preferred and results in more positive consumer response when used by a brand that is perceived as more competent. This is especially important in personal communication contexts. We find that this is explained by consumers' perceptions of informal address as warmer and formal address as more competent.

2.2. Conceptual framework

2.2.1. Language and personal pronouns in consumer behaviour

In recent years, marketing researchers have become more and more aware of the impact of linguistic factors on the effectiveness of marketing communication. Research in this area has mostly focused on bilingual consumers (e.g., de Langhe, Puntoni, Fernandes, and van Osselaer, 2011; Krishna and Ahluwalia, 2008; Luna and Peracchio, 2001 and 2005; Noriega and Blair, 2008; Puntoni, de Langhe, and van Osselaer, 2009) and on psycholinguistic effects such as categorization and phonetic symbolism (e.g., Argo, Popa, and Smith 2010; Davis and Herr, 2014; Lowrey, 2006; Schmitt and Zhang, 1998; Shrum et al., 2012; Yorkston and De Mello, 2005). Recently, however, an interest in the sociolinguistic factors that affect response to marketing communication in monolingual contexts has emerged among consumer researchers (Kronrod, Grinstein, and Wathieu, 2012a and 2012b; Sela, Sarial-Abi and Wheeler, 2012; Packard, Moore, and McFerran, 2014; Patrick and Hagtvedt, 2012), as they realized that even subtle wording changes could shape consumers' responses to brands and marketing communication.

Research in this area has particularly highlighted the importance of personal pronouns. Personal pronouns (e.g., "I", "you", "we") constitute essential features of

interpersonal communication; they can even define our relationships (Wood and Kroger 1991). Recent research shows that this is not only true of our relationships with other human beings, but also of our relationships with brands. Sela et al. (2012) demonstrate that the effectiveness of using a closeness-implying pronoun such as "we" in communication depends on whether it is consistent with the type of interaction that the consumer expects to have with the brand based on his or her relationship with it. Packard et al. (2014) investigate the effect of a firm agent's language during a service interaction. They show that contrary to what customer-orientation theory would suggest, self-references to "me" and "I" actually have a positive effect on consumers' attitudes and intentions through enhanced perceived empathy. These findings demonstrate that marketers should use personal pronouns strategically. Beyond the boundaries of the English linguistic setting, however, an important question remains: in languages in which there are two second-person singular pronouns, what are the consequences of using the formal or the informal "you" for consumer attitudes and behaviours?

2.2.2. The T/V distinction

This contrast between informal and formal address pronouns is known in sociolinguistics as the *T/V distinction*, after the Latin forms *Tu* and *Vos* (Brown and Gilman, 1960/2003). Independent of the language, *T* refers to the informal pronoun while *V* refers to the formal pronoun. The *T* pronoun is typically used to express solidarity, directness and informality, but can also convey condescendence: for example, a shop assistant may choose to address a teenager with *T* in a high-end store where all other customers are addressed formally to signal to the teenager that she does not take her seriously as a customer. In contrast, the *V* pronoun is used to express respect and formality, but can also convey distance: in an informal environment, it can be used to signify to someone that they are not part of the in-group.

Brown and Gilman's influential work linked this distinction to a macrosociological dichotomy of "power" versus "solidarity": according to them, systems based on values related to power, hierarchy and status differences tended to lean towards the use of *V*, whereas systems where solidarity and equality were more valued would lean towards *T*. They suggested a progressive evolution from a

system based on the semantics of power and address asymmetry towards a system relying on the semantics of solidarity and symmetric pronoun use. During the course of the twentieth century, it became socially unacceptable in many cultures for an employer to use informal address towards a subordinate or domestic staff and expect asymmetric (i.e., formal) address in return. In the case of English, the first instances of use of the plural form you instead of the singular thou can be dated back to the Norman invasion, when the ruling French speakers introduced loanwords and usages. Thou, the informal pronoun, was then progressively less and less used, to the point of, ultimately, disappearing from standard English. However, address choices still exist: for example, one has to choose between using title and last name (TLN), or first name (FN) only. In Brown and Gilman's view, such changes reflect a profound social evolution: solidarity is winning out over power dynamics. Ever since, the use of formal and informal address pronouns has served as a barometer of social change and as a paradigm to study the relationship between language and society. So far, the question of formal and informal address has remained unexplored outside of the sociolinguistics literature.

The research in sociolinguistics, which describes the prevalence of the different forms of address, but does not investigate people's responses to those forms of address, suggests several factors that advertisers and service providers consider when developing an address policy (Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu, 2001; Norrby and Hajek, 2011; Smith, 2004). The first is the cultural and linguistic environment in which the communication takes place. The norms of address used in a given linguistic community influence the overall prevalence of a form of address in the marketplace (Smith, 2004), with marketers often sticking to the most prevalent form in a country or language area. They are influenced by how hierarchical a society is, how much focus it places on individual status, but also by grammatical characteristics. Some languages, such as Italian, use what is grammatically a third person pronoun to express formal address. This results in verbs being conjugated in the third person and might result in the message losing much of its directness. In the advertising context, the loss in directness and clarity of such a message could counterbalance the gain in cultural fit, making formal address in advertising inefficient. In practice, address outcomes vary between linguistic contexts; inappropriate address can lead to negative reactions and resistance of the sort

encountered by IKEA in Germany when it tried to implement an informal address-only policy reflecting its Swedish roots (Norrby and Hajek, 2011; Sick, 2006).

Nonetheless, in a large number of speech communities, both formal and informal address pronouns are used, forcing marketers to decide on the most appropriate form of address for each situation. The context in which the communication takes place may also be taken into account: for example, impersonal contexts such as catalogues or advertisements are different from contexts in which an agent speaks directly to a specific customer (Norrby and Hajek, 2011). Finally, the characteristics of the target group can also play a role: within a specific language, the division of interactions between V-contexts and T-contexts typically relies on a number of principles built around the notions of identity, inclusion, exclusion, and social image (Clyne, 2009). The speakers' relative age, their relative social status, and the nature of their relationship with the brand would also influence the marketer's decision (Norrby and Warren, 2012). For instance, if their target is older or more serious, marketers might choose formal address, and if it is younger or more frivolous, informal address (Smith, 2004; Norrby and Warren, 2012). In general, relative social status is a particularly often-cited predictor of address (Brown and Gilman, 1960/2003). These "rules" nonetheless tend to leave a number of grey areas.

In this paper, we argue that sticking with the default option, and only making possible allowances for the communication medium or customer characteristics, is not always a wise choice. Practitioners making address decisions ought to also consider the characteristics of the brand itself, and, in particular, the brand's personality. Building on Sela et al. (2012), we propose that the impact of second-person address pronouns on consumer response to marketing communications depends on the pronouns' degree of consistency with the type of interaction that the consumer expects to have with the brand. Specifically, we focus on the impact of brand's perceived level of warmth and competence for consumer response to formal and informal address.

Brand warmth and competence

Warmth and competence constitute the two universal components of social perceptions (Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick, 2007). Warmth captures traits such as friendliness, approachability, and trustworthiness. Competence reflects ability, skill,

and efficacy. This conceptualization was originally developed in research on human social interactions and perceptions, but it also provides powerful insights into brand positioning (Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner, 2010). Consumers map a wide range of human personality traits onto brands (Aaker, 1997). Brands, like people and social groups, are seen as intentional agents, and their perceived intentions (warmth) and abilities (competence) are important dimensions underlying brand perceptions and consumer assessments (Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone, 2012). Brands that are perceived to have cooperative intentions are seen as warm, and associated with friendliness and sincerity; those that are thought to possess the skill set to execute are labeled competent, and associated with efficiency and skill. Because warmth and competence constitute such important dimensions of social perceptions, we expect consumers encountering new brands to make inferences about their warmth and competence based on any information made available to them (e.g., the brand's country of origin).

Aaker et al. (2010) show that non-profits tend to be perceived as warmer, but less competent than for-profits. This is consistent with an extensive body of research on group and cultural stereotypes (e.g., Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu, 2002) that finds a negative correlation between perceptions of the two dimensions when groups are evaluated. The same body of research, however, finds that when individuals are judged, warmth and competence tend not to correlate or even to correlate positively, possibly because of a "halo effect" (Judd et al., 2005; Fiske et al., 2007). Given that consumers relate to brands similarly to how they relate to people (Fournier, 1998; Fournier and Alvarez, 2012), we do not expect to find a negative correlation when consumers evaluate individual brands - as opposed to entire product categories or groups of organizations - on the warmth and competence dimensions. When different people evaluate a brand on the warmth and competence dimensions, we expect to find no correlation. When the same people evaluate both warmth and competence, we expect to find a positive correlation due to the halo effect. In other words, warm brands can also be competent; in fact, performing well on both dimensions provides brands with an extra benefit (Aaker, Garbinsky, and Vohs, 2012).

Language use has important consequences for social perceptions, including warmth and competence (Berry, Hiller, Mueller, and Pennebaker, 1997). However, no research has investigated the impact of perceived warmth and competence on

language use. As consumers repeatedly interact with a variety of conversation partners over the course of their life, they develop expectations about appropriate levels of address formality between themselves and different types of speakers. Over time, different warmth and competence profiles become associated with different linguistic norms. For example, friends and family, two social groups usually thought of as warm and with which one has a familiar relationship, are typically associated with informal address. In contrast, groups such as teachers or professional contacts, which are more likely to be thought of as competent and with which one tends to have a professional, more distant relationship, are typically associated with formal address. We argue that this results in warmth and competence becoming key factors likely to influence consumers' address expectations.

Depending on the context, warm brands may avoid informal address for fear of appearing condescending, whereas competent brands may forego formal address so as not to be perceived as distant. Yet, Sela et al. (2012) show that consumers assess the consistency between the language used in marketing communication and their existing expectations, and use this assessment to guide their attitude towards the brand. Ultimately, they find that consumers respond more favourably to language that matches their expectations than to language that does not. These findings are consistent with the argument that matching facilitates information processing and has a more positive impact on communication effectiveness and consumer response, including attitudes, than mismatching (MacInnis and Park, 1991; Pan and Schmitt, 1996). For our purposes, we will define matching as congruence between the brand's language use and the consumers' expectations, given the brand's characteristics.

Based on this, we expect that when given the choice, consumers will be more likely to express a preference for informal address when the brand is perceived as warmer, and for formal address when the brand is perceived as more competent. In addition, informal address will elicit more positive consumer responses when used by a warmer brand, whereas formal address will result in more positive responses when the brand is perceived as more competent. It should be noted that base rates vary across languages that possess a T/V distinction. For example, the formal *vous* is more often used in French advertisements, whereas Dutch is more likely to favour the informal *je*. The same applies to service encounters. We argue that the effect we propose exists across linguistic contexts. In other words, even in a linguistic context that favours formal address, informal address will still elicit more positive responses

when it is associated with a brand that is perceived as warmer relative to a brand perceived as less warm. Similarly, in a context that favour informal address, formal address will be better received if it is used by a brand that is perceived as more competent as opposed to less competent.

Consumers have distinct life experiences, and different consumers will associate informal address with warmth and formal address with competence to different extents depending of their life experiences and social environment. Some consumers will experience matching between brand warmth and address warmth and between brand competence and address competence less strongly than others. As a result, the effect of matching between brand warmth and address warmth should be moderated by the magnitude of the difference between the levels of warmth associated with formal and informal address. Similarly, the effect of matching between brand competence and address competence should be moderated by the magnitude of the difference between the levels of competence associated with formal and informal address. If matching affects consumer response more positively when this difference is larger, this acts as evidence for the process described above.

2.3. Summary of predictions and overview of studies

In six studies, we test two main hypotheses. First, we examine whether consumers' address preferences vary depending on how warm and competent they perceive a brand to be. Second, we investigate whether informal address results in more positive consumer response when used by warmer brands, and formal address in more positive response when used by more competent brands. We also answer additional questions: Does this effect exist not just in advertisements and other relatively impersonal forms of communication, but also in more personal contexts, such as service encounters? Does it appear both in linguistic contexts where the default address is informal, and in linguistic contexts where the default address is formal? What about situations where a consumer has to infer warmth and competence from other brand characteristics, such as country of origin? How do consumers' associations regarding the warmth and competence of formal and informal address affect the magnitude of the effect? Finally, what is the impact of a personal or impersonal communication context on this effect?

In study 1, we measure warmth and competence perceptions and examine consumers' address preferences for marketing communication by existing brands. In study 2, we investigate consumers' preferences for specific slogans using formal or informal address for a series of brands associated with high or low levels of warmth and competence. In study 3, we move beyond advertising to focus on the service encounter. In particular, we investigate the impact of formal and informal address use by a service provider on consumers' attitudes when the service is presented as either warm or competent. In study 4, we look at the impact of country-of-origin as a warmth and competence cue for new brands and its consequences for consumer response to formal and informal address. In study 5, we highlight the moderating role of consumers' perceptions of formal and informal address as differing in warmth and competence. Finally, in study 6, we investigate the role of personal and impersonal communication context as a boundary condition. We test and establish the effect using a variety of cues, marketplace contexts, and linguistic environments (Dutch, Mandarin Chinese, and Greek).

2.4. Empirical studies

2.4.1. Study 1: Address preferences

In the first study, we investigated consumers' preferences for pronominal address in marketing communications coming from a series of well-known brands in light of their perceived warmth and competence. In this study, we aim to show that brands that are perceived as warmer will be associated with a stronger preference for informal address, and that brands that are perceived as more competent will be associated with a stronger preference for formal address.

Method

The study was conducted in Dutch at a major Dutch university. One hundred and twenty-four undergraduate students (mean age: 20.61, 52.4% female) participated in exchange for partial course credit. In Dutch, informal address is represented by the pronoun *je* or its stressed variants *jij*, *jou*, and *jouw*. Formal address is reflected by the pronoun *u* or its stressed variant *uw*. Both formal and informal address are used in Dutch service encounters and advertisements, but

informal address is more common (Vismans, 2013). We used the 100 strongest brands in the Netherlands in 2013 according to the Young & Rubicam BrandAsset Valuator (Kruk, Marselis, Bakker, and Veldthuis, 2013; Table 1). The list included successful international and Dutch brands in a range of product categories. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions and rated either the warmth (warm, cordial, friendly) or competence (competent, skilled, capable) of each of the 100 brands on a 7-point Likert scale adapted from Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner (2010), or the type of address (from informal to formal; all seven-point scales) that they would prefer to receive in communications coming from each brand. Brands were presented in a randomized order; participants saw both the brand's name and its logo. After rating the brand on the dimension in question, participants answered a few demographic questions.

Table 1: List of the 100 strongest brands in the Netherlands (Kruk et al. 2013) used in Study 1

| | <i>Brand</i> | <i>Industry</i> | | <i>Brand</i> | <i>Industry</i> |
|----|--------------|-------------------|----|---------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Google | Online services | 24 | Douwe Egberts | Coffee |
| 2 | Ikea | Furniture | 25 | Apple | Electronics |
| 3 | iDEAL | Online payments | 26 | Sony | Electronics |
| 4 | bol.com | Online store | 27 | Facebook | Social network |
| 5 | Philips | Electronics | 28 | Olymp. Spelen | Sports org. |
| 6 | Efteling | Amusement park | 29 | Canon | Optical products |
| 7 | Microsoft | Software | 30 | Disney | Entertainment |
| 8 | Samsung | Electronics | 31 | iPad | Electronics |
| 9 | NOS | Television ch. | 32 | Tefal | Cookware |
| 10 | YouTube | Online services | 33 | MS Outlook | Software |
| 11 | Discovery | TV Channel | 34 | Pickwick | Tea |
| 12 | LEGO | Toys | 35 | Cons. bond | Consumers' org. |
| 13 | Albert Heijn | Retail | 36 | Bosch | Appliances |
| 14 | Marktplaats | Online ads | 37 | Kruidvat | Retail |
| 15 | ANWB | Travelers' assoc. | 38 | Rode Kruis | Charity |
| 16 | Miele | Appliances | 39 | Calvé | Condiments |
| 17 | Coca-Cola | Soft drinks | 40 | Android | Smartphone OS |
| 18 | Schiphol | Airport | 41 | Ahold | Retail |
| 19 | HEMA | Retail | 42 | Bolletje | Industrial bakery |
| 20 | Nat. Geogr. | Magazine & TV | 43 | Nike | Sports gear |
| 21 | TomTom | GPS | 44 | Unox | Food |
| 22 | Wikipedia | Website | 45 | Gillette | Personal care |
| 23 | Duracell | Batteries | 46 | Audi | Cars |

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------|--------------------|-----|----------------|-----------------|
| 47 | iPhone | Electronics | 74 | Nederland 3 | Television ch. |
| 48 | Media Markt | Retail | 75 | Endemol | Entertainment |
| 49 | Bose | Audio equipment | 76 | Blokker | Retail |
| 50 | NIVEA | Personal care | 77 | RTL 4 | Television ch. |
| 51 | Nikon | Optical products | 78 | Dove | Personal care |
| 52 | Gmail | Online services | 79 | Knorr | Food |
| 53 | Action | Hard discounter | 80 | De Ruijter | Food |
| 54 | Cup-a-Soup | Food | 81 | Duyvis | Food |
| 55 | KLM | Airline | 82 | Hansaplast | Personal care |
| 56 | NU.nl | Website | 83 | Volkswagen | Cars |
| 57 | Rabobank | Financial services | 84 | Honig | Food |
| 58 | Amsterdam | City admin. | 85 | Mercedes-Benz | Cars |
| 59 | Nokia | Electronics | 86 | Intratuin | Gardening store |
| 60 | 3FM Ser. Req. | Charity | 87 | PayPal | Online |
| 61 | WNF | Charity | 88 | Adidas | Sports gear |
| 62 | Heinz | Condiments | 89 | Bang & Olufsen | Electronics |
| 63 | Unilever | FMCG | 90 | KiKa | Charity |
| 64 | Gazelle | Bicycles | 91 | Allerhande | Magazine |
| 65 | Jumbo | Retail | 92 | Skype | Online services |
| 66 | Oral-B | Personal care | 93 | Maggi | Food |
| 67 | Siemens | Engineering | 94 | V&D | Retail |
| 68 | Lidl | Hard discounter | 95 | Magnum | Food |
| 69 | Senseo | Coffee | 96 | Kieskeurig.nl | Website |
| 70 | HAK | Food | 97 | Nederland 1 | Television ch. |
| 71 | KWF | Charity | 98 | Becel | Food |
| 72 | Verkade | Food | 99 | Dreft | Laundry deterg. |
| 73 | Lay's | Food | 100 | Zwitsal | Baby products |

Results

The items for warmth and competence were averaged to create two indexes. As expected, perceived warmth ($\alpha = 0.82$) was correlated with a stronger preference for informal address ($r = -.47, p < .001$; Figure 1) whereas perceived competence ($\alpha = 0.94$) was correlated with a stronger preference for formal address ($r = .33, p < .001$; Figure 2). However, perceived warmth and competence were not correlated with each other ($r = -.01, p = .91$). Confirming our main hypotheses, a regression of address preference on perceived warmth and perceived competence revealed significant main effects of perceived warmth ($\beta = -0.64, t(97) = -5.55, p < .001$) and perceived competence ($\beta = 0.57, t(97) = 3.84, p < .001$) on preferred address. In addition, we found a significant interaction effect of perceived warmth and competence ($\beta = -0.54, t(96) = -2.00, p = .048$) which we had not predicted.

To decompose the interaction, we conducted a floodlight analysis (Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch, & McClelland, 2013). The analysis revealed that the effect of perceived warmth was only significant when perceived competence had a value of 4.37 or higher, whereas the effect of perceived competence was only significant when perceived warmth was at a level of 4.80 or lower. As illustrated in figure 3, participants expressed a preference for less formal address when the brand was rated as higher in warmth and lower in competence (clustered to the lower right quadrant; brands in this quadrant included e.g. Unox, Bolletje, a Dutch bread manufacturer, and 3FM Serious Request, a charity event) and for more formal address when the brand was rated as higher in competence and lower in warmth (clustered in the upper left quadrant; brands in this quadrant included among others Microsoft, Audi, and iDEAL, an e-commerce payment system used in the Netherlands).

Figure 1: Relationship between address preference ratings and brand warmth ratings in Study 1

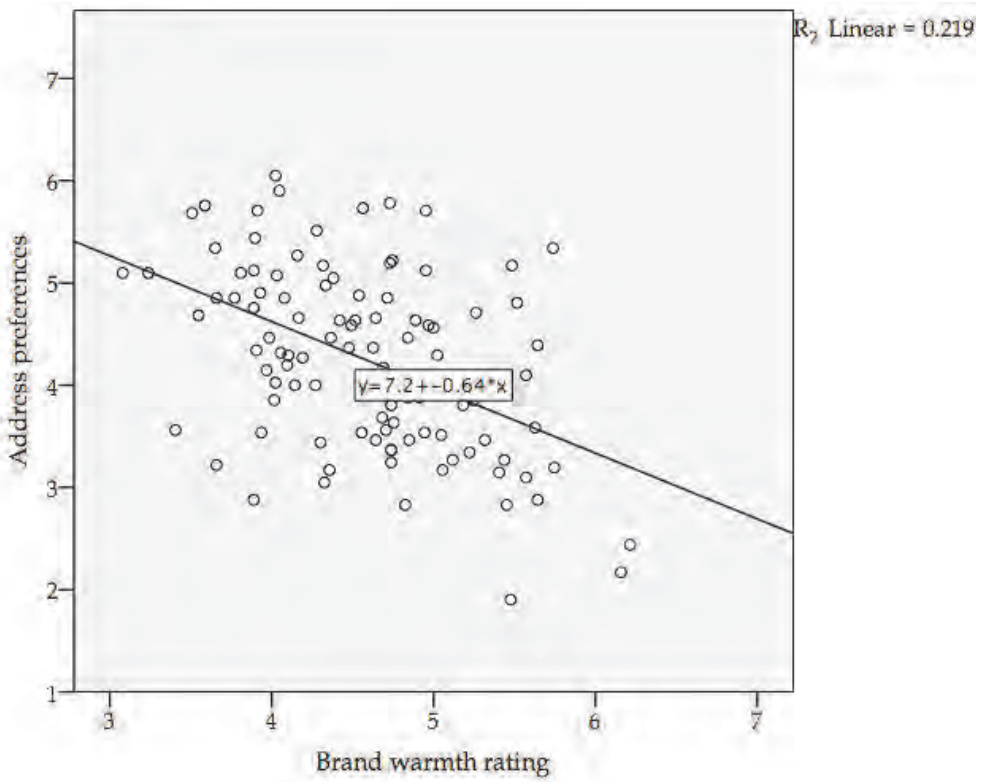


Figure 2: Relationship between address preference ratings and brand competence ratings in Study 1

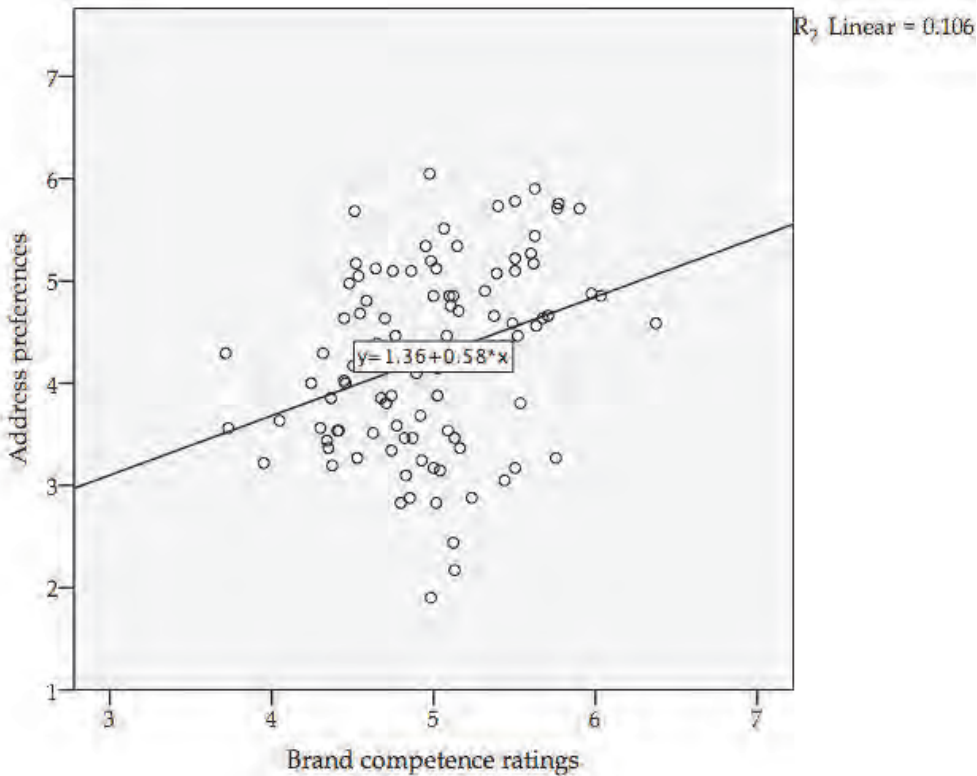
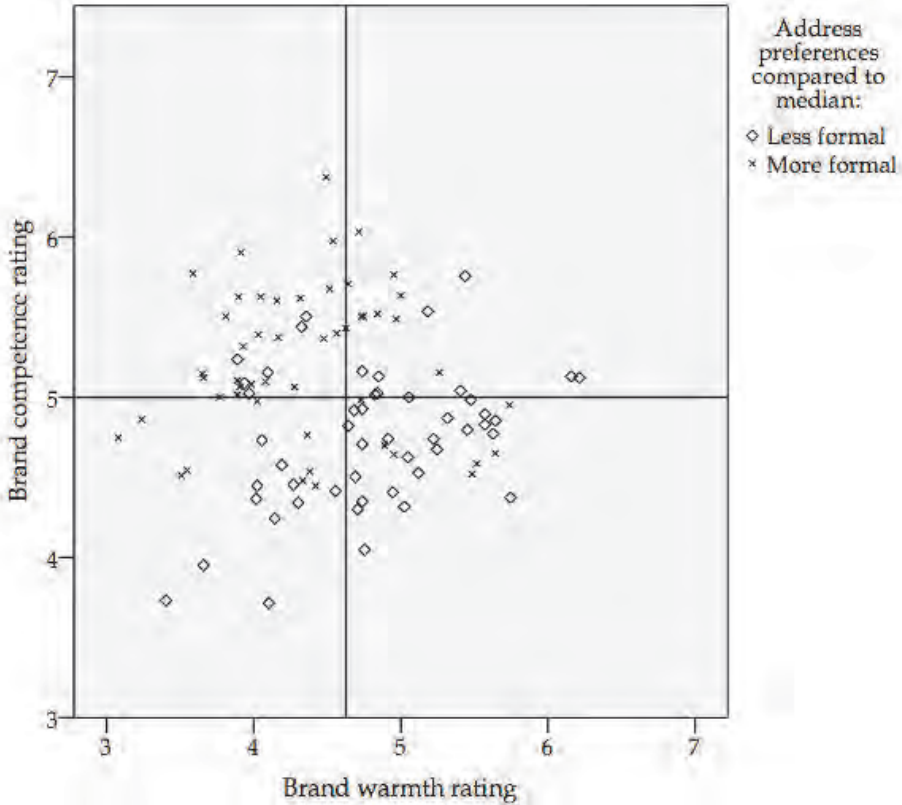


Figure 3: Address preference ratings obtained in Study 1



Discussion

These findings show that perceived brand warmth and competence are associated with significant variations in consumers' address preferences. Low warmth and high competence brands in particular are strongly associated with more formal address. This is true even among younger Dutch consumers for whom informal address is likely to be the neutral, unmarked form (Norrby and Warren, 2012). The unexpected interaction effect reflects the fact that in the Dutch advertising context the informal pronoun is the unmarked, default one. Because of this, eliciting a preference for formal address requires both low warmth and high competence – in other words, the effect of warmth is only significant at higher levels of competence whereas the effect of competence is only significant at lower levels of warmth.

2.4.2. Study 2: Choosing between slogans

Study 1 provides us with important insights by assessing address preferences associated with a wide range of real brands. In study 2, we used an experimental design to generalize this to another common situation: slogans. We asked participants to make a series of choices between slogans using either formal or informal address and associated with brands varying in perceived warmth and competence. We expected to replicate the findings of study 1 by showing that consumers are more likely to prefer informal address when the slogan is associated with a warmer brand and formal address when it is associated with a more competent brand.

Method

This study was conducted in Dutch at a major Dutch university and relied on a within-participant design. One-hundred-and-six undergraduate students (mean age: 20.87, 45.3% female) participated in exchange for partial course credit. Four participants were excluded because of incomplete data. Twenty fictional Dutch slogans featuring a second-person singular pronoun were created. The slogans featured either formal or informal address pronouns or their variants, and were not associated with a specific product category. Brand-slogan pairings were counterbalanced. Examples include “Understands you like no other”, “Just for you”, “Your choice”, etc.

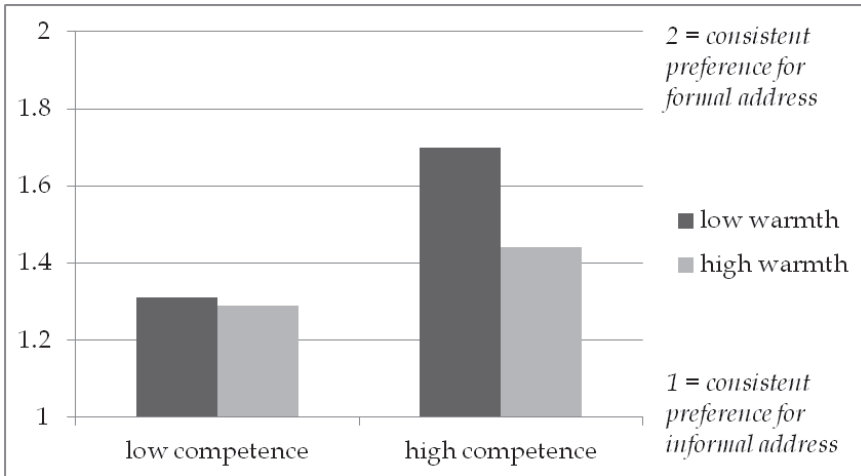
Twenty real brands were selected using the warmth and competence ratings obtained in study 1, across four categories: low warmth and low competence (Action, Marktplaats, Lidl, Endemol, Intratuin), low warmth and high competence (Microsoft, Audi, iDEAL, Mercedes-Benz, Bose), high warmth and low competence (HAK, Senseo, Cup-a-Soup, Knorr, Pickwick), high warmth and high competence (Coca-Cola, Albert Heijn, IKEA, National Geographic, KLM). For each category, brands that best met both the warmth and the competence criteria were chosen. Because finding twenty slogans that would be perceived as appropriate both when associated with commercial brands and when associated with charities to allow for a credible full counterbalancing of the brand-slogan pairings proved very challenging, three charities that ranked high on warmth and low on competence were excluded and replaced by similarly rated commercial brands. The order in which the brands

were presented was randomized. For each brand, participants were asked to choose between a version of a slogan that used informal address and another version that used formal address (e.g., "*Altijd dicht bij jou*" vs. "*Altijd dicht bij u*" - "Always close to you"). In each case, the two slogans were the same except for the address pronoun used. After making these choices, participants answered a few basic demographic questions.

Results

Scores were obtained by averaging participants' address preferences within each condition (a score of 1 indicates a consistent preference for informal address; 2 a consistent preference for formal address). The repeated-measures ANOVA revealed significant main effects of warmth ($F(1, 101) = 64.62; p < .001$) and competence ($F(1, 101) = 156.25; p < .001$) on address choices: as expected, participants were more likely to prefer informal address from brands that were high in warmth ($M = 1.36; SE = 0.02$) than from brands that were not ($M = 1.51; SE = 0.02$), and formal address from brands that were high in competence ($M = 1.57; SE = 0.02$) than from brands that were not ($M = 1.30; SE = 0.02$). There was also a significant interaction effect of warmth and competence ($F(1, 101) = 29.70; p < .001$) on address preferences (Figure 4). The interaction pattern is consistent with the pattern in study 1. When brand competence was high, there was a significant effect of brand warmth on participants' address preferences ($F(1, 101) = 98.64; p < .001$): participants were more likely to prefer informal address in the higher brand warmth condition ($M = 1.44; SD = 0.19$) and formal address in the lower brand warmth condition ($M = 1.70; SD = 0.24$). However, when competence was low, there was no significant effect of lower ($M = 1.31; SD = 0.24$) or higher ($M = 1.29; SD = 0.23$) brand warmth on address preferences ($F(1, 101) = 0.87; p = .35$). Thus, as in study 1, both low warmth and high competence were needed for participants to express address preferences that deviated from the (informal) norm. One-sample t-tests against the midpoint of the scale (1.5) revealed that each of the group means was significantly different from the midpoint (all $p < .01$) and thus reflected a clear preference for either formal or informal address.

Figure 4: Warmth by competence interaction for address choices in Study 2



Discussion

The findings in study 2 are consistent with the results of study 1. They confirm that the effect of brand warmth and competence on consumers' address preferences is present in concrete marketing communication contexts where consumers select their preferred option between two messages. At low levels of competence, low warmth does not result in a greater preference for formal address. Because informal address is the default, unmarked option in Dutch advertisements, low warmth alone is not enough to make consumers switch from the informal *je* that consumers are accustomed to seeing to the more unusual formal *u*, unless it is accompanied by high competence.

2.4.3. Study 3: Consequences for consumer response

In the two studies above, we showed the impact of brand warmth and competence on consumers' address preferences. In the third study, we investigate the downstream consequences of this effect, and specifically whether the impact of perceived warmth and competence on address preferences translates into more positive responses to informal address for a warmer brand and more positive responses to formal address for a more competent brand. The role of perceived brand warmth and competence could be specific to contexts where informal (rather

than formal) address is the unmarked form, to European languages or cultures, or to advertising and other forms of marketing communication that do not address one specific person. In this study, we address these issues by examining the consequences of formal and informal address use for consumer attitudes in a linguistic context where formal address is the norm (Mandarin Chinese). In addition, we do so in a different marketing setting: a service encounter. The service encounter differs from the advertisement in that the message is meant for one customer specifically. Because of this, the type of address used is more diagnostic of the relationship between the service provider and the customer than the type of address used in an advertisement. We predict that the effects of brand warmth and competence will still apply in this environment.

Method

This study relied on a 2 (brand: high warmth vs. high competence) × 2 (address: formal vs. informal) experimental design. It was conducted online in Mandarin Chinese. One-hundred-and-thirty-eight participants currently living in China (mean age: 32.22, 56.5% female) were recruited through online forums and randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Participants watched two video clips: in the first video, an employee presented a hotel; in the second, she spoke to a guest who was checking in. A young Chinese woman acted as the employee. Participants were asked to imagine that they were the customer in the video.

In the first clip, the brand personality of the hotel was manipulated through subtle changes in the message: words such as “honesty”, “friendly” and “caring” in the high warmth condition were replaced by “excellence”, “skilful”, and “efficient” in the high competence condition; the script was otherwise the same. In the second clip, the employee addressed the guest who was checking in using either formal or informal address. After watching both video clips, participants evaluated the employee (good-bad, helpful-unhelpful, likable-unlikable) and the hotel (good-bad, like-dislike, favorable-unfavourable, appealing-unappealing) on a 7-point semantic differential scale. This was followed by demographic questions and a one-item (warm-competent) manipulation check. Because participants were specifically asked to assess brand personality based on the video clip they had watched, we did not expect address to affect perceived brand personality.

Study 3 - Transcripts

First Clip

- Warmth condition

欢迎入住鹿特丹酒店，我仅代表我们友善热心的团队欢迎每一位顾客的入住。我们团队凭借真挚的服务和无与伦比的配套设施享誉盛名。我们的鲜明特色是贴心周到的服务人员和个性化服务。我们希望用我们温暖真诚的待客之道，成为每一位顾客心中的优选酒店。

*[Dear customer, it's my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of our friendly team. Our hotel is acclaimed for all-round **honesty** and unparalleled levels of service, a distinctive feature of our hotel is our highly **friendly** and **attentive** staff that provides exceptionally **caring** service. Our vision is to fill the earth with the **warmth** and **sincerity** of hospitality. We look forward to your visit.]*

- Competence condition

欢迎入住鹿特丹酒店，我仅代表我们专业的团队欢迎每一位顾客的入住。我们团队凭借卓越的成就和无与伦比的配套设施享誉盛名。我们的鲜明特色是训练有素的工作人员和专业的个性化服务。我们希望用我们高效优质的智慧型服务之道，成为每一位顾客心中的优选酒店。

*[Dear customer, it's my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of our competent team. Our hotel is acclaimed for all-round **excellence** and unparalleled levels of service, a distinctive feature of our hotel is our highly **skilful** and **well-trained** staff that provides exceptionally **personalized** service. Our vision is to fill the earth with the **wisdom** and **efficiency** of hospitality. We look forward to your visit.]*

Second clip

- Formal condition

Scene 1: 您好，欢迎光临，请问有什么可以帮您？

Scene2: 顾客您好，这是您的房卡和证件，请收好。您预定了一间大床房，预计入住两天，电梯请往那边走，您的房间在四楼，房间号码 429，祝您入住愉快。

- Informal condition

Scene 1: 你好，欢迎光临，请问有什么可以帮你？

Scene2: 顾客你好，这是你的房卡和证件，请收好。你预定了一间大床房，预计入住两天，电梯请往那边走，你的房间在四楼，房间号码 429，祝你入住愉快。

[Scene 1: Hello. Welcome to our hotel. How may I help you?]

*Scene 2: Customer, here is **your** ID and **your** room key. **Your** room is on the fourth floor, room number 429. Elevator is this way. Enjoy **your** stay.]*

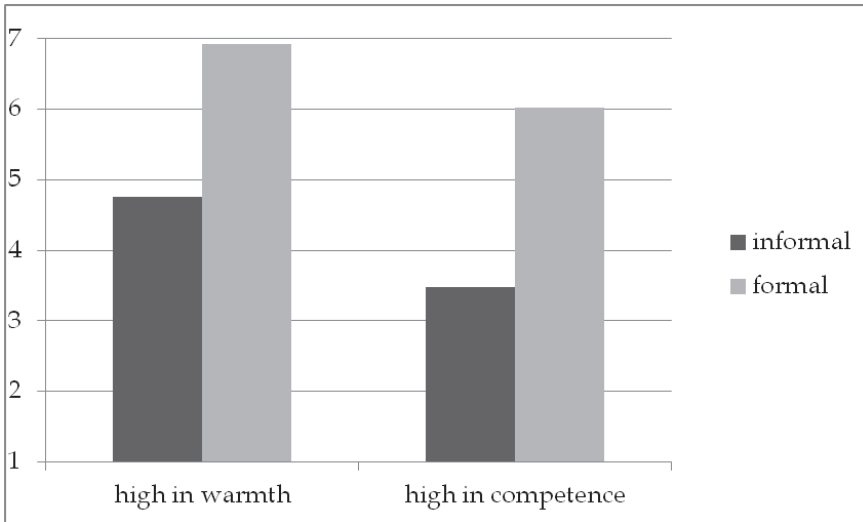
Results

Manipulation check. The manipulation check confirmed that the hotel was perceived as significantly warmer in the warmth condition and more competent in the competence condition (warmth condition: $M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.85$; competent condition: $M = 5.88$; $SD = 0.78$; $t(136) = -25.37$, $p < .001$). As expected, there was no effect of address on perceived warmth and competence ($t(130) = -0.12$, $p = .94$).

Attitude towards the hotel. A factor analysis of the attitudinal response items yielded a one-factor solution (factor loadings $> .94$), suggesting that the same construct was reflected in the scales measuring attitude towards the employee and attitude towards the hotel. The items were therefore averaged to create an index ($\alpha = 0.99$). The two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of address on attitude ($F(1, 133) = 704.67$, $p < .001$), with participants responding more positively on average to formal address ($M = 6.48$, $SD = 0.58$) than to informal address ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.92$); this reflects the fact that formal address is the default form in the Chinese service context. There was also a significant main effect of brand personality ($F(1, 133) = 154.56$, $p < .001$): the hotel elicited more positive reactions when it presented as high in warmth ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 1.20$) than when it was presented as high in competence ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.42$).

More importantly, we found a significant interaction effect of brand personality and address ($F(1, 133) = 5.59$, $p = .02$) on attitude towards the hotel (Figure 5): when the hotel was presented as high in warmth, the attitude advantage for formal address was smaller ($F(1, 133) = 283.42$, $p < .001$; informal address: $M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.54$; formal address: $M = 6.93$; $SD = 0.40$) than when it was presented as high in competence ($F(1, 133) = 431.53$, $p < .001$; informal address: $M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.71$; formal address: $M = 6.02$, $SD = 0.32$).

Figure 5: Brand personality by address interaction for attitude towards the hotel in Study 3



Discussion

In this study, we set out to extend the prior studies and examine whether the effect translated into variations in attitudes towards the company. We also tested whether it could be found in a different setting. We find that when the hotel is presented as high in warmth, the positive impact of formal address on participants' attitudes is smaller than when it is presented as high in competence. These findings confirm the impact of brand warmth and competence on consumers' attitudinal responses to messages containing formal and informal address. Our results show that these effects are not limited to European contexts, but can be found in other cultural settings. In particular, we demonstrate that the effect is also found in settings in which there is a strong preference for formal address. They also show that the effect is not only encountered in impersonal marketing contexts such as advertising, but also applies to contexts that involve a personal interaction with the customer, such as service encounters.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that in this study the main effect of address is so strong that regardless of a brand's warmth, using informal address would clearly be deleterious to the company. Whereas this may be construed to diminish the

managerial importance of the brand personality by address interaction in the Chinese context, the fact that the interaction was present in concomitance with such large main effects speaks to the interaction's robustness. Note also that direct address in a service interaction is likely a setting where consumers are especially sensitive to issues of courtesy, status, and, more generally, situational appropriateness. We suspect that informal address is unlikely to generate similarly strong negative reactions in impersonal contexts (e.g., mass-media communication). It is also unlikely to elicit strong negative reactions in the parts of China where the written distinction between formal and informal address is not commonly reflected in spoken language. Finally, it seems possible that, even in China, some segments of the consumer base may be more receptive to informal address.

2.4.4. Study 4: Address and country-of-origin

In study 3, we showed that brand warmth and competence have consequences for consumer response to formal and informal address. However, when first encountering a new brand, consumers do not always possess enough information to observe the warmth and competence of its behaviour. In such a situation, consumers may make inferences about brand warmth and competence based on other factors. These factors might include e.g. product category, user demographics, visual communication or price positioning. Another such factor is the brand's country of origin. "Made in" cues constitute a common way for consumers to infer a brand's attributes (Min Han, 1989). In study 4, we manipulate country of origin and address. Specifically, we investigate how countries associated with different levels of warmth and competence influence consumers' responses to formal and informal address used by an unknown brand. We focus on attitudinal responses and willingness to buy. We predict that informal address will result in more positive responses when the unknown brand is associated with a country that is perceived as warmer and less competent, whereas formal address will result in more positive responses when the unknown brand is associated with a country perceived as less warm and more competent.

Method

This study relied on a 2 (address: formal vs. informal) x 2 (country of origin: Spain vs. Germany) experimental design. Spain and Germany were selected based on the findings of Cuddy et al. (2009), who present a systematic investigation of the stereotypes of European countries, focusing on perceptions of warmth and competence. Among all European countries, Spain and Germany present the greatest differences in perceived warmth and competence with Spain being associated with high warmth but low competence, and Germany with low warmth but high competence (Cuddy et al., 2009). The study was conducted in Greek. Two-hundred-and-fifty-seven Greek participants (mean age: 25.65, 53.3% female) were recruited online through social networks. Participants were exposed to a screenshot of a webpage for a fictional airline based in Spain or in Germany. Country of origin was manipulated through the company name and a flag on the webpage. The visuals and information were otherwise the same (Figures 6a to 6d). The slogan and description used either formal or informal address within an otherwise identical text. In total, eleven words (in bold in the text) were changed across the two country-of-origin conditions. An approximate translation of the economy class description read as follows:

"Relax in the comfortable seats of our airplanes and reach your destination fully rested. During the flight, you will be offered cold drinks, hot drinks, and snacks. Make your flight more interesting by reading local and international press while you enjoy every comfort and the quality experience of flying with <company name>. For international flights, you will be offered a <company name> shopping guide which contains all the information you will need for shopping in the local stores of the country you are visiting."

Address was also manipulated within the slogan. The slogan was the same for both companies and changed only according to the style of address: the slogan was *Η χαρά του να ταξιδέφεις* in the informal conditions and *Η χαρά του να ταξιδέφετε* in the formal conditions, with the verb form reflecting either formal or informal address. Both translated roughly as "The joy of [your] travel". After looking at the stimulus, participants rated the slogan (bad-good; dislike-like) as well as the brand (negative-positive; bad-good; dislike-like) and said to what extent they would

consider traveling with the company (not probable-very probable), all on 7-point scales. They also answered demographic questions.

Figure 6a: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Formal German Condition)



Deutsch Schwarm

Η χαρά του να πετάτε

Ελλάδα, Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο, Γερμανία, Ελλάδα

f Like +1

Προορισμοί
Κράτηση & Έκδοση Εισιτηρίων

Check-in

Ταξιδιωτικές Πληροφορίες

Πληροφορίες Αποσκευών

Κατηγορίες Θέσεων

Εν πτήση

Economy Class
Business Class

Αγορές εν πτήση

Economy Class

Χαλαρώστε στα ευρύχωρα καθίσματα των αεροσκαφών μας και **φτάστε στον προορισμό σας** ξεκούραστα. Κατά την διάρκεια της πτήσης σας προσφέρονται κρύα, ζεστά ροφήματα και σνακ.

Κάντε το ταξίδι σας πιο ενδιαφέρον ξεφυλλίζοντας εφημερίδες από τον εγχώριο και παγκόσμιο τύπο. Ενώ παράλληλα **απολαμβάνετε όλα τα προνόμια** και την ποιοτική εμπειρία του να ταξιδεύετε με την Deutsch Schwarm.

Για τις πτήσεις εξωτερικού **σας προσφέρουμε τον οδηγό αγοράς Deutsch Schwarm market** με όλες της πληροφορίες που χρειάζεστε για να πραγματοποιήσετε τις αγορές σας σε καταστήματα της τοπικής αγοράς που ταξιδεύετε.

Αγορά Εισιτηρίου

Από ↓

Προς ↓

Αναχώρηση

Figure 6b: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Formal Spanish Condition)



Vuelo Veloz

Η χαρά του να ταξιδεύετε






Προορισμοί
 Κράτηση & Έκδοση Εισιτη-
 ρίων
 Check-in
 Ταξιδιωτικές Πληροφορίες
 Πληροφορίες Αποσκευών
 Κατηγορίες Θέσεων
 Εν πτήση
 Economy Class
 Business Class
 Αγορές εν πτήση

Economy Class
Χαλαρώστε στα ευρύχωρα καθίσματα των αεροσκαφών μας και **φτάστε στον προορισμό σας** ξεκούραστα. Κατά την διάρκεια της πτήσης σας προσφέρονται κρύα, ζεστά ροφήματα και σνακ.
 Κάντε το ταξίδι **σας** πιο ενδιαφέρον ξεφυλλίζοντας εφημερίδες από τον εγχώριο και παγκόσμιο τύπο. Ενώ παράλληλα **απολαμβάνετε** όλα τα προνόμια και την ποιοτική εμπειρία του να **ταξιδεύετε** με την Vuelo Veloz.
 Για τις πτήσεις εξωτερικού **σας προσφέρουμε** τον οδηγό αγοράς Vuelo Veloz market με όλες τις πληροφορίες που **χρειάζεστε** για να **πραγματοποιήσετε τις αγορές σας** σε καταστήματα της τοπικής αγοράς που **ταξιδεύετε**.

Αγορά Εισιτηρίου
 Από
 Προς
 Αναχώρηση

 Επιστολή

Figure 6c: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Informal German Condition)

Deutsch Schwarm

Η χαρά του να ταξιδεύεις

Προορισμοί
Κράτηση & Έκδοση Εισιτηρίων

Check-in

Ταξιδιωτικές Πληροφορίες

Πληροφορίες Αποσκευών

Κατηγορίες Θέσεων

Εν πτήση

Economy Class
Business Class

Αγορές εν πτήση

Economy Class

Χαλάρωσε στα ευρύχωρα καθίσματα των αεροσκαφών μας και **φτάσε στον προορισμό σου** ξεκούραστα . Κατά την διάρκεια της πτήσης σου προσφέρονται κρύα, ζεστά ροφήματα και σνακ.

Κάνε το ταξίδι **σου** πιο ενδιαφέρον ξεφυλλίζοντας εφημερίδες από τον εγχώριο και παγκόσμιο τύπο. Ενώ παράλληλα **απολαμβάνεις** όλα τα προνόμια και την ποιοτική εμπειρία του να **ταξιδεύεις** με την Deutsch Schwarm.

Για τις πτήσεις εξωτερικού **σου προσφέρουμε** τον οδηγό αγοράς Deutsch Schwarm market με όλες τις πληροφορίες που **χρειάζεσαι** για να **πραγματοποιήσεις τις αγορές σου** σε καταστήματα της τοπικής αγοράς που **ταξιδεύεις**.

Αγορά Εισιτηρίου

Από

Προς

Αναχώρηση

Για επιστροφή

Figure 6d: Screenshot of the webpage used in Study 4 (Informal Spanish Condition)

Vuelo Veloz

Η χαρά του να ταξιδεύεις

[Ελλάδα](#)
[Βρετανία](#)
[Γερμανία](#)
[Εσπ.](#)

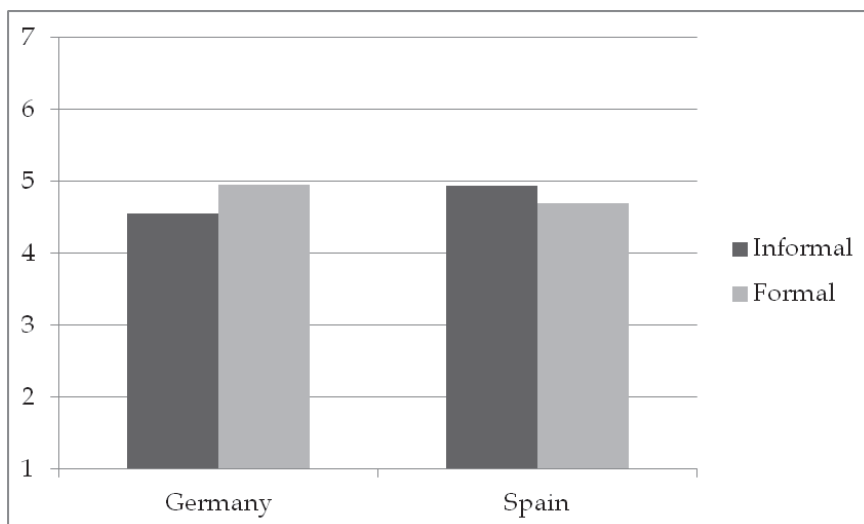
[Like](#)
[+1](#)

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Προορισμοί</p> <p>Κράτηση & Έκδοση Εισιτηρίων</p> <p>Check-in</p> <p>Ταξιδιωτικές Πληροφορίες</p> <p>Πληροφορίες Αποσκευών</p> <p>Κατηγορίες Θέσεων</p> <p>Εν πτήση</p> <p> Economy Class Business Class </p> <p>Αγορές εν πτήση</p> | <p>Economy Class</p> <p>Χαλάρωσε στα ευρύχωρα καθίσματα των αεροσκαφών μας και φτάσε στον προορισμό σου ξεκούραστα . Κατά την διάρκεια της πτήσης, σου προσφέρονται, κρύα, ζεστά ροφήματα και σνακ.</p> <p>Κάνε το ταξίδι σου πιο ενδιαφέρον ξεφυλλίζοντας εφημερίδες από τον εγχώριο και παγκόσμιο τύπο. Ενώ παράλληλα απολαμβάνεις όλα τα προνόμια και την ποιοτική εμπειρία του να ταξιδεύεις με την Vuelo Veloz.</p> <p>Για τις πτήσεις εξωτερικού σου προσφέρουμε τον οδηγό αγοράς Vuelo Veloz market με όλες τις πληροφορίες που χρειάζεσαι για να πραγματοποιήσεις τις αγορές σου σε καταστήματα της τοπικής αγοράς που ταξιδεύεις.</p> | <p>Αγορά Εισιτηρίου</p> <p>Από ↓ <input type="text"/></p> <p>Προς ↓ <input type="text"/></p> <p>Αναχώρηση</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> |
|--|--|--|

Results

Attitude towards the slogan. The items were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = 0.92$). The two-way ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of either address ($F(1, 253) = 0.20, p = .66$) or country of origin ($F(1, 253) = 0.17, p = .68$) on attitude towards the slogan. However, there was a significant interaction effect of address and country of origin ($F(1, 253) = 3.82, p = .05$) on attitude towards the slogan (Figure 7), with participants showing a relative preference for informal address ($M = 4.94, SD = 1.16$) compared to formal address ($M = 4.70, SD = 1.20$) when the brand was Spanish ($F(1, 253) = 1.17, p = .28$) and for formal address ($M = 4.95, SD = 1.52$) compared to informal address ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.20$) when the brand was German ($F(1, 253) = 2.81, p = .09$).

Figure 7: Address by country-of-origin interaction for attitude towards the slogan in Study 4.



Attitude towards the brand. Similar results were found for attitude towards the brands. These included a significant interaction effect of address and country of origin ($F(1, 253) = 6.13, p = .01$), with participants showing a directional preference for informal address ($M = 5.14, SD = 1.11$) to formal address ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.16$) when the company was Spanish ($F(1,253) = 1.50, p = .22$) and a preference for formal

address ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.26$) to informal address ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.32$) when the company was German ($F(1, 253) = 5.12$, $p = .02$).

Willingness to buy. Similar results were found, including a significant interaction effect of address and country of origin ($F(1, 253) = 4.24$, $p = .04$) on willingness to buy, with participants directionally preferring informal address ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.42$) to formal address ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.54$) when the company was Spanish ($F(1, 253) = 2.28$, $p = .13$) and formal address ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.55$) to informal address ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.50$) when it was German ($F(1, 253) = 1.97$, $p = .16$).

Discussion

Because warmth and competence are central to social perception, consumers encountering a new brand make inferences about its warmth and competence based on the available information. These findings demonstrate that the factors that influence these inferences, such as country of origin, also have consequences for reactions to address, especially when consumers are not provided with other information about the brand's personality. In addition, they show that the effect is not limited to attitudinal responses but extends to consumers' willingness to try the product. Finally, they establish the presence of the effect in yet another linguistic context, Greek.

In this study, we did not manipulate warmth and competence directly like in previous studies. We relied instead on country of origin to provide an indirect test of our key interaction. Whereas this lowered the internal validity of the study, the main goal of study 4 was to emphasize the practical relevance of the paper by showing the same pattern of results found in previous studies using common, ecologically valid cues associated to systematic differences in warmth and competence.

2.4.5. Study 5: The moderating role of address perceptions

Through four studies, we have shown that perceived brand warmth and competence influence consumers' reactions to formal and informal address in marketing communication in a variety of cultural and managerial contexts. We argue that this is because of a better match between informal address and warmer brands and between formal address and more competent brands. If this is the case, the effect should be stronger among consumers who exhibit larger differences in

their perceptions of the warmth and competence associated with formal and informal address pronouns. If a consumer barely perceives informal address as more strongly associated with warmth than formal address, for example, then the effect of brand warmth on their address preferences should be small. In study 5, we investigate the moderation effect of the magnitude of the difference in perceived warmth and competence between the two types of address.

We expect the effect of perceived brand warmth on address preferences to be moderated by the magnitude of the difference between the perceived warmth participants associate with informal address and the perceived warmth they associate with formal address. Conversely, we expect the effect of perceived brand competence on address preferences to be moderated by the magnitude of the difference between the perceived competence the participants associate with informal address and the perceived competence they associate with formal address. Finally, warm brands could simply be more strongly associated with younger consumers, and therefore with informal address, than competent brands. In this study, we investigate this alternative explanation by controlling for the perceived age of the brand's target group.

Method

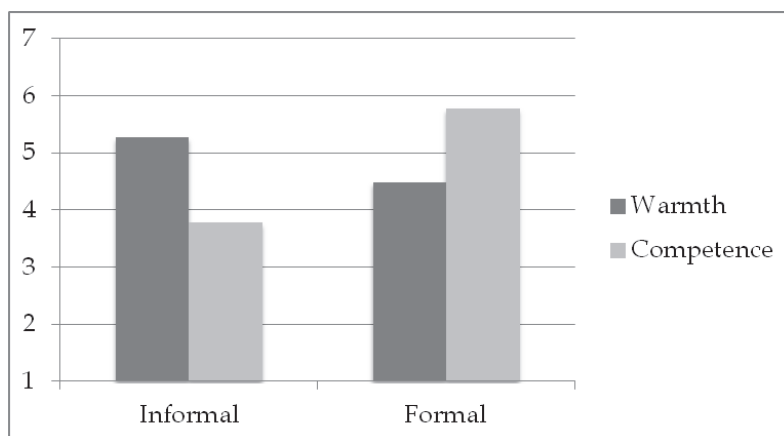
This study was conducted in Dutch at a major Dutch university. Eighty-three undergraduate students (mean age: 19.65, 41% female) participated in exchange for partial course credit. The study relied on a within-participant design. Participants first rated each of the twenty top brands used in study 2 on both perceived warmth (warm, cordial, friendly) and perceived competence (competent, skilled, capable) on seven-point Likert scales. The brands were always presented together with their logo and were shown in randomized order. The order in which participants rated warmth and competence was also randomized. Participants then rated the age of the perceived target group of each brand on a 7-point scale from "young" to "old". Finally, participants reported the type of address that they would prefer to receive from each brand, from informal to formal on a seven-point scale. Participants also rated the warmth (warm, cordial, friendly) and competence (competent, skilled, capable) of both the formal and the informal address pronouns on a seven-point

Likert scale; the order in which they did so was randomized. Finally, participants answered a few demographic questions.

Results

Perceived warmth and competence of address. Overall, the informal address pronoun, *je*, was perceived as significantly warmer (informal: $M = 5.28$, $SD = 0.98$; formal: $M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.95$; $t(81) = 4.80$, $p < .001$) and less competent (informal: $M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.43$; formal: $M = 5.78$, $SD = 0.73$; $t(81) = -10.06$, $p < .001$) than the formal address pronoun, *u* (Figure 8). As expected, there was significant variation across participants in these perceptions.

Figure 8: Perceived warmth and competence associated with formal and informal address in Study 5



Based on these items, we created two indices. The magnitude of the difference between the perceived warmth associated with informal and formal address was computed as the absolute value of the difference between each participant's warmth rating for each type of address. The magnitude of the difference in perceived address competence was similarly computed from each participant's competence rating for each type of address.

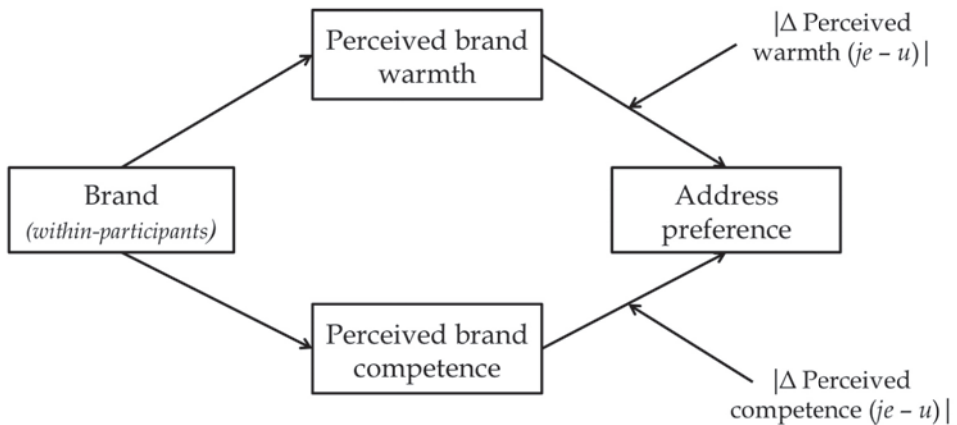
Multilevel analysis. A multilevel analysis was conducted using the MIXED procedure in SPSS with brand as the within-participant variable and individual difference in perceived brand warmth and competence between address forms as

between-participant moderators. The model revealed a significant main effect of the brand on address preferences ($F(19, 1613) = 27.46; p < .001$) after controlling for perceived target age ($F(1, 1613) = 14.12; p < .001$); when a brand was perceived as older, participants were more likely to favour formal address ($b = .16 (0.042), t(1613) = 3.76, p < .001$). There were no main effects of either perceived brand warmth ($p = .99$) or perceived brand competence ($p = .13$) on address preferences. As expected, the effect of perceived brand warmth on address preferences was significantly moderated by difference in perceived address warmth ($F(1, 1613) = 4.56; p = .033$). Conversely, the effect of perceived brand competence on address preferences was significantly moderated by difference in perceived address competence ($F(1, 1613) = 4.20; p = .041$). In other words, participants were more likely to prefer informal address for warm brands when they associated informal address more strongly with warmth compared to formal address, and to prefer formal address for competent brands when they associated formal address more strongly with competence compared to informal address. A floodlight analysis (Spiller et al. 2013) revealed that the effect of perceived brand warmth on address preference, with greater perceived warmth leading to a stronger preference for informal address, was only significant when the absolute difference in perceived address warmth was greater than 0.90. In other words, there was no significant effect of perceived brand warmth on address preference among participants who did not perceive formal and informal address to differ in warmth. This is consistent with our hypothesis.

The effect of perceived brand competence, with greater perceived competence leading to a stronger preference for formal address, remained significant regardless of the absolute difference in the participant's association of formal and informal address with competence. It should be noted that the model used to conduct the floodlight analysis cannot take into account the hierarchical nature of the data. As such, it does not correct for the fact that the differences in perceived address warmth and competence were constant within participants. This means it is less sensitive than the multilevel model. However, the magnitude of the effect did increase as the difference increased (one standard deviation below the mean: $b = 0.26 (0.061), t(1636) = 4.19, p < .001$; one standard deviation above the mean: $b = 0.32 (0.054), t(1636) = 5.92, p < .001$).

Mediation analysis. In order to provide additional evidence for the mediating role of perceived brand warmth and perceived brand competence, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis testing the role of both of these mediators simultaneously using bootstrapping. Because the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) is not designed for testing indirect effects in multilevel models, it does not correct for possible correlations between measures provided by the same participants (i.e., it assumes that a person's address preferences for different brands are independent). We are not aware of any currently available software that would allow us to estimate a moderated mediation model with multiple mediators on hierarchical data. The tested model is illustrated in figure 9.

Figure 9: Moderated mediation effects tested in Study 5



A first bootstrap analysis of indirect effects highlighted significant mediation effects by perceived brand warmth (95% confidence interval: $-0.029 < \text{C.I.} < -0.11$) and perceived brand competence (95% confidence interval: $0.015 < \text{C.I.} < 0.029$) but not by perceived target age (95% confidence interval: $-0.0031 < \text{C.I.} < 0.0038$). Sobel tests to confirm the mediation by perceived brand warmth ($z = -2.06; p = .039$) and competence ($z = 6.38; p < .001$) were significant in both cases. Above, we showed that the effect of perceived brand warmth and competence on address preferences was moderated by the magnitude of the difference in perceived address warmth and competence between formal and informal address. This is consistent with our theory, since perceived brand warmth and competence should not affect address preference among participants who do not perceive one type of address as being more strongly

associated with warmth and less strongly associated with competence than the other. Thus, we predicted two moderated mediations where differences in address perception would moderate the Mediator-DV relationships. We also controlled for the impact of perceived target age; the results were similar when perceived target age was removed from the model.

We first report the paths to the mediators (standard errors of the coefficients are reported in parentheses). There was a significant effect of brand on both perceived brand warmth ($b = 0.11$ (0.006), $t(1637) = 19.13$, $p < .001$) and perceived brand competence ($b = 0.058$ (0.005), $t(1637) = 11.72$, $p < .001$). We next report the path from the mediators to address preference. The analysis revealed a significant effect of perceived brand warmth ($b = -0.28$ (0.087), $t(1629) = -3.22$, $p = .001$) and a significant interaction effect between perceived brand warmth and difference in perceived address warmth ($b = -0.073$ (0.036), $t(1629) = -2.01$, $p = 0.044$), as well as a significant effect of perceived brand competence ($b = 0.28$ (0.107), $t(1629) = 2.62$, $p = 0.009$), on address preference. There was a significant main effect of perceived target age ($b = 0.36$ (0.041), $t(1629) = 8.92$, $p < 0.001$). The brand did not have a significant direct effect on address preference ($b = -0.015$ (0.01), $t(1629) = -1.51$, $p = 0.13$).

There was no significant effect of the interaction between perceived brand competence and difference in perceived address competence ($b = 0.007$ (0.029), $t(1629) = 0.23$, $p = .82$). Because of the strong effect of brand competence, the interaction found in the multilevel model did not appear when using this less sensitive model, which ignored the correlation between measures provided by the same participant. The effect of brand on address preference therefore appeared to be significantly mediated by perceived brand competence at all levels of the moderators.

Discussion

In this study, we demonstrated that the effect of brand on consumers' address preferences was mediated by perceived brand warmth and competence, and that the effects of perceived brand warmth and competence on address preference were moderated by the importance of the difference in the consumer's perceptions of formal and informal address as warm and competent. In other words, participants who did not exhibit different associations between formal and informal address and warmth and competence were less likely to experience the effect, since the impact of

matching between brand warmth and address warmth and between brand competence and address competence was reduced. This is consistent with our theoretical account. As previously suggested (Smith, 2004), we find that a target characteristic – perceived age – affects address preferences. However, we show that this is independent from the effect of brand personality and does not explain the mediation effects by perceived brand warmth and competence.

2.4.6. Study 6: Communication context as a boundary condition

In the five studies above, we have demonstrated that the perceived warmth and competence consumers associate with a brand affects their preferences for and responses to formal and informal address use in the brand's communication. We showed that this impact is greater for consumers who strongly associate informal address with warmth and formal address with competence. However, individual associations with formal and informal address are not the only factor moderating the impact of brand personality on consumer response to pronominal address. We also expect the importance of the effect to vary depending on the type of communication in which formal or informal address is used.

We argue that the impact of brand warmth and competence on the consumer's reaction to pronominal address will be different in personal versus impersonal contexts. A personal context is a situation in which communication is tailored to a particular consumer (e.g., a face-to-face conversation.) In contrast, an impersonal context is a situation in which communication targets a large number of people (e.g., a TV ad.) When a message is addressed to a consumer personally, it becomes diagnostic of their social status and of their relationship with the brand. However, if it is addressed to the general public, no such judgment can be inferred. As a result, consumer characteristics are less relevant and a good match between address choices and perceived brand personality is more important in impersonal messages. Consumers are likely to also pay attention to factors other than brand personality when the pronoun used reflects on them personally. Therefore, we expect the impact of brand personality on address preferences to be stronger in impersonal interactions than in personal situations. In the study below, we investigate this boundary condition empirically.

Method

The study was conducted in Dutch at a major Dutch university. Two hundred and twenty-seven undergraduate students (mean age: 19.67, 56.1% female) participated in exchange for partial course credit. As in study 1, we used the 100 strongest brands in the Netherlands according to the Young & Rubicam BrandAsset Valuator (Kruk et al., 2013, Appendix A). Context was manipulated by changing the situation in which the participant was asked to imagine encountering a communication from the brands: either in a poster in the subway (impersonal condition) or in an email from customer service (personal condition). In order to avoid an effect of different expectations for spoken and written language, the communication was written in both cases. Participants were randomly assigned to either the personal or the impersonal condition and asked to rate the type of address (from informal to formal on a seven-point scale) that they would prefer to receive in communications coming from each brand. Brands were presented in a randomized order. After rating all the brands, participants answered a few demographic questions.

Results

A multilevel analysis with preferred address as a dependent variable, context (personal vs. impersonal) as a between-subject factor and the warmth and competence ratings obtained for each brand in study 1 as covariates revealed significant main effects of both brand warmth ($F(1, 22692) = 20.61, p < .001$) and brand competence ($F(1, 22692) = 105.18, p < .001$) on address preference, as well as a main effect of communication context ($F(1, 22692) = 20.26, p < .001$). As predicted, the analysis also revealed significant interaction effects of communication context with brand competence ($F(1, 22692) = 22.42, p < .001$) and with brand warmth ($F(1, 22692) = 14.99, p < .001$) on address preferences. Consistent with previous studies, there was a significant interaction effect of perceived brand warmth and competence on address preferences ($F(1, 22692) = 57.57, p < .001$). Finally, a three-way interaction of communication context with perceived brand warmth and perceived brand competence was also found ($F(1, 22692) = 19.92, p < .001$).

Further analysis conducted to interpret the interaction revealed that in the impersonal condition, there were significant main effects of both brand warmth ($F(1,$

11296) = 32.23, $p < .001$) and brand competence ($F(1, 11296) = 102.36, p < .001$), as well as a significant interaction of perceived brand warmth and competence ($F(1, 11296) = 66.15, p < .001$) on address preferences. However, in the personal condition, there was no significant main effect of brand warmth on address preferences ($F(1, 11396) = 0.25, p = .62$). Although the main effect of brand competence remained significant ($F(1, 11396) = 16.86, p < .001$), as did the interaction effect of brand warmth and competence ($F(1, 11396) = 5.40, p = .020$), these effects were weaker than in the impersonal condition, suggesting that the importance of matching is indeed attenuated in the personal condition.

Discussion

These results confirm that the impact of a match between the type of address used by a brand and its perceived warmth and competence on consumer response varies depending on the communication context. This has important consequences for practice. Using the address pronoun that matches brand personality is especially important in impersonal contexts, such as a TV ad or a poster in a public transport environment, since in those situations consumers do not assume address to say anything about them specifically and therefore are more likely to value address use that is consistent with brand personality. In contrast, a match is less important in personal contexts – such as a personal email from customer service or a face-to-face conversation – in which address is diagnostic of the individual and their relationship with the brand, as in these situations consumers are likely to also pay attention to other salient aspects of address choices besides brand personality. For instance, consumers who feel they have a close relationship with a brand might prefer to be addressed informally, whereas consumers who are very conscious of their social status might favour formal address, regardless of brand personality.

2.5. General discussion

In order to enhance the effectiveness of their communication, companies need to know how language affects consumers' attitudes and perceptions. Prior research has discussed the impact of psycholinguistic factors on consumer response. Recently, it has emerged that sociolinguistic factors matter as well. Personal pronouns ("I", "you", "we") in particular constitute an essential feature of communication, and

recent work has highlighted their importance for marketing in general and brand relationships in particular (Sela et al., 2012; Packard et al., 2014). The distinction between formal and informal address pronouns is an omnipresent feature of the marketplace for billions of consumers around the world, found in advertising, on websites, but also in service encounters. In many of these languages, both types of address can be used, and for each setting marketers have to decide which is more appropriate. This can be an especially challenging task for multinationals trying to present a consistent message across different cultures (e.g., Norrby and Hajek, 2011) and for English-speaking marketers used to a single *you* pronoun. As a result, marketers making address choices often stick to the default address pronoun in the culture, although they sometimes take into account the characteristics of their target group. Yet, until now, no research had investigated how formal and informal address affects consumer response.

Through six studies, we demonstrate the importance of brand personality in consumer response to formal and informal address, and in particular the importance of the match between the perceived warmth and competence associated with the brand and the warmth and competence associated with the address pronoun. Our findings show that perceived brand warmth and competence not only mediate the impact of a brand on consumers' address preferences, but also moderate the effect of formal and informal address pronouns on attitudes: consumers are more likely to prefer and react positively to informal address coming from a high-warmth brand, and to formal address coming from a high-competence brand. Consistent with our theory, we find that this is because informal address is more likely to be associated with warmth and formal address with competence, thus creating a better match between informal address and warm brands and formal address and competent brands. Indeed, we find that the effect is moderated by the extent to which a consumer's perceptions of formal and informal address as warm and competent differ. While it could be argued that warm brands are simply perceived as targeting a younger crowd than competent brands, and such are more likely to be associated with informal address, we find a significant effect even if we control for the perceived age of the brand's target. We also show that the effect is found across linguistic contexts, including both settings where informal address is the default, unmarked form and settings where formal address is the default form. Finally, we highlight the role of personal or impersonal communication context as a boundary

condition for the effect. We show that the impact of brand warmth and competence on address preferences is stronger in impersonal contexts than in personal contexts. This is consistent with our expectation that a good match between address and brand personality should generally matter more in impersonal contexts, where the communication targets a large number of consumers and does not provide information about the brand's treatment of each specific consumer, than in personal contexts, where pronominal address refers to one individual consumer and has a diagnostic function: providing information about the relationship between the firm and the specific consumer, leading to an increased salience of other aspects of address choices such as consumer characteristics.

2.5.1. Theoretical contribution

The present research contributes to the literature on language effects in consumer behaviour by suggesting that brand personality, and in particular brand warmth and competence, is associated with specific expectations and preferences in terms of language and, more specifically, address pronoun use. It demonstrates that using formal and informal address in a way that is consistent with these expectations results in more positive consumer response. Our work is unique in that it illustrates the importance of matching brand personality and language use. Whereas prior research on the impact of personal pronouns in marketing communication has focused on closeness-implying pronouns ("we") and self-reference ("I"), the present work indicates that in the large number of languages worldwide that feature a T/V distinction, second-person pronouns (the formal and informal versions of "you") also have consequences for attitudes and behaviours. It reinforces the idea that subtle variations in language have consequences for marketing and underlines the importance of looking beyond English to avoid overlooking potentially important linguistic factors that affect the effectiveness of marketing communication.

Additionally, this research adds to the existing literature on brand warmth and competence by highlighting the consequences of brands being perceived as intentional agents by consumers (Kervyn et al., 2012). Our work examined both real-world brands, with which consumers were familiar and potentially had relationships, and fictional brands. The findings reveal that the perceived warmth and competence of individual brands tend to be uncorrelated when evaluated by

different participants, but positively correlated when evaluated by the same participants. This shows that people evaluate brands' intentions and abilities in a manner similar to that in which they evaluate individuals' intentions and abilities (Fiske et al. 2007). This reinforces the idea that, at least in the way they make social judgments, consumers think of brands as individuals with a personality.

Finally, this paper contributes to the sociolinguistics and in particular to the pronominal address literature by highlighting the importance of social perceptions such as warmth and competence for address expectations across linguistic contexts.

2.5.2. Managerial implications

Pronoun address choices can be a minefield for companies. Using the wrong type of address can elicit negative reactions in consumers. From a practical perspective, our findings promote the notion that pronominal address choices have important consequences for the effectiveness of marketing communication. This knowledge may be especially useful to brands going from a market where there is only one way to address consumers to one where the firm has two options, and to marketers who are native English speakers but have strategic influence over marketing communication in other languages (e.g., in Spanish). The results have ready applications in marketing. The present research highlights in particular the importance of matching pronominal address and brand personality. It demonstrates that marketers making address choices should not limit themselves to considerations such as the norms of the linguistic context or the age and disposition of their target (Smith, 2004), but should also take into account the personality of their brand, and specifically the extent to which it conveys warmth and competence. The fact that these findings are shown to replicate across marketing situations and cultural settings, regardless of the type of address considered "unmarked" in the language in question, makes them especially relevant.

Of particular interest is the fact that the importance of address is not limited to contexts where the message is personal, tailored to a specific consumer, and potentially holds diagnostic value in terms of communicating the speaker's perception of the receiver (e.g., service encounter, email) but also extends to more contexts where the pronoun is used to address an unspecified, generic customer and presumably does not hold any diagnostic value (e.g., advertising, website).

Additionally, we note that when consumers consider unfamiliar brands for which they have no predefined perceptions of warmth and competence, the clues they use to infer these, such as the country of origin of the brand, also have an impact on their responses to formal and informal address. Marketers should keep these inferences in mind. Finally, we find that consumers differ in the extent to which they associate formal and informal address with warmth and competence, and that these differences affect the extent to which they are sensitive to the match between brand personality and address. This suggests that marketers may not need to concern themselves with groups that may not exhibit these typical associations since according to the results such consumers would be expected to react indifferently to both types of address.

2.5.3. Limitations and directions for future research

We showed that brand personality affects consumer preferences for and response to formal and informal address. One remaining question is whether they do so equally across consumers. A significant proportion of our data was collected among young adults. Yet, according to our theoretical account, additional experience with formal and informal address, which is typically gained as an adult, should result in a heightened sensitivity to the match between brand personality and address pronoun use. Therefore, age could be expected to moderate the effect, with older consumers being more sensitive to matching than younger consumers. In addition, this research did not examine the consequences of address use for recall, for example in the context of advertising. While we find that a better match between brand personality and address results in more positive attitudinal responses, future research should investigate the possibility that using nonmatching, unexpected address has a positive impact on recall, as suggested by Heckler and Childers (1992) who find that incongruence stemming from unexpected but relevant information improves the memorability of marketing communication. It should also be noted that, in a number of languages, the pronoun used to convey singular formal address is actually a plural second person pronoun, which may or may not be capitalized to distinguish it from its plural twin. For example, the French *vous* can be used either to address a single person formally or to address a group of people (either formally or informally). A similar pattern exists in languages such as German and Russian, although in these cases the pronoun is often capitalized to signify that it is being

used as a singular form. Future research should investigate whether the impact of formal address on consumer responses in such linguistic settings is different from that found in contexts where the formal pronoun is a third-person personal pronoun or a different pronoun altogether.

The main goal of this chapter was to highlight the importance of brand personality for consumer response to formal and informal address. To achieve this, we have focussed on the role of brand warmth and competence. However, other brands characteristics may also be expected to affect consumer response to address. In particular, we have gathered initial evidence that suggests that other aspects of brand personality (Aaker, 1997) – such as being perceived as sophisticated, exciting, or sincere – may also have an impact.

In a first preliminary study, we looked at the impact of a brand's association with excitement or sophistication on consumers' address expectations. Because excitement tends to be associated with youthfulness and sophistication with maturity and prestige, consumers should be more likely to expect informal address from a brand they perceive to be high in excitement and formal address from a brand they perceive to be high in sophistication. This study was conducted in a major Russian city. One hundred and six native Russian speakers were approached through a social network (mean age = 26.82, 67.9% female). Participants were presented with a magazine ad for a fictional jeans brand called "YourJeans". In the sophistication condition, the ad featured a young, professional-looking male dressed in a business casual fashion; the text under the ad described YourJeans as the brand of choice for smart, successful leaders. In contrast, in the excitement condition, the ad featured a young, casually dressed male with an urban style; the text under the ad described YourJeans as the brand of choice for young, stylish and unique individuals. The font and colour of the logo changed as well to reflect brand personality; the ads were otherwise the same. Participants were asked to translate the name of the brand as well as the English-language slogan "Jeans for you" into Russian. In order to do so, they had to decide whether such a brand would use formal or informal address. They also answered questions about their perception of the brand. Their responses were coded as using either the formal (*vy*) or the informal pronoun (*ty*). The logistic regression analysis revealed a significant association between brand personality and address translation formality (Wald Chi-square = 6.88; $p = .009$). In the competence condition, 29.1% of the translations used formal

address. In the excitement condition, only 7.8% of the translations used formal address; the rest used informal address.

If exciting brands use informal address to highlight their youthfulness, sincere brands could do the same to draw attention on another characteristics associated with informal address, such as simplicity and directness, while sophisticated brands could use formal address remind customers of their association with social status. In another preliminary study, we again explored the impact of brand personality on address preferences. A pretest was first conducted in order to select appropriate brands. Forty-six students enrolled at Dutch and Belgian universities ranked 16 brands according to their level of sincerity and sophistication. Friedman's mean ranks were used to select four brands: Chanel and Moët & Chandon (sophisticated) and Dove and Nutella (sincere). The main study relied on a within-participant design with six counterbalancing conditions. One hundred and seventy Belgian and Dutch (22,4%) participants (Mean age = 30.02, 56,5% female, 97,1% native speakers) were approached through e-mail and social networks. For each of the brands, participants were presented with a choice between four possibilities: two formal slogans and two informal ones. A repeated-measures logistic regression revealed a significant effect of brand condition on address preference (Wald Chi-square = 9.23; $p = .002$). Specifically, formal address was selected 58.2% of the time for Chanel and 57.5% of the time for Moët & Chandon, but only 42.9% of the time for Dove and 42.9% of the the time for Nutella. A manipulation check confirmed that the two types of brands were rated differently by participants for both sincerity ($F(1,678) = 140.57, p < .001$) and sophistication ($F(1,678) = 251.12, p < .001$). The brands used in the sincere condition scored higher on the sincerity scale ($M = 3.26, SD = 0.91$) than the brands used in the sophisticated condition ($M = 2.47, SD = 0.84$), whereas the brands used in the sophisticated condition scored higher on the sophistication scale ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.75$) than the brands used in the sincere condition ($M = 2.41, SD = 0.77$). There was no effect of the counterbalancing conditions.

Finally, status considerations represent another important component of address choices: Formal address highlights status differences, whereas informal address is typically thought to convey equality and approachability. However, the use of informal address can also reflect condescension when there is a large status difference between the speakers. Similarly, luxury brands are associated with a higher social status than mainstream brands. This means that we would expect a

better match between formal address and luxury brands and between informal address and mainstream brands. This better match should result in more positive responses to formal address when used by luxury brands and to informal address when used by mainstream brands. In a third preliminary study, we investigated the role of brand positioning in moderating the effect of address on consumers' attitudes. We used a 2 (formal vs. informal) x 2 (low-end vs. high-end) between-subject experimental design. One hundred and seventy-seven adult participants (mean age = 30.32, 25.8% female) were approached in office settings and public transportation in the Netherlands and asked to evaluate a printed ad for a fictional sunglasses brand. Stimuli in the low-end condition used a colourful background and prominent price information. Stimuli in the high-end condition featured a grey background and no price information. The product picture and brand name were the same in all ads. All ads featured the same slogan, but one word changed to reflect either formal or informal address depending on the condition. Participants observed the ad and answered questions about their attitude towards the ad and the slogan as well as about their interest in purchasing the sunglasses. A floodlight analysis (Spiller et al., 2013) revealed a significant interaction effect of address pronoun and positioning on purchase intention in consumers aged 29.46 and above, on attitude towards the ad in consumers aged 33.52 and above, and on attitude towards the slogan in consumers aged 47.06 and above. These results are interesting as they suggest that older age does not simply result in a greater preference for formal address, but rather in a greater sensitivity to address appropriateness. Young adults in the Netherlands are typically addressed informally, and it is not surprising that while they have an understanding of address norms and expect brands to behave accordingly, these expectations do not yet translate as strongly into an effect on their attitudes.

2.6. Conclusion

Formal and informal address pronouns are omnipresent features of marketing communication for billions of consumers worldwide, and address choices are often tricky for marketers. The present research adds to the language effects literature discussing sociolinguistic factors (e.g. (e.g., Kronrod, Grinstein, and Wathieu, 2012a and 2012b; Sela, Sarial-Abi and Wheeler, 2012; Packard, Moore, and McFerran, 2014; Patrick and Hagtvedt, 2012) while helping marketers make good address decisions by encouraging them to take into account the warmth and competence associated

with the communicating brand. In particular, we find that across linguistic contexts and marketing settings, informal address is more likely to be preferred and to result in more positive responses when associated with warmer brands, whereas formal address is more likely to be preferred and to result in more positive responses when associated with more competent brands. As globalization causes companies to look abroad for growth and our societies to become more linguistically diverse, it has never been more crucial for companies to make the most of their communication strategies in languages other than English. We hope that this work will open the door for future research exploring the role of formal and informal address pronouns and their impact on consumer response.

Chapter 3:

Generational status as a boundary condition for minority targeting strategies²

3.1. Introduction

In recent decades, many countries have witnessed a rapid increase of ethnic and cultural diversity within their population and understanding minority consumers has become a priority for marketers. Standard approaches have emerged in the area of so-called ethnic marketing. In terms of media planning, advertisers attempt to reach consumers when their ethnic identity is most salient. This is consistent with the argument that ethnic identity primes positively affect responses to targeted advertisements among socially distinctive groups (e.g. Forehand and Deshpandé, 2001; Forehand, Deshpandé, and Reed, 2002; Chattaraman, Rudd and Lennon 2009; Dimofte, Forehand and Deshpandé 2003). In terms of copy writing, targeted ads typically feature spokespeople or models with the same ethnic background as the target. They are thought to have a positive impact on advertisement evaluation (e.g. Aaker, Brumbaugh, and Grier 2000; Antioco et al. 2012; Brumbaugh and Grier 2006; Deshpandé and Stayman 2004; Green 1999; Grier and Brumbaugh 1999; Grier and Deshpandé 2001; Martin, Lee, and Yang 2004; Whittler, 1991).

These strategies assume that ethnic groups are homogeneous. Yet, not all minority consumers identify with their host and heritage cultures to the same degree. We argue that generational status is one of the most important factors that determine the effectiveness of these standard minority targeting approaches. Second-generation minority consumers constitute a growing demographic, representing, for example, 10% of the Dutch population (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2012) and

² This chapter is based on an article published in the *International Journal of Research in Marketing* (Lenoir, Puntoni, Reed, and Verlegh, 2013). In 2013, the author was awarded the ESOMAR Young Researcher of the Year Award for a submission based on this chapter. The author is thankful to Jenny Cheung and Senem Canimoglu for their help with data collection.

11% of the US population (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). These consumers often consider both the heritage and the mainstream culture to play an important part in their lives (Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver, 2004): they are more likely than their parents to identify as biculturals (Giguère, Lalonde, and Lou 2010), which impacts their consumption patterns. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of consumers' generational status for the effectiveness of minority targeting practices. We conduct replications of the two standard paradigms described above and show that generational status constitutes an important boundary condition for these strategies.

3.2. Conceptual framework

3.2.1. Ethnic identity priming

The influence of identity on consumer behaviour has been discussed in many different streams of research (Reed et al. 2012). According to Donthu and Cheria (1994), ethnic identity is the key variable mediating the impact of ethnicity on shopping behaviour. For the bicultural, ethnic identity is situational: the salience of a given identity is affected by the situation in which choices are made (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989). This means that it can be affected by primes. Identity primes – specific cues in the environment that cause a particular identity to become salient – have been shown to affect consumption-related behaviour, particularly regarding identity-relevant products (Kettle and Häubl 2011; Reed 2004; White and Dahl 2007). The literature has highlighted the positive impact of ethnic primes on minority consumers' responses to targeted advertisements through increased ethnic identity salience (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand et al., 2002; Chattaraman et al., 2009; Dimofte et al., 2003). We argue that the impact of priming on ethnic identity salience and, subsequently, on the effectiveness of targeted advertisements is in fact significantly stronger for second-generation, bicultural minority consumers than for first-generation minority consumers, whose ethnic identity tends to be chronically salient. In light of this, we expect ethnic identity primes to have a more positive impact on responses to ethnic ads in second-generation than in first-generation minority consumers.

3.2.2. Featuring same-ethnicity spokespeople

In addition, according to distinctiveness theory (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994; Grier and Deshpandé 2001), members of socially distinctive minority groups tend to have a more salient ethnic identity than members of majority groups. This results in a greater impact of targeted advertising featuring same-ethnicity spokespeople on minority consumers' responses to advertisements (Deshpandé and Stayman, 1994). Several studies have shown a positive impact of spokespeople of the same ethnicity on distinctive consumers' attitudes towards the brand and ad (e.g. Aaker, Brumbaugh, and Grier 2000; Antioco, Vanhamme, Hardy, and Bernardin, 2012; Green 1999; Martin, Lee, and Yang 2004; Whittler, 1991), and ethnic spokespeople or models are widely used in targeted advertising. We argue that first-generation minority consumers tend to have a more salient ethnic identity than second-generation minority consumers. Because of this, this strategy is significantly more effective when targeting first-generation minority consumers than when targeting second-generation minority consumers. We predict that this effect of generational status on the effectiveness of the strategy is mediated by the strength of identification with the heritage culture.

3.3. Empirical studies

3.3.1. Study 1: Generational status and ethnic identity priming

In this study, we investigate the impact of ethnic identity primes on consumers' response to a same-ethnicity spokesperson.

Study design and procedure

Participants for this study were 106 consumers of Chinese heritage living in a major Dutch city and approached through professional and civic organizations, such as the Chinese student association, as well as through other participants. Fifty-two participants (42% male, mean age: 38.3 years old) were first-generation Chinese immigrants while 54 (57% male, mean age: 23.4 years old) were born in the Netherlands to Chinese parents. Participants were randomly assigned to either the prime or the control condition and presented with a paper booklet containing four

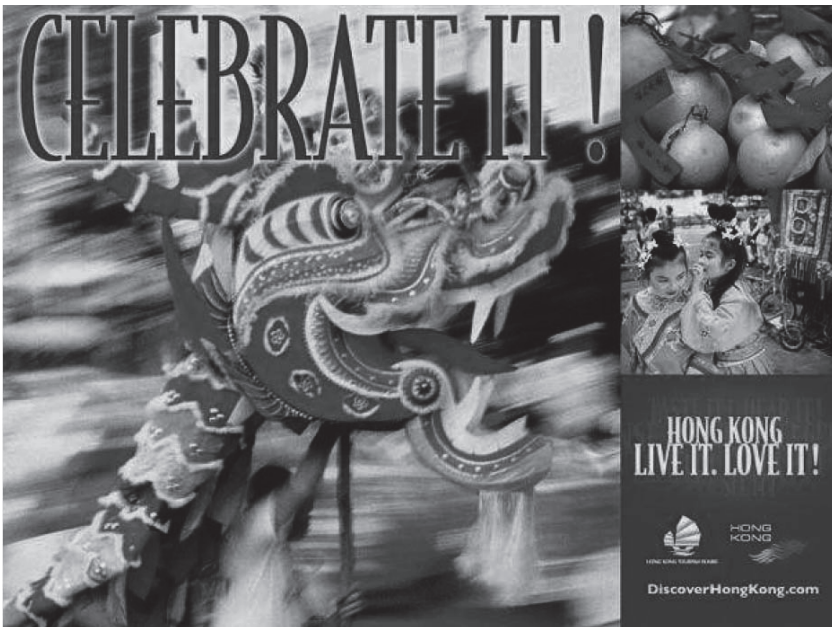
print advertisements that they were asked to evaluate. One of these ads featured a female Chinese model acting as a spokesperson for a telephone service provider (Figure 10a). In the ethnic prime condition, this stimulus was immediately preceded by an advertisement of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (Figure 10b) featuring Chinese cultural symbols (e.g., a dragon, young girls in traditional dress, etc.). In the control condition, no culturally specific images were shown. The other advertisements were fillers.

Respondents' attitude towards, and identification with the Chinese spokesperson were measured through 6- and 3-items scales respectively (I find the person in the advertisement friendly, happy, intelligent, trustworthy, attractive, appealing; "The person in the advertisements looks like me", "I identify with the person in the advertisement", "The person in the advertisement has the same ethnic background as me"). After handing in the first questionnaire, participants received a second booklet containing demographic, ethnicity and culture-related questions. A modified version of the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA - Suinn et al. 1987, 1992) was used to assess the degree of acculturation of the participants. A low score on the SL-ASIA indicates high identification with Asian culture and low acculturation to Western culture; a high score reflects the opposite.

Figure 10a: Same-ethnicity spokesperson stimulus used in Study 1



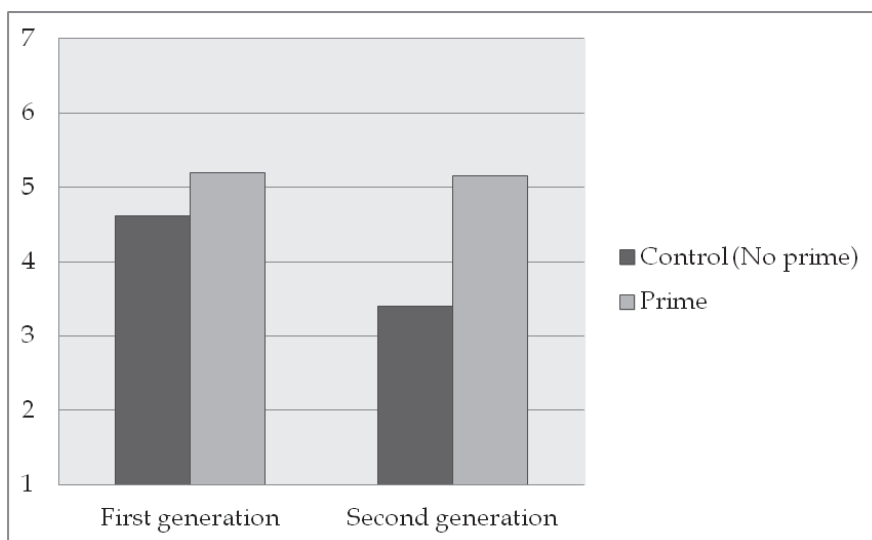
Figure 10b: Cultural identity prime used in Study 1



Results

Attitude towards the same-ethnicity spokesperson. The items were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = 0.89$). The two-way ANOVA showed significant main effects of both generation ($F(2, 102) = 17.20, p < .001$) and ethnic prime ($F(1, 102) = 59.37, p < .001$) on attitude towards the minority spokesperson (Figure 11a). There was a significant interaction effect between ethnic prime and generational status ($F(2, 101) = 15.56, p < .001$) on attitude (Table 2). First- and second-generation respondents were affected differently by the prime. When exposed to the ethnic prime, the attitude towards the ethnic spokesperson was similar ($F(1, 102) = 0.021, p = .88$) in first ($M = 5.19, SD = 0.54$) and second-generation respondents ($M = 5.15, SD = 0.58$). However, when *not* exposed to the prime, attitude was significantly lower for second- ($M = 3.40, SD = 0.96$) than for first-generation individuals ($M = 4.62, SD = 0.94; F(1, 102) = 31.56, p < .001$). An analysis of simple effects showed that the effect of prime was significant both for second-generation subjects ($F(1, 102) = 69.18, p < .001$) and for first-generation subjects ($F(1, 102) = 6.94, p = .01$).

Figure 11a: Generational status by priming condition interaction for attitude towards the ethnic spokesperson in Study 1



Identification with the same-ethnicity spokesperson. The items were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = 0.88$). A second two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of both generation ($F(1, 102) = 13.29, p < .001$) and ethnic prime ($F(1, 102) = 45.98, p < .001$) on identification with the ethnic spokesperson (Table 2). There was a significant interaction effect between ethnic prime and generational status ($F(1, 102) = 27.10, p < .001$) on identification, with identification with the spokesperson being similar ($F(1, 102) = 1.27, p = .26$) in first ($M = 4.93, SD = 0.92$) and second-generation respondents ($M = 5.26, SD = 0.77$) when they were exposed to the ethnic prime but significantly lower ($F(1, 102) = 37.75, p < .001$) for second- ($M = 2.70, SD = 1.42$) than for first-generation individuals ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.19$) when they were not exposed to the prime (Figure 11b). An analysis of simple effects showed that the effect of prime was significant for second generation subjects ($F(1, 102) = 73.23, p < .001$) but not for first generation subjects ($F(1, 102) = 1.22, p = .27$). These results confirm our hypothesis.

Figure 11b: Generational status by priming condition interaction for identification with the ethnic spokesperson in Study 1

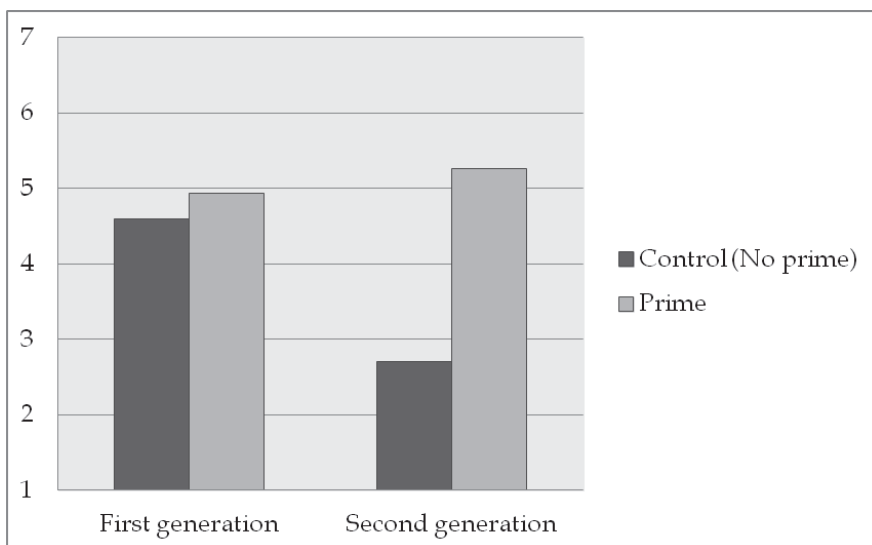


Table 2: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations obtained in Study 1

| Prime | No prime | | | | Prime | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| | First | | Second | | First | | Second | |
| Generation | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| Attitude towards spokesperson | 4.62 | 0.94 | 3.40 | 0.96 | 5.19 | 0.54 | 5.15 | 0.58 |
| Identification with spokesperson | 4.59 | 1.19 | 2.70 | 1.42 | 4.93 | 0.92 | 5.26 | 0.77 |

Acculturation. There was a significant ($t(104) = -11.08; p < .001$) difference in scores on the SL-ASIA scales between the first-generation ($M = 2.29; SD = 0.64$) and the second-generation ($M = 3.56; SD = 0.54$) participants, indicating that second-generation Chinese individuals identified significantly more with Western culture and less with Asian culture. The SL-ASIA score did not mediate the effect of prime on either attitude towards the spokesperson ($-0.04 < C.I. < 0.14$) or identification with the spokesperson ($-0.07 < C.I. < 0.20$). We speculate that the reason for this is that the SL-ASIA scale is a bipolar scale that reflects a one-dimensional approach to acculturation: it assumes that greater identification with the mainstream culture necessarily implies lower identification with the ethnic culture. In other words, this scale does not account for biculturalism and thus does not allow isolating the effect of ethnic and mainstream identification. In Study 2 we will use a different scale with separate unipolar scales for ethnic and mainstream identification.

Discussion

These results indicate that first-generation migrants are less sensitive to ethnic identity primes than second-generation individuals. This means that the impact of ethnic identity priming or cultural context on minority consumers' reactions to targeted advertisements is likely to be greater for the second generation. When looking to use ethnic appeals targeting the second-generation population, advertisers should benefit from doing so in a context in which their ethnic identity is salient (e.g. when they are at home rather than at work or school). When targeting these consumers, it is important to choose the right cultural context given that they

are likely to be less sensitive to ethnic appeals if their ethnic identity is not activated. However, when targeting a first-generation population, the context is likely to make less of a difference.

3.3.2. Study 2: Generational status and spokesperson ethnicity

In this study, we investigate the impact of generational status on consumers' response to spokesperson ethnicity.

Study design and procedure

Participants for this study were 270 consumers of Turkish heritage living in a major Dutch city. The mean age was 35.89 years old; 48% were male. One hundred forty-three participants (48% male, mean age: 41.52 years old) were first-generation Turkish immigrants while 127 (47% male, mean age: 29.51 years old) were born in the Netherlands to Turkish parents. Participants were approached at their home and completed a paper or online questionnaire. Twenty-two percent of the participants filled the questionnaire online; there was no significant effect of response medium on the dependent variables. Six respondents were deleted from the sample because of missing data.

For the measurement of identification with the host and the heritage culture, we relied on the Vancouver Acculturation Index (VAI; Ryder et al. 2000), a scale that takes into account the bi-dimensional nature of acculturation and can be adapted to different ethnic groups. The VAI considers identification with both the host and the heritage culture; unlike the SL-ASIA scale, it does not assume that the two are negatively correlated. For both cultures, the same items are rated on a five-point scale. Items included statements such as "I would be willing to marry a Turkish person", "I would be willing to marry a Dutch person"; "I enjoy typical Turkish jokes and humour", "I enjoy typical Dutch jokes and humour", etc. Respondents were asked to rate an advertisement for a charity, the charity itself, their willingness to support it and the spokesperson. The ethnicity of the young man in the advertisement was manipulated: he was assigned either a Turkish ("Ali Oztürk") or a Dutch name ("Frank de Jong"). The stimuli were otherwise identical (Figure 12a

and 12b). Participants completed the VAI and answered questions regarding their ethnic identity and demographics³.

³ Participants were randomly assigned to a Turkish prime, a Dutch prime or the control condition. In the Turkish and Dutch conditions, respondents were asked to select the most representative symbols of the culture among cultural icons. In the control condition, participants selected three pictures among natural landscapes. Similar manipulations have been used successfully in the past (e.g., Hong et al 2000). The priming effect found in study 1 was not replicated: there was no significant effect of priming on attitude towards the ethnically targeted ad in either the first ($F(2, 258) = 0.54, p = 0.59$) or the second ($F(2, 258) = 0.09, p = 0.92$) generation. We are not certain what caused this lack of effect; the cultural icons may have been too stereotypical or have negative connotations. A marginally significant interaction effect between prime, generation and spokesperson ethnicity ($F(2, 258) = 2.82; p = .062$) reflected a significant effect of the priming condition on second-generation participants' attitude towards the Dutch ad ($F(2, 258) = 4.42; p = 0.013$). Second-generation participants exposed to both the Dutch or the Turkish prime rated it higher (Dutch: $M = 4.12, SD = 0.75$; Turkish: $M = 4.05, SD = 1.04$) than those exposed to the control condition ($M = 3.22, SD = 1.22$). This suggests that ethnic identity primes accentuate positive feelings towards the host culture in second-generation consumers, but the data does not allow us to draw firm conclusions.

Figure 12a: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Minority condition)




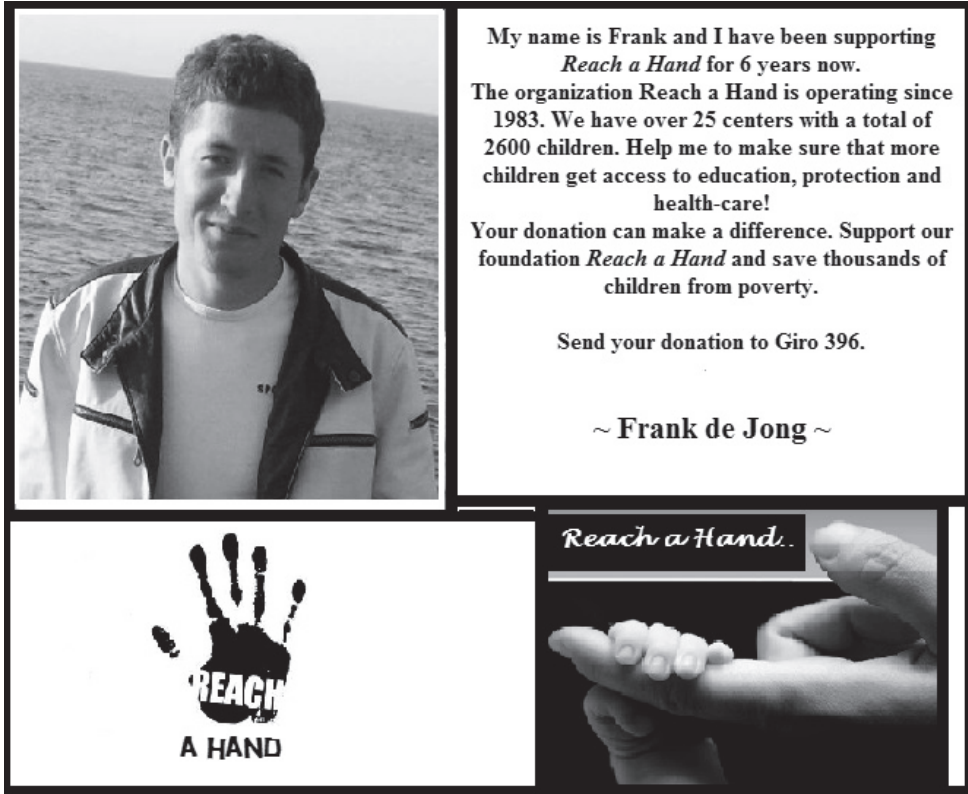
| | |
|--|---|
|  | <p>My name is Ali and I have been supporting <i>Reach a Hand</i> for 6 years now. The organization <i>Reach a Hand</i> is operating since 1983. We have over 25 centers with a total of 2600 children. Help me to make sure that more children get access to education protection and health-care!</p> <p>Your donation can make a difference. Support our foundation <i>Reach a Hand</i> and save thousands of children from poverty.</p> <p>Send your donation to Giro 396.</p> <p>~ Ali Öztürk ~</p> |
|  |  |

Figure 12b: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Majority condition)





My name is Frank and I have been supporting *Reach a Hand* for 6 years now. The organization *Reach a Hand* is operating since 1983. We have over 25 centers with a total of 2600 children. Help me to make sure that more children get access to education, protection and health-care!

Your donation can make a difference. Support our foundation *Reach a Hand* and save thousands of children from poverty.

Send your donation to Giro 396.

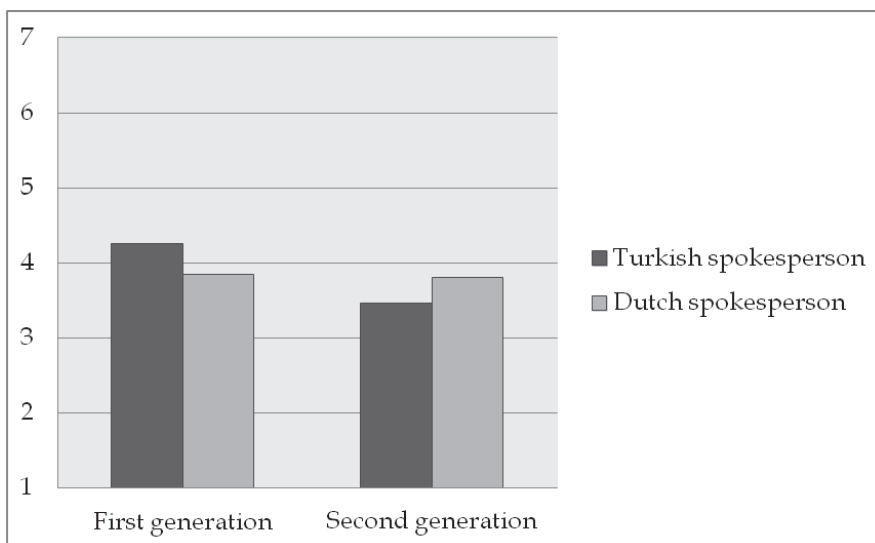
~ Frank de Jong ~



Results

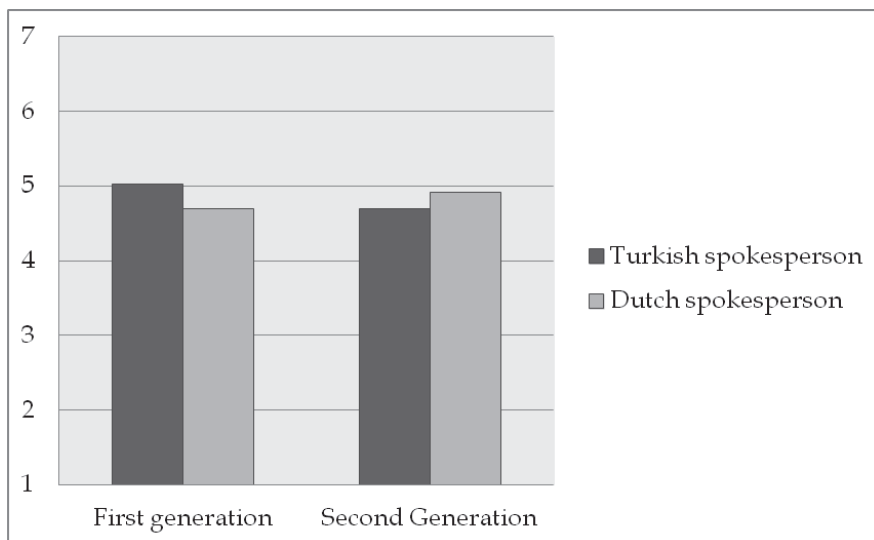
Attitude towards the ad. The items were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = 0.93$). The two-way ANOVA revealed a main effect of generation ($F(1, 266) = 9.93, p = .002$) on attitude towards the ad, with first-generation participants rating ads higher on average ($M = 4.05, SD = 1.21$) than second-generation participants ($M = 3.63, SD = 1.08$), but no main effect of spokesperson heritage ($F(1, 266) = 0.08, p = .78$). There was a significant interaction effect between generational status and spokesperson heritage on attitude towards the ad ($F(1, 266) = 8.24, p = .004$) indicating that the effect of spokesperson heritage varies significantly according to the person's generational status (Figure 13a). For first-generation participants, attitude towards the ad was more positive when the spokesperson had a Turkish name ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.17$) than a Dutch one ($M = 3.84, SD = 1.04$). The opposite was true of second-generation participants, who rated the ad with a Dutch spokesperson ($M = 3.80, SD = 1.08$) higher than the ad with a Turkish spokesperson ($M = 3.46, SD = 1.06$). An analysis of simple effects showed that the effect of spokesperson ethnicity was significant for first-generation participants ($F(1, 266) = 5.27, p = .022$) and marginally significant for second-generation participants ($F(1, 266) = 3.17, p = .076$).

Figure 13a: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the ad in Study 2



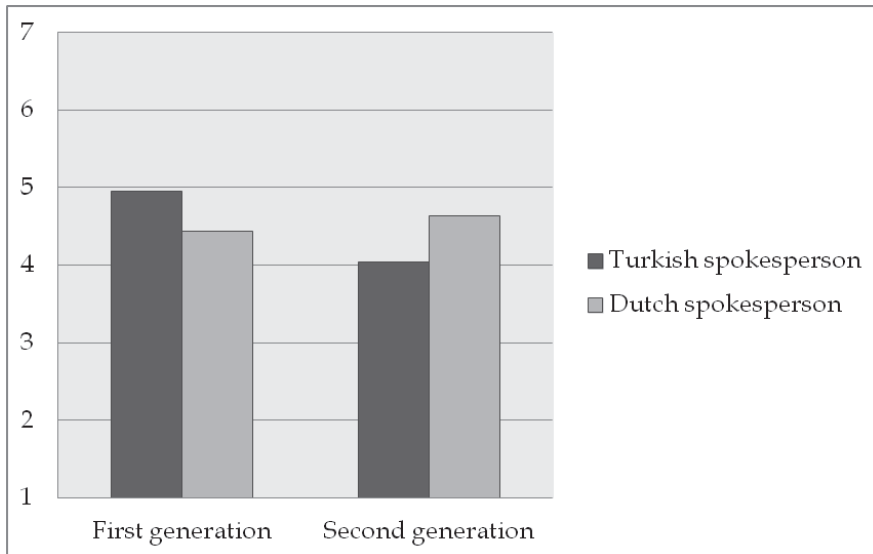
Attitude towards the organization. The scale items were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = 0.86$). The two-way ANOVA revealed no main effect of either generation ($F(1, 266) = 0.57, p = .45$) or spokesperson heritage ($F(1, 266) = 0.47, p = .50$) on attitude towards the organization. There was a significant interaction effect between generational status and spokesperson ethnicity ($F(1, 266) = 9.76, p = .002$). For first-generation participants, attitude towards the organization was more positive when its spokesperson had a Turkish name ($M = 5.03, SD = 0.69$) than a Dutch one ($M = 4.70, SD = 0.64$), while the opposite was observed in second-generation participants who rated the organization with a Dutch spokesperson ($M = 4.90, SD = 0.78$) higher than the organization with a Turkish spokesperson ($M = 4.69, SD = 0.74$); Figure 13b. An analysis of simple effects showed that the effect of spokesperson ethnicity was significant for first-generation participants ($F(1, 266) = 7.71, p = .006$) and marginally significant for second-generation participants ($F(1, 266) = 2.81, p = .095$). Consistent with the findings described above, there was a marginally significant interaction effect between prime, generation and spokesperson identity ($p = .096$).

Figure 13b: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the organisation in Study 2



Attitude towards the spokesperson. The items were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = 0.90$). The two-way ANOVA revealed a main effect of generation ($F(1, 266) = 13.83, p < .001$) on attitude towards the spokesperson, with first-generation participants expressing more positive attitudes ($M = 4.70, SD = 0.79$) than second-generation participants ($M = 4.33, SD = 0.91$), but no main effect of spokesperson heritage ($F(1, 266) = 0.11, p = .75$). There was a significant interaction effect between generational status and spokesperson heritage on attitude towards the spokesperson ($F(1, 266) = 31.78, p < .001$). First-generation participants rated the Turkish spokesperson ($M = 4.95, SD = 0.75$) higher than the Dutch one ($M = 4.44, SD = 0.74$). The opposite was true of second-generation participants who rated the Dutch spokesperson ($M = 4.63, SD = 0.71$) higher than the Turkish one ($M = 4.04, SD = 0.91$); Figure 13c. An analysis of simple effects showed that the effect of spokesperson ethnicity was significant for both first-generation ($F(1, 266) = 15.00, p < .001$) and second-generation subjects ($F(1, 266) = 16.77, p < .001$). There was a marginally significant interaction effect between prime, generation and spokesperson identity ($F(1, 258) = 2.42, p = .091$).

Figure 13c: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the spokesperson in Study 2



Willingness to support. The two items were averaged to create an index ($r = 0.39$, $N = 270$, $p < .001$). The two-way ANOVA did not reveal any main effect of either generation ($F(1, 266) = 0.23$, $p = .64$) or spokesperson heritage ($F(1, 266) = 0.96$, $p = .33$) on willingness to support the organization. There was a significant interaction effect between generational status and spokesperson ethnicity ($F(1, 266) = 4.07$, $p = .045$). For first-generation participants, willingness to support was higher when the spokesperson was Turkish ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.47$) than when he was Dutch ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.38$). For second-generation participants, on the other hand, willingness to support was higher when the spokesperson was Dutch ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.48$) than when he was Turkish ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.42$); Figure 13d. An analysis of simple effects showed that the effect of spokesperson ethnicity was significant for first-generation ($F(1,266) = 4.77$, $p = .030$) but not for second-generation subjects ($F(1,266) = 0.51$, $p = .48$). There was no significant three-way interaction with priming ($F(2, 258) = 0.47$, $p = .63$).

Figure 13d: Generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction for willingness to support Study 2

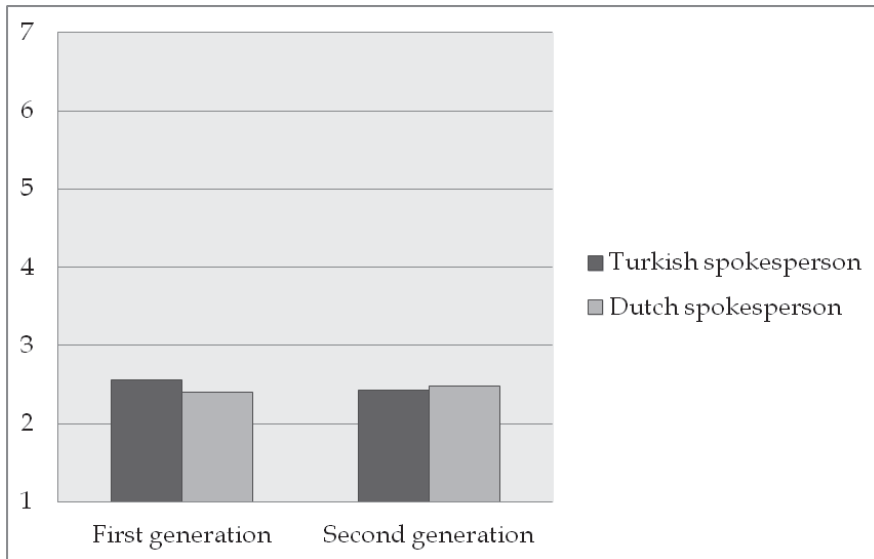


Table 3: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations obtained in Study 2

| Generation | First | | | | Second | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| | Turkish | | Dutch | | Turkish | | Dutch | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| Spokesperson heritage | | | | | | | | |
| Attitude towards the ad | 4.26 | 1.17 | 3.84 | 1.04 | 3.46 | 1.06 | 3.80 | 1.08 |
| Attitude towards the organization | 5.03 | 0.69 | 4.70 | 0.64 | 4.69 | 0.74 | 4.90 | 0.78 |
| Attitude towards the spokesperson | 4.95 | 0.75 | 4.44 | 0.74 | 4.04 | 0.91 | 4.63 | 0.71 |
| Willingness to support | 2.46 | 0.47 | 2.40 | 0.38 | 2.43 | 0.42 | 2.48 | 0.48 |

Table 4: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations for the priming manipulation in Study 2

| Prime | Control | | | | | | Dutch | | | | | | Turkish | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|------|---------|--------|------|---------|-------|------|---------|--------|------|---------|---------|------|---------|--------|------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | First | | | Second | | | First | | | Second | | | First | | | Second | | | | | | | | |
| | Dutch | | Turkish | Dutch | | Turkish | Dutch | | Turkish | Dutch | | Turkish | Dutch | | Turkish | Dutch | | Turkish | | | | | | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | | | | | | |
| Generation | 4.02 | 1.04 | 4.13 | 1.26 | 3.23 | 1.22 | 3.40 | 1.24 | 3.69 | 0.97 | 4.44 | 1.34 | 4.12 | 0.75 | 3.43 | 1.12 | 3.80 | 1.13 | 4.21 | 0.87 | 4.05 | 1.04 | 3.54 | 0.83 |
| Spokesperson heritage | 4.83 | 0.37 | 4.76 | 0.95 | 4.85 | 1.13 | 4.58 | 0.59 | 4.51 | 0.86 | 5.25 | 0.56 | 4.94 | 0.54 | 4.62 | 0.92 | 4.76 | 0.59 | 5.08 | 0.34 | 4.93 | 0.57 | 4.88 | 0.65 |
| Attitude towards the ad | 4.54 | 0.50 | 5.02 | 0.72 | 4.43 | 0.88 | 3.85 | 0.93 | 4.10 | 0.81 | 5.20 | 0.78 | 4.71 | 0.45 | 4.17 | 1.18 | 4.67 | 0.78 | 4.66 | 0.66 | 4.73 | 0.73 | 4.11 | 0.89 |
| Attitude towards the organization | 2.48 | 0.35 | 2.48 | 0.58 | 2.50 | 0.57 | 2.43 | 0.36 | 2.33 | 0.41 | 2.60 | 0.42 | 2.43 | 0.48 | 2.38 | 0.50 | 2.39 | 0.40 | 2.60 | 0.42 | 2.52 | 0.39 | 2.48 | 0.40 |

Strength of identification with the heritage culture. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of generation on strength of identification with the heritage culture ($F(1, 268) = 50.51, p < .001$). First-generation participants identified more strongly with Turkish culture ($M = 4.20, SD = 0.40$) than second-generation participants ($M = 3.90, SD = 0.27$). There was no significant main effect of the priming condition on the strength of identification with the heritage culture ($F(2, 264) = 0.62, p = .54$). A second one-way ANOVA also revealed a significant main effect of generation on identification with the mainstream culture ($F(1, 268) = 61.98, p < .001$), with second-generation participants identifying more strongly with Dutch culture ($M = 3.77, SD = 0.42$) than first-generation participants ($M = 3.38, SD = 0.38$) and no significant effect of the priming condition ($F(2, 264) = 1.05, p = .35$).

Mediation analysis. A mediation analysis was conducted using Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes' (2007) MODMED macro to investigate whether the effect of generational status on attitude towards a targeted ad was mediated by strength of ethnic identity. We expected generational status to influence ethnic identification and ethnic identification to influence advertising responses, but only when the ad featured an ethnic spokesperson. Thus, we predicted a moderated mediation where spokesperson heritage moderates the Mediator-DV relationship. The mediation analysis revealed a significant main effect of generation on ethnic identification (mediator variable model: $b = -0.30, SE = 0.04, t(265) = -7.11, p < .001$) and a significant identification by spokesperson heritage interaction effect (dependent variable model: $b = 1.37, SE = 0.34, t(265) = 4.00, p < .001$), which indicates that spokesperson heritage moderates the effect of ethnic identification on attitude towards the ad. After adding the mediator, the effect of generation on attitude was no longer significant ($b = -0.24, SE = 0.14, t(265) = -1.70, p = .09$). A bootstrap analysis of indirect effect confirmed a significant mediation effect (95% confidence interval: $-0.17 < C.I. < -0.15$). Strength of identification with the host culture did not mediate the effect.

Discussion

These results confirm that there is an effect of generational status on response to ethnic appeals, such as same-ethnicity spokespeople, and that this effect is mediated by acculturation as measured by the Vancouver Acculturation Index. Of central interest, we observed that the decisive mediating factor is not the strength of identification with the host culture, but rather the strength of identification with the heritage culture. This is consistent with our contention that ethnic identification is of crucial importance to understand the effect of targeted advertising on second-generation biculturals.

3.4. Conclusion

In today's multicultural societies, targeted advertising constitutes an important tool for marketers. Two studies have shown that generational status constitutes an important boundary condition for at least two popular targeted advertising strategies. In the first study, we saw that the responses of second-generation, bicultural consumers who switch from one identity to the other tend to be more affected by ethnic identity primes that activate their heritage identity than first-generation consumers. Marketers should take this into account when planning to target second-generation consumers using ethnic appeals, and consider the context in which the communication will appear. In the case of first-generation consumers, context is likely to make less of a difference. In the second study, we showed that generational status significantly affects responses to targeted advertising featuring same-ethnicity spokespeople. The strategy of using ethnic spokespeople in advertising was only beneficial among first-generation consumers. In fact, in our study we found a negative effect for second-generation consumers. Further research is needed to test the robustness and generalizability of this reversal. Nevertheless, the results were consistent across dependent variables, raising interesting questions for future research. We speculate that the negative effect among second-generation consumers in this particular case may be connected to negative stereotypes about the ethnic minority in Dutch culture. It is likely however that there is some variation in second-generation consumers' degree of identification with their heritage and their mainstream culture, with processes such as consumer disidentification (Josiassen, 2011) leading to different marketplace consequences. The

generational status by spokesperson ethnicity interaction was fully mediated by strength of identification with the ethnic culture, but not by identification with the mainstream culture.

In addition to serving as a warning to both researchers and practitioners regarding the dangers of holding simplistic assumptions about the relative homogeneity of ethnic minorities, our studies also have more specific implications. The results of Study 1 suggest that the positive effects of ethnic identity cues often demonstrated in the literature depend on the level of chronic accessibility of the target identity. The results of Study 2 expand on the recent findings of Antioco et al. (2012) in several ways. For example, they highlight the role of differences within the same ethnic minority and show the process by which identification processes explain variation in the effectiveness of ethnic spokespeople and models in targeted advertising. In a world of increasing ethnic diversity, we believe that these findings constitute an important addition to the existing literature on targeted advertising. We hope that they will encourage the development of targeted advertising practices that better take into account the complexity of today's ethnic identities.

Chapter 4:

Heritage congruence effects in service encounters: Boundary conditions and processes⁴

4.1. Introduction

Cultural and ethnic diversity is fast increasing in our societies. The growth of minority populations is going to be one of this century's defining demographic trends in the US and many other advanced economies (Frey, 2014). Minority consumers have already come to represent a large share of the consumer base in many countries. For example, according to the U.S. Census (2013), 37% of the current U.S. population belongs to a racial or ethnic minority group. In response, marketing practitioners are looking for ways to reach this population more effectively. For example, the current list of research priorities crafted by the Marketing Science Institute based on the feedback from its corporate members includes understanding the consequence of greater consumer diversity (Marketing Science Institute, 2014).

Most of the minority targeting literature has focused solely on the advertising context, considering, for example, the impact of same-heritage spokespersons or models in marketing communication (e.g., Antioco, Vanhamme, Hardy, and Bernardin, 2012; Deshpandé and Stayman, 1994). But minority employees also represent a substantial and growing percentage of service providers. For instance, an estimated 32% of workers in the retail industry in the United States belong to ethnic minorities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). This means that congruence between service provider and customer heritage—a concept that we will refer to as heritage congruence—is a potentially important feature of service encounters. Until now, the marketing literature has not investigated this aspect of minority consumers' interactions with the marketplace. In particular, the impact of heritage congruence on minority consumers' attitudes and on their willingness to comply with salesperson recommendations remains to be understood. With this research, we aim

⁴ This chapter is based on a manuscript currently under review (Lenoir and Puntoni, 2015).

We are thankful to Fatima Abasari and David Dasburg for their help with data collection.

to bridge this gap and allow both researchers and practitioners to better understand the impact of shared heritage on minority consumers' responses.

Strength of heritage identification is the key variable moderating the impact of ethnicity on retail shopping behaviour (Donthu and Cherian, 1992). According to distinctiveness theory (McGuire, McGuire, Child, and Fujioka, 1978), ethnic identity tends to be more salient when others of the same group are few or have low social status. In other words, minority targeting strategies are more effective among members of socially distinctive minority groups, who tend to have a more salient ethnic identity than members of majority groups. But strength of identification with the heritage culture also varies among minority consumers, even within a single ethnic group. In particular, research shows that generational status—that is, whether a minority consumer personally relocated to the host country, or was born in the host country to parents who had relocated there—affects both consumers' identification and their responsiveness to minority targeting practices (Lenoir et al., 2013). Second-generation immigrants constitute a growing demographic in many developed countries, making up over 10% of the consumer base in countries such as the US (12%; Pew Research Center, 2013) or the Netherlands (10.6%; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2014). They are more often bicultural (Giguère, Lalonde, and Lou, 2010): both the heritage and the mainstream culture play an important part in their lives (Arends-Toth and van de Vijver, 2004). They also tend to identify less strongly with their heritage culture (Lenoir, Puntoni, Reed, and Verlegh, 2013).

In this research, we examine how generational status affects consumer response to heritage congruence in the retailing context. We argue that consumers whose heritage identity is stronger and more salient, such as first-generation minority consumers, will be more likely to use shared heritage as an indicator of similarity between themselves and the salesperson, resulting in greater trust, more positive attitudes towards the salesperson, and greater willingness to buy recommended products. The objective of this paper is therefore to investigate the relevance of minority targeting in the retailing context and, in particular, to highlight the importance of generational status for the effectiveness of heritage congruence strategies in sales encounters.

4.2. Conceptual framework

4.2.1. Heritage congruence in the service interaction

Existing research suggests that minority consumers' heritage identity influences their shopping experience. When they are in a commercial establishment, they use various elements of the servicescape, including employee ethnicity, to assess their level of comfort with the service environment (Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007). Shared ethnicity between the customer and the service provider also affects minority customers' expectations of having a positive interaction and even of receiving preferential treatment, such as discounts or special recommendations (Montoya and Briggs, 2013), and appears to have a positive effect on retail store productivity, especially for stores that have a larger minority customer base (Avery et al., 2012). However, no research has investigated the impact of heritage congruence on minority consumers' attitudes and intentions in a shopping context.

The idea that a match between customer and employee characteristics has a positive effect on consumers' attitudes is consistent with the similarity-attraction hypothesis, which suggests that interpersonal attraction is positively affected by perceived attitude similarity (Byrne, 1971). Individuals tend to be attracted to in-group members because they assume that in-group members are more likely to hold attitudes and beliefs similar to their own (Chen and Kenrick, 2002). Similarity between individuals has a positive impact on attraction, relationship satisfaction, and feeling of being understood (Gonzaga, Campos, and Bradbury, 2007), as well as cooperative choices (Parks, Sanna, and Berel, 2001), which is consistent with a preference for doing business with similar others. Even incidental similarity with a salesperson has been shown to result in more positive consumer response (e.g., sharing a birthday; Jiang et al., 2010).

4.2.2. Assessing the salesperson's motives

Sales relationships are fraught with ambiguity. The customer constantly needs to assess whether the service provider's objective when recommending a product is to help them by offering genuine advice, or rather to achieve a potentially more advantageous sale and make a commission. These rival hypotheses entertained

by customers correspond to two broad types of causal inferences: customer-oriented attribution and suspicion-oriented attribution (DeCarlo, 2005). As a result, trust occupies a paradoxical position in the sales process. While it constitutes an important aspect of successful personal sales, the characteristics of the sales context itself make building trust especially challenging (Oakes, 1990). The ulterior motive of selling is often a highly accessible explanation for a salesperson's behaviour. In fact, the default assumption is that most salespeople are primarily motivated by the desire to sell (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000).

To cope with persuasion attempts in the marketplace, consumers develop persuasion knowledge about agents' goals and tactics (Friestad and Wright, 1994). When an ulterior persuasion motive is more accessible, customers are more likely to use this persuasion knowledge to evaluate the salesperson, and to infer that they are not sincere but rather motivated primarily by the intent to persuade (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000). Distinctiveness theory states that individuals' distinctive traits, such as being a member of a visible minority, tend to be more salient than more common or prevalent traits, such as being a member of the majority (McGuire et al., 1978). Distinctive consumers are also more likely to make positive a-priori judgments and expect preferential treatment from a salesperson who shares their heritage (Montoya and Briggs, 2013), we argue that the heritage-congruent salesperson's ulterior motives are less accessible to them. In other words, we suggest that distinctive customers are less likely to use persuasion knowledge and make suspicion-oriented attributions when dealing with a heritage-congruent salesperson, instead perceiving them as more trustworthy and customer-oriented.

4.2.3. Similarity and trust

Trust plays an important role in any social interaction (Simpson, 2007), but it is especially crucial in service encounters. The importance of trust in the marketplace has been repeatedly highlighted in the marketing literature (e.g., Doney and Cannon, 1997; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Swan, Bowers, and Richardson, 1999). Above all, it is essential to maintaining quality sales relationships (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles, 1990; Dorsch, Swanson, and Kelley, 1998), especially where uncertainty and risk are present (Coulter and Coulter, 2002). When meeting a person, we tend to very quickly form impressions of their trustworthiness based on available information

such as appearance (Todorov, Pakrashi, and Oosterhof, 2009). In the context of the service encounter, relationship dynamics, but also the individual characteristics of the service provider, affect their perceived trustworthiness (Moorman, Deshpandé, and Zaltman, 1993; Doney and Cannon, 1997). Swan, Bowers, and Richardson (1999) highlight the impact on trust of salesperson attributes such as similarity between the customer and the service provider. Shared heritage constitutes a strong indicator of similarity (Montoya and Briggs, 2013), and similarity is positively related to the affective component of customer trust (Johnson and Grayson, 2005). In addition, culture has consequences for the development of trust in the marketplace (Doney, Cannon, and Mullen, 1998) and individuals from the same cultural background may be better able to elicit trust in customers. Therefore, we expect the effect of heritage congruence between the salesperson and the customer on the customer's attitudes and intentions to be mediated by the perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson.

4.2.4. Identity salience and generational status

The more salient an identity, the more consumers are likely to engage in identity-based consumer behaviour (Reed et al., 2012). Donthu and Cherian (1992; 1995) highlighted the importance of the strength of consumers' ties with their heritage culture for the effectiveness of marketing strategies, stating that strength of ethnic identification is the key variable moderating the impact of ethnicity on retail shopping behaviour. Research also shows that strongly identifying with one's heritage culture tends to promote in-group favouritism (Montoya and Briggs, 2013) and causes individuals to become more susceptible to influence by in-group members (Forehand and Deshpandé, 2001). Distinctiveness is the most obvious factor affecting the extent to which a consumer identifies with their heritage culture: ethnic identity is more salient when a group is socially distinctive—that is, when members of the group are few or have low social status (Aaker et al., 2000; Deshpandé and Stayman, 1994; Grier and Deshpandé, 2001; McGuire et al., 1978). When identity is salient, in-group members generally are liked more than out-group members, especially if they embody the in-group prototype (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Therefore, in consumers who are members of distinctive minorities, we expect heritage congruence between the salesperson and the customer to have a positive effect on salesperson evaluations, including perceived trustworthiness. This effect should take place in contexts in which the customer is able to establish heritage

congruence, by relying either on physical characteristics or on other available information such as name or accent.

Within distinctive groups, another factor which affects the extent to which a particular consumer identifies with their heritage culture is generational status: namely, whether the consumer personally relocated to the host country (first generation) or were born in the host country to parents who had relocated there or moved with their parents as young children (second generation). Having grown up in the host country, second-generation minority consumers are more likely than first-generation minority consumers to be bicultural and to engage in frame-switching, shifting between the heritage and the mainstream culture depending on the situation (Giguère et al., 2010). They tend to identify less strongly with their heritage culture, especially when that identity is not activated through context or cultural cues, and they can be less sensitive to standard minority targeting practices in advertising (Lenoir et al., 2013). We argue that second-generation minority consumers, who have interacted since birth with both minority and majority individuals, are less likely than first-generation minority consumers to perceive same-heritage salespeople as significantly more trustworthy than majority salespeople. In addition, because they identify less strongly with their heritage culture, they are also less likely to assume that heritage-congruent salespeople are more customer-oriented and less likely to follow their own interest. As a result, we expect the effect of heritage congruence between the salesperson and the customer on consumer attitudes and intentions to be moderated by generation. Moreover, we expect the effect of heritage congruence to be mediated by the salesperson's perceived trustworthiness for first-generation minority consumers but not for second-generation minority consumers.

4.2.5. Attitudinal similarity and preference heterogeneity

Perceived trustworthiness is not the only aspect of the relationship that can be affected by perceived similarity with a salesperson. People may also infer attitudinal similarities from membership similarities (Simons, Berkowitz, and Moyer, 1970). A consumer might think, for instance, "since this salesperson and I both have the same heritage culture, he must share my preferences", resulting in more positive attitudes towards a product recommended by a salesperson perceived as more similar.

However, this should only apply if the product is associated with sufficient preference heterogeneity (i.e., if tastes and preferences vary across consumers). If there is very little preference heterogeneity, attitudinal similarity should be less relevant. Feick and Higie (1992) showed that the influence of similar sources on consumer attitudes and intentions varies depending on preference heterogeneity.

If first-generation, but not second-generation, minority consumers perceive heritage-congruent salespeople as more similar to themselves, then first-generation, but not second-generation, minority consumers should infer attitudinal similarity from heritage congruence. Thus, we expect that the impact of heritage congruence to be more positive when the product is associated with high preference heterogeneity than when it is associated with low preference heterogeneity, and that this effect should be found among first-generation but not second-generation minority consumers. To investigate preference heterogeneity in a context that is relevant to both prior literature and managerial practice, we focus on the often-made distinction between hedonic and utilitarian products (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000; Strahilevitz, and Myers, 1998). Hedonic value is more subjective than utilitarian value (Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994), which implies that preference heterogeneity is greater in the case of hedonic products (Ryu, Park, and Feick, 2006). As a result, a perceived similarity of attitudes and experiences should affect consumer response to salesperson's recommendations more for hedonic products than for utilitarian products.

4.3. Summary of predictions and overview of studies

In this paper, we investigate the impact of a shared heritage between the salesperson and the distinctive minority consumer on consumer response to a product recommended by the salesperson. We expect a positive effect of heritage congruence on consumer response that is significantly stronger among first-generation minority consumers than among second-generation minority consumers. We also predict that the effect is mediated by the perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson in first-generation, but not in second-generation, minority consumers. Finally, while we argue that first-generation minority consumers are more likely to assume that a same-heritage salesperson has similar attitudes and preferences, these inferences should only translate into more positive consumer responses to

salesperson recommendation in the case of product categories where there is high preference heterogeneity, such as hedonic products. Therefore, heritage congruence should have a more positive impact on consumer response to salesperson recommendation among first-generation minority consumers shopping for hedonic, high preference heterogeneity products.

We present two studies with community samples of minority consumers to investigate these hypotheses. The data for each study was collected among first- and second-generation minority consumers approached personally in the Moroccan and Hispanic communities in the Netherlands. In study 1, we examine the impact of shared heritage between customer and salesperson on first- and second-generation minority consumers' responses to salesperson recommendations, and we explore the mediating role of perceived salesperson trustworthiness. In study 2, we replicate these findings. In addition, we investigate the moderating role of low versus high preference heterogeneity by manipulating the hedonic versus utilitarian nature of the product.

4.4. Empirical studies

4.4.1. Study 1: The impact of generational status

In the first study, we investigated the effect of heritage congruence on salesperson trustworthiness and attitudes towards a product recommended by the salesperson in the Moroccan community in the Netherlands. With an estimated 375.000 people, first- and second-generation Moroccans are one of the largest minorities in the Netherlands. They represent 14.5% of the population with a foreign background (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2014). We predicted that heritage congruence should have a stronger effect on attitude towards a product recommended by the salesperson in first-generation minority consumers than in second-generation minority consumers, and that this effect should be mediated by the perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson.

Study design and procedure

The study relied on a 2 (first vs. second generation) x 2 (Dutch vs. Moroccan salesperson) semi-experimental design. One hundred and fifty-two participants from the Moroccan community were approached in a major Dutch city using snowball sampling: respondents were asked whether they had family or friends who would be willing to participate. Seventy-two were first-generation (mean age = 44.81; 34.3% female) and 80 were second-generation Moroccans immigrants—individuals born in the Netherlands to Moroccan parents or who had moved to the Netherlands before the age of seven (mean age = 24.71; 45.1% female). In line with the psychological literature on acculturation, participants who had moved to the Netherlands with their parents before the age of seven were classified as second-generation (Berry et al., 2006), as their experience is likely to be more similar to that of individuals born in the Netherlands than to that of adult migrants (Van Ours and Veenman, 2003). One participant was excluded from the analysis because of missing data.

Participants read a sales scenario in which they were considering buying a television and were advised in their choice by a salesperson. The translated scenario can be found in Figures 5a and 5b. Heritage was manipulated by changing the name of the salesperson, as reported in the scenario and shown on a picture representing a tag on their shirt: Jeroen Dekker in the majority (Dutch) condition (Figure 14a) or Mohamed Ait Haddou in the minority (Moroccan) condition (Figure 14b). Their description was otherwise identical. In the scenario, the salesperson approached the customer in the store and recommended a television that was more expensive than the one the customer was reported to have been considering. After reading the scenario, respondents were invited to answer questions about their attitude towards the product recommended by the service provider and their perception of him. Attitude towards the recommended product and perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson were measured on 7-point scales using semantic differentials. Respondents were also asked to answer some demographic questions and to provide information relative to their generational status.

Figure 14a: Scenario and stimulus used in Study 1 (Majority condition)

Zoektocht naar een TV!

Stel uzelf de volgende situatie voor: U bent op zoek naar een nieuwe TV en u wilt ongeveer 650 euro besteden. U besluit naar de Mediamarkt te gaan om geadviseerd te worden welke televisie het beste bij u past. Tijdens het rondkijken, besluit u om hulp te vragen aan een van de medewerkers.

Jeroen Dekker (34 jaar) die al 6 jaar werkt bij de Mediamarkt, loopt langs en biedt zich aan u te helpen. U antwoordt ja en geeft aan dat u aan het twijfelen bent tussen twee tv's die u hieronder op de plaatjes kunt zien. Hij loopt met u mee naar de tv's en geeft u het volgende advies:

“Beide tv's zijn heel mooi en op het eerste gezicht lijken ze nogal op elkaar. Ik denk echter dat de Samsung 40 inch LED TV (**product 1**) de beste keuze voor u zal zijn. Ondanks het feit dat deze duurder is (€ 760), heeft deze televisie meer voordelen in vergelijking met product 2. Product 1 is voordeliger in energieverbruik (tot 50%), het heeft een platter scherm, een hogere responstijd en een betere beeldkwaliteit. Met name het 'groene' element van de TV is erg aantrekkelijk, omdat de besparing van energie in de komende jaren zeker het verschil in prijs zal goed maken.”



PRODUCT 1



40 inch LED TV: 760 euro

PRODUCT 2



40 inch LED TV: 590 euro

Figure 14b: Scenario and stimulus used in Study 1 (Minority condition)

Zoektocht naar een TV!

Stel uzelf de volgende situatie voor: U bent op zoek naar een nieuwe TV en u wilt ongeveer 650 euro besteden. U besluit naar de Mediamarkt te gaan om geadviseerd te worden welke televisie het beste bij u past. Tijdens het rondkijken, besluit u om hulp te vragen aan een van de medewerkers.

Mohamed Ait Haddou (34 jaar) die al 6 jaar werkt bij de Mediamarkt, loopt langs en biedt zich aan u te helpen. U antwoordt ja en geeft aan dat u aan het twijfelen bent tussen twee tv's die u hieronder op de plaatjes kunt zien. Hij loopt met u mee naar de tv's en geeft u het volgende advies:

"Beide tv's zijn heel mooi en op het eerste gezicht lijken ze nogal op elkaar. Ik denk echter dat de Samsung 40 inch LED TV (**product 1**) de beste keuze voor u zal zijn. Ondanks het feit dat deze duurder is (€ 760), heeft deze televisie meer voordelen in vergelijking met product 2. Product 1 is voordeliger in energieverbruik (tot 50%), het heeft een platter scherm, een hogere responstijd en een betere beeldkwaliteit. Met name het 'groene' element van de TV is erg aantrekkelijk, omdat de besparing van energie in de komende jaren zeker het verschil in prijs zal goed maken."



PRODUCT 1



40 inch LED TV: 760 euro

PRODUCT 2



40 inch LED TV: 590 euro

Translation of the stimuli used in Study 1

TV search!

Imagine yourself in the following situation: you are searching for a new TV and you want to spend around 650 euro. You decide to go to a shop close to your home to be advised on which television would be best for you. As you are looking around, you decide to get some help from one of the employees. **NAME (34 years)**, who has been working for Mediamarkt for 6 years, walks by and asks if he can offer help. You reply yes and you indicate that you are heistating between the two televisions which are shown below. He walks with you to the TV section, and gives you the following advice:

“Both TVs are really nice, and they look quite alike at first sight. However, I think the Samsung 40 Inch LED TV (product 1) would be the best choice for you. Despite being more expensive (€760), this television provides many advantages compared to product 2. Product 1 is more economical in terms of energy consumption (up to 50%), it has a flatter screen, and it has a higher response time and better image quality. In particular, the "green" element of the TV is very attractive, because the saving of energy in the upcoming years will definitely make up for the difference in price.”

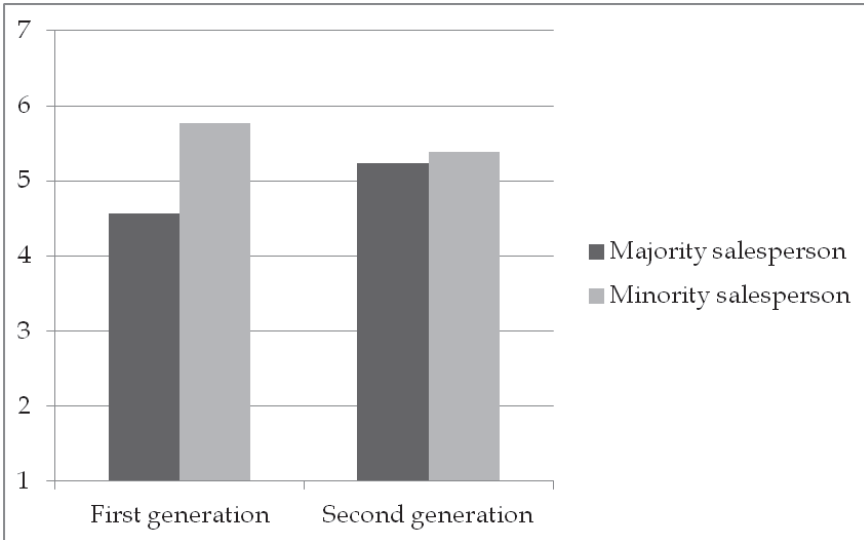
Results

Attitude towards the recommended product. The three items (poor quality-good quality, bad-good, unlikable-likable) were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = .79$). A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of heritage congruence ($F(1, 147) = 20.42, p < .001$), with the recommended product rated more positively when heritage was congruent ($M = 5.56, SD = 0.76$) than when it was not ($M = 4.91, SD = 1.13$). There was also a significant interaction effect of generational status by heritage congruence ($F(1, 147) = 11.74, p = .001$) on attitude towards the product recommended by the service provider (Figure 15). Among first-generation Moroccan consumers, the recommended product was rated more positively when heritage was congruent ($M = 5.77; SD = 0.67$) than when it was not ($M = 4.57; SD = 1.23$). Among the second-generation, on the other hand, the recommended product was rated similarly in both cases (same-heritage salesperson: $M = 5.39; SD = 0.89$; majority salesperson: $M = 5.23; SD = 0.90$). An analysis of simple effects confirmed that the effect of heritage congruence on attitude towards the recommended product was

significant for first-generation ($F(1, 147) = 29.37, p < .001$) but not for second-generation ($F(1,147) = 0.65, p = .42$) minority consumers.

Based on the mean age difference between first and second-generation participants, it could be argued that second-generation participants simply trusted the salesperson less because they were younger. However, there was no main effect of age on either perceived trustworthiness ($p = .27$) or attitude towards the product ($p = .13$) and no significant interaction effect of age with heritage congruence on either perceived trustworthiness ($p = .39$) or attitude towards the product ($p = .53$). In addition, after adding age to the model as a covariate, the interaction effect of generational status with heritage congruence on attitude towards the recommended product remained significant ($F(1,146) = 11.65, p = .001$). Based on this, we do not believe that the effect can be explained by the relatively lower age of the second-generation participants.

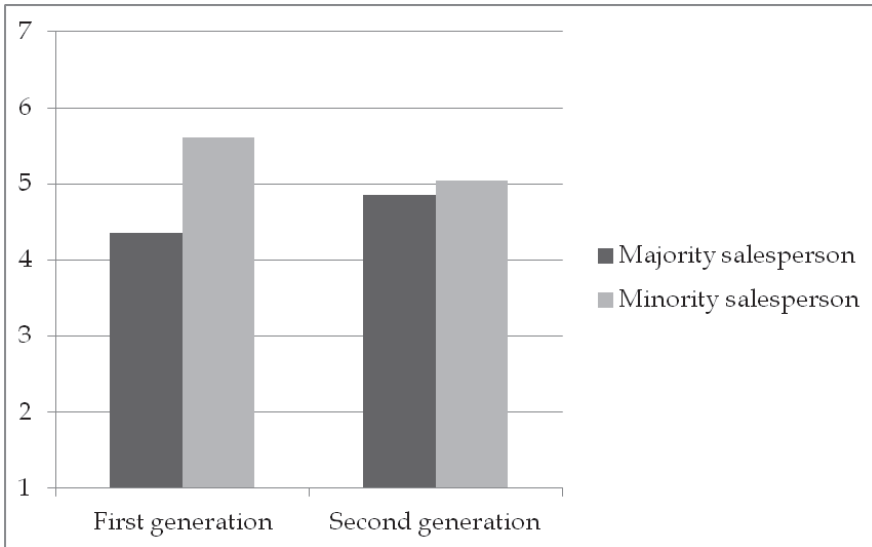
Figure 15: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity interaction for attitude towards the recommended product in Study 1



Intention to purchase the recommended product. The three items were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = .90$). A two-way ANOVA analysis did not reveal a significant interaction effect of generational status by heritage congruence ($F(1,147) = 0.97, p = .33$) on intention to purchase the television recommended by the service provider, but only a main effect of heritage congruence ($F(1,147) = 16.94, p < .001$), with respondents across generations expressing a higher likelihood to buy the television when heritage was congruent ($M = 4.81, SD = 1.48$) than when it was not ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.47$). This unexpected result suggests a positive impact of heritage congruence across generations. However, a new television represents a considerable investment for a household; choice is affected by a number of factors, and it is understandable that the scenario presented did not significantly affect purchase intentions: for example, respondents may not have been on the market for a new television at the time, or they may have been looking in a different price bracket.

Perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson. The four items (unfriendly and unapproachable-friendly and approachable, insincere-sincere, dishonest-honest, risky-safe) were first averaged to create an index ($\alpha = .90$). We expected heritage congruence to have an effect on perceived trustworthiness in first-generation, but not in second-generation, minority consumers. A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of heritage congruence ($F(1, 147) = 17.14, p < .001$), with the salesperson's trustworthiness rated more positively when heritage was congruent ($M = 5.29, SD = 1.07$) than when it was not ($M = 4.61, SD = 1.11$). There was also a significant interaction effect of generational status by heritage congruence ($F(1, 147) = 9.64, p = .002$) on perceived salesperson trustworthiness (Figure 16). Among first-generation Moroccan consumers, the salesperson was deemed more trustworthy when heritage was congruent ($M = 5.61; SD = 1.06$) than when it was not ($M = 4.34; SD = 1.12$). Among the second-generation, on the other hand, the salesperson's trustworthiness was rated similarly in both cases (same-heritage salesperson: $M = 5.04; SD = 1.03$; majority salesperson: $M = 4.86; SD = 1.06$). An analysis of simple effects confirmed that the effect of heritage congruence on perceived salesperson trustworthiness was significant for first-generation ($F(1, 147) = 24.42, p < .001$) but not for second-generation ($F(1, 147) = 0.58, p = .45$) minority consumers.

Figure 16: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity interaction for perceived salesperson trustworthiness in Study 1



Mediation analysis. A moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro to investigate whether the effect of heritage congruence on attitude towards the recommended product was mediated by the service provider's perceived trustworthiness. We predicted a moderated mediation where generational status moderates the IV-Mediator relationship.

Consistent with the results reported above, the analysis revealed significant main effects of both heritage congruence (mediator variable model: $b = 2.34$, $SE = 0.56$, $t(147) = 4.16$, $p = .0001$) and generational status ($b = 1.59$, $SE = 0.55$, $t(147) = 2.91$, $p = .004$) as well as a significant interaction of effect of service provider heritage by generational status ($b = -1.08$, $SE = 0.35$, $t(147) = -3.10$, $p = .002$) on perceived trustworthiness, which indicates that generational status moderates the effect of service provider heritage on perceived trustworthiness. There were also significant main effects of perceived trustworthiness (dependent variable model: $b = 0.42$, $SE = 0.063$, $t(146) = 6.65$, $p < .001$) and heritage congruence ($b = 1.26$, $SE = 0.45$, $t(146) = 2.77$, $p = .0064$), as well as a significant interaction effect of heritage congruence by generational status ($b = -0.58$, $SE = 0.27$, $t(146) = -2.13$, $p = .035$) on attitude towards the recommended product. A bootstrap analysis of indirect effects confirmed a significant mediation effect by perceived trustworthiness for first-generation

minority consumers (95% confidence interval: $0.29 < \text{C.I.} < 0.87$) but not for the second-generation minority consumers (95% confidence interval: $-0.14 < \text{C.I.} < 0.27$).

Discussion

These results indicate that second-generation minority consumers are less sensitive to heritage congruence than first-generation individuals, and that the perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson mediates the effect of heritage congruence on consumer response for first-generation, but not for second-generation, minority consumers. This may explain why previous research found inconsistent results when investigating the effects of heritage congruence (Avery et al., 2012). We will revisit the implications in the general discussion. Although we show that this effect cannot be explained by the lower age of the second-generation participants, other factors such as education, economic sophistication, or language fluency in the mainstream could be playing a part in this effect.

From a managerial perspective, these findings highlight the importance of service provider trustworthiness for the effectiveness of personal sales strategies. They suggest that when targeting second-generation minority consumers, service provider heritage is unlikely to make much of a difference. However, when targeting first-generation minority consumers, ensuring congruence between customer and salesperson heritage can result in significantly more positive consumer response. Retailers may want to take this into account when allocating members of their sales force to specific stores. A diverse sales force that includes minority employees may be especially important for points of sales with a significant first-generation customer base.

In the theory section, we predicted that the interaction between generation and salesperson ethnicity should be larger for hedonic than utilitarian products. In this study, we used TVs as the target product category and it is thus relevant to discuss how this choice relates to the moderation by product type. Some key features of TVs are amenable to objective comparisons and people have clear preferences for certain attribute levels (e.g., the better the resolution, the better the product). However, TVs are complex products in a fast-changing category, which makes them hard for most consumers to judge. Moreover, there is substantial heterogeneity among consumers in preference for certain attributes (e.g., screen size). As a result,

we expected shared heritage to have an effect in the case of TVs. In Study 2, we address the role of product type formally to assess a second boundary condition, besides generation, to the beneficial effects of shared heritage.

4.4.2. Study 2: The role of product category

In the second study, we replicated the findings of study 1 in a different context – the Hispanic community in the Netherlands. In this paper, we use the word “Hispanic” to refer to people who trace their roots to a Spanish-speaking nation in Latin America. Among the most represented nations in our study are Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. We aimed to explore product type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) as a boundary condition for the interaction between shared heritage and generation. Feick and Higie (1992) showed that the influence of similar sources on consumer attitudes and intentions varies depending of preference heterogeneity. Because hedonic value is more subjective than utilitarian value (Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994), perceived similarity of attitudes and experiences is likely to affect the extent to which consumers follow the salesperson's recommendations more where hedonic products are considered. Based on this, we predict that heritage congruence would be less relevant to the evaluation of utilitarian products than to that of hedonic products, resulting in a three-way interaction between shared heritage, generation, and product type.

Pretest

A pretest was conducted in the target population to determine appropriate hedonic and utilitarian product categories. Twenty-eight Hispanic participants approached in a Hispanic neighbourhood of a major Dutch city rated a series of products on the hedonic and functional dimensions (Kempf, 1999); the first (mean age = 41,2 years old; 71,4% female) and second (mean age = 26,1 years old; 50% female) generations were equally represented. Based on the results of the pretest, a bottle of wine (hedonic) and a rechargeable battery set (utilitarian) were selected. Both wine (enjoyableness: $M = 8.75$, $SD = 0.93$; functionality: $M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.48$) and rechargeable battery sets (enjoyableness: $M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.87$; functionality: $M = 7.89$, $SD = 1.40$) scored high on the relevant dimension but low on the other

dimension; in addition, these products are used by both genders, are available in similar price ranges and are consistent with a need for salesperson assistance.

Study design and procedure

The study relied on a 2 (first vs. second generation) \times 2 (Dutch vs. Hispanic service provider) \times 2 (hedonic vs. utilitarian product) semi-experimental design. Three hundred and one participants in the main study were personally approached in Hispanic neighbourhoods in three major Dutch cities as well as through religious and cultural organizations targeting the Hispanic community in the Netherlands. To avoid potential issues due to a low level of language proficiency, the questionnaire was fully bilingual Dutch-Spanish for all participants. Thirteen participants were excluded before conducting the main analysis, either due to missing data or because they did not meet the required criteria for participation in the study (e.g., they were not Hispanic), leaving a final sample size of 288: 144 first- (mean age = 41,3; 52,1% female) and 144 second-generation minority consumers (mean age = 26,0; 55,6% female). No gender effects were found.

Participants within each generational group were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (Figures 17a to 17d). The display looked similar to the one used in study 1. They were first asked to imagine a situation in which they were shopping for either wine (hedonic condition) or a rechargeable battery set (utilitarian condition), and found themselves hesitating between two options: product A, which was slightly above their budget, and product B, which was slightly under their budget. A salesperson then approached them and proceeded to recommend product A. As in study 1, salesperson heritage was manipulated by changing the name of the salesperson, as reported within the scenario as well as on a picture representing a tag on their shirt; the name of the salesperson was either Jaap Bakker (Dutch condition) or Carlos Gonzáles (Hispanic condition). Both were realistic names for service providers in a Hispanic-Dutch context.

After reading the scenario, participants answered questions about salesperson trustworthiness, attitude towards the recommended product, and future loyalty to the store. Developing customer loyalty constitutes an important aspect of the service interaction, and research has shown that social factors have consequences for loyalty (Mattila, 2001; Selnes and Hansen, 2001). All dependent variables were measured with 10-point semantic differential (perceived trustworthiness, attitude towards the

product) or Likert (loyalty to the store) scales. At the end of the study, respondents were asked to provide demographic information, including generational status.

Figure 17a: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Minority condition, utilitarian product)



Figure 17b: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Majority condition, utilitarian product)



Figure 17c: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Minority condition, hedonic product)



Figure 17d: Stimulus used in Study 2 (Majority condition, hedonic product)



Results

Manipulation check. Participants rated the product in the scenario on a 10-point (functional-enjoyable) scale. Rechargeable battery sets were perceived as significantly more functional and less enjoyable than wine ($t(286) = -65.33, p < .001$; rechargeable battery set: $M = 1.75, SD = 0.86$; wine: $M = 8.70, SD = 0.95$). This is consistent with the results of the pretest.

Attitude towards the recommended product. The four items (bad-good, unfavourable-favourable, unattractive-attractive, unsatisfactory-satisfactory) used to measure attitude towards the product recommended by the salesperson were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = .91$). A three-way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect between heritage congruence, generational status and product category ($F(1, 280) = 7.55, p = .006$) on attitude towards the product recommended by the salesperson. Among the first generation, attitude towards the recommended product was similar regardless of whether the respondent and the salesperson shared the same heritage ($M = 6.76; SD = 1.18$) or not ($M = 6.99; SD = 1.54$) when the product was utilitarian (Figure 18a). When the product was hedonic (Figure 18b), however, it was rated more positively when customer and salesperson heritage were congruent ($M = 7.66; SD = 1.48$) than when they were not ($M = 6.47; SD = 1.52$). Among the second generation, no such differences were found (Table 4). An analysis of simple effects confirmed that the effect of heritage congruence was significant for hedonic products ($F(1, 280) = 11.68, p = .001$) but not for utilitarian products ($F(1, 280) = 0.46, p = .50$) among first-generation Hispanic respondents, and neither for hedonic ($F(1, 280) = 0.46, p = .50$) nor for utilitarian products ($F(1, 280) = 0.52, p = .47$) among second-generation respondents. In addition, there was a significant main effect of product category ($F(1, 280) = 3.96, p = .048$) on attitude toward the recommended product: on average, participants rated the hedonic product ($M = 6.84, SD = 1.61$) somewhat higher than the utilitarian product ($M = 6.49, SD = 1.43$).

Figure 18a: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity for attitude towards the recommended product in Study 2 (Utilitarian condition)

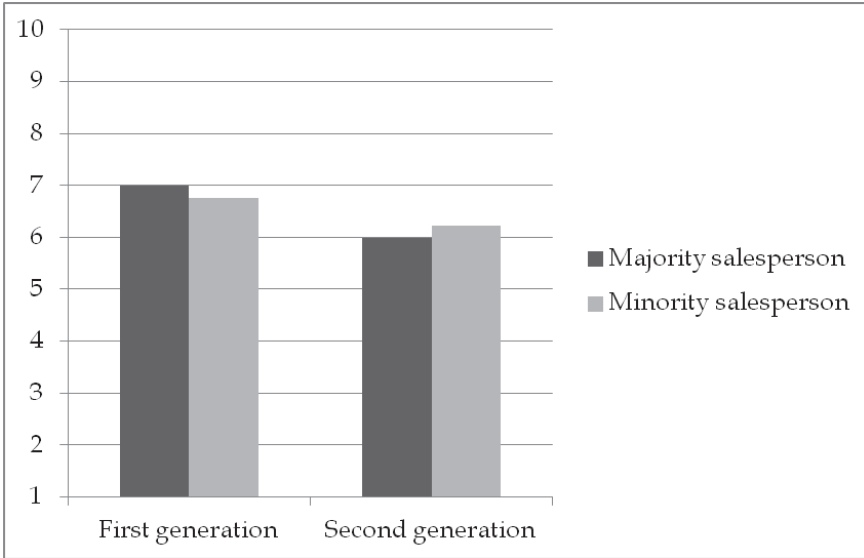
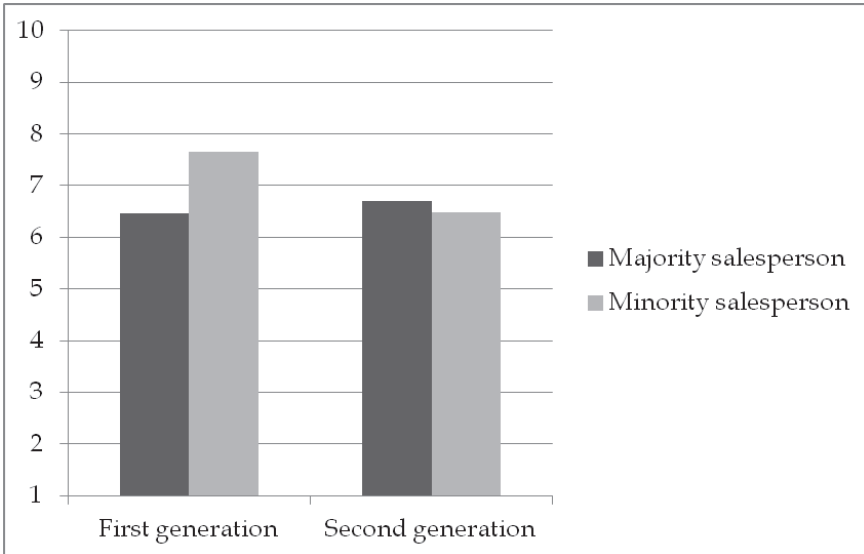


Figure 18b: Generational status by salesperson ethnicity for attitude towards the recommended product in Study 2 (Hedonic condition)



Loyalty to the store. The four items (“It is likely that I will purchase rechargeable batteries from this store in the future”, “It is probable that I will purchase rechargeable batteries from this store in the future”, “I am willing to tell people about the good aspects of this store”, “I am willing to recommend this store to others”) were averaged to create an index ($\alpha = .92$). A three-way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect between heritage congruence, generational status and product category ($F(1, 280) = 7.72, p = .006$) on intention to remain loyal to the store. Among the first generation, when the product was utilitarian, intention to remain loyal was similar regardless of whether the respondent and the salesperson shared the same heritage ($M = 7.46; SD = 1.17$) or not ($M = 7.26; SD = 1.93$). On the other hand, when the product was hedonic, participants expressed a stronger intention to remain loyal to the store when customer and salesperson heritage were congruent ($M = 7.92; SD = 1.51$) than when they were not ($M = 6.76; SD = 1.52$). Among the second generation, no such differences were found (Table 5). An analysis of simple effects confirmed that the effect of heritage congruence was significant for hedonic products ($F(1, 280) = 9.51, p = .0012$) but not for utilitarian products ($F(1, 280) = 0.29, p = .59$) among first-generation Hispanic respondents on intention to remain loyal to the store. Among second-generation respondents, no significant effect was found either for hedonic ($F(1, 280) = 2.35, p = .13$) or for utilitarian products ($F(1, 280) = 2.18, p = .14$). There was a significant main effect of generational status ($F(1, 280) = 6.83, p = .009$): on average, first-generation participants were more likely to express an intention to shop in the same store in the future ($M = 7.34, SD = 1.59$) than second-generation participants ($M = 6.86, SD = 1.66$).

Perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson. The four items (dishonest-honest, insincere-sincere, not trustworthy-trustworthy, risky-safe) were first averaged to create an index ($\alpha = .90$). We expected heritage congruence to have an effect on perceived trustworthiness in first-generation, but not in second-generation, minority consumers, irrespective of product category. A three-way ANOVA did not reveal any main effect of heritage congruence ($F(1,280) = 0.35, p = .56$), although there was a main effect of product category, with the salesperson being deemed more trustworthy when they were selling a hedonic product ($M = 6.73. SD = 1.92$) than when they were selling a utilitarian product ($M = 6.29. SD = 1.53$). There was also a significant interaction effect of generational status by heritage congruence ($F(1,280) = 7.63, p = .006$) on perceived salesperson trustworthiness (Table 5).

Table 5: Mean ratings and respective standard deviations obtained in Study 2

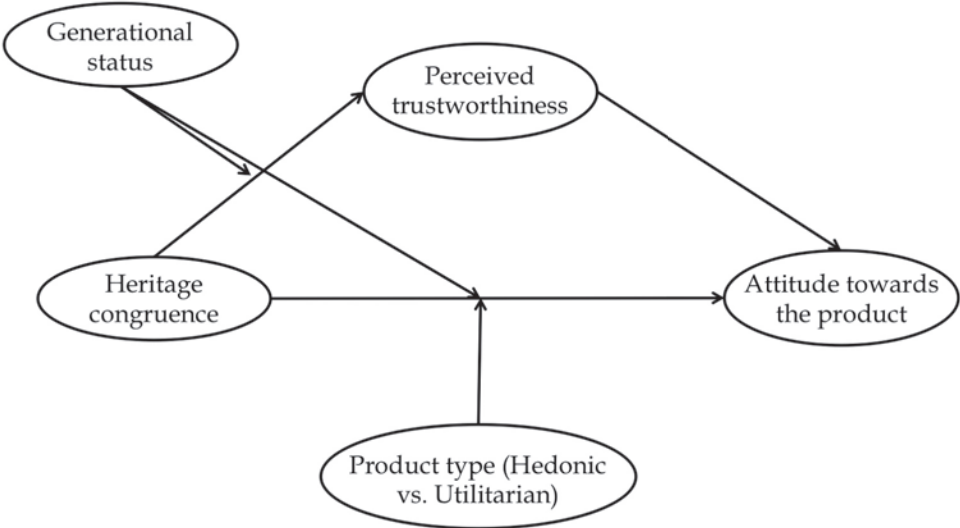
| | First generation | | | | Second generation | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Utilitarian | | Hedonic | | Utilitarian | | Hedonic | |
| | Min. SP M (SD) | Maj. SP M (SD) | Min. SP M (SD) | Maj. SP M (SD) | Min. SP M (SD) | Maj. SP M (SD) | Min. SP M (SD) | Maj. SP M (SD) |
| Att. towards the product | 6.76 (1.18) | 6.99 (1.54) | 7.66 (1.48) | 6.47 (1.52) | 6.23 (1.36) | 5.98 (1.45) | 6.49 (1.91) | 6.71 (1.24) |
| Loyalty to the store | 7.46 (1.17) | 7.26 (1.93) | 7.92 (1.51) | 6.76 (1.52) | 6.90 (1.20) | 6.34 (1.63) | 6.80 (2.02) | 7.38 (1.59) |
| Perceived trustworthiness | 6.81 (1.22) | 6.65 (1.61) | 7.67 (1.72) | 6.51 (1.99) | 5.59 (1.51) | 6.13 (1.54) | 5.90 (1.87) | 6.33 (1.53) |

Among first-generation Hispanic consumers, the salesperson was deemed more trustworthy when heritage was congruent ($M = 7.24$; $SD = 1.55$) than when it was not ($M = 6.58$; $SD = 1.79$). Among the second-generation, on the other hand, the salesperson's trustworthiness was rated similarly in both cases (same-heritage salesperson: $M = 5.90$; $SD = 1.87$; majority salesperson: $M = 6.33$; $SD = 1.53$). An analysis of simple effects confirmed that the effect of heritage congruence on perceived salesperson trustworthiness was significant for first-generation ($F(1,280) = 5.61$, $p = .019$) but not for second-generation ($F(1,280) = 2.37$, $p = .13$) Hispanic consumers. As expected, there was no interaction effect of hedonic or utilitarian product type and either generational status ($F(1,280) = 0.14$, $p = 0.71$), heritage congruence ($F(1,280) = 2.36$, $p = 0.13$), or both ($F(1,280) = 1.02$, $p = 0.31$) on perceived salesperson trustworthiness.

Moderated mediation. As in study 1, we expected heritage congruence to have an effect on perceived trustworthiness in first-generation, but not in second-generation, minority consumers. That is, we again predicted a moderated mediation where generational status would moderate the IV-Mediator relationship. In this study, however, we also expected product type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) to interact with heritage congruence and generational status independently of trust by moderating the direct effect of generational status on the IV-DV relationship. We did not expect product type to moderate the mediator-IV relationship. This would

have reflected a greater importance of perceived salesperson trustworthiness for one type of product type than for the other. Rather, we predicted that first-generation, but not second-generation, minority consumers would infer attitudinal similarity from heritage congruence, and that perceived attitudinal similarity would have a positive impact of attitudes towards the recommended product for hedonic but not for utilitarian products. We again conducted a moderated mediation analysis using a bootstrapping procedure (Hayes, 2013). The tested model is illustrated in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Model tested in Study 2



The mediation analysis revealed a significant main effect of generational status (mediator variable model: $b = -1.34$, $SE = 0.28$, $t(284) = -4.75$, $p < .001$) and heritage congruence ($b = -0.66$, $SE = 0.28$, $t(284) = -2.35$, $p = .019$) as well as a significant interaction effect of heritage congruence by generational status ($b = 1.09$, $SE = 0.40$, $t(284) = 2.74$, $p = .007$) on perceived trustworthiness. As in study 1, this reflected the fact that generational status moderates the effect of heritage congruence on perceived trustworthiness. In turn, there was a significant effect of perceived trustworthiness (dependent variable model: $b = 0.68$, $SE = 0.34$, $t(283) = 19.80$, $p < .001$) on attitude towards the product recommended by the salesperson. A bootstrap analysis of indirect effects confirmed the presence of a significant

mediation effect among first-generation respondents (95% confidence interval: $-0.86 < \text{C.I.} < -0.09$) but not among second-generation respondents (95% confidence interval: $-0.05 < \text{C.I.} < 0.68$). These results fully replicate the findings of study 1. Product type did not moderate this conditional process; in other words, there was no significant interaction effect of product type with either heritage congruence or generational status on the perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson.

The direct effect of heritage congruence on attitude towards the recommended product, however, was qualified by a three-way interaction with generational status and product category. Specifically, the analysis revealed a significant main effect of product type ($b = 0.90, SE = 0.35, t(280) = 2.60, p = .01$), a significant interaction effect of heritage congruence and product type ($b = -1.42, SE = 0.49, t(280) = -2.90, p = .004$), as well as a significant three-way interaction effect of heritage congruence with generational status and product category ($b = 1.91, SE = 0.69, t(280) = 2.75, p = .006$) on attitude towards the recommended product. These findings again support our model, and confirm the results presented above: heritage congruence had a stronger positive impact on attitudes towards the recommended product among first-generation than among second-generation minorities, especially when they were shopping for hedonic rather than utilitarian products.

To avoid lengthy exposition, we do not report here the findings from an analysis of loyalty towards the store. For this variable we find results similar to those reported above for attitudes towards the recommended product. Trustworthiness mediated the effect of shared heritage among first-generation respondents but not among second-generation respondents, product type did not moderate this conditional process, and trustworthiness did not explain the effect of product category. A detailed explanation of this additional analysis is available upon request.

Discussion

First, these results replicate the findings of study 1 by confirming, in a different minority group, that heritage congruence matters less for second-generation than for first-generation minority consumers and that trustworthiness mediates the effect of heritage congruence on attitude towards a product recommended by the salesperson for first- but not for second-generation individuals. Second, they highlight a moderating role of product type (hedonic versus utilitarian).

We argued that the perceived attitudinal similarity inferred from heritage congruence matters more in the case of high preference heterogeneity products, such as hedonic products, than in that of low preference heterogeneity products, such as utilitarian products. Although the role of preference heterogeneity as a more distal moderator was not tested in the study, the fact that the three-way interaction between generation, salesperson ethnicity, and product was not mediated by trust is consistent with our arguments.

From a managerial perspective, these results suggest that retailers might want to pay particular attention to the diversity and representativeness of their sales force in the case of hedonic products that have high preference heterogeneity and cannot be evaluated objectively. This includes products such as wine, perfume, cosmetics, literature, or even music. For these products in particular, salesperson recommendations may elicit more positive consumer responses if they come from an employee who shares the customer's ethnic background. This applies in the case of first-generation, but not second-generation, minority consumers. Among second-generation minority consumers salesperson heritage appears not to matter regardless of the product category.

4.5. General discussion

Minority consumers represent a substantial proportion of the population in many countries. Understanding how they respond to advice from service providers is bound to have important consequences for retail store productivity and sales effectiveness. Yet, until now, the literature on minority targeting has focused almost exclusively on the advertising context. There has been a lack of research investigating how minority customers respond to minority and majority service providers and salespeople in the marketplace; in particular, no prior research has examined whether interacting with a same-heritage salesperson leads minority consumers to develop more positive attitudes towards the products they recommend. In this paper, we answer these important questions. Our results reveal that potentially inconsistent preliminary findings relative to customer expectations (Montoya and Briggs, 2013) and retail store productivity (Avery et al., 2012) discussed in the literature may stem from a failure to consider two important moderators: the minority consumer's generational status and the level of preference

heterogeneity associated with the product. In addition, the results highlight the importance of heritage congruence for perceived salesperson trustworthiness among first-generation minority consumers.

Our findings show that heritage congruence between the salesperson and the minority customer has important consequences for the perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson, for the evaluation of products recommended by the salesperson, and for future loyalty to the store—but only for first-generation minority consumers. Second-generation minority consumers, who tend to identify less strongly with their heritage culture, do not tend to perceive salespeople with the same ethnic background as themselves as significantly more trustworthy than majority salespeople. In addition, we find that, even among first-generation minority consumers, heritage congruence only affects consumer response and compliance with salesperson recommendation when the product has high preference heterogeneity. This means that, for example, it can be an effective strategy when selling hedonic products, but not necessarily when selling utilitarian products.

4.5.1. Theoretical contribution

These results add to the limited literature on minority targeting in the service interaction in several ways, and improve our understanding of the social dimensions of the service encounter. First, we demonstrate that heritage congruence has important consequences for consumer response to salesperson recommendation. Second, we shed light on the mechanisms through which service provider, minority customer and product characteristics interact in the retail encounter. In particular, we highlight the mediating role of perceived salesperson trustworthiness among first-generation but not second-generation minority consumers. Third, we underline the importance of generational status for the effectiveness of minority targeting strategies beyond the context of advertising (Lenoir et al., 2013). Second-generation minority consumers were either born in the host country or moved there as very young children; they tend to be bicultural, and their heritage identity is less salient than that of their parents. Because of this, we argued that they are less likely to perceive heritage-congruent salespeople as more similar to themselves than majority salespeople and also less likely to perceive them as more trustworthy.

In addition, our findings add to the literature on hedonic and utilitarian goods. We show that the nature of the product (hedonic vs. utilitarian) moderates the effect of heritage congruence on consumer response among first-generation minority consumers but not among second-generation minority consumers, with heritage congruence mattering more in the case of hedonic products than in that of utilitarian products. We suggest that this is because hedonic products are associated with a higher level of preference heterogeneity, making attitudinal similarities inferred from perceived membership similarity more relevant: preferences for hedonic products are more subjective, and therefore recommendations from salespeople perceived as similar are more valuable. This is consistent with previous research (Feick and Higie, 1992) arguing that the influence of similar sources on consumer attitudes varies depending of preference heterogeneity. Because second-generation minority consumers' heritage identity is less salient, they are less likely than first-generation minority consumers to perceive a same-heritage salesperson as significantly more similar than a majority salesperson and hence to infer attitudinal similarity. Therefore, preference heterogeneity and hence product category does not affect the impact of heritage congruence among the second generation.

4.5.2. Managerial implications

Given the growing numbers of minority customers, understanding how to target minorities in retailing and personal selling contexts constitutes a very important challenge for marketers. Prior literature has ignored the consequences of shared heritage between minority consumers and employees. This topic is especially relevant because ethnic minorities tend to be overrepresented in the service industry. This paper offers guidelines for practitioners looking to target minority consumer in shopping and service environments. From a managerial perspective, our results suggest that congruence of ethnic heritage between the salesperson and the customer is especially relevant in contexts where first-generation minority consumers are shopping for products with high preference heterogeneity, such as hedonic products. In contrast, in contexts where minority consumers are shopping for products with low preference heterogeneity, such as utilitarian products, or when second-generation consumers constitute the target, a salesperson with the same ethnic background is less likely to have an impact on compliance with salesperson recommendation and, ultimately, sales effectiveness.

This suggests that practitioners should take into account the demographic make-up of the customer base at each of their retail locations when assigning employees to specific points of sale. This is especially true if their business involves selling hedonic products or services that are associated with high preference heterogeneity. Among first-generation minority consumers in particular, heritage congruence appears to be an effective way to inspire trust and elicit more positive consumer response to agent recommendations.

4.5.3. Limitations and future research

In this research, we did not look into the linguistic aspect of shared heritage. First-generation minority consumers, in particular, might feel more comfortable and better able to assess product characteristics in their native language, and a heritage-congruent service provider might inspire trust by providing them with the opportunity to do so. Second-generation minority consumers, on the other hand, might react negatively to communication in their heritage language, especially in communities where levels of heritage language proficiency among the second generation are low (Portes and Hao, 1998). We also did not consider product categories in which a specific heritage is associated with particularly relevant expertise. For example, a salesperson with a Belgian background may be perceived as better qualified than a majority salesperson to advise a customer on the best condiment for fries. However, in contexts in which relevant expertise is inferred from the salesperson's ethnic background, we would expect all consumers to respond more positively to recommendations from a salesperson with the relevant heritage, regardless of their own ethnic background or generational status. In addition, we did not investigate the impact of the level of integration of a minority in the host society, which may have consequences for the effectiveness of targeting strategies such as employing same-heritage salespeople (Antioco et al., 2012).

Finally, future research should investigate whether this effect constitutes a manifestation of a broader phenomenon in consumer behaviour. Heritage congruence is only one of many traits based on which individuals can infer similarity. Group membership, and hence perceived similarity, can stem from a number other factors. Assuming that individuals are in general more likely to trust in-group members and to infer attitudinal similarity with them, a similar pattern of

results should be found for other traits with which individuals can exhibit either strong or weak identification. For example, recommendations made by a salesperson wearing the shirt of the local football team should be more persuasive to season ticket holders than to occasional armchair fans.

4.6. Conclusion

Most of the minority targeting literature has focused on the advertising context, but nowadays shared ethnic background between salesperson and customer constitutes an important aspect of the service encounter. The present research investigates the impact of heritage congruence on minority consumers' response to salesperson recommendations and suggests processes and boundary conditions that are both theoretically informative and practically relevant. We hope that this work will stimulate additional research exploring the effectiveness of minority targeting strategies in service interactions and marketing more generally. Globalization causes our societies to become ever more diverse. Research that improves our understanding of the consequences of this diversity for consumer behaviour is important today and will be crucial tomorrow.

Chapter 5: General discussion

5.1. Summary of main findings

The first part of this work focussed on language effects, and more specifically on the impact of formal and informal address on consumer response. With the exception of Modern English and some dialects of Arabic, most of the world's major languages present advertisers and service providers with a choice: whether to address consumers using formal or informal pronouns (e.g., *usted* or *tu* in Spanish, *u* or *je* in Dutch, *tu* or *vous* in French). Yet, no research had so far investigated the impact of formal and informal address on consumer responses. In Chapter 2, we showed that brand personality affects consumers' preferences for and responses to forms of address. In six studies, we established that informal address is more likely to be preferred and elicits more positive responses when associated with warmer brands, whereas formal address is more likely to be preferred and elicits more positive responses when used by more competent brands. This effect was replicated in several linguistic contexts and marketing situations. We showed that this is explained by consumers' perceptions of informal address and formal address as differently associated with warmth and competence, and highlighted the impact of communication context as a boundary condition. Finally, we discussed the implications of these findings and highlighted other ways in which brand personality and positioning may influence consumer response to address.

In today's multicultural societies, ethnic targeting is an increasingly important marketing strategy, and members of ethnic minorities represent a growing percentage of both customers and service providers. The second part of the work dealt with minority targeting strategies. Two main approaches to targeting ethnic minorities have emerged in recent years: messaging consumers when their ethnic identity is most salient, and doing so with spokespeople or models with the same heritage as the targeted minority. In Chapter 3, we conducted conceptual replications of two influential articles representative of these research streams: Forehand and Deshpandé (2001) and Deshpandé and Stayman (1994). The studies showed that the effects of such practices on minority consumers are not homogeneous. In particular, the studies allowed us to identify generational status

(first vs. second generation) as an important boundary condition for these ethnic targeting strategies. We then discussed the important conceptual and practical implications of these findings for choosing an effective ethnic targeting strategy.

In Chapter 4, we built on these findings by investigating the role heritage congruence (shared ethnic background) between customers and salespersons – an increasingly relevant, but under-investigated, feature of service encounters. This chapter presented two studies with community samples of ethnic minority consumers that examined the impact of heritage congruence on minority consumers' responses. We showed that the presence of a same-heritage minority service provider leads to more positive attitudes towards the recommended product, but more among first-generation than second-generation minority consumers. The effect of heritage congruence on consumer response was mediated by the perceived trustworthiness of the service provider in first-generation but not in second-generation minority consumers. In addition, we showed that the effect of heritage congruence on consumer response is stronger for hedonic products than for utilitarian products. This is consistent with utilitarian products being associated with lower preference heterogeneity, making perceived similarity of attitudes less relevant. We then highlighted the important implications of this new evidence for the effectiveness of ethnic targeting strategies in retailing and personal selling contexts.

5.2. Directions for future research

Globalisation has caused rapid changes throughout the world, be it in terms of consumers' characteristics, their preferences, or their environment. Yet, many of its consequences for marketing still remain understudied. Possible directions for future research include investigating the intersection between the two research streams described above and developing a better understanding of the impact of heritage language use on minority consumers' responses. Featuring heritage language in marketing communication, either on its own or as part of a code-switched message, constitutes a common targeting strategy. Yet, levels of proficiency in the heritage language vary widely among second-generation minority consumers. Research shows that heritage language use in advertising can elicit positive reactions by demonstrating cultural sensitivity, but it can also arouse insecurities about

majority language use (Koslow et al., 1994). Our findings suggest that using heritage language as a cultural cue might also have an unexpected negative impact on consumer response by acting as a reminder of second-generation minority consumers' relative lack of proficiency in the heritage language. This could be particularly important in cultures where proficiency in the heritage language is a more valued skill. This discussion suggests that in the case of language cues aimed at targeting an ethnic minority, the boundary condition of intergenerational differences observed for minority spokespersons in Chapter 2 (Study 2) may turn into a disordinal (cross-over) interaction with first generation minority consumers responding positively and second-generation minority consumers responding negatively. On a related note, another important area that remains relatively unexplored by marketing researchers is the impact of the widespread use of English as a lingua franca in marketing communication. Marketers often rely on the symbolic value of the English language to convey the international, modern, or business-oriented nature of their offering. Yet, this strategy may elicit negative responses by accidentally reminding consumers whose English is poor or non-existent of their own lack of proficiency in a language that society strongly associates with success.

To better understand the global marketplace, it would also be interesting to explore linguistic accommodation strategies - the processes by which speakers adjust their language use depending on the other participants in a conversation - in service encounters in multilingual environments. This includes not only officially bi- or multilingual environments, but also settings with an immigrant or expatriate community, tourist destinations, and any setting in which a local dialect or a lingua franca is used alongside the official language in service encounters. When service encounters take place in bi- or multilingual environments, customers and service providers need to find ways to preserve both communication effectiveness and social and personal identity within the limitations of the participants' language skills and the requirements of intergroup harmony (Sachdev and Giles, 2004).

It is typically assumed that the service provider, where possible, will accommodate the customer's language. This is known as a convergence strategy. However, that is not always possible, nor indeed is it always desirable. For instance, the service provider may lack sufficient language skills. The service provider may also decide to adopt a divergence (deliberately accentuating linguistic differences) or

maintenance (lack of convergence or divergence) strategy in order to highlight their distinct identity or resist what they perceive to be linguistic imperialism. Some customers may want to obtain social approval or integrate socially whereas others wish to emphasize their distinct identity. Accommodation can be perceived as a negative if it is perceived as an implicit indication of the customer's poor language skills or of their outsider status. In other words, finding a communication strategy that is acceptable for all the parties involved in a bilingual service encounter is not as straightforward as it seems. Yet, surprisingly, language choice in the service encounter has not so far been investigated in marketing literature.

Finally, researchers may want to develop a better understanding of the influence of language on consumers' perceptions. According to the linguistic relativity principle, language affects a number of cognitive and perceptual processes and influences the way in which we perceive and analyse the world. This implies that speakers of different languages should perceive the world differently (Gentner and Goldin-Meadow, 2003; Hunt and Agnoli, 1991; Wolff and Holmes, 2011). If the structure of language affects processes such as memory and categorization, this should also have consequences for consumer research. Structural differences between languages have already been shown to have important consequences for consumer perceptions and to influence memory and judgment (e.g., Schmitt et al., 1994; Schmitt and Zhang, 1998; Tavassoli, 1999), but other aspects - including attribution and blame perceptions, (e.g., Fausey and Boroditsky, 2010 and 2011), colour categorisation (e.g., Davidoff, Davies, and Roberson, 1999), numerical cognition (e.g., Gordon, 2004; Pica, Lemer, Izard, and Dehaene, 2004), and time conceptions (e.g., Boroditsky, 2001; Chen, 2013) - remain underexplored.

5.3. Conclusion

The objective of this research was to better understand the consequences of marketers' linguistic and cultural choices when addressing consumers in a globalised environment. In the first part of the dissertation, I focused on the role of language, and particularly on the impact of formal and informal address on consumer response. I demonstrated that perceived brand personality could consistently be found to have an effect on consumers' reaction to address despite linguistic and cultural differences in the way in which address pronouns are used. In

the second part of the dissertation, I investigated boundary conditions to common ethnic minority targeting strategies featuring identity cues. I showed that even minority groups cannot be assumed to be homogeneous, and that marketers should take into account factors such as generational status when developing targeting strategies.

These findings highlight the need for marketers to embrace the complexity of consumers' cultural influences in their communication. Globalisation may have led to reduced consumer homogeneity within countries and groups, but it has also highlighted commonalities between consumers worldwide. Overall, my research suggests that practitioners should not rely on outdated cultural assumptions, but rather strive to better understand which aspects of their communication strategy are relevant for a global audience, and which should instead be tailored to specific consumers. They may yet be surprised by what they find.

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Nederlandse samenvatting

Het eerste deel van dit proefschrift is gericht op taaleffecten, en meer specifiek op de gevolgen van formele en informele aanspreekvormen voor de reacties van de consument. In de meeste van de belangrijkste talen in het wereld, met uitzondering van het hedendaagse Engels en sommige dialecten van het Arabisch, hebben adverteerders en dienstverleners een keuze: de consument met behulp van een formeel of een informeel voornaamwoord aan te spreken (b.v. *u* of *je* in het Nederlands, *usted* of *tu* in het Spaans, *tu* of *vous* in het Frans). Toch was er tot nu toe geen onderzoek naar het effect van formele en informele aanspreekvormen op de reactie van consumenten. In Hoofdstuk 2 tonen we dat de persoonlijkheid van een merk de voorkeuren van consumenten op het gebied van aanspreekvormen beïnvloedt. In zes studies tonen we aan dat de informele aanspreekvorm vaker de voorkeur krijgt en meer positieve reacties uitlokt wanneer zij gebruikt wordt door een warmere merk, terwijl de formele aanspreekvorm vaker de voorkeur krijgt en meer positieve reacties uitlokt wanneer zij gebruikt wordt door een competentere merk. Dit effect wordt gerepliceerd in verschillende taalcontexten en marketing situaties. Ook tonen we dat dit effect verklaard kan worden door het feit dat consumenten informele en formele aanspreekvormen op verschillende manieren associëren met warmte en bekwaamheid, en dat de context waarin de communicatie plaatsvindt gevolgen heeft voor het effect. Ten slotte bespreken we de betekenis van deze bevindingen voor de praktijk en stellen we andere manieren voor waarop merkpersoonlijkheid en positionering een invloed zouden kunnen hebben op de reacties van consumenten op de aanspreekvormen die merken gebruiken.

Het tweede deel van dit werk is gericht op het targeten van minderheden. In hedendaagse multiculturele samenlevingen vindt het targeten van etnische groeperingen steeds meer opgang als marketingstrategie. Er zijn ruwweg twee manieren van het targeten van etnische minderheden. De eerste variant is het benaderen van etnische consumenten als hun etnische identiteit geactiveerd is, bijvoorbeeld tijdens een cultureel festival. De tweede variant is het bereiken van consumenten door het gebruik van endorsers of modellen met dezelfde afkomst als de beoogde doelgroep. In Hoofdstuk 3 laten we zien dat de effecten van deze benaderingen verschillen voor eerste en tweede generaties minderheden. Dit heeft

belangrijke praktische implicaties. Met name adverteerders die tweede generatie minderheden willen aanspreken op basis van etniciteit dienen zeer zorgvuldig te zijn in hun keuze van een context. De resultaten van ons onderzoek suggereren dat etnische targeting bij tweede generatie minderheden alleen werkt wanneer hun etnische identiteit geactiveerd is. Ook moeten marketeers zich ervan bewust zijn dat de strategie waarbij een persoon wordt gekozen met dezelfde afkomst als de doelgroep minder effectief of zelfs contraproductief zal zijn bij vertegenwoordigers van de tweede generatie dan bij die van de eerste.

In Hoofdstuk 4 bouwen we op de bovenstaande bevindingen en onderzoeken we de invloed van een gedeelde etnische achtergrond tussen klanten en verkopers – een belangrijk aspect van verkoopgesprekken waar slechts weinig over bekend is. In dit hoofdstuk wordt de impact van gedeelde etnische achtergrond op de reacties van consumenten uit minderheden in twee studies onderzocht. Deelnemers zijn consumenten uit allochtone gemeenschappen. We tonen aan dat de aanwezigheid van een dienstverlener met dezelfde afkomst tot een positievere houding leidt ten opzichte van het aanbevolen product, maar meer onder eerste generatie dan onder tweede generatie minderheden. Het effect van een gedeelde afkomst op de reacties van consumenten wordt verklaard door de waargenomen betrouwbaarheid van de verkoper onder eerste, maar niet onder tweede generatie minderheden. Daarnaast tonen we dat het effect van een gedeelde afkomst op de reacties van consumenten sterker is voor hedonistische producten dan voor utilitaire producten. Dit is consistent met eerder onderzoek dat een lagere heterogeniteit van voorkeuren vindt bij utilitaire producten, waardoor een waargenomen gelijkheid in voorkeuren in dit geval minder relevant is. Ten slotte bespreken we de betekenis van dit onderzoek voor de effectiviteit van etnische targeting strategieën in contexten zoals de detailhandel en de persoonlijke verkoop.

Résumé en français

La première partie de cette thèse porte sur les effets de l'usage de la langue, et plus particulièrement sur l'impact des formes d'adresse formelles et informelles sur les réactions des consommateurs. Dans la plupart des langues majeures dans le monde, à l'exception de l'anglais moderne et de certains dialectes de la langue arabe, les annonceurs et fournisseurs de services doivent faire un choix: s'adresser au consommateur en utilisant soit le pronom formel, soit le pronom informel (par exemple, *vous* ou *tu* en français, *usted* ou *tú* en espagnol, *u* ou *je* en néerlandais). Pourtant, nul n'avait jusqu'ici étudié l'impact de ces formes d'adresse formelles et informelles sur les réactions des consommateurs.

Dans le chapitre 2, nous démontrons que la personnalité d'une marque affecte les préférences des consommateurs pour différentes formes d'adresse ainsi que leurs réactions. En six expériences, nous établissons que les formes d'adresse informelles sont plus susceptibles d'être préférées et suscitent des réactions plus positives lorsqu'elles sont associées avec une marque perçue comme plus "chaude", tandis que les formes d'adresse formelles sont plus susceptibles d'être préférées et suscitent des réactions plus positives lorsqu'elles sont utilisées par une marque perçue comme plus "compétente". Cet effet est reproduit dans plusieurs contextes linguistiques et dans différentes situations de marketing, comme la publicité et les services. Nous démontrons également que cet effet peut être expliqué par le fait que les consommateurs perçoivent les formes d'adresse informelle et formelles comme étant différemment associées avec la "chaleur" et la "compétence" et soulignons l'importance du contexte de communication. Enfin, nous discutons des implications de ces résultats pour la pratique et suggérons d'autres manières par lesquelles la personnalité de la marque ainsi que son positionnement pourraient influencer les réactions des consommateurs aux différentes formes d'adresse.

Dans les sociétés multiculturelles d'aujourd'hui, le ciblage ethnique est une stratégie de marketing de plus en plus importante, et les membres de minorités ethniques représentent un pourcentage croissant des clients et des fournisseurs de services. La deuxième partie de cet ouvrage traite donc des stratégies de ciblage des consommateurs issus de minorités. Deux principales approches pour cibler ces minorités ethniques et culturelles ont émergé ces dernières années: approcher les

consommateurs lorsque leur identité ethnique est la plus active, et utiliser des porte-paroles ou modèles ayant la même origine que la minorité ciblée. Dans le chapitre 3, nous menons des répliques conceptuelles de deux articles influents représentant ces courants de recherche: Forehand et Deshpandé (2001) et Deshpandé et Stayman (1994). Nos expériences montrent que les effets de ces pratiques sur les consommateurs issus de minorités ne sont pas homogènes. En effet, elles permettent d'identifier que le statut générationnel (première ou deuxième génération) représente une limite importante de ces stratégies de ciblage ethnique. Nous abordons ensuite les importantes conséquences théoriques et pratiques de ces résultats pour le développement de stratégies de ciblage efficaces.

Le chapitre 4 va plus loin encore dans ce domaine: en effet, nous y étudions l'effet d'une origine ethnique partagée entre client et vendeur. Il s'agit d'un aspect important mais peu compris des contextes de service. Nous présentons dans ce chapitre deux expériences menées avec des participants issus de la diversité. Nous y examinons l'impact de l'origine partagée sur les réactions des consommateurs issus de minorités. Nous démontrons que la présence d'un vendeur issu de la même minorité suscite des attitudes plus positives envers le produit recommandé par celui-ci, mais davantage chez les consommateurs de première génération que chez ceux de deuxième génération. L'effet de l'origine partagée sur les réactions des consommateurs peut être expliquée par la plus grande fiabilité associée au vendeur dans le cas des consommateurs de première génération, mais pas dans celui des consommateurs de deuxième génération. En outre, nous démontrons que l'effet de l'origine partagée sur les réactions des consommateurs est plus important pour les produits de type hédonique que pour les produits de type utilitaire. Cela est compatible avec de précédentes recherches associant les produits utilitaires avec une hétérogénéité réduite des préférences, ce qui rend la similarité d'attitudes attendue moins pertinente. Nous mettons ensuite en évidence les conséquences de ces résultats pour le développement de stratégies de ciblage efficaces dans les contextes tels que la vente au détail et la vente personnelle.

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About the author



Anne-Sophie Lenoir was born in Liège, Belgium on 12th April 1987. She received her Bachelor's (2008, cum laude) and Master's degree (2010, magna cum laude) in Business Engineering from the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium). After completing an internship in market research at Nielsen, she joined the Erasmus Research Institute of Management in 2011 to start her PhD research in Marketing. In 2014, she spent a semester as a visiting scholar in the marketing department at the Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University.

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ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?**ADDRESSING CONSUMERS IN A GLOBALISED WORLD**

In recent decades, globalisation has caused rapid changes in consumers' characteristics, preferences, and environment. This has led to reduced consumer homogeneity within countries and groups, but also to increased commonalities between consumers worldwide. Many of the consequences of globalisation for marketing still remain understudied. The objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of the impact on consumer response of the linguistic and cultural choices that marketers make when addressing consumers.

The first part of this dissertation focuses on the role of language, and in particular on the impact of formal and informal address on consumer response. Perceived brand personality is consistently found to have consequences for consumers' reaction to address, despite linguistic and cultural differences in the way in which address pronouns are used. The second part deals with boundary conditions to common ethnic minority targeting strategies featuring identity cues. Even minority groups cannot be assumed to be homogeneous: marketers should take into account factors such as generational status when developing targeting strategies.

This research highlights the need for marketers to challenge cultural assumptions that have become irrelevant in a globalised world. It reminds them of the importance of giving full consideration to linguistic and identity issues for the effectiveness of a marketing strategy, and encourages them to embrace the complexity of consumers' cultural influences in every aspect of communication.

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