

## **Foreign Languages Used in Taiwan TV Commercial Ads : Contents Analysis**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study observes the Taiwan TV commercial ads which use foreign languages on January to February 2004 and analyze the contents of the foreign languages appearing in the ads from 8 aspects, including the language it appears (English, Japanese, etc.), the style the foreign language appears (voice or characters; brand name, slogan, song, sentence/dialogue or word/phrase), the proportion of appearance of foreign language in the ads, the nature of the foreign languages in the ad (transmitting the product characters, expressing the feeling...), the site (in Taiwan or in other country), the subtitle on the screen (yes or no), the categories of the products and the nationality or race of the performers. Content analysis was used and the results reveal that English, Japanese and Korea are the most frequently used language in Taiwan TV commercial ads.

Keyword: Country of Origin, Commercial Ads, Foreign Language, Content Analysis

### **INTERDUCTION**

The purpose of ads is to accomplish communication goal or to transmit messages to target audiences. In addition to the body of the information, the effect of ads is associated with expressing methods. The choice of language is one of the expressing methods. The use of foreign languages including words, phrases, and songs in commercial ads can only be explained as a matter of image. Marketer have thought that foreign languages in ads in the process of decoding can be a cue of implying the country of origin, arise the effect of country-of-origin image and influence the ads effect from it.

The fact that images have the power to arouse and thereby influence a consumer's choice process is widely recognized (Percy 1993; Zaichkowsky and Vipat 1993). Among the image variables in the international advertiser's toolkit, the Country-of-origin (CO) variable is conceivably the most potent if skillfully applied.

CO image refers to “buyer’s opinions regarding the relative qualities of goods and services produced in various countries” (Bilkey, 1993). Internationally, CO serves as a useful extrinsic cue and a surrogate for difficult-to-evaluate intrinsic characteristics such as quality and performance because consumers tend to be less familiar with foreign than with domestic products (Han and Terpstra 1988; Huber and McCann 1982; Olson 1977). Even though a few researchers questioned the magnitude of importance of CO image in affecting choice behavior (Ettenson, Wagner, and Gaeth 1988; Johansson 1989; Johansson, Douglas, and Nonaka 1985), most researchers have acknowledge its salience in overall product evaluation and as a proxy for other, more intrinsic, qualities (Bilkey and Nes 1982, Han and Terpstra 1988; Yoo 1992).

The Co image concept has gradually evolved from the idea that people attach stereotypical “made-in” perceptions to products from specific countries. It has been found that all products originating in foreign countries are subject to CO image effects (Han and Terpstra, 1988) and consumers have significantly different, general perceptions about products made in different countries (Han, 1990).

Because the CO image has been conceived as multifaceted, involving several distinct CO image components in recent years (Baughn and Yaprak 1993; Hong and Wyer 1989; Ozsomer and Cavusgil 1991; Roth and Romer 1992), CO images influence purchase and consumption in several ways. Several researches stated that CO images are affected by the consumer’s perception of similarity between his or her own country’s and the origin country’s political and cultural climate and belief systems (Han 1990; Tongberg 1972; Wang and Lamb 1983). Papadopoulos, Heslop, and Bamossy (1989) summarize these notions by stating that the perceptions of origin countries are affective, and conative responses to the CO’s people. Under this facet, consumption behavior has been related to the characteristics of the origin country and its people (Han 1990; Papadoulos, Heslop, and Beracs 1990; Wang and Lamb 1983; Yaprak and Parameswaran 1986). In addition, CO effects have been related more frequently to perceptions about the overall product offerings of a particular origin country. Papadopoulos, Heslop, and Bamossy (1989) note that a consumer’s image of people of an unfamiliar country may well be based on knowledge about their capacity for producing quality products in general--and that this perception affects the consumer’s evaluation of specific products from that country. Besides, CO images are also affected by specific product attributes. Bilkey and Nes’s (1982) hypothesized that purchase intentions and behaviors are also affected by specific product attributes, which include product-, marketing-, and firm-goodwill-related attributes.

Since marketers have understood the CO image effects of their own products relate to their competitors’ are positive, they try to make good use of it. Marketers can directly present the CO of the product in ads. But this method sometimes will not coordinate with the circumstances of the ads. In addition, due to the advance in global supply chain and global manufacturing, usually the components of one product are not produced by one single country. For example, a product may be designed in Japan and produced or assembled in another country, for example, Taiwan. In such situations, even if the marketer want to deliver the Japanese image to consumers, “Made in Japan” is not a correct statement and cannot be used to deliver what the marketers want to. Hence, one method of transmitting the CO image effects is to use foreign language in TV commercial ads.

The methods that marketers operate the foreign languages in TV commercial ads can vary widely in many ways. The purpose of this study is to understand the methods which foreign languages are used by marketers in Taiwan TV commercial ads.

### CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis method is used in this study to analyze the contents of the foreign languages appearing in the ads. This study observes 32 Taiwan foreign language TV commercial ads from January to February 2004. The following eight aspects are used to analyze the contents of 32 Taiwan foreign language TV commercial ads:

#### 1. The Types of Foreign Languages Used in Taiwan TV commercial Ads

As observed on January and February 2004, the foreign languages used in Taiwan TV commercial ads are English, Japanese, Korean and French. English is the most common foreign language used in Taiwan TV commercial ads. Of the thirty-two different TV commercial ads containing foreign language observed, twenty-four, nearly three-fourth, were partly or completely in English. Besides English, eight were partly or completely in Japanese, one was in Korean and the last one was in French. Two of the thirty-two commercial ads contained both English and Japanese. (Table 1)

Table 1: Foreign Languages Used in TV Commercial ads

	Sample (N)	Percentage (%)
English	24	70
Japanese	8	24
Korean	1	3
French	1	3

Note: Some TV commercial ads contained more than one foreign language.

#### 2. The Proportion of The Foreign Languages

There were six “English only” commercial ads, five “Almost English” commercial ads and thirty “Partly English” commercial ads within twenty-four English commercial ads. One of these “English only” commercial ads was a commercial for a perfume, which contained only one word: “Attraction” and its brand name. Another one was a commercial ad for a car, which contained a few product features, one simple slogan “sense of movement” and its brand name. Another four “English only” commercial ads were commercial ads for car, motorcycle, Internet service, and biscuit, which contained more complicated English. For example there were several sentences used to mention about “men’s achievement \ success...” on the commercial of a car, or a more than 8 sentences’ rap talking about the features of an internet service.

“Almost English” commercial ads means there are no Chinese language in the ads except simple price information, simple Chinese slogan or Chinese brand name in the end of the ads. “Partly English” commercial ads contained dialogs, sentences, words or brand names in English and other languages (five are Chinese, two are Japanese).

The other foreign language ads were two “Japanese only”, two “partly Japanese”, four “Almost Japanese”, one “Partly Korean”, and one “French only” (Table 2)

Table 2: The Proportion of Foreign Languages Used in TV Commercial Ads

	Sample (N)	Percentage (%)
English Only	6	18
Japanese Only	2	6
France Only	1	3
Almost English	5	15
Almost Japanese	4	12
Partly in English	13	38
Partly in Japanese	2	6
Partly in Korean	1	3

### 3.The Style of Foreign Languages Shown on TV Screen

Although TV commercial ads contain picture and voice, most of the foreign language commercial ads focused on voice, including words/phrases, dialogues/sentences, brand names and songs. Twenty-nine of these thirty-two ads observed were with voice. Within the thirty-two foreign language commercial ads, there were twenty commercial ads whose brand names were appeared in foreign language. For example, Toyota VIOS, LUX, KIMCO...etc. These brand names shown on the commercial ads were almost in both voice' and character' way. Only 7-11 was an exception, which was pronounced in English, but show in number. That was, totally there were twenty ads speaking their brand names in foreign language and nineteen ads showing their brand name in foreign language on the screen. If not mention to the brand names, there were only nine ads with foreign characters on the screen and six of them pronounced at the same time. These characters were the simple words/phases, sentence, or slogan, such as” sense of movement”, ”best partner, so happy, take it easy”, “Fashion Love, Fashion Life”, “VCT”(product feature), “It’s everything” , and Japanese “すべ”. The other three “characters only” ads were appeared in very simple English sentence: ”I love you” or simple Japanese characters:” の”. Three ads were in the way of English songs. (Table 3)

Table 3: The Styles of Foreign Languages Used in TV Commercial ads

	Sample (N)	Percentage (%)
Voice		
Word/Phrase	9	11
Sentence	16	20
Slogan	3	4
Brand Name	20	25
Song	3	4
Character		
Word/Phrase	5	6
Sentence	1	1
Slogan	3	4
Brand Name	19	24

Note: Because some ads contained both voice and character, and some ads contained more than one style of the foreign, the total number is not 32 but 79.

#### 4. The Natures of Foreign Languages

The natures of foreign languages in Taiwan TV commercial ads were different between each other. We can distinguish the natures in five categories: 'Feeling Expressing', 'Consumer Needs or Goals', 'Consumer Problem', 'Product Feature and Benefits', 'Atmosphere', and 'Others'. For example, “お元気ですか?” was in the category of 'Feeling Expressing', “It's everything” was in the category of 'Consumer Needs or Goals', “My hair is so damaged, what can I do?” was in the category of 'Consumer Problem', “VCT”、”attraction” were the examples of 'Product Features and Benefits', and songs were in the category of 'Atmosphere' because they created a particular atmosphere for the ads. Those that could not be categorized in these five categories were in the category of 'others'. 'Product Features and Benefits' was the most common purposes when used foreign languages in TV commercial ads. (Table 4)

Table 4: The Natures of Foreign Languages Used in TV Commercial ads

	Sample (N)	Percentage (%)
Feeling Expressing	6	18
Consumer Needs or Goals	4	12
Consumer Problems	1	3
Product Features and Benefits	14	42
Atmosphere	3	9
Others.	5	15

#### 5. Subtitle or Not

Some foreign language ads had subtitles on the screen, but some are not. (Table 5) Usually, if the foreign languages were more complex or longer, there were subtitles on the screen. But interesting, there were no subtitles for Korean and Japanese ads in that few people in Taiwan could read Korean and Japanese. Korean and Japanese are not native, official or second language learned in Taiwanese school.

Table 5: The Natures of Foreign Languages Used in TV Commercial ads

	Sample (N)	Percentage (%)
With Subtitle	14	42
Without Subtitle	19	58

#### 6. Performer

The nationality or race of the performer did not always match with the language. Three of the total thirty-two foreign language ads were even without any performers. In twenty-four English language ads, 46 percent of them chose westerners to be the performers. For Japanese or Korean language ads, they all chose Asian people to be the performer. French language TV commercial ad also chose westerners as the performer in the purpose of consistency. (Table 6)

Table 6: The Nationality or Race of The Performers

	Sample(N)	Percentage(%)
English		
Asian-American born Chinese (famous singers)	2	8
Asian-Taiwanese (spoke Chinese in ads or TV stars)	2	8
Westerner (international Movie Star)	2	8
Westerner (unfamiliar actors)	9	38
Asian-Korean (famous Korean TV star)	1	4
Asian (unfamiliar actors; hard to know nationality)	5	21
No Spokesman	3	13

	Sample (N)	Percentage(%)
Japanese		
Asian-Japanese	1	13
Asian-Korean (famous Korean TV star)	1	13
Asian (unfamiliar actors; hard to know their nationality)	5	63
Asian-Taiwanese (One Taiwanese TV stars who had ever been to Japan to create her acting career)	1	13

	Sample (N)	Percentage(%)
Korean		
Asian (unfamiliar actors; hard to know their nationality)	1	50
Asian-Taiwanese (One Taiwanese TV stars)	1	50

	Sample (N)	Percentage(%)
French		
Westerner (unfamiliar actors; hard to know their nationality)	1	100

Note: Some commercial ads contained performers with different nationality.

## 7. The Sites of The Commercial Ads

There was only one ad showing English signboards in the commercial and which seemed to be made in foreign country. The sites of two Ads were in Taiwan. One was an ad for a car, and the other was Japanese style, but Taiwan favor food. The others twenty-nine ads were very hard to distinguish because most of them were either indoor scenes or didn't have any signal which we can judge by.

Table 7: The Sites of ads in TV Commercial ads

	Sample (N)	Percentage (%)
Taiwan	2	6
Obviously in foreign countries	1	3
N/A	29	91

### 8. Product categories

Most of the product categories in these foreign language ads belong to low involvement products, such as motorcycle, Beverage, Alcohol, Bra, Makeup, shampoo , ...etc. Only car and motorcycle belong to high involvement products.

Table 8: The Product Categories in TV Commercial ads

	Sample(N)	Percentage(%)
High Involvement product	8	25
Low Involvement Product	24	75

### DISCUSSIONS

Even though foreign languages may create the country of origin image effects for the products when appear on TV commercial ads, customers' attitude and comprehension to the ads might be influenced. One Dutch research had study the attitude and comprehension effect on 40 Dutch foreign language (English) TV commercial ads and found all subjects display a rather negative attitude toward the English used in the TV commercial ads and only 36 percent are able to give a rough indication of the meaning of the English used. It is striking that when the English text was not just spoken but was also shown on the screen, 50 percent of the subjects interpreted it correctly; when the text was not shown, only 22 percent gave a correct indication of its meaning. (Gerritsen et al., 2000)

This study is a content analysis about Taiwan foreign language commercial ads from 8 aspects' view. There is no research studying the attitude and comprehension toward Taiwan foreign language commercial ads. Future research can study the attitude and comprehension effect on Taiwan foreign language TV commercial ads and future researches can also study the effects between these 8 aspects with attitude, comprehension, and also memory toward any kind of foreign language commercial ads.

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**APPENDIX**  
**32 TV COMMERCIAL ADS COLLECTED FOR THIS STUDY**

Case No.	Product Category	Brand Name	Oral Language	Type	Subtitle on the screen
1	Alcohol	ROYAL SALUTE	English	Voice	No
2	Bath /Shower Foam	LUX Spa Moist	English	Voice	No
3	Beverage	Demi Soda	Korean	Voice	No
4	Beverage	Yu Cha Yuan	Japanese	Voice	Yes
5	Beverage	SUPER SUPUA	English	Song	No
6	Biscuit	Doritos	English	Voice	Yes
7	Bra	Triumph Dangerous	English	Voice	Yes
8	Car	Toyota VIOS	English	Voice+ Character	No
9	Car	Toyota VIOS	English	Voice+ Character	No
10	Car	Nissan Senta M1	English	Voice+ Character	No
11	Car	Nissan	Japanese +English	Voice	No
12	Car	Hyundai Matrix	English	Song	No
13	Car	Volkswagen	English	Voice	Yes
14	Car	Toyota Altis	English	Voice+ Character	No
15	Cash card	Comos Bank George &Mary Card	English	Voice+ Character	No
15	Cash card	Comos Bank George &Mary Card	English	Voice+ Character	No
16	Chocolate	FERRERO ROCHER	English	Song	No
17	Cleanser	Blorè Facial Wash	Japanese	Character	No
18	Cosmetics	DHC	Japanese+ English	Voice+ Character	Partly
19	Cosmetics	IA-15 I'acota	France	Voice	Yes

<b>Proportion of Appearance</b>	<b>Nature of the foreign language</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Style</b>	<b>Nationality or Race of The Performers</b>	<b>Case No.</b>
Partly	Feeling Express	N/A	Word	Westerner	1
Partly	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence	Westerner (International Movie Star)	2
Partly	Others	N/A	Word	Taiwanese (TV Star) +Asian	3
Almost	Feeling Express	N/A	Sentence	Taiwanese (TV Stars)	4
Partly	Atmosphere	N/A	Song	Asian	5
Completely	Others	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence	American Born Chinese(singer)	6
Almost	Others	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence	Westerner	7
Almost	Needs/Goals	N/A	Brand Name +Slogan	Westerner	8
Almost	Needs/Goals; Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence+Phrase	No	9
Almost	Needs/Goals	N/A	Brand Name +Slogan	No	10
Japanese-Almost English-partly (Brand Name)	Feeling Express	Taiwan	Brand Name+Word	Asian	11
Partly	Atmosphere	Foreign	Brand Name +Song+Phrase	Asian	12
Completely	Needs/Goals	N/A	Sentence	Westerner	13
Completely	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Phase+Slogan	Westerner	14
Partly	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Phrase	Taiwanese (Singers)	15
Partly	Atmosphere	N/A	Song	Asian	16
Partly	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Word	Asian	17
Japanese-Almost English-Partly (Brand Name)	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Word+Sentence	Korean	18
Completely	Others	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence	Westerner	19

<b>Case No.</b>	<b>Product Category</b>	<b>Brand Name</b>	<b>Oral Language</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Subtitle on the screen</b>
20	eyes glasses	SOLA	English	Voice	Yes
21	Food	Guan Dong Zhu	Japanese	Voice	Yes
22	Food	7-11 Strawberry Season	Japanese	Character	No
23	Internet Game	STARGATE ON LINE	English	Voice	No
24	Internet service	Hinet	English	Voice	Yes
25	Jewelry	EMPHASIS	English	Character	No
26	Jewelry	D&D Jewelry	English	Voice	Yes
27	Medical Candy	Long Jiao San の のと 飴	Japanese	Voice	Yes
28	Motorcycle	KIMCO SR125	English	Voice	Yes
29	Perfume	Lancome	English	Voice	No
30	Shampoo	LUX	English	Voice	Yes
31	Shampoo	PANETNE	Japanese	Voice	Yes
32	Shampoo	SASSOON	English	Voice	No

<b>Proportion of Appearance</b>	<b>Nature of the foreign language</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Style</b>	<b>Nationality or Race of The Performers</b>	<b>Case No.</b>
Almost	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence	Westerner	20
Almost	Feeling Express	Taiwan	Sentence	Asian	21
Partly	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Word	Asian	22
Partly	Feeling Express	N/A	Word	No	23
Completely	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Sentence	American born Chinese(singer)	24
Partly	Feeling Express	N/A	Sentence	Taiwanese	25
Partly	Others	N/A	Brand Name +Phrase	Asian	26
Completely	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Sentence	Asian	27
Completely	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence	Westerner	28
Completely	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Brand Name +Word	Westerner	29
Partly	Consumer Problem	N/A	Brand Name +Sentence	Westerner (International Movie Star)	30
Completely	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Sentence	Japanese	31
Partly	Product Features and Benefits	N/A	Sentence	Westerner	32

