

Acculturation Effects on Consumers' Attitudes Toward English or Spanish Language TV Commercials: The Moderating Role of Bilingualism

John M. Burton, M.A.
The Laster Group

Kenneth C. C. Yang, Ph.D.
[Corresponding Author]
The University of Texas at El Paso
Email: cyang@utep.edu

Abstract

The growth of the U.S. Hispanic population and its purchasing power over the past twenty years continues to be monitored closely by corporate interests anxious to gain market share and brand loyalty of this important ethnic segment. However, will Hispanic and non-Hispanic consumers respond differently to language used in advertising? This study focused on the historically dominant mass medium of television and explored whether acculturation theory and its sub-dimensions account for consumers' attitudes toward Spanish and English language television commercials. Our empirical results found that ethnic identity as an acculturation sub-dimension did not predict consumers' attitudes toward language in television commercials. However, language use and preference as an acculturation sub-dimension did predict consumers' positive and favorable attitudes toward Spanish language television commercials. The moderating role of bilingualism, however, was not found to be statistically significant. The empirical results imply that, contradictory to what advertisers may speculate, ethnic identity as a segmentation variable may not predict how consumers will respond to television commercials.

Keywords: Acculturation, Language Use and Preference, Ethnic Identity, Attitude toward Ad Language, Bilingualism

Introduction

Since Spanish-language television began its rise to viability in the United States in the mid-1970's and 1980's (Albarran, 2009; La Ferle & Lee, 2005; Strategy Research Corporation, 1991; Yankelovich, Skelly & White, Inc., 1981), its competitive battle

against the well-established English-language networks for a larger share of advertising revenue has been primarily waged over the fastest-growing segment of the Hispanic population – the bilinguals. Concurrent with advertising researchers cited above, the Spanish-language networks and affiliates have often claimed that English-only audiences are diminishing rapidly in many markets and are being replaced by bilingual Hispanics through more rapid acculturation (Morgan, 2011; Pardo & Dreas, 2011). Similarly, qualitative academic research also supports these arguments that the growing number of bilinguals and Spanish-dominant Hispanics are worthy of advertiser interest due to increased buying power, family size, and more active consumer behaviors (La Ferle & Lee, 2005; Pew Hispanic Center, 2003; Roslow & Nicolls, 1996; Scarborough Research, 2000-2011). Recent industry data gathered by Kantar Media also supports the growing importance of Spanish language television media, with Spanish language ad spending increasing 13.5% from January to March, showing a consecutive seven-quarter growth in double digits (Sebastian, 2013).

Many advertisers and advertising agencies fuel the belief that the optimum way to effectively reach Hispanics is in Spanish (Noriega & Blair, 2008; Strategy Research Corporation, 1991; Subervi & Eusebio, 2005; Ueltschy & Krampf, 1997). However, as the body of research on Hispanic consumers has increased, many now contend that this view is an oversimplification, claiming the best choice of language and models depends on the target audience's level of acculturation (Lebrón, 2002). Recent immigrants, or those considered to be low in acculturation, may respond more comfortably to advertising messages in their native language. On the other hand, subsequent generations and those who move from low to high acculturation through accumulated exposure to the host culture may prefer to use the host language.

The debate over advertising language preference of bilingual Hispanics has grown in proportion to the growing influence of Hispanic consumers both in numbers and in economic influence

throughout the U.S. Our research attempts to add some new perspective to the discussion by exploring the relationship between acculturation, language use and preference, and attitudes toward English or Spanish language television commercials. Level of bilingualism among the respondents was also explored to test its moderating effect on the relationships between acculturation and advertising language preference.

Literature Review

Applying Acculturation Theory to Advertising Research

In consumer behavior literature, acculturation is often defined as “a process by which an individual raised in one culture acquires through first-hand experiences the consumption-related values, behavior and customs of another culture” (Khairullah, 1995, cited in Ueltschy & Krampf, 1997, p.89). However, acculturation involves more than simply becoming knowledgeable of the language, norms, and values of the new culture; the process can involve a fundamental change which includes relearning the meaning of symbols, readjusting to a new value system, and letting go old beliefs, customs and behaviors (Burnam, Telles, Karno, Hough, & Escobar, 1987). Consumers who transit from monolingual Spanish to bilingualism present a unique challenge to better understand the acculturation effect on advertising language preference. Previous advertising studies have explored the impact of the acculturation process on language preference and advertising effectiveness in radio (Newton, 1986) and print (Dolinsky, 1984; Dolinsky & Feinberg, 1986; Lebrón, 2002), but language preference in the consumption of television commercials has often been ignored.

Media deregulation in the 1980s led to changes in the media landscape in the United States (Fellow, 2012; Musser, 2003). New broadcast and cable channels (such as Fox Television Network, CNN, MTV, etc.) gave viewers more options and also enabled the industry to provide segmented and targeted media contents. The changing social milieu has encouraged broadcasters to better understand different viewer segments (Musser, 2003). Previous research has presented numerous perspectives to explain why language can make a difference in the effectiveness of an advertising message targeting ethnic minorities. Feinberg (1988), for example, used slide screen media with a sample of bilingual college students to suggest that Hispanics paid more attention to ads in Spanish than in English, preferred ads in Spanish over English, and had better recall of ads in Spanish than in English. Also, the perception of linguistic similarities relies on the level of acculturation among Hispanic consumers (Deshpande, Hoyer, & Donthu, 1986; Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991) and acculturation is often employed to examine the perception of linguistic similarities and the outcomes on advertising effectiveness. Guernica and Kasperuk (1982) found that, in general, those Hispanic participants considered to be of lower acculturation (older,

less affluent and less educated) were more likely to watch Spanish-language television than those of higher acculturation. O’Guinn, Faber, and Meyer (1985) surveyed Mexican-Americans in San Antonio on preference for Spanish-language TV over English-language TV and their discriminant analysis of multiple demographic characteristics further suggested that less acculturated Hispanics preferred Spanish-language television, as well as Spanish-language radio, movies and print media.

Based on previous literature regarding the effects of acculturation and its sub-dimensions on multicultural consumer behaviors, our study selected two acculturation variables to develop research questions.

Language Use and Preference as an Independent Variable

Language is an integral concept in acculturation theory and the most commonly used variable in multi-dimensional measures that assess consumers’ acculturation levels (Burnam et al., 1987; Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995; Ueltschy & Krampf, 1997). As a sub-dimension of acculturation in commonly used acculturation scales (such as Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans/ARSMMA and The Los Angeles Epidemiologic Catchment Area/LAECA Acculturation Scale), *language use and preference* has been employed by a number of researchers as a measure of advertising effectiveness. Conceptually defined, language use is the verbal or written form of language employed in different communicative interactions and language preference is an individual’s simple choice to speak or write a particular language in different communicative interactions. Together, they help to define an individual’s level of language acculturation as a dimension of the overarching acculturation process.

Previous studies have espoused language as the most common indicator of acculturation. Using a composite acculturation index (high, medium/bicultural, or low), Ueltschy and Krampf (1997) tested, among 501 Mexican American subjects, the relationships between the levels of acculturation, positive attitudes toward print advertisements, and average recall of the ads when presented in English or Spanish with Hispanic models or characters. Using the 26-item LAECA Acculturation Scale by Burnam et al. (1987), their study found that marketers should advertise in English to highly acculturated Mexican Americans and use Hispanic or Anglo models. Hispanic Americans with lower acculturation levels can be reached more effectively by print advertisements written in Spanish and using Anglo models. Bicultural/bilingual Mexican Americans have the most positive attitude toward print ads written in English and using Anglo models, but have highest ad recall when the ads are written in English and use Hispanic models. This and other studies have demonstrated language use and preference as an important predictor of advertising effectiveness.

Ethnic Identity as an Independent Variable

Ethnic identity refers to the positive identification with indigenous cultural roots and with the use of the native tongue (Reich, Ramos, & Jaipal, 2000) and represents the degree to which one feels connected to an ethnic group (Phinney, 1989). Ethnic identity has been explored along with language use and preference as the most pertinent of “other dimensions of the acculturation process” (Ruggiero & Yang, 2005, p.2). In another exploration of ethnic identity as a significant predictor of media preference, Villarreal and Peterson (2008) found that across the media investigated – television, radio, newspapers and magazines – different sub-groups of the Hispanic population tended to generally engage the media in both English and Spanish.

Attitude toward Ad Language as a Dependent Variable

Attitude toward the ad language has been defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to the language used. In this study, we specifically focused on attitude toward language in television commercials. Citing literature dating back to 1929, Silk and Vavra (1974) explored affective reactions or ratings of the “likeability” of advertising materials evoked by exposure to an advertising message (p. 157). We adapted Wells’ (1964) 12-item emotional quotient scale to measure an ad’s affective appeal using descriptive statements such as “This ad is very appealing to me,” “I dislike this ad” and “This ad leaves me cold.”

On the basis of the acculturation literature that found a close relationship between acculturation and affective reactions to language used in television commercials, we proposed the following research questions:

RQ1: Does acculturation affect consumers’ attitude toward language in TV commercials?

RQ1-1: Does language use and preference as an acculturation dimension affect the attitude toward language in TV commercials?

RQ1-2: Does ethnic identity as an acculturation dimension affect the attitude toward language in TV commercials?

Bilingualism as a Moderating Variable

Early communication studies on acculturation often used demographics of age, gender, education and household income, along with a variety of acculturation indicators such as years of residency, country of origin, and language preference for multiple media, to explain the relationship between acculturation and media language preference (Dunn, 1975; Guernica & Kasperuk, 1982). Bilingualism has been previously defined as the comfortable use of both Spanish and English in the communicative activities of one’s normal daily life (Barea, Torrico, Lepe, Garzon, Lolorente, & Dietz, 2010). In the present study, we

extended their definition to refer to *bilingualism* as a tendency for an individual to choose to use either Spanish or English or both in different social settings and communicative interactions during the course of any given day. On the basis of the literature review, we proposed the following research questions:

RQ2: Does bilingualism affect the relationship between acculturation and the attitude toward language in TV commercials?

RQ2-1: Does bilingualism affect the relationship between language use and preference as an acculturation dimension and the attitude toward language in TV commercials?

RQ2-2: Does bilingualism affect the relationship between ethnic identity as an acculturation dimension and the attitude toward language in TV commercials?

Methodology

Our study employed a questionnaire survey to recruit 351 participants from a large public university in the Southwestern United States located on the Texas – Mexico border. Human subjects approval was obtained from the university. The IRB-approved questionnaires were distributed in several classes to ensure quick data collection. The survey questionnaire included standard human subject protection instructions, a brief statement of study purposes, explanation of the research, an invitation to participate, and an incentive to assist with snowballing distribution to other students in return for a chance to receive a \$50 gift card from a local electronics retailer.

Instrumentation

Acculturation sub-dimension scales were adapted from ARSMA, LAECA, and ARSMA-II. Seven questions measured *language use and preference* (3-point nominal scale – Both, English, or Spanish). Participants were instructed to select one option from the question that measured *ethnic identity* (5-point nominal scale – Hispanic or Latina/o, White or Anglo, Black, Asian, or Other). *Attitude toward language in television commercials* (or *attitude toward ad language in television commercials*) was measured by 5-point Likert scales anchored on *Strongly Disagree* and *Strongly Agree*. Examples of the questions include “In general, I really like TV commercials in English/Spanish,” “In general, I find TV commercials in English/Spanish to be good,” and “In general, I truly enjoy TV commercials in Spanish.” Factor analysis was conducted using Principal Component Analysis to extract two common factors: *Attitude toward English language television commercials* ($\alpha=0.88$) and *Attitude toward Spanish language television commercials* ($\alpha=0.93$). *Bilingualism* was measured by five language items indicating respondents’ preference for language at home, at work/school, for reading, writing, and for watching television (3-point nominal scale – Both, English, or Spanish).

Pretesting of the questionnaire was conducted among fourteen university graduate students to refine the instrument for ease of use and clarity.

Sampling Plan and Characteristics

A total of 379 surveys were distributed and 351 surveys were returned at the end of the 9-day collection period in 2012. A total of 312 valid surveys were entered into SPSS data analysis software. Average age of the sample was 25 and gender division was 42% male (N=131) and 58% female (N=180). Eighteen students (5.8%) were between 18 and 19 years old, while 243 students were between 20 and 29 years old (78.1%). Fifty of them were above 30 years old. 16% of the sample (N=50) self-described as first generation in the U.S. and the largest percentage (54%) indicated second generation (N=169).

Findings

Preliminary Data Manipulations

The study examined the relationship between *language use and preference*, *ethnic identity*, and *attitude toward ad language (in television commercials)*. Preliminary data manipulations were required to create composite scores from multi-item scales for acculturation variables of *language use and preference* and *ethnic identity*, and a moderating variable of *bilingualism* in order to test these relationships.

Derived from ARSMA-II (Cuellar et al., 1995) and Ruggiero and Yang (2005), a composite mean from seven *language use and preference* items was computed to form a new language variable, *language use and preference* (Mean=0.97, SD=0.31). The variable was then used to median split (Median=0.95) the sample into 2 groups: English dominant (means ranging from 0 to .95) and Spanish-dominant (means ranging from .96 to 2) to test effects on the dependent variables.

Participants were originally asked to self-identify their own ethnic identity (Hispanic/Latino, White/Anglo, Black, Asian, or Other). The ethnic identity item was then recoded to collapse some categories in order to create an *Ethnic Identity Index*. *Ethnic identity* was recoded into two levels of "Hispanic/Latino" and "Non-Hispanic/Latino." As expected for the sample, a high majority (93%) self-identified as Hispanic/Latino and 7% identified as non-Hispanic/Latino.

Bilingualism was computed to produce a composite score by

Table 1: MANOVA Model

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	Observed Power
Ethnic Identity (Hisp/Lat or non-Hisp/Lat)	Wilks' Lambda	1.00	0.60	2.00	306	.55	.15
Language Use and Preference	Wilks' Lambda	0.95	7.91	2.00	306	0.00***	.95
Language Use and Preference * Hisp/Lat or Non-Hisp/Lat	Wilks' Lambda	1.00	1.46	2.00	306	.23	.31

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Observed Power
Ethnic Identity (Hisp/Lat or Non-Hisp/Lat)	Attitude toward English Television Commercials	0.03	1	0.03	0.05	.83	.06
	Attitude toward Spanish Television Commercials	0.86	1	0.86	1.16	.28	.19
Language Use and Preference	Attitude toward English Television Commercials	0.24	1	0.24	0.36	.55	.09
	Attitude toward Spanish Television Commercials	11.47	1	11.47	15.53	.00***	.98
Language Use and Preference * Ethnic Identity (Hisp/Lat or Non-Hisp/Lat)	Attitude toward English Television Commercials	1.19	1	1.19	1.80	.18	.27
	Attitude toward Spanish Television Commercials	0.83	1	0.83	1.13	.29	.19

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

averaging five language scale items indicating respondents' preference for language at home, at work/school, for reading, writing, and for watching television (Mean=0.95, SD=0.38).

Acculturation Effects on Attitude toward Ad Language in TV Commercials

To examine the effects of two acculturation sub-dimensions (i.e., *language use and preference* and *ethnic identity*) on participants' attitude toward ad language in television commercials, MANOVA procedures were run. With correlated dependent variables, MANOVA was selected to run multiple tests on variance in two dependent variables simultaneously and to avoid Type I error. Results of the MANOVA found that Wilks' Lambda for *language use and preference* (Wilks' Lambda=1.46, F(2, 306)=7.91, p<.001)

Table 3: MANCOVA Model

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	Observed Power
Covariate Bilingualism	Wilks' Lambda	0.98	2.96	2	305	.053	.57
Main Effect Ethnic Identity (Hisp/Lat or non-Hisp/Lat)	Wilks' Lambda	1.00	0.24	2	305	.79	.01
Language Use and Preference	Wilks' Lambda	0.99	2.09	2	305	.13	.43
Interaction Effect Ethnic Identity (Hisp/Lat or non-Hisp/Lat) * Language Use and Preference	Wilks' Lambda	0.99	1.19	2	305	.31	.26

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4: ANCOVA Model

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Observed Power
Covariate Bilingualism	Attitude toward English Language Television Commercials	1.11	1	1.11	0.02	.90	.05
	Attitude toward Spanish Language Television Commercials	5.56	1	5.56	5.89	.02*	.68
Main Effect Ethnic Identity (Hisp/Lat or non-Hisp/Lat)	Attitude toward English Language Television Commercials	2.04	1	2.04	0.03	.86	.53
	Attitude toward Spanish Language Television Commercials	0.42	1	.42	.45	.50	.10
Language Use and Preference	Attitude toward English Language Television Commercials	1.23	1	1.23	1.85	.18	.27
	Attitude toward Spanish Language Television Commercials	2.07	1	2.07	2.20	.14	.32
Interaction Effect Ethnic Identity (Hisp/Lat or non-Hisp/Lat) * Language Use and Preference	Attitude toward English Language Television Commercials	1.58	1	1.58	2.38	.12	.34
	Attitude toward Spanish Language Television Commercials	2.77	1	2.27	0.03	.86	.05

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

significantly predicted the difference between English-language dominant and Spanish-language dominant groups in responses to the dependent variables. However, our empirical results showed no interaction effect on *attitude toward ad language in television commercials* (Wilks' Lambda=1.00, $F(2, 306)=1.46$, $p > .05$). Our study also showed no main effect of ethnic identity (Wilks' Lambda=0.95, $F(2, 306)=.60$, $p > .05$) (Refer to Table 1).

One-Way ANOVA demonstrated that *language use and preference* significantly predicts *Attitude toward English language television commercials* ($F=15.53$, $p < .001$), but not *attitude toward Spanish*

language television commercials ($F=0.36$, $p > .05$). Neither *ethnic identity* nor interaction effects of *language use and preference* and *ethnic identity* showed any significant effects on the dependent attitudinal variables. As a result, RQ1 was only partially supported (Refer to Table 2). We further examined the descriptive statistics and found that, in terms of *language use and preference*, no significant difference in attitude toward English television commercials was observed between English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Hispanics ($Mean_{English-Dominant}=4.01$ vs. $Mean_{Spanish-Dominant}=3.91$). However, a significant mean difference in attitude toward Spanish television commercials was observed ($Mean_{English-Dominant}=2.75$ vs. $Mean_{Spanish-Dominant}=3.70$). In other words, less acculturated Hispanics tend to have more positive attitudes toward Spanish language television commercials than more acculturated individuals (Refer to Table 2).

Moderating Effect of Bilingualism

MANCOVA was conducted to remove the influence of the covariate, *bilingualism*, on the relationship between *language use and preference*, *ethnic identity* and *attitude toward either English or Spanish language television commercials*. The results of the MANCOVA conducted on the two independent variables did not yield any significant main effects of *ethnic identity* (Wilks' Lambda=1.00, $F(2, 305)=0.24$, $p > .05$) and *language use and preference* (Wilks' Lambda=0.99, $F(2, 305)=2.09$, $p > 0.05$). The covariate, *bilingualism*, yielded no statistically significant result (Wilks' Lambda=0.98, $F(2, 305)=2.96$, $p > .05$). The interaction effect between *ethnic identity* and *language use and preference* was also not statistically significant (Wilks' Lambda=0.99, $F(2, 305)=1.19$, $p > .05$) (See Table 3).

At the uni-variate level, One-Way ANCOVA did not observe any statistically significant relationship between *language use and preference*, *ethnic identity*, and two dependent attitudinal variables. The interaction effect between *language use and preference* and *ethnic identity* was also not found to be significant. However, a significant relationship was found between *bilingualism* and *attitude toward Spanish language television commercials* ($F=5.56$, $p < .05$), but not between *bilingualism* and *attitude toward English language television commercials* ($F=1.11$, $p > .05$). Therefore, RQ2 was partially supported (Refer to Table 4).

Discussion and Conclusion

Acculturation and Attitude toward Ad Language

The study explores the relationship between *acculturation* and *attitude toward ad language in television commercials*. We examined if consumers' ethnic identity and language use and preference predict their attitudes toward ad language. We also explored if their bilingualism moderates the above relationship. As observed in our empirical data, we found that consumers' *language use and preference* as a sub-dimension of acculturation influences their attitude toward ad language in television commercials, and the effect is stronger in the heritage/Spanish language than in the host/English language. There is no significant difference in consumers' attitude toward English language television commercials between English- and Spanish-dominant groups, while a significant difference can be observed in the attitude of these groups toward Spanish language television commercials. The partial and limited support of our first research question suggests that the predictability of this acculturation variable, *language use and preference*, brings up both theoretical and practical implications that warrant further discussion.

First, *language use and preference*, commonly employed as a sub-dimension of acculturation, demonstrates consumers' level of acculturation in the host culture. English-dominant consumers are categorized as more acculturated than those whose dominant language remains Spanish. The presence of statistical significance and numerical difference in terms of attitude toward Spanish language television commercials between the more and the less acculturated groups suggests that advertisers cannot assume acculturated/English-dominant consumers will hold a more favorable attitude toward the English language television commercials. Instead, acculturated consumers whose dominant language is English are found to perceive Spanish language television commercials more favorably than Spanish-dominant consumers.

Our results confirmed recent debates and criticism on the "uni-directional acculturation school of thought" that assumes that immigrants to the U.S. would be assimilated into the American culture in every aspect of their lives (Ngo, 2008). Ngo (2008) alleged that "the monolithic view of culture..... refuses to examine the diversity within cultural groups in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation, ability and so forth." It is likely that the more acculturated consumers, in spite of their dominant use of English in their lives, maintain awareness of their heritage and feel more affinity toward television commercials produced in their heritage language.

Hispanic marketers have attempted to understand and apply this phenomenon to create more effective advertising campaigns. The accommodation theory helps explain the favorable

perceptions among Hispanic consumers when they feel that advertisers are willing to adjust their advertising campaigns to address the linguistic needs of their sub-culture (Koslow, Shamdasani, & Touchstone, 1994). In other words, in spite of their acculturation level as measured by *language use and preference*, Hispanic consumers are likely to be better targeted with Spanish language advertising because it demonstrates advertisers' effort to accommodate and is likely to lead to positive perceptions and feelings of both advertisers and their advertising campaigns. Among Hispanic consumers, perceptions of the advertiser's sensitivity to Hispanic culture are associated positively with their attitude toward Spanish advertisements (Koslow et al., 1994). Although some scholars (Platt & Weber, 1984) have warned that a sense of linguistic inferiority and insecurity among Hispanic consumers might emerge as a result of Spanish television commercials, our data from college students do not support this. For marketing communication professionals, *language use and preference* as a sub-dimension of acculturation is useful to understand how Hispanic consumers will respond to Spanish language television commercials.

Although *ethnic identity* is commonly used in advertising literature to predict consumer attitudes (Elias, Appiah, & Gong, 2011), this demographic variable is often found to generate inconclusive and non-significant outcomes. Our findings point to similar results that Hispanics' *ethnic identity* does not predict their *attitude toward language in television commercials*. In our research, we asked consumers to identify themselves as Hispanic or Latina/o, White or Anglo, Black, Asian, or Other. We later categorized participants into two categories (i.e., Hispanic/Latino vs. Non-Hispanic/Latino). Using consumers' self-identification to assess their acculturation level, we intended to examine the relationship between their acculturation and attitude toward ad language. Numerically, non-Hispanic/Latino consumers hold a more favorable attitude toward English language television commercials than their Hispanic/Latino counterparts; the pattern is reversed when it comes to their attitude toward Spanish language television commercials. Although the numerical variations seem to show a consistent and predictive trend that more acculturated consumers prefer English over Spanish language in television commercials, these differences do not generate statistically significant findings.

Our non-significant findings are likely to attribute to the conceptualization of this variable. Villarreal and Peterson (2008) argued that there was a difference between being Hispanic and possessing Hispanicness (Hispanic ethnicity) and that the difference between the two had important media preference and behavior implications. To address this important difference, scholars have developed revised instruments to better measure ethnic identity such as Phinney's (1992) Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure and Villarreal's (2004) Pan-Hispanic Familial Scale. These scales employed more refined categorization of the Hispanic identity to show various levels

of their acculturation. For example, Villarreal (2004) divided the sample into four acculturation groups: *A-Symbolic Hispanics* with relatively weak ethnic identity, *Symbolic Hispanics* with the strongest ethnic identity, *Strong Hispanics* with the second highest strength of ethnic identity, and *Weak Hispanics* with the weakest ethnic identity. Mean responses of the four ethnicity groups were related to 12 media preference and behavior items using both within-group and across-groups analysis. The results suggested that across the media investigated – television, radio, newspapers and magazines – the four ethnic groups tended to generally use media in both English and Spanish. Although the less acculturated *Strong Hispanics* group showed a slightly greater preference for Spanish-language media than the other groups, there was no strong preference by any one group for being exposed to only English-language or Spanish-language media contents. Indeed, all groups tended to watch more English-language television which proved counter to previous findings of O’Guinn et al. (1985) and others who reported that Spanish-language preferred Hispanics only tend to watch Spanish-language television. With no effect of ethnic identity on attitude toward ad language in television commercials, our study more closely aligns with Villarreal and Peterson (2008) who found no strong preference by any one ethnic acculturation group for being exposed to only English-language or Spanish-language media contents. The contradiction of findings in one study and complementary support of findings in another appear to be another example of the often conflicting nature of the ethnic identity variable as a sub-dimension of acculturation.

The Moderating Role of Bilingualism

The MANCOVA showed no significant moderating effect of *bilingualism* on relationship between either *language use and preference* or *ethnic identity* as independent variables and the dependent variables of *attitude toward ad language in television commercials* (The p-value is at .53). Measurement of *bilingualism* as a moderating variable was accomplished by averaging consumers’ language use at various settings and situations. Approximately 75% of respondents indicated that they used English or both English and Spanish in their daily communicative activities, indicating a high degree of *bilingualism* in the Hispanic sample. Therefore, treating bilingualism as a covariate in the MANCOVA enabled the researchers to assess if the relationship between two acculturation variables and the dependent attitudinal variables remain statistically significant when the effect of covariate is adjusted and removed from the model.

Despite the non-significant result in the MANCOVA, the ANCOVA showed bilingualism significantly predicted consumers’ attitude toward Spanish language in television commercials. Consumers who categorize themselves as Spanish-only or bilingual hold more favorable attitude toward Spanish in television commercials, when compared with those who are English-only. Our findings are particularly useful in

understanding the behaviors of Hispanic consumers who increasingly become bilingual and use both English and Spanish interchangeably. According to Google, over 30% of online media consumption is done by audiences who use English and Spanish interchangeably (Sagin, 2013). With bilingual and Spanish-speaking consumers currently controlling \$1 trillion in spending power in the United States, a figure expected to grow by 42% by 2017 (Sagin, 2013), it is clearly important to better understand the moderating role of bilingualism.

The effect of bilingualism has attracted the attention of advertising scholars to examine if it will influence the processing of advertising to better persuade the audience. For example, Roslow and Nicholls (1996) presented one of the most commercially relevant quantitative studies of bilingual processing of television commercials broadcast in Spanish and English. They focused on purchase intent as the key variable and established an “effectiveness differential” to index the persuasiveness of commercial messages in Spanish and English. Their study found that ads in Spanish showed greater increases in persuasion means for Spanish-dominant Hispanics and that, even among bilinguals, Spanish ads were notably more persuasive than English ads for the same brands.

We speculate that the absence of moderating effect by *bilingualism* in our study may be a result of the lack of respondents’ actual exposure to an ad or ads which was an integral part of the studies cited above. In other words, we asked about their general attitude toward language in television commercials, rather than their reactions toward a specific television commercial. While *language use and preference* was shown to have an effect on consumers’ attitude toward language in TV commercials, it encourages the possibility for an experimental study to be conducted in the future. It is likely, therefore, that the study’s *bilingualism* index did not present enough dimensions of the variable to register a significant effect on the attitudinal variables.

Theoretical Implications

Drawing its measure of acculturation variables from a revised composite of three complementary scales, ARSMA (Cuellar et al., 1980), LAECA (Burnam et al., 1987) and ARSMA-II (Cuellar et al., 1995), the study provides support for previous research on acculturation as a multidimensional concept encompassing behavioral, affective and cognitive dimensions. The study builds on the legacy of earlier research on acculturation variables and scales as measures of media language preference, advertising effectiveness, and other dimensions of multicultural marketing, and extensive study of demographics as moderators of those measures.

Providing additional theoretical implications, Jun, Gentry, Ball, and Gonzalez-Molina (1994) investigated the acculturation processes of Hispanic Americans, finding that acculturation

rates appeared to be very sensitive to how the acculturation construct was measured. If the common approach of using a language usage measure was taken, there was evidence for assimilation, as language usage appears to improve in a linear fashion over time. On the other hand, a very different pattern of results was found when cultural identity was used to measure acculturation. The acculturation process starts from the heritage culture but does not proceed linearly to the host culture, as it may progress rapidly under some circumstances, or it may move backward at any time during the process.

Oberg (1960) and Penaloza (1989) presented a more cyclical process, in which the immigrant is initially fascinated by the host culture (the honeymoon stage) and then experiences a rejection stage as he/she finds that the new culture may not be accepting or that he/she does not like several aspects of the new culture. Eventually there is a tolerance stage, followed by an integration stage. The honeymoon stage and the rejection stage may occur more than once until the person (or, if the process takes generations, the person's family) is ultimately integrated into the host culture. These interpretations may help us understand why *language use and preference* in our study showed a significant effect on *attitude toward language in television commercials*, but *ethnic identity* did not. The university student sample may have been at different stages or cycles of the acculturation process, which has been shown to be present when *ethnic identity* is used as a measure of acculturation. Furthermore, the U.S.-Mexico border region presents a unique case in studying the acculturation process because of its geographical proximity to Mexico and the minority majority environment. These environmental factors whereby Hispanic consumers constitute the majority ethnicity in the study population and the Spanish language is more widely-used compared with other regions of the U.S., warrants further exploration of these variables in our predictive model.

Managerial Implications

For marketing communication professionals, our study intends to encourage a better understanding of how to create more effective television advertising campaigns directed at Hispanics. As media technologies and consumer choices change at a rapid pace, multicultural marketers must have insights into the array of multidimensional factors affecting consumer and media use behaviors. Effective advertising messages to Hispanics would likely be enhanced by an understanding of what factors are most predictive of consumers' attitudes toward advertised brands. And while not specifically included in the present study, use of advertising models and characters, imagery, music, symbols and other creative advertising elements that produce both cognitive and affective responses should also be considered in future studies.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study surveyed a university student population, using a convenience, non-probability sampling method. Student populations have been shown to have different characteristics than a non-student population, including demographics, language use in different settings, media use and preference, and generational proximity defined by similar age (Dolinsky, 1984; Dolinsky & Feinberg, 1986). As such, age as a moderating variable was not included in the study. University students in general are from higher socio-economic strata and U.S. university classes generally use English as the dominant instructional language. Future research should expand beyond the student population to produce a broader range of characteristics that are more representative of the U.S. Hispanic television audience, and provide a more robust and diverse sampling of age and other demographics such as generation in the host culture, number and proportion of years in the host culture, geographical location, and country of origin. Also, the study was conducted on a campus with predominantly Hispanic students. To avoid the lack of representation of the non-Hispanic population and subsequent effects on statistical results, future research should also collect data on a campus with a predominantly non-Hispanic population to generate equal and balanced sample sizes.

Previous acculturation research has used a wide variety of measures with which to explore the multidimensional nature of the topic. In this study, we treated ethnic identity as a nominal scale. However, as a consumer's own ethnic identity is fluid and contingent upon situations such as the concept of *situational latinidad* (Subervi & Rios, 2005), future research should use other types of scales to better assess the effects of this important variable. Future research using additional measures of generation, ethnic interaction, country of origin, language competency and cultural behaviors would also add more dimensions to the analysis. If additional demographic variables (e.g., social class, education attainment, type of education received, employment type, socioeconomic status, and age) are included, it will provide a wider array of variables with which to explore possible interactions and provide further guidance to researchers and marketing professionals.

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