
The Effect of Using English in Persian Advertisements on Iranian Target Groups

¹ A. R. Jalilifar

Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics

ID: 1027

² R. Shokrollahi

Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch

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Abstract

The present study examined the effects of using English in products advertisements published in magazines in Iran on their Persian-speaking target audiences. 180 respondents, classified based on their gender and education, participated in this study. Respondents' perceptions of the product/brand image and attitudes towards the advertisements, their purchasing intention, and degrees of their comprehension of the English texts used in the advertisements were measured through a written questionnaire, which included ten advertisements containing English phrases or sentences. Findings revealed that the use of English in Persian advertisements positively affects Iranian target groups. However, in terms of their attitudes towards the product/brand and towards the advertisement and their purchasing intentions, this had more positive effects on Iranian women than men, on Iranian non-English students than English students, and finally, on Iranian MA and MS students than Iranians having a high-school diploma, BA or BS respectively. The findings of this study confirm the claims in the literature about the positive effects of using English in international advertising because of its symbolic value and its function as a prestige language evoking positive connotations regarding the brand. The results of this study are useful for ESP courses of business and marketing.

Keywords: advertisement, (Non)-English majoring students, purchasing intention, perceived comprehension

1. Introduction

With continuing expansion of markets, businesses have to communicate with a growing number of national and international stakeholders. One of the largest and the most important stakeholder groups is consumers. In order to communicate with consumers, businesses use advertising as an important tool for announcing product launches, price promotions, or product availability (Hornikx, Meurs & Boer, 2010). Kotler and Keller (2012) describe advertising as a form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. Thus, advertising is a way to inform, persuade, remind or reinforce intended audiences to do something. In order to achieve these goals, advertising must be developed well so that the consumers respond to it as expected by the advertiser.

The aim of advertising is to create awareness of the product and services for the consumers in order to make purchase decisions (Katke, 2007). Leung (2010) suggests that a good advertisement is the one which increases consumers' willingness toward a particular product. Because of the limitations of resources, space, and time, advertising is a very creative and innovative medium in terms of both the usage of language and images (Leung,

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

Chabahar Maritime University
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2010). Thus, as an effective strategy, advertising agencies mix foreign languages into domestic language for the very specific purpose of selling.

Several countries around the world have bilingual populations. Many of these populations are fluent in a foreign language (typically English) as well as at least one local or native language. Therefore, the advertisements in these countries could be in either one of the primary language or could have a bilingual format containing a mixture of the two languages (a combination of English and native or local language) (Krishna & Ahluwalia, 2008). Using English for the purpose of advertising in countries where it is not spoken as an official language is very widespread around the world (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft, et al., 2007).

There are many studies that have demonstrated the frequent use of English in advertising published in non-English speaking countries (e.g., Bhatia, 1992; Piller, 2000). Advertising campaigns that are part of global advertising are partly or completely in English. This is a strategy recommended by marketing experts for saving translation, adaptation, and registration costs (Mooij, 1994). In the case of globally used campaigns, advertisers choose English for several reasons. First of all, English is seen as a global language (Crystal, 2003). Second, the United States has a very crucial role in the advertising world. Third, advertisers believe everyone, in English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language countries, understands English anyway (Mowlana, 1986). Martin (2002, p. 375) suggests that the use of English in international advertising indicates modernity, prestige and technological superiority of the advertised product. Therefore, such attributions could lead to more positive attitudes to the product advertised and behavioral intentions such as purchasing intention in the target groups. Furthermore, she suggests that the proportion of English in a given advertisement may be an important factor in determining its socio-psychological effect.

In investigating the frequency of using English in product advertisements published in the glossy magazine *Elle* in Dutch-speaking Belgium, French-speaking Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain, Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft, et al. (2007) found that 67% of advertisements in the corpus contained one or more English words (next to the local language). The results showed that English was especially used for advertising products that can be associated with modernity. On the contrary, the role of language choice in advertising to bilingual populations was examined in global markets (Krishna and Ahluwalia, 2008). The results suggested that different languages vary in their advertising effectiveness for different types of products (luxuries vs. necessities). They argued that language choice for advertisements is an important decision for multinational corporations and also that such corporations cannot blindly mimic local companies in this choice.

Leung (2010) analyzed code-mixed print advertisements produced in Hong Kong between 2008 and 2009. The findings of this study showed that the mixing of English, Japanese, and vernacular Cantonese in advertising, being pretty much the norm, is likely to be limited to a few words despite being widespread. Mixing Japanese, though not entirely new, is far less popular than English. Japanese Kanji mainly mixes in advertisements featuring Japanese food or cosmetics in order to achieve positive country-of-origin effects or any trendy products. Vernacular Cantonese was the least code-mixed elements spotted in Hong Kong advertisements. It was concluded that the code-mixing practices in advertisement reflect the relative importance of the mixed languages in Hong Kong society and the use of these codes is complementary to the dominant language to get across the message.

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

Besides, the findings of some empirical studies have showed that people appreciated easy-to-understand English slogans more than difficult-to-understand English slogans (Hornikx, Meurs & Boer, 2010). Unfortunately, despite various empirical studies that reveal positive attitude toward using English in advertisements, several other studies have found the relationship to be negative. For instance, an investigation showed that one-third of the commercials on Dutch television contain English words and phrases that are pronounced with a Dutch accent based on an American English model (Gerritsen, Korzilius, Meurs & Gijbers, 2000). The results indicated that all subjects had a rather negative attitude toward the English used in the commercials and that only 36 percent exactly comprehend the meaning of the English used.

Gerritsen, Nickerson, van den Brant, et al. (2007) investigated the assumed, positive effect of English used for the specific purpose of advertising aimed at non-native speakers of English. It was shown that the use of English instead of the local language generally does not result in differences in attitudes towards the product advertised or towards the advertisement.

Planken, Meurs and Radlinska (2010) also investigated the use of English in Polish advertising published in Polish women's magazines on their audience in a written questionnaire. The experiment rejected claims about the positive effects of using English in product advertising. Specifically with respect to educational level, Gerritsen, et al. (2000) and Smakman, et al. (2009) have argued that English in TV and radio commercials in the Netherlands was evaluated and comprehended differently by respondents with different levels of education. Furthermore, Gerritsen, et al. (2000) found that younger respondents appreciated English in TV commercials more and understood it better than older respondents.

Although, in the literature, there are studies that have shown that the use of English for specific purposes of international advertising is widespread (e.g., Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft, et al., 2007; Hsu, 2008), few researchers have focused on the role of language in the persuasion process for target groups (Krishna & Ahluwalia, 2008) and almost no study has considered the role of participants' educational major, levels of education, and gender as effective variables in studies on advertising. In Iran, English words, phrases, and sentences are also used in some advertisements published in newspapers and magazines for prestige, and they aim to persuade and encourage the society to buy the products. As English is used into print advertisements in Iran, it would be interesting to see the perlocutionary force of using English in such information-loaded and outcome-driven commercial advertisements, and to consider whether advertising in English is financially attractive. Regarding the importance of advertising in promoting and introducing merchandise and its effects on the intended target groups, the present study investigated the effects of the use of English in advertisements published in Iranian newspapers and magazines on Iranian target groups. It also investigated whether using English leaves different effects on different individuals. The following research questions stand out:

1. Does the use of English in product advertisements affect Iranian target group's attitudes towards the product/brand quality and towards the advertisement?
2. Does the use of English in product advertisements affect their intention to buy the product advertised?
3. Does the use of English in product advertisements affect their perceived and actual comprehension of the (textual content of the) advertisement?

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

4. Does the use of English in product advertisements affect Iranian males and females target groups differently?
5. Does the use of English in product advertisements affect Iranian English students and non-English students differently?
6. Does the use of English in product advertisements affect the Iranians with different levels of education (people with diploma, BA and BS students, and MA and MS students) differently?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Totally, 180 respondents participated in this study. As the focus of the study was a survey of males and females' views with different levels of education, the participants were classified three times. First, based on their gender, the respondents consisted of 90 males and 90 females. Second, according to their level of education, the total number of respondents consisted of 60 people having a high-school diploma, 60 BA or BS students (English and non-English majoring students), and 60 master's students (English and non-English majoring students). Finally, based on their educational major, the respondents were divided into two groups of 60 English majoring students and 60 non-English majoring students. Selection was made on the basis of simple random sampling technique. The sample was assumed to be representative of the population of each selected group, and because the population of each group was small, this kind of random sampling was assumed to be appropriate. Their age range fell between 20 and 40 and participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were met in person and requested to take part in the study, but no force was exerted on them to cooperate.

2.2 Materials

The materials in this study consisted of ten product advertisements published in three local Persian magazines in Iran published between January 2010 and January 2011: *Khanevadehe Sabz*, *Ashpazi Khanevadehe Sabz*, and *Ashpazbashi*. From the total corpus of the advertisements published in Persian newspapers and magazines, about 45 advertisements featured English texts. Ten advertisements were selected from these 45 advertisements because the products advertised in these advertisements were assumed to be attractive for all the respondents in the study (see Appendix for a selected advertisement). These advertisements revolved around selling goods and products including items like cookware, furniture, clothes, toothpaste and baby wet towel. They were selected, as they were embellished by English words, phrases or sentences and addressed a variety of socially visible merchandise because products are to be judged on subjective criteria such as uniqueness and prestige of the brand (Williams, 2002, pp. 253-254). Moreover, including a variety of advertisements ensured the results to be more generalizable than in a design involving only one or two advertisements as a stimulus (Jackson, 1992).

The rest of the advertisements were brushed aside for a number of reasons. First, some of the advertised products like cosmetics (such as lipstick) were not attractive for all the target groups of this study. Second, some advertisements introduced services rather than products. Since the study aimed at measuring the effect of the use of English in product advertisements on Iranian target groups' attitudes towards the product/brand quality and on their intention to buy the product advertised, those advertisements introducing services were

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

also dismissed. Third, because one of the purposes of the study was to measure the effect of using English on Iranian target groups' perception of product/brand image and one of the sub-variables was the 'modernity' of the product, advertisements on products such as ice-cream and noodle were also dispensed.

2.3 Instrumentation

A questionnaire, which was originally developed in English by Planken, van Meurse and Radlinska (2010), was used to measure the respondents' responses to the advertisements. In this questionnaire, the relevant data about the respondents' backgrounds were gathered using multiple choice items and open questions. Moreover, seven-point semantic differentials or statements, accompanied by seven-point Likert scales anchored by 'completely (dis)agree', were used to measure the dependent variables of the study: 'product/brand image', 'purchasing intention', 'attitude towards the advertisement' and 'perceived comprehension' of the English used in the ads. In addition, an open question was used as a measure of 'actual comprehension', in which respondents were asked to paraphrase the meaning of English phrases from the advertisements. In other words, they described the meaning of these phrases in their own words.

In this questionnaire, first, participants were asked to supply information about their age, highest completed education, current degree program and first language. For measuring product/ brand image, there were three sub-variables: 'modernity', 'quality', and 'price'. Altogether, six items were used to measure the respondents' perceptions with regard to product/ brand image. 'Modernity' of the product/ brand was measured on the basis of three items: 'trendy', 'innovative', and 'old-fashioned'. The reliability of this three-item scale was measured by computing Cronbach's alpha and this was found to be acceptable for all ten advertisements (Cronbach's alphas: 0.82). Therefore, composite scale score could be computed for use in subsequent statistical analysis. The second sub-variable of the product/ brand image was the perceived 'quality' of the product/ brand which was measured using two semantic differentials: 'good/bad' and 'high/low' (quality). The reliability of this scale was measured, and it also found to be good for all advertisements (Cronbach's alphas: 0.82). Thus, for this sub-variable, the composite scale score was also calculated for use in subsequent statistical analysis. A single item was used to measure the third sub-variable 'price'. By this item, the participants indicated on a seven-point Likert scale to what extent they perceived the product to be 'cheap/ expensive'.

Attitude towards the advertisement was measured using the statement "The text of this advertisement is . . ." and seven items (adjectives) including 'functional', 'irritating', 'attractive', 'arrogant', 'pompous', 'sympathetic' and 'ugly', and seven-point scales anchored by 'totally (dis)agree' (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van den Brandt, et al., 2007; Gerritsen et al., 2000). The reliability indices, measured by computing Cronbach's alphas, were found to be good for all ten advertisements (Cronbach's alphas: 0.82), so composite scores were computed for use in subsequent statistical analyses.

Purchasing intention was measured on the basis of two statements with seven-point Likert scales anchored by 'totally (dis)- agree': 'I would consider purchasing [product/brand X]' and 'I will definitely purchase [product/brand X]'. The aim of these questions is to determine whether the respondents would be more likely to purchase the products when there is English text in their advertisements than when there is no English text in their advertisements, or vice versa. The reliability of the scale was found to be good for all the ten

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

advertisements (Cronbach's alphas: 0.82). Thus, composite scores were calculated for use in subsequent statistical analyses.

Perceived comprehension of English was measured on the basis of the statement "The text of this advertisement is . . ." and three items 'difficult', 'simple', and 'unclear' (Maes, Ummelen, & Hoeken, 1996, pp. 208–209; Van Meurs, Korzilius, & Hermans, 2004), accompanied by seven-point Likert scales anchored by "completely (dis)agree". The reliability of the scale was found to be good for all ten advertisements (Cronbach's alphas: 0.82). Thus, composite scores were calculated for use in subsequent statistical analyses.

Perceived comprehension was further measured at phrase level on the basis of two statements 'I understand the text/ phrase well' and 'I would be able to describe the meaning of the text/phrase in my own words', accompanied by seven-point Likert scales anchored by 'completely (dis)agree'. These statements aimed at indicating to what extent the respondents understood the English phrases that made up a part of the advertisement, and to what extent they would be able to paraphrase these. Scale reliability was found to be good for all the advertisements (Cronbach's alphas: 0.82). It was therefore decided to calculate composite scores for use in further statistical analyses for all ten advertisements.

In order to measure actual comprehension of English, participants were asked to paraphrase the meaning of the English text in the advertisements (open question). The questionnaire which is designed by Planken, van Meurse and Radlinska (2010) was translated into Persian by two translators. Then, through translation-back-translation method, the Persian version was back translated into English to ensure that the two versions are identical. It was assumed that some of the participants did not know English well; therefore, the Persian version of the questionnaire was administered. Moreover, the questionnaire was pre-tested to check its reliability.

2.4 Procedure

Ten advertisements published between 2010 and 2011, with English words, phrases and sentences, were collected and they were scanned and copied into the questionnaire. Next, the participants received the questionnaire to complete the information about product image, purchasing intention, attitudes of the participants and perceived comprehension of the English used in the advertisements about those advertisements. The participants were told that participation in the study was on a purely voluntary basis. It took the respondents about 40 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. Then, the data were collected and the frequencies as well as the percentage of the responses were calculated and put into the SPSS Package version 16 in order to do appropriate statistical analyses. Chi-square tests were used to determine whether the differences between males and females, English and non-English students, and students with different levels of education on the dependent variables, 'perception of product/ brand image', 'attitude toward the advertisements', 'purchasing intention', 'perceived comprehension' and 'actual comprehension' (of the English texts of the advertisements) were statistically significant. Finally, the results were compared and the differences were analyzed.

3. Statistical analysis

3.1. Analyzing the effect of Using English in Product Advertisements on Iranian Males and Females

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

3.1.1. Perception of Product/Brand Image

The results of the effect of using English in product advertisements on Iranian males and females regarding ‘Perception of product/brand image’ are presented in Table 1. This variable was measured on the basis of three sub-variables: ‘modernity’, ‘quality’, and ‘price’.

Table 1. Distribution of male and female responses with respect to ‘perception of product/brand image’

	Males			Females			Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	
modernity	396 (44%)	429 (47.66%)	75 (8.33%)	501 (55.66%)	337 (37.44%)	62 (6.88%)	.000
	266 (29.55%)	553 (61.44%)	81 (9%)	400 (44.44%)	424 (47.11%)	76 (8.44%)	
	79 (8.77%)	361 (40.11%)	460 (51.11%)	38 (4.22%)	238 (26.44%)	624 (69.33%)	
quality	400 (44.44%)	461 (51.22%)	39 (4.33%)	482 (53.55%)	400 (44.44%)	18 (2%)	
	387 (43%)	457 (50.77%)	56 (6.22%)	533 (59.22%)	347 (38.55%)	20 (2.22%)	
price	272 (30.22%)	552 (61.33%)	76 (8.44%)	349 (38.77%)	509 (56.55%)	42 (4.66%)	

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

As shown above, the difference in the frequency of the participants’ responses with respect to the ‘perception of product/brand image’, on its three sub-variables, was statistically significant ($\text{sig} = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). By looking at frequencies, it is revealed that women regarded the product to be significantly more modern, qualified, and expensive than men who were presented with the same advertisements.

3.1.2. Attitude towards the Advertisement

The findings with respect to ‘attitude towards the advertisement’ are presented in Table 2. As shown, there is a statistically significant difference on the frequency of males and females’ responses ($\text{sig} = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). In other words, women showed more positive attitudes towards the advertisement than men.

Table 2. Distribution of male and female responses with respect to ‘attitude towards the advertisement’

Males	Females	Sig.
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¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

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	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	
Functional	328 (36.44%)	497 (55.22%)	75 (8.33%)	341 (37.88%)	498 (55.33%)	61 (6.77%)	
Irritating	39 (4.33%)	268 (29.77%)	593 (65.88%)	8 (0.88%)	195 (21.66%)	697 (77.44%)	
Attractive	219 (24.33%)	596 (66.22%)	85 (9.44%)	291 (32.33%)	526 (58.44%)	83 (9.22%)	
Arrogant	99 (11%)	555 (61.66%)	246 (27.33%)	92 (10.22%)	534 (59.33%)	274 (30.44%)	.000
Pompous	103 (11.44%)	617 (68.55%)	180 (20%)	99 (11%)	542 (60.22%)	259 (28.77%)	
Sympathetic	90 (10%)	571 (63.44%)	239 (26.55%)	95 (10.55%)	553 (61.44%)	252 (28%)	
Ugly	40 (4.44%)	368 (40.88%)	492 (54.66%)	45 (5%)	321 (35.66%)	534 (59.33%)	

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

3.1.3. Purchasing Intention

Table 3 manifests the findings with regard to ‘purchasing intention’. The results indicated a statistically significant difference on the frequency of males and females’ responses ($\text{sig} = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). That is, the purchasing intention of female respondents was found to be significantly higher than that of male respondents who were presented with the same advertisements.

Table 3. Distribution of male and female responses with respect to ‘Purchasing intention’

	Males		Females		Sig.		
	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea			
Purchasing intention	211 (23.44%)	382 (42.44%)	307 (34.11%)	265 (29.44%)	409 (45.44%)	226 (25.11%)	.000
	122 (13.55%)	407 (45.22%)	371 (41.22%)	111 (12.33%)	418 (46.44%)	371 (41.22%)	

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

3.1.4. Perceived Comprehension

Perceived comprehension was measured on the basis of three items namely the simplicity, difficulty and clarity of the English text used in the advertisements (see Table 4) The results showed that the differences in the frequency of males and females’ responses were statistically significant ($\text{sig} = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). In other words, female respondents found the English texts used in Persian advertisements significantly more difficult to comprehend

¹ Corresponding author;

than male respondents who were presented with the same advertisements. The results also indicated that men perceived the English texts used in advertisements more clearly than women.

Table 4. Distribution of male and female responses with respect to 'Perceived comprehension' (sub-items: simplicity, difficulty and clarity of the English text used in the advertisements)

	Males		Females		Sig.		
	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea			
Difficulty	49 (5.44%)	269 (29.88%)	582 (64.66%)	159 (17.66%)	219 (24.33%)	522 (58%)	.000
Simplicity	528 (58.66%)	310 (34.44%)	62 (6.88%)	522 (58%)	209 (23.22%)	169 (18.77%)	
Clarity	533 (59.22%)	338 (37.55%)	29 (3.22%)	527 (58.55%)	214 (23.77%)	159 (17.66%)	

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

Table 5. Distribution of male and female responses with respect to 'Perceived comprehension' of English phrases

	Males		Females		Sig.		
	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea			
Actual comprehension	641 (71.22%)	214 (23.77%)	45 (5%)	537 (59.66%)	217 (24.11%)	146 (16.22%)	.436
	613 (68.11%)	238 (26.44%)	49 (5.44%)	535 (59.44%)	201 (22.33%)	164 (18.22%)	

Not statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

Table 5 is indicative of the results with respect to 'perceived comprehension' per advertisement English phrase. No significant differences were found in the frequency of males and females' responses ($\text{sig} = 0.436$). Men and women rated their comprehension of the English phrases used in the advertisements at the same level.

3.1.5. Actual Comprehension

In relation to the 'actual comprehension' and the respondents' ability to translate and paraphrase the English texts used in the advertisements, from among 90 males participating in this study, 75 males translated the English texts into Persian of whom 60 males could translate the text correctly and 15 males could not infer the core meaning of the English texts. There were similarities between males and females in this regard. In other words, 69 women out of 90 females translated the English texts used in the advertisements, from whom, 51 women could translate the texts completely correctly and 18 women could partially infer the correct meaning of the English texts. These findings are in accordance with their claims about their ability to comprehend and translate the English texts.

¹ Corresponding author;

3.2. Analyzing the effect of Using English in Product Advertisements on Iranian English majoring and Non-English majoring Students

The above procedure was followed for measuring the effect of using English in product advertisements on Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students.

3.2.1. Perception of Product/Brand Image

The results of the effect of using English in product advertisements on Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students regarding the dependent variable 'Perception of product/brand image' (sub-variables: 'modernity', 'quality', and 'price') are presented below in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of Iranian English majoring students and non-English majoring students' responses with respect to 'perception of product/brand image'

	English majoring Students			Non-English majoring Students			Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	
modernity	275 (45.83%)	290 (48.33%)	35 (5.83%)	330 (55%)	236 (39.33%)	34 (5.66%)	.000
	185 (30.83%)	369 (61.50%)	46 (7.66%)	239 (39.83%)	318 (53%)	43 (7.16%)	
	44 (7.33%)	200 (33.33%)	356 (59.33%)	33 (5.50%)	201 (33.50%)	366 (61%)	
quality	284 (47.33%)	292 (48.66%)	24 (4%)	316 (52.66%)	269 (44.83%)	15 (2.50%)	
	271 (45.16%)	291 (48.50%)	38 (6.33%)	331 (55.16%)	249 (41.50%)	20 (3.33%)	
price	227 (37.83%)	343 (57.16%)	30 (5%)	236 (39.33%)	326 (54.33%)	38 (6.33%)	

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

In order to compare frequencies, chi-square was exploited. Results showed that 0.000 is less than 0.05 which means that Persian English majoring and non-English majoring students' ideas with respect to the modernity, quality and price of the product/brand advertised were statistically significant. The frequencies manifest that Iranian non-English majoring students regarded the product to be significantly more modern, qualified, and expensive than Iranian English majoring students.

3.2.2. Attitude towards the Advertisement

Table 7 illustrates the findings with respect to 'attitude towards the advertisement'. A statistically significant difference was observed between the frequency of Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students' responses ($\text{sig} = 0.000, p < 0.05$). In other words,

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

Chabahar Maritime University
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Iranian non-English majoring students showed more positive attitudes towards the advertisement than English majoring students.

Table 7. Distribution of Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students' responses with respect to 'attitude towards the advertisement'

	English majoring Students		Non-English majoring Students				Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	
Functional	236 (39.33%)	332 (55.33%)	32 (5.33%)	227 (37.83%)	323 (53.83%)	50 (8.33%)	.000
Irritating	22 (3.66%)	153 (25.50%)	425 (70.83%)	19 (3.16%)	152 (25.33%)	429 (71.50%)	
Attractive	155 (25.83%)	395 (65.83%)	50 (8.33%)	189 (31.50%)	339 (56.50%)	72 (12%)	
Arrogant	95 (15.83%)	398 (66.33%)	107 (17.83%)	50 (8.33%)	333 (55.50%)	217 (36.16%)	
Pompous	90 (15%)	437 (72.83%)	73 (12.16%)	58 (9.66%)	350 (58.33%)	192 (32%)	
Sympathetic	79 (13.16%)	397 (66.16%)	124 (20.66%)	54 (9%)	363 (60.50%)	183 (30.50%)	
Ugly	23 (3.83%)	213 (35.50%)	364 (60.66%)	30 (5%)	202 (33.66%)	368 (61.33%)	

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

3.2.3. Purchasing Intention

Table 8 manifests the difference between Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students with regard to 'purchasing intention'. Obviously, chi-square showed a statistically significant difference between Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students with respect to this variable ($\text{sig} = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). Accordingly, the purchasing intention of Iranian English majoring students was found to be significantly higher than non-English majoring students.

Table 8. Distribution of Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students' responses with respect to 'Purchasing intention'

	English majoring Students		Non-English majoring Students				Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	
Purchasing intention	165 (27.50)	268 (44.66)	167 (27.83)	143 (23.83)	257 (42.83)	200 (33.33%)	.000
	90 (15%)	292 (48.66%)	218 (36.33%)	63 (10.50%)	229 (38.16%)	308 (51.33%)	

¹ Corresponding author;

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

3.2.4. Perceived Comprehension

Table 9 shows the results regarding the three items measuring ‘perceived comprehensibility’, namely the simplicity, difficulty and clarity of the English texts used in the advertisements. Chi-square was lower than 0.05 (sig = 0.000, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the difference with respect to ‘perceived comprehensibility’ was significant. This means that Iranian non-English majoring students found the English texts used in Persian advertisements significantly more difficult to comprehend than Iranian English majoring students who were presented with the same advertisements. The results also indicated that students perceived the English texts more clearly than the non-English majoring students.

Table 9. Distribution of English majoring and non-English majoring students’ responses with respect to ‘Perceived comprehension’ (sub-items: simplicity, difficulty and clarity of the English text used in the advertisements)

	English majoring Students		Non-English majoring Students				Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	
Difficulty	13 (2.16%)	43 (7.16%)	544 (90.66%)	69 (11.50%)	177 (29.50%)	354 (59%)	.000
Simplicity	540 (90%)	41 (6.83%)	19 (3.16%)	346 (57.66%)	170 (28.33%)	84 (14%)	
Clarity	534 (89%)	59 (9.83%)	7 (1.16%)	352 (58.66%)	179 (29.83%)	69 (11.50%)	

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

Table 10. Distribution of English majoring and non-English majoring students’ responses with respect to ‘Perceived comprehension’ of English phrases used in the advertisements

	English majoring Students		Non-English majoring Students				Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	Agree	No Idea	
Actual	586 (97.66%)	13 (2.16%)	1 (0.16%)	380 (63.33%)	170 (28.33%)	50 (8.33%)	.210
comprehension	582 (97%)	17 (2.83%)	1 (0.16%)	378 (63%)	154 (25.66%)	68 (11.33%)	

Not statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

Table 10 is indicative of the results with respect to ‘perceived comprehension’ per advertisement English phrase. Since the value of the chi-square obtained for the frequency of Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students’ responses regarding this variable was greater than 0.05 (sig = 0.210), the difference was not significant. In other

¹ Corresponding author;

words, Iranian students rated their comprehension of the English phrases used in the advertisements at the same level.

3.2.5. Actual Comprehension

Of the total number of 60 English majoring students participating in this study, only 3 students incorrectly translated the English texts used in the advertisements. Fifty seven students could correctly infer the meaning of the English texts. Findings for the non-English majoring students were not very different. Although 49 non-English majoring students described the meaning of the English texts in their native language (Persian), 36 students could correctly translate the English texts, 11 students could partially infer the meaning of the English texts, and only 2 students incorrectly translated the English texts used in the same advertisements.

3.3. Analyzing the effect of Using English in Product Advertisements on People with Different Levels of Education

Similar procedures were also followed to measure the effect of using English in product advertisements on people with different level of education (people having diploma, BA and BS students, and MA and MS students).

3.3.1. Perception of Product/Brand Image

Table 11 presents the findings of the effect of using English in product advertisements on people with different levels of education with respect to 'Perception of product/brand image' (sub-variables: 'modernity', 'quality', and 'price'). The results suggested a significant difference in the frequency of the responses, by people with different levels of education (sig = 0.000, $p < 0.05$). The frequencies reveal that Iranian MA and MS students regarded the product to be significantly more modern, qualified, and expensive than Iranian having diploma who were presented with the same advertisements. Moreover, Iranian diplomas regarded the product to be significantly more modern, qualified, and expensive than BA and BS students.

Table 11. Distribution of responses of people with different levels of education with respect to 'perception of product/brand image'

	Diploma			BA/BS			MA/MS			Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	
modernity	292 (48.66%)	240 (40%)	68 (11.33%)	227 (37.83%)	341 (56.83%)	32 (5.33%)	378 (63.00%)	185 (30.83%)	37 (6.16%)	.000
	242 (40.33%)	290 (48.33%)	68 (11.33%)	190 (31.66%)	379 (63.16%)	31 (5.16%)	234 (39.00%)	308 (51.33%)	58 (9.66%)	
	40 (6.66%)	198 (33.00%)	362 (60.33%)	38 (6.33%)	271 (45.16%)	291 (48.50%)	39 (6.50%)	130 (21.66%)	431 (71.83%)	

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

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))))))))	
quality	282	300	18	197	384	19	403	177	20
	(47.00%	(50.00%		(32.83%	(64.00%	(3.16%)	(67.16%	(29.50%	(3.33%)
))	(3.00%)))))))
price	318	264	18	215	369	16	387	171	42
	(53.00%	(44.00%		(35.83%	(61.50%	(2.66%)	(64.50%	(28.50%	(7.00%)
))	(3.00%)))))))
price	158	392	50	153	418	29	310	251	39
	(26.33%	(65.33%	(8.33%)	(25.50%	(69.66%	(4.83%)	(51.66%	(41.83%	(6.50%)
)))))))))

Statistically significant, Significant at (p<0.05)

3.3.2. Attitude towards the Advertisement

The results with regard to ‘attitude towards the advertisement’ are presented in Table 12. A statistically significant difference was observed between the frequency of the responses of diplomas, BA/BS students and master’s students (sig = 0.000, p<0.05). In other words, Iranian master’s students showed more positive attitudes towards the advertisements than diplomas who showed more positive attitudes towards the advertisements than bachelors.

Table 12. Distribution of responses of people with different level of education with respect to ‘attitude towards the advertisement’

	Diploma			BA/BS			MA/MS			Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	
Functional	206 (34.33%))	340 (56.66%))	54 (9.00%)	132 (22.00%))	437 (72.83%))	31 (5.16%)	331 (55.16%))	218 (36.33%))	51 (8.50%)	.000
Irritating	6 (1.00%)	158 (26.33%))	436 (72.66%))	13 (2.16%)	242 (40.33%))	345 (57.50%))	28 (4.66%)	63 (10.50%))	509 (84.83%))	
Attractive	166 (27.66%))	388 (64.66%))	46 (7.66%)	120 (20.00%))	447 (74.50%))	33 (5.50%)	224 (37.33%))	287 (47.83%))	89 (14.83%))	
Arrogant	46 (7.66%)	358 (59.66%))	196 (32.66%))	40 (6.66%)	472 (78.66%))	88 (14.66%))	105 (17.50%))	259 (43.16%))	236 (39.33%))	

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

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Pompous	54 (9.00%)	372 (62.00%)	174 (29.00%)	45 (7.50%)	460 (76.66%)	95 (15.83%)	103 (17.16%)	327 (54.50%)	170 (28.33%)
Sympathetic	52 (8.66%)	364 (60.66%)	184 (30.66%)	35 (5.83%)	476 (79.33%)	89 (14.83%)	98 (16.33%)	284 (47.33%)	218 (36.33%)
Ugly	32 (5.33%)	274 (45.66%)	294 (49.00%)	32 (5.33%)	297 (49.50%)	271 (45.16%)	21 (3.50%)	118 (19.66%)	461 (76.83%)

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

3.3.3. Purchasing Intention

Table 13 reveals the difference among Iranian students with respect to ‘purchasing intention’. Accordingly, the purchasing intention of master’s students was found to be significantly higher than diplomas and the purchasing intention of diplomas was found to be significantly higher than bachelors who were presented with the same advertisements ($\text{sig} = 0.000, p < 0.05$).

Table 13. Distribution of responses of people with different level of education with respect to ‘Purchasing intention’

	Diploma			BA/BS			MA/MS			Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	
Purchasing intention	168 (28.00%)	266 (44.33%)	166 (27.66%)	108 (18.00%)	344 (57.33%)	148 (24.66%)	200 (33.33%)	181 (30.16%)	219 (36.50%)	.00
	80 (13.33%)	304 (50.66%)	216 (36.00%)	46 (7.66%)	319 (53.16%)	235 (39.16%)	107 (17.83%)	202 (33.66%)	291 (48.50%)	0

Statistically significant, Significant at ($p < 0.05$)

3.3.4. Perceived Comprehension

Table 14 shows the results regarding the three items measuring ‘perceived comprehensibility’ (the simplicity, difficulty and clarity of the English text used in the advertisements). As the chi-square was lower than 0.05 ($\text{sig} = 0.000, p < 0.05$), the difference between the groups with respect to ‘perceived comprehensibility’ was significant. In other words, diplomas found the English texts used in Persian advertisements significantly more difficult to comprehend than bachelors. Moreover, bachelors also found the English texts used in Persian advertisements significantly more difficult to comprehend than masters who

¹ Corresponding author;

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were presented with the same advertisements. The results also indicated that master's students perceived the English texts more clearly than the Iranian bachelors and the latter perceived the English texts more clearly than diplomas.

Table 14. Distribution of responses of people with different level of education with respect to 'Perceived comprehension' (sub-items: simplicity, difficulty and clarity of the English text used in the advertisements)

	Diploma			BA/BS			MA/MS			Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	
difficulty	126 (21.00%))	268 (44.66%))	206 (34.33%))	59 (9.83%))	148 (24.66%))	393 (65.50%))	23 (3.83%))	72 (12.00%))	505 (84.16%))	
simplicity	164 (27.33%))	308 (51.33%))	128 (21.33%))	396 (66.00%))	136 (22.66%))	68 (11.33%))	490 (81.66%))	75 (12.50%))	35 (5.83%))	.00 0
clarity	174 (29.00%))	314 (52.33%))	112 (18.66%))	403 (97.16%))	138 (23.00%))	59 (9.83%))	483 (80.50%))	100 (16.66%))	17 (2.83%))	

Statistically significant, Significant at (p<0.05)

Table 15. Distribution of responses of people with different level of education with respect to 'Perceived comprehension' of English phrases

	Diploma			BA/BS			MA/MS			Sig.
	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	
Actual comprehension	212 (35.33%))	248 (41.33%))	140 (23.33%))	399 (66.50%))	158 (26.33%))	43 (7.16%))	567 (94.50%))	25 (4.16%))	8 (1.33%))	.43
	188 (31.33%))	268 (44.66%))	144 (24.00%))	395 (65.83%))	146 (24.33%))	59 (9.83%))	565 (94.16%))	25 (4.16%))	10 (1.66%))	6

Not statistically significant, Significant at (p<0.05)

Table 15 illustrates the results with respect to 'perceived comprehension' per advertisement English phrase. Since the value of the chi-square obtained for the frequency of responses of diplomas, bachelors and masters regarding this variable was greater than 0.05 (sig = 0.436), the difference between them was not significant. This implies that Iranian

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

diploma-holders, bachelors and masters rated their comprehension of the English phrases used in the advertisements at the same level.

3.3.5. Actual Comprehension

Findings of the study, with respect to the participants' actual ability to paraphrase and translate the English phrases and sentences, were different regarding the respondents' levels of education. Of 60 people having diploma, 21 people translated the texts into Persian of whom 18 could correctly translate the texts and 3 could partially infer the meaning of the texts. But of 60 bachelors, 51 students translated the texts of whom 39 could correctly translate the texts, 9 students could partially infer the meaning of the texts and 2 students incorrectly translated the texts. Finally, of 60 master's students participating in the study, 57 students translated the text into Persian of whom 54 could correctly translate the texts and only 3 students could partially infer the meaning of the texts.

4. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to determine the effect of using English in product advertisements published in Iran on Iranian target groups' attitudes towards the product /brand image (its modernity, quality and price), and towards the advertisement and their purchasing intention. The findings pertaining to the three variables of gender, level of education, and major) have been discussed.

4.1. The Effect of Using English in Product Advertisements on Iranian Males and Females

The findings of the study revealed that the use of English somehow positively affects Iranian males and females' attitudes towards the product quality, their intention to buy the products advertised and their perceived and actual comprehension of the advertisements. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The difference we found could have been a result of social and psychological differences between men and women.

According to Kotler (1994), people's social position can be defined based on the role and status of the individuals. For example, someone may have the role of a wife and a mother in her family. Each of these social roles has special effects on their purchasing behavior. Mown and Minor (2009) explained that when a person accepts a role, the normative pressures cause the person to act in a special way. An important role in relation to consumer behavior is decision making; the consumer makes the final decision about which brand to prefer and buy. In most of Iranian families, women are responsible for selecting and finding suitable goods and furniture. In such families, it is rare that a man buy goods without taking the opinion of his wife. Therefore, in the Iranian culture, it is the women that attend to the advertisements since most of the time they seek to find goods for use in their family. Hence, because of their social status, women are more likely to attend to the advertisements and particularly the English texts used in the advertisements more than men. Moreover, the English text used in the advertisements has more positive effects on women than men, probably because class and prestige are more important for women than men and, as Martin (2008) suggests, English often functions as a prestige language evoking positive connotations regarding the brand such as its international status and technical superiority. Therefore, English texts created a positive brand perception for them.

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

4.2. The Effect of Using English in Product Advertisements on Iranian English majoring and Non-English majoring Students

The findings of the study revealed that the use of English somehow positively affects Iranian English majoring and non-English majoring students' attitude towards the product quality, their intention to buy the product advertised and their perceived and actual comprehension of the advertisement.

In relation to the target groups' attitude towards the product/brand advertised and towards the advertisement, the difference we found could have been caused by the fact that for English majoring students, studying in English becomes part of their life. Therefore, English has a more symbolic value for non-English majoring students than English majoring students. Accordingly, English words or sentences may appear more interesting to non-English majoring students than English majoring students. It is thus reasonable that an English sentence in a Persian advertisement draws more attention of non-English majoring students than English majoring students because at one glance they may hardly understand what it means. So, they become curious to discover its meaning. Hence, they show more positive and favorable attitudes towards the products/brands advertised and towards such advertisements than English majoring students. In contrast, such English words and sentences are ordinary and common for English majoring students, and thus they might grasp them quickly.

However, in the case of 'perceived and actual comprehension' of English phrases, there was no significant difference in the respondents' assessment of whether they comprehend the English text or in their actual ability to paraphrase the English text used in the advertisements. On the one hand, although Iranian non-English majoring students might not very often read English books, they access the Internet and English classes besides TV programs in English. On the other hand, writing an advertisement is a professional job and whoever writes these advertisements are experts with the knowledge that they should develop advertisements that most people in the society can understand. Therefore, if they use English words or sentences, they are assumed to use them in a manner that addresses people with general knowledge of English.

4.3. The Effect of Using English in Product Advertisements on People with Different Levels of Education

As the findings of the study revealed, the use of English somehow positively affects Iranians with different levels of education, their attitudes towards the product quality, their intention to buy the product advertised and their perceived and actual comprehension of the advertisement. The difference between the groups could be a consequence of the effect of their educational level on their attitudes. On the one hand, highly educated people (MA and MS students) may attend to the meaning of the texts of the advertisements and appreciate the English texts used in the advertisements more than low educated people. On the other hand, low educated people (people having diploma) may attend to the symbolic value of the English used in Persian advertisements more than highly educated people. Therefore, in such cases, English has the attention-getting function and associates the advertised products with modernity in consumer's mind (Gerritsen, et al., 2007).

However, in the case of 'perceived and actual comprehension' of English phrases, when the respondents with different educational levels were asked about the difficulty of the

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

English text used in the advertisements, diploma-holders found the English texts more difficult to comprehend than bachelors who found the English texts more difficult to comprehend than master's students. It is likely that in the context of Iran, educational level and English proficiency are correlated which needs more investigation to be confirmed or rejected. However, the findings of this study indicated that people with a low level of education need more cognitive efforts to understand the meaning of the English texts than those with a middle level of education and those with a high level of education respectively. A possible explanation is that on the one hand, because of internationalization, Iranians tend to learn English more and more for different purposes such as immigration, education, and seizing different job opportunities. On the other hand, English is not used by them through their daily life and its use is restricted to, for example, class situations and interviews.

5. Conclusions

Until now, several studies have investigated the effect of the use of English in product advertisements in different contexts around the world (e.g., Gerritsen, et al., 2000; Gerritsen, Nickerson, van den Brant, et al., 2007; Hornikx, Meurs & Boer, 2010; Planken, Meurs & Radlinska, 2010). These experiments have rejected the claims in the literature about the positive effects of using English in product advertising while our findings for the use of English and the role it plays are not entirely in accordance with those of previous researchers. The findings of the present study are in line with the assumptions made in the advertising literature about the potentially positive effects of using English on non-English speaking target groups' attitudes because of its symbolic value (Kelly-Holmes, 2000, 2005; Martin 2002a, 2006; Piller, 2001, 2003; Ray, Ryder, & Scott, 1991; Ustinova and Bhatia 2005; Lee 2006). This study also confirms Gao' (2005) findings that, just as in other contexts where English is not a native language, in China as well, the symbolic value of English plays an important role in helping advertisements exercise their power of persuasion. The present study also acknowledged this fact in the context of Iran. Iranian people trust foreign goods more than Iranian goods because they like to buy famous and outstanding brands, even though they pay more money. Thus, English or other foreign language sentences in every advertisement are eye-catching and they positively influence Iranian people as these sentences associate foreign products in Iranians' minds.

In relation to the actual comprehension of the English used in advertisements published in non-English speaking countries, Gerritsen, et al. (2000) found that there is a significant difference between the people with a high level of education (63 percent), those with a middle level of education (32 percent), and those with a low level of education (12 percent). In this regard, the findings of the present study are in conflict with Gerritsen, et al.'s (2000) findings. The results of the present study revealed no significant difference between Iranians with different educational levels with respect to their comprehension of English words and phrases used in Persian advertisements. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study illustrated no gender differences in the subjects' comprehension of the English used in advertisements. This finding confirms Gerritsen (1996) and Gerritsen, et al.'s (2000) findings, who also found no significant differences between males and females regarding their comprehension of the English in commercials. According to them, these findings show that English has a very special role in such language communities, which can neither be considered as a super standard language, nor as a substandard variety.

¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

Unlike Gerritsen et al.'s (2000) findings, our study did not find any link between comprehension and attitude, since the respondents with the same level of ability to comprehend and paraphrase the English text were significantly different with respect to other variables (their attitudes toward the product advertised and the advertisements and their purchasing intention). In conclusion, this experiment provides empirical support for the usefulness of code-mixed advertising at least in the context of Iran.

6. Implications

According to Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008), the choice between English or a local language in international advertising is very crucial for multinational companies. English is an instrument to standardize advertisements (Hornikx, Meurs & Boer, 2010). When designing advertising aimed at non-English-speaking target groups, advertisers sometimes confront choices regarding standardization (using English) or localization (using a local language).

Regarding the continued globalization of business and marketing, the findings can be useful for teaching English for business purposes to business communication specialists and marketing practitioners. These findings are helpful for business communication specialists to design and develop courses in order to teach how English can be used in product advertisements more effectively to increase the persuasive effects of advertisements. Furthermore, the differences between different target groups' appreciation of the advertising message and attitudes towards the product advertised may be best considered in teaching business courses. These differences may also be helpful for advertisers to design product advertisements suitable for intended target groups in order to generate good consumer response. Finally, insights into the effects of using English in advertising messages gained in studies such as these can directly contribute to ESP teaching as well. Insights based on empirical research can improve students' awareness of how English is used for business in the world surrounding them.

The present study has a number of limitations, which should be addressed in future research on this topic. One of these limitations is that this study relied on participants' own subjective evaluations. With regard to purchasing intentions, such subjective evaluations are not a direct measure of purchasing behavior. In future research, respondents' actual purchasing behavior can be considered.

Another limitation of this study is that we investigated a number of different variables, whose measurement required a large number of items in the questionnaire. But in order to create a questionnaire that would be easy and quick to complete and thus a realistic task for the respondents, the number of measuring items included was necessarily restricted. Therefore, future studies can be carried out focusing on fewer dependent variables at a time.

There is room for more investigation on the effects of using English in Persian advertisements on Iranian target groups. Potential areas for further research constitute age, social class, product categories of luxuries, and other types of media.

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¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

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¹ Corresponding author;

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

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Appendix

¹ Corresponding author;
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

Email: ar.jalilifar@gmail.com

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¹ Corresponding author;

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