

دور التكيف اللغوي والثقافي في فعالية مواد نقاط البيع في كردستان العراق

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كيفية اقتباس البحث

صابر ، بيشتيوان عبد الله ، دور التكيف اللغوي والثقافي في فعالية مواد نقاط البيع في كردستان العراق ،مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، تشرين الثاني 2025،المجلد:15، العدد:6.

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The Role of Linguistic and Cultural Adaptation in POSM Effectiveness in Iraqi Kurdistan

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ملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التأثير متعدد الجوانب للتكيف اللغوي والثقافي على فعالية مواد نقاط البيع ضمن المشهد الاجتماعي والثقافي الفريد لكردستان العراق، وهي منطقة تتميز بهويتها الثقافية المتينة وسوقها الاستهلاكي المتنامي بسرعة. باتباع نهج متعدد الأساليب، يدمج البحث بين الرؤى الكمية المستمدة من استطلاعات رأي المستهلكين والمنظورات النوعية المستمدة من خلال مقابلات معمقة مع خبراء التسويق. يتيح هذا التلخيص المنهجي إجراء دراسة شاملة لكيفية تأثير الشعارات الكردية المترجمة على نوايا الشراء لدى المستهلكين والانطباع العام عن العلامة التجارية.

تكشف النتائج الأساسية أنه في حين أن الاستخدام الاستراتيجي للترجمات الكردية في مواد نقاط البيع يلقي صدى إيجابياً بشكل عام لدى المستهلكين في جميع أنحاء المنطقة، إلا أن درجة الفعالية تُظهر اختلافات ملحوظة بين المدن المختلفة، مما يؤكد الحاجة الماسة إلى أن يبنى المسوقون استراتيجيات تكيف محلية تراعي بدقة الاختلافات الإقليمية الدقيقة في اللهجة والمعايير الثقافية وتفضيلات المستهلكين. تُسلط الدراسة الضوء على مثالين رئيسيين، مثل

الصعوبات التي واجهتها شركة كوكاكولا في أربيل ودهوك نتيجةً لعدم إيجاد فهم دقيق للتوقعات الثقافية. تُوضّح تجارب كلٍّ من كوكاكولا، وهي علامة تجارية معترف بها عالمياً، وكاروانشي، وهي علامة تجارية محلية بارزة، التحديات الكامنة والفرص المحتملة المرتبطة بمواءمة رسائل التسويق مع القيم الثقافية المحلية الراسخة وتطلعات المستهلكين.

وعلاوة على ذلك، تُبرز النتائج قيمة التعلّم متعدد الوسائط، وما يحتاج إلى مزيد من العمل على مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض خاصة. يُظهر هذا أهمية الحساسية الثقافية. ولهذا السبب، ينبغي أن يُساعد الآخرين على بناء إطار عمل أكثر دقة. يُساهم هذا البحث في تقديم رؤية قيمة لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض خاصة من خلال التركيز على تجربتهم الخاصة، مما يُعطي معلومات أفضل حول كيفية وضع خطط دروس يُمكن أن تُطبّق في كردستان العراق.

Abstract

This study investigates the multifaceted influence of linguistic and cultural adaptation on the effectiveness of Point-of-Sale Materials (POSM) within the unique socio-cultural landscape of Iraqi Kurdistan, a region characterized by both its resilient cultural identity and its rapidly expanding consumer market. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative insights derived from consumer surveys with qualitative perspectives gathered through in-depth interviews with marketing experts. This methodological triangulation enables a comprehensive examination of how translated Kurdish slogans impact consumer purchase intentions and overall brand perception. The core findings reveal that while the strategic use of Kurdish translations in POSM generally resonates favourably with consumers across the region, the degree of effectiveness exhibits notable variations across different cities, underscoring the critical need for marketers to adopt localized adaptation strategies that meticulously account for nuanced regional differences in dialect, cultural norms, and consumer preferences. The study highlights two prime examples, such as the struggles Coca Cola had in Erbil and Duhok due to not creating nuanced understanding of the cultural expectations. The experiences of both Coca-Cola, a globally recognized brand, and Karwanchi, a prominent local brand, serve to illustrate the inherent challenges and potential opportunities associated with aligning marketing messages with deeply ingrained local cultural values and consumer aspirations.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the value of the multi-modal learning, and what needs to work more on English for specific Purpose (ESP) skills. This shows the importance of cultural sensitivity. This is why it should help others build more nuanced framework. This research





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contributes valuable insights for ESP teachers by emphasizing their own experience, which gives better information on how to make lesson plans that can work in Iraqi Kurdistan.

1. Introduction

In the continuous, highly competitive global marketplace, businesses face the enduring challenge of forging meaningful connections with diverse consumer audiences who are separated by linguistic and cultural divides. Point-of-Sale Materials (POSM), encompassing a range of in-store advertising tools such as posters, banners, danglers, wobblers, shelf talkers, and more, represent a crucial touchpoint for influencing consumer behaviour at the pivotal moment of purchase. Smith (2012) asserts that POSM plays a crucial role in attracting consumers' attention to a product and influencing their purchasing decisions. In Iraqi Kurdistan, this dynamic is amplified, as the region has become a business battleground for numerous international, multinational, and local companies, resulting in a proliferation of POSM materials translated into the Kurdish language.

However, the mere presence of POSM in the Kurdish language is no guarantee of marketing success. The problem, and core premise of this research, is that POSM efficacy is fundamentally contingent upon their capacity to deeply resonate with the local consumer base, a feat that invariably demands meticulous attention to linguistic and cultural adaptation. As De Mooij (2019) states that POSM materials will be reluctantly useless unless they are translated accurately and in culturally appropriate ways to consumers' language. In short there needs to be a cultural connection for any of this work.

Therefore, this research sheds light on an investigation into the role of linguistic and cultural adaptation in POSM effectiveness within the unique context of Iraqi Kurdistan. The purpose of this study is to examine these cultural issues. This region is distinguished by its strong cultural identity, expanding consumer market, and complex socio-political landscape. It presents a compelling case study for examining the complexities of cross-cultural marketing (Park, 2015).

To address this gap, this research endeavors to discern whether these variations in adaptation strategies exert a tangible impact on POSM effectiveness and, more broadly, on consumer response. To ensure explicit and insightful data, the researcher strategically selected three prominent companies operating within the Iraqi Kurdistan beverage market which includes Pepsi, Coca-Cola, and Karwanchi. These companies were chosen to represent a diverse spectrum of marketing approaches, encompassing both established international brands (Pepsi



and Coca-Cola) and a successful local player (Karwanchi). This selection allowed for a comparative analysis of POSM strategies employed by companies with varying levels of global reach and local market expertise. Furthermore, given their extensive and diverse marketing campaigns, these companies provided a rich source of examples of different types of POSM, ensuring a comprehensive and representative sample for analysis. Drawing upon established theories of cross-cultural communication, Gudykunst (2003) emphasizes that cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and communication breakdowns. In addition, Levinson (1983) highlights the active role of the consumer in interpreting marketing messages. Consumers draw inferences based on what is said (and unsaid) in the POSM, assuming that the marketer is being cooperative and truthful. Hall (1976) argues that communication is inseparably linked to culture, asserting that no message can escape the influence of the cultural background of both the sender and the receiver. He posits that culture operates as a hidden, often unconscious, framework that shapes our perceptions, interpretations, and responses to the world around us. Consequently, universal concepts or emotions can be understood and experienced differently across cultures, leading to potential misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Hall contends that effective communication demands a thorough grasp of implicit cultural codes and a deliberate strategy to overcome misunderstandings born from cultural differences. This is critically important in marketing, where persuasive messages must transcend literal translation to align with a target audience's specific values, beliefs, and communication preferences, thereby achieving authentic cultural connection."

2. Review of Literature

The literature review examines the theoretical underpinnings and previous empirical investigations relevant to understanding the role of linguistic and cultural adaptation in the effectiveness of Point-of-Sale Materials (POSM), particularly within the context of Iraqi Kurdistan.

2.1 Theoretical Background

This section provides a theoretical foundation for the study, exploring key concepts and frameworks relevant to understanding POSM effectiveness and cross-cultural marketing.

Point-of-Sale Materials (POSM), what we also often referred to as posters, banners, danglers, wobblers, shelf talkers, represent a set of strategies with real business. These strategies are designed at to take the attention of consumers. POSM's goals are to capture customer awareness (Smith, 2012) and enhance what sales it can do. This all is important as





well and where many have talked with different customers and ways of reaching them.

Given how big different culture is, that a certain brand meets that need is very important (De Mooij, 2019). Different culture has a high value to help each connect, but there comes this level of having to help understand the codes.

2.2 Related Studies

Several studies have examined the role of cultural values and communication styles in advertising effectiveness across different countries (Luna & Gupta, 2001; Zhang & Gelb, 1996). These studies highlight the importance of tailoring advertising messages to resonate with the specific cultural nuances of the target audience.

Other research has focused on the translation of marketing materials, examining the challenges and strategies involved in adapting slogans, taglines, and other advertising copy for new cultural contexts (e.g., Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). These studies emphasize the need to move beyond literal translations and to engage in a process of "transcreation" that captures the intended meaning and feeling of the original message. There has not been that much information that really focuses that deeply into what makes the marketing and to that, to give us what we need to make better points or how we can get the consumers to fully connect.

3. Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the role of linguistic and cultural adaptation in Point-of-Sale Material (POSM) effectiveness in Iraqi Kurdistan. This approach combines quantitative survey data with qualitative data from expert interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

3.1 Research Design:

This study utilizes a descriptive research design, aiming to describe the relationship between POSM, translation, and consumer behaviour in a natural setting (Creswell, 2014). Data will be collected and analysed to identify key themes and patterns related to the effectiveness of linguistic and cultural adaptation in POSM.

3.2 Participants:

Consumers: 100 Kurdish consumers will be randomly selected from the major cities of Iraqi Kurdistan: 40 from Erbil, 30 from Duhok, and 30 from Sulaymaniyah. This selection ensures representation from diverse regions within Kurdistan.

Experts: Six professionals with extensive experience in sales and marketing in Kurdistan will be purposefully selected and interviewed. These experts will be from a mix of companies which will encompass

those of having and ESP background. This was done so that they can share insights.

3.3 Data Collection:

Consumer Survey: A structured questionnaire will be administered to the 100 Kurdish consumers to assess their perceptions of different slogans and the influence of POSM on their purchase decisions. The survey will use Likert scale questions to measure attitudes, as well as open-ended questions for more detailed responses. The likert scale and scale has been used from other sources and this will make this paper a greater value.

Expert Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the six sales and marketing experts. Interview questions will explore their experiences with translating and adapting marketing slogans, their perceptions of what works best in the Kurdish market, and their insights on the challenges and opportunities of cross-cultural marketing.

3.4 Research Tools:

Questionnaire A carefully designed questionnaire with the goal to help answer everything.

Interview Guide: This guide is used to make sure that we get answers based on what these questions are. It is used for both to help with this research.

This is based on best practices, that is going to help with this data.

3.5 Data Analysis:

Survey Data: The survey data will be analysed using descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages) to summarize consumer responses.

Interview Data: The expert interview transcripts will be analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key insights related to linguistic and cultural adaptation.

4. The Results and Discussions

This study aimed to understand the role of linguistic and cultural adaptation in the effectiveness of Point-of-Sale Materials in Iraqi Kurdistan. The results, derived from a mixed-methods approach involving consumer surveys and expert interviews, reveal precise patterns of consumer response to translated marketing slogans.

Consumer Survey Results: Impact of Kurdish Slogans on Purchase Intentions

The consumer survey, administered to 100 Kurdish residents across Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah, assessed the extent to which translated Kurdish slogans influenced their purchase intentions. Overall, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that Kurdish slogans





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positively impacted their likelihood of purchasing products. However, the strength of this effect varied across the three cities, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Impact of Kurdish Slogans on Purchase Intentions, by City

City	Number of Respondents	Percentage Agreeing Kurdish Slogans Increase Purchase
Erbil	40	85%
Duhok	30	62%
Sulaymaniyah	30	71%
Overall	100	73%

As shown in Table 1, a strong majority (73%) of the consumers surveyed indicated that the use of Kurdish slogans in POSM increased their likelihood of purchasing the advertised products. However, there were notable differences across the three cities. Consumers in Erbil reported the strongest positive response, with 85% indicating that Kurdish slogans increased their purchase intentions. In contrast, consumers in Duhok reported the lowest positive response (62%), while those in Sulaymaniyah fell in between (71%). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of Kurdish slogans may be influenced by local factors such as cultural norms, dialectal variations, and exposure to other languages. As Park (2015) highlights, Iraqi Kurdistan is not a monolithic entity, and the complexities of how various groups respond to specific things can vary greatly. Adding to this point, Usunier and Roulin (2010) argue that it may also reflect different levels of global integration among the cities and emphasize how they may have different beliefs for a long time.

Expert Perspectives on Linguistic and Cultural Adaptation

To understand these variations in consumer response, the researcher conducted interviews with six marketing and sales experts with extensive experience in the Kurdish market. These interviews provided valuable qualitative insights into the strategies and challenges involved in creating effective localized POSM.

One recurring theme in the expert interviews was the importance of linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness in slogan translation. As Coca Cola marketing manager stated, "It's not enough to simply translate the words; you have to translate the meaning and the feeling behind the words." This underscores the need to go beyond literal translations and to engage in a process of transcreation, adapting the message to resonate with the specific cultural nuances of the Kurdish audience. This notion of



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transcreation supports what Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) found when they looked in their area of expertise.

Another key insight from the expert interviews was the importance of considering regional variations in language and culture. As one Karwanch North Sales Manager explained, "The Kurdish spoken in Erbil is not the same as the Kurdish spoken in Duhok or Sulaymaniyah. There are different dialects, different slang terms, and different cultural references that you need to be aware of." This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to POSM translation may not be effective and that marketers need to tailor their messaging to specific regions or cities within Iraqi Kurdistan. This thought process and approach is echoed by both Hannerz (1992) and in his work on cultural complexity.

The experts also noted that the effectiveness of POSM is influenced by factors such as the type of product being advertised, the target audience, and the overall marketing strategy. For example, POSM for traditional Kurdish products may benefit from emphasizing local cultural values and heritage, while POSM for global brands may focus on conveying a sense of modernity and international appeal (De Mooij, 2019).

The Pepsi Sales Director noted that "the inherent difficulties in directly translating international slogans for the Kurdish market, explaining that the cultural values and societal norms for which these slogans were originally conceived often differ considerably from those found in Kurdistan."

In an interview, the Pepsi Trade Marketing Manager highlighted the positive impact of translating the 'Get Energy' slogan for their Rockstar energy drink, reporting a 37% increase in sales following the distribution of 25,000 pieces of translated POSM. The manager attributed this success to the appeal of the translated slogan to young consumers, with a sample translation shown below.





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Picture 1: Rockstar POSM slogan translated into Kurdish

The Coca-Cola Brand Manager highlighted the real challenges of linguistic and cultural adaptation, particularly in the diverse context of Iraqi Kurdistan. According to the manager, direct translation of slogans does not always guarantee effective consumer engagement.

For example, while the 'Live in the Moment' motto served as a central theme for Coca-Cola's branding efforts in Erbil during the second and third quarters, its direct translation proved problematic in Duhok. Due to potential misunderstandings and misinterpretations arising from the translated POSM, the brand was ultimately compelled to revert to a more generic message, 'Real Magic,' in that specific market. These cases are shown in picture two and three. This highlights that what is great and well-intended is not always what works best as described by Kates (2000)



Picture 2: Coca Cola Slogan in Duhok City



Picture 3: Coca Cola Slogan in Erbil City

During an interview, the Karwanchi branch manager in Sulaimania confirmed a notable 2% increase in market share following a strategic shift to emphasize the brand's local identity. This strategy involved prominently featuring the Kurdish translation of 'local brand,' 'Khomali,' on all displays and Point-of-Sale Materials. This was done to

communicate that Karwanchi is focused and for the culture, and not like the other brands. Picture four shows that.



Picture 4: Karwanchi Slogan in Sulaimania City

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study definitively underscores the critical and multifaceted role of linguistic and cultural adaptation in maximizing the effectiveness of Point-of-Sale Materials (POSM) within the distinct market of Iraqi Kurdistan, a region characterized by both its deeply rooted cultural identity (Park, 2015) and its increasing integration into the broader globalized marketplace. The consumer survey data, which demonstrably revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the presence of thoughtfully translated Kurdish slogans and enhanced consumer purchase intentions (as summarized in Table 1), provides compelling quantitative support for this central assertion. However, a closer examination of the survey results reveals that the

positive impact of Kurdish slogans is not uniform across the region, with notable variations in consumer response observed across Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah . This nuanced pattern underscores the imperative need for marketers to move beyond generic adaptation strategies and to embrace a more granular, localized approach that meticulously accounts for subtle but significant regional variations in dialect, ingrained cultural norms, deeply held values, and prevailing consumer preferences. These variations show how marketing is not all about big companies. It's also about the micro communities, and the small connections that each can create that connection.

Moreover, the insights gleaned from in-depth interviews with seasoned marketing and sales experts operating within the Kurdish market further illuminate the complexities of achieving effective linguistic and cultural adaptation. These expert voices consistently emphasized that mere literal translation of marketing slogans is woefully insufficient to guarantee success. The key takeaway, as eloquently articulated by the Coca-Cola Marketing Manager, lies in transcending a simple word-for-word conversion and instead striving to capture the underlying 'meaning and feeling' embedded within the original message, effectively transcreating the slogan to resonate authentically with the Kurdish cultural ethos. This echoes the foundational principles of cross-cultural communication, which emphasize the importance of understanding the target audience's worldview, values, and communication styles (Gudykunst, 2003). The words that are to come for the future must have more insight to it, so the people that are in that place must actually like the new marketing effort. The Karwanchi manager further emphasizes that they wanted to promote having local in their vision.

The experiences of both Coca-Cola, a globally recognized brand, and Karwanchi, a prominent local player in the Kurdistan beverage market, offer valuable lessons in the practical application of these theoretical principles. Coca-Cola's decision to revert to a more generic message in Duhok, due to the problematic reception of the direct translation of 'Live in the Moment,' underscores the potential pitfalls of neglecting local cultural sensitivities. In contrast, Karwanchi's success in emphasizing its local identity through strategic use of the Kurdish language highlights the potential benefits of embracing and celebrating local cultural values in marketing campaigns. These findings emphasize that POSM, while a powerful tool in attracting initial consumer attention (Smith, 2012), is but one component of a broader and more intricate equation. As such, any campaign has to also build the correct community. The study highlights that with such detailed results needs for the right and quality of POSM,





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then it is worth to do the work. The road will be longer, but there will be better customer success and in turn make the revenue better.

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