

Accentedness in Radio Advertising: A Study of Regional Product- and Service Commercials

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Abstract

Multilingual advertising has been used more and more in recent years, but it does not seem to always be equally effective. Various concepts are of influence to this effectiveness. In the present study, a Dutch regional accent variety vs. standard Dutch were tested in in the context of a region-congruent service or product commercial. A group of 185 Dutch participants rated the commercials in a between-subject design. Attitude towards the commercial and the product/service, purchase intention and speaker competence and warmth were measured. Results suggested that the service commercial was nearly always rated lower on all dependent variables than the product commercial. This might be due to the fact that the chosen product is well-known in the Netherlands, and the service was made up. Contrasting with previous research, no difference was found between the two accents.

Theoretical framework

Multilingual advertising is a research area that has been given increasing attention in recent years. It has become more and more popular to include a foreign language or accent in advertisements (Hornikx & Starren, 2006). Kelly-Holmes (2005, p. 25) defines multilingual advertising as ‘the appearance of a number of different languages or voices in a market-discourse situation’. An example of a brand that uses multilingual advertising is Paturain, a brand that sells cream cheese. Paturain uses French speech in their television commercials (HavasBoondoggleAmsterdam, 2014), where a French family is seen having dinner, and talking. Their slogan ‘da’s pas fijn’ is also pronounced with a French accent. A reason for utilizing French in this case, could be that Paturain wants to transfer the French’s high culinary reputation of cheese to their own product.

The use of multilingual advertising has shown to be effective in some cases in the persuasion process of consumers for several reasons (Hornikx, Van Meurs, & Starren, 2007; Morales, Scott, & Yorkston, 2012). Firstly, using a foreign language can attract the attention of listeners on account of unexpectedness. Viewers or listeners do not anticipate that they are going to see or hear a language that deviates from their own, either foreign or accented (henceforth called ‘nonstandard’), because they typically only are in contact with their own standard language (Burgoon, Denning, & Roberts, 2002; Hornikx, van Meurs, & Hof, 2013; Hornikx & Hof, 2008). A second positive effect of incorporating a foreign language is that it has a symbolic meaning which can evoke associations (Hornikx & Starren, 2006; Piller, 2001). Morales et al. (2012) and Hornikx et al. (2007) suggest that listeners generally seem to assign the attitude or symbolic meaning they have towards a nonstandard language variety to the product. The transfer of symbolic meaning can happen unintentionally, regardless of whether a listener is aware of the persuasive intentions of foreign language display. Hornikx et al. (2007) studied this phenomenon for the French, German and Spanish language. They propose that characteristics of a language can evoke (positive) associations, even if these associations have no particular relation with the country. In Hornikx et al.’s study (2007), respondents were asked to write down words they associated with an advertisement. The advertisement was the same in all cases, only the language differed. Words in the advertisement were a translation of ‘electronic e-mail receiver’ and ‘elegance’.

Advertisements in French and Spanish activated stereotypes such as ‘beautiful’ and ‘elegant’, whereas these were not named by the participants when the product was advertised in German – even though the word ‘elegance’ was the header of the advertisement. The German language, however, still evoked associations that can be useful in advertising, such as ‘reliable’ and ‘business-like’. These associations could be appropriate for e.g. car companies, as we see in Opel’s slogan ‘Wir Leben Autos’. Hornikx et al.’s (2017) results suggest that companies and advertisers can enhance advertisements by using foreign language to trigger associations they want consumers to have for the product.

Over the course of recent years, multiple new insights have come to light. As multilingual advertising has a broad definition (Kelly-Holmes, 2005), the research on the subject ranges from the use of foreign words in advertisements (e.g. L’Oréal Nude Magique Cushion) (Hornikx et al., 2013) to the more specific use of accentedness in product or service advertising, for example Paturain’s Dutch slogan ‘da’s pas fijn’ pronounced with a French accent (HavasBoondoggleAmsterdam, 2014; Mai & Hoffmann, 2011). Since multilingual advertising can involve several language varieties, it is important to define them.

One variety of multilingual advertising that can be used is an accent. In general, people speak of an accent in language when referring to pronunciation that deviates from the standard accent. Lippi-Green (1997, p.42 as cited in Mai & Hoffman, 2014) formulated the following definition for accents: “Accents are loose bundles of prosodic and segmental features distributed over geographic and/or social space”. An accent is often seen in second language (L2) speakers: those who learn a language other than their mother tongue, commonly in a later stadium of their lives. (Munro, Derwing, & Morton, 2006). From this, it follows that speakers learning a foreign language will generally speak this L2 with an accent. However, accentedness also occurs within language borders. This is called a regional accent.

A nonstandard accent is the opposite of a standard accent, which is an accent that is seen as the norm in a language. Standardness of an accent is characterized by the fact that it is not related to a specific geographical area, even though it might be more present in certain areas (Morales et al., 2012). It is often seen as the most correct and prestigious variation of a language as it is spoken by educated members of society. Moreover, it is traditionally the language written and spoken in media and school (Edwards & Jacobsen, 1987).

However, advertisers can make the choice to advertise in a nonstandard variation. When advertising by means of using accented speech, several concepts regarding up- and downgrading of the speaker need to be taken into account. These will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Downgrading of accented speech

In most cases, the use of a standard language can result in favourable consumer reactions (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 1996; Edwards & Jacobsen, 1987; Lalwani, Lwin, & Li, 2005; Martín-Santana, Muela-Molina, Reinares-Lara, & Rodríguez-Guerra, 2015). For example, Edwards and Jacobsen (1987) and Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) propose that accented speech can decrease the attitude towards the speaker. When looking at previous studies, social groups can be categorized through two main dimensions, competence and warmth (Fiske et al., 2002). Competence is marked by characteristics such as ‘competent, intelligent, confident, competitive, independent’ and warmth is characterized by ‘sincere, good natured, warm, tolerant’ (Fiske et al., 2002). Other studies show a similar distribution (e.g. Edwards and Jacobsen, 1987, resp. competence/status/prestige vs. personal integrity/social attractiveness and Hendriks, Van Meurs and Van der Meij, 2015, resp. competence vs. affect).

Examples that suggest a speaker with a standard accent is evaluated higher on competence can be found in DeShields et al. (1996) and Edwards and Jacobsen (1987). DeShields et al. (1996) measured attitudes towards foreign accented sales pitches (including Cuban and Nicaraguan) that were presented in video form. Findings suggest that when a spokesperson speaks with a standard accent, s/he is perceived to be more competent and have more status. Moreover, DeShields et al. (1996) found that a standard accent can increase purchase intention compared to the Cuban and Nicaraguan accents. Similar findings can be found in Edwards and Jacobsen (1987), who presented respondents with story-telling audio files to measure attitudes towards regionally accented speakers from Canada. Findings from this study again suggest more perceived competence and status for the standard accent. These studies propose that speakers of a standard accent can be perceived as more competent than speakers with a regional (Edwards & Jacobsen, 1987) or a foreign (Fiske et al., 2002; Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der

Meij, 2015) accent. Nonstandard language varieties, however, are suggested to be rated higher on warmth (social attractiveness) in some cases, as will be discussed in the paragraph concerning upgrading of accented speech.

Other effects that might occur that can be positive for a standard accent concern attitude towards the advertisement, purchase intention and recall. Findings by Lalwani et al. (2005) and Hendriks, van Meurs, and van der Meij (2015) show that the standard accent can evoke a more positive outcome in attitude towards advertisement, product and purchase intention. Martín-Santana et al. (2015) suggest that a regional (Canarian) accent evokes less recall and recognition of the advertisement overall and also shows lower attitude towards the ad and the brand than a standard (Spanish) accent.

The aforementioned results show negative evaluations with regard to using nonstandard language. An explanation for the negative evaluations of accented speech can be found in the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). This theory describes the process that people immediately tie an accent to a social group and therewith categorize the person as being either in-group or out-group. People rated as in-group will commonly be evaluated higher (e.g. as being more socially attractive), whereas people belonging to an out-group are often discriminated against. According to Mai and Hoffmann (2011), this means that when for example hearing a company's spokesperson/representative speaking with an accent that is unlike that of the listener, it would decrease the listener's attitude towards the company. In certain cases, e.g. when the spokesperson's and customer's accent are similar, the SIT would propose that evaluations can positively increase.

Another explanation for negative evaluation towards a nonstandard accent could be the Language Expectancy Theory (Burgoon et al., 2002). The LET suggests that an individual's attitudes towards a person or advertisement can change drastically when expectations based on stereotypes are not met. For example, "unfavourable (or favourable) speakers may be perceived more (or less) favourably not because their behaviour is intrinsically persuasive (or dissuasive) but because it contrasts with stereotyped expectations which audiences hold." (Brooks, 1970, p. 155, as cited in Burgoon et al., 2002). The LET is also present in multilingual advertising. When e.g. seeing or hearing a commercial, it is expected to hear standard language. If this expectation is not met, attitudes might change. Hearing

accented speech when expecting standard language might cause annoyance and consequently decrease evaluations of the commercial.

Upgrading of accented speech

Even though the previously mentioned findings largely show negative influence of incorporating an accent in advertising (DeShields et al., 1996; Edwards & Jacobsen, 1987; Martín-Santana et al., 2015), several studies have proposed that there are also positive effects of using accented speech in advertising. Fiske et al. (2002) suggest that when looking at up- and downgrading of an accented speaker, warmth and competence are negatively correlated. This would mean that when a speaker is rated lower on competence, warmth might increase. However, contrasting results occur. Other studies show that perceived warmth is approximately the same for standard and nonstandard (foreign) accents (Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der Meij, 2015). The dimension speaker integrity (similar to warmth) tested by Grondelaers, Van Hout, and Steegs (2010) did show a positive difference for regionally accented speech in the Netherlands. There was, however, no clear distinction between standard versus regional accent. Results differed depending on which accent was tested.

Another theory that has been mentioned in the previous paragraph, Language Expectancy Theory (Burgoon et al., 2002), can also explain positive effects, predominantly regarding recall and recognition. When the expectation of hearing a standard language is not met, the viewer or listener is shown to pay more attention to the advertisement (Lalwani et al., 2005). Conflicting with Martín-Santana et al. (2015), who propose that a standard accent increases brand recall, Morales et al. (2012) suggest that brand recall is higher when a regional accent is used. Since the listener pays more attention to the ad (Lalwani et al., 2005), recall might increase.

An important factor when incorporating a nonstandard accent in an advertisement is congruence between the spokesperson and the advertised product. Congruence means that there is a match between the spokesperson and the product (Lynch & Schuler, 1994), e.g. beer for Germany. Several studies have shown that, when using multilingual advertising, congruence can increase attitudes towards

advertisement and product and purchase intention (Hornikx et al., 2013; Hornikx & Hof, 2008; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Puzakova, Kwak, & Bell, 2015). For example, Lynch and Schuler (1994) argue that it is possible to transfer associations to a product by marketing it with a product-congruent spokesperson. Product-spokesperson congruence (i.e. the product ‘fits’ the spokesperson) can be a very important factor for companies when they have to determine their advertising strategy. This is called the matchup hypothesis. Kamins (1990, as cited in Lynch & Schuler, 1994) defines the matchup hypothesis as follows: “that the message conveyed by the image of the celebrity and the image of the product should converge in effective advertisements”. Congruence can also evoke favourable reactions in advertising when using a country that is congruent with the advertised product (Hornikx & Hof, 2008). For example, wine can be seen as a congruent product for France. This is called product-country congruence. When wine is advertised with French slogans, consumers can perceive higher quality, have a more positive attitude towards the product and a higher purchase intention because of language-product congruence (Hornikx et al., 2013). Products, on the other hand, that were not congruent with the language they were advertised in were evaluated more negatively by respondent (Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der Meij, 2015; Hornikx et al., 2013; Hornikx & Hof, 2008).

Similar results regarding product-country congruence have been found by Puzakova et al. (2015), who conducted a study comparable with Hornikx et al. (2013). Puzakova et al. (2015), however, exposed respondents to an accent instead of a foreign language. An example from the study: hamburgers are mainly perceived as an American product. Advertising them in an American accent increased brand sincerity. If the hamburgers were branded with a Hispanic brand name (‘Carlos’s Burgers’) and advertised with a Hispanic accent, brand sincerity decreased. This example also shows the country-of-origin effect: the effect that consumers link a product directly to a country. Puzakova et al. (2015) re-establish this effect by showing that consumers link the product to a country, irrespective of the origin of the brand. An implication that follows is that congruence with a country is inflexible: the hamburgers could not be ‘re-branded’ as Hispanic through the brand name and the accent.

Multiple studies have suggested that when a country-congruent product is advertised in a nonstandard language variety, evaluations such as purchase intention, attitude to commercial and

attitude to product are higher than when the congruence does not occur (Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der Meij, 2015; Hornikx et al., 2013). Speaker affect and competence can also be higher for congruent products (Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der Meij, 2015; Hornikx et al., 2013; Morales et al., 2012).

Dutch regional accent influence on products and services

In the present study, regional accent influence in Dutch advertising will be investigated. Most of the aforementioned studies have compared foreign accents (e.g. DeShields et al., 1996; Hornikx et al., 2007). Mai and Hoffmann (2011, 2014) suggest that foreign accents may differ from regional accents because of social identity effects. Expanding on this suggestion, the present study will focus on regional accents in the Netherlands. Even though it is a small country compared to many others in the world, it is rich with dialects and accents. Due to that, it can be hard to define what the standard is. The Nederlandse Taalunie (2015) defines Standard Dutch as the language that is generally accepted to speak in secondary relationships (i.e. outside of familiar, domestic relationships). Smakman and van Bezooijen (1997) concluded that according to the most part of the Dutch inhabitants, Standard Dutch is the language spoken in the Randstad (an urbanized area consisting of a few big cities in the west of the country), and more specifically in the city of Haarlem. Another common idea presented in Smakman and van Bezooijen (1997) is that news readers and radio hosts speak with a standard accent. The regional accent that will be the focus of the present study is 'Brabants'. Brabant is a province in the south of the Netherlands, where many people speak with a fairly recognizable accent (Pinget, Rotteveel, & Van de Velde, 2014).

Dutch regional accents also show some of the characteristics attributed to other nonstandard accents in terms of e.g. warmth and status. Southern (regional) accents from the province of Limburg were, for example, rated higher on speaker integrity whereas speakers from the Randstad (with a standard accent) were rated as the norm and as having higher status (Grondelaers et al., 2010). Yet again, this example shows some of the effects a nonstandard (e.g. more socially attractive, less competent) versus a standard accent (e.g. more competent, less socially attractive) can have.

Due to the many different contexts in which multilingual advertising is applied, it is challenging to find an unambiguous answer to the question what the most effective manner to advertise is. To cater

to this apparent gap in multilingual advertising research, the present study sets out to investigate differences occur when measuring product- versus service-advertising. Most previous studies have focused on product commercials. Mai and Hoffmann (2014) suggest that there might be a difference between product- and service advertising as services are more tangible. This means that there is a stronger link with a company, because its representative will be directly in contact with the customer. Customers know that communication is an intrinsic attribute of services, whereas this is not the case for products. The listener of an advertisement might then bear in mind that s/he will personally be in contact with the company's representative (Mai & Hoffmann, 2014). Therefore, using a spokesperson with an accent that fits the region the product is associated to might be even more essential (Hornikx & Hof, 2008; Mai & Hoffmann, 2011).

Since the majority of the research shows favourable outcomes concerning congruence (Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der Meij, 2015; Hornikx et al., 2013; Hornikx & Hof, 2008; Puzakova et al., 2015) congruence is assumed to be key in the present study. Another important factor is suggested by e.g. Grondelaers et al. (2010), who show the importance of recognisability. If the accent is difficult to place, factors such as congruence will be less reliable, since the link between the product origin and the spokesperson accent might not be recognized by the respondent.

The present study will investigate listeners' attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the product/service, purchase intention (as suggested by Hendriks, van Meurs & van der Meij, 2015; Hornikx et al., 2013; Lalwani et al., 2005), and the perceived competence and warmth of a speaker (as suggested by e.g. Fiske et al., 2002; Hendriks, van Meurs & van der Meij, 2015). This leads to the following research question:

What are the effects of a regional versus a standard accent on listeners' attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the product/service, perceived speaker's competence and warmth, as well as purchase intention when advertising products and services that are congruent with a region?

Method

Materials

For the experiment, four radio commercials were created. This study has two independent variables: accent (standard versus regional accent) and category of advertisement (product versus service). This results in the following four different advertisements: standard-product, standard-service, regional-product, and regional-service. The accents used for this particular experiment were the Standard Dutch accent and the Brabant accent. All commercials were recorded by the same speaker who could both speak with a Brabant and a Standard Dutch accent. This is in line with the matched-guise technique (Lambert, 1967) which minimises the influence of different voice attributes on listeners' evaluations. Using the same speaker for all fragments also rules out differences in e.g. pitch: a low pitch has proven to be more pleasing than a high pitch (Martín-Santana et al., 2015). If the fragments would have been recorded with different speakers, it might have influenced the outcome.

The advertisement promoted a product or a service that can be linked to the Brabant province. In consensus with the research group, which contained both people from Brabant and people from other regions, the product was a 'Bossche Bol'. This is a pastry similar to an éclair. The Bossche Bol has shown to be the most recognizable as a Brabant product to the researchers, and is well-known across the Netherlands as a product typical for the region (Schalkens, 2016). The Bossche Bol originates from the city of Den Bosch. For the service, it has been chosen to promote a culinary city tour through Den Bosch, the province's capital. The company for the city tour is a non-existing company which will be called 'Beleef Den Bosch'. Both the product and the service originate in Den Bosch, which should rule out different attitudes towards different places. Apart from the manipulation, the texts were kept identical. The two different radio commercial texts can be found in the appendix.

Subjects

In total, 185 respondents took part in the experiment. All participants were Dutch native speakers, as it has been suggested to be more difficult for L2 speakers to recognize accent strength (Hendriks, van Meurs, & de Groot, 2015). Since regional accents differ from the standard, L2 speakers

could have had difficulty recognizing the accents. To rule out an increased risk of L2 speakers not hearing the difference between the two accents, only Dutch participants were included in the study. Moreover, only 36.8% of the respondents were students. This was desirable to have a diverse respondent group so results could be generalizable to a larger public.

In terms of gender, 55.7% of the respondents were female. The respondents had an average age of 38.78 ($SD = 17.00$; range 18-73). The majority of the respondents had studied or was studying at HBO level (36.2%). MBO (23.8%), university master (13.5%) and university bachelor (13.0%) were other common options. Gelderland was the most common province of birth (46.5%), followed by Limburg (17.3%), Noord-Brabant (9.2%), and Zuid-Holland (8.1%). Gelderland also was the most common current place of residence (57.8%) among the respondents. Other common places of residence among the respondents were Noord-Holland (10.8%), Limburg (8.6%), and Utrecht (6.5%). Gender ($\chi^2(3) = 2.49, p = .477$), age ($F(3, 181) = .17, p = .918$), education level ($\chi^2(18) = 15.97, p = .594$), place of birth ($F(3, 181) = .18, p = .911$) and place of residence ($F(3, 181) = 1.46, p = .227$) were all distributed equally among the four versions of the advertisement.

Design

This experiment had a 2 (accent: Standard or Brabant) x 2 (category: product or service) between-subjects design. Each listener only heard one commercial.

Instruments

After reading the introductory text, respondents were firstly asked to fill in personal information, including their gender, age, place of birth, place of residence and educational level. Then, respondents were able to listen to the recording once before they started answering questions.

Attitude towards commercial was measured with 7-point Likert scales anchored by (1)strongly disagree to (7)strongly agree, based on a research design used by Hornikx and Hof (2008) and Hendriks, van Meurs, and van der Meij (2015). Respondents answered the question “I believe this advertisement is...” followed by five items ‘nice, captivating, original, attractive, and interesting’. The reliability for attitude towards the commercial was very good ($\alpha = .93$).

Attitude towards the product was measured with 7-point Likert scales anchored by (1)strongly disagree to (7)strongly agree: attitude towards the product, which was used in the present study as well. The question to determine this was “I believe this product is...” followed by five items ‘nice, captivating, original, attractive, and interesting’ (based on Hendriks, van Meurs, and van der Meij, 2015). The reliability of attitude towards the product was very good ($\alpha = .94$).

Purchase intention was measured with three 7-point semantic differential scales. The scales were introduced by the statement ‘buying the product is...’, followed by three 7-point semantic differential scales, ranging from ‘something I certainly want to do’ to ‘something I never want to do’, ‘something I do not recommend my friends’ to ‘something I recommend to my friends’, and ‘really something for me’ to ‘really not something for me’ (based on Hornikx et al., 2013). The last question was polarized differently, so respondents would stay alert. The reliability of purchase intention was not sufficient ($\alpha = .54$). If the final item ‘really something for me – really not something for me’ was deleted, reliability would drastically increase ($\alpha = .90$). This might be due to the question having reversed polarity compared to the other questions in the questionnaire. Respondents might not have read the question thoroughly. Therefore, this item will be left out of the further analyses.

The evaluation of the speaker was included in the experiment by measuring competence and warmth (Fiske et al., 2002). Items to measure competence were ‘competent, confident, independent, competitive, intelligent’, and warmth was measured through the items ‘tolerant, warm, good natured, sincere’. These had to be answered on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1)‘strongly disagree’ to (7)‘strongly agree’. The reliability of speaker competence ($\alpha = .89$) and warmth ($\alpha = .87$) were very good.

Three manipulation checks were included in the questionnaire. The first regarded comprehensibility of the speaker, with the statement “I can easily understand this speaker” and a 7-point scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Secondly, participants were asked from which province they thought the speaker originated to measure if the manipulation of the accent had succeeded (Grondelaers et al., 2010). Thirdly, respondents were asked if they speak with an accent/dialect themselves. If the answer was ‘yes’, they had to fill in which accent/dialect. The final question of the

questionnaire was “How is your opinion on the Brabant accent?”, with a 7-point scale ranging from ‘very negative’ to ‘very positive’ (based on Mai & Hoffmann, 2011). This was measured to check if respondents were biased in their answers to the main variables.

Procedure

The Dutch questionnaire was distributed among Dutch native speakers living in the Netherlands. The participants filled out the questionnaire via the online tool Qualtrics. Since the questionnaire was sent online, respondents were able to do the experiment individually and take the necessary time. The average time that it took participants to complete the questionnaire, was 4.42 minutes. The questionnaire started with an introductory text. The text included a cover story, so the actual purpose of the study was not revealed. The cover story mentioned only that radio as a means of advertising was researched for an advertising company. Afterwards, the radio commercial was played. Participants were able to listen to the recording once before they could start to answer the questions. After answering the questions, participants were thanked for their cooperation and they were provided with an e-mail address in case they wanted to contact the researchers with any questions, complaints or comments.

Statistical treatment

Firstly, Cronbach’s α was calculated as a reliability analysis for all variables separately. Multiple two-way ANOVAs were conducted in order to measure if each condition showed differing evaluations towards the advertisement, product/service, attitudes towards the speaker, purchase intention, and attitude towards Brabants. Moreover, correlations between speaker comprehensibility and evaluations were calculated to determine if better comprehensibility would result in higher evaluations.

Results

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of standard and regional accent use in radio commercials that advertised either a product or a service, congruent with the Brabant region in the Netherlands. The dependent variables were attitude towards the advertisement and towards the product,

purchase intention, and perceived speaker competence and warmth. Recognition of the accent, attitude towards the regional speech and comprehensibility of the commercial were included as manipulation checks.

Evaluation of the advertisement

A two-way analysis of variance with accent and category as factors showed a significant main effect for category ($F(1, 181) = 11.90, p = .001$), but not for accent ($F(1, 181) = .28, p = .597$) on attitude towards the product/service. Respondents had a higher attitude towards the product/service when they had heard the product advertisement ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.27$) than when they had heard the service advertisement ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.39$). The interaction effect between category and accent was not statistically significant ($F(1, 181) < 1$).

A second two-way analysis with category and accent as factors showed a significant main effect of category on attitude towards the advertisement ($F(1, 181) = 7.79, p = .006$). Accent was not found to have a significant main effect on attitude towards the advertisement ($F(1, 181) = .02, p = .880$). Respondents had a higher attitude towards the advertisement when they had heard the product advertisement ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.28$) than when they had heard the service advertisement ($M = 2.63, SD = 1.36$). The interaction effect between category and accent was not statistically significant ($F(1, 181) = 1.61$).

For purchase intention, a third two-way analysis of variance with category and accent as factors showed a significant main effect for category ($F(1, 181) = 25.85, p < .001$). Accent was not found to have a significant main effect on purchase intention ($F(1, 181) = 1.97, p = .162$). Respondents had a higher purchase intention when they had heard the product advertisement ($M = 4.08, SD = 1.67$) than when they had heard the service advertisement ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.40$). The interaction effect between category and accent was not statistically significant ($F(1, 181) < 1$).

A fourth two-way analysis of variance with category and accent as factors showed a significant main effect of category on competence of the speaker ($F(1, 181) = 4.63, p = .033$), but no significant main effect for accent occurred on speaker competence ($F(1, 181) = 1.59, p = .209$). Respondents

attributed more competence to the speaker when they had heard the product advertisement ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.15$) than when they had heard the service advertisement ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.30$). The interaction effect between category and accent were not statistically significant ($F(1, 181) < 1$)

The fifth and last two-way analysis of variance with category and accent as factors showed no significant effect of category ($F(1, 181) = 4.56$, $p = .097$), nor of accent ($F(1, 181) = 2.80$, $p = .193$) on warmth of the speaker. The interaction effect between category and accent was not statistically significant ($F(1, 181) < 1$). All means and standard deviations of the two-way ANOVAs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for the overall evaluations of the product and service radio commercials with a Standard Dutch or a Brabant accent (1 = extremely negative, 7 = extremely positive)

		Attitude towards product/service $M (SD)$	Attitude towards commercial $M (SD)$	Purchase intention $M (SD)$	Speaker competence $M (SD)$	Speaker warmth $M (SD)$
Product	Standard	3.49	3.04	4.25	3.97	4.32
	Dutch ($n = 51$)	(1.23)	(1.12)	(1.58)	(1.16)	(1.00)
	Brabants ($n = 39$)	3.46 (1.34)	3.31 (1.46)	3.86 (1.79)	3.77 (1.14)	4.20 (1.47)
Service	Standard	2.88	2.74	3.02	3.61	4.13
	Dutch ($n = 48$)	(1.40)	(1.35)	(1.45)	(1.13)	(1.05)
	Brabants ($n = 47$)	2.71 (1.38)	2.52 (1.37)	2.78 (1.36)	3.35 (1.45)	3.76 (1.57)

Manipulation checks

The respondents were asked where they thought the speaker of the advertisement was from. For the Brabant version, 90.7% identified the speaker correctly as a person from Brabant. In the Standard Dutch version, Brabant was still the most common guess by respondents with 38.4%. However, provinces which are known to be regions where people speak Standard Dutch (Utrecht, Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland) make up for 42.4%, which means the majority of the respondents recognized the accent correctly. Another common identification was Gelderland (11.1%).

A two-way analysis of variance for attitude towards the Brabant accent with category of advertisement and accent as factors showed no significant main effects of category ($F(1, 181) = 0.14, p = .905$) or accent ($F(1, 181) = 1.88, p = .172$) on the attitude towards Brabants. The interaction effect between category and accent was not statistically significant either ($F(1, 181) < 1$). Means and standard deviations for attitude towards Brabants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for the attitude towards the Brabant accent in function of category of advertisement and language used (1 = extremely negative, 7 = extremely positive)

	Product		Service	
	Standard Dutch ($n = 51$) $M (SD)$	Brabants ($n = 39$) $M (SD)$	Standard Dutch ($n = 48$) $M (SD)$	Brabants ($n = 47$) $M (SD)$
Attitude towards Brabants	4.88 (1.45)	5.05 (1.38)	4.79 (1.35)	5.19 (1.42)

A significant positive correlation was found between comprehensibility and attitude towards the product ($r(185) = .30, p < .001$), attitude towards the advertisement ($r(185) = .24, p = .001$), purchase intention ($r(185) = .23, p = .001$), speaker competence ($r(185) = .28, p < .001$), and speaker warmth ($r(185) = .32, p < .001$). This means that all dependent variables were rated higher when respondents were

able to understand the advertisement. Comprehensibility on average was quite high ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.84$).

Conclusion and discussion

The aim of the study was to determine the effects of a regional versus a standard accent on region-congruent products and services. This was measured in the Netherlands for the Brabant accent versus standard Dutch. The answer to the research question was explored through five variables: attitude towards the advertisement and product, purchase intention, and perceived speaker competence and warmth.

Attitude towards the product/service

Mai and Hoffmann (2014) proposed that product commercials might be evaluated differently than service commercials due to accent- and social identity effects. They argued that the future interaction of a service might result in different accent effects. Even though the present study shows a higher attitude towards the product commercial compared to the service commercial, this outcome was not related to the accent. No difference occurred between the Brabant and Standard Dutch accent, but the product was still rated higher than the service. This might not necessarily be related to the distinction between the category product/service, but more to the actual product and service used in the commercial. A possible explanation for overall lower evaluations towards the service commercial could be that a Bossche Bol is a product that is well-known in all of the Netherlands, whereas “Beleef Den Bosch” is a non-existing company that does not evoke earlier associations. This can be related to the mere-exposure effect. The mere-exposure effect is the phenomenon that the simply being (repetitively) exposed to something can increase attitudes (Hoeken, Hornikx, & Hustinx, 2009). This effect is applicable to the Bossche Bol, but not to Beleef den Bosch, which might explain the difference in evaluation. Moreover, it is likely that many respondents might have tried the product at some point in their lives. If they enjoyed it, it might have positively influenced their answers.

Attitude towards the advertisement

DeShields et al. (1996), Lalwani et al. (2005), and Martín-Santana et al. (2015) suggested that the attitude towards the advertisement was higher for a standard accent than for a nonstandard accent. The present study does not confirm these findings. Again, the product commercial was evaluated more positively than the service commercial, but accent showed no difference. Reasons for this might be the same as mentioned for the variable attitude towards the product/service. Furthermore, DeShields et al. (1996) made use of a foreign accent and physical cues as well, which might explain the difference between their study and the present study. Overall evaluations of the commercials were below average, which might indicate that the text was not attractive for the respondents.

Purchase intention

DeShields et al. (1996), Lalwani et al. (2005), and Martín-Santana et al. (2015) also proposed that a standard accent would evoke higher purchase intention. Similar to the two variables named above, no difference between the two accents occurred. Again, the same explanations as above could be applicable. Additionally, purchase intention might have been lower for the service because the commercial only does not give much information. For a food related product, consumers know what to expect, whereas this is not the case for a day trip of an unknown company. If consumers receive too little information, evaluations could decrease (Hoeken et al., 2009).

Speaker competence

Mai and Hoffmann (2011) as well as Edwards and Jacobsen (1987), found that standard accents are rated higher than regional accents on competence. However, this was not the case in the present study. Mai and Hoffmann (2011) and Edwards and Jacobson (1987) did study other regional accents than Brabants, which might explain the contradicting outcomes. Possibly, the two accents chosen for this study were too similar for participants to notice the difference and thus evaluate them differently. Grondelaers et al. (2010) suggested that accent characteristics can be of influence to the evaluation, which might indicate that if another regional accent had been tested, differences between the standard and the regional accent might have turned out to be significant.

Speaker warmth

For warmth, contrasting results were found by previous research. Some studies found that nonstandard (regional) accents could be perceived as more socially attractive than standard accents (e.g. Grondelaers et al., 2010), whereas others found no significant difference between the two (Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der Meij, 2015). The present study confirms the findings by Hendriks, van Meurs, and van der Meij (2015). As mentioned above, the two accents in the study might have been too similar for respondents to evaluate the speaker differently. Accents characteristics might have influenced the outcome as well (Grondelaers et al., 2010).

Manipulation checks

For all dependent variables, a positive correlation with comprehensibility of the advertisement was found. Since overall scores for the dependent variables were below average and the score for comprehensibility was above, it is unlikely that comprehensibility was main cause of the low appraisal of the advertisement, product, purchase intention, and speaker evaluations.

An important factor of the study was for the respondents to recognise the speaker's accent. The majority of participants recognized the Brabant accent. The Standard Dutch accent seemed to be more difficult to recognize. A reason for that might be that there are several provinces that are perceived to have Standard Dutch speakers, which could have caused the spreading of the respondents' choices among Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland and Utrecht. Moreover, because listeners were not prepared for questions about the accent of the speaker, they might not have given it second thoughts while listening to the commercial. Even though evaluations of the commercial might change subconsciously due to accent, the question about which accent was used in the commercial would have required the listeners to pay attention to that specific characteristic of the fragment. When the question about the perceived accent was asked at the end of the questionnaire, respondents might only have remembered what the advertisement was about (words such as 'Brabant' and 'Den Bosch' were named) and therefore answered the question with 'Brabant'. At the moment of answering the question, Brabant might have top of mind awareness, which would cause respondents to see it as the most logical answer.

Limitations and implications for further research

The first limitation of the study is that, due to lack of time, no pre-tests could be conducted. This would have been preferable to determine which product or service should be advertised in the radio commercial to verify the degree of congruence. In consensus with the research group, a culinary city tour had been chosen for the service and a Bossche Bol for the product commercial. As has been presented in the results, all evaluations towards the product commercials were higher than towards the service commercial. The well-known reputation of the Bossche Bol as opposed to the imaginary city tour company might be the reason for this. Even though it can be challenging to propose a product and a service congruent with a region which are both equally attractive and well-known, it might greatly influence the results if an extensive pre-test was conducted. Additionally, no question about product-region congruence was included in the survey as a manipulation check. Therefore, it cannot be stated with certainty that the product and service were perceived as congruent by the respondents.

A second limitation that is due to lack of time is the choosing of the speaker. In consensus with the research group, a native speaker of Standard Dutch and Brabants was chosen between three possible candidates. However, the speaker of the radio commercials was not trained specifically for recording commercials nor for speaking both accents. No independent opinions were included in choosing this speaker, which could have had an effect on the outcome of the study. A pre-test would have been advantageous in this case as well.

Another limitation might be that only one accent was studied. Brabants was chosen because it is a regional accent that might be easily recognizable by the respondents. Nonetheless, accents have varying characteristics, which could have caused differences in e.g. competence and warmth (Grondelaers et al., 2010). If other accents had been included, results might have differed. Moreover, the speaker was not trained in speaking both Brabants and Standard Dutch. This might have caused a slight difference in the speaker's pronunciation of the Brabant accent, which could have resulted in less prominent differences between the two accents.

Because respondents only listened to one commercial in the questionnaire, they did not have the opportunity to think about the difference between the product and the service or between the two accents.

Even though the between-subjects design was intended, it might have resulted in different outcomes, had participants listened to both conditions. One reason for alleged different outcomes might be that there would have been more participants for each condition. This could have increased generalizability and would have decreased the influence of individual differences. A between-subjects design does, however, rule out the effect that responses to the first condition are transferred to the second condition.

Lastly, the present study only focused on accents. No dialect words were used in the radio commercial. As has been shown in the results, this did not cause any trouble in recognizing the accent. However, it might cause (stronger) differences in evaluations of the commercial or the speaker.

Practical implications

The present study has aimed to fill some gaps in the research field of regionally accented product- and service advertising. The study has paved the way for follow-up studies regarding product- and service selling. It could, for example, be conducted for a different accent. In that case, it is advisable to run pre-tests in order to ensure more reliable results. Furthermore, the results of the study can aid companies and advertisers in making decisions about whether or not an accent should be incorporated in their commercials. There are still many factors that should be studied further for more specific recommendations, but the present study suggests that there is no difference in advertising a region-congruent product or service in either regionally or standardly accented speech.

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Appendix

Product commercial

Bourgondisch Brabant. Waar beter te ontdekken dan in Den Bosch? Kom langs en ervaar de geschiedenis van geuren, kleuren en smaken in de het hart van Brabant. Beleef Den Bosch nodigt u uit om de lekkerste Bossche Bollen te komen proeven. Deze hele maand: twee voor de prijs van één! Ga naar www.beleefdenbosch.nl. Super gezellig!

Service commercial

Bourgondisch Brabant. Waar beter te ontdekken dan in Den Bosch? Kom langs en ervaar de geschiedenis van geuren, kleuren en smaken in de het hart van Brabant. Beleef Den Bosch nodigt u uit voor een gezellige dagtrip om de sfeer van Den Bosch te komen proeven. Deze hele maand: twee voor de prijs van één! Ga naar www.beleefdenbosch.nl. Super gezellig!

Questionnaire

Beste deelnemer,

Heel erg bedankt voor uw tijd. In opdracht van een reclamebureau doen wij onderzoek naar radio als reclamemedium. Wij willen u daarom graag vragen uw mening te geven over een radioreclame die u zometeen te horen krijgt. Daarna vragen wij u een aantal vragen te beantwoorden.

Er zijn geen foute antwoorden, wij zijn puur geïnteresseerd in uw mening. Uw antwoorden blijven volledig anoniem en worden alleen voor dit onderzoek gebruikt.

Het invullen van dit onderzoek zal ongeveer 5-10 minuten duren. Uw mening is erg waardevol voor ons en wij willen u daarom vragen de vragenlijst niet vroegtijdig af te breken.

Wij vragen u deze vragenlijst zo mogelijk op een laptop of pc in te vullen omdat het programma niet door elk tablet of mobiele telefoon ondersteund wordt.

Wij danken u nogmaals hartelijk voor uw deelname! Klik nu op de pijl om met het onderzoek te beginnen.

1. Geslacht:

Man (1), Vrouw (2), Anders (3)

2. Leeftijd (in jaren):**3. Mijn huidige woonplaats ligt in...**

Groningen (1), Friesland (2), Drenthe (3), Overijssel (4), Flevoland (5), Gelderland (6), Utrecht (7), Noord-Holland (8), Zuid-Holland (9), Zeeland (10), Noord-Brabant (11), Limburg (12)

4. Hoeveel jaar woont u al in uw huidige woonplaats?**5. Mijn geboorteplaats ligt in...**

Groningen (1), Friesland (2), Drenthe (3), Overijssel (4), Flevoland (5), Gelderland (6), Utrecht (7), Noord-Holland (8), Zuid-Holland (9), Zeeland (10), Noord-Brabant (11), Limburg (12)

6. Hoeveel jaar heeft u in uw geboorteplaats gewoond?**7. Mijn hoogst genoten opleiding is...**

Basisonderwijs/middelbaar onderwijs (1), MBO (2), HBO (3), WO bachelor (4), WO master (5), WO postdoctoraal (7), Anders, namelijk: (6) _____

8. Wat is uw beroep? Indien u nog studeert, vul dan 'student' in.

Nu volgt de radioreclame. Klik alstublieft hieronder op de link om deze af te spelen. Let op: u kunt de radioreclame slechts één keer beluisteren. Zorg dus dat uw geluid aanstaat.

Beantwoord nu alstublieft de volgende vragen over de radioreclame die u zojuist hebt beluisterd.

9. Ik vind deze radioreclame...

Helemaal mee oneens (1)Helemaal mee eens (7)

Leuk (1), Boeiend (2), Origineel (3), Aantrekkelijk (4), Interessant (5)

10. Ik vind dit product...

Helemaal mee oneens (1)Helemaal mee eens (7)

Leuk (1), Boeiend (2), Origineel (3), Aantrekkelijk (4), Interessant (5)

11. Dit product kopen is...

(1) (7)

Iets dat ik nooit zou doen:Iets dat ik zeker zou doen (1)

Iets dat ik helemaal niet zou aanraden aan mijn vrienden:Iets dat ik zeker zou aanraden aan mijn vrienden (2)

Echt iets voor mij:Helemaal niks voor mij (3)

12. Ik vind de spreker van deze radioreclame...

Helemaal mee oneens (1)Helemaal mee eens (7)

Competent (1), Zelfverzekerd (2), Onafhankelijk (3), Competitief (4), Intelligent (5), Tolerant (6), Warm (7), Goed gemanierd (8), Oprecht (9)

13. Ik kan deze spreker makkelijk begrijpen

Helemaal mee oneens (1)Helemaal mee eens (7)

14. Uit welke provincie denkt u dat de spreker van deze radioreclame komt?

Groningen (1), Friesland (2), Drenthe (3), Overijssel (4), Flevoland (5), Gelderland (6), Utrecht (7), Noord-Holland (8), Zuid-Holland (9), Zeeland (10), Noord-Brabant (11), Limburg (12)

15. Spreekt u zelf met een accent/dialect?

Ja (1), Nee (2), Weet ik niet (3)

16. If Ja Is Selected → Welk accent/dialect?**17. Hoe staat u tegenover het Brabantse accent?**

Zeer negatief (1) Zeer positief (7)

Dit is het einde van de vragenlijst. Heel erg bedankt voor het invullen. Indien u nog vragen, opmerkingen of klachten heeft, horen wij dat graag. Tevens is het mogelijk om op de hoogte te worden gehouden van het onderzoek. Hiervoor kunt u contact met ons opnemen via el.smeets@student.ru.nl BELANGRIJK: Klik nog één keer op de pijl hieronder om de resultaten te verzenden.