

Goade gij eik veur lokoal? A study on the effects of Noord-Brabant regional accent strength  
and localness cues in Dutch TV commercials

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Master Thesis

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31-08-2022

Total word count excluding tables, references and appendices: 11.188

### **A word of thanks**

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor dr. Berna Hendriks for supporting me throughout the process of writing my thesis. With professionalism, constructive criticism and a joke here and there she was able to keep me grounded, focused on my own research and prevent me from getting ahead of myself, while also striving for the best possible result each and every time. I would also like to thank dr. Marieke Hoetjes for assessing me and providing me with clear and constructive feedback at the start of this process.

Conducting this research would not have been possible without the many people who have helped me to carry out the (much bigger than anticipated) job of producing TV worthy commercials. Thank you, to my long-time friend Jay van Cleef from Moonboy Films for sitting through my endless adaptations, feedback and precision when producing, filming and editing all recordings and commercials. A special thank you goes out to René Derks and Alex de Graaff for taking time out of their busy schedules to loan their voice to a student in need. Furthermore I would like to thank Strik bakery for their endless supply of sausage rolls during the process of filming the commercials and for allowing me to film their building for my research.

I am grateful that I got to carry out this study, something which has (to my knowledge) never been done before, and to, hopefully, have contributed to the research field of accentuatedness with my thesis.

## **Abstract**

The use of nonstandard accents such as regional or foreign accents in commercials is a well-known advertising strategy that advertisers use with the goal of drawing more attention to their service or product via recognizable cultural cues. Research on this topic has culminated into varying positive and negative effects of nonstandard accents (Hendriks et al., 2015; Lalwani et al., 2005; Morales et al., 2012).

The use of local origin markers (localness) in advertising is closely related to accent use in commercials as both transfer stereotypical characteristics of a culture onto a product/service (Aichner, 2014; Haarman, 1984). Effects of localness have, however, not been studied in combination with accentedness.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of regional accent strength and localness on viewers' attitude towards the commercial, speaker competence, speaker likability and product and purchase intention, recall and comprehensibility. 270 Dutch participants took part in an experiment with a 3 (accent: weak regional/strong regional/standard) x 2 (localness: presence/absence of origin markers) design. The viewers evaluated a TV-commercial via an online Qualtrics questionnaire.

The results showed significant effects of accent for Speaker likability and Brand recall. The weak regional accent was evaluated as significantly less likable. For Brand recall, the standard accent scored significantly lower. Overall, no significant effects of localness were found.

*Keywords:* accentedness, (non)standard accents, accent-product congruence, accent strength, localness, TV commercials.

## **Introduction**

The use of regional accents in radio as well as TV commercials is a well-known advertising strategy that is used in many parts of the world. Commercials of the Dutch fast food brand Mora use a spokesperson with a Southern Dutch accent. An older, though well-known commercial featuring multiple regional accents is that of Avis, portraying multiple New York Yankee fans meeting a New England native on the first day at his new job. These commercials use accents to trigger familiar stereotypes in listeners/viewers to promote the service or product in question (Piller, 2001).

Researchers have delved into the topic of accentedness and have studied it over the last three decades. Research focused on both commercial and non-commercial contexts tends to show varying results (Dragojevic et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2015; Hornikx et al., 2013;

Lalwani et al., 2005; Grondelaers et al., 2019). Where some studies revealed a preference for standard accents in commercial and non-commercial settings (for example due to higher evaluation on professionalism, competence and intelligence), others revealed a preference for nonstandard accents in terms of warmth and sincerity. Furthermore, standard accents tend to fit people's expectation of speech in professional contexts whereas nonstandard accents may not (Burgoon & Burgoon, 2001). Contrastingly, nonstandard accents appear to increase a consumer's memory of a brand and product in commercial settings whereas a standard accent tends to decrease memory (Morales et al., 2012).

Studies carried out in non-commercial contexts revealed the importance of accent strength, suggesting that a stronger nonstandard accent led to more negative evaluations. The same investigation in commercial contexts has received less scholarly attention, with exception to Hendriks et al. (2019) who studied the effects of accent strength on the evaluation of German product and service radio commercials.

Most studies on accentedness thus far have used radio commercials or other forms of recorded speech in their research method (Hendriks et al., 2015, 2019; Morales et al., 2012; Reinares-Lara et al., 2016). Hendriks et al. (2019) suggests that the lack of effects of regional accents in radio commercials may be due to the low level of local origin markers present in such commercials. Using TV-commercials in future research can provide more possibilities for including visual origin markers. The present study aims to investigate the effects of regional accent strength and the presence of local origin markers in Dutch TV-commercials.

### **Positive and negative evaluations**

Accentedness has received continuous scholarly attention over the last three to four decades, which has revealed both positive and negative evaluations of regional and foreign accents in comparison with standard accents (Birch & McPhail, 2010; Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Peters & Hammonds, 1984; Puzakova et al., 2015).

Research on Dutch regional accents and language attitudes by Grondelaers et al. (2009; 2010) has revealed that speakers with a regional accent may be regarded more positively than standard accented speakers when it comes to likeability and solidarity. These findings are in line with those of in terms of trustworthiness, generosity and warmth in both commercial (Hendriks et al., 2019) and non-commercial contexts (Heijmer & Vonk, 2002; Schoel & Stahlberg, 2012).

Apart from such positive characteristics, previous research has also revealed negative evaluations from listeners evaluating regional accents in commercial and non-commercial context. Scholars suggest that listeners tend to consider speakers with a regional accent to be

less competent, less educated, less self-confident and not as able to present high-quality arguments when compared to standard accented speakers (Birch & McPhail, 2010; Grondelaers et al., 2010). Additionally, in contexts where listeners expect a certain level of language use, for example in professional contexts such as commercials, television and radio shows, meetings etc., a deviation from these expectations through non-standard accent use may yield more negative reactions from listeners. This effect is explained by the Language Expectancy Theory by Burgoon and Burgoon (2001) who suggest that language that infringes on people's expectations of appropriate language and communication prevents persuasion and may result in negative attitude changes towards the speaker or the subject explained by the speaker.

Many evaluations of accentedness have been studied in non-commercial contexts (Dragojevic et al., 2017; Heijmer & Vonk, 2002; Hendriks & Van Meurs, 2022; Schoel & Stahlberg, 2012). Recently however, a trend is visible that examines the effects of nonstandard accents in commercial settings (Hendriks et al., 2015; Hendriks et al., 2019, Hendriks et al., 2022; Lalwani et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2013).

Looking specifically at commercial contexts, there is a consensus on the advantageous effects of accent-product congruence in commercial settings. Following Hendriks' et al. (2019) study on regional accent strength in German radio commercials with a congruent product or service, accent-product congruence is defined as a correspondence between characteristics of the (accented) spokesperson in the commercial and attributes of the product or service that is advertised (Hendriks et al., 2019). According to Kelly-Holmes (2005), Lalwani et al. (2005), Hornikx et al. (2013), Hendriks et al. (2015) and Puzakova et al. (2015) among others, when such congruence is present, more positive evaluations are made regarding the attitude towards the commercial, the attitude towards the product, the attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention of the viewer/listener. For example, Hornikx et al. (2013) conducted a study with Dutch participants who had to rate the effectiveness of multiple advertisements where the language (German, French or Spanish) of the slogan was either congruent or incongruent to the product. The researchers found that accent-product congruence for the slogan and product led to higher perceived product quality, more positive attitudes towards the product and higher purchase intention. These effects can be explained by The Matchup Hypothesis, first coined by Lynch and Schuler (1994). Their hypothesis claims that the match between the accent and product creates new meaning by unifying information about the accent and information about the product into a new whole. This new meaning is then transferred to the commercial, product and accented speaker and triggers more positive

evaluations. The Matchup Hypothesis (Lynch & Schuler, 1994) thus suggests that a congruence between the characteristics of the spokesperson and the advertised product leads to an increase in the effectiveness of advertising. Hendriks et al. (2015) found support for this hypothesis in their study on the effect of foreign accents in radio commercials. They tested whether Dutch participants evaluated typical German and French products more positively when they were advertised with a congruent German or French foreign accent and found more positive evaluations regarding purchase intention, attitude towards the commercial and product when accent-product congruence was present. Despite the positive effects of accent-product congruence in this study, the overall evaluation of the standard accent was still more positive. Puzakova et al. (2015) found similar results for accent-product congruence in commercial settings. The researchers tested the effects of accent and accent-product congruence on brand sincerity on undergraduate students with commercials for Hispanic food items (tacos) and American food items (burgers) with a corresponding Hispanic accent or American accent and found that an accent and brand name congruent to the product led to higher brand sincerity. The results from Lalwani et al. (2005) do not fall in line with those from Hendriks et al. (2015) and Puzakova et al. (2015). They investigated the effects of two English accent variations (British English and Singaporean English (Singlish)) on spokesperson credibility and found that the match between a Singlish accent and local product in advertising led to a decline in affinity ratings. The authors explain this finding by stating that British English is used most in Singapore for communication on professional levels and higher status population. The university students who participated in this experiment could thus have a preference for British English as they associate it with higher social class communication.

### **Localness**

Accent-product congruence is often achieved in advertising by including cues familiar to the viewer/listener, like foreign, national or regional stereotypes (Lynch & Schuler, 1994). Stereotypes are the biggest reservoirs of familiar elements from other cultures or regions in people's minds that are deliberately applied in advertising to underline characteristics or prestige of a product or brand (Haarman, 1984). Regarding advertisements for regional products, advertising agencies tend to use stereotypes or cues related to so called 'localness' in their commercials. For example, the well-known Dutch casino 'Holland Casino' broadcasted a commercial a few years back referring to Southern Dutch (football) culture as being somewhat blunt and direct in a comedic sense as this is a recognizable and humorous part of the culture for many Dutch people. Through commercials as these, it becomes clear

that the recent definition of localness has become a rather positive and sometimes humorous one, whereas localness used to have negative connotations for consumers regarding inferiority in quality and desirability of the brand and products compared to more well-known international brands (Roth & Romeo, 1992, Hoskins, et al., 2021). Today, localness can be defined as the consumers' perception that a brand or product is "legitimately connected to a highly constrained local culture, identity and/or social movement" (Hoskins et al., 2021, p. 9). Brands that focus their corporate identity around localness often use cultural cues and labels such as artisanal, craft, or farmers market etc. to portray their local identity (Hoskins et al., 2021).

Aichner (2014) recognizes eight strategies that involve such regional/national/foreign cues often used by organizations to promote products that relate to a certain region or country. These so called origin markers include: Made in..., quality and origin labels, region/country of origin embedded in the company name, typical region/country of origin words embedded in the company name, the use of region/country of origin accent or language, use of famous or stereotypical people, use of region/country of origin flags and symbols, use of typical landscapes and famous buildings. These strategies are applied to positively influence the image of the organisation, brand, commercial or product with the goal of increasing sales (Aichner, 2014).

Both the Matchup Hypothesis (Lynch & Schuler, 1994) and origin marketing (Aichner, 2014) follow from the Country/Region of Origin Effect, which Van Ittersum et al. (2003) explain as communicating certain qualities of a product in advertisements that are based on the natural environment, human expertise and or cultural identity present in the country/region of origin of the product.

### **Attitude and purchase intention**

The Hierarchy of Effects Model, designed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961), explains the general theory on which the Matchup Hypothesis, origin marketing and Country/Region of origin effect are based. This model states that advertising is a long-term process, where several steps are necessary to move from reaching uninterested uncommitted consumers to lead them to actual purchase. Consumers process the information given in the advertisement, which evokes positive attitudes towards the spokesperson present in the commercial. This triggers positive attitudes towards the commercial itself and ultimately towards the product advertised in that commercial (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). Such a chain reaction of positive evaluations from consumers increases consumer involvement and commitment which may ultimately lead to higher purchase intention (Barry & Howard, 1990). This line of thought can

be projected onto the use of accents in commercials. Consumers process the accented speech and are likely to transfer their evaluations of the accented speaker onto the commercial and product, which may lead to favourable evaluations and higher purchase intention.

Following the theory of the Matchup Hypothesis (Lynch & Schuler, 1994), origin marketing (Aichner, 2014), the Country/Region of Origin effect (Van Ittersum et al., 2003) and the Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961), the assumption is that the use of accents for congruent products leads to advantageous evaluations of the commercials, speakers and products at hand. Hendriks et al. (2015) and Puzakova et al. (2015) confirmed this with their results that revealed more positive evaluations of non-standard accented spokespersons in terms of sincerity and warmth.

However, the general line of previous research on the evaluation of standard vs. non-standard accents in commercial contexts shows that in most cases, standard accents tend to yield more positive evaluations from consumers (Lalwani et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2013; Reinares-Lara et al., 2016). Lalwani et al. (2005) revealed this in their study on spokesperson credibility for British English and Singlish. Singaporean University students were asked which accent they found to be more credible, and their evaluations revealed a strong preference for British English with significantly higher affinity ratings. Similarly Reinares-Lara et al. (2016) studied the effects of a standard Spanish accent (from Madrid) versus a local Spanish accent (from the Canary Islands) on spokesperson credibility in radio commercials for blood donation and found that, regardless of the listeners' origin, the standard accented spokesperson was evaluated as more credible. The researchers explain this finding by suggesting that standard accents are often perceived as more correct and prestigious than local accents and that they are often perceived as such regardless of the listener's location.

### **Recall**

Though several studies suggest that non-standard accents may be evaluated less positively when compared to standard accents in commercial settings, one aspect that stands out in comparison with standard accents is recall.

In the marketing communication discipline, recall can be understood as the memory consumers have of the specific brand or product after having been exposed to an advertisement. Morales et al. (2012) found that using non-standard accented speakers in commercials improved memory of the product and brand recall. Standard accents on the other hand did not positively impact memory and actually led to lower brand recall. The authors reason that standard accents demand more attention and labour in terms of processing from



consumers, which lowers their ability to memorize. Nonstandard accents on the other hand are spoken widely all over the world and consumers are more likely to encounter nonstandard accents than a pure form of a standard accent. Therefore, regional accents may increase product and brand recall as consumers invest less labour and attention in processing the language, which leaves more space for memory and recall. This contrasts with the Language Expectancy Theory (Burgoon & Burgoon, 2001) which suggests that listeners evaluate a nonstandard accented speaker more negatively than a standard accented speaker especially in professional contexts as the accent does not meet their level of expectation. In the advertising discipline it is thus of importance to evaluate the goals advertisers wish to meet with their commercial. If they prefer higher recall they may choose a nonstandard accented speaker, whereas a standard accented speaker may be more fitting for overall positive evaluation.

### **Accent strength**

Contrary to the generous extent of research on the presence of regional accents in commercials, a topic that has received less scholarly attention is the importance of accent strength, especially in commercial settings. Earlier investigation in non-commercial settings has shown that the strength of an accent is an important factor when evaluated by listeners (Dragojevic et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2017, Grondelaers et al., 2019). Research into foreign as well as regional accents revealed that stronger non-standard accents (either foreign or regional) led to more negative evaluations in sales settings (Nejjari et al., 2012) as well as non-commercial settings (Dragojevic et al., 2017). Regarding accent prestige, Grondelaers et al. (2019) found a similar trend. The authors expected to find status asymmetry between Dutch standard accents and regional accents, however they did not discover support for this asymmetry. As long as the regional accents in their study were moderate instead of strong, they were evaluated positively and without a significant difference in prestige when compared to more standard accents (Grondelaers et al., 2019). By expanding the current knowledge on evaluations of different accent strengths to commercial settings, valuable information can be provided to organizations and advertising agencies. Following the findings, they could adjust the accent strength of the speakers in their commercials to yield the most beneficial results.

Hendriks et al. (2019) were the first to study the effects of regional accent strength as opposed to standard accents in commercial contexts. They examined the effects of different degrees of the German regional accent Bavarian compared to a standard German accent in radio commercials for service and product commercials, evaluated by German consumers. Based on extant research in non-commercial contexts, the authors expected that stronger regional accents would be evaluated more negatively than moderate regional accents or

standard German accents. However, their hypothesis was not supported.

Difference in accent strength did not affect listener evaluations. Their results of research in a commercial setting did not correspond to earlier findings in non-commercial settings that suggest that stronger accents lead to more negative evaluations. Hendriks et al. (2019) did find that participants considered speakers with a moderate regional accent to be warmer than speakers with a standard German accent. Furthermore, their findings on competence revealed no difference between perceived competence of regionally accented speakers and standard accented speakers. Their study thus shows that the evaluation of German consumers on regional and standard German accents both does and does not follow the general findings on the effects of using regionally accented spokespersons in commercial contexts.

Lastly, the results of Hendriks et al. (2019) showed no support for the Matchup Hypothesis. Congruence between a regional accent and product did not result in more positive evaluations in German radio commercials. This finding is interesting, considering that earlier research on foreign accents with either congruent or incongruent products did support the matchup hypothesis (Hendriks et al., 2015). The fact that regional accent-product congruence did not result in more positive evaluations is explained by the authors by stating that radio commercials may not provide sufficient region of origin markers in terms of recognizable costumes, music, landscapes etc. to activate stereotypes that may motivate more positive evaluations. The lack of evidence for the matchup hypothesis may thus be related to the low level of localness in the commercials.

### **Localness and regional accents**

Without sufficient origin markers, less stereotypical characteristics of regional culture, can be transferred onto the product that is advertised (Haarman, 1984). Where radio commercials may lack possibilities for including localness and origin markers, television commercials have more possibilities for including regional or country specific cues. Martin (2002) explains in her study on the use of cultural images and varieties of English in French television commercials that cultural cues are of special importance in TV advertising due to their persuasive nature of communication. Stereotypical imagery and origin markers on television are likely to trigger emotional responses from the audience, which is a useful tool of persuasion to use in advertising (Martin, 2002).

Although there is a general line of research into the use of origin markers in TV commercials, no research has been conducted on the effects of localness cues in combination with accentedness in TV commercials. Localness and accentedness are closely related in

terms of their ability to trigger emotional responses from the viewer that may relate to the product that is advertised. Furthermore, the use of origin markers in previous research mainly focused on national (English cues in French commercials, Italian cues in international commercials) rather than regional cultural cues (Martin, 2002; Wyss, 2012). It is therefore interesting to investigate to what extent local origin markers may influence viewers' evaluations when combined with either regional or standard accents.

In short, despite the thorough investigation on the use of accented speech in commercial and non-commercial settings, the general influence of accents is still debatable due to conflicting findings in extant research that show positive effects for nonstandard accents on the one hand and negative effects on the other. The current study aims to expand the knowledge on the effects of accent strength in commercial settings. Furthermore, it will focus on the influence localness may have on commercial evaluations. The study of Hendriks et al. (2019), investigated one regional accent in the European country Germany. The current study will aim to generalize their results by aiming attention towards The Netherlands and specifically the Noord-Brabant (NB) accent. The Netherlands is somewhat similar to Germany in the way that both countries are divided into provinces that each have characteristic regional identities. Noord-Brabant has a characteristic regional accent and prominent regional identity recognizable through food, music, holidays and the overall warm and welcoming culture. Noord-Brabant is therefore a fitting region to examine in this study, since it will be easily recognizable and identifiable for NonNoord-Brabant consumers (Grondelaers et al., 2010).

### **Research question and hypotheses**

In line with previous research on the use of regional accented speakers, accent strength and localness in TV commercials the following research question is proposed:

*To what extent do regional accent strength and the presence of localness in TV commercials influence viewers' evaluations on attitude towards the commercial, product and speaker, purchase intention and recall?*

Following the theory from the Matchup Hypothesis (Lynch & Schuler, 1994), origin marketing (Aichner, 2014) and the Country/Region of Origin Effect (Van Ittersum et al., 2003) it is suggested that the presence of local origin markers and the presence of a regional accent will influence viewers' evaluations. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: The presence of local origin markers in TV commercials results in more positive evaluations of the commercials, speaker and product advertised than TV commercials without local origin markers.

Hypothesis 2: presence of either a weaker or strong regional accent in a TV commercial promoting a corresponding product leads to more positive evaluations of the commercials, speaker and product.

Considering that each type of origin marker (localness cues and regional accent) in itself leads to more positive evaluations according to Aichner (2014), it is hypothesised that an accumulation of those markers in the TV commercials leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The combination of local origin markers, regional accent and accent-product congruence leads to the most positive evaluations of the commercials, speaker and product and highest purchase intention.

In line with Morales' et al. (2012) results suggesting that non-standard accents lead to higher brand and product recall than standard accents, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Regional accents in the TV commercials lead to an increase in brand and recall in comparison to a standard accent.

## **Method**

This study was carried out by conducting an online Qualtrics questionnaire with a total of 40 questions that measured the Attitude towards the commercial, Attitude towards the speaker, Attitude towards the product, Purchase intention, Brand and Product recall, Perceived comprehensibility of the TV commercials and accents and demographics.

## **Materials**

The independent variables of the present study were accent (Noord-Brabant Weak (NBW, Noord-Brabant Strong (NBS, Standard Dutch (Algemeen Nederlands, AN)) and localness (presence or absence of local cues in commercials). In total, 6 TV commercials were produced with the help of audiovisual designer company Moonboy Films and two speakers (one regionally accented speaker and one standard Dutch speaker) advertising a typical Noord-Brabant product: the sausage roll (worstenbroodje). The shots for the TV commercial were filmed in a professional film studio, a Noord-Brabant home and at a local bakery. Each shot was filmed twice, once without visual local origin markers and once with visual local origin markers, which lead to two visually different commercials. The local origin markers in

the commercials included the Noord-Brabant flag in a tea towel and apron, bottles of beer and playing cards to portray Noord-Brabant conviviality, regional holiday decorations and festive regional holiday background music. These specific local origin markers were chosen as they were recognized as part of the eight strategies for promoting regional products by Aichner (2014).

The commercials were voiced with three different recordings: Standard Dutch, weak Noord-Brabant and strong Noord-Brabant, carried out by two speakers saying the following text: “Alleen deze week Brabantse worstenbroodjes van De Bourgondische Bakker! De enige echte uit het Zuiden, nu één plus één gratis! Haal ze vandaag nog bij de warme bakker bij jou om de hoek en geniet thuis van de smaak van Brabantse gezelligheid! Heb jij ze al geproefd?” (Only this week Brabant sausage rolls from The Bourgondian Baker! The one and only from the South, now: buy one get one free! Get them today at your bakery around the corner and enjoy the taste of Brabant conviviality in your home! Have you tasted them yet?). The speaker voicing the Noord-Brabant accents was a local middle-aged male, born and raised in the province. A local speaker was used to make sure the accent sounded as natural as possible. The second speaker was a middle-aged male who originates from the city of Haarlem, which Jan van Ours and Yuxin Yao (2019) suggest is the city in the Netherlands that speaks the purest form of Standard Dutch. The three recordings of the accents were placed over the commercials resulting in six combinations of accent with either presence or absence of local origin markers.

Two pre-tests were conducted for this study to test whether the three accents were recognizable and believable and whether the commercials as a whole were credible and realistic, with the goal of checking whether the commercials and accents could be used in the main experiment. A total of 33 participants took part in both pre-tests. Participants were aged 22 to 75 ( $M = 36.67$ ,  $SD = 15.72$ ) and 63.6% was female. 81.8 % of the participants were working, 12.1% were students and 6.1% was retired. The region of origin and current place of residence varied. Most participants lived in Noord-Brabant (42.5 %), Friesland (15.1 %), Gelderland (15.2 %) and Noord-Holland (15.1). The participants evaluated the recognizability and believability of the accents and the credibility and the realism of the commercials as a whole by evaluating items on a 7-point Likert scale anchored 1, totally disagree (helemaal oneens) to 7, totally agree (helemaal mee eens).

The first pre-test consisted of 5 items in a Qualtrics questionnaire to determine whether the accents used in the commercials were recognizable and whether they were believable: The speaker’s pace in this commercial is fitting to the commercial, the intonation

of the speaker fits this commercial, the speaker has a believable accent in this commercial, the speaker is convincing, the speaker sounds natural (AN commercial:  $\alpha = .721$ , NBW commercial:  $\alpha = .875$ , NBS commercial:  $\alpha = .846$ ). The recognizability of the accents was measured using two items: the speaker speaks with a standard Dutch accent, the speaker speaks with a regional accent.

The two items used to test recognizability of the accents were measured with separate repeated measures analyses. The repeated measures analysis of the item 'The speaker speaks with a standard Dutch accent' (Bonferroni correction) with accent as within-subjects variable showed a significant effect of accent ( $F(2, 31) = 40.30, p < .001$ ).

The AN accent ( $M = .530, SD = .26$ ) was evaluated as significantly more standard than the NBW accent ( $p < .001$ , Bonferroni-correction;  $M = 2.76, SD = .20$ ) and significantly more standard than the NBS accent ( $p < .001$ , Bonferroni-correction;  $M = 1.79, SD = .22$ ). Furthermore, the NBW accent was evaluated as significantly less strong than the NBS accent ( $p = .002$ ). It can thus be concluded that the accents were recognized as standard Dutch, a weak regional accent and a strong regional accent.

For the second repeated measures analysis testing the recognizability of the accents, the item 'The speaker speaks with a regional accent' was recoded to follow the same pattern as the first item. This way 1 on the Likert scale referred to very regional and 7 referred to very standard. The second repeated measures analysis (Bonferroni correction) with accent as within-subjects variable showed a significant effect of accent ( $F(23, 1) = 166.92, p < .001$ ).

The AN accent ( $M = 5.79, SD = .18$ ) was evaluated as significantly more standard than the NBW accent ( $p < .001$ , Bonferroni-correction;  $M = 2.79, SD = .17$ ) and significantly more standard than the NBS accent ( $p < .001$ , Bonferroni-correction;  $M = 1.58, SD = .12$ ). Lastly, the NBW accent was evaluated as significantly less strong than the NBS accent ( $p < .001$ ).

A repeated measures analysis with believability of the accent as within-subjects variable did not show a significant effect for believability ( $F(2, 31) = 3.10, p = .059$ ). It can thus be concluded that there was no difference in believability between the three different accents and that all accents were regarded as equally believable.

The participants evaluated the credibility and realism of the commercial by answering three items after having watched the first commercial. The items included: The commercial is believable, I could have seen this commercial on television, the brand in the commercial is realistic ( $\alpha = .768$ ). A one sample t-test was carried out in order to check whether the mean of the believability variable significantly differed from 4, the neutral option on the 7-point Likert scale.

The mean value of commercial credibility ( $M = 5.32$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) was significantly higher than the mean score of 4;  $t(32) = 6.73$ ,  $p < .001$ . This suggests that with an average of 5 the commercial overall is sufficiently believable to be used in the main experiment.

Lastly, the participants were asked whether they are familiar with the regional origin of the product advertised in the commercial to determine whether they have the necessary knowledge of the product and its regional origin. 99% of the participants was aware of the region of origin of the product before having watched the commercials, with an exception to one participant.

### Subjects

A total of 270 participants took part in the main experiment of this study (age:  $M = 30.13$ ,  $SD = 12.70$ , range: 14-79). A one-way ANOVA for the six conditions with as factor age no significant effect of age ( $F(41, 228) = 1,125$ ,  $p = .290$ ), meaning that age was equally distributed across all six conditions). 67.7% of the participants was female, 16% was male, 11.1 % identified beyond the gender binary and 1.5% preferred not to disclose their gender. A chi-square test revealed no significant relation between the six conditions and gender ( $\chi^2(10) = 10.7$ ,  $p = .381$ ) meaning that gender was equally divided across all six conditions. The majority of the participants (54.6%) were working, 33.1% were students, 6% were looking for a job and 1.8% was retired. A chi-square test revealed no significant relation between the six conditions and work status ( $\chi^2(10) = 8.0$ ,  $p = 6.33$ ), showing that work status was equally divided among all six conditions. Most participants finished higher education (HBO degree 40.7%, university degree 30%) and 22.2% finished an MBO study. A chi-square test revealed no significant relation between the six conditions and education level ( $\chi^2(5) = 2.5$ ,  $p = .775$ ). This shows that education level was equally distributed across all six conditions. The participants lived in a variety of provinces in the Netherlands including Noord-Brabant (26.6%), Gelderland (23.8%), Zuid-Holland (13.9%), Noord-Holland (9.6%), Utrecht (7.9%) and Overijssel (4.6%). A chi-square test revealed no significant relation between the six conditions and the number of people living in Noord-Brabant ( $\chi^2(5) = 3.9$ ,  $p = .570$ ), showing that the number of participants currently living in Noord-Brabant was equally divided among all six conditions. The province of origin of the participants also varied with participants having grown up in Noord-Brabant (33.9%), Gelderland (15.5%), Zuid-Holland (14.8%), Noord-Holland (8.5%), and Overijssel (6.6%) among other provinces. A chi-square test revealed no significant relation between the six conditions and the number of participants that grew up in Noord-Brabant ( $\chi^2(5) = 4.13$ ,  $p = .531$ ), showing that the number of participants who grew up in Noord-Brabant were equally distributed among the six conditions. When

asked for specific diets, 47.6% of the participants answered that they eat everything. 22.6% of the participants were vegetarian, 20.6% were flexitarian, 3.6% were pescatarian and 3.2% were vegan. A chi-square test revealed no significant relation between the six conditions and the number of participants who eat little to no meat or animal products ( $\chi^2(5, N = 252) = 8.3, p = .140$ ). This shows that the participants who eat everything and the of participants that eat little to no meat or animal products were equally divided among all six conditions.

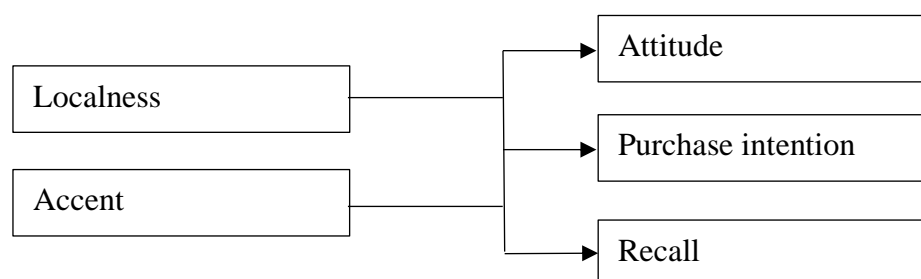
### Design

This study used an experimental 3 (standard accent, weak regional accent, strong regional accent) x 2 (presence/absence of local origin markers) between-subject design (see Table 1) where each viewer evaluated one TV commercial. This experimental design follows the research model below (see Figure 1).

**Table 1.**  
*3x2 between respondents design for six commercials*

	Algemeen Nederlands (AN)	Weak Noord- Brabant accent (NBW)	Strong Noord- Brabant accent (NBS)
Localness in commercial	Local + AN	Local + NBW	Local + NBS
No localness in commercial	Non local + AN	Non local + NBW	Non local + NBS

**Figure 1.**  
*Research model with independent variables Accent and Localness and dependent variables Attitude, Purchase intention and Recall*



### Instruments

The participants filled in an online questionnaire via the online tool Qualtrics where they evaluated the commercials on their Attitude towards the commercial, speaker competence and likability and the product, their Purchase intention, Brand and Product recall and Perceived



comprehensibility of the commercials and accents rating items on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by totally disagree to totally agree (helemaal niet mee eens – helemaal mee eens) (see Appendix 1 for complete Dutch questionnaire).

*Attitude towards the commercial* was measured using five items: I find this commercial attractive, interesting, original, fun and I want to watch this commercial more than once.

*Attitude towards the speaker* was measured using 10 items: I think the speaker sounds professional, convincing, intelligent, competent, sincere, attractive, warm, friendly, trustworthy and I feel connected to this speaker. As these items cover a broad range of characteristics this dependent variable was split into two constructs: Speaker competence and Speaker Likeability. A principal component analysis with oblimin rotation revealed a one factor solution, explaining 56% of the variance. The factor was found to be reliable ( $\alpha = .91$ ) (see Table 2). All items of the variable Attitude towards the speaker loaded onto one component and the factor analysis thus did not create a clear distinction between Speaker competence and Speaker likability.

To be able to split the items of the Attitude towards the speaker into two constructs Behkne's (2016) study on the effect of regional accents on German radio commercials was used. Her study split the variable *Evaluation of the speaker* into the constructs competence (including the items: I believe the speaker is efficient, competent, confident, independent, competitive, intelligent and trustworthy) and warmth (including the items: I believe the speaker is friendly, tolerant, warm, good-natured and sincere). Drawing information from both the factor analysis and Behkne's (2016) study, the following split was made: *Speaker competence* was measured using the five items: I think the speaker sounds professional, convincing, intelligent, competent and sincere. *Speaker likability* was measured using the five items: I think the speaker sounds attractive, warm, friendly, trustworthy and I feel connected to this speaker.

**Table 2.**

*Results of the principal component analysis with oblimin rotation*

Attitude towards the speaker	Items	Factor 1
I find the speaker	Attractive	.58
	Warm	.53
	Professional	.51
	Trustworthy	.68
	Convincing	.65

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Sincere	.58
Intelligent	.51
Friendly	.53
Competent	.52
I feel connected to this speaker	.50

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*Attitude towards the product* was measured using four items anchored: I think the product is attractive, interesting, original, fun.

*Purchase intention* was measured using three items: I would buy this product, this product appeals to me and I would recommend this product to people in my direct environment.

*Recall* was measured using two items: what was the brand called in this commercial? and what was the product that was advertised in this commercial? Before answering the questions recall the participants performed a distraction task that consisted of 15 anagrams to be solved in five minutes or less. This task was based on research from Sanders (2016) and Morrin (1999) who used the same distraction technique in their research. This type of distraction task was chosen for the current research as scholars such as Block et al. (2010) and Payne et al. (2008) found evidence that solving anagrams requires high cognitive ability and concentration which distracts participants from the initial stimulus (the commercial). The anagrams used in this study were taken from the list of 25 anagrams used in Sander's (2016) study. This list was based on criteria for high- and low-effort anagrams created by Hickman et al. (1998) and the word frequency list by the Institute of the Dutch language (Instituut voor Nederlandse taal, 2014). To familiarise the participants with the task, the first five anagrams were relatively easy, and difficulty increased as the task progressed.

*Perceived comprehensibility* of the TV commercial was measured using two items: on the whole, I comprehend this commercial well, and I could understand this commercial well. Perceived comprehensibility was taken into consideration as a manipulation check to check for possible effects that comprehensibility of the accent and commercial (or lack thereof) may have had on participants' evaluations.

The composite means for all scales of the dependent variables were calculated with  $\alpha < .7$ .

## **Procedure**

The questionnaire was created using the online tool Qualtrics. Participants were approached through convenience and snowball sampling, via the social media channels Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp and face-to-face communication between 10 July and 20 July 2022 (Emerson, 2015). The questionnaire could be reached via a link and was filled in in the participants' own time. The questionnaire was presented as part of a study that aims to determine the evaluation of a new Dutch TV commercial.

A 25€ gift card was randomly raffled off to one of the participants who chose to fill in their e-mail address at the end of the questionnaire. The winner was notified via email within three weeks after filling in the questionnaire. Before starting the questionnaire all participants filled in a consent form that described that their participation was voluntary and anonymous and that they could stop at any moment during the questionnaire. The consent form also stated that their data is kept in secure way following the privacy codes of Radboud University. Only the participants that agreed to the terms were included in this study. The average time to fill in the questionnaire was between 7 and 10 minutes. At the start and end of the questionnaire the researcher's email address was provided to participants if they had any comments or questions or wanted to be kept up to date on the results of the present study.

## **Statistical treatment**

To test the hypotheses of this study, a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was carried out to detect patterns between the multiple dependent variables simultaneously. Furthermore, separate chi-square tests were carried out for both Brand and Product recall. Lastly, a manipulation check for comprehensibility of the accents and commercials was conducted by carrying out a two-way univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA).

## **Results**

This study examined the effects Dutch regional accent strength (weak and strong) and a standard Dutch accent as well as the effects of localness in TV commercials for a congruent Dutch regional product on viewers' Attitude towards the commercial, Speaker competence, Speaker likability, Attitude towards the product, Purchase intention, Brand and Product recall and Perceived comprehensibility of the commercials and accents.

## **Manipulation checks**

To see whether all respondents comprehended each commercial and accent equally well, perceived comprehensibility was tested. A two-way univariate analysis of variance for comprehension of the overall commercial (Bonferroni correction) with accent and localness as

factors revealed no significant effects of accent on perceived comprehensibility ( $F(2, 264) < 1, p = .938$ ). Localness was not found to have a significant main effect on perceived comprehensibility ( $F(1, 264) < 1, p = .443$ ). The interaction effect between accent and localness was not statistically significant ( $F(2, 264) = 2.597, p = .076$ ).

The mean score of the perceived comprehensibility of the overall commercials showed that the weak regional accent ( $M = 5.92, SD = 1.00$ ), the strong regional accent ( $M = 5.91, SD = 1.19$ ) and the standard accent ( $M = 5.86, SD = 1.14$ ) were not significantly different from each other. This means that overall, all commercials were comprehended equally well and perceived comprehensibility of the commercial could thus not have influenced the results of this study.

A second two-way univariate analysis of variance for understanding the accent in the commercial (Bonferroni correction) with accent and localness as factors revealed a significant main effect of accent on understanding the accent ( $F(2, 264) = 12.01, p < .001$ ). Localness was not found to have a significant effect on understanding the accent ( $F(1, 264) < 1, p = .768$ ). No statistically significant interaction effect was found between accent and localness for understanding the accent ( $F(2, 264) < 1, p = .406$ ).

The mean score of the strong regional accent ( $M = 5.43, SD = 1.53$ ) was significantly lower than the mean score of the AN accent ( $p < .001$ , Bonferroni correction;  $M = 6.29, SD = 1.05$ ). The mean score of the strong regional accent did not differ significantly from the weak regional accent ( $p = .016$ , Bonferroni correction;  $M = 5.92, SD = 1.04$ ). The weak regional accent did differ significantly from the standard accent ( $p = .031$ , Bonferroni correction).

The strong regional accent was thus less well understood than the weak regional accent and the standard accent. However, as the mean scores of understanding the strong regional accent in the local and nonlocal commercials were still above 4, the neutral option on the 7-point Likert scale, it can be stated that the accent was still understood well and lack of understanding would thus not be likely to have influenced the results of this study.

**Table 3.**

*Means and standard deviations of the TV commercials with a weak regional accent (NBW), strong regional accent (NBS) or standard accent (AN) for the manipulation checks of perceived comprehensibility of the overall commercial and understanding the accent*

	Comprehensibility commercial $M$ ( $SD$ )	Understanding of accent in commercial $M$ ( $SD$ )
AN (n = 87)	5.86 (1.43)	6.29 (.89)

Local	5.86 (1.19)	6.28 (.70)
Nonlocal	5.86 (1.11)	6.30 (1.05)
NBW (n = 89)	5.92 (1.00)	5.92 (1.04)
Local	5.82 (1.08)	5.84 (1.12)
Nonlocal	6.02 (.92)	6.00 (.95)
NBS (n = 94)	5.91 (1.19)	5.43 (1.53)
Local	6.16 (.87)	5.57 (1.46)
Nonlocal	5.64 (1.42)	5.27 (1.62)

### **Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for Attitude towards the commercial, speaker competence, speaker likability and product, and Purchase intention**

A two-way multivariate analysis of variance for Attitude towards the commercial, Speaker competence, Speaker likability, Attitude towards the product and Purchase intention with as factors accent (weak regional, strong regional and standard) and localness (presence/absence of local origin markers) revealed a significant effect of accent ( $F(10, 522) = 2.68, p = .003$ ). Localness was not found to have a significant effect on Attitude towards the commercial, Speaker competence and likability, Attitude towards the product and Purchase intention ( $F(5, 260) < 1, p = .876$ ). Furthermore, no statistically significant interaction effect between accent and localness was found ( $F(10, 522) < 1, p = .837$ ).

The test of between-subjects effects showed a significant effect of accent on Speaker likability. ( $F(2, 264) = 6.80, p = .001$ ).

The mean score of Speaker likeability for the NBW accent ( $M = 4.11, SD = 1.20$ ) was significantly lower than the mean score of the AN accent ( $p = .002$ , Bonferroni correction;  $M = 4.71, SD = 1.02$ ) and the NBS accent ( $p = .017$ , Bonferroni correction;  $M = 4.57, SD = 1.18$ ). There was no significant difference in Speaker likability between the NBS accent and the AN accent ( $p = 1.000$ , Bonferroni correction).

#### **Table 4.**

*Means and standard deviations of the TV commercials with a weak regional accent (NBW), strong regional accent (NBS) or standard accent (AN) for Attitude towards the*

*commercial, Speaker competence, Speaker likability, Attitude towards the product and Purchase intention*

	Attitude towards the commercial <i>M (SD)</i>	Speaker competence <i>M (SD)</i>	Speaker likability <i>M (SD)</i>	Attitude towards the product <i>M</i> <i>(SD)</i>	Purchase intention <i>M</i> <i>(SD)</i>
AN (n = 87)	4.26 (1.13)	4.76 (1.03)	4.71 (1.02)	3.83 (1.51)	3.56 (1.83)
Local (n = 43)	4.29 (1.14)	4.73 (1.02)	4.67 (1.08)	3.76 (1.41)	3.54 (1.85)
Nonlocal (n = 44)	4.23 (1.13)	4.78 (1.06)	4.75 (.98)	3.91 (1.62)	3.57 (1.82)
NBW (n = 89)	4.08 (1.25)	4.38 (1.10)	4.11 (1.20)	3.92 (1.51)	3.34 (1.86)
Local (n = 44)	4.24 (1.25)	4.41 (1.05)	4.31 (1.13)	4.09 (1.47)	3.53 (1.86)
Nonlocal (n = 45)	3.92 (1.24)	4.35 (1.15)	3.90 (1.23)	3.76 (1.56)	3.16 (1.87)
NBS (n = 94)	4.36 (1.18)	4.56 (1.13)	4.57 (1.18)	4.00 (1.42)	3.68 (1.83)
Local (n = 49)	4.34 (1.22)	4.56 (1.23)	4.55 (1.22)	4.00 (1.49)	3.71 (1.98)
Nonlocal (n = 45)	4.37 (1.15)	4.56 (1.03)	4.60 (1.16)	4.00 (1.35)	3.64 (1.67)

### **Recall**

All respondents answered an open question on Brand recall and Product recall after a distraction task including anagrams with the goal of checking whether accent or localness could influence respondents' ability to recall the brand and product they had seen in the commercial. The Brand recall variable was recoded into 1 correct recall and 0 incorrect recall. Code 1 'correct recall' was given when participants were able to correctly name the two keywords of the brand 'Bourgondische' and 'Bakker', spelling mistakes and typos were not seen as a reason for incorrect recall. Code 0 'incorrect recall' was attributed to answers when at least one of the two keywords of the brand name was wrong.

A chi-square test showed a significant relation between accent and brand recall ( $\chi^2$  (2)

= 16.69,  $p < .001$ ). Participants who watched the AN commercial showed to have significantly lower brand recall (24.1%) than participants who watched the NBW commercial (51.7%) or the NBS commercial (48.9%). The test revealed no significant relation between localness and brand recall ( $\chi^2(1) < 1, p = .334$ ). Participants who watched the local commercial (39%) did not differ in ability to recall the brand from participants who watched the nonlocal commercial (44.8%).

The Product recall variable was also recoded into 1 correct recall and 0 incorrect recall. Code 1 'correct recall' was given when participants were able to correctly name the two keywords of the product 'worsten' and 'broodje', spelling mistakes and typos were, again not seen as a reason for coding the answer as incorrect recall. Code 0 'incorrect recall' was given when at least one of the keywords of the product was incorrect.

A chi-square test showed no significant relation between accent and product recall ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.69, p = .430$ ). Participants who watched the AN commercial (98.9%), the NBW commercial (96.6%) and the NBS commercial (98.9%) did not significantly differ in their ability to recall the product. The test revealed no significant relation between localness and product recall ( $\chi^2(1) < 1, p = .664$ ). Participants who watched the local commercial (97.8%) and the nonlocal commercial (98.5%) did not significantly differ in their ability to recall the product.

**Table 5.**

*Observed count and column percentages of chi-square tests for Brand recall and Product recall with accent*

		Brand recall				Product recall			
		AN	NBW	NBS	Total	AN	NBW	NBS	Total
Correct recall	Observed count	21	46	46	113	86	86	93	265
	Percentage	24.1%	51.7%	48.9%	41.9%	98.9%	96.6%	98.9%	98.1%
Incorrect recall	Observed count	66	43	48	157	1	3	1	5
	Percentage	75.9%	48.3%	51.1%	58.1%	1.1%	3.4%	1.1%	1.9%

**Table 6.**

*Observed count and column percentages of chi-square tests Brand recall and Product recall with localness*

		Brand recall			Product recall		
		Local	Nonlocal	Total	Local	Nonlocal	Total
Correct recall	Observed count	53	60	113	133	132	265
	Percentages	39%	44.8%	41.9%	97.8%	98.5%	98.1%
Incorrect recall	Observed count	83	74	157	3	2	5
	Percentages	61%	55.2%	58.1%	2.2%	1.5%	1.9%

### **Conclusion and discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of regional accent strength and the presence of local origin markers in TV commercials. In order to determine how viewers evaluated the commercials with either local origin markers or no local origin markers and with either a standard accent, a weak regional accent or strong regional accent on their Attitude towards the commercial, speaker competence and likability, the product, their Purchase intention, Brand and Product recall and Perceived comprehensibility were measured. The results showed that only significant effects of accent were found for Speaker likability and Brand recall. No significant effects for localness were discovered in the present study. Moreover, the significant effects that were found could not be explained by a difference in accent strength as Speaker likability was more negatively evaluated for only the weak regional accent and the significantly lower Brand recall was only observed in the standard accent. The effects of regional accent strength and localness in TV commercials thus influences viewers' evaluations just to a limited extent. The explanation for these findings are set out in the sections below.

### **Attitude towards the commercial**

As stated in hypothesis two the present study predicted that the presence of either a weak or strong regional accent advertising a congruent product would lead to more positive evaluations of the commercials, speaker and product. The results did, however, not find



support for this hypothesis. The analyses revealed that viewers did not evaluate commercials with a weak or strong regional accent congruent to the product, more positively than commercials with a standard accent. There was also no significant difference in evaluation of the commercial between the weak regional accent and the strong regional accent, so an effect of accent strength was not detected.

These findings are surprising on the one hand, as the general line of previous research regarding regional accents and accent-product congruence suggests that accent-product congruence leads to more positive evaluations of commercials (Hornikx et al., 2013; Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Puzakova et al., 2015). Furthermore, Aichner's (2014) study on origin marketing indicates that origin markers like regional language or accent may positively influence evaluations of a commercial. These effects were, unfortunately, not found. Results of the present study relate more closely to more recent research on the effects of regional accent strength in radio commercials by Hendriks et al. (2019). Both their study and the present one found that the use of regional accents did not significantly affect the viewers' evaluations of the commercials. In the present study, there was no significant preference for the standard accent, nor was there a significant effect of accent strength. The line of research regarding standard versus regional accents on evaluation of commercials thus seems to follow two different paths. While earlier studies found a general preference for standard accents in commercials, but a positive effect for accent-product congruence, more recent studies, including the present one, suggest that type of accent and accent-product congruence does not influence people's attitude towards the commercial.

### **Speaker competence and likability**

In terms of Speaker competence and likability, hypothesis 2, which stated that the presence of either a weak or strong regional accent led to more positive evaluations, is partly supported. A significant main effect was found for Speaker likability, which contained the items attractiveness, trustworthiness, friendliness, warmth and connection to the speaker. The strong regional accent was indeed viewed as very likable overall, though surprisingly, the standard accent was evaluated the same as no significant difference in likability between the two was detected. The weak regional accent on the other hand was regarded as significantly less likable.

These findings are somewhat unexpected considering that regional accents are generally regarded as more likable and more solidary according to previous research (Grondelaers et al., 2009; 2010). The findings of the present study thus contradicts scholars who agree that regionally accented speakers are evaluated as more trustworthy, generous and

warm compared to standard accented speakers (Heijmer & Vonk, 2002; Schoel & Stahlberg, 2012; Hendriks et al. 2015). Moreover, extant research suggests that regional accents can be evaluated more negatively than standard accents. For example, Grondelaers et al. (2010) and Birch and McPhail (2010) found that people regard regionally accented speakers as less intelligent, less self-confident and less competent. These results however, do not fall in line with those of the present study as no significant effect was found for Speaker competence (which included the items of professionalism, convincible, competence, intelligence, sincerity).

The weak regional accent thus seems to be an outlier when compared to the strong regional accent and the standard accent in terms of Speaker likability. This result shows possible support for the Language Expectancy Theory (Burgoon & Burgoon, 2001), which explains that viewers expect a certain level of language use in professional contexts such as commercials. When those expectations of language are not met, for example when the speaker has a nonstandard accent, this may cause more negative attitudes towards the speaker. It could be the case that the weak regional accent in the commercial was most unexpected by the participants, which resulted in more negative evaluations of the speaker. One could also suggest that the significantly more negative evaluation of the weak regional accent may be an effect of accent strength, however, this does not explain why the standard accent was evaluated the same as the strong regional accent. It could be possible that both the standard accent and the strong regional accent were clearer and/or more recognizable for the viewers and that this influenced their evaluations of the speaker. This study makes the cautious suggestion that viewers might have a preference for an accent that they can recognize more easily. It is important to note that this is merely a suspicion as the participants in this study were not asked to name the type of accent (weak/strong regional or standard) they had heard in the commercial. It could be interesting for future research to check whether the participants can recognize the accent they just listened to and whether higher recognition also leads to more positive evaluation of the accent.

### **Attitude towards the product**

Regarding attitude towards the product, hypothesis two was not supported. The analyses did not reveal more positive evaluations of the product when it was congruent to the accent that was spoken in the commercials. There was no significant difference in evaluations of the product between a standard accent, a weak regional accent or a strong regional accent. This result goes against the general consensus in previous research was regarding the positive effects of accent-product congruence on people's evaluations. Following the Matchup Hypothesis (Lynch & Schuler, 1994), a congruence between the accent spoken in the

commercial and the product advertised, would create more positive evaluations in the viewers. These evaluations would then be transferred onto the product that is advertised.

Despite the general agreement on this theory, the present study did not find support for the Matchup Hypothesis. The same result was found by Hendriks et al. (2019) who also did not discover an effect of accent-product congruence when analysing participants' evaluations of radio commercials.

Again, there seems to be a difference between earlier studies that found effects of accent-product congruence for nonstandard accents and more recent studies, including the present study, that did not reveal such effects. A possible explanation for this effect is explained by Duguid and Thomas-Hunt (2015), who state that there is a decline in biased attitudes when it comes to culture. The authors explain that people are becoming more aware of stereotyping in everyday life and found that a higher prevalence of stereotyping in messages lead to more backlash and a lower rating of warmth and sincerity towards the person conveying the message. Accent-product congruence drawing from stereotypes could thus have had a different effect several years back when stereotype awareness was not as prevalent as it is today.

### **Purchase intention**

Despite the expectations of the positive effects of regional accents and accent-product congruence substantiated by previous research and explained in hypothesis two, the present study did not find significant a significant effect of accent for purchase intention. All three accents were evaluated similarly, which indicates that there is no effect of accent strength or accent-product congruence for purchase intention. To be able to accurately evaluate these effects, it is useful to briefly refer back to the theory behind the Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). This model explains how uninterested uncommitted consumers can be led to purchase of a product or service through several steps. Consumers process information given in a commercial, in this case a regional accent, which may provoke positive attitudes related to the spokesperson. These positive attitudes are transferred to the commercial, then to the product and may ultimately lead to higher purchase intention (Barry & Howard, 1990). The same result was expected for the present study as the strong regional accent and standard accent were regarded as significantly more likable than the weak regional accent. However, the effects of Speaker likability may not have had the expected strong effect to reach the higher stages of the Hierarchy of Effects Model, to eventually influence purchase intention.

## **Recall**

The present study showed partial support for hypothesis four which stated that regional accents would have a positive effect on brand and product recall. It was found that viewers' ability to recall the brand in the TV commercial was significantly higher in the commercials with the regionally accented speaker than in the commercial with the standard accented speaker. This finding falls in line with earlier research by Morales et al. (2012), who suggested that using non-standard accents in commercials improved both brand recall and product recall in participants, whereas standard accents actually lowered participants' ability to recall. There was no significant difference in brand recall between the weak regional accent and the strong regional accent. Accent strength thus does not seem to affect viewers' ability to recall the brand in the commercial.

The results for product recall did, however, not concur with Morales' et al. (2012) findings. No significant differences between viewers' ability to recall the product in the commercial were found between the weak regional accent, the strong regional accent and the standard accent. Nearly all participants were able to recall the product in the commercial, even after the distraction task. A reason for this might be that the product in the commercial was portrayed in nearly every shot, whereas the brand was only named once by the speaker and visibly portrayed once at the end of the commercial. This was different for Morales' et al. (2012) study who exclusively used radio commercials or recorded messages all without visual cues. It may thus be the case that the product in the commercial was shown so much that no accurate analysis of product recall could be made.

Future research could thus pay attention to the number of times both the product and the brand are shown or named in the commercial. By naming/showing both the brand and the product the same number of times a more accurate analysis of brand and product recall could be made, which could possibly yield different results.

## **Localness**

Earlier research on the presence of origin markers in commercial settings revealed that cultural cues are of importance as they are persuasive and tend to trigger emotional responses from the viewer, which may enhance their evaluation of the commercial, speaker and product and may increase purchase intention (Martin, 2002). It was, therefore, hypothesized in hypothesis one that the presence of regional origin markers in the commercials would have a positive effect on attitude and purchase intention. Since previous research on nonstandard accents suggested that nonstandard accents tend to have positive effects in terms of accent-product congruence, attitude towards the speaker and recall (Lalwani et al., 2005; Hendriks et

al., 2015; Puzakova et al., 2015; Morales et al., 2012) it was hypothesized in hypothesis three that the positive effects of localness on attitude and purchase intention would be enhanced in combination with the positive effects of nonstandard accent use.

Despite earlier findings of the effects of localness in commercials, the analyses did not reveal any significant effects of localness on the attitude towards the commercial, the speaker and the product and localness did not increase purchase intention. Hypothesis one was, therefore, not supported. This means that viewers did not evaluate the commercial, speaker competence and likability and product more positively when having seen a commercial with regional origin markers. This finding does not follow the general line of research from Aichner (2014), Grondelaers (2010) and Martin (2001) who found significant effects of origin markers in commercial settings.

Contrary to the expectation of hypothesis three, the viewers did not evaluate the commercial, speaker and product more positively when having seen a commercial with a regional accent and regional origin markers. Hypothesis three was thus not supported as there was no significant interaction effect between the accent in the commercial and the presence or absence of regional origin markers. This study has closed the research gap displayed in Hendriks' et al (2015) study which stated that the lack of an effect for accent-product congruence could be explained by the low level of localness in radio commercials. Results have shown that even with a high level of visual and audible localness cues, no effect of accent-product congruence was found.

A reason why the regional origin markers did not have had the expected effect may be because the markers that were present were not visible or clear enough. Most local elements in the commercial were rather subtle, for example, a small corner of a Noord-Brabant flag tea towel visible under a cutting board, or regional holiday decorations that were difficult to see from a shot in the distance. It may be the case that the origin markers were not striking enough to have had an effect of localness on the participants. Future research may, therefore, want to include either more local elements to a TV commercial, or make the origin markers that are present more noticeable. It is also advisable to do a pre-test on the visibility of the regional origin markers. This way, the researchers can assure that the markers are sufficiently noticeable.

Furthermore, if the visual local origin markers were noticeable enough after all, it should be noted that the use of stereotypical imagery may not have the positive effect that was initially expected. The increase in awareness of the demeaning nature of stereotypes today and the proactive stance many organisations, educational facilities and activist groups take

against stereotyping through programmes, courses and organisational strategies may thus have been the reason why the local origin markers in the commercials did not lead to more positive evaluations (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015).

### **Limitations and further research**

The first limitation of this study is that no recognition question for the accents was added to the questionnaire. Because this item was not present, it could not be determined with complete certainty that the participants recognized all accents, regardless of the successful pre-tests that were carried out prior to the main experiment.

Secondly, the present study used a commercial where only one product was promoted and only one accent was used. It could have been possible that the product chosen for the commercial did not resonate with the participants and could have influenced their evaluations. By using a variety of products in the commercials influencing factors like personal preference, dietary restrictions etc. could be prevented. Furthermore, as the Noord-Brabant accent is quite well-known in the Netherlands, the effect of the regional accent on viewers' evaluations could have differed less from the standard accent than when a less well-known or more distinctive accent was used. Future research could therefore aim to generalize the results of this study by researching the effects of accent strength and localness with different accents or in different countries.

Thirdly, as no speaker was found who could record all three accents, the difference between the two speakers in the commercials could have influenced the evaluations of the participants. Although key factors such as gender and age of the speakers were kept constant, possible effects of the difference between speakers, such as pitch and hoarseness versus clarity, cannot be precluded. It is, therefore, of importance for future research to aim for one speaker that can record all accents, to be certain that a difference in speaker does not influence the results.

The presence or absence of local origin markers in the commercials was an aspect in this study that had not yet received much scholarly attention when combined with regional vs. standard accents. It was therefore somewhat difficult to determine to what extent local origin markers should be included in the commercials. When creating the commercials a balance needed to be found between making the origin markers noticeable enough to trigger possible effects of localness, but at the same ensure that the commercials were still realistic and not too over the top. As this study did not reveal significant main effects of localness it is recommended for future research to make the local origin markers more conspicuous and

noticeable in order find possible effects.

Lastly, the present study as well as multiple others in the research field of accentedness (Grondelaers et al., 2009; 2010, 2019; Hendriks et al., 2015, 2017, 2019; Heijmer & Vonk, 2002; Martin, 2002; Nejjari et al., 2012) have focused their studies on the effects of regional accents and localness in mostly Western countries. The use of regionally accented spokesperson and local origin markers did not yield much significant results in the present study. A reason for this could be that this type of advertising strategy is not as effective for Western cultures as many of them (including the Netherlands) are characterized by its directness in communication, whereas using local origin markers is quite an indirect way of promoting a product. It could, therefore, be advantageous to carry out more research similar to the present one in non-Western cultures characterized by indirect communication to check whether the results differ from those of the present study and earlier studies on accentedness and origin markers.

The present study has demonstrated that the use of regional accents in TV commercials is an intricate issue with varying results. As there is no clear general consensus on the use of regional accents in commercials yet, it is important for future research to investigate multiple possible paths of research. To date, research on the effects of regional accents in commercials has mostly been conducted with radio commercials and now TV commercials. It could be beneficial to uncover what effects regional accents may have on different types of commercials, think of print commercials such as flyers, billboard etc.

Furthermore, the channel through which the commercial is presented to the viewer might influence their evaluations as well. Future research could, as an example, examine the difference in evaluations of viewers who watch an advertisement on a television channel versus a social media app, or during a YouTube video.

The aim of this study was to close the research gaps present in the research field of accentedness and advertising, regarding the use of accents in TV commercials and the effects of visual as well as audible origin markers. This study contributes to the field of accentedness and advertising since its results on the evaluation of Speaker likability generally follow the same line of findings as previous research and thus provides support to the conclusions drawn earlier about the evaluation of nonstandard accented speakers. The present study was among the first studies in the field of accentedness to investigate the effects of accent strength and localness in TV commercials, which opens up multiple new paths for further research.

### **Practical implications**

The results of the present study may be significant for marketers working in the advertising discipline. The study provides support to marketers by contributing to a frame of reference regarding accent use and evaluation of the speaker. As the present study suggests that standard accented speakers and strong regionally accented speakers score higher on Speaker likability, marketers could find some support in these results when setting up commercial campaigns that could possibly include accented speakers.

Despite the participants' positive evaluation of speaker likability in the strong regional accent and standard accent it is of importance to note for marketers that this did not straightforwardly lead to higher purchase intention in the present study.

Lastly, recall might play a significant role for marketers when producing a commercial. The present study displayed how regional accents led to more brand recall than a standard accent. It may be beneficial to apply a regional accent in a commercial (campaign) or brand spokesperson when the marketer wishes to further increase brand memory in the mind of the consumer.

Overall, the present study has shown a variety of interesting results which could be of possible value in the marketing discipline. When opting to use a regional accent for a marketing campaign it is of importance to note that the use of regionally accented speakers has both positive and negative effects according to the present research. It is, therefore, advisable for marketers to have clear marketing goals set up when choosing the spokesperson for a brand or commercial campaign to be certain that the accent portrayed in the advertisement is the most fitting for the campaign, brand and product or service in question.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Complete Qualtrics questionnaire

---

#### Start of Block: Introduction

U wordt uitgenodigd om mee te doen aan een onderzoek naar de beoordeling van een nieuwe TV reclame. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Sophie Rikken, student aan de Radboud Universiteit. Meedoen aan het onderzoek houdt in dat u een korte reclame gaat bekijken en een online vragenlijst gaat invullen. De vragen hebben betrekking op de beoordeling van een nieuwe TV reclame en u zult tussendoor een korte puzzel gaan oplossen. Het invullen van de vragenlijst kost slechts 5 tot 10 minuten en helpt mij enorm met het uitvoeren van mijn onderzoek!

Door het volledig invullen van deze vragenlijst kunt u kans maken op een bol.com waardebon van 25 euro, deze wordt verloot onder de participanten van het onderzoek.

#### Vrijwillig

U doet vrijwillig mee aan dit onderzoek en kunt op elk moment tijdens het invullen van de vragenlijst stoppen. U hoeft niet aan te geven waarom u stopt. Omdat de data meteen geanonimiseerd worden, is het na het voltooien van het experiment niet mogelijk om uw onderzoeksgegevens te laten verwijderen.

#### Onderzoeksgegevens

Wat gebeurt er met mijn gegevens? De onderzoeksgegevens die in dit onderzoek worden verzameld zullen gebruikt worden voor datasets, artikelen en presentaties. Er wordt op discrete en beveiligde wijze volgens de privacy richtlijnen van de Radboud Universiteit met deze gegevens omgegaan.

Door te klikken op 'ik ga akkoord' geeft u aan dat u:

- Bovenstaande informatie heeft gelezen
- Instemt met deelname aan het onderzoek zoals in bovenstaande informatie is beschreven
- Begrijpt hoe de gegevens van het onderzoek bewaard zullen worden en waarvoor ze gebruikt zullen worden
- Vrijwillig meedoet aan het onderzoek
- 18 jaar of ouder bent

Als u niet mee wilt doen aan het onderzoek kunt u klikken op 'ik wil niet meedoen', u zult dan worden doorgestuurd naar het einde van deze vragenlijst.

Mocht u na het lezen van dit toestemmingsformulier nog vragen hebben dan kunt u mailen naar: [sophie.rikken@ru.nl](mailto:sophie.rikken@ru.nl)

Ik ga akkoord (1)

Ik wil niet meedoen (2)

---

#### Start of Block: Attitude towards the commercial

AttCom1 Ik vind deze reclame...

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Gedeeltelijk oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Gedeeltelijk mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Aantrekkelijk (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interessant (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Origineel (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leuk (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

AttCom2 Ik zou deze reclame vaker dan één keer willen zien

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Gedeeltelijk oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Gedeeltelijk mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

AttCom3 Ik vind deze reclame

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Gedeeltelijk oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Gedeeltelijk mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Geloofwaardig (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Realistisch (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professioneel (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Attitude towards the commercial







PurInt3 Ik zou dit product aanraden aan mensen in mijn directe omgeving

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Gedeeltelijk oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Gedeeltelijk mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

-----  
**End of Block: Purchase intention**

**Start of Block: Distraction**

Explanation Voordat je verder gaat met de vragenlijst ga je 15 anagrammen oplossen. Een anagram is een woord waarbij de letters door elkaar zijn gewisseld. Bijvoorbeeld peoln = lopen. Je gaat nu zo snel mogelijk van elk anagram dat je te zien krijgt een bestaand woord maken. Weet je een anagram niet? Vul dan een X in. Lukt het niet om binnen 5 minuten alle anagrammen op te lossen? dat is niet erg, Je wordt dan automatisch doorgestuurd naar de rest van de vragenlijst. Om je bekender te maken met de taak zullen de eerste vijf anagrammen gemakkelijker zijn. Hierna zullen deze toenemen in moeilijkheidsgraad. Succes!

-----

Ana 1 ENDAG

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Ana 2 AAGVR

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Ana 3 FSETE

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Ana 4 PTOSR

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Ana 5 TMIOE

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Ana 6 IASBS

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Ana 7 ZEORM

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---

Ana 8 KEENR

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Ana 9 CNHAT

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Ana 10 ETKST

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Ana 11 FREBI

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Ana 12 ATAKR

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Ana 13 EARKM

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Ana 14 EATTN

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---

Ana 15 JWZIE

---

---

**End of Block: Distraction**

---

**Start of Block: Recall**

Rec1 Wat was het merk dat werd genoemd in deze reclame?

---

---

Rec2 welk product werd er in deze reclame geadverteerd?

---

---

**End of Block: Recall**

---

**Start of Block: Comprehensibility of commercial**

Comp1 Ik begrijp de gehele reclame goed

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Gedeeltelijk oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Gedeeltelijk mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comp2 Ik kon de reclame goed verstaan

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Gedeeltelijk oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Gedeeltelijk mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**End of Block: Comprehensibility of commercial****Start of Block: Demographics**

DemoIntro U zult nu een aantal demografische vragen gaan beantwoorden

Demo 1 Wat voor dieet volgt u momenteel?

- Ik eet alles (1)
- Vegetariër (2)
- Pescotariër (3)
- Flexitariër (4)
- Veganist (5)
- Anders namelijk: (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Demo2 Hoe vaak eet u het product dat geadverteerd is in deze reclame?

	Nooit (1)	Zelden (2)	Soms (3)	Regelmatig (4)	Vaak (5)	Heel vaak (6)	Altijd (7)
... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demo3 Hoe lekker vindt u het product geadverteerd in de reclame?

	Helemaal niet lekker (1)	niet lekker (2)	Neutraal (3)	lekker (4)	Erg lekker (5)
... (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demo4 Hoe is uw houding ten opzichte van regionale accenten:

	Zeer negatief (1)	Negatief (2)	Een beetje negatief (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje positief (5)	Positief (6)	Zeer positief (7)
In het dagelijks leven (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In commerciële settingen zoals reclames (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demo5 Wat is uw leeftijd?

---

Demo6 Wat is uw geslacht?

- Vrouw (1)
  - Man (2)
  - Anders (3)
  - Dat zeg ik liever niet (4)
- 

Dem07 Wat is uw hoogst afgeronde of huidige opleidingsniveau?

- MBO (1)
  - HBO (2)
  - WO (3)
  - Anders namelijk: (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Demo8 Wat is uw werkstatus?

- Werkend (1)
  - Werkzoekende (2)
  - Studerend (3)
  - Gepensioneerd (4)
- 

Demo9 Wat is uw nationaliteit?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Demo10 In welke provincie woont u momenteel?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Demo11 In welke provincie bent u opgegroeid?

---

**End of Block: Demographics**

---

**Start of Block: Loterij**

Vul hier uw e-mailadres in als u kans wilt maken op de Bol.com bon ter waarde van 25 euro. Deze gegevens zullen uitsluitend voor de bekendmaking van de winnaar worden gebruikt. U zult dus niet worden gecontacteerd voor marketing of commerciële doeleinden. Als u uw e-mailadres invult zult u uiterlijk 3 weken na het invullen van de vragenlijst een e-mail ontvangen als u heeft gewonnen.

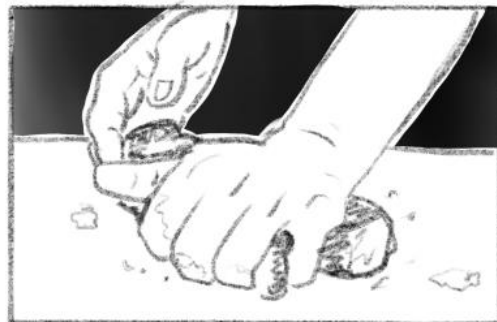
---

Appendix 2. Logo and storyboards design commercials

# DE *Bourgondische* BAKKER



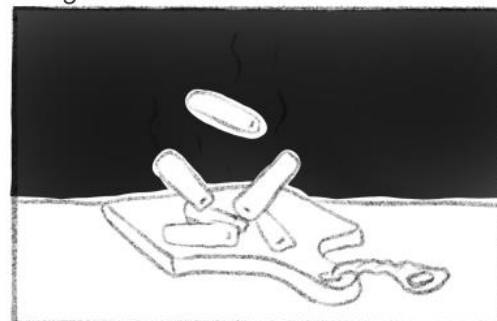
1. ZOOM ON SAUSAGE ROLLS.  
*Alleen deze week*



2. KNEADING DOUGH  
*Brabantse worstenbroodjes van de  
bourgondische bakker*



3. SLOMO FALLING SAUSAGE ROLLS.  
*De énige echt uit het Zuiden*

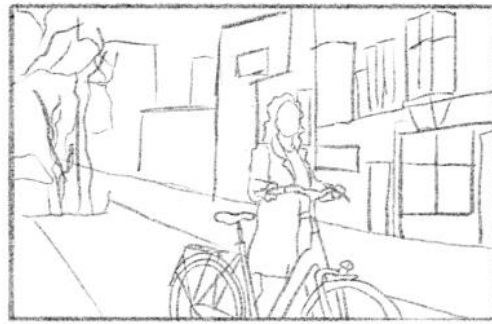


4. ROLLS FALL ON CUTTING BOARD.  
*Nu 1 + 1 gratis*



5. WOMAN ON BIKE.

Haal ze vandaag nog



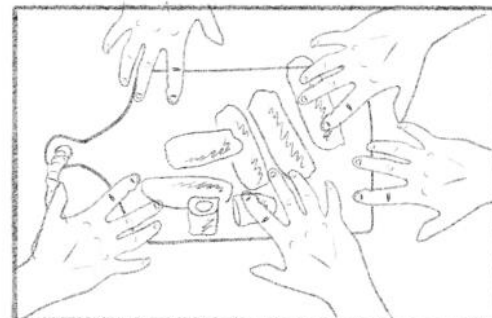
6. WOMAN STEPS OFF BIKE.

Bij de warme bakker bij jou om de hoek



7. SAUSAGE ROLL BEING OPENED.

En geniet thuis de van de smaak  
van Brabantse gezelligheid



8. HANDS GRAB SAUSAGE ROLLS.

Heb jij ze al geproefd?



1. ZOOM SAUSAGE ROLLS + CHECKERED CLOTH.

Alleen deze week



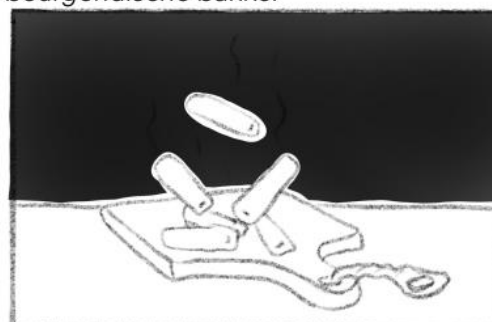
2. KNEADING DOUGH

Brabantse worstenbroodjes van de  
bourgondische bakker



3. CARNAVAL WAGON IN STREET.

De énieg echt uit het Zuiden



4. ROLLS FALL ON CUTTING BOARD.

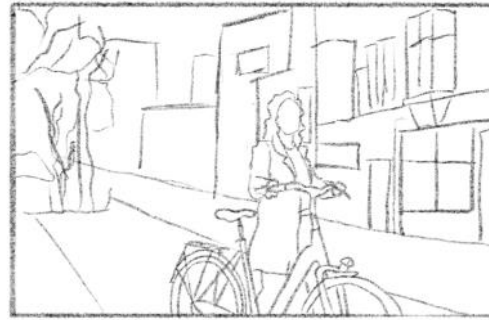
Nu 1 + 1 gratis





5. WOMAN ON BIKE.

*Haal ze vandaag nog*



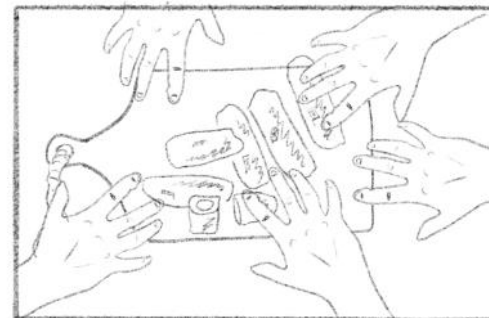
6. WOMAN STEPS OFF BIKE.

*Bij de warme bakker bij jou om de hoek*



7. PEOPLE DRINKING + FUN TOGETHER.

*En geniet thuis de van de smaak  
van Brabantse gezelligheid*



8. HANDS GRAB SAUSAGE ROLLS WITH NB FLAGS.

*Heb jij ze al geproefd?*

### **Appendix 3. Digital links to produced commercials**

#### 1. Local AN commercial

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXI1hn3dauc&ab\\_channel=SophieRikken](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXI1hn3dauc&ab_channel=SophieRikken)

#### 2. Local NBW commercial

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWpXZjjTdLw&ab\\_channel=SophieRikken](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWpXZjjTdLw&ab_channel=SophieRikken)

#### 3. Local NBS commercial

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5chRqeq-1Y&ab\\_channel=SophieRikken](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5chRqeq-1Y&ab_channel=SophieRikken)

#### 4. Nonlocal AN commercial

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qJFMagrgpM&ab\\_channel=SophieRikken](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qJFMagrgpM&ab_channel=SophieRikken)

#### 5. Nonlocal NBW commercial

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnkC-QYnYic&ab\\_channel=SophieRikken](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnkC-QYnYic&ab_channel=SophieRikken)

#### 6. Nonlocal NBS commercial

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIbPrcnpejo&ab\\_channel=SophieRikken](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIbPrcnpejo&ab_channel=SophieRikken)

