The Cross-Cultural Effects of the Use of Intensifiers in Web-Advertisements on English and Dutch Consumers' Attitudes Towards the Advertisement, Brand and Purchase Intention

Master's Thesis

Student:

Renske Jacobs

s4241886

lem.jacobs@student.ru.nl

Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Nijmegen, June 2017

Supervisor:

Dr. U. Nederstigt

Radboud University

u.nederstigt@let.ru.nl

Abstract

An increasing number of companies are using the limited spaces of social media sites to advertise their services and products. In order to stand out, companies frequently use intensifiers to trigger attention from web-users, yet the effects of these intensifiers in online web-advertisements had not been investigated to date. This study investigated the cross-cultural effects of different types of intensifiers in web-advertisements on Dutch and English consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement and brand and their purchase intention. A between-subjects design was employed existing of three participant groups, each counting 90 participants: Dutch participants subjected to Dutch advertisements, Dutch participants subjected to English advertisements and English advertisements. Each participant was subjected to 5 web-advertisements in either one of three conditions: web-advertisements without intensifiers, with lexical intensifiers or with semantic intensifiers. Results showed that English participants scored significantly higher on attitude towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention than Dutch participants, irrespective of the types of intensifiers used. A common found trend was that advertisements without intensifiers often yielded more favourable attitudes and purchase intention than advertisements with lexical intensifiers. For the Dutch participant groups, semantic intensifiers also evoked more positive attitudes towards the brand and purchase intention than lexical intensifiers, irrespective of the language of the advertisement. For the English participant group semantic intensifiers yielded a more positive attitude towards the advertisement and a higher purchase intention. It can be concluded that companies evoke more favourable attitudes and a higher purchase intention when refraining from using lexical intensifiers in web-advertisements and instead use semantic intensifiers or no intensifiers at all. Future experimental studies could focus on the relationship between intensifiers in web-advertisements and the credibility of the advertisement and brand to investigate whether this affects consumers' attitudes.

Keywords: cross-cultural, intensifiers, language, online, advertising, semantic, lexical

1. Introduction

An increasing number of companies are advertising on social media to reach their target audience. It is expected that in 2017 the social media advertising expenditure will exceed 35 billion American dollars globally (eMarketer, 2015). Although social media allow companies to reach an enormous number of people worldwide, there are also limitations in advertising on these media. The advertisement sizes on social network sites are relatively small, as the advertisements are often displayed in the banner (e.g. on Facebook) or in the size of a single post (e.g. on Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram). With a limited number of words, companies have to persuade social media users to click on the advertisement which redirects them to the advertised product, service or corporate website. What we often find in such compact web-advertisements is intensified language, which companies use to trigger attention from web-users, as can be seen in the example in figure 1.

Figure 1. Example of web-advertisement

After going through many web-advertisements, it became apparent that language in such advertisements is usually intensified in three ways: by using an adjective that can be replaced by a less extreme adjective with the same meaning (e.g. *amazing* view instead of *pretty* view, *incredible* prices instead of *good* prices), by adding intensifying adverbs to the text (e.g. *very* warm, *really* tasty) and finally, by using a superlative adjective in the text (*best* food, *wildest* waves). An example of this type of advertising and intensification through the use of extreme adjectives can be found in figure 1. Research has shown that the use of intensifying language

increases persuasion in many different contexts (Hamilton, Hunter & Burgoon, 1990; Long & Christensen, 2008; Craig & Blankenship, 2011; Burgers & De Graaf, 2013; etc.). However, only very little is known about the effects of the use of intensified language within the context of advertising (Den Ouden & Van Wijk, 2007). For example, it has not been studied whether intensified language in advertisements has an effect on purchase intention or consumers' attitudes towards the product advertised and the brand itself. This study therefore aimed to investigate the cross-cultural effects of intensifying language in web-advertisements on Dutch and English consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Intensifying adverbs and adjectives

Intensified language was first defined by Bowers (1963) as 'the quality of language which indicates the degree to which the speaker's attitude toward a concept deviates from neutrality'(p.146). The definitions given by language researchers after Bowers (1963), do not deviate from the notion that intensified language aids expressions to deviate from neutrality, for example, Burgoon, Jones and Stewart (1975) defined intensified language as 'language indicating the degree and direction of distance from neutrality' (p.241). A more recent definition of intensified language, given by Renkema (1997) differed slightly from the previously given definition. Renkema (1997) chose to define intensified language based on its linguistic characteristic which allows speakers to downtown and amplify it. Intensified language was described by Renkema (1997) as 'a formulation that can be replaced by a weaker variant' (p. 497). In his corpus study, Renkema (1997) categorized intensified language into a total of 21 categories based on whether an intensifier can be replaced by a downtoned variant (e.g. *amazing* food - *good* food, *horrific* story - *scary* story) or can be completely left out of the sentence without changing its meaning, (e.g. *very* nice - nice). This study only focused on intensifying adverbs and extreme adjectives, as these types of intensifiers were found to be most commonly used in short web-ads. Prior to this study, a total of 20 web-advertisements that were obtained through the social media website Facebook were investigated and the most frequently found intensifiers were extreme adjectives, intensifying adverbs and superlative adjectives. Unfortunately, taking into consideration superlative

adjectives would have been beyond the scope of this thesis research, which is why this study strictly focused on investigating intensifying adverbs and extreme adjectives.

Since this study exclusively focused on these two types of intensifiers, only two of Renkema's (1997) categories were considered relevant to this study: lexical intensifiers and semantic intensifiers. Renkema (1997) identified lexical intensifiers as adverbs that could be left out without changing the lexical definition of the sentence (e.g. *really* strange - strange). The second relevant category is semantic intensifiers, which Renkema (1997) identified as adjectives that can be downtoned (*breathtaking* view - *pretty* view). This means that, according to Renkema's (1997) classification, intensifying adverbs are referred to as lexical intensifiers and extreme adjectives are referred to as semantic intensifiers.

Lexical and semantic intensifiers can be divided into two categories: amplifiers and downtoners (Xiao & Tao, 2007; Mahmood, 2015). Amplifiers are characterized by their ability to increase or upscale the intensity from a neutral description. Examples of amplifying adverbs are 'very', 'really' and 'absolutely' (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1987) and examples of amplifying adjectives are 'amazing', 'fabulous' and 'fantastic' (Schellens & Van Mulken, 2012). Downtoners also intensify the meaning of a sentence, but downscale the expression in the sentence, e.g. 'fairly' and 'pretty' are downtoning lexical intensifiers (Nevalainen & Rissanen, 2002) and 'disgusting' and 'horrible' are examples of downtoning semantic intensifiers (Schellens & Van Mulken, 2012). Because this study focuses on the effects of intensifiers within the context of advertising, in which the language use is commonly characterized by words that aim to provoke positive feelings, this study deals with amplifiers in the form of lexical and semantic intensifiers only. Quirk et al. (1987) further categorized amplifiers into two categories, namely maximizers and boosters. Intensifying adverbs that expressed the upper scale or most extreme version of the word were classified as maximizers (e.g. totally, completely), where boosters were characterized by the ability to upscale the expression to beyond neutral, but not to its fullest extreme (e.g. greatly, very) (Quirk et al., 1987). Although Quirk et al. (1987) considered the distinction to be evident, other researchers did not attribute the same words to the same categories as Quirk et al. (1987) did (Xiao & Tao, 2007). To prevent this study from categorical confusion, no distinction will

be made between maximizers and boosters. Instead, lexical and semantic intensifiers that meet the previously provided description of 'amplifiers' were used in this study.

2.2 Previous research on intensifiers

Intensifiers have been the subject of several studies. To date, most studies on intensifiers focused on the occurrence and/or use of intensifiers within specific contexts or cultures (e.g. Romero, 2012; Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005; Siemund, 2000; Renkema, van den Bergh, Janssen, Bertens, & Damen, 1997). To our knowledge, around a dozen studies focused on the effects of intensified written language on the recipient of the communicational action. The effects known to date suggest that intensifiers can have both positive and negative effects on readers. Positive effects were found by McEwen and Greenberg (1970), for example, who studied the effects of language intensity on message and source credibility. In their study, they used an informative message, which attacked the topic of brushing your teeth after every meal. They showed that participants rated the message that was manipulated as highly intense to be clearer and its source was rated more dynamic as opposed to the low intensity message. Highly intense messages were manipulated by adding lexical intensifiers, such as 'greatly' and 'extremely', where lowly intense messages were formed by adding downtoning modifiers, such as 'perhaps' and 'slightly'. In a secondary analysis, McEwen and Greenberg (1970) found that the highly intense message was not only perceived to be significantly clearer than the low intensity message, but was also rated as more logical and its source was considered to be more trustworthy, qualified and dynamic. The finding that highly intense texts was considered to be clearer is supported by a more recent study on the effects of intensifiers on message processing and behavioural intentions (Craig & Blankenship, 2011). In their dual experiment, Craig and Blankenship (2011) let undergraduate psychology students evaluate editorials as part of a course program. These editorials were manipulated as lowly and highly intense and after the evaluation, students were asked to complete a survey measuring emotionality of the language used and attitudes towards the language and message (e.g. beneficial, wise, good, favourable and desirable and their opposites) and agreement with the message. The first experiment, using an editorial about nuclear power, showed that intensifiers significantly increased message processing, which means that readers were more open to taking the information provided in the editorial on board. In their second study (Craig & Blankenship, 2011), a different topic

(comprehensive final exams) was used to rule out possible influence of salience of a topic. In this second study the dependent variable 'willingness to sign a petition' in favour of the topic discussed in the editorial was incorporated into the survey. Results showed that intensified language led to increased intentions to sign the petition as well as increased message processing.

Burgers and De Graaf (2013) also found positive effects when they investigated whether intensifiers in news reports had an effect on readers' sensationalism perceptions. They also found intensifiers to increase readers' perceived newsworthiness and positively affect their attitude towards the news article. In their study, attitude referred to the level of entertainment and appropriateness of the language used in the article. The findings of Burgers and De Graaf (2013) however, were not limited to positive effects. They discovered that, although readers considered a news report with intensified language newsworthy and entertaining, they also tended to perceive the articles as less credible and therefore had less appreciation towards the message.

Burgers and De Graaf (2013) were not the only researchers who found negative effects of intensifiers on readers' perceptions. In their study, Den Ouden and Van Wijk (2007) focused on how the use of intensifiers in advertising directed at Dutch youngsters affected perceived message clarity, text attractiveness and appropriateness. They used two different product advertisements (DVD and hair gel), of which they made three versions: neutral, regular and innovative. The neutral version contained no intensifiers, the regular version contained 8 classic intensifiers, which were characterized by their common use and their inclusion in the national Dutch dictionary (e.g. really, very, totally), and the innovative version contained 8 intensifiers, of which 6 innovative ones. Innovative intensifiers were characterized by their common use by youngsters, although these are not included in the national Dutch dictionary (e.g. cool, flipping, sick)[1]. In their experiment, Den Ouden and Van Wijk (2007) showed that the innovative versions of the advertisements were not rated more positively on message clarity, text attractiveness and appropriateness. Classic intensifiers were found to have no

---

[1] These are English translations of Dutch intensifiers, which are considered to have the same level of extremity and level of use among English youngsters

effects on message clarity, text attractiveness and appropriateness, where innovative intensifiers were found to negatively affect those variables.

In sum, intensifiers have been shown to affect readers perceptions and attitudes across different contexts. The direction of these effects differ strongly across previously performed studies. In all studies described above, larger pieces of text, such as press releases and news articles, were used to test the effects of intensifiers and only one study (Den Ouden & Van Wijk, 2007) focused on the effects of intensifiers within an advertising context. This context however, is extremely relevant, especially in the online environment where consumers are continuously approached by short web-advertisements. Intensifiers are commonly found in short advertisements, but how effective are they? The answer to this question would be extremely useful for corporate marketers and reputation managers, as this knowledge would enable them to make informed choices in terms of vocabulary use in advertisements. This study aimed to shed more light on this particular case and used the following research question to do so:

RQ: What are the effects of intensifiers in web-advertisements on Dutch and English consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and on their purchase intention?

In order to structure the study, the main research question was divided into the following sub questions.

SQ1: What are the effects of intensifiers in web-advertisements on Dutch consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention?

SQ2: What are the effects of intensifiers in web-advertisements on English consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention?

2.3 Cross-cultural effects of intensifiers
In the past three decades, the use of English in Dutch written advertising has increased significantly (Renkema, Vallen & Hoeken, 2001; Gerritsen et al., 2007). Renkema, Vallen and Hoeken (2001) stated in their study that approximately 15 percent of all advertisements

directed at Dutch target groups was completely written in English and it is likely that this number has increased over the past sixteen years. Not only will the Dutch public come across advertisements that were intendedly written in English for the Dutch, but it will also be confronted with English web-advertisements that are directed at a global audience. Since internet has experienced tremendous growth over the last two decades, consumers have been given access to a much larger market. Consumers can now place orders with foreign shops online and visit global online social networks, which has led them to come across web-advertisements with English slogans and websites with English product descriptions (e.g. Nike, AirBnB, McDonald's). Despite the fact that online marketing tools such as Google Adwords allow companies to automatically translate advertisements to local languages based on the geographic locations of computers, many large companies still choose to publish their corporate website and web-advertisements in English (e.g. Mondelez International). The language in advertisements is, however, often of greater importance than companies expect, especially when the advertisement is exposed to a global public (De Mooij, 2005). Both non-native and native speakers of English may stem from a completely different cultural background, both in language and norms. To illustrate, the Netherlands scores much lower on masculinity (14) than the UK does (66) on the cultural dimensions from Hofstede (www.hofstede-center.nl, 2017). This implies that the English culture is far more masculine, which means that the nation is overall more success- and achievement-oriented, more focused on material rewards and generally more assertive, as opposed to feminine cultures (Hofstede, 2001). This difference is relevant to the current topic, as previous studies indicated that masculine cultures (as opposed to feminine cultures) utter a more elaborate verbal communication style (Gudykunst & Ting Toomey, 1988; Fernández, Carrera Levillain, Sánchez Fernández, Paez & Candia, 2000) and more extreme response styles in surveys (Johnson, Kulesa, Llc, Cho en Shavitt, 2005). The extent to which people express themselves verbally and the level of extremity in survey answers could be an indication of the number of intensifiers used in written expressions, i.e. the more elaborate the verbal expression, the more an elaborate written expression is expected. In terms of elaborate verbal expression, masculine cultures have been shown to emphasize expressions of emotions that reflect pride, assertiveness and anger and tend to de-emphasize expressions of emotions that display weakness (Fernandez et al., 2000). Emphasis in this sense refers to the public display of such emotions through verbal and written expression. Since one of the functions of intensifiers is to

enhance the extremity of the expression (Renkema, 1997) it is expected that cultures in which extreme response styles are preferred and certain emotions tend to be vocalized more expressively, more intense language would be preferred. Jacobs and Hocks (2013) tested this theory. They carried out a study on cross-cultural differences in language intensity in online hotel reviews written by Dutch and English web-users. Consistent with the hypothesis that native speakers of English would use more intensifiers to express themselves based on the idea that a more masculine culture tends to use more elaborate verbal communication (given that assertiveness and pride are emotions linked to expressing opinion in online reviews) (Gudykunst & Ting Toomey, 1988; Fernandez et al., 2000), they found that native speakers of English did indeed use significantly more intensifiers in hotel reviews than native speakers of Dutch (Jacobs & Hocks, 2013). In their corpus study, Jacobs and Hocks (2013) investigated the difference in number of intensifiers occurring in reviews per nationality and identified the types of intensifiers used, which they coded according to the Tiny TIM model, based on the TIM model designed by Van Mulken and Schellens (2012). Using the Tiny TIM model, Jacobs and Hocks (2013) divided intensifiers into three categories, namely lexical intensifiers (e.g. *very*), semantic intensifiers existing of one word (e.g. *thrilling*) and semantic intensifiers existing of more than one word (e.g. *raining cats and dogs*). Their study showed a significant correlation between the language of the review and the number of intensifiers used. With their study, Jacobs and Hocks (2013) showed that there is a difference in the occurrence and use of intensifiers in English and Dutch online writing. Not only did they show that native speakers of English made more use of intensifiers in their writing, they also showed that there is a small significant difference in the use of the various types of intensifiers. Native speakers of English were found to use slightly more lexical intensifiers (46%) as opposed to native speakers of Dutch (39%). Another interesting finding by Jacobs and Hocks (2013) was that within this category native speakers of English used the intensifying adverb 'very' in 72 % of the cases when intensifying their language using a lexical verb. In Dutch, 'very' typically translates to 'heel', 'erg' or 'zeer', and these words were used less often within the same category, specifically in 62% of the cases. They also revealed that native speakers of Dutch used semantic intensifiers existing of one word more often (45%) than native speakers of English (39%). In the reviews, both native speakers of Dutch and native speakers of English rarely used semantic intensifiers existing of more than one word (respectively 3% and 4%), which is why the present study did not create a separate category for this type of intensifier.

The preference for using certain types intensifiers may be a reflection of what is preferred in reading, however, these differences in use of intensifiers found by Jacobs and Hocks (2013) have not been subjected to research. Investigating whether these differences do indeed reflect a preference for certain types of intensifiers when reading texts however, would be interesting as this may affect consumers' attitudes differently cross-culturally. When global web-advertisements are automatically translated through Google Adwords or a similar automatic tool, nuances in preference may not be taken into consideration. It is therefore extremely useful to investigate the extent to which different types of intensifiers affect the attitudes towards the advertisement cross-culturally. Is a web-advertisement with lexical intensifiers appreciated more or less than a web-advertisement with semantic intensifiers by the Dutch and English public? And does it matter whether Dutch consumers receive a Dutch version of a written advertisement or the same advertisement in English? The present study aimed to answer these questions. If Dutch consumers respond more positively to Dutch reviews - which contain presumably less lexical, but more semantic intensifiers than English reviews - then it would be advisable to offer the Dutch public the web-advertisement written in Dutch. If there are no differences found, companies could save money by spreading their global English advertisement to web users in the Netherlands. In order to investigate whether different intensifiers affect Dutch and English consumers differently, the following sub questions were posed.

SQ3: To what extent do the different types of intensifiers in English web-advertisements affect Dutch consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention as opposed to Dutch web-advertisements?

S4: To what extent do the different types of intensifiers in English web-advertisements affect English consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention as opposed to Dutch consumers?

3. Method

3.1 Materials

In this experiment Dutch and English participants were subjected to a total of five web-advertisements either without, with lexical or with semantic intensifiers. The products advertised in the advertisements were a digital photocamera, shoes, a toothbrush, a hotel and crisps. These products were chosen as a range of products that differ in levels of salience and price are likely to minimize differences in effects caused by the product in the advertisement. For all advertisements a non-brand was used to ensure that ready existing attitudes would not influence the attitude towards the advertisement and brand, as well as the purchase intention.
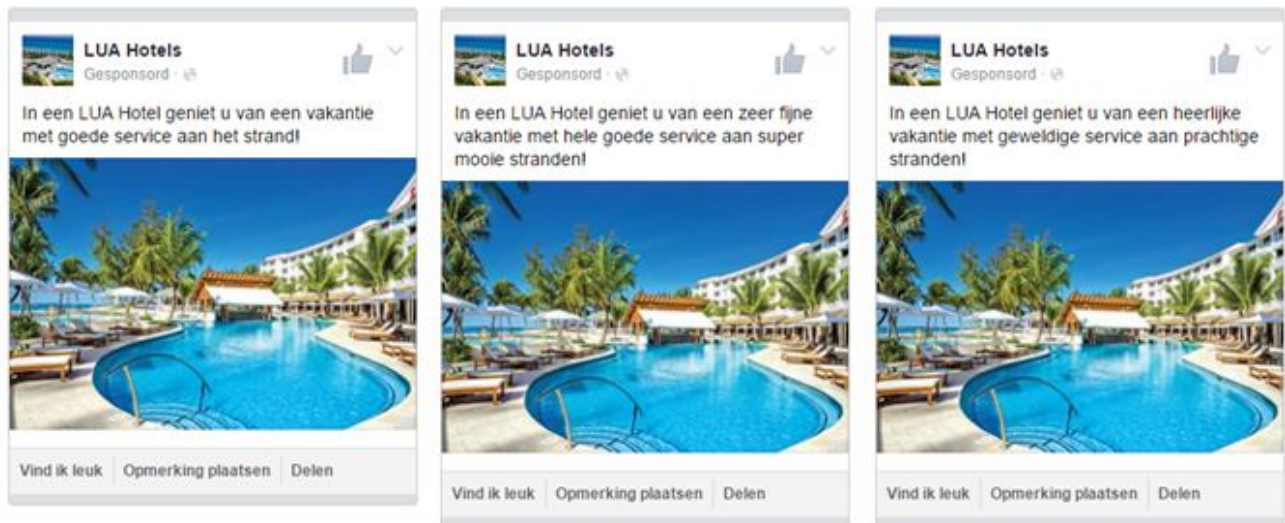
Figure 2. Examples of Dutch web-advertisements without, with lexical and with semantic intensifiers

In total, six different different web-advertisement types were created. For each advertisement type, all five advertisements were written in the same language (i.e. Dutch or English) and contained either lexical intensifiers, semantic intensifiers or no intensifiers at all. The different advertisements can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 2 shows examples of the advertisements in three Dutch conditions. The advertisement on the far left contains no intensifiers, the web-advertisement in the middle contains lexical intensifiers and the web-advertisement on the far right contains semantic intensifiers.

Figure 3 shows examples of the advertisements in three English conditions, with a different product. In this figure, the web-advertisement on the left is the English condition without

Figure 3. Examples of English web-advertisements without, with lexical and with semantic intensifiers

intensifiers, the middle web-advertisement depicts the condition with lexical intensifiers and the web-advertisement on the far right contains semantic intensifiers.

All web-advertisements were created using the original Facebook web-advertisement tool which any company has access to through a corporate Facebook page. It was chosen to use the official Facebook web-advertisement tool, so that the web-advertisements would be accurate simulations of real web-advertisements which subjects are subjected to in everyday online activity. In order to reach this tool, corporate Facebook pages of the fake brands were created but remained unpublished. After production of the web-advertisements, the corporate Facebook pages of the non-brands were deleted.

The images used in the advertisements were pretested to ensure that each picture was considered to be equally interesting and appealing. The pre-test was carried out among 6 Dutch and 4 English participants. In total five participants were female, of which 3 were Dutch. The pre-test took place in three separate occasions, with five days in between each session. The reason for this five-day separation was to eliminate the possibility that participants would compare pictures which depict the same product, which could affect the validity of the results. Leaving five days in between each session however, increased the likelihood of participants being unbiased by previous pictures. For each advertisement three optional pictures were shown to the participants, divided over the three different experiments. In the first part of the experiment participants were asked to rate the perceived level of

interest, beauty and attractiveness of the first five images of each advertisement presented in the online questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. Five days later, the same participants were asked to do the same, with five different pictures for each advertisement. Another five days later, the same participants were again subjected to five new images for each advertisements. Based on the results of this pre-test, five suitable images were chosen which all scored between 4 and 4.5 on the five-point Likert scale of interest, beauty and attractiveness.

3.2 Subjects

In total, 270 participants took part in this study, of which 180 were Dutch and 90 were English. Of the overall sample, 187 participants were female. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 79 years old with an average of 35,7 ($M = 35.89$, $SD = 14.75$). Of all participants, 95,5% used Facebook at least once per day. Educational levels ranged from primary school to postdoctoral level. The most frequent educational level was University degree level (33,3%) followed by NVQ level 3 and 4 (30,4%). The subjects were divided into three participant groups existing of 90 participants each. These groups were: Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch web-advertisements, Dutch participants who were subjected to English web-advertisements and English participants who were subjected to English web-advertisements. A Chi square test showed that there was a significant difference in the gender between the three groups (χ^2 (12,270) = 8.59, p = .014)[2]. Another Chi square test showed that there was a significant difference in educational level between the three participant groups (χ^2 (12,270) = 38.42, $p < .001$)[3]. In the Dutch sample which was subjected to Dutch advertisements, 73% was female and the ages ranged from 18 to 67, with an average age of 32 ($M = 32.42$, $SD = 13.02$). The most frequent educational level in this participant group was university degree level (38%), followed by NVQ level 3 and 4 (31%). Of the Dutch participant group which was subjected to English web-advertisements, 77% was female and ages ranged from 18 to 79, with an average age of 31 ($M = 31.13$, $SD = 13.94$). The most frequent educational level was university of applied sciences, which was represented by 37% of this group. The second most frequent educational level was university degree level (36%).

---

[2] This significant difference should have been noted during the statistical treatment of this study, but unfortunately doing so is beyond the scope of this thesis.
[3] This significant difference should have been noted during the statistical treatment of this study, but unfortunately doing so is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In the English sample, ages ranged from 18 to 69, with an average age of 43,5 ($M = 43.51$, $SD = 14.12$). The most frequent educational level among English participants was NVQ level 3 and 4 (36%), followed by university degree level (27%). The mean age from the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements ($M = 32.42$, $SD = 13.02$) was shown to be significantly lower (t (178) $= 5.47$, $p < .001$) than the mean age of the English group subjected to English advertisements ($M = 43.51$, $SD = 14.12$). Also, the mean age from the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements ($M = 31.13$, $SD = 13.94$) was shown to be significantly lower (t (178) $= 5.92$, $p < .001$) than the mean age of the English group subjected to English advertisements ($M = 43.51$, $SD = 14.12$).

3.3 Design

In this experiment a 2x3 between-subjects design was used with a Dutch control group (Figure 2). A total of 90 Dutch participants was exposed to the English web-advertisements and 90 English participants were subjected to English advertisements. The Dutch control group was subjected to Dutch advertisements to identify whether attitudes towards advertisements and brands formed by Dutch participants subjected to English web-advertisements are significantly different to scores from Dutch participants subjected to Dutch web-advertisements.

Dutch participants were subjected to either English or Dutch web-advertisements and English participants were subjected to English web-advertisements. Each participant was subjected to the advertisements in one condition: either without intensifiers, with lexical or with semantic intensifiers. This resulted in nine different conditions in this between-subjects design, which is displayed in figure 2.
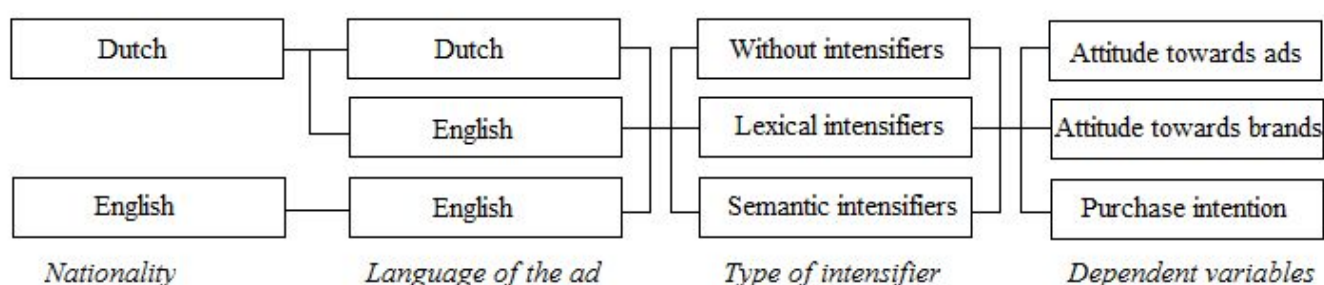

Figure 2. Analytical model

3.4 Instruments

In this study, three dependent variables were measured: consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, consumers' attitudes towards the brand behind the advertisement and the purchase intention. The variable *Attitude towards the advertisement* was operationalized as the evaluative response to the commercial message (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and measured using the three semantic differential scale developed by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989): good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant and favourable/unfavourable. For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was very good: α = .92. For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was good: α = .89. For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was very good: α = .89. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was very good: α = .92. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was very good: α = .91. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was good: α = .82. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was very good: α = .92. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was very good: α = .92. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the advertisement* comprising three items was very good: α = .92.

The variable *Attitude towards the brands* was operationalized as the evaluative response to the advertiser behind the commercial message (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and was measured using the same semantic differential scale developed by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989), existing of three-items: good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant and favourable/unfavourable. For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .99. For the Dutch

participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .91. For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was good: α = .87. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .97. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .95. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .92. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .98. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .98. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Attitude towards the brand* comprising three items was very good: α = .98.

Finally, the dependent variable *Purchase intention* was operationalized as the likelihood of consumers buying the product after exposure to the advertisement and was measured using a scale developed by Hornikx, De Groot, Timmermans, Mariëns, & Verckens (2010) existing of 4 items, each with a 7-point Likert scale anchored with 'very unlikely' (=1) and 'very likely' (=5). For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was good: α = .89. For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was good: α = .87. For the Dutch participant group subjected to Dutch advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was acceptable: α = 74. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was good: α = .85. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was good: α = .87. For the Dutch participant group subjected to English advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was

very good: α = .91. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was good: α = .87. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements with lexical intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was very good: α = .91. For the English participant group subjected to English advertisements with semantic intensifiers, the reliability of *Purchase intention* comprising four items was very good: α = .90.

3.5 Procedure

The participants who took part in this study were approached via a Facebook message which provided a link to the online questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed using Qualtrics. Participants were given a brief introduction to inform them about the content and length of the experiment. In the introduction the participants were asked to give their opinion on Facebook web-advertisements that were in the making for newly launched brands and tested before publication. After reading the brief introduction, participants were made aware that starting the survey indicated that they had given informed consent to take part in this study. They were presented with five advertisements successively and after each advertisement a questionnaire followed. The total questionnaire took approximately 5 minutes to fill out. Collection of the data took two weeks.

Statistical treatments

In order to answer the research questions, two-way ANOVAs were carried out.

4. Results

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations (between brackets) of the Attitude towards the advertisements, Attitude towards the brands and Purchase intention per Participant group

	Dutch group Dutch ads	Dutch group English ads	English group English ads
	n = 90	n = 90	n = 90
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Attitude ads	4.51 (.11)	4.65 (.11)	5.19 (.11)
Attitude brands	4.29 (.09)	4.25 (.09)	4.74 (.09)
Purchase intention	3.26 (12)	3.29 (.12)	4.03 (.12)

4.1 Attitude towards the advertisement

The two-way ANOVA with as factors Participant group (Dutch subjected to Dutch ads/Dutch subjected to English ads/English subjected to English ads) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the advertisement showed a significant main effect of Participant group (F (2,261) = 12.01, p = .001, η^2 = .04). Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements (M = 4.51, SD = .11) were found to have a significantly lower attitude towards the advertisements than English participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 5.19, SD = .11). Also, as shown in table 1, Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 4.65, SD = .11) were found to have a significantly more negative attitude towards the advertisements than English participants subjected to English advertisements (M = 5.19, SD = .11). These results are displayed in table 1. A main effect of Type of intensifier on Attitude towards the advertisements was also found (F (2,261) = 6.31, p = .004, η^2 = .04). Irrespective of their nationality, participants who were subjected to the advertisements without intensifiers (M = 4.92, SD = .11) turned out to have a significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisements than participants subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 4.49, SD = .11). In addition, participants who

were subjected to advertisements with semantic intensifiers ($M = 4.95$, $SD = .11$) turned out to have a significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisements than participants subjected to the advertisements with lexical intensifiers ($M = 4.49$, $SD = .11$), irrespective of their nationality. The results of this two-way ANOVA are presented in table 2. Furthermore, the interaction between Participant group and Type of intensifier was not significant (F $(2,261) = .39$, $p = .675$)

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations (between brackets) of the Attitude towards the advertisements per Type of intensifier and Participant group (1 = very negative, 7 = very positive)

	Dutch group Dutch ads	Dutch group English ads	English group English ads	Total
	n = 90	n = 90	n = 90	n = 270
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
No intensifiers	4.80 (.93)	4.77 (.97)	5.19 (1.20)	4.92 (.11)
Lexical intensifiers	4.10 (1.15)	4.32 (.85)	5.05 (1.38)	4.49 (.11)
Semantic intensifiers	4.64 (1.02)	4.86 (.86)	5.33 (.91)	4.95 (.11)
Total	4.51 (.11)	4.65 (.11)	5.19 (.11)	

In order to find out which factors affect the significant differences found in the previous test comparing the three participant groups, multiple two-way ANOVAs were carried out. For the comparison of the Dutch participants who were subjected to English and the Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements, a two-way ANOVA was carried out with as factors Language of advertisements (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the advertisement. The two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of Type of intensifier (F $(2,174) = 6.72$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .07$). Irrespective of language of the advertisement, Dutch participants who were subjected to

advertisements without intensifiers (M = 4.78, SD = .13) were shown to have a significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisement than Dutch participants who were subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 4.21, SD = .13). In addition, Dutch participants who were shown advertisements with semantic intensifiers (M = 4.75, SD = .13) were also shown to have a more positive attitude towards the advertisement than Dutch participants who were shown advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 4.21, SD = .13), irrespective of the language of the advertisement. There was no significant effect found for Language of the advertisements (F (1,174) = .91, p = .342). In addition, the interaction between Language of the advertisements and Type of intensifier was not significant (F (2,174) = .31, p = .731).

For the comparison of Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements and English participants who were subjected to English advertisements, a two-way ANOVA with as factors Nationality (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the advertisement was carried out. This two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of Nationality (F (1,174) = 11.94, p = .001, η^2 = .06). As shown in table 2, English participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 5.19, SD = .11) were shown to have a significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisements than Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 4.65, SD = .11). A marginally significant effect was found for Type of intensifier (F (2,174) = 2.52, p = .084). Irrespective of the nationality of the participants, participants who were subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers (M = 4.98, SD = .14) were shown to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the English advertisements than participants who were subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 4.68, SD = .14). In addition, the interaction between Nationality and Type of intensifier turned out to be not significant (F (2,174) = .39, p = .677).

The two-way ANOVA with as factors Language of the advertisements (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the advertisement showed a significant main effect of Language of the advertisements (F (1,174) = 16.71, p < .001, η^2 = .09). As shown in table 2, English participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 5.19, SD = .12) were shown to have a significantly more positive attitude

towards the advertisements than Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements ($M = 4.51$, $SD = .12$). A marginally significant effect was found for Type of intensifier ($F (2,174) = 2.81$, $p = .063$). Irrespective of their nationality, participants who were subjected to advertisements in their native language without intensifiers ($M = 4.99$, $SD = .14$) were shown to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisements than participants who were subjected to advertisements in their native language with lexical intensifiers ($M = 4.57$, $SD = .14$). Also, participants who were subjected to advertisements in their native language with semantic intensifiers ($M = 4.99$, $SD = .14$) were found to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisements than participants who were shown advertisements in their native language with lexical intensifiers ($M = 4.57$, $SD = .14$), irrespective of their nationality. In addition, the interaction between Language of the advertisement and Type of intensifier was not significant ($F (2,174) = .94$, $p = .391$).

4.2 Attitude towards the brand

The two-way ANOVA with as factors Participant group (Dutch subjected to Dutch ads/Dutch subjected to English ads/English subjected to English ads) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the brand showed a significant main effect of Participant group ($F (1,261) = 16.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$). Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .09$) were found to have a significantly lower attitude towards the brands than English participants who were subjected to English advertisements ($M = 4.74$, $SD = .09$). Also, Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements ($M = 4.25$, $SD = .09$) were found to have a significantly more negative attitude towards the brands than English participants subjected to English advertisements ($M = 4.74$, $SD = .09$). The above mentioned results are presented in table 1. Also, a main effect of Type of intensifier on Attitude towards the brand was found ($F (2,261) = 3.56$, $p = .030$, $\eta^2 = .03$). Irrespective of their nationality, participants who were subjected to the advertisements without intensifiers ($M = 4.53$, $SD = .09$) turned out to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisements than participants subjected to brands with lexical intensifiers ($M = 4.25$, $SD = .09$). In addition, participants who were subjected to advertisements with semantic intensifiers ($M = 4.52$, $SD = .09$) turned out to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the brands than participants subjected

to the advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 4.25, SD = .09), irrespective of their nationality. These results are presented in table 3. Furthermore, the interaction between Participant group and Type of intensifier was not significant (F (2,261) = 1.35, p = .262)

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations (between brackets) of the Attitude towards the brands per Type of intensifier and Participant group (1 = very negative, 7 = very positive)

	Dutch group Dutch ads	Dutch group English ads	English group English ads	Total
	n = 90	n = 90	n = 90	n = 270
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
No intensifiers	4.43 (.75)	4.21 (.65)	4.94 (1.07)	4.53 (.09)
Lexical intensifiers	4.06 (.82)	4.10 (.61)	4.59 (1.15)	4.25 (.09)
Semantic intensifiers	4.39 (.57)	4.46 (.78)	4.70 (.74)	4.52 (.09)
Total	4.29 (.09)	4.25 (.09)	4.74 (.09)	

In order to find out which factors affect the significant differences found in the previous test comparing the three participant groups, multiple two-way ANOVAs were carried out. For the comparison of Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements and Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements, a two-way ANOVA with as factors Language of advertisements (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the brand was carried out. This two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of Type of intensifier (F (2,174) = 3.88, p = .023, η^2 = .04). Dutch participants who were subjected to advertisements with semantic intensifiers (M = 4.42, SD = .09) were shown to have a significantly more positive attitude towards the brand than Dutch participants who were subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 4.08, SD = .09). There was no significant effect found for Language of the advertisements (F (1,174) = .14, p = .709). In addition, the interaction between Language of the advertisements and Type of intensifier was shown to be not significant (F (2,174) = .81, p = .448).

Another two-way ANOVA with as factors Nationality (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the brand was carried out for the

comparison of Dutch participants subjected to English advertisements and English participants subjected to English advertisements. This test showed a significant main effect of Nationality (F (1,174) = 14.66, p < .001, η^2 = .08). As shown in table 3, English participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 4.74, SD = .09) were shown to have a significantly more positive attitude towards the brands than Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 4.25, SD = .09). No significant effect was found for Type of intensifier (F (2,174) = 1.51, p = .224). Also, the interaction between Nationality and Type of intensifier was not significant (F (2,174) = 1.22, p = .298).

In order to compare Dutch participants subjected to Dutch advertisements and English participants subjected to English advertisements, a two-way ANOVA with as factors Language of the advertisements (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Attitude towards the brand was carried out. This two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of Language of the advertisements (F (1,174) = 11.92, p = .001, η^2 = .06). As shown in table 3, English participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 4.74, SD = .09) were shown to have a significantly more positive attitude towards the brands than Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements (M = 4.29, SD = .09). A marginally significant effect was found for Type of intensifier (F (2,174) = 2.66, p = .073). Irrespective of their nationality, participants who were subjected to advertisements in their native language without intensifiers (M = 4.69, SD = .11) were shown to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the brands than participants who were subjected to advertisements in their native language with lexical intensifiers (M = 4.32, SD = .11). The interaction between Language of the advertisement and Type of intensifier was shown to be not significant (F (2,174) = .94, p = .391).

4.3 Purchase intention

The two-way ANOVA with as factors Participant group (Dutch subjected to Dutch ads/Dutch subjected to English ads/English subjected to English ads) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Purchase intention showed a significant main effect of Participant group (F (1,261) = 20.53, p < .001, η^2 = .07). As shown in table 1, Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements (M = 3.26, SD = .12) were found to have a significantly lower purchase intention than English participants who were subjected to

English advertisements (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = .12). Also, Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements (*M* = 3.29, *SD* = .12) were found to have a significantly lower purchase intention the brands than English participants subjected to English advertisements (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = .12). Table 1 summarizes these results. Also, a main effect of Type of intensifier on Purchase intention was found (*F* (2,261) = 6.55, *p* = .002, η^2 = .05). As shown in table 4, participants who were subjected to the advertisements without intensifiers (*M* = 3.77, *SD* = .12) turned out to have a significantly higher purchase intention than participants subjected to brands with lexical intensifiers (*M* = 3.21, *SD* = .12), irrespective of their nationality. In addition, participants who were subjected to advertisements with semantic intensifiers (*M* = 3.60, *SD* = .12) turned out to have a marginally significantly higher purchase intention than participants subjected to the advertisements with lexical intensifiers (*M* = 3.21, *SD* = .12), irrespective of their nationality. Furthermore, the interaction between Participant group and Type of intensifier was not significant (*F* (2,261) = .30, *p* = .740). These results are presented in table 4.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations (between brackets) of the Purchase intention per Type of intensifier and Participant group (1 = very negative, 7 = very positive)

	Dutch group Dutch ads	Dutch group English ads	English group English ads	Total
	n = 90	n = 90	n = 90	n = 270
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
No intensifiers	3.57 (1.12)	3.43 (1.04)	4.31 (1.12)	3.77 (.12)
Lexical intensifiers	2.80 (1.16)	3.04 (.88)	3.80 (1.21)	3.21 (.12)
Semantic intensifiers	3.41 (1.09)	3.40 (1.12)	3.98 (1.06)	3.60 (.12)
Total	3.26 (.12)	3.29 (.12)	4.03 (.12)	

To further examine which factors affect the significant difference found in the ANOVA comparing the three participant groups, an additional three two-way ANOVAs were carried out. For the comparison of Dutch participants subjected to Dutch advertisements and Dutch participants subjected to English advertisements, a two-way ANOVA with as factors Language of advertisements (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Purchase intention. This test showed a significant main effect of Type of intensifier (F (2,174) = 5.10, p = .007, η^2 = .06). Irrespective of the language of the advertisement, Dutch participants who were subjected to advertisements without intensifiers (M = 3.50, SD = .14) were shown to have a significantly higher level of purchase intention than Dutch participants who were subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 2.92, SD = .14). In addition, participants who were shown advertisements with semantic intensifiers (M = 3.41, SD = .14) were also shown to have a significantly higher level of purchase intention than participants who were shown advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 2.92, SD = .14). No significant effect was found for Language of the advertisements (F (1,174) = .04, p = .851). In addition, the interaction between Language of the advertisements and Type of intensifier turned out to be not significant (F (2,174) = .48, p = .622).

In order to compare the Purchase intention of Dutch participants subjected to English advertisements and English participants subjected to English advertisements, a two-way ANOVA with as factors Nationality (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) was carried out. This two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of Nationality (F (1,174) = 21.15, p < .001, η^2 = .11). As shown in table 4, English participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 4.03, SD = .11) were shown to have a significantly higher level of purchase intention than Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements (M = 3.29, SD = .11). A marginally significant effect was found for Type of intensifier (F (2,174) = 2.68, p = .071). Irrespective of their nationality, participants who were subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers (M = 3.87, SD = .14) were shown to have a marginally significantly higher level of purchase intention than participants who were subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers (M = 3.42, SD = .14). In addition, the interaction between Nationality and Type of intensifier was not significant (F (2,174) = .31, p = .733).

Finally, a two-way ANOVA with as factors Language of the advertisements (English/Dutch) and Type of intensifier (without, lexical, semantic) for the Purchase intention was carried out for comparison of Dutch participants subjected to Dutch advertisements and English participants subjected to English advertisements. This two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of Language of the advertisements (F (1,174) = 20.87, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$). As shown in table 4, English participants who were subjected to English advertisements ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .12$) were shown to have a significantly higher level of purchase intention than Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .12$). A significant effect was found for Type of intensifier (F (2,174) = 4.93, $p = .008$). Irrespective of their nationality, participants who were subjected to advertisements without intensifiers ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .15$) were shown to have a significantly higher level of purchase intention than participants who were subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .15$). The interaction between Language of the advertisement and Type of intensifier was not significant (F (2,174) = .57, $p = .569$).

5. Conclusion and discussion

This study aimed to provide insight into the effects of different types of intensifiers in web-advertisements. This study aimed to investigate whether the use of different types of intensifiers (i.e. lexical, semantic or none at all) in web-advertisements affects Dutch and English consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and their purchase intention and how these effects differ cross-culturally. This research question has been answered in manifold.

5.1 Differences between Dutch and English consumers

Sub question 1 focused on whether intensifiers in web-advertisements affect Dutch consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention. Sub question 2 focused on whether intensifiers in web-advertisements affect English consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention. In this study both Dutch and English consumers reacted more favourably to web-advertisements that did not contain intensifiers than to web-advertisements containing lexical intensifiers. This finding indicates that companies are likely to yield more positive attitudes towards the advertisement and brand, as

well as a higher purchase intention, when refraining from the use of lexical intensifiers in web-advertisements.

Results also showed that Dutch consumers subjected to web-advertisements with semantic intensifiers reacted more favourably in terms of attitude towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention than Dutch consumers subjected to web-advertisements with lexical intensifiers, irrespective of the language of the advertisement. This finding suggests that, for the Dutch consumer market, using semantic intensifiers in online web-advertisements will be likely to evoke more favourable attitudes and a higher purchase intention than advertisements with lexical verbs. Also, English participants who were subjected to advertisements with semantic intensifiers in their native language were found to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisements as well as a significantly higher purchase intention than English participants who were shown advertisements with lexical intensifiers in their native language. These findings indicate that, for the English consumer market, using semantic intensifiers in online web-advertisements will most-likely result in a more favourable attitude towards the brand than when lexical intensifiers are used. From these results it can be concluded that it is advisable to refrain from using lexical intensifiers in web-advertisements.

The finding that Dutch participants subjected to advertisements with semantic intensifiers held significantly more positive attitudes towards the advertisements and brands and a significantly higher level of purchase intention than Dutch participants subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers is in accordance with the findings in Jacobs and Hocks' (2013) study, which revealed that Dutch people tended to use more semantic intensifiers than lexical intensifiers when expressing their experiences and opinions in online written reviews. Therefore, it was expected that they would appreciate reading semantic intensifiers more than lexical intensifiers. However, the finding which indicates that advertisements without intensifiers scored significantly higher on attitude towards the advertisements and purchase intention than advertisements with lexical intensifiers does not support this theory. In the study of Jacobs and Hocks (2013) Dutch consumers were found to leave out intensifiers of their online written reviews in only 13% of the cases, where they used lexical intensifiers in 39% of their reviews. This would suggest that Dutch consumers express

their opinions and experiences fairly intense, but would rather be informed about products in a more neutral manner. This could be explained by the notion that when language is intensified, this affects the credibility of both the message and the source, which is in turn related to attitude change (Burgoon, Jones, & Stewart, 1975; Bradac, Bowers & Courtright, 1979). If the credibility of the advertisement or the source would be affected by different types of intensifiers, it is very likely that this effect would be reflected in the attitude towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention. For example, if an increased number of lexical intensifiers negatively affects the perceived credibility of the advertisement or source, this could yield negative attitudes and a lower purchase intention as a result. Previous research has found evidence for the notion that intensified language leads to a decreased perceived credibility of the message and less appreciation towards the message (Burgers and De Graaf, 2013). Burgers and De Graaf (2013) found that news reports in which the language had been intensified by adding intensifiers to the text, were perceived as less credible, which in turn affected the appreciation towards the news report. Although this explanation is in accordance with the findings of this study, the relation between intensified language and credibility of the message and source has not been investigated in a web-advertisement context to date. Whether intensified language in web-advertisements affects credibility of the advertisements and brands, which then affects the attitude towards the advertisements, brands and purchase intention would be an interesting topic for future research.

5.2 Difference between Dutch consumers subjected to Dutch and English web-advertisements

The third sub question of this study focused on whether there is a difference in Dutch consumers' attitudes and purchase intention when confronted with English web-advertisements and Dutch web-advertisements. This study showed no significant differences between the attitude towards the advertisements, brands and purchase intention based on the language of the advertisements. This finding suggests that for Dutch participants there is no difference between English and Dutch advertisements in terms of how the different types of intensifiers affect their attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention. This indicates that companies which invest in translating their English advertisements to Dutch for Dutch audiences may not have to do so when taking effects of intensified language into consideration. A possible explanation for this finding is the

supposedly high level of English skills among the Dutch participants. Not only is the Dutch population renowned for its high level of English language skills (Education First, 2016), the average educational level was significantly higher among the two Dutch participant groups than in the English participant group. Because many participants of the Dutch sample attended university or university of applied sciences, it is likely that their knowledge of the English language was above average. When mastering a non-native language on an advanced level, the differences in evaluating a web-advertisement in this non-native language in comparison to a web-advertisement in a native language may be rather small. Unfortunately the level of English language has not been measured in this study. Therefore this explanation cannot be confirmed with data.

5.3 Difference between English and Dutch consumers subjected to English web-advertisements

The last sub question of this study was posed to investigate whether English and Dutch consumers evaluate English web-advertisements differently in terms of attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention and how different types of intensifiers affect this evaluation. English participants were found to have a higher score on attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention, which is in line with the general trend in this study which revealed English participants to also have a significantly higher score than Dutch participants subjected to Dutch advertisements on all dependent measures. It is therefore questionable whether this significant difference was caused by the manipulation of the intensifiers, or perhaps because British participants tend to give more extreme scores when filling out surveys than Dutch participants (Johnson, et al., 2005; Renkema, 1997). This finding is in line with findings from previous studies (Johnson et al., 2005; Renkema, 1997; Jacobs and Hocks, 2013) which suggest that English respondents have a larger tendency to express themselves more intensively than Dutch respondents. Not only is this theory supported by English respondents' tendency to utter a more extreme response style in surveys (Johnson et al., 2005; Renkema, 1997), but also by the finding that English consumers utter more intensifiers when expressing their opinions and experiences in online written reviews (Jacobs & Hocks, 2013). This last tendency may imply that, since English consumers wield a more intense writing style when writing online reviews, they may also have a preference for more intensified language when reading online advertisements. The

present study is in accordance with this theory, as the results lend support for the notion that English consumers react significantly more positive to web-advertisements with intensifiers than Dutch consumers. The results of this study alone however, do not suffice enough evidence to generalize this notion. Future research could be conducted on the difference in effects of intensifiers on multiple cultures with extreme response styles and neutral response styles to confirm this notion.

Another interesting finding is that both English and Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements without intensifiers were shown to have a marginally significantly more positive attitude towards the English advertisements and a marginally significantly higher purchase intention than participants who were subjected to advertisements with lexical intensifiers. This implies that unintensified language in web-advertisements yields a more favourable response with both English and Dutch consumers, than web-advertisements which contain lexical intensifiers. This finding is striking, as this preference appears to be the case for both English participants who have been subjected to English web-advertisements and Dutch participants who have been subjected to both English and Dutch web-advertisements. Thus, in all scenarios web-advertisements without intensifiers yielded more positive outcomes than did advertisements with lexical intensifiers. This could again be explained through the suggested interaction between intensified language and perceived credibility of the source and message (Miller & Basehart, 1969; Burgoon, Jones, & Stewart, 1975; Bradac, Bowers & Courtright, 1979). This interaction however, would have to be further investigated to be confirmed.

5.4 Limitations

Limitations of this study were that the samples did significantly differ in terms of educational level, gender and age. In future research this should be taken into account. In addition, the level of English skills of the Dutch participants was not measured, which might have been valuable knowledge to explain the lack of difference of effects of intensifiers between Dutch participants who were subjected to Dutch advertisements and Dutch participants who were subjected to English advertisements.

5.5 Recommendations

All in all it can be concluded that different types of intensifiers do affect consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement, brand and purchase intention, which makes vocabulary choice a crucial part of advertisement development. This study has made apparent that companies are best to refrain from using lexical intensifiers (e.g. very, really) in their web-advertisements, as lexical intensifiers yield less favourable attitudes and purchase intentions than web-advertisements with semantic intensifiers (e.g. fantastic, exceptional) or no intensifiers at all. It is therefore recommended that companies use either no intensifiers or semantic intensifiers in web-advertisements rather than lexical intensifiers if they aim to evoke more favourable attitudes towards the advertisement and brand as well as a higher level of purchase intention. In addition, based on the results of this study it is not necessary to translate web-advertisements written in English to Dutch for the Dutch consumer market. This recommendation however, should be taken with caution, as the external validity of this outcome may have been compromised by the division of educational level among the participant groups.

Future research could focus on the relation between credibility and language intensity and investigate whether this relation also affects consumers' attitudes and purchase intention. Other experimental studies could also focus on how the tendency of cultures with extreme response styles and cultures with neutral response styles relates to expressing oneself intensely both verbally and written and whether this relates to attitudes towards intensified language.

References

Andersen, P. A., & Blackburn, T. R. (2004). An experimental study of language intensity and response rate in e mail surveys. 73-84.

Bradac, J. J., Bowers, J. W., & Courtright, J. A. (1979). Three language variables in communication research: Intensity, immediacy, and diversity. *Human Communication Research*, *5*, 257-269.

Bradac, J. J., Hosman, L. A., & Tardy, C. H. (1978). Reciprocal disclosures and language intensity: Attributional consequences. *Communications Monographs*, *45*, 1-17.

Bowers, J.W. (1963). Language intensity, social introversion, and attitude change. *Speech Monographs, 30*, 345-352.

Buller, D. B., Burgoon, M., Hall, J. R., Levine, N., Taylor, A. M., Beach, B. H., ... & Bergen, A. (2000). Using language intensity to increase the success of a family intervention to protect children from ultraviolet radiation: predictions from language expectancy theory. *Preventive medicine*, *30*, 103-113.

Burgers, C., & de Graaf, A. (2013). Language intensity as a sensationalistic news feature: The influence of style on sensationalism perceptions and effects. *Communications-The European Journal of Communication Research*, *38*, 167-188.

Burgoon, M., Jones, S.B., & Stewart, D. (1975). Toward a message-centered theory of persuasion: Three empirical investigations of language intensity. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 240-256.

Craig, T. Y., & Blankenship, K. L. (2011). Language and persuasion: Linguistic extremity influences message processing and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 0261927X11407167.

Den Ouden, H., & Van Wijk, C. (2007). 'Om vet gaaf op te kicken': over jongerentaal en het gebruik ervan in productadvertenties. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, *35*, 232.

Dorfman, P. W., & Howell, J. P. (1988). Dimensions of national culture and effective leadership patterns: Hofstede revisited. *Advances in international comparative management*, *3*, 127-150.

Education First. 2016. *The world's largest ranking of countries by English skills* [Research report]. Retrieved from http://www.ef.nl/epi/?_sp=8abfd6d9-65e4-4bc1-9982-d4c55d099f01.1497531589743

eMarketer, (2015). Social Network Ad Spending to Hit $23.68 Billion Worldwide in 2015. Retrieved from
https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Social-Network-Ad-Spending-Hit-2368-Billion-Worldwide-2015/1012357

Fernández, I., Carrera Levillain, P., Sánchez Fernández, F., Paez, D., & Candia, L. (2000). Differences between cultures in emotional verbal and non-verbal reactions. *Psicothema*.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Gerritsen, M., Nickerson, C., Van den Brandt, C., Crijns, R., Dominguez, N., Van Meurs, F., & Nederstigt, U. (2007). English in print advertising in Germany, Spain and the Netherlands: Frequency of occurrence, comprehensibility and the effect on corporate image. *The role of English in institutional and business settings: An intercultural perspective*, 79-98.

Gudykunst, W.B. & Ting-Toomey, S., (1988). Culture and Affective Communication. *American Behavioral Scientist*. *31*, 384-400.

Hamilton, M. A., Hunter, J. E., & Burgoon, M. (1990). An empirical test of an axiomatic model of the relationship between language intensity and persuasion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *9*, 235-255.

Hofstede, G., (2001). *Culture's consequences; comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. 1st ed. California: Sage

Hornikx, J., de Groot, E., Timmermans, E., Mariëns, J., & Verckens, J. P. (2010). Is het aanpassen van advertenties aan culturele waarden in West-Europa zinvol?. *Tijdschrift voor Taalbeheersing*, *32*, 114-127.

Ito, R., & Tagliamonte, S. (2003). Well weird, right dodgy, very strange, really cool: Layering and recycling in English intensifiers. *Language in Society, 32*, 257-279.

Jacobs, R., & Hocks, P. (2013). *Evaluations in online reviews written in different languages: A study on the role of language intensity in a corpus of Dutch-English online hotel reviews.* (Unpublished thesis). Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands.

Ji, L. J., Zhang, Z., & Nisbett, R. E. (2004). Is it culture or is it language? Examination of language effects in cross-cultural research on categorization. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 87*, 57.
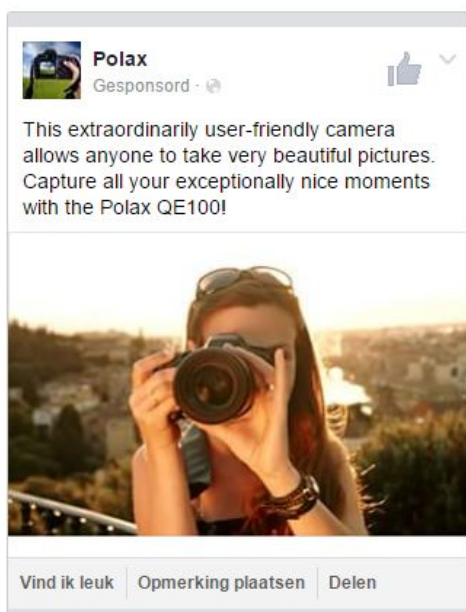
Johnson, T., Kulesa, P., Llc, I., Cho, Y.I., & Shavitt, S. (2005). The relation between culture and response styles; evidence from 19 countries. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 36*, 264-277.

Long, L. N., & Christensen, W. F. (2008). Clearly, Using Intensifiers is Very Bad-Or Is It. *Idaho Law Review*, 45, 171-190.

MacKenzie, S. B., & Lutz, R. J. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context. *The Journal of Marketing*, 48-65.

Mahmood, A. A. (2015). Linguistic intensification and its role in interlingual translation of speech acts between English and Arabic. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, *6*, 23-32.

McEwen, W. J., & Greenberg, B. S. (1970). The effects of message intensity on receiver evaluations of source, message and topic. *Journal of communication*, *20*, 340-350.

Miller, G.R., & Basehart, J. (1969). Source trustworthiness, opinionated statements, and responses to persuasive communication. *Speech Monographs, 36*, 1-7.

Moreno, A.I. & Suárez, L. (2008). A study of critical attitude across English and Spanish academic book reviews. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 7*, 15-26.

Nevalainen, T., & Rissanen, M. (2002). Fairly pretty or pretty fair? On the development and grammaticalization of English downtoners. *Language Sciences*, *24*, 359-380.

Noriega, J., & Blair, E. (2008). Advertising to bilinguals: Does the language of advertising influence the nature of thoughts?. *Journal of Marketing*, *72*, 69-83.

Pander Maat, H. (2004). Wervend taalgebruik in persberichten – werkt het? Hoe journalisten omgaan met persberichten in de luchtvaartsector [Promotional language use in press releases – does it work? How journalists deal with press releases from the aviation sector]. *Tijdschrift voor Taalbeheersing, 26*, 209-225.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1987). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.

Renkema, J.(1997). *Geïntensiveerd taalgebruik: een analyseschema.* [Intensified language: an analytical classification].

Renkema, J., van den Bergh, H., Janssen, D., Bertens, N., & Damen, M. (1997). Geïntensiveerd taalgebruik: een analyseschema. [Intensified language: an analytical classification]. *Taalgebruik ontrafeld*, 495-504.

Renkema, J., Vallen, E., & Hoeken, H. (2001). Tuinapparatuur of garden equipment? Verschillen in betekenisnuance tussen Nederlandse en Engelse termen. *Onze Taal, 70*, 257-259.

Romero, S. (2012). This is so cool! - A comparative corpus study on intensifiers in British and American English.

Siemund, P. (2000). *Intensifiers in English and German: a comparison* (Vol. 6). Psychology Press.

Tagliamonte, S., & Roberts, C. (2005). So weird; so cool; so innovative: The use of intensifiers in the television series Friends. *American speech, 80*, 280-300.

Van Mulken, M., & Schellens, P. J. (2012). Over loodzware bassen en wapperende broekspijpen - Gebruik en perceptie van taalintensiverende stijlmiddelen. *Tijdschrift voor taalbeheersing*, *34*, 26-53.

Xiao, R., & Tao, H. (2007). A corpus-based sociolinguistic study of amplifiers in British English. *Sociolinguistic studies*, *1*, 241-273.

Appendix A.

All advertisements which were developed for this study are displayed below.

Polax

English lexical intensifiers

English semantic intensifiers

English no intensifiers

Dutch lexical intensifiers

Dutch semantic intensifiers

Dutch no intensifiers

LUA Hotels

English lexical intensifiers

English semantic intensifiers

English no intensifiers

Dutch lexical intensifiers

Dutch semantic intensifiers

Dutch no intensifiers

Crispo's

Try Crispo's new recipe: the super tasty flavour and the really crispy crunch will enrich your moment of indulgence!

English lexical intensifiers

Try Crispo's new recipe: the delicious flavour and scrumptious crunch will enrich your moment of indulgence!

English semantic intensifiers

Try Crispo's new recipe: the flavour and cru will enrich your moment of indulgence!

English no intensifiers

Proef het vernieuwde recept van Crispo's: de super lekkere smaak en geweldig stevige crunch verrijken jouw geluksmomentje!

Dutch lexical intensifiers

Proef het vernieuwde recept van Crispo's: de verrukkelijke smaak en overheerlijke crunch verrijken jouw geluksmomentje!

Dutch semantic intensifiers

Proef het vernieuwde recept van Crispo's: smaak en crunch verrijken jouw geluksmomentje!

Dutch no intensifiers

Push

The new Push© Classic High is comfortable, yet stylish. With really good quality and a very large variety of colour options, these sneakers are mega suitable to complete your casual outfit!

English lexical intensifiers

The new Push© Classic High is comfortable, yet stylish. With exceptional quality and a huge variety of colour options, these are excellent sneakers to complete your casual outfit.

English semantic intensifiers

The new Push© Classic High is comforta, yet stylish. With good quality and a variet colour options, these sneakers complete casual outfit!

English no intensifiers

De nieuwe Push© Classic High is comfortabel en toch stylish. Met zeer goede kwaliteit en een erg groot aantal kleuren opties, zijn deze sneakers mega geschikt om je casual outfit compleet te maken!

Dutch lexical intensifiers

De nieuwe Push© Classic High is comfortabel en toch stylish. Met uitzonderlijke kwaliteit en een reusachtig aantal kleuren opties, zijn dit ultieme sneakers om je casual outfit compleet te maken!

Dutch semantic intensifiers

De nieuwe Push© Classic High is comfor en toch stylish. Met goede kwaliteit en ee groot aantal kleuren opties, maken deze schoenen je casual outfit compleet!

Dutch no intensifiers

Luxadent

Luxadent — Gesponsord	**Luxadent** — Gesponsord	**Luxadent** — Gesponsord
This very powerful toothbrush ensures that all leftovers are brushed away and leaves you with a truly beautiful smile. Click here to view this really good offer from Luxadent!	This powerful toothbrush ensures that all leftovers are brushed away and leaves you with a gorgeous smile. Click here to view this amazing offer from Luxadent!	This powerful toothbrush ensures tha leftovers are brushed away and leave with a pretty smile. Click here to view from Luxadent!
Vind ik leuk · Opmerking plaatsen · Delen	Vind ik leuk · Opmerking plaatsen · Delen	Vind ik leuk · Opmerking plaatsen · Dele
English lexical intensifiers	English semantic intensifiers	English no intensifiers

Luxadent — Gesponsord	**Luxadent** — Gesponsord	**Luxadent** — Gesponsord
Deze zeer krachtige tandenborstel neemt alle etensresten zorgvuldig mee en zorgt voor een ontzettend mooie glimlach. Klik hier voor deze super goede aanbieding van Luxadent!	Deze krachtige tandenborstel neemt alle etensresten zorgvuldig mee en zorgt voor een prachtige glimlach. Klik hier voor deze waanzinnige aanbieding van Luxadent!	Deze krachtige tandenborstel neemt etensresten zorgvuldig mee en zorgt mooie glimlach. Klik hier voor deze a van Luxadent!
Vind ik leuk · Opmerking plaatsen · Delen	Vind ik leuk · Opmerking plaatsen · Delen	Vind ik leuk · Opmerking plaatsen · Dele
Dutch lexical intensifiers	Dutch semantic intensifiers	Dutch no intensifiers

Appendix B.

Declaration plagiarism and fraud

The undersigned
[first name, surname and student number],

<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 120px;"></div>

Master's student at the Radboud University Faculty of Arts,

declares that the assessed thesis is entirely original and was written exclusively by himself/herself. The undersigned has indicated explicitly and in detail where all the information and ideas derived from other sources can be found. The research data presented in this thesis were collected by the undersigned himself/herself using the methods described in this thesis.

Place and date:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 120px;"></div>

Signature:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 160px;"></div>