

The Presence of English on Cigarette Packs in Five Non-English Speaking Low- and Middle-Income Countries



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Background

- The cigarette pack is increasingly a primary communicator of brand messaging.
- English is the most frequently used language in global advertising.
- English has both communicative and symbolic value.
- Research on the use of English in marketing in non-Anglophone settings has primarily focused on advertisements (not packaging) in high-income countries.

Methods

- In 2013, we collected one of every available unique cigarette pack from 36 vendors across three cities in 14 countries. **Total cigarette packs collected = 3,017**
- Five countries analyzed from five WHO Regions: **Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, Ukraine, Viet Nam**
- English terminology is coded as a marketing appeal.
- Taxonomy developed from existing literature:

- Symbolic enhancement:** Associations between English and stereotypical American and/or British cultural attributes.
- Global standardization:** English used to create common branding and taglines across countries.
- Attention grabbing:** English used to draw audience attention.
- Lexical gap:** English used where a language does not have a word for a given concept.
- Utility:** English used to communicate to a broader audience.
- Ego enhancement:** English used to create connection with audience with linguistic proficiency.

Results



Symbolic enhancement:
Luxury

Symbolic enhancement:
U.S.



Symbolic enhancement:
Britain

Symbolic enhancement:
Non-Anglophone



Global standardization

Attention grabbing

Inclusion of English beyond brand name

| Country | # of packs collected | % with English |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Egypt | 58 | 97 |
| Viet Nam | 145 | 97 |
| Brazil | 109 | 84 |
| Bangladesh | 186 | 98 |
| Ukraine | 324 | 84 |
| Total | 822 | 90 |



Utility

Lexical gap

Ego enhancement

Emergent issues

- Lexical utility of English is reinforced by imagery.
- English on packs is used to serve purposes identified in previous work and some novel applications.
- Both code-mixed and monolingual formats used.
- English has utility even when explicit references are being made to other cultures and countries.

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