The Perception of Cosmetic Brand Names among Saudi Consumers: Implications for Intercultural Advertising

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Abstract

As the global cosmetics market expands rapidly, the importance of cultural sensitivity in advertising becomes evident. However, certain brand names used internationally may unintentionally offend specific audiences due to linguistic and cultural differences. This study examines the perceptions and attitudes of 770 Saudi individuals toward brand names deemed inappropriate or provocative within the Saudi sociocultural context. The research aims to shed light on the implications for intercultural advertising targeting Saudi consumers. The findings reveal strong negative reactions to brand names with sexual references, with respondents using terms such as "disgusting," "shocking," and "shameless" in their descriptions. The study also highlights the impact of these names on religious and moral values cherished in Saudi society. The implications for international cosmetic companies targeting Gulf consumers include careful consideration of name translations and connotations in Arabic-speaking markets, involvement of local expertise in advertising campaigns, and enhanced cultural sensitivity training for marketing professionals operating abroad. This research contributes to the understanding of intercultural advertising and provides insights for improving cultural competence in English language education, particularly in the context of teaching English for advertising. By raising awareness of these issues, appropriate choices of brand identifiers can be discussed to benefit both businesses and target audiences.

Keywords: Saudi consumers, cosmetics marketing, intercultural advertising, English language education, cultural sensitivity

1. Introduction

As a response to globalization, the world has become a global village (McLuhan, 1964), and this has created a great opportunity for international trade and marketing. Advertising, as a powerful element in marketing, has become very controversial. The content of advertisements is a reflection of the cultural values and practices of a specific society. For this reason, it has been strongly argued that culture has a great impact on global advertising strategies (Harvey, 1993; Mueller, 1992). Although some aspects of advertisements can be shared across different cultures, other aspects need to be localized to reflect the norms of a specific culture or country. It has been asserted that consumers interact positively with the advertising messages that they can relate to and the ones that are in line with their culture. Therefore, market forces must be mindful of the cultural values of the target audience and must pay attention to the selection of the appropriate advertisement content.

The beauty industry and personal care market, in particular, is fast-growing in Saudi Arabia, and it is expected to reach USD 5.5 billion by 2024 (Euromonitor International, 2022). This huge demanding market has become the target for many global brands. However, the names of many cosmetic products are not well-adapted to the cultural and religious values of the target society. Most of these names are considered "offensive" or at least "sexually-oriented".

Given the key role of consumers' attitude toward advertisements in brand purchase and selection (Goldsmith et al., 2000; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989), it is highly important to understand what Saudi people think of these "offensive" names. This study will seek to understand the level of awareness among Saudis toward "provocative" language in marketing cosmetic products and what impact they might have on society. It also aims to find out whether such "inappropriate" names appeal to the Saudi consumers or whether they are considered "offensive", and how these "offensive" names may influence their purchase intentions.

2. Literature Review

In global marketing, advertisements have been the main channel to communicate with audiences. According to Yahya (2014), advertisers use certain techniques and communication tools to promote a positive image of a brand or a business, which influences customers to buy from this brand owner or business. Marketers use multiple means to persuade customers to purchase products and services, including appealing images, messages, physical attributes and names. Moriuchi and Jackson emphasized that stakeholders should not just focus on one element of designing an advertisement (such as images), but they should work on all potential elements that contribute to the success

of the advertisement (2017). In fact, the product's name makes the first impression on customers and acts as a key symbol for any business (Aaker, 1990). The names of brands and products have a great influence on how customers understand the products' qualities. Therefore, selecting proper names is of paramount importance, especially when targeting foreign markets (Zhang & Schmitt, 2001).

Although advertisements can be the main hook for customers, at times they can provoke the customers. Such advertisements are considered controversial and can elicit reactions of humiliation, distaste, or offense from the audience (Fam et al., 2008; Waller et al., 2013). Previous literature (such as Phau & Prendergast, 2001) has discussed several dimensions of controversial advertisements, including "the matter" (which focuses on the particular product or service), "the manner" (which focuses on how an advertisement is executed) and "the media" (which focuses on the particular medium being used for the advertisement). For example, products such as cigarettes, alcohol, contraceptives and condoms are perceived as offensive in terms of sexual connotations, vulgarity and cultural sensitivity (see Rehman & Brooks, 1987; Waller, 1999, 2004). Another example of offensive advertisements is the one where women are used as sexual toys or recipients of violence, underpinning the belief in gender inequalities and male domination (see White, 1990).

Despite being controversial and offensive, this type of advertisement is still widely used. Waller (2003) explained how controversial advertisements can be successful and have positive impacts. Provoking the audience might be intentional in advertising. According to Dahl et al. (2003), the use of shocking content in advertisements has a positive impact on the public in terms of attention, memory and recognition. Such content is considered shocking due to the presence of nudity, vulgarity, violation of social norms, inappropriate images, and sexual references. It creates a great deal of debate and publicity in society. This type of advertisement is known as shock advertising or shockvertising and has been considered an effective tool for reaching customers (Dahl et al., 2003). For example, using swear words in advertisements can be portrayed as a norm violation, aiming to shock the customers in order to persuade them (Scherer & Sagarin, 2006).

Despite leaving a lasting impression on the audience, the use of shocking appeals can be risky based on the level of offensiveness it has on customers and the reason for such offense. They can harm the products and the brands and demotivate the public to purchase a particular item or service. For example, in Australia, people felt offended by advertisements using indecent language (Waller, 1999). Moreover, consumers in Hong Kong were less likely to buy from a company using offensive advertising (Prendergast et al., 2002).

Previous studies concerning offensive advertisements pertain mostly to western cultures and values. No work has been done on this topic in the Saudi context. Given the fact that offensive advertisements are context-specific, they are judged differently across cultures. For example, addictive and sex-related products were more offensive in Korea than in the US. The study of An and Kim (2006) which compared the attitudes of Korean and American consumers found that consumers from high-context and collective cultures are less accepting of sexually-related products and norm-violated advertisements whereas consumers from low-context and individualistic cultures are less critical of socially-sensitive products as well as sexually-oriented products. Understanding cultural differences plays a key role in successful intercultural advertising, because cultural values determine how the majority within a society usually think, believe, and behave. Advertising campaigns must understand how to communicate with intended customers and must attend to their needs, values, and buying motives. The Saudi culture is described widely as a religious conservative culture since it was derived from Islamic values and beliefs (Al-Salomi, 2016). Previous literature (such as Ting & Run, 2012) identified a lack of empirical studies concerning controversial advertisements and consumer behavior. In particular, more studies need to be carried out in neglected contexts such as the Arabic countries (see Albernethy & Franke, 1996) and Saudi Arabia makes no exception. Therefore, this study aims to examine the attitudes of Saudi customers toward inappropriate names of cosmetic products such as: Deep Throat Blush, Better Than Sex Mascara, Orgasm Blush and Sexy Mother Pucker Lipstick. It attempts to understand their reactions to these "sexually-oriented" names and what impact they might have on their buying decisions. It mainly highlights the importance of cross-cultural awareness to minimize the negative influence of cultural variations and to establish common ground for people from various cultural backgrounds to interact within.

3. Data Collections Methods

This study employed Saldanha and O'Brien's (2014) work titled "Research Methodologies in Translation Studies" as a foundation for its methodology and methodological decisions. It followed a mixed-methods typology for collecting qualitative and quantitative survey data. This mixed-method approach helped to enhance the data collection and analysis, by integrating both data, the quantitative part through close-ended questions and the qualitative through open-ended questions. Online surveys save time, are convenient and can reach a wide population (Jones et al., 2021). In a country where "over two-thirds of Saudi Arabia's population is under the age of 35" (Varun, 2020), online surveys were the best for this study as it was able to make use of the young and "internet savvy" population (Aoki & Elasmar, 2000, p. 3).

3.1 Surveys

As per Saldanha and O'Brien's (2014) suggestions, the surveys employed both open- and closed-ended questions to obtain textual data (qualitative), categorical data (quantitative) and ordinal data (quantitative). Weiss (2005) stated that quantitative methods may "come from the task completion times, from the number of steps taken by each user in response to a given survey question, and from user responses to discrete questions" (p. 569), however, qualitative data "come mostly in the form of open-ended (type-in) questions" (p. 569). This survey employs a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ), "a questionnaire that has been specifically designed to be completed by a respondent without the intervention of the researchers (e.g., an interviewer) collecting the data" (Tavakoli, 2012, p. 576). The surveys were created and published on the well-known Google Form. Most survey questions were compulsory, except for the last open-ended question. Whenever applicable, space was left for participants' comments and participants were invited to add information or suggestions. This

allowed for a qualitative analysis besides a quantitative one.

3.2 Survey Questions

The survey was carried out in Arabic and was structured as follows:

1) Demographics: Questions 2-6 and 8,9 and 11 inquired about the respondents' demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational level, English fluency, nationality, census division, language spoken at home, etc).

2) Personal preferences: The remaining questions inquired about the respondents' buying habits, acceptance or agreement with the current naming, their translations and their potential impact, and any suggestions or solutions for such names.

3) Correspondents' opinion on the topic of the research and their willing to participate further: This took the form of an open-ended question at the end of the survey fallowed by an inquiry for those who are willing to participate in an interview to further discuss the matter.

3.3 Pilot Survey

One of the first ways to test the surveys was to conduct a pilot survey. This tested the survey's clarity (Edwards, & Talbot, 1999) and it shall also make sure the survey is equally valid and credible (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Consequently, a pilot was sent to 15 people. The outcome was as following:

1) There was a need to add more countries to one of the questions regarding time spent in foreign countries. As a result, Australia and New Zealand were added. It is important to also note that many Saudis are currently pursuing their academic degrees in Australia and New Zealand and hence it is important to include these categories in the question.

2) The age category was altered. At first the survey did not include those who were below the age of 18. However, one of the correspondents suggested that teenagers in this age category are keen on buying makeup and that it would be interesting to study their views.

3) There was also a suggestion to include the option to answer freely on some of the questions. Therefore, three open-ended questions were added to the survey.

3.4 Survey Distribution

In the survey, a participation information sheet was provided to the participants which included contact information for the researchers (email address), as well as the name of the institution and the participants' consent. The main method that proved to be successful in attracting correspondents was WhatsApp messages. Personal WhatsApp messages were most effective, messages distributed in a WhatsApp group were less effective. Using Twitter as a means to distribute the survey was not as effective. These were the main methods used for distributing the survey.

The surveys were distributed, and data was collected between September 2022 and October 2022 from 770 correspondents. The survey was conducted in Arabic. The survey targeted any literate Saudi customer or resident and/or their families who were interested in makeup and cosmetics. The survey aimed to reveal whether such names were an issue and whether demographics (age, education level, English proficiency, gender, location, residence in a big city or small town, having spent some time in a foreign or a Western country) influenced what was considered problematic.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Data

This section observes respondents' attitudes as per the close-ended questions in the survey results. The first question in the survey was designed to intrigue the respondents on the one hand and familiarize them with the issue on the other. To do so, respondents were presented with images of some products alongside their names. Then, they were asked which product name stuck in their memory. Participants were allowed to choose more than one option. Below are the products' names in the order of the respondents' votes.

1) Better Than Sex Mascara (54.2%)

2) Orgasm Blush (33.9%)

3) Sexy Mother Pucker Lipstick (29.7%)

4) Deep Throat Blush (28.7%)

5) Nail Polish in I LIKE IT ON TOP (19.2%)

Most respondents selected names that include easily spotted sexual words such as "sex" and "sexy" rather than the ones with sexual connotations such as No.4 and 5. The respondents were also asked to add any other name that was not included in the survey. Some of the suggested names include: Kinda Sexy, Climax Extreme Mascara and Naked. The respondents' answers suggest that they are familiar with the issue and are aware of such names in the beauty industry. The next set of questions was designed to reveal the demographics of the respondents (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Demographics of Study Participants (Questions 2-6 & 8)

Demographics Questions (1-6,8)			
Question	Answers	%	P out of 770.
2- Gender	Female	97.5	751
	Male	2.5	19
3- Age	18-24	14.9	115
	25-34	22.1	170
	35-44	38.2	294
	45-54	17.3	133
	55-64	6	46
4- Education Level	High School	7.9	61
	Diploma	3.8	29
	College or University	57.8	445
	Postgraduate studies (Master's or PhD)	30.1	232
5- English Level	Fluent	53.4	411
	Intermediate	31.4	242
	Beginner	14	108
	Do not speak English	1.2	9
6- Spoken Language at Home	Arabic	65.1	501
	English	0.8	6
	Both	33.8	260
8-Nationally	Saudi	97.3	749
	Other	2.7	21

As can be inferred from the table above, most participants were females (97.5%), which was expected since the survey was tackling makeup and other beauty products which are more relevant to females in the Saudi culture. Regarding the age category, the biggest percentage (38.2%) was between 35 and 44. This could be attributed to the fact that this is the most common age within the faculty members where the survey was distributed first. This was followed by the younger generation of (25-34) who resembled 22.1% of the respondents. Regarding education level, the majority (57.8%) had a college or university degree, followed by those who had either a master's degree or PhD (30.1%). This indicates that the majority of participants were highly educated. Most respondents considered themselves to be fluent in English (53.4%). Which is expected given that English is the second most spoken language in Saudi and because the survey was initially distributed at the College of Languages[1]. As the majority were competent English speakers, they understood the underlying meanings of these names. While most of the respondents spoke Arabic at home (65.1%.), some were bilingual (33.8%) and only a minority communicated in English-only inside their homes. The respondents were mostly Saudis (97.3%). Regarding their residential area, the majority were from Riyadh (53.1%), then came those from the Makkah region which includes Jeddah (32.2%). Then came those from the Eastern Province and the rest of the Kingdom.

Respondents were also asked whether they lived in a country outside Saudi Arabia for a given period of time. This question was asked to show if living outside the Kingdom will affect their tolerance of such language. Indeed, the majority (53.8%) have never lived outside Saudi Arabia. However, (21.9%) lived for five years or more, while (9.9%) lived for two years or more, and the rest lived for two years or more and six months or more. The smallest section lived abroad for less than six months. The respondents were further asked about the country they lived *in* outside Saudi Arabia. This question aimed to investigate the influence of Western and English-speaking countries on the respondent's attitude verses other Asian or African countries for example. The survey revealed that (24.7%) of those who did live outside the kingdom lived in America and (12.9%) Britain, (6.9%) Canada, (3.6%) other European countries, (2.7%) Australia or New Zealand, then only 1.8% lived in other countries, like, Sudan, Emirates, Morocco, Jordan, France, Singapore, Yamen, Bahrain and Kazakhstan.

The next question inquired about the use of inappropriate words in spoken English in advertisements or in product names. (44.4%) rejected such use entirely, (38.3%) said they do get bothered, (11.9%) indicated that they do not care, and the remaining indicated that they do not know. Respondents were asked about the stores where they usually purchase cosmetics and perfumes from. Participants were able to choose more than one option. This question was asked for a variety of reasons. Mainly because online stores showed a higher tendency toward keeping the names without any alterations. The other reason was to find out if local stores - like Faces – treated these names differently than global chains, like Sephora. Majority of (78.4%) said Sephora, (54.9%) said Faces, (22.1%) said Debenhams, (11.4%) said different pharmacies like (Boots, Whites, etc.), (10.9%) said - Boutiqaat (one of the regional popular sites for beauty and makeup products), and then only 1.4% said other, including: Nice One website (a local store), Center point, Kiko, NYX, and different websites, including Amazon. The findings suggest that while consumers showed a preference for global chains, namely, Sephora, consumers also liked regional and local stores.

Respondents were asked how often they buy cosmetics and perfumes online. 52.5% said sometimes, 32.3% said never, and 14.9% said

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[1] The College of Languages at Princess Nourah Bint Abdul Rahman University is a college whereby English is spoken either as a language of instruction or as a Lingua Franca among its members.

often. This shows that online purchases represent a significant portion of beauty purchases. Therefore, censoring inappropriate language could represent a challenge for online purchases. When asked "Has it ever caught your attention that some cosmetics and perfumes have inappropriate names?" The majority of 59.7% said Yes, some are unacceptable, (25.3%) said they don't care about that and 10.5% don't know. One of the findings was that all of those who did not care either spoke Arabic only in their homes or were bilingual. This might suggest that those who speak English more or solely are more sensitive about those names. An interesting finding was that the ratio among those who answered "yes" came from the category that has "lived abroad for 5 years are more". This might suggest that either that they understand English made them more aware of such a language, or that they are keener on protecting their culture. The highest percentage agreeing was also among those that were "35-44" years old.

Participants were further asked if inappropriate product names discouraged them from buying these products. The responses were in this order: 36.9% said maybe, 28.3% said no they don't care about the name, 27.8% said they do care. This low percentage of those who do not care reflects a society that cares, if not even bothered by such names. Respondents were asked if they felt embarrassed, for example, if they were to ask their sons or someone else to buy a product with an inappropriate name. The majority, 78.3%, felt embarrassed, 12.5% didn't know or were not sure, then 8.8% did not know about product names. These responses further support the previous question whereby such names do bother the consumers to the point where the name of a makeup product causes embarrassment. Considering their popularity among teenagers, respondents were asked whether they wanted product names to be censored and modified to make them more suitable for the Saudi community. The majority (71.9%) said yes, the product's name should be taken into consideration and modified, 20.1% somewhat agreed with modifying the name and the others were between I do not know, and I do not care, and it does not matter to me. Respondents were asked "if a product has been renamed so that it is more suitable for the Saudi community as shown in the next picture, which one will you likely to buy?"

Figure 1. *Altered Mascara Names (Better than Sex vs Better than love)*

The responses were in this order: 58.2% said they will buy the modified one. While 14.5% said they do not know or are not sure. Only 14.3% said they will buy the original one. Lastly 12.6% said they do not care. The high percentage of those keen on the modified name suggests that these names are highly sensitive and modified naming might be a solution to attract more consumers and resolve the negative connotation associated with these names. When asked about the biggest impact of having cosmetics with inappropriate names, participants were allowed to choose more than one answer. The Majority 76.8% said it will build a society that accepts inappropriate words and terminology. Predictably, 24.3% said it hinders consumers from purchasing such products. Interestingly, 19.4% said it will increase young people's desire to purchase these products because of their catchy names. Lastly 16.2% said it contributes to acceptance of cultural differences.

Finally, participants were asked about maintaining the product's names, even if inappropriate for Saudi society and what affect it has on society. A majority of 65.8% said such names do affect the language used in the community. Therefore, labels and names must be taken care of and inappropriately named products must be modified by their manufacturers. On the other hand, 20.1% said they do not mind altering the name or maintaining the name as long as the packaging is the same as it is originally. 16% said the product name should be kept so the consumers can be certain it is the original product. A small percentage of 8.4% said keep the product names so it will be easier for them to recognize these products and 3.6% said they do not care.

4.2 Qualitative Data

This section reveals the translated findings retrieved from the open-ended question at the end of the survey. The respondents were asked if there is anything they wanted to add regarding the research topic. This question allowed them to add a comment about the issue being researched. It was answered by 137 respondents. Most of them expressed their appreciation to the researchers for giving attention to this

"very important" topic and wished them luck in their research. For example, one participant wrote, "Thank you, I often, during my shopping for these products and using them, think about this issue. I am glad that someone is sharing with me the same concern, and they even took a step forward to search about this topic. May God reward you for it and bless you". Unsurprisingly, a few mentioned that they did not pay attention to these inappropriate names before, and taking part in this study gave them insight into this issue. Their answers were like:

"I have never paid attention to these names except in this questionnaire. I think they are inappropriate."

"I've never noticed or looked closely at these inappropriate names until I read your research."

"Honestly, it is my first time noticing these product names."

"Sorry, we didn't know about the names of the cosmetic products that are inappropriate to our Muslim society."

"It's strange that during my travel I didn't pay attention to these products."

"Thank you and I didn't expect products like these exist in our market."

"I am not a fan of cosmetics, and I got shocked by these names that I've never seen before. I am wondering how they got into the Saudi market and how they are displayed and purchased!!!"

"How widespread are these names? I didn't pay attention to any of them before."

"Thanks for alerting me to this because I didn't know and I think the majority didn't know about this topic."

"Thanks for enlightening us about this topic because we didn't know about this topic."

"I thank all the authors of the questionnaire for drawing attention to an important point overlooked by society."

Some believed that the purpose of choosing these names was for marketing purposes. These comments included:

"I know that choosing a controversial name for products may get people to talk about it, leading to an increase in sales. Yet, I also believe that companies can choose a name that does not violate social norms in various communities because conforming to the social norms of one community at the expense of another may not make them successful. It does not mean that we, Muslims have to accept them, support them and increase their profit. There is no reason for using such sexual names. I am proud of being a part of society that rejects these names."

"Choosing the products' names for international marketing is hard to tailor individually to each culture because they look for the easiest way to gain profit, even at the expense of their morals."

In addition to provoking the public's attention, some participants noted that these names targeted women and the younger generation:

"I totally believe that there is no need for inappropriate names for these products. It is westernized marketing which provokes controversy about what these products do to women which helps the merchant receive attention and increase sales. All I know is that such a reason is not acceptable in our Islamic and Arabic society."

"From my point of view, it makes women perceive themselves as tools for temptation."

"To be honest it is disgusting, and we fear that the young generation gets used to such vulgar names. It's better to stop importing such brands and remain satisfied with local brands."

"I got curious about whether my daughter will accept these names later on and whether these names will become part of her language. I really would like to know the results of your study."

"These names bother me, especially for female teenagers."

"Marketing a product through focusing on seducing the opposite sex is not acceptable at all. Describing perfumes as 'sexy' and using sexual names for products are not supposed to be normal. Many young girls buy these perfumes and products, how can we accept the idea that wearing make-up and perfumes is mainly to attract and seduce the other sex. It is actually part of being female."

"I'm not a make-up fan so I don't really have nor buy makeup, and all the makeup brands and names I know are very basic and appropriate, so I was shocked that there are product names like this! I wouldn't be keen on buying them. But again, teens would mostly see them online on social media and want to buy these products, so whether they altered the names in the Saudi market or not, girls will still buy them online! Therefore, the culture of the names and what is appropriate and what is not should change in the minds of people."

As a marketing tool, these names were perceived by a few participants as a part of globalization and multiculturalism. These participants seemed unbothered by these names as shown in their answers:

"What I care about the most is the quality of the product. And it's Ok to have a name suitable for our Muslim and Arabic society in agreement with the manufacturing companies to clarify the place of manufacture to guarantee its quality and its compliance with the international standards."

"Perhaps I personally don't care about the product's name, but this topic is sensitive for the society."

"We may care about the brand and the shade, but we don't recall the name."

"The name is not the point; it is just a name chosen by the company. We care about the quality of the product."

"It is true that the proper name is important, but the quality is the most important."

"The most important thing is that these products don't contain pig substances and have expiration dates."

"As a result of globalisation, it is up to the society and consumers to decide. The current openness is due to multiculturalism and multi-religions and the fact that there are no potentials to fill the gaps."

"Sometimes inappropriate names attract customers more because they are not common here, and it's a type of marketing. And probably a large number of people accept it because people travel overseas and buy all the products' names no matter what. The most important thing is that the product is good."

Similarly, one wrote:

"Life does not revolve around make-up only, and I am sorry this is my opinion. In our Saudi society kids and teenagers are saying words much worse than the names of these cosmetics which are only sexual and not a big deal. Sex is a human nature, it is not swearing or cursing that need to be corrected in the minds of Saudi or Arabic society. There are much deeper issues that need to be corrected more than the make-up names."

Another one shared a similar sentiment and felt that there are more important things to care about than products' names such as "words printed on clothes are more harmful than cosmetic products because these words are faster spreading as they go everywhere with the person wearing these clothes". These unworried comments represent only 8% while over 90% of the respondents expressed their pressing concern about this issue, and they justified their opinions based on their religion and culture. They argued:

"We have to prove our Islamic identity to the whole world, and the Western society has to accept it. I am Muslim, and I don't accept these inappropriate names."

"We are a Muslim and conservative society, and producers need to respect our belief and culture, not the opposite."

"We have to hold on to our Arabic language and Islamic principles to get ahead of other communities."

"We hope that the names become suitable to our Islamic teachings."

"In my opinion, our society must adhere to its religion and culture instead of being influenced by the Western culture."

"The more we protect our original identity, the more we contribute to change the dominant culture and its influence on our mindsets."

"the names should be appropriate for our Saudi society."

In addition to the religious and cultural impact of these names, public morals were also raised as a major concern by some respondents:

"These names are shameless. They make sex the center of everything. This has a negative impact on the culture of the society, the standards of public principles, and what is accepted and what is not."

"The inappropriate names destroy the values and eliminate chastity."

"The names should be socially acceptable and appropriate because we are a society characterized by high morals."

"They should respect the human morals if they don't respect the religious morals because the consumer deserves to be respected as he determines the rate of profit or loss."

"I think the reason for such naming is to build societies that lack manners and values."

"I don't like any names that are incompatible with morals and general decency."

Most of their opinions show a strong rejection by the Saudi consumers toward these names as strongly voiced by one respondent: "It is unacceptable and unreasonable that everything has become sexual". They described these names as "controversial", "disgusting", "shocking" and "shameless". Moreover, the persistent use of such names may lead to acceptance among the society, as reflected by the respondents:

"The topic is extremely important, so we don't disregard all things related to religion and identity. Things always start small and unrecognizable, and then we get used to them and accept them even if they were unacceptable at the beginning. Nowadays, people face many challenges, and some might think we have to focus on bigger matters and consider this issue later one. However, if we all, as one society, each in his field, stand for raising awareness and enhancing the Islamic and Arabic identity, we will create a strong cohesive society."

"When a product with inappropriate name is frequently used, it will affect how people perceive this name, even if he rejects such names. Everything we encounter will have an impact. The frequent use of these inappropriate and disrespectful names creates mindsets who perceive themselves as merely sexual objects."

"These names have sexual connotations which eliminate chastity and increase their publicity and use."

"The popularity of such words and its connection with the make-up names in particular are definitely indirect messages to instill Western ideas that ruin all societies, especially the Arabic society."

Most opinions fall in the same vein and show a strong desire by the Saudi consumer to change and alter these names. Some gave examples of names that have been successfully changed in Saudi Arabia to "appropriate" names, such as "Better than love" and "Nars blusher O". One respondent, for instance, expressed her support for the company named "Two faced" for respecting her culture and changing the mascara's inappropriate name to "Better than love", and added "I always make sure to buy the local version of the product". Some highlighted that changing the name of the product might lead to questioning its quality and originality. According to one of the respondents, "it is very confusing indeed because the majority do not understand the meanings of these names and do not buy products with altered names because they believe that any change means fake products". Similarly, another respondent expressed her uncertainty about whether "it is better to change the name or to keep it". One further explained that "there is a widespread rumor that there is a difference between the quality of the product with its real name and the one with an altered name".

Consequently, one of the participants suggested that "after changing the product's name, the main company should prove that the product is original through clarifying the reason behind this change in well-known reliable places to gain the public's trust". Another suggestion, emerging from the data analysis, is to make sure that the price of the product with a new name remains the same to make it successful. On the contrary, one disagreed with the idea of changing the names of the products entering Saudi Arabia because it will cause difficulty "finding the products being advertised elsewhere", and "finding the reviews of the same product from different people around the world". She also added "islamizing and saudizing[12] everything is not a good idea, especially when it is related to capitalism". Some also proposed that the names should be translated into Arabic, so the majority understand them and "do not get fooled by merchants". Other suggestions included "placing strict censorship on imported products", "setting more conditions on foreign products", "supporting local brands", and "boycotting products with offensive names". Moreover, some participants highlighted the need for the ministry of commerce to "be addressed to take a role in informing international companies to respect our values" and "to prevent these names from being in our market". Some strongly believed that the "best solution to this issue is to raise awareness among Saudi people regarding these names in order to help them take a strong stand against these companies to force them to be culturally sensitive."

The respondents' comments resonate well with the findings revealed from the quantitative analysis in the previous section, as a high percentage rejected these inappropriate names and suggested these names be modified to be suitable to Islamic-Arabic society. The majority, from the quantitative data analysis, similarly described the negative impact of these inappropriate names on the Islamic and Arabic culture and on the purchase intent of the Saudi consumers. Only a minority (12.6%) showed indifference to the issue, and this is in line with the few comments expressing impartialness toward the products' names as revealed from the qualitative data analysis.

5. Discussion

The way people interact with advertisements varies based on the perspectives of their own culture. Brands that respect the culture of their audience and show high cultural sensitivity are more likely to build robust connection with their potential consumers. Using products' names that provoke controversy has been very common in marketing to gain attention. Such controversy may harm the business and lead to negative consequences (Waller et al., 2013). As the customers interact with these products, they may feel offended and discouraged to buy them. Therefore, it is very important to examine how customers respond to such controversial products' names. This current study attempted to specifically understand the Saudi consumers toward inappropriate cosmetic names and their reactions to these names.

The results revealed unacceptance among the majority of the study participants who expressed their worry and embarrassment toward these names. Although a few participants were not aware of this issue and mentioned that they were shocked to see them for the first time in the survey, the majority had noticed the use of such names and were not happy about their prevalence in the Saudi market. The reasons for their high awareness might be due to the high level of their education, their English competence, their sensitivity to other cultures as a result of living abroad, and their interest in make-up products, as 97% of the study participants were female. As the literature confirms that there is a relationship between products' names and customers' behavior, it was evident from the data analysis that the use of "sexual" names leads to fewer purchase intentions and product boycotts.

The study also reveals a complex set of impacts related to the use of controversial products' names. Religion was the main reason for rejecting these offensive and sex-driven names, as people in Saudi Arabia are extremely proud of their Islamic identity and are very conservative about their culture. Such intolerance of inappropriately named products was also found among high-context cultures in other studies in the literature (e.g., Kim, 2006). A major concern was also expressed by the Saudi consumers regarding the negative influence of these names on public morals. As a result, a number of solutions were proposed by the study participants. First, as over 60% of the survey respondents buy cosmetic products online, marketers and business owners must be careful when choosing the name of their products. The names have to be culturally sensitive and ethically-acceptable. Secondly, inappropriate names should be banned or altered in the Saudi Market. The Ministry of Commerce should be involved in taking strict measures against this issue and should apply censorship on imported products. Most importantly, as some respondents expressed their uncertainty about the efficiency of changing the products' names, they insisted on the need to raise awareness about the meaning of these names among Saudi society to educate them and to help them preserve their religious and cultural values.

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[2] Making things appropriate to Islamic and Saudi culture.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the implications for intercultural advertising targeting Saudi consumers. It contributes to the comprehension of intercultural advertising and offers valuable insights for enhancing cross-cultural competence in the field of English language education, specifically within the realm of teaching English for advertising. By bringing attention to these matters, marketers can engage in meaningful discussions about selecting suitable brand names that can be advantageous for both businesses and their target audiences. Marketers need to have a deep understanding of consumer behavior and be attuned to their needs. The ultimate objective of advertising is to influence consumers to take action, typically by making a purchase. To accomplish this objective, advertisers must develop their cross-cultural competence and must gain insight into their target audience. This involves studying how consumers think, what drives their decisions, and the context in which they exist.

7. Limitations, Future Avenues and Study Implications

As noted, the survey was written in Arabic and addressed mostly Arabic speakers regardless of their English level. This might have affected the participants' understanding of some of the provocative beauty products' names. Many of these names have sexual connotations but are not explicitly sexual. Therefore, participants with beginner or intermediate English might not have been able to grasp the intended meaning behind these names.

Future studies could compare people's tolerance of names and images and determine which is deemed more provocative. Another arena for future studies would be comparing different Muslim cultures that do not speak Arabic like, Malaysia or Indonesia, to the Saudi one to examine how they deal with such provocative names and find out the level of tolerance they exhibit. It could be beneficial to repeat the administration of this survey in five years and compare the results and how the community changes its views of what is acceptable.

A major implication of this study is to raise awareness of cultural insensitivity and its negative impact on cross-cultural interactions. Marketing professionals operating in Arabic-speaking countries must understand their brand names' translations, connotations and perceptions in order to create impactful marketing campaigns. They can enhance their cultural sensitivity through receiving special training in cross-cultural advertising and intercultural communication. They can also benefit from the involvement of local expertise in their advertising campaigns to ensure its appropriateness to the target context. Moreover, the development of intercultural competence should receive more attention in language education and must be enhanced through understanding cultural differences and embracing diversity.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

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The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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