What is this Accent?

Effects of Accent and Language in International Advertising Contexts

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Abstract

While accent effects have been studied in Western advertising contexts, there are contradictory findings on accent effects, and the moderating role of country-of-origin (COO), in other contexts. Few studies extended such accent effects to non-English-speaking cultural settings, particularly in emerging countries. This article fills this knowledge gap by examining accent and language effects on consumers’ perceived effectiveness of a spokesperson in Chinese advertising contexts. We explore how Chinese consumers evaluate spokespersons with standard and non-standard accents, whether these accents are associated with belongingness, sophistication, and modernity, and whether COO moderates such accent and language effects on the perceived effectiveness of spokespersons. Across three studies, the findings demonstrate that compared with a spokesperson with a non-standard accent (i.e., English-accented Mandarin), spokespersons with standard accents (i.e., standard Mandarin and standard English) are perceived to be more effective. Furthermore, Chinese consumers associate standard Mandarin with belongingness, and standard English with sophistication and modernity, whereas English-accented Mandarin has the lowest degree of these associations among the three accents. Although the moderating effect of COO is observed in Study 3, standard English is preferred for both advertised domestic and foreign products.

KEYWORDS: International advertising; spokesperson effectiveness; accents; language associations; country-of-origin (COO).
1 INTRODUCTION

Multilingual advertising, defined as “the appearance of a number of different languages or voices in a market-discourse situation” (Kelly-Holmes, 2005, p. 25), has become a worldwide phenomenon. Thus, consumers are frequently exposed to foreign-produced advertisements featuring spokespersons who speak foreign languages, or local languages with foreign accents, such as Hispanic-accented spokespersons for McDonald’s Fiesta menu (Puzakova, Kwak, & Bell, 2015), and German-accented spokespersons in car ads (Mai & Hoffmann, 2014). Prior research suggests that foreign languages or accents are used in advertising to attract consumers’ attention (Hornikx, van Meurs, & Starren, 2007). Further, the use of foreign languages or accents can evoke consumers’ associations that are transferred to the advertised product, thus creating a positive image of the brand and product (Hornikx, van Meurs, & Starren, 2007; Kelly-Holmes, 2005). This argument is consistent with the sociolinguistic findings that accents evoke stereotyped responses to the speaker (Hendriks, van Meurs, & van der Meij, 2015).

Although recent business research explored accent effects, the findings are contradictory. First, most researchers found that compared with standard accents (e.g., American-/British-/Australian-English accents), non-standard accents (e.g., Greek-/Singaporean-English accents) evoke in consumers negative evaluations of salespersons or spokespersons (DeShields & De los Santos, 2000; Lwin & Wee, 2000; Rao, Hill, & Tombs, 2011). Some researchers, however, found euphony and prestige effects of a dialect (Mai & Hoffmann, 2011), or positive effects of non-standard accents when the speaker’s accent fits the listener’s own (Armstrong & Siew, 2001). Other researchers (Lalwani, Lwin, & Li, 2005; Morales, Scott, & Yorkston, 2012) suggested that the study of accents in advertising should consider the role of country-of-origin (COO), since the accents can trigger stereotypes about the speakers’ countries or ethnic groups. Although prior research argued that foreign languages function as implicit COO cues, few studies have tested this argument (Hornikx & van Meurs, 2017).

More importantly, most studies were conducted in English-speaking countries, or among bilinguals with the focus on English language or accent. Very few studies are conducted in international advertising contexts, in particular studies on Chinese accents in advertising, except for Liu et al. (2013) focusing on the differences between Mandarin and Cantonese. To fill this knowledge gap, and to reconcile the previous contradictory findings on accent effects, the current research in the Chinese advertising context examines accent and language effects on...
Chinese evaluations of spokespersons in commercials. More specifically, in Study 1, we examine whether two standard accents/languages (i.e., standard Mandarin and standard English) evoke more favorable judgements than a non-standard accent (i.e., English-accented Mandarin). In Study 2, we investigate whether 1) standard Mandarin induces stronger associations with belongingness; 2) standard English induces stronger associations with sophistication and modernity; and 3) English-accented Mandarin induces the least associations of belongingness, sophistication, and modernity among these three accents. In Study 3, we examine whether COO interacts with accents and languages, moderating the accent effects.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on accent standardness, accents in Chinese advertising, language associations, and country-of-origin (COO) effects, from which the hypotheses are developed. Section 3–5 present three studies and findings. Section 6 provides discussion and implications, and Section 7 details limitations and future research. Section 8 concludes the article with the importance of accent effects in advertising and our key findings.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Accent standardness and perceived quality

Previous research studied accent effects in various areas including business, psychology, and education, and found that the standardness of accents is important. Accent standardness refers to systemized and accepted formal norms describing correct language usage in a society (Giles & Powesland, 1975). It consists of a: 1) context component, which refers to the perception of correctness and formal characteristics of a society; and 2) social-class component, which refers to the degree of association with the highest socioeconomic status (Morales, Scott, & Yorkston, 2012). Therefore, “standard accents, compared with nonstandard accents, tend to be perceived as more correct and prestigious” (Morales, Scott, & Yorkston, 2012, p.33).

The literature suggests that listeners evaluate a spokesperson in terms of personality traits and qualities based on a spoken message (Edwards, 1982; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). Language, dialect, and accent function as important determinants of source perceptions, through which people would evaluate a spokesperson across a range of dimensions, such as competence, dynamics, and dominance (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Most studies suggest that standard accents elicit more favorable evaluations than nonstandard ones (Berechree & Ball, 1979; Edward, 1982; Lambert et al., 1960). However, some studies demonstrate that nonstandard accents possess...
certain strengths, not shared with standard accents. For example, Giles (1970, 1971) found that nonstandard speakers are favorably evaluated in terms of integrity, social attractiveness, and toughness. Furthermore, Giles (1973) found that, although the argument spoken in standard accents was perceived to have more favorable qualities, only the argument spoken in regional accents elicited opinion shifts.

Contradictory findings of accent effects were also found in business research. Some found positive effects of non-standard accents; for example, Armstrong and Siew (2001) found that the dialect fluency of both the seller and the buyer leads to mutual trust and satisfaction with each other. Mai and Hoffmann (2011) demonstrated the quality, euphony, and prestige effects of a dialect. Notwithstanding the findings of positive effects of non-standard accents, most business research found that compared with salespersons with non-standard English accents, salespersons with standard-English accents are evaluated more favorably in terms of credibility, competence, and friendliness (Tsalikis, DeShields, & LaTour, 1991); or as more attractive, thus leading to greater purchase intentions (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 1996; DeShields & De los Santos, 2000). Birch and McPhail (1999) found that Australian consumers evaluate Australian spokespersons more favorably across characteristics including similarity, dynamism, and professionalism than American and British spokespersons; but the overall attitude towards the advertisement is relatively similar for all three types of ads, supporting the idea of standardized advertising campaigns in Australian advertising contexts. Similarly, Lwin and Wee (1999) found that Western sounded accents (i.e., Australian and British accents) are more effective in advertising campaigns than Asian sounding English accents in three Asia Pacific countries (Australia, Myanmar, and Singapore), and such effects are moderated by the respondents’ nationalities. More recent studies in radio advertising demonstrate that the standard (vs. local) accent led to the greater effectiveness of radio advertising in terms of cognition and affect (Martín-Santana et al., 2015), and received a higher level of spokesperson credibility (Reinares-Lara, Martín-Santana, & Muela-Molina, 2016).

The target consumers’ attitudes toward a spokesperson would affect their attitudes toward the advertisement, and finally their overall brand attitudes and purchase intentions of the featured product (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). However, Morales, Scott, and Yorkston (2012) argue that advertising researchers just started examining the impacts of accents on consumers’ attitudes with a focus on accent standardness and familiarity. Synthesizing contradictory findings in this
research, we argue that the accent studies in advertising are of great significance. Further, prior work mainly focused on the impact of accents in English-speaking countries. Accent effects would be different if the spokesperson used a narrower and country-specific language, rather than English with American or French accent (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 1996). Therefore, it is still unclear in which situations and which accents will elicit more favorable responses (Puzakova, Kwak, & Bell, 2015). It is interesting to investigate how such accent effects vary according to different cultural settings (e.g., Chinese advertising), or whether prior findings could be reconciled.

2.2 Accents in Chinese advertising

China, one of the global leading advertising markets, second only to the U.S., is expected to contribute approximately USD16 billion to global advertising expenditures between 2018 and 2021 (Statista, 2020). However, research on accent effects in Chinese advertising is relatively scarce. Liu et al. (2013) examined the impact of spokespersons’ standard Mandarin and local Cantonese accents on advertising persuasion. Their findings show that Mandarin is more effective in promoting high-involvement products, whereas Cantonese strengthens consumer brand attitudes and memory for low-involvement products; and Mandarin-accented ads with rational appeals lead to higher persuasion, whereas Cantonese-accented ads with emotional appeals lead to higher persuasion.

However, we argue that the Cantonese accent is not prevalent across the whole mainland China, and thus the accent has its own limited effects when we talk about Chinese advertising. Standard Mandarin, also known as Putonghua, is the official language of China, and the most frequently used in Chinese advertising. It is interesting that not only multinational corporations (MNCs), but also local companies use spokespersons with foreign-accented Mandarin or standard English to promote their products. Local companies hope that the foreign-accented Mandarin can give their products a sense of “foreignness”, which would then induce the stereotype and image of that country, to be transferred to the product. In general, there are mainly four types of Chinese television commercials in terms of languages and accents: standard Mandarin, standard Cantonese (mainly in Guangdong province and its vicinity in Southeastern China), foreign languages (e.g., English, French, or Korean), and foreign-accented Mandarin (i.e., Mandarin with a Korean or an American accent). In our research, we mainly focus on standard
Mandarin, standard English, and English-accented Mandarin, exploring the impacts of languages and accents used in Chinese TV commercials on evaluations of spokespersons. Most studies suggest that the spokespersons with standard accents are evaluated more favorably than those with non-standard accents (Liu et al., 2013; Martín-Santana et al., 2015; Morales, Scott, & Yorkston, 2012; Reinares-Lara, Martín-Santana, & Muela-Molina, 2016). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H1:** Compared with a spokesperson with English-accented Mandarin, a spokesperson with standard Mandarin, and a spokesperson with standard English evoke more favorable judgements in the Chinese advertising context.

### 2.3 Language associations

Prior research provided strong evidence that foreign languages evoke certain associations (Hornikx & van Meurs, 2017). For example, in surveys and experiments using print ads or slogans, the German language is associated with quality and reliability, and the French language is associated with beauty, elegance, style, and femininity (Haarmann, 1989; Hornikx, van Meurs, & Starren, 2007; Kelly-Holems 2005; Piller, 2001). Further, in bilingual cultures with English as the second language (e.g., Japan, Korea, and Germany), the use of English in advertising evokes socially stereotypic associations with social advance, modernity, progress, sophistication, and cosmopolitanism (Bhatia, 2000; Haarmann, 1989; Piller, 2003; Takashi, 1990a, 1990b). However, the primary/first language tends to be associated with a high level of belongingness, that is, closeness and in-group associations (Myers-Scotton, 1999, 2002). For instance, Myers-Scotton (1999) found that a commissioner spoke his first language to his in-group assistants, whereas he spoke English to an out-group member. Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone (1994) found that the use of Spanish in print advertising was associated with the Hispanic community. These findings suggest that language in writing or spoken form induces associations related to that country or in-group communities.

Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008) investigated asymmetric language effects on advertising effectiveness (i.e., print slogans) in the context of Indian advertising. While India has 22 recognized official languages, such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Nepali, Malayalam, and Gujarati, Hindi is spoken by the largest population of 422 million people, and Indian English is spoken by the second largest population of 125 million people (Reddy, Maity, & Rao, 2013). Thus,
researchers only focused on Hindi and English, demonstrating that in this bilingual culture, English is associated with sophistication and modernity, and Hindi is associated with belongingness. Such findings were also confirmed in Lin and Wang (2016) reinvestigating the asymmetric language effects on advertising effectiveness in a monolingual culture such as Taiwan, where Chinese is the dominant language. Their findings demonstrate that English in print slogans evokes stronger associations with sophistication and modernity, whereas the local language evokes stronger associations with belongingness. The language spoken in Taiwan is the counterpart of Mandarin spoken in Mainland China, but with a slight Taiwanese accent. Thus, applying these findings of language associations in the context of print slogans to the context of accents, we propose that standard Mandarin and English languages/accents evoke the same language-based associations. Specifically, we hypothesize that:

**H2a:** In the context of Chinese advertising, standard Mandarin induces stronger associations with belongingness than standard English and English-accented Mandarin.

**H2b:** In the context of Chinese advertising, standard English induces stronger associations with sophistication and modernity than standard Mandarin and English-accented Mandarin.

However, since English-accented Mandarin has a sense of “foreignness” and sounds unfamiliar to Chinese consumers, we do not expect it to be strongly associated with either belongingness, or sophistication and modernity. Thus, we hypothesize that:

**H2c:** In the context of Chinese advertising, English-accented Mandarin induces the least degree of associations with belongingness, sophistication, and modernity among the three accents.

### 2.4 Country-of-origin (COO) effect

Companies use different cues such as colors (Lim et al., 2020), religion (Zehra & Minton, 2019), and country-of-origin (Koschate-Fischer, Diamantopoulos, & Oldenkotte, 2012; Magnusson, Westjohn, & Zdravkovic, 2011; Martin et al., 2011) in their advertising to enhance the effectiveness of ads, or improve brand or product evaluations. In particular, domestic brands are more likely to use COO cues in print ads in developed markets, whereas foreign brands are more likely to do so in developing markets; the print ads of symbolic products feature more COO cues than the ads of hedonic or utilitarian products in developing markets (Zeugner-Roth & Bartsch, 2020).

The COO effect is the impact of the country-of-origin information on consumers’
perceptions of products and advertising (Hao et al., 2021; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). The literature on COO effects suggests that the use of a particular foreign language in advertising is effective when there is a congruence between the product advertised and the country where the language is spoken (Domzal, Hunt, & Kernan, 1995; Hornikx, van Meurs, & Hof, 2013; Kelly-Holmes, 2005), for example, the congruity between wine and the French language. Some researchers contend that foreign languages function as implicit cues for COO, and thus affect consumers’ evaluations of the product advertised (Aichner, 2014; Hornikx & van Meurs, 2017; Melnyk, Klein, & Völckner, 2012). Such COO effects also occur in the case of using a foreign accent in advertising. For example, Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dubé-Rioux (1989, 1994) show that pronouncing a brand name with a French accent is more effective than pronouncing the same brand with an English accent for hedonic products that fit the cultural image of France among U.S. listeners. Furthermore, Puzakova, Kwak, and Bell (2015) found that the congruence between product ethnicity and the spokesperson’s accent enhances the brand sincerity. They also found a boundary condition that the effect of product ethnicity-accent congruence overrides the effect of brand ethnicity-accent congruence. More recent findings based on content analysis (Nelson et al., 2020) show that the Jamaican COO, featured in food and beverage advertising of local brands, functions as a cultural cue, leading Jamaican consumers living in Kingston, Jamaica to purchases local brands.

However, some researchers argue that the congruence between accents and product COO is not always effective. Lalwani, Lwin, and Li (2005) demonstrate that among Singaporean consumers, the congruence between a foreign product and a spokesperson with a British-English accent strengthens the perceived credibility of the spokesperson; whereas, such effect does not occur when there is congruence between a local product and the Singlish accent. Further, using 45-second radio ads for hotels as stimuli, Morales, Scott, and Yorkston (2012) demonstrated that the standard accents elicit more favorable evaluations and such effects override COO effects; but a more familiar, nonstandard accent improves consumers’ memory, whereas standard accents lower brand recall. However, we argue that such findings of standard accent effects overriding COO effects may not be generalized to other product categories with more salient COO cues. We therefore propose that the congruence between a spokesperson’s accent and the product COO will lead to more favorable evaluations of the spokespersons and the ads, as the spokespersons know the products from their own country (Lalwani, Lwin, & Li, 2005). However, we do not
include English-accented Mandarin in the interaction effect of accents and product COO cue on the effectiveness of the spokesperson, since English-accented Mandarin, which is neither standard Mandarin nor standard English, cannot be associated with product COO. More specifically, we hypothesize that:

**H3a:** In the context of Chinese advertising, a spokesperson with standard Mandarin is evaluated as more effective than a spokesperson with standard English for a product of domestic origin (vs. a product of foreign origin).

**H3b:** In the context of Chinese advertising, a spokesperson with standard English is evaluated as more effective than a spokesperson with standard Mandarin for a product of foreign origin (vs. a product of domestic origin).

### 3 STUDY 1

Study 1 was designed to test H1. Specifically, we test the different impacts of two standard languages/accents (i.e., standard Mandarin and standard English) and a non-standard accent (i.e., English-accented Mandarin) on consumers’ judgements, which include competence, personal integrity, social attractiveness, and perceived effectiveness of the spokesperson.

#### 3.1 Method

We modified slightly the experiments conducted by Tsaliki, Ortiz-Buonafina, and LaTour (1992), who tested the accents effects of a Guatemalan-Spanish businessman and a foreign-accented Spanish businessman. Three hypothetical TV commercials about a fictitious travel agency (see Appendix A) were dubbed in standard Mandarin, standard English, and English-accented Mandarin by three low-pitched female spokespersons. Identical subtitles in both English and Chinese were provided, but only Chinese subtitles in the standard Mandarin commercial to control the quality of translation. According to Martín-Santana, Reinares-Lara, and Reinares-Lara (2017), low-pitched female voices generate more favorable attitudes toward both the advertisement and the brand. The hypothetical commercials used the “voice-over” technique, so that the spokesperson could only be heard, and the respondents were allowed to focus on the accents and languages spoken by the spokesperson, and could not be biased by confounding variables such as physical attractiveness (Birch & McPhai, 1999). The standard Mandarin and standard English scripts were recorded by two female professional voice actresses whose mother...
tongues were Mandarin and English, respectively; the foreign-accented Mandarin was recorded by a female American who was currently learning Mandarin. The standard Mandarin voice actress recorded the message several times, and the most natural rendition was selected; standard English and English-accented Mandarin voice actresses recorded the message several times to match the speed, rate, and the volume of the standard Mandarin version.

We recruited 100 Chinese respondents (30% female) from CrowdFlower (renamed Appen), by defining the location criterion as mainland China, so that all respondents living in mainland China constitute a sample with a wide range of demographics. All respondents participated in the study via an online questionnaire. First, participants read a short paragraph explaining that an advertising agency wanted to know consumers’ attitudes toward the spokesperson for their new TV commercial; then, they watched three 40-second TV commercials dubbed by three spokespersons with different accents, respectively. After watching each video, participants answered 20 questions about the spokesperson. We adapted the measurements from Tsalikis, Ortiz-Buonafina, and LaTour (1992), consisting of 15 adjectives underlying dimensions of competence, personal integrity, and social attractiveness, and five perceived effectiveness measurements (see Appendix B). These 15 adjectives were selected from multiple studies in psychology, well representing the three underlying dimensions. Reliability and validity of the measurements were established in prior research (Tsalikis, Ortiz-Buonafina, & LaTour, 1992). Competence was measured by intelligent, clear, professional, self-confident, knowledgeable, convincing, and competent. Personal integrity was measured by honest, credible, and dependable. Social attractiveness was measured by friendly, with status, humble, helpful, and cheerful. Participants were asked to rate the extent on 6-point scales (1 = “not at all associated”, 6 = “strongly associated”) to which they felt that the spokesperson was associated with each of the 15 adjectives. Perceived effectiveness was measured by five items (Would you buy the product/service from the company in this advertisement? (1 = “very unlikely”, 7 = “very likely”); Would you recommend the product/service from this company to your friends? (1 = “very unlikely”, 7 = “very likely”); What type of image do you think the spokesperson gives to the product/service? (1 = “very bad”, 7 = “very good”); What type of image do you think the spokesperson gives to the company? (1 = “very bad”, 7 = “very good”); In your opinion, is the spokesperson effective? (1 = “not at all”, 7 = “every effective”). All reliability coefficients of each spokesperson were high (standard Mandarin: α = .97; standard English: α = .98; English
accented Mandarin: $\alpha = .98$), indicating high internal consistency among the items (Nunnally, 1967). At the end of the questionnaire, the demographic information was collected.

3.2 Results
Following Tsalikis, Ortiz-Buonafina, & LaTour (1992), we tested H1 using 20 repeated measures ANOVAs. The independent variable was the spokesperson’s accent (i.e., standard Mandarin: SM, standard English: SE, English-accented Mandarin: EAM). The dependent variables were the 15 adjectives and the five perceived effectiveness measures. The ANOVA results along with the mean scores and $F$ values for each spokesperson are shown in Table 1; the mean scores for the three spokespersons were significantly different, as all $p$ values except for “humble” ($p = .098$) were significantly smaller than .05. This is consistent with previous findings, which indicate that people’s perceptions of accents are not strong in terms of “humble” (Edwards, 1982; Giles, 1970). The results reveal that for the 20 dependent variables, standard Mandarin and standard English spokespersons were rated higher than the English-accented Mandarin spokesperson, except one item measuring perceived effectiveness (i.e., Would you recommend the product/service from this company to your friends?). Thus, we averaged the five perceived effectiveness items (standard Mandarin: $\alpha = .95$, standard English: $\alpha = .95$; English-accented Mandarin: $\alpha = .96$), and ran repeated measures ANOVAs. The results show that standard Mandarin and standard English were perceived as more effective than English-accented Mandarin ($M_{SM} = 4.73$, $M_{SE} = 5.23$, $M_{EAM} = 4.33$, $F(2, 198) = 27.06, p < .001$). Therefore, H1 was supported. Spokespersons with standard Mandarin and standard English accents evoke more favorable judgements than the English-accented Mandarin spokesperson.

4 STUDY 2
The objective of Study 2 was to test whether the accents evoke the socially stereotypic associations found in the literature on language-based associations (i.e., H2a, H2b, and H2c). More specifically, we tested whether standard Mandarin is associated with belongingness, and standard English with sophistication and modernity, whereas English-accented Mandarin has the least degree of belongingness, sophistication, and modernity among the three accents.

4.1 Method
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101 Chinese respondents (37.6% female) were recruited from CrowdFlower by defining the location criteria as mainland China, and all respondents participated in an online questionnaire. First, participants read a short paragraph explaining that an advertising agency wanted to know consumers’ attitudes toward the spokesperson’s accent for their new advertising, and then they watched the three 40-second TV commercials used in study 1. After watching each video, participants were asked to rate the extent on 6-point scales (1 = “not at all associated”, 6 = “strongly associated”) to which they felt that the spokesperson was associated with belongingness, sophistication, and modernity, class associations, and tone of voice. We adopted the scales from Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008): belongingness was measured by family, closeness, caring, belonging, being personal, and being distant; sophistication and modernity were measured by globalness, prestige, exclusivity, cosmopolitan, and professionalism; class associations were measured by middle class and upper class; and tone of voice was measured by polite and stern. The reliability coefficients for each spokesperson regarding belongingness, sophistication, and modernity met the threshold of 0.70 (Table 2). At the end of the questionnaire, demographic information was collected.

4.2 Results
The results (Table 3) reveal that standard English exhibited the strongest associations with all of the words representing sophistication and modernity, such as globalness, exclusivity, cosmopolitan, prestige, and professionalism ($p s < .001$). Standard Mandarin conveyed the greatest sense of belongingness among the three accents, as the spokesperson was rated highest for all terms that denoted belongingness, such as family, closeness, sense of belonging, personal, and caring ($p s < .01$), and was perceived as the least distant ($p < .001$). English-accented Mandarin has the least degree of associations with belongingness, sophistication, and modernity among the three accents, as the spokesperson was rated the lowest and below the average means for all items except “distant”. Therefore, $H2a$, $H2b$, and $H2c$ were supported.

Furthermore, standard English was more strongly associated with upper class than standard Mandarin and English-accented Mandarin ($p < .01$), while standard Mandarin was more strongly associated with middle class ($p < .01$) than the other two types of accents. In terms of the tone of voice, standard English was perceived as the most polite, and English-accented Mandarin was considered as the least polite ($p < .01$), whereas these three types of accents did not differ in the extent to which they were perceived as stern ($p = .87$).
5 STUDY 3

The objective of Study 3 was to test whether the congruence between the accent and the product country-of-origin (COO) has an impact on the perceived effectiveness of spokespersons. More specifically, we tested whether a spokesperson with standard Mandarin is evaluated as more effective than a spokesperson with standard English for a product of domestic (i.e., Chinese) origin; and whether a spokesperson with standard English accent is evaluated as more effective than a spokesperson with standard Mandarin accent for a product of foreign (i.e., Canadian) origin.

5.1 Pretest

We recruited 41 Chinese respondents (73% female) from WeChat (a Chinese social networking platform) to participate in the pretest of whether the COO cues in the hypothetical advertisement were effective. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (i.e., Shenzhen, China as a domestic company vs. Montreal, Canada as a foreign company). We selected Shenzhen to represent China because it is one of the traditional first-tier cities in China (Wong, 2019), known for cosmopolitanism and innovation (Yi et al., 2017). We selected Montreal to represent Canada because it is Canada’s second largest city, and a flagship city of sports and festivals, known for Expo 67 and the 1976 Olympics (Roult, Adjizian, & Auger, 2016). Thus, these two cities can be closely related to the country-of-origin (see Appendix C).

After reading the brief introduction to the company with images of the products (i.e., athletic apparel) and the cities, participants were asked to rate to what extent the athletic apparel product fits the country origin on 7-point semantic differentials (1 = “very bad fit”; 7 = “very good fit”; Hornikx, van Meurs, & Hof, 2013). In the Shenzhen condition, participants rated the COO-product fit high ($M = 4.89; p < .01$); in the Montreal condition, the result showed that the COO cue was also effective ($M = 4.41, p < .01$). To sum up, the results of the pretest indicates that the COO cues in the hypothetical advertisements were effective.
5.2 Method

102 Chinese participants (33.3% female) were recruited from CrowdFlower using the same criterion as the previous studies, and randomly assigned to one of the two conditions in a 2 (product COO: Shenzhen, China vs. Montreal, Canada, between-subjects) X 2 (accent type: standard Mandarin vs. standard English, within-subject) design. Four 40-second voice-over hypothetical commercials featuring a fictitious athletic apparel company corresponding to each COO condition (i.e., Shenzhen and Montreal), with standard Mandarin or standard English, were created for this study (see Appendix D). The subtitles in both English and Chinese in the two conditions were identical. We selected an athletic apparel company because everyone wears athletic apparel, and there are global brands (e.g., Nike and Adidas), and domestic brands (e.g., Anta and Li-Ning) capturing 66% market share in 2019 in the Chinese market (Ma, 2020). Further, we used a fictitious company name to avoid prior brand recognition, so that participants could only focus on the voice-over of the spokespersons. All versions were identical in terms of the advertising messages, and the only difference was the information identifying the product COO used in the pretest. In each condition, after watching each video, participants completed an online questionnaire to evaluate the spokesperson effectiveness, using the same five perceived effectiveness items as in Study 1 (standard Mandarin: $\alpha = .90$; standard English: $\alpha = .94$).

5.2 Results

A repeated measures ANOVA with COO cues (Shenzhen, China vs. Montreal, Canada) as a between-subjects factor, and accent type (standard Mandarin vs. standard English) as a within-subject factor yielded a significant main effect of accent type on the perceived effectiveness of the spokesperson ($F(1,100) = 19.72, p < .001$). More importantly, the accent type by COO cue interaction effect on the perceived effectiveness of the spokesperson was marginally significant ($F(1,100) = 3.85, p = .052$). For the factor “COO”, there was no significant main effect on the perceived effectiveness ($F(1,100) = .06, p = .803$). The results showed that participants in the Shenzhen condition rated the spokesperson with standard English as more effective than the spokesperson with standard Mandarin ($M_{SM} = 4.44$, SD = 1.02; $M_{SE} = 4.98$, SD = 1.10), thus rejecting H3a. Similar results were obtained in the Montreal condition ($M_{SM} = 4.66$, SD = 1.04; $M_{SE} = 4.86$, SD = 1.27), thus supporting H3b. The results suggest that participants preferred standard English for both domestic and foreign products.

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Two main reasons might explain why the participants preferred the spokesperson with standard English accent in the condition of Shenzhen. First, prior research suggests that, as the major international language of advertising in non-English-speaking countries, English endows a product with a social stereotype such as modernization, globalization, and sophistication rather than an ethno-cultural stereotype (Piller, 2003), indicating the superior social status of the English language. Furthermore, there are about 400 million English learners in China, since the entire society regards the study of English as a vital strategy for a person who pursues a better education and a better career (He, 2010).

6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS
Across three studies, we demonstrate that compared with non-standard accent (i.e., English-accented Mandarin), standard accents and languages (i.e., standard Mandarin and standard English) evoke more favorable judgements among Chinese consumers, consistent with previous findings (Study 1); such effects might be explained by the language or accent associations, that is, standard Mandarin is strongly associated with belongingness, and standard English is strongly associated with sophistication and modernity, whereas English-accented Mandarin has the least degree of associations with belongingness, sophistication, and modernity (Study 2); the country-of-origin (COO) cue functions as a moderator, which interacts with the accent type and influences the accent effects on Chinese consumers’ judgements of the spokesperson (Study 3). However, for both domestic and foreign products, consumers perceive the spokesperson with standard English accent as more effective than the one with standard Mandarin accent. Therefore, we draw the conclusion that in the context of Chinese advertising, it would be more effective for both local firms and multinational corporations (MNCs) to develop advertising messages using a spokesperson with standard English accent.

This article makes several contributions to the extant literature. First, it contributes to the literature regarding accent effects on consumers’ perceptions of the spokesperson and ads. We extend the research conducted in English-speaking countries to the non-English-speaking context in an emerging economy, and consider the joint effects of language and accent. Our findings are consistent with most previous findings by showing that in Chinese advertising, compared with the non-standard accent (i.e., English-accented Mandarin), standard accents (i.e., standard
Mandarin and standard English accents) evoke more favorable evaluations and perceived effectiveness of the spokesperson, regardless of the choice of language. Second, this research responds to Mai and Hoffmann’s (2014) call for further investigation of the underlying mechanism explaining such accent and language effects, and other factors moderating such effects. We examined the relationship between accents and accent/language-based associations using video stimuli, that is, standard Mandarin has the strongest associations with belongingness, and standard English has the strongest associations with sophistication and modernity, consistent with prior research that used print slogans (Krishna & Ahluwalia, 2008; Lin & Wang, 2016). Finally, we explored the role COO plays as a moderator. While prior research demonstrated that there is no interaction effect between accent type and COO, suggesting that accent standardness overrides COO effects (Morales, Scott, & Yorkston, 2012), our findings show that the COO acted as a moderator, interacting with the accent type, and enhancing consumers’ perceived effectiveness of the spokesperson who promoted a foreign product. However, Chinese consumers preferred standard English to standard Mandarin for both domestic and foreign products.

This article provides managerial implications for marketers in either local Chinese firms or MNCs by suggesting that in the Chinese advertising context, consumers prefer standard accents/languages (e.g., standard Mandarin and standard English) to non-standard accents (e.g., English-accented Mandarin). Therefore, for marketing and advertising managers operating in Chinese markets, it is more desirable to choose a spokesperson with a standard accent, as a non-standard accent evokes less favorable judgements, less positive attitudes towards the spokesperson and the advertisement, and lower purchase intentions. Furthermore, both local firms and MNCs should exercise caution when using English-accented Mandarin in advertising, since our findings show that the spokesperson with English-accented Mandarin was perceived as the least favorable one. Therefore, we do not suggest that companies use English-accented Mandarin speaking spokespersons to promote their products.

Furthermore, the findings of Study 2 acknowledge the relationship between accents and language-based associations. Thus, our studies suggest that marketers could use a spokesperson in an advertisement by aligning the associations of the spokesperson’s accent with the images and messages that the product or service convey. For example, for products featuring “belongingness and home” (i.e., everyday products such as milk or soap), the use of standard
Mandarin in ads can be more effective in promoting the products; for products featuring “modernity and sophistication”, such as modern luxury cars or luxury handbags, the use of standard English in ads may achieve more desirable results. Thus, messages featuring standard English associated with sophistication and modernity or standard Mandarin associated with belongingness would appeal to Chinese consumers and these associations might enhance consumer-brand relationships.

Finally, we find that the congruence between standard English and product COO strengthens the accent effects on the perceived effectiveness of the spokesperson (Study 3); therefore, it is more effective for MNCs to use a spokesperson with standard English rather than standard Mandarin in their advertising. The same strategy may also apply to local firms, since our findings show that Chinese consumers prefer standard English to standard Mandarin for the local products as well. Such results also corroborate the previous findings that in most cases, the standard accents can achieve better marketing results, and particularly standard English is preferred due to its well-established status of being modern, sophisticated, and prestigious. There are about 400 million English learners in China, who pursue a higher education and a better career through English learning (He, 2010), and with a better education, more Chinese consumers may have a higher criterion for languages and accents.

7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current research has limitations. Our research is within the context of Chinese advertising, mainly focusing on standard Mandarin, standard English, and English-accented Mandarin. However, the accents and languages used in today’s Chinese advertising industry are diverse. For example, Korean-accented Mandarin, French-accented Mandarin, and some Chinese dialect are often heard in today’s Chinese TV commercials. Future research may examine whether our findings can apply to other accents, or explore the effects of other foreign languages/accents on Chinese consumers’ evaluations of advertising, particularly the effects of standard Korean accent and Korean-accented Mandarin, as the Korean Wave (also called Hallyu), defined as exports of South Korean’s popular culture, has significantly influenced China since the late 1990s (Kim & Ryoo, 2007).

Further, since English is associated with social stereotypes, such as modernity and sophistication, rather than an ethno-cultural stereotype (Piller, 2003), future research may focus...
on another language that marketers can use to strongly associate a product with an ethno-cultural stereotype, such as wine with the French language, or cars with the German language. In a series of studies, we used online questionnaires, and it might be hard to ensure that participants could pay enough attention to the video commercials and COO cues. Thus, future research may replicate our findings by using controlled laboratory experiments.

The stimuli in three studies are all video commercials and we did not consider other forms of advertising such as audio communication platforms, thus constituting another limitation and also pointing out a venue for future research. Researchers may use audio commercials to replicate our findings, or consider the medium type of advertising as an interesting moderator, which strengthens or weakens the current effects. For example, will audio advertisements with three accent types have the same effect as video advertisements, or will they weaken the effects?

Moreover, we did not consider the spokesperson gender, which could potentially alter the findings. In our studies, we only used female voice-over for the stimulus ads. Will the female spokesperson be perceived to be warmer than a male spokesperson, thus inducing higher associations of belongingness? Will the male spokesperson be perceived to be more competent than the female spokesperson, thus leading to higher associations of sophistication and modernity? Notwithstanding, further research may take a different track by exploring whether the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) mediates the relationship between the accent type and the spokesperson’s effectiveness. Research on social psychology demonstrates that warmth–competence SCM is used by individuals to make evaluations of people, personality traits, and groups (Fiske et al., 2002; Judd et al., 2005). Therefore, researchers can examine whether a spokesperson with standard Mandarin is perceived to be more effective via perceived warmth, whereas a spokesperson with standard English is perceived to be more effective via perceived competence. Moreover, brand personality can be considered as a moderator in future research, which might interact with the spokesperson’s accent, such that sincere brands may match standard local accent, whereas competent or sophisticated brands may match standard English, leading to favorable evaluations of the spokesperson and the commercial.

It is also interesting to know whether male and female consumers have different responses to spokespersons’ accents, since only a few studies suggest that males react more favorably to the non-standard accent (Lalwani, Lwin, & Li, 2005). Moreover, future research could examine the moderating role of the product category, and observe the interactions among accents, product
COO, and product category (i.e., luxury vs. necessity). Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008) found that for MNCs rather than for local companies, the use of English in print slogans is more effective in advertising luxury products, and the use of local language Hindi in print slogans is more effective in promoting necessities. Moreover, future research could also consider the moderating role of celebrity endorsement. Celebrity influences might be strong enough to offset the effects of language and accent, or generate some unexpected results. For example, a foreign celebrity with foreign-accented Mandarin might have a more positive impact than an unknown spokesperson with a standard accent. We believe that extending accent effects to non-English-speaking cultural settings and considering intervening factors may yield more fruitful findings.

In our research, we only used pictures to manipulate COO cues. Future research may consider other cues related to cultural identities (Chinese vs. Western) or brands, such as background music, which can match the origin of the product or brand advertised, since brand-music congruency affects consumers’ attitude towards the ad (Lavack, Thakor, & Bottausci, 2008). For example, the local music may match the local standard accent, whereas the Western music can match standard English, thus leading to music-accent congruency, which in turn increases spokesperson effectiveness. There might be a three-way interaction among the accent type, background music, and COO cues. Further, consumer-brand identity may function as another moderator, which strengthens the relationship between the accent type and spokesperson effectiveness, since strong (vs. weak) consumer-brand identity leads to a more favorable brand attitude, stronger willingness to share brand information, and higher purchase intentions (Graham & Wilder, 2020).

Finally, technological advancement has reshaped marketing communications, extending traditional marketing to a larger scope via digital activities, mobile apps, and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tiktok), allowing a deeper level of co-creation between consumers and companies (Wang, 2021). Therefore, future research may examine accent effects in these settings such as chatbots, voice assistants, mobile apps, and social media platforms. Future research can also explore the downstream outcomes of spokesperson effectiveness affected by the accent type, such as attitudes towards the commercial, brand recall, and purchase intentions. We believe that pursuing these investigations may provide more nuanced understanding of accent effects.
8 CONCLUSION

With globalization and acculturation, multilingual advertising involving different languages or accents has become a worldwide phenomenon. Thus, consumers frequently see or hear advertisements featuring spokespersons who speak foreign languages, or their own languages with foreign accents. China is one of the global leading advertising markets, second only to the U.S. with an expected contribution of USD16 billion to global advertising spending from 2018 to 2021 (Statista, 2020). As such, it is important for firms, particularly global brands, to know what accent is the most effective when implementing advertising strategies. In Chinese advertising, some global brands use standard English or standard Korean in their TV commercials targeting Chinese consumers (e.g., KFC’s Korean commercial, Dior’s English commercial, and Jeep’s 75 Anniversary English commercial). Recently, some Chinese firms have used foreign languages in their TV commercials. Some examples are Lenovo’s (a technology company) commercial in standard English, Daphne’s (a shoe company) commercial in standard Korean, and Li-Ning’s (a sportswear company) commercial in standard English. Further, some local brands use English-accented Mandarin in their TV commercials, such as Kong Weng’s cake commercial. Whether these advertising strategies using different accents are effective has not been explored in prior research. This article fills this knowledge gap, demonstrating that the spokesperson with standard Mandarin or standard English accent is perceived more favorably among Chinese consumers than English-accented Mandarin, corroborating the previous findings on accent effects. However, contrary to Morales, Scott, and Yorkston (2012), our findings show that the product COO moderates such accent effects. Specifically, Chinese consumers perceived the spokesperson with standard English (vs. standard Mandarin) to be more effective when the product has a foreign origin. Moreover, we demonstrate that a spokesperson’s accent can evoke certain associations, as does a spokesperson’s written language, contributing to the extant literature.

REFERENCES


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Appendix A: Hypothetical TV commercial script for Study 1 & Study 2

Founded in 1999, One Mountain is now one of the leading International tour operators in the world. The company provides a complete line of travel services including accommodation reservation, transportation ticketing, packaged tours, corporate travel management, and customized luxury journeys. After 18 years of continuously endeavors, OneMountain has become one of the top leaders in the world traveling market, connecting people to unique travel experiences, at any price point, in more than 30,000 cities, and over 200 countries. The company offers its services through an advanced transaction and service platform consisting of mobile apps, websites and a centralized, 24-hour customer service center. The trusted, passionate travel specialists invite you to the ultimate travel experience. Whether you know exactly where you want to go or need some inspiration, OneMountain is here to guide you, and to create a journey that will surpass your expectations. Connect us today, off to see the world.
Appendix B: Construct items

Study 1:

15 adjectives

Based on the advertisement you just watched, please answer “to what extent do you think the spokesperson you heard is associated with the following words?” (1 = “not at all associated”; 6 = “strongly associated”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Social attractiveness</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>With status</td>
<td>Credible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>Dependable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convincing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five perceived effectiveness items (Study 1 & Study 3)

1. Would you buy the product/service from the company in this advertisement?
(1 = “very unlikely”; 7 = “very likely”)

2. Would you recommend the product/service from this company to your friends?
(1 = “very unlikely”; 7 = “very likely”)

3. What type of image do you think the spokesperson gives to the product/service?
(1 = “very bad”; 7 = “very good”)

4. What type of image do you think the spokesperson gives to the company?
(1 = “very bad”; 7 = “very good”)

5. In your opinion, is the spokesperson effective?
(1 = “not at all effective”; 7 = “very effective”)

Study 2: Belongingness, Sophistication and Modernity

Based on the advertisement you just watched, please answer “to what extent do you think the spokesperson you heard is associated with the following words?” (1 = “not at all associated”; 6 = “strongly associated”).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belongingness</th>
<th>Sophistication and Modernity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Globalness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>Exclusivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
<td>Cosmopolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant</td>
<td>Professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C. Prestest stimuli

This appendix is only for the review process and is available upon request.

Appendix D: Hypothetical TV commercial scripts for Study 3

Founded in Montreal, Canada in 1999, Onemountain Sport Inc. is a fashion athletic apparel
company. OneMountain produces a complete line of athletic products for running, training and most other sweaty pursuits. We make our products through the most cutting-edge technology as well as world-class designs. The company is continuously searching for new ways to make better products and to innovate manufacturing techniques. Product quality is the foundation we stand on and this foundation is comprised of three key areas: fabric, performance and craftsmanship. Our products will keep you as comfortable as possible to get most out of your training. A constant that has never wavered is our desire to empower people to reach their full potential through providing the right tools and resources, and encouraging a culture of goal pursuit and personal responsibility. The core values of quality, integrity, and fun are at the heart of our company culture. Join us today, and strive to be better than your best self.

Founded in Shenzhen, China, in 1999, Onemountain Sport Inc. is a fashion athletic apparel company. OneMountain produces a complete line of athletic products for running, training and most other sweaty pursuits. We make our products through the most cutting edge technology as well as world-class designs. The company is continuously searching for new ways to make better products and to innovate manufacturing techniques. Product quality is the foundation we stand on and this foundation is comprised of three key areas: fabric, performance and craftsmanship. Our products will keep you as comfortable as possible to get most out of your training. A constant that has never wavered is our desire to empower people to reach their full potential through providing the right tools and resources, and encouraging a culture of goal pursuit and personal responsibility. The core values of quality, integrity, and fun are at the heart of our company culture. Join us today and strive to be better than your best self.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct items</th>
<th>Mean (SM)</th>
<th>Mean (SE)</th>
<th>Mean (EAM)</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>4.16 (.101)</td>
<td>4.63 (.97)</td>
<td>4.06 (1.08)</td>
<td>20.05</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>4.32 (.101)</td>
<td>4.60 (.93)</td>
<td>3.99 (1.06)</td>
<td>16.99</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>4.28 (.97)</td>
<td>4.51 (.97)</td>
<td>4.13 (1.01)</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>4.42 (1.06)</td>
<td>4.74 (1.04)</td>
<td>3.89 (1.19)</td>
<td>25.26</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>4.51 (.97)</td>
<td>4.87 (.96)</td>
<td>4.11 (1.19)</td>
<td>22.17</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>4.43 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.77 (1.01)</td>
<td>3.94 (1.25)</td>
<td>22.31</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credible</td>
<td>4.22 (1.02)</td>
<td>4.61 (.98)</td>
<td>3.99 (1.11)</td>
<td>13.86</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With status</td>
<td>3.95 (.91)</td>
<td>4.41 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.73 (1.18)</td>
<td>19.14</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>4.44 (.95)</td>
<td>4.75 (.96)</td>
<td>4.07 (1.07)</td>
<td>21.22</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>4.28 (.90)</td>
<td>4.58 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.05 (1.14)</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>4.09 (1.17)</td>
<td>4.32 (1.10)</td>
<td>4.12 (1.06)</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convincing</td>
<td>4.36 (.94)</td>
<td>4.64 (1.01)</td>
<td>3.86 (1.11)</td>
<td>22.71</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>4.33 (1.04)</td>
<td>4.67 (.10)</td>
<td>3.99 (1.08)</td>
<td>17.40</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>4.39 (1.03)</td>
<td>4.77 (.99)</td>
<td>3.90 (1.12)</td>
<td>30.06</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>4.24 (1.17)</td>
<td>4.48 (1.11)</td>
<td>3.82 (1.30)</td>
<td>13.78</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy product</td>
<td>4.78 (1.43)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.27 (1.43)</td>
<td>18.06</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend</td>
<td>3.80 (1.31)</td>
<td>5.19 (1.32)</td>
<td>4.26 (1.43)</td>
<td>61.14</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product image</td>
<td>5.01 (1.33)</td>
<td>5.20 (1.26)</td>
<td>4.37 (1.41)</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company image</td>
<td>4.94 (1.23)</td>
<td>5.28 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.34 (1.45)</td>
<td>23.52</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>5.12 (1.31)</td>
<td>5.41 (1.30)</td>
<td>4.39 (1.54)</td>
<td>22.41</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2. Reliability coefficients in Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accent</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Mandarin</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophistication and modernity</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard English</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophistication and modernity</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English-accented Mandarin</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophistication and modernity</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* “Distant” is excluded from “Belongingness”.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct items</th>
<th>Mean (SM)</th>
<th>Mean (SE)</th>
<th>Mean (EAM)</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>3.66 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.34 (1.12)</td>
<td>2.92 (1.27)</td>
<td>20.08</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>3.84 (.83)</td>
<td>3.43 (1.16)</td>
<td>2.72 (1.13)</td>
<td>36.28</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>3.85 (.84)</td>
<td>3.21 (1.21)</td>
<td>2.61 (1.23)</td>
<td>39.23</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>3.44 (.93)</td>
<td>3.37 (.10)</td>
<td>3.13 (1.06)</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant</td>
<td>2.65 (1.04)</td>
<td>2.96 (1.10)</td>
<td>3.23 (.97)</td>
<td>10.47</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>3.76 (.83)</td>
<td>3.57 (.86)</td>
<td>2.68 (1.04)</td>
<td>50.53</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalness</td>
<td>3.50 (.91)</td>
<td>3.90 (.98)</td>
<td>2.99 (1.07)</td>
<td>27.51</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusivity</td>
<td>2.92 (1.17)</td>
<td>3.42 (1.15)</td>
<td>2.89 (1.13)</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>3.34 (1.06)</td>
<td>3.64 (1.10)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.10)</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>3.55 (.76)</td>
<td>3.8 (.93)</td>
<td>2.68 (1.12)</td>
<td>44.65</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>3.96 (.86)</td>
<td>4.14 (.85)</td>
<td>2.74 (1.31)</td>
<td>57.15</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>3.32 (.98)</td>
<td>3.22 (.98)</td>
<td>2.8 (1.07)</td>
<td>10.70</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>3.26 (.96)</td>
<td>3.62 (1.03)</td>
<td>2.54 (1.21)</td>
<td>41.72</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite tone</td>
<td>4.07 (.89)</td>
<td>4.21 (.78)</td>
<td>2.95 (1.25)</td>
<td>54.77</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stern tone</td>
<td>2.34 (1.23)</td>
<td>2.38 (1.28)</td>
<td>2.39 (1.14)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.874</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 1. Interaction effect between product COO and the accent type

Note: Figures in the chart indicate mean values.