

Viewers' Perceptions towards the Use of Code-Switching in Tiktok Advertisements in Relation to Brand Recognition, Viewers' Trust and Viewers' Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching is commonly used by advertisers to deliver their message in online advertisements, yet how viewers perceive its use in these advertisements is still under explored. Using the Markedness Model by Scotton (1998), this study aims to investigate the viewers' perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing their engagement, brand recognition, and trust in those advertisements. A quantitative approach using an online questionnaire consisting of a 16-item survey on viewers' perceptions of code-switching in TikTok advertisements was conducted among 240 students at a public university in Malaysia. The results of the study revealed that the viewers perceived code-switching in TikTok advertisements positively in enhancing brand recognition, viewers' trust and viewers' engagement. In addition, the study discovered that viewers' trust had the greatest impact on their engagement in TikTok advertisements that used code switching. These findings suggest that advertisers or brands can use code-switching in TikTok advertisements to build engagement, brand recognition and trust, making the advertisements more relatable and culturally relevant for diverse viewers.

Keywords: code-switching, TikTok advertisements, brand recognition, viewers' trust, viewers' engagement

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon that generally occurs in a bilingual community, wherein speakers alternate between two languages, particularly their target language and second language. This phenomenon is inevitable in various linguistic contexts, including education, family, and business, due to its significant role in serving various functions (Almoaily, 2023). Nevertheless, code-switching is not limited to physical face-to-face interactions. It can be found in online advertisements through social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Advertisers widely recognise and employ code-switching in online advertisements. Advertisers frequently use it, especially in bilingual communities (Almoaily, 2023). Code-switching is prevalent in TikTok advertisements, as it is an effective marketing strategy that could attract and engage the target audience (Mansor, 2021). Many favoured its ability to engage dynamically and perceived code-switching positively in terms of engaging interest and building rapport (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024). It helps brands adapt their messages to various linguistic and cultural contexts, which helps build familiarity and engagement with their viewers. On top of that, strategic advertising campaigns can improve brand recognition and help a company stand out in a competitive market (Kemal & Omar, 2024). It also contributes to enhanced understanding and trust in advertisers due to more effective communication and connection (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024).

Advertisers often switch languages to align with the language proficiency of their audience, thus demonstrating the relevance of this practice on social media platforms, where the audience is more diverse and there is a need for clear communication (Ketut et al., 2024). However, the incorporation of foreign words in online advertisements can convey diverse meanings of a product or service, thus affecting viewers' perceptions of code-

switching. In certain social situations, the stigmatisation of speaking multiple languages can lead to prejudice and discrimination (Nazri & Kassim, 2023). Moreover, excessive code-switching could impact the viewers with limited proficiency in one or both languages, who may feel excluded by highly complex linguistic transitions, thus resulting in disengagement (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024).

Understanding viewers' perceptions of code-switching in TikTok advertisements is vital for advertisers in establishing a strong online presence. An insufficient online presence may lead viewers to perceive the company as lacking credibility and brand recognition, which in turn diminishes their confidence in the products or services offered (Harahap, 2023). If viewers perceive a brand negatively, they may disengage from it, resulting in lower effectiveness of advertising communication (Kuo et al., 2021). In addition, the inconsistency between the advertisers' choice of language in advertisements and the viewers' preferences of language choice suggests the need to produce advertisements that match the preferences of the target audience. Accordingly, there are two main objectives of the study. The first is to explore viewers' perceptions of code-switching in TikTok advertisements, particularly in relation to brand recognition, trust, and engagement. The second is to examine whether brand recognition and viewers' trust serve as predictors of viewers' engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Markedness Model

This study employs the Markedness Model proposed by Carol-Myers Scotton (1998), which provides a distinct framework of four maxims for understanding the social motivations underlying code-switching. The foundational theory was introduced by Carol-Myers Scotton (1993), whereas the 1998 version offers a more systematic framework for analysing code-switching in modern digital discourse. This framework explores practical maxims that explain why and how speakers (or brands) switch codes in various social circumstances. The four maxims are explicitly labelled as follows:

- (a) Sequential Unmarked Choice Maxim: Switch from one unmarked code to another when situational features change during an interaction, resulting in a change in the unmarked choice (Myers-Scotton, 1993).
- (b) Code-switching as an Unmarked Choice Maxim: Maintain a pattern of switching between codes when the unmarked rights and obligations balance for participants is indexed by both codes, rather than solely one (Myers-Scotton, 1993).
- (c) Marked Choice Maxim: Transition to a marked choice to negotiate a different rights and obligations balance than the one indexed by the unmarked choice (Myers-Scotton, 1993).
- (d) Exploratory Choice Maxim: In the less conventional exchanges, when an unmarked option is not apparent, code-switching is used to suggest one or more codes, each representing the unmarked index of a potential balance of rights and obligations for the interaction (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

The Markedness Model (1998) is a theoretical framework for code-switching that addresses the motivations behind this linguistic phenomenon (Sadat & Mohammed, 2021). According to Myers-Scotton (1998), the speaker's goal is to optimise by choosing one language over another based on the strategy that would best serve their own interests. The model illustrates that language users opt to communicate in a manner that clearly indicates their rights and obligations in relation to other participants within the discourse and its context (Sadat & Mohammed, 2021). The right and obligation imply a linguistic choice that is marked or unmarked.

The Markedness Model implies that all speakers have a 'markedness evaluator' that enables them to recognise and differentiate between marked or unmarked choices or codes (Myers-Scotton, 1998). The marked code reflects the negotiation of the speaker's identity and relation to other participants, whereby a speaker chooses to speak a language with the intention of achieving the best outcomes. On the other hand, the unmarked code refers to the language expected in a specific context. Speakers can opt between the unexpected or marked language and the expected or unmarked language, depending on their intentions. In the study, the marked code reflects the

second language, English, whereas the unmarked code represents the native or common language, which is Malay. In this context, the speakers or brands choose to switch codes in online advertisements to achieve specific objectives, which are enhancing viewers' engagement, brand recognition and viewers' trust.

This model can be employed to identify whether the viewers perceive marked code-switching as positive in terms of enhancing viewers' engagement, brand recognition, and viewers' trust, or negative, such as disengagement, negative brand recognition, and uncertainty. This model fits the study, as it emphasises that the speaker's language choice is highly influenced by his reasons for code-switching after considering the context and the available code (Sadat & Mohammed, 2021). In this context, brands consider the language background of their audience and take advantage of using code-switching in fulfilling their intentions, which are enhancing viewers' engagement, brand recognition and viewers' trust. Furthermore, this model helps the researcher to understand the brands' motivations for strategic code-switching in online advertisements from the viewers' perspectives (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024).

Code-switching and online advertisements

Code-switching is a linguistic term that refers to the use of more than one language in communication. In this context, two or more languages are used alternately in the same utterance or discourse (Sadat & Mohammed, 2021). Code-switching is the process of transitioning from one language to another in speech events to accommodate specific roles and circumstances (Putri & Sulistiyono, 2023). Code-switching allows speakers to use parts of speech from two different grammatical systems, which can lead to a wide range of expressions (Søreng, 2023).

Code-switching can be observed in diverse communicative contexts, such as regular conversation, digital media and advertising, particularly online advertisements. In the context of advertising, advertisers can effectively persuade and engage viewers using code-switching. Integrating a second language into advertisements, such as slogans, taglines, and product names, can attract bilingual audiences (Harahap, 2023). Bilingual advertisements are prevalent across multiple media forms, such as television commercials, online advertisements, and social media posts (Kemal & Omar, 2024). The practice of code-switching is relevant in online advertisements on social media platforms, specifically TikTok, where the viewers are increasingly diverse and where the need for clear and inclusive communication is crucial (Ketut et al., 2024). They found that TikTok viewers spent an average of 95 minutes per day on the application. This finding indicates that viewers are likely to come across TikTok videos featuring instances of code-switching. It is known for its brief, engaging videos, which encourage viewers to use language spontaneously.

There were many recent published studies on different aspects of code-switching in online advertising (Harahap, 2023; Almoaily, 2023; Laura & Djuharie, 2025; Rosita et al., 2025). Harahap (2023) investigated the students' perceptions of code-switching in advertisements. He found that the majority of tertiary students in Indonesia perceived code-switched online advertisements as having a greater impact than monolingual advertisements. He concluded that code-switched online advertisements significantly influenced the online business environment, benefiting advertisers and those in business, as they were original, appealing, non-confusing, easily understood, and did not destroy the Indonesian language.

In addition, Almoaily (2023) examined the roles of Arabic-English code-switching in advertisements created by Saudi influencers on Snapchat. The study conducted a corpus analysis on 4000 words produced by 40 male and female advertisers to categorise instances of code-switching into several social and sociolinguistic functions. It was discovered that switching for availability was the most prevalent function for code-switching, as the majority of sampled advertisers were either Arabic monolingual or had low English proficiency.

Meanwhile, Laura and Djuharie (2025) analysed the types and functions of code-switching by TikTok content creators. They discovered that code-switching played a key role in how bilingual people interacted on social media. The findings revealed that switching languages within a single sentence occurred the most, indicating a strong habit of using code switching. In a similar vein, a study conducted by Rosita et al. (2025) on the use of

code-switching in El Barack's TikTok videos found 58 instances of types and functions of code-switching across his ten videos, highlighting the importance of code-switching in social media.

While many studies highlight the persuasive and engaging role of code-switching in online advertising (Harahap, 2023; Laura & Djuharie, 2025; Rosita et al., 2025), other research presents a more cautious view. Nasrulddin (2021) found that some Malaysian consumers perceived bilingual advertisements as confusing or distracting, particularly when switching was excessive. Similarly, Almoaily (2023) noted that monolingual audiences sometimes struggled to engage with English insertions, suggesting that code-switching may reduce accessibility for certain groups.

Code-switching and brand recognition

Brand recognition plays a significant role in online advertisements. It can be defined as an individual's ability to recall a brand name along with a product category or need in brand-relevant situations (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2022). According to Chun et al. (2020), brand recognition serves as a representation of product imagery, enhances familiarity and preference towards products, builds trust in products and companies, and incorporates specific products into buying considerations. Brand recognition also refers to the ability of viewers to verify their prior exposure to the brand when presented with it as a cue (Viktoriia, 2020).

Only a limited number of studies have been conducted on the use of code-switching in advertisements to enhance brand recognition. Sharaf Eldin (2020) examined the linguistic motivations underlying code-switching in the name of McDonald's meals and incorporated the strategic use of English and Arabic elements to generate linguistic novelty, evoke cultural associations, and enhance brand recognition. The study found that the strategic use of code-switching between English and Arabic in advertisements contributes to viewers' engagement, brand recognition, and viewers' purchase intention. Sharaf Eldin (2020) argued that the viewers' attitudes towards the use of code-switching in advertisements were positive, particularly in terms of the brand memory, which could be considered as brand recognition. The study provided information about the diverse patterns and types of code-switching in advertising as well as the linguistic functions and motivations underlying code-switching

Akter et al. (2024) examined the types of code-switching, the reasons behind it in Bangladeshi television advertisements and its impact on viewers. The study discovered that intra-sentential code-switching was the most often utilised form of code-switching in television advertisements, revealing that such code-switching improved the viewers' ability to recall the advertisements and affected their purchasing behaviour. Advertisers employed code-switching to attract and engage viewers, address lexical gaps, emphasise critical points, and enhance contextual understanding. It illustrates the persuasive benefits associated with incorporating various languages in broadcast media.

Although prior research (Sharaf Eldin, 2020; Akter et al., 2024) points to the persuasive advantages of code-switching in boosting brand recognition and recall, not all findings align with this optimistic view. Ibrahim (2013), for instance, reported that the heavy use of *Manglish* and *Bahasa Rojak* in Malaysian print advertisements occasionally left readers confused and undermined brand clarity. Likewise, Tajolosa (2013) highlighted that monolingual viewers often felt less included by bilingual advertising suggesting that the effectiveness of code-switching depends on the linguistic background of the target market.

Code-switching and viewers' trust

Viewers' trust is another crucial concept that is closely related to viewers' engagement and brand recognition. It can be defined as the midpoint of a long-term relationship that is mutually beneficial for both viewers and companies and is established and maintained (Wickramasinghe et al., 2021). Kim and Kim (2021) describe trust as a relationship trait that develops through constant interactions. Viewers' trust reflects their confidence and willingness to rely on the message (Kim & Kim, 2021). Next, Alvarez (2020) defines trustworthiness as the advertisers' integrity, reliability, and dependability. In the context of code-switching, clear and well-constructed language minimises misunderstandings, builds trust, and enhances the advertisement's credibility (Kemal & Omar, 2024).

Several studies were conducted to see the influence of code-switching in advertisements on viewers' trust. For instance, Belaidouni and Kherbache (2024) found that the use of code-switching in Facebook Live sales enhanced viewers' trust in the advertisers due to clearer communication and connection. The findings also indicated that code-switching made the advertisers look more authentic.

Meanwhile, in a different context, Alvarez (2020) investigated the effect of advertisements presented in English, Spanish, and code-switching between English and Spanish formats on viewers' perceptions of spokesperson trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and brand attitudes. The findings revealed that among strong American identities, a spokesperson or source communicating in English was regarded as equally competent as one using Spanish. Nevertheless, the source's level of expertise and brand attitudes were perceived more positively when communicated in English rather than Spanish among individuals who did not identify with American culture. Alvarez (2020) suggested that sources should avoid employing code-switching as a communication strategy in printed advertisements, as it was regarded as less knowledgeable and competent than those employing entirely English or Spanish, resulting in lower brand attitudes. Additionally, the study also found that the use of code-switching in advertisements did not significantly influence how trustworthy the message was perceived to be, and as a result, brands' evaluations remained unchanged.

Code-switching and viewers' engagement

Viewers' engagement is one of the notable aspects that should be considered when employing code-switching in online advertisements. It refers to the situation when viewers interact with brands or advertisers in online advertisements rather than skipping the advertisements. Viewers' engagement is regarded as one of the criteria by TikTok's recommendation system in ranking the videos (Cheng & Li, 2024). Engagement can be defined as the process by which online users establish a connection or participate in collaborative efforts with brands, companies, or other users (Galdón Salvador et al., 2024). Similarly, Hallock et al. (2019) defined engagement as the process by which viewers build relationships with other viewers or brands, going beyond the simple acts of liking, commenting, or posting on a social network. In this context, viewers' engagement indicates a long-term relationship between viewers and a brand.

Past scholars found that the use of code-switching in advertisements helped enhance viewers' engagement with the advertisements. For example, Ketut et al. (2024) examined the linguistic strategies used by Indonesian tour guides on TikTok, emphasising the practice of code-switching and its functions. They looked at how the practice of code-switching contributed to viewers' engagement and effective communication. They discovered that intra-sentential switching was mostly used by the tour guides to serve various functions like adding cultural nuance, highlighting important points, engaging the viewers, and expressing specific behaviours.

Another study by Belaidouni and Kherbache (2024) explored code-switching in Facebook Live sales in the Algerian context and its impact as a persuasive tool in marketing. The study revealed that the viewers perceived code-switching favourably, as it engaged interest and established a connection with advertisers. However, they noted that excessive frequent shifts may result in viewers' disengagement, thereby forcing advertisers to consider the target viewers' language proficiency and the type of product when employing code-switching in the advertisements.

Since code mixing is considered as a sub-set of code-switching (Musyken, 2000), studies were also conducted to see whether this phenomenon influenced viewers' engagement. For example, Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021) investigated Instagram users' attitudes towards code-mixing between Thai and English in the advertising of an international study consultancy firm. The findings revealed that Instagram users had positive perceptions of code-mixing in Instagram advertisements, particularly in terms of the three components of attitudes: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. They found that the users liked and felt attracted to the use of code-mixing in Instagram advertisements. The study also discovered that the majority of the viewers indicated a positive attitude towards code-mixing in Instagram advertisements as they kept on reading the message rather than leaving the Instagram account which posted the advertisements. This finding implies that viewers are engaged with the advertisements containing code-mixing of such language strategies in TikTok advertisements.

Examining engagement in a different platform, Tabassum (2024) investigated the relationship between code-mixing television advertisements, viewers' emotional responses, cognitive processing of advertisements, and viewers' confidence levels among people between the ages of 18 and 35. The study found that people have a high level of comfort with code-mixed advertisements that they are able to understand, and they have a beneficial relationship with the language that they are able to comprehend and regard appealing. Additionally, they feel moderately confident of comprehension when exposed to code-mixed advertisements, indicating that the language utilised in advertisements contributes to shaping an individual's level of confidence. Tabassum (2024) concluded that viewers perceived code-mixing positively in enhancing self-confidence and engagement with the content. While the study managed to offer suggestions for the psychological impacts of code-mixing in advertising among the youth, it did not focus on the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements and lacked the viewers' perceptions towards the use of code-switching in enhancing brand recognition and viewers' trust.

Although studies conducted by Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021) and Tabasum (2024) showed that code-switching could encourage viewers' engagement, some studies found that code-switching in advertisements could lead to some issues. For example, Mainake (2021), in a study of Indonesian food advertisements, pointed out that excessive reliance on English insertions risked confusing viewers and weakening the clarity of the brand message. In the Philippine context, Banatao and Malenab-Temporal (2019) observed that frequent language switching in television commercials occasionally blurred brand identity rather than reinforcing it. Similarly, Da Silva (2014) argued that consumer responses to bilingual advertising are not uniformly positive, with some audiences perceiving code-switching as unnecessary or even distracting.

In conclusion, code-switching in advertisements has been shown to enhance brand recognition, trust, and engagement, but its effectiveness is not universal. Factors such as audience language background, cultural context, and the degree of switching employed can determine whether it strengthens communication or undermines clarity. This highlights the need for advertisers to adopt a context-sensitive approach when incorporating code-switching into their strategies.

The past literature on code-switching in advertisements has only discussed one construct at a time, for example, brand recognition (Akter et al., 2024; Banatao and Malenab-Temporal, 2019; Da Silva, 2014; Sharaf Eldin, 2020) in which their studies did not revolve online platforms, trust (Alvarez, 2020; Kemal & Omar, 2024) and engagement (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024; Ketut et al., 2024). Thus, the gaps suggest a need to study how viewers perceive code-switching in TikTok advertisements in relation to brand recognition, trust and engagement within a Malaysian multilingual setting.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study used quantitative research using a survey approach. Quantitative research looks at how different factors relate to each other through tools that help analyse numbers with statistical methods. It is designed to measure data and generalise findings from a sample study across different points of view. This approach involves incorporating safeguards against bias, addressing alternative or counterfactual explanations, and generalising and replicating the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A survey was deemed appropriate for this study as it was to assess a sample of the population, providing a quantitative description of its trends, attitudes, and opinions (Saunders et al., 2019). Surveys are one of the examples of research designs that can be employed to conduct research and collect data in the format of numbers (Ghanad, 2023). Survey design assists researchers in answering descriptive questions, exploring the relationships between variables, and examining predictive relationships between variables over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research design enables researchers to collect data from a large population and obtain quantitative data for statistical analysis. It includes a cross-sectional study, where a questionnaire is used for data collection. Cross-sectional surveys acquire data from people who share all variables except the ones studied (Ghanad, 2023).

Sample and sampling technique

The sample size was calculated based on 53449 of the total population at a public university. The Raosoft online sample size calculator was used, where a 7% margin of error and 95% confidence level were entered alongside the population size and 50% response distribution to generate the recommended sample size. Online calculators generally require inputs for a study's confidence level, margin of error, and population size to determine the minimal sample size required (Memon et al., 2020). The margin of error is calculated as 7%, adhering to the acceptable range of $\pm 4\%$ to $\pm 8\%$ at a 95% confidence level in surveys (Léonidas et al., 2024).

Next, sampling refers to the process of acquiring a representative sample consisting of a limited number of units or examples selected from a significantly larger group or population (Rahman et al., 2022). The study employed simple random sampling, where each member of the population has an equal probability of being chosen as the sample. This method enables the researcher to select sample that represents the population across key characteristics and to estimate the sampling error with a degree of confidence (Ahmed, 2024). Simple random sampling is effective as the findings obtained are more likely to reflect trends across the entire population (Rahman et al., 2022). It also ensures that each case within the population had an equal probability of selection to represent the entire population without any bias (Saunders et al., 2019).

Instrument

Research instrument refers to the method of collecting data in research, like questionnaires, observation and interviews (Ghanad, 2023). The study used an online questionnaire as the research instrument because it is frequently associated with survey design and can be distributed to a sample (Saunders et al., 2019). The online questionnaire was distributed to the sample via Google Forms, an online survey platform. This type of platform facilitates data collection by organising data into organised spreadsheets for analysis, reducing data entry errors, and expediting hypothesis testing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Besides that, the online questionnaire was adapted from the previous studies (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024; Junsom & Jeanjaroonsri, 2021; Mansor, 2021; Tabassum, 2024).

The online questionnaire used in the present study was divided into four sections. Section A focused on gathering the respondents' demographic information, like gender, code-switching preferences and frequency of viewing TikTok advertisements containing code-switching. Secondly, Section B consisted of 7 items exploring the viewers' perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing viewers engagement. Next, Section C consisted of 4 items investigating the viewers' perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing brand recognition. Lastly, Section D consisted of 5 items examining the viewers' perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing viewers' trust. The response type for Section B, C and D was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data collection and data analysis

The data of the study were collected from the responses via the Google Form that were distributed to the respondents through an online invitation via a link to the Google Form. Email, personal messages, and WhatsApp groups. Subsequently, the responses from the online survey platform were transferred to IBM SPSS Statistics 29 for analysis. In this study, the data were analysed descriptively in a form of means and standard deviations. In addition, stepwise multiple regression was employed to examine whether the viewers' perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing brand recognition and viewers' trust predicted viewers' engagement.

Reliability and validity

The instrument utilised to evaluate the survey must have certain qualities to yield beneficial results in the study. These two qualities are reliability and validity, which are the two most important features in evaluating measuring instrument used in a study. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measurement, while validity deals with the

accuracy of a measurement (Ghanad, 2023).

In the present study, the researchers conducted an internal consistency test which measures the consistency of the items in the measuring instrument. The internal consistency was determined using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and the value was .0.950 The result indicates that there is a very high level of internal consistency (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). In ensuring the validity of the instrument, the researchers adapted the questionnaires from the past studies (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024; Junsom & Jeanjaroonsri, 2021; Mansor, 2021; Tabassum, 2024). Then, the researchers obtained reviews from the experts and academicians with extensive knowledge regarding the appropriateness of each item in the measuring instrument. Expert reviews are important for ensuring consistent and unbiased results (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will present the results and discussion based on the interpretation of the findings. To examine the viewers’ perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing brand recognition, viewers’ trust and viewers’ engagement, means and standard deviations of each construct will be presented.

Brand recognition

Table 1 illustrates how viewers perceived the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements to enhance brand recognition.

Table 1 Viewers’ perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing brand recognition

No	Item	Mean
C4	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements often draws my attention to brands.	3.82
C3	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements creates a brand image for the product.	3.74
C2	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements creates a strong impact on my mind.	3.68
C1	I am likely to recall a brand in TikTok advertisements that incorporate code-switching.	3.54

Viewers perceived that code-switching in TikTok advertisements often drew their attention to brands (Item C4), resulting in the highest mean score (M = 3.82). This finding correlates with Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021), who found that code-mixed advertisements grabbed the viewers’ attention. Employing languages that align with the viewers’ cultural and linguistic background can attract their attention. Viewers also agreed that code-switching in advertisements made them notice the advertisements and like the products advertised (Akter et al., 2024). This evidence indicates that the advertisers often employ code-switching in their advertisements to attract the viewers’ attention to the brands and persuade them to buy the products or services advertised. Similarly, Sharaf Eldin (2020) mentioned that the employment of code-switching in advertisements aligns with cultural preferences and enhances viewers’ engagement and brand recognition.

Attention in brand recognition is the crucial part in recognising and remembering a brand. Based on the marked choice maxim of Myers-Scotton’s (1998) Markedness Model, this indicates that advertisers may intentionally employ code-switching in TikTok advertisements to enhance the visibility of brand elements, helping them to stand out in the viewers’ mind and strengthening the brand’s presence.

Next, viewers perceived that code-switching in TikTok advertisements created a brand image for the product (Item C3) had the second highest mean score (M = 3.74). This result corresponds with Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021), who found that viewers perceived code-mixing in advertisements positively in creating a brand image for the product. Akter et al. (2024) noted that the viewers find the use of code-switching pleasant to see in advertisements, and it brings them happiness and refreshes their minds. This implies a positive brand image that

the viewers have for the products. Interpreted through the marked choice maxim in Myers-Scotton’s (1998) Markedness Model, code-switching may be used deliberately to create a brand image and makes it more memorable, thereby enhancing brand recognition.

Apart from that, the present study found that viewers perceived code-switching in TikTok advertisements as creating a strong impact on their minds (Item C2) ($M = 3.68$). This finding aligns with Akter et al. (2024), who discovered that most viewers believed that code-switching had a strong impact on them. They noted that when they encounter remarkable English words and phrases in advertising, they frequently incorporate these code-switched phrases as taglines in their dialogues (Akter et al., 2024). Some viewers indicated that this encouraged them to purchase a product. This finding reflects how code-switching in TikTok advertisements contributes to viewer recall and emotional impact, supporting both engagement and brand recognition. Looking at the marked choice maxim in Myers-Scotton’s (1998) Markedness Model, code-switching in advertisements makes them more memorable by standing out from the expected language choice, thus leaving stronger impressions on viewers.

Lastly, Item C1, which is, “I am likely to recall a brand in TikTok advertisements that incorporate code-switching”, had the lowest mean score for brand recognition ($M = 3.54$). Although the viewers perceived the item as positive, Tabassum (2024) reported a lower mean for a similar item. Nevertheless, her viewers expressed that that they tended to remember and talk about advertisements employing code-mixing. Similar to this, Akter et al. (2024) found that code-switching improved viewers’ recall of advertisements. Viewers even incorporated the code-switching phrases that they heard in the advertisements into their daily conversations (Akter et al., 2024). This result indicates that the use of code-switching in advertisements enables the viewers to recall the brand better. Based on Myers-Scotton’s (1998) marked choice maxim, code-switching serves as a beneficial language strategy that highlights significant brand elements, making them easier to remember.

Overall, the present study found that the viewers perceived the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements as positive in enhancing brand recognition. The findings of the present study correlate with those from the previous studies (Akter et al., 2024; Sharaf Eldin, 2020), which revealed that the use of code-switching in advertisements contributed to brand recognition.

Viewers’ trust

Table 2 illustrates how viewers perceived the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements to enhance viewers’ trust.

Table 2 Viewers’ perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing viewers’ trust

No	Item	Mean
D5	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements gives me adequate knowledge about the product or service.	3.92
D3	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements is more attractive than only using one language.	3.90
D4	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements is more influential than only using one language.	3.85
D1	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements enhances my trust in the advertiser.	3.59
D2	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements is more trustworthy.	3.46

Viewers perceived that code-switching in TikTok advertisements gave them adequate knowledge about the product or service (Item D5), resulting in the highest mean score ($M = 3.92$). This result indicates that viewers feel well-informed through code-switched advertisements. This correlates with Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021), who discovered that the viewers perceived code-mixed advertisements positively in terms of giving them

enough knowledge about the product advertised. When the use of code-switching improves the viewers' understanding, it will increase their confidence in the product or service advertised.

The finding can be interpreted through the unmarked choice maxim in Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1998). In this context, code-switching can be seen as a natural and effective communication tool which can enhance understanding and trust between the viewers and the advertisers. Switching between codes is done naturally to meet the viewers' expectations, which is to understand the product or service better. In this case, the advertisers opt for the unmarked language, Malay, to align with the viewers' cultural and linguistic background.

Next, viewers perceived that code-switching in TikTok advertisements was more attractive than only using one language, as indicated by Item D3, which had the second highest mean score ($M = 3.90$), followed by Item D4, which is "*Code-switching in TikTok advertisements is more influential than only using one language*" ($M = 3.85$). These findings align with Mansor (2021), who found that most viewers agreed that code-switched advertisements were more attractive and influential than monolingual advertisements. An advertisement's level of engagement and attractiveness can influence its credibility and trustworthiness in advertising. Advertisers who employ code-switching in their advertisements avoid using English terms that may be confusing to viewers or that are not understood by the viewers (Akter et al., 2024).

When code-switching makes advertisements more attractive, viewers may perceive the brands as professional, authentic and relatable, thus viewing the brands as more credible and trustworthy. This aligns with the marked choice maxim of Myers-Scotton's (1998) Markedness Model, where the strategic use of code-switching not only attract attention but also enhance trust in the message and the advertiser. Additionally, the result of Item D4 fits with the marked choice maxim, where code-switching can be used as a tool to enhance the influence and credibility of the message, thus increasing trust in the advertisers. In this context, the advertisers deviate from the expected monolingual norm to grab attention and signal inclusivity, thus shaping viewers' trust.

Furthermore, the viewers perceived code-switching in TikTok advertisements as enhancing their trust in the advertiser (Item D1) ($M = 3.59$). This result corresponds with Belaidouni and Kherbache (2024), who discovered that code-switching in advertisements enhanced the viewers' understanding and trust in the advertisers due to clearer communication and connection. Upon viewing the code-switching advertisements, viewers exhibited positive attitudes towards the advertised product. Consequently, they are most likely to trust the product because it makes them feel like it is a decent item to buy or try (Akter et al., 2024). This finding can be interpreted through both the unmarked and marked choice maxims of Myers-Scotton's (1998) Markedness Model. In this context, code-switching may serve as a natural communication style that builds familiarity or serve as a planned strategy to show credibility and professionalism.

Lastly, Item D2, which said, "*Code-switching in TikTok advertisements is more trustworthy*", had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.46$), even though it still falls within a moderately neutral mean range. This finding aligns with Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021), who reported a moderately neutral mean score for the similar item. This result suggests that while code-switching in advertisements enhances viewers' engagement, it does not automatically lead to increased viewers' trust, as trust may be influenced by other factors aside from language choice, such as brand reputation and transparency. Based on Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1998), this can be analysed through the unmarked and marked choice maxims. In this context, trust can be established when code-switching appears natural (unmarked) or when it is employed to emphasise significant messages (marked).

Overall, the present study found that viewers perceived the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements as positively enhancing their trust. The findings of the present study correspond with those from the previous studies (Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024; Junsom & Jeanjaroonsri, 2020), which revealed that the use of code-switching in advertisements contributes to viewers' trust.

Viewers' engagement

Table 3 illustrates how viewers perceived the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements as a means to enhance their engagement.

Table 3 Viewers’ perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing viewers’ engagement

No	Item	Mean
B1	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements makes me more engaged with the content.	3.80
B4	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements attracts my interest.	3.79
B2	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements makes me more interested in the products or services.	3.78
B5	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements does not make me feel bored.	3.77
B3	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements does not confuse me.	3.74
B6	Code-switching in TikTok advertisements encourages me to contact the advertiser with further enquiries.	3.37
B7	I follow TikTok accounts where their advertisements use code-switching.	3.08

Viewers perceived that code-switching in TikTok advertisements made them more engaged with the content (Item B1), resulting in the highest mean score ($M = 3.80$). The result corresponds with Tabassum (2024), who found that viewers perceived advertisements that used a blend of English and their native language as effective in establishing an engagement with the content. Similarly, Akter et al. (2024) discovered that viewers believed the advertisers used code-switching in advertisements to attract more viewers. Code-switching has become a unique feature on TikTok, where many advertisers want to reach more people and maintain them engaged with the content they produce by using different languages (Laura & Djuharie, 2025). On top of that, the advertisers agreed that code-switching effectively enhances viewers’ engagement with the content by considering the viewers’ preferences for code-switching and societal trends (Akter et al., 2024).

The findings were interpreted using Myers-Scotton’s Markedness Model (1998). The item “*Code-switching in TikTok advertisements makes me more engaged with the content*”, which received a relatively high mean score, reflects the unmarked choice maxim. This suggests that viewers perceive the use of both English and Malay in TikTok advertisements as a natural and expected communication style, which enhances their engagement. The casual and familiar nature of the language choice makes the code-switching feel unmarked and relatable.

Next, viewers perceived that code-switching in TikTok advertisements attracted their interest, as indicated by Item B4, which had the second highest mean score ($M = 3.79$), followed by Item B2, which is “*Code-switching makes me more interested in the products or services*” ($M = 3.78$). These findings align with Belaidouni and Kherbache (2024), who discovered that the use of code-switching affected viewers’ engagement, where the majority of viewers believed that code-switching attracted their interest and made them more interested in the products or services advertised. Similarly, Akter et al. (2024) and Mansor (2021) found that advertisers employ code-switching in advertisements to attract viewers’ attention. Advertisers believed that incorporating two languages into a single sentence creates an appealing linguistic impact, which could persuade viewers to purchase the advertised products or services by using the English language (Akter et al., 2024).

Based on the marked choice maxim, code-switching is used in a way that stands out in the context of TikTok advertisements. This aligns with the items “*Code-switching in TikTok advertisements attracts my interest*” and “*Code-switching in TikTok advertisements makes me more interested in the products or services.*” In these cases, switching from Malay (the unmarked or expected language) to English (the marked choice) may serve to grab attention, signal professionalism and highlight key messages. The marked use of English makes the advertisements stand out and engage viewers more deeply with the advertised product or service.

Besides that, the present study found that viewers perceived that code-switching in TikTok advertisements does not make them feel bored (Item B5) ($M = 3.77$). The finding corresponds with Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021), who found that the viewers did not feel bored when they viewed code-mixed advertisements. The viewers think that brands use code-switching to make the advertisements fun and interesting to watch (Akter et al., 2024). Item B5 reflects a generally positive viewer perception. This corresponds with the unmarked choice maxim in Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1998), as viewers likely perceive code-switching as a natural part of social media communication, especially within a bilingual Malaysian context. In this case, these shifts are familiar and expected, ensuring that the viewing experience remains uninterrupted and engaging, thus preventing boredom.

In addition, the present study discovered that the viewers perceived code-switching in TikTok advertisements as non-confusing (Item B3) ($M = 3.74$). The result aligns with Mansor (2021), who reported that the use of code-switching in advertisements did not confuse the viewers. Since the code-switched advertisement was original, appealing, non-confusing, and understood, it has remained in their minds and had a positive impact. However, this finding contrasts with Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021), who reported that viewers held neutral perceptions towards the use of code-switching in relation to confusion or clarity in understanding the message. Item B3 can be interpreted through the unmarked choice maxim in Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1998). This indicates that viewers perceive code-switching as a familiar and expected communication strategy, rather than confusing or disrupting. In a bilingual environment like Malaysia, switching between Malay and English is often part of everyday discourse. Therefore, its use in TikTok advertisements aligns with social norms, which makes it an unmarked language choice.

In contrast to the previous findings, the present study found that Item B6, which is "*Code-switching in TikTok advertisements encourages me to contact the advertiser with further enquiries*", had a moderately neutral mean score ($M = 3.37$), reflecting a neutral to slightly positive perception. This result contradicts the findings of Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021), who reported that viewers perceived code-mixed advertisements as encouraging them to contact the advertisers with further enquiries, resulting in a more positive response and a higher mean score. This can be interpreted through the marked choice maxim in Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1998). In this context, code-switching may function as a deliberate strategy to enhance credibility or signal professionalism, thereby encouraging viewers to engage beyond the advertisement itself. It suggests that while code-switching in TikTok advertisements may stand out, it does not strongly motivate most viewers to initiate direct contact with the advertisers.

Lastly, Item B7, which is "*I follow TikTok accounts where their advertisements use code-switching*", had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.08$), reflecting a neutral to slightly positive perception. In contrast, Junsom and Jeanjaroonsri (2021) reported a higher mean for a similar item, where their viewers frequently followed accounts that posted code-mixed advertisements. The result indicates that some viewers may be engaged with the content but prefer to scroll passively rather than taking an extra step, which is following the TikTok accounts. Based on Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1998), this aligns with both unmarked and marked choice maxims. For some viewers, code-switching is a familiar and expected feature (unmarked) that does not strongly influence their following behaviour. For others, it serves as a creative use of language (marked) that makes the advertisements stand out, but this alone may not strongly influence their decision to follow the account.

Overall, the present study found that the viewers perceived the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements as positive in enhancing viewers' engagement. The findings of the present study correlate with those from the previous studies (Akter et al., 2024; Belaidouni & Kherbache, 2024; Ketut et al., 2024), which revealed that the use of code-switching in advertisements contributes to viewers' engagement.

To investigate if brand recognition and viewers' trust predict viewers' engagement

An inferential analysis was conducted using a stepwise multiple regression to investigate whether the viewers' perceptions towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements in enhancing brand recognition and viewers' trust contribute to viewers' engagement.

Table 4 Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.749 ^a	.561	.559	.57427

a. Predictors: (Constant), VIEWERS' TRUST

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to investigate whether brand recognition and viewers' trust contributed to their engagement towards the use of code-switching in TikTok advertisements. Table 4 indicates that the multiple correlation coefficient for model 1 was .749, indicating approximately 56.1% of the variance of viewers' engagement could be accounted for by viewers' trust.

Table 5 ANOVA

	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model 1	1	100.144	303.668	<.001 ^b
	238	.330		
Total	239			

a. Dependent Variable: VIEWERS' ENGAGEMENT

b. Predictors: (Constant), VIEWERS' TRUST

In Step 1, viewers' trust entered into the regression equation and was significantly related to viewers' engagement, $F(1,238) = 303.668, p < 0.01$ (see Table 5). Brand recognition ($t = 6.146, p < 0.01$) did not enter into the equation in Step 2 as shown in Table 7, despite making significant contribution.

Table 6 Coefficients

Model	Standardized Coefficients		Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	.767	.168			4.572	.001
Viewers' Trust	.762	.044	.749		17.426	.001

a. Dependent Variable: VIEWERS' ENGAGEMENT

Table 7 Excluded Variable

Model	Beta In	t	Sig.
1 (Brand Recognition)	.387 ^b	6.146	.001

a. Dependent Variable: VIEWERS' ENGAGEMENT

b. Predictors: (Constant), VIEWERS' TRUST

The regression model for predicting viewers' engagement using the coefficients in Table 6 was:

$$\text{Predicted viewers' engagement} = 0.767 + 0.762 (\text{Viewers' trust})$$

Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that viewers' trust contributes to the viewers' engagement most as the model shows that the regression coefficient related to viewers' trust is 0.762; a unit increase in viewers' trust is associated with a 0.762 unit increase in viewers' engagement.

Overall, the study found that viewers' trust has the most significant impact on viewers' engagement with TikTok advertisements that employ code-switching. This suggests that when viewers perceive the advertiser or the message as trustworthy, they are more likely to remain engaged with the content by watching or interacting with the advertisement. This aligns with the findings of Belaidouni and Kherbache (2024), who observed that code-switching in advertisements led viewers to perceive the product as sophisticated and exclusive, thereby fostering a more positive attitude towards the product advertised. This relationship demonstrates how important it is for advertisers to not only use strategies that draw people's attention but also use language that builds trust.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that code-switching between English and Malay in TikTok advertisements is a highly effective communication strategy among viewers. The findings demonstrate that code-switching enhances viewer engagement, strengthens brand recognition, and builds trust. Viewers found such advertisements are more interesting, memorable, and credible compared to monolingual ones, which encourage them to stay engaged and recall the advertised brands.

It is also concluded that viewers' trust emerges as the most predictor to engagement, as compared to brand recognition. Overall, these findings highlight the value of code-switching as a persuasive tool in digital advertising, particularly for reaching viewers on social media platforms.

Future research is encouraged to examine the use of code-switching across a wider range of platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, and to conduct comparative analyses between them. In addition, variables such as cultural identity, language attitudes, and levels of language proficiency could be investigated as potential mediating factors influencing its effectiveness.

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