

Are Consumers More Responsive to Male or Female Voices in Advertisements?

Male voices seen as more forceful while female voices are more soothing

New York, N.Y. – March 12, 2010 – A lot of thought goes into the “right” voice for every advertisement. Certainly the tone and timbre of a voice are two things that can help sell the product or service. But, probably the most important question every marketer must answer is, should the voice be male or female?

It really depends on the tone the ad is attempting to convey. Almost half of Americans (48%) believe a male voice is more forceful while 46% believe a female voice is more soothing, so those may be easy choices for a marketing executive to make. However, almost half of U.S. adults also say it makes no difference to them and neither voice is more forceful (49%) or more soothing (46%).

These are some of the findings of a new **Adweek Media/ Harris Poll**, survey of 2,194 U.S. adults surveyed online between February 2 and 4, 2010 by **Harris Interactive**.

It is a little more of a difficult decision if the advertisement is trying to persuade someone to do something – and aren’t all ads effectively doing just that? One in five Americans (19%) believes a female voice is more persuasive while 18% say they believe a male voice is more persuasive. Almost two-thirds (64%) say the voice’s gender makes no difference in persuasion.

When it comes to actually selling a specific thing, two-thirds of Americans say it doesn’t make a difference and neither voice is more likely to sell them a car (66%) or a computer (69%). Among those who believe it makes a difference, over one-quarter (28%) believe a male voice is more likely to sell them a car and 23% say a male voice is more likely to sell them a computer. Only 7% say a female voice is more likely to sell them either.

Gender differences

Men and women do think similarly on the tone of the two types of voices – with one major exception. Over half of men (54%) believe a female voice is more soothing, compared to 38% of women who say the same. One in ten women (11%) believes a male voice is more soothing while 5% of men say the same. The only other real difference between men and women is on the selling of a car. One-third of men (32%) say a male voice is more likely to sell them a car compared to 23% of women who say this.

So what?

Advertisers will still spend time to determine what voice to use in advertisements. But, overall, the American consumer does not believe that, for most things, one type of voice is more or less likely to sell them a certain product or service. Yes, male voices are more forceful while female voices are more soothing, but when it comes to cars and computers, just to name two products, the tenor of the ad will matter more than the gender of the voice.

TABLE 1
EFFECT OF VOICES IN COMMERCIALS

“When there is a voiceover in a commercial, which type of voice is...?”

Base: All U.S. adults

	Male Voice	Female Voice	Makes no difference
	%	%	%
More forceful	48	2	49
More soothing	8	46	46
More persuasive	18	19	64
More likely to sell me a car	28	7	66
More likely to sell me a computer	23	7	69

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding;

TABLE 2
EFFECT OF VOICES IN COMMERCIALS – BY GENDER

“When there is a voiceover in a commercial, which type of voice is...?”
Percent Saying “Male Voice”

Base: All U.S. adults

	Total	Gender	
		Men	Women
	%	%	%
More forceful	48	51	46
More soothing	8	5	11
More persuasive	18	21	15
More likely to sell me a car	28	32	23
More likely to sell me a computer	23	24	23

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding;

TABLE 3
EFFECT OF VOICES IN COMMERCIALS – BY GENDER

“When there is a voiceover in a commercial, which type of voice is...?”
Percent Saying “Female Voice”

Base: All U.S. adults

	Total	Gender	
		Men	Women
	%	%	%
More forceful	2	2	3
More soothing	46	54	38
More persuasive	19	20	18
More likely to sell me a car	7	9	5
More likely to sell me a computer	7	10	5

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding;

Methodology

This **Adweek Media/Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States February 2 and 4, 2010 among 2,194 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Where

appropriate, this data were also weighted to reflect the composition of the adult online population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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