

BBC Learning English
Talk about English
Live webcast
Consumerism and Mexico



About this script

Please note that this is not a word for word transcript of the programme as broadcast. In the recording process changes may have been made which will not be reflected here.

Jackie: Hello, welcome to Talk About English, live from our offices in London. I'm Jackie Dalton.

Callum: Hello I'm Callum Robertson.

Jackie: Today in the programme:

David

I think it's about originality, impact and, most importantly, relevance.

Jackie: The language of advertising and branding, and insight from some of the world's top experts on how big companies manage to make us buy their products.

Callum: And....

Emily

I absolutely hate clothes shopping

Callum: Who said all girls love shopping?

Jackie: A special focus on Mexico as our country of the month.

Callum: And of course, we'll announce the winner of our competition to win an mp3 player.

Jackie: Our special guest today is going to be helping us with some of the business English that comes up. Sian Harris is a highly experienced language teacher. Sian, welcome to the programme.

Sian: (responds)

Callum: Our programmes over the past month have looked at different areas of consumerism. This is the focus of this week's programme.

Brand slogans

Jackie: This week we're going to focus on branding and advertising. Those were all advertisements for brands. Sian, could you explain these two terms to us please.

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: Wally Olins is a top brand consultant. He's given advice on branding to some of the world's most successful companies. He's going to tell us about what he thinks are the main purposes of branding and advertising.

Wally

The brand is a product or service with a personality. Obviously a brand has functions, it competes with other brands on price and quality and service. But it also has emotional characteristics – an attitude, if you like. Advertising is one of the means by which the brand brings itself to the consumer's notice.

Callum: So Wally described a brand as the kind of personality of a product or service. He says it's about 'attitude' – Sian, can you explain what we mean by that?

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: So what is that makes good branding? What should you do when you're trying to come up with a powerful brand? Naresh Ramchandani has won creative awards at the world's most successful advertising agencies. What does he think?

Naresh

I think it's about taking a company and making it person-sized. Because I think you as a person can't relate to a big organisation. But you can relate to a person. I think it's about developing a relationship between you the consumer and the service or the product.

This product might be your friend or it might be your companion or it might be your advisor or it might be, you know, someone who's wiser than you, but there's a relationship and it's very much one to one and I think that's always the way to actually get some connection.

Callum: So Naresh says good branding is about making the product seem like a person – building a relationship.

Jackie: So for example your bank might want to be seen as a friend who is very knowledgeable and who you can trust – do you feel like that about your banks?

All: (respond)

Jackie: Now we're going to hear from David Droga creative director of Saatchi Saatchi, also voted creative person of the decade. What does he think good branding and advertising is all about?

David

I think it's about originality, impact and, most importantly, relevance.

Callum: Impact – a word that's very important in advertising. All advertisers want to have maximum impact. What exactly do we mean when we say this Sian?

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: Do you think you're affected by advertising – does it have a strong impact on you?

All: (discuss)

Jackie: David also used the word 'relevance', what does he mean by that?

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: Well, as he's going to tell us, David thinks that the best brands are ones where the image is very much related to what the company really is and really values – not just a sort of pretend image. These are the companies that people really 'buy in to'. 'Buy in to' - Sian?

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: Now listen to David describing some companies which he thinks are great examples of good branding, starting with the maker of the ipod.

David

You look at Apple as an organisation that sort of restless attitude, that inventive attitude. I mean that's sort of something that's true to the heart of the brand and I think that's something that's very appealing and what people buy in to. You could do the same for Nike, they set about a revolution when they changed the way running shoes were advertised it became a movement, much more than just a fashion statement. Virgin another global brand – it sort of taps into Branson's attitude – the challenger. And it really leaves a lot of competitors out in the cold.

Callum: So David says Apple, Virgin and Nike are examples of brands people really buy in to because the brand image is very closely linked to what the company is about, whether it's Apple's inventiveness, or Virgin's idea of challenging.

Jackie: And he used a nice phrase there – he said this 'leaves competitors out in the cold'.

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: So let's recap on some of the language that has come up.

Branding

Advertising

Impact

Relevance

To buy in to

To leave competitors out in the cold

Lila Downs, Viborita

Jackie: That was Mexican singer, Lila Downs with *Viborita*.

Callum: BBC Learning English's Country of the Month at the moment is Mexico, and in the Communicate section of our website, you'll be able to find pictures and descriptions of Mexico which our listeners have sent in and answers to questions about Mexico.

Jackie: As part of our special focus on Mexico, in this programme we're going to take a special look at consumerism, branding and advertising in Mexico. I spoke to a couple of our listeners there. The first one I spoke to is Luis Felipe.

Luis Felipe

Jackie: OK so that was the view of Luis Felipe, telling us that he thinks brands are important – he used the word 'class' meaning high quality. He also said that advertising is powerful in Mexico and that that's a problem because people become more interested in buying nice things than reading or studying.

I also spoke to Laura, who lives near Mexico City and asked her if she liked to buy things with brand labels. What does she think?

Laura

Jackie: Now let's go over to Lourdes Heredia, she's a journalist originally from Mexico – joining us on the line from Washington, where she is at the moment.

(Jackie and Lourdes talk about Mexico and consumerism)

Jackie: Lourdes thank you very much for joining us.

We've been discussing consumerism for about a month now – and asking you about how it affects you and whether you like shopping. A number of girls wrote in saying 'yes I like shopping, that's because I'm a girl' and boys wrote in saying 'I don't like shopping because I'm a boy'. It seems that most of you think it's true that boys don't like shopping but girls do! Hoa in Vietnam says

"I'm a girl so I like shopping. And I like to go to small shops, because things are cheaper in small shops than in large **malls**."

Jackie: 'Mall' is a term we heard in recent programmes – Sian can you just remind us what a 'mall' is?

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: Brigita in Slovakia says
OHHHHHHHHHH, I LOVE shopping:) Just as any girl in the world, I guess:)
I can honestly say that I am a **shopoholic**!)

Sian: (explain shopoholic)

Callum: But then we have Darren in China saying

"I don't like shopping, just because I am a boy."

Soal, China

"I'm a boy so I dislike going shopping. I never like to go to small shops,
because things are not very good, I also like to buy things in the same place."

Jackie: So what's all this about is it true that girls like shopping and boys don't?

Our colleague Jo spoke to one of our listeners who wrote in, Hui-Chung Tai
from Taiwan. Does she think there is a difference between men and women
when it comes to liking shopping? First Jo asked her if she liked shopping.

Interview

Sure I think most people enjoy shopping – especially ladies.

Really – you think ladies prefer shopping to men?

Yes.

Why do you think women like shopping more than men – what experiences have you had to
show that women tend to like shopping more than men?

When I was little I always remember that my mother she liked to take children to go to
department store – but when we invited our father to come with us he would always say he
rather spend time on other things. And this situation also happened a lot to my friends.

Jackie: So Hui-Chung thinks that women prefer shopping to men. Her mother always used to love going shopping and her father would rather do something else.

Callum: Well we thought we'd look at this further and we asked men and women around the BBC Learning English office to see how true it is that women like shopping and men don't.

GIRLS V BOYS

THE GIRLS

Do I like shopping? Yes I do. But the thing I don't like is really spending money!

I don't really like shopping

I absolutely hate clothes shopping

Most of the time I really don't like shopping because I don't like being in crowded places.

THE BOYS

I don't really like the process of shopping

I like shopping when I'm just out looking for something on a whim

Yes I do like shopping – especially for books and music

I love shopping!

(Ends with music note!)

Jackie: So you may or may not be surprised to hear that actually some of the men here like shopping and lots of the women really don't enjoy it!!

All: (discuss shopping)

Jackie: Well when some of us go shopping our main aim is to get what we want and get out as quickly as possible, while some of us just keep on buying, keep on spending – and 'to keep on' is a phrase we're going to hear more about now in a songline!

Songline

Jackie: As it's Mexico month this month, we're going to hear a news story about three Mexican fishermen who were lost at sea for nine months have been found. They were rescued near the Marshall Islands, halfway between Australia and Hawaii. They drifted more than eight-thousand kilometres across the sea. The report says they've become folk heroes in Mexico – folk heroes – what's that?

Callum: (explains.)

Jackie: The men were picked up by a Taiwanese trawler which found them drifting in the ocean. Two words it would be helpful to understand there – trawler and drifting – first, what's a trawler?

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: And it picked them up as they were drifting? Drifting?

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: Well we're going to hear the first part of a report on this. Listen out for those words.

Callum: They were 'folk heroes', 'trawler' and 'drifting'.

Jackie: Also, as you listen try to answer this question:

Callum: In which ocean where the fisherman found drifting?

Jackie: If your geography is good you may already have worked it out. In which ocean were the fisherman found drifting? Phil Mercer has sent us this report from Sydney, here's the first part:

Fishermen

The three fishermen have become folk heroes in Mexico. They will be able to enjoy their celebrity status when they're flown home later this week. They arrived on the Marshall Islands on board a Taiwanese trawler that found them drifting in the Pacific Ocean two weeks ago. They told their rescuers that they'd been lost at sea for more than nine months and that two other crew members had died during the ordeal.

Callum: The answer was they were drifting in the Pacific Ocean when they were picked up by the trawler.

Jackie: After nine months in the ocean they were very tired and a lot thinner. In his report, Phil will use the word 'exhausted'.

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: He'll also use the word 'emaciated'.

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: But, even though they were emaciated, they somehow managed to stay alive by finding some food. What did they eat?

Fishermen

When they were finally plucked to safety the survivors were exhausted and emaciated, which was hardly surprising given that they'd survived by eating sea gulls and raw fish. One of the men earned the nickname "El Gato" or the Cat, for the way he pounced on birds that landed on their boat.

Callum: Well they managed to survive by eating seagulls, which are a kind of bird that you find around the sea and raw fish.

Jackie: And two of the fisherman even started calling one 'the cat' because of the way he pounced on the birds that landed on the boat. Pounced?

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: Well, in the last part of the report we'll hear that the fisherman are in hospital for a check-up.

Callum: You have a check-up in hospital or at the doctors to make sure there is nothing wrong with you.

Jackie: The check-up showed they were in good shape – there was nothing wrong with them.

Callum: One of them in particular had good news from his family though.

Jackie: Yes, what was his good news?

Fishermen

They've been taken to hospital on the remote Marshall Islands for a check-up and are said to be in good physical and mental shape. These lucky fishermen have been able to speak to their families back home. One survivor was told that he was the father of a six-month-old baby girl who was born while he was missing at sea.

Callum: Well the good news was that one of them had a new baby daughter who had been born while he was missing.

Jackie: Now let's hear that report in full

Fishermen

Jackie: Well now it's the moment many of you have been waiting for – the results of our competition. We asked you to write a report about consumerism in your country. We've had some really fabulous entries, haven't we Callum?

All: (discuss reports)

Callum: Congratulations to Bee San Shee for Malaysia for her video reports.

Jackie: There was some lovely language in there:

window-shopping
getting the best deal
haggling
upmarket

Jackie: Because that was the only video entry, it seemed a bit unfair that people who did really good reports, but weren't able to do videos should do less well, so we're also going to award a prize for the runner up. This was Guodong Duan from China.

Jackie: A few words that might be helpful in understanding his report: debt.

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: over-consumption

Sian: (explains)

Jackie: a loan

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: Here's an extract of Guodong's report, he made only a few mistakes.

Guodong Duan

China is becoming the consumer-driven society.

One initial Chinese word pronounced as 'fuweng' refers to a person who is very rich. Coincidentally enough, another creative word with same pronunciation often appears in recent media to describe young generation who buy valuables but in deep **debt**. This ironic word reflects the trend that the young go after larger houses, cars and other brand things by borrowing.

There's no doubt people have the right to enjoy a better material life, but the consumerism tends to result in mental pressure and **over-consumption**. Those 'fuweng' in debt actually suffer from having to pay back their **loan**. And in the weekends, mounting people choose to swarm into shops as so claimed way of relax, personally, I believe parts of them are wasting time and money on unnecessary things.

Jackie: Sian, we've also asked you to pick a winner

Sian: (responds – Venkata from India)

Jackie: OK, well let's hear some extracts from her report

Venkata

In India you find people with varied attitudes towards consumerism. Most of the people in the villages are simple and unostentatious. If at all they indulge, it is to buy a television set for the house or to buy some more gold ornaments for their ladies. The phenomenon of consumerism has not yet peeped into these innocent lands. There, philanthropy and family heritage command greater value than wealth and holdings. The families which feed the poor and the hungry are looked upon with admiration.

In the towns and cities, there is some shift in the values of people towards consumerism. With the advent of IT revolution, urban India has more money to splurge on luxuries. So, people try to impress their friends and neighbors by having the coolest gadgets and wearing the hottest tagged t-shirts. The advent of posh shopping malls in the cities has been **a shot in the arm** for

consumerism. Where you buy your goods and what you buy have become status indicators. But, India isn't yet a consumerist country; people still hold spiritual values above material pursuits.

Jackie: So mp3 players are on their way to those winning entries. Thank you to all of you for your entries. We had lots and lots and really enjoyed reading them.
Callum, you'd like to make an apology?

Callum: (responds)

Jackie: That's all for this week's Talk About English. Thank you to Sian Harris for your help.

Callum: Join us again next week!

All: Goodbye