SPANISH FORMS OF ADDRESS IN ADVERTISING AND MARKETING DOCUMENTS IN MADRID: RESPECT AND POLI TENESS

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Introduction

During social or professional interactions, it is common to wonder how different individuals should be addressed. When is it appropriate to use the given name (Carol, Brian)? When should the title plus surname be used (Miss/Ms./Mrs./Mr. Henderson)?

In Spanish, as well as English, the title plus family name is considered a more formal type of address than the first name, which is more informal. Generally, the formal address is used with strangers, with people who are older than the speaker, and with someone worthy of respect.

In addition to first and last names, second-person pronouns are also forms of address. In English there exists only one form, you, in both singular and plural (plus the dialectal variants y'all, you guys, and yinz in the plural). However, in Spanish one must choose between tú, vos (in some parts of Latin America), and usted for the singular. For the plural, in parts of Spain, a speaker must choose between vosotros/vosotras and ustedes, while only ustedes is used for the plural in Latin America.

Verbal forms corresponding to the second-person pronouns are as follows in the present indicative:

tú + second-person singular (estudias/comprendes/escribes)
usted + third-person singular (estudia/comprende/escribe)

vosotros/as + second-person plural (estudiáis/comprendéis/escribís)

ustedes + third-person plural (estudian/comprenden/escriben)

Regarding the social meaning of second-person singular pronouns of address in Spanish, the formal usted could be characterized as more polite than the informal tú and vos.

Methodology

This study\(^1\) is part of a larger project, begun in 1995, collecting business documents and studying address forms in the workplace in Santiago de Chile, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, Caracas, San Jose de Costa Rica, Mexico City, San Luis Potosí, San Juan de Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Santiago de los Caballeros, and Madrid (see Uber 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000a, 2000b, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2011, 2012). Data from workplaces in Madrid, Spain illustrate some issues that are important for conducting international business. A complete understanding of the culture and pragmatics of business must include the concepts of

- respect, and
- politeness,

as well as how these concepts are reflected in the forms used to address the customer.

Forms of Address

Spanish-language address forms reflect these concepts of respect and politeness in the workplace. With age and higher rank comes respect, which would dictate usage of the more formal address: usted.
People with whom a worker is not acquainted are also addressed with *usted*, such as walk-in customers.

Norms of **politeness** dictate that one should be accommodating toward the addressee. (The idea is something like: “Be nice, so that the customer does not lose face.”)

**Politeness** can be manifest in the form of the respectful, deferential

- *usted* in the singular and
- *ustedes* in the plural (for Madrid),

plus the corresponding verb forms.

Alternatively, **politeness** can also dictate informal address:

- *tú* in the singular, and
- *vosotros* in the plural (for Madrid),

plus the corresponding verb forms.

This informal address can be used:

- toward those sharing equal social status (in all types of usages and situations), or
- to show confidence and solidarity toward the consumer in business encounters, advertising and marketing.

**Examples**

Examples from marketing and advertising will illustrate these different usages geared toward different audiences. Included are newspaper advertisements, surveys and forms to be filled out, product labels, and instructions to the customer.

**Newspapers**
Advertisements from newspapers employ different address forms for different target markets.

**Surveys and Forms**

- Given that they are generally distributed to unknown people, surveys employ *usted*.
- Forms to fill out upon registration at a hotel employ *usted*, because the employees are generally not acquainted with the clients at check-in.

**Product labels and instructions**

Address usage can vary in such marketing tools. For example, a colorful sticker on the front of a product employs *tú*. Instructions on the back of a label, and on the fold-up technical information use infinitives, because they are addressed to no one in particular. A specific recommendation to the consumer uses *usted*, because it is more direct.

**Use of Usted**

Ads directed to business executives or to elderly people generally show respect, and tend to use *usted*.

Advertisements for financial assistance address the targeted customer with *usted* also, to show respect, and to try not to make the customer feel embarrassed about needing help with finances.

**Use of Tú**

On the other hand, **public service announcements** try to establish solidarity and togetherness with local residents.

Ads directed toward **women, young people, students, families, and movie buffs** also employ *tú* as a way of showing informality.
Advertising directed toward **local consumers** generally uses *tú*, again to show solidarity. (The idea is something like: “You are one of us.” “You belong here.”)

Similarly, we find *tú* used in ads for **products for the home**, showing solidarity with those who live in the area, and in **ads for entertainment** (showing informality).

**Examples from Newspapers**

Fig. 1. Ad directed to international business executives uses *usted* (*su negocio, cuente con, le ofrecemos, necesita, infórmese*).
Negocio Internacional

Si quiere iniciar o potenciar su negocio internacional, cuente con nuestro apoyo

Le ofrecemos todo lo que necesita para llevar su negocio a cualquier lugar del mundo. Ya sea en exportación, en aprovisionamiento internacional o en la globalización de su actividad productiva. Le ayudamos a construir un negocio sin fronteras. Porque en SabadellAtlántico ponemos a su disposición una extensa gama de productos y, lo más importante, el asesoramiento directo que nuestros expertos en negocio internacional le ofrecerán en todo momento.

- Soluciones de financiación a la medida de su empresa.
- Soluciones de gestión para sus cobros y pagos internacionales.
- Soluciones para el impulso de su negocio.

Infórmese llamando al 902 32 32 22 o en sabadellatlantico.com/empresa

SabadellAtlántico
El valor de la confianza
Fig. 2. Ad for hearing aids directed to elderly people (showing man with white hair) uses usted (si es usted; su carnet; obtendrá; para usted, que necesita; le realizamos; su audífono; Solicite).
Fig. 3. Ad directed to businesses for safety product, which could be used in geriatric centers for elderly people, uses usted (Evite, Supere, Haga su pedido).

Fig. 4. Ad for financial assistance uses usted (¿Tiene...?, ¡¡Llámenos!!) to avoid having the potential customer feel embarrassed.
Fig. 5. Another ad for financial assistance uses *usted* (*su disposición, le ayudará, sus problemas, si llama*).
Fig. 6. Another ad for financial assistance uses usted (Si tiene, propiedad suya, su familia, le damos, consulte).
Fig. 7. Yet another ad for financial assistance uses usted (Necesita, nadie se lo da, Tiene, su hipoteca, ¿Le van a embargar la casa?, ¡¡¡Llámenos!!!, su propiedad, le damos solución).
Fig. 8. Public service announcement for public transportation uses tú (¿y Tú?, Participa). This is directed toward local consumers, thus showing solidarity.
Fig. 9. Ads directed toward young women use tú (*Entra, tu ahorro*), showing solidarity.
Fig. 10. Ads directed toward older women also use tú (*Ven, Elimina, Olvidate de tu edad*) to show solidarity and to try to make them feel younger.
Fig. 11. Ad directed toward young mothers uses tú (Tú siempre les cuidas a ellos. Y a ti, ¿Quién te cuida?, tu seguro, tu póliza, te cuida).
Fig. 12. Ad directed toward prospective students uses tú (Mejora y crece, Infórmate, te interesa, no pierdas, tu cualificación).
Fig 13. Ad for products for the home uses tú (tu casa & tú). Such potential customers would be local residents. The photo shows a young couple.
Fig. 14. Ad directed toward local moviegoers (for a film on the 1981 Spanish coup attempt, which would be of interest mostly to Spaniards and to madrileños specifically) uses tú (Gana con WB y Qué, manda un email, and especially: ¿Dónde estabas tú el 23-F?).
Fig. 15. Ad for family-oriented entertainment uses tú (no te va a faltar, tu bebé, divertirte, Prepara tu fiesta, lo que necesitas, lo tienes, entra en ... y participa). This shows solidarity. In addition, children would be involved in this activity.
Fig. 16. Ad for apartments (some furnished and on the beach) starting at 70,000 € uses tú (Esperabas tu momento, visítanos). Note the young woman running on the beach, showing informal, fun-type of living.
Fig. 17. In contrast, an ad for apartments starting at 195,000 € uses usted (Visítelos), in order to show respect toward wealthier potential consumers.
Example from a promotional brochure

Fig. 18. Promotional literature directed toward local consumers (who would employ a catering service) use tú (Disfruta, que estés, contáctanos, garantizarte tu pedido, confirmalo, puedes, consulta, darte, ven, te lo llevamos, tu pedido, nos das tu dirección y te lo enviamos, tu evento).
Examples from Product Labeling and Instructions

Fig. 19. Colorful product label on front at top of Listerine bottle uses tú (*Limpia tu boca*).

However, the directions on the back of the Listerine label, and factory-supplied fold-up inserts with technical instructions, employ *infinitives*. Perhaps this is to avoid choosing an address form, because these instructions are directed to no one in particular. This is also a way of being somewhat more formal than using tú.

**Listerine instructions**

- *Usar* dos veces al día.
- *Apretar*, *Girar* (in the instructions for opening and closing)
- *Verter* 20 ml. en un vaso, *realizar enjuagues alrededor de dientes y encías* durante 30 segundos y después *escupir*.
- *No consumir* si al comprarlo el precinto está roto.
- *No diluir*, *tragar o beber de la botella*.
- *Mantener* fuera del alcance de los niños
*Usted* is used on a more direct and formal recommendation to the Listerine consumer:

- *Le recomendamos que visite regularmente a su dentista.*

**Examples from Forms and Surveys**

Fig. 20. Hotel registration form uses *usted* to show formality in addressing clients (*sus datos, su alojamiento, su salida*).

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Habit./Room</th>
<th>Pax</th>
<th>Nombre/Name</th>
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<th>Out</th>
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<th>Empresa</th>
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<td>Room Rate</td>
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Sus datos serán incluidos en un fichero cuyo responsable es Hotel Gran Versalles, para la gestión de su alojamiento, de acuerdo a la Ley Orgánica de Protección de Datos de 15/1999 tiene derecho de acceso, rectificación y cancelación, enviando un escrito a nuestra dirección. El Hotel no responde del efectivo, joyas, ordenadores personales o valores que no sean entregados y declarados para su custodia en nuestras cajas fuertes. Hora de salida 12 del mediodía.

El hotel tiene suscrito un seguro contra robo que cubre 1.500 Euros del valor depositado en las Cajas fuertes.

*Your data will be included in a file property of Hotel Gran Versalles. Data will only be used for hosting and services. According to the Organic Law 15/1999 at any time you may access, rectify or eliminate your personal data sending a letter to our address. We can not accept responsibility for money, jewels, personal computers, or other valuable objects unless deposited and declared on our safe boxes. Check out time 12 at NOON.*

*The hotel has insurance coverage against stolen articles, for an amount of 1.500 Euros of the value deposited in the safes.*

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Gran Versalles Hotel ****

Madrid

Covarrubias, 4 y 6. 28010 Madrid - Spain

Tel: 91 447 5700. Fax: 91 446 3967

e-mail: hgv@hotelgranversalles.es

www.hotelgranversalles.es

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I.V.A. Incluido. VAT included
Horario Desayuno: de 7:00 a 10:00 horas.
Breakfast Served from: 7:00 to 10:00 a.m.
Desayuno Fin de Semana/Breakfast Weekend: 7:00 - 11:00h a.m.

Acepto las condiciones del contrato
I'm accepting contract conditions

Firma/Signature

Gracias por entregar la llave el día de su salida.
Thank you for giving the key back at check out time.
Fig. 21. Instructions to patients to fill out hospital survey uses usted to show respect (su paso, su servicio, su opinión, rellene, depositelo, su colaboración).

AL SERVICIO DE LA VIDA Y DE LA ESPERANZA

Deseamos que su paso por el Sanatorio San Francisco de Asís haya sido satisfactorio. Toda la organización y todos los medios del sanatorio están a su servicio.

Nuestro objetivo es mejorar continuamente la atención a los pacientes y a sus acompañantes, y para ello necesitamos conocer su opinión.

POR FAVOR RELLENE ESTE CUESTIONARIO Y DEPOSITÉLO EN LOS BUZONES DE CLIENTES SITUADOS EN LAS SALAS DE ESPERA

Gracias por su colaboración

Encuesta de satisfacción de pacientes
URGENCIAS
Conclusions

Politeness dictates usage of usted in advertisements directed toward older and wealthier clients, toward business executives, and in ads for financial assistance, in order to show respect.

Usted is also used toward:

- Unknown consumers (such as the hospital survey)
- Toward hotel clients
- In more formal directives (such as to visit the dentist regularly).

Politeness also dictates usage of tú in advertisements directed toward women, young people, students, and families to show confidence, togetherness and solidarity toward local consumers and toward those of similar social status. Tú is also used to make aging women feel younger.

Thus, we have seen that the concepts of respect and politeness are reflected in the forms used to address different consumers.

Of course, forms of respect and politeness do vary from one region to another. One must learn the norms, or have local counterparts assist with which address form would be most appropriate for that area.

References


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