

Cross-cultural Transfers in Creative Advertisements

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Abstract

In a global economy characterised by ongoing corporate internationalisation, digitally-driven communication, evolving migration trends, shifts in advertising practices from locally-focused discourse to multicultural perspectives, and cross-cultural references, the existing literature has mainly examined globalisation and advertising through the lenses of intercultural competence, cultural differences, and the semiotics of local adaptations, cultural appropriations, diversity, and representation. However, there is limited knowledge regarding creativity in advertising, especially as influenced by the dynamics of two or more cultures involved in the creation or amplification of a communication campaign. The exploration is based on a content analysis of 44 advertising case studies that depict the brand story across more than two cultures. These campaigns aired between 2015 and 2025 and received the highest distinction at a global creative advertising festival, earning top recognition within the marketing and communications community. The study contributes to understanding creative advertising rhetoric in cross-cultural communication and examines the role of creativity in promoting intercultural exchanges in advertising narratives through open-access products, solutions, and innovations. The empirical research highlights the nature of cross-cultural intersections in creative discourse, whether in individualistic or collectivist nations, or in vertical (hierarchical) versus horizontal (egalitarian) societies. Limitations include the narrow scope of the analysed dataset and the need for future studies employing a quantitative approach with a broader perspective.

Keywords: cross-cultural, advertising, creativity, hierarchical, egalitarian

Introduction

In the global village (McLuhan 1962, 31), digital communication enhances cross-cultural interactions, whether through integration, assimilation, or cultural adoption. The dynamics of migration make it essential for global brands to include multicultural references in their discourses. In an internationalised communication landscape, these blends are both necessary and evident in advertising. The advertising discourse intentionally or naturally crosses cultural boundaries, using cultural cues from other countries, borrowing elements from neighbouring nations, or transforming country-specific solutions, products, or services into universal options for all nations. Advertising becomes a multilingual tool that evokes ethnocultural associations (Kelly-Holmes 2005, 10). Transcultural marketing integrates

influential cultural values and standards from various cultural backgrounds across global markets, including traditions, religion, language, rituals, and celebrations (Nelson and Paek 2007, 67; Camillo et al. 2011, 319-320). In recent decades, Europe has proven to be a generous stage for standardisation practices (Whitelock and Rey 1998, 257). Nonetheless, cross-cultural marketing dates back to the emergence of trading posts that served as early outdoor support for travellers along the Silk Road, promoting Chinese silk, Arabian jewellery, and Indian spices. In late medieval European cities, Italians gained expertise in international trade, while Americans led the shift from trading to manufacturing after the Industrial Revolution (Sheth and Paratyar 2020, 248-249).

Interest in transcultural communication is evident in extensive academic research, mainly focusing on comparative or country-specific studies. The first multi-country study to evaluate a global brand strategy and its implementation within a transnational media outlet was published in 2007, addressing the dialectic of standardisation and localisation (Nelson and Paek 2007, 64-65).

A literature review indicates that a specialised body of work contributes to three distinct research areas. The first area is based on a descriptive taxonomy, consisting of 14 information cues developed by Resnik and Stern (1977, 14-15). This line of research has yielded cross-cultural studies on TV content evaluation (Johnstone et al. 1987, 228), on theoretical meta-analysis (Abernethy and Franke 1996, 3), and on the presence of ambiguity in American and Korean ads (Han and Hong-Lim 2015, 2).

Scholars have conducted comparative studies of the amount of information provided in advertisements, finding that high-context cultures tend to favour a soft-sell approach and use less information. In contrast, low-context countries are more likely to adopt a hard-sell approach (Whitelock and Rey 1998, 257; Okazaki et al. 2010, 16; Almurshidee 2017, 3). This second line of cross-cultural research is inspired by the dichotomy proposed by Hall (1976, 106-109), which also influenced studies on emotional responses to advertising content (Wang et al. 2020, 2-3).

Lastly, a significant body of work has examined cultural patterns through the framework of one of the most influential books on country-level cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al. 2010, 30-31): power distance index, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, long- and short-term orientation, indulgence and restraint, uncertainty avoidance. Specialised literature has also explored advertising differences reflected in the cultural exchange between two specific nations (Valaei et al. 2016, 273; Jay and Cude 2019, 255; Akolkar et al. 2024, 263). Advertising campaigns involving two or more cultures have mostly been studied through the lens of cultural theories. On one side, specialised literature examines the relationship between global campaign strategies and local adaptations, highlighting intercultural competence (Martin and Nakayama 2015, 15; De Mooji 2018, 327; Pantelic et al. 2024, 59), standardization (Wang and Yang 2011, 27; Szkudlarek et al. 2020, 1-3), and cultural differences as invisible barriers (Usunier and Lee 2009, 378-379; Zhang et al. 2022, 3). On the other side, researchers have explored cultural representation (Allen 2004, 73), addressing issues such as cultural diversity (Zhu et al. 2006, 321; Eisend et al. 2023, 54), global sustainable consumption (Glikson and Erez 2020, 4; Sheths and Paratyar 2020, 257), and geopolitical inclusion (Bernstein et al. 2020, 397).

Researchers have employed multi-dimensional models to analyse impression management and socially desirable behaviours (Lalwani et al. 2006, 167-169). While intercultural communication studies and semiotic research have documented and organized

relevant body of knowledge, following a value-driven analysis of benevolence, self-direction, universalism, hedonism, and power (Batra et al. 2017, 916-917; Desmarais et al. 2024, 214), limited research has focused on the role of multi-cultural intersections in the creation and reception of globally acclaimed creative brand narratives.

The purpose of this analysis is to expand the understanding of multicultural exchanges through marketing and communication discourse and to identify dominant creative patterns in designing these cultural interactions. The paper's focus is on how creativity facilitates cross-cultural intersections. Accordingly, the study conducts a three-part analysis: the profile of the advertising sender and the target country, the types of cultural artifacts conveyed through the brand story (such as cultural objects, services, and tools), and the nature of these transcultural exchanges, guided by a four-dimensional theoretical framework inspired by Triandis and Gelfand's well-known essay on cross-cultural advertising (1988, 118-121).

Materials and methods

Materials

The study focuses on content analysis of an initial dataset of 293 advertising objects, presented as case studies that received top honours in their categories at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival in 2015 and 2025. Over an 11-year period, 44 campaigns referenced two or more cultures involved in the creation, deployment, or amplification of the brand communication (Table 1). As a result, the dataset includes 44 advertising materials, submitted, and showcased as video case studies on the competition's official website (Cannes Lions Awards 2015-2025). Due to COVID-19 context, the awards for 2020 have been offered alongside the 2021 winners, in a single ceremony, with a consolidated acknowledgements' list. The choice of this particular competition is justified by its high prominence within the marketing and advertising community, as well as its diverse range of main award categories (Galmés et al. 2016, 83; Tur-Viñes et al. 2024, 467-468).

Table 1. Qualified Advertising Campaigns – Grand Prix Winners at Cannes Lions Advertising Festival (2015-2025)

Award Year, Category	Brand Name – Campaign Title (Agency Name)	Campaign Strategy Synopsis
2015		
Innovation	What3Words – <i>Three words to address the world</i> (What3Words, London)	Divide the world map in 57 trillion squares and each remote area was given a unique three-word address, for more accurate geolocation.
2016		
Good	UNICEF – <i>Unfairytale Tales</i> (180LA, Los Angeles)	Tell the story of refugee children by blending fairytale narrative with the refugee drama.
Entertainment	The New York Times VR – <i>The Displaced</i> (Vrse.Works, New York)	Highlight the refugee crisis with three stories from Sudan, Ukraine and Syria, through VR.
Direct	Swedish Tourist Association – <i>The Swedish Number</i> (Ingo, Stockholm)	Promote Sweden by having locals answer foreigners' queries on a public phone number.
2017		

Good	Amnesty International – <i>The Refugee Nation</i> (Ogilvy, New York)	Create a universal flag and an anthem for the first refugee team to compete at 2016 Rio Olympic Games.
Entertainment	Santander Bank – <i>Beyond Money</i> (MRM/McCann, Spain)	Launch a new bank account by disrupting the market with a film about invaluable life experiences.
Good	Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health – <i>The Immunity Charm</i> (McCann Health, India)	Turn beaded bracelets into color-coded immunization records for children.
Cyber	The Bank of Åland – <i>Baltic Sea Project</i> (RBK Communication, Stockholm)	Calculate the carbon footprint of purchases through a bank index offered as open access innovation.
2018		
Film	Procter & Gamble – <i>The Talk</i> (Saatchi & Saatchi, New York)	Raise awareness on racism by showcasing decades of talks between Black mothers and their sons.
Titanium	Tourism Australia – <i>Dundee: The Son of a Legend Returns Home</i> (Droga 5, New York)	Broadcast a fake movie trailer to promote tourism in Australia.
Design, PR	Plastic Oceans Foundations and LADBible – <i>The Trash Isles</i> (AMVBBDO, London)	Lobby for the UN to recognize a considerable patch of plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean as an official nation.
2019		
Film, Film Craft	The New York Times – <i>The Truth is Worth It</i> (Droga 5, New York)	Showcase the intense, perilous work behind investigations required by news stories.
Creative Data	Black & Abroad – <i>Go Back to Africa</i> (FCB/ SIX, Toronto)	Replace racist social media posts containing the phrase “go back to Africa” with inspirational imagery depicting the beauty of African nations.
Titanium	Reporters without Borders – <i>The Uncensored Playlist</i> (DDB, Berlin)	Outsmart online press censorship by integrating banned articles into pop songs on streaming platforms.
Creative Effectiveness	Carrefour – <i>Black Supermarket</i> (Marcel, Paris)	Lobby for a new law to permit a wider acceptance of seeds, by allowing shoppers to have access to the illegal fruits and vegetables.
Creative eCommerce	Doconomy – <i>Do Black</i> (RBK Communication, Stockholm)	Promote sustainable consumption by tracking bank users’ carbon emissions and alerting them when they exceeded the limit.
2020-2021		
Entertainment for Music	Mercado Livre – <i>Feed Parade</i> (Gut, São Paulo)	Recreate a cancelled Pride Parade by transforming social media audience tags into a digital parade.
Entertainment for Sport	House of Lapland – <i>Salla 2032</i> (Africa DDB, São Paulo)	Raise awareness on climate change issues by using an ironic bid for the Summer Olympics of 2023 by an Arctic town.
Outdoor	Heineken – <i>Shutter Ads</i> (Publicis, Italy)	Support closed bars during COVID-19 lockdown by redirecting conventional outdoor advertising budgets to bars and projecting ad messages on their metal shutters.
2022		
Brand Experience & Activation, Radio & Audio,	VICE Media – <i>The Unfiltered History Tour</i> (Dentsu Creative, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Gurgaon)	Raise awareness on colonial history disputes by scanning 10 controversial, notorious artifacts and telling their origin story through immersive AR technology.

Social & Influencer		
Media, Industry Craft	Sheba – <i>Hope Reef</i> (AMV BBDO, London)	Promote the cause of coral reef restoration by increasing live coral coverage of Indonesian reefs.
2023		
Titanium	The Government of Tuvalu – <i>The First Digital Nation</i> (The Monkeys, part of the Accenture Song, Sydney)	Raise awareness on climate change by duplicating an endangered island in the Pacific with a digital (metaverse) nation, to preserve its cultural identity and rights.
Titanium	Budweiser – <i>Bring Home the Bud</i> (Wieden + Kennedy, New York and São Paulo; Allison Worldwide, San Francisco)	Turn a last-minute ban from selling beer in Qatar stadiums during the FIFA World Cup by redirecting the product to the winning country (Argentina).
Sustainable Development Goals, Titanium	Mastercard – <i>Where to Settle</i> (McCann, Poland)	Help Ukrainian refugees find suitable accommodation and jobs by cross-referencing Polish cities with real estate platforms and salary data.
Direct	Adidas – <i>Runner 321</i> (FCB, Canada)	Promote sports inclusivity by advocating for the adoption of a universal competition number (321) for Down syndrome.
Health	Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center – <i>Working with Cancer</i> (Publicis Groupe, Paris)	Raise awareness on stigma around cancer in the workplace by encouraging companies to pledge support for employees with this diagnosis.
Design, Creative Business Transformation	Microsoft – <i>ADLaM: An Alphabet to Preserve a Culture</i> (McCann, New York)	Preserve the culture and language of Fulani people from West Africa by transforming their alphabet into a digital, standardized font.
Creative Business to Business	B3 Stock Exchange and United Nations Global Impact – <i>Eart4</i> (AlmapBBDO, São Paulo)	Encourage business leaders to invest in sustainable trading options by launching a symbolic IPO for Planet Earth.
Creative Data	Stella Artois – <i>The Artois Probability</i> (GUT, Buenos Aires)	Showcase the iconic brand presence through European art history by using AI and data to analyze the likelihood of Stella Artois brand presence in famous paintings.
Creative Strategy	Renault – <i>Plug Inn</i> (Publicis Conseil, Paris; Publicis Sapient, Paris)	Combat the scarcity of charging stations in France by connecting electronic vehicles' drivers with a map of home chargers belonging to private individuals.
2024		
Creative Data	Mastercard – <i>Room for Everyone</i> (McCann Poland)	Fight xenophobia by bridging Ukrainian and Polish businesses through a complementary business model that brings mutual profits.
Entertainment for Music	Johnnie Walker – <i>Errata at 88</i> (AlmapBBDO, São Paulo)	Correct a historical injustice by supporting the visibility and performance of a previously ignored music pioneer.
Good	Reporters without Borders – <i>The First Speech</i> (Innocean, Berlin)	Expose hypocritical dictators by highlighting the empty promises of freedom delivered in their inaugural speeches.
Luxury & Lifestyle	Loewe and Suna Fujita – <i>LOEWE x Suna Fujita</i> (Loewe, Madrid)	Show craftsmanship by designing a whimsical holiday collection in collaboration with a Japanese ceramic studio.

Creative Strategy	KPN – <i>A Piece of Me</i> (Dentsu Creative, Amsterdam)	Address the issue of online shaming by integrating educational messages into a notorious artists' song lyrics.
Innovation	KVI Brave Fund Inc. – <i>Voice 2 Diabetes</i> (Klick Health, Toronto)	Democratize access to diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes by analyzing users' voices through smartphone recordings.
2025		
Titanium	Pedigree – <i>Pedigree Caramelo</i> (AlmapBBDO, São Paulo)	Promote adoption of mixed-breed dogs by turning a popular Brazilian dog into an iconic breed with pedigree.
Entertainment for Music	Rimas Music – <i>Tracking Bad Bunny</i> (DDB Latina, Puerto Rico)	Launch the new Puerto Rican-inspired album by hiding hints about songs using Spotify and Google Maps' GPS coordinates.
Entertainment for Sport	Supercell – <i>Haaland Payback Time</i> (DAVID, New York)	Promote a game by inviting rivals of Haaland football player to attack his in-game village and take revenge.
Good, Health	New Zealand Herpes Foundation – <i>Make New Zealand The Best Place to Have Herpes</i> (Motion Sickness, New Zealand; FINCH, New Zealand)	Reduce shame around the herpes virus by humorously promoting New Zealand as an inclusive place that normalizes the condition through "Herpes Stigma Index" and "Herpes Destigmatisation Course".
Sustainable Development Goals	Natura – <i>The Amazon Greenventory</i> (Africa Creative DDB, São Paulo)	Support sustainable resources, communities, and agriculture by digitally mapping the Amazonian biodiversity.
Innovation	Spotify and Museum for the United Nations – UN Live – <i>Sounds Right</i> (AKQA, Copenhagen)	Generate royalties for natural resources by enlisting nature sounds as official Spotify artist.
Luxury	LVHM – <i>The Partnership that Changed Everything</i> (Havas Play, France; Havas, Paris)	Outsmart the conventions of a classical Olympics sponsorship by co-creating and integrating products into the competition itself.
Outdoor	Paris 2024 – <i>Olympic Games Opening Ceremony Paris 2024</i> (Paname 24; Auditoire; Double 2; OBO; Havas; Havas Events, Paris)	Design a legendary 2024 Olympics opening ceremony by turning the Seine River into a dynamic outdoor and Parisian public spaces into storytelling hubs.

Methods

The methodology of this inquiry follows the theoretical framework developed by Triandis and Gelfand (1998, 118-119), relating individualistic and collectivistic patterns to vertical and horizontal cultural differences. The distinction between horizontal and vertical cultural differences separates equality from hierarchy as key factors (Shavitt et al. 2011, 299). The premise of Triandis and Gelfand's (1998, 118) framework is that individualism and collectivism are polythetic constructs, akin to those in other academic fields. Therefore, they introduced a second criterion, using a multi-dimensional model: both individualism and collectivism can be vertical (focused on hierarchy) or horizontal (centred on equality). The analysis emphasises these campaigns' cultural references, their commercial goals, and the characteristics of each cross-cultural transfer.

The study follows three criteria: sender and receiver dynamics (country of origin and campaign destination), cultural exchange artefacts (product, service, or tool, whether physical, digital, or phygital), and the type of cross-cultural transfer (horizontal collectivism,

vertical collectivism, horizontal individualism, and vertical individualism). The content analysis employed a processual approach that embeds multi-dimensional variables, as a static perspective would have neutralised cross-cultural transfers and the dynamic nature of the advertising product. Moreover, contemporary systematic literature reviews recommend processual and hybrid theoretical tools for improved critical analysis, and for novel explorations of the functions of creativity in advertising (Szkudlarek *et al.* 2020, 6).

Results and discussion

The four-dimensional model allows for a more nuanced cross-cultural comparison and provides insight into how creative advertisements utilise either hierarchical or egalitarian cultural dynamics. In the cultural exchange process, communication was primarily initiated by a global brand with extensive coverage. Additionally, communication with a specific national sender—such as a commercial brand or NGO—was represented by the United States of America or by a northern European nation (Sweden, Finland, Norway). Countries that produced more than one successful creative campaign include Spain, Poland, and France. On the receiving end, most creative campaigns conveyed messages for the international community, with a significant number targeting UN member states.

The highest number of cultural transfers in the analysed campaigns related to services (26), dominated by the sub-section of lobby services (7). The second most represented category was that of products, while only five campaigns provided tools, in the form of educational or financial instruments. From an automation perspective, the assessment included 14 digital products, services, and tools. Lastly, a sectoral screening reveals a considerable presence of transfers of institutional services (lobby and advocacy), financial, health, and edutainment assets (Table 2).

Table 2. Cross-cultural Transfer Dynamics and Scope in Grand Prix Advertising Case Studies (2015-2025)

Brand Name – Campaign Title	Country of Origin (COO), Campaign Destination (CD)	Cultural Exchange Artifact	Cross-Cultural Transfer
2015			
What3Words – <i>Three words to address the world</i>	COO: Great Britain CD: All countries	Location Service (geolocation)	Horizontal Collectivism
2016			
UNICEF – <i>Unfairy Tales</i>	COO: U.S.A. CD: All countries	Lobby Service (refugee crisis)	Horizontal Collectivism
The New York Times VR – <i>The Displaced</i>	COO: U.S.A. CD: All countries	Lobby Service (refugee crisis)	Horizontal Collectivism
Swedish Tourist Association – <i>The Swedish Number</i>	COO: Sweden CD: All countries	Information Service (tourism)	Horizontal Individualism
2017			
Amnesty International – <i>The Refugee Nation</i>	COO: Global NGO CD: Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan	Cultural Product (flag)	Horizontal Collectivism

Santander Bank – <i>Beyond Money</i>	COO: Spain CD: All countries	Financial Education Service (savings)	Vertical Individualism
Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health – <i>The Immunity Charm</i>	COO: Afghanistan CD: India	Health Product (bracelet)	Horizontal Collectivism
The Bank of Åland – <i>Baltic Sea Project</i>	COO: Finland CD: United Nations	Financial Educational Tool (bank index)	Horizontal Individualism
2018			
Procter & Gamble – <i>The Talk</i>	COO: U.S.A. CD: All countries	Lobby Service (human rights)	Horizontal Collectivism
Tourism Australia – <i>Dundee: The Son of a Legend Returns Home</i>	COO: Australia CD: All countries	Information Service (tourism)	Horizontal Individualism
Plastic Oceans Foundations and LADBible – <i>The Trash Isles</i>	COO: Great Britain CD: United Nations	Lobby Service (pollution)	Horizontal Collectivism
2019			
The New York Times – <i>The Truth is Worth It</i>	COO: U.S.A (reporting on Israel conflicts) CD: All countries	Information Service (news reporting)	Horizontal Individualism
Black & Abroad – <i>Go Back to Africa</i>	COO: African nations CD: All countries	Information Service (tourism)	Vertical Collectivism
Reporters without Borders – <i>The Uncensored Playlist</i>	COO: Germany (content from China, Vietnam) CD: All countries	Edutainment Service (journalism and pop songs)	Vertical Collectivism
Carrefour – <i>Black Supermarket</i>	COO: France CD: European countries	Lobby Service (Trading seeds)	Horizontal Collectivism
Doconomy – <i>Do Black</i>	COO: Sweden CD: All countries	Financial Educational Service (bank index)	Horizontal Individualism
2020-2021			
Mercado Livre – <i>Feed Parade</i>	COO: Brazil CD: Latin America	Entertainment Service (music parade)	Horizontal Collectivism
House of Lapland – <i>Salla 2032</i>	COO: Finland CD: All countries	Lobby Service (climate change)	Vertical Collectivism
Heineken – <i>Shutter Ads</i>	COO: Global brand CD: Argentina, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Spain	Financial Service (budgets)	Vertical Collectivism
2022			
VICE Media – <i>The Unfiltered History Tour</i>	COO: India CD: All countries	Digital Product (museum guide)	Vertical Collectivism
Sheba – <i>Hope Reef</i>	COO: Global Brand CD: All countries	Natural Product (restored coral reefs)	Horizontal Collectivism
2023			
The Government of Tuvalu – <i>The First Digital Nation</i>	COO: Pacific Ocean CD: United Nations	Digital Cultural Product (digital nation)	Horizontal Individualism
Budweiser – <i>Bring Home the Bud</i>	COO: Global brand CD: Argentina	Physical Product (beer)	Horizontal Individualism

Mastercard – <i>Where to Settle</i>	COO: Poland CD: Ukraine	Digital Product (app)	Horizontal Collectivism
Adidas – <i>Runner 321</i>	COO: Canada CD: All countries	Lobby service (sports competition policy)	Horizontal Collectivism
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center – <i>Working with Cancer</i>	COO: Global brand CD: All countries	Advocacy service (pledge petition)	Horizontal Collectivism
Microsoft – <i>ADLaM: An Alphabet to Preserve a Culture</i>	COO: U.S.A. CD: African countries	Digital Product (Digital alphabet and font)	Horizontal Collectivism
B3 Stock Exchange and United Nations Global Impact – <i>Eart4</i>	COO: United Nations CD: All nations	Digital Financial Tool (stock exchange IPO)	Horizontal Individualism
Stella Artois – <i>The Artois Probability</i>	COO: Global brand (European content) CD: All nations	Digital Statistical Tool (probability analysis)	Vertical Individualism
Renault – <i>Plug Inn</i>	COO: France CD: All nations	Digital Product (mobility app)	Horizontal Collectivism
2024			
Mastercard – <i>Room for Everyone</i>	COO: Poland CD: Ukraine	Digital Financial Tool (business app)	Horizontal Collectivism
Johnnie Walker – <i>Errata at 88</i>	COO: Global brand (Brazilian content) CD: All countries	Physical Product (news article) and Entertainment Service (concert sponsorship)	Vertical Collectivism
Reporters without Borders – <i>The First Speech</i>	COO: Global NGO (Russian, Turkish, and Venezuelan content) CD: All countries	Lobby service (support for democracies)	Horizontal Collectivism
Loewe and Suna Fujita – <i>LOEWE x Suna Fujita</i>	COO: Spain and Japan CD: All countries	Physical Product (fashion collection)	Vertical Individualism
KPN – <i>A Piece of Me</i>	COO: The Netherlands CD: All countries	Edutainment Product (music and courses)	Horizontal Collectivism
KVI Brave Fund Inc. – <i>Voice 2 Diabetes</i>	COO: Canada CD: India, Canada	Digital Health Service (medical app)	Horizontal Collectivism
2025			
Pedigree – <i>Pedigree Caramelo</i>	COO: Brazil CD: All countries	Advocacy Service (official FCI dog registry)	Vertical Collectivism
Rimas Music – <i>Tracking Bad Bunny</i>	COO: Puerto Rico CD: All countries	Phygitel Entertainment Service (album launch)	Horizontal Collectivism
Supercell – <i>Haaland Payback Time</i>	COO: Global brand (Norwegian content) CD: All countries	Digital Entertainment Service (in-game activation)	Vertical Individualism
New Zealand Herpes Foundation – <i>Make New Zealand The Best Place to Have Herpes</i>	COO: New Zealand (host of international competition) CD: All countries	Digital Edutainment Tool (health index)	Horizontal Individualism

Natura – <i>The Amazon Greenventory</i>	COO: Brazil (Amazonian realm) CD: World Economic Forum countries	Digital Service (environmental platform)	Vertical Collectivism
Spotify and Museum for the United National – UN Live – <i>Sounds Right</i>	COO: Global brand CD: All countries	Entertainment Product (official musical entity)	Horizontal Collectivism
LVHM – <i>The Partnership that Changed Everything</i>	COO: Global brand (French content) CD: All countries	Physical Product (fashion items)	Vertical Individualism
Paris 2024 – <i>Olympic Games Opening Ceremony Paris 2024</i>	COO: France CD: All countries	Entertainment Service (live show)	Vertical Individualism

Out of all four major categories evaluated for the 44 brand stories, the most prominent was “Horizontal Collectivism,” with 21 use-cases in the winning campaigns. This section offers a fertile ground for advertising narratives, as it sits at the crossroads of egalitarianism and group belonging, enabling a more socially-engaged brand discourse that goes beyond mere commercial interests. Six of these use-cases are represented by non-governmental organisations (UNICEF, Amnesty International, Plastic Oceans Foundations, Reporters Without Borders, Memorial Working With Cancer, and KVI Brave Fund Inc.), fourteen are commercial brands (What3Words, Mercado Livre, Sheba, Mastercard, Microsoft, Renault, KPN, Rimas Music, Spotify, The New York Times, Procter & Gamble, Carrefour, Adidas), and one has been submitted by the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health. The dominant category where these campaigns received awards is Grand Prix for Good, followed by Innovation, Creative Strategy, Entertainment for Music, and Design. Mastercard is the brand that achieved double recognition by employing the same strategic approach: facilitating the integration of Ukrainian people and businesses into the Polish socio-economic landscape by using cross-reference data points to demonstrate optimal re-location options for immigrants.

The “Horizontal Collectivism” segment includes advertising campaigns that add value to vulnerable groups (such as refugees, residents without access to medical services, communities of different sexual orientations, politically-exposed countries, people without officially registered addresses, victims of online shaming, Down syndrome patients, electric vehicle drivers, farmers excluded from the national trade system, and employees diagnosed with cancer), or to endangered environments (nature, coral reefs, the ocean). In these specific cases, brands show their support through products, whether in the form of songs, bracelets, flags, new coral reefs, digitised alphabets, or through services (such as lobbying or advocacy for petitions, health or geo-location apps, proprietary geocoding systems, digital parades).

In the “Horizontal Individualism” section, nine campaigns received recognition for their autonomous yet egalitarian approach. These advertising campaigns reflect a democratic socialist perspective, either by promoting global indexes to highlight climate change dynamics or by endorsing a touristic or commercial cause. B3 Stock Exchange, United Nations Global Impact, Åland Bank, and Doconomy created and promoted different indexes, all aimed at raising awareness of behaviours that are harmful to the planet, either by calculating carbon footprints or by creating an IPO for planet Earth’s public listing on the stock market. Swedish Tourist Association and Tourism Australia employed two distinct brand strategies that served a similar purpose: opening their cultural heritage to potential

tourists. The New York Times highlighted the labour-intensive process required for a well-documented investigative report, while Budweiser managed an operational crisis by redirecting banned beer to a country likely to win a football tournament. The New Zealand Herpes Foundation designed an educational entertainment campaign to equip citizens with better knowledge, leading to improved perceptions and behaviours towards a common virus. The Government of Tuvalu replicated an island into a metaverse digital clone to preserve its cultural heritage amidst the threats of climate change.

Campaigns limited to a “Horizontal Individualistic” approach have mainly generated services and tools such as indexes, edutainment instruments (like academia courses), information services accessible to an international audience, and news reporting services. The products delivered by the campaign in this category include stocks of beer (Budweiser), digital archives (The Government of Tuvalu), and a movie trailer (Tourism Australia). The transfers have been one-way, with the country of origin sending these cultural artefacts either to general audiences from different cultures or to specific international groups.

“Vertical Collectivism” is a section comprising eight campaigns that reflect low levels of freedom and equality in their respective communication instances. Group integrity and sacrifice for maintaining the well-being of the in-group are essential components for successful communication. Although this category involves a significant degree of altruistic, sacrificial efforts to uplift underprivileged groups, all campaigns have been signed by commercial actors, with only one exception (Reporters Without Borders). Black & Abroad reinterpreted a racist cliché to promote tourism in various African destinations, Heineken redirected their media budgets to unconventional outdoor advertising on the shutters of closed bars during COVID-19, VICE took a risk by exposing colonialism through promoting alternative origin stories of cultural artifacts in the British Museum, Johnnie Walker addressed a historical injustice by highlighting a less-known pioneer in music, Pedigree modified their packaging to promote a mixed-breed dog as an aspirational pet for adoption, while Natura endorsed their sustainable cosmetic products by assisting farmers in the Amazon and local communities. House of Lapland, a public marketing and communication agency, raised awareness of the adverse effects of climate change by mocking weather conditions during the Summer Olympics, and Reporters Without Borders employed the universal language of songs to camouflage press articles that would have been censored if communicated through traditional media outlets like newspapers.

For the “Vertical Collectivism” segment, the changes included advocacy services (Pedigree), lobbying services (House of Lapland), information services (Black & Abroad), edutainment services (Reporters Without Borders), digital platform (Natura), and financial services (Heineken). Cultural products comprised a digital object in the form of a virtual museum tour (VICE), and a physical product (Johnnie Walker).

The “Vertical Individualism” category features six campaigns that promote a unique, distinguished image to their respective audiences, fostering direct or indirect competitive contexts. Santander Bank created a film to highlight invaluable life experiences, Stella Artois reinforced its iconic connection with art across centuries and borders, Paris 2024 designed a legendary opening ceremony that transformed ordinary public spaces into vibrant storytelling hubs, Supercell promoted their game by incorporating real-life cues into game design, Loewe and Suna Fujita collaborated on a limited edition fashion collection, while LVHM co-created and integrated their fashion items into the Paris Olympics logistics.

For this section, brands naturally aim for a high ranking to establish premium and aspirational positions in consumers' minds. To achieve this, they exchange cultural objects such as designer fashion collections (LVHM, Loewe, and Suna Fujita) and cinematography products (Santander). Cultural transfers also include a probability index (Stella Artois) and entertainment services: a digital one designed by Supercell, and a physical, live version created by Paris 2024.

Conclusions

After analysing advertising use-cases, a key implication is that very few brands adopt an entirely standardised approach. Techniques like customisation, local insights, cultural appropriation, or transcultural branding are used by global commercial or non-governmental organisations to boost relevance and memorability for their specific target audiences. The analysis highlights the prevalence of cross-cultural intersections rooted in a horizontal collectivist approach. Country-specific advertising case studies include the U.S.A., Scandinavian countries, the U.K., Poland, and France. A significant number of well-crafted advertising campaigns have been created by global NGOs that systematically aim to reduce the marketing of products, services, or behaviours that are threatening to the planet or cause substantial negative consequences (Sheth and Parvatiyar 2020, 257). Regardless of the category, advertisements also target institutional or business audiences, mainly organisations such as the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, or publicly traded companies. These initiatives call for more responsible organisational behaviour towards the climate, in an environment where brands' expansion leads to increased global operations (Vaddadi and Thandava 2019, 74).

Secondly, initiators of transcultural marketing efforts come from non-governmental sectors such as finance, health, and entertainment. The primary form of cultural exchange has been through services. Repeated uses of edutainment or infotainment products and services show that creativity can combine seemingly incompatible objectives. The main support for qualified advertising messages remains within the analogue sphere, in the form of physical products, services, or tools.

A final implication of the study concerns the necessity to re-evaluate traditional frameworks of multicultural advertising communication, as established definitions no longer accommodate contemporary realities. For example, while individualist societies are often characterised by hedonism and independence, the current content analysis highlights their altruistic, modest, and interdependent tendencies. The study of cross-cultural interactions highlights the need for new techniques to explore current socio-economic priorities, where countries shift their interests towards scarce resources and focus on preserving their national integrity. Additionally, brands seek to achieve high notoriety and consumer appeal ratings. Cultural incongruity has already been examined by scholars, who explore discrepancies between traditional theoretical models and the emerging globalised, digital communication landscape (Shavitt et al. 2008, 1115).

Future research is necessary as a complementary approach could incorporate statistically relevant data spanning more decades. Several cross-cultural variables (ethnicity, gender, inclusion, cultural profile, values) remain underexplored, allowing for potential intersectional analysis. Lastly, a significant limitation of the study is that a larger dataset could be cross-referenced with new media, digital tools, and algorithms embedded within the creative advertising narrative.

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