



Cultural Values in Global Brand Messaging

How Global Brands Tailor Their Messages to the Local Hearts

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ABSTRACT

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The rise of globalization has led to a significant increase of established brands in the creation of the global markets. When brands cross the boundaries, it brings many profits and benefits, and is more complicated than running in their own local market. For the brands that are successful in the domestic market to succeed in the international market, brands are expected to deliver the product or service and communicate their brand message to the target audience more effectively. When brands communicate internationally, they face several challenges and risks, such as social and cultural misunderstandings. To maintain a strong brand relationship across different markets, it is essential to create ethical and culturally sensitive advertising campaigns.

This thesis explores how international brands effectively adapt their message to target audiences in different cultural backgrounds. The aim of this study was to identify ethical and cultural challenges in cross-cultural advertising and suggest recommendations for creating culturally sensitive and ethical advertising campaigns.

To find out more insights about consumers in various cultures, the author has conducted research in Finland, Sri Lanka, and Kenya, representing different cultures. The findings reflect the facts of transparency and individualism in Finland, family and tradition in Sri Lanka, community and employment in Kenya how influential for the perspective of advertising. Also, this study emphasizes how successfully different regions are represented by popular brands of Coca-Cola, Nike, and McDonald's. This thesis identifies challenges such as stereotyping, risk of consumer manipulation and cultural appropriateness, and the risk of conveying messages without cultural sensitivity, offending consumers, and damaging brand reputation.

The thesis concluded that highlighting ethical and culturally sensitive brand messaging strengthens long-term brand relationships in global markets. And the suggested recommendations help global brands to tailor their brand messaging to local hearts ethically and effectively.

Key words: cross-cultural advertising, cultural values, cultural intelligence, consumer behaviour, global branding, ethical marketing

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study background

At the end of the 20th century, globalization increased significantly, and the globe has become a single market. To address the different consumers in interconnected marketplaces, the global brands have started to promote their products and services to different cultural audiences all over the world. In today's more increasingly interlinked world, multinational brands face a challenge of maintaining a healthy brand identity while resonating with diverse cultural values. Cross-cultural advertising plays a crucial role as the most important tool in shaping brand identity and communicating the relevant brand message to the local consumers. While cross-cultural advertising campaigns target consistency, they must align with the local values, their traditional beliefs, and social norms to ensure relevance and acceptance (de Mooij, 2019, 143). Whether it's called "Cross-cultural Advertising", "Ethnic Advertising", or "Multi-cultural Advertising", it all refers to the same strategic process of advertising to consumers who are in a different culture from the advertiser's own culture (Cui, 2001, 12).

The cultural values influence the global brand messaging, and ethical challenges arise in cross-cultural advertising campaigns. Several ethical considerations, such as stereotyping, cultural appropriateness, and consumer manipulation, can create controversial situations that can be damaging to brand recognition and consumer trust (Taylor, 2020). Cultural values shape the consumer's perception and behaviour. And it influences how consumers understand brand recognition and their messages. An effective cross-cultural brand campaign requires a brand to adapt its strategies to reflect local cultural values respectfully. Advertisers need to develop a comprehensive marketing mix that successfully meets the cultural preferences as well as demands of their target audience in order to succeed in cross-cultural marketplaces (Tuleja, 2016). Despite the increasing importance of ethical considerations in marketing, still it can be found a gap in understanding how brands can balance global messages with cultural sensitivity.

1.2 Goal of the study

To address this gap, the study investigates the current cross-cultural advertising practices, relevant theoretical approaches, and some case studies in the real world. Additionally, primary research was conducted with consumers and advertising experts to collect insights to gain an understanding of ethical best practices. These findings will support the development of ethical guidelines for the global brands to create effective and culturally respectful cross-cultural advertising campaigns.

1.2.1 Research objectives

- i. To identify and analyse the key cultural values influencing consumer behaviour in different regions.
- ii. To analyse how successful global brands adapt their advertising campaigns to the incorporation of local cultural values and beliefs.
- iii. To identify the cultural impact of the culturally adapted marketing campaigns on brand perception, trust, and loyalty across different markets.
- iv. To evaluate the challenges and risks associated with incorporating local cultural values in cross-cultural advertising campaigns.
- v. To investigate the role of cultural intelligence in developing global advertising campaigns.
- vi. To assess the long-term effects of culturally sensitive branding on a company's global market position.
- vii. To propose recommendations for ethical and culturally sensitive cross-cultural advertising.

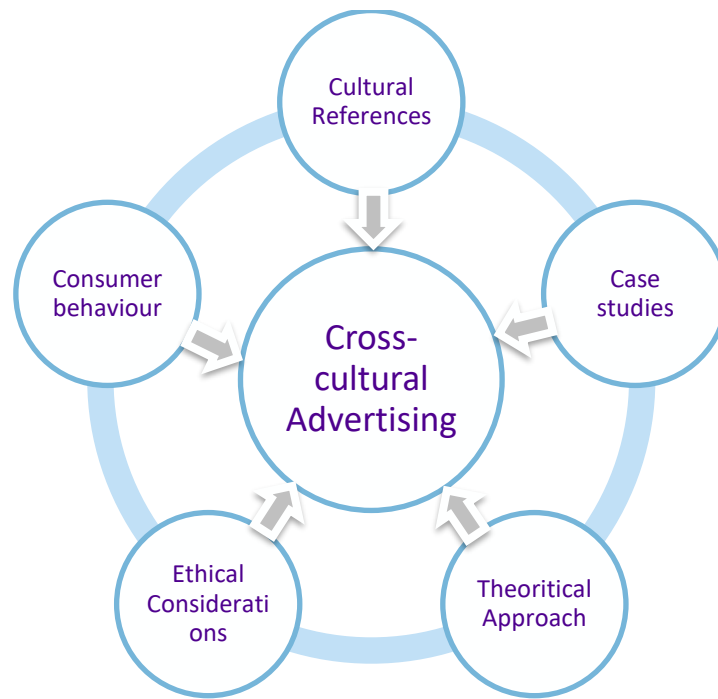


FIGURE 1. Scope of the study

1.3 Methodology

This research combined with quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

- **Literature review:** This section examines the relevant theoretical approaches of cultural branding and ethical marketing.
- **Case studies:** This chapter outlines cross-cultural advertising campaigns from different global brands, what strategies and best practices they used to effectively approach their target audience, and what the pitfalls are.
- **Surveys:** This section reflects the analysis of the insights from consumers and advertising experts to assess their perceptions of ethical challenges in global advertising.

1.4 Selection of the countries

To provide a differentiated and representative analysis, this study focuses primarily on three countries: Sri Lanka (Asian continent), Kenya (African continent), and Finland (European continent). These countries were selected based on their unique cultural characteristics, economic structures, and consumer behaviour.

- **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka is an island in South Asia with a deep-rooted traditional cultural background and many religious influences. The strong collectivist values and social norms of Sri Lanka provide advertisers with the need to align with its values.
- **Kenya:** Representing the African market, Kenya has a mix of traditional and modern consumer behaviour. Its cultural identity and language diversity play a crucial role in shaping the brand perception.
- **Finland:** With an individualistic and high-trust society in the Nordic area, Finland is an example of a Western market. The transparency, sustainability, and digital engagement in Finland are key factors in the effectiveness of advertising.

This study aims to enhance the understanding of cross-cultural advertising by carefully analyzing these three culturally different regions. It will provide practical guidelines for global brands to streamline their strategies to tailor their brand messages to resonate with diverse cultural audiences.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising is a powerful communication tool to influence consumer behaviour. But when it comes to cross-cultural advertising, it raises a complex of ethical issues. In different cultures, they interpret messages based on their cultural norms, values, and communication systems (Miracle, 2024, 3). It is important to explore some key cultural and advertising theories to understand how different cultures and their values shape advertising strategies.

2.1 What is advertising?

In today's world, advertising uses every possible medium to generate people's awareness of its message effectively. It does via television, radio, newspapers or any other print media, the internet, hoardings, posters, events, sponsorships, clothes, sounds, visuals, and even using people. Advertising is a powerful tool that helps businesses, organizations, and individuals promote their products, services, or any other brand messages to their target audience. Its primary goal is to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about what they offer to the consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 578).

There are several definitions that describe what advertising is and its use. Leo Burnett defined advertising as "selling cornflakes to consumers who are eating Cheerios" (Bendixen, 1983, 17). In his own publication, Burnett defined advertising as having a deep understanding as "The true art of advertising is to make people want what you want to sell" (Burnett, 1961, 47)

Advertising is a method of one-way communication that focuses on promoting products, services, or brands to a target audience and where to access it (Verma, Dudani, Singh, Banjare, Goel, 2023).

Advertising consists of all the activities involved in presenting to a group a non-personal, oral or visual, openly sponsored message regarding a product, service, or an idea (Stanton, 1984, 676).

Advertising is the means of making known in order to sell goods or services (Ogilvy, 1983, 8).

Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the recipient to take an action, now or in the future (Lane, King & Reichert, 2011, 4).

These several definitions highlight the diverse perspectives on advertising, emphasizing its role as a non-personal, paid, and persuasive form of communication aimed at promoting products, services, or ideas.

While different definitions of advertising focus on the creation of messages and their delivery, cross-cultural advertising theories provide a framework for adapting those messages to different cultures with specific values and communication styles.

2.2 Cultural dimensions theory

The most widely used framework for understanding cultural differences is Geert Hofstede's theory. Hofstede identified six key dimensions that influence behaviour and consumer decision-making in different cultures (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

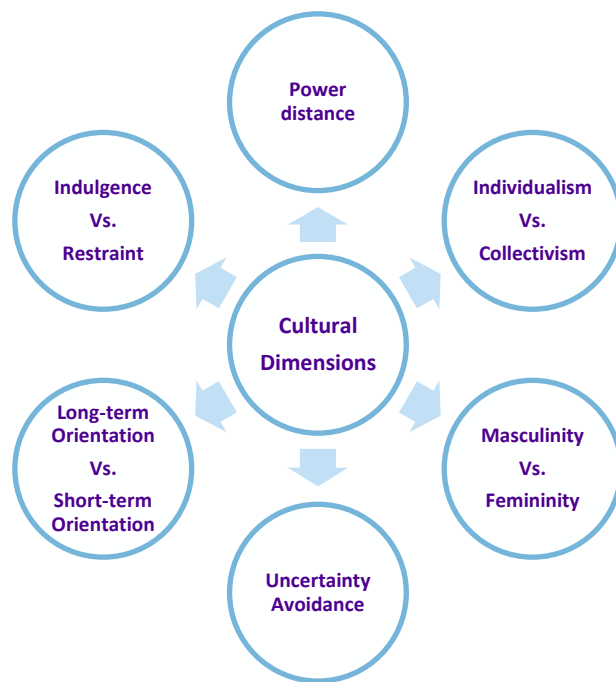


FIGURE 2. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (Hofstede et al, 2010).

Power distance: This reflects the extent to which less powerful members of organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. It can be seen that the luxury brands maintain their status in high-power-distance cultures. They are prevalent hierarchical structures, and the authority is respected. Conversely, low power-distance countries emphasise equality (Hofstede et al, 2010, 54–56).

Individualism Vs. Collectivism: This examines the extent to which individuals are integrated into which groups. In individualist countries focus is on personal success, while in collectivist cultures, emphasis the family or community (Hofstede et al, 2010, 91–92).

Masculinity Vs. Femininity: This dimension explores the emotional role distribution between genders. Masculine cultures value determination, competitiveness, and material success. But feminine cultures prioritize caring, cooperation, and the quality of life (Hofstede et al, 2010, 139–140).

Uncertainty Avoidance: This measures the tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty in a society. In uncertainty avoidance cultures, it can be seen as a prefer-

ence to minimize uncertainty with proper rules and more clear structures, contrasting with the low uncertainty cultures that prefer to have tolerance of ambiguity (Hofstede et al, 2010, 191–192).

Long-term Vs. Short-term Orientation: This describes a society’s focus on the future versus present or past values. Long-term oriented countries value perseverance, thrift, and future rewards, while short-term countries emphasise instant satisfaction and their traditions (Hofstede et al, 2010, 239–240).

Indulgence Vs. Restraint: This reflects the extent to which a society allows or defeats the satisfaction of basic human desires related to the enjoyment of life. Indulgent cultures emphasize human emotions. But restrained cultures encourage social or cultural norms and control (Hofstede et al, 2010, 281–282).

2.3 Edward T. Hall’s theory

An American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher, Edward Twitchell Hall explores in his theory how people in different cultures communicate and interpret messages. It has focused on how much information is implied rather than how much is explicitly stated (Hall, 1976).

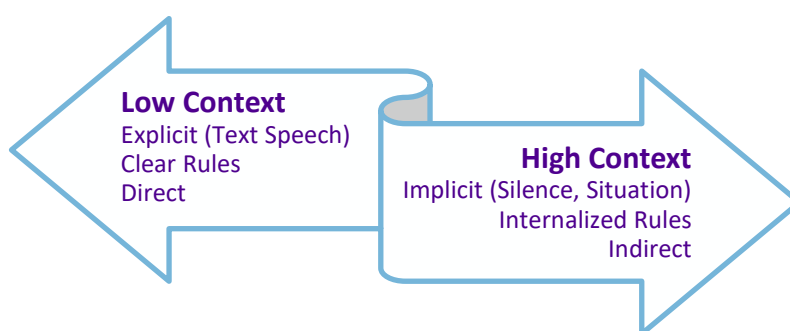


FIGURE 3. Hall’s high-context and low-context theory (Hall, 1976)

Low context cultures: People tend to communicate clearly and directly. They strongly rely on words to convey meaning (Hall, 1976, 85–89).

High context cultures: The communication style is more indirect and implicit. People heavily rely on context, unspoken cues, and shared understanding to interpret the message. They might avoid open conflict and express themselves using subtle suggestions, body language, and interpersonal connections (Hall, 1976, 90–94).

2.4 Comparison of Hofstede’s dimensions and Hall’s contexts

When considering cross-cultural advertising, both Hofstede’s and Hall’s theories provide valuable insights, though they approach cultural differences from well-defined angles.

TABLE 1. Comparison of Hofstede’s and Hall’s theories (Hofstede 2001, Hall 1976)

	Hofstede’s Theory	Hall’s Theory
Focus	Pointed out broad cultural values. It provides a framework for understanding deep-seated social values.	It highlighted differences in communication styles.
Strengths	Offers broad insights into social values and an accessible framework for comparing cultures.	Provides valuable insights into communication differences and helps to avoid misunderstandings.
Limitations	Based on specific time and context.	It can be difficult to apply correctly.
Application in Advertising	Helps advertisers avoid messages that conflict with cultural values.	Helps advertisers tailor their message to the target audience.

By applying both Hofstede’s and Hall’s theories, advertisers can minimize misinterpretation of cultural values, inappropriate use of communication styles, and failure to understand the impact of advertising on different cultures.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations used for this study.

3.1 Research design

This study utilizes a quantitative and qualitative mixed-method approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethical challenges in cross-cultural advertising. To gather consumer responses and advertising experts' insights, it is suitable to use a mixed-method research design.

3.2 Data collection methods

The primary quantitative data collection method for this research is an online survey using Google Forms. Google Forms was chosen for this research based on its user-friendly interface, accessibility and ease of use. The questionnaire was carefully developed to avoid cultural bias and ensure clarity to avoid differences in language interpretation. The survey includes both open-ended questions for qualitative analysis and closed-ended questions to collect quantitative information. This combination provides a detailed insight into consumer preferences and the cultural factors that shape the brand perception.

The survey will target two different groups.

- I. **General consumers:** to understand how different cultural backgrounds influence the perception of advertising strategies and ethical considerations.
- II. **Advertising experts:** to collect professional insights into the strategies and challenges in cross-cultural advertising.

3.3 Sampling techniques

This study utilizes a methodical sampling technique (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019), targeting three countries with unique cultural characteristics in different continents: Sri Lanka (Asia), Finland (Europe), and Kenya (Africa). This selection seeks to capture a diverse range of cultural values and consumer buying behaviours.

The target sample size is as follows:

TABLE 2. Survey sample size

Category	Sri Lanka	Finland	Kenya	Total
General Consumers	35-40	20-25	30-35	75-100
Advertising Experts	5-10	3-5	5-10	15-25

A **5% error margin** will be maintained to ensure the reliability of the information. This sample size is large enough to identify significant patterns while ensuring a manageable scope for analysis (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

4 DATA ANALYSIS

This section explains the analysis of the survey responses collected from participants in Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Finland. The purpose of this study is to understand how consumers from different cultures perceive global advertising messages, how cultural values influence their trust and loyalty to the brands, and what the reactions are to the brand messaging. By analysing the collected data, it can be understood how well the global brands tailor their messages to local hearts.

As De Mooij (2019) explains, the cultural values are deeply shaping customer behaviour. The brands that fail to address these requirements, their survival in the global market is questionable. This survey focuses on cultural representation in global advertising, consumer trust in culturally adapted advertising, cultural facts influencing consumer buying patterns, and many other key factors.

The sample of this survey included general consumers and advertising experts in all three countries and ensuring the diversity of the survey data. The use of an online Google form makes it easy to provide their feedback. The survey covered four key areas: demographic information, perception of stereotyping, cultural appropriation, and consumer manipulation in advertising. The following sections will present the research findings from each country and compare cross-regional patterns.

4.1 Survey analysis of Finland respondents

To understand how people in Finland respond to ethical issues of cross-cultural advertising, a structured survey was conducted among 20 respondents.

4.1.1 Demographic profile

The participants of the survey represented different age groups, genders, educational backgrounds, and occupations (See table 3). All the respondents are currently residing in Finland. 90% of the total respondents are Finnish, and a small number of (10%) Swedish-speaking Finns.

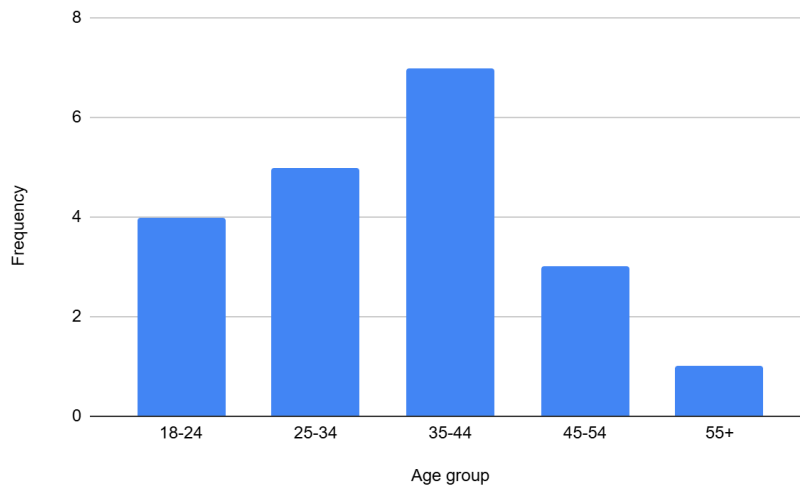


FIGURE 4. Age distribution of Finland respondents

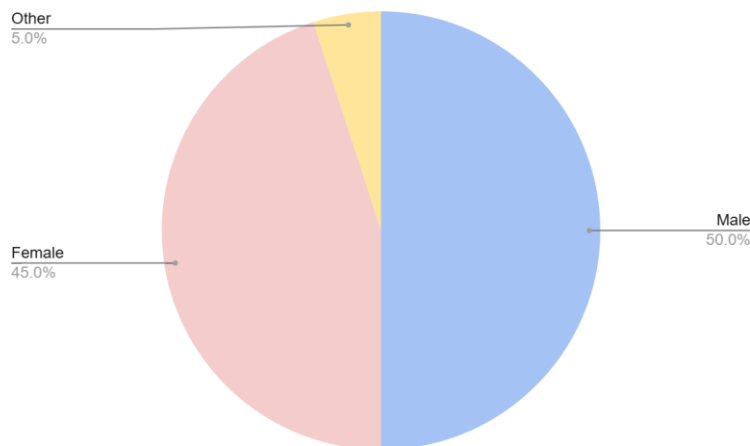


FIGURE 5. Gender distribution of Finns

All respondents in Finland are Finland residents, and 1 respondent is a Swedish-speaking Finnish resident. The table below shows the education and occupation information about the Finnish research sample.

TABLE 3. Demographic information of respondents in Finland (n=20)

Educational Level		
High School	3	15%
Vocational School	4	20%
Bachelor's Degree	6	30%
Master's Degree	5	25%
Ph.D. or higher	2	10%
Occupation (Top 5)		
Office worker	4	20%
Student	3	15%
Retired	3	15%
Software developer	2	10%
Nurse	2	10%

4.1.2 Perception of stereotyping in advertising

A majority of Finland respondents agreed that the advertisement in Finland aligns with the cultural values. However, 40% stated that the advertisements are stereotyped by a cultural group.

Common examples of stereotyping are explained as follows:

- Finnish food is simplified as mostly reindeer meat and rye bread
- Tourism only focuses on snow and sauna
- Older Finnish people are portrayed as always quiet

When asked about the acceptability of cultural stereotypes, 50% of respondents found it unacceptable to some extent (Table 4).

TABLE 4. Perception of cultural stereotyping

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very acceptable	1	5%
Somewhat acceptable	3	15%
Neutral	4	20%
Somewhat unacceptable	5	25%
Very unacceptable	7	35%

More than half of the participants (60%) stated that stereotyping can harm cultural perceptions. And this aligns with the previous study that indicates the stereotypes indicate inaccurate cultural perceptions (Taylor, 2017).

According to the respondents, the preferred advertising strategies that reflect the Finnish culture include direct and factual messages (70%), humor (60%), and storytelling (45%). This finding reflects Hofstede's (2010) idea that Finland has a low-context and individualist culture that values direct messaging and clarity.

4.1.3 Views on cultural appropriation

More than half respondents (60%) were familiar with the term "cultural appropriation," and 35% among them had seen that some advertisements have used appropriated cultural elements inappropriately. Some examples included such as use of Sami patterns without mentioning credit, the underestimation of Finnish sauna culture, misuse of Kalevala imagery.

Representing a strong majority, 70% of respondents stated that using cultural elements is acceptable if it is used respectfully (Table 5).

TABLE 5. Views on using cultural elements in ads

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Acceptable if done respectfully	14	70%
Never acceptable	2	10%
Depends on context	4	20%

Moreover, 65% of participants stated that the use of cultural elements inappropriately can cause harm or misunderstanding.

4.1.4 Consumer manipulation and ethical considerations

Nearly half (45%) of respondents stated that some advertisements take advantage of cultural differences to manipulate consumers. Some examples include:

- Some ads pressuring customers to be “modern” or appear as “successful”
- Take advantage of cultural equality values to sell exclusivity

85% of respondents agree that the advertisers have a responsibility to avoid manipulating consumers (Figure 5).

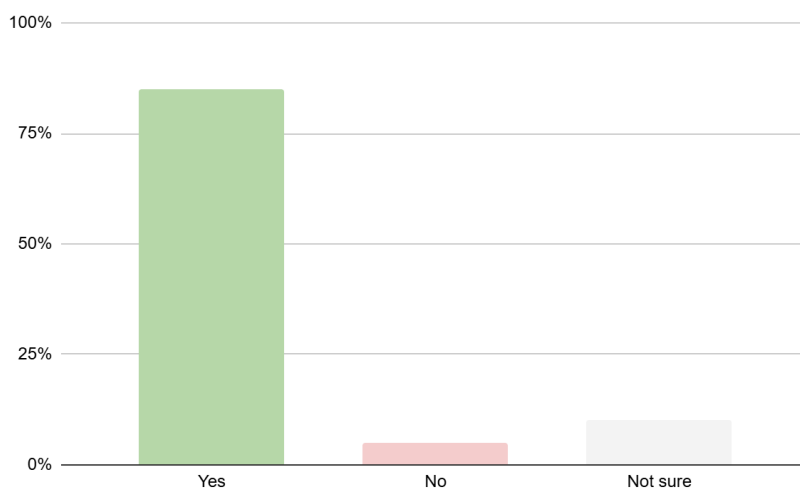


FIGURE 6. Should advertisers avoid manipulation?

The respondents have given suggestions about the steps that can be taken by the advertisers to better understand and respect cultural differences.

Deep research on Finnish culture

- Avoiding stereotypes
- Pre-test ads with Finnish focus groups
- Use proper Finnish language

These suggestions are better aligned with the best practices in global advertising suggested by De Mooij (2019), who explained the cultural sensitivity in global advertising.

This survey reflects that the Finnish society is aware of the impact of cross-cultural advertising, and they prefer respectful, well-researched advertising campaigns that reflect their cultural values. These insights will help the global advertisers tailor their campaigns to align with the Finnish culture.

4.2 Survey analysis of Sri Lankan respondents

This section explains an analysis of data gathered from a survey conducted among 35 Sri Lankans on ethical considerations in global advertising. This survey aimed to identify how Sri Lankan consumers perceive cultural stereotyping, consumer manipulation, and cultural appropriation.

4.2.1 Demographic information

The respondents from Sri Lanka represented diverse age groups and gender identified with 51.43% male and 45.71% female.

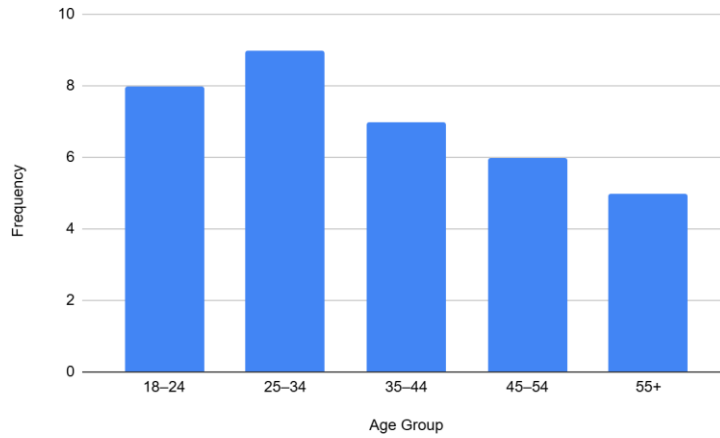


FIGURE 7. Age distribution of Sri Lankans

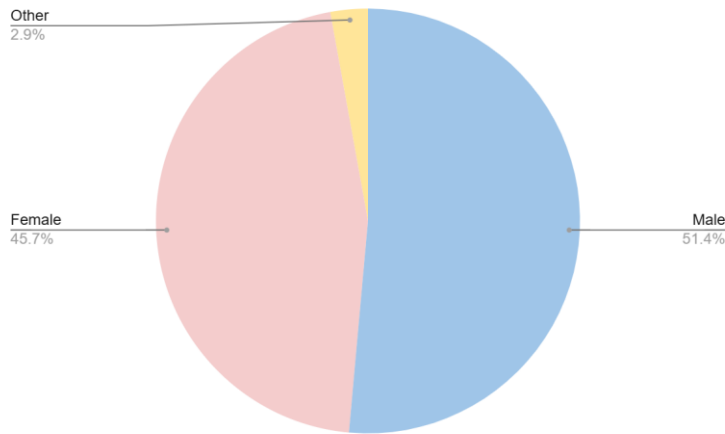


FIGURE 8. Gender distribution of Sri Lankans

All respondents reside in Sri Lanka, and the sample was chosen based on their diverse cultural backgrounds. Here (Table 6) the number of participants for the survey in each category is presented, and most of the participants moderate (37.14%) or high (22.86%) exposure to global advertising.

TABLE 6. Cultural, educational and occupational background

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Cultural Background	Sinhala	71.43%
	Tamil	20.00%
	Muslim	5.71%
	Burgher	2.86%
Educational Level	Bachelor's degree	34.29%
	Master's degree	22.86%
	Other levels	42.85%
Occupation	Office workers	17.14%
	Business owners	11.43%
	Other occupations	71.43%
Exposure to global Advertising	Moderate	37.14%
	High	22.86%
	Other exposure levels	40.00%

4.2.2 Perception of stereotyping advertising

57.14% of total participants agreed that the advertising in Sri Lanka is aligned with the cultural values, while 17.15% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the same statement.

The most preferred advertising strategy was emotional storytelling (57.14%) and humor/entertaining (51.43%).

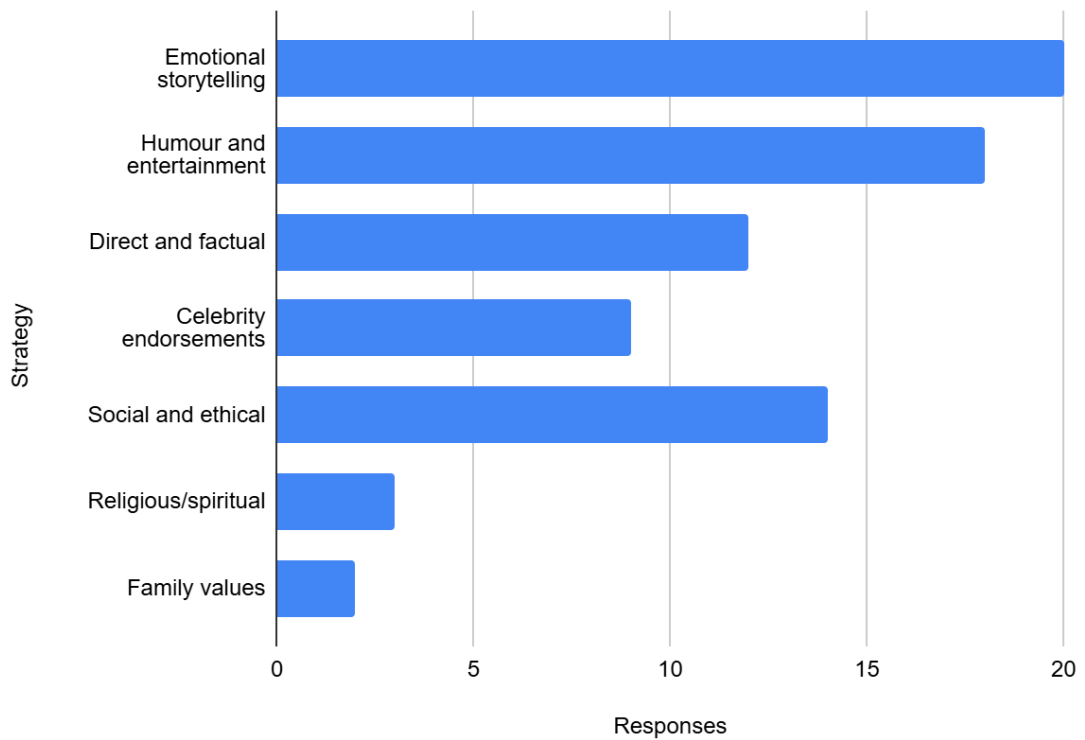


FIGURE 9. Preferred advertising strategy in Sri Lanka

A significant number of respondents (62.86%) encountered advertisements in Sri Lanka that stereotyped certain cultures or groups. Common examples included:

- Ethnic groups showed stereotypical roles
- Beauty advertisements showed lighter skin
- Advertisements underestimated cultural values, customs, or religious practices

Moreover, 51.43% of total respondents stated that cultural stereotypes in advertising are somewhat or completely unacceptable, and 71.43% of respondents believed that stereotypes could harm cultural values. As a reaction to those types of stereotype advertisements, 34.29% said that they find them offensive and avoid such brands.

4.2.3 Cultural appropriation in advertising

51.43% of total respondents were familiar with the term “cultural appropriation,” and 40% stated that they found culturally appropriated elements used inappropriately in advertising. Some examples were highlighted:

- Use traditional dress and symbols inaccurately
- Misuse of religious imagery and terms
- Misuse of historical places
- Undervalued Sri Lankan traditional dance and music
- Changing and using the values found in ancient folk literature

68.57% of respondents agreed that the use of cultural elements is acceptable when it is used respectfully. Moreover, 80% stated that cultural appropriation in advertising can be harmful or lead to misunderstandings.

4.2.4 Consumer manipulation in advertising

60% of the total surveyed believed that certain advertisements manipulate customers by leveraging cultural differences. Some examples mentioned:

- Create insecurities in social acceptance
- Leveraging sensitivity around social and family status
- Using religious beliefs or superstitions

40% of respondents believe that emotional appeals in cross-cultural advertising are somewhat or completely unacceptable, suggesting a careful perspective on manipulative messaging.

An overwhelming 91.43% stated that the advertisers should be accountable for not manipulating consumers. Some suggestions to respect cultural values were included:

- Conduct deep research on Sri Lankan culture
- Being mindful when using religious and ethnically sensitive elements
- Consulting local cultural experts

The result of the survey conducted among 35 Sri Lankans, they are highly sensitive to both cultural appropriation and stereotyping in advertising. They emphasize the importance of respecting cultural values, religious practices, and social

status. Similar to the prior studies (De Mooij, 2019), emotional and ethical advertising strategies are more acceptable when they use culturally relevant and respectful.

These findings indicate that advertisers aiming at the Sri Lankan audience in cross-cultural campaigns should prioritize cultural sensitivity and avoid manipulative representations.

4.3 Survey analysis on Kenyan respondents

This section delivers and analyzes the responses gathered from the survey conducted among 25 Kenyan participants on their views on cross-cultural advertising and its use. The aim of this analysis is to understand how cultural values, stereotypes, cultural appropriation, and consumer manipulation are recognized by the Kenyan audience.

4.3.1 Demographic profile of Kenyan respondents

The sample for the Kenyan audience (n=25) was diverse in age, gender, educational background, and occupation.

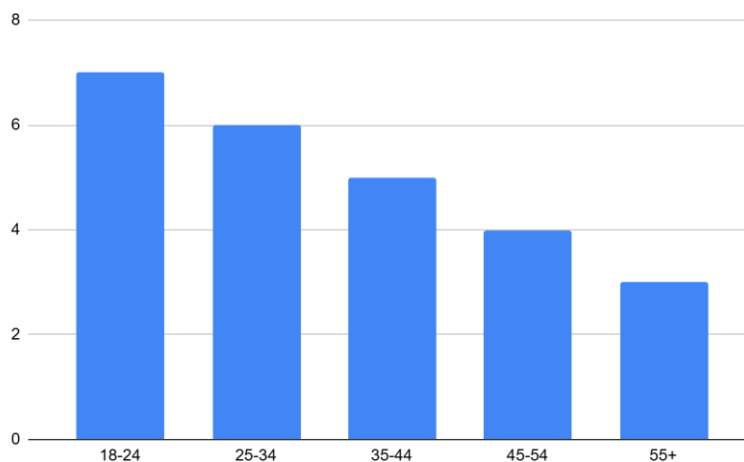


FIGURE 10. Age distribution of the Kenyan sample

The gender distribution of the respondents in Kenya is mentioned below in a chart. The gender ratio of the Kenyan respondents can be seen as male 52% and female 44%, which is most similar to the Kenyan population's gender ratio (Statistica.com, 2023)

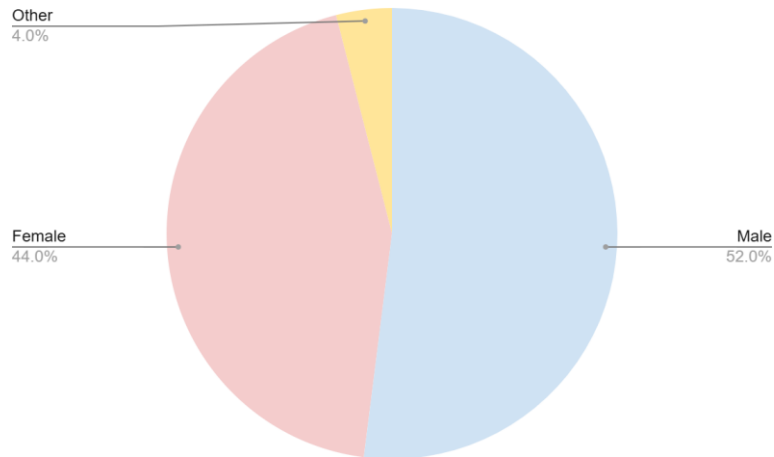


FIGURE 11. Gender distribution of the Kenyan sample

52% of the total respondents were below 35 years of age, as they are highly exposed to the media. And the respondents represent a broad ethnic background in Kenya, such as Swahili, Kikuyu, Luhya, and Somali, highlighting its multicultural society.

Among the educational backgrounds of the surveyed Kenyans, most had a bachelor's degree (32%) or vocational training (16%).

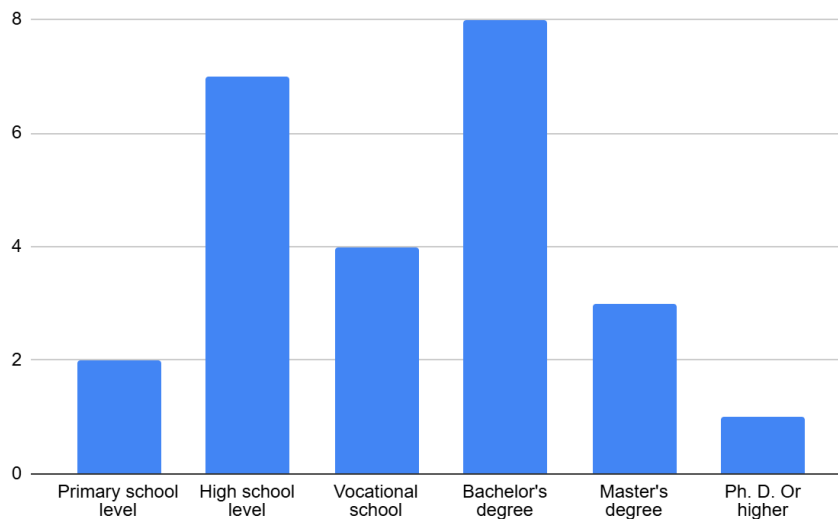


FIGURE 12. Educational background of Kenyan respondents

4.3.2 Perception of stereotyping in advertising

44% of total respondents agreed that the advertising in Kenya aligned with the cultural values, but 16% disagreed with the same. These percentages reflect that many advertisements try to align with Kenyan culture and its values, but there are some noticeable gaps.

When responding to suggestions for advertising strategies, 60% of responses were found for emotional storytelling, while 40% of responses were for humor and entertainment.

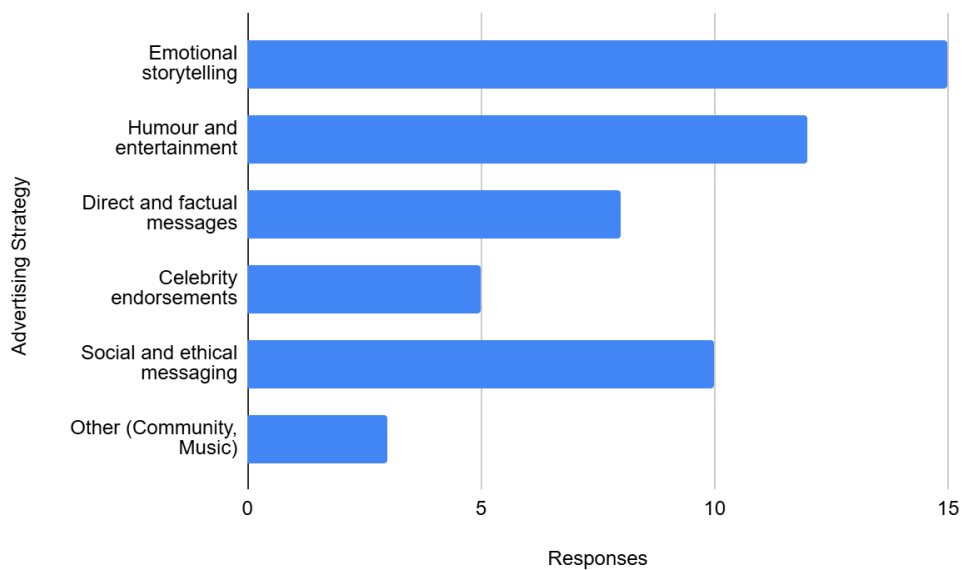


FIGURE 13. Preferred advertising strategy

72% of respondents had seen stereotypes of culture in Advertising and provided examples, including:

- Demonstration of ethnic groups in limited job roles
- Ads simplify traditions for the use of humor
- Ads promote lighter skin for beauty products

4.3.3 Cultural appropriation in advertising

56% of Kenyan respondents were familiar with the term “Cultural Appropriation” and 48% had seen the use of cultural elements inappropriately in advertising.

Common examples include:

- Traditional Kenyan designs were used without giving proper credit
- Incorrect use of some language terms
- Unnecessary use of religious symbols

Most respondents (68.6%) agreed that the usage of cultural symbols if it is used in an acceptable manner. But 80% stated that cultural appropriation can lead to misunderstanding or harm.

4.3.4 Consumer manipulation in advertising

60% of Kenyan respondents stated that the advertisements manipulate consumers by leveraging cultural differences. Some examples include:

- Misuse the family values to push product purchases
- Ads create insecurity in modernity and success

The respondents answered the question about emotional appeal; balanced feedback was received. 92% believed that the advertisers have a responsibility to avoid customer manipulation in advertising.

Respondents suggested some strategies for advertisers to use cultural elements and their values in a respectable manner.

- Cultural research and consulting experts
- Avoid generalization and stereotypes
- Pretest with local focus groups
- Show genuine respect for the local culture

Overall, Kenyan respondents believed that the advertising should reflect local cultural values respectfully, avoid stereotyping and cultural appropriation, and

use cultural symbols with care and proper acknowledgment. Both consumer manipulation and cultural appropriation are considered notable risks that advertisers should avoid when implementing campaigns.

4.4 Survey analysis of Finland advertising experts

This section presents the information and feedback gathered from advertising experts from Finland. 3 Finland advertising experts were selected, and they are working in different positions such as creative director, advertising strategist, and marketing manager. These experts have over 5 years' work experience in the advertising industry, and all have worked on cross-cultural campaigns.

TABLE 7. Professional background of Finland experts

Expert	Role	Experience	Worked in CCA	Regions
Expert 1	Creative Director	More than 15 years	Yes	Europe, Asia, America
Expert 2	Advertising strategist	10-15 years	Yes	Europe, the Middle East, and Africa
Expert 3	Marketing manager	5-10 years	Yes	Europe, Asia

According to the above table, Europe is the most common region (100%) and followed by Asia (67%).

4.4.1 Frequency and nature of ethical challenges

The majority of experts stated that they have faced ethical challenges often or sometimes when working in Cross-cultural Advertising (CCA). This response reflects the ethical challenges that are frequently considered in practice.

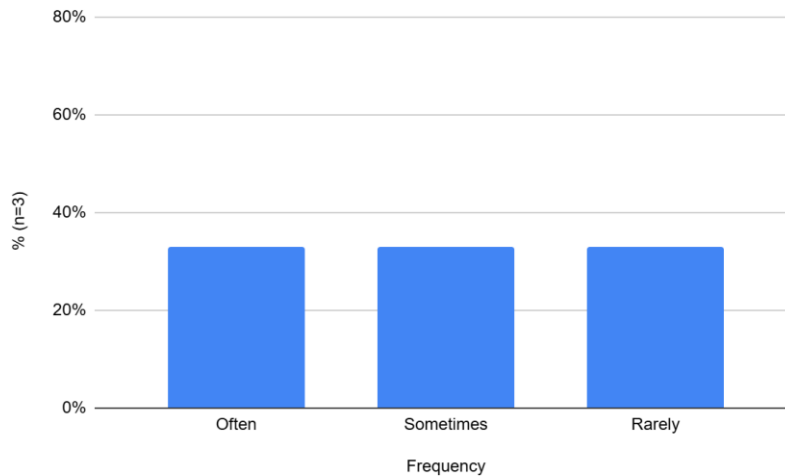


FIGURE 14. Frequency of facing ethical challenges

When considering ethical challenges, the top-ranked challenges according to the average ranking were stereotyping, misrepresenting cultural values, and cultural appropriateness. This finding is aligned with previous literature that points out the stereotyping as a central ethical risk in CCA (De Mooij, 2019).

TABLE 8. Ranking of ethical challenges (lower rank = higher importance)

Ethical Challenge	Avg. Rank
Stereotyping	2.7
Misrepresentation of culture	2.7
Cultural appropriation	2.7
Consumer manipulation	4
Lack of diversity	5

4.4.2 Strategies to avoid ethical risks

Experts emphasized various strategies to reduce ethical challenges in CCA. The most common strategies are conducting cultural research and avoiding clichés and generalization. This highlights a significant focus on thorough research and teamwork during the development of an ad campaign.

TABLE 9. Strategies to avoid stereotypes

Strategy	Percentage (n=3)
Conduct cultural research	100%
Avoid cliches and generalizations	100%
Consult cultural experts	67%
Test ads with target audiences	33%

4.4.3 Handling accusations of cultural appropriation

One expert stated that they had faced accusations of cultural appropriation in advertising. As a response to this situation, they took corrective action such as withdrawing the campaign, discussing with the affected cultural groups, and revising the ad campaign with stricter guidelines.

4.4.4 Importance of cultural sensitivity

All experts emphasized that the importance of cultural sensitivity is either very important or important. This high importance reflects the ethical considerations that are not just theoretical but crucial in the practical world experience.

Moreover, strategies such as adherence to ethical guidelines (67%), use of diverse creative teams (67%), and avoiding controversial themes (67%) were used to balance cultural sensitivity and creativity.

Experts rated the effectiveness of development strategies on a scale of 1-5 (higher score = more effective).

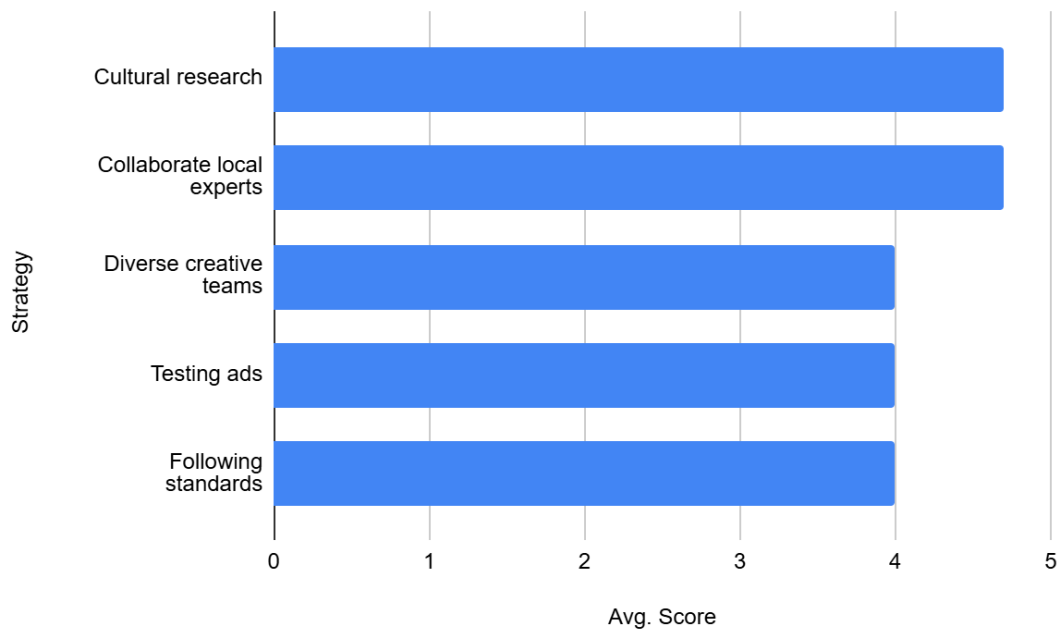


FIGURE 15. Effectiveness of development strategies

4.4.5 Risks of consumer manipulation

A majority of experts (67%) highlighted those advertisements aimed at multicultural audiences that unintentionally manipulate consumers by exploiting emotions or misrepresenting cultural elements. To avoid these manipulations, experts suggest respecting cultural values (67%), ensuring transparency (100%), and avoiding exploitation (67%).

4.4.6 Expert comments

Open-ended comments given by experts on the practical situations of CCA and recommendations:

- Continuing conversations with cultural representatives is essential to update with changing cultural nuances.
- Creative teams should inform clients about the time and resources required to implement effective and ethical CCA.
- The goal of CCA is not just to “prevent errors” but also to respect the richness of the culture.

4.5 Survey analysis of advertising experts from Sri Lanka

This section provides the findings of the survey on ethical considerations on CCA, conducted among seven advertising experts from Sri Lanka. The analysis focuses on professional backgrounds, ethical challenges, and strategies used to balance creativity and cultural sensitivity in the Sri Lankan audience.

4.5.1 Experts' profile

The respondents represented different job roles, experiences, and functions. 71% of experts have prior experience in working in global advertising, mostly in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and America.

TABLE 10. Professional background of Sri Lankan experts

Expert	Role	Experience	Worked in CCA	Regions
Expert 1	Creative Director	10–15 years	Yes	Asia, Middle East
Expert 2	Communication consultant	5–10 years	Yes	Asia
Expert 3	Copy writer	Less than 5 years	No	N/A
Expert 4	Media planner	More than 15 years	Yes	Asia, Africa, Middle East
Expert 5	Copy writer	5–10 years	Yes	Asia, America
Expert 6	Art Director	10–15 years	Yes	Asia, Europe
Expert 7	Marketing Manager	Less than 5 years	No	N/A

4.5.2 Frequency and types of ethical challenges

A majority (57%) stated that they faced ethical challenges either often or very often. These highlighted ethical risks are frequently considered in Sri Lankan advertising practice.

The analysis reflects stereotypes as the most critical concern, and due to gender roles, religious diversity, and ethnic sensitivity, it is essential to avoid stereotypes.

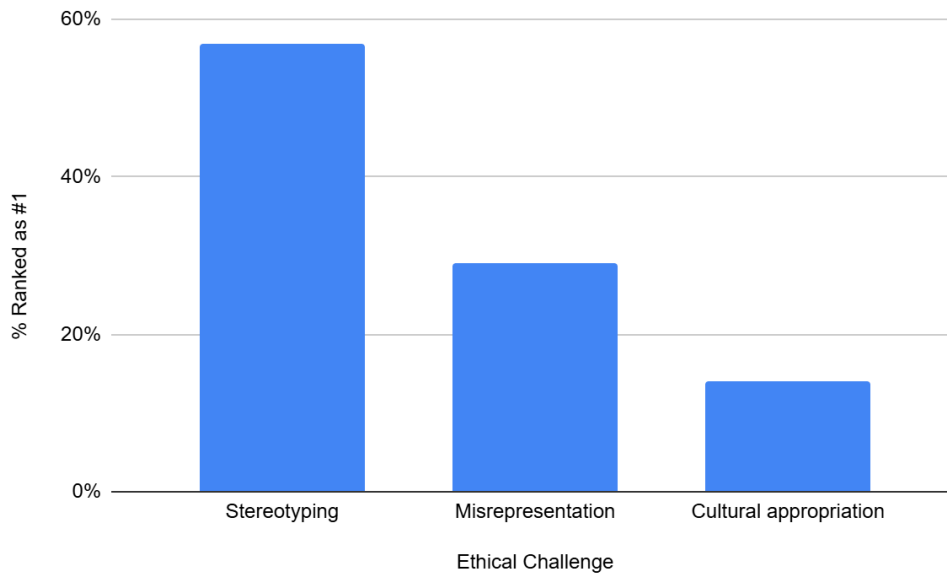


FIGURE 16. Key ethical challenges ranked (top rated) in Sri Lanka

4.5.3 Strategies to reduce ethical risks

All advertising experts (100%) emphasized the importance of cultural research and avoiding clichés and generalizations to reduce stereotypes and cultural missteps. Consulting cultural experts and conducting pretesting ads is also used. Additionally, 29% of the total advertising experts have faced accusations of cultural appropriation, as in response to the situation, a revising campaign and public apologies were implemented.

TABLE 11. Strategies used to avoid stereotypes

Strategy	% Experts Using
Cultural research	100%
Avoiding clichés	100%
Consulting experts	71%
Testing ads	43%

4.5.4 Balancing creativity and cultural ethics

To balance creativity and cultural responsiveness, the experts have applied several strategies such as implementing ethical guidelines, diverse teams, and avoiding controversial themes.

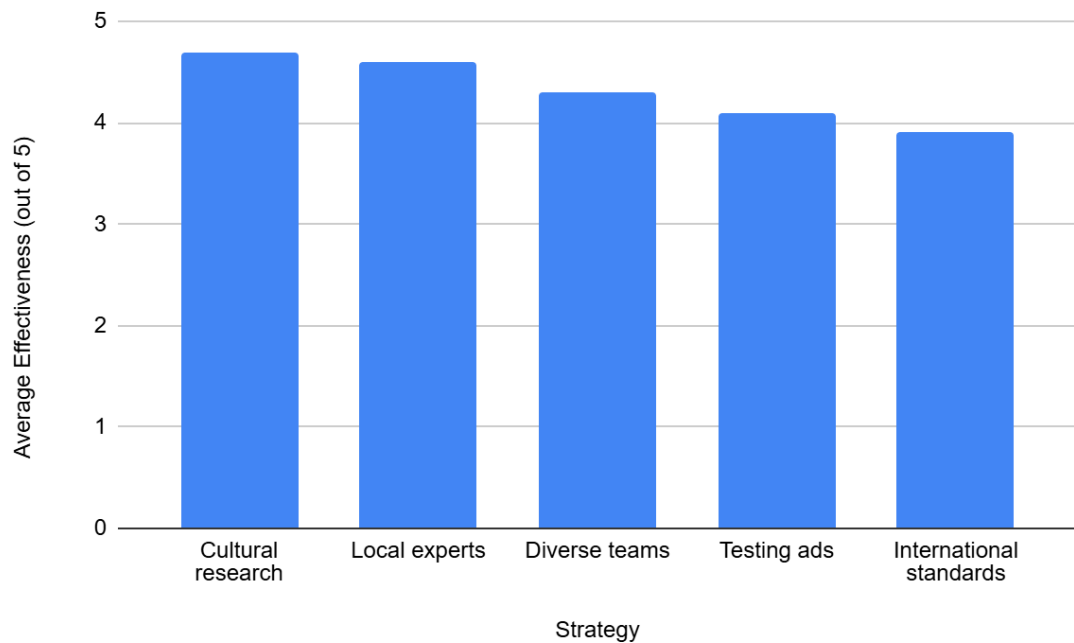


FIGURE 17. Effectiveness of strategies to keep ethical sensitivity

4.5.5 Risk of consumer manipulation

The majority (86%) of total experts highlighted by cross-cultural advertising unintentionally manipulated consumers, and they commonly recommended strategies such as transparency (100%), respecting culture (100%), and avoiding exploitation (86%).

4.5.6 Sri Lankan experts' comments

Various comments given by advertising experts from Sri Lanka supported the qualitative findings.

- Careful cultural research is needed based on the diverse religious and ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.
- Gender role stereotypes are sensitive issues.
- Proper engagement with cultural groups prevents fallouts.
- Younger audiences respect social values, not cultural correctness.

4.6 Survey analysis of advertising experts in Kenya

This section explains the findings of four advertising experts in Kenya, who surveyed on ethical considerations on cross-cultural advertising (CCA).

4.6.1 Professional background

75% of total respondents (3/4) have worked on cross-cultural advertising campaigns mainly within the African continent, but also in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Their job roles are varied across project management, copywriting, media planning, and marketing management. Most of them have work experience of more than 5 years, and this sample represents a mix of professionals and early-career professionals.

TABLE 12. Sample responses of Kenyan advertising experts

Expert	Role	Experience	Worked on CCA	Regions
Expert 1	Copywriter	5–10 years	Yes	Africa, Asia
Expert 2	Assistant Marketing Manager	Less than 5 years	Yes	Africa, Europe
Expert 3	Project Manager	10–15 years	Yes	Africa, Middle East
Expert 4	Media Planner	5–10 years	No	N/A

4.6.2 Ethical challenges in cross-cultural advertising

Half of the total respondents stated that they have faced challenges in CCA either “often” or “very often”.

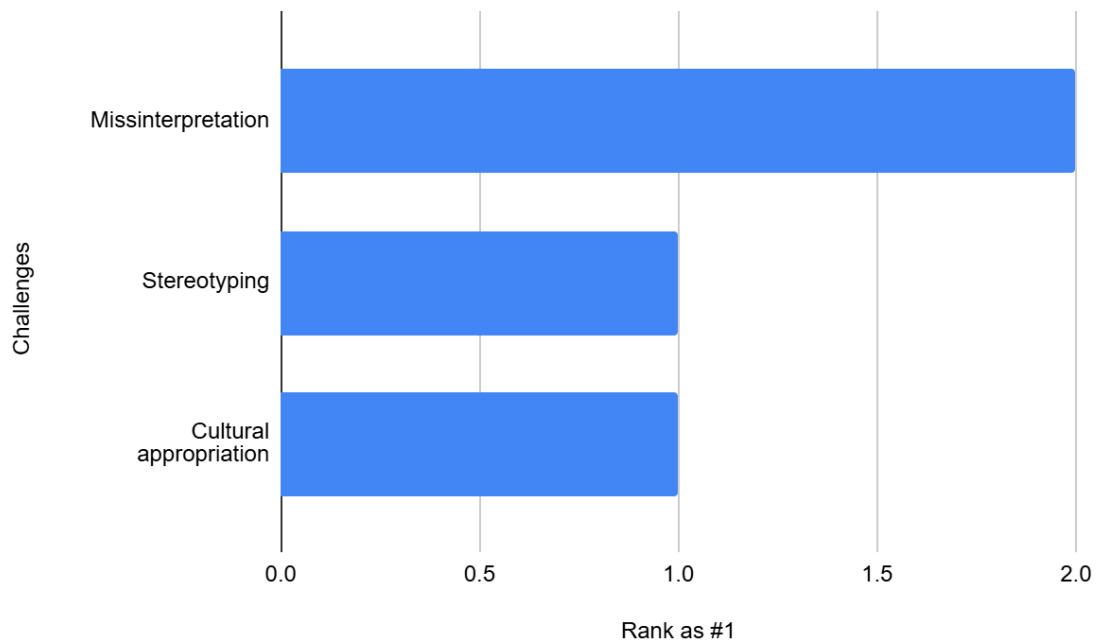


FIGURE 18. Main ethical challenges

These issues reflect the ethical challenges that are common in the Kenyan advertising industry, as much as in other regions, specifically when addressing culturally diverse audiences. All experts (100%) emphasized that conducting cultural research and avoiding cultural clichés is a common practice to reduce ethical issues. Moreover, 75% highlight consulting local cultural experts, and 50% test ad campaigns before launching them.

4.6.3 Accusation of cultural appropriation

One expert among all 4 (25%) had experience of facing cultural appropriation in a cross-cultural advertising campaign. To address the situation, the strategies implemented include revising the campaign, having conversations with target audiences, and introducing strict guidelines.

4.6.4 Importance of cultural sensitivity

All advertising experts in Kenya (100%) highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity, either “very important” or “extremely important” in cross-cultural advertising. This reflects that the ethnic diversity in Kenya needs a careful balance between creativity and ethical values to avoid favoring one ethnic group. To balance creativity and ethical values, the experts emphasized the following strategies that they have used:

TABLE 13. Strategies used by experts

Strategy	% of Experts Using
Ethical guidelines	75%
Diverse creative teams	75%
Testing with consultants	50%
Avoiding controversial themes	50%

4.6.5 Risk of manipulation

75% of total respondents stated that there is a risk of consumer manipulation in global advertising. All respondents highlighted respect for culture and transparency, and 75% of respondents said that they avoid exploitation and follow the ethical guidelines.

4.7 Comparative analysis and key insights

The surveys conducted across Finland, Sri Lanka, and Kenya with both consumers and advertising experts reveal important insights. These insights are significant when developing global advertising campaigns that respect cultural values and create greater brand loyalty.

Stereotyping in advertising: Stereotyping is a universal ethical challenge, though its expression differs with the cultural context. Advertisers should avoid generalizations and maintain nuanced representation to reflect cultural respect.

Cultural appropriation awareness: Respectful cultural representation with proper recognition and context is generally acceptable. However, incorrect application can lead to misunderstandings and backlashes. Advertisers should prioritize consultations and recognition.

Consumer manipulation concerns: Global consumers expect advertising should be responsible and not exploit the insecurity, social standards, and cultural sensitivity. This emphasizes the importance of authenticity and building trust between the brands and local customers.

Preferred advertising approaches: Adapting messaging styles to align with cultural communication preferences enhances resonance with consumers. Direct and factual communication style works in Finland, but the emotional storytelling style is more effective in Sri Lanka and Kenya.

Best practices: Experts highlighted the importance of in-depth cultural research, partnership with cultural experts, and open communication as essential for ethical and effective cross-cultural advertising campaigns.

5 UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL VALUES ACROSS REGIONS

Advertising across different cultures requires a deep understanding of cultural values that shape consumer behaviour. Every part of life and human interaction influences the culture. Anthropologists explain several key elements to define how people communicate, interact with the world and communicate (Yüksel, 2022).

- **Material culture:** Includes physical objects and resources. This covers the tools that people use, the industries they have developed, and the economic condition.
- **Social organizations:** This includes education systems, family life, political structure, and the media.
- **Human relationships with the Universe:** Cultural beliefs about the universe and how people understand their placement in the world.
- **Artistic expression:** This contains visual arts, drama & theatre, music, and dance. Various forms of art are a reflection of the cultural values, and it's essential to a quality culture.
- **Communication:** Communication styles and language are deeply influenced by a culture. (Yüksel, 2022, 7–9).

5.1 Overview of major cultural dimensions

Several cultural theories have explored how cultural differences affect to communication and business interactions.

As reviewed in section 3, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (Hofstede, 2001) explains key dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism and power distance, which shape consumer preferences. For example, in high power distribution cultures like Sri Lanka and Kenya, respect for social hierarchies and authority influences to the brand credibility, whereas a low power distribution cultures such as Finland, people prefer equality and direct communication.

Similarly, Hall's High-context versus Low-context Communication Theory (Hall, 1976) discusses how people in high-context cultures like Sri Lanka and Kenya rely more on symbolic and indirect communication, while low-context cultures like Finland respond to clear and direct messages.

5.2 Regional variations in cultural values

Across the regions, cultural values vary, which influence consumer behaviour and the response to the brand messaging.

- **Sri Lanka (Asia):** Sri Lanka has a collectivist culture and high-power distance. Family bond, respect for hierarchical structures, and most importantly, religious values influence consumer behavior. Advertising strategies that align with family, social harmony, and tradition tend to resonate with the audience. In these types of cultures, celebrity endorsements and emotional storytelling are commonly used to connect with consumers. (Hewapathirana, 2018)
- **Finland (Europe):** Finland reflects an individualistic culture with low power distance. Finnish consumers value directness, honesty, and simplicity in advertising. Since consumers prefer a clear and simple communication style, humor and truthful messaging work well. It is important to consider ethical issues, such as environmental sustainability and social responsibility. (Mayer, 2014)
- **Kenya (Africa):** Kenya represents a collectivist and high-power distance culture. Group harmony, respect for authority, and community values are shaping consumer behavior. Advertising strategies that highlight shared values, respect for elders, and group harmony are mostly effective. To create more trust and brand loyalty, it is possible to use celebrity endorsements and emotional approaches for advertising. (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2018)

5.3 Impact of cultural values on consumer behaviour

As per Wang, J. J., Lalwani, A. K., & DeVecchio, D. (2022), culture can be explained as a collection of fundamental principles that represent universally applicable solutions to the challenges of external adaptation (often referred to as survival) and internal integration (commonly known as cohesiveness). Kroeber & Kluckhohn. (1952, 181) describe the culture as “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups”. In simple terms, “a culture can be understood as a set of core assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs shared by a social group.”

These definitions emphasize that culture offers a common framework for how individuals approach problem-solving and perceive their environment. As a result, understanding these fundamental assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs is crucial to predicting and interpreting consumer behaviors in various cultural settings.

Cultural values are critical in understanding how consumers behave, interpret advertising, and trust brands. High-context countries (e.g., Sri Lanka & Kenya) depend on implied meanings and symbolism. So, the advertising should be more concerned about indirect communication styles and cultural symbols (Hall, 1976). In comparison, low-context cultures (e.g., Finland) favor a straightforward communication style and factual details. When it comes to trust and brand loyalty, in collectivist cultures, it is built through long-term relationships and alignment with community values (Hofstede, 2001). Advertising campaigns that reflect social harmony and value traditions develop strong brand loyalty. However, individualistic cultures value personal benefits and innovation for brand trust and loyalty. Additionally, ethical considerations play a significant role in cross-cultural advertising. Ethical concerns such as stereotypes and cultural appropriateness are especially delicate in various markets, as misusing cultural symbols and unsuitable humor can result in a negative impact (Zhang & Shavitt, 2003).

6 STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING CULTURAL VALUES IN GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS

Culture significantly contributes to the formation of people's identities, creating a sense of belonging, affecting behavioural standards, and directing individuals' actions (Zhang, 2012). This provides a collection of symbols, codes, and values that are communicated, shared, and related to guide and make sense of human activities. To create a strong and effective global advertising campaign, it is important to have a deep understanding of cultural values. Global brands should balance their brand identity with local cultural preferences to build a meaningful bond with different audiences. This chapter examines strategies for global brands to integrate with local cultural values.

6.1 Cultural research and insights gathering

Prior to launching a global advertising campaign, it is important to understand the values, beliefs, methods of communication, and purchasing habits of the target audience. Cultural research is the foundation of successful global marketing, allowing brands to avoid missteps and build meaningful relationships (Mooij, 2019).

6.1.1 Methods for cultural research

- Ethnographic research: Analysing consumer behaviour in real-life situations provides valuable insights into cultural preferences (Luna & Guptha, 2001, 46–47).
E.g., IKEA studies home layouts for their region-specific furniture designs.
- Surveys and Focus groups: Gathering direct feedback from local consumers helps in understanding their attitudes and expectations regarding advertising (Mooij, 2019, 82).
E.g., McDonald's does focus group tests before they launch new menu items,

- **Combination with local experts:** Collaborating with local advertising experts, cultural analysts, and sociologists ensures more genuine messages (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, 460–461).
E.g., Lululemon collaborates with local fitness trainers and Yoga instructors in China and India.
- **Social Listening:** Observing cultural trends and consumer sentiments of different groups on social media, gaining insight into how their thoughts and feelings are expressed, their intentions, and emerging trends (Luna & Gupta, 2001, 59).
E.g., Nike observes social media to understand local sports trends.
- **Surveys:** Collecting quantitative data on values, habits, and preferences provides a structured approach and facilitates cross-cultural comparisons (Gelato, 2024, 12).
E.g., Coca-Cola does surveys to identify popular names for their “Share a Coke” campaign.

6.1.2 Importance of cultural insights

Cultural advertising has become an important strategy in a time when consumers are closely attracted to brands that reflect their cultural values, beliefs, and sensibilities. For instance, research shows that in low-context countries like Finland, humor-based advertising is more effective (Tehtello, 2024) while emotional storytelling strategies are highly applicable in high-context countries like Kenya and Sri Lanka (Irjems, 2020). It is important to build strong and genuine relationships between brands and consumers that ensure the brands not only communicate their marketing messages but also are emotionally linked with their target audiences. As consumers tend to align with brands that reflect or respect their cultural identities and values, the importance of cultural advertising is emphasized in its ability to develop brand loyalty and advocate for behavior.

6.2 Balancing global consistency with local relevance

In global advertising campaigns, it is a common challenge that balance brand consistency with local relevance.

“Global brands should act locally, but think globally” (Levitt, 1983).

Global brands should maintain their identity while adapting their brand messaging to resonate with relevant cultural values.

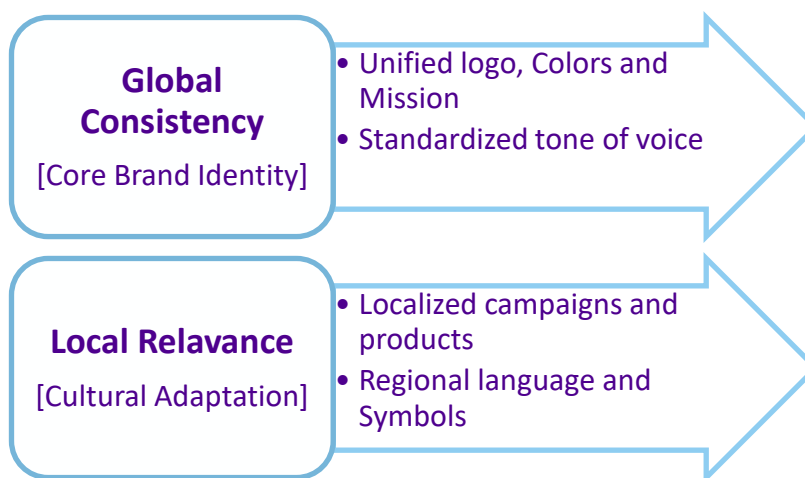


FIGURE 19. Framework for balance

Effective cultural advertising requires that brands genuinely interact with cultural narratives, more than just inserting themselves into them. This requires **authenticity**, steering clear of appropriation: **relevance**, engaging with ongoing cultural discussions: **Inclusivity**, showcasing a variety of perspectives: **respect**, navigating cultural sensitivity with care: **value addition**, making a constructive contribution: and **consistency**, alignment with brand identity.

When brands expand globally, they need to use a balanced strategy to maintain a unified global presence, resonating with diverse local markets. Three primary approaches emerge from this balancing act:

- I. **Standardization:** Applying the same advertising approach in global markets.
E.g., Coca-Cola uses the “Open Happiness” slogan worldwide
- II. **Adaptation:** Customize advertising to the local cultural values.

E.g., McDonald's adapts its menu to align with local food preferences.

III. **Hybrid:** Maintaining core brand identity while enabling local adaptation.

E.g., Nike maintains its global brand identity but uses culturally relevant athletes in its advertising campaigns.

6.3 Adapting brand messaging to cultural contexts

Successful advertising campaigns require more than translating words- they need tailoring brand messaging to align with cultural values, beliefs, and consumer behaviors. A strategy that works in one country may fail in another country due to differences in language, symbolism, humor, and social norms (Mooij, 2019).



FIGURE 20. Adapting brand message and tone (de Mooij, 2019)

- i. **Understanding cultural dimensions:** Cultural frameworks, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, help advertisers to tailor their brand messages to relevant target audiences (Richardsson, 2023, 28). For instance,
 - Individual cultures (Finland): Focus on personal success, uniqueness, and freedom.

- E.g., Nike's "Just do it" campaign promotes self-achievement
- Collective cultures (Sri Lanka, China): Emphasize community, family and harmony.
 - E.g., Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign in China uses popular local names to emphasize connections.

- ii. **Language and localization:** Using regionally appropriate language prevents misinterpretation. However, direct translation can lead to embarrassing mistakes (Mooij, 2019, 186). Brands should consider when creating content,
 - Using culturally relevant idioms and slang
 - Using misunderstood and offensive phrases.
 - E.g., In China, KFC's "Finger Lickin' Good" was misunderstood as "Eat your fingers off" (Ricks, 2006).

- iii. **Symbolism and imagery:** Using visuals that appropriately resonate with the target audiences (Zhang & Shavitt, 2003). Different colors, gestures, and symbols carry different meanings.
 - Red color: Consider as 'luck' in China but represents 'danger' in Western countries.
 - E.g., In China, Pepsi changed its blue color can to red color to better align with the culture (Zhang & Neelankavil, 2015).
 - Thumbs-up: Reflects positive gestures in Western countries but is offensive in the Middle East.

- iv. **Humor and emotional appeal:** High-context cultures mostly prefer emotional storytelling advertising, while low-context cultures favor direct messages (Hall, 1976, 91). Humor varies widely; what is funny in one culture may be offensive in another culture.
 - UK and US: Irony and sarcasm work well
 - Japan: Most prefer straightforward and respectful messages

- v. **Ethical and social considerations:** Respect for the cultural sensitivities and avoiding stereotypes builds brand reputation (De Mooij, 2019). Brands must avoid cultural insensitivity.

- Religious considerations: Asian countries have deep-rooted religious beliefs, and respecting them can increase brand acceptance.
 - E.g.: McDonald's: In India, avoid beef as Indians respect the cow as a symbol of God.

7 EXEMPLARY CASE STUDIES (IN EUROPE, AFRICA, AND ASIA)

successful global companies understand that the “one size fits all” approach doesn’t match across different cultures. They don’t just translate their advertisements into the local language. Understanding the local messaging styles, visuals, and adapting to the relevant cultures, even changing product features to fit the consumer preferences, makes a positive impact on the brand.

This section explores how global brands effectively adapt to the local cultural values in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The author considers three extremely popular multinational brands around the world: Coca-Cola, Nike, and McDonald's. These case studies demonstrate how global companies understand the importance of cultural sensitivity in global advertising.

7.1 Case study no. 1: Coca-Cola – A master of cultural localization

Coca-Cola is a strong example of how it emotionally and effectively connects with people across different cultures around the world. Its advertising strategies mainly focus on happiness, community, and family, but adjust the presentation based on local cultural values and consumer preferences. Coca-Cola does not sell just a cola drink; they sell shared moments. Coca-Cola masterfully executes the “glocalization” (Robertson, 1995), maintaining its global brand identity while deeply integrating itself into regional cultures through its messaging and innovations.



FIGURE 21. Coca-Cola's 4Ps mix marketing strategy (edrawmind.com, nd.)

7.1.1 Asia: Emphasizing family and celebration

India: In India, Coca-Cola's advertising strategy mainly focuses on the deep family ties and lively celebrations such as Diwali and Holi that are essential in Indian culture (Coca-Cola Company, 2022, "Milke Hi Manegi Diwali" section; Mad Over Marketing, 2022, paras. 3-7). Their advertisements use bright colors, Indian local music, and the messaging that focuses on unity among family members and joy (Coca-Cola company, 2021). Since most Indians follow film stars, Coca-Cola's advertising strategy uses different actors in different parts of India to promote their product. For instance, Aamir Khan in the Northern region, Vijay in the Southern region, and Aishwarya Rai in the Western region (Skillfloor, 2024, "Celebrity Endorsements" section; IIDE, 2025, "Localized Businesses" section).

Sri Lanka: Sri Lankan culture is family-oriented and religious (de Silva, 2019). Coke advertisements in Sri Lanka always depict the collective gatherings of family or friends and the joyfulness. Also, they associate their product with Sri Lankan traditional celebrations such as the Sinhala New Year, reflecting Coke as a part of the reuniting of families (Lanka Business News, 2025, "A Journey Through Festivities and Flavour" & "Blending Global Flavors with Local Traditions" sections; Eyeview Sri Lanka, 2024, "Is Cooking" campaign section). They avoid individualism, mostly used in Western ads, and focus on togetherness and tradition.

Middle East: In the Ramadan festival season, Coca-Cola releases a campaign that reflects spiritual values, sharing, and togetherness. These advertisements do not show drinking or eating, but focus on emotional storytelling (Alwitt & Berger, 1993).

7.1.2 Africa: Highlighting community and empowerment

Coca-Cola campaigns in various African countries, often reflecting beyond a refreshment drink. They always highlight community values, how people live together and help each other. Also, some campaigns promote economic empowerment initiatives, showcasing the brand's commitment to local development. (Nwakanma, 2012,).

South Africa: In South Africa, Coca-Cola highlights the community values and economic empowerment through initiatives (JAMII platform, Bizniz in a box program). Coca-Cola's initiatives have led to the establishment of more than 700 micro-enterprises and provided support to marginalized communities.

Kenya: Coca-Cola promotes their slogan for Kenya as "*Share a meal – Share a Coke,*" as in Kenya meals are communal and people eat together. Coca-Cola ads in Kenya showcase families and friends that are sharing meals with Coke, reflecting unity and hospitality (Okigbo, 2020, 44–45, Chapter 3: "Advertising and Cultural Values in Kenya"). They also support the local musical festivals to associate with Kenyan pop music culture.

7.1.3 Europe: Balancing universal themes with local nuance

Coca-Cola's Advertising strategy in Europe showcases a careful combination of maintaining a universal brand image and adapting to the relevant local markets. By keeping their fundamental identity of providing refreshment and providing joyful moments, the company skillfully tailors their message to connect with the different cultures throughout the continent (Simamora, Putra, Pinardi & Nuh 2024).

United Kingdom: The Coca-Cola "Share a Coke" campaign often uses its humor and incorporates iconic UK landmarks. (PRG, 2022; The Grocer, 2025) Their Christmas Truck promo has become more popular and a tradition in the UK, associated with the brand, featuring festive cheer and community spirit (coca-cola.com, 2024, social section).

Finland: Finland values nature, simplicity, and quiet happiness (Hofstede Insights, 2023). The "Share a Coke" campaign is promoted in Finland as "Share a

Coke with a Friend” and instead of flashing ads, Coca-Cola ran minimalist campaigns with popular Finnish names (for instance: “Mika” and “Liisa”) on Coke bottles (YLT Translations, 2024). To align with Finnish people’s love for winter sports, they also promoted “Winter Happiness” with snowy advertisements.

7.2 Case study no. 2: Nike - Empowerment across cultures

Nike’s main sources of promotion are sponsorships and advertisements. The brand features advertisements that include well-known celebrities and top athletes in different countries to capture different audiences (Singh, Tripathi, & Kumar, 2023, 3). Nike’s slogan, “Just Do It,” was first launched in 1988 to motivate everyone to do their task efficiently, and it has become associated with everyone (worldbrandaffairs.com, 2023).

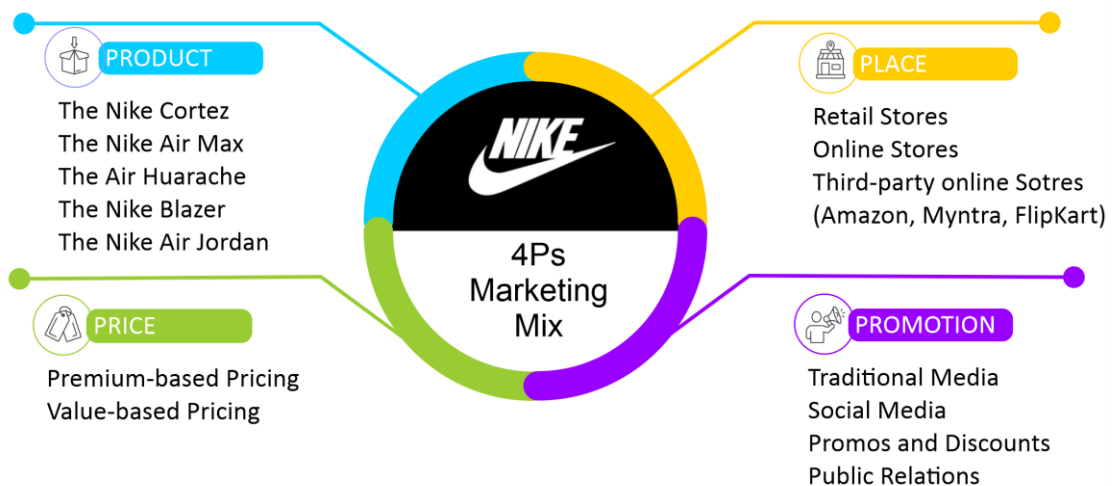


FIGURE 22. Nike’s 4Ps marketing strategy (edrawmind.com, nd.)

7.2.1 Asia: Highlighting modest sports wear

Middle East and India: In more traditional cultures like India and the Middle East, Nike creates and markets modest sports apparel especially for women (Singh, 2021, 29–32) Their campaigns highlight empowered and confident female athletes while adhering to cultural dress standards, while still promoting athleticism

and empowerment (Nike News, 2022). This reflects cultural sensitivity and the need to adapt to the local values.

Sri Lanka: In Sri Lanka, Nike associates their brand with Cricket as it is the most popular than any other sport. They partnered with Sri Lankan cricket stars to get more familiar with the consumers. (Charter & Clark, 2023, 14–16)

7.2.2 Africa: Highlights local sports heroes

South Africa: Nike understands the importance of adapting to the cultural values in South Africa as a country with various languages and cultures. Nike partnered with local athletes and celebrities like Nasty C and uses local languages to connect with the community. Campaigns like “Run Jozi” promote healthy lifestyles and community, aligning with South African values of togetherness and care (Towles et al., n.d.). Nike also customizes their products to fit the local market, such as Bafana Bafana jerseys and limited-edition shoes in South African colors (Zhang & Pitts, 2019, 168–172).

Kenya: Kenya is most popular for running events and mostly dominates long-distance running. Nike advertisements in Kenya featured marathon champions (like Eliud Kipchoge) instead of using global stars. (Borenstein & Krieger, 2024, 11).

7.2.3 Europe: Individuals to community inspiration

Nike advertisements focus more on individual achievements and breaking limits in European countries. Their campaigns are energetic and challenge the social norms (Zhang & Shavitt, 2003).

Germany: Nike ads often touch German sports culture, particularly soccer (Football). Their campaigns regularly feature popular players in the German national soccer team, inspiring national pride. For instance, in major tournaments like the Euro Championship, Nike released a campaign with German sports persons to

highlight the unity and national identity around the sports (Sports Illustrated, 2024). Beyond football, Nike also focuses on Germany's sustainability and environmental concerns. While not aligned with their main theme, some campaigns subtly highlight Nike's eco-friendly initiatives. (Dubinsky, 2023, 161)

Finland: Nike Finland chose ordinary athletes rather than high-profile superstars, showcasing runners in forests and skiers in quiet landscapes (Borenstein & Krieger, 2024). And as an individualist culture, they don't advertise based on team sports.

7.3 Case study no. 3 McDonald's – Menu and message localization

McDonald's often focuses their global marketing strategies by balancing Standardization, maintaining core brand image and menu items, with Localization; adapting to the local taste and cultural norms and its values (Czinkota et al., 2021). McDonald's advertising strategy across various online and offline methods allowed them to maintain their brand image and continue market penetration in the fast-food restaurant industry. McDonald's is not only about its food, but also its adaptation to the local food preferences, menu, services, and advertising messaging strategies. They ensure to maintain a strong emotional connection with their consumers through ad campaigns and localization strategies. McDonald's always prioritises their consumers' preferences and comfort. (corporate.mcdonalds.com, 2023)

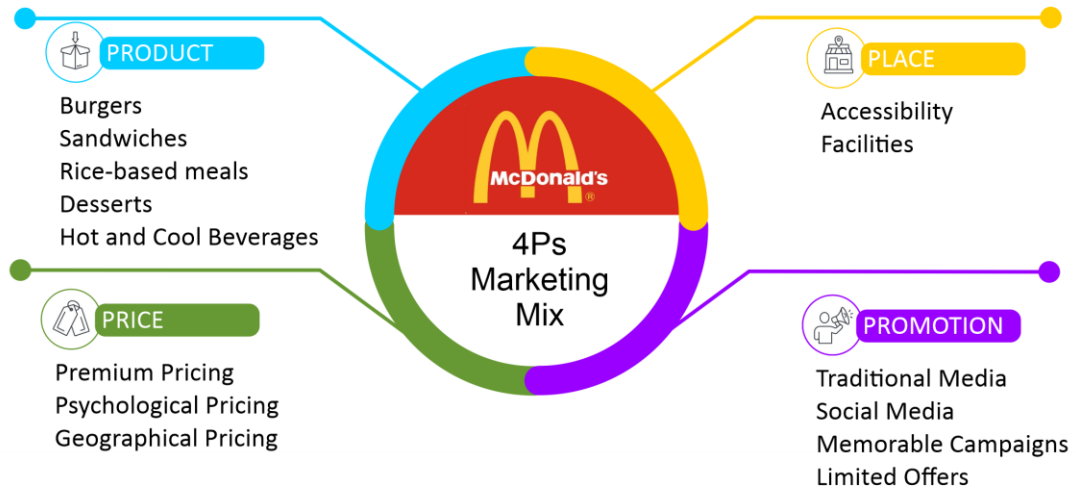


FIGURE 23. McDonald's 4Ps marketing strategy (edrawmind.com, nd.)

7.3.1 Asia: Vegetarian options and packaging

When McDonald's (McD) planned to expand its brand globally, the first country they researched was China (Mujtaba, BG, and Patel, 2007, 5). They found many insights in Asian countries by analysing these findings. Asian cultures are more collectivist and prefer more individualized service (Lee, Khan, Ko, 2017, 407). McDonald's marketing strategy has capitalized on understanding the regional consumer psychology and fulfilling customer wants based on different cultures and beliefs. Asian cultures are mainly influenced by their religious beliefs, and McDonald's has introduced menus based on different religious and cultural festival seasons (Wu and Ma, 2021, 76–78). They advertise McD "Iftar meals" in Ramadan festival season by showcasing the importance of breaking fast with their loved ones (Instagram.com/mcdonaldspakistan).

India: McDonald's has prioritized the pricing strategy in India as Indians emphasize product affordability rather than product quality (Hu,Z., 2023, 5). India is the country with the highest number of vegetarians in the world, and the percentage is around 39 percent of its total population (Times of India, 2023). Based on this, McD has introduced a wide range of vegetarian options in their menu, like the McAloo Tikki burger. As highly influenced by religious beliefs, a large part of Indians does not eat beef or pork (pewresearch, 2021). In order to respect these cultural values, McD has abandoned its iconic beef burger and offers only

chicken, fish, and vegan options (Mujtaba, BG, and Patel, 2007). And India has various festivals, like Diwali, Holi, Eid al-Fitr, etc. McDonald's has tailored their messaging according to the festive mood (warc.com, 2024). Moreover, India has 22 main languages (censusindia, 2011). For nationwide launches, McD uses at least 8 different languages to minimize misunderstandings. Also, they use many Cricket heroes to promote their brand, such as Kartik Aaryan (facebook.com/mcdonaldsindia, 2024).

Sri Lanka: Sri Lankans prefer spicier food, and their main meal is based on rice. They offer more spicy options (for instance: McSpicy Chicken burger) and rice options like Curry N Rice, McRice. (Hennayake, 2013, 6) The majority of the Sri Lankan population speaks the Sinhala language, also 2 other main languages. Based on that, they create advertising campaigns in three languages, including English. As a collectivist culture, Sri Lankans place more trust in brands that respect their community values. As a high-context country, McD uses the emotional storytelling strategy to convey its message strongly to the target audiences.

7.3.2 Africa: Tailoring to local menus

In many African countries, McDonald's has adapted its menu based on regional tastes and ingredients (McDonald's ZA, 2025). The communication style focuses more on community-based messaging and promoting education, health, and sustainability.

South Africa: McD's South Africa introduced menu items that cater to South African flavors, such as the "McFlava" burger and "Jalapeño" chicken burger (mcdonalds.co.za, 2025). Also, they are focusing on affordability when planning marketing campaigns (DeepResearch.me., 2023). To build trust among their customers, McD's promotes a campaign called "Know Our Food" to show their customers how McD's food is prepared and what ingredients they use to make food (knowourfood.co.za, 2024). Advertising often relies on family connections and happy moments.

7.3.3 Europe: Sustainability Initiatives

McDonald's conducts deep marketing surveys to understand local traditions, dining preferences, and sensitivities. This helps them to localize their ad campaigns. (Vignali, C. 2001) McDonald's implements eco-friendly practices in their restaurant chain in Europe by minimizing wastage and reducing greenhouse gas. This initiative aligns with the environmental sustainability practices in European culture (McDonald's impact report, 2023). European countries are individualistic, and their branding campaigns are not many diverse as in Asian or African countries. Many European consumers believe McD foods are unhealthy (Sobaih & Abdelaziz, 2022, 4). Based on this, McD has to create new health and nutrition dishes and promote them accordingly (Talpau and Boscor, 2011).

Finland: Finland is one of the countries with the highest veganism rate in Europe (Statista, 2023). Based on this demand, McD has introduced a permanent vegetarian item McVegan Burger (a soy-based product), for Finnish consumers (mcdonalds.com/fi, 2025). Also, Finland has a 2%-3% Celiac Disease rate of the total population (Celiac Disease Foundation, 2023). McD Finland has addressed this issue by adapting its menu card with Gluten-free options. Finnish people do not prefer flashy and exaggerated advertisements. They focus on "hygiene" (comfort) rather than loud promotions, and they respect Finnish cultural modesty. (Toor, 2024, 17, 30) Many McD outlets use eco-friendly recycled materials and LED lights. As Finns prefer minimum social interactions, McD promotes self-ordering systems (Toor, 2024, 33).

Spain: Spanish people have late-night dinners, so McD outlets open past midnight (Richardson, 2007, 17). And they have introduced gazpacho and olive oil instead of ketchup (mcdonalds.es, 2025). Reflecting the vegan and fish love in Spain, they have added some vegan and fish burgers to their menu. Restaurants are designed with large areas like casual social spaces to sit for many groups of people. Spanish McD ads align with family and sharing food culture (Richardson, 2007, 45). Also, they partner with the Spanish Football league for their promotions (LaLiga happy meal) and link with national pride (onefootball.com, 2018).

8 CHALLENGES IN INCORPORATING CULTURAL VALUES

Cultural appropriation in global advertising is more than just making poor brand image. It can be a costly and damaging trap that swallows brands completely. Companies are facing backlash due to the insensitivity of their advertising campaigns. They lost customers, experienced significant financial losses, and sometimes struggled with legal issues (Freire, Gertner, & Gertner, 2022, 6–7). Therefore, multinational business organizations must adapt to cultural diversity while also demonstrating sensitivity to the cultural norms of different international markets (Tuleja, 2016).

Global brands must carefully balance their brand identity, cultural relevance, and ethical responsibility when adapting their messages to local cultural values. This is not only translating words or using colours, but also deep-rooted cultural beliefs, values, and emotions. This section explores key challenges for global advertising with real-world examples.

8.1 Avoiding cultural appropriation and stereotyping

The biggest challenge when trying to adapt to the local culture is to make sure the brand doesn't accidentally use the cultural elements in an offensive or disrespectful way. This happens when the brands don't know the real idea about the true meaning of the cultural aspects or do not give proper credit, and this is called Cultural Appropriation (Rogers, 2006, 490). For instance, a clothing brand uses a traditional pattern from a specific culture on their clothing without giving proper credit to the cultural relevance can be seen as appropriation. Stereotypes is another issue that brands ignore the diversity of cultural values and limit it to common characteristics.

Example: In 2018, Dolce & Gabbana released an advertisement featuring a Chinese model struggling to eat Italian food using chopsticks. This ad was perceived as racist and is estimated lost \$500M in market value, also leading to boycotts in China (zoomsphere.com, 2025).

In China, the Coca-Cola brand name initially translated to “Ke-Kou-Ke-La,” which confused the consumers with its meaning of “Bite the wax tadpole”. And later it changed to “Ko-Kou-Ko-Le” with the meaning of “happiness in the mouth” (Phu concepts.com, 2024).

8.1.1 How to avoid errors?

To avoid such issues, the brands should associate with local experts who can help to create more respectful and effective ad campaigns (Taylor, 2020).

- ✓ Collaborate with local experts: (E.g., Nike’s hijab designed with local athletes)
- ✓ Conduct deep cultural research before creating ad campaigns
- ✓ Avoid using the cultural elements perversely
- ✓ Use focus groups to identify offensive messaging before launching
- ✓ Train global teams to respect cultures and historical contexts

TABLE 14. Cultural appropriation vs. cultural appreciation

Feature	Appropriation	Appreciation
Origin	Using cultural elements that are not their own	Learning and valuing about elements of different cultures.
Respect	Often, the original culture is not respected; it can be turned into a commodity,	Shows respect to the culture and understands its meaning.
Permission	Use cultural elements without permission or credit.	Seeks permission when needed and gives credit to the source.
Impact	Can be harmful and offensive.	Can be positive and promote cross-cultural understanding.

8.2 Risk of cultural mistakes and brand damage

Even a minor cultural misstep can lead to a change or damage to a brand image or financial losses in global advertising. These mistakes can be spread rapidly within a few minutes to the world, by using the most powerful social media in the present situation, leading to boycotts or long-term brand damage. (Hassan & Yazdanifard, 2019, 4–7)

Examples:

- **Misunderstanding of Values:** In the UAE, a BMW advertisement shows that the players of a local football team singing the national anthem at the start of a game, on the halfway and rushing out of the stadium to see the BMWs waiting outside. Soon after the ad first aired, an Arabic language hashtag saying “#stopBMWads” began trending on Twitter with comments of “shameful” and “unacceptable” (Forbes.com, 2016).
- **Language missteps:** McDonald’s slogan “Finger Lickin’ Good” was translated in the Chinese market as “Eat Your Fingers’ Off” (Ricks, Arpan & Fu, 2014).
- **Visual symbolism errors:** In some Southeast Asian countries, the colour blue is considered a symbol of death or mourning. Based on that, the Pepsi canned packages had to change to red colour for better cultural alignment (Zhang, 2020).
- **Insensitivity of Taboos:** Advertising that touches the religious symbols, beliefs, and politics should be handled with extreme care. Because one acceptable in a culture might be offensive in another. In 2017, Nike released a campaign in Saudi Arabia featuring a woman with uncovered hair and clashed with a religious norm (Al-Makrami, 2021).

8.3 The potential for cultural insights

It is important to understand that adapting to the cultural values can also be a great opportunity for brands to gain their brand image and increase sales significantly. When brands spend enough time to understand the cultural values, they

can create an innovative advertising campaign that resonates with local consumers, leading to excellent brand loyalty. (Peng & Bazaki, 2016, 4)

When considering the cultural insights properly, it leads to innovations by inspiring new products or services, business models that match to the relevant cultural needs and their preferences (Agu, Nwabekee, & Ijomah, 2024, 10–11).

Example: Unilever’s “Dirty is Good” campaign is a result of deep research on insights of parenting in India and Brazil. Parents in these countries mostly value outdoor play for the learning and growing of their children. (unilever.com, 2024)

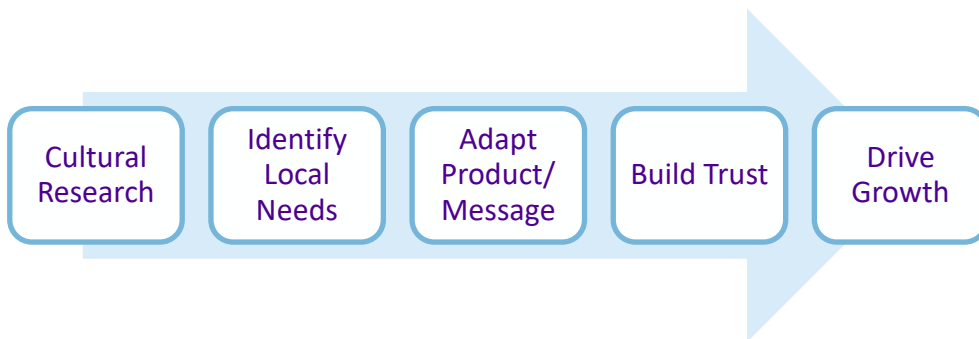


FIGURE 24. How cultural insights fuel innovation (de Mooij, 2019)

The global marketplace always plays a huge role in brand competitiveness. As a result, brands must find a proper way to compete with others, introduce innovative and necessary products or services that are more relevant to people’s daily lives. By demonstrating a genuine understanding and respect for local cultures, a brand can create a strong connection with consumers that can be differentiated from other competitive brands and in a more standardized approach (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).

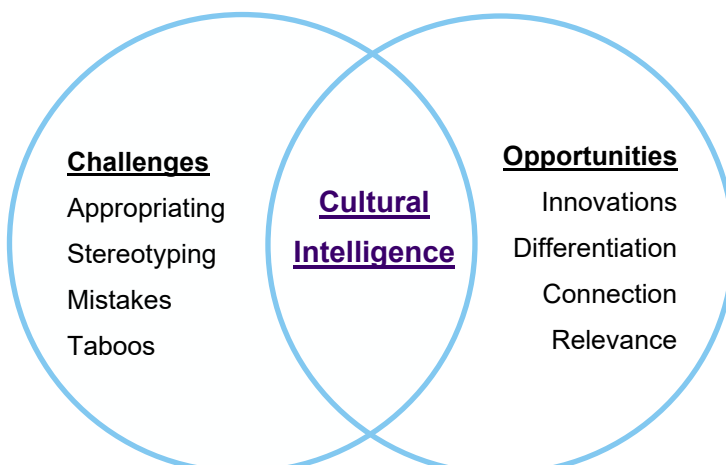


FIGURE 25. The dual role of culture in global messaging (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).

8.4 Navigating cultural sensitiveness and taboos

As discussed earlier in this report, Cultural sensitivities and taboos make obstacles in cross-cultural advertising. To overcome this issue successfully, the brands must take following steps accordingly (Jyväsjarvi, 2024):

- Conduct deep cultural research: In-depth market research, cultural audits and consulting local experts.
- Utilize local expert talents: To avoid cultural conflicts, associate with local agencies and cultural consultants / marketers in cross-cultural advertisement campaigns.
- Pre-testing: Test the campaign with focus group of the relevant culture to identify possible problems and inappropriate situations before a campaign is rolled out.
- Be adaptable: The brands must be willing to change or even withdraw the campaign when it is founded inappropriate or offensive for the relevant culture.

8.5 Maintaining brand authenticity across culture

Another challenge in cross-cultural advertising is how to adapt the brand message with the relevant culture, without losing the brand identity and uniqueness. To maintain brand trust and loyalty with consumers, it is important to maintain a good brand authenticity. If a brand simply appears to be fake cultural sensibility, consumers are likely to capture (Beverland, Lindgreen & Vink, 2008).

- To maintain the brand authenticity, the brand should consider on following steps:

- Identify core brand values: A brand should clearly define its core brand values and brand image. These values should be maintained consistently across global markets.
- Identify culturally relevant ways: It is critical to find culturally relevant ways to express above mentioned core brand values, instead of changing the identity to each specific cultural group.
- Have an authentic communication with communities: By developing relationships with local communities and open dialogues, brands can ensure how to communicate their values in a culturally sensitive way.
- Transparency: Be transparent in the process of adapting to the culture, because the consumers always respect the efforts a brand puts into reaching out them.

By carefully navigating these challenges, global brands can create effective advertising campaigns, that not only resonate with the relevant culture, but also make a strong brand loyalty around the world while keeping the core brand values and identity.

9 MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURALLY ADAPTED CAMPAIGNS

When global brands adapt their brand messaging to the local hearts, it is essential to measure the impact of their campaign and how the brand adaptation has resonated with different cultures. Measuring the success of culturally adapted campaigns provides an overall understanding of what works, what doesn't, and how future campaigns should be designed ethically and effectively. This chapter examines the possible ways to evaluate the effectiveness of culturally adapted global ad campaigns.

9.1 Key performance indicators (KPIs) for cultural resonance

To measure the cultural resonance of brands, it is important to consider KPIs beyond the traditional marketing metrics that specifically connect how well the brand messaging campaigns resonate with the cultural values of the target audience. These key performance indicators help to understand not only whether the campaign was effective, but also how it meshed appropriately with the culture. These indicators include:

- Recognition – How strongly the brand message and role are understood by the local community (Moon & Oh, 2015).
- Alliance - The extent to which the brand's values align with the values of the target audience, such as respect, tradition, and response to the campaign (Schwartz, 2012).
- Engagement – How are people willing to interact with the brand, for instance, sharing content, participating in the promo campaigns, etc (Tsai, W.-H. S., & Men, L. R., 2017).
- Advocacy – Willingness to become consumers as ambassadors, recommend the brand to others, such as family and friends (Bilro, R. G., Loureiro, S. M. C., & Guerreiro, J., 2019).

TABLE 15. Example KPIs for cultural resonance

KPI	What it measures	Example metric
Recognition	Brand awareness of local content	Percentage recall in local surveys
Alliance	Value alignment with local consumers	Survey agreement with brand values
Engagement	Consumer interaction with brand values	Likes, Comments, Shares
Advocacy	Willingness to recommend the brand	Net Promoter Score (NPS)

9.2 Social media interactions and cultural relevance

Monitoring and analyzing social media interactions is the fastest way to understand if a culturally adapted campaign is effective. For instance, an advertising campaign featuring the traditional Diwali festival in India that gets thousands of positive reactions, comments, and more shares reflects the strong cultural resonance with the campaign. However, if the same campaign applies to another region, it might receive a backlash or low response, and that reflects a mismatch of the campaign.

TABLE 16. Social media key metrics (Ramachandran, 2023, 192)

Metric	What it measures	Example
Likes, Shares	Audience's immediate reaction	Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign with Egypt names campaign got 3x more shares, rather than the global campaign (Hootsuite, 2022).
Comments	Emotional reactions and cultural relevance	Nike's Pro Hijab launch in Middle East generated 85% positive comments (Sprinklr, 2021).
Hashtag trends	Viral The Cultural Impact	McDonald's promoted #SzechuanSauce in the USA trended for 72+ hours (Twitter Analytics, 2023).

9.2.1 Monitoring brand sentiment

Brand sentiment refers to the overall understanding, feeling, or opinion that a consumer group has about a brand. Social Listening Tools can be used to track and analyze the brand sentiment across many social media platforms, forums, and review sites (Pang & Lee, 2008). By monitoring the brand sentiment of an ad campaign, before, during, and after its launch, the impact of the cultural relationship between the brand and the consumers can be assessed.

9.3 Methods for assessing cultural fit and impact

Brands use different kinds of methods to assess how well ad campaigns fit and impact the local community.

Cultural Impact Assessment: A systematic evaluation of the campaign on the target culture. This includes any potential cultural appropriation, insensitivity, or stereotyping and assessment of the alignment with local cultural values (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Expert evaluation: Consulting cultural experts can gain an understanding of valuable insights about cultural appropriateness and the effectiveness of the ad campaign (Shavitt, Lee, & Johnson, 2018, 633).

Focus groups and consumer surveys: To identify the consumers' understanding and perception on the cultural elements that have been used for the ad campaign, it is important to gather information and feedback directly from consumers and focus groups (Calder & Phillips, 2004).

A/B Testing: This can be used to compare the effectiveness of a culturally adapted ad campaign with a standardized global campaign. This helps to identify the impact of cultural adaptation on brand acceptance, purchasing intent, etc. (Ray, 2025, 8)

9.4 Long-term effects on brand equity

Brand equity is the value that a brand gains by being a well-known and trusted product or service in consumers' minds (Keller, 1993, 2). It is important to consider the long-term effect on brand equity of culturally adapted campaigns. A successfully designed advertising campaign that adapted to the relevant culture can generate more brand equity by strengthening the brand image and loyalty (Keller, 1993).

Here are examples for assessing long-term effects:

Long-term Studies: Monitoring brand image, brand loyalty, and brand awareness over the years can gain an understanding of the impact of culturally adapted brand campaigns (Aaker, 1996).

Comparative analysis: An insight into the effectiveness of culturally adapted campaigns can be gathered by comparing brand equity in markets which are culturally adapted campaigns are widely used and markets where standardized campaigns were used (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999, 78–80).

Brand tracking insights: This study includes collecting data regularly on consumer perception of the brand. The data can be used to understand how cultural adaptation affects these consumer perceptions (Heinberg, Ozkaya, & Taube, 2016).

9.4.1 Customer lifetime value (CLV)

Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) is an estimate overall income that a business can expect from a customer throughout the entire lifetime of their relationship (Berger & Nasr, 2021). Measuring the CLV of the customers who engage with the brand through culturally adapted campaigns helps estimate the long-term revenue generated by them.

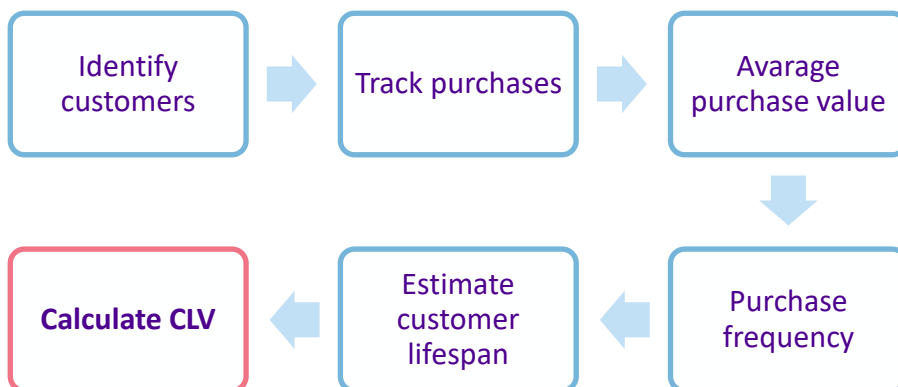


FIGURE 26. Customer lifetime value calculation process (Kumar, V., & Reinartz, W., 2016)

If the CLV is higher for culturally engaged customers than the customers who engage with standardized ad campaigns, it reflects that the culturally adapted campaigns are not only effective for building cultural resonance but also drive long-term profitability.

10 DISCUSSION

In the present, more globalized business world, when the brands advertise globally, they must concentrate and effectively navigate the cultural differences and their values. Because cross-cultural advertising is not just creating campaign to convey their brand message to a group of customers but also resonate with the local culture values, beliefs and ethical expectations, and make a brand relationship for a long time. Understanding these dimensions is not optional, it is a must to build a strong brand identity in the global market.

This thesis examined the ways in which international brands must integrate cultural values into their advertising campaigns and the impact of these strategies on consumers across various regions. This study focused on three nations: Finland, Sri Lanka, and Kenya, representing the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Through the analysis of local consumers, local advertising experts, and relevant case studies, several findings were revealed.

Firstly, it is clear that the cultural values significantly impact consumer behaviour across three regions. For example, consumers of Sri Lanka and Kenya value the community values, respect for traditions, and religious beliefs. In contrast, Finnish society values individuality, equality, and direct communication. These insights indicate that the brands cannot apply the same strategy universally and expect the same outcomes.

Secondly, this study revealed that effective global brands adapt their advertising strategies by incorporating local cultural symbols, languages, and communication styles. For instance, Coca-Cola Ramadan promotion in Asia and Nike's campaign on empowerment and equality in Europe reflect how global brands respect and mirror local culture in their brand messages to build an emotional bond with local consumers. This helps brands to maintain a highly loyal customer base, as consumers believe that the brand acknowledges and respects their identity.

However, it is challenging to adapt brand messaging to the local cultures. The research highlights the challenges, such as cultural appropriateness, misinterpretation, and stereotypes. For example, using cultural symbols without knowledge of their meaning can be offensive and damage the brand reputation. Also, it is important to concentrate on keeping the brand identity without adapting too much to the local cultures.

10.1 Recommendations

Above mentioned findings suggest that the culturally sensitive brands have opportunities to establish globally and maintain a strong international brand identity. When consumers feel that the brand respects their culture and values, they intend to trust and build stronger relationships with the brand, which strengthens the market presence of the brand.

According to the survey, the following recommendations are offered to international brands involved in cross-cultural advertising.

- ✓ Conduct in-depth cultural research using research techniques such as ethnographic studies, surveys, and social media analysis.
- ✓ Consult the local culture experts to enhance the knowledge of local communities and conduct a regional focus group test before launching campaigns.
- ✓ Avoid the stereotypes, cultural misappropriations, and offensive humour.
- ✓ Educate and update marketing and creative teams to enhance cultural intelligence.
- ✓ Adhere to ethical standards and respect the social and religious sensitivities.

10.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the advertising that is ethical and culturally sensitive goes beyond avoiding mistakes; it is about building significant, long-term relationships with consumers in various cultures. The global brands that successfully tailor their

message to local hearts while showing respect and genuineness will not only avoid pitfalls but also can achieve greater trust, loyalty, and prosperity in international markets.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire for Consumers

1(4)

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your age group?
 - 18–24
 - 25–34
 - 35–44
 - 45–54
 - 55+
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say
3. What is your cultural/ethnic background?
 - [Open-ended]
4. In which country do you currently reside?
 - [Open-ended]
5. What is your educational level?
 - Primary school level
 - High school level
 - Vocational school
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Ph. D. Or higher
6. What is your occupation (If Applicable)
 - [Open ended]
7. How would you describe your level of exposure to international advertising?
 - Very low

- Low 2(4)
- Moderate
- High
- Very high

Section B: Perceptions of Stereotyping in Advertising

8. Do you think advertisements in your country align with local cultural values?
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
9. Which types of advertising strategies do you feel best reflect your culture?
- Emotional storytelling
 - Humour and entertainment
 - Direct and factual messages
 - Celebrity endorsements
 - Social and ethical messaging
 - Other (Please specify) [Open-ended]
10. Have you ever encountered advertisements that you felt stereotyped a particular culture or group?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
11. If yes, can you provide an example?
- [Open-ended]
12. How do you feel about the use of cultural stereotypes in advertising?
- Very acceptable
 - Somewhat acceptable

- Neutral 3(4)
- Somewhat unacceptable
- Very unacceptable

13. Do you think stereotypes in advertising can harm cultural perceptions?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

14. How do you react when you see an advertisement that reinforces cultural stereotypes?

- I find it offensive and avoid the brand
- I feel indifferent
- I find it entertaining
- Other (please specify): _____

Section C: Cultural Appropriation in Advertising

15. Are you familiar with the term "cultural appropriation"?

- Yes
- No

16. Have you ever seen an advertisement that you felt appropriated elements of a culture inappropriately?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

17. If yes, can you describe the advertisement and why you felt it was inappropriate?

- [Open-ended]

18. How do you feel about brands using cultural symbols, traditions, or practices in their advertising?

- It's acceptable if done respectfully
- It's never acceptable
- It depends on the context
- Other (please specify): _____

19. Do you think cultural appropriation in advertising can lead to misunderstandings or harm?

- Yes 4(4)
- No
- Not sure

Section D: Consumer Manipulation in Advertising

20. Do you believe that some advertisements manipulate consumers by exploiting cultural differences?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

21. Can you provide an example of an advertisement that you felt was manipulative?

- [Open-ended]

22. How do you feel about the use of emotional appeals (e.g., fear, guilt, joy) in cross-cultural advertising?

- Very acceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Neutral
- Somewhat unacceptable
- Very unacceptable

23. Do you think advertisers have a responsibility to avoid manipulating consumers?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

24. How can advertisers better respect cultural differences while promoting their products?

[Open-ended]

Appendix 2. Questionnaire for Advertising Experts

Section A: Professional Background

1(3)

1. What is your role in the advertising industry?
 - Creative Director
 - Marketing Manager
 - Advertising Strategist
 - Copywriter
 - Media Planner
 - Other (please specify): _____
2. How many years of experience do you have in the advertising industry?
 - Less than 5 years
 - 5–10 years
 - 10–15 years
 - More than 15 years
3. Have you worked on cross-cultural advertising campaigns?
 - Yes
 - No
4. If yes, which regions or cultures have you worked with? (Select all that apply)
 - America
 - Europe
 - Asia
 - Africa
 - Middle East
 - Other (please specify): _____

Section B: Ethical Challenges

5. How often do you encounter ethical challenges when creating cross-cultural advertising campaigns?
 - Very often
 - Often
 - Sometimes

- Rarely 2(3)
 - Never
6. Rank the following ethical challenges in order of their importance (1 = most , 5 = least):
- Stereotyping
 - Cultural appropriation
 - Consumer manipulation
 - Misrepresentation of cultural values
 - Lack of diversity in creativity
7. How do you ensure that your advertising does not perpetuate cultural stereotypes? (Select one ore more relevant)
- Conducting cultural research
 - Consulting with cultural experts
 - Testing ads with target audiences
 - Avoiding clichés and generalizations
 - Other (please specify): _____
8. Have your campaigns ever been accused of cultural appropriation?
- Yes
 - No
9. If yes, how did you address these accusations? (Select all that apply)
- Issued a public apology
 - Revised or withdrew the campaign
 - Engaged in dialogue with affected communities
 - Implemented stricter ethical guidelines
 - Other (please specify): _____
10. How important is cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural advertising?
- Extremely important
 - Very important
 - Moderately important
 - Slightly important
 - Not important

Section C: Balancing Creativity and Ethics

11. How do you balance creativity with cultural sensitivity in advertising? (Select all that apply) 3(3)
- By involving diverse creative teams
 - By adhering to ethical guidelines
 - By testing campaigns with cultural consultants
 - By avoiding controversial themes
 - Other (please specify): _____
12. How effective are the following strategies in avoiding ethical pitfalls in cross-cultural advertising? (Rate on 1 = not effective and 5 = very effective)
- Conducting cultural research
 - Collaborating with local experts
 - Using diverse creative teams
 - Testing ads with target audiences
 - Following international advertising standards
13. Do you believe that cross-cultural advertising can unintentionally manipulate consumers?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
14. If yes, how can this be avoided? (Select all that apply)
- By being transparent about advertising intent
 - By avoiding emotional exploitation
 - By respecting cultural values and norms
 - By adhering to ethical advertising guidelines
 - Other (please specify): _____

Closing Question

19. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding ethical considerations in cross-cultural advertising?
- [Open-ended]

Appendix 3. Survey feedback of Finland respondents

1(2)

Partcp ID	Age Group	Gender	Education Level	Occupation	Exposure to Int Advr
1	25–34	Female	Master's degree	Marketing Manager	High
2	45–54	Male	High school level	Construction Worker	Moderate
3	18–24	Male	Vocational school	Car Mechanic	Moderate
4	35–44	Female	Ph. D. Or higher	University Researcher	Very high
5	55+	Male	Primary school level	Retired Logger	Very low
6	25–34	Female	Bachelor's degree	Teacher	Moderate
7	18–24	Female	High school level	Retail Assistant	High
8	35–44	Male	Master's degree	IT Consultant	Very high
9	45–54	Female	Vocational school	Nurse	Moderate
10	25–34	Male	Bachelor's degree	Software Developer	High
11	55+	Female	High school level	Retired Shopkeeper	Low
12	18–24	Male	Vocational school	Electrician	Moderate
13	35–44	Female	Master's degree	Lawyer	Very high
14	45–54	Male	Bachelor's degree	Engineer	High
15	25–34	Female	High school level	Hairdresser	Moderate
16	55+	Male	Master's degree	Retired Accountant	Moderate
17	18–24	Female	Bachelor's degree	Student	Very high
18	35–44	Male	Ph. D. Or higher	Architect	Very high
19	45–54	Female	High school level	Librarian	Low
20	25–34	Male	Vocational school	Chef	Moderate

2(2)

Q #	Question Text	Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Do you think you often see stereotypes in advertising?	15	50	15	15	5		
2	Do you think these stereotypes are usually harmful?	10	60	15	10	5		
5	for advertising to use stereotypes for humorous	5	10	20	40	25		
7	always strive for accurate representation of people?	5	40	15	30	10		
8	responsibility to avoid perpetuating harmful	30	55	10	5	0		
9	Should advertising always strive for accurate representation of different cultures?						65	35
10	are aware of the potential harm of using stereotypes?	5	35	25	30	5		
12	from another culture in advertising is always wrong?	15	30	30	15	10		
13	profit from using elements of another culture in their	25	45	15	10	5		
15	for companies to use cultural elements for aesthetic	20	40	25	10	5		
16	appropriation in advertising is a serious issue?	10	45	25	15	5		
19	give credit to the culture they are referencing in their	30	40	20	5	5		
20	that use cultural elements in their advertising do so	5	20	35	30	10		
22	creates unrealistic expectations for consumers?	40	50	10	0	0		
23	pressures consumers to buy things they don't really need?	45	45	10	0	0		
25	generally has a positive or negative impact on society?	5	75	20	0	0		

Appendix 4. Survey feedback of Sri Lankan respondents

1(3)

Participant ID	Age Group	Gender	Ethnic Group	Education Level	Occupation	Exposure t
1	25–34	Female	Sinhalese	Bachelor's degree	Marketing Executive	High
2	45–54	Male	Tamil	High school level	Small Business Owner	Moderate
3	18–24	Male	Muslim	Vocational school	Retail Assistant	Moderate
4	35–44	Female	Sinhalese	Master's degree	Teacher	High
5	55+	Male	Tamil	Primary school level	Retired Fisherman	Very low
6	25–34	Female	Burgher	High school level	Accountant	Low
7	18–24	Female	Sinhalese	Bachelor's degree	Unemployed Graduate	Moderate
8	35–44	Male	Muslim	Master's degree	NGO Program Manager	Very high
9	45–54	Female	Tamil	Primary school level	Market Vendor	Very low
10	25–34	Male	Sinhalese	Vocational school	Electrician	Low
11	55+	Female	Muslim	High school level	Homemaker	Low
12	18–24	Male	Tamil	Bachelor's degree	Freelance Photographer	High
13	35–44	Female	Sinhalese	Master's degree	Lawyer	High
14	45–54	Male	Muslim	High school level	Driver	Moderate
15	25–34	Female	Tamil	Vocational school	Beautician	Moderate
16	55+	Male	Sinhalese	Bachelor's degree	Retired Teacher	Moderate
17	18–24	Female	Muslim	High school level	Student	High
18	35–44	Male	Tamil	Ph. D. Or higher	Research Scientist	Very high
19	45–54	Female	Sinhalese	Bachelor's degree	School Administrator	Moderate
20	25–34	Male	Muslim	Vocational school	Mechanic	Low
21	55+	Female	Tamil	Primary school level	Traditional Artisan	Very low
22	18–24	Male	Sinhalese	High school level	Farm Laborer	Low
23	35–44	Female	Muslim	Bachelor's degree	Accountant	High
24	45–54	Male	Tamil	Master's degree	Business Consultant	Very high
25	25–34	Female	Sinhalese	High school level	Nurse	Moderate

2(3)

26	35-44	Male	Burgher	Bachelor's degree	Journalist	High
27	18-24	Female	Tamil	Vocational school	Data Entry Clerk	Moderate
28	55+	Male	Muslim	High school level	Retired Businessman	Moderate
29	25-34	Male	Sinhalese	Master's degree	Software Engineer	Very high
30	45-54	Female	Tamil	Bachelor's degree	Bank Manager	High
31	18-24	Male	Muslim	High school level	Sales Assistant	Moderate
32	35-44	Female	Sinhalese	Vocational school	Tailor	Low
33	55+	Female	Tamil	Primary school level	Retired Teacher	Low
34	25-34	Male	Burgher	High school level	Chef	Moderate
35	45-54	Female	Muslim	Master's degree	Doctor	Very high

Q #	Question Text	Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)
8	Do you think advertisements in your country align with local cultural values?	11	40	29	14	6			
9	Which types of advertising strategies do you feel best reflect your culture? (Emotional storytelling)						60		
9	Which types of advertising strategies do you feel best reflect your culture? (Humour and entertainment)						46		
9	Which types of advertising strategies do you feel best reflect your culture? (Direct and factual messages)						34		
9	Which types of advertising strategies do you feel best reflect your culture? (Celebrity endorsements)						20		
9	Which types of advertising strategies do you feel best reflect your culture? (Social and ethical messaging)						51		
10	Have you ever encountered advertisements that you felt stereotyped a particular culture or group?						74	17	9
12	How do you feel about the use of cultural stereotypes in advertising?	6	17	26	34	17			
13	Do you think stereotypes in advertising can harm cultural perceptions?						69	14	17
14	How do you react when you see an advertisement that reinforces cultural stereotypes? (I find it offensive)						54		
14	How do you react when you see an advertisement that reinforces cultural stereotypes? (I feel indifferent)						23		
14	How do you react when you see an advertisement that reinforces cultural stereotypes? (I find it entertaining)						3		
15	Are you familiar with the term "cultural appropriation"?						57	31	11
16	Have you ever seen an advertisement that you felt appropriated elements of a culture inappropriately?						60	23	17
18	How do you feel about brands using cultural symbols, traditions, or practices in their advertising? (It's acceptable)						71		
18	How do you feel about brands using cultural symbols, traditions, or practices in their advertising? (It's new)						9		
18	How do you feel about brands using cultural symbols, traditions, or practices in their advertising? (It depends)						17		
19	Do you think cultural appropriation in advertising can lead to misunderstandings or harm?						74	9	17
20	Do you believe that some advertisements manipulate consumers by exploiting cultural differences?						63	17	20
22	How do you feel about the use of emotional appeals (e.g., fear, guilt, joy) in cross-cultural advertising?	11	43	29	11	6			
23	Do you think advertisers have a responsibility to avoid manipulating consumers?						86	6	8

Appendix 5. Survey feedback from Kenyan respondents

1(2)

Partcp ID	Age Group	Gender	Ethnic Group	Education Level	Occupation	Exposure to Int. Advrt.
1	25–34	Female	Kikuyu	Bachelor's degree	Marketing Executive	High
2	45–54	Male	Luo	High school level	Small Business Owner	Moderate
3	18–24	Male	Maasai	Vocational school	Tourism Guide	Moderate
4	35–44	Female	Kalenjin	Master's degree	University Lecturer	High
5	55+	Male	Luhya	Primary school level	Retired Farmer	Very low
6	25–34	Female	Kisii	High school level	Retail Assistant	Low
7	18–24	Female	Mijikenda	Bachelor's degree	Unemployed Graduate	Moderate
8	35–44	Male	Somali	Master's degree	NGO Program Manager	Very high
9	45–54	Female	Turkana	Primary school level	Market Vendor	Very low
10	25–34	Male	Embu	Vocational school	Electrician	Low
11	55+	Female	Meru	High school level	Homemaker	Low
12	18–24	Male	Samburu	Bachelor's degree	Freelance Photographer	High
13	35–44	Female	Kamba	Master's degree	Lawyer	High
14	45–54	Male	Taita	High school level	Driver	Moderate
15	25–34	Female	Pokot	Vocational school	Beautician	Moderate
16	55+	Male	Nandi	Bachelor's degree	Retired Teacher	Moderate
17	18–24	Female	Luo	High school level	Student	High
18	35–44	Male	Kikuyu	Ph. D. Or higher	Research Scientist	Very high
19	45–54	Female	Luhya	Bachelor's degree	School Administrator	Moderate
20	25–34	Male	Kisii	Vocational school	Mechanic	Low
21	55+	Female	Maasai	Primary school level	Traditional Artisan	Very low
22	18–24	Male	Kalenjin	High school level	Farm Laborer	Low
23	35–44	Female	Mijikenda	Bachelor's degree	Accountant	High
24	45–54	Male	Somali	Master's degree	Business Consultant	Very high
25	25–34	Female	Turkana	High school level	Nurse	Moderate

2(2)

Q #	Question Text	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Do you think you often see stereotypes in advertising?	20	52	12	12	4		
2	Do you think these stereotypes are usually harmful?	16	60	12	8	4		
5	Do you think it is acceptable for advertising to use stereotypes for humorous effect?	4	12	16	44	24		
7	Do you think advertising should always strive for accurate representation of people?	4	32	16	36	12		
8	Do you think advertising has a responsibility to avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes?	28	56	8	4	4		
9	Should advertising always strive for accurate representation of different cultures?						60	40
10	Do you think most advertisers are aware of the potential harm of using stereotypes?	4	40	20	32	4		
12	Do you think using elements from another culture in advertising is always wrong?	12	32	28	20	8		
13	Do you think companies should profit from using elements of another culture in their advertising?	32	48	8	8	4		
15	Do you think it is acceptable for companies to use cultural elements for aesthetic purposes only?	28	48	12	8	4		
16	Do you think cultural appropriation in advertising is a serious issue?	8	40	24	20	8		
19	Do you think companies should give credit to the culture they are referencing in their advertising?	32	44	16	4	4		
20	Do you think most companies that use cultural elements in their advertising do so respectfully?	4	20	32	36	8		
22	Do you think advertising often creates unrealistic expectations for consumers?	36	52	12	0	0		
23	Do you think advertising often pressures consumers to buy things they don't really need?	44	44	12	0	0		
25	Do you think advertising generally has a positive or negative impact on society?	4	80	16	0	0		