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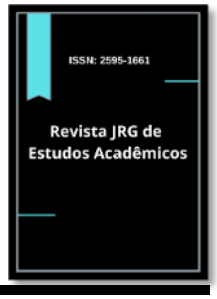

Intercultural marketing and adaptation of global campaigns: a review of key theories and practices

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Abstract
Intercultural marketing is a fundamental discipline for companies operating globally, as it involves adapting communication strategies to the cultural specificities of each market. This article reviews the main theories and practices related to the adaptation of global campaigns, highlighting concepts such as standardization versus adaptation, transcreation and the application of cultural dimensions in international advertising. Real-life cases are presented that illustrate the importance of cultural sensitivity in the effectiveness of campaigns and the challenges faced by brands in multicultural environments are discussed. The analysis also highlights the role of technology and artificial intelligence in the personalization of global messages, reinforcing the need to balance global consistency and local relevance for the success of campaigns.

Keywords*: cultural adaptation; global campaigns; international communication; intercultural marketing; transcreation.*

1. Introduction

We live in an era characterized by intensified globalization, in which companies expand their operations beyond national borders, facing the challenge of serving culturally diverse consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2019). In this context, intercultural marketing emerges as a strategic discipline focused on adapting advertising campaigns to the cultural specificities of each market (De Mooij, 2014).

According to Hofstede (2011), cultural differences between countries significantly influence how advertising messages are perceived and interpreted, making adaptation an essential factor for the effectiveness of global campaigns. Dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism and uncertainty avoidance are determinant variables in consumer behavior (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Levitt (1983) introduced the concept of global standardization, advocating for the uniformity of products and campaigns to maximize efficiency. However, scholars such as Douglas and Craig (2006) counter this view by arguing that cultural adaptation

is indispensable for addressing local nuances and ensuring brand acceptance in different sociocultural contexts.

Within this framework, the practice of transcreation stands out. Going beyond literal translation, it seeks to adapt advertising content to the symbolic universe of each culture. This approach has proven to be one of the most effective strategies in intercultural communication (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; De Mooij, 2014).

Hofstede et al. (2010) emphasize that symbolic elements, such as colors, gestures, and visual icons, carry different meanings across cultures. Overlooking these aspects can seriously compromise the effectiveness of campaigns, as illustrated by Pepsi's advertising failure in China (Ricks, 1993).

Hall (1976) deepens this understanding by classifying cultures into high-context and low-context categories. In high-context cultures, such as Japan and Saudi Arabia, communication tends to be more implicit and symbolic, whereas in low-context cultures like the United States and Germany, it is typically more direct and explicit (Cardon, 2008).

The rise of digital platforms has profoundly transformed the landscape of global marketing. Tools such as Facebook and Google Ads enable refined cultural segmentation, allowing for highly personalized campaign strategies (Kumar & Petersen, 2018). In addition, regional platforms like WeChat and VK play strategic roles within their respective markets (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

The concept of glocalization, coined by Robertson (1995), merges global and local dimensions, reflecting a common practice in which brands maintain a global identity while adapting campaign elements to regional cultural contexts.

The increasing use of in-depth ethnographic studies has contributed to a better understanding of values, beliefs, and consumer habits across countries, enabling the development of more authentic and culturally sensitive campaigns (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

The incorporation of technologies based on artificial intelligence is revolutionizing intercultural marketing, enabling real-time adjustments and content personalization based on cultural big data (Chatterjee et al., 2021). These technological advances significantly enhance the ability of brands to engage effectively with diverse audiences.

Ethical considerations also play a central role in this process. Arnold and Quelch (1998) emphasize that while the pursuit of commercial efficiency is legitimate, it is essential to respect local values and cultural sensitivities to avoid stereotypes or offensive cultural appropriations.

Case studies further demonstrate the relevance of such strategies. McDonald's, for example, adapts its menus and campaigns based on local dietary habits and cultural values, thereby demonstrating high levels of intercultural sensitivity (Vignali, 2001).

According to Mooij and Hofstede (2010), effective campaigns are those that align with dominant cultural archetypes, fostering emotional connections and building trust with local consumers.

Global advertising agencies play a fundamental role in this process. Jain (1989) argues that such agencies must balance brand consistency with cultural flexibility, acting as mediators between global values and local specificities.

The literature also highlights the positive impact of intercultural campaigns on brand image. Companies that demonstrate understanding and respect for local cultures tend to enhance their reputation and foster long-term consumer loyalty (Franco & Marra, 2017).

Authenticity perception is another critical factor. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) show that the use of local influencers in global campaigns significantly increases credibility and audience engagement.

Sustainability is also a growing trend in global marketing. Leonidou and Skarmeas (2017) argue that campaign messages must be adapted to reflect the level of environmental awareness and social values of each market.

Political and economic conditions also affect the reception of global campaigns. Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997) emphasize that understanding the macroeconomic and sociopolitical environment is essential to avoid setbacks and maximize campaign impact.

Ongoing training of marketing teams is also crucial in the face of the rapid transformations of the global environment. Franco and Marra (2017) reiterate the importance of professionals staying up to date with cultural, technological, and social trends to ensure the effectiveness of communication strategies.

Finally, the balance between standardization and adaptation remains the main challenge in intercultural marketing. As summarized by Kotler and Keller (2019), global success depends on a brand's ability to maintain a coherent identity while demonstrating sensitivity and flexibility in addressing the cultural specificities of each market.

2. Methodology

This study is characterized as a qualitative research of an exploratory nature, grounded in a bibliographic review. Its objective is to analyze the main theories and practices related to intercultural marketing, with an emphasis on the adaptation of global advertising campaigns. The investigation is based on a theoretical framework that examines the correlation between cultural variables and international communication strategies, aiming to understand how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of campaigns in different sociocultural contexts.

2.1. Type of research

According to Gil (2010), bibliographic research is characterized by the analysis of previously published materials, such as books, scientific articles, and other documentary sources, and is appropriate for the theoretical construction of a given subject. In this study, this approach was employed to identify and analyze the main concepts, practices, and challenges related to intercultural marketing and the adaptation of advertising campaigns in global markets.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, as supported by Minayo (2009) and Marconi and Lakatos (2003), who argue that this type of methodology seeks to understand the meanings attributed by individuals and organizations to their actions and strategies. This perspective proves to be appropriate for examining how cultural variables influence the reception and effectiveness of global advertising campaigns, considering symbolic, linguistic, and contextual aspects (Hofstede, 2011; De Mooij, 2014).

3. Methodological Procedures

3.1. Literature Review

Data collection was conducted through the reading and critical analysis of the following works:

● HOFSTEDE, G. *Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context* (2011);

● HOFSTEDE, G.; HOFSTEDE, G. J.; MINKOV, M. *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (2010);

● DE MOOIJ, M. *Global marketing and advertising: Understanding cultural paradoxes* (2014);

● KOTLER, P.; KELLER, K. L. *Marketing Management* (2019);

● CHENG, J.; SCHWEITZER, J. C. *Cultural values reflected in Chinese and US television commercials* (1996);

● ROBERTSON, R. *Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity* (1995);

● ARNOLD, D. G.; QUELCH, J. A. *Ethics in marketing: International cases and perspectives* (1998);

● CHATTERJEE, S.; RANA, N. P.; TAMILMANI, K.; SHARMA, A. *The role of AI in marketing* (2021).

These references were selected for their relevance in the fields of international marketing, global consumer behavior, and intercultural communication, all directly related to the adaptation of advertising campaigns in multicultural environments.

3.2. Selection Criteria

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

● Authors recognized in the fields of international marketing, advertising, and intercultural behavior;
● Works that directly address cultural adaptation and the communication strategies of global brands;
● Publications that relate cultural variables to the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

As for the exclusion criteria, opinion pieces, non-academic sources, and materials that did not address, either directly or indirectly, the theme of intercultural marketing were discarded.

3.3. Analysis Technique

The analysis of the selected material was conducted through exploratory and critical reading, as proposed by Marconi and Lakatos (2003), aiming to identify the main concepts addressed in the following areas:

● Cultural dimensions applied to marketing (Hofstede, 2011);
● Practices of transcreation and campaign adaptation (De Mooij, 2014);
● Global versus local strategies (Kotler & Keller, 2019; Robertson, 1995);

● Use of artificial intelligence and technology in cultural personalization (Chatterjee et al., 2021);
● Ethical aspects of campaign adaptation (Arnold & Quelch, 1998).

Similar ideas were grouped into thematic categories and discussed in an integrated manner throughout the development of the study.

4. Justification of the Methodological Choice

The choice of bibliographic review is justified by this methodology's ability to systematize and analyze the existing body of knowledge on intercultural marketing and the adaptation of global campaigns. According to Marconi and Lakatos (2003), this type of approach enables the identification, organization, and discussion of consolidated theories, serving as a foundation for critical analysis and the advancement of knowledge in the field. Complementarily, Gil (2010) emphasizes that bibliographic review allows researchers to become familiar with the state of the art of the topic under investigation, enabling them to position themselves in a well-founded manner within the academic field and contribute to the theoretical development of the discipline.

5. Limitations of the Study

As it is grounded in theoretical analysis, this research presents as its main limitation the reliance on available literature, without the incorporation of primary empirical data. Consequently, the results obtained consist of analytical reflections derived from the reviewed theoretical corpus, which may limit the generalizability of the conclusions to specific practical contexts. Nonetheless, the chosen approach contributes significantly to conceptual development and provides a theoretical foundation that may guide future empirical investigations.

6. Ethical Considerations

As this is an exclusively bibliographic study, there was no direct involvement of human subjects, which exempts it from the need for submission to research ethics committees, in accordance with current ethical regulations. All sources consulted were properly referenced, in compliance with the ethical principles of scientific research and the standards related to copyright and academic integrity.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 The Influence of Culture on Global Consumer Behavior

Intercultural marketing has established itself as a fundamental strategic field in the globalized corporate environment by enabling effective brand communication across diverse cultural contexts. Hofstede (2011) emphasizes that cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance exert a direct influence on consumer behavior. These variables significantly affect how advertising messages are interpreted, making communicational adaptation a critical element for the success of global campaigns (Mooij, 2014).

Complementarily, Hall (1976) introduces the distinction between high-context and low-context cultures, highlighting that in countries such as Japan and the United Arab Emirates, communication tends to be more indirect, symbolic, and context-dependent, whereas in countries like Germany and the United States, direct, clear, and explicit communication is more highly valued. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for developing more precise global campaigns, capable of

reducing communication noise and enhancing brand acceptance in diverse cultural settings (Cardon, 2008).

8. Cultural Adaptation Strategies in Global Campaigns

The specialized literature demonstrates that effective cultural adaptation goes beyond the mere literal translation of advertising campaigns. Transcreation, as defined by Cheng and Schweitzer (1996), is a process that reformulates concepts, images, and language to align them with the values, symbols, and cultural references of the target audience. Kotler and Keller (2019) emphasize that this practice is not limited to content translation but involves the reinterpretation of marketing messages to ensure they evoke emotions and meanings that are culturally relevant.

Douglas and Craig (2006) argue that although global standardization provides economies of scale and operational efficiency, cultural adaptation allows for the personalization of communication, increasing consumer engagement and strengthening brand identity in diverse markets. A clear example is McDonald's, which customizes its menus and communication strategies according to the dietary preferences and cultural values of each country. This hybrid approach, known as glocalization, has proven particularly effective in reconciling global brand identity with local cultural sensitivity (Robertson, 1995; Vignali, 2001).

9. The Role of Emotions in Building Strong Brands

The construction of strong brands is intrinsically linked to the ability to evoke positive and meaningful emotions in consumers. Aaker (2014) argues that brands capable of establishing deep emotional bonds tend to demonstrate greater resilience in times of market instability, in addition to fostering higher levels of consumer loyalty. This emotional connection supports the development of long-term relationships and contributes to the competitive differentiation of brands in highly contested environments.

In this regard, Gobé (2002) introduces the concept of citizen brands—those characterized by their ability to align with the values, aspirations, and emotions of their target audience, promoting a sense of belonging, identification, and emotional engagement. This perspective underscores the importance of marketing strategies oriented toward the subjective dimensions of consumption, recognizing emotions as central components in the construction of brand identity and perceived value.

10. Emotions and the Digital Environment

With the advent of digital marketing, emotions remain central elements in communication strategies, adapting to the new dynamics of technology-mediated interactions. Adolpho (2016), in presenting the "8 Ps of digital marketing," highlights the importance of message personalization and emotional engagement stimulation on digital platforms, emphasizing that affective connection is fundamental for attracting and retaining audiences in a highly competitive and constantly evolving environment.

In the same vein, Kingsnorth (2019) argues that in the digital environment, brands should prioritize the creation of meaningful experiences that foster emotional connections with consumers. To achieve this, the strategic use of data and insights becomes essential, enabling the personalization of interactions and the strengthening of emotional bonds with users. This approach reinforces the continued centrality of emotions, even within a communication ecosystem mediated by digital technologies and algorithms.

11. Ethical Considerations in the Use of Emotional Appeals

Although emotional marketing has proven highly effective in building bonds between brands and consumers, it is essential to consider the ethical implications associated with its application. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) emphasize the need to use technology in a humanized manner, promoting interactions that respect individuals' privacy, emotions, and dignity. In a context where personal and behavioral data are extensively leveraged for the personalization of communication strategies, ethical commitment must serve as a guiding principle for marketing practices.

In the same direction, Goleman (2009) underscores the importance of empathy and social responsibility as foundations for more conscious and responsible communication. According to the author, brands should transcend purely commercial objectives by directing their actions toward the promotion of consumer well-being and the reinforcement of positive social values. Thus, emotional marketing should not be understood solely as a tool of persuasion, but also as an instrument for building ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible relationships with the public.

12. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the impact of emotional marketing on advertising strategies and product promotion, highlighting its growing relevance in the contemporary consumer landscape. The theoretical evidence gathered demonstrates that emotions play a central role in purchase decision-making, often influencing consumers more significantly than purely rational arguments based on the functional attributes of products.

Emotional marketing seeks to deliver experiences aligned with the values, desires, and needs of the audience, establishing long-lasting affective connections with brands. Strategies that integrate sensory, affective, and cognitive stimuli have proven effective not only in enhancing the impact of advertising campaigns but also in building strong and resilient brands capable of fostering customer loyalty through consistent emotional bonds.

Visual identity and message personalization are positioned as fundamental strategic elements, especially in a market characterized by high competitiveness and communicational saturation. With the rise of digital marketing, these strategies have been intensified, allowing for closer and more personalized interactions with consumers and expanding opportunities for emotional engagement.

However, the application of emotional marketing must be anchored in ethical principles, guided by respect for privacy, emotional integrity, and the promotion of social responsibility in communication practices. Brands that incorporate empathy and ethical commitment into their strategies tend to strengthen their institutional positioning and build more authentic and sustainable relationships with their audiences.

It is concluded, therefore, that emotional marketing constitutes a high-potential strategic tool not only for stimulating consumption but also for fostering genuine connections, adding symbolic value to the brand, and consolidating lasting and ethical relationships between companies and consumers.

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