



CREATIVE
CULTURE

ENHANCE

CROSS CULTURAL AUDIT OFFERING

November 2020

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalised world, there is an ever-increasing need for advertising, marketing and communications to be consistent across borders whilst being locally relevant and engaging.

Unfortunately, cultural blunders still occur on a regular basis among large blue-chip companies and small brands alike. With the rise of digital and social channels, these errors can travel the world in a split second. The resulting financial and reputational damage to a brand can be very difficult to recover from.

So how can brands proactively ensure cultural authenticity and avoid detrimental faux pas in a landscape that is more diverse and fragmented than ever before? How do they keep up with the ever-evolving nature of culture? And how can they tackle any potential flaws before it's too late?

How

Cross-cultural audits offer a way to review the creative or strategic output of any form with teams of local experts. From product innovations to concepts, product or brand names, creative assets or even strategy on a bigger scale, our teams can identify any potential red flags within your global content to ensure that the materials are locally appropriate. They can also suggest targeted local touches that will make the message even more powerful with various audiences.



When

Undertaken early enough in the creative stage, cross-cultural audits ensure consistency across markets as well as optimised local engagement. Following roll-out, and when combined with semiotic analysis, they can also be used as a reliable way to identify which elements have resonated particularly well in order to find the recipe to a successful campaign for future initiatives.



WHAT WE CAN AUDIT

Creative assets

Whether you are working on a TV advert, corporate video or brochure, digital or print campaign, or any other content, our teams of in-market cultural experts will share valuable insights on how to tweak the creative materials in order to make them relevant and engaging to the local target audience without compromising global consistency.

Positioning

It doesn't matter how far along your team is in the ideation process. Even without finalised assets (or no supporting assets at all), we can evaluate the relevance of a specific strategy at a local level. Our feedback will feed and enrich your global positioning.

Innovation

Launching a new, innovative product or service is never easy. There is a wide range of stakeholders at central and local levels to get approval from. By proofing initial ideas and concepts with local cultural experts, you'll be in a better position to justify its potential across markets.

Brand or product name

Creating a brand, product or range name that works across markets (either in English or in the various local languages) can be a challenging undertaking. Again, there are many stakeholders to satisfy and other legal, intellectual property hurdles to overcome. A cross-cultural audit combined with our internal cross-market-checks and consolidation can simplify decision-making processes.

Pitch support

For agencies working on international pitches, cross-cultural audits can be a great way to showcase due diligence has been undertaken and that the creative materials or strategies proposed work across the client's key markets.

Existing or past campaigns

Want to understand why your current campaign is achieving much better results than previous ones? Or why the latest roll-out has flopped in certain markets? Cross-cultural audits can also prove handy in assessing campaigns and messages post-launch. Our teams of cultural experts, planners and semioticians can pinpoint the elements of the campaign that led to its success or failure, allowing you to draw valuable learnings for future campaigns and initiatives in the future.

D&I: internal or external initiatives

In the current climate, ensuring sensitivity, appropriateness and inclusivity is more important than ever. Brands are more and more at risk of being called out and criticised for posting problematic content, delivering the wrong messages or making empty claims. The key objective is to educate, engage and empower your teams to achieve the right results. Culturally-proofing messages or initiatives will ensure that your brand is on point across various communities across domestic and international markets. For more information on our Cultural Sensitivity offering, please review our deck [here](#) or contact your Account Manager.

Added value

- Streamlines internationalisation processes
- Increases compliance and buy-in from the local markets
- Avoids costly crisis management (reputation, budgets)
- Budget optimisation

HOW WE DO IT

Teams

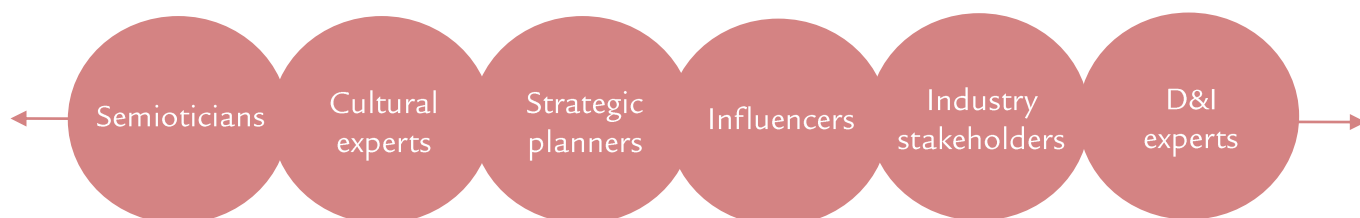
In order to provide granular cultural insights and feedback, we cherry-pick the best-in-market experts according to the client's request. They are all native to the respective markets and have prior industry experience. Profiles range from strategic planners to digital strategists, cultural consultants, sociologists and semioticians, among many others.

Processes and quality assurance

We always work with 2+ experts per market, per project, in order to ensure the feedback is 100% objective. As part of our commitment to high-standard quality, we also always put together dedicated teams of local experts per client, whom we rotate across projects to ensure long-term familiarity with the brand and its objectives as well as continuity and consistency across projects.

For each project, we co-design a questionnaire with the client, which enables for a truly bespoke approach and ensures that all key requirements are tackled. In turn, our team of cross-cultural account and project managers identify the typical areas of contention and raise additional invaluable insight opportunities for the project.

Numerous quality assurance steps are undertaken in the process, including the design of a customised brief for our local experts, back-and-forth on the insights gathered at every stage, and consolidated insights per market and across markets for cross-enrichment (executive summaries, ratings and recommendations are provided per market and across markets).





CULTURAL EXPERTS

MEET SOME OF OUR EXPERTS

Leon

With over 15 years' experience in top network creative agencies, Leon is a well-rounded Chinese strategic planner. With a career in advertising and digital marketing in a range of international network agencies, his understanding of the Chinese market is second to none and he has extensive experience in gathering insights for luxury brands.

Clients include: Devialet, Estée Lauder, Hennessy

Nasif

Nasif is a Dubai-based cultural expert with over 10 years of experience providing cross-cultural training to a range of global clients in order to help them understand the culture and navigate the intricacies of doing business in the UAE. In 2016, he founded his own company, which provides consulting services and bespoke cultural programs to better understand the UAE culture.

Clients include: Dubai World Trade Centre, Jumeirah, Naspers, PWC, Thales

Jaap

Jaap is a Dutch strategy professional with over 15 years of international experience, having worked both on the agency and client-side. His experience includes executing qualitative research and consumer insight studies for leading food groups such as Unilever. He has worked in different socio-cultural environments in Amsterdam, London, Singapore and Dubai.

Clients include: Douwe Egberts, FrieslandCampina, Kraft Foods, Knorr, Unilever

Temple

Temple is a strategic planner from Nigeria, who specialises in brand communications, digital and telecommunications. He is the founder of a technology service company with a mission to change rural Africa's landscape and to empower people through digital and socially inclusive products.

Clients include: Arsenal Football Club, Huawei, MTN

COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES

Cross-cultural audits are a great way to gather an objective, expert perspective on creative development. It can be complemented by other services that give a more emotional, close-to-the-customer insight. By combining multiple methods, brands ensure that they are developing concepts or assets that achieve optimal levels of engagement and ROI across markets.

Focus groups and connects

Gathering panels of consumers are an effective way to understand a given market. Cross-checking the results from the cross-cultural audit with actual and potential customers ensures that the local market roll-out will be successful. Connects are similar to focus groups. Rather than checking the creative work with a group, you'll undertake it on a 1-to-1 call.

Influencer evaluations

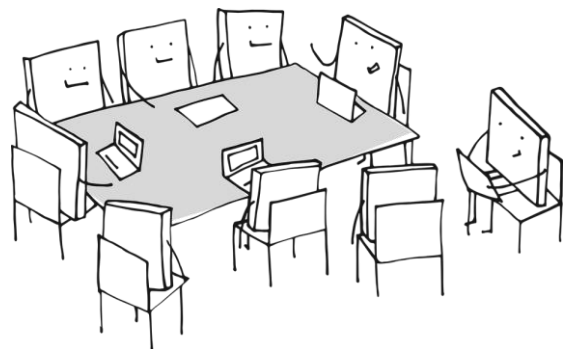
Influencers can also be a useful resource for knowledge. They are aware of what's trending and what's the next hot trend. Endorsing them in the early stages of conceptualisation will not only ensure the relevance of the concept/ assets but also get you a great, trusted advocate base at launch.

Social listening

Measuring sentiment online is a powerful tool. It can be related to a product, segment, brand, campaign and more. Prior to launch, it is a helpful barometer to understand the marketplace and potential consumers. After launch, it will enable you to measure how successful your campaign was.

For further information about these complementary services, please contact your Account Manager at Creative Culture.

More information on our focus group and consumer connect solutions can be found in our Local Market Intelligence deck [here](#).



Lipton tests new concepts with Saudi consumers

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Context

Lipton is a global tea brand. As a keen tea-drinking nation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of their key markets. There is an ongoing need to create new content or refresh pre-existing communication concepts and products for local markets, so it is necessary to research new stimuli with existing consumers.

Challenge

In the past, some of the concepts that Lipton created and researched for the Saudi Arabian market received negative feedback because the content did not reflect the way local consumers usually drink tea (for example, the men depicted didn't look Saudi, the clothing in the adverts did not coincide with on-the-ground fashion, or the teacups were not typical of those used locally). The research and stimuli were rendered biased.

Like all cultures, consumption habits and rituals (including Islamic laws and customs) influence Saudi consumers' expectations. In this case, drinking tea is an important moment for socialisation. Therefore, attention to cultural details and removing obvious alien or negative imagery and copy is essential to receiving useful, actionable research and insights.



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Solution

Lipton asked Creative Culture to ensure research stimuli was 100% appropriate for the Saudi consumer. This involved the team preparing concepts in English (following the Unilever localisation and brand/ tone of voice guidelines) and providing two creative options to choose from.

Once approved, Creative Culture transcreated the content into Modern Standard Arabic, ensuring references to tea consumption habits resonated in the target market. Lastly, our teams suggested a selection of locally relevant visuals with which to present the concepts during the focus groups.

Results

The Lipton research team was able to understand and present how a product concept is most likely to be best understood by the consumer, and therefore receive useful feedback and insight.

This improvement in effectiveness and efficiency meant that the Lipton team had to conduct less concept rework and research phases, ultimately spending less money and time and sending content to the market faster.

Creative Culture can bring added value through expert cross-cultural audits, truly local copy and supporting visuals. This can mean the difference between average and excellent marketing.

Julius Bär: When cultural insights enhance global positioning

Argentina, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, UAE

Context

Swiss private banking group Julius Bär wanted to roll out a series of corporate videos across several markets in South America, Asia and the Middle East to mark its 125th anniversary. The videos were aimed at core customers (high net-worth individuals), employees and other stakeholders – all of whom were important audiences. The storylines in the videos focused on the history of the company within various work-related and social scenarios conceptualised by the brand's German-based creative agency.

Challenge

As the audiences were both geographically and socio-economically diverse, the challenge was to ensure maximum impact and success in local markets. Julius Bär needed to assess if the strategies, messages and visuals supporting the videos were illustrated in a way that would be well understood and perceived by these various audiences.

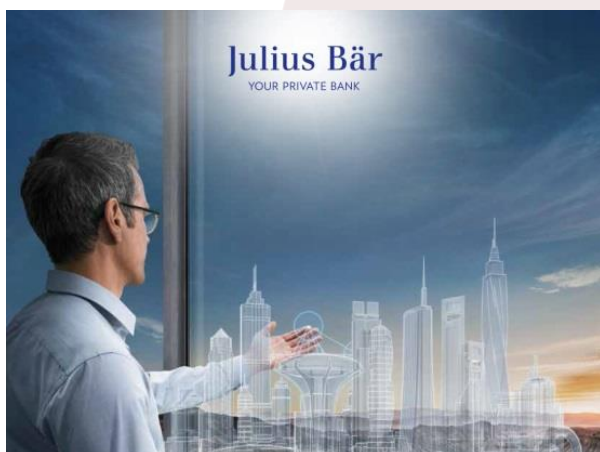
Solution

Creative Culture was tasked with the cultural assessment of the video treatments. By examining the casting choices, the ways in which social and professional interactions were conducted, the scenes depicted and the messages in the videos, our in-market cultural experts guided the brand in producing videos that retained the key messages of the globally consistent material. At the same time, we ensured that all local audiences would be able to fully understand and appreciate the videos as the brand had intended.

Results

The cultural assessments that we provided allowed Julius Bär to maximise effectiveness in disparate markets. Insights gathered ranged from what the most relevant luxury car brands are per market to how particular locations are perceived by audiences in other countries. More specifically, the experts discovered what imagery should be employed to portray Switzerland to Asian and South American markets. By flagging potential cultural faux pas or elements that would not be understood/ well-received, Julius Bär was able to tweak the executions and roll them out globally as a strong, consistent series of videos – increasing local buy-in from the markets at all levels.

Corporate messaging ought to be consistent across all markets. With the relevant expert eye, it can also be culturally-acute.





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When cross-cultural audits and semiotics can super-power cognitive marketing

World-renowned cognac brand launches new range across cultures and subcultures

China, USA

Context

A world-renowned cognac brand was looking to redefine and fine-tune the strategy of a key product.

While historically cognac appeals to a wide range of audiences, the brand was looking to better understand how their existing branding resonates with Chinese consumers as well as two of their major target segments within the USA: Hispanic and African American communities.

Challenges

Looking deeper into cultural perceptions within the Chinese market and those of different cultures existing within the USA, the brand wanted to ensure that all new visual codes, queues and messaging would appeal to all demographics of their consumer base.

With two very distinct regions at hand, our teams would support the brand and Impact Mémoire, their cognitive marketing agency to identify where there are common grounds to ensure the newly developed packaging (bottle, label and pack) would appeal to the various target audiences locally.

Solution

Creative Culture worked hand in hand with Impact Mémoire to provide granular cultural insights that would complement their cognitive analysis. We intervened in two key areas by providing cross-cultural audits and a semiotic analysis of the brand's packaging and design alongside those of some key competitors.

In order to do so, we worked with a dedicated team of cultural consultants and semioticians from each of the target segments. With experience in the spirits and cognac industry, their analysis covered elements such as bottle shape, colours, copy, labels and other supporting materials. Once the feedback from both expert profiles was received, they were collated, cross-checked and finalised to deliver a simple yet clear guidance to the client in terms of the opportunities and challenges presented in the new design.

Results

Evolving from cross-cultural audits into semiotics, as well as delving deeper into the existing cultures within a market region, our relationship with Impact Mémoire has been longstanding and growing ever since. The launch of the product and visual identity were well informed for a maximal local impact.

By combining the relevant expertise from cognitive sciences, culture and semiotics, brands arm themselves with the right ammunition to target multiple markets.



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Felix products to appeal to customers in key markets

Europe

Context

Felix, a European pet food brand owned by Purina (Nestlé), was preparing to launch a new cat snack category targeting cat owners in France, Germany, Spain and the UK.

Challenge

Felix needed product names that could be understood across all European markets. Creative Culture's key challenge was to suggest product names that, although presented in English, would be easily understood and sound appealing in the French, German and Spanish markets. It was also important to ensure that none of the names suggested were already in use in these markets.

Finally, the names needed to convey Felix's position as a producer of "unique, unexpected and exciting flavours". Ideally, we wanted to find solutions that contained an alliteration or a pun.

Solution

To achieve these goals, Creative Culture worked with a team of senior in-market copywriters to complete the task in two key stages. Firstly, our writers worked to generate new options for the product names, based on a detailed brief provided.

They were then asked to assess both the old and new product names. In addition to ranking them in order of suitability, they were asked to explain why some options did or did not work on the market.

Once we completed the assessment, we were able to present the product names that would work best across all markets.

Results

The name generation and subsequent assessment carried out by Creative Culture ensured that Felix's new products had a strong entrance into the local markets.

Combining creativity with cross-cultural proofing for a customer-centric approach.



Malcolm Hollis launches new brand identity with cultural relevance

Hong Kong, Germany, UAE, US

Context

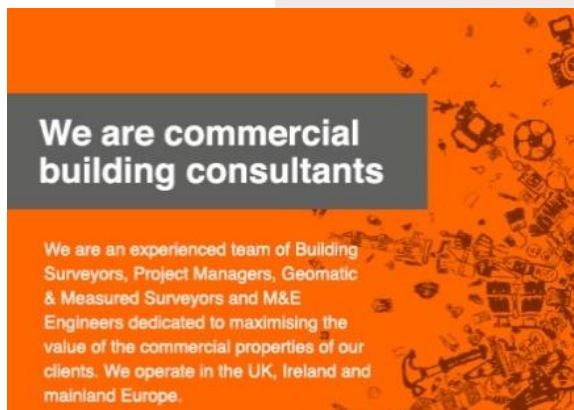
In 2017, leading independent commercial property consultancy Malcolm Hollis was launching its new brand identity to international markets, including Hong Kong, Germany, the UAE and the US.

Key to the success of this important launch was the consistency and relevance of message across all markets, with a strong emphasis on local cultural considerations concerning the brand tone of voice.

Challenge

Creative Culture was asked to support this global launch across multiple markets to target a demanding B2B audience: landlords, development companies and potential occupiers of commercial space.

The main challenge was to ensure consistency in tone of voice across markets, while also standing out from competitors. As the company's creative content employed a distinctly British sense of humour, it was essential to maintain the established identity and playfulness of the brand once localised in the markets.



Solution

We used our bespoke cross-cultural audit and semantic analysis services, delivered by our team of cultural experts and copywriters, to assess an 80+ page deck related to the brand's identity, design, visuals and tone of voice. We assessed the relevance of the material in each market and suggested areas to be tweaked in order to better perform and resonate locally. We also benchmarked the brand proposition against the local competition to understand best practice and market expectations.

By combining the expertise of industry specialists and cultural consultants to deliver tone of voice guidelines, we supported local markets in developing their own activations, demonstrating that their perspective had been taken into consideration throughout the strategy development process.

Results

The original creative strategy accounted for local needs while remaining consistent with core messaging, resulting in a global brand identity launch that was both relevant and effective. For example, visuals related to drinking alcohol were removed for the UAE, references to the number 14 (an unlucky number) were avoided in Hong Kong, and the level of formality was adjusted for Germany, where a formal address was highly recommended.

The use of expert and bespoke cross-cultural audits ensured the successful launch of a global brand identity.

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EXECUTE



Creative Culture is a cross-cultural consultancy. We draw upon the expertise of over 2,900 in-market specialists in over 120 countries to unearth cultural differences and insights, and turn them into opportunity. We understand and apply cultural differences, drive relevance, optimise delivery and enhance local engagement with your customers and within your organisation.

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