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From “Taste the Feeling” to “Siente el Sabor”: Coca-Cola’s Advertising Cultural Adaptation in Latin America

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*“Caminante,
no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar”
– Antonio Machado*

*To those still searching for their way:
The only true way is the one you build, step by step.*

ABSTRACT

Coca-Cola's international ubiquity has made "having a Coke" a common practice and cultural tradition across the globe, establishing the company as the global leader in the soft drink market. The brand's uniqueness lies not only in the values it embodies and the experiences it offers but especially in its ability to integrate its global identity with local cultures through glocalization. This dissertation examines the cultural adaptation of Coca-Cola's advertising in Latin America through the processes of "Coca-Colonization" and cultural hybridization. Beginning with Coca-Cola's origins and its evolution through advertising, this study analyzes Latino cultural values and traditions, and the company's strategies to align its brand values with these cultural nuances. Furthermore, through an analysis of Coca-Cola's advertising campaigns across different Latin American countries, the research illustrates the crucial role of cultural adaptation in effective cross-cultural advertising. The findings demonstrate that Coca-Cola's global success is rooted in its ability to strategically adapt its global identity to each target market's cultural values and traditions. Finally, the thesis emphasizes the essential role of the intercultural communicator in facilitating cross-cultural communication and effective advertising, especially in diverse global markets like Latin America.

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INTRODUCTION

*“Advertising is not made of words but made of culture”
– Simon Anholt*

In the last few decades, globalization has reshaped the social, economic, and cultural landscapes of societies across the globe. This interconnectedness has allowed brands and corporations to reach audiences in multiple regions, necessitating culturally aware marketing strategies that appeal to local identities while retaining the brand’s universal appeal. This thesis investigates how intercultural communication and cultural adaptation play pivotal roles in global advertising, specifically through the lens of Coca-Cola’s advertising strategies in Latin America. By analyzing the interaction between culture and advertising, the research explores the challenges and decisions faced by global corporations like Coca-Cola when entering and establishing themselves in culturally distinct markets.

Chapter 1 provides a theoretical foundation by examining the role of culture in advertising. It discusses cultural frameworks, highlighting models like Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory, which categorizes cultures along dimensions such as collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. This theoretical base illustrates how cultural elements influence consumer perceptions, preferences and behaviors. The chapter also covers the debate on whether to standardize or localize global advertising, delving into the core strategies of advertising adaptation and providing Coca-Cola’s journey as an example of *glocalization*, an increasingly common approach to balance global brand coherence with local resonance.

Chapter 2 delves into Coca-Cola’s historical presence and influence across Latin America, examining how the brand became woven into the region’s cultural fabric through mechanisms of cultural hybridization. This profound integration led to the phenomenon of *Coca-Colonization*, a process through which Coca-Cola shifted from a mere global brand to a symbol of Latin American cultural practices and identities. The analysis explores Coca-Cola’s deep integration within indigenous communities’ local traditions, while critically examining the controversial impacts on health and environmental dynamics, framing the brand’s presence as both culturally adaptive and disruptive.

Chapter 3 investigates Latin American cultural values and beliefs, highlighting essential concepts such as *collectivismo* (collectivism) and *familismo* (family orientation), as well as the constructs of *machismo* and *marianismo* (traditional gender roles). These values deeply influence the Latin American worldview and explain how advertising content is perceived and consumed by this audience. This chapter further explores Latino and Latina stereotypes prevalent in U.S. media, examining how these depictions can shape and sometimes distort perceptions of Latinos' identity. Through understanding these cultural nuances, the chapter provides insights into how Coca-Cola navigates, respects, and reflects these identities in its campaigns.

Chapter 4 presents a case study of Coca-Cola's advertising cultural adaptation in Latin America. Beginning with an overview of the evolution of the company's philosophy across the years and how it has been adapted to the Latin American market, the chapter examines both successful and controversial advertising campaigns, analyzing how Coca-Cola adapted them to the Latin American values and pointing out the main problems in the controversial ones. The chapter initially delves into general campaigns designed to resonate with Latinos' cultural values and identity and then focuses on specific campaigns targeting Argentina and Mexico. The discussion extends to the broader role of intercultural communicators, whose expertise in navigating cultural landscapes helps crafting culturally-resonant advertising, fostering stronger emotional connections between brands and diverse consumer bases and avoiding cross-cultural misunderstandings.

In conclusion, this thesis highlights the importance of cultural intelligence and intercultural communication in the global advertising landscape, where understanding and respecting cultural differences is essential for brand success. Through an in-depth look at Coca-Cola's strategies in Latin America, this research underscores the power of culturally-oriented marketing practices in creating authentic and respectful relationships with consumers across borders.

CHAPTER 1

Culture and Advertising

*“Culture is the new medium to be used in ads”
– Silvia Betti*

1.1 The Role of Culture in Intercultural Communication and Advertising

Culture deeply influences each part of our lives, shaping our thoughts, behaviors, and perceptions. We automatically internalize the culture we are born into and grow up with, which manifests in numerous aspects of our lives ranging from the language we speak, to the food we eat, and the traditions we celebrate. Culture also permeates our communication styles, literature, music, religious practices, fashion choices, gender roles, family dynamics, educational systems, and advertising strategies.

However, culture is not biologically inherited but acquired through social learning and interaction. As Handwerker states in his paper “The Origins and Evolution of Culture” (1989), while genes are biologically transmitted from parents to offspring, cultural traits are socially acquired behaviors, values, and beliefs. Therefore, we learn and interiorize cultural practices from our social interactions by observing others, mirroring their actions, and engaging in communication. The roots of culture date back to the preliminary stages of human evolution, when our ancestors started crafting basic tools, social structures, and communication methods. Over time, human societies evolved and diversified around the globe, leading to unique cultural practices adapted to specific environments based on their historical background, geographic location, and relations with nearby cultures.

In today’s globalized and interconnected world, technological advancements and increased intercultural exchanges are reshaping cultural dynamics at an unprecedented pace. Given culture’s primary role in our daily lives, developing cultural intelligence has become indispensable for successfully navigating this increasingly complex cross-cultural reality. Recognizing and mitigating our own cultural biases is crucial when interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds to avoid imposing the personal beliefs we earned from our original context onto our international conversations. This is especially true for professionals involved in global business, where intercultural

communication and cultural intelligence skills are needed for both personal and professional success. Whether selling a product or service or closing a deal, recognizing the nuanced differences between markets is paramount. For instance, professionals working in the advertising field and aiming to craft international advertising campaigns must consider the peculiarities of the countries they would like to target while paying particular attention to the differences between the cultures they deal with and their own countries of origin. As a result, they could decide to create advertising campaigns specifically tailored to certain countries, adapt existing content to fit distinct cultural environments, or even standardize their campaigns to appeal to a global audience.

Since making these decisions requires a deep understanding of cross-cultural dynamics and strong communication skills, professionals lacking expertise in this area can benefit from intercultural communicators, who possess in-depth knowledge of specific target market cultures. These experts can craft highly effective, locally oriented content that resonates with diverse audiences, ensuring successful campaigns and avoiding culturally insensitive materials or international blunders. By skillfully bridging cultural gaps, intercultural communication professionals can promote global understanding and business success by facilitating international exchange across diverse cultural markets.

Therefore, the first fundamental pillar to effectively communicate across borders is knowing what culture is and what elements it encompasses. With this in mind, we will now delve into the definition of culture and examine its profound impact on international advertising.

1.2 Culture: Some Frameworks

Over the years, numerous scholars across various disciplines have explored the definition of culture. Etymologically speaking, the term “culture” comes from the Latin *cultura*, which means “to grow” or “to cultivate.” In her book *Intercultural Communication for Global Business: How Leaders Communicate for Success* (2016), Elizabeth Tuleja states that culture establishes the rules of every social group, determining our behaviors when we interact with other people (Tuleja, 2016). Edward Hall, a renowned anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher, defines culture as a system of shared, learned patterns of behavior, beliefs, and knowledge, transmitted from generation

to generation within a society. He defines culture as both a form of communication and an invisible force that often operates beyond our conscious awareness, but whose impact can be observed in human interactions and relations (Hall, 1976).

In his book *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* (1980), Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede, a pioneering figure in cultural studies known for his influential work on cultural dimensions, defines culture as “The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, the concept of culture can be applied to several social categories, including societies, organizations, age groups, genders, and families and, even within societies made of diverse cultural groups, we can find cultural characteristics that make these groups easily recognizable to other people (Hofstede, 1980). In addition, in his book *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (2010), Hofstede argues that culture is not an innate trait but rather a learned characteristic, as it forms among individuals who have undergone similar educational and life paths (Hofstede, 2010). More precisely, he elaborated an *Onion Model* to understand cultural differences based on four levels of cultural manifestation:

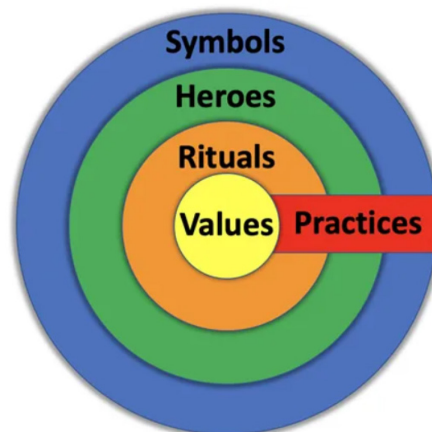


Figure 1. The Onion Model: The Manifestations of Culture (Hofstede, 2010; Source: urly.it/3a-jv)

1. *Symbols* include rituals, gestures, pictures, and other visible manifestations of culture holding a specific meaning within a particular cultural context. Symbols evolve over time, with newer representations often replacing older ones in cultural

significance and meaning. For example, *Mate* is a traditional symbol of the Argentinian culture, an infusion derived from the leaves of the mate herb, typically consumed from a gourd using a metal straw.

2. *Heroes* refer to real or fictional individuals admired and celebrated within a specific culture for the values and ideals they embody. An example for Latin American people would be Simón Bolívar, also known as “El Libertador,” a Venezuelan military who spearheaded the independence movements of several South American countries from Spanish colonial rule in the early 19th century.
3. *Rituals* are activities, ceremonies, or behaviors, considered essential in a specific society as they reinforce cultural norms and values. An example of a religious ceremony is the famous *Día de los Muertos* which takes place in many Latin American countries from October 31st to November 2nd to honor deceased loved ones.
4. *Values* are a culture’s core elements, deeply held beliefs, and principles, shaping people’s behavior and decision-making process. According to Makiere De Mooij, we can distinguish between macro- and micro-level values. Macro-level values are collective or *cultural values*, while micro-level values are *value orientations* (De Mooij, 2013). Cultural values vary depending on the specific culture: for example, *individualism* is a deeply rooted value in the U.S., as Americans prioritize individual goals and happiness over collective interests. Instead, *familismo* is widely spread in Latin America, highlighting family bonds and loyalty to relatives.

Symbols, heroes, and rituals are *practices* or expressions, meaning that, though they are externally visible, they carry a deeper hidden cultural meaning based on each culture’s interpretation. Similarly to Hofstede’s Onion, in her book *Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*, De Mooij introduced a pyramidal model to distinguish between various levels of culture stating that “The term *culture* may apply to ethnic or national groups, or groups within a society at different levels: a country, an age group, a profession, or a social class” (De Mooij, 2013). Given the diversity of these levels, it is crucial to specify which one we are referring to, especially in continents like

South America and Africa, where historically imposed national borders often fail to align with cultural groups.

Another influential model, proposed by anthropologist Edward Hall, explains that not only do cultural practices change from one society to another, but also culture itself presents two sides: one hidden and one visible. In his book *Beyond Culture* (1976), Edward Hall metaphorically represents culture as an iceberg characterized by a visible part, represented by the tip of the iceberg (our behavior), and an invisible part beneath the surface, made of innate cultural paradigms, such as values and beliefs, that shape our worldview and communication.

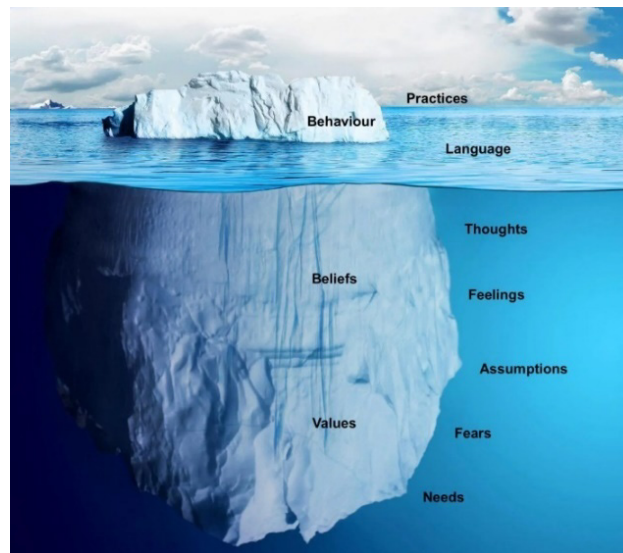


Figure 2. The Iceberg Model of Culture (Hall, 1976; Source: urly.it/3a-jt)

Culture's hidden invisible layers have the strongest impact on people's behavior and are essential for understanding cultural nuances and engaging in effective intercultural communication.

The visible and submerged parts of the iceberg can also be referred to as *objective* and *subjective culture*. In his book *Hispanic Marketing: A Cultural Perspective* (2005), Felipe and Betty Ann Korzenny argue that objective culture comprises the tangible and most known aspects of culture, upon which cultural groups rely in everyday life (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). For instance, in each Latin American country, the typical dresses with colorful designs represent an objective aspect of the Hispanic culture. Instead, subjective culture includes hidden beliefs and perceptions about the world, and

other culturally shared implicit ways of thinking. Objective and subjective cultural elements are also crucial to developing culturally effective advertising, as “There are many subjective aspects of culture that can make critical differences in the effectiveness of advertising” (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). For example, the *Captain Morgan* rum brand features a confident pirate figure with one leg raised on a barrel, dressed in a red coat and boots. While this image was well-received by Anglo consumers, it did not appeal to Hispanic ones, who saw it as a representation of domination and exploitation because they associated it with the hardships experienced during the era of Spanish supremacy in Latin America (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

Based on what we have just said, transferring one’s beliefs and values to another culture will inevitably lead to cross-cultural blunders. Therefore, professionals aiming to communicate internationally must be equipped with cultural intelligence, defined by Elizabeth Tuleja in her book *Intercultural Communication for Global Business: How Leaders Communicate for Success* (2016) as “A person’s ability to function skillfully in a cultural context different than one’s own” (Tuleja, 2016). According to Tuleja, *cultural intelligence* stems from blending knowledge, mindfulness, and skills to create intercultural competence, a fundamental skill for effective intercultural communicators and leaders.

1.2.1 Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is the dynamic exchange of information, ideas, and meanings between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. According to Tuleja, “It examines how the specific cultural differences affect the interactions of the people engaged” in cross-cultural exchanges (Tuleja, 2016). In our increasingly interconnected and globalized world, mastering intercultural communication skills has become essential for both personal and professional success, and being culturally intelligent can help avoid blunders when communicating with people of different cultures.

This multifaceted discipline encompasses several key aspects that vary across cultures and must be properly considered, such as linguistic diversity, cultural values, proxemics or personal space, and non-verbal cues. Linguistic diversity among speakers arises not only from the different languages spoken but also from variations in dialects, jargon, and culturally bound idiomatic expressions. Beyond language, understanding and

respecting each culture's specific cultural values, traditions, and beliefs is crucial to avoid inadvertent offense or misunderstandings. Also, the concept of personal space needs to be mentioned, since different cultures vary in the amount of space they feel comfortable with when speaking or standing next to each other. For example, Latin American, Spanish, and Italian cultures are more used to closer interpersonal distances, while Scandinavian countries and the UK prefer larger personal bubbles. Even non-verbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, body posture, and gaze, carry different meanings across cultures. An example is the contrasting interpretation of eye contact: in Japan, avoiding direct eye contact is a sign of respect, whereas in Western cultures it is generally perceived as a lack of interest.

As De Mooij and Hofstede stated, "Understanding culture is crucial for international business because it is the key to understanding differences in consumer behavior across countries." (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Therefore, the ability to communicate effectively across cultures has evolved from a valuable asset to a fundamental skill.

1.3 Dimensionalizing Culture

As mentioned above, many scholars have tried to dimensionalize culture but "The more recent cultural frameworks have provided only limited advancements compared with Hofstede's original work" (De Mooij, 2015). Hofstede developed a framework to analyze cultural differences across countries which initially comprised only four dimensions and was later expanded with two additional ones. Several scholars applied his model to various research topics, including De Mooij, who employed it to differentiate between advertising styles in different countries. We aim to analyze Hofstede's categories with a cross-cultural advertising approach in mind, using De Mooij's theories.

1.3.1 Cultural Dimensions and Advertising

De Mooij employs Hofstede's cultural dimensions to analyze how consumers from different cultural backgrounds react to advertising, providing valuable insights into why certain campaigns succeed or fail across different markets. In particular, De Mooij argues that advertisements must be tailored to align with specific cultural contexts and applies Hofstede's cultural dimensions to contemporary advertisements (De Mooij, 2004). Below

are Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, enhanced by De Mooij's insights on their impact on advertising:

- *Power Distance (PDI)*: it measures the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal power distribution. High-power distance societies, such as China and Latin America, admit hierarchical structures and unequal power distribution, while low-power distance cultures, like the U.S. and the UK, value equally distributed power and independence. Power Distance is often represented in advertising through images of workplace and family relationships: low-power distance societies typically portray these dynamics as egalitarian and autonomous, while high-power distance cultures emphasize hierarchical structures and authority. In high-power distance societies, where status is highly valued, advertising strategies often employ collective scenarios to highlight status and influence. For instance, a motorcycle advertisement would resonate more strongly by positioning the rider in a group setting, surrounded by people admiring him for his vehicle, rather than depicting him riding solo, as high-power distance cultures value visible social validation. Contrarily, advertisements emphasizing individual freedom and personal achievement resonate more in low-power distance cultures. Also, advertisements featuring influential people as testimonials have greater appeal in high-power distance societies.
- *Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV-COL)*: individualistic societies prioritize personal goals, self-fulfillment and independence, while collectivistic cultures stress group loyalty, collective interests and interdependence. Collectivism is frequently depicted in advertising through scenes of shared experiences, such as images of families and friends gathered around a meal. In fact, collectivistic cultures perceive food as automatically and implicitly shared with others, while individualistic societies are more explicitly aware of togetherness when eating (De Mooij, 2015).
- *Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)*: masculine societies, such as Italy and the U.S., prioritize assertiveness, achievement, and material success,

whereas feminine cultures, such as Sweden and Norway, praise cooperation, compassion, and quality of life. Advertising targeting masculine societies should employ a more aggressive communicative style, while those directed to feminine cultures should opt for a more modest one (De Mooij, 2013). However, according to De Mooij, some portrayals in advertisements tend to be wrongly related to this dimension. For example, nudity in advertising is not necessarily related to cultural masculinity, but rather to high-uncertainty avoidance because of purity values. An example of how masculinity and femininity are reflected in advertising can be seen by comparing American and Swedish recruitment ads. American ads often use an aggressive tone to highlight the bravery of the people fighting for their country, whereas Swedish ads employ a modest and caring tone, emphasizing the need to preserve peace to let people enjoy their lives, watch their children grow, and find happiness.

- *Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)*: this dimension measures a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. High-uncertainty avoidance societies, such as Latin America and Greece, seek rules and order because they feel threatened by ambiguity and wish to minimize risk. Instead, low-uncertainty avoidance cultures, like Sweden and the U.S., are more prone to frequent change and risk-taking. For example, as opposed to low-uncertainty avoidance societies, high-uncertainty avoidance cultures prefer to take medicine instead of doing sports (De Mooij, 2013). However, De Mooij notes that risk avoidance is not necessarily a defining value of high-uncertainty avoidance cultures, and this is particularly evident in car-buying motives that change depending on the culture. Contrary to what one might think, safety is not a primary concern for automobile purchases in high-uncertainty avoidance societies. Instead, these cultures prioritize features like fast acceleration and view driving as a means of stress release (De Mooij, 2015). Thus, risk perception is associated with high-uncertainty avoidance only in some product categories, such as food, as people of high-uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to be more concerned about the potential health risks of food damage.

- *Long-term Orientation (LTO)*: this dimension was added later by Hofstede (1991) to distinguish between Easterners and Westerners' ways of thinking. Long-term-oriented societies, like China and Japan, prioritize long-term planning, persistence, and thrift. Instead, short-term-oriented cultures, such as the U.S. and Latin America, respect traditions and praise protecting one's face, personal stability, and immediate gratification. Even though the correlation between short-term orientation and respect for tradition may seem paradoxical, "This reflects the desirable versus the desired: tradition is important, but it is innovativeness that is desired" (De Mooij, 2013). Furthermore, cultural orientation influences family dynamics and religious attitudes: in long-term-oriented cultures, parents tend to adopt a more moderate approach toward their children, and short-term-oriented societies often display stronger religious inclinations (De Mooij, 2013). Thus, advertising targeting short-term-oriented cultures should emphasize immediate benefits and pleasures, while paying attention not to disrespect spirituality and religious beliefs.
- *Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)*: indulgent societies praise immediate gratification of human needs, while restrained ones suppress such impulses in favor of social norms. Short-term-oriented cultures prioritize indulgence, while long-term-oriented societies are more restrained (De Mooij, 2013).

Thus, based on the above mentioned examples, it is crucial to be aware of how cultural dimensions work to understand each culture's values and preferences, and accurately represent them in advertising. Professionals should analyze each advertising scenario individually, without automatically linking specific advertising portrayals to certain cultural dimensions. Since cultural context profoundly influences how individuals perceive and interpret the world, adopting this tailored approach is crucial to authentically resonate with the target audience, avoiding stereotypes and oversimplification. Moving beyond mere cultural dimensions, we must delve into the relationship between culture and context, which also determines how individuals from different cultures interpret the world.

1.3.2 Culture and Context

Culture and context are deeply intertwined, as our cultural context shapes how we perceive the world and influences the meanings we assign to verbal and non-verbal cues. Context refers to the specific circumstances or environment that shape how cultural elements are perceived and interpreted. For example, polite behavior in one context may be seen as rude in another.

Edward Hall developed a framework to dimensionalize cultural differences based on context: in terms of communication, he distinguished between high- and low-context cultures, while regarding time perception he introduced the concepts of monochronic and polychronic cultures.

1.3.2.1 High Versus Low-context Cultures

High-context cultures, such as Japan and Latin America, rely on implicit communication, giving extreme importance to the context of utterance. In these cultures, non-verbal cues play a significant role, meanings are often conveyed through subtle elements such as pauses, gaze, and gestures, and silence is a powerful communicative tool. In contrast, *low-context cultures*, such as Germany or the U.S., prioritize verbal communication and give less importance to the context of utterance. They communicate in an explicit, direct, and unambiguous way, and perceive silence as uncomfortable or embarrassing.

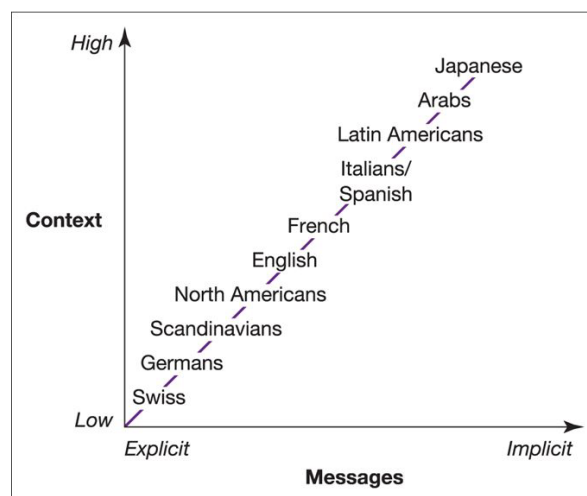


Figure 3. The Contextual Continuum of Cultures: High and Low Context (Hall, 1976;

Source: urly.it/3a-js)

The difference between high- and low-context cultures can be seen in the type and amount of information used in advertising: “Low-context communication is more textual and high-context communication more visual” (De Mooij, 2013). For example, a comparison of American and Indian advertisements showed that American ads used directive speech more often, while Indian ones preferred poetic language and symbols (Lazović, 2012). Thus, advertisements targeting high-context cultures strongly rely on symbols, implicit meanings, and visual elements, aiming to evoke emotions rather than provide explicit information. On the other hand, advertisements tailored for low-context cultures typically display a bigger amount of written information and explain product or service characteristics in detail. The image below precisely shows the difference in the amount of information provided on a drink label in high-context versus low-context cultures.



Figure 4. High Versus Low-Context Communication (Source: urly.it/310v4r)

The interaction between low-context and high-context cultures can often lead to misunderstandings caused by their different communication norms. An example of this cultural dissonance can be seen in casual greetings: in the U.S., a low-context culture, it is common practice to say “Hi, how are you?” while passing an acquaintance on the street, often used as a polite acknowledgment rather than a genuine inquiry into one’s well-being. However, a Mexican, coming from a high-context culture, would likely pause to engage in a conversation and provide a detailed response about their day (Tuleja, 2017). This reflects the Latin American cultural perspective where speech is as a crucial moment of social interaction that transcends mere information exchange.

1.3.2.2 Monochronic Versus Polychronic Time Cultures

Diverse cultures vary not only in their communication styles but also in their perception of time. More specifically, Hall distinguishes between monochronic and polychronic time cultures.

Monochronic time cultures, such as northern European countries and the U.S., perceive time as linear and tend to complete one task at a time. Since they view time as a finite resource that should not be wasted, they value punctuality, precise schedules, and deadline organization. *Polychronic time cultures*, such as China and Latin America, perceive time as cyclical, constantly flowing like a river. Their approach to time is fluid and flexible, engaging in multiple activities simultaneously, and accepting interruptions and delays rather than viewing them negatively.

De Mooij states that this difference in time perception also influences the concept of cause and effect used to explain events (De Mooij, 2013). Monochronic cultures believe that everything happens because of one's actions and choices, while polychronic cultures accept symbolic and mystical explanations, thinking that a higher power will decide the course of their lives. For example, Latin American cultures attribute a crucial role to supernatural forces and strongly believe in the power of nature dominating human beings. So, the differences between high- and low-context communication and monochronic and polychronic time cultures must be considered in order to choose the right advertising information depending on the target culture and avoid intercultural blunders.

Understanding the pivotal role of culture is crucial for businesses, as it directly influences how advertising messages are perceived and interpreted across different cultural contexts. With this in mind, the next section will explore how cultural factors impact the effectiveness of advertising strategies in international markets.

1.4 The Role of Culture in Advertising

“Advertising can be viewed as a symbolic artifact or communication product constructed from the conventions of a particular culture” (De Mooij, 2015). This definition highlights the intricate relationship between culture and advertising, explaining that advertising reflects and translates the cultural conventions of a specific country into symbolic messages. Advertisements targeting a specific culture should represent the

values and needs of that audience, rather than mirroring the cultural principles of the advertising developers or depicting the target culture through stereotypical lenses derived from their potentially biased perspectives. Consequently, professionals in this field must cultivate a deep awareness of cultural differences and their manifestation in advertising across various nations. From language choice and communication style to visual elements and symbols, cultural nuances permeate every aspect of each culture's advertising campaigns.

1.4.1 Advertising Styles

In her article *Translating Advertising: Painting the Tip of An Iceberg* (2004), De Mooij explains that "Different communication styles are reflected in advertising styles" (De Mooij, 2004), meaning that countries can be categorized based on their predominant communication style, which also manifests in their advertisements.

The first distinction she mentions is between *direct communication style*, typical of individualistic low-context cultures, and *indirect communication style*, mostly used in collectivistic high-context cultures. The former is more verbal and addresses people directly using the personal pronoun "you" or "we," while the latter is more visual and indirect, using metaphors, symbols, word plays, and taglines (De Mooij, 2004). More specifically, considering the influence of cultural factors on people's verbal communication and the importance of context, De Mooij distinguishes between *verbal personal style* and *verbal contextual style*. The former refers to a self-centered language that frequently employs personal pronouns and enhances the "I" identity (e.g., English), while the latter stresses context-related identity (e.g., Chinese). The last distinction is between elaborate, exacting, and succinct verbal style. The *elaborate verbal style* is typical of high-context cultures of moderate to strong uncertainty avoidance and uses rich evocative language. The *exacting style* is employed by low-context cultures, such as the U.S., and only provides the required information. The *succinct style*, characterized by pauses, silences, and understatements, is typical of high-context cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance.

By applying communication styles to advertising, De Mooij (2013) elaborated the following map which categorizes countries into four quadrants, each exhibiting distinctive cultural traits and advertising styles.

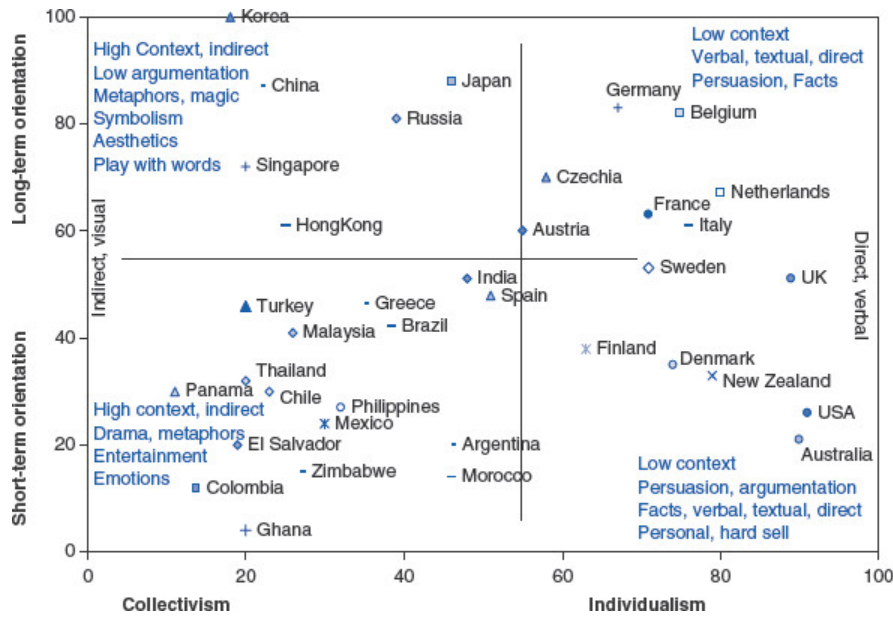


Figure 5. Advertising Styles across Cultures (De Mooij, 2013)

On the one hand, countries in the left-hand quadrants, such as China and Mexico, are collectivistic cultures that typically employ implicit and indirect advertising styles, emphasizing visuals and symbols. The upper-left quadrant includes Eastern countries that rely on visual information, metaphors, wordplay, and symbolic representations. The lower-left quadrant includes a mix of African, Hispanic, and Asian countries characterized by an indirect but more verbal advertising style. For instance, Spain straddles the border with the lower-right quadrant, indicating a more direct advertising style than other Latin American countries, such as Mexico or Colombia.

On the other hand, countries in the right-hand quadrants, such as Italy and the U.S., are individualistic cultures that favor more direct and explicit advertising styles, emphasizing verbal information. The upper-right quadrant countries are characterized by information-dense, serious, and structured advertising focusing on logical argumentation. Countries in the lower-right quadrant better tolerate humor in advertising, frequently develop self-centered advertising, emphasize individual uniqueness, and balance information with entertainment.

Thus, interpersonal communication styles differ according to the culture and are reflected in each country's advertising style. Professionals dealing with intercultural communication and seeking to adapt their advertisements to specific countries must

effectively stick to the proper advertising style to improve their communication efficacy and cultural acceptance.

1.4.2 Advertising Cultural Elements

Beyond advertising styles, advertisements' linguistic and socio-cultural content vary significantly across distinct cultural contexts, influencing the overall message of each specific ad. More specifically, every message we aim to convey through our communication is influenced by the receiver's interpretation, which is filtered through the lens of their unique experiences and cultural background. This interplay between message, interpretation, and cultural context is represented by Ogden & Richards' *Triangle of Meaning* (1923), a model illustrating the process of meaning creation in communication. The three essential components of meaning are: *symbol*, the word or sign to which people assign meaning, which is used to represent an idea or object; *referent*, the actual real-world object that the symbol refers to; *reference*, the mental representation or concept that the symbol evokes in the mind of the person using or interpreting the word. As communicators, we should employ symbols known by our interlocutors because shared knowledge, traditions, and experiences allow our communication to be successful.

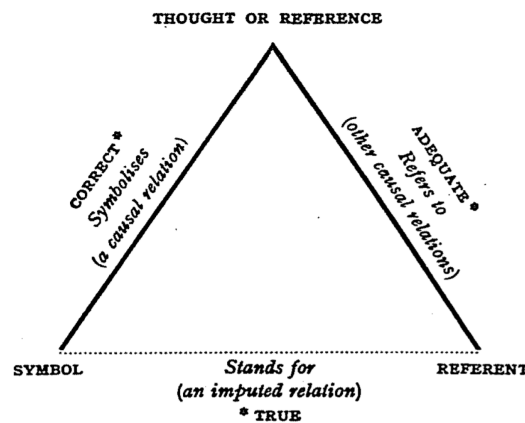


Figure 6. The Triangle of Meaning (Ogden & Richards, 1923; Source: urly.it/310h60)

People from distinct cultural backgrounds interpret the same symbols differently, potentially determining opposite perceptions and reactions to the same advertisements. In particular, diverse cultural audiences hold different values and perceptions regarding what constitutes a benefit or enhances their status. For instance, in 1990 Volvo tried to

market a car in the same way across Europe, but this approach failed due to the company's oversight of the diverse cultural values across European countries. Despite the shared similarities that distinguish European countries from Asian or American ones, each European nation possesses unique values and traditions reflected in consumers' purchasing choices. In Volvo's case, different cultural attitudes across Europe led to opposing car-buying motives: safety was the primary concern in the UK and Switzerland, status was highly valued in France, and performance in Germany (Lazovic, 2012).

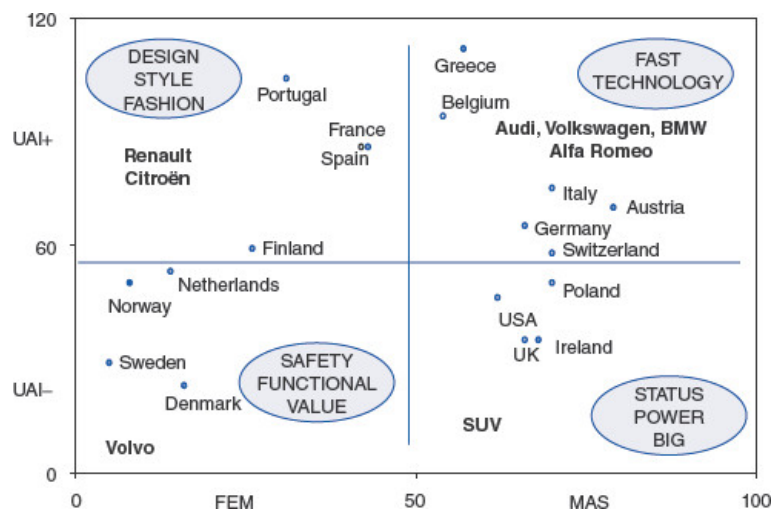


Figure 7. Car Buying Motives Across Europe (De Mooij, 2013)

Thus, it is essential to effectively structure advertising content considering each audience's values and preferences to convey the intended message interpretation. Regarding advertising content, we can distinguish between two major features: the verbal or linguistic aspect and the non-verbal or socio-cultural aspect. The *verbal* or *linguistic aspect* involves the language used to persuade consumers and convey a specific message, while the *non-verbal* or *socio-cultural aspect* includes images, symbols, colors, non-verbal cues, and music in commercials (Abokhoza, 2019). Since the interpretation of these two main advertising components varies across cultures, they must be carefully selected and adapted to address the target market effectively. For instance, "Chinese native speakers rely more on visual representations, whereas English speakers rely primarily on phonological representations (verbal sounds)" (De Mooij, 2004).

1.4.2.1 The Linguistic Element

The *verbal* or *linguistic* element of advertising is crucial, as each language words carry specific cultural values and meanings that often cannot be translated into another language. Advertising language is rich in rhetorical tools such as anaphors, onomatopoeias, metaphors, rhymes, idioms, and puns. These elements are strategically employed to stress message repetition and improve memorization, but they must be culturally adapted to be effective in different countries. The verbal component of advertising goes beyond mere word choice to encompass pronunciation and phonetic elements. Each language has a distinct phonological system, meaning that advertising sounds or pronunciation plays intended for a specific audience might not work for other cultures. For example, the two taglines “If anyone can, Canon can” and “O₂, see what you can do” rhyme in English, enhancing the persuasive appeal of the advertising message, but in non-English speaking countries where people pronounce these brand names differently, the rhyme will not be perceived and the taglines will be less persuasive (De Mooij, 2004).

1.4.2.2 The Sociocultural Element

The *non-verbal* or *sociocultural* element of advertising includes several elements that vary depending on the target culture:

- *Colors* convey specific feelings and emotions that can positively or negatively affect human behaviors and purchasing decisions. They are given different meanings in each culture and must therefore be carefully chosen by brands. For example, in Western cultures, red conveys love, danger, and anger, whereas in China it is associated with luck and prosperity. Similarly, in Western countries white symbolizes purity, innocence, and cleanliness, while in Japan it is linked to death and mourning. Some colors also carry specific meanings, such as green, which is associated with ecology and natural practices, and advertising professionals normally choose to employ these colors with a specific intent. For example, Coca-Cola’s distinctive red color is intended to evoke happiness, energy, and excitement. However, in 2013, Coca-Cola introduced *Coca-Cola Life* in Argentina and Chile with

green packaging to highlight its healthier attributes, including lower calories and sugars, and natural ingredients derived from the stevia plant.



Figure 8. Coca-Cola Life Packaging (Source: urly.it/3a-jr)

- *Images or visuals* reflect the values and traditions of the target culture. For example, advertising aimed at collectivistic cultures, such as Latin American countries, typically emphasizes the importance of sharing moments with family, friends, and loved ones. It is essential to consider the significant cross-cultural differences in image perception: Western cultures tend to have an analytic perception, focusing on the main elements of an image which are considered independently, whereas Eastern cultures adopt a holistic perspective, seeing a relationship of interdependence between the main subjects of the image and its background. In addition, images should be carefully selected considering the target audience's cultural and historical background to avoid stereotypical representations and potential controversy. An example of stereotypical advertising imagery was *Frito Bandito*, a cartoon mascot used by the American snack food company Frito-Lay to promote their Fritos corn chips. The character embodied a stereotypical Mexican bandit with a thick mustache, wearing a sombrero, and carrying guns. Frito Bandito was withdrawn following significant backlash from the Mexican community, who found the portrayal stereotypical and offensive, as it depicted Mexicans as untrustworthy bandits.



Figure 9. Frito-Lay Mascot “Frito Bandito” (Source: urly.it/3a-p_)

The sequence in which images are displayed also needs careful adaptation in advertising, as Western cultures read from left to right, but Middle Eastern ones read from right to left. Consequently, structuring a print advertisement with images flowing from left to right could lead to misunderstandings when targeting a Middle Eastern audience.

- *Symbols* can be associated with various concepts, including religious practices, luck and bad luck, etc. For instance, in Western cultures, the four-leaf clover and the horseshoe are associated with good luck, whereas Asian cultures use elephants, dragons, and flowers. Even numbers carry different meanings depending on the culture: Westerners link the number 13 with bad luck and omit it in airplane seating rows and skyscraper floors. Instead, Chinese people consider the number 4 unlucky because of its pronunciation, which resembles the word “death”.
- *Non-verbal gestures* are body movements or positions that convey messages without speaking, such as facial expressions, hand movements, posture, and gaze. For example, in Western cultures nodding shows agreement, and shaking one’s head indicates denial, whereas in Bulgaria and Greece, the opposite occurs. Also, the thumb-up sign manifests approval in Western countries but represents an insult comparable to the middle finger in Greece.
- *Units of measurement*, including date and time formats, currency, figures, weight, and size, must be adapted to the target country. For instance, an American advertisement that lists Coca-Cola's size in ounces should be converted into milliliters or liters when targeting countries that use the metric system.

- *Political and legal norms* must be considered when creating advertisements for different countries, as norms regulating the advertising sector vary. For example, cigarette and tobacco advertising is banned in Italy, France, and the UK. In France, the 1994 Law Tubone establishes that slogans and taglines in foreign languages must also be translated into French. Also, European countries often include advisory statements in their commercials to comply with the European Union's public health regulations on food labeling and advertising. For example, television food advertisements in France and Spain include statements such as “Eat a balanced diet” or “Exercise regularly” to comply with EU regulations that require advertising to promote healthy eating habits and lifestyles (urly.it/310pw0).

Therefore, since the linguistic and sociocultural components of advertising vary significantly across cultures, neglecting to adapt these elements can result in misunderstandings and even damage a brand's reputation. Although adapting advertising content to the linguistic and sociocultural norms of the target culture is often crucial for effective intercultural communication, it is not the only approach brands might choose to expand their advertising campaigns beyond national borders. Other strategies include standardization, where the same advertising is used globally, and glocalization, a blend of the two previous approaches where advertising content is adapted to resonate with local audiences while a consistent global brand identity is maintained.

1.5 To Standardize or to Localize? An Ongoing Debate

Whether to standardize advertising content or to adapt it locally has been a prominent debate in cross-cultural advertising for many years, and still provokes conflicting opinions among scholars. As companies began to expand internationally, they had to decide between maintaining their advertising content across distinct cultural markets or tailoring it to the specific cultural values and needs of each country they were targeting.

On the one hand, *standardization* supporters argue that a global advertising strategy can build an internationally strong and unified brand image, facilitate economies of scale that reduce the company's costs, and ensure message uniformity. On the other hand,

localization proponents stress the importance of cultural sensitivity, highlighting the need to adapt advertisements to local values, traditions, and language. Localization supporters believe that adapting advertising can build deeper connections with consumers, recognizing that the diversity of their preferences and behaviors comes from their unique cultural backgrounds.

The standardization-localization debate has also seen the rise of a third strategy that blends the elements of the two previous solutions: the *glocalization* approach. Glocalization has emerged as a hybrid strategy that combines the benefits of globalization and localization, enabling companies to create a global identity while adapting to each target market's local cultural values and needs.

This section aims to delve into advertising main cross-cultural adaptation methods, analyzing the concepts of standardization, localization, and glocalization. The advantages and drawbacks of each strategy will be tackled, providing a comprehensive understanding of how businesses can ensure effective advertising while navigating the complexities of our modern global market.

1.5.1 Standardization

Starting from the 1990s, the advent of globalization led to the integration of markets, economies, and cultures in a global scale, forcing companies to expand their strategies internationally. Globalization can be defined as “The compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992).

In this increasingly interconnected context of mass-produced and globally standardized products, the standardization theory of advertising emerged, producing internationally unified advertising content appealing to shared global needs. This theory finds its founding pillar in Theodore Levitt's article “The Globalization of Markets” (1983), in which he argues that advancements in technology and communication have led to the homogenization of consumer preferences worldwide over the years. With his influential work, Levitt, an esteemed economist and professor at Harvard Business School, popularized the term *globalization* by stating that “The world's needs and desires have been irrevocably homogenized. This makes the multinational corporation obsolete and the global corporation absolute” (Levitt, 1983). Levitt argues that the future does not belong to multinational corporations that locally adapt their products and advertising, but

to global companies that capitalize on brand strength and benefits derived from standardization. He advocates for a new paradigm of global companies selling standardized products and services internationally at lower costs thanks to the economies of scale, regardless of each country's cultural differences and values. To support his thesis of the world as a huge single market rather than a complex network of diverse cultural nuances, Levitt argues that international brands have already opted for this strategy by selling globally standardized products that appeal to an international audience (Levitt, 1983). Besides the economic advantages of the standardization approach exemplified by Levitt, Philipp Kotler, another leading marketing scholar, states that this global approach builds strong and consistent brand identity across markets, reinforcing brand awareness and loyalty towards the company (Kotler, 2000).

However, decades later, the standardization theory was criticized by several academics who defined it as culturally insensitive because it failed to acknowledge local audiences' unique cultural preferences and traditions, resulting in potentially ineffective and controversial advertising campaigns. Due to the insufficient attention to local cultural nuances, standardized advertising frequently appeared generic and impersonal and did not evoke emotional responses from diverse consumers.

Companies like Sony, Nokia, Volvo, McDonald's, and Coca-Cola, renowned for their global strategy and standardized advertising, have since recognized the value of cultural nuances by shifting towards a more localized approach. For instance, Coca-Cola, long regarded as the greatest example of global strategy and standardized products, began focusing more on local markets following CEO Douglas Daft's assertion that "The next big evolutionary step of 'going global' now has to be 'going local' (Ball, 2003, as cited in Dumitrescu, 2010). Having acknowledged the importance of tailoring content to consumers' local preferences, Coca-Cola shifted from a globalized approach to a "Think local, act local" strategy, resulting in the ownership of numerous successful local brands alongside its well-known global brands, such as Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, and Fanta (De Mooij, 2004).

Thus, nowadays even global brands like Coca-Cola do not fully standardize their offerings, but strategically adapt certain elements (such as packaging, advertising, and product flavors) to align with local cultural nuances and traditions. For example, Coca-Cola's beverages are sweeter in the Middle East to satisfy regional preferences, while in

Japan the company regularly introduces seasonal offerings to reflect the country’s desire for limited-edition products. Even Coca-Cola’s iconic logo varies significantly across countries to adapt to diverse local preferences and cultures. In Thailand, the logo is rendered in the flowing script of the Thai alphabet, while in China it is transliterated into Chinese characters that phonetically resemble the brand name.



Figure 10. Coca-Cola Logos in Different Languages (Source: urly.it/310c71)

Moreover, Coca-Cola’s advertising campaigns often feature local celebrities, cultural references, and holiday themes tailored to each country. These examples detach from mere standardization, exemplifying the need for global brands to fine-tune their strategies to resonate with the unique cultural preferences of diverse audiences. Moving from a one-size-fits-all strategy towards a more localized approach, brands like Coca-Cola can establish deeper connections with culturally diverse consumers.

1.5.2 Localization

In contrast with the standardization approach, localization gained popularity as customers began to seek more personalized products and advertising, losing interest in global content. While standardization was rooted in Theodore Levitt’s theory of the globalization of markets, localization is instead supported by Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory, highlighting that “Understanding cultural differences is crucial for effective communication and marketing in international markets” (Hofstede, 1980).

The advantages of localization have been extensively debated by scholars, including De Mooij, who defines localization as “Adapting a product or content to meet the language, cultural and other requirements of a specific target market” (De Mooij, 2013). This definition points out localization multifaceted nature, which goes beyond mere language translation as “Advertising consists of concepts, ideas, copy and visuals. A concept or idea that is relevant for one culture is not necessarily relevant for others” (De Mooij, 2004). Even though advertising localization requires higher costs and resources than standardization, it improves intercultural communication, resulting in a competitive advantage over other brands, and a deeper emotional connection with each target audience. The competitive advantage of localization ensures greater local resonance and brand loyalty by tailoring products or services to closely align with the local market’s needs, habits, and preferences (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

Therefore, not only does localization entail effectively translating advertising copy into the target language, but it also involves adjusting visuals, symbols, colors, and designs to suit local cultural norms, values, and political requirements. To fully explain the difficulty of this process and the level of cultural intelligence required to accomplish it, advertising translation has been metaphorically compared to the act of painting the tip of an iceberg:

Translating advertising copy is like painting the tip of an iceberg and hoping the whole thing will turn red. What makes copy work is not the words themselves, but subtle combinations of those words, and most of all the echoes and repercussions of those words within the mind of the reader. These are precisely the subtleties which translation fails to convey. Advertising is not made of words, but made of culture (Anholt, 2000).

This visual metaphor enables us to picture advertising translation as only a small piece of a bigger puzzle, just like painting the tip of an iceberg and hoping it will all turn red. Starting from the assumption that advertising is made of culture rather than words, we can affirm that advertising localization goes far beyond literal translation, as it involves adapting a wide range of elements to maintain the advertising's meaning and persuasiveness. However, the process of advertising adaptation is often underestimated and reduced to literal translations or culturally insensitive localizations. It is crucial to understand that when it comes to advertising across cultures, literal translation is not sufficient and *transcreation* comes into play, going beyond linguistic equivalence and entailing a deeper understanding of cultural contexts.

1.5.3 Transcreation

In her book *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts* (2010), Ira Torresi clearly explains the difference between translation and transcreation: while translation primarily involves transposing concepts from one language into another, localization focuses on the cross-cultural necessity to tailor the persuasive text to the target market and often requires *transcreation*, which provides a more natural and compelling version of the original text for the target audience (Torresi, 2010).

Claudia Benetello, professional Italian translator, copywriter, and transcreator, defines transcreation as “Writing advertising copy for a specific market, starting from copy written in a source language as if the target text had been originated in the target language and culture” (Benetello, 2017). Thus, transcreation creatively adapts advertising promotional content at an intercultural level, rewriting the advertising text in a different language from the original one (urly.it/31003z). It is a service that lies somewhere between translation (*trans*) and copywriting (*creation*) entailing source language knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and local market familiarity (Benetello, 2017).

Transcreation professionals must then craft the best advertising option for each target market, maintaining the original message persuasiveness and ensuring that crucial elements, such as the brand name or the tagline, do not carry negative meanings in the target language and do not offend the audience. Unfortunately, the benefits of transcreation are still highly underestimated, as brands often adopt literal translations which result in intercultural blunders and misunderstandings. Numerous examples of advertising literal translation have occurred across the years: Between 1963 and 1967, Pepsi used the slogan “Come alive! You’re in the Pepsi generation” to compete with Coca-Cola, which was mistranslated into Chinese as “Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead”. This error deeply offended Chinese consumers, as it clashed with their deep-rooted cultural reverence for ancestors, who are believed to continue influencing the lives of their living relatives even after death (urly.it/310pw_). In 1983, the American brewer Coors used the slogan “Turn it loose”, whose Spanish translation “Suéltalo con Coors” was a big failure since it meant “Get diarrhea” (urly.it/310px4). In 1987, Brainliff Airlines launched a campaign to promote their luxurious leather seats using the slogan “Fly in Leather”. However, it was mistranslated into Spanish as “Vuela en cuero,” which can be interpreted as “Fly naked” in Spanish slang (urly.it/310px4). While the above

examples may be outdated, literal translations are still common in today’s advertising and keep provoking cross-cultural misunderstandings. A recent example is the Italian National Agency for Tourism’s campaign “Open to Meraviglia,” launched in 2023 to promote Italy’s cultural beauty to an international audience. The campaign faced severe criticism from cross-cultural experts due to its literal translations, highlighting the ongoing challenges in effectively communicating across different cultures. Some examples of the campaign’s mistranslations in the German version were the Italian city of *Brindisi* translated as “Toast,” or *Fermo*’s town as “Stillstand” (urly.it/31003_).

Conversely, a successful example that demonstrates the power of transcreation is Coca-Cola’s adaptation of its payoff in different countries. The company’s famous payoff “Taste the feeling” was adapted through transcreation to fit local cultural contexts while maintaining the original’s emotional impact and meaning. For example, in Spain, it was rendered as “Siente el sabor” (Feel the taste), aligning the sensory connection of the original slogan with the Spanish language, whereas in Argentina it was adapted to “Sentí el sabor” (Feel the taste), adapting the message to the local way of communicating by employing to the *vos* form, commonly used in Argentina and other parts of the Rio de la Plata region. In France, the payoff became “Savoure l’instant” (Savour the moment), focusing on enjoying the present, a concept that perfectly aligns with the French culture appreciation for savoring life’s small pleasures (urly.it/310pxb).



Figure 11. Transcreation of Coca-Cola’s “Taste the Feeling” Payoff in Different Languages (Source: urly.it/310h8s)

Transcreation is also frequently employed to adapt brand or product names to resonate with the target country's culture. For instance, Coca-Cola's brand name was transcreated in Chinese characters as 可口可乐 [kě kǒu kě lè], faithfully reproducing the sound of Coca-Cola's name while evoking a positive meaning: 可口 means "tasty," and 可乐 means "happy" or "fun." However, when Coca-Cola's name was first phonetically adapted into Chinese it meant "Bite the wax tadpole," resulting in a giant cultural blunder in the Chinese market (urly.it/31003n). Therefore, simply choosing the target language sounds that more closely resemble a brand's name is not enough to prevent misunderstandings, especially with Asian languages, whose phonetic systems differ significantly from those of Western languages.



Figure 12. Adaptation of Coca-Cola's Name into Chinese Characters (Source: urly.it/31003j)

Thus, transcreation crafts recognizable product names and advertising texts that better resonate with the target culture, being both easier to pronounce thanks to phonetic adaptation, and more impactful due to the connection with the audience's cultural values and linguistic system. Considering that the successful transcreation of product and brand names requires a comprehensive understanding of the target language and culture, there are three main ways to properly recreate brand names in different languages (Li, 2001):

- Adapting the pronunciation to maintain the original sound of the brand name, without necessarily conveying any specific meaning in the target language. For example, the Finnish brand *Nokia* whose adaptation in Chinese is *Nuojiya* (诺基亚)

- Adapting the brand name to convey a positive or relevant meaning in the target culture. For example, the above mentioned case of *Coca-Cola* which was rendered in Chinese as *kě kǒu kě lè*, or *Ericsson* which becomes 爱立信, *Ai* (love) *li* (establish) *xin* (trust)
- Replacing the original brand name with an entirely new name that carries the desired attributes, even if it does not phonetically resemble the original one. For example, in Chinese *Sprite* becomes *Xue Bi* (雪碧), where *Xue* means “Snow” and *Bi* “Green,” evoking a sense of freshness and coolness.

Employing one of these methods to transcreate brand and product names is of utmost importance to avoid cross-cultural blunders such as those that frequently happened in the history of the automotive field. For instance, Chevrolet Nova faced a notable challenge when it was marketed in Spanish-speaking countries, since “No va” means “It doesn’t go” in Spanish, an unfortunate implication for a car. Something similar happened to Mitsubishi with the launch of the Pajero SUV, as *Pajero* is a Spanish slang term for someone who masturbates, highly inappropriate for the brand’s image and reputation (urly.it/310pxy).

Thus, while literal translations often lead to misunderstandings or cultural insensitivity, transcreation adapts the brand and product names and the advertising content to preserve the original intent and emotional appeal.

1.5.4 Glocalization

In recent years, the debate between globalization and localization has led to a third strategy widely adopted among international brands. In her article “Globalization and Localization in Advertising Translation: A Love-Hate Relationship?” (2016), Valdés Rodríguez states that “The tensions between the concepts of globalization and localization in advertising have converged into the more recent ‘Think globally, act locally’, which encapsulates the agreement between both positions” (Valdés Rodríguez, 2016).

Glocalization (a portmanteau of the words “globalization” and “localization”) is a strategic approach that combines global brand consistency and local adaptation, whose development has been driven by the need for multinational companies to address each

market's cultures. The origins of this strategy can be traced back to the early 1990s, when sociologist Roland Robertson coined the term *glocalization* to describe the simultaneous globalization and localization processes occurring in several areas of society, including advertising. Robertson described glocalization as “The tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures” and “The co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies” (Robertson, 1992). Glocalization comes from the Japanese word *dochakuka*, where *do* means “land,” *chaku* means “arrive,” and *ka* “process of” (Khonder, 2004, as cited in Dimutrescu & Vinerean, 2010). This approach started developing as businesses became aware of the significant impact of cultural differences on local consumers, driven by technological advancements and rising expectations for personalized experiences. Glocal strategies enable companies to maintain a consistent global brand image while tailoring their products, services, and advertising to local desires.

1.5.5 From Global to Glocal: Coca-Cola's Journey Towards Glocalization

Several international brands have been opting for glocal strategies, highlighting the effectiveness of this method which perfectly combines glocalization and localization. For instance, Coca-Cola, one of the most famous international brands known for selling global products, has significantly transformed its strategy over the years. Initially celebrated for its global approach, Coca-Cola has gradually shifted from a standardized strategy to glocalization, acknowledging the importance of adapting its products and advertising to diverse cultural values and consumer preferences. Coca-Cola's initial global strategy was characterized by standardized product offerings and internationally uniform advertising campaigns, exemplified by 1971 “I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke” campaign. Widely considered as one of the most iconic and memorable commercials in advertising history, the “Hilltop” campaign positioned Coca-Cola as more than just a beverage, but as a universal symbol of unity and global harmony. The advertisement featured a group of young people from around the world, gathered on a hilltop, and singing together in harmony. By showcasing individuals from various cultural backgrounds singing together, the commercial effectively portrayed Coca-Cola as a common connection between the people of the world. This imagery powerfully conveyed the idea that the act of sharing a Coca-Cola transcended cultural borders, creating a shared

experience that resonates with an international audience. Not only Coca-Cola succeeded in reinforcing its status as a global brand with a global community, but it also presented the brand as a facilitator of cross-cultural understanding by celebrating the multicultural nature of its consumer base.



Figure 13. Coca-Cola's "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke" Advertisement (1971;
Source: urly.it/310452)

However, the limitations of a one-size-fits-all strategy soon became evident, leading the company to recognize the need to shift from a purely global strategy to a more nuanced glocal approach. In January 2000, Coca-Cola's CEO Douglas Daft surprisingly announced that the company would no longer produce global advertisements, stating that "If our local colleagues develop an idea or strategy that is the right thing to do locally [...], then they have the authority and responsibility to make it happen" (Daft, 2000). Subsequent Coca-Cola CEOs moved away from both Daft's extreme localization and the initial approach of total standardization, resulting in the company's current globalization strategy by trying to "Compete in a way that neither ignores the differences across countries nor caves in to them entirely" (Ghemawat, 2007). Within this strategy, Coca-Cola maintains a global identity while adapting its drink flavors to local preferences, localizing its advertising campaigns, and often introducing limited-edition products to celebrate local traditions and cultural heritage. For instance, in 2010 Coca-Cola launched a limited-edition bottle series to celebrate Mexico's Independence Bicentenary

(urly.it/31047n). This set comprised 32 collectible bottles with images of each Mexican state and distinctive elements, colors, and designs resonating with the Mexican culture.



Figure 14. Coca-Cola’s Limited-Edition Bottles for Mexico’s Independence Bicentenary (2010; Source: urly.it/31047v)

Moreover, Coca-Cola’s glocalized approach also extends to the adaptation of its digital content and website for different countries. According to Singh and Pereira, “Localization of web content involves modifying the website to reflect local languages, cultural preferences, and business practices” (Singh & Pereira, 2005). Website localization encompasses accurately translating content, representing cultural values and local products, adapting color schemes and symbols, adjusting design and layout, ensuring compliance with local advertising regulations, and addressing specific environmental and social concerns relevant to the target audience. Coca-Cola’s website perfectly embodies this multifaceted cultural adaptation, providing a different version according to the target country. For instance, as of August 2024, Coca-Cola’s Argentinian website features the “Juntos en todas” campaign (Together in every situation) which celebrates the importance of being together in significant moments of life, deeply resonating with Argentinian people's collectivism and familism values. *Familismo* is a cultural value that emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong family bonds and prioritizing family needs over individual desires. This value is often reflected in advertising through portrayals of family celebrations and gatherings, showcasing relatives

enjoying traditional cuisine together and reinforcing familiar connections and cultural traditions. In this case, Coca-Cola’s Argentinian website perfectly adapts to this core cultural value, highlighting how a Coca-Cola drink enhances every important family moment and fosters shared happiness among loved ones.



Figure 15. Coca-Cola’s Argentine Campaign “Juntos en todas” (2024; Source: urly.it/310cz-)

Instead, Coca-Cola’s Peruvian website embraces Peru’s cultural heritage by celebrating *Fiestas Patrias*, a two-day national holiday that takes place on July 28th and 29th to celebrate the country’s independence from Spanish rule. *Fiestas Patrias* is the most important celebration for Peruvian people, as it is a fundamental moment to feel proud of their identity and cultural heritage. Coca-Cola’s Peruvian website features a culturally resonant advertisement called “Celebremos con eso que nos une” (Let’s celebrate with what unites us) from the advertising campaign “Diferencias” (Differences), launched to celebrate diversity and unity within the framework of *Fiestas Patrias*. The campaign suggests that despite the differences in the country’s population, there will always be similarities unifying Peruvians, inviting them to value these differences and celebrate their shared identity. To further honor the event, a limited edition of Inca Kola, a soft drink deeply ingrained in the Peruvian culture, was released featuring the colors of the Peruvian flag.



Figure 16. Coca-Cola's Peruvian Website Celebrating Fiestas Patrias (2024; Source: urly.it/310cz_)

The above mentioned examples have shown Coca-Cola's commitment to celebrating local traditions and cultural heritage and demonstrate that even big global brands that used to be known for their standardized approach, have realized the increasing necessity to localize their products and advertising through a more accurate representation of people's cultures and traditions. The success of American companies expanding globally can be measured by their ability to become *multi-local* and integrate into diverse countries without causing a sense of cultural imposition among local people (Foster, 2008). Glocalization is precisely about this balance: maintaining a global identity while tailoring products, services, and advertising content to local cultural values and needs.

Thus, as global markets continue to diversify, recognizing cultural nuances has become paramount for companies and professionals seeking to establish meaningful connections with consumers worldwide. This examination of cultural dimensions and communication styles underscores the complexity of cross-cultural advertising and highlights the importance of cultural competence in determining the success of global advertising. Companies that prioritize cultural intelligence and embrace cultural diversity will be better equipped to craft impactful advertising that truly speaks to the hearts and minds of culturally different consumers. In the following section, we will examine how Coca-Cola strategically integrates Latin American culture into its marketing efforts, demonstrating how a global brand can successfully adapt its messaging to celebrate local cultural values while maintaining its universal appeal.

CHAPTER 2

Coca-Cola's Influence in Latin America: From Global Brand to Local Icon

“Latin America is a key operating unit for The Coca-Cola Company. Not only because of the size of our business in the region but also because of the bond we developed with local people”
– Sergio Londoño

2.1 Coca-Cola's Origin and Evolution Through Its Advertising

Coca-Cola, also commonly known as *Coke*, is more than just a beverage, it is a global icon that has significantly influenced cultures, societies, and human interactions. The story of Coca-Cola began in 1886 in Atlanta, Georgia, when pharmacist John Stith Pemberton, in response to prohibitions laws, reformulated his wine into a non-alcoholic version which became what we now know as Coca-Cola (urly.it/310hvk). Initially conceived as a remedy for common illnesses, Pemberton crafted the syrup by blending *coca* leaves and *kola* nuts and carried it to Jacob's Pharmacy, where it was sold for just five cents a glass as a soda fountain drink, a type of beverage that was very popular due to the perceived health benefits of carbonated water (urly.it/310hvk). Frank Robinson, the company's accountant, played a crucial role in shaping Coca-Cola's brand identity, designing the iconic logo and coining the name “Coca-Cola” because of the visual appeal of the two Cs for advertising purposes (A Short History of The Coca-Cola Company, 2011). The acquisition of Coca-Cola by Asa Candler in 1888 marked the crucial shift from its origin as a local remedy to a national refreshment. After founding The Coca-Cola Company in 1892, Candler transformed the brand's advertising strategy in 1895 as he realized that promoting Coca-Cola as a refreshing beverage was more appealing than marketing it as a medical remedy. This strategic advertising shift was key to the company's global success as Candler recognized that they should advertise to the masses rather than to the few (Pendergrast, 2013). As a result, Coca-Cola started to be sold in every U.S. state and established an innovative franchise bottling system, allowing independent bottlers to produce and distribute the drink globally (Britannica, 2024).

The early 20th century saw Coca-Cola adapting to changing societal norms and expanding its horizons. Coke's original formula contained a blend of cocaine from *coca*

leaves and caffeine from *kola* nuts, both of which have deep cultural roots: in West Africa and Colombia, *kola* nuts have traditionally been chewed or brewed into a drink known as *cola* for their stimulating effects, whereas in the Andes, *coca* leaves have long been chewed for their energizing properties, reducing hunger, and alleviating altitude sickness (Cortés, 2012). However, growing public awareness of cocaine’s addictive nature led Coca-Cola to eliminate it from its recipe in 1903, replacing it with decocainized coca leaf extract. Coca-Cola’s global success was further solidified by the beginning of its international bottling in 1906 and the introduction of its iconic contour bottle design in 1915, crafted by Alexander Samuelson to create a bottle “So distinctive that it could be recognized by feel in the dark or identified lying broken on the ground” (A Short History of The Coca-Cola Company, 2011). In 1919, the company was acquired by Ernest Woodruff and started its expansion across Europe through locally-oriented advertising: Coca-Cola’s global success was due from the start to its brilliant advertisements that associated the drink with moments of shared happiness and well-being.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Coca-Cola became a symbol of the American culture, representing fun and happiness. This was a time of strong global cultural impact, epitomized by Coca-Cola’s 1931 first Santa Claus advertisement that not only associated the brand with Christmas but also helped standardize the global image of Santa Claus as a jolly, rotund man with a white beard and a red suit. This ad created a cultural icon that transcended national and religious boundaries considering that before “The image of Santa Claus ranged from big to small, and wore colors from red to green or brown, as was depicted differently according to each country’s stories and culture” (A Short History of the Coca-Cola Company, 2011).



Figure 17. Coca-Cola’s First Santa Claus Advertisement (Source: urly.it/310hac)

World War II constituted a pivotal moment in Coca-Cola's history. After the U.S. entered the war in 1941, CEO Robert Woodruff started focusing on military-centric advertising to connect the brand with American patriotism while selling Coke to soldiers for just five cents per bottle (A Short History of the Coca-Cola Company, 2011). Despite wartime sugar rationing, Woodruff's strategic advertising portrayed Coca-Cola as an essential military supply for boosting soldiers' energy and morale, eventually succeeding in exempting the drink from sugar rationing and reinforcing its status as a symbol of American values. For instance, in this advertisement, an American soldier comes back home from the war, greeting a Coca-Cola poster with the phrase "My old friend Coke", as the taste of a Coke symbolizes being home and being American (Weiner, 1966).



Figure 18. Coca-Cola's "My Old Friend Coke" Military-Themed Advertisement
(Source: urly.it/310j0b)

Meanwhile, American soldiers took Coca-Cola around the world, introducing it in those countries where it was still not present. Coca-Cola wartime advertisements frequently depicted American soldiers in exotic scenes sharing a Coke with locals of different countries, symbolizing friendship and highlighting that sharing a Coke was a happy custom spreading around the globe (urly.it/310j0p). This is perfectly represented by a 1944 campaign featuring a series of advertisements depicting American soldiers sharing a Coke with different local populations. This campaign effectively resonated with various local cultures by associating the act of sharing a Coke with a local idiom or cultural aspect from each targeted population. For instance, the print advertisement targeting Panama stated "Have a Coca-Cola = ¿Qué Hay, Amigo?... or making pals in

Panama”, using a Spanish expression translated as “What Gives, Pal?”. In addition, the equal sign employed in this advertising campaign was meant to associate drinking Coke with the American way of life while approaching local people’s languages and cultural traditions (Weiner, 1996).



Figure 19. Coca-Cola’s “Have a Coca-Cola” Panama Advertisement (Source: urly.it/310j0y)

After World War II, Coca-Cola became a global icon sold in almost every country, including South America, where it produced advertisements specifically focused on each Latin American country’s culture thanks to its locally-oriented franchise system. Coca-Cola’s 1944 advertising campaign “La Invitación Universal... ¡Tomemos una Coca-Cola!” (The Universal Invitation... Let’s Drink a Coke!) perfectly exemplifies this strategy, resonating deeply with Latin American values and traditions. The slogan “Tomemos una Coca-Cola” emphasizes the importance of shared experiences and a sense of community that perfectly aligns with Latin American collectivism. The following two advertisements taken from this campaign targeted Argentina and Mexico respectively.



Figure 20 and 21. Coca-Cola’s “Tomemos una Coca-Cola!” Advertisements in Argentina and Mexico (1944; Sources: urly.it/310j86, urly.it/310j87)

The Argentinian advertisement (on the left) depicts a relaxed moment after a polo match, a sport with a deep cultural tradition in Argentina, introduced by British immigrants in the late 19th century and very popular due to the country’s vast open spaces and the skilled horsemanship of the local *gauchos*. Instead, the Mexican advertisement (on the right) shows a group of people enjoying Coca-Cola at a *jaripeo* event, a traditional form of bull riding introduced by Spanish colonizers and adapted by Mexican indigenous communities into a unique cultural spectacle. Unlike a typical rodeo, *jaripeo* holds a distinct cultural and historical significance: “Instead of the matador and bull, it features a rider, known as a *jinete*, who attempts to stay mounted on a bucking bull for as long as possible” (urly.it/310j82). This event embodies traditional Mexican values such as courage and resilience, and it is a fundamental moment for Mexican people to reunite and honor their common cultural heritage (urly.it/310j82). Both advertisements depict Argentinian and Mexican people in group settings, enjoying joyful and relaxed moments with their loved ones. These portrayals resonate with Latin American cultural values, where the power of an experience is enhanced by sharing it with family and friends, and reflect Coca-Cola’s understanding of Hispanic collectivism, which prioritizes group harmony and shared experiences over individual pleasure (Hofstede, 1980).

Thus, Coca-Cola’s evolution from a symbol of American identity to a global cultural phenomenon demonstrates the brand’s intercultural adaptability and strategic advertising approach. The fundamental goal of advertising is precisely to create mental association networks, linking the brand with specific values in consumers’ minds (De Mooij, 2013).



Figure 22. Mental Associations with Coca-Cola across Cultures (De Mooij, 2013)

In Coca-Cola’s case, while the brand has historically been associated with American identity, its advertising campaigns during and after the war have been fundamental to establishing Coca-Cola as more than just a drink but as a cultural symbol that integrates with local traditions and customs. This strategy reflects the principle that advertising success depends on the harmony between the values conveyed by the message and those of the target audience (De Mooij, 2013).

Coca-Cola’s dual identity, as both a global icon and a culturally adaptive brand, laid the ground for what scholars refer to as “Coca-Colonization”, a process where the company goes beyond mere consumption, becoming intertwined with local beliefs and cultural norms. The phenomenon of *Coca-Colonization* not only reflects the spread of American consumer culture but illustrates the complex dynamics of *cultural hybridization*, where a global brand merges with local traditions to create new cultural expressions.

2.2 Coca-Colonization and Cultural Hybridization

As American influence spread globally, understanding its impact on different cultures became increasingly important. When American companies like Coca-Cola enter foreign markets, they face the challenge of building emotional connections with consumers who are not familiar with their products and brands: successfully adapting to these diverse cultural contexts requires marketing strategies that resonate with local values and preferences (Nagata, 2011).

The term *Coca-Colonization* encapsulates the global spread of American consumer culture, with Coca-Cola being a powerful symbol of cultural imperialism and globalization (Ciafone, 2018). This phenomenon goes beyond economic influence, intertwining traditional customs and beliefs with the consumption of international brands, while also shaping social, dietary, and health-related outcomes within local communities (Yates-Doerr, 2015; Leatherman & Goodman, 2005). Being aware of these multifaceted implications is crucial for navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by the global diffusion of American consumer culture (Leatherman & Goodman, 2005).

The increased consumption of soft drinks in Latin America perfectly exemplifies the intertwined concepts of “Coca-Colonization” and “cultural hybridization”, two closely related theories that mutually reinforce one another (Nagata, 2011). The spread of American culture and preferences through brands like Coca-Cola in developing countries reflects a complex cultural dynamic. On the one hand, these brands are perceived as symbols of higher social status and lifestyle associated with developed countries (Howes, 1996). On the other hand, the integration of these global products and brands into local cultural practices demonstrates a process of cultural hybridization, a blend of different cultures resulting from the interaction of global influences with distinctive local traditions, driven by factors such as tourism, globalization, migration and colonialism (Tuncer, 2023).

Cultural hybridization is represented by Coca-Cola’s integration into different indigenous cultures across Latin America, where the beverage is not only consumed but has also been incorporated into religious practices, ceremonies, traditional cuisine, and healing rituals. This phenomenon can be observed among the Tzotzil Maya in the Mexican state of Chiapas, the Aymara and Quechua in the Bolivian and Peruvian Andes, and the Yucatec Maya in Mexico, who have adapted Coca-Cola to their cultural practices,

often without being aware of its American origin (Howes, 1996). Coca-Cola has become integrated into indigenous traditions and practices at multiple levels, as will be outlined in the following section.

2.2.1 Coca-Cola's Cultural Impact on Latino Indigenous Communities

Coca-Cola's expansion into Latin America in the early 20th century was driven by the belief that economic interactions between developed and developing countries could foster modernization in the latter (Ciafone, 2018). Mexico's case in the 1970s illustrates this dynamic: the country's economic growth, fueled by the rapid development of the tourism industry, profoundly affected indigenous communities who shifted from traditional agricultural practices to tourism-related employment, becoming dependent on commercial food sources including processed foods and soft drinks. By the 1990s, Mexico had become one of the world's largest consumers of soft drinks, accounting for 15% of Coke's international sales and 20% of Pepsi's (Leatherman & Goodman, 2005). This transition led to deteriorating nutritional outcomes, manifesting as undernourishment in children and obesity and diabetes in adults (Leatherman & Goodman, 2005). Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state, constitutes a striking example of Coca-Cola's profound cultural integration into indigenous communities through its locally oriented advertising strategies that boosted the increase in soft drink consumption and the incorporation of Coca-Cola into local traditions.

2.2.1.1 Chiapas: The Epicenter of Coca-Colonization in Mexico

Compared to other regions, Coca-Cola's success in Chiapas is due to a combination of specific factors. Firstly, the company has implemented a widespread and reliable distribution strategy by creating a network of local entrepreneurs, known as *ruteros*, who distribute Coca-Cola to the most remote areas, creating an economic dependency that further reinforces the brand's presence (Nagata, 2011). Additionally, Coca-Cola invests in local sponsorships and offers incentives to small businesses, such as free storefront painting with the company's logo, to encourage product promotion. The company has also integrated itself into everyday life contexts such as cooking, religious ceremonies, and healing practices. For instance, in religious rituals, Coca-Cola has replaced *poch*, the Mayan traditional alcoholic drink, and in the town of *San Juan Chamula* church leaders

use Coke for ceremonies, decorating the church and healing purposes (Pendergrast, 2013). Furthermore, since potable water in the area is often inaccessible or contaminated, Coca-Cola's greater availability and lower cost have made it a fundamental part of Chiapas' daily life. As a result, Coca-Cola's presence in the Mexican state of Chiapas goes far beyond mere consumption, permeating television programming, street billboards, and store decorations (Nagata, 2011).



Figure 23. Coca-Cola Storefront Painted in Chiapas, Mexico (Source: urly.it/310pf3)

Coca-Cola's ubiquity in this region is immediately apparent to visitors: the company's aggressive advertising strategy has resulted in a visual landscape dominated by its branding, where even welcome signs carry the iconic Coca-Cola logo. For instance, people entering Chiapas municipalities like San Juan Cancun and Zinacantán are greeted by signs featuring indigenous men proudly holding Coca-Cola bottles, a powerful visual representation of the brand's integration into local cultural identity.



Figure 24 and 25. Coca-Cola Welcome Signs in San Juan Cancun and Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico (Sources: urly.it/310pg-, urly.it/310ph0)

Coca-Cola's advertisements in Chiapas have also been effectively localized to appeal to indigenous populations, employing local imagery and traditional languages, further embedding the brand into the indigenous culture. For example, Coca-Cola's billboards written in the *Tzeltal* and *Tzotzil* languages, spoken by the local Mayan indigenous community, are commonly found in several Chiapas municipalities (Hardin, 2012).



Figure 26. Tzotzil Language Adaptation of “Taste the Feeling” in San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, Mexico (Source: urly.it/310r1t)

However, the health consequences of Coca-Cola's widespread consumption are severe: Chiapas has one of the highest per capita Coca-Cola consumption rates in the world, with indigenous children drinking more Coca-Cola than milk, leading to malnutrition and dental problems (Nagata, 2011). Also, the rising prevalence of type 2 diabetes is concerning, with some communities reporting rates as high as 30% among adults (Hardin, 2012). In 2006, reports revealed a doubling of diabetes rates in Mexico since 2000, making the disease the country's leading cause of mortality (The Guardian, 2015).

The case of Chiapas illustrates Coca-Cola's multifaceted and profound impact on indigenous communities, which goes far beyond simple product consumption, reshaping cultural practices at several levels. However, Chiapas is not an isolated case: the company's integration into indigenous cultures is a widespread phenomenon across Latin America and we will now explore in more detail how Coca-Cola has integrated into

various aspects of indigenous cultural practices, from religious ceremonies to culinary customs.

2.2.1.2 The Integration of Coca-Cola into Latino Indigenous Practices

In his article “Coca-Colonization and Hybridization of Diets Among the Tz’utujil Maya” (2011), Jason Nagata explains how Coca-Cola has become ingrained in various aspects of the Latin American indigenous cultures:

- *Religious practices and ceremonies:* following increasing concerns about alcohol consumption, religious leaders began introducing soft drinks as an alternative to alcoholic beverages during ceremonies in several Latin American countries (Nash, 2007). Coca-Cola is frequently employed instead of wine to celebrate church services, as carbonation is believed to drive away evil spirits and cleanse the soul (Nagata, 2011). Coca-Cola is also frequently offered to deities alongside candles and other traditional items. For example, in Santiago Atitlan, a man offered a one-liter bottle of Coke to the revered Mayan saint *Maximón* to ensure his daughter a pleasant wedding (Nagata, 2011). Soft drinks are also part of major Christian celebrations, such as *Semana Santa* and the *Feria del Apostol Santiago*. During this feria, the most significant celebration in Santiago Atitlan, a themed parade is held, and in 2007 under the theme “Traditions of Santiago Atitlan” children marched carrying Coca-Cola cases as part of local bridal dowry elements. Coca-Cola sponsored the parade, with a branded van and loudspeakers encouraging attendees to enjoy the festival with a Coke in hand (Nagata, 2011).
- *Traditional cuisine:* Coca-Cola has become a key ingredient in Latin American hybrid cooking, especially in celebratory dishes because of its distinct color, sweet-sour flavor, and status as a specialty food item (Nagata, 2011). For example, it is used in the Colombian leg of pork, in the Mexican *pollo a la Coca-Cola* and in the Guatemalan *gallo con Coca-Cola*, rooster marinated in Coke prepared for Christmas or weddings (Nagata, 2011).

- *Language*: Coca-Cola has also made its mark on the language of Latin American indigenous communities. Many Guatemalan and Argentinian communities believe “Coca-Cola” is a Spanish word and view the product as inherently Latino (Anderson-Fye, 2004), suggesting that the brand has achieved such a level of cultural integration that is perceived as part of the local heritage rather than as an imported product. The brand has also inspired local expressions such as “Coca-Cola shape” which refers to an idealized feminine silhouette resembling the iconic glass bottle and “2-Liter Coke bottle” to refer to a less slim physique without a defined waist (Anderson-Fye, 2004). Coca-Cola’s brand name has also become a generic term for many indigenous communities: for instance, in Mexico “Coca” is employed to describe any carbonated soft drink (Godoy, Reyes-Garcia & Huanca, 2007).
- *Healing and medical remedies*: Coca-Cola has been incorporated into traditional medicinal practices across Latin America. Local people attribute healing properties to the drink, often boiling it with indigenous herbs to treat various diseases including coughs, sore throats, fevers, headaches, and stomachaches (Nagata, 2011). The drink is also frequently prescribed by *curanderos*, traditional healers in Latin American cultures who use a blend of herbal medicine, spiritual practices and folk remedies to treat physical and spiritual illnesses (Yates-Doerr, 2015). This perception of Coca-Cola’s medicinal value probably stems from the historical development of soft drinks as a safer alternative to potentially contaminated water, as well as from local theories about the inherent *hot and cold* properties of foods (Nagata, 2011). According to these beliefs, cold substances like Coca-Cola are considered beneficial for “hot” illnesses such as sore throats and for refreshment in hot weather. However, they should be avoided in colder conditions or consumed at room temperature to prevent “cold” illnesses. The practice of boiling Coca-Cola before using it as a medicine aligns with these cultural beliefs about modulating substances’ temperature for therapeutic effects (Nagata, 2011).

- *Social events*: Coca-Cola has also become an integral part of major social events in Latin American cultures. It is a fundamental beverage at weddings, graduations, birthdays, funerals and *quinceañeras*, the traditional celebrations for 15-year-old Latino girls (Nagata, 2011).

Thus, Coca-Cola has successfully positioned itself within traditional contexts, representing a connection to global culture and satisfying indigenous populations' desire for modernization without necessarily requiring a break from tradition. As mentioned in Chapter 1, short-term-oriented cultures like Latin America respect traditions while also seeking innovation (De Mooij, 2013). Coca-Cola's integration into indigenous cultures shows that short-term-oriented cultures can embrace novelty by incorporating new elements into their original cultural practices, while still honoring their core traditions, meaning that innovation can coexist with and even reinforce respect for tradition.

However, Coca-Cola's deep penetration into local peoples' traditions and daily practices is not without controversy, as the company's pervasive influence has raised serious concerns regarding its impact on society, public health, and the local environment.

2.3 Health, Environmental and Social Consequences

Coca-Cola's multilevel colonization and cultural hybridization in Latin America has led to significant criticism concerning water availability, public health, labor practices and environmental sustainability. Since soft drinks are more affordable and easily available than bottled water, particularly when sold in returnable glass bottles, Coca-Cola is consumed daily as a water substitute in many Latin American countries (Nash, 2007). Multinational corporations like Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Nestlé have been granted groundwater exploitation rights by different Latin American governments, leading to the privatization of water resources and its consequent unaffordability. For example, "In Bolivia water rates increased by as much as 200 percent after privatization" (Abouharb & Cingranelli, 2007). Similarly, water privatization in Mexico started even before adequately serving many indigenous areas and Mexico City faces a severe water crisis with water supplies at risk of scarcity and contamination (Nash, 2007). As a result, local communities frequently protested against Coca-Cola's appropriation of water resources,

arguing that access to water is a fundamental human right that should remain affordable and accessible to all.

In addition, Coca-Cola has been accused of exacerbating health issues in Latin America following numerous studies that correlated the increased soft drink consumption with nutrition-related diseases in the region (Hawkes, 2006). The widespread consumption of Coca-Cola as a water substitute and in daily activities has been linked to alarming increases in obesity and type 2 diabetes rates (Nagata, 2011). Thus, Coca-Cola has contributed to the region's nutritional shift towards diets high in saturated fats and sugar, turning sugar-sweetened beverages into a primary source of energy and contributing to the rise of nutrition-related illnesses.

Coca-Cola has also faced accusations concerning labor rights violations in Latin America because of alleged poor working conditions and violence against labor organizers. In Colombia, between 1990 and 2002, nine union leaders at Coca-Cola's bottling plants were allegedly murdered by paramilitary groups with ties to plant managers (The Guardian, 2003). Similar allegations have been made in Guatemala, where the company has been accused of employing private security forces to intimidate union organizers (Sawayda et al., 2014). In response to these claims, a global activist campaign called "Stop Killer Coke" was launched in 2003 to raise awareness about the company's alleged human rights abuses and unethical practices (urly.it/310nd8). Following these accusations, Coca-Cola has implemented new human rights policies and increased engagement with labor unions and human rights organizations.

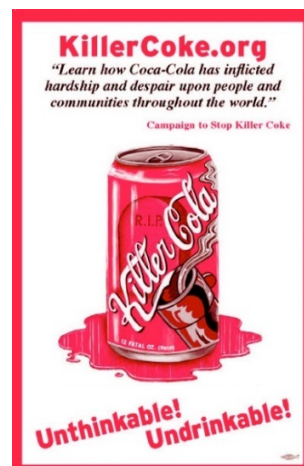


Figure 27. "Stop Killer Coke" Global Activist Campaign Against Coca-Cola (Source: urly.it/310tw9)

The environmental impact of Coca-Cola's operations in Latin America has also drawn criticism concerning plastic pollution and carbon footprint. The company's single-use plastic bottles have significantly contributed to plastic waste in a region where waste management systems are often inadequate. As a result, the company has been launching various initiatives to address growing environmental concerns in the region, such as the "Coca-Cola Retornable" (Returnable Coke) sustainability program implemented in many Latin American countries to reduce plastic waste by using returnable, washable and reusable glass and PET plastic bottles (urly.it/310ndn).

The company promoted its "Coca-Cola Retornable" through the 2023 "Somos Muchos" (We are many) advertising campaign launched across Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Argentina. This campaign highlighted Coca-Cola's commitment to environmental sustainability while fostering a sense of unity and collective action among Latin American consumers. Using the slogan "Si somos muchos, las cosas empiezan a cambiar" (If we are many, things start to change), Coca-Cola skillfully engaged local communities to join forces to reduce plastic waste, recognizing that sustainability efforts are more likely to succeed when framed as collective endeavors in collectivistic cultures. In fact, Latin American societies tend to prioritize group goals over individual objectives and perceive their identity as closely linked to their community (Hofstede, 1980). The collective spirit of the campaign was further emphasized by the message "La próxima vez que te preguntes si estás solo, recuerda que somos muchos" (Next time you wonder if you are alone, remember that we are many), reminding Latinos they are part of a larger movement for change. However, the campaign not only aligned with Latin American collectivism ("Hagamos juntos"; Let's do it together) but also resonated with the region's short-term orientation and desire for immediate gratification. By stating "Hagamos ahora, hagamos que hoy tenga mejor sabor que ayer" (Let's do it now, let's make today taste better than yesterday), the campaign focused on the present, motivating Latin American consumers with the promise of tangible, immediate results rather than abstract future goals, ensuring a more effective advertising appeal.

The Coca-Cola Argentina website describes the advertising campaign by stressing that meaningful change requires collective effort, highlighting the company's awareness of the importance of connecting with Latin American cultural values:

Sabemos que los cambios y la diferencia *se hacen juntos* [...]. Asumimos el compromiso de hacerlo *de manera conjunta* hacia la sustentabilidad y un mejor *futuro compartido* (urly.it/310ryq)¹.



Figure 28. Coca-Cola’s “Somos Muchos” Advertisement (2023; Source: urly.it/310shd)

Therefore, despite numerous controversies and criticism, “the sun never sets on the Coca-Cola empire” (Nagata, 2011) thanks to the company’s skillful integration into local cultural fabrics through locally-oriented and culturally-sensitive advertising. Advertising campaigns that resonate with local cultural values and traditions are more effective and persuasive than general and culturally insensitive ones, which tend to be overlooked and misunderstood (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005; Singh & Bartikowski, 2009).

In the Latin American context, creating culturally-significant advertising is particularly important, as the region is characterized by a strong sense of identity, where values such as *familismo*, *colectivismo*, and *religiosidad* deeply shape consumer preferences. In the next chapter, we will explore Latin American cultural values and analyze how Coca-Cola has effectively adapted its brand values to the Latin American ones, transforming a beverage into a symbol of belonging and cultural identity.

¹ We know that changes and differences *are made together* [...]. We are committed to *working together* towards sustainability and a better *shared future*.

CHAPTER 3

Latin American Cultural Values and Beliefs

*“Cultural values are not inherited like genes
but transmitted through countless daily acts”
– Néstor García Canclini*

3.1 Defining Hispanic and Latino Identities

When defining Hispanic cultural values and how global brands such as Coca-Cola structure their advertising to reflect them, it is crucial to remember that identifying cultures' boundaries to craft cross-cultural marketing strategies is more complex than we think. In fact, “One of the most typical errors marketers make when marketing to Hispanic consumers is to assume that Hispanics share the same worldview as they themselves or other consumers have” (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). In their book *Hispanic Marketing: A Cultural Perspective* (2005), Felipe and Betty Ann Korzenny argue that marketers should ask themselves what meaningful cultural elements and values advertising must convey to better resonate with Hispanic consumers.

Hispanic identity derives from a cultural heritage that unites different people through shared beliefs, values, worldviews and social perspectives. These similarities within Latin American countries originate from a common historical legacy of Spanish colonization, which forged a collective experience that defined the region's culture. Notably, in continents like South America, where foreign powers historically demarcated national boundaries, there is often little correspondence between political borders and cultural groups (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

The term *Hispanic* emerged in the 1970s as a U.S. Census Bureau classification to encompass individuals of Spanish origin or whose native language is Spanish, including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and South and Central Americans (Segal & Sosa, 1983). However, this label has been criticized as an imposed colonial symbol, given its etymological roots in *Hispania*, the ancient Roman term for the Iberian Peninsula. In response to these concerns, some Spanish-speaking communities proposed *Latino* as a more fitting alternative, even though this term also faced criticism as it potentially includes anyone from Latin-based cultures, such as Italians, Romanians, Portuguese and French. Despite the ongoing debates among Spanish speakers, *Hispanic* remains the more

widely adopted term in official and academic contexts (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005), serving as a broader label for anyone from Spanish-speaking countries, whereas *Latino* specifically defines people from Latin America.

While each Latin American country holds unique cultural characteristics and traditions, there exists a set of shared cultural values, beliefs and attitudes unifying all Hispanic groups (Segal & Sosa, 1983). These similarities form the roots of the Latin American cultural identity, transcending national borders and linguistic variations. As a result, the following section will examine the core values that constitute the essence of Latinos' culture and beliefs, gaining deeper insights into the collective identity that unifies Hispanic populations while appreciating the rich tapestry of Latin America's local cultural variations.

3.2 Latino Cultural Values

According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Latin American populations are characterized by high uncertainty avoidance and power distance, short-term orientation, masculinity, collectivism and polychronic time perception (Hofstede, 1980). More specifically, core Hispanic values include *collectivismo* and *familismo*, *machismo* and *marianismo*, *religiosidad* and *fatalismo*, folk beliefs, and a series of values governing interpersonal relations such as *respeto* and *dignidad*, *simpatía*, *personalismo* and *confianza* (Singh & Bartikowski, 2009; Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005; Delgado, 2017).

3.2.1 *Collectivismo* and *Familismo*

Latino cultures are collectivistic, characterized by a profound sense of belonging and loyalty to one's in-group. This *collectivismo* manifests through an emphasis on interdependence, mutual support and blending of individual and family identities. Latinos value conformity to societal norms and established social rules, prioritizing group needs and decisions over individual preferences (Hofstede, 1980). At the heart of Latin American collectivism lies the concept of *familismo*, a deeply rooted value that emphasizes maintaining close, interdependent relationships with extended family members. As Delgado (2017) points out, "Among Latinos, it is impossible to separate *familismo* from collectivism with changes in one cultural value creating changes in others".

Unlike individualistic cultures, where family is often seen as a temporary environment from which children are expected to gain independence as soon as they grow up, Latin American cultures view family as a lifelong influence: “The role and importance of the *familia* is not restricted to one particular age group and must be viewed from a life-cycle perspective, with the family playing an influential role throughout” (Delgado, 2017). The responsibility for raising children is seen as a collective effort that transcends the nuclear family, with extended family members actively participating in children’s upbringing. As a result, Latino families not only include blood relatives and in-laws but also a network of individuals connected by cultural traditions, such as *padrinos* (godparents) and close friends and neighbors, considered *como familia* (like family) (Delgado, 2017). This extended family structure is reflected in multi-generational households, where two, three, or even four generations commonly live together.

In addition, Latino families tend to be hierarchical, reflecting the culture’s high-power distance: elders and parents hold positions of authority, while younger family members are expected to show respect and value their guidance. This social security system, known as *compadrazgo*, involves two married couples (the parents and godparents), the child, a priest, and God to ensure the child’s safety and well-being in case of unforeseen circumstances (Delgado, 2017). Therefore, parents expect their children and grandchildren to take care of them as they age (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005) and children frequently choose to live close to their families even after they grow up (Delgado, 2017).

In addition, shared cultural traditions and celebrations play a fundamental role in reinforcing family bonds and transmitting cultural values across generations. Celebrating religious holidays or family gatherings such as baptisms, first communions, *quinceañeras* (a girl’s 15th birthday) and weddings is fundamental for strengthening relationships between children and extended family and showing family unity (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). Consequently, advertising depicting friends and family gatherings highly resonates with Latin American *collectivismo* and *familismo* as “Hispanic audiences will react more favorably to portrayals of family and friends than to more individualistic portrayals” (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

The centrality of *collectivismo* and *familismo* also deeply influences Latinos’ decision-making and social behavior. In fact, they often define their identity in relation to

their family and rely on family opinions for important decisions. This extends to Latinos' consumer choices, as purchasing decisions (such as buying a house or a car) are normally driven by family and group consensus (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). For example, "A Hispanic consumer is more likely to buy a certain car if many of the people in his or her social circle own one", suggesting that social influence is a powerful tool in Hispanic marketing (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

3.2.2 *Machismo* and *Marianismo*

According to Hofstede (1980), Latin American cultures are characterized by high masculinity, assertiveness, ambition and performance orientation (Singh & Bartikowski, 2009). Masculinity manifests in a clear distinction of gender roles, epitomized by the cultural values of *machismo* and *marianismo*. These two Hispanic values date back to the Spanish conquest of Latin America when the *mestizaje*² between local Indian women and Spanish conquerors began, establishing masculine domination and feminine submission (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

Consequently, the value of *machismo* was established, emphasizing male assertiveness, dominance, career orientation, emotional detachment and family protection. Traditionally, *machismo* was associated with authoritarianism, virility and dominance but a more modern understanding of this value encompasses a blend of toughness and sexuality, as well as a strong sense of responsibility and honor towards the family (Gregory & Munch, 1997). In his book *Social Work with Latinos: Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Perspectives* (2007), Delgado argues that *machismo* has been employed across the years to define both positive and negative types of male behavior. Positive representations of *machismo* refer to a man's strength under difficult circumstances and employ the terms "*trabajador* (hard worker), *noble* (honorable), *responsable* (responsible), *hombre de palabra* (a man of his word)" (Delgado, 2017). Instead, machos' negative characteristics include excessive authoritarianism, control and emotional restrictions on their wives, which can even result in domestic violence (Delgado, 2017).

² *Mestizaje* refers to the process of "reproduction between and cultural intermixing of Spanish and Indigenous American people" (urly.it/312dry).

On the other hand, the concept of *marianismo* is rooted in the Catholic tradition and portrays women as the emblem of purity, moral excellence and submission, defining them as spiritually superior and morally stronger than men. According to *marianismo*, women must endure emotional and physical challenges for their families and the role of motherhood is highly admired within the society (Delgado, 2017). However, women's sexuality is thought to be under men's control, as sexual activity is seen as a mere means of reproduction rather than a way of pleasure (Delgado, 2017).

This emphasized gender role division, caused by the strong influence of *machismo* and *marianismo* in Latinos' cultural heritage, starts at a young age when girls are supposed to help their mothers with household activities (such as cooking and taking care of younger siblings), whereas boys are expected to work alongside their fathers (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

As women should be devoted to caring for their husbands and children, advertising often portrays them in their motherly role, sponsoring products that will help them maintain their homes and take care of their families. At the same time, because men feel proudly responsible for leading their families, advertising frequently markets masculine products emphasizing strength, independence and success, as Latino men are more inclined to purchase products that reinforce their perceived masculinity (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

3.2.3 *Religiosidad* and *Fatalismo*

Latin American cultures are characterized by short-term orientation, focusing on the present rather than making long-term plans, prioritizing immediate gratification and social harmony and having a flexible approach to time and punctuality (Hofstede, 1980). However, despite being present-oriented, Latinos profoundly respect traditions and historical customs.

Another defining characteristic of short-term-oriented societies is their strong religious inclination (De Mooij, 2013): spirituality and *religiosidad* are integral values of the Latin American identity, playing a crucial role in people's lives and traditions (Delgado, 2017). Coming from a complex history of foreign domination, Latinos deeply appreciate the simple fact of being alive, prioritizing immediate benefits over delayed gratification and aiming to savor each day to the fullest as exemplified in the saying

“Morning is a time for celebration because when you open your eyes you know you are still alive” (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). This present-focused perspective is intrinsically linked to *fatalismo*, a cultural value rooted in the belief that life events are predetermined or controlled by fate, limiting individual agency. This fatalist view is epitomized by the concept of *Dios Dirá* (God Will Tell), according to which one’s life and outcomes are in God’s hands and human control over destiny is limited (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). Since life is unpredictable, it is preferable to prioritize immediate experiences over future planning, meaning that “Saving for tomorrow is less important than throwing a great *quinceañera* party today” (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

The cultural value of *mañana* (tomorrow) further reinforces Latinos’ fatalist worldview, encouraging people to enjoy the present moment while postponing tasks and decisions. This tendency to delay concerns to *mañana* provides a sense of security, allowing *hoy* (today) to unfold with its inherent unpredictability (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

Closely intertwined with *fatalismo* is the concept of life as a *valle de lágrimas* (valley of tears), which considers suffering inevitable and life inherently challenging, reducing the perceived impact of individual actions compared to the course of destiny (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). Consequently, while enjoying each day remains paramount, the afterlife gains fundamental importance as it represents an opportunity for redemption.

Latinos’ strong *religiosidad* has also instilled a pervasive sense of existential guilt in society, which manifests through the concept of *culpa* (guilt). This sentiment is frequent in Latinos’ daily lives, particularly among mothers who often feel guilty when they perceive they have not done enough for their families as “They find reconfirmation in their identity as a mother when their children love the things they provide for them” (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). Recognizing this, advertising targeting Latino mothers frequently aims to alleviate this sense of guilt to foster long-lasting connections and enhance advertising appeal (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

Thus, advertisements targeting Latin Americans must consider their short-term orientation, *fatalismo* and *religiosidad*, emphasizing immediate benefits while respecting their religious beliefs.

3.2.4 Folk Beliefs and Healing Practices

Understanding Latin American folk beliefs and healing practices is crucial to appreciating the depth of Latinos' cultural values. In Latin America, the two main belief systems that derive from a blend of religious and healing traditions are *Santería* and *Espiritismo*. *Santería*, a syncretic religion born in colonial Cuba, derived from African slaves' blending of their West African Yoruba beliefs with Catholic traditions to preserve their original religious practices (Brandon, 1997). It consists of a supreme god and various *orishas*, deities to whom devotees make offerings and rituals, including animal sacrifices. Instead, *Espiritismo* emerged in the 19th century in Puerto Rico and encompasses spiritual communication, belief in reincarnation, healing practices and cleansing rituals carried out using natural elements (Brandon, 1997).

Latin American folk healing practices are deeply ingrained in the region's cultural heritage and traditional medicine, blending indigenous, African and European healing traditions. The most common Latin American folk healing system is *curanderismo*, which combines physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing practices to address both physical and psychological diseases (Gamboa & Holen, 2023). *Curanderismo* reflects the holistic Latino worldview that considers health as a balance of multiple factors:

Many Hispanics think that illnesses can be caused by 1. Psychological states such as embarrassment, envy, anger, fear, fright, excessive worry, turmoil in the family, or improper behavior or violations of moral or ethical codes; 2. Environmental or natural conditions such as bad air, germs, dust, excess cold or heat, bad food, or poverty; and 3. Supernatural causes such as malevolent spirits, bad luck, or the witchcraft of living enemies (who are believed to cause harm out of vengeance or envy) (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

Curanderos and curanderas are highly respected in Latin American communities as spiritual healers who combine various types of medical knowledge inherited through generations or perceived divine intervention: "The objects used include herbs, common household items (eggs, lemons, garlic) and religious or mystical symbols (water, oils, incense, perfumes), [...] while the ceremonies include prayers, rituals and cleansings" (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). A core principle in *curanderismo* is the *hot and cold* theory of illness, which categorizes illnesses and remedies depending on the temperature: to restore bodily balance, cold illnesses require hot remedies, whereas hot diseases must be treated with cold remedies (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005). For instance, in case of a cold disease, a hot drink would be recommended while a cold one should be avoided.

Curanderos normally treat several culturally bound Latino diseases, such as *susto*, *nervios*, *mal de ojo* and *empacho*, that are believed to derive from spiritual or emotional causes. *Susto* (fright or soul loss) is an illness caused by a traumatic experience or event that displaces a person's soul from their body whose symptoms include anxiety, depression and loss of appetite (Delgado, 2017). Curanderos treat it with spiritual rituals such as *limpias* (cleansings) using candles, herbs and prayers to call the soul back to the body. *Nervios* (nerves) is a broader illness than *susto* which stems from overwhelming situations and causes anxiety, stress and emotional instability (Delgado, 2017). *Mal de ojo* (evil eye) occurs when a person intentionally or unintentionally harms others, especially children, through malicious gaze out of admiration or envy. Symptoms include unexplained crying, fever, vomiting and loss of energy and it is normally treated by rubbing an egg over the affected person's body to absorb the negative energy (Delgado, 2017). *Empacho* (digestive blockage) is believed to be caused by food stuck to the walls of the stomach and its primary symptoms include stomach pain and bloating (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

3.2.5 Interpersonal Relations: From *Respecto* to *Confianza*

Latinos' interpersonal relations are profoundly shaped by five interconnected cultural values that constitute the foundation of Latinos' social interactions: *respeto*, *dignidad*, *simpatía*, *personalismo* and *confianza*.

At the heart of Latin American social dynamics lies *respeto* (respect), a core cultural value that emphasizes respecting others, particularly elders and authority figures. In Latin American cultures, where context and non-verbal cues play significant roles, maintaining social harmony through respect and courtesy is paramount (Singh & Bartikowski, 2009). This value manifests in the Spanish use of the formal *usted* form to address older people, strangers, or those in positions of power, conveying appropriate distance and formality (Delgado, 2017).

Linked to the concept of *respeto* is the cultural value of *dignidad*, which refers to a person's self-worth and personal honor and constitutes the essence of one's soul, protected from insult by the observance of *respeto* (Delgado, 2017). In Latino cultures, protecting one's dignity and acknowledging that of others is essential to maintain

respectful social relations given that face preservation is highly valued and public humiliation is deeply hurtful (Hofstede, 1980).

Simpatía highlights Latinos' need to maintain harmonious and friendly interpersonal relations at all costs, avoiding open conflict or criticism to preserve social harmony. As a result, public disagreement is undesirable, and trust is built through warm, polite social interactions that actively seek to minimize negative confrontations (Delgado, 2017).

Personalismo reflects the importance of deep personal connections and it is described as a form of “‘formal friendliness’ or a warm, personal relationship that attempts to minimize professional distance” (Delgado, 2017). This value derives from Latinos' high-context and collectivistic orientation, which prioritizes intimate and individualized communication over formal and impersonal interaction styles. *Personalismo* can be observed in various ways, such as professional meetings held in informal settings like homes, food sharing as a sign of trust and mutual respect, or through non-verbal cues like handshakes, physical proximity, hugs, or cheek kisses (Delgado, 2017). Consequently, the absence of *personalismo* may inhibit Latinos' engagement, as they may feel uncomfortable with detached interactions in social and professional contexts (Delgado, 2017).

Finally, *confianza* emphasizes the need to build trust at the root of any personal interaction. Latinos expect loyalty and view breaches of trust as deeply disrespectful actions that can irreparably damage relationships. *Confianza* “establishes a bond that can exist over an extended period of time and is based on proof of positive and contributing actions” (Delgado, 2017), meaning that it is not easily granted, but it is a gradual process built on consistent positive behaviors and interactions.

3.2.6 *Orgullo*: Latino Cultural Pride

Cultural pride is a fundamental value of Latinos' identity as “Hispanics have a tremendous pride in themselves and their heritage and culture” (Segal & Sosa, 1983). This profound *orgullo* derives from a shared colonial history and linguistic legacy, with the Spanish language serving as a strong source of pride. As stated by Segal & Sosa (2005), “all Hispanics consider their language the most important part of their tradition to preserve”, making the Hispanic market particularly attractive for marketers (Korzenny

& Korzenny, 2005). This linguistic bond makes Spanish-language advertising more appealing and effective than English-language campaigns when targeting Latin American audiences (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005).

Latinos' cultural pride manifests in many internationally renowned ways: music and dance forms like salsa, cumbia, reggaeton, tango and flamenco; literary movements like magical realism; culinary traditions with unique dishes specific to each Latin American country, such as *mate* and *asado* in Argentina, *tacos* in Mexico and *arepas* in Colombia, etc. More specifically, traditional music and food represent two fundamental pillars of Latin American culture, establishing an emotional connection that serves as a unifying cultural experience (Delgado, 2017). Cultural celebrations further exemplify Latinos' pride, serving as occasions to honor shared cultural heritage. For example, the Mexican tradition of the *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) transforms grief into an opportunity to remember deceased loved ones; the *Hispanic Heritage Month* celebrates Hispanic contribution to the nation's cultural and artistic heritage; and the *Fiestas Patrias* commemorate each Latin American country's independence from Spain, reinforcing national identity. All these events are proudly celebrated to honor Latinos' cultural heritage through music, dance, food and communal gatherings.

Latinos also take immense pride in strong family connections, seen as a sign of community strength, and resilience, the ability to overcome economic hardships, navigate challenges and adapt to new environments. As a result, "Latin American popular culture is filled with examples of 'being poor but proud' type statements" (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005), highlighting the importance of persevering against adversity.

It is crucial to note that, while Latinos proudly celebrate their cultural heritage, they also condemn stereotypical representations that can result in hostility from other ethnic groups. Consequently, brands seeking to engage with Latin American audiences should avoid stereotypes and foster genuine, culturally bound Latino representations by adapting their advertising and products to their values and preferences (Delgado, 2017).

Thus, Latinos' cultural pride permeates every aspect of their life, from language and artistic expressions to family values and religion. Respecting this *orgullo* and avoiding stereotypical portrayals is essential to effectively engage with Latin American consumers in both social and professional contexts.

3.3 Latino and Latina Stereotypes in the U.S. Media

Stereotyping is a cognitive process used to categorize social and cultural groups based on simplified mental representations using a limited set of characteristics applied universally (López, 2023). Professionals must avoid stereotypes in intercultural communication and advertising as they often lead to oversimplification and misrepresentation of cultural groups.

In the case of Latinos and Latinas, in the U.S. media they have frequently been subjected to negative stereotyping and misconceptions that portray them as criminal, lazy, or prone to problematic behaviors such as teen pregnancy or gang involvement (López, 2023).

3.3.1 Latino Stereotypes

In his book *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*, Berg (2002) identifies some of the most common Latino stereotypes that should be avoided to promote a more accurate and respectful Latino representation in media and advertising. More specifically, Latino stereotypes in the U.S. media include:

- The *Macho* stereotype is rooted in the cultural concept of *machismo* and portrays Latino men as hyper-masculine, emotionally distant, dominant and controlling towards their wives (urly.it/310zxv). Over the years, Hollywood movies and advertising have portrayed *Machos* as fearless, aggressive and violent, reinforcing the traditional Latino gender role division where men work to earn money and women take care of their household and children (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014).



Figure 29. The *Macho* Stereotype (Source: urly.it/311-z9)

- The *Latin Lover*, one of the most widely used Latino stereotypes that gained popularity through early 20th-century movies, describes Latinos as driven by sexual desire, naturally passionate and irresistible, high-skilled in the art of romance and threatening to women's virtue (Berg, 2002).



Figure 30. The *Latin Lover* Stereotype (Source: urly.it/311-z7)

- The *Gangster* or *Bandido* stereotype portrays Latinos as inherently dangerous and untrustworthy gang members or criminals. *Bandidos* are typically described as menacing, inherently dishonest, irrational and overly emotional (Berg, 2002). They generally cannot speak English or speak it with a strong Spanish accent, highlighting their villainous nature (Berg, 2002). According to Berg (2002), the two main variants of the *Bandido* stereotype are the drug runner and the inner-city gang member, reinforcing the harmful idea that criminality is inherent to the Latino culture. A typical representation of this stereotype is the character of Tony Montana from the “Scarface” movie.



Figure 31. The *Gangster* or *Bandido* Stereotype (Source: urly.it/311m6h)

- The *Male Buffoon* stereotype presents Latinos as unintelligent, clumsy comical figures, often playing the fool to entertain audiences with their perceived stupidity (Berg, 2002). The *Male Buffoon* is described as childish and simpleminded, with an exaggerated Spanish accent, ridiculous behavior and overly emotional actions (urly.it/310zac). This stereotypical depiction perpetuates the dangerous belief that Latinos are intellectually inferior and should not be taken seriously in professional or social contexts.



Figure 32. The *Male Buffoon* Stereotype (Source: urly.it/310-c_)

3.3.2 Latina Stereotypes

On the other hand, in the U.S. Latina stereotypical representations are dichotomous, oscillating between the “good girl” and the “bad girl” (López, 2023). The “good” Latina embodies the principles of *marianismo*, being chaste, modest, submissive and devoted to her husband and children, whereas the “bad” Latina is sexually uninhibited and prone to

early pregnancy (López, 2023). In her article “Growing Up Latina in the U.S.: Controlling Images, Stereotypes and Resistance”, López (2023) argues that “This dichotomous representation is rooted in centuries-old depictions of Latinas as either ‘virtuous virgins’ similar to *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, or ‘pagan putas’ like *Malinche*, the mistress and interpreter of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortez”. Latinas’ media representations often exacerbate these stereotypes, portraying them as “either hypersexualized ‘hoochie mamas’, exotic bombshells, gang members, domestic workers or teen mothers” (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014).

The most common Latina stereotypes in the U.S. media are:

- The *Spicy Latina* (or *Hot Señorita*) stereotype describes Latinas as fiery, passionate, exotic and sexually uninhibited. It gained prominence in the 1940s and persisted through the 2000s, embodied by celebrities like Jennifer Lopez, Shakira and Salma Hayek (urly.it/310-0x).

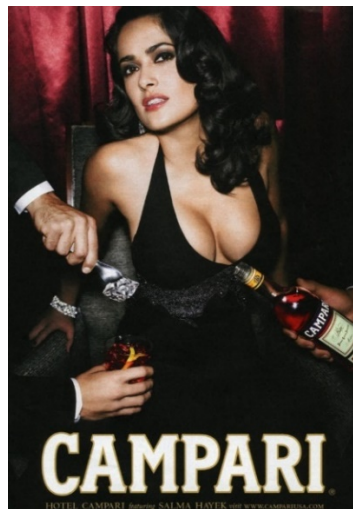


Figure 33. The Spicy Latina Stereotype (Source: urly.it/310-ca)

- The *Maid* stereotype confines Latinas to domestic work and subservient roles, reinforcing harmful assumptions about their limited capabilities and inferior social status (urly.it/310-0x). This portrayal can be seen in Jennifer Lopez’s character in the movie “Maid in Manhattan”.

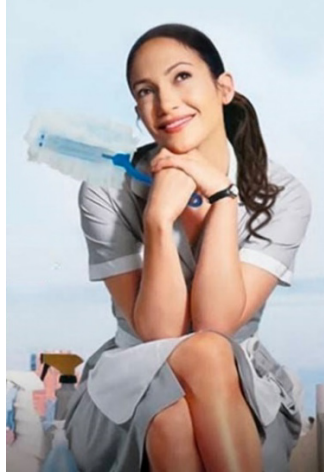


Figure 34. The Maid Stereotype (Source: urly.it/311m36)

- The *Dark Lady* stereotype is the counterpart to the male Latin Lover stereotype, emphasizing Latinas' physical appearance and sexual appeal. According to Berg (2002), “the female Latin lover is virginal, inscrutable, aristocratic—and erotically appealing precisely because of these characteristics. Her cool distance is what makes her fascinating to Anglo males”. This complex and stereotypical Latina characterization is expressed by Salma Hayek in the movie “From Dusk Till Dawn”.



Figure 35. The Dark Lady Stereotype (Source: urly.it/311m46)

- The *Harlot* corresponds to the male *Bandido* stereotype and depicts Latinas as lusty and hot-tempered, suggesting they are primarily driven by passion and sexual desire and that they cannot live without a man (Berg, 2002).



Figure 36. The Harlot Stereotype (Source: urly.it/310-d2)

- The *Female Clown* is the female version of the Male Buffoon and is used to neutralize Latina's sexual appeal, presenting them in a ridiculous way as comical and foolish (Berg, 2002). One of the most common examples is the character of Betty Suarez from the American TV series "Ugly Betty".



Figure 37. The Female Clown Stereotype (Source: urly.it/311m2t)

- The *Loud and Dramatic* stereotype portrays Latinas as loud, overly expressive, and prone to emotional outbursts, suggesting a lack of control or rationality (urly.it/311m1t).

- The *Submissive Wife* stereotype describes Latinas as traditionally obedient, subservient to their husbands and bound by conservative gender roles (Berg, 2002; López & Chesney-Lind, 2014; López, 2023).

Thus, the U.S. media representations of Latinos and Latinas often rely on stereotypes, failing to capture the complexity of their culture and negatively impacting how they are perceived in both professional and social contexts. Being aware of the main Latino stereotypes is fundamental to fostering more authentic cultural portrayals in the media while avoiding oversimplifications that can lead to criticism.

3.4 Adapting Coca-Cola's Brand Values to Latin American Culture

As stated on the official website, The Coca-Cola Company's mission is "to refresh the world, to inspire moments of optimism and happiness, and to create value and make a difference" (urly.it/310-sg). This multifaceted mission is supported by a set of core brand values that include leadership, collaboration, integrity, accountability, passion, diversity and quality (urly.it/310-sg). All these values form the foundation of Coca-Cola's global brand identity, but the company's success lies in its ability to skillfully align these values with the cultural norms of its target markets.

In Latin America, Coca-Cola has effectively adapted its brand values to local cultural ones, as evidenced by its localized advertising strategies and product offerings. First, Coca-Cola's emphasis on *collaboration* perfectly matches Latinos' cultural values of *collectivismo* and *familismo*. Recognizing the central role of family and community in Latin American societies, the company has tailored its marketing strategy to highlight shared experiences and family gatherings. As a result, Coca-Cola's advertisements frequently portray extended Latino families enjoying Coca-Cola together, reinforcing the brand's role in fostering social connections and strengthening family bonds.

Similarly, the company's mission to "inspire moments of optimism and happiness" (urly.it/310-sg) aligns with Latinos' cultural tendency towards short-term orientation, present-focus and *mañana* mindset, a value system that focuses on enjoying today and postponing concerns about the future. Coca-Cola capitalizes on this cultural trait by

encouraging consumers to share a Coke with loved ones to savor each moment to the fullest and focus on the present moment.

Coca-Cola's commitment to embrace *diversity* and promote inclusion is reflected in its multifaceted approach to honoring Latinos' cultural heritage and national pride. The company values Latinos' cultural diversity through various initiatives: featuring a wide range of Latinos' ethnicities in its advertising, translating campaigns into various Latin American Spanish dialects and indigenous languages, sponsoring cultural events and celebrations across the region and developing localized product offerings and beverage flavors. In particular, Coca-Cola has long recognized the power of music and food in the Latin American culture, positioning itself as a promoter of Latinos' culinary and musical uniqueness. In terms of music, Coca-Cola frequently sponsors music festivals featuring local Latino artists in its advertising campaigns. An example of the company's commitment to honoring local music is the *Coca-Cola Flow Fest*, an annual festival that originated in Mexico and has since spread across Latin America, becoming a cultural phenomenon. This event focuses on reggaeton and urban Latin music and draws top Latin American artists and thousands of enthusiasts to celebrate the power of music as a source of cultural pride (urly.it/310_5p).



Figure 38. Coca-Cola Flow Fest in Mexico (2024; Source: urly.it/310ym_)

In terms of local cuisine, the *Coca-Cola Food Fest* epitomizes the company's commitment to celebrating Latin American gastronomy. This vibrant festival blends culinary experiences with live entertainment, resonating particularly strongly in Latin America, where traditional cuisine constitutes a cornerstone of cultural identity. This

festival aims to unite people through their shared love for food, showcasing a variety of food vendors, talented local chefs and unique culinary experiences to celebrate local dishes while promoting Coca-Cola as the perfect beverage pairing to Latinos' regional tastes (urly.it/310_6s). The Coca-Cola Food Fest is not just a food event, but it also focuses on sustainability and community building by fostering connections through gastronomy and entertainment (urly.it/310_6s).



Figure 39. Coca-Cola Food Fest in Colombia (2024; Source: urly.it/310_70)

Coca-Cola's dedication to inclusion and Latinos' uniqueness celebration is also manifested through its localized advertising campaigns, honoring Latino cultural pride and events. For instance, Coca-Cola celebrates the *Hispanic Heritage Month*, a month-long celebration taking place from September 15th to October 15th to celebrate Hispanic culture and Latino artistic and culinary contributions in the U.S. (urly.it/310_fc). In 2020, to honor this cultural celebration, Coca-Cola shared this image accompanied by the collectivist statement "Juntos, Somos Más Fuertes" (Together, We Are Stronger).



Figure 40. Coca-Cola Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month (2020; Source: urly.it/310_hz)

Similarly, to celebrate the 2024 Hispanic Heritage Month, Coca-Cola launched an exciting sweepstake: the prize offers a trip for two people to attend the *Premios Juventud*, an annual award show honoring Latin American music and pop culture ([urly.it/311mdb](https://www.urly.it/311mdb)). This promotion not only engaged with the Latino community but also highlighted Coca-Cola's commitment to celebrating Latin American culture through the cornerstone of music.



Figure 41. Coca-Cola's "Sip to the Rhythm of Hispanic Heritage" Campaign (2024; Source: [urly.it/311md2](https://www.urly.it/311md2))

Another crucial cultural occasion celebrated by Coca-Cola is the Mexican *Día de los Muertos*, a celebration rooted in ancient indigenous traditions that consists of welcoming the spirits of deceased loved ones rather than mourning their loss. The typical symbol of this celebration is the Mexican *calavera*, a decorative skull that reminds Mexicans to live every moment to the fullest and celebrate the joy of life focusing on the present ([urly.it/311hgz](https://www.urly.it/311hgz)). In 2018, Coca-Cola shared a photo featuring traditional *calaveras* accompanied by the message "Festejemos juntos la alegría de vivir" (Let's celebrate together the joy of living), reinforcing short-term orientation and present focus while honoring Mexican cultural traditions.



Figure 42. Coca-Cola's *Feliz Día de Muertos* Packaging (2018; Source: urly.it/311hsx)

Moreover, Coca-Cola periodically introduces beverages tailored to each Latin American market's preferences and needs. Examples include the Argentinian *Coca-Cola Life* made with the natural sweetener stevia, the Peruvian *Inca Kola*, the Mexican *Fresca*, which caters to the Mexican preference for citrus flavors, and the *Coca-Cola Sin Azúcar*, a sugar-free version that recognizes growing health concerns in Latin America.

Thus, The Coca-Cola Company has skillfully aligned its brand cultural values with Latin American ones at several levels. Coca-Cola's emphasis on shared experiences deeply resonates with Latinos' values of *colectivismo* and *familismo*, fostering a profound sense of community and togetherness. At the same time, the brand's focus on the happiness of everyday situations and the importance of living in the present moment harmonizes with the region's short-term orientation and present-focused mindset. Furthermore, Coca-Cola's commitment to diversity and inclusion is exemplified through its sponsorship of culturally significant events and the creation of experiences that honor Latinos' cultural pride and heritage, positioning the company as more than just a beverage, but as a culturally sensitive brand that values the nuances of Latin American traditions. This strategic connection of Coca-Cola's brand values with Latinos' cultural pillars has allowed the company to cultivate a strong, authentic connection with Latin American consumers, demonstrating that global brands can achieve local relevance through skillful cultural adaptation. In the following chapter, we will delve deeper into Coca-Cola's efforts to align with Latin American cultural values by examining the company's advertising campaigns across different Latin American countries.

CHAPTER 4

The “Real Magic” of Coca-Cola’s Advertising Cultural Adaptation in Latin America

*“Culture is multi-faceted,
though it’s ultimately about the right behaviors for each situation.
It’s an expression of who we are”
– James Quincey*

4.1 Coca-Cola’s Journey From “Taste the Feeling” to “Real Magic”

As discussed in the previous chapters, Coca-Cola’s glocalized advertising approach embodies the “think global, act local” philosophy, tailoring advertising campaigns and product offerings to align with the unique cultural values and preferences of each target market. Before examining specific Coca-Cola advertising campaigns, it is crucial to trace the brand’s evolution over the years by analyzing its slogans and core communication concepts to provide insight into how the company has adapted its message and philosophy to resonate with Latin American cultural values and traditions.

4.1.1 Open Happiness or *Destapa la Felicidad*

In 2009, Coca-Cola launched the *Open Happiness* global marketing campaign which promoted enjoying life’s simple pleasures with Coca-Cola (urly.it/311ncq). Throughout its history, the company has aimed to convey an optimistic worldview, which was accurately epitomized by the *Open Happiness* concept, recognizing that despite our daily challenges, there are still countless moments to be happy and appreciate life while drinking a Coke (urly.it/311ncq). The *Open Happiness* advertising campaign aimed at linking Coca-Cola to feelings of happiness and joy, portraying the drink as a universal symbol of togetherness and a loyal companion in every shared moment of joy (urly.it/311ncq). Starting as a global concept, in line with its “think global, act local” approach, the slogan was translated for the Hispanic market as *Destapa la felicidad* (or *Destapá la felicidad* in Argentina).



Figure 43. Translation of “Open Happiness” as “Destapa la felicidad” for Spanish Markets (2009; Source: urly.it/311nda)

4.1.2 Taste the Feeling or *Siente el Sabor*

In 2016, the *Open Happiness* concept was replaced by *Taste the Feeling*, which eventually became the most iconic Coca-Cola trademark thanks to the captivating jingle that accompanied the slogan. The new tagline emphasized that, while Coca-Cola offers a variety of products, they all share the same tasteful and refreshing attributes (urly.it/311ng0). While the *Open Happiness* concept highlighted the joy of having a Coke, the *Taste the Feeling* philosophy focused on the product to showcase the emotional side of the Coca-Cola experience, as the simple pleasure of drinking a Coke makes every moment special (urly.it/311ng0). Similarly to the previous concept, *Taste the Feeling* was adapted for the Hispanic market and became *Siente el Sabor* (o *Senti el Sabor* in Argentina), a slogan that skillfully aligned with Latinos’ present focus and short-term orientation. In fact, *Siente el Sabor* invites consumers to taste and enjoy Coca-Cola in the present, appealing to immediate sensory experiences and resonating with Latin America’s strong value of savoring the present moment and being happy for life’s daily pleasures.



Figure 44. Translation of “Taste the Feeling” as “Siente el sabor” for Spanish Markets (2016; Source: urly.it/311nj1)

4.1.3 Real Magic or *Magia de Verdad*

In 2021, Coca-Cola changed its globally famous *Taste the Feeling* concept to the most recent *Real Magic*, encouraging people to celebrate the authentic magic of humanity. This philosophy was developed to acknowledge the dichotomy of our modern world, reflected in Coca-Cola's ambivalent identity as both authentic and mysterious, real and magical (urly.it/311nn4). Coca-Cola believes that such dichotomies make our world more interesting and that magic stems from finding the extraordinary in ordinary moments (urly.it/311nn7). With the *Real Magic* concept, Coca-Cola also renewed its visual identity by introducing a reimagined version of its logo, the “Hug” logo, which reminds of a hug and takes inspiration from the way the trademark wraps around the iconic Coca-Cola packaging (urly.it/311nn4).



Figure 45. Coca-Cola's “Real Magic” Visual Identity (2021; Source: urly.it/311np8)

Coca-Cola's *Real Magic* most recent concept, adapted to the Hispanic market as *Magia de Verdad*, perfectly aligns with Latinos' cultural values of *collectivismo* and *familismo*, as it highlights shared, spontaneous moments of human interaction, focusing on the “magic” that happens when people come together. In addition, this concept stresses the importance of finding magic and joy in ordinary moments, aligning with Latinos' short-term orientation and present focus. The *Real Magic* philosophy also resonates with Latinos' cultural pride and rich tapestry of traditions, as it embraces cultural diversity by highlighting that what makes us different is what unites us: “Real magic happens when

people get together and when what we share in common is greater than what sets us apart” (urly.it/311nn4). Under the *Real Magic* concept, Coca-Cola developed several advertising campaigns in Latin America to celebrate the power of diversity highlighting that, even though Latinos from different countries may be different, they share a common cultural heritage which is part of their shared identity.



Figure 46. Translation of “Real Magic” as “Magia de verdad” for Spanish Markets (2021; Source: urly.it/311npj)

Therefore, despite being global, Coca-Cola’s concepts and advertising slogans are skillfully translated and adapted to the cultural values of each target audience, including Latin America. In particular, Coca-Cola’s last concept, *Real Magic*, perfectly aligns with Latinos’ cultural values by celebrating cultural diversity as a way to feel even more connected and unified.

To gain a deeper understanding of how Coca-Cola aligns its advertising with Latino cultural values and traditions, the following sections will examine several of the company’s successful campaigns and the specific cultural elements they resonate with. Additionally, we will explore certain Coca-Cola campaigns that have faced controversy, analyzing the aspects that sparked criticism within Latin American cultures and highlighting the complexities of cultural sensitivity in advertising.

4.2 Coca-Cola’s Advertising in Latin America

Coca-Cola’s glocalized advertising strategy reflects the “think global, act local” philosophy, crafting campaigns with universal themes that appeal to international

audiences while adapting these messages to reflect regional identities, traditions and cultural values. In Latin America, Coca-Cola's advertisements often embrace shared Latino values, celebrating *familismo*, *collectivismo* and *orgullo cultural*. At the same time, the company designs localized advertising campaigns that resonate with specific Latin American countries, aligning with national traditions and cultural events. This dual approach not only deepens Coca-Cola's connection to Latin American markets but also demonstrates a deep understanding of consumers' regional and national cultural dynamics.

Coca-Cola's strategy in Latin America consists of both tailoring campaigns for specific Latin American countries and creating advertising that resonates with a shared Latino identity rooted in the historical background and cultural heritage. This approach reflects a profound understanding of Latin American audiences, who not only identify with their individual nations but also with a broader Latino heritage that reinforces their cultural pride and shared values. By celebrating core values like cultural pride, family ties and collective goals, the following Coca-Cola advertisements honor the collective Latino spirit, creating a sense of belonging and recognition that transcends national boundaries.

4.2.1 *Orgullosos de ser Latino* (2015)

During the 2015 *Hispanic Heritage Month*, Coca-Cola launched its *Orgullosos de ser Latino* (Proud to be Latino) campaign, a celebration of Latin American cultural identity and pride. The campaign highlighted the rich diversity within the Latino community, featuring individuals from various ethnic backgrounds. This inclusive approach was meant to send a powerful message that resonated with Latinos' cultural pride: despite the multicultural nature of the population, Latinos share a common cultural heritage that serves as a source of collective pride.

In particular, Coca-Cola aimed "to celebrate the immense pride that surrounds [Latinos'] culture, their roots and most of all their last names" (urly.it/311s2a) with a campaign focusing on Latino surnames as a symbol of cultural legacy. As a result, the company introduced the *Heritage Tattoo Can*, an ingenious Coke can that allowed people to get their family name tattooed temporarily, honoring their ancestry and reinforcing cultural pride.



Figure 47. The Coca-Cola Tattoo Can from the “Orgulloso de ser Latino” Campaign (2015; Source: urly.it/311sg6)

This creative element became the focal point of the commercial, capturing touching moments of individuals sharing their personal family stories while applying the tattoo with their last name (urly.it/311s34). Coca-Cola also encouraged people to share their family stories online using the hashtag #OrgullosoDeSer (followed by participants’ last names) and offered personalized Coke bottles featuring family surnames through their website, creating tangible connections with Latinos’ families and their cultural heritage (urly.it/311s34).

By making family names the key element of the campaign, Coca-Cola emphasized its role in Latino family celebrations, reinforcing its contribution to supporting familiar bonds. The timing of the campaign during the *Hispanic Heritage Month*, a crucial cultural event for Latin American people, highlighted the deep meaning that family names hold within Latino communities, recognizing that cultural celebration is not just an occasional event but an integral part of daily life, where surnames symbolize both Latinos’ cultural heritage and identity (urly.it/311s34).

The *Orgulloso de ser Latino* commercial opens by affirming that “there are many things that make Latinos proud” and asking different people the question “what does it mean to be Latino?” (urly.it/311s32). Responses reflect a deep sense of cultural pride, as people say that being Latino means so many different things, starting from “a sense of pride that no other culture has” (urly.it/311s32). Among the many sources of pride, the

commercial highlights that the most significant one is the family name (urly.it/311s32). As stated by various people in the commercial, for Latinos their last name is more than just a label, as it is a bond with their family and cultural roots which carries the family's history, cultural legacy and identity. For instance, a man named *García* describes his family's barber shop, a business passed down through generations, as a legacy tied to his last name, which he feels a deep responsibility to honor. Another participant, *Santamaría*, associates his surname with his religious upbringing, highlighting the profound sense of *religiosidad* present in Latino culture. Similarly, while painting her family's market with both their last name and a Coca-Cola mural, a woman proudly explains that members of the *Pérez* family are “invincible, unstoppable and dreamers” (urly.it/311s32), embodying a sense of pride and resilience rooted in family identity.



Figure 48. Frames from Coca-Cola's “Orgullo de ser Latino” Commercial (2015;

Source: urly.it/311s32)

Recognizing the deep pride Latinos feel in their family names, the commercial introduces Coca-Cola's initiative to celebrate Latinos' *orgullo* with the personalized *Coca-Cola Tattoo Can*. The can not only allows them to display their family name proudly on the Coke but also to get their surname tattooed, symbolizing their sense of belonging and heritage. Using the tagline “behind every name, there is a story” (urly.it/311s32), Coca-Cola captures the rich narratives and traditions tied to Latino family names, offering a meaningful way for Latinos to honor and share their roots.

The commercial also points out key traits of Latinos' identity, such as resilience and optimism, by saying that: "Being Latino is pride, hard work, fighting through the tough times and keeping the faith, being optimistic, loving and caring" (urly.it/311s32). Latinos' family names are thus portrayed not only as markers of cultural heritage but also as symbols of strength and endurance through hardships, representing each family's history of sacrifices and hard work to reach common life goals. This deeply resonates with Latinos' resilient character and optimism, as they are used to keeping their faith even in the most challenging circumstances.

Through its diverse cast and meaningful imagery, the commercial showcases the broad spectrum of Latinos' identity, emphasizing that shared cultural values and traditions unite them across different nationalities and backgrounds. The visual representations of meaningful Latinos' symbols, such as traditional clothing, Latin American flags and vibrant street art resonate with Latinos' cultural pride and identity. In addition, scenes depicting shared moments with family and friends and collective celebrations reflect core Latino cultural values of *collectivismo* and *familismo*, highlighting that the pride of being Latino is best celebrated together. The campaign also emphasizes *personalismo*, valuing close, personal relationships marked by warmth and affection, and *simpatía*, which refers to polite and respectful interactions.



Figure 49. Frames from Coca-Cola's "Orgullosa de ser Latino" Commercial (2015;

Source: urly.it/311s32)

The campaign's tagline "Orgullosos de ser Latino" is repeated throughout the commercial to reinforce Latinos' sense of cultural pride and unity. The message conveyed is that being Latino is something to be proud of, despite the challenges and stereotypes, and shared pride is a powerful source of strength. The spot concludes by encouraging Latinos to embrace their roots, language and traditions, always feeling proud of their family name and identity: "Siéntete orgulloso de quien eres: Orgulloso de ser Latino" (Be proud of who you are: proud to be Latino).



Figure 50. Frame from Coca-Cola's "Orgullosos de ser Latino" Commercial (2015;
Source: urly.it/311s32)

Thus, Coca-Cola's *Orgullosos de ser Latino* campaign deeply resonates with Latinos' main cultural values of *familismo*, *colectivismo*, cultural pride, resilience, *personalismo* and *simpatía*. By celebrating Latinos' last names as symbols of collective heritage, the commercial reinforces Latinos' *orgullo* while positioning Coca-Cola as a brand that honors their shared identity and cultural heritage.

4.2.2 *En nombre de todos* (2015)

In 2015, Coca-Cola launched its *En nombre de todos* (In everyone's name) advertising campaign as part of the larger *Comparte una Coca-Cola* (Share a Coke) initiative, which aimed to connect with consumers by replacing the iconic Coke logo with popular names from each target market. In addition to celebrating Latino cultural pride by featuring widely recognized Spanish names, Coca-Cola recognized that many indigenous communities in Latin America would hardly find their names represented on

mainstream Coke bottles as “not everyone is called Ana or Roberto, but there are places like Peru where indigenous people have names like Cusho or Shoni” (urly.it/311t0h). To address this issue, Coca-Cola launched the *En nombre de todos* campaign, incorporating names from indigenous languages such as Quechua, Aymara, Nahuatl, Mapuche and Guaraní, extending its celebration of identity to honor Latin America’s rich cultural diversity.



Figure 51. Coca-Cola’s Integration of Quechua Names as Part of the “En nombre de todos” Campaign (2015; Source: urly.it/311t8v)

As part of the campaign, Coca-Cola introduced a unique vending machine that could personalize Coke cans by recognizing indigenous names spoken aloud. This vending machine was brought to an indigenous village in Peru, where locals had the chance to print their traditional Quechua names on Coke bottles, representing a meaningful way to celebrate and recognize their cultural identity within the global brand.



Figure 52. Coca-Cola Quechua Vending Machine (2015; Source: urly.it/311t0d)

The commercial captured powerful moments of indigenous proudly holding Coke bottles labeled with names rarely seen in mainstream media, such as “Cushto”, “Pellu” and “Meshi”. By including names from indigenous languages, the campaign celebrates Latin America’s cultural diversity and acknowledges the crucial contributions of indigenous communities, whose languages and cultural heritage are often overlooked in advertising. This inclusive action aligns with indigenous cultural pride, offering indigenous people visibility and reinforcing the importance of embracing Latin America’s multicultural identity. For many indigenous people, honoring their language and names is a key part of cultural preservation, as names carry deep historical, spiritual and familial significance.

Furthermore, the commercial emphasizes the importance of shared experiences and community for indigenous people, whose traditions emphasize communal work, mutual support and a strong collective identity. By promoting the sharing of personalized Cokes, Coca-Cola positioned itself as more than just a beverage, becoming a symbol of connection and cultural inclusivity, fostering meaningful bonds and shared moments not only among Latinos but also within indigenous communities.



Figure 53. Frames from Coca-Cola’s “En nombre de todos” Commercial (2015; Source: urly.it/311t0d)

4.3 Coca-Cola's Advertising in Argentina and Mexico

Coca-Cola's advertising impact in Argentina and Mexico is particularly strong compared to other Latin American countries due to several factors, including the company's long-standing presence in these areas and its ability to integrate deeply into their national traditions and collective identities.

Argentina and Mexico hold considerable regional influence in Latin America, with Argentina often regarded as a cultural epicenter for the Southern Cone and Mexico for Central America ([urly.it/31291r](#)). Both countries have rich cultural traditions that are celebrated across the region, making them strategic focal points for Coca-Cola's marketing strategies. By establishing a strong presence in these two nations, Coca-Cola taps into cultural values that often influence the broader Latin American market: Mexico's cultural contributions, like *Día de los Muertos* and its globally celebrated cuisine, coupled with Argentina's passionate soccer culture and iconic tango, create compelling narrative frameworks for brand engagement.

Coca-Cola's relationship with these countries dates back to the early 20th century, facilitating an organic integration into local social structures and allowing the company to build significant brand loyalty. In Mexico, the number one consumer of Coca-Cola in the brand has achieved remarkable depth, becoming ingrained with indigenous communities' practices and traditional celebrations ([urly.it/31291j](#)). Similarly, in Argentina, Coca-Cola has managed to align itself with the country's social fabric and national passions for soccer and social gatherings like traditional *asado* (barbecue) and *mate* consumption ([urly.it/31291v](#)).

The company's advertising in these markets goes beyond conventional product promotion, crafting narratives that celebrate national identities, social bonds, and collective experiences. By understanding and honoring local nuances, Coca-Cola creates campaigns that resonate deeply with Argentine and Mexican audiences, establishing an emotional connection that surpasses traditional consumer-brand relationships. The following section analyzes how Coca-Cola created advertising targeted to these countries, aligning with their core cultural values, lifestyles and traditions.

4.3.1 Argentine Advertising Campaigns

As in many other Latin American countries, *familismo* plays a central role in Argentinian culture, where extended families and friends maintain close relationships and often come together for meals and celebrations. The Argentinian culture values enjoying life's simple pleasures, frequently linked to traditional cuisine. Gatherings for *asado*, the typical Argentinian barbecue featuring grilled meats and sharing *mate*, a traditional infused herbal drink, represent rituals that strengthen bonds among loved ones (urly.it/312925). Additionally, Argentinians take great pride in their national identity, especially through their passion for soccer, which is considered more than just a sport because it serves as a social glue that unites communities and fosters a sense of belonging.

4.3.1.1 *Juntos en todas* (2024)

In 2023, Coca-Cola announced a global marketing initiative called “A Recipe for Magic”, translated into Spanish as *Receta Mágica*, which celebrates the connective power of meals (urly.it/311pk0). *Receta Mágica* believes that, whenever friends and family come together to share a meal, the “recipe for magic” only needs three basic ingredients: “the moment of connection, the meal and an ice-cold Coca-Cola” (urly.it/311pk0). The campaign aims to highlight how different cultures create magical moments through their unique culinary traditions, acknowledging Coca-Cola's universal appeal while celebrating the diverse local food cultures that bring people together (urly.it/311pk0). As a result, the campaign invites people to gather to rediscover the joy of sharing a meal and a Coke while making memories with loved ones, encouraging consumers to share their personal stories of *Recetas Mágicas* (urly.it/311pk0).

Within the concept of *Receta Mágica*, in 2024 Coca-Cola launched the *Juntos en Todas* (Together in every situation) advertising campaign to highlight the drink's presence in Argentinians' daily shared experiences and joyful life moments. The campaign consists of three main television commercials, each focusing on different cultural values that resonate with the Argentinian identity: the *Canchita* (Soccer Field), the *Hijo* (Son) and the *Embarazo* (Pregnancy). The campaign is inspired by the idea that everyone has a photograph featuring a Coca-Cola during a significant moment in their lives (urly.it/311p8s). From this concept, the three most culturally-rich and authentic

stories from real Coca-Cola consumers were selected to highlight meaningful experiences in the daily lives of Argentinians paired with traditional food (urly.it/311p8s).

The *Canchita* (Soccer field) commercial portrays a joyful moment shared after a soccer match in an Argentinian neighborhood, where friends enjoy traditional hot dogs, known as *panchos*, alongside a refreshing Coca-Cola. The commercial humorously states that what happens on the field (known as *cancha*) stays on the field and that “to get us out of the field, they have to beat us first” (urly.it/311p9z). The Argentinian *cancha* represents more than just a soccer field; it serves as a gathering place for friends to discuss life and create joyful memories while temporarily postponing everyday concerns.



Figure 54. Coca-Cola’s “Juntos en todas” Campaign: *Canchita* Commercial (2024;
Source: urly.it/311p9q)

This commercial aligns with the cultural values of *collectivismo* and *familismo*, where close friends are often considered *como familia* (like family). It emphasizes the importance of enjoying the present, embodying the Latino orientation toward living the present moment to the fullest and delaying future concerns. In addition, the commercial celebrates Argentinian cultural pride by highlighting soccer not just as a sport, but as a vital source of cultural identity and social connection. The commercial concludes with

the tagline “Partido con amigos. Panchos con papitas” (Match with friends. Panchos with fries), linking a traditional dish to the shared experience on the soccer field.

The *Hijo* (Son) commercial portrays a young man who has recently moved out of his family home and returns to have lunch with his family. In the commercial, the mother explains that since her son moved out, they see him more than when he lived with them because he misses her cooking. She adds that when she cooks him *milanesas*³, he is even more inclined to come back home (urly.it/311pb-), symbolizing the emotional connection between mother and son and the central role of traditional Argentinian food in their relationship.



Figure 55. Coca-Cola’s “Juntos en todas” Campaign: *Hijo* Commercial (2024; Source: urly.it/311pbz)

This commercial reflects the cultural value of *familismo* in Argentine culture, highlighting the deep emotional connections within parent-child relationships. The impact of a child leaving home resonates strongly within Argentina’s strong family ties, where it is common for children to remain at home for extended periods or to live nearby

³ *Milanesas* are breaded cutlets of meat or chicken escalope that represent a popular food in Argentinian traditional cuisine (urly.it/311pg_).

to care for their aging parents. The mother's gesture of preparing food for her children reflects the nurturing role of Latino mothers, while the shared Coca-Cola symbolizes continuity and support during a major life transition. The commercial concludes with the tagline "Siempre en casa. Milanesas con puré" (Always at home. Milanesas with puré), connecting the comfort of home with the traditional Argentinian dish.

The *Embarazo* (Pregnancy) commercial shows a family gathered around the table when the daughter and her boyfriend share the joyful news that they are expecting a baby. The daughter explains that, at her parents' house, it is better to make such announcements on a full stomach, so they decided to reveal their news while enjoying her mother's homemade *fideos*⁴. She concludes by stating "we no longer meet to eat at my parent's house, now we meet at grandparents' house" (urly.it/311pd8).



Figure 56. Coca-Cola's "Juntos en todas" Campaign: *Embarazo* Commercial (2024; Source: urly.it/311phs)

This commercial resonates deeply with Argentinian cultural values of *familismo* and *collectivismo*, portraying the couple's choice to announce their pregnancy at the family lunch table while savoring *pasta casera* (homemade pasta). The tagline "Deliciosas noticias. Pasta casera" (Delicious News. Homemade Pasta), beautifully ties the significant announcement to a traditional meal shared with family and accompanied

⁴ *Fideos* are strips of paste usually made with water, flour and egg, similar to noodles (urly.it/311pgs).

by a Coca-Cola. In Argentina, family celebrations and major life events like this are deeply cherished, reinforcing the importance of familial unity and collective joy. In fact, Argentinian families highly celebrate the arrival of a new life, as the whole extended family structure will take care of the newborn. Once again, Coca-Cola plays a meaningful role in this emotional moment, reflecting the “real magic” that comes from sharing happy moments with loved ones.

Therefore, the *Juntos en todas* advertising campaign skillfully aligns with Argentine cultural values of *familismo* and *colectivismo*, focusing on the importance of shared collective moments, *present orientation* expressed by the joy of living the moment, and *orgullo cultural*, accompanying family and friends gatherings with Argentine typical dishes.

4.3.1.2 *Te tocó nacer acá* (2018)

In 2018, Coca-Cola launched its *Te tocó nacer acá* (You were born here) advertising campaign to promote a message of unity during a time of financial crisis in Argentina. In fact, the campaign aimed to showcase the resilience of Argentinians and their ability to come together in challenging situations, highlighting that Coca-Cola understood the strength of the Argentine spirit in facing critical moments and that the company would always stand by their side (urly.it/311q9r).

The commercial from the *Te tocó nacer acá* advertising campaign emphasizes the Argentinian local spirit, emphasizing their collective strength and assuring that no one would face these difficulties alone (urly.it/311q9r). The central topic of the campaign is the importance of the Argentine identity, highlighted through a narration of unique cultural traits directed toward a newborn child. From the start, the commercial honors Argentinian national pride by showing the national football team t-shirt, symbolizing that football is more than just a sport, as it is a crucial expression of shared cultural heritage.



Figure 57. Frame from Coca-Cola's "Te tocó nacer acá" Commercial (2018; Source: urly.it/311qc6)

The commercial begins with the child's birth by saying "you arrived at a complicated time and, of all the countries in the world, you were born in Argentina, but you know that here you will never be alone... Look, it is already happening" (urly.it/311qc6). Argentina's collectivistic nature is highlighted by stating that if you are born in this country, despite the economic hardships, you will always find someone by your side. In fact, as soon as the child is born, he is surrounded by his extended family and friends, cheering the joy of a new life by being all together.



Figure 58. Frame from Coca-Cola's "Te tocó nacer acá" Commercial (2018; Source: urly.it/311qc6)

The commercial goes on by illustrating some typical examples of Argentinian cultural values: "where would you see twenty people welcoming you at the airport, fifty

tables of strangers at the restaurant singing you a happy birthday, a whole airplane applauding when the plane lands, or a group of people applauding you if you cook an *asado*?” (urly.it/311qc6). Describing scenarios in which Argentinian people gather to welcome someone they love at the airport or to sing a stranger happy birthday perfectly represents the country’s sense of community, strong solidarity and the idea that one will never be alone, aligning with the cultural values of *familismo*, *colectivismo*, *simpatía* and *personalismo*.

In particular, the scene where the guy is enthusiastically welcomed by a group of twenty people at the airport goes straight to the hearts of Argentinian people because returning home and reuniting with one’s family and loved ones is often celebrated as a significant event, as portrayed in the *Hijo* commercial from the “Juntos en todas” advertising campaign. A group of people gathering to welcome someone at the airport underscores the collectivist idea that important moments are shared experiences, reinforcing the sense of belonging and the importance of Argentinian extended families. Also, in this scene people openly express their excitement and warmth, cheering out loud, as Argentinians often express affection and happiness in a very public and communal way.



Figure 59. Frame from Coca-Cola’s “Te tocó nacer acá” Commercial (2018; Source: urly.it/311qc6)

Applauding at the landing airplane also emphasizes the Argentinian sense of community and collectivism, as collective expressions of emotion are deeply ingrained in the culture. Even a small gesture such as those of the passengers celebrating the landing

airplane highlights the importance of coming together in the simplest everyday situations. This scene perfectly encapsulates the Argentine mentality of *disfrutar el momento* (enjoying the moment) and celebrating collective success, even in the smallest life situations such as the end of a flight which may seem trivial to other people.



Figure 60. Frame from Coca-Cola's "Te tocó nacer acá" Commercial (2018; Source: urly.it/311qc6)

The campaign's tagline "Juntos vamos a encontrar la manera" (Together we will find the way) further reinforces the power of being together and is accompanied in the commercial by a photo of two men carrying a box of Cokes, aligning with Argentinians' *collectivismo* and community-oriented efforts (urly.it/311q9r).



Figure 61. Frame from Coca-Cola's "Te tocó nacer acá" Commercial (2018; Source: urly.it/311qc6)

Therefore, Coca-Cola's *Te tocó nacer acá* advertising campaign deeply resonates with Argentinians' national pride, stating that Argentina is the only country where you will never feel alone and you will always have someone by your side. The campaign skillfully resonates with Argentinians' cultural identity, portraying quintessentially Argentine scenarios that align with the cultural values of *familismo*, *colectivismo* and *orgullo cultural*.

4.3.1.3 *Estamos más cerca de lo que creemos* (2017)

In 2017, Coca-Cola launched its advertising campaign *Estamos más cerca de lo que creemos* (We are closer than we think) to emphasize Argentinians' tendency to stay together during a period of political division. The campaign focuses on Argentinians' close interpersonal distance, showing how they tend to invade personal space, give affectionate gestures and easily interact with strangers. The concept emerged from research demonstrating that Argentinians maintain the smallest interpersonal space when interacting with others (urly.it/311rgw). This study was carried out in 42 countries and showed that the accepted interpersonal space varies greatly according to culture and other factors, such as climate or religion, concluding that “Argentines are the ones who need the fewest centimeters between their body and that of a stranger: 77, and only 40 with an acquaintance” (urly.it/311s0b). In the campaign's print advertisement, a group of six people tries to squeeze to fit on the couch while enjoying a Coke, emphasizing the little interpersonal distance Argentinian people maintain from each other, as well as their family orientation and collectivist view.



Figure 62. Coca-Cola's "Estamos más cerca de lo que creemos" Advertisement (2017;

Source: urly.it/311rhj)

The *Estamos más cerca de lo que creemos* commercial captures fundamental aspects of Argentine culture by focusing on close interpersonal contact and physical interaction. With a background cover of the Beatles' "All Together Now", the commercial reunites everyday scenes where Argentinians physically engage with one another, suggesting that they are "closer than they think", both physically and in terms of shared values, regardless of political and social divisions (urly.it/311rgw).

Argentinians are a high-contact culture, meaning that they tend to engage in physical touch and stand close to each other, generally maintaining minimal interpersonal distance. Argentinians' tendency to close interactions and proximity is highlighted from the beginning of the commercial: "We are the ones who accept to stand the smallest distance from each other, and although it may seem strange, uncomfortable or that we invade personal space, that speaks of how we are" (urly.it/311r_9).



Figure 63. Frame from Coca-Cola's "Estamos más cerca de lo que creemos" Commercial (2017; Source: urly.it/311r_9)

This cultural tendency is humorously illustrated throughout the commercial by different social interaction scenes: an employee greeting another man with a kiss in a professional context, a doctor affectionately patting a patient on the head and a group of strangers standing very close to each other in a packed elevator (urly.it/311r_9). In other cultures, having such close contact and intimate behavior in formal contexts, such as a business meeting or a medical checkup, may be seen as odd or invasive. However, in

Argentina these behaviors are normal and symbolize warmth, connection and a strong sense of community, as people tend to extend their social bonds even to those outside their immediate circle, showcasing the nation’s open and inclusive nature: “We treat strangers as in other countries they treat friends, we are *toquetones* (touchy), *franederos* (cuddly), we greet with kisses, hugs and unexplainable rituals” (urly.it/311r_9).



Figure 64. Frames from Coca-Cola’s “Estamos más cerca de lo que creemos” Commercial (2017; Source: urly.it/311r_9)

Even though these gestures and behaviors may be uncomfortable for some cultures, the commercial highlights the beauty of these cultural habits, emphasizing the cultural values behind these close and unifying actions: “And yes, there are times when we invade each other’s personal space, we get so close that we even look like one. Let’s not lose the habit, because even if sometimes we forget, we are closer than we think” (urly.it/311r_9).

The commercial also emphasizes Argentinians’ ability to empathize and understand one another as shown in some scenes of silent support, such as a friend offering a shoulder to cry on, and moments of casual connections, such as crossing someone’s eyes on the train or smiling at a stranger (urly.it/311rgw). These acts of kindness, however small,

speak to a deep sense of compassion and solidarity within Argentine society, reflecting central cultural values of *personalismo* (the importance of personal relationships) and *simpatía* (a focus on kindness and empathy).

Therefore, this campaign celebrates cultural unity and identity, highlighting that Argentinians share a common thread of *colectivismo* and a sense of humanity and belonging that transcends social and political divisions.

4.3.2 Mexican Advertising Campaigns

As in the other Latin American countries, *familismo* and *colectivismo* are two main cultural values in Mexico, where family gatherings, celebrations and shared meals serve as vital aspects of everyday life. This emphasis on communal experience particularly manifests in Mexico's rich traditional cuisine, where dishes like *tacos*, *tamales*, *enchiladas* and *mole* embody cultural heritage and family traditions.

In addition, Mexico's strong indigenous heritage, derived especially from the Aztec and Mayan civilizations, is still reflected in the country's language, art, clothing and spiritual beliefs. The fusion of indigenous and Spanish influences is evident in Mexico's diverse artistic expressions: from the sounds of folkloric music with *mariachi*⁵ and *rancheras*⁶ to traditional garments like the elegant *charro*⁷ outfit and the intricately designed *huipil*⁸ that still symbolize cultural pride and identity.

Catholic traditions are also deeply ingrained in the Mexican culture, with central celebrations such as the *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* and cultural events like the iconic *Día de los Muertos*, which honors deceased loved ones through rituals reflecting both indigenous spiritual practices and Catholic religious traditions.

All these elements demonstrate how Mexico's various cultural influences have evolved into harmonious expressions of national identity.

⁵ *Mariachi* is "a small, strolling, Mexican band consisting usually of trumpeters, guitarists and violinists" (urly.it/3120rp).

⁶ *Ranchera* is "a traditional Mexican song performed solo with a guitar" (urly.it/3120rt).

⁷ *Charro* is "a Mexican horseman or cowboy typically dressed in an elaborately decorated outfit of close-fitting pants, jacket or serape, and sombrero" (urly.it/3120ry).

⁸ *Huipil* is "a straight slipover one-piece garment that is made by folding a rectangle of material end to end, sewing up the straight sides but leaving openings near the folded top for the arms, and cutting a slit or a square in the center of the fold to furnish an opening for the head, is often decorated with embroidery, and is worn as a blouse or dress by women chiefly in Mexico and Central America" (urly.it/3120ra).

4.3.2.1 *Nos une el mundo que queremos* (2024)

Coca-Cola's 2024 Mexican campaign *Nos une el mundo que queremos* (We are united by the world we want) celebrates Mexicans' cultural diversity while emphasizing their shared values. The campaign's core message states that what unites Mexicans is more than what divides them: "we may be different, but we are united by the world we want to live in" (urly.it/311zkz).

The campaign explores Mexico's social diversity by portraying opposing lifestyles and opinions to highlight that, despite varying beliefs, opinions and habits, Mexicans are unified by their shared identity. Even in times of cultural or social tensions, Coca-Cola emphasizes that more elements unite Mexicans than those that separate them: cultural richness, traditions and music are just some of these unifying aspects (urly.it/311zms).

The commercial begins by acknowledging various societal divisions through everyday contrasts: different musical tastes, office workers in suits versus remote workers in pajamas, night owls versus early risers, people who choose to express themselves through their art in the street or those who do it through their social media profiles (urly.it/311zkz). These differences also include an ongoing Mexican culinary debate about whether *quesadillas* (a traditional dish made from *tortilla*) must contain cheese or not, resonating with Mexicans' cultural pride in their traditional cuisine: "the country is divided between those who say *quesadillas* go with cheese and those who say they do not" (urly.it/311zkz).



Figure 65. Coca-Cola's "Nos une el mundo que queremos" Advertisement (2024;

Source: urly.it/311zmg)

The campaign's message aligns with the Mexican values of *colectivismo* and *familismo*, prioritizing common goals and well-being over individual needs. In fact, despite the differences, Mexicans share a deep sense of connection based on mutual respect, cultural pride and a desire for a prosperous community. This sense of community and mutual support is what motivates the population to take care of their local environment, fight for equal rights and hope for a better shared future.



Figure 66. Frames from Coca-Cola's "Nos une el mundo que queremos" Commercial (2024; Source: urly.it/311zkz)

Coca-Cola's emphasis on unity and common goals reflects a strategic shift toward social responsibility to address crucial social issues in Mexico. By carrying out environmental initiatives and empowering communities, the company positions itself as a socially-conscious partner addressing the sensitive local issues of environmental sustainability, social well-being and community empowerment. These topics resonate deeply with Mexico's growing social and environmental awareness concerning public health issues, such as high diabetes rates, and water services privatization, especially among indigenous communities. In fact, because of rising environmental consciousness and lack of water access in many Mexican communities, Coca-Cola aligned its brand and

advertising strategy with sustainability and water conservation practices to effectively address Mexican people's concerns.

Mexico is characterized by a strong sense of responsibility and solidarity, both in the family and within the broader community, and this commercial appeals to it by encouraging consumers to take part in initiatives that protect the environment and support local businesses. On its official website, Coca-Cola perfectly describes the campaign's aim as it follows:

“Have you ever thought that what unites us is stronger than what separates us? We may have different perspectives on life and today we might feel very distant from each other. But deep down we want the same things: a world with more opportunities for all communities and new generations, a planet that recycles every day, a region with more access to water, and collective actions to empower people and build a better future. And, above all, a region that refreshes every day” (urly.it/311zm9).

Thus, Coca-Cola's *Nos une el mundo que queremos* (We are united by the world we want) campaign encourages collective action for a better future by promoting ideals of togetherness, mutual support and collaboration to address social and environmental issues. The company's commitment to collaborate with consumers to safeguard the environment and ensure water and health services access reflects a collective effort that effectively aligns with Mexican *colectivismo*. This cultural resonance is deepened through the representation of Mexico's cultural essence, portraying everyday life situations and cultural elements, including music and traditional dances, people wearing traditional clothing and references to the Mexican cuisine, represented by the debate about whether *quesadillas* should contain cheese or not.

4.3.2.2 *El amor multiplica* (2022)

In 2022, Coca-Cola Mexico launched the *El amor multiplica* (Love Multiplies) campaign to encourage Mexican people to join forces and develop initiatives in four key areas: women's empowerment, community support, water conservation and recycling (urly.it/311-1m).

The campaign called upon Mexican citizens and organizations to promote positive social change through various community-based initiatives, including public space renovations, beach and river cleanups, entrepreneurship training for women and recycling programs (urly.it/311-1h). The core message of the campaign emphasizes love as a unifying force for transformation and positive actions, stating that “love inspires our

actions for Mexico [...] because when we work together we know that great things happen” ([urly.it/311-1h](https://www.urly.it/311-1h)) and aligning with Mexican cultural values of *colectivismo* and community pride.



Figure 67. Coca-Cola’s “El amor multiplica” Advertisement (2022; Source: [urly.it/311za8](https://www.urly.it/311za8))

The campaign’s key feature was a series of murals painted on Coca-Cola delivery trucks to bring a message of love and positivity throughout Mexico. These mobile canvases effectively expanded the campaign’s impact while reinforcing Coca-Cola’s integration in the Mexican society. Local artists created these murals to inspire community transformation, with designs reflecting each neighborhood’s unique identity while addressing the campaign’s core themes: promoting women’s societal roles, protecting water and encouraging sustainable practices ([urly.it/311-1_](https://www.urly.it/311-1_)).

The choice of murals carries particular significance in the Mexican culture: the Mexican *muralism* movement, which emerged in the 1920s under government initiative, saw exponents like Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros using public art to educate the population on the country’s history and celebrate Mexico’s identity and cultural heritage ([urly.it/311-37](https://www.urly.it/311-37)). Following this cultural tradition, Coca-Cola’s murals used

vibrant colors to depict scenes of daily life and community connection, featuring fundamental symbols of the Mexican culture, including native plants and traditional cuisine. Beyond mere decoration, these murals serve as powerful reminders of Mexico’s cultural identity, demonstrating how traditional art forms can convey modern messages of sustainability and social progress while honoring cultural heritage and showing Coca-Cola’s commitment to celebrating the Mexican culture.



Figure 68. Coca-Cola’s “El amor multiplica” Murales (2022; Source: urly.it/311-s4)

The campaign also resonates with Mexican *collectivismo*, highlighting that small individual actions can lead to collective efforts capable of generating big changes (urly.it/311-1w). In fact, Coca-Cola invited Mexicans to contribute to a bigger transformation, as in Latin America collective goals are prioritized over individual needs. In addition, portraying Mexican people sharing meaningful moments while drinking Coca-Cola suggested that the drink is always part of Mexicans’ daily interactions, strengthening the country’s social fabric.

4.4 Coca-Cola’s Controversial Advertising Campaigns

Coca-Cola’s efforts to connect with Mexican cultural values through localized advertising campaigns have faced significant criticism due to the country’s high diabetes

rates and water accessibility issues. The *El amor multiplica* campaign drew backlash from the Mexican consumer advocacy group *El Poder del Consumidor*, which argued that the company was more focused on improving its image rather than demonstrating a genuine commitment to environmental sustainability and women's empowerment, highlighting that obesity and diabetes rates are higher among Mexican women than men (urly.it/311_h7). However, this is not the only Coca-Cola advertising campaign to have sparked controversy, as the company has faced similar criticism throughout Latin America, where numerous campaigns have been perceived as culturally insensitive or disrespectful to local values and traditions over the years.

The company's unsuccessful campaigns reveal the complexities of cross-cultural advertising, where misunderstandings may arise from multiple factors ranging from oversimplified cultural adaptations, stereotypical representations, misinterpretation of local cultural values, or miscommunication of the advertising's core message. Analyzing Coca-Cola's controversial advertising campaigns in Latin America provides valuable insights into the challenges of advertising cultural adaptation and underscores the essential role of intercultural communicators in effectively navigating multicultural contexts.

4.4.1 *Siente el sabor* (2016)

In 2016, Coca-Cola launched its global print advertising campaign *Siente el sabor* (Taste the feeling), translated as *Senti el sabor* in Argentina, as part of a comprehensive rebranding initiative. Though designed to celebrate universal moments of joy and connection through Coca-Cola consumption, the campaign encountered significant resistance in Latin America due to its problematic portrayal of women.

The core issue was the campaign's stereotypical and objectifying representation of women through advertisements displaying them in suggestive poses and provocative scenarios, including female figures wearing revealing clothes or a woman's mouth approaching a Coca-Cola bottle. These representations drew criticism for perpetuating gender stereotypes and promoting unrealistic body standards, characterized by idealized proportions and exaggerated thinness (urly.it/311tcq).



Figure 69. Coca-Cola’s “Siente el sabor” Poster (2016; Source: urly.it/311tg1)

The campaign’s reception was especially problematic because it clashed with the cultural value of *marianismo*, which traditionally emphasizes female purity and virtue. This cultural dissonance was particularly evident in countries like Argentina and Mexico, where feminist movements were actively challenging the *machismo* culture and discussing women’s empowerment. As a result, the campaign’s stereotypical and dated representation of women misaligned with contemporary social values in Latin America, where Latinas were fighting for gender equality and trying to eradicate harmful stereotypes. In particular, the advertisements’ portrayals reinforced two persistent Latina stereotypes: the “Spicy Latina”, which reduces Latin American women to hypersexualized, passionate figures, and the “Dark Lady”, characterizing them as mysteriously seductive yet emotionally distant (Berg, 2002).

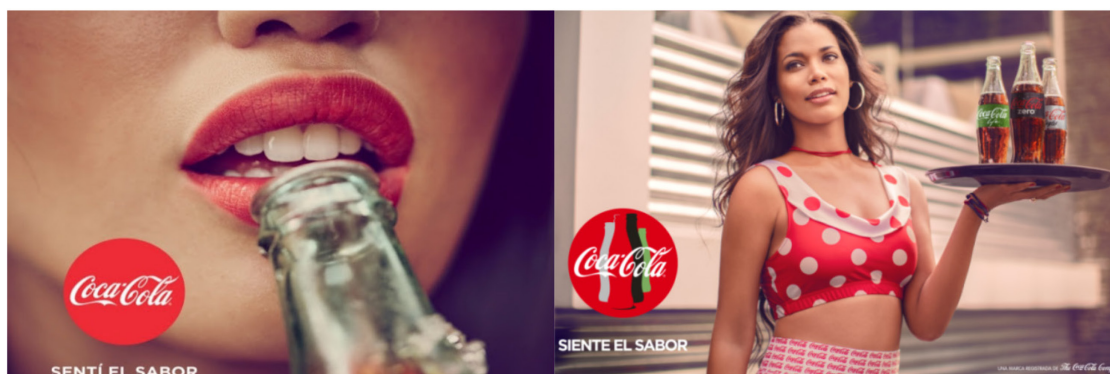


Figure 70. Coca-Cola’s “Siente el sabor” Advertisements (2016; Sources: urly.it/311tdz, urly.it/311tdy)

This controversy underscores the crucial need for cultural sensitivity in global advertising, especially regarding gender representation. The campaign was criticized in for perpetuating the stereotypical, hypersexualized image of Latina women, which resonated negatively in a region where women's roles have historically been framed by a *machista* or male-dominant perspective (urly.it/311tcq). This portrayal not only clashed with evolving social movements advocating for gender equality but also revived outdated stereotypes that Latin Americans are actively working to dismantle. Latin American cultures have long valued femininity, but often in a way that reduces women's identities to appearances or supporting roles. As a result, Coca-Cola's campaign was seen as regressive rather than empowering, showing how global advertising that relies on standardized gender portrayals can inadvertently fuel harmful stereotypes, alienating target audiences rather than engaging them (urly.it/312946).

Truly resonant advertising requires a nuanced understanding of local dynamics, including awareness of historical gender norms and ongoing social movements. Avoiding reductive and stereotypical representations of women, especially those tied to pervasive Latina stereotypes and *machismo* tendencies, would likely have led to a more positive reception of the *Siente el Sabor* campaign in Latin America.

4.4.2 *Abre tu corazón* (2015)

Coca-Cola's 2015 Christmas campaign *Abre tu corazón* (Open your heart) in Mexico became a striking example of failed cultural sensitivity in advertising and led to accusations of racism for its problematic portrayal of indigenous communities. While the commercial aimed to address discrimination, opening with the powerful statistic "81.6% of indigenous people have felt rejected for speaking another language" and encouraging Mexicans to "overcome that prejudice", its execution ultimately reinforced the prejudices it claimed to combat (urly.it/311t_j).



Figure 71. Frame from Coca-Cola’s “Abre tu corazón” Commercial (2015; Source: urly.it/311ta5)

By stating “this Christmas a group of young people wanted to give indigenous people a very special message” (urly.it/311ta5), the commercial’s narrative centered on young urbanites traveling to the Mixe community of Totontepec to construct a Christmas tree from Coca-Cola bottle caps and red-painted wood, adorned with the phrase “Tkmuk nijttumtat” (Let’s remain together) in the Mixe language. The scene culminated with the visitors’ distributing soft drinks to indigenous people “whose faces light up as they accept the soft drink and gaze up at the glowing tree” (urly.it/311t_j). At the end of the spot, the visitors and Indigenous people are gathered around the Coca-Cola Christmas tree, hugging and sharing a Coke (urly.it/311v04).



Figure 72. Frames from Coca-Cola’s “Abre tu corazón” Commercial (2015; Source: urly.it/311ta5)

In contrast to the *En nombre de todos* campaign analyzed in the previous section, in which the indigenous language is used to create personalized Coke bottles with indigenous names resonating with cultural pride, this campaign employs the Mixe indigenous language in a problematic context that recalls colonialism and white supremacy. Therefore, this attempt to convey inclusion and cultural sensitivity by using the indigenous language proved ineffective given the overall narrative of the commercial, which portrayed indigenous people as culturally-inferior, reducing them to a population that only finds happiness from receiving a Coca-Cola tree.

The *Alliance for Food Health* criticized the commercial for “reproducing and reinforcing stereotypes that establish Indians as culturally and racially subordinated”, describing visitors’ behavior as “paternalistic” (urly.it/311v04). In response, the Alliance produced an alternative version of the commercial in which Mixe people addressed the community’s actual challenges, including limited access to water and health services and increasing rates of type 2 diabetes (urly.it/311v04). In this counter-commercial, indigenous people argued that one-third of the Oaxaca’s population lacks access to running water, 2.8 million Indigenous people live without healthcare access and type 2 diabetes in indigenous communities represents a real epidemic (urly.it/311v04). The indigenous narrative highlighted that, to remain together, they need to protect their dignity, health and culture, and ended with the powerful statement “in Oaxaca, we drink *tejate*, tea and clear water”, highlighting their traditional beverage *tejate*, made from toasted corn, fermented cacao beans and dried flowers, as a symbol of cultural heritage and autonomy (urly.it/311v04).

According to Elvira Constantina Pablo, a Mixe lawyer, the commercial was “racist and discriminatory” because it reinforced the idea that indigenous people need outside intervention rather than recognition of their rich cultural heritage (urly.it/311v0-). The portrayal of Indians as silent, passive figures requiring external salvation evoked centuries-old patterns of cultural imperialism, reinforcing the colonial narrative of Indigenous being socially inferior and in need of help from those perceived as “superior” or more “civilized”. Despite positioning itself as an initiative to overcome prejudice, the campaign failed to honor the heritage of the Mixe community, showing outsiders coming into the village and imposing their way of living.

Therefore, this controversy highlights the importance of considering not only the cultural values but also the social, environmental and historical conditions of the target audience when crafting advertising. The commercial conflicted with the indigenous community's sense of pride and belonging, but especially with their needs and daily challenges concerning water access, healthcare and high diabetes rates.

4.4.3 *149 calorías* (2013)

In 2013, Coca-Cola launched its *149 calorías* campaign across Mexico to highlight that a regular can of Coca-Cola contained 149 calories while demonstrating various ways to burn off these calories through physical activities. The campaign portrayed people engaging in everyday activities like jogging, cycling and dancing, with each exercise linked to its corresponding calorie burn, ultimately adding up to a total of 149 calories. The advertisements paired optimistic slogans such as “149 calorías para disfrutar” (149 calories to enjoy) and “149 calorías para bailar” (149 calories to dance) with specific activity suggestions like “enjoy a 22-minutes bicycle ride” or “dance for 20 minutes with friends” (urly.it/311yrs). In this way, the campaign showed how easy it can be to burn off a Coke's 149 calories and suggested that consuming Coca-Cola can be part of a balanced and active lifestyle.



Figure 73. Coca-Cola's “149 calorías” Advertisements (2013; Sources: urly.it/311yrw, urly.it/311ry)

However, the Mexican consumer advocacy group *El Poder del Consumidor* filed a complaint against the campaign, accusing it of being misleading and a health risk (urly.it/311ypy). In fact, the primary concern was that promoting increased calorie consumption was irresponsible given Mexico's ongoing struggles with high obesity and diabetes rates caused by excessive soft drink consumption (urly.it/311yng). In addition, the complaint highlighted another significant issue: the campaign prominently featured 355 ml glass bottles, which are rarely used in Mexico, where consumers normally purchase the 600 ml size containing 252 calories (substantially higher than the advertised 149). Although a small-print disclaimer noted that the 149 calories referred to the 355 ml bottle, critics argued this disclosure was insufficient given the considerable calorie difference between the two bottle sizes (urly.it/311yng). The consumer advocacy group also accused Coca-Cola of spreading misinformation, as soft drink calories are different from other types of calories. In fact, research proved that sugar and fructose calories contained in soft drinks pose greater risks of metabolic damage and can lead to addiction due to high sugar content (urly.it/311yng).

Thus, the campaign's optimistic, lifestyle-centered message clashed with Mexico's growing public health awareness surrounding soft drink consumption, failing to acknowledge the country's specific cultural and health context. The "happiness" messaging seemed to minimize serious concerns about diabetes and obesity affecting many Mexicans, particularly within Indigenous communities. Moreover, the lack of transparency around bottle sizes misled consumers into believing the 600 ml bottle contained only 149 calories, which was instead the amount of calories of the 355 ml bottle size. In response to these criticisms, Coca-Cola has adjusted its Latin American marketing strategy focusing on promoting sustainable lifestyles and healthier alternatives, such as sugar-free options. This shift has been especially evident in Mexico, where water conservation and public health concerns about sugary beverages have become increasingly urgent.

4.4.4 *Actitud ligera* (2012)

Coca-Cola's 2012 *Actitud ligera* (Light Attitude) campaign aimed to reposition Coca-Cola Light (or Diet Coke) by challenging traditional masculinity while promoting a carefree, lighthearted lifestyle. The campaign emerged from Coca-Cola's recognition

that men were reluctant to consume Diet Coke due to its feminine associations (urly.it/311z3_).

The campaign's central commercial approached this gender barrier through humor, opening with the provocative question "Who is a real *macho* today?" and comparing the old *macho* concept with the modern idea of masculinity. In the first part of the commercial, conventional *macho* stereotypes are listed, such as the strongest man, the stoic figure who never cries, and the womanizer who dates multiple women at a time (urly.it/311yv4). In the second part, a new progressive model of *macho* is introduced: a man who comfortably wears tights when jogging, acknowledges other men's attractiveness, handles household responsibilities, actively participates in childcare by getting up at 4 a.m. to change diapers, enjoys traditionally "feminine" activities such as reading gossip magazines at the hairdresser, and openly shares his relationship status on social media (urly.it/311yv4). The commercial ended by stating that the true *macho* is someone confident enough to drink Diet Coke at a party without caring about other people's opinions (urly.it/311yv4), associating the concept of *macho* with the act of proudly drinking Diet Coke.



Figure 74. Frames from Coca-Cola's "Actitud ligera" Commercial (2012; Source: urly.it/311yv4)

However, the campaign sparked a bitter debate across Latin America, particularly in Mexico, where women's organizations were trying to challenge the *machismo* culture

which was considered deeply problematic for the country. The National Council to Prevent Discrimination (Conapred) and feminist movements condemned the advertising by explaining that “it propagates stereotypes that reinforce discrimination and violence against women and thus contribute to feeding a reality that is extremely harmful and deadly in Mexico” (urly.it/311z47). The core criticism centered on the campaign’s attempt to redefine the concept of *macho* positively, ignoring *machismo*’s inherent connection to male dominance and patriarchal traditions. According to the Conapred’s president, the main problem was linking the modern masculinity characteristics to the old concept of *macho* and to the *machismo* culture, which could have been easily avoided by using the term “man” instead of “macho” (urly.it/311ytd). As a result, organizations and movements called on citizens to stop consuming Diet Coke until the company completely withdrew the *Actitud Ligera* advertising campaign (urly.it/311ytd).

The campaign’s print advertisements further complicated these tensions, perpetuating even more stereotypes. The left one, stating that “A *macho* accepts that his girlfriend is a better driver than him”, suggests that a *macho* is no longer the stereotypically strong and resilient male but rather someone confident and humble enough to accept the idea that his girlfriend might be a better driver than him. Despite attempting to be progressive, it came across as patronizing, reinforcing gender stereotypes. The right one, stating that “A *macho* cares about dressing well”, reinforces the idea of a “new macho” who values self-care and physical appearance (urly.it/311ytd).



Figure 75. Coca-Cola’s “Actitud ligera” Male Advertisements (2012; Sources: urly.it/311yxa, urly.it/311yxx)

These advertisements were also released in the feminine version, depicting female figures explaining that their boyfriend is a *macho* because he drinks Diet Coke and is not ashamed of admitting it.



Figure 76. Coca-Cola’s “Actitud ligera” Female Advertisement (2012; Source: urly.it/311zf8)

Therefore, the campaign aimed to encourage men to adopt a more flexible attitude toward gender roles, promoting a relaxed, easygoing and “light” approach by challenging old *machismo* stereotypes. However, in many Latin American cultures, *machismo* still plays a crucial role, as men are expected to be strong, assertive, and resilient. For these Latino men, suggesting that a real *macho* should be able to change diapers, read gossip magazines at the hairdresser, and accept his girlfriend to drive better than him could be seen as undermining their traditional role and historical values.

The campaign’s main problem was associating characteristics linked to modern masculinity, such as a light attitude toward life and freedom from social expectations, with the traditional *macho* ideal (urly.it/311ytd). This message is reinforced through the slogans on the campaign’s posters: “With all due respect, I don’t care what people say”, promotes a carefree attitude towards social judgment, encouraging men to live authentically without worrying about others’ opinions. The second one, “We are all unique, but only a few of us know it”, emphasizes self-confidence, implying that drinking Diet Coke reflects embracing one’s uniqueness. Finally, “I wake up every day to impress myself”, focuses on self-motivation, suggesting that true self-worth comes from personal achievements rather than external validation.



Figure 77. Coca-Cola’s “Actitud ligera” Posters (2012; Source: urly.it/311z7d)

While the campaign aimed to promote self-confidence and authenticity, its messaging clashed with the traditional *macho* concept and with core Latino cultural values of *familismo* and *collectivismo*, where community and family opinions are highly valued. The campaign’s emphasis on individualism and defiance of societal expectations conflicted with Latin America’s strong collective orientation and emphasis on maintaining social harmony and valuing other people’s opinions.

Consequently, the campaign ultimately failed on two fronts, clashing with both traditionalist and progressive orientations in the Latin American society. For those holding traditional gender roles based on *machismo* and *marianismo*, the campaign appeared to mock and disrespect established cultural norms. Conversely, for women’s organizations fighting to dismantle patriarchal traditions, the campaign’s attempt to rehabilitate *machismo* terminology undermined their efforts toward genuine gender equality. As Lizaralde observed, “the concept of *macho*, as *machismo*, is not seen in the same way in Spain as in Latin countries” (urly.it/311ytd), which is precisely why this advertising campaign failed in Latin America, where the *machismo* culture still permeates everyday gender dynamics.

4.5 The Power of Glocalization in Cross-Cultural Advertising

This in-depth analysis of Coca-Cola's campaigns in Latin America demonstrates how advertising cultural adaptation constitutes an indispensable tool for the success of global brands in culturally diverse markets. Coca-Cola's approach, centered on the "think global, act local" philosophy, has shown how understanding and celebrating Latinos' cultural identity can transform a global consumer product into a culturally relevant and emotionally significant symbol for the local market. The examined success cases reveal how Coca-Cola has managed to position itself as more than just a beverage, becoming a cultural symbol that honors the fundamental values of the Latin American society: family, community, national traditions, and a deep sense of cultural pride. This culturally-oriented approach has enabled the brand to build an authentic and lasting emotional connection with its Latin American consumers.

However, the analysis has also highlighted how some attempts at advertising localization have proved problematic, generating significant controversy and criticism. These failures, characterized by the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and culturally inappropriate representations, underscore the inherent risks of a superficial approach to cultural adaptation. Coca-Cola's controversial campaigns have shown how a lack of deep understanding of the socio-cultural and historical context can not only compromise communication effectiveness but also damage brand reputation in the target market.

In this context, the strategic role of the intercultural communicator emerges as a key figure in the advertising glocalization process. This professional, equipped with specific skills in cultural mediation, can serve as an essential bridge between the brand's global vision and the country's local sensitivities, ensuring that advertising messages are not only culturally-appropriate but also authentically resonant with the community's cultural values. Intercultural communicators' ability to navigate cultural nuances, anticipate potential criticism and propose culturally-pertinent solutions proves fundamental in avoiding cross-cultural misunderstandings and optimizing the impact of advertising campaigns.

Therefore, Coca-Cola's experience in Latin America offers valuable insight for contemporary international marketing, proving that success in global communication depends not only on the creative quality of the messages but especially on the understanding of local cultural dimensions. In an era of growing cultural awareness and

social consciousness, cultural adaptation has evolved from a mere option to a fundamental strategic imperative for any brand seeking to forge authentic, lasting relationships with culturally-diverse markets. Today, a company's success is measured not just by market penetration but by the depth of cultural resonance and authentic connection with local communities.

CONCLUSION

This study of Coca-Cola's advertising cultural adaptation in Latin America underscores that global brands must adapt their messages to resonate meaningfully with diverse cultural audiences. The research reveals that intercultural competence and understanding of local cultural values and traditions are prerequisites for success in today's increasingly interconnected marketplace.

As the global leader in the soft drink sector, Coca-Cola has adapted its marketing strategy over the years to reflect consumers' growing need for cultural inclusion and sensitivity. The company has evolved from a standardized communication approach to a sophisticated glocalization strategy founded on the "think global, act local" philosophy which constitutes the key to effectively resonating with its diverse cultural markets. Through a cultural hybridization process, the beverage has transformed from a U.S. product into an integral symbol of Latin American identity, becoming deeply embedded in indigenous religious celebrations, culinary traditions and native languages. The brand has become so ingrained in the country's cultural fabric that people perceive it as part of their own culture and traditions. This cultural integration has been achieved through a strong marketing strategy based on locally-oriented advertising and communication initiatives that maintain Coca-Cola's global identity while resonating with specific Latinos' cultural values.

Not only does the brand craft advertising campaigns targeted to the whole Latin American population, but it especially adapts its advertising to each Latin American country's traditions, values and preferences. By analyzing Coca-Cola's Argentine and Mexican campaigns, it has become clear that impactful and effective advertising must reflect each country's distinct cultural fabric and social needs. Conversely, by examining case studies of Coca-Cola's controversial campaigns, it has been proven that advertising lacking cultural adaptation or inadvertently perpetuating stereotypical representations can often lead to controversies, damaging the brand's reputation and image.

These findings underscore the emerging importance of intercultural communicators in global advertising, new professional figures who do more than translate but rather align messages with local cultural values to prevent cross-cultural misunderstandings. Intercultural communication is becoming an increasingly critical and appealing career path for young professionals seeking to make a meaningful impact in the business of

globalization, shaping campaigns that align with local cultural values and guiding brands to prevent misunderstandings. For instance, Coca-Cola's Mexican campaign *Actitud Ligera* might have been better received if intercultural communicators had avoided the references to the *machismo* culture, still deeply ingrained in Mexico's social fabric.

Intercultural communicators interpret cultural values, symbols, and behaviors, which are crucial for shaping messages that resonate with local audiences and their expertise is particularly vital in navigating the nuances between individualistic and collectivist societies. In the Latin American collectivist society, messages that emphasize family, harmony, and respect for tradition resonate more effectively than those that merely focus on individual success. As a result, campaigns that reflect communal values, rather than imposing individualistic ideals, are more likely to engage and resonate with Latin American audiences.

Moreover, intercultural communicators are aware of the differences between high-context and low-context communication cultures and can skillfully adapt advertising messages to the culture's tendency for explicit or implicit communication. For example, in the Latin American high-context culture, where subtlety and non-verbal cues carry significant meaning, campaigns that overlook these cultural traits can seem overly direct or simplistic, leading to perceptions of insensitivity and lack of authenticity.

The role of intercultural communicators becomes particularly crucial when campaigns aim to represent or engage with traditionally marginalized communities. In this case, they can provide valuable insights into the country's historical and socio-political context, helping brands avoid reinforcing stereotypes or power imbalances that can generate negative reactions in societies with histories of colonialism or social inequality. For instance, Coca-Cola's *Abre tu Corazón* advertising campaign in Mexico unintentionally echoed colonialist dynamics by portraying non-indigenous youth delivering Cokes to an indigenous community, implying a paternalistic message of external assistance from white people. With their deep understanding of cultural sensitivities and historical context, intercultural communicators could have anticipated the problematic implications of this campaign, guiding the brand toward a more thoughtful approach that authentically celebrated indigenous culture while carefully avoiding the reinforcement of historical power imbalances.

In today's globalized communication landscape, where companies embrace the "think global, act local" philosophy, intercultural communicators play a dual role: they not only safeguard against potential controversies and miscommunication but also significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of advertising campaigns. In this context, intercultural communicators emerge as crucial mediators, skillfully identifying deeply embedded cultural assumptions and carefully guiding campaigns toward authentic inclusivity and culturally respectful representation.

As today's global consumers become more culturally aware and social media amplifies calls for cultural sensitivity, intercultural communication experts have become indispensable in designing campaigns that honor cultural pride and identity. However, many companies still undervalue the crucial role of intercultural communicators, often viewing them as an optional addition rather than a strategic necessity. This oversight can lead to costly mistakes, including culturally-insensitive campaigns that can damage brand reputation, lost market opportunities in diverse countries, and weakened international business relationships. Conversely, companies that do integrate these professionals are better positioned to build trust, deepen loyalty and reinforce their commitment to cultural diversity.

In conclusion, as global markets continue to evolve and cultural awareness increases, the demand for culturally resonant advertising will only grow. The success of global brands will increasingly depend on their ability to navigate cultural complexities with authenticity and respect. As Korzenny & Korzenny (2005) note, "Culture is a constant for its members... only the trained individual can articulate the differences". This observation underscores the findings of this research: successful cultural adaptation requires not only mere translation but also practical expertise in intercultural communication, making the role of intercultural communicators indispensable for brands seeking to build meaningful, lasting relationships with diverse cultural audiences worldwide.

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SUMMARY

Questa tesi nasce dalla volontà di coniugare il mondo della cultura e quello della comunicazione. La comunicazione interculturale unisce perfettamente queste due aree, occupandosi di studiare le differenze tra i valori, gli usi e i costumi di culture diverse per prevenire fallimenti nelle attività professionali che implicano lo scambio tra persone provenienti da contesti culturali differenti. In un mondo sempre più globalizzato come quello in cui viviamo, aziende e brand si trovano a doversi relazionare costantemente con consumatori di altri paesi e culture. Per questo è fondamentale che si dotino di figure professionali con un bagaglio di conoscenza interculturale tale da potersi rapportare con persone di altre culture, comprenderne gli stati d'animo, i messaggi non verbali e le aspettative nei confronti di un determinato prodotto, servizio o scambio comunicativo.

Coca-Cola, leader indiscusso nel settore beverage, negli anni ha modificato il suo approccio per adattarsi all'emergere di nuove necessità nel mercato globale da parte dei consumatori. In particolare, la strategia di comunicazione interculturale di Coca-Cola è rifinita nel dettaglio per adattarsi ad ogni mercato e risuonare con le tradizioni e i valori culturali del paese a cui si rivolge. Inizialmente, la comunicazione dell'azienda era standardizzata, identica a livello globale per trasmettere in maniera universale i valori di felicità e connessione che da sempre la rappresentano. Tuttavia, col passare degli anni, la strategia comunicativa di Coca-Cola si è evoluta fino ad abbracciare la filosofia del "think global, act local", rispecchiando un approccio di glocalizzazione che presuppone il connubio tra un'identità globale ben riconoscibile e l'adattamento a livello locale dei prodotti e delle pubblicità per riflettere i valori culturali, le tradizioni e le preferenze di ogni mercato. Il presente studio si propone di analizzare il rapporto che intercorre tra cultura e pubblicità, esaminando l'evoluzione delle strategie di comunicazione del brand leader mondiale nel settore beverage. In particolare, la tesi analizza l'adattamento culturale delle pubblicità di Coca-Cola in America Latina, un mercato e un contesto culturale ancora spesso sottostimato e poco studiato.

Il primo capitolo esplora il ruolo essenziale della cultura nella comunicazione interculturale e nella pubblicità, ponendo basi teoriche per comprendere come aziende globali come Coca-Cola adattino le proprie campagne pubblicitarie a contesti culturali specifici. La cultura, che non è trasmessa geneticamente ma acquisita attraverso interazioni sociali, modella i nostri valori, comportamenti e stili comunicativi.

Comprendere la cultura e sviluppare una forte intelligenza culturale è essenziale per i professionisti che operano in contesti globali, soprattutto per evitare incomprensioni o conflitti interculturali. L'intelligenza culturale permette di riconoscere e mitigare i propri pregiudizi culturali, consentendo una comunicazione autentica e rispettosa delle differenze.

Partendo dall'etimologia del termine "cultura", il capitolo affronta diverse definizioni del termine fino ad arrivare alle teorie chiave sulle differenze interculturali elaborate dagli studiosi Edward Hall e Geert Hofstede. La teoria del contesto di Hall, strettamente collegata alle dimensioni culturali di Hofstede, distingue tra culture ad alto contesto (high-context cultures), come quelle latinoamericane, in cui la comunicazione è indiretta e fa largo uso di significati impliciti e non verbali, e culture a basso contesto comunicativo (low-context cultures), come gli Stati Uniti, che privilegiano una comunicazione esplicita e diretta. Inoltre, Hall distingue due percezioni del tempo tra culture diverse: la cultura a percezione del tempo monocronica (monochronic-time cultures) vedono il tempo come lineare e preferiscono gestire una sola attività alla volta, dando priorità alla puntualità e alla pianificazione, mentre le culture a percezione del tempo policronica (polychronic-time cultures) considerano il tempo come flessibile, gestendo più attività contemporaneamente e privilegiando le relazioni interpersonali rispetto alla rigida organizzazione temporale.

Geert Hofstede (1980), psicologo sociale olandese noto per il suo lavoro pionieristico sulle dimensioni culturali e le differenze interculturali nelle organizzazioni, definisce la cultura come una "programmazione collettiva della mente" che distingue un gruppo sociale dall'altro rendendo possibili le interazioni fra persone di contesti differenti. Utilizzando un "modello a cipolla", Hofstede rappresenta i livelli di manifestazione culturale in quattro categorie: simboli, eroi, rituali e valori. I simboli includono gesti, immagini e altre espressioni culturali visibili che cambiano col tempo, mentre gli eroi rappresentano figure ammirate in una cultura per i valori che incarnano, come *Simón Bolívar* per la cultura latinoamericana. I rituali sono attività o comportamenti con valore simbolico, come il *Día de los Muertos*, celebrazione comune in molti paesi latinoamericani, mentre i valori rappresentano l'essenza della cultura, i principi più profondi che guidano il comportamento delle persone. La teoria delle dimensioni culturali di Hofstede descrive come le culture differiscono in termini di valori ed è fondamentale

per comprendere in che modo la cultura influenza le percezioni e i comportamenti delle persone, anche in termini di ricezione dei messaggi pubblicitari. Hofstede identifica sei dimensioni a seconda delle quali valuta i paesi da 1 a 100 ed elabora un quadro di riferimento: distanza dal potere, individualismo versus collettivismo, mascolinità versus femminilità, avversione all'incertezza, orientamento a lungo o breve termine, e indulgenza versus moderazione.

A partire dalla teoria delle dimensioni culturali di Hofstede, Marieke De Mooij (2013) elabora il modello degli stili pubblicitari (advertising styles) che permette di analizzare come diversi contesti culturali reagiscono alla comunicazione e ai messaggi pubblicitari, collegando elementi culturali specifici ai modi in cui le pubblicità sono progettate e recepite in diverse società. De Mooij evidenzia in che modo la cultura influenza le preferenze e le interpretazioni dei messaggi pubblicitari, suggerendo l'importanza di adattare il contenuto pubblicitario ai valori culturali locali per migliorare l'efficacia dei messaggi che si intendono comunicare. Per esempio, nelle culture a elevata distanza dal potere, la pubblicità utilizza spesso scenari collettivi e riferimenti allo status, mentre nelle culture a bassa distanza dal potere i messaggi tendono a celebrare l'indipendenza e l'autonomia. Anche l'opposizione tra individualismo e collettivismo influisce sui contenuti pubblicitari: i paesi individualisti privilegiano messaggi di autorealizzazione, mentre nelle culture collettiviste prevalgono immagini di esperienze condivise. La distinzione tra mascolinità e femminilità evidenzia l'importanza di adattare il tono della comunicazione a seconda del contesto, dove le culture maschili prediligono messaggi aggressivi e ambiziosi e quelle femminili uno stile più cooperativo e modesto. L'avversione all'incertezza influenza il modo in cui le culture rispondono all'ambiguità, con una preferenza per regole chiare nelle culture con alta avversione all'incertezza, come quelle latinoamericane, rispetto a quelle più tolleranti come gli Stati Uniti.

Considerando che il contenuto pubblicitario è composto da elementi linguistici e visivi che vengono interpretati in maniera diversa a seconda della cultura, il capitolo continua trattando il dibattito tra standardizzazione e localizzazione nella pubblicità: la standardizzazione mantiene un'identità globale del marchio, riduce i costi e garantisce uniformità, mentre la localizzazione costruisce un legame più profondo con i consumatori, riconoscendo la specificità dei contesti culturali. Inoltre, la glocalizzazione emerge come strategia ibrida che combina i benefici della standardizzazione e della

localizzazione, consentendo a marchi globali come Coca-Cola di mantenere un'identità globale adattando i propri prodotti e messaggi pubblicitari ai gusti e alle tradizioni locali, come ad esempio al valore del familismo in America Latina, che sottolinea i legami familiari e che Coca-Cola riesce a celebrare efficacemente nelle sue campagne. Il capitolo si conclude sottolineando come Coca-Cola, inizialmente conosciuta per la sua strategia di standardizzazione, abbia riconosciuto l'importanza di adattarsi alle preferenze culturali locali, spostandosi verso un approccio di glocalizzazione che bilancia l'identità globale con un profondo rispetto delle specificità culturali latinoamericane.

Il secondo capitolo analizza la trasformazione di Coca-Cola da marchio globale a icona locale in America Latina, esaminando il fenomeno della "Coca-Colonizzazione" e il processo di ibridazione culturale che ha portato la bevanda a diventare parte integrante della cultura latinoamericana. Inizialmente introdotta nella regione come una bevanda statunitense, Coca-Cola si è integrata progressivamente nelle comunità locali non solo come prodotto di consumo ma come elemento culturale che si inserisce nelle tradizioni, nelle celebrazioni e nelle pratiche quotidiane della vita delle persone. Questo processo di radicamento culturale, definito Coca-Colonizzazione, rappresenta la transizione di Coca-Cola da simbolo di modernità globale a elemento capace di riflettere le identità locali, divenendo una sorta di ponte tra l'universo simbolico latinoamericano e la cultura commerciale occidentale.

Per penetrare così in profondità all'interno del contesto latinoamericano, Coca-Cola ha adottato strategie di marketing mirate capaci di cogliere l'essenza delle culture latinoamericane, adattando la propria immagine ai valori e alle credenze delle popolazioni locali. Infatti, Coca-Cola utilizza elementi culturali, religiosi e storici per costruire un legame affettivo con i consumatori, posizionandosi non solo come una semplice bevanda ma come parte delle celebrazioni familiari, degli eventi sociali e dei momenti di condivisione. Uno degli esempi più emblematici di questa integrazione culturale è il ruolo che la bevanda ricopre nello stato di Chiapas, in Messico. Qui, Coca-Cola è diventata parte delle pratiche culturali e delle usanze delle popolazioni indigene, venendo utilizzata come ingrediente nelle ricette culinarie, come bevanda nei rituali di guarigione dei *curanderos* e durante i momenti di preghiera e le cerimonie religiose. L'integrazione di Coca-Cola nelle pratiche culturali indigene rappresenta una forma di ibridazione culturale

in cui la tradizione indigena si fonde con l'elemento estraneo, creando una sintesi che riflette l'influenza reciproca tra globalizzazione e resistenza locale.

Tuttavia, il capitolo evidenzia anche le conseguenze negative di questa forte integrazione culturale che ha comportato problemi sanitari, ambientali e sociali per le comunità latinoamericane. Da un punto di vista sanitario, l'ampio consumo di Coca-Cola dovuto alla sua integrazione nelle pratiche culturali indigene e alla sua maggiore accessibilità ed economicità rispetto all'acqua potabile ha contribuito all'aumento di problemi di salute pubblica come l'obesità e il diabete. Il marchio è stato criticato per la sua strategia di marketing che, facendo leva su simboli culturali e valori familiari, promuove il consumo di una bevanda zuccherata in popolazioni già vulnerabili. Inoltre, anche l'impatto ambientale di Coca-Cola nelle aree caratterizzate da scarsità idrica rappresenta una criticità poiché le comunità vicine agli stabilimenti di imbottigliamento subiscono la riduzione delle risorse idriche locali a causa dell'elevato consumo di acqua da parte dell'azienda, generando tensioni e problematiche di accesso all'acqua per usi domestici e agricoli. Questo sfruttamento delle risorse naturali ha sollevato accuse di imperialismo economico, in cui le necessità delle popolazioni locali vengono subordinate agli interessi commerciali di una multinazionale. Oltre alle conseguenze sanitarie e ambientali, Coca-Cola è stata anche accusata di sfruttamento dei lavoratori in diversi paesi latinoamericani e gli attivisti che portano avanti questa causa hanno creato la campagna globale *Stop Killer Coke* contro la multinazionale. La Coca-Colonizzazione solleva anche questioni di natura culturale, in quanto l'espansione del marchio in America Latina rappresenta per alcuni una forma di imperialismo culturale. Attraverso il marketing e le campagne pubblicitarie, Coca-Cola influenza le pratiche di consumo e contribuisce a plasmare le percezioni delle comunità locali, promuovendo un prodotto straniero a scapito dei prodotti locali. Questa dinamica è percepita da alcuni come un'intrusione che minaccia l'autenticità delle pratiche culturali e spinge le comunità a valorizzare un simbolo esterno come Coca-Cola invece di rafforzare i propri elementi culturali. Tuttavia, questo processo di integrazione culturale è anche un fenomeno di ibridazione, dove Coca-Cola non solo si adatta ai contesti locali, ma interagisce con essi, influenzandoli e venendo influenzata a sua volta. La sintesi che ne risulta può essere interpretata come un esempio di resistenza culturale attiva, in cui le comunità locali non subiscono passivamente l'influenza esterna, ma rielaborano l'elemento straniero adattandolo alle proprie esigenze

e valori. In questo senso, Coca-Cola riesce a trasformarsi da semplice simbolo della cultura consumistica americana a elemento della quotidianità delle popolazioni latinoamericane, riflettendo e alimentando i valori e le tradizioni della regione, in linea con l'approccio di glocalizzazione che rappresenta la chiave del suo successo in America Latina. Mantenendo un'immagine globale coerente, il marchio adatta il proprio messaggio alle specificità culturali locali e sfrutta la complessità del contesto latinoamericano per rafforzare il proprio legame con il pubblico, contribuendo a ridefinire le stesse tradizioni locali.

Dunque, nonostante le controversie a cui l'azienda ha risposto cercando di promuovere campagne più sostenibili e inclusive, la presenza di Coca-Cola in America Latina è un esempio emblematico di interazione tra dinamiche globali e locali. La capacità del marchio di adattarsi e radicarsi nel tessuto sociale senza apparire come un'imposizione, ma come un'icona culturale apprezzata, testimonia il successo di una strategia che riconosce e valorizza le differenze culturali. In questa fusione tra accettazione e resistenza, tra adattamento e identità globale, Coca-Cola si presenta come un caso unico di glocalizzazione, dove l'influenza della globalizzazione non distrugge le culture locali ma le integra in una sintesi culturale dinamica e complessa.

Il terzo capitolo esamina l'universo complesso e stratificato dei valori culturali, delle credenze e delle pratiche sociali latinoamericane, analizzando in particolare l'importanza che questi elementi assumono nell'interpretazione della pubblicità e nel processo di costruzione dei significati. Si parte dalla definizione di identità ispanica e latina, riconoscendo che, nonostante la condivisione di alcuni elementi culturali, vi è una grande varietà tra le nazioni latinoamericane. Ogni paese della regione ha una storia unica e radici indigene, europee e africane, che si fondono in culture peculiari e talvolta contrastanti, contribuendo a formare identità collettive caratterizzate da tradizioni, norme sociali e simboli specifici. Allo stesso tempo, la cultura latinoamericana è un'unità culturale con tratti condivisi, tra cui la lingua spagnola e una tradizione di valori comunitari e familiari. Queste identità culturalmente ricche formano il contesto entro cui i messaggi pubblicitari vengono recepiti, interpretati e reinterpretati dal pubblico latinoamericano, creando un terreno complesso per il lavoro dei pubblicitari.

Uno dei valori fondamentali delle culture latinoamericane è il *colectivismo*, che definisce l'importanza della comunità e della famiglia rispetto all'individuo. In una

cultura collettivista, i bisogni del gruppo sono prioritari, e il valore dell'interdipendenza sociale è accentuato. In questo contesto, l'individuo è spesso visto come parte di un insieme più grande e i legami sociali sono considerati più importanti delle ambizioni personali. Questo valore si riflette nella pubblicità che cerca di celebrare la connessione e la solidarietà all'interno della comunità, utilizzando immagini di unità e di coesione, come famiglie e amici riuniti attorno a un tavolo. Coca-Cola ha sfruttato questo valore attraverso campagne che mostrano gruppi di persone in contesti di condivisione e celebrazione, posizionandosi come elemento di aggregazione e di gioia condivisa. Il valore del *collectivismo* latinoamericano differisce profondamente dall'individualismo dominante in molte culture occidentali, che privilegiano l'autosufficienza e l'autorealizzazione, e richiede quindi un approccio pubblicitario che rispetti questa visione di comunità come nucleo di vita sociale e individuale.

Strettamente legato al *collectivismo* è il valore del *familismo*, che sottolinea la centralità della famiglia come istituzione sociale primaria e fondamento della struttura di sostegno. La famiglia è vista non solo come il luogo in cui si formano e si consolidano le relazioni personali, ma anche come il primo punto di riferimento per l'identità e il senso di appartenenza. In questo contesto culturale, il *familismo* è considerato un valore chiave, che enfatizza l'importanza dei legami stretti e dell'impegno reciproco all'interno della famiglia allargata. Le campagne pubblicitarie mirate ai consumatori latinoamericani spesso fanno leva su questo sentimento di unione familiare, evidenziando temi di protezione, cura e supporto reciproco, per creare un legame emotivo con il pubblico. Coca-Cola rappresenta frequentemente nelle sue pubblicità scene di riunioni familiari, celebrazioni e momenti condivisi, cercando di evocare l'idea che la bevanda sia parte integrante di queste situazioni. In una cultura in cui la famiglia gioca un ruolo centrale, questi messaggi hanno una risonanza speciale, andando oltre la mera promozione del prodotto e collocandosi come simbolo di momenti significativi.

Un altro valore cardine della cultura latinoamericana è rappresentato dalla dicotomia tra i ruoli di genere tradizionali, noti come *machismo* e *marianismo*. Il *machismo* riflette un modello di virilità incentrato sull'autorità, sulla forza e sulla protezione della famiglia da parte dell'uomo. È un valore che esprime l'importanza della figura maschile come pilastro della famiglia e come individuo dotato di un'autorità naturale. Il *marianismo*, al contrario, rappresenta la controparte femminile del *machismo*,

idealizzando la donna come figura devota alla famiglia, purezza e sacrificio. La donna è vista come custode dei valori tradizionali, impegnata a sostenere la famiglia e a garantire l'armonia domestica. Questa visione, seppur in evoluzione, continua a influenzare profondamente la rappresentazione della donna nelle campagne pubblicitarie destinate al mercato latinoamericano, spesso ritratta come madre premurosa e figura di stabilità. Questi valori tradizionali sono talvolta rafforzati dalle campagne pubblicitarie per evocare sentimenti di familiarità e autenticità, ma rischiano anche di perpetuare stereotipi di genere limitanti. Le campagne pubblicitarie moderne cercano in alcuni casi di sfidare o di aggiornare queste rappresentazioni, ma senza abbandonare del tutto le basi culturali che definiscono la percezione della mascolinità e della femminilità nella regione.

La *religiosità* è un altro elemento centrale dell'identità culturale latinoamericana e ha un'influenza significativa sulla visione del mondo e sui valori etici della popolazione. La tradizione cattolica, radicata da secoli nella regione, è stata in parte assimilata con credenze indigene e sincretismi, creando un sistema di valori unico e complesso. Questo meccanismo ha influenzato profondamente non solo le norme di comportamento, ma anche il modo in cui i consumatori rispondono ai messaggi pubblicitari. La pubblicità che si rivolge a un pubblico latinoamericano tende spesso a incorporare simboli religiosi o tematiche di speranza e fede, non solo per rispettare il valore religioso, ma anche per risuonare con un pubblico che attribuisce grande significato alla spiritualità. In questo contesto, Coca-Cola ha utilizzato spesso simboli e narrazioni che evocano fiducia, resilienza e valori morali, rafforzando il legame emotivo con il consumatore attraverso temi che riflettono la loro fede e la loro spiritualità quotidiana. Parallelamente alla religiosità si colloca il concetto di *fatalismo*, credenza secondo la quale il destino è predeterminato e le persone devono accettare la vita per come si presenta. Questo valore culturale porta a un atteggiamento di rassegnazione ma anche di resilienza di fronte alle difficoltà, accettando le avversità come parte del cammino. Il fatalismo può influenzare la pubblicità in modo particolare, con messaggi che sottolineano la capacità di resistere, di adattarsi e di affrontare le sfide con coraggio.

Un altro aspetto rilevante esplorato nel capitolo riguarda le *credenze popolari* e le *pratiche di guarigione*, che rappresentano una componente vitale del patrimonio culturale latinoamericano. Queste pratiche, che includono la medicina tradizionale e il ricorso a rimedi naturali, riflettono un legame profondo con la terra e la natura, così come una

forma di spiritualità che va oltre la religione istituzionalizzata. In molte comunità, la saggezza popolare è considerata un'importante risorsa di conoscenza e la pubblicità che intende entrare in sintonia con questi valori potrebbe fare riferimento a immagini della natura, della purezza e della guarigione spirituale.

Infine, il capitolo dedica una sezione al concetto di *orgoglio culturale*, che rappresenta uno dei tratti distintivi più forti della cultura latinoamericana. L'orgoglio delle proprie radici (*orgullo cultural*) è particolarmente rilevante in una regione in cui l'identità nazionale e le tradizioni culturali sono state preservate con fierezza di fronte alle influenze esterne. L'orgoglio latino si riflette nel desiderio di celebrare la propria eredità, la storia collettiva e i simboli nazionali. Le campagne pubblicitarie di successo in America Latina spesso incorporano simboli di patriottismo, linguaggio locale e riferimenti culturali, cercando di evocare un senso di appartenenza e di rispetto per le proprie origini. Coca-Cola ha spesso fatto leva su questo sentimento nelle sue campagne, utilizzando elementi locali per celebrare l'orgoglio dei consumatori e consolidare il proprio posizionamento come marchio che rispetta e celebra le culture locali. Queste campagne evidenziano come Coca-Cola sia stata in grado di adattare i propri valori aziendali a quelli della cultura latinoamericana, integrando temi di famiglia, comunità e appartenenza per creare un legame autentico e rispettoso con il pubblico.

Il quarto capitolo analizza le strategie di adattamento culturale messe in atto da Coca-Cola nelle sue pubblicità per connettersi con le popolazioni locali. Il concetto di glocalizzazione è esplorato in relazione alla capacità del brand di fondere un'identità globale con un'impronta locale, rispondendo ai valori e alle tradizioni delle culture specifiche di ciascun paese. L'evoluzione della filosofia aziendale di Coca-Cola, che passa dall'enfasi sulla qualità del prodotto a un approccio più empatico e centrato sulle emozioni e sui valori culturali, riflette questa strategia: il marchio non si presenta solo come una bevanda, ma come parte integrante della vita quotidiana e dei momenti significativi dei consumatori. Le campagne pubblicitarie di Coca-Cola in America Latina hanno come obiettivo quello di rispecchiare valori profondamente radicati, come il *familismo*, il *collectivismo*, l'orgoglio culturale e il rispetto per la religiosità, oltre a enfatizzare i legami di comunità e le tradizioni locali.

Il capitolo inizia con una panoramica sull'evoluzione dei payoff e della filosofia di Coca-Cola negli ultimi anni partendo da *Taste the Feeling*, passando per *Open Happiness*,

fino ad arrivare al più recente *Real Magic*. L'analisi degli adattamenti culturali delle pubblicità di Coca-Cola inizia da una serie di campagne che rispecchiano l'identità latinoamericana, tra cui *Orgulloso de ser Latino*, progettata per celebrare l'identità culturale e l'orgoglio nazionale latinoamericano attraverso scene che evocano il folklore locale e i colori delle bandiere nazionali, elementi che mirano a risvegliare un forte senso di appartenenza e fierezza nelle proprie radici culturali. Coca-Cola si posiziona così come un brand che riconosce, apprezza e celebra la cultura locale, e non come una mera compagnia multinazionale. Questo approccio è particolarmente importante in un contesto come l'America Latina, dove l'orgoglio culturale è fortemente radicato e i consumatori tendono a privilegiare i brand che mostrano un rispetto autentico per le tradizioni locali.

Successivamente, l'analisi si focalizza su alcune campagne pubblicitarie realizzate da Coca-Cola in Argentina e in Messico, due paesi in cui l'azienda ha svolto un lavoro di adattamento culturale particolarmente significativo. In Argentina, le campagne di Coca-Cola fanno leva sui valori del *familismo* e dell'unione familiare, della condivisione della cucina tradizionale e della radicata passione per il calcio del popolo argentino. La campagna argentina *Juntos en todas* si focalizza sulla connessione e sulla vicinanza emotiva, elementi particolarmente cari alla cultura argentina. Attraverso scene di vita quotidiana e riunioni familiari unite dalla cucina tipica argentina, la campagna riesce a evocare sentimenti di appartenenza e di intimità, posizionando Coca-Cola come parte integrante dei momenti di condivisione. Allo stesso modo, la campagna *Te tocó nacer acá* celebra l'orgoglio nazionale e il senso di appartenenza alla patria argentina, utilizzando situazioni che evocano un profondo legame con il proprio paese. Infatti, la campagna si rivolge ad un neonato spiegandogli la fortuna di poter nascere e crescere in un paese unito come l'Argentina ed elencando una serie di tratti culturali argentini, come essere molto socievoli e mantenere poca distanza interpersonale, essere sempre disponibili ad aiutare gli altri nel momento del bisogno, accogliere sempre qualcuno a tavola per pranzare insieme e compiere gesti di fratellanza anche nei confronti di sconosciuti. Questo approccio crea un legame emotivo con i consumatori, che vedono nel marchio un simbolo di riconoscimento e di rispetto per la cultura locale.

In Messico, Coca-Cola ha sviluppato diverse campagne che riflettono l'importanza della famiglia, dell'amore per la terra e della comunità, allineandosi alle necessità della popolazione locale di vivere in un ambiente più sostenibile in cui tutti possano avere

accesso all'acqua potabile non contaminata e ai servizi sanitari. Infatti, la campagna *Nos une el mundo que queremos* affronta temi di sostenibilità ambientale e di consapevolezza ecologica, dimostrando che Coca-Cola riconosce e rispetta i valori della popolazione messicana, promuovendo un messaggio di responsabilità e di cura per il pianeta. Coca-Cola si impegna a presentarsi non solo come un'azienda attenta alle necessità dei suoi consumatori, ma anche come un brand consapevole del suo impatto ecologico, impegnato a sostenere iniziative di conservazione ambientale. Questo messaggio di responsabilità sociale è rafforzato attraverso immagini che rappresentano paesaggi naturali, famiglie che collaborano per il bene comune e giovani impegnati nella protezione dell'ambiente. In tal modo, Coca-Cola cerca di costruire un'identità che va oltre il semplice consumo del prodotto, posizionandosi come un'azienda che condivide e promuove valori collettivi importanti per il benessere della comunità. Un'altra campagna, *El amor multiplica*, è costruita attorno ai valori dell'amore e della solidarietà per la comunità, due concetti fortemente radicati nella cultura messicana. Coca-Cola si presenta come un simbolo di connessione e di affetto che incoraggia la vicinanza tra le persone, creando un'immagine di marca che va oltre il prodotto stesso e connettendosi con la cultura locale. Infatti, la campagna si sviluppa dipingendo i camion di Coca-Cola con *murales* realizzati da artisti locali che riprendono elementi tipici della cultura messicana.

Dopo aver analizzato in che modo Coca-Cola ha adattato le proprie pubblicità ai valori culturali latinoamericani e in particolare a quelli dell'Argentina e del Messico, il capitolo prosegue analizzando alcune delle campagne pubblicitarie più controverse di Coca-Cola che hanno generato critiche per la rappresentazione poco sensibile delle culture locali. Campagne come *Siente el sabor* sono state criticate per l'utilizzo di stereotipi culturali che non riflettevano pienamente la complessità e la ricchezza delle culture latinoamericane. Questi episodi hanno evidenziato l'importanza della sensibilità culturale nelle strategie pubblicitarie globali e la necessità di comprendere a fondo le sfumature dei valori locali per evitare rappresentazioni superficiali o generalizzate. Coca-Cola ha imparato da queste esperienze e ha cercato di migliorare l'approccio alle campagne pubblicitarie, dimostrando un impegno più forte verso l'autenticità e il rispetto per le culture locali.

L'analisi delle controversie scaturite dalle pubblicità di Coca-Cola che hanno urtato le sensibilità culturali locali conduce ad una riflessione sull'importanza

dell'interculturalità e della glocalizzazione nelle strategie dell'azienda. L'approccio di Coca-Cola all'adattamento culturale rappresenta un modello di riferimento per le multinazionali che desiderano costruire relazioni durature con i consumatori locali. L'integrazione dei valori culturali locali nelle campagne pubblicitarie ha dimostrato che, per le aziende globali, non è solo vantaggioso economicamente, ma è anche eticamente appropriato operare in sintonia con i valori e le tradizioni delle comunità in cui si inseriscono. Coca-Cola, utilizzando la glocalizzazione, ha reso possibile mantenere una forte identità globale e al tempo stesso costruire legami profondi con i consumatori locali, posizionandosi come un brand che non solo rispetta, ma celebra le differenze culturali e le rende parte della propria identità.

La tesi dimostra come Coca-Cola, grazie a una strategia di adattamento culturale e alla sensibilità verso i valori locali, sia riuscita a trasformarsi da marchio globale a simbolo profondamente radicato nelle comunità latinoamericane. Attraverso il concetto di glocalizzazione, il brand è passato dall'essere un prodotto internazionale a diventare un elemento integrante della vita e delle tradizioni locali, creando campagne pubblicitarie che riflettono temi centrali come la famiglia, la comunità, l'orgoglio nazionale e il rispetto per la religiosità. Queste campagne non solo promuovono la bevanda, ma trasmettono messaggi che risuonano con le esperienze e le aspirazioni delle persone, posizionando Coca-Cola come un veicolo di unione e celebrazione dei momenti condivisi.

Il percorso di Coca-Cola mette in evidenza il potere della comunicazione interculturale per superare le barriere, mostrando come una strategia di marketing sensibile alle differenze culturali possa non solo migliorare la presenza di un brand a livello locale, ma anche contribuire alla costruzione di legami autentici e duraturi con i consumatori. L'analisi delle pubblicità dimostra che il successo di Coca-Cola in America Latina non è solo una questione di vendite o di immagine, ma il risultato di un dialogo costante con le comunità locali, fondato su un profondo rispetto per la loro cultura e identità. In questo modo, Coca-Cola riesce a mantenere la sua identità globale senza alienare i valori e le tradizioni locali, dimostrando come la glocalizzazione possa essere una strategia potente per le aziende multinazionali che desiderano affermarsi in mercati culturalmente diversificati. Il lavoro fornisce infine una riflessione su come la figura del comunicatore interculturale possa giocare un ruolo chiave nell'evoluzione della pubblicità globale, supportando le aziende a navigare le complessità culturali e a creare

comunicazioni che siano allo stesso tempo universali e locali. Il caso di Coca-Cola in America Latina diventa così un esempio emblematico di come la pubblicità, se concepita con sensibilità interculturale, possa trasformarsi in uno strumento di connessione e valorizzazione delle diversità culturali, contribuendo a rafforzare l'impatto positivo del brand nel mondo.