

Decoding culture and emotion in video

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The most effective video content is that which evokes emotions. It's what all brands are trying to create. But cultural differences mean emotional triggers vary market by market, says Unruly's Ian Forrester.

What country am I describing here? It's a place where people are hurried, serious, reserved, restrained, composed and methodical. How about this one? This time I'm thinking of a place where people are relaxed, friendly, spontaneous, uninhibited, emotional and impulsive.

Actually, they're both descriptions of America, but from different perspectives. The first list contains words people in Mexico use to describe the USA; the second, what people in Japan think. But why are these adjectives so different? The answers are rooted in culture.

Cultural attitudes run through every nation's psyche and ultimately influence how its people think, feel and act. But understanding how one country differs to another can be tricky; after all, how do you quantify attitudes?

Fortunately, in 2017, MediaCom's [Cultural Connections](#) study went some way to helping marketers do just that, interviewing 60,000 consumers across 63 countries to understand why they respond to specific situations and messages in different ways.

Launched in collaboration with Hofstede Insights, the study is helping marketers build detailed profiles of consumer cultures and remap the world according to attitudes and behaviours.

This is powerful stuff, which is why, at Unruly, we are combining MediaCom's data with our own emotional content testing tool, UnrulyEQ, to help brands understand how to create videos that will travel well across borders.

How EQ works

We spend a lot of time researching emotional impact because it's the most reliable predictor of marketing and business success. As a Nielsen consumer neuroscience study states, ads with above-average EEG scores deliver a 23% lift in sales volume (Nielsen consumer neuroscience internal study – FMCG brands – 2015). In other words, the more emotive an ad is, the more people will react to it. If an ad triggers the right emotional responses and is attributed to the correct brand, it will likely lead to increased sales.

At Unruly, we've created a special tool to help us understand these emotional responses. UnrulyEQ is an emotional content testing tool which lets us evaluate, improve and predict the potential of video ads, and help our clients maximise the social and emotional impact of their content.

The tool provides:

- An identification of the type and intensity of emotions elicited by an ad;
- Diagnostics to optimise content for emotional impact and improve creative quality;
- Deep analysis of the metrics that matter, including brand statements, brand impact and purchase intent;
- Analysis to identify whether viewers feel an ad is authentic to the brand.

Alongside this output, we have now added cultural analysis. By testing a video in a single market and calculating the correlations between cultural leanings and emotions by individuals we can predict how the video will perform in other markets (with reference to MediaCom's Cultural Connections database).

Case study: Libresse – 'Blood'

As an example, let's look at responses to [Libresse's 'Blood'](#) commercial. This ad for the Swedish feminine hygiene brand shows strong women overcoming blood to perform great feats. In one scene, for example, a downhill mountain biker falls over and bleeds, before carrying on to success.

The link between culture and emotion

Testing the ad in a single market helps us understand how, when the video is viewed through a certain cultural lens, different emotions are evoked. The UK data reveals that the more individualistic the viewer, the more likely they are to be confused; the more impulsive, the more likely they are to be inspired and so on.

Two key cultural dimensions are linked with emotions in this instance: Relationship (Collective or Individualistic) and Information Need (Informed or Impulsive).

Relationship measures if a country has a collective or individualistic culture. Do they think in terms of 'me' or 'we'? As the UK is an individualistic culture, consumers are typically confused by 'Blood'. They can't understand why the ad shows women putting themselves

through pain for little benefit.

On the flip side, collective cultures would be more likely to feel pride and amazement while watching the ad. Libresse's fem-powerment message – which empowers women as a whole, not just individuals – would appeal to their collective mindset.

Information Need measures the extent to which people research a product before they buy. Do they want to be informed, or are they impulsive? In 'Blood', the Libresse product is never mentioned or demonstrated. Viewers are left to make up their own minds about how the product works. For UK consumers, who crave information, the ad simply doesn't deliver.

Conversely, impulsive cultures don't crave details; instead, they appreciate emotional, brand-led stories. As a result, the commercial's emotive storyline and strong production values would likely leave consumers in these territories feeling inspired and amazed.

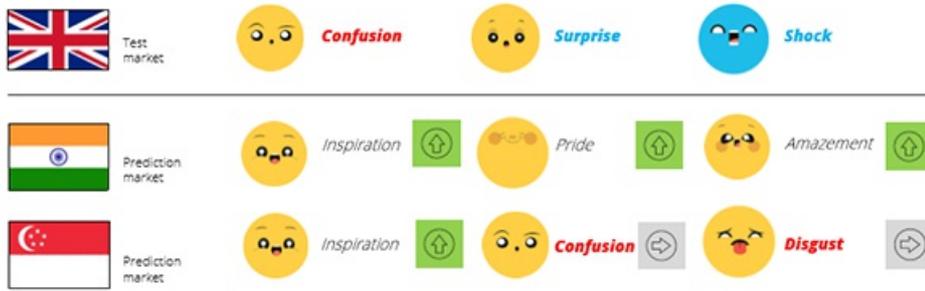
Prediction of performance in other markets

We can use these findings to predict how other countries would react to the content based on their cultural profiles.

Take India and Singapore, for instance. India is highly collective and impulsive, which would suggest the commercial would evoke a positive response in this market.

Singapore is somewhere between UK and India for both dimensions. Here, we can predict that 'Blood' would perform better than in the UK, but would not be received as positively as in India.

The top three psychological responses in these markets, would likely be as follows.



The arrows next to the emotions in the prediction markets indicate if that emotion will be evoked more, less, or equally intensely in the prediction market, as compared with the test market.

What's next?

The Libresse example is a classic case of understanding the role culture plays in driving video performance across borders. By testing in one territory and establishing the correlations between culture and emotion, we can now predict how the video would perform in other territories.

This has huge implications for brands looking to launch content across borders. Our new UnrulyEQ Max product, which includes Hofstede cultural analysis, lets our clients receive up to three territory predictions for every test they run, effectively producing four tests for the price of one.

The results of the test can be used to:

- Tweak ad edits by territory to take advantage of cultural sensitivities.
- Drive content strategy by giving creative teams a broad understanding of what will and will not work in different countries.
- Inform the territory distribution plan, upweighting in territories where the content will fly and down-weighting where it will flop.

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OPINION