The filtration system of localization and glocalization for brand voice and brand communication

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Abstract

For over half a century, there has been ongoing debate among communication professionals and theorists about the need for localization or globalization in brand communication. Both sides have argued about the most effective strategy for global brands in the global market, with no clear consensus on the optimal approach. This paper aims to examine the impact of localization and glocalization on brand voice. A qualitative study design was used, based on a content analysis of case studies involving globalization, localization, and glocalization. The study is exploratory in nature and uses inductive reasoning. Through case study analysis, it became apparent that localized and glocalized brand communication and brand voice are influenced by various factors such as cultural background, religion, national beliefs, political environment, regional languages, media policies, political restraints, and socioeconomic conditions. These factors act as "filters" that may edit, clarify, censor, change, or leave brand communication unchanged. The author introduces the concept of a "filtration system" for localization and glocalization, which can be applied by multinational companies entering new markets to better fit the culture, habits, and values of the local area.

Keywords: Brand voice, brand communication, globalization, localization, glocalization, filtration system

Introduction

"Think globally, act locally," was a phrase famously coined by Scottish planner Patrick Geddes in 1915. Geddes, known as the "Father of Regional Planning," was a practical thinker who helped develop some of the world's most challenging urban areas (Groom, 2012, p. 177). He was known for his holistic and spiritual approach to urban issues, which was groundbreaking at the time (Groom, 2012, p. 177). This paper aims to explore whether this approach is still relevant in today's global communication landscape and can be used to successfully expand brand communication overseas without losing its core essence.

The internet and technological advancements have brought numerous changes to society, including both scientific achievements and global challenges (Varsha et al., 2021, p. 3). Global communication has made the economic world more interconnected and convenient for commerce, collaboration, and development (Schultz, 2011, p. 240). As a result, corporate communication allows individuals to communicate, negotiate, learn, exchange ideas and perspectives, provide feedback, and express themselves on a global scale. Business communication has become global, allowing companies to reach international audiences through a variety of channels such as smartphones, the web, online stores, voice assistants, social media platforms, and even on the streets. The

pandemic has further intensified the globalization of brand communication, as brands and their customers increasingly move into the digital world. In this paper, the author investigates the impact of localization and globalization on brand communication and brand voice. The author suggests that multinational companies with diverse audiences should consider the value of localizing or glocalizing their brand communication and brand voice in different marketplaces.

Literature Review

Since the internet boom of the early 1990s, new media has been embraced enthusiastically (Schultz, 2011, p. 240). Advanced technology is often seen as a path to a brighter future (Schultz, 2011, p. 238). Railroads, aviation, television, and, most recently, the internet, have all promised to bring people together and foster understanding, respect, and collaboration (Schultz, 2011, p. 240). These technologies have also enabled global financial derivative trading and capital circulation, further driving globalization (Schultz, 2011, p. 245). According to Friedman, there are three stages of globalization, each with its own driving forces: globalization 1.0 driven by countries, globalization 2.0 driven by companies, and globalization 3.0 driven by individuals competing and collaborating globally (Charles, 2007, p. 260). The authors suggest that language and the evolution of communication are key driving forces behind global businesses and globalization. When multinational corporations go local, they must find ways to communicate effectively within and outside the organization (Charles, 2007, p. 261).

Academics have also studied consumer attitudes towards globalization and the factors that influence their evaluations. Researchers have found that consumers may hold positive views towards the economic consequences of globalization, such as increased choice and access to products, or they may be attracted to global brands and the lifestyle choices they represent. Globalization attitude (GA) refers to an individual's beliefs about the favorable or unfavorable economic consequences of globalization (Spears et al., 2004), while susceptibility to global consumer culture (SGCC) describes consumers' desire to acquire global brands due to their perceived superior quality, social prestige, or conformity to consumption trends (Zhou et al., 2008, p. 337).

Other researchers have argued that consumers with a positive orientation towards globalization are more likely to purchase global brands, based on the relationship between their attitude and brand identification (Bartsch et al., 2016, p. 5). Using English in brand communication can signify belonging to a transnational culture (e.g. "The United Colors of Benetton"), or incorporating international brand logos can position a brand as global (Bartsch et al., 2016, p. 6).

According to Murphy and Kraidy (2003), understanding the local impacts of globalization has been a challenging goal for international communication theory and research (Murphy et al., 2003, p. 5). This includes examining the need for localization for global brands entering local markets. One useful resource in this regard is advertisers, who, along with other industry professionals, create, develop, translate, and localize brand communication. Rodrigez notes that globalization influences the production and dissemination of promotional texts on an international level for economic and operational reasons, as advertising texts are often produced concurrently for an international market and are designed to appeal to customers from a wide range of cultures (Rodrigez, 2016, p. 134). Once the marketing campaign's decisions and design are finalized, the various textual materials are customized for different types of media, including television and the internet. Meanings and messages are created on a global scale, but are tailored to local groups.

While localization is not a new trend in advertising, and globalization still holds a prominent place, translation can sometimes reveal problems with globalization and highlight differences. Mooij (2013, p. 2) notes that "Globalization has not produced globally uniform consumers. Although there is a worldwide convergence of technology, media, and financial systems, the desires and behaviors of consumers are not converging" (Rodrigez, 2016, p. 150).

As digital media becomes increasingly prevalent, it is essential to understand cross-linguistic persuasive communication transmitted through these channels (Cheung, 2010, p. 355). In marketing and advertising to diverse communities, the same product may be marketed using different tactics, and the corresponding sales message may be encoded using various expressions, styles, and tones (Cheung, 2010, p. 356). Translation plays a

crucial role in global communication, and cultural filtering is often used to adapt to local traditions. Inappropriate texts, visuals, or sounds can elicit strong emotions – a global player may violate conventions of language use in a specific context by "importing" a foreign norm (House et al., 2020, p. 13). According to the authors of the chapter "Localization" in the book "Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Technology," localization refers to "the processes whereby digital content and products developed in one locale are adapted for sale and use in one or more other locales" (Dunne, 2014, p. 16).

For over 50 years, there has been ongoing debate between supporters of globalization and localization in brand communication. Global organizations may prefer to standardize content in order to create a homogenous image of the brand across multiple markets, thereby reinforcing brand equity (Taylor et al., 2006, p. 98). This approach can be economically beneficial and easier to coordinate. However, both academics and practitioners have examined the potential and potential limitations of this approach, particularly in terms of whether local markets with their own tastes, preferences, and conditions would accept it (Taylor et al., 2006, p. 98). Global marketers must consider the various challenges their products may face in global markets, including differences in the economic, political, social, and cultural environments (Dumitrescu, 2010, p. 148).

Academic research has paid little attention to the regional level of international advertising standards. Zandpour and Harich, in the mid-1990s, found that regional proximity did not necessarily lead to advertising standardization, as was the case in Asia and Europe, based on a content study of advertisements from eight nations (Fastoso, 2010, p. 33). However, their findings showed that there were commonalities in advertising between North and South American countries (Fastoso, 2010, p. 33). More recent research provides a review of advertising standardization studies among managers and suggests that there has been a shift in focus from a global to a regional perspective (Fastoso, 2010, p. 33).

Conceptual Framework

In the early 1990s, academicians suggested that a uniform marketing strategy across Europe would be beneficial as the single European market developed (Taylor et al., 2006). The large size of this market, with a population of 400 million people and a yearly worth of 7 trillion US dollars, made it a promising opportunity for standardization (Taylor et al., 2006). By the beginning of the 2000s, multinational campaigns across Europe were on the rise, with companies such as Adidas, Apple, and Levi's launching pan-European online campaigns (Taylor et al., 2006). The global marketing strategy (GMS) theory, developed by Zou and Cavusgil (2002), explains why corporations often choose to standardize advertising (Taylor et al., 2006). This theory consists of eight dimensions, including product, promotion, distribution, and pricing standardization, as well as coordination of value-adding activities (Taylor et al., 2006). The concept of "fit" is central to the GMS theory, and Zou and Cavusgil argue that, without significant constraints, the best performance is achieved through the use of a GMS (Taylor et al., 2006). They also posit that standardized advertising is a crucial part of the GMS, as it affects both the marketing mix and the brand image (Taylor et al., 2006). Therefore, the GMS hypothesis suggests that if no restrictions are present, organizations will use global advertising strategies.

Applied Methodology

The author conducted a literature review on brand voice and its behavior within the context of globalization and localization, but found insufficient data for further analysis. In an effort to fill this research gap, the author aims to examine how brand voice changes in localization and glocalization. While globalization of brand communication could also be a topic of interest, the author has chosen to focus specifically on localization and glocalization. The research question being addressed is: How is the brand voice in brand communication affected by the adoption of localization and/or glocalization?

The goal of this research is to determine whether the adoption of localization or glocalization has an impact on the brand voice in brand communication. During the initial stages of this study, it was discovered that there is a lack of research on how localization and glocalization may affect the brand voice in brand communication. As a result, this study is exploratory and based on inductive reasoning. It was conducted using qualitative data analysis techniques, including the examination of case studies on the localization and glocalization of brand communication in various geographical regions.

Brand Voice and Brand Communication under Localization and Glocalization

According to Surikova et al. (2022), the brand voice is a key aspect of brand communication that determines the connotation, emotion, and style of a message. It is "a set of marketing, linguistic, and stylistic parameters that influence brand communication based on the communication channel, intended receiver, and desired effect" (Surikova et al., 2022, p. 86). Given this definition, it seems likely that localization and glocalization could affect the brand voice, as certain elements of communication are altered to fit local markets, audiences, and expectations. Many organizations opt for a middle ground between global and local brand communication, known as glocalization, which allows them to maintain a consistent global brand image while adapting to local expectations (Tixier, 2005, p. 15).

Globalization of Brand	Localization of Brand	Glocalization of Brand
Communication	Communication	Communication
involves using similar techniques to maintain consistent ideas and values in communication efforts by multinational communication agencies (Rodriguez, 2020, p. 133). It is a communication process that promotes dialogue between	Localization involves connecting a global brand to the symbolic meanings, values, beliefs, and norms of local cultures (Li et al., 2020, p. 50). It involves reflecting a local cultural identity or presenting the brand as if it were produced specifically for local consumers (Li et al., 2020, p. 49). To increase acceptance of the brand among local consumers, marketers often incorporate cultural elements, such as values, traditions, images, and symbols from the local culture, into their marketing messages (Li et al., 2020, p. 50).	globalization efforts to fit the constraints of the local environment (Li et al., 2020, p.51). In order to strengthen the connection between the brand and local consumers, global brands may incorporate local cultural characteristics into their marketing strategy (Li et

Table No.1 Comparative Table of Globalization, Localization and Glocalization of Brand Communication

In order to understand how brand voice may change with globalization, glocalization, or localization, the author has selected three case studies on brand communication in various geographical regions and environments for analysis.

Case Study 1: International advertising strategies of multinational enterprises in the Middle East, by T.C. Melewar, Sarah Turnbull, George Balabanis, 2000, (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 529-547)

In the early 2000s, pan-Arab media emerged in the Middle East. Prior to this, many multinational corporations (MNCs) viewed the Middle East as a single regional market with minimal cultural variations. They also believed that the region was becoming more Western, allowing for the use of global advertising strategies. A self-administered questionnaire was completed by 110 local brand-promoting groups, with 84% returning their responses. Companies were asked about their marketing strategies in both the US and the Middle East.

According to the respondents, a standardized strategy provides a consistent brand image across markets.

They also believed that standardization allowed for the use of pan-Arab media, resulting in improved quality control and cost savings due to economies of scale in advertising production. However, many corporations cited the high level of government controls and constraints present in Middle Eastern markets as a disadvantage of a standard strategy. Respondents also mentioned cultural differences as an obstacle to using a standardized approach to branding.

The target segments for companies were evenly split between the three approaches. Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies tend to have a global target consumer, while airlines determine their target based on their routes in each local market. Lebanon's media strategy is based on its French and Arabic languages, leading to a deeply split media. To be consistent in the Middle East, companies may need to reevaluate their communication strategy in nations with media restrictions. In many markets, radio is unable to air commercials, making it difficult for experts to develop a consistent communication strategy.

The majority of corporations appear to make decisions about positioning and the main focus of their advertising at headquarters, leading to positioning and communication strategies that derive from the established brand stance. Decisions on target segments, creative execution, and media strategy are mostly made locally. While the company headquarters sets rules for a corporate target segment, this may not match the profile of the local market. As the headquarters are not located in the local market, media planning must be done by locals who are familiar with the local media.

According to the study, the most highly-rated feature of standardization is its ability to provide a consistent brand image across markets. Organizations believe that the benefits of using a standardized strategy in advertising and brand communication outweigh the disadvantages. The greatest drawback of the standardized method was its inability to predict government advertising and communication regulations. The study found that businesses view the Middle East as an area with similar traditions and beliefs, and do not see the differences between the various countries as a barrier to a standardized approach. Even language variations are not seen as a concern for communication using a standardized method. Advertisers are assumed to be indifferent to using colloquial Arabic or local dialects in each market and are comfortable using Gulf Arabic, classical Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, or another standard form of the language. The slogan's relevance in all markets is also not seen as a significant issue.

Government regulations are a major concern for regional advertisers and can create significant coordination issues for advertisers launching a regional campaign. The research results show that the local office is involved in many decisions that are influenced by the local environment, such as media strategy and creative execution.

Case Study 2: Globalization, corporate nationalism, and Japanese cultural intermediaries: Representation of bukatsu through Nike advertising at the global-local nexus, by Koji Kobayashi University of Otago, New Zealand, 2011, (Kobayashi, 2011, p.724-742).

This case study examined the corporate re-imagination of "the nation" by evaluating Nike advertising in Japan's representation of bukatsu and Japanese cultural mediators' national identity. Bukatsu, which mixes traditional Japanese values with sports and modern culture, is said to help Japanese kids figure out who they are as a cultural group. Although bukatsu was reproduced and represented by an "American" company, the article argued that local, Japanese cultural intermediaries at the national subsidiary and advertising agency actively played an important role in articulating and legitimizing meanings and representations of Japanese physical culture through Nike's "glocal" advertising campaign within corporate nationalism. In particular, the former bukatsu practitioners at Nike Japan and WKT shared their personal understandings of bukatsu with Nike World Headquarters. They linked their bukatsu experiences to Japan's national sporting identity, which made the "Where is the Next?" campaign an important part of marketing and advertising for the Nike brand in Japan. "The Where is the Next?" campaign's lifestyle reflected both local cultural intermediaries' subjective sensations, tastes, and experiences and WKT's ethnographic research on bukatsu youth. From their opinion, this reflective, albeit subjective, incorporation of current bukatsu signs is crucial to expressing the "banal reality" that was infused with a Ronaldinho sign to create a hyper-real spectacle of bukatsu existence. Even though these results are not perfect, they suggest that the experiences, cultures, and identities of cultural intermediaries are reflexively absorbed into the moment of production as key parts of representation in the short circuit of culture. Despite the focus on national sporting identity and local cultural intermediaries, it is essential to note how they are exposed to hegemonic codes like the global culture industry, corporate capitalism, and masculinity. Indeed, uncritical celebration of bukatsu reproduces and normalizes a variety of problematic practices, including the male-dominated corporate world, including media conglomerates:

- exploitive labor practices, including those in the creative industry
- strong social and seniority-based hierarchies
- "banal" and "branded" nationalism

In Japan, sport, youth, cultural, and masculine identities are shaped through the meanings and representations of bukatsu, which are transmitted, managed, and consumed within the cultural circuit. To understand the interconnected and non-linear relationships between the global and the local, the West and the non-West, and the modern and the traditional, it is important to consider both the macro perspective of cultural globalization and the micro perspective of cultural intermediaries' identities. Robertson and White's idea that globalization is not only a broad sociocultural phenomenon but also a focus on the changing identities of individuals is relevant in this context. Given their "glocal" role in negotiating the global-local nexus beyond the dichotomy of "the West and the Rest", non-Western cultural intermediaries in the global cultural economy deserve greater attention in studies on sport, media, and cultural identity.

Case Study 3: T/V pronouns in global communication practices: The case of IKEA catalogues across linguacultures, by Juliane House and Daniel Z. Kadar, 2020, p. 1-15 (House et al., 2020, p.1-15).

This research examined how IKEA catalogs translate the second-person pronominal T-form in various languages. IKEA is known for branding with the T-form, even in areas where it may be perceived as controversial. A selection of IKEA catalogs indicated frequent T-policy violations. By examining translations of the T-form in IKEA catalogs and language users' evaluations of their (in)appropriacy, the researchers integrated T versus V pronominal research into the pragmatics of translation by showing that the translation of relatively "obviously simple" expressions, such as second person pronominal forms, can reveal a variety of cross-cultural pragmatic differences.

The research summarized IKEA catalogs' translational strategies in German, Hungarian, Dutch, and Belgian Dutch. IKEA's T-policy (Hong Kong Mandarin and Belgian French) was explicitly violated by V-only catalogs. The Mainland Chinese and Japanese catalogs utilized a "third way" by translating the two standard scenarios in two different ways. Thus, the research shows that pragmatically salient terms might be difficult to translate. Translation is important in worldwide communication, and cultural filtration is frequently used to accommodate local traditions. This is because the perceived inappropriateness of a pragmatically salient expression in a standard situation can elicit strong emotions, especially if it is perceived that a global player violates the convention holding for the specific standard situation by "importing" a foreign norm of language use. To evaluate the acceptability of the T/V translational choices, five groups of respondents were asked to review passages from IKEA catalogs. The translational strategy of challenging IKEA's T-policy and strategically resolving it were viewed more favorably than the translational option of just accepting this policy.

According to the respondents' assessments, such a negative portrayal of the effect of globalization in this situation would be an overgeneralization. While many people in countries where the T-form is "imposed" on local customs are skeptical of it, there appears to be a significant generational divide in their assessment of this translational option. Many German and Hungarian respondents rated the T-form negatively, in linguacultures where the T/V distinction is handled more differently in catalogs, ratings were more about how "foreign" the T use was rather than how much they did not like it.

Discussions and Findings

The analysis of these three case studies revealed a repeating pattern among the factors that influenced brand communication when launching brand communication in a new region. These factors are gathered in the table below.

The Factors That Affect Brand Communication	Case Study N. 1	Case Study N. 2	Case Study N. 3
Cultural Backgrounds	Significant factor	Significant factor	Significant factor
Religion	Significant factor	n/a	n/a
Political Environment	Significant factor	n/a	n/a
G o v e r n m e n t a l Regulations	Significant factor	n/a	n/a
Languages	Significant factor	Significant factor	Significant factor
Media Policies and Constraints	Significant factor	n/a	n/a
Socioeconomical Wellbeing	Significant factor	n/a	n/a

 Table No.2 Comparative Table containing factors affecting brand communication and brand voice, mentioned in the case studies

The localization and glocalization of brand communication are commonly employed strategies that have garnered the interest of researchers, though there is a lack of consensus on their effectiveness. These approaches aim to adapt a brand's messaging and content to fit the norms and expectations of a new market while still maintaining the brand's core identity. However, the process of implementing these approaches can be challenging due to various factors such as cultural background, religion, national beliefs, political environment, language, media policies, and social constraints, which can act as filters that influence the brand's message as it is transmitted to the new market.



Diagram No.1 The brand communication filtration system in the process of localization and glocalization

The layers of the brand communication filtration system

Cultural Backgrounds: Cultural differences and backgrounds determine the actions people take and the responses they shape. People's identities are shaped and influenced by the cultural heritage, national identities, and family traditions they were taught as children. It incorporates beliefs, values, conventions, and behaviors. This is a vast area for analysis and investigation, and this is not the focus of the author of this paper. However, the cultural background is one of the many filtering layers that brand communication should go through. For example, Dulux Paints would have a hard time adapting its "Dulux dog" marketing campaign for use in Middle Eastern countries. Dogs are considered unclean animals in the eyes of Muslims. If a devout Muslim were to be licked by a dog, then he or she would be compelled to wash themselves seven times, each time in pure water (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 531).

Religion: it has existed in human communities since the beginning of time. It has altered and evolved to suit human civilizations, from primal animalistic beliefs to complex polytheistic pantheons. For example, as the researchers pointed out, the Middle East is a focal point for three of the world's major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The area is also the center of the Baha'i and Zoroastrian religions (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 530). According to Jeannet and Hennessey (1998), Muslims believe in the superiority of human life above other forms of life. Marketers are consequently urged to avoid using statues and busts in their marketing materials. Advertising symbols should reflect strong human ideals (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 531–532).

Political environment: It matters when a customer decides on a purchase. According to Kestenbaum from the online Forbes edition, quoting a Resonate report, political views of brands that align with consumers' values increase the likelihood of a product or service being sold (Kestenbaum, 2022, extracted 9.11.2022). If the brand communication is successful, it will result in increased sales and profits, as well as a reduction in marketing expenses since the targeted customers will become brand advocates. (Kestenbaum, 2022, retrieved November 9, 2022).

Governmental Regulations: Legal knowledge and the ability to accurately express legal implications in an international setting are valuable and important tools (Varner et al., 2014, p. 1). Despite a developing body of international law, most laws are territorial (Varner et al., 2014, p. 1). Laws are an important instrument for a country to use to preserve its interests (Varner et al., 2014, p. 1). The Swiss regulate their organizations, while the Germans govern theirs (Varner et al., 2014, p. 1). The same is true for the United States, Canada, and any other country. Nations make laws to promote and protect their own interests (Varner et al., 2014, p. 1). The legal systems of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States are theocratic and based on Islamic Sharia law, but the legal systems of other Middle Eastern nations are a mixture of Islamic and civil law developed from colonial influences (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 531).

Languages: According to the UNESCO World Atlas of Languages (2021), the number of languages spoken and signed is 8,324; these have been documented by governments, public institutions, and academic communities, with approximately 7,000 still in use. Thus, translation is important in delivering brand communication. For example, in the Middle East, numerous languages are spoken, including Arabic, Farsi, Greek, Hebrew, Turkish, and various minor regional dialects. In addition, the region is truly cosmopolitan due to the migrant workers' and expatriates' languages and customs (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 530).

Media Policies and Constraints: The implementation of a legal framework has a direct impact on media quality, which is strongly tied to many other social phenomena. Some countries have media restrictions, which may compel corporations to reconsider their media tactics, particularly if they are seeking to maintain a consistent approach in the Middle East (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 540). Melewar et al. (2000) state that these possible media limits make it harder for advertisers to use a standard creative approach (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 540).

Socioeconomic Background: Socioeconomic inequalities would be an impediment to standardizing product-related advertising content (e.g., literacy and per-capita income level hindering the standard use of price appeals) (Fastoso et al., 2010, p. 38). There are also substantial variances across nations' economic conditions.

Saudi Arabia and Oman are classified as upper-middle-income economies by the World Bank, while Egypt and Yemen are classified as low-income. Due to these economic inequalities, the quality of living and purchasing power of Middle Eastern markets vary considerably (Melewar et al., 2000, p. 531).

Conclusions

This article explores the factors that influence brand voice in the context of localization and glocalization, which are commonly used strategies for entering new markets. Globalization, localization, and glocalization have all become important topics for both academia and practitioners seeking the optimal strategy for global brands in the international market. The study investigates the impact of localization and glocalization on brand communication and brand voice through a case study analysis. The results show that localized and glocalized brand communication and brand voice are influenced by cultural background, religion, national values, political environment, regional languages, media policies, and social and political constraints. These factors act as filters that adjust, clarify, censor, or leave unchanged the brand's message as it is transmitted to the new market.

Brand voice is a tool used in brand communication to convey the brand's personality, values, and motivation to consumers. Many multinational corporations choose to modify their brand voice when entering new markets through localization and glocalization in order to appeal to the expectations of diverse cultures. In some cases, this may involve adjusting the brand's personality to fit the local culture, while in others it may simply involve refining and readjusting the brand's voice so that it is perceived as intended. The filtration system for brand communication and brand voice allows multinational corporations to tailor their messages to the region while maintaining the brand's values, essence, and culture.

This qualitative research is based on previously conducted case studies and has limitations in terms of the number and diversity of cases included. Further research could involve both quantitative and qualitative analysis of case studies on localization, glocalization, and standardization, which were not the focus of this study. The findings of this research have practical implications for practitioners at both the headquarters and regional levels, as they face many challenges in developing, creating, and implementing brand communication. The more knowledge that is available on these topics, both theoretical and practical, the easier it will be for communication experts to deliver effective brand communication with minimal brand damage and maximum response from target audiences.

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