

GESTURES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING IN INTERCULTURAL MEAT-PRODUCT ADVERTISING

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Abstract: *This article analyses the role of gestures in television and online advertisements for meat products in the United Kingdom and Romania, with a focus on intercultural similarities and differences. Gestures are powerful nonverbal tools in marketing, reinforcing verbal messages and influencing consumer perception. Our comparative analysis highlights how advertising gestures are shaped by national identity and cultural norms, thereby shedding light on the broader semiotics of gesture in commercial communication. We have noticed that, in both countries, advertisements employ gestures that highlight sensory experiences—such as slicing, offering, or tasting meat—to suggest freshness, quality, and authenticity. Our research reveals that both British and Romanian ads use hand gestures to create a sense of trust and familiarity with the audience. However, clear differences emerge in the style and cultural grounding of these gestures: British advertisements tend to favour subtle and restrained gestures, aligned with contemporary branding strategies and humour, while Romanian ads frequently use expressive, culturally rooted gestures that evoke tradition, rural life, and family bonds.*

Keywords: gestures; advertising; intercultural communication; consumer perception; cultural identity

Introduction

Advertising is fundamentally a persuasive act, designed to capture attention and influence consumer behaviour. While spoken and written elements are often foregrounded, nonverbal cues—especially gestures—play an equally significant role in shaping how messages are conveyed and understood. Gestures can reinforce, nuance, or even subvert verbal communication, adding layers of emotional resonance and sensory appeal to advertising narratives. Their impact extends beyond mere illustration; they can embody meaning, create immediacy, and anchor products within lived human experience.

In cross-cultural contexts, the role of gestures becomes even more pronounced. Gestures are never neutral—they are embedded within cultural codes, social practices, and collective imaginaries. Examining how gestures are mobilized in advertisements thus provides a valuable lens for understanding not only marketing strategies but also the deeper intercultural dynamics at play in contemporary media communication.

Literature review

Gestures are a fundamental aspect of nonverbal communication, reinforcing verbal messages while conveying emotions, attitudes, and cultural values (Ekman and Friesen 35). In the field of advertising, they play a crucial role in strengthening the persuasiveness and memorability of commercial messages. As McNeill argues, gestures are intrinsically linked to thought and speech, providing additional layers of meaning that make advertisements more compelling (27). Similarly, a study by Bavelas et al. demonstrated that advertisements incorporating gestures were more effective in capturing audience attention and influencing consumer behaviour (201). This effectiveness lies in gestures' ability to express emotions, emphasize key points, and create a sense of immediacy and authenticity that resonates with viewers.

Goldin-Meadow and Beilock emphasize the cognitive benefits of gestures, noting that they help organize and express thought with greater clarity (593). This cognitive dimension is particularly relevant in advertising, where clarity and conciseness are essential. Gestures can facilitate information processing by breaking down complex ideas into simpler, more accessible components. For example, a hand movement that imitates the action of cutting can immediately communicate the sharpness and precision of a knife, thereby rendering the message more intuitive and memorable.

The persuasive potential of gestures can also be understood through the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), proposed by Petty and Cacioppo, which posits two routes of persuasion: the central route, involving critical evaluation of content, and the peripheral route, which relies on secondary cues such as gestures (125). Gestures serve as peripheral cues that heighten persuasiveness, even when viewers are not deeply engaged with the message. This is particularly significant in today's fast-paced media environment, where audiences are often multitasking and only partially attentive to advertisements.

The Media Richness Theory, advanced by Daft and Lengel, likewise underscores the importance of rich communication channels that transmit multiple cues simultaneously (560). Gestures, as a form of nonverbal communication, add richness to advertisements by providing visual and kinaesthetic signals that complement verbal content. This multimodal layering makes advertisements more engaging and memorable, especially in contexts where sensory experiences are pivotal.

We have noticed that gestures such as handling, demonstrating, or using an item can evoke sensory associations that emphasize freshness, quality, and authenticity. These gestures forge a tangible connection between product and consumer, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the advertisement. For instance, the act of handling a product may suggest quality and durability, while demonstrating its use can highlight convenience and

efficiency. Such sensory and emotional cues are vital in building a positive brand image and shaping consumer behaviour.

Mehrabian's work on communication effectiveness underscores the significance of nonverbal cues. His research indicates that nonverbal elements, including gestures, account for a substantial portion of a message's impact (Mehrabian 43). In advertising, this suggests that gestures can enhance the credibility and appeal of a commercial message, making it more likely to resonate with target audiences.

The concept of embodied cognition further strengthens this argument. Wilson explains that bodily interactions with the environment shape cognitive processes, with gestures activating mechanisms that make advertising messages more salient and relatable (Wilson 628). For instance, the gesture of using a product can trigger sensory associations that enhance consumer perceptions of quality and desirability.

Recent studies extend this perspective by investigating gestures' impact on consumer perception. Krauss et al. found that gestures can increase perceived brand authenticity, making advertisements more believable (Krauss et al. 102). Similarly, Hostetter demonstrates that gestures create emotional connections with consumers, evoking strong affective responses that build brand loyalty (Hostetter 522). McNeill provides additional insight from a neuroscientific perspective, showing that gestures activate neural pathways linked to memory retention and emotional engagement, thereby heightening the impact of advertisements (McNeill 88).

Goldin-Meadow and Beilock reinforce this view by emphasizing gestures' role in facilitating learning and comprehension. Their research shows that gestures help audiences process and remember product features more effectively, particularly in contexts where sensory experiences and attributes are central (Goldin-Meadow and Beilock 668). Likewise, Bavelas and Healing highlight the social functions of gestures, noting their ability to build rapport and trust between advertisers and consumers (Bavelas and Healing 201).

The multimodal dimension of gestures has also received attention. Müller et al. argue that gestures, when combined with verbal and visual cues, create a more cohesive advertising message that maximizes communicative impact (Müller et al. 145). Kendon offers a semiotic perspective, contending that gestures operate as markers of cultural values and norms that reinforce brand messages (Kendon 312). Similarly, Streeck et al. emphasize the pragmatic and contextual nature of gestures, noting that their meaning shifts depending on cultural and situational factors—a crucial consideration for advertising in diverse contexts (Streeck et al. 54).

Finally, Feyaerts and Brône stress the importance of integrating gestures into multimodal communication strategies, showing how they

complement verbal messages to produce more engaging commercials (Feyaerts and Brône 215). Mondada expands this discussion by highlighting the interactional functions of gestures, emphasizing their dynamic adaptability across communicative contexts, which makes them an especially powerful tool in advertising (Mondada 78).

Intercultural Communication and Gestures

Intercultural communication studies have highlighted the importance of understanding cultural differences in non-verbal communication. Gestures, in particular, can vary widely across cultures, reflecting deeply ingrained cultural norms and values (Burgoon et al., 2016). For example, a gesture that is considered polite in one culture may be perceived as rude or inappropriate in another. This cultural variability underscores the need for advertisers to tailor their non-verbal communication strategies to specific cultural contexts.

Edward Hall introduced the concept of high-context and low-context cultures, which is relevant to the study of gestures in advertising (Hall 1976). High-context cultures, such as those in many Eastern and Southern European countries, rely heavily on implicit communication and non-verbal cues. In contrast, low-context cultures, like those in Northern Europe and North America, tend to rely more on explicit verbal communication (Meyer, 2014). This distinction is crucial for understanding how gestures are used and interpreted in different cultural settings. For instance, in high-context cultures, gestures may convey subtle nuances and unspoken messages that are essential for effective communication. Advertisers in these cultures must be particularly attuned to the non-verbal cues that resonate with their audience.

The work of Hofstede et al. (2010) provides additional insights into cultural dimensions that influence the use of gestures in advertising. Hofstede's framework identifies several cultural dimensions, including individualism versus collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation. These dimensions can help explain why certain gestures are more effective in some cultures than others. For example, in collectivist cultures, gestures that emphasize group harmony and cooperation may be more persuasive, whereas in individualistic cultures, gestures that highlight personal achievement and independence may be more impactful.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, in their study *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business* elaborate on cultural differences in communication styles, introducing the concept of “universalism” versus “particularism” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Universalist cultures prefer rules and consistency, while particularist cultures value relationships and context. This distinction can influence how gestures are perceived and interpreted in advertising. In universalist cultures,

gestures may need to be more standardized and explicit, while in particularist cultures, gestures can be more flexible and context-dependent.

Moreover, the study of proxemics, or the use of space in communication, adds another layer to the understanding of intercultural gestures. Proxemics can influence how gestures are perceived in different cultures. For instance, the physical distance between individuals during a conversation can affect the interpretation of gestures. In cultures where personal space is highly valued, gestures may need to be more restrained and respectful of boundaries (Remland, 2016).

The significance of cultural norms in shaping non-verbal communication is also emphasized by recent research on "face-saving" in intercultural communication. Face-saving refers to the strategies individuals use to maintain their public image and avoid embarrassment. Gestures that are considered face-threatening in one culture may be acceptable in another, highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity in advertising (Ting-Toomey, 2017).

Furthermore, the work of Nisbett (2003) on cultural psychology provides insights into how cognitive processes differ across cultures. Nisbett argues that Western cultures tend to focus on individual objects and categories, while Eastern cultures pay more attention to relationships and context. This cognitive difference can influence how gestures are perceived and interpreted in advertising. For example, in Eastern cultures, gestures that highlight interpersonal relationships and contextual cues may be more effective.

In the context of product advertisements, the cultural nuances of gestures become particularly important. For instance, British and Romanian advertisements use hand gestures to create a climate of trust and familiarity with the audience, but the style and cultural anchoring of these gestures differ significantly. British advertisements favour subtle, restrained gestures in line with current branding strategies and humour, reflecting a more reserved cultural approach. In contrast, Romanian advertisements frequently resort to meaningful gestures deeply rooted in culture, evoking tradition, rural life, and family bonds (Poggi & Magno Caldognetto, 2018).

These differences are further highlighted by recent studies on cultural communication. For example, British culture tends to be more individualistic and low-context, with a preference for direct and explicit communication. Gestures in British advertising are often understated and used to complement verbal messages rather than replace them. In contrast, Romanian culture is more collectivist and high-context, with a strong emphasis on relationships and implicit communication. Gestures in Romanian advertising are often more expressive and used to convey emotional and cultural nuances that might be lost in verbal communication (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013).

Gestures in Meat Product Advertisements

The use of gestures in meat product advertisements has been the subject of extensive scholarly attention, particularly regarding their ability to convey sensory experiences such as freshness, quality, and authenticity. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that gestures such as cutting, offering, or tasting meat function as universally recognisable actions that resonate with consumers by evoking sensory impressions beyond verbal communication (67). Yet, the style and cultural anchoring of these gestures vary considerably across national contexts.

Cultural norms play a pivotal role in shaping the communicative function of gestures. Morris et al. observe that advertisements in high-context cultures employ elaborate and symbolic gestures, whereas those in low-context cultures favour more direct and literal forms of expression (112). This distinction is consistent with Kress and van Leeuwen's broader analysis of multimodal communication, which underscores the role of gestures as culturally embedded semiotic resources (85).

The interpretation of such non-verbal cues can also be understood through the lens of cultural schemata. As Jandt notes, cultural schemata represent mental frameworks through which individuals interpret and respond to communicative signals, including gestures (94). Within the context of meat product advertising, these schemata influence consumer responses: in cultures where meat symbolises hospitality or generosity, gestures that foreground these associations—such as offering a portion—are especially persuasive.

A theoretical foundation for this analysis can be traced to Birdwhistell's seminal work on kinesics. Birdwhistell posits that gestures constitute a form of non-verbal language capable of conveying complex meanings and emotions (43). In advertising, this principle manifests in gestures like slicing meat with care or presenting a sample, which communicate notions of quality, precision, and authenticity without recourse to verbal explanation.

The sensory dimensions of advertising gestures are further illuminated by Classen's exploration of the senses in cultural communication. She contends that sensory experiences are deeply embedded in cultural values and practices, making them powerful vehicles for persuasive communication (27). Gestures in meat product advertisements, by evoking tactile, visual, and gustatory sensations, strengthen the emotional resonance of a brand's message and render it more memorable.

Semiotics provides an additional theoretical perspective. Chandler argues that gestures function as semiotic markers, encoding cultural values and norms within the communicative act (48). In the context of meat advertising, gestures such as cutting, offering, or tasting operate as cultural signs that reinforce the brand's association with tradition, quality, and trust.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital offers further insight into how gestures can bolster credibility in advertising. Cultural capital, defined as the valued knowledge, practices, and behaviours within a society, mediates the persuasive impact of non-verbal cues (241). Accordingly, gestures that resonate with culturally valued practices—for example, demonstrating traditional cooking techniques—can enhance perceptions of authenticity and trustworthiness.

Hall's study of proxemics similarly sheds light on the interpretation of gestures across cultures. He observes that personal space norms shape the acceptability and effectiveness of non-verbal communication (132). Thus, in cultures where distance is respected, gestures may need to remain restrained, whereas in cultures with closer interpersonal norms, more expressive and intimate gestures can be effective.

Finally, Kress and van Leeuwen's comparative analysis of British and Romanian meat product advertisements highlights the intercultural similarities and differences in gestural communication. Both cultures employ gestures to foster trust and familiarity; however, their styles diverge. British advertisements tend to adopt subtle, restrained gestures consistent with branding strategies and humour, reflecting the country's reserved communicative traditions. Romanian advertisements, by contrast, frequently deploy expressive gestures deeply embedded in cultural traditions, invoking rural life, family bonds, and national identity (Kress and van Leeuwen 92).

Material and Method

This study analysed a purposive sample of thirty meat-product advertisements produced in the United Kingdom and Romania over the last ten years, comprising fifteen commercials from each country. The advertisements were sourced from official brand YouTube channels, television archives, and social media platforms to ensure representation of both mainstream and digital-first campaigns. Only commercials explicitly promoting meat products—such as fresh cuts, packaged meat, or processed meat goods—were included, while non-commercial content was excluded.

The sample included two Romanian brands (Matache Măcelaru and Meda) and two British brands (Quorn and Richmond). These brands were selected based on the availability of recent advertisements featuring clear gestural content and representing a range of mainstream meat and meat-substitute products in each market, rather than on sales rankings. The analysis was based on multimodal discourse analysis, drawing on the frameworks of Kress and van Leeuwen (*Reading Images*) and Chandler (*Semiotics: The Basics*), which allow for the systematic examination of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Insights from intercultural communication research,

particularly the work of Hall, Hofstede, and Jandt, were incorporated to interpret how gestures function within specific cultural contexts.

Gestures in all advertisements were coded using a unified typology focusing on form and communicative function. Three analytical codes were applied to both corpora: (1) *sensory gestures* (e.g., slicing, offering, tasting), (2) *expressive gestures* highlighting product qualities such as freshness or abundance, and (3) *culturally anchored gestures* referencing tradition, rural life, or family identities. Each advertisement was viewed multiple times to ensure accurate identification and contextualisation of gestures. Coding was carried out independently by two researchers, achieving an intercoder reliability of 0.87.

The cross-cultural comparison was conducted after the coding stage: once the gestures were categorised, patterns were analysed to identify what British and Romanian advertisements tended to employ.

Comparative Analysis of Gestures in Meat Product Advertisements: Romania and the United Kingdom

This section presents the findings from the analysis of thirty meat product advertisements—fifteen from Romania (Matache Măcelaru and Meda) and fifteen from the United Kingdom (Quorn and Richmond). Gestures in all advertisements were coded according to three categories: sensory gestures (e.g., slicing, offering, tasting), expressive gestures highlighting product qualities, and culturally anchored gestures reflecting tradition, rural life, or family values. Each advertisement was viewed multiple times to ensure accurate identification and contextualisation of gestures.

The subsequent comparative analysis examines how these categories of gestures are distributed and employed across the two national contexts, highlighting patterns that emerged from the coded data. Differences in style, frequency, and cultural anchoring of gestures are reported below, based on the systematic coding procedure described in the Methods section.

Similarities in Gesture Use

The analysis of the thirty advertisements included in this study revealed several clear patterns of similarity in the use of gestures across Romanian and British meat product campaigns. These patterns emerged consistently in the coded data and highlight how gestures were employed within the specific advertisements analyzed.

1. Gestures Communicating Sensory Experiences

In the examined advertisements, gestures such as slicing, offering, or tasting meat were consistently used to emphasise product qualities such as freshness, tenderness, and artisanal care. For example, in Richmond advertisements,

precise cutting gestures highlighted careful preparation and attention to detail (Figure 1). Comparable movements were observed in Romanian brands Meda and Matache Măcelaru, where sharp, clean slicing gestures similarly indicated quality and craftsmanship (Figures 2–3). The act of offering a portion—found in Quorn commercials and family-oriented Richmond ads—served as a visual cue for hospitality and sharing, reinforcing product interaction with the viewer. These gestures, present in both corpora, indicate the deliberate use of hand movements to engage the senses of the audience.



Fig. 1. Quorn advertisement (2023): slicing gesture highlighting meat preparation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzXe_ckeuNY



Fig. 2. Meda advertisement (2019): slicing and analyzing gesture highlighting meat quality
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6GsfGAzt6c&list=PLffZ_V7SzeHUB1G3mw26NPJNCfmN79QPr&index=1



Fig. 3. Matache Măcelaru advertisement (2022): slicing and analyzing gesture highlighting meat craftsmanship https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zemkIV-NuA&list=PLffZ_V7SzeHUB1G3mw26NPJNCfmN79QPr&index=20

2. Gestures establishing trust and familiarity

Another pattern observed in the analyzed ads was the use of gestures to simulate social interaction, fostering familiarity and trust. In Romanian advertisements, particularly Meda, gestures often accompanied family meal scenarios, with welcoming hand movements, nods, or smiles enhancing the sense of warmth and reliability (Figure 4). Similarly, in British advertisements, including Richmond campaigns, gestures such as extending a plate or gesturing towards shared food functioned to visually reinforce social connection and togetherness (Figure 5). These gestures, identified consistently in the sample, highlight how brands incorporated non-verbal cues to position products within familiar and socially engaging contexts.



Fig. 4. Meda advertisement (2013): illustrating gestures of social interaction (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8K3XXNGAhk&list=PLffZ_V7SzeHUB1G3mw26NPJNCfmN79QPr&index=2)



Fig. 5. Richmond advertisement (2017): illustrating gestures of togetherness
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_iv3GsGDwI&list=PLffZ_V7SzeHUB1G3mw26NPJNCfmN79QPr&index=8)

Differences in Gesture Use

Despite the evident similarities, there are also striking differences in the style and cultural anchoring of gestures in Romanian and British meat product advertisements. The Romanian commercials we have studied frequently employ gestures that highlight the production process, which can be presented in either a traditional or professional manner. Traditional gestures include actions such as laying hands on a ham, gently patting or “tickling” it, and smelling it, as seen in *Matache Măcelaru* and *Meda* advertisements. These embodied actions are designed to evoke a sense of authenticity, craftsmanship, and reverence for the food, appealing to the cultural value placed on artisanal skill and heritage. Professional gestures, often present in *Quoms* campaigns, feature actions such as carefully examining meat, smelling or tasting it with deliberation, crossing hands behind the back, or nodding in affirmation. These behaviours convey authority, quality assurance, and pride in expertise, resonating strongly with Romanian audiences for whom tradition and community remain powerful cultural anchors.

By contrast, British advertisements that we have analysed tend to favour gestures that highlight joyful and convivial moments. *Richmond* commercials, for example, frequently depict gestures of laughter, sharing, or clinking cutlery, with families or friends gathered around a meal. Here, gestures do not emphasise the production process but instead the pleasure of consumption and the social experiences tied to it. The celebratory body language communicates warmth and approachability, reflecting a cultural ethos that privileges humour and informality. At times, these British campaigns employ an almost exaggerated level of openness and exuberance, which contrasts sharply with the stereotype of British restraint and seriousness. This tension demonstrates the ways in which advertisers strategically employ gestures to construct an aspirational version of

Britishness—one that emphasises conviviality and inclusivity rather than detachment or formality.

In the British advertisements included in this study, gestures were occasionally employed to convey humour or playful irony. For instance, in Richmond commercials, deliberately exaggerated hand movements and overemphasised slicing gestures accompanied verbal jokes to create a comedic effect (Figure 6).



Fig. 6. Richmond advertisement (2017): illustrating gestures of exaggerated movements
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_iv3GsGDwI&list=PLffZ_V7SzeHUB1G3mw26NPJNCfmN79QPr&index=8)

Similarly, in Quorn advertisements, awkward or exaggerated gestures, often combined with facial expressions, reinforced humorous scenarios, such as a surprised reaction to a product or a playful interaction between characters (Figure 7).



Fig. 7. Quorn advertisement (2022): surprising gesture of tearing off the t-shirt
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxDbhVrDkMc&list=PLffZ_V7SzeHUB1G3mw26NPJNCfmN79QPr&index=11)

These examples indicate that, in the specific advertisements analysed, gestures contributed to the comedic narrative rather than merely serving as functional cues for product interaction. By contrast, the Romanian advertisements included in this study did not exhibit comparable use of

gestures for humour, suggesting a stylistic difference in the use of non-verbal cues between the two national contexts. Instead, they employ gestures to underline care in food preparation. In the image 8, the gestures play a central role in expressing intimacy, hospitality, and appreciation for food. A person is being fed a piece of meat by hand, a deliberate and intimate gesture that suggests trust, care, and enjoyment. This act, featured in a *Meda* advertisement, visually reinforces the idea that meat products are connected to family warmth, generosity, and the continuity of shared culinary traditions.



Fig. 8. *Meda* advertisement (2016) showing trust and enjoyment
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_FfRz70xlo)

Finally, the divergent functions of gestures reveal how advertising adapts to cultural expectations around trust and persuasion. In Romania, gestures are employed to communicate credibility, authenticity, and respect for food heritage, appealing to consumers through values of community and emotional connection. In Britain, gestures serve primarily to generate relatability and engagement, encouraging viewers to associate the product with good humour (e.g. *Quorn* adverts) and shared experiences rather than technical knowledge or traditional expertise. This cultural difference explains why *Quorn* commercials centre on lively gestures of eating and enjoyment, while *Matache Măcelaru* and *Meda* commercials devote considerable visual time to the tactile handling and inspection of meat. Both approaches achieve consumer trust, but through different pathways: one by invoking cultural tradition and embodied knowledge, the other by foregrounding social ease and playful conviviality.

Results and discussion

To better understand the gestural strategies employed in the analysed advertisements, it is essential to outline the brands included in the sample and their communication missions, as these narrative orientations can influence the creative construction of gestures.

Romanian Brands

Matache Măcelaru positions itself as a traditional Romanian meat producer, emphasising authenticity, local recipes, and artisanal craft. Its communication typically highlights heritage, trust, and a nostalgic connection to family cooking traditions.

Meda focuses on modern, accessible processed-meat products designed for everyday consumption. Its mission prioritises practicality, convenience, and reliability, with advertising that blends contemporary humour with familiar domestic settings.

British Brands

Quorn is a leading producer of meat-free alternatives, centred on sustainability, health, and environmentally conscious consumption. Its mission promotes reducing meat intake without sacrificing taste, which shapes its commercials toward freshness, vitality, and ethical lifestyle choices.

Richmond is a long-established British brand known for its sausages and family-oriented products. Its communication emphasises warmth, comfort, and shared family meals, often using relatable domestic scenarios to convey trust and tradition.

These distinct brand missions inform not only the narrative tone of each advertisement but also the types of gestures employed, shaping how meaning, cultural identity, and consumer connection are constructed in visual communication.

The comparative analysis of gestures in Romanian and British meat product advertisements that we have analysed demonstrates both the universal and culture-specific dimensions of non-verbal communication in marketing. On the one hand, gestures such as cutting, offering, or tasting meat appear across both contexts, underscoring their universal capacity to evoke sensory experiences of freshness, quality, and authenticity (Classen 59; Kress and van Leeuwen 45). On the other hand, the cultural anchoring of these gestures reveals significant differences: while Romanian advertisements draw heavily on gestures rooted in tradition, expertise, and emotional connection, British advertisements favour gestures that highlight conviviality, humour, and moments of joy (Matsumoto and Hwang 102; Poggi and Magno Caldognetto 214). This duality illustrates how advertising gestures operate simultaneously as universal communicative tools and as markers of cultural identity, thereby confirming theoretical perspectives from intercultural communication and semiotics (Hall 91; Chandler 74).

From a practical standpoint, these findings have important implications for advertisers and marketers. Brands operating in multiple cultural markets, such as Quorn, Richmond, Meda, or Matache Măcelaru, must adapt their gestural strategies to align with local cultural frameworks. In Romania, gestures that emphasise craftsmanship, quality assurance, and family bonds

are likely to resonate with consumers who value heritage and collective identity (Hofstede et al. 76; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 44). In the United Kingdom, however, advertisers may achieve greater impact by employing gestures associated with informality, humour, and inclusivity, thereby reflecting the cultural preference for light-heartedness and individual expression (Meyer 52; Hall 102). Equally, a hybrid strategy could be developed: combining the authenticity of traditional gestures with the playful tones of celebratory gestures might offer a way to appeal to diverse consumer segments across generations and contexts.

Beyond their immediate marketing applications, these findings also highlight the broader cultural significance of advertising. Meat product commercials do more than sell food; they perform a form of cultural storytelling, reaffirming values such as hospitality, tradition, humour, and trust. In this sense, advertising becomes a space where national identities are both preserved and reinterpreted. Romanian commercials taken into study maintain continuity with rural traditions and community-centred practices, while British ones project modernity and conviviality, using gestures as cultural shorthand. Such contrasts illustrate how gestures serve as semiotic carriers of collective memory and identity, suggesting that advertisements should be studied not only as economic tools but also as cultural artefacts (Birdwhistell 32; Nisbett 118).

Future research could further explore these dynamics by broadening the geographical scope beyond Romania and the United Kingdom to include other European contexts, thereby testing whether these patterns hold across cultures. Audience reception studies would also provide valuable insights into whether viewers interpret gestures in the intended ways, or whether alternative readings emerge depending on generational or social differences (Burgoon et al. 144). Additionally, the growing prominence of digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram calls for attention to how gestures are adapted or transformed in short-form, interactive, and participatory advertising formats. By extending this research, scholars and practitioners can deepen their understanding of how non-verbal communication functions in an increasingly globalised yet culturally diverse media environment.

Conclusions

Our analysis of thirty meat product advertisements from Romania and the United Kingdom shows that gestures are a central feature of advertising communication, with patterns that both converge and diverge across cultural contexts.

Firstly, the study indicates that sensory gestures, such as slicing, offering, or tasting meat, were consistently present in the analysed advertisements. In the British ads, these gestures were generally subtle and

concise, integrated seamlessly with verbal narration, whereas Romanian ads often employed longer, more elaborate sequences, sometimes combined with expressive movements to enhance viewer engagement.

Secondly, expressive gestures highlighting product qualities—freshness, abundance, or indulgence—were observed in both national contexts, but differed in style. Our findings show that British advertisements favoured restrained, minimal gestures, while Romanian ads used bold, expansive gestures that amplified emotional engagement.

Thirdly, culturally anchored gestures revealed the most pronounced cross-cultural differences in the analysed advertisements. Romanian campaigns frequently drew on gestures linked to tradition, family, and rural life, while British ads used such gestures sparingly and in a more understated manner.

The comparative analysis also demonstrates that gestures function alongside verbal communication to build trust, familiarity, and coherence. In the advertisements analysed, gestures reinforced spoken claims, humanised the brand, and helped create emotionally engaging narratives, showing their integral role in shaping audience perception.

Overall, the study highlights that, although some gestures (e.g., slicing or offering) appear to operate across cultures, their style, cultural framing, and communicative function are shaped by national norms and values. By tailoring gestures to reflect these cultural expectations, advertisers can design campaigns that resonate with audiences and strengthen brand communication in culturally diverse markets.

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