

Body of Work



*Different Points of View
adverts by HSBC
(2001 - present)*

Introduction

HSBC, originally founded in Hong Kong and Shanghai in 1865, is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organizations, operating in over 60 countries. Its brand identity has long emphasized global connectivity and cultural understanding, positioning itself as "The world's local bank." HSBC's advertising history reflects this global outlook. From early campaigns focused on trust and stability, the brand shifted toward themes of internationalism and diversity as globalization accelerated.

Launched in the early 2000s, HSBC's "Different Points of View" campaign became one of the most iconic examples of its branding. The campaign centred on a simple but powerful idea: the same image can mean very different things depending on cultural context. Each advertisement featured a single photograph such as a handshake, a colour, or an animal. The image is paired with three contrasting captions that revealed how interpretation varies across cultures. For example, a picture of a cow might be labelled "Sacred" in one panel, "Food" in another, and "Leather" in a third. This approach reinforced HSBC's positioning as 'The World's Local Bank,' emphasizing its understanding of cultural diversity and its ability to serve customers globally while respecting local values. (In another version, the relationship between image and text is reversed, and a single word is paired with three different images. In yet another version, two images are juxtaposed with two different meanings. Taken together, the ads all reflect the theme of cultural diversity and the idea that globalization connects us while preserving difference.)

More importantly, for the purposes of this study, the ads invite viewers to reflect on how perspective shapes meaning. The campaign resonated because it tapped into a universal truth: globalization brings people closer, but cultural differences remain significant. Just as images can carry different meanings, so can words, phrases, and dialects. It opens the door to considerations of interpretation, identity, and communication across cultures, making it an excellent springboard for thinking about language and cultural nuance.

How to study HSBC's Different Points of View campaign

When looking at this Body of Work, notice how the ads use visual minimalism: a clean image against a white background, paired with short, punchy text. This simplicity draws attention to the message without distraction. The repetition of the same image with different labels (or vice versa) creates a juxtaposition that prompts reflection on how assumptions shape interpretation. The captions themselves often use semantic contrast (words that evoke radically different associations such as “sacred” vs “leather”) to highlight cultural relativity and provoke thought about how cultures might clash over more emotive issues such as religion or consumerism. However, the ads are not shocking or overly provocative; the general tone is more thought-provoking than judgmental, inviting curiosity rather than condemnation.

Furthermore, don't forget the design concept includes physical presentation: by situating the ads along airport gangways, HSBC transforms a physical space into part of the message. Airports are hubs of international movement, where travellers are already navigating cultural differences and shifting perspectives. This context amplifies the campaign's core message that the same object or idea can be seen in multiple ways. The gangway setting also creates a sequential experience. Passengers encounter the ads as they walk, seeing a series of contrasting images and statements. This physical progression encourages the move from a fixed viewpoint to a new one, encouraging intercultural understanding. Finally, the final panel of many of the ads contain copy and slogans that anchor the meaning and purpose of the campaign. The statements (or questions) encourage the viewer to see cultural difference as a strength and openness as a virtue.

Once you've examined the visual and textual elements of the HSBC *Different Points of View* campaign and found the deliberate strategies that shape the ad's message, gather your answers to these three questions that will help you unlock the campaign's underlying logic and significance:

1. How does the campaign illustrate the idea that meaning depends on perspective?
2. What message does HSBC convey about cultural diversity in a globalised world?
3. How do the stylistic choices (such as minimalism, contrast, physical placement, slogans) help communicate the campaign's message?

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the more you recognise
what really matters to people.

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The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise
that what one person values
may be different to the next.

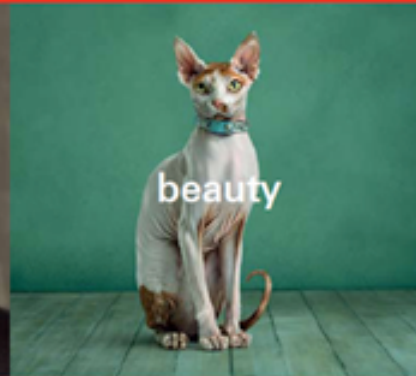
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Images by HSBC Buildings plc



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The more you look at the world,
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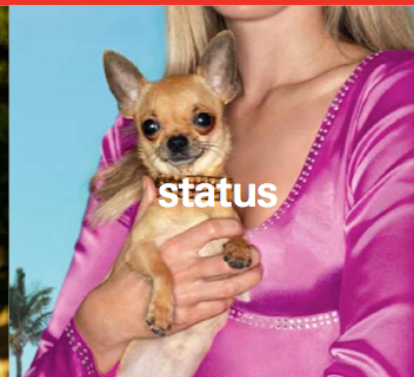
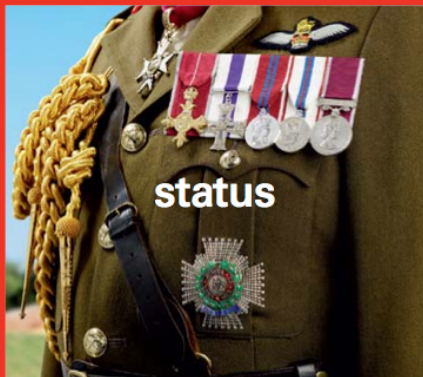


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that what one person values
may be different to the next.

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HSBC 
The world's local bank

Image by HSBC Holdings plc.



The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise
what really matters to people.

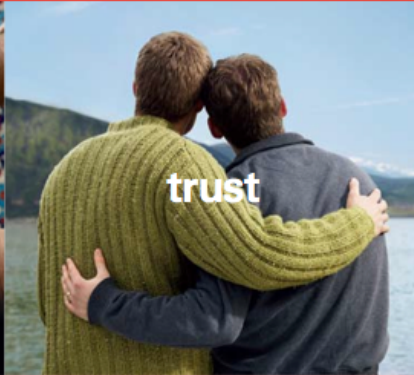
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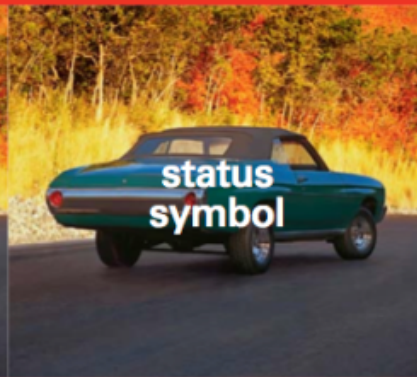
The more you look at the world,
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people's different values.

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The more you look at the world,
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people value things differently.

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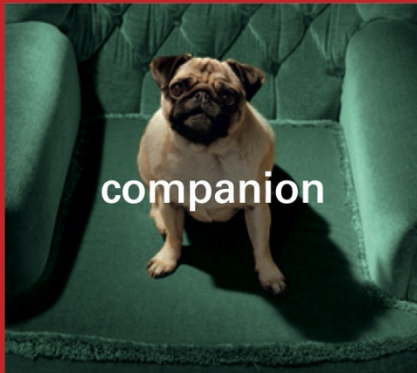
Image by HSBC Holdings plc



The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise that
people value the same things
but in different ways.

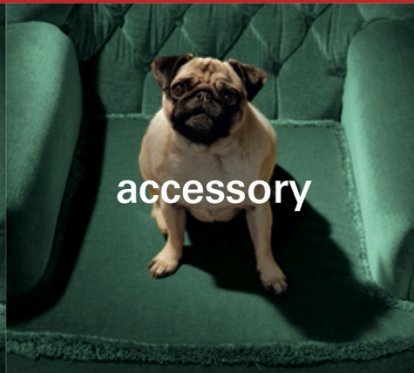
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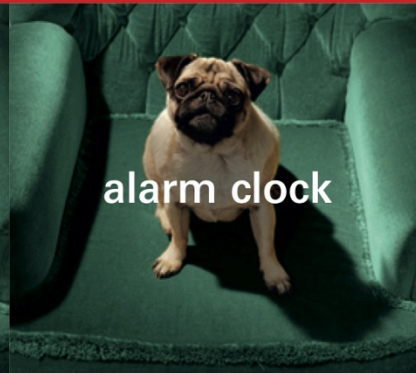


companion

Image by HSBC Holdings plc.



accessory



alarm clock

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what really matters to people.

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fate

Image by HSBC Holdings plc.



fear



fairy tale

The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise that
people have different ideas about
what's important.

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Issued by HSBC Holdings plc.

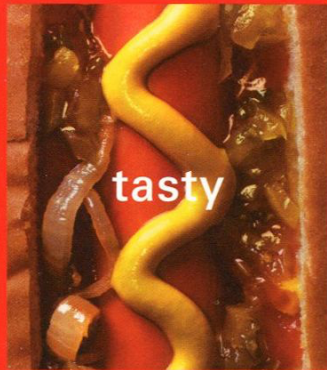
We're not all tempted by the same things. What one person finds wonderful will be looked at with distaste by someone else.

But a difference of opinion can be a healthy thing.

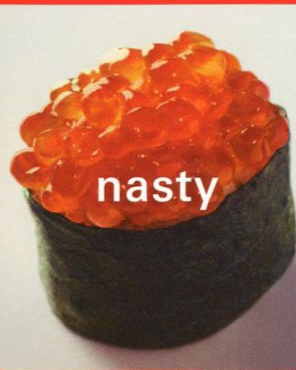
At HSBC we encounter the particular preferences of millions of customers around the world every day. And it's our firm belief that there's no problem having different views, just potential.

yourpointofview.com

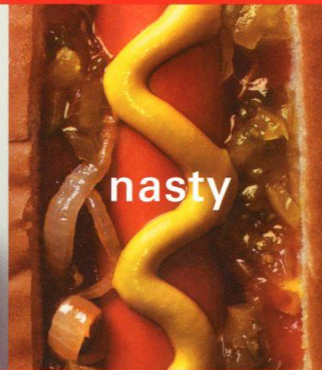
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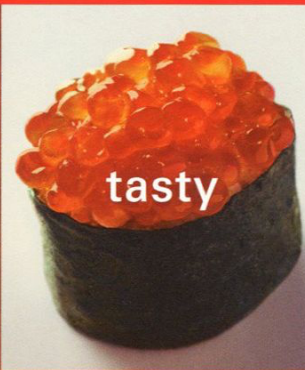
tasty



nasty



nasty



tasty

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tedious



riveting



riveting



tedious

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Another point of view
can sometimes open up
a whole new world.

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Isn't it better to be open to other
people's points of view?

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