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How to Guide



How to write an International Marketing Strategy. 8 Top Tips.

Gary Muddyman, CEO and Managing Director of UK-based *Conversis (conversisglobal.com)*, and long-time member of the non-profit *Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) (gala-global.org)* offers some top tips on international marketing.



For British businesses to successfully take advantage of future growth opportunities in foreign markets, they must ensure that all communication materials are culturally customised.

While language tends to be the main focus of companies that market to customers outside of the UK, the fact is that lack of knowledge about cultural differences can render any marketing campaign unsuccessful.

1. Localisation needs to be part of the international marketing mix right from the beginning.

More and more companies are trying to reach audiences in all corners of the globe. Marketing collateral is designed to attract a customer, raise their interest, convince them that they would like your product and steer them towards taking an action, such as purchase.

This in itself is a challenge, but one which is significantly increased when creating documentation in multiple languages. Be aware of any legal and regulatory requirements specific to the target country that must be adhered to – and they vary widely from country to country - as any mistakes can prove very costly and damaging to the brand.

2. Communicating locally is critical when trying to expand marketing programmes internationally.

It's not just about translating the marketing collateral. It's about understanding the differences in culture, currency, religion, packaging and much more. It is critical to accept that there is no such thing as marketing 'to Europe' or 'to Asia'. Cultural differences in foreign markets span from the use of colour and images, to religion and social behaviour such as how you should greet and address someone, or how to conduct business.

3. Put the consumer first.

Do your research and design your campaign to address their needs and sensitivities. When going global, that means understanding the reality of the multilingual, multicultural marketplace and not just extrapolating domestic market behaviour to achieve international success. To gain the trust of your audience, it is imperative to understand them before developing marketing collateral.

4. Know the language and, in some cases, the dialect.

Seventeen official languages are spoken in India. English and Hindi are the main languages and English is widely used in business communications. When targeting an Indian audience, care should be taken to ensure that the correct language is used for the target region.

When communicating in Brazil, you must be fully aware of the differences between European and Brazilian Portuguese. The same can be said for Spanish, a language spoken by approximately 400 million people worldwide. Spanish has many regional variations, some of which differ significantly.

Using the wrong Spanish and Portuguese in the wrong market will certainly affect the success of any marketing campaign. Nowhere in the world are high-quality translations more appreciated than in France.

Take great care when marketing to the French as mistakes that may be shrugged off in other cultures will certainly not be ignored in France. An unprofessional translation can literally translate to international business failure.

5. Choose your communication channel carefully.

Care should be taken in selecting the relevant communication channels. For example, the Chinese will not build relationships via email and tend not to react to direct mail: the best way of promoting a product is by attending industry related events.

In Mexico, face-to-face meetings are preferred over telephone, letters or email.

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Negotiations and decisions take a long time and deadlines are seen as flexible and fluid so do not expect immediate results.

6. Translate your website into several languages.

Translating your website into several languages will enable international customers to research and evaluate your offerings. A number of studies have shown that a majority of consumers will not buy from a website that is not in their own language. Web localisation will also improve your results in local language versions of popular search engines.

7. Reaching international audiences may be easier than serving them.

Before you embark on a global promotion effort, plan for success and ensure you are ready to respond to the demand you expect to generate.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What happens when an order comes in from an international buyer?
- Will your sales staff be able to interact in the native language or will you force them to switch to English to close the deal? If so, expect a percentage of your deals to collapse at this stage.
- Can you process payments in multiple currencies or handle wire transfers (more common in Europe than credit cards)?
- Will you extend credit terms to international companies?
- What will you charge for distribution and support?

8. Train your staff.

Don't forget that your call centre staff, retail assistants and channel representatives need to perform their roles competently in the local language.



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