

Navigating foreign waters

Lumière du Soleil's Svetlana discusses the pitfalls of using the same marketing campaign material in multiple destinations

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We operate in an age whereby international marketing is easier than ever. We have access to almost unlimited information, market entry procedures in many countries are relatively transparent and the success of numerous transnational corporations acts as an incentive for other companies to take this path.

In the exhibition business international marketing is extremely important because organisers need to attract international exhibitors and visitors to create successful industry events. In accordance with UFI rules, only exhibitions with not less than 10 per cent of international exhibitors and international as international.

International marketing greatly enlarges the potential market and scope for company growth. However it is necessary to take into account lots of factors, which are integral to a project's success, when you enter foreign markets.

Find out all the pitfalls before diving in

Companies must consider many things to be successful with their international marketing:

- They need to evaluate brand relevance at a glance to ensure

inclusivity with cultural characteristics;

- The big task is to adapt communication materials in accordance with market demands and cultural context;
- They must plan and realise promotional campaigns for target audiences that differ from your regular promotional activity.

It is important to have a deep understanding of the special aspects relating to cross-cultural communications when creating an international marketing programme. The lack of this kind of experience, understanding and sensitivity to your partners' cultural values may have dire implications, up to and including a failure to reach an international agreement.

Is it ok?

For example, an advertisement using the gesture 'OK' was proposed for the promotional campaign of an international travel exhibition with a huge number of participants from the Emirates. However this gesture, while very positive for us, is likely to be perceived very negatively by people from the Gulf States, and using it may well result in a complete failure when targeted at this demographic.



After changing the concept of the advertising campaign, the event was quite successful, and the Emirates' participants signed several international contracts during it.

Seeing red

An international exhibition proposed using an umbrella brand in many countries, including China, featured a nice tortoise logo. Unfortunately tortoise sounds like a rude word in Chinese and may well cause offence to Chinese exhibitors and visitors. Furthermore, using the red font in advertising materials is likely to have negative connotations for Chinese people. The number '4' (four) sounds like the Chinese word for death and should be used with caution.

Cultural characteristics play an important role when conducting marketing surveys, planning sales sectors and in many other areas.

Companies should always double check when entering international markets to avoid pitfalls in their way.

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The world of global exhibitions is beset by opportunities for embarrassment

