

# Global and international advertising campaigns

**G**lobal and international advertising campaigns are strategies that companies use to sell their products on foreign markets. While **international campaigns** are structured to reflect regional, national and local market cultural differences and preferences, **global advertising** uses the same standardised strategy worldwide, considering the world as a single entity and taking advantage of huge economies of scale.

According to experts, global advertising works better when it appeals to similar tastes, interests, needs and values. However, the new trend of “glocal” advertising – which answers to the phrase “think global, act local” – is what is now recognised as the best solution. In this case, advertisers standardise certain core elements of the campaign, but also incorporate local cultural influences into the final product.

In their article *International advertising*, Susan P. Douglas and C. Samuel Craig of the New York University, Stern School of Business, agree that such campaigns target different audiences, who differ from country to country in terms of how they perceive or interpret symbols, respond to humour or emotional appeals, as well as levels of literacy and languages spoken.

International campaigns can therefore be seen as a communication process which crosses multiple contexts and which “differs in terms of language, literacy, values, communication styles and consumption patterns: for example, a message may not get through to the audience because of people’s inability to understand it, because they misinterpret the message by attaching different meanings to the words or symbols used, or because they do not respond to the message due to a lack of income to purchase the advertised product”. What’s more, “media limitations also play a role in the failure of a communication to reach its intended audience”.

They also view international advertising “as a business activity through which a firm attempts to inform target audiences in multiple countries about itself and its product or service offerings. In some cases the advertising message relates to the firm and its activities, i.e. its corporate image. In other cases, the message relates to a specific product or service marketed by the firm. In either case, the firm will use the services of an advertising agency to determine the appropriate message, advertising copy and make the media placement.” This business activity, involving advertisers and the advertising agencies that create ads and buy media in different countries, constitutes a worldwide industry that is growing in importance.

Last but not least, they state that international advertising can work as a social force which, on the one hand, may propagate Western behaviour or values throughout the world and thus clash with other cultures, but, on the other hand, may work as an “important force integrating societies and establishing common bonds, universal symbols and models of communication among peoples in different parts of the globe”.





**1** BEFORE READING. Work with a classmate. Read these features of a good advert, then choose an advert you like and decide whether it has these features and whether the same advert could be translated to be used in a North American, an African or an Asian country and be equally effective, and why or why not.

A good advert is:

- simple ■ memorable ■ suggestive ■ convincing ■ effective ■ true ■ able to grab and hold the attention ■ entertaining



**2** Read about these global advertising campaigns which failed. Match each word in bold to its synonym or definition and answer the questions.

**International Marketing Campaigns That Failed to Translate**



1. *Coors ‘Suffer From Diarrhoea’* ■ For a large part of its history, Coors beer could only be found in the western US and was affectionately known as ‘Colorado Kool-Aid’. The company’s **‘Turn It Loose!’** slogan was successful in America but had a surprising impact in Spanish-speaking Mexico, where the literal translation predicted that anyone who drank Coors would ‘Suffer From Diarrhoea!’
2. *American Motors Launches ‘The Killer’* ■ When AM launched a car named ‘Matador’, they were confident of sales success, with research suggesting that the word meant virility and excitement to consumers. However, when they introduced the model to Puerto Rico they ran into trouble. It turned out that matador was the Spanish word for ‘killer’ – hardly a good advertisement.
3. *Pepsi ‘Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave’* ■ When Pepsi entered the Chinese market it launched with the slogan ‘Pepsi Brings You Back to Life’. Unfortunately, the company failed to realise that the phrase had been translated as ‘Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the **Grave**’. Not an ideal **blunder** in a country where reverence for ancestors is an important part of the culture.
4. *Pepsodent ‘You’ll Wonder Where the Yellow Went’* ■ When Pepsodent tried to sell toothpaste in South East Asia by promising white teeth, the brand **overlooked** a key cultural factor. In this part of the world, people chew **betel nuts** to try and blacken their teeth – a habit which is viewed as a status symbol. Consequently, the brand’s promise wasn’t what their audience wanted to hear.
5. *Ford ‘Tiny Male Genitals’* ■ When Ford introduced the popular Pinto to Brazil they were surprised to find that sales went nowhere. After some investigation it transpired that ‘Pinto’ was slang in Brazil for **‘tiny male genitals’**. The brand quickly removed the nameplates from the cars and changed them to read ‘Corcel’, which means ‘horse’.
6. *Braniff Airlines ‘Fly Naked’* When the now **defunct** Braniff airlines decided they wanted to appeal to first class customers, they created a campaign to promote their leather **upholstery** in Mexico. Unfortunately the tag line ‘Fly in Leather’ literally translated as ‘Fly **Naked**’.

Adapted from: <http://www.k-international.com/blog/7-international-marketing-campaigns-that-failed-to-translate>

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Very bad. ....                                               | 6. Failed to see or notice something. .... |
| 2. Place where a dead person is buried. ....                    | 7. Nut of a tropical Asian palm. ....      |
| 3. Open. ....                                                   | 8. Stupid or careless mistake. ....        |
| 4. Dead. ....                                                   | 9. Not wearing any clothes. ....           |
| 5. Soft covering on furniture such as armchairs and sofas. .... | 10. Very small. ....                       |

1. Why did the translation for Coors beer promote diarrhoea?
2. Why was the AM company convinced that “matador” would be a good name for its car? What does it mean in English?
3. What was the intended meaning of the Pepsi campaign?
4. What cultural factor did Pepsodent not take into consideration when launching their campaign in Asia?
5. What solution to their language blunder did the Ford company adopt?
6. What was the mistake of the Braniff company generated by?