

6 Top Tips for Growth Focused  
Retail Organisations...  
and Marketing Campaigns  
that Failed to Translate

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# Introduction

**This guide includes 6 top tips for growth focussed retail organisations.**

Packed with helpful advice and using real-life examples, readers will benefit from the experience of some of the biggest retail organisations.

This guide contains:

- 6 top tips for growth focussed retail organisations
- Marketing campaigns that failed to translate

## **Tip no. 1 –** Approach the market carefully, adapting when necessary

**S**ometimes it can seem like the world is smaller than ever – that we live in a global village where international borders mean little. However, when it comes to international business expansion, the importance of cultural differences cannot be underestimated. Indeed, many businesses have found out the hard way that what works at home can go down very differently in a new and different market. In this article we present 6 tips you can learn from some of the world's biggest businesses' most notable successes and failures. ►

## < 6 top tips for growth focussed retail organisations

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### Choose Your Market Carefully

While many businesses are tempted to expand overseas by rapidly growing economies and the allure of fast returns, it is essential to thoroughly research the new market first. Questions include:

- Is there an appetite for your product?
- Who are the local competitors?
- What are the local customs and regulations, and how might these impact your business?

Taco Bell's success in South Korea is a prime example of the importance of employing a smart international business strategy when expanding into new markets. After earlier unsuccessful attempts to bring Tex-Mex to Asia, Taco Bell struck gold when they correctly identified several factors that made South Korea a promising market – namely, an appetite for novel dining experiences from the West, and the existence of highly influential 'power bloggers' capable of causing a buzz.

This story highlights the importance of studying the market and assessing your brand. Only then can you accurately predict your brand's performance within a new market, and decide on a suitable international business strategy.

### Utilise Local Knowledge

Even if you speak the target market's language and are familiar with the country, no amount of research can replace the value of local knowledge. Partnering with local experts is one of the best things you can do to safeguard against embarrassing – and potentially business-destroying – mistakes, from mistranslations to bad decisions.

Take Walmart's failure to successfully expand into Germany – the brand pulled out of the country in 2006, at an estimated loss of \$1 billion. What went wrong? The company had failed to listen to the locals, who could easily have told the US retailer that German shoppers tend to prefer smaller shops, are sceptical of low prices and find US-style customer service overfamiliar.

Without a comprehensive understanding of your target country's customs, regulations and culture, you cannot hope to succeed. Working with local experts is the best way to put together an informed expansion strategy. ►

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“The ‘think global, act local’ approach is certainly working for Coca Cola – the company derives 80% of its sales from outside the US, and is available in over 200 countries”

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### Have a Strong Team on the Ground

For a business to be successful in new markets, it needs a strong team on the ground making decisions as to how best to deliver the brand to the local market.

This model has long been employed by Coca Cola’s ‘think global, act local’ approach. Speaking to Strategy + Business, Ahmet C. Bozer, president of the company’s Eurasia and Africa Group, explained: “The key for international companies is finding the right mix of global and local in their operations. The Coca-Cola brand is global, but it must be locally relevant.”

This strategy is certainly working for Coca Cola – the company derives 80% of its sales from outside the US, and is available in over 200 countries.

### Adapt to the Local Culture

Simply transplanting a successful domestic business model abroad does not guarantee success. Different cultures, customs and habits can make or break an international launch.

Take eBay’s early attempts to conquer the Chinese auction market. In 2004, eBay replicated an approach that had already proved successful in several other countries. The strategy simply entailed buying a local company and switching it to the eBay platform. Yet within just two years, eBay abandoned the Chinese market with its tail between its legs.

What went wrong? eBay had failed to take into account the importance of ‘guanxi’ – social connections – to the way business is done in China. Chinese buyers wanted to build trust with sellers through direct contact rather than rely on other users’ reviews. As such, they overwhelmingly preferred local competitor Taobao, which has an instant messaging function.

Fortunately, eBay learnt its lesson, and has since gone on to successfully re-launch in China, this time with a focus on helping domestic sellers market their products to international consumers for whom guanxi is not a concern. In other words, eBay has recognised the role it can play within the market, and adapted accordingly. ►

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### **But Don't Adapt Beyond Recognition**

While it is important to adapt your business to meet the needs of a new market, be wary of adapting more than is necessary. Make too many changes and you risk losing what it is that makes your brand unique.

Finding the right balance between adapting to local markets and still maintaining a clear brand identity is something that the Subway franchise has worked hard to achieve over the years. Speaking to QSR, Subway's director of development Don Fertman recounted the process of trial and error that occurred during the franchise's expansion into Japan. Initially, menus were adapted so much that the offering became unrecognisable as distinctively Subway.

However, since then Subways in Japan have fallen more in line with the universal brand offering. "They have since come to (understand) [sic.] that what made Subway great was those six-inch, foot-long sandwiches and basic menu structure," Fertman explains.

Keeping a clear idea of your brand's core values and identity is key to expanding overseas. Ultimately, you have to believe that your business has something unique and valuable to offer. After that, it's simply a matter of working out how to best bring these offerings to a new cultural context.

International business expansion is no easy feat, as the challenges encountered by these world-leading businesses demonstrates. But, with thorough research, a clear strategy and the right support, there is no reason you cannot make your business a success in new markets. ■



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### Tip no. 2 – Culture guide for expanding internationally

Every year, hundreds of entrepreneurial companies will consider international expansion as a growth strategy – and with potential rewards including increased revenue and a wider range of customers, why wouldn't they? Most of these businesses will know that thorough planning, plentiful finances and accurate translation are central to their success. However, the importance of local culture, as well as the unexpected complications it can cause, is often overlooked. Here is why an in-depth understanding of local customs, assumptions and biases should be at the heart of everything you do.

#### Big brands ignored local culture – and it did not work

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, advances in technology allowed companies to enter international markets, with an ease that would previously have been unthinkable.

The result was the growth of global corporations, such as Toyota, McDonalds, Levi's and Coca Cola, who applied production quality controls and scale efficiencies to market low-cost, standardised products to customers across the world.

Initially, this strategy worked. Consumers were excited to sample international merchandise, and products such as the McDonald's Big Mac and Marlboro Cigarettes went global.

Then, the backlash started. The same emerging markets that had jumped at the chance to sample international products began to resent what they perceived as "cultural imperialism" – and consumers turned back to local brands. ►

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There was only one thing for it. Corporations rethought their global marketing strategies and began to take local culture into account. For example, in March 2000, Coca Cola released their “think local, act local” strategy.

Luckily, we can learn from the mistakes of those who have gone before us – local culture matters.

### **Marketing strategies may have a completely different effect on international audiences**

Think about all of the things that make your culture unique. Colloquialisms, turns of phrase, colour associations and humour can all vary hugely by region, let alone country.

If you take the UK itself as an example, each region (or even city) has its own set of words and phrases, such as “getting a cob on” (which means getting angry in Liverpool), “gert lush” (the highest form of praise in Bristol), “wey aye, man!” (a generic proclamation of positivity in Newcastle) and “a face like cracked fat” (which means looking bad tempered in Cumbria).

From a broader perspective, the colour white has dramatically different associations around the globe – in China, Japan and parts of Africa, it is associated with mourning, while in the western world it is associated with purity.

While these may be extreme examples, it is easy to see how a marketing strategy that is not localised for each of its audiences could have an undesirable effect – and the same applies to everything from your blog content to sales materials.

In some cases, a translation that takes local culture into account may be all that is needed, but in others, the message may need to be completely recreated, while maintaining the original idea and branding (a process known as transcreation).

### **Your site could alienate international audiences**

What is considered an acceptable tone for a business site varies considerably from country to country. For example, in the UK and US, an informal, friendly and even humorous tone is generally acceptable, or even expected, depending on the type of business you run. ►

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# “Everything from the appropriate greeting to when to give out business cards can vary by country”

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However, in countries such as Poland, business style and language is far more formal. A direct translation of your site, without taking tone into account, could therefore alienate a Polish audience. Aside from this, factors such as layout could impact your site's accessibility, if they are not in line with your audiences' cultural codes. For example, in the west, we tend to read in an F-shape, from left to right – but this is not the case in the Arabic world, where people often read from right to left.

If your website translation ignores the cultural codes of its target audiences, you could lose out to local competitors.

## **Business etiquette varies hugely across the world**

Heading overseas for an international business meeting? If you do not take the time to understand local culture and etiquette, you could be in for an uncomfortable experience.

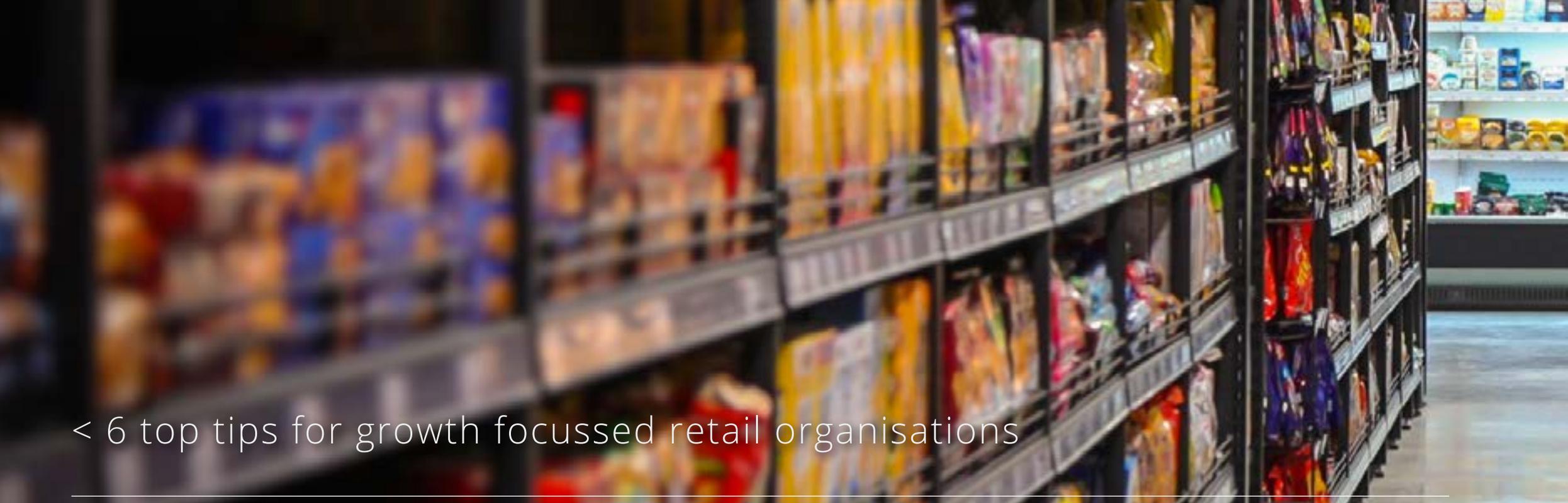
Despite the globalised nature of the modern business world, business etiquette varies considerably, depending on which country you are in.

For example, blowing your nose in public could cause offence in Japan, accepting something with one hand indicates that you do not consider it of value in China and saying “no” is considered impolite in India (it should be replaced with “I will try”).

In fact, everything from the appropriate greeting to when to give out business cards can vary by country – and sometimes even by region or ethnic group.

Consequently, if you do not do your homework, you risk damaging important business relationships.

Expanding internationally is about more than translating documents word-for-word and ensuring you have the infrastructure to deal with overseas business. An understanding of local culture is at the heart of a successful strategy. ■



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## Tip no. 3 – Translation versus transcreation

What is transcreation and how is it different from translation? How do you know if you need transcreation services for your content?

### What is transcreation?

Simply put, transcreation is the process of adapting content to a new target audience, changing elements of the material and messaging as needed to keep the same overall emotional impact.

Generally speaking, pure translation involves a more faithful rendering of content from one language to another. Sometimes, this is precisely what you want: information from the first language made understandable to a new audience. But what if the success of your project depends on more than just information? Or, what if there's something about the original message that is keeping a new country's audience from engaging fully?

### Translator, traitor?

“Traduttore, traditore.” In English, that means “translator, traitor.” This old Italian saying implies that there is no way a translated work can ever exactly replicate the original. Something always gets lost in translation.

That seems like an overly cynical way of looking at the act of translation. However, it is true that translators often have to choose between being faithful to the words in the original text, or being faithful to the spirit and meaning. Even the most accurate word-for-word translations can be “betrayals” if abstract elements like idioms are not made understandable to your target audience. That is why even the most advanced machine translation systems available today are still no substitute for a good human translator.

In advertising and marketing, you are not just trying to inform your audience. If you are doing your job, you are trying to inspire them, to motivate them, to get them to do something. Effective adverts and marketing campaigns depend on a combination of subtle emotional cues. Emotions are universal. However, the signals that inspire them often depend on culture. As just one example, different colours carry different emotional meanings around the world. ►



That is where transcreation comes in: by reconsidering the whole project from the ground up, transcreation specialists can achieve the same motivational and emotional impact as the original copy, but for a new audience with different linguistic and cultural expectations. Transcreation can involve elements as diverse as changing the colour scheme, changing the imagery, and rewriting or changing aspects of the copy to more effectively address the target audience.

The result? A final output that looks as if it was designed and written by a local agency in the target country.

### **Need some examples?**

Take a look at how [Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Amazon have localised and transcreated their websites to appeal to different audiences around the world.](#)

### **Do you need transcreation or marketing translation?**

Typical projects that require transcreation include web campaigns that do not attract customers in other markets, ads that are based on wordplay, humour that is directly related to just one language or culture, or products and services that need to be marketed to diverse demographics within the same market.

Transcreation is not always necessary, of course. Sometimes, marketing translation is all you need to create copy that resonates with the target audience. Marketing translation keeps the original message intact instead of recreating it from scratch. However, it does include translating slogans, jokes and figures of speech to make them relevant to the target audience.

So, how do you know which you need? Unless you have a deep understanding of both the original and target culture, you probably don't. The answer depends on both your goals and on the nature of the source material. Often, both marketing translation and transcreation are used together on the same project. A language service provider experienced with both approaches can help you decide when to use each for maximum efficiency and best results. ■



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### Tip no. 4 – Learn from global brands in action

In the 1980s, only a handful of brands, such as Coca Cola and IBM, ruled the global stage. However, as the internet continued to lower the barriers to entering new markets, an increasing number of companies were able to achieve this level of influence. Today, building a global brand requires a lot more than simply translating your website into different languages. The most successful companies understand that consistent and universally appealing messaging has to be combined with an understanding of local culture and tastes – a tactic that is known as a ‘glocal’ strategy.

Here are five examples of powerful global branding in action.



#### Airbnb

When Airbnb was first launched, the brand faced a big challenge: convincing people around the globe that staying in a stranger’s home isn’t weird or scary. However, under the guidance of CMO Jonathan Mildenhall, the company has experienced remarkable global success – it now has listings in over 190 countries. Key to Airbnb’s global strategy is localisation, with a dedicated localisation department responsible for making the site accessible around the globe, as well as local storytelling – essential for developing trust and a sense of community between hosts and travellers.

The brand has also introduced a universal symbol as its logo – the Belo – which symbolises ‘belonging’ no matter where you are in the world. ►

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# “The content on the Apple website is carefully translated and localised for international audiences”

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## Apple

Arguably the most successful global brand of our time, we can all learn a thing or two from Apple. When it comes to its products, the company has opted for a one-size-fits-all strategy, with iPhone design identical regardless of region. And, whilst this can be a dangerous tactic, Apple’s minimalist and intuitive approach has resulted in products with global appeal.

However, the brand knows where this standardisation needs to end. The customer service protocol of each of its worldwide stores is tailored to suit local tastes and, despite having the same look and feel regardless of location, the content on the Apple site is carefully translated and localised for international audiences.



## Starbucks

It’s impossible to talk about powerful global branding without mentioning Starbucks. With around 20,000 stores in 63 countries, the world’s most popular coffee house has made its mark from Brazil to China, where many thought it would fail to take off due to the cultural importance of tea drinking.

But what is it about the Starbucks brand that gives it such global appeal? The company has gone to great lengths to make sure that every Starbucks feels like a local coffee house, without losing brand consistency. For example, in China, a regional dislike for coffee was combatted with coffee-free drinks, whilst stores in Asia feature more adaptable seating arrangements to cater for larger groups.

The company was also a pioneer of consumer-centric digital strategy, with personalised perks on the Starbucks app including free birthday coffee. As a result, no matter where you are in the world, the brand never feels like an impersonal American corporate giant. ►

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### Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola is an old-hat when it comes to operating on a global level. However, the company has had to adapt to create a global brand that resonates with international audiences.

In the 1980s and '90s, when the company first emerged onto the global stage, standardised products and messaging resulted in a backlash against American imperialism. In response, Coca-Cola introduced its 'think local, act local' marketing strategy in 2000, with an aim to increase local sensitivity.

Since then, Coca-Cola has gone from strength to strength, and is still one of the world's most recognisable brands. Key to this success has been the company's focus on enduring and universal values such as 'sharing' and 'happiness', as well as product and messaging localisation. For example, during the FIFA World Cup, each of the company's international homepages featured local celebrities and cultural references, alongside the instantly recognisable Coca-Cola branding.



### Ikea

Founded in 1943 by Ingvar Kamprad, Ikea has become a globally recognisable brand, with stores all over the world, from Japan to Croatia. In part, this success can be credited to the company's universally appealing brand attributes of low price, sustainability, form, function and quality.

However, as with all successful global brands, Ikea takes the time to understand its international audiences. In this video, Ikea's Head of Research Mikael Ydholm explains how the company examines societal shifts around the world, as well as people's perceptions of Ikea, to inform product choices.

Although they often retain the same elements, room sets will also vary from store to store to suit local customs. For example, in Japan, they will often feature tatami mats, a traditional Japanese floor covering.

Building a global brand is anything but simple – but with it being easier than ever before to enter international markets, it's something that an increasing number of companies can achieve. The key is to find the right balance between global messaging and localised strategies. ►





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### Tip no. 5 – How to localise a luxury brand

China is now the world's second largest consumer of luxury goods (USA is first, Japan is 3rd). As the world economy grows the centre of gravity of the global middle class shifts eastwards, with this shift your customers are changing, managing a luxury brand is not what it used to be. The key to marketing a luxury brand is the considered and precise use of language to ensure that the target market is reached. Translating existing content with a full appreciation of the colloquial and cultural implications of the text is therefore vital to an effective expansion strategy.

The style and register is always paramount – never more so than when seeking to influence the purchasing intent of new markets. After all, if it was as simple as running the words through Google Translate there would be little need for a strategic multi-market plan. Irrespective of the product, service or demographic, in order to effectively promote on a multinational platform, it is therefore vital that the textual content is translated with a complete linguistic understanding of each specific market.



#### The Importance of Textual Identity

Brands such as Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci have all successfully created an international audience for their goods, one that has clearly integrated the labels' textual presentation into new markets. Prada and Fendi, however, although internationally recognised, are arguably less respected within their extended field. This could be seen as due to the vagaries of taste and trends in foreign markets – or it could be considered the result of a lack of clearly identifiable textual characteristics. ►

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A textual identity is not just about the types of goods for sale, but concerns the exact vocabulary used to describe them. Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci – despite being adopted for short periods of time by a less affluent demographic – have retained and transferred their premium position across all markets, in part due to their strongly maintained textual identity. Prada and Fendi, although retaining a healthy popularity on home ground, do not seem to have the same prominence in foreign market consciousness.

Attracting the desired demographic, particularly when translating from another language, involves a careful consideration of the original target audience, a comparison with the ‘new’ target audience, a focus on the commonalities of expectation and a setting of linguistic parameters that take all of these aspects on board. Ultimately, the skill required to translate a marketing message whilst maintaining the tone of the original language is, as yet, not automated; Google Translate does not recognise nuance, colloquialism, flow or flair – human translators do.

### **Maintaining Brand Equity**

One of the most important aspects of premium brand marketing is to ensure consistency in public presentation. Building and improving international brand equity is more than a tick-list of actions – it also depends upon successfully harnessing intangible assets such as desire, aspiration, ambition and, ultimately, satisfaction. Luxury purchases are as much an emotional choice as an investment in lifestyle, so textually placing a label firmly in the position of claiming both can only be of benefit. Therefore, the perception of a luxury brand will be dependent on the public profile, which in many ways will rely upon the textual communication used in marketing materials.

Having already built a profitable profile in one language, failing to effectively translate a successful textual identity into a multinational forum will not only hamper efforts in new markets, but also runs the risk of perceptually damaging existing positions. For example, one of the most popular articles on our blog details translation errors on food packaging. Certainly, amusing in the abstract, but should such misunderstandings be associated with a luxury brand the inevitable media attention guaranteed by their premium position could only be of detriment to public perception. In short, the absence of a textually consistent public presentation might allow a perceptual interpretation at odds with the original associations of quality, exclusivity, craftsmanship and desirability. ►

# “Direct translations of product names, for example, have historically caused difficulties in foreign markets”

## Understanding Culture

Translating for a premium brand not only involves at least two languages, it also involves an understanding of the implications of culturally inappropriate content. The implicit interpretation of any text will be unique to the target market, so a linguistic gap caused by a lack of comprehension during the translation process can damage brand equity and affect the widespread perception of any new audience.



Cross-cultural misinterpretations of physical actions are an acknowledged pitfall in the business world, but potentially inappropriate textual content is arguably more embarrassing. Direct translations of product names, for example, have historically caused difficulties in foreign markets – General Motors introduced the Chevy Nova to South America, only to find out that “nova” translates as “it won’t go”; Clairol marketed their “Mist Stick” curling iron in Germany, only to discover that “mist” was a slang term for manure; and Ford inadvertently amused their new target audience when they tried to bring the Pinto to Brazil, finding out far too late that “pinto” was a slang term for “tiny male genitals” – the model was eventually, at great expense, renamed “Corcel”.

The task of translation for a luxury new market is therefore to find the most appropriate language in order to effectively convey the existing message, without falling foul of colloquialism or phrasing. Issues of social stratification, which could include class and caste as well as socio-economic positioning, are also of paramount importance when considering a language-based interpretation of an existing marketing strategy. Basically, if the original text includes a culturally responsive description of quality, a foreign audience may not recognise it. Or, more worryingly, it may contain the local slang term for “cheap”. ▶

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### **Multi-Medium Influence and Intent**

Any push into new markets will inevitably be a multi-pronged and carefully strategised affair. With the ubiquitous nature of a multi-lingual website and the associated issues of the availability of descriptive comparisons, it is important that all mediums are treated with the same attention to detail.

Choosing a partner with the translation infrastructure to provide a retail translation service that can concurrently deliver a message via print, dual-broadcast or online marketing tools could be an efficient allocation of resources. It ensures a textual cohesion that would allow each aspect of the project to be treated as a linguistically consistent whole, permitting an integrated approach to the ultimate strategy. Therefore, taking into consideration the need for a consistent textual identity, the value of the existing brand equity position, and the cultural implications of phraseology and vocabulary, a provider that is capable of consolidating their translation services to account for all aspects in a multi-medium format is clearly preferable.

In order that any message is not diluted by a separation of linguistic oversight, for the purposes of directing a market's purchasing intent, textually creating an image of integrity, excellence, attention to detail and the highest degree of quality can be most effectively projected by normalising all multi-medium presentations. Indeed, ROI is achieved by reliably directing this intent with a dedicated strategy – an objective which could be reached in a new market by ensuring that all translations are performed by a culturally experienced specialist.

### **Preparation and Intent**

Regardless of the specific nature of the brand or market in question, the ultimate factor when considering translating for new markets is need. In order to be able to define the exact requirements for a textual translation and set the appropriate linguistic parameters it is important that every decision is fully informed. ■

## < 6 top tips for growth focussed retail organisations

### **Tip no. 6 –** Beware of relying on Google Translate

*A personal reflection by  
Richard Brooks, CEO K International*

I was asked this question today. It wasn't the first time. If I'm honest, it annoyed me that I should have to answer it at all. But I guess if you don't work in the language industry, you might perceive Google as a trustworthy company who can do no wrong, so you could be forgiven for thinking that their machine translation would be equally reliable. So, here's my answer for anyone who may be guilty of having the same thoughts.

It's surprising (to me, at least) how many times I hear things like;

- So basically, you do the same as Google Translate?
- Why should I pay you anything when I can get Google Translate to do it for free?
- Do you use Google Translate for all your translation?
- Do you just have one big computer who does all the translation?

(the answer is NO to all of the above)



Over the years I've lost quite a few projects to people translating legal contracts, user guides, websites and most recently, translating food packaging, with Google Translate. How do we compete with something that's perceived as being free? I can talk about how much time, effort and money is required to get the original English document right, so surely when approaching the translation aspect, at least some respect should be paid to the quality of language used, especially when the originator may not be able to read the results. But not everyone listens. ►

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The practice of maintaining a multinational marketing message and ensuring the feel of the original language is kept the same takes a high degree of knowledge and skill that can only come (at least for the moment) from human involvement. Machines are unable to accurately convey or understand all the nuances involved with a localization project. When companies rely on this type of machine translation, the shortcuts become painfully obvious to readers of the final product. One of the most popular posts on K International's language blog is about when packaging translation goes wrong.

### Yeah, but it looks Right

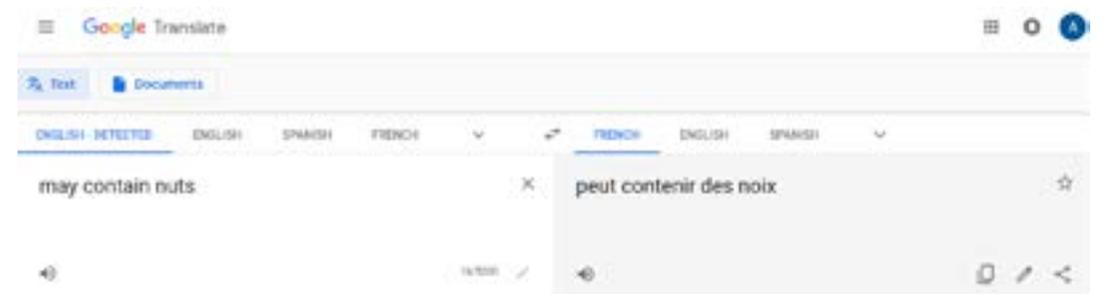
What really makes me sad is when we see examples of translation companies using Google Translate as their own work. Whenever I spot this (believe me we can tell) I do my best to tell the company involved.

Earlier this year we used this very method to remove a translation agency supplying a very large global retailer with translation to be used on their international packing. If you're trying to remove an incumbent company a great way of getting the client to listen to you is for you to proofread their text and present the findings to them, especially if it has a legal connotation to it (for instance food packaging or medical documentation).

The translation house in question claimed to use professional translators (aligned with EN15038 which means a translator, reviewer and an independent QA is employed to check the target document translation) and yet we found examples of text which had been translated using the same output Google Translate spits out.

Let me give you an example.

Google translate (image taken September 2018) returns the French translation of 'may contain nuts' as 'Peut contenir des noix' – looks about right doesn't it? Well noix translates as walnuts so the phrase returned can be understood as 'may contain walnuts'. Are nuts and walnuts different? They are if you or your child has an allergy. And they are different if you want to legally sell your product in a French speaking part of the world. ▶



# “Terminology Management can be used as either a cash generator or a barrier to entry for your competitors”

I took my translation team around the retailer’s store in-country to see for themselves exactly what had happened. We found the error on 40% of packs. We now provide all of the retailer’s language support.

## Polluted Translation Memories

The problem is made worse by adding incorrect terms, such as these, to a translation memory without the help of a terminologist. They then get used to return ICEs or 101% matches (depending on your Translation Engine of choice). One problem phrase can soon find itself making its way on to almost all of your translated information, partly driven by the bizarre trend of not charging for, or checking 101/ICEs matches provided by large agencies. I’m all for saving money but with things this important to the end consumer extra care really needs to be taken.



## Terminology Management

Terminology Management can be used as either a cash generator or a barrier to entry for your competitors, both ways add value to your business. Making a success of it is largely dependent on demonstrating where you are adding value to your customer’s supply chain. ►

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A study by Schuetz, Joerg and Rita Nuebel, "Multi-purpose vs. Task-specific Application: Diagnostic Evaluation of Multilingual Language Technologies" shows us that the cost of correcting a translation error increases dramatically as the process moves on (from Authoring to Maintenance). The value can be generated by managing the terminology for the client, not adding value to errors and demonstrating the value/money saved in the process. There are numerous terminology tools available on the market to help your team manage this process but the tool has to be fit for the purpose intended. I've seen everything from dynamic systems running on top of the latest technology to Google spreadsheets with columns for notes/comments. The point is it needs to work and it needs to be built on a solid foundation, investment in expensive IT systems sometimes makes your problems worse.

### Alignment with Stakeholders

Other stakeholders in the process will have vital input into the quality of the end product. Depending on what you're translating, these people/departments could be;

- the client
- the supply chain
- the marketing team
- the artworkers
- legislation agents
- the end consumer



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# “Google Translate can’t draw solely from quality sources as these are often formalised language ”

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All will have an equal view about the translation, but some views are more equal than others. There are tools to help you to manage this such as stakeholder impact Vs influence 2x2s that help you to highlight the areas where your systems will need to be aligned first. This image (I didn't invent the model but I use it and present about it) gives you a very quick view into how to manage the stakeholders as they fall into each box, it is obviously pointless spending a lot of time on someone who has very little power or influence over the project.

## Yeah but, Can I use it?

Google Translate has its uses, but read the data usage agreement and don't rely on the output if you're going to rely on it to keep you/your company out of court. It is a subsidiary of Google. This means that it draws on the same technology as the regular search engine does. For languages, it cuts the sentence into segments which are then researched automatically on the web. The problem is that the web is an interactive tool, with the entire world as its supplier. Google Translate can't draw solely from quality sources as these are often formalised language and doesn't reflect consumer demand for the translation of popularised phrases. Furthermore, it knows no grammar, it fakes grammar through its segmentation rules.

The process of taking your message, breaking it down to its constitute parts, understanding the external influences in region, applying the relevant legislation and putting it all back together in another language remains a complex one. Don't rely on a free service to do this (you wouldn't for almost anything else in your business) and if your language supplier is using it – talk to us at K International. ■

# Marketing campaigns that failed to translate

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We are inundated with marketing campaigns every hour of every day – from billboard advertisements to events and the articles we read. But there is a fine line between a campaign that succeeds and a campaign that fails to resonate with its intended audience.

Companies will often spend millions on marketing, with even the tiniest details (such as phrases and hair colour) carefully considered.

The problem comes when an organisation decides to expand its brand internationally but fails to carefully adapt its messaging for an international audience. At the very least this is likely to result in an unsuccessful campaign. But in many cases it can result in a hugely damaging (if sometimes quite amusing) cultural blunder.

'One Size Fits All' International Marketing Doesn't Work

Let's take a television advertising campaign promoting Indian Mobile phone company Bharti Airtel in Africa as an example. With business in 17 African countries, the brand wanted to create a campaign that would have continent-wide appeal. ▶



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“A cut and paste approach to global marketing does not work on the same continent, let alone different ones”

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However, they severely underestimated Africa’s cultural diversity. The use of South African actors, images of the Savannah and coins – when many Africans only use paper money – resulted in the campaign failing to resonate in many countries and monumentally flopping.

The message was clear – a cut and paste approach to global marketing does not work on the same continent, let alone different ones.

## International marketing campaigns that failed to translate

So, what happens when a campaign goes monumentally wrong?

### 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!’

### Pampers Confuses Japanese Parents



When Proctor & Gamble started selling Pampers diapers in Japan, they were confused why sales were so dire. After some careful research, they realised that the problem was the packaging, which featured an image of a stork delivering a baby. The reference was completely lost on Japanese parents, since the story is not part of Japanese folklore – instead their story goes that giant floating peaches deliver babies. ▶

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### American Motors Launches 'The Killer'



When American Motors 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.

### 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.

### 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 was not what their audience wanted to hear.

### 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.

### 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'.

When it comes to global marketing, a 'one size fits all' approach doesn't work. Getting it right involves taking complex cultural considerations into account, as well as ensuring that your messaging is faithfully recreated by translators with in depth local knowledge. ■

## < 6 top tips for growth focussed retail organisations

### Translating Fast Fashion – a case study

**K**International recently developed a solution for a very large European retailer to help them to localise/translate all of their packaging for their dynamic range of clothing.

The challenge was to provide translation that was ‘on trend’, error free and made best use of all the previously translated material, which helped to dramatically lower the unit cost per word to translate.

When we reviewed the existing translation solution we found that the translation was being stored on a shared excel sheet in the head office.

The theory was great, if they had translated something once then that translation could be re-used for future packaging at (virtually) zero cost. But in practice it meant that no one was responsible for the data and the spreadsheet had to be emailed around people outside of the ‘loop’. Comments and suggestions were not imported into the master list, the context of the translation was often wrong and the quality of the translation never really improved over time.

ENGLISH	CZECH
90% polyurethane, 10% elastodiene	90% polyuretan, 10% elastodien
100% polyester, excluding trim	100% polyester, kromě lemování
50% polyester 50% elastodine	50% polyester, 50% elastodien
55% silk 45% cotton	55% hedvábi 45% bavlna
95% cotton/5% lycra	95% BAVLNA, 5% LYCRA
100% cotton	100% BAVLNA
1% elastane	1% elastan
50% PU	50% PU
50/50 feather down	50/50 peří/ prachové peří
100% recycled polyester	100% recyklovaný polyester
100% cashmere	100% kašmír
100% cotton excluding trim	100% bavlna s výjimkou lemu
100% cotton flannel	
100% jute	100% Juta
100% leather	100% Kůže
100% nylon	100% Nylon

The spreadsheet was used by approximately, 20 buyers, 8 print companies, hundreds of manufacturers, designers, project managers and other stakeholders located all over the world. ▶

## < 6 top tips for growth focussed retail organisations

We consulted with stakeholders to deliver the best solution for the client which consisted of:

- Translating and proofing the existing translation memory held in the spreadsheet
- Convert the excel file to a dataset
- Build a web front end and make it searchable
- Host it online
- Link it to our me

So that is exactly what we did. The process now allows all users of the system to check all previously validated translated material and re-use it at zero cost.

To ensure we help the customer continuously learn and grow, any term not found in the translation database is translated by K International with a 24 or 48 hour turnaround time.

The new approach means that once the new translation is completed it is automatically added to the database/library so that it can be used as many times needed for free in the future. Professional translators oversee and routinely monitor all data that is in this system keeping it all up to date with current legislation. ■

The screenshot displays a web application interface for translation management. At the top, there are two tabs: "Search memory" (active) and "Order new translation". Below the tabs, a message states: "Please note that the search is limited to 50 results".

The main search area includes the following fields:

- Product Category and Group:** A dropdown menu with "--Select--" selected. A list of categories is shown, with "CARE INSTRUCTIONS" highlighted by a mouse cursor. Other categories include AGE / SIZE, COLOUR, COUNTRIES, EN17 WARNINGS, ENVIRONMENTAL, FIBRE NAMES, FOOTWEAR BOOTS, FOOTWEAR CASUAL, and FOOTWEAR FORMAL.
- Search text:** An empty text input field.
- English only:** A checkbox that is currently unchecked.

At the bottom left of the search area, there is a link: "Export current data as XLS file".

Below the search area, there is a section titled "Can't find a translation? Order one here:". This section includes:

- Product Category and Group:** A dropdown menu with "CARE INSTRUCTIONS" selected.
- Text to translate:** A text input field containing "dry clean only".
- Additional information:** A text input field containing "to be used on our new range of men's s".

A red button labeled "Request Translation" is located at the bottom of this section, with a mouse cursor hovering over it.



# K International

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At K International, we have expert teams of marketers and translators all over the world

Our multilingual copywriters and designers are ready to be your voice in another language. Our experts use their inside knowledge of the target language and culture to analyse your project. They will help you decide how best to proceed so that the resulting translation retains the full spirit and message of the original, but in a manner that will impact positively on the end users in the target country.

## Choose us because

K International has the knowledge and processes to help make your business an international success. We work with numerous large retail organisations, driving success. Do not get lost in translation – we can offer you specialist support and advice on legal, cultural and procedural issues, at every stage of your expansion process. Feel free to get in touch.

We would love to hear from you!

Tel: **+44 (0)1908 557900** or email [info@k-international.com](mailto:info@k-international.com)

K International are a leading language service provider based in Milton Keynes, England.  
Operating since 1986, we provide targeted solutions for some of the largest global corporations and governments.

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