

Multilingual Brand Check Case Study

What do you do when you want to take a brand international? English speaking countries are pretty straight forward but what about non-English speaking countries? Where on earth do you start?

One of the main issues for any company taking their first steps into the international market is whether their brand name and values will 'translate' into new countries and markets. Huge errors have been made in the past by giants of branding who should know better.

Coca Cola's first version of its Chinese name was different from the one it presently uses. Unfortunately, the company found that people interpreted its first choice as 'Bite the wax tadpole' or 'Female horse stuffed with wax', depending on the dialect. Coke then settled with Ke Kou Ke Le, which translates literally as 'tasty, can make you happy' or very loosely as 'so mouth-watering it makes you happy.'

Coca Cola had a huge PR, Marketing and production problem on their hands which could have been avoided with some simple research into the Chinese market. These errors stay in the minds of customers for a long time and make re-launching even, after correction, more difficult.

So what do you do to avoid the Cola trap? Well that's where Applied Language come in with our International Brand Checking service.

Challenge

One the UK's top four branding agencies came to us facing the same challenge as Coca Cola had, and not wanting to hit the same costly and embarrassing problems, they needed a solution. They knew that they had to get this right and that there would be a million and one issues just as

there are with launching a brand in the UK. The agency already knew the steps to launching an English language brand - they'd successfully launched hundreds already - but they also knew that having straight translations of all their branding, marketing and PR just wouldn't work.

Aside from the language issues there are a myriad of cultural issues to deal with:

- Colour - Is the colour palate going to work in the target market? For example in China black is considered unlucky.
- Product - Is the product a cultural mismatch? In Indonesia there is a high incidence of lactose intolerance so ice cream would be a tough product to sell.
- Religion - Could your brand be religiously offensive? The Arabic Big Brother was pulled off air due to religious pressure.

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So where did they start?

The branding agency were already working with Applied Language for translation work on PR and marketing communications. So when they won a new client who actively wanted to launch their brand into several countries at once they came directly to Applied Language. They needed to get as much market research as possible so that they could adapt or at the very worst ditch any plans to launch in a given market.

Due to Applied Language's flexible approach to solving customer's complex problems they were able to tap into their 14,000 strong resources of in-



country professional linguists who all have specialist industry specific skills. This means that they can give accurate linguistic and cultural feedback on any product or brand.

Complex questionnaires based on the agency's brand were sent out to linguists who matched the criteria set by the agencies client. Each questionnaire consists of 20 questions related to the brand such as:

- Is there a similar product in the target country?
- Would a direct translation of the brand name be rude, offensive or put the brand in a bad light?

Applied Language has a standard set of questions however all customers using the service are advised to tailor the questions as specifically as possible to their own requirements. It's also advisable to give the linguists any prototypes or draft designs so that they can have a real feel for the product, though this isn't essential.

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Applied Language sent out the questionnaires which had been approved by the agency to the pre-selected linguists. They were fully briefed on the product and brand and given one week to complete and return their completed forms. All the questionnaires were completed in English. Applied Language then collated all the information together and submitted it back to the agency so that they could use the findings in their presentation back to their client.

Benefit

The benefits of this service are clear for the branding agency. They now have at their disposal an army of multilingual international market researchers who can be utilised on a project basis to provide information on any subject they need. This flexibility means that they can test any number of ideas and theories very quickly and at little cost.

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or call our UK office on +44 (0)870 367 7000 or
our US office on +1(800) 579 5010**

UK ■ USA ■ Bulgaria ■ India ■ France ■ Spain ■ Guatemala ■ Hong Kong
Head office: Brookes Mill, Armitage Bridge, Huddersfield HD4 7NR UK.