

# Taking your brand into new territories



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Taking your brand overseas has a lot of parallels with making your own travel plans: make sure you've done your research, learn the language, know how to get there and where you are going to stay – and, importantly, how you will make friends.

I am no travel agent, but here are five 'thought starters' on things to consider when designing for export:

## 1. Are you needed?

The very first thing to consider is the core of your brand – will the reasons that you are successful at home still be relevant and motivating overseas? A good base understanding of the customer (chooser and user), the category and the competitors is key to answering this question.

Take a good look at your brand proposition and your core brand values – is your market positioning still differentiated and ownable in this new context?

## 2. Will you travel well?

Some very big, established brands have made some 'schoolboy' errors when taking brands into new territories. Almost an urban legend now was the decision by Vauxhall to take the Nova ('no va' – literally meaning, 'doesn't go') into the Spanish market.

What does your brand name mean – literally and colloquially – in your chosen territories? Check that it works. Oh, and that you have it registered, too!

Think also about your visual brand assets – colours, graphics – and consider if there is a cultural significance to these in new territories that you just would not have considered in the home market. As examples, a dog, a foot, a shot of a woman eating – each of these would not be used graphically in some cultures for fear of causing quite serious offence or giving quite the wrong message.

### **3. How can you stand out?**

Know your market, know your competition. Consider ownership, consider relevance. Are your ‘ownable’ brand assets still ownable overseas? Is your current market niche still available, or taken? Does your new shopper approach the category and the fixture in the way that you are used to from your domestic customers?

### **4. How will you maintain relationships with your parents?**

Taking some of the answers to questions 1-3 above at face value, a brand owner might decide that their livery, and even their name, should be changed for an overseas market – or markets. But consider what this means for your longer-term brand health.

Having worked closely with [Boxer](#) (based in Birmingham and Chicago), I find their terminology of “Global Voice, Local Accent” from their global work with McDonald’s really useful. It encourages a brand owner to think about those elements that are globally consistent and which should flex to respect local needs or values. It is worth considering what your “Global Design Framework” would, could and should look like – a tweak to your domestic livery could make the difference between having a cohesive global brand expression or a bit of an inconsistent mess! Take time to make that big picture decision.

### **5. How can you make best use of your budget?**

Other than your brand’s vital relationship with your new consumers, making your move cost effective is perhaps equally, or more, important. I would strongly encourage any brand marketer to establish a cross functional team from day one. Involve production, procurement, the supply chain. Think about your brand’s voyage overseas in the most rounded way possible to ensure sustainability in brand, product quality, supply etc.

And, of course, don’t forget your toothbrush.

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