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Cross Cultural Marketing Blunders



By Harini Ragothaman
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Cross cultural marketing is extremely important in this era of increasing globalization. Some of the most hilarious and shocking marketing blunders have occurred in the area of cross cultural marketing. We bring to you the top 10 cross cultural marketing gaffes that will leave you in splits and make you wonder how the best marketing teams in the world could have overlooked something that simple!

- ✧ Gerber is the name of one of America's best-known makers of baby food but "gerber" can also be translated into French as "to vomit" – somewhat limiting for the brand's next global marketing push.
- ✧ Coors put its slogan, "Turn It Loose," into Spanish, where it was read as "Suffer from Diarrhea."
- ✧ Scandinavian vacuum manufacturer Electrolux used the following in an American campaign: "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux". Enough said.
- ✧ Marketing executives approved a global promotional campaign that compared an American luxury Hotel in New York to the Taj Mahal in India, a magnificent structure to be sure, but nevertheless, a tomb (mausoleum). Pretty morbid, I would say!
- ✧ Staff at the African port of Stevedoring saw the "internationally recognized" symbol for "fragile" (a broken wine glass) and mistook it for a box of broken glass. Rather than waste space they threw all the boxes into the sea! Not only can written language be misinterpreted but also pictures and symbols.
- ✧ Pepsodent tried to sell its toothpaste in Southeast Asia by emphasizing that it "whitens your teeth." They found out that the local natives chew betel nuts to blacken their teeth which they find attractive. Oops!
- ✧ United Airlines unknowingly got off on the wrong foot during its initial flights from Hong Kong. To commemorate the occasion, they handed out white carnations to the passengers. When they learned that to many Asians white flowers represent bad luck and even death, they changed to red carnations. Death flowers while flying? Shudder.
- ✧ When Gerber started selling baby food in Africa, they put a picture of a baby on the label of their jars, just as they do in the United States. However, the company did not realize a common practice in some African markets of putting pictures of the contents on the labels since many consumers are illiterate...you can imagine how this horrified customers.
- ✧ During the 1994 World Cup, Heineken printed the flag of each qualifying country under the bottle cap. Saudi Arabia was included, which has a holy verse on its flag. This angered Muslims all over the world as the verse was then associated with alcohol. Heineken reacted by recalling all the bottles and stopping their marketing campaign all together.



Emails with no subject line were opened 8% more than those with a subject line.
The reason: An email without a subject line shows more email preview text.

Cross-Cultural Marketing Success Stories



By RoseAnn Varghese
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It's fairly easy (and very entertaining) to find examples of marketing translation errors, such as the emphatic but unsettling "Good luck!" billboard that greets passengers of a Central Asian airline. But what about brands that got it right? Here are our top three:

✓ Coke's "Mommy Bloggers" (South Korea)

Brand evangelism is today's magic marketing word. Coke began reaching out to a group of young moms in Seoul that had an online "clout" with their peers, hosting parties and building partnerships. Today, that group of mommy bloggers not only help share information and evangelize the Coca-Cola brand, but also advise Coke marketers on how to better communicate with them and Korean families!

✓ Levi's Nuevo Pionero (U.S. Hispanic)

In a campaign that shows a truly "adventurous" approach to catching the eye of the young bi-cultural Latino market, Levi's took five young U.S. Hispanics on a journey from Alaska to Argentina on the Pan-American Highway. This journey from North to South shows the five travellers fully clad in Levi's new Work Wear line, stopping in ten different cities and pitching in on work projects involving the arts. Their experiences were documented in a ten-week reality show. To build up hype, the five *pioneros*, armed with their iPhones, posted live updates on the show's website and their Facebook pages. Levi's managed to turn this Latino inspired sojourn into a campaign for themselves in the target market.

✓ Volvo's American Drive-In (U.K.)

What happens when a brand capitalizes on the American culture to sell their product??? Given the surprising yet ardent fascination with anything west, a journalist and cultural entrepreneur Damian Barr, with the help of Volvo, launched the Starlite Urban Drive-In East London. Aping the American scenario was conveniently easy and rightly so, given all it took were 25 shiny Volvos, some loud music and screenings of American classics such as Grease and Dirty Dancing! Throw in some food into this culturally inspired ambience and you've gotten yourself one successful diner up and running! To complete the American 1950s setting, waitresses on roller skates took orders for burgers, meatloaf and ice cream sundaes! Interestingly, seeing the success of Volvo's American drive-in, Ford sponsored a series of outdoor film screenings at 11 different U.K. homes as part of its launch campaign for the new Galaxy.



Pizza Hut and Domino's in India

1992: Paneer on a Pizza!

1997: Paneer on a Pizza?

2002: Oh Yeah! Paneer on a Pizza.

Make it simple. Make it memorable.



When **Kentucky Fried Chicken** entered the Chinese market, to their horror they discovered that their slogan "finger lickin' good" came out as "eat your fingers off"



Effective Strategies in Multicultural Marketing



By Padmavathy Krishnamurthy
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Are your campaigns reaching the intended audiences? That's a key question facing marketing professionals, as the combined wave of technology, communication access, and spending power continues to extend across the globe. Here are some marketing strategies to pay heed to:

❖ Create an Effective Multicultural Marketing Campaign

An effective multicultural campaign will deliver a clear message and connect emotionally with the target audience. It will confirm your credibility. Sometimes, however, seemingly little things can come back to haunt your efforts. Even if you've achieved accurate translation and done your homework on the localization side, you'll need to watch out for certain pitfalls. When adapting your content to the target culture, enlist the help of representatives from your target locales. They should review your content in the following areas, which typically cause confusion and lead to poor comprehension:

- Culturally inappropriate or confusing analogies, metaphors, puns, idioms, and slang
- Cultural references that are inappropriate or could lose meaning (e.g., gender-specific roles; humor; ethnic, geographical, or historical references)
- Key messages, names, and slogans
- Confusing graphics or icons
- Grammar issues (e.g., ambiguous use of direct and indirect objects, gerunds, nouns, adjectives, relative pronouns, questions in negative form)
- Active/passive voice
- Pedagogical issues

❖ Who's Doing It Right?

Companies that are doing multicultural marketing right include Google, HP, American Express, Philips, Skype, Ericsson, Procter & Gamble, and Cisco.

What are they doing well? For the most part, they are making sure that...

- They provide websites in multiple languages and for multiple countries, with direct access from the main page.
- Each marketing piece contains images and content specific to the country or ethnic group being targeted.
- Each piece adheres to the same look, feel, and tone as the main corporate theme, preserving the brand.

**Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Interruptive
marke--**

