

## GLOBAL DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

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As any brand, be it consumable or luxury, open up their business globally through digital, their strategy for different markets needs to reflect various differences that exist in each country or region.

From varying digital habits to disparities in infrastructure, brands cannot expect that their framework for a specific country say India will be effective if carried over to other countries. Even if a brand is not actively seeking global consumers, having an online presence means they are on an international stage.

“In the end, as soon as you open your Web site, and you make it available to the world, you are global, even if you don’t want to be,” said Jean Marc Rejaud, professor of advertising and marketing communications at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York.

### **Expansion strategy**

Expanding your marketing efforts to an international audience can be a great opportunity to grow your company and reach potential customers that may not otherwise discover your brand, products or services. Reaching an international audience, though, entails understanding regional cultures, laws and online behaviour’s.

Before kicking off your international digital marketing strategy, consider the various strategies on how to successfully market to an international audience.

Here are certain suggestive global digital strategies:

#### **1. Know the multiplicities before acting.**

Brands cannot expect that a one-size-fits-all approach will work for every country. For instance, in the U.S., a small number of ecommerce sales come from social, meaning brands turn to the platforms more for brand building than monetization. However, in a different market like China, about 46.3 percent of social network users shop ecommerce, offering more opportunities to link content and commerce. The most important properties also differ in different regions. Where

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Facebook is the “elephant in the room” in the U.S., Baidu and Tencent rule in Asia and Brazilians frequent Google and Terra-Telefonica.

Therefore, a partnership with Google might be good for a number of countries, but is not able to be used as a blanket approach.

Knowing the online activity on each device in a given country, as well as what Web properties are popular and consumers’ online shopping habits are recommended before planning an approach.

## **2. Think global marketing planning.**

Different markets come with different objectives, depending on the maturity and length of a relationship with a particular region. For instance, for a particular brand that has been in the U.S. for a long time, the objective may be to retain or gain back customers, while the goal for an emerging market might center on obtaining new consumers.

Positioning may also vary depending on the region. In the U.S., Coach competes with Kate Spade and Michael Kors, presenting its case that it offers more benefits for the same price. The same brand in China is up against Gucci and Chanel.

Because of these distinctions, brands have to figure out the sweet spot between customizing and standardizing that optimizes for cost.

## **3. Take one right step at a time.**

When entering a new market, a brand may want to first dip their toe in the water before jumping in. This means that instead of a full Web site, a brand could start selling through a local marketplace, such as Taobao in China or eBay in the U.S.

After learning from the experience on a third-party ecommerce site, a brand can build its own Web site, and ship merchandise either from a local warehouse or its home country.

The final step is a full Web site managed entirely locally.

## **4. Measure absolute KPIs and locally benchmarked relative KPIs.**

Rather than using measurement metrics from a home country, brands should compare themselves to the best players in a particular market.

This will allow for more weight to portions of an online presence that matter most for a particular region. For example, in the U.S., ecommerce might be weighed more than in other markets, due to its importance.

Entering new markets can be risky, especially going into uncharted territory, but if a brand is aware of the risk, it can pay off.

For instance, Estée Lauder Cos.' expansion practices are marked by entering emerging markets ahead of other companies despite the increased risk.

Understanding risk tolerance is a must when embarking on any new project, especially when setting up shop in marketplace that is still developing. As one of the world's most valuable brands, Estée Lauder strives to introduce its products ahead of competitors to better understand emerging markets.

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"Beauty is the entry point of luxury in every circumstance, Our brands are global. But our consumers are global, too. We look to gateway cities around the world that represent the best of what our brand has to offer. These are cities such as Paris, London, New York and maybe even Hong Kong now." says William P. Lauder, executive chairman of Estée Lauder Cos., New York.

## 5. Start with Cross-Cultural Competency

Having your site translated into other languages is a huge advantage to marketing to an international audience, but having a deep understanding of your own and other's cultures is also important.

The first step to improving cross-cultural competency is understanding the cultural barriers within which you and others in your business operate. Having a grasp of the cultural assumptions and biases that you hold will help you identify cultural differences that may jeopardize business abroad.

Only after you understand your own culture can you begin to learn about other cultures and make note of differences. Reading books and essays on a particular culture can only take you so far. These readings often generalize or stereotype a given culture. Once you "learn" these generalizations, take them with a grain of salt and adapt accordingly.

Think about how your country or region's cultural norms differ among age groups, genders, geographical areas and so on, and then consider these differences among consumers in other cultures. Learning about and respecting other cultures will help you localize your brand's message.

When possible, talk with, learn from and spend time with people who represent the audience you're hoping to reach.

## 6. Understand Regional Laws



When marketing to a global audience, your business should be aware of regional regulations on products, advertising and sales tactics.

**Advertising Regulations:** In some regions of the world, advertising related to certain types of products are subject to approval by various governing bodies. For example, in many countries, advertisements for pharmaceuticals must be approved by local health ministries.

Furthermore, comparative advertising is treated with varying degrees of hostility across the world. While America may be relatively relaxed about using phrases like "best" and "better" to describe products in relation to other brands, Germany, France and Belgium are all known for having very strict principles when it comes to competitive messaging.

Verizon's commercials that compared 3G coverage across America between Verizon's and AT&T's networks, for example, made it to fruition in the States, but this type of comparative, and possibly misleading, sales tactic may not be permissible in other countries.

**Regulation of Sales Tactics:** Various sales promotion tactics — such as contests, sweepstakes, deals and premium offers (i.e., buy one, get one free) — are usually regulated differently across borders. Make sure your desired promotion tactics don't conflict with local laws before running them.

**Product Laws:** If you sell your product online to an international audience, it is subject to product development laws regarding chemical makeup, safety, performance and packaging designs, including languages, sizes and materials used.

## 7. Customize Search Engine Marketing Based on Local Usage

International search engine marketing is a mixture of choosing the right search engines, localizing content and understanding keywords.

**Choose the Right Search Engines:** Figure out which search engines are used by the particular markets you are targeting. While you can reach many English-speaking customers via search by advertising on the top three search engines in the U.S. — Google, Yahoo and Bing — international use of search engines varies. Often, local markets are best served via local search engines, because the English-language search engines don't always suffice for niche, local content.

**Localize Your Content:** It isn't enough to simply translate your website into target languages if quality is your goal — don't serve second-rate content to your international clients. When possible, localize your product, services and messaging for each market you serve. This can be costly, so weigh the options carefully.

**Choose Native Keywords:** With international SEM, you shouldn't focus on translating keywords into foreign languages. Instead, work with native speakers trained in search marketing to figure out native keywords that would be best associated with your website and its content. Remember that keywords aren't words, but instead shortened thoughts used by Internet browsers to find particular types of content. Therefore, keywords are often influenced by culture, which is best navigated by locals.

## 8. Optimize Site Design



In many cases, the first portal for your online communication with potential customers will be your website. Optimize your site design to allow for ultimate flexibility for global visitors.

There are a lot of considerations when developing a global-friendly website, a few of which are:

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**Colors and Symbols:** Colors and symbols are deeply ingrained in cultures; research perceptions of colors and symbols among your target audience and adapt accordingly. In most of Europe and the Americas, for example, white is associated with purity and marriage. In Japan, China and parts of Africa, though, white is traditionally the color of mourning. But don't be fooled — in Westernized Asian cities, white weddings are becoming more common. Beyond colors, make sure any icons, logos or graphics you are using are acceptable and looked upon in good light in areas you wish to reach.

**Currency Conversion:** If you are in the e-commerce business and offer international shipping, make sure you also enable users to convert their purchase amount into their own currency. Conversion can be confusing to the average consumer. Giving users the option can only make it easier. There are quite a few currency conversion API tools to choose from, but they can be difficult to sort through — check out Exchange Rate API for starters.

**Use of Text:** There's more to worry about than whether your site is easily translated. First off, minimize the use of text in graphics, as these cannot be translated. While it may be impossible to eliminate all graphics with text, read up on other design options made possible by the rise of web fonts. Furthermore, make sure your web design flows to accommodate machine translation. Some elements may be fine, but others may not display properly. Test your site using a machine translation service and make adjustments as needed.

**Loading Speed:** Check out the Yahoo Developer Network for some best practices on speeding up your website. It's particularly important, when it comes to reaching a global audience, to use a Content Delivery Network (CDN), which is a collection of web servers around the world. Instead of serving your site from one location, you can improve load times by offering it from the server nearest to your site visitor.

## 8. Adapt Social Media for Various Languages



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Choose your audience". It features a header with a person icon and the text "Make this visible to fans with". Below this, there are two main sections: "Location" and "Languages". The "Location" section has a dropdown menu currently set to "United States" with a close button (x). Below the dropdown are three radio button options: "Everywhere" (which is selected), "By State/Province", and "By City". The "Languages" section has a text input field with the placeholder text "Enter language". At the bottom right of the dialog box are two buttons: "Okay" and "Cancel".

If your company already serves multiple markets and your site sees a lot of international visitors, you should consider looking into ways to reach your global audience via social media. Here are a few ideas for some popular social platforms:

**Facebook:** On the world's largest social network, there are two key strategies for reaching global audiences — creating one Page or many.

By creating one brand Page, you can target updates by location, demographics and language. This is a good option if you are looking to have one hub for content creation. On the positive side, users will be receiving targeted updates in their news feeds, and they will still be gathered in one place. The downside is the possibility of confusing users who visit your Page and find updates in multiple languages. This could limit interaction on your Page.

Creating multiple regional Pages increases the localization of each Page, but this method requires more time to customize, as various logos and text should be created for each one. You'll have to figure out the right option for your brand, but considering your strategy *before* launching is a good start.

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