



Multi-market campaigns

Peter Field explores why there are so few multi-market case studies of success

THOUGHT (wrongly as it turned out) that multi-market campaigns would be relatively easy to explore among case studies of success worldwide - after all, so much is written about global brands these days that you might think they *defined* success in modern marketing. Instead I discovered that they *defied* success more often. There are, quite simply, very few case studies of success by truly multi-market campaigns - defined in the terms of **John Philip Jones** (1) as multinational brands, sold in many countries and supported by multinational advertising. Jones observes that many companies have had their fingers burnt with poorly planned and executed multinational campaigns and estimates that they therefore only account for 10% to 20% of all advertising expenditure. But that still ought to generate more case studies than it does. So why is this?

Jones observes that multinational advertising 'is not a field for the inexperienced' and the evidence of the multinational case studies would appear to support him. The companies behind the case studies resemble a global marketing 'hall of fame': P&G, Unilever, Diageo, Nike, Adidas, Coca-Cola - you get the drift. Clearly, multinational campaigns are difficult to get right and often result in inefficient 'lowest common denominator'

thinking. But, equally clearly, it is possible to get it right and many of these companies have development processes to ensure that campaign ideas are built on powerful insights that can cross cultural borders. So this article examines the nature of these insights to see what can be learnt from multi-market campaigns that have defied the odds against success.

Look deep

The most obvious conclusion from the multi-market case studies is that they were all seeking some deeper emotional level of meaning for the brand, rather than simply presenting product features or benefits. Product benefits are notoriously culturally sensitive, as **Olivio/Bertolli** (2) discovered in the early days of the rollout of the brand from its UK launch-pad. Trying to express healthy eating across four very different national food cultures ultimately forced the brand to dig deeper into psychological motivations. The brand discovered the hugely fertile territory of the common human desire to live a long and active life and 'Club 18-130' was born.

Olivio/Bertolli perhaps falsifies the basis of the common prejudice against multi-market campaigns, that in developing them to work across cultural borders they become weakened within any one

culture. In this case it appears to have helped strengthen the campaign.

Another campaign developed in fear of cultural borders was for **Velux** (3). The campaign needed to span cultures (and climates) from Norway to Spain, so any approach that reflected national outlooks was doomed. The answer again was to look deeper at what was being sold: not windows but the transformation of the living environment. Deeper still, the campaign wove a universally charming story about this transformation. Forgotten toys in a dark attic come to life to facilitate a loft conversion (if only it were that easy...) and are rediscovered in the bright new room that results.

Warm feelings

Velux is a nice example of a school of multi-market cases that work by creating emotional engagement through commonly accepted symbols of warmth and affection. **Pampers** (4) is another, though with a twist. It ought to be easy to generate multi-market emotional engagement in baby care categories - cute babies are guaranteed to provoke an emotional response in any culture - though this hasn't prevented all advertisers from failing. In its desire to appeal to Swedish and Greek mums, Pampers eschewed conventional baby romancing, to give us a baby's

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perspective on life that is universal and endearing.

Peugeot (5) also falls into this school with its 72-market launch campaign for the 407. Built around the unifying insight that all cars in that market segment look rather alike (except, of course, the Peugeot 407), the campaign parodied competitors as giant brightly coloured toys, and presented the 407 as a 'real' drivers' car. Fun, playful and engaging, the campaign ran in all markets without adaptation.

Toyota's approach (6) was to create a green 'halo' for the brand based on the company's zero-emissions target. But rather than talking literally of saving mankind from the effects of his infatuation with the motor car, it was expressed symbolically through a child in a nest.

Distancing the communications from the 'metal' undoubtedly adds to its emotive power (and neatly sidesteps the potential contradictions inherent within a product range that spans the Prius and the Landcruiser).

The power of passions

The passion school of multi-market campaigns has been well represented by sportswear for some years now. The standard model of the athlete as demigod is a proven formula for igniting sports

passions in any culture. **Adidas** (7) chose to play with this formula by presenting athletes in a more human and approachable light in its 'Impossible is Nothing' campaign. Following a launch commercial featuring the brand's six top athlete-endorsers, the campaign told individual athletes' stories of conquering the impossible. By so doing it not only invoked the passions of the sports, but tapped a rich vein of warmth for the athletes. The Adidas campaign was developed (8) into a fantasy football challenge in outer space intended to tap the passions of youth across 18 nations, for a genre of films and games as well as football.

Similarly **Nike** (9), arguably the greatest exponent of this school, chose to tap the passions aroused by dance for its major push into women's sportswear. Cleverly, though, the campaign amplified these passions through the injustice dancers felt about the lack of official recognition of dance as a sport: the 'Tell me I'm not an athlete' campaign came out fighting for the cause.

Passions of a different sort were lucratively aroused for **Magnum** (10) by the '7 deadly sins' campaign. Originating as a promotional idea in Australia, it had demonstrated its potential and was seized on as the basis for the brand relaunch for Europe. The launch execution set up the idea (and the 'range') of the seven sins while subsequent executions focused on lust, sloth and greed (don't we all?). The campaign was developed around a carefully researched understanding of women's sexual fantasies. These proved remarkably constant across Europe although some local tweaks were required to reflect the reported reality of 'German consumers having no knowledge of the concept of the Deadly Sins and Italian consumers arguably having too much!' Sadly the research methodology used to obtain these insights is not reported. Executions for Mediterranean markets were given a more romantic flavour, while those for northern ones were more provocative, but essentially the same footage ran everywhere.

Johnnie Walker (n) exploited various passions - heroism, sporting glory, national pride, ethics and discovery, to

name but five. Each market developed its own take on the common idea of 'keep walking' as you strive to achieve your goals, unified by the famous 'striding man' logo.

Olivio/Bertolli (as we have already seen) also fits into this school of multi-market campaigns. Perhaps an equally important defining feature of these campaigns is that they reflect a desired self-image of consumers - they are about realising one's dreams. At the basic level, there is no reason why dreams should vary widely across national boundaries.

Experiential unification

The third school is exemplified by **Sprite** (12). The 'freedom from thirst' campaign sought to capture the experience of drinking the brand. This was represented as an escape from a hot, thirsty, urban world into a cool, refreshing, liquid one. Clearly this has universal relevance.

Similarly, **Herbal Essences** (13) reflected the indulgent pleasure of hair washing for its target market across eight EU nations. Again, like many experiential insights, this is common across cultures. It is also one that creates a richly distinct territory for Herbal Essences from the many results-focused brands in the category.

Sony (14) is no stranger to experiential campaigns. We await a full case study of the more recent Bravia campaign - a powerful example of a multi-market experiential campaign - but in the meantime, the 'You make it a Sony' case study for its precursor is useful inspiration. The campaign played back a universal truth, expressed in qualitative research as: 'People are important, technology without people is nothing.' The campaign humorously demonstrated that, even with the best technology, it is what people do with it that matters.

And finally to the Audi launch campaign for the Qj (15). Launching an SUV must be getting tougher (at least let's hope so), so the successful 2006 launch of the Q7 was all the more remarkable. The campaign captured the experiential freedom of this all-surface vehicle in a way that clearly proved irresistible to the globally homogeneous 'performance SUV' driver.

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So why so few multi-market case studies?

One senses that many multinational companies are relative newcomers to the demanding world of the emotional sell - and, as we have seen, the effectiveness of multi-market campaigns appears to depend on powerful emotional insights.

So perhaps we will see more multi-market case studies from the global players in years to come. If not, let's hope their shareholders find something else to get passionate about. •