



Ipsos ASI

The Advertising Research Specialists

Knowledge Transfer

A guide to the when and the how of transferring advertising between markets



REFLECTIONS
Inspiration for Action

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Times are tough. Resources are tight. In this economy, marketers are under increasing pressure to do more with less. Scrutinizing your advertising—and advertising research budget—invariably leads to discussions around multinational ad transferability. Before you make a decision to extend or adjust, consider these strategies to ensure that transferability isn't just possible – but probable.

Creative Is King

While there are many lessons to share around advertising transferability, there is one learning that transcends all others. Despite any researcher's healthy regard for statistics, at Ipsos ASI we recognize the big overarching truth: whichever way we cut the data, it tells the same story – creative is king. Every test we do reiterates that what makes a campaign truly powerful is a good story (strategy), told well (execution).



Nothing transfers like a really powerful idea that keys into fundamental human motivations. Get it right at the outset and your brand can enjoy advertising that travels well and delivers wherever it goes. In our experience, there is less risk in transferring the big idea than in transferring individual executions where the underpinning idea has not been conceived with global transferability in mind.

The Virtues of Thinking Big

To travel well, an idea needs to start big. What do we mean by this? A big idea taps into essential human motivations: ones to which we all can relate. For example, Ipsos ASI's thought-leader-in-chief and author of emotional advertising book, *Gimme!*, states that, *"Campaigns that leverage genetic human emotions can work across cultures because they touch core elements of being human—rather than being localized or restricted due to a lack of appreciation for a unique product feature."*

There are emotions and values we all share, regardless of cultural influence. Throughout the world, we all want to be loved. We all want to laugh. We all want safe environments in which to raise our children. The list is long. When brands and their campaigns focus on these universal emotions, they are more likely to be global in application and relevance. Succeeding in doing so may also relieve the pressure to be very specific about the functional benefits being communicated—just think about the success of Apple's iPod, or even the Blackberry, not to mention Nike's *Just do it* campaign.

A strong idea may also require less reliance on **specific executional characteristics**, which are likely to render lower levels of universality. For Unilever's Axe anti-perspirant, it was better to appeal to broad human (or in this case, young male) motivation than to say, use the Statue of Liberty, with her raised arm to highlight dry armpits. Clearly, use of such an executional element may well limit the appeal of this ad in another region/country outside of the United States. Another executional example would be the use of a spokesperson who might be well-known in one region, but not in others.



Much depends on budget, of course—some spokespersons such as George Clooney for Nespresso have the potential to go global, but at a suitably global price tag, no doubt.

The same goes for targeting: the more specific the advertising is towards a specific target group or on one unique selling proposition (functional benefit), the more likely that the brand appeal will be globally restrictive.

Why Transferability is Tough

There are many reasons why transferability is tough:

- Market situation: your market share, consumer needs, and the competitive environment may differ
- Brand history: the degree of familiarity with the advertised brand and its territory may vary
- Advertising context: some styles might be more common in some countries than in others, potentially affecting cut-through
- Culture: the reaction to a message and an execution also depends on culture

Local Tastes are Very Local

To be clear, it is far from simply being able to hive the world off into its geographic groupings. Would it be easy to transfer an ad from say, the United States to English-speaking Canada? It isn't. Regardless of perceived similarity, our research shows that 60% of ads tested in the one country perform differently in the other—where 'perform differently' is defined as being in a completely different sales effectiveness bracket.

Without a doubt, nothing succeeds like success: ads which score above average for sales effectiveness transfer most successfully from country to country. A successful transfer is defined as: a pre-test in the country the ad is transferred **to** reveals a similar performance on sales impact as in the country that the ad is being transferred **from**. Yet, even having identified these clusters, transference is not necessarily an easy matter.

Studies we have conducted in Western Europe reveal that if tempted to transfer an ad without pre-testing first, you have a just better than even chance that it will pay off. A mere 57% of ads which are in the average bracket in our database make a successful transfer to another country.

If you have an ad, however, which scores above average in sales potential in the market you are transferring from, we do in fact see 66% of such ads transfer successfully.

Clearly, this still leaves a third of such ads which do not deliver the same performance in the new market that they've transferred to.

In essence, you can't buck the cultural characteristics of a country, which inevitably shape how advertising is processed. Take the contrast between the United States and Canada. The clue lies in these nations' respective mantras...for Canada it is 'peace, order and good government', compared to America's more extroverted 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. No surprise, perhaps that American consumers respond better to emotional advertising, while Canadians are more concerned with rational product benefits – this demonstrates itself all too visibly in the different ways that one ad is often received in the two countries.

We can go further. Culturally, English-speaking Canadians pride themselves on their politeness, so advertisements which make superiority claims for the product/service being advertised vs. a competitor are considerably less likely to be successful than in America, unless they do not make the competitor look bad (a hard trick to pull off without the advert being somewhat self-defeating!). We have not even mentioned what happens when advertising transfer is attempted between the culturally disparate and yet geographically proximate English-speaking Canada and French-speaking Canada. The research shows 52% of ads crossing this linguistic and cultural border do not retain similar abilities to generate sales. Quebecois have their own distinctive identity, are close-knit, and experientially-motivated (live life to the fullest, have children late). No surprise then that some of the most successful ads in Quebec have been those featuring home-grown stars, for example, the magnificently successful and therefore very long running campaign for Pepsi.





In the 1980s, Pepsi overtook Coca-Cola as the leading cola drink in Quebec and to this day continues to sustain market leadership. This was at the time of the highly successful and now iconic global campaign featuring Michael Jackson. Yet it wasn't the "King of Pop" who helped Pepsi win in Quebec—it was a Pepsi ad campaign featuring famous Quebecois comedian Claude Meunier.

There are certain clusters where ads are much more likely to transfer across borders more successfully than if they were transferred to countries outside of that cluster. Within Western Europe, these are fairly predictable: there is a Northern region (France, the United Kingdom and Germany) and the Southern region (Spain, Italy), where ads transfer most readily. Scandinavia and the Benelux countries demonstrate a good degree of transferability between themselves; these markets are more exposed to foreign copy, and tend to be more accepting so long as ads are Euro-regionally produced.

Within Eastern Europe, studies across Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary demonstrate successful inter-country transfer rates within these borders (76% of ads achieve a similar performance level when transferred). It's worth noting that these markets also tend to be more forgiving of foreign copy (U.S. origin and brand heritage is actually more aspirational in some cases), though there are signs that this is changing. In this respect, these countries are in line with Germany by being more accepting of U.S. culture, than say France and the U.K. Generally, their ads tend to be the most similar to an American style creative—rational and informational.

There is a further emerging cluster which achieves similar levels of transfer—specifically Russia, the Ukraine, and Romania.

By contrast, studies across the Middle East (covering Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia) demonstrate that scarcely over half the ads tested transfer successfully, and crucially the same is true when attempting to transfer between Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

It's Very Easy to Spoil the Magic

There is one other critical note of caution from Ipsos ASI's learnings. Many advertisers are tempted to make major changes to an ad in an effort to make it fit the market it is being transferred into. The evidence is that these changes in fact spoil the sales potential. Strong ads to which only minor changes are made, such as selling line, voiceover, supers, and images, transfer well. Those with major changes do not, e.g. format, key messages, casting, and humor.

Factors to Consider when Developing Copy for Transfer

In our experience, there are certain executional factors that you must consider if developing advertisements with their subsequent transfer in mind:

Look for similar markets

- Competitive environment, brand heritage and in-market performance, culture, attitudes, needs, habits, advertising sophistication

Consider the copy's origin and how consumers may respond to this (if apparent)

- Optimize chances of success by transferring only high performing copies
- Check that the main message remains relevant and motivating to consumers within transfer market

Degree of announcer or character audio delivery

- Ease of dubbing
- Number of speaking face to camera shots
- Appropriateness of silent characters

Music with high impact visuals

- Many telecoms and electronics companies use music and images with announcer voiceover to great effect e.g.: Sony, iPod, Vodafone, Sony Ericsson

Cast (if used)

- Use celebrities and icons with caution
- Ethnicity of characters

Is animation suitable?

- Surroundings provide visual clues regarding origins
- It may be that casting and shooting with transferability in mind means shooting two versions at the same time

Categories Make a Difference

Ipsos ASI's research demonstrates that your category has an effect on transferability: 88% of snack ads which originally tested above-average transfer as average or better. PBC (80%), home care (78%) and oral care (67%) transfer well, too while feminine products (50%) and fabric (38%), for example, transfer much less effectively.

Transferability by Brand

When all is said and done, it's not just vital to be country-sensitive and creative-sensitive, but you must also be sensitive to a brand's equity and the stage that the brand is at in that particular market.

In addition to factoring in the clusters of countries where ads transfer most successfully, global management of a brand is also likely to involve overlaying an understanding of the stage that the brand is at in different parts of the world. In the early stages of establishing a brand, building familiarity is a key priority, as is establishing the 'case' for the product. This is likely to point to a more rationally-based advertising approach. In more mature markets, the context may be very competitive, so there may well be a need to drive home particular attributes to remind consumers of product superiority.

Yet aside from this, the likelihood is that in such markets, it is advertising with emotional appeal which will deliver the biggest dividend for the brand.

It's not just how well-developed the brand is—the brand's drivers also need to be considered. By examining these points, brand managers cannot only understand long-term strategies, but also what levers to pull to further develop their brands with attribute drivers, and to further push them, using touchpoints.

Conclusion

No one knows your brand and your objective better than you—the trick is to make transferability work. So before transferring, ask yourself, is there a strong compatibility between countries? Do you have a clear understanding of what you need the advertisement to do and is that job similar? Do you know from certain experience that the message will not alienate your audience? By asking the right questions and effectively tailoring your ad to meet potential pitfalls, successful transference may just lean in your favor. But whenever transferring, in all cases, be sure to step back and always think big.



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About Ipsos ASI

Ipsos ASI offers marketers state-of-the-art advertising research built on more than 40 years of experience using measures predictive of in-market performance. We offer a full-range of solutions across all media – at any stage in the creative process – from equity assessment to strategic development, advertising testing, and tracking. Our research is backed by a dedicated team of advertising research specialists whose mission is to deliver the answers that will add value to your business anywhere in the world.

About Ipsos

Ipsos ASI is a member of the Ipsos Group, a leading global survey-based research company. Ipsos member companies offer expertise in advertising, customer loyalty, marketing, media, and public affairs research, as well as forecasting, modeling, and consulting. With offices in 55 countries, the Paris-based company was founded in 1975.

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