

Glocal Marketing: Keeping the Global Core While Adding Local Nuances



The immediacy of the online world can aid in effectively localizing brand messages, but the process is still not without its challenges.

Although digital tools are changing the methods of how global and local brand teams can customize campaigns, the struggle between global and local messaging still remains. With the onset of digital media, the term “glocal” defines this conundrum of creating a globally accepted core idea that can be adapted to resonate locally.

The immediacy and accessibility of digital communications can help create an atmosphere of collaboration by allowing members of both teams to discuss ideas in real time. Online channels make it easy to bring local team members to the table for feedback that can influence the overall decision-making process.

According to Michael Mabey, director, client solutions, America, at the global market research agency SKIM, this joint decision-making and real-time feedback process, a relatively new phenomenon, holds great advantages. Having members from global and local brand teams online and onboard at the same

time can dramatically speed up the market research process, improve internal alignment, and increase market research effectiveness. Mr. Mabey says he has observed this collaboration occurring more over the past year, and this tipping point is creating a frictionless environment for sharing information and insight.

“Digital has made an impact on multi-country market research because it is easy to bring the local country teams in at any time,” Mr. Mabey says. “Global and local get to interact about what is going on with the research as it is happening and both teams get to influence what is going to be asked next. This is a result of digital access, and it is a big change.”

A great example, Mr. Mabey says, is multi-country online qualitative work that has all teams at the table listening in when market research respondents from multiple countries are providing feedback. Because the research is happening online, it allows all teams, regardless of time zones, to have access, and they can send immediate feedback to the moderator.

“Both global and country teams can tell us to drill down on an interesting point and global and local organizations have never been able to interact this way as the research is actually going on,” he says.

Digital Impact on Localization

Other changes resulting from the immediacy of the digital world include the capacity of bringing the local teams in earlier in the campaign process and the ability to establish local relationships more quickly and easily.

“Digital media provides marketers the benefit of immediate brand communications and campaign launches,” says Shawn Goodman, director, corporate branding, Takeda Cambridge US. “With the ever-expanding viral growth of digital and social media, building relationships across borders can be done effectively and in real time.”

There is still the challenge of making sure that localized messaging retains the original

FAST FACT

THE TERM “GLOCALIZATION” BLENDS GLOBALIZATION AND LOCALIZATION TO REFER TO A CONCEPT TO DESCRIBE AN INDIVIDUAL, GROUP, ORGANIZATION, PRODUCT, OR SERVICE THAT REFLECTS NOT ONLY GLOBAL STANDARDS, BUT ALSO LOCAL ONES.

Source: Wikipedia

intent of the global campaign and that changes take into account the differences in language, cultures, and audiences.

“As a brand crosses borders or top-level domains, representing URL country codes, the programs that promote the brand take on different meanings and require both flexibility of brand standards and campaign messaging along with, if possible, market testing to ensure the organization retains the essence of the brand and meaning or impact of the campaign for the local audience,” Mr. Goodman says. “All that being said, I believe brand marketers are developing global campaigns with this in mind and working toward a more universal message when launching.”

Digital also provides regional specific sites and social spaces that can help aid with campaign customization to ensure proper local messaging, but unfortunately there is much less control in the digital space with localizing a campaign. Mr. Goodman says digital is essentially a great tool for corporate branding for a pharma company, but it is a bit more difficult for regulated product brand marketing.

“Product-branded communications are difficult to control in the digital arena because they are monitored by local regulatory agencies, such as the OPDP in the United States,” he says. “Other regions also may have stringent requirements that make centralization difficult. De-centralizing through region-specific sites and working with local authorities is the only way to successfully ensure brand consistency and local regulatory requirements are upheld and not violated.”

From the audience perspective, digital media provides an opportunity for a global brand to reach a local audience, but unless the

common challenges of culture, language, and geo-sensitive consumer behavior are met, the global message will not resonate with locals.

“Digital media is beneficial to global campaigns in a limited way,” says Simon Li, general manager, Kantar Health China. “Digital provides a convenient space for the local audience to access global information, but language and other factors will still be a big barrier.”

Despite the advantages of digital correspondence between teams, some companies are moving their global teams to the emerging market locality so that they may get a better idea of how that region functions. For example, Mr. Li says Bayer has moved its global team for general management projects in diabetes and manufacturing in women’s health from its headquarters in Berlin to Beijing.

“Instead of having people sitting in Germany trying to figure out what is happening on the ground in China and making decisions from afar, Bayer recognizes that China is a big part of this emerging market, and having the global team right there to work with the local team much more closely and prepare for new brand launches is a key component to the company’s success,” he says.

Another change in the global/local landscape involves a trend toward the disappearing role of regional teams, and a bit of a power shift between global and local teams as a result. Mr. Mabey says SKIM has observed the traditional marketing hierarchy of global, regional, and local structure in brand teams to be fading in some pharma companies, with the global and local teams emerging more often as the key decision makers.

“We are starting to see global and local teams and no middle group,” he says. “This changes the dynamics.”

Mr. Mabey can’t identify why this trend may be occurring other than cost considerations, but he has seen it play out in terms of local country affiliates’ willingness or lack of willingness to participate in large global projects and influence over how global projects get implemented.

“We have had multiple country studies changed dramatically because of push back from the country-level teams in terms of what they wanted out of the study tactically and operationally versus what the global team needs from a large study strategically,” he says.

Mr. Mabey says there has always been that type of tension, but traditionally the global teams had the buying power, but now the country affiliates have growing influence over spending.



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MICHAEL MABEY / SKIM
@skimgroup

“I’m not sure what is driving this power shift specifically but it could be that countries have more sophistication and on-the-ground knowledge in what works and are less willing to accept the point of view of a group that’s far away from them,” he says. “From a market research perspective, we have definitely seen this shift over the past six months to a year.”

Preferred vendor programs are another place where the local teams are having more of a voice.

Mr. Mabey says he has witnessed a situation in which a global pharmaceutical company wanted to implement an international preferred vendor program that was initiated in the United States throughout the rest of its world affiliates, but the affiliates objected.

“The affiliates were okay with some type of a preferred vendor program, but they were not okay with the head office setting a global list of providers,” he says. “To me this is another indication that there is a shift in the power relationship between the head office global group and some of their more important country affiliates.”

Challenges Remain the Same

Digital may impact how global and local teams communicate, how brand strategy is designed, and the speed at which the marketing research process is conducted, but the bottom line is that global and local teams are still facing age-old challenges of getting the local team to buy into the global plan, as well as designing appropriate marketing messages that are culturally correct.

Mr. Li says he has witnessed both ends of the spectrum when it comes to local and global interactions — either the local team pushes back on everything or it accepts whatever is given from global with little to no input. Some local

teams may believe they have little influence on the global branding position, so they just do whatever they have been told.

“There are not many successful cases where the local franchise can take the global strategy as is and implement it in a way that resonates with the local audience,” he says. “Local teams need to find a better way to adapt the global plan early on in the process. I believe most global strategies are flexible enough for local brand teams to use to develop their own success.”

Mr. Li says it is the natural course that a global campaign will need to be localized, and while local adjustments are expected, they cannot disrupt the core global positioning.

“All local adaptations should keep the core

value intact,” he says. “There are some very successful cases of local teams adapting effectively, and the key is to adapt a global position using the language that the local customers speak, which is very important and very challenging.”

Mr. Goodman from Takeda agrees that this is the ultimate challenge in global and local campaign alignment.

“The biggest challenge when developing a cohesive global campaign is working around cultures, translations, and how to incorporate digital and social media at the local level as part of the strategy,” Mr. Goodman says.

Another challenge is to balance the foundation of a global strategy with the needs of the local team.

Creating a Global Buzz

Digital media does not make targeting audiences across multiple countries any less complex, it just makes it more doable. Below, HubSpot offers up seven tips from its Complete Guide to Global Social Media Marketing ebook to create social media content that resonates with both global and local audiences.

1. Segment the Audience Smartly

First, determine how to segment your social media audience by deciding which countries and languages need to be targeted, and set some social media goals for each of these audiences. Next, decide if the localization features of the most popular social networks can be used to segment the audience rather than creating a brand new page or profile for each one. Specifically for global marketing, it's possible to choose to segment by geography, language, or a combination of both.

2. Provide Native Translations

Don't simply take an English blog post and copy/paste it into Google Translate for the Spanish blog version, or vice-versa. The same principle goes for tweets and Facebook status updates. The content will just end up sounding “Google translated” to anyone who speaks the language natively. Instead, get help from someone who is fluent in the language that the content is being created for. In addition, be aware of variations in spelling from region to region. For example, American and British folks may speak the same language, but there are certain nuances that are

important to address, for example color versus colour; optimization versus optimisation; etc.

3. Solicit Content From Local Contributors

From each region being targeted, recruit guest bloggers who can provide local insights. This is especially important if a separate blog is being set up for each language or region being targeted.

4. Post Relevant Content

Whether posting content on a global blog, Facebook page, or Twitter profile, there are certain content creation best practices for global audiences to keep in mind. Make sure to be on top of the hot topics and sensitive issues in each of the target markets, or hire someone to specialize in each market. In addition, make sure to only post content that's relevant to each specific audience. In other words, a news story in Australia may not be relevant to the audience in Ireland.

5. Use High-Quality Images Wherever Possible

Remember, an image doesn't need a translation. Visuals are much easier for international

audiences to understand, especially if separate profiles for each region or language are not being created. Visuals also happen to drive engagement. In fact, according to Simply Measured, just one month after the introduction of Facebook timeline for brands, visual content — photos and videos — saw a 65% increase in engagement.

6. Understand Color Connotations

Figure out what certain colors mean in different countries before designing blog and social media profiles. In most of Europe and the Americas, white is associated with purity and marriage. In Japan, China, and parts of Africa, white is the color of mourning. Be aware of these types of nuances for the different target audiences.

7. Link All Social Channels Together

Be sure to link all of social media channels for each language together. The goals here are to make it easy for people to find the other channels in their language and make it easy for people who have landed in the wrong place to find the channels most relevant to them.



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SIMON LI / Kantar Health
@Kantar_Health

“Country-level teams want specific country-level operational and tactical ideas represented in the research objectives if they are being asked to pay, and it appears global teams are leaving more room for customization at the local level,” Mr. Mabey says. “The digital nature of our world has made those customizations possible and relatively easy to do.”

Another way to ensure that global and local teams can work together more effectively is to involve the local team early on in the campaign planning process. This is especially important from an emerging market perspective, when global teams are traditionally based in the United States or European Union, and they need to educate themselves to understand the culture, language barriers, differences in business methods in the emerging market.

“The issue in most cases is that the global brand team develops the core position and the core messages, and it does not involve the local team in a cohesive way,” Mr. Li says. “Multinational companies have not been involving their local brand teams in the early stage when they are developing a core position and message, so there should be no wonder that when the global team tries to implement a plan, it will be very difficult to get buy in from local teams as they have not been part of the process from the beginning.”

Getting Glocal Right

According to Mr. Goodman, the first step in generating an effective global campaign is to nail down the core concept of the brand.

“First and foremost the essence of the brand should be established before attempting to generate a global brand presence; this includes developing the brand footprint and messaging, in other words what the brand means and what it is.”

Market testing is a critical step, and Mr. Goodman says some companies are still skipping over this valuable tool, which can help successfully boost brand adoption.

“It’s crucial to market test positioning and messaging to ensure cultural and translational and cultural alignment and that the essence of the brand maintains its integrity across borders; it is impossible to understand global perceptions without talking to local audiences,” he says. “I find it interesting that some organizations might see market testing as a nice to have when in fact there are several case studies that show it is part of a critical path toward the successful adoption of a brand or campaign.”

Mr. Goodman would suggest providing global brand guidelines to the regions for consistent implementation of the brand at the local level, and lastly, be flexible with decentralized brand communications.

“It’s important to work with local regions to establish the brand essence and make sure the footprint of the brand is intact, this will allow for flexibility with brand communications while ensuring a consistent brand,” he says.

While Mr. Li believes it is important to involve the local team early in the process to have productive discussions about how to localize a global program, he cautions that the two teams should not ignore the most important factor in the equation: the customer.

“One of the risks of having too many internal discussions between local and global teams is that they may tend to forget to listen to customers and what they say or want,” he says. “There may be lots of marketing talk, but it’s all between the two parties and they actually need to listen to what customer says.”

He would encourage engaging KOLs earlier in the process as well.

“There is a great benefit in involving the local KOL as early as possible in a global campaign,” Mr. Li says. “This is especially true in a specialty area, such as oncology. In China for example, oncologists are well-connected in their field all over the world.”

Mr. Li points to an example in using digital to better understand local markets, in which his company and Bayer presented at last year’s EphMRA Asia conference. Bayer



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Takeda Cambridge US

and Kantar Health joined together to create a process for educating local and global brand teams on stakeholder online/offline communication preferences in China. Through online segmentation tools, they discovered that compared with Western physicians, Chinese doctors are more likely to engage in online communications and should have higher involvement levels.

Bayer acknowledged that social media listening (SML) is a cost-effective means of gaining insight into the day-to-day challenges faced by patients, their journey through their disease, knowledge of side effects and possible comorbidities, the brands they are engaging with and why, and their unmet needs. These efforts also need to be localized, and marketers need to have a firm understanding on how SML works in different cultures.

One SML study following thousands of Chinese diabetes patients’ discussions found that patients were much more open in an online setting, with almost half questioning others on diagnosis and therapies and sharing their feelings about coping with the disease. In Western cultures, however, moderation is often needed to keep the conversation on track.

“Digital channels provide compelling opportunities to engage healthcare professionals and patients, but those who try to apply Western digital practices in China will fail,” Mr. Li says. “In Bayer’s case, the local teams helped their global colleagues understand local platforms and user behavior to gain the competitive advantage.” **PV**