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Foreign shore: fresh market

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Make an impact outside your home region, says Tsafir Peles – capitalise on international opportunities while minimising risks.

With 15 to 30 per cent of all visits to US websites originating from abroad, Internet use growing exponentially in developing markets and expat communities fast becoming important niche audiences, astute advertisers and publishers have an opportunity to exploit this unleashed, global potential – both from the buy-side and the sell-side.

But will one catch-all strategy for the international market work?

Not really. Localisation is the key. And success in the global marketplace requires an in-depth understanding of localisation that goes beyond language and linguistic nuances.

It includes cultural differences, local regulations, currencies, and payment methods . . . and these are only the tip of a very large iceberg that involves myriad subtle distinctions and unfamiliar parameters that can make or break an international advertising campaign.

The greatest challenge for advertisers is that almost everything they have learned about their home markets – what works, what doesn't, and why; how to approach the target audience; what to offer them; how to design the call to action – all of this hard-won knowledge is, for the most part, irrelevant in other regions of the world. Moreover, a new layer of optimisation is required which will impact on all the existing parameters . . . and will, therefore, influence the entire course of the campaign. Without properly building and implementing this critical layer, it is all too easy to miss those lucrative opportunities.

Click 'aqui' or click 'here'

Message translations must utilise relevant jargon and appropriate buzz words – and be fine-tuned to language nuances and cultural preferences – in order to deliver a spot-on message that generates the sought-after response. Similarly, when selecting a prize, advertisers had better be sure that the specific model actually works in the target country!

The complexities inherent in targeting an international audience require a lot more than just reaching them with translated messages. Local regulations – as well as creative and technical requirements of local service providers – must be taken into account. It's not enough to prepare a great landing page that presents savvy marketing content and format, if it doesn't comply with the technical guidelines of the

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local infrastructure or service provider, it may not even open when potential customers click on it!

Additional optimisation layer for the value chain

In order to successfully lead local audiences to the desired action, smart, subtle and sophisticated optimisation is required across all campaign parameters, guided every step of the way by the mantra, 'Different strokes for different folks!' From promotional offer to messaging, placement, creative, and conversion funnels, a perfect blend must be created that will maximise bottom-line results.

For example, an incentivised lead generation campaign is running in Germany, France and the UK. Which prize will work best? This is, in fact, quite a complex issue. Since products have varying value and emotional associations from country to country, correct selection demands extensive knowledge of local attitudes.

In the UK, for example, an Audi might be considered the perfect draw; in France, cars can also work well, but almost any car will do; in Germany, however, an iPhone would be a stronger incentive, since 'win a car' sweepstakes are considered unrealistic and would therefore not attract the audience.

Rule of thumb: the selection of the promotional offer should always be region-based; in some countries, a particular product will generate high ROI, while in others, the same offer may not work at all. The above example is a relatively simple one. Just imagine the complexities involved when dealing with multiple markets that are distant and diverse, geographically, linguistically and demographically.

No less important than the prize is the selection of media and placement, a task that involves much more than locating publishers to run specific campaigns.

In some regions, it is crucial to run a campaign only on 'safe' websites that are seen as respectable and reliable. And, in certain parts of the world, colour plays a significant role, often equal to seemingly more critical issues.

Advertisers must also carefully consider their sales approach. Should a hard sell or a more sophisticated tactic be implemented?

Help is out there

How can advertisers overcome these multiple and seemingly insurmountable challenges? Don't despair! Help is available.

One solution is to work with local partners in each targeted region. They know the lay of the land, they understand the subtleties, and are experts at fine-tuning. The problem is that finding the right partners is a complex and time-consuming process that needs to be done separately for each target market. Though this model can work exceptionally well for some advertisers, aggregators and ad networks may be the answer for others. This channel enables you to reach diverse media, links and markets – with just one click.

Like local partners, aggregators are experienced in acquiring local media and can manage the entire value chain and relevant localisations. Familiar with cultural differences, they are adept at targeting specific market segments, e.g. differentiating language and nuance between Mexican Spanish and the Spanish spoken in Spain, or among Spanish dialects across the various regions in Spain.

Whether you decide to build a network of local partners or to work with aggregators – or a combination of the two – these localisation experts will maximise your success and minimise your risks while you capitalise on the vast opportunities awaiting you in the international market.

Tsafrir Peles (pictured right) – co-CEO of DMG – has been involved with Internet advertising since 1999. He joined DSNR in 2003 and co-founded DSNR Media Group (DMG) five years later.

