

Ads that travel well begin with an insight

By [Daren Poole](#), issued by [Kantar](#)

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A frequent question I hear from senior global marketers is, "How can I maximise ad transference?" It's a sensible question. As zero-based budgeting grows in popularity, the opportunity to save costs by producing one ad that can be used in many countries is compelling. But there is the risk that making an ad work across multiple countries may not be the best way to maximise ROI.

Benefits and risks of a global approach

In many ways, the world is getting smaller and brands are becoming more international. Advertising produced and deployed globally has the potential to be a huge cost saver for marketers. But the odds are against the ad working effectively globally, so marketers need to know when a global ad is the best option and when it would be best to take a global idea and execute locally. And often, local marketers will say they can create better copy locally, which will more than cover the incremental production cost. So who's right?

Few ads transfer successfully

Only 38% of the ads tested by Kantar Millward Brown that are strong in one country are strong in another. And only 20% of ads run that are strong in one country are strong in another. With evidence like that, you would be inclined to side with the local brand director and allow production of new creative.

Consistency, consistency, consistency

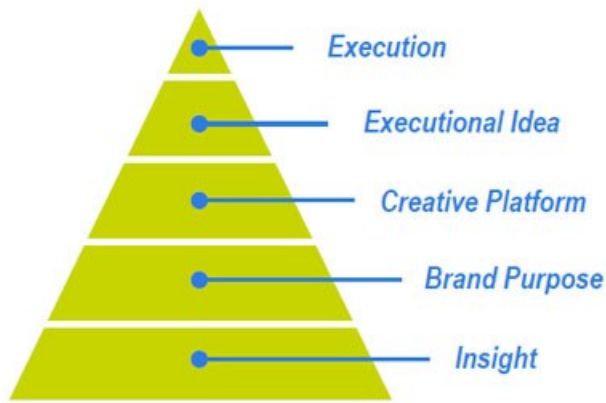
Because many brands are international and consumers are geographically mobile, giving creative control to local markets does run the risk of presenting non-unified brand associations. At worst, consumers could be confused about what a brand stands for.

Guide from the centre, execute locally

Some of the best global advertising we see has centrally defined 'foundations' with local execution. Giving the local team a framework to work within allows them to develop a brief which considers the brand's status in that country. This is the biggest factor affecting whether or not an ad can cross borders successfully. It also means that local specifics around receptivity to advertising and any 'red flags' around cultural sensitivities can be addressed. Some marketers might argue that this approach is too time consuming and too costly, but if the foundations are strong, they'll only need to be revisited every few years. And, following the global lead doesn't have to add time to the development process.

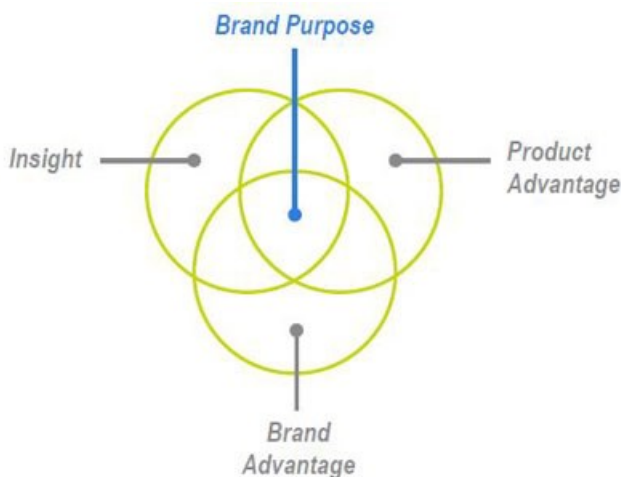
Start with an insight

It might sound obvious, but the most successful global advertising starts with an insight. To be enduring and truly global, the insight has to be based on a fundamental human truth, not on an observation around a current fad or even a trend. And it doesn't need to involve the brand. The AdAge campaign of the century, Dove's 'Campaign for Real Beauty' has been running since 2004. Every single ad was based on the insight that emerged from a three-year research programme: few women considered themselves beautiful or that they were responsible for influencing their own definition of beauty. That insight has been the start of many creative executions over the years, with different local challenges, but it has proven to be very enduring yet flexible.



Define the purpose

The best campaigns don't go straight from insight to execution. They identify the brand's purpose, which is found at the intersection of the insight, the brand's functional strengths and its emotional strengths. Brand purpose is much harder for other brands to copy than product attributes, and provided the insight is a fundamental truth, it can be global and flexible when the product changes. Always' 'Like a girl' campaign has been so successful in part because its creative doesn't deal with product attributes but focusses on the longstanding purpose of supporting girls as they transition from puberty to young women.



Develop a creative platform

The term may no longer be in vogue, but when brands operate in more countries, in more channels and in a more agile way than ever before, it makes sense for all communications to be based on a 'big idea'. This means that the creative team have a framework within which they can work and a point of reference when it comes to how the brand talks to people. It gives teams a head start each time they're called upon to produce new creative, and it means they can work pretty much in real time. Oreo's famous 'dunk in the dark' tweet from the 2013 Super Bowl blackout was widely regarded to be genius, but was also a great example of planned spontaneity: an almost immediate response to the lights going out that was totally 'on brand' and 'on market'. The benefit for consumers? They have consistent and easily recognisable interactions with the brand, wherever they happen to be in the world. While some people think that a consistent campaign idea is an outdated concept or a creative straight jacket, there are many brands that have found ways of expressing a consistent idea. Red Bull continuously develops new ways of executing against 'gives you wings'.

Execute in market

If two or more markets have similar stages of category development, similar brand status and receptivity to advertising and there are no cultural 'red flags' in the script, then the chances are that an ad that showcases the brand's purpose and is built on its creative platform will transfer successfully. Ads that use strong visual language have the best chance of

succeeding. It's still worth doing a quick check with consumers to ensure the ad will resonate.

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