

How to: dealing with multiple languages



multi-lingual packaging

As cultures continue to blend and intertwine the need for bilingual packaging is increasing rapidly.

Some markets have mandatory requirements already in place, Canada for example - where English and French have to be identical in size.

Consider adding a second language even if you're not selling beyond the US border, especially if your product is popular within other communities. There are companies already using this approach and enjoying some success as a result.

Possibly the most important consideration when developing packaging for multiple countries is to stay consistent and true to your brand!
Keep it simple, if in doubt - less is more.

Case Study: Vitasoy Soymilk



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Vitasoy's new line of soymilk was introduced to both the US & Canadian markets in April 2014. In the first three months following introduction, the line captured a 35% market share. The pack's primary panel has been deliberately kept clean, following a 'less is more' approach - this makes for a more visually appealing product, prompting rapid growth in sales and awareness.

The Canadian and US lines also incorporate Chinese characters - speaking to the original core customer base of Chinese speaking immigrants. This also enables Vitasoy Soymilk to be sold in mainstream markets as well as ethnic markets.

Less is more : Minimizing the copy and communicating only the most important information is a good rule of thumb, it allows the designer to produce a more aesthetically pleasing and stronger package.

LESS = MORE

copy & distraction

on shelf visibility & awareness

Another advantage from minimizing the information displayed - the package architecture could more easily be maintained, making for fewer changes in turn minimizing the added cost of producing multiple versions. Ultimately, these packs will be recognizable wherever the product is sold.



Tips:

1. It's important to be aware of the latest bilingual / multi-lingual packaging restrictions and requirements for the country you plan on distributing within, and to remain up-to-date with this information as it does change.
2. Similar internal rules and requirements may be in place with the retailers, distributors and dealers you plan to sell to. Do your due diligence and approach them before finalizing the packaging.
3. Keep the primary panel as clean as possible. Create zones for smaller secondary messaging.
4. Make sure that you are using the correct characters and grammar for each language. Ideally copy proof this with a second set of eyes.

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Case Study: Florida's Natural

Language versions need not be disparate to the original package design. Florida's Natural follows this mantra - at a glance, the Canadian pack its exactly the same as the one consumers are familiar with in the US, so similar in fact that they may not be aware they were picking up a different version. Consistency promotes brand awareness and loyalty.



Challenges

Challenge 1 - Is consumer alienation a possibility? Communicating via bilingual packaging, may unintentionally alienate your core audience simply from it's presence. One line of thinking suggests that reinforcing a reliance on a single language may actually slow cultural assimilation.

Challenge 2 - Are you protected? U.S. laws encourage manufacturers to protect themselves from legal liability by using bilingual labels. Inadequate communication in a secondary language can mislead or under inform - key instructions can be lost. Correct implemented bilingual labels allow manufacturers to anticipate this kind of legal issue. However, a marketer who chooses to include two languages may be liable for not including warning labels in other foreign languages - depending on the market - It's a potentially slippery slope.

Challenge 3 - Do you know your audience? While its important to know the legal requirements or legal liability, manufacturers that produce American products should be aware of market forces in order to determine whether or not to include bilingual communication. Its possible that only certain products or lines are treated this way targeting a specific audience of a specific product, Bilingual packaging is more commonly found in states with significant ethnic populations such as California, Texas and Florida.