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Nissan's and Jaguar's Global Branding

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1. Nissan's Global Brand: Standardization versus Localization

Nissan has a powerful global brand that spans several continents, from Asia and Europe to Africa and the Americas. In August 2003, for the first time ever, Nissan ranked in the top 100 companies in *Business Week's* annual survey of the world's most valuable brands, joining the ranks of Coca-Cola, Microsoft and IBM.¹ The company was described by *Business Week* as being "on a roll," thanks to its management. Through Nissan's alliance with Renault of France, the company has embarked on what it terms the Nissan Revival Plan (NRP), which delineates decisive steps for bringing the company into the future through a coordinated campaign of restructuring and realigning.

Nissan has indeed been on a roll since the implementation of its NRP. The company formed its own advertising agency, G1 Worldwide, with responsibility for its advertising and marketing campaigns globally. Nissan has standardized many aspects of its global brand implementation, including the company name and logo, now recognizable globally. Many of its television commercials are very similar worldwide and include only a translation of the dialogue into the local language. Also, the "Shift_" campaign is a global initiative created by G1 to capture the evolution of Nissan's cars and its dedication to "shifting" the way people move through the world. The campaign is designed to create a single, revolutionized global image for the brand through use of this tagline and the graphics supporting it. All of Nissan's global newspaper and magazine advertising and television commercials feature the tagline.²

However, while many aspects of the brand have been standardized, there are also numerous aspects that have been customized to each local country. Although each Web site carries the Nissan logo and the same palate of colors (gray, white and red), the local country Web sites are very distinct in look and feel. For example, the U.S. Web site highlights leasing options and larger four-wheel drive models, whereas Asian and European Web sites do not mention leases and tend to highlight the smaller compact cars that are more popular in those regions.

Additionally, the global "Shift" campaign is highly varied from country to country. For instance, in the United States the word *Shift* is followed by constantly transforming descriptor words with which the brand aspires to be associated (e.g., *inspiration*, *performance*), whereas in other countries, because advertising may not be as advanced as in the U.S., consumers see only "Shift_the future" as the standard tagline in advertisements.³

¹ Nissan Motor Co., Ltd., Nissan Global Corporate Information Web site, <http://www.nissan-global.com/>.

² Visit by author to G1 Worldwide in Tokyo on March 13, 2003.

³ Visit by author to G1 Worldwide in Tokyo on March 13, 2003.

Finally, there is a great deal of variety in the types of cars, and therefore the products, the brand is known for in each country. For instance, in the United States there is a strong emphasis on the Web site on the success of the Infiniti Series as well as the Pathfinder Series. In other countries, however, these cars have not been introduced; instead there is emphasis on the Cube, a new car introduced for the European and Japanese markets. The Cube is a larger car that is still sufficiently compact to be easily maneuverable in tight streets, but it is not necessarily as sleek as the cars Nissan with which would like to be associated in the United States.⁴ (See appendix.)

Nissan has overweighed the localization portion of its global branding campaigns. While the reliance on different product models to fit each individualized market is necessary, there should be a more consistent global brand image on Nissan's local country Web sites and in its other branding. Aside from a similarity in color palettes, the Web sites have a different look and feel and emphasize different aspects of the brand. For example, the U.S. Web site focuses on the car in motion and challenging rugged landscapes, while the Japanese Web site simply shows pictures of the car and appears to spotlight its superiority and compactness. (See appendix.) It is critical for the brand to standardize its Web sites and advertising to focus on a unique message, possibly "superior performance in the challenges of rugged landscapes or tightly intertwined streets." Regardless of the image chosen, there must be more consistency in the presentation of the cars and image the brand is attempting to convey on a global scale.

2. A Comparison: Jaguar's Highly Standardized Approach

Jaguar has a highly standardized approach in its global branding. Its white, forest green and black color scheme is uniform across all of its global branding, Web sites and advertisements. The logo and the Jaguar figure can be found in all of its marketing and on each car. The elegance and sleekness the brand is known for are consistent—from the United States to the United Kingdom to Japan. In contrast to Nissan, all of Jaguar's print and television advertising emphasizes the sleekness and technical superiority of the car as well as its luxury, no matter which country the consumer is in. The events Jaguar sponsors (discussed in section 3) further this consistency in global brand image.

Furthermore, the Web sites for each country are standardized and can be accessed through the main Jaguar site. Each country's Web site displays a gray toolbar across the top with the names of the five models Jaguar produces, followed by pictures of each model and a price quote in the country's currency. There are some local variations for each site, including "pre-owned," or used, car options in Europe and America, as well as additional

⁴ Nissan Motor Co., Ltd., Nissan Japan Web site, <http://www.nissan.co.jp/>.

parts and mechanics information on the Japanese Web site.⁵ However, the branding of the cars is uniform from country to country, depicting similar models displayed in a similar fashion and always focusing on the sleekness of the cars. This is an effective technique for standardizing a unique brand positioning for the cars regardless of the Web site or country a customer may visit.

3. From the United States to Japan: Consumer Perceptions of Nissan and Jaguar

In the U.S. market, car manufacturers place a strong emphasis on roomy, durable cars, stressing such features as performance under rugged conditions or the spaciousness to accommodate a large family. In contrast, in the Japanese market, emphasis is placed on superior performance in navigating narrow city streets and technological advances, such as navigational systems in cars.

Given the differences in priorities between the two countries, Nissan and Jaguar have had varying levels of success. Nissan has built four plants in the United States and Mexico that are focused on the production of those vehicles most popular with U.S. audiences, including the Xterra SUV, Altima sedan and Frontier pickup. While many of Nissan's SUVs and pickup trucks have gained popularity in the United States and have led to the success of the brand there, these are not the same models and brand image that have led to the success of the cars in Japan. Rather, in Japan the rebirth of the Fairlady Z Series and the introduction of the Cube, both of which highlight precision and compactness, have led to the brand's success.

In contrast, Jaguar competes most closely with Nissan's Infiniti Series, highlighting the luxury and prestige of its cars. In the United States (and Europe), the company plays on the culture's affinity for sports cars, highlighting its appearance in James Bond films as well as the various races in which the car manufacturer has participated. This differs somewhat from Jaguar's branding in Japan, where it places more emphasis on the servicing and, similar to Nissan, the automotive parts used in the car, highlighting the technological advances made by the company and playing to the value consumers place on technical superiority. Overall, however, Jaguar's cars all convey a consistent global branding image emphasizing a luxurious and superior driving experience.

Jaguar may find it simpler than Nissan to execute a single global branding campaign because its cars are all targeted to the same customer base—purchasers of luxury cars who value the driving experience. Nissan, on the other hand, targets many different consumers including drivers of family sedans (Maxima and Altima), drivers seeking a more rugged experience or transporting large families (Pathfinder) and drivers desiring luxury cars (Infiniti). Despite this, Nissan has attempted to execute a single brand image across the

⁵ Jaguar Cars Web site, <http://www.jaguar.com/>.

globe with its “Shift” campaign, but it has been forced to emphasize significant differences in its car models and brand attributes according to preferences in each country.

While both Jaguar and Nissan showed significant growth in the U.S. market between 1999 and 2002, Jaguar considerably outpaced Nissan, with overall growth in light-vehicle sales of 75 percent in that time period, compared to only 22 percent for Nissan (see figure 1). Jaguar also showed significant growth in the Japanese market, with Japanese sales rising 112 percent to 5,238 from 2001 to 2002 (*Automotive Industries* 2003).⁶ This may be related to a rise in popularity of luxury cars worldwide or—to Jaguar’s credit—it may be a symbol of Jaguar’s success in implementing a single global brand campaign based upon consumers’ perceptions of its cars.

Figure 1. Market Shares of U.S. Dealer New Light-Vehicle Sales

| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | % Growth from 1999 to 2002 |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|------|------|------|-------------------------------|
| | <i>(Thousands of Units)</i> | | | | <i>(% of Total)</i> | | | | |
| Nissan | 403.5 | 421.9 | 414.6 | 490.7 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 6.1 | 21.61% |
| Jaguar | 35.0 | 43.7 | 44.5 | 61.2 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 74.86% |

Source: *Ward’s Automotive Reports* (2003).

⁶ It would be interesting to compare Jaguar to just Nissan’s luxury-class Infiniti Series, but these data are not available.

Appendix

Advertising Illustrations for Various Nissan Global Ad Campaigns

Nissan Advertising for Japanese Models



The Nissan Cube



The Nissan Cube



The Nissan March

Nissan Advertising for U.S. Models



Professional driver closed course

The Nissan Pathfinder



The Nissan Xterra



The Nissan Maxima

References

Automotive Industries. 2003. Japan's top 37 imported automobile nameplates by number of vehicle imported in 2002, 8 June.

Wards Automotive Reports. 2003. Market shares of U.S. dealer new light vehicle sales.