

4 growth guidelines globetrotting pizza brands need to know



Pizza brands have been, and continue to be, out in front on the increasing trend toward global brand expansion. But, today the traditional model of only large-scale brands going global is passe. Today, much smaller U.S. restaurant chains — some with as few as 20 locations — are now expanding capably on an international level.

Similarly, all sizes of brands are also using technology to reach customers globally through the locally preferred social media channels, as well as through their brands' POS systems, which now allow brands to extend specialized support anywhere at any time.

Adding fuel to this expansion trend is the rapidly growing middle-income groups in countries like India, China and Indonesia, which have in turn created new opportunities for U.S. brands with overseas consumers who now have the discretionary income to spend at pizza chains from all over the planet. This trend has often pushed restaurant brands of all ilk to switch to global suppliers of products and services to meet heightened demand across many worldwide markets, while still maintaining their brands' quality standards.

Regardless of how and where your brand chooses to take advantage of international market opportunities, however, there remain four basic principles that brand leaders should keep top of mind as their concepts enter and begin operating in new markets. Review these and use them as filters for all your international initiatives to help keep your brand's competitive edge razor-sharp.

Brand is everything

Humans are naturally drawn to products, services and ideas that they are familiar with and trust. Internationally, U.S. food and beverage brands are perceived as established, well-developed and as consistently delivering quality returns. This alone gives brands an edge on the international stage for brands that remain true to what they are.

Quality is priceless

Though quality is not implied worldwide, it has become synonymous with U.S. food service brands internationally due to their outstanding track records in this arena. For instance, both tourists and locals know that wherever they travel they can rely on the same quality in McDonald's Quarter Pounder sandwich. International consumers understand that U.S. brands don't sacrifice quality or convenience, which may not be the case for some restaurant concepts born in other areas of the planet.

The growing worldwide 'middle class'

The **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** reports that 95 percent of the consumers that American companies want to sell to live beyond our shores, many of whom are now two-income households with two or more children which now have the money needed to eat out.

That, in combination with the growing concern many adults have concerning their youngsters' diets, along with the often lower quality food safety standards and controls outside of the U.S., give U.S. pizza brands a kind of automatic "leg up" in off-shore markets. This ever-larger global middle class which tends to trust U.S. brands is driving the success of international expansion and market penetration.

Social media marketing

While most Americans prefer to communicate today by text, in many other countries, social media is the preferred communication channel since phone calls and texts in foreign markets often incur charges, while social media channels do not.

This fact greatly increases the number of global social media users in foreign markets. For instance, in the U.S. Facebook has about 63% penetration, while in the United Arab Emirates city of Dubai, that number is closer to 90%. Social media provides the ability for brands to be seen by a global audience and is vital to the success of a brand looking to expand into another country.

Looking ahead

As we move to the future, many multinational brands will continue to evolve worldwide by personalizing their experiences via customizable apps and creating the idea of "my restaurant" for consumers. Additionally, while in-store cash transactions are slowly declining in the U.S., going cashless has become a huge deal in other countries.

For those reasons, pizza brands that seek to pursue the global customer would be wise to give long and hard consideration to the adoption of digital payment options for the increasing number of customers who now want to go cashless.



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William "Bill" Edwards has over 45 years of international experience working with multiple Fortune 100 companies in over 68 countries. He has a deep respect for other cultures and their business customs, and loves helping U.S. businesses realize their full potential on the global stage. He has worked with 15 U.S. F&B brands taking them global.



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