

## Globalization Bites The Wax Tadpole (/ english/culture/globalization-bites-the-wax-tadpole)

Most of us have heard about how Coca-Cola pulled a massive boo-boo when it launched a campaign in China which translated the soft drink's name literally into: 'Bite the wax tadpole' or the even more mouth-watering, 'Female horse stuffed with wax' (depending on the dialect).

Or, how the people pushing Chevy Nova cars did a rather pathetic sales job when Spanish speakers understood 'Nova' to mean, "No go".

## The 40.000 character problem

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## 蝌蝌齦蠟 - Kē Kē Kėn Là

"bite the wax tadpole"

可口可乐 - Kė Kou Kė Lè

- "happy mouth drink"



Considering the colossal amount of marketing dollars at corporate disposal one would think that this would be a fairly infrequent phenomenon.

Not so.

The Ford Motor Co. had a similar problem in Brazil when the Pinto flopped. The company found out that Pinto was Brazilian slang for "tiny male genitals". Quick to learn, Ford pried off all the nameplates and promptly substituted the name Corcel, or "horse" instead.

As the following compilation illustrates, our esteemed mindmanipulating marketers have often fallen prey to their own negligence. In their directed efforts at keeping the jingles and slogans in our heads, many advertisers apparently forgot the rather important expenditure of hiring a translator when attempting to open and entice foreign markets:

- When Pepsi started marketing its products in China a few years (https://wise.comback, their slogan, "Come alive with the Pepsi generation" suggested to the Chinese that "Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave."
- The marketers for Kentucky Fried Chicken didn't do much better when their slogan "Finger-lickin' good!" came out in Chinese as "Eat your fingers off!"
- The Scandinavian vacuum manufacturer Electrolux should have thought twice before it surged into the

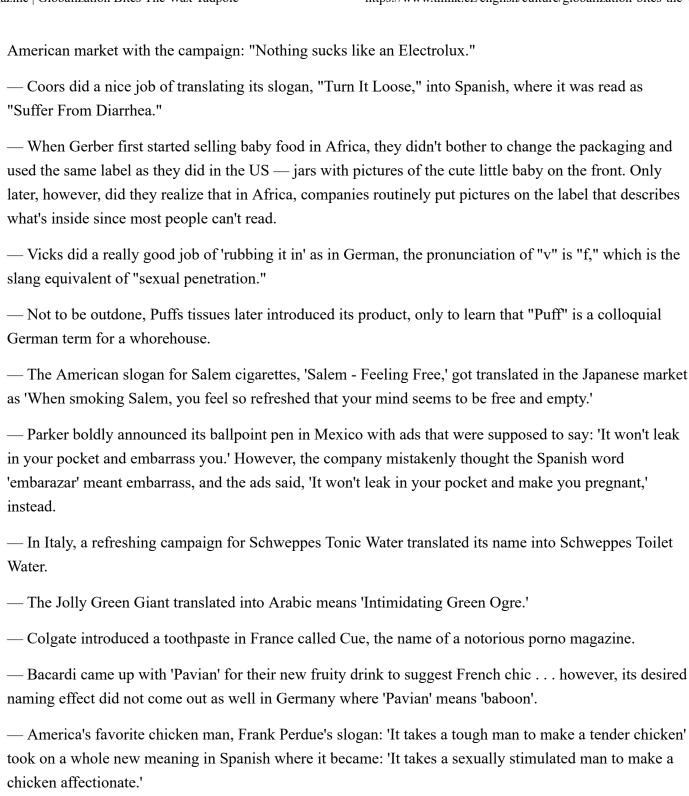


(https://wise.com/invite/dic/jeffreeb)

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dung.

Tourist Company changed its name.



— In an effort to revitalize orange juice sales in England, a campaign was devised to pronounce the drink's eye-opening, pick-me-up qualities. Ergo, "Orange juice. It gets your pecker up."

— Clairol introduced the 'Mist Stick,' a curling iron, into Germany only to find out that 'mist' is slang for

— Japan's second-largest tourist agency was a bit concerned when it entered English-speaking markets and began receiving requests for unusual sex tours. Upon finding out why, the owners of Kinki Nippon

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- Hunt-Wesson introduced its Big John products in French Canada as Gros Jos before realizing that the phrase, in slang, means "big breasts." In this case, however, the translation did not have a noticeable effect on sales.
- And currently in Japan, Microsoft's slogan: "Where do you want to go today" is showing its true colors with flashy, stylized ads that helpfully assert: "Microsoft: If you don't know where you want to go, we'll make sure you get taken."

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