



Spring

Breaking Through the Noise:
Translating UK Beauty Brands for
Success in the USA

London

New York

Los Angeles

Milan

BREAKING THROUGH THE NOISE:
TRANSLATING UK BEAUTY BRANDS FOR SUCCESS IN THE USA

“The British beauty industry is one of the most entrepreneurially-led, independent beauty markets in the world. The British Beauty Council’s work with industry has been dominated by nurturing indie British brands with radical concepts that penetrate the market and challenge the status quo.

The industry is made up of 95% SMEs, and its rich history in beauty can be seen from brands such as Vidal Sassoon to the Body Shop - renegade pioneers that stood for something beyond their product.

British beauty has an unmatched energy thanks to its multi-faceted nature. From cutting-edge product innovation - think John Frieda’s 1990’s Frizz Ease - to trailblazing creativity - from Pat McGrath, Sam McKnight and Guido Palau to name a few - British beauty’s delicate and intuitive balance is what makes it brilliant.

It’s this message British brands must harness as they become global players. When new markets are able to tap into these enshrined values, the international beauty opportunities are endless...”

- Millie Kendall OBE, CEO of The British Beauty Council

Drawing on Spring’s years of experience partnering with UK beauty brands and our analysis of those we consider to be best in class, this report details the 5 key principles & insights that Brit beauty brands should keep in mind when developing communications that need to cut through the noise and connect with US beauty consumers.

1. Reflect the multi-facetedness of Brit beauty

When looking to leverage “brand Britain” it’s critical to not be too predictable, or fall foul of tired cliches. Instead, Brit beauty brands should celebrate the rich melting pot of cultures, personalities, ingredients and influences that make up the UK today.

While London as the epicentre of Britishness is still very telegraphic for a US consumer, the modern portrayal is much more multi-faceted: taking cues from adjacent categories such as fashion & music in terms of how the vibrancy & energy of the city is portrayed.



RIMMEL LONDON

Rimmel has been a proud export of the British cosmetics industry since 1970. In 2020, Spring partnered with Rimmel to deliver a brand repositioning & refresh – still playing with classic British iconography such as the Union Jack & backdrops such as Westminster and Tower Bridge - but bringing a more vibrant & contemporary edge.

The evolution in the brand’s positioning was underscored through the shift from “Get...” to “Live the London Look” – a beauty philosophy that celebrates personality over perfection, and recognises that for Gen Z, beauty is inherently personal and self-defined.

British pop star Rita Ora was succeeded by Adowa Aboah as brand ambassador, a British supermodel known for her activism as much as for her individual sense of beauty & style. In a similar vein, Olympic medalist Tom Daley was recently announced as a global ambassador, adding to the eclectic line up of British born talent.

2. Brit beauty is an attitude

Many home-grown beauty brands are tapping into their unique British character as a means of cutting through, recognising that British provenance isn't purely limited to geography, it can also inform a brand's attitude.

JO MALONE

Jo Malone combines quintessentially British wit & whimsy with a high-touch, high-quality British service sensibility. The brand taps into elements of traditional British culture & ingredients to create a sense of quirkiness and intrigue around its scents and the stories behind them. Jo Malone's eclectic attitude is always artfully reflected in its campaigns, which have been lensed by the inimitable British photographer Tim Walker for over a decade.



PAT MCGRATH LABS

Pat McGrath's adventurous & innovative attitude to beauty has seen her hailed as one of the most creative make up artists in the world. Speaking about her eponymous brand, McGrath explained, "my intention when I created Labs was that the people that used our products would be empowered to explore a fearless, daring attitude towards makeup - that's why we always write 'Use Without Caution' on everything we make."



THIS WORKS

This Works is great example of how British pragmatism & integrity can inspire a unique approach to beauty. Founded by former British Vogue Beauty Director, Kathy Phillips, This Works' expertise is reinforced by CEO Dr Anna Persaud, a Biochemist with unique insight into product development & testing. "This Works" also takes its name from the 750 strong UK-based consumer panel who must give their endorsement - by quite literally agreeing "this works" - to every product prior to launch.



3. Celebrate British beauty luminaries with compelling founder storytelling

Over the years, the UK has produced a veritable roster of beauty powerhouses: from British models and tastemakers who have inspired iconic beauty looks, to talented scientists, hairdressers and make-up artists who have shaped the beauty agenda on both sides of the Atlantic.

The creative vision, expertise and entrepreneurial spirit of these British beauty luminaries clearly resonates with US consumers – something to keep in mind when developing your founder story, as a means of defining the role of Britishness and bringing authenticity and personality to your brand.

CHARLOTTE TILBURY

Instantly recognisable for its glamorous aesthetic, Charlotte Tilbury's eponymous brand is a reflection, not only of her expertise, but of her personal beauty philosophy: and it's safe to say it's fabulous darlings! Charlotte is at the heart of the brand's communications: from captions on social that reflect her distinctive tone of voice to appearing in campaigns alongside a cast of iconic British ambassadors. Awarded an MBE for her services to the beauty industry in 2018, Charlotte Tilbury Beauty was picked to be the official beauty sponsor of the Platinum Jubilee Pageant earlier this year, a role that was effectively amplified via the brand's social.



LISA ELDRIDGE

Prior to launching her make up brand, Lisa Eldridge had already amassed a following of 3m+ beauty fans on social media and was the first celeb MUA to use YouTube to offer viewers unprecedentedly intimate insight into her work - and her world. From tutorials that helped thousands of people with advice on looking (and feeling) their best when meeting their ex, to charming & chatty makeovers with some of the world's best-loved celebrities, Lisa's empathetic-yet-aspirational make up artistry has been central to the success of her eponymous brand. Her inclusive & affirming nature has really resonated with US audiences, reflected in the fact that America is one of the leading markets for her brand today.



4. Connect via shared UK/USA values

Although in the UK & the US we speak a common language, it would be naïve to assume that our cultures are also the same. As a result, when translating your brand and communications to appeal to the US market, it's helpful to start by identifying key values that you & your brand hold in common with US beauty fans. From Spring's experience, there are several ways you can approach this...

A SHARED BEAUTY MINDSET - VICTORIA BECKHAM BEAUTY

Victoria Beckham Beauty was founded on the belief that beauty should complement and empower the dynamic life you lead. Developed through Victoria's personal lens, these are the products she felt were missing from her own makeup bag: high performance beauty solutions for the modern individual who lives life on-the-move and to the fullest - neatly expressed in the statement: "Beauty in Motion". A mindset & proposition that is informed by Victoria's own experience, and something that beauty shoppers in both the UK and US can clearly relate to.



COLLABORATION WITH US TALENT THAT EMBODIES YOUR BRAND ETHOS - BEAUTYPIE X JENNA LYONS

In support of Beauty Pie's quest to bring its disruptive members' club concept to the US, they have collaborated with style icon Jenna Lyons, former Creative Director of J. Crew, a position that has earned her the accolade "the woman who dressed America". From her sold-out nail polish edit to the latest lipstick collection, the collaboration has helped to introduce Beauty Pie to US consumers as the smart choice for savvy beauty lovers that appreciate Jenna's "industry insider" eye for style & quality.



A SHARED BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE OF "CLEAN" BEAUTY CREDENTIALS - REN CLEAN SKINCARE

1,300 cosmetic ingredients are banned in the UK, compared to just 11 in the US. Although these credentials are hugely important to UK consumers, the phrase "clean beauty" has less traction in the UK. When looking to appeal to US consumers, British beauty brands should be sure to showcase these credentials - but do so in a way that is super-transparent and substantiated. Working with REN back in 2015, we discovered that UK provenance can be leveraged to create a sense of honesty & trust - and avoid getting caught up marketing buzzwords.

5. Cult product can transcend geographies

The UK is home to some truly innovative beauty brands and yet for some, the role of Britishness in their positioning & communications is more discrete. Rather than lean into provenance, or attitude, or a Brit founder, they choose to let their products do the talking and connect - first & foremost - via a universal consumer need.

PIXI GLOW TONIC

Founded over 20 years ago PIXI has become the go-to brand for universally-appealing glowing, radiant skin. Debuted in London by Swedish makeup artist Petra Strand, the brand's ethos is that "everyone looks better with a little glow". Hero product, Glow Tonic, was originally blended & filled by hand in the basement of PIXI's Carnaby Street boutique but has gone on to enjoy decades of the success in America - initially launched via Target and, more recently, thanks to its virality on TikTok. Today, it is true cult buy: over half a million bottles are sold every year.



111SKIN MASKS

Founded by leading Harley Street plastic surgeon Dr Yannis Alexandrides and his visionary wife, Eva, 111SKIN has become a global authority in masking. Powerfully debunking the notion of masks as a superficial novelty, 111SKIN's offering uniquely combines Dr Yannis' clinical expertise with Eva's passion for innovation and innate understanding of consumers' needs. Every bit as effective as they are aesthetically & sensorially appealing, 111SKIN's masks are not only coveted by discerning beauty consumers but proudly seen on famous faces as well as backstage at London & NY Fashion Weeks.



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IN SUMMARY

5 principles for translating UK beauty brands for success in the USA



1 REFLECT THE MULTI-FACETEDNESS OF BRIT BEAUTY

While London as the epicentre of Britishness is still very telegraphic for a US consumer, the modern portrayal is much more multi-faceted: taking cues from categories such as fashion & music in terms of how the vibrancy & energy of the city is portrayed.



2 BRIT BEAUTY IS AN ATTITUDE

Many home-grown beauty brands are tapping into their unique British character as a means of cutting through, recognising that British provenance isn't limited to geography, it can also inform a brand's attitude.



3 CELEBRATE BRITISH BEAUTY LUMINARIES WITH COMPELLING FOUNDER STORYTELLING

The creative vision, expertise and entrepreneurial spirit of British beauty luminaries clearly resonates with US consumers – something to keep in mind when developing your founder story, as a means of defining the role of Britishness and bringing authenticity and personality to your brand.



4 CONNECT VIA SHARED UK/USA VALUES

Although in the UK & the US we speak a common language, it would be naïve to assume that our cultures are also the same. When translating your brand to appeal to the US market, start by identifying key values that you & your brand hold in common with US beauty fans.



5 CULT PRODUCTS CAN TRANSCEND GEOGRAPHIES

The UK is home to some truly innovative beauty brands and yet for some, the role of Britishness in their positioning & communications is more discrete. Rather than lean into provenance, they choose to let their products do the talking and connect - first & foremost - via a universal consumer need.

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How are you translating your Brit
beauty brand for success in USA?

If you'd like to discuss how Spring can help you,
please reach out to us at
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