

## 1 **3 Mediterranean shoes conquer** 2 **the world**

3 Global branding from local  
4 resources: the Camper case

5 *Daniele Dalli and Simona Romani*

### 6 **Overview**

7 Brand management literature is often based on the implicit assumption that there are  
8 general rules and common principles for globally building and exploiting a brand's  
9 potential. According to this view, brand meanings and values can be "adapted" to the  
10 international setting according to the target markets' characteristics. Moreover, adaptation  
11 usually presupposes domestic (country of origin) and international markets' intrinsic  
12 characteristics.

13 In this section, we describe the Camper case: this company succeeded in positioning the  
14 brand according to its local meanings and values, influencing the market to accept them, thus  
15 contradicting the "adaptation" paradigm (*glocal*: think global, act local) and following the  
16 opposite way (*locbal*: think local, act global). Furthermore, this experience demonstrates  
17 that management rules, especially when they involve cultural interaction, can be critically  
18 assessed and "transformed". Subsequently, original, innovative, and successful strategies  
19 can be developed by interpreting the brand's role in its cultural background and in the target  
20 market.

### 21 **Introduction**

22 This chapter aims to demonstrate that, following a cultural orientation in brand management,  
23 effective international marketing strategies can be based on local values and meanings that  
24 can be successfully extended towards the global market. This is the situation at Camper,  
25 originally a small company on the island of Majorca, Spain – geographically and culturally  
26 a small area compared with the large economies of North America, continental Europe and  
27 Japan. The company has successfully exported its products using the brand as an ideological  
28 and cultural carrier (Holt 2004; Schroeder *et al.* 2006) representing ethnic and ethical issues,  
29 even critical ones. An example of the latter is the company's famous "walk don't run" slogan  
30 that seems targeted at global footwear brands that encourage jogging. Hence, a cultural  
31 orientation in marketing can be promising for many small and medium-sized companies, not  
32 necessarily located in wealthy economies, but still aiming at competing on a global scale,  
33 "out-localizing" transnational corporations (Ger 1999).

34 Traditional strategic brand management often follows the implicit assumption of  
35 branding as a universal technique and the use of common principles across cultures to build  
36 a strong brand. It ignores the crucial aspect of brand as a cultural form; in practice, the  
37 traditional approach to brands and branding assumes that the cultural context has a marginal  
38 role in determining the brand architecture and the model of the brand development.

1 Kapferer (2008), for example, minimizes the importance of the brands' historical, geo-  
2 graphical and cultural roots in the creation of a strong global brand identity and positioning.  
3 He affirms that the geographical roots (Premium vodka and Finland) or the native soil's  
4 values (Apple and California) can help the process of brand building, but deems many other  
5 elements to be more important in this process, such as a brand's typical products, symbols,  
6 logotypes, etc.

7 From another point of view, Keller (2008) focuses on brand value creation (building).  
8 According to this perspective, companies create value starting from zero and/or exploiting  
9 extant cultural and symbolic resources. In this process, nothing is said about the ideological  
10 dimension of the market process: brands and branding are not neutral cultural tools and their  
11 development often implies ideological, if not even ethical, decisions. Branding strategies  
12 and their extension to international markets can be seen as acts of reproduction of the  
13 dominant ideological values (Arnould and Thompson 2005). In fact, often consumers react  
14 negatively to corporate communication and try to resist (Holt 2002). Companies are not  
15 necessarily constrained to carry on and reproduce extant market ideology: they can also  
16 challenge mainstream values and differentiate their positioning in ideological and ethical  
17 terms. This means paying attention to the target consumers' cultural characteristics in a more  
18 profound, critical, and interactive way than the usual "adaptation" paradigm (Cayla and  
19 Arnould 2008).

20 In this section, unlike in the above-mentioned approaches, we accept the idea of  
21 a brand as a specific symbolic form, a particular way of talking about and regarding  
22 the world. Consequently, it is essential to examine branding from deep historical, geo-  
23 graphical and socio-cultural contexts in order to acknowledge the diverse way of  
24 branding and thinking about brands across different situations. If branding is viewed as a  
25 culturally malleable mode of communication, this allows us to think more productively  
26 about the way the cultural context influences branding activities – even its ideological  
27 dimension.

28 The interpretive tradition in consumer research has shown how important the knowledge  
29 of local culture can be in order to compete successfully against global players (Ger 1999):  
30 the intrinsic advantage of local companies is their "local identity and culture". This can  
31 be improved to compete with "local" strategies aimed at defining goods and services'  
32 "authentic" value. Traditional international marketing approaches focus brand manage-  
33 ment's attention on the search for similarities at the global level to turn them into local,  
34 adapted marketing programs, whereas in a more culturally oriented fashion, local companies  
35 could and should focus on local idiosyncrasies and extend them on a global scale (Askegaard  
36 and Kjeldgaard 2007).

37 As the case of Camper will demonstrate, companies can also consider the socio-cultural  
38 setting in critical ways, proposing new and unexpected cultural and marketing programs, in  
39 which "local" resources are employed to change the "global" cultural and competitive  
40 scenario.

41 Consider the Camper case in a specific segment of the footwear market:

- 42 • Camper "criticized" the market's dominant logic: Walk, don't run!
- 43 • Camper chose concerned and committed consumers: *no los compres, si no los*  
44 *necesitas!* (Don't buy the product, if you don't need it!)
- 45 • Camper has changed (self-criticism) its positioning and communication by trying to  
46 select and link groups of consumers with similar cultural and ideological orientations  
47 toward the same core concept: the Med (the Mediterranean) is the Net!

1 In this section we analyze the emergence of Camper's footwear as a successful international  
2 brand to contribute to this research stream. In particular, we discuss the ways in which  
3 historical, cultural, social and geographical configurations could influence brand activities  
4 and become precious resources that the company can use to define diverse and particular  
5 identities and positioning.

6 In 2000, with a view to competing against well-funded global fashion brands in the  
7 global market, Camper launched its campaign, "The Walking Society". By building on its  
8 established origins and on the David and Goliath story (with its compelling binaries), Camper  
9 was portrayed as "small", "friendly", "authentic" and rooted in a traditional "Mediterranean  
10 spirit". This unique positioning stood in clear contrast to the "cool" and "placeless" global  
11 fashion brands and produced results in terms of sales and revenues.

12 To explain Camper's success, we need to explore the complex relations between different  
13 forms of brand building strategies, myths and authenticity.

## 14 **The company and its history**

15 To understand the Camper phenomenon, we must start with its origins. The company's  
16 history began in 1877 when Antonio Fluxà, on returning from a trip to England, brought  
17 together a group of craftsmen in his birthplace, Majorca,<sup>1</sup> and set up the island's first shoe  
18 factory. The manufacturing tradition was handed down from father to son to Antonio Fluxà's  
19 grandson, Lorenzo, who, in 1975, created the Camper brand with the idea of introducing  
20 design in the company and producing casual wear products.

21 In a Spain where the Franco dictatorship had recently ended and which was characterized  
22 by a strongly conservative spirit, Camper's decision to introduce casual shoes was no  
23 coincidence. The project emerged as a yearning for liberty and change – a yearning  
24 which marked the post-Franco period in Spain, an example of the desire for a radical  
25 transformation after years of isolation and the country's closed attitude towards the rest of  
26 the world.

27 Camper had anticipated the explosion of creativity that would characterize the country a  
28 few years later, particularly in the city of Barcelona, with which Camper has always had  
29 close and strong relations. It was precisely here that the first mono-brand shop was opened  
30 in 1981, and here that, 23 years later, Camper initiated its business diversification in the  
31 catering (with Camper FoodBall) and hospitality (with Casa Camper) sectors.

32 In 1992, the international expansion of the brand began with the opening of branches  
33 (offices and shops) in the main centres of European fashion (the UK, France, and Italy).

34 However, the crucial turning point for Camper came after a meeting with the young  
35 copywriter Shubhankar Ray<sup>2</sup> who discovered the brand in 2000 during a trip to Majorca.

36 I thought it had the potential of Apple. There is something friendly about it; I thought it  
37 was slightly idiosyncratic and had more to do with industrial design than fashion. Also,  
38 they weren't based in London or New York, but Majorca. I thought the location had a  
39 psycho-geographical impact on the brand. But the image was not really an international  
40 standard.

41 (Interview recorded by the authors at the Camper headquarters in Mallorca in  
42 July 2006. This holds for other excerpts, unless otherwise stated.)

43 Ray managed to meet with Lorenzo Fluxà, who immediately decided to employ him to  
44 develop Camper's image:

1 I asked to be put up in an old finca on the hill to achieve the same psycho-geographical  
2 effect. I started to look at what this culture comprised. They are not confident with  
3 outsiders; there are fences everywhere. They are insular, Spartan. There is a reluctance  
4 to waste money ... I started photographing the countryside, the farmer playing a card  
5 game called “truco”, people on Vespas, horse-trap racing in which the horses aren’t  
6 allowed to run. I started to define another Majorca, one that wasn’t about tourists getting  
7 drunk on the beach.<sup>3</sup>

8 The result of this experience was the identification of something “unique” about both the  
9 brand and the island. It was something that had always been there, but that had never been  
10 defined. Ray decided to use this exclusivity, together with other elements, to conceive the  
11 Camper brand that, right from the start, he considered as something very distant from  
12 traditional, US-based models of globalization and consumerism.

13 In contemporary social and cultural conditions, brands can have several potential  
14 meanings and can be used and interpreted in unexpected ways in local contexts, where they  
15 are re-territorialized, appropriated and transformed in surprising ways. For example, Cova  
16 *et al.* (2007) highlight many variations in the meanings that American and French players  
17 give to a battle re-enactment game called Warhammer. Again, Kates and Goh (2003), using  
18 the Absolute Vodka brand case, illustrate that brand meanings “morph” across social,  
19 community and national groups, facilitated by marketers who understand plurality and  
20 cultural diversity. However, while certain global brands might be characteristically fluid,  
21 others are more culturally and affectively fixed. Crucially, Holt (2006) recognizes that brands  
22 cannot generate meanings to which people will subscribe regardless. Such brands should  
23 rather tap into broader sensations, desires, opinions and identities, often aligning themselves  
24 with mythical notions produced by different cultural forms such as movies, novels, music,  
25 popular discourse, etc. Brands may thus be conceived as “ideological parasites” that depend  
26 on tapping into pre-existing discourses and feelings, into “myth markets” (*ibid.*).

27 Here we can identify a popular myth associated with the Camper case that taps into  
28 popular pre-existing structures of feeling, belief and identity and through which individuals  
29 acquire meaning for their social life and experiences. It is, in fact, by building on its  
30 established origins and the David and Goliath story – dynamized by the compelling mini/  
31 giant, local/global and south/north binaries – that the Camper brand emerges as “small”,  
32 “friendly”, “authentic” and rooted in a traditional “Mediterranean spirit”. This is very distant  
33 from the prefabricated glossy images that advertisers traditionally associate with global  
34 fashion brands.

35 This myth is often used whenever a small, weak party takes on a giant. In most contexts,  
36 smallness and weakness are not advantages as such. Goliath killed many other Israelites  
37 who were smaller and weaker. David’s sling and five stones taken from a brook were  
38 simple technology, especially when employed against the armour that made Goliath seem  
39 invulnerable. However, David’s one stone hit him on the forehead and the giant fell  
40 face down.

41 Similarly, Ray identified in the normally devaluated local (in comparison to the global)  
42 possible strengths. These strengths could be grasped when combined, in new dynamic ways,  
43 with the island’s precious historical, geographical and cultural resources. Together with the  
44 family’s know-how of the product, the austerity and simplicity of the rural world, as well as  
45 the Mediterranean history and culture, all of these influence the brand’s aesthetics and values.  
46 These phenomena represent several forms of brand rooting that the company uses to  
47 successfully create a distinctive and authentic image.

## 1 **Rooting Camper in the rural Mediterranean world**

### 2 *Rurality and old traditions*

3 Camper means peasant, and the simplicity of the rural world is one of the brand's most impor-  
4 tant roots ... My previous work at Levis and Caterpillar had all been about globalization and  
5 the urban; I began to conceive Camper as the opposite: local and rural. I was thinking about an  
6 alternative and opposite viewpoint to construct its brand image. I was lucky that the brand  
7 owner wanted to create something different and indulged me in my particular line of thinking,  
8 which was based more on 'mindstyle' than on lifestyle.

9 As Ray passionately and rigorously stresses, given its geographical origin (Majorca), the  
10 Camper brand had the possibility of being rooted in an honest and simple rural spirit. This  
11 is an alternative way of thinking – the opposite of the great themes of modernization and  
12 development.

13 Pasini (2005) observes that the geography of this brand forms part of its DNA, to  
14 the point that, from time to time, one has the impression that Camper's rural roots are as  
15 important as the product itself. This particular brand would not have been possible, or would  
16 have been quite different, had it not been conceived in Majorca.

17 The present cultural context – having left the phase of triumphant modernity behind and  
18 now witnessing the affirmation of postmodern thought – clearly favours this type of very  
19 “traditional” rooting. Owing to postmodernity's rediscovery of aesthetic and emotive aspects,  
20 its sense of openness toward others and those who are different, and the end of the great  
21 narratives, it can accommodate the rise of new approaches in branding and marketing in  
22 general.

23 As several authors note (Firat and Dholakia 2006), postmodernism, precisely because it  
24 succeeds modernism, does not demonize tradition as a simple and obtuse resistance to  
25 modernity. It rather considers tradition as a resource, a store of symbols and meanings that  
26 can be reinterpreted in a new phase and on the basis of new requirements. Some groups of  
27 consumers actually perceive the need to distance themselves from the fundamentalism of  
28 modernity. They therefore transfer new values from rural traditions (honesty, austerity,  
29 simplicity) in order to regain the quality of life. These values can provide different concepts  
30 of wealth than the dominant ones, which are limited to a mere private accumulation of goods  
31 as a possible solution to present-day needs.

32 Camper crucially emphasizes respect for tradition and its rural origins, reinterpreting  
33 these on the basis of present needs, and giving them a new meaning in the light of changes  
34 brought about by progress and innovation:

35 The spirit of the brand is transmitted through the product. Our shoes are a link between  
36 our origin and tradition and our markets' urban reality. They evoke the stable values of  
37 the rural Mediterranean world – durability and simplicity – and incorporate them into  
38 the urban world by means of a sophisticated informality, a careful design, a rhetoric that  
39 does not discard irony and, particularly, imagination.

(Camper internal document)

41 We are thus faced with a postmodern, not a pre-modern interpretation of traditions.  
42 Rural values such as sobriety and respect for nature and the environment have endured the

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1 modernity that had reduced and confined them. However, by bearing the experience of this  
2 period and having acquired certain elements from it, these values are now transformed in  
3 respect of their origin. This signifies a reworking of traditions on the basis of their continu-  
4 ous interaction with modernity.

5 Hence, the pre-modern interpretation of austerity (reduce, re-use, repair) is re-taken from  
6 a contemporary viewpoint with recourse to new production processes that favour material  
7 and energy savings, to recycled and recyclable materials, to simple, basic and modest prod-  
8 ucts. In addition, respect for nature and the environment is reconsidered through the use of  
9 ecological and natural materials. It is not by chance that Lorenza Fluxà, the actual owner,  
10 considers Camaleon (Figure 3.1), the first shoe model produced by Camper in 1976, to be the  
11 real symbol of the company. The reason is because this shoe was inspired by an authentic  
12 peasant model made in an artisan way with pieces of truck canvas, leather offcuts and rubber  
13 tire. Camaleon was the “original recycled” shoe.

14 As reported by Pasini (2005):

15 Working toward health and sustainability, today, means adding value to a project,  
16 starting with a design that leans toward the essential that backs the idea of eliminating  
17 components and simplifying products rather than adding new and redundant elements.  
18 The experience of comfort is a simple idea that can be given concrete representation  
19 through materials and the production process if one is capable of applying a new  
20 concept of technology, in which the vision of a long-term future is sustained by the  
21 need to reduce and simplify rather than add elements. Reducing is the great hope of  
22 the future since reducing means diminishing our dependency on products and raw  
23 materials, which are clearly less and less compatible with the idea of sustainable  
24 development.

25 (Interview with Juana Martorell, Camper Product Manager at that time)

26 The Camper product that perhaps best represents this philosophy is the “Wabi”. This shoe’s  
27 name is a Japanese word from the verb “*Wabiru*” (to ask for forgiveness). The shoe was  
28 developed according to the concepts of simplicity, modest living, comfort and pure satisfac-  
29 tion. Ergonomic and environmentally friendly, the shoe was launched on the market with the  
30 slogan “healthy for your feet, good for the planet” and “healthy + clean = Wabi”. The main  
31 trait of this model is that whereas the majority of shoes need an average of 10 production  
32 phases and 60 components, the Wabi merely requires four phases and three independent  
33 components (external protection, inner sole and sock) using natural, recyclable materials  
34 such as rubber, jute, felted wool or coconut fibre (Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.1 Camaleon shoes.



Figure 3.2 Wabi shoes.

1 The rural root of this brand is also recreated in advertising. Showing super-real, contra-  
2 dictory images of a simple and traditional Mediterranean reality is an alternative to  
3 the US-based models of globalization and consumption in which everybody is sexy and  
4 cool. Some examples from the campaigns include old men playing a local bowling game,  
5 small cars photographed in Naples, camels, Bedouins, and a contemporary Cleopatra  
6 in Cairo.

### 7 *The Mediterranean history and culture*

8 Another central element in the rooting of the Camper brand is the Mediterranean history and  
9 culture. Ray maintains that it is necessary to reappraise the Mediterranean, its dignity and  
10 identity and, accordingly, the need to disrupt the modern North's dominance. In particular,  
11 Ray's ideas are based on the desire to get rid of the clichés and stereotypes that have been  
12 attributed to the Mediterranean area by dominant thinking and that associates it with either  
13 the mafia, and other criminal activities, or with images of an idyllic tourist paradise. He  
14 strongly perceives the need to go beyond these perceptions and to focus on those values that  
15 constitute Mediterranean wealth, such as creativity, openness to others, fantasy, imagination  
16 and tolerance. These are the positive and valuable characteristics that should contribute to  
17 the brand-building process and form Camper's identity all over the world.

18 Ray's point of view on the role of the Mediterranean area is very aligned to that  
19 claimed in several books by Franco Cassano (Cassano 1996, 1998, 2001, 2002), the Italian  
20 sociologist who takes on the challenge of trying to come up with a true discourse capable  
21 of illustrating Mediterranean thinking and culture. As he clearly affirms in *Paeninsula*  
22 (*Peninsula*) (1998: 90):

23 Today, it is possible to rediscover the South, the Mediterranean, to restore the value  
24 of its innate polytheism, the relish of a moderation that arises from this ancient  
25 destination at the crossroads of nations. This is the only right thing to do here and not  
26 only here.

27 Mediterranean values are therefore not only a cultural proposal for the South, but a resource  
28 for contemporary thinking in general. These values can be of central importance in the  
29 South's integration into a global culture to which it can contribute creatively. This differs  
30 radically from its long-assigned role as a depressed area and obstacle to development. This  
31 means reformulating "alternative conventions of poverty and wealth, taking into account the  
32 dignity of another way of living" (Cassano 1996: 5). It means re-examining these points by  
33 dispelling the myths generated by modernity. For example,

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1 The desert was not destined for the motorized idiocy of the Paris–Dakar. It has been a  
2 founding location of a part of spirituality, divine transits, marches, fasts, temptations  
3 and fears. It was much richer when crossed by these travellers than today when it has  
4 become the stake of consumerist followers of the foreign legion. Only a clouded mind  
5 could consider the desert as something awaiting progress, to fill, to develop for tourism  
6 and normalisation.

7 (ibid.)

8 One of the Mediterranean values given most attention is that of slowness. Cassano entitles  
9 the first chapter in *Pensiero meridiano (Meridian Thinking)* “go slowly” and certain texts  
10 contained in *Modernizzare stanca (Modernizing makes you tired)* are veritable eulogies to  
11 slowness. He observes that:

12 the man of speed, *homo currens*, undoubtedly gains certain faculties, but loses others,  
13 primarily attention for others ..., the passion, caring or tenderness that comes from  
14 having not merely aims, but also sentiments, not only competitors, but also friends, ties,  
15 prohibitions or troubles.

16 (2001: 154)

17 Regaining slowness can favour the contemporaneous presence of different temporalities  
18 (fast and slow) and therefore enable the individual to choose from these various contexts. As  
19 Firat (2005) observes, if only a small elite of trendsetters were to be inclined towards  
20 slowness, the majority of people would find pleasure in immersing themselves in different  
21 ways of living and consuming without limiting their choice to just one.

22 The defence of slowness is central for Camper with its motto *Walk, don't run* and  
23 *The Walking Society* advertising campaign that Ray created in 2001. Camper intends to  
24 restore the pleasure of walking to counter speed, which is one of modernity's greatest  
25 obsessions. Indeed, Camper's communication advises individuals to re-appropriate slower  
26 rhythms, rediscover reflection, calmness, pauses, a sense of sociality and contact  
27 with nature.

28 For Camper, walking also means travelling, going from one place to another. In fact,  
29 *The Walking Society* campaign takes the consumer to a different Mediterranean country  
30 each season. This is meant to reference (and reinforce) the cultural *Zeitgeist* underpinning  
31 the Camper brand.

32 Each campaign is rooted in a specific location (Majorca, Morocco, Italy, Greece, Egypt,  
33 etc.), with certain people and their customs, and seeks to illustrate some of the values found  
34 in the David and Goliath story that strongly inspire the brand-building process.

35 All in all, The Walking Society represents a virtual society of people who share the  
36 Mediterranean spirit, but come from different social, cultural, economic, or geographi-  
37 cal realities and who dedicate their imagination and their efforts – individually or  
38 collectively – to contributing useful, positive ideas and solutions to improve the world.

39 (Camper internal document)

40 Moreover, as part of the campaign, Ray initiated a low-budget *magalog* (magazine +  
41 catalogue); this publication features provoking and often controversial photographs,  
42 amusing images from Moroccan landscapes, and of Bedouins in Egypt at the time of the  
43 American invasion of Iraq. Besides the images, Ray also features politically charged



1 articles on subjects like the oil trade, the anti-car movement, slow food and free software in  
2 the *magalog*. The *magalog* can thus be seen as Camper communication's ideological  
3 vector.

#### 4 ***The result: authenticity with "realism"***

5 Camper attempts to deeply root its brand by using historical, geographical and cultural  
6 themes to attain authenticity – the key concept. The rural Mediterranean area becomes the  
7 site of claims for authenticity as a marker that distinguishes this area from the non-authentic  
8 urban global North.

9 On Lovemarks, Brenda from the United Arab Emirates writes:

10 When you're in an elevator, do you press the button manically in the hope the doors will  
11 close quicker? Walk don't run. When you're passing by a garden do you put your head  
12 down, immersed in your thoughts? Walk don't run. Do you have to stop and talk to  
13 people or do you rush around from one chore to the next? Walk don't run. Do you take  
14 the time to savour the goodness in your food? Walk don't run. That is the Camper's  
15 spirit – open, authentic and refreshing.

16 (7 September 2006, [www.lovemarks.com](http://www.lovemarks.com))

17 Authenticity is a central element in branding (Alexander 2009) because it serves as a form  
18 of cultural distinction that can be projected onto objects, places and institutions through  
19 which consumers can "express themselves and fix points of security and order in an  
20 amorphous modern society" (Spooner 1986: 226). Consumers look for brands that contrib-  
21 ute to the creation of their identity by providing important symbolic and cultural elements  
22 (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Successful brands are those that best realize this project, that  
23 succeed in creating worlds that stimulate, provoke and inspire the consumer's imagination,  
24 that help him/her interpret the surrounding culture and find an acceptable position within it  
25 (Holt 2004; Beverland and Farrelly 2010).

26 However, this is not always enough to ensure long-lasting success, since in a situation of  
27 equality in terms of cultural contribution, consumers prefer the brands of companies that  
28 demonstrate their ability to fulfil their civic obligations, "that act like a local merchant, as a  
29 stalwart citizen of the community" (Holt 2002: 88). Camper has made a real contribution  
30 to this process of constructing a new form of authenticity that places increasing importance  
31 on the ethical and cultural qualities of the company that markets the brand, and which has  
32 to transform this brand into a veritable cultural resource that can inspire and stimulate  
33 consumers.

34 As illustrated above, by emphasizing the Mediterranean's re-evaluation and the recovery  
35 of tradition with moderation and also taking into consumers or citizens' increasing request  
36 for respect into consideration, Camper represents a true authentic brand – a "citizen artist  
37 brand" according to Holt's (2002) definition.

38 As Laura writes on Lovemark: "I love Camper because they love nature, while being  
39 innovative. Because they radiate happiness. Because they are fashionable, but they are  
40 out of the fashion system. Because I like what they believe in" (14 September 2005, [www.lovemarks.com](http://www.lovemarks.com)).

42 Not all brands are made by "money-grabbing capitalists" selling products that consumers  
43 probably don't need. Some brands can project an honest reality with social responsibility  
44 and ethics. Camper is one of them.

1 However, this is not the end of the story. Since Camper faces more competition, Ray's  
2 task, in 2005, became to transform the rural Mediterranean positioning by including cities  
3 from the emerging world, to do so with humour and to extend the company image across  
4 the globe.

## 5 **Transforming the rural Med positioning to include** 6 **more international images**

7 In Camper's language, walking is a metaphor for travel. In 2005, a new exciting journey in  
8 search of new cultural experiences and new possible relationships started for this brand.<sup>4</sup>  
9 The first destination was India with the Autumn/Winter 2005 campaign, which was  
10 immediately followed by China. Ray explains this decision:

11 After the 2000–2004 period when the focus was on the Mediterranean and on the  
12 opposition between north and south, I had the feeling that there was a way to propose  
13 the same strategy, the same concept to a bigger world outside the Mediterranean.  
14 I considered the possibility of playing with the same idea, playing with the same  
15 things (slowness, walking, etc.) but inside a new setting, a new world.

16 And I realized that there were relationships between the South (Spain, Italy, the Arabic  
17 countries and the East) that were far more than between the West and the South.

18 The East is synonymous with civilization, ease and comfort; it is the place of the  
19 community, of the hierarchy; it is the place where rules (natural, social, etc.) come before  
20 individuals whose freedom mainly lies in the interpretation of their roles in society (Cassano  
21 1998: 50–1).

22 But the interesting point in this transformation from the rural Mediterranean to a more  
23 international positioning is the creation of a new type of opposition, based not only on the  
24 North–South binary this time, but also on alliances: on one side, the strong North–West  
25 characterized by innovation, technologies, and economics and, on the other side, the weak  
26 South–East with its backwardness, fatalism, and deficit. Again, David versus Goliath story  
27 emerges, although in an extended version.

28 Ray talks about “creative pollination” outside the Med and he tries to generate new  
29 cultural experiences associated with the brand, choosing the different cultures' essential  
30 and truly authentic elements and combining them in an original way. The images of holy  
31 cows in India, or of farmers and rice paddies in China are a way to reinforce Camper brand  
32 values – such as rurality, slowness, irony, naturality – and to enrich them with diversity  
33 (Figure 3.3).

34 The result of this activity is a new type of creative language open to experimentation  
35 and contamination, in which the experience of difference stops being a defensive  
36 barrier and become a stimulus for new contact. According to Ray, Camper “moves  
37 from the rural Mediterranean with reality to the international emerging world with  
38 diversity”.

39 This movement to the East is also associated with an important Camper sales growth in  
40 the Asian Pacific, especially in Korea and Japan. The brand started to perform really well,  
41 much better than in other areas of the world, such as the US. However, the idea of the new  
42 South–East alliance was soon replaced by the South in the Autumn/Winter 2006 campaign.  
43 In this case, not the Mediterranean South, but the Latin American South as represented by  
44 Brazil and the city of São Paulo (Figure 3.4). Ray stresses “the passage from the old world

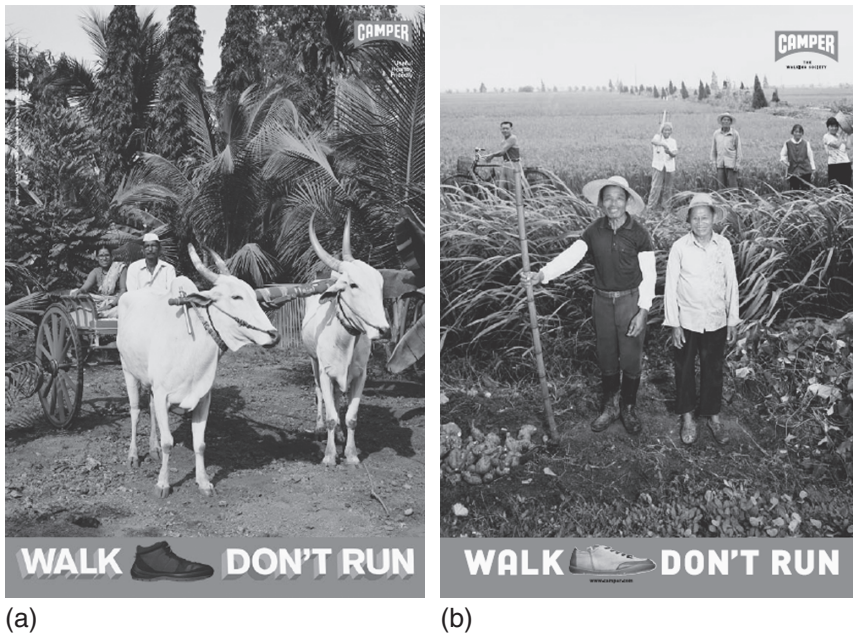


Figure 3.3 Camper advertising.

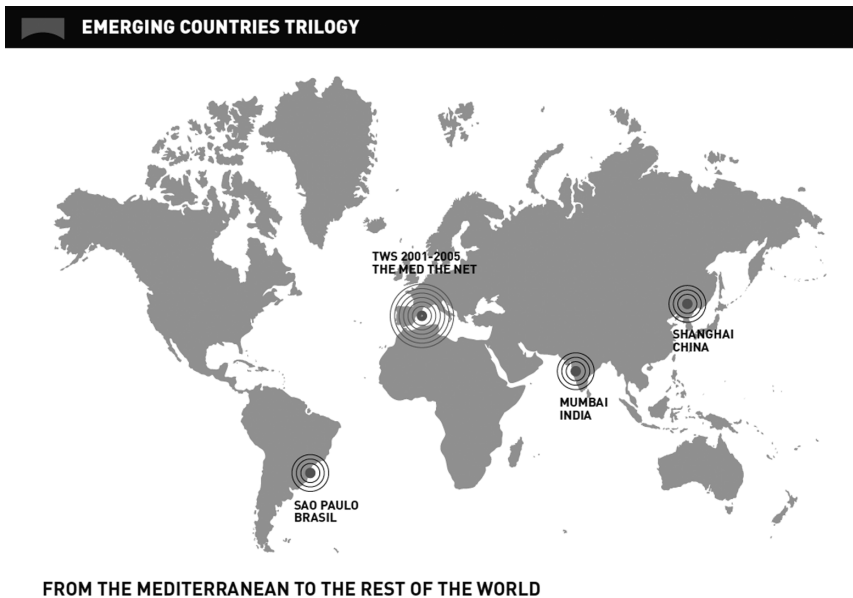


Figure 3.4 Emerging countries and Camper.

1 cities of influence – London, Paris, New York – to the new world cities of relevance –  
2 Mumbai, Shanghai, and São Paulo”.

3 São Paulo is a location that emphasizes the brand’s new international status, and the idea  
4 of movement from the Mediterranean to the rest of the world. The city’s multicultural mix  
5 can specifically help deliver diversity as the new core brand value. The samba friends, the  
6 graffiti artists, the flower growers and the football players are the visual expression of the  
7 association between the rural Mediterranean Camper values and the social groups featuring  
8 Brazil’s rich diversity of Brazil (Figure 3.5).

9 The emerging country trilogy closes Camper’s journey around the world. As competition  
10 increases and the brand becomes more visible around the world, there is the need to protect  
11 the brand’s mind-style, values and personality. What next strategy will allow Camper to  
12 continue being a “special” brand?

13 The analysis of the diverse ways of branding and thinking about brands across different  
14 contexts is very limited. These issues are strongly related to the idea of a brand as a  
15 cultural form, which is generally detached from the traditional strategic brand management  
16 approach. Conversely, when a brand is accepted as a specific cultural and symbolic form,  
17 as a particular way of talking about and seeing the world (Cayla and Arnould 2008), it  
18 is crucial to consider it from deep historical, geographical and socio-cultural contexts.  
19 Thus, the diverse ways of branding and thinking about brands across situations can be  
20 acknowledged, and the idea that all over the world brands are evolving in the same way, can  
21 be rejected.

## 22 **Conclusion and managerial recommendations**

23 The Camper experience seems promising in the light of a cultural appraisal of marketing  
24 models and tools. Without a clever and committed concern for the cultural dimension of  
25 the company’s background, actual setting, and final market, Camper would have not been  
26 able to compete against global players in the footwear market. In this case, symbolic and  
27 mythic elements of local culture have been processed and transferred to a larger setting  
28 (the international market), adapting brand image to and positioning in one country at a  
29 time, but following the same “ideological” framework: rurality, tradition, authenticity,  
30 moderation, etc.

31 In a sense, the company has employed both flexibility and modesty with regard to the  
32 cultural settings at which the brand has been targeted. Modesty means that Camper has not  
33 taken the actual market conditions for granted and the company has been willing to take a  
34 critical stance toward them, even towards its own values and past experiences. In a period in  
35 which “running” seemed a mainstream trend, Camper decided to ask its customers not to  
36 run, just walk. When global marketing communication had been focused on product  
37 performance, endorsement, and massive campaigns, Camper chose traditional and  
38 sustainable product attributes, peasants and farmers as endorsers, and their own customers  
39 as communication agents.

40 This history has been told by means of an open(-minded) cultural framework: flexible,  
41 modest, and – mostly importantly – open. The Med-is-the-Net metaphor stands for a flexible,  
42 soft, permeable and inclusive tool that the company used to intelligently “endear” their  
43 customers in different countries, and win their attention and attachment.

44 In a sense, Camper has turned the *glocal* (think global, act local) slogan into its opposite:  
45 *locbal* (think local, act global). The company has been able to apply a self-reflexive,  
46 self-critical, even critical assessment to assign the most value to the local symbolic and

# Not for Distribution

Mediterranean shoes conquer the world 55



Figure 3.5 Camper advertising.

1 cultural resources employed in an international setting (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard 2007;  
2 Ger 1999).

3 The Camper experience can be located in Cova's (2005) idea of a Mediterranean approach  
4 to marketing. Using Cassano's model of Meridian Thinking (Cassano 1998), he proposes  
5 a moderate marketing approach capable of avoiding the excesses that characterize the  
6 typical traditional view of marketing. Cova's moderate position of a company vis-à-vis its  
7 consumers generates

8 a more comprehensive and less utilitarian approach that does not invoke simplistic  
9 reflections phrased in terms of market actions or responses to consumers, but instead  
10 calls for a more complex understanding both of how companies fit into society, and also  
11 of their interrelations with all of its actors. In other words, this is a socially relevant  
12 perspective of the interface between clients, firms and all of their market-oriented or  
13 non-market-oriented stakeholders.

(Cova 2005: 211)

15 Camper fits very well with this sense of proportion regarding the company's product offer,  
16 marketing approach and relation with society.

17 The company took a critical stance toward extant models about how to run the business  
18 and engage with customers. Starting from internal job conditions and relationships  
19 with employees, Camper developed a general positioning in terms of ethics and ideology.  
20 Employment contracts, services, and even manufacturing options (outsourcing, delocaliza-  
21 tion, materials, etc.) have been considered in the light of a mature and socially responsible  
22 attitude. Starting from this, Camper took a humble perspective about how to approach  
23 the market and its customers without imposing or projecting a pre-defined model of  
24 consumer behaviour to which customer could or should adapt. Besides, Camper offerings  
25 have been proposed as an opportunity, a resource, "just in case" it could prove to be  
26 interesting and/or attracting: *jno los compres, si no los necesitas!* (Don't buy it, if you  
27 don't need it!). Moreover, the company took a pedagogical stance towards its customers  
28 and the market, trying to defend and support ideals of sustainability, openness, tolerance,  
29 and integration, creating a welcoming bundle of products, services, platforms, and  
30 meanings.

31 However, it is important that applying the associations between ways of thinking and  
32 managerial actions is not limited to the Med area, but can be extended to other areas of the  
33 world. An interesting case is represented by the Celtic approach to marketing (Brown 2006;  
34 McAuley *et al.* 2006) that stresses the valorization of the typical Celtic traits of being  
35 "spontaneous, creative, dangerous, mystical" and the opposition to the more Anglo-Saxon  
36 ones of being "methodical, rule-seeking, circumspect, rational" (Hackley 2006: 69). In terms  
37 of marketing practices, the focus here is on the use of Celtic symbols, designs, myths, and  
38 legends as part of the product, packaging, promotion, etc. The marketing of Guinness,  
39 the popular Irish beer, provides an useful successful example: in spite of being brewed in  
40 50 countries and marketed in 150 regions, the "black stuff" continues to be quintessentially  
41 Irish because the Celtic myths and symbols have been central in the development of the  
42 brand identity during its long history (Simmons 2006).

43 Cayla and Eckhardt (2008) present interesting experiences about Asian companies  
44 that are trying to Asianize their positioning, situating brands as belonging less to a specific  
45 country and more to a region. Again, as in the Camper case, and in general in the construc-  
46 tion of iconic American brands, as illustrated by Holt (2004), brand managers draw from

1 different local stories and myths to create powerful brands. This is specifically true with  
2 these regional Asian brand managers' need to create a new synthesis of cultural referents  
3 (East and West, future and present, etc.). With these referents, they construct a new identity  
4 myth for Asian consumers that is more appealing than the traditional representation of an  
5 exotic Asia. Similar to the Camper experience, these brands try to combine tradition and  
6 modernity, and to construct a different type of modernity that does not imitate the West  
7 and that "escape the Western and orientalist gaze representing Asia as exotic" (Cayla and  
8 Eckhardt 2008: 226).

## 9 **Review and discussion questions**

10 The Camper experience suggests the need for a more plural, self-reflexive, culturally  
11 conscious, even critical reasoning about the way in which marketing managers approach  
12 branding decisions. The following elements can be employed to stimulate collective  
13 discussion:

14 1 Local cultural values are not necessarily marginal, even if, from a merely quantitative  
15 point of view, they represent a small portion of the whole market. Camper meanings and  
16 values are rooted in a micro-culture that lies at the crossroad between Spanish, Catalan,  
17 and Majorcan traditions, all of which share common Mediterranean origins. Regardless  
18 of the size of this cultural background, these values can be extended to and  
19 re-interpreted for a larger, multi-cultural setting.

20 2 Local, even marginal, cultural meanings and values prove attractive for various profiles/  
21 segments of global consumers. Different markets have appreciated Camper shoes for  
22 different reasons – from the design to the company's communication, from its cultural  
23 values to its ethical stances. Local values can be conjugated according to different final  
24 market characteristics.

25 3 The development of local cultural values towards global branding strategies can  
26 be improved by employing managerial capabilities and competences that come from  
27 outside the cultural milieu: outsiders' cultural framework assists in identifying the most  
28 important issues in a local culture that can be better employed in the global branding  
29 strategy.

30 4 Given that brands can be conceived as cultural and ideological carriers, it is necessary  
31 to carefully identify and select appropriate symbols and values, starting from local  
32 and specific ones, and seeing whether and how they can be "translated" for a wider  
33 market;

34 5 In the Camper case, elements of the communication mix are markedly idiosyncratic  
35 compared to traditional marketing approaches: for instance, the endorsers of the brand  
36 differ from traditional ones. Which other elements in Camper's communication can be  
37 considered from the same perspective?

38 6 Camper aimed at building an iconic brand. Usually iconic brands benefit from premium  
39 price strategies. Is this true? If so, should it be accepted? Is it possible to conceive iconic  
40 brands as convenience brands?

## 41 **Keywords**

42 Authenticity, critical marketing, cultural branding, hybridization, iconic brand, Mediterranean,  
43 myth, responsibility, simplicity, sustainability.

## 1 Notes

- 2 1 Majorca is the largest of the Balearic Islands, Spain. It is located in the Mediterranean Sea,  
3 approximately 200 km south of Barcelona.
- 4 2 Shubhankar Ray was born in Calcutta, India, in 1968. After graduating from Manchester University  
5 with a Chemistry BSc, he worked for numerous global brands: G-Star, Camper, Caterpillar, Levi's,  
6 Stride, and Travel Fox.
- 7 3 McCracken (1988, pp. 11–12) describes the relationship between the researcher and the culture and  
8 observes that the “intimate acquaintance with one’s own culture can create as much blindness as  
9 insight. It can prevent the observer from seeing cultural assumptions and practices.” Ray, as a  
10 stranger to the local culture, was able to minimize the dangers of familiarity. Excerpt from Iconeye.  
11 com ([http://www.iconeye.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2622:mal-lorca-icon-024--june-2005](http://www.iconeye.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2622:mal-lorca-icon-024--june-2005)).
- 13 4 In 2005, in addition to the brand’s internationalization phase, the company decided on a diversifica-  
14 tion phase. Camper FoodBall, an ecological and healthy alternative to fast food, and Casa Camper,  
15 a new concept hotel, are the results of this diversification. The company realized these projects  
16 internally and manages them under the motto “Producing for the three fundamental needs of man:  
17 feet, home and food, the rest is a bonus.”

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