

Can you get inspiration from a foreign model without copying it?

Are you an entrepreneur? Maddyness has created a true kit of different steps to follow in creating, growing, and even selling your own startup. From hiring to protecting your brand and moving on to financing your innovation, you will find tips and good practices so that you can easily find your way in the entrepreneurship labyrinth. In this article: some recommendations for getting inspiration from a foreign model without risking looking like a copycat.

Too Long? Here's the key takeaways

Adapt your concept to the market that you want to enter

Make sure you have time to wait

You can't straight up copy, but nothing is stopping you from getting inspired

Why not try a new take on the concept?

If there are too many difficulties... Create something new!

Different cultures are just that - different!

New trends that work in other countries are not necessarily adaptable in your own country. Is the local market developed enough? Are your neighbours ready for such an idea? Will your product or service fit in with the way of life of a large number of potential clients in your country? Adapt to the needs and customs of local consumers. It might seem obvious, even if you were bored to death in your geography and history classes about globalisation and the standardisation of the ways of life, but there are some qualities in every country that won't allow for certain business adaptations. A very sweet breakfast food that does extremely well in France might find it hard to enter the UK market, given that many Brits eat a salty breakfast.

More so than consumption habits, the necessary infrastructure and resources must be similar in your country as in the country of origin. You will also have to abide by all your country's laws within your business sector. Make sure to cover your back, because if you don't, you may find yourself juggling legal problems.

“Analyse the market to be sure that your concept will be in harmony with local customs.”

New ideas require more marketing

Seeing a startup that has had success outside of your borders makes you want to try and replicate it, assuming the same success will follow. Companies that imitate foreign concepts are called *copycats*. If you remain defiant on the first point and you still want to launch a revolutionary concept in your own country, be aware that you will have to do a lot of marketing for quite a bit of time.

What is already common in the U.S. or in Asia may be just a crazy idea in the UK. If this is the case, don't expect immediate success and create your business plan and roadmap with care. Give your idea time to infuse. This

strategy could turn out to be profitable but it's also risky. Some startups end up closing down, having been ahead of their time in a market that isn't as partial to new technology, like Asia for example.

“Give yourself time to convince your potential users.”

Get inspired, don't copy

Just because it is legal to get inspired by an already existing idea or concept because it can't be protected, that doesn't mean that you can completely copy its elements (texts from the website, presentation brochure, design, etc.). These elements are actually protected by the copyright or, for some, by patents. Get inspired by the concept itself but don't copy the entire company.

Ask yourself some good questions: what makes the user experience of this platform pleasing? Why does the landing page design speak to you? How did this startup create an engaged community? Reproduce the successful parts of your inspiration sources, but don't forget that a good idea is nothing without a good follow through.

Don't forget that imitating the logo and the name of a brand is considered infringement. Even a simple resemblance can bring about a legal conviction and the risk of confusion or association can be proved. You can also be attacked for “parasitism.” In theory, recreating Uber or Airbnb is prohibited. Even if, in the facts, it is difficult to prove that the company is getting an undue benefit of this positioning, it's best to not put yourself in unnecessary danger. You will be more successful with a clean identity.

“Don't cross the red line. Get inspired – yes. Copy a website or brand – no.”

Consider all your options

Placing your concept on another market, a niche market for example, could be a good idea to profit from the success of an already tested model, like box deliveries. In the UK, Allsubscriptionboxes created a website with hundreds of different boxes that can be delivered in the UK. In the same way, the idea of a marketplace can be easily adaptable for a specialised sector if there is already a supply and demand.

Contrarily, products are hard to imitate, because they are often protected under patents. The same goes for inventions and technical processes. You are risking a lot if you commit infringement. If convicted, you can be seeing 6 months in prison and a £50,000 fine.

You could, however, import the product or buy the right to reproduce the concept. This would be the simplest and fastest solution. Obtaining the promise of distribution of the product or service in your country by negotiating a contract of exclusivity would be ideal (pay attention to volume goals, though!).

“No to infringement. Yes to adaptation.”

Don't be afraid to quit

An immature market, legal risks, technical obstacles... Sometimes you need to look at the evidence. The idea could be great, but not for your country. If you don't have the patience or the bank account to be able to wait until your concept “takes off,” it might be time to create something new!

“It is easier to give up on a passion than master it.” Nietzsche once said.

