

# LOCALISING COACH

## A Case Study & Implementation Plan



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Image from Coach (2024)

# PROPOSAL

## Description

Whilst other brands struggle amidst a global luxury slowdown, Coach parent company Tapestry's sales have remained steady, or in some cases increased (Schulz, 2024). During this lull period for other brands, Coach have the opportunity to further extend their competitive advantage worldwide and future-proof the brand by focusing on localisation.

The strategy described in this study derives its success from in-depth market and consumer research which will be utilised to develop and tailor region-specific products. Wherever possible, utilising smaller-scale local sourcing increases sustainability whilst partnering with local artists enhances exclusivity at a comparable price point.

The success of this approach comes from an understanding of premium and luxury consumers' priorities, namely identified as sustainability, exclusivity, and travel (Sabanoglu, 2024; Statista Market Insights, 2024). Successful localisation improves on sustainability whilst offering a tailored, unique, and exclusive product offering, thus encouraging both local and tourism spending.

## Company Overview

Founded in New York City in 1941, Coach is the largest brand under parent company Tapestry, which also encompasses Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman (Tapestry, 2024). Coach are renowned for their 'accessible luxury' handbags and leather accessories, boasting 930 directly-operated stores and over \$5 billion in 2024 sales across 60 worldwide markets (Tapestry, 2024).

Historically, Coach have targeted women in their 20s to 40s, but with the luxury consumer demographic shifting younger in recent years, Coach have made successful efforts to target Gen Z (Webb, 2022). The company have found great success in this with the launch of their Tabby bag and its campaign featuring Lil Nas X, as well as their fresh Coachtopia initiative (Bain, 2024).

## Business Problem

Coach are not taking full advantage of localisation as a growth strategy.

With sales already strong in China, the United States, and some regions in Europe, Coach need a way to drive growth globally and take advantage of promising and emerging markets such as Southeast Asia, South America, India, and underpenetrated European regions (Tapestry, 2024). Contributing factors to this problem include shifting consumer behaviour, competition from other premium and luxury brands, as well as worldwide economic woes (Bain, 2024).

## Business Questions

- How can products be developed that reflect the priorities, tastes, and cultures of different regional consumers?
- Can Coach localise sustainable materials sourcing whilst remaining profitable?
- What strategic and logistical challenges would this approach face?

## Recommendations

Coach should focus on localisation for brand growth by developing region-specific products which reflect the tastes and cultures of consumers in that region, as well as luxury tourists. These products should feature locally-sourced materials wherever practical, cutting carbon emissions from shipping and improving sustainability whilst supporting local markets and driving consumer appeal. Coach should also leverage creative partnerships with local artisans and icons to create limited-edition products for celebrations such as Lunar New Year and Diwali.

Outside the scope of this case study, Coach should prioritise in-store experience and ambience, as well as customer-to-sales staff interactions, as consumer sentiment displays that this is an increased desire amongst consumers (BoF and McKinsey & Co., 2024). The brand should also expand their instant resale technology from exclusively Coachtopia products to all Coach products.

# CASE STUDY

## Business Problem (Expanded)

Coach are not taking full advantage of localisation as a growth strategy, thereby missing out on revenue and market share from emerging regions in luxury fashion such as India, Africa, and the Middle East (Benissan, 2023).

McKinsey & Company's State of Fashion 2025, reports that half of executives have plans to localise their market model and value proposition. Pricing and assortment have been cited as two areas to target in order to differentiate brands and connect with consumers in emerging markets (Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company, 2024).

## Sub-Issues & Strategic Failings

Three key issues comprising this problem have been identified.

**1. Market opportunities:** As of this year, 60% of Coach's revenue came from the North American region, followed by China and Other Asia at 33% combined (Tapestry, 2024). As growth in the Americas slows for the brand, Coach must take advantage of opportunities for growth elsewhere. In addition, early entry to emerging regions will establish Coach as a key player in the accessible luxury sector.

**2. Consumer sentiment:** As emerging markets such as India begin to gain recognition in the global fashion scene, brands such as Cartier have introduced events and collections that celebrate Diwali, the Indian festival of light (Assomull, 2024). Developing and including localised products which pay homage to cultural events and holidays will encourage consumer engagement in emerging markets and worldwide.

**3. Competitive advantage:** Without a localisation strategy, Coach risk their competitive advantage in key regions, losing market share to competitors like Gucci and Louis Vuitton who excel in successful localisation. Gucci and Louis Vuitton demonstrate that localisation can be a successful global brand strategy.

## Theories & Concepts

**Scarcity Principle:** The scarcity principle in economics, first proposed by Lionel Robbins in 1932, has been backed and applied to consumer goods by Cialdini (2008). In this context, the principle states that consumers value something more if it is scarce, such as with a limited-edition or exclusive product (Waschenfelder, 2020).

**Conspicuous Consumption:** Conspicuous consumption, a phrase coined by Thorstein Veblen in his 1899 book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions*, refers to purchasing commodities – especially luxury commodities – to publicly signal wealth.

**Localisation:** Pioneered by grocery store chain Bain in the 1990s, localisation in retail refers to the customisation of product offer, marketing strategies, and consumer experiences to tailor to the unique needs and preferences in a specific region (Vishwanath and Rigby, 2006).

## Comparable Case Studies

### Louis Vuitton

Louis Vuitton's localisation strategy allows the brand to stay relevant globally whilst maintaining its luxury consumer perception.

**Tailored products:** The brand mainly focuses localisation efforts in Asia, where they develop market-specific products such as their Lunar New Year collections to build cultural relevance (Jess, 2024). Tailoring to local preferences is a retailing best practice and helps to create an emotional link between local consumers and the brand.

**Limited editions:** At their flagship store at Champs-Élysées, Paris, Louis Vuitton offer store-exclusive products and personalisation services, generating luxury tourism spending and leveraging the scarcity principle to encourage purchases (Tramuta, 2024).

**Local collaborations:** In 2012 and again in 2023, Louis Vuitton partnered with renowned Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. The more recent collection, debuted only in Japan and China, comprised over a hundred items

bearing Kusama's signature polka dot and pumpkin motifs, and rapidly gained worldwide success and prestige (Silbert, 2023).

Louis Vuitton's localisation has been extremely successful because the brand have tapped into local consumer sentiment and preferences, local culture through relevant artist and celebrity collaborations, and have capitalized on social psychology through limited-edition and exclusive products and services.

## **Gucci**

Gucci's global localisation strategy has been executed similarly to that of Louis Vuitton, integrating culturally-relevant designs and products seamlessly into their unique brand handwriting.

**Tailored products:** Each year, Gucci releases capsule collections for Chinese New Year featuring the year's zodiac. 2024 was the Year of the Dragon, and was celebrated with the release of pieces featuring dragon motifs and traditional red and gold designs (Tan, 2024). Annual releases allow Gucci to tap into local celebrations and customs in a way that cultivates emotional connection to the brand.

**Limited editions:** Taking advantage of great potential revenue in the United Arab Emirates, Gucci released the Dubai Emirates Resort collection, with exclusive pieces highlighting traditional Middle Eastern motifs, complemented by a dramatically renovated store in Dubai's Mall of the Emirates (Wow-Emirates, 2024).

**Local collaborations:** Gucci partnered with K-Pop star Kai from EXO, the result of which was a collection that was distinctly Gucci, whilst featuring Kai's signature teddy bear (Prestige, 2021). With K-Pop's enthusiastic following in Korea and its growing influence worldwide amongst youths, the collection stayed true to Gucci's ethos whilst remaining fresh and appealing to a younger audience.

Gucci's localisation strategy has been successful because of their well-executed combination of the house's global luxury appeal with local relevance and innovation.

## **Coach: The Brand**

### **Values**

"We make beautiful things, crafted to last – that you can be yourself in" (Coach, 2024).

On their website, Coach state their brand values of craftsmanship and quality, heritage and legacy, and their consumer-centred approach to luxury (Coach, 2024). The localisation strategy proposed in this study will underpin and complement these values.

Tailoring unique, high quality products to specific local regions highlights Coach's commitment to craftsmanship and quality, while representing the brand's dedication to the consumer. Localisation efforts will also allow Coach to link their heritage to the unique heritage and legacies of the regions the brand trade in, strengthening the emotional link between Coach and their consumers.

### **Ethics**

Coach's statements on ethics revolve around three areas of people, communities, and planet, with the stated goal of a better-made future for all through inclusivity, giving back, and sustainable practices. (Coach, 2024).

With localisation, Coach have the opportunity to further their triple bottom line whilst demonstrating these ethics. Tapestry have signed the Open to All pledge, along with 50 other fashion brands, promising to foster inclusivity and equality for customers and employees alike (Open to All, 2024). Although the pledge is focused on American brands, Coach should bring this mindset to localised stores in emerging markets, where minorities and vulnerable populations may not be as protected. Localisation, including the localisation of sourcing and artistic talent, provide Coach with the means to give back to the regions they have a presence in in a truly meaningful way, such as providing jobs and fostering local artisans. Localisation also has significant means to increase sustainability both globally and in smaller-scale ways.

### **Governance**

Under parent company Tapestry, Coach is overseen by a board of directors and several committees to ensure standardised governance is maintained (Tapestry, 2024). The brand describe four pillars of governance in their most recent sustainability report: people, planet, products, and communities (Tapestry, 2024).

The localisation strategy will adhere to this governance structure. The first pillar, people, are seen to through



in-depth consumer research and respect for local culture, in addition to providing jobs across the supply chain in the selected regions. The sustainability benefits of localisation will further Coach's sustainability and ESG goals through sustainable materials sourcing and reduced shipping distance and therefore impact. Products, the main focus of the localisation strategy described, will be developed according to the brand's values and ethics as well as those of the people in the regions these products will be sold in. The strategy will have a positive impact on the communities it engages with through jobs, sourcing, and talent creation.

## Vision

Coach's vision is to "stretch what's possible" through meaningful impact on the people involved in the brand, the planet through sustainability initiatives, the products the brand create and sell, and the communities they are a part of (Tapestry, 2024).

As discussed previously, localisation will drive positive change in all of these areas, from providing opportunities to people in every step of the supply chain to emotionally connecting with consumers worldwide in a meaningful, culturally significant way.

## Situational Analysis

### SWOT analysis

A SWOT situational analysis has been conducted to aid in creating a localisation strategy for Coach.

**Strengths:** Coach have a strong heritage and good brand recognition, and they are known for their quality craftsmanship. The brand also have a global presence, trading in 60 markets (Kahn, 2024).

**Weaknesses:** Coach rely heavily on the North American region for revenue, and have limited presence in emerging markets such as India and the Middle East (Tapestry, 2024). Although the brand have sustainability initiatives in place, sustainability rating website Good on You still rate Coach a 2 out of 5, or 'not good enough' (Good on You, 2023).

**Opportunities:** Coach have the opportunity to expand their presence in emerging markets, as suggested in this localisation strategy. The brand also have the opportunity to implement further sustainability initiatives and leverage collaborations and limited edition products.

**Threats:** Coach suffer from intense market competition in the affordable luxury market sector (Fuller, 2024). In addition, geopolitical risks and shifting consumer preferences put the brand at risk.

### TOWS analysis

From this research, a TOWS analysis has been performed to support the localisation strategy.

**Strengths-Opportunities:** Coach should utilise their signature craftsmanship and heritage to develop region-specific products which highlight the brand's quality and sustainability practices.

**Strengths-Threats:** To adapt to shifting consumer preferences and differentiate the brand from others in the market, Coach should have unique, limited edition products on offer which reflect thoroughly researched regional consumer preferences.

**Weaknesses-Opportunities:** Coach should expand their presence in emerging markets such as India, Africa, and the Middle East to capitalise on these regional consumers' growing purchasing power. The brand should also work to implement sustainability efforts in order to gain global recognition.

**Weaknesses-Threats:** As mentioned, Coach should strengthen their sustainability credentials and ensure that brand exclusivity is maintained to mitigate risks from intense competition and consumer expectations.

The localisation strategy proposed will leverage Coach's brand strengths and opportunities whilst mitigating the brand's weaknesses and susceptibility to threats.

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This implementation plan uses the five stages of project management outlined by the Project Management Institute (PMI) (2024): initiation, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing.

## 1. Initiating

**Identify business needs:** The business needs of the brand have been broadly identified in this document, but the team should do further research into this to ensure that the execution of this strategy is correct for the brand.

**Create project charter:** The team will develop a project charter which outlines high-level objectives and deliverables and outlines the project's initial scope and stakeholders.

**Define deliverables:** The team will specify and describe what deliverables will be produced from this project, such as limited-edition collections to be released, as well as the success criteria for such deliverables.

**Identify stakeholders:** Stakeholders, such as the Coach board of directors, customers, and suppliers, will be identified and a stakeholder matrix will be created which includes and accounts for each stakeholder's impact, risks, and influence. This will ensure that the correct steps are taken to reassure and satisfy high-impact stakeholders.

**Obtain authorisation:** Authorisation from the executive team at Coach and its board of directors will be necessary to begin implementation of the plan.

## 2. Planning

**Create WBS and schedule:** The team will describe what is to be included in the scope of the plan and create a work breakdown structure in order to divide the overall localisation strategy into manageable tasks. A Gantt chart will be used to organise tasks into a feasible schedule. Since Coach have the largest presence outside the United States in China, the brand could start project rollout here to minimise risk (Tapestry, 2024).

**Resource management:** The team will identify resources required for localisation to be a success; this includes people such as designers, retail workers, and suppliers, as well as materials such as specialty fabrics or leathers.

**Budgeting and cost estimates:** Costs will be estimated for activities such as the designing, manufacturing, and shipping of region-specific products and a budget must be approved by leadership. Costs for marketing, promotional activities, and store design will also be calculated and accounted for, though these are outside the scope of this study.

**Risk management:** Risks to the project will be identified and from this a risk assessment matrix will be created. For likely and/or probable risks, such as supply chain disruptions, unpredictable weather patterns, and shifting consumer behaviours, mitigation plans will be developed to the best of the brand's ability.

## 3. Execution

**Assign tasks:** Tasks will be assigned to team members according to availability and expertise. Productive task assignment will maximise each member's abilities and contribution to the overall project.

**Procurement:** Any supplies necessary for successful localised product development, such as raw or finished materials, will be acquired or organised by the project team, ensuring that the project will have the supplies necessary to succeed when they are needed.

**Change management:** Should it be needed, a change management framework will be established to ensure that any changes will be evaluated, approved, and implemented in a streamlined, standardised way. Changes should be submitted via change request forms, logged, and assessed for impacts to the three key areas: project scope, schedule, and cost. This will help mitigate scope creep and schedule or budget extension.

**Stakeholder engagement:** Stakeholders will be communicated with frequently and kept informed of project updates and progress via regular status reports. This will foster collaboration as well as minimising risks and building trust between the team, brand, and key stakeholders.

## 4. Monitoring & Controlling

**Monitor progress:** The project manager and team will continuously monitor the project to ensure objectives are being met, using the project charter, milestone completion, and key performance indicators for the brand.

**Change control:** Working with key stakeholders and executives, the team will evaluate and approve or reject any changes to project scope, schedule, or budget, and record these changes in the project's change log to guarantee clear documentation. This will aid in lessons learnt and help inform future projects.

**Quality control:** Deliverables will be thoroughly inspected to verify that they meet success criteria defined in the project charter. This is imperative to protect Coach's global reputation for creating quality products.

**Risk management:** Risks will be continuously assessed, and if needed, previously prepared risk mitigation plans will be into effect. It is important to manage risks effectively in order to assure that the project stays on track and on budget and to avoid scope creep.

**Track issues:** Throughout the execution of the strategy, any issues that arise will be tracked by the team and the project manager, guaranteeing that what the issue was, as well as how the team resolved it, will be documented and can be used to inform future projects.

## 5. Closing

**Final deliveries:** The team will make sure that all deliverables have met quality standards and acquire approval from key stakeholders such as the brand, executives, and the board of directors. The project will need to be signed as completed by the owner and sponsor, in this case Coach's board of directors and executives.

**Success evaluation:** The success of the execution will be assessed against objectives outlined in the charter and scope in collaboration with the brand and other key stakeholders.

**Lessons learnt:** As discussed, lessons learnt from the project will be discussed both within the team and the wider Coach brand informed by documented issues, changes, and performance reports from the project. This will allow the brand to utilise any strategies the team may have used to resolve issues and new best practices, which can be shared throughout other teams at Coach and within the other Tapestry brands to increase efficiency and chances of brand success.

**Close contracts:** Any contracts which need to be closed, such as temporary contracts with suppliers or retail spaces, will be closed, documented, and filed away for the brand's records.

**Celebrate!:** Acknowledge the team's successes and those of everyone involved in making Coach's localisation strategy a success, boosting morale and reinforcing Coach's reputation as having a favourable company culture.

# CONCLUSION

The business problem Coach currently faces was identified earlier as the missed opportunity for brand growth and revenue in emerging markets due to a lack of any localisation strategy in these regions.

In order to solve this issue, a comprehensive localisation strategy has been proposed in this case study. Limited-edition and exclusive products will be tailored to fit the desires and cultures of consumers in selected regions and will then be released and sold in strategic locations in these regions. Localisation will foster emotional connection between the brand and consumers worldwide through these tailored products, as well as collaborations between Coach and local artists and artisans and partnerships with culturally important figures. In doing so, Coach's sustainability credentials will be bolstered through the strategy's conscious sourcing strategies.





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