

## Taxi London on the Road to Japan



A British company from North Devon is preparing to take on the likes of Estée Lauder, Maybelline and Max Factor following a successful research trip to Japan and Hong Kong, financed by the **Export Marketing Research Scheme**.

Husband and wife team, Peter Kelly and Jane Williamson have invested £100,000 of their own money to create the **Taxi London** brand of prestige cosmetics. The aim is to develop a niche product that will appeal to Far Eastern markets where British goods are seen as a premium commodity – hence its overtly British branding and imagery.

Before commencing manufacture specifically for the Far Eastern markets, however, Peter and Jane needed to establish that there was a market for their products and how best to approach it. Peter undertook the research trip, with the support and guidance of the **Export Marketing Research Advisor**.

***"The Export Marketing Research Scheme was the catalyst that made it possible for us to research Japan and Hong Kong." Peter Williamson. Taxi London***

*"However, I never took it for granted that we would get funding for the project. I think by assuming you'll be using your own money to fund the trip you avoid complacency. I knew we had to get the most from our visit and so we were very thorough in our preparations,"* said Peter. This thoroughness paid off. **Taxi London** established that there was, indeed, a potential marketplace for its cosmetics and that very little adaptation was needed, other than slight changes to the packaging. In the light of this, manufacturing has now begun and the company is setting off for a major cosmetics show in Hong Kong in a few weeks time. Discussions are well advanced with distributors in Japan and Hong Kong and the company is close to clinching a deal to supply products for 24 stores in Japan.

Peter is in no doubt about the benefits of carrying out face to face research before diving into a new market and he points out that you shouldn't underestimate the advantages of networking. *"I have been in the cosmetics industry for 20 years so I know a lot of people. Before I went to Japan and Hong Kong, I asked around for advice on who to visit and where to go. I also made sure to get advice on business etiquette, and was advised to take gifts to thank the people I interviewed. I took some locally made fudge and, as well as supplying it to me for nothing as a thank you for giving them the exposure overseas, the fudge company has since offered to help out by providing warehouse space. You can achieve fantastic things by talking to people, which is one of the reasons why I think it is so important to do field research before you try to break into a new market."*

As part of the criteria for **Export Marketing Research Scheme** funding, companies undertaking a research trip overseas are required to complete a report detailing their findings. For **Taxi London**, this report has proved a valuable strategy document.

*"It is not shoved away in the back of a drawer," concludes Peter. "It is a living, breathing document and we refer to it frequently to make sure we are still on the right track. As far as I am concerned, £5000 of research went into creating that document and I want to make sure that we plan our strategy according to what the market told is and not what we think it should be."*

**For more information about Taxi London, visit [www.taxicosmetics.com](http://www.taxicosmetics.com). For further information on the Export Marketing Research Scheme, visit <http://www.chamberonline.co.uk/>.**