

## The Necessity of Website Localization

Of all Internet users approximately 65% speak a language other than English which goes to say that an English language site is probably losing thousands of visitors per day. Depending on the website's focus, this may or may not be important. However, If the site is commercial, it's probably quite important and necessary. This hypothesis actually applies to any website in only one language, targeted to a single culture. Websites in English are frequently chosen as examples to show the importance of website localization because it's a forceful reminder that not even a language as influential as English can elude taking second place sometimes on the Internet. What course of action can a business take? In essence set up two things that are vital to participate in foreign markets: an e-commerce enabled site and a website localization/globalization which is a multi layered process involving a lot more than just translation.

### Expensive Errors

Possibly, translation blunders can do a website more damage than benefit. When the automotive company, American Motors, decided to market the Matador, a very costly mistake was made. Their intention was to position the car along with an image of bravery and endurance. But, in Puerto Rico, the name means 'killer'. Considering the hazardous route conditions on the island, a 'killer' car was the last thing that would be welcomed. True website localization protects against such costly and disappointing failures.

### Breaking Down The Barriers

It can't be overstressed just how important it is to be familiar with the customs of a website's targeted public. What dialect do they use? What age groups are represented? What is their predominant religion? What are their levels of education? Not all of the questions will have to be answered. However, if for instance the business is a vendor of books on all topics, the targeted clientele will be diverse in a Western culture. Most countries in the West have a very high literacy rate. Therefore, in the case of website localization for a bookstore, the choice of a dialect probably doesn't require much thought. The most standardized form of the language should be the choice. In case of an organization not-for-profit that may target particular ethnic groups however, dialect becomes a point of strong interest.

Surprisingly, even wrong choice of colors, symbols and images, can bring down a campaign of website localization. How can this be? Suppose a clothing store wishes to market their apparel in the Arab world. Now suppose that they have a special on bikinis and depict photographic images of women in bikinis on the site. Their web pages may be accurately translated, linguistically speaking, but it would be offensive to the greater part of the targeted audience. Most Arabs, Muslims or Christians, disapprove of the lack of modesty in dress common in the West among both men and women.

True website localization will also cover the scripting issues of translation. For example, if a site is going to be adjusted to a Chinese-speaking audience, its format will likely have to be modified because Chinese and Japanese are top to bottom languages.

Those are only some of the major points that must be well thought of for effective website localization jobs.

### About the Author

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