A Guide to Website Localisation

Promote your brand worldwide and achieve international sales success

A guide to establishing an effective foreign language website

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www.comtectranslations.com
Are you taking full advantage of your website to promote your brand to a global audience?

At Comtec we believe many companies are missing out on exciting opportunities to access new markets overseas via their website. To help spread the word we’ve created this short, handy guide highlighting our top ten most important steps in setting up your foreign language website. So whether you’re looking to make the most of your website to build business abroad or you’re considering exports for the first time, our guide will offer tons of helpful advice to put you on the right track.

So, what are the opportunities for UK businesses to access new markets online?

There are currently around 3.5 billion internet users worldwide and tens of millions of businesses operating online. Now more than ever, we have the opportunity to reach out to these potential customers.

Did you know that over half of all Google searches are made in a language other than English? This means that if your business has a website that’s just in English you are missing out on reaching a significant proportion of global internet users.

The illustration below shows the top ten languages used on the internet (to the nearest ten million):

Why translate your website in the first place?

Top level statistics are great for seeing the big picture, but what do they mean on a practical level?

E-commerce is big, but there are still exciting opportunities for growth

The UK e-commerce market is one of the leading markets in Europe with 77% of internet users making online purchases in 2015. While there is still steady growth in this market (12%), there are exciting opportunities for cross-border e-commerce sales in other regions.

In Europe, Spain and Italy could provide new markets for e-commerce retailers as these countries are seeing annual growth rates of 16% and 19% per annum, respectively. Consumers have been slower to embrace online shopping than in other parts of the world, but we are now seeing very positive growth.

Chinese e-commerce worth more than US market

Further afield, the Chinese e-commerce market overtook the US in 2013, having increased 100 fold in seven years. 2015 figures from eMarketer valued Chinese e-commerce sales at $634 billion, compared to $340 billion in the US. Cross-border e-commerce amounted to more than 6% of China’s total consumer e-commerce in 2015, with high demand for luxury goods. This market is growing by upwards of 50% per annum. Chinese website translation is well worth considering.

Emerging markets: get in before the competition

Other regions and countries are also seeing rapid e-commerce growth including Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and Africa. A key factor in this trend is internet connectivity. Whereas growth is slowing in many Western countries, there are still substantial opportunities in emerging markets where internet penetration is still increasing.

Don’t forget m-commerce!

M-commerce sales offer further opportunities for cross-border trade. Smartphone technology has enabled people across the globe to access the internet anywhere, and often for the first time. Regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa are seeing rapid growth in internet penetration rates for this reason.

This is the main driver behind m-commerce uptake. In some markets, like Asia, m-commerce has seen growth of up to 250% in the last two years as smartphone adoption rates rise exponentially.

Mobile optimised websites and mobile apps are the key to m-commerce success: translated and localised for target markets.

Grow your overseas business faster by speaking to potential customers in their own language

The facts speak for themselves:

- Website visitors stay for twice as long if a website is in their own language (Forrester Research)
- Customers who buy online will pay more for a product if they can buy it in their own language (Common Sense Advisory)
- Web users are four times more likely to purchase from a website that communicates in their language (www.idc.com)
- English-only websites reach less than a quarter of the world’s internet users (Common Sense Advisory)
- Websites need to be translated into 12 languages to reach 80% of the world’s online consumers (Common Sense Advisory)

British companies on the move

Many British companies have recognised the online marketing opportunities available to their businesses by setting up Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and eBay shops. But is it really enough to promote your brand only in English? Businesses that are prepared to communicate in the languages of their potential overseas customers are the ones that will really reap the rewards.
Advertising and promoting your business online doesn’t have to be difficult, even in other languages

Hopefully we’ve succeeded in convincing you to jump in and kick-start your overseas export ventures by now, but before you do, take a few moments to think about:

1. Researching your market
Research is the most important stage in website translation, so it’s important that you do it right. Use the internet to check out your online competition and measure demand for your product/service in other countries. There’s no point targeting a country where people don’t need your product or service! You should also look at:

- **Google Analytics** – where are your customers coming from?
- **Google Market Finder** – how many times are people searching for your keywords in other languages?
- **The costs and regulations** associated with your target market(s)
- **Competition** in your target market(s)

2. Using available support
Fortunately, there is plenty of support available for businesses wishing to target overseas customers. There are lots of organisations willing to help, including:

- **Department of International Trade (formerly UKTI)** has country reports on its website and can also help you to carry out in-depth research into potential markets
- **HM Government’s website great.gov.uk** provides advice and support for business considering exporting
- **Export Britain** – an online resource from The British Chambers of Commerce – has surveys and reports on its website exportbritain.org.uk and also details of export services
- **Many Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** run schemes to help local businesses export overseas.
- **HSBC’s international trade advice section (knowledge.hsbc.co.uk/trading-overseas)**

3. Reviewing your existing website
Before even considering translating your website into another language it’s important to ensure that it’s well-written to start with. In order to prepare your website for translation, it should:

- **Be written in clear and simple English**
- **Not use slang terms, idioms or colloquial expressions that can be difficult to translate**
- **Avoid words with double-meanings**
- **Be written in simple, concise sentences where possible**
- **Be accurate, with no spelling or grammatical mistakes**
- **Avoid abbreviations if possible**
4. Avoiding brand name faux pas
Check your brand and slogans to make sure there are no negative meanings in other languages. After all, you wouldn’t want to make the same mistakes as these companies:

- Clairol once launched a product in Germany called ‘Mist Stick’ – not realising that in German the word ‘mist’ is slang for manure!
- Pepsi excitedly encouraged Chinese customers to ‘Come Alive with the Pepsi Generation’ – yet the Chinese translation promised that ‘Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave’
- Electrolux took their hugely successful UK vacuum cleaner advertising campaign to America, failing to appreciate that even without translation, ‘Nothing sucks like an Electrolux’ had an entirely different meaning for US customers!

5. Getting the domain name right
If you’re setting up your website in multiple languages, you’ll need to think about how to separate the different language versions from the original English site. One option is to buy the top level domain name for the specific country, i.e. www.website.de (for Germany) and host this locally. Alternatively, you can use a subdomain, i.e. http://de.website.com. Another option is to set up language specific subfolders within your top level domain, for example www.website.com/de. Opinions on which is the best to adopt in terms of SEO vary from source to source, but the best choice for you will depend very much on your objectives and overall strategy for building sales in the target market.

6. Social media – the global phenomena with a local outlook
Social media has undeniably changed the way we communicate – including how we talk to our customers – it’s now a vital part of your international marketing strategy. Businesses know that they need to be active on the social media platforms their customers use, and if planning international expansion that includes local platforms as well as globally recognised channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. China is a good example of why a localised strategy for social media is necessary.

WeChat (微信; Wēixìn), Renren (人人; Rén Rén), Weibo (微博; Wēibō), Youku Tudou (优酷土豆; Yōukù Túdòu), Dianping (大众点评; Dà Zhòng Diǎn Píng), and Douban (豆瓣; Dōu Bàn) may not be familiar in the UK but they are big in China.

To stay ahead of the competition, it’s worth researching which social media platforms are popular in your target market and setting up separate accounts for each language.

7. Researching international search engine optimisation (SEO)
Don’t underestimate the importance of translating and localising your keywords. It’s not as simple as just literally translating the keywords into other languages; the most effective keyword for a product or service in another market might not be a direct translation of the English term. It could be a colloquial term, a ‘nickname’ for a product or a completely different word altogether.

Problems with carrying out keyword research in other languages include:

- There are fewer keyword research tools in languages other than English
- Some languages have multiple spellings of the same word
- Website users might drop accents or space words differently to the ‘proper’ style of the language
- It can be dangerous to assume that an English keyword translated into another language is acceptable to use – if you don’t know the language, you don’t know what it really means!

To overcome these issues, work with a professional language translation company to carry out your keyword research to determine the correct search terms.
8. Hiring a professional translation company

Website translation and marketing translation requires the skills of a professional. Online tools are unreliable and often result in websites full of spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes and, even worse, mistranslations. This is guaranteed to put off potential overseas customers.

You might have thought about asking an in-house staff member who can speak the language needed to translate your website for you. However, only a professional translator will possess the skills required to carry out your website translation correctly. Professional translators translate only into their native language and possess specialist knowledge of the subject matter involved e.g. engineering, marketing, electronics, finance. The more specialised your sector, the more important it is that the translators have the necessary specialist knowledge to carry out your website translation accurately.

Here are just a few key steps you can take when choosing a translation company to translate your website:

- **Ask someone you trust** to recommend a company they’ve worked with or heard good reports about in the past. Do you know of other companies that have had successful website translations carried out? Ask them for their recommendations.

- **Contact the Association of Translation Companies** (ATC), which provides a list of registered companies in the UK. Language bodies such as CILT, the National Centre for languages, provide information on sourcing providers.

- **Check out the qualifications and expertise** of the translators employed by the company, including their technical and business understanding.

- **Ask whether the company uses translation memory technology.** This software allows translated copy to be stored and reused later for future projects. Use of translation memory software not only ensures consistency in style and terminology across all material, but in the long run also ensures future projects are cost-effective by avoiding unnecessary re-translation.

- **Decide whether the translation company needs to be located nearby, or if you’re happy to communicate by phone, email and over the internet with the occasional meeting.**

9. Managing your website translation project thoroughly

It’ll be important to work closely with the company you choose to translate your website to help you plan all elements of the project. You’ll also need to get your website development agency or in-house website development team fully involved in the process.

At Comtec, we often work alongside our client’s website development agency as part of the website localisation process to complete all the different elements, including authoring, design and development.

10. Can you respond to overseas enquiries?

Having gone to all the trouble of carrying out research into potential overseas markets, comparing website translation services, conducting keyword research and finally launching your website in a whole other language, one question remains: how are you going to deal with the enquiries that will soon be coming in via your translated website?

It might sound obvious but don’t forget that enquiries via your foreign language website will not be in English! To take full advantage of these all important leads you’ve successfully generated, it’s essential to have a good strategy in place. This could include:

- Setting up a pre-recorded message in the foreign language

- Sending out an automated holding email in the correct language, giving you a bit of time to respond in more detail

- Using an in-house translator or a professional language translation company to translate the enquiries for you

If you don’t have the language skills in-house you might want to consider using Comtec TALK, our instant, on-demand telephone interpreting service available in over 150 languages, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In just one call you’ll be speaking in the same language as your customers, enabling you to handle overseas enquiries effortlessly.
How will Comtec help make it easy?

Now you understand the reasons, pitfalls and elements to consider when launching your website for an international audience, how will Comtec help make that journey as easy as possible?

Your website may be a brochure site or a more complex e-commerce site with on-going content updates. We’re on-hand at every stage to help you get the best results.

Whether your site has been developed with a commercially licensed or open-source web content management system such as WordPress, Drupal, Joomla!, or a bespoke CMS designed in-house, we’re able to provide advice and support on a variety of different elements, including authoring, design and development alongside the translation of content.

When handling the translations, we can work with you in a variety of different ways. We can directly insert the translations into your website, work with exported content from your website in formats such as XML or XLIFF and then return the translations to you for re-uploading or even develop a connector between your website and our translation portal to allow seamless exchange of content.

In the end, it’s our aim to always make sure translation projects are as straightforward and stress-free as possible for you. We do this by:

- Working closely with your website developer or in-house web team to identify the best workflow to deliver the fastest results
- Working with you to develop a detailed brief on style, tone and terminology to ensure the final translations are addressing your key markets in the way you want
- Managing all aspects of the translations, keeping you updated with only need-to-know information
- Providing a range of review tools so your market contacts can quickly and easily review and give feedback on translated copy
- Assisting with ongoing translation requirements such as content updates, blogs and website enquiries

Need further help?

If you would like further advice on setting up a foreign language website, please contact a member of our team at info@comtectranslations.com or call us on +44 (0) 1926 335 681

About Comtec Translations

Comtec is one of the UK’s leading suppliers of language services to business. Our services cover technical, marketing and legal translation, website localisation, software localisation and interpreting. For over 30 years we have worked in partnership with companies and creative agencies, enabling them to communicate effectively in all major languages. As market-leading innovators, we use the latest technologies to simplify the translation process, combining our technical know-how with the expertise of our linguists, to deliver translation and localisation projects efficiently, on time and on budget.