



# Kickstarting international growth with an effective translation and localisation strategy

# Comtec

Your translation partner



# A guide to using language to unlock the power of international markets



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# Introduction

## Finding your competitive edge with translations

New to translations or need to brush up on your localisation? This guide is here to help. Whether you're a total novice or have been burnt by bad translations before, on the coming pages we'll share everything you need to know to kickstart international growth and connect with customers on a global scale.

Taking a brand overseas, although potentially lucrative, can be complex and may feel like venturing into the unknown. Language is often a part of a company's globalisation strategy, which at first can feel very daunting. Hopefully, this guide will help put your mind at ease and show you that with the right planning, strategy, process and partner, connecting your brand with a global audience isn't impossible.

**P.S. If you want to read more in-depth about delivering effective multilingual marketing campaigns or specifically website translations, take a look at these other guides we've produced.**

## Translations make all the difference

We'll kick things off with a word of warning: English isn't a global language. Whilst many countries may understand and even use English, to engage an audience you should be speaking their language.

A study commissioned by [UK Trade and Investment](#) found that poor language skills are holding back the UK's trade performance. It concluded that firms with a greater understanding of language and cultural issues are more likely to achieve higher export sales.

The potential spending power of international customers is staggering, and with the increase in e-commerce and virtual communication, taking your brand overseas seems more viable than ever.

### Online markets: top 10 languages for website users

Language	Millions of internet users	World population of language speakers (millions)
English	1186	1531
Chinese	888	1477
Spanish	364	517
Arabic	237	448
Portuguese	172	291
Indonesian/Malaysian	198	306
French	152	432
Japanese	119	126
Russian	116	146
German	93	99
Other languages	1061	2523

Ref: <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>

## Look who's talking

Studies have shown that customers are more receptive and loyal to brands that speak their language. **CSA Research** conducted a survey of 8,709 global consumers in 29 countries in Europe, Asia, North America, and South America and uncovered some important statistics on the value of translation for global business:

- When it comes to e-commerce, **nearly 50% of global consumers say they won't buy from websites that aren't in their language.**
- 75% of respondents in CSA's research say that they're **more likely to purchase the same brand again if customer care is in their language.**
- When it's time to make a decision, **76% of respondents will choose the product/website with information in their language.**

Translation and localisation ensures that your content is not only understood, but engaging and culturally relevant. It shows your international customers, employees and business partners that you care enough to speak their language and reflect their values and culture. It may also give you the edge over your competitors and keep customers coming back.

That's why it's so important to use translations as part of your international strategy. Whether you want to achieve more market share in existing overseas territories or expand into new fast-growing markets, this guide will help you use languages to boost your engagement with prospects and customers.



**“Localisation improves customer experience and increases engagement in the brand dialogue. It should be a rigorously planned and executed business strategy for any company looking to grow internationally”**

Don DePalma, Common Sense, Advisory Chief Strategy Officer and Founder

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# What is translation and localisation and why is it important for marketing?



**Let's start with some key definitions that'll help you to understand the process of translation a little better.**

When a translator converts individual words into another language, a translation is produced. With factual copy such as technical guides, the translation process can be more straightforward, with a focus on technical accuracy and use of specific terminology. However, when a communication piece has been carefully crafted to have an emotional impact on its readers, a more sophisticated approach is needed – that of localisation.

## **Localisation**

Localisation adapts content to suit the local culture so that nuanced messaging retains its meaning and impact. It ensures that employees are communicated with in ways that they are most receptive to. There are different degrees of localisation, as illustrated in the Localisation Spectrum (p.6).

## **Transcreation**

Transcreation is an advanced form of localisation that combines translation skills and creative licence to preserve the core meaning of the source text for its new region. In essence, it is the translation of ideas, not just words. Ideally suited for creative content designed to increase engagement, transcreation can change the source text dramatically but still elicit the same emotional response.

**If all this sounds complicated, then don't worry. We will help you choose which approach is best for which type of project.**

# Developing the right approach for marketing translations

LOW  HIGH

## Machine Translation with post-editing

Source content is translated using machine translation and then post-edited by a translator.

—  
**Lower cost, faster turnaround, reduced accuracy**  
—

### When to use?

Suitable for large volumes of content, including product descriptions, user reviews and certain internal documents.

## Light Translation

A professional native-speaking linguist with sector-specific expertise translates the source content. Proofreading is not included.

—  
**Lower cost, reduced accuracy**  
—

### When to use?

For basic translations of content when reduced accuracy is acceptable or regional colleagues can proofread.

## Pro Translation

The team includes both a translator and proofreader, each with sector-specific expertise, working together to ensure the highest level of fluency and appropriate cultural fit for the content. This approach is also suitable for technical content with specialist terminology.

—  
**Popular approach, highly localised**  
—

### When to use?

Suitable for key communications such as website content, emails, newsletters, brochures.

## Transcreation

A creative translator and proofreader fully adapt, revise and edit, moving away from the source text where needed to create a fully localised piece.

—  
**More creative, higher cost**  
—

### When to use?

For content that needs to be motivational and highly targeted, such as slogans and taglines.

## Copywriting

When copywriting doesn't translate effectively even with transcreation, a native-speaking copywriter is given a brief to write original content.

—  
**Most creative**  
—

### When to use?

Suitable for source content that is highly targeted at the original region, which does not translate effectively in the new region.

## The Localisation Spectrum

Localisation is the art of adapting content to suit local cultures and geographical contexts. There are different degrees of localisation depending on the emotional impact you want to generate. This is illustrated in the Localisation Spectrum below.

If you've been frustrated by slow or poor quality translations, or your content has failed to achieve the results you anticipated, it could be that you need to localise your content more.

If your message is intended to be highly emotive, you'll need to spend more time localising the content to make it relevant and compelling for each region. This means adjusting cultural references, humour and language contained within the copy, so each reader will feel like it's been written for them. If your copy is purely factual, a straightforward translation, with limited localisation, will effectively communicate the message.

Fortunately, there is a model to help you choose the right level of localisation for your communications.

# Getting started with translation and localisation

The questions in this section will spark some ideas about how you can kickstart the internationalisation of your marketing translations.

## Are you already translating and localising content?

**YES:** Collate feedback on prior translations from your local markets. Did they achieve good sales results? Do people feel they could have been improved by stronger or smoother translation? Once you've identified any issues with language, style or even the source content, you'll know how to improve for the future.

**NO:** Establish which markets you want to target and research the languages required. Don't forget to research the native languages, as some countries have more than one language. Your translation provider can help you do this.

## Have you previously used a translation service provider?

**YES:** Identify what worked well and where things could be improved so that your next translation project delivers even better results. Trialling new translation partners can be done by asking them for sample translations and asking for feedback on them from your local teams. This is a great way to test how translations can be improved.

**NO:** Shortlist providers who are a good fit for your business. Look for ones with relevant sector experience and expertise in marketing translations. It's best if you can work with one that has supported organisations at your stage of international growth so you can use their experience to your advantage. Don't forget that they also need to be a good fit culturally as you'll want them to feel like an integral part of your team. Again, asking potential

partners for translation samples is a good way to assess their quality.

## Do you know what marketing channels you need to engage within your target overseas markets?

**YES:** Create a definitive list of all your content that needs translating. Many clients begin with a localised version of their UK website. Printed materials and product videos are popular for trade events and exhibitions. Look at the cross-over between different channels and scope the potential for re-using translated materials, e.g. using digital content in brochures or case studies. This will increase your ROI.

**NO:** Spending time now on market research will prevent incurring costs later. Find out what marketing materials work in your target markets and avoid those that don't. Your local teams will be able to provide insight here, as the best channels and therefore materials are likely to differ across markets.

## Do you know if other departments need content translated?

**YES:** Ensuring everyone has access to a style guide and a shared glossary of terminology will help keep the brand consistent. Your translation partner can help you create these or advise on what they need to contain. It's best to use one translation partner to translate all your marketing materials as they can also use technology that helps your terminology remain consistent.

**NO:** It's worth finding out now what needs to be translated to support your business activities. You'll achieve better results if you use just one translation provider who will build a detailed understanding of your brand, style and specialist terminology. For example, your legal, sales and customer service teams may be working on terms and conditions, contracts, sales agreements and customer support information. Make sure you also keep HR in the loop.

## Have you got a team of local market reviewers to approve and sign off your translations?

**YES:** Take it to the next level by asking one person in each market to be your 'localisation champion'. Work with them and your translation partner to develop glossaries of terminology and style guides. Implement review guidelines so other reviewers have a clear process to follow and apply rules consistently.

**NO:** Engaging local market reviewers is a critical part of the translation process so find colleagues in the local market who can review newly translated content. They don't have to have marketing or sales experience, but it will help. The key consideration is making sure they are based in-market and so can identify language or references which won't resonate with local audiences. Make sure they have enough time to devote to the project, so deadlines don't get missed.

**Translations and managing feedback can be complex and require careful management. Do you need help project managing your translations and working with local market reviewers?**

**YES:** Ask your translation provider about their project management capabilities. They may be able to take the pressure off you by liaising with local markets to reduce the stress of handling multilingual translation projects and dealing with large volumes of content.

**NO:** Keep streamlining your processes to improve your translations and achieve higher ROI. Explore ways to save both time and money by working with your translation provider to maximise translation memories.



# Five easy steps to achieving the best results

## Develop a style guide to create consistency

Your translation partner can help you with this, but a style guide provides a consistent reference point for tone of voice, terminology and brand elements. This will also guide your local review teams so they apply the same rules across geographies.

## Provide your translation partner with a clear brief

This should include your objectives, target markets, the nature of the translated text and deadlines. Your partner must understand the end purpose of the translation. Do you need a purely technical copy or a more creative text? Is it to inform or to sell?

## Provide reference material where available

Providing product information and brochures will help your new team gain product knowledge, assimilate any technical information and build up a picture of the language you use to communicate.

## Engage colleagues in overseas markets

Ask employees, agents and/or distributors to review translations in draft form. They can provide valuable input on market-specific terminology and stylistic preferences. You can also allow your translation supplier to liaise directly with them to receive and process feedback as quickly as possible.

## Remember to finalise your source text before starting the translation

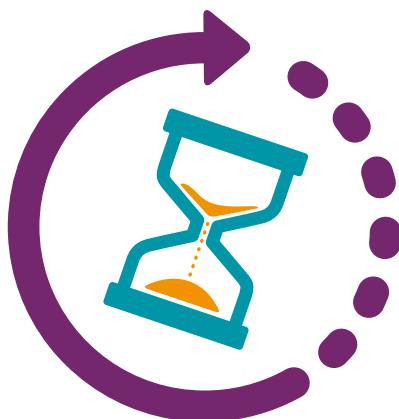
The more versions you have, the more likely it is that errors will creep into the final version. Be sure to date each version and mark changes clearly from one version to the next.

# How to measure ROI

Translation and localisation should save you time and money. But how do you measure your ROI?

You may receive an increasing number of requests for translated materials across the different markets. This is especially true if other departments, such as HR and Finance, also need translations.

There are many ways to measure the success of a campaign.



Some of the most popular are:

- New product orders from existing customers (if your product has already been launched in that market)
- Time to market
- Number of visitors/enquiries following the localisation of a website
- Number of new leads
- Cost per new customer acquisition

With the right translation partner, you should see favourable results, such as a reduction in time to market and cost per acquisition, as your translated content delivers faster and better results. You should also find the process less intensive, so your team is freed up to focus on other valuable activities. Therefore, it's worth checking that you are seeing a ROI in terms of internal time.

# How to track the ROI on translations

## Benchmark before and after results

If this is the first time you've invested in language support, it's simple to compare results to those of your previous campaigns.

## Survey your customers

You can conduct a survey comparing how well the service is received before and after translation. How do your customers rate your service? Would they recommend your brand?

## Translation efficiency

You can compare how much time was previously spent on translations, whether in-house or managing the process with an external supplier, compared to your new supplier. Has a new process introduced greater efficiency? Are there fewer people involved now in the translation process? Is the time they spent on translations now used more efficiently on other valuable activities? If so, can you measure the value of these?

# The risks of poor-quality translations

Poor-quality translations can easily result from using inexperienced bilingual staff or a translator without industry-specific or marketing expertise. Unfortunately, they can cost a lot to put right. The cost of editing or reworking can be high, especially if you have to bring in a new translation partner at the last minute or delay a campaign.

# Keep learning and improving

The data you use to measure ROI provides a roadmap for improving your localised content in each market. Use these insights to generate even better ROI with every new campaign and to continually refine your existing global marketing assets.

# Six ways to achieve more value

**Whether you're already localising content and want to know how to get more value for money, or if you're just getting started and want to maximise your investment, there are a few simple tips to help you achieve a higher ROI:**



1

## Carefully consider quality vs cost

Look at the type of content and decide on the quality level required based on the end-use of the content.

2

## Think about your source content

You can reduce the time it takes to translate and localise source content by optimising it for localisation from the start. Style guides, glossaries of terminology and 'internationalised' content will all help keep costs down and achieve consistent results. Asking your local review teams to review the source content before any translation will also help to reduce the costs of changing it later on.

3

## Establish a single internal reviewer per language or market

Their job is to establish consistency across the review process and ensure review guidelines are adhered to. For larger projects, you may need a team of reviewers, but always have a 'champion' to guide the team and ensure quality standards are met.

4

## Create clear guidelines for the reviewers

Changes due to personal preferences cost you time and money. By establishing review guidelines, you can cut unnecessary edits and increase the consistency of your localised content.

5

## Request samples for review

Ask your translation partner for samples before proceeding with a localisation project. Your reviewers can provide feedback that will help brief the translation team and reduce review cycles further down the line.

6

## Monitor the time spent on revising the translations

By checking how much time it is taking to review translations you can identify if it is taking too long. If it is, then you may want to speak to your translation partner to check that they understand the brief. Your partner should be able to guide how long the reviews should take so you can manage expectations with your local review teams.

# Why Comtec?

For 40 years Comtec has enabled international businesses to streamline their translation process and get better results from their global marketing – in over 200 languages.

With a global network of highly skilled linguists translating for every industry sector, combined with our passion for quality and our use of innovative technology, we're able to ensure all translations are 100% accurate and delivered on time and to budget.

Plus, with rigorous quality procedures in place to ISO 9001:2015 standard, and the internationally recognised ISO 17100:2015 translation industry certification, you can be confident that every project we undertake is accurate, authentic in tone and culturally appropriate.

## Our mission

We work with a wide range of innovative organisations, from high-growth start-ups through to established FTSE companies, to help them deliver their marketing worldwide. Whether you need multilingual content to engage, inform or inspire, we've got you covered. No matter how large or complex your project, we ensure your message is strong, compelling and ready to resonate in every region.

## Our solutions

Here are a few types of content we can help you with:

- Translations of print content – brochures, leaflets, catalogues
- Translations of digital content – websites, social media, blogs, Adwords
- Voiceovers and subtitling for videos, podcasts and webinars
- Transcreation of slogans and straplines
- Cultural reviews
- Artworking for all languages

## Our people

Our people have a passion for languages, expertise in translation and a real desire to make a difference for our clients. Clients value the focus we place on delivering the highest possible quality, building a partnership with them to share our experience and providing a service they can truly rely on.

## Our commitment to you

We're not just a translation company – we're a translation partner. We're trusted by leading global organisations, together with their communication teams and creative partners, to localise content, for every market, in every industry and every language.



Looking to find out more?



This is James, he's here to answer any questions you might have.

Drop James an email on [jbrown@comtectranslations.com](mailto:jbrown@comtectranslations.com) or book a 10-minute discovery call here to see how we can support you in getting the best results from your marketing communications.



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