



# Guide to Website Localisation

A technical briefing for non-technical marketers and managers showing how to drive awareness and sales through content localisation and international SEO

Author: Yusuf Bhana



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DOMAINS AND  
HOSTING

MULTI-LINGUAL  
CONTENT

CMS  
INTEGRATION

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# Introduction

## About this guide

***“If your business is online, your competition is global. And so are your potential customers.”***

Marketers understand the importance of relevance and website localisation is one of the fundamentals of a relevant, personalised online user experience. A properly localised website speaks directly to the consumer in their own language, enabling businesses and brands to compete with local and global players in their niche. The results are multiple: better search rankings; higher levels of engagement; a better user experience; trust and ultimately, increased conversion rates and sales.

### What is it? Translation

Translation is the process of translating words or text from one language into another.

### What is it? Localisation

Localisation is the process of adapting your website and its content to suit the preferences, cultural norms, tastes and expectations of local audiences. It differs from translation since the cultural nuances and functional expectations of the target region are a core consideration and the site design, layout and structure as well as the content are often adapted to better engage with local audiences.

The main difference between translation and localisation is that the target culture, as well as the language, must be taken into account when adapting product and marketing messages to suit local audiences. Localisation is most often required for the adaptation of websites, social media pages, apps and video games and usually has a strong technical component to it. But it's also an exercise in cultural adaptation which means there's also huge sociological and psychological elements to it. This is what makes the process so tricky and why it's so different for every region around the world.

Understanding how diversity within your consumer base affects your customers and your ability to engage with them is a key part of your task as a global marketer. So, before you initialise a website localisation project, it's important to identify the opportunities that are most likely to achieve your business objectives.

## What maturity of localisation capabilities do you have?

To place localisation in the wider context of your digital marketing capabilities we have created this table to help you explain to colleagues your current use of localisation and how you aim to develop them.

	Initial	Managed	Defined	Quantified	Optimised
Roles and responsibilities	No defined roles or responsibilities	Ad-hoc responsibility for international websites	Defined roles and responsibilities for each region but online activity siloed	IT/marketing/sales department integration & collaboration	Region-specific cross-business & cross-disciplinary integration and collaboration

	Initial	Managed	Defined	Quantified	Optimised
<b>Strategy and planning</b>	No localisation strategy or plan	Single localisation strategy for all territories	Separate localisation strategy for each territory	Data-driven localisation strategy with clearly defined SMART objectives	Regular situation review + agile strategic approach to localisation
<b>Infrastructure and data</b>	Single language site hosted in home territory	Separate multi-language websites hosted in target regions with ccTLD or subdomain structure	Defined approach to infrastructure in different regions	Infrastructure decided on a case-by-case basis to support users in target region – e.g mobile first in some territories	Optimised infrastructure – CDNs, page speed analysis and action to optimise performance per territory
<b>Content</b>	No local content created	Content created is not well tailored to local market needs	Content is 'culturally customised' to local needs	Additional static content developed to increase local relevance and conversion	All forms of content such as interactive tools and video are localised where effective
<b>International search marketing</b>	No search marketing strategy / SEO limited to on page content in source language	Source keywords identified and translated for target language	Localised keyword research, keywords identified in the target language & onsite optimisation	Structured testing of title, description, headings, content & detailed keyword position tracking across languages and territories	Dedicated outreach programmes, PR, content marketing on local sites in native language
<b>Customer experience</b>	Limited customer support and little understanding of customer journey	Basic understanding of the customer journey but no action taken	Site structure and content optimised for the customer journey – but not region specific	Usability studies performed to define localised user journeys & site optimised for each region	Fully personalised and optimised to user preferences in every territory
<b>Analytics, optimisation and reporting</b>	Analytics installed but no optimisation, reporting or KPIs	Reporting based on traffic volumes, measurement of traffic per territory	Simple in-page and visitor path analysis and basic AB tests of content in each territory	Localised dashboards per region, multi-variate testing & segment/region specific KPIs for each region	Predictive analytics, econometric models, automated real time alerts + Dynamic optimisation of personalised content + Real-time feedback, detailed competitor benchmarking

DOMAINS AND HOSTING

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Here's a summary chart in the same format as other guides in our benchmarking templates<sup>1</sup>.



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## Why should I read this guide?

This practical guide explains how to review and improve your current use of localisation for different countries.

There are powerful reasons why businesses that have not yet fully localised their websites should:

- ✔ 55% of global consumers said they only buy products from websites that provide them with information in their own language. (Source: [Common Sense Advisory](#))
- ✔ 51% of business buyers would rather buy a product from a site with poor-quality localisation than from a site that only has content in English. (Source: [Common Sense Advisory](#))
- ✔ 56% of the consumers said the ability to obtain information in their own language is even more important than price. (Source: [Common Sense Advisory](#))

This guide includes advice on how to prepare and execute your website localisation strategy, from the technical implementation of your systems infrastructure, content creation, search engine optimisation (SEO) and management of the translation and localisation process.

## Who is this guide for?

The guide is aimed at marketers responsible for increasing the business contribution for companies and brands using customer-facing websites for different international markets. It's intended to highlight the main success factors for improvements to be reviewed when implementing projects with specialist agencies, consultants and in-house search, content and user experience specialists.

<sup>1</sup> [Smart Insights: Online Marketing Benchmarks - download larger version](#)

It will be particularly useful for defining key requirements and issues to discuss when starting a localisation project for a country.

Roles that will find the guide useful include:

- ✓ Marketing directors and managers
- ✓ Digital marketing and Ecommerce managers (central global team and local country or region managers)
- ✓ Country website managers
- ✓ Content and editorial managers
- ✓ Products and brand managers

You can see these include both centralised roles and local roles in each

## How is it structured?

The guide covers three areas, starting with domain management, then reviewing content localisation including SEO. Finally, more technical issues involving integration with your CMS are considered.

1. **Domains and hosting** - choosing your domain, hosting, content management system (CMS) and content delivery network (CDN).
2. **Multi-lingual content & international SEO** - creating your international content with localisation and SEO in mind.
3. **Localisation integration & management** – integrating your CMS with a language service provider, selecting technical translation options, providers and managing the localisation process.

This report assumes that your business has used the data and tools at its disposal to develop a localisation strategy for each target country or region. Your localisation strategy will inform your approach to website localisation at almost every stage of the process so having a detailed and robust plan in place will increase the likelihood of success in entering these new global markets.

## About TranslateMedia

[TranslateMedia](#) provides bespoke professional language services including website and app localisation, international SEO, multi-lingual paid search and global social media monitoring and management. The company helps businesses expand into new territories by providing consultancy and language support to ensure that organisations are able to tailor their digital assets, marketing collateral and advertising campaigns for local audiences in over 90 languages.

## About the author



[Yusuf Bhana](#) is Head of Digital at TranslateMedia, a global website localisation and transcreation agency. He has over 15-years of experience in web development and digital marketing, in roles at both agencies and client side, and has a passion for digital strategy, website localisation and SEO.

# ONE. DOMAINS AND HOSTING

## CHOOSING A DOMAIN

When expanding your business into new markets overseas, even a seemingly simple task such as selecting a domain should be well thought through, since the type of domain chosen can have a massive effect on trust, engagement and rankings in the target region.

If your business already has a successful brand, it makes sense to expand abroad using the same brand name and to incorporate this into your chosen domain name. However, just because your brand enjoys success in domestic markets using a specific brand and domain name, this does not mean that this will automatically translate to success abroad

You can avoid a potential marketing disaster by ensuring that your brand name and domain will be well received by local audiences. This can be achieved simply by consulting with native language speakers and by conducting market research within the target country. Failure to address potential issues that may arise from poor brand name or domain name selection risks sabotaging your international marketing campaigns before you've had a chance to deliver your product or sales messages to your target audience.

## DOMAIN TYPES AND URL STRUCTURES

There are three main types of domain names - country-code top-level domain names (ccTLDs), generic top-level domain names (gTLDs) and sponsored top-level domain names (sTLD). A ccTLD might be something like example.fr, while the gTLD alternative would be something like example.com, .org, .info, .biz and so on. sTLDs are specialised top-level domains that have a sponsor representing a specific community. Common examples of these are .edu for the education sector and .gov for government but they also include others such as .travel, .mobi and .jobs with many more expected to be [added in future](#).

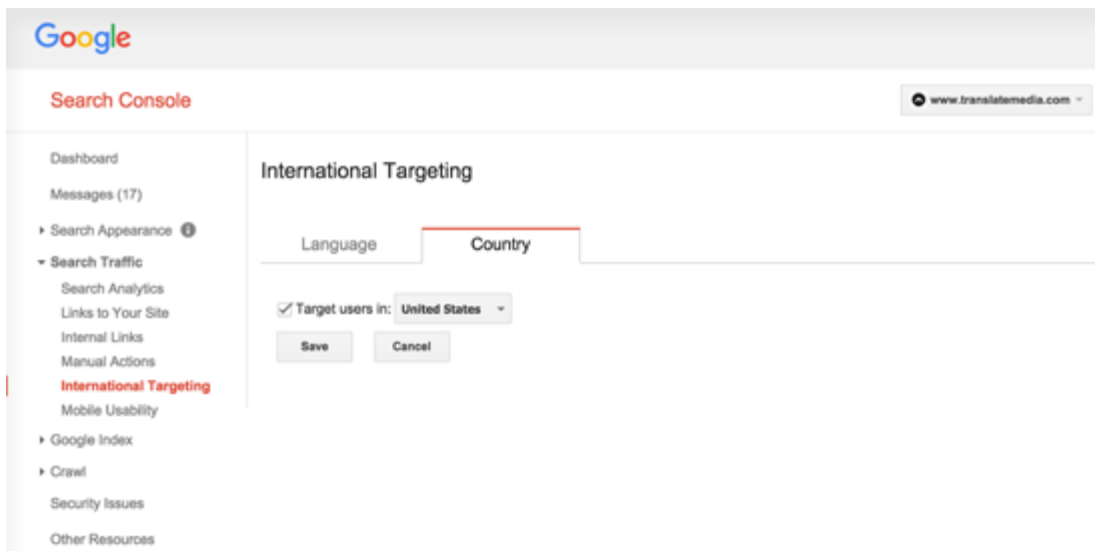
As well as existing on various different domains, multi-language websites can be configured in a number of ways - each of which has its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

**Option 1: Using gTLD/sTLD subdirectories e.g. example.com/fr/ or example.acme/fr/**  
*In this instance, all language versions would reside on one generic top-level domain (gTLD) or sponsored top-level domain names (sTLD), with each language being separated into subdirectories (or subfolders) – for example, example.com/en/, example.com/fr/ or example.com/de/.*

Domain subdirectories have the distinct advantage of allowing the new language versions to share some of the authority of the main domain. One domain means one SEO campaign so building authority to the root directory will have a positive, indirect impact on /fr/ and /de/ sites.

Once the site has been developed and launched, it is important to notify Google that these subfolders are associated with the relevant language and target country. Within [Google Search Console](#), it is possible to specify geographical targets for each language. This can be found in the “International Targeting” page within the ‘Search Traffic’ menu as shown below.





1

It's important to note that you'll need to set up a separate property for each subdirectory - as it's only possible to target users in a single country for each property (unless you decide to remove the international targeting options and allow Google to decide).

Using a subdirectory structure on a single domain may not be a suitable method if the server is located far away from the target country – for example if your .com site is hosted in the UK but you want to release a website for the Chinese market.

The reason for this is that Chinese users would have to connect to a server located halfway across the world to download the text, images and scripts that make up your site. This would have a huge negative impact on page download speeds.

Before developing your site to include the various language subfolders it is important to measure how fast pages take to load for users in the target market. Pingdom offers a Real User Monitoring tool that allows you to determine average page speeds for actual users by geographical location. If your pages take much longer than a couple of seconds to load in the target location, then you would need to consider other options.

Another reason for not using the subdirectory method is that in certain countries, local domains are given preference in search engine results page. For instance, Baidu, China's dominant search engine, prefers to list Chinese domains within their search engine results and obtaining a good ranking with a gTLD or sTLD is extremely difficult. So to ensure success in China, you need to use a Chinese (.cn) ccTLD.

### Option 2. Separate ccTLD e.g. example.com.fr

Another common method of targeting multiple languages is to develop websites on entirely separate country code top-level domains. This has a significant advantage over the domain subdirectory method in regards to page speed as you can host the site in the target country closer to your users – significantly reducing latency.

Domains with relevant ccTLDs also tend to be recognisable in the SERPs and trusted amongst local users. This leads to higher click-through rates and potentially higher conversion rates.

However, creating separate sites on different ccTLDs can be more expensive to set up and maintain. Each domain would need to be paid for separately and the cost for this would increase as the number of domains increases. Each site would also require separate hosting in the target country, leading to increased hosting costs.

In some cases it may not be possible to register your brand or exact match domain in another country as the name may have already been taken. Another disadvantage of using ccTLDs is that each domain would require separate SEO activity to increase authority and trust. This is due to authority and PageRank not being automatically passed between domains in the same way as on sites employing a subfolder structure. Finally, each site would have its own separate database and CMS installation leading to an increase in time spent implementing, developing and maintaining these systems.

### Option 3. Separate subdomain e.g. fr.example.com.

Another option available for site localisation is via a subdomain – for instance fr.example.com or de.example.com. This has the advantage of lowering costs as only one domain is required. By using subdomains, you can also ensure consistency and don't have to worry about not being able to register your domain in the target country or region.

Unlike subfolders, it is possible to host subdomains on separate servers. So each subdomain can be on a server located in the relevant territory, improving page download speeds and increasing the likelihood of SEO success.

Geographical targets for subdomains can also be specified in Google Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools and Yandex Webmaster, allowing you to inform the relevant search engines of your preferred target region.

However, authority does not flow to any significant level between root domains and subdomains. So like the ccTLD method, SEO efforts on the main domain would not translate to increases in search rankings or authority of the subdomain. Just like with a ccTLD, if subdomains are hosted in separate countries, then development, implementation and hosting costs increase and maintenance efforts would also be duplicated across regions.

### Option 4. Query string parameter e.g. example.com?lang=en

The final method by which you can deploy multi-lingual websites is by using a query string parameter in the page URL, for instance – example.com?lang=en.

This method is by far the worst method. Not only is it not possible to host the site in the target country using this method, and thereby taking advantage of increased page speed, it is also more difficult for some search engines to spider websites that rely on URL query string parameters to deliver content to the end user.

## URLs AND SEO

So which is the best option for SEO overall? In general, with all other things remaining equal, separate ccTLDs are the best option for SEO. Separate ccTLDs were also recommended by Matt Cutts when he was responsible for Google's Search Quality Team. He states that having separate country domains allows search engines to easily determine which language and country the site is catered to.

Google states that *"if you decide to use dynamic pages (i.e., the URL contains a "?" character), be aware that not every search engine spider crawls dynamic pages as well as static pages. It helps to keep the parameters short and the number of them few."*

Since Baidu has a preference for Chinese domains hosted on Chinese servers, ccTLD are also the best way to achieve high rankings on Baidu in China.

Bing (which also powers Yahoo! search results), like Google, has the ability to target sites geographically. This means that you can still achieve higher search rankings in your target region using a single domain or a subdomain rather than a ccTLD, however, for reasons of

speed and trust mentioned earlier – ccTLDs are still recommended in many regions such as Japan where Yahoo! has a huge market share.

Yandex also provides the ability to target by region and goes as far as to split Russia up into 83 separate regions which can all be targeted individually. However, since the website is predominantly used in Russia (and some other Eastern European countries), they have not included a geo-targeting facility that includes the whole world. So, for inclusion in Yandex, a ccTLD coupled with relevant Russian region targeting is recommended.

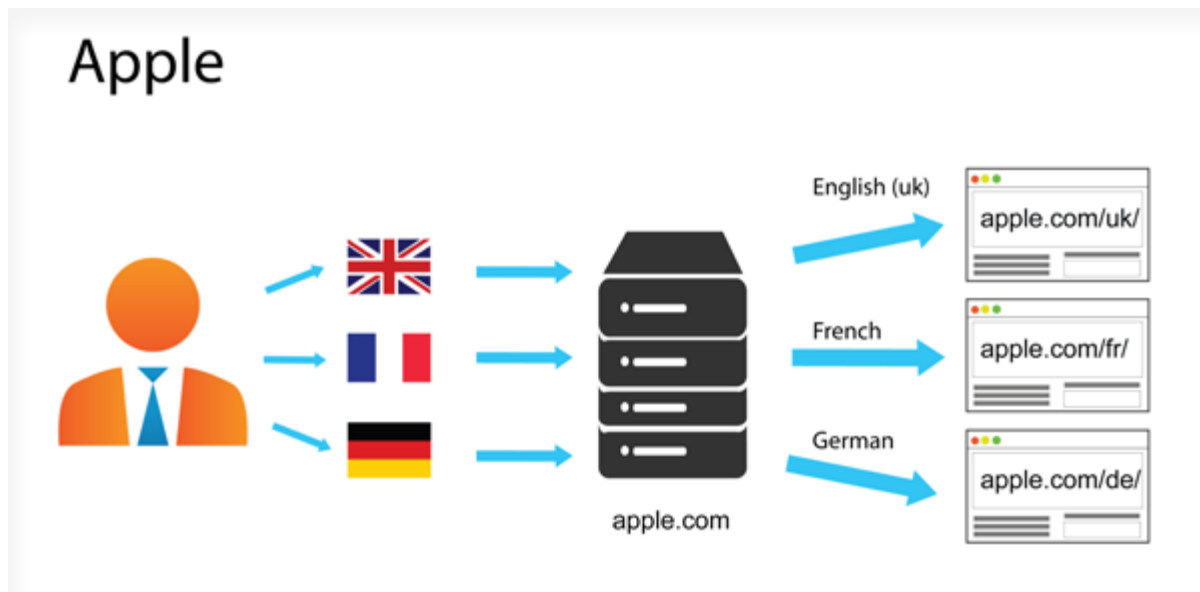
If it is not possible to use a ccTLD, then your approach will depend largely on the market you choose to target, how close they are to your local market geographically and culturally and the resources available for localisation and management of your sites. Since every business and market has specific nuances, it is advisable to speak to a website localisation and/or technical SEO expert before selecting an approach.

## EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT DOMAIN AND URL STRUCTURES

Different global businesses have decided on different approaches to their domain names and URL structures. Here are some examples:

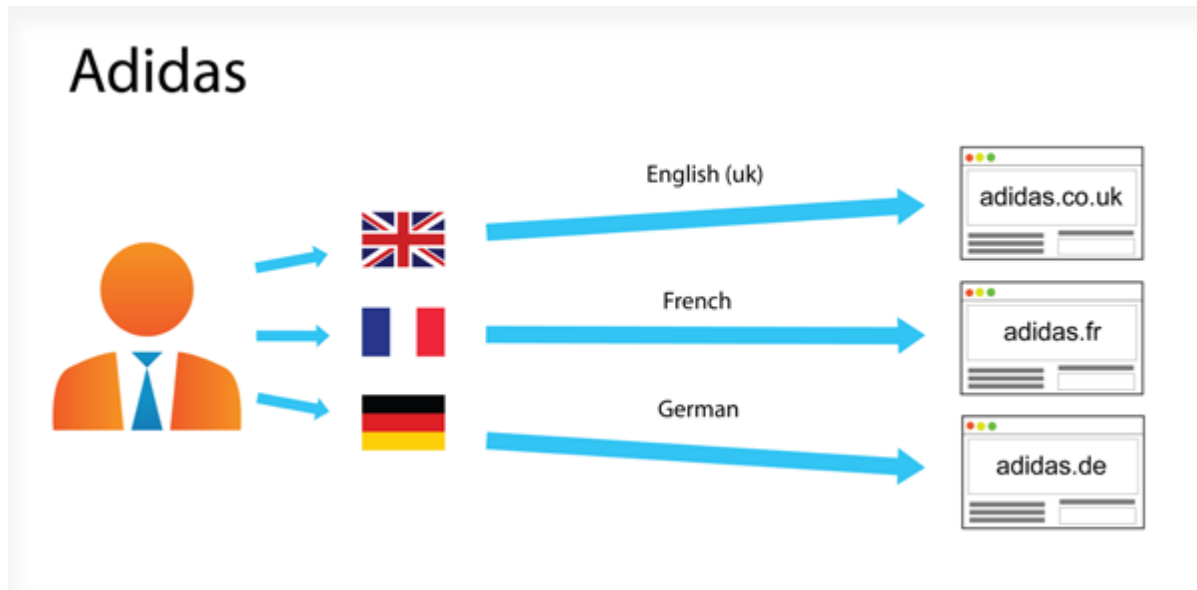
### Apple

Apple has opted for using their gTLD ([apple.com](http://apple.com)) and a subdirectory structure to host their multi-language content.



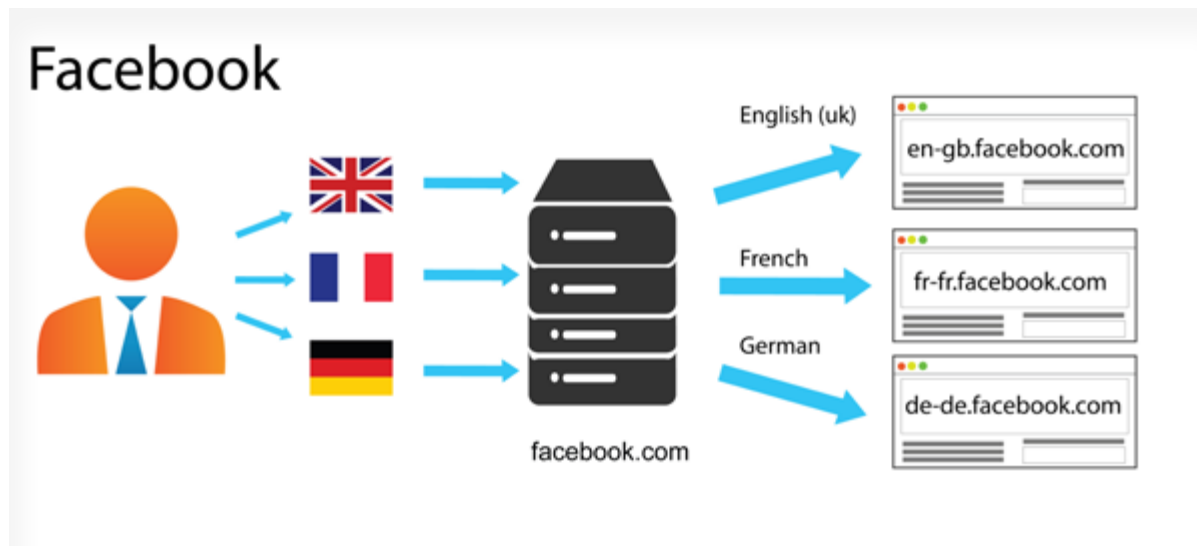
## Adidas

Adidas decided to go for the ccTLD option with separate domains for each country and language.



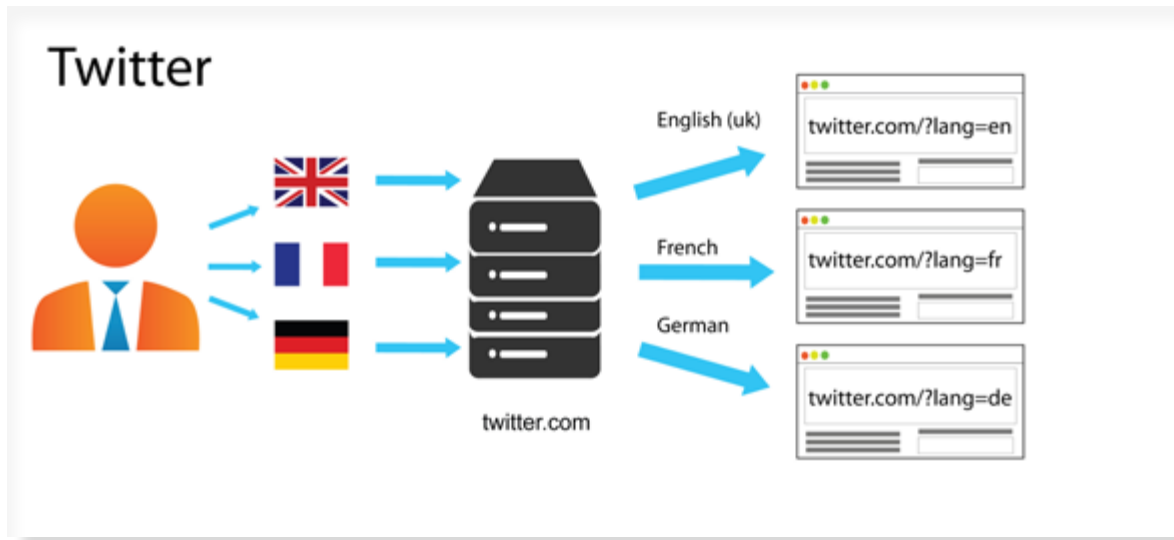
## Facebook

Facebook have decided that it would use subdomains for each language and country combinations such as en-gb or fr-fr.



## Twitter

While Twitter has opted for using query string parameters to present multi-language content on it's international sites.



## HOSTING OPTIONS

When entering new markets overseas, you will need to decide where and by whom your website is hosted. The physical (geographical) location of a web server can have a big impact on your website's ability to achieve high rankings on local search engines. It also has a major impact on the speed at which your web pages are delivered to end users.

How your servers are configured to deliver content to end users is also important. Managing a multi-language website, particularly when they are hosted in separate locations, can be costly and difficult to maintain.

There are many hosting options available to businesses. The three most common types of hosting packages are shared, dedicated and virtual private server hosting.

### Shared hosting

A shared hosting service, sometimes referred to as a virtual hosting service, is where many websites reside on a single web server. Each site sits on its own partition (a server location or drive), to keep it separate from other sites. Shared hosting is generally the most economical option. This is because many people share the overall cost of server maintenance. In a shared hosting environment, the hosting provider is usually responsible for managing the server, installing software, security updates and providing technical support and other aspects of service maintenance.

Most shared hosting providers offer their services with a user-friendly web-based graphical control panel, so it is easy to upload your site and create email accounts, FTP users and databases.

While shared hosting can help you considerably reduce costs by allowing you to pass responsibility for server maintenance onto the hosting provider, there are many disadvantages.

## Disadvantages

One of the biggest disadvantages of shared hosting stems from the limited resources at your disposal. Sharing a server means sharing system resources with other users on one physical machine and therefore every user has some restrictions placed on their service. For example, if any of the sites on the shared server use a lot of traffic—CPU cycles, memory or email capabilities, etc.—other sites on the same machine are likely to experience reduced hosting performance.

Shared hosting is also more likely to be less secure than dedicated hosting. If any one site on a shared server is compromised, it opens a gateway for the attacker to gain access to the other sites hosted on the same server. A malicious user could purchase hosting from a shared hosting provider and use his site to gain access to other sites on the same server. If file permissions have been improperly configured, then shared file systems might also give other users or processes system-wide access to your files.

Another disadvantage of shared hosting is that a site's SEO can be negatively impacted if the shared host is in a bad neighbourhood. A bad neighbourhood on the web is any site that uses tricks, otherwise known as black hat techniques, to try and increase their site's rankings or any site that utilises malicious code to cause harm to customers using the site.

Some languages are more prone to spam and some countries have more bad neighbourhoods than others. Majestic SEO offer a [neighbourhood checker tool](#) which can be used to seek out and avoid hosts associated with bad neighbourhoods.

Shared hosting is suitable if you don't expect your website to receive a great deal of traffic or if you don't have a large budget for your site launch and simply want to test the market within a given location before deciding on your long-term approach.

## Dedicated hosting

A dedicated hosting service is where the client leases an entire server which is dedicated to the client's website or eCommerce system.

This is more flexible than shared hosting. If you need to upgrade your server hardware or operating system, it is usually much easier with a dedicated service. You'll have more control over your site's functionality and the ability to add more options and features.

If you're running a large corporate website or a site that receives a lot of traffic, then dedicated hosting offers significant advantages over shared hosting. So, if you expect to receive a high volume of traffic by expanding into a new territory, for instance if your brand is already quite well known, or if you already receive a significant amount of traffic from the target region to your domestic site, then a dedicated server is likely to be the best option. However, it is also possible to achieve many of the benefits of dedicated hosting at much lower costs by using Virtual Private Server hosting.

## Virtual Private Server hosting

Virtual Private Server (VPS) hosting is an innovative approach to partitioning physical servers into several virtual machines which can each be bought or leased by the client. VPS hosting is the future of modern hosting as it provides the power and functionality of a high-end dedicated server but at a much lower price.

By purchasing a VPS you get your own individual machine with root access and dedicated CPU and RAM. VPS hosting also offers all the security benefits of a dedicated host, however, VPS hosting is often much cheaper than dedicated hosting for similar space, bandwidth and functionality.

## Databases and data

Businesses operating across different regions should also obtain advice on how to handle the personal data of their local customers. Many countries around the world have or plan to introduce laws governing data localisation. Here are just a few examples:

### Russia

In July 2014, Russia's Council of the Federation approved a bill to the existing privacy laws that created an obligation for organisations operating in Russia to store personal data on Russian citizens on servers located within the country. This new law came into force on the 1st September 2015.

### Vietnam

In 2013, the Vietnamese government passed a combined censorship/forced data localisation law that requires all online services providers to keep a copy of almost all data from Vietnamese customers and businesses on servers in Vietnam.

### India

In India, the National Security Council Secretariat is considering proposals that will force email providers to set up servers in the country to store all data generated within India. The organisation added that internet traffic data should be routed within India as much as possible.

### Brazil

Brazil's internet law, "Marco da Civil", introduced in 2009, emphasised internet freedom and net neutrality. However, following the Snowden revelations, new privacy related amendments were added to the bill. These included strict consent requirements for data collection and the right to be forgotten. Data localisation proposals were initially included, but later withdrawn.

### China

China also has strict data localisation laws that mean companies must store the data they collect from Chinese citizens on servers located in the country.

### EU

The European Union plans to unify data protection with a single law, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The current EU Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC does not consider important aspects such as globalisation and newer technological developments like social networks and cloud computing sufficiently. The new legislation hopes to protect the privacy of EU citizens by enforcing strict protocols on the transfer of data between the EU and other countries.

Under GDPR, US-based companies that have never set foot within the EU will face significant fines – between 2%-5% of global turnover if they refuse to play by the new rules.

The difference between this and previous laws is that it is a regulation and not a directive. The EU's European Council aims for adoption by all 28 EU Member States by 2017.

### US

Unlike Europe, and for its own cultural and historical reasons, the US does not maintain a singular, comprehensive data protection law regulating the storage and use of personal

data. Instead, the US favours a sectoral approach and there are numerous privacy laws that operate at federal and state levels. There are also different laws depending on the industry sector.

Increased globalisation has forced the US to agree a basic privacy framework with the EU known as the Safe Harbor Principles. Under the agreement, the US promises to give adequate safeguards to any personal data belonging to people living in the EU. The Safe Harbor Principles have been under review for some time and the US is working with the EU to ensure they are mutually satisfactory.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT CMS

Your choice of CMS is likely to have a big impact on your ability to deliver localised websites for multiple regions and languages. While most enterprise CMSs are developed with localisation in mind, there are a number of options available and depending on your budget and requirements, some are more suitable than others.

### Open source or proprietary?

While most popular open source content management systems will contain free and paid plugins to assist you with localisation most high-end proprietary content management systems will provide professional localisation capabilities out of the box.

This doesn't necessarily mean that one system is better than the other, but while proprietary systems tend to be more powerful, when high levels of customisation are required their costs can often make them inaccessible for small to medium-sized businesses. Development costs also tend to be higher with proprietary systems and it can be harder to find qualified developers especially if you have advanced requirements.

Regardless of whether you decide on an open source or proprietary CMS - it should support the following multi-lingual capabilities at a minimum;

### Site architecture for global markets and languages

This will allow you to generate country sites and dictate which pages will be translated locally, regionally or globally.

### Ability to import/export text as XML, XLIFF or other standard formats

This will make working with your translation provider easier by allowing you to import and export text in a standardised format; this is especially relevant if you have a large website and need the ability to upload translated content en masse.

### Support for multi-lingual media management

It is important to have the ability to store different assets such as images and other media for the purpose of localisation.

### API integration

If you've got a lot of content that requires translation on a regular basis, then it's important that your CMS allows integration with the translation management platform of your language service provider. This will allow you set up rules to identify new content that requires translation and send this to your provider to translate. Ecommerce websites with lots of products being added regularly typically require API integration to better manage their translation projects.



## Which CMS is best?

When choosing a CMS it makes sense to look at your requirements as a whole, above and beyond your localisation requirements. While there is no 'best' CMS there are some that perform certain tasks better than others.

The below factors should serve as a guiding point when deciding which CMS to use:

- ✔ The size of your website in terms of content and pages
- ✔ The regularity and complexity of updates
- ✔ How you will be managing the CMS – in-house or external
- ✔ The level of localisation required – how many languages, how many pages etc
- ✔ The complexity of the website – is it a basic site or is there a high degree of custom functionality?
- ✔ Is the website an online store with E-commerce functionality?
- ✔ SEO requirements
- ✔ Blog management requirements
- ✔ Is professional support required?
- ✔ Budget

While this is not an exhaustive list we have explored the most popular open source CMS solutions below.

## Wordpress

Wordpress is known for its ease of use and flexibility for both developers and end users and is by far the most popular open source CMS. It's quite easy to learn the basics of Wordpress especially if your requirements don't involve complex customisation. If they do, an experienced developer should be able to customise Wordpress to allow it to support most custom functions.

One of the main benefits of using Wordpress is that it has a very large and active community which means that you can often find third-party plugins that allow you to achieve your goals. Wordpress has little localisation support or functionality out of the box but there are free (and paid) plugins that you can install to accommodate for this. The most popular, and arguably the best, of these plugins is [WPML](#) (The WordPress Multi-Lingual Plugin) which is easy to install and integrate - even for less technical users.

## Drupal

Drupal is a very powerful and flexible CMS but also has a steep learning curve. Drupal is excellent if you require a highly customised website with advanced functionality and have advanced development capabilities at your disposal. While it has the most power it is also a very lightweight CMS (which can change depending on which plugins you decide to use) meaning that load times are fast with a base Drupal installation in comparison to Wordpress or Joomla. Drupal also has a high level of localisation functionality and options out of the box in addition to plugins that can aid with translation management.

## Joomla!

Joomla! is often thought as the bridge between Wordpress and Drupal in terms of complexity and ease of use. Joomla! has strong ecommerce and social networking capabilities out of the

box, which makes it a popular choice for users who require this kind of functionality. Unlike Wordpress, Joomla does have some localisation capabilities built in. Like Wordpress there are also plugins available to add localisation capabilities to your website.

### Proprietary

Much like open source CMSs there are myriad proprietary options available that are relevant for different uses. Popular choices include Adobe Experience Manager, Sitecore, EpiServer, IBM Websphere, Demandware and Hybris.

Investing in a proprietary CMS can be a large investment and we don't recommend choosing a proprietary solution without first seeking the advice of professional developers, digital agencies or systems integrators to define your requirements and identify the system which best suits your needs.

## WEBSITE PERFORMANCE & CONTENT DELIVERY NETWORKS

It is extremely important that your website is physically located in your target region since the further away that your site is located from the target customer, the slower the site will take to load.

If your organisation's web server is located in the USA for example, and a large proportion of your customers are located in China, then these customers are likely to experience latency when attempting to access your site. This is because requests for the HTML, images, scripts and stylesheets that make up your site have to travel halfway across the world to be received by the web server and more importantly, these objects need to travel huge distances to be delivered to the end user.

Slow loading web pages will have a negative impact on your brand, on engagement with your site and on conversion rates within the target market. Therefore, in order to increase the likelihood of success in new overseas markets, you need to ensure that your organisation's website loads quickly in the target territory.

A common way to improve website speeds for end users is by using a content delivery network (CDN). A CDN is a large distributed system of servers deployed in multiple data centres across the Internet (sometimes referred to as edge locations).

Depending on the extent of the performance issues resulting from your web servers being geographically remote to your target users, you may want to consider using a CDN to deliver your content to users around the globe. However, there are some important factors to consider when selecting a CDN vendor.

### Location

Some CDN vendors simply don't have data centres within your target region. For instance, Amazon Web Services, a leading provider of CDN technology and services, don't have an edge location in Africa or the Middle East. Microsoft's cloud CDN solution, Azure, also doesn't have any African locations. So Amazon Web Servers and Microsoft would not be suitable CDN vendors for businesses looking to expand into these regions.

### Speed & reliability

When selecting a CDN provider, two of the key performance factors are speed and reliability. You need to ensure that the CDN vendor has the available high-performance infrastructure to support your application's requirements. You also need to ensure that the service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – so nothing less than 99.9% uptime should be considered.

While the world's major CDN vendors (Amazon Web Services, Google, Microsoft, Akamai, MaxCDN, Cloudflare etc.) all claim to deliver over 99.9% uptime, there are clearly differences between them. Interestingly, they also display different performance characteristics for different regions and also for different protocols (for example HTTP and HTTPS).

For businesses running secure, transactional ecommerce stores, it is extremely important to select a CDN provider that has relatively fast load times for content using the secure hypertext transfer protocol (HTTPS) since credit and debit card transactions will require HTTPS for secure processing and many of the critical pages on these sites, such as the checkout process, will be secure.

1

DOMAINS AND  
HOSTING

MULTI-LINGUAL  
CONTENT

CMS  
INTEGRATION

# TWO

## MULTI-LINGUAL CONTENT & INTERNATIONAL SEO

Your multi-lingual content is the bedrock of your international marketing efforts. So ensuring that your content is tailored to the needs and expectations of your target audience is key to success. Your content also has a significant impact on whether users in these markets find you and how they then engage with your brand.

As well as language considerations, the success of any international SEO strategy is reliant on the content being well-written, engaging and suitable for the target audience as this will impact on rankings, click-through rates and dwell time - all of which are factors that are considered to impact SEO.

Site owners should also be aware that using machine translated content can also impact negatively on local user engagement and SEO. [John Mueller](#), Webmaster Trends Analyst at Google, went as far as to say that “using Google Translate to translate your whole site, is the same thing as “auto-generated content” which means it could be impacted by Google’s content quality search algorithm filter - Panda.

There are many other considerations when it comes to multi-lingual content that international marketers should be aware of.

### Text expansion and contraction

When translating content from one language to another, the translated content is likely to contract or expand depending on the difference in the number of characters between the source and target text.

For instance, languages like Spanish, French and German can contract or expand by up to 30% when translating content from English. Since 30% isn’t a great deal, in most cases, the designer or app developer can simply allow for the extra space that the target text might consume.

However, not all languages share similar characters sets with English. Asian languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, have fewer characters when translated from English. That being said, the complexity of many Asian characters means that they often have to use larger font sizes in order to be legible.

Similarly, abbreviations in the source language may not have parallel versions in the target language. So, when localising a website or app, it is recommended that your localised software is designed with the target language text in place to ensure that items fit the navigation and screen sizes of the devices you wish to target.

### Character sets and encoding

Dealing with lots of different languages within the same application and storing this content in a single database has historically been tricky due to the limitations of the available character encoding methods.

A character encoding system consists of a code that pairs each character from a given language with something else, such as a sequence of numbers, bit patterns, octets or electrical pulses, in order to store the data or transmit it across the internet.

In the past, different languages required separate character encoding methodologies. To overcome these limitations, in the late 1980s, several different organisations began working

on the creation of a global character set which they hoped could be used for all the world's modern languages. The requirement for this global character set became even more important with the introduction of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s. This led to the development of Unicode.

Unicode can support many different character encodings. It is supported in most operating systems and all modern browsers. The most commonly used Unicode encoding is UTF-8. In the past few years, UTF-8 has become the dominant character encoding method for the web, accounting for more than half of all web pages. Due to the universal nature of UTF-8, it is now the industry standard method of storing multi-language data. So, if you intend to expand your business abroad, especially if you're communicating in languages that don't use Latin-based character sets, then you need to ensure your database is correctly configured to use UTF-8 character encoding and binary UTF-8 collation and that your CMS supports UTF-8.

### Text orientation

Text orientation describes the direction followed by the written text and languages can be written left-to-right (like English, German and French) or right-to-left (like Arabic or Hebrew). Sometimes, text can even be displayed vertically (like in Chinese or Japanese).

This presents huge challenges for designers, developers and linguists when working on single-system, multi-language projects.

Websites and apps that are designed for left-to-right languages often don't work for right-to-left ones. And for vertical text, this is even more of a problem as HTML has no support for it. Historically web developers used tables to simulate it. Thankfully, now CSS3 includes a property known as "writing-mode" which can render vertical text when given the value "tb-rl". However, be aware that many older browsers don't support CSS3.

### Terminology

A lot of the content that your business needs to localise will include brand and product names and descriptions of products and services that use specific industry terminology or jargon. While the use of such terminology frequently drives competitive differentiation it does present challenges when it comes to translation.

While some phrases may have local language equivalents, they may not mean exactly the same thing and in many industries or cultures, alternative phrases may be more common. To ensure that terminology is accurately translated, it's advisable to ensure that a native translator with industry expertise is recruited to work on your website localisation project.

### Abbreviations and acronyms

Another common issue that translators face is the translation of abbreviations or acronyms. Abbreviations of well-known company names or institutions sometimes have their own translations e.g. (NATO -> OTAN in Spanish). Acronyms may also have their own local versions (e.g. AIDS -> SIDA in Spanish). However, for abbreviations or acronyms associated with your company's products or services where they are no known local equivalents, then it's advisable to provide an explanation of the term or include it in a glossary.

### Currency

There are over 180 currencies currently in circulation around the world. With over 190 sovereign states, almost every country – excluding those that are part of some sort of currency union such as the Euro – has its own currency.

Not all of these currencies are represented by a single character and not all of them use the Latin character set.

So, when designing ecommerce websites or, in fact, any software that displays currencies, designers need to ensure that all the currencies in use in their target market are catered for and are able to display correctly.

## Time and date

Displaying dates and times in the preferred local formats is also highly recommended as it avoids ambiguity and allows local users to process date information much more quickly. An obvious example of this is the difference between UK and US date formats. If your business promises to get in contact with a customer or your ecommerce site states that it will deliver goods on a given date, for example 11/12/15, then UK users would expect this to be the 11th December 2015, while American users would think the delivery date is 12th November 2015.

Similarly, in Japan, the date is written with the year first, then month, then day, so presenting the date as shown above to a Japanese user would make them think their goods were being delivered on the 15th December 2011. A lot of confusion and frustration can be born out of providing incorrect dates and times so localising these to local formats is critical.

## Numeric formats

Dates aren't the only representations of data that require localisation. Numeric formats are also presented in a number of different ways deepening on the country, region or culture.

The system used in the west (the decimal Hindu-Arabic numeral system) was invented in India around AD 500 and many cultures use this system but with different characters to represent the numbers. However, there are often small differences between languages and cultures.

In the UK or US, we use a comma as a separator to denote a thousand e.g. 1,000. However, in Germany and France they use a full stop (or period as the Americans call it) e.g. 1.000. Similarly, the character used as a decimal separator is a full stop in the UK and US while this is represented by a comma in France and Germany (e.g. 1,000.50 vs. 1.000,50).

Digit grouping can also differ. For example, the three-digit group (e.g. 1,000,000) is used for most western cultures. However, Hindi uses a two-digit grouping for all numbers except hundreds which are denoted using a three-digit grouping (e.g.10,00,000).

Other languages have their own number systems and different systems for different things. For instance, in Japanese there are two sets of numbers - the native Japanese system and the Sino-Japanese system and go from 1 to 10, instead of 0 to 9. Sino-Japanese numbers are used in combination with counter words (助数詞 *josūshi*), when counting things, actions and events while a different form is used for counting people. Percentages can also be written in several ways depending on the region and language (e.g. 99%, 99 %, 99 pct, %99) - so these too would require localisation.

## Measurements

Since its introduction in France in the late 18th century, the International System of Units or metric system has done wonders for the standardisation of units of measurement. Since then, colonialism and globalisation have allowed the system to be adopted by many different countries around the world. However, not all countries use the metric system and not every unit of measurement in the countries that have adopted it is standardised or in common use by the local population.

The US is often cited as the only industrialised country where the metric system is not the predominant system of units. Liberia and Myanmar are two other countries that have not officially adopted the metric system. When using measurements in these regions it's important that they are converted to local formats. The symbols used to describe these units also differ. For example, in Russia, it is normal to use Russian abbreviations (in Cyrillic letters) instead of standard symbols, e.g. кг vs. kg. So these too would require localisation.

## Address and telephone formats

The conventions for displaying addresses and telephone numbers also vary by country and language.

Countries of World Numbering Zone 1 (North America) - which includes the USA, Canada and Mexico have the country code 1 for telephone numbers. English speakers in the US and Canada conform to the international format: e.g. within the North American zone (302)1234567 or international +1302 1234567. But in the Canadian province of Quebec, where French is the first language, the Office québécois de la langue française has established that phone numbers must be written with spaces first and then a hyphen for the last sequence, as follows: 1 NPA NXX-XXXX

Similarly, Spanish-speaking Mexico has an alternative format. Fixed lines are usually written for local audiences as XXX XX XX and XXXX XXXX, depending on the length, with or without dashes between the segments. While in Europe, almost every country has its own length and format.

Addresses pose a similar issue when it comes to localisation. Apart from the obvious differences in terminology e.g. Zip Code vs. Post Code, there are large differences in the structure and format of physical addresses in different countries. Users may have very simple addresses with just two or three lines in many regions. Others could include a street name, complex name, block number, floor, suite or door numbers as well as the town, principality and zipcode/postcode.

## Alphabetical ordering

Many sites will include lists of pages, products or services and allow users to sort these alphabetically. This also presents a localisation challenge since there are huge differences between languages. The basic ordering of the Latin alphabet is well established but there are differences between European languages. Many have accented letters and place these in different orders.

*In French, for example, accented letters are not considered to be additional letters in the alphabet. But, in Spanish, ñ is considered to be a separate letter, but accented vowels such as á and é are not and. In Icelandic, accented letters such as á, í, and ö are all considered to be distinct.*

German words with an umlaut are ordered with the umlaut being ignored while in Turkish, which adopted the German graphemes ö and ü, words with an umlaut appear last. For instance, a word like tüfek, would come after tuz, in the Turkish dictionary. The Danish and Norwegian alphabets end with å, whereas the Icelandic, Swedish and Finnish alphabets place ö at the end.

## Calendars

Although most are familiar with the Gregorian calendar, some cultures use alternative calendars while others have slight differences. Not only are the names of the days, weeks and months different in many cases, there are differences in how the weeks are structured.

In the USA, the week starts on Sunday, while it begins on Monday in the UK and Friday in the Maldives.

In many Muslim countries, Friday is a holy day when Jumu'ah prayers take place. However, some like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt, enjoy the weekend from Friday to Saturday. In Iran and Afghanistan it's common to have a half day on Thursday in addition to a day off on Friday. Others like Turkey and Pakistan have their weekends on Saturday and Sunday. Online calendars and UI elements such as date pickers should be localised to suit users in the target country.

## COUNTRY/LANGUAGE SELECTORS

There are many ways that your site can allow users to select or change their country or language and each method has its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

Many sites force language preferences on users when they select their country. For instance, if they select France, they get redirected to the French site or subfolder. However, this can pose an issue for countries that have many different official languages or large expat communities from other countries that don't speak the official language but would still like to see content that's relevant for their territory and prices displayed in local currencies. For these reasons, it's good practice to separate country and language selectors allowing users to select them independently.

Another common method of displaying countries is by using the relevant flag - along with the name of the country in a dropdown menu or modal window. While in most cases this is fine, there are a number of regions around the world where regions and their statuses as sovereign states are disputed and displaying these can be highly political and potentially alienate consumers.

## REDIRECTS

Some websites go as far as to redirect users to a specific site or subfolder if they access the site from an IP address that has been recognised as being from the relevant country. In many cases, the user is unable to access other language and country versions of the site. This can be a huge mistake as it prevents users who may be in another country on business or on holiday from accessing content and buying products in their native language and local currency. Also, geo-location identification based on IP is not an exact science so site owners could be locking users out of their preferred country and language.

However, there may be valid reasons behind structuring your site in this way. If your site needs to redirect users to specific content for legal reasons for instance, then you should ensure that these are permanent 301 redirects and there aren't multiple redirects in place to avoid issues with not being indexed or featured prominently on local search engines.

## INTERNATIONAL SEO

Depending which country or region you want to target, there is likely to be a difference in search engine market share. While Google dominates globally with a [67% market share](#), there are some countries where alternative search engines are more widely used by the local population.

For instance, in China, Baidu is the dominant search engine with over [70%](#) of China's internet users preferring their platform while Google has less than 10% market share. In Russia, Yandex claims over 40% market share. In Japan and Taiwan, Yahoo! has significant market share estimated at [51%](#) and [31%](#) respectively.



So, when it comes to international SEO, the strategies and tactics employed need to take into consideration the algorithmic makeup of the dominant search engine in each country. The ranking factors for each of these search engines need to be understood and both on- and off-page SEO strategies adjusted to increase SEO success.

### Targeting local search engines

The internet contains over 30 trillion web pages and this figure is growing at an alarming rate. All search engines crawl the internet by following links on web pages. They then sort these pages in their index by a range of factors using programs and formulas known as algorithms. However, every search algorithm is different, which means different search engine results.

### Google

Google is the world's leading search engine with over 67% market share overall in September 2015 and arguably has the most complex algorithm. There are over 200 ranking factors that go into Google's patented and highly complex ranking algorithm.

### Baidu

Baidu is the world's second largest search engine by number of searches – with just over 9% global market share as of September 2015. This is largely as a result of being the most popular in China, the world's most populous state. Many people assume that Baidu's success in China means that it has a complex and sophisticated algorithm to challenge Google's, however, SEOs have ruled that it is not as sophisticated as Google's and relies on fewer ranking factors.

### Yahoo!

Yahoo! claimed 10% global market share in September 2015, making it the third most popular search engine world wide. However, the organic search listings on Yahoo! Search are powered by Bing, so Yahoo! uses Bing's algorithm to determine the inclusion and rank of websites on their search results pages.

### Yandex

Yandex, although only really popular in Eastern Europe, still achieved a around [60%](#) of Russian market share in 2015, making the search engine the fourth most popular globally. Yandex, like Bing and Google, has updated its algorithm many times in the last few years. Until recently the algorithm was very basic and as a result search rankings were easy to manipulate. However, in recent years Yandex has become much more complex leading some commentators to compare it to Google.

### Bing

As of September 2015, Microsoft's Bing has [10.8%](#) global market share. Like Google, Bing regularly updates their algorithm in order to present more relevant results for search queries. However, their algorithm is not as complex as Google's and therefore Bing takes longer to index sites and displays different results to Google locally and abroad.

While most of these search engines do not publish their algorithms and take great steps to ensure their mathematical secrets remain hidden, professional SEOs have also used a series of tests and trial and error techniques to shed more light on these complex processes to identify the relative importance of the different ranking factor

## Hreflang and canonical URLs

It's generally considered to be good SEO practice to include a [canonical URL](#) on your web pages to allow Google and other search engines to index the preferred version of your page.

For instance, if you're able to access your website's homepage from <http://example.com>, <http://example.com/> and <http://example.com/index.html>, then it would be wise to specify the preferred homepage URL in the canonical link tag.

*e.g.* `<link rel="canonical" href="http://example.com/" />`

For multi-language websites, Google recommends using the [hreflang](#) tag, which tells search engines the language of a web page, [instead of the canonical tag](#).

*e.g.* `<link rel="alternate" href="http://example.com" hreflang="fr-ca" />`

Google uses this information, among other signals, to show the page to users who are searching in that language. If for example you have translated your content in Italian, you would use `hreflang="it"` to tag the language of the page as Italian, so when search engines encounter a query from a user they have reason to believe is Italian, they will serve the Italian page instead of the English one.

Additionally, some languages have different variants. In this instance, you can further specify which region within the same language you would like to target by adding the country tag to the `xreflang` tag. For example, if you are targeting Canadian French as opposed to European French, you would write `hreflang="fr-ca"`. When optimising for different search engines, remember that Bing's equivalent is the [language meta tag](#), while both Google and Yandex use `hreflang` tags.

In 2013, Google introduced support for the '[x-default hreflang](#)' tag which signals to Google's algorithms that a particular page doesn't target any specific language or locale and is the default page when no other page is better suited.

## INTERNATIONAL KEYWORD RESEARCH

Ranking for the right keywords can make or break your online business. So researching relevant keywords in the target region is a critical element of every successful SEO and PPC strategy.

In order to know which keywords to target, it's essential to not only understand the demand for a given term or phrase, but also the levels of competition and therefore, the work required to achieve high rankings for particular terms. This is why it is not enough to merely translate a list of keywords as the literal translations, in many cases, are not the terms being used by local users to search for products and services.

For example, the popular English term to search for flights is "cheap flights" and this term is searched for on Google millions of times a month. The literal translation into Italian is "voli economici".

However, users in Italy don't use this term to search for cheap flights and instead use the key phrase "voli low cost". So airlines using the phrase "voli economici" could be missing out on millions of customers every month.

International keyword research should take into account:

- Local search volumes
- Levels of local competition for each keyword
- Keyword relevance
- User intent and stage in the buying cycle

## Keyword research tools

There are free online tools that allow you to determine keyword volumes and competition levels across multiple countries. The most well-known of these is probably the [Google Adwords Keyword Planner](#) – which can be used for countries in which Google is the dominant search engine. When comparing search volumes across multiple countries, [Google's Global Market Finder](#) is a good place to start.

However, before embarking on expansion into a new international market, you need to identify if opportunities exist within these markets and whether or not your business can compete there. By correlating search volumes from the keyword tool with previous on-site activity (conversion rate, bounce rate, time-on-site and repeat visits) it is possible to determine high performance key words which can be used in paid search advertising and SEO activity.

But remember that Google is not always the dominant search engine. In China, Baidu is the most popular search engine, Yandex rules in Russia and in Japan; Yahoo has the greatest market share. [Baidu](#) has a keyword tool of its own and so does [Yandex](#). To get the most out of the local keyword research it's best to work with a native translator to ensure that they keyterms you're selecting are relevant to your business and target consumer.

# THREE

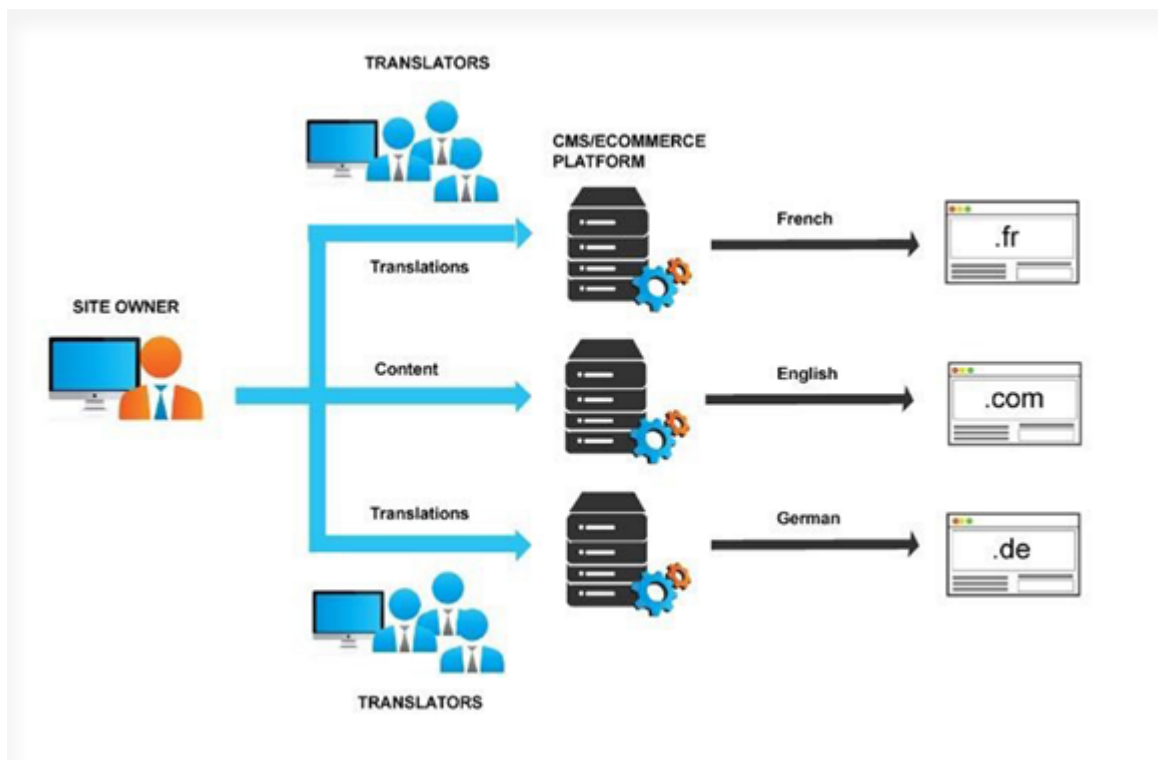
## CMS INTEGRATION & LOCALISATION MANAGEMENT

Deciding between the various approaches to managing multiple international websites is a critical step in the localisation process and one that is likely to significantly affect the future performance of a website.

One of the most common challenges faced by marketing, ecommerce and I.T professionals when expanding internationally is deciding on how to organise their infrastructure to best manage the translation process. There are no hard and fast rules and the decision depends on a huge range of factors.

Below are the three main options available to businesses looking to expand their operations into new territories including the pros and cons of each method and best practice advice for different markets around the globe.

### Standalone website



The simplest solution is to have a standalone website on a different domain or subdomain with content presented to users in their native language.

- ✔ Allows you to develop a unique offering for a specific market which includes a completely different design, layout, information architecture and contains unique, localised content.
- ✔ Can be hosted in the target territory. These domains typically rank better for some local search engines – notably Baidu and Yandex.
- ✔ Local users tend to place more trust in them.
- ✔ SEO advantages of geo-targeting and domain-level trust factors.

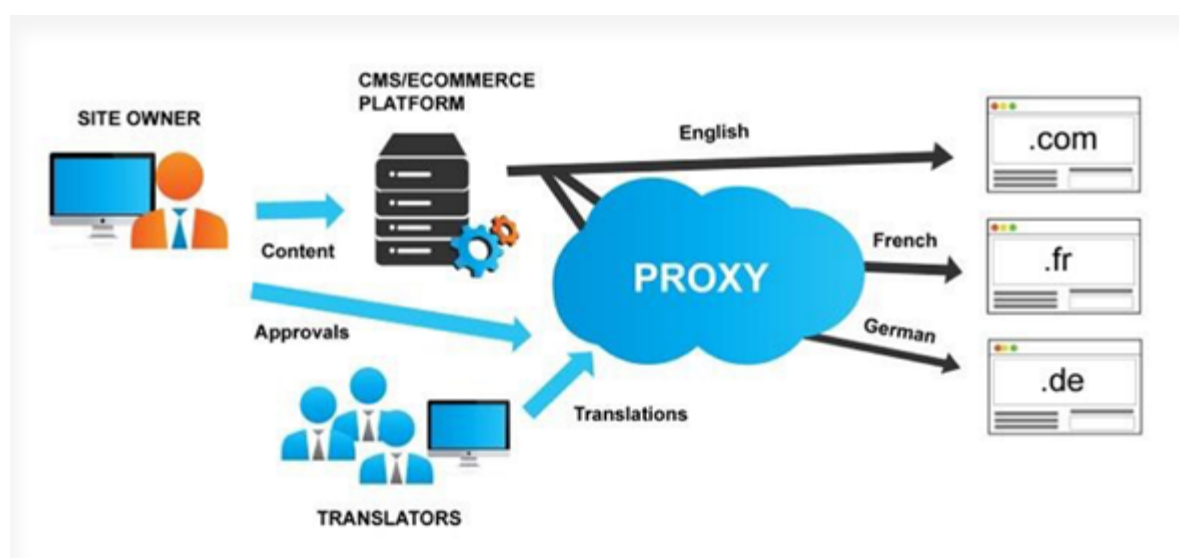
- ✓ Faster page loads - boosting SEO, user engagement and conversion rates .
- ✓ You don't have to concern yourself with data localisation laws currently being passed in places like Russia and Brazil whereby data collected in the region cannot be transmitted externally.

So, in all, standalone sites allow businesses to develop truly unique experiences for users in different territories without affecting sites in other territories – allowing for true site localisation to be implemented.

However, having a standalone website can place a burden on resources as bug fixes, software functionality improvements, security patches and other design or technical changes will have to be completed on each site separately.

If you decide on the standalone website approach, ensure that you register your trademark-related domain names. Cybersquatting, the process of registering domain names with bad intent in order to profit from another organisation's trademark, is rife in many emerging markets.

### Proxy-based solution



Proxy-based solutions allow for the retrieval of content from a client server by a separate server (the proxy), which is then translated and delivered through the proxy to the end client.

### The benefits of a proxy-based solution

- ✓ Translations can be completed without additional staging or QA and are often deployed more quickly than on a standalone website, a content management system (CMS) or ecommerce integrated solution.
- ✓ Recommended as a quick and dirty solution for testing new markets. Startups often favour proxies for this reason— allowing for market testing of their minimum viable product approaches to product development.
- ✓ Good alternative to web CMS integration solutions for largely static websites that require few, if any, regular changes to the functionality or design of pages.

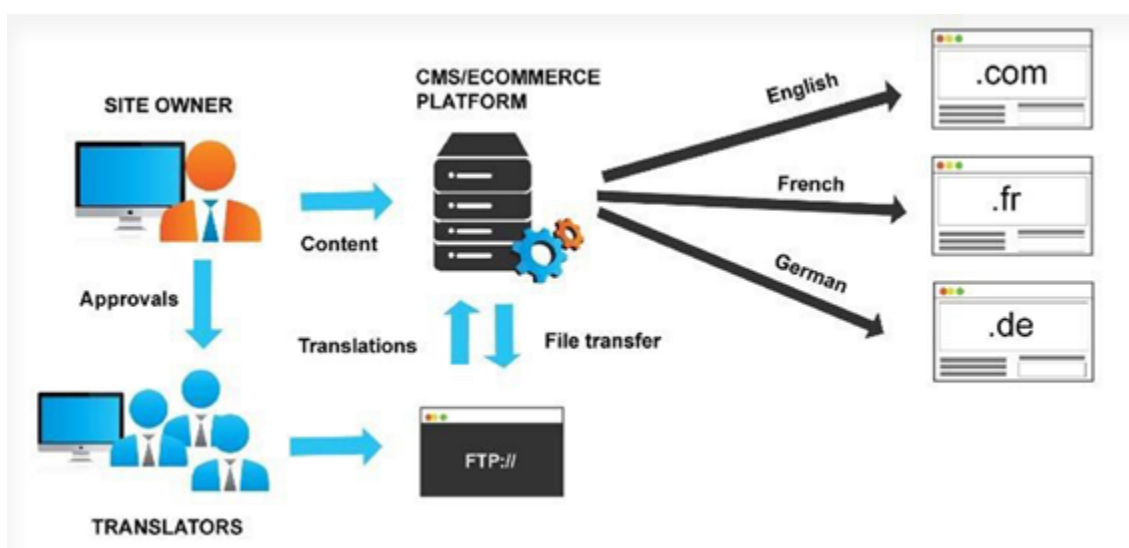
## Disadvantages of proxies

Sites that use a lot of dynamic content, cookie-based personalisation, product recommendations, or ones that employ conversion rate optimisation techniques such as split A/B and multivariate testing are not suited to proxies. This is because the proxy solutions use screen-scraping or imports of static content from the source database/CMS so the sites derived from this data are essentially static.

If you opt for a proxy-based solution, be aware that you are relinquishing control of your site to a third party, and it's often very difficult to switch provider. Website, search and advertising technology evolves very quickly. If you want to remain at the forefront, offering the latest technologies to users, then a proxy solution isn't suitable. Essentially, they lock you into the past.

If you decide to go down the proxy route, you should obtain guarantees that the vendor will provide you with all the content and translation memories in the event that they decide to increase their prices substantially, if the quality of work or service is poor or, worse still, if they go out of business.

## CMS or eCommerce integrated solution



An increasingly popular method of managing the translation process is by implementing a CMS or eCommerce Integrated Solution.

When the source content is ready for translation, it is transferred to the provider's server using FTP or via an API. Once it's complete, the provider usually returns the translated content to the client using the preferred method (FTP/API etc.) from which the client can import the content back into their CMS.

### The benefits of a CMS / eCommerce integrated solution

- ✓ You have the control to edit the text on your own system before and after publication.
- ✓ If you run highly-personalised, localised campaigns, an integrated solution provides better support for multiple teams in different locations to collaborate.
- ✓ Allows for great flexibility when it comes to deciding style, tone-of-voice and specific glossaries to be used when performing the translation.

- ✓ If you are operating in regions where a separate domain and host are required, once the solution has been developed then the time scales and costs of additional integrations can be kept to a minimum as most of the work has already been completed.
- ✓ Allows you to keep your websites up to date with the latest technology to support new mobile devices, file and video formats, interactive functionality, mobile or desktop apps and bricks and mortar store inventory integration to deliver a true omni-channel experience to the end user.

Note that the CMS/ecommerce integrated method does have significant overheads when compared with a simple proxy-based solution. This is because resources are required to design, configure and manage the import/export process.

However, once implemented, an integrated solution will soon begin to deliver ROI, offering full control over a site's design, content, SEO, style and tone-of-voice – allowing you to deliver rich, personalised content to specific target audiences globally.

## LOCALISATION MANAGEMENT

Once you've identified your target region, audience and have selected the relevant keywords, you'll need to ensure that your communications are translated with these in mind. This is arguably one of the most important steps in the localisation process as it will determine to a large extent whether your website appears in search engines and that the message and product offering resonates with users in the target market.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE SERVICE

Depending on your requirements and budget, there are a number of different translation options available for your website content.

### Professional Human Translation

The highest quality translation projects are the ones that use a native, in-country linguist with expertise in your business sector and knowledge of the behaviour of your consumers in your target market to carry out the translation work. Language services providers typically charge per source word for professional human translation but costs can vary between suppliers. Professional Human Translation is recommended for most website content.

## TRANSCREATION

### What is it? Transcreation

Transcreation, or creative translation, is the process of adapting creative into another language and culture. So, rather than being a direct translation of the source text, Transcreation focuses on capturing the desired persuasive or emotive effect of the original message and transferring it into the adapted translation. Language service providers typically charge for transcreation by the word but it's normally more expensive than regular translation due to the level of specialist knowledge and additional creativity and work required to adapt messages for each region and culture.

Transcreation is recommended for advertising copy, core brand messages, straplines and slogans, blog articles and editorial content as well as for landing pages used in paid and natural search marketing.

## MACHINE TRANSLATION

The term “Machine Translation” (MT) refers to the use of computer software to translate text automatically. There are two types of machine translation: rule-based, where software attempts to model the rules of a language; and statistical, where the computer attempts to learn from large amounts of text that have been previously translated.

Although great advancements have been made in recent years, machine translation should not be used for business-critical content, as the quality is currently far inferior to human translation.

Machine Translation works better with some language pairs than others and for text in which style and tone of voice are not the main concern. However, even slightly complex copy with colloquialisms or other culturally bound text are not suitable for machine translation.

Raw machine translation is generally not recommended due to the low quality in many languages but can be used in certain cases such as translating user generated content. For businesses purposes, it has become common to pair machine translation with human post-editing. When done well, in selected languages, for the right type of content and with a robust review process, it can be faster and cheaper than human translation. Machine Translation is generally provided on a per word basis. Post-edited machine translation is recommended for large numbers of product descriptions and non-business critical content. However, localisation managers need to be aware that the use of Machine Translation often results in a poorer quality translation than Professional Human Translation and Transcreation.

## MANAGING STYLE & BRAND TONE OF VOICE ACROSS LANGUAGES

A key element of ensuring that your marketing communications are localised but still retain their core message lies in managing your brand’s style and tone of voice in multiple languages.

What you can do to maintain tone of voice in translated and transcreated content:

### 1. Create a detailed translation brief

As is the case with most types of content creation, the more information you provide at the beginning of the translation project, the smoother the process and the more accurate the end result will be.

At a minimum, your translation brief should outline:

#### Your target audience

By providing details on your target customer’s preferences and characteristics such as activity on social media, their concerns, fears and buying habits - you can ensure that the translated copy is developed with your target audience in mind.

#### Context

If you can, always try to mention where the text will appear on your site and what it’s referring to. If you’re translating products, you may want to include images in your source content. Sometimes this is the only way to ensure the correct translation of terms that can have several meanings in the source or target languages.



## Target region

Remember to specify the regions you are targeting. Although some countries share a common language, there might be significant differences in the way it is spoken or written. You can observe this phenomenon when comparing South American Spanish with European Spanish, or to a lesser extent in US and UK English.

## Style and tone of voice

You'll need to go as far as spelling out the literary style and tone of voice for the image you are hoping to portray. For several foreign languages, it is also necessary to indicate whether the translator should use the formal or informal way of addressing the reader. This is because in many languages, the language used in a formal and informal context differs drastically. You should also be aware of that cultural differences between regions mean that your style and tone of voice in your source text may not be suitable for the target audience.

In many cases, you might want to display some content in English to users in different countries. This is particularly true for luxury and heritage brands that do well in other countries due in part to their cultural heritage. A good example of this is [Vertu](#), the UK luxury mobile phone manufacturer that employs Transcreation for many of their core brand messages but also leaves many in English to retain their appeal as a western brand in countries such as Russia and China.

## Measurements, currencies, number formats etc.

As mentioned previously, localisation goes beyond the language and properly localised websites will also localise number formats, currencies, measurements etc. to suit local preferences. Your brief should contain information on your preferences in regards to measurements, currencies and number formats.

## 2. Provide a glossary and reference material

Tone of voice is dictated by the terms you use as well as the style of writing. That's why it is important that they remain consistent and on-brand.

While translators often create glossaries as they translate, creating a formal one in English will speed up the translation process while allowing you to maintain greater control of your localised text.

Developing a glossary is even more important for text that is highly technical in nature or has lots of industry terminology or jargon. Make sure you highlight recurring terms, as well those that should remain untranslated. This is a decision that you must make according to your brand guidelines.

If you have examples of previously translated text of a similar nature, it's useful to provide it to your translators as they can get a feel for your brand, as well as making sure the main terms remain consistent in all of your translated content.

## 3. Leverage Translation Memory

A Translation Memory (TM) is a database of previously translated text, separated into segments which consist of sentences or phrases. They are used in conjunction with CAT (Computer Assisted Translation) tools to save time and reduce costs of translation work.

As the translator translates, they use these tools to build up a database of both the source and the target language. When the translator encounters a similar segment in the source text, the CAT tool can suggest a translation based on the translation memory.

At this point, the translator can decide if the translation is appropriate or if it should be changed. It is important to note this is not a machine translation, as the text needs to have been manually translated beforehand and sometimes requires manual editing. TMs are very useful for large or long-term projects where the source text has a relatively large number of repetitions.

A company with extensive Translation Memory libraries will notice huge cost and time savings in the long term, as well as increasing consistency of terms across multiple products, websites and territories.

#### 4. Provide ongoing feedback and add country reviews to the process

Receiving feedback is the most effective way to ensure that your translation provider can respond to your needs.

Determining the quality of a translation is largely subjective. A perfect translation for one client may not be suitable for another, even if they operate in the same industries or have similar customers. This is why client feedback is so important.

More often than not, issues with a translation are more to do with personal preferences than linguistic errors.

In this case, some LSPs will agree to rework the translation until the client is completely satisfied with it.

In-country review is one of the most crucial, yet challenging, steps in the translation process. In-country review is the process by which the translated material is sent to an individual in the target country to review linguistic and formatting issues associated with a given translation project. The reviewer is generally a work colleague who resides in the subsidiary or branch office—most often a sales manager, country manager, or distributor—who has been asked to serve in this capacity. To ensure a successful review, we suggest the following guidelines.

##### The goals of an in-country review

The overarching goal of an in-country review is to gain local acceptance for the product or product materials in the target market through the reviewers linguistic and product expertise. The goals and expectations of the reviewers should be established as early in the process as possible, since this task is rarely the person's core function.

##### Who should perform reviews?

Ideally reviews should be performed by individuals with a linguistic background, solid product knowledge, and quality review experience. However, they are more often performed by local sales staff or distributors who have a vested interest in the translation quality, but no formal review experience. Therefore, it is critical that a clear set of guidelines or instructions be provided to ensure consistent and timely feedback from reviewers. Guidelines become even more important if you plan to have more than one person conduct the review per language. Your translation vendor can assist you in developing these.

We strongly recommend working with your translation vendor as early in the process as possible to establish review guidelines. The first step in this process is creating glossaries and style guides before translation starts. This step will establish preferred terminology, usage of acronyms, punctuation, etc.

Glossaries and style guides enable translators to incorporate preferred terminology and style at the outset of a project. Involving your reviewers in this process will give them the opportunity to provide valuable input up front and minimise the number of revisions later.

### Why is this so important?

There is often more than one way to correctly express a concept or idea, and without guidance on key terminology, even a good translation that is faithful to the original text may not reflect the expressions preferred by your in-country staff. The next step is to help your reviewers understand the purpose and focus of the review process by providing them with specific parameters:

- ✔ Adherence to glossary and style guides
- ✔ Consistency of the translation
- ✔ Compliance with instructions (i.e., items that should not be translated are correct)
- ✔ Country-specific measurements and other standards are met
- ✔ Accuracy of terminology
- ✔ Style (cultural appropriateness of aesthetic and/or writing style)

### How should review comments be provided?

Depending on the source files or document, there are different ways to communicate reviewer comments; however, in all circumstances the original translated text must show up in the reviewed document. For an editable electronic file such as an MS Word document, reviewers can make suggestions and comments using the change-tracking feature. If they are using an application that does not support change tracking they may be able to designate their comments in another way such as by using a different coloured font. Reviewers may also use a separate document to communicate comments. In this case it must be very clear to which text the comment correlates. This will minimise follow-up queries from your translation vendor. In the case of multiple reviewers per language, it is best if the client coordinates and consolidates the reviewers' comments in a single document before sending to the vendor. Reviewer comments should be as clear and specific as possible.

### How and when are reviewer comments implemented?

To avoid additional costs and delays in delivery, it is very important for reviewer comments to arrive prior to testing and implementation. A delivery schedule should be agreed on at the outset of the project to allow translators adequate time to implement any changes. Your translation vendor will apply all valid changes. For some changes, particularly in the case of stylistic preferences of the reviewer, it is helpful for your vendor if the reviewers can be available to answer any questions that may arise during comment implementation.

## CONCLUSION

Localisation is a complex process and one that requires a huge range of skills and specialist knowledge. For these reasons the process of localising a website is best handled by a team of professionals which includes individuals with specific expertise in the various areas from understanding the local culture to develop an appropriate strategy to technical architecture, systems implementation, design, web development, SEO, creative copywriting, translation and finally, quality assurance and feedback to ensure that your localised website delivers a return on investment.

We hope you found our localisation guide useful and inspiring. If you have any questions or suggestions, please get in touch with us via support, or contact the author directly on Linked-In: [Yusuf Bhana - LinkedIn profile](#).