



**ADAPTING CREATIVE MEDIA FOR INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES:  
HOW TO DRIVE ENGAGEMENT & INSPIRE ACTION**





## WHY ADAPTING CREATIVE MEDIA FOR GLOBAL MARKETS MATTERS

Marketing is about engagement and inspiring action. It's about conveying the essence of a brand, the value of a product or service, the reason to choose one brand over another. The likelihood of marketing to succeed in its goal depends greatly on the creative process. On the development of language and visuals delivered in the right medium, at the right time, to the right audience.

In the same way that the right words are crucial to conveying brand identity, the **visual elements** of localized creative media **can make or break the brand experience for international audiences.**

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CREATIVE MEDIA?

Creative media refers to published marketing content that's being localized for international markets, whether for print, downloadable assets, or online and interactive formats. Creative media localization is about adapting text and visual content for international consumers, maintaining consistency of look and feel across locales.

However, when it comes to marketing localization, the goal is typically to **produce an authentic user experience** and drive engagement. The result of a media localization process varies greatly depending on how it's approached. And, for marketers developing creative media for international audiences, understanding the differences in approach is key to success.



A 2019 study of global customer experience strategy across B2B and B2C brands indicated that 73% of respondents consider both a consistent global brand and locally relevant brand essential to their CX goals. Source: Common Sense Advisory



## WHAT CAN GO WRONG WITH LOCALIZED DESIGN & UX?

The traditional media localization delivery model is based on “engineering” source content into target languages (resulting in a one-to-many set of localized assets based on the original English). This typically tech-focused approach can be applied to any type of media with text in it, from print format downloadable assets and apps to eLearning modules and websites.


The focus of media engineering is to produce efficiently localized, ready-to-publish versions of the original content in multiple languages. It’s highly efficient from a localization delivery perspective and works well for many types of purely informational content.

However, marketing content depends on engagement and local relevance to drive results. A one-to-many media localization process doesn't necessarily take varying in-market UX expectations into account.

The table stakes of traditional media localization are the least companies can do to localize content adequately for cultural variance. These include:

- Text expansion & contraction
- Character encoding & multi-directional design
- Color meanings & imagery nuances
- Typographical standards

**But things have changed.** In the same way that international consumers don’t want to deal with poor or obviously translated content, they also **don’t want to deal with poor and inappropriate design and UX.**

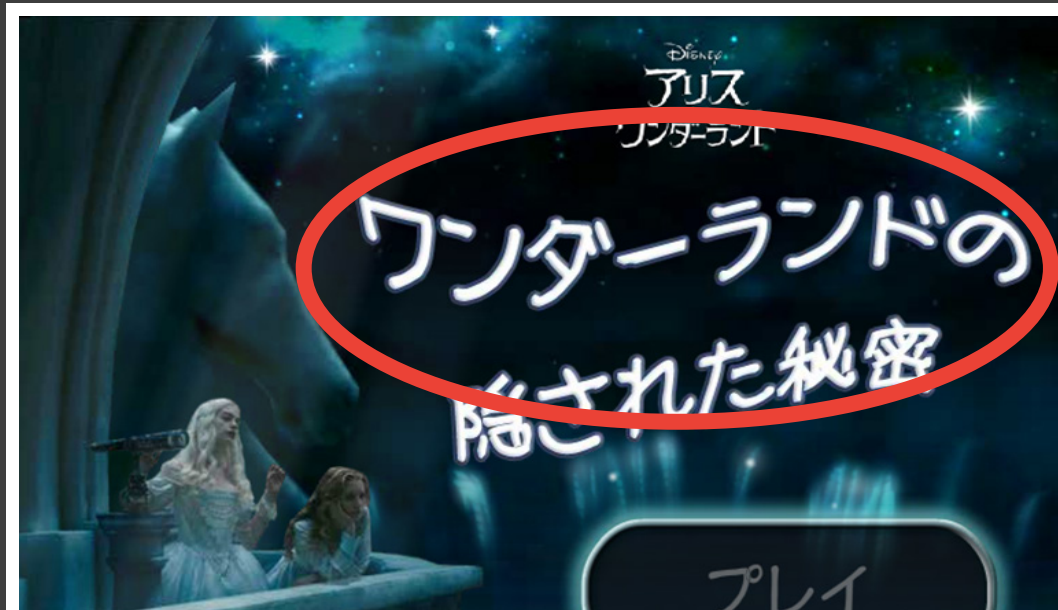
A small white LEGO Stormtrooper figure is positioned on a computer keyboard. The figure is standing on several keys, including one with the letter 'G'. The background is a blurred view of the keyboard and the desk surface.

**For companies whose product is literally part of their brand experience, locally appropriate design is another aspect of user engagement that can make or break international growth.**



## MEDIA LOCALIZATION GONE WRONG: VIDEO GAME HOMESCREEN

In this example, the initial localization has been carried out by non-native speakers and without guidance from in-country specialists. While the content is technically and linguistically correct, the poor font selection makes the result obviously localized, inappropriate, and ultimately **disengaging for the target audience**.



### Initial localization: Inappropriate font selection

The localized design presents a childish, playful font that's inappropriate for the theme and target audience.



### Redelivered localization: Appropriate font selection

The font selected – based on local trends for look and feel – is more aligned to the game's visual experience.



**KEY TAKEAWAY:** In-country design + insights are crucial to getting UX and engagement right.



Most language service providers (LSPs) offer media localization services based on the one-to-many model, with a focus on efficiency over UX.

### Be cautious if your LSP:

- **Focuses on file formats and content volume in assessing creative media service and budget needs.** These are important in scoping out the technical effort involved in localizing media, but they don't address the creative elements of adapting marketing media for international audiences.
- **Places a heavy dependency on the English design in producing localized versions.** This works fine for many types of purely informational content, not necessarily for marketing. It's likely they're not addressing cultural variations in design and visual experience.
- **Describes quality in terms of process and linguistic accuracy as opposed to brand and content experience.** Many LSPs talk about quality stages and review cycles. But for creative media, it's entirely possible for translations to be accurate and visuals to be completely off-base.
- **Doesn't support review and feedback by your in-country stakeholders.** This is a sign the LSP is not properly set up for creative media localization. Developing authentic, on-brand media for your target locales is often more effective when your in-country stakeholders are involved in the process.
- **Carries out media engineering fully in-house or fully off-shored.** A successful creative media localization model is dependent on professional, in-country design resources working with in-house designers – in much the same way as in-country linguistic resource networks operate.
- **Discusses your media localization needs in the context of software.** This is a sign the LSP may be putting their business goals ahead of yours. Workflow management tools that work in multiple formats offer great efficiency gains in producing high-volume multimedia content. However, they generally don't allow for language- or market-specific visual experience. This is especially true of LSP-owned globalization management systems designed for publishing web content. Many of these systems are built on proxy-based models, which don't allow for country-specific content, UX, or search optimization.

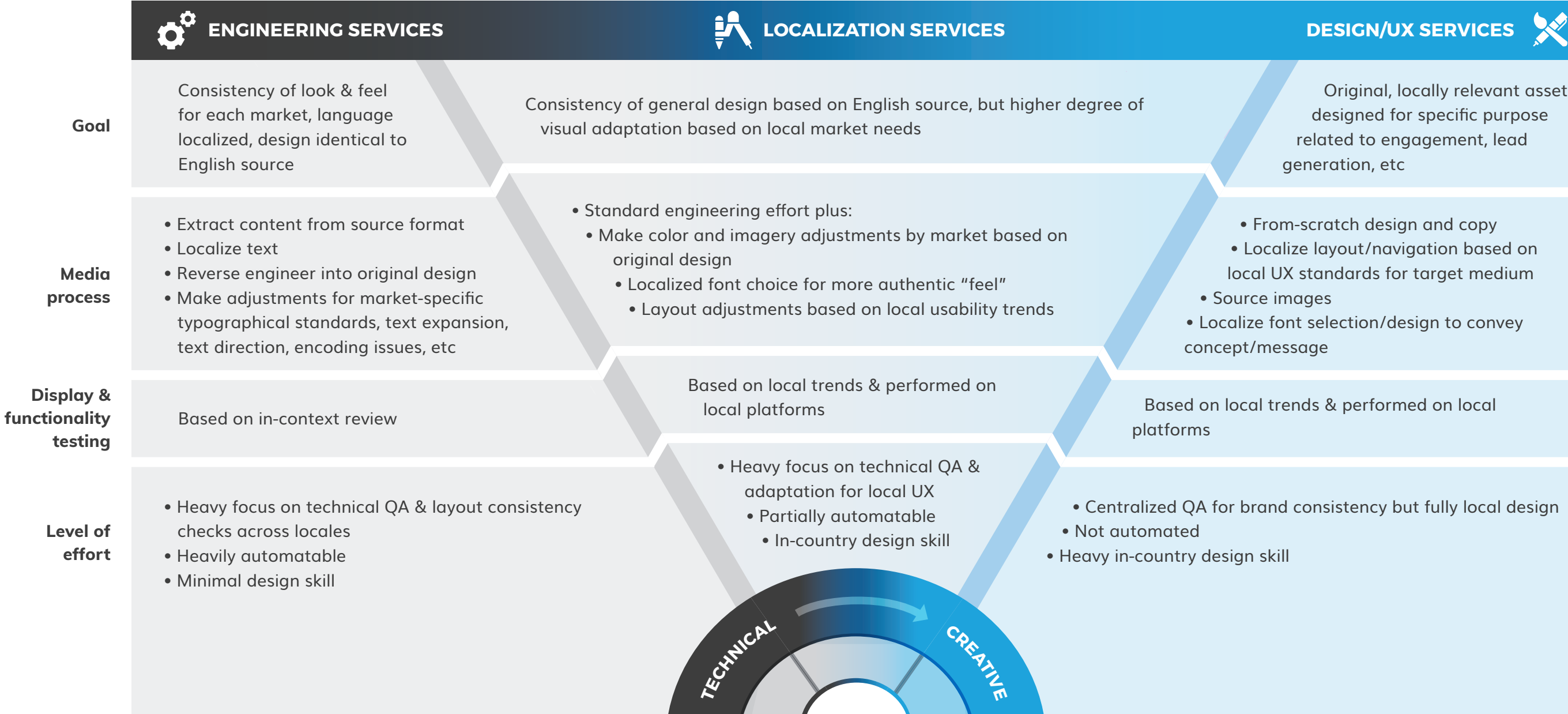


## WATCH OUT



# SELECTING THE RIGHT CREATIVE MEDIA LOCALIZATION SERVICES

The level of media localization expertise you need to maximize UX and design for your international markets should ultimately be informed by the nature and purpose of the content. **The greater the need to drive engagement and inspire action, the more important visual and user experience becomes.**







## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: ENGINEERING

**Traditional, one-to-many creative media requiring an “engineering” approach.** In this example, text is the primary localized element of the visual, and the outcome is multiple language versions with designs identical to the original source.

- **Goal:** Attract international visitors to a destination
- **Adaptation model:** One-to-many (English source)
- **Source design:** Readily localizable
- **Content creativity:** Minimally creative
- **Imagery + color choice adaptation:** None required
- **Text/font:** Corporate font selection supports international character sets
- **Text expansion + typography:** Design accommodates text expansion & international typographical standards

**A hassle-free stay is a direct route to guest satisfaction.**

But don't stop with one Building Block. Use them all to bridge the gap between Welcome and Farewell.

**使客人在居住时享受一站式服务是通往客人满意度的捷径。**

但是不要只停留在一块品牌服务基石之上。而要利用全部，搭建欢迎与告别之间的桥梁。

**Een probleemloos verblijf is de directe weg naar tevredenheid van de gast.**

Maar het houdt niet op bij één Building Block. Gebruik ze allemaal om de tijd te overbruggen tussen welkom en afscheid.

**Hilton**  
Travel should take you places™

*Travel is more than just A to B.  
Travel should create a world of possibilities.*

**A hassle-free stay is a direct route to guest satisfaction.**

But don't stop with one Building Block. Use them all to bridge the gap between Welcome and Farewell.

**HASSLE-FREE**





## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: LOCALIZATION



**Hybrid, one-to-many localized media requiring a more creative approach.** In this example, the outcome is multiple language versions that convey the look and feel of the original but have customized, hand-drawn logos and text for each market.

Localized design requirement heavily focused on logo and chalkboard text to deliver an authentic experience.

- **Goal:** An authentic user experience
- **Adaptation model:** One-to-many (English source)
- **Source design:** Moderately creative
- **Content creativity:** Moderately creative
- **Imagery + color choice adaptation:** None required
- **Text/font:** Text is not font-based but hand-drawn, conveying a fun and relaxed feel aimed at young gamers
- **Text expansion + typography:** Design reasonably accommodates text expansion & international typographical standards



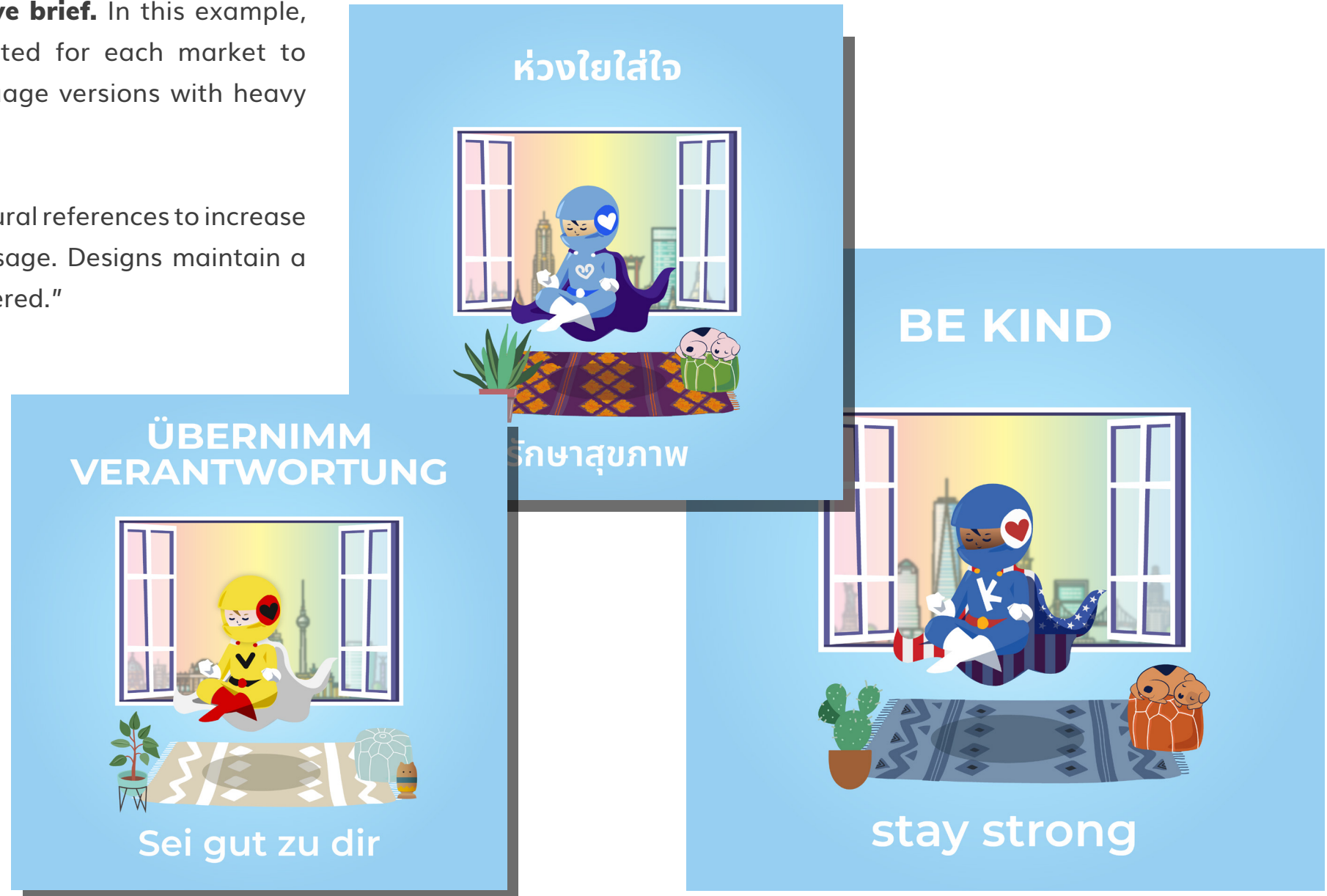


## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: DESIGN/UX

**Market-specific localized media based on a creative brief.** In this example, the concept and messaging is consistent but adapted for each market to increase engagement. The outcome is multiple language versions with heavy visual adaptation.

Localized designs take into account locally relevant cultural references to increase authenticity and user engagement with the core message. Designs maintain a consistent look and feel but are not obviously “engineered.”

- **Goal:** Visual engagement via social media
- **Adaptation model:** Concept-to-many  
(concept + messaging as source)
- **Source design:** Highly creative
- **Content creativity:** Highly creative
- **Imagery + color choice adaptation:** Internationalized for significant adaptation of color and image elements
- **Text/font:** Font selection supports international character sets or easy analogous font style selection
- **Text expansion + typography:** Design reasonably accommodates text expansion & international typographical standards







## HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

- **Know your markets.** Understand user behaviors and expectations, and make sure the creative brief accounts for those differences. Consider which aspects of your design/UX should be adapted for some markets. In some cases, adaptation isn't feasible, and from-scratch design is the best approach.
- **Remember that visual elements are important.** Text design and font selection can be the difference between engagement and disaster. Locally appropriate imagery isn't just about offending or not offending – it's about inspiration or indifference. Local market behavior is a major driver of design as well. Low-context cultures, like Western European markets, prefer less text with more visuals. Higher-context cultures, like Asian markets, prefer more text and fewer visuals. If you're creating online content to drive sales, it's important to take usability preferences into account – particularly in competitive markets.
- **Allow for market-specific design/UX.** Don't architect your content so that in-language experience is dependent on the English design. Consider elements of online and offline media that inform varying user experience goals and drive creative needs. Doing this as early as possible in the US domestic creative process will make localization more streamlined and less costly, while setting you up for success in-market.
- **Think beyond language.** If you're looking for transcreation or copywriting, chances are you need design/UX services as well. Not considering design as part of your concept adaptation needs for international markets may undermine the effort you put into creative linguistic elements.
- **Look for in-country resource models that include design/UX expertise.** Design, like language, is a constantly evolving part of any culture. Professional, in-country designers not only provide the skill required to produce on-brand design but also valuable input when it comes to font selection, color, imagery, layout, and usability for maximum engagement. As with any aspect of culture, visual tastes and fashions change, and you may be missing out on opportunities to leverage local trends that will project your message. For marketing localization, the value and importance of in-country expertise goes far beyond language delivery.
- **Don't confuse technical skill with creative skill.** Both are crucial to effective marketing localization. Technical skill is critical to scaling creative media at volume, but – if too heavily emphasized – that efficiency can come at the cost of creativity. Finding the balance between technical and creative capabilities is key to producing localized creative media that drives your marketing and growth goals, as well as your budget goals.



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