



WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

WHAT GOES WRONG + HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

“

Website localization is a non-debatable necessity for any business looking to expand globally. With over 3 billion internet subscribers in the world today, more than 75% of them are outside the US. By 2021, 2.4 billion buyers will be online globally, spending more than \$26 trillion on B2B and B2C eCommerce. HightechNectar.com + Businesses.com, Statista

”

WHY IS WEBSITE LOCALIZATION IMPORTANT?

Website localization is about delivering a user experience that’s as compelling to international audiences as it is to your US visitors. Successful website localization compels international consumers to **relate to your message, trust your brand, and – ultimately – become customers.**

Websites are a critical part of the customer journey and central to content marketing. They enable and support digital marketing strategy to drive brand awareness and lead generation. And the same is the case for international audiences. As such, successful and effective website localization is about far more than just translation. **But companies often place too much emphasis on translation, consider optimization as an afterthought, and fail to plan for promotional activities and the need to measure and iterate at the local level.**

All consumers, regardless of locale, are looking for three basic things from a website experience:



To find information that allows them to make an informed choice



To purchase a product or service easily in a secure and credible environment



To receive post-sales support and problem resolution

To meet these needs, companies must think beyond language. **A website is the digital face of a brand.** Poor user experience – such as confusing navigation, poor language quality, irrelevant content, and uninspiring imagery – will turn customers off, especially if they have other choices.

When properly executed and managed, websites deliver the following, on any timezone, any platform, in any locale:

	Heightened brand awareness
	Increased revenue and market share
	Competitive advantage
	Shortened time to market
	Improved connection with consumers and partners
	Brand credibility
	Advertising opportunities
	Efficiencies for business operations

THE ROI OF WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

When it comes to going global, the value of website localization in meeting consumer expectations increases exponentially. The CSA states that localizing into just 14 Tier 1 languages reaches 90% of global online GDP. For companies going global, website localization is a major tactical effort in extending their reach to international audiences. 40% of online businesses worldwide rely on website localization as a leading method of marketing their goods internationally (Statista, 2020). And **international consumers are far more likely to make a purchase in their own language regardless of their English proficiency.**

The more competitive the local market landscape, the more important UX becomes. When faced with the choice of two or more similar products, **82% of consumers are more likely to purchase products and services that provide information in their own language.** However, when it comes to language quality, 49% of English-proficient consumers would rather buy in English than suffer poor translation. And **75% of all international consumers will drop out** along the customer journey if they encounter problems with the localized experience.

Marketing is about inspiring action. And international consumers prefer to make buying decisions in their own language.



CONSIDERATION

37%

of international consumers spend more time viewing web content in their own language.

56%

of consumers say that the ability to obtain information in their own language is more important than price.



CONVERSION

76%

of B2C buyers are more likely to make a purchase in their own language.

81%

of B2B buyers are more likely to purchase products with a localized experience.

Common Sense Advisory, CRWB B2C & B2B, 2019



WHERE DO COMPANIES GO WRONG WITH WEBSITE LOCALIZATION?

While companies clearly see the value of websites in reaching domestic consumers, they frequently **fail to connect with what the international consumer is looking for** in their website experience. Some companies fail to localize at all, assuming that international customers will buy in English. Others stop short at translation and **fail to consider that the localized experience they provide is critical to their long-term success in international markets.**

Poor, short-sighted choices made in the early stages of website localization can prohibit longer-term growth, often long before a company realizes this is the case. And this tends to follow a pattern:

1



Short-term thinking and getting stuck on achieving a multilingual presence.

(Hint: translation is a tactic, not your goal.)

2



Focusing on how to get website localization done quickly and efficiently, **rather than why.**

(Hint: it's about marketing ROI, not low-cost translation.)

3



Not considering what drives international consumer **behavior.**

(Hint: the competitive landscape in-market is a big clue.)

4



Confusion over corporate goals and failure to measure ROI.

(Hint: low-cost translation and content reuse is not ROI.)



“

Too often companies find the multilingual websites they launched quickly and efficiently at the start don't support longer-term marketing goals. They find themselves locked into a situation that doesn't support international SEO strategy or enable them to customize UX at the local level. They have to circumvent their website localization investment to support international digital marketing needs. Or they employ local agencies to run digital marketing tactics independently. This is the opposite of efficiency and scale.

”



SHORT-TERM THINKING AND GETTING STUCK ON A MULTILINGUAL PRESENCE

Most companies that want to expand their online presence internationally seek out translation + localization services.

However, most localization service providers (LSPs) work on a centralized model for website content, adapting multiple versions of the original English experience into several target languages (a one-to-many relationship). The primary focus for this model is on engineering as much text and imagery as possible, into as many target languages as possible, as quickly and efficiently as possible.

While this approach delivers great short-term results for in-language content, it **places little focus on locale-specific UX, content relevance, and developing content that drives results for each market.** This can prevent companies from optimizing their online marketing for next-level globalization and improved marketing ROI down the line and can ultimately result in:

- Localized content that has the same look and feel as the US English website. (The local experience isn't customized.)
- Language quality that may be patchy depending on the approach.
- SEO that hasn't been considered or isn't readily supported.
- Difficult-to-produce, locale-specific content based on locally relevant trends and events.
- Difficult-to-run, market-specific campaigns that rely on website content.
- Architecture that can make developing original content impossible.
- Patchy LSP support for copywriting, transcreation, or locale-specific creative.
- Over-emphasis on process-engineering rather than content development.



FOCUSING ON THE HOW, NOT THE WHY

The bias toward localization efficiency almost always comes into play as organizations become concerned with **how to get website localization done**, losing sight of **why they are doing it**.

Establishing long- and short-term marketing goals before taking the leap toward scaling multilingual content seems like an obvious thought process. But often the technical complexities – combined with LSPs driving clients toward cost- and time-efficient solutions (i.e. software) – lead organizations to make short-term decisions based on solving website localization process problems.

While software is critically important in scaling online content, an **over-focus on high-volume, cost-efficient website translation software sidetracks companies and often hijacks business goals (and budgets) as they get “locked in.”**

Understanding what the options are before engaging with a provider is critical, as is taking the time to consider short- and long-term benefits of those options. Seemingly low-effort, quick time-to-market localization options can result in less flexibility and less control over your website. Very few companies would willingly opt into that possibility if they were aware of the pitfalls.

“

Many buyers of language technology complain about the costs they invest in language technology only to discover that they need yet another expensive add-on to make it work with their content management systems.

CSA, Language Services Market, 2019

”



“

Firms generally recognize that content has value in supporting their brand worldwide and attracting and retaining customers. However, executives tend to over-invest in the creation of the original material while scrimping on the localized versions upon which they often depend for a hefty portion of their revenue.

CSA, Global Content Missteps, 2018

”



NOT CONSIDERING WHAT DRIVES INTERNATIONAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Even for companies that recognize the intrinsic value of localization in a global business model, multilingual content is often a low-value, quick-turnaround expense to be managed right at the end of the content-creation process. **There is an inherent disconnect between what effective marketing localization demands and how companies source and engage with services to meet that demand.** For marketing, that's counter intuitive.

Taking the time to understand what drives international consumers can make all the difference. Language is just one piece of the puzzle. Online behavior, digital platform trends, and in-market UX expectations related to navigation, imagery/text ratios, form functionality, shopping cart functionality, and payment options vary greatly from market to market.

Whether you're operating an eCommerce site or selling B2B products and services reliant on lead generation, **it's folly to assume that international consumers will connect with, engage, and convert in the same way as US domestic consumers.**

Factors companies often fail to consider before translating everything





CONFUSION OVER CORPORATE GOALS/FAILURE TO MEASURE ROI

Not establishing clear marketing localization goals could very well be the reason many companies fail to maximize on global opportunity. Lack of buy-in at the corporate level for globalization strategy often results in fragmented localization activities and costly decisions.

“

When prioritizing content, most companies haven't developed the discipline to tier their content based on marketing personas and customer journey maps.

”

Companies often view localization as a cost to be managed versus a measurable investment in growth. This feeds into the efficiency bias, results in the four states of misalignment, and runs two risks:

1. **Compounded revenue loss** as customers flee for better-localized brands.
2. **Stunted global market share**, making it harder to regain in the future.

Marketing localization ROI isn't about content reuse and efficiency. While those things are critical to scaling effective global content, they don't measure the value of your marketing localization efforts. Whether a company is dealing with software lock-in or a lack of strategic thinking around longer-term marketing goals and ROI, a sub-par international online presence becomes a CX-deprived situation that **could lose up to 80% of total addressable market (TAM) across the customer journey.**

The Four States of Misalignment



**DEER IN THE
HEADLIGHTS**

We hope for the best.



**DRIVING
BLIND**

We have no idea what
content our local
customers consume.



**MAGIC
WAND**

We'll search for the perfect
solution until we find it.



**MUDDIED
BUSINESS CASES**

We keep getting sidetracked
in cost-per-word debates.

Model based on CSA

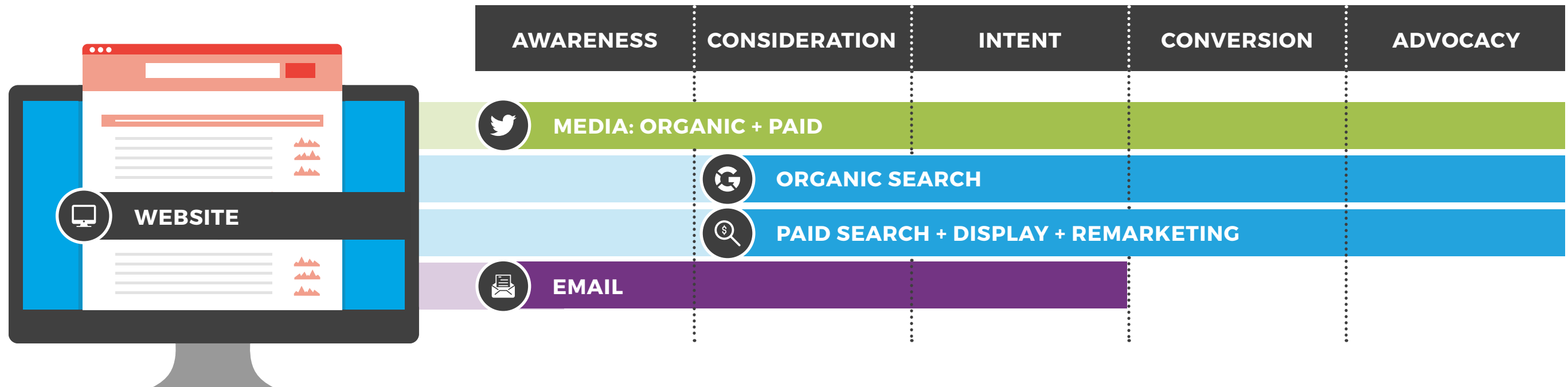


HERE'S HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

CONNECTING THE DOTS BETWEEN MARKETING AND LOCALIZATION BEST PRACTICE

While the missteps that companies make with website localization can vary, the pattern is pretty consistent. Companies of all sizes frequently jump into website localization as a technical endeavor, place emphasis on translation as the goal, consider optimization as an afterthought, and fail to plan for promotional activities and the need to measure and iterate at the local level.

The development of a multilingual website should be driven by **clear content marketing objectives**, which recognize the importance of the **international customer journey** and amplify your opportunity to **connect and engage** with potential customers from awareness to conversion.



Websites, microsites, and landing pages are arguably the most important vehicles in any online content marketing model focused on lead generation and sales.

While many methods can drive traffic, their ability to hold and carry the customer through their journey from consideration to conversion is key to digital marketing success. Websites connect your online sales and marketing with your offline sales and marketing. They're the key method by which consumers will experience and engage with your brand.

Connecting the dots between localization and marketing best practice to drive international success is key to achieving efficient and effective website localization. This enables companies to address both short- and long-term needs while aligning with organizational goals for international growth. **Truly effective website localization is iterative, and based on actionable, measurable insights.** And you don't need a huge technical, operational, or budgetary outlay to drive results. And, if done well, companies can build the case for localization and achieve buy-in at the corporate level over time.

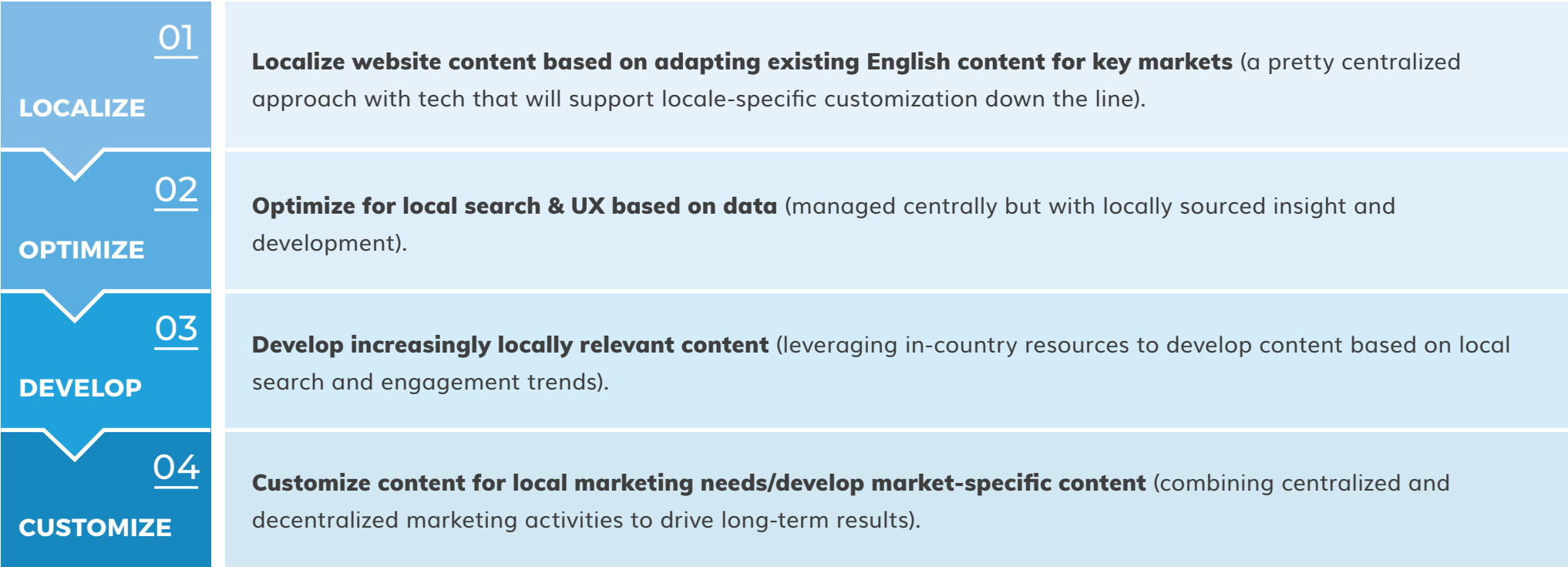


PLANNING WEBSITE LOCALIZATION FOR SHORT- AND LONG-TERM NEEDS

To maximize on international opportunity, your website localization strategy should allow for **longer-term, market-specific content and a tailored UX**, the case for which you will build on a timeline that suits your organization via insights, data, and results.

Remember **translation is a tactic, not your goal**. It's the least you can do to engage with your international audience as a solid first step. Your website localization strategy will mature over time and must be able to pivot with your global digital marketing activities as they develop. For many companies, that means being able to shift from heavily centrally managed multilingual content, to more decentralized local marketing activities.

With that in mind, a truly effective website localization strategy might evolve as follows:



DRIVING FUTURE GROWTH

The best possible way to keep the growth moving is to plan for it in the first place. Don't get stuck at the first hurdle. Serving up multilingual content on your website is the very least you can do to increase your international sales. Your website forms just one part of your digital marketing strategy. You'll need to mobilize your international **digital marketing toolkit to maximize engagement with your international consumers** from awareness to advocacy. Your website, microsite, and landing pages must complement that effort, not become a roadblock to it. And keep in mind that every locale differs. **Digital strategy that works in one market may not work for another.** The right partner will help you to drive results based on individual market nuance.



Above all, **remember the customer journey.** Prioritize the international markets that will drive the most growth for your business. Take the time to consider international customer journeys and develop strategy based on that. Optimize conversion rates based on locale-specific needs. **Make sure your digital marketing tactics work holistically with your content marketing to drive the results you're looking for.** This is where the sweet spot is in maximizing international opportunity, in beating out the competition, and truly reaching a level of localization maturity where international strategy is embedded at every level of the organization, is truly optimized and transparent, and delivers results.

CLICK TO LEARN MORE:





GET IN TOUCH

www.wordbank.com/us

connect@wordbank.com

[in](#) [ig](#) [f](#)

