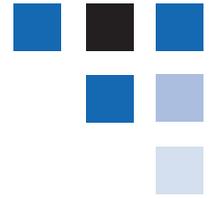


BEST PRACTICE BRIEF

Lack of Translation Affects Purchasing Decisions

By Liz Elting



BEST PRACTICE BRIEF: Lack of Translation Affects Purchasing Decisions

By Liz Elting

International businesses and the customers who buy their products were recently surveyed on the importance of language during the online shopping experience. Surprisingly, a majority of executives ranked translation and localization as minimally important. However, a vast majority of consumers said these elements drive their purchasing decisions. Consumers all over the world prefer to shop in their own language, and they choose to do business with companies that demonstrate cultural understanding and sensitivity.

If you want to grow internationally, you must listen to the desires of your potential customers abroad. To avoid the pitfalls of poorly executed international expansion, follow these tips for translation and localization:

1. Develop an international search engine marketing (ISEM) plan. ISEM starts with research into regionally relevant keywords. Translation and localization experts should be entrusted to lead ISEM efforts because they understand the nuance of regional dialects and conversational speech, as well as the parameters of preferred search engines.

After selecting the effective keywords, organizations can begin building multi-pronged efforts in new markets. This might include targeted pay-per-click ads, relevant landing pages, multilingual rich media, adapted banner ads, out-of-home advertising, experiential marketing with people on the ground, philanthropic community involvement, and events like launch parties and networking functions, as well as social media outreach.

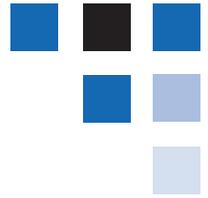
2. Develop quality content. Keywords alone will not achieve corporate goals; content is crucial. Therefore, organizations that rely on “quick fix” solutions like machine translation can put themselves at a greater disadvantage than those that don’t translate at all. Since machine translation is not adept at catching the regional dialects and cultural references that can make or break a campaign, it could end up driving away the very customers you hoped to capture by translating in the first place.

3. Empower customers with options. One way to illustrate awareness about an international customer base is to offer customers a choice of language. Residents in many countries speak multiple languages and become frustrated when content in one language is automatically displayed over another. A pull-down menu of language choices can be effective in breeding customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4. Pictures must be “translated,” too. When an organization decides on an image to accompany its copy, its choice can pay huge dividends by quickly communicating facts or emotions. It can also illustrate the company’s lack of cultural awareness instantly. This can lead to increased website bounce rates and decreased sales. Select images that will resonate in target regions, and confirm assumptions about art choices with localization experts. In addition, remember to add appropriate and specific text in the alternate image tags to make the most of an image’s search engine optimization (SEO) potential.

5. Value your customers with proper translation. This is the most important aspect to expanding your organization internationally: respect your customers. It’s no wonder consumer respondents to the survey mentioned above were turned off by websites with careless translation or lack of demonstrated knowledge about the countries in which they were attempting to sell.

Seventy-three percent of the consumers who participated said they encounter e-commerce websites that are not available in their native languages. Nearly 68 percent said they “always” or “sometimes” encounter website translations that are not correct or are confusing because the writer lacked an understanding of the culture. And more than half said when left to their own devices, they either try to translate material themselves, rely on a browser-based translation application, or terminate their shopping sessions.



When shopping online, consumers around the world want a quality experience. By following some proven best practices, organizations can deliver on customer expectations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Liz Elting *is co-founder and co-CEO of TransPerfect.*