



MULTILINGUAL WEBSITES – POINTS TO CONSIDER

Time scale

- Allow plenty of time for writing copy, taking photographs, page design, translation, typesetting, uploading etc. as it will probably take longer than you think.

Navigation

- If only certain parts of your website are to be translated, access to the original pages needs to be easy and obvious. Use simple links and/or buttons.
- If your site is large, consider adding a site map. This will help your visitors to find what they are looking for.

Content

- Be aware of cultural sensitivity e.g. do not use pictures of scantily-clad women if your site is aimed at the Middle East, and be aware that the colour white is considered unlucky in China.
- Consider whether you want the content to be the same for all languages, or even for different countries using the same language. It might be better to write copy aimed at a specific market e.g. one text for Germans and a slightly different text for, say, Austrians, and then another for Koreans.

Layout

- Bear in mind that the layout will look different in different language versions:
 - Arabic reads from right to left;
 - Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean use different scripts, so the layout may look quite different;
 - Some languages are more “wordy” than others so you may need to reduce the text size to make them fit better. However, Chinese and Japanese pages often have fewer characters so the pages may be shorter.

Updates

- Consider carefully if changes to the original version will mean changes to the other languages. If so, and they are not urgent, collate all the amendments and have them translated as one batch to save costs. Consider making changes only two or three times a year.

Coding

- You will need to translate your keywords, descriptions, page titles, ALT tags (the text that appears when you run the mouse over a graphic) as well as any buttons or other graphics containing text.

Saving money

- An effective cost saving option is to translate only those parts of the site that are relevant for the foreign language market. By simplifying the website you will save on both the initial translation and subsequent updates.
- Another money saving possibility is to translate key documents and brochures and offer them as PDF downloads rather than translating the complete website.

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