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A Field Guide to Multimedia Translation

Discover design and coding best practices for multimedia localization.

Introduction

Translating your website into multiple languages is an incredibly valuable investment for your worldwide business. Customers want—and expect—to transact in their preferred languages. Providing a seamless, personalized experience can positively impact everything from brand awareness to customer acquisition to long-term customer retention.

But today, websites are complex assets that use far more than text to create powerful, persuasive customer experiences. Images, video, downloadable assets and other multimedia now make up the bedrock of creating outstanding websites. Translating this valuable material requires the right blend of technology and expertise.

In this short guide, we'll walk through the best practices for translating multimedia content on your site, and some tips and tricks to ensure that your global visitors have a world-class experience on your digital properties.

Complete Translation

Often, companies embarking on a website localization project are overwhelmed—or

even intimidated—by the idea of trying to translate their entire website.

So instead, they'll opt for translating only part of the site, such as the more simplistic text elements. They leave the more complex dynamic media aside.

This can be a costly mistake. Partially-translated content leads to a “mixed language” experience on a website, where some sections of the website—or even parts of a webpage—are translated, while others are not.

That means global customers are encountering images, videos or interactive assets that they cannot understand. This can feel amateurish to a user, and sends the message that your organization isn't truly committed to their market—or their business.



The best option is to **translate your site completely**, including all multimedia assets across the site. Great technology partners can easily help with this at the outset, working with you to discover and identify all the translatable content on your site and include it in your initial translation efforts.

Plus, leading vendors should be able to automatically find and translate any new content you put on your site after your localized site is live. This way, your translation process doesn't miss a beat even as you add content, products and more to your website.

The best vendors also enable you to leverage those translations for offline use as sales assets or in marketing campaigns, which can help maximize the return on your translation investment.

Develop Style Guide and Glossaries

As you take your business global, you're counting on your brand to bring the right tone, messaging and value proposition into new markets. And as you translate your content into new languages, you don't want to compromise any of the investment you've made in your brand equity.

As you expand your site into global markets, work with both your internal teams and vendors to develop **brand guides, style guides and glossaries** of key terms and brand verbiage to help aid in the translation of your site.

Whether you're working with plain text or something more dynamic and nuanced like demonstration videos, a style guide can help translators preserve your brand voice and personality when working through translations, and ensure consistency across markets and geographies.

Plus, continuity across media—whether textual, visual or interactive—can ensure that your customers in any market experience your brand and messaging exactly the way you intend ... and that your unique value shines through, no matter the language.



Optimize Visual Assets

Your teams work hard to create a visually appealing, immersive experience on your website that draws users in and encourages them to keep interacting with your content.

As you craft multimedia content for your flagship website, consider a few handy tips for ensuring that your visual assets—images, videos, PDFs or interactive applications—are optimized to make translating and redeploying them in new languages easy and streamlined.

A few things to remember:



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KEEP TEXT SEPARATE FROM IMAGES

Rather than embedding translatable text in flattened images, keep text externalized to speed up the translation process and bolster your international SEO. You'll also save time and money by eliminating the complicated graphic work that would otherwise be part of the translation process.



USE .SUB OR .XML FILES TO SEPARATE VIDEO CAPTIONS

Keeping a video's subtitles text separate from the media itself also speeds up the translation process, increases discoverability by search engines and simplifies the effort required to translate these assets.



USE CODE TO DICTATE WHERE VISUAL ASSETS APPEAR

Rather than defining “absolute” positions and dimensions for images, allow them to move dynamically with the rest of the design so that any translations that result in longer word count will fluidly adapt to the design. That goes for CSS styling and JavaScript templates, too.



Preserve Search Engine Optimization

You've likely made substantial investments in search engine optimization for your flagship website. You'll want to do as much as possible to preserve your successful SERP and keyword work in your site translations, too.

Many translation vendors can't easily work with metadata, which is the all-important "invisible" text and information that helps search engines find your content and rank it for authority. This impacts where your site appears in search results.

Look for a vendor that can easily work with the metadata across your site, including and especially the metadata on your multimedia content. Whether it's the alt text for an image or the title and description for a video, the interactive content you have across your site can dramatically impact search engine optimization.

Good translation vendors can translate your website content and all the metadata from the origin language into the new languages for your new markets.

The best vendors also suggest ways to:

- ▶ Localize translations and content for regional and local search terms
- ▶ Use keywords that are popular with global audiences
- ▶ Attract the attention of smaller search engines that might be used only in local or regional areas

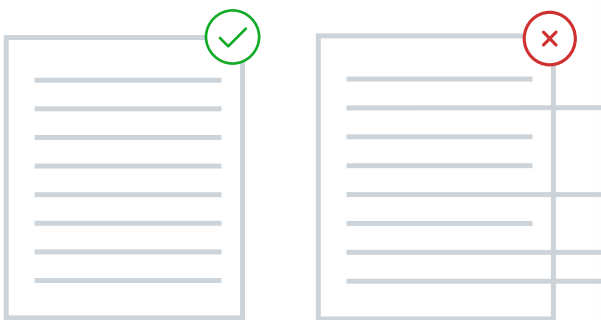
Aim for Design Consistency

One of the sneakiest challenges of website translation has nothing to do with the translation of language itself. It's what happens to the site after you try to integrate newly translated text into the design.

"Word growth" is the commonly-used term for when translated copy exceeds the word and character count of the origin language content. This can be a real headache when you're adapting your website design—or redesigning your site—and trying accommodate translated content.

For instance, website templates that were designed with only one language in mind (often English) can “break” while trying to accommodate longer words or phrases. Meticulously-designed pages now appear disjointed and sloppy. Navigation menus are wrecked by word wrap.

You can proactively avoid some of these issues by using flexible design parameters in individual elements to ensure that they can adjust to small changes in word and character count.



By defining CSS styles globally rather than locally and using “relative” design elements (like ‘float left’ or ‘align center’) vs. absolute (350px wide, indent 50px), many of your multimedia files will accommodate small word growth adjustments seamlessly and easily.

Bringing on board an experienced translation partner can help, too, when there are more substantial adjustments you must make to accommodate new languages while preserving your site design.

A great vendor has the human experts on hand to anticipate these design challenges, advise on preventative measures you can take for your multimedia element design, and work with you to make adaptations so your multilingual sites provide the same outstanding experiences as your flagship site.



Use Coding Best Practices

Employing a few additional tips and tricks to the code behind your website can also hugely help when redesigning your site and deploying multilingual websites.

For example:

- ▶ **Select fonts that offer support for alternate language character sets**
- ▶ **Standardize naming JavaScript and JSON files that have translatable content so they're more easily processed for translation**
- ▶ **Skip the use of html tags inside sentences which can hinder translation quality**
- ▶ **Don't use on-page or URL literals to drive any logic elements on the site**
- ▶ **Use "disable" directive tags for any content that should not be translated**

Work With Best-In-Class Partners

The investment you're making in your international website and its multimedia experience is a substantial one. It's worth partnering with a leading translation vendor that can help with more than just language translation.

Experienced translation vendors should be able to provide other guidance on how to build, structure or re-design website elements to simplify and streamline any translation work.

A turn-key solution can ensure that you have the human expertise available to answer questions, solve tricky challenges, anticipate future growth and scale to ensure that your website translation always stays on track.





Best-in-class vendors can offer:

- ▶ **The best quality translation**—using a blend of machine and human technologies—and teams to do in-depth quality assurance.
- ▶ **Technology independence**, and the ability to redesign or re-platform your site as needed without impacting your translation technology.
- ▶ **Effortless workflow management**, saving your internal teams countless hours of frustrating process oversight.
- ▶ **Ongoing management of your multilingual site**, including detecting new content and multimedia as its added and automatically queueing it for translation.

As your international brand grows and scales, so too will the dynamic customer experience you can offer your global website customers. A smart investment in multimedia translation can provide an engaging website experience that encourages your global visitors to interact with content, learn about your company, and ultimately, become customers for life.

About MotionPoint

MotionPoint solves the operational complexity and cost of website localization. Unlike all other approaches, our technology and turn-key solution are built specifically for this purpose.

We translate, deploy, and operate multilingual websites, optimizing the customer experience across all channels.



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MotionPoint Corporation

info@motionpoint.com

www.motionpoint.com