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## Design and Development Best Practices for Multilingual Websites

Learn how to optimize design and development elements for streamlined website translation.

## Introduction

Ensuring global customers can intuitively navigate your company's website is essential to creating a positive brand experience.

After all, local customers in your secondary markets want a great UX just as much as your primary-market customers do.

That means making smart choices about your website's design and build—especially if you plan on translating your website. By following a few key design principles, you can make it fast, easy and budget-friendly to ensure your localized websites deliver the same great UX and customer experience as your flagship website.

This guide provides actionable best practices for designers, developers and content creators to streamline the process of localizing your web content for global customers, mitigate site disruptions, minimize costs and more.

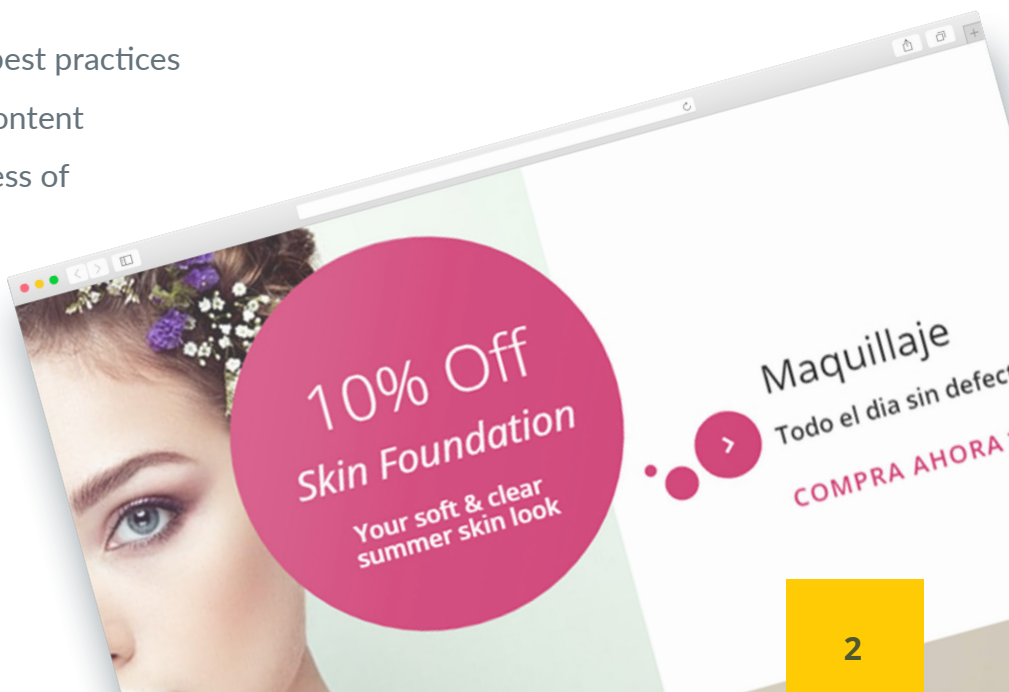
## How Design Affects Translation

Today's global customers demand satisfying, enriching, positive digital user experiences. And because so much business is digitally-driven, online customers are increasingly aware of what your website is offering—and what it's lacking.

When your localized sites aren't built to ease translation efforts, a host of user functionality problems can result, including:

- × Partially-translated content
- × Confusing or broken menu links
- × Content that doesn't appear in local search engines
- × Dynamic forms that aren't optimized for the expectations of local customers

And more



**This can alienate your international customers, fast.** They'll assume your brand doesn't value their market very much. That can drive them away—right into the arms of your competitors.

Fortunately, the way your team builds your flagship website can greatly ease the translation and localization process. Following the best practices outlined here will:

- ✓ Accelerate the turnaround time for translation
- ✓ Keep costs manageable by eliminating additional or repetitive work
- ✓ Maximize the use of already-translated and approved content
- ✓ Improve localized search engine results
- ✓ Provide a satisfying user experience for customers in every market you serve



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## Design and Layout Considerations

Images on your flagship website can change frequently or contain text that should be updated from time to time. Any text in these images should be translated on your global websites, too.

To streamline image translation while avoiding extra design work:

## DO:

- ✓ Separate text from imagery and multimedia applications, rather than embedding the text layer into a flattened .jpg or .png.
- ✓ Consider using automated text generation on translatable images.
- ✓ Let “parent” elements set the positioning of nested elements. If an image needs to be resized, the new dimension should “push” the surrounding elements vertically or horizontally, rather than overlapping them.
- ✓ Ensure an element’s positioning source code represents its visual positioning on the page. For example, if an image is visually placed on the right side of the page, its positioning code should be “align: right, float: right.”
- ✓ Organize sprite images vertically whenever possible (unless it dramatically affects file size), as this allows for word growth when translating an image in multiple languages.

## DON'T:

- ✗ Use width and height attributes. The image’s dimensions should define its size on the page. Images should “float freely” on the page.
- ✗ Embed prices or dynamic offers within imagery unless via externalized text to eliminate the risk of displaying stale pricing or offers.
- ✗ Merge images to create a larger image where text is used.
- ✗ Use absolute positioning for nested elements.



# Word Growth and Misalignment

When translating your flagship website's text into other languages, phrases can require significantly more words (or sometimes fewer words) to convey the same connect than the original language. This common occurrence is called word growth or word expansion, and can create design problems on your localized sites.



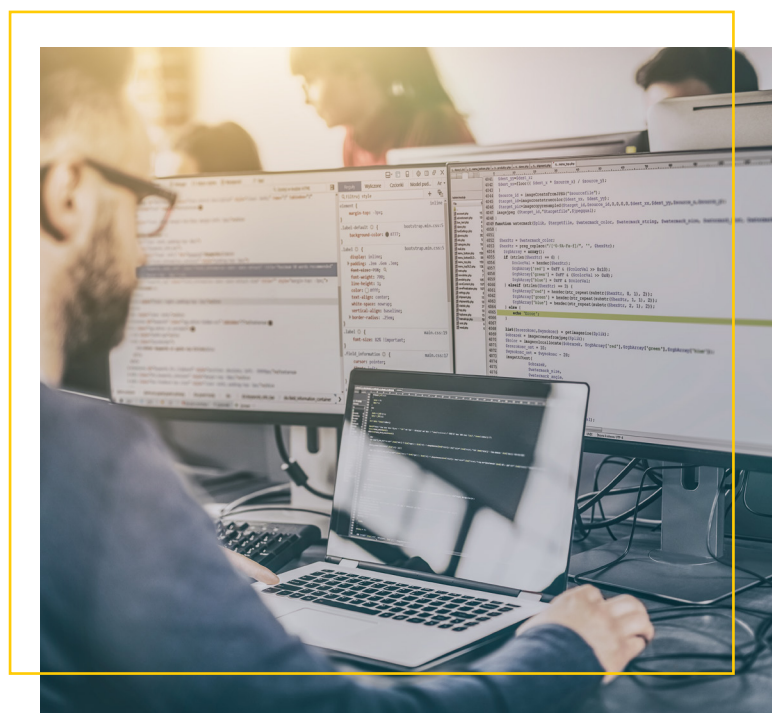
However, you can proactively plan for—and elegantly sidestep—these potential disruptions.

## DO:

- ✓ Make page templates fully dynamic to accommodate text growth. Allow word-wrap rather than word overflow (for text).
- ✓ Some languages, such as Arabic, change content direction to read right to left, which often requires custom layout/formatting from your origin site. To accommodate this:
  - Use both global and localized CSS to align text without fixed values.
  - Use localized CSS to position floating and/or fixed elements.
- ✓ Create breathing space within JS, CSS and HTML templates
- ✓ If you must embed content within JS, name JS files so that it is clear where the content appears on the website.
- ✓ Organize sprite images vertically whenever possible (unless it dramatically affects file size), as this allows for word growth when translating an image in multiple languages.

## DON'T:

- ✗ Use in-line style, which is especially problematic for languages reading right to left.
- ✗ Control capitalization via CSS.
- ✗ Embed text into imagery or JS if it can be avoided.



## Quick Guide: Word Growth

Keep in mind the approximate word and character growth per language (relative to English).

Language	Word Growth
Spanish	20%
French	20%
Chinese	-11%
German	18%
Portuguese	17%
Japanese	-40%
Russian	18%
Arabic	5%
Italian	17%
Korean	-37%

## Coding Considerations

When it comes to multimedia and omnichannel content, a few coding best practices can make a dramatic difference in easing translation concerns such as:

- ✓ Reduced translation costs
- ✓ Increased translation speed
- ✓ Improved regional SEO

## Videos

We recommend the following best practices to ensure text is easy to translate and detectable by local search engines.

- ✓ Externalize text from video files whenever possible.
- ✓ Use .sub (subtitle) or .xml files for externalized text.

## Omnichannel Content

Ensure your localization solution handles many media types, not just websites. This includes:

- ✓ In-store signage
- ✓ PDFs
- ✓ Product documentation
- ✓ Mobile applications
- ✓ Emails
- ✓ Social media streams

To take full advantage of this capability, your team should externalize the content from your omnichannel assets using file types such as:

- ✓ .xliif – for InDesign source files
- ✓ .xml – for mobile applications
- ✓ .html – for marketing emails

**This content, now separated from design elements, makes it easier, faster and more affordable to localize for many markets.**

## Display Functionality

Display elements such as fonts, dynamic fields, encoding tags and more can disrupt localized site functionality—unless you properly plan for them before translation begins.

To ensure proper translation and display of content on your localized sites, make sure to:

- ✓ Select fonts that support alternate language character sets.
- ✓ Avoid on-page and URL literals to drive logic.
- ✓ Use standardized JS and JSON naming conventions to identify content for translation.
- ✓ Use standalone phrases from dynamic sources (e.g., CMS, JSON, JS, XML).
- ✓ Avoid the use of `<span>` tags within sentences.
- ✓ Apply 'disable' Directive Tags around content that should not be translated.



## Back-End Functionality

The conventions for listing units of measure, dates, postal codes and more can also change from market to market. Take these local conventions into account as you design your site.

These steps can help:

- ✓ Enable users to input time, currency, dates, zip codes, etc., according to local expectations.
- ✓ Allow users to select local units of measure (e.g., standard to metric, Fahrenheit to Celsius).
- ✓ Leverage existing translations for metadata.
- ✓ When using dynamic fields, break content into easily translatable segments.
- ✓ Use JS `f(x)` to alphabetize lists.

## Conclusion

When your website templates and multimedia assets are designed to streamline localization efforts, you can ensure continuing site functionality for global customers, while also significantly lowering ongoing translation costs.

Contact us if you'd like more information about these website design and build best practices, or other ways MotionPoint can help you save money.

## 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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