



Online store localization made easy: the ultimate guide to your international web store

Checklist included





Want to break into new markets with your online store and win customers around the world? A professional localization strategy helps you do exactly that. And Supertext is here to help you find yours, no matter what you want to sell: be it fashion, technology, convenience and lifestyle products, or something else entirely – we'll put in a good word for you across the globe.

Leverage local thinking to achieve global success and discover what it takes to localize your store for new markets. Step one? Keep reading.



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5 reasons to localize your on- line store

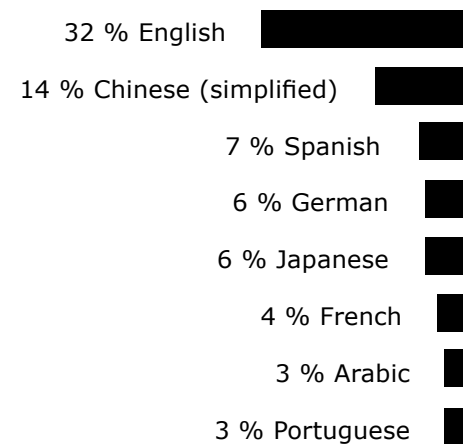
In 2020, global e-commerce sales rose by more than 27%. Websites are usually a customer's first point of contact with a brand or company. This means that if you're running an exclusively online store, that first impression might be your only one. Alongside the products on sale, user experience plays a decisive role.

An online store in the user's native language is an experience that cannot be rivaled –and it makes customers more likely to dig deep into their pockets. The more languages you offer, the greater your chances of success. Here are the five most important reasons why.

Win over customers

According to the international "Can't Read, Won't Buy" survey, 40% of users will not buy products from online stores in languages other than their native one. 72% would rather buy a product if some information, even just customer reviews, is available in their own language. In order to turn casual users into repeat customers, you have to knock on their doors and talk with them like a local.

English gives you access to 32% of the world's customers. That's not bad, but if you added another seven languages, you could reach a full 75% of global customers. The most important languages for store growth are:



Top eight languages by GDP

Source: CSA Research

Increase your revenue per sale

Buying products in an online store that you don't fully understand or that you don't think looks right feels a bit risky – especially when a purchase is going to be expensive. What's called "social proof" can tip the scales. Social proof is content that serves as an indication of a product's quality and the concrete experience of using it, such as customer reviews.

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Social proof is especially convincing when made by and with real people with whom the customer can identify. This is most effective when they all speak the same language.

Don't rely on discounts

The "Can't Read, Won't Buy" survey also shows that 54% of users are actually ready to pay more for products when they see information in their own language. Localization therefore offers a clear competitive advantage – one that even pays off if you have higher prices than your competition.

Create trust

Localizing a website sends two clear signals. First, it's professional – you and your store look like a serious business. Second, it shows that you've done your research about the target market and can offer customers the right product for their needs. Both of these bolster customers' trust and confidence in you. This trust is decisive for success in online retail.

You build a sustainable relationship with your customer base

People are social beings – they want to buy things from humans, not robots. Think about a farmer's market: aren't the friendly vendors at the stands all part of the shopping experience? The same is true of online stores: one translated by a machine will sound mechanical and will hardly persuade anyone to make a purchase.

For long-term loyalty, your products and services need to be convincing. Then, one day in the future when a customer needs to make another purchase, they'll think of you – if you speak their language.

A final note from the "Can't Read, Won't Buy" survey: 75% of users will look for an alternative store in their own language rather than returning to their previous provider. Work on forging a lasting relationship, and your happy customers will come back, again and again.

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Start to finish: 10 steps to localizing an online store

Localizing an online store can give anyone a boost, from startups to international corporations. And though every project is unique, the basic concept is always the same. Success is just a question of executing it properly. This step-by-step guide is designed to help.

Before we get started, here are the terms you need to know

What is localization?

Localization is the process of tailoring online stores to the cultural context of each market or country. The aim is to give every user the same emotional experience as in the original. Translating a text is just one part of the process – images, colors and appeals to the target audience can all be tailored as well.

What is internationalization?

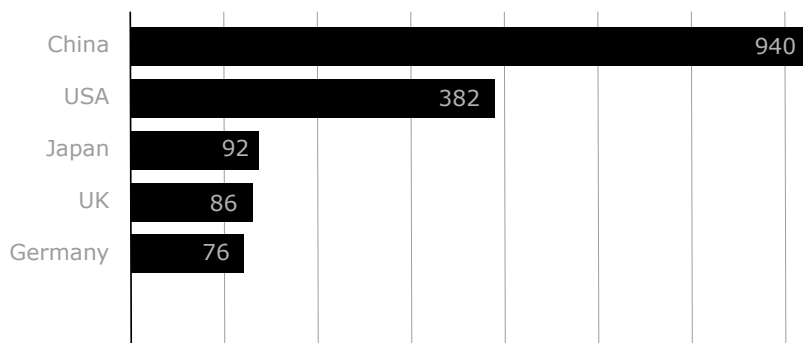
Internationalization encompasses the technical requirements for localization and involves coding the website to enable it to handle multiple versions in different languages. This affects elements of the user interface (UI), such as character and date formats, numbers and currencies.

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1. Define target markets

Before you proceed any further, ask yourself: where in the world holds the greatest chance of success for your store and products? Your execs are usually the ones who will decide whether to target multiple markets or just the one. Getting your hands on statistics about the most popular target markets is a good starting point.



The biggest markets in e-commerce in 2020 by sales (in EUR million)

Source: Statista

Existing website visitors can give you an insight into potential markets. Take a look at your analytics: in which countries or language areas were your products clicked on most often? Localized content can increase sales several times over in places that already show interest in your products.

Export products: international niche trends for 2021

Beauty products for men, home workout equipment, books about politics, natural hair care for women, natural and handmade pet products.

Source: Ecomdash.com

2. Check the conditions on the ground

Once you've decided which countries you're heading to, the next step is to take stock of the terrain.

- Which languages are spoken there?
- How do local consumers behave?
- What preferences do they have when shopping?
- What are the legal regulations governing retail?
- Does your current store design (e.g. images, colors) appeal to the local culture?

Doing your market research homework up front will save you time and resources later on. You'll find out how to get your products

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and store ready for success. It's not only about the language – it's also about the prices you set, delivery conditions (shipping costs, delivery location, timing) payment methods and customer service requirements. Adjustments aren't only necessary for far-off regions like Singapore or Switzerland – even customers just across the pond in the UK prefer different advertising styles to those in the US.

Getting a clear picture at this stage gives you a better overview of the potential challenges involved. Information about local cultures can be found in online communities or (digital) events. Online surveys or – even better – a language service provider with experts in your target country can help you identify the changes you should make for a strong launch in the new market.

Doing your research well in advance will also give your store developers plenty of time to make the necessary adjustments. It's time to move on to point three.

Studies show that the right payment method can equate to around 20% more sales for your online store. Here are the most popular payment methods by country:

Germany	Credit card, PayPal, Pay Later by Klarna
France	Credit/debit card, PayPal
Switzerland	Invoice, credit card
Japan	Konbini (paying in convenience stores on receipt), credit card, Amazon Pay
China, Singapore	Alipay, credit/debit card
USA	Credit card, PayPal

Source: Shopify

An example of legal regulations:

In Germany, the last stage of the purchase process is required by law to be called "buy" or "order for a fee". In France, there's a two-click rule: the privacy policy and legal information have to be a maximum of two clicks away from anywhere in the store.

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3. Check the store's technical requirements

Many websites are internationalized by default – in other words, programmed to accommodate multiple languages. If yours isn't not, you'll need to change the code, which is why a good relationship with your development experts is essential for successful e-commerce localization.

Here are the technical details you need to get right:

- URL structure: country-specific domains such as supertext.de/ supetext.fr or general top-level domains with subdomains, such as de.supertext.com/fr.supertext.org etc,
- Server location defined through the IP address and hreflang attribute for the different language versions
- Character and number formats, text alignment
- Integration of different payment methods
- Currency programming and individual pricing

Depending on the solution chosen for each store, various tools and plug-ins are available to support multiple languages:

- Shopify: Langify, Weglot
- Shopware: Crowdin
- WooCommerce, Squarespace: WPML, Polylang

4. Set the project timeline

The next step is to decide when your online store should be ready to go live. For large-scale projects, start by localizing the one or two languages that need to go online first. As a rule of thumb, a website of around 20,000 words will take two to three working weeks for each target language. Multiple languages can also be worked on at the same time.

In addition to determining the deadlines, you should also ask yourself which internal and external teams need to be involved and how you're planning to localize the store. At which

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stage of the product's development cycle should you commission the translations? Do you want to localize the store in multiple languages in parallel or one after the other?

[Find out more about the different project management methods you can use here.](#)

Your approach will ultimately come down to the resources you are relying on – and what your language service provider can offer you. This brings us to the next step.

Human or machine?

How much creative translation work does your online store need? And where does machine translation suffice? The service you choose will affect your schedule and language service provider.

You can find out more in step seven.

5. Select your language service provider (LSP)

Localizing an online store involves more than just translation, which is why doing it yourself or using Google Translate are not realistic options. That's how you end up with a German homepage named *Zuhause* (rather than the standard "Home", borrowed from the English) or "page views" that have become "page consultations" in French.

Partnering with a professional localization company will not only give you access to the linguistic expertise you need, but will also provide the requisite cultural insight and essential technology.

Here are a few pointers to help you find your dream localization partner:

- Quality standards (ISO certification, native speakers, etc.)
- Areas of expertise and experience (fields, content types, etc.)
- Price
- Size
- Technology and processes
- Location

For detailed tips on choosing a language service provider, check out [our blog article](#).

Your choice of partner depends on your specific requirements. A startup looking to offer its online store in just one other language, for example, may go for a boutique agency. If you want to enter multiple markets or already have an international presence, a global full-service provider may be what you need.

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6. Define the technical setup

Shopify, Jimdo, Magento, Shopware, STRATO, WooCommerce, Contao – no matter which e-commerce software you work with, managing translations manually is a huge amount of work, and you're bound to make some mistakes if you try to go it alone. Automating this workflow should be your goal. And that's just a question of finding the right translation interface.

Professional translation plug-ins can be integrated with any e-commerce software or CMS. Orders go directly to the translators through the plug-in and automatically return to you on completion. You can find out more about how this works for Shopify stores [in this blog post](#).

Software for product information management (PIM) and a translation management system (TMS) simplify the translation process, especially when dealing with multiple languages.

Why do you need a PIM system?

A product information management (PIM) system centralizes and automates all of your product-specific data and processes. If you have an extensive range of products in different warehouses and countries, this software is essential. It stores:

- multilingual product information and data (measurements, weights, certificates, etc.)
- Customer reviews and USPs
- Images with multilingual names, Titles and meta tags
- Safety and operational manuals, Warranty conditions

The translation memory saves every translated word and suggests the existing translation if the same (or a similar) passage comes up again. Together with the terminology database (termbase), it ensures consistency and faster turn-around times. You can thus seamlessly translate anything from a whole new collection to small tweaks to existing copy, and process thousands of product texts per week directly in your CMS.

With the right technical setup, translating into several languages at the same time becomes a simple task. The advantage of continuous localization is that the various teams aren't dependent on one another and the turnaround times are shorter. Localized content can therefore go live

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at any time, regardless of whether a development sprint is taking place. You can find more information [here](#).

What is a TMS?

A translation management system (TMS) manages and consolidates translation projects on a central platform. It also establishes a channel between the customer and the LSP, allowing the former to send all content for translation at the click of a button. The translated texts can then be integrated directly into the store again. Status tracking provides an overview of ongoing projects, and processes can be automated to make them faster.

7. Make the necessary linguistic and cultural adjustments. From machine translation through to transcreation.

Now we can get down to business: say the word and your entire online store will be localized. Depending on the content, you can take advantage of human translation, machine translation, or both. Define for yourself which content on your website gets the most attention and where a basic translation without all the bells and whistles is enough.

Here's a breakdown of which service is suited to which type of content:

Content	Service
Landing pages, info pages (e.g. About us), SEO texts	Human translation
User comments, product texts, FAQs	Machine Translation with post-editing
Marketing texts, headlines, claims	Transcreation (creative Translation)

Choosing a service to translate your online store – an example

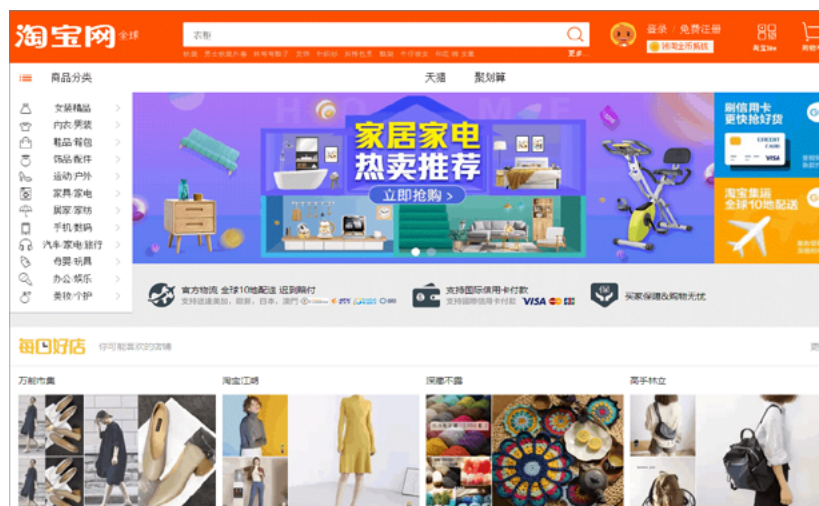
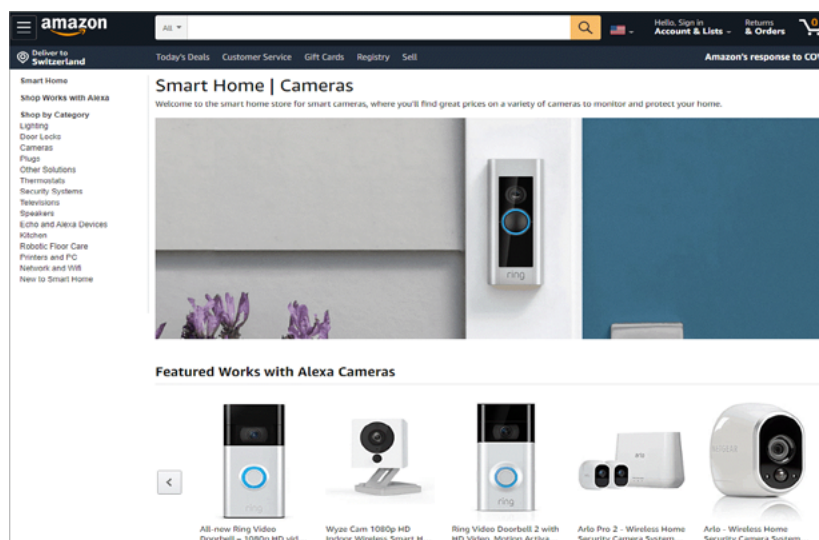
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You'll need to localize a lot more than just the online store content: marketing materials such as campaign texts or emails, as well as keywords and advertising clips, all need to be adapted, too. [Jump ahead to step eight for more information on this.](#)

In most cases, the translation will take place in CSV, JSON or XLIFF files containing all the store content in the form of strings. The translated content will also be reimported to your website in the same way.

For an authentic user experience, you'll also need to make cultural adjustments for your target audience. This means the users should feel as though the store was developed exclusively for them. Tailoring the user experience (UX) to the culture and habits of each market involves checking number and date formats, units of measurement, appeals to the users and imagery. Each market and region will have different color preferences, for example. By internationalizing your store, you've already laid the technical foundations for this.



Amazon vs Taobao store design

Western users are accustomed to minimalist designs, while Asian users prefer colorful pages full of content.

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8. Adapting communication for marketing

Most users find your store or product page via one of two methods:

1. By accessing a URL, for example via links on third-party pages (referrals) such as comparison websites, blogs or campaigns on social media.
2. Via keyword and product searches using search engines such as Google and Bing.

The sources of traffic and your marketing tools are therefore the same across the globe. However, the precise measures you take can vary considerably from country to country.

If you want your store's products to be found by a local audience, you need localized keywords. This is the only way results will appear when somebody searches in a different language or location. Just quickly translating search terms, meta tags and title tags won't cut it here. Keywords need to be reanalyzed for each new market, since search habits are different in each place.

Furthermore, you need to know which search engines users are getting information from: what Google is to the US and many other parts of the world, Baidu and Yandex are to China and Russia respectively.

Here are two examples of how local idiosyncrasies take on a key role in online searches:

1. If someone searches for a special offer in Germany, they type "Sonderangebot" into the search field. However, in Switzerland, they'd type in "Aktion".
2. Is this your fall collection, or your autumn collection? Google Translate suggests the former – and while this is perfect for the US market, you'll achieve many more hits with "autumn collection" in the UK.

Furthermore, campaign texts on social media and other platforms should feel authentic to the target audience. This can be achieved by correctly addressing the user. While English has no distinction between polite and informal pronouns, for example, other languages do – and referring to a French speaker with the informal "tu" on your online store might sink it. You also have to take into account customers' expectations of how an

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appeal will be made. Some stereotypes have a grain of truth: German speakers like information that provides concrete added value, while US-based users respond more to emotional appeals. The campaign visuals should also be adapted where possible, because they could have different cultural associations depending on the target country.

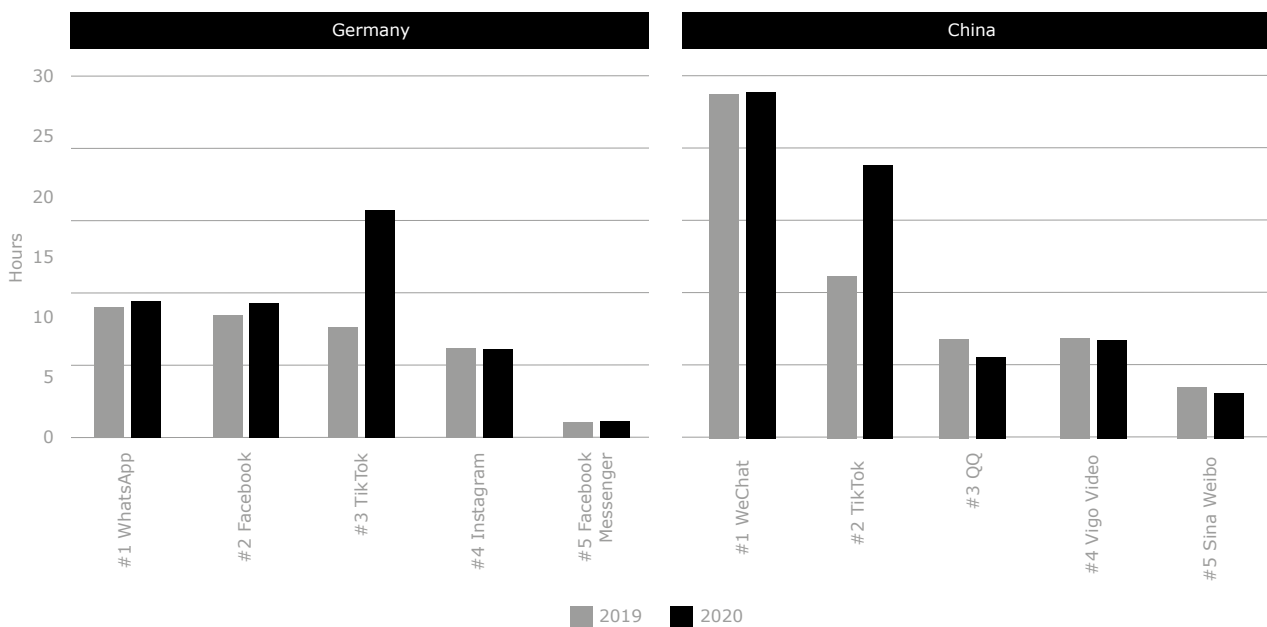
Think about which texts your customers see. When they're buying something, what automated emails do they receive? Which re-marketing campaigns are running in the background? This way, you can be sure you've translated every bit of text.

It's also important to consider which social media platforms are actually being used in which market. Find out what the most popular social channels are in your target market – whether Facebook, Instagram, WeChat or something else – and set up your marketing campaign accordingly.

Stork vs peaches

In the world of marketing and communication, it's not enough to just translate words, as Procter & Gamble found out in the 1970s. When they launched disposable Pampers diapers in the Japanese market, Japanese parents were confused by the advertising campaign, which portrayed a stork carrying a diaper.

P&G only found out later that according to Japanese folklore, it's not the stork that brings babies; according to the legend of Momotaro, they float down the river in a giant peach.



The most popular social media platforms in Germany and China by monthly usage

Source: App Annie

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9. Testing the user experience

Now that your translations are complete, the next step is to test the user experience and the store elements in your current layout. You can conduct the initial functionality test internally, with the next step being a beta test with users in the target market and on devices commonly used there. Local experts from your LSP will often take on this task. The online store is tested for its user-friendliness:

- Is the online store simple and easy to use in the new language on different end devices?
- Are there translation errors or missing text that only becomes apparent in context?
- Do display problems need to be rectified due to space limitations or line breaks, for example in headlines, categories or the navigation options?

By checking for completeness in the different languages, you improve the user experience and can iron out any final display errors. At the same time, there is no need for any subsequent bug fixes or rounds of revisions, and users experience fewer problems when first using the site, allowing a faster and more successful market launch.

10. Localize again. And again. And again.

You've made it to the final step in this journey and your localized online store is ready for launch. Congratulations! Now all you have to do is keep an eye on your analytics and keywords performance, and track how your website traffic and conversions increase. However, localization doesn't stop with the launch of the new version of your online store. It's always in flux due to the addition of new features, content and business areas, and this has to be reflected in the localized versions. In other words, localization is a continuous, never-ending process.

What's more, if your store is successful, you can always consider adding more languages and markets. In that case, go back to step seven and start again. The best part? Your teams and LSP have already worked together and can jump straight back into the process. You've probably chosen continuous localization as the strategy for your online store anyway. Congratulations – you've laid the foundations for limitless growth.

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Four areas where you can save money when localizing

Localizing an online store has a price. This depends on various things, such as project size, language combinations and your service provider's resources. However, there are opportunities to save and still get a convincing result. We'll show you what they are.

Preparing the project correctly

Time is money. You pay for every hour that localization specialists spend preparing the translation and for any questions they have. Get your project on the right track from the start by thinking about internationalization as early as possible. Are the format and technical specifications correct? Do you need to clear anything up with the developers? The more things you can organize early on, the shorter the localization stage will be.

This also applies to the content itself: the best way to prepare the texts for localization is by shortening the original text length and avoiding any jargon or slang. You should also clearly mark the areas of text that are specifically intended for the local target audience. To make things even clearer for the translator, include any source files or contextual information.

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Choose machine translation where possible

Your goal is to be multilingual. But there's no reason you can't economize on the way. In other words, you don't need to give every sentence the same treatment. According to CSA Research, product reviews, the navigation options and the support page are the most important content in website localization. These are also the areas with the most savings potential – and this is where machine translation comes in. Customer feedback describes consumers' actual experiences with your products or services. This user-generated content doesn't need to sound good – honest feedback is best, even when it's blunt. And the same is true of the translation. Here, speed and intelligibility are more important than well-written, error-free texts.

As machine translation costs just a fraction of human translation, it's a win-win scenario: 25% machine translation can mean up to 40% in total savings. With post-editing (revision by a human), you can eliminate the biggest translation blunders and also save more money to spend on translations where quality really matters.

Did you know?

It's been found that users actually rate the online shopping experience higher if the reviews have clearly been translated by a machine.

Invest in useful technology

Calculations from the last few years show that using CAT tools achieves 30% lower costs and shorter turnaround times for translations. It also improves quality and saves time internally.

Using technology also has other advantages: interfaces with CMS or PIM systems ensure maximum automation, increase project management efficiency and save money in the long term. Manual work is done away with and you can enter the market faster. What seem like higher costs in the first instance due to one-time account fees have actually been proven to increase the ROI, as these services pay for themselves several times over in the long run.

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Define deadline priorities

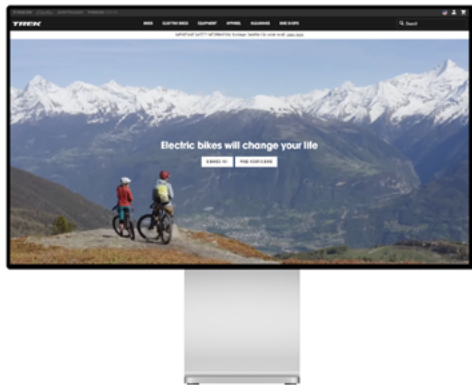
Alongside quality, you should also set priorities for deadlines. Concentrate on the areas that will make the greatest impact in the shortest amount of time. Market research or a quick look at your analytics can help: do most users enter your site via your homepage? Then start by localizing the navigation options. Are customers jumping ship at the checkout process? Then first look at localizing the payment and shipping options. The rest can be taken care of as you go.

If you're continually localizing, you don't have to wait so long to go live. You're also doing your future self a favor. After all, an online retail store is always changing – from just a small content update to a whole new product collection. According to CSA Research, 67% of people said they were happy with a website that is half localized. So there is something to be said for proceeding strategically and resourcefully, rather than trying to do everything at once.



Success stories

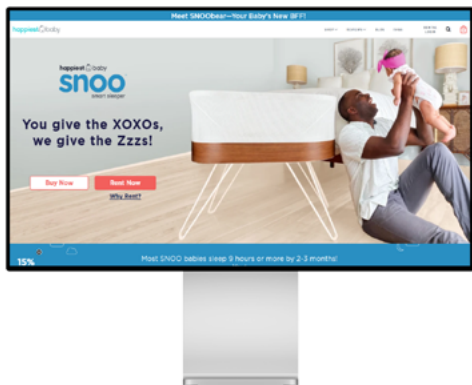
Learn more about localization in e-commerce – with specific examples. From small companies to large global conglomerates, from fashion brands to bike manufacturers.



Trek

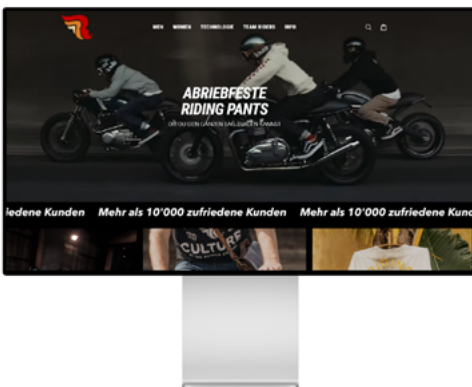
The bike manufacturer launched in 85 countries. With Supertext as its creative localization partner.

[Find out more](#)



Happiest Baby

Supertext is helping the successful US brand with its European market launch.



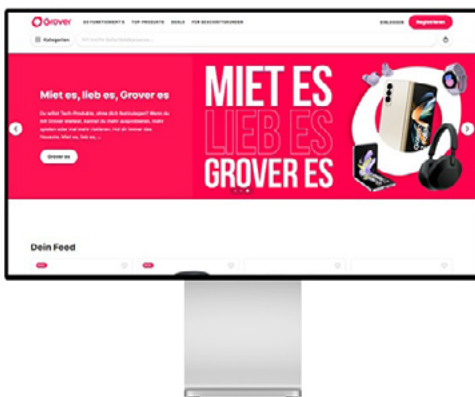
Riding Culture

From underdog to successful brand thanks to slogans that inspire bikers across the world.

[Find out more](#)

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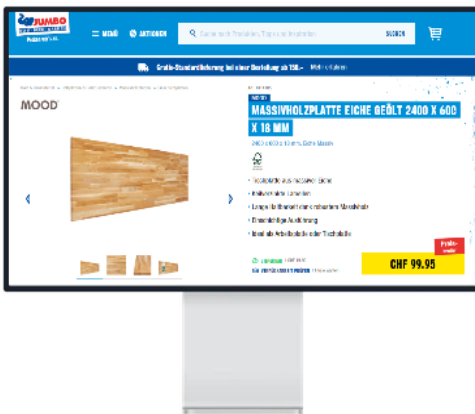




Grover

The e-commerce phenomenon expands with full-service linguistic support from Supertext.

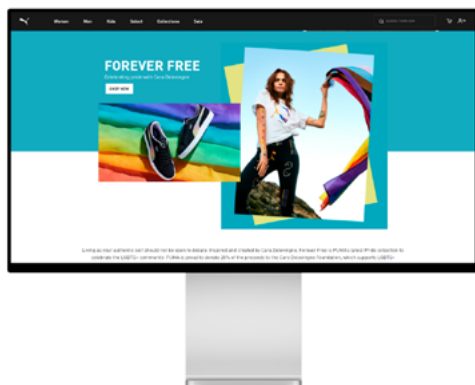
[Find out more](#)



JUMBO

180,000 product texts for the Swiss chain of DIY stores – delivered in three languages, straight to the system.

[Find out more](#)



PUMA

Product descriptions in abundance. Unique, even for the umpteenth pair of sneakers.

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The online store localization checklist

Creating an international online store in just a few steps – your checklist.

Preparation

- Define target markets
Check demand for your products in various markets; evaluate public interest and download statistics

- Conduct market research
Assess languages, cultural contexts, customer behaviors and trends

- Review and internationalize the store's technical specifications as required
URL, hreflang attribute, character formats, payment methods, currency programming

- Assemble a localization team
Allocate roles among your internal product management and development experts

- Set the project timeline and draw up a schedule
Agree on deadlines and how you will approach the project

- Choose a language service provider and technical setup
Request quotes, check system connections and define processes

- Determine which services are required for the content
Identify areas that require particular focus

Implementation

- Translate the store and make cultural adjustments
Extract all strings, focusing on figures, units of measurement, design and images when amending the text

 - Analyze marketing channels and localize content
Localize keywords, transcreate marketing texts, check the creative and (in)formal campaign register and adjust if required, analyze market-specific social media trends

 - Test the UX in the layout
Carry out internal and external beta testing with a target group; review content completeness, consistency and presentation

 - Go live with the new store version
Check keyword performance and website traffic with analytics and keep an eye on growth
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Ready to have a chat
about your online store
project? We'd love to.

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+1 (424) 387 7375

supertext.com
[Get in touch](#)



Supertext. The name says it all.

Founded in 2005 as a copywriting and translation agency, Supertext has grown into one of the most innovative and creative language service providers in the world. With locations in Los Angeles, Zurich and Berlin, more than 3,000 companies – from startups to global conglomerates – regularly use Supertext's web-based services, which are delivered by more than 2,000 language experts. The LSP has forged a strong reputation as a partner for creative online store localization, helping brands such as Puma, Trek and Happiest Baby expand their global presence.