

FIVE TIPS FOR SEO TRANSLATIONS

HOW TO BE FOUND AROUND THE WORLD



MARKETS AND LANGUAGES

Current studies show that, with slight variations between industries, over 90 per cent of all purchase decisions are made online, or are at least influenced by online content.

Companies that underestimate the significance of search engines in their communication measures fail to tap into substantial sales potential and frequently give away large shares of the profit to the competition. Most companies are aware of this and invest a lot of time and money in optimising their websites. However, this becomes trickier when it comes to the expansion to international markets – and that includes different countries that technically speak the same language. Although, for example, English is spoken in Britain and America, when the Brits are planning their summer break they are likely to search for “holidays” where the Americans will look for a “vacation”. As a result, a travel agent’s website which is optimised for Britain would not even appear in search results in the U.S. if the company expanded across the Atlantic with that same website. It is often these small differences that determine the success or failure of a company on the target market.

They are an example of how the understanding and interpretation of language cannot be reduced to word-for-word translation. If we are to understand each other properly, regional differences in expression, the cultural context, and the actual use of language in the region in question will have to be considered. Companies that wish to open up international markets will need to speak their customers’ local language – and that also applies to the visibility of their texts in search engines.

Global business – with the right language expertise

The times are favourable for an internationalisation of Swiss companies. However, according to a recently published study by IBI Research, 38 per cent of respondents from various companies stated that the translation of their website and their product portfolio constitutes a hurdle to expansion. It is simply not enough to translate content literally into the respective language. Individual terms and whole expressions may carry quite different associations for readers of different origins – translation has to be made to measure if it is to work. That applies to blog entries and product descriptions just as much as to job advertisements and company profiles. The right keywords and the appropriate content are crucial for your positioning in any common search engine. If you want to sell your product abroad, you will need to speak the language of your potential customers – in every respect. Inconsistent wording, the wrong keywords, or translation errors may lead to a company never being found by the customer online, even though it offers the exact product the customer is looking for.

SEO translation – the key to success

Around four out of five consumers buy products exclusively on country-specific websites. Companies aiming for success outside their domestic market are faced with the challenge that the search engine-optimised content of their website and subpages cannot simply be translated word for word. This is where SEO translations come into the game.

SEO stands for search engine optimisation. The aim of any SEO work is to place websites as far as possible at the top of the organic search results of Google etc. in order to make them immediately visible to users and encourage them to visit the website. The choice of the right keywords is crucial in this effort. Keywords are particular terms which reflect the interests and therefore the search behaviour of consumers. They have to be included in the website in a number of places, including in various text passages and in particular tags, i.e. particular sections, of the HTML code. An example that demonstrates the art of translation: The German word “Haus” may be translated into English as either “home” or “property”. It is the translator’s job to decide which term is more likely to be successful on the English-speaking market. If the translator makes the right choice, the text will be found more easily online.

Do users tend to search for “buy a house” or “buy a property”? The use of the right keywords can be the factor that determines the success or failure of international expansion online. It is a subject that really needs to be given attention. The more sophisticated the SEO text, the larger its chance of securing a top position in the search engine filters and attracting large numbers of users to the website.

Content is king – particularly for search engines

However, the ingenious positioning of keywords alone does not guarantee success. The content of company and shop sites is another important factor of online marketing. That applies to headlines, product descriptions and meta-data as much as infographics and visuals. Only websites that provide neatly phrased and maintained content will be considered by the relevant search engines, and at the same time offer added value to prospective customers.

This can only be achieved by translators who are native speakers in their target language and have experience of SEO. The translation services required for international rollout must be provided by experts in both translation and online marketing. Another important factor is that website must also provide unique content, i.e., original, expressive copy that is not repeated elsewhere, as similar text passages across different pages are considered copies by the search



engines and result in deductions in the ratings. The consequence: the website drops down the list of search results.

SEO translations – for whom are they important?

Many e-commerce platforms target internet users around the world, which makes several language versions advisable. However, even websites for countries with more than one official language or with regional differences should pay heed to SEO. Translations with a focus on SEO not only make sense for internationally operating companies but for anybody who wants or needs to address their customers in their own language. The first step is to perform a market analysis of the different sales regions. Information about competition and search behaviour can indicate the most expedient keywords, from which, in turn, content can be constructed that is internationally appealing and irresistible to search engines.

Five tips for SEO translations

- 1. Analysis and evaluation
- 2. Definition of keywords
- 3. Optimisation of keywords
- 4. Localisation and individualisation
- 5. Competition analysis and final translation

→ 1. Analysis and evaluation

SEO translations are more than just the mere translation of a text from one language to another.

The existence of a multilingual website in itself is not enough to attract an international audience. The texts in the different languages must be found in prominent places in search engines for the company to be truly visible. This is achieved by what is known as localisation – a special kind of challenge. In order to appear towards the top of the search results in Google and other relevant, country-specific search engines, every single component of search engine marketing must be tailored to the specifics of the respective language and requirements of the target group. An initial analysis is indispensable to define and understand these factors. Translation work should only start once this analysis is completed. This also involves a review of the existing SEO strategy with regard to internationalisation, in collaboration with translation and SEO specialists. Such a review must go far beyond an evaluation of the obvious content. There are numerous elements beyond the published content which must be considered, be it metadata, title tags, alt and title attributes of images and links, and the anchor texts of links. E-books and other files which are offered for download must likewise be carefully examined.



→ 2. Definition of keywords

There is no getting around specific keyword research.

The obvious translation is not always the best choice. In English, this is particularly relevant when it comes to the difference between British and American spelling. The U.S. fast food chain Dunkin' Donuts, for example, has optimised its keywords for the British market to the spelling "doughnut" only, whereas in the U.S. it uses both "donut" and "doughnut", reflecting the use of both on the other side of the Atlantic.

In addition, the chosen keywords must also be optimised for the right search engine. In the large western industrialised nations, Google is clearly top dog in the world of on-line searches, but go to Russia or China and you will need to consider alternatives with larger market shares in these countries if you want to draw customers' attention. In China, Baidu is the leading search engine, in Russia, most people use Yandex. The latter is specifically programmed to analyse the particularities of the Russian language and therefore reacts more sensitively than Google to spelling or grammatical errors. Before keywords are defined for the target market, it is therefore advisable to research the particularities of the respective search engine, ideally with professional help. If one is not up to date here, the international activities may actually fail due to linguistic subtleties.

→ 3. Optimisation of keywords

Web content should address the subject-matter comprehensively.

There is more to website localisation than merely defining keywords. For some time now there has been a growing awareness of the importance of a holistic approach to keyword optimisation. This approach is based on the realisation that web content no longer needs to be tailored to a specific keyword – as was the case only a few years ago – but should cover a larger subject-area. It is no longer necessary to create separate pages for different word order, fillers, synonyms and keywords with low search volumes

which overlap with other pages in terms of content. Such terms can now be bundled into one page. This is of great benefit to the efficiency of SEO translations. However, if you expand your focus too widely and discuss more than one subject per page, you will overshoot the mark as relevance will be decreased. This is most manifest in the title and meta description, of which there are only one each per page, making it difficult to span more than one subject. However, creating texts that are as long as possible for the sake of holistic keyword optimisation can hardly be the best solution. The primary aim of all SEO translations is to keep the target market in focus and provide excellent content that is not just tailored to the respective algorithms but is also of a length that is digestible and attractive to the reader.

→ 4. Localisation and individualisation

Search engines reward quality content.

SEO translations must be flawless and unique. No surprises here. So far, no machine in the world has been able to provide this level of precision. Where simply individual words or a few sentences are concerned, machine translation may be an attractive option. However, things only need to get a little more complex for machine translation to meet its limits. The quality of a search engine-optimised translation is not just determined by its flawlessness in terms of spelling and grammar. It also needs to take account of stylistic particularities, idioms and cultural customs of the target country. The only way to achieve such texts is through native speakers who are intimately familiar with the most recent linguistic trends of the respective country. They are the only ones who can capture the individual tone of a in detail, and recreate it accurately in the translation.

At the same time, however important cultural differences might be, a translation of websites, blog entries and similar copy should always strike a happy medium between the country-specific conversational customs and the company's language. This is the only way to achieve both comprehensively compelling content and a positive ranking.

→ 5. Competition analysis and final translation

What does content achieve in the competition for the top positions in search engine results?

This question can only be answered once the keywords for the finished content have been defined and optimised. A truly excellent translation service provider with SEO expertise will stand out at this point by examining every single term once more, specifically in comparison with those of the competing websites. With the help of WDF*IDF tools, we review the content with regard to the semantics of keywords.

The aim is for every new or optimised text which includes the same words with similar frequency to result in a positive ranking. Professionals work on the basis that a search term is only truly effective if it fits in the right linguistic “neighbourhood”. Experienced copy writers and translators will use these tools even at the content creation stage

to purposefully combine words right from the start. If a text, despite all efforts, is not achieving the intended ranking, it can be adjusted subsequently using keywords from the WDF*IDF analysis.

CONCLUSION

SEO translations have long since ceased to be an optional extra. They are a must for any company that does not want to restrict itself to communicating online in the language of the domestic market. Globalisation in e-commerce only succeeds where content is professionally localised, with a feel for language and the necessary expertise in the operation of search engines.

OUR TOTAL COMMITMENT TO QUALITY AND INNOVATION SETS US APART

As a leading international translation services provider, 24translate has been connecting small and mid-sized German companies with the rest of the world for two decades. When expanding into new markets, global leaders such as tesa, Feintool, and ThyssenKrupp regularly rely on our technology and professional expertise. 24translate’s customers enjoy 24/7 access to every aspect of our company’s proven translation management system, which guarantees consistent quality and reliability.

About 24translate

Companies have been able to connect with the entire world for two decades, thanks to 24translate - one of the leading international language service providers. Our core competencies - specialised translations, text optimisations, as well as process optimisations across all industries - thus offer our customers our unique technical expertise and our advanced security standards, especially for very demanding translation projects.

Do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you still have questions or would like to know more about how to make better use of your multilingual communication potential.

We will gladly offer you individual and free-of-charge advice.

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