WHICH WAY WEBSITE LOCALIZATION: TRANSLATION OR COPYWRITING?

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to look at website localization practices of several important websites and to look at the similarities and differences between two approaches to text localization through translation and copywriting.

Keywords: website localization, website translation, website copywriting.

Website localization is a must for any company that wants to offer its products and services globally to an international market. Companies have been practising localization at some level ever since organized and professional trade went beyond borders at the beginning of the 19th century, and we can only speculate that it started with the simple translation of the product type name, quantity conversion (from royal to metric and vice versa), translation most likely done by the importer and not by the exporter.

Nowadays, well-established multinationals are in control of how their merchandise or services are marketed in various areas of the world, imposing on their business branches and importers strict rules which generally follow the processes of globalization and internationalization of any product or service. Also, franchise is another good example of such practices. The mother company rules apply to marketing strategies as well.

In traditional marketing, efficiency (measured in ROI – return on investment) of advertisements depends to a high degree on their placement. On a general audience broadcaster, a prime time ad will address to a very wide audience, and results are less predictable, whereas the same ad on a sports channel, with shows addressed specifically to men is more likely to yield far better results. For example, a premium car brand with a price tag over 30.000 Euros advertised on such a sports channel, during the transmission a golf event, is better targeted, while in terms of costs the campaign may be similar. In terms of such an advertisement, localization consists of translation and adaptation of the verbal part. In online marketing, although there are many similarities with traditional marketing, there are particularities that have to be taken into account. Online marketing covers several aspects, which are all important success of a business: websites, social media, digital branding, blogging, video, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, affiliate marketing, online PR, and digital advertising. Other marketing professionals distinguish 14 types of marketing online: Search Engine Optimization, Pay per click, Email, Video Marketing, Blogging, Content Marketing, Social Media, Network

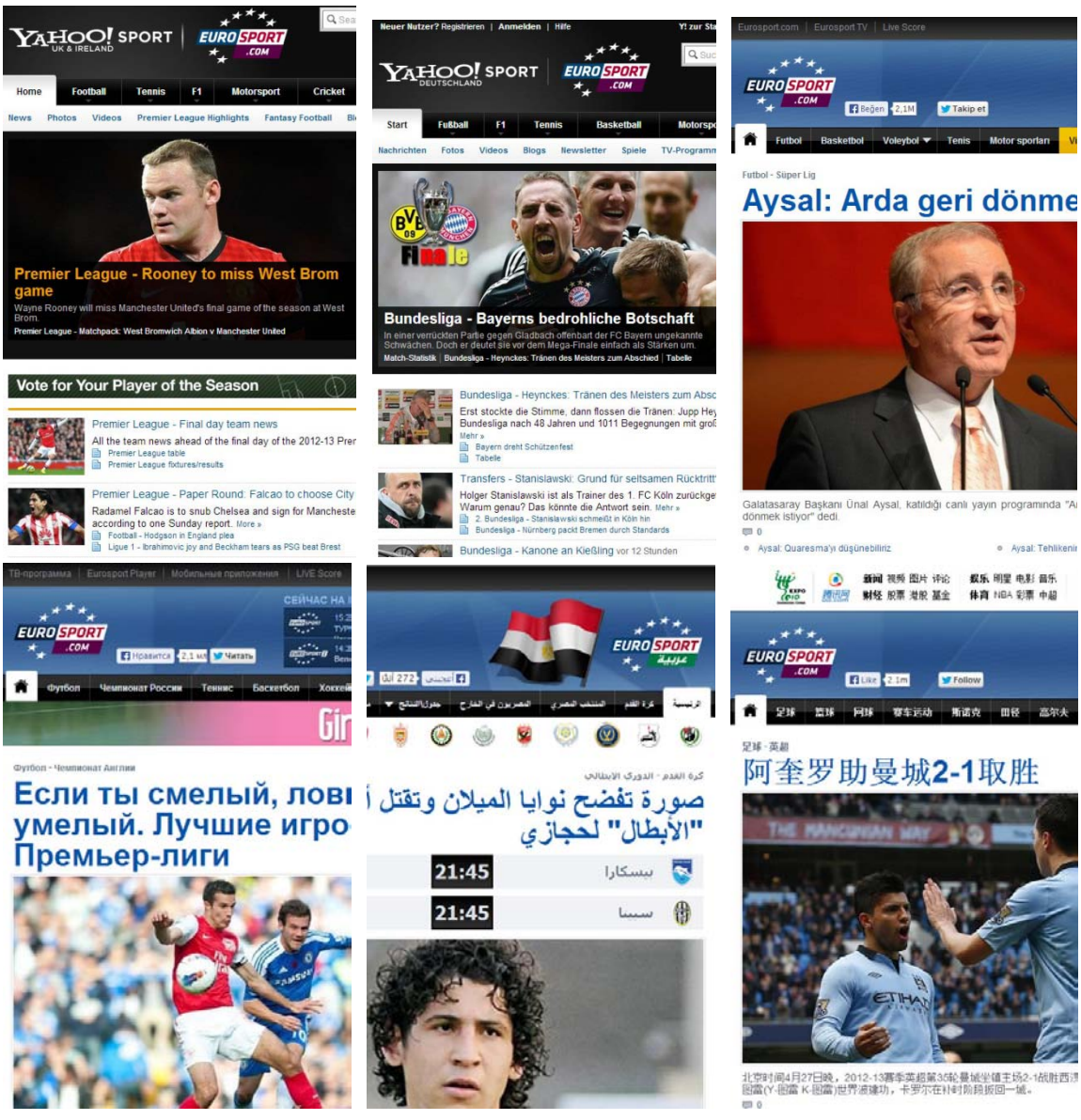
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Marketing, Community Building, Location Based Marketing, Contextual marketing, Affiliate (performance based) Marketing, User Experience Branding (UxB), Interactive Advertising [1]. Among these internet-marketing subfields there is naturally some overlapping. What we are most interested in for the purpose of this paper is Content marketing and Search Engine Optimization, because in the case of website localization content is the main part that is localized.

Localization, as shown in a previous paper [2], is part of a more complex practice that includes globalization and internationalization as processes that are achieved before localization. Most localizers consider translation part of the localization. However, there are examples that translation is not the only way to localize content.

Let us consider Eurosport (the former pan-European sports channel which is now global) and its website(s)[3]. The main site asks for your permission to set the country and language of your choice.



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The six instances captured represent content demonstrate that localization is not about translation, but about content created specifically for the UK, Germany, Turkey, Russia, the Arab countries - mainly Egypt, and China(Simplified Han).

One can easily see that the main picture in the top news is different and it is about sporting events specific to each country or region. For the Arabic version even the layout of the website is in accordance with the writing rules of Arabic, that is, right to left page viewing.

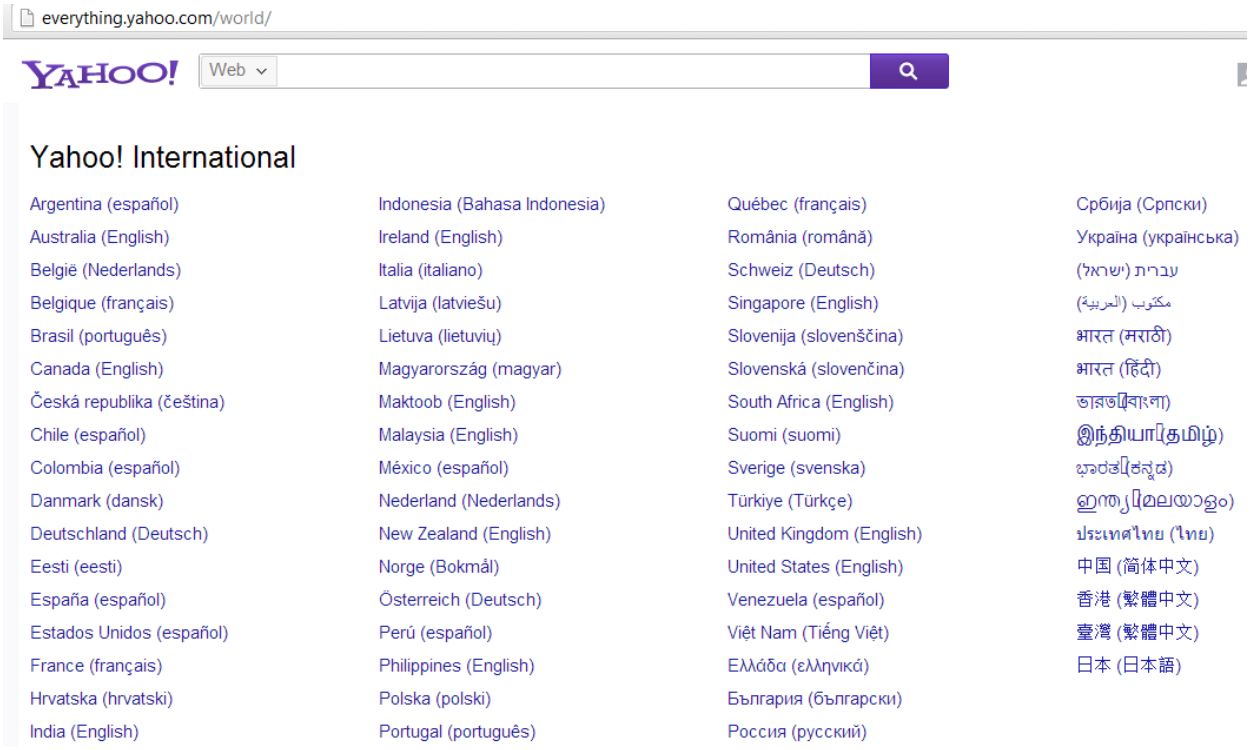
On a closer inspection, one can also observe that above the Eurosport logo, on the grey bar, for some of the countries there are some extra services while for others there is none. This has to do with the immersion of Eurosport and Yahoo! (partnered a while back) with third party services or with the physical and technical possibility of offering their own services.

Also, while on some of these localized websites Eurosport allows web advertising from third parties, on others there is no advertisement. If we look at the main menu and the submenu of the home page we can see that even those are localized. By tracking user activity, Eurosport can determine which sports are of interest in all of the countries they cover. That is why the menus are different. The homepage button is not on all of the sites represented by the button itself and the text "home". On some of the sites the text is replaced with an icon, a stylized house that stands for the main page. While the submenus of the start page are very rich in diversity for the UK and Germany, for Turkey and China there are only two subcategories, for the Arabs text is replaced by icons, and for Russia there is no submenu.

Furthermore, we can see that football is the most popular with all of the nations but there is variation when it comes to other sports. F1 (Formula 1) is right after football in Germany, third in the UK and not to be found on the other versions (but under the "More" category). Tennis is again is popular to various degrees in various parts of the world and so on. This shows that Eurosport is very much user oriented and not interested in translating content but in offering original content that appeals to regional users, content contextualized to its consumers, while maintaining an international section for each of the pages and an international website. The Romanian version [4] maintains the general characteristics of the other versions although it looks barren both in content and design as compared to the others.

Yahoo itself is another successfully localized service provider that started out as a search engine and a free email provider has gone a long way. It started out as a service in English only, first for the US and extended to be a services provider covering many of the world's countries. While there is a common feeling to the entire localized versions of yahoo services, again, the same as with Eurosport, content is different and of interest to the region it is targeted to. While the yahoo.com stand apart both in terms of design and quantity of information offered, the other versions show the preference of the communities for various types of news. Advertisements displayed also vary according to the targeted country.

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The languages and countries in which localized Yahoo websites are available[5]

By far, by the highest number of localized online services being offered, Google outclasses any other competitor and should be considered as the etalon in globalization, internationalization and localization. According to Google [6] they are offering their interface in 130 languages. Any Google service starts initially in English and then it is rolled out to in all of the other languages.

Many other multinationals that are offering for instance electronics, will more likely use translation rather than content (re)creation, whereas small companies or importers of less known brands will opt for the later. For instance, for *fighting mould,* the simple translation into Romanian of some of the original American sites might work to some extent, but an analysis of the Romanian market is a must, to learn what are the key terms used by Romanians to find information on such products and to learn about user behaviour. Google with its such the

From the examples above, one can see that translation is not always the way to go during the localization process. Many companies will rather use copywriting services rather than translation. Copywriting and Christiane Nord's *instrumental translation* (1997:81) are rather similar in purpose if we look at their definitions.

Copywriting.com defines **copywriting** as "the art and science of writing words to promote a product, a business, a person or an idea; and carefully selecting, editing, weaving and constructing those words in a way that they'll persuade the reader into taking a specific and measurable action."

Instrumental translation "serves as an independent message-transmitting instrument in a new communicative action in the target culture, and is intended to fulfil

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its communicative purpose without the recipient being conscious of reading or hearing a text which, in a different form, was used before in a different communicative situation."

While copywriting is based on research on several texts in the target language, instrumental translation will be based on a source text in a different language. From the perspective of SEO both processes can take into consideration specific keywords to be used, yet a copywriter will be more at home with target language and cultural codes. The translator even if a native speaker of the target language may still misunderstand the source text. Some may be against copywriting considering that by writing from scratch the content, there is no contact with the original text. In some cases (as the examples above), there is no need to have the same feeling as in the source text, as can be demonstrated by means of non-verbal elements. Also, by imposing the same keywords, yet localized for each market, the texts will still be based on a common reference but with the specifics of each market.

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[6] http://www.google.com/about/company/philosophy/

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