IS IT GILT ALL THE WAY, WHEN IT COMES TO WEBSITE LOCALIZATION?

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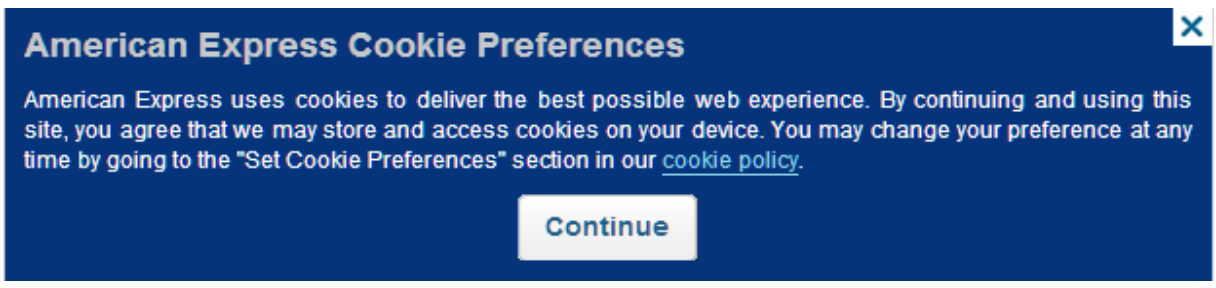
Abstract

The paper explores the webpages of several top international companies to evaluate if those pages follow the GILT routine.

Keywords: globalization, internationalization, localization, translation, information ethics, content, privacy

When speaking about the process of website localization researchers refer to three more interrelated practices: globalization, internationalization and translation. Localization academics and the translation industry often integrate localization and translation with the other two processes. But is it always the case? Are the international companies always localizing and translating their content? Are localization and translation always mandatory to be a successful online company?

In this paper I will investigate the *Privacy* page of several international companies to weigh the extent its content is localized. There are two main reasons for choosing this particular page. First, there are legislative differences and other specific locales among various countries around the world. Second, there is a rising concern among online content consumers with regards to their privacy. There is also an EU directive about privacy, more specifically about using cookies, which can be noticed when you visit for the first time a website from a country that is an EU member.



Consequently, companies should attach a greater importance to the content provided to their users through the privacy webpages as it is imperative for users to be acknowledged about the data collected, how it is used and shared.

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Choosing the companies. The companies chosen for this research have been featured in various online business publications as being both among the best one hundred global brands - interbrand.com (1) - and/or among the Top 25 Best Global Websites of 2013 according to bytelevel.com (2). While interbrand.com makes a classification of the companies based on their financial performance and global reach (3) either by traditional means of communication or online - through websites, bytelevel.com has a rather different approach in classifying companies, focusing its scoring methodology on the companies' online presence. The first criterion is to verify the evolution of the company websites in 2013 as compared to 2012. Next, the raw number of the languages in which content and services are available. Third, the bytelevel report takes into consideration the availability and accessibility of a global navigation. Forth, they look into how websites are structured so that they can cover as many device screens as possible, in terms of content display adapted to various screen sizes. Last, but not least, the degree of localization and the integration of social media.

While the site listed by interbrand.com and bytelevel.com are to be considered at a global scale and research is done rigorously, there are many national websites that are important to national and local communities. That is why I also decided to look into statistical data that is strictly listing websites in order of their importance to limit the number of global websites to be analyzed according to their reputation and level of usage. Alexa.com (4) is a service that offers information on how company websites perform globally or at national level, strictly by recording and measuring user activity on the pages of websites. The table below shows how the three listings compare. I have chosen as the starting list the one provided by bytelevel.com because if they are that successful at all the criteria by which they made it to the top 25, they should also score high at least in the Alexa listing.

	Bytelevel.com listing[A]	*Interbrand.com listing[B]*	*Alexa.com Listing[C]*	*Combined Listing*[D]*
Google	1	2	1	4
Hotels.com	2	NA	656	NA
Facebook	3	52	2	57
Cisco Systems	4	13	1549	1556
3M	5	76	9638	9719
Philips	6	40	3652	3698
Booking.com	7	NA	138	NA
Samsung	8	8	264	280
Twitter	9	NA	11	NA
NIVEA	10	NA	65349	NA
Microsoft	11	5	39	55
Kayak	12	NA	779	NA
HP	13	15	286	314
Starbucks	14	91	2040	2145
Wikipedia	15	NA	6	NA
Yahoo!	16	NA	4	NA

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LG	17	NA	1561	NA
Autodesk	18	NA	3107	NA
Intel	19	9	1003	1031
American Express	20	23	334	377
Merck	21	NA	63471	NA
Adobe	22	79	64	165
KLM	23	NA	4123	NA
Deloitte	24	NA	5859	NA
KPMG	25	NA	12153	NA

*The smaller the number of from the Combined listing, the more valuable the company at all levels.

As you can see there is not always an agreement between what the best global websites in terms of potential global reach and localization (column A) or what financial data holds (column B) are on one hand, and the actual number of users who use the company websites. Some of the best global websites do not even make it in the top one hundred of global brands.

While the differences between A and B or B and C are understandable, as the older companies still employ many of the traditional ways of marketing, the variances between A and C show quite a great deal of discrepancies, considering that they are the results of statistical research regarding online presence. But while in A the methodology is rather prescriptive, with the companies in focus, in B, the direction is strictly from the point of view of website visibility, usability and number of users employing those websites. This difference between A and C throws a bit of Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Adobe are listed relatively similarly in all of the three listings. They are all software companies which have all benefited from substantial growth and, hence capital. Furthermore, in the case of software companies the products can be improved and tested without investing in raw materials, retail stores and production technology, etc. Also, moving from software to web applications, web services and web presence is only a natural step.

Next group of companies which are relatively well-placed in all three lists are predominantly hardware companies: Samsung, HP, and Intel. They score high in the Combined list. American Express, from the banking industry, also scores high. The last group of companies that is listed in all the three columns is activating in various fields but the discrepancies are rather attributable to the way in which marketing is conducted, online and traditionally, probably with a bigger focus on the latter.

While hotels.com, booking.com and Twitter, Kayak, Wikipedia, Yahoo! are not listed in the top 100 best brands, they score high in the Alexa listing. These companies are all offering web services and their business is software and internet oriented. Therefore, I have chosen to limit the list of companies to be listed only to the following 14 companies: Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Adobe, Samsung, HP, Intel, American Express, hotels.com, booking.com, Twitter, Kayak, Wikipedia, Yahoo!

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Analyzing the privacy page. In analyzing the privacy page(s) for all the above mentioned websites I verified if there is a translated privacy page and if the same page is also localized and to what extent. In the table below you can see the full list of features verified. The sector column states the primary industry of the company. The Number of languages column refers to the options given by the website to pick from several language and country combinations. The Country/Language gate checks for a separate page from where you can choose. Privacy page checks for the existence of a Privacy terms. The Cookie warning alert shows if this warning is displayed the first time you visit a website from an EU member country. As most of our personal details are transmitted through cookies, I check if there is a separate page that explains what information the cookies collect.

Next, I check if there is a difference between the original text, usually American English, and the other English dialects. I also check if there is any type of localization on the privacy page when English is used for several countries. The same is done for German, French and Spanish.

Last but not least, I check how the localized site is integrated into the main website. It can be set as a subdomain (country.thewebsite.com), as a national top level domain (www.thewebsite.country) or as a subfolder (www.thewebsite .com/country/).

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	Brand	*Sector*	*Languages/ regions*	*Country/ language Auto-redirect*	*Country/ language gate*	*Privacy page*	*Cookie warning alert*	*Separate cookie page*	*Trl.*	*English group*		*German group*		*French group*		*URL localization type*
										TD	L	TD	L	TD	L	
1	Google	Technology	62	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	TLD
2	Facebook	Technology	56	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Same URL
3	Microsoft	Technology	96	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	TLD with redirection to folder URL
4	Adobe	Technology	58	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Folder URL
5	Samsung	Technology	164	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Folder URL
6	HP	Technology	97	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Folder URL
7	Intel	Technology	55	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Folder URL
8	American Express	Banking	93*	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	TLD/folder URL
9	hotels.com	Tourism	91	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	subdomain
10	booking.com	Tourism	42	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Same URL
11	Twitter	Technology	36	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Same URL
12	Kayak	Tourism	29	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	TLD/ subdomain
13	Wikipedia	Information	51	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	subdomain
14	Yahoo!	Technology	35	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	subdomain

Trl= translation among various languages of the privacy page, TD=differences at textual level, L=localization, TLD=top level domain (i.e. .ro), folder URL= http://www.microsoft.com/**ro-ro/**
*you may chose you own language once you access your country

Data collection period: from 1st of March through 20th of March 2014

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Google allows choosing among 62 languages. While it is using a redirect script on accessing google.com the very first time (accessing google.com would redirect to the top level domain of the country from where it is accessed) it will also remember if you opt for the .com. It is important to notice that Google also offers under the top level domain of a certain country its services in the languages of the minorities. For example Google.ro can also be used in Hungarian or German. While Google allows you to pick from among 62 languages, you would expect to see some differences, especially if you can opt between English and English (United Kingdom). The language differences between the .com English and British English are minimal, addition of "that" in the .co.uk, "such as" instead of "like", spelling with "s" versus spelling with "z" for some of the words, slightly different usage of comma etc. Although there are some dialect specific differences, there are no other locale specific differences. Furthermore, the .com version is used for all the other Anglophone countries around the world. This is reasonable to a certain degree as all the internet technology related vocabulary originates from the U.S. but there are still some differences when it comes to law.

Next I checked if there are any differences among the countries where German is the official language. The privacy policy page is identical for Germany, Austria and Switzerland. As they are all members of the EU, identical privacy policy is reasonable. More interesting is to check if there are differences between the French of .fr and that of .ca. I have found that speaking strictly about the language employed there are some terminology differences:

.fr: Règles de confidentialité, collectons ,informations ,cookies ,un meilleur confort d'utilisation, etc

.ca: Politique de confidentialité, recueillons ,données ,témoins ,une utilisation plus conviviale, etc.

Also, the .ca French is using some first letter capitalization when naming services, the same as with the .com English. Interesting to see that while .ca is using a French term "témoins", .fr is using the English borrowing "cookies". All the differences are rather synonymous expressions and there is no information specific to any locale.

If we compare Spanish and Spanish (Latin America) there are significantly more differences between the analyzed privacy policy pages. The differences at wording and expression level rise to 50%. This is much higher than in the case of .com English and .co.uk English. However, there are no specific privacy pages for each of the Latin American countries.

Regarding **Facebook**, there is no language auto- redirect, and while the same URL is used, one can easily pick his/her favorite language. In my case, Romanian is the first suggested alternative to English (US) the default. Facebook is offered in 56 languages and while the privacy page is translated into each of the obviously different languages, there are no differences between UK and US English; there is a unique page for German, and same privacy pages for the following pairs (although they are marked as separate

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languages): Canada and France French, Spain Spanish and International Spanish, Brazil and Portugal Portuguese.

If you access **Microsoft**'s countries/regions page you may think that they are offering their services in 96 languages. However, if we look at the big number of English variants for several regions/countries, it seems that they only want to satisfy national pride. Whichever English variant you are choosing, it directs you to either the UK or the US privacy page. And there is no difference between the UK and the US page, with the exception of some omissions (Microsoft.com vs. Microsoft) or minor typos. The same is true for Spanish, French, Portuguese variants. If we look at the 3 Germans privacy pages, the differences are again minimal. All Spanish privacy pages are 100% identical at textual level. All French privacy pages are the same, for all of the francophone countries, with the exception of Canada. There are some differences at vocabulary and at sentence structure level among the different variants, somewhat along the differences found on the Google French privacy pages.

When it comes to **Adobe** you may choose among 58 languages/regions. While there is a privacy page for all of the international languages, if we compare the Canadian and the US pages it is interesting to notice that on the Canadian page there is an extra sentence: "For more information about which country's laws apply to the collection and use of your personal information, please see the Information for non-U.S. users page. " Otherwise the pages are identical. The rest of the English pages are the same as the Canadian page. If we compare the French pages, respectively the one for Canada and the one for France, they are all the way similar, which is a bit different if we think of the previous companies. Further looking at Belgian and North Africa French, again there is no difference at all. The same is true for Spanish variants. As for the German variants, the privacy pages show some differences, probably due to the last updated date of the privacy policy (Austria page on "7. Mai 2012" whereas the Germany page on "20. Dezember 2013") So apart from the difference that may be attributed to updating information there are vocabulary differences such as *Gültig ab* vs. *Letzte Aktualisierung* or *Adobe-Kennung* vs. *Adobe-ID*. Checking on the Switzerland German privacy page showed the same update page as that for Austria. This shows that the German privacy pages are actually following the same policy as in the case of English, French and Spanish.

When analyzing **Samsung** one can see that it shows 164 languages and regions. In checking the privacy pages, it seems that all of the privacy pages are particularized to the country and language for which it is targeted. However, there are discrepancies in the updating of the various privacy pages. This shows that there are local officials responsible for the local websites. Furthermore, if we compare Samsung to all of the previous companies, it is clear that they show interest in translating and localizing not only their marketing campaigns but also the issues that might concern the users most with regards to privacy.

HP, much like Samsung, seems to have local teams that update content at regular intervals, yet not unitarily. For instance, the Australian privacy page is more elaborate with

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some 10% more information and updated in 2014, as compared to the US and the UK versions (updated in 2013).

Regarding **Intel**, all the English variants of the privacy page requests are redirected to the default .com URL. Same is true for French. In the case of Spanish there is around a 10% difference between the language employed on the .es website and the general Latin American privacy page, used for all the South America Spanish speaking countries. In the case of German, there is no separate language for Austria, and the .ch domain was inaccessible at the moment of conducting this research.

American Express is doing much better when it comes to translation and localization of privacy pages. This is probably a necessity considering the legal issues in the domain it activates, that of financial services.

Conclusions

From the findings of this paper we can see that most companies fail to actually localize the privacy page content. Translation of the pages is not always necessary, that is why we considered the language pairs spoken in various part of the world. Romanian translation of the privacy page for the Romanian webpages sounds neither natural nor they use proper legal terminology. That is why I would assume that the same happens with all of the other languages to greater or lesser degree. If the translator is not familiar with the legal terminology of the target language, we cannot talk about localized versions of content.

However, it is important to notice that, most of the companies comply with the EU regulation regarding the cookies used to track user activity on websites. It is interesting to notice that some companies may not prompt you with the usage of cookies if you are accessing their default .com content or from other regions of the world, for instance Australia, even if you are accessing the site from within the boundaries of the E.U. This is probably standard as a tourist from the U.S. or Australia might be visiting Europe and still be using their own country's website.

While there are raising concerns among internet users with regard to their privacy, and steps have been taken into limiting what information is collected and shared, for instance, Google no longer provides the keywords to analytics software, some of the companies do not differentiate at all between the default English privacy page and the English variants of the other regions. The same is true for Spanish, German and French. For Chinese, they may be using different variants.

It is also interesting to notice, that some companies respond actively to regional and national sensibilities, other strictly focus only on language differences (Samsung's 164 vs. Intel's 55). Some companies are using flags while others are not. In the case of the US market, one should notice that only few companies offer information in Spanish, although there is an important Spanish within the US borders.

Looking at the data collected, one can say that when talking about GILT, localization and translation is not always applied. English, Spanish, French, German

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variants of the privacy page are most often the same, so there is neither a localization process nor a translation process, at least in the case of privacy pages. Translation for minor languages is often implemented only later. For instance, while you may choose Romanian, you are redirected to the US privacy page. It is a standard procedure that webpages are localized and/or translated if they are of interest to the users. Privacy pages and other legal related webpages are most often skipped hence there is no active interest in reading them.

Internet sources

[1] http://www.interbrand.com/en/best-global-brands/2013/top-100-list-view.aspx
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The data collection period for all of the aforementioned websites: from 1st of March through 20th of March 2014

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