b2bmarketing.net

The content marketer's guide to universal content domination

B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events

SDL*

MANAGED TRANSLATION





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Section 1

When it comes to content creation across a global marketplace, what's the status quo in B2B land?

You'd have to have been living in a shadowy cave in deepest, darkest middle England to have escaped the full-throttle advance of globalisation. Cheap flights make travel more of an inevitability than a possibility, and digital platforms make us more connected than we'd sometimes like to be. In today's world, we're *all* global citizens – and more brands are cottoning on to the possibilities of reaching us than ever before.

The downside of this inevitable global contraction is, of course, the challenges associated with dipping our toes in foreign waters. While the world might be getting smaller, it's not getting any less complex or any more homogenised. Oh no – heaven forbid you confuse a south Londoner with a north Londoner, let alone a Spanish buyer with a Portuguese prospect. Despite our propensity to travel, the tug of geo-cultural identity is strong, and our love for brands remains intrinsically linked to their ability to tailor and personalise content for us as individuals within our specific geo-cultural locations. Get it wrong and risk losing us forever.

So, in a recent research project carried out in association with SDL Managed Translation, we surveyed 202 B2B marketers to find out how they'd rate their own ability to 'go global' from a content perspective. In the following pages we'll be reporting back on the lay of the land and outlining some of the startling advantages of content localisation. Clue: these include increased engagement, higher ROI and greater budget efficiency. We'll also be sharing some nuggets of advice to help you localise your content in a way that's more consistent, more manageable and ultimately more successful for your brand.

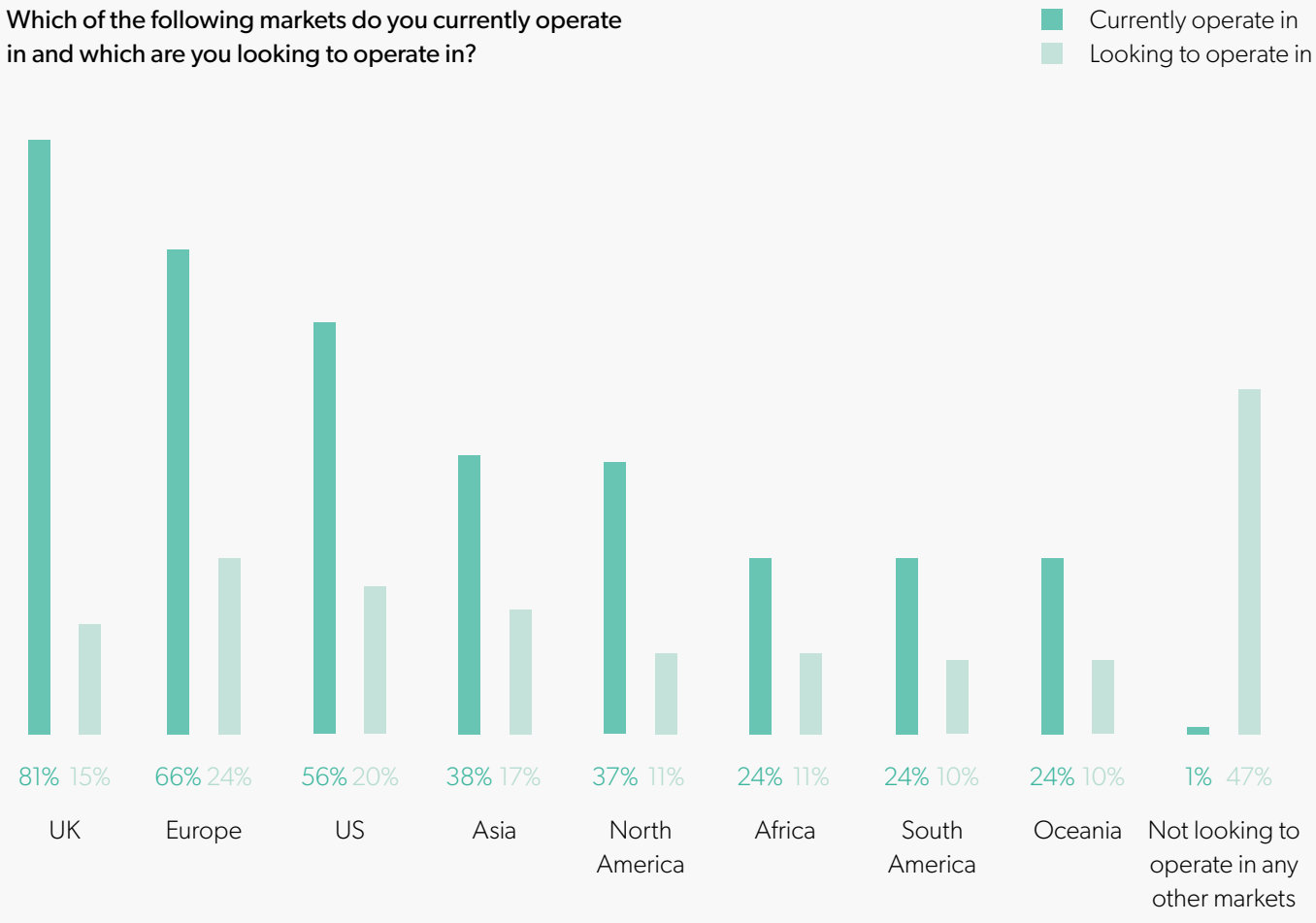
"Heaven forbid you confuse a south Londoner with a north Londoner, let alone a Spanish buyer with a Portuguese prospect"

Assessing the lay of the land

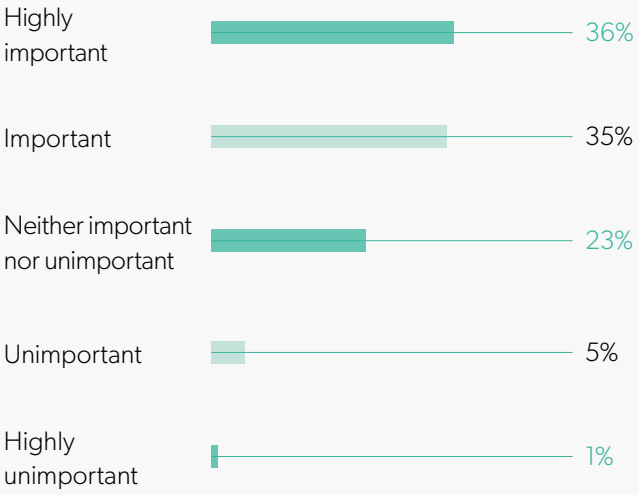
It comes as no surprise that the majority of B2B marketers out there operate in multiple markets, proving the world really is their proverbial oyster. Significant numbers of you are already operating in Europe (66%), the US (56%) and Asia (38%) – as well as the UK, of course. And those numbers look set to increase: 24% have one eye on European markets and 20% are looking to move into the US. A small but not insignificant number (17%) are planning to make waves in Asian waters.

And some of you have your hands full with multiple markets: one respondent's company operates in 250, and 7% surpass the 99 mark. This is also reflected in the number of languages you're translating content into – 62% translate into more than one language, a fifth (21%) translate into more than five.

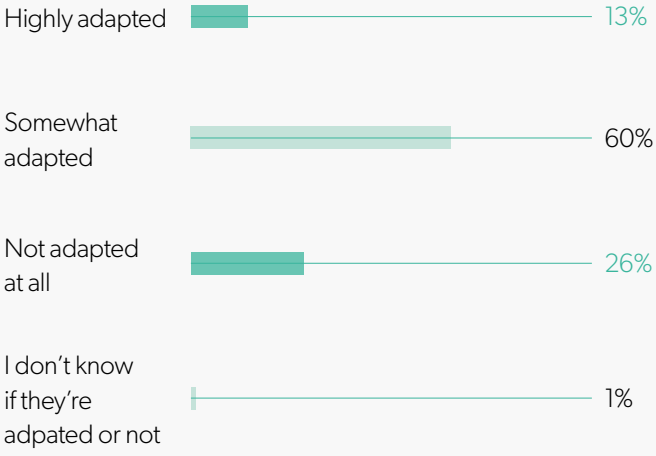
Which of the following markets do you currently operate in and which are you looking to operate in?



How important is localisation to your marketing campaigns?



To what extent is your content marketing adapted to different markets?



Localisation, then, is pretty high on the agenda – or so we assume. While 36% describe it as 'highly important' and 35% as 'important', a surprising 23% dismiss it as 'neither important nor unimportant'. This is unsettling: as we'll see later on, the repercussions of blasting out homogenous, poorly localised content to multiple complex markets are serious and sometimes irrevocable. It seems then, that there's work to be done in educating B2B marketers about the importance of adapting content for different markets: more than a quarter of you (26%) admit that you don't tweak it at all – this is particularly concerning when we consider that 66% of you are operating in European markets where 23 different languages are currently being spoken.

So why this reticence to localise content? Nearly a third of marketers (32%) are managing localisation in-house, which perhaps explains why it seems to be slipping off the priority list. When you're stretched in every direction and working to tight deadlines, your primary concern might well be your biggest market, which also happens to be English-speaking – and this is where you choose to spend maximum time and energy.

The numbers do the talking here: while 40% describe their ability to produce quality content for a local market as 'very strong', just 12% can say the same for a global market. It figures, right? A quarter of you aren't localising content for foreign markets at all: it follows that the content being sent – or sprayed – out to these unsuspecting prospects isn't of a particularly high standard.

Which of the following metrics do you most commonly use when measuring the success of your content for global markets?



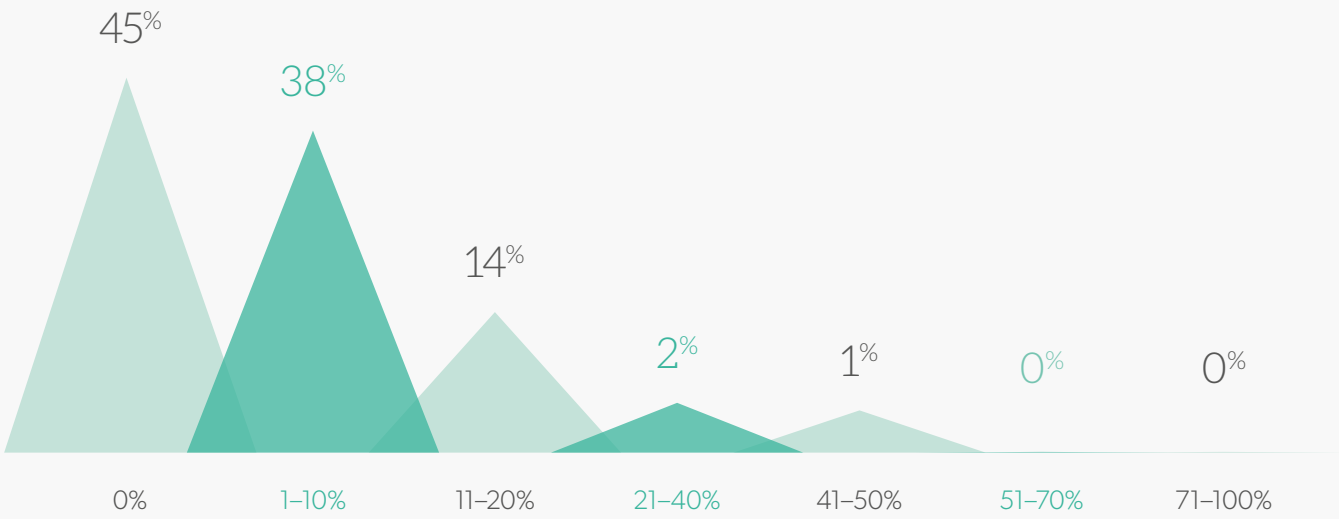
Balancing demands on time and money

So we know that you're busy people and that busy people run out of time on a regular basis – you've got meetings, Skype calls, conference calls, campaign planning sessions and agency workshops to contend with on a weekly basis. It's not surprising, then, that over a third of you (35%) are spending less than two hours a month repurposing content for your global audience. Time's money, after all. Tweaking copy in an email that's being sent out to 2000 people in the Netherlands? Just not a priority right now.

And with campaign budgets being pinched all the time, marketers are under barrel-loads of pressure to prove ROI – if it's not click-through rates you're being measured on (66%), it's leads generated (60%), web page conversions (44%) or international web traffic (24%). Every penny counts, and nothing must be wasted; a laser-sharp focus on delivering ROI is more critical today than ever before.

"It's not surprising, that over a third of you (35%) are spending less than two hours a month repurposing content for your global audience"

What percentage of your campaign budget do you usually spend translating content into other languages?



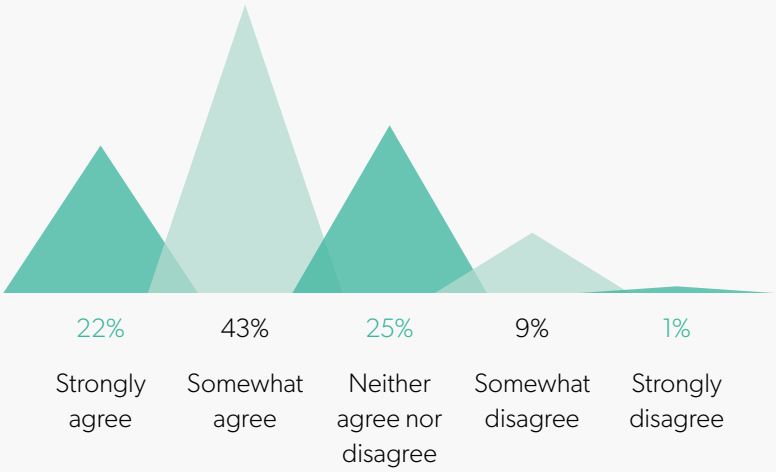
So again, it's not much of a surprise that few of you are dedicating much (if any) of your budget to content translation. A hefty 45% aren't spending a penny on it, and 38% are only spending between one and 10% of their overall budget. And while the vast majority of you consider the localisation of content at the beginning of a campaign, a worrying 8% only think about it during the campaign itself – again this points to the fact that while we might consider ourselves global marketers, our global audiences are often being sidelined.

"While we might consider ourselves global marketers, our global audiences are often being sidelined"

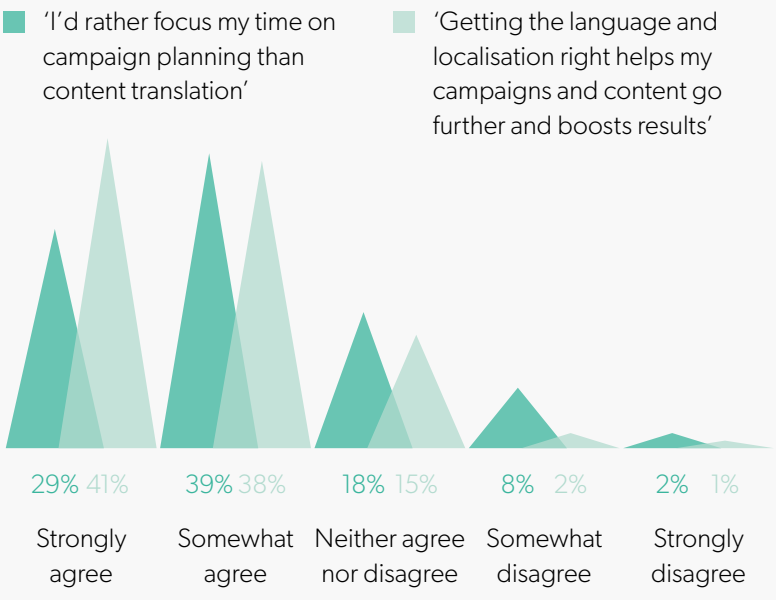
But while localisation is certainly slipping down the priority list, the value of getting it right isn't in question: 65% of you agree that content isn't optimised if it's repurposed, rather than rewritten for a local audience. And while 29% of respondents 'strongly agree' they'd rather focus their time on campaign planning than content translation', 41% 'strongly agree' that getting language and localisation right helps their campaigns and content go further and boosts results. The disconnect is stark: on the one hand, marketers know full well that localising and translating content properly is crucial, but on the other, it's not something they feel they have the time, resource or understanding to fully commit to.

"But while localisation is certainly slipping down the priority list, the value of getting it right isn't in question: 65% of you agree that content isn't optimised if it's repurposed rather than rewritten for a local audience"

To what extent would you agree that your content is not optimised if it's repurposed, rather than rewritten for a global audience?

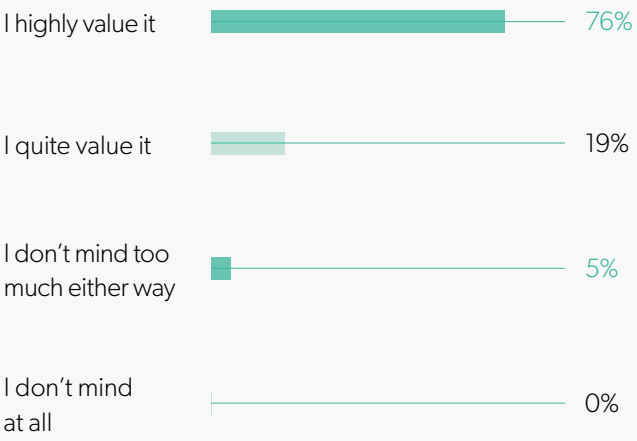


To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

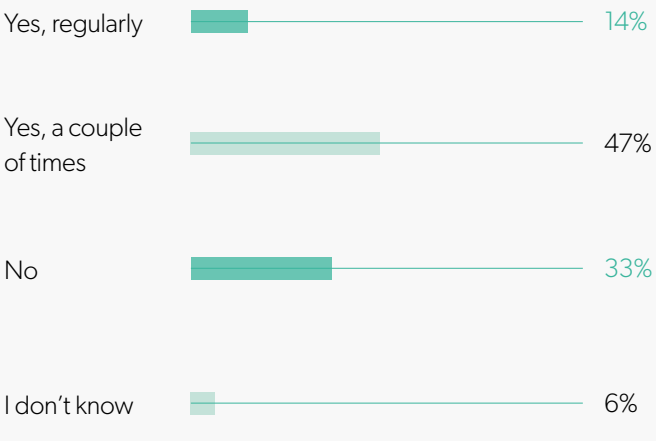


Section 2
The challenges involved with localising content

How much do you as a consumer value content that's produced in the right language and tone?



In the past six to 12 months, have you received content that's clearly aimed at someone in a different location or in the wrong language?



The stats thus far paint a rather bleak picture: localisation is rightly considered important for marketers operating across multiple markets – but it's just not where you want to spend your time or budget. Now let's focus, for a moment, on your own experiences as consumers.

A colossal 76% of you say that as consumers you 'highly value' content that's produced in the right language and tone. No big surprise there; human engagement is all about striking the perfect tone and employing language that resonates. How often do you receive a poorly worded email – or an email plainly intended for someone else – and feel distinctly unimpressed with the brand in question? Fairly regularly it seems, judging by our survey results. Nearly half (47%) of you have received this kind of content a couple of times in the last six to 12 months. In a funny way, this stat marries up quite predictably with our earlier findings about the importance of localising content – marketers might understand why they should be doing localisation, but not everyone's practising what they preach.

"How often do you receive a poorly worded email – or an email plainly intended for someone else – and feel distinctly unimpressed with the brand in question?"

As consumers, we feel pretty unequivocal about brands that send us content that hasn't been localised. A staggering 94% of respondents say it weakens their impression of a brand, 44% significantly so. Here are a few of our all-time favourite clangers:

- Clairol launched a new curling iron in Germany called 'mist stick', without realising that 'mist' in German is slang for 'manure'.
- Ford came a-cropper when marketing their new 'Pinto' model in Brazil: 'pinto' in Brazilian Portuguese means 'tiny male genitals'.
- Pepsi's 'Brings you back to life' slogan nosedived in China, where it was literally translated into Mandarin as 'Brings you back from the grave'.
- 'Got milk?' was one US copywriter's claim to fame back in 1993. It didn't go down quite as well in Spanish-speaking countries, where it was directly translated as: 'Are you lactating?'

But these aren't one-offs. The majority of our respondents have their own examples of poor localisation, from both B2B and B2C perspectives. Here are just a few of them:

> *"I saw a campaign devised in Korea (without UK input) which was expected to be used in the UK. It had very deep and dark sexual undertones..."*

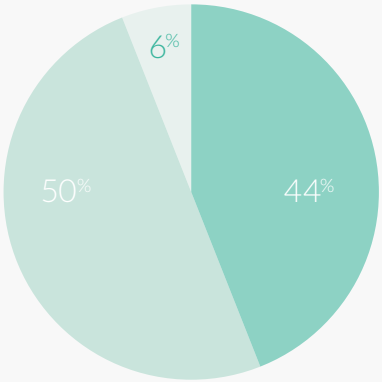
> *"Using the word 'paper' in a particular context that when literally translated into Spanish and Italian referred to 'toilet paper'!"*

> *"Personally I hate being asked for a 'ZIP code'. If you're going to offer a UK service, please call it a 'postcode'!"*

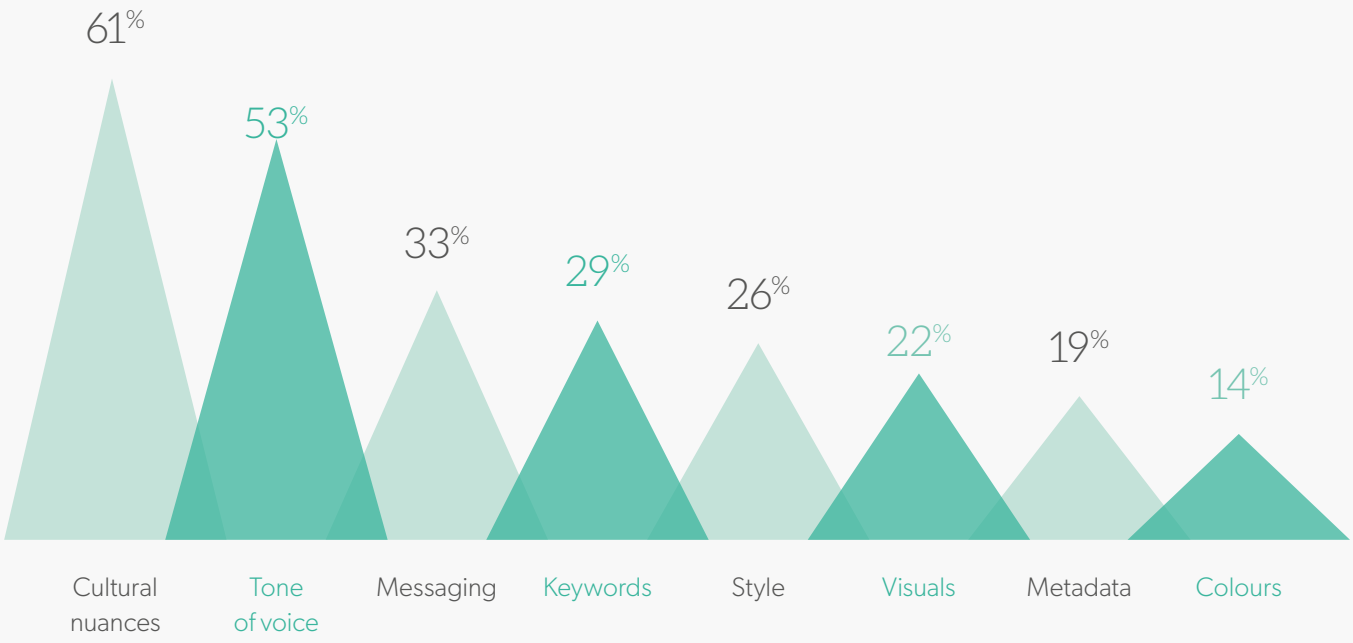
> *"Things that annoy me are '$' symbols and general Americanisms such as sports analogies that bear no relevance to the UK audience."*

> *"I've seen campaigns sent out in the MENA market called things like the 'sales and marketing love story' or 'S&M' campaign – completely inappropriate for the market in question."*

To what extent does your impression of a brand weaken when you receive an email in the wrong language?



Thinking about the content you generate, which of the following most commonly fall by the wayside in the localisation process?



From the graph above it's clear that localisation pitfalls can be split into a number of areas:

- Poor segmentation
- Incorrect language
- Incorrect terminology
- Lack of awareness of cultural norms.

The latter is particularly hard to get right. Take Asia, for example, a sprawling, diverse and highly complex market: on the one hand you have China, heavily influenced by government policy, and on the other South Korea and Taiwan, which are far more liberal and western-minded.

And it's as much about the design of the email, brochure or whitepaper you're sending as it is the content itself: when it comes to colour schemes, brands need to tread particularly carefully in certain territories. Red and yellow are both considered politically sensitive colours in Thailand, whereas white signifies mourning in parts of Southeast Asia.

Becoming familiar with the cultural nuances of different regions is no mean feat, as the majority of our respondents admit. Some 61% of you say that cultural nuances are the biggest challenge when localising content, followed closely by tone of voice (53%), messaging (33%) and keywords (29%). Read on to find out how these can be overcome – and how to make sure your content flies in whichever market it's destined for.

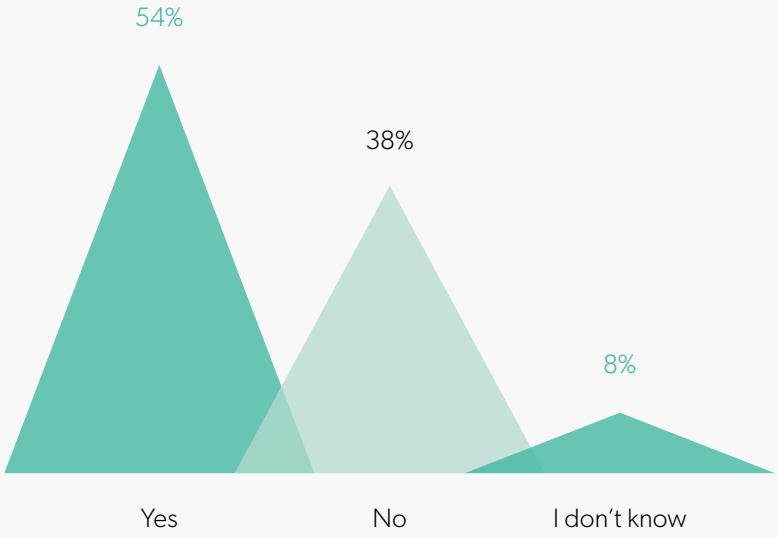
Section 3
Overcoming the biggest localisation pitfalls

If you're now convinced that localising content needs to be a bigger priority for your content marketing team, never fear: there are some easy ways to boost your localisation and translation armoury. First off, make sure you have a style guide. For anyone producing content this is an absolute no-brainer, and with 38% admitting they don't have one (and 8% unsure whether they do or don't) this is an easy first step on the road to universal content domination.

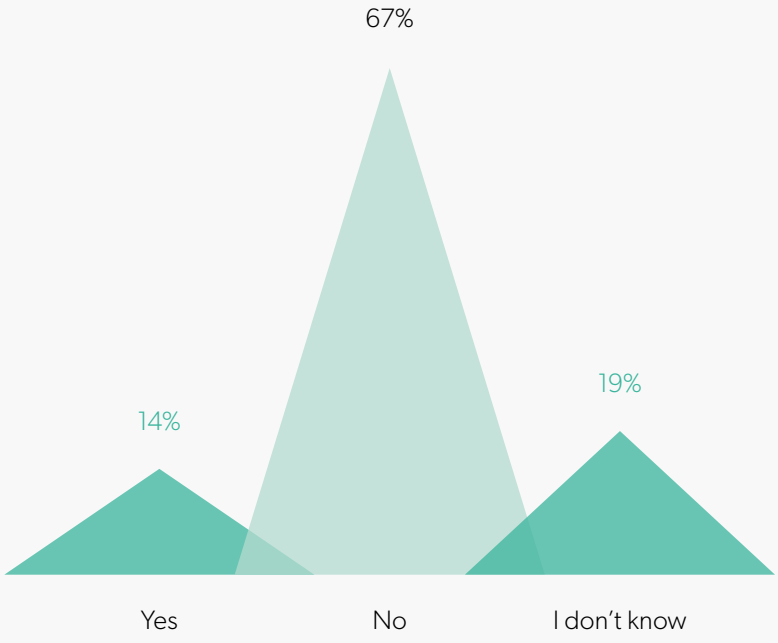
A good style guide will document everything content-related, from the terminology the company uses to describe itself, to spelling and punctuation preferences. In doing so, it becomes a basic road map that everyone can follow when creating content: yes, content will need to be repurposed for foreign markets, but a basic style guide will make the localisation and translation process much easier and more streamlined.

And what about translation memory technology? A huge 67% of you admit you don't use it, but why not? Translation memory technology automatically manages preferred vocabulary and specialist terminology by presenting the client's preferred terms to the translator for inclusion where appropriate. It ensures you never pay for the same phrase twice – storing and reusing translated material to ensure consistency while also delivering some pretty nice cost savings.

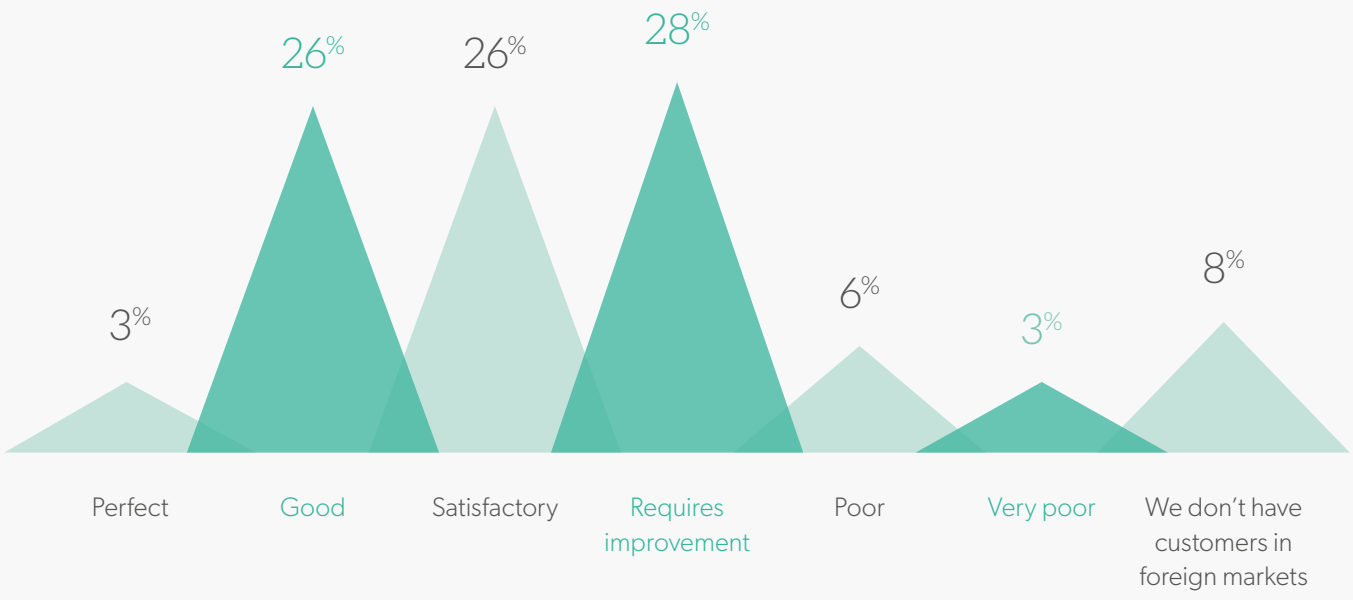
Do you have a style guide in your source language?



Do you use translation memory technology?



How would you describe your team's understanding of customers in foreign markets?



Your understanding of the foreign markets in which you operate will obviously dictate, to a great extent, the success of your marketing efforts – and it appears there's quite a bit of brushing up to be done in this area. While 26% of respondents describe their team's understanding of customers in foreign markets as 'good', 28% say it 'requires improvement'. So how best to swot up? Start by actively engaging with your colleagues and customers in these foreign markets. They'll be best placed to advise on cultural niceties and colloquial no-nos.

"While 26% of respondents describe their team's understanding of customers in foreign markets as 'good', 28% say it 'requires improvement"

Five ways to boost your content for foreign markets

- Introduce and circulate a style guide: it'll mean each writer conforms to the same tone of voice and brand style.
- Ensure your copy is clearly formatted: translators hate working with poorly formatted text. Plus, some translations will be longer than others – make sure you're allowing for this in the design of your emails and web pages.
- Get to grips with each and every market. What are their painpoints and what makes their market (and thus buying needs) unique?
- Think about the language you're using. Your brand's tone of voice may be familiar and colloquial here, but how will it work in Japan, where formality and politeness are highly valued?
- Make a note of idioms and colloquialisms in a glossary – we write and say these all the time without realising we're doing so. If you can highlight where they're being used, you're more likely to either flag them to your translator, or avoid using them altogether.

Personalisation has become something of a meaningless buzzword in B2B, but its importance shouldn't be underestimated – particularly in the global marketplace. By tailoring your content for each and every segment of your audience, you're standing out in your prospects' inboxes and boosting those all-important click rates in the process. The content marketer who fails to recognise this will end up much like the hapless dodo – unable to wing its way to new and fertile lands, and, ultimately, facing extinction.

Taking your content up a gear



Robert Gorby
VP SMB Business,
SDL Managed Translation

While it's edifying to see marketers recognise the need for a presence in multiple markets, it's concerning that more than a quarter (26%) fail to tailor content for customers around the world. From a marketing point of view, this triggers some pretty ear-piercing alarm bells: a failure to localise means a failure to connect with your audience, a fundamental stumbling block in the whole marketing process.

The reasons behind such stats are clear. Producing content that resonates with the reader takes a lot of time and effort: it can be a painstaking process, particularly when multiple stakeholders are involved. As a result, translation isn't often a top priority for the time-poor content marketer. But it's concerning that having dedicated so much effort to producing quality content, so many marketers are failing to take that extra step and ensure it's properly localised in the reader's language.

So is this mainly down to cost? Some 46% aren't spending a penny on translation – perhaps because they haven't budgeted for it from the outset. But instead of looking at it as a cost centre, the localisation process should be seen as an investment. And more importantly, translation needs to be part of the process from the outset. Failure to invest can have some pretty dire consequences – from both a brand protection and cost perspective. We've seen lots of brands spend significant sums rectifying campaign errors after failing to invest properly in localisation, and it can be hugely damaging.

"Instead of looking at it as a cost centre, the localisation process should be seen as an investment"

Working with the right language translation provider will help you determine where human translation is necessary and where machine translation might work. Customer reviews, for example, can be left to the machines, while more high value items – like web or campaign copy – always require that human touch. Either way, the right provider will advise on what's needed when and ensure every piece of content works for whichever audience it's destined for, wherever they might be in the world. ››

Seven questions to ask when comparing quotes from language service providers

1. Are you getting the right skills to match the task?
   Costs can differ depending on the specialism of the translator, such as legal or marketing, so make sure you find a partner with the right skills for the task.

2. Are the translators freelance or in-house?
   Freelancers can be a cost-effective way to get things done, but in-house ownership delivers right-first-time quality and consistency. Find a provider that has its own network of in-house and freelance translators so they can support your business as it enters new markets and geographies.

3. Is the translator living in-territory and translating into their mother tongue?
   It's the only way to know for sure whether your message will 'shout' locally.

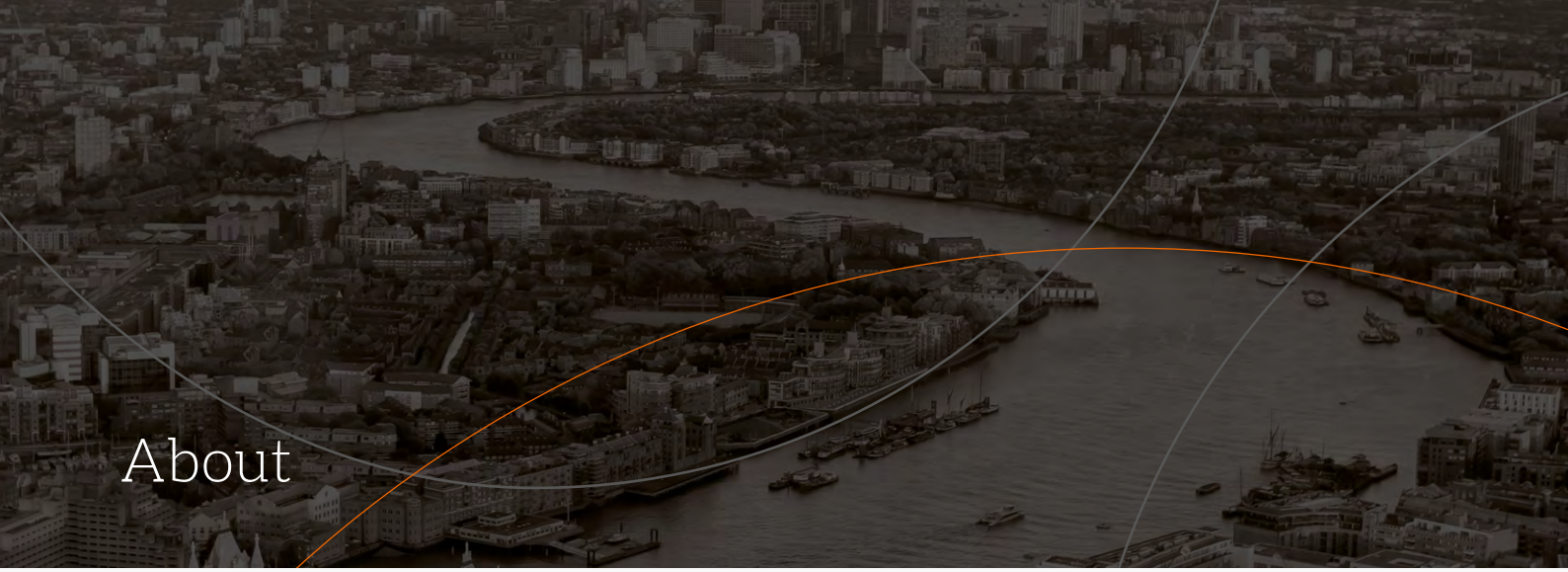
4. Are you using translation memory technology?
   This is your way to progressively reduce costs by reusing previously translated material. And if it's your intellectual property, you can switch language service providers and transfer it across.

5. Is content being proofed and reviewed?
   Is your translation going to be checked by a second linguist? The same linguist? Or will it not be reviewed at all? Do they have ISO 9001–certified processes and standards?

6. Will you receive it in the format you need?
   If not, factor in the cost, time and complications involved with converting the text for desktop publishing.

7. Can your provider handle everything all the time?
   How many freelancers/in-house translators do they have? Can they support all languages and specialisations? In short, can they grow in line with your business?

Get an instant quote today. 15,000 in-house, in-territory translators working to ISO9001 standards… just a click away at sdl.com/managed-translation



About

B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership.

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0)20 7014 4920.

B2B Marketing

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SDL

SDL is the global innovator in language translation technology, services and content management. With more than 20 years of experience, SDL creates transformative business results through nuanced digital experiences with customers around the world.

There's a reason why thousands of demanding businesses rely on SDL when going global. They recognise the difference that having 15,000-plus in-country translators makes when you need to have an answer for every language. They are reassured by the fact that with all these people working to one consistent ISO standard they can rely on a consistent quality of product and service. And they take full advantage of the technology we have created, which sets the industry standard, for simplifying translation projects, reducing costs and accelerating time to market.

SDL Managed Translation offers that technology through a self-service cloud-based translation platform that enables users to create and manage translation projects from one easy-to-use online dashboard, making enterprise-grade translation service and technology accessible and affordable to small and growing businesses.

For more information on SDL Managed Translation, visit sdl.com/managed-translation

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