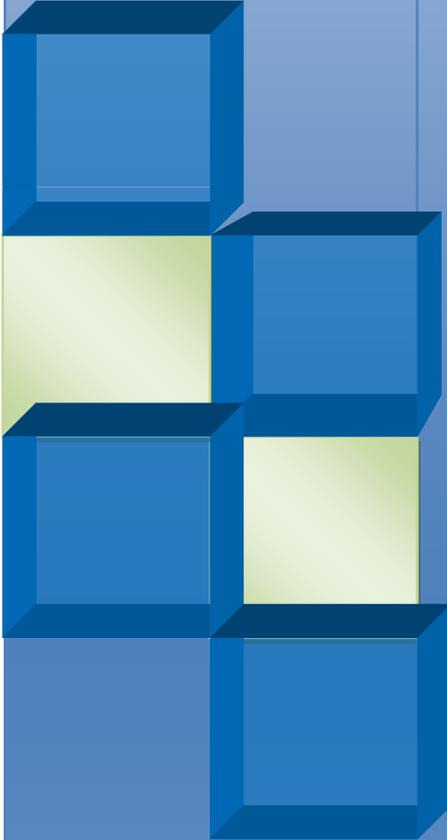
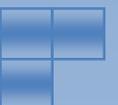


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## Online Multilingual marketing strategy: *Indispensable for the Tourism Industry*

By Vineet Singh



## Abstract

*While most of us would tend to disagree, the fact is that the most popular search language is not English. If you have been guessing Chinese, you are right. A current survey reveals that more than 75% internet users browse non-English pages and almost 98% conduct search in their native language. The proliferation of search engines and the speed of global search are matched only by the energy of the globetrotting tourists. Travel and Tourism segment has managed to keep its ship afloat even in the current days of recession. While 2010 promises to be trendsetting year in the history of Tourism industry, the marketers and think-tanks are still digging their heels to capture the multi-lingual tourist community, who venture out of their houses only after consulting the revered search engines. The billion dollar question for the marketing strategists is – Is their site coming up in the travel related searches being conducted every second? And even if the site manages to be visible, is the right message being conveyed? Let's walk down the line to evaluate some of these queries.*

## Global travel search landscape

Japanese are considered to be the most avid travelers on the planet and they are also the most meticulous of planners. Japan, where technology is like second nature, is also dependent upon the search mechanism for their global travel plans. Traditionally, there are three peak travel seasons in Japan – New Year, Golden Week in early May and one in August (O-bon), a time to honor the ancestors. This is the season for frantic online searches. But, in all probability, the searches are being conducted in the native Japanese language. Does that not warrant a website of a hotel or a lodge in Arizona to be in Japanese language if they want to tap the seasonal pool of tourists from Tokyo? Most of us would deduce that the problem can be solved by utilizing the automatic translation tool by Google. Nothing can be farther from truth. A machine translation might end up alienating your potential customers.

Understanding the value of native search, major search engines have a local edition to cater to the expanding needs of the local search market – google.ca (Canada), google.fr (France), Yahoo.de. Being found on the first page of local search engines is imperative for any global business, and this requires an optimized multi-lingual version of your websites. So, to tie up with your Japanese or Chinese customers, the Chinese or Japanese versions of their websites should be supported by a locally understandable booking and reservation menu on the website. To top it off, your foreign customers should be able to receive the confirmation of their bookings in their native language. This is the starting of a global tie-up.



[Image credit: [www.travel-vancouver-island.com](http://www.travel-vancouver-island.com)]

For any traveler, the search phase is followed by a data collection and comparative analysis phase which entails the following activities...

- Scanning the website for any travel related intelligence. This might include information regarding the local culture, native souvenirs, hidden treasures, safety precautions and any specific information of interest
- Price comparison is a major objective of this phase of a potential visitor. A close scrutiny of offerings, prices and testimonials takes place and this becomes the decisive factor in short listing the potential candidates

Understanding the linguistic nuances is of paramount importance while crafting the content of these vital sections on the website or digital brochure. A fast and furious approach to content transformation might not arrest the interests of your global customers.

A cultural distinction is imperative for creating customized messages for different markets and regions. Being multilingual is just the first step towards a global acceptability of your website and marketing agenda – The real challenge is to convey the same message wrapped in various cultural blankets. So, once you have identified your potential markets, the next step is to mold the content of your website with an eye on the cultural, social and economic values of the foreign land – This expedites the process of market segmentation for the travel related services you are offering.

## Is your site speaking the language of the land?

Translation is always considered the panacea for all the multilingual marketing pains and many global marketing big hats have fallen prey to this misconception. Every industry has its own language of the trade and a grasp of the local flavor is vital to enhance the acceptability of the online business in either Beijing or in Tokyo – and the same business will be governed by a different set of localization rules. Targeting the sentiments and values of a foreign traveler is followed by an increased number of bookings. A right localization technique has enabled remote lodges in Smokey Mountain, USA to attract visitors from UK and China – The website could speak the right language in the right place.

While marketing executives around the world are busy adopting the most effective search marketing strategies to boost their bookings and bottom line, the content angle is often limited to the best translation service provider – and this entails a lot of money in making your site speak different languages. But, are we being complacent and creating one way traffic with our customers. What is required is a genuine conversation between your website and the non-English customers. Form submission, submission receipts, Thank you mail to the final query response should all be highly localized to create an air of assurance for the foreign traveler.

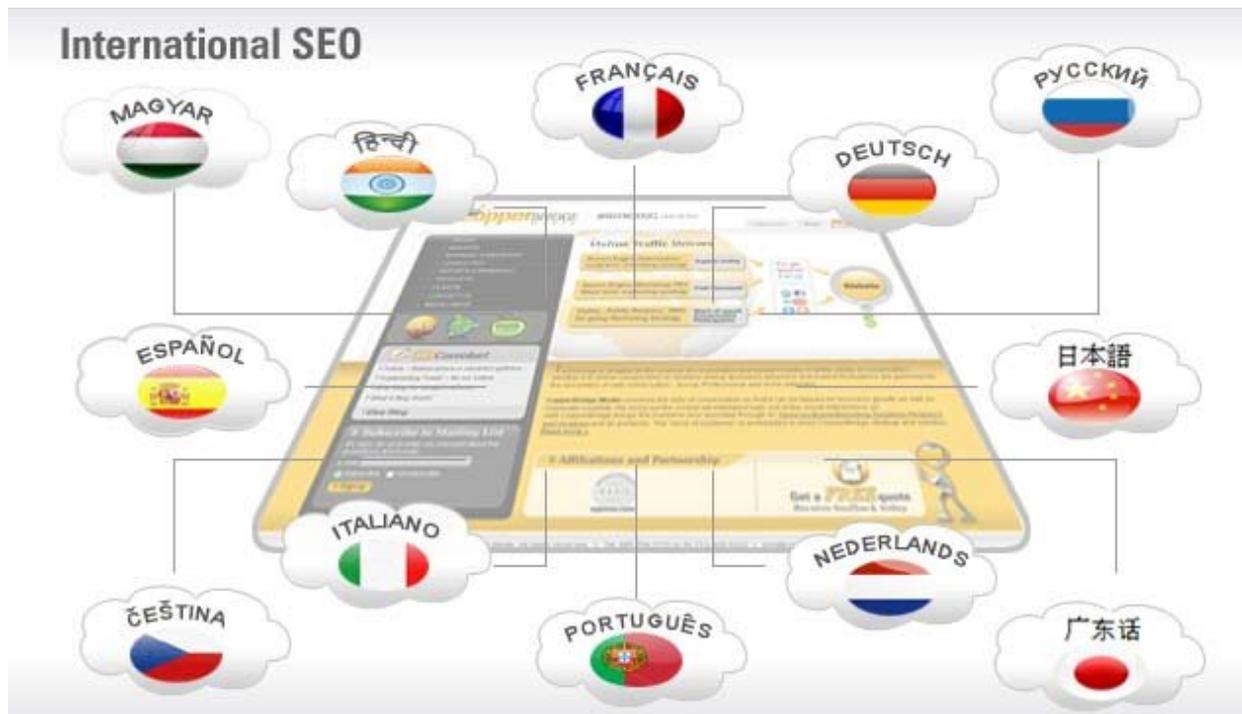


[Image credit: [www.buzzle.com](http://www.buzzle.com)]

With new regions being added under the internet umbrella with every passing moment, the percentage non-English web pages have gone up to almost 90% - Is it not a sign of a new multilingual era, where marketing and business success is hinged on the number of foreign brand ambassadors that your company has. It is a known fact that even the users proficient in English are loyal to websites offering services in their native language – alignment of our thoughts is always in the mother tongue.

### Is your marketing pitch speaking the language of the land?

Convincing the customer takes on a new proportion when the services being offered are as intangible as the experience, feelings and memory. Marketing copywriting is a complex ballgame even for English audience, and adding the concoction of culture, social values, religion and linguistic nuances makes the task of multilingual copywriting an unenviable one. For example Chinese and Japanese have had a great and long history and to some extent they have seen the cultural and historical bucket overflow in their own backyard, but they long for a different experience when they travel to a western destination – By all accounts their focus is more on exotic shopping experience. That is one localization aspect that no seasoned copywriter would like to ignore when creating a sales pitch for the Chinese travelers.



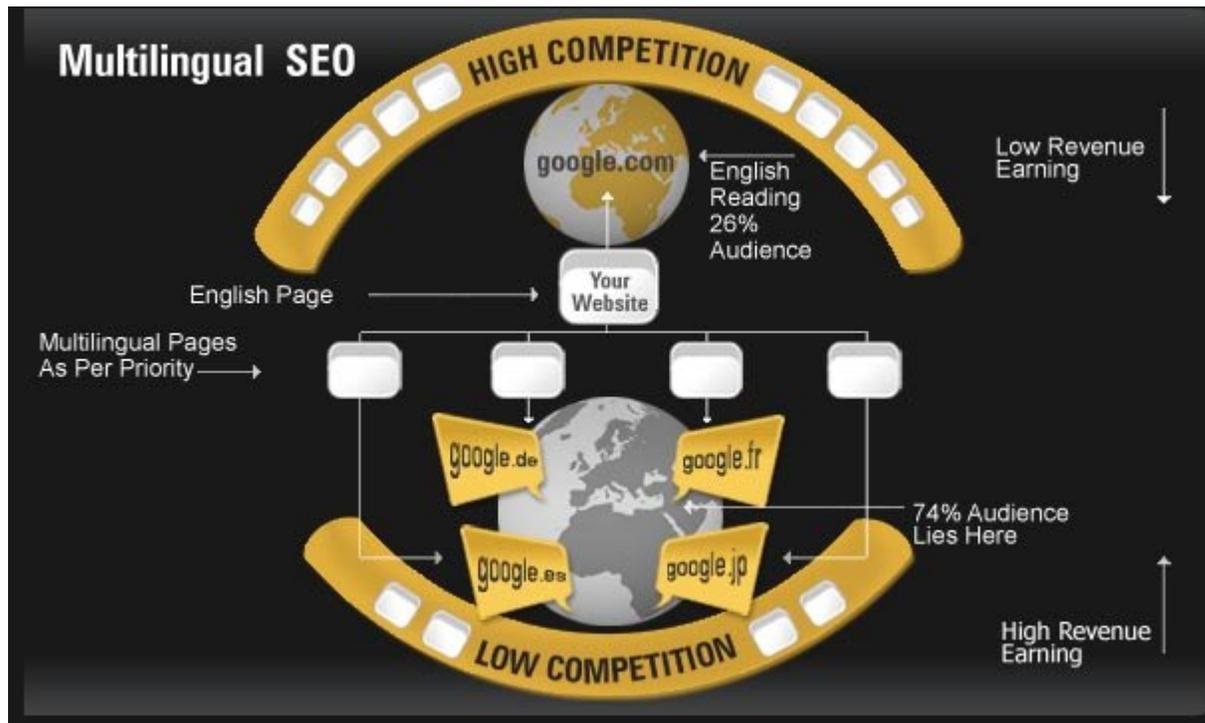
Even the graphics have a different connotation for Europeans, Americans and Asians and this fact dictates a different marketing copy to be crafted for different localization needs. So, if you are marketing your site through...

- Multilingual Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Search Engine marketing (SEM) or Pay-Per-Click (PPC)
- Affiliate marketing
- Content marketing
- Video / Picture marketing
- Social Media marketing

...the multilingual aspect brings the psychological and cultural factor into the whole marketing scheme. No wonder that even the best translators and copywriters fail to achieve conversions for a multilingual site.

## Multilingual search landscape...

If the owner of an English language site is told that he is targeting only 23% of the world population, he might be tempted to scrap off his site, but the fact is that more than 75% of the of the global online searches are being done on non-English languages. A linguistic map of US will tell you that more than 40% of American population is Spanish speaking – and to add to the twist, Mexican Spanish is a different Spanish than Spain's Spanish.



Can we target Google in China when more than 260 million net savvy Chinese are hooked on to Baidu – the largest Chinese search engine. In the same breath, we can mention Yandex and Voila - the largest search engines for Russia and France respectively. A recent statistics revealed that only 1 % of the English websites are translated into Spanish – and the Spanish online market represents \$500 billion in value...Can one really afford to ignore the Spanish language. Multilingual marketing is not only a necessity for the business owners, but also a boon for the global consumer community – who can get the best deal from anywhere in the world. As reflected in the above analysis, English is seldom the native language for global travelers.

## Conclusion

*If you have a business and you are not online, then you are losing big time to your competitors. But, if you have a website and your customer base is spread globally, and you don't have multilingual site, then you are losing an opportunity to be a leader in your segment. The pervasiveness of internet has changed the rules of the online economy and your customers are most probably searching for you in a language other than the English. Having a multilingual site is just half the trip – Business gets a boost by localizing your content, which tantamount to integrating the cultural, social and economic values of a population into your content and site's character.*

## About the Author

### Vineet Singh

Vineet is a seasoned marketer and experimental entrepreneur. He is founder and CEO of CopperBridge media ([www.copperbridgemedia.com](http://www.copperbridgemedia.com)). He is a passionate teacher and environmentalist and is also the founder and Managing director of Green Arth ([www.greenarth.com](http://www.greenarth.com)).

### About Copper Bridge Media

CopperBridge Media ([www.copperbridgemedia.com](http://www.copperbridgemedia.com)) is global marketing strategy firm and business enabler. It relies on its high intelligence data capture and analysis to cater to the conversion and ROI centric demands of its clients. It offers Corporate Branding, Multi-Channel Marketing, Research and Analysis and pervasive Search marketing solutions to its clients.

PaperTip ([www.papertip.com](http://www.papertip.com)) is the content marketing arm of CopperBridge and is vital to the success of its client's online business strategy. CopperBridge Media takes its social responsibility very seriously and has recently launched GreenArth ([www.greenarth.com](http://www.greenarth.com)) – as a platform to conserve the natural resources and safeguard the environment.

### Get In Touch

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