

Top 10 Translation and localization tips

For cross-cultural brand success



Building your business in new language markets? A localized marketing strategy is key.

Launching a marketing campaign in a new market or expanding an existing campaign into additional areas can be a tricky affair. What colors, images, or turns of phrase are enticing and which fall flat?

Without a keen cultural eye, even the best planned campaign can falter – even if it has enjoyed previous success in other markets.

Even if your new market doesn't require translation into a new language for the campaign, regional differences and colloquialisms can have disastrous consequences.

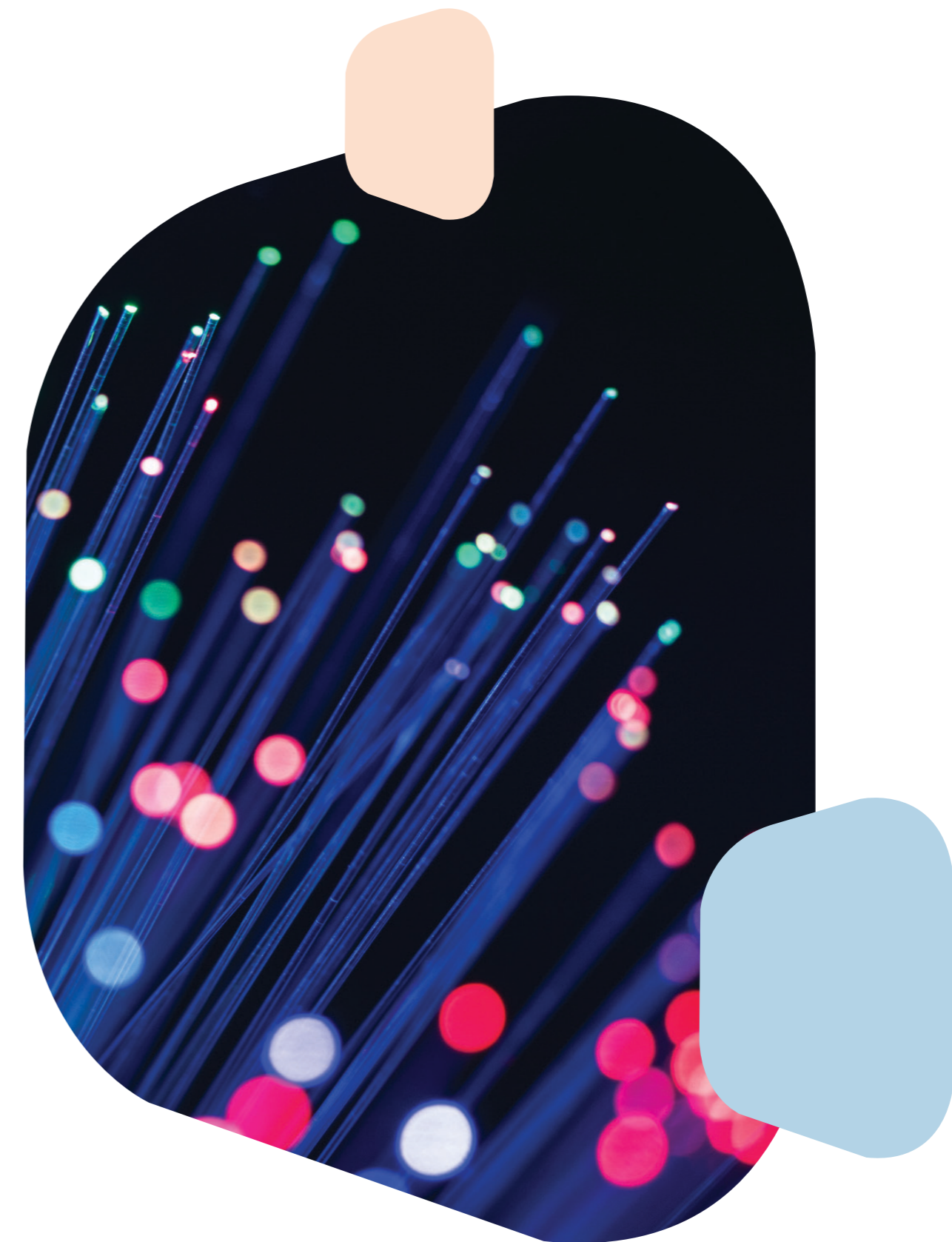
When McDonald's launched in India, locations began offering chicken, lamb, and vegetarian

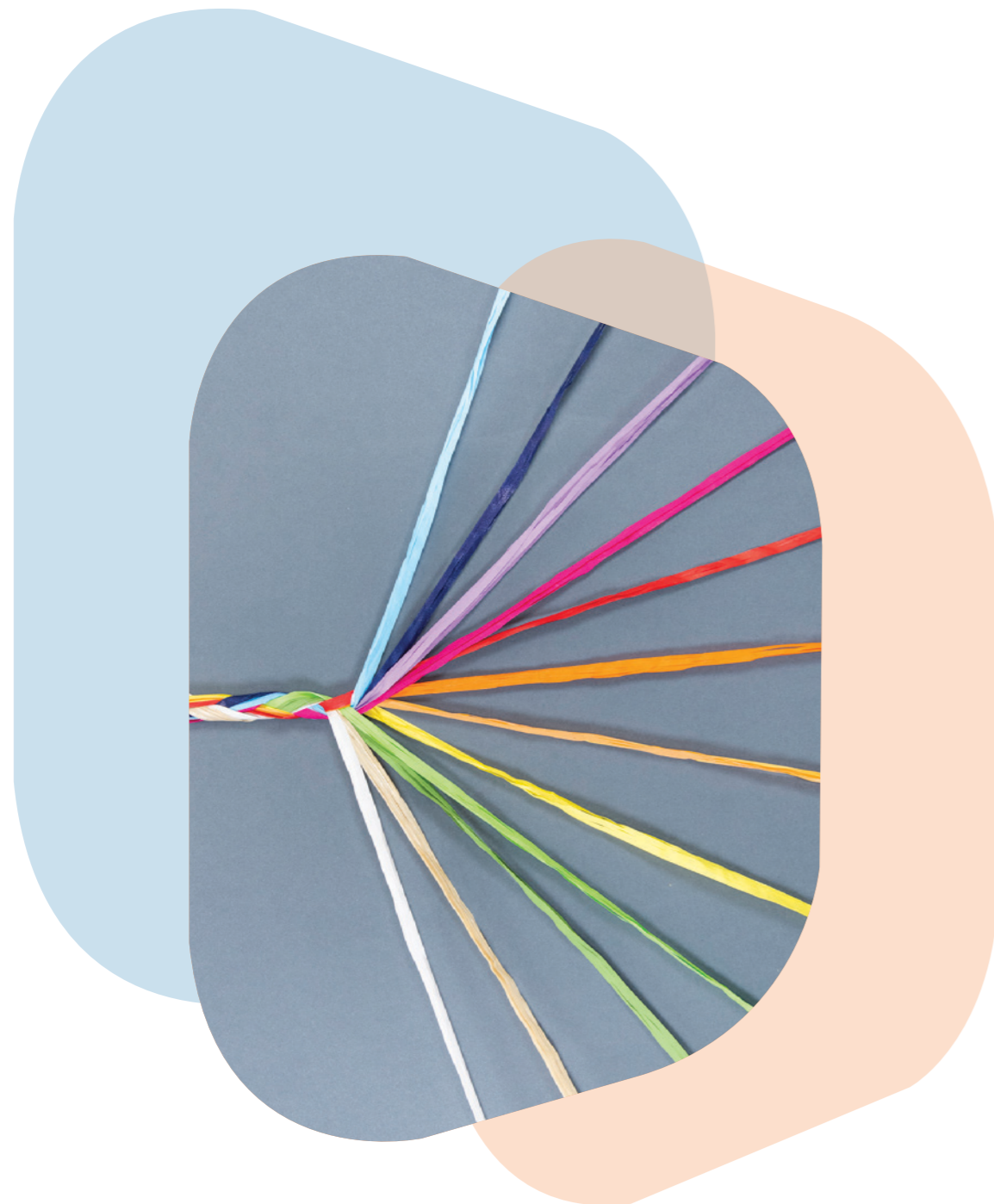
dishes. Although the brand is best known for hamburgers, heavily marketing the sandwich in India wouldn't have made much sense.

Why? Because 80% of the country's population practices Hinduism, a religion that prohibits beef consumption, and about 20% identify as vegetarian. In order to succeed in such a culturally varied market, McDonald's needed to redesign the menu to match the preferences of a wider range of customers.



In this eBook, we'll share 10 of our top tips to help you successfully translate your marketing campaigns across languages, cultures and regions to most effectively connect with new markets and achieve brand success.





Tip 1

Determine your target audience

Effective marketing needs to reflect the habits, tastes and lifestyle of its target audience. If you choose only a “global” version of a language when translating your branding or marketing campaign, this may save you money, but your content may be considered too neutral to be effective.

Content that appeals to “everyone” runs the risk of resonating with no one. You will need to consider the risks and benefits of each scenario.

Before you develop an existing campaign or send your existing text to the translation team, determine if it will be global or regional in scope. This, along with your budget, will determine your target languages. If your project is global, then you may consider opting for “global” Spanish.

If it’s only for certain Latin American audiences and your budget allows, you may want to choose multiple specific regional Spanish translations (for example, Mexican Spanish).

Working with a **translation service** from the very beginning can help you develop a global campaign that can be easily localized to more specific regions.



Even if you are not customizing or tailoring your marketing to best engage specific local regions, you should still analyze your content for a wide range of locales in your target area to reduce the potential for accidentally confusing or otherwise ineffective translations.

Tip 2

Evaluate your content

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You should undertake a professional, thorough review of all source content, including your company logos, slogans and imagery as well as your intended marketing campaign assets.

This review can involve translation and interpretation professionals, marketing professionals, focus groups, cultural consultants, and other strategic decision-makers. Its mission is to identify images, phrases, or concepts that might not translate effectively, such as culturally specific pictures, metaphors and idiomatic expressions.

In a brand new marketing campaign, having this feedback available before translation can help you decide whether to change your original campaign in order to be more consistent across translations.

For example, if you discover during the early stages of development that your new product's logo or slogan may be confusing or otherwise not resonate with an entire

population of potential consumers, you may want to change it altogether rather than develop different branding for different markets.

If, on the other hand, you are expanding an existing campaign into a new market, it may make more sense to allow your translation provider to suggest words, images and metaphors that will convey the original message most effectively in the target languages, even if the exact phrasing or imagery is different from the original campaign. This process, referred to as "**transcreation**," will ensure your message is adapted appropriately while maintaining its intent, style, tone and context.

For instance, when developing a successful campaign depicting the close bond between people and pets, it may be appropriate to

change the images to those of different animals depending on each country's most common beloved animal companions.

Ideally, the writer of the source materials should be trained in writing global-friendly content, which will enable easier translation without significant changes to the original ideas.



Reviewing your existing content is vital to ensure not only that your marketing assets are as effective as possible but also that they are not inadvertently confusing, nonsensical, or have an otherwise unintended meaning.



Tip 3

Budget appropriately

Translation of marketing content takes time! Don't expect the same timeline or level of investment as when translating technical, legal, or general business documents. Marketing content, by its nature, tends to be cleverly nuanced.

That said, its meanings are more open to interpretation. Standard translation of copy often does not effectively convey the subtleties of the original and is therefore not appropriate for marketing content. Rather, "adaptation" may be used. Adaptation can involve changing words or sentences or rearranging the structure of the copy, rather than following the order of the source. A skilled translation team will look at the

context of the content and its intended message and use their professional judgment in preparing a translation that captures the feeling and intent of the original.

Standard translations are entirely sufficient for some applications, like catalog descriptions, instruction manuals, safety information and other copy that is largely factual and non-persuasive.



Use the most appropriate method of translation, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.





Tip 3 - continued

Budget appropriately

Headlines, taglines and copy require extra attention and multiple revisions to get the translations to reflect the desired message and feel.

If it's not possible to translate the content while preserving the original intent, it may take additional time to find new images or craft new messaging. The need for these extra revisions and additions can make these kinds of translation workflows more costly, too.

In addition, style consistency is much more important for marketing content than when translating technical documentation or other business work. Because of this, a single project shouldn't be split among too many translators.

So, in addition to the content itself requiring more time to translate, the need to use a smaller translating team for marketing and branding content will add to the project's cost and duration.



Make sure you account for the extra time transcreation and adaptation will take when establishing your deadlines and budget.

Tip 4

Define the desired **style and tone**

Once you have an idea of the purpose, scope and target audience, examine and evaluate the most effective style and tone for your marketing communications.

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Are your communications formal or informal?



Marketing messages that are out of touch with the community standards of their target audience will not resonate, will not be effective and may actually harm your brand.

Do you have different audiences for different types of communications?



Additionally, consider the cultural context of your target market. To a culture that values professional international soccer, an advertisement featuring Lionel Messi will be instantly recognizable, where the same advertisement may fall flat in a baseball-centric nation.

Should the translated content mirror the English style or be more localized?



Often, situations that are lighthearted in one culture may be traditionally very serious in another, even if they involve similar groups of people.

It may be easy to preserve the effectiveness of the message in the new market by keeping the same tone and style while substituting a comparable local sports celebrity.



Incorporating global considerations in your initial marketing strategy, rather than developing a domestic strategy and then translating it, can be a more effective and economical way to tailor your style and tone to each target market.

Tip 5

Create a style guide and glossary

A **style guide** is a set of standards for the writing and design of your documents, images and other marketing assets.

Developing a customized style guide in conjunction with your translation and transcreation team ensures consistency within your campaign and across your larger-scale branding. It sets out what your organization has decided are best practices and stylistic choices.

If your company is in multiple markets, each **should have its own style guide** that covers punctuation, formatting, regional branding elements, the desired tone and level of formality, preferred formats and layouts and other

localization and adaptation issues (how phone numbers are designated, for example).

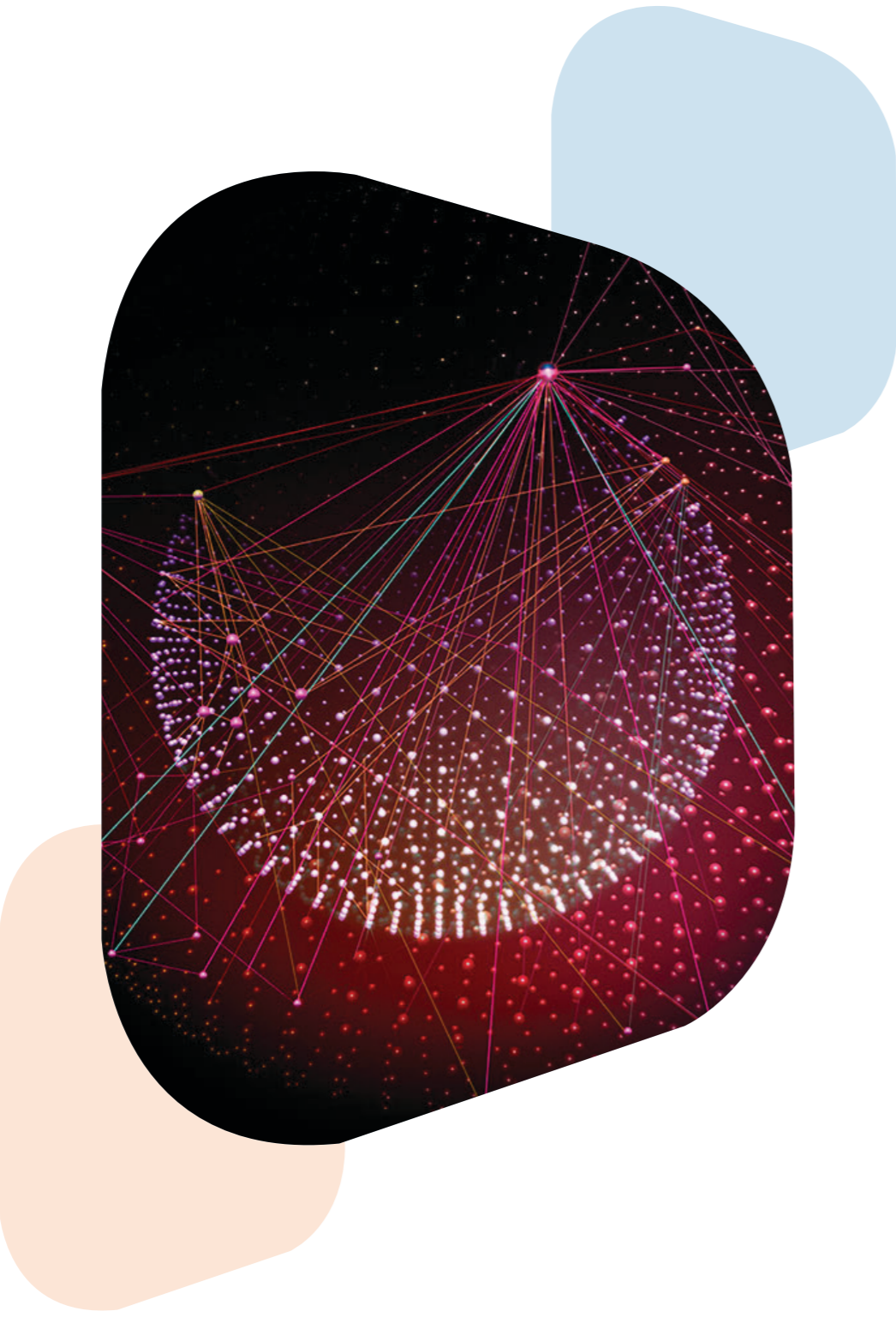
A **glossary** is a list of approved, frequently used words, key terms, and expressions, along with their translations.

It can include preferred explanatory translations for industry jargon or other words for which there is no direct translation. It can also specify internally preferred translations for words or expressions that have multiple, commonly accepted translations.



A glossary can also explain words that have specific local or industry meanings, such as to “friend” someone on a social media network.





Tip 6

Share the **knowledge**

In order to produce copy that aligns with your company's vision and marketing strategy, your translation provider needs to know about the research and strategic decisions you've made.

Your provider should understand the objective of the marketing assets, the makeup of your target audience and the preferred style and tone for the project.

Many brands create strategy briefs in house or have them created by an outside marketing agency but never share them with the translation team because translation is frequently an afterthought.

A much more effective strategy is to develop and share this information in conjunction with your localization experts from the very beginning.

This will empower them to most effectively communicate your message to localized markets and best employ their professional knowledge and opinions to reach your objectives.



Create and share a global creative brief outlining your overall brand strategy and goals. Even the best translators will underperform without being privy to the context of your overall strategy.

Tip 7

Review

For websites, multi-region campaigns, or other large endeavors, make sure your translation provider is on the right track by reviewing a sample of the translation for style and tone early in the process.

A review team should be set up in advance of engaging a translation service. Ideally, this team will consist of one reviewer for each language, engaged from the beginning of the project and consistently checking in along the way. Because consistency is key, reworking the style of a translation project is very time consuming. It is better to make sure that your translation team is capturing your style and tone in an appropriate manner as early as possible in the process.

If you don't have the internal resources to **review** a project in the translated language, plan ahead

and engage a consultant to do so. This is significantly cheaper than retranslating substantial amounts of text (and infinitely better than realizing, too late, that your translation is off the mark, nonsensical, or hilariously ineffective).

Also, allow enough time in your schedule for additional reviews and a final refinement step. The feedback from the consultants or reviewers should be analyzed, harmonized (if more than one reviewer is participating) and fully implemented.



Language is subjective, and reactions to marketing text and imagery can be strong. If there is ambiguity, you may want to test the marketing on a control group or test panel. Many professional marketing research companies can arrange for this kind of trial. The process is the same as in English, so expect strong opinions and feedback.



Tip 8

Follow **local** laws and customs

What's allowed and prohibited in advertising differs greatly by country and region. It's essential that your entire team understand what the local restrictions are on advertising images, text and video.

In addition to prohibitions on nudity, violence, or language, there may also be regulations forbidding certain kinds of direct marketing, comparisons to other brands, or "puffery" (exaggerated praise or claims promoting a product).

Many countries, especially in Europe, also utilize helpful standard and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) approved symbols to convey a message without having to translate it. For example, the recycle, shelf life, and ironing symbols can be used throughout the European

Union (EU), thereby saving a lot of space and also complying with local regulations. Symbols such as those used to designate hazardous materials also enjoy widespread international recognition.

Be careful when using non-standard symbols, custom designs or logos. Sometimes, a graphic depiction or symbol that seems perfectly ordinary and straightforward may take on a different meaning in another **culture** or may be too confusing to effectively convey your meaning.



If you are translating a brand name or other protected symbol, ensure that you take appropriate steps to use the locally appropriate trademark, copyright or other designations to ensure your intellectual property status is protected.



Tip 9

Take extra care with names and slogans

Brand names, even those that are meaningless or made up in their original language, can mean something different or sound like other meaningful words when translated into another language.

Take care not only to examine your marketing messages but also your brand and product names when entering a new market.

HSBC, a global financial services company with headquarters in London had a slogan of “Assume Nothing,” to convey that anything was possible at their bank. When translated into other languages, the slogan became “Do Nothing,”

which local consumers interpreted as “that bank that does nothing.” In response, HSBC adjusted their slogan to be “The World’s Private Bank.”

If you’re planning to use a slogan or tagline in your translated material, a review by a consultant familiar with local culture is imperative to prevent such mistakes.



The highly effective “Got Milk?” campaign from The California Milk Advisory Board ran into issues in Mexico. In Spanish, the slogan was interpreted as “Are you lactating?” and the local market took offense. The disconnect in the translation was discovered and later corrected.





Tip 10

Be aware of space limitations

Most languages take up more space than English, so if English is your source language, you will need to plan accordingly. Packaging and instruction sheets with limited space may need to be revised once translation and localization are completed.

This may involve revisions to the overall design of the materials to preserve the aesthetic appeal while ensuring readability. It may also take extra time and result in additional expense, so be sure to consider it in your budget and timeline.

When designing an entirely new campaign, it can be beneficial to think ahead, even if your initial campaign is only for your home market.

Considering localization and translation from the very beginning – during the initial design phase and layout – can allow you to leave adequate room for any future target languages, reducing the necessity and cost of later redesigns.

Learn more about Acclaro's start-to-finish multilingual marketing approach.



With the right team, brand awareness and cultural insights, your marketing campaign can create the right buzz and build your business in your target language market.



Power your strategic growth

Go beyond tactical localization with tailored, strategic solutions that resonate locally and drive growth globally

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Scale your global growth with a **strategic localization team**

We're a strategic translation and localization agency that helps the world's leading companies succeed across cultures.

1

We simplify what can seem like a complex process.

Our expert teams reduce the complexity of translation and localization to serve your goals strategically. With your goals front and center, we deliver language programs powered by innovative **localization** technology that engage audiences. We'll explain each step to ensure clarity and progress.

2

You'll always come first.

Your success is our success, and our project managers will be with you at every step. We run a flexible process tailored to your team so you'll always know how your translation requests are progressing and what to expect. Our self-service portal, **My Acclaro**, makes managing progress easy.


3

We believe in the power of partnership.

We believe inspired solutions come from close collaboration – no one knows your business better than you do, and no one does localization like we do. By taking the time to understand how we each work best, we'll combine your strengths and ours to create **tailored solutions** that serve your goals.


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 SEO & SEM

 Social media

 Advertising

 Website & landing pages

 Email campaigns

 Video

 PR/Comms

 Collateral