

# Language and Payment Support Translates into Global Sales

If you translate your site into other languages, you greatly increase the chance to grab the attention of consumers who speak those languages. If you go beyond marketing to them in their own language and adapt the logistics of purchasing, that Web site localization will greatly increase the likelihood of someone hitting the buy button.

Specifically, research we've conducted at Common Sense Advisory found that customer-buying experiences vary by their competence in the site's language and the ability of the system to turn lookers into buyers. We uncovered two major issues:

- **Language and pre-commerce issues repel visitors.** If prospects can't speak the language of the site, they're quick to go elsewhere. Our sample of 2,430 consumers in non-English-speaking countries revealed visitors leave when they encounter English beyond the welcome page and when they are faced with lengthy agreements to read. The prospect of paying hefty shipping costs was a secondary reason for abandonment.

- **Commerce issues send language-proficient users away.** For people who can handle the site's language, a demand for too much visitor information followed slow-to-load as the most cited reason for leaving. Then, the lack of transaction support for their country, lengthy agreements and shipping costs sent them on their way. If they managed to get past those pre-purchase hurdles, the site's inability to accept their credit derailed their purchases.

In other words, many sites make prospective buyers run a gauntlet, only to throw them out right before money can change hands.

## The Importance of Converting Global Lookers to Buyers

What is the financial, marketing, and branding cost of frustrating potential customers who can't buy due to logistical or payment issues? There isn't a lot of data on why people abandon their shopping carts when buying internationally, but two points underscore the scope of the problem:

- **European vendors refuse a third of transactions.** A May 2007 draft report from the European Parliament found that only six percent of consumers buy from sites outside their home countries. One third who tried to buy had their business refused by the vendor. The report didn't state the reason, but the inability to accept local payment methods tends to be a common reason for bouncing a transaction.

- **American e-commerce numbers include foreign sales.** Every month, the U.S. business press and analyst firms comment on the increasing contribution of electronic commerce to the economy. Not all of this revenue originates in the United States. On its FAQ page, the U.S.

Census Bureau notes that its monthly retail trade data on "e-commerce and total sales include sales covering all store and non-store retail locations in the United States operated by a firm selected in the survey. Sales made to a customer in a foreign country through a U.S. Web site are included in the estimates." In other words, U.S. firms aggregate all Web sales, including foreign ones, into their revenue totals. How much bigger could that e-commerce number be if more companies supported top-to-bottom online sales to prospective buyers in other countries?

### **Plan to Support for the Entire Transaction**

Once online retailers recognize the opportunity, they'll invest what it takes to turn browsers into buyers across national boundaries. That means localizing the entire buying experience – initial site visit, browsing, registration, purchase, payment, and post-sales support – to the countries in which they want to sell

Research every country where you'd like to do business. Find out what percentage of the total online population can complete a purchase using local transactional norms. Payment methods, shipping and fulfillment options, taxes, service agreements – everything – must be according to local online custom. You can be sure that your potential customers will look for shipping details, service contracts, and other details in the local language. Don't disappoint them. Otherwise, no matter how much you market to international audiences, they won't be able to buy from you unless you make the experience more local.

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