

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE LANGUAGE LOCALIZATION INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The current study addresses to analyze the cross cultural communication in language localization industry. The analysis focuses on cross-cultural communication and defines linguistic perspective in localized advertising of international products. The friction in localization service is also presented in the current study. Since language localization is a purpose-driven process, skopostheorie was applied in order to provide a theoretical ground to the particular case of website localization. The result shows that even though a digital service can be presented in English, reaching a significant market share requires localization. Therefore to reach full market potential, localization of digital services should be targeted to language markets instead of geographical areas. It is seen from the result that a need for full localization is disappearing due to the fast globalization of the services and the governance of consumer tastes. Full localization means adaptation of colors, layout and numbers. Fast development cycles of digital services would not even allow such extensive localization practices. Instead, a common opinion was that the need for translation is increasing. Localization service emerges as a constant process, the standards and requirements of localization are increasing. Thus, internationalization theory will be reframed and evolve in order to enable it to encompass the new realities of economic life. The concept of internationalization is nowadays implying a mixture of complex learning processes, organizing cross-border knowledge and resources, integrating cross-cultural perspectives in internal and external networks, managing the global/regional portfolio and blending global/regional shareholder value with local customer value perspective.

Keywords: *cross-cultural communication, language localization industry, internationalization, skopos theory.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has increased dramatically in the early 21st century. It is an era of global business and economic integration, the extent to which economic activity crosses national boundaries. Commercial products and services of giant multinationals have been marketed to people from different culture environments. In an increasingly global economic environment, international trade has achieved phenomenal growth resulting in increased international advertising across diverse cultures (Retnowati, 2015).

With the development of computers, Internet, and information literacy, websites have become more important for companies, individuals, and public or governmental institutions. Websites today are among the most important information channels. The Internet also contributes to the development of globalization. Many companies today operate outside the

country of their origin and become a part of the market with different cultural habits. This fact leads to a necessity for adapting the communication (Cermak, 2018).

Over the past decade the number of Internet services has increased and the importance of the Internet as a communication medium and market place has grown at an exceptional pace. Such developments have radically changed the way companies interact with their customers (Holmqvist 2009). On one hand, the Internet allows companies to internationalize fast and compete globally already at a very early stage of business which creates many new opportunities for companies. On the other hand, operating in a global and multilingual business environment creates unprecedented challenges especially in terms of language, translation and technical requirements.

Currently, most companies target their websites and marketing for specific countries or cultural groups. However, in order to reach the full market potential, companies should see the internet environment through a more global lens, as there are no country borders in the Internet. Websites do not just communicate with one segment of consumers: instead, they are “born-global” for all global consumers to see. Consequently, brands have to introduced to consumers, they need to enter the communities, the cultures, in order to gain trust, be accepted and eventually be listened. The only way brands can go through this is by respecting the consumers’ language, entering their cultural framework as well as by presenting target consumers through positive and realistic imagery, the way in which good cross cultural communication can be built up.

To fulfill all these expectations requires the constant creation of large quantities of quality content and communication suited to each specific market, while trying to keep the right level of brand consistency across markets to generate brand value. This necessitates a strong need for coordinated action, a deep knowledge of the target audience and an excellent understanding of the product that is going to be marketed. That is something that not all agencies can offer, primarily because of a lack of foreign-language and cultural knowledge among the personnel that work within them (Studies & Austermuehl, 2005).

1. Cross Cultural Advertising

Since the increasing level of globalization and internationalization, there have been many studies of cultural differences in international business and ways to learn them faster. Dutch social physiologist Geert Hofstede (1997) proposed probably the best theory of cultural differences, known as Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory. He distinguished six dimensions of cultural differences important in international communication. They are:

- **Power Distance Index (PDI)**. This index means the power distribution in the society, and to what extent individuals expect it both in organizations, and in ordinary life.
- **Individualism vs. collectivism(IDV)**. This dimension represents how integrated individuals in groups are.
- **Uncertainty avoidance index(UAI)** – society’s tolerance for ambiguity
- **Masculinity vs. femininity(MAS)** – level of society’s preference for heroism, achievement and material rewards for success.
- **Long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation(LTO)** – connection of the past with the current and future actions.
- **Indulgence vs. restraint(IND)** – measure of happiness; or if the simple joys are fulfilled

The issue of cross cultural communication started from marketing practitioners and academics who consider standardized approaches to marketing and advertising strategies in globalization, and then some studies proved that the standardization of advertising across culture is not valid. Therefore, cross cultural advertising takes local culture into account when conveying messages in advertisements (Retnowati, 2015). Cross cultural understanding is very important in order to produce successful localized advertising that would reflect the cultural values and norms of intended audience. Challenge in cross cultural advertising is the problem of communicating to people of diverse cultural background.

Cross cultural solutions are applied in areas such as language, communication style, images and cultural values. Cross cultural advertising is simply about using common sense and analyzing how the different elements of an advertising campaign are impacted by culture and modifying them to best speak to the target audience. Other challenges are determining between standardization and adaptation of cultural values content of advertising when facing different people from diverse cultures. The essence of advertising is convincing people that a product is meant for them. By purchasing it, they will receive some benefits, whether it be lifestyle, status, convenience or financial. However, when an advertising campaign is taken abroad, different values and perceptions as to what enhances status or gives convenience exist. These differences make the original advertising campaign defunct. Therefore, cross cultural advertising campaign need an understanding of a particular culture and the creative execution must still take account of cultural differences (Retnowati, 2015).

An effective advertising must derive from and be part of a culture, sharing the language and values of the target audience. It is not simply a matter of choosing between a sparkling international creative strategy and execution which neglects local needs, motives, and buying habit, or a local campaign which strongly relates to local buying motives but inferior in terms of professionalism. The best aspect of the two approaches must be combined in order to produce an effective cross cultural advertising which can be easily adapted to local circumstances.

Cross cultural understanding is very important in order to be able to devise successful localized advertising that would reflect the cultural values and norms of its targeted audience. By understanding cross cultural differences or similarities in advertising strategy, expressions and manifest values and norms, we understand which aspects of advertising can be shared across several countries and conversely which aspect need to be adapted to local cultures. In most cases, consumer's attitudes, awareness and behavior are largely driven by the framework of their own culture, which is not only communicated to people but also forms and modifies the communication among the people of a society. Global marketing strategies is not culture free. Conversely, such strategies should be culture relevant because influences of culture on consumer behavior and perception of global marketing communications are powerful and profound. One of the greatest challenges in cross cultural advertising is the problem of communicating to people of diverse cultural background (Retnowati, 2015).

2. Language Localization

Language, language skills and language difficulties will increasingly impact how consumers perceive, experience and evaluate services. Consequently, language is an increasingly important topic in multinational management and marketing research (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). Language is an increasingly important challenge and

suggests ways for companies to meet this challenge (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). Language and translation issues are a current and important topic in international business and marketing, as companies operate in an increasingly global and multilingual business environment (Taanonen, 2014). Even though a digital service can be presented in English, reaching a significant market share requires localization. Therefore to reach full market potential, localization of digital services should be targeted to language markets instead of geographical areas (Taanonen, 2014).

Language localization is the process of adapting content localization products, services, and applications for regional or local consumption (Focus & Global, 2018). Language localization is not just language translation. Language localization considers cultural differences, traditions, market trends, modern slang, and sense of humor and accordingly localizes the content to appeal to the customer's cultural preferences in their own target language.

The increasing number of Internet users and languages has made the question of localization increasingly important. Localization requires resources but it has been studied that companies investing more in translation are more likely to announce higher revenues than those who are investing less (Ray & Kelly 2012). However, the financial motives are not the only reason for companies to invest in translation. Most Fortune 500 companies invest in translation to better meet their customers' expectations, maintain or enhance their brand value, target new customers, or meet local regulations and legal requirements (Ray and Kelly 2012).

Localization service serves foreign consumers in the language most convenient for the consumer which is usually English is ill-advised. In language discourse of localization, currently, English is the dominant language of the Internet but this might change in the near future. The importance of other languages is increasing, as the number of non-English speaking web users is growing fast (Taanonen, 2014). In line with the growth in the amount and diversity of content to be translated, globalization and expanding international markets have resulted in more languages requiring translation. In the early 2000s, the most common language combinations were from English into French, Italian, German, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, and Japanese (Chan, 2013). Sociolinguistic research implies that no single language can be used in international contexts; we propose that the use of a single language might not be enough even in national contexts (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012)

Service employees need to take their cue from the consumer. Consumers who make an attempt to speak the local language may cherish speaking it, regardless of their actual language skills. The fact that foreigners speak the local language is a sign they have chosen to learn it, often voluntarily, and service personnel who switches language upon hearing an accent risk implicitly saying that the consumer speaks the language badly. If consumers express a desire to change language, the service provider should follow suit. However, the service provider should never initiate language change, as even the best-intentioned language switch risks backfiring, leaving consumers feeling humiliated and dissatisfied (Holmqvist, n.d.).

Communication means keeping customers informed in language they can understand (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1991). This definition is broad enough to encompass both the use of terminology that the customer understands speaking the same language, and

a more literal interpretation. The importance of considering the using of the customer's own language practically. Underlying both meanings is the requirement that the service provider ensures the customer can understand what the service provider is trying to communicate.

Consumers prefer using their native language (Puntoni, de Langhe, and van Osselaer, 2009) and that even consumers who are fluent in more than one language expressly indicate that the use of their native language influences their perceptions of service providers (Holmqvist, 2011). These findings reinforce the relevance of language for service encounters and further imply that native language preferences are even stronger in consumer contexts that demand extensive interactions (Holmqvist, 2011).

Language, as the foundation of most communication, is key to enabling consumers to interact with companies. However, the role of language is more extensive than merely as a means of communication. For example, even consumers who are fluent in a second language may not always be happy to use it, and might look for possibilities to use their native language instead. In this sense, we suggest that language can influence consumer perceptions about service providers even before the service encounter begins. (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012).

The objective of language localization is to introduce content localization products or services to eliminate possible language and perception sensitivities and to effectively capture the targeted market (Focus & Global, 2018). Companies that want to sell their products/services to new markets are among those who need localization services the most. The most popular product in global language industry nowadays is software or website localization as well as application localization services. Language plays an important role in the localization of digital services, and cultural adaptations are rarely done due to the global nature of digital services as well as due to the speed of developments. It seems that there is no need for cultural adaptations and profound localization in this type of services (Taanonen, 2014)

B. METHOD

Skopos Theory in Analyzing Localized Advertising

The skopos theory in this study attempts to identify cultural elements in advertising and analyse them. A number of procedure were followed to investigate Vermeer's skopos theory in the transfer of both textual and visual elements localized advertisement. Textual elements in the source and target adverts were observed by the author of this paper: Examples of the textual elements of advertising observed are: Brand names (e.g. Eternity), company/designer names (e.g. Avon), slogan or a headline (e.g. you are the eternal part of me) and short body copy such as a brief description of a cosmetic product. Visual elements in both source and target adverts were also observed: For example, women's images, symbols, logos, colors. The purpose of observing textual and visual elements in adverts was to find out the frequent use of skopos strategies in both textual and visual elements of online adverts as well as their impacts on the cultural concepts of the target culture.

Functional, flexible and adaptative approach of skopostheories is what cross-cultural advertisers need. In this view, translation is conceived primarily "as a process of intercultural communication, whose end product is a text which is capable of functioning appropriately in specific situations and context of use" (Schäffner, 1998a: 3). "A text in skopostheorist

approach is regarded as an offer of information from its producer to a recipient”. “Translation is then a secondary offer of information about information originally offered in another language within another culture” (Schäffner, 1998b: 236).

Therefore, the translator must interpret the information contained in the source text “by selecting those features which most closely correspond to the requirements of the target situation” (Shuttleworth & Cowie in *Studies & Austermeuhl*, 2005). From this point of view, the translation process is not determined retrospectively by the source text, its effects on its addressees, or the intention of its author, but prospectively by the function of the target text as determined by the target recipient’s requirements, which is the ideal scenario in global advertising. It can be regarded as widely known that, from a functionalist point of view, the translator’s decisions in the translation process should be governed by the function or communicative purpose the target text (TT) is intended to fulfil in a particular target-culture situation.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Cultural Differences in Website Advertising

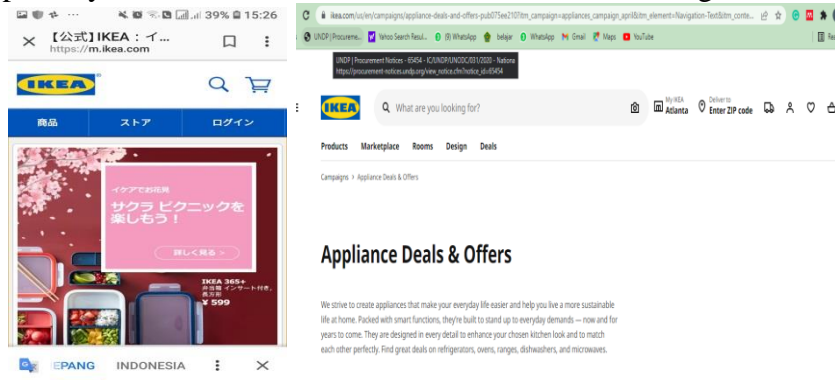
Global economy requires companies to adapt web strategies to regional audiences. Globalization became a necessity, a strategy to make wider audiences understand the product, brand, message, website, offer. Progressive companies not only translate their website content in many languages, but improve the online experience for prospects and customers as well. Companies want to launch sites in many languages faster, with less resources and easier maintenance.

Localization became necessity to widespread brands of the company. Once they have target countries and languages, they do efforts to build international customers’ personas. The company voice in that region should match the corporate voice or should be adjusted to meet the expectations of the regional audience. The adverts categorize all available content – text, graphics, manuals and documents, demos, videos, product screenshots, product pages, sign up forms, etc. However, they do not localize everything. The adverts content create a tiered market model aims at meet the customers’ and prospects’ expectations. Specific legal and technological considerations of one country also take into account.

Web design of different language versions changed depending on the way people in target market prefer consuming information. When internationalizing, things to take into account is the cultural differences between people and the way they perceive information. Each country has its own customs, traditions and a different attitude to the same things. Translating the text and its sense to another language, traditions, values and opinion about the most controversial issues are the target markets’ culture which can lead different interpretation from consumer.

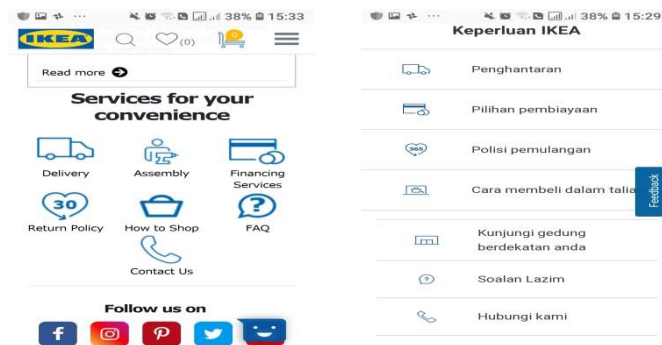
In cross-cultural advertising the problem would be the establishment of the invariant, since although the creation of a super brand would indeed involve the establishment of those core invariants, in many cases there is not such a thing when translating marketing communications. The key message an advertiser wants to communicate to one culture or market is not necessarily the key message the advertiser wants to communicate to another culture or market.

Some illustration adopted from adverts below show that Japanese and Chinese prefer many images and graphics, while in Western European countries people prefer strict minimalism, especially if it concerns more formal websites concerning business.



It seems that a need for full localization is disappearing due to fast globalization of the services and the governance of consumer tastes. By full localization means adaptation of colors, layout and numbers. Fast development cycles of digital services would not even allow such extensive localization practices. Instead, a common opinion was that a need for translation is increasing. However, as language is a set of symbols, the importance of visualization and interactive elements will increase relatively more than the importance of language. This was argued by the fact that Internet is constantly expanding to the markets where literacy rates are low, making the visual appearance of the websites and Internet services more important than the language. (Taanonen, 2014)

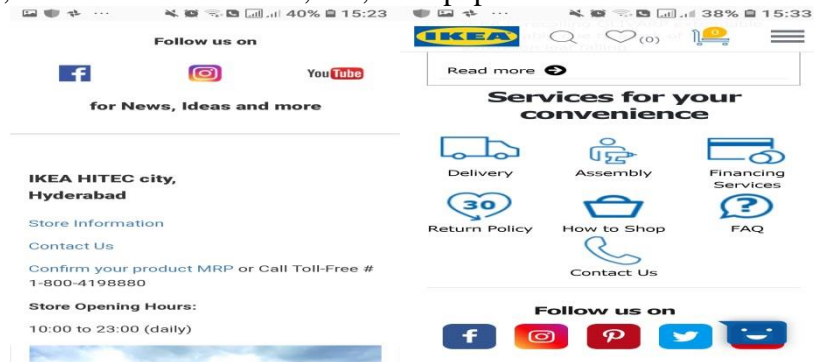
In some countries, people prefer [sliders](#), some people like text from the top of the page, while in some countries, static [hero images](#) on the top of pages are more commonly used



Such details are often a market standard, by using a static image instead of a slider, company will have a competitive advantage, but in reality, this is the industry standard, and people will be expecting a slider.

2. Difference in Lifestyle

Another difference that can influence the way company target new audience is the difference in lifestyle and habits. Where do they prefer ordering services that you sell? Where do they search for relevant information and reviews of different products? The international marketing strategy of website will highly depend on that. Depending on the customer habits, company will reach out influencers in social media, write reviews for relevant local websites, create videos, advertise on YouTube, TV, newspapers or collaborate with offline stores.



3. Using of Graphics or Videos

If it is enough to show pictures or videos to sell product or service, or while the company want to work more on building the brand image, it does not have to write texts in each of the target languages to reach the right people. Attracted pictures or videos with perfectly designed product along with the brand name (can be a laptop, a car, a dish from restaurant and much more). People will considering it regardless of the country they live in. In case of the right presentation of it and the brand name, they will associate the kind of products with the brand.

Company use infographics to show benefits of their product or service. They might include some English words that the target audience will probably understand even if they don't speak English. Some other intercultural standards deliver message internationally without the need of extra words: music, joy, fun, communication and much more.



However, native speakers are not always the best translators, as they might often use too fancy language for a standard user. A case of a native English speaker assured that a translation was good and accurate for the given context but the non-native users did not understand the expression in this particular context. Consequently, it is important to understand the target audience and their preferences. International English is usually the most secure option when targeting global customers. In addition, it is important to know the language of today since language changes constantly. With technical services, such as younited, it can be difficult to find accurate terms in all target languages since many words come from English, and it takes time before the corresponding words and concepts are developed in other languages (Taanonen, 2014). the implementation of explicitation, explanation and sometimes neutralisation or omission strategies rather than domesticating decisions through substitution strategies (Moron & Calvo, 2018).

4. Internationalization is Localization

“Well internationalized is already well localized.” (Localization project manager in Taanonen, 2014)

Talking about foreign markets has always been integral to internationalisation. Johanson and Vahlne (1977) in “The Uppsala Model” define internationalization as a process in which a firm gradually increases its commitment to foreign markets. It is now generally recognised that the internationalisation of firms is contingent upon specific foreign market knowledge in terms of knowledge of local business counterparts and their relations, as well as an understanding of social values and business cultures (Eriksson et al., 1997). Firms are able to garner knowledge and information with regard to their own specific internationalisation needs, thus reducing traditional information barriers to internationalisation (Loane, 2005).

Internationalization as a process that involves customizing for different regions of the word according to cultural, regional and national differences to serve specific target markets. Internationalization is the process of planning and implementing products and services so that they can easily be adapted to specific local languages and cultures, a process called localization. The internationalization process is sometimes called translation or localization enablement. It implies the designing of a product in such a way that it will meet the needs of users in many countries or can be easily adapted to do so.

Internationalization might mean, take for example, designing a website so that when it is translated from English to Spanish the layout still works although many words in Spanish have more characters and therefore take up more space on the page in Spanish than in English. Products that are internationalized often must be localized to fit the needs of that country’s users (Yeng, Kamariah, & Mat, 2010). The internationalization market entry decisions are made in a rational manner, based on an analysis of the costs of transaction (Jeryl Whitelock, 2002 in Perri & Stetco, 2014).

Intercultural communication skills for the language services industry requires aware professionals who can bridge the gap between differences and adapt information and values in the best and most functionally efficient way. Internationalisation contexts call for interdisciplinary approaches and constant renewal of knowhow to keep pace with the latest developments and needs (Moron & Calvo, 2018). Ironically, by taking website through the steps of internationalization, it is localizing website, a depth of local understanding in

different regions, a broader catalogue of text in different languages, and a bank of images and design ideas that relate to a range of demographics. To be successful, this stack of geographical micro sites must connect to Universal Site, the adverts must offer choice and flexibility and once they do, company will have a truly international website that has no boundaries. Making it clear to site visitors and capable of handling international sales is at the heart of website internationalization. Instrumental approach to localization is the one that suits cross cultural dissemination of adverts, the intended target audiences have to be addressed directly. Still, in this era of globalization, cultural boundaries are increasingly blurred which leads to the expand of cultural context beyond their original geographical confines (de Pedro Ricoy, 2012).

Internationalization involves the creation of a product that is as culturally neutral as possible by eliminating any culture-specific characteristics it may contain, thus enabling its easy and fast adaptation or tailoring. LISA gives the following definition:

“Internationalization is the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for redesign. Internationalization takes place at the level of program (or product) design and document development”. In other words, if a company wants to go global it produces internationalized products that can then be easily localized to attract local consumers abroad. (Studies & Austermeuhl, 2005)

To advertisers, an understanding of the interplay between local and foreign cultural values is essential in creating an affinity with consumers to achieve the desired communication effects. This challenge is intensified as the glocalization process would likely differ across segments, given the consumers’ differential readiness and ability to adapt and internationalize (روحانی حائری, 1382).

Internationalization theory has to be reframed and evolve to enable it to encompass the new realities of economic life. The concept of internationalization must be widened. It nowadays implies a mixture of complex learning processes, organizing cross-border knowledge and resources, integrating cross-cultural perspectives in internal and external networks, managing the global/regional portfolio and blending global/regional shareholder value with local customer value perspectives (Axinn & Matthyssens, 2002).

5. Friction in Language Localization Industry

Localization is seen as a process of cultural adaptation (Taanonen, 2014). A common perception nowadays that customers want to operate in their native language and that companies have to provide information in consumers’ language in order to stay competitive. Currently, the localization decisions of the company are made based on the company’s strategy and general market outlook. Usually, the company expands first to the countries where it already has a local country office. The country office is able to help both in localization and in marketing activities (Taanonen, 2014).

Even though, it seems that a need for full localization is disappearing due to fast globalization of the services and the governance of consumer tastes. By full localization means adaptation of colors, layout and numbers. Fast development cycles of digital services would not even allow such extensive localization practices. Instead, a common opinion was that a need for translation is increasing. However, as language is a set of symbols, the importance of visualization and interactive elements will increase relatively more than the importance of language. This was argued by the fact that Internet is constantly expanding to

the markets where literacy rates are low, making the visual appearance of the websites and Internet services more important than the language. (Taanonen, 2014)

According to the localization manager in Taanonen studies, it seems that the Internet era has changed the standards of translation: there simply is no time for checking individual words or nuances in the text. However, every translation goes through a professional translator, which is an important part of the company's quality control process. At times, small errors might be fixed in-house but even those are sent afterwards to a professional translator for approval (Taanonen, 2014). At the case company, localization is started already during the service development phase. The faster localization is started the better. They responsible in creating the English version of the service and ensuring that the original source language meets the requirements for localization (Taanonen, 2014)

Earlier the service was translated and adapted to the local needs once. One of the localization managers in Taanonen study pointed out that the nature of localization has changed. Nowadays, localization is a constant process, and the standards and requirements of localization are increasing. The requirements for localization can be summed up in three words: "More, faster, and higher". Consequently, the pressure for quality, speed and costs are constantly increasing. The speed of releasing and updating new language versions is high. Localization of digital services is more about well-functioning and highly automated processes than about single words and nuances. There is no time to improve and polish single translations but the focus is on the big picture and the processes (Taanonen, 2014).

D. CONCLUSION

Cross cultural understanding is very important in order to produce successful localized advertising that would reflect the cultural values and norms of intended audience. Challenge in cross cultural advertising is the problem of communicating to people of diverse cultural background. Cross cultural solutions are applied in areas such as language, communication style, images and cultural values. Each country has its own customs, traditions and a different attitude to the same things. Translating the text and its sense to another language, traditions, values and opinion about the most controversial issues are the target markets' culture which can lead different interpretation from consumer.

Language and translation issues are a current and important topic in international business and marketing, as companies operate in an increasingly global and multilingual business environment (Taanonen, 2014). Even though a digital service can be presented in English, reaching a significant market share requires localization. Therefore to reach full market potential, localization of digital services should be targeted to language markets instead of geographical areas.

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of complex learning processes, organizing cross-border knowledge and resources, integrating cross-cultural perspectives in internal and external networks, managing the global/regional portfolio and blending global/regional shareholder value with local customer value perspective.

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