

Boost business with localised, translated mobile ads

By  [Françoise Henderson](#)

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As Chinese is set to overtake English in 2015 as the [biggest language on the internet](#) with Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Russian making rapid inroads, the advantages of a translated website are obvious. However, there is something that is still routinely ignored, the importance of also translating and localising mobile advertising.

While many companies have been slow to develop their mobile advertising strategies, consumers are [rapidly adopting mobile](#) as their primary way of accessing the internet.



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Gartner Research believes the global mobile advertising market could reach \$18bn in 2014 and grow to \$41.9bn within three years - North America accounting for the strongest general advertising focus and investment.

While Africa represents a small slice of this, its growth rate will be startling. Informa Telecoms and Media predicts African telecom firms will generate \$1.3bn in ad revenue by 2016 through ads in text messages, mobile apps and downloads.

This presents a tremendous opportunity for businesses that translate and tailor their mobile content to local audiences.

Can't read, won't buy

Studies by analyst firm Common Sense Advisory has found that 75% of customers prefer buying products in their own language. To test whether localised ads make a difference, mobile user acquisition firm [Appia conducted a study](#) where they ran controlled tests of mobile ads that were both localised and in English across three different regions (specifically, Germany, Spain and France).

The ads were distributed across its network at the same time and traffic was served evenly, based on real-time visits to a mobile app or website.

The results were telling: 86% of the localised campaigns outperformed the English campaigns in both clickthroughs and conversions. The average clickthrough rate for the English campaign was 2.35%, with a conversion rate of 7.47%. Meanwhile, local ads had a clickthrough rate of 3.34%, with a conversion rate of 9.08%.

Clearly, localised copy and creative resonate with customers and prospects, and they can have a big impact on the bottom line.

Mobile, though, is a tricky medium. Businesses should build out personas for each of their potential customer types first, and then work to establish what messages will work best. Then, businesses have to take into account SoLoMo, a popular acronym among mobile marketers today.

Beyond location to localisation

SoLoMo stands for social-local-mobile. It puts specific emphasis on apps that are built with geo-targeting, layered with a social network, to achieve the highest levels of engagement.

However, when you're planning an international campaign, the local part of SoLoMo should mean localised rather than

local. Appia finds that native language use can significantly improve click-through and conversion rates.

Further localisation efforts

In Japan, McDonald's runs mobile marketing campaigns that are [customised for the customer](#), with ads and coupon offers geared toward previous purchases, age and location. Tailoring mobile ads may even mean considering different dialects. For example, in China and the Philippines, there are dozens of dialects. An ad that has localised but sent to a part of the market where customers speak a different dialect can be rendered ineffective.

Likewise, businesses have to think carefully about the differences between markets that speak the same language. Portuguese, for example, may be spoken in Portugal and Angola, but cultural differences need to be taken into account. Those differences may affect tone, vocabulary and even colour schemes.

The creative ad itself - for example, a banner or video - will need to be built from the ground up with localisation in mind. Mobile ads already have very little room for graphics and text, which means every letter counts. English-language creative may fit neatly within one box, but the same translated copy might be cut off, leaving an incomplete and unprofessional-looking ad.

Experiment with the translated copy before sending an ad out, so that you can be sure both the native and localised versions have the look and feel of the brand. The same goes for any kind of video.

Subtitles can be a cheaper option, but they may not stay in sync with the footage, especially in the short, flashy videos familiar to a mobile environment. Instead, companies should find a way to have voice actors dub the video in the market's local language.

Brave new world of mobile opportunity

The opportunities presented by mobile marketing are still just emerging, but consumers have already migrated there, dedicating most of their time online using their smartphones and tablets.

The mobile environment is different from traditional online or print outlets, demanding concise and brief ads that could be wholly different from a company's traditional marketing tactics.

Mobile habits differ from user to user and country to country. The things and experiences customers expect can vary wildly, depending on their location. The good news is, however, that most of this data can be accessible through analytics tools.

A company that harnesses all this new information and makes the most of the mobile environment will be one that localises content for country, culture and customer - in real time. Appia's study has shown the enormous revenue potential for localised mobile ads. When context is thrown into the mix, business opportunities will grow exponentially.

While the mobile marketing gold rush is happening, there has been surprisingly little on what that will mean for international marketing campaigns... or the lack thereof.

Localised mobile ads is a brave new world, and the businesses that experiment with how to best connect with mobile users will have a great head start as this environment continues to evolve.

ABOUT FRANÇOISE HENDERSON

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