

COLUMNS

5 ways to localize apps and build brand loyalty

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By **Clint Poole**

As the mobile application marketplace rapidly evolves, brands are looking to new strategies and innovative ways to effectively provide seamless digital experiences to customers across channels and geographic markets.

A **recent study from Ovum** reported that mobile app revenue will grow 2.2 times over the next five years, reaching \$79 billion in 2020.

In addition, App Annie reports that the global mobile app market will see continued growth in mature markets, while emerging markets such as India, Indonesia, Brazil, Argentina and Turkey will expand the most dramatically through 2020.

These numbers are staggering and, as a result, brands must incorporate localization into their app development strategies or risk alienating and losing valuable customers.

Local train

The next person who downloads your app could be located anywhere and will expect a seamless, tailored experience regardless of language.

Mobile app localization is no longer a nice-to-have, but a necessity.

By taking customers' cultural and language preferences into account, brands can dramatically improve customer experience (CX), while maintaining global brand consistency.

In fact, App Annie reports that localizing an iPhone's app text resulted in 128 percent more downloads per country.

So, how can organizations successfully incorporate localization into app development and where do they start?

While it can seem like a mammoth task, localization does not need to be an intimidating process.

By embracing five key strategies, brands can minimize the time and complexity of localization, resulting in a smooth and manageable process to provide the ultimate level of customer satisfaction.

1. Choose the right languages

Many global markets have more than one preferred or recognized language.

In addition, only 20 percent of Internet users are native English speakers.

With this in mind, it is crucial that organizations analyze current traffic to determine a list of the top languages that the app will be expected to support across these markets.

By choosing the correct countries, companies can gain visibility into insights on the language strategy in opportunity-rich markets and provide relevant experiences that will appeal to all consumers.

2. Understand market regulations and policies

In app localization, brands must ensure that the app is compliant with market regulations and policies in the countries in which it expands.

For example, China may have stricter regulations for age requirements on games versus another country.

By considering these restrictions and choosing the correct languages based on the app's content, brands can avoid breaking any laws or policies.

3. Test global and localized apps

When it comes to testing the global app, brands must incorporate international app testing to ensure that user experiences are consistent across the globe.

Testing the app on various international settings such as dates, times, currency and fonts with different cultures and locales on devices and carriers is essential, especially in validating the readiness of the app for international users.

Testing prior to app distribution also helps counter frequent but short usage patterns, limited screen sizes and memory device fragmentation.

In terms of testing the localized app, organizations need to take into account that non-English languages are 30 percent longer than other languages.

Thus, they must ensure that all of the hard-coded strings are located prior to translation to allow for the utmost quality throughout the entire development cycle. This will enable expansion and contraction of text and, therefore, result in increased efficiency and reduced cost in the long run.

4. Isolate localizable content from code

The next step in app localization is to make the architecture local-independent.

Brands can accomplish this by separating the content from the code, placing it in a resource file and providing a language service provider with all relevant style guides and tones to ensure consistency.

For example, Dutch words are shorter than English words, Thai does not separate its words with spaces and many Asian languages such as Cantonese and Mandarin have tone and accent marks above and below the characters.

By focusing on language characteristics and isolating localizable content from the code, brands can ensure that their app will maintain consistency across the globe, while increasing customer loyalty.

5. Create a punchy app store description

The final step in the app localization process is to provide a dynamic description for the app store.

However, brands beware: idioms tend to translate poorly between languages and must be kept in mind while writing a punchy description to attract all viewers.

Lastly, companies should instill search engine optimization best practice to increase discoverability in the app store. Poor metadata equals poor search rankings.

THE MOBILE and digital era is exploding and will only continue to grow.

The key to global app localization success is understanding customers' global preferences and baking localization strategies into the app development process at the outset.

As a result, this will ultimately build a strong foundation for brands looking to localize their apps across the global marketplace, and enable quality customer experiences and loyalty.

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