



THE **RETAILER'S** GUIDE TO **WEB** **GLOBALIZATION**

Best practices and resources for
taking retail Web sites global (and local)

Sample Chapter

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Introduction

When Amazon.com launched Web sites for Germany and the UK in 1998, it became the first major online retailer to embrace Web globalization. Today, Amazon is one of hundreds of retailers that have localized their Web sites for new markets and new audiences.

And they're only just getting started. Over the next ten years, thousands of retailers will embrace Web globalization. Retailers that are well on their way include Dell, eBay, IKEA, and Starbucks.

¿Habla Español?

Even retailers that have no plans to expand beyond the US will find themselves grappling with Web localization. The 39-million-strong block of native Spanish speakers is growing in affluence and in its preference for retailers who speak to them in their native tongue. And right behind them are Chinese speakers, who may be much smaller in numbers but also represent a significant selling opportunity. Companies that have already targeted these audiences with localized Web sites include H&R Block, Charles Schwab, Southwest Airlines, and Sears.

Who This Guide Is For

This guide is intended for marketing and Web development teams at US-based retailers, both large and small. This guide is designed to save you time and help you avoid many of the mistakes made by retailers that have gone before you. The guide includes a mix of real-world best practices and globalization resources.

Profile: IKEA

IKEA (www.ikea.com) is arguably *the* most global retailer, with more than 220 stores in more than 20 countries. Founded in Sweden in 1946, the stores collectively sees more than 400 million visitors each year.

IKEA was one of the pioneers of the global design template. The company has used a consistent design for more than six years and through two redesigns.

What's nice about the template is how much room it leaves for local promotion and customization.

The IKEA Global Template



Source: Byte Level Research

As shown here, IKEA use a global design template that all country sites share while Wal-Mart has no such consistency among its country sites.

IKEA vs. Wal-Mart

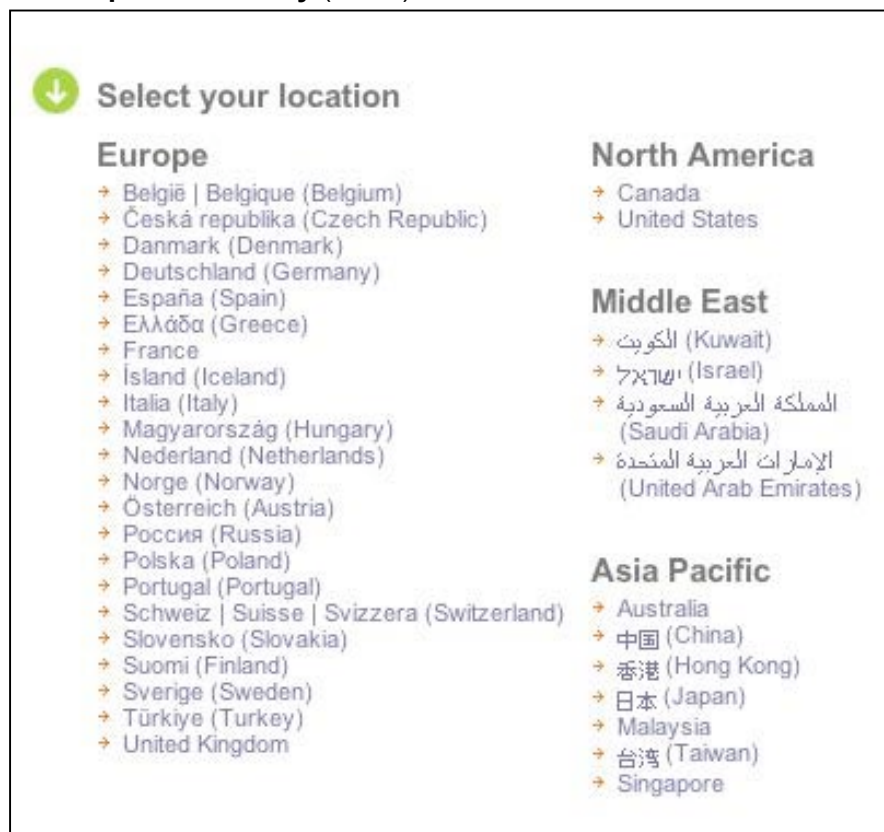


Source: Byte Level Research

Global Navigation

IKEA was also a pioneer in the use of the splash global gateway. The gateway uses Unicode to support the display of plain text links in a variety of scripts, such as Arabic, Chinese, and Cyrillic. Once Web users select a country, they then may have the option to select a language, depending on the country. For example, the home page of IKEA Switzerland offers a choice of three languages: German, French, and Italian.

IKEA Splash Gateway (detail)



The screenshot shows a 'Select your location' menu with a green downward arrow icon. The menu is organized into four regional categories, each with a list of countries and their names in local scripts where applicable.

- Europe**
 - België | Belgique (Belgium)
 - Česká republika (Czech Republic)
 - Danmark (Denmark)
 - Deutschland (Germany)
 - España (Spain)
 - Ελλάδα (Greece)
 - France
 - Ísland (Iceland)
 - Italia (Italy)
 - Magyarország (Hungary)
 - Nederland (Netherlands)
 - Norge (Norway)
 - Österreich (Austria)
 - Россия (Russia)
 - Polska (Poland)
 - Portugal (Portugal)
 - Schweiz | Suisse | Svizzera (Switzerland)
 - Slovensko (Slovakia)
 - Suomi (Finland)
 - Sverige (Sweden)
 - Türkiye (Turkey)
 - United Kingdom
- North America**
 - Canada
 - United States
- Middle East**
 - الكويت (Kuwait)
 - ישראל (Israel)
 - المملكة العربية السعودية (Saudi Arabia)
 - الإمارات العربية المتحدة (United Arab Emirates)
- Asia Pacific**
 - Australia
 - 中国 (China)
 - 香港 (Hong Kong)
 - 日本 (Japan)
 - Malaysia
 - 台湾 (Taiwan)
 - Singapore

Source: IKEA

For some countries, IKEA provides additional language links, when applicable, such as with Canada below.

IKEA Canada (detail)



Source: IKEA

Each country Web site also includes the country name within the template header, a smart way to remind the Web user of exactly where he or she is.

The major drawback to the IKEA landing page is that IKEA does not capture the user's country preference as a cookie. As a result, repeat visitors will keep on landing on the splash page.

Also, the use of Unicode may result in some Web users seeing black or empty boxes where Arabic script should appear. This is because older computer systems do not support Unicode and do not have the necessary fonts. Finally, on country pages, there is no permanent global gateway, which means a user cannot click out of a country site. The only way to change locales is to manually enter www.ikea.com and start over.

To purchase the guide, visit:
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