



ALPHA



White Paper


Fast-Moving Consumer Goods

Faster than Ever

Everything is fast-moving in the 21st century thanks to the Internet, improved communication and logistics which are run like an Olympic relay race. You can buy from anywhere in the world and have goods shipped to you in a week (if you pay enough). There are online payment solutions, online credit solutions, all completely multicurrency-friendly. Buying has never been easier; borders have become elastic.

There are no currency-conversion stresses for the customer. Maybe the exchange rates aren't the cheapest you can find, but for the speed and convenience of the whole experience, the customer is happy just to click 'buy' and complete the transaction, and get on with the rest of their day.

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A global high street in every town

The term 'FMCG products', or 'CPG' (consumer packaged goods as they are often referred to in the US), is a broad classification which includes a multitude of diverse items: from pre-packed fresh and dried food goods and beverages, to stationery and even underwear for both sexes, the list is almost endless. Of course, there is careful cataloguing and international definitions with ISIC (International Standard Industrial Classification) labels.

What many of these products have in common is a short shelf life, which makes this industry especially fast-paced and often very seasonal. As many of the items are for 'personal' or 'domestic' use, these goods need to be packaged and promoted specifically for each different language market. Buyers worldwide will buy these kind of products based on their brand knowledge, and because they not only know and trust the companies that make them, but also feel that the company is part of their own particular cultural and historical matrix. No matter that these brands were all bought up by a massive conglomerate headquartered across the other side of the world.

No surprise, then, that the industry has a high, continuous, demand for translation and globalization services, especially across multilingual contents such as Europe or Asia.

A world of words

For such a fast-moving industry, these companies, whether they are small businesses, SMEs or global giants, ideally need to be partnered with a strong and reactive translation and globalization enterprise; more ideally, this LSP should be well-versed in consumer trends and creative B2C marketing strategies and even content creation.

The kind of material that the FMCG industry needs translated is as broad as its product variety. Depending on the products and the specific demographics they are destined for within each different region or cultural market, the material might include slogans and straplines, web content such as e-newsletters, banner ad copy and website information – often product descriptions. Then there is social media content, across the five main social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube (don't forget Snapchat and upcoming Tik Tok), and, of course, AV content which requires specialist technicians.

A starting point for a workload coming from a large, globally recognized company can be in the region of 1.5 million words across a variety of the media mentioned above, translated or transcreated into various languages.

Beyond the company's own bulk of information that accompanies each and every product on the ISIC lists, there is also the material required for the massive eCommerce sites that support the sale of thousands of these goods, as well as their own comprehensive social media presence.

On the other side, there is the B2B material: swathes of logistics documentation for distribution partners, training manuals, information guides, legal material, health and safety certification and other accreditations which allow the goods to pass physically through one country to another and beyond. Throughout, the LSP needs to be aware of the customer's termsbases, if any, and incorporate the client's own up-to-date style guides. All of the translations need to harmonize terminology, yet offer different appropriate tone, across all texts, as well as business areas, to deliver the brand message and maintain brand consistency in a dependable, transparent manner.

Shops, stores and 'boutiques'

With such a potentially massive, multi-faceted operation to translate for, you could be forgiven for thinking that the best kind of LSP to take on this kind of work would be the largest one you can find. However, in this case, size can be a hindrance rather than a facilitator. Due to their size, these large outfits often have webs of internal communications. This, together with their reliance on external vendors and self-employed freelance staff, results in opportunities for broken links to appear in the communication chain growing exponentially.

The ideal LSP is a medium-sized company which can offer a 'boutique' localization service. The workflows will be developed through a process of careful collaboration between the client and the LSP so that they are tailor-made for that client, and that client alone. This may also involve the LSP needing to interface a client's existing content management system within their own infrastructure. And, on top of everything else, with such a vast amount of content, often coming in successive, seasonal waves (think: summer sales, brand events, local public holidays in each cultural market) quick turnaround is absolutely essential.

To achieve this kind of specialist service, using a raft of freelance translators and, where needed, content writers, would be impossible. The creation, translation, project management and systems support teams all need to be in-house to act, react and timetable incoming work speedily. That is what makes a truly effective bespoke localization solution.

Specific – and speedy – solutions

Once the workloads, schedule and processes have been worked out and agreed, the workflow needs to be continuously agile between the client and LSP, to allow for adjustments that have to be made in accordance with the client's changing needs. In tandem with this, there needs to be agreement on both sides to review the quotation and processes regularly to ensure optimal customer satisfaction and fair remuneration.

As well as serving as the client's contacts for any questions that arise on a day-to-day basis, the LSP's own project managers and account managers will ideally take on the responsibility of organizing and maintaining a smooth production process and monitoring the workload. They should act, as much as possible, as advocates for the clients too.

Necessarily, many established LSPs will have main offices across the globe. The internal infrastructure between these hubs can serve as a useful, fast-moving conduit to connect all aspects of the translation and localization services which the LSP is providing – most importantly, perhaps, the ability to provide in-house native speakers across a wide range of countries. This goes a long way to ensuring both authenticity and excellence in the work produced. In-house translation helps guarantee consistent terminology, style and expression, all of which goes towards building a unified perception within the highly competitive FMCG market.

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