



ALPHA

White paper

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# Localisation 3.0: making content work across the Internet of Things

From the Fitbit on your wrist to the way you track your online shopping, the Internet of Things (IoT) is revolutionising the way we live our lives. As we move towards an era of total connectivity, we are building ever more intimate relationships with the products and services that surround us. In these highly personalised contexts, high-quality localised content offers valuable market opportunities to deepen these relationships, as well as presenting significant technical challenges.

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## Connected worlds

Welcome to a reality that is already all around us. Wearable fitness monitors provide us with instant feedback on our workouts and a cloud-based activity log to track progress. At home, services such as the Amazon Echo allow you to turn up the heating, stream music or order pizza with a simple voice command. And, on a larger scale, networked smart cities are improving environmental performance and saving money with real-time solutions to key issues such as traffic or energy management.

Nevertheless, this is just the beginning. Business intelligence firm IHS Markit predicts that there will be 30.7 billion IoT devices worldwide by 2020<sup>1</sup> while industry analysts Gartner suggests a more conservative total of 20.8 billion<sup>2</sup> (excluding smartphones, tablets and computers). Either way, the numbers are huge – way more than one per person alive. And the underlying premise is clear: the 21<sup>st</sup>-century economy will increasingly be built on a huge diversity of connected products and services designed to respond to ever-changing user needs. For most businesses, it is not so much a question as to whether to become a part of the IoT, but how.

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## Redefining user experiences

What role, then, does localisation have to play in this rapidly evolving landscape? Across virtually all market sectors, IoT-enabled solutions are devised to be highly responsive to individual user needs. In this way, the interactive relationship between user and technology is taken to an unprecedented personal level. In years gone by, the living room that turned on the heating and switched on your music of choice was the stuff of sci-fi fantasy. Now, it is yours for £149.95 from Amazon – thanks, Alexa.

The intimacy of these relationships means that it is essential to deliver content that is not just well translated, but also carefully targeted and culturally appropriate to diverse yet highly stratified target audiences. In the UK, for example, you might command your smart car to open the boot, locate the nearest motorway or ask it how much petrol you have left. North American drivers, however, are likely to use the terms “trunk”, “highway” and “gas” respectively. Understanding these cultural differences is not simply a “nice-to-have” optional extra; it is a function-critical component of the smart system (unless you don’t need to get your luggage out of the back of the car). As a result, effectively localised content plays a critical role in defining the quality of user experience, whether via your smart watch on the move or embedded in your smart home management system.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/louiscolombus/2016/11/27/roundup-of-internet-of-things-forecasts-and-market-estimates-2016/#3950ee3e292d>

<sup>2</sup> <http://spectrum.ieee.org/tech-talk/telecom/internet/popular-internet-of-things-forecast-of-50-billion-devices-by-2020-is-outdated>

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## Bigger, faster, better?

As the number of connected devices on the IoT continues to rise exponentially, its value to consumers and vendors is not in doubt. However, in this global market, localisation of the IoT represents a significant technical and logistical challenge, the extent of which has never previously been encountered before by language service providers and their clients.

There are two key aspects to this challenge. First is the sheer volume of data with which IoT devices are asked to process. In the abovementioned smart car, for example, the operating device needs to be able to understand and respond effectively and naturally to a huge range of data inputs, from tyre pressure through weather conditions to traffic updates. It is a far cry from the days of the flashing light on the dashboard as a low fuel warning. Or, to take another example, think of the personalised shopping app which provides offers and information according to your location and preferences. With an unlimited range of new products and services that could be featured, localisation of content is potentially a daunting task with no limit to its ultimate scope.

The second key challenge in localisation of the Internet of Things is speed. The digital revolution has empowered consumers with expectations of an “anything, anywhere, any time” availability of products and services. For businesses, competitors on the other side of the world may be as much or more of a threat than local providers of similar products or services. In an age of one-click shopping from an international choice of vendors, there is rarely time for the staggered region-by-region launches which epitomised much of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century approach to globalisation. Speed to market is one of the defining features of globalised campaigns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly in hi-tech sectors such as the IoT.

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## A paradigm shift

Put simply, the growth of connected devices across the IoT is already leading to a demand for far greater volumes of localised content in much reduced timeframes as compared to traditional localisation models. So how should we respond? The very personal relationships we have with our smart devices and the discerning nature of global consumers mean that a blanket lowering of quality standards is simply not an option. And, as almost any business will tell you, the budget available for localisation is simply not going to rise to meet the resource levels needed to match the exponential growth of localisation needs using traditional models.

What is required is a profound change of localisation paradigm – a transformation of planning, processes, workflows and even expectations – enabling large volumes of localised content at a speed to match our real-time applications and “instant-access” demands for content. At the heart of this shift of approach is the idea of “agile localisation”: a strategic approach to localisation which incorporates a robust framework and the flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing needs.

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## Clear priorities

With more to do in less time, one of the key aspects of this approach is a prioritisation of different types of content in terms of localisation quality. With potentially huge volumes of data and/or content being offered to users via their connected devices, manufacturers and localisation providers need to establish a clear hierarchy and set of protocols through which localisation resources can be allocated efficiently. Got some brand-driven consumer-focused marketing content? This will likely need to be processed through in-country localisation experts and a full quality assurance check to ensure high standards and brand uniformity. Relaying third-party information on relevant subjects (e.g. a Google search): perhaps some kind of automated machine translation will suffice.

Alongside prioritised levels of localisation, transparency in terms of content ownership and delivery, and the development of automated workflows are all key elements of the agile localisation delivery model. Quality measurement systems should have clear and objective metrics built into them, so that localisation projects can be monitored, analysed and improved on an ongoing basis.

Workflows and quality processes need to be built around the emerging new ways of delivering content across the IoT. Although big product releases and new market entries will probably mean that there is still some need for heavy “front-end” localisation work, the majority of localisation work will take place around much smaller content items which are updated on a continuous basis. This again calls for an agile workflow structure that is designed to manage the ebb and flow of ongoing content requirements across diverse markets. Much of this content may be required in video or audio formats, meaning that localisation services need to be well versed in providing sophisticated audio-visual capabilities.

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## New models for localisation: fluid, transparent and value-focused

The IoT is, by its very nature, many things to many people. But what is clear even at this relatively early stage in its development is that it is redefining the way we approach localisation and how to implement it. As content becomes more fluid, more frequent and more extensive, the most productive way to manage it is to incorporate localisation processes much higher upstream than in traditional models as an integral part of the content generation platform. By doing this, localisation becomes a powerful tool through which to drive international opportunities, rather than an add-on quality assurance process in a never-ending trail of “catch-up”.

The prospects to broaden market coverage while deepening customer relations offered by the IoT are huge. As Jason Mann, Director, Industry Product Management at global analytics firm SAS commented: "This is not just a chance to better inform and automate business processes; it is a step change in capability that provides unprecedented opportunities in business integration and customer connection." At Alpha, we believe that localisation has a critical part to play in realising these opportunities – we'd love to talk with you further about how.

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