


ALPHA



White Paper

ALPHA CRC LTD
St Andrew's House
St Andrew's Road
Cambridge CB4 1DL
United Kingdom

 @alpha_crc

alphacrc.com

Why and how to localize for the Japanese market?

When deciding to take your products to the Japanese market, it's important to realise that in order for potential Japanese customers to understand the content, direct translation alone simply may not cut it.

So, don't go heading straight towards Google Translate or searching for a freelance translator; take a quick look first at several things you should know about marketing for Japan.

The pitfalls of direct translation

First of all, direct translation is a pitfall of so many who are eager to share their products and various pieces of content across borders. This would typically result not only in text which is inaccurate, but messages which may have lost a lot of their original meaning, and could potentially confuse the target market. Enter localization.

Localizing complexity

When entering the Japanese market, localization is vital due to the following major reasons: complexity of the target language not only in spoken but written form, the various levels of politeness and formality, and a lack of familiarity of the English language in Japan.

Mastering the Japanese language is far from easy, particularly for speakers of English or other European languages. There are three different scripts, and sometimes the Japanese even purposefully spell words with different character sets.

The right style for the right occasion

In this manner, choosing the right styles of speech for a certain situation is particularly important. For instance, using polite speech (keigo) in advertisements may be suitable in order to show respect to your customers; however, being overly formal may come across as stiff and outdated (depending on your company and purpose).

In summary

So when taking your product to the Japanese market, the benefits of localization cannot be stressed enough. This will result in content which is error free and will read in a way that flows naturally to the target market, the level of politeness and tone will be appropriate, and you will more likely invoke the kind of feelings in readers that your original material intended.

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