“Can’t Read Won’t Buy”

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Global Consumers

How language, nationality, and brand recognition influence online buying behaviors

Ben Sargent, Senior Analyst
Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
Common Sense Advisory

- Founded 2002, based in Lowell, Massachusetts
  - Focus: online and offline operations that drive business globalization, internationalization, translation, localization

- Syndicated Market Research
  - Over 50 research reports published to date
  - 10 new reports scheduled for 2007
  - Qualitative and quantitative data techniques

- Consulting
  - People: Organizational design
  - Process: Optimization and best practices
  - Technology: Evaluation and selection

- Training
  - Customer Centric Selling®
  - Mastering Web Globalization
  - Trends in Translation Technology

For more information, [click here](#).
Supply

- Most web pages served today are in English
- Most web servers are based in English-speaking countries
### Top 25 countries by number of hosts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th># of hosts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>195,139,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>28,322,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11,859,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8,363,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7,773,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>6,508,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6,065,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, South</td>
<td>5,434,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>4,320,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3,934,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>3,427,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2,958,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2,871,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2,521,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2,443,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2,416,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2,062,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1,980,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,731,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1,634,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1,612,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,543,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1,364,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1,313,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1,267,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67% in English-speaking countries as of June 2007 (CIA World Fact Book)

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
Top 25 languages by web page volume

- English: 57.4%
- German: 8.7%
- French: 2.9%
- Russian: 2.5%
- Japanese: 2.5%
- Chinese: 2.5%
- Spanish: 2.5%
- Italian: 2.2%
- Korean: 1.9%
- Dutch: 1.9%
- Portuguese: 1.0%
- Other: 14.0%

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
English-speakers as a percentage of total online population has fallen to ~30%.

Source: Common Sense Advisory 2007
Demand

- Most web users are outside English-speaking countries
- Most web users speak languages other than English
- Most of the available market (GDP) is outside English-speaking countries
World GDP by country

Just 15 countries create 75% of World GDP as of June 2007 (CIA World Fact Book)

Source: "Can’t Read, Won’t Buy," Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
The 10 Mega Languages Online

Just Ten Mega-languages Represent 80% of Total Online Population

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
Today’s theme

● Business Localization vs. One Size Fits All
  – The choice: Adapt your selling proposition or make everyone read English
  – The reality: Most people prefer buying in their own language
  – The “duh” factor: People won’t buy what they can’t understand

● Companies need hard data to justify spending real money on translation

● Data from 2006 survey of 2,430 consumers in 8 non-Anglophone countries

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
About the Survey

2,430 respondents in 8 non-Anglophone countries:

- Brazil, China (PRC), France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Spain, Turkey

- Sample included participants with little or no English (41.2%) and with some proficiency in English (58.8%)

- Results validate qualitative surveys on European markets
People prefer visiting and buying from mother-language websites

- People from non-Anglophone countries visit English-language websites monthly or more frequently:
  - 67.4% of total sample visit frequently vs. 45% of those with no/little English

- Survey participants spend more time at websites in their own language than at English-language ones:
  - 72.1% of total sample spend most or all of their time at local-language sites
  - But the number goes up to 89.1% for those with no/little English

- Time spent at websites converts into sales:
  - From the data, statistical tests show a strong correlation between the amount of time someone spends on local-language websites and whether s/he buys from that site

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
“Foreign” visits to Anglophone sites

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
More time spent at in-language sites

Source: "Can't Read, Won't Buy," Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
In-language sites get the buyers

“How often do you buy from English-language sites?”

Worldwide Response (2,430)
- Rarely or never from English: 74.5%
- Most or some from English: 25.5%

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
All other things being equal: consumers prefer buying in their language.
Variance by product type:
Importance of language in the buying decision

Services (financial and travel): 80%
Big ticket (autos and computers): 70%

Personal care and household products: 60%
Commodities and consumables: 60%
Service buyers demand own language

Language is a more important factor with different purchase categories:

- Services including travel: 79.6% say communication in their own language is important, with number rising to 85.1% for those with no/low English
- Expensive goods: 68.8% want own language, 78.7% for no/low English
- Food, personal care, household: 58.4% want own language, 66.7% for no/low
- Commodities, low-cost goods: 59.3% want own language, 71% for no/low

Travel/entertainment and financial services rank highest in preference for local-language communications:

- Financial services: 85.3%
- Travel & entertainment: 74.0%

Over half the respondents said they are willing to pay more for products in their own language

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
Language takes you only so far

- Language is key, but not the only key in a successful sale:
  - Performance
  - Language competence
  - Usability
  - Financial issues

- For non-Anglophones:
  - Site speed, quality, and language cause them to abandon sites

- For those with English proficiency:
  - Once in the sales funnel, financial and logistical issues can flush them out

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The research shows:

It’s not just about the sale. Post-sales interactions in language are even more important.

Source: Can’t Read, Won’t Buy
Common Sense Advisory, 2006
Conclusions:
Language and localization matter

- Language draws prospects into the sales funnel
- More information in their language keeps them browsing
- Properly localized forms, transactions, and logistics increase the likelihood of conversion
- Discretionary purchases – such as financial services – demand the highest level of language and localized transactional support

Source: “Can’t Read, Won’t Buy,” Common Sense Advisory, Inc.
Globalization by the numbers

- Growth in the volume of world merchandise trade and GDP, 1996-06

Source: WTO
Bibliography of cited research

- Can’t Read, Won’t Buy: Why Language Matters on Global Websites
- Global Content Management Technology
- Translation Management Technology
- Translation Management Technology Scorecards
- Design Practices for Global Gateways
- Real World Enterprise
- Localization Maturity Model
- Beyond Global Websites

These reports (and book) are available as part of a membership with Common Sense Advisory. Call +1.978.275.0500 for details.
Thank you.

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