

SESSION SUMMARY

Localizing Images: Cultural Aspects and Visual Metaphors

Purpose

When we think localization, we usually think of text and screenshots. However, translating images and visual elements, keeping in mind the cultural ethos of the target audience, is crucial too; especially for marketing-oriented content and websites. In this session, we will look at the cultural dimensions that must be considered while localizing the visual elements of “content”.

Relevance

This session is of relevance to all technical communicators. While the text and screenshots aspects of localization are abundantly discussed in industry events and publications, image, color, website design, user interaction, symbol, and icon localization is often not given the importance it deserves.

The session captures all the relevant "non-functional" aspects of localizing visual elements.

I believe this session will be especially valuable for technical communicators already working with marketing-related Web content or aspiring to move to such a role.

Session outline

Introduction

- Defining culture and visual elements
- Significance of localizing images and visual elements
- Analyzing target audience for the localized versions
- Colors, graphics, symbols, visual arrangements, and how they convey cultural meaning

Color

- Significance of colors
- Class differences and color perception
- Age differences and color perception
- Climatic differences and color perception
- Color trends
- Web-safe colors
- Religious connotations of colors

Symbols and icons

- Some guidelines on using symbols internationally
- Using national flags on a globalized website

- Aversion to certain symbolism after a change of regime
- Images instead of inconvenient verbiage; for example, wheelchair icon instead of *differently-abled*

Cultural dimensions

- Hofstede's dimensions of culture
 - Power Distance
 - Individualism vs Collectivism
 - Femininity vs Masculinity
 - Uncertainty Avoidance
 - Long Term Orientation
- Cultural dimension scores for some countries—the USA, Canada, India, China, etc.
- Limitations of Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions

Using Hofstede's dimensions of culture in localization projects

- Application to images
- Applications to information hierarchy
- Applications to user interactions
- Some case studies

Hall's Time Orientations and culture

- Monochronic and polychronic time orientations
- Attributes of monochronic and polychronic cultures

Summing up

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