















A Christmas Story

Content marketing for ecommerce success in a multicultural world



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Driving sales for Christmas

By Frank Hartkopf

Christmas is retail's most important season. While the general public are still tanned from their summer holiday, it's high time for businesses to get ready for the sales rush in the lead-up to Christmas Day and beyond.

Having just come out of a long recession and with the home market saturated, many UK retailers are looking to expand into new, emerging markets around the world. Thanks to the internet, this has never been easier. It is a great opportunity for Western retailers to find growth both on the Continent and outside Europe.

...many UK retailers are looking to expand into new, emerging markets around the world

However, the time of one-size-fits-all marketing is over. Globalisation now means localisation – even McDonald's serves [rice McMeals in China](#). In this white paper, two experienced international content marketing providers are joining forces to give you a comprehensive insight into how best-in-class online retailers are using the power of multilingual content marketing to exceed their sales targets this festive season.

Christmas is celebrated and merchandised around the world, but if you want to capitalise on this, you need to understand the local and cultural differences of each region. With examples from brands such as Coca-Cola, Marks & Spencer and Hotels.com, and reports from contributors across the globe, this white paper will equip you for the multilingual future of retail.





The most wonderful time of the marketing year

By Eric Ingrand & Karen Webber

Content marketing is the new advertising for brands. As most commentators agree, this is not just a trend but a paradigm shift in the traditional approach to customer interaction and communication.

Brands are now publishers. Audiences speak through social media. Viral videos and images on social networks replace print and TV ad campaigns. High-quality content is the primary way in which products and services are discussed and discovered.

Yet many global brands are still not yet global publishers. Around 60 to 70 percent of Fortune 500 companies produce some multilingual content, leaving a large proportion still shouting only in English and hoping to be heard.

Publishing content in multiple languages for a variety of markets requires digital agility. But it is an incredibly powerful way of reaching out to new audiences. Large or small, companies with an international reach need multicultural content marketing to succeed in the digital age.

A shared vision

This white paper is the result of a collaboration between two content marketing agencies with a shared vision. NewsReach (newsreach.co.uk) and EnVeritas Group (enveritasgroup.com) have collaborated to explain how global brands can harness the power of multicultural content.



[Frank Hartkopf](#), from Germany, is Head of European Content at NewsReach, an Axonn Media brand



[Eric Ingrand](#), French, born in Germany and raised in Brazil, is EnVeritas Group's Vice President of Content Marketing EMEA



[Karen Webber](#), from South Africa, is Head of Marketing Communications at Axonn Media



[Lisa Plumridge](#), from England, is Chief Content Officer at EnVeritas Group

A window of opportunity

With decades of experience in international publishing and digital marketing between us, we believe that content marketing is the best way for a brand to form relationships with customers. We are all passionate about helping companies do this, wherever their target markets are based and whichever languages they speak.

We know that content marketing is the most efficient & long-lasting form of advertising in the new era of multimedia. We know this because we have gathered reliable data from a host of B2B and B2C Fortune 500 companies

We know that content marketing is the most efficient and long-lasting form of advertising in the new era of multimedia. We know this because we have gathered reliable data from a host of B2B and B2C Fortune 500 companies.

There is a window of opportunity for companies willing to discover the power of multicultural content marketing. You can break into fresh markets, and you can improve your reputation and credibility around the world.

This white paper sets out best practices for Western companies expanding into new markets. Multicultural content marketing is the focus, exemplified by Christmas in emerging markets.

Please get in touch with us if you wish to comment on or discuss any of the points raised here.

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All I want for Christmas: 5 tips for ecommerce retailers

5 tips on how ecommerce retailers can spruce up their shop in time for Christmas

Ecommerce revenues are continually growing. In [Germany](#), 25 million people are buying Christmas presents online; that is almost half of all German internet users. To cash in on this trend, online retailers should use the coming weeks to prepare for the big sales rush.



Review your online shop content

When things get hectic, product descriptions and images are often the last things you think about renewing. Yet presentation is essential to stand out from the competition. Now is the time to shoot new product photos and increase the information value of your product descriptions. Use videos to show how to set up and use your products.

User reviews are a great way to convert buyers, as are how-to guides and feature articles. This will increase engagement on your shop pages and contribute to a higher conversion rate.



Update your SEO

After recent Google updates, including [Panda](#) and [Penguin](#), it has become almost impossible to game search results with dodgy links and spammy content. A lot of ecommerce businesses have been penalised by Google for following outdated SEO strategies. To rank higher for the keywords your buyers search for, you need to get up to speed with current [best practices in SEO and content optimisation](#).

Check your backlink profile and get rid of any links from suspicious sites. Don't stuff content full of keywords. Create content for humans, but in a way that is understood by machines.



Check the look and feel of your online shop

Check how you can improve the visual appeal of your online shop. New colours, a clearer design and more intuitive navigation will all help to improve your site's performance. Perform usability tests with volunteers from your target market to get unbiased feedback on the user experience. Test your shop on different browsers and make it compatible with mobile devices, as more and more Christmas shopping is done from [smartphones and tablet computers](#).



Analyse your pricing and product range design

Pricing and product range remain the [most important criteria when buying online](#). Analyse last year's Christmas sales data to identify bestsellers and position them more prominently. Check out what your competitors are doing on pricing.

However, a recent [survey by Axonn Media](#) among UK consumers and business buyers has shown that two-thirds (67%) are more likely to buy from brands whose content they enjoy – even if it costs them between five and ten per cent more than from a brand that doesn't publish content or engage on social media.



Make your user experience truly international

If you have decided to tap into a new market, it's not enough simply to translate your product descriptions and list prices in your foreign customers' currency. You need to adapt the user experience to cultural expectations and interests.

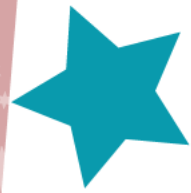
To build trust and avoid abandoned shopping carts, you should clearly communicate to users that you deliver to their country. Delivery costs and timescales for each country should be made clear on detail pages and in the cart. Make your foreign customers aware of early international order deadlines if they want to have their goods delivered before Christmas.

Not only prices and discounts, but also the sizes of clothes and shoes must be converted to the units your foreign clients are used to. Adapt your address form fields to local and regional customs: while UK buyers put their house number before the street name and the postcode behind the city name, it's the other way round in Germany.

Foreign buyers are more likely to purchase if you offer them the e-payment method they're used to in their home country. Most online retailers only offer foreign clients payments by credit card or PayPal. To stand out from the competition, you should for example offer direct bank transfers for buyers from the Continent, possibly with the help of an external provider.

You need to adapt the user experience to cultural expectations and interests





Holiday content marketing lessons from Coca-Cola

By Robert Rose

As the holidays approach, we will no doubt be treated to some amazing content by Coca-Cola. Along with Happiness Factories and Polar Bears comes, in my opinion, the brand's most incredible work – which is its approach to content marketing.

If you haven't seen the [Content 2020 Project](#) and watched Coca-Cola's public take on how they differentiate their brand using what they call 'Liquid Content', it's worth stopping right now to watch it. Go ahead. I'll wait.

Coca-Cola understands that truly the only way to have your message spread in today's media oversaturation is to have ideas spread among social networks. This is why they've put such an incredible focus on it.

When I interviewed the architect of this project, Jonathan Mildenhall – vice president of global advertising strategy and creative excellence at Coca-Cola – he told me: 'Coca-Cola has a history of firsts.'

*We are lucky enough that **millions of consumers now want to produce content** and be a driving part of our conversation. This gave us the opportunity to take time out and really think about how to articulate our evolved creative agenda for our key global and local brands*

What Jonathan means is that Coca-Cola has embraced content creation as the new way to differentiate a brand in the marketplace. By transforming an iconic brand into a media asset, the company creates affinity with an audience.



[Watch now](#)

Planning the gift that keeps on giving

There's no doubt that Coca-Cola will do this year what they've done for the past couple: integrate paid, owned and earned media in a unique way that encourages sharing.

For example, [last year's paid commercial](#) was watched on television and also had about 140,000 views online. But its [100th Christmas of Coca-Cola in the Philippines](#) video was viewed more than 1.6 million times.

...its 100th Christmas of Coca-Cola in the Philippines video was viewed more than 1.6 million times



[Watch now](#)

The lessons we as marketers can learn from Coca-Cola have to do with great planning and theming for creative storytelling.

Coca-Cola doesn't just throw content against the wall and see what sticks. There are planning sessions and editorial theming that go into the content creation process at every step.

Dare to be different

One of the biggest takeaways from my discussion with Jonathan was that every idea must work across different channels. He said: 'We have horizontal strategies from creative development, idea development and production. So, everyone's remit is to be horizontal or integrated in thinking. We're as siloed as any large organization. But in the end, you may be heading up social, or PR, or production, but your solutions, your team solutions, must work horizontally across every function in the marketing world.'

As we start into the holiday season, marketers would do well to take inspiration from Coca-Cola's creativity and innovation and infuse a small bit of it into our own strategy. The question we must constantly ask is: 'What's more valuable? Is it more valuable for us to try to get out ten more blog posts of the top 5 reasons why x, y or z? Or, should we really put planning, creativity and thought into how we can differentiate our brand using content?'



Robert Rose is the Chief Strategist for the Content Marketing Institute, and Senior Contributing Analyst for Digital Clarity Group.



Think global, speak like a local

Multicultural content marketing helps online stores gain trust abroad

By Eric Ingrand

An American man walks into a bar in Barcelona and orders a Heineken in English. The waiter nods. The man is served, drinks up, leaves.

An American man walks into a bar in Barcelona and orders an Estrella Damm in Catalan. The waiter nods and smiles. The man begins chatting to locals, who are delighted by his understanding of Catalan language and culture. He is quickly accepted and welcomed when returning.

As any traveller knows, basic communication is easy. But to gain the trust of locals you need to speak the language and understand cultural values.

*...to gain the trust of locals you need to
speak the language
and understand cultural values*

Journeying into new markets

Online stores expanding into new markets are like travellers in an unknown land. You'll encounter many challenges – legal, political, financial. But your biggest challenge will be to understand how locals think, feel and talk.





There is a reason [only four of the top 100 internet companies](#) currently have Arabic websites, despite Arabic being one of the fastest growing, most lucrative markets on the web with over 300 million native speakers. Localising into Arabic is not easy. Right to left scripting, differences in dialect and cultural values mean there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Yet winning Arabic customers means engaging them in Arabic, not English.

[The fastest-growing European countries in 2013](#) are forecast to be mostly in eastern Europe, where English is not so common: Georgia, Moldova, Kosovo, Turkey, Ukraine. In Europe as a whole, [23 official languages](#) are spoken. A recent [European Union study](#) indicates that only around 18 percent of web users feel comfortable purchasing in a non-native language, and 42 percent would never buy in a language not their own. (Would you?)

So why are so many brand websites in English only, or English and just one other language?

Content marketing helps smoothen the journey

Multicultural content marketing builds trust in your brand and helps online shoppers overcome the fears that stop conversion. To do this, you'll need to communicate in the right language. Here's how.

-  **Research** potential new markets using website analytics and global trends.
-  **Engage** a local partner for localisation, content creation and advice on cultural norms and events.
-  **Keep a local site and social media** presence maintained with regular, high-quality content either cleverly localised or created from scratch.
-  **Test**, monitor and improve your efforts continuously with the aim of increasing traffic, engagement and conversion rates.

With the magic of multicultural content marketing, online retailers with a bit of courage and the right partner can seize this window of opportunity to get ahead of the game.





10 tips for a smooth launch into new markets

Best practices for successful multicultural content marketing

By Eric Ingrand

1

Tempted by automated translation? Don't! It will hurt your brand reputation in the long term.

2

Multicultural content marketing is not multilingual SEO. Go for high-quality content in the local language.

3

Develop a style guide for each target language. This will keep your brand image consistent when working across borders with multiple partners.

4

Localise rather than translate. This includes keywords if you use them.

5

Use local social media. If people like your message, they'll spread it through their social networks. Quality content can replace big advertising budgets.

6

Act on insights from website or social media analytics. However, remember that quantitative data should be supplemented by on-the-ground advice from real people.

7

Create a realistic website and social media publishing calendar. This will help you keep content fresh, relevant and timely, and your multilingual presence will grow at a sustainable rate. Include cultural events such as Christmas.

8

Keep campaigns local. If you want to roll out a global campaign, localise the message and validate it with your local team.

9

Identify influential local bloggers, invite them to an event or offer them a scoop. Bloggers may be more active over Christmas as their readership will be higher.

10

Gather focus groups. Listen to what participants say and test their ideas on small areas before rolling them out. This is important for cultural events such as Christmas, since local traditions may differ significantly.



Emerging markets: a window of opportunity for retailers

By Ben Sillitoe

Growing economies and emerging business markets offer huge potential for Western retailers, but achieving success abroad is not easy. There are a plethora of cultural behaviours, differences in taste and technological trends that retailers need to understand if they are to adapt their business models successfully.

For more established ecommerce nations, such as those in northern Europe, it makes sense to act sooner rather than later when it comes to international expansion. The pace of tech innovation means local players may quickly have the capacity to corner their own markets.

Today, retailers in the UK, Germany and the Nordic region can take advantage of their dominant position in terms of digital capability to gain a foothold in emerging territories before local firms in southern and eastern Europe catch up.

Internet shopping in Italy, Spain and Russia, for example, is on a strong growth curve as consumers start to trust the systems and processes involved, so forward-thinking retailers can break down new boundaries if they can identify the finer nuances associated with their new markets and target their offering accordingly.

*Internet shopping in
Italy, Spain & Russia
is on a strong growth curve...*



Marks & Spencer is one company expanding its European reach as it looks to boost top-line sales and raise its profile on an international scale. Having brought in the experienced Jan Heere as director of international a couple of years ago, the clothing and food retailer has since launched stores in several new territories, including France and the Netherlands. Heere had worked for a number of years at Zara-owner Inditex, one of the best-performing international retailers in modern times, and he understands what is needed to succeed in territories M&S views as key growth markets.



M&S has taken the opportunity presented by a new target market in the Netherlands, for example, to trial some new technological concepts that are in keeping with today's multichannel retail world. Success achieved with concepts such as virtual fashion rails – where shoppers can view clothes on screens and order in-store – and retail spaces with lots of digital signage like touch screens will likely be replicated in stores across its portfolio. It has also paid close attention to local and cultural requirements by launching mobile-specific and local-language/currency websites to ensure a smooth transition – a critical consideration for UK companies looking to gain traction abroad. It's early days, but the initial feedback has been good, and it seems that M&S can learn a lot about the wider future of its business by testing out new concepts in foreign climes.

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Ben Sillitoe is the Editor of Essential Retail, a leading global retail solutions resource.



Hotels.com marketing strategies for emerging markets

Michael Korkia and **Malte Bunjes**, marketing managers at Expedia brand Hotels.com, speak to **Eric Ingrand** about their marketing strategies when launching into emerging markets

Which markets will be key drivers of new business for Hotels.com over the next three years?

In EMEA, three markets stand out: Russia, Turkey and the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Globally, we would include Asia Pacific and Latin America, particularly Brazil, India and China. The Russian and Turkish markets are growing really fast right now, not only for Hotels.com but generally. The UAE and Saudi markets may be small in terms of population but they have immense spending power. However, for internet companies such as Hotels.com, there can be some country specific-challenges, for instance when building local sites with right to left scripting of Arabic etc.

...there can be some country-specific challenges

What marketing and communications strategies do you employ when entering a new market?

First we get our product up to speed with a properly localised site. Then we focus on organic search with a variety of SEM tactics. We view search engines as the equivalent of shelves in the supermarket, so we do our best to get our product displayed prominently before looking at other marketing channels.

How important is content marketing – and more specifically multilingual content marketing – in your communications strategy?

We tread a middle ground between localising English content and creating targeted content for particular markets. We provide more than 85 localised Hotels.com websites in 35 languages around the world and continuously extend these numbers. When launching a new point of sale, we start with a localised version of the English site. As soon as we see that the market is growing, we invest more in tailoring content to the local language, culture and individual consumer's needs. It's a gradual approach based on internal research. For example, our Russian website used to be a direct localisation from English. Over the last few years, we have continuously improved the Russian site with localisation and are happy that it now has a really Russian look and feel, which makes it even more relevant to consumers – and therefore more prominent in organic search. We are currently reworking the Turkish site in a similar way.

How useful is social media in emerging economies, and how do you harness it at a local level?

The whole question of social media marketing is interesting. Social media is growing fast and many brands are trying to exploit its potential, but it can be a challenge to evaluate. Our research from more established markets shows that it does help to build trust in our brand and it opens a direct communication opportunity with our customers. But it's not a direct response marketing channel and currently it's not as effective as some more traditional methods.

In Russia, for instance, we spent a significant amount of effort building our profile on the local equivalent of Facebook, Vkontakte. Interestingly, despite being around three times bigger than Facebook locally, Google doesn't rank Vkontakte very highly. In some cases, local social media sites are even black-listed by Google and links from these sites will harm your search engine positioning.

In Russia, Turkey, the Middle East and South Africa, mobile is particularly important because more people have access to 3G via smartphones and tablets than to regular broadband internet



How do you take into account the growth in mobile and smartphone use in emerging economies?

Mobile is definitely one of the biggest future marketing channels. It is growing very rapidly, not only in new and emerging markets but in established territories. In Russia, Turkey, the Middle East and South Africa mobile is particularly important because more people have access to 3G via smartphones and tablets than to regular broadband internet.

Although the number of bookings via desktop is still higher, the trend is that this might change over the next few years. There are already a lot of last-minute bookings through the Hotels.com mobile site and particularly our smartphone booking apps. For example, we offer 20,000 last-minute deals exclusively for mobile customers.

How do you measure the effectiveness of your content marketing efforts in different countries and markets?

We are a numbers-driven company. We track the performance of every single marketing channel, including offline channels where it's more challenging to get firm data. Online, our usual model is last-click attribution through Omniture. We also compare growth and average spend for each channel. In emerging markets, once our basic marketing channels start performing and we see a positive development, we start optimising other channels. The aim is to maximise growth, not profit.

When creating a new campaign, do you think about cultural as well as linguistic differences? How do you deal with cultural differences?

We always try to take linguistic and cultural diversities into account. This has a huge effect. For instance, for several years we used the same Brazilian Portuguese website for both Brazil and Portugal, on the grounds that Brazil was a bigger market. A few years ago, we localised Portugal's site into European Portuguese and saw the conversion rate grow in triple digits. Russia is another good example. We rolled out an improved localisation of our Russian site which used the correct grammatical case for city names and immediately registered a very positive effect in the conversion rate.

Christmas customs are being adopted by other cultures who have never traditionally celebrated this festival. Have you noticed any differences in online purchasing habits around Christmas time, both in Western countries and other markets?

Even if Christmas is not traditionally celebrated in a country, there may be other major winter holidays which take its place. In Russia, Christmas Day is January 7th and the main festival is actually New Year. Russians often plan their long holidays for the first three weeks of January, which they start booking at the end of September. So we see bookings peak in this period.

In Israel, Hanukkah takes the place of Christmas for 75 percent of the population. For the 17 percent of the population who are Muslim, Eid is very important. So we do notice seasonal differences in online behaviour in different markets, but they are not all related to Christmas per se.

Celebrations in Israel



75%
*of the population
celebrate
Hanukkah*



17%
*of the population
celebrate
Eid*

Your portfolio includes Israel. Can you give us some examples of how Israeli online shopping habits vary from those of other countries?

Israelis enjoy travelling internationally and long-haul destinations are very popular. We see that due to a high level of purchasing power. Israeli travellers book longer stays and spend more for their trips. They also tend to visit families and friends abroad, which often includes the US, such as New York, California and Florida, or major European cities like London or Paris. Summer school holidays span two months in July and August, so leisure and family travel peaks in this period. We base promotional campaigns on these holidays.

When you plan your marketing messages for Christmas, do you choose a central theme that can be applied globally and adapted slightly for local markets? Or do you develop local campaigns separately to make them more relevant to each market?

For most countries, we use a general approach to Christmas marketing with slight adaptations per country - for instance, a later release date for Russia. But there are some countries that we have to approach differently. For instance, in South Africa, Christmas is celebrated in the middle of their summer, so we have to adapt the images and destinations promoted.



Michael Korkia and Malte Bunjes are marketing managers at Expedia brand Hotels.com



Hotels.com is a leading provider of hotel accommodation worldwide, offering booking services through its own network of localised websites and telephone call centres. It is an affiliate of Expedia.



Joy to the World: cultural variations in Christmas celebrations

★ China



By Shaojun Zhang, Beijing, China, and Mia Wei, Chinese expat living in London



Young people in cities celebrate Christmas with gifts, dinners and shopping trips. For many under-30s, it's now as important as traditional Chinese holidays such as the Spring and Moon festivals.

You can hardly find a restaurant table or hotel room between Christmas Eve and January 1st. Shops and online stores put on promotions to attract customers. Gifts are small, such as flowers or chocolate, but people are spending more and more each year.

Christmas is not a family occasion as it is in the West. Older generations, especially in rural areas, seldom celebrate.



★ Dubai



By Alice Johnson, Dubai, UAE



Although Christmas is less significant than Ramadan and Eid, it has become more prominent in the last few years. Many expats are Christian, so they may take time off work and go to church. Others take no holiday.

Christmas sales and special restaurant offers begin to be advertised after Eid Al Adha in October or November.

Dubai Shopping Festival in January could be seen as a post-Christmas sale, but is not advertised as such.



★ Russia



By **Natalia Simkina**, Ivanovo, Russia, and **Alexei Player**, Moscow, Russia



Christmas is January 7th in the Russian Orthodox Church, but for most people New Year is the most important winter festival. Decorations, fir trees, family dinners and gifts are common from the end of December until mid-January.

The retail period begins in November and lasts until the end of January, with promotions covering New Year (January 1st), Old New Year (January 14th) and Epiphany (January 19th).

It's a busy time for festive foods and gifts for children. Young people in cities do buy online, but most Russians shop last-minute in physical stores.



★ Finland



By **Tiina Esjola**, Jyvaskyla, Finland and **Sini Hakala**, Finnish expat in Greece



Our main celebration is Christmas Eve, when the table is laid with a handsome feast. After dinner with roasted ham, carrot and swede casseroles, plum pies and gingerbread cookies, Joulupukki, our very own Santa Claus, arrives. A pine tree is the centrepiece of the decorations with pretty Christmas lights and other ornaments.

One tradition is enjoying a Christmas sauna with the family and afterwards rolling in the snow. This has to happen before sunset, though, as it's best not to be there when, according to the myth, the spirits of the dead return on Christmas Eve to take a sauna.

Christmas shopping and advertisement can start as early as September or even August. Finns have so far been cautious with their online shopping, so online retailers need to focus on quality and trustworthiness.



★ Nigeria



By Bridget Baldauf, Abuja, Nigeria, and Adebisi Adesina, Nigerian expat living in the US

“

Christmas and New Year are important for Christians in Nigeria, who make up just under half of the population and are mainly based in the south and east. For Muslims, Sallah (Eid) is a much more important festival.

Shopping around the Christmas period is mainly about food and drink. Families get together in villages and celebrate with a feast. Gifts other than food and cloth are not common, except among rich Nigerians who may shop abroad.

”

★ Argentina



By Matt Chesterton, Buenos Aires, Argentina

“

All of Argentina's cultural festivals, including carnival and independence days, are busy times for retailers. At Christmas, people still queue around the block to buy traditional food and drink such as pan dulce, cider and perhaps a suckling pig for the Christmas Eve barbecue.

Feasting is more important than gift-giving for most families, with most people shopping last-minute at local malls. Fireworks on Christmas Eve are a national tradition. Although few people work between Christmas and New Year, there are not many festive sales.

”

★ South Africa



By Karen Webber, South African expat in the UK



Africa's Rainbow Nation has 11 official languages and 51 million highly diverse residents, but one thing everyone has in common is Christmas being a summer affair. Retailers launch Christmas promotions as early as October, with many shops decorated as 'winter wonderlands' and children lining up to tell sweaty Santas what they'd like for Christmas.

On the big day, most families skip the Christmas turkey dinner in favour of cold food or a barbecue, and many soak up the sun on the beach. About 80% of South Africans are Christian, so Carols by Candlelight and exchanging presents are popular Christmas Eve activities, with a special church service attended on Christmas morning.

The day after Christmas is known as the Day of Goodwill. South Africa's high poverty rate means millions don't have enough to eat, let alone think about gifts at Christmas. On this day, South Africans are encouraged to give to those less fortunate.



★ Brazil



By Sarah Oliveira, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Henrique Guerra, Porto Alegre, Brazil



Christmas is both an important Catholic festival and a busy retail period. Most people take holiday on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and there are celebrations all over Brazil both before and after this.

Retailers put up decorations and offer promotions. Some people start shopping for Christmas gifts in October, while others wait for January sales. In the week running up to Christmas, shopping malls are packed and some stores even close their doors for short periods due to excessive customers.





By Ranjabati Das, Calcutta, India



Christmas is important to the Christian minority in India, but for the rest, it is a season of joy and partying. December 24th is a big night while Christmas Day, a national holiday in India, is quietly spent, looking forward to a hungover Christmas lunch.

I don't think Bombay or Delhi have a party culture like this, but we Calcuttans, who have been most affected by the colonial rule, certainly do, especially at various centres of recreation and relaxation commonly known as 'clubs'.

Christmas is considered to be British as the Christmas food is generally British, although some non-Christians choose to celebrate it as Bada Din ('Big Day') and cook Indian delicacies to celebrate the festivities.

Christmas gifts aren't common. In Bengali culture, we buy gifts for friends and relatives during Durga Puja at the end of September/early October. It's still a big retail period for clothes, makeup and accessories as people shop for themselves in the run-up to New Year's parties. Online shopping is becoming more and more common, with the younger generations being more click-happy.





A day in the life of an international content manager

By Lisa Plumridge

From creative brainstorming to hiring an international team and then managing guidelines, calendars, budgets and deadlines, the day-to-day of an international content manager is varied and interesting. It's also pressured and plate-spinning in equal measure.

We tend to get involved with our clients at pitch stage, collaborating in the creative process and shaping the content strategy. Once pitches are won, the focus is on developing the team and finding the right person for each task, often in multiple locations and working in numerous languages.

*Often we're working with teams covering
**several time zones and
personalities** across the spectrum*

For a project to be successful, various elements need to be in place from the off: content creation guidelines for writers, editors and translators; templates and examples; style guides and glossaries for the languages we're working in; budgets; calendars.

Often we're working with teams covering several time zones and personalities across the spectrum. It helps to have people on board who are used to working with an international team and who can keep their heads in case something goes awry – these people are the safety net that keep a project on track.

Remote teams need careful management: emails can be misconstrued and instructions misunderstood. Communication is key here, from team meetings on video or conference call to gentle encouragement on a personal level via a quick phone call or one-line instant message. Keeping team members in different corners of the world connected can mean the difference between a project that exceeds expectations and one that falters.





Implementing a multicultural content marketing strategy

By Frank Hartkopf

Content for your customers abroad needs to be transcreated, not translated. Only when it is written from scratch by a native writer will it have the desired effect and convert website users. But how do you deliver a consistent brand message across all markets?

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Working with multinational companies across different markets in Europe, Australasia and the Americas, NewsReach has established a process to get this balance right. We provide all writers with detailed topic descriptions for each article planned for a month in advance and give them access to a pool of sources and research data.

These topic pitches, which have been approved by the client, make the general article direction clear to local writers. Combined with the general briefing on this client, writers then conduct their own research using local sources. Finally, they write the piece, adapting it to the local situation. This way, stories are told differently across the markets, but the main plot remains the same.

This simple strategy also gives marketers control over the output without having to understand every language.





Wrapping it up

What to consider when choosing a provider for your website content

By Frank Hartkopf

Content marketing works.

[A recent study](#) by NewsReach's parent company, Axonn Media, has shown that 74% of UK marketers say content marketing increases online traffic. The catch is that many businesses lack the resources and expertise to do it properly. No problem – there are many agencies claiming to be able to perform these services for you, so that you can get on with your core business. However, you need to be careful to whom you entrust part of your online presence, especially when communicating in many different languages. Here are a few questions you need to ask yourself when choosing the right partner.

Cost vs. ROI

"If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, wait until you hire an amateur."

Quality comes at a price, but it will pay off in the long run. The price of your content will vary depending on language, length and research effort required. Do shop around for the best offer, but keep in mind that price isn't everything. Look for the best value and ask for examples of an agency's work. Make sure that the agency reports back to you on performance, for example traffic, social shares, inbound links generated and ultimately conversions.

Strategy

Is the agency simply producing the content and emailing it to you or is there a plan for it to generate a return? A professional content marketing agency should have a clear, defined strategy.

Branding

How does the agency present its own brand? Do they practise what they preach? Are they experienced in collaborating with in-house marketers, complementing each other? Your brand is your most valuable asset, so make sure it does not get damaged by poor-quality translations and an off-brand tone and style.

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Simple processes and agility

How much legwork do you have to do? While you will want to contribute some input into your content strategy as you know your audience best, you should not end up doing most of the work. Ask if they have a simple process in place, with clear production steps and timelines. They should also be flexible enough to react quickly to changing requirements.

Expertise

Do they have experience in helping companies entering new markets with multicultural content marketing? Don't assume that because an agency offers multilingual content as a service, they know what they're doing. Ask them for examples of their previous work and about their editorial experience.

Has your prospective agency taken the time to research and understand your audience?

Industry knowledge

Producing an infographic is one thing, but getting the most out of it is another. Have agency staff taken the time to research and understand your audience? Have they spoken with you about your industry and how you want to convey your message? Don't let them take a one-size-fits-all approach. The more tailored, the better.

Testimonials

Can the agency deliver what they promise? There is no better way to find out than getting feedback from a business they have worked with before. Ask for testimonials and case studies to prove their claims.





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