



Small Changes, Big Workload

Improving Translation in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Leisure





AT A GLANCE

Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure is an exceptional business in that its goal is to help consumers derive the greatest value and satisfaction from time away from home and office. Managers in this vertical who are responsible for providing the linguistic portion of a smooth travel experience can use this paper to examine their own translation processes and improve them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Translating a pamphlet or property description attractively may seem like an uninteresting business problem – even a distraction – to a tour operator, but to a prospective customer planning a trip from the other side of the world, it is a godsend and a deal-closer.

In contrast to managers in most industries, those responsible for translation in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure work toward an unusual goal in customer satisfaction: If done properly, translations help their customers make the most of time away from home.

Attracting visitors and passengers in their own country is already difficult, but these managers must also attract guests from other regions, using foreign languages in almost every interaction. The travelers, seeking to make the most of their time out of the office and on vacation, are sensitive to miscommunication through poor translation; for example:

- ➔ A travel Website's abandon rate suddenly spikes because its new catalog and reservation infrastructure does not support multiple languages.
- ➔ The Website for a regional tourism office offers top-level pages translated into several languages, but sub-pages with supporting descriptions remain in the host country's language, ignoring the needs of important visitor populations.
- ➔ Foreign language maps, event schedules, and pamphlets at a theme park omit important updates not because of the expense but because of the work involved in translating and publishing a few words into multiple languages.
- ➔ Photographs of mistranslated signage on cruise ships or in hotels end up among comments on travel review Websites and social networks.
- ➔ Travelers complain to their friends that they "would have enjoyed the tour much more if there had been materials in our language."

How can managers in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure avoid these costly situations and attract visitors in multiple languages? Which technologies are at their disposal? What are common myths about translation in this industry, and what are the facts behind them? Managers responsible for providing the linguistic portion of a smooth travel experience can use this paper to examine their own translation processes and improve them.



MAIN MESSAGES

- ➔ For private enterprise and government entities, Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure is an opportunity to sell existing assets to continuous streams of new customers worldwide.
- ➔ Attracting worldwide visitors requires translation, and most translation in this industry involves small and frequent updates in multiple files across multiple languages.
- ➔ A successful translation strategy involves providing accurate, persuasive information in the visitor's language, and applying technology to keep the translation function from disrupting the normal business of satisfying travelers.

TRANSLATION LANDSCAPE IN HOSPITALITY, TRAVEL, TOURISM, AND LEISURE

Most companies in this vertical market have wrestled with translation, with a variety of perspectives and outcomes.

What kinds of companies are in this industry?

While often lumped together as “the travel industry,” several different fields make up this vertical:

Hospitality includes hotels, resorts, spas and, for purposes of translation, suppliers of the reservation and customer infrastructure used to market them.

Travel encompasses airlines, cruise lines, railroads, public and private surface transportation, and the online travel and booking sites that feed them.

Tourism usually comprises the government bodies – from municipal to national – and tour conductors trying to increase the visibility of their region, often by attracting visitors from other countries.

Leisure-oriented organizations – museums, monuments, recreational facilities, amusement and theme parks, vacation package companies, entertainment venues – ensure that travelers have plenty to do from the time they arrive until the time they leave, and must also ensure that they can do it in a language that is comfortable to them.

While these categories are not fixed, their members all share one goal: To help their customers make the most of time away from home.

Who manages translation in these organizations?

When customers cross language boundaries to plan or spend their travel time, a translation manager must ensure that translation does not get in the way. In many small Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure organizations, the **owners or business managers** who are responsible for profit and loss need to cast their net as widely as possible. They find that growing the business means going global, and that requires translation. These managers come to translation as an afterthought.

Translation Scenario:

Initiated as a close relationship with linguists in a couple of languages, the translation effort suddenly involves an ad hoc network of friends and “partners” around the world. A network this feeble cannot scale up for an increasing number of languages.





In companies with an evolved Web presence, **eCommerce managers** often become de facto translation managers, as global traffic ramps up unexpectedly and a worldwide revenue base beckons. These managers see the potential for translated content, yet still don't know about all of the work that goes into delivering it.

Marketing and communications managers take on translation as part of their role in creating the content in the first place. They also execute a broader strategy of growing their brand and developing a customer following in international regions, so their task may be to update a brochure for a theme park – and do it in eight languages.

In the public sector, **government officials** often manage translation because they are responsible for developing the economic growth in a region.

In all cases, the translation function starts small, until costs and benefits gain momentum and translation begins to take on a life of its own.

What are managers in this industry translating?

The Web has become the epicenter of translation in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure, since most international travel research and booking takes place there. At the highest level are property-specific Websites for hotels, theme parks, museums, cities, geographic regions, cruise lines, and resorts, requiring translation of everything from descriptions to endorsements.

Just below this level are the sites for online reservations and travel marketing used by airlines, tour operators, and travel agents. The infrastructure that aggregates and hosts this content has its own text, ranging from schedules to terms and conditions.

Besides Web content, Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure organizations translate brochures, event announcements, mailers, ongoing-contact pieces, newsletters, catalogs, and e-mail to make the sale and maintain the relationship.

Upon arrival, travelers look for printed information in tour materials, maps, passenger instructions, and advisories, so making these available in other languages is an important part of follow-through.

Larger companies have their own, internal translation needs for materials including employee communications, training guides, videos, e-learning packages, and procedure manuals.

More specifically, though, most translation of Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure content involves small but important changes to existing text: a new service offered at a spa, a second swimming pool, an added port of call, an updated description following a hotel remodel, a different route to reach the property, pricing changes, and opening and closing times of monuments. Even when the text is repetitive (e.g., hotel descriptions re-used from one property to another), maintaining accurate content can pose problems in the original language, and propagating these changes across multiple languages becomes a daunting task.

What trends and factors drive these managers?

Global profits, revenue goals, and new markets drive private companies to take the needs of their foreign customers seriously. As currencies rise and fall, and as consumers in emerging economies begin to travel internationally for pleasure, the return on investment to going global can help companies stabilize their revenue streams.

“By 2017, [worldwide Travel & Tourism employment] is expected to rise to 262.6 million jobs, accounting for 8.3 per cent of total employment...Of total world exports, Travel & Tourism accounts for some 12 per cent (US \$1,847.8 billion) in 2007. Over the next few years, world Travel & Tourism exports are expected to grow at a rate of 4.6 percent per annum.”

From “Progress and Priorities 2007/2008,” World Travel & Tourism Council





For **economic development and multiplier effects**, public entities and entire national governments also have their eye on greater revenue from this industry.

Beyond translation, many managers must also learn **localization**, or the process of adapting their content to all of the needs of a given locale. Consider that an airline or tour operator may offer different packages and promotions on its Japanese site from those on its French site, based on different travel habits. This can be a competitive advantage over operators who translate, yet offer the same product to visitors from all countries.

But **tourist satisfaction** is the most important driver for translation managers. Expectations run high for vacation holidays and business travel, so first impressions are important. Customers are more careful about and less forgiving of poor-quality translations of marketing materials (printed, Web) when it comes to basing travel plans on them. Besides, unfavorable comments move very quickly on travel review sites regardless of language, and it is difficult to get ahead of them.

BUSINESS ISSUES

Translation scenario:

While a close relationship with the translator is important, many companies choose a vendor for a slightly lower price per word, and then spend vastly more money over time because the vendor is not using translation technology to recycle previous translations.

Still, translation is not a core business activity in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure, so it often feels more like a distraction than a driver. Smart companies figure out how to handle translation efficiently so they can focus on profits, economic growth, and tourist satisfaction.

Misconceptions about translation

- "The cheapest way to handle translation is through an employee or a translator based here in town. We think the quality is acceptable." This may suffice for a hotel in Madrid that wants to attract visitors from the Basque Country or Catalonia, but it does not scale to attract visitors from France, Germany, Japan, and other countries. Also, small translation vendors may use human translators to translate a continuous stream of 10-word changes (event dates, itineraries, property descriptions, schedules, etc.) but charge excessively because they aren't using recycling tools like translation memory to provide economies of scale.
- "One translator is as good as another." Translations for this market need to be both attractive and accurate, and linguists who specialize in birth certificates or legal documents may not be the best fit. When first impressions are important to capturing the tourist dollar, an expert in this market's terminology can improve quality and help persuade visitors.
- "We don't have the capacity to continuously translate and publish our high monthly volumes of small changes." This industry's content requires continual publishing and translation of small changes, but much of the work of managing the content is now automated and accessible to companies of any size.

Translation needs for Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure

Regardless of how these companies may misunderstand translation, several human and technical factors characterize their needs for it.

Close, local relationships with translation vendors are a priority among entities like regional tourism offices, museums, and small hotels. They work locally by nature and want to maintain local relationships even as they take advantage of global opportunities.

This industry's content calls for **attractive, marketing-oriented translations** that not only educate but also help to persuade and sell to a demanding audience with countless options for limited travel time and budget.





When a high volume of small changes goes into multiple languages, file management can quickly spiral out of control. Managers who intend to grow their translation effort need to automate this function or resign themselves to chasing bits of translated sentences among writers, translators, designers, and reviewers.

Translation memory (TM) software is suited to these small changes and repetitive content. TM compares a new document against previous translation work stored in a database, re-uses as much of the stored content as possible and makes it easy for the translator to find the new text. As companies translate more content and add new languages to their Websites, they discover the need to **enable their back-end systems** and architecture to support multiple languages and character sets. They also outrun their internal QA resources and require **external testing services** for both functionality and linguistic quality. This saves the embarrassment of having worldwide users stumble onto corrupted characters, broken links and defective forms.

LIONBRIDGE TRANSLATION MODEL FOR HOSPITALITY, TOURISM, TRAVEL, AND LEISURE

Lionbridge addresses the range of human and technical needs that confront translation managers in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure, from small, regional companies to global enterprises.

At the heart of the model is Freeway, a Web-based platform for centralizing assets, controlling the communication channel, and storing instant information on the status and spend of translation projects. Lionbridge clients may use any or all Freeway services that apply to their business.

Local relationships

The model starts by preserving the close-to-home relationship important to many translation managers, with in-country native speakers versed in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure terminology, a local account manager and a project manager. This balances local feel with reach across Freeway's global cloud.

Persuasive, accurate translations

Context and background information are the essence of translation, so Lionbridge chooses subject-expert translators and places language assets – style guides, glossaries, dictionaries, country references – in an online Freeway repository to which translators have around-the-clock access.

File and content management

The process of tracking small changes among hundreds of files is better automated than left to manual execution. The argument for a content management system (CMS) becomes even more compelling for organizations hosting multiple language-versions, so Freeway works with Web services-based CMS technologies. The translation manager (or any internal publisher) can submit and retrieve content during translation, then check the finished product into CMS for review. For many companies, addressing the file management problem this way is as important as the translation itself.

In advanced CMS implementations, Lionbridge clients can also analyze Website information on pages viewed (by visitor origin) to determine the most commonly requested content on a country-by-country basis. If, for example, most people researching France from country A browse pages on the Côte d'Azur but not on Euro Disney, and most visitors from country B have the opposite preference, this analysis can help inform decisions on the best way to spend precious translation funds.





Translation memory software

To keep costs low over the long term, Freeway gives translators and project managers online access to previous work stored in translation memory databases. For example, if version 1 of a brochure or Web page was translated last month, and 15% of the text changed in version 2 this month, TM tools will recycle and reuse the already translated 85% from version 1 and make it easy for the translator to work on the updated 15%. TM tools help translators work faster, share existing text in multiple languages, and avoid unnecessary re-translation.

Language quality services

Once the translated materials are in place, linguists can perform QA on them for translation quality and functionality. This is valuable for Websites and materials on which a variety of translators have worked over time, when consistency and establishing a global brand are important. Functionality testing ensures that Websites and software work properly in all languages, and that the translation process has not introduced bugs.

Client portal

Finally, clients use Freeway's portal to view the status of current translation projects, collaborate with project managers and content reviewers, search and update translation memory databases or glossaries, and run reports that summarize project statistics and finances. The result is that, even though translation takes place in Freeway, the project is always as close as the nearest browser.

Complete platform

This combination of human and automated effort is a platform built to meet the translation needs of small, medium and large companies in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure.

CONCLUSION

Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure is an exceptional industry in that its goal is to help consumers derive the greatest value and satisfaction from time away from home and office. Buyers rely on accurate, reliable translations in deciding how to invest travel budgets, and in spending holiday travel time free from communication problems. Sellers compete for every tourism dollar in any language, and can increase profit and economic benefit through a balanced use of linguistic talent and technology.

To attract and inform international travelers, business managers planning for growth look far beyond translation to consider file and content management, money-saving leverage of prior work, multilingual testing capacity, machine translation, and Web-based tools. The Lionbridge translation model of local presence with access to worldwide translators offers these business and technical advantages to Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Leisure companies of every size. Most importantly, Lionbridge has designed its products and services to operate offsite, so that companies in this industry can focus on the business of satisfying travelers, instead of managing files, translation vendors, and projects.





CONTACT INFORMATION

About Lionbridge

Lionbridge Technologies, Inc. (Nasdaq: LIOX) is a leading provider of translation, localization, and testing services. Lionbridge combines global language resources with proven program management methodologies to serve as an outsource partner throughout a client's product and content lifecycle. Organizations in all industries rely on Lionbridge language and testing services to increase international market share, speed adoption of products and content, and ensure the integrity of their global brands. Based in Waltham, Mass., Lionbridge operates across 26 countries, and provides services under the Lionbridge and VeriTest® brands.

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