



Expertise
and insight
for the future

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Marketing Localization in a Born-Global SaaS Company

Discovering Additional Opportunities

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<p>This thesis focused on a born-global company and its marketing. Since most born-globals do not localize their marketing at early stages, it attempted to build a framework that would help to identify opportunities in marketing localization and make respective decisions.</p> <p>This thesis was carried out as an applied research project. It focuses mostly on the data collection and analysis of qualitative data. However, some elements of numerical calculations were used as well. The main data sources included interviews with the stakeholders of the case company, as well as the internal and publicly available information.</p> <p>The study identified the reasons the case company did not do marketing localization, as well as approaches that can help to identify opportunities in marketing localization. The reasons why the company did not do localization include homogenous customer needs and resource constraints. To help the company start marketing localization, a framework has been proposed that evaluates the opportunities in marketing localization based on four dimensions: sales situation, English proficiency level, demand volume, and localization difficulty.</p> <p>Implementation of this framework should help the case company to begin successful marketing localization by identifying opportunities and directing the resources to the right target markets.</p>	
Keywords	SaaS, born-global startup, Localization, Marketing, Marketing Strategy

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1 Introduction

Born-global firms or international new ventures are a relatively recent phenomenon. As these companies expand globally immediately at the moment of funding or very shortly after it, they run contrary with established approaches of international expansion of a business. These companies are often found in technology-related industries. Digital products and services are becoming more and more popular and important. These include SaaS (software-as-a-service) and PaaS (platform-as-a-service). It is often said that digitalization removes borders and facilitates globalization. It is true that international expansion and entering the new markets are often quite different for the digital services compared to the traditional products. In fact, it can be much simpler. Many successful digital platforms and SaaS businesses operate globally, and for some of them, success can be achieved only by the global presence.

Born-global companies normally do not localize or diversify their product and marketing in different countries and regions. However, as they grow, they may start considering marketing localization. Marketing localization in the markets where they are already present can be a good additional growth opportunity. However, they would need to understand how large an opportunity it is, how much should be invested, as well as which market to focus on.

The objective of this thesis is to create a marketing localization evaluation framework, as well as an implementation plan, for a B2B SaaS born-global startup that is starting to mature and considers marketing localization.

1.1 Business Context

The case company of this thesis is a SaaS startup based in the Nordics. It was founded in the 2010-s and is developing automation software for digital marketing. It brings data from various online marketing platforms into multiple data analysis, visualization tools, as well as cloud data storage. This way, it helps digital marketers to save time on tedious manual tasks related to digital marketing reporting and concentrate on the things which are essential for the growth of their business. The product can also be described as a data pipeline.

The company has self-served and sales-assisted customer funnels. Self-served products can be purchased online based on a monthly or yearly subscription and are for smaller purchases. This funnel is similar to an e-commerce business. Large or more complex enterprise-level sales are made by the sales department with the classic B2B model – lead generation, nurturing, and qualification. As typical with software, a free trial is offered. There are different packages and tiers available depending on the number of users, data sources, and data volume.

The customers are not of the same size and do not belong to one specific industry. Instead, they are very diverse and include both small startups, as well as large MNCs. The main customer segment is digital marketing agencies and digital marketing service providers, who use this software to provide better service to their customers. There are also customers who use the software in-house, for their own digital marketing activities. Probably, the main differentiating factor that makes the products of the case company suitable for a potential customer is the amount of marketing data they need to work with, as well as its data maturity. Data maturity can be defined as a measurement of how advanced a company's data analysis is.

This industry is currently growing, and the case company is considered one of the market leaders. The company is developing new products and moving towards more complex solutions suitable for sales-assisted funnel. However, as new competitors are entering the market, it is vital to continue growing and developing, both in terms of product development and marketing strategy.

The company closed series A, as well as series B founding rounds. However, the company has been profitable all the time, which is rare for technology startups at this stage and highlights its success.

The case company is undergoing a period of rapid growth and expansion. Its products have been very successful, and in after several years since its founding, the company had more than 60 000 users, including 3 900 paying users in more than 60 countries. Initial growth has been mostly organic, without sustained marketing efforts. However, different marketing and sales enablement activities have been intensifying as the company grew.

1.2 Business Challenge, Objective, and Outcome

At the moment, about 55% of total sales come from English-speaking countries, such as the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. This is quite natural, as these nations have mature digital marketing industries. Besides, the software is currently only offered in English, as well as customer support is mostly in English. However, the digital marketing industry is experiencing faster growth in many non-English speaking emerging markets than in the mentioned established countries. The company has been quite successful in many non-English speaking markets, such as Germany, France, and Brazil.

As the company continues to grow, it has relatively ambitious growth targets and therefore needs to continue looking for growth opportunities. One potentially untapped growth opportunity is marketing localization in the countries where the company is already present. Those would be non-English speaking countries which are considered key markets for the company's products. However, the challenge is to understand opportunity size, as well as to decide on its plan and implementation.

Accordingly, the objective of this thesis is *to create a marketing localization evaluation framework, as well as an implementation plan, for the case company - a B2B SaaS born-global startup* - that starts to mature and considers marketing localization.

The framework will help to evaluate potential business opportunities related to marketing localization, as well as will help to make and prioritize the decisions related to it. Business opportunities will be based on current sales dynamics in these markets, and evaluation of market segment that prefers to use the local language as opposed to English.

1.3 Thesis Outline

This thesis will begin with the analysis of the current situation at the case company, with the goal of understanding its business context and which business theories can be applied to it. Another goal of this analysis is to understand to what extent it has been localizing its marketing, as well as the reasons for that state.

Then business theories related to born-global companies and their marketing will be examined. As a result, the situation at the case company, conceptual framework, as well as stakeholder input will be joined together to form the basis of the proposal building.

The objective of this study is to build a framework that will allow to evaluate additional opportunities from marketing localization in the markets where the company is already established. This framework will consider multiple dimensions based on the current state analysis, as well as the conceptual framework. In the end, an implementation plan suggestion will be presented as well.

The framework that is built in this thesis is going to be applied to the markets where the company is already established, therefore no traditional market entry or market research analysis will be undertaken. Market research is out of the scope of this thesis because the digital product which is marketed and sold through online channels to most countries is relatively simple and does not require any significant investments. The target is for the company to strengthen its position in key non-English speaking markets.

2 Method and Material

This section describes the research approach, research design, and data collection and analysis methods used in this thesis.

2.1 Research Approach

Research design is based on the following principles and approaches.

This is an *applied research* project. According to Collis & Hussey (2009, p.7), “applied research is a study that has been designed to apply its findings to solving a specific, existing problem.” This way, it is opposed to basic or pure research, which deals with problems that are “of less specific nature, and the research is being conducted primarily to improve our understanding of general issues without emphasis on its immediate application” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 8). This thesis does not attempt to improve understanding of general business or marketing theories. Instead, it examines a specific situation that exists in a specific company, or potentially, in other companies of the same type. The goal of this study is to provide specific suggestions for the improvement of the problem that is being examined.

The research is mostly *descriptive* in nature. Descriptive research is “used to identify and obtain information on the characteristics of a particular problem or issue” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 5). The research is going to use different available data in order to create a picture of what is happening at the case company, as well as in the industry in general. As a result, a possible framework for improvement will be built and described based on the above picture. Therefore, it views the company and the processes within it as interactions between humans rather than the combination of laws, like natural sciences. According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009, p. 119), such an approach is characterized by a small scale of data collection, subjective meanings, and deeper insights. The researcher is the part of the research and affects it.

The applied research paradigm is more often connected with qualitative data and inductive research, where (1, p.8) “the theory is developed from the observation of the empirical reality” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 8). However, in this thesis, both deductive and inductive methods will be used. The current situation at the case company will be

analyzed against existing business theories (deduction), but, as every business situation is unique, the improvement framework will be built based on the data analysis, in addition to theoretical knowledge (induction). This was helped by the fact that the author has been working at the case company for four years, therefore it has the features of an insider study.

The study uses a variety of research methods. It utilizes the insider knowledge that has not been written or formalized (derived via informal discussions and interviews with the stakeholders). It also collected qualitative data from internal data sources (including the company's internal communication tools). The major amount of these data was primary and collected by the thesis researcher. On the other hand, secondary data used in the study were mostly quantitative.

More specifically, the thesis will focus on using the methods typical for the marketing field, such as in marketing research, as described below:

“The primary goal of marketing research is to develop and test theories that seek to explain and predict marketing phenomena with the view of using this understanding to improve business decision-making. In this capacity, marketing research is the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through this understanding. It creates knowledge used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process. Marketing research specifies the knowledge required to address these issues, designs the method for collecting appropriate information, manages and implements the data collection process, analyzes the results, and communicates the findings and their implications.” (Grapentine & Teas, 2012)

The research design and data collection are discussed next.

2.2 Research Design

This thesis will explore the current situation and build suggestions for improvement based on the existing knowledge and co-creation with the team. To this end, the thesis will utilize the internal data of the company in order to understand the current situation. Also, it will gather existing knowledge and best practices from published information that is available to understand existing solutions and help in creating its own. In addition, the

thesis will utilize suggestions for building the proposal from the team at the case company. Therefore, this thesis will use qualitative research methods.

This study is conducted in several steps. The research design of this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

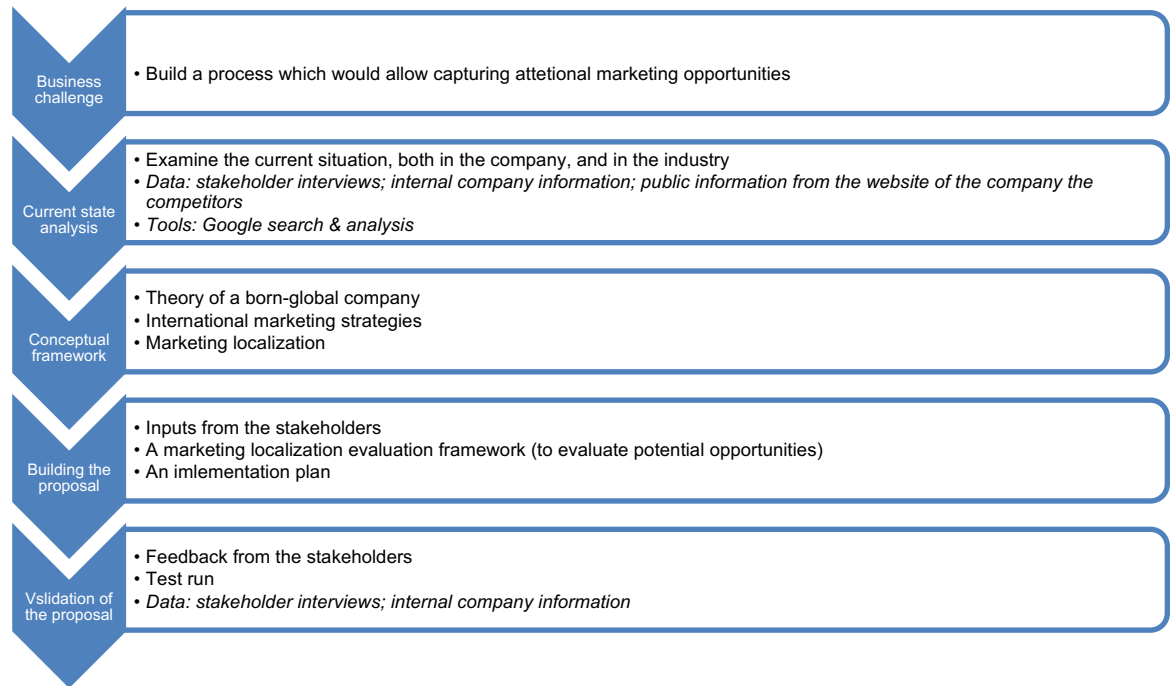


Figure 1. Research design of this thesis.

As seen from Figure 1, the study starts with identifying the business challenge and setting the objective. It continues to the current state analysis where the current marketing situation is analyzed, both in the company and among the competitors. The current state analysis uses internal interviews and decisions to gather and analyze the internal perspective. It also analyses a series of internal documents and utilizes online information available in open access about the competitors. Finally, the current state analysis uses online tools (such as Google Ads and SEMRush) in order to analyze the competitive landscape. As a result of the current state analysis, the study identifies the challenges and areas for development related to marketing localization.

In the next step, the study explores existing knowledge concerning born-global firms, international marketing, and marketing localization to build a proposal.

In the next step, the proposal is built based on the results of the current state analysis, selected suggestions from existing knowledge and best practice, and ideas coming from co-creation with the team.

In the final step, the proposal is validated via applying the proposed marketing localization framework to the real-life data (in this case, internal company data) and via discussions with the management and interviews with the key stakeholders.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

This study draws from a variety of data sources, and the data was collected in two data collection rounds. Table 1 shows details of Data collections 1-2 used in this study.

Table 1. Details of Data collections 1-2 used in this study.

	Participants / role	Data type	Topic, description	Date, length	Documented as
Data 1, for the current state analysis (Section 3 or 4), and proposal (Section 5)					
1	Respondent 1: Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)	Video conference	Discussion about marketing localization at a case company	Nov 2021, 20 min	Recording and non-verbatim transcription
2	Respondent 2: Head of Business Development (Bizdev)	Video conference	Discussion about marketing localization at a case company	Nov 2021, 20 min	Recording and non-verbatim transcription
3	Respondent 3: Head of Performance Marketing	Video conference	Discussion about marketing localization at a case company	Nov 2021, 20 min	Recording and non-verbatim transcription
Data 2, for validation (Section 6)					
1	Respondent 1: Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)	Video conference	Feedback about the thesis framework	Nov 2021, 15 min	Recording and non-verbatim transcription
2	Respondent 2: Head of Business Development (Bizdev)	Video conference	Feedback about the thesis framework	Nov 2021, 15 min	Recording and non-verbatim transcription
3	Respondent 3: Head of Performance Marketing	Video conference	Feedback about the thesis framework	Nov 2021, 15 min	Recording and non-verbatim transcription

As seen from Table 1, data for this thesis was collected in two rounds.

During both rounds, the same marketing stakeholders in the case company have been interviewed. Marketing stakeholders chosen are people who either impacted marketing strategy in the past or are having a direct influence on it at the moment. Those include:

- *Chief Marketing Officer.* Joined the company in spring 2021. Has vast experience in international marketing, both at an agency and at a global software company. He wasn't an eyewitness of the initial growth of the case company but has probably the largest impact on the further development of its marketing.
- *Head of Business Development.* A very early employee of the case company, he has been with it since 2016. Until spring 2021, he has also been a Head of Marketing. This way, he has been behind the early growth of the case company and marketing activities behind it.
- *Head of Performance Marketing.* Joined the company in autumn 2020. Is responsible for, among others, advertising and paid acquisition activities of the case company, which potentially include localization of the advertising.

In addition to these stakeholders, the author of the thesis has very good knowledge of the situation at the case company. He has also been a very early employee of the case company (since 2017), working on global advertising, paid acquisition, as well as analytics.

The first round, collecting Data 1, was conducted for the current state analysis, as well as proposal building, in the form of one-to-one video conference interviews. The goal was to collect qualitative data on the thoughts and ideas of the stakeholders about the following points:

- To what extent has the case company done marketing localization until now?
- Reasons why the marketing localization has not been done on a wider scale, and their importance.
- At which point should a born-global company consider marketing localization?

- How could a case company begin planning marketing localization (proposal building)?

In the next round, Data 2 was collected when conducting validation of the initial proposal. It also consisted of one-to-one interviews with the same stakeholders as in the first round. It consisted of feedback about the marketing localization decision framework developed in this study. Feedback included comments if the framework would work, what are its advantages and weaknesses.

Thus, in this study, the interviews made one of the primary methods of data collection. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured, online, or face-to-face interviews, with questions created in advance. The interviews were recorded, and the field notes were taken. The questions for the interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition, Data 1-2 included other types of data, mostly analysis of internal documents, as well as open-access information and online tools. Table 2 below lists the documents, open access sources, and tools analyzed in this study.

Table 2. Internal documents, open-access information, and tools used in the study.

Data type or a tool	Description	Format
Internal company information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company structure - Company business strategy - Company growth information - Company marketing strategy - Company sales data - Historical performance data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal documentation - Internal memos - Sales reports - Marketing reports - Press releases - Performance data from internal systems
Public business information (in open access)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company growth and revenue information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public business registers in the Nordics
Public information about competitors (in open access)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online ads - Marketing message - Product interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competitive intelligence tools, Google Ads, SEMRush - Competitor websites
Google search analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Search volumes for different search queries - Related searches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Google Ads Keyword Planner

As seen from Table 2, *internal company information* included the structure, strategies, products, marketing activities, and other related documents from internal sources. This information is not public or even not properly documented but available internally to the employees of the company. Some of the information was also gathered from the press releases of the company and from the company's website. No permission was given to use the company name in the thesis, therefore the company will be addressed as "the case company."

In addition to internal documents, the study utilizes online information in open access. Information about the industry and the competition is taken from public sources, in most cases, the websites of the competitors. Wikipedia is also used to cross-check the terminology in different languages.

Finally, the study also uses online tools. Several online tools are used that are either publicly available or require a login. The main tool for search queries on Google will be Keyword Planner that is part of the Google Ads toolkit and is available for Google Ads advertisers. Other Google tools, such as Google Trends and Google Translate, will be used for analyzing Google search queries, as well.

Thus, the biggest part of the data was analyzed for the current state analysis. The findings from the current state analysis are discussed in Section 3 below.

3 Current State Analysis of the Case Company and Its Competitors

This section discusses the results of the current state analysis of the case company's marketing localization and that of competitors.

3.1 Overview of the Current State Analysis

In order to develop a framework for marketing expansion and localization, it was necessary, first, to understand the current situation at the case company. This included the collection and analysis of two main layers of data.

First, general information about the company, its structure, and its products was gathered and analyzed. This helped to categorize the company according to different business theories and apply marketing approaches suitable for the relevant company type.

Second, more specific information about its marketing and marketing localization was gathered and analyzed. This included data to understand to what extent the company has done marketing localization until now, as well as to identify its future plans. This information was needed to evaluate the scope of the framework that would be developed in this study.

General information about the company has been collected using both published and internal data. Published information included the following data sources: first, the company's own website that provides information about its products and the structure of the case company. Also, the company's blogs were utilized that contain press releases about the products, growth, expansion, and investment rounds. Second, the study also utilized the data from the public company register that contains financial and headcount data that help to evaluate the growth of the company.

Importantly, internal data helped to get insights that were not available in publicly available data. This included strategy documents, internal memos, and internal reports. These sources helped to receive more detailed information about the structure of the company, its performance, as well as the development of its business and marketing strategy.

More specific information about marketing localization at the case company was acquired from the internal documents. However, the main source of information regarding this area was gathered from stakeholder interviews. These interviews also helped to answer the question why things happened the way they did, not just what happened.

In addition to the current state of marketing localization at the case company, the analysis of marketing localization was done in relation to main competitors. That was done using publicly available data – competitors' websites, ads, and so forth. The goal was to understand to what extent they are currently localizing their public-facing marketing messaging.

3.2 Description of the Current State of Marketing Localization at the Case Company

The case company is a SaaS startup based in the Nordics. It was founded in the 2010-s and is developing automation software for digital marketing. The case company can be defined as a born-global company. This way, the company has operated globally since the very beginning, its home market has never been important. This is not uncommon for software companies, as online distribution makes it really easy to offer their product globally.

A traditional born-global definition also means that the company does not diversify its product offering and marketing for different regions.

The case company is undergoing a period of rapid growth and expansion. Its products have been very successful, and in 2018, the company had more than 60 000 users, including 3 900 paying users in more than 60 countries. Initial growth has been mostly organic, without sustained marketing efforts, however, different marketing and sales enablement activities have been intensifying as the company grew. Figure 2 shows how the company has been experiencing rapid growth since its founding.

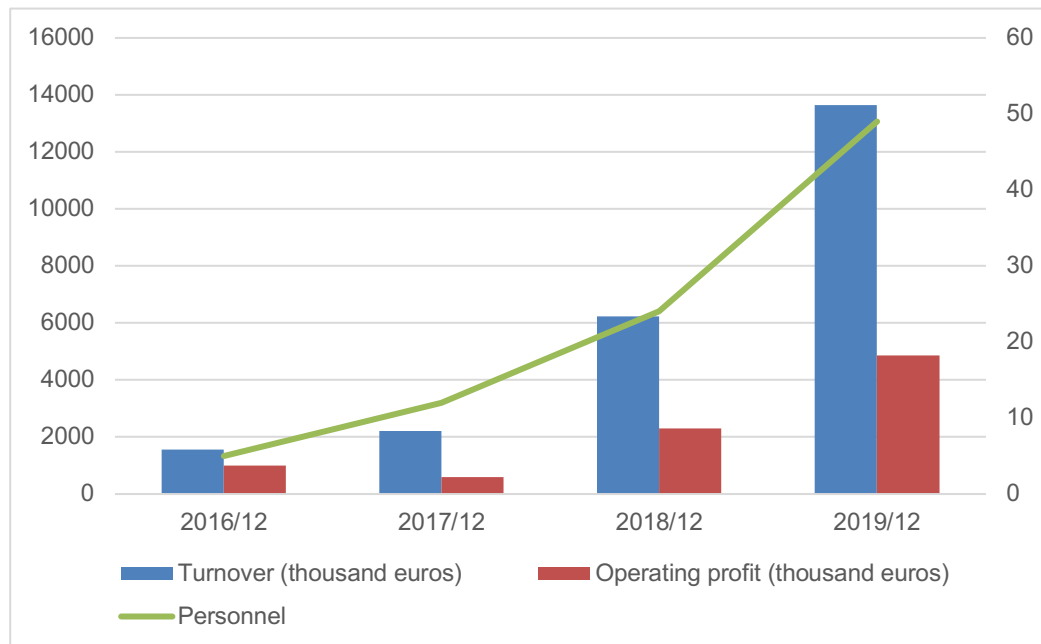


Figure 2. Yearly financial data of the target company (source: public company register in the Nordics).

Next, the main elements of the current product offering of the case company include the following:

A. Product

The company brings data from various online marketing platforms into multiple data analysis, visualization tools, as well as cloud data storage. This way, the company helps digital marketers to save time on tedious manual tasks related to digital marketing reporting and concentrate on the things which are essential for the growth of their business. The product can also be described as *a data pipeline*.

At the moment, about 55% of total sales come from English-speaking countries, such as the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. This is entirely natural, as these nations have mature digital marketing industries. Besides, the software is currently only offered in English, as well as customer support is mostly in English. However, the digital marketing industry is experiencing faster growth in many non-English speaking emerging markets than in the mentioned established countries. The company has been quite successful in many non-English speaking markets, such as Germany, France, and Brazil.

B. Sales & support

The company has self-served and sales-assisted customer funnels. Self-served products can be purchased online based on a monthly or yearly subscription and are for smaller purchases. This funnel is similar to an e-commerce business. Large or more complex enterprise-level sales are made by the sales department with the classic B2B model – lead generation, nurturing, and qualification.

This industry is currently growing, and the case company is considered one of the market leaders. The company is developing new products and moving towards more complex solutions suitable for sales-assisted funnel. However, as new competitors are entering the market, it is vital to continue growing and developing, both in terms of product development and marketing strategy.

C. Marketing

The customers are not of the same size and do not belong to one specific industry. Instead, they are very diverse and include both small startups, as well as large MNCs. The main customer segment is digital marketing agencies and digital marketing service providers, who use this software to provide better service to their customers. There are also customers who use the software in-house, for their own digital marketing activities.

Probably, the main differentiating factor that makes the products of the case company suitable for a potential customer is the amount of marketing data they need to work with, as well as its data maturity. Data maturity can be defined as a measurement of how advanced a company's data analysis is.

As typical with software, a free trial is offered. There are different packages and tiers available depending on the number of users, data sources, and data volume.

D. State of localization

The company has the product only in English. Website and marketing communications are also only in English. Customer support and sales are theoretically also only in English, however, there are people who know different languages and are able to serve customers in different languages.

The above results were gathered from the interview with the stakeholders. For example, CMO mentioned that *“to her knowledge, we haven’t done anything to date.”* However, some small activities that were localized include affiliate marketing and sales materials to be used in face-to-face sales conversations.

Concerning localized marketing done by the affiliate partners, the Head of Bizdev noted the following:

I think we have affiliates in Latin America and in some of the other countries, and I think they did some localized marketing for us.

However, a very big disadvantage of the localization done by the affiliate partners is that there is very limited control over the messaging, and therefore it cannot be considered the main way to develop marketing localization on a global scale.

On the other hand, according to the Head of Performance Marketing, we have created some localized *“materials for sale to give out directly.”* These materials can serve as a basis for further marketing localization activities, however so far, they have been made on a case-by-case basis for specific customers, and therefore might not necessarily be suitable for global or regional marketing.

There have been discussions about localization from time to time, however, localization so far has never been a priority. The general consensus is that there is still potential in English-speaking markets.

Concerning the reasons why localization wasn’t a priority so far, the interviewees cited several reasons. Thus, according to CMO, the main reason we didn’t localize was that we were able to grow strongly without localizing:

We tend to do everything in English because, as the company, we’ve gotten away with this. So you get away with it in tech, but you wouldn’t get away with it in other industries.

We didn’t see it as something that would accelerate the growth. The growth was happening without the localization, and localization by its very nature

adds complexity. And complexity slows things down. So I think having a single language in a tech sphere that was growing fast means that you don't want to add the complexity until you absolutely have to.

On the other hand, the Head of Bizdev focused on the homogeneity of the customers and their behavior:

There are probably two of the most homogeneous industries across the globe. One is marketing tools, and the other one is the developer tools. And those are, I think, two fields that where almost everyone working in Europe and the United States, and basically across the developing countries are pretty much using the same tools. And also, those are two domains where everyone can speak good English.

English is commonly known among digital marketing professionals around the world, and a lot of professional media are in English. In order to get the latest industry information, the customers basically need to read in English and attend English events. On the other hand, digital marketers in non-English speaking countries are using their own languages as well. And a few non-English speaking countries are special in a way that marketers are using different tools there, which means that our product will not be relevant there, even if they would understand English.

Head of Performance marketing agreed with the fact that our customers have so far been comfortable with us using English, but, in addition, argued that the main issue should have been resource constraints:

Any kind of localization could be very resource-intensive. And the resource issue is kind of a real issue in the sense that you wouldn't only need the marketing materials. We would have to, at some point, think about also translating the user interfaces of the product.

All interviewees, in general, agreed that we had not seen significant differences in the way people use our product in different regions. However, there have been regional differences in price perception. Also, the respondents agreed that there could be cultural differences that we are not aware of.

On the other hand, other respondents, besides the Head of Performance Marketing, didn't agree that resource constraints were a significant factor in why the case company hasn't done marketing localization in the past. These views contradict common theories of born-global companies that state that these companies don't diversify their products or localize their marketing due to a lack of resources and specialized skills (Kumar & Yakhlef, 2014). According to CMO:

If we had thought that the lack of localization was stifling growth, resources would be found. It just wasn't high on the list of priorities.

And according to the Head of Bizdev:

Limited resources are a very common problem, almost regardless of company size. I almost never thought not having enough resources was a reason for not doing anything. And I think that not giving a high enough priority is the main reason because I always have very limited resources. This is why you prioritize.

As the company continues to grow, it has relatively ambitious growth targets and therefore needs to continue looking for growth opportunities. One potentially untapped growth opportunity is marketing localization in the countries where the company is already present. Those would be non-English speaking countries which are considered key markets for the company's products. However, the challenge is to understand opportunity size, as well as to decide on its plan and implementation.

3.3 Analysis of Current State of Marketing Localization with Competitors

In order to understand if marketing localization is common among data-related B2B SaaS, this study researched the top 10 brands in the niche. The brands were chosen, and the analysis was performed in the following way:

- 1) A brand should come up as a competitor of the case company in some context. (For example, the brands that come up in sales conversations or Google searches.).
- 2) Google search volumes for all brands corresponding to the above criteria were evaluated using Google Ads Keyword Planner, and ten brands with the highest global search volumes were chosen.
- 3) Websites and LinkedIn pages of the chosen companies were analyzed.
- 4) Their ads were analyzed using Google Ads' ad preview tool and competitive intelligence tools provided by SEMRush.

Thus, the study selected ten competing brands (companies in the industry). The basic information about the selected companies is listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Main competitors of the case company

Name	Searches on Google	Employees on LinkedIn	Country of origin	Website	Localized ads in one of the following countries: France, Germany, Spain	Localized website
1. Databox	27,100	89	Serbia	databox.com	No	No
2. Fivetran	27,100	531	United States	fivetran.com	French, German	French, German
3. Supermetrics	27,100	168	Finland	Supermetrics.com	No	No
4. Datorama	14,800	426	United States/Israel	Datorama.com	No	German, Japanese
5. Klipfolio	14,800	57	Canada	Klipfolio.com	No	No
6. Matillion	12,100	275	United Kingdom	matillion.com	No	No
7. Cyfe	6,600	4	United States	Cyfe.com	No	No
8. Hevo	6,600	120	India	Hevodata.com	No	no
9. Rivery	6,600	48	Israel	Rivery.io	No	Google Translate
10. Adverity	5,400	224	Austria	Adverity.com	German	German

Data in the table provides the information the following focus points for comparison:

- *Searches on Google* indicate the global brand awareness of the respective company. This analysis considered the most well-known brands in the industry
- *Number of employees on LinkedIn* means the number of people on this business-focused social network who indicated their employer as the company in question. As most employees in the tech sector use LinkedIn, this gives quite a reliable estimate of the headcount of a company. Smaller companies can be considered startups, while larger ones have already become scaleups.
- Understanding the *country of origin* can be useful, as born-global companies are more common in smaller countries with a limited domestic market (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015, p. 10).
- *Localized ads* mean that it was possible to find ads on Google in local languages targeted to Germany, France, or Spain (or, if the website is localized for other countries/languages, then ads in those languages as well. It is not possible to detect all the ads that a company is running, and also ad situation can change quickly, therefore this information is not 100% reliable.
- *Localized website* means if there are any other language versions of the website besides English (all companies have an English website). Information is actual in November 2021.

The results of the comparison show that most companies in the industry do not localize their marketing or do it to a very little extent. It also seems that companies start localization with the website and try ads in other languages only after that. Also, they do localized ads in languages that they have on their website, which is understandable, as having ads in local languages leading to an English website can result in a bad user experience.

Another point worth noting is that a few companies that do some content and ad localization are some of the largest in this sample in terms of headcount. For example, the only company that does both ad and website localization in more than one language is Fivetran, and it has the largest headcount in the sample. With over 500 employees, it isn't a startup anymore. This confirms the viewpoint that a tech company starts with

having everything in English but considers marketing localization when it reaches a certain point in its growth.

On the other hand, the country of origin does not seem to have a large impact on localization decisions. The companies established in a large English country, such as the United States, seem to consider localization, while companies established in small non-English speaking countries seem to not necessarily do it.

As can be concluded from this comparison against competitors, as marketing localization is not common in the industry, it can mean that localization can become a competitive advantage, and there can be an untouched opportunity in localization. On the other hand, as the company is already present in many markets using English, this wouldn't necessarily mean entering new markets but rather looking for new opportunities in the existing markets.

3.4 Key Findings from the Current State Analysis

The case company is a B2B SaaS provider and can be defined as a born-global company, as it has been active worldwide since the very beginning. The company has experienced rapid growth and is considered one of the market leaders in the industry.

The product of the case company is offered only in English, as well as most marketing communications have been in English, too. Localization hasn't been a priority for marketing, as the company has been able to grow really fast without it, and it would have added unnecessary complexity. All fast-growing companies have limited resources and in-house expertise, however, it would be possible to find resources for localization if it would be prioritized.

One of the reasons why localization was not a priority has been the relative homogeneity of the customers. There do not seem to be many regional differences in the way they use the product. Also, they are used to consuming information in English, as well as using tools that are also in English.

Analysis of the competitors has shown that most of them do not localize their marketing as well. It seems that they start considering localized after they grow to a certain

threshold. However, they start with one or two key markets, and the decision needs to be made about them.

Based on these findings, the main weaknesses that will be focused on in the next steps of this research are as follows:

1. Understanding at which point a born-global startup should start considering marketing localization.
2. Understanding differences between customers in different countries and regions.
3. Choosing which countries to prioritize for localization.

Next, the study will explore available knowledge and best practice so that to address these gaps.

4 Existing Knowledge and Best Practice of Marketing of a Born-Global Company

4.1 A Born-Global Company and Its Marketing

There can be different reasons companies decide to expand internationally or multiple forces that move them to do so. The drivers could be as diverse as related to the market conditions, cost structure, government regulations, or competitive landscape. According to Yip's globalization network, these can include market drivers, cost drivers, government drivers, and competitive drivers (Yip & Hult, 2012).

Whatever the motives or driving forces, internationalization is normally seen as a gradual or step-by-step process. One of the most popular internationalization models, the so-called Uppsala stage model, divides the international expansion of a company into several stages. It assumes that "the companies begin their operations abroad in fairly nearby markets and only gradually penetrate more far-flung markets" (Hollensen, 2011, p. 74).

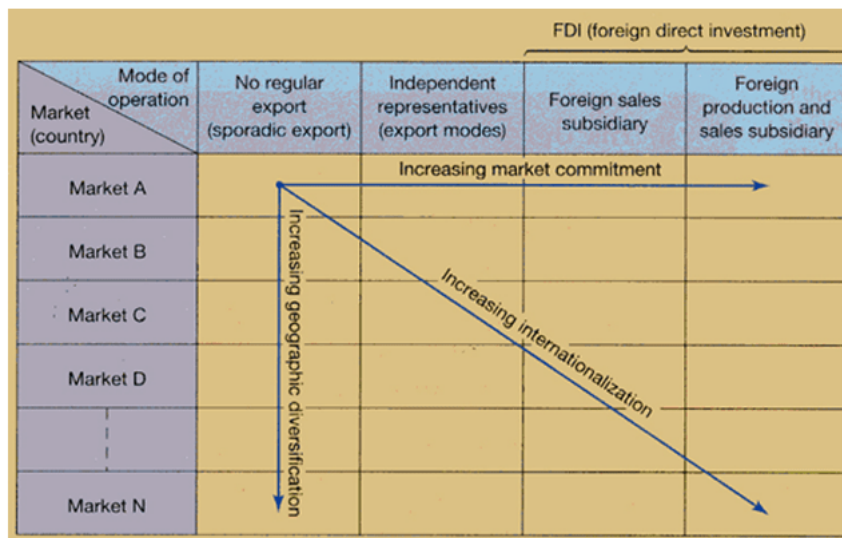


Figure 3. Uppsala Model of International Expansion (Hollensen, 2011, p. 75)

According to this model, international expansion happens on two axes (see Figure 3). One is based on the distance, i.e., first nearby countries, then farther. It has to be noted that besides physical distance, also so-called psychic distance can be important (Ghauri & Cateora, 2014, p.211). This means that some countries are geographically far away, but relatively close culturally, or in terms of the business environment, and therefore easy

to expand. Also, the opposite is true; geographically close markets can be difficult for expansion due to the above-mentioned reasons. Thus, even though Russia is geographically very close to the Nordics, it is generally a very difficult market for Nordic companies. On the other hand, for Western businesses, Australia is much easier than most Asian countries, as it is both its culture, legal system, and business environment are European in origin.

The second axis is market commitment. In a new market, companies first try the waters, do some sporadic sales using the local partner. If the early steps are successful, they become more and more established in a market. They would first engage in regular exports, then establish a sales subsidiary, and finally, a manufacturing subsidiary (Hollensen, 2011, p. 74).

However, a relatively recent phenomenon, which has been called a born-global firm, seems to contradict this established model described above. A *Born-global* firm is a company that “begins with a global view of their markets and develops the capabilities needed to achieve its international goal at or near the firm’s founding” (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004, p. 125). Such a company does not follow a traditional (Uppsala model) step-by-step international expansion process (home – neighboring countries – region – global) but expands to markets that are geographically far or serves customers globally wherever they are. Knight & Cavusgil (2004) also note that “there has been little research that attempts to explain why born globals internationalize early.

Born-global companies tend to have the following features:

A. Making use of digital distribution and marketing channels

Digitalization blurs geographical borders and makes it much easier to do business globally. The most common cases for born-global firms are software companies that do not have any physical distribution, and therefore can easily sell anywhere in the world (Tanev, 2012, p.6). Technology services and other technology companies can easily fit into this category as well. The companies that do have physical products can utilize digitalized distribution channels, such as marketplaces. It is also possible to expand globally by means of local partnerships. (Tanev, 2012, p.7)

B. Niche product

Born-global companies, in most cases, offer a niche product or a product with a relatively specific use case and a narrow customer base. This happens since their user needs are relatively homogenous, which means that their motivation to buy the product and the way they use it is relatively the same independent of their cultural differences. (Tanev, 2012, p.6)

In the case of a niche product, born-global companies are more likely to emerge in smaller countries where the domestic market for niche products would be insufficient and international expansion can be the only way to grow. (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015, p. 10) There are exceptions to this, however, such as Google.

C. No product diversification and localization

Born-global companies normally do not diversify their product range. They can have one or several key products they focus on. According to Kumar & Yakhlef (2014), due to the limited resources available for marketing, as well as homogenous customer needs, born-global companies normally do not do any product or marketing localization. The marketing message is not adapted for different markets, and in many cases, the product and the marketing message are only offered in one language (most often, English).

It can be concluded that these features also make the born-global companies special in terms of their marketing and the approaches to marketing localization.

4.2 Marketing Localization

There is a significant amount of literature about the competencies of a born-global firm, including its marketing. It has also been noted that marketing plays a critical role in the born-global firms, as well as their marketing is internationally oriented (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004, p. 129, 130). Therefore, a born-global company should have a global marketing strategy very early in its development. However, studies on the stage when a born-global firm grows and begins to localize its marketing are quite rare.

When a born-global firm is growing, it matures and acquires more diverse competencies, and its organizational structure becomes more complex. It might start behaving more like

a traditional MNC, and it can make a decision to localize its product or marketing message. Based on the common sense logic, this can happen on multiple levels:

1. *Sales materials* translated into different languages, and there are sales reps who can speak different languages.
2. *Marketing website* translated into different languages.
3. *Marketing website* translated into different languages and culturally adapted
4. *Product* localized into different languages
5. *Different pricing* for different countries
6. *Different marketing message* for different countries
7. *Different products* for different countries.

Importantly, this study is going to focus only on the marketing message localization, not touching the pricing (point 5 above) or product localization (points 4 and 7 above).

Additional opportunities that localization brings come from the assumption that potential customers in a country where English is not its first language would be more likely to buy if marketing is in their native language, compared to English. As the research above shows, many SaaS companies do not localize, therefore customers are used to products in English. In order to evaluate potential opportunities of localized marketing, we will consider English proficiency levels and the number of searches in local languages compared to English.

On the other hand, not everyone understands English. People who do not understand or have a poor command of English are less likely to respond to a marketing message in English. Hence in countries with low English proficiency levels, a relatively large market segment can be untapped by marketing localization. While, if the majority of the potential customers are already good at English, the untapped potential would be smaller.

4.3 Conceptual Framework of This Thesis

Based on the literature, the conceptual framework of this thesis is presented in Figure 4 and includes the following elements.



Figure 4. Conceptual Framework of This Thesis.

The thesis focuses on the concept of a *born-global company*. Its main defining point is international, or even global, operation since very early in its existence. This contradicts established international expansion theories. In order to achieve such a rapid expansion when the company is still in its early stages, it is common for born-global companies to utilize digital distribution and marketing channels, offer a high-quality niche product that fulfills specific and relative homogenous needs for the customers in different parts of the world. This also means that there is no product or marketing diversification or localization at that stage.

Another key concept of this thesis is *marketing localization*. As a born-globally company grows and develops its global marketing strategy, it will arrive at the need to start localizing its marketing message. However, there is very limited literature available about this stage of the development of a born-global company.

Therefore, a framework to help decision-making related to marketing localization was proposed in order to address the above-mentioned situation.

5 Building Proposal for the Marketing Localization Evaluation Framework for the Company

This section merges the results of the current state analysis and the conceptual framework towards the building of the Proposal using Data 1.

5.1 Overview of the Proposal Building Stage

After conducting the current state analysis, the scope of the problem and three main gaps were identified, which the case company needs to address before moving forward with its marketing localization. These gaps were identified by examining internal and publicly available company documents. However, the most important way was talking to the stakeholders and letting them share their views about the reasons for the current gaps in marketing localization.

Based on the identified gaps, the study skimmed through the available knowledge and best practice concerning the marketing localization for born-global companies. There was a limited amount of literature found about born-global companies and when they should start considering marketing localization. Therefore, the proposal was mainly built based on the author's co-creation with the key stakeholders when working at the case company.

The proposal building was done in two steps. The first step was done during the stakeholder interviews when they were asked when a born-global company should consider marketing localization, what should be the first steps, and how it should evaluate the opportunities. The stakeholders mentioned several preferred approaches and had both common and different points in their views. The second step related to the stakeholders' request to the thesis research to finalize the proposal by pulling together, formulating, and further polishing the proposed framework for marketing localization for a born-global company. The results of the proposal building are reported below.

5.2 Findings from Data 1

As part of Round 1 of data collection, key stakeholders were asked the following questions focused on addressing the major identified gaps related to the current state of marketing localization:

1. When should a case company consider marketing localization?
2. What should be the first steps?
3. How should it choose which markets to prioritize?

Answers to these questions were derived from the stakeholder co-creation and made the basis for the proposal.

First, as for “*Deciding when to consider localizing.*” According to CMO:

The company should consider localization of marketing when that localization is going to stimulate further growth.

More specifically, the Head of Bizdev made a suggestion that marketing localization will be important when the company starts to engage in specific activities, such as social media communities or events marketing.

Second, as for “*Marketing activities to be localized first.*” Two opposing views were expressed. According to CMO:

Sales materials would be the first point, and if that starts to work better, then we would go back up the funnel and start with advertising and landing pages.

On the other hand, Head of Performance marketing would go a different way:

I think most likely translating some key pages on our website, so maybe something like pricing, and having a few case studies in the native

language, and maybe having some product pages in the native language would make sense.

It has to be noted that the case company has already translated sales materials on an ad-hoc basis, therefore further localization should continue with the website and advertising.

Third, as for “*Evaluating opportunities in different markets.*” Multiple criteria to evaluate markets for localization were mentioned by the stakeholders. Those included the following:

1. Based on the current revenue amount
2. Based on potential revenue
3. Based on price sensitivity and conversion rates
4. Based on data maturity.
5. Based on the proficiency in English and being comfortable in using English.

These criteria are not mutually exclusive, therefore, a combination of multiple criteria could be used.

These inputs related to the gaps identified in the current state of the company’s marketing localization and utilized the concepts mentioned in Section 4. Table 4 draws together these inputs as a foundation for building the Proposal:

Table 4. Key stakeholder suggestions for Proposal building in relation to findings from the CSA and the Conceptual framework.

	<i>Weaknesses identified in Current State Analysis</i>	<i>Input from literature (CF)</i>	<i>Suggestions from stakeholders for the Proposal</i>
1	Understanding at which point a born-global startup should start considering marketing localization.	<p>Born-global company is international from day one. No localization or product diversification. Lack of resources for localization.</p> <p>Lack of literature on the subject of when a born-global company should start localizing.</p>	<p>The company should consider localization of marketing when that localization is going to stimulate further growth.</p> <p>Evaluate countries with the largest current or potential revenue, compare with potential costs.</p>
2	Understanding differences between customers in different countries and regions.	Customers' needs are relatively homogenous.	<p>Differences between customers in a different region can be based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on price sensitivity and conversion rates. - Based on data maturity. - Based on the proficiency in English and being comfortable in using English.

As seen from Table 4, the main dimensions on which countries should be evaluated for localization include: (a) how large the opportunity is and (b) how different the customers are. The opportunity size is related to potential sales revenue and potential localization costs. Differences in customer behavior are mainly expressed through their English proficiency and willingness to use English as opposed to their own language.

The proposal is built based on these identified dimensions.

5.3 Summary of the Initial Proposal

Evaluation of the business opportunities vested in marketing localization for born-global startups can be done in various dimensions, which, in turn, can be combined to give a total opportunity score.

First, one way to evaluate this would be by looking into *English proficiency levels* in different countries. This can be done by looking into English Proficiency Index (EPI) that is published by Education First annually. It is based on the English language test results in different countries and assigns a score to every country that allows grouping them into very high, high, moderate, low, and very low proficiency levels. (EF English Proficiency Index - A Ranking of 100 Countries and Regions by English Skills, 2020). For example, Scandinavian countries have a very high level of English proficiency.

However, using this type of evaluation has several limitations. First of all, not all countries are included. Second, if people are proficient in English, it does not necessarily mean that English is their preferred language for marketing communication. Lastly, there are differences in the usage of English in different situations and among different groups of people. For example, people might use English for work, but not in their everyday life. Also, highly educated white-collar workers, such as engineers, marketers, or analysts, are more likely to have higher English proficiency levels compared to the general population. Also, English is the common language for marketing and data-related information, and the use of English in these areas is often the standard.

The above reasons can mean that even in countries with lower English proficiency, business opportunities from the localization are more limited than it looks.

Second, another gauge is the number of *searches in the local language compared to English*. It can also help in understanding the opportunities of localization. Analyzing this for business-related search queries (in this case, data and marketing-related). This can help to understand if the local people prefer English or the local language for these terms, and also can help to evaluate untapped opportunities for marketing activities, such as paid search campaigns. It could help to estimate how much additional web traffic and conversions a company could get if it would target search queries in the local language besides English.

Search volumes for different queries in different countries can be evaluated using Google's keyword planner tool. This tool is part of the Google Ads platform and is used by search engine marketing practitioners for the planning of search engine advertising campaigns.

However, there are several limitations that need to be taken into consideration in relation to search queries. First, some words are directly loaned from English. For example, the word for "marketing" in many languages will be a direct loanword. However, it does not mean that the local people searching with these words are fluent in English. There are especially many English loanwords in the technology and business spheres. There can also be keywords that are not exact loans but are very similar to English words, especially in languages that are related to English.

Third, the evaluation can include *the localization difficulty*. This would include the difficulty of translation, cultural differences to take into account, as well as resources that the company already possesses. If the company already has people who can translate to a target audience, and linguistic and cultural differences from English are not significant, localization will be relatively simple. On the other hand, if it is a language that is difficult to find translators, as well as very different from English linguistically and culturally, localization difficulty will be significant. For example, localizing into German will be relatively easy (translators in-house, language relatively similar to English, only small cultural differences), but localizing into Laotian will be difficult (difficult to find translators, significant linguistic and cultural differences). Also, the need for cultural adaptation, in addition to translation, will increase the difficulty.

Finally, the *Current sales situation* needs to be carefully considered. This can be done on multiple levels. The easiest approach is to look at current sales volumes in specific countries. Additional parameters, such as opportunity close rate, can also be considered. Or, the priority given to a country by the sales team can be taken into account. In many ways, this consideration should be done first before diving into other factors, and therefore this factor should be placed first in the marketing localization framework.

Thus, the proposal for the case company for the marketing localization evaluation can be summarized as follows:

1. **Current sales situation.** This dimension evaluates the size of potential opportunity. This would be a score indicating how important this market is for the sales department based on historical sales data. This would use sales volume, opportunity close rate, and trial conversion rate.
2. **English proficiency.** This is one of the dimensions that evaluates the homogeneity of the customer's needs. The most recent EPI level in the country would indicate the size of a potential market not reached by current English marketing activities. Note that a higher English proficiency level would result in a low score and vice versa.
3. **Demand volume.** This is another dimension that looks into differences in customer behavior in different countries. Search volumes for relevant keywords compared to the same keywords in English in the same country. The keywords chosen should be translatable.
4. **Localization difficulty.** This dimension evaluates potential needs for resources in order to proceed. This score would take into consideration the ease of translation and cultural differences. The translation is easier if it can be done in-house, i.e., there are speakers of the target language in the company who can dedicate their time for the translation. Translation becomes more difficult if it needs to be outsourced and even more difficult if the language in question is a rare language for which it is difficult to find translators. The cultural difference indicated a need for cultural adaption of the content. It is small if the content can be just translated, without any cultural adaptation, and becomes more significant if many changes in the content are needed for cultural adaptation.

The above marketing localization evaluation framework is proposed in order to help in making marketing localization decisions at the case company. As the case company, as a born-global company, is already selling all around the world, the goal of localization at this stage is not entering new markets but capturing additional opportunities in the existing ones. Therefore, traditional market research and market entry approaches may not be fully fitting. As a trial attempt, a more simple approach can be tried, which was created in this proposal and presented above.

For more precise evaluation, this framework could also be calculated and scored based on each variable. When considering the results, the countries with a higher total score of the framework should be prioritized for marketing localization. The countries can also be grouped in tiers for longer-term planning.

However, it needs to be noted that the score-based planning - when it is done - should allow for flexibility, as the scores can change. For example, keyword volumes will most likely change over time, as will the sales volumes by country. Also, someone person speaking a new language can join the company. Also, the score has a level of subjectivity and, therefore, should not be treated as an absolute result.

If following this recommended way of scoring and evaluation, this framework can also be presented in a matrix form. As shown in Table 5, all possible countries for the localization would be added to the table and given scores, for example, on the 1-5 scale, for every dimension described above. 1 would mean the least opportunity, while five would mean the most opportunity. Then, the total score for a country can be calculated, and countries with the highest scores can be considered for a marketing localization project.

Table 5. Marketing Localization Matrix (Proposal).

Country	Sales situation	English proficiency	Demand volume	Localization difficulty
Country 1				
Country 2				
Country 3				

Summing up, this approach to marketing localization evaluation has a number of distinct benefits. As the goal is to discover additional opportunities, the company does not need to create a completely new marketing strategy for different countries at this point. Rather, it should apply its global strategy to a local market. One of the reasons for the fast global growth of the company is because the customer's needs around the world are relatively homogenous. If this would not be the case, the company most likely could not be global from its very beginning, as it would not have the resources for building different marketing strategies for different countries. This means that the company does not need to focus on different branding or value proposition for different countries. These can come at a later stage, especially if the current localization activities would reveal that there actually

are differences in customers' needs in different regions, or if the company will consider building country or region-specific products.

After the evaluation of marketing localization opportunities is done according to this framework, the company can map out its marketing funnel and start localizing from the top of the funnel, testing and evaluating along the way.

Next section will present the results from the validation of this framework.

6 Validation of the Proposal

This section reports on the results of the validation stage and points to further developments to the initial Proposal. At the end of this section, the implementation plan is presented.

6.1 Overview of the Validation Stage

Validation was performed in two steps. First, the framework was tested with the actual data. The countries chosen for the initial test included France, Germany, and Brazil. The results of the test are presented in Table 6. Second, the stakeholders' feedback is collected.

6.2 Developments to the Proposal (based on Data Collection 2)

First, from testing the proposed framework with actual data, the following results were obtained.

Before the test calculations, the following variables were selected and set. (A) *the sales situation* score was set based on the fact that these countries are in the top 10 countries by sales volumes, but none of them is in the 1st spot. Next, (B) *the English proficiency* score was selected based on EPI level: Very high – 1, high – 2, poor – 4. Next, (C), *the demand volume* was the most difficult dimension to set and evaluate. It was done by choosing a set of industry keywords and comparing search volumes in English versus in the native language for these terms. A higher share of native language meant a higher score. Finally, (D) *localization difficulty* was evaluated based on the availability of localization resources, as well as cultural and linguistic differences.

The calculation tables are given in Appendix 2. Table 7 below shows the summary of the results.

Table 6. Framework validation.

Country	Sales situation	English proficiency	Demand volume	Localization difficulty	Total score
France	4	2	4	4	14
Germany	4	1	3	5	13
Brazil	4	4	2	4	14

It seems that all three countries had relatively similar results, and the results of France and Brazil are the same. This means that all three countries chosen are relatively important for localization. In order to test the framework and see more varied results, a country that is obviously less important should have been chosen.

On the other hand, an interesting relationship between English proficiency and demand volume has been observed. In general, English seems to be used more often in data and business-related conversations, compared to the overall English proficiency levels. However, the relationship between English proficiency and demand volume (search volumes for relevant terms in native languages) doesn't always seem to be linear. Thus, Brazil has poorer English proficiency in general but a higher amount of English searches for business and data terms, which France has better English proficiency, but more searches in the local language.

This means that to make a decision, there are three ways to proceed:

- If there are sufficient resources, start localizing both for France and Brazil.
- If general English proficiency is prioritized (for example, wider targeted marketing is planned), start localizing for Brazil.
- If the demand volume is prioritized (for narrower, niche-targeted marketing), start localizing for France.

Second, the validation focused on gathering stakeholders' feedback. The stakeholders provided both positive and negative feedback about the proposal. In general, the reception was good, and it was mentioned that the approach might work. However, some of the potential issues and suggestions for improvement are as follows:

- This framework is very case-specific and suitable for B2B; however, it will most likely not be suitable for B2C.
- The framework should consider product-market fit in the target market.
- Some languages are used in multiple countries, therefore choosing such a language might have some additional consequences.
- Choosing a market based on current revenue might pose a risk of losing out on the potential that we are not aware of.
- The dimensions should be weighed. For example, English proficiency and demand volume should have a higher weight compared to two other dimensions. This would allow us to look at the English proficiency of a target user base.

This way, the framework can be used at a case company, but several adjustments, as well as assumptions about the application scope, would need to be made. Therefore, an implementation plan has been drawn up.

6.3 Implementation Plan

Based on the testing results, as well as the stakeholder feedback, it was decided that the framework could be applied at the case company for evaluation of opportunities for marketing localization. However, some assumptions about the framework, as well as improvements, need to be made. The assumptions are as follows:

- The framework can be used for B2B SaaS born-global companies. It might not be suitable for other company types.
- The framework should consider complexity when the same language is spoken in more than one country.

Improvements to the proposal are as follows:

- Dimensions should be assigned weights according to their relative importance.
- Better way to evaluate the demand volumes can be explored.

The implementation plan has been created with a goal to start marketing localization within a one-year timeframe. It is presented in table 7.

Table 7. Implementation plan.

Step No.	Description	Estimated completion by	Responsible Person
1	Update the framework with the weighting of the dimensions and better demand volume evaluation	Jan 2022	
2	Framework documentation	Feb 2022	
3	Large scale testing: Use the framework to evaluate the top 15 non-English speaking countries based on the sales volumes. Choose three countries to focus on	Apr 2022	
4	Localization plan for country 1 – decide on the content to be localized	May 2022	
5	Localized content and ads for country 1 are live.	June 2022	
6	Evaluation of the results and incremental value	Sep 2022	
7	Same as steps 4-6 for countries 2 and 3	Sep – Dec 2022	

7 Conclusions

This section contains the executive summary and the conclusion of the thesis.

7.1 Executive Summary

This thesis focused on a born-global company and its marketing. It explored additional business opportunities related to marketing localization. The case company is a born-global B2B SaaS company that has experienced fast growth, however, it has not done any marketing localization so far. The goal of the thesis was to build a framework that would help the case company to make a decision about countries where to start marketing localization.

This thesis was carried out as an applied research project. It focused mostly on the data collection and analysis of qualitative data, however, some elements of quantitative data were used as well. The main data sources were interviews with the stakeholders of the case company, as well as the internal and publicly available information.

The study identified the reasons the case company did not do marketing localization, and one of the main reasons was the fact that it was able to grow fast without localizing. On the other hand, the case company should consider marketing localization, as there are further growth opportunities related to it. Other findings to consider in relation to marketing localization included homogenous customer needs and resource constraints. Therefore, the decision to try marketing localization should be based on potential rewards and costs, as well as evaluation of features that would characterize potential customers and sales opportunities in these new markets. Such features include the English proficiency level of the target audience and their demand for products of the case company, as well as the level of difficulty of marketing localization for the case company.

Based on these findings, as well as suggestions from available knowledge and best practice, the proposal for the marketing localization evaluation framework was built. The framework evaluates potential countries/markets for marketing localization based on four dimensions. These include their sales situation, the English proficiency level of the local population, their demand volume, and localization difficulty for the case company. Every

dimension could be scored, and the total score can be calculated as a matrix, which should help to guide the localization decision.

The proposal was validated in two rounds of validation: first, by a test run, as well as the feedback by stakeholders. The stakeholders accepted this proposal for implementation at the case company adding their own suggestions and recommendations for implementation. The proposal has a relatively narrow application – for a B2B SaaS born-global company, but it can be implemented after making some final practical adjustments such as adding specific weights to the dimensions.

The implementation of this framework will help the case company to begin successful marketing localization by identifying opportunities and directing the resources to the right target markets. The novelty of this proposal relates to the fact that born-global companies often develop contrary to established business theories. However, as the world is becoming more and more connected, their importance will also grow. Therefore, more research on born-global companies would need to consider marketing localization, and here, the proposal can be helpful as a starting point for their own investigation.

7.2 Thesis Evaluation

In general, the thesis has reached its initial objective as it managed to suggest a framework for marketing localization. It utilized both the literature and available public and internal data. In addition, the interviews gave very valuable insights that helped to build the proposal. However, there is room for improvement that other researchers, as well as business practitioners, should take into consideration when reading this thesis.

One challenge is that marketing-related topics easily become too wide in scope, and it is possible that the thesis could have been more focused on the specific context, born-global companies. It was necessary to narrow down the initial idea, but probably it could have been done better.

Another challenge was the lack of relevant literature and a small scale of data collection in the case company, as the size of the company is very small itself. As mentioned, there are a lot of publications about marketing strategies, a relatively limited amount of publications about born-global companies, but almost nothing relates directly to the

maturity of a born-global company when it starts to localize and diversify. The solution to this could have been in building better bridges between different types of literature and drawing inspiration from more generalized studies. As for the size of data collection in the case company, even though the interviews were good and reached their target, they could have been more in-depth and visionary, and more questions could have been asked. On the other hand, it is challenging to arrange a longer meeting with a stakeholder, such as CMO or Head of Business Development, but other researchers will hopefully take these limitations into account when doing their own research and do it better.

7.3 Closing Words

On a personal level, this thesis has been a very interesting and challenging project, and the result has been, in general, satisfactory. Born-global companies make a very interesting topic for research. On the one hand, the way these companies operate often runs contrary to established business theories. On the other hand, as the world becomes more and more connected, born-global businesses are going to be more and more common.

Therefore, more research on different facets and stages of development of born-global firms should soon come. Having better recipes for the management, operations, marketing of these companies could be very useful for future researchers and entrepreneurs.

Also, as born-global companies are very marketing-focused, their marketing strategy is very innovative, and having a fresh approach to that could help build more successful born-global brands.

Hopefully, this thesis can contribute to the above-mentioned developments.

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Appendix 1.

Interview questions

Interview questions, Data 1

Has the case company done any marketing localization in the past?

Why is it so?

Are resource constraints the main reason?

Are the customers homogenous around the world?

When should the case company start considering marketing localization?

What should it begin with, and how should it choose the market to prioritize?

Interview questions, Data 2

What do you think about the framework?

Will it work?

What are potential issues with it?

Appendix 2.

Demand Volume Calculation

Note that if the total score is lower, it means that the opportunity is less.

Search volumes in Germany

German kw	Monthly searches	English kw	Monthly searches	Coeff.	+/-	Result
Zielseite	40	landing page	12100	303	-1	-303
Suchmaschinenoptimierung	9900	search engine optimization	2400	4	1	4
Umrechnungskurse	5400	conversion rates	12100	2	-1	-2
Benutzererfahrung	140	user experience	6600	47	-1	-47
Markenbekanntheit	390	brand awareness	1900	5	-1	-5
Suchmaschinenmarketing	1600	search engine marketing	12100	8	-1	-8
Suchmaschine	49500	search engine	4400	11	1	11
maschinelles Lernen	3600	machine learning	18100	5	-1	-5
Datensee	20	data lake	5400	270	-1	-270
relationale Datenbank	5400	relational database	1300	4	1	4
Datenintegration	480	data integration	1600	3	-1	-3
Datenmarkt	40	data mart	1900	48	-1	-48
Kundenakquisitionskosten	10	customer acquisition costs	880	88	-1	-88
Business Intelligence-Tool	720	business intelligence tool	210	3	1	3
Data Warehouse-Architektur	210	data warehouse architecture	260	1	-1	-1
total score						-756

Search volumes in France

French kw	Monthly searches	English kw	Monthly searches	Coeff.	+/-	Result
page de destination	110	landing page	12100	110	-1	-110
planificateur de mots clés	210	keyword planner	4400	21	-1	-21
marketing des médias sociaux	170	social media marketing	1000	6	-1	-6
outil de mots clés	20	keyword tool	2900	145	-1	-145
optimisation du moteur de recherche	20	search engine optimization	1600	80	-1	-80
taux de conversion	4400	conversion rates	880	5	1	5
expérience utilisateur	1600	user experience	1000	2	1	2
recherche de mots clés	260	keyword research	210	1	1	1
notoriété de la marque	90	brand awareness	880	10	-1	-10
moteur de recherche	74000	search engine	1900	39	1	39
apprentissage automatique	720	machine learning	14800	21	-1	-21
entrepôt de données	480	data warehouse	4400	9	-1	-9
lac de données	170	data lake	5400	32	-1	-32
base de données relationnelle	1600	relational database	390	4	1	4
intégration de données	140	data integration	720	5	-1	-5
outils bi	590	bi tools	260	2	1	2
pipeline de données	90	data pipeline	480	5	-1	-5
coûts d'acquisition de clients	880	customer acquisition costs	50	18	1	18
modèle relationnel	880	relational model	50	18	1	18
total score						-355

Search volumes in Brazil

Portuguese kw	Monthly searches	English kw	Monthly searches	Coeff.	+/-	Result
página de destino	30	landing page	49500	1650	-1	-1650
planejador de palavras-chave	9900	keyword planner	6600	2	1	2
marketing de mídia social	70	social media marketing	2400	34	-1	-34
ferramenta de palavra-chave	170	keyword tool	12100	71	-1	-71
taxas de conversão	2400	conversion rates	390	6	1	6
experiência de usuário	110	user experience	3600	33	-1	-33
pesquisa de palavras-chave	720	keyword research	260	3	1	3
notoriedade da marca	10	brand awareness	1900	190	-1	-190
marketing de busca	390	search engine marketing	480	1	-1	-1
motor de busca	880	search engine	1600	2	-1	-2
aprendizado de máquina	1900	machine learning	27100	14	-1	-14
armazém de dados	260	data warehouse	9900	38	-1	-38
lago de dados	50	data lake	8100	162	-1	-162
integração de dados	260	data integration	320	1	-1	-1
ferramentas bi	590	bi tools	140	4	1	4
pipeline de dados	390	data pipeline	480	1	-1	-1
arquitetura de data warehouse	20	data warehouse architecture	50	3	-1	-3
modelo relacional	2900	relational model	50	58	1	58
total score						-2128