



## **Attracting International Audience Through Website's Multilingualism.**

Finnish e-retailing industry.

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>This thesis studies the role of multilingualism in e-retailing business in terms of its impact on the international web-traffic and how it could attract a foreign audience to the commercial website (webshop). The global growth in e-commerce and the development of the internet capabilities in online business enables the international possibilities for the e-retailing, however, in Finland, the e-retailers' investments in foreign languages and in serving foreign markets is still the lowest in comparison with other Nordic countries which might cut their chances of being visible and exposed to international audience. In that context, the literature review focused mainly on the role of multilingualism in the internationalization of the online business, especially in e-retailing, while the empirical research was conducted through three different approaches: First by conducting a correlation study to examine the relationship between the percentage of the international traffic and the number of available languages in the tested webshops, the second approach was implementing an experiment to test the impact of the added foreign languages to a Finnish webshop on attracting international traffic (possible causal relationship), and the third approach was conducting two expert-interviews to provide a deep understanding and explanation of how and why such results were acquired. Based on the research findings, it could be argued that the multilingualization of the webshop is the foundation required to internationalize the Finnish e-retailing business, while other online and offline marketing techniques need to be built on that to drive the right and the most relevant audience for an e-retailing business. Therefore, (after detecting the abroad business opportunity) adding the local language(s) of the target foreign market(s) to an existed webshop is the basis for e-retailers to make their business visible at that market(s) and to attract a relevant international audience for the business.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, Web (online) Shopping has continually replaced some of the in-store shopping for a variety of reasons: easy to access, wider options, instance comparison, entertainment, the development of internet penetration, 24 hours availability, saving shopping time and sometimes saving money and effort, plus to the nature of the internet and its characteristics, “The internet has become a powerful force that influences shopping behavior” (McGaughey and Mason 1998). Furthermore (as illustrated in figure 1), e-commerce is estimated to grow by more than 20% a year to as much as 3.5\$-4\$ trillion by 2020 (eMarketer 2016, Statista 2018). These estimations offer enormous opportunities for e-retailers, especially those who are able to handle foreign business activities and cross-border sales.

In Finland, Finnish e-retailers are still able to utilize their webshops in a way that can lead to the generation of more cross-border sales by adopting internationalization (Localization) strategy, exploring new markets and targeting foreign potential e-shoppers. “*It’s important to consider the international customers when using online retail platforms: adapting the language, payment, or pricing options can make the site more appealing to the target audience*” British Chamber of Commerce Annual Conference at 2016 – DHL Express UK 2016.

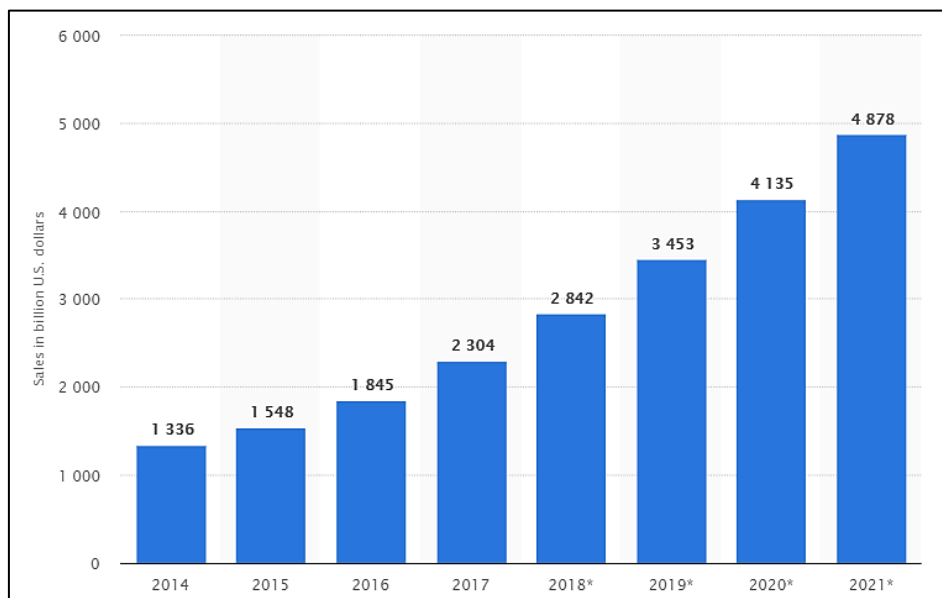


Figure 1: Global retail e-commerce sales (2014-2021) in US dollar. Sources: Statista 2018.

In this information and digitalization age, reaching an international audience in foreign markets through the internet has become easier than ever, and opportunities like never before exist in operating e-commerce websites (Bryan Heathman 2014). But usually, before entering new markets, companies tend to first localize their business (Curry, J.E. 1999), which is also applicable to e-retailing industry as well. Therefore, localizing the webshop might attract foreign visitors and increase the web-traffic, which is an important indicator of business opportunities and the effectiveness of the online business in attracting foreign potential customers.

For any website, when it comes to localization process there are two main aspects: lingual and cultural (country) adaptation. However, whereas most of the current research is focused on cultural adaptation, (Shneor 2011) in his doctoral dissertation based on empirical research indicates that translation (lingual aspect) in online business is perceived as the most important aspect of website localization which might be easier to implement than the country adaptation as the latter is assumed to require greater congruence with local preferences.

Moreover, another study by (Mari Taanonen 2014) argued that language choice and translation quality are more relevant to understanding website localization than analysis of cultural adaptation, since translation, language quality and technical suitability of the language are the key drivers of successful localization in the context of digital services. Therefore, this study will focus mainly on the role of lingual aspect of the commercial website (webshop) on web-traffic and on reaching a foreign audience in e-retailing business.

## **1.1 Background**

Generally, Finland might be a challenging market for e-retailing business due to the low population density, geographical aspects, and language barrier. To the rest of the Nordic region, Finland lags somewhat behind its neighboring countries when it comes to e-commerce. *“Only half of all Finnish consumers aged 18–79 years shops online each month; a much lower percentage than in the rest of the region. Nonetheless, almost half of those who shop online make purchases from abroad”* (postnord.fi – 2017).

In Finland, where there is a high level of innovation and a well-developed online services industry, the multilingual web-shop might bring significant benefits to Finnish e-retailers by helping them explore the international (cross-border) opportunities and reaching e-shoppers with different lingual-preferences (locally or abroad). *“84% of international consumers say they’re more likely to buy from a website with product information in their own language”* (Common Sense Advisory 2014).

Yet, initiating a multilingual webshop is not a simple issue, it might not be an easy decision for many e-retailers due to the different factors that need to be taken into consideration such as: the technical capability, the website content, the cost-benefits assessment, the business nature, available resources, identifying the audience, defining the target market(s) and the language preference of the targeted foreign customers. However, Finnish e-retailers need to make some changes on the operational and strategic level to improve the future of the e-retailing industry, as so far, Finnish companies do not benefit from the opportunities of internationalization in e-commerce compared with other Nordic companies (Digibaromitri 2016).

According to Digibaromitri 2015, Finnish Webshops investment in hosting foreign languages is clearly less than other Nordic countries. On average, Finnish web-stores have only one foreign language option (most often it is English), while there are on average six for the Swedish, and seven for Danish Web-Shops. Also, Finnish Web-Shops investment in serving foreign customers is lesser than the other Nordic countries. For instance, Danish Web-Shops are delivering orders to 11 different countries on average, while the Finnish Web-Shops are delivering orders for only three countries on average, whereas only 8% of Finnish e-commerce companies actually have cross-border sales. Nonetheless, for any e-retailer, before being able to deliver orders to foreign markets, the ability to reach and communicate with those abroad customers has to be owned first.

However, using a unilingual website (webshop) by a Finnish e-retailer will create various limitations in terms of:

- Marketing the business to potential customers with different lingual preferences.
- The international awareness and online visibility.
- Reaching foreign market(s) by attracting international audience & e-shoppers.



- International viral marketing.

Despite the technological development in Web Content Management Systems (CMS) and in the localization and translation process, the cost-benefit assessment and the clear strategy to target foreign markets are still critical factors to adopt multilingual website (webshop) in e-retailing business.

## **1.2 Research Gap**

The overwhelming power of the Internet and the passion for internationalization enables corporate websites to generate great impact on the growth and the success of the e-retailing business in cross-border sales. Nonetheless, there are quite a few studies on website localization (Costales 2012, Nauert 2007). However, it has been noticed that for any e-retailing company, when targeting new markets, the lingual and cultural adaptation greatly affect the success of the business in that market. In that context, many literature and academic papers studied the role of cultural adaptation in the internationalization of e-commerce and in the website localization process, but there is limited research that has studied the role of the multilingualization of the website (as an independent element) on attracting international audience or on reaching out to foreign markets particularly in the e-retailing industry.

## **1.3 The aim of the study**

This study aims to examine the impact of website's multilingualism (as a part of the website localization process) on the international online visibility and on attracting an international audience for e-retailing business.

*Research Questions:*

1. What is the impact of multilingualism on the webshop visibility in international markets?
2. How can multilingual websites support e-retailers attract an international audience?

## 1.4 Limitation

The multilingualism in the e-retailing industry has several impacts on different levels when it comes to business internationalization. However, this study was focused on the role of webshop multilingualism on reaching foreign and broader audiences and therefore, it does not discuss the impact on the level of customer engagement, the new customer acquisition, the sales value or the repeating pattern of web-visiting.

The empirical part of this study focused on the case of Finnish e-retailing companies, which is the home country, therefore, the results may not be applicable to the e-retailing industry in a different home country.

From the time perspective, the research has been conducted in 5 months and the data of the empirical part has been collected within 2 months, and that might affect the volume of the collected data especially from the conducted experiment.

There is the geo-linguistic aspect of the conducted experiment. The author selected German and English languages to test the impact of the added language to a Finnish webshop on the web analytics data, however, the results might differ when different languages are used.

## 1.5 Methodology

Based on the aim of the study, the empirical data was collected through three main approaches: -

- 1- Correlation study: 27 Finnish webshops has been selected randomly and segmented into three segments based on the lingual aspect: unilingual, bilingual and multi-lingual websites, then, the selected webshops have been tested by SimilarWeb platform to compare the web-traffic data among the different segments to test the possible relationship (under real conditions) between the web-analytics, (especially the international web-traffic) and the lingual aspects of the related webshops.
- 2- Experimental (Causality) research: Causal research has been used widely in a business environment to quantify the impact of the independent variable on

the other dependent variable(s) and to explain and verify if the relation exists (ex. Determine the impact of the change in product price on the sales value). Therefore, in this study, the causal research was conducted to test the impact of the added languages to a webshop on the size of the audiences and the traffic on the webshop. Practically, two demo Finnish web-shops were designed identically except (in terms of textual content and keywords) that one was a unilingual webshop (only Finnish), while the other one was a multilingual webshop (Finnish, English, and German), then measuring tools (google analytics) were used to capture the impact (the difference) on web-traffic data (locally and internationally) between both sites.

- 3- **Expert Interview:** An in-depth expert interview was conducted with two experts in the web-localization and multilingualization firms (Lionbridge and AACGLOBAL) to generate a deeper understanding of the role of the multilingual website on the visibility and the internationalization in e-retailing business. These two companies were selected because they have been considered as pioneers in the field of business internationalization and website localization.

## 1.6 Definition of Key Concepts:

- **Content Management System (CMS):** The platform or a set of programs designed to create, edit and manage the digital content remotely and simply such as Web Content Management System (WCMS) which supports the management of the Website content.
- **Conversion Rate (in e-commerce):** The ratio of total e-commerce transactions to total visits on a website (the rate of the buyers to the total web visitors).
- **Customer Acquisition Cost/Ratio (CAC):** The marketing cost of convincing a potential customer to make a purchase, and the acquisition ratio can be calculated by dividing the total costs associated with customers acquisition by the new total acquired customers during the period when those costs were spent.
- **E-retailing/E-tailing:** This is the process of selling the retail goods or services electronically through the internet, it is a form of the e-commerce in B2C context.
- **Geo-targeting:** This is a practice of determining the geolocation of a website visitor and delivering specific content or website version to that visitor based on the visitor's browsing location such as country, region or Zip code.

- **International/Multilingual SEO:** This is a special type of SEO that is designed for a multilingual website to enhance the website's rank on the searching results (SERP) in different countries and/or with different languages.
- **Internationalization:** “*The process of increasing involvement in international operations*” (Welch and Luostarinen 1988, p.36).
- **Multilingualization:** This is the process of adapting something to/into multiple languages. It is a major part of the localization process in website internationalization.
- **Organic Traffic:** These are visitors who visit the website through the organic search (by using a search engine) due to the relevancy of the keyword, also called by marketers as “unpaid traffic”.
- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** This is the process of optimizing the visibility and the appearance of a website in the searching results (SERP) when using the web search engines by a searcher.
- **Search Engine Result Page (SERP):** This is a web-page that shows and ranks a list of web links by the web search engine as results in response to the used keywords by the searcher. The page may also contain other results such as advertisements.
- **Web-Traffic:** This is the visitors to the website during a period of time, it is measure by visitors or sessions and it is an indication of the effectiveness of a website on attracting audiences.
- **Website Localization/Internationalization:** This is the process of adapting a website into a form where they are linguistically, functionally and culturally understandable by audiences in countries outside of their home market (with different sociolinguistic contexts) However, other scholars and experts have coined another term for that process such as “e-localization, web content localization, or website translation” (Jimenez-Crespo 2013).

## 2 MULTILINGUALIZATION AND THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF E-RETAILING BUSINESS

This part of the study aims to create an understanding of the role of the language in the internationalization process of the online business. It discusses the value of foreign languages in the e-retailing industry and how website localization (multilingualization) might be considered as an internationalization paradigm in online business due to its impact on the information search (via internet), and on the website/webshop attractiveness from the international audience perspective.

### 2.1 Language and the internet in international business

In the international business context, many companies are dealing “*with language issues and cope with it on daily bases, but how they do that remains largely absent from literature*” (Rebecca Piekkari 2015). According to the Cambridge Dictionary, business was defined as the process of selling and buying goods and services, and it referred to the entities (individuals or companies) that implement or support that process. Therefore, to have a business, there should be an interaction between two or more parties and that kind of interaction requires an effective communicating system that enables the exchange of information between those parties with language usually being a key aspect of any business communication process. “*Language is a general, abstract aspect and a sum of organization skills and principles; it is the system that governs any concrete act of communication*” (Anca Sirbu 2015). However, it is clear that for any act of a sale or purchase there should some form of communication. “*If I am selling to you, then I speak your language*” (Willy Brandt, Former German Chancellor, in Hagen, 2011).

Historically, businesses were more developed when the involved parties were able to use the same language, “*it has been estimated that if two countries have a common language, trade between them will be 42% greater than two countries that do not*” (The Economist 2012). Therefore, as a way to develop and expand the business in the international context, a company may either try to find a market with no communication obstacles and lingual barriers, or to adopt a multilingual strategy (based on the targeted market/s) to turn out the lingual barrier into competitive advantage. “*the importance of multilingual competence in the contemporary business environment is so palpable and so universally*

*recognized as to be a cliché*” (Shanahan 1996, p. 315). A study was done by (Pohjanen-Bernardi and Talja 2011) in Finnish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), six firms out of 21 reported that a lack of language skills caused a loss of international business by preventing entry to foreign markets. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (the globalization era with the explosion of digital information flow) to explore the business opportunities out of the home country, companies can’t keep focusing mainly on customers with a common language preference, especially when it comes to international business potential and the expansion possibilities into foreign markets.

### **2.1.1 Lingual adaptation in foreign business operation**

The digitalization and the web-based services opened the gates for the information age where the business has shifted from the traditional industry of mass production to the age where an economy is now based on information technology. In that context, the ability to sharing information, having a proper communication channel and understanding the customers’ needs become more valuable.

It is not all about who is selling the better product anymore, now it is more about companies that are able to serve the needs of their customers in a better way. *“Rolls-Royce no longer sells jet engines; it sells the hours that each engine is actually thrusting an airplane through the sky”* (Economist 2012). However, a common language is the key to sharing information and enabling the companies to adopt a customer-centric approach when serving their customers.

Nowadays, companies are following different strategies to cope with the lingual barriers in international business context. Some companies are seeing the development of English language such as Lingua-Franca an effective way to deal with language issues in multinational business operation. However, many studies showed that the diversity of the language remains a major issue in international business where English as a Lingua-Franca can’t solve it, especially in the fields of sales negotiation, customer feedback, or in establishing an external relationship in foreign markets. For instance, in the Finnish business context, *“the simple reality is that Finnish firms can’t rely on the use of Finnish beyond their home market”* (Rebecca Piekkari 2015).

In general, whereas psychic distance was defined as “*the factors preventing or disturbing the flow of information between the company’s home country and the target foreign market*” (Rebecca Piekkari 2015), and as the cultural distance is a major aspect of the psychic distance, the language was treated as an element of the cultural factors and is embedded in the cultural box, and that makes it the ‘*forgotten factor*’ (Rebecca Piekkari 2015).

Certainly, language is a key aspect of culture, yet, the impact of language may exceed the cultural frame, “*language has an importance above and beyond the-embeddedness-in-culture perspective*” (Rebecca Piekkari 2015). Therefore, sometimes language might be under-valued by being embedded within the cultural aspects, in business in general and in e-commerce specifically. It might be more beneficial to consider language as a separate element when targeting international customers. However, that doesn’t mean the companies need not focus on the cultural-distance when operating (or plan to) in foreign markets, but it means that the importance of lingual adaptation needs to be highlighted by adopting a clear strategy to handle the lingual differences, as that could add a competitive advantage for the business in foreign markets. As (Turnbull & Welham 1985) argued that the foreign-language competence “*facilitates business internationalization through influencing the relationship between the seller and the buyer, help in built a trust, create a major impact on the atmosphere that shape the relationship, and it gives a psychological advantage in term of selling*”, furthermore, some studies indicate that companies which adapted to client’s language achieved higher export performance, for instance, “*French companies using German when corresponding with German companies sold more than those who operated in English*” within the same market (Rebecca Piekkari 2015, p. 168).

### **2.1.2 Internet and global shopping**

The development of internet services does not just impact online businesses and e-commerce, it also has a significant impact on the shopping behavior as it makes shopping more unavoidable “*You almost have to make an effort to avoid shopping today. Stay out of stores and museums and theme restaurants and you still are face-to-face with Internet shopping twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week*” (Paco Underhill 2009). With the internet, the shopping options are not limited to a local market or distance aspect, it becomes global, wherever an internet connection is available, interaction is possible, and

communication is enabled. Therefore, that distinguishes the business strategy between retailers and e-retailers as PostNord Sweden's retail analyst Carin Blom states:

*“Today's consumers are becoming increasingly global in their buying behavior and it's important to bring it along when you develop your e-commerce strategy. There is a great potential for online retailers to reach further than the local markets”*

And, to adopt such an international e-retailing strategy, the lingual adaptation in online stores (webshops) is an essential element that needs to be implemented.

## **2.2 The value of foreign language(s) in e-retailing business interactions**

Nowadays, the digital economy has *“encouraged businesses to develop their activities beyond their internal markets”* (Kempster and Cope 2010). The growth in global e-commerce and the increase in international online business-activities are examples of the impact of digitalization on business transactions (commercially and financially) towards foreign markets. Some statistics show that there are one million new online users logging onto the internet for the first time every day while it is expected that by 2030 the whole world will be online (CAPITA 2014). This results in the speeding up of the internationalization process especially for e-commerce, where *“the internationalization of a business be concerned with foreign markets and how to enter them”* (Carroll and Shabana 2010). Also, the how-to-enter in that context is getting easier with the internet, as the cross-border shopping habits are parallel to the general digital shopping behaviors. However, by 2020, the forecasted worldwide-retail e-commerce sales will top \$4 trillion, which is nearly 15% of all retail sales worldwide (eMarketer.com, 2016) and the opportunities to drive sales through e-commerce continue growing exponentially (CAPITA, 2014). Yet, when it comes to online shopping (in comparison with traditional retailing), it is noticed that *“the online consumers behave differently and also have more sophisticated needs”* (Sahar Karimi 2013).

According to (Koufaris 2003), online shoppers are not only buyers but also internet users but are based on the nature of the online environment (Sahar Karimi 2013). In e-retailing, traditional purchase-related factors (e.g. price and offers), are not the only factors that



attract an online audience and influence their purchase decision, but, it is also about how the customer interacts with the webshop and how that interaction fits with their expectation.

Due to the internet characteristics where the web became able to provide a highly dynamic place (platform) for the interactive communications between business-and-user and between user-and-user (Sahar Karimi 2013). Therefore, according to (Rebecca Piekkari 2015) establishing reliable communication channels with potential e-shoppers and the digital audience in foreign markets can significantly expanding the business network and enable cross-border sales for e-retailing companies through new direct and indirect connections (As illustrated in Figure -2).

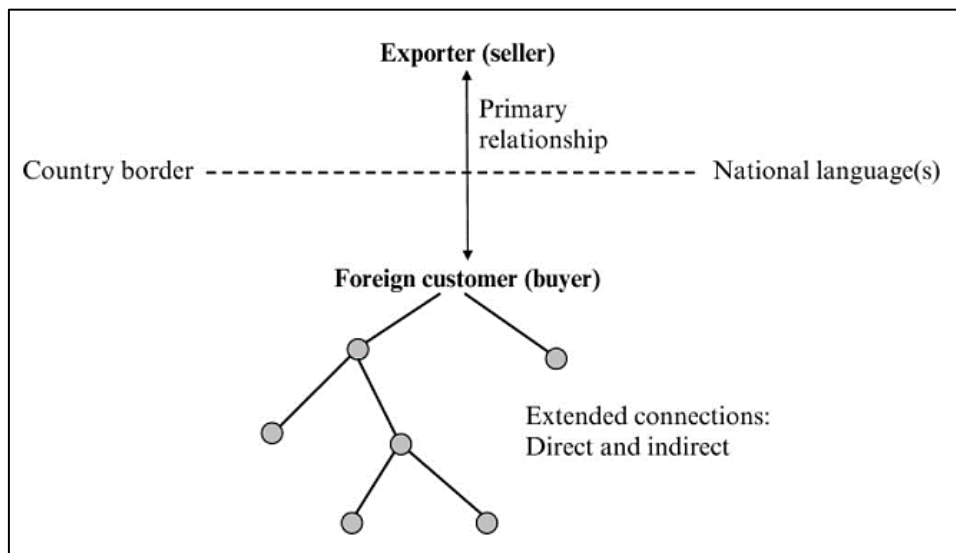


Figure 2: Network and Extended Connection. Source: (Rebecca Piekkari 2015)

Recently, many studies have shown that online shopping has become a phenomenon that crossed some classic business boundaries such as geographical borders, age, gender, and some traditional market classifications. Therefore, studies indicate that in web-based companies, it is not the country's borders that need to be crossed to have an international business, but it is the languages that enable communication with foreign consumers via the Internet (due to the borderless digital communication). For instance, a study conducted in 2014 regarding online shopping indicates that *“there are not any significant cultural differences between the German and Finnish market, except the language”* (Keisu 2014).

E-retailers (as well as those companies who rely on their online presence to generate sales across the world) need a strategy to face the challenge of reaching the foreign online-audience and meeting their expectations and from that perspective, the local languages might be an essential part of that strategy. E-retailing is not only about selling, it is more about creating a comprehensive online shopping experience. *“A localized website, with good content in the customer’s language, is key to ensure the customer is continually engaged with your brand and your products and services.”* (Connor Robinson, Solution Architect for Lionbridge, 2015).

Recently, the growth of the information flow in local languages on the internet has affected the value of language diversity in the online world. In 2012, 21 languages constituted 90% of the total web-pages content, but after only two years, 23 languages now cover 90% of the total web-pages (Capita Translation and Interpreting, 2014).

In e-retailing context, selecting and defining the required languages for a webshop depends on many factors like the type of offered products (nature of the business), the language of the home country, the ability to operate in foreign markets and the foreign opportunities for e-commerce. For instance, while the Chinese constitute 22% of the online population, they represent only 7% of the world’s online spending power; meanwhile, the Japanese represent 4% of the world’s online population, but they represent 10% of the world’s online spending power (CAPITA, 2014).

According to a survey conducted by Flash Eurobarometer, in almost all EU Member States, a majority of respondents (61% of the men and 51% of the women) said that they used a language other than their own when searching for buying products (e.g. online shopping) or services (e.g. tourism) on the Internet. Yet, other studies indicate that *“72% of the consumers are more frequently willing to buy something online when service is offered in their own language, and the majority of European customers even mentions that language of service is more important than price”*. (Ecommerce wiki & Common Sense Advisory). Furthermore, according to a survey conducted by the European Commission and the Common Sense Advisory, 42% of online customers never purchase from a website other than in their own language. Nonetheless, (Batson and Ford 2011) mentioned that *“we rarely see websites supporting foreign languages even the language(s) of the neighboring countries”*. And that is true even in a traditional exporting business.

(Clarke, 2000. P82) conducted a survey with some Irish companies involved in exportation business about the importance of foreign language skills for the success of their business. 86% of the respondents stated that it is (very important, important or essential) to be able to understand the language of foreign customers, yet two third of them were operating their business entirely in English.

In 2013 The Eurobarometer Flash report indicated that 51% of EU retail customers were using the e-commerce channel for retail shopping. In 2015, the Flash survey report showed that 59% of the EU retailers say they are confident selling online while half of those were confident to sell online only to consumers from their own country, which means that only 30% of the total EU retailers can make cross-border online sales (foreign online sales to at least one another EU country). *“Unsurprisingly, the more languages retail company sells in, the more likely they are to be selling in at least one other EU country: 15% of those who only sell in their own language sell to at least one other EU country, compared to 55% of those that sell in 4 or more languages”* (Flash Eurobarometer 2015). Nonetheless, based on the same survey, the cost of adopting multilingual webshop (extra costs arising from language differences) represented 27% of the mentioned obstacles regarding creating a cross-border trade development for e-retailing business, according to European e-retailers.

However, we notice that there are two significant gaps in the internationalization of the e-retailing business, the first in the perceived value of the local language in foreign markets between the sellers (e-retailers) and the customers (e-shoppers) and the second between what the companies said about the value of foreign language competence in cross-border business versus what they actually do (Rebecca Piekkari 2015). This might explain why *“40% of European e-commerce companies turn away international orders”* according to META (the Multilingual Europe Technology Alliance, 2015).

### **2.3 The marketing role of the multilingual Webshop**

Since the transition into the Big-Data age (a global interconnection network for sharing and delivering data and information), internet has emerged as a useful marketing tool to serve as a platform for domestic and international transactions (Yi Jin Lima 2016). As e-retailing is a web-based business that depends majorly on the internet and the web-shops

to generating commerce, the internet becomes the best marketing medium for such an industry.

According to studies by (Barnes & Vidgen 2002) and (Yi Jin Lima 2016), they argued that Online Shopping-Behavior (SB) is influenced mainly by three factors: (1) Subjective Norm (SN): social pressure that has an impact on personal behavior; (2) Perceived Usefulness (PU): degree of belief on how the use of a certain kind of system or technology will improve performance. (3) Website Usability (WU): how the customer perceives the website as easy to learn and to operate: easy to navigate: easy to use, and that how the website interactive is clear and understandable. However, according to (Koufaris 2003), the interactive features of websites had an impact on the psychological processes of a purchase. Therefore, Website Usability (WU) is considered as a remarkable and essential factor from the marketers' perspective as it contains the interactive features and it is completely manageable by the e-retailing company.

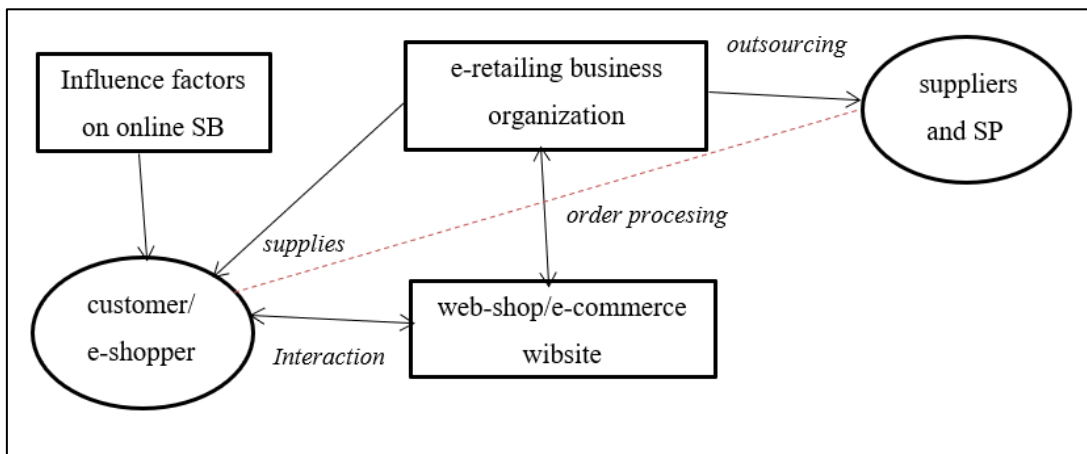


Figure 3: e-retailing simple business model.

With the enormous opportunities of cross-border sales, most e-retailers attempt to invest in outsourcing and building multi-cooperation channels with different suppliers and Service Providers (SP) (e.g. supply of goods, IT infrastructure, payment and financial service, logistics and so on. - see figure 3), yet, that could be the easy part in contrast with marketing the webshop to the target audience.

However, according to Jill Novac (the marketing professor at Texas A&M University-USA), there are 7 elements (7 C's) which drive commerce to the website and attract more traffic on a webshop or a commerce website and those elements are linked mainly to WU:

1. Context: the website theme, layout and the ease to read and navigate through it. In brief, how the visual-design of the website helps the customers to get the required information easily.
2. Commerce: The ability to make a purchase/payment and make a return (when required) in a safe and a reliable way through the website.
3. Connection: The useful links to other web-pages and this depends on the nature of the business.
4. Communication: The availability of communication channels between the company and its customers (emails, chat box, social media, phone and so on)
5. Content: This is about the information and message the company wants to be observed by the online audience through the website: “text, SEO approach, keywords, graphics or other types of media within the website” to increase the attractiveness, the web traffic, or to convince the online audience to make a purchase.
6. Community: The ability to enable customers to communicate with each other either online (e.g. live chat) or offline (e.g. rates and comments).
7. Customization: This is offering a personalized web-page to the customers based on their location, interests, language or other related preferences, and that could be done automatically or by the customer himself.

By keenly analyzing the seven webshop's (commerce website) marketing elements, it would be clear that the lingual aspect is involved significantly in all or most of them, as in the online world, the language has an impact on both interactive and non-interactive marketing communication (Mari Taanonen 2014).

The marketing (or international marketing) is at the forefront of internationalizing a firm's interaction with foreign entities (customer, institutions, suppliers and so on), and the importance of the role of language in the effectiveness on international marketing activities was confirmed in wide range of studies while the lack of relevant language skills in a foreign market can affect “*the ability of a firm's representative to interact and to collect relevant market information*” (Rebecca Piekkari 2015, p. 157). Furthermore, Rebecca

argues that dealing with language differences comes in the earlier stages when a company attempts to target an international market or foreign customers.

Nonetheless, mastering and handling the communications in the local language of the foreign market require specific resources and it could be costly for many small e-retailers, therefore, some e-retailers may ignore multilingual inquiries because of the cost. Yet, based on some studies, many companies indicated that adding more languages to websites is not the hard part, but the follow-up and being able to respond in a full-scale to foreign clients in the relevant local language(s) requires more resources and additional cost which some small companies can't handle. However, regarding webshop multilingualization, as the multilingual strategy is recommended in the earlier stages of the internationalization process (as mentioned earlier), developing a multilingual web-shop can still be valuable for an e-retailer (even before having fully localized communication channels like social media, chat box, call center) to understand the market potential, market trend, customers' needs and preferences. This will support any further international marketing activities in related foreign markets when needed and in that context, website localization strategy might be an effective starting point to internationalize an online business.

## **2.4 Website localization and internationalizing the online business**

In the online business, it could be argued that the internationalization is mainly a localization process based on specific characteristics of the target foreign market(s). However, translation and multilingualization are considered an effective tool to transfer information worldwide across different languages and cultures by creating multilingual forms of communication while website localization is one of these forms that are involved in international internet communication. However, in online business, some studies show that companies tend to target the international market directly through a webshop rather than finding a local intermediate seller/distributor.

*“Internet-based firms start online international market service through the establishment of a global shop (fully operational webshop), rather than through indirect sales, or a series of market-specific dedicated websites”* (Shneor, Rotem and Flåten, Bjørn-Tore, 2008).

According to (Yunker 2002, p. 17), website localization is the process of “*modifying a website for a specific locale*”. And that modification process deals with different aspects of the website content (e.g. colors, numbering, date format, graphics, digital media, texts, and currency), which can be classified into Lingual and Cultural features. In the lingual context, there are different levels (options) of localization: monolingual, bilingual and multilingual site and (Schewe 2001) argues that the choice between these options depends on the language policy or marketing strategy of the organization communicating through the site. In the cultural aspect, there also are levels of cultural adaptation in the features of the commercial website which depend on different factors such as the business context (e.g. B2B or B2C) or the nature of the business. For instance, international banks and airline companies tend to have a multilingual site without any modification on the other website features and aspects, while some other businesses (e.g. international fashion companies) tend to have a highly localized website (translations plus country-specific/cultural adaptations).

#### **2.4.1 Webshop Internationalization**

*“Retailers looking to expand their businesses online to international markets should consider the unique mindsets and shopping preferences of consumers in each country”* (Craig Reed, Vice President of Global Ecommerce - Pitney Bowes, 2014).

Recently, studies find that *“website localization and cultural customization can lead to improved navigation, increased usage, and better consumer attitudes toward the site; it can even yield higher purchase intentions”* (Nitish Singh 2012, p. 163). Even though there are many aspects related to webshop localization (see figure 4). Yet, those e-retailers who aim to internationalize their businesses, they still can implement a cost-efficient localization by reducing the cultural aspects of the standard webshop format (original version) or by making sure that the site *“has as few culture-specific features as possible, since those are the elements most likely to cause problems downstream”* when targeting foreign markets (Anthony Pym 2009).

In that context, it could be argued that the international site (webshop) is supposed to be neutral (culturally), so any further localization process will be easier to implement by adding different themes, lingual or other special webshop elements (through the Content

Management System-CMS) which can make the webshop more attractive for a certain foreign audience (see figure – 4).

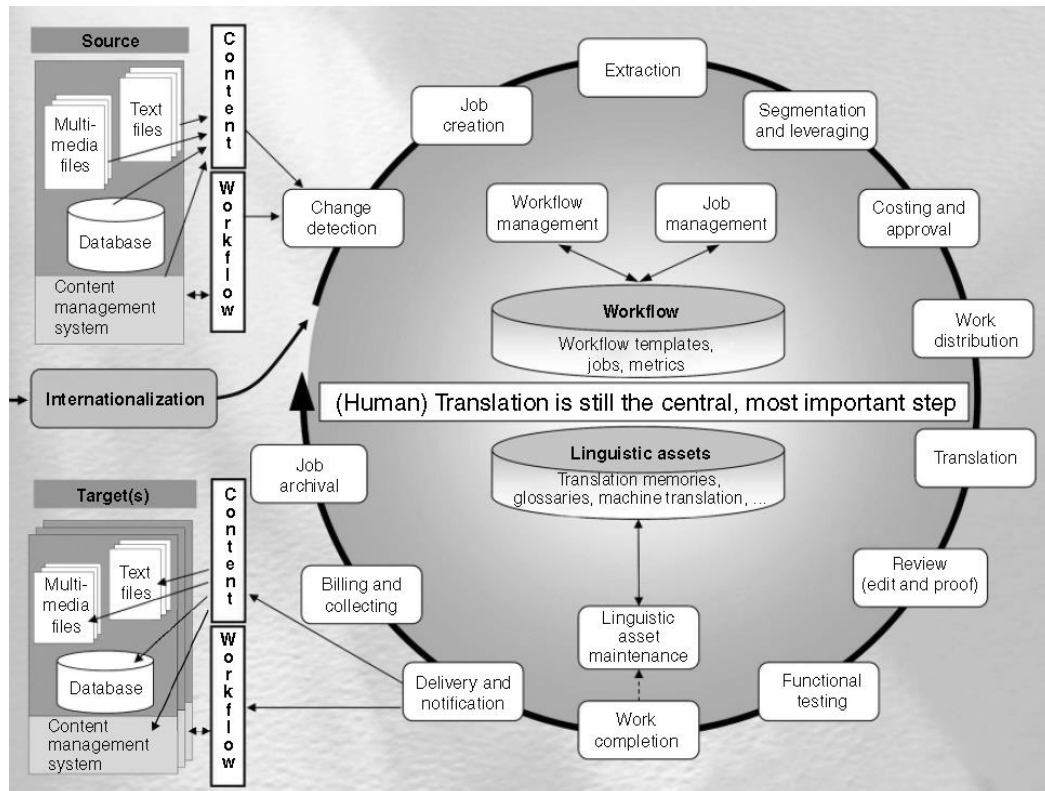


Figure 4: Web Localization Workflow. Source: Nitish Singh 2012 – p. 218

## 2.4.2 Content management system for international website

As shown in figure – 4, the Content Management System (CMS) plays an essential role in localization workflow. CMS is a simple tool used by authorized staff to manage the website content and structure. “CMSs can be interfaced with various localization tools and are able to exchange data. It helps companies manage their web content in the most granular form so that content can be reused in a wide variety of formats and outputs” (Nitish Singh, 2012. P 215). Nowadays, the development in CMSs enables e-retailers to utilize the webshop and optimize its features (e.g. offering customized pages for certain users, managing multiple versions of the sit and eliminating the possible errors) in an easy way. In that context, CMS is a powerful website internationalization tool when used to develop a multilingual or a number of international sites for the webshop.



According to (Nitish Singh 2012), CMS can help companies “leverage, share, separate, and localize various website building blocks such as content, templates, layout, and pages for developing multiple international sites”.

CMS contains two main elements:

1. Content Management Application (CMA), which helps to develop or change the content of the website.
2. Content Delivery Application (CDA), which helps to update or change the aspects of a website’s structure.

However, CMS considers the main connector that links the website administrators and designers with the external supportive entities (e.g. translation system, Language Service Provider (LSP), marketers or other localization tools) to develop and manage the site and offer a differentiated version of the webshop based on the lingual preferences (or other customization preferences) of the target audience. CMS could also be integrated with LSP’s management system to track changes in any language and apply the required translation for other versions automatically when required (see figure - 5).

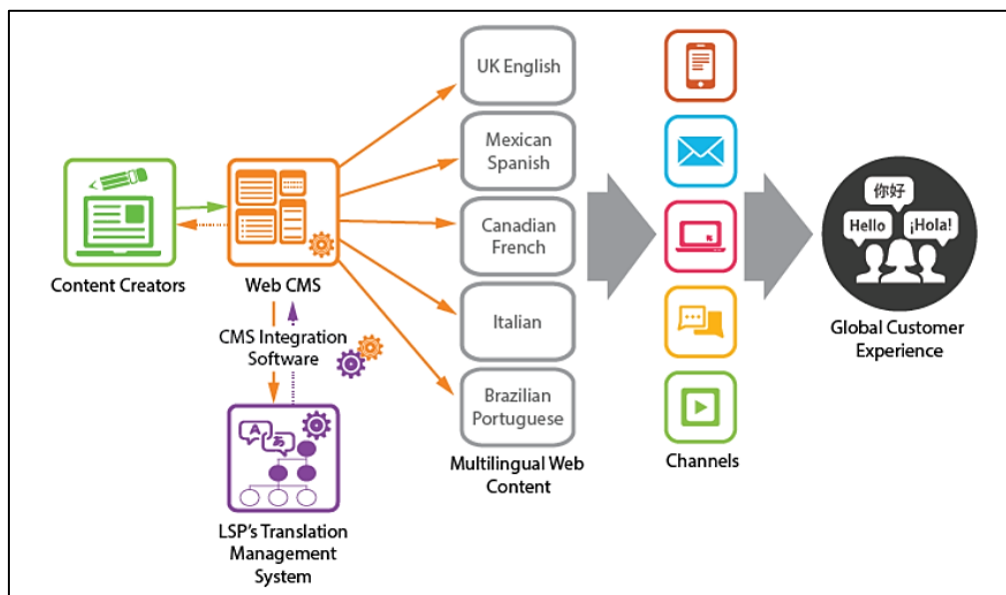


Figure 5: CMS Integrated Method. Source: Lionbridge.com - Lionbridge @2018

## 2.5 Information search in online shopping

Nowadays, the development of internet technology has directly affected online shopping and that has increased overall online sales revenue due to the increase in the number of consumers are engaging in e-retailing interactions (Sahar Karimi 2013). According to (Kotler and Armstrong 2010, p. 152-153), the purchasing decision process consists of five elements: “*problem/need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior*” and in that context, the Internet has a major impact on the second element (Information Search) of the purchasing (shopping) process. Based on the features of Internet Search Engines, online shopping has been simplified by offering consumers diverse ways of convenience to search for information, evaluate different options, get access to the rates and reviews of previous e-shoppers and spread the e-WOM (word of mouth), and those aspects have influenced the consumer online shopping behavior.

Recently, the utilization of the SEO (search engine optimization) increased competition among e-retailers (due to the accessibility of all e-retailers). Therefore, many e-retailers are continuously analysing the used Keywords and investing in Ad Words in order to have better rankings on the Search Engine Results Page (SERP) and to increase the visibility of their webshop through the SEM (Search Engine Marketing) techniques either by organic search (non-paid traffic) or other paid traffic approaches. Nonetheless, that situation reduces the power of e-retailers in such a highly competitive marketplace where the Internet purchase conversion rate is considerably low (Sahar Karimi 2013).

According to (Sproule and Archer 2000), in e-commerce, the consumer information search has three stages based on the consumer’s familiarity with the product/brand or the selling place (frequency of purchase in another word). (See figure – 6)

1. *Concept-forming*: collecting relevant information to form an initial understanding regarding a certain brand, company, service or product.
2. *Brand information*: Stage when an infrequent customer is getting familiar with a certain brand, company or product but aim to create comparisons with his purchasing criteria.

3. *Situational information*: The stage where the consumer seeks specific information about what he/she aims to buy.

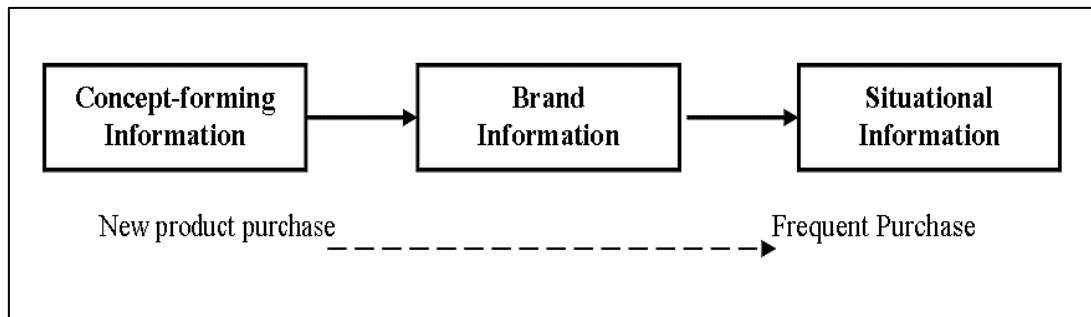


Figure 6: Stages of information search (Source: Sproule and Archer 2000)

However, it could be argued that SEO has a valuable marketing role and especially in the first stage of online information search (concept-forming information). This can directly support e-retailers when targeting new markets by attracting new international audiences who have little or no information about the webshop/e-retailing company itself or what it is offering.

## 2.6 SEO as an international marketing tool in e-retailing

According to the empirical study by (Shneor 2011), there are three main types of online promotions: Push (e.g. commissions and discounts), Pull (e.g. Search Engine Marketing), and Viral/Community efforts (e.g. managing Brand Fan Community on social media). This study showed that the "Pull" type of promotions has the highest importance level in comparison with other types, and most often it is associated with search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM), and that could be linked with the nature of online shoppers where they tend to be more powerful and demanding in their shopping process, "as they get the control of the situation and actively "pull" the information they need rather than waiting for marketers to "push" it" (Sahar Karimi 2013). Arguably, marketers are focusing more on the SEO because it is considered as a cost-efficient Inbound-marketing tool.

Inbound-marketing could be defined as a process of attracting audience/customers and generating traffic to a commercial website through four main aspects (SEO, Blogging, Content publishing, and Social Media), so it is a data-driven approach that starts with targeting strangers and aims at turning them into loyal customers.

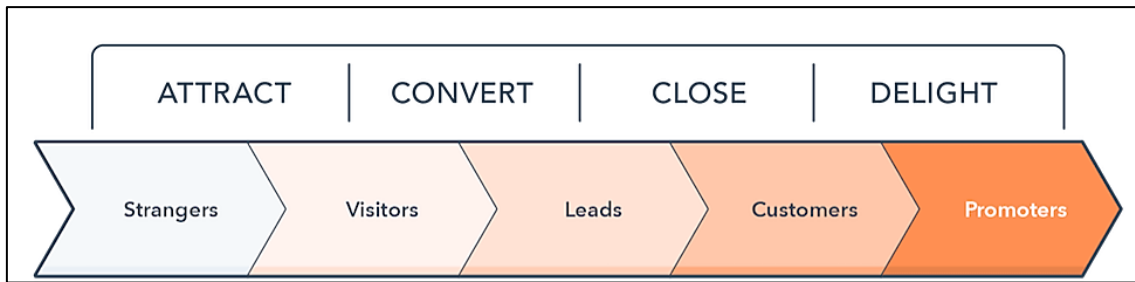


Figure 7: Inbound Marketing Methodology (Source: Hubspot.com @2018)

According to (MarketingDive.com, 2016 & iMPactbnd.com, 2017), the marketing expenses on SEO will keep increasing, whereas a study shows that “*marketers see SEO as becoming more effective, with 82% reporting effectiveness is on the rise and 42% of this group stating effectiveness is increasing significantly*”.

Accordingly, search engines increase competition among e-retailers to be at a higher rank on the SERP as studies show that 90% of all clicks on SERP goes on the first page while 7 out of 8 of those clicks go to organic search results (not on the Ads links). However, whereas there are many factors involved in creating a successful SEO and influencing the ranking on the SERP (e.g. website content, Keywords, Lingual or Geo-targeting, Internal/External links, social media integration, website technical aspects), to internationalize the online business and to enhance its ranking in the SERP (online presence) at foreign markets, a local SEO only will not be effective, therefore, Geo-Targeting and international (Multilingual) SEO approach has to be applied.

### 2.6.1 International (Multilingual) SEO

The process of International SEO is involved with different country-specific search engines so that search engine of each local country assigns the relevant web-page(s) higher ranks and make them more accessible to their target customers (Nitish 2012). Therefore, the SEO for an international and multilingual website is not the same as for a local SEO. An International SEO “*is a mix of techniques and practices that need to be implemented in order to meet the varied criteria of global search engines*” (Nitish 2012). However, according to (Nitish, 2012), several issues need to be taken into considerations when targeting international audience and they are including the following:

1. The diversity of the website languages, the multilingual content and the keywords are essential to optimize the international site as the local search engines mainly refer to local sites in local languages used in the search terms.
2. Understanding the used search engine in each market. Although Google might be seen as the main search engine used globally, yet, several markets might have different preferences (e.g. Yandex in Russia and Baidu in China).
3. It is important to optimize the site based on the local hosting and the country-code top-level domains (e.g. "de" for Germany, "fi" for Finland) or the country-language sub code (e.g. "ca-fr" Canada-French language, and "ca-en" Canada-English).
4. Generating a referral traffic by adding the site's link to other local websites, that links could improve and significantly impact the rank of the website in a specific region.
5. Duplicated contents with relevant foreign language of a website are better than using the same language (even if it was English) for each local market in terms of the visibility in SERP.
6. The technical specification of the Website (e.g. URL, Tags, sitemap) impacts the International SEO.
7. Skills and capabilities of the responsible staff, the international SEO requires a special kind of skills to be implemented probably and to handle any further update on the content or the used keywords by taking into consideration the searching pattern at that certain foreign market.

Yet, many small online businesses struggle to grasp the full potential of SEO. However, the optimization of any international/multilingual webshop is a direct result of a proper implementation which is concentrated mainly on two aspects: -

- Offering a translated (local) content and keywords according to the preference of the foreign target market through the web localization process.
- Assuring that the local pages of the international webshop are easy to find and navigate on the search engines in the target foreign markets.

And in that context, Geo-Targeting techniques are considered a reliable approach to drive the right content of the website to the right audience based on right region/location.

### 2.6.2 International Geo-Targeting

Generally, Location/Place is one of the main marketing aspects which is also applicable for e-retailing. But, unlike the traditional retailing where marketers pay more attention to the locations where the products would be offered to customers, in e-retailing it is more about the location of those potential customers and the target audience.

*“The single biggest mistake on your site is not having a clear international geo-targeting strategy in place and telling the search engines which web pages should be shown in which markets,”* McIlraith says, (Lionbridge’s Director of Global Search & Marketing).

In multilingual/multinational website, the International Geo-Targeting could be implemented either in the Manual Way: where the international website shows a universal version of the site for the visitor that asks him to select the location and then that selection will lead the visitor to the local site (e.g. Fedex.com), or in Automated Way: where a certain version of the website would be shown to the searcher or the site visitor based on his location through different means (e.g. Zip code, IP address, country domain code) and that could be done in different ways based on the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) and gTLD (Generic Top-Level Domain) structure.

However, based on the nature of the business, a company can decide which international geo-targeting approach to adopt, yet, for companies that depend on the rank of its commercial website to enhance the engagement with business audience and target customers, it is strongly recommended to adopt the Automated approach and to select the right tools to implement it, and generally, this is the case in e-retailing. Amazon (for example) uses geo-targeting to deliver country-specific content without the need to actively select the country, nevertheless, adopting such an approach is risky because the company needs to handle the Region-Language combination correctly, otherwise, it might lead to offering the wrong content for the wrong audience. Still, Amazon enables the search engine to offer the right Canadian site (in French interface) for those French-Spoken Canadian (when they search for a certain product using French) rather than guiding them to the French Site, ([www.amazon.ca/?language=fr\\_CA](http://www.amazon.ca/?language=fr_CA) **instead of** [www.amazon.fr](http://www.amazon.fr)).

However, where there are different practices dealing with international Geo-Targeting, Google Webmaster states that the most effective way is the <hreflang> tag, because that tag tells the search engines that there is a local version of the site and tries to show the right content in the right region for the right audience. For instance, by using this Tag ([https://fr.zalando.be/?\\_rfl=nl](https://fr.zalando.be/?_rfl=nl)), Zalando enables the search engine to show the French page of the Belgian version to Belgian customers who speak French (rather than the Dutch page).

Arguably, how the site is optimized (locally or internationally), is majorly about the ability of the site to target the business audience, guide them to the most relevant information, and to optimize the interaction with the website visitors to ensure the best possible shopping experience. Yet, there are different web analytics tools which could be used to monitor and improve the optimization process in local and international markets.

## 2.7 Web-Analytics Framework

In web-based companies, web-analytics is a powerful tool to monitor the business performance as it helps to set marketing KPIs or goals (e.g. the number of visitors and leads, customer acquisition and conversion rate) and subsequently monitoring and measuring the results. According to Web Analytics Association (WAA), Web-Analytics is “*the collection, measurement, analysis and documenting of internet data for the purpose of optimizing and understanding the usage of the web*”.



Figure 8: Web-Analytics Process Alejandra Leon (2015) “Retail web Analytics @Slideshar.net”

However, Web-Analytics has become an essential element of digital marketing especially in e-commerce where web-analytics support marketers measuring the interaction level with the target audience through the commercial site or the webshop, and then implementing the required improvement on the site and testing the result (see Figure 8).

Nonetheless, to implement a proper strategy of the web-analytics in an international context, the company needs to have a clear understanding of:

1. The proper sources and channels of the Web-Traffic.
2. The right Web-Metrics that need to be used.
3. How to use the data for results optimization.

## **2.8 Web-Analytics in international e-retailing**

In international e-retailing, marketers try to improve the interaction with the business audience in each target market, basically, by attracting the right audience, then turning them into leads and eventually to customers, and based on the website effectiveness, that process could be implemented in three stages:

1. **Visibility:** Increasing the relevant web-traffic (the total visits to a website/webshop)
2. **Awareness & Interest:** Improving the engagement with the target audience.
3. **Desire & Action:** Increasing the conversion rate (the ratio of total visits to total transactions)

In that context, web-analytics provides different tools that can indicate the effectiveness of the webshop in each particular stage (in the local and the foreign markets), and that helps the markets understand the strong and weak points of the website so as to take remedial action.

### **Web-Traffic/Website Visibility:**

Targeting international online audience depends on different online-marketing elements, which impact the web-traffic. Accordingly, the web-traffic metrics can measure the



website/webshop ability to generate more relevant visitors through the main indications (metrics) below:

- **Sessions:** They indicate the total number of visits to the website during a given time frame.
- **Traffic Source:** This indicates from which source the visitors find the link (paid search/ads, organic search, referral link, social media, and direct link).
- **Audience Segmentation Analysis:** This monitors the website effectiveness on targeting the right audience segment with the right content (landing page).
- **Click-Through-Rate (CTR):** This is the ratio of the total clicks to the total impression, which indicates the rate of the visitors who end up clicking on the website link out of the total internet users who saw the link on the certain places (e.g. SERP).

### **Engagement Level:**

In e-commerce, the engagement level is the second step in the interaction process with the business audience (the webshop visitors). At this stage, the web-analytics can help the retailer understand how visitors on the website behave and to measure the website/webshop effectiveness in increasing the engagement level with the business audience or turning them into business leads through the following metrics:

- **Bounce rate:** The ratio of the visitors who left the site after viewing one page to the total visitors, (the rate of the single-page session).
- **Time/page per session:** This refers to the time spent/number of viewed pages per session and it helps in understanding the users' onsite-behavior.
- **New/ Repeat and Return visitors:** These are metrics that help to understand the nature of the business audience and the visits repetition pattern.

However, where the low engagement level might lead to more one-time visits, the high engagement level might lead to a higher conversion rate.

## **Conversion Rate:**

According to (Paco Underhill 2009), when a shopper is in a store (physical or online store), that doesn't necessarily mean he will purchase something, and this where the retailer must convert the shopper into a customer.

Usually, the last step in the customer acquisition process is when a purchase decision is being made (where a visit ends with a transaction). However, on a global level, the average conversion rate in e-commerce is 3% while the Add-to-Cart Rate is about 10% (Monetate.com, 2017, Q4 report). Generally, there are many factors that might influence the conversion rate due to the fact that an online purchase decision might be interrupted at any stage (from the first click on the store link till the shopping-cart checkout) Therefore, the conversion rate is an effective metric that could enable e-retailers to measure how much visitors have been converted to customers (out of the total visitors) and to understand the online-shopping pattern of the business audience.

## **2.9 Summary**

In the traditional retailing business, when targeting a new market, a local set of operations and activities have to be managed in that foreign market, which unfortunately many small retailers can't afford to handle. However, in e-retailing, where most of that local operational activities can be outsourced (e.g. payment solution and shipping services), targeting new markets requires a strategy that focuses on creating a communication channel to enable the interaction with foreign audience (mainly through the website lingual adaptation), allocating the opportunity, and utilizing the SEO and internet geo-targeting tools to attract the right audience through the right website content.

Also, to monitor the performance of webshop internationally, web-analytics tools are used widely to set the goals and KPIs and then following the progress and applying the required actions when needed. Nonetheless, it could be argued that in e-retailing, the website multilingualization could be the initial approach to target foreign markets and attract an international audience with different lingual preferences.

### 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This part illustrates the applied methodology in this research from the theoretical and the practical aspect plus to the sources of the collected data, the validity and the reliability of the study. In that context, the theoretical framework aims to identify the reasons behind the research design and how it could be implemented, while the practical framework discusses the implementation process and how the different methods have been conducted.

#### 3.1 Theoretical framework

Based on the literature review, it could be assumed that multilingualism of the commercial website (webshop) presents a competitive advantage for e-retailers (as an international marketing tool) to support them in targeting related foreign markets and attracting international audiences with different language preferences different from the home country's language. However, to test that hypothesis and to answer the research questions, the mixed method (MM) approach has been used because it enables the use of whatever methodological tools are required to answer the research questions under study (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009).

Mixed method was defined as *“a type of research design in which qualitative and quantitative approaches are used to questions, research methods, data collection and analysis procedure, and/or interferences”* (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 7). Today, the mixed methodology is a natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 14). Yet, according to (Greene, J.C. 1989, p. 259), there are five reasons to conduct a mixed method research: (Triangulation, Complementarity, Initiation, Development, and Expansion). However, in this research, the rationale behind selecting the mixed method was *“Complementarity”*, which is generally used when *“seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method”* (Muskat & Blackman 2011).

In this study, the mixed method approach was based on two quantitative methodologies (Correlation study and experimental research) and one qualitative methodology (In-depth Experts Interview).

### 3.1.1 Correlation study

Correlation study is a quantitative research method where the research aims to determine or test a possible relationship between two or more variables through numerical data. It indicates if there is a relationship (or covariation) between the two variables (Janet Waters 2017). Furthermore, both correlation and causal research are widely used in testing a hypothesis.

In correlation study, *“When changes in one variable tend to be accompanied by specific changes in another, the two variables are said to covary (correlate)”* (Bordens & Abbott, 2011, p. 103) with the main indicator of correlation being the Correlation Coefficient “r”. Therefore, if the relationship exists, the correlation can either be positive (when variables change in the same direction,  $1 \geq r > 0$ ), or negative (when variables change in different directions,  $-1 \leq r < 0$ ), and when “r” gets closer to 0, that means the correlation is weakening and becoming less significant, accordingly, if “r” = 0 (or very close to 0), then the relationship does not exist or it is negligible, while if (“r” > + 0.5 or “r” < - 0.5) the relationship could be described as a strong “Positive or Negative” relationship respectively.

However, correlation doesn’t prove the causality (what variable influence the other) and it doesn’t specify the type the relationship due to two main reasons: The Third-Variable Problem (other possible variables may impact the relationship), and The Directionality Problem (the direct link of the impact among tested variables).

Nonetheless, correlation studies include close observations of the values of the related variables under real circumstances, and the data could be collected through tests, surveys, or by the use of archival data (Janet Waters 2017). Thus, in correlation study, the researcher does not need to attempt manipulating the variables but should just observe them (Bordens & Abbott 2011, p. 104). Furthermore, according to (Bordens & Abbott 2011) there are three different reasons to conduct a correlation study: -

1. Gathering Data in the Early Stages of Research.
2. The inability to Manipulate Variables.
3. Relating Naturally Occurring Variables.

However, the main reason in this research was Relating Naturally Occurring Variables to check “*how naturally occurring variables relate in the real world, where such information can be used to make useful predictions even if the reasons for the discovered relationships are not clear*” (Bordens & Abbott, 2011, p. 108).

### **3.1.2 Experimental (Causality) research**

Whereas both approaches (experimental and correlational research) allow the researcher to identify relationships among variables, they differ in the degree of control exerted over variables and in the ability to identify causal relationships (Bordens & Abbott 2011, p. 104). The experimental research (unlike the correlational research) incorporates a high degree of control over the variables of the study, and if designed and implemented properly, it enables the establishment of a causal relationship among the tested variables with a high level of evidence for single studies.

The aim of the Experimental Research is to examine the causality of the possible relationship between two or more variables where variables are being distinguished into dependent and independent variables, and in order to test the impact of the change in the independent variables on the dependent variable, according to (Bordens & Abbott 2011, p. 109), the experiment research needs to include two defining characteristics:

- Manipulation of one or more independent variables.
- Control over extraneous variables.

Under these two laboratory conditions and after manipulating the independent variables, the change in the dependent variables needs to be observed and recorded, and then a causal relationship will be considered to exist if the value of the dependent variable depends, at least to some extent, on the level of the independent variable (Bordens & Abbott 2011, p109). Despite the strength of the experimental research in identifying the causality relationship among tested variable, (Bordens & Abbott 2011) states that it also has some limitations mainly due to:

1. The difference between artificial and real conditions.
2. The incapability to manipulate the independent variables in some cases.

3. It cannot be applied sometimes due to ethical or technical reasons.
4. The difficulty of totally eliminate the influence of the extraneous (third) variables.

### 3.1.3 Experts interviews

*“Expert interviews are about a person’s special knowledge and experiences which result from the actions, responsibilities, obligations of the specific functional status within an organization/institution” (Littig & Vienna 2013).*

The expert interviews are used to give a deep understanding of the subject in question based on the knowledge and the experience of the interviewee (the expert in that field). According to (Littig & Vienna 2013), the expert is a rational term used by the researcher and associates with the research question when the interviewee has special expert knowledge that related to a special professional field. And since there are different reasons to conduct an expert Interview, yet, it would be more relevant when the research question focuses on technical or process related knowledge (Littig & Vienna 2013).

Where the interviews, in general, could be structured (formalized), semi-structured or unstructured, yet, according to (Libakova & Sertakova 2014), the expert interview is recommended to be semi-or-unstructured (where an interview guide might be used) to enable the interviewer going deep when required, and to enable the interviewee to reveal his knowledge with fewer restrictions or limits, as *“the purpose of the expert interview is to obtain additional unknown or reliable information, authoritative opinions serious and professional assessments of the research topic”* (Libakova & Sertakova 2014).

However, the expert interview approach has three main challenges: -

1. Fewer options to select the most relevant experts, then succeed in getting him involved.
2. The researcher and the interviewee need to share a common knowledge or scientific background to some extent.
3. It might require more time and resources to conduct compared with a normal in-depth interview.

Nonetheless, according to (Bogner, Littig & Menz 2009, Libakova & Sertakova 2014), the expert interview has a significant advantage over other types of interview due to the data reliability which is based on the interviewee’s qualifications, furthermore, in exploratory studies, the expert interview is “*a more efficient and concentrated method of gathering data than, for instance, participatory observation or systematic quantitative surveys*” (Bogner, Littig & Menz 2009, p. 2).

### 3.2 Practical framework

After collecting the secondary data, and based on the aim of the study, the research was conducted through three research approaches (Correlation study, Causal research, and In-depth Interviews). And as each approach might present diverse interrelated information, it was believed that the collected information will support the researcher to create a valid conclusion by integrating the results.

For instance, the correlation study provides information for the level of the correlation under real circumstances, yet, it can’t be used as a proof for the causality relationship. In contrast, the causal research provides a proof for the causality, yet, results might not be the same in real circumstances.

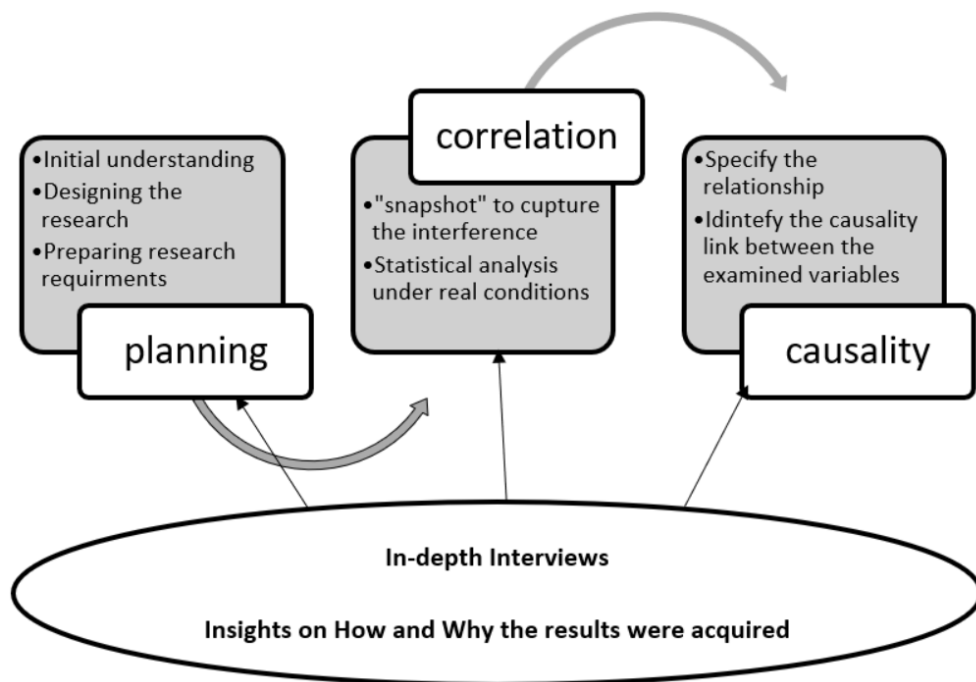


Figure 9: Research Framework

### 3.2.1 Correlation study

In this part, first, a sample of 27 different Finnish webshops has been selected in a random way (convenient selection/sample), and that sample was segmented into three segments base on available languages on each webshop.

- Unilingual webshops: The webshops support only Finnish language.
- Bilingual webshops: The webshops support Finnish and another language.
- Multilingual webshops: The webshops support more than one language in addition to the Finnish.

Then, those selected sites have been tested by using SimilarWeb platform<sup>1</sup> to collect traffic information (Number of visitors, CTR, the source of web-traffic, traffic geographical segmentation) for each webshop during Mar. 2018. And because the accuracy of the SimilarWeb data would get higher when the site has more traffic, one of the selection criteria for the Finnish webshops was: the site has a minimum 10K visitors as in average (from Dec. 2017 until Mar. 2018). After that, the data was classified under each segment to be analyzed and to calculate the correlations.

Moreover, in order to testing the correlation and the direction of the relationship (if exist), the data has been analysed by using Excel to determine the correlation coefficient “r” through comparing the number of language for selected webshops and the percentage of the international traffic (out of the overall traffics of the site).

The purpose of this part was to find the possible correlation or interference between the number of languages per webshop and the web-traffic data (total number of both local and international website visitors and their geographical distribution), and to discover if the multilingual webshops have a pattern for its web-analytics that differs from the unilingual webshop (that has only Finnish language).

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<sup>1</sup> SimilarWeb.com is a platform that analyse the search patten and the web-traffic of more than 80M website globally in order to to provide a reliable web-data for any website



### 3.2.2 Experimental (Causality) research

To support the inferential statistics of the correlation study, an experiment was conducted to test and determine the cause-and-effect relationship (the possible causality) between the website lingual aspect (independent variable) and the website attractiveness level for the local and the international audience, and that by measuring the impact of the added language(s) to Finnish a webshop on the web-traffic (statistically and geographically).

Practically, an e-retailing website content was created in English including 13 different items related to the Fashion industry (Sports Watches, Bags, Accessories, Fitness trackers), then the full content has been translated into Finnish and German by native speakers.

After that, two different domains and a web-host service were purchased and sent along with the content to a professional website designers to implement two webshops, the first one has only Finnish language with Finnish subcategory URL ([www.nlsmode.com/fi/](http://www.nlsmode.com/fi/)), while the second webshop was identical to the first site (in terms of content, design, layout and IT preferences) except it supports three languages (Finnish, English, and German) with three different subcategories ([www.nlsfashion.com/en/](http://www.nlsfashion.com/en/) or [/de/](http://www.nlsfashion.com/de/) or [/fi/](http://www.nlsfashion.com/fi/)), where it is possible to select among those different languages manually onsite or automatically based on the country code top-level domains of the search engine (e.g. [google.de](http://google.de) is supposed to drive the traffic to German page, [www.nlsfashion.com/de/](http://www.nlsfashion.com/de/)), however, both sites were ready and launched by 19th of March 2018.

#### **Webshop setting:**

**URL:** General Top-Level Domain (gTLD) with a subcategory for the language code (e.g. [/fi](http://www.nlsmode.com/fi/) for the Finnish language).

**Language Setting:** The two webshops have different language setting, the first one has only Finnish (Unilingual webshop), while the other one has Finnish, English and German language (a multilingual webshop).

**Geographical Sitting:** No advance setting for the geo-targeting process (e.g. `<hreflang>` tag), however, the google search console has been set to automatically refer the right webshop page to the right geographical zone.

**SEO:** No advance SEO or SEM techniques were used, yet, the basic SEO and keywords setting was implemented by the free version of Yoast in WordPress.

**Web-data Analysis:** Both sites were linked to google analytics and google search console to tracking and collecting the web-data at the same time-period (21.03-20.04.2018).

Both sites were designed in WordPress with minimal cultural aspects and with the same URL structure (Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) “.com” and subcategory (e.g. .com/fi/)) to help Search Engines directed the right version of the site (in terms of language) to the right audience, (because that approach is more recommended for small companies and it is easier to implement and manage). In WordPress, the Yoast plugin (the free version) was installed on each website (on the admin page of each language) to give both sites the basic SEO and XML sitemap, and the Keywords that have been used for the Finnish Webshop have been also used on the multilingual webshop along with the English and the German translated keywords as well (for related pages).

Both domains are hosted by Godaddy.com in Europe server and the web-traffic data collected during a one-month period (21.03-20.04.2018) after linking both webshops to google analytics webmaster and google search console. Google analytics was used in this study because it is considered as a reliable tool to collect and analyze the website traffic data.

### **3.2.3 Expert interviews**

Two in-depth expert interviews were conducted with senior staff in two of the most international pioneering companies in digital linguistic, localization and digital translation services to explore how a website’s multilingualism could impact the visibility of the commercial website in foreign markets and how companies could utilize their commercial website to attract an international audience.

Both interviews were requested in advance (Jan. 2018) and they used the same interview guide (Appendix 1) that was used in both interviews. The guide had been sent to the experts five days before the interview date, and the main topics of the interview were: -

- The strategy behind the multilingual commercial website.

- The advantages, challenges and limitations of creating an effective multilingual website in e-commerce.
- The impact of technology on the development of website localization service from the perspective of both service providers and their clients.

## Interviewees

1. The first interview was conducted with Mr. Hasan Shibly, the Global Program Manager at Lionbridge Technologies, Inc<sup>2</sup> – Tampere on 06. Mar. 2018. The interview was held in Lionbridge office located in Hervanta-Tampere from 9-10 am (as per the initial plan). The interview went on smooth without any interruptions.
2. The second interview was conducted with Ms. Annaelisa Huhtala, the Digital Marketing Specialist - Multilingual Communication Services at AAC GLOBAL OY<sup>3</sup> – Helsinki on 16. Mar.2018. The interview was held in ACCGLOBAL office located in Ruoholahti-Helsinki from 01-02 pm (as per the initial plan) and it progressed without any interruptions.

## 3.3 Data collection

According to the research method, the empirical data has been collected mainly through three channels:

- **SimilarWeb - Web Analysis Platform (Pro. account):** This platform offers web-data Analysis (for the tested website) based on different web-metrics (e.g. CRT, monthly visitors, traffic channels and sources), and the data collected for the 27 tested Finnish webshops was documented in a separate report for each webshop (the reports were downloaded through SimilarWeb.com) and the main information and statistical data was copied into an excel sheet.

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<sup>2</sup> Lionbridge is a global company offering localization and globalization services that enable international organizations to increase market share, speed up adoption of products and services, and engage with customers in locally relevant ways. Lionbridge.com

<sup>3</sup> AACGLOBAL is a Finnish company operating in the Nordic region and provides linguistic services and communication training, creates content for all channels, translate and localize, provide terminology services, and offers knowledge-sharing solutions and interpreting services. Aacglobal.com

- **Google Analytics & Google Search console:** The experimental data of the two demo (designed) Webshops has been collected through Google analytics and the search console platform, thereafter the main information and statistical data were copied into an excel sheet.
- **Transcriptions:** The transcription for the interviews was saved in a text forms using Word files.

In addition to the mentioned sources, further information was also collected through articles, online reports, as well as through information that was shared by the experts interviewed by the researcher via emails.

### 3.4 Validity and reliability

Based on the nature of the study, the research does not have favorable or unfavorable results. However, in the quantitative part of the research, the variables are selected carefully in order to have reliable measurement tools which can lead to a proper process analysis (for both correlation and causal research), yet, the researcher accessed the experimental webshops three times during the test period in order to make sure that both sites are functioning well. However, those visits have been avoided from the data analysis due to its impact on the web-traffic figures. According to the research in the subject, the interviews conducted in the qualitative part were to get information and insights from relevant specialists with reliable expertise.

Nonetheless, according to (Bordens & Abbott 2011), in correlation and casual research, both internal and external validity needs to be taken into consideration. (Bordens & Abbott 2011) defined internal validity as “*the ability of research design to test the hypothesis that it was designed to test*”, the external validity is defined as “*the degree that the study’s results can be extended beyond the limited research setting and sample in which they were obtained*”.

In that context, it could be argued that while the correlation study might have a high external validity, it might also have a low internal validity due to the low levels of control or understanding on how the collected data has been generated initially. Even after contacting the SimilarWeb office in London, the researcher was not able to have a

premium access to the source of information or to know about the accuracy level for the collected information by the web-analysis platform. However, in contrast, it could also argue that while causal research might have a high level of internal validity, it might also have a low level of external validity due to the artificial conditions of the experiment, “Data obtained from a tightly controlled laboratory may not generalize to more naturalistic situations in which behavior occurs” (Bordens & Abbott 2011, p. 118).

**Disadvantages of the methods and how was dealt with:**

- 1- In Correlation Study: There are low control levels on the source of data (SimilarWeb) and its form of collection. Also, there was no assurance of the accuracy level of the collected data. Yet, to deal with these cons, Alexa (web-analysis platform from Amazon) was used to compare (cross-check) the percentage of local and international traffic for a sample of the tested websites (see Table – 1). However, Alexa results were very close to SimilarWeb which support the reliability of the collected data. Nonetheless, as the correlation study can’t prove the causality of the possible relationship, therefore, a causality experiment was implemented.

Table 1: Cross-checking of the Web-Traffic distribution

Webshop address	SimilarWeb.com		Alexa.com	
	International traffic (%)	Local (Finnish) traffic (%)	International traffic (%)	Local (Finnish) traffic (%)
<a href="http://www.suomalainen.com">www.suomalainen.com</a>	6.16%	93.84%	6.30%	93.70%
<a href="http://www.karkkainen.com">www.karkkainen.com</a>	5.30%	94.70%	3.80%	96.20%
<a href="http://www.e-ville.com">www.e-ville.com</a>	14.05%	85.95%	13.30%	86.70%

- 2- In Experiment Study: The webshops were designed and implemented in artificial conditions, however, to minimize the impact of the laboratory aspects, both webshops were launched (online) simultaneously under real conditions without interfering the web-analytics from the researcher during the testing period (by filtering out the IP address of the researcher PC in Google Analytics Platform).
- 3- In Experts Interview: (the bias risk), to minimize bias, the researcher was not seeking preferable answers and he does not have any mutual interest with the selected localization companies, and the selection of the experts was done based on the requirements of the study.

## **4 WEBSITE MULTILINGUALISM AND THE INTERNATIONAL E-RETAILING AUDIENCE**

This section demonstrates the primary data that was collected through the three research approaches to:

- Examine the relationship between multilingualism in e-retailing and the level of online interactions with the international audience through the related commercial website (webshop).
- Know how to utilize the webshops to target international markets.

### **4.1 Correlation study**

Below (Table – 2) is the list of the 27 Finnish e-retailing websites/webshops which were selected to test for possible correlation (the existence of the relationship) between the number of the languages per website and: -

1. The percentage of international web-traffic (Mainly).
2. The average monthly visitors.
3. The percentage of the organic search (The ratio of web-traffic generated from organic search to all web-traffic).
4. The bounce rates.

Table 2: List of the selected Finnish webshops (Correlation Sample)

#	Finnish e-retailer / Webshop	Category
1	<a href="http://www.suomalainen.com">www.suomalainen.com</a>	Books and stationery
2	<a href="http://www.kultatahti.fi/">www.kultatahti.fi/</a>	Fashion, watches and accessories
3	<a href="http://boltbox.fi">http://boltbox.fi</a>	Smart devices and consumer electronics
4	<a href="http://kauppa.jolie.fi">http://kauppa.jolie.fi</a>	Organic-products for health and beauty care
5	<a href="http://www.klingel.fi/">www.klingel.fi/</a>	Shoes and clothing
6	<a href="http://www.emp.fi/">www.emp.fi/</a>	Rock cloths and accessories
7	<a href="http://www.hobbyhall.fi">www.hobbyhall.fi</a>	Appliances, shoes, gardening, home devices, clothes and electronics
8	<a href="http://www.puhelimenkuoret.fi">www.puhelimenkuoret.fi</a>	Phone & tablet covers and accessories
9	<a href="http://www.pahis.fi">www.pahis.fi</a>	Rock Fashion (cloths and accessories)
10	<a href="http://www.karkkainen.com">www.karkkainen.com</a>	Tools, indoor and outdoor products and other categories
11	<a href="http://www.tietokonekauppa.fi/">www.tietokonekauppa.fi/</a>	PCs and consumers electronics
12	<a href="http://www.cybershop.fi">www.cybershop.fi</a>	Cosmetics, Clothing and accessories
13	<a href="http://www.salkari.fi">www.salkari.fi</a>	Jewelry and watches
14	<a href="http://www.dustinhome.fi">www.dustinhome.fi</a>	Smart devices and consumer electronics
15	<a href="http://www.makeupshop.fi">www.makeupshop.fi</a>	Makeup and cosmetics
16	<a href="http://www.bronx.fi">www.bronx.fi</a>	Cloths and fashion
17	<a href="http://www.lamina.fi">www.lamina.fi</a>	Shoes and clothing
18	<a href="http://www.perhokauppa.fi">www.perhokauppa.fi</a>	Fishing and hunting equipment
19	<a href="http://www.unikulma.fi">www.unikulma.fi</a>	Beds, mattresses and pillows
20	<a href="http://www.lappo.fi">www.lappo.fi</a>	Beverages manufacturing
21	<a href="http://www.merittabra.fi">www.merittabra.fi</a>	Lingerie and underwear
22	<a href="http://www.direct123.fi">www.direct123.fi</a>	Smart devices, consumer electronics, home appliances and others
23	<a href="http://www.sport-tiedje.fi">www.sport-tiedje.fi</a>	Sport and training equipment
24	<a href="http://www.houseofbrandon.com">www.houseofbrandon.com</a>	Fashion, clothes and cosmetics
25	<a href="http://www.e-ville.com">www.e-ville.com</a>	Smart devices, consumer electronics, home appliances and others
26	<a href="http://www.progear.net">www.progear.net</a>	Work, kitchen, indoor and outdoor tools
27	<a href="http://www.suomikauppa.fi">www.suomikauppa.fi</a>	Foods, grocery, entertainment, cleaning, and cosmetics.

As per the research plan, the selected Finnish online stores/webshops have been tested by SimilarWeb platform and the available web-analytics (web-traffic) were recorded (see tables 3 & 4) and analyzed using Excel. (the collected data represents the period 27.12.2017-28.02.2018)

Table 3: Web-Traffic data collected through SimilarWeb analysis platform

#	Webshop address	Average monthly visitors	Language(s) LN <sup>4</sup>		International traffic (%)	Local/Finnish traffic (%)
1	<a href="http://www.suomalainen.com">www.suomalainen.com</a>	307815	1	Fi	6.16%	93.84%
2	<a href="http://www.kultatahti.fi/">www.kultatahti.fi/</a>	95822	1	Fi	3.29%	96.71%
3	<a href="http://boltbox.fi">http://boltbox.fi</a>	34862	1	Fi	4.93%	95.07%
4	<a href="http://kauppa.jolie.fi">http://kauppa.jolie.fi</a>	19029	1	Fi	5.68%	94.32%
5	<a href="http://www.klingel.fi/">www.klingel.fi/</a>	135232	1	Fi	4.65%	95.35%
6	<a href="http://www.emp.fi/">www.emp.fi/</a>	441135	1	Fi	6.81%	93.19%
7	<a href="http://www.hobbyhall.fi">www.hobbyhall.fi</a>	550,377	1	Fi	3.46%	96.54%
8	<a href="http://www.puhelimenkuoret.fi">www.puhelimenkuoret.fi</a>	34354	1	Fi	1.22%	98.78%
9	<a href="http://www.pahis.fi">www.pahis.fi</a>	50661	1	Fi	7.08%	92.92%
10	<a href="http://www.karkkainen.com">www.karkkainen.com</a>	1573000	1	Fi	5.30%	94.70%
11	<a href="http://www.tietokonekauppa.fi/">www.tietokonekauppa.fi/</a>	97831	1	Fi	7.41%	92.59%
	<b>The average of the unilingual segment</b>	<b>303647</b>			<b>5.09%</b>	<b>94.91%</b>
1	<a href="http://www.cybershop.fi">www.cybershop.fi</a>	140865	2	Fi, En	10.35%	89.65%
2	<a href="http://www.salkari.fi">www.salkari.fi</a>	205512	2	Fi, Se	13.27%	86.73%
3	<a href="http://www.dustinhome.fi">www.dustinhome.fi</a>	188787	2	Fi, Se	7.12%	92.88%
4	<a href="http://www.makeupshop.fi">www.makeupshop.fi</a>	19771	2	Fi, En	15.45%	84.55%
5	<a href="http://www.bronx.fi">www.bronx.fi</a>	46630	2	Fi, En	22.63%	77.37%
6	<a href="http://www.lamina.fi">www.lamina.fi</a>	35207	2	Fi, En	11.79%	88.21%
7	<a href="http://www.perhokauppa.fi">www.perhokauppa.fi</a>	43782	2	Fi, En	1.23%	98.77%
8	<a href="http://www.unikulma.fi">www.unikulma.fi</a>	37104	2	Fi, En	4.54%	95.46%
9	<a href="http://www.lappo.fi">www.lappo.fi</a>	43567	2	Fi, Es	10.55%	89.45%
	<b>The average of the bilingual segment</b>	<b>84581</b>			<b>10.77%</b>	<b>89.23%</b>
1	<a href="http://www.merittabra.fi">www.merittabra.fi</a>	23375	3	Fi,Se,En	17.19%	82.81%
2	<a href="http://www.direct123.fi">www.direct123.fi</a>	81413	3	Fi,En,Ru	20.00%	80.00%
3	<a href="http://www.sport-tiedje.fi">www.sport-tiedje.fi</a>	45995	3	Fi,Se,En	11.89%	88.11%
4	<a href="http://www.houseofbrandon.com">www.houseofbrandon.com</a>	79801	3	Fi,Se,En	19.22%	80.78%
5	<a href="http://www.e-ville.com">www.e-ville.com</a>	687855	4	Fi,Se,En,Da	14.05%	85.95%
6	<a href="http://www.progear.net">www.progear.net</a>	46116	5	Fi,Se,En,Da,Nr	23.79%	76.21%
7	<a href="http://www.suomikauppa.fi">www.suomikauppa.fi</a>	91248	8	Fi,En,Ch,Ja,De,Fr,It,Ru	71.55%	28.45%
	<b>The average of the multilingual segment</b>	<b>150829</b>	<b>4.14</b>		<b>25.38%</b>	<b>74.62%</b>

According to the statistics of the Finnish webshops sample above, and using the correlation function in excel, the correlation coefficient<sup>5</sup> “r” (between the number of the used

<sup>4</sup> Fi Finnish En English Se Swedish Da Danish De German Fr French  
Ru Russian It Italian Es Estonian Nr Norway Ch Chinese Ja Japan

<sup>5</sup> (According to <https://support.office.com>). The equation of the correlation coefficient is:

$$\text{Correl}(X, Y) = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Where ( $\bar{x}$  and  $\bar{y}$ ) are the sample means AVERAGE (array1) and AVERAGE (array2)



languages in the webshops “x”, and the percentage of international web-traffic “y”) was +0.89, which means that there is a “Strong Positive Relationship” between the tested variables (x & y) (See figure-10).

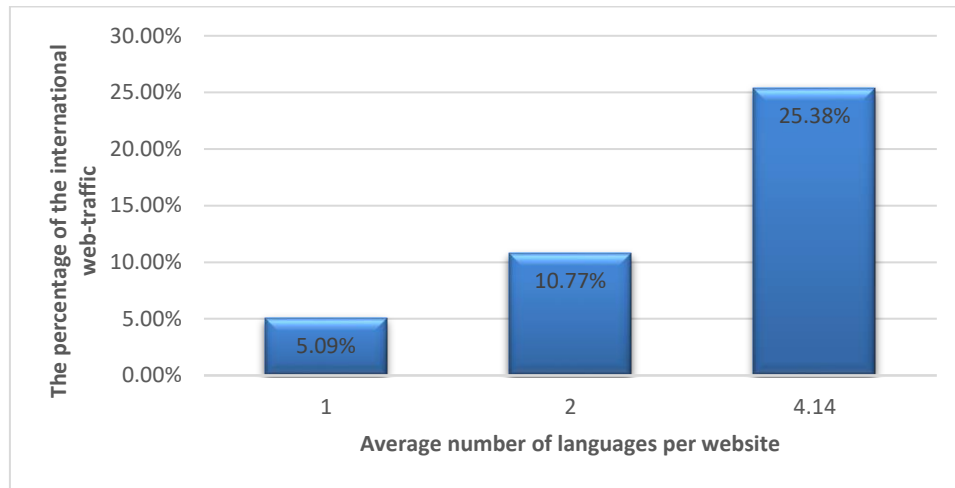


Figure 10: The relationship between the number of languages per webshop and the percentage of international traf-fics.

However, other correlations that have been calculated and did not indicate any kind of relationship between the number of languages per website and: The Bounce Rate, or the Average Monthly Visitors, or the Percentage of the Organic Search, because the correlation coefficient was close to zero between the tested variables.

- Correlation Coefficient r1 (between the number of languages and the organic search percentage) = 0.167.
- Correlation Coefficient r2 (between the number of languages and bounce rate) = 0.098.
- Correlation Coefficient r3 (between the number of languages and average monthly visitors) = - 0.1377.

Furthermore, the country source and the volume of international traffic and the percentage of organic search (out of the total traffic), were diverse among the different webshops as illustrated in Table-4.

Table 4: The distribution of the international traffics and the percentage of the Organic Search

#	Finnish e-retailers / Web-shops	LN	The main source of the international audience (Top 4)				Organic Search (%)
1	<a href="http://www.suomalainen.com">www.suomalainen.com</a>	Fi	0.80% Germany	0.71% UK	0.71% Sweden	0.69% USA	51%
2	<a href="http://www.kultatahti.fi/">www.kultatahti.fi/</a>	Fi	1.41% Netherlands	0.96% Sweden	0.44% USA	0.43% UK	55.6%
3	<a href="http://boltbox.fi">http://boltbox.fi</a>	Fi	2.31% Spain	0.62% Taiwan	0.38% Germany	0.38% USA	7.5%
4	<a href="http://kauppa.jolie.fi">http://kauppa.jolie.fi</a>	Fi	1.32% Netherlands	1.3% Estonia	1.21% Sweden	0.67% Germany	28.0%
5	<a href="http://www.klingel.fi/">www.klingel.fi/</a>	Fi	1.45% Spain	1.11% Germany	0.35% Estonia	0.30% Lithuania	26.4%
6	<a href="http://www.emp.fi/">www.emp.fi/</a>	Fi	2.23% Netherlands	0.86% Sweden	0.35% USA	0.35% Germany	18.7%
7	<a href="http://www.hobbyhall.fi">www.hobbyhall.fi</a>	Fi	0.71% Netherlands	0.43% Sweden	0.31% Spain	0.22% Germany	39.3%
8	<a href="http://www.puhelimenkuoret.fi">www.puhelimenkuoret.fi</a>	Fi	0.94% USA	0.29% Qatar			48.3%
9	<a href="http://www.pahis.fi">www.pahis.fi</a>	Fi	2.03% Netherlands	1.69% France	0.68% Serbia	0.60% Germany	52.0%
10	<a href="http://www.karkkainen.com">www.karkkainen.com</a>	Fi	0.64% Netherlands	0.57% Sweden	0.37% Germany	0.36% UK	72.8%
11	<a href="http://www.tietokonekauppa.fi/">www.tietokonekauppa.fi/</a>	Fi	1.55% India	1.38% Sweden	0.92% Norway	0.81% Russia	28.3%
12	<a href="http://www.cybershop.fi">www.cybershop.fi</a>	Fi, En	1.84% UK	1.68% Germany	1.20% Australia	0.94% Netherlands	71.5%
13	<a href="http://www.salkari.fi">www.salkari.fi</a>	Fi, Se	2.29% Norway	2.04% Sweden	1.60% France	0.97% Japan	53.2%
14	<a href="http://www.dustinhome.fi">www.dustinhome.fi</a>	Fi, Se	1.29% Netherlands	0.89% Norway	0.87% Russia	0.85% Sweden	8.1%
15	<a href="http://www.makeupshop.fi">www.makeupshop.fi</a>	Fi, En	7.28% USA	3.04% Germany	2.65% Latvia	2.48% Greece	59.0%
16	<a href="http://www.bronx.fi">www.bronx.fi</a>	Fi, En	6.93% Spain	5.66% Bosnia & H.	2.03% USA	1.39% Estonia	50.7%
17	<a href="http://www.lamina.fi">www.lamina.fi</a>	Fi, En	1.65% Russia	1.25% Netherlands	0.84% Austria	0.78% USA	43.0%
18	<a href="http://www.perhokauppa.fi">www.perhokauppa.fi</a>	Fi, En	1.23% Russia				62.0%
19	<a href="http://www.unikulma.fi">www.unikulma.fi</a>	Fi, En	1.52% Turkey	0.88% Netherlands	0.88% Spain	0.69% Sweden	59.2%
20	<a href="http://www.lappo.fi">www.lappo.fi</a>	Fi, Es	4.24% USA	2.62% Sweden	1.27% Germany	0.50% Turkey	43.3%
21	<a href="http://www.merittabra.fi">www.merittabra.fi</a>	Fi,Se,En	3.0% Netherlands	2.88% Portugal	2.31% Sweden	2.21% Philippines	52.1%
22	<a href="http://www.direct123.fi">www.direct123.fi</a>	Fi,En,Ru	2.75% Estonia	1.93% Lithuania	1.61% UK	1.32% Russia	36.6%
23	<a href="http://www.sport-tiedje.fi">www.sport-tiedje.fi</a>	Fi,Se,En	5.76% UK	2.63% Netherlands	0.79% UAE	0.77% Norway	60.4%
24	<a href="http://www.houseofbrandon.com">www.houseofbrandon.com</a>	Fi,Se,En	3.76% UK	2.41% Sweden	1.85% France	1.39% USA	57.0%
25	<a href="http://www.e-ville.com">www.e-ville.com</a> <sup>6</sup>	Fi,Se,En, Da	9.67% Sweden	0.61% Norway	0.43% Netherlands	0.37% Spain	38.3%
26	<a href="http://www.progear.net">www.progear.net</a>	Fi,Se,En, Da, Nr	10.88% Sweden	3.44% UK	1.71% Turkey	1.50% Denmark	23.4%
27	<a href="http://www.suomikauppa.fi">www.suomikauppa.fi</a>	Fi,En,Ch ,Ja,De,Fr ,It, Ru	8.43% Russia	8.41% USA	7.92% France	7.37% Japan	62.4%

Based on Table - 4, in addition to the strong positive relationship between the number of languages per website and the percentage of the intranational traffic, the main sources of the international traffic of a certain multilingual website did not always match the

<sup>6</sup> some languages didn't count because it does not function well (e.g. French and Spanish).

languages of that website. For example, the e-retailing website ([www.sport-tiedje.fi](http://www.sport-tiedje.fi)) has two foreign languages, English and Swedish, yet, Sweden was not one of the main international traffic sources.

## 4.2 Experimental (Causality) research

The data illustrated in this part has been collected through Google Analytics, Google Search Console, and Google Search Engine. According to the study purpose, the data has been used to create the required comparisons between the unilingual and the multilingual designed webshops.

### 4.2.1 Web-data analysis of both unilingual and multilingual webshop

The figures below were extracted from Google Analytics platform demonstrate the web-data analysis, the Traffic Sources (Geographically) and the Traffic Channels of both designed webshops:

- [www.nlsmode.com](http://www.nlsmode.com) (unilingual website - Finnish)
- [www.nlsfashion.com](http://www.nlsfashion.com) (Multilingual website - Finnish, English, and German)

**Audience Overview (21 Mar. – 20 Apr.):** According to the Google analytics reports of both sites, figures 11 & 12 below (where figure-11 is related to the unilingual webshop while figure-12 is related to the multilingual webshop) demonstrate 10 different illustrations related to the interactions and activities of the website users during the testing period.

At the top, the figures show the number of users (visitors) on the “y” axis, and the visiting dates on the “x” Axis and the pie chart represents the ratio of the return and the new users to the total visitors, the illustrations also indicate the web-analytics for both webshops as per the metrics below:

“Total number of users (website visitors), New users, Total sessions, Bounce rate, Number of session per user, Total page views, Pages per session, Average session duration”.

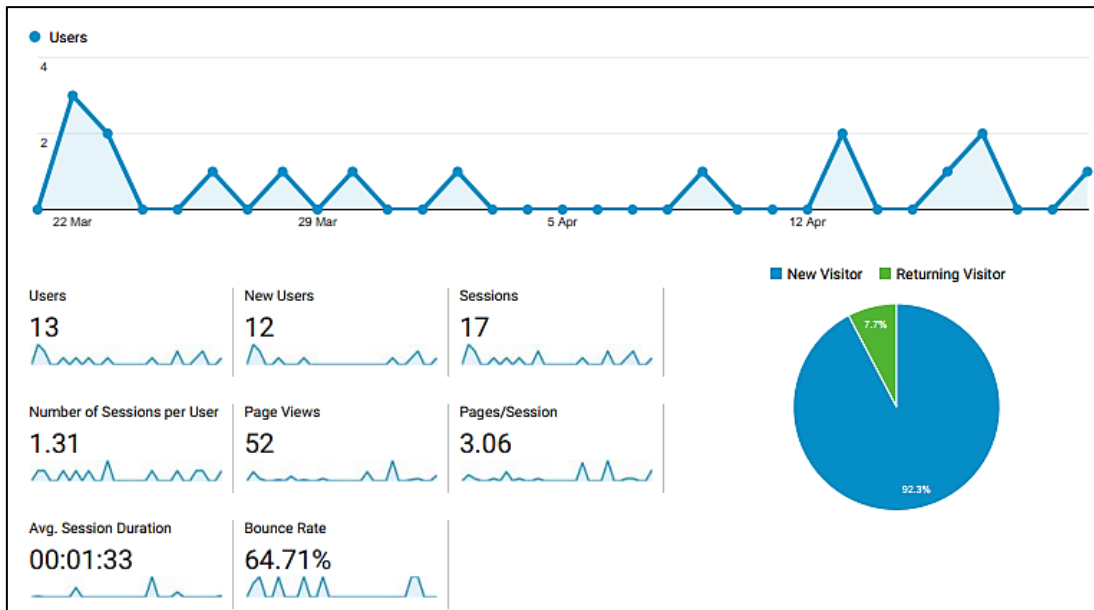


Figure 11: Audience overview of the unilingual webshop ([www.nlsmode.com](http://www.nlsmode.com))

Figure-12 below has the same data structure as figure-11 and it shows the same illustrations and metrics which is related to the second website (the multilingual webshop).

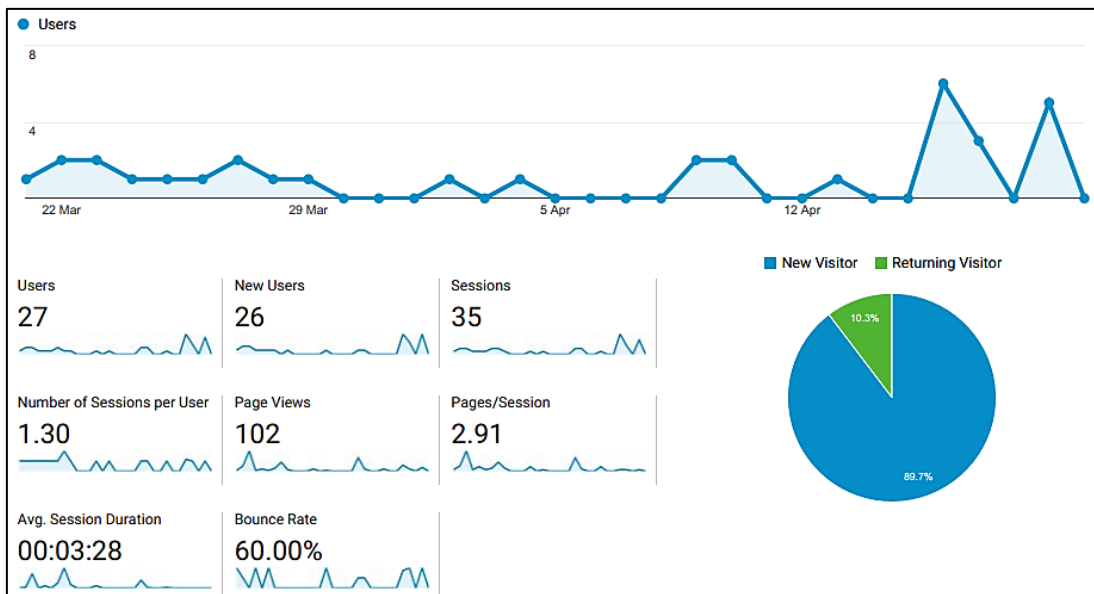


Figure 12: Audience overview of the multilingual webshop ([www.nlsfashion.com](http://www.nlsfashion.com))

**Traffic channels and sources (21 Mar. – 20 Apr.):** Figures 13 & 14 below (where figure-13 is related to the unilingual webshop while figure-14 is related to the multilingual webshop) are extracted from Google Analytics reports and divided into two sections. The first section illustrates the channels that generated the website traffic (clustered in three main groups: Direct link to the site, Organic Search or Social Media) as well as the

distribution of the related metrics (e.g. users, page per session) according to each traffic channel (group).

In the second section, the figure illustrates the geographical source of the website traffic (per country) and it shows the distribution of the related metrics (e.g. users, page per session) according to each traffic source (country).

Default Channel Grouping	Acquisition			Behaviour		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration
	13 % of Total: 100.00% (13)	12 % of Total: 100.00% (12)	17 % of Total: 100.00% (17)	64.71% Avg for View: 64.71% (0.00%)	3.06 Avg for View: 3.06 (0.00%)	00:01:33 Avg for View: 00:01:33 (0.00%)
1. Direct	8 (57.14%)	7 (58.33%)	9 (52.94%)	88.89%	1.33	00:00:38
2. Organic Search	5 (35.71%)	4 (33.33%)	7 (41.18%)	42.86%	4.86	00:02:46
3. Social	1 (7.14%)	1 (8.33%)	1 (5.88%)	0.00%	6.00	00:01:17

Country	Acquisition			Behaviour		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration
	13 % of Total: 100.00% (13)	12 % of Total: 100.00% (12)	17 % of Total: 100.00% (17)	64.71% Avg for View: 64.71% (0.00%)	3.06 Avg for View: 3.06 (0.00%)	00:01:33 Avg for View: 00:01:33 (0.00%)
1. United States	8 (61.54%)	8 (66.67%)	8 (47.06%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00
2. Finland	5 (38.46%)	4 (33.33%)	9 (52.94%)	33.33%	4.89	00:02:56

Figure 13: Traffic channels and sources of the unilingual webshop (www.nlsmode.com)

Figure-14 below has the same data-structure as figure-13, which shows the same illustrations and metrics that are related to the second website (the multilingual webshop).

Default Channel Grouping	Acquisition			Behaviour		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration
	27 % of Total: 100.00% (27)	26 % of Total: 100.00% (26)	35 % of Total: 100.00% (35)	60.00% Avg for View: 60.00% (0.00%)	2.91 Avg for View: 2.91 (0.00%)	00:03:28 Avg for View: 00:03:28 (0.00%)
1. Direct	24 (82.76%)	23 (88.46%)	27 (77.14%)	66.67%	2.52	00:03:36
2. Organic Search	3 (10.34%)	1 (3.85%)	6 (17.14%)	33.33%	4.50	00:03:37
3. Social	2 (6.90%)	2 (7.69%)	2 (5.71%)	50.00%	3.50	00:01:07

Country	Acquisition			Behaviour		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration
	27 % of Total: 100.00% (27)	26 % of Total: 100.00% (26)	35 % of Total: 100.00% (35)	60.00% Avg for View: 60.00% (0.00%)	2.91 Avg for View: 2.91 (0.00%)	00:03:28 Avg for View: 00:03:28 (0.00%)
1. United States	10 (37.04%)	10 (38.46%)	10 (28.57%)	90.00%	1.10	00:00:24
2. Finland	5 (18.52%)	4 (15.38%)	11 (31.43%)	9.09%	6.64	00:09:15
3. Pakistan	5 (18.52%)	5 (19.23%)	6 (17.14%)	66.67%	1.33	00:02:08
4. Australia	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (2.86%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00
5. Canada	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (2.86%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00
6. Germany	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.85%)	2 (5.71%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00
7. United Kingdom	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (2.86%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00
8. Israel	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (2.86%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00
9. India	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (2.86%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00
10. Sri Lanka	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (2.86%)	0.00%	3.00	00:02:36

Figure 14: Traffic sources and channels of the multilingual webshop (www.nlsfashion.com)

#### 4.2.2 Data comparison

The main data extracted from both webshops were entered into an excel sheet to create the comparison that can specify the impact of the added languages on the website traffic (as shown in Table-5 and Figure-15).

Table 5: web-data analysis comparison

Web-data analysis of the unilingual webshop								
New users	Return users	Total number of users	Finnish traffics	International traffic	Avg. Bounce rate	Page per session	Avg. session duration (Sec.)	Page views
12	1	13	5	8	64.71%	3.06	93	52
Web-data analysis of the multilingual webshop								
New users	Return users	Total number of users	Finnish traffics	International traffic	Avg. Bounce rate	page per session	Avg. session duration (Sec.)	Page views
26	1	27	5	22	60.00%	2.91	208	102
The rate of change in the measured data between both sites								
117%	0%	108%	0%	175%	-7%	-5%	124%	96%

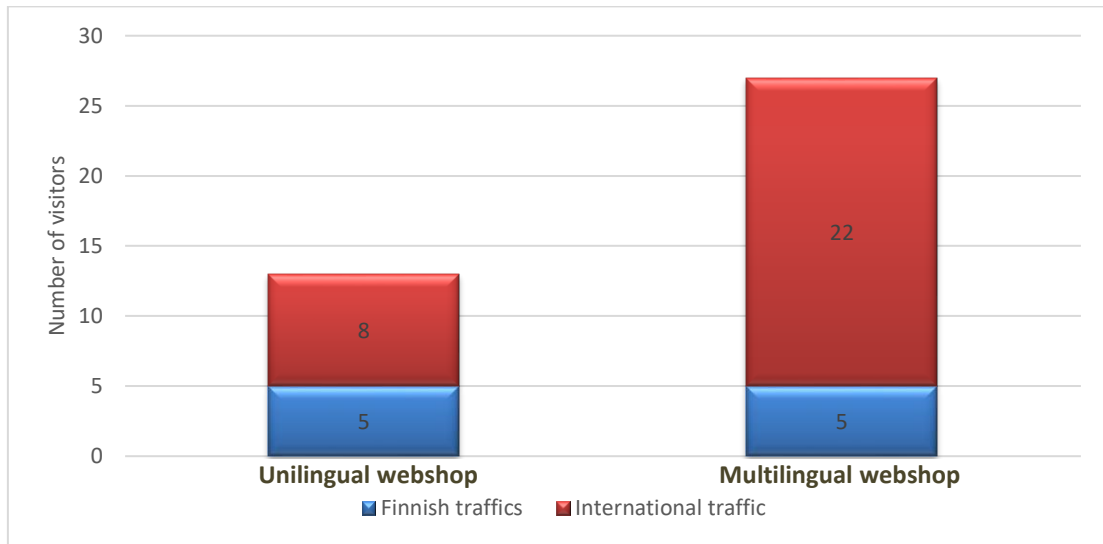


Figure 15: The traffic source of both webshops (locally and internationally)

Based on the above figures, the two added languages didn't cause a significant impact on the local traffic, the bounce rate, visit-repeating pattern or the number of pages per session, however, international traffic increased by 175% (as shown in Figure – 15), Avg. session duration (Sec.) by 124% and the number of page views by 96%. Furthermore, while the international traffic of the unilingual webshop was attracted from one country, the multilingual webshop attracted international traffic from 10 different countries.

**The keywords and the website's rank on the SERP (Locally and abroad).**

When searching locally (in Finland) using one of the strongest keywords (*NLS Fashion*) that was used in both sites, both sites showed-up in the top rank of the SERP (The Finnish Version). However, when using one of the German keywords (*NLS Fashion ist ein Trends*

setzender) that was used in the multilingual webshop/German version, the German page of the multilingual site was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> on the SERP when searching from Finland, while it was ranked the first one when searching from Germany. Accordingly, it could be argued that the combination of language and location in an online search directly impact the website rank on the SERP when using the Google Search Engine.

### 4.3 Expert interviews

Based on the questions of the interview guide and the related discussion with the experts, the collected data has been classified and clustered into eight sections (topics that linked to the aim of this research). However, to illustrate the related topics some statistical charts have been added to this part.

#### ➤ **The idea behind the multilingualism in the commercial website.**

Both of the interviewed experts, Ms. Huhtala & Mr. Shibly indicate that the main reason of having a multilingual commercial website is the aim to grow and reach a broader audience and potential customers outside the local borders.

*“It's a very competitive market. We talk about globalization. The local market is not enough for any company anymore. Growth is a must. To reach your customers you need to make sure that you are speaking the same language with them. Without that, you cut your chances” (Mr. Shibly).*

*“The multilingual website is a tool for business growth. Finland is a very small market. If you happen to find a nature that you serve that has no competition at all, then you can survive in Finland for a while. But, if you want to grow and to have continuous growth, you need to go abroad and invest in marketing in other countries as well” (Ms. Huhtala)*

The experts argued that different factors might affect the lingual aspect on the commercial website based on the business nature, industry and strategy, yet, still some companies might see the English as a Lingua-Franca while other small companies might tend to only stick to the local language and that could be due to:

*“the limitations in expenditure capabilities or the absence of growth plans or taking it step by step. But in general, if a company want to expand, there's a huge bandwidth but*



*it needs to play it to work. it needs to know how to reach the customers. Who are their customers? Where are they located? And then, how to communicate? How to reach them? it's not simply translated and pass it forward” (Mr. Shibly).*

*“Depending on English as a lingua-franca might be a right solution if a company has resources to do only one language version and it is aiming at a very wide target audience. But typically, selected language is based on the target audience which brings the most strategic benefits” (Ms. Huhtala)”*

Table 6: Summary of the experts’ key points

Mr. Shibly	Ms. Huhtala
<b>The idea behind the multilingualism in the commercial website</b>	
A tool for business globalization	The aim is to grow
Expanding out of the local market	A multilingual website is an International-Marketing approach
Implemented in different ways based on the company capabilities and plans	Adapting a website based on the local language of the targeted market is the most effective way to reaching the right audience

➤ **Website localization and the business strategy.**

Website multilingualization or localization required the strategy and prework to be effective before the execution.

*“Definitely there will be analysis, market research. There will be plans for growth. Like, what are the growth plans? is my product suitable for the X market? What are my potential sales in there? Do I want to target that region or not? If it is, then yes, I need to try to localize. If not, then no. I'll skip that region” (Mr. Shibly).*

Before adding more languages, a company needs to consider *“what are the languages it needs to choose? What is the target group a company is aiming for?” (Ms. Huhtala).*

And then when the company moves to the multilingual website, that doesn’t mean the job is done, especially for e-commerce where the localization is not a single action but a continuous process that requires periodic updates, in that sense Mr. Shibly says:

*“localization is not cheap. It's actually very expensive, imagine if you are targeting 10 languages or 10 different markets to speak different languages. Every update you have to send the content again for translation validation and so on. So, it's not cheap and it's time-consuming part. Based on that, I would definitely select what are the languages that my customers or potential customers speak, and they will be really interested in these because the first thing I would look at is where is my return of investment. It is a big investment. So, how much money I'm willing to pay and what are the important customer regions for me? Based on that I will select the languages”.*

Table 7: Summary of the experts' key points

Mr. Shibly	Ms. Huhtala
<b>Website localization and the business strategy</b>	
Advance planning and prework is required before starting the localization process	An essential part of the business expansion strategy
Identifying the opportunities, target customers and the market requirement that are needed for the successful implementation	It is a continuous process; therefore, it requires a long-term strategy

➤ **Barriers and challenges of having a multilingual website in e-retailing business:**

- 1- The cost: According to (Ms. Huhtala and Mr. Shibly), website localization is not simple, and the cost might be a significant barrier to having a multilingual commercial website or webshop and especially for such dynamic content of the webshops, it requires a set of skills, dedicated effort, and resources.
- 2- The source of content: (products suppliers). *“Where is the content coming from? if the content comes from other business owners or the e-retailers who are providing the content, so who has the responsibility and the authority or the rights to edit and localize and so on” (Mr. Shibly).*
- 3- Business automate level: This is how much the business depends on the human element for the interaction with customers and the business audience. However, in e-retailing (Ms. Huhtala) argues that *“in the webshop, the sales process can be automated, all the resell & upsell process can be automated, so if a company can automate most of the interactions, then it's fairly easy to translate than localize all the automation process. If you don't need to have always the human element there”.*
- 4- The plan to grow internationally: According to (Ms. Huhtala), while the reason to have a multilingual webshop for an e-retailer is to expand the business, if the aim to grow is absent, then the company would not invest in localization.

*“a research published last autumn about Finnish companies indicated that over 70% of Finnish companies don't want to grow. They don't have strategic decision to grow, they just want to retain their business, for such companies why they would invest in localization?” (Ms. Huhtala)*

- 5- The lingual preferences of the target market: *“if my biggest potential market is in China, I'll definitely localize in Chinese. In B2B English might be an international language. (Again, depends on which market), but if we are talking about business to customers, that makes it different” (Mr. Shibly).*
- 6- The volume of the webshop content: both experts indicate that the number of items per webshop plus the rate of frequent updates could be a challenge for the e-retailers in having a fully multilingual webshop.
- 7- The IT Structure: *“If the website was designed to be with static content, localizing it is a nightmare. That means redesigning the whole thing. But if the e-retailer had the far sight already from the beginning and make it the website in a way that is adopting several languages, then localization will be very simple and will be slightly at a lower cost, and no need to redesign or to recode” (Mr. Shibly).*

➤ **The advantage of a website's multilingualization and how multilingual websites affect business visibility internationally:**

- 1- International Awareness and Visibility: As the online business depends majorly on digital marketing, Mr. Shibly indicates that *“it definitely is a marketing plan. Localization simplifies the communication. You need to be known globally in order to sell. So, either you send your salespeople globally and start doing sales, or you recruit local salespeople in each country, which is terribly expensive, or you make your business online available to all markets you are interested in”*. And Ms. Huhtala indicates that *“The visibility is a big thing because search engine optimization brings 60 to 70% of all the website traffic”*.

And additionally, Mr. Shibly says:

*“In terms of online visibility, when a company is trying to target a market by using a different language (than that the local customers used in certain market) then the chances to be visible are next to zero, now even with the advertisement systems (like whether it's Google or something else), those browsers avoid proposing content that is not matching the customer. So, by using the local language the company would have more effective and even cheaper advertisements. However, to improve the website visibility, SEO needs to be implemented properly and that is required special skills and expert implementation. For example, if a company has*

only Finnish website and trying to reach global markets, its chances are very limited’.

In that regard, the combination of the above point and what is mentioned in the Digibarometri report, 2015 (about how the Finnish e-retailing invest significantly less than other Nordic countries in adapting more languages in their websites), might explain the low share of foreign clicks on the Finnish online advertisement in comparison with other Nordic Countries as shown in Figure 16.

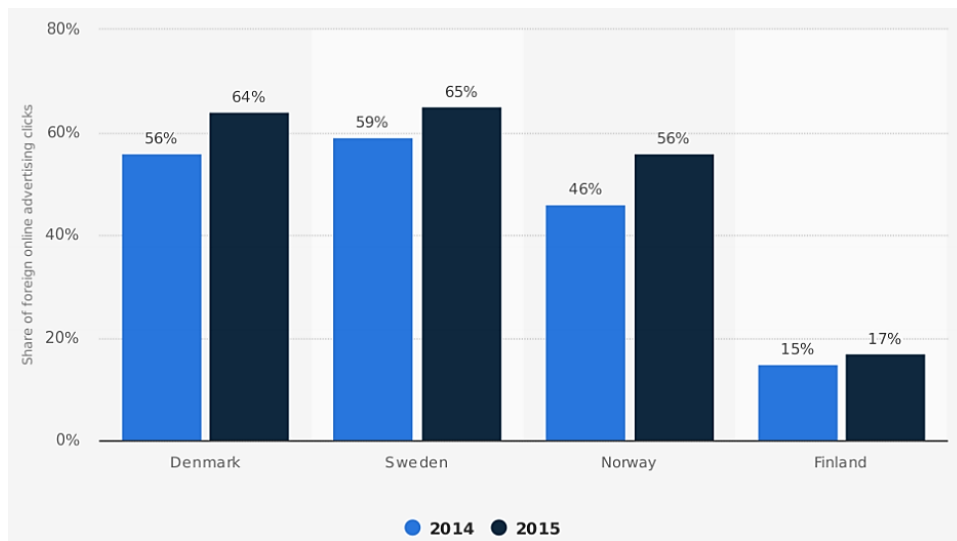


Figure 16: Share of Foreign clicks in online advertisement clicks – Source Statista

- 2- International expansion: both experts argue that there are different advantages for the multilingual website in e-commerce (if it is done correctly), and as the internet opens the gate to global sales for e-commerce, yet the localization “allows companies to reach customers globally. It allows them to reach/communicate with their customers, to introduce their products by having a website in a language that your customers might be searching for” Mr. Shibly.
- 3- Reducing the expenses: According to Mr. Shibly, besides growth, “crazy growth”, expanding the business internationally will reduce the expenses “product total cost” (due to the increase in sales volume).
- 4- Ms. Huhtala argues that using a local language in international business context improves marketing and the sales results as it increases the conversion rate.

Ms. Huhtala indicates that this is a fact supported by a study (published recently by ACCGLOBAL and shared with the author) which shows that the conversion level is increased when using a local language instead of the English content even in markets such as Sweden and Finland (see figure 17).

*“Last year we had a campaign that we first did in English and we marketed it in Finland and Sweden using English. We've got a pretty good advert with 0.37% CTR, which is better than the international average. But when we did Swedish version and marketed that to Swedes, we got 0.89% which is over double. Then we did Finnish language version for Finns, and we got over 1%. So, there is the reason why you would want to go with local languages. You get the much better conversion and you're much more likely to convert those leads into sales” Ms. Huhtala.*

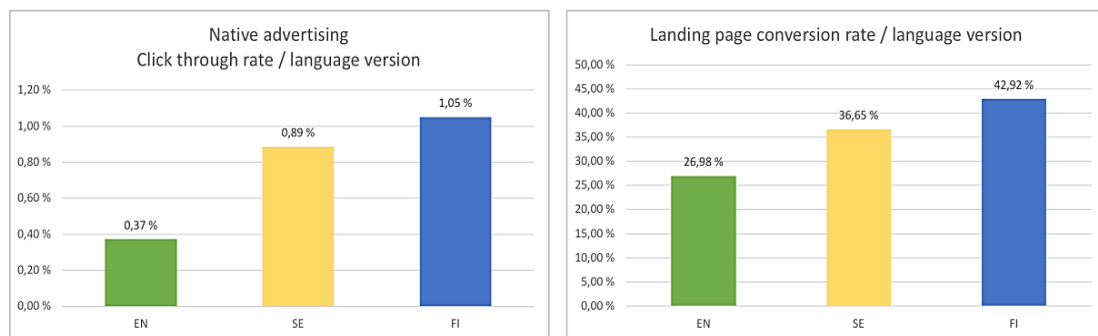


Figure 17: Native advertising promotion experiment. Source ACCGLOBAL 2018

### ➤ Local language in e-retailing from the customers perspective.

In e-retailing, customers generally can't physically test the products, therefore, both experts indicate that the satisfaction increased when the purchased items met the customer's expectation; then, communicating with customers in their local language helps them to understand better and to have the right expectation. *“People like to buy in their own language, complex information is just easier to take-in in the own language that the most familiar of using because then we can understand it better. There is no uncertainty, and it removes the risk feeling from it” Ms. Huhtala.*

Therefore, using the local language in e-retailing built **trust, more confidence** and a **sense of reliability**. *“People will trust a product more than is described in a language that they fully understand. They will trust the web page more when they have all the details and they can easily reach. You don't need to use any system in translating what is written in there” Mr. Shibly.*

Ms. Huhtala stated that *“using the local language in webshops makes it easier to trust and easier to engage”*. Furthermore, according to Ms. Huhtala, using the local language

when targeting a foreign market would allow the webshop to get reviews and comments in a local language, which influences the web-traffic and the online purchase as it will add a sense of credibility for the webshop from the international online shoppers' perspective.

Table 8: Summary of the experts' key points

Mr. Shibly	Ms. Huhtala
<b>Local language in e-retailing from the customers perspective</b>	
Full understanding of details that required to make a purchase decision	Easier to understand complex information
Trust the website content and increase the confidence of the offering products/Services	Credible engagement with the company and other customers/shoppers

➤ **The Impact of technology on the website localization.**

Both experts indicate that technology like Translation Memory (TM), integrated CMS, machine translation, SEO techniques support the website localization process by providing a smooth implementation, increasing the accuracy, reducing the processing time, eliminating human error, and improving the effectiveness in targeting the right customers. However, it doesn't directly impact the rising cost of adding more language to the website.

Integrated CMS, for example, allows the localization service provider to detect the new content added to the page (will be forwarded automatically). LSP (Language Service Provider) will process the localization, ensure that the content is in line legally and culturally with the target country, push it back, then, automatically again the localized versions of this page will be updated with the new content. However, it needs a long-term relationship with the LSP which could be suitable for multilingual e-retailing companies in general. Nonetheless, when it comes to machine translation, both experts indicate that it can't serve the e-retailers yet, because this kind of business is sensitive when it comes to translation (from the cultural and the legal aspects), and therefore, it requires native translators and sometimes a text-transcreation for marketing purposes.

Table 9: Summary of the experts' key points

Mr. Shibly	Ms. Huhtala
<b>The Impact of technology on website localization</b>	
Enhancing the implementation process and the effectiveness of the localization outcomes	Enabling the partnership approach between the company and the LSP
It doesn't have a direct impact on the rising cost of adding more language to the website.	Offering a dynamic update with a higher accuracy level, but it doesn't significantly reduce the cost at the moment.
MT is not yet ready to serve the e-retailing business	MT can't help in marketing

➤ **The website localization, SEO and Search Engine Marketing (SEM).**

The lingual aspect of the website and the used keywords could be considered as a backbone as (Ms. Huhtala) argues, yet, according to both experts, when it comes to enhancing the online visibility and ranking on the Search Engine Result Page (SERP), SEO is a long game which needs a periodic and relevant update to make it effective.

When it comes to a foreign market, the target audience might have “*entirely different searching logic and that .... (the search patterns) has to take into account as well when the company is doing keyword analysis*” Ms. Huhtala

And Mr. Shibly adds:

*“Browsers now are super intelligent. They predict your histories and starts with proposing content for you as an advertisement or suggestions and so on. When your content as a seller or an owner of an e-commerce page is with one language, then regardless of how popular you are, your content will be produced in your advertisement only to those who are using that particular language. Nothing else. So, locally plus your language and that is it. But if you support other languages and you manage to have the right keywords, you have the right traffic to your page, then it is more accessible. So, technology will support a lot If playing it right, it will help you to get bigger footprints globally”*

Accordingly, both experts (Ms. Huhtala and Mr. Shibly) state that to improve website visibility, SEO needs to be implemented properly and that requires some expertise because the common Keywords and the search pattern are changing and that needs to be followed and updated. When talking about e-commerce, the company needs to have its

own (or outsource) team to work and follow up on this activity. For instance, when a major search engine adopts a new machine learning algorithm (like Google in 2012), the SEO implementation need to be changed accordingly.

*“Repeating the same search terms is no longer the way to go. The company has to optimize search engine keyword content...it needs to build search engines that make its content reliable and trustworthy and needs to create a network so that search engines will consider it as a good fit. It will take some work for the company to rise in the rankings”*  
*Ms. Huhtala.*

Furthermore, Ms. Huhtala adds that *“Obviously, if you want to have your webshop, you should put into search engine first page results .....so, you have to select the keywords your actual customers are actually using and not some other interested parties.... and not to just hope that the term that has been established over time is the best term that people are actually searching for”*.

In general, it could be argued that SEO needs to be updated based on the change of the webshop content and the change of the search pattern of the targeted audience because some Keywords might be ineffective or might drive irrelevant traffic for the business.

Table 10: Summary of the experts' key points

Mr. Shibly	Ms. Huhtala
<b>The website localization, SEO and Search Engine Marketing (SEM).</b>	
With only Finnish language on any commercial website, the chances of online-visibility on foreign markets are very limited.	Each market has its own search pattern and searches keywords accordingly.
SEO needs a special expertise to make it effective to drive the right traffic.	SEO required a continuous update to raise the website rank on SERP and to attract the relevant traffic that can be turned into leads.
A translated website might not be effective without SEO and SEM.	The algorithms of the Search Engine changes from time to time.
The web browsers are getting smarter in selecting the best results, therefore, companies need to act according to that selection criteria	Without the proper language of the website and keywords, the investment on the SEM is a waste of money and resources.



➤ **Implementation and administration of a multilingual e-commerce website (Webshop).**

It requires a strategy, a marketing plan, allocation of resources, IT, SEM skills and continuous follow-up. According to Ms. Huhtala, in e-retailing business, being discovered on the internet is a challenge that needs to be dealt with, and the proper implementation on the multilingual website would have a positive impact on that.

*“There is so much content in the internet.... there is information overload. And to win customers in that area, in that market when there is so much information, you have to target them to tailor work message”.* However, *“the tailoring work and personalization work is I think the biggest reason for the rising cost of adding more languages”* Ms. Huhtala.

From the IT’s structure, Ms. Huhtala indicates that there are 5 different ways to design the URL structure for an effective multilingual website (based on available resources, the nature of the business and the geo-targeting plans). However, each of these ways needs certain kind of techniques to drive the right traffic and to improve the ranking on the SERP in each target-market based on the language, location and search engine index (e.g. Google.fi, Google.de or Google.fr).

Table 11: Summary of the experts' key points

Mr. Shibly	Ms. Huhtala
<b>Implementation and administration of a multilingual e-commerce website (Webshop)</b>	
In e-retailing, the implementation is both an expensive and a time-consuming process.	It is a combination of strategy, IT design, content updates and SEM
Needs a continuous follow-up for the webshop content in each language.	Required a tailor work message (based on the target market)
	There are 5 different approaches to implement and manage the multilingual webshop and each approach requires a different setting to make it effective.

## 5 FINDINGS

This part aims to combine the key points of the literature and the results of the empirical data to provide answers to the research questions.

The first research question was:

### *1- What is the impact of multilingualism on the webshop visibility in international markets?*

Adapting the local languages when operating in related foreign markets adds a competitive advantage for e-retailers in terms of online visibility by enabling communication as well as facilitating the interactions with the target audience.

According to the correlation study, the relationship between the number of languages per webshop and the percentage of the international web-traffic is a Strong Positive Relationship. Furthermore, the conducted experiment indicates that, in comparison with the unilingual webshop (commercial website), the multilingual webshop causes a significant increment in:

- International visitors (by 175%)
- Total page views (by 96%)
- Average session duration (by 124%)

Therefore, arguably, the international visibility continually gets higher when adding more languages to a certain webshop due to the higher international traffic rate and page views.

However, it was noticed (from results of both the correlation and the experimental research) that the geographical source of international traffic for a certain webshop doesn't always match the used languages in that webshop. And based on the experts' interviews, that happens due to the lack of an advance related inbound marketing techniques (e.g. Ad-Words, SEM, hreflang, Keyword analysis), because these techniques considered supportive Digital Marketing Techniques (DMT) which are required to increase the effectiveness of the multilingual website on attracting the most relevant audience for an e-retailer and enhancing the webshop visibility in the international business context.

The second research question was:

***2- How can multilingual website support e-retailers attract an international audience?***

The multilingual content and keywords of an e-retailing website are the foundation of attracting an international audience with certain lingual preferences. Relying on the home-country language only would cut the chances of e-retailers being visible to an international audience with different lingual preferences. Also, based on the nature of e-commerce (where there is a relatively high level of uncertainty due to online interaction), the local language will support the e-retailer to be found during an online search process in foreign markets and this will improve the trust and the reliability from the customers perspective as well. While some research argues that English could be a Lingua-Franca in international business context, this might not be a recommended approach in e-retailing business. According to the nature of the e-retailing business, adding more languages to a webshop required continuous efforts in terms of periodic updates but at the same time, most of the interactions and the selling process could be automated. Therefore, the e-retailers need to mainly focus on minimizing the cultural aspects on the international webshop and adapt the needed languages to the digital communication channel, especially the website.

However, due to the volume of data and the overwhelming level of information on the internet, getting found or being visible on the SERP is getting extremely difficult. Therefore, companies in the e-retailing business need to have the right combination of the local language (for target market) and a set of supportive inbound marketing or Digital Marketing Techniques (DMT) to increasing the webshop rank on the SERP including targeting the right audience with the right version of the site automatically. Accordingly, in e-retailing, the effectiveness of the website on targeting an international audience is impacted significantly by the nature of the combination between the lingual aspect of the webshop and the related Digital Marketing Techniques (e.g. blogs, Keywords, SEM, Geo-targeting approach) (see Figure-18).

In that context, in e-retailing, the unilingual website without supportive Digital Marketing Techniques would be a passive approach of attracting an international audience in the foreign markets, meanwhile, using digital marketing techniques without having the

local language of the target audience is a wasted resource. In contrast, adding the local language of the target international audience is the foundation of online visibility in that related market(s), though it needs to be combined with other related digital marketing techniques in order to create an effective approach for e-retailers to target foreign markets and attract the right audience.

With Supportive DMT	Wasted Resource	Optimal Combination
	Passive Approach	Foundation
Without Supportive DMT	Unilingual Webshop	Multilingual Webshop

Figure 18: The effectiveness matrix of attracting a proper international audience.

## 5.1 Suggestions for further research

Based on the literature review and the interviews with the experts, there could be a host of opportunities for online business in the international context due to the digitalization and global nature of the internet. However, as there are different aspects that might impact the internationalization of e-retailing business, this thesis mainly studied the lingual aspect of the commercial website, therefore, further research from the digital marketing and technological aspect might be a valuable extension for this study. However, as the objective of this research was related to the internationalization concept in e-retailing business and was based on the research questions and the applied methodology, it was not possible to cover related digital marketing techniques in this research (even though it could have made the research more coherent). In that context, it is recommended to conduct further research regarding the impact of the Search Engine Marketing on online visibility and the conversion rate of an e-retailing multilingual-website in certain market(s) in order to design a paradigm for the Finnish e-retailers on how to act when they consider targeting a foreign market and what the results might be.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The online cross-border shopping has become a global phenomenon, yet, the role of the local languages of target foreign markets could be undervalued when treated as an element embedded within the cultural distance. In e-retailing business (when the strategy to expand to a new market is in place), the multilingual website would be a valuable competence that might have a significant impact on attracting relevant international audience, increasing international web-traffic, and on marketing the webshops into foreign markets through improving the online visibility, the Website Usability (WU), and the shopping experience. Nonetheless, due to the volume of the internet data and the different aspects of online search (e.g. Search Engine algorithms, Website Content, Keywords, SERP Ranking, Search pattern, search location), additional digital marketing techniques are required.

Considering the Website's Multilingualism as a basis for the e-retailers' capability to interact with the related international audience does not mean it could stand alone, but it is the foundation on which all other supportive marketing techniques (ex. inbound marketing activities) are built on to improve the effectiveness of the webshops on attracting the right audience in the right locations through the right content in international context.

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## APPENDICES

1. Interview Guide (used during the expert interviews).
2. Transcription of the interview with Mr. Hasan Shibly, Global Program Manager at Lionbridge Technologies, Inc in 06. Mar.2018 at Lionbridge office located in Hervanta-Tampere.
3. Transcription of the interview with Ms. Annaelisa Huhtala, Digital Marketing Specialist - Multilingual Communication Services at AAC GLOBAL OY, in 16. Mar.2018 at ACCGLOBAL office located in Ruoholahti-Helsinki.
4. Emails shared with the author by the interviewed experts.
5. Web-data analysis reports for the 27 Finnish e-retailing websites (extracted from SimilarWeb analysis platform).
6. Web analytics reports and metrics for both designed e-retailing websites (webshops) extracted from google analytics platform.
7. The content of the designed webshops in different languages (Finnish, English and German).