

Report on the
Comparative Strategy Critique

on

**Indian Localized Version of Yahoo!
&
American Version of Yahoo!**

Presented to

Ulrike Irmeler

Human Centered Design & Engineering

University of Washington

By

Faria Bhatti, MS-HCDE

International Technical Communication, TC 512

Human Centered Design & Engineering

17 February 2009

1.0 – OVERVIEW

Web site localization is a major industry focus area in India, and it ranks as the #1 area in anticipated growth. Skills required to successfully localize websites include translation and editing combine with cultural understanding of the intended target market. Designers need to focus on the core of localization strategy and base it on the Indian media and the Indian religion (Hindu) in order to optimize localization, prepare and organize web file structures to streamline the process, understand test localized site functionality and analyze browser issues. Yahoo! India team has chosen the right approach to understand the need and process of localization according to the respective user demands. Hence, a culture-centered design was created for Yahoo! India which was effectively perceived and used by the intended users. This model included an Indian multi-language framework which provided ease of use not only to Hindi speakers, but users from all over India.

2.0 – CRITIQUE

A website is an increasingly valuable medium to foster a business or a product designed for various higher missions. Thereby, it must be critiqued with rigorous standards to effectively serve the business community. The following paragraphs will provide a comparative strategy critique discussing the different aspects of the localized Indian version of Yahoo website. To present a coherent layout, this critique will follow the format of the main section 'Critique' which will include screenshots from the website and various aspects of the screenshot will be discussed. Following that will be the overall discussion of the market strategy of localized Indian version of Yahoo! and in the end will be provided a 'Conclusion' based on the findings obtained from the study and it will also present an review of the aspects that might warrant any improvement.

2.1 – CULTURE AND WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

Culture plays a key role in the localization of a product or web service. The *Yahoo! India* version of the Yahoo! website has all the language in English but the content and tone of the language is switched to the Indian culture. Two major components of the Indian culture are the Bollywood (Indian movie industry) and Cricket (famous sport). The high demand and popularity of these two attributes is clearly visible on the Yahoo! India page and information on these two topics can be located easily requiring very few clicks and avoiding any digging through the layers of content.

2.2 – LANGUAGE IN WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

It is a very essential fact of the language in India that more than 60% of the population communicates amongst themselves in English. Also,

India is one of those very popular countries where a number of languages (5-10) are spoken within the country. Usually the general public is fluent in more than one language and English is a 'must' always. One reason for that is the business of 'Call Center' where employees are required to be able to communicate in English since the employees at 'Call Centers' have to deal with international buyers and markets. At various occasions, the bosses require the employees to even change their accent according to Western accent to further facilitate the communication between the call center employee and the buyer, thereby; being fluent in English is a plus.

The direction of various languages presented in the screenshot below is in a left to right direction. Since the Indian Yahoo version is not a direct translation

of American Yahoo, text expansion does not become an issue at all.

News in : हिन्दी | தமிழ் | ગુજરાતી | ಕನ್ನಡ | മലയാളം | తెలుగు | বাংলা

The screenshot above displays the number of languages the localized Yahoo! India version can be viewed in. Not only the news, but all of the other categories are translated as well. Therefore the motive of this online community is to attract as many Indian users from all over India as possible, whereas the target of American Yahoo is to create diverse users all over the world.

2.3 – PICTURES IN WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

The designer has very cautiously used the images of different actors and actresses on the website. The images of famous actors and cricket players are visible all over the entire page. Actors like Shahrukh Khan, Amitabh Bachan and Aishwarya Rai are the most favorite of Indian people. The fan following of these actors is so high that a number of people are respecting and worshipping them like godly figures by keeping their idols in the house.



Left: Aishwarya Rai; Right: Amitabh Bachan

In the American version of Yahoo, similar examples can be found but displaying different public figures like Julia Roberts in the celebrity category and baseball in the sports' category. It can be seen in the screenshot below that how localization of sports and celebrities change as the culture changes.



2.4 – SYMBOLS IN WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

Another very noticeable strategy practiced throughout all of the versions of Yahoo! India is the use of overlaying text. It saves time and increases the understandability of different categories symbols are used for.



Presented above is a screenshot of the main categories in the websites in Hindi. All of the categories have a respective symbol as well and when mouse hovers over them, notification pop-up contains their English translation. Notice that the designer has avoided the use of any animal or body gestures, thus keeping the design very simple and avoided any sort of confusion.

2.5 – COLORS IN WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

Very soft colors are used for all the pages which seem very similar to the American English version of the website. Keeping in mind that white and black colors are considered sad or mourning colors, the use of these colors is still very frequent because the association of these colors is done with clothing only. In the Information Technology world, its use has quite expanded and isn't limited because of that color-association factor. Also, the color red is associated with power in Indian color, so the color of the name of the organization 'YAHOO! INDIA' is very suitable for this cultural notion about the color red.



2.6 – NAVIGATION IN WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

The navigation of the website is quite similar to the American English version of Yahoo. The layout is also quite similar, although the categories have changed according to the cultural demands and hot topics in the Indian culture. The navigation is made

easy to browse through the type of content that is most preferred by the Indian culture e.g., Films, Cricket etc. It can also be seen in the screenshots below that the information is readily available on these categories on the homepage of the localized Indian version.



Screenshot: English localized Yahoo! India displaying Cricket



Screenshot: Pubjabi localized Yahoo! India displaying cricket team at the top and Aishwarya Rai on bottom right

2.7 – CONTENT IN WEBSITE LOCALIZATION

Content in the Indian localized version of Yahoo is mainly about the hot topics in the nation right now. Therefore, the content is highly focused around Indian, US and Pakistani governments, Bollywood, and Cricket. As you can read the text in the center of the next screenshot says that, "Two things which can make the world or Indian world go round – one of course is love and the other is cricket." Another interesting thing to note is the middle main category titled as 'Filmy Masala.' If translated in English it would mean 'Filmy Spice.' Since Bollywood (Indian film industry) has a huge impact on the Indian people, the designer has done a brilliant job in effectively high-lighting those two aspects of the culture to attract the audience.



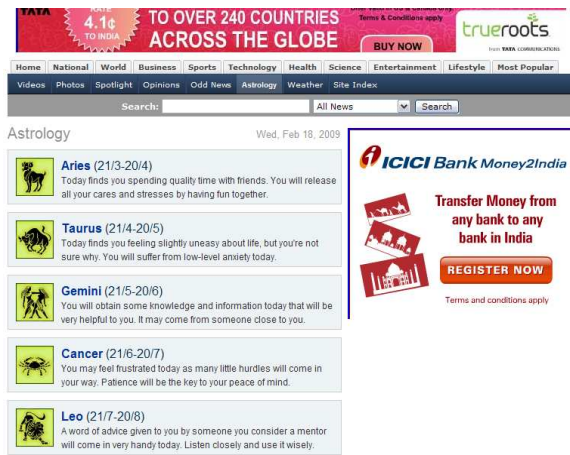
A similar example can be seen below. It is an advertisement to find appropriate matches for marriage. It is a common practice in Indian culture to get your picture along with your qualifications published in a newspaper or a website to find matches for marriage.



The Yahoo! India websites are very innate in culture, which is obvious from the advertisements as well whereas the advertisements on American Yahoo version are much broader and relateable to international audience. For example the screenshot below is from the homepage of American Yahoo and it can be seen that it is promoting education for mothers at home. Thus, the difference between Indian market strategy is less on the individualistic aspect and more on the collective aspect where it's trying to offer a match. For the American Yahoo version, it is promoting the individualistic attribute by expressing the facility of online distance education for mothers and fathers.



The screenshot below is a webpage that opens up when the user clicks on the 'Astrology' link on the homepage. Since astrology is considered a holy practice and is a part of birth-tradition in Hindu religion, Indians have a deep connection established with horoscopes. It can be clearly seen that the designer has studied not only the culture of India, but major parts of the religion as well.



I wanted to point out some other symbols and aspects of this above webpage. As you can see there are new advertisements on almost every webpage and all of them are in English, it can be said that even advertisements are localized in a way which tends to target the Indian audience through the specific products. For example, in the above case, 'Trueroots' from Tata group of Industries is a very famous calling service to India. The other advertisement on the right side about ICICI bank is very famous as well offering banking services only to Indians. Also, the different symbols used in the ad further localize the feel of the culture. The image of 'Taj Mahal' promotes the city of Agra and camels are promoting the city of Rajasthan which is known to be one of India's oldest city.

As it can be seen in the next screenshot that the translator has formatted the way date is written because in Indian culture, the number of month is written after the date i.e., 17/2/2009. The designer has also provided notifications in the form of small pop ups which appear with each category whenever the mouse hovers over those categories. Even though the language is different now (Indian

3.0 – DISCUSSION

The Internet is a new fashion bringing new twists to the world of communication. Online communities and web services are a few examples which seem to be the future and cannot be ignored. Particularly, accessing remote markets and potential clients may be much easier with a ubiquitous front window. Yet, this window must be made understandable to the target audience and hence localized. The medium's specificities naturally have an impact on the localization process as a whole and the various aspects of Yahoo! India have been studied above in these respects.

Punjabi), the text in the pop up boxes is in English. The notification boxes also carry information about when the content of that specific category was last updated. The update date for all the categories is different and so the notification boxes further facilitates when a specific news or category was updated.



Also, if you see on the right side, the top horizontal panel of links 'Mail', 'Messenger', and 'Mobile' are not translated into Punjabi. Similar is the case with 'Web', 'Images', 'Answers', 'News', 'Sign-up', 'Sign-In' etc. I do not fully understand the motive behind it but I think the translator has left them in English on purpose with the notion of making these buttons "standard buttons" and implying it on the audience to learn them in English. Another very interesting similar fact is the presence of the advertisement in English right below the English panel of links. The color orange is considered to be holy and sacred, hence the use of it in the design. Since all the ads are in English, the translator is may be intending to coach the users with the English horizontal panel of links. A second approach the designer could have used is the assumption that since more than 60% population can understand basic English, the links could be understandable, although it would have been better if they were translated as well along with all of the other content present on the page.

The main strategy of Yahoo! India is to attract as many Indian users as possible from all over India. Designers have focused on culture, religion, politics, hot topics etc. All these are quite visible through the various examples given above. The language and tone used is very Indian-ized as well which makes me think that some Indian designers might have worked on the design of the various Indian localized versions of Yahoo. Each Indian language shares a similar feel throughout the pages. It should also be noted that the English version of Yahoo! India is not a translation of American version of Yahoo! Even the content is very different in both of these versions. Same goes for the English version of Yahoo! India. Following are the main specs designers and translators kept well in mind while targeting the intended stakeholders:

- Indian Yahoo present in a number of Indian language to facilitate marketing and communication
- Layout was similar across all pages which made navigation easy to follow from page-to-page and conveniently understood
- All culturally and politically hot news is provided on the front page
- Images used were of famous celebrities which audience keep close to their hearts
- Designers avoided use of any animal symbol or abbreviation of the text to avoid confusion

Hence, the designers of the Yahoo! India have studied the culture and religion of India, and then designed the website accordingly. All of the aspects were kept in mind while designing. Overall the strategy is to make Yahoo! India a complete package for all Indian users and attempting to accommodate all possible needs from movies, politics, sports to life partners on one website which obviously would attract users not just from one specific field of life, but from wherever Indian users exist and belonging to all fields of life.

On the contrary, the American Yahoo version is not only covering the American aspects of the culture, but it is also trying to keep the website user-friendly for diverse audience. For example, pictures of people from different race, market place section on main page, news section containing news from not just one or two specific regions like Indian Yahoo, but from all over the world, language used is standard English format, entertainment section containing information about Hollywood movies etc. The purpose that both of the versions are serving is quite similar, the strategy used differs due to the broad scope of American Yahoo as compared to the narrow scope of Indian Yahoo.

4.0 - CONCLUSION

The terms referring to software and web services' localization describe the process of altering products and web services for marketing to people who speak languages other than English. Localization for an online public community like Yahoo! India places high demands on the main organization (Yahoo), and requires strategic planning, proper project management, and adherence to code writing guidelines, translation, and use of unique software tools. All of these can be easily seen in the various localized versions of Yahoo! India. The localization is done very strategically and effectively in a step by step manner keeping all the main cultural and religious issues in mind.

Globalization, localization, and internationalization have been attentively used to adhere to the various aspects of this process. The adherence process includes translation, computer code design, managing projects across different time zones and cultures, using industry-specific software tools, and all the items and processes necessary to transition a product from US-specific to the target market in India. Overall, the Yahoo! India version seems to be a complete package localized in a number of Indian languages which is successfully serving its purpose for Indian users worldwide.

REFERENCES

[1] Aykin, N & Milewski, M. E. (2005). Practical Issues and Guidelines for International Information Display. Retrieved February 17, 2009.

[2] Baldauf, S. (2009). A Hindi-English jumble. Retrieved February 17, 2009, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1123/p01s03-wosc.html>.

[3] Cavanaugh, T.M., & Cavanaugh, C. (2003). Website review and revision. Retrieved February 17, 2009, from <http://www.unf.edu/>.

[4] Esselink, B. (2006). Web Localization. Retrieved February 17, 2009, from <http://www.austincc.edu/>.

[5] Esselink, B. (2006). A Practical Guide to Localization. Retrieved February 17, 2009, from http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=JwGUS1Bt36YC&dq=A+practical+guide+to+localization&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=1kpD552owF&sig=S1bbDwFq3jxTmyENDqumwfQKGaI&ei=RJSbScadDZGksQPLq8icAg&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=3&ct=result#PPA13,M1.

[6] Ebben, S. & Marshall, G. (1999). Localized Process: Globalizing Your Code and Localizing Your Site. Retrieved February 17, 2009.

[7] Kemper, S. (2008). Localizing websites and software for Japan. Retrieved February 17, 2009.

[8] Makarenko, K., Nagorniy, K. & Tkachuk, N. (2008). Software Localization in Ukraine: Social-Cultural Issues and Technological Aspects. Retrieved February 17, 2009.

[9] Nielsen, J. (2003). Top ten mistakes in web design. Retrieved February 17, 2009, from <http://www.useit.com/>.

[10] Payne, N. (2004). Website Localization. Retrieved February 16, 2009, from <http://ezinearticles.com/>.

[11] William, H. (2005). Graphics: The Not Quite Universal Language. Retrieved February 17, 2009.

[12] Whitney, S. (2002). Top ten biggest mistakes in website design. Retrieved February 17, 2009, from <http://milheimqh.com/designarticle.html>.