

Marketing in Minority Languages

A guide for businesses





Marketing in Minority Languages

Businesses in several European countries are increasingly using regional or minority languages to add value to their products and to improve their customer services.



It is widely recognised that these languages, as well as the cultures and heritage which they represent, can offer significant commercial benefits to companies in many different market sectors.

The aim of these guidelines is to offer advice on how businesses might be able to use regional and minority languages to best effect to allow them to be more competitive and successful.



The guidelines were the focus of discussions at a workshop organised by the Welsh Language Board during June 2001, and attended by representatives of 11 European language communities (see page 13 for a list).



The points raised during the workshop and the examples of best practice presented have been incorporated in the following pages.



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General principles

Increasing numbers of companies in the retail, leisure, commercial and service sectors are realising that offering a minority language service is a vital part of developing good relations with customers and clients in a particular region or country. Customers in the region or country may well support the use of the language and enjoy dealing with businesses which also make an effort to do so.

In some European countries there are statutory provisions concerning the use of the indigenous regional or minority languages in public life. Their applicability to private sector companies in most

cases arises from the basic rights of citizens to receive services in their language of choice. These rights are enshrined in the European Union Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, enacted in 1992 and subsequently signed by 27 na-

tional governments within Europe. Several governments implement policies which actively promote and support the use of regional or minority languages by companies operating within their territories. This is the case for example in Ireland, Wales, Catalonia, the Basque Autonomous Region of Spain (Euskadi) and Galicia.

However, it is important to realise that commercial organisations will need to be persuaded of the sound marketing reasons for using regional or minority languages in their businesses, as well as the

ideological, legislative or linguistic ones.

Why use a minority language in business?

- it's a USP (Unique Selling Point) which differentiates the company from competitors who don't make the effort to use the language
- it demonstrates clearly that a company is proud to be doing business in that country or region and that it respects the culture and the community
- it is a way of giving a local focus to multinationals
- it can help to attract new customers and penetrate new markets quickly
- it generates goodwill and loyalty among customers
- it improves the perceived quality of products or services
- it enhances public relations activities
- it represents best practice in communication
- it introduces an element of surprise – use of a minority language is eye-catching



What about the cost?

Contrary to the common perception, operating bilingually does not have to incur much cost – it certainly doesn't double costs. Many of the ideas in this guide can be adopted quickly for little or no additional cost.

It is important to remember that a decision to use regional or minority languages does not mean that everything has to be bilingual overnight!

The most important thing is to plan developments carefully beforehand and set priorities to coincide with existing business plans and budgets – to work within current systems and develop them.

There is a need for thorough research in order to set the overall strategy and position the company consistently. In essence, the best advice is to use basic marketing principles and incorporate the language within them, ie.

- define the product
- define the market
- define the most effective way of introducing the product to the market within the available resources



Is bilingual best?

The answer to this question depends very much on the particular language community in question.

What percentage of the population speaks or understands the minority language?

- Are there political or legislative reasons for using only one rather than both languages?
- What is the level of literacy in the minority language among speakers?

In regions where the two languages are very different from one another and the minority language is not understood by everyone, the only way to offer the general public a language choice is to provide a bilingual service.

This element of offering language choice is very important as the use of the minority language must not be perceived as excluding non-speakers. In these circumstances, best practice is to produce bilingual materials whenever feasible, which is in any case more cost-effective. Bilingual material creates more of an impact, and everyone's language choice is automatically available. Wales and Ireland are good examples of countries where this is true.

In some countries, the indigenous language may be understood by virtually all the population. The preferred option in such cases may be to use only the regional language in marketing materials, such

as TV or poster advertisements. This is seen as an important element in normalisation of the regional language. Examples of this approach may be found

in Catalonia and Galicia.



Each individual situation obviously needs to be considered on its own merits, and there are occasionally cost issues to consider. For example,

products aimed solely at minority language speakers can be marketed in that language only, through the appropriate media – newspapers, TV channels etc.

It is certainly worth ensuring that senior executives in the company are made aware of statistics regarding attitudes to the minority language. The organisations listed on page 12 will be able to help with this information. The company as a whole must be clear in its reasoning and rationale for adopting a bilingual policy. Once the management is committed to the principle, it becomes a much easier task to achieve the practicalities. It is also important that all the staff are aware of the policy and support it.



How can a minority language be introduced cost-effectively?

The suggestions in the following pages are intended to offer simple and realistic options for adopting a bilingual approach.

Everything does not need to change at once – but there are obvious opportunities for introducing the language, for example:

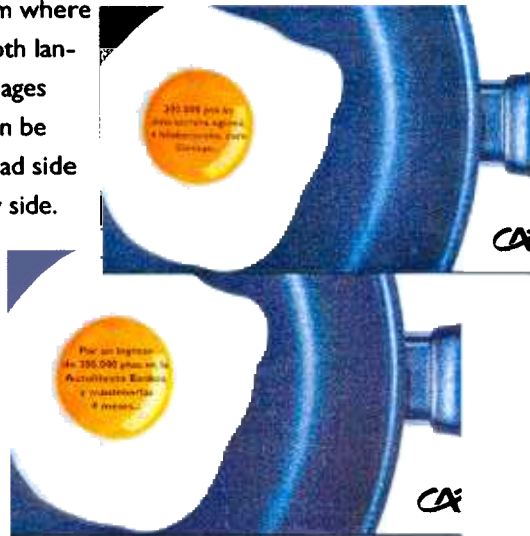
- refurbishing or opening new premises
- renewing signage
- reviewing corporate identity
- ordering new stationery
- recruiting new members of staff
- developing new products or services
- targeting new markets
- reprinting literature or creating new material
- devising new point of sale materials
- developing a website or introducing new technology
- local sponsorship possibilities
- new direct mail campaigns or newsletters

The checklist on page 13 can help to assess how bilingual a business is already, and to set priorities for the future.

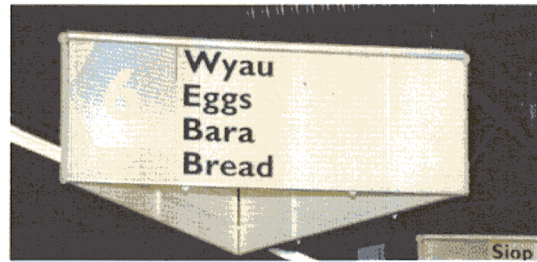
Best practice in bilingual materials



Whatever format is chosen, it is recommended that the two languages are equal in terms of size, readability and profile. The mix of text and language should allow for easy separation of the languages in bilingual documents. The preferred bilingual format in most cases is an integrated bilingualism where both languages can be read side by side.



However, the final decision will also take design issues into account, so that the most attractive



and readable option is arrived at.

If separate language versions are to be offered, the minority language version should never be of inferior quality. Both versions should be available equally easily and quickly.

Accuracy

Ideally, graphic designers and copy-writers should be able to work in both languages, so that the nuances of the minority language are appreciated by all key professionals involved.

Accuracy is obviously of prime importance in any language. Companies should not automatically expect members of staff who are minority language speakers to undertake translations unless they are totally confident and qualified. Translation is a specialist skill, and errors can prove expensive, especially on signs.



If businesses need marketing materials translated, the best advice is always to use a professional translator, even for small jobs. The contact organisations listed on page 12 can advise on finding a translator. Some will offer a free translation service for short items (signs or posters, for example) while others have linguistic advisory centres which help with terminology.



Some organisations also offer resources to ensure that the language is correct, such as word-processing spell-checkers, specialist glossaries and dictionaries.



Specific marketing tools

In this section of the pack, we consider individual marketing activities and ways in which a regional or minority language could be introduced. Examples of good practice are shown. The relative importance of each will obviously vary, depending on the size and type of organisation, business priorities, available budgets and so on. Use the suggestions here in conjunction with the checklist on page 13 to work out what is appropriate and feasible for the company in question.

International Brands

Here are two examples of multinational companies with internationally recognised brands. Rebranding the products in a minority language would obviously

be inappropriate, but the companies engender goodwill and publicity by advertising in the local minority language—Welsh in the case of Coca Cola and Irish in the case of KitKat.



VISUAL MATERIAL

The visual appearance of two languages can have a striking effect on the impression customers have of your business. It's also an easy way to start operating bilingually, even if you do not have any staff who speak the minority language.

Corporate identity

Your company logo and corporate identity convey a very powerful message about your business ethos and values. As this is the first impression the public get of the company, the bilingual element is most important. If you wish to develop a bilingual corporate identity, you should make sure that your designer is aware from the outset that you need to incorporate both languages in the logo and any application of it.

Signage

You could consider installing bilingual signage, both internally and externally; this can have a large impact for very little if any additional cost and be good value for money. In addition, how about putting the regional/minority language on your company vehicles, to take your message to a wider audience?



Local Branding—Local Names

Using a minority language conveys a strong message linking a product to the region or country. In the case of food and drink, this often creates



and impression of high quality. Here are examples of companies and products branded in Irish, Gallego and Welsh.



Many standard bilingual signs may be available off the shelf. Pictograms can also be used instead of words, where appropriate.

Many companies these days use electronic signs, on which the messages change regularly, or move across a screen. In most cases, it's a simple matter to ensure that the messages appear in two – or more – languages.

Print material – booklets, pamphlets, leaflets, flyers, posters

Marketing leaflets and booklets are relatively small documents, cost-effective to produce, and widely distributed. By preparing well-designed bilingual versions you can create a significant effect for reasonable cost, especially since these are often

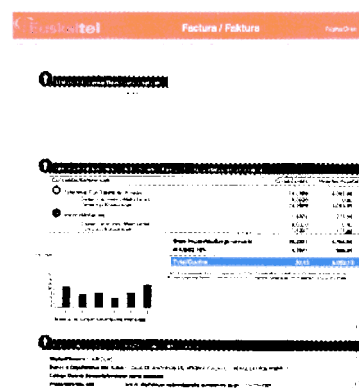


the first contact between the company and prospective clients.

Letterhead and other stationery

A letterhead, compliment slip or business card is very often a customer's first impression of your business – and a bilingual format creates an immediate impact.

Other print materials can be bilingual for little extra effort too – such as price lists, orders, response forms, invoices and receipts. What better way of ensuring that customers pay on



time than generating their goodwill with bilingual bills and invoices!

Correspondence and direct mail

Many minority language speakers feel more comfortable using that language in correspondence. The usual procedure would be for any company receiving letters in a particular language to reply using the same language, which again respects customers' language choice and generates their goodwill. By keeping records of a customer's preferred language, you can offer a more personalised service.

Direct mail is an extremely powerful marketing tool, often one of the most cost-effective in terms of generating response. By using the minority language to target areas where there is a high percentage of the population who are speakers of that language, you may well generate an even more favourable response.

If you have a range of standard letters, it's a relatively easy task to prepare different language versions of each one, with the help of a professional translator if you don't have members of staff who write confidently in both languages.

Packaging and labelling materials

If you manufacture products locally, such as food, drink or craft items, you have a golden opportunity to add value by packaging and labelling your products in the minority language of the region/country.



This attracts attention and increases customer satisfaction. Such items can be of particular

interest to visitors from outside the region, encouraging them to buy souvenirs not available at home.



ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

When using a minority language in advertising and publicity campaigns, you must ensure early in the planning process that everyone involved realises that this is to be a bilingual campaign. Planning bilingual activities from the outset is much more cost-effective than trying to add a second language at a later stage.

Press advertisements

Using a regional or minority language in advertisements conveys a very positive message. It may be possible to place bilingual advertisements in majority language publications to good effect. If

so, make sure that you get chance to proofread



the copy as errors appearing in print can be embarrassing and counter-productive.

There may be local minority language newspapers and magazines which can be an excellent medium for reaching a wide minority language audience.



Press Releases

It's definitely worth considering producing your company's press releases bilingually. They will be more likely to attract attention – and possibly a more favourable response to your company's viewpoint – from the many journalists who work in regional or minority languages. They may also encourage greater awareness and use of the minority language among some majority language press.

TV, radio and open-air advertisements

It may be possible to broadcast minority language versions of advertisements, even on majority language channels. For TV, you could consider sub-titling, or producing separate soundtracks, but you



should aim at equality between the two languages in your advertisements (see also the paragraph on bilingualism on page 5).

On minority language channels, advertisements can be shown monolingually in that language.



Information Technology

The role of IT in every business is constantly increasing, and there are a number of opportunities in this area to use minority languages. Developing a language choice option on your website is a relatively straightforward option, which conveys a clear message that you respect the principle of operating in both languages of the country or region. It is also a very cost-effective option for introducing an element of language choice. You should consider ensuring that your website address is available in both language versions.



Spellchecking software in a number of European regional or minority languages is available within Microsoft Office programs. Ask the organisations listed on page 12 for the latest information.

It is possible to adapt till software, for example, to add a message of thanks in the minority language, even if it is not possible to include all the information bilingually on a receipt. Also, it's a



relatively straightforward option to ensure that Automatic Transaction Machines (ATMs) offer a language choice which includes the local regional or minority language.



Promotions and public relations

Using the regional or minority language in promotional and PR campaigns is an extremely good way of showing that a business is anxious to support, and be a part of, the local community. There may be minority language voluntary groups – playgroups and nursery schools for instance – who need sponsorship in order to survive or develop. Supporting such initiatives can lead to a great deal of positive publicity and goodwill, as can sponsorship of cultural activities and festivals, such as the Eisteddfod in Wales or the Mod in Scotland.



FACE TO FACE CONTACT

With customers whose first language is the regional or minority language, hearing the language and having the opportunity to speak it with your staff gives you an obvious business advantage. For people who don't speak the language, whether they are from the region or not, the use of the language attracts interest and is a talking point.



There are several steps which you can consider in order to help your company to provide the best possible minority language customer interface.

Linguistic skills audit

The first step is to find out how many of your staff can speak, or are willing to learn, the language. You might be pleasantly surprised!



You should then identify those positions within your company which would most benefit from having regional or minority language speakers in them. In general, these will be those jobs with the most direct contact with the public, for example:

- receptionists;
- staff who answer the phone;
- counter staff and salespeople;
- cashiers and checkout staff.



Training

Find out how many of your staff would be interested in learning the language or in improving their linguistic skills. Your current staff are a valuable asset, and supporting them to allow them to help you to improve your bilingual service could be a very cost-effective investment.

This could vary from simple informal training, to enable staff to greet customers face to face or over the phone, to much more complicated specific requirements, depending on the needs of your business. Your first objective should be to maximise the language skills of those personnel who have direct contact with clients.



It is also important to set positive and appropriate response mechanisms in place. For example, responding with a phrase such as "I am learning [name of language]" rather than "sorry I don't speak [name of language]". This may well have training implications – in language sensitivity in addition to actual language learning.

Identifying the minority language speakers

It's one thing to have staff who can speak the language, but quite another to make sure that your



customers know where they are! You can suggest that staff indicate their ability to use the language by means of badges, desk signs and so on.



Greeting and thanking

Whether they speak the minority language

fluently or not, everyone can learn to greet and thank customers bilingually, face to face and over the phone. Minority language customers don't automatically expect a full service in that language every time they hear a bilingual greeting, but they will appreciate your efforts to use the language and to respect the principle of language choice.

Recruiting

Why not consider recruiting bilingual staff? You can note in job advertisements that you welcome applications from speakers of regional or minority languages, or you can denote some key jobs where speaking these languages is desirable or essential, as appropriate.



Many companies place bilingual job advertisements in the press. This can attract bilingual applicants for the jobs. You could also consider preparing bilingual job application forms.

Minority languages in the workplace

Even if you don't speak the regional or minority language yourself, there are ways in which you can let your staff know that you take pride in their bilingual skills. This is simply good management practice, as it increases employees' sense of identity with and loyalty to the company.



Support and encourage staff members to speak the language together at work, as well as offering customers bilingual services. This will help learners especially, to develop more confidence to use the language when dealing with customers.



If you play background music at work, what about tuning into a local station or play recorded music in the minority language – rock, traditional folk or classical.

Useful Contacts

The organisations listed below can help you with advice about using regional and minority languages in your marketing activities. Some also have resources, publications and grants to make introducing a new language easier. Click onto their websites for further information and access to resources.

Basque Autonomous Region (Euskadi)

The Basque Government's Deputy Ministry for Language Policy offers special subsidies to support the normalisation of the use of the Basque language by private companies. This support includes translating documents, training personnel and developing information technology.

Catalonia

The Linguistic Normalisation Service in Catalonia, which is a government department, offers advice and support to private companies to increase their use of the language. Through the Consorci de Normalització, a language correction and translation service is offered, as well as a helpline and company language profiling service. There are also tax concessions for companies who make a commitment to developing Catalan language policies.

Finland

Folktinget has a translation office, mostly for administrative texts.

Friesland

A CD-Rom spell-checker is available from the Fryske Akademi.

Galicia

DEPL has a linguistic advisory section which offers a translation and correction service. They have also developed glossaries of commercial and business terms. A website for glossary consultations and enquiries is in the process of being set up.

Ireland

Foras na Gaeilge provides a limited translation service in the business sector, and co-ordinates a translation service through a panel of qualified

translators. They also offer advice on bilingual design. Foras distributes specialist glossaries for the retail & food + beverage industry. It has also produced a starter pack of signage for SMEs.

Scotland

Comunn na Gaidhlig offers general advice and administers projects such as the Faile Project to promote cultural tourism and the Gaelic in the Community Scheme which invests directly to support the infrastructure of the Gaelic economy. Dictionaries and advice on terminology are also available.

Wales

Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg publishes a series of

guides aimed at the private sector in addition to a guide to bilingual design phone helpline which provides free advice and translations of short items.

Some glossaries, including shop signs and job titles, are available on the website. design awards are awarded annually in five categories and there are small grants to allow private sector companies to apply for financial assistance to produce bilingual marketing materials. spell-checker ucts.

Official Language Boards

Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg

<http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk>

Foras na Gaeilge

<http://www.forasnagaeilge.ie>

Folktinget

<http://www.folktinget.fi>

Generalitat de Catalunya

<http://cultura.gencat.es/llengcat>

Basque Language Policy Ministry

<http://www.euskadi.net>

Xunta de Galicia

<http://xunta.es>

Fryske Akademi

<http://www.fa.knaw.nl>

Other organisations

Comunn na Gaidhlig

<http://www.cnag.org.uk>

EBLUL (European Bureau for Lesser
Used Languages)

<http://www.eblul.org>

Eurolang

<http://eurolang.net>

European Commission Department of
Education and Culture

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture

List of participants in the European Workshop on Marketing in Minority Languages, Portmeirion, Gwynedd, North Wales, 25-27 June 2001

Name	Organisation
D Beaton	Canan Ltd
S Brezigar	University of Ljubljana
F Dominguez	Generalitat de Catalunya
XG Ferreiro Fente	Xunta de Galicia
S Garlatti Costa	Udine, Italy
J Gartzia Garmendia	Eusko Jaurlaritza
B Griffiths	Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg
V Hertzberg	Svenska Finlands Folkting
G Llwyd Evans	Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg
B MacCraith	Foras na Gaeilge
E Ohargain	Foras na Gaeilge
M Prys Jones	Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg
M Rannut	Tallinn Pedagogical University
G van Eunen	Sonnema
J Walter Jones	Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg

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Gwenan Llwyd Evans
November 2001



Checklist

The aim of this checklist is to enable a company: to assess its current use of the regional/minority language; to decide which elements are appropriate for its activities; to set short, medium and long-term priorities; and to draw up an action plan. The various elements are listed in the order in which they appear in the main text.

Item	Relevant for the company?	Timescale			
		Already underway	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Corporate identity					
Signage					
Print materials, leaflets etc					
Letterhead and other stationery					
Correspondence and direct mail					
Press advertisements					
Press releases					
TV, radio and open-air advertising					
Information Technology					
Promotions and public relations					
Linguistic skills audit					
Training					
Greeting and thanking					
Recruiting					
Minority language in the workplace					