An Analysis of Website Design and Localization in Saudi Arabia: The Case of Apple and Huawei

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Abstract

To date, studies that investigate and analyze the localization of tech companies' websites are still scant. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the levels of localization in Apple's and Huawei's websites on the basis of the five levels of localization proposed by Singh & Pereira (2005). In order to carry out such investigation, three external raters were asked to assess the localization of the designated websites using the said model. All of these raters have at least 12 years of experience in translation. The findings shows that Apple's Saudi website is in the highly localized level whereas Huawei's website is in the semi-localized level. It is evident from the results of this study that localization is necessary and it is locally-targeted, and thus it emphasizes the importance of creating culturally suitable websites that attract and appeal to target users' needs and expectations.

Introduction

In today's world, technological advancement paved the way for intercultural communication. However, there are cultural and linguistic barriers that stand as an obstacle to communication. These barriers are only blurred away through translation. As means of communication, companies use translation to connect to their potential customers (Gonzales, 2019). However, in some cases, translation alone is not sufficient. In order to affect and attract customers, companies need localization of which translation is only a part of it. Localization as The Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) defines it "involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/ region and language) where it will be used and sold". Targeting different customers from various cultures and languages is a complicated process that demands a great deal of effort. If a product is intended to enter a foreign market, it should be tailored to the target users' needs and expectations. This involves localizing the product in a way it seems made originally for the target users. Localization in contrast to translation is a process that goes in parallel with product development. This is because it produces approximately a new product that suits the target locale linguistically and culturally. There has been a number of literatures in marketing science has investigated whether websites aimed at different target countries differ from one another and what such impact has on the consumer (see

e.g., Becker and Eastman 2002; Gonzales, 2018; Jiménez-Crespo, 2020; Okazaki & Rivas 2002; Robbins & Stylianos, 2003; Sun, 2020; Singh & Matuso 2004). Many companies attribute their success to the right application of localization strategy. For instance, in marketing, in order to create a successful advertisement, one should use the target language and even dialects and takes inspiration from the target culture. As a result, potential customers will find it attractive and feel at ease using it. Big companies especially those in the technology sector, must pay attention to the localization of their products and websites in order to appeal to target customers' expectations. In fact, localization is still underestimated by many companies and with no doubt, this has negative consequences. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate the website localization of two of the world's biggest tech companies, Apple and Huawei in Saudi Arabia.

Statement of the Problem

Website localization poses new challenges to translators. As Esselink (2000) puts it, translation involves a limited number of steps such as terminology research, editing, proofreading, and page layout. On the other hand, localization involves different steps such as multilingual project management, software, and online help engineering, testing, conversion of translated documents to other formats, translation memory alignment management, and multilingual product support. Therefore, translators should develop skills other than linguistics ones in order to be successful localizers for products in the market.

Objectives of the Study

This study attempts to investigate the levels of localization in Apple's and Huawei's websites on the basis of the five levels of localization proposed by Singh & Pereira (2005).

Research Questions

This study aims at answering the following question:

What are the levels of localization in Huawei's and Apple's Arabic-English websites?

Research Hypothesis

In this research, it's hypothesized that the Saudi website of Huawei is only translated in contrast to Apple's website which involves a high degree of localization.

Significance of the Study

Cultural diversity makes it difficult for website developers to depend on their own instinctive knowledge or personal experiences to design usable websites between cultures (Alexander, 2019). The significance of this study is derived from two reasons. First, it attempts to analyze, and describe accordingly in an emerging field that is still in need of further investigation which is localization. Second, it provides an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge of the importance of the use of different degrees of localization in websites.

Limitations of the Study

Like any other research, this study suffers from two main limitations. First, the fact that it examines only two websites: Apple and Huawei. Second, the fact that it incorporated in the analyses a single translation model which is the Skopos Theory. Other translation models and theories such as Action and Functional theory might have been used by researchers when investigating this topic.

Literature Review
Localization

Localization is a broad term that encompasses many factors. According to Hsieh and Hong (2013) "true localization not only considers graphics, colors, symbols, terminology, date/time/currency formats and many other technical aspects of a product, but also takes into account language, customs, culture and other characteristics of the target culture market" (p. 405). Some researchers differ in defining localization yet agree upon the notion being described. For instance, Pym (2011) defines localization as "adapting features to suit a particular 'locale', which is in turn understood as a market segment defined by criteria including language, currency, and perhaps educational level or income bracket, depending on the nature of the communication." (p. 3). Jiménez-Crespo, (2013) states that "web localization is a cognitive, textual, communicative and technological process by which interactive web texts are modified to be used by audiences in different sociolinguistic contexts" (p.1). Folaron (2019) stresses the fact that technical translation and localization place high priority on crystalizing the information to the customers and users in the market world. Hence, various challenges imposed by the source text and the localization process itself (De la Cova,2016).

Vyncke and Brengman (2010) study investigated the impact of the cultural congruency of websites on measures of website effectiveness. Their results indicate that website localization cannot be seen as an isolated process but the type of products sold is an important factor to include in the decision process for localization to the customers cultural and linguistic repertoire.

Moreover, localization, as stated by Sun (2001) is carried out on two levels:

> 1) The surface level includes "adjusting the features of the product including translation, punctuation, dates, weights, measurements, addresses, currency, and so on to mirror the conventions and needs of the target audience. 2) The cultural level includes "adjusting the aesthetic appeal, images, colors, logic, functionality and communication patterns to conform to the target audience" (p. 95).

Internationalization and Globalization

Closely associated with localization are the two terms Internationalization and Globalization. The Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) defines Internationalization as "the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design. Internationalization takes place at the level of program design and document development.". Additionally, Marcus and Baumgartner (2004) define globalization as "an umbrella term that refers to all the issues involved in designing or modifying

products for audiences worldwide...we can also say that globalization combines all aspects of internationalization and localization." (256). This is in line with Sun (2012) claims that "the demand and opportunity for cross-cultural technology deign is rapidly rising due the globalization" (p.22).

Apple

Apple Inc. is an American multinational technology company specializing in consumer electronics, software, and online services. Its headquarters are located in Cupertino, California, United States. It was founded on April 1, 1976, by college dropouts Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, who brought to the new company a vision of changing the way people viewed computers. Jobs and Wozniak wanted to make computers small enough for people to have them in their homes or offices. Simply put, they wanted a user-friendly computer. (Terrell, 2021). In today's world, Apple is the largest technology company by revenue (totaling US$365.8 billion in 2021) and, is the world's biggest company by market capitalization, the fourth-largest personal computer vendor by unit sales, and the second-largest mobile phone manufacturer. It is one of the Big Five American information technology companies, alongside Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, and Microsoft.

Huawei

Huawei is a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices. It was founded by Ren Zhengfei in 1987 with a registered capital of 21,000 yuan. Its first office was a modest apartment in Shenzhen, China. At the start, Huawei was a sales agent for Private Branch Exchange (PBX) systems (Rohankumaruk, 2020). Today, Huawei has approximately 195,000 employees and operates in over 170 countries and regions, serving more than three billion people around the world. In the first half of 2022, Huawei generated CNY301.6 billion in revenue, with a net profit margin of 5.0%. The Carrier BG contributed CNY142.7 billion, the Enterprise BG CNY54.7 billion, and the Device BG CNY101.3 billion. (Huawei, 2022)

Related Studies

Sun (2001) conducted a study entitled 'Building A Culturally-Competent Corporate Web Site: An Exploratory Study of Cultural Markers in Multilingual Web Design'. The main aim of this study was to learn how cultural markers affect Web usability and identify which kinds of cultural markers are more notable to a specific group of users. The study interviewed target users and asked them about their experiences using localized Web pages on two multilingual websites: Lotus and Adobe. The findings show that culture is an important design element in multilingual Web page design. It was also found that cultural markers are noticeable in multilingual Web design, and they can increase the usability of multilingual Web pages. The study also found that users from different cultures prefer different modes of cultural markers and that the current use of cultural markers in multilingual websites is not very effective.

Mountassir (2012) carried out a study entitled 'Localization of design: the effects of country-specific graphical web design elements on the evaluation of homepages'. The study aimed at investigating the effect of country-specific graphical web design elements on the user's evaluation of homepages. In order to answer the

research question, two methods were conducted to see whether the local design had an influence on the evaluation of home pages. First, a content analysis of in total of 90 websites, from three countries (South Korea, The Netherlands, and The United States) and within three domains (news, education, and government), was conducted to explore differences in the use of graphical web design elements. Second, a user experiment was conducted to explore the effects of the country-specific graphical web design elements found in the content analysis. The findings show that twelve out of the twenty-two graphical design elements were statistically different. This indicates there are differences in the design of websites between the three countries. It was also found that country-specific graphical web design elements have an influence on the evaluation of home pages. The study also found that less interesting homepages with fewer images were appreciated less, and also that color vibrancy plays an important role in the appreciation of a website.

Alexander (2019) study investigated usability themes in high and low context cultures such as Australian, Chinese, and Saudi Arabian. He found out that cultural diversity makes it difficult for website developers to depend on their own instinctive knowledge or personal experiences to design usable websites between cultures, yet studies on cross-cultural website usability are limited and stressed the need for a cultural local adaptation. He claims that the proposed cultural adaptation closes the knowledge gap, the "divergence", regarding the relationship between culture, HCI, and website design. Broeder and Gkogka's (2020) recent study on the cultural impact of navigation design in global e-commerce shed some light on the importance of culture and localization of e-commerce design. The analysis of the results showed that the navigation design preferences are culturally affected and influence the consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, Broeder (2021) stresses the effective impact some facets of culture-specific communication styles have in consumers' attitude in high context and low context cultures where the effect of cultural hugely customers' attitude on the impact photos represented online for their marketing campaign (Broeder, 2021).

Methodology
Research Design

Because of the nature of this research, a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2012) was deemed relevant in helping answer the research questions especially targeted at social sciences (Thomas, 2022) research projects. We have adopted Creswell and Poth (2016) use of case study for our research focusing on two localization websites. The models followed in this research are the Skopos theory and Singh & Pereira's (2005) model of localization levels. In this model, there are five degrees of localization. First, standardized which means a single website for all countries. Second, semi-localized which refers to one site that gives information on many countries. Third, 'localized' which is a whole translated site for each country. Fourth, 'highly localized' which involves translations plus country-specific adaptations. Fifth, 'culturally customized' which is a new site completely immersed in the target culture. On the other hand, Skopos theory has been adopted as well. Skopos is a Greek word for purpose, which states that translation is not simply an act of linguistic transference, but rather an application of purpose. The process and approaches of

translation are determined by the purpose it fulfills which is fit our aim in investigating the websites in-focus.

Sample

We have used targeted sampling for our selection of the websites (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The two websites chosen for this research were the Saudi website of Huawei (available at https://consumer.huawei.com/sa/) and the Saudi website of apple (available at https://www.apple.com/sa-ar/). In one of these two websites, the company didn't rely on a word-for-word or literal translation of the features, characteristics, prices, etc., but rather applied some form of localization.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure in this study comprised two phases. The first phase was choosing two websites of tech companies. The selected websites were the Saudi websites of apple and Huawei. In the second phase, five different pages of the websites including the homepage, computers, smartphones, watches, and tablets were examined based on the levels of localization proposed by Singh & Pereira (2005).

Data Analysis

In an attempt to answer the research question and produce an accurate and unbiased analysis, three external raters were asked to assess the localization of the designated websites using the mentioned model. The three raters are all experts and specialized in translation and linguistics. One of whom has a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Translation, while the other two have a Ph.D. in Translation. All of these raters have at least 12 years of experience in translation.

Results

In this section, examples of all five sections examined are provided in an attempt to illustrate the accuracy of the assessment.
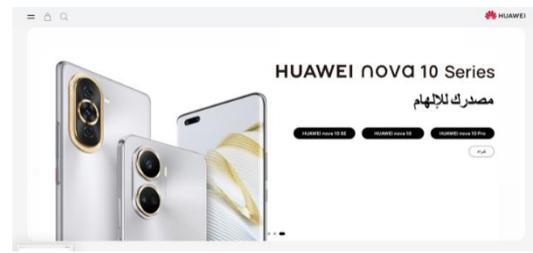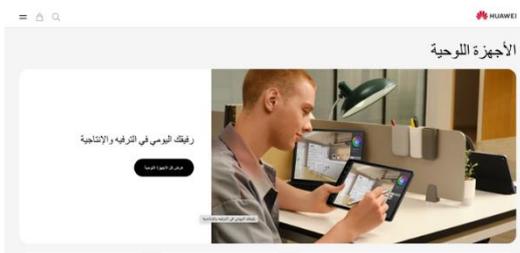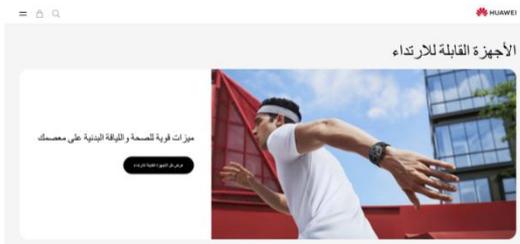
1- **Home page**
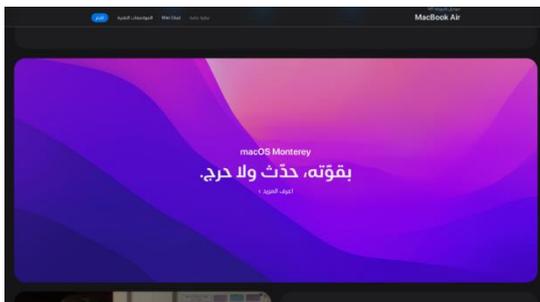**Apple:**
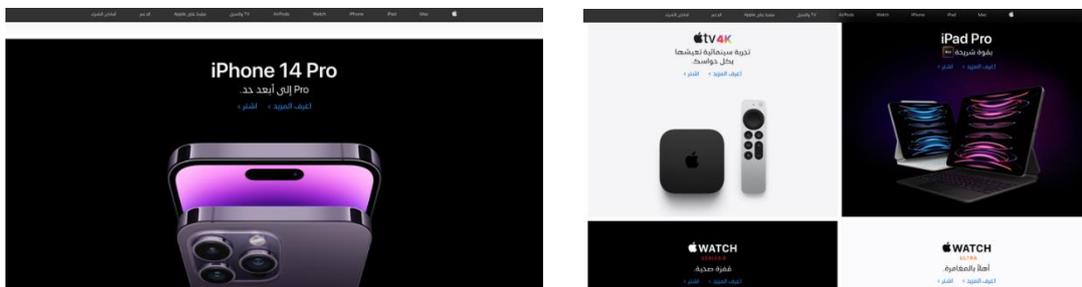
Huawei

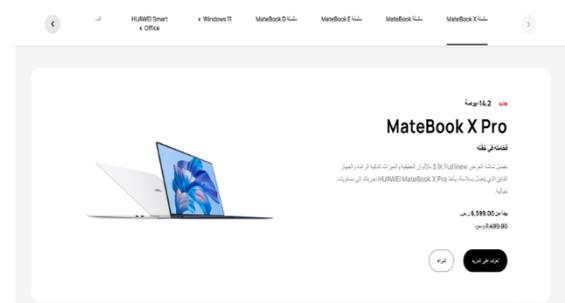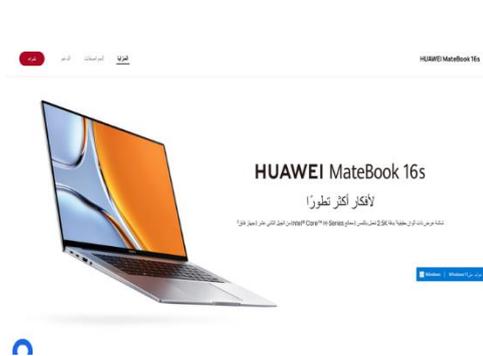## 2- Computers:
Apple
- **Power. It's in the Air.**
- **Magic Keyboard**
  Let your fingers fly.

Huawei
- **MateBook 16s**
  To Bigger Ideas
- **See Greatness in Lightness**
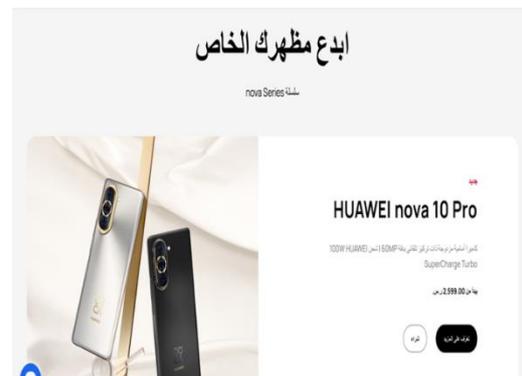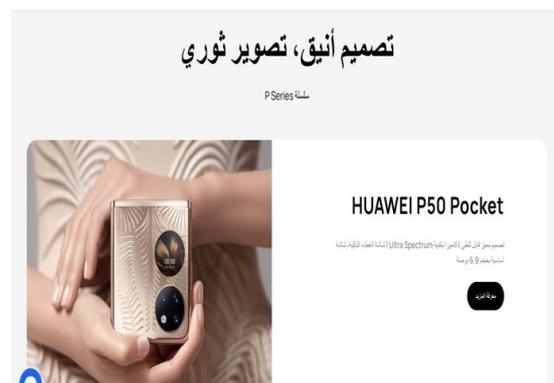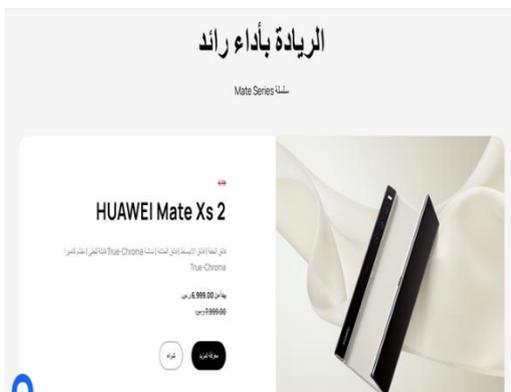

3- Smartphones:

Apple
- **Upto4x**
  the resolution. For jaw-dropping cropping.
- **The Home button you know and love.**

Huawei
- **Be inspired, Be nova**
- **Edgy Design, Revolutionary Photography**

4- Watches

Apple

- **Here's to a healthier you.**
- **Dream machine.**

Huawei

- **Wearable**

Powerful Health and Fitness Features on Your Wrist
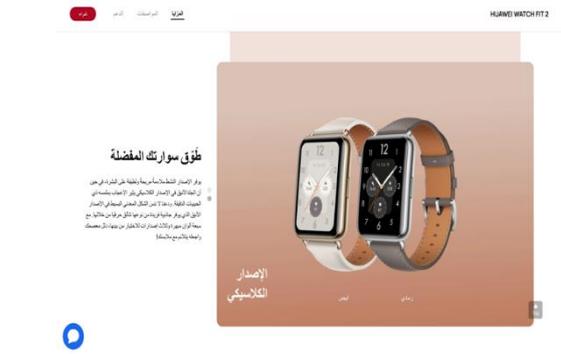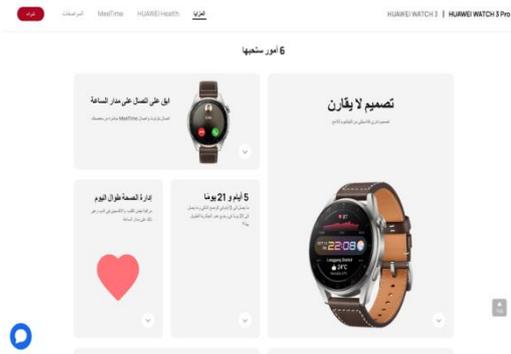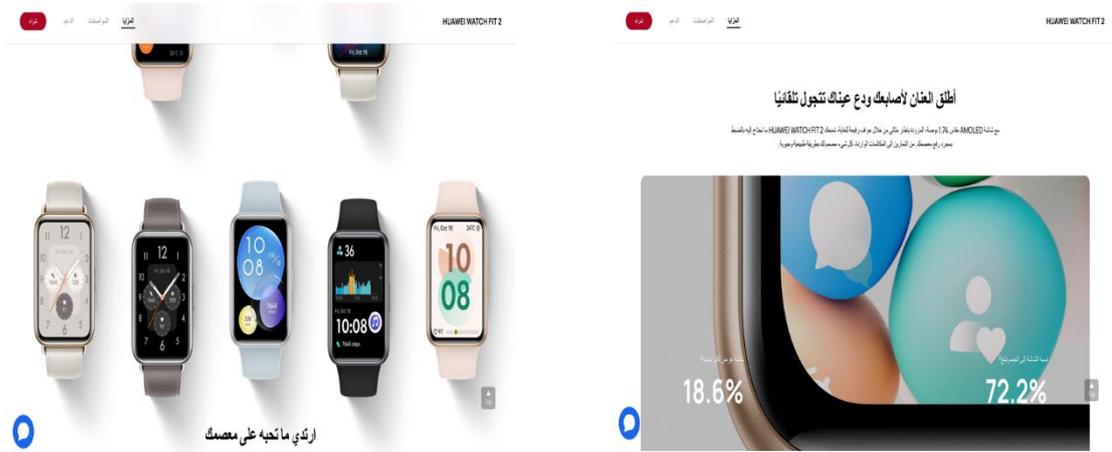
5- Tablets
Apple
- **Apple Pencil. Smart Folio. Everyday essentials.**
The magic of iPad.
In the palm of your hand.

Huawei
- **Sophisticated Design, Classy Style**
- **Premium Design, Ultimate Performance**
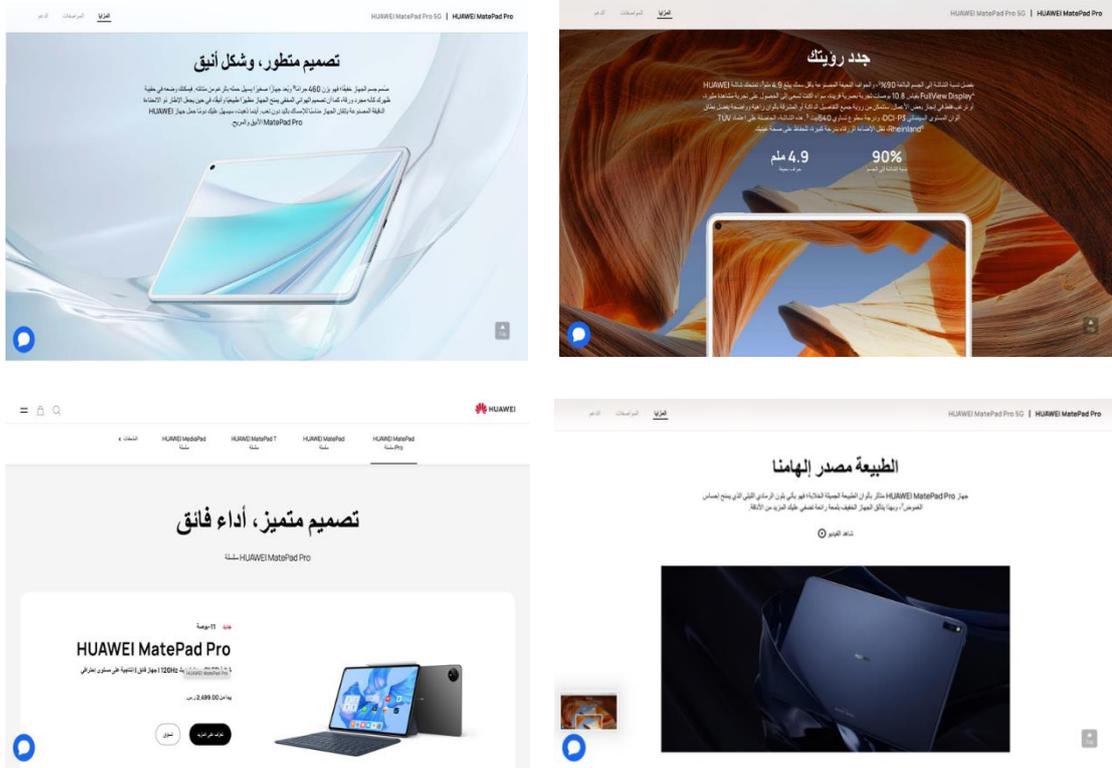
Table 1

Represents the Assessment of the First Rater

		Assessment out of 20
Home page	Apple	10
	Huawei	5
Computers	Apple	15
	Huawei	8
Smart phones	Apple	18
	Huawei	6

Table 1 (Continued)

		Assessment out of 20
Watches	Apple	17
	Huawei	5
Tablets	Apple	19
	Huawei	7

Table 2
Represents the Assessment of the Second Rater

		Assessment out of 20
Home page	Apple	9
	Huawei	6
Computers	Apple	16
	Huawei	7
Smartphones	Apple	17
	Huawei	8
Watches	Apple	15
	Huawei	6
Tablets	Apple	20
	Huawei	7

Table 3

Represents the Assessment of the Third Rater

		Assessment out of 20
Home page	Apple	13
	Huawei	7
Computers	Apple	16
	Huawei	4
Smart phones	Apple	16
	Huawei	6
Watches	Apple	14
	Huawei	4
Tablets	Apple	20
	Huawei	7

Table 4

Represents the Criteria of the Rating Scale

Rating Scale 100%				
Standardized 1-20%	Semi-localized 20-40%	Localized 40-60%	Highly localized 60-80%	Culturally customized 80-100%

Figure 1

Represents a Summary of the Raters' Assessment
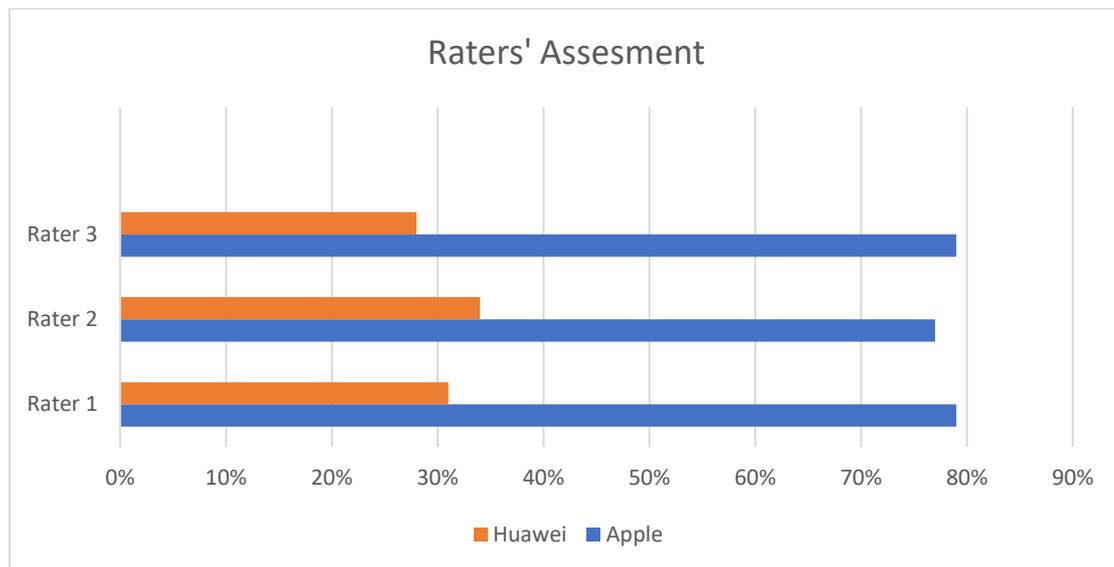
Results and Discussion

The main research question in this study aimed to determine which of the five levels of localization proposed by Singh & Pereira (2005) are there in the Saudi websites of Apple and Huawei. The investigation was carried out on five main pages including the homepage, computers, smartphones, watches, and tablets. Regarding Apple's website, the assessment of three raters was in the range of 75%-80% which indicates a highly localized level. This can be attributed to the fact that the user volume of Apple's products in Saudi Arabia is larger than that of Huawei's products. As stated in (Statista, 2022), in August 2022, the monthly share of Huawei in the Saudi Arabian mobile market reached around 11.3 percent. Apple dominated the mobile market in the kingdom with a market share of around 49.7 percent. The successful implementation of the localization strategy by Apple has affected Saudi consumers in a way that ranked Apple's smartphones as the best seller in the Saudi market.

Even though some description paragraphs are written in standard Arabic, using the Saudi dialect in the others proved to be very attractive. Additionally, the localization of Apple's website included many modifications such as changing the currencies, measurements, punctuations, names, and weights. For instance, in describing the note app in iPad mini, they wrote "iPad وكل قدراته على كيف كفك". This is a creative translation that uses a mix of the Saudi dialect and some sort of pun which aligns with "cultural adaptation" (Sinkovics et al., 2007) and "cultural similarity" (Dou et al., 2003). This proficiency of adopting such localization level gives the user the impression of feeling at ease in which it seems that the website is originally made in this language. The reason behind localizing the website was mainly to attract, impress and encourage Saudi consumers to buy the products. This supports and follows what Skopos theory states in that the aim of the translation determines which approach will be followed. As explained by Vermeer (1989), "the core meaning of Skopos theory is to (translate, interpret, speak, or write in a way that enables your text or translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and

precisely in the way they want it to function" (p. 20). On the other hand, the assessment of the Saudi Huawei website by the three raters was in the range of 25% -35% which indicates a semi-localized level which correlates to the second level in the model of Singh and Pereira (2005). This level indicates that the Huawei website is not directed only to Saudi consumers but rather gives information to many users in different countries. This website functions in all Arab countries, as it's written in standard Arabic and involves no use of Saudi-specific dialect or country-specific features. Furthermore, some basic elements were not translated as seen in watches pages, measurements units, names, and even numbers were written in English. No doubt that this has been very influential in Huawei's presence in the Saudi market as mentioned earlier concerning statistics released by Statista, (2022). This drives us to the fact that localization is closely associated with marketing (Broeder, 2021; Jiménez-Crespo, 2020). As stated by Sun (2001) "a culturally-competent multilingual website can help corporations lower the cost of entry to international trade, increase sales, create global demands, and establish a reliable, professional and international image online" (p. 95).

Conclusion and Recommendations

After analyzing the data and discussing the findings, we can conclude that the question of this research has been answered successfully based on the data analysis and discussion provided above. The findings show that Apple's website is in the highly localized level, while Huawei's website is in the semi-localized level. The findings also supported the hypothesis of this study. It is evident from the results of this study that localization is necessary for a successful product marketing, and thus it emphasizes the importance of creating culturally suitable websites that attract and appeal to target customers' needs and expectations. The findings of this study go in line with those of Hsieh and Hong (2013). They both stress that "different kinds of culturally preferred attributes should be applied on websites to target different context cultures" (p.412). For better awareness of localization importance, it is recommended for future research to investigate other world-largest companies' websites such as Amazon, Microsoft, Samsung in Saudi context. It is also recommended to investigate the impact of localization and non-localization of websites on the user decision and from the perspective of marketing. One can conclude that the digital revolution has had a profound impact on translation practices and studies (Jiménez-Crespo, 2018). As Kassawat, (2020) echoes there is a need to analyze how and to what extent transcreation is used in localization as a type of target-culture-focused translation especially in the context of Arabic in Saudi Arabia. Hence, cultural localization of websites has a potential to increase the commercial use of the websites of companies that operate or want to operate in multiple countries or regions and cultural impact on marketing (Broeder & Gkogka, 2020; Cermak & Smutny, 2018), for a better understanding of the nature of localization in the Arab market (Alotaibi & Tuhaitah, 2021)

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