



A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR MARKETERS

Using Machine Translation for Website Translation

WEGLOT

The traditional form of website translation that sees a marketing team appointing a translation agency is unable to keep up with the need for speed associated with launching content to global audiences, fast.

Resource-heavy workflows such as running through several iterations of a site in a new language, and briefing the web development team to implement changes mean marketing and digital teams struggle to align growth plans.

In recent years this outdated workflow has led to the adoption of neural machine translation with quality assurance processes to help teams launch faster and improve their translation workflow.

But machine translation still has its doubters that can't shake the historic inaccuracies

it was previously known for. The purpose of this guide is to help you, as a marketer, understand the evolution and improvement of machine translation and choose the most effective way to carry out a website translation project.

Included is real data from a report conducted by Weglot and industry-leading Nimdzi Insights where the performance and accuracy of the top 5 machine translation providers were evaluated to exactly understand the practical business impact MT has on website translation.

The main takeaway of this guide? Learn how to use machine translation alongside a blend of human translation and how to ultimately make machine translation your best ally to launch your content faster, without relying on long outdated processes.

“ Machine translation gave us an instantly multilingual website. We were able to modify the translations and then publish the content faster than with a traditional translation method.

Albert Baqués
Marketing Manager, Volcom

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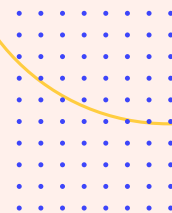
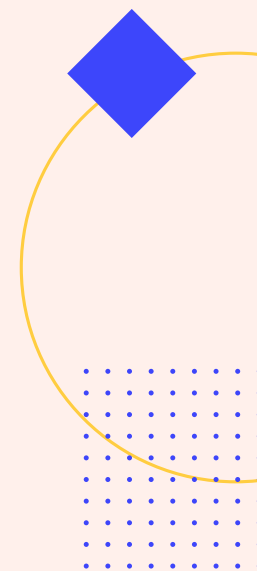
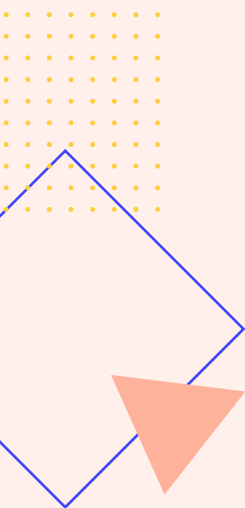
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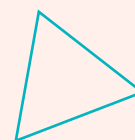
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Misconceptions about machine translation



Before discussing machine translation in more detail, it's first important to understand why we still have many misconceptions associated with MT.

We're all aware of the bad reputation machine translation has in many circles, and part of the reason is we're used to reading articles where brands have made huge errors when launching with a machine-translated website (think Amazon's launch in Sweden). Or, simply the concept of machine translation is too technical to understand, leading to major gaps in knowledge.

Even if you're willing to learn all about translation technology, you likely don't have the time.

But, let's get down to the nitty-gritty... What you do need to know about machine translation is that it actually works better than ever and can be an enormous help for your brand when launching in new markets.

In this section, we'll cover the beginnings of machine translation, the improvements and strides it's made, and where the industry is today.



THE BEGINNING

RULES-BASED MACHINE TRANSLATION

Most people think that machine translation works like this: You define rules and a dictionary for each pair of languages, then apply that information directly for word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence translation.

And yes, that is what machine translation used to be like – but it isn't anymore.

Rules-based machine translation (RBMT) didn't actually work very well at all, even though it was probably considered cutting-edge technology at the time.

RBMT was introduced at the start of the 1970s and here's what you need to remember about RBMT: Nobody handles translation like this anymore.



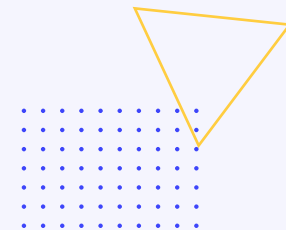
THE DEVELOPMENT

STATISTICAL MACHINE TRANSLATION

The next wave of machine translation, called statistical machine translation (SMT), breaks down sentences into multiple parts (words, phrases, structures, and/or syntactical arrangements). Then, those parts are compared to all of the examples of similar parts in the library texts.

SMT crawls huge libraries of translated text, which is called a corpus. The corpus is made up of human-translated text, which is why the results are more natural than with RBMT.

It isn't perfect though – it can still result in not-so-natural translations when there are differences in word usage or sentence structure between languages – but it's much more accurate than RBMT. And whilst this might all sound pretty good, it's still not as accurate or reliable as neural machine translation (NMT).





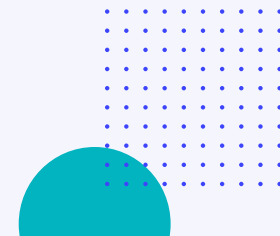
THE ACHIEVEMENT

NEURAL MACHINE TRANSLATION

Right now, NMT is the most advanced type of machine translation available. Why? Because the technology uses algorithms to teach itself how to recognize the most natural word-phrase combinations for each language.

Like with SMT, this type of translation builds on language that real people have already said or written. As a result, this is the closest simulation to the human brain we have when it comes to machine translation – at least for now.

Think of NMT as SMT on steroids. It harnesses algorithms to teach itself the most natural word and phrase combos for different language pairs. NMT regularly corrects itself, too, in order to get smarter and improve those algorithms.



2022: The state of machine translation for websites

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

According to [Free Code Camp](#), neural translation, the most advanced type of machine translation, has reduced word order mistakes by 50%, lexical mistakes by 17%, and grammar mistakes by 19% (when compared with machine translation over the last two decades).

Word order mistakes

Grammar mistakes

Lexical mistakes

0%

10%

20%

30%

40%

50%

INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS

However, to overcome perceptions, we need to understand the true capabilities of MT. Let's take a look in more detail through the topline results.

The study concluded that 85% of the machine-translated content sample was very good or acceptable in terms of usability.

The study concluded that comparing the baseline quality of different MT engines might become an obsolete practice. NMT as a technology has reached a certain level of maturity and the market-leading MT providers make it possible to translate websites to a high level of accuracy.



Average overall rating of samples and sum of reviews by overall usability (68 human reviews across all languages and engines)

INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS

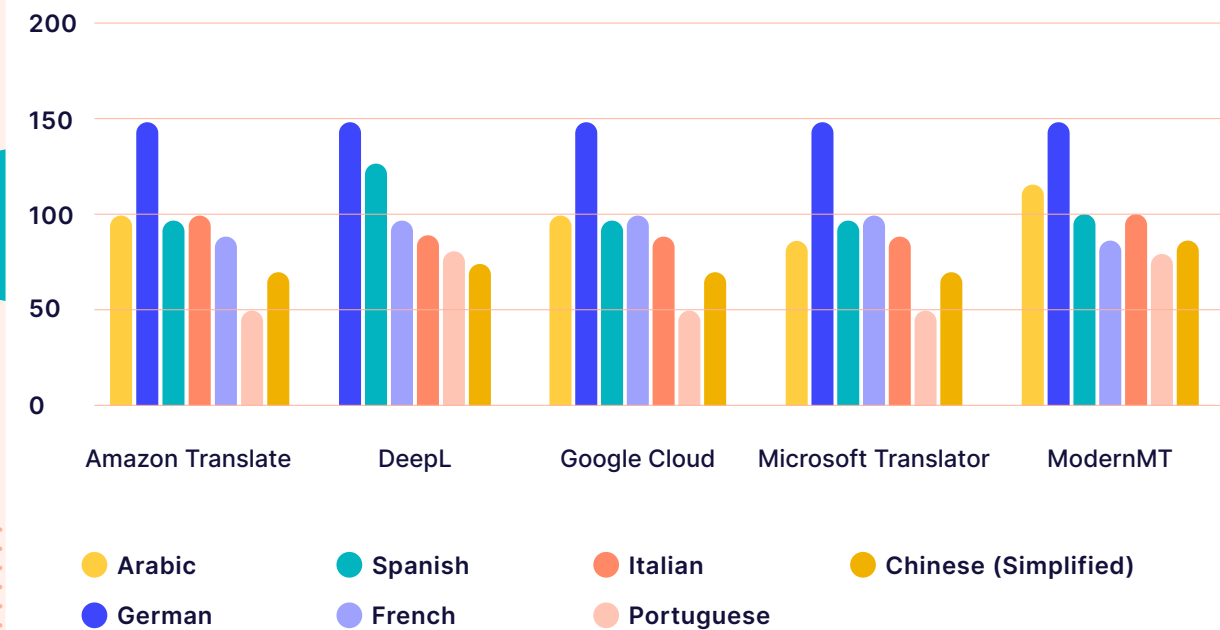
We can see this in more detail with the breakdown per language pair and the machine translation provider. Each cell of the table shows the average score of two sample reviews performed by two editors with every language scoring above acceptable on at least one machine translation provider.

	ar-EG	de-DE	es-ES	fr-FR	it-IT	pt-PT	zh-CN
Amazon Translate	2.5	3.5	3.5	3	2.5	3	3
DeepL	-	3.5	4	3	2.5	3.5	2.5
Google Cloud Translation	3.5	4	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3
Microsoft Translator	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
ModernMT	3	3	3	3	2.5	3	2.5

● Very good ● Acceptable ● Poor ● Very bad

INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS

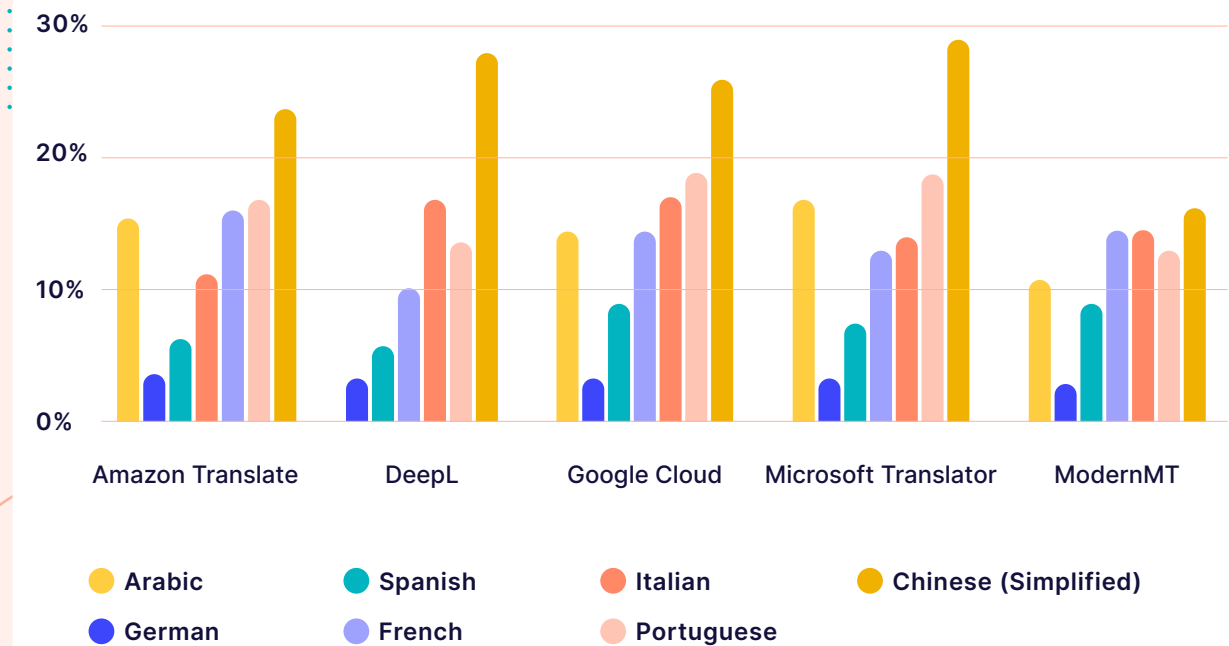
Out of the 168 translation segments sampled, the following chart identifies per language how many did not require editing and were used as they were.



de-DE no touch segments count relatively the highest, while pt-PT are relatively the lowest.

INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS

At no point in the study did the human translators have to make edits to more than 30% of machine translations across any of the language pairs and NMT providers.



INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS

It was reported by human translators that certain text fragments were translated out of context. This actually speaks in favor of machine translation because context is just as important to machines as it is to human linguists.

Human translators are usually provided with all kinds of reference material allowing them to understand the context of a given source text fragment. If you ask a translator to translate a short sentence without any context, they might make mistakes too.

How accurate is machine translation for websites then? According to Roman Civin VP of Consulting at Nimdzi Insights:

“ Machine translation has reached a level of maturity that makes it possible to translate high-volume content that otherwise would not be translated because of budget and time constraints – complementing the human linguist.

Roman Civin
VP of Consulting at Nimdzi Insights

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The value of using MT effectively lies in having state-of-the-art engines handy. In fact, it has been recently estimated that 99% of the translations produced globally are not done by professional human translators.

As this study illustrates, website translations by contemporary NMT are highly usable and require mostly minor editing.

If you intend to grow a successful, highly forward-looking organization and use machine translated content effectively, start your next strategic initiative using these revealing insights to challenge your assumptions.

EXPAND

MT is fit for **translating marketing content** like company websites.

CHALLENGE

To overcome perceptions, managers need to understand true MT capabilities.

OPTIMIZE

There's no "winner MT", there are **advanced choices** for **best business impact**.

ABANDON

A **localization model** that relies on **post-editing as a process** step is old news.

How is neural machine translation good for your website?

Naturally, the accuracy is an important factor in determining whether you'll want to use machine translation within your website translation project, however, some other fundamentals include:



QUICK MARKET FEEDBACK (TRAFFIC)

See which translated pages are getting visited right away without investing in human translation first.



QUICK CONVERSIONS

Get instant feedback on what services, articles, or transactional pages get more traffic and for which markets.



TRANSLATE FROM A BASE

Focus your translating and editing efforts on important areas of user experience, such as your homepage, your core services, and your most important traffic drivers while using machine translation as a solid starting point.



SPEED IN LAUNCHING

Launch your multilingual website instantly and test in new markets faster.



BUDGET-FRIENDLY

Machine translation is significantly cheaper than human translation. And even if you opt to use a human translator for the second leg of translation, you'll still pay less overall.

“ We take advantage of neural machine translation in our 37 languages and our global team makes quick fixes if needed. It changed our way of working and we love it.

Eric Espinoza
Product Manager, IBM

80%of revenue made
outside of France**1310**

employees

370M

revenue

How one company used Weglot to reach new markets

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THE CHALLENGE: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE 2020 ONLINE BOOM TO LAUNCH QUICKLY

The performance-focused sports brand Rossignol Group was gearing up for a European launch after booming sales in the US. They needed to translate their website into several languages: French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

To translate their website, Rossignol Group opted for Weglot, which combines human and machine translation for quicker, more accurate, natural translation.

They used Weglot for first-layer translation, then relied on their own translation team to tweak the already-translated content so it was perfect for their new audiences as speaking the customer language was the only way they'd be able to break into those markets.

THE SOLUTION: WEGLOT'S ALL-IN-ONE SOLUTION WITH MACHINE TRANSLATION AND HUMAN EDITS

Rossignol Group also smartly segmented their copy into what could be left machine translated by Weglot and what they wanted to manually edit by a human.

Human-only translation was used for copy like blog posts, brand stories, and product descriptions. Machine translation was kept for other areas of the site, like menus and sub-menus.

Overall, machine translation was used for about two-thirds of their website's content, handling an enormous segment of their copy.

Rossignol Group also used two different Weglot translation management features based on how they wanted to approach their translation workflow.

They started with the Weglot translations list to handle the bulk of their website translations.

Then, as new content was added that also needed to be translated, they relied on the visual editor for a nicer, more visual experience.

Also, both editors – the list and the visual editor – have filters that let Rossignol Group look for auto-translations and their creation date.

That made it easy for the Rossignol Group team to find content that was already machine-translated and needed to be reviewed and edited by a human specialist.

The glossary tool proved helpful, too: Rossignol Group added specific industry terms that they didn't ever want to translate, regardless of the language output. That way, they didn't have to go back in to manually change those industry terms.

Rossignol Group was able to easily launch in Europe and saw its largest conversions come out of Germany. The company also made a big impact in France post-translation and launch.

Plus, all of those international customers and potential customers were able to navigate the Rossignol Group website in their own language, which improved the customer experience tenfold.

[Read more](#) about how we worked with Rossignol Group.

Strategies for effective translation

To make the most out of using machine translation for website translation, following a certain process will ensure you can maximize its impact.

We recommend a five-step approach, involving:


1. **DO YOUR RESEARCH FIRST**
2. **USE A MACHINE TRANSLATION SOFTWARE**
3. **CATEGORIZE CONTENT AND PRIORITIZE IT**

4. **HUMAN/PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATION**

5. **TRANSCREATION**

Let's get into each one so that you can understand each stage of the process.

1. DO YOUR RESEARCH FIRST



Machine Translation Works Best for Certain Markets

Before you jump into machine translation, do your research. Where are your target markets? What languages do they speak? What is the English adoption there?

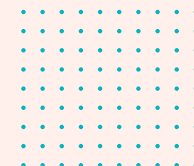
Keep in mind that machine translation is fed by large translated corpuses and the larger the quantity, the better the quality.

This means that you can expect better results from widely spoken languages such as Spanish, French or German but for a language like Icelandic, the results will not be so qualitative and

since English adoption is wide in Iceland, it makes sense to not use machine translation for this market.

Knowing your markets well will make it easier to stay focused on your translation goals and understanding which languages from the off will need more attention in the post-editing stage.

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2. USE A MACHINE TRANSLATION SOFTWARE

Handling all of Your Translations at Once

If you're running a website with hundreds of pages, including blog articles, service descriptions, and so on, translating thousands of words at once through bulk machine translation is your best choice for getting started.

What you'll need is a [website translation software](#) that includes machine translation and post-editing control. This ensures 100% of your website is detected and translated, and continuously synced when new content is added or updated thereafter.

When handling a website translation project, it's easy to see how some pages might get lost and never translated, so using a website translation software ensures this doesn't happen.

Think of this step as the detection and first layer stage. After all, it's much easier to start with some form of translation, even if it's not the quality you want from the start.



Weglot provides a first layer of machine translation from the top machine translation providers on the market to give you a quality base to start from. Use Weglot's translations management dashboard to edit, control, and approve machine translations, and add your trusted professional translators.

3. CATEGORIZING CONTENT AND PRIORITIZING IT

Segment Your Website by Content Types

Now that you have a first layer of translation for the content of your website, the next step is to focus on segmenting your site by content types to determine which pages should receive more attention in terms of human/professional translation.

This can be done in several ways, however, looking at the pages where you have the highest conversions or where you get the most traffic makes the most sense and where you'll want to spend the most time perfecting.

Important content could be your homepage, your core services pages, and descriptions, your private logins, and any blog articles that are driving significant organic traffic.

Whereas low priority content might be your menu and footer, terms and conditions, your contact page, support documents, and so on, here you can leave machine translation to do its work. When we say 'low priority' this can be interpreted as content that would be easily handled by machine translation and therefore little to no manual translation needed, or pages that don't drive significant traffic.

Of course, every website will be different in terms of priority, so draft your own hierarchy of content to define which one needs to be professionally translated.

4. HUMAN/PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATION

Working With a Translation Team to Fine-Tune the Copy

After segmenting the content of your website the next step is to bring in a human translator to read everything through, add nuances and make additional corrections to your most important pages.

This means that a lot of the heavy lifting is done by machine translation first, leaving less work for a human translator to do afterward. Human translators can intervene after machine translation because they evaluate the quality of the output and either translate from zero or clean up any problems, what we call post-editing.

It can be one of your internal team members that you invite to the project or a professional translator/agency.

Why not hire a translator or reviewer for all of the content?

Aside from the cost, you may not get the results you're after, especially when it comes to productivity.

First, human translators will take weeks or even months to finalize all translations, and their output will need to be reviewed just like that of machine translation.

Plus, recent studies have shown that editing after the first layer of machine translation resulted in 36% higher productivity than having a human

translate all of the text from scratch so machine translation can prove to be a real benefit in terms of budget and efficiency.

However, how you handle this stage of translation is important in terms of ensuring that your translation workflow is as smooth as possible. There are a few steps to this process:

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4. HUMAN/PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATION

DECIDE WHO WILL TAKE ON WHAT ROLE.

Decide whether you'll use a professional translator or bilingual members of your team. Most importantly, someone should be the project manager to ensure the translation project stays on track, is delivered on time, and that someone is managing the translators.

COME UP WITH A SET OF GUIDELINES.

To stay consistent, you should have a brand glossary and style guide to refer to. This should be developed as much as possible ahead of time to avoid having to go through the copy to make changes after it's finalized.

SET A REALISTIC TIMELINE.

Get everybody on the same page regarding start and end dates for the project, plus when smaller deliverables are due. And make sure to take each person's work and personal schedule into consideration, especially if this is a side project for some people.

COMMUNICATE WITH THE TEAM REGULARLY.

If you're not in an office setting together, real-time communication can be carried out using tools like Slack or Zoom.

5. TRANSCREATION

Translating the Essence of Language, not Just Words

Transcreation, which combines the words “translation” and “creation,” is about salvaging the essence of the message whether that be very creative content, jokes, and emotionally loaded messages.

Advanced machine translation can handle some of this, but as robots have no emotions, this is where a human translator is the most helpful.

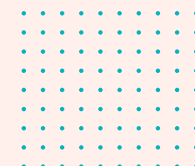
This type of translation is exactly what you’ll want your professional translator to inject into your website content to give

the same ‘local’ feeling to your translated pages. Again, this is most valuable on your most important pages such as your homepage or any high conversion landing pages.



Learn more about the concept of [transcreation](#) and how it can help improve the relevance of your content in your new markets.

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Summary

Whatever your reason to translate your web copy, there's an efficient and reliable way to do it with machine translation.

At Weglot, we use neural-based machine translation tech to translate your website so you can reach foreign audiences and expand your brand.

We combine leading services, like Bing Translator, DeepL, and Google Translate, and allow you to customize your terminologies in an automated way and to easily edit your translations so you have complete control over the quality at all times.

Machine translation isn't 100% perfect – but it's getting pretty close, and combined with a detailed human eye, your website's translations can be close to error-free.

Some brands rely on machine translation only, which can help improve website conversions, but copy accuracy is lower, which can impede the user experience and potentially have a negative impact on conversions and brand reputation.

Thousands of big brands like IBM, HBO, Volcom, Groupe Rossignol, and Nikon choose to handle human proofreading, editing, and fine-tuning of their translations after a first layer of machine translation through our solution. We believe that strikes the perfect balance – Machine translation can speed up the process of translation and handle the brunt of the text to be translated.

1

Neural technology with increasingly accurate results

2

Faster launches with immediate market feedback (quick ROI)

3

Content that's customizable on the go with internal reviewers & professionals

4

Customizable results with your terminology and your professionally translated content

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Who are we?

Weglot is a **no-code website localization solution** that allows you to **launch a multilingual website instantly**.

We both **translate and display the content of your website** removing the pain of having to manage multiple websites for multiple markets.

Manage the translation of your website translation project **in days** not months with a first layer of **machine translation** for speed and automation, then use our **post-editing features** to control the quality of your translations.

Easily **collaborate with teammates**, order **professional translators** from the Weglot Dashboard or add your own translator.

WEGLOT

