



Global SEO: Strategies for International Website Optimisation



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Taking your product or service on the road and across the pond? Boost your site's international visibility with these global SEO techniques and strategies.

What Is Global SEO?

International or Global SEO is the practice of optimising your website to attract organic traffic from international markets. As well as traditional SEO practices, it involves:

- Keyword strategies to attract various local target markets
- Content with local linguistic and cultural nuances
- Additional technical SEO (e.g., hreflang tags, geo-targeting)
- SEO best practices for all search engines (not just Google)

In a nutshell, the goal of global SEO is to ensure that your website ranks well in search engines across different regions and (more often than not) languages.

Local SEO vs. International SEO

	Local SEO	Global SEO
Target Audience	Local market	Multilingual/regional customers
Keyword Focus	Local search terms, i.e. "lawyer near me"	Multilingual/regional keywords
Content Strategy	Localised and specific to a region or city (e.g. "best falafel in Birmingham")	Localised content for different countries and languages.
Geo-targeting	Specific locations within a country	Multiple countries or regions

	Local SEO	Global SEO
Domain strategy	Single domain with location-based pages	ccTLDs, subdomains, or subdirectories
Google Business Profile	Critical for local visibility	Less relevant (but still recommend)
Cultural Considerations	Minimal market research (i.e., if you're creating content for people in same region as your own, being culturally aware/sensitive will come naturally to you)	High, requires understanding of different cultures
Search Engine Preference	Mainly Google	Google, Bing, Baidu, Yandex, etc.
Backlink Strategy	Local backlinks from regional sites	Backlinks from multiple countries or international organisations
Global SEO Analytics Tracking	A focus on local metrics	Performance across different countries and regions
Related SEO Costs	Lower, typically involves fewer resources, less content, and more straightforward keyword strategies	Higher, requires deeper market research, translations, various keyword/content strategies, additional technical optimisation, and domain management, and (usually) a higher content demand.

Is Multilingual SEO the Same as International SEO?

Not always. These two SEO approaches are similar and often overlap, but they aren't technically the same.

Multilingual SEO optimise your website for multiple languages, but the region of your target audience could be the same, i.e., a Canadian website with both English and French pages.

SEO global, on the other hand, optimises your website for different countries and regions, which takes into consideration local keyword variations, cultural preferences, and also (but not always) different languages. The international audience you're targeting may not speak different languages, as is the case if you're [optimising your tech site](#) for B2B businesses in England, Australia, Canada, and the US, *par exemple*.

Does Your SEO Need to Go Global?

The first thing to ask yourself is are you expanding into new markets and will your current content provide the local audience with the same user experience? Do your current keyword strategies match the search volume in these new regions?

There's an assumption that if you're considering global SEO, then your enterprise has hit the big leagues. That is, your business is scaling and moving beyond country or regional borders. If that's the case, international SEO is worth it.

How to Develop a Global SEO Strategy

How do you want your company to be represented in various parts of the world? How will your brand's message change, and how will your content reflect the local culture and slight nuances in keywords of your international customers?

When developing a search engine optimisation strategy to reach global markets, you'll have to take a few more factors into consideration when developing content that's not only linguistically and culturally suitable for the local target audience, but that's also tailored to the search behaviours of your target audience.

Brush up on your keyword research and strategy for better rankings. Review our guide.

TAKE A LOOK →



Although your solutions are the same, how people search for them will vary. Additionally, if you're targeting audiences in China, South Korea, and Japan, consider expanding your international SEO strategies beyond Google and Bing because other search engines like Baidu, Naver, and Yahoo! have significant market share in these regions.

Follow these steps and you'll be well on your way to developing a full-proof SEO strategy for global success:

#1: Outline Your Global Audience

So you want to optimise your website to increase your rankings and visibility (and sales, ultimately) in Singapore. But who, in Singapore, is your demographic? Narrow down your focus to the decision-makers in the new region who would be interested in your brand.

Think your target audience in Singapore is simply a carbon copy of who you're already targeting in the UK? Well, maybe in some ways, but don't assume. Do your research. There may be more differences in these global audiences than their geography.

#2: Adapt Your SEO Keyword Research for Local Search Results

It's one thing to assume that your UK audience's pain points are the same or similar to your Polish audience's pain points, but it's another thing entirely to think that both audiences use search engines the same way.

Directly translating your keywords from English to Polish is, at least in our opinion, not the clever cost-saving hack you might think. There is so much nuance to local language and culture that the subtlest word choices can make it look like you haven't done your homework. You'll have to transcreate them instead, i.e., take your translated keywords and adapt them to be more relevant and appropriate.

Even different regions that speak the same language don't always search for the same thing in the same way. Take Hoover or Kleenex, for example. In the UK, Hoover is synonymous with vacuum cleaner, but in English North America, people don't equate the two. Alternatively, North Americans say Kleenex when they really mean tissue, but in the UK, "Kleenex" is not commonly used as a proprietary eponym.

Make sure you have a list of keywords that's appropriate for the specific countries and regions you want to enter by partnering with the right people.

#3: Work with an SEO Expert to Get the Best Search Engine Results

Do you have the time, resources, and expertise to bring your international SEO efforts in house? If not, an [SEO agency](#) that has experience with global search engine optimisation can help you achieve success in other parts of the world.

With your brand knowledge and their [experience in achieving global rankings](#), you may find that working together, you'll see results faster.

Get expert advice on your international strategy without the BS.

Speak to one of our geeks about your goals.

BOOK A CALL →



#4: Create Content for a Global Audience

Now that you've developed your list of keywords for your new market (with or without the help of an SEO specialist), it's time to optimise your content.

Whether you should write brand new content or translate and transcreate existing content as part of your international SEO strategy depends on several factors, including your target market, resources, and goals.

If your target market has specific cultural, legal, or practical differences that your current content doesn't address, creating brand new content tailored to these unique needs may be more effective. And obviously, if you offer something that's unique to a particular market, you'll need to produce new content anyway.

On the other hand, if you want to keep your brand message consistent all over the world, translating and transcreating the content you already have lets you keep your brand integrity while still making sense to a local reader. Not to mention the fact that transcreation may be slightly more cost effective than starting something from scratch.

#5: Apply Technical SEO for Better Rankings

One of the definitive things that makes global SEO "global" is what you have to do during the technical optimisation process. These technical elements help Google and other search engines understand which pages to show users, so that when they click on your link, they're clicking on the most appropriate one.




We're not suggesting you implement these technical settings without prior knowledge or experience. If you don't feel comfortable applying these optimisations on your own, ask your in-house web developer or SEO team:




Implement Hreflang Tags

Use these tags to indicate the language and regional targeting of your pages to help search engines serve up the correct version to users.

Choose the Right Domain Structure

Select an appropriate domain structure for your international sites:

	Country Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs)	Subdomains	Subdirectories
Example	website.de 	ca.website.com 	example.com/it/ 
Pros	ccTLDs improve your chances of ranking well in local search results, as they send a clear signal that your content is specifically meant for users in that country.	Part of the main domain and can share some of its resources, e.g., SEO strategy.	Receives the same SEO benefits as the main domain, which presents a more efficient route to higher rankings within the region.
	Users are more likely to trust a local domain.	To some extent, subdomains benefit from the authority of the main domain, which is good for SEO.	You only need one domain registration, and your SEO strategy is more streamlined.
Cons	Each ccTLD will need to be managed as a separate website with its own domain, content, SEO strategy, etc.	Search engines might not consider subdomains as specifically targeted to a region as they would a ccTLD.	Send the weakest signal to search engines about regional targeting of the three, which means that ranking on page one will be harder.

	Country Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs)	Subdomains	Subdirectories
Example	website.de 	ca.website.com 	example.com/it/ 
	All this extra website management has a higher cost than other domain structures.	Still require careful SEO attention to ensure that the regional targeting and content are correctly optimised.	Local users might be less likely to click your global domain with a subdirectory for their country.

Optimise Meta Tags and URLs

Don't forget to 'localise' your meta titles, descriptions, and URLs for each region. It's true what they say: Google often uses whatever meta descriptions it wants, but it's better to err on the side of caution. Don't forget that your URLs need to match the translated and transcreated keywords as part of your global SEO marketing strategy.

Use Local Hosting or CDN

A Content Delivery Network (CDN) is a system of servers distributed across the world that work together to deliver your content more quickly. Faster page loads have a positive impact on UX and rankings, so consider using one.

Develop Your International Link-Building Strategy

To gain authority, credibility, and relevance in your target regions, you'll have to 'get in with the locals' in a manner of speaking. That means getting backlinks, referrals, and mentions from brands that locals within the region recognise and trust.

Here's how to approach it:

What others say about you counts for more than you think.

Learn more about link-building to find out why it's fundamental to your SEO strategy.

LEARN MORE →



Pander to the Search Engines

Once you know which search engine dominates the region you're targeting, make sure you understand their specific ranking factors, because each one might carry a different weight.

For example, Google and Baidu place a greater emphasis on backlink quality rather than the quantity. SEO global for Google Search will, therefore, have to focus more on relevance, authority, and trustworthiness of the backlinks.

Bing values quality links but you'll find it placing a greater weight on quantity rather than quality of backlinks. The reason for this is that the Microsoft search engine considers volume as a stronger indicator of popularity.

Naver, on the other hand, places more weight on content quality than backlinks, so if you're dipping your toe in the South Korean market, be sure to prioritise fresh, new, and high-quality content.

Localise Your Outreach

You'll want to obtain backlinks from sites that are recognisable and trustworthy in the specific regions you're targeting. Depending on what your niche is, this could include local news sites, blogs, and industry-related websites.

To make your site easier to pitch to local brands, you'll want to create a stack of valuable content.

Leverage Regional Influencers and Partnerships

You may not be selling products with widespread appeal, but you might still be able to find influencers who can touch on your brand, i.e., YouTube software reviewers, etc. Connecting with local influencers can lead to high-quality backlinks, which will give your international site some SEO juice.

Target Local Directories and Listings

Submit your site to local business directories and listings that are relevant in your target regions and to your niche. This step is especially important if you have satellite offices in these locations with separate business hours and phone numbers.

Optimise Your Google Business Profile

Enhance your visibility in local searches across multiple regions by setting up your Google Business Profile for all locations, or wherever your company operates.

- Use localised contact details, business hours, services, and relevant keywords.
- Actively respond to reviews (both positive and negative) and customer queries, and keep your engagement positive.
- Make sure each profile is always kept up to date with any changes in services, hours, address, and contact information. Keeping your profile regularly updated shows Google that you're still active.

International SEO Best Practices

Don't Skimp on Customer Profiling

Take as much time building out your international customer profiles as you did with your original avatar. Tailoring your content and SEO efforts to align with these new customer profiles will make your strategy much more effective.

Invest in Decent Translation Tools & Services

Look, Google Translate is obviously the easiest and cheapest way to produce foreign language pages, but it's almost too easy to look like a darn fool, especially if you're translating from or to an idiomatic language, which English famously is.

The more relevant your content is to local users, the better it will perform in search results.

Optimise for Mobile and Speed

Smartphones are used all over the world, so normal rules about page speed and performance still apply. Ensure that your site is mobile-friendly and loads quickly across all regions.

Monitor, Analyse, and Adapt

Continually monitor your international SEO performance through tools like Google Analytics and Google Search Console, and ask your SEO agency to help you set up correct tracking. Pay attention to how each region is performing, and use this data to tweak your strategy over time.

Work with an SEO Agency

We've only covered International SEO best practices on this page, but it's not enough to outrank the competitors that are already dominating regional markets. If you haven't already developed a keyword strategy and applied on-page best practices, we recommend you take a few steps back and apply some basic SEO first. Otherwise, [get in touch with an SEO agency](#) that can help you dominate search results at home and abroad.

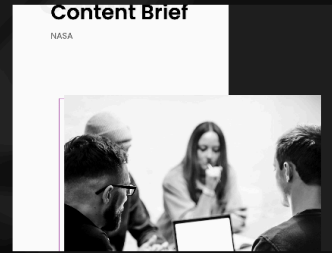
International SEO Checklist

Conduct Market Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Identify target countries and regions.<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct competitor research, analysis, and benchmarking.<input type="checkbox"/> Research local search behaviours and keywords.
Choose and Set Up Domain Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Choose the most appropriate domain structure (ccTLDs, subdomains, or subdirectories).
Implement Hreflang Tags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Add hreflang tags to your pages

	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure each page has self-referencing hreflang tags.
Translate and Localise Content	<input type="checkbox"/> Translate your website content into local languages. <input type="checkbox"/> Adapt/transcreate content and keywords to 'sound like a local'.
Optimise Technical SEO	<input type="checkbox"/> Use a CDN for faster load times. <input type="checkbox"/> Add structured data relevant to each region.
Build Local Backlinks	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner with local influencers, brands, and websites to generate quality backlinks. <input type="checkbox"/> Add your website to local business directories and niche listings. <input type="checkbox"/> Set up or optimise Google Business Profiles for each physical location.
Adapt to Regional Search Engines	<input type="checkbox"/> Optimise your site for regional search engines like Baidu, Yandex, and Naver. <input type="checkbox"/> Research and understand the specific algorithms and ranking factors of these local search engines.
Ensure Compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if your site complies with local and regional privacy regulations.

Got your international keywords? Start building optimised content with a FREE SEO Content Brief.

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FAQs About International SEO

How do I choose the right domain structure for international SEO?

It really depends on a series of factors specific to your SEO strategy and budget, but you have basically three options:

1. Using country code top-level domains (ccTLDs), e.g., .de for Germany
Using subdomains, e.g., de.example.com
Using subdirectories, e.g., example.com/de/

Not sure which domain or URL structure makes sense for your international SEO efforts? [Talk to your SEO agency for advice.](#)

What are hreflang tags, and how do I use them?

Hreflang tags are HTML attributes used to specify the language and regional targeting of a webpage. These tags help search engines understand which page version to show to users based on their language or location.

For example, if you have French content for both France and Belgium, this tag will tell Google which version to display to users in each country.

Want to start using hreflang tags? Add them to the header section of your HTML with the appropriate language and country codes (e.g., hreflang="fr-BE" for English in the United States).

Should I create separate websites for each country or language?

It depends on your goals, budget, and SEO strategy.

If you have the resources, creating country-specific websites can streamline your SEO efforts in some ways (content, user experience, etc.). If you have a really strong business presence in multiple countries, this may be the ideal setup.

However, setting your single website with subdomains or subdirectories is often more manageable and still allows for effective SEO targeting.

What tools can I use to track my international SEO performance?

There are many tools available to track the success of your SEO efforts, but generally, these tools are the most common:

- Google Search Console
- Google Analytics
- SEMrush
- Ahrefs
- Moz
- Screaming Frog

How do I manage geo-targeting in Google Search Console?

Follow these simple steps:

1. Log in to Google Search Console and select the property you want to manage.
2. Go to the "Settings" menu on the left-hand side.
3. Click on "International Targeting."
4. Choose the "Country" tab and select the country you want to target from the dropdown menu.



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