How To Create A Multilingual Website On WordPress via @sejournal, @atuljindal01

With the rise in ecommerce, we live in a borderless world. Someone sitting on one side of the world could be shopping with a business on the other.

This is cool until businesses encounter language barriers that stunt their growth in global markets.

Very few people in China can speak English. So, if your business only sells online in English, it may struggle with reaching its customers in China.

A WordPress multilingual website can help you break these barriers, tap into new markets, and reach new audiences for maximized sales.

What Is A Multilingual Website?

A multilingual website is a collection of webpages presenting information in multiple languages.

The content on such websites is translated into different languages so the website and the entity behind it can communicate with a wider audience.

Steps To Creating A Multilingual Website On WordPress

WordPress holds the largest market share among content management systems (CMS), powering 43.7% of all websites. That’s huge. And it makes sense.

WordPress is simple, accessible, and has thousands of plugins that can add unimaginable functionality to your website.

From allowing secure payment gateways to building multilingual versions of your website, there is a WordPress plugin for almost everything.

Building a multilingual website on WordPress is not just possible, it is relatively simple as well.

There are three different methods for creating a multilingual site using WordPress. I'll share a step-by-step approach for all these methods in this guide.

1. Choose Your Languages

You don't want to build a multilingual website just for the sake of having it.

You want it to be meaningful and add real, tangible value to your business. The first step towards doing that is choosing the right language.

When choosing the languages to translate your website, you should consider factors like your business type, targeted location, budget, resources, etc.

For example, if you want to expand your business, then you should find your biggest markets and target languages that are widely used by those regions (markets).

English is the internet's most popular language, accounting for 49.2% of all web content. But, simply targeting the most popular languages is not necessarily the right approach.

Canada is a good example. Suppose you're an ecommerce business and want to launch or expand in Canada. Then, should you translate your website into French, Mandarin, and Punjabi?

French is the second language of Canada and the main language

in some areas. After this, Punjabi is spoken by more than half a million people, ranking alongside Mandarin as one of the most widely spoken languages in the country.

But, are Punjabi or Mandarin speakers your target market in Canada?

It is good to start with a few high-priority languages in the beginning and for businesses working with a limited budget and resources.

2. Decide On A Domain Strategy

The next step is to decide how you want to store the translated versions of your website.

Do you want them to live on their own separate domains or stay under the main domain?

If you want the translated version of your website to have its own domain, you would want to go with a country code top-level domain (ccTLD) like:

- abc.us (for USA).
- abc.ca (for Canada).
- abc.fr (for French).

Going with a ccTLD means creating a separate website for each language.

It means multiple websites to manage, requires proper domain mapping and SEO from scratch for each site, and requires more budget and resources to successfully manage it.

So, I don’t recommend going the ccTLD route unless using geo servers is a priority or you have enough resources, team, and budget.

You can check this guide to choose the domain strategy for your multilingual website.

The next option is using subdomains.

The subdomain is the secondary domain of your main domain. It helps to organize a website and enhance user navigation.

Here is how a subdomain URL looks like:

- us.abc.com.
- ca.abc.com.
- fr.abc.com.

Subdomains may seem better than using separate ccTLD domains for each language, but Google views a subdomain as a separate website.

So, the authority you build with backlinks on the main website may not extend to the subdomains, and therefore, they may struggle to rank.

In my opinion, the best option is to use subdirectories when building a multilingual website.

Subdirectories are the subparts of your website, stored under the same domain as folders.

Subdirectories are more helpful for SEO because Google views them as part of the primary website. So, the existing authority of the website helps subdirectories rank higher in a short time period. For example:

- abc.com/us/
- abc.com/ca/
- abc.com/fr/

Subdirectories are the simplest way to create a multilingual website. That’s why leading brands, like Notion and Apple, are using it.

3. Choose The Right CMS

There are many CMS platforms to create a multilingual website, but WordPress is the most useful CMS.

It is an open-source platform that gives you full control and freedom to customize your website as much as you want.

WordPress has a strong community of users who can help build and manage a WordPress website. Also, thousands of plugins allow you to add any required functionality to your website.

If you don’t have a WordPress website, you can create one by installing WordPress on your web hosting (you can ask the hosting support team to do it for you).

Once you have a primary WordPress site, you can easily convert it into a multilingual website using one of these two options:

1. WordPress Multisite

WordPress Multisite is a WordPress feature that allows you to create multiple sites within one installation.

With a multisite setup, you can create multilingual websites using any domain strategy: ccTLDs, subdomains, or subfolders.

You need to set up domain mapping for it. You can follow this guide to properly set up domain mapping for your multisite.

When using a multisite setup for a multilingual website, you have a separate site for each language. It makes things easier to manage and optimize.

You check this guide to learn more about multisite and how to create one.

2. WordPress Plugins

Another simple option is to use a multilingual plugin. WordPress has many plugins to help you add multilingual

versions to your primary site.

Polylang, WPML, and TranslatePress are popular plugins developers use to convert a WordPress website into a multilingual one.

These plugins provide all the tools you need to translate your website's content and allow users to seamlessly switch between different versions of your website.

To use a plugin, you need to:

- Install a plugin on your website.
- Configure it according to your requirements.
- Select the languages to translate your website.

It will automatically add multilingual functionality for those languages.

4. Translate

Once your website is ready, it's time to upload content.

Remember, while translating your existing web content using machine translators like ChatGPT or Google Translate may sound like a great idea, but they will not be able to account for the linguistic nuances and cultural context.

As a result, you may end up with a substandard translation that does little to improve your website's user experience.

So, it's always better to hire professional translators who can keep the nuances of the language and cultural context in mind when translating your content.

5. Improve SEO

Your new, user-friendly multilingual website is of little value to your business if it cannot get to the people it is intended for.

You must invest in multilingual SEO to ensure your website can rank for a relevant audience, attract traffic, and take your business to new markets.

Multilingual SEO requires independent, language-specific keyword research. Find relevant keywords in the target language and see how your competitors use them.

For example, if you want to sell high-neck sweaters for men in Canada, you would want to translate your content into French and target relevant keywords.

A quick search for [pull à col montant homme] (high-neck sweater men) results in a list of ecommerce websites selling high-neck sweaters for men.

Screenshot for search for [pull à col montant homme], Google, February 2025

Now you know this could be a potential keyword you want to target in your translated website.

Besides using the right keywords, you will also have to use hreflang tags. These tags appear in the source code of your website and tell Google which language your website is in. This helps your site appear for searches in the relevant countries for the language.

Ensure the translated website is easy to navigate and offers a good user experience to maximize your SEO results.

Benefits Of Having A Multilingual Website

Building a multilingual website can be resource-intensive. You may have to hire developers and translators to help with the process. You might also have to work with locals for quality content production.

But these efforts can pay off really well if you play all your cards right.

Here are some of the benefits a multilingual website can offer:

Reach More Customers

Customers spend most or all of their time on websites in their own language.

Translating your website into different languages makes it more accessible to a broader audience, expanding your reach, driving brand awareness, and bringing more customers into the sales funnel.

Improve User Experience

All digital-savvy business owners understand the importance of personalization. But we often overlook language when building a personalization strategy.

Nothing personalizes a user’s experience more than language. When you offer your customers content in their own language, you enhance their experience.

If someone has a good experience on your website, not only are they more likely to shop, but they are also more likely to return for repeat purchases.

Better Conversion Rates

People are more likely to convert if you offer content in their language, with 76% of shoppers preferring to make purchases from a store in their native language. This is because when you speak their language, they feel more connected and understood.

Consumers who experience an emotional connection with a brand are likely to spend twice as much when shopping with them.

Competitive Advantage

Nowadays, businesses pull all sorts of levers in an effort to get ahead of their competitors. Nothing gives you a competitive edge more than having an engaged, international customer base.

With a multilingual website, your business reaches, interacts with, and sells to international consumers helping you get ahead of the local competitors.

Building A Multilingual Website: Next Step In Your Business Growth Plan

Selling to more people across the globe is becoming increasingly simple and more doable with growing ecommerce and modern technology.

But as accessible as it may become, you can never really tap into a global market unless your website speaks the local language.

This is why a multilingual website can be your gateway to becoming a multinational business.

Fortunately, WordPress makes building a multilingual website simple.

But before you get started building your multilingual website, make sure to choose the right language relevant to the most opportunity-rich market.

Always work with human translators to ensure your content is contextually relevant and culturally and linguistically accurate.

Remember, your business will only benefit from a multilingual website if it offers a good experience, accuracy, ease of navigation, and accessibility, which are all part of your user experience.

More Resources:

Featured Image: Pixel-Shot/Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/create-a-multilingual-wordpress-website/539415/