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WE THINK of the internet as the repository of all knowledge, a cloud without boundaries, stretching into infinity, available to all. We can't see any borders, so we don't think they are there. But they are and they enclose a much smaller cloud than we imagine.

As it turns out, the internet is not one cloud, but many distinct clouds, each with its own shape and color. Wisp's may stretch between some of them, but they are not really interconnected. The people who live in these clouds can usually only see within their own cloud. Most don't consider that their clouds have boundaries and they are oblivious to the existence of most of the other clouds and the people who live within them.

This is because they only see the results and pages in the languages that they search in. This may seem obvious, and it is, once you think about it, but it may not be something you've ever considered, especially if your native language is English. I know I didn't think about it until I started to use more than one language in my personal and professional spheres. Only then did I start to notice how different the results were depending on which language I was using and where I was. I am also now more acutely aware that although I may now reside in multiple clouds, there are many more beyond those that I frequent.

Even English speakers see proportionally less than they used to. Back when the internet first gained traction in the 1990s,

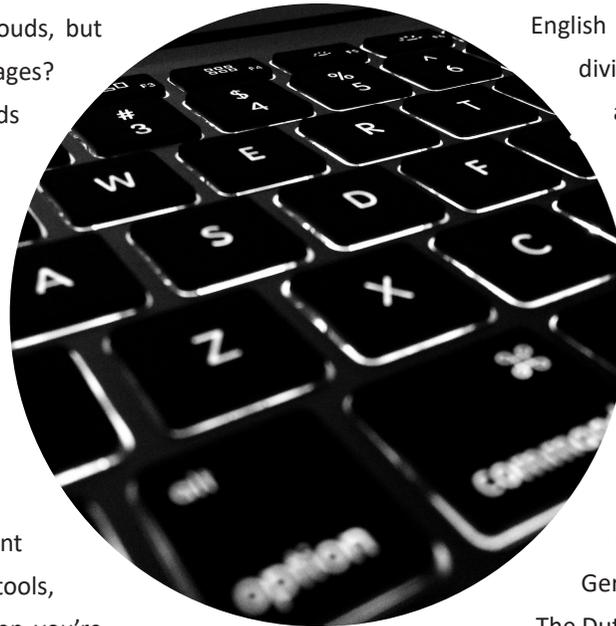
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While English is still the most prevalent language on the internet, it is growing at a slower pace than other languages.
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about 80% of the pages were in English. Some people thought then that this would mean that other languages would become less relevant, but that is far from the case. While English is still the most prevalent language on the internet, it is growing at a slower pace than other languages. When it comes to users, only about a quarter are English speakers.

It may not be surprising that English speakers are not aware of the other language clouds, but what about speakers of other languages?

While they may be aware of two clouds (English and their native tongue), they also usually only use only one language in their day-to-day life and never really consider the existence of other language clouds. They don't see the pages written in other versions of Wikipedia or the news articles on foreign news sites. Of course, they have the option to consume the content of these clouds via online translation tools, but it's hard to read something when you're not even aware that it exists!!

When researching for my book on WW2 I uncovered a Hellship that even the Dutch Hellship experts did not know about. Despite years, and in their case – decades, of research, this omission was down to the fact that each person had been searching in their native language.



It was an exception to the rule, as normally factual information such as dates and population figures are likely to be the same no matter which language you research in. The same cannot be said about the cultural or political context covered and the angles from which they are covered. The writing of history, for example, is always subjective, and that becomes very clear when you start comparing the different language

versions in Wikipedia. If you look up Indonesia in the

English version, history is a fairly brief sketch,

divided into 'Early history', 'Colonial-era' and 'Modern-era'.

In the Dutch version, there is much more focus on the Dutch role, whereas the Indonesian version reflects a greater emphasis on pre- and post-colonial history.

The Indonesian version (or its machine translation) drives home how different standpoints can be between languages, with the sentence, "During World War II, when the Dutch were colonized by Germany, Japan controlled Indonesia".

The Dutch tend to describe it as an occupation, a subtle but significant difference.

The article on Indonesia is available in 255 of the 288 languages Wikipedia offers. Of course, I can't read all of them, but even without doing so, I would bet that none of them are exactly the same. But at least a subject like a country is covered in almost all the available languages – for most articles on Wikipedia that

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Research shows that most people much prefer to shop in their own language.

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is far from the case. In fact, 71% of the articles on the site are only available in one language and 95% are in fewer than six languages. Even English speakers can't count on seeing everything as, for example, only 51% of the Wikipedia articles in German (the second largest language) are available in English.

As well as influencing what we can read about, our language clouds also provide us different online cultural experiences. On Twitter, for example, most people only interact with those who speak their language, which has led to different norms and usages of the same platform in different languages. Even those who speak more than one language act differently in social groups online depending on the language used. In China, for example, bilingual

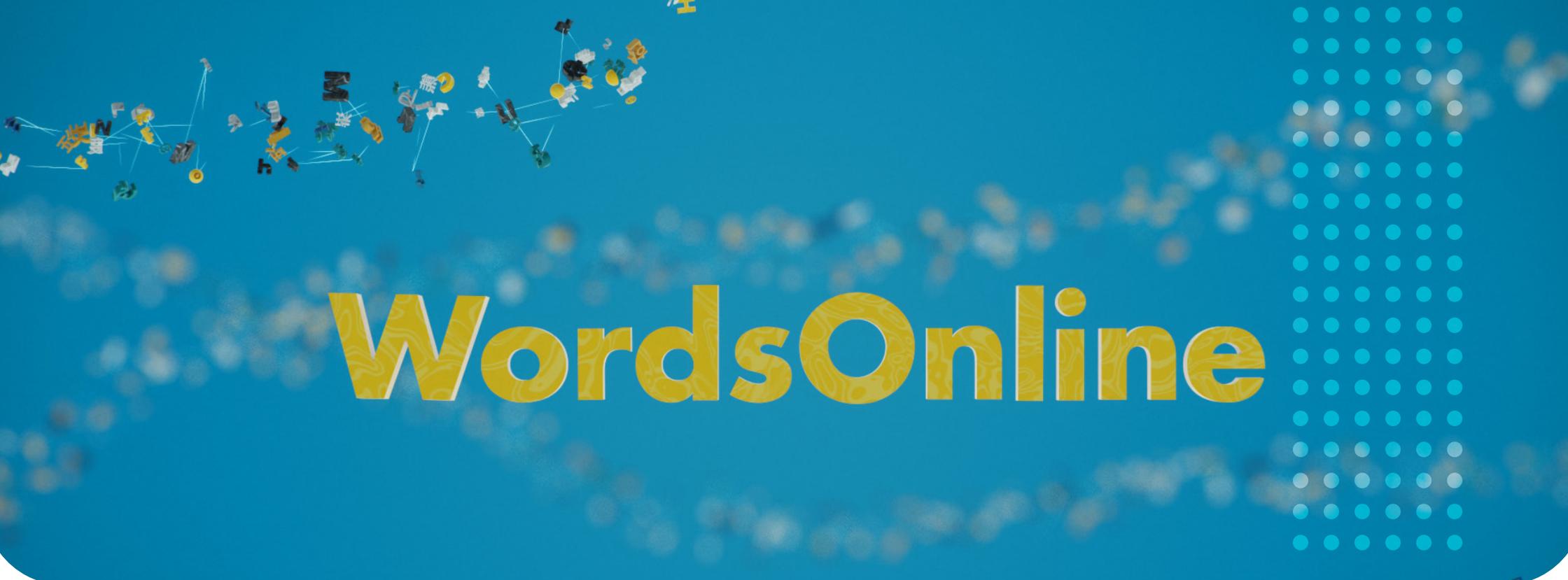
web users post more individualistically on Facebook than on the equivalent Chinese site, Renren. On that site, their posts are more likely to benefit the wider group.

Naturally, what applies to our searching and social life also applies to most

shopping. While sites like Amazon may be able to recognize searches done in multiple languages, most sites will be invisible to anyone who doesn't speak their language. If I look for a pretty dress by typing "mooie jurk", I'm only going to be presented with Dutch-speaking sites. This will automatically

exclude online clothes shops in the UK or in Germany that I might prefer, and that would be very happy to ship to me in the Netherlands, simply because it's not written in my search language and therefore wasn't included in my search results.





WordsOnline

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*...a cloud-based
AI-driven translation
platform that can
meet high volume
demands and quick
turnaround times.*
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It is not only that I cannot see sites in other languages. Research shows that most people much prefer to shop in their own language. English speakers are unlikely to look in other languages and of non-English speakers, 75% prefer to shop in their own language and 60% rarely or never buy from English language websites. Even almost 10 years ago when English was even more dominant online, nine out of 10 European internet users said that, when given a choice of languages, they always visited

a website in their own language and nearly one in five said they never browse in a language other than their own. Of this group, 42% said they never purchase products and services in other languages.

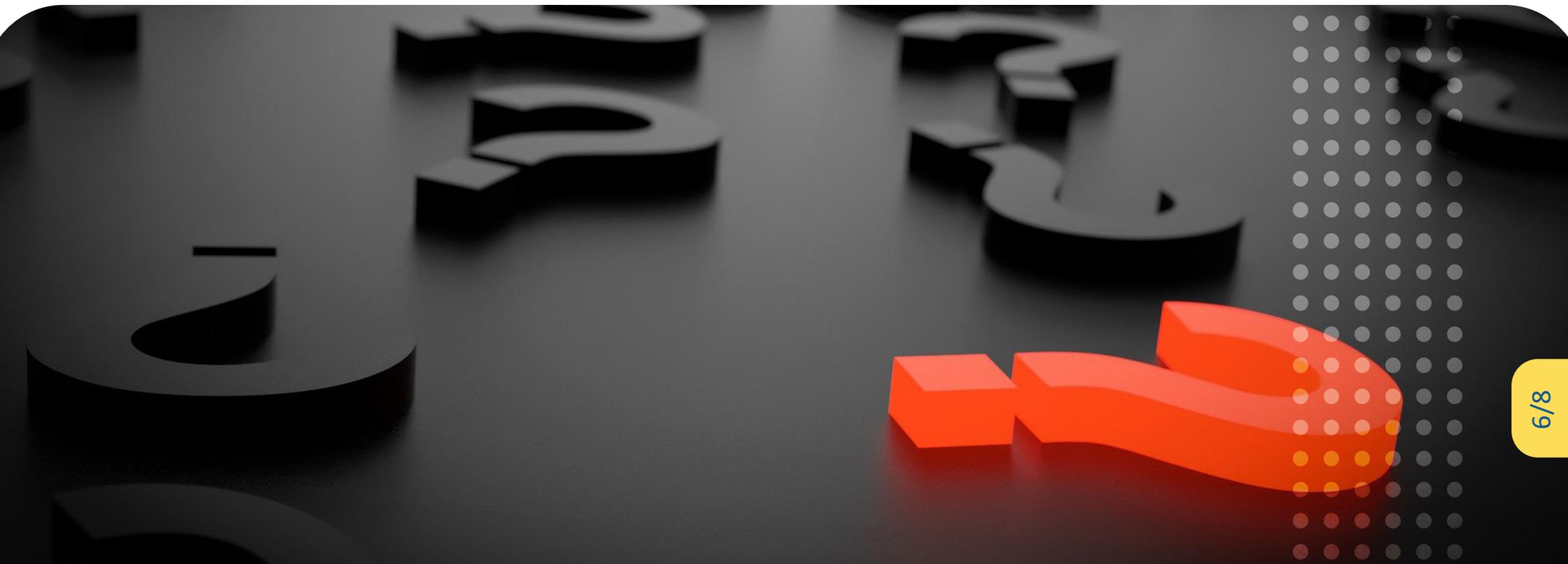
Clearly then, if you want to reach customers outside of your own country or language, you need to translate your website. Without doing so, shoppers are unlikely to find you, and even if they do, they are less likely to buy from you.

Luckily, translation services have also embraced new technologies, and it is now quicker, easier and cheaper than ever before to get your website translated. Jonckers, for example, has developed a cloud-based AI-driven translation platform called **WordsOnline** that can meet high volume demands and quick turnaround times needed for eCommerce customers. And the content can be reviewed by our certified global community of linguists.

You also need to look beyond translation and think about other changes you might make to localize your website and take your product or service into a new market. Think about questions like:

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Are you able to respond quickly to customers in their language if they have questions or concerns?
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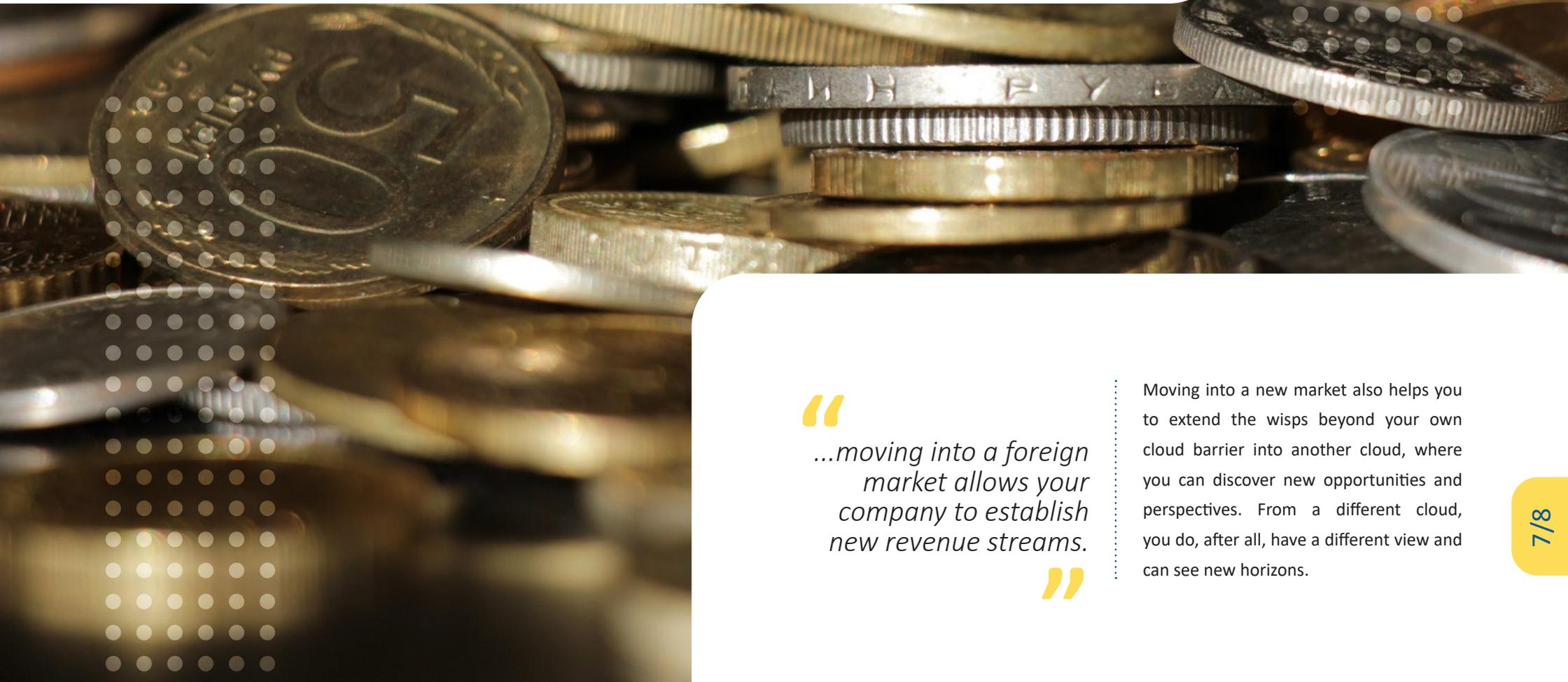
- Are there differences in culture or fashion that will impact the shape of your website? Does the website landing page reflect the customer's language? Are you thinking about SEO in all the languages?
- Are there cultural or fashion differences that affect how your product is seen, or named?
- Are your products/services in demand in other countries? Is there a potential demand if you create a market, although this means higher costs and more risk?
- Are you able to respond quickly to customers in their language if they have questions or concerns? (Hint: Jonckers can manage these translations as well)
- Can you provide invoices and receipts in a customer's language?
- If they are in a different time zone, can you respond at an appropriate time?
- How do shipping and customs work for the customer's country?
- What about online payment and financial institutions in the target country and transferring money between countries?
- How will you deal with currency fluctuations?



These questions make clear that expanding your market to another cloud requires market research and a need to find logistical solutions in addition to meeting your customer's needs in their own language. However, with current technology and infrastructure, most of these questions are relatively easily answered. Which is good

news because there are many possible advantages to checking out other clouds. For example, moving into a foreign market allows your company to establish new revenue streams. It also lets you spread the risk rather than being anchored to the fate of a single national market, and so take advantage of the growth in

other places. If you have a niche product, it can be especially helpful as it can be hard to sustain a business for these items in only one market. A new market can also facilitate new product development and give you a competitive advantage over companies doing business locally or nationally.



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Moving into a new market also helps you to extend the wisps beyond your own cloud barrier into another cloud, where you can discover new opportunities and perspectives. From a different cloud, you do, after all, have a different view and can see new horizons.



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