

# ENGLISH STILL DOMINATES THE WEB; NEW REPORT ANALYZES PRACTICES AT 400 INTERNATIONAL WEBSITES

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Survey of 25 Leading Companies In Each of 16 Countries Discovers That Most Target English-Speaking Visitors

February 4, 2004 – Despite the daily increase in the amount of content and number of users on the non-English web, nearly 90 percent of leading firms in the world's largest economies offer English as a second language on their websites. When they support just one language besides their own, that language is likely to be English.

For its report, "Design Practices for Global Gateways," Common Sense Advisory, an independent market research and analysis firm, analyzed the websites of the top 25 revenue-producing companies in 16 countries from Western Europe, Asia, and the Americas. This sample encompassed 28 market segments, including aerospace, beverages, consumer products, pharmaceuticals, retail, and telecommunications.

"We reviewed the languages that each firm listed at its corporate website," explained Don DePalma, president of Common Sense Advisory and the lead analyst. "If you include the English-speaking countries of the U.K., U.S., Canada, and Australia in the count, 98.5 percent of the companies offer some English content. If we exclude firms in Anglophone countries, English's most-favored language status drops – but by less than 10 percentage points to 89.1 percent."

The 28-page statistical analysis released earlier this year is the first in a series of Common Sense Advisory reports on this cross-border dataset of 400 firms. Besides the question of language support, the report compares and contrasts the design elements that sites use to alert a visitor to foreign-language or country-specific information. The report categorizes where that element appears on the screen; how designers signal what language is available; and whether they target languages, countries, or regions.

## Other Findings from the Report

- Companies in Anglophone countries tend to offer English-only sites. Nearly 42 percent of the U.S. companies, 50 percent of the British firms, and 80 percent of the Australian websites in the sample offer only English content. DePalma noted "these firms could point to the dominance of English in the international sample and might even take solace in the wisdom of their English-only strategies. Meanwhile, their international competitors target their customers in Seattle, Slough, and Sydney."

- Other languages have a long way to go before they catch up. The next closest languages were Spanish (21.7 percent including companies in Spanish-speaking countries, but only 6.8 percent when Spain and Mexico were excluded from the count) and French (17.2 percent including French-speaking countries, 3.6 percent when France and Canada were excluded).
- Companies worldwide prefer .com to anything else. Over half the sample favored the .com suffix for their corporate website over their national identifier (that is, .com.br for Brazil or .it for Italy). Firms in Brazil and Italy, for example, were much more likely to follow the international registrar's guidance than were other countries.

#### About the Report's Lead Analyst

In 1998 DePalma was the first industry analyst to analyze international website strategy and best practices in his oft-cited "Strategies for Global Sites" (Forrester Research). That report is the source of the most frequently quoted statistics about international marketing on the web: "Visitors linger twice as long as they do at English-only URLs; business buyers are three times more likely to buy if addressed in their own language; and customer service costs drop when instructions are displayed in the user's language."

#### About Common Sense Advisory

"Design Practices for Global Gateways" is available as part of a subscription to Common Sense Advisory's clients. Founded in 1999, Common Sense Advisory is the only research and analysis firm focusing on the localization industry. Its research insight helps planners, buyers, decision makers and practitioners improve the quality of global business and the efficiency of the online and offline operations that support it. The firm also provides hands-on consulting and training to global business teams.

Common Sense Advisory is based in the U.S., and is accessible on the web at [www.commonsenseadvisory.com](http://www.commonsenseadvisory.com). Media may request a pdf. or Word copy of the report or an interview with the lead analyst by contacting Melissa Gillespie at +1.760.522.4362 or [Melissa@commonsenseadvisory.com](mailto:Melissa@commonsenseadvisory.com)