



# Going Global with Shopify Plus



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Expanding internationally can obviously have huge benefits for your ecommerce business in terms of driving sales, revenue and growth. If you're looking to launch your brand into a new market, there are a few things to keep in mind before jumping in the deep end.

Factors including currency, language, localised customs and your site setup can all dramatically affect the performance of your online store in a new region.

To set you up for a successful expansion, we've mapped out the key considerations that should be factored into your global SEO plan.



# Decide Which Markets to Attack First

*So, you've decided to go global. But how do you know where to start?*

First, look to where you're already getting traffic, sales or engagement from – this is where you're likely to already have some degree of brand presence. You can easily gather this information in Google Analytics.

When launching into a new market, it's also important to understand what your competitors are doing by conducting an international competitor analysis. To start, look at three of your competitors in the market you're looking to launch into and assess their websites in terms of content, keyword rankings, domain authority, and any other standout factors. This will help you put together more defined SEO tactics for your own site.





# Nail Your Store Setup

*Now that you've decided where you're going to launch, the next step is to determine how you're going to do it.*

## Multi-Site vs. Multi-Currency

One way to set up your international structure on Shopify Plus is to create one or multiple new versions of your website – this is known as a multi-site setup. While this option has many benefits, it can be quite expensive and also means you'll have to spend time and effort building up the domain authority of each separate site.

Shopify Plus have recently released “multi-currency” support through Shopify Payments. This means business owners can now opt to have a single Shopify store for different regions, with the currency changing dynamically depending on the user's location. While being able to conduct international operations from a single website is great for SEO purposes, this option also comes with its disadvantages. To determine which option will work best for your business, we've compared the multi-site vs. multi-currency approach below. However, many businesses will often use a combination of the two.

## Multi-Site



- ✓ Able to change all the content on the page to make it extremely relevant to the region you're selling to
- ✓ Can accept localised payment gateways (e.g. "Konbini Pay" which is extremely popular in Japan)
- ✓ Ability to dictate product price in different regions
- ✗ Multiple sub-domains can get messy and expensive for web development
- ✗ Can create issues with the incorrect sub-domain ranking in the wrong region
- ✗ Less authority than a single site domain for SEO

## Single Site Multi-Currency



- ✓ Single site – great for SEO
- ✓ Receive all payouts in your native currency, so you can avoid timely and costly conversions
- ✓ Easily and seamlessly expand into new regions/countries without worrying about extra logistics of currency
- ✗ Unable to completely tailor content to each region
- ✗ Unable to accept payments outside of "Shopify Payments"
- ✗ Must set a single price, which Shopify converts into the user's native currency
- ✗ Less authority than a localised site



## Multi-Site vs. Multi-Currency cont.

### When to use Multi-Site

- When you need to have completely different content for different regions
- When you need local payment gateways for specific regions (e.g. Japan or China)
- When you want full control over the price of your products in different regions

### When to use Single Site Multi-Currency

- When you want to avoid confusion and make things as easy as possible
- When your main markets don't have uncommon payment gateways
- When you're wanting to advertise everywhere in the world with the same product price

## Multi-Site ccTLD vs. Subdomain

If you choose to go with a multi-site setup, this means under your root domain (www.brand.com) you will either have alternate Country Code Top Level Domains (ccTLDs) or localised sub-domains for different regions. Both options have their advantages and disadvantages, which are set out below.

Given the SEO benefits a separate ccTLD strategy affords, we recommend going with this approach. It's a good idea to get an SEO agency involved in this process to ensure your sites are set up correctly.

### ccTLDs (www.brand.co.uk)

- ✓ Much more authoritative and sends the clearest signal to search engines about your presence in that country
- ✓ Easiest way to rank locally
- ✓ A stronger, long-term solution
- ✗ Typically the most expensive to maintain
- ✗ Each site has its own separate domain authority, meaning all new domains will be starting from scratch. This necessitates localised PR efforts and link building

### Sub-Domains uk.brand.com

- ✓ Typically cheaper and easier to maintain
- ✓ Each sub-domain receives a share of domain authority from the existing site
- ✓ Slightly smaller risk of short-term negative ramifications
- ✗ Sends weaker signals to search engines, making it harder to rank organically
- ✗ Not as user-friendly (users prefer to browse locally)
- ✗ May dilute domain authority amongst sub-domains, which will make it harder for the brand to continue to grow

# Point Users in the Right Direction

*Once you've determined which store setup is going to work the best for your business, there are a number of technical elements you should input to notify Google and other search engines what websites to show to different international markets.*

## 01 Geographic Targeting with Search Console



The first step is to set up Google Search Console and set the international targeting to the main location your site will be servicing. This will ensure that the website is targeting users from the correct country, so the right traffic is arriving on your site. This is an important measure to put in place across each iteration of your site, as it will tell Google what region should receive what site within the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). If you haven't already, this would be a good time to get an SEO agency involved to ensure the targeting is set up correctly.

## 02 HREF Lang Tags

We also recommend implementing HREFLang tags to each iteration of the site. These tags help Google determine which version of your website pages to show in results pages based on a user's browser language or location. It's important for every page to have tags referencing every international version of your site to avoid misalignment issues when there are multiple versions of your site appearing in search results.

## 03 IP Redirects

When you have multiple sites set up for different regions with different currencies, it's important that the user has a seamless experience onsite. One way to kickstart this is by redirecting the user to the site within their native currency based on their IP location. Rather than using an auto-redirect, a safer option is to implement an IP detection prompting a pop-up or banner to alert the customer that they might prefer to shop in a different region. This means you'll be able to send all traffic to a single root domain without having to worry about the user ending up on the wrong site. Having the user land on a website with their native currency and potentially other localised content (e.g. imagery, copy and payment gateways) will dramatically improve your website conversion rates.



# Create a Localised Experience

*Localisation means communicating in the same way locals might speak (e.g. “shipping” instead of “delivery”, spelling the way they would spell (e.g. “grey” vs. “gray”), using local sizing metrics (inches/yards vs cms/meters or US/EU shoe sizes), and using appropriate culturally-friendly colours and imagery.*

The key to successfully launching into a new market is ensuring your website is adapted to local users. While this includes obvious things like local currencies and payment symbols, it can also extend to your content, USPs, payment options, meta-data and keywords. The changes you need to make will all depend on the region you're launching in and how similar or dissimilar it is in terms of language and culture from your existing site.



## Do Your Research



To drive organic traffic to a new international site, your brand must be discoverable by users searching for your product types. To achieve this, you'll first need to establish what local users are searching for, then expand and improve your website content to improve your visibility and rankings. Keyword and competitor research may uncover some opportunities to adjust your content throughout your site, based upon what terms people are using within the local market. When considering which keywords and opportunities to go for, evaluate what is both going to bring in the most relevant traffic, but also what is achievable for your brand. This is particularly important as all regions have vastly competitive search landscapes, so identifying keywords that offer achievable opportunity for the brand will be critical for SEO impact and driving traffic to your site.

Where your competitors have highly localised product and category pages (e.g. product language through to detailed and specific product content), you may have to adapt your own pages to compete in these markets. Failing to do this will ultimately prevent users from finding the products or information they need. Localised language should be used in the content throughout your website, as well as in your meta-data, to give your site the best chance of ranking well in international search engines.

### *An Example of Localised Language:*

*In the UK, more users will be searching for and expect to see “leggings” rather than “tights”, while in the US, these items would commonly be categorised as “pants”.*

## To Translate, Or Not To Translate

Finally, one obvious factor to consider when launching a new international site is translation. While translation by country is not always necessary, translate by market is important. For example, if the region you're expanding to speak English as a second language, there is no need to translate. However, it's still worth employing a local who understands the industry to ensure your marketing message and brand voice are mimicked. Obviously, this is particularly important if you're launching into a new market with an entirely different language and customs, as users generally feel more comfortable purchasing from sites in their native language.

*Never use Google translate - this is likely to create a negative user experience that will only harm your brand's reputation, which is the opposite of what you want to achieve.*





Launching multiple international ecommerce stores on Shopify Plus is not an easy task. However, if you have a proper strategy in place and take the right steps, you can adapt each of your stores to meet the needs and expectations of different customer segments and successfully drive growth for your business.

If you need help developing a global SEO strategy for your Shopify Plus store, contact Reload to chat with one of our ecommerce experts.

## Ready to begin your ecommerce partnership?

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