The American Lens: A Comprehensive Critique of the Cultural and Linguistic Customization of Uruguay's Official Website

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Introduction

In today's globalized world, websites play a crucial role in how a country's image is communicated to potential visitors, investors, and immigrants. For smaller countries like Uruguay, an effective online presence can significantly impact whether people decide to visit or invest; this endeavor becomes more complicated when the intended audience speaks a different language and is from a different culture.

Uruguay's website, https://www.uruguay.uy/en, features a sophisticated and modern design, elegant header videos, and persuasive copy that is meant to both attract and inform potential visitors, immigrants, and businesses from other countries. The design successfully portrays Uruguay as a peaceful, prosperous, and culturally rich country of great natural beauty. The website is available in the original Spanish as well as translated into both Portuguese and English. However, when crafting digital content for a cross-cultural audience, it is essential to go beyond aesthetics and simple translation. Website creators must consider the nuances of localization and cultural customization.

Localization refers to adapting content to meet the cultural, linguistic, and technical expectations of the target audience. For Uruguay's website, which in the case of the English version is primarily aimed at American visitors (297 million native English speakers, ~62% of the global total), careful attention must be paid not only to the visual design, but also to the linguistic choices and cultural factors that influence the user's perception and behavior. As Zhu points out, "People of different cultures hold different values, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes...If the language we use is able to meet their expectations, our target readers will be more interested in our information." (Zhu, Language Problems 61).

This paper analyzes the cultural and linguistic challenges found in Uruguay's official English-language visitor website, focusing on visual design, language use, and cultural appropriateness for American audiences. Additionally, this paper will offer recommendations for improving the website's effectiveness by incorporating principles of localization and cross-cultural communication. The discussion will be grounded in relevant theories, such as Mona Baker's translation principles, Geert Hofstede's theory of universal cultural dimensions, and practical insights from experts in the fields of technical communication and international web design.

Visual Design

Layout

Uruguay's website showcases a well-structured layout that generally aligns with web design expectations in the US. The top left corner features the website's title/home button, which is a conventional and intuitive layout for American users. The navigation bar at the top is clearly defined, providing clear paths to various sections that American visitors are likely to expect when looking for tourism, business, or cultural information. The bottom of each page features contact information through a contact form, which is also where a user would expect to find it. As Jakob Nielsen points out in his usability heuristic, "Interfaces should follow platform and industry conventions so users don't have to guess how things work" (Nielsen, 10 Usability Heuristics). When websites deviate from conventions in layout, the designers risk not only decreased usability, but also damaging their credibility. As Nielsen adds elsewhere, one of the ways that websites communicate trustworthiness is through design quality (Nielsen, Trust). To ensure quality, the design should be both aesthetically pleasing and familiar.

One notable feature of the layout is the adaptive design. When the screen is reduced to half-size, the website transforms, and the navigation bar shifts to a three-line menu, often referred to as a "hamburger menu," positioned at the top right. This design approach is increasingly popular among American websites, especially for mobile users, as it provides a streamlined and user-friendly interface.

While the design is generally effective, a critical issue is the lack of clarity around privacy. The website invites users to sign up for updates, yet it does not adequately explain what type of information users will receive, who will be sending the emails, or how frequently the updates will be delivered. The only clue is a small hyperlink at the bottom right leading to the "Privacy Policy." However, it is not clearly connected to the email sign-up process.

For American audiences, personal privacy is a significant concern, especially in the context of online communication. People from individualistic cultures like the US often place a high value on protecting personal information. As Singh says, "In individualist cultures, because personal identity is important, so is its protection. People are hesitant to share personal information with strangers" (Singh 86). To address this concern, I suggest that a modal window appear when users input their email, explaining what data will be collected, how it will be used, and offering assurances about privacy. This would help to increase transparency, allow users to make an informed decision about sharing their information, and align the website's practices with American expectations around data security.

Visual elements and graphics

Uruguay's website primarily uses videos and photographs as its visual elements, with minimal use of other graphics. Each page features a header video showing slow-motion footage

of serene and beautiful scenes from across Uruguay. This aesthetic choice is a strategic one, as high-quality video content enhances the website's sophistication and engagement, especially for an American audience. In the US, where fast internet bandwidth is widely accessible, the automatic play of such videos signals Uruguay as a modern, savvy, and opportunity-rich country. For a country like Uruguay, which may have certain political or economic associations with other more tumultuous South American nations, showcasing peaceful landscapes via well-made video is a powerful way to present the country as a safe and attractive destination.

While the header videos enhance the visual appeal and convey a rhetorical message of sophistication, they may not be universally accessible. For example, some American users in regions with lower internet speeds might experience issues with video buffering. Fortunately, the website allows users to pause the video, which mitigates potential usability issues. However, to further cater to a diverse user base, it might be beneficial to default to a paused video to allow the website to load and make the “Play” button more prominent.

The website also uses the dollar sign ($) as a currency symbol for all three versions of the site (Spanish, Portuguese, and English. This, of course, is familiar to an American audience. This is a smart choice, as the dollar sign is universally recognized. As Horton suggests, we can “take advantage of an already existing body of recognizable symbols” (Horton 158) to help bridge cultural gaps and improve user understanding.

However, not all instances of symbol and icon use are as effective. Icons are defined as “signs that look like the thing they signify” (Kimball 57). But making the assumption that signified things will be familiar across cultures is a mistake. In the “USEFUL INFORMATION” section of the “Overview” page, the use of the pound sign (#), a generic phone icon, and a hand

with an encircled dollar sign might be problematic, as they can carry different meanings in different contexts.

Calling code



The pound sign (#) is used to denote the country's "Calling code." While for some generations of Americans this is a common symbol meaning "number," it is also known as the "pound" button on a phone or a shorthand way of denoting a pound of weight. For younger Americans, seeing this might not be associated with phones, weights, or numbers at all, but rather, as a *hashtag*. Horton advises that we should avoid punctuation marks because different cultures, or even different generations within cultures, "assign them different meanings" (Horton 178). To avoid confusion and misalignment between intended and perceived meaning, the Uruguay website should instead use the generic phone icon to better align with the "Calling code" section it denotes.

Emergency telephone number



The generic phone sign is already in use to denote the "Emergency telephone number." While this may be somewhat intuitive, it does not emphasize the "emergency" aspect of the information, which is arguably the most important information in this section. To denote the number that should be called in emergencies, they should instead use the Star of Life icon, which the ems.gov website says has "become synonymous with emergency medical care around the globe" (Star of Life). The use of the Star of Life symbol, which is commonly seen in the US,

would increase clarity and international appeal, making the site more accessible to American users in an emergency situation.



Currency and exchange rate



Additionally, the icon used for “Currency and exchange rate” could be problematic. While, as mentioned, the dollar sign is internationally recognized, the use of hand gestures in cross-cultural documents is contraindicated. Horton points out that “almost every configuration of the human hand is an obscene, rude, or impolite gesture somewhere in this world” (Horton 176). Instead, the website designers could use a simple dollar sign icon.

Language Issues

Semantic and Lexical Issues

Semantic and lexical issues refer to problems with word meaning and choice. Semantic issues occur when the intended meaning of a word or phrase is unclear or misrepresented. Lexical issues involve the incorrect or awkward use of vocabulary, such as choosing a word that doesn’t fit the context or has a different connotation in the target language.

In the "Things to Do" section of the “Visit page, the phrase "Uruguay. A land of sensations that will make you quiver" is problematic. While the intended message might be to evoke excitement or awe, the verb "quiver" carries connotations of fear, anger, and even eroticism in English. This semantic misfire risks misleading or confusing American readers, who

are likely to interpret the phrase negatively. The word's primary collocates (voice, fear, chin, lips, anger) are associated with these types of emotions. For example, when someone is trying not to cry, their lip quivers. When someone is afraid, they "quiver in their boots." As Zhu observes, "Words used in different languages that seem to represent the same thing [can] actually have different cultural connotations" (Zhu, Constraint Factors 25).

The Spanish version—"una tierra de sensaciones que te hará vibrar"—uses "vibrar," which implies energy, excitement, or resonance. A better translation for the intended positive sentiment would be "A land of sensations that will thrill you," which conveys excitement and energy without the negative connotations of "quiver." Such careful attention to collocational appropriateness ensures that the translation aligns with the cultural expectations of the target audience. To avoid potentially embarrassing translations, Zhu warns that "Translators also need to pay attention to the positive/negative values…of words" (Zhu 24-25). In this case, the translators should have been cognizant of the expressive meaning of the word "quiver" instead of relying on the "propositional" meaning alone.

The issue of collocational mismatch arises again in the sentence "Ecotourism in Uruguay is the opportunity of discovering extraordinary landscapes…" found on the "Visit" page. Although this may be a direct translation from the Spanish phrase ("la oportunidad de descubrir"), the proper English construction would be "opportunity to discover." English has a collocational restriction that requires the phrase "opportunity" to be followed by "to" and a verb, not "of" and a gerund. While the phrase "opportunity of discovering" is understandable, it clearly signals poor translation and would be immediately recognized as awkward by native English speakers. As Mona Baker explains, collocational restrictions, though "arbitrary," are language-specific and must be followed in translation to avoid producing awkward or

ungrammatical phrasing (Baker 14). Such minor adjustments are essential for improving the semantic quality and fluency of the English translation.

An example of poor lexical choice appears in the phrase "Uruguay Touristic Offer" on the “Visit” page. The word “touristic” is grammatically correct but is rarely used in English, where “tourism” or “tourist” are preferred modifiers. The original Spanish says “CONOZCA NUESTRA OFERTA TURÍSTICA,” which more directly translates as “Learn about our tourist offer.” The direct translation would have been both appropriate and effective. Baker explains that near-synonyms can differ significantly in expressive force or familiarity (Baker 13). A more appropriate alternative would be “Learn about Uruguay’s Tourism Offer” or “Learn about Uruguay’s Travel Opportunities.” This adjustment would enhance the clarity and readability of the text for American readers.

The lexical issues continue with an example from the "Live" page, where Uruguay is described as “A free nation that stands out for being democratic, humane, pacific, honest, well-educated, connected, bold, and protagonist.” While the adjective “pacific” is technically accurate, it is seldom used in contemporary English. Additionally, because Uruguay is located on the Atlantic side of South America, and English speakers often associate the term “pacific” with the Pacific Ocean, this may create confusion. As Mona Baker explains, when words carry different expressive meanings, “the difference may be considerable, or it may be subtle but important enough to pose a translation problem in a given context” (Baker 22). In this case, the word "Pacific" has become so closely linked to the ocean that its broader meaning as an adjective is seldom used. A more appropriate translation would substitute “pacific” with “peaceful” or “peaceable,” terms that are more familiar to English speakers and better aligned with Uruguay’s intended portrayal as a tranquil, harmonious nation.

Finally, we also find direct translation errors, such as in the phrase “Sea wolf watching,” on the “Visit” page in the “WHERE TO GO” section. This appears to be a literal translation of the Spanish “lobos marinos” (meaning “sea lions”). Both terms, “sea lions” in English and “lobos marinos” in Spanish, are conceptual metaphors that have been lexicalized into terms for the species; yet, despite their similarity, native English speakers would not interpret “sea wolf” as “sea lion.” The words “sea” and “wolf” are not acceptable collocates in English unless they are being used as a marked collocation. They certainly wouldn’t be recognized as a translation of “sea lion.” The error here is that the website translator opted for a literal translation instead of an accurate translation. This highlights the importance of context-based lexical selection, a key principle of semantic equivalence in translation.

Syntactic and Morphological Challenges

Syntactic issues refer to problems with sentence structure, such as incomplete sentences, which disrupt the flow and clarity of communication. Morphological issues involve errors related to the form or structure of words, such as the use of the wrong word ending, which can lead to incorrect word usage and awkward phrasing.

One of the syntactic issues that occurs in the Uruguay website can be found in the sentence fragment on the “Visit” page: “A coastal paradise to choose the beach that suits you best.” This sentence is a dependent clause that contains a rheme with no theme, meaning that it lacks a clear subject, making it incomplete and difficult for readers to process. While the implied theme is “Uruguay,” this fragment lacks a clear subject or main verb. Baker highlights that syntactic structures impose “restrictions on the way messages may be organized in a language” (Baker 95), and failure to respect these restrictions disrupts coherence. A clearer and

grammatically complete sentence might be: “Uruguay is a coastal paradise where you can choose the beach that suits you best.”

Morphological issues in verb tense and form inconsistencies also disrupt the flow of the text in English. For example, in a description of activities found on the “Visit” page, a sentence reads: “Delving into the colonial history and wandering the streets…; savoring a barbecue banquet…; taking part in a popular festival…; recharging your batteries… or let your adrenaline flow…” The first part uses the present participle (“delving,” “savoring”), but the last part switches to the imperative form (“let your adrenaline flow”). This inconsistency in verb form detracts from the cohesion of the text and can confuse readers. A more consistent translation would be a parallel list using the infinitive or imperative form throughout:

> “Delve into colonial history, wander the streets of a UNESCO World Heritage site, savor a barbecue banquet and a glass of good Tannat wine, take part in a festival, recharge with a nature walk, or surf the perfect wave.”

This translation would more closely mirror the original Spanish:

> *“Adentrarse en la historia colonial y perderse en callecitas de Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad; degustar una parrilla completa con la mejor carne del mundo, acompañada de un buen tannat; ser parte de una fiesta popular, cargarse de energía en un paseo por la naturaleza o descargar adrenalina al surfear una ola perfecta en el océano.”*

For example “degustar” is the infinitive form of the verb “to taste.” Translating this into the present participle verb form in English not only reduces coherence, but it also isn’t consistent with the meaning of the original.

Another example of a morphological error is in the use of the word "protagonist" as an adjective in the phrase “a free nation that stands out for being…protagonist.” Here, the noun form "protagonist" is mistakenly used as an adjective within a series of descriptive words, which creates a grammatical inconsistency. The correct morphological form in this context would be “protagonistic,” as it adheres to English grammar rules for adjective formation. The suffix “-ic” is commonly used to create adjectives from nouns, typically carrying the meaning of “of or pertaining to” (e.g., "historic" from "history" or "scientific" from "science"). However, even the term "protagonistic" is rarely used in modern English and may sound somewhat unnatural in this particular context.

To improve the syntactic flow and readability, a more appropriate and conceptually accurate term could be “heroic.” This not only aligns better with the intended meaning but also fits the context both syntactically and semantically. “Heroic” emphasizes generosity and greatness of spirit, which aligns well with the positive image the country is trying to project. This offers a more natural and contextually fitting expression in English, improving both the coherence and impact of the sentence.

Idioms and Fixed Expressions

Idioms present a special kind of difficulty for the translator because, as Baker says, “the first difficulty that a translator comes across is being able to recognize that he or she is dealing with an idiomatic expression” (Baker 71). Idioms can be particularly challenging because their meaning is deeply rooted in cultural context, and a literal translation can lead to confusion or misinterpretation. While the Uruguay website is mostly free of idiomatic expressions, one

instance did manage to evade the translator's ability to detect that they were dealing with a Spanish idiom that does not exist in the target language.

The example of a mistranslated idiom can be found in the direct translation of the Spanish idiom "cabe en un abrazo" on Uruguay's official website. The English translation—"URUGUAY FITS IN A HUG"—illustrates the difficulties of translating idiomatic expressions.

In Spanish, the phrase likely aims to convey the idea of Uruguay being small, intimate, and welcoming, highlighting its compact size and the warm nature of its people. However, the English version does not have a direct idiomatic equivalent and could easily be misinterpreted by native English speakers. Without the appropriate cultural knowledge, the phrase risks creating confusion. Even if an English idiom existed that could capture a similar meaning, it's important to remember that idioms are often culture-dependent rather than language-dependent. As such, using idiomatic expressions in content for a broader, international audience—even those speaking the same language—should generally be avoided.

As Mona Baker notes, idioms are "frozen patterns of language" that are so deeply ingrained in specific cultural contexts that they cannot usually be translated literally without losing their intended meaning or causing confusion (Baker 69). A more effective strategy, according to Baker, might involve "Translation by omission of the entire idiom" (Baker 86). In this case, a better alternative could be: "Uruguay: Small, welcoming, unforgettable." This revised version retains the spirit of the original idiom but communicates the message in a clear, culturally neutral way that would be easily understood by an international audience.

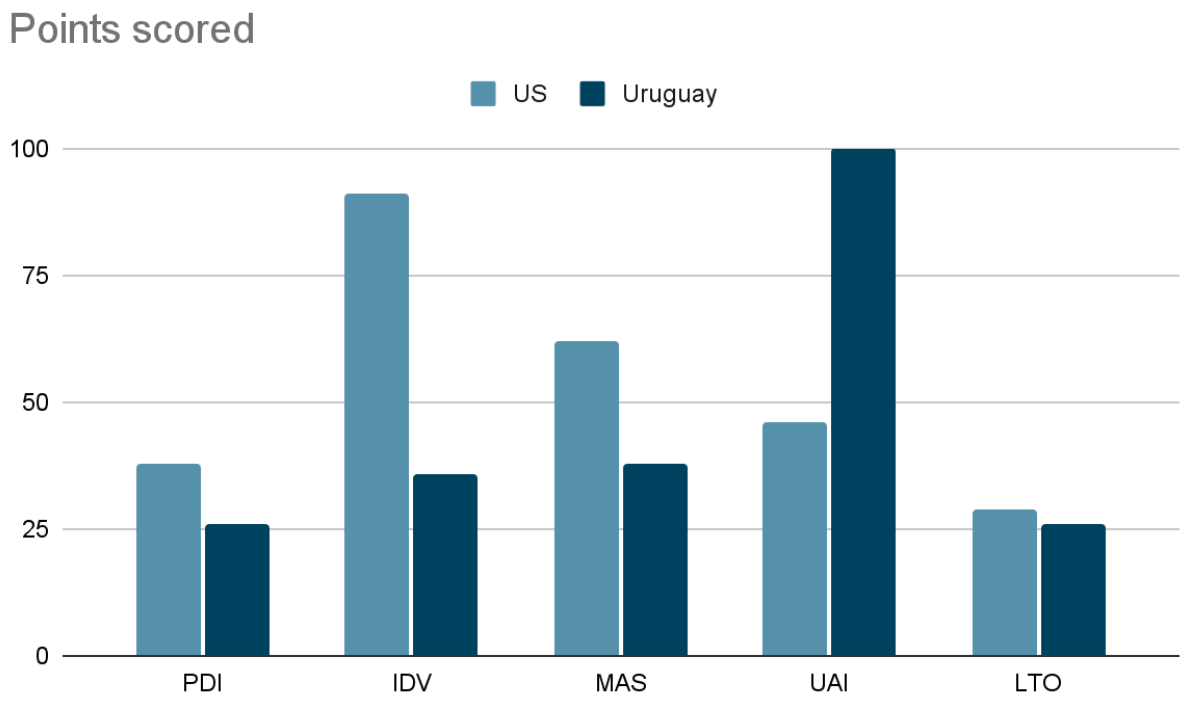
A similar, and somewhat humorous, example of a mistranslation of a fixed expression can be found in an image caption on the "Overview" page. The caption in Spanish reads, "En Uruguay hay cuatro vacunos por cada habitante." Directly translated to English, this would read, "In Uruguay there are four bovines for each inhabitant." However, the translator attempted to leverage the English fixed expression "head of cattle" in the English translation, which results in the amusing, if somewhat disturbing, translation of "In Uruguay there are four cattle heads for every inhabitant." Fixed expressions, such as "head of cattle," have "fairly transparent meanings," but they must "be taken as one unit to establish meaning" (Baker 70). If they are altered, as was done in this case, the result can be confusing, humorous, or even offensive. In the case of this mistranslation of a fixed expression, the issue could be rectified by either using the direct translation—"In Uruguay there are four bovines for each inhabitant"—or by using the fixed expression correctly—"In Uruguay there are four head of cattle per inhabitant."

Cultural Factors

Intercultural communication theories, such as Hofstede's model of universal cultural dimensions, highlight how cultural differences play a crucial role in shaping how individuals interpret, process, and respond to digital content. By recognizing and adapting to these differences when localizing materials for a target culture that is both culturally and linguistically different from the source culture, we can improve clarity, usability, and effectiveness. This approach not only helps prevent misinterpretation but also contributes to the appeal and credibility of the website that is being translated.

This section analyzes the Uruguay website through a lens of culture based on Geert Hofstede's 1980 theory of universal cultural dimensions. In this theory, Hofstede identifies six key cultural values that influence behavior across societies: Power Distance (the acceptance of unequal power distribution), Individualism vs. Collectivism (preference for individual or group focus), Masculinity vs. Femininity (the degree to which traditional gender roles are separated), Uncertainty Avoidance (tolerance for ambiguity and risk), and Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation (focus on future rewards vs. present or past). For Hofstede, these dimensions help explain cultural differences in communication, behavior, and values. This theory has become "the best known, and probably most applied, intercultural communication theory" (Gould 91).

Comparing Cultural Dimensions



In comparing the US and Uruguay in Hofstede's five cultural dimensions, we can see that the scoring in power distance and long-term orientation are not widely different. Thus, for the

sake of efficiency, this analysis will focus primarily on individualism vs. collectivism (IDV), masculinity vs. femininity (MAS), and uncertainty avoidance (UAI).

In the IDV dimension, the US scores very high with a 91, making the country highly individualistic. Individualistic cultures "value individual freedom and expression" (Singh 85), which are prioritized over connections to larger groups or society as a whole. Conversely, Uruguay has a score of 36, which means that in general, the population is more collectivistic. In collectivistic cultures, "people are integrated from birth into strong, cohesive groups that protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Marcus and Gould, 2000). The significant disparity between the individualism of the US and the collectivism of Uruguay presents opportunities for cultural customization of the Uruguay website when preparing it for an American audience, such as "individual personalization, emphasis on personal privacy, and highlighting product uniqueness" (Singh 86).

In the MAS dimension, the US scores 62, whereas Uruguay has a score of 38. In some interpretations of this dimension, the focus is on how much a culture tends to adhere to distinct or traditional gender roles. However, for the purposes of this analysis, the interpretation will focus more on the emphasis and value placed on qualities and values typically associated with masculinity (such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and material success) versus those traditionally associated with femininity (such as caring, quality of life, and consensus). Countries that score higher on the masculinity scale, like the US, would tend to prefer websites that incorporate "attributes such as success, performance, realism, fun/entertain[ment], adventure, and clear gender roles" (Singh 129).

In the UAI dimension, the US has a moderate score of 46, meaning that Americans overall have a greater tolerance for risk-taking, ambiguity, and flexibility. Uruguay has a score of 100, ranking the country very high on the scale. This high score is at the extreme of uncertainty-avoidance, and it indicates that Uruguay's populace tends to have a strong inclination toward security and a desire to minimize risk. Countries with a high uncertainty avoidance might use features in website design such as traditional themes and local terminology, which may not be as necessary or appealing for people from low uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Cultural issues and recommendations

Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)

A cultural misstep appears on the "Visit" page with the statement: "The country is constantly hosting top-level international conferences and it is the prime destination chosen by the most sophisticated and wealthy tourists…" In countries that rank high in individualism, an overt emphasis on wealth and exclusivity can be both alienating and insulting to potential visitors. According to Emilie Gould, horizontal individualism, a characteristic of US culture, is associated with "the freedom to define and pursue one's goals" (Gould 97). In an individualistic culture, where the focus is on personal independence and self-expression, phrases highlighting affluence, such as "wealthy tourists," may not resonate well with potential visitors. Instead, they could deter those from more modest economic backgrounds, giving the impression that Uruguay is less inclusive or welcoming to a wider range of tourists. Furthermore, referencing "wealthy tourists" could inadvertently conflict with Uruguay's portrayal of itself as a country promoting equality and social mobility, instead crossing into the realm of exclusivity. A more culturally neutral way to express the idea would be to say: "Uruguay is a popular destination for

international conferences and travelers seeking unique experiences in its vibrant cities, picturesque beaches, and stunning natural landscapes." This revised phrasing avoids emphasizing wealth while highlighting the broader appeal of the country.

An alternate suggestion would be to avoid cultural neutrality and instead lean into Americans' premium on individual importance and personal ambition. "The country is constantly hosting top-level international conferences and it is the prime destination chosen by the most sophisticated and wealthy tourists…" could be rephrased as "Uruguay is a popular destination for international conferences, and its vibrant cities, picturesque beaches, and stunning natural landscapes are a prime destination for sophisticated travelers like you." By changing the sentence from a third person to a second person perspective, this section would not only feel more personalized to the individual, but it would also serve to include and complement the user rather than alienate them because of their potential lack of wealth. Additionally, making this adjustment would also align the perspective with the line "Whatever the purpose of your visit, you´ll need to come back again" from the end of the same section, which clearly addresses the user.

Furthermore, on the "Invest" page, there is a focus on Uruguay being sustainable and a leader in "all development rankings in social issues, governance, and the environment in Latin America." This aligns more with Uruguay's cultural dimensional ranking of being collectivistic as opposed to the US focus on individualistic gains, "where the individual thinks in terms of 'I,'" (Zahedi 87). As Gould says, "In individualistic societies, people often act on their own needs, while in collectivist societies, people act based on the needs of their social group" (Gould 113). To appeal to investors from the US, rather than focusing only on the collectivistic appeals of Uruguay's business ecosystem, such as social issues and the environment, the website should

additionally bring to the forefront Uruguay's institutional strength, tax policies, and how access to a market of more than 600 million people would benefit US businesses and individuals.

Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)

To assess the Uruguay website in terms of customization for a culture that scores higher in the masculinity dimension, this section will focus on the "Invest" and "Made-in" pages. The reasoning behind this is that much of Uruguay's appeal for potential visitors or immigrants likely lies in its qualities associated with femininity (caring, quality of life, conservation of nature). However, for the business-minded, ambition, success, and strength are values that are prioritized. On the "Made-in" page, the copy over the header video reads "A sustainable country." While this is on-brand for Uruguay, an American would prefer growth over sustainability when it comes to business. They might be interested in both, but would not sacrifice profit for sustainability. To address this, the copy could be changed to read "A country for sustainable growth," phrasing which highlights Uruguay's commitment to sustainability while still appealing to the interest in opportunities to grow businesses.

The "Made-in" page includes some statistics on Uruguay's exports, its priority sectors in business, and the benefits of doing business with the country. Similarly, the "Invest" page includes information about Uruguay's access to a market of more than 600 million people, the benefits of its talent pool, ease of doing business, and its investment opportunities. However, in the "Leader" section, the website misses an opportunity to emphasize Uruguay's standing as a serious competitor in the global market. When listing world rankings, the only two included are "Sustainable and reliable" and "ESG Ranking." "ESG" stands for "Environmental | Social | Governance." To better cater to audiences from cultures with a higher masculinity score, the

designers should consider making the following adjustments to both the “Made-in” and “Invest” pages:

- **Highlight competitive advantages**: Emphasize Uruguay's strengths in innovation, efficiency, and productivity. Showcase success stories and case studies that demonstrate Uruguay's competitive edge in various industries.
- **Incorporate performance metrics**: Provide data-driven insights, such as export growth rates, investment growth rates, market share statistics, and performance benchmarks, to appeal to results-oriented visitors.
- **Adopt a more assertive tone**: Use language that conveys confidence and leadership in global markets. Phrases like "leading exporter," "leading investment destination," "market leader," or "industry pioneer" would resonate with a US audience.
- **Showcase individual achievements**: Highlight profiles of successful entrepreneurs, innovators, and companies that have made significant contributions to Uruguay's export and investment sectors. This personalizes success and aligns with the value placed on individual accomplishment.
- **Create competitive visuals**: Design infographics and charts that compare Uruguay's export and investment performance with other countries, illustrating its standing in the global market.

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)

Throughout the Uruguay website, there is a recurring focus on quality of life, tradition, historical sites, and infrastructure. While the country has much to boast of in these regards, for a

country like the US that has a much lower uncertainty avoidance than Uruguay, emphasizing these features might not entice travelers and emigrants seeking novelty, adventure, and excitement. For example, in the "MAIN DESTINATIONS" section of the "Visit" page, the destinations and their descriptors are somewhat subdued, appealing more to those from high UAI cultures, who look for stability and tradition, than those from low UAI cultures, who are interested in spontaneous exploration or new experiences.

The descriptions of destinations, while rich in cultural and historical significance, offer a sense of security and familiarity. For instance, "Montevideo is a must-see destination. The capital city boasts the best quality of life in Latin America and stands out for its harmonious coast, architecture, historic sites, and cultural wealth," emphasizes a well-established, comfortable lifestyle rather than the excitement of uncharted experiences. Similarly, the statement, "Punta del Este and its surroundings are another favorite choice for those coming to the country. This resort, which combines city and seaside resort, is an iconic international beach and vacation tourist destination," appeals to those who already seek popular and familiar vacation destinations, rather than visitors eager to discover something new or different.

Moreover, while Colonia del Sacramento is a UNESCO Heritage Site, describing it as a "fairytale city" and emphasizing its historical charm might be seen as less exciting for potential American visitors. Similarly, the mention of "coastal resorts, dreamy towns in the Sierras, or tourist resorts in the Northern hot springs" may not inspire the same level of adventure and curiosity in travelers from low UAI cultures like the US, who may prefer destinations that offer more open-ended, unpredictable experiences.

To appeal to potential US visitors and immigrants, the website could shift its tone to highlight adventurous opportunities and novel experiences that embrace Uruguay's natural beauty and diverse landscapes. For example, the descriptions could emphasize spontaneous exploration, such as "Venture off the beaten path to discover Uruguay's hidden gems, from remote beaches to untrodden mountain trails, where every turn offers a new adventure." Highlighting unpredictable experiences, such as adventurous outdoor activities or undiscovered vistas, would appeal to those seeking novelty and adventure.

Additionally, rather than focusing on familiar or well-established destinations, the website could present unique, off-the-beaten-path locations like lesser-known natural areas or up-and-coming towns, encouraging visitors to make their own discoveries. A suggestion might be: "Step outside the typical tourist track and uncover Uruguay's wild beauty in places that remain largely unknown to the world. Let your curiosity lead you through hidden coastal villages, lush forests, and unexplored natural wonders."

Finally, incorporating user-generated content or real-time updates on events, such as interactive maps showing local happenings or spontaneous travel tips from fellow explorers, could create a sense of openness and fluidity for visitors. This would not only allow travelers to feel more like pioneers exploring a country that is full of surprises, but it would also appeal to the individualistic desire to contribute and be seen. These changes would create resonance with US visitors.

Data Formatting Features

International information display is a critical aspect of localization, "especially in the context of web design and evaluation" (Aykin 21). While the top potential problem areas include

graphics and icons, language: rendering and translating, data object formatting, and layout, the issues found in the Uruguay website pertain to just one of these areas. There are several instances throughout the website in which data formatting features are not fully localized for a US audience. One critical oversight is the exclusive use of the metric system. While the majority of countries around the world use the metric system, the 297 million native English speakers in the US rely on the Imperial system. Neglecting this detail not only reduces usability and engagement but it also alienates a significant portion of the target audience. For example, in the “Area and Population” section, “Area,” “Density,” and “Coast” measurements are described using the metric system. The website states: "The incredible seafront of Montevideo stretches more than 20 km surrounding the city." This would be clearer and more user-friendly for Americans if presented as "20 km (approximately 12.42 miles)" for US readers. To address the “problem area” of “formatting of data objects and fields” (Aykin 34), content localized for international audiences must adapt measurement systems to suit the expectations of target cultures. Including both kilometers and miles would significantly improve comprehension for American readers, who are accustomed to the Imperial system.

The "USEFUL INFORMATION" section also requires adjustments. It provides helpful details like “Emergency telephone number” (which is the same as in the US), “Currency and exchange rate,” “Calling code,” “Driving side,” and “Supply voltage.” However, it lacks any mention that Uruguay uses the metric system. It would be beneficial to specify this detail, as well as showing all measurements in both Imperial and metric measurements and embedding a measurement converter widget, to ensure that American visitors can easily translate distances, weight, and volume into familiar units.

Another issue on this page in the “Currency and exchange rate” section is that it doesn’t specify the form of currency used in Uruguay, which could lead to confusion. Including a widget that shows up-to-date exchange rates between the Uruguayan Peso and the US Dollar would further enhance the user experience and provide essential, real-time information.

On the "Made In" page, the website provides an export forecast in US Dollars, which is helpful and appropriately localized. However, there is an issue with the numeric formatting for the thousands separator. The website uses decimals instead of commas, which can be confusing to US audiences since decimals in commas in numbers have the opposite meaning in the US. For example, figures like "30.000.000 persons eating Uruguayan products" and "1.700 exporting companies" should be formatted with commas as the thousands separator, as this is the standard format used in the US (e.g., “30,000,000 persons” and “1,700 exporting companies”). Adapting the number formatting in this way will prevent confusion and improve the clarity of the information for American users.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the cultural and linguistic challenges presented by Uruguay’s official English-language visitor website, focusing on how it can be improved for an American audience. By applying intercultural communication theories, particularly Mona Baker’s translation principles and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, it analyzed how Uruguay’s website can be enhanced through more effective localization and cultural customization.

Key recommendations include improving visual design to make it more transparent and culturally appealing for American users, especially regarding privacy policies and user interface conventions. The website can also benefit from better localization of language use by addressing

semantic and lexical issues, such as misused words or phrases that could confuse readers due to differences in cultural connotations. It is also recommended that syntactic and morphological challenges be corrected to improve clarity and coherence in the text.

In terms of cultural factors, the website should emphasize qualities that resonate more with American visitors, particularly those from individualistic, low uncertainty avoidance, and high masculinity cultures. This could be achieved by focusing on adventure, personal freedom, and innovation, while minimizing emphasis on wealth and exclusivity.

Finally, adapting data formatting—such as incorporating both the Imperial and metric systems and adjusting numeric formatting to match US conventions—would improve the accessibility and usability of the site for American visitors.

By implementing these suggestions, Uruguay's official website can become more user-friendly and appealing to American visitors, improving usability and engagement. These changes will not only enhance clarity but also make the site more attractive and relevant, ultimately increasing its effectiveness in drawing American tourists, investors, and immigrants to Uruguay.

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