

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this paper I will try to show the country specific differences, which make it difficult for European and American software companies to penetrate the Japanese software market.

The topics which are not covered in this thesis are things like import tax, legal issues, copyright problems and the distribution of software in Japan. The main emphasis of this thesis is the software technical aspect in the japanization of foreign software. In order to do this I divided the thesis into the following chapters :

1. Japanese Market

A presentation of current state and a future outlook of the Japanese hardware & software market. I also will give some information about the percentual spread of hardware & software and the type of computer power usage in Japan. Besides that I will discuss possible trends in the usage of computer systems in Japan.

2. Doing Business in Japan

A short overview about the Japanese way of doing business. Pitfalls and tips to get a long in the Japanese Business world.

3. Cultural Differences

One of the major parts of my thesis is the introduction to the Japanese cultural specialities e.g.,

- writing (Hiragana, Katakana, Kanji) and the arising problems e.g., storing this data, keyboard input, keyboard layout, the character set, ...
- date, time and currency conventions
- number representation and units
- Japanese standards in computing
- cultural depending differences
- ...

This chapter is divided into three parts :

- (a) major cultural differences (language dependent, character set, ...)
- (b) minor cultural differences (date & time format, numbers, ...)
- (c) localization pitfalls

4. Japanization

Here I will introduce the reader to possible solutions for the japanization of computer software products. I will discuss existing approaches like the OADG DOS/V or Microsoft Windows, the NEC computer line. Also I will have a look on future UNIX system standards.

5. Further outlook

Here I will discuss the impact of japanization (localization) and will try to present a further outlook of the impacts of the localization of computer software systems (e.g., Korea, China, ...)

6. Bibliography

It includes the books which I used as reference material.

7. Appendix

Here you will find an index, the glossary and some examples of the different character sets.

1.1 Japanization ?!?

Let me now start with an introduction to the arising problems if you want to adapt software for the Japanese market.

First of all it is possible to think " Why should I adapt my software to the Japanese Computer Environment ! ". If so you should stop reading this paper. Now ask yourself how *you* would react if some one would try to sell a software product to you with a catalog, manual, help screens or program messages written in Tagalog, Hindi or Japanese. If you say " I would not buy this product " then you got exactly the reaction of a Japanese computer user. If you would try to sell him an, e.g., English or German software product with native language messages or manuals.

It is true that for some limited purposes it is possible to sell English versions of a program all over the world, but this covers only the fields like operating systems, communication systems or other products used by EDP specialists. The normal everyday user expects software with help screens, messages and manuals in his own native language. Adapted to his, e.g., Japanese computer environment.

For the Japanese it is not very convenient to read their language written in our roman alphabet. Furthermore it could cause misunderstanding. It is possible to write Japanese names or addresses in roman characters, but to write a full Japanese text in roman characters would make this text very difficult to read. Output in the roman alphabet, e.g., printouts or invoices, would make the customers upset. If you want to send product information's to your customers it is essential to provide this information in the native language of the customer. One of the last, but quite important, points are that if you have to file documents to governmental authority you have to use the official country language and habit.

If the user is not familiar with, e.g., English, his will to explore all possibilities of the program are not very high and so the next time he will recommend to buy a product in his native language or with support in his own language.

A software vendor has to be aware that, in a foreign country, he has not only to compete with the local software vendors. He also has to win the trust of the foreign user and has to show his commitment to the foreign language version of his product. Not only quality and functionality are important, also how good the adaptation to the, e.g., Japanese Computer Environment is, is very important. To get a share of a

foreign market the foreign software vendor has to win over the local products. The only way to do this is to be better as them. This implies that the product *must* support country specific features. To do this a software vendor needs a certain knowledge of the computer, cultural and language environment in the target country.

With this paper it should be possible to get a first overview about the " Things to do " to create a Japanese version of a software product.