

RELEVANCE OF META TAGS AND SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO) STRATEGIES IN WEB LOCALISATION

RELEVANCIA DE LAS METAETIQUETAS Y DE LAS ESTRATEGIAS DE POSICIONAMIENTO EN BUSCADORES (SEO) EN LA LOCALIZACIÓN WEB

PERTINENCE DES MÉTABALISES ET DES STRATÉGIES DU RÉFÉRENCIEMENT NATUREL (SEO) DANS LA LOCALISATION DES SITES WEB

RELEVÂNCIA DAS METATAGS E DAS ESTRATÉGIAS DE OTIMIZAÇÃO DE MECANISMOS DE BUSCA (SEO) NA LOCALIZAÇÃO NA WEB

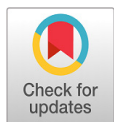
Carmen Álvarez-García

Full Professor, Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla, Spain.

carmenalvarez@upo.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1015-6220>

This research work was co-funded (80%) by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), research project ref. UPO-1265425.



ABSTRACT

Search engine optimisation (SEO) aims to improve the visibility, volume, and quality of traffic to a website or a webpage in search engines. This leads to the idea that web localisation also requires approaching the translation and adaptation of SEO into the target language and market. The main objective of this study is to explore the use and content of three key meta tags: <title> tag, header tags, and the attribute description, embedded in the <meta content> tag, on the English-localised websites of a corpus of 88 Spanish firms with geographical indications approved by the European Commission. To this end, a corpus of 480 webpages was created and analysed both manually and using the corpus tool Sketch Engine. The main results show that the companies analysed perform well regarding <title> tags or <h1> tags, while the description attributes have room for improvement. Although, in general, the English localisation of the analysed elements needs improvement; it has been found that most of the analysed companies could benefit from greater attention to mentions of geographical indications in both their Spanish websites and their corresponding English-localised versions.

Keywords: web localisation, SEO, geographical indications, meta tags, corpus

RESUMEN

Las estrategias de posicionamiento en buscadores, o SEO por sus siglas en inglés, tienen como objetivo mejorar la visibilidad de un sitio web o de una página web en los motores de búsqueda, así como el volumen y la calidad del tráfico de usuarios. Por ello, la localización web requiere también abordar la traducción y la adaptación del SEO tanto a la lengua meta como al mercado de destino. El objetivo principal del presente estudio consiste en analizar el uso y el contenido de tres metaetiquetas clave (la etiqueta <title>, las etiquetas de encabezado, o header tags, y el atributo description, integrado en la etiqueta <meta content>) en un corpus de

Received: 2024-01-30 / Accepted: 2025-02-13 / Published: 2025-05

<https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.356108>

Editor: Dr. Luanda Sito, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia.

Patrimonial rights, Universidad de Antioquia, 2025. This is an open access article, distributed in compliance with the terms of the Creative Commons license BY-NC-SA 4.0 International.



Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura

MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA, VOL. 30 ISSUE 2 (MAY-AUGUST, 2025), PP. 1-16, ISSN 0123-3432

www.udea.edu.co/ikala

88 empresas españolas que cuentan con indicaciones geográficas aprobadas por la Comisión Europea y cuyos sitios web presentan localización al inglés. Para ello, se creó un corpus de 480 páginas web que se analizaron tanto de forma manual como con el empleo de la herramienta de gestión de corpus Sketch Engine. Los principales resultados muestran que las empresas analizadas tienen buen desempeño en relación con las etiquetas <title> o <h1>, mientras que el atributo description presenta margen de mejora. En general, se observa que las localizaciones al inglés de los elementos analizados requieren mejorar y que la mayoría de las empresas analizadas podrían beneficiarse si incrementaran las menciones a las indicaciones geográficas tanto en los sitios web originales en español como en las versiones localizadas al inglés.

Palabras clave: localización web, SEO, indicaciones geográficas, metaetiquetas, corpus

RÉSUMÉ

L'optimisation du référencement naturel (SEO, par ses initiales en anglais) vise à améliorer la visibilité, le volume et la qualité du trafic vers un site ou une page web dans les moteurs de recherche. Cela conduit à l'idée que la localisation d'un site web nécessite également d'aborder la traduction et l'adaptation du SEO dans la langue et le marché cibles. Cette étude vise à explorer l'utilisation et le contenu de trois métabalises clés : <title> tag, les balises *header*, et l'attribut *description*, intégré dans la balise <meta content>, sur les sites web localisés en anglais d'un corpus de 88 entreprises espagnoles ayant des indications géographiques approuvées par la Commission Européenne. À cette fin, un corpus de 480 pages web a été créé et analysé à la fois manuellement et à l'aide de l'outil de corpus Sketch Engine. Les principaux résultats montrent que les entreprises analysées ont obtenu de bons résultats en ce qui concerne les balises <title> ou <h1>, tandis que les attributs de description peuvent être améliorés. Bien qu'en général, la localisation en anglais des éléments analysés doive être améliorée, il a été constaté que la plupart des entreprises analysées pourraient bénéficier d'une plus grande attention aux mentions d'indications géographiques à la fois dans leurs sites web en espagnol et dans leurs versions correspondantes localisées en anglais.

Mots clés : localisation de sites web, SEO, indications géographiques, métabalises, corpus

RESUMO

A otimização para motores de busca (SEO) tem como objetivo melhorar a visibilidade, o volume e a qualidade do tráfego para um site ou uma página da Web nos motores de busca. Isso leva à ideia de que a localização na Web também exige a abordagem da tradução e da adaptação da SEO para o idioma e o mercado de destino. O principal objetivo deste estudo é explorar o uso e o conteúdo de três meta tags essenciais: <title>, *header* e o atributo *description*, incorporado na tag <meta content>, nos sites localizados em inglês de um corpus de 88 empresas espanholas com indicações geográficas aprovadas pela Comissão Europeia. Para isso, um corpus de 480 páginas da Web foi criado e analisado manualmente e usando a ferramenta de corpus Sketch Engine. Os principais resultados mostram que as empresas analisadas têm um bom desempenho em relação às tags <title> ou <h1>, enquanto os atributos de descrição podem ser melhorados. Embora, em geral, a localização em inglês dos elementos analisados precise ser aprimorada, constatou-se que a maioria das empresas analisadas poderia se beneficiar de maior atenção às menções de indicações geográficas em seus sites em espanhol e em suas respectivas versões localizadas em inglês.

Palavras-chave: localização na Web, SEO, indicações geográficas, meta tags, corpus

Introduction

Search engine optimisation—commonly known by the abbreviation SEO—can be defined as “the process of improving the visibility, volume, and quality of traffic to a website or a web page in search engines via the natural search results.” (O’Neill & Curran, 2011, p. 62). In other words, “it is not enough to have a good website; it should also be ensured that the site will be found in search engines and presented in search results for relevant search words and phrases” (Achkasov, 2015, p. 201). It hence refers to the strategies implemented to increase the number of visitors to a certain website in order to have a bigger volume of sales, conferring SEO a great value for firms offering their products or services on the Internet through a website.

Web localisation can be defined as “the process of translating web digital genres (e.g., corporate websites, social networking sites, institutional sites) into a target language and using hyperlinked texts” (Jiménez-Crespo, 2016). Similarly, Zhu (2009, p. 57) describes it as “the process of making information on a Web site culturally, linguistically, graphically, and technologically customized to meet the needs of users in a target country”. This understanding highlights that web localisation must also involve translating and adapting SEO for the target language and market.

The GILT-process stands for globalisation, internationalisation, localisation and translation. The technical aspects of SEO fall under the umbrella of internationalisation, as “the goal of this stage is to guarantee to the highest possible degree that functional and development aspects are not culture-specific, so as to not pose any problems while localisation and translation take place” (Jiménez-Crespo, 2010, p. 14).

Since SEO strategies usually rely on tags, meta-tags, or attributes, as part of the coded information embedded in the source code of the site and do not appear

as content on the page itself, they can be overlooked while localising a website, making it necessary to have acquired knowledge of HTML and SEO.

Various empirical studies, with a marketing approach, have been conducted on SEO techniques implemented to improve the traffic volume and quality of websites (Andonov, 2020; Karthikeyan & Sangeetha, 2012; Lopezosa et al., 2020; Malecki, 2011).

Focusing on the translational perspective, Ramírez Delgado (2017) and Medina Reguera & Ramírez Delgado (2019) have studied errors in localisation quality and reception, while Ponce Márquez (2015a, 2015b) presents an analytical framework to assess quality in web localisation.

Ramírez Pereda & Varela Salinas (2017) researched the localisation of SEO elements and built a theoretical basis on the most relevant elements for web localisation, according to the definition of the most relevant tags to optimise website rankings.

Lushaku (2022) analysed the content of 197 websites to draw conclusions about whether their linguistic structures were optimised for search engines, observing factors such as the use of active or passive voice, paragraph length, sentence length, and readability score of different blogs and articles on the Internet. Nezvitskaya (2021) conducted a study on the use of traditional methods to preserve endangered languages and dialects in the Republic of Karelia, and the author found that SEO keywords need to be translated and need to be translated in a way that ensures they perform well and remain discoverable, just like the original ones (p. 23), allowing visitors to easily find websites written in minority languages.

Additionally, Achkasov (2015) focused on the need to include SEO translation in translation training, given that “SEO linguistics and SEO translation is an emerging challenge for both Translation Studies and institutional translator training” (p. 200).

As can be seen, more research is needed about SEO strategies in website localisation, as it will help both localisation trainers and professionals. The implications of previous research ought to be explored further, and so, in this study, the performance of a group of localised websites in English is studied, focussing on some of the main SEO features that must be taken into consideration when localising a website. Therefore, we investigated the use and content—in Spanish and English—of the <title> and header tags, as well as the *description*, which is an attribute used with the <meta> tag, in a corpus of 88 firms integrated in Regulatory Councils approved to operate in Andalusia, Spain, whose websites are localised into English.

Theoretical Framework

As mentioned above, the main objective of the present study is to explore the use of tags <title> and header tags, as well as the attribute *description*, and to analyse their content in a corpus of 480 Spanish websites, comparing the findings with their English-localised versions.

Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) is a standard markup language for web pages that has a hierarchical structure. It uses tags to give instructions to web browsers, and metatags that are not displayed by browsers on the web page but are used by crawlers of search engines or other web services (Arslan, 2020, p. 183). This hierarchy begins with a <head> tag in which metatags are embedded. These elements are the ones that are observed in this study, as they contain metadata about HTML that crawlers use for retrieval purposes. Some of the metadata contained include keywords, description, author of the document, last modified, or refresh rate (Arslan, 2020, p. 184).

Not all of these elements have the same impact on search engine retrievals. Arslan (2020) concludes in his study on the usefulness of HTML meta-elements for web retrieval that “the addition of description field could significantly improve the retrieval effectiveness, while, in contrast, the

addition of keywords field could significantly deteriorate the retrieval effectiveness” (p. 192).

Meanwhile, Gali & Fränti (2016) state that the relevance of the title tag is that “it gives a user a quick insight into the content of the page and how it might be relevant to his query. It is often the primary piece of information for users to decide which search results to click on” (p. 204). However, the authors found that “in several cases it [the title tag] also includes generic keywords [...], long descriptions that contain slogans, and advertisements [...]”. Therefore, a more robust solution is needed to extract an informative title” (p. 204).

It is also worth pointing out that the title tag length is also important:

position of the key segments in title tag would help search engine optimization (SEO). It aims at showing the most relevant web pages on the top of the results list. The closer to the beginning of the tag the segment is, the more useful it will be for ranking. It is also recommended to have the brand name in the end of the tag. (Gali & Fränti, 2016, p. 206)

The Google algorithm survey on the influence of ranking factors (Peters, 2013) measured the correlation between keywords and rankings and found that “the title tag, the body of the HTML, the meta description and the H1 tags all had relatively high correlation.” The title should also accurately match the content of the page because, “in that case, it can help the search engine to show that page in the SERPs” or search engine results pages (Ellis, 2023). The author mentions some studies (Meyers, 2021; Shepard, 2023) that have observed factors that cause Google to rewrite title tags, such as being too long or too short; missing brand names; title tags that do not match the contents of a page; the use of elements like brackets, parentheses, and pipe marks, etc.

Ellis (2023) recommends keeping title tags between 51–60 total characters, as this length appears “to result in the fewest rewrites” (How to optimize title tags section, par. 1), avoiding using

any keyword more than once (How to optimize title tags section, par. 5), using dashes instead of pipes or parentheses instead of brackets, and “matching the title tag with the header 1 (H1) tag” (How to optimize title tags section, par. 7). For local businesses, it is recommended to include geographic terms. These recommendations establish the description of the main features of the title tag to be analysed in our study.

Together with the title tag, the meta description tag is relevant to obtain a higher ranking in the results shown by search engines. Although the meta description tag is not a direct ranking signal for Google, it can increase the ratio of clicks that an add or a product listed receives, also called click-through-rate, which is a direct ranking signal. (Dean, 2023, n. p.)

Chi & Winslet Ting (2021) studied the frequencies of keywords phrases in the web page title, keyword meta tag content, description meta tag content, and words on the visible web page of the top 30 web pages ranked by a certain search in Google. The authors found that “the web page title and the description meta tag are more important as shown in the table that their average relative frequencies are higher. Google retrieves the web pages because of the keywords found in these two elements” (2021, p. 34).

The authors stated that this meta tag should accurately summarise the content of a web page and provide unique descriptions (Chi & Winslet Ting, 2021, p. 35). It is also important to note that description tags should be “hyper-relevant to the content of each page” (Singh et al., 2022, p. 3) and that it is not recommended to use the same meta description tag throughout the website.

Jiménez et al. (2004, p. 104) state that the number of characters in the meta description tag should be kept between 150 and 200 characters. Other authors, such as Ortega Fernández (2015, p. 668), recommend using a shorter description tag, with 70 to 160 characters. This relates to

semantic SEO, which refers to the use of “semantically related keywords to contextualize your topics and removing unnecessary words” (Brain, 2022). As the author states, this can be put into practice providing in-depth information about the product or the service presented on the web page, considering their benefits and key selling features.

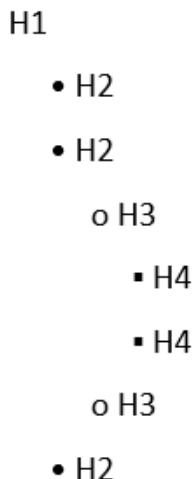
Chibane & Doan (2007, p. 817) distinguished between single-topic web pages, which are homogeneous, and multitopic web pages, which contain several blocks of homogeneous content. The authors concluded that segmentation of these content blocks into thematically coherent segments, through a hierarchy of headings, using <h1> to <h6> tags, among others, “improves the information retrieval [...] and allows to better estimate the relevance [of the search engine results] compared to the request” (Chibane & Doan, 2007, p. 818).

Header tags, “specifically the “H1” tag, are HTML elements used to define the main heading or title of a web page. They play a critical role in structuring the content and indicating its hierarchy to both users and search engines” (Akbar et al., 2022, p. 272). The <h1> to <h6> tags are used to establish a hierarchy among headings, with <h1> being the most important and <h6>, the least. As the authors state, “pertinent keywords in the H1 tag indicates the page’s content and increases its chances of ranking higher”. Apart from the usability of header tags in SEO ranking, it also allows voice search optimisation, as “voice assistants frequently use the H1 tag to read the page title back to the user” and it also allows to “improve the page’s overall readability and accessibility” for users who rely on screen readers (Akbar et al., 2022, p. 272).

Norrgård (2018, p. 34) suggests that the top-down hierarchy of heading tags should be as shown in Figure 1.

That implies that there is a nesting of heading tags and the sequence in which they should be read in the HTML code: “the first heading tag found must be h1. Pursuing the reading, one must find an h2,

Figure 1 Top-Down Hierarchy of Heading Tags



which can be divided into h3 headings and so on” (Norrgård, 2018, p. 34).

Silva (2022) gives a series of recommendations when using headers: <h1> should only be used once per web page to structure the content, while <h2> to <h6> should be included, in an orderly way, as subheadings that support the prior header; <h1> should also be on every important page and include the target keyword. The author also recommends keeping <h1> tags between 50 and 60 characters and making them similar to the title tags.

As mentioned above, the fourth element that has a relatively high correlation, according to Peters (2013), is the body of the HTML. The <body> tag includes the whole content that is presented on the web browser, and so the elements of a web page, such as headings, paragraphs, images, tables, etc. Since it contains the text that is visible on the web page, computer-assisted translation tools have no difficulty detecting the text to be localised, therefore, the <body> tag has not been analysed in the present study.

Methodology

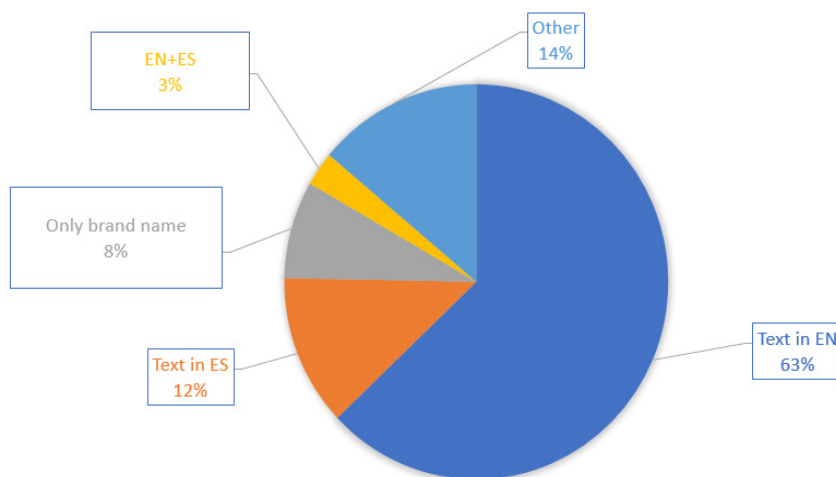
To conduct the experiments, a corpus of 762 web pages was created from 142 companies. The

companies were selected because they were registered with a regulatory council that ruled on one of the geographical indications of the European Union in Andalusia (Spain). This EU quality scheme establishes “intellectual property rights for specific products whose qualities are specifically linked to the area of production” and includes protected designation of origin (POD, for food and wine), protected geographical indication (PGI, for food and wine), and geographical indication (GI, for spirit drinks). Traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) is focused on the traditional aspects with no link to a specific geographical area (European Commission, n. d.).

To conduct this study, 480 Spanish web pages that presented an English-localised version were chosen from among the 762, and tags and metatags were observed—more specifically title tags, description tags, and header tags. This corpus of 480 web pages represents 88 companies. The files were named using an encoded system to facilitate analysis. It showed, in order of appearance, the code of the language used on the web page, the location of the company, the code of the product, the code of the quality scheme, the code of the name of the quality scheme, the code of the company, and the name of the web page in Spanish (as in: EN_AL_AO_DOP_SG_127_AOVE). Thus, different linguistic versions of the same web page had the same file name, except for the code of the language. The initial files were transformed into plain text to allow the corpus analysis software used, Sketch Engine, to consider the HTML elements as text, since they were initially excluded from the results of queries.

Once the final corpus was created and checked, a qualitative data collection matrix was created to collect data of the elements to be analysed by the corpus search and analysis tool, Sketch Engine. Due to the nature of this study, focussing on the web programming language, an extensive direct review without software was also conducted. Features such as wordlist, keywords, or concordance were

Figure 2 Translation of <title> Tags



used to find the HTML elements both in the corpus of Spanish web pages and then in the corpus of their English-localised versions. Once the elements were found, the qualitative data collection matrix was filled out.

The qualitative data collection matrix has been designed as a helping tool to draw a general image of each of the analysed elements and to draw conclusions on the results, which will be presented separately for each of the three analysed HTML elements.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion presented below are organised by type of tag. They give a picture of the performance of the 480 webpages analysed, not only in terms of the presence of each tag studied, but also in relation to the recommendations described above, both in Spanish and in English.

Tag <title>

All webpages in the study have a <title> tag, of which 62.9% include the text in English, while 12.4% maintain the text in Spanish. It is also

worth mentioning that 8.0% contain only the name of the company or the product being sold on the corresponding webpage; therefore, it could not be coded as translated or not translated. Only 2.8% of the analysed webpages contain text in both English and Spanish together (see Figure 2).

Out of the total of firms, 59.0% present title tags in English on all their webpages, and 10.8% maintain the Spanish text in title tags embedded on the English-localised webpages.

The aim of this study was not to evaluate the English translation; therefore, no analysis was conducted on the specific English locale that each company targeted for website localization. Companies may have intended to use one of the various regional varieties of English or adopt it as a lingua franca to address a culturally undefined audience — a concept that Floros & Charalampidou name as ‘universalisation’ (2019, p. 108). This insight opens new avenues for further research.

However, general errors and non-idiomatic expressions in English were found, as shown in the examples below:

- Misspelling:

EN: <title>Discover the wonderfull EVOO Oro Bailén Pearls.</title>
ES: <title>Descubra las maravillosas Perlas de Aove de Oro Bailén</title>

- Translation of proper names:

b1) EN: <title>our oil - Remedies Picasat</title>
ES: <title>Nuestro Aceite - Los Remedios Picasat</title>
b2) EN: <title>Bañón Oils - Extra Virgin Olive Oil from the province of Jaén</title>
ES: <title>Aceites Bañón - Aceite de Oliva Virgen Extra de la provincia de Jaén</title>

- Non-idiomatic or grammar mistakes:

c1) EN: <title>Viewing - Bodegas Privilegio del Condado</title>
ES: <title>Enoturismo - Bodegas Privilegio del Condado</title>
c2) EN: <title>MIO from 1898</title>
ES: <title>MIO desde 1898</title>

- Mistranslation of cultural references:

EN: <title>Reserve wine</title>
ES: <title>Vino tinto Rey Zagal Reserva DO Granada- España</title>

Some examples of English-localised <title> tags that present only a part of the text in English have also been found. The English text is also sometimes a different text although it cannot be clearly stated that the difference responds to market tailoring:

e1) EN: <title>Our History - Bodegas Barón | Desde 1631 | Manzanilla de Sanlúcar</title>
ES: <title>Nuestra historia - Bodegas Barón | Desde 1631 | Manzanilla de Sanlúcar</title>
e2) EN: <title>Pack 2 Sherry Vinagers - Tienda Online</title>
ES: <title>Vinagre de Jerez Reserva: Reserva & PX -Tienda Online</title>
e3) EN: <title>Juan Jaime Dry Fruity - Vinos del Condado de Huelva</title>
ES: <title>Juan Jaime Seco Afrutado - Vinos del Condado de Huelva</title>
e4) EN: <title>How to Differentiate Lomo Embuchado de la Caña de Lomo - DOMPAL</title>
ES: <title>Cómo Diferenciar Lomo Embuchado de la Caña de Lomo - DOMPAL</title>

As mentioned above, “It is also recommended to have the brand name in the end of the tag” (Gali & Fränti, 2016, p. 206). The brand name is included in 89.8% of the title tags of the English versions and 90.4% of the Spanish original webpages, although not always at the end. Up to 25.3% of the English tags and 25.1% of the Spanish title tags include the brand name at the beginning or, in a few cases, in the middle.

The average number of characters in the title tag is 42.15 in English tags and 40.5 in Spanish tags, as only 12.1% of the English title tags are kept between 51-60 total characters (Ellis, 2023), and only 13.9% of the Spanish tags. Most of the tags are far below 51.

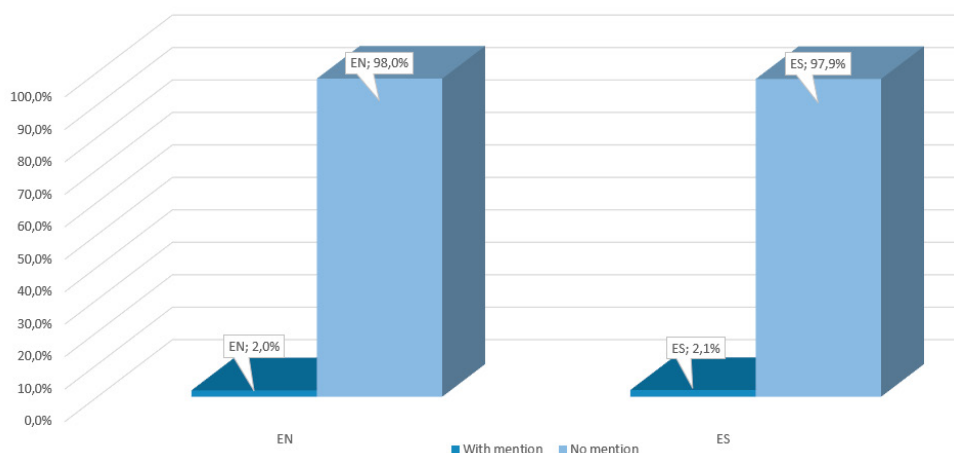
63.5% of the English tags contain dashes instead of pipes (58.5% of the Spanish tags), although more than 100 English tags (21.3%) and 125 Spanish tags (26%) contain pipes. No tags with brackets have been found.

Analysing the inclusion of geographical indications, it has been found that 2.0% of title tags in the English versions contain them, compared to 2.1% in the Spanish originals. This 0.1% difference, although statistically small, shows that minor inconsistencies can provide strategic insights and improve the user experience. For example, this slight discrepancy indicates that the differences between Spanish and English tags are not always the result of market tailoring (see Figure 3).

They usually take the form of acronyms, more specifically: IGP, PGI, PDO, D.O., some of them being Spanish acronyms, as the valid English ones are PDO, standing for protected designation of origin, and PGI, for protected geographical indications. Designation of origin, protected designation of origin, and denomination of origin have also been found, being *Denomination* a literal translation from the Spanish term.

Errors related to geographical indications are not only due to incorrect translations. Example:

Figure 3 Tags Mentioning Geographical Indications (EN and ES)



EN: <title>Title: Olive Oil Sierra de Segura s.o. - The Green Gold Olive Oil Co.</title>
 ES: <title>Aceite de Oliva Sierra de Segura D.O. - The Green Gold Olive Oil Co.</title>

In the English title tag, the acronym is wrong and misspelled, and the meta tag is also incorrect as it includes the tag in the text.

Attribute Description

Regarding the attribute description, some differences can be highlighted. Only 47.1% of the 480 webpages studied present this attribute in English versions (62.2% of the Spanish original webpages). Among them, 57.5% (130 webpages out of the total of 226 presenting the attribute) include English text, while 28.8% maintain the text in Spanish.

It is also worth mentioning that 12.4% of the description attributes on the English webpages are empty (9.0% of the attributes on the Spanish webpages). And only 1.3% of the analysed description attributes on the English webpages contain text in both English and Spanish at the same time.

As mentioned above, even if the aim of this study was not to evaluate the translation in English, errors and non-idiomatic expressions in English were found as shown below.

Examples:

• Misspelling:




EN: <meta name="description" content="Acorn-fed 100% Iberico Chorizo. Artisanally cured for 4 months. Find out all aour formats">
 ES: <meta name="description" content="Chorizo de bellota 100% ibérico. Curación artesanal durante 4 meses. Descubre todas nuestras variedades">

• Non-idiomatic or grammar mistakes:

- b1) EN: <meta name="description" content="All our wines of the PDO Granada are sold under the trademark REY ZAGAL. The base is made without use of a press, with wine bud of the Tempranillo grape...>
 ES: <meta name="description" content="Todos nuestros vinos se venden bajo la marca comercial REY ZAGAL. La base de los mismos se elabora sin prensa, realizada con vino yema de uva Tempranillo...>
- b2) EN: <meta name="description" content="La Jabugueña (Jabugo, Spain)- Our company is a manufacturer and distributor of the Iberian pig and more than half a century of experience in the sector. Our Iberian pigs live and feed on acorns in our meadows, until you reach your optimal weight and thereby obtain the best pieces, which later select and develop our teachers chacineros. We combine experience, tradition and effort, becoming an art making Iberian products ">

ES: <meta name="description" content="La Jabugueña - Nuestra empresa es fabricante y distribuidora del cerdo ibérico y contamos con más de 30 años de experiencia en el sector. Nuestros cerdos ibéricos viven y se alimentan con bellotas de nuestras dehesas, hasta llegar a su peso óptimo y así poder obtener las mejores piezas, que más tarde seleccionarán y elaborarán nuestros maestros chacineros. Los Romeros de Jabugo S. L. consigue así unir experiencia, tradición y esfuerzo, convirtiendo en un arte la elaboración de productos ibéricos"/>

The results also show some companies that include the attribute description in their localised web pages in English, although the text is completely different or a lot of information is lost, regardless of whether it is in English or in Spanish. Some examples are presented:

- a) EN: <meta name="description" content="Propuestas de presentación">
ES: <meta name="description" content="Sabor intenso y textura jugosa. Sardinas Ahumadas en Aceite  exquisitas para acompañar con pan tostado y una rodaja de tomate">
- b) EN: <meta name="description" content="Fuente de Omega 3, nuestros filetes de caballa son, además de sanos, deliciosos. Probadlos en un picadillo de tomate, en una ensalada o como se os ocurra. No os equivocaréis.">
ES: <meta name="description" content="Nuestros Filetes de Caballa en Aceite de Oliva  son, además de sanos, deliciosos. Con picadillo o ensalada. Disfrútalos en cualquier momento del día ">
- c) EN: <meta name="description" content="Shop powered by PrestaShop">
ES: <meta name="description" content="Herpac nace 1986 siendo una de las marcas más reconocidas en Salazones, Conservas y Ahumados de Barbate, Cádiz ¡Descubre más aquí!">

As Singh et al. (2022, p. 3) state, it is not recommended to use the same meta description tag across the whole website. We have found that 42% of the analysed webpages present unique descriptions. Referring to the number of companies, only 40.6% of the companies analysed present different descriptions on every page of their websites.

The average field length for description is 166.56 characters in the English-localised

webpages and 170.49 in the Spanish versions. These averages are within the limits recommended by Jiménez et al. (2004, p. 104), although they exceed the ceiling defined by Ortega Fernández (2015, p. 668) who recommends a length between 70 and 160. On English webpages, 23.5% of the total descriptions present more than 200 characters, as do 20.0% of Spanish webpages. Both figures refer to the same number of companies, 13.5% of the total. On the other hand, 25.7% of the English attributes and 15.7% of the Spanish are below 70 characters.

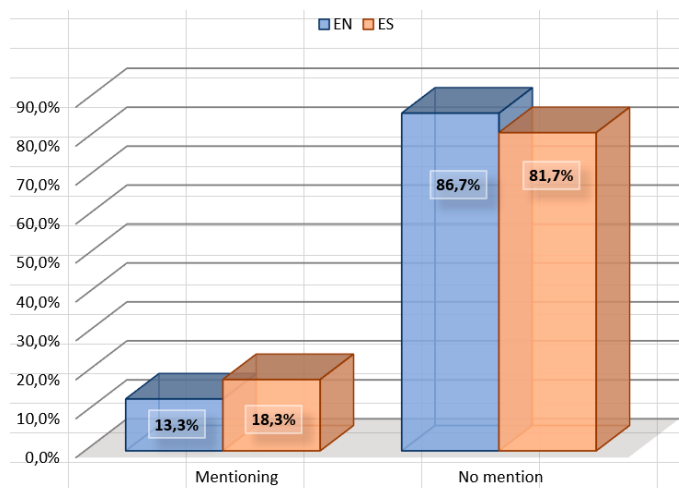
Analysing the inclusion of mentions of geographical indications (see Figure 4), only 13.3% of the total description attributes in English webpages include them, and only 18.3% of Spanish websites. This implies that descriptions in English do not always match the respective Spanish texts regarding the inclusion of a quality seal that may not be due to better convey the intended messaging.

Given that this attribute allows longer text in comparison to the title tag, its presence is higher (although not enough), and more mentions using the extended forms were found. Some acronyms were also found, more specifically: IGP, PDO, D.O., D.O.P., or D.O (with no final punctuation). As we can see, most of them are the Spanish acronyms—except for PDO—usually used in the English text, which shows a lack of understanding of the English terms for geographical indications. A Historical Denomination of Origin was also found:

EN: <meta name="description" content="The Extra Virgin Olive Oil we produce has a Historical Denomination of Origin, the D.O.P. Sierra de Segura (1979)."/>
ES: <meta name="description" content="El Aceite de Oliva Virgen Extra que producimos cuenta con una Denominación de Origen Histórica, la D.O. Sierra de Segura (1979)."/>

As shown above, it is a literal translation from the Spanish text, with the wrong term Denomination and the wrong acronym D.O.P., in which P. stands for Protected (Protegida) that does not appear in the Spanish version.

Figure 4 Attribute Description Mentioning Geographical Indications



PGI was not found in any descriptions, even though it was found in one title tag, although it is a valid acronym in English.

We can also find errors related to geographical indications, apart from translation errors. Example:

EN: <meta name="description" content="Los Pedroches is one of four unique Protected Designations of Origins for Iberian pork products that exists in Spain. We make the best assortment available to you." />

ES: <meta name="description" content="Los Pedroches es una de las cuatro únicas Denominaciones de Origen Protegidas de Ibéricos que hay en España. Ponemos a tu disposición la mejor selección." />

Table 1 presents a comparison between <title> tags and the description attributes in terms of the main features analysed and explained in detail above.

In relation to the geographical indications, Table 2 shows the comparison between the percentage of

11

Table 1 Comparison of the Main Features Analysed in the <title> Tag and the Description Attribute

Feature	<title>		description	
	English	Spanish	English	Spanish
% presence on web pages	100%	100%	50.0%	56.3%
% of web pages with text in English	62.9%	—	57.5%	—
% tags including brand name	89.8%	90.4%	—	—
% brand names in wrong position	25.3%	25.1%	—	—
Average length in characters	42.15	40.5	166.6	170.5
% title tags between 51-60 characters	12.1%	13.9%		
% description with < 70 characters	—	—	25.7%	15.7%
% description with > 200 characters	—	—	23.5%	20.0%
% of companies with unique descriptions	—	—	—	40.6%
% tags mentioning geographical indic.	2.0%	2.1%	13.3%	18.3%
% companies mentioning geographical indications	12.5%	12.5%	27.1%	24.5

Table 2 Comparison of the Right and Wrong practices for Localising Geographical Indications in the Three Elements Analysed

	<title>	description	<h1>
Wrong localisation of indications	IGP, Denominación de Origen, D.O.P., DOP, D.O and S.O.	D.O., IGP, Denominación de Origen, Historical Denomination of Origin, D.O.P., DOP, Denomination of Origin	IPG, IGP, Denomination of Origin, D.O., D.O
% incorrect mentions	46.2%	88.6%	41.2%
Correct localisation	PGI, Designation of Origin, Protected Designation of Origin, PDO	Protected Designation of Origin, Designation of Origin, PDO	PGI, Protected Designation of Origin, PDO, Designation of Origin
% correct mentions	53.8%	11.4%	58.8%

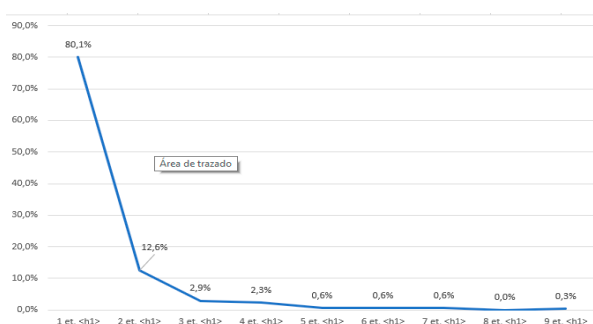
errors in the localisation of the mentions, as it has been explained above.

Header Tags

The <h1> to <h6> tags are used to establish a hierarchy among headings, with <h1> being the most important and <h6>, the least. In this paper, the results focus on <h1> tags, and <h2> to <h6> will be addressed through further investigation.

Most web pages in English present <h1> tags (71.0%), 81.9% of the companies. And 80.1% of webpages present only one <h1> tag, as recommended to structure the content of the page (Silva, 2022). However, 12.6% present two <h1> tags, and there are some pages that include more than two (7.3%). In one case, 9 <h1> tags were found on the same webpage (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Number of <h1> Tags per Web Page



As Peters (2013) states, “the title tag, the body of the HTML, the meta description and the H1 tags all had relatively high correlation.” However, only 8.4% of <h1> tags in the analysed webpages are equal or very similar to their corresponding <title> tags. There is a group of tags that differ only in mentioning the name of the company. When analysing the inclusion of the brand in the <title> tag as an appropriate SEO strategy, 45.2% of the analysed <h1> tags are very similar to <title> tags. However, 44.5% of the <h1> tags are different from their corresponding <title> tags.

The average field length for <h1> tags is 23.28 characters and the number of <h1> tags with a length between 50 and 60 characters, as recommended (Silva, 2022), is low (5.9% of the total). Figure 6 shows a comparison with the percentages found in <title> tags and the attribute description.

Figure 6 Percentage of Tags Within Recommended Characters in English-Localised Webpages

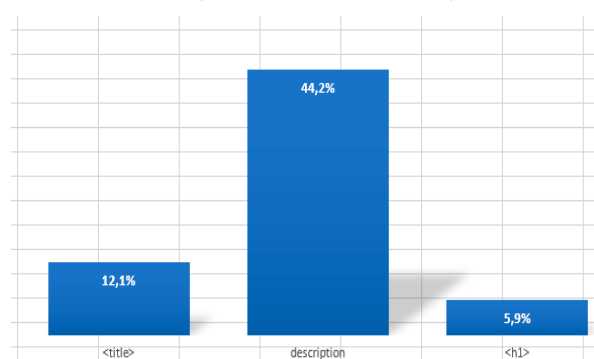


Table 3 Comparison of the Main Features Analysed in the <title> Tag, the Description Attribute, and the <h1> Tag

Feature	<title>		description		<h1>
	English	Spanish	English	Spanish	English
% presence on web pages	100%	100%	50.0%	56.3%	71.0%
% of web pages with text in English	62.9%	—	57.5%	—	79.3%
% tags including brand name	89.8%	90.4%	—	—	—
% brand names in wrong position	25.3%	25.1%	—	—	—
Average length in characters	42.15	40.5	166.6	170.5	23.3
% tags between 51-60 characters	12.1%	13.9%			4.4%
% description with < 70 characters	—	—	25.7%	15.7%	—
% description with > 200 characters	—	—	23.5%	20.0%	—
% tags with < 51 characters	71.5%	41.4%	—	—	91.6%
% tags with > 60 characters	10.9%	12.7%	—	—	4.0%
% of companies with unique descriptions	—	—	—	40.6%	—
% tags that mention geographical indication	2.0%	2.1%	13.3%	18.3%	13.3%
% of companies that mention geographical indication	12.5%	12.5%	27.1%	24.5	27.1%
% <h1> tags similar to <title> tag	—	—	—	—	36.8%

In turn, the percentage of <h1> tags with English text is as high as 79.3%, and only 7.5% present Spanish text. As explained above, header tags establish a hierarchy among headings shown to users on the web page. Consequently, Spanish text in <h1> tags means that the highlighted webpage content is not localised. 11.7% of the analysed <h1> tags present proper nouns as the only content (the name of the company or their products).

Comparing these results with the percentages in <title> tags or description attributes localised in English, it can be observed that <h1> and <title> tags perform similarly (there are 62.9% of <title> tags localised), while there is a big difference with descriptions, in which only 27.1% of them are localised in English.

Regarding the inclusion mentions of geographical indications, only 3.3% of the total <h1> tags have been found to include any mentions. Specifically: IPG, GPI, IGP, D.O., D.O, PDO, Denomination of Origin, Protected Designation of Origin, and Designation of Origin. As explained before, only some of them are valid in English, the rest being mistranslations.

It is worth noting that we have found a programming error in the header tags, as the code starts with <h2> and ends with </h1>:

```
<h2 class="hidden-xs">GRAN<br/> DUQUE
<br/>DE ALBA</h1>.
```

Table 3 shows a comparison of the three aspects analysed.

Conclusions

This study focusses on web localisation practices related to SEO strategies followed by firms under the jurisdiction of Regulatory Councils of geographical indications. Once the main features to optimise web rankings have been defined, related to meta tags <title> and headers, as well as the attribute description, the results allow us to infer that firms need to improve their strategies.

It can be inferred that companies are aware of the importance of the <title> tag, given that the whole corpus of webpages analysed present it, both in the English and the Spanish versions. It is especially important considering the percentage

of tags in English. Nevertheless, the significant number of webpages that contain only Spanish text is an important issue to highlight, given that this meta tag is shown to users in the browser tab, and it is also highlighted by Google in the results list. Therefore, it should be localised in English to increase traffic to their websites.

The results have also shown that most companies perform well by including their brand names within the content of their <title> tags. However, the number of characters is usually far below the recommended minimum.

In contrast, the performance of the description attribute is not as strong as that of the <title> tag, as less than half of the analysed webpages include it in the English versions. A significant difference was observed between the Spanish webpages and the English corresponding ones, indicating that this element was lost in the localisation process. Moreover, it must be noted that a significant number of description attributes in English localised webpages maintain the text in Spanish. Having in mind that the description is shown to users on the results list, it should be localised into English to push users to click on the result and increase the web traffic. This leads us to the conclusion that greater emphasis should be placed on the localisation of the description attribute.

The companies show a poor performance in providing unique description attributes for each webpage within their websites. Additionally, most webpages do not keep the number of characters in descriptions between the recommended range. English web pages perform worse than the Spanish ones, highlighting the importance of the localisation of relevant tags for effective SEO.

In relation to header tags, more specifically, the <h1> meta tag, the performance in general is positive, as it is included in the vast majority of both the Spanish webpages and their English corresponding ones, and most of them only include one <h1>. Nevertheless, almost half of the

webpages include <h1> tags which content are different from the corresponding <title> tags, so companies should pay greater attention to match both tags, and it should also be considered while localising.

The results for this element indicate considerable room for improvement in the length of header tags, as they serve algorithms in search engines to categorise the content displayed to users.

The results are positive regarding the language contained in this meta tag, as the analysed tags were localised in English. Both <h1> tags and <title> tags show similarly strong performance in terms of English localisation. Regarding the description attribute, the fact that the localisation in English of the description attribute performs worse makes us think that it might come from a wrong localisation practice relating to SEO strategies and that further training in SEO is needed in localisation training.

Finally, with respect to mentions of geographical indications, it can be inferred that companies do not highlight this label of quality in any of the SEO elements analysed. Mentions are almost inexistent in <title> tags, and they are used a little more frequently in description attributes or in <h1> tags, although it remains very low in both cases.

Noteworthy is this absence, given the importance of this quality label with international recognition, and it is even more serious when it is shown that most mentions in the localised description attribute in English are wrong, even though the terminology is easy to find in the European Union documents. It is slightly better in <title> and <h1> tags, although there is still room for improvement, as localised versions in English frequently use Spanish acronyms and, in a few cases, literal mistranslations from the Spanish valid terms.

The results show that on the analysed web pages about geographical indications, companies perform well with <title> tags, often including

mentions. Yet, the attribute description shows weaker figures, and the <h1> tag also performs poorly. Since the <h1> tag is intended to highlight key information on the web page, this suggests that awareness of the relevance of these quality labels is not widespread. This insight indicates that efforts may be needed to help companies realise that optimising these elements could help them reach more customers.

Regarding the quality of localisation, it has not been addressed in this study, although some errors have been detected in the three features analysed. Subsequently, further research will focus on assessing localisation quality, as well as other issues very relevant to improving localisation training that has been identified while conducting this study, such as keywords used in <title> and header tags and in description attributes, and their localisation in English; the relationship between description and the main content of the corresponding webpage; and the performance with respect to header tags <h2> to <h6>.

References

- Achkasov, A. V. (2015). Words under pressure: Translation in the context of search engine optimization. *Journal of Siberian federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2(8), 200–208. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/words-under-pressure-translation-in-the-context-of-search-engine-optimization/viewer>
- Akbar, A., Sulistianingsih, I., Syam, F. H., & Kurniawan, B. (2022, December). Implementation of on-page and off page SEO to improve tourism promotion websites. *International Conference on Sciences Development and Technology*, 2(1), 269–276.
- Andonov, A. D. (2020). The application of search engine optimization in internet marketing. *2020 55th International Scientific Conference on Information, Communication and Energy Systems and Technologies (ICEST)*, 37–41. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICEST49890.2020.9232740>
- Arslan, A. (2020). On the usefulness of HTML meta elements for web retrieval. *Eskişehir Technical University Journal of Science and Technology —Applied Sciences and Engineering*, 21(1), 182–198. <https://doi.org/10.18038/estubtda.615103>
- Brain, C. (2022, October). *How to apply semantic SEO to different niches*. MOZ. <https://moz.com/blog/niche-semantic-seo>
- Chi, H. L., & Winslet Ting, Y. C. (2021). A study on key elements for successful and effective search engine optimization. *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society*, 17(2), 23–39. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1832-3669/CGP/v17i02/23-39>
- Chibane, I., & Doan, B. L. (2007). A web page topic segmentation algorithm based on visual criteria and content layout, in *Proceedings of the 30th Annual International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval* (pp. 817–818). <https://doi.org/10.1145/1277741.1277924>
- Dean, B. (2023). *Google's 200 ranking factors: The complete list* [online]. <https://backlinko.com/google-ranking-factors#top-8> (accessed 20 January 2024).
- Ellis, M. (2023). *Title tag* [online]. <https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag> (accessed 20 January 2024).
- European Commission (n. d.). *Geographical indications and quality schemes explained* [online]. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en (accessed 20 January 2024).
- Floros, G., & Charalampidou, P. (2019). Website localisation: Asymetries and terminological challenges, *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 6(2), 108–130. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jial.19004.cha>
- Gali, N., & Fränti, P. (2016). Content-based title extraction from web page. In *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Web Information Systems and Technologies —WEBIST 2016* (vol. 2, pp. 204–210). <https://doi.org/10.5220/0005794102040210>
- Jiménez López, M. Á., Fuentes Pujol, M. E., & González Quesada, A. (2004). Aproximación al estudio de la visibilidad de la prensa local y regional en Internet: el análisis de las metatags. *Scire: representación y organización del conocimiento*, 10(2), 99–114. <https://doi.org/10.54886/scire.v10i2.1497>
- Jiménez-Crespo, M. Á. (2010). Web Internationalisation strategies and translation quality: Researching the case of “international” Spanish, *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 9(1), 13–25.
- Jiménez-Crespo, M. Á. (2016). What is (not) web localization in translation studies: A prototype approach, *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 3(1), 38–60. <https://doi.org/10.1075/JIAL.3.1.03JIM>

- Karthikeyan, K., & Sangeetha, M. (2012). Page rank based design and implementation of search engine optimization. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 40, 13–18. <https://doi.org/10.5120/5031-7182>
- Lopezosa, C., Orduña-Malea, E. & Pérez-Montoro, M. (2020). Making video news visible: Identifying the optimization strategies of the cybermedia on YouTube using web metrics. *Journalism Practice*, 14, 465–482. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1628657>
- Lushaku, A. (2022). *SEO content writing: A linguistic analysis*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4169165
- Malecki, M. M. (2011). Exploring search engine optimization strategies and tactics. *Econometrics: Mathematical Methods & Programming eJournal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1876341>
- Medina Reguera, A. & Ramírez Delgado, C. (2019). Traducción de sitios web de empresas del sector del aceite de oliva: errores de localización. In D. Gallego Hernández (Ed.), *Nuevos estudios sobre traducción para el ámbito institucional y comercial* (pp. 55–77). Peter Lang.
- Meyers, P. J. (2021). *Tackling 8,000 title tag rewrites: A case study*. MOZ. <https://moz.com/blog/title-tag-rewrite-case-study>
- Nezvitskaya, M. (2021). *Protecting the invisible: exploring the preservation of endangered languages through new media technologies* [Master's Thesis]. Aalto University, Espoo, Finland. https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/111889/master_Nezvitskaya_Mirya_2021.pdf
- Norrgård, I. (2018). *Search Engine Optimization (SEO) as a Digital Marketing technique for internationalization in higher education: The case of Oulu University of Applied Sciences* [Thesis]. Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Oulu, Finland. <http://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/142502>
- O'Neill, S. & Curran, K. (2011). The core aspects of Search Engine Optimisation necessary to move up the ranking. *International Journal of Ambient Computing and Intelligence*, 3(4), 62–70. <https://doi.org/10.4018/jaci.2011100105>
- Ortega Fernández, E. (2015). SEO: Clave para el crecimiento de las Pymes. *Opción*, 31(6), 652–675.
- Peters, M. (2013). *2013 Search Engine Ranking Factors*. *SEO Analytics* [online]. <https://moz.com/blog/ranking-factors-2013> (accessed 20 January 2024).
- Ponce Márquez, N. (2015a). Marco de aplicación in-in al control de calidad de la localización de sitios web plurilingües. *Linguae, Revista de la Sociedad Española de Lenguas Modernas*, 2, 233–247.
- Ponce Márquez, N. (2015b). El valor de la traducción en la localización de sitios web. *Revista académica liLETRAD*, 1, 551–558.
- Ramírez Delgado, C. (2017). *Estudio de la calidad de la localización de un corpus de sitios web corporativos de la industria agroalimentaria andaluza (AGROCORP): hacia un concepto de pérdida en localización web*. [Doctoral Thesis]. Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla, España. <http://hdl.handle.net/10433/6924>
- Ramírez Pereda, L. & Varela Salinas, M. J. (2017). Traducción y optimización en buscadores (SEO): de la traducción a la transcreación. *Sendebarr*, 28, 261–283. <https://doi.org/10.30827/sendebarr.v28i0.5298>
- Shepard, C. (2023). *Google rewrites 61% of page title tags [SEO Study]*. Zippy SEO. <https://zippy.com/seo/title-tags/google-title-rewrite-study/>
- Silva, C. (2022). *What is an H1 Tag? Why it matters & best practices for SEO*. Semrush Blog. https://www.semrush.com/blog/h1-tag/?utm_campaign=google-ranking-factors&utm_source=backlinko.com&utm_medium=referral
- Singh, D. K., Mahajan, R., Mahajan, J. M. & Khan, S. (2022). An exploratory study of Search Engine Optimization in context with RG-VP web solutions. *International Journal of Commerce and Management Studies (IJCAMS)*, 7(1). <https://ijcams.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Dileep-Sir-SEO.pdf>
- Zhu, P. (2009). Language problems to be coped with in web localization. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 39, 57–78. <https://doi.org/10.2190/TW.39.1.e>

How to cite this article: Álvarez-García, C. (2025). Relevance of meta tags and SEO strategies in web localisation. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 30(2), e356108. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.356108>