

Localization Strategies of Multinational Internet Game Companies: A Comparative Analysis of VALORANT and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

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Abstract:

Localization has become an important strategy for multinational internet game companies in overseas markets. However, existing studies often treat localization as a broad concept and do not clearly distinguish the relative importance of different localization strategies. This issue is especially important in the game industry, where localization involves not only access systems, but also communication, community, and long-term ecosystem development. A comparative analysis of VALORANT and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB) was conducted to examine how different localization strategies are used in practice. Four dimensions were applied in the analysis: platform localization, governance localization, market communication localization, and ecosystem localization. The findings show that the two games rely on different combinations of localization strategies. VALORANT shows stronger evidence in platform localization and governance-related regional operation, while MLBB shows stronger evidence in creator-centered communication and ecosystem localization. The analysis also suggests that these strategies do not have equal importance. Platform and governance localization mainly play a supporting role, while communication and especially ecosystem localization contribute more directly to deeper local identification. It is therefore argued that ecosystem localization is the deepest and most important strategy in this context.

Keywords: Localization; Localization strategies; Company strategies;

1. Introduction

In recent years, localization has become an increasingly important strategy for multinational internet firms. As digital companies expand into overseas markets, adaptation is required not only to local language preferences, but also to local media habits, cultural expectations, and institutional environments. Localization therefore goes far beyond translation. It is a broader strategic process through which market distance can be reduced, accessibility can be improved, and brands can become more meaningful in local contexts [1].

Recent studies mainly focus on localization in digital interfaces, platform adaptation, and the balance between standardisation and adaptation in international markets. These studies show that localization strategies in websites and digital platforms can influence users' perceptions and loyalty. They also show that digital firms need to adjust their strategies in foreign markets to reduce the liability of outsidership [1, 2, 3, 4]. At the same time, game-related studies suggest that localization in interactive media is closely connected with culture, participation, and user experience, rather than language alone [5, 6]. Research on consumer-company identification also shows that users' emotional attachment to firms remains important in digital contexts [7], while esports studies indicate that local community and team structures can strengthen participation and identification [8, 9].

However, current research usually treats localization as a general strategy. Different types of localization are not clearly distinguished, and their relative importance is rarely compared. This gap is especially important in the game industry, where localization is needed not only in access systems and communication strategies, but also in community culture, esports activities, and long-term operating mechanisms. To address this gap, attention is placed on VALORANT and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB). Both are influential multiplayer online games with strong international presence, but different localization paths can be observed in overseas markets. The main objective is to examine how different localization strategies are used in multinational internet game companies and how their relative importance can be understood. More specifically, attention is given to whether some strategies play a more basic supporting role, while others contribute more directly to deeper local identification.

Several points of innovation can be highlighted in this article. Firstly, localization is not treated as a single general strategy. Instead, it is divided into four dimensions: platform localization, governance localization, market communication localization, and ecosystem localization. This makes the analysis more structured and allows clearer comparison between different forms of localization. Secondly, the relative importance of different localization

strategies is examined. Existing studies often discuss localization in a broad way, but less attention is given to whether some strategies are more basic while others are more important for deeper local identification. Thirdly, the article applies this framework to the game industry through a comparison of VALORANT and MLBB. This helps show how localization works in a sector with strong community, esports, and live-service features, and also helps explain why ecosystem localization may be the deepest and most important layer in this context.

2. Overview of Cases

VALORANT is a multiplayer tactical shooter developed and published by Riot Games. In overseas markets, stronger evidence can be found in platform localization and governance-related regional operation. Official materials show that localization is built into language options, region settings, and account-related service structures. In addition, local operating teams play an important role in connecting global campaigns with local players. These features make VALORANT a useful case for examining how localization can be organized through platform design, regional operation, and structured market management [10, 11].

MLBB is a multiplayer online battle arena game developed by MOONTON. Compared with VALORANT, stronger evidence can be observed in market communication localization and ecosystem localization. Official materials place more emphasis on creators, community empowerment, regional esports structures, and long-term local participation. This suggests that MLBB relies less on highly visible platform or governance localization, and more on building a locally embedded ecosystem around the game. For this reason, MLBB is a suitable case for examining how local relevance can be strengthened through communication and ecosystem development [12, 13].

These two cases are suitable for comparison for two reasons. First, both belong to the same broad industry and both have strong cross-border influence, which makes the comparison meaningful. Second, different localization paths can be clearly observed. VALORANT shows a more structured and operationally managed model, while MLBB shows a more creator-centred and ecosystem-driven model. A comparison between these two cases therefore makes it easier to examine not only what localization strategies are used, but also whether different strategies have different levels of importance.

3. Analysis

To analyse localization in multinational internet game companies more clearly, four dimensions are used in this section: platform localization, governance localization,

market communication localization, and ecosystem localization. These dimensions reflect different functions of localization. Platform localization is more related to access, governance localization to trust, market communication localization to local meaning, and ecosystem localization to deeper participation and identification. Based on this framework, the following section compares VALORANT and MLBB and examines the relative importance of these strategies.

3.1 Platform Localization

Platform localization refers to the adaptation of the game's basic access system to local markets. For multinational internet game companies, this includes language options, regional account settings, server allocation, payment arrangements, and other interface-level touchpoints. Existing studies show that localization is not only about translation. It is also about adjusting digital interfaces and access systems to different cultural and market conditions. In this sense, platform localization is the most basic layer, because it affects whether local users can enter and use the game smoothly in the first place [1, 5].

VALORANT provides clearer official evidence of platform localization. Riot's support page shows that the game supports multiple languages, such as Bahasa Indonesia, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, and Traditional Chinese. This is the most direct form of language adaptation. Riot's Region of Residence page gives stronger evidence. It explains that a player's region affects shard allocation, payment options, default language, and who the player can queue with [10]. This shows that localization is built into the account and service structure, not only into translated text. In practice, Riot connects language, account region, server access, and payments in one localized system. Riot's APAC expansion announcement supports this point further. It states that the company was pursuing "hyper-localization" and expanding publishing teams in markets such as the Philippines, India, Indonesia/Malaysia, and Thailand. This means Riot is not only localizing the product interface, but also building regional operating support around the platform.

By contrast, MLBB shows weaker evidence of platform localization. Based on the current official materials, MOONTON provides fewer clear examples in this area, such as language settings, region-based account systems, or payment adaptation. This suggests that platform localization is not the main focus of MLBB's localization strategy. Instead, its localization seems to rely more on communication, esports, and ecosystem building, which will be discussed later.

The role of platform localization is mainly functional. It helps reduce entry barriers and makes the game easier to access and use in local markets. However, its independent effect is limited. Platform localization alone does not cre-

ate strong local identification. It is better understood as a supporting layer. It prepares the conditions for later trust, communication, and community participation, but it is not the deepest or most influential localization strategy in this paper [1].

3.2 Governance Localization

Governance localization refers to the adaptation of rules, safety systems, enforcement mechanisms, and institutional arrangements to local conditions. For live-service game companies, localization is not only about attracting users but also about sustaining a fair and trusted operating environment. This includes conduct regulation, reporting and punishment systems, payment-related trust, compliance requirements, and cooperation with local organizations. In the broader digital internationalization literature, firms entering foreign markets are often said to face a "liability of outsidership" meaning they must build legitimacy within local institutional settings rather than simply transfer a home-market model unchanged [2].

VALORANT shows a relatively clear governance-localization logic. Riot's voice evaluation update states that "the length of time a recording is kept may vary by region depending on local regulations and compliance requirements," and also notes that players in some regions may receive in-client notices allowing them to opt out of recording services. This is strong official evidence that Riot's governance system is not fully uniform across markets, but is adjusted according to regional legal and compliance conditions. Riot's Region of Residence system also supports this argument by linking account region to payments and matchmaking conditions [10], which shows that governance and service configuration are tied together at the regional level.

By contrast, MLBB shows less obvious evidence of governance localization. Based on the current official materials, MOONTON provides fewer clear examples of localised rules, account systems, or compliance arrangements. Most of its public communication focuses more on creators, community, and esports development. This suggests that governance localization is not a major or highly visible part of MLBB's localization strategy. Compared with VALORANT, MLBB appears to place less emphasis on this dimension in its official presentation.

Governance localization matters because it builds trust and legitimacy. A game may attract users through content or esports hype, but without locally credible governance it is difficult to sustain participation over time. For this reason, governance localization works as a bridge between platform access and deeper identification: it reduces institutional friction and helps users see the firm as a responsible long-term operator rather than a temporary foreign entrant [7, 14].

3.3 Market Communication Localization

Market communication localization refers to the adaptation of outward-facing brand communication to local cultural and media environments. This includes local social-media channels, local campaign language, creator collaboration, festival-related materials, and narratives designed around local player preferences. Compared with platform and governance localization, this dimension is closer to meaning-making: it shapes how the brand is interpreted and emotionally received in a local market. Consumer-company identification research is useful here because it explains why communication that feels relevant to local identity can increase attachment to a firm [7].

VALORANT's official materials show a relatively structured version of this strategy. Riot's Jakarta office page states that the office is "dedicated to nurturing a meaningful and purposeful relationship with Indonesian players" and that the team serves Indonesian players directly "from creating conventions for local players to running tournaments that bring global Riot campaigns close to home" [11]. The same page highlights VALORANT Connex 2023, where Indonesian fans could watch exhibition matches, get autographs, and meet other local VALORANT players (Riot Games, n.d.). This shows that Riot's communication localization is not only about sending translated messages, but about reframing global campaigns through local market-facing experiences.

MLBB's official communication evidence suggests a deeper, more creator-centered model. MOONTON's Thailand announcement states that its 2026 expansion is "driven by deep localization, creator and community empowerment" [12], while the same article explains that partnership with the Thai creator GuyNgid helps MOONTON understand local player behavior, preferences, and culture and create an experience that feels "authentically Thai" [12]. In Malaysia, the MLBB Creator Awards ceremony is officially framed as recognizing "content creators, business partners, agencies, and media representatives integral to the MLBB Malaysia ecosystem". These materials show that MLBB's communication strategy goes beyond adapting brand messages; it actively incorporates local creators and media actors into the communication process itself.

This distinction matters because communication localization influences identification through symbolic proximity. When a game speaks through familiar local language, visible local creators, and culturally resonant narratives, users are more likely to perceive it as socially relevant rather than merely functional. Game localization research also supports this point by arguing that games are interactive cultural experiences and therefore require cultural sensitivity beyond simple translation [5, 6]. Viewed this way, Riot's model appears more like local translation of global

campaign logic, while MLBB's model appears more participatory, because local actors help shape what the brand means in that market.

3.4 Ecosystem Localization

Ecosystem localization refers to the way a company becomes part of the local network around the game. This network includes teams, creators, events, media actors, and fan communities. It is not only about reaching local users. It is also about creating a local environment where users can participate and stay involved over time. In esports and live-service games, value comes not only from the game itself, but also from the wider social system around it. For this reason, ecosystem localization is closely linked to long-term identification and participation [8]. VALORANT's ecosystem localization can be seen in Riot's regional expansion and offline activities. Riot's APAC announcement states that the company is focusing on "hyper-localization" and expanding local publishing offices in key Asian markets. Riot's Jakarta office page shows this in practice. The team creates local conventions and runs tournaments for Indonesian players. It also turned VALORANT Connex into a fan event where players could watch top teams, meet professional players, and interact with other local fans [11]. This shows that Riot is not only publishing a game in the region, but also building a local participation environment around it.

MLBB's ecosystem localization appears deeper and more structured. MOONTON's company timeline states that it held the first MLBB offline esports tournament in Indonesia in 2017 and launched MPL in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore in the same year. MOONTON's homepage also states that since 2017 it has built a "professional, international and diversified esports system" within the MLBB ecosystem. Its 2026 roadmap introduced a five-region structure, which gives each region tailored infrastructure and talent development pathways [13]. Thailand's 2026 expansion plan and Malaysia's Creator Awards also show that creators, community members, and local partners are treated as important parts of the ecosystem [12].

From these examples, it can be inferred that ecosystem localization is deeper and more important than communication localization. In communication localization, local actors mainly help spread the brand message. In ecosystem localization, they become part of the brand environment itself. Users are no longer only audiences. They can also become creators, amateur competitors, or local supporters. Based on the official evidence, MLBB provides stronger support for this dimension because its ecosystem materials show long-term regional league building, tailored regional structures, and clear creator-community integration.

3.5 Summary of Analysis

Overall, the comparison shows that both VALORANT and MLBB adopt localization, but they do so in different ways. VALORANT provides stronger official evidence in platform localization and governance-linked regional operation. Its strategy is more visible in language support, region settings, payment arrangements, and local operating offices. By contrast, MLBB provides stronger official evidence in creator-centred communication and ecosystem localization. Its strategy is more visible in regional league building, creator integration, and locally tailored esports structures. This suggests that the two companies rely on different combinations of localization strategies in overseas markets.

This comparison also shows that different localization strategies do not have the same importance. Platform localization and governance localization are necessary, but their role is more basic and supportive. They help users enter the game and build initial trust. However, deeper local identification depends more on communication and especially ecosystem localization. When a game becomes part of local leagues, creator networks, offline events, and fan communities, it is more likely to be seen as “our” game rather than only a global product. Therefore, localization in multinational internet games should not be understood as translation or promotion alone. Its deeper function is to turn a global game brand into a locally meaningful object of participation and identification, with ecosystem localization representing the deepest and most important layer.

4. Suggestions and Conclusions

Based on the above findings, the following suggestions are proposed.

Firstly, multinational internet game companies should move beyond surface-level localization such as language switching, regional posters, or isolated holiday campaigns. These practices are still necessary, but they are not enough. The two cases show that stronger local attachment appears when companies invest in local creators, community organisers, tournaments, and participation formats. Riot’s Jakarta office connects global campaigns with local player events [11], while MOONTON’s Thailand strategy focuses on deep localization, creator empowerment, and community development [12]. This means future localization should focus less on one-way promotion and more on co-creating local relevance.

Secondly, companies should not treat localization as a task for marketing teams only. A better approach is to build localization as a multi-layer system. This system should connect platform localization, governance localization, market communication localization, and ecosystem lo-

calization. Riot’s case shows that language choice, region settings, payment systems, local offices, and region-specific compliance can work together. MLBB shows that league structures, creator recognition, and regional ecosystem design can also support one another. This suggests that localization works better when access, trust, communication, and participation are coordinated [1, 2].

Thirdly, deeper localization does not mean giving up global identity. The goal is not total localization, but meaningful localization. Riot’s Jakarta office aims to bring “global Riot campaigns close to home” [11], which shows how a global brand can be made locally relevant. MOONTON’s Thailand statement makes a similar point by presenting MLBB as a global title that can still feel “authentically Thai” [12].

Finally, companies should treat ecosystem localization as the most important long-term priority. This is because it is most closely linked to lasting identification and participation. Official evidence from MLBB is especially clear. Its early regional leagues, diversified esports system, and five-region structure all show that local embedding matters more than short-term promotion [13].

Overall, this paper explored the localization strategies of multinational internet game companies through a comparison of VALORANT and MLBB. The analysis showed that localization in this industry is not only about translation or simple market promotion. Instead, it includes several different layers, including platform localization, governance localization, market communication localization, and ecosystem localization. The two cases also showed that these strategies do not have the same level of importance. Platform localization and governance localization are necessary because they help users enter the game and build basic trust. However, communication localization and especially ecosystem localization play a stronger role in creating deeper local attachment and identification.

The comparison also showed clear differences between the two companies. VALORANT provided stronger evidence in platform localization and governance-related regional operation. By contrast, MLBB provided stronger evidence in creator-centred communication and ecosystem localization, especially through regional league building, creator integration, and locally tailored esports structures. This suggests that multinational internet game companies can follow different localization paths in overseas markets. However, the deeper and more effective form of localization is the one that allows the game to become part of local social and cultural life.

Based on these findings, this paper argues that ecosystem localization is the deepest and most important localization strategy in this context. It is the strategy most closely linked to long-term participation, local identification, and sustainable community development. Therefore, the main contribution of this paper is to show that localization strat-

egies should not be treated as equally important. Future research can further test this framework with more cases, other game genres, or more detailed user data.

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