

GlobalbyDesign

Web Globalization Intelligence

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عربي

Arabizing Your Web Site

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Did you know...

There are more Arabic speakers globally than Japanese and Russian speakers combined.

Words like alcohol, algebra, cotton, and coffee are derived from Arabic.

About Us

Every month, *Global By Design* explores the art and science of Web and content globalization. We cover emerging trends, real-world Web sites, the latest technologies, and innovative vendors.

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Jambo! Web Globalization in Swahili

Will Web globalization in Africa have a cellular feel?

I was fortunate to have spent a good part of January in Tanzania on a photo safari. While much of my time was spent watching wildlife, I also studied the people and the languages they spoke.

Swahili (*Kiswahili*) has been the official language of Tanzania since the 1970s. And while this language is becoming the first language spoken by an emerging generation of East Africans, Tanzania is home to more than 120 different tribes and diverse array of languages (Arabic is widely spoken on the island of Zanzibar).

Our safari guide spoke two tribal languages in addition to Swahili and English. I heard him seamlessly switch between all four of these languages during the course of our travels.

Swahili was originally written using Arabic script. It now uses Roman characters (*Jambo* means hello) so there are no technical challenges to any company that wishes to launch a Web site in Swahili. And yet few Web sites do so. I was able to round up only a handful of Web sites in Swahili; most major Tanzanian companies that I encountered offered only English-language Web sites. While English is widely viewed as the unofficial language of the business community in Tanzania, it seemed odd at first that even the cellular companies offered only English-language Web sites.

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