ON TRANSLATING, ADAPTING AND LOCALISING ADVERTISEMENTS

Cristian LAKÓ[1]

Abstract

In today's world market, the success of global companies depends to a great extent on their capability to communicate efficiently and within the terms "set" by each of the local markets. The advertisements analysed in this paper adopt a centralised communication strategy, meaning that the brand and the world-wide cognoscibility of the product is paramount.

Keywords: global branding, advertisement translation, advertisement adaptation, advertisement localization.

Advertising is a complex means of communication that makes potential buyers aware of a company's products and services. Adding to that the issues of translation and adaptability for the various local markets further complicates the communicative process.

What is *advertising*?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as "the action of calling something to the attention of the public especially by paid announcements". [1] A more elaborate definition s provided by The American Marketing Association: "the placement of announcements and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas." [2]

First of all it is very important to define the concept of advertising as it is a specific type of communication. Advertising is commonly defined as paid, one-way promotional communication in any mass media. However, with the advent of online technologies and coming of age of the online advertising market, payment is not always involved, for instance when promoting a service a product through search engine marketing. Also, performance of advertisements is measurable, targetable, faster A/B testing, etc.

Types of advertising

There are many similarities between the traditional advertising channels and their digital counterparts. However, the main benefit of digital over traditional advertising is improved cost effectiveness and more accurate target audience tracking (more efficient marketing predictability).

[1] Assistant Prof. PhD., "Petru Maior" University of Tîrgu Mureș

BDD-A25485 © 2016 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 13:00:02 UTC)

Traditional advertising	Digital advertising
- Print media (newspaper and magazine ads, newsletters, brochures and other printed material) - Broadcast media (such as TV and radio ads) - Direct mail (including fliers, postcards, catalogs) - Telemarketing - Social events - Door to door etc.	- Websites - Blogs - Social networking - Content marketing - Email campaigns - Banner ads - Search engine marketing - Video marketing etc.

From the perspective of the personnel involved in the creation of advertising, this field of activity requires specific skills such as writing skills, computer literacy, marketing, internet marketing, research, copywriting, proofreading, editing, ghostwriting, PR, SEO, and so on. These are all skills that are also required in the case of successful translators.

Whereas the table above has considered advertisements mainly from the perspective of the channels through which they are sent and received, a more important distinction between traditional versus digital advertising has to be operated at the level of the target audience. As such, one should consider advertisements and how they are seen from the perspective of permissiveness (Lako 2007).

Intrusive advertising	Permissive advertising
- untimely displaying - out of context - irrelevant	- content first ads later - contextualized - relevant

Intrusive refers to:
- untimely displaying of ads in traditional advertising for instance during a TV show or online ads displayed before content can be accessed ("please wait 5 seconds before …")
- out of context ads such as most of television advertisements (during film broadcasting for instance) or online banners about online bets while reading an article on Napoleon
- irrelevant to the audience (advertising 12+ YouTube channels while playing songs suited for 3 years old)

Permissive is the opposite:
Examples such as paid advertisements in search engine result pages (ads by keywords) or on social network websites (ads by tracking previous online activity - can be relevant but out of context)

BDD-A25485 © 2016 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 13:00:02 UTC)

In traditional media, for instance on TV, ads can be contextualized and made relevant through thorough planning: for instance ads for beer - Bergenbier "Eusunt 12!" (I am no. 12) displayed during football game broadcasts or more general sports TV shows.

Advertising on international markets

As already mentioned, placing announcements and persuasive messages on international markets require further extra skills that bring us closer to the field of translation studies.

Obviously, translations skills are inherent to this field of activity, then creativity is highly in demand as advertisements often carry complex ideas and messages that are trapped in the source culture.

All cultural related concepts are essential for efficient transcoding of the source content to the target content, in this case of advertisements. They involvecreativity, cultural literacy (E. D. Hirsch, 1987), cross-cultural communication experience, solid knowledge of the source culture and mastery of the target culture, cultural adaptation skills.

Globalisation, internationalisation and localisation are all further skills that are rather concerned with the more technical aspects involved in successfully adapting a product or service to a specific market

In the case of a centralised advertising strategy, the source advertising should avoid messages that cannot be generalized, such as rhetorical figures, puns, alliteration, rhymes, etc. Therefore, a centralized approach builds its communication so that it conveys meaning to the target community around the globe. Clear and full sentences are desirable, whereas images and other graphical elements should appeal to any culturally-entrapped potential buyers. This is similar to the process of internationalization as seen by Cronin, *cultural neutrality version* (2003:18), by Pym "intermediary version" or delocalized or one-to-many version(2014:121), a standardized version that can be used for a centralized or decentralized advertising strategy.

However, due to their complexity and the factors that determine the local markets, advertisements often require adaptation and localisation strategies.

Video case study

EN https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99kLNrYzCMY- 30 seconds (2014)
RO https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcZUibw1B2Y - 20 seconds (2014)

English version transcript*	Romanian version transcript*
Shakira presents the new Oral-B 3D White Toothpaste! What's behind Shakira's smile? Doing what she loves! Introducing the new	Care e secretul zambetului Shakirei? Faptul căface ceea ce-i place! Vă prezentăm *Blend-a-Med 3DWhite Luxe*. Elimină până la 90% din petele de suprafaţă pentru un zâmbet mai

BDD-A25485 © 2016 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 13:00:02 UTC)

Oral-B 3D White Toothpaste! It removes up to 90% surface stains in just 5 days. For a whiter and shinier smile!*Try the new Oral-B 3D White Toothpaste! Do the things you love!* **Oral-B - Clinically proven cleaning and whitening!**	alb şi mai strălucitor în doar 5 zile**şi, în plus, întăreşte smalţul!***Străluceşte cu un zâmbet Blend-a-Med 3DWhite Luxe!*

*Text styling added for explanatory purposes

At first look the two videos seem very similar, as there is a strong sense of unity, given by Shakira, an international superstar and her performance in the ad and the setting. However, a closer look reveals some differences: At the level of the textual message the text in **bold represents** extra information both in Romanian and English. The introductory sentence in English is culturally determined as such phrases are often used when featuring a superstar.Regular text is very similar both in ST and TT.The text in *italics*shows the different branding name for the same product.

The underlined text represents the core message. While it is the same in meaning, there is an inversion in Romanian. Also, sentence length differs! In English there are 2 separate shorter sentences, typical to English, marked by a short pause, whereas in Romanian the 2 sentences are combined into 1, and furthermore, extra information is added "întăreştesmalţul". This shows that the product for Romania has an extra feature, strengthening the enamel of the teeth, or that for the US market it is something inherent.

The underlined text in ***italics*** is a call-to-action and slogan-like text. It is interesting to notice that the English extra text added at the end uses a very powerful marketing word "proven", which yields an authoritative claim, yet it is completely missing completely in the Romanian version. The Romanian "Străluceşte" can be perceived both as "Shakira shines" (the indicative mood) or you the receiver of the message can shine when using this product (the imperative mood). The green text in the English version is culturally determined, by the US market, whereas the green in Romanian is product determined as could be specifically developed for Romania. Inversions and text length in the Orange and Blue texts are also somewhat culturally determined features. So, whereas the core of the ad is the same, there are signs of local adaptations for each of the markets. The main parts of the text and video represent the standardized version, showing a centralized approach to all the markets, whereas, different brand names, extra information, persuasive markers, sentence length represent the adapted and localized parts.

On the other hand, a video for Rexona is an example that shows complete remarketing for the Romanian market (a decentralized approach), with a local star and Romanian-like setting. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-BGgXAmBI4- 2011)

BDD-A25485 © 2016 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 13:00:02 UTC)

Conclusion

Depending on the strategy of an adverting campaign, centralized versus decentralized, thelocalisation and adaptation of the local advertising materials can be more or less complex and time consuming.Also, the costs in the case of a decentralized approach are higher. However, the efficiency of a localised advertisement is much more rewarding as it is felt more appropriate by the target market.

Sources

[1] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advertising
[2] https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx
[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99kLNrYzCMY
[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcZUibw1B2Y
[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-BGgXAmBI4
Cronin, M. (2003)*Translation and Globalization*, London & New York:Routledge
Hirsch, ED. (1987). *Cultural literacy, what every American needs to know*. Boston, MA. Houghton Mifflin Company.
Lakó, Cristian (2007) "Beyond Online Advertising" *The Proceedings of the European Integration - Between Tradition and Modernity Congress* (2), Târgu-Mureş: EdituraUniversităţii „PetruMaior", pp.357-363
Pym, Anthony (2014) *Exploring Translation Theories*, 2nd edition London & New York: Routledge

BDD-A25485 © 2016 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 13:00:02 UTC)