

## **Touring the translation of the advertising discourse**

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**Abstract:** Promotional and advertising texts come in different forms and, nowadays, they represent a considerable amount of material on the translation market. Advertisements, brochures, websites, tourist guides, information campaigns, all these aim to achieve one major goal: that of persuading the reader to buy something, either a product or a service. Undoubtedly, their translation requires approaching some techniques, which, although they may vary depending on their typology, are all aimed at maintaining the same persuasive purpose. This often calls for in-depth cultural adaptation and, occasionally, thorough rewriting. Tourism advertising, the focus of our research, is no exception to it, engaging a lot of ‘creative translation’ of both language and other stimuli.

**Keywords:** advertising, cross-cultural, mediation, tourism, translation.

### **1. Introduction**

Tourism is an industry that requires a lot of translation work which, among the many roles it has, acts like a liaison between the traveler and the tourism service providers or the destinations to be explored. The first contact a tourist has with one place is via an advertising means, which in tourism is rendered by brochures, leaflets or even the kind of ads that appear in the media. The size of the tourism market has registered an exponential growth recently, enabling people to access remote destinations, which are very often totally different in terms of culture and language from the ones of the eager traveler willing to uncover and understand the mystery around the locals and their universe. Thus, translation becomes a valuable tool in the hands of advertisers, who, equipped with cutting-edge techniques, will succeed in

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providing people with the right informative resource. This translation needs to be given careful consideration, since, in order to be successful, it has to transfer not only language elements but also cultural ones, striving to make sense for the individuals who come into contact with it.

There has been a lot of controversy around this issue, with many professionals arguing for or against the concept of translation. Some of them support the transfer of language as close to the original as possible, while others are totally against it, pleading for cultural adaptation and an attempt to reach for the 'sense' rather than for the 'word'.

Anholt (2000: 5) is against the idea of literal translation which so many people in the field used to support:

"Translating copy is like boiling lettuce. No matter how carefully you do it, the result is always disappointing. And you can call it what you like-I hear people using words like adaptation, transcreation, transculturation, transliteration, even the spectacularly inelegant transadaptation - just as you can poach, scald, sear, or steam your lettuce, but it's still a culinary felony and it's still not going to make anyone's mouth water."Anholt (2005: 5)

There has also been a lot of heated argument around the issue of the perfect translation, with some people stating that there is no such thing or, if there is, it is definitely more than expected or needed, interfering with the much wanted positive impact on the potential buyer, for instance.

Anholt (2005: 7) approaches this aspect by stating that the perfect form and content may not be equally important as, apart from the language we use, which might sound acceptably clumsy sometimes, attention needs to be paid to the transfer and shaping of feelings that must sound familiar so as to impress and convince. He then continues by saying that translation will never manage to be on par with the source text because of the "faint odor of foreignness" that creates an unwanted communication gap.

"Translated copy is copy with all its vital strengths removed: its slickness, self-confidence, dynamism, internal rhythm, intimacy, fluency, and persuasiveness. It has lost its sense of purpose, which is practically the only thing which will make people read." Anholt (2005: 9)

Thus, it seems that, in order to fit into a target reader universe, translation has to go far beyond reaching for equivalents that would undoubtedly sound alien to them. It needs to adjust to their cultural environment, penetrate their awareness smoothly, and, especially regarding the advertising discourse, translation needs to have a powerful persuasive impact.

In order to preserve the value of the source text in the eyes of those who will access it, the translation act will have to stick to its unique contextual specificity. Moreover, advertising should be approached while always bearing in mind that it has to be functional above all, so it needs to inform and ultimately sell. In this respect, the

translated text must, most and foremost, rebuilt the function by another language's tools rather than recreate the form. This is no easy task as, unlike writing which involves presenting the personal vision on a certain product, translation involves the decoding of someone else's view on that product. That particular someone comes from a different background and looks at this product differently, finding some different utility and placing it in a different environment.

At the other end, the potential buyer will be disheartened by the confusion created by a translator who will wrongly choose to keep a bit of source text authorial voice as well as introduce their own.

## 2. General views on the concept of cross-cultural translation

Undoubtedly, mediation or figuring out an ideal amount of intervention is an aspect to consider while performing translation so as to succeed in creating an effective cross-cultural communication in the area of tourism. It seems that the main issue here is related to managing to define the true identity of the target audience, namely the tourists for whom an advertising text is destined.

Agorni (2012: 6) recommends an analysis of the concept of identity from two perspectives-the social view and the situational one. She starts by describing the building of the translated version which should be the result of a balanced mixture between the cultural or historical knowledge of a particular destination and a skillfully composed writing framework. At this stage, she introduces the concept of 'mediation' of information so that it can be approached and decoded by the target audience of the target text, supposedly different from the initial audience of the source text.

Source Text	Translation through mediation
Visit Poldark's Cornwall!	Descoperă atmosfera de secol 18 a Cornwall-ului!
Step into the bleak atmosphere of the poet's childhood home!	Lasă-te pătruns de atmosfera bacoviană a casei poetului!
Pencarrow is a Georgian house with Grade II* listed gardens.	Pencarrow este o casă construită în stil Georgian cu grădini de o mare însemnătate pentru patrimoniul cultural britanic.

Table 1. Table showing several examples of translation through mediation

The table above presents a few examples of translation through mediation performed with the purpose of being easily accessed by tourists. The first example, "*descoperă atmosfera de secol 18 a Cornwall-ului*", is an attempt to generalise and decode a message that is initially accessible only to the British audience. Poldark, not known by the Romanian target audience, is a popular character in a TV series set in the late 18th century Britain. Conversely, "*step into the bleak atmosphere of the poet's childhood home*" demonstrates a translation endeavour from Romanian into English through which foreign tourists are invited to visit a Romanian poet's childhood home by focusing on the atmosphere that surrounds his poetic statement. Finally, "*Pencarrow*

*este o casă construită în stil Georgian cu grădini de o mare însemnătate pentru patrimoniul cultural britanic*” mediates translation by avoiding to offer too specific details about the British legislation on properties that belong to the national heritage, grade II\* being a category that is listed in the heritage registers.

There have been various ways to represent culture through translation, some being praised while others seriously condemned. Some problems arise when translation struggles to transfer elements of group or social identity by coming up with several models that could substitute cultural elements via language. Baker (2014: 17) comes up with an example which is particularly relevant here:

“Of particular interest are the mechanisms by which representations of a cultural other are generated through translation. These may include identification with a particular group through the choice of a dialect or sociolect, as in opting for an urban variety of German associated with working-class youths to dub African-American English, thus aligning AAE speakers with German speakers of that variety.” Baker (2014: 17)

Here, the solution seems to be finding cultural equivalents that may have similar roles and values. It is no easy task since they are closely related to the concept of national identity, not easily transferable as different languages are part of a unique set of values which operate on their own, generated by very specific cultural engines. Controversy can be avoided by steering clear from too much cultural specificity and sliding towards what is meant to be a safer area of neutral and sensitive communication of translated message, with an emphasis on the actual meaning rather than on form. Interestingly enough, things may be simpler than they seem as long as English is involved. Being a global language, it can be easily accessed by youngsters, which means that, every now and again, no translation is needed. By actually transferring words or concepts, the message is perceived as addressed to a specific category of people who are familiarised with them.

e.g. Want to catch this summer’s vibe? / Vrei să fii în ton cu vibe-ul sezonului estival?  
TBH, this is your one-off chance! / TBH, asta este o ocazie unică!

Both examples present word transfers of English slang easily recognisable for the young people. Nevertheless, *TBH* (to be honest) may act as a marketing incentive strategy for the ones that do not know the meaning of it but will anxiously google it to find out what it means. Once discovered, the satisfaction of deciphering a meaning can further lead to the desire to find out what the message sells.

Getting back to the concept of cross-cultural translation, Baker(2014: 18) also looks at the issue of minority languages and the extent to which they are affected by translation. Since some of these languages run the risk of becoming extinct, she sees translation as a means to get through and stand out against discrimination. Here she comes up with several examples of minority languages translating classical literature from the source language in their attempt to persevere.

The young generation is again the one holding the answer since they access translation the most and they further ensure the preservation of the national identity

through education as well as other fields, including tourism. As an attempt to increase tourism, Scotland has recently adopted a strategy to include Gaelic in tourism as part of a programme called *Gaelic Tourism Strategy for Scotland*, striving to create a more thorough travel experience through immersion after acknowledging its great value as a tourism asset.

e.g. Tha a' Ghàidhlig is Alba fìchte gu dlùth còmhla. / Gaelic and Scotland are inseparable.

A bheil misneach agad? / Are you brave enough?

Among the other main objectives of this strategy is the attempt to increase tourism in the 2018-2023 period using language as a tool to attract and turning it into an almost material landmark that can be experienced to the same extent as and other famous Scottish landmarks.

Cronin (2012: 494) introduces the issue of translation affected by globalization and promotes the idea that translation can be a facilitator for understanding other cultures. He devises a 'three-phase level of translation interaction' which represents the foundation of any translation attempt happening in our globalized world. According to him, phase one, also known as 'heteronymous translation' refers to having the message translated by someone else, which he says is time consuming, and, therefore, less efficient in any exchange because of the current pressure. In terms of tourist communication, we can only see this kind of interaction as facilitated by a travel guide, which requires total reliance and reception of a biased translation act, seen from one personal perspective. Phase two, also called the 'semi-autonomous' translation involves an attempt of someone to do the translation themselves while learning the language. Tourism-wise, this can be interpreted as a 'durational' experience which replaces the 'instantaneous' experience, in other words tourists experience 'discovery' travel on their own rather than 'escape' travel which would involve being served with an already-filtered package of information. Interestingly enough, Cronin (2012: 494) also refers to Phipps' illustration of the altered tourist perception or experience of time and place if the individuals involved approach semi-autonomous translation. Finally, phase three or the 'full autonomous' translation refers to a situation where the individuals perform translation independently, with no assistance whatsoever.

Cronin (2012: 494) states that:

"All three phases involve the acknowledgement of translation with the shift from heteronymous to the autonomous modes of translation indicating a gradual shift from recognition to implication. All three phases equally imply the restoration of durational time as a dimension to the experience and understanding of space. What the inevitable fact of translation contests in a sense is conventional understandings of globalization which draw the world even further from the matrix of lived experience." Cronin (2012: 494)

It is indeed a very interesting point of view which matches the ever-changing nature of tourism, switching from the traditional approach in which tourists simply

took whatever they were given in terms of translated content to the current one in which tourists actively engage in translating their experience, enjoying a more complex travelling experience, and thus understanding and building their own perception of the space they so eagerly explore. The latter is undoubtedly a consequence of globalization changing many fields of knowledge and research, including translation which is now a tool in the hands of the eager traveler who single-handedly embarks on a journey of discovery of new cultural elements and dimensions.

### 3. Advertising tourism-preserving the strength of language through translation

The kind of language adopted by a certain advertiser is determined first and foremost by the type of targeted audience analysed through different marketing research. Cappelli (2006: 50) mentions Dann's (1996) presentation of four different theoretical approaches to tourism. The *authenticity perspective*, for instance, is mainly centred around observing traditions and cultures, therefore is concentrated on sheer travelling experiences. The *strangerhood perspective* refers to a travel experience which involves an attempt to step out of one's own reality and start a quest for different cultural surroundings while the *play perspective* revolves around the idea of fun. The last perspective known as the *conflict and appropriation* one is mainly about societal differences, a form of tourism mainly adopted in developing countries in which tourists are provided with replications of the local traditions.

Each of these perspectives can be shaped by means of the language adopted, certain linguistic strategies having the strength to conjure up some of the aforementioned perspectives due to their expressiveness.

Dann's tourism perspective	English version	Romanian translation
Authenticity perspective	Man the defences, load the cannon and experience the explosive action of conflicts gone by.	Întăriți apărarea, încărcăți tunurile și re trăiți acțiunea explozivă a conflictelor de odinioară.
Strangerhood perspective	After seeing the jewels at Topkapi, the fabled Blue Mosque and bazaars, it's awfully nice to come home to the Istanbul Hilton."	După ce vezi bijuteriile de la Topkapi, ireala Moschee Albastră și bazarurile, este teribil de plăcut să te întorci acasă la Istanbul Hilton.
Play perspective	Barrels of fun for all the family at Cornwall's largest Cyder Farm.	Butoaie de distracție pentru toată familia la cea mai mare fermă de cidru din Cornwall.
Conflict and appropriation perspective	Travelling alone? Seqanaleqa (no worries) as you'll meet like-minded travellers each and every day.	Călătorești singur? Seqa na leqa (nu-ți face griji) deoarece te vei întâlni cu călători asemeni ție în absolut fiecare zi.

Table 2. Dann's theoretical perspectives on tourism

A clear example of authentic perspective can be observed in ‘man the defences, load the cannon and experience the explosive action of conflicts gone by’. It is an urge for the visitors to observe the warlike atmosphere of the past centuries through interactive ways of experiencing it. Its translation “întăriți apărarea, încărcați tunurile și re trăiți acțiunea explozivă a conflictelor de odinioară” reflects an attempt to preserve the authenticity of the original message by making use of military terms such as the verb *a întări*, replacing a singular with a plural *cannon-tunurile*, a more likely language form in a typical Romanian message, and some more poetic or archaic Romanian equivalents such as *experience-re trăiți/gone-by-odinioară* that are meant to have a stronger impact on the targeted audience by recreating a language representative of the ‘glorious’ past.

The second example, ‘after seeing the jewels at Topkapi, the fabled Blue Mosque and bazaars, it's awfully nice to come home to the Istanbul Hilton’ which translates into ‘după ce vezi bijuteriile de la Topkapi, ireala Moschee Albastră și bazarurile, este teribil de plăcut să te întorci acasă la Istanbul Hilton’ represents an example of tourism message created via a strangerhood perspective through which the tourists are invited to immerse themselves into the Ottoman-like atmosphere of Istanbul attractions but digest the experience into the homely atmosphere of Hilton Hotel afterwards. The chosen Romanian equivalent ‘teribil’ for ‘awfully’ is a safe option for our translation as it represents an accepted Romanian collocation whereas insisting on keeping the central meaning “îngrozitor” would have caused a lot of confusion among target readers making the whole statement sound unnatural.

“Barrels of fun for all the family at Cornwall’s largest Cyder Farm” which translates as “butoaie de distracție pentru toată familia la cea mai mare fermă de cidru din Cornwall” represents Dann’s play perspective of building an advertising tourism message in which the use of a metaphor *barrel/butoi* is meant to have a dual effect on the ones who will come across it. First, *barrel*, being a large container, will induce the idea of a large quantity of something. Thus, visitors are informed that if they access the recommended location, they are bound to experience lots of fun. Then, a barrel is where the cider is kept and, thus we are immersed into a farm-like atmosphere of organic produce which is so much sought nowadays. Making use of the exact Romanian language equivalent is meant to create the same effect on potential visitors as the word has exactly the same meaning and connotation in Romanian, therefore there is no need for mediation.

Finally, the conflict and appropriation perspective of “travelling alone? Seqa na leqa (no worries) as you’ll meet like-minded travellers each and every day” contributes to advertising a holiday to Fiji for the British audience. Taking into account the potential interaction of two totally different cultures, the advertiser offers a sneak peek at what they are supposed to experience if they choose Fiji by bringing forward *seqa na leqa*, a sample of Fijian language as a teaser. While translated, the Fijian message is preserved as it is sure to have a similar effect on Romanian potential buyers.

Even-Zohar (1971) and Levy (1969) first introduced the notion of *norm* in translation and Toury (1978) took it further and analysed it from the perspective of sociological theories. He describes them as 'toolkits' of habits, or skills and styles from which people construct 'strategies of action' (Toury 1998: 15-16). Very useful in translation, norms are engaged in making decisions before and during the translation process. For instance, they can determine a focus on the source text or on the target text while performing the translation, they help decide if a direct translation is necessary or not or if the structure and stylistics of the source text should be followed and fully transferred to the target text. Toury (1998: 55) states that 'whereas adherence to the norms of the original determines the adequacy of the translation, as compared to it, adherence to the norms of the target determines its acceptability in the target linguistic and/or literary polysystems as well as its exact position within them'. This means that the translator's approach of the source text is determined by the text's status in the source culture but affected by the positioning of the translated version in the targeted culture.

e.g. Brno gets under your skin, no matter whether you've arrived on your own, as a couple or in a group. Do you prefer to explore the city at your own easy-going pace or dive headfirst into the local party life? Whether you intend to enjoy the classic tourist attractions or sniff out the city's hidden gems, Brno will consume you just the same.

Brno îți intră sub piele indiferent dacă ești acolo pe cont propriu, într-o escapadă romantică sau în grup. Preferi să explorezi orașul în ritmul tău sau să te aventurezi în viața de noapte a locului? Fie că ești un turist clasic sau un explorator neînfricat, Brno te va învâli în aceeași energie.

The initial norm of the translation above focuses mainly on the target culture, mediating the message so it can be easily accessed by the targeted audience. Through operational and textual norms other alterations in terms of tourist message form have been made. Thus, 'dive headfirst into the local party life' has found equivalence in 'să te aventurezi în viața de noapte a locului' as a mere transfer of exact equivalents would have sounded odd for the Romanian tourists. The verb *a te aventura* is typical of the Romanian tourism advertising which provides safe decoding of the worth of the product advertised. Loyalty of translation to the initial form would have lead to misinterpretations of the actual message as in Romanian "a te arunca cu capul înainte" mostly means "to make hasty decisions".

#### 4. Conclusion

Undoubtedly the issue of culture is of utmost importance to tourism. Culture is the perfect tool in the hands of translators who will help at identifying tourist behaviour, motivations, hopes, requirements and tastes. Applying rules and norms in an attempt to attain the perfect translation does not guarantee success, at least in terms of functional approaches. Nevertheless, there are some helpful guidelines which could be followed by translators and advertisers during their practices these days.



Globalization has led to a rapid expansion in the tourism industry and unimaginable access to far-away places for people familiarised with different mindsets so translation should fill this gap while striving to cover some arguable areas of translation.

Cultural conceptualization is indeed an aspect which is still worth wider research within the vast field of translation studies.

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