**The Role of Translation in Advertising**

International advertising is becoming more and more important to brands in the global marketplace. Let’s suppose that you are a brand with a wonderful product to launch. You are ambitious, and are aiming to sell it globally. So where do you go from here?

How does your brand stay true to itself, despite the journey from one language and culture, to another? Or several languages and cultures? How do you make this transition hassle-free? And finally – how does your product become successful across many different countries? (this, after all, is your ultimate goal – whatever it may be that gets you there).

Well, translation plays a crucial role in all of this. We can even go so far as to say that it’s the answer to the above questions. But it can’t be “any old” translation. Advertising translation is a notoriously complex task, with many aspects to consider. More often than not, the advert will have both verbal and non-verbal parts to it. Translating a strapline is hard enough (more on that later!), let alone when this has to work with images and audio, for example!

Read on to find out the kind of challenges advertising translation poses, and learn about some of the recommended best practices that can be used to make sure your advertising campaign is a success, wherever you want it to be.

**The Nature of Advertisements**

The close relationship between the verbal and non-verbal components of adverts cannot be ignored when it comes to translation. Verbal elements include the brand name, payoff, slogan, body copy, etc. whereas non-verbal comprise the audio, or visual, parts. These work together to get the message across, and combined they make up the creative concept behind the advert.

A clear example of these two vital components can be seen in the anti-smoking campaign ad shown below, where the visual reference – a cigarette becoming the shadow of a gun in the background – reinforces the famous slogan “Smoking kills”.

Often, the way in which these elements interact may be more subtle than the above example, however it is always crucial to the success of a campaign. You might have a very powerful message that has been adapted to the new target audience making for a punchy strapline, but what if it doesn’t match the visual imagery originally thought to accompany the ad? The result is that the strong potential of both the image and the strapline will get completely lost. In short, the creative idea behind the advert will not be translated successfully.

**Challenges of Advertising Translation**

Different types of translation involve different kinds of challenges. While technical translation is all about accuracy and specific terminology,[**marketing translation**](https://creativetranslation.com/marketing-translation/) is a different story. Translating advertisements mainly implies **focusing on the message rather than on simply the words**.

A literal approach can be a big mistake when it comes to translation of advertising – not only can it result in a weak campaign, but it might even make for a disastrous one! Remember the [**Pepsi campaign**](https://creativetranslation.com/valentines-day-blog-post/) we mentioned some time ago?

If you are trying to promote your product globally, there are several aspects to take into account when translating your campaign. Conveying the same message across all markets is clearly key, but do you really need to use the same words?

If your “literal” translation is lucky enough to not cause a major disaster (well done already!), you are still very likely to lose some of the freshness, impact and, subsequently, the overall effect when you give too much importance to the words.

Impactful straplines play with a variety of different elements, including but not limited to metaphors, idioms, humour and alliteration. Often, these don’t translate easily into another language, and the result is something that the reader immediately recognises as a translation. Needless to say, this is not your desired outcome!

**From translation to transcreation: best practices for adapting creative ads**

So back to your brand’s product, which you are hoping to launch on a global scale. What should the next step be? Here at Creative Translation we are faced with such challenges on a daily basis, and we have learnt that the best way to tackle them is through an approach called ‘[**transcreation**](https://creativetranslation.com/what-is-transcreation-and-why-it-is-critical-to-brands/)’.

Not sure what we’re talking about? Here’s a quick recap on transcreation:

* creative translation (AKA ‘transcreation’) focuses on meaning rather than words (which is just what we need here)
* transcreation encompasses all of the nuances of your original message, reproducing them in the target language
* transcreation can be considered a step halfway between translation and copywriting

Among the things that make transcreation successful is also the way it manages to **address cultural nuances**, which can often determine the success of your campaign.

Here at Creative Translation we value a series of aspects when transcreating adverts. First and foremost, **we make your message as effective as it is in the source language**, by paying attention to all of the challenges mentioned above, such as idioms, humour and sound. All this while **staying on brand**– we make sure the “voice” of your company is always clearly and easily identified, and is consistent.

We also **respect the target audience’s values,**and by working with in-market linguists we ensure your campaign is in line with the latest consumer trends and desires. Our team is made up of marketing translators who have years of experience in the industry.

So is the future of your campaign in the hands of only one translator/transcreator? Don’t panic, we have that covered too! Our editors – who are also experienced in the marketing field – are here to help, by working on the copy too, and by ensuring your message is as catchy as can be, whoever the reader.

Last but not least, **context is key**! As explained above, the visual aspect of advertising is crucial to the success of a campaign. That’s why with your help we provide our linguists with all the relevant reference material, making sure their transcreations work beautifully within the context in which they’re going to appear.

**Evaluating the Success of Advertising Translation**

When dealing with advertising, the “traditional” parameters used to evaluate a translation do not apply. Something more creative is required – and despite it frequently being far from “faithful” to the source text, transcreation more often than not proves to be the right approach.

The ultimate goal – what really matters – is whether your campaign is successful commercially or not, and this is determined by how effectively you manage to adapt your message to the target audience. This is how advertisement translation should be assessed, and it is what we always strive for here at Creative Translation.