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Translation and Advertising: Translating Persuasion



The translation of advertising has increased in importance in the past years in the professional and academic fields. The discipline of translation studies that scrutinizes the translator process from several perspectives -linguistic, historical, cultural and cognitive- is used in this dissertation to approach the phenomenon of persuasion in advertising. The research has compared the persuasive elements of advertising in two languages: English and Spanish.

In a globalized economy, the advertising of consumer products is, by itself, a product. Issues of economic nature, completely comparable to those associated to any other consumer product, apply to advertising. Among them, product distribution is just another factor. And it is so for advertising too. Advertising may undergo a process of internationalization -its adequacy for the global market- and a complementary process of localization -adaptation to the local needs and singularities-. The interaction of both processes generates concepts such as the increasingly renowned term "glocalization": to think globally and to act locally.

But in advertising, thinking locally involves a translation process most of the times. True: many advertising campaigns are designed in such a way that hardly any adaptations or even any translation at all are needed-ads without words or in "prestigious" foreign languages-. In the last few years, however, the translation of advertising has been gaining economic weight, and also academic relevance.

The relatively young academic discipline of translation studies has been devoting some attention to advertising, often times focusing on linguistic and cultural comparisons, on the relationship between text and image, on parallelisms and differences existing at a semiotic and rhetorical level, as well as on the professional practice of this activity. In our research, however, we face the bottom line of translation of advertising by focusing on persuasion as its final goal and intrinsic mechanism.

Are there, within the advertising text, any verbal parameters that articulate persuasion from a cognitive point of view? Can they be described and quantified? How do they differ depending on the respective cultural and linguistic traditions of the languages involved in their translation? Only by mapping all these questions could we hope for a sound description of them from the standpoint of translation studies.

In our research we propose a lineup of several tools and concepts from Psychoanalysis -in a way similar to what marketing surveys overtly do-, Semiotics -after authors such as C. S. Peirce, U. Eco-, Neurolinguistics -following G. Lakoff and M. Johnson- and Comparative Rhetoric. We identify a series of morphosyntactical, rhetorical and pragmatic elements as effective persuasive mechanisms that articulate a good deal of the advertising discourse in Spanish and English. Through an analysis based on corpus linguistics, we establish the existence of a generic "cognitive prosody" in advertising that both languages seem to exploit in a similar fashion, keeping though remarkable divergences arising from the different worldviews that different cultures necessarily purvey.

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References

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