

CARRYING ADVERTISING MESSAGES ACROSS MEDIA AND BORDERS: MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTIMODALITY IN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

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ABSTRACT: Multimodality is a ubiquitous feature of advertising, especially in new digital media, which incorporate different modes, such as pictures (including moving pictures), text (including subtitles) and sound. In addition to this multimodal character, more often than not, such platforms often provide multilingual experiences, as they are normally designed to be used across different countries and cultures. They thus offer significant opportunities to analyse translational strategies in multimodal texts and seem to bring a different light to concepts traditionally discussed in translation research, especially dichotomies such as source/target text and original/translated text. This article will attempt to raise some of these issues, namely the way multimodality and multilingualism are handled in international promotional messages, by examining the websites of two international brands.

KEYWORDS: International Advertising, Multimodal Texts, Translation, Multilingual Communication, Websites

1. Introduction

Advertisements, including print adverts, are primarily multimodal, as they are part of a compositional structure (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 181-182) which includes visual forms (even if these are only used in typographical options), verbal forms and, depending on the media, other modes. Additionally, adverts are very seldom produced in only one medium, as they are often part of a multimedia campaign involving multisemiotic displays, which means that messages need to be carried over to different semiotic modes, frequently used in multisemiotic structures.

When advertisements are part of international campaigns, in addition to more evident matters regarding interlingual translation (Jakobson, 1959) and the translation of multi-texts (Guidère, 2000), other issues are triggered, as different media are approached differently across cultures. Thus, the concept of translation in international advertising may be questioned by approaches that involve more than one source language, such as in “guideline advertising”¹ (De Mooij, 1994). Moreover, when it is designed to be used in more than one medium, it is possible to question whether it is actually intersemiotic translation (Jakobson, 1959) or a trans-semiotic or multisemiotic process or translation. This approach becomes even more relevant if we consider the digital environment, which implies contents that are assumedly multimodal and designed to work as such. Nonetheless, there is need for translating concepts across different semiotic modes, languages and cultures.

In this article, we will attempt to look at translation, and translation concepts, in the light of adverts as multimodal texts. These adverts are, in fact, international, and their

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¹ In campaigns that are developed for use in several countries, “guidelines are provided on concept uniformity, but not necessarily on execution” (De Mooij, 1994, pp. 234-235).

creation presents additional challenges not only to the crossing of language and cultural barriers, but to the way we think about translation and what it implies.

2. Advertisements as multimodal texts

Current discussions on multimodality often challenge the idea of applying hierarchy to the relationship between different semiotic modes, namely verbal and visual signs (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Lee, 2013; Torresi, 2008), thus defying a verbocentric approach (Torresi, 2008) to texts which impoverishes discussions on advertising discourse and on the translation of advertising texts. In fact, such discussions often pinpoint advertisements as paradigmatic examples of texts that present multimodal structures (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Lee, 2013). Indeed, from print advertisements displaying visual and verbal signs (as well as paralinguistic signs such as typographical features), to audiovisual adverts, which add movement and sound (and subtitles, in some cases), or to more recent media, such as the Internet, which comprises all of the above, advertisements involve complex compositions which highlight the interplay of different modes, combined to compose a message.

In his essays on the photographic image in the press, Barthes (1977, p. 25) discusses the shift from verbocentric communication to an image-centred one, where words are somehow at the service of the picture. However, Barthes (1977, p. 26) concedes that even in press picture captions, words sometimes introduce new levels of meaning and connotation. When addressing the issue of rhetoric of image, his discussion revolves around a print advertisement – the Panzinni advert – which gives rise to an analysis that reveals the complex structure of a multimodal text. Here it becomes clear that the role of the text in the advert is to carry the ideological layer that allows it to play a function of elucidation, of limiting the readings of the iconic message:

Of course, elsewhere than in advertising, the anchorage may be ideological and indeed this is its principal function; the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance. (Barthes, 1977, p. 40)

Nonetheless, Barthes recognises that often, especially in communication through means other than print, it is reductive to assign an anchoring role alone to iconic signs, since, in video and messages alike, different codes concur to create a multilayered message, not necessarily involving hierarchical positions – a function he calls “relay” (p. 41). Even though he concedes that, especially in fixed (advertising) messages, the function of the text or verbal elements is primarily one of guiding or remote-controlling the reader through the signifieds of the image, Barthes recognises that the function of relay (more common in film than in fixed messages) is significant, as it involves an interplay of text and image in complementarity (p. 41). Each of these elements plays a role in providing “fragments” for building a general syntagm. He further suggests that both functions – anchorage and relay – often coexist in advertising messages: “While rare in the fixed image,

this relay-text becomes very important in film, where dialogue functions not simply as elucidation but really does advance the action by setting out, in the sequence of messages, meanings that are not to be found in the image itself” (Barthes, 1977, p. 41).

Indeed, advertising discourse makes use of all available codes to transmit its central message – its communicational focus – so as to improve the advert’s attention value and recall. It is the product of a close knitting of elements (see Cook, 2001, pp. 4-5), defying theoretical attempts to look into its concurrent codes and elements separately or to rank them together, as they form a communicational frame (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001).

3. Carrying multimodal (advertising) texts across linguistic and cultural borders

It is no longer possible to overlook the ubiquitous presence of international campaigns in the advertising panorama. It seems clear that the idea of a global citizen or consumer has been considerably overrated by enthusiasts of marketing globalisation, as this has been demystified by several experts on international marketing (see De Mooij, 2014). However, it is a fact that brands continue to market their products worldwide through international campaigns, which are often almost identical. Advertising is, therefore, the result of a former decision to trade a product worldwide, followed by a strategy to communicate it globally via international advertising campaigns, notwithstanding social and cultural differences among addressees. There is, nevertheless, a macrolevel of identical consumer behaviour which draws people to identical advertising appeals, though maybe not for the same reasons, as emphasised by De Mooij (2014, p. 5): “There may be global products, but there are no global people. There may be global brands, but there are not global motivations for buying these brands”.

Despite constraints and barriers, international adverts are now thriving (Mueller, 2017, p. 1), particularly due to a number of advantages: simpler coordination of promotional programmes, which in turn results in a faster implementation of foreign campaigns; cost reduction; possibility of exploiting good ideas more thoroughly; and, no less importantly, enhancement of brand consistency (Mueller, 1996, pp. 139-140). De Mooij (1994, p. 85) recognises these benefits: “Standardization of advertising helps to create a consistent brand image, recognizable worldwide, which reduces the risk of confusion for the consumer. Standardized advertising can also reduce the costs of producing artwork, film and other advertising material”.

Standardisation of advertising, though normally defined as “messages that are used internationally with virtually no change in theme, illustration, or copy – except perhaps, for translation where needed” (Mueller, 1996, p. 139), involves different approaches and varying degrees in the continuum of standardisation to localisation. For instance, campaigns may be used identically across borders, maintaining all elements except, eventually, the copy, which might be translated; campaigns may also present differences in execution, despite maintaining concepts and most presentation aspects, as well as “guideline advertising” (De Mooij, 1994, p. 234), which implies basic instructions and guidelines as to the concepts to be used, despite some differences in execution. All of these

approaches to international advertising concede that linguistic elements may undergo intervention, and that the linguistic mode is more likely to require translational intervention.

This raises a number of issues as to the way different semiotic modes are dealt with in various discourses and, in this case, in (international) advertising messages – or the assumptions connected with the need for or degree of translatability in modes other than the verbal mode. Moreover, should different constituting modes be handled differently in international adverts, to what extent is the integrity of the message preserved? Is meaning in multimodal messages not created by contributions from all modes employed? When addressed in international advertising, the translation of each of these modes could be handled separately, so as to cater for different audiences and cultural settings. In addition, it seems that different codes present varying degrees of translatability potential or quality.

When looking at the translation of international advertisements, mostly print adverts, Guidère (2000) proposes the notion of multi-text to make it possible to address the interplay of multiple codes. Guidère further explores the evolution that translation practices have undergone, especially due to an awareness of the multimodal nature of advertisements and the need to take this feature into consideration when carrying them across borders.

À ce moment-là, profitant des possibilités offertes par les technologies de l'information et de la communication, certains traducteurs ont eu l'ingénieuse idée de proposer une version adaptée en même temps sur le plan du texte et de l'image, celle-ci étant quelque peu retouchée à des fins d'illustration et de persuasion du commanditaire. Ils voulaient par là suggérer des changements iconographiques qui leur semblaient utiles pour assurer un meilleur accueil du message publicitaire dans les pays cibles. En plus de la traduction, ils faisaient œuvre de médiation interculturelle. (Guidère, 2009, p. 421)

This would seem a natural evolution, following studies that emphasise the role of visual communication (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996) and the need to regard this mode as ideologically and culturally bound, with its own norms of representation, and no longer as neutral, impartial representation (which it obviously is not), nor as untranslatable and, at the same time, universal. Even though the iconic character of visuals, in general, makes them superficially more amenable to an international advertising approach, even when the audience fails to grasp all of their cultural implications and values (Messaris, 1997, p. 113), it seems now simplistic to disregard them in cross-cultural communication, especially if we consider how prevailing visual and audiovisual modes are in modern media, above all new digital media. As advocated by Lee (2013, pp. 241-242), multimodality is a feature in the contemporary world of electronic communication, and translation does not just “carry across meaning” but partakes in the making of “meaning”.

3.1 Multilingualism in advertising

In addition to dealing with the complex layering of codes in international advertising, traditional notions and debates on source text vs target text seem to require a different

viewpoint. While it is clear that translations within this context need to comply with very objective marketing goals – they have to put a message across to the new target audience efficiently –, which makes them appropriate from a functionalist viewpoint, it is not clear whether questions concerning source text vs target text are actually relevant. The construction of multinational and international campaigns does not necessarily involve this dichotomy, as mentioned above. Instead, many of these messages are clearly multilingual forms of communication (House and Rehbein, 2004; Kelly-Holmes, 2005) and seem to correspond to Guidère’s (2009, p. 423, emphasis in the original) categories of *communication multilingue*: that is to say, a promotional message may be conceived in several languages at once (i.e. it is itself multilingual); it may be conceived in one language but disseminated in various others (multilingual diffusion); or the message may have issued from a multicultural environment in which two or more official languages are used (multilingual context).

Even though all of these cases apply, the creation of multinational campaigns seems to imply a message to be communicated internationally, hence including different points of departure for the same concept. A study of print advertisements for cosmetics and perfumes (Tuna, 2004), which focused specifically on the discussion of the concept of “original” in translation research, showed examples of translations from two different potential “sources”, one in English and the other in French. Figure 1 shows a Shiseido advert included in the study:

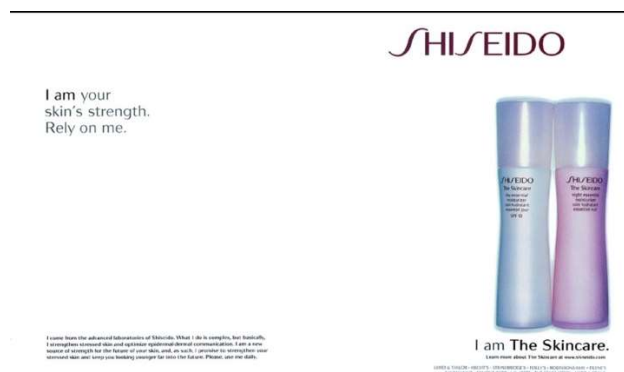


Figure 1. Shiseido advert.²

(EN) I am your skin's strength. Rely on me.

(PT) Eu sou a força da sua pele. Confie em mim.

(ES) Soy la fortaleza de su piel. Confie en mi.

(DE) Ich bin die Energie Ihrer Haut. Vertrauen Sie mir.

(FR) Je suis la force de votre peau. Misez sur l'avenir.

(IT) Sono la nuova forza della tua pelle. Punta sul futuro.

(NL) Ik ben de veerkracht van uw huid. Tot ver in de toekomst.

² Available at: <https://www.adforum.com/talent/20680-cat-doran/work/12815> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

Individual advertisements may also be multilingual, something that occurs more commonly than we realise. This phenomenon has been studied by Kelly-Holmes (2005), who contends that marketing discourses exploit linguistic difference, often making difference ubiquitous and strategic (a linguistic fetish), as well as using different languages to actually cater for situations that are bilingual or multilingual. It should be noted that languages other than the national one are often used in the advertising of home products, not only when targeting international communities with a clear global strategy, but also when addressing domestic communities, in an attempt to make the most of the linguistic fetish (House and Rehbein, 2004; Kelly-Holmes, 2005). This means that languages play multifarious roles: expressing a message, representing cultural aspects connected with the language itself, as well as conveying country-of-origin effect and language (and country/culture) status, deriving from power relationships. Thus, their display on adverts becomes relevant, both linguistically and visually. Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the way languages can be used strategically by being associated with positive attributes. In both adverts for Portuguese brands, English is used as a result of its international, “fashionable” standing. The advert for Salsa Jeans (Figure 2) includes both Portuguese and English verbal elements, but the English text is visibly larger. Mateus Rosé, a brand with strong international presence, uses solely English (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Salsa Jeans advert.³



Figure 3. Mateus Rosé advert.⁴

³ Available at: <https://www.salsajeans.com/pt/nova-colecao-outono-inverno-pg3281.html> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

⁴ Available at: <https://www.mateusrose.com/en/whats-new/mateus-sparkling-rose-brut-takes-gold-2018-edition-vinalies-internationales> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

As languages become commodities (Kelly-Holmes, 2005), their visual display, especially in the case of English and the fetish of a global “neutral” language, is instilled with symbolic values. English grants credibility due to its association with global market presence and improved communicational potential (Kelly-Holmes, 2014, p. 144-145).

It is not surprising, then, as a study of perfume and cosmetics advertising in Portugal (Tuna, 2004) has demonstrated, that a significant number of advertisements are not translated, with most of them carrying messages in English and, in the case of perfumes, often in French (e.g. Jean Paul Gaultier’s ‘Scandal à Paris’⁵). They attempt, thus, to capitalise on the associations triggered by these languages, in addition to the country-of-origin effect. In fact, non-translation has been used strategically for different purposes, as noted by Duarte (2000), who has identified different forms and causes of non-translation. According to Duarte (2000, p. 61), omission (i.e. leaving items untranslated) and repetition (carrying words or expressions over to the target language) seem to be the most recurrent in international adverts (see Figure 2). The cases under analysis seem to demonstrate that displaying other languages in addition to or instead of the target language is barely connected with the meaning of the message itself, but rather with marketing actions aimed at making the most of the associations and statuses, as well as relationships, of the languages (and consequently, cultures) involved.

4. Looking at translation in multilingual and multimodal international campaigns

As we move towards advertising involving new media, which are eminently multimodal, one of the features that stand out is multilingualism, as multimodal advertising is offered in multilingual formats to different language communities. Websites provide a rich source of discussion, bringing to light many of the issues discussed here and highlighting the need to address these new forms of cross-cultural communication (which include translation practices) from a multimodal perspective. As advocated by Gambier (2016, p. 900), digital media have particularly challenged many of the concepts used in translation and Translation Studies:

AVT and the localization of software, websites, mobile devices, and video games can be brought into fruitful dialogue. They have at least three features in common: both types of translation are the results of teamwork; the work is on volatile and intermediate texts (production script, dialogue list, online documents in progress, rolling software versions, regularly updated Web and social media content) that overstep the traditional dichotomous boundaries between source and target and question the very notion of an original; and the criteria of quality include not only acceptability but comprehensibility, accessibility, and usability.

Many brand websites are eminently promotional, drawing attention to products and to information on the brand itself and frequently including online shopping as well. They often include campaigns and advertisements used in other media, such as catalogues and

⁵ Available at: <https://www.parfumdreams.pt/Jean-Paul-Gaultier/Fragancias-femininas/Scandal> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

flyers (in PDF format), posters, magazine advert reproductions and videos, some of which used on TV. However, they also have specific features, such as banners, pop-ups and multi-screen displays. Additionally, one of the most frequent features in this medium is the possibility of access in different languages (at least a home language plus English); in the case of brand websites, there is usually the possibility of country (and language) selection. Thus, they provide a particularly relevant corpus of analysis for the purpose of analysing multimodality and multilingualism in international advertising.

4.1 Methodology

Even though many products are now traded internationally via new digital media such as advertising and commerce platforms, cosmetics and healthcare products are quite representative of international advertising approaches, even in more conventional media, as their use is often quite widespread (Mueller, 2010, pp. 175-180). Thus, this article focuses on two well-known brands, Colgate and Clarins, whose websites cover a wide range of countries.

The analysis covers the brands' main web page and some specific adverts, in an attempt to highlight: 1) how advertising campaigns deal with multiculturalism, multilingualism, and multimodality; 2) how multilingual communication is expressed; 3) how advertising in multimodal and multilingual contexts reveals linguistic, modal and cultural conceptions and preconceptions regarding language and cultural relationships and status (and, eventually, hegemony), as well as mode relationships and status; and 4) how translation concepts like those of "text", "source" and "strategy" (Gambier, 2016, p. 899) could be challenged in digital international advertising.

4.2 Data analysis

4.2.1 Colgate Website

A quick browse of the opening page of Colgate's website(s)⁶ seems enough to observe that an identical concept or appeal does not necessarily generate an identical executional approach. Even the Portuguese and the Spanish websites, which bear obvious similarities in design, graphics and display windows, raise interesting translation issues. In the website's last banner display window, for example, the Portuguese caption refers to protecting a beautiful smile, whereas the Spanish one mentions how white teeth can become:

[ES] Dientes más blancos al instante.
[Whiter teeth in an instant.]

[PT] Quando um único sorriso traz tanta alegria, vale a pena protegê-lo com Colgate.
[When a single smile brings so much joy, it's worth protecting it with Colgate.]

⁶ Available at: <https://www.colgate.com/pt-pt>; <https://www.colgate.es>; <https://www.colgate.it/?>; <https://www.colgate.fr>; <https://www.colgate.com/en-gb>; <https://www.colgate.com.br>; <https://www.colgate.com/en-in>; <https://www.colgate.com.cn> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

The Spanish version corresponds to the title of the advertisement for one of the brand's line of products. Moreover, the gloss used for the Portuguese version is the actual sentence used in the UK website for the same window display, which means the Portuguese version is translated from the English. As regards the websites for other countries, however, the way they present their promotional window displays varies considerably, despite identical visuals and fairly literal translations of the accompanying captions. In other words, the main page contains several automatically changed window displays, which might not be identical for all countries, not only in number (this ranges between three and five) but also in content (linguistic and visual), which varies less.

Even so, these opening pages have clearly involved decisions that take into account marketing approaches to campaigns that are going to be used across countries, with some differences in marketing strategies and options. Some may be connected with the products to be marketed, while others concern the availability of the products themselves. In terms of visual display, this is reflected in the number of banner windows, as mentioned above, which ranges from five (Portugal, Spain and Japan) to three (Italy, UK, France, India, China).

As for campaigns aimed at other continents and more distant cultures, differences reflect not only various concerns and agendas (e.g. water and healthcare issues in the Indian and Brazilian websites), but also expectations regarding people's and family stereotypes, which are visible in the visuals, copy, and sequencing of the slide displays. The Brazilian banners, for instance, include reference to oral care procedures, such as a voice assistant for kids – “Colgate Kids lança assistente de voz no Google para deixar a escovação das crianças mais divertida” (“Colgate Kids launches Google voice assistant to make children's brushing more fun”) –, which may suggest this help is necessary. The Indian website,⁷ for its part, includes a slide with two participants in traditional Indian costumes (a mother and a daughter), and another one in English, indicating water problems: “Every drop counts – turn off the tap while you brush” (Figure 4). This hints at a particularly relevant issue in this country. Only sites from more distant cultures, e.g. Saudi Arabia (Figure 5) and China,⁸ show identical ethnic concerns in the depiction of participants.



Figure 4. Advert from the Indian Colgate website.

⁷ Available at: <https://www.colgate.com/en-in> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

⁸ Available at: <https://www.colgate.com/en-sa>; <https://corp.colgate.com.cn> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).



Figure 5. Advert from the Saudi Arabian Colgate website.

Of particular notice is the effort of the Brazilian advertising strategy to adapt and localise by highlighting differences between Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese: the absence of determinants, the use of gerunds, the use of forms of address such as *você* (a form of “you” more commonly used in Brazilian Portuguese):

Saiba como a educação em saúde bucal vem proporcionando sorrisos saudáveis para milhões de crianças em 80 países. (Brasil)⁹

Descubra como a educação em saúde bucal proporciona sorrisos saudáveis para milhões de crianças em 80 países. (Portugal)¹⁰

The Indian website also raises relevant issues concerning language options. It is in English, though combined with some words in Hindi (especially those related to the product line), and attempts to incorporate traditional concepts and lifestyle. The ingredients are typically used in India’s medical tradition (*sangam of ved and vigyaan*), Ayurveda, and Swarna is a location in India. These lexical items are therefore indicative of Colgate’s concern to incorporate culturally familiar content into the message and product name.

Colgate Swarna Vedshakti Toothpaste

Experience the perfect sangam of ved & vigyaan with Colgate Swarna Vedshakti toothpaste.

When browsing further into product lines and their respective advertising, the websites show interesting cross-cultural approaches, and it seems that differences among adverts are more influenced by marketing decisions (concerning not only product lines and extensions, but also the strategy used for standardisation and localisation) than by linguistic or visual features (Portugal vs Brazil; UK vs Anglophone Canada; France vs Francophone Canada). In other words, variations in product range within the same product line or between different lines do not coincide with linguistic differences (or distances) or similarities, which seems to indicate that they have to do with trading strategies, such as distribution and selling figures, among other marketing options. In some cases, such as the adverts for Portugal and Brazil, differences occur even in the selling lines displayed on the

⁹ Available at: <https://www.colgate.com.br> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.colgate.com/pt-pt> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

Colgate Total packaging, with one focusing on the product's "appearance" (Portugal) and the other on its "health" (Brazil):

Efeito visível. (Portugal)
[Visible effect.]

Saúde visível. (Brazil)
[Visible health.]

Localization for bilingual countries normally entails the translation of the advertising copy (text) only. This means that visuals and graphics are identical in most cases (as is the case with the main page of the Canadian website):

[CA-EN] Be totally ready for life.
[CA-FR] Soyez totalement prêt pour la vie.

Even so, differences in advertising for identical product lines among different countries make it clear that all modes are considered, and the decision to alter one or all of the modes indicates that these messages are viewed as multimodal and that all modes are translatable when it is necessary to meet marketing goals. As already mentioned, the fact that a single language is involved (e.g. the visuals in the UK and Canadian English adverts; the visuals and copy in the European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese adverts) does not necessarily imply identical linguistic, visual or graphic options (Figure 6).

Comece já a melhorar a sua saúde oral. (Portugal)
[Start improving your oral health.]

12 benefícios por até 12 horas. (Brazil)
[12 benefits for up to 12 hours.]





Figure 6. Adverts for Colgate Total.¹¹

4.2.2 Clarins website

The Clarins website appears to confirm most findings discussed above, as the main pages indicate that marketing strategies motivate many of the decisions that are reflected in the content of the promotional messages (linguistic, visual or graphic). Linguistic affinity or closeness does not usually originate identical content, as will be shown below.

As with the Colgate adverts, the Clarins website (Figure 7)¹² presents an array of country options, some with identical main pages, though the visual merchandising used in window displays may change according to country and show dissimilar marketing options concerning product ranges and lines highlighted in the main page. Nevertheless, browsing the promotional windows for Clarins products reveals identical approaches to the ones found in the Colgate adverts. Thus, bilingual countries normally present identical websites and adverts, translating only linguistic elements.

[CA-FR]: Au plus près d'une peau parfait. Le serum expert qui contribue à réduire l'apparence des pores.

[CA-EN]: Pore-perfect is now within reach. The pro serum that helps reduce the appearance of pores.



Figure 7. Clarins advert in the Canadian website.¹³

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.colgate.com/pt-pt>; <https://www.colgate.com.br?>; <https://www.colgate.it?>; <https://www.colgate.fr>; <https://www.colgate.com/en-gb>; <https://www.colgate.es> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

¹² Available at: <https://int.clarins.com> (Access: 4 October 2019).

¹³ Available at: <https://www.clarins.ca> (Accessed: 12 October 2018).

Linguistic compatibility or affinity does not necessarily entail identical copy texts, even when the images are kept (see, for example, the Clarins Spa advert in the UK and Anglophone Canada websites, as well as in the France, Francophone Switzerland and Canada websites):

[ES] El Arte del Tacto
[IT] Esperienze Uniche
[FR] L'art du Toucher
[GB-EN] The Art of Touch
[CH-FR] L'árt du toucher
[CH-DT] Pure Berührung
[CA-EN] Ready for a little me-time?
[CA-FR] Envie de vous évader?

Interestingly, in most cases, differences in the promotional display of advertisements are not motivated by linguistic differences or by difficulties in translating visuals, but by various marketing strategies related to: (a) decisions concerning the products to be highlighted and/or marketed in a given country, normally connected with the product lifecycle in that country; (b) more or less standardised approaches to international communication, which normally results in more standardised approaches among geographically closer countries (among European countries, for example) and more localised approaches for more distant ones, both geographically and culturally.

Thus, as in the Colgate adverts, Clarins' main promotional pages often draw attention to novelty products, which might not be exactly the same for all countries, despite a considerable degree of similarity and the fact that cosmetic products tend to show standardised approaches, even in the visuals and models depicted. More stereotypical local models are often used in promotional pages of websites from more distant, non-Western cultures (Figure 8). This aspect, however, is not so evident in cosmetic adverts in general and in promotional websites, since it is quite a common strategy in such adverts to have models representing different stereotypes so as to show that products are suitable for different skin types (Tuna, 2004).



Figure 8. Advert from the Japanese Clarins website.¹⁴

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.clarins.jp/%E3%82%AF%E3%83%A9%E3%83%A9%E3%83%B3%>

In more standardised approaches, it is normally the verbal elements that are translated, sometimes involving some differences in meaning and desired effect or appeal. There seems to be an overriding concept in the Clarins Spa advert – “the art of touch” – which could be associated with the source text, but the same adverts include other messages, such as “Esperienze Uniche” in the Italian advert or “Envie de vous évader?” in the French Canadian one. More localised approaches, in turn, frequently involve different advertising appeals, which means that the key concept may be redesigned according to the target audience and culture (as in the English Canada advert, “Ready for a little me-time?”).

Languages are dealt with differently, in that English is still the language used in the international versions of these websites and as a “default” option in international marketing elements (product lines, product names, slogans, selling lines). This certainly raises many of the issues discussed in multilingual communication theories, as it reveals relationships between languages (and cultures) and issues of linguistic and cultural hegemony.

These websites have also demonstrated that, in cross-cultural communication used for marketing purposes, there are external factors which might motivate different promotional strategies. The advert for Clarins Spa is absent from many websites, including the Portuguese one. However, if we look more carefully at the Spa locations, we will see a connection between these locations and the inclusion of the respective advert.

5. Final remarks

One of the main points raised by the adverts discussed is that it is not possible to analyse international advertising without considering the multimodal and multilingual character of these texts. The use of different semiotic modes and languages allows us to account for the multilayering of codes employed in the transmission of advertising messages. Though it seems clear that the point of departure comes from a set of guidelines concerning the concept or main advertising appeal and, eventually, its execution, it is less clear that the intersemiotic process departs necessarily from one mode, one medium or one language alone. In fact, the concepts of source text and authorship are largely redundant in advertising translation.

Thus, Internet advertising highlights the multimodal character of adverts by providing users with platforms that convey these promotional messages using different modes, peculiar to different media – from copy text and visuals to pop-ups and videos, with which the users can often interact.

Translation in this context is very challenging, as it involves processes of both an interlingual and intersemiotic nature. To account for the way websites are produced, it is necessary to consider differences that transcend translation strategies or options, as they

E3%82%B9%E3%83%BC%E3%83%9E%E3%82%AC%E3%82%B8%E3%83%B3?fdid=clarinsmag (Accessed: 4 October 2019).

seem to involve trans-linguistic and trans-semiotic transactions, as well as macro-level decisions connected with marketing conditions and strategies.

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