

INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING MARKETING TEXTS

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This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the intricacies involved in the translation of marketing texts within the broader scope of intercultural business communication. It highlights the multifaceted challenges that translators encounter when dealing with content rich in culturally specific references, idiomatic expressions and persuasive rhetorical devices, i.e. elements that often resist direct or literal translation. The study underscores the necessity of employing a nuanced, context-sensitive approach that aligns with the target audience's cultural expectations, communicative norms, and market-specific preferences. In particular, the article offers a detailed classification and critical evaluation of various translation strategies, including transcreation, localization, adaptation, and perspective shift. These strategies are assessed in terms of their capacity to preserve both the semantic content and the emotional and persuasive force of the original message, which is crucial in maintaining the integrity and impact of brand communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The article also outlines practical techniques for implementing these strategies effectively. These include the transcoding, which ensures the equivalent translation of marketing content across all linguistic levels; lexical-semantic transformations, which adjust the meaning of foreign terms, considering the cultural, contextual and grammatical features of the target audience; lexical-grammatical transformations, which involve changing sentence structures and word choices to meet the grammatical and stylistic expectations of the target market. Drawing on a wide array of practical examples from real-world advertising slogans, the article illustrates how different translation strategies and techniques are applied in specific cultural contexts. Special attention is given to cases where inadequate cultural adaptation led to misinterpretation or diminished brand resonance, reinforcing the significance of a culturally informed translation process.

Key words: marketing translation, advertising slogans, transcreation, localization, adaptation, perspective shift, cultural transposition, consumer perception.

Бойко Я. В. Міжкультурна бізнес-комунікація: стратегії перекладу маркетингових текстів.

У статті проаналізовано складнощі, що виникають при перекладі маркетингових текстів у царині міжкультурної бізнес-комунікації. Висвітлено багатогранні виклики, з якими стикаються перекладачі при роботі з контентом, що містить культурно специфічні елементи, ідіоматичні вирази та переконливі риторичні засоби, тобто елементи, які часто важко передати шляхом прямого або буквального перекладу. Дослідження підкреслює необхідність використання виваженого, чутливого до контексту підходу, який відповідає культурним очікуванням цільової аудиторії, комунікативним нормам та специфічним уподобанням ринку. Зокрема, запропоновано детальну класифікацію та критичний огляд різних стратегій перекладу, серед яких транскреція, локалізація, адаптація та зміна перспективи. Ці стратегії оцінено на предмет їхньої здатності зберігати як семантичний зміст, так і емоційну та переконливу силу оригінального повідомлення, що є важливим для збереження цілісності й впливовості маркетингової комунікації через мовні та культурні межі. У статті також окреслено практичні техніки ефективного застосування цих стратегій. Серед них – транскодування, що забезпечує еквівалентний переклад маркетингового контенту на всіх мовних рівнях; лексико-семантичні трансформації, які коригують значення іноземних термінів з урахуванням культурних, контекстуальних і граматичних особливостей цільової аудиторії; лексико-граматичні трансформації, що передбачають зміну структури речень та вибір слів з урахуванням граматичних і стилістичних вимог ринку. Послугування широким спектром практичних прикладів із реальних рекламних слоганів уможливило проілюструвати, як різні стратегії та техніки застосовуються в специфічних культурних контекстах. Особливу увагу зосереджено на випадках, коли недостатня культурна адаптація призводила до неправильного тлумачення або зменшення резонансу бренду, що підкреслює важливість культурно обґрунтованого перекладацького процесу.

Ключові слова: маркетинговий переклад, рекламні слогани, транскреція, локалізація, адаптація, зміна перспективи, культурна транспозиція, сприйняття споживачем.

Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of the consideration. In the contemporary era of globalization and digital commerce, marketing communication has transcended national boundaries, requiring businesses to address culturally diverse audiences across the world. As companies strive to enter new markets, accurate and culturally sensitive

translation of marketing texts has become a critical factor in shaping brand image, engaging consumers and ensuring successful product promotion. Unlike other forms of translation, marketing translation demands not only linguistic accuracy but also cultural adaptation to reflect local values, consumer behaviour and social norms. Marketing texts occupy a unique position at the

crossroads of language, culture and commerce, often featuring idiomatic expressions, persuasive language and emotional appeal that present significant challenges in translation. The ability of businesses to effectively communicate their value propositions across cultures has become a decisive factor in international success. A poorly translated slogan or culturally insensitive advertisement can result in misunderstandings, damage to brand reputation or even marketing failure, while a culturally attuned translation can significantly enhance brand loyalty and sales. The complexity of translating such texts lies in balancing fidelity to the original message with the need for cultural and linguistic adaptation to local norms, values and consumer behaviour. A literal approach may distort the message, whereas an overly liberal one risks misrepresenting the brand identity. As global markets demand more multilingual content and consumer expectations grow increasingly complex, research into effective translation strategies for marketing texts becomes not only timely but essential. This topic addresses real-world challenges faced by translators, marketers and copywriters, and contributes valuable insights to the field of intercultural business communication by highlighting best practices in marketing translation.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Modern research literature confirms that the translation of marketing texts in the context of intercultural business communication is not merely a process of linguistic transfer but primarily a strategic adaptation of messages according to the cultural context. The success of these translations relies on blending translation techniques with intercultural competence, allowing for the preservation of persuasiveness, emotional appeal, and brand values.

Orudari examined key methods for transforming content while preserving its functional value. He emphasizes that the strategy selected should align with the genre of the text and the specific communicative situation. These considerations are particularly significant in the context of marketing translation, where emotional appeal, brevity and persuasive impact are paramount [5].

Plóńska's publication addresses the psychological dimensions of how translated messages are perceived. The author argues that for a translation to be truly effective – especially in the realm of intercultural advertising – it must trigger the same cognitive and emotional responses in the target audience as the original message [6].

Molina and Hurtado Albir offer a detailed taxonomy of translation techniques within a functionalist framework. Their work emphasizes the necessity of integrating multiple strategies (such as transposition, modulation, adaptation, and amplification) to ensure communicative adequacy, which is essential for intercultural marketing messages [4].

Hag Muntasir applies Skopos Theory to the translation of pragmatic texts, asserting that the translator's priority should be the intended function or purpose (skopos) of the translation, rather than direct equivalence [3, 38]. This approach is particularly valuable in the field of marketing, where the success of a slogan or campaign

often hinges on cultural resonance rather than literal accuracy.

Mintsys and Telegina emphasize the need to consider stylistic and cultural elements when translating texts rich in aesthetic and emotional value [2, 19]. While their examples are rooted in literary translation, their insights into transposition, modulation and adaptation prove highly applicable to the analysis and translation of advertising slogans.

Given the outlined translation approaches, it is now crucial to explore how these translation strategies can be effectively applied to preserve the cultural and commercial impact of marketing texts for the target audience within intercultural business settings.

Setting the goals and tasks of the article. The goal of this study is to identify and analyze effective translation strategies that ensure marketing texts retain their persuasive power, emotional appeal and cultural relevance across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. To achieve this goal, the article sets the following specific tasks: 1) to identify the main challenges translators face when working with marketing texts; 2) to classify and evaluate translation strategies commonly applied to marketing texts; 3) to analyze practical examples of marketing text translation to illustrate successful and unsuccessful strategies in different cultural contexts.

The outline of the main research material. Translating marketing texts poses a unique set of challenges that go beyond linguistic equivalence, as such texts are deeply embedded in cultural, emotional and psychological contexts.

One of the primary difficulties lies in handling *culturally specific elements*, such as local customs, values, symbols, humour and references that may not have direct counterparts in the target culture. Misinterpreting or inadequately adapting these elements can lead to confusion, offense or loss of message effectiveness.

Another challenge involves *idiomatic expressions*, which are often tied to the cultural worldview of the source audience. These expressions are rarely translated directly and usually require creative equivalents or complete reformulations to maintain their intended impact. Literal translation of idioms often results in unnatural or meaningless phrasing in the target language, thereby weakening the persuasive force of the message.

Additionally, *persuasive language* – a hallmark of marketing communication – relies heavily on emotional appeal, rhetorical devices and stylistic nuance. Translators must capture the tone and intent of the original text while adapting it to resonate with the target audience's cultural expectations and consumer psychology. This task is further complicated by advertising conventions, legal constraints and taboos in various cultures.

Finally, the *risk of distorting brand identity* is ever-present. A translator's decision – whether to preserve the source content closely or adapt it liberally – can influence how the brand is perceived in the new market. Striking the right balance between fidelity to the original message and sensitivity to the target culture requires both linguistic competence and intercultural awareness.

Translating marketing texts demands a nuanced balance between fidelity to the source and adaptation to the target culture. This complexity has given rise to a wide array of translation strategies, ranging from ancient practices of domestication to modern concepts like transcreation. Historically, the strategy of **domestication** – where a foreign text is adapted to the norms and expectations of the target culture – has been evident since Ancient Rome. Friedrich Nietzsche noted that Roman translators such as Horace and Propertius would often omit culturally specific Greek references, inserting Roman allusions instead and even replacing the original author's name with their own [7]. This approach presents translation as a form of cultural conquest, in which domestication not only bridges linguistic gaps but also reasserts the dominant culture's identity.

In contrast, the strategy of **foreignization**, introduced during the German classical and romantic periods and formalized by Friedrich Schleiermacher, advocates for preserving the cultural and stylistic distinctiveness of the source text. As Schleiermacher posited the translator can either bring the reader closer to the author (foreignization) or the author closer to the reader (domestication) [2, 23]. These two poles continue to underpin the theoretical framework of translation strategies today, especially in fields like marketing where both accessibility and authenticity are crucial.

Modern methods of translating marketing texts are rooted in these foundational theories but have evolved to include more specialized and practical strategies designed specifically for commercial use. Let's explore a few of them.

1. Transcreation, as a modern form of domestication, involves creatively reimagining the source text to resonate deeply with the cultural and emotional expectations of the target audience. Unlike literal translation, transcreation prioritizes the intended impact – emotional, persuasive or humorous – over strict lexical fidelity. This strategy is particularly vital for translating slogans, brand names, advertising headlines and other emotionally charged content where cultural references, idiomatic expressions, or wordplay must evoke a similar response in the target culture. Transcreation often requires close collaboration between translators and marketing professionals, as it blends linguistic skill with cultural insight and copywriting expertise to ensure that the message remains both effective and culturally appropriate.

2. Localization involves adapting content to align closely with the cultural norms, preferences and expectations of a specific target market. It goes beyond mere language translation to encompass elements such as regional vocabulary, imagery, colour schemes, product names, units of measurement, humour and even legal or regulatory requirements. The goal is to make the content feel familiar and relevant to the local audience, enhancing engagement and trust. Effective localization can significantly improve user experience and market acceptance, but it also presents challenges – particularly in maintaining consistency across different markets and preserving a cohesive global brand identity. This strategy requires not only linguistic proficiency but also deep cultural and contextual understanding.

3. **Adaptation** allows for the substitution of culture-specific elements with functionally equivalent ones from the target culture, ensuring that the intended meaning and emotional impact of the original message are preserved. This strategy is particularly useful when dealing with references, humour, idioms or imagery that may not resonate with or even be understood by the target audience. By replacing these elements with culturally familiar alternatives, adaptation helps maintain the relevance and persuasive power of the text. It is a pragmatic approach that prioritizes audience engagement, enhances message clarity and demonstrates a high level of cultural sensitivity – key factors in the success of international marketing campaigns.

4. Perspective shift involves altering the viewpoint, grammatical structure, or narrative focus of a message while preserving its core meaning. This strategy is particularly useful when the original perspective may not align with the communicative norms or expectations of the target audience. Perspective shift helps ensure that the translated message remains coherent, persuasive and stylistically appropriate, especially in marketing communication where tone and narrative framing significantly influence consumer perception. For instance, the English phrase “you are required to” might be rendered in a less direct form in cultures that favour indirectness. This strategy enhances clarity and naturalness without compromising communicative intent.

5. Literal translation (selectively applied) refers to the direct, word-for-word rendering of source content into the target language. While generally unsuitable for creative marketing materials, it may be appropriate for legally required information, technical specifications or universally understood concepts. Its use must be limited and contextually justified to avoid loss of impact or cultural mismatch.

In the context of marketing texts, these strategies are supported by practical techniques [1, 378], such as **transcoding**, which ensures the equivalent translation of marketing content across all linguistic levels. This includes methods like *transliteration*, *transcription*, *practical transcription*, *null transcoding/incrustation* and *calquing*, ensuring that brand names, slogans and other key terms are accurately conveyed in the target language. **Lexical-semantic transformations**, such as *generalisation*, *concretization* and *modulation*, adjust the meaning of foreign terms or concepts, considering the cultural, contextual and grammatical features of the target audience. This helps marketing messages resonate with local consumers while maintaining the emotional appeal and persuasive power of the original text. **Lexical-grammatical transformations** play a key role in adapting marketing content, as they involve changing sentence structures and word choices to meet the grammatical and stylistic expectations of the target market. These transformations include *grammatical substitution*, *addition/ amplification*, *omission/elimination*, *transposition*, *antonymous translation*, *descriptive translation*, *explication* and *total reorganization*. These techniques ensure that the message remains clear and culturally relevant, without losing the original intent.

Together, these strategies and practical techniques create a cohesive framework that ensures marketing content is both precise and culturally fitting. They empower brands to effectively engage with a diverse, multilingual audience, guaranteeing that marketing messages are not only technically accurate but also resonate emotionally and culturally. Marketing translators often adopt a hybrid approach, blending elements from various strategies depending on the type of content, target audience and campaign objectives. By applying these strategies and techniques, brands can successfully navigate the complexities of global marketing in an increasingly interconnected world, boosting brand loyalty, enhancing consumer engagement and driving overall campaign success.

Let us analyze several examples to illustrate the implementation of these strategies and practical techniques in marketing content. By examining real-world examples, we can better understand how brands adapt their messages to resonate with diverse audiences while maintaining consistency and emotional impact.

McDonald's global slogan *I'm Lovin' It* was translated for the Ukrainian market as 'Час для щастя' (Time for Happiness), by using a **localization strategy** that reflects national values such as family togetherness, emotional warmth and shared mealtime experiences. Rather than directly translating the original phrase, the localized version emphasizes moments of joy and harmony that align with Ukrainian cultural ideals. Visual elements of the campaign – featuring family leisure, meals with children and friendly gatherings – reinforce this emotional tone, fostering a deeper connection with the audience while maintaining the brand's core message of enjoyment and positivity.

While translating the slogan, the following techniques were used to ensure cultural appropriateness and emotional resonance with the target audience. Modulation shifted the focus from personal emotion *I'm Lovin' It – I adore it* to a temporal context and shared activity 'Час для щастя', which better corresponds to the Ukrainian style of emotional communication. Grammatical substitution replaced the verbal structure (present continuous tense – *I'm lovin'*) with a nominal one (noun 'час' + prepositional phrase 'для щастя'). **Generalisation** involved a complete change of imagery, replacing the direct emotional expression with a generalized concept of "a happy moment", which fits more naturally into Ukrainian cultural codes. Finally, elimination removed the personal pronoun 'I', as it could sound overly egocentric for Ukrainian advertising perception, further aligning the message with the local cultural context.

KFC's global slogan *Finger Lickin' Good* was translated for the Ukrainian market as 'Смачно за межами уяви' (Delicious Beyond Imagination) using an **adaptation strategy** to align with local cultural norms and expectations. The original idiomatic expression, cantered around finger-licking, could clash with Ukrainian values that emphasize cleanliness and proper table manners. The adapted slogan avoids any culturally inappropriate imagery by shifting the focus from physical action to an abstract and universally appealing description of taste. This change preserves the original's

emotional appeal – highlighting the irresistibility of the food – while ensuring the message remains respectful and relatable for the Ukrainian audience.

While translating the slogan, several techniques were used to ensure cultural appropriateness and resonance with the target audience. Generalisation and descriptive translation shifted the focus of the slogan from a personal, direct expression *Finger Lickin'* to a more abstract, sensory appeal 'Смачно за межами уяви'. This change allowed the slogan to highlight the taste experience without any potentially uncomfortable associations. Elimination was also applied by removing the direct reference to "licking", as this action might not be well received in Ukraine, where personal hygiene and cleanliness are highly valued. This omission helped avoid negative connotations while maintaining the core message of the food's irresistible taste. Finally, transposition contributed to adjusting the slogan's structure, converting the informal, idiomatic phrase *Finger Lickin' Good* into a more formal and descriptive version 'Смачно за межами уяви'. This change better aligned with the cultural and linguistic preferences of the Ukrainians, ensuring the message was both effective and appropriate.

Coca-Cola's *Open Happiness* campaign was translated for the Ukrainian market as 'Щастя в твоєму серці' (Happiness in Your Heart) through the use of a **transcreation strategy**, allowing the brand to resonate more deeply with local cultural values such as sincerity, warmth and emotional closeness. By shifting from a directive phrase to a more introspective and emotionally charged message, the transcreation preserved the original campaign's emotional appeal while aligning it with the Ukrainian audience's preference for heartfelt and human-centered communication.

While translating Coca-Cola's slogan, a number of key translation techniques were applied to ensure cultural resonance and emotional authenticity for the Ukrainian audience. **Transposition** was used by replacing the imperative verb form *Open* with a noun phrase containing a possessive pronoun 'в твоєму серці'. This shift transformed the slogan from a directive command into a gentle, reflective message, creating a more emotionally engaging and culturally appropriate tone. **Modulation** involved altering the conceptual focus from a physical action (*open*) to the emotional location (*heart*), which offered a metaphorical and sentimental reinterpretation of the message. This technique allowed the slogan to align more closely with the Ukrainian preference for emotional warmth, sincerity, and harmony. **Elimination** was also employed by removing the action-oriented verb entirely. Instead of prompting the consumer to act, the adapted slogan presents a lyrical image that evokes empathy and emotional connection. This approach emphasizes inner happiness and emotional depth, key values in Ukrainian cultural narratives, while preserving the original message's persuasive and affective intent.

Nike's iconic slogan *Just Do It* was translated for the Ukrainian market as 'Йди з вірою' (*Go with Faith*) using the **perspective shift** strategy changing both the focus and emotional tone of the message, aligning it with Ukrainian values and fostering a deeper emotional connection with the audience. While the original

slogan emphasizes immediate action and confidence, the Ukrainian version focuses on faith, belief and perseverance – values deeply rooted in Ukrainian culture, particularly in sports and personal development. This shift moves the focus from external action to internal belief and determination, resonating with Ukraine's cultural emphasis on overcoming challenges through emotional fortitude. The concept of faith, integral to Ukrainian history, enhances the slogan's emotional impact, making it more relevant to local experiences of resilience.

In the translation of Nike's slogan, **modulation** was used to reinterpret the original focus on immediate action and confidence *Just Do It* by emphasizing perseverance through faith in the Ukrainian version, 'Йди з вірою' (*Go with Faith*). This shift better aligns with the Ukrainian communication style, which values emotional fortitude and belief in the face of adversity, especially during challenging times. Modulation here involves replacing the concept of confidence with faith, maintaining the core motivation but adjusting the mode of expression to better suit local cultural values.

Conclusions and directions for further research in this area. The analysis of slogan translation strategies demonstrates that successful cross-cultural marketing transcends the mere act of literal translation. It requires a thoughtful and nuanced adaptation through strategies such as transcreation, localization, adaptation

and perspective shift. These strategies are more than just linguistic techniques; they are culturally attuned approaches that allow brands to reshape their messages in a way that resonates deeply with the values, traditions and expectations of the target audience.

The effectiveness of these strategies lies in their ability to preserve the emotional and persuasive core of the original slogan while ensuring that it feels authentic and relevant within the local cultural context. For example, in transcreation, a slogan might be reimagined entirely to align with local cultural norms, as seen in Coca-Cola's *Open Happiness* translated as 'Щастя в твоєму серці' in Ukrainian, emphasizing emotional connection over action. Similarly, perspective shifts, as illustrated by Nike's *Just Do It* adapted to 'Йди з вірою' for the Ukrainian market, can adjust the focus from external action to internal belief, aligning with cultural concepts of perseverance and faith. These strategies ensure that the brand's message is not only understood but also embraced by the target culture, creating a stronger emotional connection with the consumer.

Moving forward, further research could explore the long-term effects of these translation strategies on brand perception and consumer behaviour. Studies could investigate whether slogans that are culturally adapted using strategies like transcreation or perspective shift lead to stronger brand loyalty or greater consumer trust over time.

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