



The misunderstood concept of translation in tourism promotion

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DOI: 10.12807/ti.108201.2016.a04

Abstract: Following the rapid growth of the tourism industry worldwide, translation has become one of the most practical means of cross-cultural tourism promotion. In fact, tourism promotional materials (TPMs) are considered one of the most translated types of texts in the world today. However, this type of translated materials has frequently been criticised for its poor standard. While several studies have addressed this issue by focusing on the textual aspects of translated TPMs, research seems to be scarce on the main agents involved in TPM translation, particularly the translation commissioner who is considered a determining factor under skopos theory. In an attempt to fill this gap, and to pave the way for the mapping of possible best practices in cross-cultural TPM production, this study explores the actual practices of TPM commissioners of a tourism authority by investigating what they deem to be the ideal scenario for the creation of effective cross-cultural TPMs and the extent to which they are able to realise this ideal scenario in the commercial world. The main source of data for this study is a semi-structured interview conducted with two experienced managers of an Australian state tourism authority directly responsible for the commissioning of cross-cultural TPMs. The investigation reveals that there is a gap between what the commissioners deem to be the ideal scenario for the production of cross-cultural TPMs and the actual practices of the commissioners due to a number of misconceptions regarding the nature of translation and the role of translators. This study argues that addressing these misconceptions has the potential to not only improve the effectiveness and efficiency of cross-cultural tourism promotion but more importantly uplift the image of the translation profession as a whole.

Keywords: tourism promotional materials; translation commissioner; cross-cultural advertising; translation misconceptions; transcreation

1. Introduction

In today's environment of increasing mobility and travel, tourism is recognised as a key driver for socio-economic progress in many parts of the world. Many economies are investing heavily in tourism marketing and promotion to attract as many tourists as possible. Given the intangible nature of the tourism impulse, language –both verbal and visual– represents the most powerful driving force in persuading potential tourists and converting them into actual tourists. One of the most common types of tourism marketing tools, in which language represents an instrument of persuasion, is tourism promotional materials (TPMs). TPMs fall under the category of advertising discourse and come in a range of formats such as brochures, leaflets, posters, flyers, postcards and websites. These materials are produced using the 'language of tourism promotion' (Dann, 1996) to create appealing word images and emotional excitement in an attempt to persuade

readers to become tourists. The effectiveness of this language depends largely on its proper use within the framework of culture. The intricate interplay of language and culture within the context of tourism promotion has been rightly acknowledged by Dann, who asserts:

The language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and in so doing, convert them from potential into actual clients. By addressing them in terms of their culturally predicated needs and motivations it hopes to push them out of the armchair and onto the plane – to turn them into tourists (1996, p. 2).

Thus, in order to fulfil the main objective of persuasion, the language used in TPMs is exploited and manipulated in such a way that suits the cultural context in which the TPMs are operating. While the cultural aspect of TPMs is something that is taken for granted in a monolingual context (e.g., in domestic tourism promotion) the intricacy of this aspect becomes immediately evident once the monolingual boundaries are transcended – that is, when tourism is promoted across languages and cultures (e.g., in international tourism promotion). I shall refer to TPMs created under multilingual, multicultural conditions as cross-cultural TPMs. In such a situation, translation presents itself as one of the most practical means of communication to persuade a new audience in a different language and cultural context and convert them into actual clients. Nevertheless, translated TPMs have frequently been criticised for failing to fulfil their intended function in the target culture (as I will discuss below). Due to the increasing awareness of the importance of translation in tourism promotion, this particular sub-field of translation has received some attention in recent years. Several studies have emerged highlighting various issues in the translation of TPMs. However, most of these studies discuss the translation of TPMs in isolation from the translation commissioner or client who assigns the translation task to the individual translator. This is despite the critical role played by the commissioner in determining the purpose of the translation and the methods and approaches with which it is to be realised. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the views and practices of the commissioners of a cross-cultural TPM in an attempt to explore possible best practices for TPM translation.

2. The translation of Tourism Promotional Materials

Although TPMs have become one of the most translated materials in the world, their translations have frequently been criticised within the field of Translation Studies (Federici, 2007, p. 111; Hickey, 2004, p. 77; Kelly, 1998, pp. 33-36; Pierini, 2007, p. 90; Pinazo, 2007, p. 320; Snell-Hornby, 1999, p. 95; Sulaiman, 2014, p. 507; Sumberg, 2004, pp. 329-350). The main criticism levelled by scholars is that these translations are not adequate from the point of view of the function that they should fulfil.¹ The reasons behind the inadequacy of TPM

¹The assessment of TPM translations as being inadequate or ineffective as reported in the literature is made mainly based on the scholars' textual analysis of the translations. Much of the target-oriented research in Translation Studies consists of qualitative textual analysis that concentrates on an imagined target audience, or an 'implied reader' constructed within texts, built in and by discourse, instead of actual recipients (Assis Rosa, 2006, p. 101; Tuominen, 2012, p. 46). The investigation of the implied reader is strengthened by, but not dependent on, the researcher's expectations of the addressed readership that result from the 'insider status' of the researcher. However, Sulaiman (2013) has employed the focus group method (a primary method in marketing *Translation & Interpreting* Vol 8 No 1 (2016)

translations are discussed by Sumberg (2004, pp. 343-350), who suggests that the poor standard of translated TPMs is attributed to the translation approach adopted (2004, p. 343). According to Sumberg, the adoption of a linguistic approach (which focuses on the linguistic features of the source text) rather than a functional one (which focuses on the function and purpose of the translation) suggests that translators are unwilling or unable to leave Smith and Klein-Braley's "safe haven of a straight translation" (1997, p. 175). This view is supported by Hickey (2004, p. 77), who discusses this topic from the perspective of pragmatics, claiming that the problem lies in the fact that translators aim at 'semantic equivalence' instead of 'perlocutionary equivalence'. The ineffectiveness of the linguistic approach can be explained by the fact that in the field of advertising, the concept of 'purpose', or what is also termed as 'skopos' by the functional school of translation, is central (Vermeer, 2000, p. 221). In the field of tourism advertising, the ultimate purpose is to turn a potential tourist into an actual tourist. Therefore, what becomes more important than fidelity to the linguistic features of the source text (ST) is the requirement that the target text (TT) must function optimally in the target culture to achieve the intended purpose. In order to fulfil such a requirement, it is crucial to understand cultural differences and the difficulties these can create. Since different cultures have different values, preferences and expectations, different persuasion themes and strategies are required to influence the performance and reception of the TT.

A simple example which illustrates Sumberg's claim that TPM translators are unwilling or unable to leave the 'safe haven of a straight translation' and take into consideration cross-cultural factors that will influence the performance and reception of the TT, can be found in the translation of the paradisaic discourse commonly employed in tourism advertising to promote nature tourism. Although this strategy has the potential to create an appealing image of pristine natural sites in the Anglophone culture, it is less likely to have a similar effect in other cultures, such as the Malay and Arab, where paradise is strictly regarded as a matter of the Hereafter. In these cultures, the quest for an earthly (secular) paradise, which exists in modern Western society, does not exist. Despite this difference, there are many instances of the paradisaic theme being translated literally into these cultures for the purpose of tourism promotion. For example, a study conducted on Tourism Australia's promotional website (australia.com) revealed that the paradisaic theme used throughout the website was reproduced literally in its Malay variant (australia.com/my). For instance, the English headline "Pedal to Paradise in the Blue Mountains" was rendered literally for its Malay audience as "Mengayuh Menuju ke Syurga di Blue Mountains" (Sulaiman, 2013, pp. 154-155). The study revealed that the literal translation containing the word 'syurga' (paradise) was perceived by Malay natives as 'unnatural', 'awkward', and 'unappealing' due to their religious conceptualisation of the word 'syurga'. If the headline is to become an instrument of persuasion it could have been rendered to (something to the effect of) "Nikmati Keindahan Alam Semulajadi di Blue Mountains" (lit. "Enjoy the Beauty of Nature in the Blue Mountains")². In a similar situation, a case study investigating the paradisaic discourse of Tourism Tasmania's campaign in 2008 "The Last Paradise" revealed that the difference in how paradise is conceptualised in Western and Chinese cultures is believed to

research) to test the adequacy and effectiveness of TPM translations on actual end-users of TPMs, namely tourists and potential tourists.

² The English headline 'Pedal to Paradise' is an example of the use of poetic devices (alliteration in this case) in English TPMs to increase memorability and impact. The use of such devices to create a particular effect on readers across languages and cultures is also an area of interest in TPM translation.

have caused disappointments among tourists of Chinese origin who visited Tasmania (Chiu, 2009, p. 16).

Another key theme often used in TPMs to lure Anglophone readers into becoming tourists is that of adventure, which concerns the tourist-in-action rather than staged events and displays. This theme is used to create the image of tourists engaging with the tourist destination and actively performing and ‘doing things’ rather than passively gazing at and observing what lies before them. The use of this theme is consistent with the current trend popular among Anglophone tourists from Western societies: experiential tourism. These tourists prefer active and dynamic holidays involving challenging activities. They are no longer satisfied with the ordinary sightseeing form of tourism which simply involves the tourist ‘being there’, hence the action-packed, adventure-filled and engaging imperative verb ‘pedal’ in the previous TPM headline “Pedal to Paradise in the Blue Mountains”. Ironically, this type of discourse is known as the ‘anti-tourism discourse’, and is aimed primarily at a segment of Westerners that has evolved from sightseeing tourists to post-sightseeing travellers: consumers who do not want to be associated with passive tourism and tourists but prefer to be seen as active and adventurous explorers. In the light of this, it would be counterproductive to render ‘pedal’ literally for the traditional sightseeing tourist who values comfort and relaxation. In fact, the study by Sulaiman (2013, p. 188) shows that Malay tourists found the direct rendering of the headline unappealing. They claimed that the headline sounds “too energy consuming and physically exhausting”, making the Blue Mountains seem an inaccessible destination and visiting it a “difficult task to achieve”.

Sumberg (2004, p. 344) asserts that the unwillingness or inability of translators to leave the ‘safe haven’ of such direct ‘linguistic’ translations (or ‘semantic translation’ in Hickey’s term) is not the result of the way they were trained, as it was found that translator training does aim to develop an awareness of cultural issues and methods of handling advertising and promotional texts. Instead, her investigation shows that there are two possibilities behind the problem. The first is that commissioners hire unqualified translators who have not received the relevant training and therefore do not have the necessary skills. The second is that commissioners hire qualified translators who have the necessary skills but are prevented from being able to use them by the conditions of work. In order to investigate this matter further, a questionnaire survey was carried out by Sumberg (2004, p. 345) on commissioners of TPM translation in France. The survey reveals that the commissioners lacked awareness of cultural differences between markets and the advertising function of TPMs, and were quite unable to determine whether the translated TPMs were functionally effective. In fact, the commissioners did not understand why translators might need to alter the copy in order to make it functional in the target market. These findings suggest that although it might seem, on the surface, that it is the translator who is to be blamed for the poor standard of TPM translations, there are undoubtedly “mitigating circumstances” and it is evident that translation commissioners must bear some form of responsibility (2004, pp. 345-346).

In other words, a well-trained translator is not the only key to a successful translation. On the contrary, the translation commissioner, as emphasised by the functional school of thought in Translation Studies, has an equally important role to play. Based on the functional approach to translation, the creation of an effective translated TPM is contingent on a successful negotiation between the translator and the commissioner. Nevertheless, despite the importance of the ‘commissioner factor’, this area is under-researched in Translation Studies in general (Havumetsä, 2012, p. 2) and has hardly been addressed within the sub-

field of TPM translation with the exception of Sumberg's survey. Although numerous studies have emerged in the past decade to discuss issues related to the translation of TPMs (see for example Cappelli, 2008; Federici, 2007; Hatim, 2004; Hickey, 2004; Jiangbo & Ying, 2010; Kelly, 1998; Kristensen, 2002; Martinez, 2000; Pierini, 2007; Sanning, 2010; Snell-Hornby, 1999; Sumberg, 2004; Tognini Bonelli & Manca, 2004; Torresi, 2010, pp. 101-110; Zhang, 2012), most of these discuss the translation of TPMs in isolation from the translation commissioner. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by further exploring the commissioner factor by means of an interview. This study seeks to investigate the views and actual practices of the commissioners of a cross-cultural TPM, in an attempt to pave the way for the mapping of possible best TPM translation practices that have the potential of achieving the desired outcome in the best possible manner whilst affording the fewest problems to the translator and the greatest satisfaction to the translation commissioner.

3. Data analysis and discussion

3.1 Method

The exploratory nature of this study calls for a research methodology suited to investigate how a certain real-life phenomenon operates or why it operates in a particular way. Therefore, a case study research was conducted on actual commissioners of cross-cultural TPMs in the commercial world of tourism marketing. The main source of data for the present study is a semi-structured interview with two experienced managers of an Australian tourism authority which is responsible for promoting and supporting the development of tourist destinations within the borders of one of Australia's states. The main function of the tourism authority is to market the state as a tourist destination for domestic and international travellers and to work in partnership with the local tourism industry. As part of its function, the organisation creates original advertising and TPMs including brochures, leaflets, posters, flyers, postcards and websites. To cater for an international audience of various nationalities and cultural backgrounds, the TPMs have a number of language and market variants in which translation practices have played a key role in their creation. The two managers were interviewed together in their official capacities as state officials responsible for the commissioning of the creation and publication of these TPMs. Both managers are university graduates with degrees in the field of international marketing and tourism, in their mid-thirties and with 6-9 years of experience in the field of tourism marketing and promotion. I am grateful for the opportunity given by this particular tourism authority and the views and insights provided by its two managers. In order to preserve confidentiality, I shall refer to the authority as 'the Tourism Authority' and the two managers as 'the Commissioners'.

The interview focused on the translation practices of the Commissioners in general and their commissioning of a bilingual brochure in particular. The brochure, which consists of an English text (source text) and its Arabic translation (target text), served as an actual example to investigate the translation practices of the Commissioners. The brochure was produced by the Commissioners and published electronically on their consumer website and also in hard copies. The aim of the interview was to explore what the Commissioners deem to be the ideal scenario for the creation of effective cross-cultural TPMs, and to see the extent to which they were able to realise this ideal scenario in the commercial world. I then related the findings derived from the interview to the body of literature within Translation Studies. Based on the findings derived from the interview, I attempt to

close the gap between what might happen in the ‘ideal world’ and what actually happens in the ‘real world’ by discussing possible practical solutions.

The Tourism Authority and the Commissioners were selected for two main reasons. Firstly, the Tourism Authority’s head office was located conveniently in the same city where the research was based. Secondly, the quality of Arabic translation in the selected bilingual brochure was noticeably higher than what is commonly observed in the marketplace, making the process of its creation a topic of research interest. However, it should be noted that it is not the intent of this study to generalise the findings of this particular case study to a larger population, but rather to provide insights into the working practices of a well-established commissioner of cross-cultural TPMs. It is hoped that the study will lead to a better understanding about an even larger population, and ultimately contribute towards the mapping of best practices in TPM translation.

3.2 Cross-cultural TPMs: the ideal scenario

According to interview information related by the Commissioners, the ideal scenario for producing TPMs for a foreign market is to have people with the following criteria to tailor-make new TPMs for each market language segment:

- Native speaker of the target language (linguistic competence)
- Good understanding of the target market (cultural competence)
- Copywriting skills (creative skills)
- Good understanding of the tourism products being promoted (product knowledge)

These four criteria are indeed critical for the production of effective TPMs. Native speakers have a better understanding of language nuances and are therefore more effective in producing persuasive texts. Having a good understanding of the target market – that is, the target audience and culture – is crucial in order to be able to reach out to it effectively. Copywriting skills are essential for producing creative texts which are able to attract and persuade readers. Finally, a good knowledge of the tourism products being promoted enables the copywriter to promote the products not in any random way, but in ones that directly appeal to the target audience. Native copywriters who have good product knowledge, according to the Commissioners, are those with first-hand experience of that product. However, the problem in realising this ideal scenario lies in the fact that native copywriters are generally in-market copywriters who are based in their native countries (the target market), while tourism experiences are somewhat intangible products that can only be experienced at the tourist destination. Therefore, in order to realise this ideal scenario, native copywriters would have to be flown in from their home countries in order to familiarise them with, and immerse them in, the products prior to the copywriting process. However, the Commissioners stress that this ideal scenario, which clearly entails higher costs, is far from being practical in smaller-scale applications. Since tourism is a business, having the right people with the right skills and knowledge to produce effective TPMs is not the only condition for commercial success. The production of effective TPMs must also be done at the right cost. This scenario becomes even more unrealistic and less cost-effective when dealing with an extensive TPM which needs to be produced in a short period of time, as this means more native copywriters would need to be flown in to carry out the task.

Nevertheless, there were exceptional cases in which the Commissioners were able to materialise this ideal scenario due to the availability of staff members of the Tourism Authority who happened to fulfil the required criteria, the small

amount of work involved and the length of time provided. In such cases the process of copywriting was handled entirely by the relevant staff members who were based in the Tourism Authority's branch office located within the target country. These individuals were native speakers of the target language and had sound knowledge of their segment's characteristics. Furthermore, being employees of the Tourism Authority, they had good knowledge of the tourism products promoted by their organisation. As an example, the Commissioners pointed out that one of the Tourism Authority's German-language brochures was written in its Frankfurt office by one of its native German staff, who drafted the promotional text directly in German based on her knowledge after having seen and experienced the tourism products herself.

3.3 Cross-Cultural TPMs: The Actual Scenario

Given the fact that economics are a major factor that limits the realisation of the ideal scenario, the Commissioners are compelled to employ alternative methods which are more practical and cost-effective. In order to do this, the Commissioners distinguish between two main components of TPMs: content and language. 'Content' basically refers to the substance of the TPMs, that is, the topics, ideas and themes contained in the TPMs, regardless of the language which embodies them. 'Language' refers to the linguistic sign system used to embody and transmit the content. The content component is developed and provided internally by the Commissioners, while the language component is generally outsourced to external in-market copywriters who are native speakers of the language involved.

The contents of these TPMs are tailor-made for each market segment based on market research carried out by the Tourism Authority. Market research, which underpins the Tourism Authority's promotional and advertising efforts, is carried out to profile and understand the customer and the wider marketplace. Such research is instrumental in identifying the possible needs, interests, values, priorities, tastes and desires of consumers, so as to be able to determine the most effective way of reaching them. This type of research is increasingly being used by many tourism organisations and companies, given the recent trend towards result-driven advertising (Morgan & Pritchard, 2000, p. 88). However, the contents for each foreign market are seldom created from scratch. These contents are generally created based on existing contents written in English. Once the content suitable for the target segment is determined, it is drafted in the target language. The process of drafting the content in the target language was referred to by the Commissioners during the interview as "writing", "rewriting" and "translation". While only the term 'writing' was used to refer to the process of drafting the content directly in the target language based mainly on knowledge and not necessarily on any particular texts, all three terms were used to refer to the process of drafting the content in the target language on the basis of another text written in another language. The Arabic text of the Commissioners' English-Arabic bilingual brochure is a product of the latter process, in which the English text served as a basis for the production of the Arabic text. Although all three terms ('writing', 'rewriting' and 'translation') were used by the Commissioners to refer to the process of creating the Arabic text, for the purpose of standardising the use of terms, I will only use the term 'translation' in this study to refer to the process of creating this particular Arabic text.

The content for the Arabic text was planned and designed at the Tourism Authority's head office in Australia. Tourism products which are appropriate for the Middle Eastern region, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market segment (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain,

and Oman), were selected for the content plan. Based on the content outline, existing English texts promoting the products were selected and modified into a tailor-made English copy. The content of the brochure, comprising motivational content (i.e. generic destination description, visual content) and informational content (i.e. specific information and details) were carefully designed with the GCC segment in mind. The motivational content included strategic themes and appeals which suit that segment (e.g., familial and less adventure-driven). Images were also carefully selected to meet the requirements of the target market segment. For example, images of women sunbathing and exposing too much skin were avoided. In fact, some of the images depicted what seem to be female Muslim tourists wearing headscarves.³ The informational content of the brochure was also tailored for the market by providing relevant information on such topics as halal restaurants, mosques, accommodation, public transport and tour operators. The informational content was, however, limited as much as possible in order to maximise the useful life of the brochure. For example, prices were excluded while phone numbers were kept to a minimum to avoid having to revise and reprint the brochure within a short period of time due to changes in such information. The brochure is expected to last for the next five to six years.

What is interesting about the English content in this bilingual brochure is that, although it was designed primarily to be translated into Arabic to lure Arabic-speakers in the GCC region, particularly the family and honeymooner segments, it also serves a secondary purpose, namely to lure English-speaking expatriates residing in the same region. Thus, the English text of the brochure serves two purposes: firstly, it provides content to be translated into Arabic; secondly, it is to be read as it is in English by Anglophone readers.

Once the original English text had been finalised, it was sent to be translated into Arabic. Due to the unavailability of locally-based Arabic copywriters, and the constraints (particularly budget-related ones) involved in flying one in from the Middle East, the text was sent to a Dubai-based tour operator with whom the Commissioners work closely. The text was sent to the tour operator for two main reasons: (a) the tour operator has a freelance copywriter who specialises in tourism promotional texts (a travel writer) in Arabic, and (b) the tour operator is also an Australian holiday specialist, which operates inbound tour services in Australia, and is therefore able to advise the travel writer and provide her with first-hand knowledge about Australia's tourism products. It is understood that the copywriter has never been to Australia and therefore does not have first-hand knowledge of the tourism products promoted in the source text (ST). The Commissioners explained that they assigned the Dubai-based copywriter (who was obviously bilingual) instead of engaging a locally-based English-Arabic translator out of concern that assigning translators may result in unfavourable "direct translations". The Commissioners further explained that such measures are only taken in cases involving the translation of promotional and advertising texts. In the case of other texts which require "simple or direct translation", the Commissioners do not object to having them translated by local translation companies.

³ This is a visual strategy aimed at minimising and downplaying the strangeness associated with a destination. The visual is an implied testimony or endorsement of the destination by fellow Muslim tourists. It implies that the destination is popular among members of the reader's social group. Being a collective Muslim society, the GCC population feel some sense of belonging to the wider Muslim fabric across the world. They are emotionally connected to Muslims from other societies who share with them many values and beliefs due to their common religious membership. The testimony strategy (Dann, 1996, pp. 176-179) is particularly useful to attract tourists from collectivistic societies who value familiarity and togetherness.

The main instruction given to the copywriter was to “give an Arabic equivalent that works”. This indicates that the functionality of the target text (TT) was of paramount importance, and in order to achieve this – an Arabic translation that ‘works’ – the copywriter was informed that she was not required to “translate directly” but to ‘rewrite’ and make the changes she deemed necessary. The Commissioners also gave explicit instructions to the copywriter to make specific changes to the content, which included omitting all references to wines and wineries which exist in the English text. When asked about the degree of flexibility given to the copywriter to make changes, the Commissioner’s answer was very clear: “we are not prescriptive”. Once the Arabic translation was ready, it was sent back to the Commissioners to be placed in the brochure’s layout. Once the Arabic layout was ready, it was sent out to one of Australia’s government business offices in the Middle East and the Dubai-based tour operator to be checked for inconsistencies, edited and proofread. This process involved the Arabic text going back and forth between the Commissioners and the editors/proof-readers until all parties were satisfied (see Figure 1).

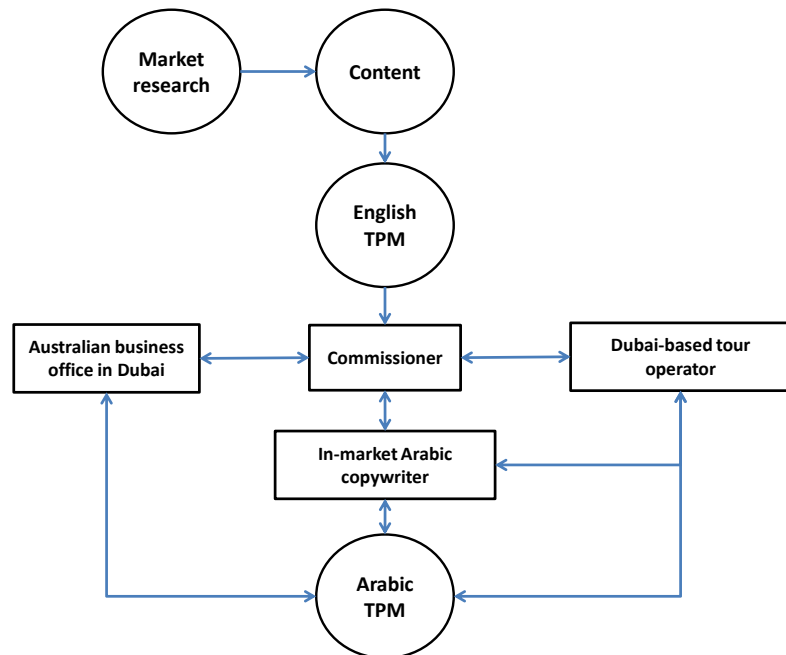


Figure 1: The procedural flow of the production of the Arabic TPM by the Tourism Authority

3.4 Closing the Gap between the Ideal and the Real

Despite the fact that the Arabic text translated by the copywriter demonstrated qualities of a functionally adequate TPM, this does not necessarily mean that the copywriter option is the only feasible one available. An alternative solution which can be equally effective is to use what the Commissioners are reluctant to use: translators. In fact, I argue that this alternative solution represents a more feasible solution for the tourism industry in general in promoting tourism across languages and cultures. In order to demonstrate this, I will address some key misconceptions held by the Commissioners regarding translators and highlight some important lessons which can be derived from the interview.

One of the most interesting findings derived from my interview with the Commissioners is the way the concepts of translation and of translators are perceived and understood. The Commissioners’ stance towards translation and

translators can be explained in terms of ‘actions’ and ‘descriptions’. By ‘actions’, I mean the actual practices adopted by them with regard to the translation of TPMs, and by ‘descriptions’, I mean their verbal account of these practices and the way these practices were framed and described during the interview. In terms of ‘actions’, the Commissioners clearly stated that they were not keen on engaging professional translators to translate their TPMs for foreign markets and had, therefore, engaged a copywriter to ‘translate’ the English text of the brochure into Arabic. In terms of ‘descriptions’, it seems that not only were the Commissioners reluctant to use translators to translate their TPMs, they were even reluctant to use the terms ‘translation’ and ‘translate’ to refer to the task performed by the copywriter. Although the respective Commissioner did use the term ‘translate’ twice throughout the interview, it was rather obvious that they tried to distance themselves from the whole idea of translation and instead showed preference for alternative terms such ‘rewrite’, ‘write’, and ‘writing’.

The Commissioners’ decision to engage the Dubai-based copywriter did not stem from the fact that there were no locally-based professional Arabic-English translators and translation houses, but rather because the Commissioners seem to hold the often maintained view in the field of global marketing and advertising that translators should not be used to produce advertising and promotional texts in foreign languages (Gregory & Wiechmann, 2002, p. 80), and that such texts should be handled by creative people, such as copywriters who are proficient in foreign languages (Cui, 2008, p. 21; Torresi, 2010, p. 8). This view is largely based on a misunderstanding of the concept and process of translation and the role of translators. Translation is perceived as a ‘mechanical’ rather than a ‘creative’ process (Bassnett, 2002, p. 12). As a result, the role of the translator is reduced to simply performing a purely linguistic rendering of texts from one language to another. Based on the interview, it was clear that the Commissioners were of the belief that the role of translators is limited to performing ‘direct translations’.

The Commissioners also believed that, unlike copywriting, translation does not involve the target text producers (translator/translation agency) advising clients on cultural issues, claiming that “the translator’s job is to simply translate”. Thus, while the copywriter is granted an active and creative role, the translator’s role is downgraded to a passive and mechanical one. The translator is far from being regarded as a bi-cultural expert or a cultural mediator who is actively involved in shaping the content of the TT. On the contrary, as stated by the Commissioners, the translator’s opinion and advice would “pollute” the Tourism Authority’s research. In their answer to a hypothetical question regarding the extent to which a translator is welcomed to provide cultural advice and participate in shaping the content of the TT, should a translator be used, the Commissioners stressed that in such a situation they would be “quite prescriptive of the content”. It is rather obvious that this statement is in striking contrast with their other statement “we are not prescriptive”, which was made in reference to the degree of flexibility given to the copywriter to make changes. The Commissioners’ views reiterate the fact that although the view of translators within Translation Studies has long shifted from that of transferor of words and sentences between languages to mediators of culture and cross-cultural experts, the common view outside the translation community remains unchanged. Even if translators are recognised as experts of the culture of the target audience, the concept of translation itself is seldom regarded as a two-way negotiation process in which changes and modifications are negotiated by the translator so as to produce functionally adequate translations. Instead it is viewed as a one-way instruction from the commissioner to the translator.

The fact that translation is perceived as a mechanical, uncreative and “within the competence of anyone with a basic grounding in a language other than their own” (Bassnett, 2002, p. 12), is the reason why translation is often accorded low status and perceived as a secondary activity. The fact that translation is being pejoratively distinguished from writing has been highlighted by scholars of Translation Studies such as Susan Bassnett:

Translation is still viewed as inferior to ‘creative’ or ‘original’ writing, with the translator somehow down-graded into a second-class citizen with a lesser talent (Bassnett, 2011, p. 91).

As a result of the pejorative view of translation, the Commissioners stressed that they ‘try’ to ‘rewrite’ all their TPMs in foreign languages rather than ‘translate’ for each target market. Ironically, in Translation Studies, ‘translating’ is also viewed as ‘rewriting’ and ‘translators’ as ‘rewriters’. Promoted by translation scholars such as Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere, this view emerged as a result of a theoretical and methodological shift in Translation Studies, commonly known as the ‘cultural turn’. The ‘cultural turn’ in Translation Studies reflects a move from language to culture, from “translation as text to translation as culture and politics” (Munday, 2008, p. 125). Lefevere stresses that “[T]ranslation is the most obviously recognisable type of rewriting” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 9) and that translators are “those in the middle, the men and women who do not write literature, but rewrite it” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 1). Based on the concept of ‘translation as rewriting’, translation is not a servile imitation. It seeks to rewrite the ST based on the socio-cultural, ideological and literary constraints which lie behind the production of the TT.

There is no doubt that the concept of translation, which has evolved from predominantly linguistic approaches and source-oriented translation theories, to a more functionally, socio-culturally and target-oriented concept of translation, has redefined the role of the translator. Under such a concept of translation, translators are not only required to master the nuances of the target language at a native level but also the nuances of the target audience and culture. Furthermore, translators are indeed required to possess copywriting skills, particularly in the case of the translation of persuasive texts such as TPMs (Sumberg, 2004, p. 344). The importance of fully understanding the process of copywriting has been explicitly acknowledged in Translation Studies. Munday (2004, p. 201), for example, stresses that the translator, “in addition to working competently between two languages, should be a good copy-writer”. Woodward-Smith (2009, p. 122) talks about copywriters and translators as having similar roles such as “deciding what kind of information to include in their messages to ensure maximum impact in culturally different settings”. Seguinot (1994, p. 56) reiterates that translating advertising texts requires an understanding of advertising techniques. In relating copywriting skills to tourism promotion, Snell-Hornby points out that such skills are essential when translating TPMs:

It is the task of the translator *not* to find an individual equivalent for each of the devices, but to create a text, based on the given information, which would rouse the burning desire in the target reader’s mind to go to London and stay at the Regent Palace. (1999, p. 100, [my emphasis])

Furthermore, Torresi (2010, p. 8) stresses that advertising and promotional translators are not mere translators, but translators with copywriting skills. This combination of translation and creative writing is termed by some as ‘transcreation’ (Lal, 1964, p. 5; 1972, p. 1; de Campos, 1981 in Vieira, 1999, p.

110). An important quality of this category of translation is the ability to be creative. ‘Transcreators’ must not allow their thinking to be imprisoned inside the box formed by the source text and culture. Instead, they must think outside the box and see the bigger picture to understand what appeals to the target audience.

My discussion has thus far addressed the Commissioners’ first three pre-requisites for the creation of an ideal scenario for the production of cross-cultural TPMs: linguistic competence, cultural competence and copywriting skills. This leaves us with the fourth pre-requisite, that is, product knowledge. In fact, it is this pre-requisite which was rather problematic for the Commissioners given the fact that most copywriting activities are performed in-country by copywriters in the target market. In the case of the Commissioners’ Arabic TPM, this prerequisite was not ideally fulfilled. The copywriter did not have firsthand knowledge of the product being promoted and had to rely on second-hand knowledge obtained through research. This also required the translation to be checked for inconsistencies by another party who possessed both Arabic expertise and firsthand knowledge of the product (in this case it was the tour operator and one of Australia’s government business offices in the Middle East). While, this pre-requisite poses some challenges for the copywriter option, it can be easily fulfilled if the translator option is used. This is because, unlike copywriting which is generally an in-market activity, translation is performed equally both in the source language country and the target language country depending on demand. Translators can easily be found outside their native country: for example, translators from English into Arabic are not only abundant in the Middle East but also in English-speaking countries such as Australia. When discussing this option with the Commissioners, one of the concerns expressed was that there is a perception that translators living abroad lose touch with their language and culture. Although this perception could be true in some cases, professional translators, in the true sense of the term, are bicultural/bilingual experts living in two different worlds. While assimilating into the culture and language they live in, they also cultivate their membership of another cultural and linguistic circle. Translators are trained to reside within this continuous duality and maintain their language skills and cultural knowledge wherever they live (Durban, 2011, p. 16). In describing this phenomenon, Pym (2004, p. 17) does not only consider translators as mediators but also as belonging to what he terms ‘professional intercultures’. Furthermore, the growing impact of modern information technology such as the Internet makes exposure to both native and target cultures entirely possible through authentic and quasi-authentic materials. This is one of the reasons why I argue that translators represent a more feasible solution for the tourism industry in promoting tourism across cultures.

One need also bear in mind that for the copywriter option to function cost-effectively in the commercial world, it is very likely that only bilingual copywriters can be used. This is because, unless native copywriters are flown to the destination and familiarised with the products, only in-market bilingual copywriters, who can base their rewritings on existing contents written in English, can be used. In the case of the Arabic TPM, the copywriter was obviously competent in English as well. This additional prerequisite makes the copywriter option even more challenging compared to the translator option.

Besides the misconceptions regarding translation and translators, there are some important lessons from the interview which are useful for the mapping of best practices in TPM translation. One of the most salient qualities of the practices adopted by the Commissioners is indeed the great emphasis given to cross-cultural issues. Market research was an underlying tool used by the Commissioners to match the attributes of the destination with the culturally predicated values, needs

and motivations of the target audience. In the case of the Arabic text, its ST was tailor-made for an Arabic audience based on market research. Hence, many of the cultural issues were dealt with prior to the translation stage. This resulted in the translation task being less demanding compared to a task in which the ST is not tailor-made for the TT audience. In other words, it was possible for the copywriter to translate the ST with minimal intervention on her part. Nevertheless, although the content design of the ST in general was culturally appropriate for the TT audience with most cultural nuances addressed, it did not mean that what remained to be done was purely a linguistic exercise involving the transfer of textual elements from the source language into the target language. This is because it is not only the content which had to be culturally appropriate but the communication style had to be culturally appropriate as well (Sulaiman, 2014). The ST content had to be represented in the target language in a culturally acceptable and appealing manner. Therefore, cultural input in the translation stage continues to be crucial. By the same token, this also means that in the absence of such cultural input during the preparation of the ST, the responsibility of addressing the cultural issues of the content would shift towards the copywriter/translator.

However, I must point out that the English-Arabic brochure is a unique case in the commercial-world of cross-cultural tourism promotion. The fact that the ST was written with the TT audience in mind is an exception rather than the norm. Similarly, in the real world of the translation industry, an ST is seldom written for an audience other than the SL audience itself. In such a case, the role of the translator as a bi-cultural expert is even more crucial. Whether the cultural input is provided mostly during the writing process of the ST or mainly by the translator during the translation process, or partly during the writing process and partly during the translation process, one thing remains unchanged: the indispensable role of this cultural input. Hence, the responsibility of providing this cultural input and the roles of both the commissioner and translator in this regard must be negotiated wisely between the commissioner and the translator so as to ensure the success of the TPM. This is important since the intensity of the translation activity and the effort required on the part of the translator increase with the decrease of cultural input on the part of the commissioner. And this of course has other implications particularly those related to translator's remuneration and the turnover time of the translation project.

4. Conclusion

While Sumberg's (2004) survey carried out more than a decade ago revealed that the (then) generally poor standard of translated TPM's was, to a certain extent, the result of the commissioners' lack of awareness of cultural differences between markets, the current study suggests that there might have been a tremendous increase in cross-cultural awareness among TPM commissioners due to the fact that tourism research has, in the past decade, focused on cultural differences (Pizam & Fleischer, 2005; Reisinger, 2009; Reisinger & Crofts, 2010). Nevertheless, it is possible that despite the significant increase in cross-cultural awareness, there is still misunderstanding about the concept of translation and the actual role of the translator among cross-cultural TPM commissioners. In the case of the brochure considered in this study, the commissioners had abandoned the 'translator option' altogether, on the assumption that translation is a purely linguistic process and not a cultural one. This suggests that while TPM commissioners might have developed a high level of cross-cultural awareness,

they still hold the old pejorative view of translators as merely transferors of words and sentences between languages and not mediators of culture. Furthermore, the fact that the Commissioners should prefer a copywriter based abroad even though there are many locally-based professional English-Arabic translators – including those accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)⁴, and/or graduates of the Arabic translation programmes available at many higher learning institutions across Australia – might suggest that formal translator qualifications, knowledge and training are being placed in an undervalued position. Therefore, it is timely to address and correct these misconceptions among cross-cultural tourism marketers, so as to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of cross-cultural tourism promotion and, just as importantly, uplift the image of the translation profession as a whole. As a way of achieving this, the study also suggests that there is a need to promote cross-disciplinary communication between Translation Studies, Marketing and Advertising Studies and Tourism Studies.

On a final note, due to the exploratory nature of the study as well as time and space limitations, only one official Tourism Authority was investigated. However, this study could pave the way for future investigations involving more tourism authorities from the remaining seven states and territories in Australia as well as tourism authorities from across the world. It would also be interesting to investigate whether there is any initiative on the part of Australian translator associations to urge institutions to avail themselves of domestic translators instead of copywriters abroad, and whether there are efforts to increase awareness among commissioners regarding the concept of translation and the role of translators. As a future research agenda, a real-life TPM translation project will be conducted with a cross-cultural TPM commissioner within the context of the commercial world of tourism promotion in order to explore, at a practical level, how translation may be utilised at its best to achieve the ultimate purpose of tourism promotion.

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⁴See NAATI's website for a long list of English Arabic accredited translators in Australia (<https://www.naati.com.au/online/PDSearch/WizardResults?WizardId=65bfabfc-1053-4ced-b7e7-04e8ad06151f>).

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