

Tweets on Advertising

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Translating Ads Rule #1: Word carefully for your target audience—working moms, seniors, grocery shoppers, football fans, voters, tourists...

Translating Ads Rule #2: If you don't know who the target is, ask. If you don't know how to talk to that target, examine how others do it.

Translating Ads Rule #3: Don't let people make you translate without telling you the context.

Translating Ads Rule #4: If the source text wording sounds odd to you, check whether you missed a play on words or a cultural reference.

Translating Ads Rule #5: Check the source text for proverbs/song lyrics/sayings you may not have noticed.

Translating Ads Rule #6: If the source text rhymes, try to make your translation rhyme.

Translating Ads Rule #7: If the source text uses alliteration or assonance, try to do the same thing.

Translating Ads Rule #8: Double-check your copy to make sure you've removed unnecessary FR abstractions and used verbs as much as possible.

Translating Ads Rule #9: Read your work out loud. Does it roll off the tongue? Is it short enough? Does it sound EN? If not, reword.

Translating Ads Rule #10: Being creative doesn't mean anything goes. Be sure to match the original in tone, manner, content, and style.

Translating Ads Rule #11: If a straightforward translation just doesn't work, take off your translator's cap and put on your writer's cap.

Translating Ads Rule #12: Be sure rewrites achieve exactly the same goal as the original ads: core message, target, call to action.

Translating Ads Rule #13: If your translated ad doesn't sound compelling/convincing, either the ad is bad or your translation is.

Need to translate a FR ad into EN? The best adaptations are "a delicate dance between restraint and creativity" (Susan Spies).

In advertising, think "verbs," especially imperative verbs: Save! Enjoy! Give! Go! Act now!

Positive wording (Remember! Act now! Save!) is usually better than negative wording (Don't forget! Don't miss out!) in advertising.

In advertising contexts, translators should feel free to suggest the use of bold or italic, or any other appropriate graphic elements.

Alliteration is fun to use when translating ads, e.g., "complete, concise, convenient" instead of "complete, brief, practical."

If you have a choice between two wordings in an advertising text, choose the one that most resembles how people actually talk.

If you have to skip a neat image or play on words in an ad because it doesn't translate well, try to add one back in somewhere else.

Abstract nouns (abundance, freshness, etc.) are not advertising friendly. Think short and snappy (lots! fresh!) and reword accordingly.

Before using slang/regionalisms/profanity, etc. in an ad, ask yourself this: would I approve my translation if I were the advertiser?

Avoid the word "whom" in advertising copy unless you are deliberately aiming for a formal EN effect.

Although "sensibilisation" means "awareness raising," "campagne de sensibilisation" is just "awareness campaign." Drop the word "raising."

"Communication" used in an ad context in FR often translates as "promotional": activités de communication = promotional activities.

In advertising, "creatives" (plural) are the people who do the creative work, and "creative" (singular) refers to concepts they develop.

"Communication-marketing" is frequent in FR advertising circles. The EN equivalent is "marketing communications."

Typical FR headline: Vous êtes déjà client? In EN, use a sentence fragment (Already a customer?) or invert (Are you already a customer?).

You'll often see "On vous attend" in FR ads. Translating this as "We're waiting for you" sounds a bit menacing. How about "Join us"?

Don't make the mistake of always translating "offert" as "offered":
forfaits offerts = packages available.

"Ouvert tous les jours/soirs"="open daily/nightly" not "every day/evening." "Ouvert sur réservation"="by appointment" not "on reservation."

"Rapport qualité-prix" is often best translated as "value (for money)" or, if it fits the tone, "bang for your buck."

The FR expression "aux couleurs de" can have nothing to do with "color": camion aux couleurs de Bell=Bell truck/truck with a Bell logo

"Dès aujourd'hui" usually means just "today," not "from today" or "starting today": Téléphonez dès aujourd'hui = Call today.

In marketing texts, remember the convenient and simple word "off": rabais de X \$ = \$X off." "\$X discount" is too official & stuffy sounding.

Careful with "témoignage": "testimony" in court, "testimonial" if an endorsement, but "personal account/story/ report," etc. in other cases.

"Publicité" is usually "advertisement" or "advertising" in EN. "Publicity" means exposure or free advertising, which is not the same.

"Spécialisé" is not always "specialized." For ads or publications, say "trade ad/trade magazine." For TV, say "specialty channel."

FR refers frequently to the "attentes du client." "Customer needs/requirements" is more common in EN than "customer expectations."

Offre de services: Try proposal/products/products & services/offerings as a translation rather than "service offer."

"Décoration" may be inadequate as a translation for "pavoisement." How about "banners and bunting" or "flags" depending on context?

When you see the FR word "support," ask yourself whether it refers to a form of media. If so, say "medium" or "media."

The fineprint on special offers often reads "certaines conditions s'appliquent." This is usually "some restrictions apply" in EN.

In FR, a contest has "un règlement." In EN, say "rules" or use the doublet "rules and regulations."

In an advertising context, "groupe de discussion" is a focus group, not a discussion group.

Remember that the verb "await" makes an elegant alternative to "wait for" in many contexts. It is particularly useful in advertising.

"Bundle" or "plan" can be good words to use in consumer marketing for "forfait," instead of "package."

When you see "Voici notre nouvelle collection/notre nouveau produit," it is more idiomatic to write "Introducing our new..." than "Here is..."

"What's more" is often a good translation of "de plus" or "qui plus est" in an advertising, conversational, or even more formal context.

Say "personalize" if tailoring to a single person (personalize a letter/service), "customize" if everyone has a choice (customize settings).

It's best in direct marketing letters to use a comma rather than a colon in your salutation (eg, "Dear Mr. X,"). It's more friendly-looking.

Semi-colons are exceedingly rare in advertising copy. Use a dash, comma, etc.

Translating an ad? Ignore the rule about spelling out numbers under 10 or 100. Advertisers prefer figures: 2 days, 3 weeks, 4 offers.

Ad copy full of colons, semi-colons, or ellipses is less compelling and impactful. Try commas or dashes, or reword to lighten punctuation.

Translating "directeur artistique"? Say "artistic director" for executives of arts organizations, but "art director" for ad agencies.

A FR "mandat" is not always a mandate in EN: Notre agence a obtenu quatre nouveaux mandats = Our agency has landed four new accounts.

FR slogans built around the word "je" (Je m'engage!) are usually best in some other form in EN, such as imperative verbs (Count me in!).

Avoid rare, literary, or archaic words in advertising unless they are being used to create a special effect.

"Expansive" is a great word, but avoid it like the plague in advertising—it can be confused with "expensive."

Using nonstandard EN to translate an ad (slang/regional dialect)? Be sure it suits your target audience and does not offend.

Translating an ad that contains a slogan? Check if the slogan is already translated—and use that translation whether you like it or not.