



The misunderstood concept of translation in tourism promotion

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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