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In Multimedia Transcreation I

Marketing Transcreation:

A Simulated Transcreation Project Based on M&M's Messages

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Abstract

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This thesis explores the practice of transcreation applied to the field of marketing. The theoretical section traces the origins of transcreation and its fields of application, before turning to its dual dimensions as both a service and a strategy and its hybrid nature at the intersection of translation and copywriting. It then details the typical transcreation workflow and outlines the key Translation Studies frameworks relevant to transcreation.

Finally, these concepts are put into practice through a simulated transcreation project based on "M&M'S Messages," a multichannel campaign built around a series of uniquely themed packages targeting younger generations, in which visuals, tones of voice, and localization all play a decisive role. Overall, the work demonstrates that transcreation is crucial in modern advertising, as it allows global brands to remain fresh and locally relevant while maintaining consistency across markets worldwide.

La presente tesi analizza la transcreazione nel campo del marketing, approfondendone sia gli aspetti teorici sia quelli pratici. Dopo averne ricostruito le origini e delineato i principali ambiti di applicazione, si esamina la sua duplice interpretazione di strategia traduttiva e servizio vero e proprio, evidenziandone al contempo il carattere ibrido, a metà strada tra traduzione e copywriting. Vengono inoltre descritti il workflow tipico di un progetto di transcreazione e i principali contributi degli Studi di Traduzione che ne costituiscono il quadro teorico di riferimento.

La parte pratica consiste invece nella simulazione di un progetto professionale di transcreazione della campagna M&M'S Messages per il mercato italiano. La campagna multicanale, composta da una serie di confezioni tematiche rivolte prevalentemente alle giovani generazioni, si distingue per la forte interconnessione tra testo, elementi visivi, culturali, e specifici toni di voce. In definitiva, la tesi mette in luce il ruolo centrale della transcreazione nella comunicazione pubblicitaria contemporanea, dimostrando come essa consenta ai brand internazionali di preservare un'identità coerente a livello globale, adattandosi al tempo stesso alle aspettative dei diversi mercati di destinazione.

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o. Introduction

This thesis examines transcreation as a hybrid practice situated at the intersection of translation and copywriting, a topic of particular interest for two main reasons.

First, transcreation represents the form of creative translation specifically required by advertising, a genre that is inherently creative and typically relies on emotional appeal to achieve its persuasive goal. As such, advertising transcreation constitutes a genuine specialization within the broader field of translation, demanding that the practitioner act simultaneously as a skilled linguist, a copywriting expert, a bicultural mediator, and a connoisseur of local market dynamics.

Second, multinational corporations must balance a uniform global brand image with local relevance, typically developing universal campaigns in International English as a *lingua franca*, deliberately stripped of culture-specific references, ready to be localized for each market. This requires translators to prioritize the intended communicative purpose and emotional impact of a message over literal linguistic equivalence, finding creative solutions that respect both the brand's identity and the target audience's local expectations.

The first chapter of the thesis establishes the historical and theoretical foundations of the transcreation practice, tracing the rudimental origins of transcreation from the 17th-century, through its 20th-century literary reinvention, all the way to its modern branding in the advertising world. It highlights how philosophers like Leibniz and translators like Purushottama Lal and Haroldo de Campos paved the way for a practice that seeks to preserve the "essence" or "root" of a text while completely transforming its form.

Afterwards, in the attempt of defining a universal definition of transcreation, the study addresses the ongoing debate between academic perspectives, which view transcreation as a creative strategy, and the language service industry, which markets it as a distinct, high-value service to justify the human effort required in the age of machine translation.

The subsequent section details the transcreation workflow, an interdisciplinary process that integrates phases such as detailed briefing, cultural insight, and intensive brainstorming. Then, it explains that, unlike traditional translation, transcreation requires the provision of multiple alternatives for high-impact segments, each accompanied by a backtranslation and a rationale to allow the client to understand the logical path and ensure the message resonates culturally while remaining consistent with the brand's global identity.

The following chapter provides a theoretical framework grounded in *Skopos* theory, which asserts that the function of the target text is the guiding principle of adaptation, alongside Social Semiotics and multimodality, which emphasize that meaning in advertising is constructed through the inextricable interplay of words, visuals, and sounds.

The final part of the thesis presents a practical simulation localizing the "M&M's Messages" 360-degree multimodal campaign for the Italian market. M&M's was selected as the ideal practical project because it offers a complex variety of challenges, starting with the distinct characterizations and tones of voice of the Spokescandies, which range from Red's cynical boastfulness to Green's supportive and empowering nature.

The campaign is heavily reliant on "jester wit," requiring the transcreator to inventively adapt high densities of wordplay, humor, and puns that cannot be

translated literally. Additionally, the project demonstrates the importance of cultural elements and re-contextualization, as the original Oscar-themed commercials were adapted for the Sanremo Music Festival to ensure the campaign felt highly relevant to the local target audience.

The M&M's project also highlights the technical and multimodal complexities of transcreation, specifically the interplay between visuals and text across different media, such as coordinating video commercials with the physical packaging. This required working within strict technical constraints: the brief demanded extreme linguistic conciseness, due to both the limited space on the packages and the short duration of the video commercials.

Finally, the choice of M&M's emphasizes the tangibility and social function of the product; the packages are designed to be touched and gifted, serving as conversation starters that align with the Italian cultural association of food with conviviality and shared moments.

1. The Origin of Transcreation and its Fields of Application

There is no doubt that transcreation today is mostly linked to marketing and advertising, but this has not always been the case. When tracing back the genesis of the practice, it becomes clear that the practice did not actually originate in the field of commerce.

One hypothesis Katan (2021) mentions, even though it does not seem to be most widely supported, is that transcreation began in the computer and video game industry in the 1980s. According to this view, early manufacturers understood that, if they wanted to offer a more natural and enjoyable gaming experience, they had to go beyond the words that characterized the user interface and the dialogues between characters. After recognizing the importance of creative freedom over strict fidelity to the source text, they began adapting images and storylines to make them culturally relevant and meet the expectations of that user segment.

According to the most widely accepted theory, though, is that the term appeared for the first time in religious philosophy in the late 17th century (Ho M. , 2024, p. 1), when German philosopher, mathematician, and logician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz allegedly coined it. In 1676, as he outlining the first theory of change based on transcreation, he described it as the guiding hand underlying the change of state between, for instance, destruction and resuscitation: "the body E is somehow extinguished and annihilated in [place] B and actually created anew and resuscitated in [place] D, which can be called, in new and most happy terminology, transcreation" (McCaffery, 2001, p. 241), which McCaffery (*ibid.*, p. 42) calls "the ability to constantly move and shift perception." Cook (2008, p. 456) further explains how Leibniz used

"transcreation" to reconcile the fact that God, despite having the ability to create and destroy, cannot change the essence of substance.

Over 150 years later, Coleridge (1839, p. 88), while reflecting on a "Commentary" on the First Epistle of Saint Peter, revisited the idea of transcreation as a compromise between a faithful rendition of the pre-existing source text and entirely new creation. In that commentary, Coleridge reflects on his own reading of the epistle in English: "it is not the Scripture that I am reading. Not the qualities merely, but the root of the qualities is transcreated. How else could it be a birth, a creation?". With "the root of the qualities," Coleridge most likely meant the essence of the original text, which was "transcreated," thus preserved while the form and structure of the language were completely transformed.

After Coleridge, the term "transcreation" fell out of use until Indian poet, academic, and translator Purushottama Lal adopted it in 1957 to describe his own approach to translating classical Indian drama from ancient Sanskrit into contemporary English: "Faced by such a variety of material, the translator must edit, reconcile and transmute; his job in many ways becomes largely a matter of transcreation" (Lal P. , 1957/1964, p. 5). He further specifies that "the thing to do is to attempt to preserve not the Sanskrit language, but the hidden tradition which it enshrines" (Lal P. , 1996, p. 43). This inherently implies a systematic deconstruction and reconstruction of the text, up to the point that—as Lal himself states in (Katan, Transcreation, 2021, p. 224)—some may be led to believe that transcreation involves distancing the translation too far from the source, when the ideal transcreation should, almost paradoxically, be "the closest to the original."

Lal never provided a formal definition of transcreation. Nonetheless, he employed the term on so many different occasions when talking about his translation that

Mohapatra (2010, p. 125) even goes so far as to state that the term was introduced into translation studies by Lal himself.

Similarly to Lal, and about at the same time, Brazilian poet Haroldo de Campos employed the term to discuss his translation of *Faust*, a 18th-century poetic play by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, for a more mainstream and contemporary Brazilian audience (Vieira, 1998). In her postcolonial research, Vieira describes De Campos' translation as "a radical operation of transcreation," referring to his free adaptation of the German masterpiece and his departure from the source text, which contrasts with the tradition of conventional translation. When translating into Portuguese, De Campos drew on the Brazilian cultural context to engage readers and immerse them in the German world, because "to transcreate means also nourishment from the local sources." Instead of trying to mimic the original, one should "appropriate the[ir] contemporary best poetry" and "use the local existing tradition" (Vieira, *A postmodern translational aesthetics in Brazil*, 1994, p. 70).

In this regard, one of the most representative examples is the transcreated title of Goethe's *Faust*. De Campos, by choosing the title "Deus e o Diabo no Fausto de Goethe" [God and the Devil in Goethe's *Faust*] for the target readership, incorporated a strong intertextual reference to the 1964 Brazilian movie *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*. Because the battle between God and the Devil a central theme in *Faust*, the Brazilian audience is more likely to engage with the story through their own culture, so that, as Katan suggests (2016, p. 376), the foreign is understood and discovered through the familiar.

De Campos ultimately equated literary translation with transcreation, viewing them mutually dependent and inseparable practices. According to Lima (2017), the Brazilian poet defined literary translation as a form of artistic expression "aimed at

experimenting with new forms" and techniques, resulting in a creative reinvention of the text rather than a mere reproduction:

[He] postulated that poetry could not be simply transposed from one idiom to another, but that it had to be reinvented. [...] Therefore, according to his view, a translation holds a degree of separation from the original, and enjoys a literary status of its own (Lima, 2017, p. 462).

Vieira also explains De Campos' views on transcreation, but in a more abstract and metaphorical way. In this case, transcreation is seen as an act of appropriation and recreation that challenges the traditional boundary between source and target text by placing the two "in a third dimension, where each is both donor and receiver," viewed through the metaphor of a blood transfusion (Vieira, *Liberating Calibans: Readings of Antropofagia and Haroldo de Campos' Poetics of Transcreation*, 1998, p. 115).

In the last decades of the 20th century, marketers and advertising agencies with international accounts began using the term transcreation to label the translation of creative ad copy in a way that would make them stand out in the vast field of marketing translation, due to the particular attention they would pay to freely adapting the copy to the target language and culture.

The word "transcreation" quickly acquired such an intrinsic value that, in 2000, it became a registered trademark in the UK. The license, which belonged to UPS Translations (now part of Intonation Translations), expired in 2010, and further attempts to register it were refused (Gauld, 2014), as transcreation has now become a widespread term. In fact, it is not only common in the Anglophone advertising and translation community, but it is also well established in Asia: the Chinese design and advertising publication *Modern Advertising Magazine* discussed the phenomenon of transcreation for the first time in 2010.

Even more recently, transcreation is being reintroduced into literature. The idea of transcreation initiated by Lal and de Campos has been explored in recent years by authors such as Dybiec-Gajer *et al.* (2020) in *Negotiating Translation and Transcreation of Children's Literature*. As the publisher company Springer states, it is "the first book to apply the concept of transcreation to children's literature in translation," in which the authors analyze transcreation practice with particular attention to the complex negotiations between creativity and normativity that the process entails. For Dybiec-Gajer and her co-editors Oittinen and Kodura, the difficulty lies in finding the right balance between the readers' expectations—and their need for free, idiomatic, or culturally relevant adaptations of narrative devices such as dual address, ambiguity, nonsense, humor or wordplay—and other constraints, such as publishers' demands, genre conventions, and other specific requirements imposed by the source text, including rhyme, rhythm, and intersemiotic links (*ibid.*).

Another example of contemporary authors building on Lal and de Campos is the one of Glance and Jaccomard (2019), who applied the concept of transcreation to dramaturgical texts by analyzing both foreignization and domestication techniques. Glance and Jaccomard conclude that, "beyond linguistic and textual competency, to be successful on the stage, translation and its revision need to draw on the skills of close textual analysis and drama performance," with particular "attention to the sounds and rhythm" so that the adaptation follows "the pace of the original" (p. 12).

Nevertheless, nowadays transcreation also extends to the scientific and medical sector. Piñeiro *et al.* (2018) applied transcreation to self-help booklets aimed at helping Hispanic/Latino smokers quit smoking. They explained that the "approach extended beyond the common practice of literal translation of the text" and that the adaptation required the addition of culturally relevant themes, images, and values, such as

familism (family orientation), *simpatía* (harmonious social relations), respect (for elders and authorities, such as physicians or clerks), personalism (an orientation toward people over abstract ideas), and fatalism (the belief that one's destiny is out of their control)" (Piñeiro et al., 2018, p. 3). The authors conclude that the text was not "merely translated into another language, but reconstructed to meet the health literacy and informational needs of the new target population while maintaining theoretical and empirical basis" (Piñeiro et al., 2018, p. 4).

Another instance of transcreation applied to a field completely different than advertising or literature is the one outlined by Artemeva (1998) in the genre of the periodic engineering report. In her paper, Artemeva explains she had to assume the dual role of writing consultant and cultural mediator to address the Russian native translator's lack of awareness regarding cultural differences as for the genre-specific macrostructure, the use of rhetoric, and the readership's assumed prior knowledge between Russia and Canada (Artemeva, 1998, p. 297).

Lastly, Gaballo (2012) even mentions the possibility of applying transcreation to the documents issued by the Icelandic aluminum industry (p. 105) and to Italian legal documents translated into English (pp. 107-108). Gaballo's thesis is that transcreation is a useful and necessary tool whenever the inadequacy of the existing terminology in the target language—which is sometimes grounded in the actual lack of a specific conceptual idea in that culture—calls for the creation of a neologism.

After having traced the origins and evolution of transcreation across different fields, the following chapter will attempt to formulate a definition of transcreation. In doing so, it will address a central question: whether transcreation should be regarded as a translation strategy within translation practices or as a fully-fledged service.

2. Definition of Transcreation: a Service or a Strategy?

As Pedersen (2016, p. 72) underlines, the term "transcreation" does not appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (nor does it, at the time of writing). However, the verbal form "transcreate" is included as a nonce word—that is, an unofficial term created for a particular occasion or situation—with the following definition: "to create by or in the way of transmission." Similarly, the *Littré*, an old French dictionary published at the end of the 19th century, mentions "transcreation" in metaphysics as "transformation by creation" (Littré, n.d.). The same *Littré* warns that its entries and definitions apply to an historical era in which the word "sport" was then a neologism and that the French language has evolved considerably in nearly 150 years.

In the *Collins Dictionary*, there is no trace of the term, except as a new-word suggestion submitted by an anonymous user. The definition proposal reads: "the process of adapting content from one language to another while maintaining the existing tone, intent and style" (Collins, 2021). That is not entirely arbitrary: when searching online, one of the most frequent occurrences of definition of transcreation is "the process of adapting a message from one language to another while maintaining its intent, style, tone, and context" (Wikipedia), a wording that closely resembles the one above.

Furthermore, as of December 2025, the term search "transcreat*" gives 474 results in the 14-billion word iWeb corpus developed on the basis of 22 million web pages (Davies, 2018), and only 19 in the 450-million word corpus of contemporary American English COCA (Davies, 2008). These results are even more interesting when compared to the search "translat*," which unsurprisingly shows more significant numbers: 880,354 in the iWeb corpus and 54,471 in the COCA.

One reason for the lack of representation of the term in authoritative dictionaries or corpora to date might be that, despite its increasingly common usage by LSPs, the word is still relatively new, at least to the non-specialized general public. Another reason, at least regarding the absence of official recognition by major dictionaries, might also be related to the definition of the term itself. In fact, there is still no clear, unambiguous explanation or definition of the phenomenon that is widely shared and accepted by both scholars and practitioners.

Kostopoulou and Charalampidou (2024) point out that academia often treats transcreation skeptically or as overlapping with long-established translation strategies, while the language service industry embraces the term as a distinct, marketable service. In other words, the main debate in defining transcreation is whether it is a full, marketable adaptation and consultation service or just a creative approach within translation, a set of creative strategies. While almost any scholar who mentions transcreation somehow places it in the category of translation practices, the language service industry tends to sell transcreation as full, higher-quality service, suggesting that it offers added compared to traditional translation.

In academia, there is widespread skepticism toward new label for translation-related activities. According to Ho (2024), some scholars (Munday, 2004; Bernal Merino, 2006; Gambier & Munday, 2014; Katan, 2016) accuse LSPs of "re-branding" (Katan, 2016, p. 377) "marketing translation" with a "more prestigious" term (Agorni, 2018, p. 261) just in order "to boost sales" (Ho, 2024, p. 7) and "to distance themselves from traditional translation firms" (Bernal Merino, 2006, p. 32), especially in those sectors in which "translation is inherently creative, such as in Literary translation, advertising or localization" (Katan, Transcreation, 2021, p. 221).

The higher status claimed by transcreation providers should eventually translate into a better economic return compared to current translation fees. According to Ho (2024), however, the definitions of transcreation providers are vague, limited to the marketing genre, and reveal misunderstandings about the nature of translation. These ambiguous definitions may either reinforce existing misconceptions about translation among clients or reflect a superficial, if not erroneous, ideas on the part of LSPs regarding what translation really is. Pedersen (2014, 2016) demonstrates that these definitions are all based on the false premise that transcreation is not translation because it is creative.

A common opinion among clients of language services is that translation is a simplistic linguistic transfer (Pedersen, 2016). Ho suggests that "some LSPs may already have the same misconception," as is clear in Pedersen's investigation (Pedersen, 2014; 2016), in which LSP label "traditional translation" as being "straightforward": transcreation "is used when translation isn't enough"; transcreation is "beyond word transfer and involves recreating the texts in the target language, "rather than just translating the source version" (Pedersen, 2016, pp. 76–78).

Ho (2024, p. 9) highlights that the word "translation" is polysemic, and most LSPs take the narrowest sense when considering translation as a "word-for-word" transfer and, in other cases, "straightforward" or "traditional" translation. Ho (2024, p. 10) suggests that, when LSPs see translation as a simple word-by-word equivalence and contrast it with transcreation, they are actually referring to prototypical translation, which is an antiquated conception of translation that was already abandoned over the course of the 17th century.

Ho claims that these descriptions of transcreation are fallacies (Ho M. , 2024, pp. 7-8), but I argue that they should be read and studied for what they are: simple

explanations of a complicate process such as transcreation. They are written for clients who may be completely unaware of the amount of work required to produce a good translation. Therefore, although some of these definitions *do* present misconceptions, they merely mirror the general public's lack of knowledge. They are not necessarily wrong if considered in their specific context and with their target audience in mind.

However, those who define transcreation as a strategy understand it as a set of tools and techniques that can be used when translating or localizing. In other words, it is a specific modality of translation—a particular way of approaching the translation or localization of a text. Among these scholars is Malenova, who in her account of audiovisual translation claims that the translator always acts "as a creative agent, trying to bridge a gap between two languages and two cultures" (Malenova, 2017, p. 530). She describes transcreation as a creative way of dealing with the particular characteristics and constraints of audiovisual translation:

[...] transcreation in AVT can be defined as a strategy of creative rethinking of a source text segment with subsequent generation of a totally new target text segment in conformity with the given AV context as a polysemiotic complex, taking into consideration characteristics of the communicative situation, technical constraints and an anticipated response of the spectators (p. 527).

This view of transcreation seems to be recurrent in AVT studies. Likewise, Chaume (2018) depicts transcreation as "an enhanced type of audiovisual translation mode" (p. 95) explaining that transcreations are essentially "all forms of semiotic adaptation and manipulation" (p. 96).

The application of transcreation as a strategy is not limited to literary and audiovisual translation, but also includes game localization, which Mangirón and O'Hagan consider a form of transcreation. According to these authors:

No oddities should be present to disturb the interactive game experience, and this is the reason why game localisers are granted *quasi* absolute freedom to modify, omit, and even add any elements which they deem necessary to bring the game closer to the players and to convey the original feel of gameplay. And, in so doing, the traditional concept of fidelity to the original is discarded. In game localisation, transcreation, rather than just translation, takes place (Mangirón & O'Hagan, 2006, p. 20).

A more synthetic yet broader definition is proposed by Ho (2024, p. 19), who describes transcreation as a special form of translation that goes beyond prototypical translation, localization, and adaptation. Ho concurs with Gaballo (2012), Rike (2013), Benetello (2018), Sattler-Hovdar (2019), and Katan (2021), in emphasizing both the target orientation and the persuasive effect of transcreation: "Transcreation is a translation practice that maximises the appeal to and the impact on the target audience" (Ho M. , 2024, p. 19). Her idea can be summarized in the following formula:

Transcreation > Localisation = Adaptation > Prototypical translation

Italian scholar of translation and linguistics Viviana Gaballo recognizes that transcreation *could* be viewed as a single creative strategy "to overcome untranslatability," but she clarifies that it is in fact a set of a variety of "strategies, methods and techniques" to adapt any work—from literary to legal texts—for the target audience (Gaballo, 2012, p. 111). In Gaballo's words, transcreation is an "holistic approach" used to create neologism and reshape the entire textual framework:

Transcreation is an intra-/interlingual re-interpretation of the original work suited to the readers/audience of the target language which requires the translator to come up with new conceptual, linguistic and cultural constructs to make up for the lack (or inadequacy) of existing ones. It can be looked at as a strategy to overcome the limits of 'untranslatability', but in fact it is a holistic approach in which all possible strategies, methods and techniques can be used. It requires fluency (the ability to generate ideas and meaningful responses), flexibility (the ability to repurpose ideas), originality (the capacity to produce rare and novel

ideas) and elaboration (the capacity to develop ideas). It requires the translator not only to conceive new words, but also to imagine new worlds (Gaballo, 2012, p. 111).

If Gaballo leaves a bit of a haze about her vision of transcreation as a service or strategy, transcreation expert Claudia Benetello—who describes herself as "Italian communication all-rounder" (Benetello, 2021)—clarified her view on the topic, almost as if responding to Gaballo's concept of untranslatability, by stating: "I for one regard transcreation as a service, not as an approach or strategy which only takes place when a literal translation is not possible" (Benetello, 2021, p. 106). Apart from taking the side of transcreation as a service, Benetello also offers the following definition of transcreation:

Writing advertising or marketing copy for a specific market, starting from copy written in a source language, as if the target text had been originated in the target language and culture (Benetello, 2016, p. 259).

TAUS, an international organization promoting translation technologies, defines transcreation as a type of enhanced translation resulting from intensive creative adaptation:

[Transcreation] can be defined as a translation that is enhanced by creativity and focus on style, register, and emotive impact, and modified to suit a new audience which can be a group of users, a country, a region, etc. Typically it covers advertising, banners, slogans, word logos. [...] transcreated content is by nature more subjective. Trust from the stakeholder in the transcreator is important. Building trust comes from the right preparation, a detailed brief, some rounds of suggestions and idea exchange. Transcreation is found most often in advertising content, or brand orientated content, where the principal aim is to sell to customers, and where taglines or straplines often require intensive reworking. (TAUS, 2019, p. 8)

A contemporary evolution of the well-know functionalist approach, transcreation aims at recreating the emotional feel of the original, while maximizing its appeal and impact on the target audience (Katan, 2021, p. 222).

Just like Benetello, Katan, and TAUS, Ray and Kelly (2010) also mention the equivalence of impact between source and target text as a cornerstone in transcreation. The contribution to the concept of transcreation here is that transcreating does not always mean rewriting completely from scratch – sometimes it is necessary to perform a straightforward 1:1 translation. The focus is rather on the maintenance of the same impact, with a mix of new content creation, adaptation and word-per-word translation:

The term "transcreation" is now more commonly applied to marketing and advertising content that must resonate in local markets in order to deliver the same impact as the original. The term may be applied when either a direct translation is adapted, or when content is completely rewritten in the local language to reflect the original message. Most often, transcreation includes a hybrid of new content, adapted content and imagery, and straightforward translation (Ray & Kelly, 2010, p. 2).

It is interesting to notice how, here, new content creation actually means copywriting. By bringing copywriting in the equation, one appears to suggest that transcreation is a different service from translation or, at least, from the traditional perception of what translation is.

This is the case with Benetello, one of the practitioners who advocates for a higher status for transcreation. Apart from cultural relevance and fitness for purpose (Gaballo 2012; Ray and Kelly 2010), Benetello considers copywriting—as well as other fundamental skills that will be examined in chapter Error! Reference source not found.—to play an essential role when providing transcreation services. That is why numerous times she has repeatedly defined transcreation as a "hybrid practice/service halfway between translation and copywriting" (Benetello, 2018, p. 29), where

"hybridization, as a particular form of specialization, creates more value for clients than machines can" (Benetello, 2021, pp. 120-121). Thus, adding copywriting to the definition is also part of the evidence used to justify the "added value" of transcreation as a hybrid service.

This is a widely shared view in the transcreation industry, and is also confirmed by Pedersen's ethnographic studies (Pedersen, 2016). From the information collected directly from the transcreation sectors, it emerges that, for most practitioners, transcreation goes beyond mere translation and therefore should be considered as a value-added service:

Phrases like "more than translation" and "just translation" seem to be repeated over and over again and contribute to the impression that transcreation gives an added value to a job that would otherwise be subject to translation. (Pedersen, 2016, p. 88)

As already mentioned, Benetello is not the only practitioner who highlights the role of copywriting as an integral component of transcreation. A similar position is expressed by fellow practitioner Nina Sattler-Hovdar, author of *Get Fit for the Future of Transcreation* (2019), a manual aimed at training future "transcreation experts." In her work, she regards transcreation as a combination of translation, copywriting, and client guidance (p. 22).

At the same time, a number of scholars also stress the importance of copywriting within transcreation. Among them is Torresi, who conceptualizes transcreation as a deconstruction and reconstruction process falling under the category of translation only when translation itself is considered as a "fuzzy set" (Garzone, 2015) and not "paradigmatic translation" (Ho M. , 2024) or "conventional translation" (FIT, 2022). In a more exhaustive definition, Torresi describes transcreation as:

A type of adaptation that involves copywriting and, possibly, prompting the creation of new visuals for the promotional material, rather than relying on the same verbal and visual structures of the source text. In this approach, the translator is seen as a creative professional highly developed language skills and in-depth understanding of social, cultural, legal and promotional conventions currently in place in the target community (Torresi, Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts, 2021, p. 199).

Other scholars advocating for the importance of the copywriting role in transcreation include Aulló-Saura, Carreira, and Pedersen. According to Aulló-Saura, "transcreation involves a combination of translation, adaptation, and content creation" and, as a result, when transcreating, the translator assumes "the role of an *ad hoc* creative copywriter" (Aulló-Saura et al., 2025, p. 3).

Carreira-Martínez's view align particularly closely with Benetello's, especially regarding the notion of hybridization and its associated added value:

Transcreation can be understood as a hybrid service that adapts messages creatively to a target culture and market, combining linguistic precision with copywriting and marketing sensitivity. It isn't just a synonym for translation but a distinct, higher-value service emerging from the convergence of translation, localization, and advertising. (Carreira, ¿Transcreación, traducción de marketing o copywriting bilingüe? Una definición basada en las ofertas de empleo del sector de servicios lingüísticos, 2018)

In contrast, TAUS represents a dissenting voice concerning the role of copywriting in transcreation. The organization explicitly distinguishes between transcreation and multilingual copywriting, considering them two entirely separate services:

[Multilingual copywriting] can be defined as the process of creating texts in multiple languages *from scratch*, with reference to brand and campaign requirements, and normally based on a detailed briefing by the client. [...] What distinguishes copywriting from transcreation is the *absence of a source text* (TAUS, 2019, p. 9).

This is in direct contrast with Pedersen's view on transcreation (Pedersen, 2016; 2019), who emphasizes the relevance of brand presence even within transcreation. Although Pedersen adopts a more descriptive approach and is careful not to propose a personal definition of transcreation, his perspective subtly emerges throughout his writing. From Carreira's reading of Pedersen's work, one could extrapolate his conception of transcreation as the creative adaptation of marketing, sales, and advertising content, in which the brand concept plays an important role, often implying changes to the original terms and meanings to prioritize the recreation of the same effect and impact as the source text (Carreira, 2020).

However, Carreira's interpretation of Pedersen's words explicitates what Pedersen himself never overtly declared. Indeed, given the current lack of consensus on a single definition, he proposes an alternative approach. While recognizing the importance of debating the definition and domains of transcreation, he argues that one should also "accept the existence of an industry that delivers products labelled transcreations"¹ and focus on "the processes that give rise to them," rather than attempting to impose a univocal interpretation at all costs (Pedersen, 2019, pp. 45-46).

Trying to define transcreation is inherently problematic, as Ho (2024, p. 11) explains. She notes that transcreation is typically described in comparison with related practices, such as localization, so the perceptions and contexts of transcreation vary

¹ Pedersen's workaround is grounded on Gideon Toury's concept of "assumed translation" (Toury, 2012, p. 26), according to which a text counts as a translation when its target community recognizes and labels it as such, even if the source text is missing, altered, or uncertain. Pedersen adapts Toury's idea to transcreation, with one small yet key difference: the decision-making power for accepting and recognizing transcreated texts is assigned to transcreation service providers rather than to the target culture (Pedersen, 2019, p. 46).

considerably, not least because each tends to be situated within a specific field (e.g., video games, cinema, marketing). As Bernal-Merino (2006, p. 35) observes, despite numerous attempts, there is no single, clear definition of transcreation precisely because different domains use the term in different ways.

Ultimately, Munday (2009, p. 9) adopts a more drastic stance, viewing efforts to define transcreation as "a futile exercise." Since the various branches of translation practice frequently overlap, he argues that it is impossible to establish "watertight categories," and it would be wiser to regard all such practices as forming a continuum of "strategies under the overarching term 'translation'".

Nevertheless, the views on transcreation as a service and as a strategy should not be considered as mutually exclusive. In fact, it is quite plausible that transcreation may be a dual-natured phenomenon in which both approaches coexist and remain compatible. In an interview-based study with professionals of the language services industry, Carreira concludes as follows:

The results suggest that the professionals share the current view of transcreation, although they highlight a second perception of the phenomenon as a multidisciplinary strategy that would overlap with other modalities of a creative nature. (Carreira, *¿Transcreación, traducción de marketing o copywriting bilingüe? Una definición basada en las ofertas de empleo del sector de servicios lingüísticos*, 2018)

The debate over whether transcreation is best understood as a translation strategy or as a fully independent service therefore remains open. What can be observed, at the present time, is that the starkly different—yet, in some respects, converging—positions may stem from the same underlying issue: the persistently low economic remuneration for translation work.

George Ho (2004) argues that translation should no longer be evaluated solely as a linguistic transfer or a cost within the production process, but as a value-generating activity capable of producing measurable commercial outcomes. According to Ho, this requires a paradigm shift in how translation is conceptualized: rather than distinguishing between "ordinary" translation and supposedly more valuable practices such as transcreation, all forms of translation should be assessed according to the economic value they create for clients. In the attempt of counterbalancing the threat posed by the unstoppable advancement of machine translation, large language models, and artificial intelligence, younger generations of translators have sought in the rebranding of high-quality, human-crafted translations.

This phenomenon is partially justifiable if it is true that transcreation, at least in the advertising sector, entails a distinctive workflow that requires additional tasks (e.g., the delivery of multiple alternatives, intensive brainstorming, inter-semiotic adaptation, brand consistency). These extra steps, together with the increased time and cognitive effort involved, already justify higher remuneration. However, the notion of "added value" associated with transcreation should be supported by real knowledge, whether grounded in academic studies or relevant professional experience). Without this solid foundation, transcreation risks becoming little more than a crafty rebranding of translation, rather than a genuinely differentiated practice

After having attempted to define transcreation and having explored its dual nature as both a strategy and a service, the following chapter will seek to reconstruct the theoretical framework within Translation Studies upon which this practice is grounded.

3. Key Theoretical Framework within Translation Studies

3.1. The Persuasive Function of Language

All advertising texts are created to achieve a specific communicative goal, or *skopos*, which is to persuade the reader to reshape their thought and perform a specific action (i.e. to try a new brand or a product), with the very ultimate goal of selling and make profit. This is possible only if the text is highly persuasive (Ho, 2024). The degree of persuasiveness of each promotional text—which Torresi (2021) describes as a continuum—can vary depending on the type of communication. In business to business (B2B) communication, texts are usually more descriptive (i.e. brochures or catalogs, product descriptions, business presentations.) than business to consumer (B2C) texts (Torresi, 2021; TAUS, 2019, p. 8; RWS Moravia, 2014). Generally speaking, the more informative the text, the more likely a translation; the more persuasive the text, the more likely a transcreation (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, p. 157).

To understand how a target text can be made to function persuasively, it is necessary to step back to the linguistic metafunctional models that laid a strong conceptual groundwork upon which newer analysis (such as the appraisal framework by Ho, 2024) were built. According to Torresi (2021), persuasive texts can be framed through several linguistic metafunctional models, most notably those developed by German psychologist Karl Bühler (1934) and Russian linguist Roman Jakobson (1960).

Bühler's model identifies three core functions of language: the representational function, conveying information about objects and states of affairs; the expressive function, revealing the speaker's inner state; and the appellative function, aimed at influencing the listener's behavior or attitude. This last function is of particular

relevance to the study of advertising and persuasive texts, given their inherently persuasive nature (Bühler, 2011).

In 1960, Roman Jakobson later expanded upon Bühler's model by adding three further functions to arrive at a six-function model of communication: the emotive function, oriented toward the addresser; the conative function, oriented toward the addressee and most closely tied to persuasion; the poetic function, focused on the message itself; the referential function, oriented toward context; the phatic function, oriented toward maintaining contact between speaker and listener; and the metalingual function, oriented toward the code itself (Jakobson, 1960).

Ho (2024), in her appraisal framework, explains more in detail all aspects related to persuasion in marketing, first by analyzing the degree to which persuasion is made explicit through the use of language, whether more directly or indirectly through devices such as metaphors. For example, Ho (*ibid.*) found that Chinese luxury texts tend to be more explicit, emotive, and poetic, often using "maximisers" to increase persuasive force. By contrast, English luxury discourse often prefers subtlety, understatement, and implicitness, leaving more room for the reader's interpretation.

The literature on the subject (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2004; Torresi, 2021; among others), identifies several distinct types and categorizations of persuasion, one of the most common being the distinction between emotional and rational persuasion. Emotional persuasion is highly personal, and has to do with emotional reaction and aesthetic appeal. On the contrary, rational persuasion appeals, on one hand, to facts, statistics and product characteristics and, on the other, to socially established norms. Emotional and rational persuasion function differently: emotion persuasion gets attention and triggers action, while rational persuasion justifies the

proposed action as objectively or socially appropriate (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2004, p. 36).

Torresi (2021, pp. 26-29) notes that all promotional texts contain a mix of both rational and emotional persuasion—which she calls "information" and "persuasion," respectively—and that the ratio between the two depends on the text types. For example, a business to-business (B2B) brochure would contain more rational persuasion and less emotional persuasion because the potential buyer is already aware of their needs (*ibid.*, p. 28). On the contrary, a business-to-consumer (B2C) advertisement likely relies on emotional persuasion more to grab the attention of a vast consumer base, or increase the demand.

With respect to B2C advertisements, Ho argues that rational and emotional persuasion can coexist, complement and even boost each other. There may be an emotional hook to grab attention, but then the purchase is justified by more objective information (i.e. product quality, special characteristic). Moreover, it is not rare to change the ratio between emotional and rational persuasion when adapting advertisements between two different cultures (Ho, 2024, pp. 21-22).

Finally, the force of persuasion is realized by graduating the message's intensity and quantity as a means of calibrating brand voice. In most cases, graduation is obtained by upscaling numbers, mass, or time (i.e. "countless possibilities", "a multitude of shades", "a world of luxury", "a sea of colors", "150 years of craftsmanship"). For instance, Ho's analysis (2024) revealed that luxury brands often rely on graduation to manage subtlety, favoring a softer upscale such as "elegantly refined" over a stronger, more emphatic upscale such as "absolutely exquisite."

Apart from being persuasive, which is the defining characteristic of all promotional texts, it could be argued that modern advertising presents further main characteristics

that are highly relevant for Translation Studies and the profession of the translator. Nowadays, advertisements appear mainly on digital media. As a result, they are (1) highly visual, relying heavily on images, videos, and sounds; (2) multimodal, as they are shared through several different media and channels; (3) interactive, when the campaigns asked the audience to engage in surveys, contests, sharing opinions or picture on social media; and, also as a consequence of all the previous, (4) highly localized for specific geographical areas or target audiences, while also being consistent across time and space and faithful to the brand's identity and tone.

When a promotional text must be repositioned for a different market, the translator is tasked with producing a target text that is simultaneously faithful to the source text's original communicative goal or intended effect (Ho, 2021; Torresi, 2021), and capable of resonating with the target audience—that is, acceptable (TAUS, 2019, p. 8) in terms of language, culture, and expectations. In practice, this means the target text must read as though it were an original in its own right (Humphrey *et al.*, 2011; Sattler-Hovdar, 2019), that remains culturally relevant, and conforms to the conventions typically associated with its text type. As Benetello (2018, p. 41) puts it, the target copy should be both "as punchy as the original and consistent with a specific advertising strategy," since different cultures may rely on entirely different advertising strategies to begin with.

Adapting a text to meet the expectations of a target audience is not, however, an entirely novel concept. This is, in essence, what is generally referred to as domestication, and the tension between domestication and its opposite, foreignization, constitutes a dichotomy with a long-standing history within Translation Studies. Since every text is inextricably bound to a specific historical and cultural context, the translator is invariably confronted with a choice between two opposing approaches:

prioritizing fidelity and adherence to the source text and its originating culture, or adapting those elements that would otherwise appear foreign to the target culture.

3.2. Skopos Theory, Domestication and Adaptation

An attempt to systematize the most influential of these translation theories has been made by Jeremy Munday (Munday, 2012, p. 304). While not necessarily exhaustive, Munday's overview proposes a recurring pattern underlying translation dichotomization: that of source-orientation versus target-orientation, also called domestication and foreignization.

The terms "domestication" and "foreignization"—the latter seen as a deliberate strategy to fight the translator's invisibility and to expose the reader to foreign cultures—were circulated in Translation Studies by Lawrence Venuti starting from 1995, but in actuality, they were rooted in the ideas first proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher nearly 180 years earlier.

Western translation theory, as Munday observes, remained for much of its history confined within a "triadic model" composed of "literalism," "paraphrase," and "free imitation" (Munday, 2016), first articulated by the English poet John Dryden in the preface to his 1680 translation of Ovid's *Epistles* (2021). Dryden distinguished three approaches: "metaphrase," a strict word-for-word rendering; "paraphrase," which preserves the sense of the original without following its exact wording; and "imitation," a freer strategy closer to what would today be called adaptation, in which the translator takes only "some general hints from the Original" and proceeds "as he pleases" (*ibid.*).

Over 150 years later, the rigid word-for-word paradigm had already been superseded. In 1813, the German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher proposed a more nuanced binary distinction, identifying two alternative translation

strategies: "den Leser zum Autor führen" [to bring the reader toward the author] or "den Autor zum Leser führen" [to bring the author toward the reader] (Schleiermacher 1813/2012: 49 in Munday 2016, p. 16).

The twentieth century saw this foundational insight expanded and reformulated by a succession of scholars, each contributing a distinct theoretical lens. In 1963, Jiří Levý introduced the notion of illusory translation, a concept centered on the aesthetic effect produced on the reader and on the degree to which the translator's mediating effort is concealed or, conversely, made visible. Levý's illusory translation aims to "create the illusion that the target text is not a translation" (Mälzer, 2011, p. 87), achieved through the extensive adaptation of language and style. A similar approach had been articulated by Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958. They called it "oblique translation," and consisted of "transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation" (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 27).

A particularly influential contribution came in 1964 from Eugene Nida, whose notion of dynamic, or functional, equivalence (Munday, 2016, p. 67) can be situated within the broader category of target- or "receptor-oriented" strategies (Munday, 2016, p. 68). For Nida, "naturalness"—understood as the adjustment of grammar, lexicon, and cultural references—constitutes a central requirement of successful translation. The translated message must be tailored to the receptor's linguistic needs and cultural expectations, such that the target text shows no trace of interference from its source (*ibid.*). This principle of equivalent effect would subsequently be taken up and developed by numerous scholars, including House (1977), Newmark (1981), Reiß and Vermeer (1984/2013), Nord (1991), and Eco (2001), the latter famously asserting that "a good translation must generate the same effect aimed at by the original" (Eco, 2001, p. 44).

In 1977, Juliane House proposed a model, which she later refined over subsequent decades, centered on the concept of equivalence, placing for the first time particular emphasis on a deep analysis of the cultural subsystems underlying both the source and target texts. For House, the translator does not only have to "filter" the language, but culturally marked elements as well (House, 2015, p. 68), in such a way that the target text that does no longer reads as a translation (House, 1997), but rather appears to have been conceived directly within the target culture. Similarly, in 1981, Peter Newmark proposed a communicative approach aimed at reproducing in the target text the same effect generated by the source text, a formulation that closely echoes Nida's dynamic equivalence according to Munday (2016, p. 71).

For Reiß & Vermeer, prioritizing the achievement of a perfect formal equivalence between source and target text is counterproductive sometimes (Reiß & Vermeer, 2013, p. 79). As a result, they substitute formal equivalence in translation with the concept of adequacy (*Adäquatheit*) in terms of the text's purpose (*Skopos*): "A translation is adequate if it is appropriate to the *skopos* defined in the commission" (Reiß & Vermeer 2013: 126), adding that it is the translator's responsibility to deem what is appropriate and what not in order "to achieve the intended *skopos*" (Reiß & Vermeer, 2013, p. 92).

It was, however, the work of Katharina Reiß and Hans Vermeer that marked the most decisive turning point in this trajectory. Reiß and Vermeer argued that the pursuit of perfect formal equivalence between source and target text is, in certain cases, counterproductive (*ibid.*, p. 79). In its place, they introduced the concept of adequacy ("*Adäquatheit*") defined in relation to the purpose, or *Skopos*, of the text (*ibid.*, p. 126). As "the function of the target text may differ from that of the source text if required by the *skopos*" (*ibid.*, p. 74), they assigned to the translator the crucial responsibility of determining what is appropriate in order "to achieve the intended *skopos*" (*ibid.*, p.

92), therefore repositioning the translator as a cultural expert and decision-maker. This theory proved to be particularly relevant for advertising translation, where communicative effectiveness for the target audience and culture is largely prioritized over formal equivalence.

Building on this functionalist foundation, in 1991, Christiane Nord further developed the *Skopos-Theorie* by introducing the principle of "function plus loyalty" (Nord, 1997). Nord noted that the translator should have no arbitrary authority over the target text; rather, they should make justifiable changes on the basis of the commissioner's purpose, which is represented, in the case of advertising transcreation, by the brief.

An equally important contribution came from Justa Holz-Mänttari's translational action theory (1984), which conceptualizes translation as a goal-oriented communicative action in which the translator, acting as an expert, produces a functional message tailored to the target context through a range of "message carriers" encompassing not only verbal text but also visual and multimodal elements, a notion of particular relevance to advertising localization.

The fact that contemporary transcreation, often marketed as a modern and innovative practice, is in reality grounded in much older translation theories raises a legitimate concern: if its core principles are not genuinely new, this could undermine the very credibility of the term "transcreation" and call into question its legitimacy as a practice distinct from translation more broadly. This question has been explicitly raised by Pedersen:

From a translation studies perspective, it is hard to say that an increased focus on target-oriented strategies should constitute an extraordinary exception and justify the making of an entirely new category. On the contrary, a proclaimed emphasis on target orientation in

transcreation is more likely to give the translation scholar a sense of familiarity. So if transcreation is accepted as being a translation phenomenon, it should also be possible to say that the emphasis on the target audience, which is repeatedly mentioned in both localisation and transcreation contexts, invites researchers to turn to the various translation dichotomies of the discipline (Pedersen, 2016, pp. 53-55).

It is Pedersen himself, however, who clarifies that the credibility of transcreation would be undermined only if the target-orientation was its sole distinguishing feature. As established earlier in this thesis, this is not the case: target-orientation is not the only factor that distinguishes transcreation from other translation practices. Its characteristic workflow and the structural necessity of a rationale and a back-translation, for instance, remain distinctive features in their own right. On the contrary, situating certain characteristics of transcreation within the broader framework of translation studies helps clarify the centrality of purpose in advertising translation, and underscores how this purpose can, as some authors argue, be subject to deliberate changes in order to serve the communicative purpose.

Finally, unlike Schleiermacher, Nida, or Toury, two recent scholars contributed a more nuanced, non-binary understanding of the domestication-foreignization spectrum. Theo Hermans and Gideon Toury employed these concepts to describe broader tendencies along a continuum (Munday, 2016, p. 114-121).

A more flexible, continuum-based approach has more recently been embraced by Gaballo (2012), Benetello (2018), and Sattler-Hovdar (2019). Gaballo (2012) proposes a Translation Matrix Diagram that organizes translation strategies along the axes of language/culture and source/target (Gaballo, 2012, p. 108). Within this model, the language-oriented category encompasses tasks typically performed by translators, while the culture-oriented category covers primarily intralingual work more often assigned to copywriters, technical writers, or translators with specialized experience in

those adjacent fields (Gaballos, 2012, p. 108). Strategies are then distributed along this spectrum: "literal translation," "faithful translation," and "word-for-word transfer" sit at the source-language-oriented end; "functional translation," "idiomatic translation," "free translation," "localization," "adaptation," and "transcreation" occupy the target-language-oriented end; while "copywriting," "copy-adaptation," and "cultural adaptation" fall under the target-culture-oriented category (Gaballos, 2012, p. 109).

Benetello (2018) and Sattler-Hovdar (2019) similarly conceive of transcreation and marketing translation as residing on a continuum (Benetello, 2018, p. 29; Sattler-Hovdar, 2019), though they frame it more explicitly around degrees of creative freedom. From their perspective, marketing translation leans toward the more straightforward translation end of the spectrum, while copywriting occupies the opposite, most creative and persuasive extreme, as it involves the creation of entirely new content by a native writer and without any source text whatsoever. Transcreation, for both scholars, sits between straightforward translation and copywriting. However, its exact position cannot be determined in absolute terms, since the degree of adaptation required depends entirely on the context and communicative purpose at hand. It therefore falls to the professional transcreator to make this determination case by case, grounding each decision in well-justified, contextualized reasoning.

As mentioned earlier, what is persuasive within one culture or market is not necessarily persuasive within another, which is why promotional texts entering a new market require adaptation to meet target-audience expectations. This is the kind of decision Reiß and Vermeer entrusted to the translator's professional judgment, who determines what should change "to achieve the intended *skopos*," while Nord cautioned that such changes must never be arbitrary, but firmly grounded in the client's brief. Adaptation to the target language, culture, and expectations is therefore

necessary (Pedersen, 2014, pp. 64-65), but always within the boundaries defined by the general requirements of the brief itself.

However, adaptation occurs at different levels. Departing from earlier scholarship, which tended to classify translation shifts according to their relative degree of necessity, Ho (2024, pp. 20-21) argued that all type of shifts are necessary for a transcreated advertising text to succeed. She therefore proposes renaming them as follows: (1) linguistic shifts, arising from grammatical and semantic constraints of the target linguistic and cultural system; (2) stylistic shifts, which help make the target text sound idiomatic; and (3) *Skopos* shifts, which maximize the text's appeal to and impact on the target audience, ultimately serving its underlying purpose, that is, to sell.

Because of the manifold differences between cultures, life styles and way of thinking, *Skopos* shifts are the ones that usually require the highest degree of divergence. Absolute fidelity to the text is secondary to eliciting the same response from audiences in the target market and the process involves meticulous recreation of the text according to the expectations of the target market (TAUS, 2019, p. 14).

3.3. Visual Semiotics, Geosemiotics and Multimodality

As discussed earlier in this chapter, modern advertising relies heavily on images. Understanding this interplay on a deep level requires some knowledge of semiotics. According to Saussure (1916/1983), semiotics is the study of signs and sign systems, and of the processes through which meaning is produced, conveyed, and interpreted within a given social or cultural context.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, published in 1978, is widely considered the origin of social semiotics, a discipline that holds considerable potential, particularly in relation to multimodal texts (Van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress, 2020). According to

Halliday (1989, p. 11), meaning is constructed not only through words, but through other factors, such the medium and the socio-cultural environment, as well.

Especially in promotional translation, the notion of "text" should therefore be understood in its semiotic sense: its meaning is not constructed by verbal elements alone, but in conjunction with the other signs co-occurring alongside it. The verbal component cannot, in other words, be meaningfully separated from visuals, sound, typography, and other semiotic elements. In Torresi's words, "the translator should analyze the source text *as a whole*" (Torresi, 2021, p. 32).

Advertising texts are, in this sense, inherently complex phenomena. Cook (Cook G. , 1992, p. 37) warns against studying language in isolation when examining such texts, observing that "language [...] rebounds against picture and music, gaining and giving new meanings and connotations," often as part of a broader campaign disseminated across multiple media and contexts (Adab & Valdés-Rodríguez, 2004, pp. 167-168).

The vast majority of academic scholarship on the translation of advertising has concentrated almost exclusively on the written word (Munday, 2004, p. 211). As Munday (*ibid.*) explains, this can be attributed to at least three converging factors. First, most translation theorists are trained primarily in linguistic or cultural analysis, rather than in the semiotics of the visual. Second, copyright restrictions heavily limit the corpus available for academic analysis. Third, and perhaps most significantly from a practical standpoint, the advertising translator typically works exclusively on the translation or adaptation of the written text, since retaining the original visuals while altering only the copy is considerably more cost-effective for the advertiser than redesigning the visuals, which would, in fact, amount to launching an entirely new campaign (*ibid.*). Yet precisely because text and image are often inextricably linked in

advertising, only an expert transcreator is capable of recreating an effective interplay between the two.

Visual semiotics is a sub-discipline of social semiotics, focused on how meaning is constructed and conveyed through visual elements such as images, color, composition, and spatial arrangement. The pioneers of this field are Kress and Van Leeuwen, whose book *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996/2021) introduced the very term "visual grammar," drawing directly on Michael Halliday's functional grammar of the written word—a framework that has, in turn, influenced numerous translation theorists according to Munday:

Within this visual grammar, elements such as composition, perspective, and the use of color carry as much "meaning potential" as the lexico-grammatical realizations found in Halliday's own grammar (Munday, 2004, p. 212).

A clear, modern example of the standards of visual semiotics can change geographically is represented by how the cover of famous American produced movie *La La Land* was adapted for the Japanese market. The original US version adopts a minimalist and highly stylized approach. In a deep blue, almost night scene the two protagonists appear small, dancing under a single lamppost within a vast empty space dominating the composition. By contrast, the Japanese version is more crowded with images and text, features brighter colors and is more dynamic thanks to elements such as fireworks. The protagonists are larger and occupy a central position; their embrace is emphasized more explicitly. Overall, the US version conveys a sense of intimacy, nostalgia, and dreamlike romance, the Japanese cover instead communicates energy, intensity and excitement, therefore presenting the movie as a lively romantic musical.



US movie posters tend to be more iconic (in the functional-cognitive sense of the word), emphasizing the visuals and the general atmosphere more than the text. Conversely, Japanese posters rely more on text to provide more information about the plot and address the viewer more directly as in an advertisement to convince the viewer to go watch the movie (Chou, 2015, p. 185).

The way how, for example, different interpersonal distance or how a determined camera angle or the size of a person in a frame can convey a different sense of power dynamics or intimacy is studied by a sub-discipline of semiotics called geosemiotics, first introduced by R. Scollon and S. W. Scollon in the book *Discourses in Place* (2003). Its central idea revolves around the fact that, when a sign is placed in the real material world, it does not exist in a vacuum, but it operates in a dynamic number of signs within a specific environment. In other words, a significant part of a sign's meaning is produced by its physical placement in contiguity with other objects. The materials, the

languages, or the fonts used in an advertisement can also contribute to its overall meaning. The meaning and the mental associations of colors can also change according to space. For instance, while red symbolizes luck and prosperity in China, it is known to carry negative connotations in other parts of the world (Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

The continuity of a message from its verbal component to its non-verbal elements, and its diffusion through different channels and contexts, is what Guidère (2009, p. 420) terms the "multitext." Baldry (2000) argues that no text is strictly monomodal: print advertisements combine verbal and visual components, radio commercials rely on the interplay of verbal and sound effects, and so on. Moreover, much of the effectiveness of a promotional text depends on its reception by the addressee, which is in turn shaped by the addressee's own cultural values (Valdés, 2019, in Torresi, 2021, p. 33).

For this reason, Munday (2004, p. 216) among others, encourages a "move beyond the written word" to incorporate "the visual, and multimodal in general". Similarly, Torresi urges working on promotional texts "as a whole," with no fear to compensate, modify, or fully substitute or elements with a strong cultural reference or specific pragmatic effect in order to maintain the same end result in the target audience and adherence to the client's brief (Torresi, 2007 in: Torresi, Advertising, 2020, pp. 16-17).

This effort to ensure consistency in messaging and brand identity is, in certain cases, carried out further upstream, before any localization process even begins. Several multinational companies now develop local campaigns simultaneously from a brief avoiding culture-specific references as much as possible (Torresi, 2020, p. 15), or an "Ur-text" or "multi-text" (Guidère 2009). In Valdés' words (2016, p. 135), these brief are "controlled," in the sense they are written in simplified English used as *lingua franca* and to avoid all ambiguities, and "deculturized," meaning they are "culturally

indefinable" (Dollerup, 2008, p. 41). This process is named "glocalization" (Adab B. , 2000, p. 224), a neologism created by merging "globalization" and "localization," and consists in creating a global message to be adapted to local markets (Valdés, 2016, p. 134).

In the effort of creating more easily localizable campaign, sometimes the advertisements of multinational corporations contain a limited number of words, while relying more on visual to convey the message; feature more internationally recognizable elements (i.e. daily actions, images, international celebrities); or avoid dialogs, puns or humor completely (Adab B. , 1997, p. 151).

Despite companies trying to reduce the degree of adaptation needed to make their communications fit each market's expectations, following the logic of "think globally, act locally" (Valdés, 2016, p. 133)—which De Mooij claims to be "a paradox", given that "thinking and behaviour are equally affected by culture" (De Mooij, 2013, p. 2)—transcreation still plays an essential role:

[It] allows campaigns to walk the fine line that ensures they are both fresh and relevant locally, and at the same time consistent globally (Pedersen, 2016, p. 192).

After having examined the translation theories that underpin transcreation, the following chapter will provide a detailed overview of its workflow, as it represents one of the key elements that distinguishes transcreation from other forms of translation practice.

4. The Transcreation Workflow

Although many language service providers (LSPs) and translation agencies offer transcreation services, its process differs substantially from translation for two main reasons. First, transcreation is inherently interdisciplinary: it sits at the intersection of advertising, marketing, and linguistic services, so its workflow integrates elements from all these areas. Second, it includes extra steps in comparison to traditional translation, such as in-depth cultural insight and the provision of multiple alternatives, for denser or more impactful text segments. Moreover, transcreation is not only about imagination and creative thinking. It is also about following a brief that sets out specific requirements and constraints, and finding a good compromise between creativity and the brief takes time and effort.

The quality of the final transcreated output also depends on the workflow used: some steps are essential to produce a high-quality result. However, unlike "conventional translation" (FIT, 2022; Ho M. , 2024)—whose workflow has been amply studied and systematized—transcreation lacks a formalized workflow. ISO 17100:2015 and earlier standards such as EN 15038:2006 and ISO/TS 11669:2012 define workflows for most translation services but mention transcreation only among value-added services, offering no practical guidance.

While ISO standards prove of limited help, the few case studies published by LSPs can be a useful source as they provide real-life scenarios rather than idealized processes. Today there are several agencies of different sizes specialized in transcreation services: from boutique firms serving small-to-medium brands and offering highly personalized services to large LSPs, such as RWS, Hogarth Worldwide,

TransPerfect, Lionbridge, WeLocalize, IPPWORLD, and TOPPAN Digital Language among others.

One such agency is Tagline, a London-based marketing implementation firm providing transcreation services. Tagline was the subject of an ethnographic study by Daniel Pedersen (2016; 2019)—a researcher at Aarhus University, Denmark—based on four weeks of full-time, in-situ observation. While Pedersen's proposal is an excellent starting point for the definition of the ideal transcreation workflow, Pedersen himself notes his model is not universal, as it reflects the practices of a single agency.

Naturally, in a large agency the process typically involves many people: from the transcreation manager, who is the main point of contact between all the other relevant agents and transcreators (called "copywriters" at Tagline) to copyeditors and clients. First of all, the agency is divided into different units, each dedicated to a particular client to ensure consistency and specialization. Clients with smaller volume of work may be grouped together under the same account. Each account has its own manager (i.e. account manager), who coordinates regional brand leaders and transcreation managers, organizing project workflows, scheduling, and communications (Pedersen, 2016, p. 145).

Transcreation is thus a team activity in which communication among all parties is essential for a successful outcome and client satisfaction. According to Pedersen (2016, p. 181; 2019, p. 50), Tagline's workflow usually includes the following steps, which could also potentially represent the typical processes and order of operations that take place in similar agencies.

1. The process starts with the transcreation manager: the in-house coordinator who follows transcreation projects through all the steps, ensuring quality, adherence to the client's brief, linguistic appropriateness, and cultural

relevance. Sometimes, there are multiple transcreation managers for the same language, since regulations, standards, and culture change by country or region (Pedersen, 2016, p. 147). The transcreation manager adapts the creative brief into a transcreation brief tailored to the local market and the client's needs, then sends it to the transcreator along with the source copy and relevant reference material.

2. The transcreator—who will usually be outside of the agency and in close contact to the local market's language, culture, and brand (Pedersen, 2016, p. 149)—adapts the copy, typically producing two to three alternatives for short, complex, or high-impact elements (e.g., headlines, taglines, payoffs), and returns the transcreated copy to the transcreation manager.
3. The transcreation manager checks the overall quality of the work and forwards it to a native-speaking copyeditor. If some issues were already resolved between the manager and the transcreator, the copyeditor will likely receive the revised version. A copyeditor's role goes beyond proofreading: they often act as a "second writer." However, the copyeditor is not expected to "rewrite" the copy, rather to propose additional ideas and solutions that could improve the copy, alongside those provided by the transcreator. (Pedersen, 2019, p. 53). The copyeditor's contribution is valuable and can constitute up to 50% of the whole transcreation process (Pedersen, 2016, p. 153).
4. The copyeditor sends the target copy back to the transcreation manager who performs a final quality check to ensure fidelity to brief and creative intent. This is the last time the transcreator sees their adaptation. The transcreation manager typically checks that all stylistic devices (e.g., wordplay, alliteration, idioms) have been addressed appropriately, verify that the copyeditor updated backtranslations and rationale for the amendments they made, reject unexplained

changes to the transcreator's work. The challenge for the copyeditor is to assess, for each copyeditor's change, whether it improves or damage the copy: both over-editing (changes made for the sake of editing rather than improvement) and under-editing are detrimental for the copy quality (Pedersen, 2016, pp. 151-152).

5. The transcreator manager selects two to three alternative alternatives, along with the related rationales, and submits both to the client.
6. The client chooses one version among all of the alternatives and approves the final transcreated copy.

It should also be noted that, at Tagline, the steps involving transcreators and copyeditors are externalized and assigned to external freelancers. As a result, Pedersen's account reflects primarily the perspective of in-house transcreation managers, since he personally witnessed only the steps that physically took place inside the Tagline's premises and concerned the transcreation managers directly.

A slightly different workflow has been proposed by Italian professional communications consultant Claudia Benetello—she calls herself "communication all-rounder" (Benetello, 2021, p. 104)— who operates as a registered freelancer (with an Italian VAT number) under the trade name Dropinka. Benetello works directly with clients without the intermediation of a translation agency and offers different types of services, from transcreation of marketing copy to voice-over direction, all the way to interpretation services.

In regards of the transcreation workflow, Benetello (2024) distinguishes between phases that apply to all transcreation projects and others that may not apply to all types of project. She also notes that some stages can be offered separately from the transcreation project. The following table lists the steps of her transcreation workflow

(*ibid.*), in the order in which they usually take place, indicating which she considers mandatory and which may be provided as standalone services.

	Mandatory step	Standalone service
1. Briefing	✓	
2. Cultural insight	✓	✓
3. Analysis	✓	
4. Brainstorming	✓	
5. Selection	✓	
6. Backtranslation		
7. Comments and rationale		
8. Feedbacks, amends and sign-off		
9. Voice-casting and voice-over direction		✓

The table does not include a checkmark for "back translation," "comments and rationale," or "feedback, amends and sign off," as these are not steps consistently present in every transcreation assignment, nor—according to Benetello—can they be offered as stand-alone services.

For the purposes of this thesis—particularly regarding the general structure of the workflow—Benetello's model will serve as the main reference because it focuses mainly on the transcreation phases, rather than project-management tasks. Nevertheless, for

a more comprehensive study, the following sections integrate both Pedersen's and Benetello's perspectives.

4.1. Briefing

The brief is one of the most characteristic elements of the transcreation workflow (Carreira, 2020), with conventional translations usually not requiring a brief, or at least not as detailed and extensive as the brief needed for transcreation. The brief is an essential phase in the transcreation workflow and plays a crucial role in ensuring a successful campaign in the target market by providing transcreators with explicit instructions, insights, and guidelines. Therefore, it must be meticulously detailed and accurate.

The brief also reflects the continuous collaboration between clients and transcreation providers that the workflow requires. When describing the dynamics inside a large transcreation agency such as Tagline, Pedersen highlights the necessity of "educating" the client about the importance of providing correct and sufficient information before starting the project, since it can improve the overall workflow and potentially even the end product.

Overall, clear communication is crucial. Transcreation managers often stress the need for clients to use structured briefing templates. Without them, project instructions become scattered across multiple emails and stakeholders, creating inefficiencies and confusion. Sometimes even basic details—such as job titles or contact information—are missing in formal communications, further complicating coordination (Pedersen, 2016, pp. 155-157).

The transcreation brief usually derives from earlier briefs produced in different production phases and addressed to different stakeholders. According to Carreira

(2020), the first phase is the client brief, which results from extensive research on sales data, competitors, and the target markets (Roca, 2007). The client brief contains not only fundamental information about the product and brand, but also the client company's needs and goals for which the campaign is developed. When the advertising professionals start shaping the campaign, they need a guiding document: the creative brief, which builds on the information and hard data provided in the client brief.

Finally, the transcreation brief is produced in the final localization phase for the target market(s). The majority of project details often comes from the creative agency and creative brief (Pedersen, 2019, p. 156). After receiving the creative brief, the transcreation manager, or the transcreator themselves, conducts research on the commissioning company or organization (Font 2021). This investigation, which focuses on the brand and its market competitors, helps prevent unintentional plagiarism (Benetello, 2018).

Although briefs are commonly pictured as written documents, the concept is broader: Calvo (2018) distinguishes between explicit briefs and implicit ones. Although her analysis focuses on translation briefs, this distinction is also applicable to transcreation briefs. Benetello (2024, p. 178) notes that, in her experience, briefs are usually written and shared by email, but they are sometimes delivered via (video) call. In this regard, Sattler-Hovard (2019, pp. 41-42) specifies that if the client is reluctant to complete the brief themselves, the transcreator may draft it based on a phone call, an in-person meeting, or e-mail exchanges. In that case the brief should be submitted to the client and signed off as the final version, since it is the document to which the transcreator is ultimately accountable.

Regardless of format, most sources stress the importance of briefs in transcreation. Pierce (2019) for Lionbridge, for instance, highlights that briefs provide

fundamental guidance throughout the whole adaptation process. Without a brief, transcreators must rely solely on the source text, and the result is likely to be less persuasive and it could even be argued that the output in the target language might be closer to a traditional marketing translation. This observation is reflected in Iizuka's classification of transcreation methodologies for RWS (Iizuka, 2019).

Iizuka differentiates three levels of transcreation. The first, "blind transcreation," is the least time-consuming and therefore cheapest approach. As this method does not involve an explicit brief, it relies only on information that can either be inferred from the source text and or found online through a simple research. For these reasons, blind transcreation seems to largely overlaps with standard marketing translation: the text is produced by a professional translator who tends not to deviate significantly from the source, and is later revised by an in-country copywriter, who typically addresses cultural or stylistic issues and occasionally improves idiomaticity without ever modifying the underlying structure. Given the minimal degree of intervention, blind transcreation is unsuitable for high-quality persuasive communication and is mainly used for low-budget marketing localization.

The second level, "transcreation with a brief," is ideal for texts rich in idioms, cultural references, metaphors, rhymes, assonances or other linguistic devices. Here, a "bicultural consultant" analyzes the source text and proposes multiple solutions for the most complex passages. The third and ultimate level, "transformative transcreation," entails a full recreation of the content by a native creative team and typically includes tests on local focus groups to ensure maximum naturalness in the target language and culture while maintaining the same persuasive impact of the original (Iizuka, 2019). The final result of a "transformative transcreation" would then be a locally hyper-relevant material.

The centrality of the brief is confirmed by research on client expectations for transcreation services carried out by Risku, Pichler and Wieser (2017). Their findings show that briefing is an excellent tool to unleash creativity within specific requirements (e.g. brand coherence, campaign objectives, space limitations). Nevertheless, it also emerges that, while clients of advertising translations unanimously expect a transcreation brief to be detailed and strategic, they generally provide only minimal information. As TAUS (2019, p. 10) argue, transcreators need as much information as possible. First, general information about the company, its background, its philosophy, its values, and its objectives is essential as a starting point. Second, any relevant existing material (e.g. product descriptions, TVC scripts) can significantly help brand and style consistency. In this sense, it is also crucial to know whether the client wishes to keep the same approach or pursue a new one: they may want something totally fresh and different or simply a shift in the tone of voice. Third, the transcreator should be briefed on how the product or brand is expected to be perceived locally. A product that is already advertised in a certain way in one market may in fact require a different approach when entering a new market. Finally, transcreators should also be aware of each client's particular preferences or other aspects to avoid (*ibid.*).

Like copywriters, transcreators must keep communication objectives in mind: why the original material was created in the first place, why it is being transcreated, the target audience's details, and the desired call to action. Put in simpler terms, as Carreira (2024) summarized, a good brief is supposed to answer questions such as: "who we are?", "who are we talking to?", "how are we talking to them?" and "what do we expect to achieve?".

Despite broad agreement on the goals and the importance of briefing, there is no single, clear definition of the characteristics of a transcreation brief. One reason is that,

due to their high adaptability to different types of projects and client's needs, transcreation briefs cannot be standard documents (Carreira, 2021). Another is confidentiality: transcreation briefs are generally subject to non-disclosure agreements, which limits the examples available to researchers. The result is that it is relatively difficult for scholars to systematize transcreation briefs and state how they are generally structured and what they should cover in detail.

One of the few authors to propose a model brief for promotional text adaptation is Torresi (2021, pp. 10-11). She stresses that her scheme should be used only when no brief is provided and must be adapted to each project's requirements and working condition. Torresi's translator-prompted brief covers six elements:

1. Channel(s): brochure, leaflet/flier, website, product packaging, mail/e-mail, trade fairs, press releases/publications, TV channel, radio station, etc;
2. Target audience: age range, nationality, gender, education level, employment, familiarity with product/service, whether the audience is made of people (end-consumers/end-users) or companies (working in the same or other fields), etc;
3. Brand values, corporate identity, desired brand image;
4. Degree of authoritativeness, proximity to the customer/user/public, and deference towards the audience;
5. Desired effect(s) on the target audience;
6. Any visual or other material that will accompany the translated text: layout, fonts, and colors for printed advertisements; music, sound effects, scene description, and camera movements for radio o TV commercials.

Torresi's model does not differ greatly from other transcreation briefs. However, it represents a valid solution for two main aspects: simplicity and flexibility. On one hand, the model uses simple terms rather technical terms and clear phrasing to avoid

ambiguities, which a perfect tool when handed out directly to client for completion, regardless of the client's previous knowledge. Examples are "what kind of effect(s) do you wish the translated text to have on the target audience?" instead of a more ambiguous and implicit wording such as "Specify the communicative goals" or even asking to specify "whether they are end-consumers/end-users" or "companies/organizations" instead of the concise yet potentially obscure expression "consumer/B2B").

On the other hand, Torresi's model brief is extremely flexible, as it cover the vast majority of advertising types, from leaflets to TVCs. Moreover, the choice of providing horizontal bars for a continuous scaling and the presence of checkboxes with a free-text field are particularly important to avoid forcing respondents into closed-ended (multiple choice) or binary (yes/no) answers and personalize as much as possible each transcreation job so that the client feel listened to.

Even if Torresi's model already covers the main aspects, for the purpose of this section, it is useful to outline a tentative systematization—aimed at being as comprehensive as possible—of the content the ideal transcreation brief. The following scheme synthesizes the information published by researches (Carreira, 2020; 2024, p. 253; Risku et al., 2017, pp. 71-73; Lemoine, 2015), practitioners (Benetello, 2024, p. 178; Sattler-Hovdar, 2019), and agencies specialized in transcreation (OnTarget translation, n.d.; TextTrans, 2017). Sections are ordered by importance for the transcreation process. As a result, the lower the item's position in the list, the more optional the information is.

- Details about the advertised product or service and its position within its category, including key similarities and differences with competitors.
- Information about the brand and the company: mission, vision, and purpose.

- Tone of voice (ToV): for example formal/informal, conservative/contemporary, engaging, polite, irreverent, authoritative, conversational, casual (see chapter Tone of Voice). Benetello (2024, p. 178), notes that, ideally, the target copy has the same ToV of the source, but she also adds that, sometimes, the original ToV may be deemed inappropriate for the target audience and market and is therefore changed or partially neutralized during the transcreation.
- Communication goals and the purpose of the campaign: whether it is aimed at boosting sales, launching a product/service in a new market, raising brand awareness (Benetello, 2024), increase customer loyalty (Lemoine, 2015), or it is part of a central campaign or a long-term strategy such as re-branding.
- Intended brand image and anticipated response from the target audience (e.g. try a product for the first time, click a link, or subscribe to a newsletter or a service) (Lemoine, 2015).
- Target group and market (Risku 2017), also called sometimes "consumer insights" (OnTarget translation, n.d.): a description of the target audience (e.g., sex/gender, age, educational, professional, and ethnic background) (*ibid.*), and any other relevant detail, especially if it affects language or visuals. The locale should also be specified to adapt the language to a specific diatopic variation (Pedersen, 2016, p. 156). The insight may also cover more marketing-related data, such as the target group's values and beliefs as buying personas by substantially answering the questions "what motivates them to buy the product/service?" and "what stops them from buying it?" (*ibid.*).
- Visual elements: in Risku's investigation (2017), "access to artwork" revealed to be a commonly shared requirement, since it can be of significant help during

the creative brainstorming, given that text and visual in advertisement are in most cases mutually interdependent.

- For television commercials (TVCs) specifically, Benetello (2024, p. 178) indicates that the brief should also include the film or, in its absence, the storyboard, along with the script document to be transcreated. The film or storyboard provides essential context on the interplay between the video footage and the copy lines, therefore potentially increasing cohesion and hyper textuality, as well as the quality of the final product.
- Expected text length and other restrictions related to space and time, both for video or static advertisements (TextTrans, 2017).
- Degree of freedom/originality: freedom in transcreation is a continuum, ranging from the creation of entirely novel content—therefore tending to copywriting—or more conventional translation that draws more heavily from the source material (Lemoine 2015). The brief can prescribe how far the transcreator may deviate from the source (TextTrans, 2017; Risku, 2017), which content may be omitted or expanded and whether approval from the client is required in this sense (Risku, 2017). This information may be obtained via open-ended responses such as in Torresi (2021) or by using plain language and clear wording such as in Texttrans' brief (2017), which poses questions such as "Would you expect translators/reviewers to creatively interpret the source text and deviate from it if necessary to maximize marketing appeal?", while mentioning specific operations such as splitting sentences, rearranging their order, adding or deleting words, and even asking the client to provide examples of such changes.

- Other company's existing translations and copy, including clear instructions on whether and how the transcreator should rely on them or, alternatively, translate more freely (Risku, 2017; TextTrans, 2017).
- Specific preferences on terminology and style: indications about whether any parts of the copy should remain in the source language, preferences regarding the translation of key terms, choices between active and passive voice, and, if relevant, specific "don'ts" based on client requests, brand type, target audience, and tone of voice (*ibid.*). In the brief, the client may also wish to clarify specific words, jargon, or puns used in the copy (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, p. 43).
- Diffusion channels (e.g. print leaflet, local/national newspaper, street billboard, television, social media, streaming or video sharing platforms, email, online banners): it can determine text's length, impact on the target audience, and degree of persuasiveness in the persuasive-informational continuum (Torresi, Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts, 2021).
- Deadlines and deliverables requested by the client: what files and in which format(s) the client expects to receive as the final version and by when (Lemoine, 2015; Carreira, 2020).
- Revision process and potential queries: some briefs may explicitly ask the client if they are open to assist with queries arise during the adaptation process, whether regarding ambiguities in the source text, inconsistencies in past copy provided as a reference, or clarification about existing guidelines (TextTrans, 2017). In such case, it would be useful to ask to provide the main contact person in the client company for this type of queries from the very beginning, along with their availability time. In particular some cases, the brief may even specify how many review rounds there will be (Lemoine, 2015; Carreira, 2020).

- Budget: always present in creative briefs, but relatively uncommon in transcreation briefs. On Target translation's brief (n.d.), for example, even specifies three subcategories (development, production and media) for the client's budget. It does not necessarily mean that budget is less important simply because it appears at the end of the list. However, since in some cases the client is the one requesting the quotation, it is not always necessary to specify the budget in every brief.

Because briefs must be detailed, they are often much longer than the copy to be adapted: the copy is usually under 2,000 words and, in many cases, under 100 words, according to Pedersen (2019, p. 51).

In this respect, Carreira (2020), after thoroughly analyzing different types of briefs, observes that transcreation briefs can be even more detailed than client and creative briefs: "the number of different categories on the transcreation briefs is higher than the ones found in the client and creative briefs" (p. 35). He argues that the reason for such a difference is more contextual information is gradually created during the previous phases of advertisement development. The presence of a brief specific to the transcreation stage is therefore justified by the fact that a good adaptation requires the most comprehensive overview possible (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the transcreation stage naturally presents different issues to be solved in comparison to previous stages of campaign development (Carreira, 2020, p. 36). The budget, for example, affects mainly the creation process; while cultural reference affect mainly the transcreation process.

Even if a detailed brief is always welcome, Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 42) notes that not every transcreation job requires a fully detailed brief. Sometimes, especially when collaborating with long-standing clients, a campaign description, its purpose, the media or channel through which it will be distributed, potential space-related

constraints, and the visuals may be sufficient. Sattler-Hovdar (*ivi*, p. 44) ultimately emphasizes that the brief quality will have a significant impact on the final transcreation quality (see 4.8.1 *Quality Assurance*).

4.2. Cultural Insight

Cultural insight—also called "native insight" (Pedersen, 2016, p. 186), "cultural context" or "research" (TAUS, 2019, p. 10)—covers information on local culture and markets. Benetello (2024, p. 179) explains that, in her workflow as a freelance transcreator, after being briefed, the cultural-insight phase begins after the brief and consists of assessing whether the source copy and visuals, together with other elements of the brand's advertising strategy, are suitable for the target market and culture. If any element might harm the company's or brand's image or fail to resonate with the target audience, the transcreator should inform the client promptly.

Benetello (*ibid.*) also notes that cultural insight may also be requested as a standalone service, most commonly to evaluate brand names before entering a foreign market. Before investing a significant amount of money on marketing and advertising, companies need to know whether a specific brand's name has a positive or negative connotation, whether it is easy to pronounce and remember, and how potential local customers will perceive it. Cultural insight can also aim at assessing creative concepts that may be the base of new advertising campaigns. In this case, the creative team needs to know how much a specific idea would resonate with the target audience and if it would make them stand out regionally among local competitors (*ibid.*)

From the perspective of international agencies such as Tagline, native insight has a broader role and may be useful at any stage of strategy development when the goal is to balance a coherent global identity with local relevance. It can serve as a starting point

for the creative team and should be considered when validating draft executions (Pedersen, 2016, p. 186). According to Pedersen (*ibid.*), in the context of an international transcreation agency, native insight addresses cultural perspectives while focusing mainly on consumer behavior (e.g., lifestyle and purchase motivations) characteristic of a local market (see **Error! Reference source not found.. Error! Reference source not found.**).

Native insight must be regularly revised. While some general traits remain stable, others change over time, so it is useful to have an updated picture of each market. In this sense, the insight should be treated as an "ever-evolving process" that summarizes the most diverse characteristics of a particular market, including legislative and practical regulatory aspects (Pedersen, 2016, pp. 189-190).

For example, Pedersen (*ibid.*) recalls a specific case in which Tagline's editorial department, while working on a television commercial for a toy, consulted one of the transcreation managers on where to position a legal disclaimer on screen (e.g. "Results may vary", "While supplies last", "Some restrictions apply", "Accessories shown not included", "Limited-time offer"). This shows that transcreation professionals are often expected to combine linguistic and cultural expertise with some knowledge of local regulations and basic design skills (i.e. video commercials, online banners, product packaging).

Warnings and disclaimers are frequent legal requirements—such as on cigarette packs (Munday, Advertising: Some Challenges to Translation Theory, 2004, pp. 210-211) or on alcoholic products—and their characteristics may vary depending on the country. For instance, wine labels in France must display the health warning "alcohol abuse is bad for your health" and advertisements of alcoholic beverages cannot include

any information other than pure facts (e.g. alcohol content, origin, composition, production methods) (Perbost et al., 2021, p. 17).

Similarly, all advertising to the general public of a medicinal product in the European Union must "include the information necessary for correct use of the product" and provide "an express, legible invitation to read the package leaflet or outer packaging". Some jurisdictions, such as the Greek one, also specifically require to include expressions such as "consult your doctor or pharmacist" (Kyriakides et al., 2024, p. 122). The Russian law on advertising² is even more detailed and prescriptive. Article 24 specifies minimum technical requirements (space and duration) for such warnings (AIPM, 2018, p. 18). Furthermore, according to the same article, drug advertising shall not induce "a healthy person needs to use the advertised product", neither suggest that the addressee is ill or likely to become ill, whether explicitly nor implicitly through question or statements such as "are you coughing?", "are you sneezing?", "do you get headaches?", "you're probably getting sick", "you have the flu", "you have a cold" (AIPM, 2018, p. 15). Meanwhile, the Danish Advertising Order, in section 10(1), expressively prohibits suggesting that consulting a doctor or undergoing surgery is unnecessary, that a medicinal product has guaranteed effects, is free from adverse reactions, or superior to other treatments, or that health would deteriorate without taking it (Hansen & Nielsen, 2022, p. 12).

Wording therefore matters and can have legal consequences. In recent years, efforts have been made in terms of harmonization of regulations across the European

² Federal Law no. 38-FZ (March 13, 2006).

Union on different aspects related to advertising. Directive 2001/83/EC provides a restrictive framework for advertising of medicinal products to protect public health. For example, it prohibits the advertising of prescription drugs in the entire European Union, unlike the USA, where it is instead allowed. Another difference between the USA and the EU is that medical and pharmaceutical professionals, in general, cannot be portrayed in advertising of medicinal products even by actors simply wearing a white coat, especially when such portrayals exploit the authority or prestige associated with that professional figure to endorse or encourage consumption.

While direct comparison with competitors is not subject to a legally binding EU-wide ban, most European countries still disallow it in practice: for example, a 2008 Spanish ruled against the claim "the best nutrition has never before had a better taste" for feedstuffs. Statements that may be considered puffery in one culture can be legally interpreted as comparative claims in another. The claim was found misleading and unlawful since it implied superiority over competitors without objective comparative evidence (Porxas & Carreras, 2014, p. 339).

In fact, there are also other ethical aspects to take into consideration in order to avoid lack of transparency toward consumers. For example, in the UK, advertising must be decent, honest, truthful, and socially responsible (UK Gov, n.d.). Marketing- and advertising-related laws are common in Europe and they exist to avoid untrue or misleading advertising. These specific regulations also has an impact on how the message can be presented visually (Adab & Valdés-Rodríguez, Introduction, 2004, p. 162). For instance, a 1995 Belgian Royal Decree, in regards of soft drinks, prohibits using images representing fruits unless the drink contains at least 10% fruit juice (Mahy & Pauwels, 2014, p. 80).

A brand name, for example, must not mislead consumers into thinking they are buying a product with different ingredients or characteristics than reality. The increasing number of court cases concerning unethical techniques used in advertising illustrate the risk: a 1996 court ruling in Brussels found a vegetable spread called Yogorine—pertaining to the YOGOOD range of products, including the products Yogosalad and Yogonaise—to mislead consumers into buying a yogurt, when the product did not contain any milk (Mahy & Pauwels, 2014, p. 96). Similarly, in 2012 a German court found that calling a soft drink "ginger beer" could mislead consumers expecting beer (Meisterernst & Evans, 2014, p. 178). These real life court cases show how inappropriate product naming can mislead consumers and undermine trust, highlighting the importance of adapting product names to local market expectations. A well executed cultural insight may prevent this kind of incidents.

Other examples illustrate how language can be used to boost sales while circumventing regulations. For instance, supermarkets advertising "fresh" bread often blur the line between legal and misleading claims, carefully choosing their wording. According to journalist Gianpaolo Usai (2020), in-store advertising and labeling for baked products found in some Italian supermarkets (e.g., Aldi's "Pan del Dì", Lidl's "Sforniamo pane tutto il giorno", MD's "sforniamo pane a tutte le ore", or U2's "il nostro pane appena sfornato") suggest that the bread is freshly baked on site when, in reality, is frequently foreign-imported, pre-cooked, frozen product, shelf stable for up to two years. In the UK, Lidl used claims such as "baked for you throughout the day" or "our freshly baked bread favourites." Interestingly, while the Italian formal translation of "to bake" would be "cuocere al forno", these companies used "sfornare,"

literally meaning "to take out of the oven" to avoid using a word such as "bake," or "fresh."³

As Munday (Munday, *Advertising: Some Challenges to Translation Theory*, 2004, pp. 210-211) notes, the use of languages other than the official national language can also be restricted, usually for economic or ideological reasons. For example, Argentina once imposed strict quotas on foreign-language advertising during periods of high unemployment. In post-handover Hong Kong, fines were levied on traders who failed to display shop signs in the new Chinese writing, which was associated with the Communist revolution. Similarly, in October 2003, the Basque regional government in Spain proposed that all businesses and self-employed service providers produce signs, business cards, and promotional materials in both Basque and Castilian Spanish.

Ideally, a competent transcreator should always be aware of the main cultural and market characteristics and be able to guide the client towards the best cultural and linguistical choices by also balancing legal requirement, local cultural relevance, and originality to make the brand stand out in the local market. This skill helps avoid fines and legal issues, boosts sales and brand awareness, and adds value to the profession. However, the final responsibility for the advertisement should rest with the company, its legal consultants (if they have any), or the agency providing the service. The individual transcreator should not be held directly accountable for legal issues,

³ According to Italian law, fresh bread must be produced in a continuous process without freezing or preservatives, and it must be sold within 72 hours of production.

Source: Decree 1 October 2018, n. 131 - Regolamento recante disciplina della denominazione di «panificio», di «pane fresco» e dell'adozione della dicitura «pane conservato». (18G00156) (GU Serie Generale n.269 November 19, 2018) <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/11/19/18G00156/sg>

especially if the client was adequately informed about the benefits and risks of specific choices and decided to proceed anyway.

At this point, with the transcreation brief in hand and the research phase completed, the third step involves the transcreation process itself.

4.3. Analysis

According to Benetello (2024, pp. 180-181), this phase encompasses (1) "flagging any cultural issues with the copy, the visual or any element of the advertising strategy," (2) examining the advertising "as a whole," including its visuals, film, music or sounds and (3) meticulously analyzing the copy and decode its underlying meaning and subtle nuances. Decoding the overt meaning of a copy implies understanding the actual messages that lies behind the words, metaphors and other literary devices.

Taglines usually aim to convince to change their opinion something and how they see it, encouraging them to empathize with the brand and adopt its worldview. Most of the time, taglines also function as calls to action: they try to convince the intended audience to perform a specific action. Sometimes, it can directly suggest buying a product because it is worthwhile (whether because it is high-quality, useful, innovative, durable, or affordable). For example, Energizer's "Keeps going and going" refers to the fact that its batteries last longer than competitors'. Metaphors often enhance the evocative power of a tagline. "Red Bull gives you wings," for instance, uses the metaphor of wings to suggest that the drink boosts energy and alertness.

Other times, the slogan does not directly mention the product's qualities but instead addresses consumers and tries to persuade them to adopt a certain mindset. Nike's world-famous taglines "Just do it" motivates you to take action and be active by also practicing sports and physical activity. Apple's "Think different" invites consumers

to be creative, original, and open-minded. L'Oréal's "Because you're worth it"—conceptually similar to Dove's "Because you deserve it"—implies that it is not the product that is worth the money, but the consumer, who buys cosmetics not out of vanity or excess but as a legitimate and even necessary act of self-affirmation. Microsoft's "Designed for you" highlights the customizability of the design and user experience by placing the user as the center of everything.

In the analysis, one should also consider the interplay between the copy and the visuals. Sometimes images even alter the interpretation of the text because the text is meant to be read together with the picture. For example, a Heinz print ad from 2023 shows kitchen staff secretly refilling a Heinz-branded bottle with cheap, non-Heinz ketchup, paired with the line "Even when it isn't Heinz, it has to be Heinz." Without the visuals, the line would be clever but abstract. The images bring the words to life.

Benetello (2017; p. 240-1; 2018, p. 38) also notes the importance of spotting underlying cultural references during analysis, such as the one in Norton Antivirus's "Boldly go," which quotes the intro to every *Star Trek* episode. References can also be made to world-famous figures, as in the case of U.S. President Donald J. Trump in 2016. UpWork, a startup company connecting freelancers and clients across the world, leveraged Trump's tweeting habits to advertise its base of social-media freelancers. The campaign—built on Trump's impulsiveness and lack of professionalism on social platforms—conveyed a simple message: a social-media strategist can drastically improve how online communication is handled (Teslaru, 2019).



Benetello (2024, p. 181) also underlines the importance of understanding and defining the tone of voice of the source copy, which can be inspirational, as in Adidas' "Impossible is nothing," or even warning-like, as in American Express' "Don't leave home without it" or Nike's "You can't stop us" (see **Error! Reference source not found.. Error! Reference source not found.**). Choosing the right tone of voice is crucial because it goes hand in hand with branding. To stand out from competitors, each brand should maintain a unique personality, whether it is standardized at a global level or adapted to each local market. As a consequence, the transcreator sometimes has to recreate the source tone, while in other cases slightly neutralizing or adapting it to align with local customs and expectations, but only when really necessary. For example, the ToV could be changed to avoid misinterpretations in the local culture or to prevent that it is perceived as rude. Other times, the tone must change entirely if

marketing research and strategy require it. In any case, consistency is key, and past advertising materials are useful tools for maintaining coherence over time and across campaigns.

One should also pay attention to and try to recreate any rhetorical device, such as metaphor, anaphora, rhyme, assonance, or alliteration. For example, "Intel inside" and "Best Buy. Best Brands. Best Prices" rely on alliteration, while the catchy version Swiffer's "La polvere non dura perchè Swiffer la cattura" transcreated into Italian uses rhyme and assonance. Benetello (*ibid.*) and Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 51) note that it is not always necessary to reproduce the same device at all costs: sometimes reproducing the same effect is more effective. If onomatopoeia is used to convey playfulness, various techniques can recreate a similar musicality or effect. If a rhyme is used to make a tagline memorable, rooting the localized version in a local idiom may achieve the same purpose.

For video commercials featuring actors or animated characters, although lip movements can now be synced quickly using artificial intelligence, the transcreator must be skilled enough to handle this type of adaptation and aware of whether it is actually required or whether lip syncing will be done in post-production, so as not to waste time on unnecessary tasks.

Last but not least, it is essential to consider any time constraints (in video commercials) or space limitations (in print advertising). For the latter, Benetello (2019) once had to recreate an Accenture ad where the headline "After examining the critical elements of their business, we're helping Dow save \$2.5 billion" was written the elements of a periodic table because Dow is a chemical company. Another challenging and interesting example is an Ikea campaign called "Crossword puzzle," published in Australia in 2009. The advertisement featured a crossword grid with numbered clues,

whose answers all belonged to the semantic fields of home organization and furniture. When solved, the crossword revealed the name of an Ikea CD/DVD tower, which was the actual advertised product. Moreover, the ad appeared next to real newspaper crosswords and featured a life-size printed version with a real CD/DVD tower functioning as the crossword's grid, with leaflets that customers could take and fill out themselves.



Across

1. Influential folk musician (5)
4. Moonshadow singer (3)
5. Doors' classic, Riders on the ____ (5)
7. Hit for Madonna in 2000 (5)
9. Sung the infectious Catch My Disease (3)
10. Aussie classic, Blue ____ Mining (3)
11. German composer (4)
12. Activist and frontman of U2 (4)

Down

1. Psychedelic band, The Grateful ____ (4)
2. Cool Brits, ____ Monkeys (6)
3. French electronic duo (3)
6. Penned Doo Wah Diddy, Manfred ____ (4)
7. Jagger, Hucknall or Fleetwood (4)
8. One hit wonder, Vanilla ____ (3)
9. Boys behind Good Vibrations (5)
11. First name of rock's "Originator" (2)

A: BENNO CD/DVD tower \$49/ea



In case the transcreator is working through an agency, the analysis phase is significantly faster than in the workflow proposed by Benetello, who mainly collaborates directly with final clients instead. The text analysis is largely carried out by the transcreation manager, who usually provide, along or withing the brief, a "copy breakdown," which "meticulously runs through every detail of the copy" (Pedersen, 2016, p. 164). The copy breakdown explains wordplay, puns, idioms, and inside jokes that a translator may also include specific questions for the transcreator, such as whether the target language offers a suitable alternative to preserve the meaning and, if not, at least the intended effect. To give a concrete idea of the possible format of a copy breakdown, Pedersen presents an example of a specific excerpt taken from his ethnographic study at Tagline:

'Records rewritten' - unusual collocation

- Here we focus on the fact that [X] has broken multiple records.
 - In English, the standard collocations are 'to set a record' and 'to break a record'; the verbs 'write' and 'rewrite' are usually used with the noun 'history' (i.e. [re]write history).
 - Whereas we might barely register the stock phrase 'records broken', the phrase 'records rewritten' is an unexpected collocation and serves to arrest our attention.
 - As such it emphasises [X] history and brand values where pushing boundaries is concerned: from technical innovation and excellence to involvement in setting new records in exploration and sport.
1. Does the same verb+noun combination work in your language? If not, what solution do you suggest to convey the same meaning with equal impact?
 2. 'Records rewritten' - can you recreate the same alliteration in your language?

(Pedersen, Transcreation in marketing and advertising: An ethnographic study, 2016, p. 164)

The copy breakdown stresses that "records rewritten" is an usual collocation but it serves a precise purpose: it is meant to catch the reader's attention, and it is therefore essential that transcreators do not overlook this intention. In short, a thorough copy breakdown ensures that nothing gets lost in adaptation.

4.4. Brainstorming

Brainstorming—also referred to as "creative thought processes" or "multiple option creation" (TAUS, 2019, p. 10)—is an essential phase in transcreation, especially for the shorter, punchy copy containing puns or wordplay (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, p. 47). However, Sattler-Hovdar (*ivi*, p. 51) ultimately acknowledges that brainstorming is not always necessary: while headlines typically demand substantial transcreation and deep creative thinking, body copy—unless especially rich in puns and wordplay—is usually more informational than persuasive, so the transcreator will translate it more directly.

While in the late 19th century "brainstorm" referred to a sudden mental disturbance or agitation, the combination of "brain" and "storm" later came to metaphorically describe an intense, energetic rush of ideas (Merriam Webster, n.d.). The modern understanding of brainstorming as a structured technique for idea generation was popularized in the 1940s by American advertising executive Alex F. Osborn, co-founder of the BBDO agency. Osborn's key principles are: (1) focus on quantity rather than quality, (2) suspend criticism for a later stage, (3) welcome unusual ideas without assumptions, and (4) combine ideas to form a single better idea (Sekhar & Lidiya, 2012, p. 114).

Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 47), argues that brainstorming is fundamentally "informed inspiration," meaning that it is a mental process and a way of working that

can be learned and practiced over time. On the subject of inspiration, David Ogilvy, one of the most influential advertisers of the 20th century, in his book *Ogilvy on Advertising*, similarly wrote that:

Big ideas come from the unconscious. This is true in art, in science and in advertising. But your unconscious has to be well informed, or your idea will be irrelevant. Stuff your conscious mind with information, then unhook your rational thought process (Ogilvy, 1985, p. 16).

To "stuff your mind" with information and hence aid creativity, Sattler-Hovdar (2019, pp. 45-46) recommends the adoption of the patterning technique as a long-term source of ideas and inspiration. This method involves systematically collecting all copy elements (e.g., words, phrases, headlines, call-to-actions, concepts, and ideas) that stand out for their persuasive power and originality. In her view, the most effective material for producing locally relevant copy lies in the so-called "untranslatables," i.e. words, phrases, and sayings that cannot be easily translated into other languages. Because of their strong cultural roots, these elements tend to be perceived as highly authentic by the target audience and are therefore more likely to resonate with it. The collected ideas may be organized into specific categories (e.g. by client, project, specialty field) or maintained in a more miscellaneous format.

Among the most widely used brainwriting techniques are mind mapping and the 6-3-5 method (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, p. 64). Mind mapping starts with a single concept placed at the center of a page, from which related ideas branch out in different directions. This structure makes it easier to see relationships between concepts and to develop thoughts in a non-linear way. One of the main advantages of mind mapping is that it engages both hemispheres of the brain, combining spontaneity and creativity with logical organization. For this reason, it can be particularly useful when developing headlines or exploring alternative ways to phrase commonly used buzzwords (*ibid.*).

The 6-3-5 method involves six participants, each of whom writes down three ideas related to a specific problem within a set amount of time, usually less than ten minutes. Once the time is up, the ideas are passed to another participant, who builds on or modifies them by adding three new ideas. This process is repeated several times until all participants have contributed to each set of ideas. Once the list is complete, the next step is to freely mix and match the words, regardless of their original row or column. The elements can be combined in any way that feels useful. For a more hands-on approach, each cell can be cut out and rearranged physically, or the spreadsheet could be substituted by small notes, such as colored Post-its (ivi, p. 66).

Despite the 6-3-5 method being originally a group activity, Sattler-Hovdar (ivi, p. 65) adapts it for individual work, using the same process but without passing the sheet to anyone else. In fact, transcreators usually work on their own rather than in teams:

Transcreation professionals are usually hired to perform work alone and are prevented from sharing details of the project with anyone else by non-disclosure agreements. Therefore, although brainstorming as such is a group creativity technique, here the word is used for the basic practice of producing as many creative options as possible on one's own, writing them down and suspending critical judgement. (Benetello, 2024, p. 182)

Regardless of whether it is collective or individual, brainstorming can ultimately be defined as a creative thinking process that enables open-minded exploration of multiple creative paths without critical filtering. This process requires time, making the phase of brainstorming is also probably one of the lengthiest of the transcreation workflow. Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 35) underlines that, regardless of the transcreator's level of expertise, transcreation requires significantly more time than most translation jobs. People unaccustomed to creative work may tire of exploring numerous possibilities and give up prematurely:

As a creative person, you will discover your brain has a built-in tendency to want to reach closure, even rush to it. [...] But in order to get to our great idea, which is usually about the 500th one to come along, you'll need to resist the temptation to give into the anxiety and sign off on the first passable idea that shows up (Sullivan & Boches, 2016, p. 59).

To achieve better results, the transcreator should consequently avoid rushing this stage, as the best ideas are almost never the first ones that come to mind:

The ideas that come to you most readily are likely to be clichés or, if not, will have been used already in similar situations. You usually have to work past your first and second rounds of ideas, even though they are good or great, and push yourself into your third or fourth round of ideas before you are in truly original territory (Lingwood & Shaw, 2022, p. 33).

As general guidelines to ensure satisfying end results, Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 52-53) recommends avoiding buzzwords (i.e. words that are used so widely in the most diverse fields that partially lost strength and precision in meaning), clichés, and potentially offensive terms: "being specific" is the "transcreator's recipe for success." To achieve this, one should bear in mind that every word, sentence or paragraph must "add value to the whole" and "contribute to the overall message." This also means that, on one hand, the transcreated copy should be concise, considering that the average attention span is significantly limited, and on the other, it should be easy to read, idiomatic and cohesive: the text should flow naturally in the target language and have a good rhythm (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, pp. 54-55).

According to Dubas Moorhouse and Dubois (2020), practical advice for an efficient brainstorming session for advertising transcreation includes focusing on:

- Equivalences: soccer for Italy corresponds to American football or baseball in the United States.

- References to everyday life, popular culture, and daily news: common sayings, as well as titles of famous books, songs or TV series titles, can be slightly modified to create puns, while recent memes or social-media trends can be leveraged to meet the client's goals.
- Deviation strategies: purposely go off-track from the original idea to uncover new perspectives that suit the local taste and culture.
- Humor, while avoiding local taboos.
- Foreign languages, but only in suitable language combinations and always with the target audience in mind. Sometimes keeping some taglines, terms or expression in the source language might be the best strategy.
- Recreation of musicality and rhetorical devices.

Both rhetoric and musicality are fundamental to ensure that the copy is persuasive. In the context of marketing and its transcreation, rhetorical devices – such as metaphor and repetition – are strategically used to generate and calibrate persuasion. According to Ho (2024), these devices are essential because they facilitate what Ho names *skopos* shifts. *Skopos* shifts are changes made during any text adaptation to "maximize the appeal to and the impact on the target audience" (ivi, p. 21) so that the target text achieves the same persuasive purpose as the original. Repetition of words or concepts, as well as hyperboles, act as intensifiers, while also increasing memorability (ivi, p. 168).

According to Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 67), Some rhetorical techniques common in advertising are:

- Alliteration, or repetition of the same initial sound as in "PayPal" and " Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline."

- Anaphora, or repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses as in "Have a break. Have a KitKat," "Think different. Think Apple," and Tesco's "Every little helps. Every penny counts."
- Epistrophe, or the repetition of the last word as in Burger King's "Have it your way. Make it your way."
- Triad, or grouping ideas, words, or phrases in threes as in Energizer's "It keeps going and going and going." It can be mixed with epistrophe as in eBay's "Buy it. Sell it. Love it." or with onomatopoeia as in Rice Krispies' "Snap. Crackle. Pop."
- Analogy, or comparison to a familiar idea or situation, as in "Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there" and "Red Bull gives you wings."
- Antithesis, or juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in a balanced structure as in "Impossible is nothing" and "Seriously fun."
- Paronomasia, or pun as in Heinz's "We're kind of a big dill", Dunkin's "You'll go nuts for our donuts", Pirelli's "Time to Re-Tire" and Subway's "Lettuce celebrate."
- Rhyme as in Bounty paper towels' "The quicker picker upper" and Pringles' "Once you pop, you can't stop."
- Anastrophe, or the usage of a word in a new grammatical form as in Aperol Spritz's "Together we joy" (noun to verb); Nutella's "Spread the happy" (adjective to noun); and Hotel Chocolat's "Gift the Wow" (double anastrophe: noun to verb and interjection to noun).
- Metaplasm, or the modification of a word's pronunciation or spelling, usually to achieve or intensify other rhetorical devices (e.g. paronomasia, alliteration,

rhyme) as in the name of the restaurant chain "Lord of the Wings" explicitly referring to the very famous movie *The Lord of the Rings*.

- Rhetorical or informal questions as in California Milk Processor Board's "Got milk?".
- Apostrophe, or addressing the audience directly using second-person forms as in L'Oréal's "Because you're worth it" and in Snickers' "You're not you when you're hungry."

American writing teacher, editor, and author Gary Provost argues that writers should not "just write words," but must "write music." While alliteration and rhyme demonstrate how musicality can be achieved through sound patterns within and across words respectively, Provost contends that this principle extends to a more structural level. He suggests that musicality can be woven throughout an entire text by varying sentence structure and length (i.e. "short, medium, and long"). This approach, as Provost's own writing demonstrates, can dramatically enhance a text's impact and its ability to capture and maintain reader attention:

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety. Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes, when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important (Provost, 1985).

The marketing transcreator must be aware of how persuasive impact is created by means of different rhetorical devices. Whether through sound, rhythm, structure, and wordplay, the use of rhetoric helps make brand messages more memorable,

emotionally resonant, and culturally relevant. The transcreator's challenge lies in recognizing these devices in the source text and then recreating their persuasive effect in the target language; not by copying exactly the same technique, but by selecting equivalent rhetorical strategies that achieve the same *skopos* shift for the new audience.

Apart from fostering creativity and free thinking, brainstorming is also important because clients often request multiple options, either for the whole copy or for individual parts. According to Benetello (2024, pp. 182-183), the parties typically agree during the briefing on how many transcreation solutions should be delivered. The number varies depending on the client and the type of copy, and different sections may require different quantities. As an example, Benetello (*ibid.*) reports being asked to provide: two different options for a TVC script and for a body copy; three options for a headline; and five options for a tagline, which seems to suggest that the number of options is proportional to the source material's complexity, persuasive force, and conciseness.

Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 74-75), while noting that five or up to ten different options are also demanded sometimes, identifies the request of three options as the standard for taglines and payoffs, where usually one is close to the original, another is inspired by the original but with a slightly different twist, and another one is a whole new concept. For the body copy, instead, she usually provides just one version, often accompanied by notes specifying the major challenges encountered and the solutions she managed to find for them.

After an extensive brainstorming session, the transcreator is faced with many different ideas, so they must reorganize them and select the most suitable options.

4.5. Selection

The selection phase is also called "word selection" (TAUS, 2019, p. 10) or "sorting, selecting, eliminating, expanding process" (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, p. 50). As the name suggests, it consists in choosing the options that one considered most valid and brief-centered. In particular, it is crucial to identify the options that are most aligned with the communicative goals because the unbound thinking that characterizes brainstorming tends to lead to solutions that are off track, adopt an inappropriate tone of voice, or shift the target copy's intended meaning too far from the source (Benetello, 2024, pp. 183-184). While the adaptation should be framed in a way that allows the target audience to relate to it, the use of buzzwords and empty phrases should be avoided, as they may sound appealing but ultimately fail to convey a clear or meaningful message (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, p. 51). Other times, at this stage the transcreator realizes that some of their solutions are simply too wordy, lack musicality, or are too ambiguous and might be misinterpreted.

After brainstorming and before starting the selection, it is beneficial to let time pass: Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 56) recommends leaving the text at least overnight, although two days would be optimal, while Benetello (2024, p. 183) recommends at least a day. However, since some clients may have urgent needs, this is not always possible, and the transcreator must be able to adapt to each situation. Ideally, allowing one or even two days before reviewing the options helps the transcreator look at their own work with greater objectivity and a more critical eye. In practice, however, the selection phase may sometimes need to take place just a few hours after brainstorming (*ivi*, p. 184). Regardless of the time available, it is advisable to spend some time engaging in different activities before starting to evaluate one's own work.

While the selection phase generally involves excluding a number of options for their inadequacy, it may also happen that, instead of completely discarding some of them, the transcreator finds a way to refine and make them suitable for the final proposal. In some cases, new valid alternatives may even emerge during this stage, if the opportunity arises (*ibid.*).

The transcreator can usually select the final proposals at their own discretion. However, clients may sometimes have specific requirements. Transcreation agencies, for instance, may request three options ranging from the most literal to the most creative. Other clients explicitly ask the transcreator to diversify the proposals, with each option aiming to reproduce different persuasive techniques found in the source copy or to highlight a different aspect of the advertised product or service (Benetello, 2024, pp. 183-184).

Before submitting the work to the client, the options are usually arranged and presented in a clear, organized manner, accompanied by a rationale and, in some cases, a backtranslation into the source language and any relevant further comments from the transcreator (Torresi, *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts*, 2021, p. 172; TAUS, 2019). The concepts of backtranslation and rationale will be explained in the following sections.

4.6. Backtranslation

Backtranslation, as the term suggests, is a close rendition of the translation back into the source language—or another language the client can understand—so that they can grasp the transcreator's approach. This translation is not necessarily word-for-word, but it is important that it does not deviate excessively from the original transcreation proposal. Accordingly, it should follow a foreignizing approach rather

than a domesticating one (Venuti, 1995; 1998): it needs to truthfully transfer the peculiarity of a specific proposal rather than be idiomatic or stylistically polished in the target language. If it moves too far toward the target language and culture, the backtranslation risks becoming too close to the source copy, rendering it ineffective.

A backtranslation, supported by the rationale, allows the client to understand the logic behind the transcreator's choices. Consequently, all stakeholders should regard it as a tool with the only aim of helping the client navigate a language and culture they do not understand or know. If the client is unaware of this purpose, the transcreator should explain it, emphasizing that the client's perception of the backtranslation does not necessarily reflect how the target audience will perceive the transcreated copy (Sattler-Hovdar, 2019, p. 76). For example, there is a difference between altering the syntax simply to follow the grammatical rules and conventions of the target language and deliberately breaking those rules to catch the reader's attention and enhance the copy's persuasive effect. In the latter case, the backtranslation should reproduce the unusual syntax in the client's language, accompanied by a clear comment explaining and justifying the transcreator's deliberate choice.

As Benetello (2024, p. 184) explains, backtranslation is not always automatically required, but it becomes a useful tool in most situations. It is standard practice when working with large corporations and global brands, which usually have two levels of approval: the first being the headquarters of the multinational company, and the second its local branch, which may operate in a single country or across larger regions sharing similar languages, cultures, or target customer type. The headquarters, at the first level of approval, is primarily concerned with avoiding reputational damage and ensuring a basic consistency with the original message, brand core values, and global image. The second level involves native speakers who are able to fully grasp subtle

meanings and the slightest nuances in the text, examine the language in depth, and assess the copy's potential effects on the target audience (*ivi*, p. 185-186).

Pedersen (2016, p. 160) emphasizes that when different corporate branches are involved in advertising campaigns, mediation and negotiation become essential. The transcreation manager must often ensure that local decision-makers understand the overarching campaign concept developed at the corporate level. This is because corporate headquarters typically seek brand global consistency, while local branches prefer maximum customization to ensure cultural relevance for the specific market. The transcreation manager's role is therefore to prevent local branches from proposing solutions that excessively distort the global message and that would likely be rejected by corporate anyway, resulting in a loss of time. Success requires finding a balance between maintaining a unified global message and adapting it appropriately to each market's preferences and customs.

4.7. Comments and Rationale

Even if comments are usually well accepted in conventional translations, they become fundamental in transcreation, since advertising copy is often dense and highly persuasive, and makes heavy use of rhetorical devices. Providing a solid rationale is not only professional—because it shows that the transcreator knows what they are doing—but also necessary for the client to reconstruct the logical path that led the transcreator to a specific proposal, allowing them to make an informed final decision on which option to adopt. Sattler-Hovdar (2019, p. 77) emphasizes the importance of providing rationales, not only to help clients understand the reasoning behind specific choices, but also to demonstrate them the time and effort invested in the transcreation

process. Furthermore, writing the rationales may be an occasion to critically assess the strength of each decision and its alignment with the brief.

Regarding the rationale, Benetello recommends explaining: why the translation moved away from the source text (a literal version would often sound awkward or ambiguous); which idioms, puns, rhetorical devices, or cultural references were used in the transcreation solution (especially when they differ from the source and lack direct equivalents in the target language and culture); how the target readership is likely to perceive the text; and how the final effect is the same as (or equivalent to) the original; all of which could be summarized in three essential steps: problem, solution, and effect.

Providing a backtranslation with comments and rationale is undoubtedly standard practice when working with large companies. However, it is also useful for smaller companies, which may export their products or services abroad without relying on local staff (Benetello 2024, p. 186), at least in the first initial phase. Even without local offices, they must ensure that their brand voice and message remain truthful and consistent with their identity and values.

For clarity, the transcreation, backtranslation, and rationale are usually organized in a three-column table, where each column corresponds to: (1) transcreation proposal, (2) backtranslation, (3) rationale and comments. For practicality (especially during the revision process), an additional column on the far left with numerical sequencing may be added to facilitate the identification of each segment. If a transcreation agency is involved, it may provide the transcreator with a pre-formatted table template; otherwise the transcreator is free to create their own and segmentate the copy at their own discretion.

Although backtranslation, comments, and rationale are especially valuable for dense, highly persuasive copy (e.g., taglines, payoffs, and shorter punchy copy), sometimes they are also be requested for longer copy, such a brochure (Benetello, 2024, p. 186), and may be delivered as comments in common word-processing tools (e.g., Microsoft Word, Libre Office, Google Documents).

4.8. Feedback, Amends and Sign-Off

This is usually the final step of the transcreation workflow, and it relies heavily on all the previous stages: "thanks to backtranslation and rationale, the client can better understand" each choice (Benetello, 2024, p. 185). If the client, according to their preference and expectations, considers the target copy to have excessively strayed from its source, they should let the transcreation know and provide adequate feedback until they are fully satisfied with the end product.

Benetello (2018) and Morón (2022) view marketing and advertising transcreation as a highly collaborative practice requiring intervention as well as negotiation. Intervention may be understood as any degree of modification introduced to ensure that the final text meets all of the client's needs and expectations. Negotiation, on the other hand, involves the transcreator's ability to inform the client about the implications and potential effects of alternative choices and, in some cases, to dissuade the client from decisions that could harm the brand's image or even lead to economic losses.

Even though intervention and negotiation are discussed in more detail in **Error! Reference source not found.** *Error! Reference source not found.*, high level of interaction and collaboration between the transcreator and the client is imperative throughout the transcreation workflow, especially at this final stage, where the copy

must be amended quickly and seamlessly. The transcreator must be ready to modify their work in accordance to the client's feedback and to provide additional alternatives when requested or when the client appears unsatisfied with the previous ones (Benetello, 2018).

Companies requesting transcreation services should be aware that providing feedback is essential to ensure a high-quality final product. If a client is unfamiliar with transcreation (for example, if this is their first time using the service), the transcreator should make this expectation explicit. When a transcreator receives feedback directly from the client, it is important to remember that they are not dealing with a professional editor; so the feedback hardly ever focuses on vocabulary, register, or tone and is, in any case, highly subjective.

Amendments are usually made in two rounds, although this depends on the case. Interactions between transcreator and client are frequent and can occur "before, during, or after" the transcreation is carried out, to align the client's expectations with the transcreator's methods (Benetello, 2018, p. 42; 2024, p. 187). However, transcreators sometimes receive no feedback and learn of the final version only after publication, when the client has modified or approved the copy without notifying them.

If an agency is involved in the process, the transcreation manager typically assigns editing to a second reviewer or editor (Pedersen, 2016); in that case the editor is ultimately responsible for the edited transcreation (Benetello, 2024, p. 188). Alternatively, the manager may return the copy to the transcreator to accept or reject each proposal. After these steps, the transcreation manager may also add their own feedback and proposals, especially if they are proficient in the target language (*ibid.*).

4.8.1. Quality Assurance

The step involving feedback and amendments is inevitably linked to quality assurance. Even though quality assurance itself, generally, is not considered as a part of workflow and it is not "a distinctive feature of transcreation" (Pedersen, 2016, p. 228), quality in advertising transcreation is of utmost importance, since companies invest a significant amount of money and substantial resources in marketing and advertising. This creates the need for quality control and raises a legitimate question: how can quality in advertising transcreation be measured?

Traditionally, translation studies have assessed quality on the basis of "hard," highly standardized, and easily quantifiable errors. The most recent and comprehensive model for quality evaluation is the Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM), developed from 2012 as part of QTLaunchPad, a research initiative funded by the European Commission. The model's categories include: accuracy (omissions, additions, mistranslations); terminology; fluency (punctuation, spelling, grammar); and style (register, naturalness) (Lommel et al., 2014).

However, when applied to transcreation, quality standards become less stable. Although these categories are suitable for most text types and can be implemented in many workflows, in advertising, grammatical errors and misspellings are sometimes deliberately used to convey a message or attract attention (TAUS, 2019, p. 11). Moreover, the less rigid relationship between source and target copy in transcreation complicates standardization.

Carreira (2021) notes that the few scholars who addressed the issue have done so mainly from the perspective of translators' training. Huertas Barros and Vine (2019), for example, thoroughly examined assessment but from the point of view of a trainer assessing students' transcreation tasks rather than from a professional, industry

perspective. Other scholars adopt a field-based, broader approach. Heinemann and Türker (2009, p. 216) discuss the application of quality control to creative texts, going beyond basic linguistic-accuracy checks. They note that clients without linguistic expertise often struggle to assess quality directly, so they tend to rely on broader criteria: the translator's qualifications and expertise (person-based criteria); systematic project and process management (process-oriented criteria); and the formal correctness and integrity of the translation itself (product-oriented criteria). Fundamentally, this type of evaluation considers both the translation process and the translator's competences.

Person-based criteria are exemplified by Morón and Calvo (2018) who—within the transcreation training project *TeCreaTe*—attempted to define the abilities that a good transcreator should possess (e.g., meeting the client brief and creatively adapting the output to the target audience). By listing the ideal transcreator's skills, the authors implicitly delineate the characteristics of high-quality transcreation, without proposing formal metrics to assess quality.

Process-focused criteria emphasize the workflow: the more attention paid to each distinct phase of transcreation, the better the final result. According to Pedersen (2016), Localize (Patrick, 2019), and RWS (Densmer, 2020), careful attention to the specific workflow of transcreation is essential to ensure optimal outcomes. Pedersen (2016, p. 228) notes that the workflow of transcreation, with all its unique characteristics, is indeed "born out of the perceptions of quality."

First, the initial briefing with the client is repeatedly highlighted as fundamental, as it clearly defines the objectives of the content to be transcreated (Densmer, 2020), and provides "additional context on the exact purpose" of the material, ensuring that the intended message is conveyed in the target language (Patrick, 2019).

Second, conducting a cultural analysis before starting the transcreation, unlike in conventional translations, demonstrates that quality standards in transcreation are high (Pedersen, 2016, p. 228). According to Densmer (2020), another factor influencing quality in transcreation is the relevance and variety of resources provided by the client, including brand style guides, glossaries, previous transcreation, and creative briefs.

Third, as part of the workflow, feedback, backtranslations, rationale and, more in general, the collaboration between all the figures involved in the process undoubtedly play a role in quality (*ibid.*). In this regard, Pedersen (2016, p. 228) notes that close collaboration between transcreation managers and transcreators helps avoid misunderstandings and ensures that the intended meaning is preserved, thereby potentially improving the final outcome. Transcreation managers oversee projects from start to finish, encouraging writers to push their creative limits and motivating them to generate as many ideas as possible (particularly in case the transcreation options provided are too similar) or reconsider the viability of linguistic or rhetorical strategies that remain close to the ones used in the source copy. In cases of doubt, transcreation managers may also consult one another, especially if they are native speakers of the project's target language, as a colleague may suggest effective alternatives (Pedersen, Managing transcreation projects: An ethnographic study, 2019, pp. 51-52).

Collaboration also involves the client, who plays a decisive role in the transcreation process by providing input and feedback. However, clients are not always aware of the consequences of specific changes, so proposed amendments should be evaluated according to specific quality criteria by asking questions such as: "does it change the intended meaning?", "does it omit anything important?", "does it change the tone, style

or register which tie in with the target audience?," "does it improve the copy or weaken it?," "does it make it too long?," or "does it create inconsistencies with other parts of the campaign?" (Pedersen, *Managing transcreation projects: An ethnographic study*, 2019, pp. 53-54).

Finally, product-based criteria are probably the closest to the approach of quality assessment for conventional translations, which traditionally relies on objective, quantifiable data, such as grammatical correctness and terminology. However, as noted earlier, these aspects are not always suitable for transcreation. For this reason, I argue that product-based criteria quality assessment in transcreation should be oriented toward a response-oriented (or functionalist) approach, focusing on the target audience's behavior and the extent to which the text achieves the communicative goal for which it was created.

In this regard Patrick (2019) argues that quality should be measured based on the effect the content has on the target audience, highlighting "engagement," "impact," and "emotional connection" as key factors. Although audience impact may initially seem difficult to quantify, in environments such as social media these aspects can be measured using key performance indicators (KPIs), either in controlled settings (e.g., surveys or tests) or once the content is publicly available. Densmer (*ibid.*) aligns with TAUS (2019, p. 11) in emphasizing the importance of KPIs and their comparison across different markets—always considering that minor differences are natural—and specifies that KPIs should vary according to the type of content and marketing channels while always adhering to SMART criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely).

With regard to social media advertising, Kočíšová and Štarchoň (2023, p. 41) grouped metrics for social media into different categories, including "awareness,"

"engagement," and "conversion." Awareness metrics capture the brand's visibility to potential customers, engagement metrics reflect the level of active interaction and involvement, while conversion metrics measure the extent to which these interactions lead to concrete actions, such as purchases or other target behaviors. Examples of KPIs include indirect economical gains, sales/subscriptions, search engine rankings, website visits, or even social media data (e.g., number of likes/reactions, shares/reposts, saves/bookmarks, impressions/views, watch time, taps forward/back, click-through rate, conversion rates, etc.).

However, measuring the quality of a transcreation solely by its economic return or by audience engagement after it has been consumed is not particularly useful, as the future performance of a text is difficult to predict. The same promotional text can indeed produce different results depending on numerous environmental factors that do not necessarily reflect the quality of the transcreation itself.

While TAUS (2019, p. 11) argues that KPIs can reveal a transcreation's "success" *ex post*—i.e., after the content is public—Densmer (2020) adopts a more pragmatic stance, viewing KPIs as tools to prevent or help correct common issues (e.g., missing cultural nuances, off-brand adaptation or content that lacks relevance for the local markets) before publication. In this sense, Densmer (*ibid.*) identifies surveys and testing as fundamental tools. Market surveys, conducted with focus groups drawn from the local population, can provide invaluable feedback that transcreation teams may use to improve the copy. Even more effective for detecting specific issues is blind A/B testing: a separate second transcreation, "the B version," is produced independently by another member of the creative team, and a panel of content specialists "review[s] the data to objectively measure the effectiveness" of each version. Only the better-performing version is ultimately used in the campaign. Alternatively, samples of the

transcreated copy may be reviewed by either "a content specialist unaffiliated with the team and/or a third-party editor" (*ibid.*).

Despite its rigorous and objective nature, quantitative data is not always directly linked to the quality of a transcreation. As a result, quality assessment often requires shifting from an *ex-ante* to an *ex-post* perspective. *Ex-ante* evaluation uses experimental methods (e.g., focus groups, blind A/B tests) with a sample audience, while *ex-post* assessment measures real-world performance after publication. *Ex-ante* results can be relatively unreliable depending on sample size and representativeness; *ex-post* data are generally more robust but pose greater risks: assessing quality only after public release may expose the brand to reputational damage and makes campaign modifications more difficult and more expensive.

To address the drawbacks of testing and surveys, Carreira (2021) proposed a simpler, faster, and cheaper alternative: a checklist for transcreation quality evaluation. Carreira's model resembles conventional translation checklists in format but differs in content. Based on his study's findings and interviews with professionals, the model systematizes the recommendations of Pedersen (2016), Patrick (2019), and Densmer (2020), while also incorporating formal criteria typical of conventional translation, such as style and grammar. The checklist includes the following elements:

- The brief has been followed;
- The correct tone of voice has been used;
- Product/service values are reflected in the transcreation;
- Other guidelines have been observed (e.g., character limits);
- A proper backtranslation and rationale have been provided;
- No linguistic issues have been found (e.g., spelling, grammar, etc.) (Carreira, 2021, p. 189)

Although relatively basic, with few categories and binary (yes/no) response options, the checklist can be considered a solid starting point for transcreation-specific quality-evaluation systems and a foundation for future research. Its minimalism is also a strength: the model can be easily adapted to different text types, projects, and communicative goals, and can be integrated with other existing models, such as LISA and MMQ.

4.9. Voice Casting and Voice-Over Direction

Voice casting and voice-over direction apply exclusively to radio and video commercials. If carried out by the same transcreator who adapted the copy, they constitute the final phase of the transcreation workflow. If instead they are carried out by a different transcreator than the one adapting the copy, it can be offered and considered as a standalone service (Benetello, 2024, pp. 188-190).

In all cases, the professional responsible for voice-over adaptation must have voice-over expertise, as they will supervise voice casting and direct the recording session. The transcreator may be provided with a list of voice talents among whom they will choose the one they consider the most suitable for the project, and they are typically asked to select one or two alternative talents in case the first choice becomes unavailable (*ibid.*).

The transcreation directs the recording session—sometimes remotely—and is ultimately responsible for the final outcome if the client is not present. During the recording session:

The transcreator briefs the VO talent on the intonation to be used. If a transcreated VO line turns out to be too long to tie in nicely with the film, the transcreation professional must be ready to adjust it on the spot. Voice talents usually provide multiple renditions of the same line, so that the client can pick their favourite (Benetello, 2021, p. 114).

Since the transcreated copy "could be acted out in different ways and still meet the brief" (Benetello, 2022), it is advisable to record multiple valid options during the session (2024, p. 189). This allows both the client and the transcreator to select the final option based on their preferences and the communicative effect they wish to achieve.

Before moving on to the practical component of this study, transcreation has been defined as a hybrid practice situated at the intersection of translation and copywriting. Its theoretical foundations have been explored by tracing its roots in major translation theories, and its professional workflow has been examined in detail. Building on this framework, the following section presents the practical component of this thesis: a simulated professional transcreation project in the field of marketing.

SIMULATED TRANSCREATION PROJECT

5.The Company

5.1. History and Brands

Mars, Incorporated was founded in 1911 by Frank C. Mars in Tacoma, Washington. Frank was still a young man, who had learnt from his mother, Elva, how to hand-dip chocolate. He decided to home-make and sell butter cream candy (Mars, n.d.). Drawing on family recipes, Frank Mars focused on creating affordable sweets that could appeal to a broad consumer base. After a slow beginning, the company began to grow faster especially after the successful launch of the Milky Way bar in 1923, followed by brands such as Snickers in 1930, M&M's in 1945, and Mars in 1932.

In 1939 Mars sponsored a local radio quiz show, Dr. IQ and launched a candy bar with the same name. At the time, this represented a significant innovation in advertising on two levels. First, advertising, until then, was traditionally focused on print advertisements, billboards, and conventional radio spots. Second, manufacturing a bar named after the quiz show and distributing Mars product as prizes to the quiz contestants represented an early example of tying product to advertising and an early form of integrated marketing communication (Mars, n.d.).

Throughout the twentieth century, the company entered new business sectors, including pet care (i.e. Pedigree, Royal Canin, Cesar, Whiskas, Sheba, Temptations), food products (i.e. Maltesers, Skittles, Snickers, Twix, Bounty, KIND, MilkyWay, 3musketeers, TrüFrü, Tasty Bite, Dolmio, Miràcoli, MasterFoods), and chewing gum (i.e. 5gum, Orbit Gum, Extra Gum, Hubba Bubba). In 2008 Mars acquired Wrigley, leading to the creation of Mars Wrigley.

Today, the company is owned by the grandchildren of Frank Mars and employs 140,0000 people with a presence in more than 80 countries, products sold in over 180

markets worldwide (Forbes, 2026), and more than \$47 billion in annual sales in 2022 (Mars, n.d.).

Mars's international success can be attributed to its ability to adapt its products and marketing strategies to different cultural contexts while maintaining a consistent identity for each brand. This balance between global reach and local responsiveness has allowed the company to establish strong relationships with consumers in diverse markets. As a result, Mars remains one of the largest privately held companies in the world and a leading player in the global food and confectionery industry.



image: <https://careers.mars.com/uk/en>

5.2. Company identity, values, Mission and vision

Mars is described as a family-owned, principle-based, and future-focused company (SOURCE). Family-owned means that Mars is privately owned by the Mars family. The company is publicly listed on any stock market, so it does not have to answer to public shareholders every quarter. This allows the company to make acquisitions with a longer time horizon, take strategic decisions more quickly, and invest in projects that may take years to pay off. For example, Mars has invested heavily in pet care, veterinary services, and sustainability initiatives that may not generate immediate returns but support long-term growth.

In order to create a common framework for decision-making and a relatively consistent corporate culture worldwide, in 1983, Mars published its first booklet on "The Five Principles," which is distributed globally across the corporation. The Five Principles are:



Quality	Quality begins with delivering our best to the people and pets we serve. It continues through all that we do.
Responsibility	We take responsibility without being asked. We support the responsibilities of others.
Mutuality	A mutual benefit is a shared benefit. Shared benefits will endure.
Efficiency	Our resources are quite precious. Being efficient helps us accomplish more and waste less.
Freedom	Freedom lets us shape our future. Performance allows us to remain free. (Mars, n.d.)

While the Five Principles remained the same since the company was born, their descriptions were updated three times—the last in 2023—to reflect a more inclusive society and to ensure the company and its principles remain relevant to younger generations. As a matter of fact, Mars has always had a forward-looking mentality,

confirmed by the numerous statements and taglines that the company shared through its different channels: "the world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today", "build a better tomorrow, today", "At Mars we strive to future today." (Mars, n.d.)

In this forward-looking context, sustainability is a key issue for companies. As a result, in 2023 Mars launched an action plan, Net Zero Roadmap, to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions across the whole chain by 2050, with an initial target of cutting emissions by 50% by 2030 (Mars, n.d.).

From the late 2010s onward, Mars, Incorporated undertook a series of structured commitments to integrate social equity into its corporate and marketing identity. In 2019 the company partnered with the Geena Davis Institute to audit the representation of diverse groups across its brand communications, and the following year it launched the Full Potential platform, an initiative designed to advance gender equity not only within the workplace but also in market-facing communications and throughout its supply chain (Mars, n.d.). Internally, Mars acknowledged that while 42% of the talent pipeline was already composed of women, systemic barriers remained, and the Full Potential program was framed as a means of fostering an inclusive culture in which female employees could advance to leadership positions (Mars, n.d.).

These principles were subsequently translated into high-visibility advertising campaigns. A notable example was the "Support Her" campaign, developed by the agency AMV BBDO, which commissioned the United Kingdom's first statue dedicated to a female soccer player, Lily Parr, in conjunction with Mars's sponsorship of the England national team during the FIFA Women's World Cup (campaign, 2019). In the United States, a parallel initiative was carried out by the Hershey Company: for Women's History Month 2022, it released limited-edition packaging for the Hershey's

bar in which the letters forming the word "SHE" were visually emphasized within the brand's logo. The campaign was accompanied by an online platform showcasing the work of eight women artists, and a partnership with Girls on the Run, a non-profit supporting girls' confidence and personal development through mentoring and sport (Smith, 2022).

Beyond gender, Mars also demonstrated the willingness to feature disability in its advertising. Around the time of the Paralympic Games, the British television network Channel 4 broadcast three short advertisements for Maltesers, each centering on a character with a disability. The spots used the product as a comic device to reframe personal experiences with light humor, with the first advertisement in particular deploying the chocolates in a playful sexual metaphor (il Post, 2016). Taken together, these campaigns illustrate a broader strategic shift by Mars toward inclusive storytelling across multiple dimensions of identity.

5.3. Mars' Marketing Code and other regulations

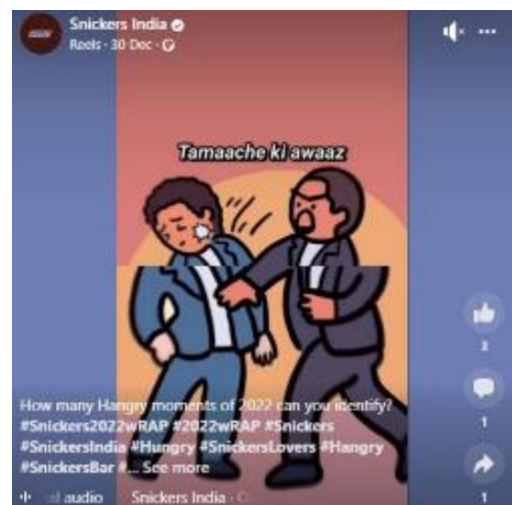
Mars follows the International Chamber of Commerce's Advertising and Marketing Communications Code, and has further strengthened this commitment through its own internal standards. In 2008, the company established the Mars Marketing Code, in line the Mars Purpose and The Five Principles. In doing so, Mars became the first food company to voluntarily stop advertising food and snack products to children under 12 years of age.

The Code applies globally across all business segments and governs the production, content, and placement of every form of marketing communication created or licensed by Mars, Incorporated, across all channels and without exception (Mars, 2019).

As for product placement, the Code prohibits advertising primarily targeting children under the age of 13 and sets a 25% audience threshold to limit incidental exposure among younger viewers. Physical placement restrictions further reinforce this stance: vending machines and event sponsorships are excluded from primary school environments, and the collection of personal data from children under 16 is explicitly forbidden.

On the content side, the Code mandates that all advertising encourage healthy lifestyles and refrain from endorsing excessive consumption. Celebrities and licensed characters with primary appeal to children are barred from promotional use, as are child-oriented mechanics such as advergames, giveaways, and purchasing incentives. Brand characters—including the M&M's Spokescandies—are subject to strict governance rules requiring that their communications be directed primarily at adult audiences. All advertising must moreover align with Mars's Five Principles and the company's internal advertising guidelines, ensuring that creative output reflects the broader ethical standards the corporation sets for itself (Mars, 2023, p. 4).

Despite the framework set by the Mars Global Marketing Code, documented cases of non-compliance have emerged across different markets, revealing the operational challenges of enforcing global standards at a local level. In December 2022, the Snickers brand in India published a Facebook Reel depicting one individual slapping another, accompanied by the caption "Slap sound – woke up the one who slept." The post was found to be in breach of the content commitments in the Mars Global Marketing Code for Human Food, as it risked normalizing violent and antisocial



behavior without any contextual framing to offset that reading. In response, the local marketing team underwent retraining on the company's guidelines to prevent similar content from being produced in the future (Mars, 2023, p. 11).

Earlier the same year, a separate violation was identified in South Korea where the Maltesers Instagram account shared an image of a man holding two full packs of the product. The absence of any indication that the two packages were intended for sharing made the post non-compliant with Mars's responsible consumption guidelines, as it could reasonably be interpreted as endorsing excessive intake (*ibid.*).



Apart from its own Marketing Code, Mars communications are also subject to the broader regulatory environment in which it operates. In Italy, there is no legislation specifically targeting food advertising; instead, the sector falls under general advertising law and, most significantly, under the *Codice di Autodisciplina della Comunicazione Commerciale*, the self-regulatory code governing commercial communications established in 1963 by the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria (IAP, 2020), whose goal is to ensure that all marketing communications are honest, truthful, and appropriate. The enforcement of this Code is entrusted to a panel of experts in law, consumer affairs, and communication, which reviews submitted cases and issues judgements in accordance with the Code (Rusconi, 2014, p. 189).

The Italian self-regulatory framework addresses the broader ethical dimensions of food advertising. Highlighting a product characteristic is unlawful even when accurate, if that characteristic is common to all products of the same category by law or

composition, since doing so creates a misleading impression of competitive distinction (Rusconi, 2014, p. 197).

The Code also prohibits content that evokes sexual intercourse or degrades human dignity, including advertisements that commodify the human body by transferring the properties of a food product onto it (Rusconi, 2014, p. 198).

Terminology is also particularly attention in Italian and European food advertising regulation. The word "extra" conveys the idea of superiority or exceptional quality, and is permitted only for specific product categories such as peeled tomatoes, tomato concentrate, jam, fruit jelly, and chocolate (Rusconi, 2014, p. 202). The term "puro" ("pure") is generally understood to mean "exclusively" and, in the context of chocolate, certifies that no vegetable fats other than cocoa butter were used in production (Rusconi, 2014, pp. 202-203). Finally, "naturale" ("natural") may only appear in labelling when a product genuinely meets EU-defined conditions for that designation, or within established specific denominations, such as "natural mineral water" or "natural aromas" (Rusconi, 2014, p. 204).

To ensure compliance, the Italian regulatory framework provides for financial sanctions in cases of violation, with fines ranging from 1,600 to 18,000 euros. This figures demonstrate that a working knowledge of the applicable regulatory framework is an essential professional competence for transcreators and anyone involved in adapting food marketing communications for a specific market (Rusconi, 2014, p. 208).

5.4. M&M's history, brand identity and communication style

M&M's were patented in 1941 by Forrest Mars Sr., who was inspired by soldiers during the Spanish Civil War carrying chocolate candies encased in a hard sugar shell, which prevented the chocolate from melting in the heat. The brand, which is now 80 years old, has continuously brought people together through new ways to enjoy its products, its Spokescandies, and new flavors (i.e. dark chocolate, fudge brownie, crunchy cookie), remaining proud of its identity as a family business.

M&M'S describes itself as being on a mission to champion the power of fun as a way for people to share their true selves and connect with others. This is reinforced through the M&M'S FUNd, which has provided resources, mentorship, opportunities and financial support to organizations and individuals within the arts and entertainment space (Mars, n.d.).

In June 2025, M&M'S unveiled its new global creative platform, "It's More Fun Together," reaffirming its mission to bring people together through the power of fun and doubling down on delivering joy through its iconic chocolate candies, the humor of its spontaneous Spokescandies, and the creation of shared moments that connect people. Notably, the ampersand, which is a distinctive sign within the M&M'S logo, is placed at the center of the platform, symbolizing the many ways the brand brings people together. With "It's More Fun Together," M&M's is taking a cross-generational, broad approach to better cater to Gen Z. The concept for the platform is rooted in survey data showing that M&M's is the favorite candy of the majority of Gen Z, millennials and boomers in the United States (Mars, 2026).

"It's More Fun Together" also became the M&M's official tagline, which was localized as "Insieme è più divertente" in the Italian market. The new creative platform

is designed to be relatable and fun, showcasing real-life examples of how M&M'S can bring spontaneous joy to ordinary situations, with the Spokescandies used as vehicles for fresh storytelling. One spot follows a millennial couple waiting anxiously outside the bathroom for their toddler's milestone moment, only for the Red Spokescandy to emerge instead and request a reward; another depicts a father watching a horror film with his children before letting out a startled scream, as the Blue Spokescandy deadpans that the real scares have yet to begin. Across all advertisements, the cast reflects a deliberately diverse range of ages and backgrounds, and each spot closes on the M&M'S products themselves, with the ampersand in the logo cycling through a spectrum of colors (*ibid.*).

The brand describes its signature register as "jester wit and humor," used to spark connection, inspire fun, and create moments of shared laughter. The platform is also built to resonate across the 100+ countries where M&M'S are sold, making global relevance a core pillar of the creative direction. Finally, co-creation with fans is positioned as the future of M&M'S brand building, with the "It's More Fun Together" platform described as the foundation for that ongoing relationship (*ibid.*).



5.4.1. The Origin and Evolution of the M&M's Characters

The M&M's captivating and colorful design would give birth to one of advertising's most enduring mascot families. However, the Spokescandies known today were not introduced all at once, and they evolved throughout the years. In the 1950s, when the mascots first came out, the first visual representations, which appeared in the 1950s, consisted of M&M-headed figures with simple stick-figure bodies. A few years later, the head and body were merged into a single rounded shape and, by the early 1970s, the mascots had begun to resemble their modern appearance. It was during this period that Red and Yellow were introduced. However, it was not until 1995 that the two were given a three-dimensional design, as well as their defining personalities and voices: Red, voiced by Jon Lovitz (later Billy West), was portrayed as cynical, sarcastic, and self-centered, while Yellow, voiced by John Goodman (later J.K. Simmons), served as his cheerful yet gullible counterpart.

From the late 1990s onwards, the M&M's family gradually expanded. Blue joined the group in 1995 following a public vote on a new candy color. Ms. Green became the first M&M's female character in 1997, while Orange appeared only two years later. Ms. Brown was introduced in 2012 as a more intellectual female counterpart to Ms. Green. Finally, in 2022, Mars presented Purple as a symbol of inclusivity and self-acceptance.

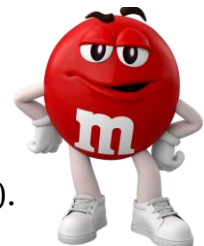
The same year, in order to reflect contemporary sensitivity in society, the M&M's characters underwent a general overhaul, resulting in "a fresh, modern take" and "more nuanced personalities" according to Mars. Following the lead of Purple, the most substantial revisions concerned the female mascots. Brown's high heels were reduced in height to convey a more professional image, while Ms. Green's peach-colored skin was replaced with a light green tone, and her iconic heeled boots were

substituted with casual sneakers. Ms. Green's personality was also redefined, shifting from a self-aware and overtly feminine representation to a more approachable and self-assured one.

Other characters were given updated footwear and underwent a range of subtle visual refinements, including adjustments to their shapes and color palettes to make the candies more inviting and inclusive. Although the 2022 redesign sparked significant discussion, it enabled the M&M's characters to enter a more dynamic and progressive world while also raising awareness of issues related to representation and inclusivity.

5.4.1.1. Red

In the official M&M's website, Red confidently introduces himself as someone who is completely aware of having "great instincts" (Mars).



In fact, Red is strong and intelligent. However he often proves to be impatient, greedy, selfish, and not to know how to lose. He is also picky and cynical, which can lead to witty humor or sarcasm. Occasionally he is portrayed as a hopeless romantic, even though women only want to eat him (Fandom).

Narcissistic by nature, he prefers to be the center of attention (Fandom). Red is proud of having been the protagonist a number of memes and enjoys his celebrity status as if it's just part of who he is, not something he actively think about or seek. He simply "does not resist [...] being a celebrity." Among his best qualities, Red mentions his charisma, smarts, and humility—the latter with a bit of irony. On the contrary, he is not able to mention any real flaw about himself. Rather, he modestly boasts about being a perfectionist. The fact he considers perfectionism as a good quality confirms and emphasizes his narcissistic tendencies (Mars).

Red is Yellow's best friend, with whom he gets into trouble because of his outspoken nature. Moreover, he often takes advantage of his best friend by bossing him around or making him do all the work.

5.4.1.2. Yellow

Yellow is Red's best friend and natural sidekick. He is extremely good natured and supportive. However, since he also is gullible and easy to manipulate, Red often abuses his benevolence.



Yellow has a positive attitude even in the worst situations (Fandom). In fact, his introductory statement is "My favorite thing about today is everything.", which emphasizes his constant optimism (Mars). It is probably no coincidence that yellow is also the color of happiness and positivity.

Yellow probably is the most child-like and naïve Spokescandy. For this reason, at times he is portrayed as clueless, which leads to comical or endearing misunderstandings (Mars). So, even though Yellow rarely understands sarcasm or subtle irony, his positive approach to life combines a sense of light-heartedness with a hint of innocent humor, very different from Red's sharp wit.

He speaks slower than the other Spokescandies, with a voice conveying his gullibility and, at time, some insecurity or hesitancy.

5.4.1.3. Orange

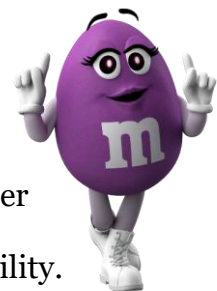
Chronically anxious, Orange is constantly hypervigilant and lives in terror that something bad may happen, such as people wanting to eat him. For this reason, he hardly ever smiles. In this regard, his chronic fatalism stands at complete opposite with Yellow's optimism (Fandom).



Orange's introductory statement is "I find your lack of concern extremely concerning," which shows how he is constantly hypervigilant and anguished by the unknown. He never really "unwinds," and "cannot leave the house without panicking" because he is "positive something will go wrong at any moment." Altogether, his words show a fatalistic view of life but also some self-deprecating humor and self-awareness (Mars).

5.4.1.4. Purple

Purple is one of the most authentic and genuine Spokescandy; for this reason, a quality that occasionally makes her appear unconventional or quirky (Fandom). Espec Compared to the other characters, she stands out for her down-to-earth nature and humility.



Rather than presenting herself as flawless, she openly acknowledges her many flaws, including her tendency to run late (Mars).

She views mistakes and embarrassing situations as a natural part of life and responds to them with self-deprecating humor. This attitude is reflected in the piece of advice that best captures her outlook on life: "Dance like no one is watching, until you realize someone is. Then stop immediately and pretend a fly was just attacking you" (Mars).

5.4.1.5. Green

Ms. Green is probably the most glamorous character as she places considerable importance on self-presentation. Like Red, she is comfortable being the center of attention (Fandom), in which she feels comfortable, just as Red. Unlike Red, however, her confidence stems from a strong sense of self-esteem rather than a need for external validation.



Similarly to Purple, Ms. Green approaches life with realism and optimism. Her motto, "live and learn and move on," reflects a pragmatic and resilient mindset. Among the Spokescandies, Ms. Green also stands out for her supportive and empowering attitude. Rather than competing for recognition or undermining others, she encourages those around her and advocates for greater female representation in leadership roles (Mars).

5.4.1.6. Brown

Ms. Brown is intelligent, charismatic, and wise. She is "not bossy" like Red, rather more assertive. Unlike Red, she does not mention a good quality when asked for a flaw. Rather, she admits that "being able to pretend [she] ha[s] one" is her quality. Even though other Spokescandies use humor, Ms. Brown uses an especially sharp wit.



When asked about what would be the first thing she would do if today was her last day, she ironically states: "I'd answer interview questions like this, because honestly that seems to slow time to a crawl" (Mars). In fact, she typically shows skepticism or disapproval toward people or situations. For this reason, she is shown with her lift often pursed or smirking, her arms crossed, giving a side-eye expression or even rolling her eyes.

5.4.1.7. Blue

Blue is perhaps the most self-assured of the M&M'S Spokescandies, defined by a cool, suave demeanor that sets him apart from his more reactive counterparts. Unlike Red, who shares a certain vanity but tends toward agitation, Blue stays completely unbothered. This trait visually reinforced



through recurring elements such as sunglasses, a saxophone, and a basketball, all of which contribute to his laid-back, effortlessly stylish persona (Fandom).

He is playfully humorous, leaning on dry wit and deadpan one-liners. Lines such as "with dead people you really have to carry the conversation" and "My dream [as a child] was just to be happy. So it's a delicious irony that I'm always blue" show a character who is not only comfortable in his own skin but willing to joke about it. Quips like "I woke up like this" and "I'm not big on multi-tasking" round out a personality that is unhurried, self-aware, and consistently the coolest presence in the room (Mars).

6.M&M's Messages Campaigns Throughout the Years

For more than seventy-five years, M&M'S has established itself as a globally recognized confectionery brand. In order to strengthen its relevance among Millennial and Generation Z consumers, in 2020, Mars introduced M&M'S Messages. According to Jessica Rello, one of the art directors and copywriters that contributed to the campaign's success (Rello, n.d.), since younger generations love to connect by sharing humorous images and memes, the campaign transformed each M&M's pack into a sharable, extremely relatable and catchy message. According to Allison Miazga-Bedrick, Brand Director at M&M'S, the team created 36 limited-edition packs with unique designs and witty phrases, made for people to connect, communicate, and enjoy everyday moments with humor and lightheartedness.

Moreover, each Message was thoroughly tailored to one of the six Spokescandies (Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, Brown, and Orange) in order to capture and bring out each unique personality, while remaining consistent with the brand's overarching jester tone of voice (*ibid.*). The Messages were also developed based on consumer research, so that the copy would reflect the most common sentiments and situations among

younger audiences. Because the available printing area on the packaging was extremely limited, every text had to be carefully crafted to maximize its communicative impact within a small space (*ibid.*).

Since the campaign was released in conjunction with the 2020 Academy Awards, the event was deliberately integrated into the campaign. Throughout the Oscars broadcast, a series of contextual commercials featuring the M&M's Messages packs were strategically scheduled to correspond with events unfolding during the ceremony, creating the impression that the brand was reacting live to the broadcast. This approach replicated the real-time communication style commonly adopted by brands on social media platforms such as Twitter/X, where content is published in direct response to live events in order to stimulate conversation and audience engagement. The campaign was further supported by a limited-edition Oscars-themed party box. By connecting physical packaging with multiple online and offline inputs, Mars transformed M&M's Messages into an interactive, cross-media campaign designed to maximise consumer engagement before, during, and after the event.

Following the successful launch of the campaign in January 2020, M&M's Messages returned the following year with a revised concept that further expanded consumer engagement. The 2021 edition featured 28 new M&M's Messages packs, each incorporating a special bar code that directed consumers to a curated Spotify playlist matching the sentiment expressed on the packaging. To reflect this integration, the campaign extended its original payoff, "Let M Say it for You," with the addition of "Let Spotify Play it for You." According to Mars (Mars Wrigley Press Release, 2021), the campaign included 13 playlists, each containing between 20 and 23 songs selected in collaboration with Spotify to complement the emotional tone of the corresponding message. For example, the message "Have a great day pretending to do work" was

paired with songs intended to make listeners feel confident and empowered, while "Slay Girl" was accompanied by a playlist featuring influential female artists (*ibid.*).

The integration of music represented a strategic extension of the campaign. As a universal medium capable of transcending many linguistic and cultural barriers, music enabled M&M's Messages to communicate even better with younger audiences. The collaboration with Spotify ultimately transformed "Let M Say it for You" into a 360-degree, multimodal campaign (see chapter 3.3), encouraging consumers to engage with the brand across multiple touchpoints (i.e. social media posts, surveys, games, and contests). In this way, brands can potentially both build a strong community of fans and create deeper consumer engagement and emotional connection.

Following the success of the original 2020 launch and the 2021 Spotify edition, Mars further extended the M&M's Messages concept through a seasonal Christmas collection released for the 2021 holiday season. The limited-edition packs adapted the campaign's humorous, character-driven messages to Christmas-related themes such as gift-giving, Santa's "nice list," and holiday celebrations, while maintaining the distinctive personalities of the Spokescandies (Flor, n.d.).

From a marketing perspective, the M&M's Messages campaign encourages consumer engagement by creating continuity between advertising and the physical product. Encountering the same messages and visual identity both in television and online advertising and later on the product packaging reinforces brand recognition and makes the campaign more memorable and immersive.

Furthermore, the packs are explicitly designed to be given as small gifts, encouraging interpersonal interaction and generating word-of-mouth communication both offline and through social media, ultimately increasing the campaign's visibility and commercial impact. This approach is particularly well suited to the Italian market,

where food is strongly associated with conviviality, sharing, and social occasions. Exchanging humorous M&M's Messages packs or sharing the Share Size editions therefore aligns naturally with local cultural practices surrounding food consumption.

Finally, the packaging itself is highly shareable: its visually distinctive design and personalised messages encourage consumers to photograph and post the packs on social media, generating user-created content that further amplifies the campaign's reach, visibility, and consumer engagement.

Given the success of the M&M's Messages campaigns in the United States, it is reasonable to assume that a similar concept could be successfully adapted to other markets, particularly Western ones sharing comparable consumer habits and communication trends. Building on this premise, the following chapter presents a plausible simulation of a professional transcreation project aimed at localizing all the campaigns discussed in this section for the Italian market.



7. The Client

For the purposes of this simulated transcreation project, no real client was involved. However, the brief was devised to be as realistic as possible, and the project is meant to showcase potential transcreation challenges within realistic working conditions, such as a detailed brief with specific requirements, and fixed deadlines.

For this project, the client is assumed to be Mars Italia, the Italian branch of the multinational company Mars, Inc. Acting through its localization and marketing department, Mars Italia commissions the transcreation of 53 M&M's Messages packages intended for the Italian market. The project is carried out under a predefined budget and follows a detailed creative brief. The creative brief is written in English because it functions as a centralized global document, designed to be adapted across multiple national markets.

The advertising videos related to the Oscars campaign are provided in a compressed ZIP folder attached to the introductory project email, together with the creative brief and the Excel template required for submitting the transcreation outputs. Within the brief, the client explicitly requests the localization of all Oscar-related introductory lines for the Italian Music Festival Sanremo 2027, in order to ensure cultural relevance for the target audience. There is no doubt that the late-night broadcast window for the Oscar ceremony significantly reduces the audience potential.

This adaptation is justified by the fact that the Academy Awards do not hold the same level of popularity or cultural resonance in Italy as the Sanremo Festival, which represents a significantly more familiar and widely followed media event in the Italian context. In fact, according to audience data released by RAI's advertising division (Freddi, 2025), the 2025 edition of the Festival recorded an average of 12.5 million

viewers across its five evenings, with an overall share of 67.1%. By comparison, the Eurovision Song Contest and the Oscar ceremony of the Academy Awards attract far less audience.

The final of Eurovision 2024, held in Malmö, Sweden, drew approximately 5.3 million Italian viewers with a share of roughly 36% (EuroFestival). The two semi-finals taken together registered much lower numbers than the final, both in terms of viewers and share (*ibid.*). The 97th Oscar ceremony of the Academy Awards, broadcast live by Rai 1 in the night between 2 and 3 March 2025 attracted approximately 347,000 viewers, with a share of 6.5% according to Auditel data (Fabbretti, 2025).

Moreover, Auditel measurements shows that the Festival's share among viewers aged 15 to 24 reached 83.87%, with the 15-to-19 cohort registering 82%, and the 25-to-34 and 35-to-44 age brackets both exceeding 70% (TvBlog, 2025). These figures invert the conventional assumption that Rai 1, as a generalist public broadcaster, draws primarily older audiences. According to the CEO of RAI Pubblicità, Luca Poggi, Sanremo has always been defined as the Italian Super Bowl; however, no comparable broadcast event achieves an 88% share among young viewers (Freddi, 2025), making Sanremo the fittest choice by far when localizing the Messages originally created for the Oscars.

The brief specifies that 25 packages are accompanied by one or more short introductory lines spoken by one of the M&M's Spokescandies, totaling 30 phrases. These lines establish a connection with the text printed on the package and therefore require transcreation alongside the main copy. For these introductory lines, the client requests one final transcreation for each source text.

For the messages printed on the packages themselves, however, the client requires three alternative transcreation proposals for every package. One proposal should

remain relatively close to the source text, while the other two are expected to adopt progressively more creative solutions. In particular, one of these alternatives may depart significantly from the source text, provided that it achieves greater idiomaticity, cultural relevance, and appeal for the Italian target audience.

The project manager requires the three transcreation proposals to be presented in the order of the transcreator's professional judgement, from the solution considered most effective and impactful for the target market to the one expected to be comparatively less memorable or persuasive. This ranking reflects the transcreator's critical evaluation of each proposal's linguistic naturalness, cultural resonance, and overall communicative effectiveness.

To support the transcreator during the preliminary analysis and to ensure consistency not only throughout the project, but also across recent campaigns, the brief provides a concise description of both the overall brand tone of voice and the individual tone of voice of each M&M's Spokescandy. Rather than extensive character profiles, the brief assigns three to four key adjectives that capture the prototypical personality of each character. These descriptors are intended to serve as constant stylistic guidelines throughout the transcreation workflow and should significantly influence lexical, register, and stylistic choices. In particular, they are expected to inform both the brainstorming phase, by guiding the generation of suitable creative alternatives, and, most importantly, the selection phase, where the final transcreation is chosen according to its consistency with the character's established voice and communicative identity. Maintaining a well-defined characterization of each Spokescandy also helps make them more lifelike and relatable in what they say and how they behave. This stronger sense of identification may, in turn, contribute to increased brand affinity and ultimately higher sales.

The brief also specifies another key technical constraint concerning the messages printed directly on the packages. Given that the available space on the packaging is limited, each Italian transcreation must not exceed the length of the corresponding source text by more than ten additional characters, including spaces, with an exceptional tolerance of up to two extra characters in limited cases. This requirement is essential to ensure that the graphic design team can successfully adapt the packaging layout while maintaining visual balance and readability.

In this respect, the transcreator is not expected to position the text within the artwork or provide instructions regarding fonts, colors, or layout. Nevertheless, they are encouraged to anticipate the final packaging design, for example, by avoiding excessively long words that might not fit or by considering word order where possible. This facilitates a layout that closely mirrors the original in terms of typography, font size, color, and stylistic emphasis, particularly in cases where these visual elements contribute to the pragmatic meaning and the overall communicative effect of the message.

Each transcreation proposal must be accompanied by a concise yet descriptive rationale outlining the key linguistic and cultural decisions underlying the solution. This rationale should clarify how tone, register, and stylistic choices were adapted from the source text to the target market, with particular attention to character voice, humor, and cultural relevance. In line with the project workflow, no back-translation is required, as all transcreated outputs will be subsequently reviewed by native-speaker copywriters in the target language.

Transcreation Brief

Project title	M&M's Messages
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Diffusion channels	National TV, YouTube, Instagram, all retail stores in Italy	
Target audience	Millennials and Generation Z consumers, with a particular focus on young adults who are highly active on social media and accustomed to communicating through humor and memes. The campaign appeals to consumers who value authenticity, relatability, and playful interpersonal interaction, and who are likely to use the packs as small gifts, conversation starters, or content to share online. However, the Messages should also remain accessible to the brand's broader consumer base.	
Brand values, corporate identity (mission, vision, and purpose) and desired brand image	Mars is a family-owned, principle-based, and future-focused company. Its Five Principles are and have always been: Quality, Responsibility, Mutuality, Efficiency, Freedom. M&M's: "It's more fun together;" "Insieme è più divertente;" colorful & fun; jester wit and humor; sharing is caring.	
Tone of voice and other specific preferences on register, terminology and style	The general TOV must always be:	
	Register:	Informal
	Lexical choices:	Colloquial, slang
	Style:	Direct/straightforward
	Content:	Relatable
	However, please adapt the TOV to each Spokescandy, as detailed in the "Our Spokescandies" document and summed up here:	
	Red:	Blunt, proud, boastful, ironical
	Yellow:	Positive, gullible, naïve
	Green:	Confident, supportive, empowering
	Brown:	Intelligent, charismatic, wise, witty
	Blue:	Self-assured, cool, laid-back
	Orange:	Anxious, fatalistic, hypervigilant
Communication goals and purpose of the campaign; anticipated response from the target audience	Social media presence (interactions and follows), short- and medium-term boost sales, strengthen brand identity and improve customers' loyalty to the brand. Be the no.1 choice in Italy for chocolate candies in the first quarter of 2027.	

Localization to the target market	All introductory lines related to the Oscars must be localized for Sanremo 2027 , the Italian Music Festival.	
Visuals; music, sound effects, scene description for commercials	See the videos in the zip folder attached to this email. For the packages layout, see the Excel file.	
Deliverables	Please fill the attached Excel document with your transcreations and rationales by following the structure of the document itself. No other file is required. Do not modify the document structure, nor delete or modify any image or descriptive item since it is standard for all the target markets. Please provide: - Three transcreation options for each M&M's package. Normally, one is closer to the source while being perfectly idiomatic in the target language - One transcreation for the introductory sentence if applicable - A brief and descriptive rationale for each transcreation option - No back-translation is required, as the work will be reviewed by native-speaker copywriters in the target language.	
Text length and other space/time-related restrictions	For packages:	Do not exceed the source length by more than 10 characters (spaces included)
	For commercials:	Do not exceed 15 seconds total per ad (two packages)
Details about the advertised product or service and its position within its category, including key similarities and differences with competitors	- Respect each Spokescandy's personality and TOV - Make sure that the text matches the body language of the candy represented on the package - Make each Message unique, catchy and as if it was written by a Gen-Z/Millennial for a Gen-Z/Millennial - Each package has to work as a standalone Message (without the introductory sentence). Therefore, you should tailor and adapt the introductory sentence to the package, and not the other way around	
Other existing translations and copy to use as a reference	Please see the Italian localized version of the M&M's website.	

Deadlines and deliverables	30 th of June 2026, 12:00 BST
Revision process and potential queries	Contact as needed: Valeria (Localization Manager at Mars) valeriasansoni@mars.com (+39) 02 4102 5836
Budget	€ XXXX

The brief included direct contact details for the Mars Italia localization manager, Valeria, who promptly clarified some aspects of the campaign not addressed in the brief. When asked about the planned release timeline of the Messages in Italy, Valeria indicated that the Sanremo-themed ones were expected to reach retail shelves by mid-January 2027. The Christmas packages, by contrast, were planned to launch at the beginning of November 2026, aligned with the opening of the holiday retail season.

Regarding product specifications, the team confirmed that the Messages packaging will be available in multiple flavors; however, they also specified that the different flavors are linked in no way to the Messages themselves. Regarding on formats available, Mars revealed that they were planning to offer family-sized packs as well, which they call "sharable." From a design standpoint, Valeria specified that the visual identity of the packaging (i.e. the Spokescandy, fonts, colors, decorative elements) will remain the same across all sizes, just slightly more "spaced out."

The following chapter presents the transcreations of all M&M'S Messages. The packages are ordered chronologically by campaign release date: the first campaign dates from early 2020 and its packaging is unrelated to any media event. It is followed by the commercials that were linked to the Academy Awards (here localized for the Festival di Sanremo). The "Let Spotify Play It" campaign will follow, and finally I will offer transcreations for the Christmas-edition packages.

The practical project will largely follow the transcreation workflow outlined in the theoretical framework, while the challenges emerging throughout the analysis will demonstrate how advertising transcreation differs substantially from other forms of translation, requiring not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity, creativity, and strategic decision-making to achieve equivalent communicative and commercial impact.

Finally, it should also be noted that the rationale accompanying each transcreation is deliberately presented in greater depth than would typically appear in a professional deliverable: given the academic nature of this thesis, the rationale has been expanded to make the reasoning behind each linguistic and creative decision fully explicit.

7.1. M&M's Messages (2020)



Che FORTUNA (per te) la nostra AMICIZIA

Ti SU/OPPORTERÒ *sempre*

Siamo una SQUADRA *imbattibile*

The transcreation solutions deliberately avoid gender-specific terms such as "amico", which would compromise the inclusiveness of the message in Italian. Instead, gender-neutral terms such as "amicizia" and "squadra" were used to emphasize the value of friendship, companionship and mutual support. The second transcreation relies on a visual wordplay: by graphically overlapping the U and O, the verb can be read both as "supporter" (I will support you) and "sopporterò" (I will put up with you), adding a playful double meaning.



SCUSA ma ho RAGIONE IO

The source text perfectly reflects Red's pride, confidence, and stubbornness: while he appears to apologize by saying "I'm sorry," he simultaneously states that his position has not changed. As a result, the message appears contradictory and resembles the kind of reluctant or insincere apology often associated with people who find it difficult to admit they are wrong.

The Italian version, 'scusa ma ho ragione io,' inverts the order of the two elements, placing the apology first and the assertion of being right immediately afterwards. This structure emphasizes the contradiction between the two statements and draws greater attention to the speaker's insistence on being correct. Furthermore, the explicit use of the pronoun "io", which is not grammatically necessary in Italian, reinforces Red's firm conviction and highlights his self-centered attitude.



MI MANCHI TANTO

QUANDO CI VEDIAMO? Mi manchi

Mi manca vederti

The tone of the source text is almost carrying a slightly childish or tender nuance. Using "face" as a synecdoche to refer to the whole person, the message is about missing someone's presence in an intimate way. In English, the phrase feels spontaneous and affectionate.

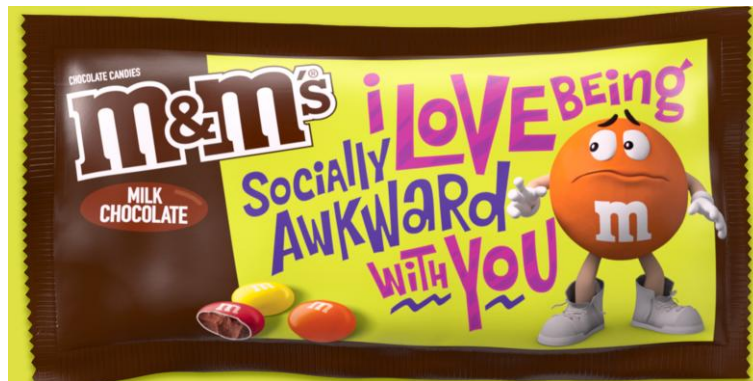
In Italian, no natural structural equivalent exists, as "faccia" is not commonly used in this metonymic sense to express affection. The only context in which the term could be made pragmatically acceptable is through its diminutive form, "faccino." However, a direct translation such as "Mi manca il tuo faccino" would likely sound excessively childish and therefore pragmatically incongruent, despite Yellow's generally warm and childlike characterization. By contrast, "mi manchi tanto" is a fully idiomatic expression in Italian, with the adverb "tanto" compensating for the emotional charge lost through the omission of the tender imagery conveyed by "face." The other two options include the verb "vedersi" (see each other), which partly makes up for the loss of "face" by referring to a physical meet-up rather than just texts or phone calls.



TI AVEVO DETTO di non seguire il mio consiglio
NON ti dovevi FIDARE TROPPO di me
Hai fatto un DISASTRO per COLPA MIA

This message reveals Orange's anxious and self-doubting tendencies, where he discredits his own advice, while catastrophize the negative outcome and assuming full responsibility for it. The first two options both amplify his insecurity: in the first case he paradoxically distances himself from his own advice to avoid responsibility, while in the second he explicitly undermines his reliability, reinforcing his fear of being wrong or causing harm. The last, instead, intensifies the tone through exaggerated

language ("disastro" and "colpa mia"), which is consistent with Orange's tendency toward catastrophism and self-blame.



ADORO quei momenti imbarazzanti con TE

Mi sento meno DISADATTATO in tua compagnia

MAMMA, ho PAURA degli ESTRANEI

This message reframes Orange's discomfort with social interaction as something acceptable and even comforting. The emphasis on "with YOU" is crucial, as it suggests that awkwardness is no longer isolating but mutual and therefore less threatening in the presence of a trusted person. This idea is mirrored truthfully in the first transcreation, which also preserves the emphasis on "love" through "adoro." The term "disadattato" in the second option effectively encapsulates the concept of "social awkwardness." Finally, "MAMMA, ho PAURA degli ESTRANEI" exaggerates Orange's social anxiety by invoking the figure of the mother and framing strangers as threatening and mirroring the source's juxtaposition between comfort (YOU) and discomfort (social world) through "mamma" and "estranei."



Un uccellino mi ha detto che è il tuo compleanno

La notifica dice che è il tuo... compleanno

Non serviva la notifica per ricordarmi che è... il tuo compleanno

Through this message, Blue pretends not to have forgotten the birthday, even though the notification reveals that he actually needed a reminder, showing his confident yet slightly self-justifying personality. The first transcreation frames the common phrase "un uccellino mi ha detto" clearly inside the typical notification layout, therefore creating a comical contradiction. The second, instead, remains closer to the source, while maintaining a natural, idiomatic flow in Italian. Finally, "Non serviva la notifica per ricordarmi che è... il tuo compleanno" makes the underlying message of likely forgetting the birthday more explicit, in line with Blue's confident personality.



E il premio al MIGLIOR AMICO va a... ME

IL PRIMO POSTO? Quello NEL TUO CUORE

La nostra AMICIZIA PREMIA ogni giorno

The first solution is the closest equivalent to the source, preserving both the awards-show framing and Yellow's innocent self-congratulation in a natural formulation. The second shifts frames the sarcastically official award into something more personal and sweet, in line with Yellow's warm personality. The third abandons the self-centered perspective of the original in favor of a mutual celebration of friendship, using the verb "premiare" to retain the semantic field of awards while reinforcing Yellow's genuine kindness and appreciation for others.



Non so chi o che cosa stiamo festeggiando, ma diamoci dentro!

Ogni scusa è buona per festeggiare

È qui la festa?

Yellow is often blissfully clueless about what is happening around him, yet he approaches every situation with genuine enthusiasm and an almost childlike desire to have fun and celebrate. The first solution preserves the source message while feeling natural and flawless in Italian. "Ogni scusa è buona per festeggiare" is a common idiomatic expression in Italian that captures Yellow's intention to celebrate regardless of the reason. Finally, the colloquial and highly idiomatic question "È qui la festa?" immediately evokes someone excited to celebrate, therefore conveying Yellow's innocent, impulsive, and playful personality.

'90s music.



Musica anni '90

NON MI STANCHERAI MAI

NON NE AVRÒ MAI ABBASTANZA.

The message revolves around the fact that music from the 1990s is often associated with nostalgia and enduring popularity. Rather than expressing admiration directly, Red frames his praise negatively ("I'm still not sick of you"), in line with his cynical and irreverent tone.

"Non mi stancherai mai" remains closer to the original by preserving the notion of never growing tired of something, while "non ne avrò mai abbastanza" shifts the emphasis toward an insatiable desire for more, therefore intensifying the positive sentiment.

Finally closed all your browser tabs.
Moved from the bed to your couch.
Put on pants to work from home?



Finalmente hai chiuso tutte le tab del browser.

Hai fatto due passi dal letto al divano.

Hai messo i pantaloni per lavorare da casa?

I MIEI PIÙ VIVI COMPLIMENTI

SEI PROPRIO IL TOP
ORA SÌ CHE SIAMO PERSONE ADULTE

The humor of the original message is based on ironic overpraise: everyday, minimal actions are described as heroic. The final line, "CONGRATS ON THAT THING YOU DID," reinforces the sarcasm of treating these micro-achievements as if they deserved major celebration.

"I miei più vivi complimenti" recreates the mock-formal congratulatory tone of "Congrats on that thing you did". "Sei proprio il top" adds a colloquial, upbeat compliment that fits the character's cool self-confidence. "Ora sì che siamo persone adulte" is the least faithful transcreation in terms of tone, since it is more witty than Blue's average way of communicating. However, it perfectly matches the sarcasm of treating the simple act of putting on trousers as proof of maturity—perfectly in line with the register and type of humor typical of Millennials and Generation Z.

7.1. Sharing Size Packages (2020)



I veri amici condividono, anche la cioccolata

Condividere è il segreto di ogni grande amicizia

Ciò che è mio è tuo (e viceversa, cioccolata compresa)

A literal translation of the source would have resulted in a message that was too long for the M&M's packaging, exceeding the creative brief's limit of no more than ten additional characters (including spaces). The three transcreation solutions preserve the original focus on friendship and sharing while naturally adapting the message to Italian within the defined characters restriction.

The first adaptation is the closest equivalent to the source; the second broadens the message into a universal statement; the third draws on a familiar expression associated with close relationships, adding the parenthetical reference to chocolate to reconnect the message with the product in a light-hearted way.



Alla fine ti apprezzo più della media
Devo ammettere che in fondo mi piaci
Non si sta male in tua compagnia

This message by Brown expresses a deliberately understated and slightly ironic appreciation through emotional restraint, reflecting her pragmatic and self-aware personality. The first transcreation preserves this measured tone by quantifying affection in an almost statistical way. "Devo ammettere", similarly to "alla fine" and "in fondo", introduces a subtle self-correction, reinforcing her reserved nature and the idea that the compliment is somewhat reluctant but sincere. Finally, in the third adaptation, positive judgement is masked through a negative statement ("Non si sta male").



Sono l'amico che tutti vorrebbero avere
Se solo avessi più amici come me...
Se tutti fossero cool come me...

This message reflects Red's highly self-confident and slightly self-referential personality, where admiration for others is replaced by admiration for himself. There is also a paradox: he expresses a desire for friendship while implicitly assuming he is already the ideal model of a friend. The first transcreation preserves this self-praise by reformulating it as an assertive statement of superiority. "Se solo avessi più amici come

me..." retains the conditional structure of the original. Finally, the last adaptation shifts the focus toward aspirational imitation, reinforcing Red's belief in his own "coolness."



Socializzare? Non proprio il mio forte
 A dire il vero, non sono molto socievole
 Ansia sociale è la mia comfort zone

Orange's statement "TBH I don't love socializing" reflects his anxious, self-aware personality, where social interaction is perceived with such honesty that often softens his vulnerability. The transcreation "Socializzare? Non proprio il mio forte" is highly idiomatic and fluent in Italian, capturing the original meaning while adapting it to a natural spoken register that fits Orange's hesitant tone. "A dire il vero, non sono molto socievole" stays closer to the source structure while sounding more natural in Italian. Finally, "Ansia sociale è la mia comfort zone" introduces a humorous contradiction, as it reframes social anxiety as something familiar and almost reassuring, reinforcing Orange's tendency to prefer predictable discomfort to uncertain social situations.



Mi scuso già per qualunque cosa combini in futuro
Conoscendomi, finirei per mettermi nei guai
Lascio fare a te, ho il terrore di fare un pasticcio

In this message, Orange humorously exaggerates his anxious and overcautious attitude, suggesting that he expects to make mistakes before anything has even happened. The first adaptation closely follows the source, preserving its anticipatory apology, while the second shifts is centered on his self-awareness that his actions will inevitably lead to trouble. Finally, the last transcreation portrays his fear of making mistakes as so overwhelming that it results in the almost paralyzing tendency to avoid acting altogether.



Ogni *regalo* va ricambiato (anche questo)
Ciò che *regalo* vorrei poi riceverlo anch'io
Odio chi non ricambia i *regali*

The message "I only give gifts I expect in return" reflects Brown's pragmatic, witty, and slightly cynical personality, framing gift-giving as an act of mutual exchange, almost like an investment. The first adaptation foregrounds this expectation, with the humorous addition that the M&M's bag itself given as a gift should be reciprocated as well. The second transcreation stays closest to the source by preserving the idea that Brown only gives presents she herself would be happy to receive. Finally, the more

direct and blunt formulation "Odio chi non ricambia i regali" reinforces Brown's uncompromising attitude on the matter.



Socializzo solo sui social
Aiuto, qualcuno mi sta parlando
Non mi sento pronto per interagire

This message humorously highlights the contradiction between being comfortable interacting online and feeling anxious in face-to-face situations, perfectly reflecting both contemporary social habits and Orange's socially awkward characterization. "Socializzo solo sui social" closely recreates the original through the alliteration of S and the wordplay between "socializzo" and "social," producing a similarly catchy and memorable effect in Italian. The other two adaptations shift the focus to Orange's immediate panic when confronted with real-life interaction, exaggerating his fear and discomfort of social contact.



Per tua FORTUNA, oggi CONDIVIDO
CONDIVIDO, ma non prenderci GUSTO
CONDIVIDO, è il MASSIMO che posso fare

By stating "If you're lucky, I'll share," Blue humorously subverts the expected purpose of a Sharing Size pack, suggesting that sharing is a rare privilege rather than a generous gesture. The first solution preserves the original reference to luck while emphasizing that sharing is an exceptional occurrence rather than the norm. The second combines the idiom "non prenderci gusto" ("don't get used to it") with a playful double meaning, as "gusto" also evokes the act of enjoying and eating M&M's. Finally, the last creates a humorous twist on the common expression "è il minimo che posso fare" to suggest that simply sharing already is the greatest act of generosity for Blue.



Potrei arrivare... o no, adoro l'effetto sorpresa
Mi aggiungo all'ultimo per l'effetto sorpresa
Le vere dive si fanno attendere

With this message, Brown humorously rejects the social convention of confirming attendance in advance (RSVP, standing for *répondez s'il vous plait*, or "please reply") and suggests that unpredictability ("the element of surprise") is more valuable and more entertaining than following established expectations. Rather than being inconsiderate, she implies that arriving unexpectedly is part of her charm. Treating

spontaneity as a deliberate choice is in line with her self-assured and slightly irreverent personality.

The first two transcreation preserve the "element of surprise" and avoid the ambiguity of a foreign acronym such as RSVP. While the first closely preserves the original message, the second shifts the focus to intentional last-minute decisions. Finally, "Le vere dive si fanno attendere" introduces the stereotype of the diva who arrives late and makes herself desired, thereby reinforcing Brown's self-confidence.

7.1. Oscars (2020)

All the commercials are presented in full and in the chronological order in which they aired during Oscars night: the first two were broadcast during the Red Carpet pre-show, while the remaining six were shown during the main Oscars ceremony.

Commercial #1



Hai davvero ascoltato tutte le canzoni in gara quest'anno?

COMPLIMENTI, sei un mito

Hai battuto ogni RECORD

COMPLIMENTI per la pazienza

Assuming that most people do not watch all nominated films, doing so is framed as an unusual, almost overachieving act. Through a fake compliment, Red actually questions the normality of the behavior: being "above average" is not presented as something truly impressive, but as something mildly ridiculous or excessive, consistent with his cynical and competitive personality.

Similarly, just as most people do not watch all the movies nominated for the Academy Awards, only a small part of Italian viewers listen to all the competing songs at the Festival di Sanremo. By replacing the nominated movies with "canzoni in gara," the message becomes immediately recognizable for an Italian audience and maintains the idea of an overwhelming annual selection that few people fully follow. "Complimenti, sei un mito" and "Hai battuto ogni record" function as exaggerated

compliments, reinforcing Red's sarcastic overstatement. Finally, "Complimenti per la pazienza" sounds more as a genuine, versatile compliment that could be gifted in the shape of a M&M's bag.



E per chi vuole vedere tutte le esibizioni:
Sarà una LUUUNGHISSIMA SETTIMANA
Serve TAAANTA PAZIENZA
Servirà MOLTIIIISSIMO CAFFÈ

Red's statement can be interpreted on two levels. On the one hand, it refers to the fact that, throughout the week, non-viewers will likely be exposed to discussions and news about the Oscars regardless. On the other hand, it implicitly acknowledges that catching up with all the nominated films is itself a lengthy and demanding task. In line with Red's sarcasm and cynicism, the elongated spelling of "loooong" reinforces both ideas.

The three transcreation options preserve the graphic and phonetic effect of the elongated vowel in "loooong," reproducing the source text's emphasis through visual and auditory exaggeration. "Sarà una luuughissima settimana" is the closest equivalent, as it directly conveys the idea of a particularly long week. Similarly, "Serve taaanta pazienza" draws on a common Italian expression used to encourage someone to endure or put up with something perceived as unpleasant, tedious, or especially time-consuming. Finally, "Servirà moltiiiiissimo caffè" emphasizes the considerable

time and effort required to catch up with all the nominated films and mentions coffee as a culturally familiar way of staying awake and sustaining prolonged effort. However, this last solution captures only one of the two interpretations conveyed by the source text.

Commercial #2

The following spot aired during the Red Carpet Pre-Show as a humorous commentary on the inevitable awkward encounters between celebrities during the event. It indirectly references a widely discussed moment from the Screen Actors Guild Awards, where the former celebrity couple Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston unexpectedly crossed paths, generating significant online attention and viral reactions.



Dedicato alle celeb che si vedono sfilare gli ex sul red carpet:

A TESTA ALTA, *sempre*

Non hai NULLA DA TEMERE, *dolcezza*

Niente AMARO IN BOCCA, *dolcezza*

This pack was first used in the original campaign as a standalone message and was later reused in the Oscars-related execution, where it accompanied the line about celebrities seeing their exes. In both cases, rather than a simple snack, the M&M's are presented as a source of comfort and a small emotional aid for awkward, stressful, or mildly dramatic situations. The phrase on the pack is strongly linked to Green's supportive personality, which makes the message feel warm and encouraging.

The transcreation works by replacing the Oscars-specific context with an equally recognizable Sanremo scenario while retaining the English borrowings "celeb" and "red carpet", both of which are fully established in Italian entertainment discourse and preserve the glamorous, celebrity-oriented atmosphere of the original. The three transcreation solutions for the M&M's bag all employ common, idiomatic expressions of encouragement that naturally fit Italian while preserving the original pack's positive pragmatic function, in line with Green's supportive, empowering, and self-assured personality. The term "dolcezza" simultaneously evokes the confectionery nature of the product and functions as a familiar term of endearment, effectively transferring the quality of "sweetness" from the candy to the addressee. The terms "sempre" and "dolcezza" should appear in italics to emphasize the final reassuring element of the message and replicate the original graphic effect of "candy" in the original package.

If no former celebrity couples were to be present at the Sanremo Festival, the transcreator should recommend, for example, to separate this Message into a short standalone commercial and replace the reference to "exes" with a more culturally neutral scenario. For example, the message could be reframed around the relatable experience of developing a crush on an unattainable celebrity (i.e. "Triste perchè non conoscerai mai il VIP per cui hai una crush?;" "Un po' di dolcezza per te").



Il vincitore ti ricorda il tuo ex?

Non era poi nemmeno un granché

Non ti meritava

Ti meriti solo green flag

Green's message humorously captures a common coping mechanism following disappointment: if an ex succeeds, the immediate reaction is to minimize their value in order to protect one's self-esteem. The transcreation relocates the scenario to the Sanremo context by replacing the successful ex with the winning performer while preserving the same emotional dynamic. "Non era poi nemmeno un granché" is the closest equivalent to the source text, while "Non ti meritava" encourages the addressee to focus on their own self-worth. Finally, "Ti meriti solo GREEN FLAG" draws on the modern concept of green flags (as opposed to red flags) in relationships. The expression also creates a subtle wordplay, as green simultaneously refers to healthy relationships and to Green herself as a Spokescandy.

Commercial #3

This spot aired during the first commercial break and commented on the Academy's decision to present the ceremony without an official host. Traditionally, the Oscars are led by a host who introduces the show, delivers opening monologues, and guides the audience between awards. The decision to omit this role was highly unusual and generated considerable public discussion before the ceremony.



Proprio sul ritornello, il microfono smette di funzionare.
In caso di problemi, non esitare a contattare qualcun altro
Vorrei tanto aiutare, ma purtroppo sono in ferie
Chiamami pure, tanto non c'è campo

The message of this package was originally used on its own in the 2021 Spotify campaign, and was later repurposed for the Oscars commercial, where it was introduced by the remark about the Academy's decision to hold the ceremony without a host. Brown sarcastically subverts the conventional expression "If there's anything I can do, don't hesitate to ask" by redirecting the request to someone else.

The expression "è il bello della diretta" (literally, "that's the beauty of live TV") is commonly used by presenters during events such as the Festival di Sanremo to justify or lightly acknowledge unexpected incidents or technical issues during live broadcasting (i.e. Bugo suddenly leaving mid-performance, Blanco destroying all flowers on stage after some technical issues with his in-ear monitor). "In caso di problemi, non esitare a contattare qualcun altro," similarly to the source, begins with a conventional formula of assistance typical of working environments, which activates the expectation of support in the reader. This expectation is then systematically subverted through a final reversal that redirects the request to someone else. Finally, the last two options are all based on common, everyday excuses used to avoid being disturbed, also in professional contexts, such as being on holiday or having no signal.



Ma dici il fatidico "è il bello della diretta" e salvi la situazione
Congratulazioni, ce l'hai fatta!
Anche oggi, te la sai cavata
L'hai scampata anche questa volta

The introductory phrase directly follows the remark about the Oscars having no host and jokingly addresses everyone else involved in the ceremony who must compensate for the absence of the official host. The same cause-and-effect structure connection between the two messages of the original campaign is successfully preserved while replacing the Oscars-specific reference with Sanremo. The first pack presents a live broadcasting problem (the microphone failing); the second pack then resolves the situation by referring to the well-known Italian expression "è il bello della diretta," a phrase commonly used on live TV to move on with the show in case of technical problems.

The three transcreation solutions maintain the idea of "making it" through idiomatic Italian expressions, while omitting the explicit reference to work, which is less relevant in the Sanremo context. The tone of all three transcreations is in line with Brown's typical attitude. The first carries a subtle ironic tone, as the congratulation exaggerates what is ultimately a rather ordinary achievement, while the latter two introduce a degree of skepticism by implying that success is temporary.

Commercial #4

This commercial ran immediately after the winners for Best Animated Feature and Best Animated Short were announced.



A tutti i personaggi dei film d'animazione della storia:

Come me non c'è nessuno

Grazie per esservi ispirati a me

Sono un grande esempio di perfezione

Red's message humorously addresses the characters from nominated animated films by assuming that they share his own greatness, turning what appears to be a compliment into an act of self-praise. Rather than genuinely acknowledging others, he thanks them for being "as awesome as I am," reinforcing his egocentric, arrogant, and self-confident personality. The three transcreation solutions preserve this narcissistic humor by shifting the focus entirely onto Red's inflated self-image. "Come me non c'è nessuno" openly asserts his uniqueness, "Grazie per esservi ispirati a me" ironically presumes that the animated characters modelled themselves after him, and "Sono un grande esempio di perfezione" further exaggerates his self-importance by presenting himself as a universal, flawless role model.



Lo sai che dopo Sanremo il vero guadagno sta nei passaggi in radio, vero?

E non venirmi a dire che non te l'avevo detto

Ecco, adesso lo sai

Di niente, puoi ringraziarmi più tardi

By stating "You do know the real money is in commercials, right?", Blue is implying that appearances in commercials are more profitable or strategically valuable than other kinds of roles (i.e. the Oscars), as if the information was insider knowledge that the listener should be grateful to receive, therefore reflecting Blue's confident, slightly superior, know-it-all attitude.

The reference to "commercial" was substituted with the concept of radio airplay, since in Italy is a key driver of post-festival success and commercial value for songs. Finally, "E non venirmi a dire che non te l'avevo detto" effectively reproduced the idea of the source text while being more idiomatic in Italian. "Ecco, adesso lo sai" replaces the idiomatic English expression with a natural conversational remark that preserves the original's playful, self-satisfied tone. Finally, "Di niente, puoi ringraziarmi più tardi" recreates the humorous implication that the speaker has done the audience a favor.

Commercial #5

This spot ran halfway through the show, immediately after Laura Dern accepted her Oscar for Best Supporting Actress.



Congratulazioni al vincitore
 Sei l'orgoglio di mamma
 Mamma è super fiera di te
 Stai andando alla grande

Each transcreation preserves the original affective meaning by adapting it to natural, idiomatic Italian expressions of pride and encouragement. All three solutions shift the implicit English structure into more spontaneous, spoken-style formulations commonly used in everyday reassurance, while maintaining a warm, supportive tone consistent with Green's empowering personality.



E se non hai vinto nulla...

A TESTA ALTA, *sempre*
 Non hai NULLA DA TEMERE, *dolcezza*
 Niente AMARO IN BOCCA, *dolcezza*

While the introductory sentence was adapted into Italian to maintain a logical connection with the previous one, the M&M's package itself is the same of Commercial #2.

Commercial #6

The following spot aired immediately after a rapid camera pan across the front row of high-profile celebrities.



A quella straordinaria presenza ora sul palco:

Non dirlo a nessuno, ma sei la mia crush

Psst! Che rimanga tra noi, ma ti adoro

Hey, ti dico un segreto: mi piaci un sacco

The transcreation into "A quella straordinaria presenza ora sul palco:" adapts the original reference to a gender-neutral form, avoiding gender-specific marking while preserving the admiring tone through the idiomatic expression "straordinaria presenza," which is natural and inclusive in Italian.

The handwritten, crayon-like, slightly rough typography used on the M&M's packaging reinforces the tone of a youthful "teenage crush," conveying an intentionally playful, informal, and slightly childlike message. All three adaptations retain this tone characteristic of Yellow, reproducing the effect of playful secrecy and spontaneous admiration. The use of "crush," widely adopted in contemporary Italian youth language, together with informal markers such as "psst!", "hey," and the colloquial intensifier "un sacco," helps recreate a familiar, spoken register that mirrors the immediacy and simplicity of the source text.



Capisco che possa suonare strano... [ma]
 Ti seguirei ovunque (ma senza sembrare uno stalker)
 Non riesco a stare un secondo senza di te
 Mi manca il fiato quando non ci sei

Orange expresses genuine admiration and loyalty while simultaneously trying to avoid sounding intrusive or inappropriate, highlighting his anxiety and social self-awareness and creating an ironical contradiction between enthusiasm and restraint.

The first transcreation option closely mirrors the source structure, while substituting "creepy" with "stalker," a widely understood and colloquially used term in Italian to maintain the same sense of social awkwardness. The other two options shift slightly toward emotional dependency and use hyperbolic romantic language to intensify the message, therefore emphasizing Orange's anxiety and fear of abandonment.

Commercial #7

The following spot aired immediately after Elton John's live performance of his hit song "(I'm Gonna) Love Me Again."



Cavolo, che voce ragazzi!
Grazie di cuore per quello che fai
Mi riempi il cuore di gioia
Hai proprio un cuore d'oro

The reference to a generic "performance" was adapted to a more specific vocal appreciation to fit the context of the Italian music better, while the same tone of surprise and admiration was retained through the colloquial interjection "cavolo"—which sounds more natural than "wow" in Italian—and the exclamation mark.

All three transcreation solutions for the message, then, are centered around the term "heart," which reflects Yellow's sincere gratitude and warm, affectionate personality. At the same time, the reference to "gold" in "Hai un cuore d'oro" subtly echoes Yellow's character color. Although the source text contains no explicit reference to either "heart" or "gold," the association with gold is conveyed visually through the use of yellow typography and the presence of the Yellow Spokescandy on the packaging, while the introduction of the concept of heart strengthens the emotional connection with the character and reinforces the intended message of gratitude.



E se abbiamo imparato qualcosa da questo Sanremo, bellezza, [è che]

Sei una favola. Punto.

Amati così come sei

Non ti servono filtri

This message uses a playful phonetic wordplay between "self" and "selfie", turning a conventional message of self-love into a contemporary, media-aware joke that resonates with celebrity culture and digital self-representation. The pun creates a light, humorous effect while still delivering an underlying message of self-acceptance, which is consistent with Green's personality. The closing "baby"—transcreated into "bellezza"—further softens the message, adding warmth and friendliness, and enhancing the overall reassuring tone.

Commercial #8

The following commercial aired during the penultimate commercial break of the evening and directly addressed viewers at home by humorously anticipating the sluggish "Monday feeling," whether caused by lack of sleep or by extensive discussion of the event at work.



Where's the after party

È qui il "festino bilaterale"?

Non volevo arrivare a mani vuote.

Mi sono permesso di passare per lasciarti un pensierino.

Ho pensato ti potesse piacere un po' di cioccolata.

The transcreation into "È qui il 'festino bilaterale'?" recontextualizes the original question within an Italian pop-culture. During the 2026 Sanremo Music Festival, Elettra Lamborghini inadvertently coined the phrase "festini bilaterali"—a malapropism for collaterali ("side events")—while complaining on live television about the unauthorized late-night parties near her hotel; the expression became one of the festival's most viral moments and was subsequently filed as a registered trademark.

All three adaptations of "I know you didn't invite me but I brought chocolate." soften the original sense of self-invitation (which would be too assertive for Yellow) and reframe it according to his gentle and considerate personality.



It's Friday.

Everyone, tomorrow...

È venerdì / [Oh, e] Comunque per lunedì...

In bocca al lupo mentre farai finta di lavorare
Sembrare occupato a lavoro ti riesce proprio bene
Non vedi l'ora di stimbrare e uscire da lavoro

Blue's message plays on the idea of collective fatigue and ironic workplace reality: on Friday, people are already mentally disengaging from work, and by Monday they are likely to feel equally unmotivated, either due to lack of rest or because they stayed up following the Oscars and watching all nominated films. In this way, Blue humorously links the entertainment event to a predictable decline in productivity, using it as a justification for a shared "pretend work" attitude that reflects his personality.

All the adaptations maintain the pragmatic effect of the source while sounding idiomatic in Italian. The first transcreation combines a conventional Italian wish of good luck with the humorous admission of pretending to work. The second shifts the focus to ironic praise, reinforcing Blue's observation about appearance versus real productivity. Finally, the last highlights the desire to end work rather than engage in it.

7.2. Let Spotify Play It for You (2021)



Ore piccole?

ALZA IL VOLUME! (ma non TROPPO)

In the English version, there is a circular pattern created by the repetition of "up" at the beginning and the end of the ad. The fact that the Yellow says to turn up the volume, but not too much—by saying "not too much"—indicates that he is considerate of others, respectful, and empathetic, unlike other Spokescandies.

On one hand, options such as 'sveglia fino a tardi?' or "ancora sveglia" feel natural, but they are gender-specific in Italian. "Ore piccole," on the other hand, is a gender-neutral natural collocation in Italian, referring to the time between midnight and dawn. It often carries a sense of staying up late or going to bed very early in the morning.



Accendi la telecamera per una videochiamata.

SLAY GIRL

SEI DIVINA

RUBI LA SCENA

The expression 'slay' is a piece of internet and youth slang used to praise someone for looking attractive, confident, or performing exceptionally well. In this context, the message functions as a playful form of encouragement, suggesting that the recipient should feel confident and self-assured when appearing on camera or, in this specific case, when activating the webcam during an online meeting or video call. "Slay" conveys an informal and relatable tone intended to resonate with younger audiences, particularly members of Generation Z.

To comply with brief and avoid lengthy solutions, "webcam" and "videocall" were chosen rather than "videocamera" and "videochiamata," considering that the English terms are commonly used in Italian especially after the pandemic and social distancing, when video calls were the norm. In Italian, the term "to slay" has been borrowed from English via social media platforms like TikTok. It has also been adapted to Italian conjugation (*slayato*, *slayare*). However, the use of this term is largely limited to Generation Z, so part of the campaign's target audience may be completely unfamiliar with this term. The second option, "sei divina," can reach a broader audience more easily, while the third option, "rubi la scena," despite being a well-established collocation, may sound slightly outdated to younger generations.



Ce l'hai fatta. (E chi l'avrebbe mai detto).

Ce l'hai fatta. (Nonostante tutto).

Ce l'hai fatta. (Ma dai).

This message reflects Brown's established personality as the skeptical, intelligent, and dryly humorous M&M's spokesperson. While the phrase initially appears to be a straightforward congratulation, the adverb "actually" between parentheses introduces an ironic undertone that is characteristic of Brown's wit. As a result, the message humorously implies a degree of surprise that the recipient succeeded in accomplishing a task, which is consistent with Brown's tendency to encourage through sarcasm and witty humor.

"E chi l'avrebbe mai detto" directly reproduces Brown's sarcastic and witty personality, as it explicitly conveys mock surprise at the recipient's success. The expression mirrors the playful skepticism of the ST and maintains the balance between congratulation and teasing that characterizes Brown. "Nonostante tutto", on the other hand, sounds more encouraging as it underlines that obstacles, setbacks, or low expectations had to be overcome before achieving the result. Finally, "Ma dai" is a filler expression commonly used among peers in colloquial Italian, which shifts the register more toward spontaneous, spoken informality.



AUGURI a te che non riveli mai l'età
Sei solo un po' più vintage. AUGURI
Ti ho chiesto solo L'ETÀ, NON IL PIN del telefono

This message reflects Brown's characteristic blend of wit, skepticism, and dry humor. Rather than offering a conventional birthday greeting, the phrase "whatever-age-you're-willing-to-admit" humorously implies that the recipient may prefer to disclose a younger age. The joke is intended not to mock the recipient, rather to maintain a subtly ironic distance, resulting in a greeting that feels affectionate yet slightly detached—consistent with Brown's typical attitude.

"Auguri a te che non riveli mai l'età" stays closest to the original meaning by explicitly referring to the recipient's reluctance to disclose their age. 'Sei solo un po' più vintage' takes a more creative approach, shifting the focus to ageing itself and using the contemporary term "vintage" to soften the witty tone. Finally, "Ti ho chiesto solo l'età, non il PIN del telefono" recreates the humor through a double joke: on the one hand, it humorously suggests that the recipient guards their age with the same level of secrecy as a personal security code; on the other hand, it hyperbolically implies that their age could be comparable in length to a phone PIN, exaggerating the idea that they are turning exceptionally old.



MILLE grazie per le MILLE volte che mi hai aiutato
Grazie, grazie, grazie (anche per quelli non detti)
GRAZIE: vale anche per quelli che non ti ho detto

The message of the source text is based on the idea that gratitude is often left unspoken in everyday life, acknowledging the many small acts of kindness for which thanks may never have been explicitly given, reflecting Yellow's kind-hearted and sincere personality. The juxtaposition of "big" and "little" highlights the difference in scale between a single, heartfelt expression of gratitude and the many small thanks left unsaid.

"Mille grazie per le mille volte che mi hai aiutato" employs hyperbole to convey the message in Italian naturally and recreate the juxtaposition big-little through the repetition of "mille." Instead, "grazie, grazie, grazie (anche per quelli non detti)" remains closer to the source by acknowledging the unexpressed gratitude. The repetition of "grazie" reinforces the sincerity of the message while sounding natural in Italian. "Grazie, grazie, grazie" can also be represented graphically in an effective way; for example, by layering one "grazie" over another or arranging them vertically, one beneath the other. Finally, "vale anche per quelli che non ti ho detto" effectively recreates the original reference to all the missed thank-yous.



Non è qualcosa che dico a chiunque, ma...

PER TE, SMETTEREI DI SCROLLARE

In the context of social media, "swiping" refers to the familiar social media gesture used to move from one story, post, or video to the next. In a digital culture where swiping has become an almost automatic habit, the willingness to stop doing so for someone is presented as an exaggerated yet meaningful gesture, suggesting that the recipient is exceptionally special.

In "Non è qualcosa che dico a chiunque," the choice of "chiunque" is gender-neutral and therefore more inclusive than alternatives such as "tutti." Even though there is a difference between "swiping" and "scrolling"—the first refers to left or right gesture to move between stories, while the latter to moving vertically through a continuous feed—"scrollare" is firmly established among younger Italian generations and is more immediately understandable than the English borrowing "swipe." As a result it conveys the idea of endlessly browsing digital content, effectively capturing the intended meaning of the original while sounding more natural.



Terrore del frigo vuoto?

In paranoia per lunedì?

Paura che piova domenica?

APRIRE IN CASO DI EMERGENZA

The "3 pm slump," refers to the typical afternoon drop in energy and motivation; the "Sunday Scaries" is a colloquial expression referring the anxiety felt on Sunday evening before the start of the week; and "having a case of the Mondays" is an established idiom used to indicate irritability, fatigue, or low mood at the beginning of the week. The phrase on the M&M's bag, "break open in case of emergency," mimics the formal, instructional language found on emergency equipment such as first-aid kits or fire alarms. The hyperbole lies in portraying common low-energy or stressful moments as real emergencies requiring immediate intervention, while implicitly presenting a bag of M&M's as the appropriate solution. The message is perfectly in line with Orange, who is consistently portrayed as overly cautious, easily overwhelmed, and prone to interpreting ordinary situations as potential crises.

"Terrore del frigo vuoto" is especially effective in Italian because it taps into a food-centered cultural context, where running out of food feels like a very relatable and almost urgent inconvenience, while "Paranoia per lunedì" is the closest equivalent to "Sunday Scaries." "Paura che piova domenica" works on two levels: on the surface it reflects the desire to fully enjoy the weekend, while at the same time elevating a simple weather condition to an extreme emergency. Finally, even though Italian has the expression "rompere il vetro in caso di emergenza" written on emergency alarms or aids, it does not fit on an M&M's package: using it would sound odd and break the link to the idea of opening the bag of candies.



Le tue playlist sono una bomba.

Le tue playlist spaccano davvero.

ROCK & ROLL E REGGAETÓN CE LI HAI NEL SANGUE

The use of *reggaetón* and *afuego*—a Spanglish expression derived from *fuego* ("fire")—evokes Latin American culture. The phrase "you rock" functions both as an established idiomatic expression meaning "you are great" and as a wordplay involving the musical genre rock & roll.

The expressions "una bomba" or "spaccano davvero" reproduce the enthusiastic and colloquial tone of *afuego* through a phrase that sounds natural and idiomatic in Italian. Since the pun based on "you rock" would be difficult to preserve directly, the transcreation compensates by introducing "ce li hai nel sangue", a well-established Italian expression that conveys a deep, innate connection to music, typical of Latin American communities. As a result, the reference to Spanglish and Latin cultural hybridity is not necessarily lost, rather compensated through different devices.



La tuta non è mai stata così cool.

Lo stile non va a pile

Sei uno schianto

Sempre al top

The phrase "Sweats have never been so good" celebrates casual fashion, individual freedom and self-determination in an ironic way. The Italian transcreation preserves the concept of "sweats," while adding "cool," a widely used Anglicism among Millennials and Gen Z.

The first transcreation option for the package uses rhyme and wordplay typical of social-media-friendly language, where the word "pile" (batteries) could also be read as "fleece," therefore creating a subtle humoristic effect. Finally, while "Sei uno schianto" works as a gender-neutral compliment in Italian, "Sempre al top" adopts a common Gen Z expression to convey the same message.



Ho sentito dire che...

Gli ULTIMI saranno i PRIMI, IN TEORIA

L'importante è PARTECIPARE, ma SOPRATTUTTO VINCERE

Chi va PIANO va LONTANO, ma ARRIVO PRIMA IO

The expression "At the end of the day, we're all winners," echoes a common motivational cliché. It suggests that everyone benefits in some way from an experience, regardless of the outcome, and that there is no need to focus on competition or defeat. However, Red exposing the cliché as unrealistic and replacing it with a more cynical, competitive perspective by bluntly pointing out "except the losers": if there are winners, there must also be losers. This is particularly suited to Red because he is often portrayed as confident, blunt, and somewhat arrogant.

All three transcreation options start with well-known proverb and end with a contradiction showcasing Red's extremely competitive attitude. "Gli ultimi saranno i primi" is undermined through the addition of "ho sentito dire che" and "in teoria," mirroring Red's skepticism and sarcastic attitude. In the second solution, Red immediately overturns the proverb "L'importante è partecipare" by specifying "ma soprattutto vincere," therefore prioritising victory over sportsmanship. Finally, the saying "Chi va piano va sano e va lontano" is in contrast with an explicitly competitive response ("ma arrivo prima io") reinforcing Red's self-confident and success-oriented personality. Although the saying is not directly related to winning and losing, it is still associated with the idea of achieving success through patience and perseverance.



Scorpione ascendente ariete...

NON voglio VINCERE, ma SOLO EVITARE DI PERDERE
 NON è che MI PIACE VINCERE, è che DETESTO PERDERE
 Quando entro in COMPETIZIONE, NON POSSO PERDERE

Here Brown denies being competitive while immediately revealing an intensely competitive mindset in practice through her statement "I just hate losing." Brown is determined in a calm and controlled manner, unlike Red. Her competitiveness is more understated, rationalized as aversion to failure rather than desire to win.

All the transcreation solutions avoid using the adjective "competitivo" in Italian, as it is not gender-neutral in form. As a consequence, the verbs "vincere" and "perdere", along with the noun "competizione", are employed as functional equivalents. "Non voglio vincere, ma solo evitare di perdere" explicitly reframes competitiveness in terms of loss-avoidance, preserving the same pragmatic effect within a natural Italian syntactic structure. "Non è che mi piace vincere, è che detesto perdere" represents the closest equivalent to the source text, as it reproduces the rhetorical balance between two opposing emotional attitudes, achieved through the juxtaposition of "piacere" and "detestare." Finally, the last solution retains the notion of competition as a core element of Brown's character in a gender-neutral construction ("Quando entro in competizione"), while shifting the focus from general attitude to necessity ("non posso

perdere"); nevertheless, it still conveys Brown's underlying mindset, in which losing is not conceived as a possible outcome.



Un grazie non è sufficiente...

Mille GRAZIE a te!

Non so più in che lingua ringraziarti...

MERCI beaucoup!

¡Muchas GRACIAS!

This commercial builds a playfully exaggerated overstatement of gratitude through multilingual repetition. On one hand, the first transcreation group preserves both the sense of inadequacy of a single thank you and the intensified expression of gratitude through the highly idiomatic in Italian "grazie mille." On the other, the second group recreates the multilingual effect of the original in French and Spanish (two language younger generations are extremely familiar with), therefore reinforcing Red's playful overstatement.



Stai scrollando senza fine da ore? / Hai cliccato *Rispondi tutti* a una mail di lavoro?

TUTTI SBAGLIANO ma io SONO INCORREGGIBILE
Sono una FRANA, è PIÙ FORTE DI ME
ERRARE È UMANO, ma PERSERVERARE È DA POLLI

Orange's message humorously reassures the reader after common everyday mistakes before immediately undermining himself, showcasing his belief that he performs worse than everyone else. On one hand, the concept of a YouTube rabbit hole is replaced by a more modern "Stai scrollando senza fine da ore?," a behavior which is typically associated with younger generations. On the other, "Reply all" is simply localized for the average Italian user.

The first solution for the package closely mirrors the original by maintaining the same message. The second option further amplifies Orange's self-deprecating humor through the idiomatic expression "essere una frana," while suggesting that his mistakes are almost beyond his control. Finally, the third solution adapts the well-known Italian proverb "Errare è umano, perseverare è diabolico" (meaning "to err is human; to persist in the same mistake is foolish or blameworthy") into a lighter, humorous version.

7.3. Christmas packages (2021)



Palese che è un regalo dell'ultimo minuto

Si vede da un km che è un regalo fatto all'ultimo

Ecco il tuo regalo dell'ultimo minuto

This Christmas package humorously acknowledges the common habit of buying Christmas presents at the last minute, with Red's blunt honesty exposing what is usually left unsaid without any attempt to sugarcoat it. M&M's themselves are often considered a quick, convenient gift. The first transcreation recreates the original using "palese" as a common term among Generation Z. The second uses the idiomatic expression "si vede da un chilometro" to emphasise how obvious the situation. Finally, the last adaptation directly presents the M&M's package itself as a last-minute gift.



Sono nella wish list di tutti

A Natale non ho tregua, tutti mi vogliono

Non voglio tirarmela, ma sono il più desiderato

In this message, Blue uses irony to disguise bragging as complaint: he is proud of being constantly desired despite saying it is "though." The first transcreation closely follows the original, even by maintaining the term "wish list," since it is widely understood and accepted by the campaign's average target audience. The second amplifies the exaggeration by turning popularity into constant pressure. Finally, the last adaptation uses the highly colloquial expression "tirarsela," meaning to act arrogant, show off or being full of oneself.



Non è mai troppo presto per i regali

Non riesco a resistere fino a Natale

È presto per Natale ma non ho resistito

Yellow's Christmas message reflects his impulsive, and childlike personality, as well as his enthusiasm for sharing, as he gives gifts early out of festive frenzy because he cannot wait for the appropriate moment. The first transcreation frames early gift-giving as something naturally positive and in line with his generous attitude. The second and third adaptations, instead, explicitly highlight his lack of self-control as he is unable to delay gratification.



Ti prego, non riciclare i regali

Ti scongiuro, non riciclararmi

Che fine orribile i regali riciclati

This message plays on and exaggerates Orange's anxiety—in this case, the fear of being "re-gifted," which is presented as a tragic fate he desperately tries to escape from at all costs. The first transcreation uses the common Italian expression "riciclare un regalo," while "ti prego" adds a supplicating tone. The second intensifies the latter effect, as the verb "scongiurare" carries a stronger sense of pleading or imploring. In the last solution, "fine orribile" matches Orange's dramatic and catastrophizing tone, reinforcing his tendency to overreact to common situations.



Festeggiare sì, ma come e quando pare a me

Natale con i tuoi, Pasqua con chi vuoi

Festeggiamo ma senza esagerare

This message by Brown plays on the traditional Christmas expression "holly and jolly," which evokes festive cheer and warmth. Rather than rejecting Christmas spirit, Brown humorously reframes it as an act of self-determination: she wants to engage in celebrations in her own terms, not according to external expectations. The joke clearly reflects her independent, self-assured personality. The first solution preserves this idea in a colloquial Italian register. The second quotes the well-known Italian proverb "Natale con i tuoi, Pasqua con chi vuoi," implying that if one opts for a traditional family-oriented Christmas, Easter is then left open as a more flexible occasion in which one can freely choose with whom and how to spend it. Finally, the last adaptation softens the tone by suggesting that celebration is acceptable as long as it remains balanced and self-regulated.



A Natale siam (quasi) tutti più buoni

Non serve essere buoni tutto l'anno

Il carbone dolce è sottovalutato

This Christmas message subverts the traditional Christmas "nice list" vs "naughty list" binary associated with Santa Claus. Instead of valuing being "good" and rule-abiding, Green suggests that conforming to expectations and being overly "nice" is boring or uninteresting, as she encourages authenticity over strict adherence to social norms, reframing "naughtiness" as individual freedom. The first transcreation partially

quotes the well-known Italian proverb, while introducing "almost" ("quasi") to add a subtle layer of realism, in line with Green's characterization. The second solution, instead, is the closest to the source, as it suggests being "good" all year long is unnecessary, since one usually receives gifts regardless of their behavior. Finally, the reference to coal ("carbone") introduces a culturally resonant reference to the Befana Italian tradition by stating that receiving coal—especially when in the sweet candy version—is not particularly negative, subtly overturning its usual punitive connotation.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that transcreation is not merely a marketing neologism, but a complex practice with deep theoretical roots that addresses the need for authentic cultural transfer in a globalized market. The research confirmed that the effectiveness of an advertising message depends on the transcreator's ability to act as a true cultural consultant, balancing fidelity to the communicative purpose with the need for emotional resonance among the target audience.

The practical project focused on the M&M's Messages campaign served as a crucial testing ground for these theories, revealing just how complex the process of decoding the source material is. It became clear that it is essential to analyze every single nuance of meaning in the original text, which does not reside solely in the words but is shaped by the cultural context (such as the case of the Messages commercials aired during the Oscar Awards ceremony), the iconic personalities of the Spokesandy characters, and the rhetorical use of language. Then, the actual production phase required extensive brainstorming to overcome initial linguistic reflexes and find solutions that could be truly original and effective for the Italian market.

Afterwards, the best options were subsequently selected, through careful comparison and evaluation. As a result, many proposals, while linguistically correct, were eliminated because they did not adhere to the creative brief or were inconsistent with the Spokesandy's personality. Transcreations that did not harmonize with the facial expression or the graphics on the package were discarded as well. This underscores the multimodal nature of advertising transcreation, where text cannot be treated separately from images.

The selected transcreations were then ranked and presented not based on their formal closeness to the English text, but exclusively according to their objective communicative impact and their ability of creating an immediate connection with the Italian consumer, regardless of how much it diverged from the source. The selection process was made transparent to the client through concise yet extremely clear rationales, designed to justify every creative choice without taking anything for granted and demonstrating the strategic value behind each adaptation.

Ultimately, the thesis confirms that transcreation represents the future of intercultural communication. The integration of elements such as the Oscar Awards or the Spotify playlists demonstrates that the campaign is a 360-degree multimodal experience, where the transcreator must orchestrate words, sounds, and culture to keep the brand genuine and relevant. In an era marked by automation, the professional's added value lies precisely in this ability to navigate human ambiguities and sensitivities, ensuring that the final product is not only read but truly "felt" and shared by the audience.

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