

HUMOROUS UPSHOT OF POOR TAGLINE TRANSLATION CAUSES EMBARRASSMENT TO COPYWRITERS



With most companies having global markets, their advertisements are targeted at a worldwide diverse audience and are translated into different languages, many a times with hilarious outcomes. Advertisers spend considerable time in thinking of taglines and sometimes pun on words, which get lost in translation and convey meanings totally different from what their originators meant. Linguistic nuances lose their flavor when translated with hilarious results. Some of the more popular ones are mentioned here. Coors beer when it was marketed in Spain, saw its "Turn It Loose," tagline translated into Spanish, with the words now meaning, 'Get Diarrhea.' The lucrative Spanish market had another advertising howler, when the American Dairy Association's 'Got Milk' campaign asked potential buyers, among them women, 'Are You Lactating?' Pepsi entry into Taiwan had a rather macabre beginning with its slogan, 'Come Alive with the Pepsi Generation', claiming 'Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead.' Kentucky's Fried Chicken, instead of telling eaters in China that you'll be licking your fingers, the chicken is so tasty, ended up telling them that they'd 'eat their fingers of.' Parkers Pens tagline, 'It won't leak in your pocket and embarrass you,' ended up causing a lot of embarrassment when the translator mistook the Spanish word "embarazar" to mean embarrassment when it actually meant to impregnate. The ad eventually read, 'It won't leak in your pocket and make you pregnant.' It took many apology letters to tell incensed viewers which 'pen' they meant. Chinese is a language that does not take easy to translation. Hence, copywriters are more careful these days when translating ads in the Chinese language. However, way back in 1920, people were not so wary. Coca Cola had then decided to market its product in China, but wanted a name that was phonetically similar to the English one. The one they coined, meant, 'Bite The Wax Tadpole.' Fisher promoting its sub-brand advertising that its body was built by General Motors. However, in Belgium the literal translation of 'body' was 'corpse' and the promotion now read a morbid 'Corpse By Fisher.' But the one translation that was rather risqué and had everyone in splits was the Brazilian translation for Perdue's Chicken. Its television ad claimed that "It Takes A Tough Man To Make A Tender Chicken." The double entendre was not lost on even those who read it in English but the Spanish translation read, 'It Takes An Aroused Man To Make A Chicken Affectionate.' Otis Engineering, renowned for its escalators were in for a surprise when their stall at an exhibition in Moscow garnered the most attention. It was found that the Moscow translators had taken the company's tagline of 'Completion Equipment' and the company's penchant for taking things 'upwards' literally and advertised its products as 'Equipment For Orgasms.' And in conclusion an adverting translation bloomer that actually resulted in increased sales. When Hunt-Wesson started selling its brand of baked beans in Canada, they were surprised at how the sales were picking up and how much interest the humble beans had generated. They knew why when they found out that the product Gros Jos in French-Canadian meant, 'Big Breasts.' With the world markets shrinking and advertising becoming a key component to stay ahead of their competitors, advertisers need to find a way to ensure that advertising bloopers do not occur. Of course it is not so easy and employing local talent is one way of ensuring that the carefully designed messages do not get lost in translation. Till then the bloopers will be a welcome diversion from the tactfully designed ads that potential buyers are subjected to.