

TRANSLATING MEDIA TRACKING

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Translating online and print news information, as part of the media tracking services provided to multinational organizations by their communications and public relations functions, is a prominent area of professional practice has been neglected in research to date. Based on a sample of 850 press articles in Spanish from 1999 to 2017, stored electronically and translated into English by the author for leading international communications agencies, this paper seeks to develop a practical, theoretical and ethical framework and methodology, with a view to facilitating the use of these strategic texts in translation and communications training.

Culling information from abroad enjoys a surprisingly long tradition, as some of the first news publications, called *corantos*, to reach British shores in 1621 were “mostly English translations of foreign news” (Ingham, p.11). However, rapid developments in globalised trade and ICTs from the late twentieth century onwards has heightened the need for “on the spot information from each market” (Castells, 1996). Organizations require translations on key areas such as the visibility and performance of their brands, the CEO, the company itself or the sector as a whole. This multilingual monitoring process encompasses newspaper or magazine articles, broadcasts, blogs and social media. The importance of translating online social media has been explored recently by Desjardins (2016), however, translation of online and offline press articles for strategic communication purposes has been overlooked.

Close textual analysis of the body of 850 articles leads to the creation of a three-step framework-based methodology. First, they can be broken down into five dominant categories: Product Mission, Market Situation, Crisis Management, Corporate Social Responsibility and CEO Visits and Interviews. The second element comprises the four growth strategies from Ansoff’s (1965) matrix model (market penetration, product development, market development and diversification), as well as strategies to protect and enhance corporate reputation (Barnett & Pollock, 2012 and Jansen, 2014). The third step embraces functionalist translation theory focusing on Reiss’s (2004) text functions (informative, aesthetic, appellative), combined with a consideration of the initiator’s role (phatic function) as posited in *skopostheorie* (Nord, 2005) and the role of translators as “agents of cooperation” (Pym, 2012).

Concentrating on the phatic function at the fore of assignments on CEO or brand ambassadors of corporations such as Microsoft, Samsung or Procter & Gamble, this paper explores the lexical and ethical impact on target text production stemming from the elevated or celebrity status of the initiator and subject of the source text. This includes discussion of press articles on heads of companies such as Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer or Lee Kun-Hee; as well as on the actor Chris Hemsworth, cast in the role of brand ambassador for Hugo Boss. Reflecting corporate reputation metrics commonly applied to media tracking (and translations thereof), the analysis considers the professional challenges posed by the fact that the commissioner wishes and needs to know, as accurately as possible, how positive or negative the tone adopted might be, as the CEO acts as “the icon for many things in the business” (Ballmer, 2009).

Finally, drawing on 20 years of undergraduate teaching, it suggests the ways in which the aforementioned framework-based methodology for media tracking translation can be used to build key competencies to prepare students for today’s translation and communications digital workplace.

Thematic area: 1 and 3

Key words: media tracking, corporate reputation, initiator, training competencies

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