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The communication value of translations: A case study of Axis Communications

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Abstract

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Axis Communications is a global market leader, provider and manufacturer of surveillance solutions that is present in more than fifty countries in the world. For an international organization of such scale communication efforts stretch across locations, cultures and languages. The integral part of establishing globally consistent communication with the public, which is aligned with the brand, corporate strategy and its goals - are professional translations. Translation practices involve corporate units beyond communication departments, as well as substantial financial resources. Therefore, communication practitioners responsible for translations require a strategic approach to managing and executing these practices. The presented research aims to, first, explore the value such communication practice has for the organization, second, understand the scope and implications of translation practices internationally.

Keywords: Professional translations, Axis Communications, Communication Value Circle, international communications, corporate communications.

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Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Acknowledgments | 4 |
| 1. Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Aim - research problem | 3 |
| 1.2 Research question | 3 |
| 1.3 Delimitation | 3 |
| 1.4 Disposition | 4 |
| 2. Literature review | 5 |
| 2.1 Defining corporate communications in a global context..... | 5 |
| 2.2 Cross-cultural communication with stakeholders..... | 8 |
| 2.3 Localization vs Translation..... | 11 |
| 2.4 Synthesis | 13 |
| 3. Theoretical background | 15 |
| 3.1 Introducing interdisciplinary framework of the Communication Value Circle (CVC)..... | 15 |
| 3.2 The framework..... | 16 |
| 3.3 Use and objectives | 19 |
| 4. Methodology | 20 |
| 4.1 Symbolic Interactionism | 20 |
| 4.2 Case study | 21 |
| 4.3 Selection of the organization | 22 |
| 4.4 Description of the case organization: Axis Communications (Axis) | 23 |
| 4.5 Data collection method | 24 |
| 4.6 Sampling | 25 |
| 4.7 Analysis | 29 |
| 4.8 Ethical considerations | 31 |
| 5. Findings and Discussion | 33 |
| 5.1 Findings | 33 |
| 5.1.1 Corporate marketing department at Axis Communications (Axis) | 34 |
| 5.1.2 Current translation strategy at Axis Communications..... | 35 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 5.1.3 Relationship between translations and sales practices..... | 39 |
| 5.1.4 Managing translations locally and globally | 40 |
| 5.1.5 Planning and executing communication practices..... | 41 |
| 5.1.6 Internal communication between HQ and regions | 43 |
| 5.1.7 Balancing translation and localization of external communication..... | 44 |
| 5.2 Discussion..... | 47 |
| 6. Conclusion | 52 |
| 6.1 Theoretical contribution..... | 53 |
| 6.2 Practical contribution..... | 53 |
| 6.3 Limitations | 54 |
| 6.4 Suggestions for future research..... | 54 |
| References..... | 55 |
| Appendix 1..... | 61 |
| Appendix 2..... | 64 |

1. Introduction

Rapid globalization has brought a plethora of development and expansion opportunities for corporations. On the other hand, challenges have emerged that threaten their operations and existence altogether. Operations that stretch across many cultures are responsible for establishing communication strategies that reflect all the stakeholders, their needs and values, while maintaining a coherent brand image and staying in line with strategically viable goals. By meeting these expectations and reflecting them through corporate communication, organizations have the opportunity to establish an effective international reputation, hence, influence organizational market value.

All strategic decisions within a corporate environment must reflect on the overall value of the entity, therefore strategic communications within organizations hold the same expectations (Argenti, 2017; Zerfass, 2008). Strategic communication as a practice “of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals” (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2013, p. 74), requires defining what goals the organization finds as strategic. The issue of defining strategic goals is not an operational problem, but a managerial one. In other words, strategic communication within the corporate dimension deals with practices of high value and high return. (Zerfass et al., 2018)

The holistic understanding of how strategic communication creates value for organizations is still underdeveloped in research (Volk et al., 2017). On top of the continuous need for justification of strategic input to the overall business strategy (Zerfass et al., 2017), communication professionals are expected to contribute to new markets the company embarked on.

Each new market creates a need for a well-defined marketing and communication strategy, which entails language translation as a core element of international activities and operations. The way those new target languages are translated in products, services, supporting marketing materials, can potentially influence the value of the company itself. Without a well-defined and employed strategy, practitioners across industries are facing difficulty managing transition activities.

In addition, geographical expansion introduces and defaults new languages and makes them “standard” - as means of internal and external communications, and all its forms of adaptation through technical translations, marketing communication practices can be seen as a new hybrid dimension within the field of strategic communication. Therefore, the demand for communication professionals understanding the new complex challenges facing them in the global environment is ever growing.

This thesis explores the communicative value of translations in the global setting, where social, political and cultural context communicate meaning by the means of language. In the corporate environment the view on communication as a tool of delivering information is a limiting perception that has been acknowledged before (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014). However, overlooking the sensemaking function of translations limits companies’ capabilities in the international arena and, when done poorly, can potentially damage its reputation. Hence, translation is a practice of high risk and high reward, where change in the environment has a direct resonance in the form and shape of the communication.

If “strategic communication permeates the entire organization, thus affecting not only the traditional function that handles communication.” (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014, p.132) then translation becomes an issue of strategic value. Issues that can influence the entirety of communication practices of a company from its public presence and customer service to the way goods and services are produced.

In the context of global expansion, where adaptation of a new market can be seen as both: business opportunity and managerial challenge, successful alignment of corporate communication with business strategy can greatly impact an organization's reputation (Jüngst, 2019; Pym, 2004) and direction of global communication strategy.

Globalization urges for such alignments from a stakeholder’s perspective as well, where communities across geographies and cultures have a variety of communication requirements, needs, traditions and expectations of the organization. Therefore, strategic communication practitioners are not only expected to maintain a coherent brand image, reputation, but translate it, or localize it across all the stakeholder groups. When global expansion brings more responsibilities to all units of the organization, communication practitioners have a role of mediators between internal operations and the global public. The front-line practices that allow for a seamless international transition are professional translations (product, technical, marketing content) and the way they meet organizational goals is defined by communication strategy, marketing strategy, legal and other requirements of new markets.

This challenge has been addressed from the value creation standpoint, where communication practitioners acknowledge their undefined role in the value creation process in the organization. However, there is still lack of theoretical and practical research on what are the appropriate tactics and methods corporate communication can employ in the multilingual environment. In addition, there is little understanding of the functional place of those communication activities, professional translations in particular, within corporate strategies.

The research problem in this context can be formulated as follows:

Multinational corporations (MNC) spend their resources on translations, but there is still little understanding if and how these translations add value to the corporations.

1.1 Aim - research problem

The aim of the thesis is to, firstly, study the value creating process of translations according to Communication Value Circle (CVC) (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017) and implications of these activities in a setting of a multinational corporation (MNC). Secondly, there is a practical dimension of this work where I attempt to contribute to solving current strategic challenges surrounding international communications, as well as provide an understanding of how they unfold and, eventually, can be met.

1.2 Research question

This thesis is guided by the following research questions:

RQ: What role do translations play in the global corporate communication strategy of Axis Communications?

RQa: How do selected corporate documents reflect the strategic role of professional translations in the development of the company?

RQb: Where and how do translation related decisions take place?

1.3 Delimitation

The study aims to contribute to the understanding of the role of international communication efforts in the frame of only one single organization - Axis Communications. It is important to

keep in mind that the problem is analysed from an internal perspective focusing on the sense-making among employees and not from the position of the public and external parties. Therefore, the public perception and response is discussed only as a consequence of employees' communication efforts.

1.4 Disposition

The following qualitative case study is conducted in the following way: Firstly, literature review provides an overview of the existing research on corporate value creation, corporate communication and marketing, effects of corporate languages and translations. Further follows the theoretical background presenting the CVC framework and how it is related to the context of global expansion. The fifth chapter covers the epistemological perspective on the study, its relevance within the case, setup and design of the research taking place. Fifth part provides findings of the research project, its synergy, as well as discussion on the implications of translation activities in the value creation process. Lastly, concluding thoughts on potential future research are shared.

2. Literature review

Strategic communication denies communication as merely process of transmission of knowledge and information, but the very essence of its production and construction. “The vital aspect of strategic communication is the epistemological interests of an organization's communication” (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014, p. 132). Therefore, the process of that communication is directly and indirectly co-created by surrounding social, political groups and stakeholders (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014). In the corporate setting these stakeholders are just as diverse as in any other purpose driven organization. This complexity, instability and continuous changes in the environment require strategies that put stakeholders at its center.

Consequently, the complexity of the topic at hand is determined not only by the industry the case company operates in, but also the interdisciplinary nature of the topic at hand. The first direction of the research is to analyse existing literature in the field of corporate communication. The following sections focus on the specifications of cross-cultural communication, professional translations and localization, and their role within external communication. The literature is presented from a corporate communication standpoint, putting at a center stakeholder and all recipients of its communication efforts. The purpose of this chapter is to present existing empirical and research findings, as well as introduce related concepts.

2.1 Defining corporate communications in a global context.

In this subsection I will look at streams of research dedicated to corporate communication, stakeholder's relationship and communication value creation.

Cornelissen (2011) points out the need for communication practitioners who are capable of making decisions from not only the perspective of the organization, but also the market it operates in. Addressing this challenge allows for alignment of corporate strategies and brings communication practitioners to the decision-making table. Author explores the need for a holistic and interconnected organizational structure that allows for cross-functional communication and coordination of efforts between departments. Therefore, Corporate communication as its integral part is a”function that offers a framework and vocabulary for the effective coordination of all means of communications with the overall purpose of establish-

ing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent" (Cornelissen, 2011). Therefore, the very heart of corporate communication is its relationship with stakeholders, who in their nature can have conflicting interests (Cornelissen, 2011).

The most common example of such conflicts can be between investors and end consumers and partners. At the same time, conflict can exist even within an organization itself between its divisions with different functions and geographical locations, in case of multinational companies. This complexity has been consistently pointed out by Cristensen et.al., (2012), Cornelissen (2011), Foley & Kendrick (2006). Such misalignment of interest and consequential scattered efforts are challenged by stakeholder theory perspective (Phillips & Margolis, 1999; Grunig & Grunig 2000; Freeman et al., 2004), that argues that the goal of any organization is to maximize value for its stakeholders despite their conflicting agendas. (Freeman, 2004) Not doing so, organizations risk bearing additional costs and creating challenges around future decisions. (Grunig, 2006) However, the same stream of literature continues with prevailing emphasis on value of corporate communication for organization with very little practical implications and indications for measuring said value.

Consequently, there has been an increasing effort dedicated toward standardization of evaluation and measurement of communication efforts, with return-on-investment (ROI) as a central metric. (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Examples such as AMEC (International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication, 2021), the Public Relations Research Standards and the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, IPR (Global Alliance, 2021) - all show the increasing efforts directed toward methods for calculating value of communication. Nonetheless, Authors like (Buhmann et.al., 2018; Watson & Zerfass, 2011) claim the need for a more comprehensive evaluation method that goes beyond financial indicators, such as ROI, and takes into account qualitative contribution of corporate communication and its complex environment.

Contemporary communication departments are overloaded with vast responsibilities that are influenced by highly intercultural, globalized, digitized environments that surround organizations. In addition to pandemic and increasing need of managing rapid external and remote internal communication, these circumstances bring about a plethora of communication opportunities. At the same time, bringing a new wave of measurement challenges as well. Therefore, the next stream of literature focuses on more complex and situational measurements of the communicative investments and its reporting methods.

De Beer (2014) argues for demonstrating the value of corporate communication practices by aligning the field with all strategic management in the organization. Building on this approach a model by Zerfass & Viertmann (2017) was introduced. Communication value circle (CVC) presents a holistic picture of the entirety of business value created by corporate communications. The authors have presented an actionable system for communication professionals to justify and measure the impact they make for the overall success of the company.

Value that is created by corporate activities, including corporate communication efforts, is also defined as ‘capitals’ by the International integrated reporting framework (IR framework) (Integrated Reporting, 2021). The framework aims to provide guidelines for organizations to understand the relationship between those capitals and the value they create for them. However, a comprehensive model for indicating and presenting communicative efforts has also been proposed before. The Communication contributions framework (CCF) (Zerfass & Volk, 2018) presents a large research on the contribution of communication professionals to their organizations. The framework aligns four contributions: convey and multiply, align and contribute, steer and manage, advice and coach with strategic and operational contributions brought about by communication professionals. (Tench et al, 2017) The same research has also shown how communication management in Europe spends most of its time on operational tasks instead of providing guidance and supporting strategic decisions of the organization. However, with the increase of operational work within communication departments such indication is a realistic picture of their unpredictable environment. This reality is also supported by Volk and Zerfass (2018) that has presented the use of management tools by communication professionals, where tools for planning and execution of communication (in other words, operational) are much more widely used than those with strategic and analytical purposes.

The overarching interdependence of businesses and stakeholders is becoming more crucial, yet complex. The rise of digitalization of organizations, their consistent expansion and technological developments that allow for artificial communication, bring about more opportunities, yet even more reputational and business challenges. With the increasing rise of communication solutions (content management systems, for example) the volume of platforms and metrics rises simultaneously. On top of that, researchers in the communication field have presented multiple original models and frameworks for organizing and measuring these efforts, yet the latter is still rarely applicable in practice (Volk & Zerfass, 2018).

Evaluation and management tools gain a new meaning in times when communication efforts are digitized, social and political environments are highly unstable, where each word

can have a price and be a 'call-to-action' for a community of stakeholders and a search engine at the same time. On the other hand, stakeholder relations also gain a different perspective. Therefore, the last stream of literature in this subsection is related to external stakeholders facilitating the value creation process.

Connecting to the abovementioned stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2004; Freeman et al., 2010; Heide et al., 2018) claims that the value creation process takes into account all stakeholder groups. Hence, with a growing variety of stakeholders there is a need for a more complex measurement system (Wasioleski & Weber, 2017).

Globalization brings about non-human stakeholders and ignoring the value of such puts the organization at disadvantage making its communication efforts ineffective. When an organization systematically keeps track of the changing environment it operates in and acts on those indications, the entity is able to sustain legitimacy and improve its overall market positioning. Luoma-aho & Paloviita (2010) argue that organizations are surrounded by non-human influences (socio-cultural, political, legal, technological, spatiotemporal, ecological) that have the power to create expensive business challenges. In addition, the research explains how communication efforts are organized around issues and not businesses and stakeholders themselves. Therefore, the author is arguing for a need to rethink existing communication strategies with focus on environment analysis, by means of actors on all levels of organization.

The next subchapter is dedicated to existing research around cross-cultural communication, with emphasis on language choices in corporations and how those languages are chosen and employed by established multinational organizations.

2.2 Cross-cultural communication with stakeholders

In the past a wide range of researchers have explored the connection between language and competitive advantages those languages give when entering a new market (Mughan, 1990). However, the majority of that research was done in the 90s. Contemporary research is increasingly dedicated to internal and operational use of foreign languages (Jackson 2014). At the same time, due to highly digitized marketing, communication solutions and tools at modern multinational corporations (MNCs) are reaching foreign markets all across the globe at an increasing speed. Therefore, existing academic literature might no longer reflect the reality and scale of language issues and challenges surrounding today's MNCs.

Research of organizational management and communication has been approached from the point of different countries and their cultures (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede, 1993), where culture played an integral part in the way managerial actions are taken. While some other researchers rejected the value given to culture in communication (Hall & Hall, 1959), a mass of research continued pursuing the field of cross-cultural communication and organizational behaviour (Soderberg & Holden, 2002; Li, 2010), where cross-cultural approach is translated through all organizational activities. However, in terms of corporate organizations, the majority of that research is primarily directed to internal cultural dynamics and communication challenges they uncover (Ghoshal et al., 1994).

Communication departments of large organizations are operating in different geographies and, therefore, forced to be structured in the way that can allow for a coherent communication strategy and activities. Cornelissen (2011) points out that, when communication departments work in centralized manner, where the majority of communication professionals are located in the head office, head office staff must ensure activities among other units are coordinated and “individual business units see their part in the overall communication strategy” (p.139).

On the other hand, in such organizations central communication efforts must also be directed towards external stakeholders surrounding regional units. In words of (Brannen et al., 2017), “Operating internationally means having to interact with transcontinental intermediaries, distinct government agencies and foreign institutions, which reside in different language environments.”. Hence, authors urge for further research of language that goes beyond purely linguistic, cultural perspectives and explores its contextual and complex use within international business. In other words, looking closely at research around language as not only means of communication, but a key element for geographical expansion of the company (Bordia & Bordia, 2015) that affects all stakeholders.

The process of transformation of information from one language to another, in the frame of an organization, is an interdisciplinary process that includes socio-political, cultural contexts. Such communication by means of translation is an overlooked research area (Brannen, 2004; Brannen et al., 2017).

Researchers have focused on the notion of English language as lingua franca and its advantages and disadvantages for MNCs (Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2014; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; Piekkari et al., 2005). At the same time, other authors explored the implications of multilingual strategies (Dhir, 2005; Piekkari et al., 2005; Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999; Thomas, 2007). Authors emphasize interdepartmental and interunit communication, while

briefly or not at all mentioning communication with external stakeholders. These mentions are limited to choice of language for corresponding, speaking with the public, its tone-of-voice and maintaining narratives in line with brand identity. Language as an asset of strategic management is primarily mentioned in terms of intellectual capital of an organization (Dhir, 2005), rather than in the frame of global business dynamics (Egelhoff, 1993). Little research was found in the intersection of strategic business decisions, market and stakeholder dynamics, and their cultural and linguistic expectations.

In the frame of corporate organizations, the concept of language has been discussed as part of a corporate language strategy, which in academic literature lies within internal communications (Fredriksson et al., 2006). Corporate language, from this point, can be recognized as a managerial tool that can determine the success of operations on a global level. In addition, corporate language influences the form and meaning of information that is being used for internal and external communication. (Brannen et al., 2017) Consequently, the same global operations, in their nature, are translated from globally accepted corporate language to local languages when communication is done locally. Therefore, a form of localization strategy is underlining and being eventually implemented on a local level.

The integral part of communication strategy must take into account cultural and linguistic aspects of the markets it operates in. However, the degree those expectations are reflected in the corporate strategies is somewhat limited. This underdeveloped area of research has been pointed out by researched (Bordia & Bordia, 2015; Brannen et al., 2017), however, there is still little evidence of the a coherent place of language in corporate communication and international business as a whole (Brannen et al., 2017).

It has been also argued (Marschan et al., 1997; Yamao and Sekiguchi, 2014; Matveev & Nelson, 2004; Bordia & Bordia, 2015), that employees' perception, willingness and motivation for adopting and using a foringn language for internal use based on their nationality and culture of origin. Consequently, authors discuss how organizations can avoid communication-al resistance in the workplace. Yet, the same perspectives are not adopted to the cultural diversity of external stakeholders.

The concept of English language proficiency and corporate language in MNCs goes hand in hand with the conversation on globalization and internalization, where the need for a comprehensive approach to language choice for operational use is determined by the degree of internalization of the organization.

2.3 Localization vs Translation

Another stream of literature analysed focuses on the process of localization and translation. However, due to the highly practical and tactical nature of the topic to the MNCs and other international organizations not only academic research has been looked at, but research done within the localization and translation industry itself. Empirical evidence of the growing demand of translation and localization strategies is also explored in this subsection.

The need for product and content localization on all levels of organization has grown due to the rise of globalized companies. Localization Industry Standards Association (Fry et al., 2003) has given a definition from a perspective of a technological company: “Globalization addresses the business issues associated with taking a product global. In the globalization of high-tech products this involves integrating localization throughout a company, after proper internationalization and product design, as well as marketing, sales, and support in the world market.” Therefore, globalization is primarily a process that enables communication. (Li et al., 2020) However, the terms of globalization, localization, internalization have been used incoherently within industry itself (Pym, 2004). Therefore, first, it is important to define the terms that are used in the study. Secondly, presenting perspectives these concepts have been approached from. The overviewed materials show lack of holistic use of the concepts, due to their novelty, continuous redefinition and interdisciplinarity. The following literature has been discussing communicative consequences of the localizing practises very superficially if discussing at all. Nonetheless, there is an increasing interest around localization in the research.

Localization practices from a technological perspective defined by the industry players as a process of “combining language and technology to produce a product that can cross cultural and language barriers” (Esselink, 2003, p.21). Technological development stands at the core of localization practices, since it enables organizations to provide their products and services on the international arena. Consequently, companies had to adopt their operations to maintain consistent translation of the products by either hiring translation teams or establishing entire units that supported all the translations. (Esselink, 2003) However, since some products, like software, which features and form itself is highly dependent on the language it is built-in, the concept of internalization has arrived.

Internalization stands for “adaptation of products to support or enable localization for international markets” (Esselink, 2003) or in other words, “preparation of a generic text for multiple localizations” (Pym, 2004, p. 30). At the same time some authors use the term inter-

nalization to define companies' ability to implement local business behaviour, the degree to which its embedded policy and community norms. (Lane et al., 2006) The diverse use of the terminology still allows us to see how the success of localization of a product relies not only on the language itself, but on how well the product and the company fits the stakeholders of each market. However, research conducted by the industry shows empirical insights missing from academic literature. Language service providers, multinational companies show interest in the return-on-investment (ROI) of localization and translation and conduct their own investigations. (CSA Research, 2021)

In order to be able to communicate with their consumers across the globe and maintain the attractiveness of their brand and offering companies have employed localization practices (Alden et al., 1999). However, this communication is enabled not only by product localization, but by marketing practices that surround these products. This brings me to a second stream of literature that approaches localization from a marketing perspective.

From a marketing perspective employing cultural symbols and nuances into their communication in order to increase brand recognition and consequently establish a fruitful relationship with the local market and stakeholders. (Alden et al., 1999) For marketing and communication departments localization has a similar meaning, but a different nature, much quicker consequences and at times different values. The quantity of empirical evidence, case studies are much bigger than those related to technical translations. For example, mass translation to 22 languages done with Brexit white paper shows a great example of translation without localization, where names of some languages were translated in a way that is clearly incorrect to native speaking people (McDonald, 2018). Another example of lack of localization perspective with its culturally sensitive nuances comes from a mass demand from Chinese authorities that occurred in 2018. Brands like Zara, Marriott, Delta Airlines were requested to update their webpages, where territories like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet were listed as separate countries. (Chan, 2018) This indication of sovereignty taps into the geopolitical nature of website localization practices that can be overlooked by translation and marketing professionals.

On the other hand, it is possible to observe companies adopting their own localization techniques and strategies to fit new foreign markets. One of the examples of a localization with high returns was presented by IKEA, when the company executed its first big launch in India. Having to adjust all visual communication of the store up to its display (considering general height of people), up to its colour in order to fit in with the local communities. (BBC Two - Flatpack Empire, 2020) Most existing case studies on localization available from trans-

lation providing agencies and external news platforms. It can be assumed that industry giants are not eager to share failures and misses of such money and time-consuming operations if they can potentially reveal tactical information.

Research also shows that localization of marketing content with time has the power to bring a foreign brand to have a local value to consumers (Li et al., 2020). Unlike marketing content, highly specialized content localization is approached much differently due to its terminology and universally accepted meanings (Pym, 2004). However, it is important to see the complexity around localization in all domains from technical to marketing nonetheless, since product and marketing are highly interdependent.

An example of complexity of these communication processes within one organization can be seen in the way websites are operated. Company's websites are a gateway for companies to gain quick direct contact with their consumers and present their brand and products in an organized way (Pikhart, 2018). Modern international websites are operated through content management systems (CMS) and are faced with the challenge. Having to update content in multiple languages continuously, maintaining brand-consistent narratives with engaging, culturally appropriate and visually appealing content is a resource consuming operational challenge that involves localization, internationalization and translation simultaneously. Determining return-on-investment (ROI) in these resources presents yet another challenge for global organizations.

Due to such high interdependency of product localization and product marketing the need for a coherent management and measurement strategy for both of these processes is at play. However, academic literature has not addressed this parallel nor has acknowledged the sparse attempts of industry to solve their localization challenges in the global market.

2.4 Synthesis

From reviewing above-mentioned literature, it is possible to draw an overall conclusion on the state of research around professional translations within communication and business literature. There is a clear interest of internal dynamics that come into play when the staff is becoming highly diverse. The issues of operational management, language use, culture appropriation and relationship building - all create new flavourful and yet complex managerial challenges. Approaching these challenges from a purely linguistic, cultural or corporate perspective shows little value. Theories of management always had to be interdisciplinary, but if we cross national borders, they should become more interdisciplinary than ever. (Hofstede, 1993,

p. 89). Therefore, the relationship between language, market dynamics, globalization, digitalization of organizations, fall between multiple fields of research, such as marketing, communication, language studies and international business. This will be further researched in the setting of a single organization - Axis Communications, that is represented across languages and continents.

As a result of growing resource consuming needs among industry players, companies had to develop their own approaches to solving translation and localization issues. A deeper and broader understanding of the impact of the translated content on the global success of the organization is needed. Not being equipped with these insights, the organization risks potential losses on international markets.

3. Theoretical background

As was outlined in the introduction, it is not only about explaining the value of overall strategic communication in Axis Communications, but rather of a particular process of translation that takes place. Process of translations and its effects from a global expansion point of view. This section will present the central theory of the study and outline its use and objectives in relation to the research problem. Thus, this framework ought to be a main perspective through which the case will be presented, analysed and concluded upon.

3.1 Introducing interdisciplinary framework of the Communication Value Circle (CVC)

Research program initiated by the Academic Society for Management and Communication resulted in the Value Creating Communication (CVC) framework. In the aim to tackle the common inconsistent perception of the value communication practices bring to organizations Zyrfass and Viertmann (2017) have contributed to the project with the CVC framework. The CVC “identifies and systematizes communication goals linked to corporate goals” (p.68), in other words, demonstrates and explains the process of value creation by means of communication on a corporate level.

It is important to mention that the basis for the framework is the understanding that communication activities are prerogative of all the organizational entities and not solely the communication departments (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p.69). Communication is rather a “cross-function that aims to fulfil the organization’s mission in many different ways” (Zyrfass & Viertmann, 2017, p.69).

Before the framework takes shape, Zerfass and Viertmann (2017) define value in a corporate context. Value creation is an end goal of all corporate entities, striving for creating profit for the organization in the most productive way. Porter (1985) explains this notion in a separate value-based management concept, yet, it was closely linked to shareholder value (Rappaport, 1986), that focused on ROI as a measuring principle. In this context communication activities are only as effective as the market positioning or brand image it is able to

communicate to the shareholders. However, Zerfass and Viertmann (2017) conclude with the understanding of the value creation within not only the context of the market, but a wider political and social realm.

CVC places communication along with corporate strategy and management, where corporate strategy is at the centre of the framework, as a basis of all business decisions (Volk et al., 2017). Corporate communication is understood as not only means to administrate stakeholder relationships, but a tool that “helps to reposition the organization and adjust strategies, and can be a key driver for creating an overall supportive framework for corporate activities” (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p.72).

3.2 The framework

In order to bring corporate and communication values in a coherent order, authors have used business goals from strategic management theory as a starting point to define corporate values used in the CVC framework. Corporate values are divided into four types: tangible assets, intangible assets, room for manoeuvre and opportunities for development (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p. 72-73).

- Tangible assets – are financial and material resources that are required for maintaining shareholder and stakeholder relationships (investors, suppliers, employees, government etc.)
- Intangibles – resources for times of uncertainty and future challenges, positive intangible properties, such as brand reputation, positive customer relations.
- Room for manoeuvre – relationships and resources, such as relationships with policy makers, media, financial resources dedicated for staying a flow and maintaining operations.
- Development opportunities – resources for keeping developing and enhancing the organizational model in the ever-changing environment.

These values are then broken down into actionable corporate goals within corporate strategies. Corporate communications, at this point, is a supporting element in all four directions. These corporate goals can, therefore, be divided into twelve types of communication value that support achieving each of the corporate goals. These types create four themes of value creating activities enabled by communication: enabling operations, ensuring flexibility, adjusting strategy, building intangibles.

- Enabling operations – by maintaining internal and external operations, “builds the basis for delivering value to stakeholders”.
- Building intangibles – by managing reputation, positive brand image and establishing rich and strong corporate culture, thus, building the overall value of the organization.
- Ensuring flexibility – by maintaining relationships with stakeholders that allow for stability and innovation in the mists of instability and crisis. Those relationships with publics depend on “trust, perception of legitimacy” of companies practices and strategies.
- Adjusting strategy – by maintaining open communication with external publics and listening mechanisms (with media, market, political and social movements in the environment). This ability is key in building competitive advantages and keeping strategic goals aligned with the needs of stakeholders (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p. 75).

These four dimensions can be used as guidance for all communication goal setting and measured accordingly. However, a coherent measuring principle (such as defined by management theory - ROI) is not a realistic expectation due to a very diverse nature of communication and corporate goals. Therefore, Zerfass and Viertmann suggest using the CVC framework as a blueprint for outlining and executing corporate communication activities (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p. 74).

Looking closely at the dozen surfaced communication value elements, four stages of corporate value creation by communication were identified: enabling value creation, creating value, current value creation, future value creation (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p. 73).

The visualization of all the above-mentioned elements is available on Figure 1.

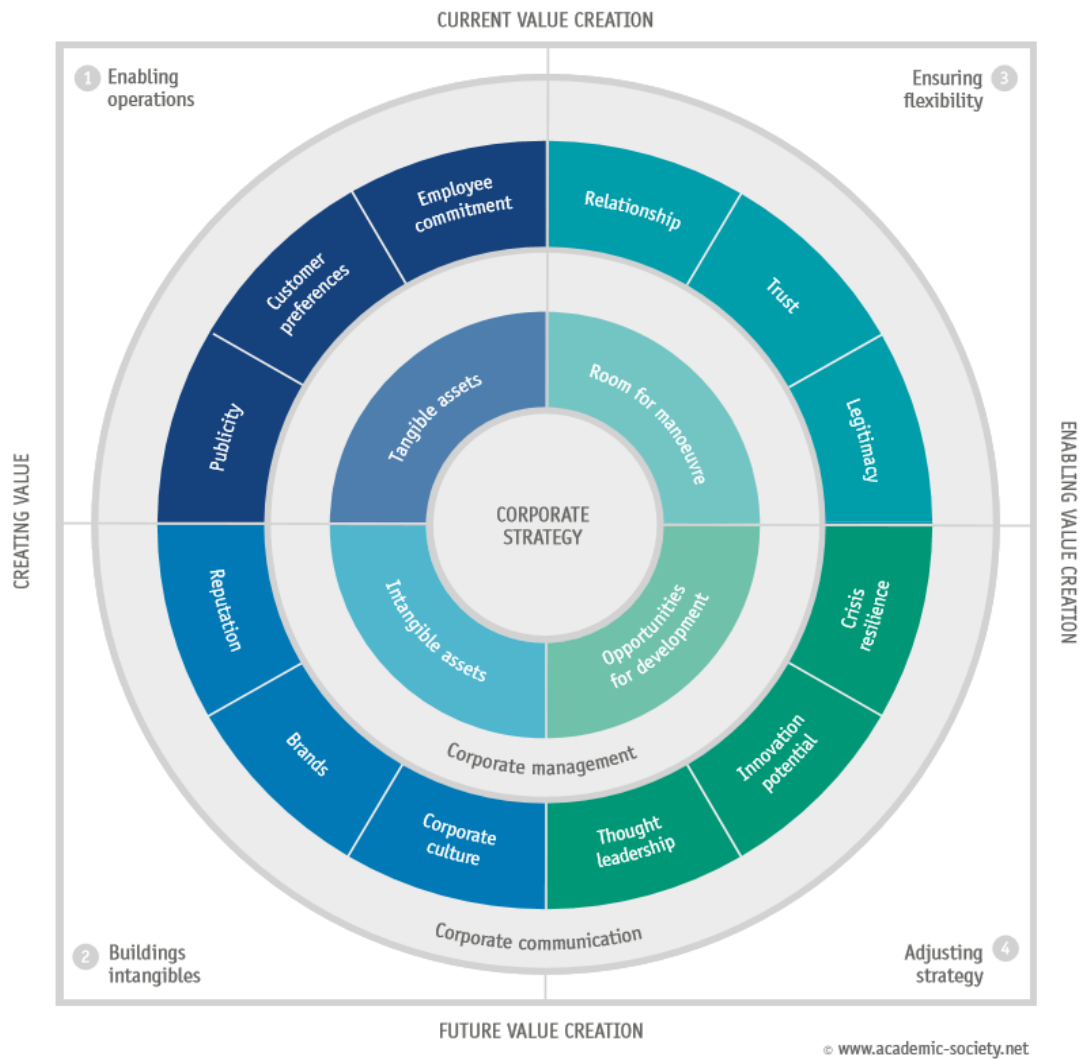


Figure 1: the communication value circle (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017)

Again, the core of the framework has to be the corporate strategy of the case organization, this strategy directs the actionable goals related to communications. Based on the business goals and direction outlined in corporate strategy, management can make informed decisions on the value creating communication activities that can bring those goals about. “This can be reflected in annual reports and statements to investors but, more importantly, in internal goals, budget allocations and incentive schemes” (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p. 74).

Authors draw multiple examples of how depending on the entity (small start-up, established business or labour union) and its environment different value dimensions should be

prioritized. Whether an organization focuses on rapid growth and brand establishment or innovation, the framework allows for prioritization and organization on any corporate function (HR, sales, corporate communication) accordingly (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017, p.74).

3.3 Use and objectives

Practical use of the CVC allows for not only alignment of communication goals with corporate strategy, but for identifying and “analysing gaps between corporate and communication goals, communicators can detect misalignments and refocus their activities” (Volk et al., 2017, p.26). Most importantly, the third issue of “Communication Insights” published by the Academic Society for Corporate Management & Communication in 2017 has also complemented these twelve values with research tools and methods, and key performance indicators (KPIs) to judge the effectiveness of communication activities aligned with them.

In order to effectively use the CVC, it must be adjusted to the specificities of a given organization: type, size, departments, field of action, stakeholders, context (p. 76). Depending on these specificities the weight of all four value dimensions should shift to meet them. Consequently, CVC takes the shape of “a management tool to identify, discuss, structure, and agree on value drivers and performance indicators in corporate communication” (p. 76).

Based on the presented theory that play central part in the study, relevant assertions to the research problem can be made:

- CVC is a working tool that can be used to align strategic communication activities with business goals (as defined by corporate strategy).
- CVC can help identify and measure the value contribution of particular communication activities.

These assertions of the theory that play a key role in the study and provide basis for the following research. With that in mind, the next chapter will deeply explain the case at hand, design of the research and methodology applied.

The model provides a basis for solving identified research problems. Translations activities are an integral part of international communications; therefore, the CVC framework can potentially aid organizations to place their translation efforts in the overall corporate strategy as well as understand the scope of these efforts and their value.

4. Methodology

The following study is conducted with qualitative methods in order to explain and understand the phenomenon of content localization in the corporate strategy and how that content creates value, in the context of a chosen organization. The phenomenon is examined from a theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism.

This chapter will outline the research approach of the study, present the case organization, introduce key objectives of the analysis, determine its limitations and ethical considerations.

4.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Chosen research paradigm for this research study is Symbolic Interactionism (SI). Symbolic Interactionism is applicable for the study at hand for its orientation towards sensemaking of different surroundings and the roles-taking mechanism employed by individuals. “Schemes of interaction become established through use but require continued confirmation by the defining acts of others” (Woods, 1992, p. 342). In the corporate environment these schemes are manifested in ways that involve both internal actors and the public. For example, “Office rituals, organizational policies, managerial styles, and new technologies are all meaningful in the sense that they evoke a variety of emotions and responses to them. As a result, they are also constantly interpreted and made sense of by managers, employees, customers, and others who come into contact with the organization.” (Prasad, 2017, p.21) Building further on this aspect, the phenomenon of localization has a symbolic meaning apart from internal actors involved in the process of content localization. Localization, as a practice of adaptation of a product to the local market (Esselink, 2003) - in the case of the study - by means of language. Consequently, Symbolic Interactionism tradition enables for understanding what place the field of localization in all its complexity occupies within the organization itself.

Therefore, I claim that the process of localisation is not just a standard repetitive operation that takes place in multinational companies but a reflection of established policies, cultures, schemes and their interaction, which are reflected in all produced content. Hence, it is a

strategically valuable communication activity that holds meaning and enables globalization and culturalization of the organizations.

Employing this tradition for the study at hand means shedding light on the meaning of localization as a strategic communication practice and the weight this meaning holds for all internal actors involved. Additionally, looking at different roles surrounding the process of localization (managers from sales and communications departments) can bring about useful knowledge on how these actors make sense of the phenomenon.

4.2 Case study

Localization and translation are an overlooked field in communication, and in order to capture its conditions and gain holistic understanding of strategic operations and decisions that take place within one closed organizational system (Bryman, 2012), a **case study methodology** was chosen.

The methodology is applicable for this study for the reasons of phenomenon complexity, unpredictable results of the investigation and ability to gain understanding of the factors surrounding translation and localization practices in the context of a complex corporate entity. In other words, allowing for “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” (Yin, 2015, p. 16).

Moving from the definition above, a contemporary corporate organization has properties of a dynamic environment with unclear boundaries between the phenomenon and the context it exists in. Additionally, the availability of involved actors who can not only be interviewed, but whose behaviour and interactions can be observed is present for the case study inquiry.

Case study aims “..to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena” (Yin, 2015, p. 37), where research design is a guiding thread to identifying appropriate data for analysis and then using that data in order to make sense of the findings. Consequently, a possible theory, or theoretical contribution can be made based on those findings.

Intention behind the study is to bring about knowledge that can be both practical and contribute to the academic field. Research design allows for adding knowledge to the existing frame of CVC and deepening understanding of how the framework can be implemented in practice. CVC is a holistic and complex framework of value creating processes, it is important to observe and analyse all its components and subcomponents within an organization,

which can not only deepen the theoretical components of the CVC theory, but test the use of the framework in action and its overall relevance to the communications practitioners.

Consequently, the chosen data sources reflect many internal perspectives, angles on the practice of localization and its value from different levels of analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). The case study will explore employees' perception of value creating capabilities of translations and whether that value is reflected in the internal documentation, as well as, show how practice of translation contributes to other vital organizational operations.

4.3 Selection of the organization

Selection of the organization was based on criteria defined by the purposeful sampling method, where” purposeful sampling requires access to key informants in the field who can help in identifying information-rich cases.” (Suri, 2011, p. 66).

Predefined list of potential case organizations was established prior to the research, however, one of the organizations had an ongoing recruitment process for a thesis writing student - Axis Communications. The company sought a student that can explore their professional translation practices and identify potential strategy improvement for the future.

The field of localization is a very narrow path that organizations of particular qualities embark on. Based on those qualities, geographical proximity, availability of communication professionals and, most importantly, organizational own need for a better understanding of localization practices, the case company was selected. In other words, “to construct a comprehensive understanding of all studies that meet certain predetermined criteria” criterion sampling was employed (Suri, 2011, p. 69). The selected criteria are:

- High number of product or service offerings
- Global exposure to all continents
- B2B orientation of business
- Scandinavian location
- Post-bureaucratic organizational structure
- Diverse teams of communication professional (from marketing and communication to PR and translation specialists)

The major influence for selection played an interest in the organization itself to put to use the research and its findings for future strategic decisions and planning. Such collaborations allowed for not only access to rich data sources, but highly fruitful interviews with internal actors and management.

The case for this study is, therefore, Axis Communications, due to predefined criteria, but also their pressing need and ambition to implement global translation strategy, highly technical and therefore niche product and global presence in more than fifty countries (Axis, 2021).

4.4 Description of the case organization: Axis Communications (Axis)

Axis Communications is a manufacturer of video and audio surveillance solutions for physical security. First, company's translation team was contacted. After agreeing on the scope of the research I eventually got access to the company, its internal Windows Team communication, which was used for conducting and recording interviews, and other platforms, including intranet (internal communication platform) that was used to collect documents for the research.

It is important to know that the target organization produces a large scope of technology from network surveillance cameras to audio systems for public broadcast and announcement. Axis Communications has a high orientation towards innovative technology for industries such as: city, retail, healthcare, education, transportation, banking, critical infrastructure, and government. (Axis, 2021) These industries provide direction for Axis marketing efforts (Marketing strategy, n.a). Founded in Lund, Sweden in 1984 corporation started as a seller of print servers quickly expanding their product line and global presence, today with 11,6 billion USD revenue in sales (by the end of Q4 2020) and presence in more than 50 countries Axis is a global market leader. Such vast presence allowed for a diverse group of interviewees and complex business strategies.

As a large multinational corporation Axis Communications business model revolves around innovation and strategy resides on three pillars: global presence, fostering sales through partnerships in local markets and continuous innovation of products and services. (Annual Review & Sustainability Report, 2020) In other words, adoption of products to different markets is one of the major strategic directions and holds high importance to the organization.

Axis holds their digital presence across different digital platforms with Axis.com as front-line communication channel with sixty-eight language and region adopted versions. This grand language base requires not only content production tailored for different markets but makes global presence seamless by providing localized company and product content.

With thousands of employees and an established partner ecosystem that involves 179 countries Axis strives to maintain and grow their global presence, while expanding their product line with more software-based solutions. (Annual Review & Sustainability Report, 2020) Ambition of further expansion, whilst operating on a geographical and cultural territory, supports Axis need for a better defined and developed language and localization strategy.

It is important to mention a few organization changes that took place at the company from 2015 till 2021. In 2015: Axis Communications left stock market due to being acquired by Canon Inc., as well as implementation of regional division into three main clusters was executed through 2021 moving from ten regions to - Asia Pacific (APAC), Europe, Middle-East and Africa (EMEA), and North, Central and South America (Americas). This led to restructuring of global sales and marketing departments. This change has affected all the employees that participated in the research and has been acknowledged during the interviews. This time of change has to be accounted for as a context when following the next Chapter 5 - Findings.

4.5 Data collection method

The first qualitative method used in this research is semi-structured interviews, focusing on the main research question as well as RQb, while the second analysis method focused on public texts and documents, bearing insights into the RQa research question of the study. Both sources of data are coded into the same themes and their combination aims for avoiding some possible biases of investigation (Bowen, 2009).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews as a data collection method benefits the study by providing understanding from a personal standpoint of the context within which the translation and localization practices unfold (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The aim of this method is in line with the theoretical framework of the research and allows for uncovering the sense-making process of the participants. Since translated content is meaningful in the context within which it is used, this meaning varies depending on the political, cultural and personal qualities of both its creator and recipient. Therefore, qualitative interviews enable participants to share their own experience as receivers and creators of content.

The interviews are guided by the predetermined interview guide (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), however, the questionnaire is not a strict document and was followed based on the course of the interview. (Appendix 2) Key questions have been asked of all the participants, but most questions aimed to stay flexible and open for modifications.

The second data source used in the research is document analysis. This method is used in order to, first, learn the historical development, changes and events that underwent with the organization and its actors. Second, documents play the role of evidence for the data accumulated from the interviews. This analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the organization and the context within which both the phenomenon and interviewees exist (Merriam, 1988). Lastly, documents provide basis to the questions of the interview. Within the current case study research, documentation is a valuable source of data, where knowledge on the policies, strategic plans and global vision for the organization directly influence the way translation practices unfold.

4.6 Sampling

As the sampling of the case organization, the chosen sampling method for the qualitative study at hand is also purposeful sampling. Stratified purposeful sampling is used for selected interviewees and criterion sampling - for selected documents.

Interviews

Purposeful sampling is one of the most popular methods of identifying and gathering data from actors who happen to be knowledgeable on the phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015). However, the technique of the sampling does not only reflect a narrow field of the thesis, but also allow for “information-rich cases” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p.1) and reflect perspectives of internal stakeholders that surround the objective of the study. Therefore, the primary sampling technique of stratified purposeful sampling shows to fully serve this purpose.

Stratified purposeful sampling approached global, regional and local communication specialists dealing with translations from three major business regions: Asia Pacific (APAC), Europe, Middle-East and Africa (EMEA), North, Central and South America (Americas). At the same time this sampling strategy aims to identify a variety of ways the phenomenon manifests not ignoring the commonality that might surface. In words of Patton (2002, p. 240) “the purpose of a stratified purposeful sample is to capture major variations rather than to identify a common core, although the latter may also emerge in the analysis. Each of the strata would constitute a fairly homogeneous sample.”

Nine employees were interviewed during the research. Over the course of seven weeks the interviews were conducted with each person individually. The participants represented a

wide range of departments and managerial levels. However, due to the limitations of research timeframe and availability of professionals, not all intended departments are represented.

The guiding principle for selecting participants was its internal hierarchy, where a global translation team oversees all the translation projects from headquarters. The team has advised me on the non-English speaking regions that require translation and localization support. However, I aimed to include at least one representative of each region (Americas, EMEA and APAC) including the global headquarters (HQ). Twenty-seven countries are represented in the interviews, country names are left out due to the ethical considerations.

The interviewees were selected based on their involvement with the content translation, role and the region of responsibility. The professionals were contacted individually by email, the project was introduced with the help of a presented information sheet and consent form in the same email (Appendix 1). All participants agreed to participate and provided their written consent before each interview took place.

| Occupation | Region | Interview duration |
|--|----------|--------------------|
| Global sales manager | HQ | 40-45 min |
| Global marketing manager | HQ | 40-45 min |
| Global translations manager | HQ | 55-65 min |
| Global translations coordinator | HQ | 55-65 min (twice) |
| Regional marketing and communications manager | EMEA | 40-45 min |
| Marketing and communications coordinator | Americas | 55-65 min |
| Senior marketing and communications specialist | APAC | 55-65 min |
| Regional marketing and communications specialist | APAC | 55-65 min |
| Marketing coordinator | EMEA | 55-65 min |

Table 1: Overview of the interviewees

Localization practices are contextual, they stretch throughout geographies and managerial levels. Therefore, to “examine the variations in the manifestation of a phenomenon” (Suri, 2011, p.70) in different countries, while still trying to give a deeper understanding of

higher management perspectives from a global standpoint, which is a very homogenous group of actors.

Documents

Documents involve three types of data: public records, personal documents and physical evidence (O’Leary, 2014). Based on the nature of the study and its case subject I focused primarily on public records. Public records are officially published records of corporate activities.

Documents are selected based on their central topic, source, date of creation and last editing and availability. First, public documents were found, those are available on the official website of the company Axis.com and are shared by the internal communication channel of the company (intranet). The keywords search in the internal platform of the company was used in order to find documentation that was not easily accessible by the public and was intended for internal use. For example, communication policy, marketing strategy and performance reports. The complete list of documents used for the analysis as follows:

- Portfolio strategy;
- Marketing strategy;
- Communication policy;
- Corporate strategy;
- Annual reports for the past 2-3 years;
- Public performance reports;

Description of the data those documents represent and, therefore, reasoning for their selection is presented in Table 2.

Just as the interviews, documents were reviewed and broken down into smaller text units that were thematized based on the predetermined and emerged themes and analysed accordingly.

| Document | Analysed data |
|--|---|
| Localization strategy - presentation intended for internal use | Process of translation and localization from the perspective of the headquarter office. |
| Portfolio strategy | Strategy for Axis solutions in accordance to the segments, market potential and regional division. |
| Marketing strategy | Existing marketing strategy based on product segmentation. |
| Communication policy | Guiding principles for external communication efforts at the company. |
| Corporate strategy | Understanding the vision and mission of the organization, its alignment with the global goals and priorities. |
| Annual reports for the past 3 years | Before and after new regional set up with three head regions. Special attention is paid to the market presence section. |
| Public performance reports | Exploring the performance metrics across the past years. |

Table 2: Selected sample of Axis Communications documents.

It is important to keep in mind the biases of such document selection that lies in the source of those documents. Official records and reports are only published if they have gotten through the internal screening process for ethical and legal considerations. Nevertheless, it's important to use those documents as a guiding map of all internal operations and processes and employ its functions. According to Bowen (2009) there are five main functions that need to be kept in mind while undergoing document analysis:

- document analysis gives an understanding of the setting within which interviewees are working, context to the phenomenon, in other words “provide background information as well as historical insights” (Bowen, 2009, p. 29),
- provides indication of a possible questions that should be asked on interviews,
- provides complimentary data to the existing data on the subject matter,
- helps notice, subtle or not, changes that occurred in the organization,
- can be used as a verification tool for other sources of data.

The case at hand requires deep understanding of not only the process of translations, but of the entirety of external communication throughout multiple regions. In such a complex case document analysis covers a substantial amount of information about organization, its practices, operations, goals and measurements. Another advantage of such a method is high availability, where Axis Communications as a public company has many public records and documents available for both internal and external use. (Bowen, 2009) General conclusion of document analysis is drawn upon all the presented documents without indications of its exact source.

Available documents have been published in accordance with the internal policies and represent an desirable picture of the organization, however, the phenomenon studied aims to understand those exact internal policies and how they represent practices of translation. Therefore, the strategic documents under scrutiny will be able to reveal important insights regardless.

4.7 Analysis

The overarching aim of document and interview analysis was identifying communication goals according to CVC framework. Therefore, the framework worked as a guiding map to identify possible evidence that indicate the current relationship between communication activities and business strategy and, consequently, the value those communication activities bring to the organization.

Interviews were conducted not only with localization and marketing and communication management in HQ, but also regional marketing and communication specialists that use the localized communication materials. The subjects are chosen in order to not only understand the perspective of strategic management, but also give voice to field professionals that are involved with day-to-day localization processes.

Such interviews gave an understanding of the use of localized materials on target locations, on the strategies behind the communication materials and thought process behind decisions that lead to internalization. However, with the managerial and geographical spread of the company it is important to keep in mind the limitations of such broad selection.

Selected documents, on the other hand, are based on the central part documents play in answering the research questions. Operational practices of corporations are highly standardised and, therefore, must be documented. From this point of view, localization practices that

require financial and human resources must therefore find their evidence in the official records. The RQa research question revolves around corporate strategy as a main indication of alignment of practice with the overall strategy. Therefore, lack of such indication points to a specific state of the investigated theme and calls for further explanation (Bowen, 2009).

The data sources are analysed in seven stages: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Each stage is pre-planned, where themes are determined throughout the analysis process.

The conducted interviews can be described as qualitative, descriptive and specific (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), where I attempt to understand different perspectives on the same practice and the meaning interviewees give to those practices. While also finding out how diverse those practices are from location to location and give clear examples of the measurement strategies they employed so far. Therefore, stage one of analysis has included formulating the aim and purpose of the study as well as establishing key themes prior to interviews and document review.

During the second stage of investigation I have planned the methodological part of the research, determined the stages and strategy of investigation, as well as gotten in contact with the case organization, interviewees and selected documents. On this stage participants were presented with an informed consent form and information sheets, which were made available to the participants prior to each interview (Appendix 1). The information sheet allows for familiarizing with the research topic and purpose of the interviews, data collection process and possible ethical concerns. Interviewees were involved on a voluntary basis and their identity remains confidential for the public. Proceeding with the interview was possible only after receiving an approval to the consent form.

The third stage involved conducting interviews with the aid of the interview guide (Appendix 2) and reviewing documents. Interviews and document review took place simultaneously over the course of seven weeks. Each interview was recorded with the use of Microsoft Teams platform. Before the analysis took place, based on the literature review, key coding themes have been identified: *strategic goals, localization, translation, language, corporate value*. However, the emerged coding themes have exceeded predetermined ones. At the same time, the complexity of the central topic was clearly visible by the way some of the coding themes interconnected with each other. Therefore, thematized between the emerged coding themes was necessary for maintaining coherence of the context and actuality of the results.

Then stage four took place, where all interviews were first transcribed and analysed based on emerging themes of each interview. Coding process has proved to be the most time consuming and required multiple alterations and adjustments. Eventually, I was able to create a set of codes that have emerged from all the sources of data. Due to potentially sensitive content some details about the participants and projects are left out, the same applies to documentation. Not all codes and quotes are included in the final research due to the same limitation as well as the word-limitations of the paper.

As was mentioned the interviews and document review have taken place simultaneously. However, after reading most of the key documents, I have formed an assumption of where localization practices align with corporate goals (CVC): Tangible assets and Room for manoeuvre, which align with communication goals of publicity, customer preferences, employee commitment, relationship, trust, legitimacy. Nonetheless, those assumptions had to be tested and examined after the entirety of the data was collected.

Consequently, in order to understand what place localization takes in the corporate strategy and what international strategy is employed on all levels it was important to develop a joint coding themes (using Excel) where all existing and emerged themes were presented and categorized with supporting interview quotes and text units from the documents.

Lastly, verification of information took place throughout the research, where claims were checked through presented internal documentation as well as by interviewing one of the translation team members twice for verification of claims of the local professionals. In other words, the methodological technique used in this study was triangulation. This technique allowed to combine “multiple lines of sight” (Berg, 2001, p.4) on a reality by using different sources of data and analysing phenomenon from different angles. Triangulation is not merely a way to combine data, but rather a tool for intertwining data points to create a holistic understanding of reality. (Berg, 2001) Collecting data by data source triangulation is a technique that allowed for a deeper investigation of the phenomenon.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are an important part of the investigation on any organizational level. Prior to the research, participants have been informed of the rights they have as interviewees, as well as in the form of information sheet and consent form. Confidentiality of participants is maintained throughout the research, however, the case organization is an enclosed system, where employees can potentially communicate with each other and share their experiences of

participating in the research. This is one of the limitations of the study, where confidentiality can be guaranteed only publicly outside the organization itself. However, measures for maintaining confidentiality within the organization have been taken. No personal information about other participants has been shared with the members of other teams and locations apart from the global translation team that provided guidance for the selection of participants in the first place.

The ethical risk of in-depth interviews is that I as a researcher could influence the way participants engage with me and the questions. At the same time my role as an outsider and the complex topic at hand that aims to expose internal operations might be perceived as threatening to the participants. The interviewees can find themselves in conflicting beliefs of what consequences might follow their honest reflections and criticisms, perhaps disturbing their existing operations as well as their relationship with management. However, this aspect has been addressed directly before each interview, when I explicitly described the motivation of the organization to improve operations and gain a better understanding of the local processes. However, if the interviewee was reluctant to address certain issues or examples the interview carried on in the direction that showed to be more comfortable for the participant.

Lastly, the biggest ethical consideration was my personal role in the organization as an enrolled thesis writing student. This role is considered to be a position of temporary employment. Therefore, the risk of influencing research results based on my personal perception of the organization as well as on the expectations that the organization has for it are present.

5. Findings and Discussion

The current chapter is structured in a way to allow for the introduction of important findings from the research, which is followed by a synthesized discussion. The discussion will present the overall evaluation of those findings and will align them with the central theory of CVC. Furthermore, this section attempts to shed light on the role translations can play in an organization, by describing the process of translation across different markets and exploring the scope of processes enabled by translations.

Consequently, the chapter focuses on answering identified research questions, explaining current processes of the case organization itself, as well as exploring the role of translations for external communication.

5.1 Findings

Through the process of interviewing, analysing and thematizing, new following results have emerged. To answer the research questions those themes have been categorized accordingly.

Keeping in mind the identified research questions are as follows:

RQ: What role do translations play in the global corporate communication strategy of Axis Communications?

RQa: How do selected corporate documents reflect the strategic role of professional translations in the development of the company?

RQb: Where and how do translation related decisions take place?

The research questions are addressed by the themes that emerged, such as current translation strategy, managing translations locally and globally, planning and executing communication practices and internal communications, relationship between translations and sales practices and balancing translation and localization. However, from the mentioned themes new insights and conclusions can be made on the state of internal communication at Axis and

the communicative roles of professionals working with translated content. These insights are further explored in the discussion section of the chapter.

The following subchapters are organized thematically, in order to allow the reader to understand the current translation processes at the case organization, the scope of translation activities and the influence it has on the organization's overall performance. The last subchapters explore the current translation activities at local offices of Axis Communications around the world.

5.1.1 Corporate marketing department at Axis Communications (Axis)

Central role in the research plays department of Corporate marketing and, primarily, its digital marketing subdepartment. The following description of the department's work is based on the interviews with its members and internal documentation.

Branching from the digital marketing department are three professionals who are in charge of the majority of translated content that is produced by Axis headquarters: marketing technology manager with translation project manager and translation coordinator, further referred to as 'the translation team'. These are primary actors in most translation related projects who oversee production of 80% of almost all of translated content across the company. With confidentiality clauses and ethical concerns in mind (Appendix 1) in this subchapter I will only briefly describe and outline the department's structure and main operational processes leaving out ongoing projects and personal details. Further evaluation and analysis of the marketing practices and translated materials will be discussed deeper.

Over the course of this thesis work the translation team has undergone changes whilst being assigned a new place within the marketing department: moving from 'Product, solutions marketing and training team' to 'Digital transformation and marketing technology' team. However, these changes have not affected the primary topic of the research nor has it affected my access to data.

It is important to understand the scope of materials and volume of translated content that is being produced and adopted with the efforts of the translation team. Each Axis product has at least 4 kinds of supporting documents: user manual, installation guide, data sheet, brochures, and licences. With more than 500 product units produced by Axis and sold in 179 countries these documents can be translated to more than 10 languages at a time. On the other hand, Axis also has software-based products that allow users to switch its interface language from

English (default language for all products) to one of the supported languages. Therefore, any changes and edits in the document or product itself can activate a chain of events that involves developers, technical writers, marketing managers, partners in countries that sell the product and their consumers. Lastly, translation of the company's main communication channel - official webpage Axis.com is also being handled entirely by the dedicated three-party team. Therefore, apart from campaign related materials, marketing flyers and brochures, which are only a minor part of all product related content, the rest of translations are being handled by the translation team.

Due to large volumes of content, requests and new products being launched and updated the overarching goal of the team is to establish efficient and clear automated processes for translation to be done smoothly. In order to reduce not only the number of translation requests, but the human and economic resources the team is continuously working on identifying process improvement opportunities. The opportunities involve development of automation translation tools as much as of a holistic global translation strategy (or equivalent) that can help Axis make informed strategic choices around content translation: language prioritization and, as the result, determining value of those translations.

5.1.2 Current translation strategy at Axis Communications

Interviewed translation team has expressed the need for guidance from the higher management on the global direction and strategy of translation activities. However, it is important to determine how exactly the headquarters (or corporate, central office) has been approaching translation activities within the corporate strategy currently. This subchapter explores the position sales and marketing management has on translations globally and how a translation team at the central office, as well as in local offices, have been operating meanwhile.

In the setting of the global organization Axis Communications, overseeing all the operations is a challenging managerial function. However, regional divisions are in place in order to distribute such responsibilities throughout the organizational hierarchy. In case of Axis Communications a new system of regional division took place in 2020-2021, where instead of 10 global regions there are now three: Americas (North, Central and South America), EMEA (Europe, Middle-East and Africa) and APAC (Asia Pacific). Such a change in the setup allows for better flexibility and communication within the regions, while simultaneously allowing for a holistic perspective on the processes within the company. This aspect was raised by the interviewees in the head office of Axis.

By having the head regions, it should be easier also to prioritize, because then you should have the requests coming from a head regional level instead of a regional level. So there should be fewer voices to prioritize from and to align with.

Because translations are being dealt primarily by marketing and communication specialists in various locations, the global marketing management shared their perspective on the global direction of translation. However, no dedicated attention to the translations as part of the marketing agenda was shown in the empirical findings. Moreover, the interviewee from the marketing management team has expressed conviction that it's the global sales department that holds the responsibility for determining translation strategy and benefits from it the most. Therefore, the sales team should be expected to drive those activities in close collaboration with the local offices. This relationship between the sales departments and the communication professionals on local markets is a theme that was brought up throughout all interviews and requires special attention in the following section of the chapter.

On the other hand, global sales management, while acknowledging the importance of the translation strategy for Axis, agreed that *the translation strategy should reside within the sales and marketing strategy and expressed* the opinion that translation related discussion should take place within the marketing agenda instead. This dissonance of understanding of the strategic place and value of translation practices for Axis results in the efforts that are based primarily on professional judgment of the translation team members and not on the agreed upon regional or global strategy.

The translation teams must consistently make decisions which determine what region or country, language or material deserves to be prioritized on a global level. So far, the team has been making these decisions *on some kind of best guess basis*. These decisions are not supported by an overarching marketing or sales strategy or plan, nor are they informed by local market dynamics and priorities, hence leaving the team in the dark and to themselves. Consequently, they are not strategic.

We have nothing to lean on. Having such strategy from top management shows - how they see us moving forward. For example, since we're a premium brand, we have a presence in the country where we need to have a certain level of localized or translated content.

The current research shows that the global translation team is approached as a content hub by regional communication teams. This created a strategic communication issue, with regional offices making strategic decisions related to translation on their own. For example, the regional marketing manager has explained how the business potential of a country or region plays the main role in their translation decision, along with its political challenges and ability of internal staff to support that region continuously. In other words, the regional marketing management takes upon itself to do market research on each region under their responsibility, ensuring that whichever language is being invested, it is beneficial and manageable for the company. This shows that even with the lack of one global translation strategy regions have, nonetheless, been employing one locally. On the other hand, the same decisions have to be made by the translation team in the headquarters globally. However due to their isolation from the sales and marketing strategy as well as from the regions decisions within the translation team are made based primarily on historical actions and accumulated experience or, in other words, from the point of internal operations rather than global dynamics.

[language name] was not a target language when I started. And then three or four products needed [language name] in the installation guide. And after a while, it just became easier to translate everything to [language name], to not have to keep track of what should and shouldn't be translated.

Another example was shared by a team member, illustrating how the lack of strategy influences not only their decision making, but the overall global presence of the company:

[...]one person was driving that really hard a few years ago. And he was saying that, "look, if we don't have a website, and the documentation in our language, we're never going to be able to sell anything here." Now, that kind of that issue, bounced around in the organization, and nobody really wanted to take it, they say that they don't know.

While the global office faces issues of prioritization and strategic planning, local offices, as was mentioned previously, are executing their own translation strategy. Here, it is also important to clarify what language support means and how a decision to translate materi-

als or webpage to a new language comes with a price higher than just translation cost. Translations of content regardless whether it is marketing or technical is done in order to communicate with the partner and end consumer. However, establishing such a communication channel must be a strategic managerial decision. This was pointed out by a few of the interviewed employees, explaining how adding a language for translation is a long-term investment decision that affects not only the marketing team, that in some cases has to create and share the content, but also the engineering and sales teams that have to spend time proofreading these materials. It is important to understand here that among other duties sales engineers take on themselves proofreading responsibility, where technical and even marketing content has to be validated by the local engineers before it is available to the public.

In addition, the very availability of a local translation creates a certain amount of unrealistic expectations. Several examples were shared during the interviews on the risks of overselling the company to a smaller market with no local offices, nor employees who can provide customer service in the language of that market.

We want to do some translation for some products. But it's not possible if they haven't got the people in place to sell the product.

We could say let's translate everything that is possible! But if you deliver something in (language name), the customer can expect that you will be dealing with him in the same language, which is not possible.

Thus, there proved to be no set strategy around translations on a global level. While it is understood that the strategy must reside somewhere between the sales and marketing agenda, the management has conflicting opinions on where on that spectrum the responsibility lies. On the other hand, regional management has established its own processes around translation investments and has a grasp on the scope of translation needs within their regions. In the next subchapter the connection between translation ability and sales performance is scrutinized. As well as, examining the entirety of the content translation process between global and local offices and what challenges local communication professionals are facing in this regard.

5.1.3 Relationship between translations and sales practices

The value of translation for the international success of Axis has been a red thread of the research and manifested in many conversations with the employees. This perspective has been acknowledged by both central and local management. In the words of one of them: *All localization, and adaptation is actually a cost to be able to sell it in that specific market.* No interviewee hesitated when exploring the business benefits of translated content. It appeared that return-on-investment (ROI) in translations drives local translation decisions as well.

[country name], for example, which is pretty small from the business side for us.. But still, we understand that without the localization of the content, it's almost impossible to address the market.

The same was acknowledged by a member of the global translation team:

Axis couldn't sell a lot of the products without the translations. We simply couldn't win any tenders without having translations.. In many countries, you're not interested in buying, if you can't get at least some of the information in your local language.

However, both of these examples primarily refer to technical content translations, while marketing content appears to hold a supporting function to the already established presence in the foreign market.

Further, it became evident how different approaches to the translation investment have developed among the different regions, highly dependent on their geographical size and market situation. For example, in smaller countries with lower command of English, localization provides a competitive advantage. Where, quoting a participant: *not many of the competitors have it (materials) in local language, at least those competitors that are our level.* At the same time without localized product materials in countries with medium or big market potential and low command of English, a competitive race is being lost to local brands, even the less established ones.

The value of translations to the global performance of the company was also demonstrated during a conversation with a translation team member that recalled an unfortunate

event of a translation agency going bankrupt. This occurrence has left Axis without accumulated translation memory and no alternative sources of translation.

It was total chaos. And the only reason why we survived through is that Axis was such a small company in those days [...] That meant that we had to start translating again, that was a huge cost[...] So when the translations aren't done on time, that delays the launch of the product, which is extremely expensive for Axis.

However, both the global translation team and local communication practitioners indicated that no risk mitigation, nor measurement system has been employed so far to determine the actual financial ratio of technical translation. Investment potential of marketing translations was noted to be hard to determine with purely quantitative methods, however some examples were shared, nonetheless.

*We notice when we post something in English, the engagement rate is much lower, as compared to doing it in [language name]. But they shoot up by at least like 50 - 60% when we have this in local language
I can see even from the click through rates[...] people don't engage with the English content.*

The ability to determine the value of both technical and marketing content has, beyond assumptions, but factually, allowed for avoiding the potential risks that neglecting translation processes can bring. Well communicated and informed translation strategy will not only give a strategic direction to existing communication efforts, but also provide a basis for effective future investments. These investments are happening regardless, both centrally and locally. However, there is no coherent way of measuring their success.

5.1.4 Managing translations locally and globally

While translations within Axis apply to external content either marketing or product related, referred to as 'technical'. However, due to the very nature of the organization and its technology driven products and solutions, all content, even marketing, can be seen as highly technical. This creates a certain marketing challenge, where in order to make the product and the

organization itself appealing to the target audience, communication professionals must create a coherent and trustworthy narrative around it. Communicating a brand identity and its offerings globally is a responsibility closely tied to the translation process. As explained by one of the interviewees, this process can take up to 50% of time for some of the local communication professionals at Axis. It was pointed out by the central management team that due to the rapid digitalization and growth that Axis has had in recent years, some processes and functions have been developing outside the operational structure, translations being one of them. Consequently, local communication practitioners have shared cases and challenges of managing translation activities.

5.1.5 Planning and executing communication practices

When it comes to translation of a heavy marketing or technical content some communication practitioners facilitate the process of receiving translation from the agency and sending it to the sales teams for proofreading, and this process can be repeated multiple times if the proofreader makes amendments. This process is in place for two main reasons: first, in order to validate the legitimacy and applicability of the translation of highly technical texts, second, to increase content quality and create a more automated translation process by collecting each change and correction suggested by the local proofreader in a centralized manner.

These two goals motivated the need to establish a close partnership with the translation providing agencies, one that takes upon itself to translate marketing content and the other which does the technical translations, creating a centrally managed translation process. Some local proofreaders work with the agency directly, some do not, as was mentioned by the translation team member. Nonetheless, in both cases the overarching issue that was brought up is whether the value of the translated content is worth the time the proofreader spent on it.

Sometimes it's missing this common understanding: what is the purpose of the translation? I see several examples: we got something from a centralized agency, without clear information on what we translated, and why we should invest time in something which nobody requested.. nobody explained why and nobody asked us.

[..] because then they wouldn't do double work, they wouldn't translate something that we are not using. And we wouldn't have to validate something that we are not going to use.

The lack of an open communication channel with the central office that distributes translations centrally is an internal communication challenge, which has shown to lead to employee dissatisfaction. Teams at the headquarters are perceived to have a one-sided relationship with the local teams. This position supports the assumption that for proofreaders as well as for marketing specialists, if translation is done centrally and requires proofreading it is of higher importance and has the first priority over content that might be translated locally. In addition, such one-sided communication manifests in other processes as well.

A few cases have been shared from all interviewed regions of Americas, EMEA and APAC, where translated content distributed from the headquarters related to products that are either not available in the region or has wording that is culturally or politically inapplicable.

And then we have to literally remove that whole chunk of text that HQ has and replace it with, another technology [...] So before I even get a translator, I need to change the English version first, and then get approval to that change. And then only after that, I can translate to the local language. You have to change the content itself. Before you can even translate it.

The local sales and marketing teams show the ability to work as a filter screen and use their knowledge of the local market and its underlying cultural dynamics. At the same time, sales and marketing are interdependent on each other in the translation process, not only because marketing comes as a source of content. With variations, but all regions have expressed some form of collaboration between sales and communication employees. From Latin America to South East Asia communication practitioners consult with sales engineers on what marketing content is applicable for the region, its legitimacy and applicability. Moreover, sales teams are the source of most marketing activities in the regions and provide a basis for all local translation decisions.

We always talk with the sales team before we even decide whether or not to translate something.

This relationship demonstrates how translation activities are a link between sales and marketing, where one cannot exist without the other.

5.1.6 Internal communication between HQ and regions

Throughout the research crossings between headquarters and regions have been at the center of all translation activities and not only due to the centralized translation process. Distribution of marketing content appeared to be a passive one-sided process, where central teams decide the product segmentation priorities and therefore influence marketing activities of the regions. It is clear that local communication professionals are free to expand the scope of materials and activities, however the direction can greatly be influenced *from above*. On the other hand, locally based professionals are aware of their responsibility to be a gateway into the local market for the global teams. Yet, when prioritization (of marketing content, product segments) set by the central office does not match the local needs and abilities, the local teams are faced with conflicting decisions. Some communication professionals shared how they are forced to go extra length to get across their ideas and suggestions.

it's very important to know what's going on in that country, you know, before we even tell them that this is a focus segment. [...] During the kickoff, they mentioned that retail is a key segment, but everyone in [region name] knows that no, not gonna work for us [...] it came to a point of like, should we force the salespeople to do it anyway? [...] So that's where the hybrid solution came about where I did my research, and reached out to all sales people to give their feedback.

And we decided we will actually focus our industrial campaign, which is not a key focus for HQ. But it is a key focus for us, because we have a lot of factories here in [language name].

Having to initiate conversation on the market potential reflects the multifunctionality of communication roles in the hierarchy of an international organization. This case also demonstrates a highly common communication issue between the headquarters and the regions within multinational corporations (MNCs). The practices discussed in this section demonstrate the importance and need of continuous relationship building and sensemaking efforts from both sides. This position has also been supported by one of the translation team members.

I would appreciate a more open channel of communication with our local offices. They are very busy with their own lives [...] But from my perspective, it would be valuable to have a more frequent communication [...] headquarters is I think, often seen as a source of material. I don't know how much else they want or need from us [...] daily communication with us is not their top priority.

The research also demonstrated the lack of communication between the regions and local communication offices. Thus, creating incoherent goals setting for created content that is either being edited locally or left out altogether. Therefore, without employing market knowledge of local communication and sales practitioners some communication efforts can potentially harm the brand in the foreign market.

5.1.7 Balancing translation and localization of external communication

Before exploring the way translation and localization manifests within Axis, it is important to be reminded that it is a complex set up that needs to consider multiple elements of translation production. For example, there appeared to be chain dynamics that came into play when the benefits of central or local translation were discussed. The sources of translation, which are central or local agencies, are highly influenced by the type of content (technical or marketing) that needs to be delivered. Depending on the type of content the issue of localization vs translation naturally surfaces. Therefore, a conversation between the communication professionals can only be effective when all aspects of content translations are taken into account.

The relationship between translation and localization exists on many levels of an organization, from product development to social media. The research shows that localization is crucial for all regional offices. Localization enables communicators to create an appealing story for a demographic around a product, and, as a result, making a brand seem more local and hence trustworthy alongside other foreign brands.

Technical and marketing content require different types of localization. Central translation team however does not actively differentiate the two based on their nature.

There's a very fine line between technical and marketing material, because Axis is a technically driven company.

Central teams provide both types of content to the rest of the regions in the world. However, marketing content tends to be actively produced locally as well. One of the motivations behind local content creation is the lack of localized materials. When exploring this topic with the local teams, communication professionals explain that through marketing content they try to create context and a narrative that can help potential consumers have a better grasp of how the technology can benefit them. Marketing content shared by the central team does not always allow this. A couple examples that were shared during the interviews are of materials that explained how surveillance solutions help reduce crime rates, how it can be used in casinos or be worn on the clothing (body-worn cameras). Such messages frame technology in a context, creating meaning and associations for the audience. However, when messages are highly contextual, they cannot be simply translated. Messages with crime rates must reflect actual numbers of each region that speaks the translated language, casinos in some countries are frowned upon and body-worn cameras are used in very limited parts of the world. Therefore, it might not be enough to simply translate content, but not localize it. Central marketing teams spread and translate them to local languages that end up never using them in the first place. These examples show that localization goes beyond merely using appropriate grammatical structures, but also taking into account the unique socio-cultural background of the region.

Sales management team takes localization as an important part of their international presence or in their words *I definitely believe that if you really want to be serious, at least on the bigger markets, you need to do local translation adaptations to be valid*. On the other hand exploring the topic of localization translation team that deals with continuous requests and edits had a different position on the subject:

We do translations, we do not do localization. And that is a trade off, we have to do. I would love to be able to do localization and to change the contents that would affect the market. But we can't, there's no way we can do that. We have to employ people in every language or the regions. I can't see that working because it would cost too much. ‘

They know their customer and I have to be humbled towards what, we are so far away from the market and the customers [...] As long as they don't start building parallel processes and are working with their own translation agencies and disrupting the automation [of translation], then if they

want to spend time tweaking messages, fine. But I would rather they give us that feedback. So we can go to the agency and say - look, we don't use this word.

Nonetheless, the research shows that communication professionals on location are taking upon themselves to localize the messaging. Such measures are employed in order to keep any public presence, otherwise non-localized content cannot be used in any form leaving the efforts of translating it unjustified. Therefore, communication specialists have urged for a balance between centralized and decentralized processes. There is a common understanding, especially among smaller regions, that have only one person responsible for content creation and validation, that, quoting a regional manager: *centralized translation is better and it can be more valuable for the teams like we are here. So this effectiveness and the level of the translation is really key for us.* The same was mentioned during interviews with all local offices mentioning the desire of having only one source of translated and localized content. Therefore, centrally or locally, communication practitioners are in agreement with each other, yet one focuses on short term needs of the region and the other invests in the long-term benefits.

This explains how the strategy of maintaining two sources of translation: centralized agency and local, came into place. All the interviewed regions have an established relationship with their local translation providers. As was previously explained the centralized agency is coordinated from the headquarters and is in place in order to maintain a coherent translation memory for each language, especially when it comes to technical texts. However, if technical information is written in simplified English and only product related, as explained by the translations team member, then marketing content is highly contextual and requires extra attention from cultural and political point of view.

The need for technical translations exists in so called extreme cases for participating in a tender or entering a new market that has legal restriction or any other case where having no technical translation will mean no opportunity to do business. This again shows a direct relationship between translations and sales opportunity.

The interesting finding was that even without such translation, local sales practitioners are providing translations, but only personally. In the words of one of the participants: *if there's any specific term that they [meaning, partners, consumers] need, then they [meaning, sales engineers] will just translate it on the spot.* In such regions local language is not supported by Axis, and, in other words, the website and other technical information is not being

translated centrally. This way local communication offices are coming up with their own ways to keep consumers engaged.

At the same time, such an approach to technical translation has also created a situation where, in words of the interviewee: *partners know that we [Axis] cannot support them with that kind of a request [meaning technical translation], they stopped requesting*. This case demonstrates two things: companies' global priorities and partners' response to them, which can potentially harm their relations in the future.

The different types of external content are like two sides of a coin - both communicate an overall brand identity, yet have different target audiences and, therefore, are managed separately. From local and central office perspectives one content is regarded as of a higher priority than the other. These differences in priorities might be a cause of still undefined translation agenda and strategy on global and regional levels. Without a common vision and understanding of the purpose, processes and contexts all decisions are made short-sighted (on both ends), which can potentially harm external and internal communications and as a result the business itself.

5.2 Discussion

This chapter provides reflection of the findings in accordance to the identified research questions. The research problem is discussed from the CVC framework perspective.

Translation at Axis manifests itself across different products and communication channels, however, for this particular research content translation has been the primary topic. Two main types of content that require translation are technical and marketing. Both can be used in digital (Axis.com, social media) or print form. The research shows that based on the type of content different strategies are employed. On a global level content is produced and translated separately. However, on the local level technical and marketing materials are approached in the similar manner and seen as a joint effort to communicate with the stakeholders. Therefore, due to the purpose and nature of technical and marketing information, they go hand in hand and require a clear strategy and measurement system that can not only demonstrate their individual value, but also show their joint effect.

RQ: What role do translations play in the global corporate communication strategy at Axis?

Translations enable all communication across the regions and also provide a basis for relationship building with the local stakeholders. Technical information translations, specifically, allow for the product adaptation globally and influences global brand reach and its value.

The research has shown that even though marketing content is highly technical it has a different aim. Technical content has a descriptive purpose, with straightforward and clear product related information. Marketing content, however, provides a different perspective on the same information, allowing for a sensemaking process to take place (Weick, 1995). Marketing content creates a narrative and supports not only the product, segment information, but the entirety of brand identity.

When a global brand communicates, for example, misleading product information or culturally inappropriate stories, local communication professionals are responsible for the way that message is translated in their region. In other words, global marketing produces content that reflects values and expectations of the local markets (Cornelissen, 2011), and when that does not happen local communication practitioners take on the strategist role upon themselves. Consequently, the local communicators facilitate communication with their audience and are responsible for its consequences yet do not always have enough power to influence the quality and the messaging itself. This has also been supported by the common misunderstanding of the purpose of the content that is being translated automatically without reflection of the local market needs. Therefore, marketing content creation and translation are organized in a centralized manner. Yet without a coherent coordination of activities or an ability of local communicators to contribute to the communication strategy, the centralized system will not be entirely justified (Cornelissen, 2011). Therefore, making decentralized local translation and content creation a common practice among the regions.

The benefits of both centralized and decentralized translation processes have been explored throughout the research, yet it became evident that decentralized translation process and localization is an inevitable part of translation strategy that currently exists in different regions. This strategy has no alternatives on a global level and is not adopted by the global translation team, leaving both translation team and local communicators efforts pursuing different agendas.

RQa: How do selected corporate documents reflect the strategic role of professional translations in the development of the company?

Documentation for analysis is chosen based on their impact on the strategic communication of Axis and its strategic importance to the teams working with the localizations. Most documents reviewed for the research are intended for internal use only. Nonetheless it was possible to review strategic communication and marketing documentation. Only the global translation team has created documents that have outlined the process of centralized translation. However, those documents are intended for the interdepartmental use and have an expository nature with no country, region or segment properties.

Document analysis has shown a high orientation towards global expansion and prioritization of key segments and stakeholders. However, not communication policy and brand guidelines have reflected regional or country-based strategies. It was not possible to gain access to the communication plans and strategies of the regions and countries, due to time limitations of the study and new regional division that unfolded at Axis the same year. Global communication strategy and activities are organized and planned around key industries instead: aviation, banking and finance, cargo and logistics, education, government, healthcare, hospitality, industrial, retail, smart cities and more. This perspective allows for audience segmentation and targeting on a global level.

Separate global sales and marketing strategy is expected to be released in summer 2021, however, until then no similar document was found. The translation team has attempted to compensate for a lack of translation guidelines by creating a presentation with an overview of internal translation processes. Nonetheless, it is not intended for educational purposes, nor can be used as a guideline for the regions.

RQb: Where and how do translation related decisions take place?

Translation related decisions are taken on three levels: global, regional and local. Global translation team responds to the local needs case by case and provides support to the internal teams and operations. Regional management oversees translation needs and opportunities with focus on a dedicated region, while local management executes regional translation strategy in each country, as well as provides local translation and content support.

While the translation process at Axis is complex and affects many internal processes there has not been acknowledged a proper place for it in the company's strategy. Global sales and marketing management does not agree on the strategic place of translation processes within the organization.

The global translation team resides in the marketing department, however, based on the interview with global marketing management currently the translation strategy is not prioritised at the moment. Global sales management approaches translations as primarily a marketing function that supports the sales initiatives. Yet the extensive interviews have demonstrated that the process of translations in the regions (Americas, EMEA, APAC) is largely enabled by the sales professionals.

On the other hand, regional marketing management has taken upon themselves to initiate a strategy and plan translation needs according to sales, marketing agendas, the socio-political setting and the internal opportunities of the company. Hence, the strategy is being manifested on a regional level and resides in the hands of the management that oversees the holistic picture of each market and makes informed decisions.

While the local translation process varies from region to region, the centralized process has common qualities among the interviewed locations. That process aims to establish a long-term quality improvement and translation automation. Observing the way centralized translation unfolds regionally, an unexpected finding has brought to the surface.

As part of the validation process of translations, local sales professionals and engineers are required to provide feedback and proofread both technical and marketing contents, making sales professional an integral part of translation and localization process. Local sales engineers are taking upon themselves a role beyond their normative one, a strategic role of communicators providing guidance to the communication professionals and determining the direction of local communication activities. This role shifting of both local marketing and local sales professionals is supported by the role theory (Biddle, 1986), where the roles are shifting as a consequence of his individual knowledge, global expansion of the organization and the translation strategy that has naturally developed overtime.

There has been no holistic measurement system identified for either type of content. (Volk & Zerfass, 2018) However, regions tend to depend on measurements that are provided by the customer service (support requests), sales departments (partner needs and requests) and communication channels they employ (email marketing and social media solutions). This shows that key performance indicators exist but are not agreed upon globally. At the same time, these measurement practices demonstrated the claim by Buhmann (2018) and Watson and Zerfass (2011) that it is the prerogative of both qualitative and quantitative methods to measure the performance of translated content.

Creating value by professional translations.

Purpose defined at the beginning of the research was to understand how translations add value to the organization, if at all. As was mentioned previously translations are enabling content creation across demographics. According to the CVC framework corporate communication creates value for the organization within four value dimensions. These dimensions align with corporate strategy and communication goals that evolve from it.

However, in the current study CVC framework is used to position translation practices, as means of strategic communications to determine its value creating process. Therefore, identifying translation communication goals to determine its value creating capabilities.

Based on the findings above and the CVC framework, the function of translation reflects two dimensions of corporate strategy that support value creation at Axis Communications: enabling operations and ensuring flexibility, and therefore contributing to companies' current value creation. (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017)

Translations create tangible assets for Axis by favourably positioning the brand and its products, hence, creating market value for companies' goods. This is only possible if the content meets expectations of the stakeholders. According to Axis corporate strategy stakeholder relations are one of the drivers of growth (Corporate Strategy). These assets are achieved on a corporate level by the translation practices. Through fostering publicity in targeted countries, enhancing experience of local users and consumers, translations ultimately enable global operations at Axis. In addition, improving translation processes and translation quality can have a positive influence on future business decisions, as well as internal employee satisfaction.

The second value dimension created by translation practices is - room for manoeuvre. By establishing a reputation of a trustworthy company among local partners and stakeholders, Axis is able to ensure that in the crisis or turbulent situation (political instability, media attitude to surveillance technology or change of legal regulations) those partnerships can provide a safety net, support to overcome it and will retain their loyalty.

Translation activities enable communication with local stakeholders and influence the quality of that communication. When the narratives and messaging are coherent with the brand's overall identity, when its actions are seen as legitimate and trustworthy from perspectives of the local public, then strong stakeholder relations are naturally built. These relations allow for a corporation to stay flexible and agile in the times of uncertainty.

6. Conclusion

This chapter provides final conclusions on the findings with a special emphasis on how these findings can contribute to both research and practice. In addition, limitations of the study and potential for future research are presented.

This study revolved around translation practices at Axis Communications. The theoretical framework based on the CVC framework developed by Zerfass and Viertmann (2017) is used to explain value creating capabilities of the phenomenon. Yet the research also attempted to explore the entire process of content translation across geographies and cultures. Consequently, discovering the ways in which communication unfolds when an organization expands its reach and targets a very diverse group of stakeholders.

When an organization undergoes expansion corporate communication practices translate business strategy beyond its native region establishing its reputation on a new market. (Pym, 2004) Translations provide the brand an upper hand to control that communication and make sure the brand narrative goes inline with its goals and actions.

The research questions are building on the shareholder perspective, where all corporate activities are in their essence aimed to bring value to the shareholders. (Freeman, 2010) Determining the role and value of translations provides valuable insights into the way translations, as a process of enabling corporate communication, provides shareholder value. (Blyth, 1986)

The interviews that took place over the course of a couple of months have indicated that communication practitioners are aware of the value the content and their efforts bring to the organization. At the same time, management struggles to place that value within its hierarchy and therefore does not provide a holistic approach and guidance to the teams highly involved with translation and localization.

Consequently, it was possible to show lack of coherent global translation strategy yet identify communication practices that form a strategy on a local level.

Changes in the regional set up that took place during the research provide the possibility of recreating and redefining existing communication activities, thus providing a fresh perspective on translation practices.

6.1 Theoretical contribution

The research provides a way to understand value creation of international communications, where cultural perspectives uncover value dimensions brought about by the practitioners. International communications go beyond purely market knowledge, but also requires cultural, political and industry specific competences that are translated through all communication activities. These competences exposed to foreign markets produce communication professionals that hold true value to the organization. These capabilities, when displayed by not only communication practitioners, but as research shows, engineers, foster their role shift to strategic communicators. In other words, by providing linguistic, socio-political and cultural guidance to the local communication practices, technical professionals navigate international communication activities. Such examples provide a new dimension to role theory, where its public relations practitioners (public relations manager and communication technician) take upon themselves both the strategic and technical roles (Dozier & Broom, 1995). However, conducted research demonstrates applicability of the theory within the entirety of the strategic communication field.

The research provides insights to the CVC framework (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017) as well. By means of demonstrating application of the framework on a global scale and explaining value building capabilities of a single communication function on that scale. At the same time, connecting the function of translations to the overall business strategy. Lastly, the framework is tested from a global perspective on language and localization activities in the setting of a security and surveillance industry.

6.2 Practical contribution

From a practical point of view, the research demonstrated the scope of translation practices in the organization with multiple markets to address. Different capabilities and ways of organizing corporate communications, as well as limitations of centralized and decentralized communication processes. The research shows the importance of internal communication and alignment of global and local strategies, and the need to continually redefine, reevaluate existing practices in accordance with local market needs.

Based on the results, corporations that operate internationally are recommended to account for the direct relationship translation and localization practices have on both: performance and partner relations. Therefore, executing strategy that does not meet local standards and expectations is a threat to local partner relations as well as the business itself. However,

creating a stagnant strategic document that considers those communication needs is not always enough, the strategy must be continuously negotiated with all related units, from sales and marketing to product development and translation teams.

At the same time, it is important to use knowledge from regional and local professionals for both market segmentation and content creation activities, otherwise the established internal operations might be regularly disrupted.

Lastly, the roles communicators hold is much more complex when situated in an international organization, therefore, an effective translation process is even more crucial for the quality of communication as well as employee satisfaction.

6.3 Limitations

The current study has been conducted without taking into account industry specific dynamics of each foreign market, nor localization practices employed by agencies that provide translations to Axis Communications. Due to limited access, only documentation available to all employees was taken into review. Sales, marketing and communication documents reflecting plans and strategies for specific locations were not accessible yet could have provided a deeper insight into the relationship between translations and its value for the local market. Due to the employed qualitative research method, the relationship between performance indicators and translation quality has not been explored. Lastly, due to the time frame, time differences and availability, it was not possible to interview a wider range of representatives and communication professionals.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Looking closely at strategic communication from a cross-cultural and corporate perspective is a potentially fruitful research direction, that due to globalization and digitalization practices is continually evolving. The study encourages future research on the value of localization and translation for corporate communication as well as on the role of communication professionals in the context of highly technical fields.

An interesting research is possible on public perception of localization and translation practices. Therefore, providing a holistic perspective on the implications of translation activities. Finally, a deeper research into the cultural and industry specific application of the CVC framework can support it with complimentary dimensions.

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Appendix 1

Information sheet

Assignment Description

With this research I am trying to understand where professional translations align with business goals and what strategy is required for a more effective work of the translations team. Therefore, I would like to give a holistic overview of how strategic decisions are being made in Axis, especially those that affect local offices. This way I can analyse how professional translations, in other words strategic communication practices, creates value for organizations.

Each new market creates a need for a well-defined marketing and communication strategy, which fall into the notion of default languages as core element of expansion activities and how that language is translated to products, services, affecting the process of value creation.

In addition, globalization urges alignments from a stakeholder's perspective as well, where communities across geographies and cultures have a variety of communication requirements, needs, traditions and expectations of the company's operations. Therefore, strategic communication practitioners not only expected to maintain a coherent brand image, reputation, but translate, or localize, it across all the stakeholder groups.

When global expansion brings more responsibilities to all units of the organization, communication practitioners have a role of mediators between internal operations and the public. The front-line practices that allow for a seamless international transition of such are **professional translations** (product, technical, marketing content) and how they meet goals defined by communication strategy, marketing strategy, legal and other requirements of new markets.

I am addressing this challenge from the value creation standpoint, where communication practitioners acknowledge their undefined role in the value creation process in the organization. There is still a lack of theoretical and practical research on what are the appropriate measures, tactics and methods corporate communication can employ in the multilingual environment. In addition, the question of functional place of those communication activities, professional translations, within corporate strategies rises.

Data Collection Procedures

To achieve this goal, researchers are to engage in the following data collection process.

1. Participant is invited to partake in a 30 minutes long deep interview on the subject matter
2. Participant will upon acceptance be sent a formal invitation for the interview
3. Participant can at any time before, during, or after the interview chose to decline participation

even though prior consent has been given

4. Interview will, based on consent from participant, be video and audio recorded via Microsoft Teams
5. Questions will be open-ended questions
6. The interview will be transcribed and sent to participant for review and approval
7. If responses may involve confidential details this part of the transcript will be rephrased or excluded entirely

Ethical Concerns

- **Potential Conflicts of Interest**

The researcher's role is separated from other professional roles and research is conducted from the position of a Lund University student.

- **Confidentiality**

In all cases, company information will be anonymised, no proprietary information will be shared and the privacy of the interviewee will be safeguarded.

- **Reasonably Foreseeable Risks and Anticipated Benefits and Costs to Participant or Others**

There are no foreseeable risks by way of physical or psychological harm to the participant or

to others in the organisation. The nature of the research involves evaluation of the organisation

so as to principally benefit the organisation. No compensation for participation is offered nor given neither to the organization nor the individual participants.



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Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Dzhamilia Buzurukova

Please tick the
box

1. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, and it will not be possible to identify me in any publication.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any question or questions, I will be free not to do so.
3. I understand that the information I submit will be analysed and may be published in an analysis of a master thesis.
4. I understand that I will have a chance to review, edit and make changes of the provided transcription within a two-week time period.

Participant Name

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 2

Interview guide

1. Starting questions

- Could I record this interview with a microphone for transcription purposes?
- Can you tell me a little about how long you've been working in the department and what your job entails?
- How long have you been working for Axis?

2. On internal operations and decisions

- What does the current workflow look like for you?
- Did the pandemic affect the operations you take and requests you get?
- What are typical operations challenges you have working?
- **How do you measure the effects of your work?**

3. Localizations and translations

- **What are the typical communication challenges you have?**
- Can I ask what your budget for localization purposes is?
- **Where do you see strategic value of translations?**
- **What difference do you see between words: translation and localization?**
- **How do you decide which language needs to be prioritised next?**
- What internal documentation do you refer to, if any?
- Are there any documents (legal, policies) that influence your work?
- **How do you measure the quality of translated content?**
- How do you measure the quality of your work? Your teams work?
- **Where do you see the value of this content?**

4. Strategic decisions that influence localization practices

- **Where do you see place of translation in the organization?**
- **How important localized materials are when you are launching a new product, opening a new office, finding new partners?**
- How do you make judgment on which location to focus on next?
- **Are there any annual plans that you follow?**
- Who are those plans shared with? With marketing and communications or translations teams, for example?
- **Do you determine key locations for each year? How do you make this judgment?**
- What strategy do you follow when you have to make decision that affect other regions?
- For example, if a new product is released, how do you decide, where to launch it first?
- **If you could implement any strategic measure across all the location, what would it be?**

5. Closing questions

- How do you see future of localization at axis?
- Is there anything that you would like to add that could be important for me to know?
- Is it possible to contact you for follow-up questions and clarification?