

Translating Cultural Terms in Tourism: Strategies Used by Translators

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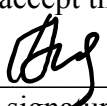
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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to explore the strategies used by translators when translating cultural terms found in tourism materials. Cultural terms, intertwining deeply with local customs, traditions, and social values, often pose translation challenges since no direct equivalents exist within the target language. Such difficulties can result in poor accuracy and cultural sensitivity in the translation processes. Using a qualitative approach, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with nine experienced translators working in the tourism sector. The collected data was analyzed by using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to translation practices, challenges, and contextual considerations. The findings highlight a predominant use of hybrid strategies, which involve retaining original cultural terms while providing contextual explanations to enhance understanding for the target audience. The thesis presents insights into how translators navigate linguistic and cultural complexities when translating for diverse audiences.

Keywords: cultural terms, tourism translation, translation strategies, hybrid translation, translator decision-making.

Аңдатпа

Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – туризм материалдарында кездесетін мәдени ұғымдарды аудару барысында аудармашылар қолданатын стратегияларды зерттеу. Мәдени ұғымдар жергілікті әдет-ғұрыптармен, дәстүрлермен және әлеуметтік құндылықтармен тығыз байланысқандықтан, оларды аудару қиындықтар тудырады, себебі бұл ұғымдардың мақсатты тілде тура баламалары болмайды. Мұндай қиындықтар аудармадағы дәлдік пен мәдени сезімталдықтың төмендеуіне әкелуі мүмкін. Сапалық әдіснамаға сүйене отырып, зерттеу туризм саласында жұмыс істейтін тоғыз тәжірибелі аудармашымен жүргізілген жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттарға негізделеді. Жиналған деректер тақырыптық талдау арқылы өңделіп, аударма тәжірибесіне, қиындықтарға және контекстік ерекшеліктерге байланысты қайталанатын тақырыптар анықталды. Нәтижелер мәдени ұғымдарды түпнұсқа күйінде сақтап, оларды түсіндіру арқылы мақсатты аудитория үшін мағынасын ашуға мүмкіндік беретін гибридті стратегиялардың басым қолданылатынын көрсетеді. Бұл диссертация әртүрлі аудитория үшін аударма жасағанда аудармашылардың тілдік және мәдени күрделіліктерді қалай жеңетінін сипаттайды.

Түйін сөздер: мәдени ұғымдар, туризм аудармасы, аударма стратегиялары, гибридті аударма, аудармашының шешім қабылдауы.

Аннотация

Цель данного исследования — изучить стратегии, применяемые переводчиками при переводе культурных терминов, встречающихся в туристических материалах.

Культурные термины, тесно связанные с местными обычаями, традициями и социальными ценностями, часто вызывают трудности при переводе, так как не имеют прямых эквивалентов в целевом языке. Эти сложности могут привести к снижению точности, а также культурной чувствительности перевода. В исследовании использован качественный подход: были проведены полуструктурированные интервью с девятью опытными переводчиками, работающими в сфере туризма. Собранные данные были проанализированы с помощью тематического анализа с целью выявления повторяющихся тем, связанных с практиками перевода, трудностями и контекстуальными аспектами. Результаты показали, что преобладает использование гибридных стратегий, сочетающих сохранение оригинальных культурных терминов с предоставлением контекстуальных объяснений для лучшего понимания целевой аудиторией. Диссертация раскрывает, как переводчики справляются с языковыми и культурными сложностями при переводе для разнородной аудитории.

Ключевые слова: культурные термины, туристический перевод, стратегии перевода, гибридный перевод, принятие решений переводчиком.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Effective cross-cultural communication marks the starting point of every adventure and translation plays a crucial role in the travel sector. Ensuring tourism materials are translated accurately is key to capturing the essence of customs as explorers immerse themselves in the tapestry of world cultures. In our interconnected world today establishing connections with individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is paramount for the tourism sector. This proficiency is crucial for drawing in and catering to travelers guaranteeing their encounters are enjoyable and unforgettable.

Cultural terms are at the core of this challenge, encompassing words and expressions that carry distinct meanings and connotations within a particular cultural framework (Edelheim, 2007; Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019). These terms, ranging from the names of historical sites and local cuisines to traditional festivals and customs, pose a formidable challenge in translation (Katan, 2009). Translating these culture-specific terms demands a delicate balance between preserving their cultural significance and ensuring accessibility for the target audience, a balance that skilled translators must continuously navigate.

Background information

Translating terms, in the context of tourism is a task that requires a profound comprehension of both the original and destination cultures. Translators need to maneuver through the subtleties of distinctions between idiomatic phrases and figurative language all while taking into account elements, like text organization, layout, and content flow (Katan, 2012; Kuhi, 2009). The task becomes even more intricate when dealing with tourism materials, where cultural elements are often used as selling points to entice potential visitors (Edelheim, 2007).

At the core of this challenge lies the multifaceted nature of culture itself. Culture can be viewed as a complex system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that shape the way a group of people perceive and interact with the world around them (Hofstede, 2011). It encompasses tangible elements, such as traditional clothing, architecture, and culinary practices, as well as intangible aspects, including social norms, religious beliefs, and artistic expressions (Katan, 2004). Cultural terms, therefore, carry layers of meaning that extend beyond their literal definitions. They are imbued with historical, social, and emotional connotations that are deeply rooted in the collective experiences and worldviews of a particular cultural group (Newmark, 1988). For instance, the term “kamikaze” in Japanese culture, while literally meaning “divine wind,” carries profound historical significance and emotional weight that may be challenging to convey accurately in other languages (Fernández Guerra, 2012).

Moreover, cultures are not static entities; they are dynamic and constantly evolving, influenced by factors such as globalization, migration, and technological advancements (Tomlinson, 1999). As a result, cultural terms can take on new meanings or become obsolete, further complicating the translation process. The term “selfie,” for instance, has permeated numerous languages and cultures, yet its connotations and usage may vary across different contexts (Ng, 2014).

Translating cultural terms in the context of tourism materials presents additional challenges. Tourism brochures, websites, and marketing materials often aim to showcase a destination’s unique cultural heritage and attractions, using evocative language and imagery to capture the imagination of potential visitors (Dann, 1996). Translators must not only accurately convey the literal meaning of cultural terms but also capture their essence and appeal in a way that resonates with the target audience (Agorni, 2012).

Furthermore, tourism translation must consider the diverse backgrounds and cultural perspectives of the intended readership. A term that may be familiar and easily understood by one target audience might be entirely foreign or even offensive to another (Fuadi, 2016).

Translators must navigate these complexities while ensuring that the translated materials remain culturally sensitive, respectful, and engaging.

Previous studies have explored various strategies employed by translators to tackle cultural terms, including domestication, which adapts the term to the target culture, and foreignization, which retains the term's original cultural flavor (Fuadi, 2016; Baker, 2018). The domestication strategy aims to make the cultural term more accessible and familiar to the target audience by finding an equivalent or providing explanations. For instance, translating the Japanese term "ryokan" as "traditional Japanese inn" may help readers understand the concept more easily (Fernández Guerra, 2012). Conversely, the foreignization strategy preserves the cultural term in its original form, introducing the readers to new cultural elements and promoting intercultural learning (Venuti, 1995).

Other approaches, such as adaptation, compression, and exploitation, have also been identified as potential tools in a translator's arsenal (Nababan et al., 2012; Agorni, 2016). Adaptation involves modifying the cultural term to make it more suitable for the target audience, while compression involves reducing the length of the text by eliminating unnecessary information. Exploitation, on the other hand, involves adding information that is not explicitly stated in the source text to provide context or clarification (Fuadi, 2016).

However, while these strategies provide a theoretical framework, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by professional translators and the specific techniques they employ to effectively convey the cultural significance of these terms in

practice. Each cultural term, context, and target audience may require a unique approach, and experienced translators often rely on their intuition, expertise, and creative problem-solving abilities to navigate these complexities (Fernández Guerra, 2012).

Furthermore, the translation of cultural terms in tourism materials is not solely a linguistic exercise but also a process of cultural mediation and negotiation (Katan, 2004). Translators must act as cultural ambassadors, bridging the gap between different worldviews and facilitating mutual understanding. They must strike a delicate balance between preserving the authenticity of the source culture and ensuring that the translated materials resonate with the target audience's cultural sensibilities (Edelheim, 2007).

Research problem

The translation of cultural terms in tourism materials poses significant challenges for translators, as these terms are deeply embedded in the source culture and often lack direct equivalents in the target language (Katan, 2009; Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019). Despite the growing body of literature on cultural translation, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative research exploring the specific challenges and strategies employed by professional translators when dealing with cultural terms in the tourism domain (Agorni, 2016; Fuadi, 2016). Existing studies have primarily focused on theoretical approaches or quantitative analyses of translated tourism materials (Edelheim, 2007; Fernández Guerra, 2012). For instance, Fuadi (2016) examined the frequency of foreignization and domestication strategies in translated tourism brochures, while Edelheim (2007) conducted a polysemic reading of tourist brochures to uncover hidden cultural messages. However, these studies do not provide insights into the decision-making processes and practical considerations of translators working with cultural terms in tourism texts.

Moreover, the literature suggests that translating cultural terms requires a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures, as well as the ability to navigate complex linguistic and cultural differences (Katan, 2004; Newmark, 1988). Translators must act as cultural mediators, finding ways to convey the essence and significance of cultural terms while ensuring accessibility for the target audience (Agorni, 2016; Katan, 2012). However, there is limited empirical research on how professional translators actually achieve this balance in practice, particularly in the context of tourism translation. Furthermore, the rapid globalization and evolving nature of the tourism industry present new challenges for translators, as they must keep pace with changing cultural trends, emerging destinations, and diverse audience expectations (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019; Tomlinson, 1999). This dynamic landscape necessitates a deeper understanding of the strategies and best practices employed by experienced translators to effectively convey cultural terms in tourism materials.

In light of these gaps in the existing literature, there is a pressing need for qualitative research that explores the lived experiences and practices of professional translators working with cultural terms in the tourism domain. By gaining insights into their challenges, decision-making processes, and strategies, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cultural translation in tourism and inform the development of best practices and training programs for translators in this field.

Research purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by professional translators when translating cultural terms in tourism materials. By delving into their first-hand accounts, the research aims to uncover the nuanced decision-

making processes, contextual considerations, and specific techniques employed by these experts to accurately convey the cultural significance and nuances of these terms to the target audience.

Research questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the main challenges and issues faced by professional translators in translating cultural terms within tourism texts?
2. What strategies and techniques do professional translators implement when translating cultural terms found in tourism materials?

Research methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, using semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences of professional translators working with cultural terms in tourism materials. To analyze the data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used, which aims to provide a flexible and rigorous framework for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within the collected data. This qualitative methodology enabled a nuanced understanding of the challenges, strategies, and decision-making processes involved in translating cultural terms, grounded in the translators' first-hand perspectives.

Research significance

This study holds significant theoretical implications for the field of translation studies, particularly in the domain of cultural translation. By providing empirical insights into the lived experiences and practices of professional translators, it contributes to the development of more nuanced and context-sensitive theoretical frameworks for understanding the translation of cultural terms (Agorni, 2016). Moreover, the findings have practical significance for the tourism industry, as they could inform the development of best practices, training programs, and

guidelines for translators working with cultural content. This, in turn, could enhance the quality and effectiveness of translated tourism materials, leading to more authentic and respectful cross-cultural exchanges between hosts and visitors (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019).

Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter two presents a comprehensive literature review, synthesizing existing research on cultural translation, tourism discourse, and the challenges of translating cultural terms. Chapter three details the study's research design and methodology, including participant selection, data collection, and analysis procedures. Chapter four reports the findings of the qualitative interviews, presenting the emergent themes and subthemes that capture the translators' experiences and strategies. Finally, Chapter five discusses the implications of the discoveries, arranging them within the broader context of translation studies and tourism research, and concludes with recommendations for practice and future research in Chapter six.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The translation of cultural terms in tourism texts plays a vital role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and shaping the perception of the destination while promoting it to diverse audiences. However, the rendition of cultural terms poses significant challenges for translators due to their culture-specific nature and lack of equivalents in the target language (Pratama et al., 2021). This literature review aims to examine the strategies employed by translators in dealing with cultural terms in tourism texts, the types of cultural losses encountered, and potential approaches to compensate for these losses. The review will follow a thematic structure, first discussing the core issues and theories in cultural term translation, then delving into specific strategies and their implications, exploring the cultural gaps and losses in translation, and finally will be concluded with a conceptual framework.

Core issues and theories in cultural term translation

The translation of cultural terms in tourism texts has garnered increasing scholarly attention, with researchers exploring various aspects such as translation strategies, cultural gaps, and translation quality (Arifin, 2014; Fuadi, 2016; Zheng, 2021). A dominant theoretical framework is Venuti's (1995) dichotomy of domestication and foreignization has been a subject of extensive debate in translation studies (Abderraouf, 2019). Domestication and foreignization represent two contrasting and complementary strategies in translation studies. Domestication simplifies the target text by aligning it with the cultural norms of the target audience, thus enhancing readability and accessibility (Abderraouf, 2019). However, this approach risks erasing the unique cultural identity of the source text, as highlighted by Shokri & Ketabi (2015), who

found domestication prevalent in literary translations but noted its tendency to obscure local color.

Conversely, foreignization preserves the cultural essence of the source text, often introducing readers to unfamiliar cultural elements (Venuti, 1995). Despite the benefits of this approach, promoting intercultural understanding, it may alienate target audiences who lack the necessary cultural context, as observed by Myskja (2013). Furthermore, Tymoczko (2007) and Shamma (2005) further criticize foreignization for its potential to reinforce stereotypes, particularly in post-colonial contexts, as demonstrated in Burton's translation of *Arabian Nights*.

The choice between these strategies often context-dependent and may vary by genre and purpose. For instance, Rezaei & Kuhl (2014) advocate for foreignization in tourist guidebooks to preserve the cultural uniqueness of destinations, whereas Shokri & Ketabi (2015) argue that domestication is more effective in literary translation, where emotional resonance with the reader is prioritized. Moreover, it was observed by them, that domestication was more frequent in literary translation, with 82% of culture-specific items domesticated to enhance reader comprehension. This ongoing debate highlights the need for a balanced approach, as proposed by Kemppanen et al. (2018), who suggest viewing these strategies as a continuum rather than binary opposites, allowing translators to adapt their translation strategies based on the specific challenges they might encounter and its intended audience.

Strategies for translating cultural terms

The translation of cultural terms in tourism texts requires a careful preservation of cultural authenticity and accessibility. The challenge may be addressed through three primary strategies: adaptation-oriented, preservation-oriented, and hybrid approaches. Each strategy offers unique benefits and limitations depending on the context and purpose of the translation.

Adaptation-oriented strategies prioritize accessibility by aligning the translated text with the norms and expectations of the target audience. For example, Fuadi (2016) highlights the effectiveness of domestication in Indonesian tourism brochures, where functional equivalents and explanatory notes were used to make cultural terms more comprehensible. However, this approach risks oversimplifying cultural nuances, potentially diminishing the richness and uniqueness of the source culture. Lin (2021) underscores the importance of intercultural adaptation in bridging cultural gaps, but questions remain about whether such adaptation may preserve the essence of cultural uniqueness of the source text.

Preservation-oriented strategies, on the other hand, aim to retain the exotic appeal of the source culture, as demonstrated by Terestyényi (2011), who found transcription/transference to be the most effective method of translation of Hungarian tourist brochures. While this approach attracts tourists by preserving cultural authenticity, it may potentially create barriers to understanding for audiences unfamiliar with the source culture, particularly when supporting context is not given. Such challenges highlight the importance of balancing cultural preservation with readability, particularly when addressing a culturally diverse audience.

Hybrid strategies aim to create the balance between cultural preservation and accessibility by combining elements of domestication and foreignization. Zheng (2021) proposes seven tentative strategies, such as transliteration with explanation and intra-text explanations, which at the same time attempts to preserve cultural significance while ensuring readability. However, hybrid strategies can be resource-intensive and require translators to possess a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures. Moreover, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on the type of text and the intended audience. For instance, hybrid approaches may work well in marketing materials but could complicate literary translations.

Ultimately, the choice of strategy is not merely a technical decision but also a cultural and ideological one. As Tymoczko (2007) argues, translators must navigate the complex interplay of cultural preservation, audience expectations, and practical constraints, emphasizing the need for context-specific solutions rather than rigid adherence to a single strategy. This perspective is specifically relevant for translation of tourism texts, where the main goal is not just to inform but also to evoke interest and appreciation for the source culture.

Cultural gaps and losses in translation

Despite the various strategies employed by translators, cultural gaps and losses remain a significant challenge in the translation of cultural terms in tourism texts. As Newmark (1988) emphasizes, texts that are rich in culture-specific references are particularly vulnerable to these losses, especially when the target audience is not familiar with the source culture. However, the extent and impact of these losses vary depending on the type of text, the employed strategy, and the translator's ability to balance cultural preservation and accessibility.

Loss of cultural connotations often occurs when differences in cultural values, norms, or symbolism prevent the accurate expression of the source text's meaning. For example, Pratama et al. (2021) found that Indonesian tourism texts frequently lost cultural nuances in translation. These losses can result from oversimplification or a lack of functional equivalents. While domestication strategies can improve readability, they often contribute to such losses, as they prioritize accessibility over cultural depth. In contrast, foreignization may help retain connotations but risks alienating target readers unfamiliar with the source culture, emphasizing the need for translators to carefully assess the cultural familiarity of their target audience.

Loss of contextual meaning arises when linguistic, situational, or cultural context is not adequately preserved. As Feng (2010) argues, cultural metaphors, idiomatic expression and

connotative meanings are highly dependent on context, and failing to capture this context can lead to misinterpretations or a loss of the intended emotional impact or incorrect messaging. For instance, Wahidi et al. (2021) noted that although 89.26% of translations in tourism texts were considered accurate, many still suffered from contextual losses, particularly when metaphors were translated too literally. To minimize such losses, translators employ hybrid strategies, such as combining transliteration with explanations (Zheng, 2021), which may help mitigate this issue by preserving context while ensuring clarity.

Loss of cultural authenticity is perhaps the most challenging to address in tourism translation, as it leads to the erosion of cultural uniqueness and identity. Xu (2021) highlights how domestication often strips cultural texts of their richness, reducing them to neutral or overly generalized versions. It is particularly problematic in tourism, where authenticity is crucial in terms of attracting and engaging audiences. Translators must navigate these challenges by acting as cultural mediators, finding creative solutions, balancing the preservation of cultural authenticity while ensuring the text remains accessible and engaging for the target audience (Katan, 2004).

Loss of readability happens at times when a translated text can be awkward or too technical, so then the audience struggles as it tries to understand it. According to Nababan et al. (2012), readability in translation is about how easily a reader can grasp the message. Tourism texts can become dull and less attractive when translators focus too much on word-to-word accuracy or add complex explanations, which is the primary concern where appealing language is the key to attracting visitors.

Loss of meaning happens if translation fails to capture full nuances of the original terms. Meaning goes beyond just definitions, as Newmark (1988) notes; it also involves emotional and

cultural aspects. Translators are able to weaken the original message's impact when all of the cultural richness vanishes. Translators oversimplify detailed concepts, or translators overlook key background, eventually leading to disappearance of the cultural depth.

Misunderstanding happens when audience misreads the translation due to errors or lack of clarity. This often results from translating cultural reference too literally as Pratama et al. (2021) point out that even small shifts in meaning can cause confusion. This is specifically relevant to tourism materials where cultural symbols are significant. Misunderstandings can hinder cross-cultural appreciation and negatively affect how people perceive a destination or the whole culture.

These cultural losses point out the importance of context-sensitive translation strategies. While no single approach can fully eliminate cultural gaps, understanding the unique challenges posed by different types of losses can help translators make informed decisions. This analysis also highlights the need for further research into how target audiences perceive these losses, as their reception may vary widely depending on cultural background and expectations and some other aspects.

Summary

Translating cultural terms in tourism texts presents a complex and dynamic challenge for translators to decide on maintaining the authenticity of cultural elements and responding properly to the different needs of their target audiences. Existing literature demonstrates that strategies such as domestication, foreignization, and hybrid methods all contain attributes that could serve them well in context. However, the mentioned strategies offer distinct advantages and disadvantages. For instance, domestication enhances readability but risks erasing cultural uniqueness, whereas foreignization preserves cultural identity but may create barriers for the

audiences unfamiliar with the source culture. Hybrid approach, although resource-intensive, suggests a better way to mediate between domestication and foreignization; however, use of such an approach often might determine the quality of translation efforts and the required solutions in relation to a particular text, depending on the skills of the translator.

A key theme emerging from the reviewed studies is the interplay between translation strategies and the need for context-sensitive strategies that address the challenges and cultural gaps, as well as the practical challenges that translators encounter. Translators must act as cultural mediators, carefully balancing the preservation of cultural uniqueness and authenticity of the source culture with the need for clarity and engagement. This is particularly critical in tourism texts, where the representation of the cultural identity is the key to success in terms of promoting destinations and leveraging cross-cultural understanding and engagement.

While significant progress has been made in identifying effective strategies, there remain gaps in understanding the decision-making processes of translators and the best practices for addressing cultural losses. This highlights the need for further research into the experiences of translators working with tourism texts in underexplored cultural contexts, such as Kazakhstan, where cultural nuances play a critical role. To sum up, this literature review underscores the complexity and importance of cultural term translation and its far-reaching implications for cross-cultural communication and the tourism industry.

Conceptual framework

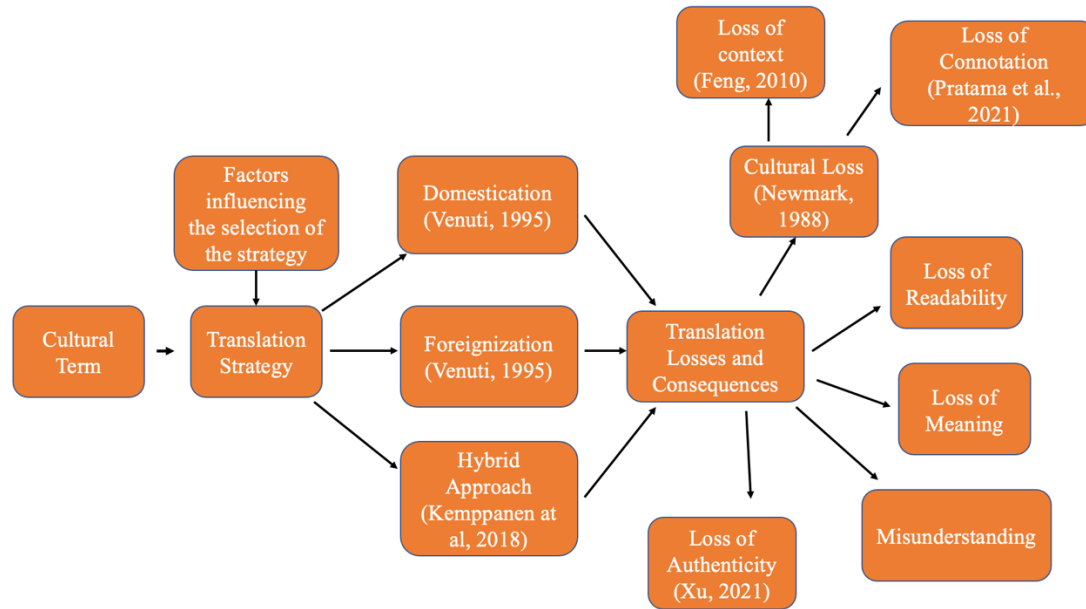
I developed the conceptual framework guiding this study that illustrates the process by which translators approach the translation of cultural terms in tourism contexts, emphasizing the strategic choices they make and the resulting consequences those choices may imply.

At the core of the framework is the cultural term, which initiates the translation process that the term goes through. It requires the translator to select a translation strategy — most commonly falling under Venuti's (1995) established categories of domestication (adapting the term to fit target culture norms) and foreignization (retaining the source term to preserve cultural identity). In addition to these traditional dichotomies, the model includes a hybrid approach (Kemppanen et al., 2018), where translators blend both strategies by transliterating the term and adding descriptive explanations.

The strategy cannot be made in isolation. There is, perhaps, a variety of different factors that might influence the selection of the strategies that remain unknown since there is no single literature that states an exact list of factors. Once a strategy is chosen, it leads to a range of translation losses and consequences, a concept widely discussed in the literature. Drawing on Newmark (1988) and expanded by scholars such as Feng (2010), Pratama et al. (2021), and Xu (2021), the framework categorizes potential losses into several domains: cultural loss, including the loss of context, connotation, or authenticity; readability and comprehension losses, such as loss of meaning, reduced clarity, or even misunderstanding. These consequences are not always avoidable, but as the literature concludes, no single strategy can eliminate all cultural loss.

The conceptual framework was developed and used to finalize the research methodology, findings' analysis, and interpretation.

Figure 1
Contextual framework I



CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The main goal of this chapter is to explain and support the research methodology and techniques selected to investigate how expert translators approach terms when translating tourism content. Translating cultural aspects presents challenges and difficulties due to lack or absence of counterparts and variations, cultural differences across different languages and societies. This research aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of how professional translators manage cultural elements in tourism materials such as brochures, guides, websites, and other resources.

To address research questions, a qualitative descriptive research design using semi-structured interviews was used. In the following sections, the rationale for choosing this approach is discussed in detail, along with information on the research design, data collection, sampling, and analysis methods. The methods implanted to ensure validity and ethical conduct was also be outlined. The chapter concludes with a discussion of limitations and potential challenges. Overall, the chosen approach provided perspectives on professional translation techniques for efficiently conveying culturally significant items in tourism settings.

Research design and rationale

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using semi-structured individual interviews as the primary method of data collection. Qualitative description is highly appropriate when the aim is to comprehensively summarize experiences, events, or processes in the everyday terms of participants (Sandelowski, 2000). As this study seeks to uncover translators' first-hand experiences with translating cultural concepts in tourism texts, a descriptive qualitative approach can provide detailed accounts in their own words.

Specifically, this design aligns well with the study's objectives to explore the challenges translators face and the strategies they employ when translating cultural terms. In-depth interviews allowed participants to freely articulate these challenges, thought processes, and nuanced techniques in detail (Roulston, 2010). This level of detail is crucial to gain insights into the tacit knowledge and decision-making used by expert translators that may be difficult to extract through quantitative surveys.

The open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews also provides the flexibility to ask follow-up questions and probe for clarification or concrete examples of complex translation processes (Turner & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2010). This enabled me to obtain a thorough understanding of the specific approaches taken to convey cultural significance. Eliciting detailed descriptions of techniques used in practice, rather than just abstract information, is a key strength of qualitative methods (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Thus, a qualitative descriptive interview study is optimally suited to develop an in-depth account of professional translation practices related to cultural terms in tourism materials. It facilitated uncovering the everyday realities and nuances of this process in translators' own words, which directly aligns with the research questions.

Sampling and participants

Purposeful criterion-based sampling was utilized to recruit nine professional translators with at least three years of experience translating tourism content like brochures, websites, marketing materials, and guides. This expertise-based sampling allowed the selection of information-rich cases that can provide in-depth insights aligned with the study objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The main requirements involve having background, in translating aspects such as places, customs, cuisine, etc. especially in the context of tourism content. This ensures that contributors

could offer in depth insights into the obstacles and approaches, within this field. This study aimed to incorporate translators, representing diverse linguistic backgrounds, educational experience and professional environments and settings. Such diversity ensures multifaceted exploration of perspectives of the strategies for translating cultural terms within tourism contexts.

Recruitment was done through referrals from university language departments, professional translation associations and direct outreach via industry networks such as ProZ, LinkedIn and other relevant platforms. The sample size of six to eight aligns with best practices for qualitative interview studies to enable thorough exploration with each participant (Vasileiou et al., 2018). All participants received complete information about the study purpose and procedures. Voluntary signed informed consent was secured, and they were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time.

Data collection procedures

The primary data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted via video conference (e.g., Zoom) lasting average of 40 minutes with each participant as it offers advantages such as increased accessibility and convenience (Schober et al., 2023). The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions covering key topics related to common challenges confronted in translating cultural tourism concepts, techniques and methods utilized when translating culture-specific items, thought processes and components considered to precisely convey cultural significance, examples of particularly difficult cases and solutions implemented, effect of the target audience, text type, project constraints, etc. on the approach, and advancement of skills and techniques over years of experience.

The flexible semi-structured format allowed me to adapt questions and probe for more detail, examples, and clarification as needed (Roulston, 2010). However, only audio from the interviews was recorded with explicit consent and transcribed verbatim.

The in-depth interviews was the primary source to access translators' own accounts of their practices and decision-making.

Data analysis methods

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, a rigorous qualitative technique to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved following the six-phase process as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006);

Familiarization: I thoroughly read the transcripts to gain an understanding of the data.

Generation of codes: Key areas of the content were organized with names to capture ideas and thoughts regarding challenges, strategies, relevant components, etc. Both surface level and basic viewpoints were categorized.

Developing themes: Names were grouped into themes that highlight important patterns related to the research questions. Themes were identified by exploring connections and similarities, between names.

Reviewing themes: Potential themes were compared against the labeled excerpts and entire dataset to ensure they form a narrative and accurately represent meanings in the data. Themes were divided, combined, or omitted as necessary.

Defining and naming themes: The essence of each theme was clarified, and a concise name was given to encapsulate its meaning.

Crafting the report: compelling examples were chosen to showcase each theme. An analytical storyline was crafted to present a narrative in relation to the research questions.

This systematic, iterative process of coding and theme development was conducted manually. To enhance reliability a portion of the data was coded by a peer researcher and any discrepancies were then discussed to refine the coding frame. Detailed documentation of each stage of analysis was maintained to ensure transparency.

Table 1
Summary of common codes

Theme	Code	Participant								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Hybrid Translation Strategy	Preserving term + explanation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Transliteration of cultural term	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Explanation follows cultural term	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Challenges in Translating Cultural Concepts	No equivalent in target language	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cultural loss due to simplification	✓	◦	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Lexical or grammatical barriers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Misunderstanding of literal translation	✓	◦	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Adapting to Audience & Context	Adjusting based on audience's age/background	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Simplifying for non-native speakers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Shortening explanations due to time limit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Avoiding sensitive topics or adapting them	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Changing strategy depending on oral vs. written mode	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Balancing Cultural Fidelity & Comprehension	Preserving cultural identity through language	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Avoiding full domestication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Using foreignization for authenticity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Making content understandable without losing meaning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Consulting colleagues / experts	◦	◦	◦	◦	✓	◦	✓	◦	◦
	Using of machine translation / digital tools	✓	✓	◦	◦	◦	◦	✓	◦	◦
5. Translator Preparation & Resources	Evolving approach with experience	✓	◦	◦	✓	✓	◦	✓	◦	✓
	Preparing context-specific terminology in advance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Follow official or institutional guidance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note. Summary of common codes across all nine interviews, where ✓ means that code was explicitly mentioned, and ◦ means not explicitly mentioned

Ethical considerations

Several measures were incorporated to ensure ethical conduct. Participation was entirely voluntary and informed consent was obtained. I ensured that all participants were treated with respect and that their privacy and confidentiality were protected. Participants signed an informed consent form detailing the study purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits prior to participation (Sanjari et al., 2014). They were given an option to decline answering any question or withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing individual identities and data and using pseudonyms. All data was securely stored on a password-protected laptop and the password was known only to me. To address the risk of data exposure, participants were given the option to skip questions, postpone or withdraw from the interview, thereby promptly handling any inconvenience. I received the Research Committee's approval regarding the ethics of the paper. These measures were implemented to protect the rights and well-being of the participants.

Limitations and challenges

While this qualitative methodology provided rich insights, some limitations had to be acknowledged. These included relatively small number of participants, and the issues of trustworthiness.

Additionally, one of the primary challenges was ensuring participants could clearly articulate the complexities of their translation decision-making process. Using probing techniques, and requesting concrete examples helped elicit these nuances and obtain in-depth responses.

There was also a subjective element in self-reported practices, as translators might solely focus on their successes and downplay strategies that didn't work well, leading to a disconnect

between what they perceive and actual practice. I also did not have chance to observe the research participants at work or could not systematically analyze the text they produced, which limited the research to getting insights of their day-to-day challenges.

Overall, the limitations were mitigated as far as possible and openly acknowledged

Summary

This chapter has detailed the qualitative descriptive methodology based on semi-structured interviews that were employed to study how professional translators navigate cultural concepts in tourism translation. The rationale for this design, sampling approach, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations have also been clarified. In the next chapter, the research findings will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In the result of this analysis, five major themes emerged from the thematic analysis, including Hybrid Translation Strategies, Challenges in Translating Cultural Terms, Adapting to Audience & Context, Balancing Cultural Fidelity and Comprehension and Translator Preparation & Resources (see table 1). This chapter describes each theme more in depth, with the direct quotes of the participants. Those are referred to by numbered pseudonymous (e.g., Participant 1) additionally indicated by their professional role (guide, translator).

Theme one: hybrid translation strategy

A dominant strategy reported by all participants is to retain the original cultural term (in transliteration if written) and add an explanation or definition for the target audience regardless of whether translation format. Rather than replacing culture-specific terms with a rough equivalent, translators overwhelmingly favor a “hybrid” approach that combines foreignization and compensation. In practice, this means introducing the term in the source language, then immediately conveying its meaning in context.

For example, one interviewee explained how she translates the Kazakh nomadic dwelling components for tourists: *“if we say, ‘this is a dombra monument’, it’s not enough. You must explain that dombra is a traditional musical instrument”* (Participant 1). Another example of the same participant with a cradle: *“we can’t just say ‘this is a besik’ – it’s necessary to add ‘it’s like a cradle”* (Participant 1). All participants stressed that simply providing a literal translation or leaving a term untranslated without context would leave foreign visitors confused. As one translator put it, *“each such term that is obvious and known to us not always familiar and requires additional explanation for a foreign guest”* (Participant 3).

Crucially, this hybrid strategy preserves the unique cultural word (maintaining authenticity) while inserting just enough explanation to make the meaning clear. One participant summarized this as the optimal solution: *“To preserve cultural features, you should leave the name in the original language (transliterated) and give a descriptive translation. In my view, that’s the most optimal approach”* (Participant 1).

This approach was echoed across interviews. For instance, another translator noted that she always utters the term and then explains what it means, since the foreigners *“expect you to explain it”* (Participant 5). In one case, a translator described how she handled the Kazakh custom *“қымыз мұрындық”* (*qumyz murundyk*, a first ceremonial tasting of fermented mare’s milk) she introduces the term, then *starts explaining*: *“The word consists of this and that... ‘murundyk’ literally means ‘nose’, but here it actually signifies ‘beginning’ – the first milking of kumys”* (Participant 5). Only after breaking down the term’s components and cultural context does she feel the concept is conveyed. This illustrates the “say–explain–interpret” pattern common to all interviewees’ accounts.

Notably, no participant advocated a purely domesticating strategy (fully replacing cultural terms with target-culture equivalents or descriptions) for core cultural concepts. The value of the original term is recognized as carrying cultural “flavor” that they wish to preserve. Even those who were unfamiliar with the theoretical terms *domestication* and *foreignization* in name understood and employed a mixed approach. *“In any case you end up mixing methods,”* said one experienced guide (Participant 5). Another admitted she hadn’t studied the theory, but upon reflection realized *“foreign – that’s like foreignization, and domestic- local. I guess I use a mix of both in practice”* (Participant 2). All translators, therefore, intuitively gravitate to a

blended strategy that keeps cultural terms visible to the audience, *“not translating them directly but then explaining the meaning”* (Participant 2).

One participant did mention occasionally using a more domesticating approach by drawing analogies to something familiar in the target culture, essentially to “conduct an analogy with local culture” particularly speaking about the cuisines of both source and target cultures. However, this was presented as one possible tactic among many, used only if it aids understanding. Overall, the prevailing philosophy is summed up by a very experienced guide’s statement: *“Otherwise, if we start replacing every culturally unique word with a generic English word, the spirit of Kazakhstan is simply lost... We’d end up calling a yurt ‘a tent with a hole in the ceiling’, and the essence would be gone”* (Participant 8). Thus, maintaining the original terms (e.g., *yurt, kumys, dombra*) is seen as essential to preserve cultural uniqueness, with additional explanation to ensure comprehension.

This hybrid strategy aligns with the concept of compensation (mentioned explicitly by one translator as her primary method – compensating for unfamiliar terms by providing explanations in the translation. In summary, all participants employ explanatory approach in translation of culture-specific terms, often by retaining the original term and providing additional context or definition. A key aspect and yet finding that is central to the translators’ approach is that they serve as cultural mediators, who at the same time teach the readers and listeners about the term rather than eliminating or omitting it.

Theme two: challenges in translating cultural concepts

When asked about difficulties with cultural terms, participants cited several types of concepts that pose challenges, primarily due to lack of direct equivalents in the target language or the need for nuanced explanation. A common refrain was that difficulty arises not from

linguistic complexity, but from the conceptual gap between cultures. As one translator explained, “*translating is not hard – the main thing is knowing what it is about*” (Participant 2). In other words, if the translator fully understands the cultural reference, they can usually find a way to explain it; if they do not, that term becomes “difficult.”

Kinship terms and genealogical concepts were singled out as particularly troublesome. One interviewee, for example, found *Kazakh kinship terminology* nearly untranslatable: “*the hardest is translating, say, our terms for family relations – nemere, shobere, shopshe (various degrees of grandchildren) or Zhety Ata (the seven ancestors tradition)*” (Participant 9). These concepts have no English equivalents, requiring extensive explanation of the Kazakh genealogy system. Another translator similarly mentioned struggling with a term from Kazakh customs “*mushel zhas*” – a symbolic age in traditions, and an expression “*shigi shapan*” given during matchmaking: “*To translate Shigi Shapan into English, I had to really unpack what it is – what kind of coat, with a nail, what it signifies*” (Participant 3). In such cases, the translator must essentially become a cultural interpreter, conveying not just a word but an entire practice or belief behind it.

Names of dishes, foods, and drinks also came up frequently. Several participants noted that traditional food names (e.g., beshbarmak, kumys) mean nothing to outsiders without explanation. One translator laughed that if you simply transliterate *beshbarmak*, “*no one will understand anything*”, so you inevitably start “*telling the backstory – for example, say beshbarmak literally means ‘five fingers’ -because it’s eaten with the hand*” (Participant 8). Beverages can be tricky as well: “*Nomads used to drink kumys – it’s not enough to say that, you need to explain what kumys is,*” an interviewee emphasized (Participant 1). Menu translations illustrate this challenge: one participant who translated a restaurant menu had to decide how to

render dish names like *kuyrdak*. She found it essential to describe the ingredients so that tourists know what they are ordering: “*Kuyrdak – the word alone tells them nothing. If I explain what it’s made of, then they can decide if they want to eat it*” (Participant 8). This ensures practical comprehension (especially important in-service contexts like dining).

Participants also encountered difficulty with historical and religious references. One translator gave an example of explaining “*Maslenitsa*” (a Russian folk holiday) to English speakers. Lacking an equivalent festival in English, she opted to call it “*Pancake Week*” as a shorthand: “*Of course that’s not the full meaning, but the communication goes through – everyone loves pancakes, and it’s easier to remember what Maslenitsa is*” (Participant 1). Here she sacrificed some nuance (the religious aspect of Maslenitsa) for a catchy explanation.

Another challenging area was sensitive historical content: One participant described translating information about traditional women’s rights in Kazakhstan, where historically “*the worth of a woman’s life was the same as a goat’s*” She felt this raw fact would shock foreign readers, so she added context that “*women’s rights are much better now, to soften it... otherwise it gives a negative view of the whole culture*” (Participant 6). This example shows the translator going beyond language to manage cultural perception.

Across interviews, a consistent theme was that translators must deeply understand the cultural term and the source culture in general themselves before they could explain it to others. Several admitted that *the translator’s own knowledge can be a limiting factor*. “*Often translators themselves don’t fully understand some old traditions,*” one participant observed, “*so there can be incorrect information. You have to read, study, check sources... take books and verify multiple times*” (Participant 2). Another said, “*Guides are not historians. We do check Wikipedia and read up before excursions... translating isn’t hard if you know what it’s about – the main*

thing is to know the subject” (Participant 3). This points to the importance of research and preparation (discussed further in Theme five). When a term was unknown to the translator, that was a true difficulty – one solved by either quick research or, if time did not permit, an honest admission that the answer would be provided later.

In summary, the “difficult” cultural terms identified were those without straightforward equivalents, including kinship terms, certain traditions, and culture-bound names of objects or events. The solution universally was expanded explanation (often quite lengthy and detailed) and sometimes creative analogy. While this demands extra effort – *“you have to really look up the etymology; you can’t just make it up”* (Participant 6). The translators accept it as necessary. They demonstrate a high awareness of where cultural gaps lie and take steps to bridge them through explanation or storytelling. As one veteran translator succinctly put it: *“There are always some losses when we talk about cultural nuances... but when you tell the whole legend or story behind one word, the word is fully revealed, and people are amazed. They say, ‘How can one word carry such meaning?’* (Participant 8). This highlights both the challenge and the reward of cultural translation: the risk of “loss” spurs the translators to become storytellers who unpack rich meanings for the audience.

Theme three: adapting to audience and context

All participants emphasized that knowing one’s audience and context is crucial in deciding how to translate cultural terms. Through axial coding, two main subthemes became clear: (a) adaptation based on the audience’s background knowledge and language ability and other several demographic factors (b) adaptation based on the mode of translation and time constraints (oral vs. written, live tour vs. text).

Audience adaptation

The translators consistently tailor their explanations to the assumed knowledge level of the audience. A recurring quote (in various forms) was: *“We work for the lowest common denominator – assume the listener does not know, unless it’s proven otherwise.”* One participant explicitly stated this translator’s rule: *“we assume by default that the person doesn’t know [the term]. If they do know, they’ll tell us. In translation there’s a rule that we work for the most uninformed listener”* (Participant 1). This means explanations are given nearly every time a cultural term comes up, because one cannot count on the audience’s prior knowledge. Another translator with experience guiding diverse groups agreed: *“We can’t assume they know what kumys is. We have to assume they don’t know”* (Participant 3).

However, some differences in approach emerge with different audience profiles. Several participants mentioned adjusting the language based on if the tourists are not native English speakers. For instance, one guide noted that many of her groups consist of Europeans who speak English as a second language (Germans, Spaniards, etc.). *“You simplify the language as much as possible, so they are comfortable and understand you better,”* she said (Participant 2). She also considers age: with children or school groups, she would use even simpler vocabulary and more basic explanations. Another participant contrasted her approaches for different nationalities: English vs. Spanish tourists. She observed that *“American tourists, whose own cuisine is not very rich, find any exotic food interesting, whereas Spaniards, with a rich cuisine, are harder to impress with food”* (Participant 7). Thus, when explaining national cuisine or any dishes, the translator should emphasize different aspects depending on the group’s cultural background – essentially *“to please Spaniards you have to try harder... Brits are happy as long as it’s better*

than a burger,” she joked (Participant 7). This indicates she tailors the cultural narrative (in this case, culinary) to what she expects will resonate with that nationality’s interests by adapting to it.

Despite these nuances, a few translators felt that nationality itself is not a major factor, and it’s more about individual familiarity. One participant, who had worked mostly as a simultaneous interpreter, reflected that she wouldn’t change her translation of a term for Americans versus Italians – *“the audience could be mixed anyway, and I might not even know who knows what”*. Instead, what she *would* consider is whether the person is a first-time visitor or a repeat visitor to Kazakhstan. *“Someone on their first trip needs more explanation. Someone on their third or fourth probably already knows what beshbarmak and boursak are,”* she explained (Participant 1). So, she differentiates by prior exposure: newcomers get full explanations, whereas return visitors might not need basics repeated.

Importantly, participants who guide or serve local or regional tourists (e.g., Russian or Kazakh tourists visiting domestic sites) also adapt content for them. One highly experienced guide noted she has guided all sorts: foreigners, CIS tourists, Kazakhstani schoolchildren, VIP delegations. She adjusts her cultural explanations to the education level of the group as well, implying she would go into more depth with an educated audience and simplify for others. Thus, adaptation is multidimensional – considering language ability, cultural background, age, interest, and prior knowledge.

Context, mode, and time

The context in which translation happens – written text vs. spoken tour, and the available time – greatly influences the approach. All translators agreed that written translations allow (and demand) more detailed explanations, whereas oral interpretation during tours often requires brevity and instant decisions. *“In written form, you can always give extra information – the*

reader can choose to read it or not,” one participant (who does both guiding and document translation) noted, *“but in an oral tour you won’t go as in-depth due to time”* (Participant 8). Another guide observed that when the tourist is physically present and seeing the object, you might not need to over-explain obvious aspects: *“If we’re in a yurt and they see it with their own eyes, they visually understand what’s in front of them... they see it’s a cradle, just called besik. So, in oral translation on-site, it’s not so critical to explain every detail”* (Participant 1). In a written text about a yurt, by contrast, *“where there is no visual, you must convey everything with words”*, potentially requiring longer descriptive translations (Participant 1). This distinction between situated oral communication and decontextualized written text was mentioned several times by different participants.

Time constraints in live situations were frequently mentioned as a limiting factor. Another guide-translated stated: *“When you’re short on time, you tend to answer more quickly and simply”* (Participant 4). She gave a vivid example of juggling an official delegation tour on a tight schedule: if a site or story had multiple versions or a long backstory, she would pick *“the version that this audience will understand and that won’t raise follow-up questions”* (Participant 8). This pragmatic choice keeps the tour running on schedule. Another participant recounted a scenario where she *had* to simplify to the point of losing nuance: showing a hunting demonstration to foreign visitors who were animal welfare conscious. With little time to explain the cultural context of falconry, she *“couldn’t convey the full meaning”* and felt some cultural significance was lost. She later clarified the reason: *“we were limited in time... I didn’t want to distract them with a long tedious story while they were watching the show”* (Participant 9). In such cases, time pressure forces the translator to prioritize essential information at the expense of depth.

The mode of translation also matters. Those who do simultaneous interpreting noted that there is virtually no time to explain – one must translate almost word-for-word in the moment. In contrast, in consecutive interpreting or tour guiding, there is a bit more flexibility to add explanations. One participant contrasted “*business interpretation, where my personal input is minimal – I just translate even if it sounds blunt*” with “*cultural tourism interpretation, where you embellish things to make them sound better*” (Participant 8). She says in simultaneous mode she would “*not insert anything extra*”, but as a cultural guide she will “*color it, make it nicer*” for the audience.

In sum, knowing the audience and context leads to adaptive strategies. Translators simplify language for non-native speakers and younger audiences, and they gauge how much explanation to give based on what they suspect the listener already knows. They also adjust on the fly: one guide mentioned she can tell by tourists’ questions and reactions how interested or informed they are and will tailor her commentary accordingly. Context-wise, oral translators often reduce or omit information, whereas written translators elaborate. When one is not limited in time (e.g., a dedicated article or book), they strive for full detail; when time is short (a two-hour city tour), they focus on the “must-knows.” In all cases, the goal remains the same: to ensure the audience leaves with an understanding of the cultural concepts, even if the delivery is adjusted and loss of authenticity is inevitable. As one participant aptly summarized her strategy: “*My strategy is to accomplish communication above all – and at the same time, preserve as much of the original’s style as possible*” (Participant 4). If the audience has understood and felt engaged given the context, the translator considers the adaptation successful.

Theme four: balancing cultural fidelity and comprehension

Another prominent theme across the interviews is the balance between conveying the preserved authentic “cultural meaning” and making the text understandable and readable, and another important aspect is to make it engaging for the audience. Participants often reflected on this as a choice between *accuracy* and *readability*, or between *preserving cultural uniqueness* and *ensuring comprehension*. In practice, however, most rejected the notion of sacrificing one for the other; instead, they seek strategies to achieve both. The hybrid approach discussed in Theme one is one such strategy. Here we delve further into how translators prioritize these aspects and the rationale behind their choices.

Several translators explicitly addressed the question: “*Which is more important – preserving cultural nuance or making the text easy to understand?*” Nearly all answered that both are important, with the caveat that understanding is the baseline requirement. “*The main thing is that they understand,*” said one guide, “*especially if it’s children or a broad audience*” (Participant 8). She went on to note that in written translations one also considers who the reader will be – scholarly or general public, kids or elders – to decide how much explanatory detail is needed.

Nevertheless, there was a strong sentiment that cultural uniqueness should not be completely lost when pursuing simplicity. One participant argued passionately against excessive domestication: “*I don’t think we should domesticate things in translation... The interest [for tourists] is in the differences!*” She added: *while we might tweak certain terms to be easier to pronounce or read, some things, if you domesticate in translation, it’s not right – the whole point is the differences we have*” (Participant 3). This view encapsulates a pride in cultural distinctiveness. She gave the example of Kazakh food names and landmarks: “*Baiterek,*

bashbarmak, boursak – *those should be left as they are, and just use compensation (describe what's inside or what it is).*” In her opinion, clarity can be achieved via description without renaming these items in a way that loses their Kazakh identity. Another translator made a similar point using the yurt example: if you replaced every term (yurt, shanyrak, etc.) with a generic word in the target language, *“there'd be nothing of the yurt left... you'd lose the spirit of it”* (Participant 3). Her solution: keep the original words and immerse the reader in those terms, while guiding them through it with explanations.

In effect, the consensus was to prioritize understanding (so that tourists are not left confused), but by means that also allow the cultural term to shine. One participant phrased this well: *“We do it so that it's understood by the weakest listener, and we try to preserve the original flavor as much as possible.”* This often means using the foreign word plus a gloss. As noted earlier, one translator observed that in published English translations of Kazakh literature, the common practice is indeed *“hybrid translation – the word is kept and a definition given”* (Participant 1), which she also follows. In her view, this approach maximizes both comprehensibility and cultural fidelity.

Only occasionally did translators choose a fully domesticating approach, and usually with non-essential details or when testing if an audience would understand an analogy. For instance, to explain *Maslenitsa* to Americans, calling it *“Pancake Week”* was a form of domestication to something relatable (pancakes) – but even here, the term “week” hints at a festival and the Russian word was likely also mentioned. The translator acknowledged it's *“not the same, but communication is achieved”* (Participant 1). This indicates that when a cultural concept can be encapsulated in a simple phrase that resonates with the audience, a translator might temporarily

favor easy comprehension over full authenticity. However, this was the exception rather than the rule.

In sensitive cases, maintaining cultural accuracy can conflict with audience perception. The earlier example of explaining historical treatment of women is illustrative: the translator initially gave the literal cultural information (that was quite shocking), but then immediately mitigated it to ensure the modern context was understood. Here the *factual cultural accuracy* (historical truth) was preserved, but extra information was added to prevent misinterpretation – essentially to protect the overall image of the culture. This is another kind of balance: being truthful but also responsible to the audience’s likely reactions. The participant explicitly noted she did this “*so as not to create a bad impression of our culture today*” (Participant 7).

We see that translators sometimes strategically choose what to emphasize or omit for the audience’s sake. One guide gave a candid account of choosing the “official” nice version of a local history and avoiding a darker unofficial story when guiding foreign tourists, “*because it’s not a very beautiful version.*” “*If a guest heard that version, I imagine it would be awful,*” she said, “*so I stick to the official version*” (Participant 5). In her case, credibility and positivity outweighed full disclosure of a grim historical rumor. This reveals that translators are not just linguistic converters but also cultural curators, deciding what image of the culture to present. That decision is influenced by what they think will best serve the communicative goal (here, maintaining respect and interest). As she noted, “*if you say something that provokes discussion and chewing over, it can derail the tour*” (Participant 5).

Overall, the interviews show a clear understanding that a translated text about culture must be both accurate and accessible. The practitioners solve this not by diluting cultural content into the target culture, but by explaining the cultural content in target language terms. As one

participant put it: *“to preserve the cultural aspects, you should probably leave the original name... and give a descriptive translation... If we replace everything with simple words, we’ll miss a lot”* (Participant 1). She further argued that many steppe culture concepts simply *have no English equivalent* (for example, specific types of nomadic tools or terms) because of different historical experiences. Thus, inventing an “equivalent” would either fail or oversimplify. Her approach: *“I would leave the word in Kazakh (in Latin script) and give an explanation”* (Participant 1).

In conclusion, major recurring themes in their strategies boil down to: *do whatever necessary to make sure the foreign reader/listener understands the term (even if that means extensive explanation or slight simplification), but do not erase the cultural distinctiveness of the term*. The translators view themselves as carrying the “cultural uniqueness” of Kazakhstan to the world, and they take that responsibility seriously, while also using every technique to ensure the audience grasps the message. This careful balancing act is a core theme in the findings.

Theme five: translator preparation and resources

Finally, a strong theme that emerged is the importance of translator preparedness, continuous learning, and resource use when dealing with cultural texts. Participants repeatedly mentioned how they equip themselves to handle cultural terms – through research, collaboration, and sometimes technology – and how their approach has evolved with experience.

Self-education and research

Virtually all translators emphasized that *they must educate themselves on cultural topics before translating them*. Many gave examples of consulting reference materials or experts for unfamiliar terms. One translator said the most important lesson she has learned is *“to first study the meanings yourself”* – noting that some traditions are obscure or no longer practiced, so even

locals may not know them today. *“You need to read, study, and check sources... don’t rely only on the internet; use verified materials,”* she insisted (Participant 5). This sentiment was shared across the board. Another participant similarly mentioned that before tours she and colleagues would *“look things up on Wikipedia and read, to make sure we know what we’re talking about”* (Participant 2). Because as guides (often with backgrounds in language or pedagogy, not history), they needed to fill gaps in historical or ethnographic knowledge.

Evolution with experience

Many interviewees reflected on how their approach improved over time as they gained experience and knowledge. For example, one guide admitted that at the start of her career, due to limited knowledge and fear of making mistakes, *“I would translate briefly and not risk adding anything beyond my prepared material”* (Participant 6). She would stick rigidly to a script or glossary and avoid going deeper. With years of experience, she accumulated cultural knowledge and confidence, and now she feels able to *“see what is best to say or translate so that it’s understood”* and to adjust to the audience on the fly. Another participant noted that after long observations and frequently asked questions and reactions from tourists, she now most of the times at least meets or anticipates what will interest them and adjusts her tour content accordingly (for instance, she discovered Spanish visitors are more intrigued by certain exhibits like the Golden Man armor than by dinosaurs, contrary to her initial assumptions). This shows an adaptive learning process – over time, translators collect feedback and refine their cultural explanations to be more effective.

Several translators mentioned that with experience, they have also learned what not to do – for example, not to overload the audience or use jargon. One said earlier she might have tried to translate too literally, but now she focuses on the core message and assumes the audience’s

perspective more. Experience also teaches where potential misunderstandings might arise. One participant gave a real example: she used a certain English word which unfamiliar to her, carried a slightly rude connotation; some native speakers in the tour politely suggested a better word. *“I explained what I meant, they understood, but said it sounds nicer if you say this word instead,”* she recounted (Participant 3). She took it as a learning moment, noting *“you can never know 100% of someone else’s language, no matter what people claim”* (Participant 3). Such experiences have honed her sensitivity to nuance and register in translation.

Use of technology and collaboration

While human judgment and knowledge are clearly paramount, translators do make selective use of tools and colleagues to assist with cultural terms. Machine translation tools (like Google Translate) were approached with caution as they do not have ability to translate culture specific words or if they do, it is most of the time incorrect. One participant admitted she sometimes uses Google Translate for quick help, for example, to quickly find the name of a tree in another language. If she sees a plant on a tour (say a type of birch) and needs the exact term, she might check online. However, she and others stressed that these tools are not reliable for full cultural translations. *“They don’t always help – I never rely 100% on Google Translate,”* said one, *“maybe it helps about 50%”* (Participant 7). In delicate cases (like idioms or nuanced terms), most do not trust machine outputs. None of the interviewees indicated using advanced AI translation for cultural texts as of yet; one explicitly said she had *“no experience with AI in this context.”* Some did use online dictionaries or Wikipedia as reference tools (for factual info), but the crafting of the translation was very much manual.

Peer support

Peer support merged as a valuable and on the most reliable resource. Especially for tour guides, consulting more experienced colleagues is common. One guide shared a clever on-the-job tactic: if a tourist asks about the tradition, she isn't well-versed in, she will honestly promise to get back with an answer. Then *“while we continue the tour, I quickly send a voice message in our WhatsApp group of senior guides asking about it”* (Participant 8). By the end of the tour, she often has a reply with the needed explanation, which she then translates and delivers to the tourist. *“I have sources I trust – my older colleagues,”* she said. This real-time collaboration helps maintain accuracy. Another participant, working in a diplomatic setting, noted although she is Kazakh herself, but she would double-check her translations of official cultural messages with a Kazakh language expert colleague due to Kazakh language improficiency to ensure correctness (for instance, when translating a greeting from Indonesian to Kazakh). These examples show a culture of peer review and teamwork behind the scenes, even though the act of translation may be solitary. Notably, most translators did not have formal teams for translating tourism texts, but they built informal networks to consult.

Formal training

Few had gone through related training specifically in translating cultural terms, but one mentioned attending a guide training course where she learned the content of the tour in English and could compare it to the Russian version. This helped her see how information is presented to foreign tourists, though it was more about content than translation technique. By and large, on-the-job learning was key. Many expressed an interest in further training or resources in this domain, implying that currently they rely on their own resourcefulness.

In terms of glossaries or prepared materials, one participant noted that early in her career she stuck to a prepared glossary and script. Others did not mention using any official glossary for cultural terms. It appears each translator builds their own mental glossary over time. One guide did mention she could refer to printed program descriptions when guiding (for example, a brochure given to tourists that has explanations), but this is more for consistency and ensuring she covers what's in print rather than for her own lack of knowledge.

Improvisation vs. preparation

An interesting insight is that even with preparation, translators often have to improvise depending on the situation (“orientation on the spot” as one of the participants called it). They prepare background knowledge and likely translations of key terms, but once with the tourists, they must choose how to deliver it in an engaging way. One guide said that aside from factual prep, “*the guide must orient on the spot and respond to whatever is asked*” (Participant 2), which requires a broad base of knowledge to draw from, since you cannot predict every question.

In summary, the translators conveyed that success in translating cultural terms is strongly tied to the translator's own cultural competency, awareness and resourcefulness. They act as researchers, learners, and sometimes investigators (tracking down elusive meanings or legends). They are not passive conduits of words – they often become subject matter experts on culture, at least to a degree sufficient to explain to others. This theme highlights that *translating culture is an active, knowledge-intensive process*. As one participant aptly concluded: “*If a person is doing translations, they must study the culture, even if time is short... Always prepare – because relying just on internet information can lead to distortions*” (Participant 3). All translators shared the goal of conveying their culture accurately, and they collectively leverage personal study, experience, peer knowledge, and selective tool use to achieve that goal.

Summary and unique insights

Through open and axial coding of the interviews, the analysis reveals a cohesive picture of how translators' approach cultural terms in tourism contexts. Despite differing backgrounds (some are professional translators, others primarily tour guides or interpreters), their strategies and challenges exhibit remarkable commonality. All participants vividly prioritize clarity for the tourists, simultaneously preserving the authenticity of cultural concepts. The key method is retaining the local terms and fully deviate their original meaning through explanations, while effectively educating the target audience. Major recurring themes include the need for extensive explanation strategies, the challenge of untranslatable terms and concepts, adaptive techniques depending on the audiences and contexts and ultimately the imperative of translator preparedness.

To support these themes, participants offered numerous illustrative anecdotes and quotes. For instance, they described how they explain items like *yurts*, *besik cradles*, *kumys*, and *dombra* with patient explanation, sometimes verifying understanding by asking tourists if they have something similar in their culture. One translator shared: "*After I translate something, I ask, 'Do you have something like this in your culture?' and they give their examples... That's when I see we understood each other*" (Participant 4). This interactive checking of comprehension is a noteworthy practice some guides use, reinforcing that translation in tourism is often a two-way communicative act, not just one-way.

Another unique insight is how translators handle cultural sensitivity. One participant, as discussed, deliberately softened certain historical facts to avoid offense, essentially performing a *cultural diplomacy* role in translation. Others exercised editorial judgment in choosing which

folk story to present. These insights show translators operating with a keen sense of responsibility for cross-cultural representation, not just linguistic accuracy.

It is also worth noting that not all translation scenarios were English-focused. One veteran guide mainly led tours in Russian for domestic tourists, but even she faced the task of explaining local Kazakh cultural terms to people from different regions or backgrounds. Her approach was akin to the others – explain in simple, relatable terms and use analogies. This suggests the strategies identified are relevant not only to English translation but to any cross-cultural mediation (e.g., Russian–Kazakh in her case). The principles of clarity, completeness of context, and cultural respect remain the same.

To sum up, the findings from these interviews provide rich, evidence-based descriptions of real-world translation strategies for cultural terms. The themes and quotes presented here demonstrate how translators in Kazakhstan’s tourism sector adeptly navigate the space between cultures – *acting not only as translators of language, but as translators of culture itself*. Their collective experience highlights that successful translation of cultural terms requires not only linguistic skill but also such aspects as cultural knowledge, adaptability, and empathy with the audience. These qualitative insights enrich our understanding of translation strategies used for culturally specific content and underscore the translator’s role as a cultural ambassador in the tourism industry.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the findings of the study are examined and interpreted in the context with literature review, focusing on translation of cultural terms in tourism. The study was a qualitative, interview-based, involving nine professional translators, which at the same time are tourist guides. The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how culture-specific terms in tourism are translated. It also included the challenges that arise, and the strategies used by translators to maintain cultural nuances and bridge cultural gaps. Based on the results presented in the Findings chapter, the discussion connects those empirical insights with the relevant theories and prior studies. Participants' experiences alignment with or extension to current scholarship are also highlighted in the following chapter.

To provide a clear structure for this analysis, the chapter is divided into five key themes that emerged from the collected data. Each of the themes are corresponding to a major aspect of the translators' approach and presented in the order: Hybrid Translation Strategy, Challenges in Translating Cultural Concepts, Adapting to Audience and Context, Balancing Cultural Fidelity and Comprehension, and Translator Preparation and Resources. The themes are discussed independently in turn with reference to the literature and examples from the interview. The chapter starts with the Hybrid Translation Strategy as the first and the most prominent approach identified among all the participants.

Theme one: hybrid translation strategy

The majority of translators involved in this study adopted a hybrid strategy that aims at preserving source-cultural terms while immediately providing explanations and contextualizing them. Across all the interviews conducted, the participants consistently described introducing the source-language term, often via transliteration, and then explaining its meaning or giving

additional definition. This finding confirms the effectiveness of combining both foreignization and domestication in practice. It aligns with Zheng's (2021) recommendation of using "transliteration with explanation" to ensure cultural significance is preserved without sacrificing readability (p.749). By retaining the authentic term and adding context, the translators aim to achieve both authenticity and clarity – essentially balancing Venuti's (1995) dichotomy by doing a bit of both. Scholars like Kemppanen et al., (2018) have argued that such a balanced approach of domestication and foreignization should be viewed not as opposites but treated as points on a continuum, adapted to the situation. The findings strongly support this view: rather than choosing one extreme, translators fluidly combined strategies based on need.

Notably, every translator in the sample favored this "foreignization-plus-explanation" method, indicating a consensus that this is the optimal solution for cultural terms in tourism. This uniform preference adds empirical evidence to the literature. Previous studies have certainly acknowledged hybrid methods, but often as one option among many others. Here, practitioners went further by essentially making it standard practice. One participant explicitly stated that leaving the name in the original language and giving a descriptive translation is the most optimal approach, which was also acknowledged by other participants too. This real-world endorsement confirms what Kemppanen et al. (2018) theorized: translators benefit from viewing strategies flexibly and adapting to audience. In summary, this research vividly shows that a hybrid approach works the best to balance cultural preservation and understanding, just as previous studies suggested.

What's interesting is how this hybrid strategy stands out in tourism settings, adding a new layer to earlier findings. For example, Terestyényi (2011) found that simply transliterating or transferring foreign terms could attract tourists by giving them a taste of something unique, and

as he stated, “exotic flavor” (p.19). However, the translators all agreed that leaving key terms, that carry cultural significance, unexplained would confuse visitors—a point that aligns with warnings in the literature about how preserving a term without context can make it harder for people to understand.

Thus, while pure foreignization might work in some written materials, in most cases participants of this study universally avoided leaving culture-specific terms untranslated without clarification. Only one participant mentioned ever using a target-culture analogy (a form of domestication), underscoring that direct replacement of cultural terms with a rough equivalent was rare. This contrasts with some tourism translation practices that were also mentioned elsewhere, such as the use of functional equivalents in Indonesian brochures (Fuadi, 2016). The reluctance or unwillingness to use target-culture analogies in Fuadi’s study suggests that translators feared oversimplifying or diluting or even omitting the cultural nuance and this is a concern echoed by Lin (2021), who questioned whether heavy adaptation could preserve the essence of cultural uniqueness. In other words, the practitioners prioritized cultural fidelity more than some prior cases of domestication did, opting for explanation rather than substitution. This contrasts with contexts like literary translation, where domestication often dominates. As Shokri & Ketabi (2015) observed, 82% of culture-specific items were domesticated to aid reader comprehension. In the tourism context, by contrast, translators found a hybrid middle-ground preferable to either extreme. This insight adds to the literature by illustrating how context in tourism shifts the preferred strategy towards a nuanced combination of techniques and strategies that deliver both authenticity and understanding.

Theme two: challenges in translating cultural concepts

The challenge of untranslatable or hard-to-translate cultural concepts was one of the recurrent themes in the findings. The research participants noted that many cultural terms and practices have no direct equivalent nor translation in the target language, making translation difficult and challenging. They often must convey meanings that are deeply rooted in the source culture's values or history, and in doing so they sometimes confront the limits of translation – certain nuances or connotations inevitably vanish in translation. This candid acknowledgment by translators confirms well-documented issues in translation studies. As Newmark (1988) emphasized, texts which are rich in culture-specific references are particularly vulnerable to translation loss when the audience lacks cultural awareness and cultural frame of reference. The findings strongly confirm this vulnerability: every translator interviewed for this research, gave examples of terms that simply do not carry the same meaning outside their cultural context. For instance, some mentioned the Kazakh custom “qymyz murundyk” – even after translating it as a “first ceremonial tasting of fermented mare’s milk,” the precise cultural significance required further explanation as it does not fully expose cultural authenticity. This echoes Pratama et al. (2021), who found Indonesian tourism texts frequently lost cultural nuances mainly because of absence of the equivalence in the target language or just oversimplifying it. Similarly, the research participants noted that even a detailed explanation can sometimes fail to fully convey the local significance or emotional resonance of a cultural concept. In translation theory terms, certain connotative meanings or cultural subtleties may be untranslatable – a phenomenon that participants of the study encounter regularly.

Moreover, the loss of nuanced meaning and context that research participants discussed resonates with specific categories of translation loss identified in the literature. Several

participants mentioned that without sufficient background or context, a literal translation of a cultural phrase could be misleading or meaningless to tourists. This aligns with Feng's (2010) observation that cultural metaphors and idiomatic expressions are highly context-dependent and risk misinterpretation if translated word-for-word. Indeed, Wahidi et al. (2021) noted that even when tourism translations are technically accurate, many suffer from contextual losses, especially when cultural metaphors are translated too literally. The participants' strategies of elaborating on or rephrasing such expressions confirm the need to handle them carefully to avoid exactly those losses. To mitigate these challenges, the translators in this study defaulted to the hybrid "term + explanation" strategy (as detailed in Theme one). By providing additional context or description, they attempt to compensate for the lack of direct equivalence, the tactic supported by Zheng (2021), who advocates combining transliteration with explanations to preserve context and clarity. In this way, the findings reinforce the literature's recommendation that compensation strategies such as adding explanations and giving additional context or description are vital and the most appropriate solution when facing culturally untranslatable content.

While the findings largely support the existing literature on the inevitability of some loss, they also add to it by highlighting translators' awareness and proactive handling of these gaps. Every participant of the research not only recognized the problem of untranslatable concepts but also had developed a conscious approach to handle it (usually through explanation, occasionally through analogy). This level of reflexivity – translators explicitly discussing what gets "lost" and how they try to avoid misunderstandings – is an important insight. It shows practitioners acting as cultural problem-solvers, closely aligning with Katan's (2004) notion of the translator as a cultural mediator who must find creative solutions to bridge gaps between cultures. One slight contrast with some prior studies is the low reliance on target-culture analogies in the data. While

the literature notes that domestication via functional equivalence is one way to address untranslatable items (Newmark, 1988), the translators in my study seldom used this method. Only one interviewee mentioned substituting a foreign concept with a roughly similar concept from the target culture. The others avoided this, fearing it could misrepresent the source culture. Instead, they preferred to explain on the source culture's own terms (with descriptive context), even if that meant a lengthier translation. This practice adds a nuanced perspective: rather than "filling" a cultural gap with a familiar analogy, these translators choose to educate the tourist about the foreign concept itself. It highlights a commitment to cultural fidelity even in the face of translation difficulties. Moreover, it enriches the discussion on how translators deal with cultural untranslatability. Generally, Theme two highlights that while translators confirm known and most recurring challenges (no equivalents, inevitable loss of some connotation), they also contribute insights into hands-on coping mechanisms that balance the losses as much as possible. As the literature concludes, no single strategy can eliminate all cultural loss, but the study shows translators combine strategies and leverage their cultural knowledge to minimize that loss in creative ways.

Theme three: adapting to audience and context

The need to adapt translation approaches to the audience and context emerged as a key theme. The research participants consistently emphasized that who the audience is – their cultural background, prior knowledge, age, language proficiency – and how/where the translation is delivered – orally during a live tour, in a written brochure, under time constraints, etc. – significantly influence their strategy. This finding is highly consistent with the literature, which stresses that translation is context-dependent and purpose-driven. In fact, previous studies have shown that the preferred translation strategy can vary greatly by genre and intended audience

(Rezaei & Kuhi, 2014). For example, in tourist guidebooks, preserving local color through foreignization is often valued to showcase cultural uniqueness, whereas in literary fiction, translators may domesticate more to ensure emotional resonance for readers (Shokri & Ketabi, 2015). The data confirms this principle of adaptation: the tourism translators that were interviewed adjust their method to fit the setting and audience expectations at hand. As one of the translators noted, that she tailors explanations depending on the target audiences' field of specialization, considering whether they are already familiar with regional history like some scholars versus a group of casual tourists hearing these terms for the first time. This is directly in line with Tymoczko's (2007) argument that translators must navigate the complex interplay of cultural preservation, audience expectations, and practical constraints, finding context-specific solutions rather than applying "one-size-fits-all" approaches.

A prominent aspect of audience adaptation in the findings was gauging the audience's cultural familiarity and adjusting detail accordingly. Translators described how they would provide more background for concepts that are likely completely new to foreigners but might be briefer if the tourists share some regional knowledge (for instance, CIS tourists might recognize certain Kazakh terms more readily than visitors from outside Eurasia). This practice is supported by the literature's recommendations that translators should carefully assess the cultural familiarity of their target audience when deciding how much to foreignize, simplify or explain (Myskja, 2013; Rezaei & Kuhi, 2014). The research participants' decisions on whether to use a simple explanation, an elaborate story, or even omit certain details depended on their read of the audience's needs. This confirms the centrality of the audience in strategy selection, as evidenced by empirical studies comparing different contexts. Rezaei and Kuhi (2014), for instance, advocated a more foreignizing approach in English-language tourist materials specifically to

cater to travelers' interest in authentic cultural experiences. The translators in my study indeed preserved authenticity, but they also ensured that the presentation of that authenticity was tuned to the audience's capacity to understand and appreciate it.

In addition to audience knowledge level, the mode of translation (oral vs. written) and situational constraints played a role. All participants were involved in oral interpreting for tourists, and many also translated written texts (tourism texts, brochures). They noted that in oral translation during tours, they often engage in an interactive, dialogic process that helps building rapport. One particularly insightful practice mentioned was that after explaining a cultural item, a guide might ask some questions. They usually ask if the tourists have a similar concept in their own culture, eventually creating a two-way dialogue. This interactive checking of comprehension is a novel insight that adds to the literature, which typically discusses translation strategy in one-directional terms. It illustrates how, in spoken tourism translation, adaptation can be dynamic: the explanation can be adjusted or expanded on the spot based on the audience's reactions. Such real-time adaptation goes beyond what is described in static text translation scenarios, highlighting the unique communicative nature of tourism settings. It resonates with the idea of translators (or interpreter-guides) as intercultural communicators. As Katan (2004) suggests, translators often function as cultural mediators, my findings provide a concrete example of this, showing mediating in action through interactive clarification.

Contextual factors like time constrain and format of the translation (written/oral) also influenced strategy choices. Participants explained that on walking tours or during live presentations, there is a need to be concise. Tourists' attention spans and tour schedules impose time limits on how much explanation can be given at once as it might be too overwhelming. Therefore, translators might simplify a description if time is limited, or break information into

smaller chunks delivered throughout the tour. In contrast, a written text (like a guidebook entry) might allow a longer, more detailed explanation, or the inclusion of a footnote or sidebar for additional context. The literature indirectly supports this adaptive behavior: it notes the practical constraints translators face in real situations which would include time pressure and format limitations (Tymoczko, 2007; Zheng, 2021). By confirming that such practical constraints are top-of-mind for translators, the study reinforces Tymoczko's (2007) call for flexible, context-aware translating rather than rigid adherence to theory. Also, adding nuance by documenting how translators consciously adjust to different modes, for instance several participants noted that in written translations they may italicize or parenthesize a foreign term with an explanation. However, in oral translation they rely on tone, pauses, and repetition to ensure the term is understood. These detailed adjustments for context are not extensively detailed in prior literature, which tends to focus on end results rather than the process. The findings thus contribute a practical layer: adapting to audience and context is not just an abstract principle but a skillful maneuver executed in various forms (interactive questioning, tailoring depth of explanation, modulating detail based on time and medium). In summary, Theme three underscores that for tourism translators, knowing one's audience and context is as critical as knowing the source language. This theme confirms broad theoretical expectations about audience-centered translation. It also provides concrete examples of how those adaptations occur on the ground, thereby enriching the discussion on contextual strategy selection.

Theme four: balancing cultural fidelity and comprehension

Throughout the interviews, translators repeatedly mentioned the importance of balancing cultural fidelity with comprehension. They feel a dual responsibility: to faithfully represent the source culture (its terms, stories, and "flavor") and to ensure the audience understands and

remains engaged. This finding strikes at the heart of a classic debate in translation studies – the trade-off between preserving the source-text culture (often linked to Venuti's (1995) foreignization) and making the text readily accessible to the target audience (Venuti's (1995) domestication). The data strongly confirms that this tension is not just theoretical but a daily concern that translators have to cope with in tourism. This is similar to the literature that argues that while foreignization maintained cultural identity but may put up obstacles for readers who are unfamiliar with it, while domestication improves readability but runs the danger of eliminating cultural distinctiveness (Myskja, 2013; Shokri & Ketabi, 2015). Indeed, one can see the participants as constantly negotiating between these two poles. For every unique term or custom, they decide how much of the original to retain and how much explanation or adaptation to provide. The pervasive use of the hybrid strategy (Theme one) is itself evidence of this balancing effort – it is literally a blend of fidelity (keeping the original term) and adaptation for comprehension (giving an explanation).

According to the findings, translators actively work towards achieving this balance and are aware of its necessity, which is consistent with Katan's (2004) and other scholars' perspectives that translators serve as cultural mediators. According to Katan (2004), translators have to strike a balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and making sure the audience can still understand the material. The participants' actions serve as an example of this mediating function. They serve as cultural ambassadors, ensuring authenticity by introducing genuine terms and traditions, yet also acting as educators or interpreters to make those elements accessible and interesting to foreign visitors. One translator described this role aptly, that she would soften certain historical facts or chooses how to present folklore so as not to overwhelm or offend the audience (for instance, omitting or rephrasing details that might be too shocking or confusing for

outsiders). In doing so, she is consciously balancing fidelity to the source content with the receptivity of the audience – a form of ethical domestication. This practice provides an example of how comprehension (and audience comfort) can occasionally take precedence over strict fidelity for the sake of cross-cultural rapport. While the literature on domestication/foreignization often frames the choice in terms of reader comprehension vs. source integrity, the study adds an ethical dimension to the discussion: translators sometimes manipulate the balance not just for clarity, but to maintain a respectful and positive cross-cultural interaction (a consideration particularly relevant in tourism contexts where the goal is to promote interest in the culture).

In comparing the findings with existing research, there is no outright contradiction but rather a reinforcement and extension of scholarly insights. The interviews confirmed that neither extreme strategy alone is satisfactory in tourism translation – a conclusion which was supported by several scholars, emphasizing the need for balance of readability and cultural preservation (Venuti, 1995; Rezaei & Kuhl, 2014; Myskja, 2013). What this study adds is evidence of how translators implement this in practice, often intuitively. For example, none of the participants advocated for a purely foreignizing approach (i.e. just presenting cultural material with minimal explanation) even though they deeply valued cultural fidelity. This underscores a slight contrast with any purist ideology that might champion foreignization at all costs. In reality, as the translators illustrate, pure foreignization without mediation would leave the audience lost – a point implied by Myskja (2013) and others who note that foreignization can alienate readers if taken too far. Conversely, the translators were also reluctant to overly domesticate content; they did not simply replace cultural elements with familiar ones or strip out the “foreignness.” This stands in contrast to the heavy domestication documented in other settings (such as the literary translation case where 82% of cultural items were domesticated) (Shokri & Ketabi, 2015). The

tourism translators here found that approach unsuitable for conveying the true appeal of the culture. In effect, their practice demonstrates a dynamic equilibrium: for each cultural term or reference, they judge how to convey it truthfully yet intelligibly. This dynamic approach supports Kemppanen et al.'s (2018) notion of a continuum between domestication and foreignization and validates the idea that effective translators oscillate along that continuum depending on the need.

Importantly, the balance of fidelity and comprehension is viewed by the translators as crucial to the success of tourism translation. Several mentioned that if you lean too much to one side, the translation fails in its purpose – either it becomes a dry “lecture” stripped of cultural charm (too domesticated), or it becomes confusing and off-putting to tourists (too foreignized). The literature concurs that especially in tourism, where the goal is both to inform and to spark appreciation for the source culture, finding the middle ground between foreignization and domestication is essential (Myskja, 2013; Rezaei & Kuhi, 2014; Kemppanen et al., 2018). The findings strongly confirm this, and additionally highlight the translator's agency in finding that balance. Rather than following a preset rule, translators exercised judgment case by case. This contributes to the literature by illustrating the qualitative decision-making process behind the scenes. It is one thing to say in theory that one must balance; this study shows how translators internalize that principle and apply it pragmatically. In conclusion, Theme four reaffirms that the fundamental goal of translating cultural terms is striking a balance between audience understanding and cultural authenticity. Additionally, it provided depth by illustrating the types of micro-decisions and even ethical considerations translators have in order to maintain that balance in actual tourism contexts.

Theme five: translator preparation and resources

The final major theme highlighted the critical role of translator preparation, knowledge, and resources in handling cultural terms. Participants unanimously noted that successfully translating culture-specific content requires substantial background knowledge and research. Many described doing homework before engaging with tourists – for example, learning the historical background of a term, checking facts about a cultural practice, or preparing analogies and descriptions in advance. This finding is consistent with the idea that nuanced strategies (like the hybrid term + explanation approach) are resource-intensive and demand a translator who has a deep understanding of both source and target. Zheng (2021) and others have pointed out that employing such hybrid or creative strategies is not trivial; the translator must possess broad cultural competence and often invest time in preparation. The study's evidence confirms this: translators with rich cultural knowledge were able to craft effective explanations on the fly, whereas even those same translators acknowledged that less experienced or less prepared individuals would struggle with these terms. In line with this, the literature notes that the effectiveness of any given strategy can depend on the skills and cultural competence and awareness of the translator (Zheng, 2021). Indeed, one contribution of the findings is underscoring how translator-centric this process is – the strategies don't operate in a vacuum; they rely on the translator's expertise.

Several participants discussed how experience and ongoing learning have shaped their approach over time. Early in their careers, some admitted they occasionally either over-explained (providing too much detail and losing the audience's interest) or under-explained (leaving tourists puzzled). With experience, they learned to calibrate the balance better (tying back to

Theme four) and to anticipate what aspects of a cultural term would confuse outsiders. This evolution with experience adds a new perspective to the literature, which often treats translation strategy use as a fixed choice or a generalized practice, rather than dynamic process (Shokri & Ketabi, 2015; Rezaei & Kuhi, 2014). The findings suggest that translator training and experiential learning are key factors – something not explicitly detailed in the literature reviewed, but intuitively in line with the notion of building translation competence. In other words, this theme adds to the idea that strategy selection and execution improve as translators gain more cultural insight and practice. It stresses the necessity of teaching translators' cultural literacy and explanatory abilities in addition to language proficiency, supporting requests for the development of these competences in translation education. Regarding the recourses, some translators noted making use of support networks, peers, and additional tools. For example, some people maintain multilingual glossaries or list of cultural terminology that have been provided with definitions based on previous research. A couple mentioned, whenever they use online dictionaries or machine translation to get a firsthand understanding of unfamiliar terms, but they immediately realize that these automated tools frequently inadequate for culture-specific concepts. This minor insight corresponds to general knowledge in translation technology: machine translation, while useful for plain language, often fails to capture cultural nuances and context. The participants' limited use of such tools suggests that human insight and research remain indispensable for this kind of translation – a point that aligns with broader translation studies, even if not explicitly covered by tourism translation literature. Additionally, some translators described consulting colleagues or subject matter experts (for example, asking an elder about a traditional custom's deeper meaning) when they encounter something they are unsure about. This collaborative approach underscores how translation of culture is a

community-informed effort, and it speaks to the ethos of thoroughness and accuracy these translators uphold.

Interestingly, the theme of preparation and resources also touched on ethical responsibility in a subtle way. Participants took preparation seriously because they believed it was their responsibility to portray their culture accurately and captivatingly. In an effort to avoid misleading the audience, one translator said she would double check her descriptions of a ceremony or custom with several sources, just to be sure they were accurate. Accuracy and cultural sensitivity are two aspects of a translator's work ethic. The findings demonstrate practitioners implicitly upholding ethical principles of adherence to cultural norms of fidelity to cultural truth and duty for their audience. The translators' preparatory work and use of resources are evidence of steps taken to uphold that ethical standard.

In summary, Theme five confirms that translator expertise and preparation are foundational to implementing any of the translation strategies effectively. The literature acknowledges that advanced strategies require deep cultural knowledge (Zheng, 2021), and the study provides concrete examples of that principle – every participant stressed knowledge as key, and those with more experience clearly managed cultural terms with greater ease. There was no significant contradiction here with existing research; rather, the results expand on it by shedding light on how translators equip themselves to meet the challenge (through research, tools, collaboration, and experience). This practical insight goes a step beyond strategy classification, emphasizing the human and material factors that enable successful cultural term translation. In doing so, this study highlights an often-implicit aspect of translation studies: even the best strategy will falter if the translator is not sufficiently prepared or resourced to carry it out. By documenting the translators' preparatory practices and resource use, this study contributes a

richer understanding of the behind-the-scenes work that underpins effective translation of cultural content in tourism.

Contribution to the conceptual framework

Beyond the specific themes discussed above, this study makes a broader contribution by illuminating which factors influence translators' choices of strategy when dealing with cultural terms in tourism. The findings suggest that strategy selection is complex decision, shaped not only by the format of the translation but by some other factors. Key factors identified include the following:

Target audience characteristics

The background, expectations, and cultural familiarity of the audience heavily determine translation strategy. Translators in this study consistently tailored their approach to who the tourists were – for instance, simplifying explanations for children or providing more cultural context for visitors with no regional knowledge. This supports the idea that knowing the audience's profile (nationality, age, interests) is crucial in deciding whether to lean more towards explanation or allow more implicit understanding. The contribution here is showing just how much translators factor audience into every decision: one participant even changed her wording depending on whether her group was Western tourists versus neighboring country tourists, reflecting a fine-grained audience awareness.

Purpose and context of the translation

Purpose as well as context of translation played a key role in selection of the appropriate and the most effective strategy. Apart the audience itself, the research participants highlighted the specific aim of the translation – whether to entertain, promote or educate – indeed influences on their translation decisions and the way how cultural terms are conveyed. These situational

elements influence the tone, detail, and strategy. For example, if the purpose is to educate deeply about culture (as in a museum tour for history enthusiasts), a translator might opt to retain more foreign terms and give in-depth explanations (leaning towards a foreignization-plus-explication strategy). If the purpose is mainly promotion or quick consumption (like a travel advertisement or a brief brochure), the translator might streamline content to be easily digestible, perhaps substituting or glossing over complex cultural terms. Our interviews showed translators constantly reading the context: during a time-constrained walking tour, they abbreviated certain explanations, whereas in a relaxed setting they delved into storytelling. It also adds insight by illustrating that even the same translator will switch strategies if the context shifts (a flexibility that theory encourages, and the findings demonstrate in practice). In tourism, where translations can range from scripted audio-guides to spontaneous Q&A with tourists, contextual factors like mode (oral vs. written) and time constraints critically shape how a cultural term is translated.

Ethical and cultural considerations

An important and somewhat less tangible factor influencing strategy is the translator's sense of ethical responsibility and cultural sensitivity. The participants occasionally made strategic choices to avoid potential misunderstandings or offense. For instance, one chose to omit or gently rephrase certain culturally sensitive historical details for international tourists, aiming to present the culture positively and avoid shock or offense. This decision was not just about comprehension, but about respecting both the source culture and the audience's values – an ethical stance. Another participant decided against translating a crude joke from folklore, feeling it would not be appropriate for the audience, thereby choosing to skip a culturally authentic element for a considerate reason. Such examples show translators weighing ethical implications

(e.g., “Will this offend or mislead the audience? Does it represent our culture appropriately?”) when selecting a strategy.

The findings add a concrete dimension to the statement: in tourism translation, the translator sometimes acts as a cultural diplomat, mediating what and how to translate in order to foster positive cross-cultural relations. These ethical considerations can lead a translator to domesticate more than they normally would (for the sake of politeness or political correctness), or conversely, to foreignize and explain in detail (for the sake of authenticity and respect for the source culture). Thus, the translator’s principles and the desired intercultural impact influence strategic choices alongside linguistic factors. This factor intertwines with audience and purpose – for example, a decision to tone down a term depends on anticipating the audience’s reaction – but it stands out as the translator’s personal and professional judgment call guiding the translation process.

In highlighting these factors – audience, context, translator competence, and ethics (among others like available time and tools) – the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of why translators choose the strategies they do. Much of the prior literature has categorized what strategies exist and debated the merits of one versus another in abstract terms. The research moves the discussion into the real world by showing that those choices are seldom made in a vacuum. They are the result of interacting influences: who is receiving the translation, under what circumstances, by whom, and with what goals in mind. This comprehensive view is particularly valuable for translation studies in the tourism domain. It implies that situational elements and translator-centric aspects, in addition to textual analysis, should be taken into consideration in future evaluation of translation processes. In conclusion, this study’s contribution is to close the gap between strategy theory and translator practice. It demonstrates

that elements like audience and purpose – which are commonly mentioned in theory – do, in fact, influence strategy selection in practice. It also introduces practical insights – such as how time pressure can curtail elaboration, or how a translator’s experience opens up strategy options – which enrich the theoretical discourse. Ultimately, understanding these influencing factors helps explain why a hybrid strategy was almost universally favored in this case, and when a translator might deviate from it. It moves us closer to a contextualized theory of translating cultural terms: one that acknowledges that the “best” strategy is contingent on a mix of audience needs, situational demands, translator preparedness, and ethical judgment. This nuanced understanding is the key contribution of this discussion, offering both scholars and practitioners a clearer picture of how cultural translation strategies are selected in real-life tourism settings.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

To remind, the purpose of this study was to explore the intricate decision-making processes of translators, shedding light on the strategies they use and challenges they encounter when translating cultural terms.

The research was guided by the following two research questions: (RQ1) What are the main challenges and issues faced by professional translators in translating cultural terms within tourism texts? (RQ2) What strategies and techniques do professional translators implement when translating cultural terms found in tourism materials?

In this chapter, I am finishing this research, answering research questions presenting implications, limitations and giving directions for future research.

Summary of key findings and themes

1. Hybrid translation strategy as the dominant approach

The research participants consistently favored a hybrid translation approach. Most translators prefer to blend both foreignization and domestication rather than choosing one exclusively. They often keep original cultural term following with it with a clear explanation, sometimes transliterating or directly translating. This combined approach is particularly effective at conveying cultural terms, as it allows translators to preserve cultural authenticity. This approach ensures tourists understand the meaning within the context too. It also retains the unique essence and significance of the original term. Throughout the interviews, this method emerged as a common practice in tourism translation, highlighting its importance. This theme directly addresses the RQ2 about translators' strategies, revealing that they primarily rely on a flexible mix of adaptation and preservation.

Translators can skillfully navigate between those two extremes. Ultimately, they achieve clarity for the audience as well as fidelity to the source material.

2. Challenges in translating cultural concepts

One major challenge identified in this research is the complexity of cultural concepts plus how translators navigate those concepts. Participants often encountered culture-specific terms and also practices that were lacking direct equivalents in the target language, which could lead to a loss of meaning. The findings reveal that some culturally specific ideas simply cannot be translated into a single word or phrase that captures their full essence. As a result, translators often need to go beyond literal translation, interpreting or simplifying concepts to effectively connect different cultures.

The research participants acknowledged some cultural nuances cannot be entirely preserved in translation. Despite this challenge, they did not see it as being a reason to give up. Instead, they emphasized the importance of creatively and efficiently bridging the gap between the source culture and broader audience, aiming to minimize any loss of meaning. For example, when describing a unique local tradition or term, translators would provide extensive context or storytelling to convey its significance, aware that a straightforward translation would fall short. This theme highlights the translator's agency as a cultural problem-solver: professionals consciously devise ways to compensate for gaps in cross-cultural understanding. They might use analogies, if appropriate, or more commonly the hybrid strategy of adding explanations, to approximate the concept for the audience. In doing so, they embody the role of cultural mediators, a role emphasized in theory as crucial for translation of culturally rich content. The findings thus underscore that one core issue (for RQ1) is the risk of cultural meaning getting "lost in translation", and the translators' response

to this is an active mediating process – using their judgement to decide how best to convey meaning when no direct translation exists. By documenting the manner in which translators perceive and deal with these untranslatable elements, the study furnishes a thorough understanding that translators are not just language converters but also cultural interpreters who fill explanatory gaps. This theme relates back to their importance of cultural complexity, which can be addressed through maneuvers such as previously mentioned, the balancing act and hybrid approach. It does confirm that a certain degree of loss cannot be avoided. Accomplished translators curtail diminishment via the construction of cultural linkages using suitable context, sufficient explanation, and applicable culturally sensitive adaptation.

3. Adapting to audience and context

The research revealed that professional translators are very attuned to their audience and the specific context in which they are translating. This awareness greatly influences their choice in techniques and highlights the challenges they face. They confront predicaments in regard to RQ1 and also select techniques that regard RQ2 as they adapt their approach to various situations.

The translation's format whether it's a written brochure, a website or a delivered orally during a guided tour and the factors such as the audience's cultural background, language skills, and prior knowledge were noted by participants to play a major role for them within their translation decisions. For instance, the style appropriate for a polished travel brochure may differ from what is needed during a live tour or in a museum setting. Translators often make contextual adjustments: in written materials, they might italicize a foreign term and provide a brief explanation, while in spoken interpretation, they rely on their tone and pacing to convey meaning. They also face practical limitations; for example, a tour guide has only a

short amount of time to explain a term live, whereas printed text can provide much more detail.

These findings highlight that translation is not one-size-fits-all; it is heavily influenced by the audience and context, requiring translators to exercise their judgment to meet situational needs. By following functionalist principles, translators adjust their choices based on the purpose of the translation and the expectations of the listeners or readers. This focus on being audience-centered and adaptable is essential for effective tourism translation and reinforces that understanding one's audience and context is just as important as mastering the source material. In summary, translators skillfully modify their explanations and delivery styles to fit different scenarios, thereby enhancing their ability to convey cultural meanings effectively.

4. Balancing cultural fidelity and audience comprehension

A recurring concern for translators was the delicate balance between staying faithful and unbiased to the source culture and making content accessible to the audience. This theme represents a fundamental challenge (speaking to RQ1) that underlies many of their decisions, that made the interviewees feel a dual responsibility: on one hand, to faithfully represent the source culture's terms, stories, and values, and on the other, to ensure the audience can understand and appreciate the material. The findings confirm that this tension is not merely theoretical but a daily practical consideration. Translators constantly negotiated "how much of the original to retain and how much explanation or adaptation to provide" for each culture-specific reference. The pervasive use of the hybrid strategy (noted in the first theme) is itself evidence of this balancing act – it embodies a compromise between cultural fidelity as keeping the original term, and audience comprehension, which is about giving an explanation.

Participants described often walking a fine line: for example, they might omit or simplify certain culturally intricate details if those might overwhelm or confuse tourists, but only as a last resort and with careful judgment. Ultimately, this theme highlights that achieving an equilibrium between authenticity and clarity is viewed as essential by translators. It reinforces long-standing observations in translation studies that a trade-off exists between maintaining a text's cultural richness and making it readily understandable – and shows how practitioners actively manage this trade-off in the tourism context. The translators in this study approached each term with an eye toward preserving cultural meaning as much as possible while adapting just enough to avoid alienating the audience. This finding illuminates RQ1 by pinpointing one of the main issues translators grapple with, and it connects to RQ2 in that the strategies employed (like the hybrid method) are in service of striking this balance.

5. Translator preparation and resources

The final theme revealed that the translator's own expertise, preparation, and background knowledge are critical factors in successfully translating cultural terms. In other words, who the translator is – their experience, skills, and training – significantly affects how well the challenges are managed and strategies executed. All participants stressed that handling culture-specific content is an expertise-intensive task. The research participants stated that they often prepare thoroughly: they research unfamiliar cultural references, consult historical or anthropological sources, and even check with community experts to ensure accuracy and richness in their translations. Those with deeper cultural knowledge or personal familiarity with both source and target cultures were evidently more comfortable and adept at finding the right balance in translation. This theme addresses RQ2 indirectly by highlighting that effective use of strategies (like the hybrid method or context adaptation) depends on the

translator's competence. Novice or less-prepared translators, as some interviewees noted from personal experience, might err by over-explaining (and thus diluting the impact or boring the audience) or under-explaining (leaving the audience confused). With experience, translators learn to "calibrate" and promptly adapt their approach, finding the most suitable approach and how much explanation to provide for a given term. The study thereby illuminates that translation strategies do not operate in a vacuum; their success is contingent on the translator's judgment and knowledge. This insight has important implications: it suggests that improving translators' cultural literacy and explanatory skills can directly enhance translation quality. The finding reinforces what translation scholarship often implies – that translation is a skill honed over time, and the translator's role is central to the outcome. By underscoring translator expertise as foundational, the research also hints that any advances in strategy (no matter how innovative) require capable practitioners to implement them. In short, Theme five confirms that human factors such as training, experience, and preparatory effort are pivotal in overcoming challenges (RQ1) and effectively applying strategies (RQ2) for cultural term translation. Successful conveyance of cultural nuances in tourism is as much about the translator's competence and ethical commitment as it is about the inherent difficulty of the text.

Together, these five themes comprehensively answer the research questions. They show that translators face complex challenges like untranslatable concepts and the need to balance fidelity with comprehension (RQ1) and that they respond by employing adaptive, hybrid strategies informed by context and bolstered by their own expertise (RQ2). The findings provide a cohesive narrative, which states that professional tourism translators

mediate culture, as they fuse translation approaches alongside experience and erudition to accomplish cultural preservation for audience accessibility.

From this research, several implications for translation theory are inferred. Experience indicates a distinct inclination toward a hybrid strategy; therefore, established theoretical dichotomies like domestication are impacted. Foreignization is too rigid. It is not able to effectively depict tourism translation.

Theoretical implications

The findings from this research have important implications for translation theory. First, the preference for a hybrid approach suggests that traditional distinctions, like domestication versus foreignization, are too rigid to fully capture what happens in tourism translation. The evidence that translators blend different methods supports a view of translation strategies as existing on a continuum, rather than as strict opposites. This indicates that being faithful to the source culture and adapting to the target audience can work together rather than against each other. It emphasizes that effective translation often requires a mix of strategies based on context, rather than sticking to a single method.

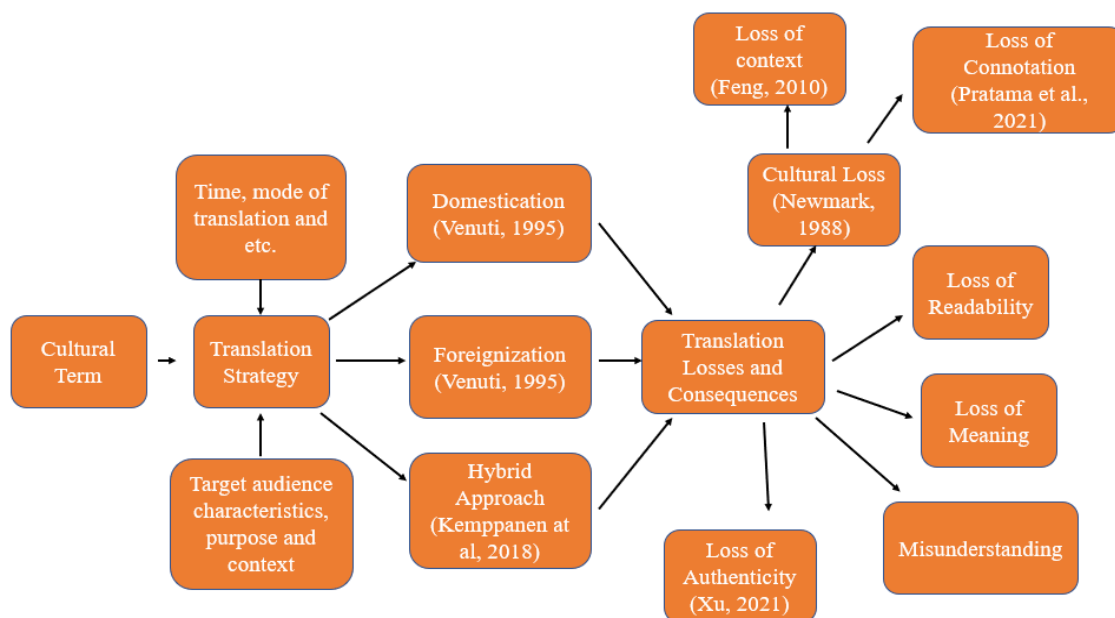
Secondly, this study enhances the understanding of the translator's role as a cultural intermediary. The findings show that translators do more than just convey language; they actively interpret culture and negotiate meaning for their audience. Their efforts to bridge cultural gaps and anticipate how the audience will receive the text provide real examples of the mediator role theorists have discussed in abstract terms. By revealing how translators tackle untranslatable terms through explanation and context, this research illustrates the concept of the translator as an intercultural communicator who utilizes creativity and cultural

knowledge. This supports existing theories that stress the need for translation to be context-aware and highlights the translator's agency in making decisions based on specific situations.

Another key implication relates to the importance of context when choosing translation strategies. The consistent focus on adapting to the audience and situation aligns with functionalist principles and Skopos theory, which argues that translation choices should be driven by purpose and the needs of the reader or listener. The data from this study confirms this notion: translators adjusted their methods depending on whether they were working with oral tours, written texts, expert audiences, or general readers. This suggests that any theoretical model for translating cultural content must take contextual variability into account as a central element. Theories that treat translation strategies as fixed traits of a text or translator do not capture the whole picture; instead, a dynamic approach that recognizes changing circumstances is more appropriate.

Finally, the research highlights the crucial role of translator competence, which is often overlooked in theory. Many translation theories examine strategies and outcomes without considering the individual translator's background. This study emphasizes that a translator's expertise—such as their cultural knowledge, experience, and preparation—is essential for understanding why certain strategies work. The implication here is that models of translation, especially for culture-specific material, should include the human element, recognizing that translation is fundamentally a practice shaped by human experience. In other words, theories need to consider translator training and the cognitive decision-making process as part of understanding how and why certain translation choices are made. By providing these empirical insights, this study enriches the theoretical discussion with a more nuanced, practice-oriented perspective on cultural translation in tourism.

Figure 2
Contextual framework II



Practical implications

This research offers valuable insights for the tourism industry and translators working with cultural content. A key finding is the effectiveness of the “term + explanation” approach in translating tourism materials. Professionals interviewed found this method successful, suggesting that tourism boards and translation agencies should encourage translators to keep original cultural terms for authenticity while providing immediate clarifications to enhance understanding.

To implement this strategy, tourism translation guidelines should promote starting with a transliteration followed by a brief explanation. This allows international tourists to encounter local terms, understand their meanings, and enrich their experiences.

Furthermore, organizations involved in tourism translation should prioritize cultural awareness in hiring. It's important to focus not only on language skills but also on translators' knowledge of source cultures and their ability to convey nuances. The study suggests that translators from the source culture or those well-versed in both cultures excel in this area.

Quality control is also essential. A review process should ensure translations balance accuracy and clarity. Editors can use a checklist based on the study's findings, asking key questions about the preservation and explanation of cultural terms.

By adopting these practices, tourism organizations can improve the effectiveness and appeal of their materials. Ultimately, implementing these insights can lead to more authentic and engaging tourism experiences, allowing visitors to connect with local culture without feeling lost or confused by unfamiliar terms.

Pedagogical implications

The findings emphasize the importance of training programs for translators that incorporate cultural translation. A solid training curriculum should include case studies and practical exercises focused on translating texts rich in cultural references—like festival descriptions, culinary terms, and historical anecdotes. Students should be encouraged to justify their choices between preserving original meanings and providing explanations. By simulating real-world scenarios, instructors can prepare students for the challenges of balancing fidelity and comprehension in professional translation.

Additionally, a hybrid approach is essential, moving beyond a simple choice between domestication and foreignization strategies. Educators should teach students to recognize the spectrum of translation techniques and how to mix methods effectively. Classroom activities might involve translating a passage with culture-specific elements in various ways: first using

a more foreignizing approach, then a more domesticating one, and finally combining both. Discussions around which combination best conveys meaning and authenticity can help students develop intuitive skills in choosing hybrid solutions.

Understanding the context is crucial as well. Students should learn to consider their audience and delivery method: “Who will read this? How will I present it?” Role-playing different contexts, such as written versus oral translation or explaining terms to various audience types, can enhance the flexibility seen in skilled translators.

The research underlines the need for cultural knowledge and strong research skills in developing translators. Effective translation requires cultural literacy and awareness, going beyond mere language proficiency. Educators should encourage students to engage in ethnographic or historical research and seek outside expertise when necessary, like consulting experienced tour guides. Assignments could involve researching cultural terms and creating translator’s notes or glossaries to accompany their translations. This practice aligns with real-world translation habits, where thorough preparation is vital for success.

Lastly, the observation that translator expertise increases with experience highlights the need for mentorship and continuous professional development. Academic programs can facilitate this by connecting students with industry mentors or offering internship opportunities in places like tourism boards or cultural institutions. Workshops for practicing translators on topics such as “translating intangible cultural heritage” or “effective strategies for tourism translation” can encourage professionals to reflect on and improve their practices. Overall, treating the translation of cultural content as a specialized skill deserving targeted training can help translators develop necessary cultural sensitivity, strategic flexibility, and

research habits. These skills are essential for delivering high-quality translations, particularly in the tourism sector.

Limitations of the study

While this study provides quite valuable understandings, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Initially, the limited sample size of professional translators in the qualitative research may somewhat limit the findings' transferability. All research participants were experts at translating tourism content in a specific and linguistic context. Their particular experiences, while rather rich, may not fully represent the particular range of scenarios in various other regions or also with various other language pairs. Future studies with larger or more diverse samples could see if these themes hold true across different cultures, languages, or type of tourism destination.

Second, the scope of this study was confined to the perspectives of translators themselves, primarily gathered through interviews. This means the data reflect what translators say they do and the challenges they perceive. There is an inherent subjective element in self-reported practices: participants might emphasize successful strategies and under-report instances that didn't work well. The study did not directly observe translators, nor did it systematically analyze the translated texts that these translators produced when at work on live projects. As a result, there is a potential gap between perceived practice and actual practice. Moreover, the research did not include the perspective of the target audience or other stakeholders. The audience's point of view leaves remains uncertain of how well the identified strategies succeed in practice, as for instance whether tourists find the provided explanations culturally engaging or clear enough. Thus, one limitation is the single-

perspective approach; incorporating readers' or listeners' feedback could provide a more holistic evaluation of the efficacy of these translation strategies.

Another limitation relates to the specific context of tourism translation. Tourism texts have particular goals (informing and enticing tourists) and this might influence translators to prefer certain strategies (like the hybrid approach for its mix of education and appeal). In other domains (such as literary translation, legal translation, etc.), the balance between fidelity and comprehension might be struck differently, or other challenges might predominate. Therefore, caution should be taken in extending these findings beyond the tourism context. Even within tourism, this study mostly dealt with cultural terms likely from one cultural source (for example, many interviews discussed terms from Kazakh culture translated for foreign tourists). Different source cultures (say, translating French cultural terms for Chinese tourists or vice versa) might present unique issues not captured here. In sum, the context-specific nature of the research is a limitation on the breadth of its applicability.

Lastly, practical constraints such as time and access meant that the study could not explore every facet of this topic. Time constraints limited the depth of follow-up with participants; a longitudinal approach (observing translators over a longer period or across multiple projects) was beyond the scope. Additionally, while the interviews touched on both written and oral translation scenarios, findings for these modes were not distinctly separated in the study due to nuanced differences between translating for written tourism media versus live interpretation. Recognizing these limitations provides a realistic frame for the study's contributions and opens clear avenues for further inquiry.

Directions for future research

While recognizing its limitations, groundwork for further research is laid by this study. Importance of comparison of languages that come from different linguistic backgrounds was also emphasized. Future research could examine how the five themes that have been identified appear in various contexts, such as how translators handle cultural terms for different language families or for different types of tourists. Comparative studies like these could highlight distinctive cultural tactics or show how approaches like the hybrid approach are widely applicable.

Including the audience's viewpoint on translation techniques is another crucial area of study. Reception studies could measure the understanding and involvement of foreign visitors by presenting them with translated tourism materials. This information would be useful in evaluating the success of various tactics, such as whether or not visitors gain from seeing original terminology with definitions. Additionally, user feedback may help translators improve their work by pointing out instances in which explanations are too complicated or insufficient.

Text or corpus-based analyses of translated tourism materials could provide additional insights into how cultural terms are translated in practice. Researchers might uncover patterns in techniques like direct transfer versus explanatory addition by examining materials like brochures and websites. Additionally, exploring the distinctions between written and oral translation of cultural content is another promising area. Translators often adjust their methods according to format, so systematic studies could focus on interpreting live situations compared to written translations. Ethnographic research and practical experiments could illuminate decision-making processes during live explanations and identify unique challenges in different formats.

The topic of translator training and experience also raises questions about educational interventions. Studies could assess the impact of specialized training on cultural translation effectiveness. For instance, comparing outputs from trainee translators who receive extra coursework on cultural mediation with those who do not could provide valuable insights. Longitudinal research following translators through their careers could reveal how their approaches to cultural terms evolve and which experiences are most impactful.

In summary, future research should aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice in cultural term translation. By diversifying contexts, focusing on audience outcomes, and exploring training and tools, subsequent studies can enhance our understanding and practice of translating culture in tourism and related fields.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Title: Translating Cultural Terms in Tourism: Strategies Used by Translators.

Introduction. This form explains the purpose of this research, your rights as a participant, and how your information will be used. Please read it carefully and ask any questions before agreeing to participate.

Purpose of the Study. This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by professional translators when translating cultural terms in tourism texts and the strategies they employ to ensure accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and audience engagement. Cultural terms—including references to historical sites, customs, traditions, and cuisine—often carry deep cultural significance, which may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Translators must carefully balance faithfulness to the source culture with readability and accessibility for international audiences.

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, using semi-structured interviews to explore:

1. The specific difficulties translators encounter when working with tourism-related cultural terms.
2. The strategies and decision-making processes they use to maintain cultural meaning while adapting content for the target audience.

Findings from this study aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural translation in the tourism industry, offering insights that could help improve translator training programs, industry guidelines, and the overall quality of multilingual tourism materials.

Procedures. You will participate in a semi-structured interview lasting 30–60 minutes. The interview will be conducted via Zoom / Microsoft Teams, depending on the participant's preference and availability. The choice of time and date will be arranged at your convenience.

The purpose of the interview is to explore the challenges and strategies used by translators when dealing with cultural terms in tourism texts. The discussion will cover topics such as:

1. Common challenges faced in translating culture-specific tourism content.
2. Strategies and techniques used to ensure cultural accuracy.
3. Examples of complex translation cases and the solutions applied.
4. The role of the target audience, text type, and project constraints in translation choices.
5. Reflections on professional development and skill improvement over time.

The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. If you are comfortable, video recording may also be used to capture non-verbal cues for research

accuracy. However, if you prefer not to be recorded, the researcher will take detailed written notes instead. You may decline to answer any question or withdraw at any time.

Voluntary Participation. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without any penalty. You can choose not to answer any question you are uncomfortable with.

Confidentiality. All collected data will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity will be anonymized using pseudonyms (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2), and all recordings and transcripts will be securely stored on a password-protected device. Only the researcher and their supervisor will have access to the raw data. The data will be used exclusively for this research project and may be included in the researcher's master's thesis and future academic publications (such as research papers or conference presentations). No personally identifiable information will be shared in any reports or publications.

Risks and Benefits. Minimal risk of discomfort when discussing professional challenges. Reflection on your translation practices and contributing to research that may inform future training programs for translators.

Contact Information. If you have any questions, please contact:

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Consent. By signing below, you confirm that:

1. You understand the purpose and procedures of this study.
2. You agree to participate voluntarily.
3. You give permission for the interview to be recorded.

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____