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Around the World in A Click: A Reflection on Translation Quality in Tourism Promotion

La vuelta al mundo en un clic: reflexiones sobre calidad en la traducción de promoción turística

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Abstract: Quality tourism means quality products. Much of the tourist content is translated. Therefore, quality translations are necessary to ensure positive levels of tourist satisfaction. The differentiation of a brand is achieved through the perceived image (Andreu *et al.*, 2000, p. 49). There are three components in the formation of the image: beliefs and attitudes associated with the product, level of knowledge about the destination, and expectations about the product (Nobs, 2003). Precisely, translation plays a crucial role on the last two elements. Often, users' expectations are not considered when designing, creating and translating tourism promotional material, which results in unsuccessful and even failed promotional campaigns that can damage the image of the destination and the products it offers. Since perceived image is not a static parameter, all participants in the promotional development of the tourist destination should review the tourist products and services on offer and their projected image, trying to adjust market niches, products, and destinations to existing or potential tourists, a process in which the translation of tourism promotional texts plays a decisive role. In this paper, we delve into the issue of quality in the translation of tourism promotional material (whether printed, on websites, apps, and social media), through the analysis of several international tourist promotion campaigns.

Keywords: Translation quality, Tourist promotion, Translation standard, Promotional discourse, Image

Resumen: Lograr la calidad turística implica contar con productos de calidad y, dado que gran parte del contenido turístico se traduce, es necesario realizar traducciones de calidad para garantizar niveles positivos de satisfacción por parte del turista. La diferenciación de una marca se logra a través de la imagen percibida (Andreu *et al.*, 2000, p. 49). En la formación de la imagen intervienen tres componentes: las creencias y actitudes asociadas con el producto, el nivel de conocimiento sobre el destino turístico y las expectativas sobre el producto (Nobs, 2003). Es en estos últimos dos elementos, precisamente, donde la traducción desempeña un papel crucial. Con relativa frecuencia, no se tienen en consideración las expectativas de los usuarios a la hora de diseñar, crear y traducir el material promocional turístico, lo que suele dar lugar a campañas promocionales poco exitosas (e incluso fallidas) que pueden dañar la imagen del destino y de los productos que este ofrece. Dado que la imagen percibida no es un parámetro estático, todos los participantes en el proceso de desarrollo promocional del destino turístico deberían revisar los productos y servicios turísticos implicados, así como la imagen proyectada, tratando de ajustar los nichos de mercado, los productos y destinos a los turistas reales y potenciales, proceso en el que la traducción de los textos de promoción turística desempeña un papel decisivo. En el presente artículo, examinamos la cuestión de la calidad en la traducción del material de promoción turística (ya sea impreso, en páginas web, aplicaciones y redes sociales), ilustrándola a través del análisis de diversas campañas de promoción turística internacional.

Palabras clave: Calidad en la traducción, Promoción turística, Estándar de traducción, Discurso promocional, Imagen

TOURIST PROMOTION: BEHIND THE SCENES

Tourist promotional material generally invites us to go around the world in a click, with a growing trend of offering new forms of information and devices which allow us to make better informed decisions about our next trip or stay. In this paper we will be dealing with the issue of quality, identifying the main factors that affect the final promotional product and particularly focusing on the aspects that should be considered to build up a translation standard in tourism.

Tourism is undeniably a robust source of income worldwide and a form of intercultural communication, which brings about possibilities of cultural and social contact through different tourist products and services, which often require translation demands to be met.

In this context, firstly, we need to clarify what we mean by “tourism product” and by “tourism quality”. According to Foris *et al.* (2018), who offer a comprehensive review of quality models for tourist products:

[T]ourism products can be defined as products that satisfy the needs of tourists. The first important characteristic of the tourism product is its complexity: the tourism product is a composite one, consisting of several goods and services offered to satisfy the tourists needs. It generally includes accommodation, transportation, and dining, as well as attractions and entertainment. Consequently, measuring quality of the tourism product must consider a lot of product distinguished features. (p. 161).

If activities, services or goods can be included under the label of tourist products, from a more comprehensive umbrella-type approach, we may also refer to tourist destinations as products, as they need to satisfy the needs of tourists if they pursue to become real tourist destinations. In its glossary, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines the main destination of a tourism trip as “the place visited that is central to the decision to take the trip” (WTO 2023a). By extension, all the other products are in some way elements which are inextricably bound to a specific destination. Therefore, the total quality management of tourist products and materials also entails the evaluation of the networked array of tangible and intangible elements that are related to a destination and contribute to its excellence.

According to a recent survey with the latest data (Statista 2024), the tourist economic sector contribution to the world’s gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to US\$7.7 trillion, which is an extremely significant share of the planet’s economy. The three leading world tourist destinations are: France (over 89 million visitors in 2020), Spain (84 million visitors), and the United States (79 million in the same year). (WTO 2021). In 2020, Spain was 2nd in tourist earnings worldwide (and 1st in Europe) with US\$80 billion. Besides, tourism is the first source of income for many countries. In the case of Spain, this amounts to 16 % of its GDP and nearly 18 % of jobs in the country. This shows the huge importance of tourism not only globally, but also at national level, and its repercussion on the image of Spain abroad.

Kelly (1997) defines the tourist text as “anything published by any organization that is designed to either give information to visitors or to advertise a destination and encourage travelling to that destination” (p. 35). The two main functions of tourist promotional texts are informative and persuasive. In this sense, these texts are intended to provide information about a given destination to potential tourists and to attract them to a particular destination or event. The variety of texts can be extremely diverse. Nevertheless, we will particularly focus on tourist promotional texts here.

New media, including the Internet, social media, and mobile apps, have opened new possibilities for the development of fresh ways of attracting tourists. Such media also pose new and complex challenges for software developers, marketing and creative teams, and translators, which merit specific studies. In this sense, the characteristics and potential of new forms of text such as dynamic brochures, interactive personalized menus, and social media platforms, surely call for a more open, interdisciplinary approach, with a strong intercultural component that surpasses the linguistic level.

Tourist promotional texts are composed by a combination of textual, iconic, and graphic elements. Depending on the medium or channel, the proportion of these elements will vary. Most institutional tourist campaigns use text/graphic advertising in general or specialized written publications, where space is limited. A tourist text is the outcome of a complex process that includes a heavy load of concentrated marketing, culture, and the use of different semiotic and linguistic systems. The translated version should follow the same conventions, but this is not always the case. As a result, ineffective translations are produced, which compromise the objective of the final product. This is due to the fact that translators are often not included in the target text production process, thus yielding a target text that may not fulfil its functional purpose, consequently jeopardizing a potentially successful reception of the message in the target culture (Fuentes, 2016, pp. 98-99).

Tourism promotion depends heavily on translation (or rather, quality translation, to be precise). However, such link and dependency are little known, and institutions are not aware enough of such importance. Recognition of the key role of both translation and translators is unfortunately and unfairly marginal. In this sense, synergies from the different stakeholders are both welcomed and needed.

1. THE NOTION OF IMAGE IN TOURIST PROMOTION

Sharma and Pradeep (2007, p. 49) defines “image” as “consumer perception of a product, institution, brand, company or person which may or may not correspond to reality”. In this sense, it could be said that “the differentiation of a brand is achieved through the perceived image” (Andreu *et al.*, 2000, p. 49). As mentioned before, three components are normally established in the formation of an image: beliefs and attitudes associated with the product, level of knowledge about the destination, and the expectations created by the product (Nobs, 2003). It is precisely in the last two elements that translation plays a key role. User expectations are frequently overlooked in the creation and translation process of tourist advertising material, giving rise to failed promotion campaigns that can damage the image of the destination and the products it offers. For instance, one of the main assets of

the United Kingdom (UK) as a tourist destination is the British monarchy and the events around it. Thus, in the official tourism promotional website, potential visitors are invited to “take in royal experiences to mark the dawn of a new era.” (VisitBritain 2023) The localized Spanish version misses the allusion to the monarch by mistranslating “royal” as *real* (*Vive experiencias reales que marquen el amanecer de una nueva era*, VisitBritain 2023), while some reference to the monarchy would have preserved the invitation to participate in some of the key events of the new king.

Brand and image go hand in hand and are constructed by the interplay of all the different elements involved in the promotional campaign of a destination or tourist product, including the tourist text, as defined above by Kelly (1997). This definition points out to the broad range of texts which fall within the umbrella of tourist discourse, given their complexity due to several reasons: different formats and media (paper, audiovisual media, social media, software applications, etc.), nature (static, such as printed ads; dynamic, such as pop-ups and banners; or interactive). This entails an internal complexity in terms of the combination of graphic, visual, verbal, iconic, symbolic or aural elements of the promotional text depending on the medium.

Moreover, promotional tourist texts always go beyond local territories and cultures (Shi-xu, 2015), since they aim at appealing visitors or customers from other places selling as their unique proposition a different and positive experience. Therefore, when elaborating a promotional text, tourist authorities or companies make efforts to project a particular image of the destination or tourist product which nurtures the brand as well. In this context we understand the brand as “the unique combination of product characteristics and added values, both functional and non-functional, which have taken a relevant meaning which is inextricably linked to that brand, awareness of which might be conscious or intuitive” in Morgan and Pritchard’s terms (2001, p. 15).

The differentiation of a brand (a destination) is achieved through the “projected image”, a concept coined by Andreu *et al.* (2000) which refers to the values, images or slogans tourist authorities, institutions or companies wish to project about a determined destination or product. The projected image is a “pull factor in the destination decision process, which is transmitted by communication channels targeted at the potential tourist” (Ashworth, 1991; in Andreu *et al.*, 2000, p. 50). The image projected by a given tourist destination is derived to a great extent from the different advertising campaigns. For example, in the case of Spain, according to Andreu *et al.* (2000, p. 52), during the 1970s and 80s, there was no coherence in communication strategies for the design and creation of promotional material. This situation was aggravated by the fact that neither the target audience nor the main features of the target users were clearly defined. From the

intercultural mediation point of view, this shows the importance of translation as a key element for successful communication. It is also necessary to establish appropriate feedback mechanisms that will allow for the different participating agents to reassess and fine-tune the elements of the tourist advertising campaign.

The perceived image, on the other hand, is a “dynamic concept on that previous knowledge [the potential tourist has about the destination], the experience at the destination, and the tourist’s evaluation of that knowledge will affect his/her image of the destination [sic]” (Hu & Ritchie, 1993; in Andreu *et al.*, 2000, p. 51). The satisfaction level that results from an evaluation process can help improve the destination image. Since the perceived image is not a static parameter, those involved in tourist advertising should be in constant review of the tourist products offered and the projected image, trying to adjust market niches, products and destinations, and existing and potential tourists. In our view, the translation of tourist advertising texts plays a decisive role in this process. Thus, countries like Australia, Spain and the UK, and more recently Saudi Arabia, have developed user-friendly and very attractive institutional tourist websites with different contents, layout and products for different target audiences. This would reflect the importance of appropriately targeting niche markets.

2. QUALITY IN TOURISM PROMOTION

In the field of tourism, translation equals intercultural mediation processes which demand a solid intercultural competence of translators if a functional and effective target text reception is desired. For instance, translators should be fully aware of cultural differences related to the language choice and corresponding locales, since there are different varieties of Spanish for Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, or Chile; likewise, English may have variations for the United Kingdom, the United States of America (US), Australia or Canada. Another example of cultural expertise is that translators should have a sound knowledge of mutual perceptions and stereotypes both in the source culture and in the target culture, as well as knowledge of user’s needs and expectations. Therefore, tourist translators stand close to marketing experts, as they should prove rich linguistic and cultural competence and creativity skills.

Undoubtedly, quality tourism requires quality products and communication strategies and processes. As such, there is a need for quality translations of texts that can ensure positive satisfaction levels on the part of the tourist. But what is expected from a quality translator in the translation of tourist texts? If we consider tourism as an export product, then it follows that, as Séguinot (1994) points out, the intercultural competence of the translator

(in many different terms) is an essential element in the commercialization of the tourism trade. The equation between quality tourism and quality products has often led to a demand of quality promotional materials to obtain high levels of satisfaction on the part of tourists. In the present context, tourism has become widely internationalized, as an experiential action and as an emotional experience. Therefore, promoting a tourist destination requires a strategic plan and decisions to reach a wider audience of potential visitors, which comprises the translation of various types of promotional materials. Additionally, the use of diverse technological media for promotion has brought about significant changes which affect the way users are addressed and how content is presented in monolingual or multilingual contexts.

Regarding the notion of “quality”, it is generally agreed that it is difficult to define what we mean by quality in tourism. Foris *et al.* (2018) point out that a tourist product is “not only a collection of tangible products and intangible services, but also psychological experiences” (p. 161), which are projected to potential tourists under convincing premises. The more efficient the promotion is, the more successful the experience of tourists will be, and tourism institutions and organizations plan their promotional efforts accordingly pursuing an optimal experience for their target clients. However, they do not always succeed and particularly they tend to fail in language and cultural aspects.

The UNWTO has launched *A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management* with case studies and snapshots which do not deal with the issue of language or communication, even though the UNWTO acknowledges that multilingualism is “a core value of the United Nations” and language diversity, “an integral part of tourism experience” (WTO, 2023b). However, among the goals of the Department of Language Services of this organization, “upholding language standards and establishing terminology” and ensuring “that the official documents of the UNWTO, including all decisions and resolutions of its governing bodies, are produced in all the official languages” are limited to the internal work of the organization.

Generally speaking, the analyses Foris *et al.* (2018) carried out “highlight the relatively low number of the tourism organizations ISO 9001 certified, and the causes that explain this situation”, which seem to be varied and, among them, we underline the tendency towards “focusing on technical issues, without taking into account social aspects” and the “lack of the staff training in the field of quality” (p. 164).

Other forms to ensure quality started from classifications and rankings of a more specific selection (Michelin Guides, Fodor guides, Lonely Planet, hotel rankings, for instance) to the contemporary set of locally based

classification schemes or quality awards (Q) in the form of marks, labels, quality certification or criteria based on user reviews (Trip Advisor).

However, these quality systems still seem to fix sight on specific elements without adopting a more global approach to the tourist promotional material. In fact, the UNWTO defined the quality of a tourist destination as:

The result of a process which implies the satisfaction of all tourism products and service needs, requirements, and expectations of the consumer at an acceptable price, in conformity with mutually accepted contractual conditions and the implicit underlying factors such as safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, communication, infrastructure, and public amenities and services. It also involves aspects of ethics, transparency and respect toward the human, natural, and cultural environment. (WTO 2023c).

Currently there are many certification systems worldwide and particularly, the aim towards sustainability has resulted in a high number of environmental quality labels, marks, and awards, related to the sustainable development of tourist destinations. Therefore, any promotional material falls within the quality control system and must comply with the established standards for the destination.

One of the latest implementations of tourist quality, the Smart Tourist Destinations, has the patronage of the European Union, which defines it (2021) as “an initiative of the European Commission to support EU cities to improve tourism services and experiences through innovative digital solutions” (Smart Tourist Destinations, 2021). This European initiative has been echoed in countries such as Spain, where the authorities have also launched a management model of tourism called Smart Tourist Destinations, considering the cross-cutting nature of tourist activities and the differentiating features of each destination. For each one some diagnosis takes place initially, an action plan is designed, followed by a monitoring phase, to identify some best practices and some improvements.

The Innovation Section of the Spanish Tourist Board, Turespaña, has published a guide with the best practices of the five Spanish destinations which have been distinguished under the label of Smart Tourist Destinations or “Destinos Turísticos Inteligentes” (Benidorm, Gijón/Xixón, Málaga, Santander and Tenerife). By disseminating their best practices, they can ensure the success of other destinations and identify their own areas of improvement. Even though language and translation are often neglected in many rankings and quality distinctions, in this case they are some of the elements of interest in these destinations. For instance, Tenerife prides itself for having a website in seven languages, which has been localized to better

suit a personal experience of the user, with a chatbox in English and Spanish (versions in French and German are in preparation) and prioritizing a natural language to facilitate the visit to the island.

Similarly, Spain, as one of the major tourist worldwide destinations, has recently opted for new models of tourism organization to enhance the benefits of destinations in the country: the so-called “Co-Op” and “Branded-Content” campaigns which have evolved from traditional marketing campaigns into more effective and internationalized forms of promotion (Antón Argudo 2022). The Co-Op campaigns are characterized by partnering with an online intermediation channel which co-invests with the Spanish tourist authority, Turespaña, to guarantee access to a qualified audience. In this case, these channels will be the Online Travel Agent (OTA) Expedia, which is leader of travel booking in Europe and United States, and TripAdvisor, a world-established travel search engine with a monthly traffic of some 490 million web users.

The second option, the “Branded-Content” campaigns, benefits from the partnership of renowned brands with a common promotional goal. Spain’s Turespaña has reached an agreement with National Geographic to promote Spain as a sustainable, nature and rural destination, and with Conde Nast Traveller publishing group for premium urban and sun and beach tourism. This marketing strategy involves launching international campaigns with localized and translated promotional products, as it already occurs with Conde Nast magazines and with National Geographic advertising.

This exploratory approach to quality in tourism has provided evidence that translation does not seem to be one of the aspects of interest in any of the initiatives and quality management models, which often ignore language and social factors, even though it is common ground that it is necessary to adapt tourist-related products and services (including tourist texts) to the user(s)’ environment. Therefore, our contribution will provide a description of some of these quality factors related to communication and translation, which are often disregarded, expecting to build up a proposal of some quality guidelines for the translation of tourism promotional materials.

3. QUALITY CRITERIA IN TOURIST PROMOTIONAL TRANSLATION

Some of the macro-textual and marketing strategies that have been described in the previous section find their counterpart in the real cases we will examine in further detail below. The concern for better quality tourist products requires a localization approach and a definition of translation policy which is founded on language and cultural decisions for every tourist promotional campaign, as Pierini (2007) hinted. Regarding cultural

presuppositions, we agree with Agorni (2012, p. 7) in that translators of tourist promotional material should:

not only consider the amount of background knowledge already possessed by their intended readership, but also be aware of the ways in which their own decisions at linguistic and explanatory level will allow a more or less degree of reader involvement, and consequently affect the promotion of tourist resorts and attractions.

One of the main claims is that every tourist destination may be promoted for different purposes and different users, so it is marketed to suit the specific needs of varied user profiles. An example of how the user comes first is one of the recent campaigns of New Zealand, which identifies four different types of potential visitors according to the purpose of the trip. This preliminary choice will determine the discourse according to the target reader's profile, namely, general tourists wishing to visit the country, professionals interested in working in New Zealand, potential higher education students, and business people with a view to invest in New Zealand companies and businesses:

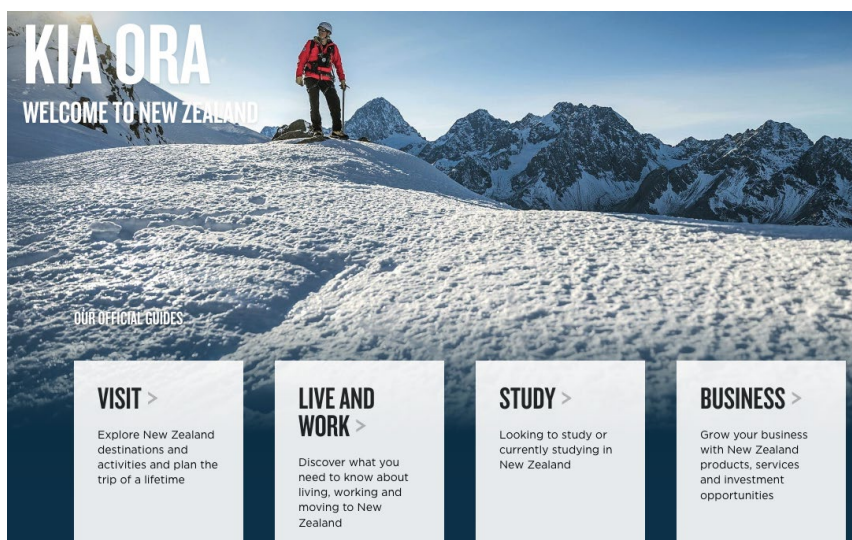


Image 1. New Zealand website

Source. Newzealand.com (14 November 2022)

Another element used in tourist promotion is the global gateway or language selector which facilitates access to the content. In the New Zealand official website, when choosing the target visitor option, this is approached not

by language, but by a selection of countries and flags. The website focuses only on a few countries and particularly on the English-speaking communities: for example, both the Canada and the US sites are in English, leaving out French-speaking Canada in the former case and the Spanish-speaking US population in the latter. Thus, part of the Canadian and American population is not being addressed in their own language, or first language.

Regarding the issue of the destination image, every tourist organization projects an image of a destination either to consolidate or to create or to modify such destination as a brand. For that purpose, institutions, tourist boards or companies invest in international campaigns through different media exploiting the projected image, as the following examples demonstrate.

A relevant example of the projected image of a destination is one of Spain's recent tourist promotion campaigns, which is of high significance since tourism continues to be the main source of income of this country. In May 2022, the promotional campaign "Enamórate de España en verano" (*This summer, fall in love with Spain*) was globally launched in different social media (Twitter, WeChat, Weixin), livestreaming the promotional video and thus consolidating the use of social media for tourism (Turespaña Oficial 2022). The campaign is based on showing two sides of Spain, that is, Barcelona in the North and Sevilla in the South, as the perfect destinations when Chinese people were allowed to travel again after the COVID-19 pandemic. What is of interest here is the perpetuation of clichés and stereotypes about Spain which are transmitted by Chinese influencers in the streamed audiovisual program: The film contains text written on the screen, as well as oral text and visuals about the fame of Spanish football teams and stereotyped flamenco music and dance, with the aim of making Chinese viewers fall in love with Spain. While a translator is not involved directly in this text, this promotional tourist ad shows the importance of the projected image in tourism. When transferring ads, translators are faced with the decision about how to preserve that image in the language choices. Having examined the Chinese text, we can confirm that the key words and ideas any translator should maintain in the target text reinforce the passion for dance, sport and art in Spain and the invitation to falling in love with Spain in summer. Three well-known Chinese celebrities, related to football, flamenco, and travel and with some connections with the promoted destination, give their testimony about these promotional messages. Should this campaign be localized to a different market or locale (be it Korea, Japan, Morocco, etc.), such celebrities should be adapted accordingly, a process in which translators should play a key role as intercultural mediators.



Image 2. Turespaña Twitter page

Source. Turespaña [@Turespana_] (27 May 2022)

The next example of the official tourism website of Spain indicates how every communication approach entails localizing the content and offering a display of language options to choose a different language site version. Visiting the various language options included in the global gateway reveals that they are not identical, neither in terms of content nor regarding the form, since they are localized and tailored to the promotional strategy of the individual target market.

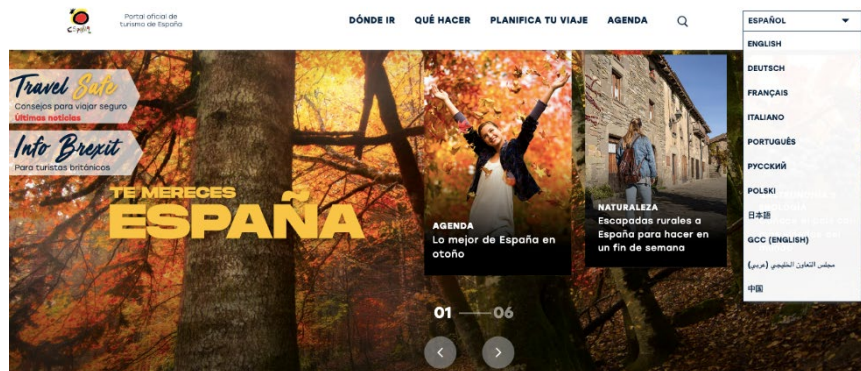


Image 3. Spanish tourism official website (Spanish site)

Source. Spanish tourism official website (Spanish site) (2022)

The main Turespaña website is localized into different languages addressing diverse audiences who gain access to the web in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Polish, Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese. Examples of localized content can be found in, for instance, the English version, that presupposes that the English-speaking target audience is British and affected by the Brexit (*Brexit info for British tourists*); and in the Italian website, where there is an additional link to a podcast about travel in Spain, as this format seems to be a popular kind of content delivery channel in Italy (*Doxa 2020*).

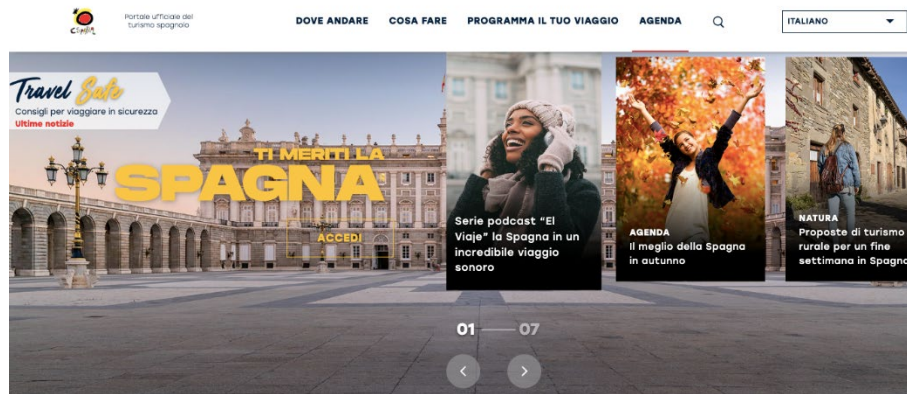


Image 4. Spanish tourism official website (Italian site)

Source. Spanish tourism official website (Italian site) (2022)

The Spanish tourism official website also includes a specific link for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC),¹ which offers both an English version and an Arabic version (Istituto de Turismo de España 2022). The Unique Selling Proposition (USP), or main advertising strategy, for the promotion of Spain's main destinations (Madrid, Barcelona, and Sevilla) for this particular market differs with respect to how Spain is sponsored in the other localized sites of Turespaña. There is an evident adaptation to what the destination, Spain, means to the market segment from the GCC in terms of content and form, resulting in a culturally customized site of Spain as a destination. For example, there are three aspects which are highlighted in the text below to appeal the target visitors from these Gulf countries: the football teams Real Madrid and Fútbol Club Barcelona, given the interest in Spanish football teams; shopping

¹ Political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.

in Madrid and Barcelona, one of the activities Arabic visitors do, and the common Moorish heritage:

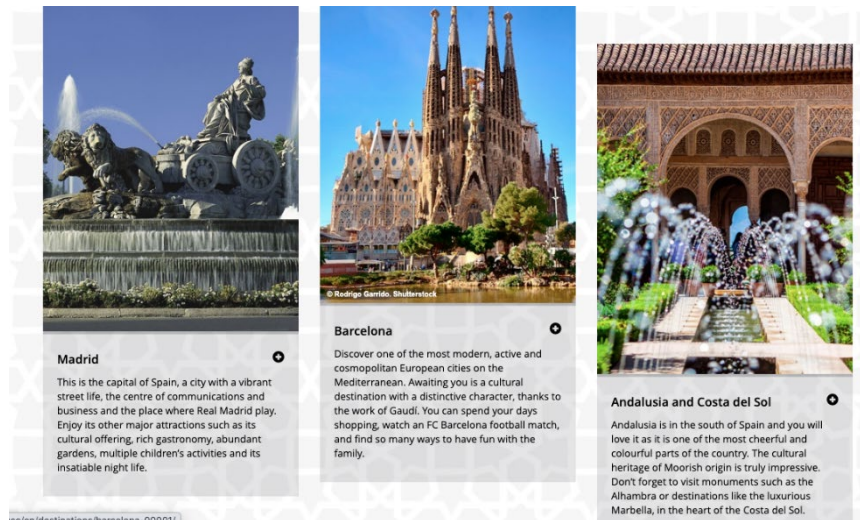


Image 5. Spanish tourism official website (GCC site)
Source. Spanish tourism official website (GCC site) (2022)

What is most remarkable of this example is how the target audience of the destination conditions the content and the lexis of the text and, thus, the translation. Evidence of this adaptation is provided in the GCC site, where there is a special section called "spain Premium" (Spain is written with a small initial "s"). With a well-selected wording and positive note, the most special attractions are described to call the attention of exclusive visitors, hence the user does not only influence the content, but the language used. Therefore, the offer of products and services of "spain Premium" is reinforced by the use of premium language, or in Dann's terms (1996), "the language of euphoria" (p. 65), such as "Unique, exclusive experiences, with the finest services", "Luxury accommodation where quality and customer satisfaction are the top priority", or "A memorable trip you'll want to repeat" (Instituto de Turismo de España 2022). These examples prove that translators of tourist texts should have the skills to identify lexical items and ways of address that distinguish some promoted elements as premium, as a sign of excellence in the source language, and create the same effect in the target language. In this case, the projected image directly determines the perceived image of the destination, i.e., how the specific target audience will create an image of the promoted destination.

In September 2002, Turespaña chose the slogan “Spain marks” for its new campaign on the grounds that market surveys indicated that it was necessary to find a new slogan that would add a more emotional and inclusive character to the advertising campaign. Turespaña officials pointed out that the campaign was expected to last for at least four years, and that anything less than that period of time would be considered a failure. The promotional texts showed modern, stylish, black and white photographs metaphorically linked (only in principle) to the “Spain marks” slogan, highlighted in red capital letters, which summarize some of Spain’s main cultural symbols and stereotypes: blood, bullfighting, wine, food, flamenco and, of course, passion. The word “passion” appears in most of the ads, thus continuing the theme behind the previous “Passion for life” campaign, although, in some cases, it is not clear what the term “passion” refers to.

On the left-hand bottom corner of each ad, there is an inserted color photograph, plus the Spanish tourism official logo by renowned painter Joan Miró, a small map of Spain indicating the scene’s location, and some allegedly illustrating text which tries to establish a link between the rest of the graphic elements. As Zanettin (2008,) points out, translators should not only focus on the linguistic elements, but also pay particular attention (especially in the case of tourist promotional texts) to the visual elements: “[while the analysis can be focused on the translation of the verbal component, it cannot dispense with an examination of how words interplay with visuals in the co-construction of meaning” (p. 23). Visual elements, and especially images or photographs, must be “considered as peritextual elements that should be ‘paratranslated”” (Cómitre & Valverde, 2014, 79). The “Spain marks” slogan itself seems to be a literal translation from the Spanish *España deja huella* (“Spain makes a mark”). In any case, “Spain marks” is neither a good translation of the expression nor effectively communicates a positive effect, thus failing to convey the required alluring function of promotional texts, and even producing a rejection reaction in the reader. There is an obvious pragmatic problem in the wording of the slogan, as it has more negative connotations in English than positive ones: the slogan is not understandable, the message is not conveyed, the expected function is not achieved, and the sought effect is quite the opposite. Perhaps a possible translation could be something in the line of “Spain’s indelible mark / lasting impression”.

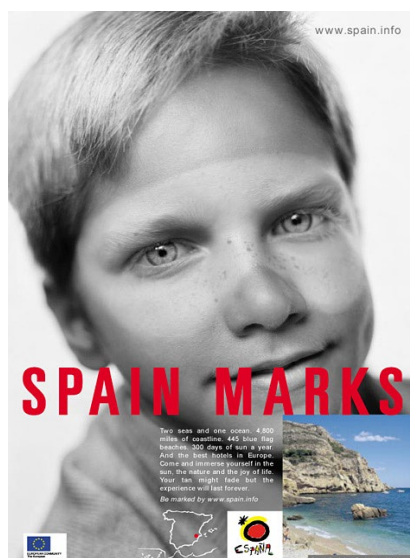


Image 6. Spain's advertisement of the "Spain marks" campaign

Source. Spain's official tourism website (2022)

One of the ads shows a large photograph of a smiling fair boy with a skiing-goggles tan, which is very confusing for the target reader, since the smaller photo displays a view of a rocky beach on the coast of Alicante. People do not wear skiing goggles on the beach, and you do not get that tan mark when you are scuba-diving; the sun is not underwater. Also, the text in the ad talks about "4,800 miles of coastline". Few countries in the world still use the imperial system of weights and measures. The US is probably the main country in this group. However, this campaign was also aimed at Scandinavian countries, which, despite their good command of the English language, might not be so familiar with miles. The text also talks about "445 blue flag beaches", a term used within the European Union to certify the quality of a given beach. US or Australian tourists, for example, will probably not know what the term stands for, as these countries are not part of the Blue Flag beach scheme.

On a more positive note, the "Spain marks" campaign seems to shift away from the traditional sun and beach offer, setting a new strategy that is today in place in the current "You deserve Spain" campaign. This new campaign offers a wider choice of tourist products, highlighting other aspects of Spain's richness, such as culture, art, architecture, golf, flamenco, Spanish as a foreign language, cuisine, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The above-described examples have portrayed an overview of some of the translation quality factors in tourism promotion we would like to underline with some concluding remarks, which invite to reflect on the need to build up a translation quality standard for tourism and on the introduction of some changes in translation training programs. There is a series of assumptions which derive from the need to produce quality tourist materials, which affect different stages and aspects of promotional translation.

An initial assumption that might sound obvious is the need to involve translation and translators in the whole process of tourist promotion from the earliest stages. The binomial brand-promotion entails linguistic and cultural processes, so as to decide how to promote a tourist destination, product or service to different kinds of users. Given that translators, as interlinguistic experts, know both the source and the target language, and that they are also competent in gauging and assessing the effect(s) of cultural nuances or the degree of relevance, for instance, of a text, the creative team and the whole product management group could benefit from their expertise and knowledge from the beginning. This would save time, money, and effort, and would prevent tourist promotional campaigns from misguiding target audiences. Therefore, in order to ensure the quality of the tourist product, we believe translators need to be involved in the whole process of promotion, given their interlinguistic and intercultural competence and expertise.

Secondly, it is evident that promotional materials have become more widely dependent on the media, particularly in recent times, when the irruption of digitalization put on the table alternative modes of reaching the target audiences of every tourist promotional campaign. In particular, in the tourist sector, the Internet, through the website as its main instrument, has become the main communication channel for and between different kinds of users: companies, institutions, individuals, etc. (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019). Besides, websites may perform different functions, such as informing, promoting or disseminating. Consequently, translators (should) have the textual competence to create and translate multimodal texts and get the best results from the translation of tourist promotional texts for different media.

Moreover, translators working in the field of tourism should be aware of how multimedia products, such as websites or social media ads, communicate and approach audiences differently. Certainly, a functional approach to the study of multilingual websites is essential, since the function of the website determines the translation and the localization processes (Valdés, 2008). Furthermore, the emphasis on the semantic dimension should be abandoned in favor of paying closer attention to a pragmatic one. As Hickey (2004, 77)

supported, from the perspective of pragmatics, the problem lies in the fact that translators aim at “semantic equivalence” instead of pursuing “perlocutionary equivalence”, focusing on the effect on receivers/users. Some of the examples above have shown that translators are aware of how multimedia tourist texts approach audiences differently and that there are different user profiles which determine the impact or effect of translated texts.

Likewise, we propose some cultural and pragmatic preliminary questions every translator and localizer should bear in mind as a first-time reader/user of the tourist promotional website s/he is commissioned to translate. Namely, whether there is a global conception of the world behind the text, or on the contrary, whether there are elements which are directly associated with the source culture, or related to the brand or institution, which require further explicitation or customization. For example, announcements, news or products that are presented in the text may depend on some previously known information, unknown to some other users of another language site, and therefore they may demand certain explicitation.

Thus, to effectively train present and future translation professionals in the field of tourism, these would need to familiarize with, in the first place, becoming aware of the complexity of reading a promotional text or any kind of, particularly, hypertexts for websites. Secondly, they should train in producing a target text which meets the standards and best practices to result into more usable and accessible websites, considering textual, discursive, and cultural aspects. In such discursive approach, not only extratextual aspects are considered, but also textual and linguistic concerns such as register, style or text readability, lexical choice or cohesion and coherence, which will ensure better quality for multilingual websites, especially in tourist promotion contexts.

Related to this macro-discursive and micro-discursive analysis is the need for training creativity to better “read” tourist promotional texts, that is, to identify the projected image and the likely perceived image, the role played by cultural and visual elements, and the use of premium promotional language. These aspects will help to establish a tourist translation standard, which could benefit from mutual work with marketing professionals and translation practitioners, as well as continuous feedback from them to better produce and translate promotional tourist texts. Bearing in mind the mediating role of translation in multicultural processes of tourist promotion, we fully agree with Soto (2013), who makes specific reference to the case of Spain: “We [translators] must consider tourist translations as an element of mediation and relationship between the tourists and the places that they visit, and we must reflect on the necessity of quality tourism translations in Spain” (p. 235). Equally important is, as mentioned above, to adapt texts to the target tourist expectations and, as stated by Durán-Muñoz (2008, 380), the quality norms.

We can thus conclude that it seems reasonable to claim that a translation quality standard is urgently needed to aim at ensuring the adequacy and acceptability of the translated or localized tourist content. Such standard would (and should) subsequently be reflected in translation training programs.

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