Linguistics

Strategies for Translating Vietnamese Culture-specific Terms in Tourism Materials into English

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ABSTRACT

Tourism plays a crucial role in economic growth, especially in countries which boast rich cultural and natural attractions like Vietnam. With the development of the tourism sector, the role of tourism materials is increasingly pivotal in building destination image and attracting more visitors. The rise of international tourism further necessitates high-quality translation of tourism materials to reach a wider audience. Culture-specific terms (CSTs), which are prevalent in the language of tourism, need to be carefully rendered into the target language to effectively convey the persuasiveness of this genre. On this basis, this study is undertaken to explore the strategies used to translate Vietnamese CSTs into English in tourism materials, particularly an online article. To fulfill this objective, the research employs a mixed method design with a corpus extracted from the online article. Qualitative analysis is applied to identify the translation strategies based on Newmark's (1988) procedures to translate culture, while the frequency of each strategy is counted for quantitative proceedings. Results indicate that among all the individual strategies, Transference is the most prevalent, followed by Synonymy, Functional equivalent, Cultural equivalent, Adaptation and Through-translation. The most common couplets also involve Transference in combination with other strategies. Besides, detailed analysis shows that there are losses of cultural elements during the translation process, calling for increased attention to the transfer of cultural elements in general and translation of tourism materials in particular. The findings further encourage the development of both linguistic and cultural competences among translators to improve the overall quality of tourism translation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The recent years have witnessed unprecedented growth in the Vietnamese tourism sector, especially international tourism (Le, 2019; Shih & Do, 2016). Tourism promotional materials play a pivotal role in this growth, as their persuasive functions help promote local cultures to target audiences, the prospective tourists (Cappelli, 2007; Dann, 1996; Muñoz, 2012). Therefore, to convey the information precisely and persuasively to the target audience, the translation of these materials should be handled with caution and meticulousness.

Culture is an inevitable aspect in tourism materials. Muñoz (2012) describes tourism as an activity involving cross-cultural interactions, suggesting that the language of tourism should serve as "a joint element between the local and foreign cultures involved" (p. 336). Consequently, the significant rise in international tourism necessitates translation as a means of overcoming language barriers and attracting tourists to various destinations. However, the prevalence of cultural references in tourism materials is a

potential source of problems for translators attempting to deal with this special discourse, as variations across cultures are indispensable (e.g., Aixelá, 1996; Newmark, 1988; Nida, 1945; Pedersen, 2011).

There have been several studies on the translation of tourism materials, most of which suggested rather poor quality of translation, impeding the level of conveyance and persuasiveness towards the target audience (e.g. Napu, 2016; Riyono, Kurniati, Mutohhar, & Ma'mun, 2024; Tang-Taye & Standing, 2016), a reason for which is the cultural elements embedded in the discourse. Besides, the deficiency in linguistic, cultural competence of many translators in this field (Newmark, 1991) and the underestimation from related stakeholders should also be taken into consideration (Pierini, 2007). On this ground, this research is conducted to investigate the strategies employed to translate Vietnamese CSTs on tourism websites into English. In particular, it analyzes materials on an online article to identify the common translation strategies used to render Vietnamese CSTs into English, as well as their level of conveyance.

Given the interwoven relation between language and culture, the translation process is firmly believed to involve the transfer of cultural values between the two cultures (Bassnett, 2013; Li, Ran, & Xia, 2010), and thus translators are deemed cultural mediators, facilitating the seamless transmission of both meaning on the lexical level and of cultural elements on conceptual level. However, addressing translation problems caused by disparities in cultural elements between languages is likely to present considerable challenges (Aixelá, 1996; Newmark, 1988; Nida, 1945; Pedersen, 2011). Among which, the "lexical gap" (Gambier et. al, 2004, p. 11), which refers to the phenomenon in which concepts in one culture that may be unfamiliar to individuals from another cultural background (Jakobson, 1959; Nord, 2014; Ruuttula, 2018), causes certain difficulties for translators, even when the source and target cultures share similar elements, for achieving a smooth and accurate translation is not always possible due to differences in social and ideological values (Aixelá, 1996). To make matters worse, literal translation can result in the distortion or loss of certain connotations associated with cultural concepts (Newmark, 1988).

Typically, culture-specific terms (CSTs) pose a serious obstacle in the path of translators. CSTs might refer to concepts familiar in one culture, but are non-existent in another (Aixelá, 1996; Baker, 1992). Newmark (1988) further refined the concept of CST by differentiating cultural language from universal or personal language. He argues that translation challenges emerge when there is a lack of cultural overlap between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). He observed that when a culture places significant emphasis on a particular subject, it tends to develop a set of specific terms that may not have equivalents in other languages. Baker (1992) contributed to the literature, exploring culture-specific concepts, which involve words and phrases that carry culturally significant meanings and are often difficult to translate due to the lack of equivalents in other languages. These concepts highlight the cultural embeddedness of language and the necessity for translators to convey not just the literal meaning but also the cultural connotations. Narváez and Zambrana (2014) expanded the scope of CSTs to include not only lexically marked terms but also symbols, icons, and gestures. This broader perspective encompasses references to geography, history, society, and culture, highlighting the multifaceted nature of CSTs. Adapting Nida, Newmark (1988, p. 95) then divides "cultural words" into five categories:

(1) Ecology: Flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills.

(2) Material culture (artifacts): Food, clothes, houses and towns, transport

(3) Social culture - work and leisure.

(4) Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts (political and administrative, religious, artistic).

(5) Gestures and habits.

Under the constraints to fully convey cultural elements reflected in CSTs, translators tend to make use of a range of strategies, which has been much investigated by scholars. Among the various typologies of translation procedures, Newmark's (1988) framework is perhaps the most influential and widely adopted. In his discussion of cultural words and their basic domains of classification, Newmark (1988) proposes a set of strategies for rendering such lexical items from source texts (ST) to target texts (TT). Since the tourism texts collected from an online article are rendered from Vietnamese into English by different translators of various calibers, the translation of CSTs in such texts incorporated translation

strategies of different frameworks. Therefore, the translation strategies of Annotation, Addition, Deletion are grouped under one banner, namely Adaptation for the purpose of consistent analysis of the findings. Detailed information regarding these translation procedures, their definitions, and examples in English and Vietnamese will be presented as follows:

Literal translation: refers to translating a text word-for-word, maintaining the structure and meaning as closely as possible to the original language.

Transference: involves directly transferring a SL word to a TL item (p. 81).

Naturalization: first adapts the word to the TL system phonologically, then morphologically (p. 82).

Cultural equivalent: provides an approximate equivalent of a cultural word in TT in place of one in ST. Notably, cultural equivalents are usually not accurate (p. 82).

Functional equivalent: replaces a CST in ST with a culture-free word in TT. In other words, it neutralizes or generalizes the ST item (p. 83).

Descriptive equivalent: involves extra descriptions of the original CST to clarify its meaning (p. 84).

Synonymy: a close synonym of the CST in TL is used (p. 84).

Through-translation: is the direct translation of common collocations, names of organizations or components of compounds from SL to TL (p. 84).

Shifts/ Transpositions: involve a change in the grammatical structure from SL to TL (p. 84 - p. 88).

Modulation: takes place when the translator reproduces the message of SL into TL to conform to the norms of TL, as there might be a difference in perspective (p. 88).

Accepted standard translation: happens when the CST in SL has an official, generally accepted translation or an institutional term (p. 89).

Compensation: occurs when the loss of meaning in one part of the sentence is made up for in another (p. 90).

Paraphrase: is the explanation of the meaning of the CST, more detailed than that of descriptive equivalent (p. 90).

Adaptation: is the combination of **Addition** (refers to the case where the translator exceeds the number of words of the ST), **Deletion** (refers to the case where the translator is more likely to reduce the number of elements that form the ST) and **Annotation** (refers to the case where additional information is added in a translation) (p. 90 - 91).

Couplets/ Triplet: occur when two or three different procedures are used (p. 91).

Componential analysis: compares a SL word with a TL word which are not one-to-one equivalents by analyzing their common components (p. 114).

II. METHODS

Research design
This study employed a mixed method design, with the quantitative approach incorporating a corpus of data, integrated with a qualitative approach. Specifically, tokens of frequency were used to quantitatively process the corpus data, which made it easier to do a range of analysis for the different objectives of the current study. Besides, the qualitative analysis was adopted to explore translation strategies used to render Vietnamese CSTs into English.

Materials
The chosen corpus was extracted from the Travel section of a Vietnamese online article based in the central city of Hue. This platform features bilingual content in both Vietnamese and English, which provides a valuable source for a comparative analysis of CSTs. A total of ten articles were chosen for the study, yielding a dataset with a word count of 10,017 words in the original Vietnamese text and 9,240 words in the corresponding English translations.

Data collection and data analysis procedures

The corpus was first extracted from the online article platform, after which it underwent several processing stages. Text alignment was conducted using Smartcat with manual modifications to ensure that the ST and TT were precisely divided into segments, with each one corresponding to a single sentence, and that the English segments were matched with their Vietnamese equivalents. While the use of Smartcat, an online translation platform, allows for rapid and precise segmentation, the manual adjustments are essential to avoid any inaccuracies due to the disparities in morphology and punctuation conventions between Vietnamese and English.

In the next stage, instances of Vietnamese CSTs were extracted from the corpus with their corresponding English translations. In particular, each instance of Vietnamese CSTs paired with English translation was counted once. If a Vietnamese CST is rendered in several ways, each of them would be counted individually. Moreover, in case of couplets, two distinctive strategies were to be listed rather than one; meanwhile, couplets were discussed in a separate section. The study then made use of frequency counts of translation strategies.

Besides the quantitative procedures, the study also dissected these instances to identify the translation strategies used based on the aforementioned Newmark's (1988) taxonomy. To ensure comprehensive understanding of the CSTs, a range of references were consulted, including dictionaries like *Từ điển Tiếng Việt* ('Vietnamese Dictionary) by Hoang (2024), Cambridge Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Other resources are also consulted in case the aforementioned references are insufficient.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative proceedings of the corpus revealed 258 Vietnamese CSTs in the chosen articles. After omitting the duplicates, 191 tokens are left for more detailed analysis of translation strategies. The frequency of individual translation strategies is presented in **Table 1**.

As can be seen from **Table 1**, Transference is the most prevalent strategy with 54 instances, followed by Synonymy with 37 instances, and Functional equivalent at 27 instances. Cultural equivalent appears 25 times, while Adaptation is used 17 times. Through-translation occurs 14 times, and Accepted standard translation is detected 9 times. Descriptive equivalents and Literal translation each have 3 instances, while Naturalization and Paraphrase appear only once each. Other strategies, namely Shifts, Modulation, Componential analysis and Compensation, are absent in the analyzed corpus. The distribution suggests a significant reliance on Transference and Synonymy compared to other strategies.

Table 1. Frequency of individual translation strategies

Individual translation strategy	Instance
Transference	54
Synonymy	37
Functional equivalent	27
Cultural equivalent	25
Adaptation	17
Through-translation	14
Accepted standard translation	9
Descriptive equivalent	3
Literal translation	3
Naturalization	1
Paraphrase	1
Total	**191**

Regarding couplets (as delineated in **Table 2**), the combination of two most prevalent single strategies (Transference + Synonymy) are also the most commonly applied with 24 instances. This is followed by Transference + Adaptation with 9 instances, and Transference + Cultural equivalent with 7. Transference + Through-translation occurs 4 times, and Synonymy + Adaptation is noted 4 times as well. Synonymy + Accepted standard translation appears twice, while Transference + Functional equivalent, Accepted standard translation + Paraphrase, and Functional equivalent + Adaptation each has 1 instance. In total, there are 53 instances of couplets.

Table 2. Frequency of couplets

Couplet	Instance
Transference + Synonymy	24
Transference + Adaptation	9
Transference + Cultural equivalent	7
Transference + Through-translation	4
Synonymy + Adaptation	4
Synonymy + Accepted standard translation	2
Transference + Functional equivalent	1
Accepted standard translation + Paraphrase	1
Functional equivalent + Adaptation	1
Total	**53**

Frequency of translation strategies

The prevalence of Transference as individual strategies and part of a couplet in the corpus is in line with previous studies on strategies to translate CSTs in menus (Yingmin & Malini, 2021) and in tourism brochures (Terestyényi, 2011). Functional equivalent and Cultural equivalent are also proven to be common and effective translation strategies in translating CSTs in a Persian folklore story (Daghoughi & Hashemian, 2016) and in a short story from Turkish into English (Kuleli, 2019), and they are also among the most prevailing strategies in this analysis. However, although ranking second, Synonymy is scarcely mentioned as one of the most frequently used strategies in past research. This finding can be explained by the high frequency of Transference + Synonymy couplets, in addition to a few occurrences of Synonymy + Adaptation and Synonymy + Accepted standard translation couplets., which in total account for over 80% of Synonymy instances.In the following section, each individual strategy and couplet types are to be discussed in detail in order of frequency.

Prevalent individual translation strategies

Transference

As can be seen from the quantitative data, Transference is the most prevalent among the individual translation strategies applied to render Vietnamese CSTs into English from the chosen article. This strategy involves keeping the original CSTs from the SL into the TL with little modification, facilitating the preservation of the cultural authenticity of the translation. When facing proper nouns in the SL that have no equivalent in the TL, translators purely "transfer" them, preserving the number of characters. The most common case can be seen in the translation of proper names of landmarks, institutions, and dynasties, often in accompaniment with Synonymy or Cultural equivalent. For examples, *cầu Trung* Đạo is translated as *Trung Dao Bridge, lầu Ngũ Phụng* as *Ngu Phung Pavilion, cung Trường Sanh* as *Truong Sanh palace, thời nhà Nguyễn* as *the Nguyen dynasty*, and *UBND (Uỷ ban Nhân dân) huyện A Lưới* as *A Luoi District People's Committee*. Material entities like *hạt a'moan, Trúc chỉ,* and *chè bột lọc thịt quay,* which are specific to Vietnamese culture and have no exact equivalent in other cultures, are also translated using Transference (into *a'moan seeds, truc chi,* and *Che Bot Loc Thit Quay* respectively) to preserve their cultural uniqueness.

It is also of note that the use of Transference varies among the instances found in the corpus. In

particular, in the majority of cases, tone marks are omitted. Since Vietnamese is a tonal language, the presence of tone marks in transferred terms might be unfamiliar or even alienating to the vast audience, specifically English-speaking readers who are unaccustomed to tonal distinctions in their orthography. Thus, the omission of tone marks makes the translation more approachable to the target audience of the article. However, there still remain a few occurrences of Transference in which tone marks are retained, i.e. *giấy dó* into *dó paper*, *cảng Chân Mây* into *Chân Mây port*. Without an understanding of Vietnamese phonology and orthography, the audience may misinterpret the significance of tone marks, which possibly hinders their comprehension of the text and leads to unwanted confusion.

Synonymy

Besides Transference, Synonymy is also widely employed to translate Vietnamese CSTs into English, and is often paired with other strategies. Upon confronting CSTs that include one or more SL words with clear one-to-one equivalents in the TL, translators can express wholly (or partly) the meaning of them by either using TL equivalents or transferring the proper noun followed by the equivalent in the TL. Regarding geographic terms, *Tây Bắc* is rendered as *the Northwest*, with *Tây* being the West, and *Bắc* the North. In cases like *sông* in *sông* Hương translated into *river* or *đầm* in *đầm Phú Lộc* into *lagoon*, both Synonymy and Transference are applied, and Synonymy focuses on the type of geographical features involved. When it comes to material cultural elements *(giấy dó - dó paper, hạt a'moan - a'moan seeds,* or *rượu nếp - glutinous wine),* Synonymy makes it possible for the audience to understand the foreign CSTs while still maintaining the cultural specificity with Transference (for the first two instances) and with the choice of a more specific ingredient of the mentioned type of wine *(glutinous)* rather than a more general term *(rice wine).*

Functional equivalent

The third commonly practiced strategy is Functional equivalent. When confronted with CSTs related to material culture such as food and architectural elements, or religious rituals, which are often exclusive to one specific culture, translators might replace the CSTs with a more culturally neutral term to enhance the audience's grasp of the TT (Newmark, 1988). Nonetheless, this deculturalization of CSTs possibly leads to omission of certain cultural nuances or even inaccurate translations. In the corpus, *chè* is rendered as *sweet soup*, a rather common translation for this type of dessert; however, it fails to capture the essence of the dish. *Chè* refers to a Vietnamese dessert with a wide variety of Vietnamese-sourced ingredients and great flexibility, served with or without ice, and is an indispensable part of Vietnamese cuisine. Translating it as the neutral term *sweet soup* not only overgeneralizes this CSTs but also undermines its cultural significance. Similarly, in describing the Imperial Citadel of Hue, *mái điện* is neutralized into *roof* and *tường thành* into *walls*. In both cases, although the translations did convey the general meaning of the CSTs, they failed to describe the ancient architecture associated with this landmark. This is also the case for CSTs on people. Such a term as *đồng bào* (literally translated as *people born of the same sac*) originates from a Vietnamese' myth, emphasizing the shared origins and unity of Vietnamese people. Although the translations *locals* and *people* do refer to Vietnamese in general, they are not suggestive of the so-called legend, thus impairing part of the meaning of the CSTs.

Moreover, there are cases in which the use of Functional equivalent does not effectively reflect the general meaning of the original CSTs. For instance, *cờ phướn* used in a traditional rituals to pray for the safety and prosperity of fishermen is translated as *banner*. *Cờ phướn* is a type of flag with vibrant colors often used for decorative purposes in festive seasons and traditional, local, religious celebrations; meanwhile, *banner* often refers to a flag or piece of cloth imprinted with a symbol, logo or any message. It is evident that they refer to two different referents, thus the translation is not successful in conveying the meaning of the original CSTs into English. Another example is the translation of *thịt gác bếp* into *smoking-shelf meat. Thịt gác bếp*, typically rendered as *smoked meat*, indicates a traditional method of preserving meat in the northern mountainous areas of Vietnam, where the meat is hung above the kitchen stove to be naturally smoked and dried. The translation in analysis, however, is rather forced and not representative of either the making process or the ingredients of this type of food.

Cultural equivalent

The use of Cultural equivalent in translation, where a CST from the source culture is replaced with one from the target culture, can enhance readers' comprehension of cultural references. However, this strategy also risks misunderstandings due to cultural differences (Newmark, 1988). A common example of this is found in the translation of material culture related to food. In the corpus, *bột* bánh is translated as *dough* and *bánh* as *cakes*. This can create confusion about the nature of these foods. Traditional Vietnamese *bánh* is made from ingredients such as sticky rice or mung beans, and can be either savory or sweet. In contrast, *cakes* and *dough* typically refer to Western pastries made from flour, butter, and eggs. Thus, translating *bánh* as *cakes* might lead the target audience to mistakenly believe that Vietnamese cakes are made from the same ingredients as Western cakes. Likewise, *mứt* is translated as *jams*, which is a substance made from boiled fruit and sugar, eaten with bread, while *mứt* refers to sugar-coated or preserved fruit, which differs significantly from the fruit preserves in jelly form. Another example is *chợ phiên*, translated as *fair*. In the ST, *chợ phiên* indicates a periodic market showcasing products from ethnic minorities in highland areas, with cultural activities and local products on display. While *fair* also signifies a large public event where goods are bought and sold, it often lacks the specific cultural connotations associated with *chợ phiên*, which emphasizes the cultural richness of the highland communities.

In addition to the absence of an equivalent of CSTs in the target culture, translators' deficiency in the understanding of the source culture is also a cause of concern. Take *buổi thượng triều* (rendered as *high court meetings*) as a case in point. *Triều* refers to the traditional practice in the court of a Vietnamese king. In this case, *thượng* indicates the act of joining the court meetings; nevertheless, the translators probably misinterpreted this word as referring to the upper court, as opposed to the lower count, thus turning the translation into *high court meetings*. The confusion might result from the use of an unfamiliar Sino-Vietnamese word to the translators, making it more challenging for him/her to make sense of this CST.

Adaptation

Adaptation is the umbrella term for Deletion, Addition and Annotation. As for Deletion, CSTs might be partially or completely omitted in the translation for different purposes. For example, đầm *Chuồn* in its later occurrences in an article is rendered as *the lagoon* to avoid repetition, as the full phrase *the Chuon lagoon* has already been mentioned beforehand. In another case, *nước mắm ruốc* is translated into *fish sauce*. Although *fish sauce* is a common functional equivalent term used for *nước mắm*, this particular translation lacks the flavor of *ruốc (shrimp paste)*, an important ingredient in this special type of fish sauce. The omission of this CST might stem from the translators' inability to find an equivalent or insufficient cultural understanding. This phenomenon calls for more formative training on cultural competence in translation to ensure that translators have a thorough insight into both the source and target cultures, and are equipped with the resources and skills to search for newly encountered terms if necessary. Adaptation also features the form of Addition, meaning the provision of additional context to the CSTs. This strategy is usually coupled with Transference in dealing with names of landmarks like *Tam Giang - Tam Giang Lagoon* or *Cố Đô - Hue Ancient Capital* to give more clarification to these proper names. Annotation also takes place when information is added, yet in a more detailed manner, namely adding explanations for the CSTs whose meanings are still vague. The notes given can take the form of a phrase, a scientific name, or a whole clause. For example, *Giàng* is translated as *Giang (heaven)*, and *rượu sim* as *sim (Rhodomyrtus tomentosa) wine, mì xưa* as *mi xua (showing unpleasant expression to guests if they haggle about the prices of a product but do not buy it)*.

Through-translation

In analyzing the use of Through-translation in the corpus, it is evident that this strategy is predominantly applied to the names of organizations and institutions, which span across administrative, historic, and artistic categories. For artistic institutions, Through-translation is employed to translate museum names, such as *Bảo tàng Hồ Chí Minh* rendered as *Ho Chi Minh Museum*. This strategy effectively conveys the functional purpose of these institutions while maintaining clarity for the target audience. In the administrative category, institutions like Đại *học Mỹ thuật* is translated to *University of Fine Arts*, and *Trung tâm Bảo tồn Di tích Cố* đô translated as *Monuments Conservation Center*. This

tactic also applies to other administrative entities, such as *UBND huyện A Lưới* becoming the *People's Committee of A Luoi District*, and *Sở Du lịch* as *Department of Tourism*. Through-translation ensures that the meaning of these institutional names are accurately and effectively transferred to the target audience, providing a straightforward understanding.

Less frequently used individual translation strategies

Besides the aforementioned translation strategies, Accepted standard translation, Descriptive equivalent, Literal translation, Naturalization, and Paraphrase are also featured in the corpus, yet at a much lower frequency. First, Accepted standard translation is employed in the cases of Đại *Nội* or *Hoàng thành*. Given that Đại *Nội* and *Hoàng thành* both signify the second circle of rampart of Hue Citadel, they are both rendered as *the Imperial Citadel* or *the Citadel*. The Vietnamese traditional costume, áo *dài*, is paired with *ao dai*, which has already been coined as a dictionary entry, thus universally recognized. When the CSTs are commonly employed and well-known enough to become a universally accepted term, or even coined as an entry in a dictionary, the translators should employ these standard translations to mitigate the cultural differences and ensure readers' understanding. It is also notable that the use of scientific names to deal with ecological CSTs like *củ riềng (galangal root)* and *dầu tràm (melaleuca oil)* is also termed as Accepted standard translation. This can be attributed to the avoidance of confusion in the actual referents of the CSTs, since there might exist several species with similar features and names across different cultures.

Descriptive equivalent occurs when additional descriptions of the CSTs are provided to clarify the meaning of CSTs. In the corpus, *kiệu muối*, a Vietnamese traditional dish during Tet, is translated using a description of its ingredients and recipes, *salted and pickled scallion heads*, just like *rượu sâm* translate into *wine made from ginseng*. It can be noted that although the use of Descriptive equivalent might lengthen the TT, it can actually give the audience a basic understanding of the CSTs mentioned, thus is worth considering in the translation of CSTs in tourism texts.

Literal translation is also sparsely employed in the corpus, with the tokens being *tết cơm mới (the new rice festival),* and *muối tiêu rừng (forest pepper)*. This straightforward approach to translation might seem convenient and effective, yet often leads to the loss of cultural connotations and significance. Specifically, *Tết cơm mới* is the most important traditional festivals of various ethnic groups in Vietnam, celebrating the new harvest and wishing for the prosperity of the people. It can even be compared to Lunar New Year, or Tet, of the Kinh people. Therefore, translating this CST as *the new rice festival* is oversimplifying and might downplay the cultural significance of this festival, especially to English-speaking readers who are not from a rice-producing country. *Muối tiêu rừng* is another case of Literal translation which requires more careful consideration. *Muối tiêu* typically refers to a common seasoning in Vietnamese cuisine consisting of salt *(muối)* mixed with ground black pepper *(tiêu)*. *Muối tiêu rừng* in this case indicates that the pepper is sourced from the forest, and in either way salt still remains as the main ingredient. However, the translation omits this main ingredient, potentially confusing readers about the nature of the dish. Due to the possible misunderstandings Literal translation might cause, it is pivotal for translators to exercise caution when selecting this translation strategy.

When it comes to Paraphrase, the strategy is featured in the translation of *mảnh* đất *thần kinh* into *the ancient capital*. *Thần kinh* as a description of Hue, the ancient capital of Vietnam, is often understood as *the sacred capital*, as *thần* is *sacred* or *mysterious*, and *kinh* as in *kinh* đô refers to *the capital city*. This is a possible source of struggles for some translators, since they might find this word unfamiliar. Instead of delving into this meaning or inventing a new term, the translator chose to paraphrase it with a commonly used name of this city, *the ancient capital*. While this choice may not convey the precise cultural nuances encompassed in the original CSTs, it manages to get the main message across.

The last strategy to be mentioned is Naturalization. There is only one token found in the whole corpus, namely *dèng* into *Zeng*. In Vietnamese, the phonemic representation of the letter *d* is */z/*, while in English it is typically pronounced as /d/, and the English letter with similar pronunciation to the Vietnamese letter *d* is *z*. This is probably the reason why the translator chose to alter the initial letter of this CSTs to conform to the English phonological system.

Couplets

Among couplet occurrences, it is evident that Transference is most largely employed in accompaniment with other translation strategies. The most prevalent among these combinations is Transference and Synonymy, particularly in CSTs including names of landmarks and material culture. In this combination, Transference involves preserving the Vietnamese proper names of the CSTs, while Synonymy is applied to the remaining part of the term which has its equivalent in English. For example, *sông* Hương is translated as *the Huong river*, đầm *Cầu Hai* as *Cau Hai lagoon*, and *giấy dó* as *dó paper*. In so doing, the cultural significance of the proper names is retained, while still offering the readers a clear idea of what is being referred to.

The couplet Transference + Adaptation is a similar attempt. In specific, Annotation and Addition are employed to clarify the original CSTs and render them into English for the foreign audience. *Trúc chỉ* is transferred into *truc chi*, paired with the annotation in brackets *(bamboo fiber)*, providing information about the material used in this form of handicraft, as the bamboo fiber used to make sheets on which *trúc chỉ* patterns are created. The annotation of *bánh A quát* (which is translated into *A Quat (love cake)*) focuses more on the cultural significance of this type of dessert, which is a traditional delicacy of ethnic minorities on mountainous areas around Hue used in important rituals, especially as a gift the new bride offers to her husband's family. Also, when there are CSTs with more cultural elements from Vietnamese ethnic groups, Transference is accompanied by Adaptation in their first few instances in the article to offer basic information on the CSTs, like *Zèng* into *Zèng brocade fabric*.

Besides Synonymy and Adaptation, Transference is also coupled with Cultural equivalent in such instances as *cung Trường Sanh (Truong Sanh palace)*, *cung Diên Thọ (Dien Tho palace), phiên chợ Bắc Hà (Bac Ha fair)*, and Through-translation in cases of *Trung tâm Sinh hoạt cộng* đồng *các dân tộc huyện A Lưới (Community Center for Ethnic Groups of A Luoi district)* and *UBND huyện Phú Lộc (Phu Loc District People's Committee)*. Transference is still employed on proper nouns, leaving the rest of the CSTs to be dealt with using Cultural equivalent and Through-translation. Similarly, Transference is combined with Functional equivalent in the case of *cổng Hoà Bình (Hoa Binh gate),* with the proper name being directly transferred by omitting tone marks, and the word *cổng* being rendered with the Functional equivalent *gate*. Take the instance of *cổng Hoà Bình*, a construction work built in feudal oriental architecture to the north of Hue Citadel, into consideration. In reality, *cổng Hoà Bình* is a three-arched gate accompanied by a waterside pavilion for the king to go picnic, whose cultural and historical significance cannot be captured using the culturally neutral word *gate*. Therefore, similar to other cases of Functional equivalent, the cultural connotations of CSTs are lost during the translation process.

Apart from being combined with Transference, Synonymy is also integrated with Adaptation and Accepted standard translation. Particularly, the proper name in đầm *Chuồn* is deleted in its English translation *(the lagoon)*, likely as a way to avoid repetition since the term *Chuon lagoon* has already appeared in the same article; in contrast, *Hue* is added to the CSTs *Cố Đô (Hue Ancient Capital)*, probably as a clarification of location. Concerning the couplet Synonymy + Accepted standard translation, *củ* in *củ riềng* is synonymous with *root* in *galangal root*, as they refer to the same part of the plant, while *galangal* is the scientific name of *riềng*, hence the translation is categorized as Accepted standard translation.

The remaining couplets, Accepted standard translation + Paraphrase and Functional equivalent + Adaptation, only have one occurrence each. The former is *mảnh* đất *thần kinh (the ancient capital)*, and the latter is *nước mắm ruốc (fish sauce)*. As discussed in sections **4.3** and **4.2.5** respectively, *mảnh* đất *thần kinh* is paraphrased using an accepted translation, thus excluding the meaning of *the sacred capital*; meanwhile, *fish sauce* is the functional equivalent of *nước mắm* and *ruốc* is deleted (or adapted). Either way, the cultural nuances of the CSTs are partially neutralized or lost after being translated.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is conclusive that translators incorporated a variety of translation strategies when dealing with CSTs in tourism texts collected from the online article chosen for the study. Specifically, Transference is the most common translation strategy, followed by Synonymy, Functional equivalent, Cultural

equivalent, Adaptation and Through-translation. This aligns with previous research based on Newmark's (1988) strategies. It is also worth mentioning that other translation strategies, namely Accepted standard translation, Descriptive equivalent, Literal translation, Naturalization and Paraphrase, are also employed, yet at a far lower rate.

Regarding the employment of couplets, Transference is the most common element, being paired with Synonymy, Adaptation, Cultural equivalent, Through-translation and Functional equivalent. Other couplets like Synonymy + Adaptation, Synonymy + Accepted standard translation, Accepted standard translation + Paraphrase and Functional equivalent + Adaptation are also sparsely utilized across the corpus. When more than one translation strategy for a CST is applied, they might complement each other, thus enhancing the conveyance of cultural elements. However, the loss of cultural connotations is still a matter of concern, especially when certain translation strategies entail the trade-off of cultural significance are adopted. Despite these strategies, detailed analysis indicates that some cultural-specific nuances are lost or downplayed, confirming the challenges of cultural translation highlighted by previous scholars (e.g., Jakobson, 1959; Newmark, 1988; Nord, 2014; Ruuttula, 2018).

The results of this work provide substantial theoretical contributions to the subject of translation studies. In particular, the findings offer some considerations for translators when adopting certain translation strategies. To be specific, it is highly advisable for translators to take a more careful approach to Transference regarding the inclusion of Vietnamese tone marks in the TT to avoid causing misunderstanding and confusion for target readers in an indeliberate fashion. In addition, translators are highly recommended to exercise serious caution when employing Functional equivalent to compensate for the loss of cultural nuances so that readers won't get confused. More importantly, besides the linguistic competence and understanding of the target culture, translators' cultural competence in the source culture is also of great importance when they cope with CSTs that bear a significant quantity of cultural elements in itself.

The study has crucial practical implications related to both the translation industry and training programs. It proposes that in addition to a solid command of language, a profound understanding of both the source and target culture is also of great importance for translators, especially those involved in the translation of the tourism industry. Providing precisely the culturally appropriate translations of cultural elements, particularly CSTs, is essential in tourism marketing as it directly influences the destination image as perceived by the prospective customers. Thus, ensuring effective translation of cultural aspects in tourism language enhances the persuasive appeal of the destinations to international tourists, providing them with a more thorough understanding of the local culture. In contrast, if these cultural aspects are mistranslated or oversimplified, it can lead to misunderstandings and a reduced experience for the travelers. The study hence underscores the significance of proper training of cultural translation in general and cultural translation in the field of tourism in particular. Moreover, it also suggests that stakeholders in the tourism industry, ranging from marketers, translators, commissioners to translation service firms should give precedence to tourism translation. It is advisable that these parties acknowledge the demand of hiring skilled translators with not just linguistic proficiency but also cultural sensitivity and competence to produce translations with adequate quality and cultural appropriation.

While the present study offers significant contributions to the application of translation strategies related to CSTs in tourism materials, it is not without its limitations. First of all, the sample size is rather limited as a result of the study's focus. The corpus is extracted from a particular online article based in central Vietnam, implying that the study may not fully cover the wide range of tourism materials, especially those from different regions. Consequently, the results may not accurately reflect the tourism discourse in Vietnam tourism literature. Another constraint lies in the subjectivity of qualitative research. The interpretation of CSTs and the strategies used to render them from Vietnamese into English might not accurately correspond to Newmark's (1988) suggested strategies. As a result, the analysis of translation procedures might be subjective, leading to potential overlaps or uncertainties in the results.

Given the limitations of the research, it is possible to propose a range of suggestions to improve future investigations on the translation of CSTs in Vietnamese and other languages. By encompassing

genres beyond tourism, such as literature or legal texts, a more comprehensive insight into the use and translation of CSTs in many settings can be achieved, enabling researchers to evaluate the representation of CSTs in a wider range of discourse. Furthermore, it is advisable to conduct genre-based comparison, examining the variations of CSTs and translation strategies used across different genres of texts. On top of that, carrying out comparative research in a variety of cultures and languages would be beneficial in understanding the patterns in CST translation in tourism settings worldwide. This would offer additional implications on how cultural nuances are handled in different languages, cultures and situations, probably resulting in the most effective methods for translating CSTs across different cultures.

ETHICS STATEMENT

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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