Cultural Mediation in Tourism Translation: Saudi Arabia as a Case Study

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Abstract
Part of the recent Saudi National Transformation program Vision 2030 is the significant growth of the tourism sector. Opening up the country to international tourists means facilitating access to Saudi culture through translation, where the role of translators as cultural mediators is salient. In the Saudi context, cultural mediation in tourism translation is an under-researched topic. This paper addresses the following question: What is the interventionist role of translators as cultural mediators and where do they position the tourist against Arabic-English translated Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) in Saudi-related tourism articles? Drawing on Kwieciński’s (2001) adaption of Venuti’s domestication and foreignization (1995), this study adopts a descriptive approach to analyze the translation strategies in a parallel corpus of Arabic and English articles published on the official website of Saudi tourism Visit Saudi. The findings reveal the active role of translators in providing access to the Saudi culture by extensively adopting the exoticization and explanation strategies in tourism texts to foreignize CSIs, especially in the contexts of traditions and food. This paper, thus, bridges the scholarly gap in Translation Studies by examining cultural mediation in translating tourism texts about Saudi Arabia, focusing on translators’ strategies and how they position Saudi CSIs in the international tourism industry.

Keywords: Culture-Specific Items, cultural mediation, exoticization, Saudi Arabia, tourism translation

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Introduction

On 27 September 2019, Saudi Arabia announced that the number of tourist visas was extended to include visitors from 49 countries. The additional permits are expected to generate a 5.6% increase in international arrivals to reach 25 million tourists in 2023 (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019). This significant step is part of a broader national transformation plan entitled Vision 2030, which was previously announced in early 2016, aiming to diversify the Saudi economy and reduce the country’s reliance on oil. The tourism sector is a significant aspect of this reforming plan (Jawadi & Ftiti, 2019), representing an active non-oil economic sector. Besides the internationally recognized touristic elements of historical sites and cultural traditions, Saudi Arabia is characterized by annual religious tourism of Hajj and Umrah to the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina that is expected to remain at the core of the sector, aiming to attract 30 million pilgrims to Saudi Arabia by 2030 (ATM Team, 2019). The reforming plan also involves diversifying other tourist activities, for instance, ecotourism, geo-tourism, and cultural tourism.

The expansion and progress of the sector mean facilitating wider access to the Saudi culture through multiple processes of translation from Arabic, mainly commissioned by the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) and disseminated through its official website Visit Saudi. This website was launched to provide an official counterpoint to collating tourism-related content from other unofficial sources, such as personal blogs of travelers and international travel platforms. Before launching Visit Saudi, fragmented tourism content on Saudi Arabia has been subject to repeated representations of stereotypical topoi (e.g., camels and campfires), and “unchanged” images of Bedouins received by the Western audience (see, for example, Feighery, 2017). Such constructed representations neglect the tribal, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the Saudi nation. For instance, Saudi-related televised travelogues do not necessarily reflect the diverse Saudi culture (Yoo & Buzinde, 2012). Repeated tourist representations foreground the broader image of Arabia and background cultural diversity and inheritances within the Kingdom.

Visit Saudi comprises over 50,000 words corpus and represents a varied distribution of themes that allow for the examination of the dynamic role of tourism translators and their cultural mediatory position in Saudi Arabia, which is overlooked in the literature of Translation Studies (henceforth TS). The only available publications to date are either within the field of Linguistics (see, for example, Al-Jarf, 2021a, 2021b) or limited to a particular region in Saudi Arabia (Mahjoub, 2019). The work of Al-Jarf (2021) addresses tourism translation in the contexts of linguistic analysis and university teaching. On the other hand, Mahjoub’s work analyses the heritage element of tourism translation within the Saudi region of Tabuk, concluding that translation contributes to promoting cultural heritage. Mahjoub’s call for the professionalization of tourism translation is limited to the specific context of Tabuk rather than the wider scope of Saudi Arabia. To bridge this scholarly gap, this paper constructs the foundation for studying cultural mediation in translating contemporary tourism texts in Saudi Arabia by establishing the extent to which Saudi-related Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) are exoticized in the translations of Visit Saudi from Arabic into English. The paper responds to the following question: What is interventionist role of translators as cultural mediators and where do they position the tourist against Arabic-English translated CSIs in Saudi-related tourism articles? It represents the first attempt at scholarly engagement with translated contemporary tourism texts in the digital context and
analyzes mediation across multiple layers of multimodality. The focus on the Saudi tourism context is driven by the specific discourse conventions in the religious and cultural domains within Saudi Arabia. In doing so, the researcher also explores the intervening strategies of translators in culturally mediating tourism texts from Arabic into English and the themes where cultural mediation is most salient.

Literature Review

Translators are continually confronted with the need for mediation, a concept that was first introduced to TS by Hatim and Mason (1997) as “the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into their processing of a text” (p. 147). In the case of tourism translation, mediation becomes more vital as the translated product must respond to the needs of the target audience (Kelly, 1997). Mediation requires translators to adopt different approaches to translation, aiming to enhance or reduce cultural differences according to their specific contexts (Agorni, 2012). Federici (2018) identifies four stages of tourism translation: bottom-up text analysis (examining and coding the source text), contrastive analysis (comparing linguistic and cultural elements), reformulation (materializing the target text), and re-editing (correcting and revising the target text). During these four stages, tourism translators add an extra element of mediation to their translations, especially in themes related to tourist attractions and traditional food, which the researcher discusses in the analysis. The mediation processes of tourism translation characterize tourism translators as intercultural experts. The above levels of active mediation that tourism translators carry out feature their dynamic role, which can be observed in the source-oriented translation strategies analyzed below.

Cultural Mediation in Tourism Translation

Tourism translation is a dynamic process that “involves the direct contact between cultures and all that this includes (folklore, customs, gastronomy, etc.),” as defined by Muñoz (2011, p.31). This communicative role makes the language of tourism a channel between foreign tourists and the culture of the place they are visiting. In this paper, culture refers to the visible level, which involves the observable reality surrounding individuals, namely language, gestures, food, and artistic practices (Sulaiman and Wilson, 2019). In the dataset, visible culture includes elements that UNESCO (no date) classifies as both tangible culture (food) and intangible culture (traditions, history, and heritage). Tangible and intangible elements of the Saudi culture are represented in textual manifestations that translators should transfer to the target culture, i.e., the Western, with extreme care. As far as translation is concerned, the question is where translated products are positioned between the domestication and the foreignization ends of the translation process. The following parts define culture-related words in the literature of TS, and examine the role played by translators in processing them.

Culture-Specific Items

Since the early 1990s, scholars in TS have regularly defined and debated the definition of the linguistic markers that manifest the source culture in its specific context (Agorni, 2012). For instance, culture-bound words and phrases are labeled as “cultural terms” (Newmark, 1991) and “culture-specific concepts” (Baker, 1995). More recently, in the 2000s, scholars have developed their labels of culture-bound terms, including “realia” (Leppihalme, 2001) and “extralinguistic...
cultural references” (Pedersen, 2007). The scholarly discussion has also expanded to describe the cases where culture-bound terms create translation problems due to their unique nature and exclusivity to the source culture; for example, Leppihalme (1997) coins the term “culture bumps,” and Ivir (2003) opts for calling them “unmatched elements of culture.”

In this paper, CSIs are conceptualized as cultural micro-linguistic manifestations by adopting the label “culture-specific items.” The term was introduced by Aixelà (1996), which is the most applicable concept to the cases in the dataset. In particular, the term highlights the cultural references of tangible and intangible elements of the terms rather than their linguistic structures. Thus, CSIs, as unique elements to the source culture (i.e., the Saudi culture), are defined in the context of this paper as:

Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the non-existence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text. (Aixelà, 1996, p.58)

The extent to which CSIs, as cultural micro-linguistic manifestations, are adapted reflects the complexity of cultural communication and where translated texts are positioned against the source and target cultures. This is mainly attributed to the fact that CSIs do not exist in isolation but rather result from “a conflict arising from any linguistically represented reference in a source text” (p.57), which, in turn, creates a translation challenge due to the lack of equivalence in the target culture. The problematic lack of cultural equivalence has been encouraging scholars in TS to develop various taxonomies of translation strategies to tackle it since the 1970s (Narváez & Zambrana, 2014), which will be discussed in the methods below.

Methods

This part discusses the processes of data collection and methodology design used in this research. The paper draws on a corpus of 27,250 words derived from parallel English and Arabic online articles collected from the official Saudi tourism website Visit Saudi. The website was chosen as the primary source of data because it is the official Saudi provider of tourist content in 7 languages besides Arabic: Chinese, Dutch, French, Spanish, English, Japanese and Russian. The website was launched in 2019 to provide a unified platform for online tourist information. The focus on the digital format of tourism content is motivated by the contemporary nature of tourism texts in Saudi Arabia, which have been regularly developed in the forms of websites and smartphone apps, especially in the era of Covid-19, where print content is significantly reduced and switched to digital.

Criteria of Data Collection

Given the aim of this paper, which is to explore the role of translators as cultural mediators and their intervening strategies, it was vital to focus on themes where the Saudi culture is most visible. Thus, the compiled digital articles belong to the most culturally related categories of texts: history and heritage, traditions, and food. The thematical categories in the dataset were coded according to the classifications by the website of Visit Saudi to analyze articles in their original
context. The sub-corpus of history and heritage involves all the published articles, encompassing 9,435 words across English and Arabic articles. Similarly, the traditions category involves 9372-words in English and Arabic articles, while the food category includes a sub-corpus of 8,446 words.

**Taxonomies for CSIs**

The cultural turn in TS during the 1990s (Munday, 2016) involved various developments of existing taxonomies to CSIs, assessing, for example, the degree of cultural transposition (Hervey & Higgins, 1992) and the degree of universalization (Aixelà, 1996). Among the available taxonomies of cultural translation is Venuti’s (1995) seminal distinction between domestication (reducing the visibility of cultural differences) and foreignization (highlighting cultural differences and moving the reader towards the source culture). Although TS scholars have not agreed on a specific label, definition, or taxonomy to approach CSIs (Ramière, 2016), Venuti’s taxonomy of domestication and foreignization has been the basis for multiple methodologies that position CSIs between the poles of source and target cultures. Various scholars in TS have revisited Venuti’s dichotomy: for instance, Aixelà (1996) measures the degree of cultural manipulation by introducing conservation and substitution, Katan (1999) suggests generalization, deletion, and distortion, whereas Olk (2012) argues for a taxonomy between transference of cultural terms and substitution. More recently, Marco (2019) combines the two criteria of foreignization and domestication with translator intervention. It is evident from the classifications outlined above that there is a significant overlap between the available taxonomies, as Davies (2012) also highlights, which is illustrated in the analysis below.

To answer the paper’s research questions on the extent to which CSIs are exoticized and the intervening strategies of translators, the chosen methodological framework is Kwieciński’s (2001) distinction between strategies of exoticization and assimilation within the poles of source and target cultures. Kwieciński narrows down Venuti’s (1995) taxonomy of foreignization and domesticating to four sub-strategies below, arguing that foreignization and domesticating “tend to be used rather loosely and to refer to different phenomena potentially leading to terminological gaps and inconsistencies” (Kwieciński, 2001, p.13). In Kwieciński’s view, domestication is the result of “accommodation of the target text to the established [target language/culture] TL/TC concepts, norms and conventions,” and foreignization, on the other hand, involves “the introduction into the target text of concepts and language forms that are alien and/or obscure in the target language and culture” (Kwieciński, 2001, pp. 13-14). Given the nature of CSIs in the dataset, the classification suggested by Kwieciński (2001) is the most applicable as it gives attention to detailing exoticization and highlighting otherness between the East (Saudi Arabia) and the West (Western tourists) (Said, 1978). In particular, myths and mythical language exist in the tourist interaction with non-Western cultures (Selwyn, 1993), inviting tourists to explore the otherness of the oriental destinations. Such interaction is explained in the framework of Kwieciński (2001), which includes the following four categories:

**Exoticizing Procedures**

This category involves translation procedures highlighting the foreignness of the CSIs when transferred to the target text (Kwieciński, 2001). This procedure, which corresponds to
Venuti’s foreignization, characterizes the translated product with a “local color,” as Newmark (1988, p.82) phrases it. In the context of the examples in the dataset, this category can be narrowed down to translation procedures arranged according to their closeness to the source culture: from pure exoticization to exoticization combined with deletion. Exoticizing procedures occur in the dataset in the form of transliteration of Saudi-related CSIs from Arabic, which are not necessarily familiar to the target reader (e.g., the word “dallah” to translate “coffee pot” in Arabic).

**Recognized Exoticizing Procedures**

In this sub-category of exoticization, translators use previously established geographical and personal names and titles that are accepted translations in a given language rather than creating new ones, as in the previous category. Recognition of exoticized words is constantly changing as new terms develop, continually requiring translators to assess the extent of exoticization applied to CSIs. This category includes retention procedures of well-known names and titles from the source culture, such as the Islamic CSIs “zakat” and “Hijri” to transliterate "زاكات" [back translation: charity] and "هجري" [back translation: the Islamic calendar].

**Rich Explicatory Procedures**

In this category, translation procedures transfer the semantic meaning of the CSIs, aiming to adapt it to the expectations and familiarity of the target audiences. Procedures usually entail adding extra words to explain the context to the reader by, for instance, providing local analogies for illustrative purposes (Kwieciński, 2001). For example, the description “a porridge-like dish” is added to illustrate the texture of the transliterated Saudi dish “Jareesh.” Similar to exoticization, this category involves sub-procedures ranging from pure explanation to hyphenated explanation and adjectivized explanation.

**Assimilative Procedures**

This group of procedures is oriented towards the target culture pole and entails substituting CSIs with corresponding cultural references in the target culture (Kwieciński, 2001). The category involves more processes of rewriting according to the new setting of the target culture with an informative function. The category includes sub-procedures of pure assimilation and partial assimilation, such as translating the Arabic word "قصر" [back translation: palace] literally into “palace” rather than using the transliterated form “Qasr.” The following analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the results arranged in a thematical order, showing the applicability of the above procedures to the cases in the dataset.

**Analysis and Results**

Following the researcher’s discussion on the corpus and methodology, this analysis exhibits the identified translation strategies in the selected three themes of history and heritage, traditions, and food. Examples in each category are numbered according to their appearance in the appendix at the end of this paper.

**History and Heritage**

In the 9435-words sub-corpus of history and heritage, four translation strategies are identified (see table one) that range from retention, transliteration, addition to literal translation.
As the source texts include multiple exoticization processes, retention of recognized source culture elements is the most frequent procedure that features 40% of the procedures identified in this theme.

Table 1. The translation procedures adopted in the theme of history and heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation procedure</th>
<th>Sub-procedures</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognized exoticization</td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>15 examples (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exoticization</td>
<td>Transliteration</td>
<td>11 examples (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>8 examples (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Literal translation</td>
<td>3 examples (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first group of translated CSIs includes cultural references to places, such as “the bride of the Red Sea”:

ST (source text): “كانت جدة ‘عروس البحر الأحمر’، ولا زالت حاضنة ومعانقة لشتات زوارها وقاطنيها”
Back translation: “Jeddah has been ‘the bride of the Red Sea,’ which still welcomes its residents and visitors”
TT (target text): “Known as ‘the Bride of the Red Sea,’ Jeddah was welcoming visitors”

In the above example, the beauty attributed to the Saudi city of Jeddah in the Arabic epithet is retained in the English translation. The second group of retained items encompasses additional descriptions and references of CSIs, for instance:

ST: “قصص الشهيرة عن ‘ألف ليلة وليلة’ (المعروف أيضاً باسم ‘الليالي العربية’)
Back translation: “The famous stories about one thousand and one night, also known as ‘the Arabian nights’”
TT: “One Thousand and One Nights” (also known as “Arabian Nights”) (4)

By transferring all the associated descriptions and references with a CSI, the translator invites tourists to engage with the original context of the cultural item and provides them with various references for cultural navigation. Transliteration follows retention in frequency, highlighting the greater exoticization of CSIs. For example, the Arabic CSI “مواسم الحج” (Back translation: Hajj seasons) is transferred by transliteration into “Month of Dhu'l Hijjah” (1), replacing the more familiar concept to the target reader “Hajj” with the position of the month on the Hijri calendar. Similarly, the Islamic-related terms “إفطار” (Back translation: crier), “موذن” (Back translation: breakfast), “حاج” (Back translation: pilgrimage), and “محراب” (Back translation: niche) are transliterated from Arabic as “muezzin” (1), “iftar” (4), “hajj” (6) and “mihrab” (6), foregrounding the key characteristics of the holy month of Ramadan. By adopting transliteration, the above CSIs are kept as “borrowings” that reflect the form, meaning, and phonetic structure of the foreign words (Zaro and Truman, 1998, p.42), which appeals to tourists...
by retaining the linguistic and phonetic features of the transliterated CSIs. The procedure of addition is the third most frequent method, following retention and transliteration, that is applied to 8 CSIs in the contexts of:

**Historical events:**

ST: “سقطت الدرعية أواخر عام 1818 وخلفتها مدينة الرياض كعاصمة للبلاد”

Back translation: “Diriyah fell in late 1818 and was succeeded by Riyadh as the capital of the country”

TT: “Diriyah fell in late 1818 at the end of the Wahhabi war and was succeeded as the nation’s capital by the nearby settlement of Riyadh” (11)

**Historical sites:**

ST: “لتدخل الدرعية التاريخ كأحد أهم معالم المملكة التراثية المعترف بها في اليونسكو عام 2010”

Back translation: “Diriyah entered as one of the most important Saudi heritage sites listed by UNESCO in 2010”

TT: “The ruins of At-Turaif were designated a UNESCO Heritage Site in 2010” (11)

**Islamic rituals:**

ST: “يوجد مصلى خشبي معلق فوق القاعة الرئيسية مخصص للنساء. وِلِلرَّضُورِ كل المصلين، كافة خدمات المسجد الأساسية موجودة داخل المسجد”

Back translation: “There is a wooden prayer space hanging above the main hall designated for women. For the comfort of prayers, all of the mosque’s basic services are located within the mosque”

TT: “Men’s prayer takes place in the main hall, while women are invited to pray in the wooden musalla (prayer hall) that hangs above the main anteroom” (11)

All the additions above share a pattern of bracketed explanation that involves providing extra information between round brackets to signal their extralinguistic and intercultural features. The addition in the third example replaces the part “all of the mosque’s basic services are located within the mosque,” assuming that the reader is more interested in learning about the separation of men and women at Islamic mosques. The following discussion positions the above translation strategies against the strategies applied in the second tourism theme: Saudi traditions.

**Traditions**

Compared with the theme of history and heritage, the sub-corpus of traditions is characterized by a higher tendency to apply transliteration, which constitutes 64% of the translation instances in this group (see table two). This theme also involves more examples of addition and fewer retention instances, suggesting more intervention by translators than in the above theme of history and heritage.

Table 2. The translation procedures adopted in the theme of traditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation procedure</th>
<th>Sub-procedures</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognized exoticization</td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>4 examples (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The traditions sub-corpus encompasses a combination of tangible and intangible cultural elements, which are defined by UNESCO (see the literature review). Examples of the tangible CSIs can be noticed in descriptions of traditional Saudi clothing, such as “دقلة” (11) [Back translation: long male coat], “مرودن” (11) [Back translation: male dress with long sleeves], “عباية” (13) [Back translation: female head cover], and “ثوب” (13) [Back translation: long male dress]. These terms are transliterated and kept in the texts as borrowings to highlight their local identity: “daghla” (11), “murowdin” (11), “abaya” (14), “hijab” (14), and “thobe” (14). The same procedure of transliteration from Arabic is also applied to CSIs that represent Saudi social places, which are listed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage (2015a). An example of these CSIs is the word “bastas” (16):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exoticization</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>36 examples (64%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>17 examples (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Literal translation</td>
<td>1 example (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The traditions sub-corpus encompasses a combination of tangible and intangible cultural elements, which are defined by UNESCO (see the literature review). Examples of the tangible CSIs can be noticed in descriptions of traditional Saudi clothing, such as “دقلة” (11) [Back translation: long male coat], “مرودن” (11) [Back translation: male dress with long sleeves], “عباية” (13) [Back translation: female head cover], and “ثوب” (13) [Back translation: long male dress]. These terms are transliterated and kept in the texts as borrowings to highlight their local identity: “daghla” (11), “murowdin” (11), “abaya” (14), “hijab” (14), and “thobe” (14). The same procedure of transliteration from Arabic is also applied to CSIs that represent Saudi social places, which are listed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage (2015a). An example of these CSIs is the word “bastas” (16):

```
ST: "أكشاك جدة التقليدية، المشهورة باسم البسطات" (15)
Back translation: “Jeddah’s famous stalls, known as bastas”
TT: “street food stalls known as bastas” (16)
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“истираха” (18):
ST: "الاستراحة، أي شاليه مستأجر يجتمعون فيه لتناول الأكل والشرب ولكي يلعبوا معاً" (17)
Back translation: “Lounge, any rented chalet to gather people for food, drink, and play”
TT: “истираха; rented chalets where friends congregate to eat, drink, and play games” (18)
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And “majlis” (14):

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ST: "مصاحبة تسمى المجلس وهي مساحة لاستقبال الضيوف" (13)
Back translation: “a space called majlis to welcome guests”
TT: “a majlis that is dedicated to entertaining guests” (14)
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Transliteration also extends to a significant number of Islamic-related CSIs, namely “الشهادة” (19) [Back translation: declaration of faith], “الصلاة (العبادة)” (19) [Back translation: prayer], “الزكاة (التصدق)” (19) [donations] and “الصوم” (19) [fasting]. These terms are transliterated into “declaration of faith (shahada)” (20), “prayer or worship (salat)” (20), “almsgiving (zakat), or giving money or food to the less fortunate” (20), and “fasting (sawm)” (20). All the above transliterations appear in the texts after their English equivalents. The addition procedure follows transliteration in frequency, which is characterized by guiding keywords, such as “known as,” “meaning,” and “which means.” Instances of explained CSIs from both the Saudi and Islamic cultures are “المسحور” (17) [Back translation: pre-dawn meal], “صلاة الفجر” (15) [Back translation: Isha prayer], “التقويم الهجري” (21) [Back translation: Hijri Calendar], “اليوم الوطني” (21) [Back translation: the national day] and “السلام عليكم” (13) [Greetings]. The five phrases are translated by adding explanatory descriptions, including “pre-dawn meal known a Suhoor” (18), “Isha, the final prayer of the day” (16), “the Hijri, the Islamic lunar calendar” (22), “Al Yom Al Watany, as Saudi National Day is known in Arabic” (22), and “‘Salam Alaykum,’ which means ‘peace be upon you’” (14). Similar to the cases of addition, there is a
common pattern of directly addressing the reader by providing illustrative descriptions, especially in the case of the Islamic greeting “‘Salam Alaykum,’ which means ‘peace be upon you’ (14).

**Food**

Food-related CSIs are prominent cultural elements that are “for many the most sensitive and important expression of national culture” (Newmark, 1988, p. 97). It is an area where “banal globalization” (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2011) can be noticed through tourists’ tendency to use the same food-related CSIs to connect with the locals of their host country. In the third sub-corpus of food, translators show their awareness of this banality by using translation strategies that bring the tourist closer to the Saudi culture compared with the themes of history and heritage, and traditions. Food-related CSIs entail details that translators should maintain and further expand, aiming to enable the tourist to experience the local Saudi food themselves. All the identified strategies are oriented more towards the categories of exoticization and explanation rather than assimilation. Table three shows a significant increase in the use of transliteration by comparison with addition and retention. The tendency to employ transliteration first and foremost is a common pattern in this theme and the theme of traditions, which is also associated with decreased percentages of literal translation strategies that drop from 5% to 0% in this theme, see table three.

Table 3. The translation procedures adopted in the theme of food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation procedure</th>
<th>Translation sub-procedures</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognized exoticization</td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>4 examples (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exoticization</td>
<td>Transliteration</td>
<td>38 examples (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>21 examples (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Literal translation</td>
<td>0 examples (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transliteration procedure is used to translate 38 CSIs related to traditional Saudi dishes, for instance, “thareed” (24), “jareesh” (24), and “kabsa” (24), which originate from different parts of Saudi Arabia, reflecting the variety of regional gastronomy. The following examples are accompanied by their photos used in both STs and TTs to show how each CSI is translated in its multimodal context (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2011).

Thareed:

ST: “الثريد: هو أقدم من الجريش، ويقال أنه يعود لحقبة ما قبل الإسلام وكان الطبق المفضل للنبي عليه الصلاة والسلام، ويتكون من اللحم المطهو مع الخضروات ويتم تقديمه مع قطعة رفيعة من الخبز” (23)

Back translation: “Thareed is older than Jareesh. It is said that it can be traced back to pre-Islam and was the favorite dish of the passenger peace be upon him; it is made of cooked meat with vegetables served with a thin slice of bread”

TT:
Jareesh:

ST: “الجريش: من أقدم الأطباق السعودية، ويعرف أيضاً بالهريس، يتكون من القمح المطحون ويسلق مع الأرز، والصل و المرق مع إضافة التوابل مثل الكمون والبقدونس والكزبرة”

Back translation: “Jareesh is the oldest Saudi dish, which is also known as hares, constating of oats that are steamed with rice, onions, stew with the additions of herbs, such as cumin, coriander, and parsley”

TT:

Kabsa:

ST: “الكبسة: مشتقة من كلمة "كبس" وهي المكونات المطبوخة أو المضغوطة في قدر خاص مع الأرز، وهو الطبق المفضل والأشهر على المائدة، ويمكن تحضيره عن طريق مجموعة من المكونات، ولكن يعتبر الأرز والخضروات المفضل والأشهر على المائدة، ويمكن تحضيره عن طريق مجموعة من المكونات، ولكن يعتبر الأرز والخضروات المفضل والأشهر على المائدة، ويمكن تحضيره عن طريق مجموعة من المكونات، ولكن يعتبر الأرز والخضروات”

Back translation: “Kabsa is a dish consisting of boiled rice and cooked ingredients, including meat and vegetables, and can be prepared in various ways. However, the preferred dish is Kabsa, which is a favorite on the table and can be prepared with a variety of ingredients, including rice and vegetables.”
Back translation: “Kabsa is derived from the word ‘kbs,’ which means the cooked ingredients in a special pot with rice, which is the most popular dish on the table. It can be prepared using a variety of ingredients, but rice, vegetables, and meat, whether lamb or chicken, remain the primary ingredient”

Figure 3. A photo of the Saudi traditional dish “kabsa” accompanied by a description of the ingredients (VisitSaudi, 2022)

The above CSIs belong to what Montanari (2004) classifies as ST foodstuffs that do not exist in the TL, which are transliterated and further mediated with additional descriptions. A prominent example of this is providing the roots of the transliterated item “kabsa” (24) as “stemming from the Arabic word ‘kbs’ which means ‘pressed.’” In addition, transliteration is significantly associated with descriptions of “dates,” a UNESCO inscribed icon of Saudi generosity (2019), featuring multiple CSIs in the ST. Remarkable examples are the Arabic terms “الرطب (ناضجة، ناعمة، ذرة，“الخلال (كامل الحجم، مقد، أصفر，“(25) “كيمري (غير ناضج، أخضر,” (25) “تمار (ناضجة، مجففة بالشمس، داكنة)“ (25). These are transliterated into “kimri (unripe, green)” (26), “khalal (full-size, crunchy, yellow)” (26), “rutab (ripe, soft)” (26), and “tamr (ripe, sun-dried, dark)” (26), featuring additional descriptions to the dates. The addition procedure, as the second most frequent in this sub-corpus, is assigned to core elements of Saudi gastronomy. For instance, Arabic coffee, which is a prominent cultural element classified as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO (2015b), is transliterated multiply as “qahwa” (26) and followed by descriptions of related items, such as “Arabic coffee” (26), “a coffee pot called a dallah” (28), and “the bottom of the coffee cup (which is called a finjal)” (28). Not only is coffee highlighted as a cultural element through transliteration but is also linked to other sub-elements of “dallah” and “finjal,” as shown in the previous examples. This procedure corresponds to Montanari’s (2004) classification of polysemous CSIs that involve different types of food in both cultures.

The addition procedure is also utilized to adapt the previously mentioned national Saudi dishes to the tourists by adding imported equivalent CSIs from the Western culture, including the loan phrase “a porridge-like dish” (30):

ST: "الجريش: وصفة توارثها الأجيال. حيث يعد وجبة دسمة خلال فصل الشتاء.“

Back translation: “Jareesh: an inherited recipe as it is considered a fatty meal in winter”
TT: “Jareesh is a porridge-like dish” (30)
and “shortbread-like exterior” (24):

ST: “المعمول: عجينة من القمح المخبوز بالفرن والمحشو بالفستق أو التمر” (23)
Back translation: “ma’amoul: an oven-baked dough stuffed with pistachios or dates”

TT: “ma’amoul has a crumbly, shortbread-like exterior” (24)

The overall translation procedure in mediating food-related CSIs tends to involve
significant “simplification or clarification” (Inggs, 2003, p. 288). The increased exoticization of
CSIs in food-related articles reflects their vital role in shaping the experience of foreign tourists in
Saudi Arabia as well as constructing the image of the country as a gastronomic tourism destination.
From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (especially DHA by Reisigl and Wodak,
2008), the identified translation procedures in this paper establish links between the micro level of
textual CSIs and the broader representation of Saudi tourism discourse. This mediatory role of
tourism translation contributes to moving Saudi Arabia as a tourist destination from being
domesticated to a foreignized, culturally diverse, and modern country. Unlike the excessive
domestication of Saudi-related tourism CSIs by foreign institutions, before launching Vision 2030,
exoticization and explanation by Visit Saudi provide wider access to the local Saudi culture and its
discursive conventions.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed at exploring cultural mediation in Saudi-related tourism texts and
where the translators position their audience between the exoticized and domesticated poles of the
Saudi culture. The analysis of how translation procedures position the tourist against translated
CSIs in a corpus of Saudi-related tourism articles has clearly shown a significant tendency to adopt
exoticization and explanation, especially in the themes of traditions and food. Exoticization and
explanation include various translation procedures of retention, transliteration, and addition,
bringing the tourists closer to the conventions of the Saudi culture. Assimilation, on the other hand,
is used significantly less frequently than the other two strategies, making only between 1% and
5% of the applied procedures. Incorporating both exoticization and explanation, the category of
food functions as an area of considerable interventionist simplification and clarification due to the
cultural indexicality of food-related CSIs and the prominent position they occupy in the Saudi
culture. The extent of exoticization and explanation varies according to the tourist context, which
means that traditions and food categories involve more transliteration and addition when compared
with history and heritage. These two procedures, thus, invite tourists to contribute to the website’s
content by reviewing how source-oriented translation from Arabic improve their tourist experience
in Saudi Arabia, which can be further examined in future research from the perspective of reception
studies.

Endnotes

1 In the tourism literature, pilgrims have been categorized as tourists who represent the first type of religious tourism
(see, for example, Chang et al., 2020).

1 Scholars in TS have been providing various descriptions to manifest the crucial mediatory role of translators: for
example, “experts in intercultural communication” (Gentzler, 2001, p.71), experts with a “bicultural vision” (Hatim
and Mason, 2014, p.223), “cultural operators” (Hewson and Martin, 1991, p.133), and “cultural mediators” (Katan,
1999, p.12). In this paper, the role of translators is mainly associated with “intercultural communication,” including,
but not limited to, roles of “professional intercultures” (Pym, 2004, p.17), “agents of intercultural communication” (Davies, 2012, p.373) and “cultural informers” (Katan, 2016, p.83).

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**A List of Articles Used in the Analysis**

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In the tourism literature, pilgrims have been categorized as tourists who represent the first type of religious tourism (see, for example, Chang et al., 2020).