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## Book review

**Sulaiman, M. Z. & Wilson, R. (2019).**  
*Translation and tourism: Strategies for  
effective cross-cultural promotion.* Springer.  
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*Reviewed by David Charlston*  
University of Liverpool, UK  
[dcharlston@btinternet.com](mailto:dcharlston@btinternet.com)

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*Translation and tourism: Strategies for effective cross-cultural promotion* was written before the Covid-19 outbreak but the book comes at a timely moment for scholars and tourism professionals committed to improving the cross-cultural role of translation in the post-pandemic tourism world. Sulaiman and Wilson offer valuable insights towards an intelligent response to the crisis as the industry starts to rebuild international and intercultural confidence.

The seriousness of the health crisis for the tourism industry and the need for a strong response has been articulated by the World Tourism Organization, which describes the “devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global tourism [...], with new data showing an 87% fall in international tourist arrivals in January as compared to 2020” (UNWTO, 2021). UNWTO calls for “stronger coordination on travel protocols between countries to ensure the safe restart of tourism and avoid another year of massive losses for the sector.” But this institutional rhetoric of “strong coordination”, a “safe restart” and avoiding “massive losses” disguises a deeper and more urgent need to understand the communicative dynamics of international tourism even beyond the crisis. The title under review opens this fascinating topic with scholarly rigour, clarity and ethical integrity, providing a nuanced but practical conceptualisation of the intercultural dynamics of tourism.

While the case study at the heart of the book examines the translation of Tourism Promotional Materials (TPMs) in the specific context of Australia and Malaysia, its methodology, theoretical analyses and the proposed cultural-conceptual approach to translation are readily transferable to different intercultural contexts.

Part I – the first 4 chapters – sets out theoretical considerations relevant to the translation of tourism promotional materials (TPMs), explaining the vital communicative role of these often multimodal and multimedial products. TPMs are defined as “the collection of media, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, flyers, postcards and websites, used to support the sales of tourism products” (p. 17). They form the primary means of communication and persuasion across languages and cultures for this industry. The definition excludes travel guides, which have a more objective function and usually have to be paid for, but includes the increasingly important use of the Internet in this sector. The

analysis of TPMs and especially the language of tourism promotion offered by Sulaiman and Wilson in Part I thus forms the basis for their subsequent development of a cultural-conceptual approach to translation and tourism (CCT) later in the book. The analysis shows not only how TPMs are supposed to function by persuading readers to buy tourist products and become tourists, but also how TPMs sometimes fail – due to inadequate or inappropriate understanding of the cultural dynamics of the market – often with humorous but commercially disastrous consequences.

The cultural-conceptual approach was designed to improve this situation. It is based on an analysis of tourist motivation, industry persuasion and the role of culture in tourism advertising. Starting with the psychology of tourist motivation (Pearce) and the sociology of tourism (Dann; Berger), the discussion identifies a range of motives which drive and shape tourists' desire to travel. These include "strangerhood", "authenticity" and "play", as well as the need to feel protected from the unfamiliar. A basic analysis of such motives or "push factors" might seem sufficient to allow a commercially useful classification of different tourist types. However, as Sulaiman and Wilson show, there is significant room for improvement in understanding and communicating the importance of cultural differences. When tourist businesses around the world plan their advertising campaigns and design their TPMs, they no doubt try to appeal to specific tourist types by presenting a carefully designed "destination image", which can be broken down into "pull factors". But complex linguistic and cultural factors, including the translation of TPMs into foreign languages, can spoil the destination image received by the target audience of potential tourists. Sulaiman and Wilson present their Cultural-Conceptual Approach as an intercultural challenge to improve communicative practices in the tourism context through in-depth investigation of translation purpose (p. 56) and destination image (p. 57) with a significant focus on cultural-conceptual analysis of target audiences. The analysis is summarized in a useful graphic, and the challenge is outlined as follows: "To be able to trigger an appealing destination image, TPMs must be designed in such a way that the destination attributes (pull factors) are established and framed in relation to consumers' needs (push factors)" (p. 58).

Based on the authors' extensive empirical research in this field, Part II – the remaining 6 chapters of the book – applies and evaluates Cultural-Conceptual Translation (CCT), investigating the case of English-Malay translation of tourism promotional materials (TPMs). This research phase focuses on three sets of TPMs: a set of English-language source texts (ST) published on the Tourism Australia website ([www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)); a secondary corpus of parallel texts (PT) originally written in Malay language by Malay copywriters to promote tourist destinations to a Malay audience; and a third corpus of texts (TT) translated from English into Malay to promote Australian tourist destinations to a Malay audience and also published on the Tourism Australia website. Textual analysis of the three corpora identified seven cultural dimensions which provide a deep understanding of the communicative context of the TPMs and of tourism generally. The seven cultural dimensions are "value orientations, such as religious beliefs, individualism versus collectivism; power distance; uncertainty avoidance; indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede); high versus low context communication; and orality versus literacy" (p. 68).

Chapter 5 explains and develops the concept of "cultural profiling" (p. 73), which is used in the field of international business and management to identify potential problems when operating in a foreign culture (Hurn). Sulaiman and Wilson acknowledge that this approach has attracted criticism because the

cultural profiles generated can be taken as “essentialist” (p. 74-5). Binary distinctions derived from the seven cultural dimensions are used later in the book to differentiate and characterise touristic preferences of Anglophone and Malay cultural groups, for example, with reference to “individualism versus collectivism”, “indulgence versus restraint”, “power distance”, “risk-seeking and risk avoidance”. Anglophone tourists thus emerge from the analysis as relatively more individualistic and self-indulgent than Malay tourists; the Anglophone culture exhibits a low power distance, so tourists are likely to be unfamiliar with authoritarian social structures; Anglophone tourists are more likely to seek risks, while their Malay counterparts are likely to be risk-avoiders. Sulaiman and Wilson recognise the dangers of such “essentialist” over-generalisations but explain that the benefits of cultural profiling outweigh the risks if the approach is used “judiciously” (p. 75). It is evident from the subsequent discussion that their intention throughout is to use profiling primarily to increase sensitivity to commercially potentially significant cultural differences. As shown in the final chapters of the book, the CCT approach is designed to leave room for negotiation between relevant agents in the communicative process, especially including appropriately trained translators. Sulaiman and Wilson also draw on Appadurai’s (1996) use of the concept of “scapes” to theorise the movement of “flows of people, money, technology, media and ideologies” through the world. Subsequent chapters consider “tourism landscapes” (Chapter 6), “performancescapes” (Chapter 7), and “style scapes” (Chapter 8). Understanding the operation of the seven cultural dimensions within these scapes expands the basis for translational decision making, translator training and quality assessment in the sense of Cultural-Conceptual Translation (CCT).

Chapters 6 to 8, which investigate the three “scapes”, have a more practical feel and appearance than the theoretical chapters. They are characterised by images from the three sets of TPMs and numerous translation examples set out in columns allowing a comparison of original English source texts (ST), texts translated into Malay as found in the corpus (TT), and according to the Cultural-Conceptual Translation approach (CCT). Back translations of the Malay texts (BT) are provided in each case. Feedback from focus groups of Malay tourists is also included in the analysis. The three “scapes” allow the authors to consider the data from different perspectives.

The chapter on tourism landscapes (Chapter 6) divides the topic into Naturescapes and Cityscapes and shows how the TPMs use imagery and text to shape and sell a destination image. Chapter 7, “Performancescapes: From Gazing to Doing”, investigates how the TPMs suggest the type and level of activity which might be expected of tourists. The range extends from highly active, risk-intensive adventure holidays to relaxing sightseeing trips suitable for all ages. Chapter 8, “Translating Stylescapes; From Tourism to Anti-tourism”, analyses stylistic features of promotional materials in English and Malay and, like the other chapters in this section, discusses the challenges posed by such culturally determined stylistic features to translators.

To focus briefly on the “naturescapes” section, the TPMs on the Tourism Australia website (ST) consistently characterise the naturescape with reference to the symbolic qualities of “paradise”. The Western concept of paradise is rooted in Greek mythology and the Hebraic conception of the Garden of Eden. It also has profound associations with Christian mythology but has subsequently been secularized, especially through European colonial encounters with “earthly paradises” (p. 91). Visual components of the TPMs depict “vibrant colours, clean white sandy beaches with sweeps of crystal clear turquoise water

merging into darker blue headlands and brighter blue skies, cascading waterfalls, exotic animals (kangaroos, koalas, penguins) marine life and coral reefs, luxuriant vegetation of forests, breathtaking panoramas and astonishing terrains". The images are accompanied by the familiar verbal tropes of pristine beauty, "spellbinding", "glorious", "magical", "perfect", "spectacular".

However, back translations of the parallel corpus of Malay texts (PT) show that "authentic Malay texts promoting natural sites rarely employ this secular notion of 'paradise on earth'" (p. 94). This is attributable to profound differences between the Anglophone and Malay cultures, especially regarding their divergent conceptualisations of paradise. The Malay concept of paradise "is essentially the notion put forward by the teachings of Islam: the abode of the righteous in the Hereafter". When translating TPMs for a target audience of Malays, it is therefore crucial to understand that "[t]o the Malays 'paradise' is strictly a matter of the hereafter and the quest for an earthly paradise, which exists in modern Western society, does not exist in Malay culture".

With this kind of fundamental conceptual distinction in mind, several examples drawn from the corpus of texts translated from English into Malay to attract Malay tourists to Australian resorts (TT) are investigated. Sulaiman and Wilson's detailed sociolinguistic analysis convincingly demonstrates that the translated texts do quite the opposite. The language of these source-text-orientated translations, which attempt to convey the concept of an earthly paradise, simply does not work in Malay. Instead, such references can disturb and alienate Malay readers, creating an unintended cross-cultural "bump".

Emphasis on "everlasting sunshine", which is portrayed as a strong pull-factor in the destination image of the translated TPMs, has a similarly disturbing effect. When shown the TPMs, focus groups of Malay speakers (see p. 69) responded forcefully, "Malays do not sunbathe!". Respondents explained that Malay tourists generally want to escape the sun in search of cooler climates. The cultural-conceptual approach developed throughout Part II of the book thus requires translators to take account of different conceptualisations of nature, paradise and even sunshine. Similar points are made about the portrayal of Australian Cityscapes as "nightlife" venues for a kind of hedonistic over-indulgence which is alien and unattractive to the Malay audience. Here too, the original TPMs portrayed a destination image which probably seemed natural and broadly appealing to the Anglophone writers and commissioners of the texts (ST), but culturally significant concepts cannot be successfully transferred without reference to cultural differences. As is shown in the final chapters, this analysis effectively explains the intercultural dynamic not only to translators but also to the tourist authorities which commission translations of TPMs.

Chapter 7, "Translating Performancescapes: From Gazing to Doing", investigates how the TPMs suggest different types and levels of performance which may be required of people travelling to the Australian tourist destination. Once again, the cultural profiling step points to binary distinctions which add structural detail to the profile of potential tourists. For example, many of the source TPMs are aimed at tourists who are looking for active, participatory, adventure holidays: they are expected to take part, take risks, try new and sometimes dangerous activities. Adventure tourism is analysed into five subthemes of adventure: action, competence, freedom and independence, authentic strangerhood and risk (Fig. 7.1, p. 130). A fascinating analysis of the language used in the PTs, the Malay TPMs, discusses the concept of "debrayage", according to which the discourse of adventure tourism found in the STs, which appeals to the individual tourist's competitive sense of personal achievement, is shown to be objectified in the Malay PTs by "shifting out".

Since Malay tourists may find the adventure discourse with its emphasis on individual performance, risk and action excessively challenging or intimidating, the Malay TPMs shift the centre of attention away from individual performance towards a more relaxed distance: gazing in preference to doing. The frequent occurrence of imperative verbs in the STs, “catch a huge barramundi, ..., ride rolling surf, ... go mountain biking ...” (p. 131) is contrasted with the more detached language of the PTs in Malay. One example is back-translated as follows: “... also awaiting tourists are diving activities and the mental challenging activity of riding a 2.2 km line cable car which connects Teluk Burau and Gunung Mat Chinchang”. Malay tourists are thus not confronted with the challenge but invited to watch and take part if they wish. This approach can therefore be used in cultural-conceptual translation to “mitigate the directness” typical of these TPMs, adapting them to the culturally determined preferences of the target audience. Further examples of the Cultural-Conceptual Translation of Performancescapes demonstrate how TPMs originally designed with an individualistic, competitive, indulgence-oriented, and risk-oriented culture in mind can be “repackaged” in a collectivistic, family-friendly, novice-friendly, non-intimidating, relaxing and above all risk-free manner” (p. 151).

Having convinced the reader of the need for Cultural-Conceptual Translation in tourism, Chapter 8, *Translating Stylescapes: From Tourism to Anti-tourism*, provides detailed examples of just how translators can achieve the desired outcomes. Chapter 9 considers the application and evaluation of the CCT model in the industry with specific reference to a pilot project involving Australian translation commissioners. The final chapter sets out guidelines for best practice in the translation of TPMs.

In conclusion, the book deals robustly but fairly with the sometimes harsh commercial realities of the market for tourist products as well as the more nuanced intercultural aspirations of Translation and Interpreting Studies scholarship. Criticisms levelled against cultural profiling are addressed firmly by explaining and demonstrating what “judicious” use of potentially essentialist frames of reference amounts to in practice. Crucially, *Translation and tourism* shows how “judicious” cultural profiling can optimally enhance intercultural understanding of the communicative dynamics of the tourism industry by engaging decisively and appropriately with the role and full potential of translation theory and practice.

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