TRANSLATION IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism is one of the industries most needing translation, due to the diversity of the people, languages and cultures in contact with each other, and also the ever-increasing demands for localization of contents in multiple languages. Essentially, translation forms part of the effort to prepare each country for foreign tourists, who do not necessarily speak the local language, so these tourists can discover that country’s culture and what it has to offer visitors. This need to translate content related to travel, culture and tourism cuts across various formats - websites, catalogues, brochures, menus, flyers or signage, in the various business areas in which the tourist industry moves.

The work of translators is therefore fundamental for airports, hotels, restaurants, museums, tourist guides or tour operators, seeking the best way to communicate their services and meet the needs of tourists. Although English is, to a certain extent, a global language that facilitates interaction around the world - and possibly the most used in tourism translation, it is not always sufficient to cover possible communication failures between speakers of different languages. In North African countries, where French has historically more influence, or in the Orient, where local difficulties in speaking English may be greater, its use will not, for example, be as widespread as in Europe.

Tourists are also increasingly demanding when searching for information - preferably trustworthy and in their own language - driven by access to new technologies and widely available machine translation options on the internet. The great diversity of languages and this importance given to personalized translation has driven the market of content localization for tourists, which is still a relatively new challenge for the tourist business. Translation thus has a very important role to play in the development of international tourism and its growth in the economy of each country.

Tourism: challenges of translation in the sector

Translation has already become indispensable to the tourism industry. However, with the information that exists on the internet, in many different languages, translation agencies are not the only way to obtain such translations. This is because tourism translations are more than just knowing the source and target languages and the respective target audiences, they also have to take into account the specific and diversified terminology of each country, activity or topic of relevance to the visitor.

Specialization and professionalization are obligatory today for translators working for this sector within companies: not because of the technical requirements of translation, but primarily due to the type of language to use. A tourism translator has to show off a country through informal language that is accessible and understandable to all audiences, using simple and intuitive terms, and assuming that the visited locations are totally unknown to these audiences. Details are also very relevant for translators in the localization of language and other related elements, such as the currency exchange differences between countries. Accordingly, translation in the tourist industry is an absolute necessity for governments and businesses. The greater the professionalization and specialization of translators, the more effective is the communication with tourists.

Terminological translation mistakes in English

Here are a few examples of mistakes in translating tourism terms. Misinterpretation of the term family-owned as family-oriented results in receiving misleading information in the target text. The reader would receive implicit information that the establishment offers some kind of family-oriented services whereas the source text term implicates mostly the size of the hotel. Family-owned hotels are usually smaller, cozy and quiet establishments with few rooms. Misinterpretation of the term expert guided tour, i.e. lack of the adjective expert in the target text lessens the communicative effect on the reader. The source attribute expert adds to the feeling of respectfulness and confidence towards the tour leader.

Standardization of tourism terminology: motivation, benefits and limitations

The benefits of the standardization process can immediately be revealed through the higher quality of translation in the tourism industry. Standard terms can help translators recreate the communicative effect of a source text in a target text. There will be no need for clumsy glosses supposed to explain to a reader the exact concept of any tourist denotatum. Thus a higher level of precision can be achieved and all misunderstandings are avoided.

The term density of tourist texts increases with the degree of specialization of a text. A text used for professional communication between tourism specialists can be unintelligible for the common tourist. Thus, tourist texts with a high level of term density are neutralized when translating for the tourist, whereas professional-oriented target texts retain the high level of term density if compared to the source text. In general, therefore, it seems that the quality of tourism translation is largely influenced by the means of translating tourism terminology. Abbreviations in tourism texts and strategies for their translation also need to be considered. As translators, we need to contribute to the future process of
achieving generally accepted standards for using, creating and translating tourism terminology. The possibility of creating universal standards for forming a multilingual corpus in the field of specialized tourism discourse lies in the hands of future researchers into the subject.

Sources:
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