

Open to Meraviglia? Can Automated Translation Change Tourism Promotional Campaigns?

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Abstract

This work examines the translation of institutional digital communication for the “Open to Meraviglia” campaign to determine whether—and how—automated translation has been employed. We compare machine-generated outputs (from NMT and GenAI tools) with what are presumed to be human translations. Our analysis reveals that the presumed human translation closely mirrors the original Italian, without being adapted to the specific cultural or communicative context, or accounting for the promotional intent of the text. On both the website and Instagram, translation errors are present, suggesting that either no post-editing or proofreading was conducted, or that the use of fully automated machine translation—given the quality of the GenAI output—was inadequate.

Keywords: automated translation, generative artificial intelligence, tourism communication, ENIT campaign, translation error classification

1. Introduction

The 2023 international campaign by the Italian Tourism Ministry and ENIT, the Italian National Tourist Board, grabbed attention after coming under severe criticism from both the national and international press both for the marketing choices and the inaccurate translation into English and German. The campaign, entitled “Open to Meraviglia,” chose as (brand) ambassador a digital rendition of Sandro Botticelli’s Venus—as painted in his masterpiece *The Birth of Venus*—appearing in many famous Italian tourist locations such as, for example, San Marco Square in Venice. The aim of this essay is to critically analyze English translations in online institutional communication—specifically on websites and social media platforms such as Instagram—in order to examine how, and to what extent, neural machine translation (hereafter NMT) and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT, influence tourism promotional campaigns across languages. The research is part of a larger project on tourism communication and translation entitled “Dietaly tourism communication in Emilia Romagna 1960–2023,” funded by the Italian Ministry of Education and Research. The research objective of the overall study is to analyze how tourism promotion in English has evolved over the past few decades, a period marked by significant changes not only in what is offered to tourists, but also in the growing awareness of translation as a key factor in tourism communication. English is de facto the global language of tourism, a language that can meet the linguistic requirements of many users, not only English native speakers. Our interest in the last ENIT campaign is based on three main factors: 1) the enormous echo of this campaign in international media (partly based on its incorrect translations into English and German); 2) a stereotyped representation of the destination of “Italy” for international tourists; 3) the possibility of using of NMT and GenAI tools for writing and translating texts as useful aids for first drafts that nevertheless require revision or post-editing by editors and translators, respectively.

The “Italy: Open to Meraviglia” campaign began in April 2023 and is still ongoing; it was presented worldwide in different media and various textual typologies, billboards, websites, and social media. Focusing on a specific geographic area, Emilia Romagna, and on the city of Ferrara, we will analyze sections of the website and of the Instagram account comparing translations from Italian into English, whose poor quality leads us to believe that we are dealing with fully automated translations and the absence of human post-editing.

2. The “Italy: Open to Meraviglia” Campaign

Since its launch, the campaign has received widespread coverage in the Italian and international media (Montagnoli, 2023; Reuters, 2023; Provoledo, 2023; Scalisi, 2023; Syed, 2023) for various reasons:

- 1) strong criticism of the use of Botticelli's Venus, which is seen as an embarrassing caricature, combined with the unprofessional design of the campaign itself;
- 2) a series of unscrupulous oversights like, for example, forgetting to register the social account *venereitalia23* or the web domain *opentomeraviglia.it*, which reveals a major inaccuracy in building the campaign;
- 3) incredible errors in translation from Italian into English and German, like, for example, the translation of place names (Brindisi became "toast" in English, Fermo was translated into German as "Stillstand" and Camerino as "Garderobe," just to name a few examples where place names were literally translated without checking or revising such trivial mistakes); in fact, the Italian translators' association responded publicly to the inaccuracies of the translations;
- 4) mistakes with historical and geographical facts;
- 5) the insertion of photos related to other cities and locations than those the described in the text ;
- 6) campaign video filmed in Slovenia (obviously not authentically Italian);
- 7) the cost of the campaign of around nine million euros.

The campaign was designed for 33 key markets, a very wide and varied audience. The campaign was thus envisioned for many different types of tourists and travelers; both domestic and international, varying in age, sex, class, ethnicity and regarding their choice of travelling the world with organized mass tourism or as individual tourists. However, because of the choice of the Venus influencer and because of a major emphasis given to images rather than to written texts, the campaign seems to target a younger generation of tourists. The attractiveness of Italy as a destination is based on many factors, such as natural or man-made attractions, climate, health and political ties, costs, hospitality and transportation. Italy certainly is, for its natural and cultural beauties, easy to sell. However, as the volume by Smith, McKeod and Robertson demonstrates, advertising in tourism is central for effective tourism communication (Smith, McLeod, & Robertson, 2010); it is a key marketing tool in tourism industries and cannot be underestimated. How tourist texts are written and translated worldwide is of extreme importance, and to cater for an international audience of various nationalities and cultural backgrounds, tourist texts should take into account market variants in which translation practices play a key role.

The structure of the campaign is simple; it is based on major Italian landmarks and narrated through stereotypes and symbols. As Palmer has outlined, a recurrent theme in destination marketing is national identity, for example, which is emphasized through the use of symbols and signs that help consumers form an image of a nation (see Palmer, 1999). The digital Venus is seen eating one of Italy's most famous dishes—a pizza, near Lake Como. The pizza is a Margherita, with its toppings that represent the colors of the Italian flag, a recurrent symbol in many images (the protagonist is seen wearing a bracelet representing the flag, as well as a ribbon in her hair). Symbols related to Italy and Italian culture are thus used and simplified for international tourists that can immediately recognize them and find a promotional message they are expecting. We know that before tourists travel to a place they begin to build an image of their chosen destination (see Buhalis, 2000). Symbols are also used in order to create an image of an authentic destination, as if authenticity were given by well-known information shared prior to a trip. Here, we use the term "authenticity" to refer to a predefined idea that a tourist possesses before visiting a destination, which has been acquired through other cultural products (movies, books, paintings). However, we are aware that the term itself is wider and has been analyzed from various standpoints (see for example, Rickly, & Vidon, 2018).

Because of the clamor around the campaign in the media, the agency which created the campaign, one of the major advertising agencies in Italy, published an advertisement in the principal newspapers replying to all the accusations. The text was entitled "Open to grazie" (Open to Thank You) and contained a series of assertive statements about the reasons for their marketing choices. Essentially, they did not acknowledge the blatant mistakes and outlined how the controversial debate which took place was a positive, rather than a negative, outcome (Montagnoli, 2023). There was such a turmoil around the campaign that there was an investigation at the Court of Auditors for revenue loss. As a consequence, both the website and the Instagram account were paused for two months in the summer of 2023.

While in the tourism sector translation is of the utmost importance, the translation of tourist texts is not always considered to be of primary importance within the wide range of tourism activities. As Kelly underlines, the quality of the source text is also an issue because "it is true that the many tourist texts are not particularly well written from the point of view of the function they should fulfill: many of them make very mistaken assumptions about their readers' knowledge" (Kelly, 1997, p. 36). First of all, translating tourist texts is not as easy as it may apparently seem (Merkaj, 2013); it means reading between cultural references in a text and balancing what we

expect to find in the representation of a specific destination as readers and what is actually presented to us. Tourist texts describe and inform the reader about places and cultures they do not know, and the main difficulty is to introduce a reality, whether it be a city, a country, a type of food or local habits, to a person who lives in a very different place and probably has very little knowledge of the destination.

3. Research Questions

Tourism texts are deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts and often present destinations in culturally specific ways. Considering that our aim is to critically analyze the English-language institutional digital communication of the Italian Ministry of Tourism in order to examine whether, and how, NMT and GenAI tools were used for translation, the following research questions—which guided our investigation—will be addressed in this paper:

- 1) Are the translations provided in the institutional promotional texts appropriately adapted to the communicative aims of the overall campaign?
- 2) Can we identify whether NMT tools and LLMs were used in the translation of this campaign, and if so, how?
- 3) What differences—if any—emerge between translations produced with DeepL and those generated with ChatGPT?
- 4) To what extent can tools such as ChatGPT and DeepL effectively translate tourism texts without human post-editing?
- 5) How useful is automated translation for tourism texts, and in what ways can it contribute to their effectiveness?

4. The Language of Tourism, Stereotypes and Translations

Due to the intangible nature of the tourism experience, signs and symbols assume a decisive importance for both hosts and guests. From souvenirs to photographs taken of tourist sites to travel brochures and advertisements, tourism presents plenty of signs and symbols. Berger regards tourism symbols and activities as “camouflaged myths and rituals” (2004, p. 6), oversimplifications of desires and myths that reach the masses in filtered form, via a number of cultural outlets for which the tourist ends up consuming a “universe of signs” (Berger, 2004, p. 33). The sign provides information about the sight and it is the first contact that a sightseer has with this particular destination; as a marker, the sign is a symbol and stands for the represented object conveying a specific message to the would-be tourist. Clearly the visual choices of the campaign started from this standpoint, but they undervalued the importance of the verbal text, or at least of the translations into English.

We know that the language of tourism is characterized by syntactic, lexical and grammatical features which make it distinct from any other language for special purposes. This is mainly due to the two main functions, the informative and the persuasive function, which the touristic discourse fulfills. Many scholars underlined the use of emphatic language through the insertion of figurative and idiomatic expressions together with rhetorical figures, the particular use of mood and verb tenses, the clause structures that make texts informative and persuasive (Katan, 2020; Dann, 2012; Manca, 2012, 2016; Fodde & Denti, 2012; Federici, 2007, 2018; Cappelli, 2006; Dann, 1996). Because of its syntactic and lexical characteristics, the translation of tourism texts requires particular skills. In the translation of a tourist text, the translator should first identify a structural level at which the reader recognizes a textual typology and certain rhetorical strategies. Next, they should consider a textual level where specific linguistic features are utilized, and finally, a lexico-grammar level which shapes the register and style (the use of superlatives, laudatory lexis, anaphoric syntactic structures). Generally speaking, we can consider four different phases in translating a tourist text: first, a bottom-up text analysis where the source text (ST) needs to be analyzed and fully understood; second, a contrastive analysis in which linguistic and cultural features and knowledge systems are compared for translation purposes; third, a reformulation in which the target text (TT) is produced and the ST reformulated; and fourth, a revision and post-editing of the translation. The translator reads and interprets the text as a socio-cultural product constructed through a specific culturally-bound view. In translation, textual cohesion is achieved through a deliberate syntactic and morphologic structure, conjunctions to link passages, anaphoric and cataphoric references, and deictic elements aligned with the chosen topic. All of these work together with coherence—that is to say, the logical links perceptible in the text and the recipient’s ability to make sense of the information presented. The translator knows that textual properties point out social practices and different ways of perceiving various aspects of the world. Due to the poor quality of text in the “Italy: Open to Meraviglia” campaign, it seems that there was little or no revision and post-editing.

5. Methodology

This project was conducted from a critical, exploratory and comparative perspective. The methodology adopted

for this project lies within the framework of multimodal discourse analysis, henceforth MDS (as discussed in Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010), with a focus on translation studies (Pym, 1992, 2023), specifically for tourism discourse (Federici, 2018; Katan, 2020). As we analyzed a promotional campaign on a website and on social media (Instagram), we approached language from a multimodal perspective. As a matter of fact, we aimed “at examining the distinct potential for meaning of each semiotic mode (image, gesture, speech, architecture) involved in a communicative artifact or event” (Caple, 2018, p. 85). According to Van Leeuwen, “many forms of contemporary written language cannot be adequately understood unless we look not just at language, but also at images, layout, typography and colour” (Van Leeuwen, 2011, p. 668). As for our analysis, we considered each text under study (both from the website and Instagram account) as a combination of two or more semiotic modes, specifically language and image. Each semiotic mode is intended as a meaning-making system. However, for this paper, we especially focused on the textual level.

In addition, since the main focus of this paper was on English translations of the Italian source texts, we adopted a critical perspective to determine the quality of the translations and establish whether automated translation was employed. There are traditionally four types of translation methods (Hutchins & Somers, 1992; Stahlberg, 2019; Rothwell et al., 2023): a) human translation (HT); b) fully automated machine translation (FAMT); c) machine-assisted human translation (MAHT); d) human-assisted machine translation (HAMT). As regards this paper, we provided qualitative evaluations of the source texts (ST). In keeping with Hutchins and Somers (1992, p. 163), we distinguish between two types of assessment for automated translation. On the one hand, there is the glass-box evaluation, enacted by those researchers with access to all the workings of the system. On the other hand, the black-box evaluation is performed by those researchers who can work only with input texts and output texts. In this sense, we carried out a black-box evaluation as we studied the output, namely the translated text.

For this case study, the analysis involved three steps. At first, we collected two different samples regarding the online touristic communication enacted by ENIT in order to investigate the aforementioned research questions. We saved and stored a sample of four pages from the website and we collected 10 Instagram posts. Secondly, we performed a quality assessment of the English translation for each sampled text. Following Hutchins and Somers (1992, p. 163), there are three main tests for the quality of the translation:

- Accuracy—Does the TT contain the same information as the ST?
- Clarity—Is the TT understandable to a reader?
- Style—Does the TT contain proper linguistic choices?

We then distinguish between objective (as discussed in Jiao et al., 2023) and subjective measurements for these tests. Given the exploratory nature of this paper and the size of the dataset, we only performed subjective measurement by relying on our expertise as linguists and translators.

Lastly, we tested whether automated translation had been used by comparing the published English texts with translations produced by two AI-based translation tools: the NMT system DeepL (DeepL, 2024) and the LLM ChatGPT 3.5 (OpenAI, 2024). Specifically for the Instagram account analysis, we then compared the linguistic choices found in the translations with data drawn from both parallel and general corpora.

6. Analysis

6.1 Website Analysis

Our analysis of the official website for the “Italia. Open to Meraviglia” campaign will focus on the region of Emilia Romagna and specifically on the city of Ferrara. The website has been translated into only two languages, English and Spanish. A first glance at the website reveals that it is made up of sections already published on other institutional websites, such as the Emilia Romagna tourism website and the city of Ferrara website. Due to the fact that Italy in general, and Emilia Romagna in particular, are perceived as “must see” destinations, the website is built with many links and sections which focus on many aspects that can be interesting for tourists, from historical explanations to itineraries for different tourist typologies and curiosities about people and places.

We will present an example comparing the source text and the target text and outlining the major issues concerning a possible automated translation. In order to analyze the texts, we have translated the Italian text into English with DeepL and ChatGPT.

Table 1. Comparison of ST, TT and two FAMT of the website

ST	TT	DeepL	ChatGPT
Piccola città gioiello della pianura emiliana, Ferrara custodisce meraviglie storiche e artistiche in un ambiente urbano rilassante. Tutto il fascino di una capitale del lontano passato, un concentrato di bellezze create a cavallo fra il Medioevo e il Rinascimento. A Ferrara potrai fare un autentico viaggio a ritroso nel tempo esplorando il borgo antico a piedi o in bicicletta, il mezzo più amato dai ferraresi. Non trascurare i piatti della cucina tradizionale che definire golosa è poco.	A small jewel of the Emilia-Romagna plain, Ferrara hosts historical and artistic wonders in a relaxing urban environment. With all the charm of a capital from the distant past, it offers boundless beauty that straddles the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Ferrara lets you take an authentic journey back in time, exploring the old town on foot or by bicycle—the locals' favourite means of transport. Not forgetting the traditional cuisine—to call it mouth-watering is an understatement!	A small jewel of a city on the plains of Emilia, Ferrara holds historical and artistic wonders in a relaxed urban setting. All the charm of a capital of the distant past, a concentration of beauty created at the turn of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In Ferrara, you can take an authentic trip back in time by exploring the ancient town on foot or by bicycle, the Ferrara people's most beloved means of transport. Don't overlook the dishes of traditional cuisine that to call mouthwatering is an understatement.	A small jewel of a city on the plains of Emilia, Ferrara is home to historical and artistic wonders in a relaxed urban setting. It exudes the charm of a capital from a bygone era, with a concentration of beauty that emerged during the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. In Ferrara, you can embark on an authentic journey back in time by exploring the ancient town on foot or by bicycle, the favored means of transport for the people of Ferrara. Be sure not to miss the traditional cuisine, which calling mouthwatering is an understatement.

The official translation of this text reveals some errors, the most major of which is in the clause “it offers boundless beauty that straddles the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,” in which the verb “straddle” is used incorrectly. It would have been more adequate to use an expression such as “at the crossroads of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance” because “straddle” refers to horses and cannot be utilized to create a metaphor that is equivalent to the one used in the source text, while the expression “at the crossroads” is the correct translation of source text meaning. Similarly, in the sentence that starts with “Not forgetting the traditional cuisine,” the verb form “Not to forget” would have been preferable, or tourists could have been addressed directly with an expression like “Don't forget to”. The chosen option is ungrammatical. The best choice for the previous sentence “un autentico viaggio a ritroso nel tempo” is the ChatGPT translation “you can embark on an authentic journey back in time” since it maintains the idea of the travel. A look at the automatically translated texts reveals literal translations, sometimes without an accurate revision of the terminology and the meaning of words. When compared with the other two texts, the translation of the entire text with ChatGPT quite interestingly seems to better mirror the expressions and emphatic language of tourism communication. If it is not possible to affirm with certainty that MT tools have been used for the TT translation, the inaccuracy of some choices reveal a lack of text revision. Looking at the DeepL and ChatGPT versions, it is clear that the use of these tools can be time saving for the translator but requires post-editing, otherwise grammar errors and mistranslations can be found in texts together with linguistic choices that are not stylistically appropriate. The text can be readable and understandable but not correct from a lexical and cultural point of view. If we look at the example, the TT is probably the result of a translation done through the aid of MT translation but without an accurate post-editing necessary to check mistakes and to evaluate the efficacy of the communication. In a tourist text the lack of a persuasive and emphatic language means a lack of communication. This inaccuracy in the translation of cultural bound terms is clearer if we look at the following section of the website where the focus is on food:

Table 2. Comparison of ST and TT

ST	TT	DeepL	ChatGPT
Questa è anche l'occasione ghiotta per gustare alcune ricette tipiche della tradizione del Carnevale, periodo in cui ci si concedeva piatti sostanziosi prima della Quaresima. Oltre ai tipici lupini ferraresi, che sono tortelli fritti nell'olio, e ai crostoli, simili alle chiacchiere e alle frappe, varrebbe la pena assaggiare il leggendario pasticcio di maccheroni, un piatto elaboratissimo. Rispetto ai lussuosi banchetti rinascimentali ha subito qualche variante: l'attuale ricetta prevede un involucri esterno di pasta frolla, un ripieno di maccheroncini e il condimento interno fatto di besciamella, ragù bianco di carne, tartufi e funghi.	This is also a tempting opportunity to sample some typical recipes from the Carnival tradition, a period when people indulged in hearty dishes before Lent. In addition to the typical Ferrara lupini, which are tortelli fried in oil, and crostoli, similar to Mardi Gras fritters and frappès, the legendary macaroni pie, an elaborate dish, is also worth tasting. Compared to the luxurious Renaissance banquets, it has had a few variations: the current recipe has an outer shell of shortcrust pastry, a filling of macaroni and the inner sauce made of béchamel, white meat ragù, truffles and mushrooms.	This is also a mouthwatering opportunity to taste some typical recipes from the Carnival tradition, a period when people indulged in hearty dishes before Lent. In addition to the typical Ferrara lupini, which are tortelli fried in oil, and crostoli, similar to chiacchiere and frappe, the legendary macaroni pie, an elaborate dish, would be worth tasting. Compared to the luxurious Renaissance banquets, it has undergone a few variations: the current recipe calls for an outer shell of shortcrust pastry, a filling of maccheroncini and the inner sauce made of béchamel sauce, white meat sauce, truffles and mushrooms.	This is also a great opportunity to enjoy some traditional Carnival recipes, a time of year when people would indulge in hearty dishes before Lent. In addition to the typical lupini ferraresi, which are fried tortelli, and crostoli, similar to chiacchiere and frappe, it's worth tasting the legendary macaroni pie, an extremely elaborate dish. Compared to the luxurious Renaissance banquets, it has undergone a few changes: the current recipe includes an outer shell of shortcrust pastry, a filling of small macaroni, and an internal seasoning made of béchamel, white meat ragù, truffles, and mushrooms.

The TT offers a very similar version of translations with DeepL and ChatGPT which misses one important factor: a post-editing revision which ensures that any references to cultural bound terms has been checked and adapted to the TT. If the first sentence of this paragraph is understandable in English, the following sentences characterized by food terms seem to have been translated without any revision, as for example, the term “frappè” (which means milk-shake—and not a fried sweet) demonstrates. We know that food terms are untranslatable and that they need to be left in the source language adding authenticity and an exotic flavour to the tourist text, however they need to be explained with additional information which can further persuade the would-be tourist to choose the destination.

6.2 Instagram Analysis

The advertising campaign has also made its presence felt on Instagram by opening an account under the name of Venere Italia. The strategy entails integrating Botticelli's Venus, an emblem of the Italian Renaissance, into the foremost tourist attractions across Italy. According to this strategy, Venus becomes a virtual content creator and (brand) ambassador. Each post is bilingual, and the English version comes first. As of the time of writing this work, the Instagram account has 243,000 followers and it follows 3 accounts: ENIT (<https://www.instagram.com/enit.it/>), the Italian Ministry of Tourism (<https://www.instagram.com/ministeroturismo/>) and Italia.it (<https://www.instagram.com/italiait/>), the official account for tourism in Italy. At first glance, the account seems to merely represent a tool for promotion on the Internet, which just reports pieces of information about Italy and is not used creatively.

As previously performed for the website, an example will be presented in which we compare the source text and the target text, outlining the major issues related to potential MT. In order to test the quality of the English translation, we compared the target text with the translations performed by DeepL and ChatGPT 3.5.

Table 3. Comparison of ST, TT and two FAMT as regards Instagram

<i>ST</i>	<i>TT</i>	<i>DeepL</i>	<i>ChatGPT</i>
A Bologna la bici è regina! Volevo raccontarvi della mia recente esperienza in questa città che mi ha davvero conquistata. Sapevate che è un luogo perfetto da girare in bicicletta? Piste ciclabili immerse nel verde, strade poco trafficate e un centro storico compatto la rendono ideale per gli amanti delle due ruote.	In Bologna, the bike is a queen! I wanted to tell you about my recent experience in this city that really won me over. Did you know that it is a perfect place to ride a bike? Cycle paths surrounded by greenery, roads with little traffic and a compact historic centre make it ideal for two-wheelers.	In Bologna, the bike is queen! I wanted to tell you about my recent experience in this city that really won me over. Did you know that it is a perfect place to ride a bike? Cycle paths surrounded by greenery, roads with little traffic and a compact historic centre make it ideal for two-wheelers.	In Bologna, the bicycle reigns supreme! I wanted to tell you about my recent experience in this city that truly won me over. Did you know it's a perfect place to explore by bike? Cycle paths immersed in greenery, lightly trafficked streets, and a compact historic center make it ideal for cycling enthusiasts.

The analysis of example 3 (Table 3) reveals that, despite the TT being *accurate* and *clear* in conveying the information of the ST, there are still some *stylistic* choices made by the presumed translator which should be critically analyzed on the basis that we are dealing with an informative text aimed at touristic promotion, not just an informative text. It appears that the translator produced an overly literal translation (TT) which mirrors the Italian original and which was not adapted to the social media context and to the touristic promotional intent. Also, there is one case when the translator has failed in providing the correct translation. Moreover, when comparing the two FAMT translations, the DeepL version unexpectedly closely resembles the TT, whereas the ChatGPT version presents different translation choices, which seem more suitable for that communicative context.

Firstly, the sentence ‘*A Bologna la bici è regina!*’, which includes the metaphorical expression ‘*bici è regina*’, has been translated literally in both the TT and the DeepL translation. In contrast, ChatGPT reformulates the sentence: the subject *bicycle* is no longer modified by the nominal predicate *be + queen*; instead, the mapping BIKE IS QUEEN is directly conveyed through the verb *to reign* combined with the adverb *supreme*. This translation alters and simplifies the syntactic structure by replacing the nominal predicate with a simple predicate, aiming to enhance the sentence’s effectiveness for touristic promotion.

The translation of the verbal phrase ‘*girare in bicicletta*’, rendered as ‘*ride a bike*’ in both the TT and DeepL versions, has been improved by ChatGPT as ‘*explore by bike*’. While the TT and DeepL translations are correct—as confirmed by an analysis of two parallel corpora, OPUS (Note 1) and Intercorp (Note 2), where *ride* was found to be the sole translation—the translators do not appear to have considered the communicative purpose of the text. In fact, ChatGPT’s choice of *explore* evokes a sense of discovery and adventure, a concept that aligns more effectively with the promotional nature of a touristic text than the verb *ride*.

The noun phrase “roads with little traffic” is again correctly translating the Italian ST but it too closely resembles the Italian noun phrase structure. The phrase “lightly trafficked streets” seems more suitable for the communicative context and aim. This was confirmed also by the investigation of the distribution of these structures on SketchEngine, and we found that the expression “trafficked + street OR road” is significantly more frequent than street OR road + little traffic, respectively 778 vs 313 in EnTenTen21 corpus (Jakubiček et al., 2013) and 17 vs 3 in the Sibol Corpus (Note 3).

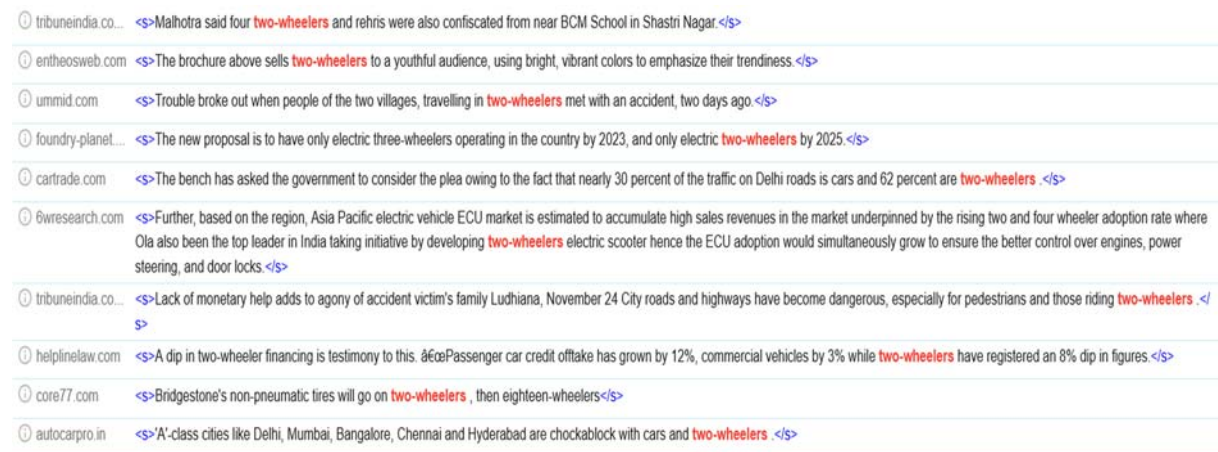


Figure 1. GDEX tool showing 10 examples of the use of the noun phrase “two-wheelers” in context

Lastly, the translation of *‘amanti delle due ruote’* is particularly noteworthy. As shown in Table 3, the phrase has been incorrectly translated as *‘two-wheelers’*, which generally refers to “a vehicle, especially a bicycle, having two wheels” (Collins, 2025). In contrast, the correct translation would have been ChatGPT’s *‘cycling enthusiasts’*, which also captures the emotional nuance conveyed by *‘amanti’*. To further verify the precise meaning of *‘two-wheelers’*, we conducted a corpus investigation using the GDEX tool on SketchEngine (*Good Dictionary EXamples*), a system designed to evaluate sentences based on their suitability as dictionary examples. As demonstrated in Figure 1, our search confirmed that the primary definition of *‘two-wheelers’* applies to vehicles rather than people.

The Instagram analysis has shown that the TT lacks professional handling and that the presumed translator failed to consider the communicative aim as well as specific translation tasks. For instance, the TT includes mistranslations (e.g., ‘two-wheelers’ instead of ‘cycling enthusiasts’) and overly literal translation choices (e.g., ‘roads with little traffic’ instead of ‘lightly trafficked streets’). Additionally, this finding also raises the question of whether a human translator or proofreader was involved in managing the translation of the post. Due to space limitations, we have presented only one example here. However, as this analysis demonstrates, the TT exhibits similar inaccurate stylistic features and ambiguously unclear translations, which may suggest that no professional human translator or proofreader was engaged. Furthermore, this argument is reinforced by the striking similarity between the TT and the DeepL FAMT output, which may indicate that this tool itself was used for the translation. This is further supported by the finding that ChatGPT outperforms DeepL, aligning with Jiao et al. (2023), who state that translations produced by LLMs tend to be more appealing than those generated by NMT systems.

7. Conclusive Remarks and Further Research

This work has examined the translation of institutional digital communication for the campaign “Open to Meraviglia” in order to determine whether, and how, automated translation has been employed.

As discussed in the analysis sections, the poor quality of the translations—at stylistic, syntactic, and lexical levels—suggests that a significant portion of the content may have been produced without any evidence of proofreading or post-editing and the promotional texts have not been adapted to the communicative aims of the overall campaign. The message conveyed by the translations under analysis is clear, but it seems that no effort has been made to make it linguistically engaging, as it closely mirrors the original Italian version, without any consideration of the target language and its cultural background. In several cases, the presumed human translations closely resemble machine-generated output or contain grammar and lexical errors, calling into question the extent of human involvement in the process.

With regard to the comparison with fully automated machine translation (FAMT), there are strong similarities between the English version published on the website and on Instagram and the translations produced by DeepL, while ChatGPT 3.5 generated a more refined version of the text. This finding partially aligns with the results of Jiao et al. (2023), which demonstrated ChatGPT’s superior performance compared to other commercial translation tools. Although we cannot definitively conclude that FAMT was employed, the close resemblance between the target text and the DeepL translation suggests that DeepL may have been used without any subsequent proofreading or post-editing—especially when contrasted with the higher quality of the ChatGPT output.

Considering that our dataset was size-limited and that the website was visible only for a certain amount of time, further research could expand the analysis to a larger dataset and to the new and revised version of the website. In so doing, it would be possible to enhance the comparison by employing both objective and quantitative assessment criteria, as in Freitas and Liu (2017) and Jiao et al. (2023), or by focusing on the design of translation prompts, as in Gao, Wang and Hou (2023). Additionally, it would be beneficial to conduct the analysis at a discursive level, considering discourse coherence and cohesion, as in Lee (2023).

Although this research is still in progress, it contributes an additional layer of reflection on the role of translation in tourism communication. This case study has shown, for example, that AI-based fully automated machine translation (AI-FAMT) performs noticeably better than conventional neural machine translation models. Nonetheless, there remains room for improvement in AI-FAMT outputs. Crucially, human proofreading or post-editing remains necessary—particularly in the context of tourism communication, where linguistic nuance and cultural sensitivity are essential.

Echoing what Lee (2024, p. 18) described as ‘the posthumanism turn,’ we believe that the role and capabilities of future translators will increasingly be assessed based on their use and management of AI-based technologies, as well as their ability to understand the communicative context during the post-editing phase. In other words, future translators will need to learn how to actively interact and ‘speak’ directly with AI tools to achieve a common goal: producing high-quality translations.

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Notes

Note 1. The Opus Parallel Corpus is a set of text corpora with aligned sentences which allow searching and analysing translations between a total of 40 languages. A list of the sources from which these corpora have been taken can be found here <https://www.sketchengine.eu/opus-parallel-corpora/> (Last visited on 10th March 2025). The Italian and English corpora have been consulted through SketchEngine (<https://app.sketchengine.eu/>).

Note 2. Intercorp consists of a set of parallel corpora of over 40 languages. More informations can be found at this link <https://wiki.korpus.cz/doku.php/en:cnk:intercorp> (Last visited onn10th March 2025). The Italian and English corpora have been consulted through Kontext (<https://www.korpus.cz>)

Note 3. The English language newspapers corpus (SiBol) is an English corpus made up of articles collected from various English language newspapers of the years 1993–2021. More info can be found at <https://www.sketchengine.eu/sibol-corpus/#toggle-id-3-closed> (Last visited onn10th March 2025)

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