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Mapping the Interface Between Translation Studies and Imagology: A Bibliographic Review, 1940–2025

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Abstract: This paper provides a mapping of research development in the cross-field area between Translation Studies (TS) and national image studies. To navigate the field's terminological spread, the article adopts the National Image Cluster (NIC) as an operational umbrella for recurring constructs (national image, national identity, national character), together with related discursive codings including stereotype and cliché. The study uses *BITRA* to build a two-part corpus: the baseline corpus (1940–2019, N = 502) and the update corpus (2020–2025, N = 151), obtaining 653 records overall. The article is methodologically based on descriptive bibliometric analysis and lightweight text analysis to investigate the growth of publications, document type, recurrent outlet, author prominence, and thematic tendencies. The findings depict an evolution from marginality (pre-1980), to expansion (1980s–1990s), and then to heightened visibility (2000s onward). The primary source of publication is journal articles, though a substantial contribution is also made by edited-volume chapters, books and doctoral dissertations. The clustering analysis suggests that literary and cultural translation continues as the longest-lasting research area, whereas journalism/media translation and audiovisual/multimodal translation constitute important parallel tracks. The 2020–The 2020–2025 update indicates that the thematic core remains stable rather than disrupted: representation, identity, and stereotyping continue as central concerns, yet their articulation increasingly foregrounds digital circulation, platforms, and other contemporary media settings. The 2025 update indicates that the thematic core remains stable rather than disrupted: representation, identity, and stereotyping continue as central concerns, yet their articulation increasingly foregrounds digital circulation, platforms, and other contemporary media settings. The article's point is that bibliometric evidence is good for mapping scholarly attention, but it cannot by itself demonstrate a causal effect of translation on public perceptions. The conclusion is that this line of work has settled into an enduring and increasingly differentiated part of TS, and it opens up a platform for further exchange with Imagology, media studies, and reception-oriented research.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Imagology, Bibliometric Review, National Image, National Identity, *BITRA*.

1. Introduction

National images can be understood as representations of a country and its people that circulate widely in society. Their importance in cross-border communication is that they affect how nations are perceived, valued, and positioned by external publics and institutions. For that reason, the concept is frequently discussed in relation to soft power, including in tourism, education, diplomacy, and international politics (Tapachai & Waryszak 2000; Gilboa 2008; Gertner 2010). Situated within this communicative environment, translation and interpreting go beyond word transfer across languages. They help relay narratives about nations, re-frame them, and, at times, recalibrate them for new audiences.

This representational aspect has been long accepted in Translation Studies (TS). A large amount of literature established that translation helps in the creation, distribution, and modification of cultural images, including images of national selfhood and foreign others. Kuran-Burçoğlu (1998) shows, through historical analysis, that translation choices, selection practices, and cultural transfer may be entangled with prestige relations and ideological aspirations in specific national contexts. Later research has applied these questions across varied domains, including literary circulation, journalism and media translation, institutional communication, tourism discourse, and audiovisual



translation. In these fields, scholars have investigated the ways translated discourse contributes to framing and valuation, shapes reception, and becomes entangled in wider representational politics.

Even so, this line of research remains difficult to consolidate as a clearly bounded area of inquiry. One reason is dispersion: relevant studies are scattered across TS subfields that do not always engage one another directly, such as literary translation, news translation, audiovisual translation, translation policy, and reception studies. A second reason is terminological instability. Researchers variously use labels such as national image, national identity, national character, stereotype, and cliché; sometimes these are carefully distinguished, but sometimes they overlap or are used with different analytical scope. A third difficulty is that the literature has grown enough to make it hard to see the field in aggregate: which outlets structure the discussion, which publication formats predominate, which topical domains recur most consistently, and whether the post-2019 literature extends earlier patterns or marks new directions. Recent work at the intersection of TS, imagology, and reception research points both to renewed interest in this area and to the absence of a settled conceptual vocabulary (Snauwaert 2021; Delabastita & Gonne 2021; van Doorslaer 2022).

These conditions point to a specific research gap. What is still missing is a longitudinal overview of how TS has organized and developed research on translation/interpreting in relation to national representation. A bibliometric review is appropriate here because the problem is one of mapping the research record rather than measuring audience effects. Such an approach can show when this topic becomes more visible, which formats and venues have carried it, and which conceptual and thematic patterns recur across time. At the same time, bibliometric evidence primarily supports claims about the structure and evolution of research attention, not direct causal claims about translation's real-world effects on public perceptions of nations. Accordingly, this study does not attempt to measure national image formation empirically among audiences, readers, or media users. Rather, it examines how TS scholarship has conceptualized and investigated translation/interpreting in relation to national-image-related constructs across decades.

To address the problem of conceptual dispersion while maintaining analytical precision, this study adopts the term National Image Cluster (NIC). NIC is used here as an umbrella label for a family of interrelated constructs through which national representation is described, most centrally national image, national identity, national character, and discursive codings such as stereotypes, clichés, and prejudices. In this article, ITNIC refers to the TS research corpus in which translation and/or interpreting is discussed in explicit connection with at least one NIC construct. The term is therefore used as an operational label for corpus construction and analysis, not as a claim that bibliometric mapping can measure the "impact" of translation/interpreting on national image in any direct causal sense.

Using the *BITRA* (*Bibliography of Interpreting and Translation*) database, this study compiles a screened corpus of publications that explicitly connect translation/interpreting with NIC-related terms for the baseline period 1940–2019, and supplements it with an update corpus for 2020–2025 in order to assess whether earlier patterns remain stable in the most recent scholarship. Against this background, the study addresses the following research questions:

(RQ1) How has TS research connecting translation/interpreting to NIC constructs evolved over time in publication volume?

(RQ2) What are the dominant publication formats (articles, chapters, books, dissertations) and main outlets (journals/publishers) in this field?

(RQ3) Which NIC constructs and topical domains (e.g., literature, journalism/media, audiovisual translation, policy/institutions) recur most strongly in titles/keywords over time?

(RQ4) Which theoretical and methodological emphases characterize the mapped literature, and how do they shift across periods?

(RQ5) What continuities and emerging emphases become visible in the post-2019 update (2020–2025)?

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 elucidates the NIC framework and demonstrates how it was used to inform the *BITRA* search strategy and screening decisions. Section 3 presents the bibliometric findings, such as increasing volumes of publications, types of documents, outlets, constructs related to



NIC, and topical trends and makes comparisons of the corpus base with the 2020–2025 update. Section 4 examines the findings through the lens of debates in TS, imagology, and related fields, noting continuities, recent developments, and areas where the literature remains incomplete. Section 5 brings the article to a close by recapping the main contributions, acknowledging limitations, and setting out directions for future inquiry.

2. Research Design

2.1 Conceptual Framework and Operationalization of the National Image Cluster (NIC)

In TS, discussions of national representation draw on multiple related, though non-identical, concepts, including national image, national identity, national character, stereotype, cliché, and prejudice. Such labels are frequently used interchangeably in the literature; however, they are used to denote different dimensions of analysis. In this article, national image refers to a cognitive representation of a country and its people (Kunczik 1997); national identity denotes a relatively stable framework of collective identification and belief (Leerssen 2006); and national character refers to attributed moral, behavioral, or motivational qualities associated with a national group (Beler & Leerssen, 2007). At the level of discourse, such representations are frequently articulated through clichés, stereotypes, and prejudices, whose rhetorical force and evaluative charge may vary.

To address these related but distinct constructs within a single analytical framework, this study uses the umbrella term National Image Cluster(NIC). NIC refers to the family of concepts through which national representation is articulated in cross-cultural discourse, including (i) core representational anchors (image, identity, character) and (ii) discursive codings (stereotype, cliché, prejudice), while also allowing for the coexistence of contradictory or competing counter-images within the same discourse tradition (Beler & Leerssen, 2007).

For corpus construction, NIC was operationalized as both a retrieval framework and a coding framework. A *BITRA* record was considered eligible when its title, abstract, or keywords explicitly contained at least one NIC marker term. The English-language search markers used were: "national image," "state image," "country image," "national stereotype," "national character," and "national identity / national identities." These markers served two functions: first, to retrieve records from *BITRA*; and second, to code each included record according to the NIC construct(s) explicitly addressed. In this article, ITNIC refers to the TS literature indexed in *BITRA* that explicitly links translation or interpreting to at least one NIC construct. The term is therefore a bibliographic shorthand; it does not imply that bibliometric evidence can measure causal effects of translation on public opinion or on real-world image formation.

Table 1. Operationalization of NIC constructs for *BITRA* query and coding

NIC component (concept)	<i>BITRA</i> query term (s) used for retrieval	Coding category used in analysis	Coding rule (what triggers the code)
National image (image as perception of a country/people)	"national image"; "country image"; "state image"	NIC-Image	Assign when any of the three strings appears in title/abstract/keywords.
National identity (identity as stabilized belief/identification)	"national identity" (captures identity/identities)	NIC-Identity	Assign when "national identity/identities" occurs in title/abstract/keywords.
National character (character as attributed motivational/moral profile)	"national character"	NIC-Character	Assign when the exact phrase occurs in title/abstract/keywords.
National stereotype (stereotype as discursive coding)	"national stereotype"	NIC-Stereotype	Assign when the exact phrase occurs in title/abstract/keywords.

Note. Additional NIC-related terms such as cliché and prejudice were not used as primary retrieval markers because they produced lower precision. However, such terms could still appear within retrieved records and were captured during title and keyword mapping where relevant.



Where metadata were available, records were also coded by dominant research domain or medium, such as literature, journalism/news, tourism discourse, audiovisual translation/subtitling, and institutional or policy translation. This additional tagging made it possible to relate NIC constructs to the principal empirical contexts in which they are studied (See Appendix C).

To connect the NIC framework to the bibliometric procedure, Table 1 summarizes the searchable marker terms used in BITRA and the coding categories applied during screening and thematic mapping. Records could receive multiple NIC codes when more than one construct was explicitly present in the title, abstract, or keywords.

2.2 Data Source and Corpus Construction

The dataset was compiled from *BITRA (Bibliography of Interpreting and Translation)*, an open-access bibliographic database maintained by the Department of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Alicante and coordinated by [Javier Franco Aixela \(2001-2023\)](#). *BITRA* provides multilingual search functionality and bibliographic metadata including title, author(s), year, publication type, outlet, and, in many cases, abstract and keywords.

The corpus was constructed in two stages in order to combine historical coverage with temporal updating.

1. Baseline Corpus (1940–2019).

- a. *BITRA* was queried using the NIC marker set described above (See Appendix A). The initial search returned 628 records. After deduplication and relevance screening, 502 records remained in the baseline corpus (See Appendix B).

2. Update Corpus (2020–2025).

- a. Using the same search string and screening criteria, an update search was conducted on 20 February 2026, yielding 151 additional eligible records for the period 2020–2025.
- b. The final combined corpus therefore comprised 653 records. A brief note is warranted regarding the lower boundary of the search window. Although the query begins in 1940, the earliest records retrieved through this marker set appear only in the late 1940s in *BITRA*. Accordingly, the 1940s remain sparsely represented in the corpus.

Records were excluded for one of two reasons: (1) Duplicate bibliographic entries, including repeated listings of the same publication or multiple metadata variants of a single record; (2) Conceptual irrelevance, that is, cases in which NIC-related terms were used in a non-national sense or did not concern national representation. Examples include uses of identity referring solely to translator or professional identity, or uses of image in a purely technical or visual sense without national framing.

For each included record, the following fields were exported from *BITRA* for analysis: author(s), year, title, publication type, outlet/publisher, language (when available), and abstract/keywords(when available).

2.3 Analytical Procedures

The analysis combines descriptive bibliometrics with lightweight text mining.

1. Descriptive bibliometrics. All included records from the baseline and update corpora were compiled into a spreadsheet for counting and cross-tabulation. The analysis reports annual and decadal publication growth; publication formats (e.g., journal articles, books, edited-volume chapters, dissertations/theses, and special issues/monographs); the distribution of records across journals and publishers; and author productivity. Author productivity was calculated using full counting, meaning that each co-authored publication was counted once for each author.
2. Abstracts analysis. To identify recurring topical emphases, a term-frequency analysis was conducted on the abstract using Python. For non-English records, the English abstract supplied in *BITRA* was used when available. Because one or more records may lack a usable title string in the export, the size of the abstract-analysis corpus is distinguished from the full bibliometric corpus and reported explicitly in Section 3.4.



3. **Baseline–Update Comparison.** To address the issue of post-2019 currency, the study first reports the baseline results for 1940–2019 and then compares them with the 2020–2025 update period in terms of publication growth, publication formats, and recurring title keywords. This comparison makes it possible to identify both continuities and newly visible emphases in the recent literature.

This design supports claims about the structure, distribution, and evolution of research attention in TS on NIC-related topics. It does not, by itself, establish causal effects of translation or interpreting on national image in publics, institutions, or media systems.

3. Results

3.1 Temporal Distribution of Publications, 1940–2025

This study examines translation-related scholarship on the National Image Cluster (hereafter ITNIC), that is, research explicitly linking translation and/or interpreting to national image, identity, stereotype, or character. The analysis is based on two *BITRA* extractions using the same query string and screening rules: a baseline corpus covering 1940–2019 (N = 502) and an update corpus covering 2020–2025 (N = 151). The combined dataset therefore contains N = 653 records.

To visualize diachronic change, publications were grouped by decade for the baseline period, while 2020–2025 was treated as a separate update window rather than as a full decade. Figure 1 shows that the temporal distribution is highly uneven across the period under study.

These figures show that research linking translation/interpreting to NIC-related constructs was scarce before 1980. Publication output started to rise in the 1980s and 1990s, then increased more markedly in the 2000s and reached its highest absolute level in 2010–2019. Because the 2020–2025 period covers only six years, however, its raw total is not directly comparable to the totals for the preceding ten-year intervals. A more appropriate comparison is annual output. On that basis, the update period averages 25.2 publications per year, slightly below the 2010s average of 28.5, but clearly above the 2000s average of 17.2. Overall, the data suggest that the field maintained steady research output in the early 2020s, rather than experiencing a drop after 2019.

The earliest retrieved record dates to 1948, indicating that no item matching the present search terms was found in *BITRA* before that year. Periods with few or no retrieved records should be interpreted as descriptive results of the present query and screening procedure, rather than as evidence for broader geopolitical or disciplinary explanations. Historical differences in database coverage, indexing practices, and metadata completeness may also affect the apparent distribution of publications across time.

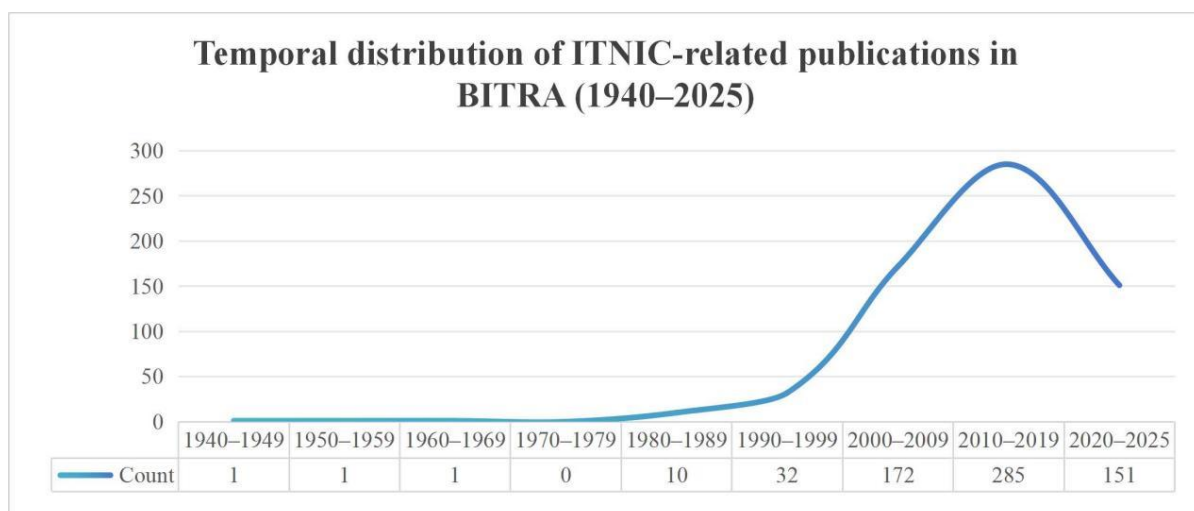


Figure 1. Temporal distribution of ITNIC-related publications in *BITRA* (1940 – 2025)

Note: 2020–2025 represents a six-year update window rather than a full decade.

In addition, the 2020 – 2025 update window may still be affected by indexing lag for the most recent years, especially 2024 – 2025, and should therefore be interpreted with appropriate caution.

3.2 Publication Types

Figure 2 summarizes the distribution of publication types across the study period. In the baseline corpus (1940–2019; N = 502), journal articles constitute the largest category (n = 248), followed by book chapters (n = 117), dissertations/theses (n = 73), and books (n = 52). A small number of records are indexed as monographs (n = 7) or fall into other/hybrid categories (n = 5), such as booklet/report items or records with ambiguous combined labels in *BITRA*. This distribution shows that Research on ITNIC has been distributed primarily in journal articles and chapters in edited volumes before 2020. Theses and dissertations were not as pronounced, but they represented a significant portion of the corpus.

In the 2020–2025 update corpus (N = 151), journal articles account for the largest portion of publications, numbering 103. Book chapters follow (n = 33), then books (n = 10), with monographs making up a relatively small remainder (n = 5). The dataset includes no dissertations or theses for the period in question. Even so, because of the update window, the absence should not be taken as a strong signal. Because bibliographic databases often capture doctoral work later than journal and book publications, the observed pattern may be driven by indexing lag rather than a real disappearance of dissertation-level research.

In aggregate, the full corpus (1940–2025; N = 653) is largely composed of journal articles (n = 351) and book chapters (n = 150). The publication landscape also includes books (n = 62) and dissertations/theses (n = 73), which are less numerous but still significant. The baseline–update contrast indicates that the early 2020s display a stronger concentration of publications in journals. One possible explanation is that journals have become an even more central channel for the rapid circulation of new research, whereas edited volumes and monographs continue to serve as venues for more sustained theoretical discussion and detailed case-based analysis.

3.2.1 Journal Articles

Journal articles constitute the principal venue for ITNIC scholarship. In the baseline corpus (1940–2019; N = 502), [265] items are journal articles, distributed across [144] journals. This spread indicates that research linking translation with national image, identity, stereotype, and character is not confined to a single niche, but circulates across TS, interpreting studies, media and audiovisual translation, and adjacent humanities- and communication-oriented venues.

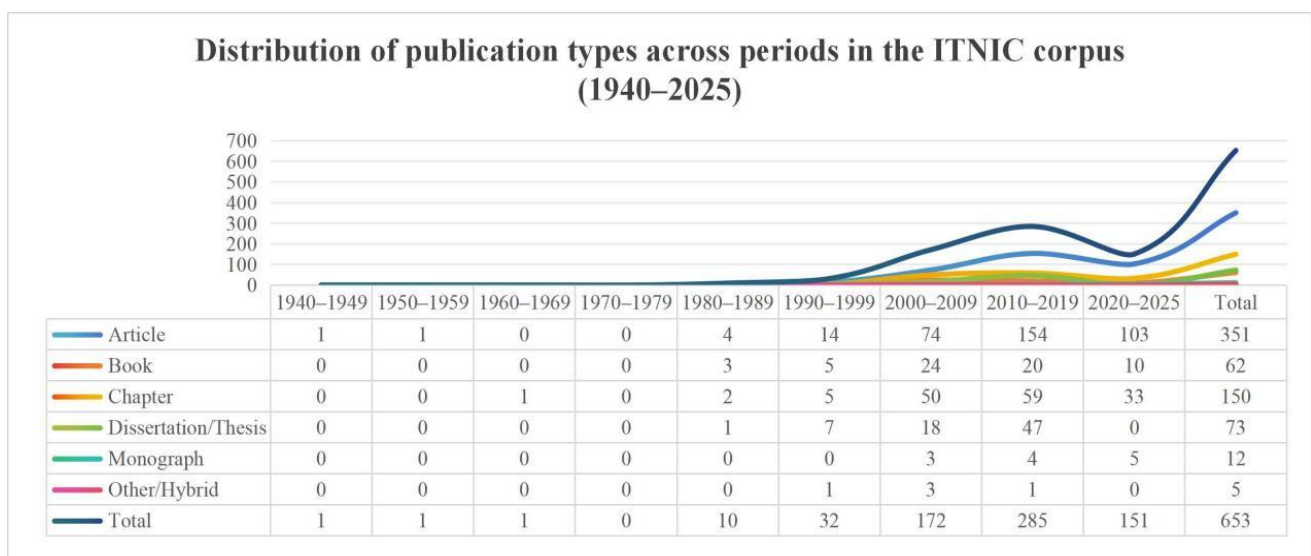


Figure 2. Period-by-period distribution of publication types in the ITNIC corpus (1940 – 2025)

Note: The 2020–2025 window spans six years; “Other/Hybrid” includes *BITRA* metadata categories that are minor or ambiguous.



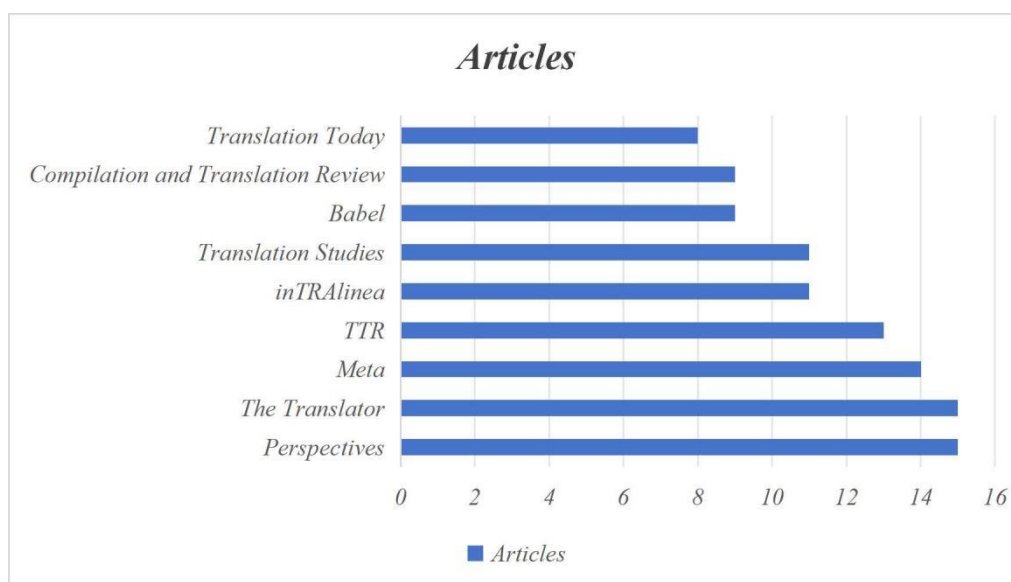


Figure 3. Journal Articles

At the same time, publication is moderately concentrated: [23] journals publish three or more items and together account for [127] articles (about [48%] of all journal articles in the baseline corpus). The most frequent outlets are *Perspectives* and *the Translator* (15 articles each), followed by *Meta* (14), *TTR* (13), *inTRAlinea* and *Translation Studies* (11 each), *Babel* and *Compilation and Translation Review* (9 each), and *Translation Today* (8) (see Figure 3).

Because this study is bibliometric, the journal-article record should not be read as direct evidence that translation causes changes in national image in a social-scientific sense. Rather, the bibliographic metadata including titles, abstracts, and subject terms indexed in *BITRA*, show that journal scholarship recurrently frames translation as a representational and discursive site in which national images, identities, stereotypes, and notions of “national character” are constructed, circulated, negotiated, reinforced, or contested.

Across the baseline journal articles, four recurring thematic clusters are especially visible in the metadata. A significant portion of the literature centers on media, journalism, and discourse in general, discussing translation in connection to framing, recontextualization, and circulation of images in news and other forms of public communication. A major parallel strand concerns literary and cultural translation, notably work examining canon formation, cultural mediation, and the representation of national and cultural difference. Another significant field of study is audiovisual and multimodal translation. Work on subtitling, dubbing, and accessibility shows that semiotic constraints inherent in cross-media forms can bring some aspects of national identity and cultural stereotyping to the fore, while downplaying others. A further strand of the literature is organized around identity issues, including minority, migrant, regional, and gender- or sexuality-related perspectives, where translation is approached as a practice of positioning, visibility, and voice.

At the methodological level, journals are dominated by qualitative case studies and text, discourse, and paratext-centered analyses. Alongside the prevailing tendency, the corpus incorporates a smaller but enduring set of reception-oriented and other empirically informed contributions. The pattern is consistent with TS’ traditional emphasis on interpretive explanations of representation and ideological mediation, rather than on experimental research designs or causal inference about social-world effects.

According to the update corpus (2020–2025; N = 124), the continuity of both journal outlets and thematic focus is broad; however, some new areas of interest emerge, such as digital circulation, platform environment, automation and AI, and politicized information ecologies like disinformation. In this paper, these developments are regarded as modifications in the structure of the research environment, not as immediate manifestations of quantifiable impacts on national-image outcomes.

3.2.2 Books and Chapters

Within ITNIC scholarship, books and edited volumes form a crucial long-form foundation. While journal articles often present discrete case studies across a wide range of outlets, monographs and collections allow for longer historical trajectories, clearer theoretical framing, and broader cross-national comparison. The connection between translation, ideology, nation, and subjectivity is defined in the book record by a number of now-canonical pieces (Venuti 1992; Liu 1995; Sakai 1997). Since the early 2000s, this research question has been extended to historically-grounded studies of literary translation, nation-building, and cultural representation (Agorni 2002; Roldán Vera 2003; Meylaerts 2004; Frank 2007; Levy 2011; Goodwin 2020; Todorova 2021). In these works, translation is not conceived as a neutral transfer, but rather as a selective and institutionally mediated practice in the narration, exportation, domestication, canonization and contestation of national cultures.

Edited volumes are especially telling, as they tend to appear when a topic has begun to consolidate into more recognizable research agendas. The previously reported works register a thematic reorientation: earlier, more general discussions of ideology and identity increasingly give way to direct attention to national images, stereotyping, framing, crisis discourse, and cultural transfer (Santaemilia 2005, Levy 2011, Federici & Declercq 2019 and Gonne *et al.*, 2021). The interdisciplinarity of the field is also emphasized in the book record. While the literature is still anchored in literary history and comparative literature, analogous questions increasingly extend into children's literature, travel writing, news/media translation, dubbing and subtitling, legal multilingualism, cultural diplomacy, migration, and exile. Publications are concentrated in specialist academic venues, Routledge, John Benjamins, Peter Lang, St. Jerome, Palgrave Macmillan, and university presses in particular, implying a firm TS grounding alongside openness to adjacent fields. The dominance of English notwithstanding, publications in French, German, Spanish, and other languages show that the research is not limited to Anglophone contexts.

Bibliometrically, the point is not that book-length work proves translation changes national image in measurable social terms. The point is that scholars repeatedly choose books and edited collections when they want to trace, over long historical periods, how translation contributes to constructing national culture, national character, self-image, and hetero-image.

Book chapters are the most flexible format in this part of the corpus. They are particularly suited to sharply defined case studies including the re-framing of a nation in translated news, the role of translation in canon formation, the transfer of national stereotypes across literary systems, the political uses of pseudo-translation, or the negotiation of institutional and supranational identities in multilingual settings. Several collections act as clear clustering points for this work (Venuti 2005; Hung, 2005; Kuran-Burçoğlu, 1998). This clustering is bibliometrically important because it suggests that once imagology and identity became explicit organizing terms, chapter-length studies became a preferred venue for testing them across different corpora and media.

Terms such as national image, self-image, hetero-image, stereotype, national character, nation-building, framing, mediation, and cultural transfer recur across studies of literary translation, travel writing, anthologies, political discourse, news translation, dubbing, subtitling, and institutional multilingualism. Representative examples include Lefevere (1996) on canon formation, Kamala (2000) on representing the nation in English translation, Hanna (2005) on the making and unmaking of national identity, Venuti (2005) on translation and national identities, van Doorslaer (2012) on national and cultural images, Valdeón García (2016) on national image in news translation, and later work on auto-image, self-framing, and digital nationalism in political and media translation. Compared with monographs, chapters more often isolate one text, one translator, one event, or one medium; compared with journal articles, they are more strongly shaped by the thematic logic of edited collections.

Methodologically, these chapters are overwhelmingly interpretive and context-driven. They tend to analyze discourse, para-text, selection, omission, framing, and reception rather than to measure causal image effects experimentally. Their importance therefore lies in showing how persistently translation scholars conceptualize translation as a site where nations and cultures are represented to themselves and to others.

3.2.3 Dissertations and Theses

Doctoral dissertations and theses constitute a substantial, though internally heterogeneous, part of the baseline corpus. The material spans from the late 1980s to 2019, with its clearest concentration in the late 2000s



and mid-2010s rather than in a simple year-on-year rise. Once items primarily concerned with machine translation, audio description/accessibility, easy-to-read, or general interpreting pedagogy are bracketed off, the doctoral subset still forms a robust core of ITNIC research. Its strongest clusters concern the reception and circulation of translated national literatures, the construction of national and cultural images in journalism, tourism, paratexts, and audiovisual media, and the role of translation in canon formation, cultural transfer, and identity negotiation. In that sense, ITNIC emerges not only as a journal-and-book topic, but also as a stable area of doctoral specialization.

The evidence for the most recent period, however, is much thinner. In the present corpus, dissertation/thesis records taper off sharply after the mid-2010s and are effectively absent after 2019. This pattern should not be read as evidence of a substantive decline in doctoral research. A more cautious interpretation is that dissertations and theses are especially vulnerable to delayed indexing, uneven database coverage, and lower bibliographic visibility than journal articles or books.

3.3 Active and Influential Authors

To characterize authorship patterns in the *BITRA*-retrieved ITNIC corpus, this section reports two complementary indicators: author productivity (publication counts) and citation prominence within *BITRA* (aggregated from the database's Impact metadata). Because these indicators are corpus- and database-dependent, they should be interpreted as intra-corpus signals, not as universal rankings of scholarly standing across TS.

Author productivity means most active contributors. I computed author publication counts using the author field of each record and full counting (each co-authored record contributes one count to each listed author). Author names were normalized (e.g., harmonizing comma/no-comma formats and minor spelling/capitalization variants), and the top-ranked names were checked manually for remaining inconsistencies. Authorship is highly dispersed. 768 unique authors appear in the corpus, and 708 authors (92.2%) occur only once, indicating a long-tail distribution rather than a small closed author community. The most productive contributors in the corpus include Luc van Doorslaer (9 publications), Reine Meylaerts (7), and Lawrence Venuti (5), followed by several authors with 3 publications each (e.g., Moira Inghilleri, Emer O'Sullivan, Nitsa Ben-Ari, Chantal Gagnon, Yves Gambier, Maud Gonne). In the update window (2020–2025), productivity remains distributed across many contributors, with only a small number of authors publishing more than one record in that period.

Citation prominence suggests influential anchors within the corpus. To estimate which authors function as recurrent reference points within the retrieved corpus, I used *BITRA*'s Impact metadata. For each record, I computed the number of citing *BITRA* entries listed in the Impact field and aggregated these counts by author (full counting). Lawrence Venuti (67) is the most frequently cited author in the corpus, followed by Maria Tymoczko (50) and Reine Meylaerts (32); other frequently cited anchors include Itamar Even-Zohar (26), Zohar Shavit (24), and W. John Hutchins (21).

Table 2. Most productive authors in the ITNIC corpus (publication counts; full counting)

Author	1940–2019 (N)	2020–2025 (N)	Total (N)
Luc van Doorslaer	6	3	9
Reine Meylaerts	6	1	7
Lawrence Venuti	5	0	5
Moira Inghilleri	2	1	3
Emer O'Sullivan	3	0	3
Nitsa Ben-Ari	3	0	3
Chantal Gagnon	2	1	3
Yves Gambier	2	1	3
Maud Gonne	1	2	3



Publication counts and citation prominence do not fully coincide. Some authors are cited frequently even though they contribute relatively few publications to the ITNIC corpus itself, suggesting that they function chiefly as conceptual or methodological reference points for later studies.

3.4 Highly Explored Topics

To complement the publication-count analysis, I examined abstracts in order to identify recurring themes in ITNIC scholarship. Since not all records in *BITRA* have abstracts, this step was restricted to records whose abstracts were not empty in the metadata exported. Records having no abstracts were not included in the thematic analysis but included in the bibliometric totals presented in Sections 3.1–3.3.

The cleaning procedure involved converting abstracts to lowercase, eliminating punctuation and common function words, and merging frequent morphological variants. I also eliminated extremely wide field words like translation, translator, national, image, and identity, as they would otherwise overtake the results without much thematic discrimination. This enabled the emergence of more informative signals, such as media domains, genres, institutions, and methodological settings. I began with the cleaned corpus, extracted salient keywords, and then performed TF-IDF-weighted clustering to generate topic groupings of the records. To label each cluster, I closely read the highest-weighted terms and examined representative abstracts within the group. To be descriptive, each record was classified in the cluster that had the strongest thematic profile.

Table 3. A small set of recurring topical clusters

Thematic cluster (label)	Representative keywords (from abstracts)	Baseline N (1940– 2019)	Update N (2020– 2024)	Total N (%)
Cultural/political representation and public discourse	cultural, political, self/other, global, transfer, media/news, framing, conflict	164	39	203 (31.9%)
Literature and poetry (canon, history, form)	literature, literary, novel, century, works, poetry/poems, authorial voice, rewriting	135	38	173 (27.2%)
Pedagogy and professional formation	students, training, education, professional, community, communication, competence	51	26	77 (12.1%)
National case-study concentrations	Chinese/China/West; Italian/Italy/dialect; reception; market; regional variation	50	16	66 (10.4%)
Audiovisual translation and accessibility	film, subtitles/subtitling, audiovisual, dubbing, viewers; audio description, blind/visually impaired	52	10	62 (9.7%)
Legal and institutional translation	legal, law, EU, terminology, multilingual, legislation, institutions	17	9	26 (4.1%)
Children's literature and polysystem	children, books, stories, polysystem, picture books, comparative	13	8	21 (3.3%)
Other / non-English abstract residual	non-English keywords (small cluster not interpreted)	9	0	9 (1.4%)

Note. The topical clusters are derived from abstract text mining and should be interpreted descriptively as patterns of research attention in the literature; cluster labels are assigned by inspection of weighted keywords and representative abstracts.

The abstract-based mapping reveals a small set of recurring topical clusters that structure the field (Table 3). Two clusters account for the largest share of abstracted publications. First, a broad cluster on cultural/political representation and public discourse foregrounds themes such as cultural transfer, self/other positioning, ideological framing, and, within many studies, news/media contexts and conflict-related discourse. Second, literature and poetry remains a dominant locus for examining national representation, reflecting the field's continued use of literary



circulation (novels, poetry, historical writing, canon formation) as a privileged archive for tracking image/identity narratives. Beyond these two dominant clusters, several substantial and conceptually distinct strands are evident. Pedagogy and professional formation studies examine national identity, stereotypes, and intercultural positioning in translator/interpreter training and professional communities. Audiovisual translation and accessibility centers on film/television subtitling and dubbing, alongside accessibility-oriented work (e.g., audio description). Legal and institutional translation highlights multilingual governance, legal terminology, and EU-related settings. A further cluster reflects national case-study concentrations, where scholarship repeatedly revisits particular geopolitical/language constellations (e.g., China/West; Italian dialect and reception contexts) as empirical sites for studying national representation. Finally, a small residual group consists of non-English abstracts that are difficult to integrate into the same keyword space and is therefore not interpreted further.

A baseline–update comparison suggests continuity of the major clusters after 2019, with some relative strengthening in the update window (2020–2025) for pedagogy/professional formation and legal/institutional work, while literature, public discourse, and audiovisual contexts remain central. Importantly, these results should be read as a mapping of research emphases in the TS literature, not as evidence of causal effects of translation on national image in audiences.

4. Discussions

The results suggest that research on translation/interpreting and national image constructs (NIC) has moved from a relatively scattered thematic presence to a recognizable, though still internally diverse, line of inquiry within TS. Read against the five research questions, the corpus does not point to a single, unified sub-field with stable boundaries so much as to a cumulative area of overlap where several long-standing TS concerns converge: representation, identity, ideology, mediation, reception, and cross-cultural framing. What the mapping makes visible, therefore, is less the consolidation of a narrow niche than the gradual stabilization of a problem-space in which translation and interpreting are repeatedly treated as agents in the construction, circulation, negotiation, or contestation of national and cultural images.

For RQ1, the small number of relevant publications in the earlier decades should not be taken to mean that links between translation and national or cultural representation were absent. A more plausible reading is that this line of work was diffused across related vocabularies and disciplinary contexts, notably comparative literature, reception studies, literary history, nationalism studies, and cultural criticism. The notable rise in the number of publications since the 2000s indicates that TS started to answer these questions more specifically in its own context. The notable rise in the number of publications since the 2000s indicates that TS started to answer these questions more specifically in its own context. This shift is important in that it signals a move in the way the field conceives translation: not as a medium through which already established cultures communicate, but as a place in which national images, self-images, and images of others are generated and exchanged. The fact that the activity persists, evident in the early 2020s, means that it was not a short-lived impact of the cultural turn. It is still a vigorous line of inquiry, now defined by the new media environments, shifting political backgrounds, and more recent modes of textual circulation.

In the case of RQ2, the publication ecology can be used to explain the institutional development of the field. The findings reveal a high degree of concentration in journals, yet not one predominant venue and approach. Instead, ITNIC studies can be found in journals, special issues, edited volumes, monographs, and dissertations, implying that they circulate via a variety of academic platforms. Disciplinary visibility is largely provided by general TS journals; in contrast, edited collections and themed issues tend to cluster related work around concerns such as Imagology, media translation, intercultural communication, multilingualism, and audiovisual translation. In that regard, the discipline seems to be thematically united and institutionally fragmented. The same trend is observed in the author data. Many one-time contributors are present along with a smaller population of recurring author and frequently cited reference figures. This develops a two-level structure. An extensive empirical layer is constructed by case-based research, and a smaller conceptual layer is maintained by a fairly fixed number of theoretical touchstones. The mismatch between productivity and citation prominence is especially noteworthy. The field therefore progresses by accumulating case studies while repeatedly drawing on a restricted set of interpretive frameworks.



In regards to RQ3, the lexical and topical data indicate that NIC should be viewed as a cluster rather than as a concept. Throughout the corpus, "image" tends to be coupled with other concepts rather than used alone. It is habitually associated with identity, nation, representation, stereotype, alterity, self/other positioning, cultural difference and, in some instances, national character or collective memory. This tendency is important as it indicates the field is not based on a single stable vocabulary. Rather, it operates by means of an extended semantic network, whereby various labels focus on various features of the same issue: the role of translation and interpreting in the representation of collectivities. The dominant thematic continuity is the lasting salience of literary translation and cultural transfer. Literature has continued to be an important archive in that it provides paratextual framing, canon formation, translation choice, and long histories of reception. The findings suggest that, alongside literary work, the field has grown to encompass much more than literary materials alone. The second major strand is journalism and media discourse, in which translation is researched in connection to framing, re-framing, selection and omission, emphasis, and ideological positioning in the circulation of national images. A third increasingly visible strand involves audiovisual and multimodal translation, where national images are negotiated not only through verbal choices but also through subtitles, dubbing, voice-over, visual codes, paratexts, and platformed interfaces. Institutional and policy-oriented work appears less dominant than literature and media, but it is nonetheless significant because it extends the question of national image into diplomatic, governmental, legal, and organizational settings.

At the same time, the mapping also exposes a methodological issue that is worth making explicit. The keyword "image" is productive but unstable. In some parts of the broader TS literature, it refers to national/cultural image, while in others it refers to visual image in the intersemiotic sense. This is particularly visible in adjacent literatures on audio description, accessibility, and visual translation. The implication is not that such records are irrelevant, but that the corpus sits on a boundary where Imagological and visual-semiotic senses of "image" sometimes overlap. This polysemy partly explains why curatorial judgment is necessary in delimiting the field. It also suggests that one of the contributions of the NIC framing is precisely to make that boundary more explicit, distinguishing work that uses "image" in a national/cultural sense from work where "image" primarily denotes visual material.

For RQ4, the mapped literature appears to show a movement from relatively text-centered, historically oriented, and often literary approaches toward a more heterogeneous methodological repertoire. Earlier and foundational work is frequently shaped by descriptive TS, polysystem thinking, manipulation theory, reception approaches, or broadly cultural and postcolonial frameworks. These remain important, especially in literary case studies, but the corpus also shows later growth in discourse-oriented, sociological, corpus-based, and multimodal approaches. In practical terms, this means that the field increasingly studies national image not only as a thematic or representational content inside texts, but as an effect of selection, framing, paratextual packaging, institutional mediation, circulation, and reception. There are also methodological implications of this broadening. It is not only about how a nation is represented in a text translated, but rather about how it is mediated in a longer chain of mediation that includes translators, editors, publishers, institutions, media systems, and audiences. Meanwhile, the corpus shows that continuity outweighs rupture. The prevalent approaches all through are close reading, case studies, and qualitative discourse analysis. The main change is thus not a shift in method from qualitative to quantitative, but a reorientation from text-focused analysis toward a more layered understanding of mediation.

RQ5 similarly indicates the continuity in new circumstances rather than a definite paradigmatic shift. The 2020–2025 suggests that digital circulation and platform settings have become more salient, that automation and AI are more visible, and that crisis, mobility, and mediated public discourse have regained emphasis. However, these themes are more of a continuation of previous concerns than a substitute. Literary translation still has a sustained presence, media and institutional discourse remain central concerns, and audiovisual/multimodal research continues its upward trajectory. The most changed aspect has been the setting, in which questions on national-images are posed. In platform-based settings with dense networks, images move fast and reach wider publics. They are also shaped through tightly packed combinations of text, image, sound, metadata, and algorithmic filtering. The update therefore suggests not a break with earlier ITNIC research, but its reformulation under new technological and geopolitical pressures. This is why the beginning of the 2020s can be regarded not as entirely new era, but as the one when older questions about nation, representation, identity, and translation find new significance in digitally enhanced environments.



These results make ITNIC a bridging field in TS. It spans literary and non-literary materials, links historical and contemporary cases, and frames textual, visual, institutional, and technological mediation together. Its diversity is not a weakness in that sense. It is part of what makes the area analytically useful. At the same time, the results also imply that future work will benefit from sharper conceptual distinctions: between national image and broader cultural representation, between imagological and visual-semiotic uses of "image," and between translation as textual transfer and translation as a wider regime of mediated representation. These points provide the basis for the conclusions and implications that follow.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study mapped TS scholarship linking translation/interpreting to NIC-related constructs by combining a baseline *BITRA* corpus (1940–2019; N = 502) with an update corpus (2020–2025; N = 151), yielding a combined dataset of N = 653 records. Rather than measuring the real-world effects of translation on national image, the study provides a bibliometric and text-analytic overview of how the topic has been framed inside the discipline: how publication volume has evolved, which formats and outlets dominate, which constructs and domains recur most strongly, and which theoretical and methodological tendencies characterize the literature. Taken together, the findings answer the five research questions as follows.

In relation to RQ1, the longitudinal distribution shows that TS research connecting translation/interpreting to NIC constructs was sparse and scattered in the earlier decades, but expanded markedly from the late twentieth century onward. Expansion is most clearly visible in the 2000s and 2010s, when the topic becomes a stable research line rather than a sporadic interest. The post-2019 update shows continuity beyond the baseline period, with publication output extending into the early 2020s. Nonetheless, the most recent years should be approached carefully, since indexing lags and uneven database coverage can reduce the apparent volume of near-current publications.

For RQ2, the publication landscape is journal-led, yet it extends beyond journals. Articles dominate overall, but chapters and monographs comprise a meaningful second tier, especially where the work is historically oriented or theoretical. Over the long run, dissertations and theses are clearly part of the corpus, especially in the 2000s and 2010s. Their lighter footprint in the update period is best read as an indexing lag, not as the disappearance of doctoral research. The outlet profile shows a concentrated core alongside a dispersed periphery. The corpus repeatedly returns to journals such as *Perspectives*, *The Translator*, *Translation Studies*, *Target*, *Meta*, *TTR*, *Babel*, and *inTRAlinea*, as well as publishers such as Routledge, John Benjamins, Peter Lang, St. Jerome, Palgrave Macmillan, and Bloomsbury. This suggests that the topic does not sit within a single venue or subfield; rather, it appears across literary translation, media/audiovisual translation, discourse-oriented TS, institutional translation, and associated interdisciplinary scholarship.

For RQ3, the most persistent vocabulary clusters stay close to image, identity, representation, nation/national, and culture/cultural. Related notions like stereotype, otherness, Imagology, and self/other representation also keep resurfacing. In terms of substantive focus, literature persists as the longest-standing archive through which translation's role in shaping or circulating national and cultural images is examined. The second major strand examines journalism, media, and news translation, emphasizing translation as a practice that frames events, recontextualizes discourse, positions ideologically, and narrates crisis. The third strand is built around audiovisual and multimodal translation, especially subtitling and dubbing, film and television, and paratextual mediation, where national images are made salient through multimodal combinations instead of verbal text alone. The record shows recurrent attention to institutional, political, legal, and tourism-related materials, but these themes are less central than literature and media. Overall, the field's coherence comes less from a single fixed object and more from a recurring concern with translation's role in mediating collective images across genres, domains, and semiotic forms.

The RQ4 mapping indicates a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches, but not a rupture. Earlier work and much of the baseline corpus draw heavily on Descriptive Translation Studies, poly-system theory, reception studies, comparative literature, canon formation, and the cultural turn. Over time, these approaches are joined, and in some areas partly reoriented, by Imagology, discourse analysis, framing and narrative theory, the sociology of translation, postcolonial and gender-based approaches, and para-text studies. Methodologically, the field



broadens from a strong dependence on qualitative case studies and close reading toward a wider mix that includes corpus-based work, bibliometric mapping, media and discourse analysis, reception research, and multimodal analysis. This is better described as accumulation than replacement: literary-historical and case-based work remains central even as newer methods gain ground. Once items primarily concerned with machine translation, audio description, easy-to-read, or general interpreting pedagogy are bracketed off unless they explicitly broaden “image” beyond national/cultural image, the dominant methodological profile of the field remains a context-sensitive inquiry into representation, mediation, and identity construction.

For RQ5, the 2020–2025 update points more to continuity than to rupture. The main concerns of the field including national and cultural image, identity, stereotyping, literary circulation, and media framing remain in place. What becomes more visible is the articulation of these concerns with transnational and multiscale perspectives, including tensions between local, regional, and national identities, questions of self-translation and transnational literary positioning, and digitally mediated circulation. The update also indicates stronger interest in multimodal and platform-based environments, where national images are negotiated through online media, social platforms, and more diffuse chains of recontextualization. At present, these should be treated as emerging emphases within an established line of research, not yet as evidence of a full paradigmatic shift.

These results have several implications. The NIC framework is conceptually helpful in that it combines a scattered vocabulary encompassing image, identity, character, stereotype, representation, self-image and hetero-image into a practical scheme for retrieval and description. The evidence also indicates that these terms are not interchangeable, pointing to the value of more careful term-by-term distinction in future research. Regarding methodology, the paper highlights the importance of macro-level mapping and close analysis combination. Although bibliometrics, metadata analysis, and text mining can map growth patterns, publication structures, and broad themes, they cannot, on their own, explain the textual practices through which image work is carried out. To explain that level of image work, researchers still need discourse analysis, paratext analysis, multimodal analysis, reception research, and domain-specific case studies. The results suggest, substantively, that ITNIC research would gain from moving toward cross-domain comparison, such as examining how national images are negotiated differently across literature, journalism, audiovisual translation, tourism, and institutional discourse, instead of handling each strand separately.

There are a number of limitations to be mentioned. First, the corpus is built on *BITRA*'s coverage, indexing practices, and metadata completeness. Second, NIC-based retrieval will overlook studies that are framed by neighboring terms like nation branding, soft power, public diplomacy, or auto-/hetero-image when these are not part of the search strategy. Third, abstracts or regular descriptors of subjects are not provided in all the records, and this limits the richness of automated topic mapping. Fourth, outlet and productivity patterns are partly affected by methodological decisions about normalization and counting. Fifth, *BITRA* impact indicators reflect within-corpus prominence, not broader citation influence as indexed by Scopus or Web of Science. Finally, bibliometric evidence can track scholarly attention, but it cannot, on its own, establish causal links between translation practices and changes in public perceptions of nations or cultures.

Taken as a whole, the study shows that the translation/interpreting–NIC research nexus has become a durable and increasingly differentiated area in TS. With a historical center of gravity in literary and cultural mediation, the field now stretches into media discourse, multimodality, institutional communication, and digitally mediated circulation. The main point is therefore not only that the field has grown, but that it has developed a more varied internal structure while keeping a recognizable core concern: the role of translation and interpreting in the making, circulation, contestation, and reframing of collective images and identities.

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Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Project administration, Funding acquisition. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

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