COGNITIVE STUDIES | ÉTUDES COGNITIVES, 25
Warsaw 2025

Article No.: 3514
DOI: 10.11649/cs.3514

Citation: Tran, L. T. B. (2025). Metaphorical conceptualisation of market as a journey: A contrastive view. *Cognitive Studies | Études cognitives*, *2025*(25), Article 3514. https://doi.org/10.11649/cs.3514

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Metaphorical Conceptualisation of Market as a Journey: A Contrastive View

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how the concept of market can be metaphorically expressed through the concept of journey and identify the similarities and differences in the use of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English and Vietnamese economic news. The research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, employing classification statistics, descriptive analysis, comparative–contrastive approaches, and the Metaphor Identification Procedure by the Pragglejaz Group for identifying metaphors. The research results reveal that six prominent attributes of the source domain of JOURNEY are used to construct the target domain of MARKET. The journey metaphor serves a crucial communicative function by simplifying complex economic concepts and encouraging participants to approach market activities with patience, resilience, and strategic planning. The research has practical implications for language teaching and learning, translation, journalism, and policy-making by providing a framework to understand and effectively communicate market-related concepts.
Keywords: conceptual metaphor; market; journey; comparative–contrastive approaches; English/Vietnamese

1 Introduction

Metaphor is pervasive in both everyday language and thought. In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is considered to be not only a figure of speech and object of language, but also part of the conceptual system, thought process and everyday way of expression (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In fact, most of our conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. In essence, conceptual metaphor reflects the relationship between language and thought, which is rooted in bodily experience and shaped by culture, making it both universal and culture-specific due to national mindset (Lee, 2001).

Conceptual metaphor has been of great concern to scientists worldwide, since it opens the door to examining how humans perceive the world (Johnson, 1987). It has been extensively studied across various disciplines, such as language, psychology, art, literature, philosophy, physics, biology, politics, economics, and law. In economics, research on conceptual metaphors in economic discourses has significantly increased over the past three decades. The studies often employ qualitative methods (e.g. Adam, 2020; Fromberg et al., 2024; Mohammed & Jawad, 2023) or a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (e.g. Cardini, 2014; Faraz, 2021; Greavu, 2024). Researchers use frameworks such as the MIP (e.g. Luporini, 2013) and MIPVU (e.g. Bogdanović, 2023) for metaphor identification, alongside theories by Lakoff, Johnson, and Deignan (e.g. Bratož, 2004; Khalifa, 2018). Journalistic texts are commonly chosen as the primary data source for these studies, as they are rich in metaphorical language and widely used in reporting on economics and finance (Bratož, 2004; Swandewi et al., 2021). The studies highlight the communicative and pragmatic functions of conceptual metaphors in economic discourse, showing that metaphors make abstract economic theories and concepts simpler, less abstract, and more persuasive (Al-Hindawi & Al-Saate, 2016; Bielenia-Grajewska, 2009; Henderson, 1982; Jäkel, 2003; Lapka, 2023; McCloskey, 1994).

In addition, economic metaphors influence economic decisions and market trends through their persuasive and manipulative functions (Charteris-Black, 2004; Dosev, 2019). Some studies, such as those by Gao (2016) and Khayrullayeva and Sayyora (2024), analyse the impact of culture and national mindset on the formation and use of metaphors. Their findings indicate that metaphors are culturally specific, while at the same time universal, caused by similar bodily experiences. In economic discourse, metaphor usage remains largely consistent across languages, with only minor cultural variations, illustrating their universality (Arrese, 2015).

The number of studies on market metaphors – an essential component of economic metaphors – remains relatively modest, with examples including the works of Charteris-Black and Ennis (2001) and White (1997). To fill this research gap, a contrastive analysis of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English and Vietnamese economic news has been conducted. The primary purpose of this study is to examine how the concept of market is metaphorically expressed through the concept of journey in both languages and to identify the similarities and differences in the use of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English and Vietnamese economic news. Towards this end, the study poses two research questions as follows:

- How is the concept of market metaphorically represented as a journey in English and Vietnamese?
- What are the similarities and differences in the use of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English and Vietnamese economic news?

This study is hoped to build the confidence of readers, researchers, educators, and language learners in using and understanding language. It therefore offers practical applications for language education, translation, journalism, and policy-making.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Overview of Conceptual Metaphor

Kövecses (2010, p. 4) defines conceptual metaphor as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain." These domains, described by Langacker (1987, p. 147) as "cognitive entities: mental experiences, representational spaces, concepts, or conceptual complexes", form the basis of a conceptual metaphor. The basic structure of a conceptual metaphor is "CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B", in which A is the target domain and B is the source domain. According to Kövecses (2010, p. 4), the source domain provides language expressions to understand the target domain, while the target domain is understood through the source domain.

2.2 Conceptual Metaphor and Its Mapping Mechanism

A conceptual metaphor is constructed from systematic correspondences, or cross-domain mappings, between the source and target domains. Kövecses (2010, p. 7) describes these mappings as "a set of systematic correspondences between the source and the target in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of B correspond to constituent elements of A." Through this mechanism, attributes from the source domain are projected onto the target domain, making it more explicit and comprehensible. The source and target domains are systematically related due to certain similarities between them (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

2.3 Universality and Variation in Metaphorical Conceptualisation

Conceptual metaphor is universal because it reflects cognitive processes rooted in human bodily experiences, regardless of cultural differences across linguistic communities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The structure and function of the human body, common to all races, generate similar embodied experiences, serving as the foundation for the universality of conceptual metaphor (Kövecses, 2005).

Conceptual metaphor is also culture-specific (Deignan et al., 1997; Kövecses, 2015). The cultural variability of conceptual metaphor is influenced by a range of factors, including historical, environmental, sociocultural, and experiential elements (Kövecses, 2015). Furthermore, conceptual metaphor is diverse within a culture due to the influence of societal, ethnic, regional, generational, and individual factors (Kövecses, 2005).

3 Methods

The research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, employing classification statistics, descriptive analysis, and comparative–contrastive approaches. Additionally, it utilizes the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by the Pragglejaz Group in 2007 for identifying metaphors. The MIP includes four steps as follows (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p. 3):

- Step 1: Read the entire text/discourse to understand its general meaning
- Step 2: Identify the lexical units used in the text/discourse
- Step 3:
  - establish the meaning in the context of each lexical unit
  - determine if each lexical unit has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context
  - if a more basic contemporary meaning exists, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it
- Step 4: If the answer is yes, the lexical unit is identified as a metaphor.

Example: *The company is drowning in debt*.

- Step 1: Read the entire text/discourse to understand its general meaning.
- Step 2: Identify the lexical units used in the text/discourse.
  The lexical units are: *The* / *company* / *is* / *drowning* / *in* / *debt*.
- Steps 3 and 4:
  The lexical units *the*, *company*, *is*, *in* and *debt* are used with their literal meanings and are therefore not metaphors.
  Drowning: Literal meaning: To die by suffocating after being submerged in water. Contextual meaning: To be overwhelmed and fail because of a negative situation. In this context, it signifies that the company is on the verge of collapse due to its financial obligations.

In this example, the contextual meaning of *drowning* does not align with its literal meaning. It can only be understood through an implicit comparison. Specifically, the abstract concept of a company failing due to financial liabilities is understood through the concrete, physical experience of a person suffocating. Therefore, this is a metaphorical expression. The example above contains one metaphorical expression out of the six lexical units analysed.

While the MIP provides a systematic framework, its application presents methodological challenges that require principled decisions (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). To ensure internal consistency and mitigate potential subjective bias, the researcher implemented a rigorous process involving multiple coding passes on different days and used the Vietnamese Dictionary by Hoang (2003) to define basic meanings. This iterative coding process was crucial for self-correction, as it allowed for the re-evaluation of initial judgments and ensured that the MIP criteria were applied uniformly throughout the dataset. Moreover, grounding the analysis in an authoritative lexicographical source provided an external, objective benchmark that proved indispensable for resolving ambiguity in borderline cases.

The study compares the frequency and mapping mechanism of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English and Vietnamese. This metaphor is categorised and labelled according to the attributes of the source domain JOURNEY. The comparison takes place on three levels: semantic, cognitive, and communicative. On the semantic level, the research reveals how metaphorical meanings are formed by explaining both the literal and figurative meanings of words and analysing specific metaphorical lexical units

used in each language. On the cognitive level, the cognitive foundation is examined through the analysis of the source domain JOURNEY, the target domain MARKET, and the mapping mechanism between them. On the communicative level, the study explores the pragmatic meanings of this conceptual metaphor, with a focus on communicative functions such as persuasion, advice, and evaluation.

The data analysis was conducted in three stages, beginning with a manual search for conceptual metaphors in English and Vietnamese economic news using the MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). Manual metaphor identification was preferred over software, as metaphors often appear in specific contexts and can be deeply embedded in language, requiring a full-text analysis rather than isolated examination of lexical units. The identified metaphors were then categorised into six subgroups based on the characteristics of the source domain JOURNEY, including starting point/destination, roads/paths, movements, obstacles, tools, and travellers. In the third stage, the author described and compared the metaphorical expressions and mapping mechanisms of the six subtypes in English and Vietnamese with typical examples for illustration. For each Vietnamese example, there is an English equivalent translated by the author. The impact of language, culture, and national mindset leading to similarities and differences between the two languages in the use of this metaphor was also analysed.

The data included 100 economic news articles (50 in English and 50 in Vietnamese) sourced from five prominent American online newspapers (BLOOMBERG, BUSINESS INSIDER, FORBES, THE NEW YORK TIMES, WALL STREET JOURNAL) and five well-known Vietnamese online newspapers (CAFEF, BÁO ĐẦU TƯ, THỜI BÁO TÀI CHÍNH VIỆT NAM, VIETNAMNET, VNECONOMY). These articles were selected through a systematic process with clear criteria to ensure relevance and consistency. First, sources were chosen based on their high reputation and significant influence in the economic discourse of each country. Second, a contemporary timeframe from September 2023 to December 2024 was established to capture recent metaphorical usage. Third, to focus on argumentative and interpretive language, only articles identified as market analysis, commentary, or in-depth reports were included, while short news briefs and purely data-driven reports were excluded. The Vietnamese Dictionary by Hoang (2003), a widely used reference, was used to determine the basic meanings of each lexical unit. To ensure sample size consistency, only the first 400 words of each piece of news were collected, totalling 20,000 words in each corpus.

4 Results and Discussion

A journey is a specific type of movement, involving travel from one place to another. It typically includes attributes such as purpose, locations (starting point, destination, route, direction, intermediate stops), time, means of transport, participants, the journey itself (events, experiences, obstacles, speed, movement, distance travelled), and the journey's characteristics (the traveller's mood), etc. These elements are mapped onto the target domain MARKET with corresponding attributes such as policies, solutions, events, developments, directions, resources, and participants. According to the theory of cross-domain mapping by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), when the market is reflected as a journey, the characteristics of the source domain JOURNEY are systematically projected onto the target domain MARKET. The source domain provides rich and familiar knowledge that helps readers conceptualise abstract concepts in the target domain more easily. For instance, market activities, such as the business operations of a company or the economic activities of a nation, are viewed as the movement of a traveller along a road towards a destination.

The attributes of the source domain which were chosen for the metaphorical mapping process are illustrated in Table 1.

Based on these attributes, the cross-domain mappings are identified in Table 2.

4.1 The Conceptual Metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English Economic News

In English economic news, the market is conceptualised through various aspects of a journey, helping readers better understand market-related events and phenomena. This metaphor is further divided into submetaphors below.

Table 1. Subcategories of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY.

Attributes of the source domain	English		Vietnamese	
	Number of metaphorical expressions	Number of occurrences	Number of metaphorical expressions	Number of occurrences
Starting point/destination of a journey	3	32	5	10
Roads/paths	3	39	3	9
Movements during a journey	31	209	18	102
Obstacles during a journey	6	13	3	5
Tools for a journey	3	19	1	1
Travellers	0	0	1	1
Total	**46**	**312**	**31**	**128**

Table 2. The mapping schema of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY.

The source domain: JOURNEY		The target domain: MARKET
Starting point/destination of a journey	→	Beginning/result of a market activity
Roads/ paths	→	Business solutions
Movements during a journey	→	Market activities
Obstacles during a journey	→	Market difficulties
Tools for a journey	→	Business strategies
Travellers	→	Market participants

THE BEGINNING/RESULT OF A MARKET ACTIVITY IS THE STARTING POINT/DESTINATION OF A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has three metaphorical expressions with 32 occurrences (Appendix A).

To begin a journey, the traveller must start from a specific point and prepare the necessary baggage and transport. When this attribute is mapped onto the abstract domain of the market, the beginning of a market activity is visualised as the preparation for a journey. For example:

(1) *Start* by taking DEI out of HR's limited realm and turning it into a critical part of your business development strategy. [1]

The word *start* metaphorically represents the beginning of a company's activity. The writer suggests that companies should shift from superficial DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) activities to genuine efforts to create a supportive work environment for employees. This approach may not only improve corporate culture but also attract talented people, clients, and investors, providing a competitive advantage for the business.

Few travellers embark on a journey without identifying their goals and destinations in advance. The destination of a journey is projected onto the goal of an economic activity, as illustrated by the sub-metaphor *THE RESULT OF A MARKET ACTIVITY IS THE DESTINATION OF A JOURNEY*. Economic goals motivate companies, governments, or organisations to strive for growth. For instance:

(2) Fed Chairman Jerome Powell is likely to step in to boost the economy in September… The plan is to return to a 2% inflation rate and a 2% benchmark interest rate. Exactly how we get there – through a *soft landing* or after a recession – is the question that will have markets convulsing between fresh data prints and central-bank announcements until we reach our destination. [2]

This example highlights the Fed's intervention in the market to achieve the goal of reducing inflation and benchmark interest rates to 2% through a *soft landing*. In this case, the market is talked about in terms of an aircraft, with the Fed acting as the pilot, steering the market through policies. The destination represents the goal of stimulating economic growth.

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS ARE ROADS/PATHS This sub-metaphor has three examples with 39 occurrences (Appendix A).

Based on real-life experience, after embarking on a journey, a traveller must follow a specific path in a certain direction to reach his destination. When the notion of a path is mapped onto the target domain of the market, it symbolizes the strategies or policies implemented by companies, organisations, or nations to achieve economic goals, forming the sub-metaphor BUSINESS SOLUTIONS ARE ROADS/PATHS. For example:

(3) Buybacks, which often happen when a company believes its stock is undervalued, can increase the price of the stock. …It's telling, Jain said, that companies chose that *path* rather than to invest more of their profits in producing more oil and gas. [3]

To grow a business, companies can adopt various strategies, such as buying back their own stock. This strategy is conceptualised as a path chosen by the company's leadership in the journey of building and developing the business. Through this metaphor, readers can visualise economic strategies or policies as a *path* in the conceptual domain of a journey.

Milestones, turning points, and crossroads on a road can also be understood as major changes and decisions in business. Below are some typical examples:

(4) Both the Fed and the American economy are approaching a *crossroads*. Inflation has come down …Given the progress, the critical question facing Fed officials is no longer how much economic damage it will take to wrestle price increases back under control. [4]

(5) This approval is seen as a *milestone* in legitimizing Bitcoin and Ethereum as investment assets and is expected to drive substantial capital inflows into the cryptocurrency market through multiple spot ETFs. [5]

A crossroads is a junction where two or more roads meet at the same level. At a crossroads, decisions must be made about which path to take, with each direction leading to a different outcome. In the domain of cognitive linguistics, a crossroads emphasizes critical decisions at a particular moment, when different choices can result in vastly different consequences. In example (4), the metaphor *crossroads* describes a decisive moment faced by the Federal Reserve and the U.S. economy. After a prolonged struggle with high inflation, the Fed must now decide on the next measures to control the situation. This metaphor implies urgency, as these decisions directly impact the stability and growth of the entire U.S. economy.

While both *milestone* and *crossroads* are symbolic representations of significant events in a journey, their usage differs. In example (5), the term *milestone* marks an important event in the development of the digital currency market – legalizing Bitcoin and Ethereum as investment assets. These metaphors effectively illustrate different aspects of market activities in a vivid and creative manner.

MARKET ACTIVITIES ARE MOVEMENTS DURING A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has 31 examples with 209 occurrences (Appendix A).

In a journey, taking steps is essential as each step brings the traveller closer to his destination. When projected onto the economic domain, this often refers to specific market activities, as seen in example (6):

(6) Local governments must promote building a unified market "*step by step*", he said. [6]

The phrase *step by step* metaphorically represents gradual and systematic progress towards building a unified market. This metaphor conveys the complexity of the process, requiring patience and structured implementation. It implies that every small action contributes to a bigger success.

Travellers may move in various directions – forward, backward, upward, or downward – and even stop or change course. Typically, moving in different directions yields different results; for instance, moving forward means getting closer to the goal, while moving backward implies moving farther from it. Projecting these directional movement characteristics onto market activities helps readers visualise abstract economic notions more easily. Based on universal experience, we know that UP IS GOOD, MOVING FORWARD

IS GOOD, and DOWN IS NOT GOOD, MOVING BACKWARD IS NOT GOOD. From this, we can infer that upward or forward movements symbolise *growth*, indicating high economic efficiency, profit growth, or increased labour productivity. Conversely, when the market is structured through downward or backward movements, it corresponds to reduced profits or efficiency. For example:

(7) In the days that followed, the market *jumped* or *fell* with each new piece of information, leading to a distinct tightness in every investor's chest. [7]

Jumped (upward movement) conveys market growth, while *fell* (downward movement) depicts market decline. These dynamic metaphors vividly illustrate market fluctuations, making abstract concepts more tangible for readers. In example (7), market fluctuations are metaphorised in terms of the metaphorical expressions *jumped* and *fell*. Sometimes during a journey the traveller needs to move to a higher point. In the field of economics, progress is often associated with upward movements because this state is linked to positive effects; therefore, *jumped* conceptualizes market growth. Conversely, *fell* describes movement to a lower position, so it conveys a negative message – a market decline. Universal metaphors related to physical experiences during a journey make market fluctuations more vivid and easier to understand.

Verbs describing different ways of movement also contribute to structuring the subdomain of market activities, as illustrated in the example below:

(8) The market's *laggards* have sprung to life in recent days, while the seemingly impervious 'Magnificent Seven' group of technology stocks has *stumbled*. [8]

The above example uses two metaphors. The word *stumbled*, being defined as "tripping over something due to carelessness while walking" (Hoang, 2003, p. 1106), denotes an unfavourable situation where a careless traveller, while moving forward, unexpectedly trips and falls. This metaphor relates to the subdomain of obstacles because stumbling is often caused by roadblocks. It is a novel comparison, as stock market instability is rarely visualised as a stumble caused by carelessness. *Laggards* is another intriguing metaphor that conceptualizes underperforming stocks as travellers moving at a slow pace, consequently falling behind.

In a journey, speed is a critical factor. When projected onto the source domain of the market, the speed of movement reflects two scenarios: first, a rapidly developing market, and second, a slowly developing market. These form two sub-metaphors: A RAPIDLY DEVELOPING MARKET IS FAST MOVEMENT DURING A JOURNEY and A SLOWLY DEVELOPING MARKET IS SLOW MOVEMENT DURING A JOURNEY. For example:

(9) When the Fed lowers interest rates, as it is preparing to do, it takes that pressure off and can allow the economy to *speed* back *up*. [9]

(10) The signs that the economy is *slowing* are neither unexpected nor unintended. [10]

In example (9), the U.S. economy is expected to grow faster when the Fed lowers interest rates, just like a traveller *speeding up* in favourable conditions. Conversely, economic stagnation is visualised through the image of a traveller *slowing down* when feeling fatigued, uncomfortable, or facing an unfavourable situation (example (10)). In this case, the market's growth rate is compared to the speed of movement during a journey.

MARKET DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTACLES DURING A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has six metaphorical words with 13 occurrences (Appendix A).

A road/path is not always smooth. Travellers may encounter numerous obstacles, such as geographical barriers (e.g., a bumpy road), psychological challenges (e.g., hesitation when choosing a path or destination, fatigue, or discouragement), and physical impediments (e.g., barriers, bumps, crashes, or getting stuck). Similarly, market participants, such as investors and businesses, face various challenges and difficulties conceptualised as obstacles on the road/path. For example:

(11) When 1990 came around, Japan entered its "lost decade" of financial woes and the American stock market *crashed*; half the contemporary artworks offered in major auctions that fall failed to sell. [11]

In this example, the collapse of the American stock market is perceived as a *crash*, evoking a sense of panic and uncertainty similar to a sudden, uncontrollable accident. This metaphor implies that recovery, like repairing the aftermath of a crash, requires significant time and effort. The notion of obstacles helps readers understand the difficulties faced in the market and conveys deeper insights into the nature of investment and business.

BUSINESS STRATEGIES ARE TOOLS FOR A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has three metaphorical words with 19 occurrences (Appendix A).

While obstacles represent market challenges, tools such as a *compass*, *guide*, or *map* are encoded as business strategies for companies or organisations. For example:

(12) *Navigating* Life And Business: The Power Of Your Internal Compass. We *started with an open slate* and shaped our divining *compass points* according to the *journey* we have followed to get here. [12]

This example combines four metaphors – *compass*, *points*, *navigating*, and *journey* – to vividly illustrate the process of development, decision-making, and goal-setting in life and business. *Started with an open slate* symbolizes the starting point and initial steps of a journey. To reach their destination, travellers rely on a *compass* to *navigate* and identify key *points* or objectives along the way. In this context, the internal *compass* is metaphorically encoded to represent the principles, goals, or philosophies of individuals or organisations that guide decisions and actions towards achieving established objectives.

4.2 The Conceptual Metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in Vietnamese Economic News

In Vietnamese economic news, the market is often conceptualised as a journey, enabling readers to better grasp market-related events and phenomena. This metaphor is divided into the following subcategories:

THE BEGINNING/RESULT OF A MARKET ACTIVITY IS THE STARTING POINT/DESTINATION OF A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has five metaphorical words with 10 occurrences (Appendix B).

The start and end of a market activity are often envisioned as the starting point and destination of a journey. Consider the following examples:

(13) Khác với các công ty bảo hiểm "lão làng" trên thị trường, OPES định hướng trở thành công ty bảo hiểm số ngay từ *điểm xuất phát*. [13]
[Unlike well-established insurance companies in the market, OPES has aimed to become a digital insurance company right from its *starting point*.]

(14) Để về *đích* với mục tiêu tăng trưởng xuất khẩu 6% trong năm 2024, nửa cuối năm còn lại, gánh nặng vẫn đổ lên vai các ngành hàng xuất khẩu lớn và các cơ quan quản lý, điều hành xuất nhập khẩu trong việc sớm nắm bắt thông tin thị trường, các xu hướng tiêu dùng mới, quy định mới từ các nhà nhập khẩu để thông tin và điều hành kịp thời. [14]
[To reach the *destination* of 6% export growth in 2024, in the remaining half of the year, major export sectors and regulatory agencies managing import and export operations have to shoulder the burden of promptly capturing market trends, new consumption habits, and import regulations for timely actions.]

Based on real-life experiences, we know that every journey begins with a starting point, and similarly, every economic activity must have an initial stage. This could be the commencement of a project or the

establishment of a new company, as illustrated in example (13). *Điểm xuất phát* 'starting point' is a conceptualisation of the foundation of OPES. Since there is a great deal of work to do before setting up a company, its establishment is metaphorically described as preparing for and embarking on a journey.

Every journey also has a destination or specific goal. A traveller embarks on a journey and moves along a path to reach a predetermined location. The same applies to the market, where economic activities are directed towards achieving specific objectives, primarily maximizing profits. Therefore, achieving a goal in an economic activity can be conceptualised as reaching the destination of a journey. The metaphor implies patience and resilience, as every road/path finally leads to the destination. In example (14), the target of achieving a 6% export growth rate in 2024 is conceived as the *destination* of a journey. Throughout this process, tasks such as gathering market information and managing export–import operations are likened to the road/path businesses and regulatory agencies must traverse. Challenges in the export process, such as rapidly changing market information and new regulations imposed by importers, are comprehended as obstacles on the journey. Meanwhile, exporters and regulatory agencies are seen as travellers undertaking this journey.

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS ARE ROADS/PATHS This sub-metaphor has three metaphorical expressions with nine occurrences (Appendix B).

A road/path is the route a traveller takes to reach a destination. In business, it symbolizes strategies, solutions, or policies. For example:

(15) Ông Nguyễn Thọ Tuyển – Chủ tịch HĐQT Công ty Cổ phần Bất động sản BHS (BHS Group) cho rằng, lãi suất ngân hàng thấp kỷ lục, khoảng 8 triệu tỷ tiền gửi ngân hàng đang *tìm đường* vào bất động sản để giữ tài sản. [15]
[Nguyen Tho Tuyen, Chairman of the Board of Directors of BHS Group, said that with record-low interest rates, around 8 trillion VND in bank deposits is *finding its way* into real estate as a means of preserving assets.]

Tìm đường 'finding its way' metaphorically refers to seeking a financial solution amid economic fluctuations, and investment in real estate is portrayed as a feasible *way* to protect assets. The flow of money is personified as a *traveller* who chooses the most suitable *way* to achieve a goal. This metaphor vividly illustrates economic trends and factors affecting the real estate market, making the information engaging and accessible.

MARKET ACTIVITIES ARE MOVEMENTS DURING A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has 18 metaphorical expressions with 102 occurrences (Appendix B).

Movements like *bước* 'step', *tiến* 'advance', or *lùi* 'step backwards' are used to describe market activities. In a journey, travellers must move forward to reach the destination. This embodied experience forms the basis for the metaphors MOVING FORWARD IS GOOD and MOVING BACKWARD IS NOT GOOD. This movement is mapped onto the economic domain to describe market development or economic achievements. For example:

(16) *Khe cửa hẹp* cho BYD *tiến* vào Châu Âu. Sau nhiều tháng điều tra, Liên minh châu Âu đã công bố mức thuế bổ sung đối với xe điện (EV) nhập khẩu từ Trung Quốc, vì những gì mà họ cho là sự hỗ trợ không công bằng của Bắc Kinh đối với các công ty làm suy yếu các nhà sản xuất ô tô châu Âu. Trong số những nhà sản xuất Trung Quốc, BYD được xem vẫn có "tuyệt chiêu" để lách vào thị trường này. [16]
[A *narrow doorway* for BYD to *advance* towards Europe. After months of investigation, the EU announced additional tariffs on Chinese-imported electric vehicles, citing unfair subsidies from Beijing to defeat European car manufacturers. Among Chinese manufacturers, BYD is seen as having a 'trump card' to squeeze into this market.]

(17) Rổ VN30 có 25 mã giảm, 5 mã đứng giá và không có cổ phiếu nào *lùi* xuống dưới tham chiếu. [17]
[Within the VN30 basket, 25 stocks decreased, 5 remained unchanged, and none *stepped backwards* below the reference level.]

In example (16), *tiến* 'advance' means "moving straight ahead" (Hoang, 2003, p. 986), and this motion is projected onto the target domain to symbolise BYD's continuous efforts to overcome barriers and penetrate a competitive new market like Europe. *Khe cửa hẹp* 'narrow doorway' reflects the obstacles BYD faces when trying to enter the European market. Conversely, *lùi* 'stepped backwards', as in example (17), describes movement away from the destination. This image is transferred to the economic domain to signify a decline in stock prices. In both examples, there is a projection of movement direction onto the increase or decrease of assets or value.

There is also some correspondence between economic growth and the speed of movement. Moving fast means economic development and vice versa. For instance:

(18) Thông qua bức tranh của ngành nông nghiệp và thực tiễn của Lộc Trời, ông Huỳnh Văn Thòn kỳ vọng chính sách, đối sách hợp lý được ban hành để doanh nghiệp thoát khỏi tình trạng "bấp bênh", *đi nhanh* cũng không được, *đi chậm* cũng không xong. [18]
[Given the current situation of the agricultural industry and Lộc Trời, Mr. Huỳnh Văn Thòn expresses hope for suitable policies and solutions to help businesses escape the "precarious" state in which neither *speeding up* nor *slowing down* is effective.]

In this quote, Mr. Huỳnh Văn Thòn describes the precarious state of the business, in which neither *speeding up* nor *slowing down* yields effective results. *Đi nhanh* 'speeding up' metaphorically represents a desire for rapid growth or business expansion. However, growing too quickly can lead to risks such as insufficient capital, declining product quality, and difficulties in management. *Đi chậm* 'slowing down' corresponds to slow development or even stagnation. If the business moves too slowly, competitors may overtake it, resulting in lost opportunities for growth.

This metaphor illustrates the dilemma faced by businesses like Lộc Trời, which find themselves unable to grow too quickly yet unable to remain unchanged. The business resembles a vehicle navigating a road full of potholes and sharp turns. If it moves too fast, the vehicle risks overturning; if it moves too slowly, it risks being overtaken by others.

MARKET DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTACLES DURING A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has three metaphorical expressions with five occurrences (Appendix B).

From our experience, we know that a journey always involves unforeseen challenges. Along the way, travellers may encounter obstacles or difficulties that hinder progress, and to reach the destination, they must overcome these challenges. Obstacles on the road serve as metaphors for difficulties and challenges in the market, forming the sub-metaphor MARKET DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTACLES DURING A JOURNEY. The metaphor warns market participants of the risks and difficulties involved in participating in the market which require suitable skills and strategic planning to deal with. For example:

(19) *Gập ghềnh* xây dựng chuỗi lúa gạo bền vững. Nhớ lại *hành trình* phát triển chuỗi lúa gạo bền vững, ông Huỳnh Văn Thòn thừa nhận rằng nhiều lúc Tập đoàn Lộc Trời như "cầm đèn chạy trước ô tô". [19]
[The *bumpy road* to building a sustainable rice chain. Reflecting on the *journey* of developing a sustainable rice chain, Mr. Huỳnh Văn Thòn admitted that there were times when Lộc Trời Group acted as if it were 'holding a lamp while running ahead of a car.']

(20) Hạ tầng đầy "*ổ gà*". Quy hoạch hạ tầng thiếu sự đồng bộ, thiếu sự điều tiết từ cơ quan quản lý nhà nước đang là một trong những *điểm nghẽn* lớn nhất của ngành logistics. Đối với địa phương, quy hoạch hạ tầng còn mang tính hình thức, thiếu sự địa phương hóa theo đặc thù, thế mạnh của từng vùng, miền. [20]
[Infrastructure full of '*potholes*'. The lack of synchronised infrastructure planning and ineffective

regulations from state management agencies are among the biggest *bottlenecks* for the logistics industry. At the local level, infrastructure planning is often superficial and not based on the unique characteristics and strengths of each region.]

Gập ghềnh 'bumpy' and *ổ gà* 'potholes' symbolise challenges and difficulties on the *road* to conquering the market. In a journey, potholes and bumpy roads force travellers to slow down, stop, or find ways to overcome them to continue their trip. Similarly, in business activities, *ổ gà* 'potholes' and *gập ghềnh* 'bumpy road' hinder or delay a company's progress towards its goals. In (19), *bumpy road* projects the image of an uneven path, symbolizing the long-term challenges a company faces while striving to build a sustainable rice chain. These challenges are not specific but rather ongoing difficulties that require continuous effort to overcome. In contrast, *potholes* in (20) describe small holes or damage on the road – specific obstacles that hinder the journey. In this context, *potholes* represent concrete issues in logistics infrastructure planning, such as lack of synchronisation, ineffective regulation, and impractical planning. Compared to *bumpy road*, *potholes* are more specific since they focus on smaller yet critical aspects that hinder logistics operations. In a word, both examples highlight how market difficulties are conceptualised through the mapping from a tangible notion of road to the economic domain.

BUSINESS STRATEGIES ARE TOOLS FOR A JOURNEY This sub-metaphor has one metaphorical expression with one occurrence (Appendix B).

Just like a necessary tool which supports a journey, a business strategy plays a crucial role in helping a company overcome challenges in the market. While obstacles on the road symbolise difficulties, tools such as a compass represent the strategies and plans that businesses devise to achieve their goals. For example:

(21) Riêng tại Chubb Life cũng đang cải tiến theo hướng ngắn gọn và dễ hiểu, có các bản tóm tắt quy tắc và điều khoản bên cạnh quy tắc và điều khoản sản phẩm đầy đủ. Chúng tôi tập trung lấy lợi ích của khách hàng là *kim chỉ nam* …[21]
[At Chubb Life, we are aiming at simplicity and clarity by providing product term and condition summaries alongside the full versions. We consider customer benefits as our *compass* …]

Literally, a compass is "a device with a needle that shows direction, a tool that helps travellers navigate their way and avoid getting lost" (Hoang, 2003, p. 527). In a business context, *kim chỉ nam* 'compass' symbolizes the principles, strategies, or core values that guide an organisation towards success. It is the element that directs every decision, action, and strategy of the company.

In example (21), the phrase *consider customer benefits as our compass* emphasizes that customer benefits are the ultimate goal and the guiding factor for all activities at Chubb Life. By using the *compass* metaphor, Chubb Life underscores its commitment to customers. This metaphor not only conveys a clear message but also creates a positive image of a company that makes customer benefits their first priority.

MARKET PARTICIPANTS ARE TRAVELLERS This sub-metaphor has one metaphorical expression with one occurrence (Appendix B).

Market participants can be metaphorised in terms of travellers. For instance:

(22) Tuy nhiên, với chiến lược phát triển đúng đắn và sự *đồng hành* của cả chính phủ và doanh nghiệp, Việt Nam hoàn toàn có thể trở thành một trung tâm bán dẫn trong khu vực và trên thế giới. [22]
[However, with the right development strategy and the *company* of both the government and businesses, Vietnam can surely become a semiconductor hub in the region and the world.]

In the example above, market participants, specifically businesses, are depicted as travellers on a journey. Both the government and businesses play the role of companions travelling together on the path of developing the semiconductor industry. The government provides a supportive environment and favourable policies (similar to providing maps, compasses, or guiding tools for a journey), while businesses implement specific strategies and actions (similar to taking steps along the path to gradually reach the destination).

4.3 Comparison of the Conceptual Metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English and Vietnamese Economic News

A comparative analysis of the conceptual metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English and Vietnamese economic news reveals a fascinating interplay between universal cognitive structures and culturally specific linguistic expressions. This finding aligns with the conclusion by Kövecses (2005) that conceptual metaphors can be both universal and culture-specific. While the underlying metaphorical framework is remarkably consistent, its frequency, specific manifestations, and rhetorical framing show significant differences.

Qualitatively, there is a significant disparity in the number of metaphorical expressions and their occurrences in English and Vietnamese economic news: 46 metaphorical expressions and 312 occurrences in English compared to 31 metaphorical expressions and 128 occurrences in Vietnamese (Table 1). This difference in frequency illustrates the cultural variability of metaphor, which, as Kövecses (2015) suggests, is often shaped by unique historical and social factors. Historically, the higher prevalence of journey-related metaphors in the American context reflects the country's long-standing cultural emphasis on expansion of territory, influence, and values. Thus, the journey concept is deeply intertwined with American values and beliefs (T. N. T. Nguyen, 2024). In contrast, the lower frequency in Vietnamese news, which draws from a culture often characterised as more static and influenced by Eastern philosophy (H. H. Nguyen, 2004), could point to different conventionalised rhetorical strategies for discussing economic phenomena.

Cognitively, there is substantial similarity in the mapping schema across the two languages. This shared cognitive structure corroborates the theoretical position of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2005), demonstrating that metaphorical universality often stems from common embodied experiences, such as the act of taking a journey. This is evident in the common construction of six sub-metaphors derived from prominent attributes of the source domain, including starting point/destination, roads/paths, movements, obstacles, tools, and travellers. However, the finding also highlights the cultural specificity of the metaphor, a principle noted in the work of Deignan et al. (1997). The sub-metaphor MARKET PARTICIPANTS ARE TRAVELLERS only appears in Vietnamese data, illustrating the cultural specificity characteristic of conceptual metaphor. This unique mapping suggests a cultural emphasis on collectivism and partnership as integral to the economic "journey", a nuance not explicitly found in the English data. Furthermore, the analysis confirms the partial nature of metaphorical mapping in both languages. While movement is the most prominent attribute, other aspects of a journey, such as purpose, time, means of transport, distance travelled, and the emotions of travellers, are not systematically mapped.

Communicatively, the metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY implies encouragement for patience, as every road/path – long or short, difficult or smooth – leads to a destination. It also conveys the unpredictable difficulties along the journey, necessitating skill and strategic planning to reach the goal. Additionally, the journey metaphor inherently suggests the risks involved in participating in the market. By framing market activities as part of a journey, this metaphor facilitates the comprehension of abstract economic concepts and shapes the attitudes of market participants, emphasizing the importance of resilience and foresight.

5 Conclusion

This study highlights the two-sided nature of conceptual metaphor: it can be universal in its basic structure but specific in its cultural use. The research reveals that while both languages employ similar attributes to metaphorise market activities, demonstrating the universality of conceptual metaphors that likely stem from shared human experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the prevalence of this metaphor varies between them. The United States, with its emphasis on growth and progress, seems to favour the journey metaphor more than Vietnam, which, influenced by Eastern philosophy, may prioritise steadiness and balance. Interestingly, Vietnamese data uniquely includes the sub-metaphor MARKET PARTICIPANTS ARE TRAVELLERS, which shows the diverse ways in which cultures can adapt and expand upon a core metaphor. The journey metaphor, prevalent in both languages, serves a crucial communicative function by simplifying complex economic concepts and encouraging participants to approach market activities with patience, resilience, and strategic planning.

This study aims to establish a framework for classifying subtypes of market-related metaphors in English and Vietnamese, contributing to both theoretical understanding of cognitive linguistics and practical applications. The research findings have practical implications for language teaching and learning as well as translation by aiding in the understanding and effective communication of market-related concepts in both languages. Moreover, the research can benefit journalists and policy-makers by providing insights into how to effectively communicate market-related ideas to the public.

This study only focuses on conceptual metaphor mappings from the source domain of JOURNEY to the target domain of MARKET in economic news. Future research could broaden the scope by exploring other source domains such as WAR, PEOPLE, and WEATHER, investigating MARKET as a source domain, or examining different text genres for a more comprehensive perspective. Moreover, the corpus size of 50 articles per language may limit the statistical generalizability of the frequency findings. Therefore, future large-scale corpus studies could build upon this research to verify the patterns across a broader dataset.

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A Statistical Data of the Conceptual Metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in English Economic News

Sub-metaphor	Source domain attribute		Metaphorical expression	Number of occurrences	Metaphorical expression	Number of occurrences
THE BEGINNING / RESULT OF A MARKET ACTIVITY IS THE STARTING POINT / DESTINATION OF A JOURNEY	*Starting point of a journey*		Embark	2	Start	27
	Destination of a journey		Destination	3		
BUSINESS SOLUTIONS ARE ROADS / PATHS	*Roads/paths*		Crossroad	28	Milestone	8
			Path	3		
MARKET ACTIVITIES ARE MOVEMENTS DURING A JOURNEY	*Movements during a journey*	*Movement*	Move	12	Step	16
			Stumble	1	Balance	6
		Forward movement	Advance	2	Approach	8
			Head	1		
		Upward movement	Climb	16	Go up	4
			Jump	3	Leap	1
			Rise	11		
		Backward movement	Backtrack	1	Laggard	1
			Lag behind	3	Step backwards	1
		Downward movement	Go down	17	Fall	18
			Plummet	5		
		Stop	Stop	9	Halt	1
		Change in direction	Comeback	3	Return	14
			Reverse	1		
		Speed of movement	Pace	6	Speed	3
			Accelerate	3	Speed up	1
			Hike	5	Inch	1
			Slow	35		
MARKET DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTACLES DURING A JOURNEY	*Obstacles during a journey*		Barrier	2	Bump	2
			Bumpy	4	Crash	1
			Pothole	1	Stuck	3
BUSINESS STRATEGIES ARE TOOLS FOR A JOURNEY	*Tools for a journey*		Compass	12	Guide	6
			Map	1		

B Statistical Data of the Conceptual Metaphor MARKET IS A JOURNEY in Vietnamese Economic News

Sub-metaphor	Source domain attribute		Metaphorical expression	Number of occurrences	Metaphorical expression	Number of occurrences
THE BEGINNING / RESULT OF A MARKET ACTIVITY IS THE STARTING POINT / DESTINATION OF A JOURNEY	*Starting point of a journey*		Điểm xuất phát (starting point)	2	Mốc số 0 (zero milestone)	1
			Điểm khởi đầu (starting point)	3		
	Destination of a journey		Điểm đến (destination)	3	Đích (destination)	1
BUSINESS SOLUTIONS ARE ROADS / PATHS	*Roads/paths*		Đường (road/path/way)	5	Mốc (milestone)	3
			Ngã ba đường (crossroad)	1		
MARKET ACTIVITIES ARE MOVEMENTS DURING A JOURNEY	*Movements during a journey*	*Movement*	Bước (step)	13		
		Forward movement	Tiến (advance)	8		
		Upward movement	Đi lên (go up)	4		
		Backward movement	Lùi (step backwards)	6	Tụt hậu (lag behind)	2
		Downward movement	Đi xuống (go down)	1	Lao dốc (plummet)	16
		Stop	Dậm chân tại chỗ (standstill)	1	Đứng yên (halt)	2
		Change in direction	Quay trở lại (return)	10		
		Speed of movement	Bứt tốc (accelerate)	4	Tăng tốc (accelerate)	6
			Chạy (run)	7	Đi nhanh (speed up)	3
			Nhích nhẹ (inch)	2	Đi chậm (slow down)	2
			Chậm chân (move slowly)	1	Tốc độ (speed)	14
MARKET DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTACLES DURING A JOURNEY	*Obstacles during a journey*		Gập ghềnh (bumpy)	2	Ổ gà (pothole)	2
			Rào chắn (barrier)	1		
BUSINESS STRATEGIES ARE TOOLS FOR A JOURNEY	*Tools for a journey*		Kim chỉ nam (compass)	1		
MARKET PARTICIPANTS ARE TRAVELERS	*Travellers*		Đồng hành (company)	1		

Acknowledgment
The author wishes to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

The publication was financed at the author's expense.

The author declares that she has no competing interests.

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Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland
Publishing history: Received 2024-08-01; Accepted 2025-07-26; Published 2025-12-31.