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The Language of Tourism on the Web: an analysis of Tripadvisor reviews

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an ancient phenomenon which has developed through time, eventually becoming one of the most influential industries in the world economy. The advent of the internet, and with it the emergence of new channels of communication, have led to a great revolution in the field of tourism, at all levels. Starting from the 1990s, the language of tourism has been a subject of research. Various studies have highlighted its interdisciplinarity and heterogeneous character. These characteristics have developed over time, in particular, with the constant progress of technology, tourism discourse has had the need to adapt to the new media sources. The Web has enabled the connection of millions of people from throughout the world and users can produce their own content. Numerous virtual spaces have developed, where tourists share information regarding the tourism destinations. These new spaces present new linguistic features in order to adapt to the peculiar characteristics of the Web, such as interactivity and multimodality. The growth of virtual spaces is accompanied by the evolution of textual genres, which comply with the peculiarities of the medium. Among these new tourism genres, travel blogs and tourism websites in particular have been object of research, whereas little space has been devoted to the analysis of online travel reviews. Many studies in this regard have focused mostly on the strong influence of user-generated content and the impact they have on the decision-making process of tourists. However, they do not address the language issue to a great extent.

Thus, the purpose of the present dissertation is to analyse the evolution that the tourism sector has undergone, particularly at a linguistic level. It aims at the investigation of the linguistic features of online travel reviews and intends to analyse how internet users demonstrate their satisfaction with the tourism destinations visited. The Research Questions address the following issues: Which lexico-grammatical features do tourists use most to demonstrate satisfaction in an online context? Could we consider this particular area of tourism as a specific language, which relies on a set of standards and conventions? What features do online travel reviews share with other genres of tourism discourse? To what extent could online travel reviews be considered as part of tourism

discourse? In order to answer these questions, a corpus of travel reviews from Tripadvisor has been collected and analysed.

This work is made up of four chapters, the first three focusing on the analysis of the language of tourism and its evolution, with the description of the principal textual genres. The fourth chapter instead contains a corpus-based analysis which aims at the investigation of the linguistic choices of tourists in an online context.

Chapter 1 focuses on the language of tourism in general. After giving a description of the elements which characterise a specialised language, I have investigated whether tourism discourse can be considered as specialised discourse, through a reviews of principal studies on the field. What results is the complexity of such language, which can be regarded as specialised since it presents its own features and terminology, although different from other kinds of specialised languages. To follow, the main features of such language are described, in particular the lexical and morphosyntactic features and the verbal techniques adopted. A further section is dedicated to the communicative dimension of the language of tourism, as the specificity of this lies at the communicative level. Then, the functions which the language of tourism performs are explored. As a language of social control, particular attention is given to the element of persuasion, useful in the promotion of a destination to turn potential tourists into actual ones.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the textual genres of tourism discourse. The first part of the chapter provides a brief introduction and definition of textual genres and their criteria of classification. The peculiarity of the language of tourism is also noticeable at a textual level: it is difficult to make a precise classification of tourism genres, given the hybridisation between them. A major distinction can be made between texts for experts of the field and texts for the public. In the wide variety of tourism texts, the principal and traditional ones have been described, especially in terms of their linguistic features and purposes. They are: tourist guidebooks, travel articles, leaflets and brochures and tourism advertising texts.

Chapter 3 deals with web-mediated communication. The first section provides a historical outline of the tourism as a phenomenon, from its ancient origins to modern day. In particular, with the advent of the internet, a new kind of tourism has developed.

This results in a new figure of tourist, who has new opportunities and therefore new requirements. The transformations in tourism promotion and communication have meant that also tourism texts need to adapt to the necessities of the new tourist and to the peculiarities of new media. This chapter provides the description of the main web-mediated forms of tourism communication: commercial and promotional websites, travel blogs and online travel reviews, on which the present study focuses its attention.

Chapter 4 brings together the themes of the first three chapters. It presents a corpus-based analysis aimed at the investigation of online travel reviews. Through the analysis of 100 reviews collected from Tripadvisor site, composing the corpus, I have been able to identify the principal linguistic choices of tourists in describing and evaluating their experience. The study consists of various parts: a keyword analysis, a lexicogrammatical analysis and an appraisal analysis. The last section deals with the comparison of online travel reviews with tourism texts, which have been described in Chapter 2 and 3, in order to see whether they can be regarded as an integral part of the language of tourism. The results of the study will show the principal linguistic features of online travel reviews and their inclusion within the language of tourism.

CHAPTER 1. THE LANGUAGE OF TOURISM

Tourism is a phenomenon existing from ancient times, which has acquired new dimensions and different features over the ages, and so has its language. In this chapter I will first investigate whether tourism discourse should be considered a specialised language, through the analysis of various authors' definitions. In the second part of the chapter the main features of the language of tourism, specifically its lexical and morphosyntactic characteristics, are described. A further section is devoted to the textual techniques. Then, the principal functions of this language are defined. The last section will analyse the element of persuasion, which designates an important part of tourism discourse, aimed at promoting destinations to potential tourists.

1.1 The language of tourism as a specialised discourse

Tourism has been widely studied from a social, economic and historical perspective, and, especially in the English language, from an anthropological and ethnographic point of view. Gradually, due to the fact that tourism has become one of the biggest industries in the world, the demand for specialisation in this field is steadily increasing. Only since the 1990s has tourism started to be investigated also from a linguistic perspective, in particular on account of Graham Dann¹, whose work, *The language of tourism: a sociolinguistic perspective*, shows that the language of tourism has a discourse of its own. He was the first one to examine tourism as a language *per se*, that is, as a language which organises the discourse according to specific lexical, morphosyntactic choices and specific textual structures. He placed the language of tourism within the area of specialised languages and has encouraged additional studies, in particular with regard to the linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects of such discourse. The delay in considering the language of tourism as a specialised language, as compared to such an ancient phenomenon, is due to two principal features: its interdisciplinarity and its level of specialisation (Muñoz, 2010: 32).

As a matter of fact scholars found difficulties in defining the nature of the language of tourism, as this field is highly influenced by other disciplines. Moreover, the

¹ A British tourism researcher (1941-2018).

heterogeneous nature of its community should be taken into consideration, since it includes both professionals of the industry and simple tourists (Agorni, 2012: 6). The language of tourism is characterised by a peculiar variety, which lacks the uniformity of an extended subject area. Additionally, the recipients of tourism texts often are non-specialists in the area, and this makes the discourse closer to general language. Calvi (2005: 33) defines the language of tourism as “un linguaggio dalla fisionomia sfuggente”; it has borders which are not clearly defined and includes different communicative functions, that are informative, persuasive and argumentative. On the other hand, on a professional level, tourism presents a well-defined physiognomy, which is articulated into several sectors and consists of various professional figures (experts in communication, tour guides, tour operators, etc.) (Calvi, 2005: 43).

The thematic component² of this language comes from the combination of numerous technical and disciplinary fields, such as geography, economics, sociology, psychology, but also art, food, sport, events and any other areas, which are potentially infinite because they depend on the fields that are employed each time to describe or enhance the touristic experience to be promoted. In addition, the language of tourism can be easily considered close to the current non-specialised language, both because of the great spread of the tourism experience, and also because the several thematic subject areas are strictly connected with general language. Yet the closeness of the language of tourism to general language is also determined by the fact that the majority of the texts in such sector are intended for the general public. This state of affairs caused the language of tourism not to be regarded as a specialised discourse for a long time. Things began to change when the need of a changing society for a professional subject-domain became urgent, as Sager (in Nigro, 2006: 48) states: “special languages develop in direct response to socio-economic change”. Since the language is a social institution, it adapts and changes, conforming to the needs of society. When a specific professional area grows, the need for a specific specialised terminology increases as a result (Crevatin, 2002: 2).

The inclusion of the language of tourism within the area of specialised languages is an open and debated issue. After the intense work of Dann in the area, in the early 2000s

² Cortelazzo (1999) identifies two different dimensions in a specialised language, which are the thematic component and the communicative one.

there has been a proliferation of studies which analyse the tourism discourse as a specialised discourse. Italian scholars, including Calvi, Francesconi, Gotti, Nigro, in particular, have focused on the analysis of the lexical, morphosyntactic and textual features of the language of tourism.

It is not simple to give a standard definition of what is meant by “specialised language”. According to Agorni (2012), it depends on the adopted methodological approaches. For instance, Sager *et al* (1980) (in Agorni, 2012: 1) indicate economy, precision and appropriateness as specific markers of specialised discourse; and Gotti (2005) argues that a language, to be defined as specialised, needs to present three important elements, which are the type of user, domain of use, use of the language in a specific setting. In particular, Gotti, with the expression “specialized discourse”, refers to a language that “reflects more clearly the specialist use of the language in contexts which are typical of a specialized community stretching across the academic, the professional, the technical and the occupational areas of knowledge and practice” (Gotti, 2005: 24). Cortelazzo (1994) speaks of “special language” to refer to

una varietà funzionale di una lingua naturale, dipendente da un settore di conoscenze o da una sfera di attività specialistiche, utilizzata da un gruppo di parlanti più ristretto, [...] per soddisfare i bisogni comunicativi dei parlanti di un determinato settore specialistico³ (in Scarpa, 2001: 1).

Although there are different terms to which to refer and several interpretations, a definition of specialised language is given by CERLIS⁴: “si definiscono linguaggi specialistici quei sottosistemi della lingua comune che vengono utilizzati in ambiti professionali, tecnici o scientifici, a scopo descrittivo o comunicativo”⁵ (Gotti, 2006: 11).

What distinguishes specialised languages from general language most is the lexis. However, given the extension of the field of tourism, it is difficult to define the specificity of its language. In particular, Hoffman (in Muñoz, 2010: 33) proposes a classification of specialised lexicon into three different categories: specific vocabulary,

³ [My translation] “a functional variety of a natural language, which depends on a specialised area of knowledge or activity, and which is used by a smaller group of speakers, [...] to satisfy communicative needs of the speakers of a specific specialised field”.

⁴ CERLIS (Centro di Ricerca sui Linguaggi Specialistici) was founded in 1999 and is directed by Maurizio Gotti, from University of Bergamo.

⁵ [My translation] “specialised languages are defined as those subsystems of the common language, which are used in professional, technical or scientific fields, with a descriptive or communicative purpose”.

i.e. highly specialised terms; common specific vocabulary, i.e. common words which are semantically restricted into the specialised field of interest; and general vocabulary, i.e. common words which are used without any semantic variation. Hence, the lexicon of specialised languages does not only comprehend highly specialised terms, but also words from the common language (Nigro, 2006: 52). Likewise, in tourism texts we can find examples of all three of Hoffman's categories of lexicon. The specific vocabulary of the language of tourism derives from the different areas of study that characterise it, but for the most part, the terms of the language of tourism belong to general language.

Calvi (2005: 52), on the basis of the classification suggested by Hoffman, identifies three levels of specialisation of the language of tourism as well:

- 1- A more specific lexical core, which includes technical and professional features pertaining to tourist organisations (travel agency), structures (hotel, restaurants), services, etc.;
- 2- Terms which derive from different fields but acquire a specific tourism dimension, meaning those words that, even when extracted from their context of usage, are immediately traced back to the language of tourism;
- 3- Terms that can be considered part of the language of tourism only in relation to single contexts of usage. For example, tourism texts are rich in terms belonging to art and landscape descriptions, which lack a specific tourism meaning. Within this category, we also find cultural terms or *realia*, which are words belonging to the host culture, in particular to the field of art, gastronomy, craftsmanship, social events.

If we consider the lexicon as the main element that distinguishes a specialised language from the non-specialised language, then we could reasonably argue that the language of tourism cannot be treated as specialised discourse. As a matter of fact, the tourism industry lacks a specific lexicon. It is instead very close to common language.

However, the literature is rich in studies that allow us to conclude that the language of tourism can be fully considered as a specialised discourse. Among others, some relevant authors, Calvi, Dann and Kelly, assert that tourism language shows some particular linguistic features that justify its inclusion in the area of specialised languages (Muñoz: 32). Calvi (2005: 43), in particular defines the language of tourism as:

la lingua di specialità propria di un particolare ambito professionale, suddiviso in molteplici settori, la cui componente tematica proviene dalla combinazione di diversi aspetti tecnici e disciplinari.⁶

The language of tourism has its own features and terminology, which make it different from other specialised languages. There are several elements that set the language of tourism apart from other kinds of specialised languages. In particular, Agorni (2012: 4) establishes three main features. Firstly, the language of tourism has no restriction in terms of usage. We can though make a distinction between the variety of experts and the language instead used for tourism promotion, which is more largely spread. Secondly, the referential needs of professionals of the field are lower compared to other traditional subject domains, such as Economics or Law. Moreover, there is a higher level of interchange between tourism discourse and general language. Finally, although the referential needs are low, the communicative needs of tourists are complex. Whereas other specialised languages are distinguished by a highly specialised lexicon, the specificity of the language of tourism is situated at a communicative level (Agorni, 2012: 6).

Even though the language of tourism is a variety addressing a general audience who do not need a specific competence in the field, it is actually structured on the basis of a specific register and techniques. Dann defines the language of tourism as “a special type of communication, one which differs from other forms of human exchange” (Dann, 1996: 1). By applying Gotti’s (2005) definition of specialised language to the language of tourism, we can define it as “un sottosistema della lingua comune”, as it has its own lexical, morphological, and textual structures. To conclude, in light of the fact that the language of tourism is structured according to specific registers and differs from everyday communication (Nigro, 2006: 40), it can qualify as a particular type of specialised language. Although tourism is characterised by the presence of different subject areas, it is made homogenous by specific features at a lexical, morphosyntactic and textual level.

⁶ [My translation] “the specialty language specific to a particular professional field, which is divided into various sectors, whose thematic component derives from the combination of several technical and disciplinary aspects”.

1.2 The main features of tourism discourse

1.2.1 Lexical features

Lexicon is the most distinguishing characteristic of specialised discourse. Yet, as concerns tourism discourse, as we have seen above, highly specific sector-based lexicon is adopted only by professional figures of the management-organisational area (Elia, 2018: 125). On the other hand, the area related to the product sale employs words which derive from other disciplines or from general language. The main lexical characteristics of the language of tourism are: monoreferentiality, conciseness, use of emphatic language, great use of adjectives.

Monoreferentiality is the most distinctive feature of the lexicon and refers to the fact that in a given context only one meaning is allowed. Specialised lexis is indeed characterised by semantic uniqueness, i.e. the equivalence between a word and the meaning it refers to (Gotti, 2006: 22). The exact semantic relationship between a word and its meaning guarantees conciseness and precision, and ensures the reduction of ambiguity to the minimum, due to the prevalence of denotation, as every term signals a specific concept. The referential nature of terminology in specialised languages guarantees the immediacy, and reduces ambiguity and polysemy; it complies with the requirements of clarity, precision, transparency and usability, which are typical of the language of tourism. The need for a single referent means that users are often forced to create new terms in order to define new concepts (new services or new tasks in the sector) without ambiguity or misunderstandings (Gotti, 2006: 23). These new terms lead to the development of specialised lexis. They are created by means of processes of word-formation which are similar to the processes of other specialised languages, such as derivation, composition, incorporation of foreign words (loan words or calque), and semantic redetermination of unities belonging to common language; but also through the use of acronyms (Nigro, 2006: 57).

Monoreferentiality and precision are also connected with conciseness. This means that concepts need to be expressed in the shortest possible form, and this results in techniques such as blending, which is the process of merging two lexemes into a single term (ecotourism < ecological + tourism; motel < motor + hotel) or reduction of the

term itself. Conciseness is also ensured by the usage of acronyms and abbreviations (Gotti, 2006: 24). As regards the use of emphatic language, the tone of specialised discourse is usually neutral. Specialised texts generally lack emotive connotations, which are typical of non-specialised language, especially when the text is mainly informative and terms have a purely denotative function (Gotti, 2006: 26). Texts pertaining to the tourism field differ from other kinds of specialised languages in this regard. Tourism texts (tour operators brochures, advertising materials, etc.) not only have an informative function, but, as we will see later, they are also persuasive, so emphasis on emotion is present. The lexis used in this kind of text is emphatic and highly evaluative, reflecting the need for tourist operators to present the places and services in positive terms. Tourism texts are rich in encomiastic adjectives, emotionally captivating collocations, and a series of strategies of “linguistic seduction” with the purpose of making the destination unique.

Within the evaluative lexis we can include the abundance of adjectives in tourism texts. Dann (2000: 65) speaks of the discourse of tourism as an “extreme language”, in relation to the rigorous use of positive adjectives and euphoria. The presentation of the tourist product requires the use of adjectives both to describe the characteristics of the product and to construct its identity. Description and evaluation are interwoven in the discourse, also to appeal to the receivers’ emotions and persuade them to the action towards the destination at issue (Pierini, 2009: 98). In particular the form of superlative is preferred to describe locations, attractions and guarantee the distinctiveness of the destination. Adjectives are used to create a sense of exaggeration, to surprise the text receivers by portraying places in extraordinary terms, often by means of analogy and comparison (Agorni, 2012: 6). Once again according to Gotti (2006: 28), the use of the superlative forms in particular “are meant to convey idyllic views of the places advertised”.

1.2.2 Morphosyntactic features

The morphosyntax of specialised languages does not have specific features, since specialised discourse shares the same syntactic rules as general language, but it is characterised by the particular frequency of these. (Nigro, 2006: 57). Certain syntactic

structures are used more frequently than in non-specialised language and become typical and distinctive of this kind of specialised language. In the tourism field, syntax acquires a major role, as the specificity of such language does not lie in the single lexical units, but rather in the “context-specific relations that exist between items of vocabulary” (Nigro, 2006: 59).

In tourism discourse the most common features are: nominalisation, expressive conciseness, premodification, verb tenses, modals, the use of passive forms and imperatives (Maci, 2018: 31). Nominalisation consists of the transformation from one syntactical category to another, for instance when a verb is transformed into a noun and a noun or verb into an adjective. In tourism discourse, especially, there is the frequent use of nouns acquiring a verbal function. Nominalisation is used to convey objective and precise information. It is also used to underline the presence of already known elements in a nominalised form in order to facilitate cohesion. The use of nominalised forms secures the requirements of syntactic conciseness (Maci, 2020: 21).

Conciseness does not only involves the lexical level of the language, but also the syntax. As Newmark (1988) (in Sanning, 2010: 125) remarks: tourism texts “must be written in a language that is immediately comprehensible to the readership”. According to Gotti (2006: 28), a distinctive feature of specialised discourse is its compact syntactic structure that confirms the demand for conciseness. Syntactic conciseness is usually achieved through the omission of phrasal elements, such as articles, prepositions. Another linguistic strategy is that of avoiding relative clauses and making the sentence structure lighter (Gotti, 2006: 28). Relative clauses are usually substituted with lexemes obtained by means of affixation, as prefixes and suffixes have their own semantic values that ensure the right communicative function. The resulting expressions are therefore shorter than the original version and ensure a higher degree of compactness and result in what Maci (2018) refers to as “expressive conciseness”.

The omission or substitution of the relative clauses facilitates the process of premodification. It is the process in which lexical items with an adjectival function are dislocated with regard to the head-noun, thus giving the expression greater semantic importance (Maci, 2018: 32). A specific case is the use of the present and past participle instead of the full relative clause as premodifier, that is the substitution of the relative

clause with the present participle of the main verb (Muñoz, 2011: 35). The use of premodification, as Gotti (2006: 30) states, offers advantages in terms of greater textual conciseness. Relative clause reduction appears to be very straightforward in the English language, because of the possibility of using a right-to-left construction, which allows for nominal adjectivation, i.e. the use of a noun to specify another with an adjectival function (for instance: tour operator, package holiday, wild-life paradise).

Passive forms are used when the emphasis is intended to be on the object of the predicate rather than on the agent of the action. This assures a high degree of depersonalisation, an emotional detachment between the author and the public. But when the focus is on the tourist, then the agent is expressed (Maci, 2018: 35). As concerns verb tenses, present simple tense is the most frequent tense in tourism texts. It makes the time of the holiday seem still and everlasting (Nigro, 2006: 60). The past tense is used for historical descriptions to give the text some sort of cultural authority. The future tense, instead, is used in tourism advertisements to transform places into desirable destinations (Elia, 2018: 132). The imperative, along with the present tense, is very common in such language. It is not used to give directly orders to the tourist, but it invites him/her to participate in the activities and opportunities which are offered (Muñoz, 2011: 35). The imperative is also used to give instructions to the tourist, for instance on how to reach some places or even how to behave according to the host community customs. Modals are auxiliary verbs that provide additional and specific meaning to the main verb of the sentence: they precede the verb and give it a different connotation which can indicate necessity, permissibility and probability, or negation of these.⁷ “Whenever the text targets tourists, modality expresses a way of behaving and action to be taken by the tourist” (Maci, 2018: 35). Modals acquire a different function in tourism discourse compared to other specialised languages. For instance the verb “will” does not indicate the future but certainty and recommendation: “on the way to Westminster Abbey you will hear about Leonardo da Vinci”. The modal “can” does not express ability or possibility, but it is used to arouse the interest of the tourist (Nigro, 2006: 61): “you can experience Sydney and Bondi’s most noteworthy attractions” (Maci, 2018: 35).

⁷ Definition taken from the grammar book “Grammar Evolution”, Eli Publishing, 2020.

1.2.3 Verbal techniques

Moreover, along with its own lexical and morphosyntactic characteristics, the language of tourism adopts some verbal techniques, such as comparison, keywords and keying, testimony, humour, languaging and ego-targeting. They all meet the principal function of tourism texts, that is the persuasiveness. A brief presentation of these techniques is given below. Comparison is adopted through the use of simile and metaphor to mitigate the effects of strangeness and unfamiliarity associated with a vacation destination (Dann, 1996: 172). Keywords and keying instead are important as: “for optimal effectiveness the message should be short, clear, current, active and conclude with the identified key words” (Dann, 1996: 174). In the field of tourism these key words should correspond to the requirements of the tourists, and be taken from the shared language of the general public. In the language of tourism there are very careful lexical choices of keywords, for instance *adventure*, *dream*, *imagination*, *pleasure* in order to satisfy tourists’ expectations. These words are often associated with the themes of romanticism, rebirth, happiness, hedonism, fairy, fun, sex, sun, which tend to arouse positive feelings (Muñoz, 2011: 34). The purpose of these keywords in the tourism field is that of promoting and attracting the potential tourist. They do not belong to strictly specialised language, but are taken from the shared language of the general public (Nigro, 2006: 55).

Testimony consists in anchoring the idea of a destination to a recognisable person, in order to attract new visitors, through the “voice” of such person which invite them to come to the destination (Dann, 1996: 177). Humour involves playing with words, by paradoxes and puns to convey various messages and to create a connection with the potential tourist. Moreover, through humour, unfamiliarity of the destination could be reduced, by preparing the potential visitor for the strange customs of the destination (Dann, 1996: 178).

As regards languaging, Dann (1996) traces the origin of the term back to Potter to signify “a scoring over one’s rival through the use of real or fictitious foreign words of which they have scant knowledge, thereby inducing feelings of inferiority in one’s opponent” (Dann, 1996: 183). Dann himself adds to this definition a further interpretation, stating that languaging is “the impressive use of foreign words, but also a manipulation of the vernacular, a special choice of vocabulary, and not just for its own

sake” (Dann, 1996: 184). Furthermore, he claims that the use of particular expressions can be ego-enhancing and memory sustaining. In tourism discourse, there are other interpretations of this technique: Denti and Fodde (2005) (in Cesiri, 2017: 199) state that languaging “serves to anticipate the real experience that tourists will live upon their arrival”, to prepare the tourists, by showing them what they will find once they arrive at the destination, with the reduction of the linguistic and cultural distance between them and the local people (Cesiri, 2017: 197). It reduces the sense of strangeness which a tourist could feel towards a culture he or she does not know. Cappelli (2013) refers to languaging as the technique of using words in the language of the host community, often in the local dialect of the destination, in the English texts. Such technique is performed in various ways in tourism texts: words can be reported with their original forms in italics along with their definition, explanation, paraphrase or translation. Languaging is connected with the local culture: most of the foreign words refer to toponyms, specific names of building and places, landmarks, popular traditions of the host community and in particular belong to the field of eno-gastronomy. Examples of this technique can be found in the work of Cesiri (2017: 341), who analyses terms in the Venetian dialect in English tourism websites, such as *osteria: small local restaurant; spritz: the local aperitivo of wine, soda and Campari; Ponte degli Scalzi: Bridge of the Barefoot.*

The term ego-targeting refers to the special use of pronouns, with the purpose of targeting the ego of the customer in order to make him/her become a tourist. This technique allows one to establish a direct relationship with the readership and fully meet the need for tourism discourse to be persuasive. Pronouns are used to comply with the strategy of inclusion (identification of the recipient with the images), the recipient is addressed directly as “you” (Agorni, 2012: 7), to include him/her into discourse. The forms “we”, “our”, “us” identify the tourism industry and the pronoun “you” addresses the readership, thus, the tourist feels him/herself as the privileged subject of the message (Nigro, 2006: 61). By using these forms, the author tends to establish a direct relationship with the readership, generating identification and loyalty, so that, as a result the recipient is willing to become a tourist (Maci, 2018: 33).

1.3 The communicative dimension

Every specialised language has its own communicative dimension, which is essential to the accomplishment of the designated activity (Calvi, 2005: 45). Cortelazzo (1990: 3) makes a distinction between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of specialised languages, identifying a thematic component and a communicative component. Agorni (2012: 3) applies this distinction to the language of tourism as well: the thematic component is that which refers to the content of the specific domain and answers the referential needs of the professionals who work in the field of tourism. On the other hand, the communicative component is related to the context of situation; the vertical dimension refers to the relationship between the language and its use, since specialised languages acquire different features in relation to the social context in which they are used (Cortelazzo, 1990: 48). Apart from linguistic (and also non-linguistic) features, tourism texts are also characterised by the communicative situation, which is influenced by the author, the audience, the channel and the mode (Muñoz, 2011: 37). The communicative component refers to the social usage of the language variety, and to all the related pragmatic aspects which derive from the context and the kind of relationship that exists among interlocutors. Communication indeed not only occurs between the specialists of a specific subject area, but concerns also their contact with the public and can obey to different objectives (to inform, educate, explain, persuade and so on). Communication that determines the creation of a specialised language is that related to the activities of the professional area (Calvi, 2005: 45). Cortelazzo (1990) and Gotti (1991) in Calvi (2005: 21) identify three main communicative levels, each of one with different degrees of specialisation of the language:

- 1- Communication among experts has the purpose of explaining the results of some research and discussing about them; the prevalent thematic component is that of the specialised area. Here we can include typically specialised texts of argumentative nature, which are characterised by a specific terminology, objectivity and neutrality.
- 2- Communication between experts and non-experts is oriented to the education of future experts in the field. Due to its educational purposes, this language variety admits simplifications and comments to make the discourse more accessible.

- 3- The purpose of communication between experts and the audience is the divulgation, so concepts are expressed in a clear and easy way, by means of reformulation and the constant use of common language. Here, the specialised dimension is notably reduced.

This categorisation can be used also for the language of tourism, which has different levels of expression (Gotti, 2006: 21). Highly specialised discourse is used exclusively by the experts in the field of tourism; the produced texts are full of specific expressions and adopt codified textual genres. Interactions between specialists and non-specialists instead present a language which is more similar to general discourse: the selected vocabulary still belongs to the specific field of subject, but the other discursive features are close to everyday language. The last level, which is that of advertising communication, is elaborated by the experts and addresses the general public. Persuasive function is essential for this kind of communication, which presents peculiar linguistic aspects (Calvi, 2005: 46) as we will see further on.

Every specialised language has a certain communicative dimension, the language of tourism as well. Indeed, the communicative component represents the central core of the language of tourism, as the specificity of this language is located exactly at a communicative level. The reference to communication is implicit in the image of tourism itself, “è il linguaggio stesso a far muovere la macchina turistica”⁸ (Nigro, 2006): through a specific and focused language, tourism industry can capture readers’ attention, transforming potential tourists into actual ones, and leading their behaviour (Nigro, 2006: 40). Nevertheless, also Dann affirms that without language and communication tourism does not exist. In this language, several communicative strategies are employed in order to fulfil the need to meet readers’ expectations about the text they are about to read, in terms of content and style.

In the field of tourism special attention is given to the various employed discursive strategies. First, some strategies are directed to identify text receivers, their needs and expectations, and produce functional messages, such as strategies of reader inclusion and involvement strategies. Secondly, informative and descriptive texts are framed into specific genres with a strong persuasive function. In addition, tourism texts are

⁸ [My translation] “language itself is what moves the tourism industry”.

characterised by an abundance of culture-specific items, as they represent the deepest cultural identity (Agorni, 2012: 5). Tourism texts should also include extra information, pertaining to food, roads, streets, that facilitates identification when visiting a place (Muñoz, 2011: 39).

1.4 Functions of tourism communication

When analysing the language of tourism, it is necessary to examine its principal properties, including its function (Dann, 1996: 34). The language has a variety of functions, which refer to the different ways in which language is used to serve a particular purpose. Jakobson (1960) (in Dann, 1996: 35), identifies six different functions of the language:

Functions	
Expressive function	It refers to the sender of the message and the attitudes of the communicator, for instance, the use of emphatic language.
Conative (or directive) function	It involves those strategies used to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the receiver of the message, through the use of imperative and vocative.
Referential (or informational) function	It is employed to convey information, through referential speech acts: describing, asserting, requesting, confirming and refuting.
Phatic (or interactional) function	In order to maintain the attention of the receiver, questions to make feel him or her involved are posed.
Metalinguistic function	It refers to the language's ability to speak about itself and its codes, including questions of grammar and terminology.
Poetic function	It refers to the adoption of linguistic

	<p>devices from poetry, such as metaphor and rhyme, to adequately transmit the meaning of the message and to make the discourse more attractive.</p>
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Table 1.1. Jakobson's functions of language

As regards the language of tourism, the main function is certainly that of referential or informational function (Munoz, 2011: 35), as the specific purpose of tourism discourse is to inform and describe countries or regions. However, we should consider that tourism uses language to manipulate reality and the definition by Dann (1996: 2) highlights this:

The language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and, in so doing, convert them from potential into actual clients. By addressing them in terms of their own culturally predicated needs and motivations, it hopes to push them out of the armchair and on to the plane - to turn them into tourists.

Likewise, Sanning (2010) states:

the purpose is to attract the tourists' attention, arouse their interest and give them an aesthetic impression, so that they may be persuaded to visit the tourist attraction and gain knowledge of the nature, culture, history and customs of the tourist attraction through reading the text. (Sanning, 2010: 125)

As Nigro affirms (2006: 55), the language of tourism, unlike other kinds of specialised languages, is not directed to a narrow circle of professional figures, but is addressed to an extended group of potential tourists. Tourism discourse is established in a persuasive manner in order to attract visitors. As we have already seen, the linguistic features and strategies adopted in the language of tourism are all directed to the persuasiveness of the message. Tourism texts are built around the tourist's needs: all the attention is focused on the decision-making process of the readership, about the choice of travel destinations. In this light, tourists are seen as consumers and tourist destinations as the products, which, for the purpose of being successfully promoted, need to be presented in an adequate and convincing linguistic way (Maci, 2020: 29) and made desirable. According to Mocini (2010: 27), at the root of tourism discourse there is a kind of cognitive and emotional manipulation. The product, in this case the destination, has to acquire value to potential tourists' eyes.

Thus, the language of tourism may even be considered a language of social control. It contains norms and values and prescriptions (Dann, 1996: 3). Tourism has developed, over the years, into “a social control system focused on the conduct of people in their free time” (Ostrowski 1988 in Dann, 1996: 76). Texts are oriented towards a precise objective, that of making tourists choose the activities proposed, making them move in the desired direction (what they have to eat, activities to do, events to which participate, etc.), often on the basis of economic reasoning. To accomplish this, the language of tourism needs to be persuasive. As follows, the predominant functions of this language, along with the informative one, are promotional and persuasive (or vocative) functions. In addition to these, language of tourism fulfils other secondary functions, such as expressive, conative and poetic.

With reference to Jakobson’s classification of language functions mentioned above, we can apply it in the context of the language of tourism.

Function	
Expressive function	Emotive register is used, as well as superlatives, to speak about the destination, and also value judgements of the speaker, who expresses his/her feelings (Sanning, 2010: 125), in order to maintain communication links with the reader.
Conative function	Adoption of imperatives for people to see and do things and call the readership to action. They are told how to act, think or feel, that is in the exact way designed by the text (Sanning, 2010: 125).
Referential function	In this kind of communication, this is expected to be the most important function, as it has the objective of providing some relevant information

	about the country, its historical importance, cultural traditions and so forth.
Phatic function	We may find conversational register similar to oral communication to maintain the attention of the readers, for instance by means of simple words, short sentences.
Metalinguistic function	It is an underutilised function in this kind of discourse, as it is “far from the language of tourism’s ability to advertise its own products with confidence” (Dann, 1996: 37). However, some metalingual expressions are used as attention-seeking devices.
Poetic function	The message, in order to attract readers, is transmitted through the use of poetic devices, which highlight salient characteristics of a locality.

Table 1.2. Functions of language applied to the language of tourism

All these functions are expressed by adopting both the linguistic techniques we have already described above but also by non-verbal elements, like photos, pictures or symbols (Muñoz, 2011: 36). Such elements play an important role, especially in today tourism, as we will see further on, in order to achieve in particular the purpose of persuasion.

1.4.1 Persuasion in tourism discourse

Persuasion can be defined as “the process of trying to alter, modify or change the saliency of the values, wants, beliefs and actions of others” (O’ Shaughnessy & O’ Shaughnessy, 2004: 5). The concept of persuasion has been investigated since the time of ancient Greece, as a dominant theme in the rhetorical tradition (Hogan, 2012: 2). The

Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote in the 4th century B.C. a treatise on the art of persuasion, *Rhetoric*, in which he stated the basis for an effective communication. He identifies three main inextricably connected components in the creation of a persuasive communication: *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. *Ethos* represents the intellectual and moral capacity of the speaker, who needs to convey a trustworthy message; *pathos* denotes the strategies employed to evoke an emotional response from the audience and *logos* expresses the strategies of argumentation (Pelclova & Lu, 2018: 44-45). In order to explicate such elements a specific language needs to be adopted, since persuasion is an intentional and “interactive process in which linguistic choices are made with a specific aim” (Pelclova & Lu, 2018: 44). Likewise, Halmari and Virtanen (2005) affirm:

persuasion is defined as those linguistic choices that aim at changing or affecting the behavior of others or strengthening the existing beliefs and behaviors of those who already agree, the beliefs and behaviors of persuaders included (Halmari & Virtanen, 2005: 5).

“All language use can in a sense be regarded as persuasive” (Halmari & Virtanen, 2005: 3), even though there are some discourses in which persuasion plays a more important role, such as the language of politics, advertising, media discourse but it is also employed within professional discourse communities, in legal documents and business negotiations (Halmari & Virtanen, 2005: 3). Despite the discoveries and the numerous transformations which have occurred in communication technologies, “the nature of persuasive communication still relies in the three rhetorical components described by Aristotle in the 4th century B.C.” (Pelclova, Lu, 2018: 1).

Persuasion is also needed to a large extent in tourism discourse, since the language of tourism is principally built upon its promotional function (Nigro, 2006: 51). Manca, in *Persuasion in tourism discourse* (2016), investigates the notion of persuasion within the language of tourism, whose “promotional aim is achieved by a strategic combination of information and persuasion” (Manca, 2016: 64). As a matter of fact, tourism is characterised by its multidimensional nature: on one hand, its specialised language and terminology are used by professional figures, on the other hand tourism employs promotional discourse to refer to potential tourists (Maci, 2018: 2). Promotion is the means to differentiate a destination to the others and build the unique identity of the place. The tourist is seen as a consumer, the goal of the persuasion is to turn the destination into an exclusive destination, often emotionally loaded to satisfy the customers’ needs and expectations.

Promotional materials give meticulous descriptions of the travel destinations, tell tourists what to expect, but also how to behave, for instance how to dress, according to the customs of the visited place and other cultural constraints (Dann, 1996: 84). The tourist, as reported by Gardner (in Dann, 1996: 85) “is conditioned, programmed by his itinerary or guidebook, to visit certain places and experience them in a way prompted by advertising, his native self and his internalized culture”. It is the language that makes a place touristic, through the words that are used to describe it, and this confirms the strict correlation between language and tourism itself. Tourism discourse is therefore highly persuasive “because its objective is to sell a product, in this case a destination, an attraction, by describing a reality which has to be perceived in terms of authenticity and exclusiveness” (Manca, 2016: 2) and it adopts specific linguistic strategies, as we have seen above, which appeal to the target audience. Through the persuasiveness of the message, tourists change their behaviour by choosing the travel destination advertised. Salim (2012: 139) affirms that “persuasion has become domain force behind tourism promotion, in efforts to influence prospective tourists to visit particular destination”. Tourism texts, such as brochures, websites, media advertising, are an important source of information for potential tourists, important in the process of decision-making of the destination they would like to travel to. Tourism promotion is established in a persuasive manner in order to seduce the potential tourist to become an actual one.

For all these reasons, advertising plays a crucial role in the tourism field. Tourism has become one of the most profitable and lucrative industries, so it is necessary for tourism operators to use advertising as a means through which create a positive image on destinations and convince potential tourists to travel and buy tourism products (Salehi, Farahbakhsh, 2014: 125). Advertising is “the activity or profession of producing advertisements for commercial products or services” (Salehi & Farahbakhsh, 2014: 127). Nowadays advertising is an essential tool of communication which has the power of establishing visibility of the product or service to the target audience and of manipulating people’s ideas about some products (Salim, 2012: 138). “Advertising is the means by which the necessary information is given on tourist and tourist areas, used to convince them to travel”, Salehi and Farahbakhsh (2014: 129) state. Thus, persuasion plays an important role in tourism advertisements: “[an] advertisement has the power to persuade consumers’ desire to the product” (Widyahening, 2015: 70). To be effective,

advertisements need to be persuasive and this can be achieved through the language. These forms of communication, in order to fulfil the persuasive function, require a specific use of the language, which plays a pivotal role in the construction of the persuasiveness of the message. “Advertisement is a good example of the creative use of persuasive strategies which can be demonstrated through language”, states Salim (2012: 139). Destinations are also valorised by means of keywords and a careful choice of words and lexico-grammatical features, which have the power to convey specific meanings. However, rational language alone is not sufficient to achieve the persuasive purpose, and emotion is a major factor in effective advertising: it allows the author of the text to connect with the audience (O’Shaughnessy, O’Shaughnessy, 2004: 27). Advertising indeed must capture the reader’s attention, establish credibility and generate trust in potential tourists, since it always involves a promise that tourists expect to be fulfilled (O’Shaughnessy, O’Shaughnessy, 2004: 6). Yet, the appeal to the emotions of the readership has the purpose to create an identification between the tourist and the destination. When people are emotionally touched by the message of the advertisement, they are more likely to change perspective about the product or service being advertised.

In advertising the intent of selling a product or service is reached through the adoption of a specific model, which originated in the marketing domain, called AIDA, an acronym which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. This model reflects two main functions of advertising: to inform and to persuade. It guides step by step the potential buyer towards the purchase of the product or service. This model can be fully applied to tourism discourse; in order to reach the promotional purpose, a strategic combination of information and persuasion is to be implemented. The four steps of the model are achieved by means of various lexical, grammatical and syntactical devices. Attention and Interest are settled by focusing on the uniqueness of the destination, through the use of adjectives; Desire is activated by using nouns and adjectives, descriptions of activities, for instance for specific groups of travellers (depending on their passions and inclination, age, social and cultural attitude). Action is then supposed to be taken by potential tourists who have been encouraged and are attracted to visit the destination.

CHAPTER 2. Textual genres of tourism discourse

In this chapter, the textual genres of tourism discourse will be described, in particular traditional printed ones. First, a definition of textual genre and its criteria of classification is given. Various authors identify several parameters for the categorisation of genres, including the actors involved in the text, the function of the text, the channel of communication, and the stage of a trip. Features of texts concerning tourism discourse reveal its specificity, also at a textual level. Thus, it is not easy to draw a distinct classification, as tourism texts tend to be hybrid genres. Traditional tourism texts, which include tourist guidebooks, travel articles, leaflets and brochures and tourism advertising texts, will be analysed in detail, with their functions, textual structure and linguistic features.

2.1 Textual genres

Along with the lexical, morphosyntactic and textual features, another important factor which makes the language of tourism a specialised discourse is the presence of its own textual genres, marked by specific lexicon and discourse strategies. Before analysing various types of tourism texts, it is first necessary to define what a genre is. There are various definitions and interpretations of different authors about this term, each of which scrutinises distinct perspectives. The following definitions all relate the concept of genre to the communicative factor and analyse it at the socio-pragmatical level, rather than its form. First, Bathia considers genre as a communicative event, which is strictly related to socio-cultural aspects:

Genre refers to language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution, which give rise to stable structural form by imposing constraints on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discursal resources (Bathia 2004: 23).

Calvi (2005: 47) gives her own definition of genre, based on the meaning assigned to this term by Swales (1990), who states:

a genre comprises a class of communicative events, the member of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre (Calvi, 2005: 47).

In line with this, Calvi (2011: 2) defines genre as a textual class which originated from the need to achieve the communicative demands of a professional and discourse community and that operates specific conventions with regard to the actual social context. In particular, she articulates:

clases textuales nacidas en el seno de una comunidad discursiva, que obedecen a un determinado propósito comunicativo, y se caracterizan por una serie de rasgos retóricos y formales relativamente estables, más o menos permeables a los factores culturales y situacionales⁹.

In the light of such definitions of the term “genre”, which place the emphasis on its communicative role rather than its form, it is evident that “we talk about a category which is defined on the basis of external criteria” (Cappelli, 2006: 15), such as the speaker’s purpose and topic. Nonetheless, a specific communicative goal requires specific linguistic content and form. Different text types use in fact different languages, meaning a variation of lexical and grammatical features across various textual genres (Castello, 2002: 52); even though the distinctiveness of the language of tourism also lies in the exception to this norm, as there are actually some similarities across different tourist genres.

The complexity of the discourse of tourism, which in Chapter 1 we have observed at syntactical and morphological levels above, also appears at a textual level, as tourism language adopts specific textual patterns in order to fulfil promotional, persuasive and informational functions of the tourism communication (Nigro, 2006: 63). Given the presence of different subject areas in the discourse of tourism, the rich variety of addressees and the richness of purposes that tourism has as objectives, it is not simple to accurately identify what kinds of texts can be included in the sphere of tourism genres. In spite of this challenge, there are some textual forms that can be considered as typical of tourism discourse, which share a specific lexicon and characteristic discourse strategies and textual patterns. A tourism text “is any text published by a public or private organisation of any kind” to respond to different functions: to give information to any kind of visitor, to advertise a destination and encourage visitors to go there (Kelly, 1997: 35). According to Calvi (2005: 49) in such texts there occurs a marked communicative tendency. There are actually examples of tourism texts in most aspects

⁹ [My translation] “textual classes which are born within a discourse community, which comply to a specific communicative purpose, and are characterised by a series of rather fixed formal and rhetorical features, which are pretty much permeable to cultural and situational factors”.

of everyday life: we can encounter tourism material in newspapers, on posters and billboards, on the internet and even a simple conversation among friends can be considered a kind of tourism discourse (Francesconi, 2014: 4). Thus, the variety of tourism texts is wide, since they serve the several functions of the language of tourism. There are specific communicative events which are defined by their principal purpose, in view of the kind of relationship existing between the sender and the receiver of the message (Calvi, 2005: 47). Calvi (2010: 10-16), in an attempt to give an accurate representation of genre, identifies different levels by means of multifunctional and multidimensional models. She puts the category of genre within a hierarchy which includes upper levels, such as macro-genre, and inferior level, that of subgenre.

Genre is characterised by its communicative and pragmatic function, by its formal distinctiveness and its own linguistic qualities; practical guides, advertisements, travel reports, but also tickets, bookings, forums and travel blogs belong the category of genre. In spite of the fact that genres have their own autonomy, they can be enclosed in macro-genres which can be defined as a combination of more genres, whose topic, purpose, channel of communication and sender are the same but which differ for textual typology and style. Among macro-genres are the brochure, the tourist guide, the travel magazine, the webpage (Francesconi, 2014: 15). However, the higher level of this framework is associated with the families of genres: they are distinguished for their communicative purpose which can be framed into a specific professional context (Calvi, 2010: 15). Genre families “comprehend texts in a given socio-professional context with a similar communicative function” (Francesconi, 2014: 15). There are publishing genres, such as tourist guides or travel magazines, which originate in the publishing industry and serve the purpose of informing the reader. Institutional genres are elaborated by official institutions to strengthen the image of the destination, such as brochures, official websites.

Yet, there are commercial texts, such as advertisements, which are designed by marketing departments or other tourism companies, with the objective of selling the tourist product and organisational texts, which are produced by the agencies to coordinate accommodation and transport. Other genre families pertain to the field of the law, such as regulations; the scientific and academic ones are genres employed within subject areas that investigate the tourism phenomenon, and finally informal genres,

which include texts such as blogs produced by tourists themselves, who become experts of the field (Calvi, 2010: 22-23). At a lower and more specific level, there is the category of subgenres, which are characterised on a thematic level (Francesconi, 2014: 16). Tourism texts embrace various topics which derive from several areas of interest, such as art, history, nature, crafts, food and drink, events, sport and entertainment (Calvi, 2010: 27).

Besides Calvi's complex and composite frame of reference, the difficulty in classifying various tourism genres also lies in the fact that there are a large number of factors which influence the classification of tourism genres. Francesconi (2012: 16), in an attempt to categorise different text types, states that attention should be focused on influential aspects as actors, medium, stage of trip, mode, communication function, genre value, lexico-grammatical strategies, and the degree of language specialisation. Once again Calvi (2010: 21) distinguishes different genres in the light of their channel of communication, their prevailing function, textual type and the stage in which tourists use them. First, we need to consider the actors of the communication, which are the agents involved in the communication system, as the role they play has significant outcomes on the type of text. Tourist operators, editorial or commercial institutions and institutional boards produce formal texts which are highly codified (Francesconi, 2012: 19). Yet, text types do not only depend on the sender of the message, but also on the addressee of the text, who can be a specialist or a non-specialist, and also on which different discourse strategies are adopted. In an educational context among specialists and non-specialists, for instance, textbooks, essays and manuals are produced, whereas reports in travel magazines are types of text which address their message to a wider audience.

Another aspect is the function of the text: tourism texts cover several purposes but there is always a scope which dominates over the others. The principal functions of tourism texts are to inform, to instruct and to persuade (Calvi, 2010: 21). Authors of tourism texts provide tourists information on practical issues, as well as cultural and historical information to fulfil their desire of knowledge, as they hope to learn ahead everything about the destination they will visit. Moreover, tourists are guided in their behaviour through advice and instructions on how to act during their visit. The persuasive function is crucial in those texts, such as institutional advertising, which are aimed at the public,

in order to exhort them to use a service or buy a specific product and to promote the image of a particular destination (Calvi, Bonomi, 2011: 183). On the basis of their pragmatic function, we can distinguish professional communication and promotional communication (Maci, 2020: 8). Professional communication involves exchanges between agencies, hotels, airlines, tour operators, institutions, and includes contracts, conventions, legislations, tourism planning and governance. On the other hand, promotional communication is aimed at potential tourists and comprehends tourism advertising, which provide useful information, brochures and leaflets which are highly persuasive materials and articles in specialised magazines, but also itineraries and tourist guides (Maci, 2020: 8).

Similarly, Nigro (2006: 64) draws a main distinction between specialised texts reserved for experts and texts for the wider public. She identifies different levels with regard to the interlocutors, considering whether the communication takes place among the experts or between experts and the public. In relation to the communicative function, Francesconi (2014: 25) identifies genre value among the factors that distinguish different texts. Basic forms of linguistic communication are narrative, descriptive, regulative, expository and argumentative (Francesconi, 2012: 9). Genre values are defined in terms of subject matter, theme and chaining strategies: the narrative genre for instance is predominant in travel books and diaries, in which events are told to the reader like the telling of a story. The descriptive genre is based on space representation, such as descriptions of geographical areas and is typical of brochures. The regulative genre is used in guidebooks to provide instructions for the tourist, while the expository genre is visible in some detailed guidebook sections which include objective explanations about weather conditions, timetable, and so on. Finally, the argumentative genre is found in travel reports, as they present evaluation of a destination by means of both positive and negative comments. Even though genre values identify different text types, they constantly appear in hybrid forms in tourism texts (Francesconi, 2014: 26).

The medium or channel of communication is another parameter for the identification of tourism genres. Printed materials are the most traditional form of tourism communication, such as brochures, leaflets, travel guides. Oral texts are also important in tourism discourse, like word-of-mouth which Dann (1996) defines as “the most significant source of tourism communication”. The expression “word-of-mouth” refers

to the “group phenomenon, in which you can exchange thoughts, ideas and comments between one, two or more consumers, of which no one is a professional marketing source” (Bone, 1992 in Fili, Križaj, 2017: 107). As the oldest means through which in the ancient and medieval communities economic and social activities were performed (De Ascaniis, 2013: 19), word-of-mouth enables the free and spontaneous exchange of unsolicited information and suggestions about trips and holiday destinations among friends and relatives (Francesconi, 2014: 21). This is because tourists often rely massively on advice from friends family and other peer groups (Cox et al., 2009: 747). As part of the oral materials there are also interactions among tourist operators and tourists or those occurring during tourist events, like fairs, congresses, exhibitions, performances (Francesconi, 2014: 21). It is important to consider that every channel of communication, whether oral or written, requires specific formal and linguistic features (Calvi, 2005: 49). This is the element, among the parameters for the classification of genres, which has undergone the most radical changes, due to the new media and recent channels of communication with the resulting transformation of tourism itself. Contemporary tourism is characterised by the use of the electronic medium, which has made it possible to expand the potentiality of a particular feature of the tourism discourse, that is multimodality. Tourism texts are “multimodal” texts, they combine different resources, both verbal and visual; the meaning of the text is conveyed by means of the interaction between different semiotic resources, such as texts, images, videos, audios. Printed tourism texts are rich in pictures that represent the places described in the written parts, to arouse reader’s attention, and enhance the destination (Castello, 2002: 104).

Tourism materials also make use of maps, which are useful tools to direct readers around places. The advent of the internet has strengthened this feature, as it has allowed people to create increasingly interactive contents. With the internet as a new channel of communication, alongside with traditional written tourism texts, new forms of communication have developed. As a result, a new language and style in tourism texts have developed. Closely related to the channel of communication, Castello (2002) establishes the format as another feature that allows one to classify different text types as it permits one to distinguish genres at first sight. The format of texts varies from

genre to genre: brochures are made up of one single sheet, whereas travel magazines have several pages; tourist guides take instead the form of a book (Castello, 2002: 97).

Finally, the moment in which a tourism text is used by tourists acquires significance for the identification of tourist genres. Clawson and Knestch (1966) (in Maci, 2020) distinguish five different phases of tourist's consumption: anticipation, travel to site, on-site experience, return travel and post travel memories and outcomes (Maci, 2020: 7). Similarly, Dann (1996), from a sociological perspective, proposes a classification of the media of tourism according to their location within the three stages of the tourism process, which are pre-trip, on trip and post-trip, meaning the stage in which the text is consumed or produced. Texts used at different trip stages respond to different communicative functions and therefore adopt different textual patterns. The first group is that of pre-trip materials, which are mainly of a promotional nature and are used at the moment of trip planning. These include adverts, leaflets, brochures, which are genres typical of promotion and marketing. Such genres anticipate the experience for potential tourists in order to influence their travel destination decisions (Francesconi, 2014: 24). Tourist guides and maps, as well as interactions among tourism operators and tourists, are instead considered as on-trip materials, as they guide the tourist during his or her trip. They have indeed a descriptive, informative and instructive character. The category of post-trip materials includes different elements, both material objects, like postcards and souvenirs, which constitute a reminder of the holiday, or texts written by tourists themselves after their trip to narrate their own experience. Post-trip materials include more informal genres like trip reports and reviews, as they are produced by tourists who provide information and evaluate their experience. Once again, the separation among genres according to their trip stage cannot be strict, since texts often can be utilised at different phases of the trip (Francesconi, 2014: 22). It is also necessary to consider whether the classification depends on the text's actual production or its use by other tourists, as in the case of blogs, which are written by tourists while they are having their experience or immediately after it, but are also explored by other potential tourists during their decision-making process.

In spite of all these classification factors, and of the resulting difficulty in the creation of clear-cut categorisations, there are nevertheless some textual genres which can be considered as belonging to the tourism field. They are featured by specific lexicon, by

the adoption of suitable discourse strategies and textual patterns (Nigro, 2006: 63), even if “certain verbal techniques, certain topics and language strategies are indeed typical of English tourism discourse across genres” (Cappelli, 2006: 172).

By combining Nigro (2006) and Calvi's (2005) works, three main areas of the tourism discourse can be identified, each of which has with its own discourse strategies and features. The three areas include: exclusively specialised discourse, information material, and texts for the public, especially advertisements. Strictly specialised discourse is restricted to those texts which are aimed at professional figures and pertains to the organisational and economic aspects of the field. These texts include essays, research articles on economics and marketing. Therefore, their features are borrowed from other fields, such as Economics and Law (Calvi, 2010: 19). Other specialised texts involve organisational aspects of tourism, which are performed by tourism industries. For example, the field of commercial correspondence for the management of tourism industry is a hybridisation from other commercial activities. In terms of discourse strategies these models are very similar to those of other technical-scientific fields (Calvi, 2005: 48), in particular for the presence of a highly specialised vocabulary and for the high degree of formality. Then there are informative texts, which concern the tourist organisation, such as articles about tourism economics, but also a theoretical reflection on the tourism phenomenon and its features, such as the study of tourist flows. They also include anthropological and sociological reflections and can be included in the field of scientific popularisation, as such texts do not have linguistic and discourse features of their own (Calvi, 2005: 48). In this regard, the category of texts for the public is more interesting to analyse, as they show discourse features which are typical of tourism discourse (Nigro, 2006: 64). Such a category offers a rich variety of texts which differ for their function and characteristics and even belong to different textual genres. Texts for the public make use of a wide variety of language registers, varying from literary to colloquial style, as their target audience is quite heterogeneous. When tourist experts address the public, they usually describe a tourism product or destination for informational but mostly persuasive purposes, since the ultimate aim is to attract potential tourists to visit the destination at issue. Thus, the description of a tourist place is likewise a kind of marketing activity, for which it employs specific textual models (Calvi, 2010: 19). In comparison with other products, however, the

immateriality of tourism products requires the development of its own specific textual patterns.

Despite this endeavour of categorisation, tourism texts do not occur in such distinct classifications. Genres constantly influence each other, through the combination of structures and discourse strategies. This results in hybrid texts which it is difficult to classify into a specific genre. Despite the categorisation of different text types, it is necessary to consider that tourism texts are hybrid genres, that they acquire some specific traits from other genres. For instance, texts for the public borrow several features from advertising (Calvi, 2005: 49). Thus, it is convenient to frame tourism texts within a dynamic and open classification, which deals with various intersections among different genres (Calvi, 2010: 27).

In spite of the pervasive hybridisation, a distinction between tourism texts can be made. Actually, textual genres pertaining to tourism discourse are highly codified (Nigro, 2006: 32). Such texts tend to have a specific textual organisation, specific patterns or at least certain elements are always included. Texts often consist of standardised sections, for instance advertisements always include a slogan and some images, whereas the informative section is the main one in brochures (Cappelli, 2006: 96). As regards the content of tourism texts, the subject matter is always concerned with the description of the place, the same notions can be found in all the text types. The degree of details and completeness of information changes though, varying from text to text, and is independent of the kind of publication (Castello, 2002: 93). The subject matter is always directly expressed, to provide information in the clearest and most precise way, as tourist publications are always reader-oriented, composed to suit the needs and interests of potential tourists (Castello, 2002: 95).

The textual variety of the tourism industry is broad, it is also in constant evolution, also as an answer to social changes. The creation of a specific tourism textual genre, the tourist guide, is often attributed to the same moment in which tourism in a modern perspective developed. Then, the offer expanded to numerous new genres, such as brochures, leaflets, web pages, in parallel with historical and social transformations. In particular, the great impact of the spread of the digital medium, with the consequent

fragmentation of information, has made the borders among different textual genres even more fragile (Calvi, 2011: 154).

2.2 Tourist guidebooks

Tourist guidebooks represent the most traditional genre, which is connected with the travel literature. They are editorial publications which are written in the form of a book, incorporating travel itineraries, useful and practical advice, but also graphic and visual elements such as maps, pictures or illustrations. They are used by tourists when they are already at the destination or immediately before their arrival to plan the visit, and can therefore be included within the pre-trip and on trip materials. The genre of the tourist guidebook has originated from the need of guiding tourists during their trip, through the account of the culture and traditions of the places. This text arose as a complete but light text, which is rich in every kind of information, from the historical to the practical one. When tourist guides first developed, they drew most features on old literary traditions and different already existing textual genres (Nigro, 2006: 34). In particular, from historical and geographical texts they took descriptions, the historical background and the impersonal and objective style. The simple and linear form is instead typical of itineraries and road books; and from travel books they took social commentary and a more personal style. Occasionally indeed some tourist guides tend to state facts in a more detached way, whereas others provide a more subjective portrait of destinations (Cappelli, 2006: 217).

Tourist guides as a textual genre emerged thanks to the work of John Murray and Becker, who are considered the fathers of this literary phenomenon. The first Murray guide, entitled *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*, was published in 1836 and was soon followed by Becker who published his first guide in 1839. At first, tourist guides were referred as “handbooks”, as they became an essential traveling companion for tourists, who were guided in every single stage of their trip. The first guides were marked by completeness of information, functionality and usability and they were written in an informational and objective style. From that moment, the amount of tourist guides increased exponentially, each with its own target audience and style; among the

best known there are three English tourist guides, which are the *Rough Guide*, *Time Out* and *Lonely Planet*.

Although they may present different linguistic and stylistic features, tourist guidebooks have a quite standardised structure: they provide both socio-cultural and practical information. Tourist guidebooks have the purpose of directing the tourist during his or her trip, but they also facilitate the tourist relationship with an unfamiliar culture (Giacomarra, 2005: 28). Tourist guides represent a complex text which is articulated in several sections, each with its own specific purpose: first, a section concerning the history of the place, including information about the geography, history, art, nature, traditions and events. Then, a section is dedicated to the activity of sightseeing, that is the list of visitable places and attractions. Finally, there is a section containing practical information and advice, inclusive of recommendations for restaurants, hotels and other services with their respective contact details, as well as useful tips about practical matters such as transportation and currency (Cappelli, 2006: 200).

Even though tourist guidebooks are perceived as having a higher value than other tourist genres, because they are of a less promotional nature, and the informative and prescriptive functions prevailing, nonetheless all guidebooks have a “leading function” (Cappelli, 2006: 233). As Buzard (1993) (in Elia, 2018: 134) states, tourist guides:

precede the tourist, making the crooked straight and the rough places plain for the tourist’s hesitant footsteps; they (accompany) the tourist on the path they had beaten, directing gazes and prompting responses.

They are a powerful tool in influencing the tourists’ decisions. They actually direct and influence tourists interests in prompting their responses. The language is therefore actually persuasive, in order to capture readers’ attention (Maci, 2020: 165). Even from a linguistic perspective, the language of tourism is a language of social control: verbs are used in their imperative form in directive texts which reflect the authoritative voice instructing the reader and telling him or her what is appropriate and what is not.

Even though tourists feel that they have the possibility to freely choose their holiday destination, due to the objective style of the text, the tourist gaze is actually directed by the authoritative position of the author. The description of the places is permeated with the subjective view of the author: it is indeed rich in evaluative elements, such as adjectives and linguistic expressions of explicit personal judgement (Cappelli, 2006:

234). In the last few decades, tourist guidebooks have experienced a significant differentiation in style and graphical representation, as the adoption of visual elements, such as maps, pictures and images, has increased.

2.3 Travel articles

Travel-related articles are written by journalists and appear in many magazines and newspaper supplements. They can vary both in form and content, some are written in the form of a travel story, like a sort of trip report that can be more or less formal, but they are not written for the purpose of sharing a personal experience, rather with the aim of conveying the sense of authenticity (Cappelli, 2006: 149). Such articles can also act as promotional material and serve the function of influencing potential tourists on their pre-trip stage.

In the area of tourism journalism, several are the objectives of travel articles: they provide information about the material aspects of the trip, or they could guide tourists' choices towards specific places and attractions (Calvi, 2005: 93). Even though the content of such texts is usually informative, the descriptions are complemented by advertisements (Nigro, 2006: 66). The promotional purpose is still the dominant function of tourism discourse, as it is part of the economic rationale for tourism itself. Articles can be found in specialised tourist magazines, which are normally published on behalf of peripheral institutions with the purpose of advertising their town or attraction (Castello, 2002: 99). Yet, they can be found in special sections in daily newspapers, also in the form of travelogues, which are texts written by tourists themselves to tell about their holiday in order to provide information and give advice to other potential tourists (Nigro, 2006: 66).

Conforming to the informative material, travel-related articles are similar to tourist guides, but they additionally provide an accurate and updated list of places to stay, comparing various offers for the same destination in terms of prices, services and their quality, and they contain detailed information about accommodation. Compared to tourist guidebooks, which are written in an objective and technical language, descriptions contained in travel articles tend to be more subjective (Calvi, 2005: 93). They are written in such a manner that engages the reader and gives him or her the

illusion of personally living the experience. Writers often appeal to the emotional component of the readers to influence and guide their choices and behaviours (Gotti, 2006: 32). There are still some aspects that travel articles have in common with tourist guidebooks, such as the combination of descriptions and practical information, which are collected in special sections. However, travel articles are less methodical in the descriptions and offer a limited view on places compared to tourist guidebooks (Calvi, 2005: 49). Travel articles are marked by a lively and colloquial style, and they are rich in modal verbs and expressions, in particular ‘should’ and ‘can’ are frequent. They represent the personal advice of the author, and “are used to increase the degree of the author’s commitment on the part of the author” (Castello, 2002: 84).

Nonetheless, travel articles do not only appear in prestigious magazines, most weekly magazines have a travel section, with articles or short contributes that address the magazine’s audience (Cappelli, 2006: 192). Travel magazines experienced a significant growth during the 2000s, as a result of the increasing need on the part of tourists for information on destinations and on organisational aspects, in particular information on accommodation and other services (Calvi, 2005: 49). Within the field of magazines, a subgenre has flourished, that of inflight magazines, which represent a growing sector of the media market and a great source of financial profit (Maci, 2020: 142). They are a special type of magazines, as they are not found at newsagents’ but are provided free on board the plane or in airport departure lounges, they are part of the airline’s entertainment package. Inflight magazines are used in the first place by airlines companies to strengthen their image and to secure customer loyalty.

In describing the destinations reached by the flights, airline companies attempt to differentiate their offer from other companies, through distinctive and exceptional characterisation of the places, and at the same time they offer tourists important piece of information (Small, Wilson, Harris, 2008: 20). Such magazines contain articles on various aspects of tourism, from business to general-interest features, they provide information about the destination of the flights, but they also offer products. While other types of print media are designed to specific market segments according to the distinct needs and motivations of the readers, inflight magazines do not address a specific target readership (Small, Wilson, Harris, 2008: 18). Writers of such articles should consider the heterogeneity of customers and their different ways of consumption of the

magazines, which indeed cover a wide range of topics. They include various sections, such as cultural articles, business information, travel and destination information, inflight information about airports, visas, local climate, currency (Maci, 2020: 144). Inflight magazines make very wide use of illustrations and images, which are carefully chosen to accompany the description of the destinations to reinforce their image.

2.4 Leaflets and brochures

Leaflets and brochures are editorial publications, which are produced by both public and private institutions, tourist officers, hotels and tour operators (Calvi, 2005: 49) and have as primary objective that of promoting a destination and are freely distributed on tourist destinations. They can be grouped in the same textual genre, as brochures and leaflets differ only in terms of their length (Maci, 2020: 121). A leaflet is a smaller version of a brochure and usually appears like a single sheet or several pieces of paper folded together, in which part of the content is informational and descriptive: they provide information about itineraries, prices and timetables. Brochures are like a sort of small magazine that contains pictures and information on a product¹⁰ and their layout makes them similar to a book. Molina and Esteban (2006) (in Francesconi, 2011: 343) define brochures as “a form of printed promotional material designed to communicate with existing or potential tourists”. Brochures and leaflets serve two major functions: promotional function and informational function. They are highly informative, they contain descriptions about attractions in terms of their features and services (Gotti, 2005: 32) in their attempt to satisfy needs and desires of tourists. Their main purpose is in fact that of selling tourist products, such as flights, package holiday, tours, accommodation, so they are characterised by a persuasive and propagandistic style (Nigro, 2006: 64). Brochures also suggest possible tours in which all the described attractions are combined to form a tourist route (Calvi, 2005: 65). The content of brochures concerns especially information from a practical point of view, which may be useful to tourists in planning their trip and can include details about insurance, flight timetables and other available services (Maci, 2020: 124).

¹⁰ Definition taken from Cambridge Dictionary:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/brochure?q=brochure>

(last visited on 01/28/2023)

Brochures can be considered as on trip materials, as they are usually available on site, produced by authorities who are responsible for monuments, attractions and other places of interest as a sort of written guides for tourists (Kelly, 1998: 3). They can vary in style and purpose and also their format can be different: they may be printed in book or made available in electronic format so that potential tourists can read it online directly on their phone or download it. As tourism texts are characterised by a standardised structure, leaflets and brochures also have a highly codified textual structure, they are commonly divided into sections, whose contents range from general to more detailed information (Maci, 2020: 120). At the top of the first page is situated the headline indicating the name of the destination, whereas the actual text is at the bottom of the page. In general, they are marked by a simple and basic structure, which comprehends a cover, a summary, general presentation and tailored offer (Francesconi, 2011: 343). The text is usually made up of standardised parts: the first and the last pages contain general information about the destination, such as weather conditions, time zones and currency or information related to transportation and other services (Maci, 2020: 120). They tend to follow certain specific “moves”: evaluative claims about the place to visit, its brief history, guided tour of the main attractions, practical details and regulations (Maci, 2020: 119). The most important part of brochures, however, is represented by the descriptions of receptive structures, which make use of this material to promote their facilities.

Due to their persuasive function, this genre is emphatic and evaluative and tends to represent only the positive qualities of the location at issue in order to make the potential tourist choose a service offered by that particular tourist operator. Compared to more informational genres, like tourist guidebooks, the tourist is widely involved in the text; brochures “are designed to play on people’s emotions, and, by describing the destination, they tempt the reader to indulge in highly emotional experiences which mirror the targeted audience’s desires” (Maci, 2020: 126). Such need of impressing the reader is reflected at the linguistic level: the language of brochures and leaflets is highly evaluative, characterised by superlative descriptions (Maci, 2020: 125). The communication function is achieved through a highly persuasive discursive strategies, by means of visual and verbal codes. The language is characterised by pre-modifiers such as attributes and adjectives and the verbs are evaluative as well, used most in the

form of present simple and imperative. The simple present is the time used to describe the tourist destination as permanently valid and unchanging, so that the tourists can “feel themselves part of the place described” (Maci, 2020: 127). The imperative marks the presence of the enunciator and has the function of establishing a dialogic and intimate relationship between the sender and the addressee, by means of personal pronouns to directly address the readership (Francesconi, 2011: 347). Thus, the potential tourist will be more willing to visit the place. But imperative verb forms are also used to give instruction about how to behave or to suggest specific activities to do during the trip, and also to invite the readership make some special experiences (Castello, 2002: 84).

Given the limited space, information is to be given in a short portion of text and this results in some specific features of the language of brochures and leaflets. The text needs to be compact, dense and internally coherent (Francesconi, 2011: 348). Moreover, the targeted readership of such tourism texts is wide, therefore they prefer a vocabulary that is simple and accessible to most potential readers. There is a tendency to avoid the grammatical complexity of sentences and the linguistic accuracy, which instead is a common characteristic of the language of tourist guidebooks. Simple language is chosen, which is close to the language used in advertisements, with short, simple and to point sentences (Cappelli, 2006: 83). Unlike advertisements, although, brochures and leaflets contain more informational texts. They make generally use of elliptical clauses and sentences lack the verb in order to convey information as quickly and directly as possible, but while maintaining their efficiency in terms of promotion (Castello, 2002: 82). As a consequence, in such texts there is an accurate choice of keywords, in their combination with an appealing modifier, which “tend to reflect more the potential visitors’ expectations than the real destination” (Cappelli, 2006: 96).

To summarise, brochures and leaflets constitute a model of highly cohesive and expressive texts, whose content is conveyed not only by means of verbal text, but also through visual elements (Francesconi, 2011: 348). Texts make use of images, illustrations which reproduce the destination and are essential elements in creating the image destination, as they convey the main values of the location and capture readers’ attention. Images usually occupy the upper part of the page and represent the tourist service as ideal to the tourists (Maci, 2020: 120). Given the centrality of the persuasive

function, the aesthetic component plays which is equally important as that of the verbal text: the choice of the font, of the layout and colours is not casual as all these elements have a powerful influence on the destination image. Particular attention should be given to the cover of brochures and leaflets since this has to capture the readers' attention and is therefore the most persuasive section (Francesconi, 2011: 346).

2.5 Tourism advertising texts

Advertising is a communicative event with special persuasive purposes (Maci, 2020: 89). The main objective is the modification of the consumer's behaviour related to his or her choice of the product. Coltman (1989) (in Dann, 1996: 137) makes a distinction between direct and indirect advertising. Direct tourism advertising consists in the creation of a commercial message intended for potential tourists to increase sales of tourist products, by the utilisation of newspapers, TV, magazines, brochures, billboards. Indirect advertising instead aims to create a positive destination image on behalf of tourism organisations.

The first model of advertisement was the tourism poster, which is considered to be the most ancient means of tourism promotion. At first, tourism posters consisted of elegant artworks which were painted by hand and were addressed to the bourgeois public, thus requiring elitist language and content (Nigro, 2006: 65). The first printed commercial grade poster was designed in England in 1477 by the English painter, William Caxton, and had the purpose of promoting the thermal treatments of Salisbury. The advertisement mainly consisted in a text with a referential function and a narrative dimension. Yet, commercial posters assumed modern features just around 1830 in France. During the period of the industrial revolution, posters, as we know them today, started to spread. A shift occurred from the poster as a work of art, whose realisation was conformed to the artistic style of the period, to a poster with a more straightforward marketing strategy, through the adoption of faster printing techniques. Thus, advertisements focus on the conciseness and immediacy of the message achieved by means of slogan. The centrality of the images has established as a central feature, as the visual appeal gains greater importance than the word and the writing (Trotta, 2002: 60). Nowadays, tourism posters adopt almost exclusively photographs of the marketed

products. In the last decades, however, in view of the new media, posters have been relegated to a secondary position and have acquired new features in new spaces, such as on means of transport.

Distinct types of advertisements can be found both in specialised magazines and in most widespread newspapers. They can be of a longer or shorter length and adopt more or less pronounced linguistic and non-linguistic strategies. Yet, we can encounter tourism advertising on billboards, television or brochures. There are many types of advertisements, depending from the kind of offered service and the figure of the submitter; they can be grouped in two main categories: commercial advertising and advertising managed by public authorities. They adopt specific discourse strategies and lexicon, as different are their communicative purpose. Commercial advertisements produce messages which are directed to the sale of tourism products, whereas public authorities design promotional campaigns with the purpose of strengthening the destination image and enhancing the territory and the activities it offers (Calvi, 2005: 72). In both cases, the information content is minimal, whereas the persuasive and propagandistic messages prevail. Promotional campaigns make frequent use of verbs of motion in order to invite the potential tourists to visit the destination at issue (Calvi, 2005: 73). When the advertisement instead aims at selling a tourism product, the persuasive component of the message concerns the economic terminology and technical terms about tourism organisation are more frequent.

Compared to other kinds of advertisements, tourism announcements do not use specialised vocabulary for ostentation. The use of technicalities is a strategy used in the marketing field to justify the alleged exclusivity of the product. In tourism advertising, by contrast, specialised terms are quite rare and, when present, they refer to the organisational aspects of the trip or the types of services offered by the facility rather than referring to the qualities of the destination. Tourism advertisements, although they share the same linguistic and textual patterns of other kinds of adverts, show some peculiar features in the language, in terms of lexical and stylistic choices. This depends on the particular nature of the tourism product, which Savelli (1996) (in Calvi, 2005: 48) describes as: “un oggetto assai sfuggente nelle sue origini, nelle sue motivazioni e

nelle sue evoluzioni”.¹¹ Tourism product has singular features which distinguish it from other products, due to its composite and experiential character (Calvi, 2005: 71-72). It consists of both material components, such as accommodations, airports and other physical spaces, and a large number of intangible factors. Tourism destinations are usually loaded with expectations and emotions by tourists, whose representation and description of the place can be influenced by advertising.

Thus, tourism advertising language deviates from common advertising communication and it demands specific marketing strategies. In order to be successful, advertisements should: “attract a person’s attention, sustain the interest it has attracted, be remembered and prompt some kind of action” (Maci, 2020: 92). To make information as appealing as possible, the tourism industry applies iconic and verbal strategies for a successful advertisement. The text needs to be immediately comprehensible and the design has to attract the reader (Maci, 2020: 89). Language of tourism advertising is precise, factual and explanatory, and characterised by readability. It also needs to be recognised as familiar by potential tourists and to make a lasting impression. Yet, it is also a language which needs to be creative and stimulate the dialogue between the sender and the reader. This is achieved through colloquial and personal forms, but also by means of rhetorical devices (Nigro, 2006: 65). In all the advertisements, the register is very informal, similar to the one we use when we speak to friends, and the interaction is full of emotive involvement.

The attention of the reader is often captured by the use of attention-value strategies, such as code-switching. Code-switching is the insertion of material, a single unit or more, from one language into the structure of another language, in the context of a single conversation or situation. This phenomenon is very relevant in the tourism domain, as it helps to better comprehend how a culture, which is different from that of the reader, is perceived. Since destinations are usually distant from where the potential tourist lives, a sense of the exotic should be conveyed in the text, through the use of words expressed in the language spoken in the destination country (Maci, 2020: 92). Code-switching is a technique which allows to add authenticity to the narration. This aspect is illustrated by the *Grana Padano* airport campaign which, through language

¹¹ [My translation] “an object which is quite elusive in terms of its origins, motivations and developments”.

crossing, with the slogan *Arrivederci from Venezia* conveys images of authenticity of the place and at the same time images of familiarity and trust in the holiday destination (Maci, 2020: 96).

Such creative uses of the language of advertising also involve rhetorical strategies typically belonging to marketing, including the use of metaphors, lexical deviations, puns and irony which surprise and entertain the reader. The text usually hides hidden meanings, which the readers feel encouraged to resolve. In this way the tourist is actively involved in the text, as he or she tries to understand the essence of the text. This allows to create a solid relationship between the sender and the readership of the text: “once the consumer feels clever for understanding the implicit message of the text, positive attitudes towards the brand are established” (Maci, 2020: 108). Likewise, irony is a useful tool to draw the attention of the readers. It consists in a statement which “conveys a meaning different from the one it professes to give, since it creates a discrepancy between what the words actually say and what they really mean” (Maci, 2020: 106). If the reader understands the irony of the message, he would feel himself or herself special and this creates a good association with the sender and hence also with the destination the text promotes. As well as irony, puns and play on words play a similar role in advertisements. Through a humorous function in the text, these rhetorical devices can communicate the uniqueness of the product or destination in order to attract immediate attention (Khan, 2014: 29).

Tourism advertising texts usually consist of a large picture which makes a visual statement, accompanied by a slogan, a phrase designed to be memorable, a symbol or logo, which emphasise a particular feature of the destination and are used to identify it. At the top of the page there is the headline, which is the first large-print words potential tourist look at and should attract attention in order to encourage the potential customer to look more closely at the text and continue reading it (Maci, 2020: 90). The verbal content of advertisements varies from text to text, ranging from a simple slogan to more detailed and elaborated texts in which information follows a hierarchical structure (Calvi, 2005: 73). The slogan, which consists in a phrase designed to be memorable, serves the persuasive function of the message and is printed in big letters. Less important sections, which contain less significant information, are instead characterised by a smaller font. The slogan usually consists of a play on words, which concerns the

authenticity and uniqueness of the place. For instance, the slogan for the promotion of the city of Bergamo, “*Place to BERgamo*”, recalls Hamlet’s famous soliloquy *to be or not to be* and illustrates the city of Bergamo as a place to visit and where tourists can give space to their imagination (Maci, 2020: 99). The word play also concerns the emotional appeal of the reader: most used words are indeed *feel, love* which can affect readers’ emotions. An example of this is the slogan for the tourism promotion of Slovenia, which reads “*I feel sLOVEnia*” (Khan, 2014: 32).

As well as in other tourist genres, an important element in tourism advertising is the visual element. The slogan is generally complemented with a picture that enhances the destination image and remains easily impressed in the minds of potential tourists. For instance, in the *Grana Padano* airport campaign some of Italian famous landmarks are represented as a work of art engraved in the cheese. Thus, in the mind of the potential tourist the product is directly associated with the destination, cheese is made monumental as the symbol it represents, and Italy is thus made the paradise of both culture and food (Maci, 2020: 117). Puns and play of words, which surprise and entertain the reader while conveying important messages, should as well interact directly with the illustrations to reinforce the expressed meaning.

CHAPTER THREE. Web-mediated tourism communication

This chapter aims to investigate the transformations which have occurred in tourism as a phenomenon and in its communication. In particular, the advent of the internet and the proliferation of its new media have resulted in new opportunities for the tourism industry and for tourists. First, the new figure of tourist is described: he or she is increasingly informed and demanding as a result of the use of new means of communication. This transformation is investigated at a linguistic level, since new channels of communication require original linguistic strategies; new textual genres have also developed as well as new online spaces, such as those in which the creators of content and materials are the tourists themselves. A detailed characterisation of web-mediated communication will be provided, along with the description of promotional and commercial websites, travel blogs and travel online reviews.

3.1 Tourism 2.0: a new type of tourist

Tourism is an old phenomenon, which originated in ancient Rome, where in the first century B.C., the practice of spending the summer in the countryside began (Nigro, 2006: 14). During the medieval period, journeys were undertaken as a way of searching for faith in distant lands: tourists were pilgrims who travelled to places of worship to pray or to take part in religious events. The beginning of real tourism, as we perceive it today, took place between the 16th and 17th centuries, together stays at thermal baths, and when in England there appeared the first holiday resorts and facilities (Giacomarra, 2005: 22). In the same period, young aristocrats from England, France and Germany started to travel to other European destinations for educational purposes. This practice, which became known as the *Grand Tour*, was a journey of learning for young people, who would become part of the ruling class of their country: they had the chance to complete their studies and consolidate their knowledge, by means of the exchange and dialogue with other social, political and cultural realities (Nigro, 2006: 21). This practice lacked any kind of tourism organisation, as local means of transport were used and many services, even accommodation, were free of charge (Giacomarra, 2005: 23).

In the second half of the 18th century, the practice of the *Grand Tour* suffered a collapse due to the expansion of the English bourgeois class, who, unlike young aristocrats who travelled for educational purposes, considered travelling as a source of delight and entertainment. After the Napoleonic Wars, which devastated Europe from 1803 to 1815, the practice of the *Grand Tour* ended and was replaced by the so-called *Grand Tourism* (Nigro, 2006: 21). During the 18th century, there was a rapid and significant expansion of means of transport and as a result, the activity of tourism came to involve a wider public. This gave rise to the explosion of the phenomenon of mass tourism between the 1950s and the 1960s, which Nigro (2006) calls the “golden age of tourism”. As a result of the development of industrial society, and the creation of the first tourism accommodation, tourism experienced a process of standardisation. Many people, who previously could not afford to travel for reasons of money and time, now had the chance to travel, due to technological innovations and new means of communication (Giacomarra, 2005: 26).

Mass tourism was characterised by superficiality and commercialisation: people buy holiday packages, which are produced by travel agencies and which erase any opportunities for the tourists to personally choose and program their trip. In this period, tourists who wanted to organise a trip with all the comforts provided by tourism operators contacted travel agencies, which played a major role in planning tours in every detail: what activities should be done, where to eat, how to move around the places visited. The tourism industry acquired a strong economic dimension, comparable to other production activities (Giacomarra, 2005: 30). Such an approach promoted an undifferentiated tourism product and left aside the individuality of tourists. However, in the 1970s the authenticity of the experience and the value of travelling as cultural enrichment were rediscovered (Nigro, 2006: 23). The passage to a post-industrial society produced significant social and economic transformations and led to the end of mass tourism.

Post-industrial society is marked by greater social complexity and more active participation of the tourist in the holiday planning process. It resulted in a shift from package tourism to independent travel organisation (Maci, 2012: 139) and in a modification of the interpersonal relationships in the tourism field. Tourist operators now need to consider different demands on behalf of tourists and recognise their tastes

and expectations. Following market fragmentation and the move of tourism from an undifferentiated product into different kinds of tourism, corresponding to the distinct motivations of tourists (Calvi, 2005: 40-41), the tourism industry had to adapt to these changes and offer differentiated products to different tourists. There are several factors to which tourism industry needs to look at in order to offer different solutions: the origin of the tourists, their age, means of transport chosen for the trip, the reasons behind the trip, the host community, the length of stay, whether the tourist is travelling alone or in a group (Calvi, 2005: 60). There are trips that last just one day and longer stays; tourists can travel as a way of entertainment or there could be a practical reason for the trip, such as for work or study purposes.

Tourism is one of the fields which have undergone some of the greatest developments over recent years, in particular due to the increasing use of the latest technology and new means of communication (Gotti, 2005: 33). Contemporary tourism is characterised by the electronic medium, which has brought significant developments to this field (Francesconi, 2012: 1). The advent of the internet has drastically changed the concept of tourism itself, to the extent that we now can refer to it as Tourism 2.0 (Colantonio, 2022: 3). The growing use of the internet has presented the opportunity for instant, free and democratic communication and guaranteed a greater exchange of information between geographically distant consumers. The Web has had a significant impact in many fields, and as well on the tourism industry, which benefits from advantages of the Internet to achieve its own purposes with less time and at the same time in an effective way (Maci, 2017: 4). The internet has transformed the mediation between tourism operators and tourists, as well as the modality of tourism promotion.

Cyberspace allows the tourism industry to offer services of greater quality and has provided new tools to compete in the market with lower costs. Tourism industries can directly communicate with their own target market without needing intermediaries, but rather exploiting an enhanced interactivity and a higher degree of customisation of the message (Maci, 2012: 137). In particular, the virtual space of the Web has allowed tourism texts to circulate with an incredible potential in terms of accessibility, as it offers access to a potentially infinite quantity of sources of information and material with reduced times and costs compared to traditional printed materials. The internet is a dynamic source of information which is highly accessible and constantly updated

(Francesconi, 2012: 4), and tourists have the chance to experience the holiday virtually before even they arrive at the destination and thereby reduce the gap between their expectations and the real experience.

Furthermore, while the first version of the Web made information electronically available, its constant evolution has led to the establishment of the so-called Web 2.0 or social Web, which allows individuals to become active creators of the information (Amaral, Tiago and Tiago, 2014: 138). This results in a redefinition of roles: travel agencies are diminishing their centrality in the holiday destination decision and planning processes, which tourists have the capacity to do autonomously. Due to the Web and its accessibility, specialists of the field no longer have exclusive control over the spread of knowledge. Everyone can now access to every kind of information online and simple tourists become experts of the field and creators of tourism discourse (Calvi and Bonomi, 2008: 185). Today, potential tourists search for information about destinations directly via the Web and likewise can exchange their own information with other tourists and share their experiences (Elia, 2018 :37).

Tourists do not only have direct access to any information, but also the management of the business has passed into the hands of tourists themselves. This is facilitated by constantly updated technologies, through which tourists can plan their trip in every single detail, at all the stages, without the intermediation of travel agencies (Elia, 2018: 135). Most tourist actions are now performed through the internet, which makes it possible to manage the whole tourism process in all its phases (Francesconi, 2014: 1). On the pre-trip stage, online tourists can search for information about destinations, compare prices of different services and book flights, accommodation, visits to museums and other leisure activities. It seems that tourists prefer to gather information on the Web instead of traditional resources (Amaral, Tiago and Tiago, 2014: 138). During the holiday, tourists have the possibility to check in real time through their smartphones information and opening hours of shops and attractions and organise their itineraries directly from applications on the phone. They can also book the visits at attractions and events. Then, in the post trip stage they post photos, videos and share the details of their experience, or write opinions and reviews on specific websites.

Along with this new way of interpreting the phenomenon of tourism, a new figure of tourist has developed. Whole sets of online services have transformed the behaviour of potential tourists, who become increasingly demanding (Manca, 2009: 1). They do not need a professional figure to organise the trip, as they can instead do it in full autonomy. The tourist 2.0 has moved away from the kind of tourist which tourism industry addressed in an impersonal way, as a mere customer of the industry, during the 1950s and 1960s. The tourist 2.0 is an informed and conscious tourist, with his/her own tastes and needs. There is a transition from consumer to prosumer: the tourist no longer plays a passive role but rather an extremely active one, they are “more experienced, more educated, more destination-oriented, more independent, more flexible” (Maci, 2007: 42). The Web is a space characterised by participation and interaction, where people can share their opinions, they are in fact both readers and writers (Francesconi, 2012: 46).

In light of all these transformations, it has been necessary for the tourism industry to modify its communication of the tourist experience. There is the need for communication to switch from being descriptive to experiential, as tourism is seen as an opportunity to have experiences (Lombardi, 2014: 12). The internet itself has indeed become a space in which potential tourists can virtually experience the holiday with the support of multimedia material. The mere objective description of the location is no longer sufficient to communicate the image of a territory, since the central role is played by the experience and emotions of the tourist rather than by the tourism product itself. “I prodotti turistici oggi non sono più i musei, i monumenti o le opere architettoniche [...]. I prodotti sono le emozioni e le esperienze che una destinazione è in grado di offrire, meglio se memorabili”¹² (Hernández and Cocco, 2019: 186).

The tourism industry now has to tell a story to potential tourists and dialogue with their emotions to convey the values of the territory and to promote destinations as “generators of experience”. There is the need for more direct ways of communication and more powerful persuasive language. The language of tourism has had to evolve with consideration of the potentialities of the internet and of the transformations occurring in the tourism industry. Such language needs to be accessible to an

¹² [My translation] “today, tourism products are no longer museums, landmarks or works of architecture [...]. The emotions and memorable experiences which a destination can offer to the tourists now constitute the tourism product”.

increasingly heterogenous public, without losing its persuasive qualities (Elia, 2018: 136). The tourism industry has always employed texts characterised by interrelations of verbal and iconic elements and the Web has increased the potentialities of such multimodal contents (Maci, 2020: XI). Transformations brought by web-mediated communication have also led to an evolution of tourism texts, some of which have modified their features, while brand new genres have developed in the virtual space of the Web.

3.2 Evolution of tourism texts

As well as the transformations the internet has brought to the way of selling tourist products and destinations, it has also contributed to various changes to the modalities of promotion and tourism communication. As often occurs, socio-cultural transformations can cause significant changes at the level of the language. As Francesconi (2014: 4) states: “text configuration patterns are deeply rooted in the socio-historical age in which they are produced and consumed”. As language reflects society, textual genres tend to change in relation to economic or technological factors, communication purposes, and many other motivations (Francesconi, 2014: 31). Tourism texts, as dynamic and constantly subject to innovation, have undergone a series of important changes, also due to the establishment of the digital medium, which has enabled consumer-to-consumer communication. The increasing use of the Web and the growth of digital communication has had a revolutionary impact on textual patterns. At the beginning of the digital age, numerous tourism texts experienced a migration to the Web. They underwent a process of “remediation” (Francesconi, 2012: 32), by which traditional genres, such as leaflets and brochures were electronically transformed through a simple variation from a paper version to a digital one. In the case of tourist guides, for instance, publishing agencies decided to publish their material on e-book format in a synthesised version, whereas online magazines have introduced a section dedicated to tourism and travel world (Elia, 2018: 137).

In light of this electronical transformation, there are many consequences for tourism communication: it appears easier have updated information in comparison to traditional

printed materials, due to their nature. As Dann (2007) affirms: “the traditional guidebook containing printed information about a given place, by its own admission, may well be out-of-date from the very moment it is published” (Dann, 2007: 15). Through the migration to the Web, traditional genres have become more direct and interactive, they have acquired greater persuasive power and they involve the reader more directly. Furthermore, brochures and leaflets on the Web feature more customised communication, in relation to the target audience, and a wider use of iconic elements (Calvi and Bonomi, 2008: 185). Other genres have been affected by deeper transformations: institutional webpages and online platforms have extended their communicative possibilities (Elia, 2018: 137). This evolution has helped to strengthen the hybridisation of already existing genres (Calvi, 2016: 16), as boundaries among different genres have become blurred: on a webpage, for instance, informative discourse is interwoven with promotional discourse and in it we can find a combination of the features of the guidebook, the leaflet and other kinds of tourism materials.

The growing use of the Web has led to the creation of new genres belonging to an interactive and more accessible form of communication, a new category of texts which were born in relation to the evolution of the internet. New forms of communication have arisen, with the consequent creation of a travel community, in which people with shared interests can exchange their opinions, suggestions and recommendations. These are also useful tools for the tourism industry, as they allow it to collect and interpret tourists’ opinions and expectations in order to properly plan the tourist offers (Simeon and Martone, 2016: 682).

These new virtual spaces, which are closely linked to digital communication and its peculiarities, require the creation of new narrative strategies and linguistic models (Elia, 2018: 137). The expansion of the number of internet users has generated global communication between people from all over the world, characterised by openness and international connection, which have enhanced the transmission of knowledge and interactivity. The migration to a virtual space has changed the amount and presentation of information, as well as the style and linguistic strategies of tourism texts (Edo-Marzà, 2016: 3). A new language has developed, which shares its main features with the digital medium, including multimodality, hypertextuality and interactivity.

Multimodality is a typical characteristic of tourism texts, already existing in printed traditional genres, as they combine verbal and non-verbal elements. In leaflets, for instance, the text is always accompanied by pictures. The Web has caused the migration to a virtual multimodality, and the potentiality of multimodal relationships have augmented: all online travel texts have become increasingly multimodal, they contain more visual layouts, combination of written text and images, pictures, grids and maps (Maci, 2012: 43). When tourism texts are uploaded on the internet, they become hypertexts. Hypertextuality represents the global interconnection of a potential infinite number of hypertexts, through which Internet users can move from one page or site to another:

The main feature of hypertexts is that their information is chosen and designed to attract attention by paradoxically disturbing any process of predictable reading on the screen in a conventional way. (Crystal, 2004: 138)

The hypertextual nature of the Web is reflected in the language used online, which breaks conventional reading patterns (Maci, 2012: 3). The linearity of the written text dissolves, the architecture of the text is deconstructed and is then recomposed, it becomes flexible to the internet users' necessities (Calvi, 2016: 14). Internet users do not have to follow a hierarchical menu, but can choose their own path through a network of pages just by clicking on a link (Castello, 2002: 100). Readers have the opportunity to interact with the text in a dynamic and active way which is not possible in traditional writing. The presence of web-links gives the reader the illusion of having total control over the path to follow within the webpage. However, web-links are situated on the page by web designers in such a specific way that increases the power of influence over potential tourists' decisions and behaviours. Links can even be located in the middle of a sentence, thus making readers exit a page to move to different sections within the site or even to other sites (Cappelli, 2006: 122). Moreover, the content of websites is not static and permanent in the page, but it often moves around the screen and changes in the colours, reflecting some specific communicative choices of the web-designer (Crystal, 2004: 44). On the Web, areas are carefully allocated to particular kinds of information and specifically designed "to attract the attention and disturb any process of predictable reading through the screen in a conventional way" (Crystal, 2004: 196).

Another characteristic of web language is interactivity, as the Web enables people from anywhere in the world to communicate with each other. Thus, there is a shift from a monological discourse to an open dialogue with a potential infinite number of participants (Francesconi, 2014: 3). A relationship marked by asymmetry between the tourism industry and the tourists has characterised tourism communication for a long time. During the period in which mass tourism predominated, the unique purpose was that of selling the tourist product and therefore a one-way communication existed. Then, technology has transformed this into a more interactive and many-to-many communication (Elia, 2018: 127). “It becomes necessary to re-visit the underpinning ‘language of tourism’ as it makes the transition from monologue to dialogue and triologue”, states Dann (2007: 29). The traditional media of tourism discourse, such as brochures or advertisements, were characterised by monological communication from the sender of the message to the addressee without hardly any feedback from the targeted audience or interaction between the tourist operator and the tourists. Monological messages were indeed often transmitted to potential tourists, who need to be persuaded by the authoritative sender (Dann, 2012: 62). With the advent of internet clients began to have their voices, with the consequent passage to a dialogical communication between the tourism industry and tourists, who can be both sender and addressee of the messages (Dann, 2012: 63).

The tourism industry thus has the opportunity to communicate with its own target market, for instance facilities can directly answer to dissatisfied clients, who post on the Web negative reviews to the services received during their stay. Yet potential tourists can also consult actual tourists who have already experienced a given destination or facility. Dann introduced the term “trialogue” to describe this three-way communicative situation, in which tourists can communicate with the tourism industry and also with other tourists, who became message producers themselves. The Web has changed the character of the interactions between consumers and has transformed mass communication into interpersonal communication (Elia, 2018: 136). This results in a need for reducing the complexity of the language and moving towards a more informal type of communication. In the restatement of the roles in the tourism industry, the language experienced a shift from formal to informal communication, a “transition from monologue to more open forms of communication” (Dann, 2012: 62).

Informal communication between non-specialists is characterised by a conversational tone, substantial emotional components, less specialised vocabulary and often inaccurate syntax, lexis and punctuation, which are all features typical of modern and contemporary digital tourism textuality (Francesconi, 2012: 21). Since tourists themselves became creators of messages, tourism discourse needs a reduction of the linguistic complexity, also due to the fact that the potential audience is extremely heterogenous and the fact that real-time means of communication impose the speed of information. The syntax has undergone a simplification process, and often appears as fragmented, making use of acronyms and abbreviations. This results in the passage from a formal and specialised language to a language which is coming closer and closer to the oral communication. There is an intersection between orality and writing, formality and informality and borders between tourism promotion and scientific divulgation have blurred.

Informative discourse, which is typical of the tourist guidebook, is contaminated by promotional discourse, which is characteristic of brochures and advertising (Calvi, 2016: 29). There is a move to the oralisation of tourism discourse, through the adoption of a conversational register, maintaining however the persuasive purpose of the text (Calvi, 2019: 2). Since producers of the text are the tourists themselves, such materials are characterised by a greater spontaneity and lower lexical precision. Through the entry of the voice of the tourist within the tourism discourse, along with the oralisation of the discourse, the subjectivity of the writer emerges in the text (Calvi, 2019: 5). Once again Calvi (2019) states that texts produced by tourists are marked by the phenomenon of a polyphony of voices. Professionals of the field usually incorporate the voice of the tourists within the specialised discourse, through the common formula “what the customers liked the most”, which is suitable to the purpose of capturing the attention of the reader and increases the credibility of the message (Calvi, 2019: 7).

Today, tourism communication largely employs tourist voices to convey promotional messages. Tourists have become creators of tourism discourse themselves, thus leading to the creation of new virtual spaces, like travel communities. These spaces enable tourists to produce a spontaneous and impulsive form of narration, which requires specific linguistic and narrative features (Francesconi, 2014: 3). On the Web, individuals who share the same interests can communicate and exchange opinions with

one another. The traditional practice of word-of-mouth has thus become digital, called electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Compared with traditional word-of-mouth although there are some differences, as e-WOM is less limited in terms of geographical, social and time factors, so that it can reach a wider range of people. Electronic word-of-mouth is aimed at a potential infinite audience, made up of different people in terms of age, gender, social status, interests, life-style, and so forth. Additionally, the possibility of posting something online anonymously encourages tourists to produce content in the most genuine way possible. Texts can also be supplemented with photos and videos, which is an added feature if compared to face-face conversation (Fili and Križaj, 2016: 108).

As we have seen above, while previously only experts in the field had control over the information, now tourists themselves produce content. Tourists have become active participants in the production of tourism discourse on the Web, where User Generated Content (UGC) is spreading. Through the internet, tourists do not only search for and read information on the Web, but they also have the possibility to post their own information during and after their holidays (Amaral, Tiago and Tiago, 2014: 140). Contents which are created by internet users are regarded as more genuine and credible compared to information provided by marketers or tourism professionals, as they are above the logics of the market economy. As the concept of online reputation has become of the utmost importance, hence the authority of information is guaranteed by the spontaneous and impulsive form of narration of the contents produced by tourists. Today UGC constitutes an integral part of tourism discourse and represents a useful tool, which can be implemented by the tourism industry to influence the decision-making process of tourists (Amaral, Tiago and Tiago, 2014: 145).

The participation of tourists in tourism communication has increased the availability and accessibility of practical information about destinations, which is constantly updated. This has led to the creation of digital spaces which adopt new linguistic models (Calvi and Bonomi, 2008: 189). The spread of user-generated contents is supported by specific platforms, through which tourists can gain information and plan their trip, but also interact with other peers about the visited places and experiences (Hernández and Cocco, 2019: 186). This has led to the creation of an increasing number of social networks and new tourism platforms. Today, online tourism communication is realised

through a wide variety of websites which differ in content, senders, addresses and communicative purposes (Elia, 2018: 135). As a matter of fact, “social media are acknowledging as a more trustworthy source of holiday’s information than others resources available” (Amaral, Tiago and Tiago, 2014: 139). The informative role, which was once performed by tourist guidebooks, is now in the hands of sites aggregating various contents generated by internet users (Elia, 2018: 138). Along with official and private travel websites, informal communication is pervading the tourism experience at all stages of the trip. People with a shared interest in tourism and travel meet in the Web in so-called travel communities, in which destinations and tourism attractions are described and narrated directly by tourists. Travel-community website are experiencing increased power in influencing the tourism market, as they are able to attract and persuade more than traditional guides (Francesconi, 2012: 44).

The tourism industry has therefore searched for new communicative models, such as social networks, in which tourists can exchange comments and share information about tourist destinations (Elia, 2018: 136). Their use accompanies tourists in every stage of their trip: before the holiday, social networks are consulted to have ideas and make decisions about the destination, but tourists can also look at reviews and suggestions during their trip. Another element is the development of tourism applications which are installed on smartphones and offer immediate information at every moment needed, thus allowing tourists to discover every detail of the given destination and which guide the tourists during their itinerary, supplying information on the history and attractions of the city (Elia, 2018: 138). In turn tourists can post opinions about their experience and share photos (Amaral, Tiago and Tiago, 2014: 140).

These new virtual spaces require specific and modern narrative strategies. The revolution brought about by the electronic medium has led to the development of new narrative strategies in accordance with digital communication and its features, which are multimodality, hypertextuality and interactivity. There is a transition from the impersonal and objective style of institutional communication to a new form of communication, which is based on storytelling. Social storytelling is the form of modern communication which is most widespread in the tourism field (Elia, 2018: 136). Ejarque (2015) (in Hernández and Cocco, 2019: 187) defines storytelling as:

una tecnica narrativa che consiste nell'utilizzare la struttura del racconto per spiegare un concetto, un prodotto, un'esperienza. Di fatto, non è altro che un modo di comunicare persuasivo, che adotta un approccio personale e che si rivolge direttamente alle persone¹³.

The main speech acts involve the conversion of the personal experience into a narration and evaluation of the services and visited places (Calvi, 2019: 5). Digital spaces are characterised by a colloquial and immediate style: some features of spoken language are often present in internet writing, such as short constructions, phrasal repetitions, flexible sentence structure (Crystal, 2004: 40). Digital communication is distinguished by a particular textuality which merges characteristics of written and spoken English. Within tourism discourse, due to the presence of user-generated contents, emotional components of the narrations emerge as well as the subjective tone of the description (Calvi 2019: 5).

These new forms of travel writing allow travellers to share and leave a record of their travel experience, and include multi-media materials. These are non-official virtual spaces in which tourists meet, and where they have the opportunity to post information, comments and evaluations. Such tourism platforms play an increasingly significant role in influencing the decision-making process of potential tourists.

3.2.1 Commercial and promotional websites

The development of the internet and of online commerce has been exploited to a great extent in the tourism field; as a matter of fact the most visited webpages are online sites concerning travels and tourism (Mocini, 2009: 29). Tourism websites can be created by national or regional institutions, by commercial organisations or travellers communities and they “contribute to the negotiated process of identity construction for the destination advertised and for the potential tourist” (Manca, 2016: 3). Both institutional and commercial webpages have as the dominant purpose the promotional one, even though they can differ in their linguistic factors, such as style and wealth of information (Calvi, 2010: 17). Furthermore, webpages can be either promotional or commercial, or

¹³ [My translation] “a narrative technique which consists in using the structure of the story to explain a concept, a product or an experience. It is basically a persuasive way of communicating, which adopts a personal approach and addresses people directly”.

both promotional and commercial; and different site types can be found on the Web. There are informational sites which provide information about all aspects of tourism, whereas promotional sites include sites of tourist boards whose objective is the promotion of a destination area. Commercial sites instead operate as a space of intermediation, in which potential customers can come into contact with service providers (Pierini, 2007: 85).

On tourism webpages, potential tourists can book their holiday directly, check prices of accommodation and services, and look at photographs. In order to promote a destination successfully, a webpage needs to adopt various strategies, ranging from linguistic aspects and content to layout settings (Manca, 2009: 153). If we consider the web page as a text, it “is a multi-semiotic entity resulting from the interplay of various resources”; it combines together written language, pictorial and graphic elements, all related with each other (Garzone, 2002 in Pierini, 2007: 88). Most of the features of a written text are altered by the Web; in particular the static nature of the written text is reshaped in favour of the dynamicity and interactivity of the webpage (Crystal, 2004: 201). As we have already seen, the Web is marked by hypertextuality, which breaks the conventional linearity of the text. The interaction of verbal and non-verbal signs is an important feature. We cannot therefore consider webpages as a simple text: since their main function is to promote destinations and attract the largest number of tourists, webpages need to adopt specific linguistic and non-linguistic strategies.

For a long time, webpages have been considered as the electronic version of traditional printed genres, as most commercial tourism-related websites are organised as a sort of “online brochure” with informational as well as promotional and commercial sections (Cappelli, 2006: 122), but, as online content, they present some distinctive features in terms of structure and language (Cappelli, 2008: 4). Tourism websites have specific structures which differ from the printed promotional materials: they contain simple but high quality text, with the design as one of the essential components (Salim and Som, 2018: 365). Webpages consist in a homepage and various sections. The homepage is defined as “the first page or computer screen of information that a viewer sees when accessing a website” (Zhao *et al.*, 2003) (in Manca, 2016: 13). The homepage of a website represents a very important element in creating the first impression in the reader, hence it is carefully designed to stimulate the visitor’s attention and encourage

him/her to explore the website further, but also to establish a contact with the visitor of the page. Several sections, into which the website is divided, concern History/Heritage, Arts, Nature/Geography, Food and Wine/Cuisine, Attractions, Transport, Accommodation, Itineraries. Then, webpages are constituted by other recognisable elements like title bar, navigation bar, main content area (Cappelli, 2008: 4). Inside a webpage we can find a variety of materials, such as descriptive and practical guides, sections dedicated to the experts of the field and blogs.

Webpages are multi-semiotic in nature: the main aim of the website communication is achieved by the combination of both verbal and visual elements (Calvi 2010: 24). “Language plays a fundamental role at all levels of their structure” (Cappelli, 2008: 5), which presents extremely brief texts, in bulleted-like style, as argumentation is not particularly present in websites (Maci, 2012: 146). Since the communicative interactions occur between experts and non-experts of the field, the language of website tends to be more similar to non-specialised discourse (Maci, 2007: 15) and that of spoken registers, due to the interactive nature of the digital medium. Almost all the characteristics typical of the language of tourism can be found on tourism webpages, including the abundant use of adjectives and of emphatic language, the frequent use of the imperative mood and the direct addressing to the reader (Pierini, 2007: 5).

The use of adjectives and positive terms in the descriptions of websites, such as ‘great’, ‘unique’, ‘special’, is aimed at transmitting “both a sense of euphoria for the services the website is promoting and a sense of distinctiveness and authenticity” (Maci, 2007: 56). Verbs are mainly used in the imperative form to guide tourists and to create a high involvement of the web visitor, because of the promotional function. Towards the same goal, the technique of ego-targeting is employed: the dialogue develops between the “you” and “we” forms. Yet, modal verbs are employed with the purpose of softening the authoritative voice, to give tourists the illusion that they have the decision in their hands (Maci, 2007: 58). Through the use of the modal verb “can”, for instance, the idea of possibility is conveyed. The tourist has the role of choosing whether accept the invitation to visit the destination being promoted, but actually he/she is strongly influenced by the description of the many opportunities the place offers. Webpages share some features with other traditional tourism genres, such as the imperative and the direct appeal to the readership, which are common in tourist brochures and print

advertisements. Structural constraints of the Web produce interesting choices at the linguistic level (Cappelli, 2008: 7). The nature of the Web brings to the extreme certain uses of the language of tourism, as keywords and key-phrases. Such particular linguistic elements have “to attract the readers’ attention immediately by informing him or her of the text’s main points” (Maci, 2012: 139) and are essential for the main linguistic prerequisite of the Web, which is the search engine optimisation. Tourists arrive at a website by writing specific words on the search bar, and keywords can highlight the visibility of the page. Therefore, they need to be short and informative and are usually concentrated at the beginning of the page. Webpages must contain a higher concentration of keywords and key-phrases, so that the message is repeated and is impressed in the mind of the reader. Keywords often relate to the emotions of visitors and refer to tourists’ expectations rather than to qualities of the destination (Maci, 2012: 147).

Yet, tourism webpages present characteristics which are typical of the language of the Web, including a simple style, the tendency to use short and simple sentences, a conversational tone, evaluative language. As a result of the features of the digital medium, an effective webpage should be characterised by multimodality, hypertextuality, eye-catching graphics and experiential visuality. Websites are based on hypertext links that connect information in different parts of the site, and thus the internet user has the possibility of choosing his or her path throughout the site (Maci, 2012: 8). Websites are indeed multidimensional resources: images, sounds and other visual components are “strategically combined together to inform, attract and persuade the potential tourist at the pre-trip stage” (Manca, 2016: 3). All graphic resources are used in a creative and captivating way, and the design and the layout of the websites also play a decisive role in shaping the destination image (Pierini, 2008: 172). The layout is constructed in such a way as to invite the internet users to read the texts (Maci, 2012: 146). Every detail becomes important in the design of the webpage, ranging from the colours which are used to the way in which different elements are placed within the space of the page. A prerogative of an effective webpage is however the coherence of the content and the harmony of the various elements, which must follow a very precise composition plan within the page (Crystal, 2004: 201). Every element needs to be positioned in a specific way to attract the reader’s attention; images, videos or other

components need to interrelate to each other (Maci 2012: 141). Images play a central role in tourism websites, as visual elements are employed to shape and enhance the destination image and to build the persuasiveness of the message (Salim and Som, 2018: 367).

3.2.2 Travel blogs

Travel blogs provide a digital space in which new forms of socialisation are achieved and actual communities of people with shared interests are created. Such spaces contain regularly updated posts and articles, which readers are allowed to contribute to with their own comments. A blog is a virtual personal space, which is autonomously created and managed by a private user who publishes a kind of personal diary in the form of posts. Such posts are stored in reverse chronological order in a digital archive which is always accessible to other internet users (Francesconi, 2012: 2). Blogs emerged in the mid-1990s as a practice among professionals and since then they have undergone an exponential growth and spread to several fields, covering different topics, such as photography, cooking, journalism and so on. Today, the blog is regarded as one of the most effective digital media in which everyone can share experiences, give opinions and suggestions, or regulate organisational intentions (Juliaty and Dita, 2021: 317).

Travel blogs account for 20% of the total blogosphere. The travel blog offers online travel accounts uploaded by travellers often while still on the road, and information often concerns the practical and organisational aspects of the trip (Calvi and Bonomi, 2008: 184). They are personal accounts spontaneously written for the benefit of other travellers or future travellers, who can gain unique information and be emotionally involved in the narration as the events are directly narrated by those who have experienced them first-hand. Furthermore, tourists write blogs without being influenced by others and they are not forced to follow any criteria for publication, thus making this kind of publication reliable and trustworthy.

Freedom and spontaneity in the act of writing may make travel blogs a more reliable source of information on real travel experiences than guidebooks or brochures, which are mainly written with promotional purposes in mind. (D'Egidio, 2014: 147)

In their accounts, the narration of the blog covers all the stages of the trip, from its planning to its actual execution, including details about both positive and negative experiences. As blogs are a form of spontaneous writing, they are characterised by informal first-person narrations of events, a highly subjective tone and linguistic expressions that convey the subjectivity of the reader, descriptive passages and positive evaluative expressions (Cappelli, 2006: 301). Blogs present a more chronological order in the narration of the events compared to other tourism texts (Francesconi, 2012: 10). Yet, like tourism texts, they tend to follow a particular structure, which consists in several moves: situational move, descriptive move, closure move and invitational move (Juliaty, Dita, 2021: 318).

The first part of a blog post is marked by the situational move, that is the topic introduction to give readers an idea of what to expect. The descriptive move consists in providing detailed information on several travelling aspects, such as tourist attractions, itineraries or interesting travel activities. This is a fundamental move because it has the purpose to attract the reader and make him/her continue with the reading of the post. Then, the descriptive move is followed by the closure move, which provides a summary of the trip with the personal thoughts of the writer. Some posts then present an invitational move in which the blogger invites readers to share comments so as to create a discussion on the topic (Juliaty and Dita, 2021: 318). As regards the functions of blogs, the referential function and the emotive function are the main ones. They indeed have the purpose of providing information about the travel destination to other potential tourists and, in doing so, bloggers express their feelings about their experiences (Juliaty and Dita, 2021: 321). In such way, bloggers share a part of their personality and of their lives with other users and this results in more authentic and genuine material compared to institutional tourism texts (Juliaty and Dita, 2021: 322). When compared to other tourist genres, blogs present some common features but also many differences from traditional texts. The space description of the destination, which is typical of tourist guidebooks, is in the present case provided in a subjective way: descriptions are rich in adjectives that express the opinions and feelings of the blog writer. Although the narrative and descriptive textual types prevail, an instructive tone is used in blogs to give instruction and advice on itineraries. In comparison to tourism promotion, however, the prescriptive strength is not as intense, also due to the possibility of

negative comments, whereas promotion discourse tends to embellish places and attractions with beautiful and appealing terms (Calvi and Bonomi, 2008: 184).

At a linguistic level, blogs attest the evolution of the language of tourism, as they present some typical features of the virtual spaces, which have experienced the oralisation of the written medium (Cappelli, 2006: 143). The language of tourism on the Web tends to be more similar to everyday language and this occurs likewise in blogs, which adopt dialogical practices of the Internet discursive genre (Calvi and Bonomi, 2008: 184). The language in travel blogs is generally informal, and rich in expressions which are borrowed from spoken registers. Online travel accounts seem to take many of their features from traditional travel books, as they consist in the narration of an individual experience, but in contrast to the literary language and sophisticated style of travel books, blogs are written in a colloquial and immediate style. This occasionally even results in stylistic inaccuracy, lexico-grammatical mistakes or incoherent sentences. The written text is like any other form of tourism text, generally complemented by a wide range of multimodal material, like photos and videos or maps (Francesconi, 2012: 3).

3.2.3 Online travel reviews: Tripadvisor

Within the virtual communities which have arisen on the Web around the area of tourism there are online reviews. Before the digitalisation of the world, reviews were typically written by experts in the field, but with the emergence of new communication channels reviews can be produced online by users for an audience of peers (Cenni and Goethals, 2020: 22). They constitute the prevalent form of e-WOM and they represent people's wish to share their travel experiences online (De Ascaniis, 2013: 20). They play a major role in the field of tourism as they provide information for other potential tourists, by making it easier for them to imagine what places are like (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008: 11). Even though they are regarded as post-trip materials, which are written by tourists following their travel experience, reviews collected in travel communities or social networks have a strong influence on all the phases of the travel planning process (Simeon and Martone, 2016: 681). During trip planning, reviews constitute one of the

principal materials to which tourists turn to gain information. They can then help tourists to narrow down their choices and after the trip tourists share and compare their experiences (De Ascaniis, 2013: 21).

The ultimate purpose of reviews is that of sharing personal experiences with future travellers, providing detailed information which is generally not available on websites or through advertising. That constitutes the reason why:

online consumer reviews are often considered more trustworthy and credible than information which is provided by suppliers of products and services, assumedly because consumers are considered to provide more honest information. (Cox *et al.*, 2009: 749)

Reviews are characterised by spontaneity as they consist in advice given by tourists who have personally experienced a service and visited a holiday destination to other potential tourists. Since they are written by users and represent the consumer's perspective, there is the tendency to consider reviews more truthful than information provided by tourist companies or local institutions, who are driven by commercial motivations. Tourists today look at other tourist comments and reviews as the most widely used source of information and as a useful tool in supporting their decision-making process (Cox, 2009: 748). Moreover, reviews are a useful tool for tourism operators, who are provided with reliable feedback on their business performance (Cappelli, 2006: 303). Tourism operators can obtain important information which can be used to improve the quality of the services offered and also have the possibility to answer unsatisfied customers in order to transform their opinion. Reviews also help to shape the reputation of a product or service and strengthen the destination image (Cenni and Goethals, 2020: 20).

Fiorentino e Compagnone (2019) identify online reviews as persuasive and evaluative texts, which are able to determine tourists' behaviour and to orient their choices. Reviews are usually short texts, which lack or are poor in narration and are rich in evaluative elements, such as positive and negative adjectives. There can be positive, negative or neutral reviews. They are characterised by first-person narration and a highly subjective tone, as are affected by tourists' feelings and emotions (Cappelli, 2006: 304). The information content is usually minimal, and is made up of the practical reason for the trip (Calvi, 2016: 18). Far from the objective description of reality, which is typical of tourist guidebooks, for instance, reviews are rather a "subjective recalling of experienced reality" (Cappelli, 2006: 305). There are descriptive passages but they

are rich in appraisal and are intended to validate the positive or negative evaluation of the place or service. This results in an argumentative text in nature, which combines description and narration, but also includes formulas which are typical of the tourism recommendation. The argumentation is then often followed by some advice, expressed in the form of a recommendation or suggestion, or sometimes in the form of instructions, with the use of the imperative mood (Cappelli, 2006: 304).

The texts of reviews are often united by a common generic structure, which includes communicative acts such as evaluation, description and recommendation, and occasionally narration (Fiorentino and Compagnone: 2019: 53). Evaluation is principally expressed by means of evaluative lexical units, such as adjectives, adverbs, nouns and specific verbs used to describe locations, attractions, accompanied by an enthusiastic way of speech. Another element which characterises online reviews is the narrativity: in some cases tourists tend to narrate what happened rather than describe it, and this is exemplified by the use of pronouns like *I* and *we* (Fiorentino and Compagnone, 2019: 58). Reviews usually contain standardised parts, which can all be present at the same time or just some of them are used in the text. At the beginning, background information is given, for example when the stay took place and for how long. The main body of the review consists in the evaluation of different characteristics of the location, the price, the services offered and so on. The text often ends with “future-oriented recommendations” (Cenni and Goethals, 2020: 25). There are indeed relatively few texts which are purely descriptive or evaluative, but are rather strongly perlocutionary, as they intend to provide suggestions to other potential future tourists (Fiorentino and Compagnone, 2019: 57). Reviews, as well as blogs and travel communities, can be considered as an indirect form of promotion, which aim to suggest to the reader that the product or service evaluation is coming from a peer and is therefore credible and impartial (Cappelli, 2006: 303).

Since online reviews are produced by internet users, the language of such texts is distinctly different from that used by tourism marketers. Far from being specialised and linguistically complex, reviews adopt a language characterised by a simple syntax and colloquialisms, which create the illusion of orality. In their study of online reviews content, Lei and Law (2015) give the definition of review as “an unstructured, but complete text distributed into a series of complete sentences called comments by

individual online reviewers” (Lei and Law, 2015: 21). There is also a shift from the impersonal style of the institutional communication to a kind of communication which focuses on the value of the personal experience and on the emotions of tourists (Hernández and Cocco, 2019: 186). From the discourse perspective, reviews can be considered as a hybrid cyber-genre, which has characteristics borrowed from other online editorial genres and serve different functions. They perform an informative function, which is typical of webpages and virtual tour guides; then they share with blogs the narration of personal experiences and, like tourism advertisements, reviews serve the persuasive purpose, as they indirectly play a part in the commercial promotion of the destinations (Hernández and Cocco, 2019: 186).

Titles represent an integral part of reviews: they summarise the content and make explicit the different communicative functions of the text. They can be of variable lengths and often contain numerous adjectives, which may be evaluative, descriptive or perlocutionary (Fiorentino and Compagnone, 2019: 56). Similar to an advertising slogan, their first objective is to attract the reader’s curiosity through a rich and evocative lexis which shapes the first impression of the readers about the review (Cenni and Goethals, 2020: 23). Titles always anticipate what is said in the text, allowing the readers to identify the meaning of the review itself (Fiorentino and Compagnone, 2019: 57). Finally, reviews, like all types of tourism texts, are multimodal resources which include linguistic elements as well as iconic ones (De Ascaniis, 2013: 110). Writers of the reviews have the chance to accompany their text with their own pictures. Another element which is emerging within tourism discourse is the category of emotion. Expressions related to personal experiences used by reviewers create an emotional response on the readers and reinforce the credibility of what is written (Calvi, 2019: 8).

Among the countless online platforms hosting user-generated reviews which have multiplied over recent years, Tripadvisor is the world’s largest travel community, where users can compare various economic offers, and plan a trip in every detail, by reading other users’ opinions on destinations and attractions. The site also provides a forum where tourists can share their knowledge and experiences with the rest of the travelling community (Calvi, 2016: 9). Then tourists, having returned from their holiday, can post their own comments about it to help other tourists plan their trip. Tripadvisor was one of the first platforms to benefit from the potentialities of user-generated content. It was

founded by Stephen Kaufer, Langley Steinert, Nick Shanny, and Thomas Palka in February 2000. With more than 830 million travel reviews and opinions, the site is consulted by 460 million individual monthly visitors at the pre-trip stage. It helps them organise their journeys, find the perfect accommodation, restaurants, landmarks, through positive or negative comments and suggestions written by other tourists in the post-trip stage (Francesconi, 2012: 2). Tripadvisor has thoroughly changed the way tourists plan their trips, and it has become one of the resources tourists rely on the most. Tripadvisor helps potential tourists organise their journey and find the perfect accommodation, by comparing different solutions with their prices and list of services. Users can also make a reservation directly through the website, since hotels, travel agencies and other structures are affiliated with the website, which is connected to booking platforms. The declared aim of Tripadvisor is to:

helps hundreds of millions of people each month become better travellers, from planning to booking to taking a trip. Travelers across the globe use the Tripadvisor site and app to discover where to stay, what to do and where to eat based on guidance from those who have been there before¹⁴.

Tripadvisor contains users' comments on restaurants and hotels, but also on cultural attractions, such as museums, churches, archaeological sites. On the site, consumers can make their evaluation in two ways. They are first asked to rate the place or service they want to review using a single word choosing from a five point-scale: excellent, very good, average, poor, terrible. Then, consumers can choose to develop their evaluation by writing a brief text. The discourse on the credibility of reviews is a very sensitive issue, considering the fact that sometimes users can find fraudulent reviews which are written by tourist organisations, under an assumed name, with commercial purposes. In this regard, Tripadvisor implements some measures to avoid false reviews. The staff of the platform filters each review before it is published, and any review which does not follow the guidelines is removed (Compagnone and Fiorentino, 2018: 273). Yet the fact remains that reviews, given that they are part of the user-generated contents, today are regarded as a reliable and trustworthy means on which many potential tourists rely.

¹⁴ <https://tripadvisor.mediaroom.com/us-about-us> (last visited on 02/08/2023)

CHAPTER 4. Corpus-based analysis of Tripadvisor reviews

This chapter aims at presenting and discussing a corpus-based study carried out to investigate the language of tourism on the Web. In particular the language of online travel reviews is analysed both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. In the first section, the purposes and the methodology of the study are presented. The study employs a quantitative and qualitative analysis by means of the software AntConc, as well as an appraisal analysis. First, a keyword analysis is carried out. Then, the main lexico-grammatical features of online reviews are investigated, including the analysis of the nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs used in such texts. This is followed by the appraisal analysis, in order to observe the ways review writers express their approval. A further section is concerned with the comparison of online travel reviews with other tourism texts, which I have examined above. Lastly, final remarks about the online language of tourism are made, with a concluding reflection on whether the language of online travel reviews can be regarded as an integral part of the language of tourism.

4.1 Aims of the study

As discussed in the previous chapters, the language of tourism has changed greatly over the years. With the advent of the internet, the tourism phenomenon has undergone a series of important transformations, and so has the language used in the tourism field. In particular, the possibility for internet users to produce their own content and post it online has caused the passage from the formality to the informality of the communication. This has resulted in a different kind of textuality: new textual genres have emerged and with them new linguistic features too. The present study aims at analysing the main characteristics of online travel reviews, at investigating what linguistic choices internet users adopt to express their satisfaction for the visited places. This study specifically attempts to answer to the following research questions:

- Which lexico-grammatical features do tourists use most to demonstrate satisfaction in an online context?
- What features do online travel reviews share with other genres of tourism discourse?

- To what extent could online travel reviews be considered as a part of tourism discourse?
- Could we consider this particular area of tourism as a specific language, which relies on a set of standards and conventions? If so, what are these?

4.2 Methodology and data collection

For the present study, the methodological approach of corpus linguistics has been chosen. Rather than taking into consideration “what is theoretically possible in a language”, corpus linguistics analyses “the actual language used in naturally occurring texts” (Biber and Conrad and Reppen, 1998: 1). It allows for a systematic analysis of the language in use, and has the purpose of examining the language of texts which are representative of a specific discourse community in a given situation (Nigro, 2006: 76). Corpus linguistics enables us to discover what particular patterns are associated with lexical or grammatical features and how these patterns differ across varieties and registers. Such a linguistic analysis is carried out through the creation of a corpus, which can be defined as a collection of naturally occurring texts, sampled to be representative of a language variety, stored in electronic format, accessible by means of a computer and analysable with the help of linguistic analysis software (Maci, 2016: 67). Through computer software it is possible to identify and analyse complex patterns of language use. Lexical units, for instance, may also be investigated in terms of frequency and usage with other words in the context.

Likewise, the present study adopts a corpus-based approach. For the purposes of this study, a corpus containing texts of online travel reviews has been created and analysed with the purpose of discovering how internet users use language to express their satisfaction with the attractions they have visited. To build the corpus, 100 reviews about the main cultural attractions of the city of Padua have been collected from the travel site Tripadvisor¹⁵. I have taken various parameters into consideration in order to gather the texts, such as the rating, the country of origin of the reviewers, the length of the text. The authors of the collected reviews belong to different nationalities, as we can see in the information profile, but all are expert English speakers. Most of them come

¹⁵ <https://www.tripadvisor.com/>

from United Kingdom and United States of America, but there are also Australians and Canadians users. However, not every user profile includes complete information, and some of the reviews do not report the country of origin of the writer. The time frame of writing of the reviews goes from 23rd March 2017 to 22nd October 2022. For the selection, only positive reviews by satisfied tourists have been considered, with a rating of 5 stars, which corresponds to the maximum. From the homepage of the site, the keyword “Padua” was entered in the general search box “Where to”. Then, from the result “Top Attractions in Padua”, the “Things to Do in Padua” section was selected.

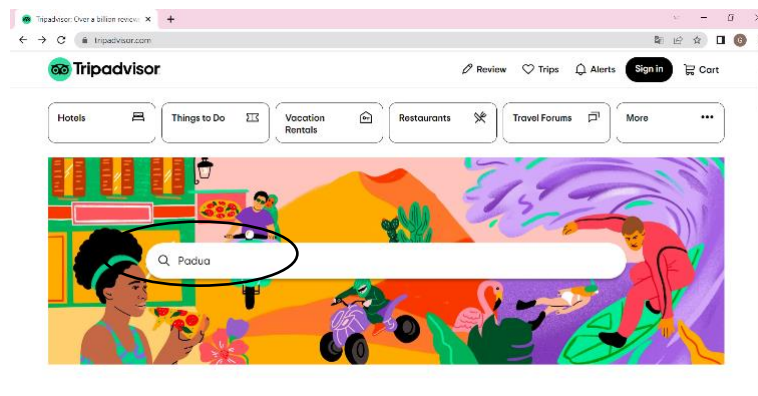


Figure 4.1. Homepage of Tripadvisor

Among the most visited places of Padua, five attractions have been chosen, those which present the largest number of reviews: Cappella degli Scrovegni (7358), Basilica di Sant’Antonio (6867), Prato della Valle (4162), Orto Botanico (2373), Palazzo della Ragione (1736). For each attraction, 20 reviews have been selected.

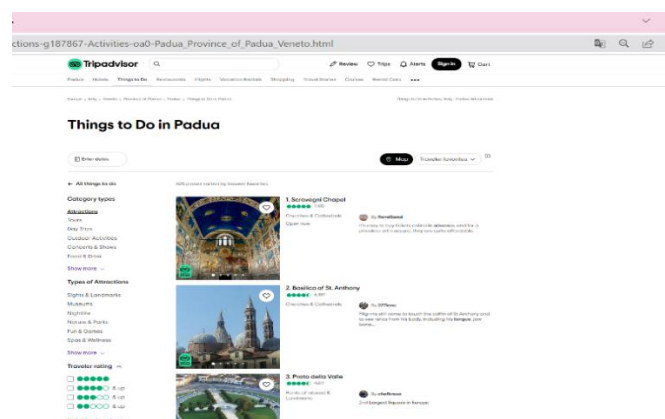


Figure 4.2. “Things to Do in Padua” section on Tripadvisor

The selected texts in the corpus consist of a title and a body. On the site, very short reviews can be found, but also rather long texts. In order to carry out as accurate an analysis as possible, I have selected reviews with approximately the same length.

<i>Cultural attraction</i>	<i>Total amount of words</i>	<i>Average length (words per review)</i>
20 reviews: Cappella degli Scrovegni	1922	96
20 reviews: Basilica di Sant'Antonio	1640	82
20 reviews: Prato della Valle	1255	63
20 reviews: Orto Botanico	1251	62
20 reviews: Palazzo della Ragione	1313	67
100 Total	7381	74

Table 4.1. Number of reviews and average length

Corpora are explored by using a concordance software, which uses several tools to investigate various aspects of the texts. The present research has been conducted using the software AntConc. AntConc is a freeware, multi-platform application, a computer software tool which allows users to process a corpus of language and display results in an easy way to understand (Anthony, 2005: 729). For an effective analysis, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative investigation is necessary. While the software can detect features that otherwise would be difficult to identify, it is still fundamental to read carefully the results it provides.

First, a quantitative analysis was carried out in order to give a statistical overview of the elements present in the texts at issue, such as number of words, frequent lexical words, keywords and concordances. In the following table the number of types and tokens in the corpus are illustrated. Types refer to more general and abstract categories, “each different word in a corpus” (Nigro, 2006: 78). Types display the total number of words without counting words that are repeated, and tokens represent the running words of the corpus, meaning the total number of words contained in the uploaded file (Maci, 2016: 70).

<i>No. of reviews</i>	<i>No. of types</i>	<i>Average types</i>	<i>No. of tokens</i>	<i>Average tokens</i>
100	1534	15.34	7451	74.51

Table 4.2. Number of types and tokens

Then, a qualitative analysis has been carried out, in which the data given by AntConc are examined and interpreted. Before that, in the next section I will illustrate the structure of the collected review texts in the corpus.

4.3 Structure of the review texts

As we have seen in section 3.2.3, we can identify in reviews some specific moves which different texts have in common. In particular Fiorentino e Compagnone (2019) observe three main communicative acts, which are description, evaluation and recommendation, and narration in some cases. The first part is usually involved with the objective description of the place or attraction, even though the personal opinion of the author often appears visible already in this passage, through the adjectives that accompany the nouns. The description of the place is frequently supplemented by the narration in first-person of the personal experience, also including the narration of the feelings and emotions felt. In the evaluation move, travellers estimate the principal characteristics of the visited place and of the services which are offered. The last part of the reviews usually consists of recommendations which are given to other potential future tourists. The following review is an example of a review text, which is taken from the corpus collection, in which these three moves are encountered. First, the author of the review describes the Basilica of St. Anthony. The description is intertwined with such expressions as “is exciting to see” which convey the emotions experienced by the tourist. The text concludes with the recommendation to review readers to visit the place.

Quite simply a magnificent edifice and, unbelievably, free to visit. The building is vast and completely packed with fabulous devotional artwork. The whole idea of venerating ‘relics’ such as the obscure body parts of long dead saints is completely bonkers of course, yet the extent to which such a pursuit inspired great artists to produce elaborate reliquaries and receptacles is exciting to see. This great church offers the serenity of secluded cloisters, the wedding cake and gilt drama of Anthony’s tomb and massive feats of sculpture and fresco. I could spend hours in here and would certainly recommend a visit of no less than an hour if a full appreciation is to be gained.

Likewise, Cenni and Goethals (2020) identify several moves in review texts. In the opening position, they place the extra/background information, which concerns for instance details of the stay, such as the period in which tourists have visited the place or

even references to their personal life and past experiences. Tourists who evaluate the Basilica of St. Anthony, for instance, have a tendency to open their reviews by stating that they have visited many churches before, to explain the particular and unique beauty of this one.

I have been in quite a few churches and cathedrals in Europe in my life and I think this was the most beautiful.

We visit many churches, cathedrals and chapels on our travels. This one is right up there in terms of scale, architecture and interest.

The main body, according to Cenni and Goethals (2020), consists of the evaluation of the attraction, in terms of its appearance, features but also practical aspects, such as opening hours or costs. Since the major objective of reviews is the assessment of the travel destinations, this move has been found in all the collected texts. The closing is usually marked by the presence of future-oriented recommendations to other potential tourists. This part may or may not be found in the texts; in some cases recommendations are more explicit, while in other texts there are implicit suggestions to other tourists.

If you are in the area of Padua, I highly recommend a visit to see the Scrovegni Chapel.

It is a magnificent place to experience.

A nice way to spend an afternoon or morning.

The following review shows the presence of the above described moves. First, the author gives brief background information, related to personal experience, in this case the fact that the author of the review has studied Art History. Then, information about the attraction, the Scrovegni Chapel, is given, through a narration in which the subjective stance of the author emerges, through the adjective *overwhelming*. Following this, the author invites readers to visit the attraction with a strong statement: “I implore you to see and to marvel at this world treasure!”. Lastly, practical information is given, such the tip to book the ticket in advance.

I studied this in Art History, but nothing prepares you for the assault on your senses of the real thing. Overwhelming...in a good way. The Chapel has been renovated again recently, adding a 1-storey glass extension. This box helps to break the flow of visitors, and to equalise temperature and humidity. All to preserve the integrity of the paintings. I implore you to see and to marvel at this world treasure!

There are lots of rules and regulations now, so make sure you take a gander at the official website and book your tickets well in advance. They were sold out when we visited.

There are instead some reviews which provide really detailed descriptions of the attraction. In the following example, the description move prevails over the others, which are actually absent. The author gives a detailed characterisation of Palazzo della Ragione, with the explanation of all the various spaces which it is made up of, and even a short mention of its history.

The ground floor of this civic building covers multiple food shops, while market stalls are set up in the adjacent piazzas on weekdays.

The upper level is a huge great hall, the interior walls of which are covered by frescoes depicting the influence of the zodiac on human life and activities, as well as multiple coats of arms. At the western end of the hall is a huge wooden horse made in 1466 for the Capodilista family and given to the city 400 years later. A working Foucault's pendulum is in the south east corner of the great hall.

The loggia on the south side of the great hall overlooks Piazza delle Erbe.

On the other hand, there are some review texts which lack a detailed description of the attraction, and instead just express, in very short space, the subjective stance of the author. The following is an example of this.

We had a very enjoyable visit to these gardens and especially enjoyed the new greenhouses which were brilliant! Extremely informative and something of interest for all age groups.

4.4 Corpus-based analysis

4.4.1 Keyword analysis

The keyword analysis allows us to “find which words appear unusually frequently in a corpus compared with the same words in a reference corpus” (Anthony, 2005: 733). It may facilitate understanding of the main points of a text. For such analysis, review texts have been transformed from Word file to Text file, in order to make it compatible with the text format which is required by the tools of computational analysis of the software. Moreover, for the purpose of an accurate analysis, any typing errors or spelling mistakes

have been corrected. Even though such errors and a fragmented syntax are peculiar features of the language of online reviews, in this specific case they are regarded as errors, which could obstacle computational processing performed by the software.

In the present study, the keyword analysis has been performed according to Keywords Extractor website¹⁶. The website employs as a reference corpus a combination of BNC and COCA corpora, which include both spoken and written language and are constantly updated. The *British National Corpus* (BNC) gathers 100 million of words in English language, while the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) contains one billion words in American English, a collection of spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, TV, movie subtitles, blogs and webpages.¹⁷

The keyword list below contains all the words in the review texts that, according to the instructions given in the website, are at least 25 times more numerous in such texts than in the reference corpus. At keyness cut-off of 25, there are 54 keywords from a total of 7144 (probably the software does not include proper nouns in the analysis), for a keywords ratio of 7.56 per 1000 words (a ratio of more than 1 word x 1000).¹⁸ This suggests a high keyword text, meaning that many words are distinct to this text. A keyword list is usually presented in order of *keyness*: the most statistically significant keywords appear first. For instance, the keyness value of the word *basilica*, 34994, means that the term is 34994.00 times more frequent in this text than it is in the reference corpus.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Keyness</i>
(1)	basilica	34994.00
(2)	botanic	29395.00
(3)	especial	8399.00
(4)	fresco	7278.80
(5)	biodiversity	5599.00
(6)	palazzo	4199.00
(7)	glasshouse	4199.00
(8)	piazza	1119.80
(9)	breathtaking	839.90
(10)	tram	787.38
(11)	chapel	745.34

¹⁶ <https://www.lex tutor.ca/key/>

¹⁷ https://lex tutor.ca/key/bnc_coca_fams_speechwrite_US_UK_per10mill.txt

(12)	pilgrim	629.90
(13)	artwork	583.25
(14)	relic	524.94
(15)	tropics	399.93
(16)	tomb	302.65
(17)	zodiac	299.93
(18)	pendulum	294.68
(19)	sculpt	237.70
(20)	statue	236.11
(21)	artifact	233.28
(22)	greenhouse	213.53
(23)	stroll	155.53
(24)	della	206.93
(25)	monument	135.45
(26)	stall	113.93
(27)	spectacular	111.10
(28)	magnificent	85.70
(29)	stun	85.12
(30)	fountain	83.99
(31)	Italy	74.88
(32)	slot	71.17
(33)	medieval	68.84
(34)	fabulous	66.66
(35)	cafe	56.74
(36)	euro	53.83
(37)	cathedral	51.21
(38)	picnic	48.27
(39)	saint	47.34
(40)	canal	46.66
(41)	architecture	35.53
(42)	visit	35.28
(43)	online	35.24
(44)	beauty	34.22
(45)	amaze	33.33
(46)	garden	33.21
(47)	interior	32.36
(48)	square	30.57
(49)	surround	29.97
(50)	fantastic	29.91
(51)	impress	29.62
(52)	preserve	27.93
(53)	gorgeous	27.58
(54)	ticket	25.84

Table 4.3. Keyword analysis

The findings of the keyword analysis show the analogy of online travel reviews with some of the main features of the promotional language of tourism. The resulting keywords are for the most part nouns which belong to the several subject fields which tourism discourse includes. This reflects the interdisciplinarity of the language of tourism, which I have discussed in section 1.1. For this reason, these nouns have been subdivided into groups, according to the semantic area to which they belong, architecture and buildings, art and services.

<i>Architecture and buildings</i>	basilica, palazzo, glasshouse, piazza, chapel, tomb, statue, monument, fountain, cathedral, square
<i>Art</i>	fresco, artwork, relic, artifact, sculpt
<i>Services</i>	tram, café, ticket

Table 4.4. Categorisation of noun keywords by semantic area

Furthermore, the prevalence of nouns reveals the referential function of the texts, as these are used to describe the places.

Other predominant elements in the keyword list are the adjectives, which manifest the persuasive and promotional functions of review texts. They describe the cultural attractions from various points of view, especially from architectural, artistic and urbanistic perspectives. They are adjectives which describe the places and attractions in very positive terms, such as *brehtaking*, *spectacular*, *magnificent*, *fabulous*, *fantastic*, *gorgeous*. Such adjectives express the subjective stance of the reviewer. As concerns the verbs, they are comparatively few in number in the keyword list. We find the verb *visit* as was to be expected, since the reviewers tell about the experience lived by visiting specific places. Likewise, the verb *surround* specifies the location of the attraction and the verb *preserve* refers to the condition of it and its high degree of preservation. Other verbs in the keyword list are verbs which belong to the semantic field of wonder. *Stun*, *amaze*, *impress* describe the impact that the cultural attractions have on tourists at the moment of their visit.

4.4.2 Lexico-grammatical features

The language of online travel reviews, as already stated in section 3.2.3, is marked by a simple syntax and use of colloquialisms, close to the spoken register. The lexicon employed is principally evaluative, since the ultimate purpose of reviews is to evaluate the tourism destinations.

Following the keyword analysis, the next step for the investigation of the lexico-grammatical features was to generate a word list, with the help of AntConc. The *word list* tool and the *concordance* tool were used the most. A word list provides the list of all the lexical words in the corpus sorted by their frequency in the texts and is useful to find interesting areas for investigation. To generate the word list, I uploaded the corpus in .txt format into the software AntConc, and I also uploaded a stoplist in order to remove the most commonly used words in a language, which carry very little information and may be an obstacle to an effective analysis, such as articles, prepositions and conjunctions. Next, the software automatically creates a word list and allows you to search for linguistic items in the *concordance* tool, which permits to identify how a term is used in context. Is in fact in the context that a lexical item acquires its sense (Pierini, 2009: 18).

The corpus was then part-of-speech (POS) tagged using TagAnt. Part-of-speech tagging is the process of marking up a word in a corpus as corresponding to a particular part of speech, meaning nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs. For each of these categories, I selected those units which occur more in the corpus. Then, through the *concordance* function, it was found which words are used mostly with a specific adverb, adjective or other lexical units. A concordance is a list of all the occurrences of a search term in a corpus. Having entered a certain word in the search box, this is displayed at the center of the output panel with the linguistic context with which it occurs in the texts of the corpus. The node word, which is the word we entered, is shown with a variable number of words to the left and right of the search term. Looking at the concordances, it is possible to identify the collocates of the specific words. Through an inductive interpretation of the data, it is possible to identify the most frequently co-occurring words.

In the following sections, an investigation of frequent nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs with their collocations is carried out. The analysis is supplemented with several

excerpts of reviews from the corpus, in order to display the linguistic choices tourists make in expressing their satisfaction.

4.4.2.1 Nouns

From the word list, I selected the most frequent nouns and then analysed them through the *concordance* function, in order to highlight relevant linguistic features and determine their collocation.

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Part of speech</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Collocation (before)</i>	<i>Collocation (after)</i>
55	noun	place	this, great, wonderful	to, of
37	noun	chapel	small, beautiful	
25	noun	building	enormous, tremendous, lovely	is, was, in
24	noun	Basilica	gorgeous, beautiful	is
24	noun	garden	botanical, botanic	
23	noun	frescoes	lovely, Giotto's	are, depicting
21	noun	church	large, amazing	
21	noun	world		Heritage, first
20	noun	market	indoor, flea, Sunday	below
18	noun	art	Western, medieval	history
18	noun	hall	vast, huge, enormous	
16	noun	square	spacious, vast	with

14	noun	history	full of	
12	noun	statues		
11	noun	experience	lifetime, great	
9	noun	paintings		from
9	noun	tram	take	stop
8	noun	train		station
6	noun	gem		

Table 4.5. Frequent nouns and their collocations

The most frequent nouns in the corpus appear to pertain to the several subject domains of the language of tourism, in particular to architecture and art, such as *chapel, building, church, frescoes, statues, paintings*. The most frequently occurring noun is *place*, as the object of the reviews are the attractions of the city of Padua. It is mostly used with the demonstrative determiner *this*, to indicate the place they refer to. It is also particularly used with adjectives such as *beautiful, impressive, special, nice*, as nouns are usually paired with adjectives which describe and evaluate them.

*Imagine this **place** and Giotto working on these masterpieces 700 years ago [...]
An amazing and special **place** – the art was epoch and life changing.*

Place is also largely used in the phrasal construction “a perfect place to do something”, as a recommendation by tourists to other potential tourists to visit the place, with some suggestions on what activities they could do to fully enjoy such place.

*It's a nice **place** to read a book or sit.
A perfect **place** to sit and drink a Spritz.
[...] you will find this wonderful **place** to wander and relax.*

Some nouns, such as *building, basilica, frescoes* are followed by the verb *be* to give an objective description of the places. We can find it at the present tense, to indicate for instance where the building or monument is located in the city, or at the past tense to

illustrate how it appeared to tourists at the time of their visit or even to tell something about the history of the place.

*The building **is** at the center area of Padova [...]*

*The basilica **is** easily accessible by tram from the Padua train station.*

*The frescoes **are** ordered in three tiers [...]*

*The hall **was** once the largest hall in the world with frescoes from Giotto.*

The noun *world* is used to express the uniqueness of the attraction, which presents some distinctive characteristics that tourists cannot find in other places. Moreover, many of the cultural attractions at issue, such as the Scrovegni Chapel, the Basilica of St. Anthony, the Orto Botanico and Palazzo della Ragione have been awarded “UNESCO World Heritage Site”.

*[...] to admire the design of the **world's** first botanical garden [...]*

*Padova botanical garden is one of the oldest in the **world**.*

*[...] in its historical location, a UNESCO **World** Heritage Site.*

Another frequently occurring noun, which belongs to the semantic field of architecture, is *hall*. It is related to Palazzo della Ragione and is mostly used with spatial adjectives which describe it, with reference to its size. All the reviews of such location refer to the majestic grandeur of the hall. Most occurring adjectives are *huge*, *enormous*, *vast*.

*The Hall was once the largest **hall** in the world with frescoes from Giotto.*

*The vast **hall** above the market is truly amazing.*

*[...] the huge **hall** above contains the most amazing collection of wall to ceiling frescoes.*

*The enormous **hall** in the Palazzo is dazzling.*

The word *history* is used to express the centrality of the historical perspective to attract tourists. The history of a place represents a high value for tourists, who look for the cultural relevance and authenticity of the places visited. Nowadays, cultural tourism has become one of the most influential form of tourism. The history and heritage of the places are important factors in the construction of a memorable experience.

*The building was full of **history** and beautiful artifacts.*

*The chapel is the most amazing place and has a wonderful **history**.*

The tourist 2.0 indeed has recognised the importance of the experiential value of the journey and seeks a way to live an exclusive experience. The noun *experience* is a recurring noun within the corpus and is used with occurring expression, such as *once-in-a-life-time experience*, in order to state the uniqueness and exclusiveness of what tourists have experienced.

*Being able to visit the chapel was such a moving **experience** for me.*

*A once in a life time **experience** you won't soon forget.*

Likewise, the noun *gem* conveys the authenticity and uniqueness of the experience, along with *treasure* and *miracle*. *Gem* is used especially in reference to the Basilica of St. Anthony and to the Orto Botanico to convey the preciousness of what tourists had the privilege to see, like something which is not easily found in other places.

*It's a **gem** hidden away in this town.*

*[...] but the new botanical hothouse in an absolute architectural **gem**!*

Then, there are two nouns, *tram* and *train*, which refer to the services the city of Padua offers, and are used within sentences which provide practical information, for instance on how to get to the place in which the attraction is situated. These nouns also occur in specific clusters of words, such as *train station* and *tram stop*.

*You take the **tram** coming towards you heading into town.*

*[...] and the **tram stop** is to the right of the ticket booth.*

*It is a bit of a walk from the **train station**.*

Nouns, on the whole, are almost always preceded by one or more adjectives, which implicitly express the subjective stance of the author of the review. Some nouns are accompanied by adjectives which describe the place from an objective point of view, by illustrating their physical or cultural characteristics. As concerns, for instance, the nouns *garden* or *art*, they are preceded by classifiers which give information about the type of garden and art tourists are referring to.

*This is the oldest botanical **garden** that is still in its original location.*

*[...] in the presence of Giotto's genius of late medieval **art** [...]*

Moreover, nouns are supplemented by adjectives that convey the reviewer's impression of the place. I will now analyse these kinds of adjectives in the next section.

4.4.2.2 Adjectives, determiners and noun premodifiers

As we have seen in Chapter 1, section 1.2.1, the language of tourism is characterised by an evaluative lexis, which is defined by the abundance of adjectives. Adjectives indeed play a major role in tourism discourse, being used to describe a destination and construct its identity. The table below with the adjectives occurring in the corpus shows their importance also in review texts.

In the word list below, we find demonstrative determiners, such as *this*, and quantifying determiners, such as *many*, *some*, *few*, *any*. Yet, there is a significant predominance of descriptive adjectives, such as *beautiful*, *wonderful*, *amazing*, *great*, *interesting* and so on. Some of these refer to the aesthetical properties of the attractions, such as the dimension, whereas the majority of adjectives add a positive judgement to the attractions being described.

The most widely occurring adjective in my corpus is the determiner *this*. As a demonstrative determiner, it modifies a noun in a sentence while emphasising its importance, by indicating which noun the writer is referring to in the text. Demonstrative determiners are similar to the definite article *the* in conveying definite meaning and are generally used for anaphoric reference.¹⁹ In this context, it is used to indicate the attraction the reviewer is referring to. The choice of the determiner *this* can also reflect the emotional closeness of reviewers to the place described.

It should be noted that *this* is also used as a pronoun in order to avoid the need to repeat the same noun. The pronoun *this* is usually used for textual linkage, referring back to a specific noun phrase antecedent. *This* as a pronoun often collocates with the verb *is* for the purpose of giving a detailed description of what has been mentioned before.

*We stopped here on our way to Verona just to see **this** basilica.*

*[...] to ensure the preservation of **this** beautiful place.*

***This** great church offers the serenity of secluded cloisters [...]*

***This** is the premier attraction in Padua.*

¹⁹ Biber Douglas Susan Conrad and Geoffrey N Leech. 2002. *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow Essex England: Longman.

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Part of speech</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Collocation (before)</i>	<i>Collocation (after)</i>
86	adj.	this	see, visit	place, is
52	adj.	beautiful	and, most	place, church, artwork, and
30	adj.	very		interesting, appealing, well, old, long
25	adj.	wonderful	truly	place, surprise, experience
23	adj.	amazing	most	collection, building, place
19	adj.	worth	definitely, well	visit
18	adj.	great	really	place, hall
18	adj.	many		churches, people
16	adj.	botanical	historic	garden
14	adj.	interesting	very, and	and, history, garden
13	adj.	lovely		frescoes, place
13	adj.	most	the	amazing, important, beautiful
13	adj.	old	very, years	and
13	adj.	large	very	church, building

12	adj.	some	with	of, time
10	adj.	few	a	
10	adj.	impressive	truly, most	place, monument, edifice
10	adj.	new		glasshouse
9	adj.	huge		hall, space
9	adj.	small	very	canal, chapel, group
8	adj.	any		
6	adj.	breathhtaking	absolutely, and	piazza, place
6	adj.	magnificent	truly	place, edifice
6	adj.	peaceful	and	place
5	adj.	extraordinary		piece, chapel
5	adj.	moving		
4	adj.	modern		

Table 4.6. Frequent adjectives and determiners and their collocations

Adjectives can be categorised in descriptive adjectives, evaluative adjectives and experiential adjectives (Pierini, 2009: 98). Descriptive adjectives have a referential function, as they provide factual information about the places they describe. In the corpus, such adjectives are *old*, *large*, *huge*, *small*, *new*, which designate objective properties of the attractions. Evaluative adjectives, instead, reflect a subjective stance of

the writer, who gives a personal opinion about the visited place. Since the main purpose of the reviews is to evaluate things, the texts are rich in this kind of adjectives, such as *beautiful*, which is one of the most occurring adjective in the corpus, *wonderful*, *amazing*, *great*. There is also another category, that of adjectives which express perceptions or emotions of the writer, and are called experiential adjectives (Pierini, 2009: 11). Besides being highly subjective, such adjectives involve thought and feelings, by explicating the way tourist felt when experienced the place. *Interesting*, *lovely*, *peaceful*, *stunning*, *impressive*, *brehtaking*, are adjectives which all express the impact that the attractions had on tourists.

*The Palazzo della Ragione is such an **impressive** building from the outside [...]
[...] at the end of Via Roma this is a **brehtaking** open piazza.
[...] still something to admire for the **lovely** frescoes [...]*

Quantifying determiners such as *many*, *some*, *few* and *any*, specify nouns in terms of quantity or amount.²⁰ The quantifier *many* denotes a large quantity, whereas *some* denotes a moderate quantity. In the corpus, indefinite adjectives do not occur in specific clusters of words, but refer instead to a variety of different things.

*[...] were **some** plants from the Americas were accustomed [...]
Beautiful church with **many** artworks and Christian's relicts.*

Yet, the vast majority of adjectives in the corpus are descriptive adjectives, which describe the attractions both from an objective and subjective perspective. Among the adjectives, it is interesting to analyse the time descriptor *old*. It is employed to describe the origin of the building and express its antiquity, but it is also used to convey the idea of continuity between the past and the present and highlight the timeless aspect of the monument. The adjective *old* is frequently coupled with the adjectives *new* or *modern*, which occur together in expressions like “old and modern”, “old and new”. The combination of these adjectives makes the attraction being described close to the tourists' world while maintaining their original features.

*I loved the combination of **old** and **modern** frescoes.
Amazing blend of **old** and **new**.*

²⁰ Biber Douglas, Susan Conrad and Geoffrey N Leech. 2002. *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow Essex England: Longman.

In the corpus we principally find evaluative descriptors with a positive value, which underline the beauty and majesty of the places they refer to, such as *beautiful*, *amazing*, *great*. They are used by reviewers to express their subjective judgement of some particular element of the attractions, which they especially liked. These adjectives tend to precede nouns, like *place*, *building*, *church*.

*This **great** church offers the serenity of secluded cloisters [...]*

***Beautiful** space with **beautiful** surroundings [...]*

In particular, the idea of grandiosity and attractiveness of the place is rendered by such adjectives as *magnificent*, *impressive*, *extraordinary*. The adjective *moving* especially refers to the Scrovegni Chapel, as tourists are particularly fascinated by the appeal of Giotto's paintings, which make them feel very emotional.

*[...] as well as an **impressive** representation of the Final judgment on the end wall.*

*Each one of the fresco pictures tells the most **moving** and beautiful, and human, story.*

Adjectives have a tendency to collocate with the conjunction *and*, this reflecting the tendency to use adjectives in pairs. In a single sentence we find two or more adjectives in a row, or even a sequence of adjectives. Binomial expressions are lexical bounds consisting of two words from the same grammatical category coordinated by *and* or *or*. In this particular case, adjectives are used in combination for a particular semantic effect. This is a particular type of rhetorical device, which aims at intensifying the meaning of the adjective.

*[...] the Basilica inside is absolutely spectacular **and** breathtaking.*

*A green **and** peaceful **and** beautiful place to stroll or just relax in.*

Furthermore, the occurrence of *most* with other adjectives tells us about the use of the superlative form of adjectives. Superlative adjectives are used to convey the sense of exclusiveness of the described attractions. As well as in the form *most* + adjective, superlatives are expressed in the form *the* + adjective + *-est*, in such examples as *the largest*, *the best*, *the greatest*.

*This is **the oldest** botanical garden in Europe.*

*[...] is one of **the best** Squares not only in Italy, but in Europe.*

*The chapel is **the most amazing** place and has a wonderful history.*

*This is one of **the most beautiful** church interiors I've ever seen in my travels [...]*

The adjective *worth* is adopted to state the uniqueness of the attraction and the worthiness of spending time visiting it. *Worth* creates specific clusters within the corpus, such as *definitely worth a visit*, *well worth the visit*.

*[...] near to the Basilica and definitely **worth a visit**.*

*Definitely something **worth** seeing as you enjoy an ice cream from a nearby vendor.*

*Very well **worth** the entrance fee.*

Moreover, we find examples of noun premodification. Some nouns in the corpus are used as premodifiers, occurring in front of the head noun and thus functioning as attributive adjectives, which is why I decided to include them in this section. Premodification is a technique particularly employed in tourism discourse, in order to have condensed forms and save space. As explained in section 1.2.2, premodification is useful to achieve textual conciseness, which is one of the main features of the language of tourism. For instance, the noun *floor* is pre-modified by the noun *ground*, which acts as an adjective, indicating the location of the attraction or parts of it.

*The **ground floor** of this civic building covers multiple food shops [...]*

*On its **ground floor** one finds an indoor market of butchers, fishmongers [...]*

Moreover, adjectives are often preceded by the modifying adverb *very*, which is used to increase the intensity of the adjective. The combination of *very* + adjective can be employed to objectively describe something, as in the case of *very old*, *very large* expressions; or to highlight the intensity of the emotions lived by tourists.

*[...] it is a **very large** church, with the typical basilica design [...]*

*[...] it was **very special** to go to the Basilica.*

*We had a **very enjoyable** visit to these gardens [...]*

4.4.2.3 Adverbs

In the corpus adverbs are less frequent than other kinds of lexical units, but nonetheless perform an important function.

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Part of speech</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Collocation (before)</i>	<i>Collocation (after)</i>
30	adv.	very	a, was	interesting, large, well
23	adv.	well	as, very	worth, preserved
22	adv.	just		amazing, wonderful
15	adv.	around	walk	
11	adv.	outside	the	
11	adv.	quite		stunning, magical
7	adv.	near		
6	adv.	above	hall	
6	adv.	absolutely		divine, breathtaking
6	adv.	definitely		worth
6	adv.	really		great
6	adv.	truly		impressive
5	adv.	simply		beautiful
4	adv.	beautifully		preserved, decorated

Table 4.7. Frequent adverbs and their collocations

As can be noticed in the table above, there are not particularly relevant collocates before the adverbs, whereas collocates after are particularly meaningful for the analysis. Adverbs, for their grammatical nature, almost always precede an adjective and have the purpose of strengthening the meaning of it.

There are some adverbs of place, which express distance, direction or position. Adverbs such as *around*, *above*, *near*, are used to indicate where attractions are located or illustrate where some activities should be done..

*If you want to light a candle, you have to bring one in and place it in a box **near** the entrance to St. Anthony's tomb.*

*Fascinating to walk **around** and appreciate the hidden messages.*

*[...] the huge hall **above** contains the most amazing collection [...]*

Except for this kind of adverb, the rest of adverbs are of an intensifying type, strengthening the meaning of the adjectives they accompany and giving emphasis to the concept expressed. At the top position of the word list we find the adverb *well*, which is used in combination with -ed participle thus creating adjectival compounds. Adjectival compounds are made from a combination of words, resulting in a compact expression of information.²¹

In the corpus, in particular we find the compound adjectives, which are used in attributive function, *well worth* and *well-presented*, which is referred to the services the attraction offers. The occurring compound *well preserved* describes the condition in which the attractions are, by stating that the place has conserved its original features and beauty.

*Amazing to see paintings from 1300 so **well preserved** [...]*

*Very **well-presented** with plenty of explanation in English.*

Other common adverbs are *simply*, *truly*, *really*, *definitely*, *absolutely* which are used to express and show the sincerity of the reviewers in giving their comments and opinions.

*[...] with the tropical and desert greenhouses are **just** amazing.*

*[...] but the basilica inside is **absolutely** spectacular and breathtaking.*

***Truly** impressive and interesting with many artefacts [...]*

²¹ Biber Douglas, Susan Conrad and Geoffrey N Leech. 2002. *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow Essex England: Longman.

4.4.2.4 Verbs

Among the main morphosyntactic characteristics of the language of tourism, in section 1.2.2 I have analysed the verb tense. In the language of tourism the present tense and the imperative form prevail over the others. In the case of online travel reviews, as the below analysis will show, this prevalence is confirmed, yet with some distinctions.

As we can see from the table below, verbs in the corpus mostly are in the base form, or imperative mood. Only in a few cases, the past tense is employed.

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Part of speech</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Collocation (before)</i>	<i>Collocation (after)</i>
40	verb	see	must, could, to	in
35	verb	visit	can, to	to
17	verb	get	can, you, to	tickets
17	verb	go	to	to, inside
14	verb	take	you, can	photos, time
12	verb	walk	short	around, down, from
10	verb	book		ahead
10	verb	visited	we, I	
9	verb	enjoy	just	
8	verb	allowed	is, pictures	in
8	verb	find	to	
8	verb	miss	don't	

6	verb	look	to	at, from
5	verb	walked	we	through

Table 4.8. Frequent verbs and their collocations

The verbs in the corpus often appear in non-finite clauses, which have no tense and usually lack an explicit subject. The verb phrase can be introduced by an infinitive, -ing participle or -ed participle and it usually begins the clause.

Along with infinitive clauses, verbs in my corpus are mostly used in the present tense and in the imperative form. The imperative mood in review texts is not used to give instructions, as happens in other types of tourism texts, but to establish a direct contact with readers and make the message more incisive and powerful. It acts as a sort of piece of advice from a friend.

***Go** to the new glasshouse directly, especially on a cold and cloudy day.*

***Take** the tram there then a very short walk.*

*[...] or just **walk** around and enjoy the statues.*

Some verbs in the word list are in the past tense, principally in the past simple, to tell and describe what tourists did during their trip. Such verbs are in fact preceded by the personal pronouns *we* or *I*.

*[...] and finally **I visited** church of St. Anthony of Padova [...]*

*Next, **we walked** to the indoor greenhouse.*

*We **visited** on a Sunday and found a market all around [...]*

Furthermore, there are a few verbs (which are not inserted in the table) in which the past participle has the function of an adjective to describe the feelings of tourists during their visit to the attractions. In the following examples, *surprised* is a participial adjective used in predicative function, whereas the participle *moved* is used in passive voice and functions as a predicative adjective describing the state of tourists.

*[...] and be **moved** by the whole experience of being here.*

*I was **surprised** and **delighted** that we could take photos [...]*

Likewise, *allowed* is used in passive constructions in sentences in which the reviewers provide readers with useful information about any rules and prohibitions.

*Be mindful that no photographs are **allowed** inside [...] [...] and the limited amount of people **allowed** in for only 15 minutes.*

Most of the frequent verbs in the corpus are action verbs, such as *see, visit, go, get, look*, which indicate the activities tourists should do during their holiday. For instance, the verb *visit* is used in the infinitive form in expressions such as “wonderful place to visit”, “be sure to visit”. These are very common expressions of the language of tourism, which are especially used in promotional discourse to make information appealing and to attract readers.

*Be sure to **visit** where he is buried and here you will see pilgrims from around the world [...]*

*While you wait for your tour, you can **visit** the gift shop [...]*

*This historical botanical garden is a wonderful place to **visit** while in Padua [...]*

Likewise, the verb of action *walk* is very frequent. It is mostly used in the imperative form to give other tourists useful suggestions.

*[...] or just **walk** around and enjoy the statues [...]*

*[...] then **walk** past priceless gold religious articles behind glass showcases.*

*[...] fascinating to **walk** around and appreciate the hidden messages.*

The verb *book* is used to inform the tourists about the necessity of booking the tickets for the attractions in advance.

***Book** ahead to avoid disappointment.*

*Take a gander at the official website and **book** your tickets well in advance.*

Look at, watch and *see* are verbs of perception, which convey the experience of the physical senses. Here as well, they are employed to give readers tips on how to appreciate the experience of visiting the place through their senses.

*Make sure to **look** up at the ceiling, and not only at the beautiful frescoes.*

*Tip 1: take binoculars to **look at** detail.*

*Don't forget to **see** the mysteriously preserved tongue.*

Other verbs belong instead to the category of experiential verbs, such as *find*, *enjoy*, or expressions like “have a picnic”.

*[...] there is plenty of time and space to **enjoy** this fabulous collection.*

*[...] want to spend an afternoon or morning with your family or friends or just yourself, **have a picnic** or [...]*

The verb *miss* complies with the persuasive function of the text, it is used in the formulas *not to be missed*, *don't miss* in order to encourage potential tourists to visit the place.

[...] that you should not miss if you are in the area.

Don't miss the spectacular reliquaries [...]

[...] a large open market each Sunday not to be missed.

A separate observation should be made for modal verbs, which, as we have seen in section 1.2.2, hold an important place within tourism discourse. They express ‘modality’, such as possibility, necessity, prediction and volition.²² Most frequent modals within the corpus has been found to be the verbs *can*, *will* and *need*. *Can* expresses permission or possibility, *will* is used in the value of prediction or volition and *need* expresses a necessity.

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Part of speech</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Collocation (before)</i>	<i>Collocation (after)</i>
26	verb	can	you	get, take, explore
6	verb	will	you	find, give
6	verb	need	you	

Table 4.9. Modal verbs and their collocations

The most widely used modal verb is *can*, which is used to express the abilities and opportunities tourists find at the destination and to implicitly entice future tourists to exploit such possibilities. Modal verbs predominantly occur with *you* as a subject, since

²² Biber Douglas, Susan Conrad and Geoffrey N Leech. 2002. *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow Essex England: Longman.

the message is deliberately addressed to the reader of the review. Between writer and reader of the reviews an exclusive relationship is created, partly because potential tourists cannot usually find the shared information through other institutional sources.

*From here you **can** explore the city including the palaces [...]*

*You **can** get tickets online for a convenient time.*

*You **can** have a picnic, you **can** play music, you **can** play soccer [...]*

While here you can visit the tomb of St. Anthony [...]

The verb *will* occurs in sentences which have the intention of informing the potential tourists about what they will find once arrived in the place being reviewed. *Will* assumes the value of a guarantee to future tourists, who are projected towards the tourist destination in advance. Or it can express a prediction about the emotions they will experience.

*And at the end, you **will** find the bar to rest and enjoy the garden more.*

*[...] you **will** be amazed by the brilliant frescoes that surround you [...]*

Likewise, the semi-modal *need* is employed to give suggestions to other potential tourists, especially practical information on how, for instance, book the visit to the attractions. *Need* as a semi-modal verb means “be necessary to”, “have to”, and is used to provide information about specific rules and regulations.

*You **need** to pre-book online and the time in the Chapel is restricted [...]*

*[...] it is a Church and so you **need** to dress appropriately and behave respectfully.*

Other modal verbs are rarer in the corpus, but nevertheless there are some, such as *might* (4), *should* (4) and the semi-modal *have to* (4), which perform the same function of the above mentioned modals.

*You **have to** wait in an air-conditioned waiting room [...]*

*[...] although it **might** take some time to get there.*

*The experience you **should** not miss even if you are not religious.*

As concerns *must*, in this case is not used as a modal verb, but with the auxiliary *is* and operates therefore as a noun, indicating something that tourists must do during their trip. In particular, it frequently occurs in the following cluster: “A must see in Padua”.

*For those love botanical gardens, this is a **must** see.*

*This is a **must see** in Padova.*
*[...] is this beautiful and vast square that is a **must** visit.*

4.4.3 Use of pronouns

The use of pronouns in review texts shows the particular kind of relationship that is established between writer and reader.

The following table shows the occurrences of the frequently used pronouns in the collected texts. The first person pronouns *we* and *I* occur in many of the reviews, but the most frequent pronoun is the second-person pronoun *you*.

<i>I</i>	<i>We</i>	<i>You</i>
57	41	100

Table 4.10. Frequency of subject pronouns

The first-person pronouns *we* and *I* are used in the narration of the personal experience of tourists and as well in the evaluation and recommendation moves.

I spent there around 30 minutes and enjoyed the stroll.
*Next, **we** walked to the indoor greenhouse.*
*[...] **I** highly recommend a visit to see the Scrovegni Chapel.*

The most frequent pronoun, however, is the second-person pronoun *you*, as one of the main purposes of reviewers is to give advice and suggestions to other potential tourists. As observed in section 3.2.3, the argumentation in review texts is almost always followed by a series of recommendations to the reader. The interplay of first-person pronouns, *I* and *we*, and the second-person pronoun *you* makes it possible to establish a dialogic relationship between reader and writer. The reader is directly addressed with the second-person pronoun and this way he/she feels involved and part of the narrative experience. This reflects the common technique in the language of tourism of ego-targeting, presented in section 1.2.3, which is employed to build an intimate relationship with the reader and to make him/her feel unique.

The pronoun *you* is followed by action verbs, which invite tourists to do something such as *take*, *enter*, *book*, *watch*, or by modal verbs, such as *can*, *need*, *will*, to offer possibilities or give instructions on what to do or how to behave.

*Then, **you** watch a 15-minute film about the painter, Giotto [...]*

*From here **you** can explore the city including the palaces, the churches [...]*

*[...] **you** will be amazed by the brilliant frescoes that surround you [...]*

The direct contact of the writer with the readership is also evidenced by the presence of the second-person possessive adjective *your*, which has a frequency in the corpus of 17 occurrences.

*[...] there's a chance to get a printed certificate of **your** visit.*

*[...] but nothing prepares you for the assault on **your** senses of the real thing.*

4.5 Appraisal analysis

The Appraisal framework is a particular approach to exploring, describing and explaining the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt stances, to construct textual personas and to manage interpersonal positioning and relationships. [...] It explores how attitudes, judgements and emotive responses are explicitly presented in texts and how they may be more indirectly implied, presupposed or assumed. (The Appraisal Website, 2022)²³

Because of the high value of personal opinions and emotions in online travel reviews, which are subjective by nature and express travellers' judgments and evaluation, this type of analysis proves to be particularly suitable for the present investigation. The appraisal analysis has been conducted in this study with the purpose of identifying, within the corpus of collected reviews, reviewers' choices in expressing their evaluation of the visited places from a semantic perspective.

Appraisal is divided into three domains, which are *Attitude*, *Engagement* and *Graduation*. *Attitude* is concerned with those utterances which indicate as a person, thing or situation is perceived, either in positive or negative terms. The category of *Engagement* includes the different resources by which speakers or writers negotiate their opinions, whereas *Graduation* involves the set of resources by which the tone of the utterance varies (The Appraisal Website, 2022).

²³ <https://grammatics.com/appraisal/> (last visited on 01/25/2023)

For the present study, I have examined the categories of *Attitude* and *Graduation*, as the most relevant and meaningful to analyse the data under investigation. In a similar way to the lexico-grammatical analysis, I have used AntConc to search words that could be related to such domains. The category of *Attitude* is itself divided into three subtypes: *affect*, *judgement* and *appreciation*. *Affect* deals with the feelings and emotional responses (Martin and White, 2005: 42). In the case of my corpus, the emotional reactions of tourists to the cultural attractions do not include negative responses, since only excellent-rated reviews have been considered. Reviewers tend to adopt lexical items which convey the emotional state of their visit, making the readers closer to their lived experience. Instances of *affect* are also adjectives which express the satisfaction of the tourists with their own expectations.

Loved this building and the entire Piazza.

*It was very **special** to go to the Basilica.*

*I was there on Sunday during the mass – very **emotional**.*

*I was **surprised** and **delighted** that we could take photos [...]*

*I visited here not expecting too much, but was very **impressed**.*

Judgement deals with attitudinal evaluation of human behaviour by reference to a set of social and ethical norms. In the collected reviews, this aspect appears to be not particularly relevant, but it could be observed in relation to the services offered by the attractions. Tourists often show admiration for how the offered service is provided, in particular they seem to appreciate how the visit to the Scrovegni Chapel is organised.

[...] where they show an excellent little film with English subtitles [...]

The tours are superbly organised as indeed they need to be to ensure the preservation of this beautiful place.

Appreciation refers to the aesthetic dimension of things being evaluated. It concerns the assessment of the appearance and the impact human artefacts or natural phenomena have on individuals (The Appraisal Website, 2022). Instances of *appreciation* are mainly adjectives which are emotionally loaded, such as *wonderful*, *great*, and adjectives which describe the worthiness of something, such as *priceless*. We also find some expressions which convey the impact tourists had in front of the cultural attractions.

*A rotunda complete with **wonderful** statues [...]*

[...] then walk past **priceless** gold religious articles behind glass showcases.

The Basilica takes your breath away.

Instances of *appreciation* are also represented by nouns; in the following examples reviewers use nouns such as *honour*, *privilege* to communicate the appreciation for the opportunity of living such experience and to express the uniqueness of it.

[...] *the extent to which such a pursuit inspired great artists to produce elaborate reliquaries and receptacles is **exciting** to see.*

*What an extraordinary **privilege** to see this art!*

*I was so **fortunate** to visit this beautiful place in celebration of St. Anthony feast day.*

Appreciation can also be expressed implicitly, through no evaluative language, but by means of expressions that suggest the satisfaction of the experience lived. For instance, the desire to return to visit the place indicates the satisfaction of the previous experience. In another example, the delight of the experience is expressed by the reviewer by stating that he/she could have spent all the time visiting that place.

This is my first visit to this church and this is not going to be my last [...]

I could spend hours in here and would certainly recommend a visit [...]

The category of *graduation* encompasses how the feelings expressed are graded on a scale of intensity (Martin and White, 2005: 136). This category can be applied to travel review texts, given the emphatic use of the language in the tourism domain. The language of tourism, defined by Dann (1996) an “extreme language”, makes extensive use of superlative adjectives. In our corpus, *graduation* is realised through premodification and intensification of adjectives and superlatives which convey the strong feelings of the reviewers. At the uppermost position in the scale of intensification are the intensifiers *very*, *absolutely*, *really*, *highly*, which make the meaning of the adjective more powerful.

*The selection of plants are **very** interesting.*

[...] *the basilica inside is **absolutely** spectacular.*

Intensification is also realised by means of repetition. We can find the repetition of the same lexical item or a sequence of two or more different adjectives.

*Very **big and impressive** square in the heart of this beautiful city [...]*

***Stunning stunning** spot!*

The appraisal analysis is more complex than this, as the engagement category has been left out from the analysis and each category listed above is actually more complex. I have chosen to analyse the most meaningful aspects for my investigation, which are the categories of *Attitude* and *Graduation*. The analysis has shown that many of the characteristics already observed from the lexico-grammatical analysis are found also in this context, such as the adjectivation and has confirmed the dialogic relationship between the reviewer and the reader, who is involved in the narration of the emotions lived by the tourists. As stated in section 3.2.3, the way tourists narrate their experience and the expressions they use produce specific emotional responses in readers and make him/her feel closer to the reviewer.

4.6 Comparison of reviews with other tourism genres

As extensively discussed in the previous chapters, the language of tourism represents complex and multifaceted discourse. This language is divided into many sublanguages and embraces different textual genres, which differ in their linguistic features, style and purposes. Among the above analysed tourism texts, that of online reviews may be considered an interesting genre and perhaps the most complex. The language of online travel reviews is heterogenous, incorporating the characteristics typical of the web-mediated communication and the features of other tourism texts as well. Since the medium through which online reviews are produced is the Web, their language displays some of the peculiarities of the language of internet, such as interaction among users and multimodality. Yet, many of the characteristics of online travel reviews are taken from other textual genres belonging to the tourism field. The conciseness, the use of short and simple sentences and the immediacy of the message are characteristics assimilable both to the language of tourism and to the language of the Web.

First of all, multimodality is a recurring feature across different tourism texts, and online travel reviews are no exception. On Tripadvisor, reviewers have the possibility of supplementing their comments with pictures of the places reviewed, taken during their visit. Tourists can upload one or more photos, which are placed in form of album under the review's text.

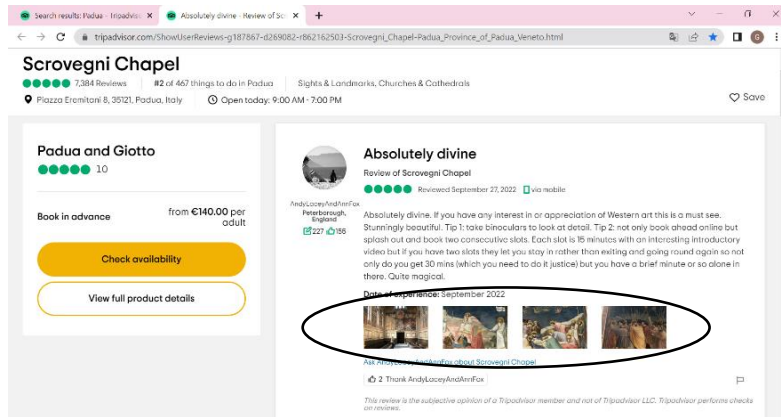


Figure 4.3. Example of review supplemented with photos

Images can help readers immerse into the place being described by the reviewer and make the reviews more credible. Since the inclusion of photos is an optional choice for reviewers, not every text is supplemented by pictures. In the case of my corpus, for instance, 26 reviews out of a total of 100 contain photos. Taking into consideration my corpus of analysis, a first general comparison should be made between online reviews, written by internet users and the language of tourism as used by professional figures of the field. Among the similarities between them, we find the emphatic use of the language, represented by the abundance of positive qualifying adjectives. Online reviewers describe in enthusiastic terms the tourism destination, in the same way as tourist guidebooks. Although similarities and differences can be found when comparing online travel reviews with all the above analysed textual tourism genres, in the following sections I will analyse those comparisons which show the most interesting aspects. Specifically, online travel reviews are analysed in comparison to tourism advertising texts and official tourism websites, which have been analysed in section 2.5 and section 3.2.1.

4.6.1 Comparison of reviews with tourism advertising texts

In particular, many of the characteristics which are attributable to the promotional language of tourism have been encountered. Although the purpose of advertisements is certainly different from the purpose of online reviews, these two genres share many common features. Advertising adopts specific discourse strategies in order to achieve its

main objective, that is the selling of the tourism product. The review text is instead a spontaneous act of writing, whose purpose is just the sharing of experiences and emotions. The information is minimal in advertising texts, whereas in the reviews description is one of the main communicative move. Although for different causes and purposes, these two genres appear to share many features. They are both characterised by the informal register of the text and the emotive involvement of the reader. In addition, the effect of such texts on tourists is the same: they both persuade potential tourists to travel and visit the destination described. Online travel reviews have a huge influence on tourists decision-making process, on a par with advertising. Reviews act as “a proposal made by the reviewer to the reader to engage in some course of action, in order to reach a goal that he/she believes is good or desirable for the reader him/her self” (De Ascaniis, 2013: 157).

An element of the online travel reviews, in particular, shows many similarities to the language of advertising, that is the title. Each reviewer, when posting a review on Tripadvisor, has to choose a title for his/her text. It generally consists in a very short utterance, with a high lexical density, made up mostly of nouns and adjectives, like an advertising slogan (Fiorentino and Compagnone, 2019: 57). The purpose of the title in the review is that of drawing the attention of the reader and attracting him/her to read the entire text. The titles of the collected reviews are of variable length, but overall have a tendency to be very short. Such titles have been analysed with regard to the classification of Fiorentino and Compagnone (2019), who identify several kinds of titles which accomplish different functions. In our corpus, we find evaluative, descriptive – evaluative, multifunction and emotional-personal titles.

Evaluative titles consist in single word titles with an evaluative adjective referred to the place visited.

Stunning

Breathtaking!

Marvellous..

Descriptive – evaluative titles contain both a description and an evaluation of the place or of the experience. They are usually made up of a noun + evaluative adjectives, which describe the beauty and uniqueness of the place.

An extraordinary chapel
Amazingly beautiful and well attended
A wonderful historical botanical garden
Hidden gem in Padua

Only two reviews in the corpus have a longer and complex title, and belong to the category of multifunction titles. They perform the evaluation and recommendation functions at the same time.

Don't miss the priceless artifacts in one of the side chapels all the way in the back.
A fabulous site, worth a separate trip to Padova (but read about Giotto's frescoes first)

Lastly, we find some examples of emotional-personal titles. In this case, the focus of the author is not on the objective characteristics of the attraction, but rather on the nature of their personal experience.

Best church experience for some time
A truly wonderful experience
Wonderful surprise
Quite a wonderful surprise

4.6.2 Comparison of reviews with official tourism websites

The language of online reviews is very different from the official language of websites, which is mostly impersonal, objective and promotional (Held, 2018: 290). Online review language, on the contrary, is highly subjective, since texts express the personal opinions of tourists on the visited place and its services. There is actually a combination of technical and more informal lexicon, based on the various sections of the text. The initial part containing the description is more precise at a lexico-syntactic level and includes specialised lexicon as the keyword analysis has shown us, whereas the final part with the recommendations to other tourists tends to be more informal in the language use.

However, the fact that their channel of communication is the Web, which requires the immediacy of the language, implies many linguistic similarities between reviews and websites. In particular, the tendency of the language to prefer the features of a spoken

register, a simple syntax made up of short sentences, but also the direct appeal to readers and the adoption of evaluative language, even though with different purposes. Institutional websites make use of evaluative adjectives and expressions to strengthen the destination image and attract tourists, in compliance with its promotional intent. Reviewers adopt evaluative language to highlight the degree of satisfaction of the tourist experience. The distance of reviewers from the market logic makes review texts more accurate and trustworthy than institutional materials. Promotional tourism webpages have their focus on the web-reader (Maci, 2007: 62), whereas in the reviews the focus is both on the web-author, by means of the reviewer's personal experience and on the web-reader to give him/her some advice.

Likewise, both genres adopt the technique of ego-targeting and the imperative mood, again with different intentions: websites need to persuade potential tourists by means of an instructive tone, whereas reviewers simply want to invite other tourists to do something he/she has experienced, as a friend would do.

4.7 Concluding remarks

The various analyses which have been carried out throughout the present study have had as final objective that of finding the answers to the research questions specified in section 4.1. Through the lexico-grammatical analysis I have investigated which nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs are used by tourists to show their satisfaction with the attractions visited. This analysis has highlighted the presence of some of the characteristics of the language of tourism. Most of the nouns in the corpus belong to the semantic fields of art and architecture and are accompanied by highly positive descriptive adjectives. There are also many intensifying adverbs which strengthen the meaning of the adjectives, and many verbs of actions and experiential verbs. The appraisal analysis, which investigates attitude, judgements and emotive responses of tourists, has shown us that reviewers of cultural attractions explicitly express their emotions and appreciation for the experience, also to establish a relationship of trust and build a connection with the reader.

Finally, the comparison with other tourism genres has demonstrated that online travel reviews are a hybrid genre, as they present characteristics which are at any rate common to all the traditional, and more modern as well, tourism textual genres. This is confirmed by several studies, which investigate whether online travel reviews can be considered as a textual genre with its own peculiarities. De Ascaniis (2013) states that they have recognisable characteristics, for which we can consider online travel reviews as a textual genre, considering the structure of the text and its functions. Likewise, Held (2018) describes online travel reviews as a new genre whose “main aims are to rate, evaluate, describe and recommend”. In his view, the combination of referential and perlocutionary functions and the textual structure, made up of narration, recommendation, comments and suggestions, are the basis for considering such texts an independent textual genre. There are a set of specific standards which are peculiar to this kind of text, such as the spontaneity of the act of writing and the way of writing itself. The language used is characterised by an extremely informal communication and by inaccuracy at the syntactic level.

However, little has been said about another research question, that is whether we can consider online travel reviews as an integral part of tourism discourse. As highlighted by the present study, both at a formal and linguistic level, they play an important role in the decision-making process of tourists, on a par with other tourism texts, such as advertising or other materials originating from institutional sources. Similarities with the language of advertising and the major influence on tourists makes it possible to assert the closeness of online travel reviews to promotional genre, also for their social and economic importance. In the last few years, online reviews have become one of the important means to exert influence over tourists’ decisions, even though indirectly. They also cover the same functions of other types of tourism discourse, that are referential, prescriptive and persuasive. Also from a linguistic point of view, we can consider online travel reviews as part of the language of tourism, as they share several features with other tourism texts, as we have seen, and many of the innovative features are actually the result of the evolution of the medium, which has brought to the evolution of the language as well. Thus, we can consider online travel reviews effectively as an integral part of the language of tourism, both in terms of functions and language use.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation was to examine how language is used by tourists to demonstrate their satisfaction with travel experiences in an online context. As stated in the introduction, the research questions guiding this research were principally the following: what lexico-grammatical features tourists use most, what of these features online travel reviews share with other genres of tourism discourse and whether they can be considered as an integral part of such discourse. The investigation of these features was carried out through a corpus-linguistics approach and is presented in Chapter 4. The corpus containing 100 reviews taken from Tripadvisor was examined both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, with the help of the software AntConc. From the results of the keyword analysis and the word list, I was able to investigate how internet users make their linguistic choices to express satisfaction in an online context.

The keyword list has shown that the nouns in the corpus are principally representative of the fields of art and architecture. The examination of most frequent nouns has demonstrated their common occurrence with adjectives, which describe and evaluate them. Adjectives are indeed very frequent in the corpus, especially evaluative adjectives which convey the subjective stance of the reviewer. Likewise, adverbs used in the reviews that form the corpus under investigation confirm the emphatic use of the language, as they are used to strengthen the meaning of adjectives. The analysis of the most frequent verbs has revealed the use of the imperative form and modal verbs. These forms are used to give advice to other potential tourists and to establish a dialogic relationship between writer and reader. This is also supported by the use of the second-person pronoun *you*, which characterises the technique of ego-targeting. Then, an appraisal analysis was carried out to investigate how tourists express their emotions and this has confirmed the features observed in the lexico-grammatical analysis. The results shown suggest that online travel reviews present some peculiar and distinctive linguistic features which can make us consider this particular discourse area as a specific language.

Finally, the last part of the corpus analysis presents the comparison of online travel reviews with other textual genres of tourism discourse. This has demonstrated the existence of many similarities between them, such as the emphatic use of the language, the imperative mood, and the ego-targeting technique. We can therefore consider online travel reviews as part of the language of tourism.

To conclude, it can be claimed that the analysis of online travel reviews has achieved the established objectives. It has provided a description of the various linguistic elements adopted in reviews that contribute to an emphatic and evaluative use of the language and the establishment of a close relationship between tourists and potential tourists. Besides, it has proved the inclusion of such language within tourism discourse.

The present study helps to extend the existing research addressed to understanding the new means through which tourism can be promoted and managed, and to grasp the linguistic choices of tourists in expressing their perceptions on cultural attractions. The findings of the study are in line with existing research, which shows the specificity of online travel reviews as a textual genre. However, they provide a deeper understanding of the main linguistic features of the review texts, on which only a few studies focused previously.

The study also provides implications at managerial level in the tourism sector. Nowadays, online travel reviews, as well as other user-generated content, represent an important part of tourism discourse and they are likely to play an increasingly important role within the tourism field, because of the close relationship between socio-historical transformations and the language. Thus, the tourism industry should take into account such materials and use them for the tourism promotion, given their strong influence, and might adapt to the informal communication of internet users.

This study presents some limitations that can be considered starting points for future research. First, the restricted amount of data collected and the geographical context, confined to some of the cultural attractions in the city of Padua. Moreover, the review texts selected are only written in English language and contain only positive evaluations. Future studies could take into consideration more destinations, in order to check the real efficacy of the study, and also negative evaluations. Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyse online travel reviews by adopting a cross-linguistic and

intercultural approaches, which might determine significant linguistic differences across cultures. Such research would contribute to further developments in the field of contemporary tourism discourse.

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Appendix: texts of reviews

Scrovegni Chapel

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187867-d269082-Reviews-Scrovegni_Chapel-Padua_Province_of_Padua_Veneto.html

Absolutely divine

Peterborough, England

Reviewed September 27, 2022

Absolutely divine. If you have any interest in or appreciation of Western art this is a must see. Stunningly beautiful. Tip 1: take binoculars to look at detail. Tip 2: not only book ahead online but splash out and book two consecutive slots. Each slot is 15 minutes with an interesting introductory video but if you have two slots they let you stay in rather than exiting and going round again so not only do you get 30 mins (which you need to do it justice) but you have a brief minute or so alone in there. Quite magical.

Wow!

Washington DC, District of Columbia

Reviewed June 22, 2022

This is the premiere attraction in Padua. While visitors typically remain inside for 15 minutes, our tour leader booked three consecutive sets of tickets enabling us to remain for 45. In that time, he walked us through Jesus' life and highlighted the technical innovations that Giotto's work employed. What an extraordinary privilege to see this art!

Not to be missed

Reviewed June 6, 2022

So incredibly beautiful and moving. Giotto was so psychological in his painting and was an innovator in his presentation of humankind.

The preliminary film was very helpful interesting and informative

Tip: Monday is generally not a good day to go to Padova (loads of things shut). The Scrovegni Chapel is open but not the Chapel next door

Tip: book in advance only

Tip: we took train from Venice. It's near station

An extraordinary chapel

Bald Head Island, North Carolina

Reviewed May 6, 2022

It is a miracle that these 700 year old frescoes by Giotto have survived. They are extraordinary. The city of Padua has done a remarkable job caring for them. They are a treasure of western civilization that you should no miss if you are in the area.

A fabulous site, worth a separate trip to Padova (but read about Giotto's frescoes first)

Indianapolis, Indiana

Reviewed April 14, 2022

This is a fabulous site—world class in terms of art history—with Giotto's beautiful frescoes from 1300 revolutionizing western art. It is also simply beautiful. The introductory film at the beginning (required, in a kind of airlock before entering the chapel), is interesting and helpful, with good English subtitles. The only downside is that you only get 15 minutes inside the chapel. I went back two more times! In April, at least, it is easy to get tickets on the official Scrovegni chapel website.

I also went for the evening showing called "Giotto under the stars.". The only real difference from the daytime showings is the lighting in the evening, which makes the frescoes much easier to see. During the day, sunlight streaming in through the high windows makes it a little hard to see the upper panels. Binoculars help.

Gorgeous site worth seeing on any trip

Shawano, Wisconsin

Reviewed December 11, 2021

Outstanding site to see beautifully preserved fresco's from like the 1300 time frame before Renaissance painting to hold, Allowed only in for 15 minutes after you finish a 15 minute video in A room that's air temperature and moisture controlled, You do get to take as many photos as you wish as long as there's no video and no touching. Tickets have to be bought online As they usually do not have same day but online is quite easy and you can bring your voucher from your email and they will give you the exchange ticket for your set time. Well worth the cost and the time frame For any art and Christian religion Imaging.

A must see in Padua

United States

Reviewed September 30, 2020

I studied this in Art History, but nothing prepares you for the assault on your senses of the real thing. Overwhelming...in a good way. The Chapel has been renovated again recently, adding a 1-storey glass extension. This box helps to break the flow of visitors, and to equalise temperature and humidity. All to preserve the integrity of the paintings. I implore you to see and to marvel at this world treasure!

There are lots of rules and regulations now, so make sure you take a gander at the official website and book your tickets well in advance. They were sold out when we visited.

European wonder

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed January 10, 2020

When I was a child I saw a picture of the Lamentation by Giotto and fell in love with it. I didn't realise it was just one of a group of paintings from this chapel. Being able to visit the chapel was such a moving experience for me. We went to one of the night time viewings when you get slightly longer in the chapel and we were a very small group. It was beyond wonderful. I was surprised and delighted that we could take photos, it is well looked after and a special place.

Scrovegni Chapel

Toronto, Canada

Reviewed January 3, 2020

How am I supposed to review/critique the Scrovegni Chapel. It's quite possibly the greatest work of art of Western Civilization. I don't know... the exterior is a little bland?! C'mon Scrovegni, you scrimped on the outside!

Padua is not difficult to get to by train if you are in the Venice area. It's a little longer ride from Bologna where I was coming from, but the chapel is worth it.

I get the reasons for the security and climatized room and the limited amount of people allowed in for only 15 minutes. It's really not that much of a hassle and it's protecting the art. Just buy your tickets well in advance, online, and you should have no trouble at all.

If you are in the area of Padua, I highly recommend a visit to see the Scrovegni Chapel.

Bucket List!

Seattle, Washington

Reviewed November 10, 2019

This is one of the most incredibly places in the world. Giotto's frescoes have been lovingly preserved. You have to wait in an air-conditioned waiting room where they show an excellent little film with English subtitles, telling you about the history of the chapel and all the frescoes in it. Then you go in and they let you stay for about 20 minutes. Each one of the fresco pictures tells the most moving and beautiful, and human, story. He influenced all of future European art with the detail, the emotion, the humanity. Your ticket gets you into the rest of the museums too. Absolutely one of the highlights of my entire life to see this place in person.

Well worth the visit if you believe in civilization

Reviewed October 31, 2019

You have to go through a couple of steps to get to the chapel and bookings (at least 24 hours in advance are recommended) get your tix from the tourist office downtown . The environmental controls to protect the frescoes require you to wait yet further and only groups of 25 are admitted at any one time. After all that your patience is rewarded by being in the presence of Giotto's genius of late medieval art which prefigured the later modernization of Renaissance painting. If you believe in civilization then it's worth the wait.

Fascinating and beautiful

UK

Reviewed October 12, 2019

The tour is limited to 25 people every 30 minutes . The first 15 minutes is spent in an ante room watching an interesting screened lecture about the frescoes in the chapel . Then to protect and maintain the environment within the chapel you enter through 2 doors and spend 15 minutes in the chapel before a buzzer goes and you leave . Amazing to see paintings from 1300 so well preserved and made all more interesting by listening to the lecture just before . Well worth the effort

An extraordinary piece of history

Plymouth, United Kingdom

Reviewed October 9, 2019

The chapel is the most amazing place and has a wonderful history. The tours are superbly organised as indeed they need to be to ensure the preservation of this beautiful place. Only 15 minutes is allowed in the chapel. Before you enter the chapel, you are in a lounge area for about 15 minutes where you watch a video about the chapel which helps understand the story behind the frescoes. It really is quite stunning and is now over 700 years old.

The most beautiful Chapel in the world

Bedford, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 19, 2019

Words do not work with the Scrovegni Chapel - only a visit and then reflection. You need to pre-book online and the time in the Chapel is restricted, but Giotto's intense and passionate work is wonderfully direct. Buy the best guide book you can afford and relive the experience later - you can take photos without flash, but it is better to use the time absorbing the art. Perhaps confine your photography to taking a few shots of the general scale of the Chapel and close-ups of some favourite scenes. Another piece of advice: I wish I had read more about Giotto before I visited.

An amazing and special place - the art was epoch and life changing.

Surprisingly unique and beautiful chapel

Des Moines, Iowa

Reviewed June 25, 2019

From the outside it looks like a deceptively simple chapel, yet once you watch the film that better prepares you to go inside, you will be amazed by the brilliant frescoes that surround you, immersing you in the stories of Jesus and his parents and grandparents. Irrespective of your faith, the frescoes are powerful with their realism and raw emotions. A once in a lifetime experience you won't soon forget. The history of the chapel is fascinating, as well.

Fantastic chapel well worth the visit

Maryland Suburbs

Reviewed June 18, 2019

We had no trouble buying the tickets to this wonderful chapel online. While you wait for your tour, you can visit the gift shop and stroll through the gardens. Then you watch a 15-minute film about the painter, Giotto, and how he came to paint the frescos. The frescos are gorgeous, with a rich blue that is difficult to describe. There is no flash allowed in the chapel, but it's easy to take fantastic photos with just a cell phone, no flash needed. A once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Just beautiful, truly magnificent

Castle Hill, Australia

Reviewed May 13, 2019

If you are in Padua, this is a must see if you like art. The frescoes are spectacular and numbers are limited so you never feel crowded. Book ahead to avoid disappointment although they do offer night time visits which are not in such high demand.

Beautiful Artwork

North Plainfield, New Jersey

Reviewed May 7, 2019

Because of the age of the paintings and the restoration taking place, they only allow you 30 minutes in the chapel with a small group. But, if you like old churches and the art that goes with

them, like we do, this place is a must. The walls are covered as well as the ceiling with artwork depicting the life of Christ and his parents. So lovely! Imagine this place and Giotto working on these masterpieces 700 years ago and that we can still view and appreciate them today.

One of the two top destinations in Padua

Bellaire, Texas

Reviewed October 29, 2018

This small chapel, in the center of historic Padua, holds the amazing collection of Giotto frescoes depicting the life and passion of Christ, as well as an impressive representation of the Final judgment on the end wall. The frescoes are ordered in three tiers, are very well preserved, and because only small groups of visitors are allowed in at a time and only a few times during the day, there is plenty of time and space to enjoy this fabulous collection. You can get tickets online for a convenient time. Otherwise, you might need to wait for hours to get in.

Stunning

North Wales

Reviewed October 19, 2018

Make sure you book in advance and I would suggest getting the Padua Card to save money. You don't get very long in the chapel but there is an introductory video and the numbers allowed in are limited so you don't spend all your time looking at the back of people's heads. A must if you are in Padua.

Basilica of St. Anthony

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187867-d242147-Reviews-Basilica_of_St_Anthony-Padua_Province_of_Padua_Veneto.html

A fantastic pilgrimage

Lincolnshire, United Kingdom

Reviewed February 11, 2022

A stunning basilica, with wonderful architecture, sculptures, paintings, relics. The tomb of St Antonio a wonderful of any age. The experience you should not miss even if you are not religious. Painting and frescoes are brilliant. Well worth a visit.

A place of pilgrimage

United States

Reviewed September 30, 2020

This stunning church is dedicated to St. Anthony, patron saint of the lost. No pictures allowed, so use your eyes well.

The non-religious can revel in the architecture, paintings and sculpture that adorn every surface. For believers, it is a place of deep power. Thousands come every year on pilgrimage to pray for the Saint's intercession. It doesn't matter whether you are there for worship or for Art: nothing is profane to this who know how to see, as de Chardin said. Highly recommended.

Spiritual church

Chelmsford, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 2, 2020

This is my first visit to this church and this is not going to be my last, due to Covid few restrictions in place but it was much better than I expected, I wanted to come here for long time and finally I visited church of St Anthony's of Padova, unfortunately no Mass in English but we managed to pray and spent reasonable time at the church, few shops around the church and local small park available to have a small picnic and have a good time.

Truly impressive

Milton Keynes, United Kingdom

Reviewed January 25, 2020

We visit many churches, cathedrals and chapels on our travels. This one is right up there in terms of scale, architecture and interest.

Truly impressive and interesting with many artefacts some of which are a little gruesome such as Saint Anthony's tongue!!

A hidden gem!

Reviewed December 13, 2019

St. Anthony's Basilica is an amazing church. We stopped here on our way to Verona just to see this basilica. Both of our children even said it was worth the stop. It's a large church that takes up an entire block. It's gorgeous inside. If you want to light a candle, you have to bring one in and place it in a box near the entrance to St. Anthony's tomb. The statues, the relics, the entire design is just beautiful. It's a gem hidden away in this town. From the train station, we took the blue tram to the Santo stop, which is 2-3 blocks from the basilica. The tram ticket office is just outside the train station, and the tram stop is to the right of the ticket booth. You take the tram coming towards you heading into town, not heading up the hill.

Moving Visit to a Beautiful Basilica

Ocala, Florida

Reviewed November 29, 2019

A major place of pilgrimage to many, the Roman Catholic Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua is a beautiful large church that is the final resting place of this beloved saint. Be sure to visit where he is buried and here you will see pilgrims from around the world in prayer and be moved by the whole experience of being here. Don't miss the spectacular reliquaries which are kept not far from where St. Anthony is buried. It's impressive, holy, unique, and also moving to see. No trip to Padua is complete without a visit to this basilica. This is place is a definitely must-see. The basilica is easily accessible by tram from the Padua train station. Be mindful that no photographs are allowed inside and modest attire is required. Allow at least one hour to visit this holy and beautiful place.

Spectacular sight

Reviewed November 11, 2019

The exterior isn't much but the basilica inside is absolutely spectacular and breathtaking. It's a must see in Padova. It's too bad that they don't allow pictures as postcards are no replacement. Take the tram there then a very short walk. Afterwards, a short walk to the beautiful Prato della Valle.

Most Impressive Place

Seattle, Washington

Reviewed November 10, 2019

I loved the combination of old and modern frescoes. Look for the pictures of St. Anthony preaching to the fish! We were blessed to go there when they had mass and we could see the lovely Donatello crucifix, too. Don't forget to see the mysteriously preserved tongue.

Don't miss the priceless artifacts in one of the side chapels all the way in the back

Fair Lawn, New Jersey

Reviewed October 13, 2019

This is a very large building with what seemed like dozens of side chapels. I walked around a semi-circular path that I believe took me behind the altar. In one of those rooms (don't miss that one!) you go up a few stairs, then walk past priceless gold religious articles behind glass showcases. Three priests in that room guarded the artifacts and controlled the flow of the crowd. I felt like I was in a very wealthy church.

This basilica is one of the largest and most elaborate I've seen in Italy. And it's surprisingly FREE to visit.

A Sacred Place

Reviewed October 11, 2019

The Basilica takes your breath away. It is just wonderful. The basilica houses the tomb of St Anthony and some impressive art. There are lots of relics of other saints too there. There was a dress code to cover shoulders and no short shorts. Worth the visit, must see in Padua.

Amazingly beautiful and well attended

Toronto, ON

Reviewed October 9, 2019

This is one of the most beautiful church interiors I've ever seen in my travels, but I respected their request to not take photographs inside. There are several bronze sculptures by Donatello

(including the crucifix), and multiple other sculptures and frescoes. It was not tacky, but truly beautifully laid out.

This is a very active church; not only was there masses being held (areas are roped off for those attending the services, but also those praying over the sarcophagus of Saint Anthony, and of the relics (yes, Saint Anthony's tongue is really on display). Watching some of the people arriving, it was clear they were on a pilgrimage and not simply tourists to Italy - and so there was a lot of prayer in the church and not just holiday-goers.

Magnificent

Patterson, California

Reviewed September 22, 2019

This is a must see in Padova. There are many easy places to park near or if you take a train to town, it is a quick 8 Euro cab ride or about a 30 minute walk through mostly nice parts of town. Once inside, do remember that it is a Church and so you need to dress appropriately and behave respectfully. While here you can visit the tomb of St. Anthony and enjoy the beautiful gardens outside. It is a magnificent place to experience.

Best church experience for some time

Hampton, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 3, 2019

Quite simply a magnificent edifice and, unbelievably, free to visit. The building is vast and completely packed with fabulous devotional artwork. The whole idea of venerating 'relics' such as the obscure body parts of long dead saints is completely bonkers of course, yet the extent to which such a pursuit inspired great artists to produce elaborate reliquaries and receptacles is exciting to see. This great church offers the serenity of secluded cloisters, the wedding cake and gilt drama of Anthony's tomb and massive feats of sculpture and fresco. I could spend hours in here and would certainly recommend a visit of no less than an hour if a full appreciation is to be gained.

Simply beautiful

North Hampshire, UK

Reviewed July 17, 2019

We drove around the corner and ahead stood this beautiful basilica with unrivalled architecture. We had been told that Padua was not worth going to by a guide book and were so glad we went. There was a dress code to cover shoulders and no short shorts so had to cover up to go in, but the building was full of history and beautiful artifacts. There were a lot of religious pilgrims around so please be respectful, but as an atheist, I simply enjoyed the building and artwork from a non religious perspective. Definitely worth an hour or so of anyone's time

Amazing!

Los Angeles, California

Reviewed July 3, 2019

I was so fortunate to visit this beautiful place in celebration of St Anthony's feast day. To be there with thousands of other pilgrims was incredible. Be warned - lots of touristy kiosks set up all over. However the experience of being inside the basilica is wonderful. A must see when in Padua.

Monumental Basilica

Reviewed June 14, 2019

Beautiful church with many artworks and Christian's relicts. Breathtaking place with ancient chapels and courtyards. I was there on Sunday during the mass – very emotional.

One of the most important reasons to visit Padua

This is arguably the top attraction for visitors to Padua

Bellaire, Texas

Reviewed October 29, 2018

The Chiesa del Santo, as locals call it, is an impressive monument: it is a very large church, with the typical basilica design, and impressively decorated on the inside, with frescoes, oil paintings, mosaics , stone carvings and a collection of relicts supposedly going back to St. Anthony. The church is usually packed, especially around Sundays and holidays. As a working church, there are several masses during the day, and visitors are restricted during services.

Visiting the tomb and relics of the Saint is done in an orderly fashion, although it might take some time to get there.

Excellent

Reviewed October 16, 2018

The basilica looks beautiful both from the outside and the inside. For Catholics, it's a place connected with one of the greatest saints, Saint Antony. You can touch the tomb of the saint and pray next to his holy remains. The interior is amazing. For pilgrims, there's a chance to get a printed certificate of your visit.

Breathtaking!

Leeds, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 17, 2018

I have been in quite a few churches and cathedrals in Europe in my life and I think this was the most beautiful. The mosaics and paintings that were on some of the walls and the ceiling are incredible and must be seen. The photos speak for themselves. Definitely worth a visit.

A special place!

Brisbane, Australia

Reviewed September 15, 2018

As one who has prayed to Saint Anthony on many occasions to find missing items, it was very special to go to the Basilica. The building is, itself, stunning. The art work is marvellous. Saint Anthony's tomb is a place of quiet reflection. You can't go to Padua and not visit here.

Prato della Valle

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187867-d246565-Reviews-Prato_della_Valle-Padua_Province_of_Padua_Veneto.html

My park.

Reviewed May 28, 2020

The first time I visited this park I was 15 years old and vowed to return every time I went to Italy. Now I am almost 60 I kept my word and it remains one of my favourite places in the world.

You can have a picnic, you can play music, you can play soccer, you can read, or just walk around and enjoy the statues.

Spectacularly beautiful

Perth, Australia

Reviewed October 15, 2019

My favorite place in Padua. Towering statues of various artists of ancient times. The fountain in the middle did not matter much to me except it looking exceptionally amazing from above. What took my breathe away is the reflection the statues and surrounding buildings on the water of the small canal surrounding the large green space island within. I would recommend this to anyone who love enjoys photography.

A 'must see' in Padua

Plymouth, United Kingdom

Reviewed October 9, 2019

A wonderful open area, with occasional food stalls. The green area is surrounded by a 'river'. Access to green area is via a choice of four bridges. Many statues on each side of the river serve as reminders to famous Italian academics and notable persons. Definitely something worth seeing as you enjoy an ice cream from a nearby vendor. Also many shops nearby.

Beautiful park

Patterson, California

Reviewed September 22, 2019

This is a wonderful park located very near to the Basilica and definitely worth a visit. You can even find a flea market here once a week, with some wonderful offerings, including many fresh

fruits, vegetables and flowers. There is parking very near, making it a very easy place to visit. It is a bit of a walk from the train station, or you can take a cab to the Basilica (only 8 euro) and then enjoy the walk down a lovely little street. There are also several shops and restaurants near and a lovely pedestrian only street. A nice way to spend an afternoon or morning.

Italy's biggest piazza

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 3, 2019

Just a few minutes' walk from the basilica of San Antonio is this beautiful and vast square that is a must visit. Lined by the statues of the most important people in Italian history, this square is a rather relaxing and peaceful place to be if you want to spend an afternoon or morning with your family or friends or just yourself, have a picnic or just enjoy the moment. Tram stops are close by.

Beautiful landscaped square

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed June 25, 2019

Padua dates back to the 10th or 11th BC, became a Roman town and, like many northern Italian cities, frequently changed hands until it became part of the unified Kingdom of Italy in 1866.

The Prato della Valle, created in 1775, is the largest square in Italy and one of the largest in Europe, with 78 statues of notable citizens in two rings at the centre. From here you can explore the city including the palaces, the churches, the university and the market.

A couple of the buildings around the square are only skin-deep, being designed for dignitaries to watch entertainments in the square.

Nice walk

Reviewed January 9, 2019

It was beautiful day in January, so we have excellent walk there. Must see in Padua. A great place to enjoy the sun!

A Beautiful Centrepiece

Dublin, Ireland

Reviewed November 12, 2018

Not too far from the church of Santa Antonio and at the end of Via Roma this is a breathtaking open piazza. Prato, I think means meadow or lawn. A rotunda complete with wonderful statues and restaurants and cafes on the edges it is a lovely place just to take time to sit and look. While there are also smaller markets and exhibitions on the prato there is also a large open market each Saturday not to be missed. There is a tram stop at Prato so it is easy to access. Just one of the many beautiful features of this lovely city

A beautiful Ornate Sculpture park

Leeds, United Kingdom

Reviewed October 9, 2018

Absolutely extraordinary and I am not sure of its origin or purpose, other than a lovely green space enhanced by fountains waterways, bridges and sculptures. A nice place to people watch on a warm evening as the sun sets.

A huge space in the middle of the city

Beckenham, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 26, 2018

This came as a pleasant surprise when visiting the basilicas. There's not a lot to say about it - it's just a pleasant place to be. There are two tram stops at either end of the Prato making it easy to reach from anywhere in the city.

Beautiful place

Reviewed August 31, 2018

Must see in Padova. There are 2 cathedrals and a lot of great cafe nearby. It's a nice place to read a book or to sit and relax on the grass.

great place to picnic and relax

Potomac, Maryland

Reviewed August 24, 2018

wonderful area with statues and grassy fields, great place to take photos as you can get the domes and towers of churches in the background

A must see in Padua

Hobart, Australia

Reviewed July 24, 2018

Not far from the Basilica of St Anthony, you will find this wonderful place to wander and relax. It has 78 statues, a moat, lots of fish, green grass and trees. It is apparently the biggest piazza/park of its kind in Europe, and with a fountain at its centre, it was lovely to see so many people enjoying this wonderful space.

Sunday Market

Glasgow, United Kingdom

Reviewed July 3, 2018

We visited on a Sunday and found a market all around the perimeter of the central park. There were clothes, jewelry, antiques and almost anything you could want. After walking around the market we then crossed a bridge and were able to find a seat in the shade.

A popular place with the locals.

Peaceful

Bashall Eaves, United Kingdom

Reviewed June 1, 2018

Walked through here a couple of times and sat people watching. The first was a public holiday and the volunteers on patrol were blowing whistles at people cycling through. Everyone obeyed leading me to wonder what punishment could be enforced if someone rebelled.

We went again early one evening when it as peaceful. Beautiful place to watch the world go by.

Exceptional place

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed April 14, 2018

Must see in Padova Very big and impressive square in the heart of this beautiful city especially in spring and summer full of young people who enjoy Italian life under the sky full of stars

Kinda living Forum Romanum in Padua

Reviewed December 4, 2017

Wonderful spacious square on the border of the city center of Padova. A circle of sculptures in the green crossed by walking trails with banks alongside in the shadow of the big trees. Pubs on one side of the square and the botanic garden, and the gorgeous basilica from the 14th century. One can spend couple of hours on or around the square resonating with its atmosphere.

One of the best Squares in Europe

Novi, Michigan

Reviewed October 7, 2017

This large mostly pedestrian square with lots of sculptures, artificial canal, beautiful buildings, to my mind, is one of the best Squares not only in Italy, but in Europe. Once again, knowing its history would help to appreciate it even more.

Beautiful Square with small canal and fountain.

Wantage, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 18, 2017

A green and peaceful and beautiful place to stroll or just relax in. In the morning there are a few fruit and veg stalls and on Sundays there is a flea market. Several cafes fringe the square. A perfect place to sit and drink a Spritz and relax

Easily underestimated

Washington, United Kingdom

Reviewed April 11, 2017

I underestimated this place (foolish I know) but as our hotel was meters away we explored. Stunning stunning spot!! Beautiful space with beautiful surroundings, I think I'd be a happier man if I spent time here everyday, a gentle walk or just a perch watching the world go by. Also, a cracking market on the Saturday we were there, huge!

Padua Botanical Garden – World Heritage Site

[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187867-d246567-Reviews-Padua Botanical Garden World Heritage Site-Padua Province of Padua Veneto.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187867-d246567-Reviews-Padua_Botanical_Garden_World_Heritage_Site-Padua_Province_of_Padua_Veneto.html)

The green thumb of the brain of Veneto

New Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reviewed October 22, 2022

This is the standard all botanical gardens should be measured against.

The oldest for sure.

Not as big as the NY Botanical but provides an education and a step back in history.

A must see in Padua.

A truly wonderful experience

San Francisco, California

Reviewed October 23, 2021

We hired an English-speaking guide by contacting the garden via email before our trip. This was a good decision as the gardens are large .We spent an amazing two hours with her seeing the highlights of the garden and understanding how the garden has evolved over time. Our guide had extensive knowledge of the plants. The toxic plant area was particularly interesting. I can't say enough about the biodiversity wing which is newer, don't miss it. It's world heritage status is well deserved.

Fantastic and beautiful garden - a must-see

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed August 26, 2020

Must see. A really great experience. Very well-presented with plenty of explanation in English. A huge range of plants which really demonstrates how much the Padovan botanists knew and how far they developed our understanding of the role of plants in our lives.

Surprising botanic garden

Vancouver, Canada

Reviewed September 19, 2019

I visited here not expecting too much, but was very impressed. Having visited many botanic gardens throughout the world, this one rates quite high (not like Kew or Kirstenbosch) but still very good. It is very old - the oldest university botanic garden in the world. They have a new area of greenhouses with different biomes - this is the gem of the garden.

Interesting

Denver, Colorado

Reviewed June 30, 2019

Very interesting garden, this is the oldest academic botanical garden that is still in its original location. It was originally devoted to the growth of medicinal plants. However it was enriched with plants from all over the world mainly because of the trade in Venice which brought the plants from many countries.

There are many rare species preserved here and it is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Very peaceful and beautiful, great for an afternoon stroll.

Wonderful and historical

Reviewed May 14, 2019

For those who love botanical gardens, this is a must see. It is unlike any garden you have ever visited -- in its historical location, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, ancient trees and everyday

flowers all bundled together. You can see more pictures and read our full review at testedtravel.com

Amazing blend of old and new - VISIT THIS PLACE!

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed March 8, 2019

Absolutely breathtaking. The old part is amazing, but the new botanical hothouse is an absolute architectural gem! Honestly, it was serene and amazing.

Definitely worth a visit

Sidney, Australia

Reviewed March 4, 2019

We had a very enjoyable visit to these gardens and especially enjoyed the new greenhouses which were brilliant! Extremely informative and something of interest for all age groups.

Nice, tranquil gardens

Washington DC, District of Columbia

Reviewed December 30, 2018

My husband and I came here in December. The outdoor garden, understandably, was not at its peak, but it was still peaceful. We were the only visitors there; there were a few staff people around. Next, we walked to the indoor greenhouse. It was a nice, warm respite from the cold outside. Again, we were the only visitors there so we had the whole place to ourselves. The entire place was not that large, so I could see this being a good family activity that wouldn't be too tiring for young or old.

A peace of natural heaven in Padova

Albany, New York

Reviewed December 12, 2018

What a special place! Even in the winter, it was a wonderful spot to visit. Lots of history and an amazing, important collection. #biodiversity at its best!

Go to the new glasshouse

Reviewed November 19, 2018

Go to the new glasshouse directly, especially on a cold and cloudy day. The older part is full with interesting plants, but in a way similar to any older botanical garden in Europe. In addition to that, not very appealing in the off season and without any educational concept. On the other hand, new glasshouse is a gem. Combining two educational concepts provided by curator, visitors can really emerge themselves into the world of plants. Congratulations to the crew behind this project :)

Must See

Tulsa, Oklahoma, United States

Reviewed August 28, 2018

There is a reason this is one of the most famous botanical gardens. Also, the new addition is educational, interactive, & has rotating exhibits.

Exceedingly beautiful

Reviewed August 25, 2018

This botanical garden is one of the treasures of the city; there's an ancient part with a circular, walled garden, and two small squares near two of the entrance, with very scenographic, low fountains full of nymphaea and with some statues; there are local and exotic plants, and a greenhouse that seems out of a sci-fi movie (look from the second floor).

The price is very convenient: children don't pay, students up to 25 and elderly pay 5€, adults 10.

Fabulous greenhouses

Great Torrington, United Kingdom

Reviewed August 6, 2018

The historic gardens are lovely, but the jewel I. The crown are the more modern greenhouses, housing the Biodiversity selection. From Tropical to arid climates, the displays are easy to follow and very informative. Only word of warning is we suffered a number of mosquito bites during our visit to the tropical house, so slap on the repellent before visiting

Admire the design of the world's first botanical garden

New York City, New York

Reviewed August 4, 2018

Visiting Padua's Botanical Garden was less about plants themselves but the real treat was to admire the design of the world's first botanical garden (UNESCO site for that reason). It's beautifully planned in a circle surrounded by high walls. I spent there around 30 minutes and enjoyed the stroll.

A wonderful historical botanical garden

Reviewed July 17, 2018

Padova (Padua) botanical garden is one of the oldest in the world where some plants from the Americas were accustomed to European weather and uses.

The new section with the tropical and desert greenhouses are just amazing. And at the end, you will find the bar to rest and enjoy the garden more

Hidden gem in Padua

Palo Alto, California

Reviewed July 7, 2018

This historic botanical garden is a wonderful place to visit while in Padua, especially on a summer morning when it is cool and uncrowded. There are beautiful trees and plants in the large main garden area along with statues, fountains, and songbirds. There is also a massive biodiversity greenhouse behind the main gardens with sections on tropical, sub-tropical, temperate, and arid climates, with interesting commentary about each. This place also has a very interesting history which you can learn about while there, which goes back to 1545 and is linked to the evolution of foods and medicines in the western world.

Old and modern

Glasgow, United Kingdom

Reviewed July 3, 2018

We found it a bit difficult to find the entrance but managed to follow the road signs. This is the oldest botanic gardens in Europe. The old gardens are set out nicely and includes a palm from 1585.

The new Gardens of Biodiversity is situated in a wonderful modern greenhouse and the selection of plants are very interesting.

Very well worth the entrance fee.

A refreshing place to visit on a hot day

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reviewed October 14, 2017

In the 1500s, explorers to faraway continents often brought back exotic plants, herbs, fruits, vegetables to Europe. Because of the university medical school, Padua attracted those interested in the use of herbs for medicinal use. This is a very old botanical garden. It is behind the Basilica San Antonio. There is an entrance fee (a good idea or else it might be overrun by a horde of tourists) but well worth it, especially on a hot day.

Beautiful

Reviewed April 23, 2017

The Botanical Gardens are quite beautiful, and they have a long history dating back to the 16th century. There is a museum devoted to endangered animals as well as the gardens. A great place to go on a day when the weather is fine.

Palazzo della Ragione

[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187867-d246557-Reviews-Palazzo della Ragione-Padua Province of Padua Veneto.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187867-d246557-Reviews-Palazzo_della_Ragione-Padua_Province_of_Padua_Veneto.html)

Amazing indoor market

Hitchin, United Kingdom

Reviewed November 18, 2019

We were in Padova for only a few days, staying in a hotel. Had we been staying longer and self catering, we would have spent loads. A beautiful building housing a great indoor market. My mouth is watering thinking about all the food goodies it contains!

Amazing Great Hall

Adelaide, Australia

Reviewed October 28, 2019

The ground floor of this civic building covers multiple food shops, while market stalls are set up in the adjacent piazzas on weekdays.

The upper level is a huge great hall, the interior walls of which are covered by frescoes depicting the influence of the zodiac on human life and activities, as well as multiple coats of arms. At the western end of the hall is a huge wooden horse made in 1466 for the Capodilista family and given to the city 400 years later. A working Foucault's pendulum is in the south east corner of the great hall.

The loggia on the south side of the great hall overlooks Piazza delle Erbe.

Best of Padua

Valparaiso, Indiana

Reviewed October 17, 2019

Loved this building and the entire Piazza. Sunday, full of life. We sat and had a Spritz and I admired this Building. Wanted so much to go inside but something was scheduled there and the line was blocks long...next time.

This area was what I expected. You are in the center of the world in the 1500's.

If you do nothing else in Padua come here. Piazza's on both sides of the Building and all surrounding Buildings are wonderful as well.

Don't miss this - up there with the Scrovegni Chapel

Ashby de la Zouch, United Kingdom

Reviewed August 18, 2019

Above the covered market which is a great destination in its own right, the huge hall above contains the most amazing collection of wall to ceiling frescoes and a gigantic 15th century wooden horse constructed for a tournament. Also a fascinating 13th century version of the Naughty Step on which debtors were placed in their underwear.

Beautiful old court building in centre of Padua

Exeter, United Kingdom

Reviewed May 12, 2019

This is a fascinating building. The walls are decorated with numerous paintings representing the months of the year and signs of the zodiac.

High on the wall is a bronze sun through which the sun's rays strike a line on the floor at midday.

Notable objects include a Foucault's pendulum; and the stone of shame on which debtors were forced to sit before being expelled from the city.

There is a huge wooden horse dating from medieval times.

Impressive edifice

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed October 5, 2018

The imposing Palazzo della Ragione towers over the markets that surround it. On its ground floor one finds an indoor market of butchers, fishmongers, cheese makers, and bakers. On the floor above is a cavernous hall, which is populated by a large wooden horse statue from the 15th century. This hall is where medieval courts once dispensed justice. The surrounding terraces offer a nice view over the markets below.

With over 300 frescos inside this building it is a must see.

Eastbourne, UK

Reviewed June 19, 2018

The vast hall above the market is truly amazing. The walls are covered with frescos of the zodiac and you need the crib sheet or you miss some. An art exhibition was being held within when we visited which was interesting.

Love It!

Los Angeles, California

Reviewed May 12, 2018 via mobile

The building is at the center area of Padova, surrounded by colorful street market with additional stalls located on the first floor. The hall was once the largest hall in the world with frescos from Giotto. You can still envision the glorious past when you are standing at the center of the hall. The wooden replica stature based on Da Vinci's drawing is an added bonus. Looking down at the market place from the balcony is a great way to pass the time and get a glimpse of daily Italian life.

Wonderful surprise

Redcar, United Kingdom

Reviewed April 12, 2018

Magnificent building from the outside, flanked by two piazzas. Just as magnificent inside. A massive room with unsupported roof. At one end a massive wooden horse and at the other end a copy of Foucault's Pendulum. Must be a great performance venue.

Be prepared to be surprised

London, United Kingdom

Reviewed March 20, 2018

From the outside this looks like a decorated palace that you might see anywhere in Italy. Inside is different, without giving away the surprise the roof is amazing.

Make sure to go inside

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reviewed October 14, 2017

The Palazzo della Ragione is such an impressive building from the outside that many people never pay the entrance fee to go inside. They should. This is the largest "room" in Europe without support columns -- it is amazing. Shipbuilders figured out how to accomplish this. Imagine the inside of the upside down hull of a large ship. Make sure to look up at the ceiling, and not only at the beautiful frescoes. Get the information sheet to understand what this is, basically the commercial arbitration courts for the various trades and guilds. This one "room" will give you an appreciation of the wealth and economic importance of Padua in the middle ages.

Fantastic Building

Sydney, Australia

Reviewed October 1, 2017

The main building in the square has plenty of shops and produce stores below it to browse, then there is upstairs where you can explore some of the history of the area in a massive sized building.

A tremendous building

Glasgow, United Kingdom

Reviewed October 2, 2017

The enormous hall in the Palazzo is dazzling. We took plenty of time to study the astronomical signs and the religious themes all painted around the hall. There are good tv screens which demonstrate and explain these. The Giant wooden horse is superb and obviously if there is a wedding in Padua a photograph of the happy couple has to be taken at its base as happened when we were there

Market below

Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 15, 2017

Ok this is not about the amazing building itself, but about the market below

There is plenty of reviews about the great hall and horse etc but for me it's the meat and cheese market below

I lost count of the tiny and large stalls of fresh meat , cheese, dried pasta and even more cured meat , wow

With the fruit market outside to one side and leather goods to the other this is a wonderful place to visit

Wow

Weston super Mare, United Kingdom

Reviewed September 6, 2017

Originally I thought that a look at the outside was enough, but no, the vast hall above the markets, is stunning!

Huge space beautifully decorated, and at just 6 euro (4 for over 65's), well with the visit. Check out the pendulum.

Lovely building

Glasgow, United Kingdom

Reviewed August 20, 2017

This is a lovely historic building in the centre of Padua. we walked through and there were many stalls selling food to locals. In the square there were fruit and veg stalls.

The upper stories of the building was closed but we could see that it was covered in lovely frescoes.

Quite a wonderful surprise

Fredonia, New York

Reviewed April 24, 2017

It a bit to find the entrance but what a fabulous surprise inside. The HUGE hall lined with an amazing array of frescos. Quite breathtaking. The monumental wooden horse inside was also quite a sight. The second story balcony and facade was perfect for photography

Marvellous..

Sheffield, United Kingdom

Reviewed April 14, 2017

Hard to believe that this place has stood in more-or-less its present form since the thirteenth century (roof replacements as a result of 'Acts of God' notwithstanding!). Frescos are brilliant and the sheer size of the place is something to behold. There's a good guide to the frescos given free with you ticket.

Beautiful interior

Reviewed April 17, 2017

visited on day trip from venice - train is only 25 mins - this building has the most amazing wall decorations and the biggest statue of a horse you are likely to see. fascinating to walk a round and appreciate the hidden messages. lunch nearby easy to find also

A place to marvel at

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Reviewed March 23, 2017

Can anyone believe that this hall has been a functioning Council and Courthouse since the 1300s ? No longer after the 1700s of course; still something to admire for the lovely frescoes of the months and the myths and all the symbolic representations. Have a spritz after that on the square

Riassunto in italiano

Il turismo è un fenomeno antichissimo, che trova le sue origini già nell'antica Roma e che, in costante sviluppo, ha acquisito nel tempo nuove forme e dimensioni, così come anche il linguaggio utilizzato in tale settore. In particolare, l'avvento di internet, grazie alle numerose possibilità che offre, ha rivoluzionato molteplici aspetti della nostra vita, così si è sviluppato anche un nuovo modo di fare turismo. In tal contesto si colloca l'obiettivo del presente elaborato, che si propone come un'analisi linguistica di testi di recensioni di viaggio online. L'approccio utilizzato è quello della *corpus linguistics*, una metodologia per l'analisi linguistica che si serve dell'utilizzo di corpora. L'obiettivo principale di questa analisi riguarda un ambito del discorso specializzato, quello del turismo, che coinvolge la nostra vita quotidiana. Troviamo infatti esempi di testi turistici ovunque nella realtà intorno a noi, come guide turistiche, depliant, cartelloni pubblicitari o pubblicità online. Il turismo è uno degli ambiti più importanti sia a livello storico-sociale sia economico, diventando nel tempo una delle industrie mondiali più influenti. Il fenomeno del turismo è strettamente connesso al linguaggio, in quanto senza comunicazione il turismo non esisterebbe affatto. Nello specifico, l'analisi vuole investigare l'evoluzione del linguaggio del turismo, che si modifica anche in relazione ai contesti storici e sociali in cui si sviluppa, e in particolar modo intende analizzare come i turisti narrano e valutano la propria esperienza in un contesto online, dal punto di vista linguistico. Inoltre, l'elaborato si propone di confrontare le recensioni di viaggio con altri generi testuali del settore turistico, per indagare se, nella sua evoluzione, il linguaggio del turismo ha mantenuto le proprie caratteristiche. L'analisi si propone di rispondere alle seguenti domande: Quali caratteristiche lessico-grammaticali vengono utilizzate dai turisti per esprimere la propria soddisfazione in un contesto online? Possiamo considerare questa particolare area del turismo come un linguaggio specifico, che si basa su una serie di convenzioni linguistiche? Quali caratteristiche accomunano le recensioni di viaggio e gli altri generi testuali del discorso turistico? In quale misura le recensioni possono essere considerate parte del discorso turistico? Al fine di rispondere

a tali domande, l'analisi prevede un approccio linguistico sia di tipo quantitativo, ma soprattutto qualitativo, tramite l'aiuto del software AntConc.

L'elaborato si articola in quattro capitoli, ognuno dei quali affronta questioni diverse legate al linguaggio del turismo, alle sue caratteristiche e ai principali testi turistici, il cui approfondimento risulta utile ai fini dell'analisi linguistica affrontata nel quarto capitolo.

Il primo capitolo fornisce una descrizione generale del linguaggio del turismo. La prima parte si propone di offrire una panoramica sugli studi relativi al linguaggio del turismo in quanto linguaggio specializzato. A partire dagli anni '90 del Novecento, data la crescente importanza del fenomeno turistico, si sono sviluppati studi sulla questione, in particolare in seguito al lavoro di Graham Dann, che per primo mostra come il linguaggio del turismo costituisca un discorso a sé stante. Definire tale linguaggio appare di particolare complessità, in particolare per via della sua interdisciplinarietà, il grado di specializzazione e la natura eterogenea della comunità, in quanto coinvolge sia esperti del settore ma anche semplici turisti. Calvi (2005) definisce infatti il linguaggio del turismo come “un linguaggio dalla fisionomia sfuggente”. La componente tematica del linguaggio del turismo è il frutto della combinazione di vari settori disciplinari, come la geografia, economia, sociologia, ma anche cibo, sport, eventi. Questo avvicina tale linguaggio al linguaggio comune, anche in base al fatto che i destinatari dei testi turistici sono in larga misura figure non esperte del settore. Tutte queste caratteristiche hanno fatto sì che per lungo tempo il linguaggio del turismo non sia stato considerato come discorso specializzato. Le cose iniziano a cambiare con l'ampliamento del settore turistico, quando si è iniziato a discutere sulla questione. Varie sono le definizioni e interpretazioni attorno al concetto di “linguaggio specializzato”, che Gotti (2006) definisce come “un sottosistema della lingua comune che viene utilizzato in ambiti professionali, tecnici o scientifici”. Poiché il tratto caratteristico di un linguaggio specializzato è la presenza di una terminologia prettamente specializzata, e che il linguaggio del turismo è molto vicino invece alla lingua comune, si potrebbe pensare che quest'ultimo non possa essere inserito all'interno dei linguaggi specializzati. Eppure sono molti gli studi che affermano il contrario, dal momento che il linguaggio del turismo presenta delle proprie peculiarità, seppur diverse da quelle di altri linguaggi specialistici. In particolare, il linguaggio del turismo si distingue per specifiche

caratteristiche lessicali, morfosintattiche e testuali. Le principali caratteristiche lessicali sono la monoreferenzialità, la concisione, l'uso enfatico della lingua e l'abbondante aggettivazione. Il lessico è contraddistinto dal significato tendenzialmente univoco dei termini, e questo garantisce concisione e precisione, riducendo l'ambiguità del messaggio. Mentre i testi specialistici mancano generalmente di una connotazione emotiva, i testi appartenenti al discorso turistico sono ricchi di un lessico fortemente valutativo ed enfatico, in particolare attraverso l'uso di aggettivi che descrivono le mete turistiche in termini estremamente positivi. Per quanto riguarda le caratteristiche morfosintattiche, ci sono alcune strutture sintattiche contraddistintive di questo linguaggio, come la nominalizzazione, la concisione espressiva, la premodificazione, l'uso di verbi modali, la forma passiva e imperativa dei verbi, tutte caratteristiche che permettono al linguaggio del turismo di garantire la concisione e l'immediatezza del testo. Per quanto riguarda i verbi, la forma principalmente usata è il presente per rendere il senso di immobilità del luogo descritto, insieme alla forma imperativa, impiegata per invitare i potenziali turisti a visitare il luogo e fornire loro istruzioni. Anche i verbi modali sono particolarmente impiegati, per rivolgersi in forma diretta ai turisti, ed esprimere opportunità e raccomandazioni. Data la principale funzione di persuadere, il linguaggio del turismo adotta inoltre una serie di tecniche verbali. In particolare, l'utilizzo di parole chiave, dell'ironia, della tecnica del *languaging* e *ego-targeting*, per stabilire una relazione diretta con il lettore e avvicinarlo alla realtà che andrà a visitare. La componente fondamentale del linguaggio del turismo è la componente comunicativa, poiché la sua specificità si trova proprio a questo livello, nell'uso della lingua, che dipende dal contesto e dal tipo di relazione esistente tra gli interlocutori. Si possono individuare diversi livelli comunicativi, ognuno con un diverso grado di specializzazione del linguaggio: la comunicazione tra esperti prevede l'utilizzo di un lessico altamente specialistico; la comunicazione tra esperti e non esperti, che presenta commistione tra lessico specialistico e tratti della lingua comune. Infine, la comunicazione tra esperti e il pubblico, quella della comunicazione pubblicitaria, in cui l'elemento della persuasione è essenziale.

Il linguaggio del turismo ricopre principalmente tre funzioni: informativa, promozionale e persuasiva. È una lingua di controllo sociale, i testi hanno infatti come principale obiettivo quello di persuadere e convincere, attraverso specifiche tecniche linguistiche e

non linguistiche. A questo proposito, assume grande rilevanza l'elemento della persuasione, che gioca un ruolo centrale all'interno del discorso turistico. L'origine degli studi sulla persuasione è molto antica, essendo un tema dominante già nella tradizione retorica greca. In particolare, la persuasione diventa la componente fondamentale per creare un messaggio efficace, in quanto il linguaggio del turismo si costruisce principalmente proprio attorno alla sua funzione promozionale.

Il secondo capitolo introduce invece le caratteristiche del linguaggio del turismo a livello testuale. Un genere testuale si può definire come una classe testuale creata all'interno di una comunità discorsiva, che risponde a un determinato scopo comunicativo. La complessità del linguaggio del turismo si riscontra anche a livello testuale, data la ricca varietà di destinatari e obiettivi dei vari testi. Tuttavia, ci sono alcune forme testuali che possono essere considerate come appartenenti specificamente al settore turistico, in cui particolarmente marcata è la componente comunicativa. I diversi generi testuali possono essere classificati sulla base di alcuni parametri: gli attori della comunicazione, il mezzo di comunicazione, la fase del viaggio in cui viene utilizzato, la funzione comunicativa, le strategie lessico-grammaticali e il grado di specializzazione della lingua. Nonostante la difficoltà di collocare i generi turistici all'interno di una classificazione precisa, ci sono alcuni autori, in particolare Calvi (2005) e Nigro (2006), che identificano le principali categorie di testi turistici. Si distinguono principalmente testi per gli esperti del settore e testi per il pubblico, nello specifico la pubblicità, che presenta interessanti caratteristiche dal punto di vista delle strategie linguistiche. Possono inoltre essere individuate tre aree principali del discorso turistico, ognuna con le proprie strategie discorsive e caratteristiche. Ci sono testi altamente specializzati destinati agli esperti del settore, altri materiali informativi concernono l'organizzazione turistica e includono anche riflessioni di stampo antropologico e sociologico. Infine, ci sono testi destinati al grande pubblico, che fanno uso di una grande varietà di registri linguistici e che hanno come obiettivo la promozione della destinazione turistica.

Nonostante l'ibridazione che caratterizza i vari generi turistici, le cui caratteristiche si intrecciano e si influenzano reciprocamente, tutti i testi turistici presentano una specifica organizzazione testuale e uno stesso contenuto, che varia solo in termini di completezza dell'informazione. Tra i principali generi del turismo troviamo le guide turistiche, che

rappresentano il genere più tradizionale. Le prime guide turistiche furono pubblicate nel 1836 e nel 1839 rispettivamente da John Murray e Becker, che sono considerati i padri fondatori di tale fenomeno letterario. Da quel momento, la quantità di guide turistiche pubblicate è aumentata esponenzialmente, differenziandosi per caratteristiche linguistiche e stile. L'obiettivo comune è quello di guidare i turisti durante il loro viaggio, fornendo informazioni di stampo storico-culturale ma anche informazioni pratiche. Le guide turistiche si presentano come un testo completo e compatto, articolato in varie sezioni, ognuna con uno scopo ben preciso.

Un altro genere turistico è rappresentato dagli articoli di viaggio che troviamo in giornali e riviste. Anche in questo caso il contenuto è di tipo principalmente informativo, il testo negli articoli di viaggio è però spesso accompagnato da annunci pubblicitari, per via della loro funzione promozionale. Gli articoli di viaggio presentano caratteristiche simili a quelle delle guide turistiche, ma a differenza del linguaggio obiettivo di queste ultime, le descrizioni negli articoli tendono a essere più soggettive, essendo talvolta frutto di turisti che raccontano la propria esperienza. Anche lo stile è più colloquiale. Le riviste di viaggio hanno subito nel tempo una significativa crescita, e nuovi sottogeneri hanno prosperato, come le riviste di bordo, fornite in maniera gratuita a bordo degli aerei. Queste contengono informazioni di vario tipo, oltre a fornire informazioni riguardo il volo e la destinazione, offrono anche e pubblicizzano prodotti.

Depliant e brochure sono pubblicazioni editoriali, prodotte sia da istituzioni pubbliche che private, che vengono distribuite in forma gratuita sul posto e hanno come obiettivo la promozione delle destinazioni turistiche. Possono essere inserite all'interno dello stesso genere testuale, in quanto differiscono solo per la lunghezza del testo. Il contenuto di questo materiale è altamente informativo e riguarda principalmente caratteristiche e servizi delle attrazioni turistiche. Rispetto però ad altri generi informativi, il turista in questo caso è maggiormente coinvolto nel messaggio del testo, attraverso l'utilizzo di codici verbali e visuali persuasivi che mirano ad attrarre il lettore. Dato il poco spazio in cui il testo deve inserirsi, mostrano delle peculiarità a livello linguistico: si presentano come un testo compatto e denso con un vocabolario semplice e accessibile a tutti.

Altro genere di grande rilevanza all'interno del settore turistico è quello della pubblicità. Il primo modello di pubblicità è individuabile nei primi manifesti commerciali che

apparvero nel Settecento, che consistevano principalmente in un testo con funzione narrativa e referenziale. A partire dalla rivoluzione industriale si diffonde invece il manifesto così come lo intendiamo oggi. Elemento essenziale è lo slogan, che punta alla concisione e all'immediatezza del messaggio da trasmettere, insieme alla centralità delle immagini che ritraggono il prodotto o la destinazione da promuovere che diventano fulcro del manifesto. Negli ultimi decenni, tuttavia, in seguito alla comparsa dei nuovi mezzi di comunicazione, i manifesti pubblicitari sono stati relegati a una posizione secondaria, e hanno acquisito nuove caratteristiche in nuovi spazi, servendosi ad esempio dei mezzi di trasporto pubblici.

Nel terzo capitolo si riflette sull'evoluzione che ha subito il settore turistico. La prima parte del capitolo offre una digressione storica sul fenomeno del turismo, su come si è sviluppato nel tempo. Le sue origini si possono far risalire già all'antica Roma, in cui vi era la consuetudine di spendere l'estate nelle ville in campagna. Durante il periodo medievale il viaggio era invece intrapreso come pellegrinaggio verso luoghi di culto. Ma l'inizio del fenomeno turistico così come lo intendiamo noi oggi risale al periodo tra il XVI e il XVII secolo, con le prime strutture turistiche in Gran Bretagna. Nello stesso periodo, in Francia, si sviluppa la pratica del *Grand Tour*, un viaggio intrapreso dai giovani aristocratici europei destinati a diventare parte della futura classe dirigente per terminare i propri studi e consolidare le proprie conoscenze. Nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo, tuttavia, questa pratica subì un lento declino, per via dell'espansione della classe borghese inglese che ricercava nel viaggio solo un motivo di svago, fino alla sua scomparsa a seguito delle guerre napoleoniche. In seguito, con la rapida e significativa espansione dei mezzi di trasporto l'attività turistica iniziò a coinvolgere un pubblico sempre più ampio. Iniziò così il grande periodo del turismo di massa, caratterizzato dalla standardizzazione e commercializzazione del viaggio. I turisti iniziano ad acquistare pacchetti di viaggio prodotti dalle agenzie di viaggio, che svolgono in questo periodo un ruolo molto importante nell'organizzazione del viaggio in ogni dettaglio. Questo approccio lasciava da parte l'individualità e i bisogni del singolo turista e promuoveva invece un prodotto turistico indifferenziato. Tuttavia, a partire dagli anni '70 del Novecento si riscoprono il valore del viaggio come arricchimento culturale e l'autenticità dell'esperienza. Con il passaggio alla società post-industriale, si passa dal turismo organizzato di massa a un prodotto turistico personalizzato e a una

partecipazione più attiva del turista nel processo di pianificazione della vacanza. L'industria turistica deve tener conto dei bisogni del singolo turista e delle molteplici motivazioni di viaggio.

La rivoluzione più importante all'interno del settore turistico avviene con l'avvento di internet e dei nuovi mezzi di comunicazione. La rete offre nuove possibilità agli utenti e ha trasformato radicalmente il concetto di turismo stesso, garantendo una comunicazione istantanea e lo scambio di informazioni tra milioni di utenti in diverse parti del mondo. Internet ha cambiato anche la natura dei rapporti interpersonali all'interno del settore turistico: l'industria turistica non ha più bisogno dell'intermediazione delle agenzie di viaggio, ma può comunicare direttamente con il turista. Grazie all'accessibilità delle informazioni, il turista può essere costantemente informato e vivere virtualmente la vacanza, riducendo il divario tra le proprie aspettative e la realtà. La nuova figura del turista, definito turista 2.0, più informato e pertanto più esigente, ha anche la possibilità di diventare produttore attivo di informazioni e contenuti nel web. Questo comporta una ridefinizione dei ruoli all'interno del settore turistico: il turista è in grado di organizzare il proprio viaggio in ognuna delle sue fasi e diventa esperto del settore, il cui controllo non è più esclusivo delle figure professionali. Alla luce di queste trasformazioni, l'industria turistica ha avuto la necessità di modificare la propria comunicazione, che passa dall'essere descrittiva a esperienziale. Il turista 2.0 pone al centro del proprio viaggio le emozioni e le esperienze vissute, piuttosto che il mero prodotto turistico.

Il linguaggio del turismo si evolve verso una comunicazione più diretta e un uso fortemente persuasivo della lingua, sfruttando tutte le opportunità offerte da internet. Questa evoluzione del linguaggio porta anche a un'evoluzione del genere testuale turistico, che deve modellarsi sulle nuove caratteristiche del web, come la multimedialità e l'ipertestualità. In alcuni casi, si verifica una semplice "rimediazione" dei testi turistici, che subiscono una variazione dalla versione cartacea a una versione digitale. In altri casi, invece, i generi subiscono trasformazioni più profonde, aumentando le proprie capacità comunicative. Questa trasformazione ha determinato un maggiore grado di ibridazione dei generi turistici, i cui confini diventano sempre più labili. Inoltre, nuovi generi turistici vengono creati modellandosi sulle caratteristiche del web, portando alla creazione di nuovi spazi virtuali, in cui i turisti possono condividere

informazioni e immagini con altri turisti. Una delle caratteristiche principali di tali spazi è infatti la multimodalità: il testo viene accompagnato dalle immagini, che assumono un ruolo sempre più centrale nella comunicazione del prodotto turistico. Altra caratteristica principale del web è l'ipertestualità, che permette agli utenti in rete di muoversi da una pagina all'altra, offrendo la possibilità di interagire con il testo in modo molto più dinamico rispetto alla linearità del testo scritto cartaceo.

Oggi, la comunicazione turistica si avvale non soltanto di siti turistici istituzionali, ma anche di una serie di spazi di comunicazione informale tra utenti, che possono pubblicare opinioni, commenti e valutazioni. I siti istituzionali hanno come scopo principale quello di promuovere una destinazione turistica, attraverso l'adozione di specifiche strategie linguistiche e non linguistiche. La pagina web è designata in modo tale da attrarre l'attenzione dell'utente, soprattutto attraverso l'uso delle immagini. Sebbene il linguaggio delle pagine web si avvicini più a un registro colloquiale piuttosto che a un linguaggio specializzato, molte delle caratteristiche del linguaggio del turismo possono essere individuate, in particolare l'uso abbondante di aggettivi, l'adozione della forma imperativa del verbo e il fatto di rivolgersi direttamente al lettore. Dall'altro lato, molte delle caratteristiche dei siti turistici promozionali derivano dalla loro appartenenza al web, come lo stile breve e semplice delle frasi e un tono prevalentemente colloquiale. Altro spazio virtuale è quello dei travel blog, che permette agli utenti della rete di pubblicare post e articoli, a cui altri utenti possono contribuire con i propri commenti. Caratteristica principale dei blog è il fatto che sono scritti spontaneamente da turisti che desiderano condividere la propria esperienza e che, rispetto agli spazi ufficiali, non sono condizionati dalle logiche di mercato. A livello linguistico, infatti, sono contraddistinti da una narrazione in prima persona e da un tono fortemente soggettivo. Presentano, tuttavia, una specifica struttura, che prevede diverse mosse comunicative: descrizione del luogo visitato e dell'esperienza vissuta e invito agli altri utenti a partecipare alla discussione. Fulcro del presente studio sono le recensioni di viaggio online, che giocano oggi un ruolo fondamentale all'interno del settore turistico, grazie alla loro significativa influenza nel processo decisionale di potenziali turisti. Le recensioni hanno come fine ultimo quello di raccontare e valutare l'esperienza di viaggio, da parte di turisti che l'hanno vissuta in prima persona e sono quindi un materiale molto affidabile e godono di maggiore credibilità rispetto, ad

esempio, alle fonti istituzionali. I testi delle recensioni sono spesso molto brevi e presentano una specifica struttura, che può essere riassunta in tre atti comunicativi: descrizione, valutazione e raccomandazione. I recensori concludono infatti spesso il proprio breve testo con consigli pratici e suggerimenti utili per potenziali futuri turisti. Per questo motivo, le recensioni possono essere considerate come una forma indiretta di promozione turistica. Tra i numerosi siti online di viaggio che si sono sviluppate negli ultimi anni, Tripadvisor rappresenta indubbiamente la principale piattaforma. Questa può essere utilizzata in tutte le varie fasi del viaggio: i turisti possono consultare il sito per pianificare il proprio viaggio, basandosi sui commenti di altri utenti, e successivamente pubblicare il proprio resoconto di viaggio e valutare i luoghi visitati e i servizi ricevuti.

Alla luce delle riflessioni affrontate nei capitoli precedenti riguardo l'evoluzione subita dal linguaggio del turismo, il quarto capitolo presenta l'analisi linguistica dei testi delle recensioni di viaggio online. Il mio studio si è basato sulla costruzione di un corpus composto da 100 recensioni che coprono un arco temporale di circa cinque anni, tratte dal sito di viaggi Tripadvisor, che valutano alcune delle principali attrazioni culturali della città di Padova. Il corpus di testi è stato poi analizzato sia da un punto di vista quantitativo che qualitativo, attraverso l'aiuto del software di consultazione di corpora AntConc. Inizialmente, è stata condotta un'analisi keyword, che ha permesso di individuare le parole che sono più frequenti all'interno del corpus in esame rispetto a un corpus standard di riferimento. In seguito, attraverso l'osservazione della *word list*, ovvero l'elenco di tutte le parole presenti nel corpus, ho selezionato quelle parole che apparivano più interessanti ai fini della mia analisi, suddividendole secondo le parti del discorso: nomi, aggettivi, avverbi e verbi. Si è notato in particolare che i nomi più utilizzati appartengono ai vari settori attorno a cui il linguaggio del turismo si sviluppa. La grande quantità di aggettivi dimostrano l'uso enfatico della lingua, in particolare la forma superlativa degli aggettivi. Anche gli avverbi sono utilizzati per enfatizzare il significato positivo degli aggettivi. Per quanto riguarda i verbi invece, si nota l'uso della forma imperativa per fornire consigli a potenziali turisti, e il particolare uso dei verbi modali. La riflessione sull'uso dei pronomi ha dimostrato la relazione di vicinanza tra recensore e lettore. E' stata poi condotta un'analisi sui modi attraverso cui i recensori esprimono le proprie emozioni e il giudizio positivo nei confronti delle attrazioni

culturali, che ha rivelato la presenza di termini che riguardano la sfera affettiva. Infine, il confronto delle recensioni con gli altri tipi di testi turistici ha permesso di individuare le molteplici somiglianze e di indagare la loro appartenenza al linguaggio del turismo. Molte delle caratteristiche linguistiche emerse dall'analisi del corpus, come l'uso enfatico della lingua, il rivolgersi direttamente al lettore, l'impiego della forma imperativa del verbo, fanno parte delle caratteristiche principali del linguaggio del turismo. In particolare, le recensioni hanno molte caratteristiche in comune con il linguaggio promozionale della pubblicità. I titoli delle recensioni si presentano come una sorta di slogan, che ha l'intento di attirare l'attenzione del lettore e invogliare alla lettura del testo. Rispetto ai siti promozionali, invece, nonostante le caratteristiche comuni, le recensioni sono differenti dal punto di vista dell'informalità del linguaggio, vicino al registro della lingua parlata.

L'analisi svolta ha permesso di rispondere alle domande di ricerca formulate in precedenza, riguardanti in particolare le recensioni di viaggio online come un genere testuale a sé stante e la loro appartenenza al linguaggio del turismo. L'analisi lessico-grammaticale in particolare ha mostrato la ricorrenza di alcuni tratti specifici nei testi delle recensioni, e anche di una struttura ben precisa dei testi. Ciò ha permesso di affermare la specificità del linguaggio delle recensioni online che presentano peculiarità proprie. Allo stesso tempo, i testi delle recensioni sono un genere ibrido: riprendono molte delle caratteristiche peculiari del linguaggio del web e molte delle caratteristiche tipiche del linguaggio del turismo. Sulla base di questa riflessione, è possibile considerare il genere delle recensioni di viaggio online a tutti gli effetti parte integrante del linguaggio del turismo.

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