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Evaluative language and multimodality in online tourism discourse: The case of Prague.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth in travel demand in the last few decades (excluding the current COVID-19 pandemic) and the rapid evolution of social media (Web 2.0) into new opportunities for tourism industry have led to the phenomenon of Tourism 2.0. Tourism 2.0 is the term that indicates planning and buying tourism services using Web 2.0 environments such as social media, blogs, and wikis. Tourism 2.0 has brought about deep transformations, as many tourism companies can now improve their knowledge about consumers and trends and can control their online brand image, so as to better understand their consumers' needs. Consumers have also generally changed their status from passive to active users. All this has been possible thanks to social media such as Instagram and Facebook, which allow the transmission of knowledge within hyper-connected virtual communities. Websites and social media provide a new and novel way of helping to define a destination or a corporate image. In order to be effective, they have to be interesting, entertaining and should provide good networking opportunities. If they fail to do so, they might turn out to be useless.

Research has been conducted on the "effectiveness" of websites managed by tourism organizations, and has shown that effectiveness can be improved with the use of modality and evaluative language. Many approaches have been used to measure the effectiveness but each of them present strong limitations. According to Morrison et al (2004: 247), it is impossible to pinpoint the state of a given approach in website evaluation for tourism and hospitality.

The purpose of my dissertation is to analyse the visual and linguistic choices made by tourism organizations in order to promote the city of Prague. The focus is on this city, because in 2019 I won an Erasmus scholarship for a semester exchange programme with the largest University in Prague (Charles

University). Unfortunately, due to the COVID pandemic I spent there only one month and a half, which unfortunately affected the scope of my dissertation, because I did not have the chance to carry out all the fieldwork I had planned.

In Chapter 1, I review studies that have explored the linguistic and multimodal features of the language of tourism, with a specific focus on the language of tourism on the web (Tourism 2.0) and the role of multimodality in social media.

In Chapter 2, I present and discuss Internet applications and the phenomenon of Tourism 2.0, together with some online applications useful for tourism organization.

In Chapter 3, I review studies of the he linguistic phenomenon of language evaluation.

In Chapter 4, I specifically analyse the linguistic aspects of two websites about Prague: *https://www.prague.eu/en* and *http://praguetoday.net/*. The analyses will aim to explore how the language used in websites can attract potential tourists and turn them into actual tourists.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I analyse the role of the visual language adopted by the two websites for the promotion of Prague.

LINGUISTIC AND MULTIMODAL ASPECTS OF THE LANGUAGE OF TOURISM

1.1. The language of tourism on the web

Due to the rapid growth of the travel demand in the last few decades, the attention of the tourism industry has been focused on the tourist decision-making process; in fact, the tourist is no longer seen as passive but “more experienced, more educated, more destination-oriented, more independent, more flexible” (Cho and Fesenmaier, 2001: 353).

Since tourists’ expectations are constructed on the representation or description of products which cannot be seen before their actual experience, they seek as much information as possible, in order to minimize the gap between expectations and experience (Maci, 2007: 42). According to Cho and Fesenmaier (2001: 353), the Internet has begun to be regarded as a source of information because it enables tourists to explore multimedia website in order to both obtain information about a destination and to experience the holiday in advance.

The information provided by tourist organizations cover different fields, from marketing to sociology, from psychology to anthropology, and “the tourism industry is designed to attract as many customers as possible” (Maci, 2007: 42) and so there is the need to sell the same product on different markets and to different customers either.

In order to do so, the product has to be presented in adequate and convincing linguistic ways, which can vary from one target to another. Indeed, the language of tourism displays features which differ from those of the general discourse. Much research has focused on the linguistic tools employed in the tourism industry.

Maci (2007: 43), states that the language of tourism should be highly persuasive in order to reach the set purposes. The purposes include: selling a product by describing a reality in an authentic and genuine style, giving the targeted people the illusion of feeling the holiday experience, before actually living it. Furthermore, the product should sound exclusive to give the idea of "something off the beaten track".

This persuasive language has been forged by a continue exploitation of texts by the tourism industry; these texts are characterized by interrelations between verbal and iconic elements, that is a combination of multimodal and multimedia features.

The Internet has become the primary means through which destination marketing organizations communicate with potential tourists. In order to do so, destination marketers increasingly try to design their websites as a tool for influencing travellers' decision-making process. Internet is an effective communication medium for persuading people; in this sense "persuasion is operationally defined as a destination website's ability to evoke favourable impressions toward the site" (Kim et. al, 2008: 5).

According to the study conducted by Kim et. al (2008), a series of six basic requirements that website must include to enhance users' satisfaction and persuasiveness of a website: informativeness, usability, inspiration, involvement, credibility, reciprocity.

"The potentialities of these multimodal relationships are further augmented when tourism texts are uploaded on the Net and become hypertexts" (Maci, 2007: 43). The main feature of hypertexts is that the hierarchical structure of traditional texts is substituted for both external and internal links, responsible for providing information which is designed to attract the attention by disturbing any process of predictable reading on the screen in a conventional way.

Web-links reflect a communicative choice of the web designer, but they give the readers the idea to be playing an active role while scanning the texts in the web-pages, enhancing their illusion of having total control over what link may be followed (Maci, 2007: 44).

1.1.1. Metaphor in tourism discourse

Since tourism discourse can be considered a type of specialised discourse, it is characterised by some stylistic choices and linguistic strategies of persuasion. In particular, English promotional tourist websites, use metaphorical language in order to persuade their potential tourists (Mattiello, 2012: 69).

Metaphor can be approached from many theoretical perspectives. Mattiello (2012: 72), for example, cites several of them. The first one is related to Grice's pragmatic theory. According to the Gricean approach, metaphors are "departures from a norm of literalness", while Lakoff and Turner see metaphor as "constitutive of human thought and hence pervasive in language" (Mattiello, 2012: 71).

In any case, metaphors are seen as evocative imagistic elements which seem to play a dominant role in tourism discourse; to understand a metaphor, it means to take into account both the propositional component and the imagistic component of communication, even though one or the other component may prevail from case to case. How does metaphor affect the truth-conditional? With a metaphor the speaker 'makes as if to say' something, but also wants to explicitly communicate something. According to Mattiello (2012: 74), the notion of metaphor related to tourist language is strictly connected to the process of lexical broadening, that is, it "is the process whereby a word is used to apply to objects, events or actions that strictly speaking fall outside its linguistically-specified denotation".

Metaphor hyperbole, approximation and category extension are subvarieties of broadening which differ essentially in the degree to which the linguistically-specified denotation is expanded. In particular, between hyperbole and metaphor there seems to be a continuum of cases, since the former involves a quantitative difference, while the latter a qualitative one.

However, the quantitative/qualitative difference is not always so straightforward. Metaphors are used in tourism language because they are easily accessible to tourists and they cost “relatively little processing effort” (Mattiello, 2012: 79).

1.1.2. Adjectivisation in tourism discourse

Adjectives play a relevant role in discourse since they modulate and elaborate the meaning of nouns. They can either describe an entity or express an opinion, a judgement. For this reason, they are central in many genres: in novels, in advertisements (e.g. *new, special, fine, best, original*), in critical reviews and in critical review. Since “the selection and use of adjectives vary across domains and discourse types”, Pierini, (2009: 95) in her study explore the specific use of adjectives in tourism discourse. Tourism is a fast-growing sector on the Web and a new mass medium: they are both used for promoting tourist products all over the world. Tourism communication on the Web tends to take the form of very rich and complex language. There are some lexical choices which recur in tourism discourse, which make up the so-called ‘phraseology of tourism’. The first purpose of the phraseology is “to persuade receivers to purchase the tourist product” (Pierini, 2009: 97). In order to do so, the characteristics of the tourist product are presented implicitly or explicitly in positive terms; the vocabulary is highly evaluative, exalting the positive characteristics of the service or the product, trying to motivate them to action. As a consequence, in tourism discourse description and evaluation are interwoven.

Snell-Hornby (1990) draws a distinction between static and dynamic adjectives: the first one designate inherent stable objective properties (i.e. shape, size) while the second one refers to changeable properties, applied externally as a value judgement (e.g *cruel, careless*). Anyway, the interpretation of a word as good or bad depends on the other items in the environment.

Pierini (2009) divides adjectives in two different groups: evaluative adjectives, reflecting a subjective stance with the function of evaluating, and descriptive adjectives with the function of providing factual information. From to Pierini's analysis (2009: 98), it emerges that both the adjectives *free* and *new* occur very frequently in Web adverts, and thus become "keywords". Keywords convey primary information and tend to be short, clear and to the point. In this case both these keywords (and in general, in tourism discourse) are those corresponding to the requirements of the potential tourist.

In order to express a superlative meaning, the category of 'extraordinariness' is used (e.g. *special, exceptional*). Their purpose is to emphasise different values, focusing on authentic experiences typical of the tourist destination. These type of adjectives usually encode authenticity, such as *typical* and *authentic.*

Another linguistic feature used to intensify the semantic values encoded by the adjectives is the superlative (e.g. *the best*, *very*) identified by Pierini (2009: 107) as a form of 'extreme language'.

Since the message in tourism discourse on the Web has a persuasive purpose, the encoder usually tries to reassure the receiver, highlighting the positive, aspects of the product or trying to convert the negative aspects into positive one.

A word, in this case an adjective, can lose its neutral meaning in a particular environment and, on the contrary, it can take on an extra meaning of emotional or attitudinal nature. Pierini (2009: 109) uses the adjective *small* in order to explain the linguistic phenomenon called "semantic prosody": in general, *small* carries a neutral meaning, but it can interpreted as negative or positive depending on the evaluative item placed in its immediate co-text (e.g. *small charming villages)*. Adjectives, more than other word- classes, are able to take on different senses depending on their co-text; the collocation with other words, together with the pragmatic meaning of adjectives and the grammatical patterns they occur in play a fundamental role in the construction of the promotional discourse of tourism. Pierini (2009: 110) clearly shows that in the industry of persuasion a clear understanding of these characteristics is of great assistance: companies should make sure that bad prosodies do not impede their sales.

1.2. Multimodality: an empirical approach

"Multimodality is a term used in very different ways within several epistemological and disciplinary fields" (Mondada, 2016: 338). Referring to computer sciences, multimodality might indicate interfaces, channels and media of communication. From the semiotic point of view, multimodality refers to different types of signs providing and affording diverse semiotic effects (texts, fixed or moving images, multimedia messages). Finally, in the study of social interaction (for example, in conversation analysis), this term is used to indicate several resources mobilized by participants for organizing their action (e.g. gesture, facial expressions, body postures and movements, grammar or lexis). Finally, in the study of social interaction (for example, in conversation analysis), this term is used to indicate several resources mobilized by participants for organizing their action (e.g. gesture, facial expressions, body postures and movements, grammar or lexis).

To analyse the structure of documents from a multimodal perspective means to examine how "documents combine text, images, and other forms of communication" (Hiippala, 2015: 1). All these elements work together and are related to each other.

Due to the growing interest in multimodality, Forceville (2007: 1235) says that the study of multimodality is currently a "hot academic topic" within the field of linguistics; but how can the application of linguistics enhance the understanding of multimodality, which is a non-linguistic phenomenon?

Linguists have invested considerable efforts in relating these dimensions to each other in order to understand multimodal artefacts and to describe how the different pieces come for a whole. As suggested by Bateman and Schmidt (2012: 32), if the analytic tools developed within linguistics are to be used in multimodal analysis, their application needs to be done at “an appropriate level of theoretical abstraction”.

In particular, there are two theories of language that have influenced multimodal research: social semiotics and systemic-functional linguistics. Multimodality is in need of development and so there has been much criticism about this field, mostly regarding the social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis (Hiippala, 2015: 3): Bateman, Delin and Henschel (2004), Bateman (2008), and Thomas (2014) targeted it as “interpretative” and “impressionistic”, particularly in the analysis of layout. In general, the criticism has generally called for increased empiricism in the field of multimodal research. The problem of doing an empirical research is, as Forceville (2007: 1236) called the attention to, the infinite detail in multimodality. Indeed, studies in multimodality rarely formulate generalisations, but given the immense number of multimodal artefacts present in our daily lives, this presents a substantial challenge to the field: “a well-formulated theory should be able to generalise and make predictions about different aspects of multimodality” (Hiippala, 2015: 3). Because of this detailed analyses dominating multimodal research, the more abstract levels of multimodal structure have not been explored in much detail yet, although they play an important role in organising the content and the structure of texts.

In fact, these kinds of abstract levels of organisation can affect both the structure and the appearance of artefacts belonging to the same ‘family’. In his article Hiippala (2015: 4) mentions, for example, the difference between tabloids and broadsheet newspapers: “we recognise them by their appearance, but we also immediately form expectations towards their content and structure”.

In order to adopt an empirical approach to multimodality, the analytical tools used for the analysis should be sharpened: in other words, the theoretical concepts should be reworked ideally “by observing the data and feeding the results back into the theory” (Hiippala, 2015: 4).

The most important analytic tool is the concept of “mode”, describing language, image, layout and other modes of communication as resources for exchanging meanings.

Another concept is “genre”, which is typically used to describe communicative situations and the social and communicative purposes of a given communicative situation. The attempts to establish a connection between modes and their relation to the abstract notion of genre are few.

According to Hiippala (2015: 5), multimodal research faces two challenges posing a problem in the pursue of the general principles behind multimodality: - “the potentially excessive focus on detail” - “the limited understanding of the more abstract levels of organisation”.

In order to solve this problem, Tseng and Bateman (2012: 93) suggest setting up a solid relationship between detailed descriptions and abstract conceptualisations: this is the only way to achieve a more comprehensive, general view of multimodality. The concept of a multimodal artefact, which “brings together the contributions from both mode and genre” (Hiippala, 2015: 5), helps in forging a link between concepts such as mode, medium, genre, and artefact. Following Hiippala (2015: 5), “the multimodal artefact is conceptualised as a middle ground, as a site of integration for the contributions arising from both mode and genre”. In particular, the concept of mode provides a perspective to multimodal structure, while the concept of a genre is used to identify patterns in the multimodal structure.

In order to carry out a multimodal analysis describing entire artefacts, Forceville (2010: 2607) points out: “I suggest we do so by systematically analysing corpora of discourses belonging to the same genre; communicated in the same medium; drawing on the same combination of modes; in the light of a clearly formulated research question".

This kind of analysis, anyway, requires a specific dataset as well as an appropriate set of analytical tools. By mapping the ground between the concepts of mode and genre, other kinds of phenomena that have gained attention within the field of multimodal research over the years can be described: for example, metaphor, cohesion, and intersemiotic relation.

1.2.1. Multimodality in social media

Social media platforms make available the creation and sharing of multimodal artefacts to an unprecedented number of people, providing a creative space for multimodal text production and the emergence of new genres and new configurations of typified communicative forms fulfilling specific social functions (Adami and Jewitt, 2016: 263-270). There is a growing body of research on the characteristics of social media users, their attitudes, behaviour and practices. Anyway, empirical research on social media contents shared online is typically focused on language, while the multimodal character of social media has been neglected.

In fact, while previously a text comprised mostly printed words, the definition of "text" in itself has been extended: it includes other dimensions, which "moves away from the notion that language as the dominant mode in meaning-making work". (Abas, 2011: 13). Generally speaking, besides textual resources, any website displays visual resources such as layout, colours and fonts, all of which concur to shape the overall layout of the page as a set of meaningful resources.

The layout of a website is the arrangement of the elements on a webpage, which makes meanings through framing all the devices that connect and separate elements and through positioning them on a page. Finally, colours are used both in images and in framing. They make meaning through modal elements such as lighting, saturation and nuancing (Adami, 2012: 2).

A text is considered to be multimodal when it includes images, videos and audio files along with writing.

For example the choice of colours in a website, where aesthetics and attractiveness constitute a particular challenge, is crucial because during the first few seconds of interaction that users or visitors decide whether or not to continue navigating the website. Colours have the potential to affect our perceptions, emotional reactions and behavioural intentions. In fact, several studies have pointed to a relationship between colours and emotion.

According to Bonnardel et al. (2011: 71) some colours serve to excite an individual, while other colours elicit relaxation. Cooler colours, such as blue, are preferred than warmer colours, such as red or yellow because they usually release relaxing and positive feelings. Colours have also been described as having an influence on behavioural intention, with blue producing stronger buying intentions than red. Moreover, users' preferences seem to be based on a combination of Web page balance and colour. Also, the users' culture is important when it comes to the colours.

In line with this view, we argue that colours constitute a crucial feature of websites as they not only contribute to the users' first impressions and feelings about a website, but also influence users' navigation behaviour and subsequent performance. Several studies have provided evidence of a relationship between colours and emotions. Long wavelength colours such as red and yellow have been hypothesized to be more negatively arousing than short wavelength colours, such as blue, white and grey.

Also, website usability can significantly impact trust and the perceived ease of use is as important as perceived aesthetics. Numerous researchers have determined that an effectively designed website including the use of appropriate colours may engage and attract consumers resulting in satisfaction with an online vendor; ineffective colour combinations on graphic design impeded user performance and satisfaction.

A particular colour scheme can have a significant impact on his or her experience, for example, according to Cyr et al. (2010:16) "yellow colour scheme received adverse reaction from most participants when utilized on an electronics e-commerce site".

Websites follow a very precise plan: pictures, texts (visual, textual or both), video-clips and the frames in which they are set, interrelate and interact each other. They convey a meaning to the reader thanks to a system of information existing within any text: this is defined by Kress and Van Leuween (1996: 181) composition.

In western cultures, the composition usually follows a Z-reading pattern: in fact, text is written from left to right and from top to bottom (Kress / van Leeuwen 1996: 218).

As consequence, the most natural division created by the Z-reading pattern of the page is into left and right, top and bottom, and centre and margins "which helps us to define the zones where the different visual elements are placed" (Maci, 2007: 45).

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 181-229) the elements placed to the left of the vertical axis of the page are presented as Given pieces of information. Elements in the upper part of the page appeal to the reader's emotions, expressing what might be, while the bottom elements have an informative appeal. This contrast can be awarded the values of *Ideal* and *Real*, where *Ideal* elements are more salient and simply contain the general points of information; *Real* elements give more practical and specific information.

The elements placed in the Centre are the nucleus of information, with those set at the Margins as subsidiary parts of the image core. As for new elements, opposed to the Given are not yet known or agreed upon.

The position of the elements in the webpage, together with font, size, colours and image sharpness chosen for the webpages are created to attract the reader's attention. The eye is led from one element to another thanks to vectors, which are virtual lines created by the shape and the position of elements. Each element in the text has its own salience. Sometimes it can suggest division or framing lines: the framing of an element suggests its differentiation and individuality, while the lack of framing suggests unity presenting the picture as a whole (Kress / van Leeuwen 1996: 214-218).

Images are a large part of the artefacts produced and shared online. Recently, they have been the subject of Big Data analysis, through the mining of metadata (tags, time and place of posting) and through specific software for object recognition. These studies detect significant trends of image use, which increase our understanding of the "who", "where" and "what" of social media (Adami and Jewitt, 2016: 263-270).

According to Hochman (2014) and Manovich (2016: 1-14) there are two types of analysis: *the quantitative*, which describes images in terms of relative frequency and the *qualitative*, which accounts for "interpersonal, stylistic and social meanings" (Adami and Jewitt, 2016: 263-270). The expressive, interpersonal, stylistic and social meanings in the images are produced through colour, lighting, camera angle, frame, placement, or pictorial detail. Anyway, when images are included in academic researches, they tend to be either described only in terms of relative frequency or in terms of content.

The goal of recent research (such as Adami and Jewitt, 2016: 263-270) is to move beyond a content focused analysis, in order to draw on concepts and methods from discourse analysis, social semiotics and multimodality. Social media visual practices and functions allow users to share creativity to participate in community-specific communicative practices through appropriating and reusing.

Hull and Nelson (2005: 224-262) demonstrate that "multimodality resides in the semiotic relationships between and among different modes". In fact, different semiotic modes might not convey similar meanings even if they attempt to encode similar content; they perform different communicative work in a multimodal ensemble (Abas, 2011). As regards digital environments, social semiotic studies mainly focus on “interactivity” and “hypertextuality”. The term interactivity has been widely used trans-disciplinarily, since it is an elusive concept employed to refer to different phenomena (Adami, 2015: 134).

In this field, interactivity is intended as the user’s interaction with multimedia elements in the text, in other words to indicate what users can do to a text, such as the interaction with the media.

Interactivity can also be useful for analysing the relation between the intended text (with all its interactive features) and its intended users. This concept can also say something about its designers’ interests in positioning themselves and their text in respect to prospective users.

“Digital texts afford interactivity” (Adami, 2015: 134) because they enable ‘users’ to act at given sites through links, buttons and search fields which are not only signs that make meaning on the page, but they are also sites of action; in this sense, they help to achieve certain effects on the user, besides representing certain meanings, bringing about a changed textual situation between the writer and the reader.

While interactivity has been defined as ambiguous, hypertextuality:

> “defines the affordance of digital texts of giving access to a network of other texts, enabling readers to go from one text to another through the use of hyperlinks” (Adami, 201: 135).

Hypertextuality takes the form of anchors (e.g. links, buttons and fields) and “clickable areas” on a webpage providing access to further text.

Semiotically speaking, they are ‘interactive sites/signs’, in that they enable users to act upon the text. These anchors are places where the user can act;

but according to Adami, (2015: 137) the semiotic concepts of signifier (something that underlying a concept) and signified (the concept) are not enough to describe interactive sites and signs.

"Signs in a text are usually meant to be interpreted; images are meant to be seen and written language is meant to be read to have any effect. Interactive sites/signs, instead, are meant to be acted upon rather than, or along with, being interpreted."

All instances of language require their signifiers to be pronounced to have an effect, for example the typical formula "I pronounce you husband and wife' must be articulated to have its effects. On the contrary, reading an interactive site/sign does not activate it. Every anchor can be represented through a word, an image or a colour but their signifier has to be manipulated to perform their function. The signified of an interactive site/sign "says" something like "'here you can [type and] click, and you'll have an effect, in some way related to the signifier.' However, to produce the effect, it needs to be activated and handled.

Therefore, in this sense, interactive sites/signs are more similar to objects than to 'textual' signs: their function in digital texts is not only to represent something, but it is rather to do something. (Adami, 2015: 137)

Providing feedback, 'commenting' or 'rating' a given text and sharing a web link are three distinct effects requiring the user's action upon the text to be produced (Adami, 2015: 136). Therefore, hypertextuality can be considered as one of the interactive possibilities afforded by digital texts. According to Adami, because of their two-fold nature, interactive sites and signs present three separate but intertwined features, according to which they can vary:

- a form; they can be represented through writing, images or shapes, or a combination of these. They can also be still or dynamic. In particular, certain forms conventionally have the potential to signal interactivity; for example, as concerns typed texts, there are some salient graphic features such as underlining, bolding, and colour differentiation. Closed shapes (for closed shapes is intended a figure which is enclosed from all the sides end-to-end and form a figure with no openings; for open shape is intended a figure made up of line segments, with at least one line segment that isn't connected to anything at one of its endpoints) are possible signifiers too, especially when combined with shadings. Small size is a potential signifier too, so a small image or a small logo are likely to be used as 'icons' to be clicked; on the contrary, large still images can also be used as thumbnails to a video and give access to dynamic images when clicked on. All these details usually disambiguate the possible interactive value of a sign on a page.

- *action:* against a wide range of forms, a rather small range of actions can activate interactive sites/signs. They require users to either *click*, *type and click*, or *hover* onto them with the cursor.

While the sites/signs requiring the sole clicking can be represented through any visual mode, the 'type+click' action has a preferred signifier, that is a rectangular shape of various dimensions: it usually has a white background, representing a 'blank field' to be filled. Even if there is no direct correspondence between signifier and signified action, this does not mean that a change in the form is meaningless. When no automatic univocal correspondence exists, the association is dependent on choice.

- *effect:* the effect of an interactive site/signs is realised in the actions required to activate it. (Adami, 2015: 139) Semiotically speaking, a site/sign can enable user to perform one or more of the following actions

1. *access new text*: this is provided by hyperlinks-anchors in order to give directions to an existing page; this does not result in a change of the text but only in a change of what appears on the screen.

2. *provide text*: it can be either in the form of user-provided content (e.g. the posting of a comment) or, in the case of click-only sites providing users' feedback or preferences, it can be a +1 count (e.g. the like button on Facebook). it usually produces a change in the text.

3. *transfer text*: consists of the sharing of a given text to other media spaces or to other people (e.g. through email sending/forwarding), to a social space (e.g. through sharing onto social network), or to the user's own device (as in the case of 'saving', 'printing' options). The text before and after sharing is the same, but the recipient's textual environment changes; produces a change in the text through re-contextualization.

These three textual effects can generate several different social effects and have different social purposes. Anyway, no direct relation exists between forms and actions, neither nor does it a relation exist between actions and effects. So In other words, a type-and-click site/sign might enable users to provide their own text, (in the case of comment form), or to access text, (in the case of a keyword search form). To sum up, interactive sites/signs have a double valence. If we look at them as signs, they can be thought of as representing something associating a signifier to a signified. If considered as sites, they require the user's action to produce a textual effect. Forms, actions and effects do not have a straightforward correspondence and so, for this reason the actual combination of the three in an interactive site/sign – and the overall configuration of the interactive sites/signs of a text – is significant of design choices made to meet specific rhetorical aims. (Adami, 2015: 140)

In order to analyse the interactive sites/signs and the interactive meaning of their configuration in a text, Halliyday's three metafunctions (1978) can be adopted. Halliday's model will be presented in the following paragraph.

1.2.2. Multimodality and the systemic functional model of language

According to Halliday's systemic functional approach to language, language can perform three different functions: the Ideational function, that is, language can say something about the world; the Interpersonal function, to represent the participants involved in the communicative event, and finally a Textual function to identify the features of the text.

In particular, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) adapt Halliday's framework to the analysis of multimodal texts, showing that the three metafunctions can be used analytically to describe three different layers of meaning of language in use.

To function as a full system of communication, the visual like all semiotic modes, has to serve several communication requirements. The three Halliday's metafunction are not specific to the linguistic.

- The ideational metafunction represents objects and their relations with the world outside. This world most frequently is the world of other semiotic system. For this reason it offers several choices in which objects can be represented and several ways in which they can be related to each other.
- The interpersonal metafunction serves to project the relations between the producer of the sign and the receiver of that sign. In other words, it serves to project a particular social relation. In the case of visual representations, for example, a depicted person may address viewers directly by looking at the camera or may turn away from the viewer. In the first case, it conveys a sense of interaction while in the second case it conveys an absence of interaction.
- The textual metafunction has the capacity to form texts which cohere internally and with the context for which they are produced. In visual communication, different compositional arrangements allow the realization of different textual meanings. For example, to change the layout it means to completely alter the relation between the image.

Kress and Van Leeuwen's book "Reading images: the grammar of visual design" (1996: 1) is relevant when it comes to the visual semiotic: instead of the iconographical significance of people in images, they concentrate more on the "grammar", that means on the way in which this depict people thing and places and how they are combined in visual statements of lesser or greater complexity into a meaningful whole, just as the grammar of language do with words explaining how they are combined in texts. The grammar of visual does not pay attention to the connotative and denotative meaning, on the contrary it focuses on the formal and aesthetic description of images, for example on the way the composition can be used to attract the viewer's attention to one thing more than to another.

As consequence, the visual structures are not like linguistic structures, even if they present some analogies: they both realize meanings which can overlap (some things can be expressed both visually and verbally, some of them not), but they point to different interpretations of experience and to different form of social interaction.

To sum up, "when something can be 'said' both visually and verbally the way in which it will be said, is different" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 2)

To make an example, what in language is expressed through the choice between different word classes and semantic structures is, in visual communication, expresses between the choice of different colours.

The grammar of the visual, anyway, is not universal. As Kress and Van Leeuwen explain in their book (1996: 3) it is not transparent and universally understood, but cultural specific: in this case it is focused on the "Western" culture, that means that each example are confined to to visual objects taken from the Western culture. For example, the communication related to the Western culture, implies the convention of writing from left to right, while other cultures write from right to left or from top to bottom: this will consequently attach different values and meanings to the key dimensions of visual space.

As a consequence:

"we assume that the elements such as 'centre' or 'margin', 'top' or 'bottom' will be elements used in the visual semiotics of any culture, but with meanings and values which are likely to differ from those of the Western cultures" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 3).

Of course, this stress on the unity of the Western visual, deriving from the global power of the Western mass media and the technologies of the industries, does not exclude the possibility of social variation. To give an example, in many English-language magazines from the Philippines, the advertisements are characterized by conventional Western iconographical elements integrated into a local visual semiotic design. The unity of language is a social construct and people quite freely combine elements from the languages they know, mixing them and creating ‘pidgins’. Visual communication is not subjected to any policy and for this reason it has developed faster than language, but the dominant visual language is now controlled by the technological empires of the mass media.

The work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) focuses on the concept of sign and sign-making in semiotic. For semiotic it is intended that “domain of linguistic applied to other non-linguistic modes of communication” (Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 5).

Sign-making is seen as a process whereby the maker (child or adult) seeks to make a representation of some entities (physical or semiotic); their interest in the object, is usually very complex since it arises out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker and it is focused on the specific context in which the sign is produced. In this view, the interest in a specific aspect plays an important role, since it guides the selection of what is seen as the criterial aspects of the object in the given context. “It is never the ‘whole object’ but only ever its criterial aspects which are represented” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 6).

Sign-makers have the meaning and the signified they want to express; signs are not pre-existing conjunctions of a signifier together with a signified but, on the contrary, these two strata are independent of each other. To give an example taken from Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 6), when a three-year-old boy was asked to draw a car, he drew some wheels and said, “this is a car”. For him, the car, was defined by the characteristics of “having wheels” and, as a consequence, his representation focused on this aspect. In this case, a three-year-old’s interest in car is expressed as an interest in wheels. These wheels, in turn, are represented as circles because of their visual appearance first of all and then because of the circular motion representing their action of "going round and round".

Kress and Van Leeuwen compare this process of sign-making to a double metaphoric process, in which analogy is the constitutive principle: "a car is a wheel, and a wheel is a circle". X is like Y. It demonstrates that, both children and adults are engaged in the construction of metaphors, even if the former are less constrained by culture or by already existing metaphors.

"We see signs as motivated conjunctions of signifier (forms) and signifieds (meanings)" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 7): signs are never arbitrary, and the "motivation" for the correspondence should be formulated in relation to the sign-maker and to the context in which the sign is produced. This is also valid for language in general, because all linguistic forms are used in a mediated manner in the expression of meaning.

Both adults and children as sign-makers are guided by their own interest, by a condensation of cultural and social histories. As a consequence, they produce signs which can be seen as transformations of existing semiotic materials in new ways, but always meaningful.

The same happens with certain language forms that are produced by certain social actors in certain social contexts. A social semiotic approach conceives communication as implying the existence of many actors making their messages understandable in a particular context. Also, in doing so, they choose expressions which should be transparent to other participants. On the other hand, there are some social structures in which communication takes place in a way that is marked by power differences, affecting the understanding of the participants. Usually, the participants who are in position of power can force the other participants into greater efforts of interpretation, since their notion of understanding is different from that of the participant who produces messages that are harder to interpret.

The forms of expression chosen by a given sign-maker are the consequence of what they have in mind, and which is seen as the most plausible in a given context. The same do speakers of foreign languages. Their interest at the moment of producing a linguistic sign is to represent what they want to represent and in so doing they choose the most apt form. This can take the form of conventions and constraints.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 13) follow Halliday's model defining three major functions of visual design: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual functions. The ideational function is the function of language of representing the world around and inside us, while the interpersonal function enables social interactions as social relations. To engage in a conversation or to play a piece of music is to communicate something in a specific social context and to represent the world both in a concrete or in an abstract terms.

In order to provide insights into the social semiotics of the interactivity of a text, Adami (2015: 141) proposes an analysis that considers the various combinations of the three metafunctions, mapped onto the two-dimensional functioning (*syntagmatically*, on the page where they are displayed, in their relation with other co-occurring elements or *paradigmatically*, opening to optional text realizations, hence in their relation with these), and the two-fold nature of interactive sites/signs (interactive sites/signs could be both places enabling actions producing effects and forms endowed with meanings). The ideational (meta-)function of an interactive site/sign corresponds to what the interactive site/sign represents and performs in the world. The interpersonal function corresponds to the relations/identities projected by the site/sign about the author and the user of the text. Finally, the textual metafunction corresponds to how the other two are presented within the text.

These three metafunctions need to be mapped out distinctively for the *syntagmatic* and the *paradigmatic* plane, where syntagmatic is intended as the ways in which the sign addresses the user to capture the kinds of expectations it raises, while the paradigmatic plane corresponds to the action activating it and the effect it produces.

Dimensions	Ideational function	Interpersonal function	Textual function	Interactive value
Syntagmatic (within the page)	What it is: – form/ meaning (representation of the world)	What it says about: – authors – users	How/where in the page: – salience – information structure	Aesthetics of interactivity
Paradigmatic (optional realization)	Which action Which effect Where	Directionality/ power Who towards whom: – author/users/ others	Before–after Given–new	Functionalities of interactivity

Table N. 1: The three metafunctions mapped onto the two dimensions of interactive sites/ signs (from Adami, 2016: 142).

The syntagmatic meanings of an interactive site/sign and of their ensemble in a text account for the aesthetics of interactivity of a page, while the analysis of the paradigmatic meanings account for the functionality of interactivity of a page and the configuration of the actual interactive possibilities provided.

"Online environments have new facilities for multimodal text production and dissemination" (Adami, 2014: 223-243). As consequence, multi-modal text production coupling writing, images and other multimodal elements has become an ordinary sign-making practice of any user taking part in online social media. These practices are being reshaped due to digital technologies affording the multimodal representation and re-use of previously existing texts in new contexts. In fact, as regards text dissemination, the reusing and forwarding of previously produced texts into other contexts has become an increasingly frequent form of everyday text production. Any text can be linked to another, forwarded into another space, embedded in some other text.

As consequence, a networked distribution is no longer an exclusive of corporations (Adami, 2014: 224).

2. TOURISM 2.0

2.1. What is tourism 2.0?

Tourism 2.0, also known as "cybertourism", is the result of the rapid evolution of social media into a new opportunity for the hospitality and tourism industry (Sparks & al., 2013). This phenomenon benefits from several applications offered by web 2.0, among which the following ones deserve a mention: services, blogs, forums, and social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter). These online applications represent a valid possibility for companies to improve their knowledge about consumers and trends, to control their online brand image, and to gain a direct contact with consumers to better understand their needs. The World Wide Web has developed considerable power, and so there is a real need to improve market research for tourism organisations in order to "facilitate timely consumer decision making" (Akehurst, 2009).

As concerns customers, online services imply a shared transmission of knowledge and, as a consequence, the creation of an hyper-connected community, characterised by "openness, interactivity, mass collaboration, global connection, social networking, and so forth" (Edo-Marzá, Nuria, 2016: 9). Consequently, the tourist that was once a semi-passive entity, even in her/his own experience is now transformed into a producer of "electronically available user-generated content" (Edo-Marzá, Nuria, 2016: 9). Tourists manage their experience through the Internet and through new technologies and social media, which are used to add multidimensional perspective to the experience.

According to Edo-Marzá (2016: 9-10), "the tourist 2.0 knows how to take advantage of the communicative channels" and "can get information anytime and anywhere, and share their experiences" (Bassaler[1]). For example, sites such as Trip Advisor enable users to comment on products and destinations they have experienced and, generating online reviews, inform and influence individual travel purchase decisions (Sparks, 2013).

For this reason, social media users are nowadays confronted with large volumes of often conflicting information, and so their perception of tourist destinations and their ultimate decisions depend on content and presentation shared on the internet.

According to a research conducted by Sparks (2013: 2) consumers take decisions based on "messages designed to persuade by affecting both beliefs and attitudes, and subsequently, behaviour itself", so both the content and the source are likely to influence persuasion and as consequence, to have an impact on the final decison. Also, electronic word of mouth is a form of second-hand information, where word of mouth (WOM) includes all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership or the characteristics of a particular service or their sellers. The word of mouth is used by consumers to make inferences or to take decisions about something.

2.2. Internet applications for tourism organization

For tourism organisations, the internet has become one of the most important marketing communication channels (Wang and Fesenmaier 2006).

These channels have five important functions: communication, promotion, product distribution, management, and research (Akehurst, 2009). It is understood that enterprises would endeavour to learn and use web-applications and social media, because the internet contains a large amount of customisable information; Web 2.0 consists of the user generated contents

[1] https://www.orange-business.com/en/blogs/enterprising-business/industry/generation-y-and-new-technologies-tourism-20

and of peer-to-peer applications. It constitutes an area of innovation in the last years. (O'Reilly 2005).

For example, social websites such as YouTube.com and Facebook have gained popularity. Even though they often display unstructured quirky and random content, because the host organisation rarely manages content, they are two of the most interactive applications where details of trips and advice are often frequently updated, shared and displayed in chronological order (Akehurst, 2009).

These activities of blogs and their users (bloggers) have become known as the ''blogosphere'' (Carson, 2008).Among these applications are specific tourism sites, enabling users to share information (e.g. *http://tripadvisor.com),* public travel blog sites *(*e.g. *http://praguetoday.net/)* travel guides provide web space to publish stories (e.g. *http://lonelyplanet.com)* and some other social media and online applications enabling people to share videos, photos and vlogs (*Youtube, Facebook, Instagram*)

2.2.1. Travel blogs

Tourism 2.0 has led to new forms of communication, as observed by Durán (2012), which yielded relevant sociolinguistic implications; the content-producers are the very same tourists who inform and transmit their opinions through traveller forums, blogs, etc. This has led to a redefinition of roles and concepts and to an increase in the information available.

For example, blogs, which are only one of the forms of social media that tourists use as an alternative to traditional travel guides to inform their decisions, consist of regularly updated posts and articles, where readers are often allowed to contribute comments. So, they are platforms both for self-expression and for information sharing (Luzón, María-José, 2016).Web logs ("blogs") have been out there since 1997, but it is only in recent years that their growth has been exponential.

Travel blogs, in particular, "combine personal blogging with topic blogging" (Luzón, María-José, 2016). A research conducted by Compete Inc. has found that UGC "has an influence on around US$10 billion p.a. in online travel bookings and over 20% of consumers rely on UGC when trip planning" (Akehurst, 2009). Travel blogs may have different purposes: to describe what happened in the journey, provide information about practical aspects for the readers, or to evaluate the journey, with recommendations and advice (Goethals, 2013).

Travel blogs are mostly intended for interaction with an audience of similarly minded travellers (Lee & Gretzel, 2014), but they share some features with other modes of 2.0 tourism communication, like rating websites (e.g. *Tripadvisor*) or microblogging in social media (e.g. *Instagram, Facebook*). Anyway, while these latter types of websites are topic-oriented and focused on evaluation, blogs "provide a holistic understanding of the tourist experience" (Munar, 2010).

The participants in Web 2.0 tourism social media do not constitute a traditional speech community, but belong to a different lingua–culture. Following Wenger (1998), they can be called "a community of practice" (CofP), which can be defined as follows: "mutual engagement in shared practices, participation in jointly negotiated enterprise, use of a shared repertoire of member resources", including linguistic resources, like a shared language, in this case English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Luzón, María-José, 2016: 130). Web 2.0 tourists have a command of online resources, which enables them to research possible destinations and accommodation, together with the online purchase of these services.

According to Akehurst (2009), this has to be considered a real consumer revolution, which has transferred much power from suppliers to consumers, and tourism organisations are well placed to take advantage of these new opportunities.

However, is the available information accurate and usable? The answer is “yes” (Akehurst, 2009), even though this area of innovation is in widespread development; the internet is still rather chaotic and crude in capabilities, while consumers are learning new modes to interact. The degree of customer involvement and control is growing together with the power and pervasiveness of technologies; consumers are no longer seen as passive users and “no industry can ignore this long-term shift in negotiating power” (Akehurst, 2009: 53).

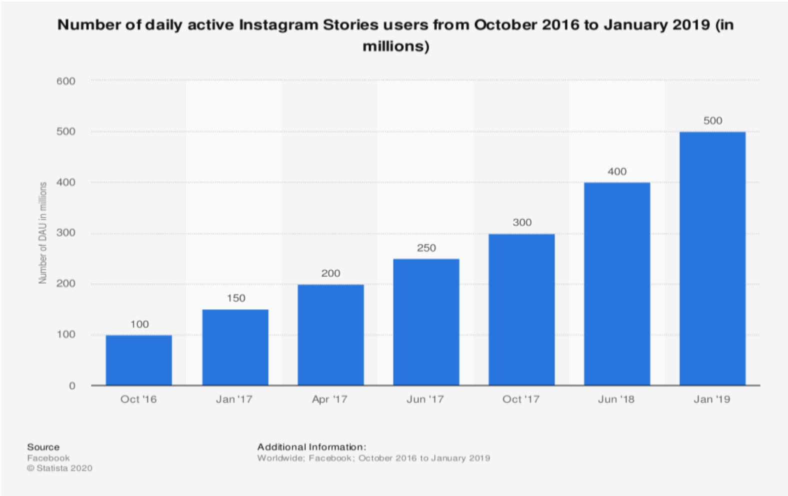
It is likely that future consumers will be more demanding and more information intensive; in other words, they will dictate both timing and mode of communications.

Why is there this higher perceived credibility of opinions expressed in these online applications? According to a recent study conducted by Gretzel et al. (2007), the most popular online activity is to look at other tourists’ comments and travel blogs: in fact, consumer reviews are perceived as particularly influential because they are written from a consumer's perspective and so provide an opportunity for an indirect experience. Blogs exhibit the overwhelming human need to ‘‘belong’’, to socially interact and to share life experiences” (Pan et al. 2007; Gretzel et al. 2007).

Blogs provide a new and novel way of helping to define a destination or a corporate image, but they need to be interesting, entertaining and should provide good networking opportunities; otherwise, they become useless. To be repeatedly visited, the blog needs to be updated and enriched with bright new content (Price and Starkov 2006).

2.2.2. Instagram

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platform; it is a mobile-phone application in which users post photographs with captions. It was launched in October 2010, and by now the company has hosted 800 million users worldwide, after adding 100 million in merely four months (Smith,



2018).

Figure 2.1 shows the growth of the number of Instagram users over time.

Figure 2.1: Growth in the Number of Instagram Users Timeline

Instagram is used to keep in contact with friends, to view fashion, food and other types of picture, such as landscapes or architectural photography; a large part of this social media, anyway, is used as a travel accoutrement. According to a report published by Forbes in 2016, 71% of users aged 18–30 are using the application while on the road; two other studies both found that around half of their survey respondents described Instagram as a source of inspiration for their trip (Smith, 2018).

In particular, Lauren Bath, a marketer and Instagram user, in an interview with Galbraith (2015, http://gofuturemedia.com/podcast-episodes/influence-of-instagram-for-tourism-marketing/) says that “Instagram is critical to the pre-travel ‘dreaming phase’”.

The platform also functions as a form of multimodal travel writing, where authors and users enact the mediatised travel performances they no longer read about in books.

Instagram accounts are created either for a personal (*travel bloggers*) or a professional (*travel companies, travel destination accounts*) purpose. As a consequence, the industry's old narrators are left behind in favour of a rapid expansion of the popularity of this platform and its "deep imbrication with the mythos of travel" (Smith, 2018: 173).

Instagram's most popular travel-focused users are attracted by the consistent visual motifs on Instagram, because tourist destinations are seen as available for possession and consumption. Smith (2018: 173) shows how, while oral narration remains a strong component of tourism practices, "photography has been intensely imbricated in tourism both as narration and as a practice from the industry's very inception". Photographs are an important part of the 'pretour narrative' and inform tourists of 'what they are supposed to do' at a destination. In this sense, Instagram acts "both as an archive for discourse about a destination and as a vector through which experience can be performed" (Smith, 2018: 174).

Instagram exemplifies a form of travel writing, while visually narrating people's travel experiences, described as a fact-based, first-person prose account of an author's trip (Smith, 2018: 175). Users take the images themselves and post them to narrate a real, mostly autobiographical experience; additional information, often first-person narrations, is provided by captions and hashtags, such as *#travelstoke* and *#wanderlust*, whose purpose is to align images with others similar pictures.

They provide other users with information, together with another two types of tags: one of them indicates the people who are in the picture, while the geotag indicates the location (Parsons, 2017). All these data provided by Instagram are making information more accessible, and as a consequence they are allowing tourists to be more updated in their travel habits.

In fact, Instagram users can easily find other tourists, virtually follow them and gain an insight into their experience: for example, where they went, when and who they went with. Also, many tourist destinations are becoming more commercialised because of social media, which had a large impact upon this. Instagram is still a relatively new media platform, and indeed the broader effect of social media on the tourist imaginary is largely unmeasured.

Anyway, travel photography is something tourists have done for years when travelling, dating back to 1840. According to Boley et al. (2012: 28).

"tourists primary motivation for taking pictures is to prove that they physically visited a place and to help 'construct travel memories"

Nowadays, experiences are shared by users through images on Instagram, replacing the concept of the postcard. Pine & Gilmore (1998) say that probably this is a tangible way to stimulate envy in others, also due to the use of filters and editing applications which make pictures idealistic and unrealistic.

According to a study conducted by Kindai, a digital communication agency, tourism-based activities are most attractive on Instagram. It was also discovered that "47% of users have been to a place based on a photo published by one of their friends" (Khlat, 2014).[2]

There is also a large population, also known as "the armchair travellers", who never venture outside their own country, city or village, but they live in an imaginary world fuelled by others travellers' photography.

They enjoy viewing travel-related content, but do not want to travel, and according to Parsons (2017: 26), "the notion of fuelling one's imagination through other people's travel experiences is a concept most relevant to Instagram."

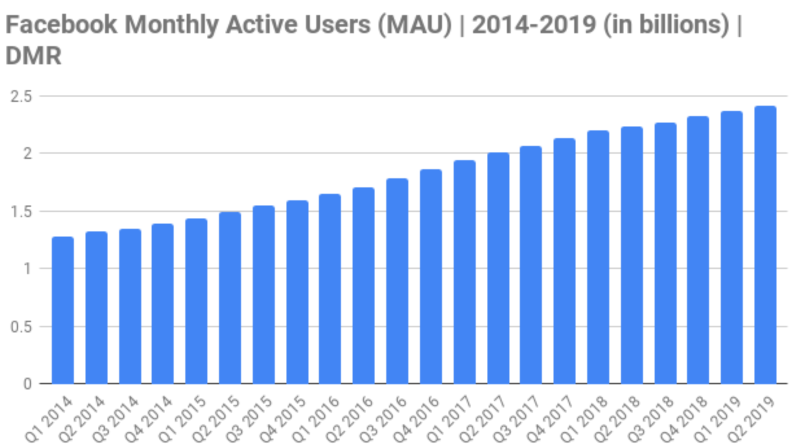
[2] https://www.tourmag.com/Tourism-the-most-popular-sector-on-Instagram_a65405.html (Last visited on 11th January 2021)

2.2.3. Facebook

Facebook is a popular site launched in 2004. It boasts more than 100 million users, uploading 500 million photos per month. The growth of this community is exponential, in fact by April 2008 Facebook overtook News Corporation's MySpace as the world's most popular social networking site; it reaches an estimated 29.9% of the global internet user community and, in terms of usage, social networking is the third most popular computing activity now[3]

Figure 2.2 shows the growth of the number of Facebook users over time.

Figure 2.2: Growth in the Number of Facebook Users Timeline[4]



[3] https://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2018/04/08/why-facebook-triumphed-over-all-other-social-networks/). (Last visited on 11th January 2021)
[4] https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/by-the-numbers-17-amazing-facebook-stats/ (Last visited on 19th January 2021)

Some researchers have shown that two-thirds of travellers who use the internet are also on Facebook (90% in the 18 to 24 age group, but they retain an important presence in almost all age-groups).

Facebook has been studied in many different contexts. Pesonen studied Facebook in 2011, and at the time this scholar came to the conclusion that "there is not much knowledge on how tourism companies should use Facebook and even less on how they actually use it" (Pesonen, 2011: 2).

Zouganeli et al. (2011: 110), on the other hand, found that "Facebook (Fb) is enormous and daunting, and everybody's still figuring out the best ways to market within it".

According to research conducted by Dholakia and Durham (2010), Facebook fan pages are a low-cost way to do marketing in social media fan pages and an effective marketing tool, because companies using fan pages can increase word-of-mouth marketing and customer loyalty. Facebook marketing, in fact, is also a type of word-of-mouth marketing that is ranked as the most important information source when consumer is making a purchase. This is very important especially when it comes to hospitality and tourism, as the products of tourism are difficult to evaluate because of their intangible nature.

Facebook users who work for a specific company have the ability to interact with one other through their company's site. Social media in general are a hybrid element of the marketing mix because they allow companies to talk to their customers as well as customers to talk directly to one other. Consumer discussions are shaped by social media managers, for example by providing customers with networking platforms, such as Facebook. This is a real challenge for tourism companies: manager should "locate the complaint forums and try to handle them professionally" (Pesonen, 2011: 3) and Facebook makes responding to complaints much easier.

These online communities built around a destination or a tourism product/service are based on content flow and interaction. Speaking of online communities, Zouganeli et al. (2011: 111) claim that “they are interrelated and equally complex in their definition”.

Content helps receiver (in this case Facebook users) in taking a decision: “it increases understanding and decreases uncertainty” (Zouganeli et al.: 2011: 111) because it brings a new value. The concept of interaction is also crucial: interaction can be considered the evolution of two-way communication. In this new era it constitutes one of the major innovations. Data from the external environment are collected by each system through the constant sending and receiving of information (Zouganeli et al. 2011).

According to Kaitatzi-Whitlock (2003), we are facing the end of communication monologues thanks to the creation of new forms of communities, based on a horizontal system of information organization. Horizontal communication usually relates to messages communicated among people on a similar level of the hierarchy, so it permits people with the same rank in an organisation to collaborate or cooperate.

In the case of Facebook tourism pages, all the contents posted refer to information about the destination or tourism services. The format of the contents can be textual, audio or video. Touristic agency usually creates Facebook pages in order to they support the users during each phase of the decision making process, before, during and after the trip. Contents are usually uploaded by the organisation and its fans.

The interactions are measured based on the frequency of the posts, the number of ‘likes’ and comments they receive, the existence of tabs promoting interaction, i.e. discussions (Person, 2011).

Social media exert great influence in generating the idea of travelling, on the actual planning process, and during the post-travel phase.

The role of social media is still not well understood in terms of the way they affect tourism organizations and companies, while research on social media in travels is still growing, together with the literature regarding the adoption of the Web 2.0 in tourist companies (Xiang, 2011).

For example, Stankov, Lazic and Dragivecic (2010) conducted a research about the European NTOs (National Tourism Organization) Facebook activity to examine their official presence on the network, namely the number of their fans, their Facebook name and the use of standard features i.e. info, photos, events. Their research showed that nearly half of them had no Facebook account and that most of NTOs have been slow to respond to the marketing opportunities brought by Facebook, as they do not take advantage of all the tools offered by this form of user-generated content.

Another study, conducted by O' Connor (2011), based on the use of Facebook by some hotel chains shows that Facebook as a marketing tool is still not used properly: although many among these hotels are present on Facebook, most are practically invisible because they present a low level of content activity and interaction.

Finally, Slivar (2009) explored Facebook as a means of promotion of tourist agencies in Croatia and Serbia, and showed that both countries' tourist agencies are still poorly aware of the need for promotion on Facebook. In fact, none of the tourist agencies (especially in the youth sector) neither in Croatia nor in Serbia have a Facebook page.

3. EVALUATION IN TOURISM TEXT.

3.1. What is evaluation?

"To evaluate" means to include an element of opinion in a sentence; this element can be both positive or negative. In general, the expression of the writer's or the speaker's opinion is an important feature of language.

Talking about language expressing opinion, also the term *connotation* is used, and focuses on the language items; the terms *affect* and *attitude*, indeed, take the perspective of the language user. The difference in perspective among these three terms is connected to the distinction between *connotative meaning* (real world experience) and *affective meaning* (personal feeling of the speaker). The notion of evaluation is often associated with *modality,* in other words, "the writer's opinion concerning the likelihood of the various events" (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 3) opposed to the idea of *evidentality,* related to "the kinds of evidence a person has for making factual claims" (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 6)

Evaluation constitutes an important part of linguistics, since it has three main functions:

1. *it is used to express the writer's or speaker's opinion, reflecting the value of that person and the community*; it tells the readers how the writer feels about something or what he/she thinks about something, expressing a communal value-system. A value-system is a fundamental part of the ideology behind a text, because it identifies the ideology of the society that has produced it. Anyway, as Hunston and Thompson (2000: 6) stated in their book, the ideology reflected by a text may belong to a sub-group rather that to a whole society. Texts transmit ideologies and their nature is revealed in them. To examine texts, it means also to lay bare the ideologies that have inspired them and because they are sets of values, evaluation is a key concept when it comes to their study

2. *to construct a relation between the writer/speaker and the reader/listener*; this function can be studied in three different areas: *manipulation* of the reader in order to convince him/her about a specific thing; *hedging* when the role of evaluation is connected to the truth-value or certainty of a statement. Hedging[5] is particularly important when it comes to academic writing and reading, but disciplines can vary in their use of modality; in science, for example, it can be used as purely rethorical device.

3. *to organize the discourse*; the relation between the writer/speaker and the reader/listener exists also in terms of the text itself. In this case, the action will take place between discourse- producer and discourse-recipient and part of their relationship is a "mutual awareness of the boundaries in the discourse". (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 10). Labov identifies the "basic narrative clause" without which a story cannot exist, together with evaluation. In fact, this indicates that the events in the story are funny, amazing or terrifying.

In general, evaluation cluster at various parts of the narration, such as the Abstract or at the end. Evaluation can organise paragraphs interactively and, especially when it comes to narrative, fulfil a communicative function. A single sentence can perform only one or two or three of these functions simultaneously.

As Hunston and Thompson (2000: 20) state in their book, evaluation has been noted to be comparative, subjective and value-laden and so to identify it in a text, it means to identify " the signal of comparison, subjectivity and social value". In particular, its comparative nature is emphasized because it indicates a contrast with the norm (e.g. the use of a negative, which compares what is not with what might be). The value-laden nature of evaluation, indeed, can be defined in terms of goal- achievement: if something is good it helps to

[5] Hedging is the use of linguistic devices to express hesitation or uncertainty as well as to demonstrate politeness and indirectness. (https://www.enago.com/academy/hedging-in-academic-writing/; Last visited on the 29th January 2021)

achieve a goal; if something prevents the achievement of a goal, on the contrary it is bad. There are many types of terminology in the area, and the act of evaluation can be done along different parameters (e.g. *good-bad, positive-negative*). As said above, the evaluation of good and bad is dependent on the values underlying the text (*e.g., something that takes a lot of effort is undesirable*). Evaluation can also discuss the reliability of something/someone, so how certain the writers is about each piece of information (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 22). This level can be indicated through auxiliaries and modal expressions. *Expectedness* is another important parameter for evaluation, together with importance and relevance.

All these parameters play different roles in the discourse. For example, in academic research the certainty parameter is very important; on the contrary, in genres whose central function is to assess of the value of something, the good-bad parameter is the most important one: they are more "real-world oriented", while the parameters of importance and expectedness are more "text-oriented". Even though there are four parameters for evaluation, evaluation is only one single phenomenon and the most basic parameter is the good-bad one, since evaluation of certainty is not neutral and can vary according to the cultural value. Anyway, as Hunston and Thompson (2000: 25) claim, all these parameters indicate that a text can be either *significant* (what is told is important and surprising) or *coherent* (the part are related to each other in an obvious way). Both these qualities make a text good, but when it comes to evaluating the aspects of his/her discourse, a writer is more likely to mark it as good and certain rather than irrelevant or uncertain, and this is clearly visible through phrases which mark partial relevance, such as *by the way*.

3.1.1. Hoey's analysis of Chomsky's persuasive rhetoric

The most influential movement in post-war linguistics has been associated with Noam Chomsky. He "ascribed to linguistics a more significant role in the world of knowledge" (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 29), claiming that a grammar not only should analyse a limited set of sentences, but it should also explain the creativity of a language. Chomsky drew attention both to the possibility of finding a system of formal universals underlying the heterogeneity of languages and to the psychological implications of this possibility. According to Hoey (quoted by Hunston and Thompson 2000: 30), the rhetorical device used by Chomsky to describe his theory consists in making it difficult for the reader to support an alternative view to his own view without looking foolish. The persuasive power of his arguments is achieved through some strategies of persuasion. Two of them are:

- To inflate the apparent merits of his arguments by calling them "powerful", "strong", "forceful", "convincing". On the contrary, he uses the corresponding antonyms should be used to deflate the opponents' arguments.
- To label the opponents as "irrational" or "guilty of irrationality".

In particular, Hoey (quoted by Hunston and Thompson 2000: 33) demonstrates that one of the features of Chomsky's writings is the high traffic in evaluations of various sort. The relation between Situation and Evaluation is the most fundamental relation in his discourse organization. Chomsky's use of the evaluation is significant because of:

1. the quantity of evaluative items;
2. the interweaving of them with the situational elements;
3. the presentation of them without proving them.

Usually, scientific argumentation is organised around the pattern *situation – evaluation of the situation* or *evaluation – basis of evaluation*; it means that either an evaluation is offered, a reason for it is given and a proofs follows, or the situation is first presented and then evaluated. However, as Hoey states (2000: 32) these two patterns are less present in Chomsky's works.

In particular, Hoey (quoted by Hunston and Thompson 2000: 33) analysing Chomsky's stance of evaluation cites the following example: "these *rather obvious comments* apply directly to the study of language, child or adult".In particular, the phrase *rather obvious comments* conceals a potential disagreement. In Hoey's view, Chomsky uses this strategy to make it more difficult for a potential opponent to run counter him. The effect he wanted to achieve is to make anyone who does not find the comments obvious suspect their own judgement rather than Chomsky's one. That is, he makes critics "frightened of opening to the charge of missing the obvious" (Hoey quoted by Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 34).

Another example provided by Hoey is taken from Chomsky's book "Linguistic theory" (1966):

> "repetition of a fixed phrase is a rarity; it is only under exceptional and quite uninteresting circumstances that one can consider how situational context determines what is said, even in probabilistic terms".

In particular, Hoey analyses the phrase "quite uninteresting". The embedding of the evaluation protects Chomsky from having to provide a basis for a contentious viewpoint. In this case calling the circumstances "quite uninteresting", where situational context determines what is said, removes the necessity of incorporating any contextual features in generative grammar. This type of evaluation is used in such a way that no evidence is required to support it.

Most of Chomsky's theses are provided without a base, but contain evaluations that attack alternative positions. He sometimes even insults people whose view of linguistic theory is different from his own. An example of this is the following:

Anyone concerned with intellectual processes or any question that goes beyond mere data arranging it is the question of competence that is fundamental.

In this phrase, as Hoey (in Hunston and Thompson 2000 :36) analyses whoever is involved in data processing is dismissed as being involved in "mere data arranging".

Moreover, the word *beyond* stresses the fact that Chomsky's opponents have already gone against by concerning themselves with far more trivial issues.

Finally, anyone who disputes the claim of the sentence is laying him/herself "open to the charge that he or she is not a person who is concerned with intellectual processes or any question that goes beyond mere data arranging" (Hoey, in Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 36). The same device has been used by Chomsky for other sentences; anyone who disputes the claim is in danger of having her/his results not taken seriously.

To sum up, Chomsky's success as a rhetorician is closely related to his use of evaluation: it is used both as a device to attack his opposers and to support his own views.

3.1.2. Evaluation: Modality and affect

"Modality" is a main type of evaluation far more recognizably grammaticalized than others, because it is realize by features of language which are "traditionally thought of as belonging to grammar than affect this" (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 20).

While modality is realized by features of language belonging to grammar, is discussed under the heading of it and centred around the dedicated class of modal verbs, the phenomenon of "affect" tends to be exercised on propositions. Specifically, "affect" takes the form of affective evaluation on entities. It is usually treated under the heading of lexis and centred around the functionally promiscuous classes of adjectives and nouns.

The grammar of modality has been fully explored, while the grammar of affective evaluation has been less investigated. However, within the studies of modality also a varied range of structural possibilities have been included.

In particular, there are three types of linguistic features that signal evaluation. Each of these prioritize a different characteristics of evaluation.

Here they are:

1. Comparators: adjectives, adverbs of degree, adverbs such as just, only, at least and expressions of negativity;
2. Markers of value, that can be a lexical item related to some evaluative environment and indicators of goals and their (non-) achievement (what is good is something that can help to reach your goals; what is bad impedes the achievement of the goal). This group is inherently more to lexis than to grammar;
3. Markers of subjectivity, such as conjunctions, marked clause structures, modals and other markers of (un-) certainty.

According to Hunston and Thompson (2000: 22), it is essential to view grammar from the evaluative perspective in order to complement the content perspective that dominates grammar. It is also necessary to see it in an unfamiliar light, to bring out connections between apparently unrelated phenomena.

One of the crucial issues in communication is the question of the reliability of messages. Some messages are more credible than others: for example, a report is more reliable than a story. The concept of truth remains insecure and subject to doubt. As members of society, we are able to make decisions on the basis of some information and to decide to (not-) trust them: we do so on the basis of textual cues and of modality markers, which can often help us to decide what should be regarded with suspect and what should be regarded as credible. These modality markers are like guides to the truth of the message and are seen as motivated signs.

3.1.3 Evaluation in language and in visual communication

The relation between signifiers and signified is one of transparency: it means that sign makers usually choose what they regard as plausible means for expressing the meanings they decide to express. They have arisen out of the interest of a social group, but they interact across the systems produced by groups in the society.

“ A social semiotic theory of truth cannot claim to establish the absolute truth or untruth of representations” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 159), because it can only show if a proposition is represented as true or not according to the beliefs and the values of a particular social group. The term “modality”, which as we have seen comes from linguistics, can account for a more complex situation, because people not only affirm the values of their group as true, but they also take into account the beliefs of other groups. Modality does not express absolute truth or falsehood. On the contrary, it produces shared truth aligning readers with some statements and distancing from others.

This concept is equally valid both for language and for visual communication. Visuals, in fact, can represent people and things in more or less realistic ways. In any case, modality judgements are social and depend on what is considered real in the social group for which the representation is primarily intended. From the point of view of naturalism, reality is defined on the basis of how much correspondence there is between what we normally see of a certain object with the naked eye and the visual representation of that object. On the other hand, scientific realism defines reality on the basis of what things are like regularly. This means that it considers surface details as ephemeral and it “probes beyond the visual appearance of things” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 163). Reality can be in the eye of the beholder, but the eye is located in a social setting and a history; as consequence, it looks at the reality in a specific form. In fact, "realism" is produced by a particular group as an effect of some practices which defines that group. In visual communication, the definition of reality is bound up with technologies of representations and reproduction. For example, for us the defining technology in photography is the 35mm colour photography, but in the past the "black and white" technique dominated: this shows how quickly these histories develop.

Each realism has its own naturalism. It means that what counts as real find expression in the most natural form of representing that kind of reality. Although different types of realism exist side by side in our society, there is a dominant standard by which visual realism is judged based on the appearance of things and on how much correspondence there is between what we can normally see of an object in a concrete setting and what we can see of it in a visual representation.

In visual communication, modality is expressed in terms of three scales:

1. Colour saturation: from the full colour saturation to black and white
2. Colour differentiation: from a range of colours to monochrome
3. Colour modulation: from modulated colour (with the use of different shades of red) to unmodulated colours

Each point of the scale has a certain modality value in terms of naturalistic standard.

Fig 3.1 Modality scale for colour saturation (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 165)

The three markers above all deal with colours. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 165) also discuss the other key markers of visual modality:

1. Contextualization: from the absence of background to an articulated background. One step away from full contextualization
2. Representation: from maximum abstraction to maximum representation of pictorial detail;
3. Depth: from the absence of depth to maximally deep perspective;
4. Illumination: from the fullest representation of the play of light/shade to its absence;
5. Brightness: from a maximum number of different degrees of brightness to just two degrees.

For example, Figure 3.1 was taken from a website that sells travel packages.

Although the participants may be unfamiliar with the subject matter, the setting is realistic enough. The colour and contrast are consistent with a high level of modality.

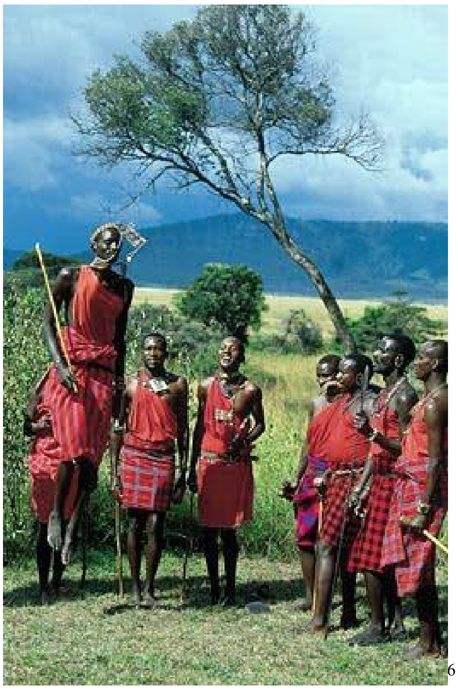

[6]

Figure 3.1: From higher to lower modality

[6] https://sites.google.com/site/guidetoreadingimages/5-modality

The image could have been altered, such as in Figure 3.2, with a higher degree of contrast and brightness to provide an ethereal feel, but a lower modality.

Figure 3.2: Lower modality -- High Brightness & Contrast[7]

The image also could have alternatively been altered such as in Figure 3.3 with a high degree of contrast, colour saturation, differentiation, and modulation to provide a more vibrant feel, but also a lower modality

[7] https://sites.google.com/site/guidetoreadingimages/5-modality

Figure 3.3 Lower Modality -- High Contrast/Unrealistic Colour[8]

As consequence, modality is realized by an interplay of cues. For this reason it is much more complex in images and “graded than the realization of modality in language” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 168). However, in language too the value of modality depends on the context. Qualifications such as “It is quite possible that ...” used in academic writing are used to increase (or decrease) the credibility of a text.

In our culture, seeing is a synonym for understanding; in fact, visual modality do not rely on the objective correspondence between the visual image and a reality defined in some way, but it is constructed on some culturally and historically determined standards of what is real and what is not.

[8] https://sites.google.com/site/guidetoreadingimages/5-modality

In order to describe the way in which texts are coded by specific cultures or in a specific context, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 170) report four abstract principles elaborated by Bernstein in 1981, known as "coding orientation":

1. Technological coding orientations: this principle takes into account the effectiveness of the visual representation. For example, if a colour is useless for the scientific purpose of a specific image, it has low modality;
2. Sensory coding orientation: these are used when the pleasure principle is allowed to be dominant, for example in cooking or in advertising. Here colour conveys high modality since it has an affective meaning;
3. Abstract coding orientation: used in high art or in academic contexts. In such cases modality is higher "the more an image reduces the individual to the general and the concrete to its essential qualities" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 170). Producing a text in this context, it is a mark of social distinction;
4. Naturalistic coding orientation. By now, this is the dominant in our society, because it codes the orientation of all members of a culture, without any distinction regarding how much education once has received.

Apart from these principles, whether a representation is judged credible or not is not necessarily a matter of truth. One social group may not consider credible what another group does not. That is why modality is seen as interactive rather than ideational, and as social rather than independent. Modality produces social affinity, aligning the viewers with certain forms of representation.

According to Hunston and Thompson (2000: 22), it is essential to view grammar from the evaluative perspective in order to complement the content perspective that dominates grammar and to see it in an unfamiliar light, to bring out connections between apparently unrelated phenomena.

3.1.4 Internet-based evaluation

In the past twenty years there has been a growing reliance on the Internet for the promotion and sales of tourism-related products and services.

According to a research by Jupiter Communications[9] (2000), sales over the Internet doubled from 1998 to almost 6 billion € during the 1999 Christmas Holiday period. Many studies suggest that there is great need for evaluations of Web-site effectiveness, beyond hits and page viewings, because of the significant costs for advertising maintenance and setup, but also because:

> "knowing the number of viewers of a Web page tells little about visitor characteristics, motives for visiting the site, satisfaction with the site, and actions he or she will take as a result of viewing the Web site" (Tierney, 2000: 212).

There is also an intense competition for Web viewers, and as consequence increasing costs for advertising to direct potential buyers to a website.

In order to measure the effectiveness of tourism websites, a variety of approaches have been suggested. The most common is to count the number of *hits*[10] to the site. Usually, the number of hits is usually much greater than the number of actual visitors because a website usually contains more than one file (Morrison et al 2005: 213). There is some software which can provide information on site visitors' domain name and type, region or country of request, organization type, but they cannot give critical information about the user, such as the reason for visiting a specific site or the satisfaction of the user. Detailed data about the promotional effectiveness of a website can be collected through survey emailed to respondents; these surveys have an advantage in the ability to acquire large sample sizes at a very low cost and

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[9] Jupiter Communications (2000). "Online Holiday Sales Hit $7 Billion, Consumer Satisfaction Rising." Press Release [Online]. Available: http://www.jup.com (January 14)

[10] The number of files that are downloaded from a Web server

in a short time. Because of the difficulty in getting the attention and cooperation of users, an incentive is often necessary to get the user to do so.

In fact, probably one of the most serious concerns about Internet- based surveys is the non-response bias (Tierney, 2000).

Of course, having a direct online e-commerce system is another good indicator of the effectiveness of one's business, but many tourism websites do not sell services and so they cannot use this as a gauge. Anyway, tourism companies have noted that visitors often only gather information from a website and then call or write an e-mail to request a brochure or to make a reservation. In this case, the website may have a powerful role in the purchase decision, but anyway additional research is needed to fully determine website effectiveness in promoting tourism services (Tierney, 2000).

A study on the effectiveness of the state tourism website was conducted by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism in 1999; its primary goal was to determine if people inquiring for information via the Web actually visited the destination and the results showed that 68% of the respondents had. The sample consisted of persons who had inquired for information via the state Web: they were emailed an invitation to complete the online survey. Using this approach, the study achieved a 32.2% response rate and the authors found that this online method was very cost effective compared to conventional survey methods. A limitation of this approach for measuring effectiveness was for example no identification of the impact of nonresponse bias on findings, which constitutes one of the most serious concerns about Internet-based surveys, as already discussed in the previous paragraph.

The research conducted by Tierney (2000) attempted to develop an efficient online method for evaluating tourism promotional websites using an efficient and relatively easy to use methodology whose goal was to revolutionize some types of survey research and to allow businesses to more frequently contact clients. The research was composed by three different phase: first, data gathering while the respondent was visiting the website; secondly an email survey was sent several months after visiting the website, aiming at collecting both demographic and motivational information, through questions about the planning of the trip or about actions they had already taken or planned to take immediately. Finally, the third phase includes a postsurvey designed to gather information from respondents of the first presurvey to learn if they visited the state or not and what effect their viewing of the state website had on their visit. The results showed that incentives used to lure users to an online survey can influence the type of respondents and, as consequence, the reliability and validity of a website. For example, placing the entry link for the survey in a more visible place on the web page (such as a pop-up) could help viewers find the survey easier. The majority of respondents of this survey had already decided to visit California and wanted the website to assist in trip planning.

These findings demonstrate that the website influenced respondent travel plans to California, for both residents and non-residents. Moreover, it also increased the likelihood of non-residents visiting California. Results also suggest that a state website can influence large numbers of residents to visit new destinations in the state. Tourism websites may be able to keep more residents in state and to distribute their spending to new, often rural areas (Tierney, 2000: 219).

It is clear that there are many potential ways to evaluate tourism and hospitality websites and the survey is just on of them. According to Morrison et al (2005: 246) “Web site evaluation in tourism and hospitality is still in its early stages of development”, because practitioners have been experimenting with different approaches but each of them has strong limitations. Most of the perspectives or evaluation criteria and measures can be standardized across tourism and hospitality and to do so, trade associations should work together with academics to develop greater standardization in website evaluation method.

3.2. The grammar of evaluation

What counts as evaluation in a text? Hunston and Thompson (2000: 13) try to provide both a conceptual a linguistic answer to this question. The conceptual one has been already analysed in the previous paragraphs. The following paragraph, will focus on the linguistic identification of evaluation. In particular, there are three linguistic aspects which deal with evaluation:

3.2.1. Lexis

Among the lexical items considered to be evaluative (in the sense that evaluation is their chief function), adjectives, adverbs, verbs and nouns can be found. Although there is a considerable degree of consensus about the evaluative meaning of words, there is no specific criteria to distinguish between evaluative and non-evaluative items. For this reason, although in former times many aspects of language were accessible only through intuition, in recent years machine-stored corpora have become available. A particular lexical item is the product of hundreds of experiences of that item, "scattered across years of heterogeneous language experience". (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 15). A very large corpus, can mimic (but not replicate) these experiences through thousands of instances of each word occurring in naturally occurring discourse, representing the discourse of a community.

Doing so, the cumulative effect of each word is made accessible to explicit observation. The evaluation associated with particular lexical items can be complex and may not even be accessible to intuition. In this sense, a corpus can give very useful information about the evaluative force of a particular lexical items to be investigated. In this respect, it can be revealing to cite the example reported by Hunston and Thompson (2000: 18) regarding the use of the verb "cause". This verb is usually collocated with words indicating undesirable things (e.g. natural/economic disaster, illnesses). Indeed, recent studies have demonstrated that following the" semantic prosody" of the verb "cause", its real meaning is not "to make something happen" but to "make something bad happen".

> When it comes to certain lexical items, which give information in addition to the evaluation their status as evaluation may be more debatable: this is true in the case of nouns and verbs.

An example from Hunston and Thompson (2000: 17) will follow.

The following verbs all have the same meaning of "being involved in something or taking part in an activity" when followed by the preposition "in": *assist, engage, join, collaborate, help, meddle, collude, interfere, participate.*

However, they have different evaluative values. "Assist" and "help" evaluate the involvement in a positive way from the point of view of people involved in the activity. For example, to assist in a bank robbery is a positive act from the point of view of other robbers, but not from the bank staff.

"Collude" evaluates the both the activity and the involvement negatively.

"Meddle" and "interfere" evaluate the involvement negatively but only from the point of view of other people involved in the activity.

"Collaborate", "participate", "join" and "engage", finally, do not evaluate the participation: the nature of the activity will decide if the involvement is good or bad and as consequence, if the sense of the verb will be positive or negative.

3.2.2. Text and grammar

Evaluation tend to be found throughout a text rather than being confined to a part of it. However, in some cases, evaluation is identified because of its position in the text and the role that it plays because of that position.

Many scholars have associated certain aspects of grammar with evaluation. Among them are the following ones:

Labov (1972) speaks about the "departures from the basic narrative system" (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 18) which have a marked evaluative force.

These departures are: comparators (negatives, futures, modals, questions, imperatives, comparatives), correlatives (double appositives, attributives, double appositives), intensifiers (quantifiers, gestures, repetition, ritual utterances).

Stubbs (1986: 1) in his study speaks about "modal grammar", an investigation into language which

> "is used to express personal beliefs and adopt positions, to express agreement and disagreement with others, to make personal and social allegiances, contracts and commitments, or alternatively to disassociate the speaker from points of view and to remain vague or uncommitted"

This theory explores the interaction between lexis, grammar and pragmatic meaning. According to Stubbs, some topics belonging to this area are references to future time, tag question, the choice of simple aspect of verbs of cognition, the logical connectors (or, if, and) and the ways of being explicit through performatives or being vague.

Finally, also Biber and Finegan (1989) give a list of twelve lexical/ grammar expressions of feeling and judgements, the so called "stance markers". Some of these are lexical items, others are categories: modals indicating possibilities, hedges (value language), adjectives indicating certainty or doubt, adverbs indicating affect, emphatics (e.g. for sure, really)

3.2.3. Adverbial stance markers

In recent times, linguists have become increasingly interested in the ways speakers and writers convey their own feelings. This kind of investigation has been conducted with a variety of methods. In particular, Conrad and Biber

(1999 quoted by Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 56-73) have focused on the use of adverbials to mark the personal writer's or speaker's stance. The term "stance" here, acquire the meaning of "expression of personal feelings" (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 56). Adverbials of stance are more frequent in conversation than in academic prose. This indicate that, in conversation, stance is more frequently indicated by an adverb, followed by a clause.

Conrad and Biber (1999 quoted by Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 56-73) have analysed adverbials expressing meaning associated with the speaker's/writer's attitude towards what he or she is saying using three collection of texts: one of conversations, one of academic writing and one of news reportage. They identified three types of meaning: Epistemic, attitudinal and stance.

1. Epistemic, how much the author is certain about the information (e.g. *probably*). This type of adverb is generally used to comment on the certainty of a proposition (e.g. *perhaps*), including comments on the source of information either specifically or by implication (e.g. *apparently, evidently*).

Under epistemic stance it is possible to distinguish among other sub-classes, such as adverbs indicating that the proposition is imprecise (e.g. sort of), commenting the reality of a proposition (e.g. *really, actually*) or identifying the perspective from which the proposition is true (e.g. *in most cases*);

2. Attitudinal indicates feelings or judgements about what is said (e.g. *surprisingly*) and convey the speaker's feelings, attitudes, expectations or value judgements;

3. Style stance indicates how something is said/written (e.g. honestly, briefly) and comment on the manner of speaking. A descriptive parameter for stance adverbials is grammatical realization as an adverb phrase (e.g. quite frankly), as a prepositional phrase (e.g. for a fact) and as a finite subordinate clause (e.g. I think).

Most stance adverbial can occur in different clause positions, for example final, pre-verbal or post-verbal. Other stance adverbials are exceptional in often being restricted in their clause position; they are sometimes used on the clausal level and they can also be used to have scope over a phrase. These include markers of imprecision, such as “sort of”. Even though this type of adverbials have more a local scope, they “present the speaker’s assessment of imprecision or style” (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 62) so they are included in stance adverbials as well.

The purpose of Huston and Thompson’s research (2000) is to how meaning is expressed through adverbials in each register. They also identify the most frequent words in each register. However, they mostly focused on grammar, instead of lexis, in particular on grammatical devices used to frame a preposition. For example, the adverb “maybe” in a sentence can be used to express the writer’s uncertainty about the following preposition. On the contrary the adjective “sure” marks the speaker’s certainty about the following preposition:

I’m sure I’ve spoken to him (Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 58)

There are also other grammatical devices used for marking stance, such as nominal expressions or modal verbs. In their book, Hunston and Thompson (2000: 56-73) reports what Conrad and Biber found out in their research is that each register has a set of stance adverbials and distribute them in different clause positions.

There are three parameters used to characterize adverbial stance markers:

1. Semantic class
2. Grammatical realization
3. Placement in the clause

However, a corpus can reveal much more about a grammatical feature, investigating the actual pattern of use. (Conrad and Biber, 1999 quoted by Hunston and Thompson, 2000: 56-73)

3.2.4. Hedges and boosters

Lakoff (1972: 195) popularized the concept of *hedge* and defined it as "words whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy". Hedges modify words or phrases within a proposition; anyway, it does not include "only the modification of words or phrases within a proposition but also the modification of one's commitment to the propositional content" (Takimoto, 2015: 95). In fact, by now it is necessary to distinguish between the two types of hedging: Writers express their judgments, toward the propositional content of the text; readers, on the contrary, modify the truth-value of the preposition through the use of hedges and boosters. Hedging reduce the strength or force of an expression, while boosting intensify or emphasize the force by asserting a proposition with confidence. Hedges can offer a possibility for textual manipulation in the sense that the reader is left in the dark regarding the truth value of what is being expressed, but boosters leave the reader little room for their own interpretations.

The pragmatic aspects of hedges and boosters are closely related to modality: while modality is concerned with a speaker's attitude toward a factual status of a proposition; hedges and boosters are related to a subject's personal attitudes toward the propositional content. To give an example: in "It may be true," *may* is a hedge and in "It must be true", *must* is a booster, but also both expressions show modality (Takimoto, 2015: 95). Epistemic modality concerns the way speakers or writers communicate their doubts or certainties and it largely overlaps with hedging and boosting; evidential modality on the contrary is intended as "any linguistic expression of attitudes toward knowledge" (Takimoto, 2015: 96), so it occurs as hedges or booster.

Based on this theory, Takimoto divides adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs into the following categories in the Tables 1 and 2 (Takimoto, 2015: 96):

Table 1: Categories and examples of adjectives and adverbs

	Possibility/ Probability	Indefinite frequency	Indefinite degree	Approximation
Adjectives	*probable*	*frequent*	*modest*	*approximate*
	possible	*general*	*moderate*	*rough*
	likely	*regular*	*reasonable*	
Adverbs	*perhaps*	*frequently*	*mainly*	*approximately*
	possibly	*often*	*primarily*	*roughly*
	probably	*sometimes*	*relatively*	

Table 2: Categories and examples of nouns and verbs

	Non-factive claim	Tentative cognition	Tentative likelihood
Nouns	*Claim*	*assumption*	*likelihood*
	Prediction	*hypothesis*	*tendency*
	Suggestion	*inference*	*uncertain*
Verbs	*Claim*	*anticipate*	*appear*
	Indicate	*assess*	*seem*
	Predict	*assume*	*tend*

As regards social media, while research in social media credibility has gained significant traction in recent years, we still know very little, for example, about what types of words and phrases are used to improve the credibility in online language. Mitra et al. (2017: 127), identifies the linguistic categories that most powerfully signal credibility and reflect on the relative importance on specific phrases within these categories. They found out that the presence of affirmative booster words such as the adjective *undeniable* was associated with higher perceived credibility. Boosters are expressions of assertiveness and words like *establish, clearly, certainly* are used to express the strength of a claim and the certainty of expected outcomes. On the contrary, hedges are used by people who are uncertain about a topic tend to use such tentative language were used to classify statements into low or moderate levels of certainty. This demonstrates the intrinsic connection between hedges and expressions of certainty – a concept also closely related to credibility assessment. Therefore, studying hedges and boosters in online language means to study social media credibility through a linguistic model.

Anyway, since hedges in particular is considered to be a marker of uncertainty, and uncertainty is a fundamental characteristic of science writing, a number of studies of hedges have dealt more with academic or scientific studies. Indeed, hedging "plays a critical role in gaining approval for writers' claims from readers by presenting statements with appropriate accuracy, caution and humility" (Takimoto, 2015: 96).

4. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

The objective of this dissertation is to analyse both the linguistic and visual choices made by tourism organizations in order to promote a given destination and to see if it is appropriate to attract potential tourists and turn them into actual tourists.

For the purpose of this dissertation, in this paragraph a corpus of texts will be examined in order to analyse both the lexical choices and the linguistic strategies adopted by the authors of two online websites.

The corpus under scrutiny is composed of 15,293 words in total and 2847 files. All of these files are articles published in two tourist websites: *http://praguetoday.net/* and *https://www.prague.eu/en*; both of them are focused in the tourist promotion of the city of Prague.

Place	Type	Website	Words	Tokens	Types
Prague	Tourist website	*https://www.prague.eu/en*	13634	203934	13634
Prague	Tourist website	*http://praguetoday.net/*	4937	33900	4937

Table 1: Quantitative data about the sub-corpora

Place	Type	Websites	Words	Tokens	Types
Prague	Tourist websites	*https://www.prague.eu/en;* *http://praguetoday.net/*	15293	237834	15293

Table 2: Quantitative data about the whole corpus

The corpus includes articles published up until 20th September 2020. The research has been conducted using the software AntConc, which is an advanced text analysis application useful for providing details about the text inside of one or multiple text files.

4.1. What is AntConc?

AntConc[11] is a text analysis tool, which started out as a simple concordance program. The program can be downloaded from the Laurence Anthony Laboratory website and can run under any Windows environment including Win 98/Me/2000/NT and XP, but also Macintosh OSX and Linux computers.

AntConc contains several tools among which we find:

concordance, that generates concordance lines from one or more target texts chosen by the user;

concordance plot, which provides a way to see which files include the target search term, but it can also be used to identify where the search term hits cluster together; *file view* produce a view of the original file;

the *clusters* tool, used to generate an ordered list of clusters that appear around a search term;

the *collocates* used to generate a list of collocates that appear near a search term;

word list feature, used to generate a list of ordered words that appear in the target files;

the *keyword lists*, used to generate a list of "keywords", that are unusually frequent or infrequent in the target files.

For this study, I mainly used the *Concordance tool* and the *Word list* tool.

4.2. Analysis

As Maci (2007: 14) states, "the nature of the web language of tourism appears to be extremely persuasive and therefore evaluative because of its promotional function." In fact, the tourism industry is designed to attract as many customers as possible. As consequence, what is important is first to establish a relationship of authenticity between the tourist and the reality he

[11] http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/releases/AntConc321/help.pdf (Last visited on the 5th of February 2021)

or she will see; this authenticity can be conveyed by means of modifiers and adjectives.

Moreover, since there is the need to sell the same product to different customers, the same product has to be presented in convincing linguistic ways, and to do so the language used should be highly persuasive.

Another important value is also given to diversity, in fact things and cultures are highly appreciated because they are different from what is familiar. In order to underline the positive value of diversity some specific types of words are used, such as terms related to preservation (*old, unspoilt*), continuity (*tradition,*), exclusiveness (*exclusive, unique*) and attractiveness (*fascinating, great*). In fact, the language of advertising consists of competitive and complex linguistic choices used to create a sense of exclusiveness among customers. Persuasiveness, exclusiveness and informative values are created and developed from the visual image and language used.

"To advertise is to inform the audience or customer about the product as well as persuading potential tourists in the context of tourism. This is achieved by creating a meaning or value out of it" (Salim et al, 2012: 138).
In order to see whether these concepts were recreated through the language of the corpus analysed, I decided to conduct my research as follows.

First, I created a word list and sorted it by frequency. Then I analysed the most occurring adjectives, verbs and nouns. As concerns adjectives (section 4.1) and verbs (section 4.2), I decided to take into consideration the items occurring at least 70 times in the corpus, while I decided to raise the number of nouns to 150, since the number of nouns in my corpus is large (section 4.3).

4.2.1. Adjectives

First of all, I extracted the most frequent adjectives occurring at least seventy times in the corpus have been extracted and summarized in Table 3 below.

Word	**Frequency**
Czech	1301
Old	497
Free	424
Modern	364
Unique	332
New	309
Historical	296
First	292
Original	267
International	260
Beautiful	244
Small	243
Traditional	226
Good	223
High	221
Wide	217
Italian	216
Baroque	211
Popular	209
Famous	201
Great	192
Largest	184
National	183
Best	180
Available	174
Public	173
Contemporary	166
Fresh	165
Excellent	142
Large	142
Stylish	139
Main	137

Oldest	132
Cosy	131
Different	130
Historic	128
Long	122
French	117
Top	116
Pleasant	114
Quiet	114
Complex	110
Homemade	106
Important	103
Gothic	120
renowned	101
Romantic	100
Private	99
Luxury	98
Early	97
European	96
Inspired	95
Social	90
Young	88
Central	86
Jewish	85
Comfortable	84
Spacious	84
Furnished	83
Ideal	83
Second	79
English	76
Elegant	74
Extensive	74
Decorated	73
Delicious	71

Hot	70

Table 3. Adjectives occurring at least 70 times in the corpus

Apart for the adjective *Czech* indicating the nationality, the most occurrent words are *old* (497), and *free* (424). While *old* is used to convey a sense of continuity between the past and the present, enhancing the timeless beauty of Prague, *free* is linked to offers proposed to tourists and it is mostly used to increase the readers' feeling of engagement and to attract their attention. In fact, the word mostly occurs with the expressions "admission", "access" and "of charge".

According to a research conducted by the professor Dan Ariely in his book "Predictably Irrational: The Idden Forces that shapes our decisions", the word *free*:

"gives us such an emotional charge that we perceive what is being offered as immensely more valuable than it really is[12]".

Moreover, nearly everyone loves free stuff, so including this word into a blog post can boost the engagement, appealing more people at the same time.

The adjective *old* is very significant when speaking about Prague and its tradition, as the Old Town, in the city centre, is one of the most popular attractions for tourists. Indeed, looking at the concordances, we see that the adjective *old* occurs with the words *Town* 317 times, out of 424.

the seat of the **Old Town** administration
into the middle of the **Old Town**
beautiful view of the **Old Town**
located near the **Old Town square**

[12] https://neilpatel.com/blog/14-trigger-words-to-ignite-engagement-with-your-blog-posts/ (last visited on 28th December 2020)

Opposed to the concept of old age is the concept of modernity. The adjective *modern* occurs 364 times in the corpus, often used together with the adjective *contemporary* and with nouns such as *accommodation, design, restaurants*.

The concept of modernity is related with a form of social change: modernity is distant from the perception of tradition as basic culture and more similar to westernization and commoditization. The analysis of *modernity* has also focused on authenticity, as authenticity enhances the recovery of lost elements. On the contrary, modernity as a form of transformation can bring about changes both in true local traditional cultures and in various places, as seen in several destinations. “Modernity has made possible the accelerating rates of exchange, movement, and communication across spaces” (Salim et al. 2012, 137). For this reason, being an agent of social change, tourism impacts on key aspects such as economy, tradition, culture and even the political landscape of a country.

All the other adjectives occurring in the corpus convey both a sense of euphoria for the services the website is promoting and a sense of authenticity.

This is confirmed by the presence of adjectives such as *unique* (332 occurrences) and *original* (267 occurrences), but also by the high frequency of the intensifying and modifying adjectives *high* (221), *great* (192 occurrences), *main* (137) and *top* (116 occurrences). The superlative forms *most* (502) and *best* (180) stress the evaluative and clearly promotional character of the texts in the corpus, while conveying the exclusive quality of the described destinations.

the restaurant has the **best** beers in Prague
the most valuable and **best**-preserved historical libraries
the **best** weekend events in Prague

Karlštejn, one of the **most** stunning Czech castles
located in one of the **most** unique places in the historical centre of Prague

it’s probably the **most** beautiful Ministry of Culture in the world

In particular, the superlative *most* frequently occurs in combination with other adjectives such as *beautiful, important, attractive*, and *famous*. As Maci (2007: 16) states, “the described tourist location is always the most famous, most beautiful and most popular one”; this is also stressed by the absence of the second term of comparison within the sentence, underling the uniqueness of the place.

Žižkov is one of the **most** iconic Prague neighbourhoods
Gallery houses one of the **most** important Central European collections
Prague Castle is one of the **most** spectacular in the world

The adjective *top* (used as pre-modifier) often occurs with the noun *quality*, in order to intensify its exclusiveness. The same applies to the adjective *great*, which often occurs with words related to food and drinks, for example

great coffee
great food
great cuisine
great restaurant
great burgers
great cocktails.

According to Sengel et al. (2015: 430), local and regional food can add value to a given destination, because visitors tend to prefer authentic products. Food reflects destinations, cultural and social identity, and plays an important role in the selection of a destination.

In this sense, also the adjective *traditional* (226) is used with nouns related to the concept of food: it occurs a large number of times with the following words and phrases: *cuisine*, *Czech cuisine*, *pub* and *menu*.

should not refuse an invitation for **traditional** Czech specialities
comfortable seating, quality modern Czech **cuisine**, and excellent beer
high-quality Czech **cuisine** and specialities such as […]
authentic local **cafe** with tasty food and good coffee

The adjectives referring to nationalities, such as *Italian*, *French* and *English* occur in different type of combinations. Both *Italian* and *French* are used while speaking about food and restaurants, in collocations such as:

Italian and **French** cuisine
offering Italian delicacies not easily found elsewhere.
wines by Italian winemakers not easily found elsewhere.
French chocolate
French-style cafè in the city centre
shop with a large selection of **Italian** fresh products and delicacies

The country's cuisine image also has impact on both country image and intention to visit. In particular, countries such as France, Thailand, and Italy that are distinguished by their cuisine, are aware of the fact that their culinary culture have a positive and significant effect on their country's image. Both in the United States and in Europe in general, French and Italian cuisine are two of the most prominent. In their research, Aydin et. al (2020) demonstrates that both Italian and French culinary culture and the presence of these two countries' traditional restaurants influences both directly and indirectly the travellers' intentions to visit any countries all over the world. (Aydin et al, 2020: 4-5)

The adjective *English*, on the contrary, is used mainly in collocations dealing with theatres, events and cinemas to indicate that a specific program or film or a theatre performance is also available in the English version.

the movie is available in the **English version**
university offers degree programs in Czech and in **English**
most people in Prague speak **English**
you can visit this cafe as well: staff speaks **English**
some performances available in **English**

This is strictly related to the concept of English used as a lingua franca: English can be termed a global language both because of its growth and emergence. Today 1.27 billion people speak English[13], and, of course most of those people are not native English speakers. The language has forked into many forms and evolved into what are essentially different forms of English spoken all over the world. It is important for tourism organization to offer their services in English due to the big number of speakers.

4.2.2. Verb forms

In order to see if the same feelings of authenticity, popularity and distinctiveness are also expressed by verbs, a list of verb forms occurring at least 70 times in the corpus has been extracted from the analysed corpus and reported in Table 4 below:

Word	**Frequency**
Is	3819
Are	1073
Offers	699

[13] https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/ (last visited on 19th January 2021).

Features	445
Will	425
Find	332
Have	313
Enjoy	248
Situated	230
Walk	168
Own	156
Like	152
Including	144
See	135
Provides	131
Know	129
Includes	125
Works	122
Get	121
Come	115
Go	105
Stop	104
Ride	97
Dance	93
taste	93
Held	88
Make	88
Set	87
Choose	82
Found	80
Try	73
Use	72

Table 4. Verb forms occurring at least 70 times in the corpus

Apart from the verb forms of the verb "to be", *is* and *are*, the most recurrent form is *offers,* which is a clear invitation for the web-tourist to look for the benefits that a holiday or a specific place can offer. In particular, the most frequent collocate of the verb *offer* is the noun *views*.

some of the rooms **offer** a unique view of Prague Castle
the apartments **offer** view of many important sights
suites, which **offer** views at the city centre

bar, where they **offer** the excellent Kozel
the eight taps **offer** the finest Czech beers
trips and cruises **offer** an unforgettable view of historical Prague.

The verb *find,* often occurring with the modal verb *will* is used as a synonym for *discover*, "opening a scenario of exploration to which the tourist is lured" (Maci, 2007: 56).

The use of the verb *find* is supported by the extremely high frequency of such verbs as *visit*, *see*, *get*, *go*, *try* in order to increase the fascination such a web exploration can offer. These types of verbs, also called "action verbs" are very often expressed in the imperative mood in tourism industry texts, because through the imperative mood the author explicitly and directly urges the reader to join and experience the destination. The reader is 'pulled' into the scene. Moreover, they convey the idea of an already existing relationship of friendship, while evoking a sense of adventure.

Visit a place inspired by memories and tastes
Come and **see** the amazing miniature
So, let's **get** to know it like a local!
Get to know Prague from a different perspective
Come and **try** cakes that had been enjoyed by Czech president

However, in the corpus I analysed the verbs manly mainly occur with the modal verb *can* (1015 occurrences), which conveys the idea of possibility and by the auxiliary *will* (425 occurrences), which on the contrary conveys certainty.

In the collocations of the verb *can*, the subject is always *you* when the writer wants to convey the idea of possibility. This can be observed in the selection of clusters below.

You	**can**	admire beautiful views
You	**can**	accommodate here
You	**can**	enjoy wine
You	**can**	find peace from the bustle of the city
You	**can**	admire a wide range of beautiful jewellery
You	**can**	also explore the medieval corridors

The impression of certainty, though, is conveyed by means of the epistemic use of the modal verb *will*. There is a balance between the active and passive role the potential tourist can have: if the collocate is an experiential verb (such as *enjoy, taste*), or more generally, a stative verb expressing one of the senses the pronoun *you* takes on the subject function. If this is not the case (such as with the verb *take*), its function is that of object, such as in the following clusters:

You	**will**	also find
You	**will**	enjoy the tasty food
The world	**will**	take you to major sites
This journey	**will**	take you to places
We	**will**	take you to see buildings

Therefore, a potential consumer is often referred to with the pronoun *you*, while the people who have control over communication are indicated with the pronoun *we*. Anyway, in my corpus there are only 2 occurrences of the pronoun *we* co-occurring with the verb *will* and 2 with the verb *can*. This suggests that the presence of the writer is not essential for the main purpose of the website, and that there is an asymmetrical interaction between the participants of the communicative event.

As for other modal verbs, *must* only occurs 27 times, in particular in sentences dealing with safety measures adopted in order to avoid the spread of the Covid-19 virus, as in the following clusters:

Masks **must** be worn
Gastronomic facilities **must** be closed
Shops **must** be closed

Must is often used with the auxiliary *is* as a noun. In this sense, it is used with meaning of "something that one must do" , as showed in the clusters below:
Their ice cream is a **must**
Prague is a **must**
This is a **must-**visit stop

That is, in all the cases listed above, the modal form is a noun which indicates the necessity for the tourist not to miss something in order to have an authentic experience. It creates a sort of agreement, obtained through empathy between the writer and the tourist/viewer. Finally, it can be claimed that the nominalized form *must* is extremely concise. Generally speaking, conciseness is a verbal strategy by means of which concepts are expressed in the shortest form possible to bring about persuasiveness. In this case, *must* introduces a condition without which the tourist cannot fully appreciate the authentic experience the destination has to offer" (Maci, 2007: 60). Here, the feeling of exclusiveness the author wants to convey is concisely expressed by the nominalized form *must*.

4.2.3. Nouns

As can be seen from Table 5, the nouns in the corpus under investigation, refer to the world of tourism. Due to the big large amount of nouns present in the corpus, only the ones occurring at least 150 times are reported in Table 5 and analysed.

Table 5. List of nouns occurring at least 150 times in the corpus

Word	**Frequency**
Prague	2710
Hotel	1055
Centre	853
City	812
Restaurant	780
Praha	731
Rooms	614
Town	582
Art	471
Building	466
Coffee	415
Cafè	402
Place	395
Beer	355
Century	354
Church	335
Wine	335
Bar	334
World	334
castle	327
Exhibition	318

Hall	308
Cuisine	301
Festival	301
Garden	299
Food	290
Music	284
Gallery	278
Atmosphere	269
Museum	264
Park	262
Republic	252
Bridge	237
Tower	236
admission	233
Menu	223
children	219
Theatre	217
Palace	216
Street	215
Shop	207
Exhibitions	204
View	202
History	190
Offer	189
Breakfast	184
Family	181
Events	179
Local	179
Accommodation	167
Guests	161
Room	159
Club	158
Artists	157
Rivers	155

Visitors	151

As already stated, almost all the nouns in the corpus refer to the field of tourism. They give practical information about the destination. The terms *beer*, *castle*, *bridge* and *river* very clearly refer to the city of Prague: *Charles bridge*, for example, is one of the main city attractions, together with the castle on the main square. In fact, the nouns in the articles should describe the physical and cultural characteristics of the location.

Enjoy carefully treated **beer**
Beer lovers will sample everything from the country
You get an unusual view of the **river** and city
view and observe Prague and the Vltava **river**, Prague Castle and the centre
Guests can take a stroll to the **Charles Bridge** or the National Theatre
stay in a luxurious hotel nearby the iconic **Charles Bridge.**

Furthermore, beer represents an important tradition for Czech people, as Prague is well-known not only for its beautiful architecture but also for its beer sold at a cheap price. *Beer* constitutes a real attraction for tourists, who are also fascinated by the very prices of food and drinks in general.

According to a survey conducted by Deutsche Bank, "Prague is the second-cheapest place to drink beer in the world". Beer certainly played an important role in the country's growth; in fact, in the 16th century, the Czech brewing industry contributed as much as 87% of total municipal income to city coffers.

So, Czech Republic has a very old beer drinking culture[14].

The articles need to be informative in order to offer an actual description of the place, in this case Prague. To present the location as a concrete

[14] https://www.insidehook.com/article/food-and-drink/why-the-best-beer-drinking-country-in-the-world-is-also-one-of-the-cheapest (last visited on 28th December 2020).

destination, the terms used should convey practical and objective information about it.

In the corpus under scrutiny, the word *hotel* is repeated 1055 times, together with *rooms* (614). During my analysis, in fact, I noticed that the articles about accommodation, are the most frequent because they convey practical information about a place.

According to a research conducted by Liu et al. (2014: 73):

> "Information quality of a website is a significant factor determining customers' intention to purchase hospitality products as the more information about the product is available, the simpler it is to make a reservation"

This study, demonstrates that, the quality of information may be one of the most important factors for users. The success of these information should be measured by three factors, which are "responsiveness, reliability, and empathy" of the service provider.

As I have already stated in the paragraph dedicated to the analysis of the adjectives, both food and beverages play an important role in the selection of a destination. In fact, the word *restaurant* occurs 780 times, together with *coffee* (415), *café* (402), *beer* (355), *wine* (335), *bar* (334), *food* (290), *menu* (223) and *breakfast* (184).

4.3. Discussion

As shown in this Chapter, the language of the texts in my corpus is generally very emphatic, strongly evaluative and persuasive, because it tries to extoll the positive characteristics of the places described. Persuasion is needed in order to influence potential tourists. Persuasive communication can create lasting changes. Like in the case of my corpus, it can involve the use of verbal messages to influence attitudes and people's behaviour: verbal messages are deliberately used to affect the hearts and minds of the audience (Salim et al, 2012: 139). Consequently, the information provided constitutes an important aspect in the selection process of tourist destinations.

Furthermore, all the words used to describe the location aim to present it as a sort of "concrete" destination. Accordingly, the texts tend to be informative so as to offer vivid descriptions of the places. This is realised, for instance, by the use of the words *bridge, beer, old, cheap*, all of which refer to real attractions in Prague. The description of the destination (both physical and cultural) is "embedded in the text which is extremely evaluative and persuasive" (Maci, 2007: 62).

Both the verbal texts as well as the visual input contribute to promoting a given destination and to creating a specific cognitive image of it. This can clearly vary and is determined by the characteristics of the destination. The cognitive images of a place are created both by the verbal and visual language used in the process of promotion of any destination and are important for the success of the promotion. In fact, they affect the tourists' satisfaction.

Consequently, it is important to first create and then to sustain the representation of a given place, because this very it can turn attractive potential tourists into actual tourist.

The role of visual language in the promotion of a destination and in the creation of a given cognitive representation will be analysed in the following chapter.

5. MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the visual choices made by tourism organizations in order to promote the city of Prague. In order to do so, the two websites described in the previous Chapter will be analysed:

Table 5.1: data about the websites analysed

Place	**Type**	**Website**
Prague	Amateur website	*https://www.prague.eu/en*
Prague	Official website	*http://praguetoday.net/*

The first one has the domain *.net*, which indicates a generic domain name, available for anyone to use. The second one has the *.eu* top level domain used by citizens and companies in the Member States. This domain is usually used by trademarks and official institutions. In general, it indicates something more "official" than the other generic domains such as *.it, .com, .net.*

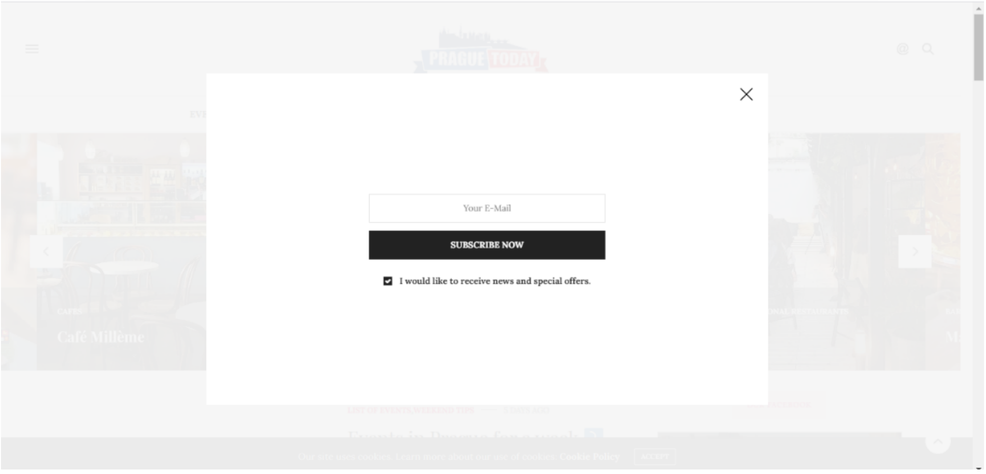
The first website is managed by a woman who lives in Prague and promotes her city using different social media, including a website. The second website analysed is an official site of the City of Prague, probably run by an organization and not by a single person.

5.1. Webpages

5.1.1. Analysis of http://praguetoday.net/

Opening the webpage, the first thing which appears is a newsletter signup form inviting the visitor to subscribe to the page through email, in order to receive special offers (Figure 1)

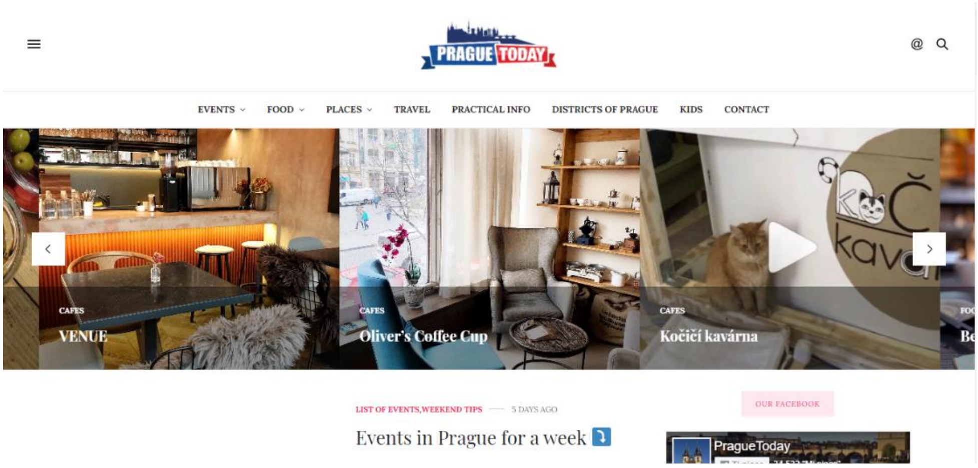
Figure 5.1.: Newsletter signup form



Email marketing can be an effective way to cultivate relationships with followers or viewers. In order to convince them to sign up to your newsletter it is useful to insert a *sign up form* in the website. In this case it is an email popup and since usually you have a limited amount of space in an email popup, the best email sign up offers potential subscribers some type of incentives for joining your email list, in this case “special offers”. This is considered to be one of the highly-converting techniques in a website.

The homepage consists of a slideshow of images and into each of them web-links have been inserted. Following these web links, the reader is redirected to a specific article present in the site. (Figure 2)

Figure 5.2.: Homepage



When developing products or systems, designers have to come up with design solutions that are both novel and adapted to their future users. It means that new systems of communication must also have an aesthetic value, apart from the usability and should also inject some fun and pleasure into people's lives. So, interactive systems must be regarded as conveying feelings through visual sensory modalities.

At the very top of the page we find a logo which is composed by a sort of sketched skyline of Prague representing the most famous and worldwide-known attraction of the city: Charles bridge at the right, the Castle in the main square and the Dancing House. The colours chosen for the logo are blue, white and red which are the three Czech Republic's flag colours. This stresses the idea of nationality and identity of the nation and make the logo well targeted and easily recognizable.

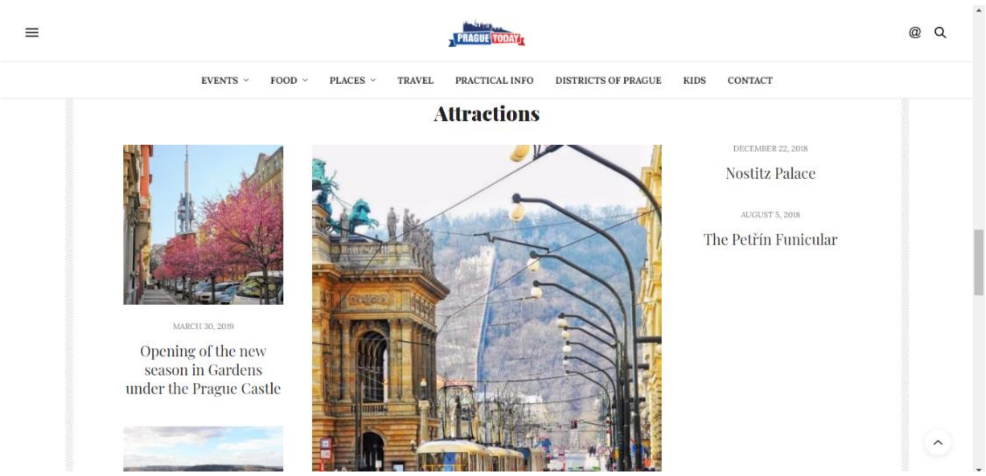
As regards the choice of colours in the website http://praguetoday.net/ , the predominant colour is white, which makes the webpage very minimal in the design and for this reason easier to use. The absence of other colour apart white, make the viewers focused on the webpage: the design is fresh, the white colour gives brightness to the webpage. The use of colour appears to be well-balanced too, as to avoid any striking or disturbing contrast.

Scrolling down we find another section where some images and articles are shown. The pictures chosen displays a sunny and colourful Prague; it means that all the photos were taken in Spring or in Summer. Here the writer intentionally decided to post pictures to attract tourist: it is known, in fact, that Prague is a mostly rainy and cold city, but evidently the author decided to hide this detail in order to display the most beautiful part of Prague. (Image 3)

In fact, Bonnardel et al. (2011: 70) demonstrated that “examined visitors’ first impressions and found that the best predictor of overall judgments by typical website users was the impression of beauty”.

It is important to specify that all the photos in this website are taken from the correlated Instagram account, managed by the same person. The photos are not professional, but on the contrary they are amateur. They may be taken with the camera phone, shot in an unplanned way. This characteristic gives the idea of something authentic and simple.

Figure 5.3: Bottom of the Webpage



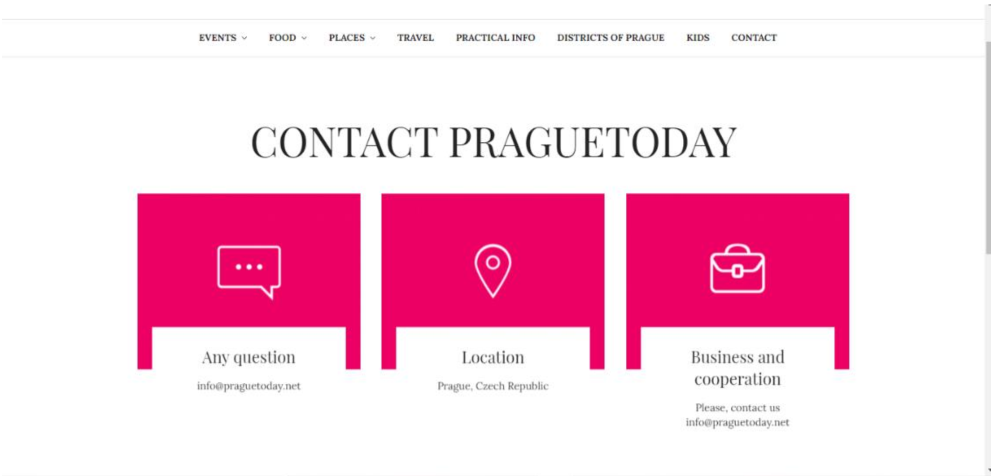
Moving clockwise in the page, we found some specific sections into which the webpage is divided. Events, food, places, travel, practical info, district of Prague, Kids and finally contact. All of these section helps to categorize and to make easier the navigation for the visitors.

By clicking on articles, the text will be shown and there is also the possibility to read it in the original language, that is Czech. Anyway, the main language of the webpage is English, used to make it accessible to more people.

At the bottom of the page there are some specific sections for contacts. These sections are fundamental, in fact websites should be designed so that visitors easily understand who sponsors the site. (Figure 4)

The boxes are pink: socially, pink has a "feminine" association, with pastel pink additionally connoted as "romantic" in Western cultures, while the more saturated nuance having a more "determined" character, as in this case.

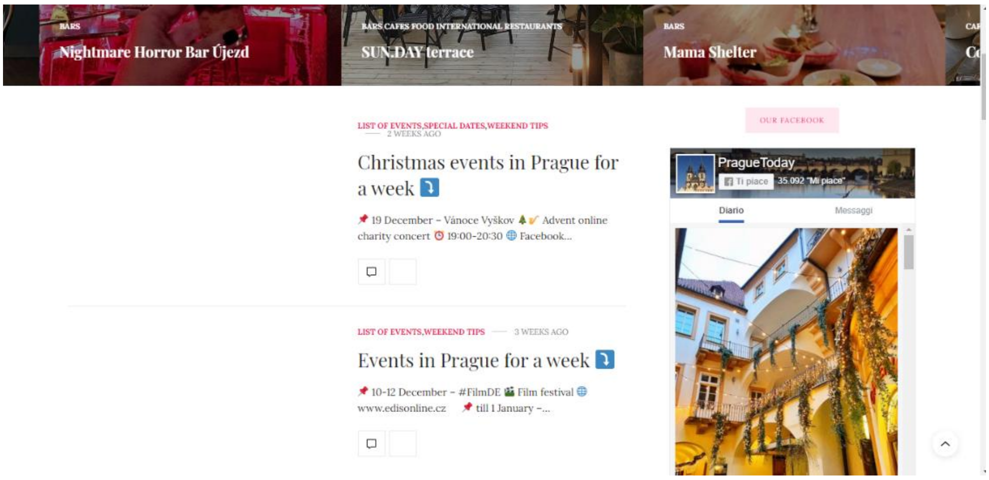
Figure 5.4: Contacts



The top part of the page can be seen as a unit and divided between *Ideal* and *Real*; *Ideal* is the logo of the page, the drawings about Prague: how it seems. *Real* are the sections and weblinks about accommodation, restaurants and so on.

Scrolling down the page, we see that the page is organized into two columns, divided according to the Given/New pattern. The Given, on the left is represented by the articles, the New, on the right, is a Facebook widget where the last posts shared by the authors are shown. The widget gives also the opportunity to write directly to the owner of the page through the section "messages". (Figure 5)

Figure 5.5: Layout of the Webpage



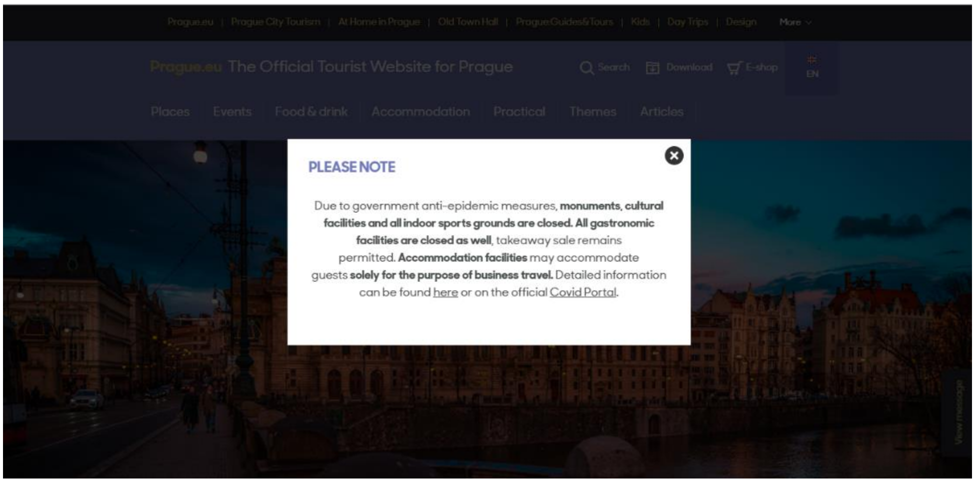
In the centre of the Web page, all the elements are arranged in two vertically-oriented columns, suggesting a linear (top to bottom) reading path. On the contrary, the top and the bottom part of the page are orientated horizontally.

5.1.2. Analysis of https://www.prague.eu/en

The second webpage under scrutiny is https://www.prague.eu/en, which at a first glance appears to be very different from the previous analysed.

Opening the page, a notice about anti-epidemic measures taken by the Government comes out. (Figure 6)

Figure 5.6: Notice about anti-epidemic measures



The notification contains a direct link to the official Coronavirus portal[15].

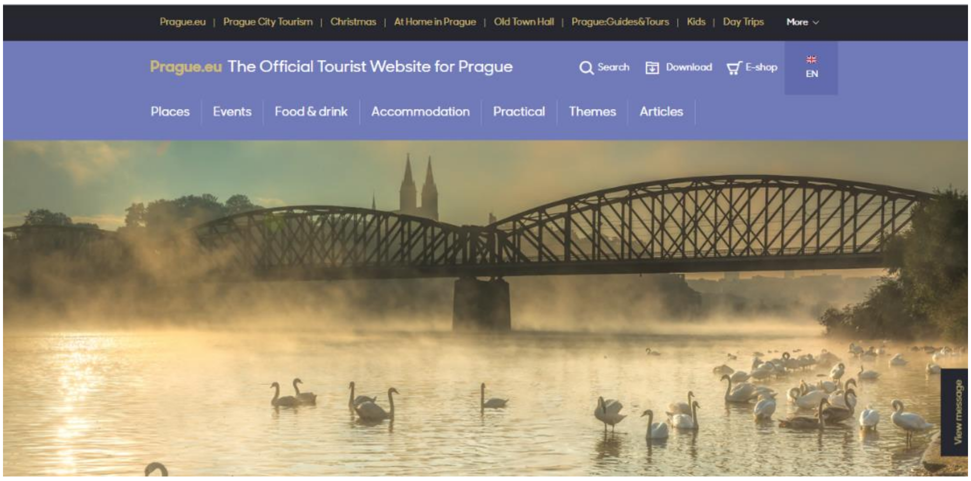
Closing the pop-up window, the first thing one notices is the slideshow of images on the top part of the page. All the pictures are very representative because the first one is a photo representing snowy rooftops; the second is a picture of Charles Bridge with swans and ducks, a very famous attraction for tourists in Prague. The third is a sunset with a view on the city[16] (Figure 7).

All the photos in the website deploy the modality of professional photography, on the contrary of the first website analysed, whose photos are taken amateurishly.

Figure 5.7: slideshow of images on the top part of the page

[15] https://koronavirus.mzcr.cz/en (Last visited on 4th January 2021)

[16] Take note that this analysis has been conducted on the 31st December 2020, so the pictures displayed on the website may change in the meantime.



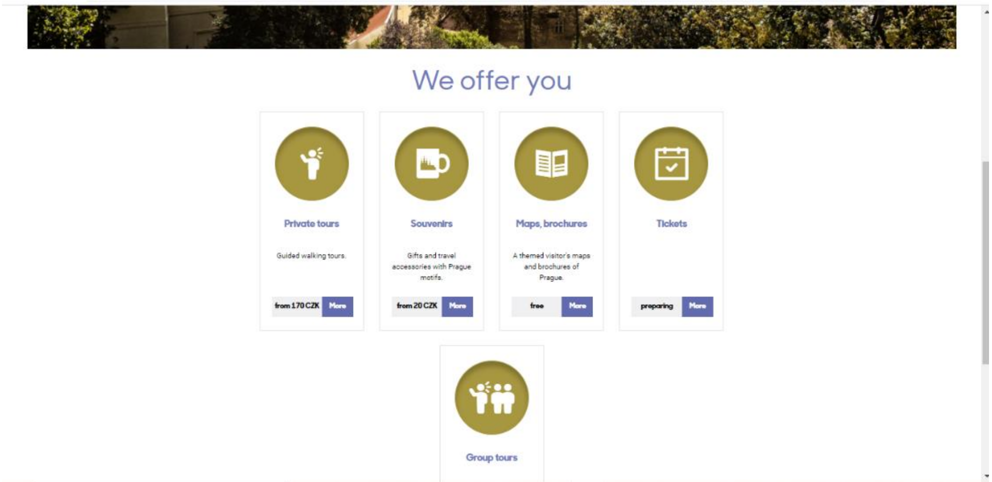
On the upper part of the page there are different sections: *Prague.eu, Prague city tourism, Christmas, At home in Prague, Old Town Hall, Prague: Guides&Tours, Kids, Day Trips & more*.

Over the slideshow of picture there is the name of the page, which is not a real logo as in the case of http://praguetoday.net/. In fact, "logos are used by companies because they represent a concise image of the company. A picture, as they say, can tell a thousand words[17]".

Next to the name of the website there are three sections: *search*, which is useful to facilitate the research on the website using keywords, *download* where you can download images, videos, maps, brochures, or apps and finally the section *e-shop.* By clicking on them you will be redirected to another page where several services are offered. (Image 8)

Figure 5.8: e-shop section

[17] https://www.sitepoint.com/logo-design-101-what-is-a-logo/ (Last visited on 4th January 2021)



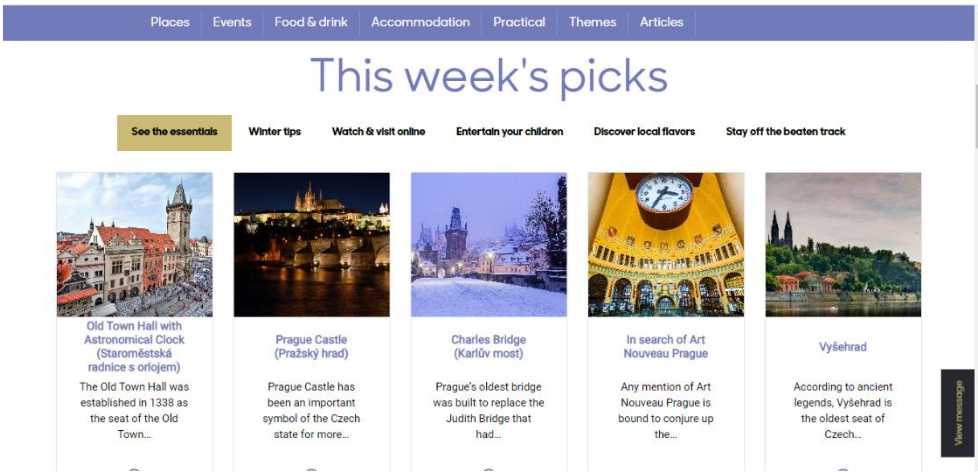
The word "offer" on the top of the page is likely to have been chosen to attract people and to increase the engagement. In fact, apart from some brochures, all the other services listed in the page are to be paid.

Going back to the homepage (https://www.prague.eu/en) I noticed that the webpage is available in many different languages and not only in English or Czech. Some of the languages available are German, Russian, Korean, Chinese and Finnish, making the website accessible to more people, also to who do not speak English.

Moving clockwise on the page, we find specific sections into which the Web page is divided, and the articles are categorized: *places, events, food & drinks, places, accommodation, practical info*. What I noticed is that these categories are almost exactly like the sections in the previous website analysed.

In the centre of the page is the section *"This week's picks"* (Figure 9)

Figure 5.9: centre of the page



This constitutes the main body of the webpage, because as Kress and Van Leeuwen say (1996: 181-229), the elements placed in the Centre are the nucleus of information. In fact, some of the most important articles of the website are posted here, again divided in more sections.

Scrolling down there is the section *Themes*, which again is also listed on the top of the Web page. Finally, at the bottom of the page there is a section dedicated to information about Prague, such as: *weather conditions, currency exchange rates between Czech koruna and euro/dollars*, a space for subscribing to the newsletter and all the other contacts of Prague.eu such as *Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest*.

All the elements in the page are horizontally oriented so there is not a real division between left and right side, as in the first Web page analysed, but this layout confers the page a high level of regularity, orderliness and cohesion.

Anyway, here it is still possible to recognize elements in the upper part of the page, in the centre and in the bottom part. The *ideal* elements of the webpage are constituted by the slideshow of images. The *real* is constituted by the practical information at the end of the page.

The colour palette for this website is composed only of two colours: white and blue. These two colours together reflect partly the Czech flag, but again as stated in the previous analysis, blue is a cooler colour that produces stronger buying intentions, while white gives brightness to the page.

5.2. Discussion

According to the study conducted by Kim et. al (2008), informativeness has been shown to be the primary motivation for Internet users to visit a specific online page because trip planners usually search information in order to reduce the perceived risk embedded in travel product and service purchase. In this sense, I find the second webpage analysed more informative than the first one (https://www.prague.eu/en). This is so not only because it contains more practical information (e.g., weather forecasts, free brochures for download and currency exchange rates), but also because in the section *accommodation,* each article is provided with a detailed description of the place and two direct link: one to *Booking.com* and another one to Google maps. Under these two buttons are a series of keywords which categorized the article into specific section, in order to make easier the research for users (e.g. *hotel ****, apartment, in the broader city centre, meeting room ≤ 50, congress hall ≤ 100, garage, wheelchair access, family friendly).*

Last, but not least, under each article published in the section *accommodations* there is a list of specific information about the number of rooms available and with specific contacts such as Telephone number and e-mail address to contact the structure. (Figures 10)

Figure 5.10: example of article about accommodations

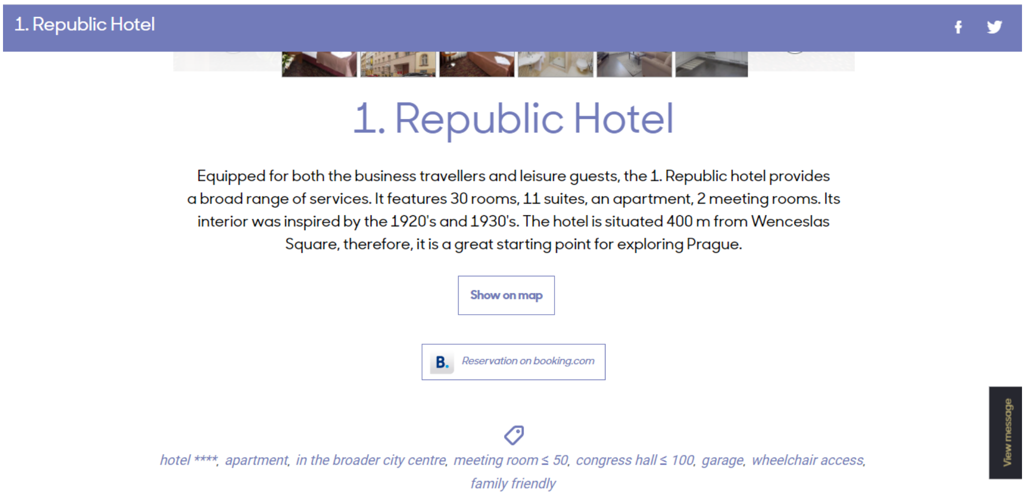
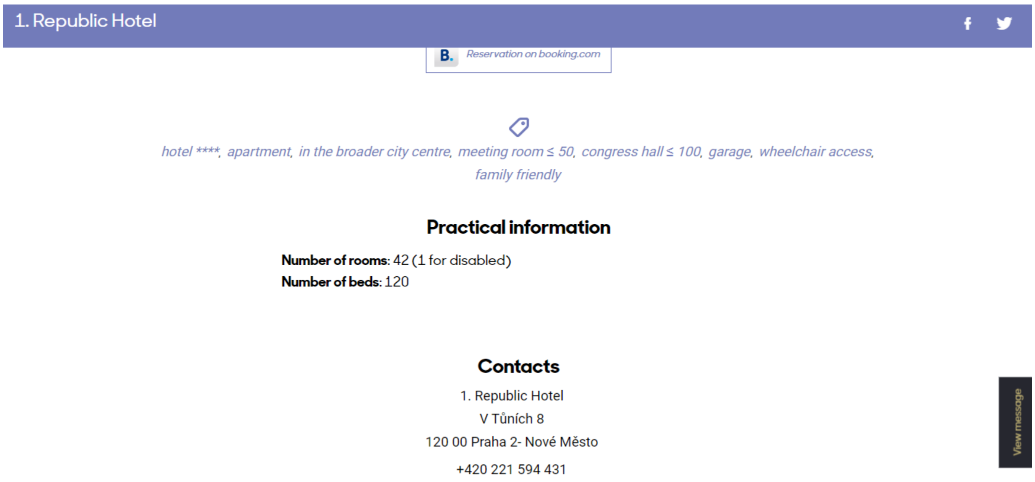


Figure 5.11: example of article about accommodations



On the contrary, the first website analysed (http://praguetoday.net/) does not display a specific section devoted to accommodation and as a consequence, no articles about it.

Accuracy, variety, relevance, usefulness, currency, security, validity, and *completeness* are some of the criteria used by Kim et al. (2008: 6) to assess information. The informativeness of a website is positively associated with positive attitude toward the website, since the more informative a tourism destination website is, the more likely users are to form a favourable first impression toward that specific website.

Another important foundation of persuasion is credibility. Usually, visitors can infer site credibility through a simple inspection. There are some cues called "credibility cues" which are used to enhance the credibility of a specific website for users. One of the most used is the incorporation of the word *official* in many websites. This is the case of https://www.prague.eu/en which in the top part of the page, near the official name reports "The Official Tourist website for Prague".

As previously explained, in multimodal analysis there is a specific difference between the two websites: the first one (http://praguetoday.net/) does not aim to sell anything, while the second one (https://eshop.prague.eu/en), apart from its informational purposes, has a specific section named *e-shop*. In this sense, it is more useful for the web managers to increase the website credibility. Indeed, high credibility for users toward a website reduces the perceived risks associated with online shopping, and generates more favourable attitudes toward the website and online shopping.

Moreover, travel brochures and special offers are an example of benefits offered to users in the hope of building a reciprocal relationship between potential tourists and Web creators. Visitors are often asked to provide personal information such as name, e-mail address, and sometimes phone number as a repayment for benefits received. For example, the website Prague.eu offers free brochures and maps only providing your personal e-mail address in the section *e-shop*. When a website supports a two-way information exchange between the destination and the users we speak of reciprocity. For a tourism destination website to be reciprocal it means to enable users to directly contact the tourism office or to provide helpful customer service (Kim et. al, 2008: 7).

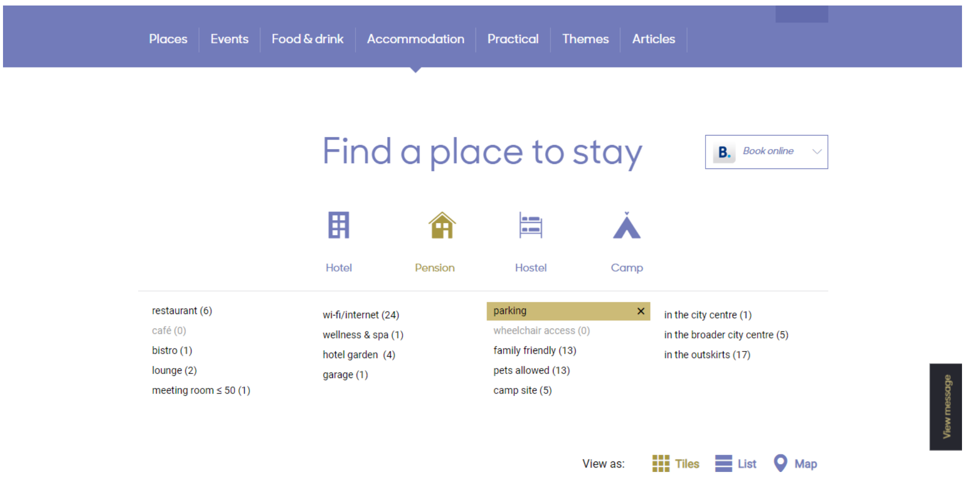
Another important success factor for a website is usability. The more usable a tourism destination is, "the more likely users are to form a favourable first impression toward the Web page" (Kim et al, 2008: 6).

In both the analysed websites, I noticed that the articles are categorized in specific sections, which more or less are the same. The categorization into subfolders makes easier the navigation for users because it creates specific paths for each article and each topic.

Let us assume that a potential tourist, browsing the website https://www.prague.eu/en wants to look for a pension with parking.

First, he/she must click on the section *accommodation*, then click on the subfolder *pension*; a series of characteristics will appear. It is enough to click on the button *parking* and the filtered search results will appear (Figure 12).

Figure 5.12: example of browsing in the section *accommodation*



Both the websites analysed have the *search* section, useful for speeding up the research only by typing a specific word or a key word. This makes the site more accessible and practical.

The creation of a strong and positive associative link or image about the destination is also important, because positive images encourage potential

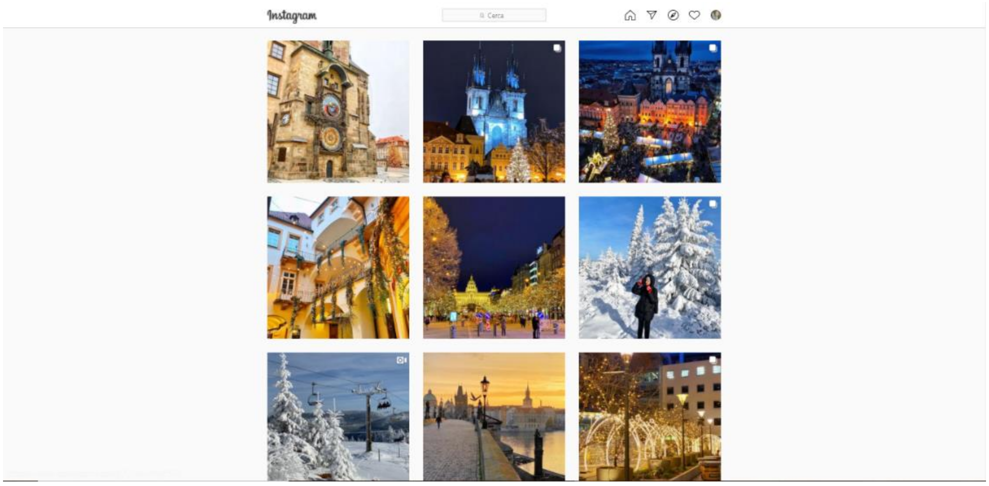
tourists to visit that destination. To put the emphasis on scenic beauty, the Web creators should use visual, auditory, and imagery-oriented features.
In this sense, one of the most emerging marketing practices which has been recently emerging is to use Instagram for tour operators and travel agents to promote a certain destination. Nowadays, Instagram is a very important part of the communication strategy in tourism "because there is a whole generation of people who are using social media who aren't reading the paper anymore and Instagram is a great place to reach them" (Shuqair et al, 2017: 2).

The role of Instagram is important when it comes to building a Destination Image (DI), that is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a tourist holds of a destination. Instagram images are a medium that better communicate the functional attributes of a destination and modify the viewers' image into an induced image at best.

The two websites analysed both have an Instagram page. The former[18] contains amateur photographs, the latter[19] professional photos[20]. Anyway, by looking at both I personally found the first one more inspirational, in particular for the colours palette used, which varies according to the season. For example, Figure 13 shows the Instagram page updated on the occasion of Christmas 2020.

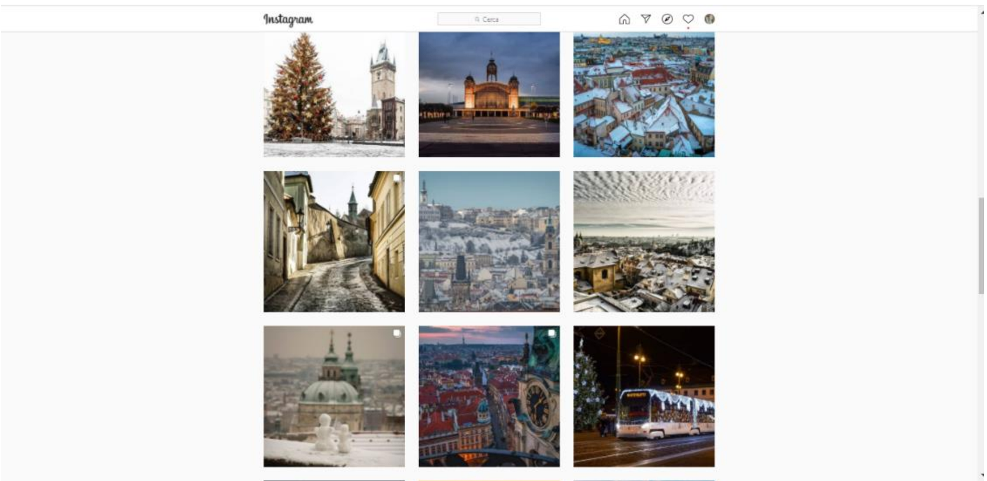
Figure 5.13: extract of Prague today's Instagram account

[18] https://www.instagram.com/praguetoday/
[19] https://www.instagram.com/cityofprague/
[20] It is important to note that both the Instagram accounts' posted visual contents (video, pictures) are owned by their owners.



The colour chosen for this Instagram account are warmer than those adopted for the second website, which also presents a coherent palette but more oriented on cold colour, such as white and grey (Figure 14).

Figure 5.14: extract of city of Prague's Instagram account



Instagram is a visual platform and user's motivation for using the platform is hedonic-oriented; it means that images or videos posted by organizations in this channel should be generally tasteful and inspirational. DMOs[21] can use this characteristic to their advantage and to show very appealing content of the destination in order to catch the audience's attention. Instagram is a helpful channel to stimulate people who are in the dreaming stage that is why both Instagram pages shows beautiful landscape.

The comparative visual analysis of the two websites, has attempted at making explicit the purposes that underlie aesthetic judgement. In fact, while the first website is only an online blog managed by a girl living in Prague, having only an informative and an inspirational purpose, the second one is an official website of the city of Prague which aims to promote the city and "sell" various services. Table 5.2 summarizes the most important aesthetic values analysed in this Chapter through a multimodal approach.

Table 5.2: Synoptic view of aesthetic values analysed.

Mode	http://praguetoday.net/	https://www.prague.eu/en
Colour	White Blue Pink	White Blue
Layout	Both vertically and horizontally oriented	Horizontally oriented
Images	Amateur photography	Professional photography

At the end of this Chapter devoted to the multimodal analysis I would like to add a general comment. Sociolinguists have long pursued this line of research on the role of various semiotic resources used in combination.

[21] Destination Management Organization: a professional services company with local knowledge, expertise and resources, working in the design and implementation of events, activities, tours, transportation and program logistics. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Destination_management

However, they have not often included the visual component of representation. With today's exponential growth in the number of digital texts designed for marketing purposes also in the tourism sector, aesthetic sign-making conventions are also studied extensively.

CONCLUSIONS

In the last decades (at least before the COVID-19 pandemic), the demand for travel services has been rapidly growing. Nowadays, the Internet represents the primary means through which tourism organizations communicate with potential tourists. The rapid evolution of social media into a new opportunity for the hospitality and tourism industry has led to the phenomenon of "cybertourism", also known as Tourism 2.0 (Sparks et. al, 2013), which benefits from several applications offered by web 2.0, such as Web sites and social media. "Tourists 2.0" know how to take advantage of this communicative channels, and use them to obtain information at anytime and from anywhere, and also to share their experiences. Blogs and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram provide creative spaces for multimodal text production and enable their users to participate in community-specific communicative practices. Specifically, blogs are used for both self-expression and for information sharing, while Instagram is employed to visually narrate people's travel experiences. Facebook pages support potential tourists during each phase of their decision making process, i.e. before, during and after the trip contents uploaded by tourist organizations and by their fans.

As shown in this dissertation, the definition of "text" is no longer limited to printed words, but it is now clearly extended to a multimodal dimension, which includes elements such as layout, colours, and the choice of fonts. A text is a multimodal text when it includes images, videos and audio files along with written text.

In Chapter 5, I carried out a comparative analysis of the multimodal choices made by the authors of one blog and one official website promoting the city of Prague. The websites the bloggers created are very different. The first website (http://praguetoday.net/)is an online blog managed by a woman living in Prague, called Prague Today. This blog has clear informative and inspirational purposes. By contrast, the second website (https://www.prague.eu) is one of the official websites of the city of Prague which aims to promote the city and to "sell" various services. This website, unlike the former, presents a specific section called *e-shop,* where, apart from some free brochures to download, the other services listed on the page are charged*: private tours, souvenirs or tickets*.

In order to inspire favourable attitudes toward a given website and to reduce the risks its users perceive associated with online shopping, it is important to enhance the credibility of a website. One of the most used techniques to do so consists in using the word *official* in the website, which is exactly what happens in http://praguetoday.net/. At the top of its page it clearly states: *"The Official Tourist website for Prague"*. Another detail used by the web manager in order to induce the viewers to buy products is to use a colour palette orientated on cooler colours such as blue and white. In this respect, Bonnardel et al. (2011:71) suggest that some colours serve to excite an individual, while other colours tend to elicit relaxation. For example, blue, white and grey are preferred than warmer colours, such as red or yellow, because they usually release relaxing and positive feelings. Moreover, blue produces stronger buying intentions, which is why, as shown in my analysis, blue and white were chosen for both the websites. Behind the choice of these tones there might also be a cultural reason: white and blue are two out of the three Czech Republic's flag colours.

However, this theory does not seem to be true for Instagram, where web managers usually post pictures to show very appealing contents of the destination, in order to catch the audience's attention. Instagram can help to stimulate people who are in the dreaming stage, that is why images or videos posted by organizations in this channel should be generally tasteful and inspirational, but at the same time they should present a given destination as a concrete place. From the brief analysis I carried out of the two Instagram accounts related to the two websites under scrutiny, it emerged that the amateur account[22] related to the former website, Prague Today, presents everyday photos that were shot with a camera phone. They also visually describe the life in Prague seen through the eyes of a young woman. On the contrary, the Instagram account of the second and official website I analysed[23] (48,4k followers) only shares only professional photos. The first informal website (http://praguetoday.net/) thus proved to be more successful (208k followers) than the second website I analysed in terms of Instagram followers.

Both of them present a coherent and organized palette of colours, but the first one is more oriented towards warmer colours, while the second one is focused on cooler colours, such as grey and white. Moreover, the author of the former Instagram account varies colours and types of photos according to the season and well depicts specific occasions or celebrations. For example, during Christmas the predominant colours are gold and red, while during Easter the colours are yellow and pastel shades. As we have seen, it is important for the tourism industry and its practitioners to build a specific Destination Image (the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a tourist holds of a destination) and Instagram provides one of the most emerging marketing outlets.

I also analyzed the layout of the two websites (http://praguetoday.net/ and https://www.prague.eu). From the analyses it emerged that the layout contributes to shaping the webpages and to turning them into a set of meaningful resources. In general, in Western culture the composition of a webpage follows the Z-reading pattern, which means that texts are written and read from left to right and from top to bottom. Also, a page created by the Z-reading pattern is most naturally divided into left and right, top and bottom.

[22] https://www.instagram.com/praguetoday/?hl=it
[23] https://www.instagram.com/cityofprague/?hl=it

Following this theory, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 181-229) came up with an idealized division of webpages into *Given and New*, *Ideal and Real*. http://praguetoday.net/ is vertically oriented: the page is divided into two columns where the elements placed in the left part are presented as Given pieces of information, while the elements in the right part represent the New information. On the contrary, https://www.prague.eu is horizontally oriented and can be interpreted following the division between Ideal and Real. The Ideal component comprises elements on the page which are usually placed at the top, such as images, videos or the logo of the page. On the other hand, the Real component represents elements placed at the bottom of the page, where more practical information is usually presented. In the case of https://www.prague.eu we find the e-mail address, the location weather conditions, and currency exchange rates between Czech koruna and euro/dollars. The comparative analysis I carried out confirms Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory (1996), showing that all the elements on the webpage are placed in specific positions that make meanings for the users.

It stands to reason that the primary motivation for an Internet user to visit and explore a given webpage is to become informed about something. As a consequence, informativeness is one of the most important goals of a person visiting a website. In the case of tourism websites, trip planners usually search information before leaving for a certain destination: the more informative a tourism destination website is the more likely users are to form a favourable first impression toward that specific website and toward the promoted destination. In this sense, I found the official Prague website (https://www.prague.eu) more informative than the other one (http://praguetoday.net/). First of all, it is focused on providing more practical information, such as the updated weather conditions in the city. Secondly, the website reflects many of the criteria used by Kim et al. (2008: 6) to assess information, such as *accuracy*. In the section about accommodation, for example, there are more than 600 articles about hotels, hostels and pensions and in Prague: each of them is provided with a detailed description of the place and two direct links: one to *Booking.com* and another one to Google maps. The other website (http://praguetoday.net/), on the contrary, does not present any section about accommodation. There is a strong difference in the focus of the two websites analysed: as previously explained, one (https://www.prague.eu) aims to promote but also to sell something, while the other wants only to promote. It is predictable, therefore, that websites who want to sell something tend to contain elements that enhance their credibility and usability. Also the accuracy of the information presented as well as the reciprocity between the website and the users are important. An example from https://www.prague.eu is the section *e-shop*, in which some services are to be paid while some others are free (there is also a section called *download* where images and other contents can be downloaded for free from users). However, visitors are often asked to provide personal information such as name, e-mail address, and sometimes phone number, as a repayment for the benefits received: the goal is to build a reciprocal relationship between potential tourists and the creators. http://praguetoday.net/ is, on the contrary, only a blog run by a young woman whose major business is on Instagram where she shows what life is like in Prague and gives tips for visitors. What is remarkable is that she only uses a phone and the embedded camera to do so: her main goal is to produce appealing contents, to show what one can do in Prague and the beautiful part of it, and does not specifically explain how to organize a trip to Prague. It is a natural consequence that her website results to be less accurate and less reader-friendly than the first one.

As already explained, informativeness is important when it comes to the evaluation of a website: Internet is considered the main source of information, because it enables tourists to experience the holiday in advance. In fact, tourists are now seen as active users, who are more experienced and more educated than in the past. In order to do so, tourist organizations should also present tourism attractions in adequate and convincing linguistic ways.

As discussed in Chapter 1, tourism discourse can be considered a type of specialised discourse because it is characterised by some stylistic choices and linguistic strategies of persuasion such as metaphors and adjectivisation, through which the positive characteristics of the services or products are exalted and presented in positive terms. From the linguistic analysis, conducted on a corpus of texts based on articles published in two tourist websites about Prague, it has emerged that the language of the texts is generally very emphatic, strongly evaluative and persuasive in order to transform potential tourists into actual tourists (Maci, 2007: 43). Some of the most occurring adjectives in the corpus convey a sense of euphoria for the services the website is promoting but also a sense of authenticity*: unique, original, top, high, great, main, top*, together with the superlative *best* and *most*, stress the evaluative and clearly promotional character of the texts in the corpus: these adjectives are identified by Pierini (2009: 107) as a form of 'extreme language'. The encoder always tries to highlight the positive, aspects of the product or tries to convert the negative aspects into positive ones; "the described tourist location is always the most famous, most beautiful and most popular one" (Maci, 2007: 16). This is also stressed by the absence of the second term of comparison within the sentence.

The most recurrent adjective in the corpus is *free:* this word is mostly used to increase the readers' feeling of engagement and to attract their attention: nearly everyone loves free stuff, so including this word into a blog post can boost the engagement, appealing more people at the same time. The concept of authenticity is also important when it comes to promoting a destination, especially if the destination is a city known for the timeless beauty of its Old Town, such as Prague. As expected, *old* is the second most recurring adjective in the corpus, but there are also other words which offer a vivid description of the destination: *bridge, castle, beer, cheap, bridge* and *river. Charles Bridge*, for example, is one of the main city attractions, together with the *castle* on the main square; *beer* represents an important tradition for Czech people. All these words are representative of Prague, because they are used to present it as “concrete”. The concept of *tradition* is very important also when it comes to food: the adjective *traditional* mostly occurs with nouns related to the concept of food: the image of the country’s cuisine has an important impact on both country image and intention to visit.

Opposed to the concept of oldness there is the concept of modernity. The adjective *modern* is often used together with the adjective *contemporary* and with nouns such as *accommodation, design, restaurants* occur many times in the corpus. While authenticity enhances the recovery of lost elements, the concept of modernity is related with a form of social change: modernity is more similar to westernization and commoditization and can be seen as a form of transformation bringing about changes in true local traditional cultures.

Tourism is also an agent of social change, because it made it brought about accelerating rates of exchange. Also, it has impacts on other aspects, such as economy, tradition and culture. With reference to cultural changes, it is important to note that from my analysis it emerged that two of the most frequently used adjectives are *Italian* and *French*, always occurring while speaking about food and restaurants.

Countries such as France and Italy are distinguished by their cuisine and are aware of the fact that their culinary culture has a positive and significant effect on their country's image. In their research, Aydin et al. (2020) demonstrate that both Italian and French culinary culture and the presence of these two countries’ traditional restaurants influences both directly and indirectly the travellers’ intentions to visit any countries all over the world. This can be seen as a direct consequence of modernization, clearly opposed to the image of the traditional Czech pubs, which on the contrary is linked to the concept of traditions.

Persuasiveness can also be conveyed by conciseness, which is a verbal strategy by means of which concepts are expressed in the shortest form possible: for example the nominalized form *must* is extremely concise and at the same time it conveys a feeling of exclusiveness such as in the following sentence: “This is a **must-**visit stop”.

In this case it indicates the necessity for the tourist not to miss something in order to have an authentic experience.

Other verbs, such as *visit*, *see*, *get*, *go*, *try* are used in the imperative mood to directly urge the reader to join and experience the destination. Moreover, they convey the idea of an already existing relationship of friendship.

Due to the growing reliance on the Internet for the promotion of tourism, nowadays there is an intense competition for Web viewers, and as a consequence increasing costs for advertising. The objective of my dissertation was to analyse both the linguistic and visual choices made by tourism organizations in order to promote a given destination and to see if it is appropriate to convert potential tourists into actual tourists. From the linguistic point of view, the results confirmed the conclusions Maci (2007) and other authors: there are specific lexical choices which recur in tourism discourse, which make up the so-called ‘phraseology of tourism’. The first purpose of this phraseology is “to persuade receivers to purchase the tourist product” (Pierini, 2009: 97).

Apart from my analysis, a variety of approaches have been suggested by many authors in order to measure the effectiveness of tourism websites. One of the most common is to email surveys to respondents. Surveys have an advantage in the ability to acquire large sample sizes at a very low cost and in a short time; anyway because of the difficulty in getting the attention and cooperation of users, an incentive is often necessary to get the user to do so.

Non-response bias still remains one of the problem about Internet- based surveys, but having a direct online e-commerce system is another good indicator of the effectiveness of one’s business. As a consequence, it will be easier for the official Prague website (https://www.prague.eu) to check the website traffic in entrance and/or in exit, thanks to the specific sections *e-*

shop and *download* where of course web managers can keep track of how many people download or buy something.

Anyway, sometimes it happens that the website only has a powerful role in the purchase decision: this is the case of the first blog, Prague today whose goal is not to sell something, but only to show the most appealing side of Prague and to attract tourists.

The outbreak of Coronavirus in 2020 has affected my research: as I explained I was supposed to spend a whole semester in Prague thanks to an Erasmus scholarship, but I had to come back earlier and to conduct my research at home, collecting information through Internet. This constitutes a limit of my dissertation.

Another limit is the number of websites and as consequence of articles analysed: the corpus I analysed is small. Originally, it should have been composed of three websites, but unfortunately one of them was closed and the related Instagram account has not been updated since 28th May 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the tourism industry due to the resulting travel restrictions as well as slump in demand among travellers. This of course affects also tourist organizations, which now have fewer reasons to improve their knowledge about consumers and trends and to control their online brand image.

In order to better analyse the linguistic choices made by tourist organization, I decided to focus on websites instead of more popular social media, such as Instagram. This constitutes another limit of this dissertation: the number of blogs and website for destination promotion (in this case Prague) is now very low if compared to the number of Instagram accounts dealing with the same topic. A suggestion for future research could be to focus more on Instagram travel accounts, both in the study of aesthetic and in the linguistic aspects of it.

The phenomenon of “cybertourism” or Tourism 2.0 (Sparks & al. 2013), benefits from several applications offered by web 2.0 such as websites and social media. Currently, the number of these social media is rapidly growing and another suggestion for future research could be to consider new trends.

Anyway, multimedia elements are taking over the written contents, and the field of study is slowly moving away from linguistics. Nowadays, a video or a picture are preferred to a long-written blog post. Instagram has slowly evolved into a social and branding platform. However, the real trend of 2020 is TikTok, a relatively new social media where one can create and share contents/information only in the format of videos. In this sector there is a vast market of people looking for micro-entertainment and distraction for a few minutes during the day. If a video is interesting or appealing it can gain millions of views.

Finally, in order to carry out a precise analysis of the real effectiveness of a website, my suggestion for future research is to focus more on website users through data gathering and surveys emailed to users, in order to collect information about the planning of a trip, the usefulness of a given website and its role in the decision phase.

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RIASSUNTO

Questa tesi si propone l'obiettivo di analizzare le scelte linguistiche ed estetiche intraprese da organizzazioni turistiche e/o privati per promuovere una specifica meta turistica: nel mio caso si tratta di Praga.

La mia scelta è ricaduta su questa città in quanto sono stata scelta come assegnista di una borsa di studio Erasmus + per il semestre primaverile 2020 proprio nell' Università di Praga (Charles University): la mia intenzione era di approfondire le mie ricerche sul posto, ma a causa della pandemia di Covid, il mio semestre in presenza è durato solo un mese, mentre i restanti 4 sono stati svolti in modalità telematica dall'Italia. Questo costituisce infatti un limite della mia tesi.

La mia analisi si è svolta su due fronti; sul fronte linguistico (Capitolo 4) ho deciso di analizzare un corpus di articoli estratti da due siti web[24] che promuovono la città di Praga composti da 15293 parole in totale. Per l'analisi ho utilizzato il software AntConc che serve per consultare e analizzare dei corpora; in particolare ne ho utilizzato la funzione *word list* che permette di vedere quante volte una parola è utilizzata nei testi sotto analisi e la funzione *concordance*. I siti web da me scelti sono in realtà molto diversi da loro in quanto il primo è un blog gestito da una ragazza che vive a Praga (Prague Today), mentre il secondo è il sito web ufficiale della città di Praga (Prague.eu).

Ho utilizzato questi stessi siti web per l'analisi delle scelte estetiche fatte dai rispettivi web manager, focalizzandomi sulla palette colori e sul layout della pagina, i quali costituiscono un insieme di risorse significative.

Negli ultimi anni (o perlomeno prima dell'epidemia di Covid-19 scoppiata nel 2019/20) si è assistito alla nascita del cosiddetto Cyber Turismo, detto

[24] http://praguetoday.net/;
https://www.prague.eu/en

anche Turismo 2.0; questo fenomeno nasce dall' incrocio di due mondi: il turismo e il web. Oggigiorno chi decide di fare un viaggio difficilmente ha voglia di perdere troppo tempo e dunque può beneficiare delle possibilità di trovare qualcosa su internet, che sono infinite.

Il turista tipo si muove su internet, ricerca destinazioni, si informa, si confronta con altri utenti, legge e lascia opinioni; il viaggiatore di oggi è un vero e proprio consumatore di esperienze, non più un fruitore distaccato e passivo di bellezze e attrattive, ma un protagonista che entra in contatto con una destinazione.

I social media giocano un ruolo importante in questo senso e costituiscono un'ottima strategia di marketing. Il turista 2.0 è attirato dall'idea di poter vivere una certa esperienza, così cerca emozioni stimolanti anche nella fase di preparazione del viaggio, si crea delle aspettative: per questo motivo è importante costruire nella sua mente una precisa immagine della destinazione. In inglese si parla in questo senso di *Destination Image* che non è altro che la somma delle idee, delle credenze e delle impressioni che una persona ha riguardo una specifica destinazione.

I paradigmi sui quali si fondava il turismo in passato sono radicalmente cambiati, così come il turista stesso e il suo modo di viaggiare. Per l'industria del turismo è importante dunque creare uno storytelling intorno ai loro prodotti per far sì che l'utente che naviga sul web diventi un potenziale acquirente, per promuovere la destinazione al meglio e anche per distinguersi dalla concorrenza che al giorno d'oggi è molto alta. Per fare ciò c'è bisogno di scegliere le giuste parole e di utilizzare le giuste scelte estetiche: è proprio questo di cui si occupa la mia tesi.

Nel primo capitolo ho affrontato diversi temi, prima di tutto quello del linguaggio utilizzato nel turismo online: come ho già precedentemente affermato, per vendere un prodotto o un servizio, esso deve essere presentato in maniera adeguata, persuasiva e soprattutto convincente. Ecco perché il linguaggio del turismo può essere considerato un tipo di linguaggio specialistico, in quanto presenta caratteristiche proprie. Alcune delle tecniche analizzate sono la metafora e l'ampio utilizzo di aggettivi positivi per descrivere il prodotto, in questo caso la destinazione; per esempio, dalla mia analisi linguistica è emerso che gli aggettivi più utilizzati nel corpus sono i superlativi *best* e *most*, identificati da Pierini (2009: 107) come una sorta di "linguaggio estremo", allo stesso modo di altri aggettivi utilizzati molto frequentemente come *unique, original, top, high, great, main, top* che esaltano le caratteristiche del posto ed hanno una chiara funzione promozionale. Anche l'aggettivo *free* è molto utilizzato, ed è stato etichettato da Pierini (2009: 98) come una parola chiave per attrarre l'attenzione dei potenziali turisti e per produrre alti tassi di conversione nelle vendite: infatti, quasi tutti amano ciò che è gratis.

Il capitolo 1 continua con un'analisi della multimodalità: essa non è altro che l'applicazione di più alfabetizzazioni all'interno di un mezzo. Tutto crea significato: dal posizionamento delle immagini all'organizzazione del contenuto. Nell'era digitale non si fa più affidamento solo sul testo isolato come fonte primaria di comunicazione, ma anche all'immagine. La multimodalità descrive le pratiche di comunicazione in termini di risorse sia linguistiche che spaziali e visive utilizzate per comporre i messaggi. Hiippala (2015: 1) afferma per esempio che analizzare dei documenti da un punto di vista multimodale vuol dire capire come testo e immagini creano significato e comunicano tra di loro. La definizione stessa di "testo" è completamente cambiata rispetto al passato in quanto non comprende più solo la dimensione linguistica, ma anche la dimensione visuale: il layout, il font scelto, il colore comunicano significati, così come le parole. I social media, per esempio, utilizzano molti strumenti per aggiungere multidimensionalità a ciò che verrà creato sulla propria piattaforma. Queste funzionalità modali aggiuntive creano un'esperienza più interattiva per l'utente.

Bonnardel (2011:71) afferma che alcuni colori sono associati all'azione di vendere/acquistare più di altri: è il caso di colori più freddi come il bianco e soprattutto il blu. Non è un caso che in entrambi i siti analizzati nel capitolo 5 il colore dominante sia il colore blu, specialmente nel sito ufficiale di Praga che presenta un'apposita sezione di *e-shop* nella quale è possibile acquistare diversi servizi, come per esempio dei tour guidati.

Per quanto riguarda invece il layout di una pagina web (inteso come la disposizione degli elementi al suo interno), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 181-229) evidenziano che nella cultura occidentale sono organizzati seguendo uno schema detto Z-reading che divide la pagina in quattro parti: sopra e sotto, destra e sinistra, seguendo appunto lo schema di lettura e scrittura occidentale. Solitamente gli elementi a sinistra sono presentati come dati di fatto *(Given),* mentre gli elementi a destra sono informazioni nuove *(New).* Al contrario ciò che è posizionato nella parte superiore è "l'ideale" *(Ideal)*, ciò che si rifà per lo più alla sfera emotiva dell'utente e dunque immagini e paesaggi da sogno; ciò che sta nella parte inferiore è il reale *(Real)*, come per esempio informazioni pratiche riguardo il meteo o box contatti.

Non è importante solo come si dice qualcosa, ma anche cosa si dice: uno dei fattori più importanti da tenere in considerazione quando si gestiscono pagine web è quante informazioni gli utenti possono trovare all'interno (Kim et. Al, 2008) in è molto più probabile che gli utenti continuino la navigazione nel sito se si rendono conto che all'interno ci possono trovare una grande mole di informazioni.

Durante la mia analisi, per esempio, ho potuto notare che il sito ufficiale di Praga contiene molte più informazioni pratiche utili per un potenziale turista: informazioni sul tasso di cambio, sul meteo, una sezione completamente dedicata agli hotel in cui ogni articolo è corredato da un link per prenotare direttamente su Booking, così come una box informazioni con i contatti. Queste sezioni mancano completamente nel secondo blog analizzato.

D’altronde, è emerso come le due piattaforme abbiano un fine diverso: mentre il sito ufficiale vuole vendere qualcosa, il blog è puramente informativo e creato a scopo dilettantistico. Conseguenza di ciò è che il primo conterrà informazioni più dettagliate e sarà molto più attento alla completezza dato che il loro fine ultimo è vendere un servizio.

Nel secondo capitolo invece ho analizzato nello specifico il fenomeno del Turismo 2.0 e le sue implicazioni, soffermandomi sulle caratteristiche di 3 piattaforme online utilizzate per la promozione turistica. Secondo Akehurst (2009) le loro principali funzioni sono quella di promozione, comunicazione, management, ricerca e distribuzione del prodotto.

Ogni piattaforma ha le sue principali caratteristiche: i blog o i siti web informano. Nel caso del turismo, un blog potrebbe costituire una sorta di guida turistica virtuale, completa di articoli e molto spesso di mappe scaricabili, come per esempio è possibile fare nel sito web ufficiale di Praga da me analizzato, dove è presente una vera e propria sezione *Downloads* nella quale si trovano cartine e guide scaricabili. Un blog può anche costituire un diario dove si descrive la città, dove si possono dare informazioni pratiche riguardo ad alloggi e trasporti, così come consigli e raccomandazioni (Goethals, 2013); è il caso del blog Prague Today nel quale l’autrice racconta le proprie giornate nella città di Praga e ne evidenzia le caratteristiche positive in modo da presentarla a possibili turisti.

Oggigiorno però il blog non è più il format preferito dagli utenti in quanto il pubblico si è spostato su social media che si focalizzano sull’impatto visivo, come per esempio Instagram. Secondo Galbraith (2015) questa piattaforma gioca un ruolo quasi decisivo nella fase di precedente all’organizzazione del viaggio, nel quale l’utente si crea delle aspettative riguardo la meta. Per questo motivo, le immagini condivise dai gestori di account turistici dovrebbero essere stimolanti, d’impatto e d’ispirazione. Inoltre, Instagram contribuisce a creare delle immagini concrete della destinazione;

recentemente c'è stata un'inversione di marcia rispetto al passato in quanto sembra che le foto preferite siano quelle amatoriali, che presentano il prodotto in maniera reale e raccontano una storia.

A riguardo, ho dedicato una piccola parte della mia analisi estetica anche ai relativi account dei siti web da me presi in considerazione e ciò che ne è venuto fuori è che, sebbene entrambi gli account presentino delle bacheche ordinate e orientate sempre sugli stessi colori per creare una sorta di coerenza narrativa, l'account gestito dalla ragazza ha più del doppio dei fans che invece ha l'account ufficiale della città di Praga. La differenza sostanziale è che mentre quest'ultimo presenta delle foto più fredde, sia a livello di nuances che a livello di soggetti fotografati, (perlopiù strade, monumenti e paesaggi), il primo contiene foto di vita reali, sprazzi di vita di una semplice ragazza che vive a Praga e che racconta la città tramite la fotocamera e la tastiera del suo cellulare. Anche in questo caso, l'autenticità svolge un ruolo importante soprattutto perché aiuta l'utente a costruirsi una chiara immagine della destinazione.

Infine, nel capitolo 2 ho analizzato il ruolo di Facebook, il quale è conosciuto per le sue fan page: sono un modo a basso costo per farsi pubblicità, per raccogliere opinioni e commenti e per favorire il passaparola.

Questo è un fattore molto importante nel mondo del turismo in quanto costituisce un modo per avere dei riscontri reali dato che molto spesso le destinazioni a noi sconosciute e mai visitate sono considerate quasi realtà intangibili.

Nel terzo capitolo ho analizzato il concetto di *evaluation* nel linguaggio turistico. Valutazione può essere intesa come l'inserimento di parole positive e negative in un discorso e può essere utilizzata per esprimere la propria opinione o per convincere qualcuno di qualcosa. In articoli accademici, per esempio, la tecnica di *hedging* è molto utilizzata: essa non è altro che l'utilizzo di tecniche linguistiche per esprimere certezza o esitazione riguardo qualcosa. La valutazione si può basare su molti parametri ma quello più comune è il parametro buono/cattivo.

Il concetto di valutazione può essere riconosciuto in alcuni elementi linguistici e grammaticali, come nel caso di avverbi, aggettivi, modali e congiunzioni: in questo caso parliamo di *modality*. In particolare, Conrad and Biber (1999) si sono focalizzati sull' uso di avverbi per esprimere emozioni personali: presenti molto più in ambito conversazionale che accademico, si possono trovare in posizione pre e post verbale. Per fare un esempio, *forse* può essere utilizzato per esprimere incertezza circa la frase seguente; al contrario, *sicuramente*, esprime certezza. Il concetto di *modality* non indica assoluta verità o falsità e questo è vero sia per il linguaggio che per la comunicazione visuale. Soprattutto in quest'ultimo caso il concetto di *modality* dipende strettamente da valori culturali: ciò che è vero, lo è per un determinato gruppo sociale può non esserlo per un altro. Dal punto di vista del naturalismo la realtà può cambiare in base all'occhio che la guarda ed è definita in base a quanta corrispondenza c'è tra quello che vediamo noi di un certo oggetto e la rappresentazione visuale di quell'oggetto, dunque il fattore culturale gioca un ruolo molto importante nella definizione stessa di realtà.

Infine ho dedicato un breve paragrafo al concetto di valutazione adattato al mondo online: ciò che si valuta su Internet è principalmente l'efficienza di un sito web. Ciò che si prende in considerazione sono vari fattori, quali la reciprocità, l'affidabilità, l'accuratezza, la quantità di informazioni che riesce a veicolare, ma anche il grado di coinvolgimento (Kim et. al 2008). Per valutare un sito web sono stati provati molti approcci, tra cui il più famoso è quello sperimentato da Tierney (2000) che consiste in una prima fase di raccolta di dati personali di alcuni utenti e secondariamente in un sondaggio inoltrato a tutti coloro che avevano precedentemente lasciato il proprio indirizzo mail. Lo scopo del sondaggio è di raccogliere informazioni: una tra le più rilevanti era quella di capire se poi gli utenti avessero visitato in questione la destinazione per la quale stavano raccogliendo informazioni.

In ogni caso, uno dei limiti di questo approccio sono le persone che non rispondono al sondaggio: una soluzione sarebbe quella di offrire un incentivo per attrarre l'attenzione degli utenti, come un buono sconto.

Il quarto e quinto capitolo sono dedicati all'analisi linguistica e visuale delle quali ho già parlato in precedenza.

Per concludere, ciò che è emerso dalla mia ricerca è che il Turista 2.0 è un partecipante attivo e non più un utente passivo come accadeva in passato. I social media hanno promosso un tipo di comunicazione detta orizzontale, nella quale gli utenti appartengono allo stesso livello della scala gerarchica, si scambiano informazioni e commenti, fomentando il cosiddetto passaparola.

Se da una parte questo è un aspetto positivo per l'industria del turismo in quanto costituisce un modo per fare pubblicità a basso costo, dall'altro aumenta la concorrenza.

L'introduzione del turismo 2.0 ha portato a ripensare le strategie di marketing legate a questo settore, sempre più orientate all'esperienza del consumatore e ai canali attraverso cui si esprimono. Internet ha cambiato il volto del settore turistico, dando la possibilità ai fruitori del prodotto di partecipare attivamente alla costruzione dell'offerta, anche in maniera autonoma, accedendo direttamente ai prodotti, confrontando le offerte e soprattutto diventando giudice delle stesse.

Il cambiamento nel settore parte dalla stessa scelta e prenotazione del prodotto turistico, che avviene online. Così come online avvengono le recensioni di viaggio e le condivisioni.

Oggi, il viaggiatore è sempre più social, condivide in tempo reale la propria vacanza, realizza foto e video che poi pubblica sui social media, fa largo uso di apparecchiature mobili per fotografare, comunicare, commentare, interagire con altri utenti.

E’ importante dunque fare scelte consapevoli per beneficiare al massimo delle nuove opportunità aperte dal Cyber Turismo.