

A FEW COMMENTS ON WEB SITE PROMOTIONAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This paper gives an insight into the nature of the tourism discourse. It provides some notes on tourism and on tourism web sites importance. The author considers tourism web sites the means of promotion for tourist destinations and the generators of destination image. The paper also focuses on the language of the interaction between the promoter and the public and examines promoting emotional language that may have a great influence on the process of tourist decision-making. It provides the analysis of randomly selected web sites on Scottish castles. In this connection, linguistic instances found during the analysis are provided.

Key words: tourism, promotional, web sites, emotional, evaluative, adjectives, cyber communication

Introduction

People have always had reasons for travelling to other parts of the world. The first and main reason was trade. There have, however, been many other reasons for travelling: experiencing different cultures, tasting different cuisines, seeing works of art, learning new languages and many others.

The word tourist was coined in the late eighteenth century. It referred to a person who toured. In the past, tours were for the rich, and they generally lasted for a long time because it was not easy to get to other parts of the world. The sons of British aristocracy were sent on tours to the 'more cultural' parts of Europe, particularly Italy. The tours were known as grand tours. It was a kind of school extension. The purpose of such tours was to give a young man the opportunity to experience a 'wild life' before settling down. At the beginning the word tourist had a negative connotation. It is still slightly felt in the saying I am an explorer; you are a traveller; he is a tourist. In the middle of the nineteenth century travel opportunities increased with the development of railways and other fast means of transport.

Travelling gradually became a special kind of global leisure activity. It was given the name tourism. Now tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that has to adapt to customers' requirements and desires. Due to globalisation and strong international competition tourism is going through a series of deep transformations.

1. Cyber Communication in Tourism Discourse

In the past few years the importance of tourism industry has rapidly increased due to the Internet. The internet offers new opportunities to tourism providers. They asked the best designers to create attractive and colourful web sites for them. Their products and services have become one of the most traded items on their web sites. They offer here their information and appraisal on a potential destination and thus find more customers and increase their profits.

The Internet, however, is not only a purchasing tool. Tourism web sites are providing the tourism industry with greater and greater power. Tourism web sites have three functions. They provide information about a specific destination, they promote the destination as well as they create or influence the destination image. Potential tourists use web sites to search places and attractions that optimally satisfy their touristic desires. The promoter has to choose the tools that evoke an image that will stimulate tourist's interest to visit such a destination. The destination attributes usually generate and influence the beauty of the destination. It may be said that the chosen words can make the destination more or less attractive. The language in promotion functions as a generator of the destination image.

It is evident that the internet is also a fast and efficient communication and promotional tool. In the last years the phenomenon has been known as cyber communication or cyber promotion. The internet is today a global network that connects tourism providers and potential clients all over the world. They use the Internet to communicate, distribute and market their products to potential customers worldwide in a cost- and time-efficient way (Buhalis and Law 2001).

Communication is the activity of conveying information. Communication includes the addresser, a message, and the addressee. The tourist web site provider and a potential web site client enter a process of cyber communication. To make the communication successful it is important not only to identify the real participants of web sites tourism communication but also to explore the relationship which has been established between them, to state who controls the process of communication and how the addresser constructs a linguistic message for the target addressee. Successful communication depends on both appropriate performance and interpretation of the addresser's intention. In the process of performance the addresser refers via certain linguistic forms to the objects to help the addressee to identify

them during the process of interpretation. The aim is to achieve maximum effect with the smallest amount of energy and time on both addresser and addressee's sides.

This kind of online communication brings together remotely located parties who communicate in electronic space. The distance between the location of the addresser and the target addressee in this type of communication is larger than in everyday communication. The larger is the distance (physical and mental) between the participants of communication, the stronger is the requirement of using more precise and more impressive language. The power of impression plays here an important role. The emotional facial expressions of the communicators are not displayed here; the real facial emotions seen on the faces and heard in the voices of the participants in everyday communication have to be replaced with the words (or pictures or sounds) having the same emotional impact. While in everyday communication both parties are emotionally involved, here web sites text creators are emotionally disinterested; their goal is to evoke an emotional state in the other party. They use emotional words in order to gain control over the addressee, to influence their decisions and change their opinions.

2. Tourism Web Sites Language

The phenomenon of tourism has been studied from different points of view (sociology, economics, cultural studies, etc.). Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard (1998, 2000, 2001) investigate the interrelation of tourism and society. They believe that tourism has to be studied in relation to society, politics and culture. The investigation of the role of language in tourism promotion is not extensive. Swales (1990) focuses his attention on the language of different discourse communities with emphasis on the language of tourism discourse and the linguistic strategies that are used in tourist communication. Urry (1990), Calvi (2005) and Nigro (2006) examine the language of tourism as Language for Special Purposes. Urry (1990) and McCannell (1976) claim that language of tourism conveys specific images of the destination. The language of tourism does not only inform but also persuades what must be seen and evokes an anticipation of intense pleasures. The first crucial work on the language of tourism and its impact on the people's behaviour is the book *The Language of Tourism* (1996) written by Graham Dan. He studies the tourism discourse from a sociolinguistic perspective and reveals its persuasive power of the language of tourism. The author here claims that tourism

business makes use of language in order “to allure and control tourists and their experience of the destination. He proposes a three-stage model of the media of tourism categorization: pre-trip, on-trip and post-trip stages. This model shows the functions of the tourist promotional language according to the used stage“ (1996: 144).

3. Tourism Web Sites Analysis and Findings

The analysed corpus consists of 7764 words and is created from the texts about Scottish castles. The texts were taken from several websites about Scotland, such as

http://www.scotland-welcomes-you.com/scottish_castles.html

<http://www.authenticireland.com/scotland+castle>

<http://www.visitscotland.com/about/history/castles>

<http://www.aboutscotland.com/castles/castles.html>

http://www.celticcastles.com/find_scottish.asp

<http://www.hotelclub.com>

During the analysis the focus was put on the investigation of adjectives. I decided to examine adjectives, the word class that, in my view, possesses the capacity to visualise the attributes of the described objects. Visualisation is very important in the promotional tourism discourse. It enables the addressee to imagine the portrayed reality intensely, vividly, and colourfully and thus to recognize the addressers' intention. There are several classifications of adjectives that are based on morphological, syntactic, semantic, functional and pragmatic criteria. In this analysis I use the functional-pragmatic classification made by C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980), who divides adjectives into two basic: objective and subjective. Then the subjective adjectives are divided into emotional and evaluative, and evaluative into non-axiological (quality or quantity, often gradable) and axiological (expressing subjective value, either positive or negative; Nuria, 2012: 103). In the study I use the covering terms non-evaluative and evaluative adjectives, with emotional adjectives being part of the group of evaluative ones. This helps identify the attitude of the writer to the described reality. I have to admit that in some entries the classification might be subject to my intuition.

The adjectives were collected manually and divided into two basic groups – non-evaluative and evaluative. The evaluative adjectives were further classified into three categories – emotional, non-axiological and axiological.

The following table shows the ratio of evaluative and non evaluative adjective. Out of 664 adjectives (both evaluative and non-evaluative) evaluative adjectives make 53 %. It proves the manipulative approach of the addresser.

	All adjectives		Non-evaluative		Evaluative	
Scottish castles	664	8,5%	312	47%	352	53%

Table 1: The ratio of evaluative to non-evaluative adjectives

Division of adjectives into emotional non-axiological and evaluative axiological
Emotional adjectives: magnificent, beautiful, fine, Peaceful, romantic, tranquil, breathtaking, spectacular, fascinating, memorable, charming, dramatic, cosy luxurious, stunning, fairytale, idyllic, impressive, cosy, fairytale, idyllic, impressive, uxury, majestic, proud, relaxing, striking, comfortable, imposing, magical, mysterious, picturesque,
Evaluative – Non-axiological: perfect, private, original, ancient, secluded, large, photographed, powerful, large, rich, bustling, award winning, colourful, extensive, immense, panoramic, quiet, unspoilt,
Evaluative – Axiological: unique, exclusive, best, famous, great, authentic, exceptional, ideal, superb, true, friendly, grand, iconic, grand, iconic, important, remarkable, renowned, special, excellent, traditional, worth

Emotional adjectives are the most common in the corpus. The table shows the greatest number of emotional adjectives. The addresser deliberately uses emotive colourful words to stimulate interest in the addressee and to manipulate them. Emotional language arouses strong feelings and emotional appeals.

The following list provides the evaluative adjectives that occur in the web sites texts on Scottish castles:

- a) three times (18): *cosy, fairytale, friendly, grand, iconic, idyllic, important, impressive, large, luxury, majestic, proud, relaxing, remarkable, renowned, rich, special, striking*
- b) twice (21): *award winning, boasting, bonnie, bustling, colourful, comfortable, evocative, excellent, extensive, immense, imposing, magical, mysterious, panoramic, picturesque, quiet, steeped in, sumptuous, unspoilt, traditional, worth*
- c) once (40): *able, admired, amazing, attractive, awe-inspired, broad, bygone, delightful, discreet, elaborate, enjoyable, enviable, famed for, favoured, favourite, fulfilling, golden, healthy, inspiring, interesting, inquisitive, lasting, lavish, legendary, lordly, mighty, other-*

worldly, pretty, precious, quintessential, rejuvenating, sophisticated, splendid, stately, sweeping, timeless, unusual, vibrant, visited, well-known, wondrous

The corpus consisting of the texts about Scottish castles provides the abundance of emotional and evaluative adjectives that collocate with the key noun castle. The following list shows their variety as well as the usage in the superlative form.

- *exceptional* castle
- *grand* castle
- *charming* castle
- *iconic* castles
- *luxury exclusive* castle
- *magnificent* castle
- *unique* castle
- *most famous* castle
- *most important* castle
- *one of the grandest* castles
- *one of the most evocative* castles
- *seven most impressive* castles

I observe that persuasive language is a strong linguistic means used in tourism promotional web sites to encourage the site visitor to visit a particular place or sight.

Conclusion

The paper focuses on the role of the web site language in the promotion of a tourist destination. The texts of the analysed web sites promoting Scottish castles are rich in colourful, emotional words, especially adjectives that have the power of strong visualisation of the described entity.

The text creators have to use the emotional language carefully not to create unreal pictures of the individual described destinations.

I would like to express here my desire. I wish cyber communication devices would never be so perfect to enable us to experience all these beautiful destinations virtually, only through words and pictures. I believe that the language of web sites will never be so emotionally

expressive and animating that electronic visualisation will not replace the experience of an actual visit of wonderful places all over the world.

It would definitely protect local cultures against the unfavourable effects of excessive commercialisation. The most visited countries would, however, lose profit gained from tourism.

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