

Stefania M. Maci

English Tourism Discourse

Insights into the Professional, Promotional and Digital Language of Tourism

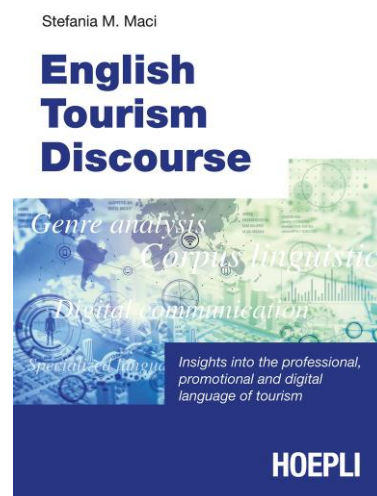
Milan, Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 2020, pp.288

Review by Elena Mattei

Keywords: *English tourism discourse, specialized languages, generic analysis, corpus-based approach, promotional discourse*

The analysis of discourse in contemporary communicative events has a great impact on the reception and understanding of underlying intents and ideologies in the construction of reality. Tourism discourse has often attracted the attention of scholars investigating persuasive language designed to convince consumers of the necessity of a product—or intangible service, as is the case with travel packages—and influence their purchasing behavior by means of perception manipulation. Nowadays, understanding new trends of persuasive communication both at the linguistic and discursive level is fundamental to gain insight into what society considers to be and shapes as attractive for marketing purposes.

This new volume by Maci highlights the role played by the tourism industry in the global economic development as the fastest growing and leading sector in international business markets (3). This is achieved by introducing its specialized, promotional language in English, the *lingua franca* of tourism (218), together with an overview of online multimodal practices. It makes a comprehensive contribution to the literature on English tourism discourse for two main reasons. On the one hand, it provides an exhaustive socio-economic and generic context of tourism narratives; on the other hand, it sheds light on the way rhetorical strategies, lexical items and syntactical structures are exploited to achieve a series of communicative aims revolving around profit-making purposes. By drawing upon Corpus Linguistics to integrate



genre and discourse analysis—without neglecting social semiotics—the author succeeds in creating the contextual and analytical framework that underpins the social and academic relevance of her work. As a matter of fact, tourism discourse reflects new societal economic and communicative trends that have turned this industry into an attentive planner and examiner of the tourist's decision-making process and expectations (218).

Due to its clear structure and rigorous methodology, this textbook provides a guide to those seeking to acquire knowledge about tourism linguistic practices through the lens of generic conventions and hybridization, which characterize specialized tourism texts in sustainable policy making as well as asymmetrical promotional discourse. For these reasons, it may be considered a valuable companion to postgraduate students in the field of discourse analysis, linguistics and tourism marketing studies who wish to understand how this type of discourse is ideologically constructed by means of reliable corpus analysis. Due to its comprehensiveness and practicality, it may also be relevant to scholars who wish to increase their knowledge on the subject as well as to specialists who work in the tourism industry.

The book is divided into three main sections that analyze tourism discourse from different perspectives. While the first part introduces tourism specialized discourse with a focus on professional legal texts (Chapter One, Two and Three), the second part examines different genres belonging to promotional discourse (Chapter Four to Eight). The final section, Chapter Nine, provides insights into electronic discourse. Each section features an internal structure that starts with the outline of the socio-generic context characterizing that specific type of discourse and moves on to the corpus-based quantitative and qualitative discussion of the main linguistic patterns of use. The volume ends with glossaries that define the most distinctive tourism discourse terms.

The first section accompanies the readers in a rapid but effective excursus of tourism discourse conventions through a generic analysis built on Bhatia's work (1993). This part of the book reviews the distinctive syntactic, terminological and textual traits of tourism discourse as a language for specialized purposes (LSP) both in professional and promotional communication. Chapter One, in particular, will be useful to readers unfamiliar with or interested in tourism discourse as representative of a community of experts. The narrative continues with the introduction of a solid corpus-based methodological framework for the exploration of the professional tourism genres of planning and European regulations. The entire first section enables readers who are new to specialized tourism discourse to understand how terminological, lexico-grammatical conventions and specific rhetorical moves pertaining to legal discourse, or *legalese* (51), are exploited by specialists in the industry to

realize new policy agendas and bring social and economic changes that may increase a country's wealth as well as "European tourism competitiveness and its capacity for sustainable growth" (47). The practical inspection of linguistic patterns—such as in the analysis of the frequency of modality markers across a spectrum of epistemicity, deonticity and dynamicity in European recommendations—clearly shows, in the light of *interdiscursivity*, how language is manipulated for specific objectives, i.e. to ideologically display managerial entrepreneurship in governance or to express authority and obligation in regulations.

In the second part of the volume, the focus shifts from the *professional* to the *promotional* genres of tourism discourse. By underlining the importance of persuasiveness as the most characteristic ideological aspect and pragmatic function of promotion in the tourism industry, the author paves the way for the introduction of the theoretical approaches and semiotic resources that help specialists manipulate the perception and pre-consumption of a destination and the expectations regarding the intangible tourist experience. Here, the readers are invited to reflect upon the role of tourism as a social phenomenon, shaped by individuals in the last centuries to answer the need for a sense of *authenticity* which may be perceived in the *unknown, remote* and Edward Said's *dominated* "other" (1978) (Dann 1996). The understanding of tourism discourse as such allows advertisers, consumers and scholars to discover the potential of behavior manipulation by means of communication.

Later on in this section, the central role of promotion in tourism rhetoric is discussed as a social phenomenon worthy of note. This part provides an overview of persuasive strategies in the pre-trip and during-trip stages of the consumer's decision-making process and ways in which these are realized. Purely promotional and often multimodal advertising material is presented in chapter Five, whereas more informative genres such as brochures, catalogues and itineraries are investigated in chapter Six. Attention is devoted also to understudied elements in the field (inflight magazines, chapter Seven) and to hybrid forms such as tourist guides (Chapter Eight). One aspect that readers may find to be of particular interest is the role that advertising posters play on encoding and decoding processes that attract attention of the tourist. Indeed, these devices are realized through the interplay between visuals, which stimulate memory and enhance the effectiveness of written text, and either puns or rhetorical strategies such as irony or metaphors. In particular, the presence of foreign words—which are native of the destination promoted—in code-switching strategies stimulates the creation of a *linguascape*, an ideologically constructed (i.e. ideal) representation of a destination and a social community in which foreigners perceive and trust its authenticity, consequently wishing

to associate their identity with it (98) and become part of a global, successful and elitist group of people.

The final section enables the readers to gain an understanding of how to conduct a successful and insightful corpus-based analysis of tourism discourse on online channels. In particular, the author identifies the opportunities offered by the Web as the most powerful and widely used means of persuasive communication design, both verbal and visual, which shape the expectations of the prospective customer and provide an idealized, attractive representation of the destination that may be “lived” before having the actual experience (183). This chapter ends the manuscript harmoniously by bringing together all the methodological and theoretical frameworks used in it and by confirming the presence in online promotional narratives of highly evaluative linguistic features, which are based on emotional impact and aesthetic appreciation—along with practical and referential information. This repertoire of stances epistemically conveys how the destination should be perceived and is presumably anchored to the real world (127), and it concurs to the realization of persuasion and change of behavior in old and new target audiences.

In conclusion, this book is a detailed introduction to tourism discourse which might prove relevant to students at a range of levels as well as researchers and experienced scholars interested in tourism discourse as a dynamic and impactful socio-economic phenomenon. Indeed, it showcases its ability to develop and leverage linguistic devices and rhetorical structures as a response to changes in the tourism industry and adjustment to contemporary technological and socio-semiotic affordances. The combination of these factors underpins the emergence of new communicative aims and conventions which shape novel genres and forms of communication which, according to the author, “promote, determine and govern tourism and the tourist’s experience” (220).

This volume might be considered an extremely valuable addition to the literature on tourism discourse that accompanies other major volumes on the matter (Manca 2016; Gotti et al. 2017). Nevertheless, one area that might be further developed is the question of the latest trends of electronic promotional discourse, such as social media posts and visual communication. Despite the fact that this was not the main focus of the book, the analysis of images may be enhanced by the methodological framework and in-depth observations which can be provided by a social semiotic and Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective (Francesconi 2014; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) and by new trends of multimodal corpus-based research (Bateman 2017). Indeed, Bateman advocates the need for a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach to this kind of analysis. In my opinion, the investigation of the

functions that language and other forms of communication have in the creation of context-dependent meaning may contribute more fully to contemporary tourism e-discourse. Additionally, the systematic analysis of corpora of text and images or videos will shed light on new patterns of interrelated ideological meaning which might not be detected otherwise, and which may provide insights into novel expressions of persuasion as a response or activation of specific social needs.

Elena Mattei is a PhD candidate in Digital Humanities and English Language at the University of Verona. Her research interests focus on the collection and analysis of tourism multimodal corpora on social media, with particular attention to both Visual Design and Systemic Functional Linguistics theories.

Works cited

- Bateman, John, Janina Wildfeuer and Tuomo Hiippala. *Multimodality: Foundations, Research and Analysis – A Problem-oriented Introduction*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2017.
- Bhatia, Vijay. *Analyzing Genre Language Use in Professional Settings*. London: Longman, 1993.
- Dann, Graham. *The Language of Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Wallingford: CAB International, 1996.
- Francesconi, Sabrina. *Reading Tourism Texts: A Multimodal Analysis*. Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2014.
- Gotti, Maurizio, Stefania Maci and Maurizio Sala, edited by. *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being: Representing the Voices of Tourism*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2017.
- Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Manca, Elena. *Persuasion in Tourism Discourse: Methodologies and Models*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient*. New York: Pantheon, 1978.