

THE “POWER OF INCANTATION”: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN THEME PARKS’ WEBSITES

SARA CORRIZZATO, VALERIA FRANCESCHI
UNIVERSITÀ DI VERONA

Abstract – Representing “an instance of highly specialized discourse” (Gotti 2006, p. 21), the language of tourism has become an area of great interest in academia, where its multifaceted essence has been studied from different, but intertwined, perspectives. A common feature that characterizes tourist materials is the shared aim of convincing future clients to choose the tourist attraction they are promoting, implementing specific verbal, visual and multimodal techniques. Amongst the strategies commonly associated with the language of tourism promotion tense and magic can be found (Dann 1996). The first projects the tourist outside of present time, denying the existence of time itself, or by transporting the tourist into a nostalgic past or into a utopic future. Magic, on the other hand, relies on the “power of incantation”, and on the transportation to locations that do not only exist outside of time, but also outside of a physical place. This contribution aims at investigating how such strategies come into play in the promotion of major theme parks across Europe. Looking specifically at the language used in the construction of narratives in the official websites of eight major European theme parks, the data will be analyzed through both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The use of keywords and expressions pertaining to these two dimensions will be analyzed and commented upon, with the aim of investigating which distinctive promotional strategies are used to “convert [tourists] from potential to actual clients” (Dann 1996, p. 2) in the domain of theme parks.

Keywords: theme parks; language of tourism; keywords analysis; corpus linguistics; discourse analysis.

1. Introduction

Due to its unstoppable progress and widespread influence on inter- and national economies, the travel and tourism industry is nowadays considered as “one of the world’s largest industries with a global economic contribution (direct, indirect and induced) of over 7.6 trillion U.S. dollars in 2016”.¹

¹ <https://www.statista.com/topics/962/global-tourism/> (12.03.2018).

According to recent research by UNWTO (The World Tourism Organization), tourism appears to be an essential ingredient for our planet's development and prosperity as well as for people's well-being. In terms of socio-economic development, an increasing number of jobs and enterprises have been created thanks to the growing quantity of urban and rural areas that rely on tourism as a source of income. As a consequence, many areas of the world, almost unknown before, have become popular thanks to new tourist flows.² Over the last decades, the tourism sector has indeed shown to be one of the strongest and most variable industries, going from 25 million international tourist arrivals in 1950 to 1322 million in 2017.³ Most notably, in 2016 international tourist arrivals worldwide have risen up to 1235 billion, demonstrating that the top ten international destinations were France, the United States, Spain, China, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, Mexico, Thailand and Austria.⁴

Although the tourism sector has been proven by a recent EUROSTAT study⁵ to be resilient in face of economic crisis, it “is primarily a services-based industry – the principal products provided by tourism businesses are experiences and hospitality. These are intangible products and more difficult to market than tangible products such as cars” (Davashish 2011, p. 1). For these reasons, promoting a destination is recognized as one of the key elements to attract tourists and to win customer loyalty.

However, promotional strategies connected to tourism have to take into consideration a significant number of factors: “tourism is a volatile business”, as Nagle (1999) clarifies, because “not only is it subject to climatic change, it is also influenced by political instability, currency fluctuations, changes on fashion and changes on economy” (Nagle 1999, p. 9). As a matter of fact, social, cultural, historical, political, economic, legal or technological factors, just to name a few, can deeply affect perspective tourists' choices. Yet in 1979, Cohen's words indeed aptly explain the concept that considering tourists “as ‘travellers for pleasure’ [...] is a superficial view of the tourist” (Cohen 1979, p. 179).

² UNWTO - Tourism Highlights <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284418145> (10.03.2018).

³ <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2018-01-15/2017-international-tourism-results-highest-seven-years> (12.02.2018).

⁴ <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284419029> (14.03.2018).

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_industries_-_employment#Tourism_industries_prove_resilient_to_the_economic_crisis_and_provide_jobs_for_women_and_young_people (13.03.2018).

1.1 Understanding the language of tourism promotion

A closer look at contemporary tourists indeed demonstrates that they are not a monolithic community, but they actually show different characteristics, being driven by diverging motivating factors. In this regard, Dann (1996) recognizes four theoretical perspectives that contribute to delineate tourist profiles: if the so-called authenticity perspective is supposed to illustrate people’s desire to live authentic experiences, merging with the real lives of others, the strangerhood hypothesis focuses more on the tourist’s “appreciation of the experience of strangeness and novelty” (Cohen 1972, p. 165).⁶ The third categorization, defined play perspective, “sees tourism as a play, as a game in which popular pleasure and fun are key concepts” (Cappelli 2006, p. 50). Tracing its roots “in the growth of the British seaside resort [...] and its organization of proletarian mass leisure in holiday camps, leaving the middle and upper class to gaze romantically on nature” (Dann 1996, p. 18), this perspective puts its emphasis on spectacle, trying to meet clients’ desire for creativity, storytelling, humour, wit, music and fantasy. In Urry’s (1990) opinion individuals are attracted by hyperreality, where temporal and special constraints do not exist. Finally, the last categorization, the conflict dimension, has been mostly applied to tourism flows towards less developed countries, as its definition finds its roots in the assumption that interest for this type of tourism grows because of discrepancies existing in wealth distribution and power location.

Offering eye-opening reflections on the role globalization has played in re-shaping the idea of travel and tourism, Fyall and Garrod (2005, p. 3) also point out that traditional promotional methods within business companies are being replaced by “enduring collaborative arrangements”, and this recent approach seems to perfectly fit tourism industry, “where fragmented, multi-sectoral and interdependent nature of tourism provides a catalytic focus for inter-organizational co-ordination” (Fyall, Garrod 2005, p. 3). In order to attract more clients, different marketing resources have been created,

⁶ The accurate description of tourists within the second category given by Cohen (1979) also helped the following researchers in the field categorize them into five subcategories. Those defined as “recreational” tend to live the experience as a relief, i.e. “a temporary and enjoyable [...] movement away from the Centre” (Dann 1996, p. 14). After their playful trip, they will be completely part of their “Centre” again. The second type of tourists are called “divisionary”, since they are driven by boredom and dissatisfaction with their “Centre”. Unlike the previous example, the so-called “experiential” tourists, dissatisfied with their every-day routine, find relief in unknown places. A more elaborated version of experiential tourism is identified as “experimental”, “in which travel is determined by chance and whim, rather than by tourism industry” (Richards 2010, p. 79). The fifth category of tourism is presented as “existential”: the individual in fact replaces the “Centre” with the “Other”. He completely identifies with the “Other” abandoning his own socio-cultural origins.

improved and exploited throughout the years: Francesconi (2014) offers an accurate classification of “genre families”, as defined by Calvi (2010, p. 16), in tourism discourse by recognizing seven categories. The first one, labelled “editorial”, includes travel books, travel guides, travel and tourist magazines; the second group, called “institutional”, comprises official leaflets, brochures, websites and advertisements. In the third category, defined as “commercial”, hotel brochures, leaflets, advertisements and travel agent websites are specified; while tickets, bookings, cards and invoices are examples of the “organizational” group. Within the “legal” dimension, regulations and norms can be found, while critical volumes, essays and articles are part of the “scientific and academic” sector. Travel blogs and travel chats exemplify the last category, called “informal” (Calvi 2010, p. 15).

The heterogeneity of print and digital materials makes their creation really complex, so that several aspects in their construction have to be taken into account. Basically, as Dann (1996, p. 171) suggests, the techniques used are predominately verbal - i.e. the use of figures of speech, the relevant role of key words or ego-targeting – and they generally successfully coexist with visual techniques aiming at optimizing promotional materials’ effect through the specific use of colours, format and visual cliché. However, the plurilithic nature of tourism and its heterogeneous interactants has been acknowledged too, so marketing and promotional strategies have become of central interest in order to fully understand how combinations of words and pictures can “persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings and, in so doing, convert from potential into actual clients” (Dann 1996, p. 2). Marketing experts rely on the aforementioned four perspectives to create promotional materials that could be able to attract future clients by exerting considerable leverage on their desires and needs. According to a general observation, parts of speech become attracting elements aiming at tempting people; therefore, the promotion of a given destination implies a creative and unique approach. Language of authentication, of differentiation, and of appropriation are in fact directly associated respectively to the authenticity, the strangerhood and the conflict perspectives, while linguistic choices defined as “a language of recreation” are those connected to the play perspective (see Dann 1996).

1.2. Theme park promotion

Due to their heterogeneous and multifaceted nature, theme parks are generally associated with various perspectives: if those most common are the play and the strangerhood ones, the authenticity perspective may be also taken into consideration when related to the notion of hyperreality. Indeed, in Dann’s words “authenticity does not reside in reality, but in an interpreted representation of reality” (Dann 1996, p. 19). The notion of hyperreality, originally theorized by Baudrillard (1981), has been often associated with

places such as theme parks, where “the distinction between reality and fantasy is momentarily blurred” (Brown 2016, p. 24) and the “experiences and settings” guests encounter “are engineered to allow consumers to vicariously experience some other place, time, or reality” (Edvardsson *et al.* 2005, p. 151), to the point that the fictional reality appears to be more credible than the real (Brown 2016, p. 24; Eco 2003, p. 59; Sangiorgi 2012, p. 69). The language of authentication, as will be seen, may be found in theme park promotional material, to highlight its hyperreal nature. This sort of hyperreality is created by rejecting the traditional idea of time and space in favour of a new dimension in which out-of-time and out-of-space magical microcosms can develop; visitors have indeed the possibility to sink in unknown worlds where conventional living rules do not count (Urry 1990). The theme park itself may indeed be seen as a non-place (Augé 1997; see also Sangiorgi 2012, p. 69). In this specific case, promotional language used to develop future visitors’ interest aims at “playfully recreate[s] reality” (Dann 1996, p. 21-23). Within a crafted scenery where tourists are invited to play “the role of children by evoking themes of regression and pleasure” (Dann 1996, p. 117), linguistic choices are proven to be of great importance to achieve the goal, which is mainly governed by the “three Fs” model: Fun (Cohen 1985), Fantasy (Boorstin 1987) and Fairy tales (Jafari, Gardner 1991). As a matter of fact, the harmonic co-existence of past, present and future tenses and the persistent reference to magical worlds and fairy tales contributes to shape the visitors’ desire to be part of the new environment (see Sangiorgi 2007a, 2007b, 2012). Perceiving the theme park experience as a journey through time and space, timelessness is reinforced so that the present seems to disappear, leaving room to structures pointing to either the past or the future. Past tenses are mainly used to come back to forgotten worlds, whereas future tenses testify a promise to make visitors have fun, laugh and live thrilling and magic experiences. Magic indeed is seen as an element that “misrepresents time in space and vice versa” (Dann 1996, p. 55) captivating and luring clients.

From a more general perspective, the use of language within the field of tourism has become of great interest in the study of promotional strategies and recipients’ response, since the lexicon of tourism has been classified as a form of specialized discourse (Gotti 2006). Studies concerning specific linguistic traits and their impact on the tourism sector have indeed focused on a variety of promotional tools, demonstrating that the choice of words can deeply influence the perlocutionary force of utterances not only promoting the target destination but also fostering different processes of socio-cultural representation and negotiation. In some cases, both visual and textual features “re-present the place, [...] which is oriented and manipulated by and through promotional aims” (Francesconi 2007, p. 44). Thus, both print and digital

promotional materials have been analyzed from different angles (e.g. De Stasio, Palusci 2007; Hallet, Kaplan-Weinger 2010; Agorni 2012; Manca, Bianchi 2013; Teodorescu 2014; Manca 2016; Gotti, Maci, Sala 2017; Malenkina, Ivanov 2018) to investigate how and to what extent language is intrinsically intertwined with marketing strategies.

Websites, whether tourist operator boards, destination websites, or Facebook pages, have recently become the most investigated type of tourism promotion material, as testified by the numerous studies carried out in recent times (e.g. Cesiri 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Bianchi 2017a, 2017b; Pierini 2008, 2009; Manca 2008, 2009, 2013; Maci 2017; Castello 2002, 2017). Linguistic and rhetorical features of the language of tourism online appear to be consistent with those originally identified by Dann (1996) and further developed over the years by other researchers in the field.

2. The present study

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the official websites for major European theme parks and determine which linguistic and rhetorical devices are most frequently used to promote the parks and their services. We expected to find a pervasive use of two of Dann's perspectives, namely the strangerhood and the play perspective, alongside a stronger presence of words related to the dimension of magic. Due to the very nature of theme parks, which may include settings reconstructing entire geographical areas or historical periods, the a-temporal, a-spatial dimensions would also be likely to be stressed in the websites.

More specifically, we would investigate whether these websites promote their destinations by making use of what Dann (1996, p. 55) has called "the power of incantation"; in that respect, he states that the dimensions of time in space are expanded and recreated within the physical boundaries of the park and people are transformed into someone "other than [them]selves" (Dann 1996, p. 55).

2.1. Methodology and data selection

Eight websites of European theme parks were selected for the creation of the corpus. The eight theme parks were chosen according to the annual number of visitors.⁷ A deliberate choice was made to exclude from the list theme parks based on pre-existing trademarked products such as *Disneyland Resort*

⁷ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/194291/attendance-at-theme-and-amusement-parks-in-europe-since-2010/> (04.09.2018).

Paris and *Legoland*, as we assumed these universes would influence the attractions, shows, and accommodation offered as well as language used to promote them. The French park *Puy du Fou* was also excluded due to its focus on historical themes and shows rather than traditional attractions and rides. Data was therefore collected from the websites of the following theme parks:

- *Europa-Park* (EP), Germany
- *Efteling* (EF), The Netherlands
- *Tivoli Gardens* (TG), Denmark
- *PortAventura* (PA), Spain
- *Liseberg* (LB), Sweden
- *Gardaland* (GD), Italy
- *Phantasialand* (PhL), Germany
- *Alton Towers* (AT), United Kingdom⁸

For each website, three sections were selected for analysis, namely

- a) rides and attractions
- b) shows
- c) hotels and accommodations

As the aforementioned categories were deemed those more likely to include detailed descriptions of the park. In addition, these sections were common to all these websites, with the exception of *Liseberg*, which, as a smaller park, does not have internal accommodation. Elements that appeared repeatedly in multiple website pages, like links to other sections of the website, technical or accessibility information on the rides, etc., were purged from the texts. The final corpus totaled at around 45,054 words.

A mixed quantitative and qualitative approach was adopted to investigate the corpus, drawing from the tenets of corpus linguistics for the quantitative part, and discourse analysis for the qualitative section of the analysis. The first part involved the automatic calculation of single-word keywords in the corpus, with the aim of identifying those terms that emerged as significant in theme park promotion. To this purpose, the corpus analysis tool Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2014) was used. Amongst the numerous reference corpora available on Sketch Engine, *English Wikipedia* was finally selected as, upon reflection, it was considered the most suitable example of

⁸ The parks taken into consideration are characterized by different types of attractions aimed at different age brackets, from family rides oriented towards younger children to intense rollercoasters and thrill rides for teenagers and adults. With the exception of *Tivoli Gardens*, which is a traditional luna park, the others are divided into multiple areas, each one with a different theme (e.g. fairytale, Far West, Arab souk, China, etc.) that is reflected in the rides, shows and food joints. All parks except for *Liseberg* also provide accommodation options, some of which evoke the themes found in the park.

online written informative discourse. As we expected specific words pertaining to the individual parks – such as park, area or attraction names – to score high in keyness due to their absence or very low frequency in the reference corpus, a choice was made to set a value of 100 in the “add-N” parameter for keyword extraction, in order to favor the presence of more common words in the keyword list rather than very rare ones (Kilgarriff 2009).

The resulting keywords were then filtered for noise: park and attraction names, as well as terms pertaining exclusively to the area of hotels and accommodation (e.g. *breakfast*, *bunk beds*, *microwave*, etc.) were purged from the final list, alongside words that only occurred in a single website. Out of the 150 keywords identified by the tool, 120 lemmas were eventually included in our final list.⁹ The focus was prevalently on lexical keywords – i.e. adjectives, nouns, verbs, adverbs – which constituted a springboard on which to base the qualitative aspect of our research.

Part of speech	Number of Keywords
Nouns	68
Adjectives	34
Verbs	29
Adverbs	2
Pronouns	6

Table 1
Breakdown of keywords by part of speech.

As may be noticed, the sum of the individual elements exceeds the total number of keywords taken into consideration; this is clearly because some of the lemmas in the list occur as different parts of speech (e.g. *ride*, which occurs as both noun and verb) and are therefore counted in two categories

The keywords were then divided according to themes: two macro-themes were identified that were consistent, as expected, with the play and strangerhood perspectives: fairy tales and adventure. Both themes contribute to the distortion of the dimensions of space and time: park guests are plucked out of spatio-temporal reality and become time travelers; in addition, visitors have access to supernatural universes where the laws and constraints of physics are non-existent and a plethora of fantastic, mythological characters come to life.

⁹ This final list is reported in Annex 1.

2.2. Fairy tales and Adventures

Many of the identified keywords could potentially fit in both categories, due to the fact that adventure can be considered an element of fairytales, while others can be more easily distinguished as belonging to one or the other genre. These two themes are expressed through multiple aspects in the website, as may be seen from the following keywords:

- Supernatural/mythological creatures: *dragon, giant, ghost, pirate, fairy*
- Adjectives: *enchanting, exciting, magical, spectacular, wild, brave, fantastic, beautiful, adventurous, amazing, incredible, dark*
- Scenic nouns: *tower, jungle, woodland, garden, land*
- Action verbs: *ride, dare, discover, fly, dream, dance, climb*

A search for collocations relating to these keywords suggest that the websites provide accurate and detailed descriptions for the themed areas of the park as well as the themed attractions, as may be seen from the examples below

(1) The Matterhorn Blitz awaits, and will whisk you off on a *wild* and rugged mountain valley ride. (EP)

(2) The king calls upon all brave citizens. Slay the *dragon* that terrorises the kingdom! (EF)

Some of these keywords may have received a particularly high keyness score due to the popularity of themed areas and attractions that may be common in multiple parks, such as a fairy tale area, or because it is part of the name of an attraction, or due to the timeframe in which the collection of data took place, that is, around Halloween.

Scenic nouns, which are a common feature of the language of tourism and have shown high keyness scores in previous studies (Kang, Yu 2011, p. 134), are often accompanied in this corpus by adjectives that once again evoke desirable connotations, relating the locations to experiences that would be unimaginable in ordinary life: “beautiful, faraway *lands* with a distinct Asian charm” (PhL), “the ruins of an ancient Aztec *tower* covered in hieroglyphics” (PA), “the treasures of the thick unexplored *jungle!*” (GD) However, the idea of potential danger is also inherent in the narrative presented in the websites, where rides are often presented, as in traditional tales, as obstacles to overcome or enemies to escape from or vanquish. This can be seen through both adjectives and verbs in the corpus, as in example 2 above, or in other instances, such as “*dare* you enter our terrifying scare mazes” (AT), “behold this creepy scene in the *dark* and try not to be afraid” (EF), “blood-curdling encounters with terrifying monsters and creatures of the night” (PA). In the fictional world of theme parks, using this type of

negatively-connoted terms does not reflect negatively on visitor interest but, on the contrary, a safe ‘scare’ or obstacle is welcomed by visitors.

2.3. Time and space

The stress on the dimensions of fairy tales and adventures goes hand in hand with, and contributes actively to, one of the main techniques employed in the websites analyzed, that is, the distortion, to the point of subsuming entirely, of the spatial and temporal dimensions. The disappearance of the conventional notion of time is a common device in promotional tourism discourse (Dann 1996). In the theme park setting, however, this technique appears to be amplified. First, space is also involved, as often multiple geographical settings are reproduced – specific cities – or evoked – countries, or wider areas – within the confines of the park. The guest therefore has the impression of moving from one city – or country – to another in a matter of minutes, as in Europa Park, whose themed areas are inspired by European countries. The extracts below exemplify this technique, as both highlight the opportunity for the guest to travel to the four corners of the planet while being in the park.

(3) Get ready to experience the greatest adventure for fearless adventurers, whether it means crossing the North Pole or the Jungle, rather than the Wild West or the fascinating Arab world, your exploration will be breathtaking! (GD)

(4) You can travel the world in a few minutes (EF)

Vocabulary pertaining to traveling was present in the keyword list. Words like *ride* and *journey* have high keyness, especially the former as in its noun form it is used to indicate the attractions. Other keywords occurring extensively across parks pertain to the realm of spatial movement, such as *boat*, *fly*, *trip*, *walk*, *gondola*, *train*, *climb*, *world*, some of which overlap with the dimensions of fairy tales and adventure. The scenic nouns listed in those dimensions also contribute to providing an idea of immediate long-distance travel, as if the guest was being teleported from a location to another. Guests are indeed invited to “hop aboard one of these *boats*” (PA), “witness the *world* from above” (EP) and “float hundreds of feet up in *gondolas* all the colors on the rainbow” (AT)

Passages like “this old steam *train* departs from the Estació del Nord and takes you to the Far West of PortAventura” (PA) connect the erasure of the spatial dimension to that of the temporal dimension. Visitors can move not only through space, but also through time, moving easily through historical eras, from the Far West to Viking Scandinavia or to the Italian Renaissance as guests ride in “one of Leonardo da Vinci's ingenious flying machines!” (EP).

Visitors to theme parks can therefore escape the constraints of time and space during their stay at the park, but, in addition, they can also escape reality in its entirety, as they may find themselves in fictional settings populated by magical creatures and fairy tale characters: park guests “escape from reality” (EF) and can evoke a genie by rubbing Aladdin’s lamp, or take a “virtual journey into the mysterious world of the spirit of the American Natives” (GD).

2.4. Hyperreality and the Strangerhood perspective

The aspects introduced in the previous sections suggest that tourism promotional material for theme parks both underline their hyperreal nature while at the same time making extensive use of the strangerhood perspective (Cohen 1972), with the latter playing a more prominent role even as they overlap in the description of attractions, shows, and themed hotel rooms. Moving constantly across space and time satisfies the guest’s desire of an “experience of strangeness and novelty” (Cohen 1972, p. 165); at the same time, the authenticity perspective is used to make sure that the exotic experience is also realistic. In the websites analyzed, it is often highlighted that the park’s reconstructions are very faithful reproductions of their real world’s counterparts, aiming at providing the guest with a convincing, immersive experience where fiction is undistinguishable from reality. The use of language of authentication, commonly associated with the authenticity perspective (MacCannell 1989), may be interpreted here as stressing the nature of the park as hyperreal, where fictional objects and experiences are perceived as “more real than the real” (Brown 2016, p. 24). This can be seen in the websites, starting from the presence of the adjective *real* in the list of identified keywords, which suggests an equivalence between the fictional world of the park and the actual locations or events it attempts at reproducing. Guests can indeed see “*real* soldiers” (PA), a “*real* Night Garden”¹⁰ (AT), and have a “*real* farm adventure” (EP). The words authentic, typical, original, while not listed among the keywords, are also found, as may be seen in the examples below:

- (5) Transport yourself to an authentic hacienda in colonial Mexico (PA)
- (6) Observe the typical Nordic wildlife (LB)
- (7) Experience the rhythm of Africa for yourself, live! On original drums from West Africa – djembes (EF)

¹⁰ In the Night Garden is a British TV show aimed at children of pre-school age.

The language of authentication is employed here to legitimize the fictional world of the parks, although it has to be noted that this technique is not used consistently in all websites, as it was more common in the Spanish park, with these terms occurring sporadically, or with other meanings, in the other websites. The language of authentication, and more specifically the word *real*, also contributes to the construction of a play perspective – and in turn to the transformation of the guest – which will be investigated in the next section. More common and evident across the corpus is the adoption of a strangerhood perspective, through which the guests leave their world behind and are taken to strange, new, fantastic dimensions.

This perspective is here achieved through a language of differentiation that highlights the element of discovery, mystery and adventure, that is, anything that can offer a respite from the boring routine of home. The spectacular and the impossible are also present, offering unique experiences that would not be available to visitors outside the theme park. We find the language of differentiation applied to existing historical eras and locations – “discover an African village” (EP) as well as to the realms of magic, fairy tales, legends and even science fiction that take the visitor into a completely different dimension. A “mysterious wormhole” (GD), the “legendary city of Atlantis” (EP), and the “humble tower of the Mystery Castle” (PhL) are some of the out-of-the-ordinary settings in which incredible adventures can take place. Once they have “escaped from reality” (EF), visitors will find themselves escaping from “the deadly claws of the tireless predator” (GD), or “a massive volcano eruption” (PA); encountering “curious creatures” (TG), or again going “through lush aquatic landscape” (PhL), and enjoying “spectacular” shows (EF/PA). In the park, childhood dreams can become true: visitors “can live the dream of flying” (EP) and continue living in a dream even after they have woken up in a themed room of a park hotel.

The play perspective is also frequently adopted in theme park promotional material, as the attractions are fictional reconstructions. In such places, tourism is perceived as a game, based on artificial, contrived experiences. The language of differentiation is not only applied to the narrative context through which the rides and shows are presented, but at times the curtain of fiction is parted and the technical characteristics of the rides are exposed in order to attract visitors. Ride information is generally provided for rollercoasters, aimed at visitors looking for a thrill and for whom the magical atmosphere of theme parks goes hand in hand with the adrenaline rush provided by an intense ride. Coasters are described as “spectacular” (EF), “high-speed” (PhL), and having “amazing loops” (TG). Going beyond the identified keywords, comparative forms are used to underline the uniqueness of the ride and the experience it provides: we read of “the highest looping of a catapult coaster in Europe” (EP), “the world’s first 14 loop

rollercoaster” (AT), the “longest and fastest in Scandinavia” (LB) and so on. The next section will highlight how the play perspective clearly emerges from our corpus through the use of vocabulary, tenses and pronouns.

2.5. The guest as active agent and transformation of the guest

The play perspective, introduced by Urry in 1990, is traditionally associated to theme parks and to the idea of tourism as a game, where the fictional aspect of the holiday experience has a prominent role. This perspective is easily identified in the corpus as emerging from the analysis of multiple linguistic aspects in the websites that pertain to the language of recreation, namely pronoun and lexical keywords, and tense use.

The widespread presence of the personal and possessive pronouns *you*, *your*, which rank respectively first and second for keyness, and the reflexive *yourself* suggest that prospective visitors are addressed directly in the websites. This use of pronouns, known as ego-targeting and also recognized as a common device of the language of advertising (see e.g. Leech 1966), represents the attempt to establish a friendly, informal relationship between the writer and its audience, as the reader perceives that s/he is being addressed individually. Prospective visitors are thus informed of the many opportunities, adventures and experiences they can have at the park, experiences of which they are the active protagonists. Indeed, the visitor is not passively observing what happens in the park or on the rides; on the contrary, the discourse here aims at giving visitors control over their own actions, through which they may influence the course of the plots upon which the rides are based. This strategy fits within the view of the theme park as a hyperreality, where “customers go “on stage” and take an active or passive role in cocreating the experience” (Edvardsson *et al.* 2005, p. 151).

The use of pronouns outlined above contributes to, but is not the only linguistic element employed to, infuse agency in the prospective guest: the use of the verbs *can* and *will*, when accompanying the pronoun *you*, underlines the opportunities for future action that can be undertaken in the park, as may be seen from the following examples:

- (8) *you can* put your pirate skills to the test (AT)
- (9) *you can* defy waves and sea monsters (EF)

A similar role is played by the imperative form, which is used generously in the websites, as both an exhortation for the prospective guest to take action and as a device to immerse the reader in the narrative and increase desire to try the experience first-hand.

- (10) Use the interactive chimes to create a magical tune to woo Rapunzel to safety (EP)

The use of imperatives, however, does not only aim at giving guests the illusion of agency within the park, as in example (10) above, but also have the purpose of transforming them into someone different, someone who exists and lives outside the boundaries of ordinary life.

- (11) Hence, get ready to live the life of a curious and... fearless explorer!
(GD)
- (12) Become a princess in your favourite fairytale (GD)
- (13) When the ghosts and ghouls attack, this is your chance to fight back
(AT)

Imperatives are not the only verbal form used to create the illusion of transformation into someone different. In the following extract, for example, we see again the use of the future tense through the verb *will*:

- (14) You *will* be the Snow Princess in the Kingdom of Ice! (GD)

The use of the future tense in the language of tourism creates in the reader a sense of anticipation and desire. Indeed, here the guest – or, more likely, their children – may be drawn by the promise that they will turn into princesses for the duration of their stay at the parks.

The third element of the language of recreation is constituted by lexical keywords. Namely, the play perspective is achieved through the adjective *real* and the verb to *feel*. As with the elements previously discussed, these also contribute to turning guests into active protagonists, taking different roles according to the chosen ride, show, or hotel. Visitors will become “*real* heroes” (EP), “*real* daredevils” (EF), “*real* princess” (GD). The adjective often appears in combination with *feel*, in the structure “feel like a real”, followed by the role taken by the guest: race driver, Red Baron, Cowboy, Far West magnate, and so on. The simile “feel like” also occurs in four websites (AT/EF/EP/PA) to introduce the transformation of the guest; in this case, in addition to roles (e.g. true cowboy, intrepid explorer, real-life adventurers) and fictional characters (e.g. Sinbad the sailor), one ride makes visitors also feel like “a pin ball” (AT). This requires, on the part of the guests, to adopt a suspension of disbelief by which they accept the fictional dimensions created within the borders of the park as reality, shedding their own ordinary identities to take on the roles suggested by the park, embarking on missions, i.e. the rides, and whose actions can determine the success of that mission and the safety of others.

The presence of the play perspective is however not limited to the transformation of the guest; the language of recreation is also used in the description of the experience of the rides, with a preference for thrill rides like roller coasters. As said in the previous section, the narrative is ‘broken’ and an attempt is made to create anticipation in the visitor by evoking the physical sensation of riding roller coasters and other attractions. We find again the keyword *feel* to introduce these passages: passengers on these rides may *feel* dizzy, as though “[they] are being lifted off [their] seat” (PA), or they may feel the pressure of gravity forces and of centrifugal forces. While this aspect may still play into the narrative of adventure that pervades park descriptions, and occur alongside it, it suggests that the websites are also catering to a category of theme park goers that have a specific interest in intense rides and roller coasters. Indeed, both the terms *coaster* and *rollercoaster* are included in the list of identified keywords, indicating the relevance of this type of ride in promoting theme parks online. Hyperreality here coexists with more traditional advertising, where the rollercoaster is perceived and presented as a product, stripped of its magic role in the narrative.

3. Conclusion

As testified by several major studies (see Dann 1996; and Gotti 2006), the language used in the promotion of tourism locations has been collocated within the field of specialized discourses, because it uses specific linguistic strategies aiming at convincing prospective visitors to choose the advertised destination. Verbal – as well as visual – components of promotional materials are essential in the construction of a product which can seduce clients exploiting their (non)-hidden desires. In light of these observations, Dann’s four perspectives accurately clarify different tourists’ needs by highlighting the reasons why they are motivated to select a specific site or travel. The present study demonstrates that the promotion of theme parks does not move away from these shared assumptions, adopting several linguistic strategies that lead even more and more individuals to spend at least one day in a theme park.¹¹ According to recent research, *Europa Park* (Germany), *Efteling* (Holland) and *Tivoli Gardens* (Denmark) are among the twenty-five most visited theme and amusement parks worldwide in 2016.¹² The keywords identified and selected in the present study show that the parks under examination are presented as a post-modern, hyperreal non-place, where

¹¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/194247/worldwide-attendance-at-theme-and-amusement-parks-since-2010/> (05.04.2018).

advertising of the fictional as authentic is combined with the subsuming of the dimensions of time and space and the suspension of the laws of physics to plunge guests into fictional realms in which fun, fairy tales and thrilling adventures are essential elements. The play perspective appears to be the preponderant aspect, with continuous references to the strangerhood perspective. The authenticity perspective may also be included, contributing to the construction of the park as a hyperreal non-place. While the present study focused specifically on the power of incantation and on the magic aspect attributed to theme parks, it should also be noted that a more concrete element is also present in the websites, as testified by the attention to the technical specifications of roller coasters mentioned above, as well as by the numerous filtered keywords pertaining to the services offered by the hotels and other accommodation options within the parks. Nevertheless, official theme park websites appear to make widespread use of the power of incantation and magic, presenting a visit to the parks as a way for all guests – even adults – to live out the fantastic adventures of their childhood dreams.

Bionotes: Sara Corrizzato received a PhD in English Linguistics from the University of Verona (2012). She published *Spike Lee's Bamboozled: A Contrastive Analysis of Compliments and Insults from English into Italian* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015). Her areas of research include corpus linguistics and LSP, translation theory and audiovisual language, ELT and teacher education. She is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Verona and is currently teaching English Language and Translation at the University of Verona. She has also taught ESP at the University of Brescia for three years. Valeria Franceschi is currently a junior researcher in English Language and Translation at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Verona. She has recently published *Exploring Plurilingualism in Fan Fiction: ELF Users as Creative Writers* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017). In addition to English as a Lingua Franca, her research areas of interest include digital communication and corpus linguistics.

Authors' addresses: sara.corrizzato@univr.it, valeria.franceschi@univr.it

References

- Agorni M. (ed.) 2012, *Prospettive linguistiche e traduttologiche negli studi sul turismo*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.
- Augé M. 1997, *L'impossible voyage. Le tourisme et ses images*, Éditions Payot & Rivages, Paris.
- Baudrillard J. 1981, *Simulacra and Simulation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- Bianchi F. 2017a, *Strategie promozionali degli operatori del lusso in Facebook*, in “Lingue e Linguaggi” 20, Special Issue, Guido M.G. (ed.) *Strategie di comunicazione dei prodotti di lusso attraverso l'inglese come 'lingua franca' internazionale. Sostenibilità ed emozioni come leve strategiche per lo sviluppo del 'Made in Puglia'*, pp. 239-271.
- Bianchi F. 2017b, *The social tricks of advertising. Discourse strategies of English-speaking tour operators on Facebook*, in “Iperstoria” 10, pp. 3-32.
- Boorstin D. 1987, *The Image. A guide to pseudo-events in America*, Atheneum, New York.
- Brown S. 2016, *Postmodern marketing: dead and buried or alive and kicking?*, in Baker M.J. and Hart S. (eds.), *The Book of Marketing*, Routledge, London, pp. 21-36.
- Calvi M.V. 2010, *Los generos discursivos en la lengua del turismo: una propuesta de clasificación*, in “Iberica” 19, pp. 9-32.
- Cappelli G. 2006, *Sun, sea, sex and the unspoilt countryside: How the English language makes tourists out of readers*, Pari Publishing, Grosseto.
- Castello E. 2002, *Tourist information texts: a corpus-based study of four related genres*, Unipress, Padua.
- Castello E. 2017, *Ways of representing and promoting Padua: professional, novice and (non)native voices*, in Gotti, M., Maci S. and Sala M. (eds.), *Ways of seeing, ways of being. Representing the Voices of Tourism*, Peter Lang, Bern, pp. 379-400.
- Cesiri D. 2016, *Promoting Venice through digital travel guidebooks: a case study of texts written in English and in Italian*, in “CULTUS” 9, pp. 49-67.
- Cesiri D. 2017a, *Communicating the Image of Venice: The Use of Discourse Markers in Websites and Digital Travel Guidebooks*, in “Iperstoria” 10, pp. 33-44.
- Cesiri D. 2017b, *Balancing Tourism Promotion and Professional Discourse: A Corpus-based Analysis of Digital Travel Guidebooks Promoting Venice in English*, in Vargas Sierra C. (ed.) *Professional and Academic Discourse: an Interdisciplinary Perspective*, “EPiC Series in Language and Linguistics”, EasyChair Publications 2, pp. 247-255.
- Cohen E. 1972, *Toward a sociology of international tourist*, in “Social Research” 39, pp. 164-172.
- Cohen E. 1979, *A Phenomenology of tourist experiences*, in “Sociology” 13, pp. 179-201.
- Cohen E. 1985, *Tourism as a play*, in “Religion” 15, pp. 291-304.
- Dann G. 1996, *The language of Tourism. A Sociolinguistic Perspective*, CAB International, Wallingford.
- Davashish D. 2011, *Tourism Marketing*, Pearson, Delhi.
- De Stasio C. and Palusci O. (eds.) 2007, *The Languages of tourism. Turismo e mediazione*, Edizioni Unicopli, Milano.
- Eco U. 2003, *Dalla periferia dell'impero*, Bompiani, Milano.

- Edvardsson B., Enquist B. and Johnston R. 2005, *Cocreating Customer Value Through Hyperreality in the Prepurchase Service Experience*, in “Journal of Service Research” 8 [2], pp. 149-161.
- Francesconi S. 2007, *English for tourism promotion: Italy in British tourism texts*, Hoepli, Milano.
- Francesconi S. 2014, *Reading Tourism Texts: A Multimodal Analysis*, Channel Views Publications, Clevedon.
- Fyall A. and Garrod B. 2005, *Tourism Marketing. A Collaborative Approach*, Channel Views Publications, Clevedon.
- Gotti M. 2006, *The language of tourism as specialized discourse*, in Palusci O. and Francesconi S. (eds.), *Translating Tourism: linguistic / cultural representations*, Dipartimento di Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Filosofici, Trento, pp. 15-34.
- Gotti M., Maci S. and Sala M. (eds.) 2017, *Ways of seeing, ways of being. Representing the Voices of Tourism*, Peter Lang, Bern.
- Hallet R.W. and Kaplan-Weinger J. 2010, *Official Tourism Websites: a Discourse Analysis*, Channel View Publications, Bristol.
- Jafari J. and Gardner M. 1991, *Tourism and Fiction. Travel and fiction, fiction as a journey*, Centre des Hautes Etudes Touristiques, Université d’Aix-Marseille, Aix-en-Provence.
- Kang N. and Yu, Q. 2011, *Corpus-Based Stylistic Analysis of Tourism English*, in “Journal of Language Teaching and Research” 2 [1], pp. 129-136.
- Kilgarriff A. 2009, *Simple Maths for Keywords*, in Mahlberg M., González-Díaz V. and Smith C. (eds.), *Proceedings of Corpus Linguistics Conference CL2009*, University of Liverpool, Liverpool. <https://www.kilgarriff.co.uk/Publications/2009-K-CLLiverpool-SimpleMaths.doc> (12.03.2018)
- Kilgarriff A., Baisa V., Bušta J., Jakubíček M., Vojtěch K., Michelfeit J., Suchomel V. 2014, *The Sketch Engine: Ten years on*, in “Lexicography ASIALEX” 1, pp. 7-36.
- Leech G. 1966, *English in advertising; a linguistic study of advertising in Great Britain*, Longman, London.
- Maci S. 2017, *Meaning-making in Web 2.0 tourism discourse*, in Gotti M., Maci S. and Sala M. (eds.) *Ways of seeing, ways of being. Representing the Voices of Tourism*, Peter Lang, Bern, pp. 131-154.
- Malenkina N. and Ivanov S. 2018, *A linguistic analysis of the official tourism websites of the seventeen Spanish Autonomous Communities*, in “Journal of Destination Marketing & Management” 9, pp. 204-233.
- Manca E. 2008, *‘Immerse yourself in the traditions of the simply way of life’: analysing English translations of Italian agriturismo websites*, in “RITT Journal Rivista Internazionale di Tecnica della Traduzione” 10, pp. 33-45.
- Manca E. 2009, *Aspetti culturali a confronto: la promozione turistica in Italia e in Gran Bretagna*, in De Rosa G.L. and De Laurentis A. (eds.) *Lingue policentriche a confronto: quando la periferia diventa centro*, Polimetrica, Milano, pp.153-164.
- Manca E. 2013, *Describing through the five senses. A contrastive socio-cultural and linguistic analysis of Italian and British tourist websites*, in Manca E. and Bianchi F. (eds.), *Tourism and tourist promotion around the world: a linguistic and socio-cultural perspective*, Salento University Publishing, Lecce, pp. 109-124.
- Manca E. 2016, *Persuasion in Tourism Discourse: methodologies and models*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Manca E. and Bianchi F. (eds.) 2013, *Tourism and tourist promotion around the world: a linguistic and socio-cultural perspective*, Salento University Publishing, Lecce.

- MacCannell D. 1989, *The Tourist. A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Schocken Books, New York.
- Nagle G. 1999, *Tourism, Leisure and Recreation*, Nelson Thornes, Cheltenham.
- Pierini P. 2008, *A Warm Welcome. Guaranteed. Aspetti dell’inglese nei siti degli enti nazionali per il turismo*, in “Studi Linguistici e Filologici Online” 6, pp. 163-202.
- Pierini P. 2009, *Adjectives in tourism English on the web: a corpus-based study*, in “CÍRCULO de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación (clac)” 40, pp. 93-116.
- Richards G. 2010, *Creative tourism and local development*, in Wurzbürger R., Ageson T., Pattakos A. and Pratt S. (eds.), *Creative Tourism. A global conversation*, Sunstone Press, Santa Fe, pp. 78-90.
- Sangiorgi S. 2007a, *Postmodern Travels through Standardized Utopias: The Case of Theme Parks*, in Geoffroy, C. and Sibley R. (eds.), *Going Abroad – Travel, Tourism and Migration*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, pp. 188-202.
- Sangiorgi S. 2007b, *L’ipermercato dei sogni: tecnologia e utopia nei parchi di divertimento a tema*, in “Morus” 4, pp. 193-202.
- Sangiorgi S. 2012, *Le parole dell’iperrealtà: la comunicazione dei parchi divertimento a tema*, in Agorni M. (ed.) *Prospettive linguistiche e traduttologiche negli studi sul turismo*, Franco Angeli, Milano, pp. 67-82.
- Teodorescu A. 2014, *Tourism Discourse – A linguistic analysis of tourism websites*, in “Language and Literature – European Landmarks of Identity” 15, pp. 367-372.
- Urry E. 1990, *The tourist gaze. Leisure and travel in contemporary society*, SAGE Publications, London.

Annex 1. List of selected keywords

Keyword	Keyness		Keyword	Keyness		Keyword	Keyness
you	46.34		stay	5.90		ghost	4.41
your	35.30		fly	5.85		virtual	4.36
ride	31.31		feel	5.82		combination	4.36
fun	20.37		magic	5.71		sit	4.36
experience	20.18		beautiful	5.69		cosy	4.34
train	19.08		adventurous	5.61		everything	4.32
coaster	13.67		thrill	5.50		explorer	4.26
enjoy	13.65		here	5.50		get	4.24
attraction	12.91		comfort	5.50		let	4.24
experience	11.92		tower	5.48		view	4.22
yourself	11.59		garden	5.41		resort	4.19
carousel	11.36		colourful	5.37		splash	4.19
will	11.20		giant	5.33		floor	4.19
our	10.28		interactive	5.23		fast	4.17
holiday	9.61		guest	5.17		walk	4.15
journey	9.47		favourite	5.16		enchant	4.09
roller	9.37		jungle	5.13		pirate	4.09
enchanted	9.04		visitor	5.11		wait	4.09
theme	8.84		water	5.02		family	4.05
playground	8.29		wheel	5.02		real	4.01
exciting	8.29		trip	5.01		entrance	3.99
luxury	8.02		rabbit	4.96		excitement	3.99
boat	7.45		relax	4.96		child	3.98
magical	7.44		bumper	4.93		reality	3.98
spectacular	7.07		whole	4.92		kid	3.95
fairytale	7.04		breathtaking	4.90		height	3.95
unique	6.80		dream	4.89		entertainment	3.93
wild	6.75		perfect	4.88		world	3.91
brave	6.57		woodland	4.84		guarantee	3.90
fantastic	6.55		amazing	4.67		gondola	3.90
dragon	6.49		incredible	4.65		slide	3.87
await	6.48		dark	4.55		exclusive	3.87
spinning	6.47		land	4.54		train	3.85
swing	6.29		atmosphere	4.52		sure	3.84
ready	6.23		everyone	4.48		dance	3.83
dare	6.15		crazy	4.45		climb	3.82
discover	6.09		ghost	4.41		can	3.82
rollercoaster	6.09		virtual	4.36		cars	3.82
little	6.08		combination	4.36		far	3.81
spin	6.07		sit	4.36		sky	3.78
park	6.06		cosy	4.34		indoor	3.78
speed	5.90		crazy	4.45		fairy	3.76