Cultus

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

TOURISM ACROSS CULTURES
Accessibility in Tourist Communication
2016, Issue 9, Volume 1

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the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

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Foreword

It is our great pleasure to present the first volume of Cultus 9, an issue entirely dedicated to the language of tourism in a cross-cultural perspective. A high number of articles have been submitted for this issue by international academics and researchers. For this reason, eight articles are being published in volume 1, edited by Elena Manca and Cinzia Spinzi, the remaining ones will follow in volume 2, edited by David Katan and Cinzia Spinzi.

We would like to thank all the authors for contributing to this field of study, and to this issue, with their high-quality, innovative and interesting work and for their dedication and patience.

In addition, we would like to thank those members of the Scientific Committee who have contributed to the making of this volume and whose work has increased the quality of the articles even more.

We are sure that this issue will be very useful for future research in Tourism Discourse studies.

Elena Manca and *Cinzia Spinzi*

Official Tourist Websites and the Cultural Communication Grammar model: analysing language, visuals, and cultural features

Elena Manca

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the homepages of four official tourist websites, namely the websites which promote Italy, France, Germany, and New Zealand according to a new framework, labelled here as 'Cultural Communication Grammar'. This methodological approach combines the approach of Multimodal analysis (Halliday 1978, 1984; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) with the framework provided by Intercultural studies (Hofstede 1991, 2001; Hall 1982, 1983; Brake et al. 1995; Katan 2006) and aims at classifying the cultural features represented on official tourist websites through the analysis of language and visuals.
Findings reveal that cultures systematically select definite linguistic and visual communication modes in the way they describe their cultural values, exchange information between participants and structure the messages which carry the content of the communicative event.

1. Introduction and previous research

Official tourism destination websites are the 'official' representation of a place and act as mediators in the relationship between tourists and destinations at a pre-trip stage. As Pritcher and Morgan suggest (2005: p. 94) tourist websites, together with brochures and travel guides, shape potential tourists' expectations long before they arrive at their destinations; for this reason, the representation of destinations in official tourism websites can be considered as "the codified and authorised versions of local culture and history". Furthermore, the internet "with its capacity to incorporate a virtual world of information about tourist destinations plays a seminal role as mediator in the process of construction of a collaborative tourist-destination identity (Hallet and Kaplan-Weinger, 2010: p. 117). In fact, it is through the cooperative, negotiative, mediated interaction of websites and tourists that identities for destinations and their visitors are constructed (*ibidem*: p. 116). Tourism is, therefore, not only a way of

accessing the world but it is also a means of locating ourselves in it (Franklin, 2003: p. 26). Websites, through different communication modes, act as mediators of meaning transmission and importantly contribute to the negotiated process of identity construction for the destination advertised and for the potential tourist (Hallet and Kaplan-Weinger, 2010: p. 121). This explains why studying tourism discourse is of utmost importance: it is part of that cultural system where identities are constructed, where the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary, where alterity is pre-packaged and turned into an object of consumption (see Hummon 1988; see Francesconi 2007).

A website is a complex text whose components are not only made up of language but also of a set of culturally and functionally dependent modes which all contribute to the overall meaning, and make the text function as a full system of communication. In tourist websites, the combination of both verbal and visual communication evidently contribute to the achievement of the final aim: language, images and sounds are strategically combined together to inform, attract and persuade the potential tourist at the pre-trip stage.

Recent studies on the analysis of tourism discourse through a multimodal approach have focused on the interconnections between language, visuality, travellers, tourists and space representation, on the way composition is conveyed to the readers thanks to various interrelated systems of information, and on the role of images in representation and identity construction (Francesconi 2007, 2011, 2012, 2014; Maci 2010; Denti 2012). To my knowledge, apart from a study conducted by Manca (2016), no previous research has focused on the identification of a framework for the classification of systematic relationships between the selection of images, language and the cultural values of the countries being advertised in official tourist websites.

For this reason, this paper sets out to analyse the homepages of four official tourist websites, namely the websites which promote Italy, France, Germany, and New Zealand according to a new framework, labelled here as 'Cultural Communication Grammar'. This methodological approach combines the approach of Multimodal analysis (Halliday 1978, 1984; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) with the framework provided by Intercultural studies (Hofstede 1991, 2001; Hall 1982, 1983; Brake *et al.* 1995; Katan 2006) and aims at classifying the cultural features represented in official tourist websites through the analysis of language and visuals.

2. Systemic Functional Grammar, Visual Grammar and Cultural Communication Grammar

Prior to the homepage analysis, this section briefly presents the theories on Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 1978, 1984) and on Visual Grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) which constitute the Multimodal approach, and the cultural models proposed by Hofstede (1991), Hall (1982), and Lewis (1996). After that, these theories and frameworks will be combined in the Cultural Communication Grammar approach and applied to the analysis of the homepages of four official tourist websites in order to identify systematic cultural features in their visual and linguistic communication modes.

2.1 Systemic Functional Grammar

Halliday's social semiotic theory (1978) focuses on how people use language in the accomplishment of their everyday social life. In Hallidayan terms 'use' equals 'function' and the latter is interpreted as a fundamental property of language itself which is basic to the evolution of the semantic system (Halliday, 1984: p. 17). Language is semantically complex because it is structured in such a way as to make three main meanings (or metafunctions) function simultaneously: ideational, interpersonal and textual.

The ideational metafunction refers to how human experience is construed in a text (Halliday, 2004: p. 30). This metafunction is divided into two components: the Experiential, which is concerned with "the features that can be thought of as representing the real world as it is apprehended in our experience" (Halliday, 1985: p. 19), and the Logical, which refers to the logical structure of the clause complex. The major grammar system which is involved in this kind of meaning is the system of Transitivity which provides "the lexicogrammatical resources for construing a quantum of change in the flow of events as a figure – as a configuration of elements centred on a process" (Halliday and Mathiessen, 2004: p. 213). Depending on what they describe, the different types of processes which are construed by the Transitivity system in the grammar can be Material, Mental, Verbal, Behavioural, Existential, and Relational. Other two aspects of the clause which are described in the analysis of the Transitivity structure are the selection of participants that is realised in the

verbal group of the clause, and the selection of circumstantial meanings expressed through adverbial groups or prepositional phrases (Eggins, 2011: pp. 214-215). The second grammar system of the ideational metafunction is realised in the clause complex through the system of Taxis and of Logico-semantic relation. Their structural resources are parataxis, hypotaxis, projection (when a clause is quoted or reported by another clause), and expansion (when one clause extends on the meanings of another).

The interpersonal metafunction refers to the clause as "a piece of interaction between speaker and listener" (Halliday, 1985: p. 20). Language is not seen as a way of reflecting, as in the experiential metafunction, but as a way of acting. This metafunction is configured through the grammar system of Mood and Modality (Eggins, 2011: p. 183). In the act of speaking, speakers take on different speech roles and, in so doing, they assign to their listeners a complementary role. The basic speech roles we can take on in the exchange are 'giving' and 'demanding' (Eggins, 2011: p. 144). Furthermore, we can also choose what kind of commodity we are exchanging, namely 'information' or 'goods and services' (*ibidem*). These variables imply the use of the four basic speech functions, that is to say statement, question, offer, and command which are encoded by means of three main syntactic Moods, that is to say declarative, interrogative and imperative.

The Textual metafunction is the third strand of meaning which is realised simultaneously and refers to the clause as a message. The system involved is the Theme which sees the clause as divided into two components: the Theme (the point of departure of a message) and the Rheme (new information about the Theme, the part where the Theme is developed). The message in the clause "thus unfolds from thematic prominence – the part that the speaker has chosen to highlight as the starting point for the addressee – to thematic non-prominence" (Halliday, 2004: p. 89). What is chosen as a thematic element in the clause may vary in that it is selected by the speaker/writer. Themes can be marked or unmarked on the basis of the structural element which is selected to occupy the initial position. An unmarked Theme is a Theme which conflates with a Subject in a declarative, with a Finite operator or a WH-element in an interrogative, with a Predicator in imperative clauses.

Forms of marked Theme, for example, in a declarative is an adverbial group or prepositional phrase functioning as Adjunct in the clause, which

is, however, very common (Halliday, 2004: p. 98) or the Complement, which is least likely to be thematic.

The other system at work in the way grammar manages the discourse flow is Information, which is a system not of the clause but of a separate grammatical unit, the information unit (Halliday, 2004: p. 115). This unit is a structure made up of two functions, the Given and the New, which represent what is already known or predictable and what is new or unpredictable. For this reason, ideally, each information unit should start with a Given element accompanied by a New element. However, structurally, the obligatory element is only the New while the Given is optional due to its anaphoric/cataphoric nature and, consequently, to the fact that it can be subjected to ellipsis (*ibidem*: p. 116). Although the information unit is parallel to the clause there is not always correspondence between Given-New and Theme-Rheme.

2.2 Visual grammar

The three metafunctions elaborated by Halliday (1978) have influenced the social semiotic framework of 'Visual Communication Grammar' developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). They adopt different labels to refer to Halliday's ideational and textual meanings, which in visual communication become 'representational' and 'compositional', and they keep the Hallidayan label 'interpersonal' meaning to refer to the interaction between participants in visuals.

The representational meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: p. 45) refers to the way aspects of the world are represented by semiotic modes. This system of meaning is expressed through two types of images:

1. Narrative images, which involve processes such as Action processes, Reactional processes, Speech and Mental processes, and Conversion processes;
2. Conceptual images, including Classificational processes, Analytical processes and Symbolic processes. Narrative images describe the unfolding of actions and contain vectors, that is to say depicted elements which form an oblique line, such as bodies, limbs, tools, roads etc. On the other hand, conceptual images represent participants in terms of their more generalized, stable or 'timeless' essences (van Leuween and Jewitt, 2001: p. 141) and do not have vectors.

The interpersonal meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: p. 114) refers to the interaction between represented participants (the elements depicted in the images) and interactive participants (the producers and the viewers of the images). The interactive meaning of images is configured through four elements:

1. Contact (presence/absence of gaze establishing an imaginary relationship with the viewer in which demand is asked for or offer is given), 2. Social Distance (intimate, social, or impersonal depending on the sizes of frames, namely close-up, medium or long shot), 3. Attitude (involvement/detachment expressed by perspectives and angles), and 4. Modality (real, not-real depending on the appearance of what is depicted and by its degree of correspondence with what we normally see in real life).

The third and last meaning, the compositional one, is related to the way elements are placed and composed in images. This system of meaning is configured through elements such as:

1. Information value (the placement of elements in the various areas of the image);
2. Salience (expressed through foregrounding or backgrounding, size, contrast in colours, sharpness etc.);
3. Framing (presence/absence of dividing lines, frame lines, etc., which connect or disconnect elements).

2.3 Cultural Communication Grammar

A similar tripartite framework, as those developed for the study of language and visuals, can be applied to the study of cultures through the analysis of the way messages are communicated. In fact, modes of communication such as clauses or images:

1. are the expression of cultural values,
2. are interactive cultural events in which messages and information are exchanged,
3. are structured and organized according to the values and conventions which are typical of each culture.

For this reason, what is meant here by 'cultural meaning' is the way cultures express and represent their cultural values, the way their members interact in events where information is exchanged and the way messages are structured and organized in communicative events which imply the use of language and/or visuals. Three strands of cultural meaning can, thus, be identified in this model:

1. 'expressional', aimed at the expression and description of cultural values and orientations;
2. 'liaisonal', referring to the way participants exchange information between them;
3. 'structural', related to the structure of the contents being exchanged in the communicative event.

The basic unit of analysis of this new model is comprised of the clause and/or the visuals used as systems to convey messages in a communicative event. An example of such a unit of analysis is a website page which usually conveys information by using both linguistic text and pictures.

Each of the three meanings or metafunctions of the Cultural Communication Grammar model are systematically realised by different systems which allow us to classify specific cultural meanings.

The expressional meaning refers to the way aspects of a culture are expressed and represented through the linguistic and visual modes. This metafunction is configured through the systems of 1. Doing and 2. Being. These two systems derive from the orientation of Action elaborated by Brake *et al.* (1995: p. 39) following Kluckhohn (1961), Hofstede (1991) and Hall (1982, 1983).

The Doing corresponds to action and separates the level of behaviour from the level of identity. This means that what we are does not correspond to what we do.

The Being corresponds to the state, to non-action and operates simultaneously on the level of identity and behaviour, thus interpreting what we do and what we are as equal (see Katan, 2004: p. 316).

Expressional meaning ⎰ Doing
⎱ Being

Table 1. The expressional meaning and its systems

The implications connected with these two tendencies are visible on both the features of language and visuals: those cultures that tend towards the Doing are more likely to convey facts rather than feelings and opinions in linguistic communication, and to use more often Narrative images in visual communication; conversely, a tendency towards the Being implies a more frequent use of personal feelings and opinions in linguistic communication, and more emphasis on Conceptual images in visual communication.

Those cultures which tend towards the system of Doing are also very likely to be "individualistic cultures" (Hofstede 2001) and "low-context cultures" (Hall 1982); conversely, the cultures which tend towards the Being will tend to show features of "collectivistic cultures" (Hofstede 2001) and of "high-context cultures" (Hall 1982, 1983). In individualistic cultures, members tend to look only after themselves and their immediate family. The opposite occurs in collectivistic cultures in which relationships among individuals are very strong and there is a tendency to be integrated in cohesive in-groups. Individualistic cultures rely less on a network of shared knowledge, events and contexts; for this reason, information has to be more explicit and the object of communication is much more important than the way it is communicated. Conversely, in collectivistic cultures, information flows more easily among members of groups and there is less need for explicit communication: in communicative exchanges, how something is communicated is much more important than the contents which are actually communicated.

Cultures which realise the expressional metafunction through the system of Doing are expected to construe themselves through explicit verbal messages, focus on facts, concrete items and words, argumentation, Material processes and Narrative images. On the other hand, cultures which realise this metafunction through the system of Being are more likely to reflect their reality through implicitness, focus on feelings and opinions, use of abstract words and nominalisation, symbolism, sensory language, Existential and Relational processes, and Conceptual images.

The liaisonal meaning refers to the way different cultures interact in communicative events. This meaning is realised through two main components: 1. Directness, 2. Indirectness. These two systems are strongly related to the extent to which the members of a culture accept and expect that power is distributed equally or unequally. This attitude is defined by Hofstede (2001) as the dimension of Power Distance: different tendencies towards an equal or unequal distribution imply different interactional features.

Liaisonal meaning   Directness

                        Indirectness

Table 2. The liaisonal meaning and its systems

Directness corresponds to a direct style of communication which is linguistically effected through a dialogic and informal style, salutations and engagements markers such as 'you' or 'yours', imperative forms and questions; Indirectness is illustrated by a less dialogic and formal style, impersonal forms and expression, indirect address, declaratives.

Cultures which express the liaisonal meaning through the system of Directness will also be more likely to use images depicting human participants which seek to establish a contact of offer and demand, and images which occupy large sections of the space available; cultures that configure this meaning through the system of Indirectness will tend to use more frequently images without human participants, or images in which participants seek to establish a contact of offer (but rarely of demand, being this always a feature of high interactivity).

The third meaning of cultural grammar is the structural meaning which refers to the way modes of communication are culturally structured to convey meaningful messages. This meaning is realised through two main components which are labelled 1. Linearity, 2. Circularity.

Structural meaning   Linearity

                        Circularity

Table 3. The structural meaning and its systems

Linearity refers to messages which are characterised by the KISS principle, that is to say 'keep it short and simple'; according to this principle, messages are reader-friendly and linear, particularly because the relationship between cause and effect and the main points of the message are easily identifiable and clear (see Katan, 2006: p. 55). Cultures which realise the structural meaning through this system in linguistic communication are very likely to adopt the principle of linearity in the way visuals are organised in a message. For example, websites will tend to be characterised by high granularity with well-defined clusters[1], clear paths, and continuity of shapes.

Circularity is a component which is illustrated by messages characterised by the KILC principle ('keep it long and complete'), by a writer-oriented attitude, hypotaxis, and by a circularity which is achieved through a major emphasis on background details (see Katan, 2006: p. 55). Cultures which express the structural meaning through Circularity will tend to organize visuals in websites, for example, by putting more emphasis on features such as continuity of colour, empty spaces, presence of more than one path to follow.

The limits of this model are obvious: as suggested by Lewis (1996: p. 27) there are over 200 recognised countries in the world, and the number of cultures is considerably greater if regional variations are also taken into account. On the other hand, particularly in those text types such as commercial or promotional websites which are aimed at an international audience, cultural differences may be blurred because they may have been adapted through the use of a 'lingua franca' which may neutralise cultural peculiarities (cfr. Spinzi 2016).

However, attempts to categorise cultures will always be made, and cultural theories will always be developed because predicting a culture's behaviour is of utmost importance in cross-cultural events to develop not only successful strategies of communication, but also to search and create some kind of unity and, for example, to standardise policies (Lewis, 1996: p. 29).

Cross-cultural studies and theories, therefore, contribute to facilitating better relationships, reducing misunderstandings among the members of different cultures, helping individuals acquire "deepening insights into the target (partner's) culture" and adopt "a cultural stance towards the

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[1] In visual analysis, granularity refers to the property of texts constituted by graphically distinct functional units or clusters (Francesconi, 2014: p. 163).

partner/colleague, designed (through adaptation) to fit in suitably with the attitudes of the other" (Lewis, 1996: p. 28).

The following sections of this paper describe the application of the model, illustrated and defined here as 'Cultural Communication Grammar', to four tourist websites, namely the four official tourist websites promoting Italy, France, Germany, and New Zealand as holiday destinations.

The aim of this analysis is to show that the messages conveyed through linguistic and visual strategies in these websites reflect the expressional, liaisonal, and structural meanings which are typical of the way cultures represent themselves or are represented.

3. Data and analysis

As already stated above, the four official tourist websites selected for analysis are those which promote Italy, France, Germany and New Zealand. The choice of these countries is not random as countries were chosen with reference to the scores[2] attributed to them along cultural dimensions by Hofstede (1980; 2001), and in particular along the Power Distance dimension. This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (*ibidem*). For this reason, countries with low scores on Power Distance are expected to communicate by using a more informal style characterised, for example, by direct address, questions and Imperative forms of verbs. Conversely, countries with high scores on this dimension will tend to use a more informal style of communication mainly characterised by impersonal expressions and a frequent use of declaratives (Manca 2016). Italy and France were chosen for their high scores on Power Distance (namely, 50 and 68) and Germany and New Zealand for their low scores on Power Distance (namely, 35 and 22). These four countries also belong to two different cultural groups: Italy and France are high-context cultures whereas Germany and New Zealand are low-context cultures. Furthermore, in Lewis' model (1996: p. 33), Germany and New Zealand are defined as linear-active countries, that is to say they are characterised by a very linear way of dealing with things and tasks, sticking to facts, are unemotional, and use logic. Conversely, Italy and France are

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[2] Dimensions are measured on a scale from 0 to 100 and results are described and detailed on the website geert-hofstede.com from which scores have been taken.

more multi-active, they tend to change plans, juggle facts, get first-hand (oral) information, are emotional, complete human transactions, and confront emotionally.

It is hypothesised here that all the similarities and differences described above will correspond to the activation of different systems in the realisation of the three meanings of Cultural Grammar.

The unit of analysis adopted in the present investigation is the homepage, defined as "the first page or computer screen of information that a viewer sees when accessing a website" (Zhao *et al.*, 2003: p. 78). The homepage is a very important section of the website as it is the visitor's first impression and communicates the tone of the site. Its appearance is strategically designed to stimulate the visitors' interest and to tempt them to explore the website further (West, 2012: p. 293). For this reason, it is more likely to contain most of those cultural features which are typical of the way cultures represent themselves or are represented.
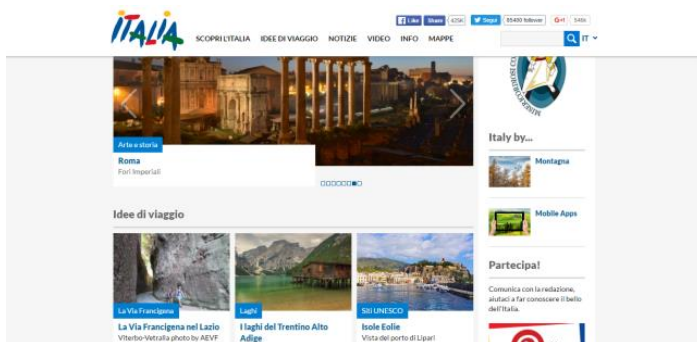
3.1 The homepage for Italy

Figure 1. Homepage of the website www.italia.it

The analysis of the homepage of the official tourist website for Italy starts with the identification of the expressional meaning. As visible in Figure 1, the linguistic content of the page is only comprised of captions to pictures. These captions do not contain verbs but only phrases containing specific or general geographical names, and general and specific names of attractions, such as *Arte e storia – Roma – Fori imperiali* (Art and History – Rome – The Imperial Fora) or *Laghi – I laghi del Trentino Alto-Adige – Lago di Braies* (Lakes – Trentino Alto-Adige lakes – Braies Lake). The processes

described, although implicitly, are Existential, because the elements *c'è/ci sono* (there is/there are) have been omitted but are implied. Even though the presence of specific captions may seem to be related to a description characterised by facts and details, there are no explicit messages which can guide the reader towards a better understanding of what is offered and described, such as longer descriptions or explanations.

Images almost never depict human participants but monuments and attractions, and, for this reason, they can be defined as Conceptual.

The expressional meaning in the Italian website is, thus, configured through the system of Being.

The absence of explicit verbs and of human participants in images make the level of interactivity of this homepage very low. The style is monologic, the Italian attractions are 'offered' to viewers, and no direct contact is established. For this reason, the liaisonal meaning is realised through the system of Indirectness.

The homepage of the Italian website is characterised by two main colours, light-blue and white, which create cohesion among the different clusters constituting the page. However, the space in the homepage is not completely occupied by pictures and captions and the different sections constituting the homepage are separated by blank spaces. The path to follow in order to visit the sections of the website is characterised by two alternatives: the top bar contains the following links: *Scopri l'Italia* (Discover Italy), *Idee di viaggio* (Travel Ideas), *Notizie* (News), *Video* (Videos), *Info* (Information), and *Mappe* (Maps). Scrolling down the page, we find a cluster featuring a side-scrolling gallery containing highlights from other sections of the websites, and, scrolling further, we find again the first three links of the top bar, but this time represented through a set of pictures with accompanying captions. The various sections of the website, therefore, can be accessed from several entry points on the homepage.

All these features suggest that the structural meaning of this homepage is expressed through the system of Circularity.

3.2 The homepage for France

The linguistic content of the website france.fr is mainly made up of captions to pictures (Figure 2). Most of these captions do not contain verbs but only noun phrases, such as *Weekendfrance: ecotourisme, charme et*

insolite (Weekendfrance: ecotourism, charm and extravagance), *Le verre dans tous ses éclats au MusVer, Nord* (The glass and its splendour at the MusVer museum, Nord), *Courchevel, le ski pour tous* (Courchevel, skiing for everybody), *Le Mont-Saint-Michele, le retour à la mer* (Mont-Saint-Michele, the return to the sea). These captions could be said to express the expressional meaning through Existential processes elliptical of the verb 'to be'. Furthermore, captions are not accompanied by longer texts; and what is offered and described in the homepage is perfectly clear only when the textual links are accessed.
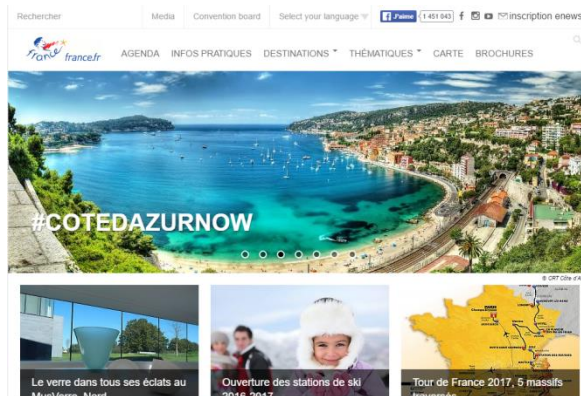

Figure 2. Homepage of the website france.fr

Most of the images available on the homepage are not Narrative but Conceptual, and the few human participants depicted are tourists and visitors enjoying museums and destinations. Apart from one case, participants always represent the stereotype of the tourist enjoying the destination described or advertised.

The expressional meaning in the French website is, thus, configured through the system of Being.

As for the liaisonal meaning, the language used is mainly monologic: there is only one sentence containing the imperative form and one question in the captions to the pictures in the side-scrolling gallery (*Découvrez sa carte postale vidéo de Paris* – Discover Paris video postcard, *Quel amateur des vins êtez-vous?* – What kind of wine lover are you?), but the rest of the linguistic content available on the homepage is characterised by a very low level of interaction. In the few pictures of the homepage featuring people, the participants depicted never try to establish a contact of demand, through a direct gaze, with viewers: human participants look at

works of art or at what is around them. There is only one picture where a human participant, a child, looks directly at viewers showing some snow in his cupped hands and inviting readers to enjoy the French ski resorts; but most of the pictures on the homepage are a clear example of offering goods and services rather than of demanding.

This suggests that the liaisonal meaning is mainly expressed through the system of Indirectness on the French homepage.

In terms of layout, this homepage is comprised of many clusters, which are, however, separated by blank spaces, and the two colours which characterise the whole page are white and grey. The path to follow in order to visit the various sections of the website is not clear-cut: links to news and events seem to be predominant at the centre of the homepage while the links to destinations can be found in the video section reported in the lower part of the homepage, or can be accessed through the links *Destinations* and *Thématiques* (Themes) in the upper bar, or still through the links *Destinations* and *Idee de vacances* (Holiday ideas) at the bottom of the page.

These features suggest that the structural meaning of the French homepage is expressed through the system of Circularity.

3.3 The homepage for Germany

Figure 3. Homepage of the website www.germany.travel

The official homepage of the German website can be defined as a cover homepage (Cucchi, 2015: p. 13) because it only displays the menu of the website (Figure 3). Each picture corresponds to a precise section of the

website, and captions are characterised only by nouns: *Städte & Kultur* (Cities & Culture), *Freizeit & Erholung* (Free time and Relaxation), *Reiseinformation* (Travel infos), etc. Interestingly, 3 out of 12 sections are characterised by a caption in English *Specials*, *Events*, and *Follow me*. No processes are described but what clearly appears from a look at the linguistic content is a high focus on specific facts and details. In terms of visuals, 6 out of 11 pictures are clearly Narrative due to the presence of vectors emanating from the human participants depicted in most of the pictures.

As suggested by all these features, the expressional meaning tends to be expressed through the system of Doing.

As for the liaisonal meaning, the website seems to be predominantly monologic even though the message *Willkommen im Reiseland Deutschland* (Welcome to the tourist country of Germany) and the caption *Follow me* are two examples of interactive communication. As for pictures, only one out of 8 featuring human participants depicts two women looking directly at the viewer, thus establishing a contact of demand. For this reason, the liaisonal meaning tends to be configured mainly through the system of Indirectness, although a tendency towards Directness is also present.

The structural meaning is clearly expressed through the system of Linearity: the path to follow to visit the website is clear and only one alternative is provided for readers. There is no predominant colour, and cohesion is created more thanks to the use of similar shapes for clusters (well defined rectangles and squares) rather than through colours.

3.4 The homepage for New Zealand

The homepage of the New Zealand website seems to be linguistically characterised by messages containing Material, Mental, and Verbal processes, such as: 'Let us show you New Zealand', 'Welcome to the official travel website for New Zealand', 'Your Middle-earth journey begins here', 'Get inspired', 'Walking & Hiking', etc. Images are 11, and 7 of them are clearly Narrative. This means that the tendency of the New Zealand website is that of realising the expressional meaning through the system of Doing.

Figure 4. Upper section of the newzealand.com homepage

Figure 5. Central section of the newzealand.com homepage

The liaisonal meaning is expressed through the system of Directness both linguistically and visually. The linguistic content used as caption to the various images on the homepage is characterised by high interactivity due to the presence of imperative forms, personal pronouns such as 'us', 'our', 'you', and 'your', and salutations. All the pictures but one depict human participants and the image which occupies the central part of the homepage (see Figure 5) is an example of contact of demand, due to the woman's gaze which is directly addressed at the viewer. Furthermore, the size of the first two pictures (Figure 4 and Figure 5) acts as an invitation to join the New Zealand world and thus contributes to create interactive communication.
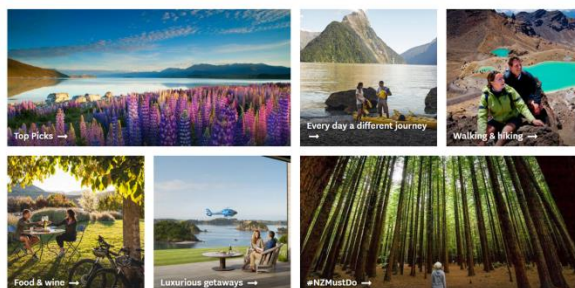

Figure 6. Lower section of the New Zealand website homepage

The structural meaning is configured through the system of Linearity as the high granularity of the homepage suggests. Cohesion is not achieved through colours but through the shape of the different clusters and the linear way in which they are organized across the homepage (Figure 6).

The presence of more than one path to access the different sections of the website is not an aspect of circularity because the different paths available do not constitute different entry points to the same sections but they allow viewers to choose where to start their virtual tour of New Zealand: either from a specific destination or from a specific activity, or still from one of the several recommended trips.

4. Discussion of findings

Table 4 will help us summarise the results achieved and comment on the similarities and differences identified across the four cultures thanks to the Cultural Grammar framework.

	Italy	France	Germany	New Zealand
Expressional meaning	Being	Being	Doing	Doing
Liaisonal meaning	Indirectness	Indirectness	Indirectness/Directness	Directness
Structural meaning	Circularity	Circularity	Linearity	Linearity

Table 4. The systems which configure the three meanings in the four homepages

The Italian and the French homepages realise the three meanings through the same systems, that is to say Being, Indirectness, and Circularity. This implies that the type of tourist promotion adopted by the two countries focuses more on how contents are presented, provides readers with 'offers' rather than making 'demands' and leaves readers free to choose their own paths and destinations. As observed by de Mooij and Hofstede (2011: p. 85), and confirmed by Manca (2016), in collectivistic cultures (such as the Italian and the French ones) a relationship of trust should be created first in order to sell a product and this can be achieved only by showing and presenting the alternatives available and without directly addressing and inviting readers to take action.

The German and the New Zealand homepages realise the expressional and the structural meanings through the same systems, that is to say

through Doing and Linearity. These choices are related to a type of promotion which emphasises more facts and details and which guides readers along well-defined paths and both virtual and concrete itineraries. Contents are much more important than form, and aims are clear and easily accessible. The only difference between these two cultures is a different perspective in the realisation of the liaisonal meaning: while the New Zealand promotion is direct and aims to get readers to take action immediately, the German promotion prefers to give readers time to absorb information before convincing them to take advantage of the products offered.

This methodology clearly needs to be further researched and applied systematically to different text types and to a wider range of cultures in order to avoid (over) generalisations and to avoid making statements on how a culture really works by considering only individual examples.

However, the results achieved are in line with what Hall (1982, 1983) and Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001) have theorised, particularly in the identification of groups of cultures with similar features, such as high- and low-context cultures, and collectivistic and individualistic cultures. The Cultural Communication Grammar model aims to allow researchers to classify systematically the linguistic and visual features which are preferred by each culture in (tourist) communication and to understand how different cultures perceive, process and interpret information. The advantages of these classifications are varied, particularly in the promotional and commercial domains: products can be localised more easily according to specific cultural peculiarities, and, consequently, persuasion can be activated according to the more appropriate cultural strategies thus making the promotion more successful.

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