

Research Article

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Picturing the route – the multimodal representation of time and space in tourism discourse

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Abstract: This study investigates the multimodal representation of time and space in print and digital tourism texts, focusing on the interplay between text and image. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis, it examines how tourism discourse employs various semiotic modes – primarily graphic and visual – to transform sites into sights and influence potential tourist's choices. Tourism texts are not only multimodal but also dialogical, specialized and promotional. Building on prior research on the persuasive and rhetorical functions of tourism discourse, the paper analyses how visual and verbal elements are combined to evoke destination imagery, convey emotional values, provide sensory immediacy, and shape tourist experiences. These multimodal constructions engage the tourist gaze, a sociocultural process shaping how destinations are viewed through established patterns. The study further explores how these processes manifest in representations of temporal and spatial contrasts between everyday life and vacation, portrayals of distance and proximity, and the integration of time and space with markers of identity.

Keywords: tourism discourse; spatio-temporal representation; tourist gaze; destination imagery; intersemiotic meaning-making

1 Introduction

The present study examines how time and space are multimodally represented in print and digital tourism texts, with special focus on the interplay between text and image. In tourism discourse, meaning is constructed cross-culturally and intersemiotically (Denti 2021: 83), as texts draw on multiple semiotic modes – graphic, phonic and visual – to transform sites into sights and convert potential tourists into actual ones (Cronin 2000: 22; Denti 2021: 83). Besides their multimodal character, tourism texts are (a) dialogical, as space and time are often constructed or staged to meet visitor expectations (cf. also Bondi 1999); (b) specialized, because both experts and non-experts in the tourism discourse community share their structures and communicative goals (Gotti 2006); and (c) promotional, to varying degrees depending on their primary goal.

Since the seminal study by Dann (1996), who worked on the language of tourism based on sociolinguistic components, research in tourism has been studied under the perspective of persuasion (Antelmi 2018: 95). Tourist communication has been considered a form of promotional discourse that has special linguistic characteristics and reveals rhetorical strategies (cf., e.g., Calvi 2009; Cogno and Dall'Ara 2006). These verbal features can be inextricably interwoven with the visual code in order to evoke destination imagery by transferring emotional values and sensual immediacy (cf., e.g., Bruculeri 2009; Francesconi 2014; Held 2009b; Messner 2023a). As visuals are representations of the touristic experience, they instruct visitors in how to construct their experiences, how to view a place and how to create their own photographs (Hunter 2014: 626).

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These pre-patterned ways of seeing, also known as “tourist gaze” (Urry 2002), involve the process of turning places into attractive ‘sights’ and any kind of socio-culturally framed ways of being. As Held (2018: 1) notes, “being a tourist is considered as lively experiencing an ideal vision of places as evoked and constructed in images and texts.” Tourists both experience and shape this gaze, which evolves as the industry responds to changing interests (cf. Urry and Larsen 2011: 5). Tourism discourse presents destinations as temporary, memorable experiences, using language and images to emphasize personal enjoyment and social interaction between self and other(s), similarity and difference, and between proximity and distance (cf. Held 2018: 1).

The aim of this article is to show how these contrasts can be nuanced within a multimodal time- and space-making in tourism texts. The focus is on French promotional texts from various national tourism marketing campaigns – a language still underexplored in tourism discourse (but see, e.g., Lugin 2004; Messner 2023b). Following the principles of Multimodal Discourse Analysis, the study focuses on the following questions:

- (1) How do temporal and spatial contrasts manifest between everyday life at home and holiday experiences in vacation settings? How are they mitigated in the multimodal text?
- (2) How are concepts of distance and proximity represented through multimodal approaches?
- (3) How are time and space reflected in linguistic and visual markers of the destination’s identity?
- (4) How are time and space interwoven, i.e., which spatial cognitions permit temporality and which temporal signs have to do with spatiality?

2 Time and space in tourism discourse

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends the mere act of travelling – it operates as a cultural and semiotic construct that shapes perceptions of space, time and identity. According to Brucculeri (2009), travel represents an extraordinary set of activities juxtaposed against the ordinariness of everyday life. This creates a discourse between ‘here’ and ‘there’, wherein the act of travelling establishes a distinctive space-time framework markedly different from that of non-travelling existence. Through actions, narratives and representations, tourism creates and perpetuates imaginaries, imbuing places with identity traits and characterizing individuals associated with them through particular forms of action, passion and relational dynamics (Brucculeri 2009: 19–20).

Tourist communication, through its strategic deployment of temporal and spatial constructs, serves as a powerful medium in shaping how destinations are perceived and experienced. Touristic time is portrayed as extraordinary and qualitative in opposition to the ordinary and quantitative time at home. Dann (1996) identified key strategies in tourism language that shape perceptions of time: escaping time constraints, emphasizing timeless or eternal qualities of places, romanticizing the past to evoke nostalgia, and encouraging consumers to imagine idealized futures. In terms of temporal dimensions, Held (2008a: 164) emphasizes that tourist texts engage present enjoyment (on-trip), future anticipation (pre-trip) and past memory (post-trip), each reflected in common topoi. Messner (2023a, 2023b, 2024) extends these insights to multimodal tourism texts, observing that images also convey temporal dimensions, such as stillness, dynamism or nostalgia.

This form of “Zeitweh” [‘time ache’] (Dann 1996: 49) is invariably intertwined with a wanderlust, i.e. a longing for distant places. From a semiotic perspective, places are dynamic entities whose identities and images are continuously negotiated through multiple discourses (Brucculeri 2009: 27). Tourist communication plays a pivotal role in shaping the sense of place by constructing symbolic markers and identity traits (cf. Held 2019b), a process that can also be conceptualized as ‘linguaging’, i.e. the strategic use of local linguistic elements to evoke cultural specificity and authenticity (cf. Cappelli 2013). Held (2018) views travel communication as inherently spatial, focusing on physical movement and the dynamics of directions, dimensions and locations. It encourages travellers to experience the world through the acts of leaving, arriving and moving between locations (Held 2018: 11–12). The identity of places is further constructed through linguistic strategies such as metaphors and metonymies (Guan and Forceville 2020) or deixis (Held 2019a). For instance, the deictic *qui* [‘here’] emphasizes a location’s authenticity, enhancing its perceived uniqueness and brand value (cf. Held 2019a). This extends to portraying space as a dream (Held 2008b, 2009a) and to creating positive imaginary worlds (Manca 2018).

Tourist communication not only constructs and depicts temporal and spatial experiences but also continually reinforces Urry's (2002) tourist gaze. The tourist gaze, a theory centred on travellers' viewpoints and their perception of destinations, is understood as a discursive, sign-mediated construction that drives the tourism industry. Pre-established perceptions about how destinations should be seen are embedded in promotional texts, visual media and itineraries, transforming locations into 'must-see' sights that they are through the masses of eyes constantly put on them. The tourist gaze operates cyclically, as tourists view and photograph destinations precisely as guided, replicating the framing, angles and lighting seen in postcards and brochures (Francesconi 2012: 67). It is then the task of the tourism text to mediate between the destination identity the institution or the tourism industry wants to convey and the destination image perceived by the tourist. As tourism continues to evolve, its semiotic, temporal and spatial dimensions remain critical to understanding its cultural and economic impact.

3 Multimodality in tourism discourse

In tourism discourse, multimodal representations of the tourist experience have assumed a progressively significant role in the marketing of tourist destinations (cf., e.g., Antelmi et al. 2007; Francesconi 2014; Held and Bendel 2008). Particularly in tourism promotional contexts, the verbal message is inextricably intertwined with the accompanying images (Denti 2021; Maci 2013; Messner 2023a). Through figurative language and the systematic use of images to make places "visible" (Held 2004: 60), the outcome of destination promotion is "a 'sight', a 'must-see', a *sehenswürdigkeit*" (Francesconi 2012: 66). Tourism texts thus make meaning through multimodality, i.e., they are built through multiple semiotic modes (cf. Denti 2021).

This paper views multimodality – from a social semiotic perspective – as the simultaneous use of multiple modes in a single communicative act to create meaning. The concept of mode indicates the semiotic resources used in the act of communication, such as graphic, phonic and visual signs. Different semiotic modes carry distinct semantic features and properties as well as cognitive orientations (Stöckl 2004: 16). For instance, the semantics of language is less vague and polysemous than that of image. Yet, images count as richer in information than language, as they carry sensory and intense connotative information (Stöckl 2004: 17–18). Additionally, while language operates as a linear mode, experienced as a sequence of verbal units, images are understood holistically and simultaneously (Francesconi 2014: 128).

Within a multimodal approach, the intersemiotic cohesion between modes, especially between text and image, helps to understand how modes contribute to meaning making (Royce 2007). The concept of 'intersemiosis' highlights the interaction of modes in designing a message or event, where they may reinforce each other, serve complementary functions, or be arranged hierarchically (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001: 20). Modal relations are understood as interactions that mutually enhance the semiotic potential of each mode, encouraging an exploration of the "multiplied meaning derived from the interaction of modal resources" (Francesconi 2014: 131). In tourism communication, the exploitation of intersemiosis is at the service of visibility and appeal to the public (Antelmi et al. 2007: 223). For instance, Held (2008b) shows how the visual potential of 'trigger' words (e.g., expressions from diatopic varieties) at the interface between image and language in destination ads are able to create contiguity relationships between a space and its effects on tourists (e.g., Spain marks/transforms the tourist into a person of pleasure). Messner (2023a, 2023b, 2024) analysed how text and image work together in tourism communication to represent vacation time. The author observed that often the semantics of verbs (e.g., the inchoative character of the verb *to start* or the durative character of the verb *to live*) are exploited on the verbal level to express temporality. These verbs are very closely linked to visual representations of temporality, e.g., durability is visually enhanced by the depiction of a place in its typical atmosphere. Helfrich (2018) considered the repertoire of meaning-making resources of tourist destination marketing in digital media, with focus on the international campaign *I need Spain*. The author stresses the focus on the individual tourist experience, for which catch visuals are combined with directive speech acts, interactive tools and peer storytelling. The findings of these studies, which highlight the need to view the tourism text as a cohesive unit where various semiotic elements combine to strengthen its communicative impact (cf. also Denti 2021), are also central to this study.

4 Data and method

The analysis is based on a dataset comprising 370 print and digital tourism texts, collected between 1971 and 2024, with some gaps within this period, since the texts were not collected systematically.¹ Concerning the pre-trip phase, the data are mostly of promotional nature with the more or less hidden goal of influencing the holiday decision making process. The texts in the corpus promote countries (e.g., Austria, Australia, Norway, Dominican Republic), regions (e.g., Alsace, South Tyrol, Trentino, Madeira) and cities (e.g., Abu Dhabi, Seoul). They were drawn from magazines, both niche and mainstream (e.g., *Qui Touring*, *Télérama*, *GEO*, *National Geographic*); from websites of destinations and national tourism organizations, but also from local news sites; and from Instagram and YouTube accounts of different travel spots. The materials are multilingual (Italian, French, Spanish, English, German) and were chosen based on their explicit or implicit references to temporality on the verbal and/or visual level (e.g., using metaphorical language and visuals that evoke a dive into the holiday experience). They were coded with regard to specific criteria, such as (advertising) campaign, location, medium, language(s), year, source, topics and sub-topics, components (text-based, image-based), page design, content (text-based, image-based), etc.

For the present study, six tourism texts of the corpus for the destinations Corsica, Alsace, Bretagne, Austria, Korea and Tromsø were selected as they effectively illustrate how multimodal time- and space-making (in French) functions within tourism discourse. The adverts originate from the following sources: the magazine *TGV magazine*; the website of the agency LMWR and the site *Rennes Info Autrement*; tourism websites for Alsace, Austria and Tromsø. Despite belonging to different genres, the analysed print and digital materials share a common promotional goal: they are created by the marketing departments of agencies and tourism companies to promote direct sales of tourism products and influence consumer perception (cf. Calvi 2010: 22).

The theoretical framework employed for the following qualitative analysis is Multimodal Discourse Analysis, which is – according to Stöckl (2014) – an essential methodology for studying advertising. Methodologically, this multifaceted approach connects social-semiotic and systemic-functional perspectives (cf., e.g., Jewitt 2014). Social-semiotic analysis accounts for all forms of expression, including both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication – their interplay and the allocation of meaning among modes are central to meaning-making processes (cf. Kress and Van Leeuwen 2021; Paltridge 2012; Stöckl 2014). Signs from one mode provide context for interpreting signs from another, creating coherence through interactions that can be of different kind, such as additive, reinforcing, complementary, hierarchical, divergent, or conflicting, depending on the communicative intent (cf. Stöckl 2012). This interplay, known as “intersemiosis” (Royce 2007), “constitutes the basic principle of encoding in complex semiotic processes such as advertising” (Helfrich 2018: 74). The result of the choice, composition and combination of multimodal elements in a specific discourse is a “multimodal supertext” (Helfrich 2018: 74), in which the boundaries, as Denti (2021: 101) notes, between text and image may also become blurred, i.e., the two modes are not separate semiotic entities but fade into each other.

In this paper, multimodal constructions of time and space in tourist texts are analysed through the lens of the three metafunctions of Systemic Functional Theory (Halliday 1978). According to the metafunctional model, texts simultaneously construct ideational meaning (experience and logic), interpersonal meaning (social relations and attitudes) and textual meaning (coherent message organization). In tourism texts, ideational meaning can emerge through narrative structures in text and image; interpersonal meaning through the viewer’s positioning via pictorial techniques; and textual meaning through the salience of visual elements, emphasized by colour or contrast.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis provides an effective framework for examining advertising strategies, including the multimodal representation of temporality and spatiality in tourism discourse. It enables the analysis of how various semiotic modes interact to create intermodal cohesion and coherence. This is particularly relevant in digital media advertising, where the range of multimodal elements shaping meaning is broader and more dynamic than in print media (cf. Helfrich 2018).

¹ In the present study, diachronic development is not considered.

5 Findings

In the following, the described theoretical principles are applied to print and digital tourism texts. The analysis addresses verbal and visual levels – incorporating typographic and compositional features – with particular attention to their role in conveying temporal and spatial dimensions. The investigation of the examples centres around three key axes: (1) the multimodal representation of temporal and spatial contrasts between everyday life/home and holiday time/vacation place (Figures 1–2); (2) the expression of time and space in linguistic and visual identity markers (Figures 3–4); and (3) the multimodal depiction of distance and proximity as well as the mediation between these two poles (Figures 5–6).

5.1 Temporal and spatial contrasts

5.1.1 Example 1: Corsica

- (1) *Votre Corse aujourd'hui. Votre Corse demain.*
 ['Your Corsica today. Your Corsica tomorrow.']

This text combines the contrast between everyday life and the appeal of Corsican holidays with a focus on the visual message. Two different states are confronted in the ad: today's everyday life, symbolized by the use of olive oil daily; and tomorrow's holiday in Corsica, where the potential tourist can witness first-hand the olive trees from which the oil is produced locally. The invitation is clear: leave behind the routine and immerse yourself in the authentic beauty of Corsica. According to Brucculeri (2009: 34), tourist discourse constructs places through a contrast between the 'near', associated with reality, presence and certainty, and the 'far', linked to utopia, temporal distance and unreality, thereby also evoking myth. The colours used in the images (strong yellow colour



Figure 1: Corsica advertisement (16.9.2024, <https://lmwr.fr/work/lmwr/corsica-ferries.html>).²

² Image rights have been obtained for all pictures used in this paper.

on the left vs. shadow cast on the right) highlight this contrast and possible shift between the near and the distant. This visual transition aligns with the logical sequence outlined by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2021): the left side represents the known, the trigger, the beginning; the right side ushers in the new, the effect and the result. In this way, the cause, the ordinary, and the effect, the exciting, unfold visually. At the same time, the olive oil represents the ‘outcome’ of the right, implying that Corsica can also be ‘reintegrated’ into everyday life.

Within the comparison of two distinct states, the ad brings into play “identity markers” (Held 2019b) for the destination Corsica, represented by the olive oil and the olive trees as its source amidst the landscapes of the island. According to Held (2019b), these identity markers, derived from a region’s material and cultural conditions, function as metonymic symbols, representing its cultural and historical essence. These elements shift from biographical traits into emblematic icons of the destination (cf. Lugin 2004). As observed by Guan and Forceville (2020: 140) in their analysis of metonymies in Chinese cities promotion, Corsica’s identity markers function as metonymic source domains for the target domain *CORSICA*, guiding the viewers toward imagining themselves as future guests. Simultaneously, a metonymic link between the bottled olive oil and the olives on the tree illustrates a part-whole relationship, enabling a conceptual shift across temporal frames.

The appeal here is thus strong: the images evoke the imagination of the potential tourists, offering a visual narrative of the region as a specific zone of pleasure, nature and authenticity (cf. Held 2019b). This image-centric approach (cf. Stöckl 2020) reflects Norris’ (2014: 90) concept of “modal intensity”, where visuals dominate the multimodal ensemble. Stöckl (2020: 194) describes image-centricity as mutual mode elaboration, i.e., a logico-semantic relation (Martinec and Salway 2005) in which the text refines or expands the image, or the image reinforces the headline. In the ad for Corsica, the image draws the viewer in with its vivid depiction, while the sparse text amplifies its impact, guiding the viewer from the everyday to the extraordinary. The text also explicates the name of the destination – without this indication, the images could easily represent any destination where olive trees are found and olive oil is produced. Text and image are therefore both important in conveying the contrastive message and in emphasizing the cultural and historical significance of the identity markers. Or, as Stöckl (2020: 194) notes, even in image-led communication, it is often the minimal accompanying language that carries the greatest semantic weight.

5.1.2 Example 2: Alsace

In this second example, a complex interplay of voices and perspectives reflects the unique, polyphonic nature of the region Alsace in France. In order to offer insights into how small regions like Alsace can be framed as expansive, contrasts and metaphors are used.

- (2) *L’Alsace a tout d’un grand voyage. Ici, l’inattendu flirte avec l’ordinaire, les petites choses ont toute leur importance et toutes les envies sont comblées. Ici, l’identité de l’Alsace s’exprime avec ferveur pour transporter les voyageurs vers ailleurs. Un ailleurs qui invite à la découverte et au partage. Entre lieux emblématiques et coins secrets, l’Alsace a tout d’un grand voyage.*

[‘Alsace: a small region, a grand journey. Here, the unexpected flirts with the ordinary, the little things matter and there is something to please all tastes. Here, the identity of Alsace is passionately present all throughout the region, transporting travellers to elsewhere. An elsewhere that invites discovery and sharing. Between iconic places and secret corners, Alsace has everything for an incredible journey.’]

L’Alsace, un voyage unique... comme vous !

[‘Alsace, a unique journey... just like you!’]

This example, consisting of two screenshots taken from the homepage of Alsace tourism, exemplifies a complex interplay between contrasts, both in linguistic expression and visual representation. The title itself in the first screenshot, *L’Alsace a tout d’un grand voyage* [‘Alsace: a small region, a grand journey’], encapsulates this duality, using antithesis to signal the depth of the destination’s cultural and experiential offerings. The region’s modest size is juxtaposed against the grandiosity of the journey it promises, setting the stage for a narrative of unexpected discovery. The use of contrasts also continues in the text, e.g., in the expressions *les petites choses ont toute leur importance* [‘the little things matter’] and *entre lieux emblématiques et coins secrets* [‘between iconic places and

secret corners’]. In the former expression, the antithesis between ‘small’ and ‘big, of importance’ is transferred from the region to experiences made during the holiday. In the latter expression, the prepositional phrase ‘between x and y’, which functions as a linguistic marker of spatial diversity, is employed. The references to ‘emblematic landmarks’ alongside ‘hidden corners’ create a dynamic interplay between the familiar and the secret, inviting the reader to perceive the region as a multifaceted space. This spatial intersection is further enhanced by personifications such as *l’inattendu flirte avec l’ordinaire* [‘the unexpected flirts with the ordinary’] or *un ailleurs qui invite à la découverte* [‘an elsewhere that invites discovery’], where the unexpected and new engage with the ordinary and known.

In the visual dimension, the text mirrors Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2021) theory of visual grammar, employing a movement from a wide-angle perspective to a narrower view. The moving from macro to micro perspective creates a sense of depth and immersion, guiding the viewer’s gaze from an overview of the destination (here: the canals of Colmar, a city in Alsace, in the foreground) to its unique, localized features (the Church of Saint Joseph in Colmar, in the background). Francesconi (2014: 96), in her study on multimodality in tourism and travel texts, identifies the horizontal layering of images as a common modality cue that, on an interpersonal level, conveys a sense of invitation and access to the destination.

The shift in perspectives is furthermore observable in the semantics of the verbs ‘invite’ and ‘visit’. The use of ‘invite’ positions the region Alsace as an active agent that beckons travellers, suggesting an internal, welcoming force. This perspective is aligned with an inside-out approach, where the region itself reaches out to engage potential visitors. Conversely, the verb ‘visit’ represents an outside-in perspective, framing the tourist as an external observer who enters the region. At the same time, the contrast in perspectives is nuanced by the deictic ‘here’ employed in text, which serves as *origo*, i.e., a reference point that situates the subject in the immediate context of Alsace. This linguistic choice creates a sense of proximity and presence, positioning the reader as an active participant in the experience (cf. also Held 2019a).

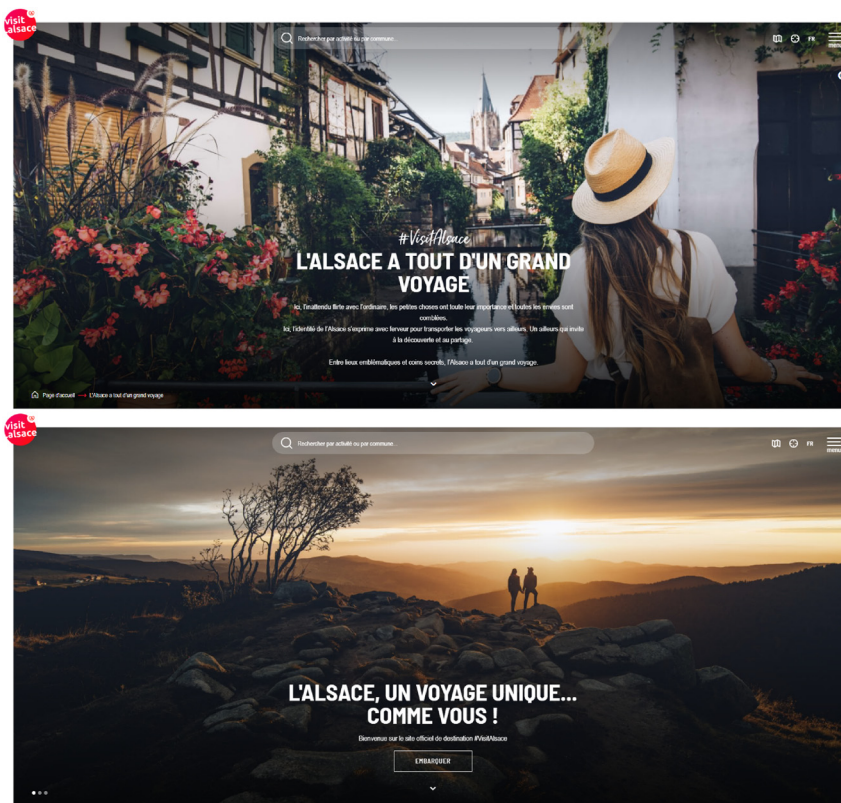


Figure 2: Alsace advertisements (11.11.2024, <https://www.visit-alsace/rever-alsace/> and <https://www.visit-alsace/>).

Additionally, the comparative approach finds expression in the two conceptual domains ‘discovery’ and ‘positive imaginary worlds’, which were already identified by Manca (2018) in her analysis of official tourist websites. The two frameworks are represented in the expressions *transporter les voyageurs vers ailleurs* (‘transport the travellers to elsewhere’) and *toutes les envies sont comblées* (‘all desires are fulfilled’). While the former phrase – combining a movement and a static place – situates Alsace within the domain of discovery, suggesting a transformative experience, the latter one taps into the domain of a utopian, idealized destination, promising a space where every expectation is met.

In comparing the first screenshot with the second one, a further contrast becomes evident: the narrative shifts from descriptive, impersonal accounts to a more intimate, persuasive language aimed at creating a connection with the reader. Whereas in the first text, an impersonal style emphasizes the objective qualities of the region – its landmarks, historical significance and cultural heritage – in the second text, a more personal, emotive style focuses on subjective experiences and unique encounters, employing language – the personal pronoun *vous* [‘you’] – that is designed to resonate emotionally with the reader. The use of *vous* exemplifies “ego-targeting” (Dann 1996: 185–188), where the visitor perceives the message as personally addressed, fostering a sense of being singled out as both spectator and consumer (cf. also Maci 2018: 33). The pronoun appears in the comparative construction *comme vous* [‘just like you’], a particularly salient structure in this context, as the emphasis ultimately falls on the notion of *voyage unique* [‘unique journey’]. The contrast is supported by the visual: the first image shows a single person, while the second one depicts a couple whose physical closeness – marked by holding hands – signifies intimacy. In addition, the represented persons are shown from the back, which, in combination with *vous* [‘you’] leads to a depersonalized (impersonal) view on which the future traveller’s identity can project themselves (cf. also Denti 2020: 260). As Cogno and Dall’Ara (2006: 228) argue, establishing a personal connection between communicative actors is a key persuasive strategy that promotes identification and loyalty.

The contrasts used in this example – between the small and the grand, the ordinary and the unexpected, the inside and the outside, the impersonal and the personal – are not merely stylistic choices but serve as fundamental strategies in constructing an image of Alsace as a destination that is both diverse and immersive. It also becomes evident that the dialogic interaction between different perspectives reflects the notion of polyphony in tourism discourse, where multiple viewpoints are integrated.

5.2 ‘Languaging’ – or the articulation of time and space via linguistic identity markers, coupled with visual cues

The concept of “languaging”, originally defined by Potter (1970: 90–91) as the strategic use of foreign words to assert superiority or exclusivity, has evolved in tourism communication into a more nuanced strategy that seeks to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps rather than reinforce social hierarchies. As discussed by Cappelli (2013: 354–355), languaging in this context refers specifically to the use of local language elements to achieve various pragmatic effects, e.g., enhancing the tourist’s sense of authenticity, reducing cultural distance, and facilitating a more immersive experience. Dann (1996) and Cesiri (2016) identify the use of regional (and also foreign) language as a traditional verbal technique that enriches the narrative of the travel destination, providing a kind of “linguistic flavor” (Manca 2018: 102) that makes the experience more genuine and appealing to tourists. Moreover, the idea of languaging contributes to the creation of a “linguascape of the travel destination” (Jaworski et al. 2003: 17) in the context of tourism, where language is not merely a medium of communication but a crucial part of the destination’s identity (cf. also Held 2020). By integrating local language into promotional materials, the tourism industry crafts an anticipated experience for visitors in emotional and cultural terms (cf. Maci 2018: 30). This deliberate linguistic construction sets the stage for the tourist’s encounter with the destination, shaping expectations and emotions before the actual experience unfolds.

The extent to which languaging is employed in tourism texts often correlates with the perceived cultural and linguistic distance between the tourist and the host community (Cesiri 2016: 65). When this gap is substantial, the use of local language elements becomes a vital strategy for mitigating potential misunderstandings and for enhancing the tourist’s comfort and engagement. Interestingly, when addressing regions of a foreign country,

reference to local elements is generally avoided – if not established outside the country. It remains to be seen whether the ‘linguaging trend’ holds true across different contexts, including the specific cases examined in this study.

5.2.1 Example 3: Bretagne

- (3) *Cet été, Breizhpirez au grand air. Écrivez votre propre légende dans les Monts d'Arrée. Bretagne. Le dépaysement proche de chez vous.*
 ['This summer, *breazhe* in the fresh air. Write your own legend in the Monts d'Arrée. Brittany. A change of scenery close to home.']
Cet été, découvrez les villes de Keractère. Arpentez les villes d'art et d'histoire de Bretagne. Bretagne. Le dépaysement proche de chez vous.
 ['This summer, discover the towns with *keracter*. Explore Brittany's towns of art and history. Brittany. A change of scenery close to home.']

These two tourism texts, which were part of a post-covid campaign in 2020 for the region of Bretagne/Brittany in France, show how time and space are associated with linguistic elements of the regional language, the Breton, that act as markers of identity (*breizh* ['Brittany'], *ker* ['town, village']). Temporality and spatiality are also expressed through metaphors and metonymies (e.g., *making holidays is breathing*) which not only enhance the emotional appeal of travel but also reflect the broader societal and temporal contexts in which they are deployed.

The focus of the campaign is on a qualitative time change: a future state (*le dépaysement proche de chez vous* ['a change of scenery close to home']), that will occur during summer (*cet été* ['this summer']), contrasts with the



Figure 3: Brittany advertisements (16.9.2024, <https://www.rennes-infos-autrement.fr/une-campagne-vivifiante-pour-promouvoir-le-tourisme-breton>).

current state (staying at home, being restricted due to covid). This temporal contrast between present and future – which is typical for the language of tourism (cf. Dann 1996) – is connected to a spatial change, expressed in the temporal-local adjective *proche* (*de chez vous*). The semantics of the adjective implies the bringing of a more distant place closer to the potential tourist. This is reinforced by the use of imperatives (*breizhpirez* – which simultaneously constitutes a pun on the Breton term *breizh* –, *écrivez*, *découvrez*, *arpentez*; [‘breathe, write, discover, explore’]) which have a fundamentally directive value and aim to guide the conduct of the addressees. Moreover, the nouns *légende* and *histoire* enrich the semantic scope of the verbs *écrire* and *découvrir* within the complex verb-noun phrase temporal predicate, as they denote the past while concurrently projecting into the future, implying actions yet to be undertaken by the prospective traveller.

On the visual level, the two images exhibit differing modes of representation. The first picture is narrative (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2021), portraying two individuals engaged in a dynamic, on-trip activity, conveying movement and temporality. In contrast, the second image is conceptual (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2021), characterized by a static, timeless quality that resembles a post-trip snapshot, evoking memory rather than action.

Yet, both examples share the use of Breton-specific language and cultural anchors to construct a layered, persuasive narrative. Terms like *breizh* and *ker* act as verbal shibboleths, signalling membership in the Breton cultural and linguistic community. They provide immediate recognition for insiders, fostering authenticity, while simultaneously appealing to outsiders – especially through typographical emphasis – by evoking an exotic and intriguing cultural backdrop (cf. also Held 2008b). Auer’s (2010) concept of public texts making spaces and languages visible is particularly relevant here. The use of regional dialects and expressions in tourism advertising spatializes language, embedding it within the physical and cultural geography of Brittany. Temporal dimensions are also suggested, as the linguistic markers evoke both historical continuity and a modern reassertion of regional identity.

On the typographical and visual level, both words are prominently highlighted through larger font sizes and visually supported by the Breton flag incorporated into the destination’s branding. This form of “language crossing” (Cappelli 2013) emphasizes not only the foreignness of the terms but also their cultural resonance. As Jaworski et al. (2003: 23) note, the use of host languages extends beyond literal meaning, serving to evoke authenticity and exoticism while also fostering familiarity and trust. Additionally, the superscript symbol following *Bretagne*, reminiscent of a copyright mark, subtly signals notions of authenticity and quality.

Interestingly, the Breton terms are left unexplained. While their meanings are partly inferred from context and word integration, this approach carries risks. As Manca (2018: 103) observes, inaccessible regional linguistic markers may alienate audiences, undermining the message’s persuasiveness and pragmatic effectiveness. However, in the case of *breizh* and *ker*, the broader cultural associations with Brittany likely mitigate this risk, ensuring that the terms contribute positively to the overall narrative.

The inclusion of Breton words is paired with metonymies and metaphors that enhance their persuasive impact. For instance, the metonymy *making holidays is breathing* is present in the first text. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, this figurative expression gains heightened resonance, standing in stark contrast to respiratory illness. Also, the air that tourists breathe serves metonymically as a stand-in for the local atmosphere, which, in turn metaphorically enables the ‘inhalation’ of Breton culture itself. Holidays here are conceptualized as essential for mental and emotional well-being, reflecting a recent trend (cf. Antelmi 2018). This tourism type is centred on needs and values distinct from mass consumption, encompassing segments such as adventure, eco-, sustainable and heritage tourism (cf. Antelmi 2018; Francesconi 2012: 13–14). Additionally, a visual metaphor arises from the activity of hiking up on a hill which is illuminated by the sun: *GOOD IS UP/GOOD IS LIGHT*. This metaphor associates positivity with upward motion and lightness (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 16). Unlike verbal metaphors, visual metaphors lack explicit grammar, which makes them less consciously processed by audiences (Guan and Forceville 2020: 140). This subtlety enhances their persuasive power, aligning positive travel experiences with elevation, light and aspiration. Thanks to their embodied nature, they are appealing to everyone (Guan and Forceville 2020: 141).

In the second picture, too, the use of figurative language is observable. Through the use of the verbs ‘discover’ and ‘explore’, the character of Breton cities is anchored in the conceptual domains of *DISCOVERY* and *ADVENTURE* (cf. Manca 2018), evoking also connotations to the magical and extraordinary (cf. Dann 1996; Pierini 2008). These

implied domains resonate with deeply rooted human desires for exploration and wonder, casting travel not merely as an activity but as a transformative experience. Dann (1996: 57) relates magical properties of tourism with the creation of envy in the subject: “We wish to become instantly and magically transformed into objects of envy. [...] By flying us to the destination on the equivalent of a magic carpet, i.e. by being ‘transported’ out of time and place, such a ‘transformation’ becomes possible.”

5.2.2 Example 4: Austria

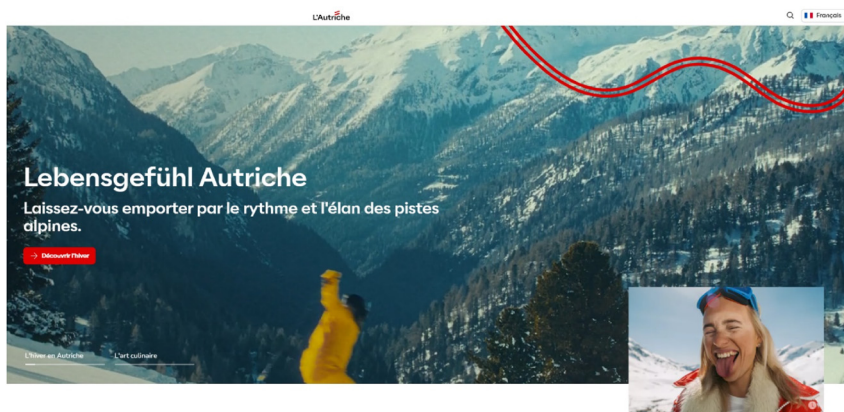
In this example, a tourism text for Austria, the use of a German expression within a French text is correlated with verbal and visual identity markers as well as with musical terms.

- (4) *Lebensgefühl Autriche. Laissez-vous emporter par le rythme et l'élan des pistes alpines. En vacances en Autriche, laissez-vous séduire par l'harmonie entre nature, montagnes, lacs et culture pour vivre des instants exceptionnels.*
 ['Austrian way of life. Let yourself be carried away by the rhythm and momentum of the Alpine slopes. On holiday in Austria, let yourself be seduced by the harmony between nature, mountains, lakes and culture, and experience exceptional moments.']

This screenshot from Austria's official tourist website is centred on the term *Lebensgefühl* ['way of life'] as part of a broader campaign inviting travellers to experience unique emotions and moments. By leaving *Lebensgefühl* untranslated, the campaign uses it as a bridge between languages, making the foreign concept approachable and engaging for international audiences. Rather than relying on direct translation, the term's meaning is conveyed through context, visuals and imagery, rendering it both exotic and accessible (cf. Cappelli 2013).

The lack of a definite article further heightens the term's abstract and unbounded quality. Unlike French, which typically uses articles with generic abstract nouns, German frequently omits it. As Kleineberg (2022) observes, this zero article suggests a referent that is theoretically perceptible but not yet individually experienced. In this context, *Lebensgefühl* is presented as an emotional potential, i.e. an experience awaiting realization during the traveller's stay in Austria. Simultaneously, its implicit connection to the destination, the season (winter), and visual and linguistic identity markers (nature, mountains, snow) ensures that it is specific enough to anchor the viewer's imagination to Austria's unique cultural and natural allure. The interplay triggers a conversational implicature, prompting the viewer to infer the implicit message: Austria offers a *Lebensgefühl* that transcends simple pleasure and is deeply rooted in nature and cultural identity.

Furthermore, it embodies rhythm (*laissez-vous emporter par le rythme des pistes* ['let yourself be carried away by the rhythm of the slopes']) and harmony (*laissez-vous séduire par l'harmonie* ['let yourself be seduced by the harmony']). The idea of rhythm is additionally reinforced by the visual: the blurred image of the skier evokes



En vacances en Autriche, laissez-vous séduire par l'harmonie entre nature, montagnes, lacs et culture pour vivre des instants exceptionnels.

Figure 4: Austria advertisement (22.10.2022, <https://www.austria.info/fr/>).

not only anonymity of the traveller but also the dynamic, continuous motion associated with rhythm. The (metaphoric) message is clear: just as music evokes feelings through rhythm and harmony, so too does Austria's *Lebensgefühl* unfold as an orchestrated symphony of sensory and emotional experiences.

In this 'musical' context, the causative construction *laissez-vous* ['let yourself'] is used in a permissive way: the subject (the potential tourist) allows the action (*emporter, séduire...*) without controlling it. Permissive causatives link two related events: the finite verb's action as the cause and the infinite verb's action as consequence (cf. Simone and Cerbasi 2001). The infinitives *emporter* and *séduire* evoke sensory experiences and align with the final periphrastic phrase *pour vivre des instants exceptionnels* ['to experience exceptional moments'] and the visual imagery (skiing in the mountains, enjoying the winter sun). The verb *emporter* additionally implies a spatial dimension, suggesting physical movement.

Visually, the alpine landscape reveals a striking contrast to the Brittany advert (cf. Figure 2), offering little to no view of the sky. The mountains appear dark and oppressive, and the downward slope – reinforced by the act of skiing – adds to the overall sense of descent. Despite this, the textual reference to 'alpine' and the prominent red ski track (a visual cue that simultaneously evokes the red-white-red of the Austrian flag) align coherently with the broader representational logic. These elements function as visual identity markers, anchoring the scene in a culturally and geographically specific context.

5.3 Temporal-spatial distance becomes temporal-spatial proximity

The following two examples highlight the contrast between distant space and time (vacation life) and proximate space and time (everyday life). As noted earlier (cf. Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2), Brucculeri (2009: 34) describes this contrast as a comparative dialogue between a familiar, taken-for-granted world and an inherently other one, progressing from a nearby, partially different zone to a distant, idealized holiday space. However, the upcoming examples reveal that this opposition is not always consistent and may be in part diminished.

5.3.1 Example 5: Korea

- (5) *Si vous pensez que l'histoire est seulement dans les livres, visitez la Corée. L'histoire de quelques milliers d'années réapparaîtra devant vous. En tant que patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, le sanctuaire de Jongmyo vous accueillera au printemps avec des cérémonies rituelles.*
 ['If you think history is only in books, visit Korea. Thousands of years of history will appear in front of your eyes. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Jongmyo sanctuary will welcome you in spring with ritual ceremonies.']

This Korea advertisement exploits the contrast between past and future, as well as between here and there, to appeal to potential tourists through both verbal and visual elements. In linguistic terms, the contrast is expressed in the juxtaposition of past (history), present (the understanding of history as a dynamic, lived experience) and future (visiting Korea and participating at ceremonies). The conditional phrase in present tense introduced by *si* ['if'] confronts an enduring state of thinking (*si vous pensez...* ['if you think']) with the future and durative state of visiting (*visitez la Corée* ['visit Korea']) another place. Visually, the contrast is accentuated by the juxtaposition of a historical text excerpt at the top of the page with a photograph of a spiritual-religious ceremony below. Hunter (2014), in his study on the visual formation of a destination image for Seoul, relates the linking of historical and contemporary photographs of monumental architecture to connotations of historical authenticity and change. These two aspects also apply to the Korea ad, where historical fidelity, which oscillates between past and present, is central. The upcoming state of the potential tourist is further explicated in the body text, where future tense is used (*réapparaîtra devant vous*, ['will appear in front of your eyes']; *vous accueillera*, ['will welcome you']). Through visual parallels between the book excerpt and the photograph, the advertisement creates a sense of



Figure 5: Korea advertisement (2008, TGV Magazine).

continuity between past, present and future, anchored in a specific location. Both text and image refer to this place, the Jongmyo sanctuary, which represents a cultural and historical emblem of Korea.

In this multimodal text, time and space are intrinsically interwoven to promote travel to Korea. Temporal and spatial cues bridge the gap between ‘here’ and ‘there’ – an exotic “elsewhere” (Baider et al. 2004: 29) – enabling potential tourists to project themselves into an imagined future, or what Dann (1996: 53) terms their “future perfect tense”. This projection allows viewers to envision desired outcomes as already realized, fostering identification with the promoted destination. Consequently, temporal and spatial distance is transformed into perceived proximity, i.e., a distant time/place becomes a possible future near time/place.

5.3.2 Example 6: Tromsø

In this example as well, the contrast between the near and the distant is reduced, also by the use of a specific medium: the internet.

- (6) *Tromsø. Une aventure estivale en Arctique. Puisez ici de l'inspiration ou rendez-vous sur la page de Tromsø en hiver. L'été à Tromsø est particulièrement unique, puisque la ville est illuminée par le soleil de minuit. Comme vous le savez, le soleil ne se couche jamais en été dans le Cercle polaire arctique ... ce qui fait de Tromsø, également connue sous le nom de capitale de l'Arctique, votre terrain de jeu 24 heures sur 24. L'excuse parfaite pour passer la nuit dehors ! Tromsø invite à une exploration plus poussée que le simple fait d'admirer le ciel. Cité universitaire la plus septentrionale du monde, c'est aussi une ville animée et pleine de surprises. Vous y trouverez non seulement une vie nocturne trépidante, mais aussi des concerts, des expositions d'art et des festivals.*

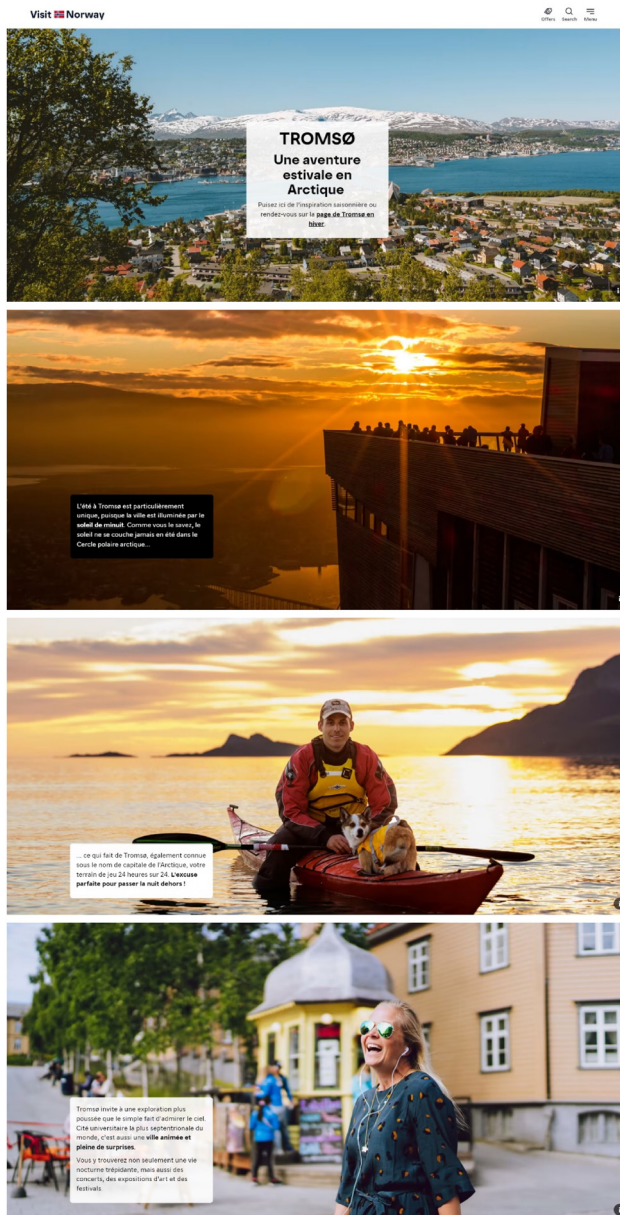


Figure 6: Tromsø advertisement (5.12.2024, <https://www.visitnorway.fr/destinations-norvege/region-nord/tromso/>).

[‘Tromsø. A summer adventure in the Arctic. Find inspiration here or visit the Tromsø in winter page. The summer in Tromsø is quite unique, as the city is lit up by the midnight sun. You see, the sun never sets in summer above the Arctic Circle ... which makes Tromsø, also known as the Arctic Capital, your playground 24 hours a day. The perfect excuse to stay out all night! Tromsø beckons for more exploration than just marvelling at the sky. As the world’s northernmost university town, it is also a vibrant city full of surprises. Not only will you find a buzzing nightlife, you can enjoy concerts, art exhibitions and festivals as well.’]

This example shows how websites play a key role in crafting immersive experiences for potential tourists. By combining visual representations with carefully selected temporal expressions, they construct a narrative that encourages potential tourists to identify with the destination’s depicted identity. The internet facilitates the compression of space and time – a hallmark of globalized digital communication (cf. Moroşanu Frith et al. 2020). On the Tromsø destination website, this temporal-spatial condensation is realized through an “imaginary tour”

(Linde and Labov 1975) through space and time: as users scroll, successive images appear, creating a virtual journey that invites them to envision themselves at the destination.

A central strategy in this construction is the use of both conceptual and narrative images (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2021). The latter ones typically feature people shown as happy, welcoming and engaged in local or traditional activities, positioning them as objects of appreciation for visitors (cf. Cohen 1993). These images not only depict a desirable way of tourist life but also stimulate a process of identification in potential tourists, encouraging them to project themselves into these scenes and imagine their own participation in these activities (Francesconi 2014: 77). Equally significant is the consistent use of a horizontal camera angle, capturing individuals frontally and at close range to establish direct visual contact. This strategy explicitly invites the viewer to engage affectively and experientially (Francesconi 2014: 90), a dynamic further reinforced by the direct ‘interlocution’ evident in the gaze of the man in the kayak.

The website’s textual strategy includes the anticipation of the tourist’s journey through the temporal lexeme *aventure* [‘adventure’], which inherently implies a change of state (cf. also the Latin etymology: *ADVENTURA* < *ADVENIRE*, [‘things that must happen’]), capturing the perfective and terminative aspects of time. This suggests that the adventure is not just a process but a definitive and culminating experience that will lead the visitor to a new phase of enjoyment or self-discovery. Additionally, temporal references, such as the description of the destination in terms of ‘summer’, serve to anchor the user’s experience within a specific time frame, aligning the destination’s appeal with the ideal conditions for tourism. Simultaneously, the phenomenon of the midnight sun in the Northern regions blurs the distinction between night and day, creating ambiguity about the exact timing of the photographs. This temporal framing invites users to envision themselves at the destination during a particular season, reinforcing the idea of an idyllic, time-bound experience – one where the usual limits of daytime are extended by the midsummer midnight sun.

Tourists are thus encouraged to ‘immerse’ themselves in the experience presented by the destination. There is a subtle shift in the narrative structure when the website moves from passive engagement (*puisez ici de l’inspiration* [‘find inspiration here’]) to active participation (*Tromsø invite à une exploration plus poussée que le simple fait d’admirer le ciel* [‘Tromsø beckons for more exploration than just marvelling at the sky’]). The second phrase repositions the user from a passive recipient of inspiration to an active participant in the tourist experience. This shift invites users to engage directly with the destination, allowing them to project themselves into the narrative and identify with the individuals in the images. Manca (2018) and Messner (2024) argue that immersive tourism communication can create a sense of virtual presence at a destination. In this context, the traditional view of tourism as a contrast to everyday life (cf. Cohen 1979) becomes less applicable. With the rise of new media and technologies, tourism experiences can increasingly be integrated into daily life without the need for physical travel (cf. Minazzi 2015: 53; Uriely 2005). These innovations mediate the temporal and spatial dimensions of travel, leading to an overlap between everyday and touristic time and space, where boundaries become fluid and indistinct.

6 Summary and discussion

In tourism texts, verbal and visual effects are skilfully combined, aiming to offer a multimodal experience during looking at advertisements or visits to websites, and to shape an illusion of reality and real enjoyment (cf. Held 2004). According to Dann (1996), the tourist’s gaze is prepared through the words, phrases, sentences and images encountered in tourism texts before the journey begins. The examples analysed in this paper show how temporal and spatial aspects of the tourism experience are portrayed in promotional material for different destinations and how language and image intersemiotically engage to intertwine spatial and temporal concepts, with one influencing the understanding of the other. As “tourist consumption is primarily visual” (Jenkins 2003: 309), tourist spaces and vacation time become touristic, when they acquire the status of places absolutely to be visited and time absolutely to be lived. For this, not only images, signs and symbols are carefully selected, but also words and expressions – the latter not primarily for their denotative potential, but for their intrinsic connotative qualities. Language’s metonymic and metaphorical potential, verb semantics and different styles to address the

potential tourist are exploited to juxtapose touristic time and space – regarded as out-of-ordinary and qualitative – with home time and space – considered as ordinary and quantitative – as well as to highlight divergent and contrastive facets of a destination (see Sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.2.1).

Furthermore, regional language and cultural concepts are used to anticipate the tourist's experience in emotional and cultural terms (see Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2), and linguistic expressions of contiguity between past, present and future – extending to their constructional integration in compressed past-present-future frames – aid to mitigate the contrast between distant time/places and near time/places (see Sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2). These verbal strategies are intrinsically interwoven with visual representations, such as:

- (a) contrasting two divergent temporal and spatial states within images and with the use of different colours to highlight the opposition between everyday and holiday life, which is also expressed in verbal terms (example 1, cf. Section 5.1.1);
- (b) shifting from wide to narrow perspectives and employing horizontal layering to support the verbal invitation to explore the destination and to know its diverse and polyphonic nature (examples 1, 6, cf. Sections 5.1.1 and 5.3.2);
- (c) exploiting the diverse functions of narrative and conceptual images to create both an idea of involvement and immersion, and of the authentic, even magical character of the destination (examples 2, 3, 6, cf. Sections 5.1.2, 5.2.1 and 5.3.2);
- (d) juxtaposing visual identity markers and linguistic borrowing to develop a contiguity relation between a cause (the passive action of being seduced) and a consequence (actively enjoying the holiday) (example 4, cf. Section 5.2.2);
- (e) combining the visual comparison of a past/present situation and a future state with a verbal condition to diminish the contrast between here and there (example 5, cf. Section 5.3.1);
- (f) synthesizing visual tourist impressions and verbal temporal/spatial markers and indications, and simultaneously taking advantage of the digital medium to trace an imaginary tour through time and space (example 6, cf. Section 5.3.2).

The analysed examples share a common temporal and spatial progression: beginning from a point of departure (time and space at home, in everyday life), a directional movement is established toward the destination and holiday period, culminating in a shift to a different time and space (the actual holiday away from home). Within this cycle, temporal signs can relate to spatiality, often involving positioning or perspective in space, such as metaphors of motion (cf. examples 2, 4 and 5); metonymic mapping (cf. examples 1 and 3); the metaphorical construal of time in terms of movement through space, commonly captured by the conceptual metaphor *TIME IS A JOURNEY* (cf. examples 2 and 6); temporal immersion in a space (cf. examples 2 and 6), also with a possible impact of time-boundedness (cf. example 3); or boundaries that indicate temporal division and imply spatial separation (cf. example 1). Simultaneously, spatial cognitions can also permit temporality; they typically involve concepts that relate to movement, progression or transformation over time. They include (a) directionality – spatial terms like *up* and *down*, often mirrored in visuals, evoke movement through time or future-oriented progression (cf. example 2); (b) distance – concepts such as *NEAR* and *FAR* imply temporal dimensions like the near future or distant past (cf. example 5); (c) transition – concepts like *MOVING* or *CROSSING* signal changes unfolding over time (cf. example 6). The integration of spatiotemporal mappings – particularly when examined through the lens of Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002), which posits the selective fusion of elements from distinct mental spaces into a unified, emergent structure – offers a productive avenue for further inquiry.

The concept of transition also relates to time-boundedness, as illustrated in example 3 (Section 5.2.1). Social, cultural and political factors influence the time-specific perception of tourism texts (Messner 2023a: 381). When a text is tied to particular conditions – such as travel restrictions – it becomes linked to a defined timeframe for its use and dissemination (Messner 2023a: 381). Future research could further explore the role of time-boundedness in tourism texts, especially in digital ones, which can be continuously updated to reflect changing circumstances.

The analysis further revealed that the concept of polyphony, where various viewpoints converge, is crucial for tourism discourse. This observation particularly applies to the visual level, where strategies such as perspective, camera angle, colours, directions and social distance help establish a dynamic interaction between

the represented participants and the viewer/potential tourist. According to Urry (2002), the tourist gaze conceptualizes tourist spaces primarily as semiotic places consumed through organized, socially shaped processes of perceiving and interpreting signs. These signs are not chosen by tourists themselves but are curated and regulated by the tourism industry through deliberate site selection and symbolic management (cf. Crestani 2018: 24). Thus, the tourist gaze both shapes and is shaped by discourse, making language and image, as Held (2018: 12) describes, “a two-sided mirror reflecting tourism as a global social movement in space and time.” The tourist gaze is mediated through various textual forms that reflect the three stages of the tourism experience: (a) pre-trip, where it is first imagined; (b) on-trip, where it is experienced as a transient sensory event; and (c) post-trip, where it is documented and transformed into lasting memory (cf. Held 2018: 12–13). Further linguistic research in tourism discourse should focus on developing new approaches to ‘gazing’ at language and image use and their potential to create and mediate touristic time and space within a text. Additionally, future research could explore the distinction between the tourism site as a geographical entity and the spatial arrangement within the image. For instance, in example 1 (Section 5.1.1), the olive oil bottle appears in an empty, decontextualized space, whereas the tree is fully integrated into its natural setting. This distinction enables a more nuanced analysis of how spatial – and temporal – meaning is constructed both visually and conceptually.

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