

Tourism Destination Image and Irish Websites

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Abstract

This article addresses the issue of the formation of Tourist Destination Image through the analysis of the specific tourism discourse - the linguistic variety of English generally used in tourism – which was applied by some Irish websites promoting accommodation in hostels and advertising local festivals: the study focuses on the way tourism discourse contributes to convey an induced image of a destination. Tourism Destination Image (T.D.I.) can actually be shaped through the mediation between tourists' mental constructs and web-based promotional tourism material. The survey was partly developed during my English course in Tourism Studies, university of Palermo. A linguistic study was conducted on samples of texts from websites promoting both accommodation in Irish hostels and, parallelly, a new and more dynamic image of Dublin and Irish towns, also through the promotion of typical local festivals and events. Results show that linguistic features were used together with psychological attributes.

Keywords: tourism destination image; tourism discourse; youth hostels; festivals and events

Introduction

In this article I will investigate the formation of Tourist Destination Image about Dublin and Ireland as it is promoted by websites advertising Irish hostels and Irish events. It will be divided into two sections: the former concerns a theoretical analysis of TDI formation and of the specific type of language used in tourism; the latter deals with the actual analysis of the language employed by a group of websites advertising Irish hostels and events.

1 Review of the literature: Tourist Destination Image

The Tourist Destination Image (TDI) of a place is shaped by the images that a destination evokes, and by the atmosphere and the attractions that the consumer expects from it (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). These stereotypical, affective and unique images form “*tourists' mental constructs*” (Gallarza, Saura, Garcia, 2000).

Destination Image consequently plays a relevant role in individual's travel decision. (MacInnis, 1987; Chon, 1990).

Image can be characterised by “*any idea, belief, feeling or attitude*” or as a “*set of expectations and perceptions a prospective traveller has of a destination*” (Buhalis, 2000, p. 99) which can be due to past experiences, word of mouth or any other information or promotional campaign.

Baloglu and McCleary (1999) have investigated the process of formation of Tourist Destination Image and have proposed a model which takes into consideration two relevant determinants:

1. **stimulus factors**, or functional variables, which can be directly observed and/or measured (e.g. information sources);
2. **personal factors**, which refer to psychological characteristics not directly observable (e.g. values, personality, etc.).

Parallelly Gunn (1972) identifies three different segments in the formation of the concept of image: the *organic*, the *induced* and the *modified induced* image.

The **organic image** derives from sources of information which are not controlled by the marketer, e.g. word of mouth.

The **induced image** develops from marketing information, such as brochures (or websites).

The **modified induced image** is the result of personal experiences made at the destination.

As previously stated, the destination image plays a significant role in connection with tourists' choice of a destination. Generally speaking, the destination image influences potential tourists' subjective perception, consequent behaviour and destination choice. However, the way in which a destination image is communicated is equally relevant, and through that we move into the field of the specific language of tourism. Graham Dann with his "*The Language of Tourism*" (1996) was among the first researchers who proposed a detailed analysis of the language of tourism. He suggests that tourism promotion creates its own language by trying to seduce thousands of people into becoming tourists.

1.2 The Components of a Destination Image

Research has shown that there is a clear relationship between a positive image of a destination and positive purchase decisions (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998: 64). In their article 'The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image' (1991:6), Echtner and Ritchie define destination image as 'impressions of a place' or 'perceptions of an area.' They acknowledge the existence of three continuums that support the image of any destination: 1) functional-psychological, 2) attribute-holistic, 3) common-unique. Hence: '[...] Destination Image consists of **functional characteristics**, concerning the more tangible aspects of a destination, and **psychological characteristics**, concerning the more intangible aspects'. Furthermore, they argue that a destination image should be perceived in terms of both **individual attributes** (e.g. climate, accommodation facilities) and **holistic impressions** (e.g. mental pictures or imagery of a destination).

Therefore, Echtner and Ritchie distinguish between functional and psychological characteristics of an image. The *functional* characteristics refer to directly observable or measurable components (e.g. price, accommodations, attractions) while the *psychological* characteristics are intangible (e.g. friendliness, safety). Thus destination images are perceived in terms of both attribute-based and holistic components – which can be both of functional and psychological characteristics. Furthermore, Etchner and Ritchie introduce an additional dimension, called the **common-unique dimension**. Destination images can range from images based on common to unique features. Common functional characteristics of a destination include e.g. climate, price levels and infrastructure. On the other hand, quality of service, safety and level of friendliness are examples of common psychological characteristics. At the other end of the continuum, destination images can consist of unique features and events (functional characteristics) or auras and atmosphere (psychological characteristics). Consequently, in order to favourably differentiate a destination from competing ones, the psychological characteristics and the unique features associated with the destination should be enhanced. This idea is also supported by Dann (Dann in Echtner, 1992: 52) (see Table No. 1).

1.3 Destination Image Formation

As already emphasised in the Introduction, tourists have different images of a destination and these images are partly formed by various sources providing some form of information. William Gartner (1993) labels the various sources as 'agents'. Gunn (1972) was the first to identify image formation agents by suggesting that images are formed through *induced* and *organic* agents. Induced images are created through information received from external sources such as destination advertising (Gartner, 1993: 196). Organic images are formed from past experiences and unbiased sources of information, e.g. news reports, movies, newspapers. According to Gunn, the formation of an image occurs in the continual interplay of the organic and induced image. The key difference between the two image formation agents is the level of control.

It is possible to control the induced image because it is the result of a planned marketing effort (e.g. through brochures), whereas the organic image is beyond the control of destination marketers (Gartner, 1993: 196). Furthermore Gartner divides 'induced' agents into four types: **overt induced I**, which consists of traditional forms of advertising such as brochures, radio, television; **overt induced II**, which is information from e.g. tour operators; **covert induced I**, which consists of testimonies from celebrities and satisfied customers; **covert induced II**, which is independent endorsement through travel writing (Ibid.:197-201).

Finally he presents ‘organic’ agents as distinguished into unsolicited organic agents, which consist of information provided by friends and relatives who have visited a destination, and solicited organic agents, which refer to the tourist deliberately seeking information from friends and relatives (Ibid: 203-204).

The purpose of this article is that of identifying the image formed by agents of the following categories: *overt induced I* and *covert induced I*. More specifically, I will examine the destination image concerning Dublin and Ireland as it is conveyed through websites advertising Irish hostels and Irish festivals, with particular reference to the analysis of the language used for that purpose.

1.4 The Language of Tourism

In the introduction to *The Language of Tourism* (1996) Graham Dann states that tourism, in the act of promotion, has its own language (Dann, 1996: 2); the verbal and the visual elements in tourism promotional material constitute a particular type of language, which differs from other forms of communication. Before Dann, other tourism researchers and academics, such as MacCannell (1989), had provided useful insights into this subject and have analysed the ideas generally conveyed through the language of tourism as well as the reasons at the basis of tourists’ destination choice. Three major theoretical stands are identified in tourism literature: *the authenticity perspective*, *the strangerhood perspective* and *the conflict perspective*, first introduced in tourism literature in the 1970s.

The **authenticity** perspective was first introduced by Dean MacCannell in *The Tourist.. A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1989) as a reaction to Levi-Strauss’s claim that the structures of everyday modern life had been destroyed by modernity itself. Consequently, given the destruction of modern society, MacCannell argues that the primary motive for tourists to travel is a quest for authenticity; tourists, defined as *modern pilgrims*, hope to find in foreign cultures a more genuine lifestyle that is purer and more complete than their own. However, this is, in his opinion, doomed to fail, as tourism industry presents tourists with constructed tourist spaces and a ‘staged authenticity’ (e.g. the Maori dance in New Zealand).

The second perspective concerns **strangerhood** and it originates from Erik Cohen. In his article ‘Towards a Sociology of international tourism’ (1972) Cohen writes that ‘*the modern man is interested in things, sights, customs and cultures different from his own, precisely because they are different*’. According to Cohen tourists seek both familiarity and strangeness in the tourism experience. As a matter of fact, not all tourists seek strangeness in foreign cultures; some tourists deliberately seek familiarity when they are away. The language of tourism is aware of the strangerhood-familiarity distinction. By incorporating this distinction into the language of tourism, it often seeks to seduce and persuade potential tourists by making them feel as though they have never left home, despite being in a foreign country. The destination image, therefore, should try and communicate both concepts.

The final perspective is the **conflict** perspective, where the focus is on the way in which destinations are portrayed in promotional material and the power relations that form part of tourism imagery. The conflict perspective originates from Edward Said, whose book *Orientalism* was first published in 1978 (Dann, 1996: 23-24; Morgan and Pritchard, 1998: 14). In *Orientalism* Said examines the history and nature of Western attitudes towards the East and argues that the relationship between the East and the West is one of power and subordination. Consequently the language of tourism found in advertising, travel books, guidebooks and so on reflects the notion of Western dominance and superiority over Eastern inferiority.

1.5 Properties of the Language of Tourism

1.5.1 This section outlines six properties of the language of tourism, as they have been identified and analysed by researchers and academics (mainly Dann, 1996, and Borra in Dann, 1996), namely: *function*, *structure*, *lack of sender identification*, *monologue*, *euphoria* and *tautology*.

- **Function:** the first property of the language of tourism is *function*, which shares similar features with other forms of communication (Dann, 1996: 34). In 1960 Roman Jakobson identified six factors which can be distinguished in every verbal communication “act”: an addresser, an addressee, a message, a context, a channel and a code. To each of these factors Jakobson attached six correspondingly functions of language (Jakobson in Innis, 1986: 150):

1. The emotional function, where the focus is on the addresser of the message.
2. The conative function, where the focus is on the addressee.
3. The referential function, where the focus is on the context or meaning of the message.
4. The phatic function, which refers to the channel of communication.
5. The metalingual function, which deals with the code itself.
6. The poetic function, which focuses on the message for its own sake. (e.g. style)

According to Borra, the aim of any tourist brochure is to provide objective information about a destination (Borra in Dann, 1996: 37). In this respect the referential function would be the most important one. However, Borra also argues that no single function should be emphasised at the expense of others: communication is successful if no single function is emphasised to the detriment of the remaining functions (Borra in Dann, 1996: 38).

Nevertheless, using only the referential function does not provide a competitive edge for a destination. It has already been emphasised that destinations should stress their psychological and symbolic benefits and characteristics. Hence, a subjective approach would be appropriate, or even necessary. In that case the prevailing functions should be the emotive and the conative ones.

- **Structure:** the second property of the language of tourism is *structure*. A number of tourism researchers and academics have observed that the language of tourism tends to contrast, for example, the periphery with the centre, the port with the desert, etc. Thus tourist brochures employ a binary language of opposites in both text and pictures in order to communicate the many sides of a destination (Dann, 1996: 45). Borra's observations have later added that this structure of opposites is commonly found, for instance, in the use of 'you' contrasted with 'crowd', 'young' contrasted with 'old', 'materialism' with 'spirituality', etc. (Borra in Dann, 1996: 46).
- **Lack of sender identification:** it refers to the reader's *uncertainty* with regard to the sender of a tourist brochure. According to Dann, such uncertainty is due to the fact that the reader cannot contest the validity of the information provided in the tourist brochure (Dann, 1996: 62-63).
- **Monologue:** in a tourist brochure the language essentially assumes the form of a *monologue*: it is generally the addresser who speaks (or writes) and the addressee who listens (or reads).
- **Euphoria:** the language of tourism very often assumes a form of *extreme language*, because it tends to focus on the exotic and positive aspects and benefits of a destination. A destination must always appear to be problem free, with no reference to the daily difficulties faced by local populations (Dann, 1996: 65).
- **Tautology:** Dann claims that the relationship between the tourist and the language of tourism is tautological. This means that tourists on their holiday visit places featured in the brochure that persuaded them to take the trip. In other words, tourists simply confirm the discourse of the brochure (Dann, 1996: 65). The language of tourism dictates what tourists choose to see and tourists take the contents of the brochure for the gospel truth. Thus, tourists complete the tautological circle by bringing home photographs similar to those shown to them prior to their holiday (Dann, 1996: 66).

1.5.2 Rhetorical Strategies

The language of tourism employs a number of verbal rhetorical strategies to communicate a destination image (Dann, 1996), namely:

- 1) The first one to be considered is **comparison**, which is generally expressed through metaphors in tourist brochures, in order to compare destinations with "paradise".

Besides, Dann argues that metaphors are often implemented into a brochure to downplay the strangeness of a destination. By transferring the familiar to the unfamiliar, the language of tourism attempts to meet the tourist's demand of familiarity to a destination.

- 2) The second verbal rhetorical strategy frequently used concerns **key words**. These are used to provide inspiration and they often correspond to the tourist's needs and requirements for adventure and escape from everyday life. Furthermore, they create a certain euphoric atmosphere, with key words such as 'away, escape, dream, discover, imagination, pleasure'. A second concept similar to key words is **keying**. It refers to words such as 'genuine, authentic, original, real', which emphasise the authenticity of a destination (Dann, 1996: 174-176).

- 3) **Testimony** is another rhetorical strategy. Testimonies from well-known people, e.g. celebrities, are frequently included in the promotion of destinations (Dann, 1996: 176-179; Morgan and Pritchard: 1998: 68).

Nevertheless, an additional study by Dann has indicated that testimonies from one tourist to another may be equally effective, because potential tourists find it easier to identify with other tourists, rather than celebrities (Dann, 1996: 177).

- 4) **Humour** is an effective device to attract the readers' attention and communicate an image of an easy-going destination.
- 5) **Languaging** refers to the incorporation of foreign words and/or unknown language and, in particular, languaging is applied to the description of gastronomy.
- 6) Through **ego-targeting** the destination tries to seduce the reader of a brochure by addressing him/her directly: the tourist will feel important and this in turn will reflect positively upon the tourist's image of the destination and his/her consequent choice (Dann, 1996: 179-188).

1.6 Visual Rhetorical Strategies and Semiotics

With the work of the French linguist Roland Barthes, semiotics, that is the study of signs and how meaning is generated from signs, entered a marketing context and it particularly focused on the analysis of advertisement images. By *sign* we mean anything that refers to something other than itself (Fiske, 1989: 43-44). The reader actively partakes in the interpretation of signs, since the meaning of a sign depends on the interpretation of the reader and his/her cultural codes (Echtner, 1999: 47). In his *Rhetoric of the Image* (1964) Barthes stressed that language is not merely used in an obvious **denotative** sense – being 'denotation' the obvious meaning of a sign, common to people sharing the same cultural code – but language is also used in a more symbolic **connotative** sense, which refers to the additional meaning or meanings that occur when the sign meets the feelings, values or emotions of the reader (Barthes in Innis, 1986: 193). The connotations of a sign include all the associations created in the reader's mind and are therefore highly subjective and dependent on the reader's cultural conventions.

1.7 Model Employed in the Analysis of Websites

I will here show how the language of tourism has been employed by Irish websites promoting accommodation in hostels and advertising local festivals in order to attract potential tourists' attention and consequently affect their destination image about Ireland and Irish towns. The analysis is two-fold, as it involves both the denotative and the connotative level.

The examined websites promoting hostels were on the whole ten, of which I will propose just a selection (Galway and Doolin); the hostels have been organised and analysed in groups of two to four according to common characteristics, while the websites on festivals (five altogether) refer to all Ireland.

The analysis of each site or group of sites will begin with an investigation at the **denotative** level (i.e. on the basis of Jakobson's language functions), then the focus will shift from the obvious literal meanings of the verbal elements to their **connotative** and symbolic meanings. The connotative level will in particular investigate the previously highlighted aspects, namely: structure, identification of the sender, use of monologue, euphoria, tautology.

The relevant role played by the **rhetorical strategies** previously listed will also be examined (i.e.: comparison, keywords / keying, testimony, humour, languaging, ego-targeting).

Attention will also be paid to the interaction between text and images (according to the theory of the 'anchorage' expressed by Barthes in his essay *Rhetoric of the Image* - op.cit.- that is when the text guides the reader's interpretation of the picture in a specific direction).

I will subsequently identify the **functional** attributes (e.g. nightlife, festivals, shopping facilities, entertainment, etc.) and the **psychological** attributes (e.g. friendliness of the population; quality of the service; opportunity for adventure; relaxation; atmosphere; culture; different cuisine), **psychological-holistic impressions** (blend of tradition and modernity) and the **common-unique dimension** (e.g. gastronomy) by means of the list developed by Echtner and Ritchie.

2 Analysis of Tourism Discourse Used by Websites to Advertise Irish Hostels

2.1 Analysis of the Following Websites

- www.kinlaygalway.ie
- www.galwaycityhostel.com

- www.ailleriverhosteldoolin.ie

This group of websites promotes hostels in the cities of **Galway** and **Doolin**, both situated on the Western coast of Ireland.

Denotative Level

At the denotative level, i.e. from the point of view of Jakobson's language functions, the main function stands out to be the **emotional** one, as the tourist is emotionally captured by the use of adjectives and phrases such as: *unspoiled landscape, fascinating coastline, fresh sea air, great natural beauty, wild coast, scenic area, old world charm, wonderland of sights, stunning walk, picturesque area*, which contribute to create a climate of "strangeness", "diversity" and "authenticity", compared to visitors' usual and frantic daily life (McCannell (op. cit.), E. Cohen (op. cit.) and E. Said (op. cit.).

Connotative Level

- **Structure:** there is a common structure of opposites, for example, the use of *old cottage* as opposed to *modern comforts* or *old world charm* as opposed to *new friends*.
- **Identification of the sender:** in all the websites the sender is not clearly expressed but it is implied, although that does not seem to create any problem, because past visitors' personal opinions make up for it.
- **Use of monologue:** we find the use of monologue in the presentation of the accommodation. When tourists interact with the various blogs of the websites we have, instead, a real dialogue.
- **Euphoria:** each destination advertised by the websites is presented as a *quiet oasis* or a *magic corner*.
- **Tautology:** tourists satisfied with their experience confirm, through their testimonies and photographs, what websites show and offer to potential tourists.

Rhetorical Strategies

- **Presentation:** the name of each hostel in the above-mentioned websites is set in the middle of the welcome page. On the same page there is a small presentation of the accommodation, very often located in the heart of the host city, therefore representing an ideal base for tours and excursions. Every website offers tourists all kinds of information (location, number of rooms, means of transport, things to do, things to see, activities inside the structure, services, ways of booking and payment, reviews, useful addresses, useful links). Each website also offers practical information about the internal organization (e.g. breakfast includes: tea / coffee, orange juice, toast and a selection of cereals) and its services (wi-fi, free luggage storage, etc.). Each hostel, furnished in modern style, is adapted to the needs of young people and easily accessible, both in terms of price and of means of transport.
- With reference to **comparison** (comparison between the destination and 'paradisical places'), adjectives and/or expressions used to describe the accommodation and the local natural attractions are as follows: *ideal place, the most famous place in the world, best, the happiest, fantastic, great, unspoiled, charming, beautiful, lovely, comfortable, modern* (the use of the last one falls into the category of opposites, or antonyms, in contrast to *old, traditional*).
- With reference to the use of **keywords**, which arouse the desire to escape, the most frequent ones are *exploration* and *adventure*.
 - The use of **keying** is very common: there are often terms such as *original, real, traditional, Irish* especially concerning the environment in general.
 - There are several **testimonies** in the website, both by young tourists (through social networks) and travel guides and magazines. Expressions such as: *Great hostel!, Ideal place, Great for groups!, The best hostel in Ireland, Excellent, Hostel absolutely fabulous, Very clean and comfortable beds, Staff were so helpful, friendly and accommodating, Wonderful, one of my favourites!, A real gem of hostel, The best hostel I've ever been to, Great spot*, particularly insist on the aspect of 'reliability', since they provide the reader with more guarantees about the hostel than a tour operator could do and they are therefore more seriously taken into consideration by potential tourists.
 - The function of **ego-targeting** is evident through the use of 'you' and of the imperatives with specific invitations addressed to young tourists: *Call us!, Contact us! Book now!, Click here!, Join us!*

There is a clear reference to backpackers in the expression "A great place to meet the original backpacker and trade stories of life being out on the road". Expressions such as: *warm welcome, like returning home, to become familiar with ...* make people feel at ease and communicate a family atmosphere.

- As for the function of **linguaging**, in this group of websites there is only a reference to the typical Irish beer.

Visual Rhetorical Strategies

Pictures are a strong issue for the promotion of facilities and we find them on every page of each website. On each picture a caption is often added that provides further information about the rooms and recreational activities, thus showing the function of *anchorage* proposed by Roland Barthes (op.cit.).

Characteristics and Attributes (model proposed by Echtner and Ritchie)

- **Functional Attributes:** hostels are in a perfect location to decide to carry out daily tours (Galway, Connemara, Doolin Cave) or sport activities such as swimming, golf or leisure activities such as boat trips or horse riding.
- **Psychological Attributes:** various recreational activities can be performed in the hostels, offering young people the opportunity to know each other better and make friends.
- **Psychological-holistic impressions:** they can be found in the combination between the modernity of the type of accommodation and traditional Irish welcome.
- **Common-Unique dimension:** there are no examples or references to special events.

3. Analysis of Tourism Discourse Used by Websites Promoting Irish Festivals

I took into consideration five websites which promoted festivals and events all over Ireland during the months of April and May 2014. There were respectively 23 and 45 festivals advertised for each month, with May turning out to be the most 'celebrated' month of the year (more than August, which features 27 festivals). The main themes of the festivals revolved around music – as it is expected in Ireland – art, theatre, literature, dance, less frequently food and drinks (coffee or beer).

The high percentage of artistic and literary themes is quite amazing and it clearly shows the intention to convey an image of Ireland tightly connected to its artistic, musical and literary past, which Irish people feel very proud of. Parallely, there seems to be a preference to concentrate on the new and fresh energies of Ireland, both in music and literature, rather than remaining stuck to celebrations of anniversaries of past glorious figures – as it mostly happens, instead, in other European countries. The basic purpose is to release the potentialities of a country which is clearly growing in all sectors.

In simply economic terms, we could state that they have turned their culture into a commodity, though not just as something static or to be contemplated in a museum, on the contrary it is alive and growing and has to be shared and increased through everyone's participation and contribution.

Moreover, all the events and festivals promoted have their roots in the historical, literary and artistic past of Ireland, thus avoiding the aspect of 'staged authenticity' often occurring in tourist destinations (Dann, G., 1996, p.6).

The model applied in order to analyse the *tourism discourse* used in the following websites is the same as the one used in the analysis of websites promoting hostels (see paragraph 1.7).

3.1 Waterford 1100 Birthday (Ireland's oldest city) January 1st, December 31st, 2014.

Connotative level

Rhetorical Strategies

Presentation: the website provides historical details about the oldest Irish city, which was founded by the Vikings; it mentions the various initiatives proposed, as well as an unusual 'Time Capsule' they are preparing with pictures of 7000 local school children. There are frequent and strong references to its past and traditions.

Comparison: there are repeated references to all the places related to its history (i.e. Bishop's Palace, Medieval Museum, Reginald's Tower) which manage to create a direct connection between today's fascination and the town's cultural heritage.

Key words/keying: 'significant birthday', 'spectacular marauding Vikings', 'historical themes', 'exciting festivals', 'time capsule' are all expressions which communicate the idea of an event not to be missed, a unique experience with a high historical relevance. Being there means sharing part of Irish history. There are no examples of ego-targeting, nor of languaging.

Denotative Level

On the basis of Jakobson's linguistic functions, the *referential* and the *emotive* ones seem to be prevailing here, as the text is very informative and there is a clear attempt to involve the reader/potential tourist with the help of a historic fascination.

According to the model provided by Echtner and Ritchie, we can find both *psychological-holistic attributes*, as visitors can find a blend of tradition/history in the anniversary, and modernity in the various proposals offered to tourists; besides, the *common-unique attribute* is guaranteed by the uniqueness of the 1100th anniversary of the foundation of the town.

3.2 Music for Galway (October 14th, 2013 – May 7th, 2014)

Connotative Level

Rhetorical Strategies

Presentation: information are provided about the origin of the initiative (1981). The high quality of the event is emphasised as well as the range of opportunities offered.

Comparison: once again, the high quality of the event is ensured by the presence of 'world class musicians', that have no equal elsewhere.

Key words/keying: 'inspiring', 'stimulating'.

There are no examples of ego-targeting nor languaging.

Denotative level

The prevailing function seems to be the *referential* one, as only main information are provided about the event and its origins. The *common-unique* attribute is provided by the fact that the music festival in Galway is something specifically Irish and couldn't take place anywhere else with the same authenticity.

3.3 Cork World Book Fest (April 22-26, 2014)

Connotative level

Rhetorical Strategies

Presentation: it is advertised as a 'celebration of books and reading'; visitors can find street fairs, book stalls, food stalls, music and more. A list of the writers who will participate is also provided. World class writers have been invited. The event will also include a special focus on Spanish-language writers, thus ensuring an international feature.

Comparison: the event is unique, it has no equal either in Ireland or Europe as it is specifically devoted to writers and literature experts who gather on this special occasion, thus sharing a feeling of belonging.

Key words/keying: 'unique', 'vibrant', 'innovative', 'inclusive', 'participative', 'world class writers'.

There is no reference to *ego-targeting*, only to 'audiences' in general, nor to *languaging*.

Denotative Level

The main functions are again the *referential* and the *emotive* ones since, besides all the factual information conveyed, the focus is on potential visitors' personal and emotional involvement through the use of the adjectives above listed.

The *common-unique attribute* is once again ensured by the uniqueness and originality of the event taking place in Cork.

3.4 Cork Shakespearean Company 90th Anniversary (April 23, 2014)

Connotative level

Rhetorical Strategies

Presentation: this is one of the fewest events which revolves around a company – and its anniversary -whose focus lays on a past author, i.e. the most representative in English literature. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare is presented as ‘a milestone in our history’ and the festival includes ‘a rehearsed reading of the complete works of W. Shakespeare over a 12 hour period in 12 different venues in Cork’.

Comparison: it is an original initiative, for the first time proposed in this format, which doesn’t take place in any other locations in the same way.

Key words/Keying: ‘milestone’, ‘something never tried before’.

There are no examples of *ego-targeting*, nor *linguaging*.

Denotative level

The prevailing functions are the *referential* one, as the website provides detailed information about the event, as well as the *emotive* one, since the focus is on the fascination of Shakespeare’s works and the unusual way in which they will be enjoyed.

The *psychological* attributes are ensured by the exceptional experience of sharing the reading of Shakespeare’s works in such an original and complete way and by the chance to get to know other people equally interested in Shakespeare; similarly, the *common-unique* attribute is provided by the originality and uniqueness of the initiative which takes place on the anniversary of Shakespeare’s death.

Although it won’t certainly be the only event devoted to Shakespeare this year, it is certainly one of the most original initiatives about the way the reading of his works is proposed, and that aspect provides a *common-unique* attribute.

3.5 Friar’s Gate Literary Weekend (April 24-27, 2014)

Connotative level

Rhetorical Strategies

Presentation: the initiative takes place during a weekend and revolves around speakers, workshops, book launches and theatre. As a matter of fact, there is a tight connection between literature and theatre throughout the weekend. Some books which will be launched on that occasion are the result of advanced creative writing classes. On the Saturday there will be some place devoted to children’s reading.

Comparison: It is a rare opportunity for all established and non-established writers to share their works with others in a relaxed atmosphere.

Key words/Keying: ‘intimate’, ‘creative writing classes’, ‘relaxed’, ‘informal’, ‘acclaimed’, ‘exciting’.

There are no examples of *ego-targeting*, nor *linguaging*.

Denotative level

The prevailing functions are the *referential* and the *emotive* one, as the article provides plenty of *factual* information about the event and it tries to personally involve people to participate.

The *psychological* attributes are underlined by the invitation to ‘share their writings’ and to get to know each other better. Once again the *common-unique* attribute is ensured by the uniqueness of the initiative which puts together various aspects (theatre, literature, etc.) as well as well-known authors or inexperienced writers, without neglecting some space for children’s reading either.

Conclusions

This article has focused on the issue of the formation of Tourist Destination Image through the analysis of *tourism discourse*, as it was applied by a group of Irish websites promoting accommodation in youth hostels and advertising Irish festivals. Results have shown that *tourism discourse* contributed to convey an *induced* image of destination.

From most recent studies it has emerged that *tourist destination image* is one of the factors which mostly affects potential tourists' choice of a destination. Consequently, the right application of the language of tourism turns out to be crucial in the act of communicating an image which can better succeed in orienting potential tourists.

On the websites concerning Irish hostels and festivals the *image* of Ireland is mainly conveyed through the interaction between *denotative* and *connotative* meanings of verbal and visual elements (Dann, 1996; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991, 1993 ; Barthes, 1964).

The model of analysis proposed by Echtner and Ritchie has been chosen as a theoretical structure. In particular, the two categories of *overt induced I* and *covert induced I* have been privileged (Gartner, 1993, op.cit).

The analysis of the *tourism discourse* used by the websites in order to promote Irish youth hostels and local festivals has emphasised their extraordinary ability to affect the potential tourist's perception of Ireland as an 'authentic, welcoming and friendly place', 'young and modern' as well as of historical-artistic interest, thus indirectly promoting a tourist destination image of Dublin and other Irish cities as most suitable places, especially for young people, and presenting Irish hostels as the ideal accommodation to start the discovery of the country and to approach its friendly inhabitants. The website presentations also manage to 'isolate' the individual from the mass and to address him/her directly, thus creating a more personal involvement.

Such analysis of Tourism Destination Image conveyed through *tourism discourse*, far from being exhaustive, is merely a part of a wider survey which will continue to be carried out over the next academic years.

	<u>Individual attributes</u> (climate, accommodation, facilities, etc.)
	<u>Holistic impressions</u> (mental picture of a destination)
TDI	
	Functional (observable components)
	<u>Characteristics</u>
	Psychological (friendliness, safety)

Table no. 1

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