

# A Multimodal Investigation into Tourism Promotional Communication on Instagram

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**Abstract.** The semiotic theory of multimodality defines human interchange as an interplay of different semiotic resources, which are often designed intentionally to convey specific meanings and boost specific reactions. The present article focuses on the investigation of the deliberate realizations of promotional purposes on the part of three travel agencies on Instagram, by mainly focusing on the combined use of text, layout and imagery. Drawing upon theories such as Visual Design, Systemic Functional Linguistics and tourism discourse, a new framework of analysis was developed in order to provide interesting qualitative insights into three posts shared by three travel companies, based in three different English-speaking countries. The results showed that both the pictures and the texts, along with the layout of the Instagram profile pages and posts, were designed in order to transfer positive attitudes of the destination to the target audience. This function was fulfilled through bimodal and parallel illocutionary acts of persuasion with the purpose of prompting imagination, therefore allowing the consumption of the intangible service and subsequently inducing unconscious needs, positive attitudes and, finally, influencing the behavior of the potential consumer. Hence, this study can supply both actors of the communicational act – sender and receiver – with a critical descriptive outline of promotional narrative patterns. To better understand the implications of these results, however, future research should include the collection of a higher number of material and the implementation of scientific results, achievable by means of Multimodal Corpus Analysis and further marketing inquiry.

## 1. Introduction and related work

The combination of verbal and non-verbal means of communication has always been characteristic of human beings. In the interaction with the world and with others, everyone has brought its own beliefs and inner perceptions of the reality and has expressed them, negotiated them through different ways. This process keeps being achieved by shaping new different, personal sets of meaning, whose design derives from specific backgrounds and purposes. The creation of meaning in the society is the aim of semiosis, on which Kress (2010) focused in order to give rise to a new theory of language, or better, of communication, as language, either written or verbal, is just one of the means of communication. Nowadays, especially, with the enormous technological achievements, attention has been shifted to visual communication and, in particular, to images and videos. Verbal communication has not been left apart; however, it plays now a subservient and supportive role (Rowse and Pahl 163; Jewitt 2009) and, as also van Leeuwen explains, it mostly *accompanies* visual communication now (2006), such as in the Social Media virtual world. Social Media and Web 2.0 (or even Web 3.0) directly and consistently affect today's world and communication, due to their pervasiveness and easy accessibility. As a matter of fact, 56% of people (in the whole world) use Social Media, whereas almost all young people own a social network account, whether of Facebook or Instagram (Zeng 2013). That is the same for businesses<sup>1</sup>. Authors such as Jones et al. (2015), Tannen (2013), Herring (2013) and Trester (2013) have deeply and usefully devoted their attention to this new field of study, offering new insights into contemporary communication by bringing together the language discourse features and its latest online trends. New language features and trends, proper of Netspeak, such as colloquialisms, friendly tones and hashtags, are being exploited, under an atmosphere of “planned serendipity”, by tourism companies as well (Thurlow 2013). Tourism organizations in fact, according to their Social Media Marketing strategy, rely on Social Networks with the objective of building an intimate, long-lasting relationship with their customers – or prosumers – by engaging them, therefore raising awareness towards the brand and unconscious human needs, satisfiable only through the purchase of experiences (Barefoot and Szabo 2010; Mangold and Faulds 200). The latter's fruition however, by nature intangible, as travel packages are, must be pre-discovered with the help of different stimuli, among which images figure, due to their immediate and effective impact (Urry 1990). Language, of course, plays an important role as well, for it supports and enhances the visual mode by exploiting rhetoric devices proper of the tourism discourse (Francesconi 2014; Bianchi 2017). The intertwining of these means with their affordances leads to the arrangement of a promotional strategy which triggers imagination

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-marketing-industry-report-2018/> (Last visited: 20/05/2019)

and positive attitudes, therefore influencing the perception and behavior of the potential tourist in their decision – making process (Dann 1996).

With this article we took advantage of the research work and findings of all of these authors and, with the help of authors from the economic area such as Deiss and Henneberry (2016), Gretzel and Yoo (2014) and Hays et al. (2012), we managed to apply them to a more spreading and visually developed social network, i.e. Instagram. Notwithstanding, the scope of our inquiry was intentionally limited to promotional communication, and particularly to tourism promotional language. On the one hand, Dann (1996), together with Verstergaard and Schroeder (1993) supplied us with an extensive review on advertising and tourism linguistic devices. On the other hand, the more recent works of Bianchi (2017) and Francesconi (2014), the latter of whom chose to adopt Halliday's SFL theory of language (1961, 1985), assisted us in narrowing down our domain of research and in framing a realistic model to apply to contemporary online tourism communication.

The scope of the present study concerns thus the observation and analysis of the singular meanings and the overall orchestration of multimodal means of communication, such as images and text, designed by travel agencies on Instagram. A small amount of space was dedicated to the analysis of a third mode as well, i.e. layout of the profile page and the posts of the organizations at issue. We believe this work could be of useful importance in order to expand the area of application of language and multimodal communication theories. As a matter of fact, to the best of our knowledge, there have not hitherto been conducted any multimodal studies, which analyze Instagram communication strategies in the area of tourism promotion. However, the fact that the elected research topic lacks critical investigation does not mean, in our opinion, that there is not enough material suitable for investigation. The reason behind this assumption results from the awareness that Instagram's advancement and growth rate, especially on the part of companies, has only occurred in the last few years, possibly to the detriment of Facebook (according to the Hubspot *Instagram Engagement Report*). Hence, we believe a social network like Instagram could offer precious insight into the current promotional strategies adopted by marketers and, in this case, by travel agencies. Furthermore, similarly to Francesconi's review and adaptation of the traditional tourism texts' generic classification, it shall be noteworthy to add a complementary exploration on the phenomenon of generic evolution and hybridization.

On the basis of all the aforementioned grounds, the current study will first focus on assessing the virtual presence of travel companies on Instagram. Successively, attention will be given to how promotional communication is realized from a multimodal perspective, therefore both visually and linguistically.

**Contributions.** We briefly list the contributions we believe this article provides.

1. To the best of our knowledge, there have not hitherto been conducted any multimodal studies, which analyze Instagram communication strategies in the area of tourism promotion. With this article we tried to develop a multimodal analytical theoretical framework of tourism rhetorical strategies, aiming, therefore, to expand the area of application of language and multimodal communication theories. This was attainable by drawing upon and reinterpreting specific fields' theoretical approaches, among which, mainly: the social semiotic theory of Multimodality, a concrete scheme of visual design's features, tourism and advertising discourse, generic evolution and hybridization, layout analysis, online and Web 2.0 language, Systemic Functional Linguistics and more specific Social Media Marketing implications.
2. This hybrid theoretical framework was subsequently employed to investigate tourism agencies' deliberate realizations of promotional purposes on the Instagram platform – a new sub-domain of research of linguistic, economic and social fields. This allowed the designing of a comprehensive interpretation of contemporary tourism advertising.
3. Under this novel perspective, we conducted some multimodal critical analysis of tourism discourse. Specifically, three posts taken from three different travel agencies, based in English-speaking countries, underwent a multilayered qualitative analysis, showing how meaning in promotional communication is often intentionally constructed by the coherent intertwining of different modes, such as image, text and layout.

**Structure of the article.** This article is structured as follows. Section 2 will offer a detailed description of the analytical methodology of contemporary tourism promotional language in a multimodal context employed; additionally, it will supply the audience with the clarification of every decision taken, along with the definition of the research questions. Section 3 will be devoted to analyzing some examples taken from the multimodal and social, promotional setting of Instagram with the analytical approach at issue. Section 4 will focus on

summarizing the main findings of this research study. Finally, in Section 5, conclusions will be drawn and limitations of this article will be presented more thoroughly.

## 2. The present study: methodology and implications

In order to carry out our research study, we decided to analyze the Instagram profile page and posts of three travel agencies, based in three different English-speaking countries. The three travel operators' Social Media activity aims at targeting a generalized audience, which is daily prompted by the companies' content. The travel organizations we chose to investigate are named "Tourism Ireland", "Western Australia" and "Destination Canada", which correspondingly promote Ireland (both EIRE and Northern Ireland), Western Australia and Canada. The study will deal with a detailed qualitative analysis of one post for each company and will mainly investigate its multimodal features, i.e. the written part and the visual part of the post. In the first part, the layout and visual mode will be analyzed with the help of the theory of visual design founded by Kress and Van Leeuwen. In the second part, the written mode will be explored according to Halliday's SFL and the theories arousing from the language of tourism and Social Media.

To the best of our knowledge, there have not hitherto been conducted any multimodal studies, analyzing Instagram communication strategies in the area of tourism promotion. However, this project has been conceived after primarily studying and appreciating the works of Bianchi (2017) and Francesconi (2014). On the one hand, Bianchi's article entitled *The Social Tricks of Advertising. Discourse Strategies of English-speaking tour operators on Facebook* offered a very useful insight into a multimodal discourse analysis on Facebook. The author managed in fact to describe the visual and especially the linguistic strategies displayed by three generalized-budget tour operators, based in different English-speaking countries. She carried out both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis and therefore, by collecting a consistent corpus of online material, she presented a comprehensive review, which focused on visual and discourse features of six-months posts of three travel agencies. On the other hand, Francesconi's pivotal study on multimodal communication on tourism websites (2014) offered us a precious and detailed insight into the qualitative multimodal analysis of images. Her work, entitled *Reading Tourism Texts: A Multimodal Analysis*, furthermore introduced and applied Halliday's Systemic Functional Language theory to travel agencies' website pages. This entirely multimodal investigation on visual communication and language represented an interesting way of seeing texts and discourse that we had never seen before, which, additionally, coheres internally perfectly. The foundations of Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory are taken in fact from Halliday's SFL work and expand it, by applying it to visual imagery.

With regards to the choices we made when dealing with the immense corpus that can be found on the Web, we narrowed down our investigation to *Instagram* and to *qualitative, multimodal* and *SFL* research on the *promotional* communication of these *specific* English-speaking *travel agencies* for the following reasons. First of all, we decided to apply the multimodal theory, and specifically investigate the meaning conveyed by the interconnection between images and language, for we felt inspired by the idea of being able to analyze language in a more comprehensive and efficient way. As a matter of fact, personal exchange, especially in the contemporary environment, is more immediate, effective and condensed through images and visuality. We therefore chose the social platform of Instagram as it is a highly spread network, among both people and companies, that relies on the use of high-quality images. We then decided to benefit from the SFL theory for it represents, in our opinion, an innovative and coherent way of analyzing multimodal discourse on the Web. The SFL theory in fact not only paved the way for a multimodal visual analysis, but it is a theory that studies how individuals make meaning in the social context and how their linguistic choices affect the others and are negotiated. Successively, we opted to carry out solely some qualitative research, without thus taking advantage of a very useful method such as Corpus Analysis, for we were deeply convinced to work on multimodality. Doing also a quantitative review would have taken in fact much more time and skills; nonetheless, it would have conferred more credibility and exhaustiveness without any doubt, thanks to the deployment of scientific statistics on a significant corpus. Hence, this represents an important limitation of our work. Furthermore, we decided to analyze tourism promotional content, instead of user-generated-content in general or other companies' pages, for we always felt an interest for marketing and digital marketing in particular, in the area of tourism, both for the specificities of our studies' area and for the experience at a travel agency in Dublin. In addition, we found out, after previous and detailed research, that travel organizations were more concerned and put a lot of work in presenting themselves – and their "product" – with a lot of really high-quality imagery. After all, tourism advertising, for the intangible nature of its products, always had to

carefully prepare an apt and evoking communication. We actually found a lot of material also on high-quality UGC content, such as Instagram profile pages (blogs and communities), which were dedicated only to sharing experiences, pictures, of travelers and photographers, and a lot of data shared by local, regional, governmental, media and NGO websites. Finally, we opted to analyze Ireland, Western Australia and Canada for both practical and affective reasons. On the one hand, these three English-speaking countries (and former colonies) display very different cultures and landscapes and, with this research study, we were planning to provide a more colorful and comprehensive set of findings on the anglophone world. Moreover, we were not able to find highly active pages, which employed a high quality of communication, with regards to both images and text, and with a decent amount of followers. For example, we left out a profile page of a travel company based in the USA for it basically did not have any text attached to the image of the post, even though it fulfilled all the other parameters. Conversely, we found complete, active and followed pages in the countries we chose. On the other hand, we feel a special affection towards Ireland and the Irish culture, for we had the privilege to live and work there, and we were able to get to know the lifestyle, the people and the enchanting landscapes of Dublin and the Irish country. Therefore, we left out the U.K. on purpose. we had in fact enough material to study on three different companies.

After this digression on the reasons regarding this article's field, we would like to quickly but accurately present the points through which analysis will be conducted for each post. First of all, it will focus on the following research questions:

- 1 – Do these travel companies use Instagram to engage with their potential clients and promote their business?
- 2 – How is online tourism promotion realized, linguistically and visually, i.e. multimodally?

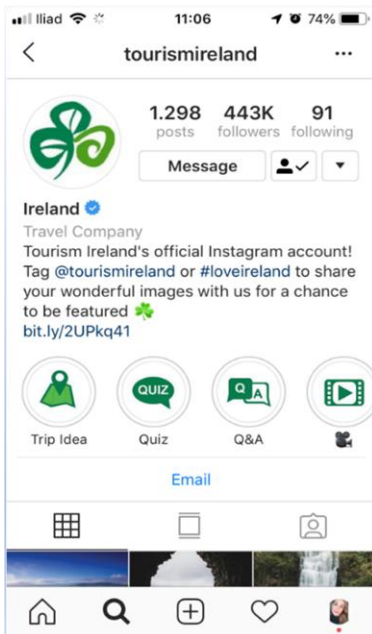
In order to answer these questions, in the following section, we will take into consideration and analyze some Instagram posts from three specific travel agencies.

### **3. Analysis and findings**

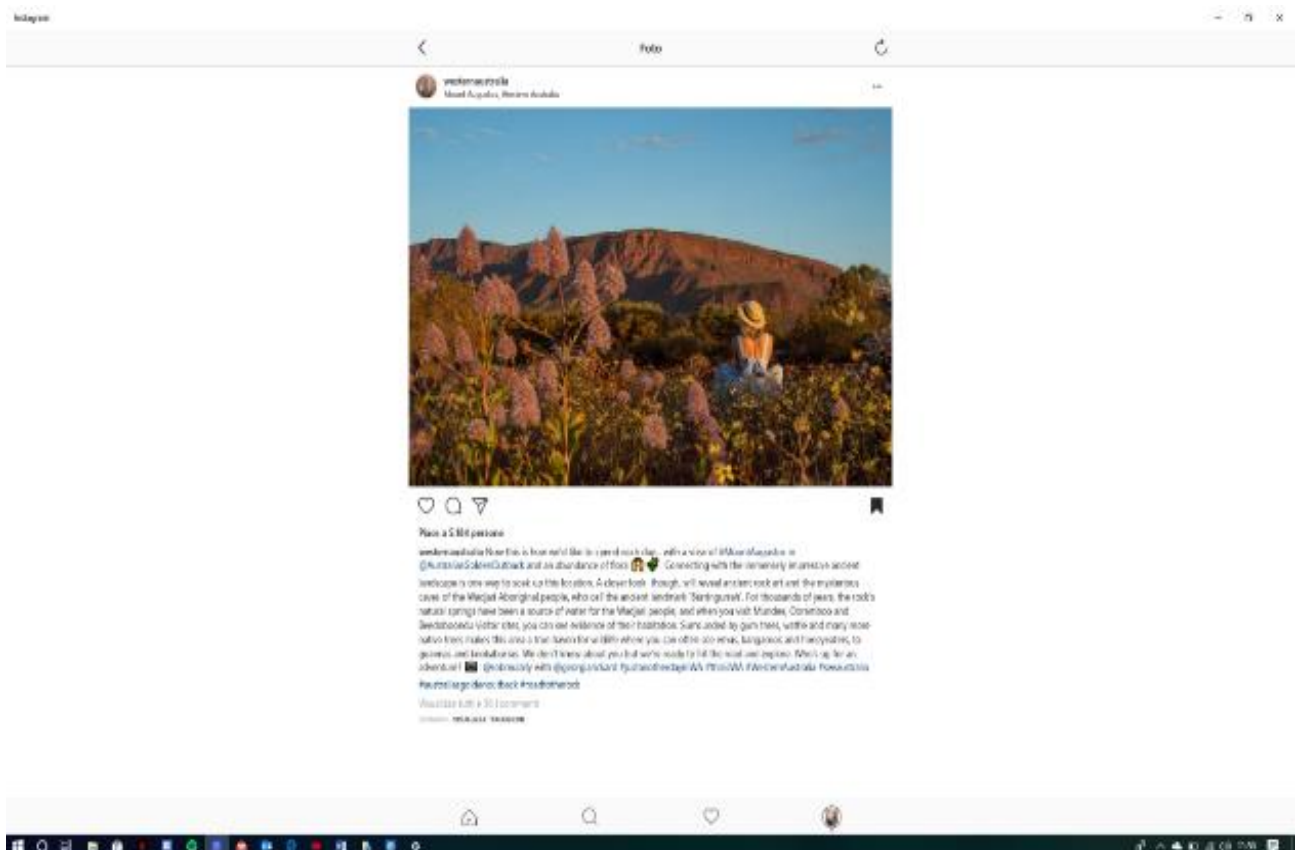
The travel agencies of the three different English-speaking countries we took into account are “Tourism Ireland”, with 443.000 followers, “Western Australia”, with 393.000 followers, and “Destination Canada” (named “Explore Canada” on Instagram), with 1.500.000 followers. The analyzed posts were chosen in a temporal span of fifteen months, from March 18, 2018 to May 3, 2019 and among over 1000 posts. Each post will be investigated as follows. In the first phase (Section 3.1), common to all companies, a short amount of time will be devoted to the analysis of the profile page and the post's layout mode. In phase two, space will be given to the detailed analysis of the image of the post, according to the Grammar of Visual Design theory. In phase three, some SFL analysis will be conducted on the written part of the post, with the modalities we presented in the previous chapter; in addition, implications regarding the SFL findings will be made. Finally, in the fourth phase, language will be explored according to the theories on tourism communication strategies and the online marketing and social environment. We will then start by offering an overview of the profile page and post layout.

#### **3.1. Profile page and post layout analysis**

The screenshots reported in the following page are taken from a smartphone and offer an overview of the layout of the profile pages – or landing pages – of these three travel companies. These screenshots were taken with a smartphone for practical purposes. The smartphone screen format – limited in width and extended in height – better fitted in fact the conformation of the written page and provided more condensed information. However, we decided to provide a view from the website as well, having to offer an insight into a typical but complete layout of an Instagram post. On the smartphone in fact, at the first impact, space is almost totally reserved to the image. One can therefore visualize the rest, or the entire, part of the post, the written text, by scrolling down. The screenshot provided below, conversely, was taken in its fully layout composition, but only by changing the resolution of the computer screen, from 150% to 100%.



Smartphone screenshots of the profile pages of *Tourism Ireland*, *Western Australia* and *Explore Canada* (*Destination Canada*).



Computer screenshot of a post shared by *Western Australia*

What can be inferred is that the Instagram design, mostly devoted to showing high-quality pictures, was founded on the principles of giving the majority of space and relevance to the image and was conceived – or successively developed – in order to fit the dimensions and characteristics of a smartphone. On the website, in fact, it is typically impossible to view the whole image in the first place, whereas on the phone the first “screen”

is dedicated to perfectly and entirely showing the picture, and the following “scroll” to showing the text. This latter therefore seems to us a more harmonic way of interconnecting two distinct modes and showing them with great detail, in a more effective way. The image, as a matter of fact, is the first thing that appears and is of more immediate impact to the viewer, for the emotional and evoking connotations it plays. Furthermore, this distribution of the content confirms the assumption that Social Media, by being focused on multimodality, aim at giving the user the impression of more agency in choosing the reading path and length, when viewing the clusters of content. On the other hand, on the website of the Social Media, i.e. on a much bigger screen, users have the opportunity to engage with more content, even though incomplete as well, and often cut, with the normal screen resolutions. The idea in fact is to provide also here more agency to the user, who will actively scroll down in order to find interesting content or to see the full content of something. Social Media thus provide a less static way of dealing with content, when compared to classic websites.

If one takes a closer look at the layout of the profile pages and of the post, both from the computer and the smartphone, few considerations can be made, according to Kress (2009), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) and Francesconi (2014). First of all, the granularity of the text and the image is represented by the disposition of a high number of clusters in the profile page. Many reading paths are in fact available for each user who first engages with the company. The dynamic organization of the colorful or black/blue content on a white background provides relevance, and so do the different framings of the distinct contents, which are mostly circles. They actually supply the page design with a friendly and informal sensation and remind of the shape of a push button. The different small clusters are separated by a small but clear spacing, represented by invisible lines, and the choice of the font, confirm this friendly and informal tone. The elected font in fact appears to be *Roboto*, which resembles an informal, small, capital handwriting, which was chosen over more institutional and professional fonts such as *Times New Roman* or *Arial*. Following the example of Francesconi (133-139), from the top left corner, clockwise, the clusters on all the three travel companies’ profile pages are:

- 1) above, the Instagram username, which usually coincides with the brand name/the name of the company;
- 2) below, on the left, the logo of the company, a visual brand image element, which, if pushed, visualizes daily content;
- 3) a formal but relevant set of information such as the number of posts, followers, and users followed, whose aim is to show the high degree of activity and success;
- 4) the direct message button, which confirms the idea of close relationships;
- 5) a button that, if clicked, shows the possibility of following pages with similar content;
- 6) the name of the company again, or the name of the country promoted;
- 7) the type of user of the social network, in this case, a travel company;
- 8) a brief description of the account and the activity of the agency, along with the suggestion of tagging/hashtagging the page in order to be featured on the official page, which aims at providing more visibility and an improvement of the brand image quality;
- 9) the link to the website, which serves the purpose of driving traffic and potential customers to the website/shopping cart and allowing the tracking of the process;
- 10) the name of the followers of the page that the user is following;
- 11) a horizontal list of content and useful information such as pictures/video/stories regarding the company’s activity, offers and services;
- 12) the link to the official email address;
- 13) a series of “buttons” which enclose small text clusters and mostly images, the most relevant and valuable content of the page, whose aim is to engage, inform and promote the audience (see for example *Tourism Ireland*);
- 14) finally, the list of the pictures, where the page was tagged by other followers, whose activity boosts the visibility and the Google/Instagram rankings, or that were selected from high-quality UCG content and then tagged.

The most salient section is the logo, which is the first thing that appears, on the left, as the given, referential information. The latter also provides real information such as the stories – when one pushes the button – and the description of the account, a big, invisible rectangle that represents the biggest cluster and stays in the center of the page. The choice of a black/colorful content against a white background provides relevance and visibility to the logo and the more concrete activities (stories) framed through the small circles. As a matter of fact, the use of the same color/set of colors and the same framing supplies the layout of the page with coherence.

On the whole, this dynamic space offers different reading paths and ways of engaging with the content, and inspires to further explore it by scrolling it. The Instagram Social Media page is therefore a hybrid text, similar to the website page, but indeed more dynamic. It stays between the static, space-based text and pagey properties (Baldry and Thibault 105), like writing, arrangement and depiction, and time-based text, screeny properties, such as hypertextuality and videos.

Furthermore, the layout of the page can be represented as a *mode*, for it fulfills all the three metafunctions. First of all, at the ideational – and textual – level, it structures basic information on the activity and services, opportunities provided by the company. At the interpersonal level, it prompts affective responses, acts of following or requests for information, and consequently the creation of a close relationship and willingness to help. Moreover, it provides a visual and more tangible viewing of the offer, it indexes cultural values and shapes a friendly, colorful and welcoming, pleasant atmosphere. Eventually, the disposition, the framing and the colors of the elements provide coherence. Even though the multimodality of the content shapes different reading paths, the arrangement of the elements and the affordances of the medium invite a privileged trajectory, which starts from the logo and continues down, to the set of information and the viewing of content. The new piece of information, on the left, is provided by the possibility of following the page afterwards. Finally, in our opinion, the design configuration of the page confirms the distribution of the information value, as the more ideal, evoking and identity piece of information stays on the top and is the first thing seen, whereas the more concrete information stays below. By actively scrolling, one can then visualize the offer of the company more tangibly, with videos and images. The content and the text are clearly predominant on the left side of the page, as it is, for Western cultures, the reading starting point of a semiotic entity.

If one moves from the profile page to a post, it becomes possible to make a few assumptions about the post layout as well. First of all, both website and phone configurations give high relevance to the image, the most important cluster of content of the Social Media. As Kress claimed in both his works (2006, 2009), visual imagery has become the most salient content in nowadays' society, for the specific mode's resources and new media affordances. The image – and the video as well – in fact is a more effective, immediate, and connotatively powerful and apt means of conveying content, which can be understood, filtered by everyone in the world, for Social Media aims at interconnecting everyone globally. The role of the image has therefore shifted from a subservient, supportive illustration of the written content to a more fundamental, if not the most fundamental, element for conveying significance and meaning to the viewer. As a matter of fact, it occupies the whole screen on the smartphone, if vertical, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the information clusters on the website, even with a 100% screen resolution. As in the profile page layout, the logo is the first thing seen on the left, followed by the username/brand name of the company. Below, the geolocation tagging of the picture provides important and coherent information as well, for it gives the opportunity to know the exact name of the location of the destination at issue. The picture's salience and size are majestic and, with its high-quality nature and degree of color saturation, differentiation and modulation, it enables the viewer to focus on the picture and pre-discover, feel the experience of the trip. Below, there is the possibility of liking, commenting and sending the picture privately. Further above, the number of likes is provided, confirming the visibility and quality degree of the image and, therefore, of the service and the company. Finally, the text description of the image is given, preceded by the reiteration of the company's username, which was inserted in order to provide coherence to the tourism promotional image description and to the layout. The hashtags, the tags, the comments and the date of the picture follow and serve the purpose of supplying the company with visibility and higher rankings, both on Google and Instagram search. This time, the image is provided on the top, as the ideal element of the design, whereas the text and the comment appear below, as if to more concretely and personally describe and engage with the visual content. The logo and the geolocation appear both on the left, as the given element. The image is central and, in most cases, occupies the whole screen. The framing devices are always invisible lines, whereas the shape of the clusters is rectangular. The background is always white, in order to secure salience to both the visual and the written content, and gives coherence, as it is a pattern that is present on every Instagram page. This layout mode fulfills all the three metafunctions for the same reason presented above. Eventually, the reading path on this opened page is basically one, or at least starts with one, and is confirmed by the need to scroll down with both devices in order to view the most salient element of the layout, i.e. the image. Afterwards, more reading possibilities are available. One might in fact click on the geolocation, in order to know more and explore the destination represented by the image; one could engage more actively and therefore like or comment the picture. Occasionally, one could share the image with his friends or simply leave the page, and, at this point, he might either explore more content, if interested in the company offer, or just definitively close the page. At this point, attention should be devoted to the visual analysis of the image of a post.



### 3.2. *Tourism Ireland*: post's visual and written analysis

**Visual analysis.** The image below was taken from *Tourism Ireland*'s Instagram account and represents a typical inland Irish landscape, featured by vast lands of green plains, which, in this picture, are framed by a series of allotments, and imponent, fascinating mountains, immersed in a gloomy, grey weather. In this case, the attention is shifted to the rocky, inhospitable but nonetheless fascinating Caves of Keash, the destination pictured by the post. The represented participants in this picture are the nature and the human being; for this reason, the image belongs to the *narrative* images. As every narrative image, there is an action in process along with a vector, i.e. the vector formed by the eyeline and the posture of the represented human participant, together with his action of viewing, or rather, contemplating the landscape. The gaze of the participant is therefore the action and invites the interactive participant, i.e. the viewer, to follow the vector of



Narrative reactional image taken from a post shared by *Tourism Ireland*. Photo credits go to [theislanders.ie](#) (Instagram username)



his gaze, and to contemplate the landscape as well. The process of sightseeing enacts in turn a process of identification with the represented participant and the enjoyment of that scene from that particular viewpoint (Francesconi 77). The *tourist gaze strategy* was conceived by tourism companies in order to assert power over the viewer and turn him into first, an abstract visitor, and then, into a potential one, by instilling the *desire to live* that experience. This means by which the viewer is lead into the desire to live the experience – the *call-to-action* – in the reality coincides and is enhanced by the deployment of the ego-enhancing strategy. A person in fact features in the destination image and usually embodies some longed-for features, which are then transferred to the viewer. The girl in the image is in fact young, skinny, healthy and on adventure. The captured look in her eyes is what mostly instills the desire; furthermore, following the indexical reference theory, the *backpack*, viewable from the back, represents a symbol and an emotional, social condition of wildness, adventure and independency. These features are successively transmitted first to the represented participant and then to the viewer, for he *yearns* to feel that way. Furthermore, the representation of a lonely girl, *wandering* with a backpack, and being simply dressed with a pair of jeans, a yellow windbreaker and a pair of boots, conveys more the idea of the mystical and lost traveler than the perception of a tourist who is following directions and living among comforts.

With regards to the three metafunctions, one can infer some assumptions about this typical but nonetheless interesting touristic, narrative, reactional image. First of all, the picture, in our opinion, is definitely non-transactional, even though it could be wrongly considered transactional at first glance. On the one hand, it seems to feature the Reacter and the Phenomenon, at which the Reacter is staring, i.e. the landscape that extends indefinitely, conveying a feeling of stillness of time, space and of the majesty of the Irish nature. On the other hand, however, the Reacter might be looking at some other Phenomenon, which is not viewable from the viewer. The reason lies in the fact that the direction formed by *the cave and the pose* of the represented participant does not coincide with the direction formed by the *vector of her gaze*, which defines the action. The former in fact leads to the portion of the landscape viewed from the interactive participant and *framed* by the cave – a visual cliché and a framing technique quite spread in tourism strategies – whereas the latter takes the viewer outside the image. Maybe, the girl is looking at the path that will lead her down the mountain; however, this part is cut and not viewable. The above mentioned strategy, which is employed in order not to include the *object of observation* clearly and on purpose, is a tourism marketing device and is a source of manipulation of the viewer, who will then be *wondering* with prompted *curiosity* – and thus *interest* – what the participant might be looking at with such contemplation and spontaneity (Francesconi 68; Kress and Van Leeuwen 119-124). Finally, the *circumstances* are realized by the presence of the cave and the green plains.

Secondly, as regards the interpersonal function, the contact between the represented participants and the interactive participant is that of an indirect address. The young girl is not in fact addressing the viewer by looking at him; therefore, the relation is an *offer* relation. The wandering girl is not demanding anything from the viewer, neither confrontation, subjugation nor identification – even though this last effect is achieved through other ways – but, conversely, she is looking at other ways and is an object of contemplation. The size of frame is realized by a close-medium shot, which conveys a feeling of an intimate-social relation. This way the viewer, possibly a young man or woman scrolling on Social Media, or maybe a middle-aged woman, who is trying to retrieve her past youth or seeing her daughter in it, can easily identify with the subject. The girl is not a stranger, is not an *other*, and she does have a personality and some feelings as well. In addition, close-medium shots prompt the viewer to *buy* the experience, for the latter seems to be more in his reach (Kress and Van Leeuwen 128). Successively, the subjective adoption of both a horizontal and vertical angle convey the idea of a more personal relationship as well. On the one side, the horizontal angle is oblique, for the photographer has not situated himself in front of the girl but has photographed her slightly from the left side. The frontal plane of the photographer meets the girl's, which is exemplified by the vector formed by the green low part of the framing, on the low left side of the picture. Had these two lines been parallel to one another, the horizontal angle would have been frontal. However, the two lines diverge, and the photographer is not facing the girl nor is he exactly behind her. The vanishing points in fact, formed by the encounter between the main vectors/lines in the pictures, fall and converge outside the picture, or right on the edge (the gaze, the two frontal planes, the horizon). The feeling expressed is thus more of detachment, even though a "light" one, since the author is very close to the girl and slightly on the left. Maybe, the author wants to express the idea that from the place, where the viewer's experiencing the trip (the image of it), it is not possible to truly live it. Finally, the vertical angle is mildly high, conveying an idea of power over the represented participant. The viewer is accordingly between the condition of being equal and more powerful than the girl, therefore being

flattered by the author. As regards *modality*, the picture, by being a photograph, is considered realistic and faithful to reality, according to the naturalistic – and Western – reality coding orientation. If the degree of the modality markers is neither too high or too low, the picture is considered very naturalistic and realistic, and this is the case. The colors in fact are neither too saturated nor modulated but, conversely, they represent the gloomy, dull and pale colors of an Irish cloudy day; the color differentiation is not high as well, for the colors are mainly grey, green and brown, the typical colors of an inland Irish landscape. Maybe, the apparent low degree of saturation, modulation and differentiation derives from the choice of the weather, which is however naturalistic and typical of Ireland. Hence, this picture aims to symbolically convey the gloomy, but somewhat comfortable, Irish atmosphere and mood, so praised by the wandering romantic traveler. The degree of contextualization and representation is medium, for the background represented by the plains is not as sharp in details as some rocks in the foreground. However, these rocks are clearer for the source of illumination that puts slightly in evidence the girl as well. The degree of brightness is actually low, especially if one looks at the darkness inside the cave.

To conclude the analysis, it would be advisable to say a few words on the textual metafunction, which is the one in charge of providing internal and external coherence to the design of the image and to the overall meaning. To begin with, according to the principle of the *information value*, the image is more centered than polarized. The most important element, which is put in evidence thanks to the framing device of the dark cave exit, is first the girl and then the surrounding landscape. The girl is positioned on the right, but the frame of the cave eliminates every side of the image and creates a center, in which the girl is present. The girl is in fact positioned in between but in a salient position, in the foreground. However, on the left, plenty of space was dedicated to the landscape, which somewhat could make the girl the new, unknown information, who first thrillingly explores the nature. The line of the horizon divides up the ideal – in this case a high, powerful position such as the one in which the girl is placed in the picture, in the foreground, together with the cave, which dominates the plains, the background – from the real, the plains, where the girl will end. This image therefore results in a five-dimension picture, which features all the dimensions. Eventually, framing devices are well clear in this picture. Spaces and elements are disconnected by watching the granularity of the plains, which are made up of allotments, and this granularity, that eliminates also the continuity of color, provides dynamicity, for the boundaries look like possible paths. The girl, on the other hand, with the warm color of her yellow windbreaker, looks like she is happily blending in with the landscape she is contemplating. The dark cave, conversely, represents a relevant disconnection, both as regards color and as a framework, or even maybe a prior foreground, as if to show that the girl has finally escaped and managed to see the light, always the unknown but more welcoming than the cave. The visual cliché of showing the gate, the exit, from the known to the unknown, seems here to be misrepresented, for the scarier unknown is prior, in the cave. Maybe, the author wants to suggest that being in the position of not exploring is scarier than the true exploring, activity that can result more familiar to the human nature.

**Linguistic analysis.** *Phase three* and *four* are concerned with the written mode of the post. We will first analyze the post from the point of view of SFL theory: first, the *Transitivity and Theme* analysis (a); second, the *Mood* analysis (b); finally, the *Clause Complex* analysis (c)<sup>2</sup>. The text of the post posted by Tourism Ireland, and attached to the previous picture, recites as follows:

“Have you been to the Caves of Keash? Black mouths on the face of Keshcorran Mountain, these mysterious caves offer incredible views along with fascinating history and folklore. The caves have been the subject of myths and legends for thousands of years, and it is believed people used to live in these caves, as well as bears, wolves and other wildlife. Cormac mac Airt, the most famous High King of Ireland, is said to have been born at a well nearby and, while his mother slept, was stolen by wolves and raised by them inside the caves!

Thanks @theislanders.ie for the lovely photo! Want to know more about Ireland’s kings and heroes? Check out the link in our bio 🐾 #loveireland #ireland #irlande #irlanda #discoverireland #visitireland #instaireland”

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<sup>2</sup> This analysis was carried out following *Francesconi*’s SFL pattern of analysis (2014) and other specific information provided by *Halliday* (1961), *Halliday and Matthiessen* (2004)



The text attached to the post shared by *Tourism Ireland*. Text credits go to it.

### a) Transitivity and Theme analysis<sup>3</sup>

Key. *Processes*: material (Pm), mental (Pme), attributive (Pa), identifying (Pi), behavioral (Pb), verbal (Pv), existential (Pe). *Participants*: Actor (A), Goal (G), Beneficiary (B), Senser (S), Phenomenon (Ph), Carrier (C), Attribute (At), Token (T), Value (V), Behaver (B), Sayer (Sy), Target (T), Receiver (R)<sup>4</sup>, Existent (E). *Circumstances* of location (Cl), of extent (Cx), of manner (Cm), of cause (Cc), of accompaniment (Ca), of matter (Ct), of role (Co). *Theme* is underlined.

“Have you (A) been (Pm) to the Caves of Keash (Cl)? Black mouths (A) on the face of Keshcorran Mountain (Cl), these mysterious caves [(A)]<sup>5</sup> offer (Pm) incredible views along with fascinating history and folklore (G). The caves (T) have been (Pi) the subject of myths and legends (V) for thousands of years (Cx), and it (Ph) is believed (Pme) people (A) used to (Pb) live (Pm) in these caves (Cl), as well as bears, wolves and other wildlife [(A)]. Cormac mac Airt [(T)], the most famous High King of Ireland (T), is said (Pv) to have been born (Pm) at a well nearby (Cl) and, while his mother (A) slept (Pm), was stolen (Pm) by wolves (A) and raised (Pm) by them (A) inside the caves (Cl)!

Thanks (Pv; T) @theislanders.ie (R) for the lovely photo (Cc)! Want (Pme) to know (Pme) more (Ph) about Ireland’s kings and heroes (Ct)? Check out (Pm) the link (G) in our bio (Cl) 🏰 #loveireland #ireland #irlande #irlanda #discoverireland #visitireland #instaireland”

<sup>3</sup> Information added from <http://systemictheory.blogspot.com/?m=1> (Last visited: 1/05/2019) and from <https://journals.openedition.org/asp/1584> (Last visited: 4/05/2019)

<sup>4</sup> Added from a further explanation of the theory provided by <http://www.alvinleong.info/sfg/sfgtrans.html> (Last visited: 1/05/2019)

<sup>5</sup> This is not counted in the box for it is a repetition of the same subject (“the mysterious caves”)

Process type	No.
Material	8
Mental	3
Relational attributive	0
Relational identifying	1
Verbal	2
Behavioral	1
Existential	0
Total number of processes:	15

Process types in the post provided by *Tourism Ireland*

As one can see from the box above, the majority of processes is represented by material processes, i.e. verbs that refer to the performing of actions. The post is in fact centered on the telling of an ancient history, which is related to the destination. In addition, the ancient mystery around the story is enhanced through the employment of both a mental process, such as “believe”, and a verbal process, “say”, in the impersonal form. The other material processes are enacted by interrogative and imperative forms and directly address the user, therefore involving him and inducing him to *act*. The other two mental processes deployed in this text are connected as well to an interrogative form and a request for information, i.e. another *call-to-action* strategy. The absence of relational attributive forms denotes the intended lack of description of the destination and of its appeal. However, two embedded “relational identifying” phrases, that describe first the caves and then the main character of the legend recounted, miss the count for, by being phrases and not clauses, they do not feature any process, even though the function they fulfill is the same. Many of the participants are represented by characters of the legend in order to provide credibility. For the same reason, six circumstances out of nine are *locative*, as if to connect the story directly and concretely to the location, transferring the former’s legendary aura of mystery to the latter. As for Theme-Rheme structure, themes here are usually unmarked. The first and the final part of the text are in fact quite simply structured, with its questions and demands, whereas the middle part is more rhetorical, discursive, for it is a narration that aims at constructing a more pleasant and slow rhythm and engage the audience. All of this is confirmed by the fact that the subjects of the Theme are mostly the addressed viewer, the caves and its legendary characters.

As regards the genre, from this first analysis, and keeping in mind the nature of the Social Media post, it is safe to affirm that this text belongs to both the institutional, commercial and informal genre families. Like brochures and websites, in fact, this post presents a destination and is shared by an official source; however, it is a covert advertisement, as Social Media business communication mostly is. The tone is in fact informal and consequently distinct from the brochures or websites; the sentences and clauses are shorter, for the aim of Social Media is to get closer to the wide audience and convince it in the pre-trip stage, with immediateness and without making it notice. The illocutionary force of typical promotional pre-trip stages communication is clear in the interrogative and imperative forms, which reinforce the need to explore and connect with the past and untamed nature. The more narrative than descriptive genre value, conversely, is noticeable in the whole text, being the telling of a legend. Instagram posts represent accordingly a *generic innovation* (Francesconi 28-34), more than a genre mixing, as it is the creation of a new genre that can fulfill every generic value, i.e. the narrative, descriptive, instructive, expositive or argumentative, maintaining however the same communicative function, i.e. to *promote*.

## b) Mood and Modality analysis<sup>6</sup>

Key. *Subject* (S), *Finite* (F), negative (Fn), modalised (Fms), modulated (Fml), *Predicator* (P), modulated *Predicator* (Pml), modalised *Predicator* (Pms), fused *Finite and Predicator* (F/P). *Complement* (C), attributive *Complement* (Ca), agent *Complement* (Cg)<sup>7</sup>. *Adjunct* (A), circumstantial (Ac), mood (Am), comment (Ao), polarity (Ap), vocative (Av), conjunctive (Aj), continuity (At). The *MOOD element* of ranking clauses is shown in bold, [embedded clauses] stay in square brackets.

<sup>6</sup> Information added from <https://www.slideshare.net/liliaindriani/grammar-4-7731634> (Last visited: 1/05/2019) and from Adenan (2001), Eggins (1994), Halliday (1985;1990), Halliday and Hasan (1985; 1989)

<sup>7</sup> Added by me

“**Have** (F) **you** (S) been (P) to the Caves of Keash (Ac)? Black mouths (Ca) on the face of Keshcorran Mountain (Ac), **these mysterious caves** (S) **offer** (F/P) incredible views along with (Aj) fascinating history and folklore (C). **The caves** (S) **have** (F) been (P) the subject of myths and legends (Ca) for thousands of years (Ac), and (Aj) **it** (S) **is** (F) believed (P) **people** (S) **used to** (Fms) live (P) in these caves (Ac) , **as well as bears** (S), **wolves** (S) **and other wildlife** (S). **Cormac mac Airt** (S), the most famous High King of Ireland (Ca), **is** (F) said (P) **to have** (F) been born (P) at a well (Ac) nearby (Ac) and (Aj), while (Aj) **his mother** (S) **slept** (F/P), **was** (F) stolen (P) by wolves (Cg) and (Aj) raised (P) by them (Cg) inside the caves (Ac)!

**Thanks** (F/P) @theislanders.ie (C/Av) for the lovely photo (Ac)! **Want** (F) to know (P) more (C) about Ireland’s kings and heroes (Ac)? **Check** (F) out (P) the link (C) in our bio (Ac) 🏰 #loveireland #ireland #irlande #irlanda #discoverireland #visitireland #instaireland”

With this analysis one can infer that the author decided to mainly *offer* information through the deployment of the declarative mood; however, the interrogative and imperative moods are employed as well, for there are clauses that demand, push, question, something, in a more covert/overt way. The subjects in fact, as it was said earlier, are the addressed readers, the destination and the characters of the legend about the destination. Finite and Predicate forms work together in this text and provide more complexity, color, dynamicity and both mist and credibility to the story and the destination. The complements are mainly circumstantial and adjunctive, as every narration of a legend should be. The use of an agent complement denotes the deployment of the passive forms, keeping the protagonist of the story, who really existed, at the beginning of the sentence, and as the subject of the MOOD. The presence of pronouns, such as you, and of imperative forms, enhances the ego-targeting strategy of singling out the reader from the crowd, therefore making him feel special, and associating him directly with the location and the experience recounted, which is related to it. The almost totally absence of modalisation and modulation confirms the fact that a trustworthy story is being told. One could however argue that modulation is replaced by imperative forms, whereas modalisation, i.e. the degree of probability, uncertainty, could be found in the impersonal forms of believe and say, for they convey the same effect as modalisation.

### c) Clause complex analysis

Key. [embedded clauses]; 1,2,3 parataxis;  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  hypotaxis; “ locution; ‘ idea; = elaboration; + extension;  $\times$  enhancement.

Clause simplex: “Have you been to the Caves of Keash?

Clause simplex: Black mouths on the face of Keshcorran Mountain, these mysterious caves offer incredible views along with fascinating history and folklore.

1. The caves have been the subject of myths and legends for thousands of years,

2. and it is believed

$\alpha$  ‘ people used to live in these caves, as well as bears, wolves and other wildlife.

1. Cormac mac Airt, the most famous High King of Ireland, is said

$\alpha$  “ to have been born at a well nearby and,

$\beta \times$  while his mother slept,

1 + was stolen by wolves and raised by them inside the caves.

Clause simplex: Thanks @theislanders.ie for the lovely photo!

Clause simplex: Want to know more about Ireland’s kings and heroes?

Clause simplex: Check out the link in our bio 🏰

#loveireland #ireland #irlande #irlanda #discoverireland #visitireland #instaireland”



No. of words (without hashtags)	120
Lexical density <sup>8</sup>	No. of content-carrying words = 54 No. of non-content-carrying-words = 66
No. of sentences	7
No. of clause simplexes	5
No. of clause complexes	2
No. of embedded clauses (dependent)	0
No. of projected locutions/ideas	2
No. of elaboration, extension, enhancement processes (expanded logico-semantic relations)	1 (paratactic) 1 (hypotactic)
Parataxis	3
Hypotaxis	2

#### Clauses' relations and complexes in the post provided by *Tourism Ireland*

This text, according to the syntactic analysis, shows a high number of clause simplexes and a relatively small number of complexes of clauses, most of which feature hypotactic relations. Both clause complexes feature one hypotactic construction, denoted by the logico-semantic relation of *projection* and the declarative verbs *believe* and *say*, both of which are interwoven with paratactic forms. We considered in fact the clause “was stolen by wolves and raised by them inside the caves” a construction that depends paratactically from the principal clause and which extends its meaning, i.e. adds information with conjunctive forms (*and*). The clause does not depend on the subordinate  $\alpha$  for it is not syntactically related to it, neither hypotactically nor paratactically; as a matter of fact, the clause shares the subject and cannot exist without the principal *I*. The subordinate clause  $\beta$   $\times$ , conversely, hypotactically depends on the subordinate  $\alpha$  “, for it is introduced by the hypotactic conjunction *while* and, additionally, it *enhances* both  $\alpha$  and the whole narration with a semantic development in terms of time. We chose in fact to denominate each level of subordination with different Greek alphabetic letters. Conferring the same letter to subordinates that were depending on one another would have otherwise conveyed the wrong idea, i.e. that they were on the same level with respect to the principal and all directly dependent on it. However, this was not the case. Moreover, with regards to this analysis and especially with the definition of *paratactic embedded clauses*, we would like to make here a short observation about the decisions we consciously took when dealing with it. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), embedded clauses are rankshifted clauses, i.e. clauses that are downgraded as a constituent, such as clauses that are subject or object of another and do not stay between commas (382). Furthermore, always according to Halliday (1961) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), elaboration, extension and enhancement processes can be both paratactic and hypotactic. However, it appeared to us that Francesconi (2014) considered embedded clauses implicit hypotactic clauses, and especially relative implicit ones, i.e. that are not a constituent but that depend one from another (48; 63-64; 68-69). We decided therefore to consider the existence of paratactic relations of elaboration, extension and enhancement, and to regard the implicit hypotactic clauses within commas as embedded, as Francesconi did in her work. To continue the analysis, we noticed that the inserted nominal phrase “as well as bears, wolves and other wildlife” is put at the end of the clause, and not next to the first subject of the subordinate clause, i.e. people. The author aimed, in our opinion, to achieve effectiveness, conciseness to the narration and put emphasis on the human beings, to which readers can relate. The narrative pace is reinforced by the complicated paratactic and hypotactic relations of the second clause complex; moreover, the use of the passive voice confirms the idea that the human being is kept as protagonist, with which the audience can indeed identify. Furthermore, the text shows a high proportion of words to sentences, and especially to clause complexes, which are only two. This feature and the alternation between paratactic and hypotactic relations are typical of the narrative genre. However, this genre differs from the brochure or website genres for the sentences are shorter, simpler and characterized by colloquialisms and inaccuracies. An example can be found in the employment of an interrogative form without the auxiliary and the pronoun, and the use of an abbreviation (bio instead of biography). This tenor strategies serve the purpose of conveying immediacy, spontaneity and a friendly tone; the author seeks in fact to establish an equal and personal relation and an affective involvement.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sltinfo.com/lexical-density/> (Last visited: 1/05/2019)



With respect to the theories exposed by Dann (1996) and the language of tourism, this post clearly reproduces the ideas of strangerhood and the return to the past. To begin with, the telling of an ancient story that took place in “mysterious” caves, i.e. the destination portrayed, protagonist of “fascinating history of folklore”, “myths and legends”, and location of “kings and heroes”, emphasizes the rhetorical attention to a far, suggestive, yet reachable past, unspoilt by the present and characterized by heroic deeds. The charm of the *different* and unknown, untamed is further underlined by the adoption of an exotic, wild narrative with subjects such as wolves, bears, who lived among humans and even raised a king. This latter subject can be then discoverable by the human explorer, traveler, who only cares about finding the truth, the authentic, the unspoilt, living without any constraints or expectations. This whole discourse is supported by the adoption of the key word strategy, the employment of metaphors and of foreign, original words. The semantization of the experience, such as the use of adjectives like incredible, fascinating, mysterious, famous and the nouns quoted before, shape and trigger imagination. Moreover, the deployment of “black mouths”, referred to the caves, together with the original names of the caves, mountains and the king who lived there, confer positive feelings, connotations, finally inducing desire and leading to action.

To conclude, a few words about the language of Social Media and Social Media Marketing should be made. First of all, the type of the post is clearly informative, with its genre value being coherently narrative. The aim of the post is clearly in fact to inform, to recount some facts about a destination. The employment of *engaging* elements as well – such as the question in the first line and the command at the end of the post – refer to an interest in building an informal, close relationship with a friendly tone, rather than a powerfully asymmetrical relationship. Moreover, the structure of the post typically represents the different steps of the advertising strategy, whose first step is to catch the attention with a prompting question. The second step is then enacted with the intent to hold the interest and create a desire by making reference to a legend. Eventually, the author attempts to convince the audience to get more information – call to action – by clicking on the website and maybe buy a vacation. Social media therefore comply with the objective of raising awareness and creating desire among the audience. The deployment of emoticons, tags, hashtags, abbreviations, colloquialisms, are all distinctive of the informal and friendly Netspeak language. In addition, the likes, the comments, the visits on the post, the profile and possibly the website are all parameters to measure the return on engagement – which can lead to ROI, i.e. return on investment, and profit. Furthermore, the hashtags not only provide a colorful tone and both internal and external coherence, since they all refer to the country promoted, but they also represent a marketing strategy. If one looks closely, he can in fact notice that the company employs different languages in the hashtags when referring to Ireland, probably because it wants to target the anglophone, the French and the Italian audience, who will probably search Irish content through those keywords. The others include keywords such as “love”, “discover”, “visit”, in order to be trackable by people who are planning touristic activities in Ireland. Indeed, by deploying a good marketing strategy, a post will get lots of likes, and the more engagement a post prompts, the more visibility it will have, both on Google and Instagram search tabs. This will definitely affect the decision-making process of some potential tourist who will be looking for outstanding tourist content or companies.

After deeply investigating the multimodal meaning of this first post, attention will now be shifted to another post, which was shared by Western Australia.

### 3.3 *Western Australia*: post’s visual and written analysis

**Visual analysis.** The image below was taken from *Western Australia*’s Instagram account and represents a typical coastal Australian landscape. The location of the post, Broome, is located in the stunning north-west coast of the continent, in the state of Western Australia and by the Timor Sea. The image instantly catches the attention, for it pictures, from a high position, the different “layers” of the wild, untamed and unspoilt Australian coast. The aforementioned location features here the deep, blue and clear ocean, the endless sandy beach, the rocky, rusty, but nonetheless fascinating and thrilling cliffs and the Australian reddish soil, dotted with its distinctive green bushes. This picture, in our opinion, manages to underline the magnificence and the impressiveness of the “newest” continent and the biggest island in the world. The represented participants are in fact solely embodied by the natural landscape, contrary to the previous picture, which also showed a live being performing an action. Here, on the contrary, there is no sign of neither Actors nor vectors, which represents the action. For this reason, this picture falls within the *conceptual* imagery, and therefore in the conceptual process of *describing* the essence of a semiotic entity. At this point, one may argue that the picture could be classificational or analytical; however, there are not any abstract subjects related by a taxonomy or

hierarchy, nor there is a part-whole objective structure that defines abstract, artificial, topographical or topological features. As a matter of fact, naturalistic photographs do not belong to analytical representations unless they are very objective. Thus, this picture can be considered *symbolic*, i.e. it provides a description of an entity but without a Carrier that carries its meaning and its symbolic value; it is consequently a symbolic suggestive and its process aims at *suggesting, evoking*, a generalized condition, situation, essence. This picture depicts the Australian way of living, atmosphere, characterized by the enjoyment of the “holiday mode”, for its eternal presence of marvelous, breathtaking beaches and wild inland. This “holiday mode” and the pleasure derived from the availing of the opportunity to find the hidden “treasures”, jewels, is additionally



Conceptual, symbolic suggestive image taken from a post shared by *Western Australia*. Photo credits go to joncorpus.photography (Instagram username)

complemented and preceded by, in our opinion, a “challenge mode”. In order to enjoy a relaxing time by the beach in fact it is indispensable to reach it and survive the dangers that this treacherous and inhospitable land can hide. This experience could even cost one’s life; however, the prize consists in being literally catapulted – as also the picture shot suggests – on a different reality, where the lucky visitors are unmolested by and far

from the chaotic, contrived and predictable urban life. The human participant, therefore, by being absent from the view, is led to desire, feel the need and imagine a condition of a total uninhabited and thrillingly special, somehow dangerous vacation of which he could be part, instead of just contemplating it.

As regards the three metafunctions, it should be advisable to make some assumptions about this symbolic suggestive picture. To begin with, the ideational picture, by outlining the relation between the represented participants, is quite “simpler” than the narrative image, which features both an action in process and the presence of *someone*. The picture is made up of only one participant, and therefore no relation can be talked about. Furthermore, the description of the condition has been already provided.

Successively, concerning the interpersonal metafunction, which describes the relation between the represented participants and the interactive participants, many points could be made about the author’s perspective and intentions. The eye contact is here obviously absent; notwithstanding, the photographer, by taking a long shot and a perfectly perpendicular top-down angle, manages to convey specific attitudes towards the “subject” of the picture. First of all, this kind of frame size is taken in order to express social distance. The long shot in fact suggests an impersonal relation between the represented participants and the viewer. They therefore are linked to a more objective attitude and detached view of what is represented, which is considered without feelings nor personality, and which does not affect the viewer. This could be however the case of abstract diagrams, but rarely of naturalistic photographs. Long shots can also suggest the same reaction of narrative offer images, such as the first one analyzed, for they are chosen in order to make the viewer contemplate the picture in its grandeur. They are *far* from the reality in which the viewer is living; however, this reality can be reached with one click. Secondly, the choice of not adopting any horizontal or frontal angles, and therefore no subjective perspectives, seems to convey an objective attitude and lack of involvement as well. As a matter of fact, this picture, by being taken from an almost perfectly perpendicular top-down angle, is treated as an abstract chart or a map. This effect was selected in order to neutralize the perspective’s distortions or omissions that might have arisen with oblique or frontal angles. The oblique angle, actually, would have provided an unfaithful image, as regards the true sizes and proportions of the landscapes, whereas a frontal angle would have missed the biodiversity of the Australian inland and it would have only depicted the sea with the cliffs. Hence, the author desired to offer the most perfect, comprehensive and faithful naturalistic image possible of the Australian coast. Moreover, top-down angles are taken to achieve and convey a position of power, of knowledge, superiority of the viewer over the landscape, which, even though is half idyllic, half wild, can be contemplated and tamed. Finally, with regards to the modality and its degree, it should be safe to claim that this picture, by being a photograph, is part of the naturalistic coding orientation and it is considered faithful and appropriate to this reality genre. The degree of the various modality markers should be usually in fact in the middle, in order to be able to portray a very naturalistic image; this is the case here. On the one hand, the color saturation is not at his highest level, for there is no need to catch the attention with extremely saturated colors in a such naturally breathtaking and vibrantly diverse landscape like this one. On the other hand, the color differentiation, i.e. the range of colors available, is neither high nor low, for there are mainly six colors that are characteristic of this image: the blue of the ocean, the white of the surf, the light brown of the pale sand, the red of the cliffs, the green of the bushes and the ochre of the road, which reminds of the aridity of the place and the remote presence of human beings. The presence of these colors is fairly distributed and proportioned according to its natural degree of vastness and importance. Furthermore, color modulation, i.e. the degree of shade, can be fairly seen in the waves, in the different layers of the beach, among the bushes and the coves of the rocks. As regards contextualization, it stays in the middle, for the only clue of a background is provided by the sharpness of the cliffs. The picture in fact is not perfectly perpendicular and this choice of perspective therefore creates a background and some level of depth; additionally, its sharpness, accuracy and richness of details increase the degree of representation as well. The level of brightness and illumination, eventually, are not significantly high in order, in our opinion, to convey a more objective description of the Australian landscape, which can be wonderful anyway.

To conclude the visual analysis, one should not forget to say a few words about the textual metafunction as well. The internal and external coherence is mainly realized through a polarized and vertical distribution of information and through the deployment of definite framings. Firstly, one can easily notice the absence of polarly given-new (or left-right) information, as the picture is basically made up of a set of “layers”, framed parallel spaces that form almost only horizontal lines. There is no evidence of vertical framed spaces as if to convey a continuity that reflects the idyllic immutability, vast omnipresence of the Australian coast. It is inferable however an ideal and real space, represented by the impervious inland and the quiet, calming and

refreshing ocean. The entities are divided up by the coastal beach, a consistent rectangular that occupies exactly the center and functions as a link between the apparently “more inhospitable” part of the country and the more relaxing, welcoming waters. In our opinion, the choice to represent Australia from this point of view and not the typical other way round, i.e. with sea coinciding with the ideal and the endless horizon, signifies that the author aims at putting the attention on the typical and unique characteristics of the untamed “red” country. The ocean could be as beautiful as the Australian one as in every other island. Moreover, the author might also want to convey the idea that Australia is usually seen as the land of the dangers, which however are minimum and can be avoided. The country is actually an island, and if one stays on the coast, he can eschew the dangers and the heat of the inland and enjoy the freshness of absolute blue waters. The choice of including a detailed portrayal of the indented cliffs is made in order to remind of the typical color of these majestic edges that, from the inland, lead to the ocean. The cliffs in this picture in fact look like a downhill that inevitably brings to the sea. Furthermore, it is safe to argue that this shot depicts an almost perfectly symmetrical coast. Its borders are symmetrical and create a center, which puts the attention on the sand of the beach. In conclusion, it might be said that there are mainly eight clusters, formed by the different entities and the road, and all of them are mostly linear and rectangular, shaping an ordered and a not so dispersed set of information. The discontinuities are constituted by the horizontal lines, which also enclose different colors, and the only different framing shape, i.e. the irregular line that forms the edges of the cliffs, provides even more discontinuity and the main color contrast, between the plain, light brown sand and the dark red/dark brown coast. The cultural construction paradigm of the uniqueness and biodiversity of this land is here achieved and reinforced by the “cultural” syntagma, combination of inland and ocean. As regards materiality, finally, color differentiation, modulation, color value and hue are highly important in this image. Color differentiation and color hue especially, which together refer to the number of colors present in a scale from blue to red, create a vibrant contrast here, as there are both blueish and reddish colors. One represents the land, whereas the other the vast ocean; they are so different, yet so complementary and one next to each other in the Australian landscape. This last strategy therefore supplies the imagery with compositional coherence and comprehensiveness; consequently, one can safely assume that this image manages not only to catch and hold the attention, through its details and biodiversity, but it also is able to create and prompt a untamable, irrepressible desire to be there and live that experience, and therefore a need for action.

**Linguistic analysis.** With reference to the linguistic analysis, we will proceed as we did in the previous analysis of the Irish post. The original text and post can be viewed as follows:

“Oh #Broome, how you’ve captured our hearts ❤️. Who needs words to describe just how incredible this @AustraliasNorthWest location is when a picture displays it so perfectly. Life here has its own pace, and colour palette too – with beautifully burnt 🔥 ochre, cool 🌊 blues and vivid 🌿 greens. The striking contrast in hues are the ideal accompaniment to the vibrant yet relaxed lifestyle that this destination is known for. Enjoy a trip here and be spoiled with 22km of beautiful 🌊 beaches to unwind at, filled with pale sand and dramatic rusty cliffs. Just a word of warning: once you experience the Broome way of life, you may never want to go home again! 📷: @joncorpus.photography #justanotherdayinWA #thisisWA #WesternAustralia #seeaustralia #australiasnw”



The text attached to the post shared by *Western Australia*. Text credits go to it.

### a) Transitivity and Theme analysis

Key. *Processes*: material (Pm), mental (Pme), attributive (Pa), identifying (Pi), behavioral (Pb), verbal (Pv), existential (Pe). *Participants*: Actor (A), Goal (G), Beneficiary (B), Senser (S), Phenomenon (Ph), Carrier (C), Attribute (At), Token (T), Value (V), Behaver (B), Sayer (Sy), Target (T), Receiver (R), Existent (E). *Circumstances* of location (Cl), of extent (Cx), of manner (Cm), of cause (Cc), of accompaniment (Ca), of matter (Ct), of role (Co). *Theme* is underlined.

“Oh #Broome [(Ph)], how (Cm) you’ ve (A) captured (Pm/Pme<sup>9</sup>) our hearts (G) ❤️. Who (S) needs (Pme) words (Ph) to describe (Pv) just how incredible (At) this @AustraliasNorthWest location (C) is (Pa) when a picture (S) displays (Pme) it (Ph) so perfectly (Cm). Life (C) here has (Pa) its own pace (At), and colour palette (C) too – with beautifully (Cm) burnt 🍷 ochre (At), cool 🌊 blues (At) and vivid 🌿 greens (At). The striking contrast (T) in hues (Ct) are (Pi) the ideal accompaniment (V) to the vibrant yet relaxed lifestyle (Ca) that (Cc) this destination (Ph) is known for (Pme). Enjoy (Pm) a trip (G) here (Cl) and be spoiled (Pb) with 22km of beautiful 🌊 beaches (Cm) to unwind at (Pb), filled with (Pa) pale sand and dramatic rusty cliffs (At). Just a word of warning (T): once (Cx) you (S) experience (Pme) the Broome way of life (Ph), you (S) may never want (Pme) to go (Pm) home (Cl) again (Cx)! 📷: @joncorpus.photography #justanotherdayinWA #thisisWA #WesternAustralia #seeaustralia #australiasnw”

Process type	No.
Material	2
Mental	6
Relational attributive	3
Relational identifying	1
Verbal	1
Behavioral	2
Existential	0
Total number of processes:	15

Process types in the post provided by *Western Australia*

<sup>9</sup> This is a mental process metaphorically constructed as a material process, i.e. with an actor and a Goal; consequently, it will be analyzed as a material process but counted as mental.



As one can view from the table, the processes in this text are mostly *mental* and *relational attributive*. In fact, even though this post shares the same number of processes as the text posted by *Tourism Ireland*, they considerably differ in how they choose to engage with the audience and covertly promote their destinations. Contrary to the previous post, which mainly focused on *material* processes and the *narration of a story*, this post fixes its attention on worshipping, describing the uniqueness and the magnificence of the location.

On the one side, mental processes strongly connect the good qualities of the location with the perceptions of the potential reader and tourist, who is led to think and feel what the post says the destination conveys. Verbs such as need, want, experience, know, display all refer to a cognitive attitude of desire that should embrace the reader and convince him that this destination, for its wonderfulness, is capable of evoking those feelings and therefore prompting into desire and action. The metaphorical employment of material processes in the first sentence such as capture, which is obviously here figurative, for a location cannot steal someone's heart, but maybe instill certain feelings, powerfully manages to express the purpose of the communication and *capture* the *attention* of the reader. These verbs, additionally, are all used together with the ego-targeting technique with either pronouns such as "you" and possessives such as "our", or rhetorical questions and imperatives, both of which imply the same subject, i.e. *you*. On the other side, complementarily, the deployment of attributive processes, which were totally absent in the narration, aim at portraying or, as the text says, *displaying*, all the stunning characteristics of the destination, particularly with the recurrent referral to the variety of colors and contrastive biodiversity of the location. This strategy of shifting the attention to the appeal of the destination serves the purpose of fueling the imagination of the viewer/reader. The latter will then be flattered to be addressed by the author, who thinks that this place would definitely be perfect for a person such as the reader. Therefore, in our opinion, and as one can see from the next, these two processes go hand in hand with the objective of addressing and interconnecting the audience with the location, consequently creating the desire and need to feel that way and feel that experience, which is possible only through the *purchase* of it. The two material processes, moreover, provide concreteness to the experience and directly lead the addressee to *do* something in order to live a once-in-a-lifetime experience, from which one would not want to go away. Eventually, the only two behavioral processes, which are usually intransitive, for they express a psychological/physical state, are used together and both are linked to the imperative form and the idea of relaxation, suggesting that it is almost a duty to take some time off and enjoy life, once in a while. The majority of circumstances are, naturally, attributive, whereas locative and extent ones are sporadically deployed in order to create a contrast between the fruition of a both exciting and relaxing colorful experience in that location and the tedium, the greyness and the dullness of the current situation.

As regards the discourse unfolding, its generic value and the theme-rheme structure, some considerations should be included. The adopted theme-rheme structure is merely simple, for the themes are all unmarked and its components conflate with the MOOD structure of every sentence. The given elements mostly refer to the destination, which is the prerequisite in order to be able to change life and feel that way. The text starts with the adoption of an informal evocative exclamative and an informal rhetorical interrogative, whose aim is to address both the destination and the reader. Successively, a detailed and colorful description unfolds and is followed by imperative and modal clauses, employed in order to push the reader to buy. This discourse structure underpins the descriptive generic value that characterizes brochures and websites as well, as the other post did. The reason lies in fact that Social Media posts, by belonging to an institutional, commercial and informal genre families, might every time entail different generic values, but will always display the same communicative function, i.e. the overt ask for engagement and the covert promotion techniques.

## b) Mood and Modality analysis

Key. *Subject* (S), *Finite* (F), negative (Fn), modalised (Fms), modulated (Fml), *Predicator* (P), modulated *Predicator* (Pml), modalised *Predicator* (Pms), fused *Finite and Predicator* (F/P). *Complement* (C), attributive *Complement* (Ca), agent *Complement* (Cg). *Adjunct* (A), circumstantial (Ac), mood (Am), comment (Ao), polarity (Ap), vocative (Av), conjunctive (Aj), continuity (At). The *MOOD element* of ranking clauses is shown in bold, [embedded clauses] stay in square brackets.

"Oh #Broome (Av), how (Am) **you'** (S) **ve** (F) captured (P) our hearts (C) ❤️. **Who** (S) **needs** (F) words (C) to describe (P) just (Aj) how (Am) incredible (Ca) **this @AustraliasNorthWest location** (S) **is** (F) when (Aj) **a picture** (S) **displays** (F/P) it (C) so perfectly (Am). **Life** (S) here (Ac) **has** (F/P) its own pace (C), and **colour palette** (S) too – with beautifully burnt 🔥 ochre (C), cool 🌊 blues (C) and (Aj) vivid 🌿 greens (C). **The**



**striking contrast** (S) in hues (Ac) **are** (F) the ideal accompaniment (Ca) to the vibrant yet relaxed lifestyle (Ac) that **this destination** (S) **is** (F) known for (P). **Enjoy** (F/P) a trip (C) here (Ac) and (Aj) **be** (F) spoiled (P) with 22km of beautiful 🌊 beaches (Ac) **to unwind** (F) at (P), [filled (P) with pale sand (C) and (Aj) dramatic rusty cliffs (C)]. Just a word of warning (Ao): once (Ac) **you** (S) **experience** (F/P) the Broome way of life (C), **you** (S) **may never** (Fml) want (Pms) to go (P) home (Ac) again (Ac)! 📷: @joncorpus.photography #justanotherdayinWA #thisisWA #WesternAustralia #seeaustralia #australiasnw”

After undertaking this analysis on the mood structure, i.e the means by which the author decided to shape the conversation with its interlocutor, it is safe to claim that the purpose of this text is to mainly *offer* information. The majority of the clauses are realized in fact with the employment of the declarative mood. The author, thus, aims at offering important pieces of information about the destination, which might be able to convince the reader of its greatness and to eventually contact the company. The first clause, however, which has a great impact over the addressee, is covert, informal and exclamative, for it lacks the exclamation point; notwithstanding, it is structured as one. The other exclamative present in the text is the last one, which additionally is characterized by both modalised and modulated forms of the verbs. The juxtaposition of the modulated verb “may” and the modalised verb “never want” confers a higher degree of modality to the text and, consequently, creates a subtle warning or piece of advice mitigated by “may” and not, for example, “will”. The “less prescribing” modal seems in fact to provide decisional power to the reader, but it somehow makes it clear that that destination will inevitably charm them and win them over. Alongside declarative moods, one can notice interrogative and imperative clauses as well. The second clause, for example, is a covert rhetorical interrogative; however, the absence of the interrogative mark and the deployment of the period, which is conversely typical of declaratives, might provide a firmer tone and more certainty, credibility to the “affirmation” of these alleged qualities. Finally, the use of the imperative mood, as in the previous analysis, is used in order to push the reader into intangibly living the experience and lead him into action, contacting and buying. The high number of Finite forms of the verb associated with Predicators confers complexity to the text and a slow, pleasant rhythm. Additionally, mood adjuncts here create a vibrant and colorful atmosphere when portraying the destination, due to the high number of circumstantial ones, which fix in time and space the location and confer credibility to the flattering and pompous description. Eventually, the many attributive complements conflate with the attributes of the relational attributive processes, confirming the descriptive nature of the text. The subjects of the MOOD are, naturally, mainly the destination and the reader, who, targeted and singled out from the crowd, feels addressed and special, pushed to continue the reading and maybe to put himself in action in order to achieve that dream.

### c) Clause complex analysis

Key. [embedded clauses]; 1,2,3 parataxis;  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  hypotaxis; “ locution; ‘ idea; = elaboration; + extension;  $\times$  enhancement

Clause simplex: Oh #Broome, how you’ve captured our hearts ❤️.

1. Who needs words

$\alpha$  to describe

$\beta$  “ just how incredible this @AustraliasNorthWest location is

$\gamma \times$  when a picture displays it so perfectly.

Clause simplex: Life here has its own pace, and colour palette too – with beautifully burnt 🔥 ochre, cool 🌊 blues and vivid ❤️ greens.

1. The striking contrast in hues are the ideal accompaniment to the vibrant yet relaxed lifestyle

$\alpha \times$  that this destination is known for.

1. Enjoy a trip here

2 + and be spoiled with 22km of beautiful 🌊 beaches

$\alpha$  to unwind at,

$\alpha \times$  [filled with pale sand and dramatic rusty cliffs].

$\alpha \times$  <sup>10</sup>Just a word of warning: once you experience the Broome way of life,

1. you may never want to go home again!

<sup>10</sup> This hypotactic relation is referred to the principal 1 below, “you may never want to go home again”

📷: @joncorpus.photography #justanotherdayinWA #thisisWA #WesternAustralia #seeaustralia #australiasnw

No. of words (without the final hashtags and tags)	112
Lexical density	No. of content-carrying words = 69 No. of non-content-carrying-words = 43
No. of sentences	6
No. of clause simplexes	2
No. of clause complexes	4
No. of embedded clauses (dependent)	1
No. of projected locutions/ideas	1
No. of elaboration, extension, enhancement processes (expanded logico-semantic relations)	1 (paratactic) 4 (hypotactic)
Parataxis	1
Hypotaxis	6

Clauses' relations and complexes in the post provided by *Western Australia*

The clause complex analysis of this post shows that the syntactic structure of this text is more elaborated than the one found in first analysis. On the one hand, the composition is poor in clause simplexes and paratactic relations but, on the other hand, it is rich in clause complexes and hypotactic relations. The first clause complex is constructed with the unfolding of three subordinate clauses, each one of them dependent on the previous one. First of all, the verbal process of the subordinate verb *describe* reports the incredibility that characterizes this location, whereas the subordinate  $\gamma$  further enhances and expands this idea by concretely referring to the picture. Secondly, the second clause complex includes an explicit relative, contrary to the embedded clause present in the third clause complex, which is more intricate. The embedded clause  $\alpha \times$  and the subordinate  $\alpha$  of this latter clause complex are implicit relatives, which therefore do not feature the subject explicitly and whose related verbs are not conjugate. They both depend hypotactically to the clause 2 +, which stands in a paratactic relation with the principal *I*. Finally, it has to be mentioned the last clause complex might be seen as interesting, as the order of its clauses is reversed. The principal clause comes in fact after the subordinate, which precedes it. This discourse strategy affects the reader, for it supplies the text with a more persuasive and informal tone, putting the attention on the fact that a satisfactory result will be achieved, if the reader follows the steps the communication offers.

To continue the text analysis, the highly descriptive rhythm is confirmed by the high proportion of words to sentences and the higher number of content-carrying words<sup>11</sup>, compared to the number of non-content-carrying words. Content-carrying words such as full verbs, adjectives, nouns and adverbs add more colorfulness, dynamicity and concreteness to the description, as these are the words responsible for prompting the imagination of the destination that is talked about. Furthermore, the high number of hypotactic and implicit relations further enhances the power of the descriptive nature of the text and provides a slow rhythm. Both of these features are actually heavily shared by typical brochures and websites inserts as well. As a matter of fact, the sentences in this composition are longer than the previous narrative post and interconnect various clauses; however, the Social Media post still differs from these more traditional genres for, despite its official and (covert) promotional nature, it features colloquialism and inaccuracies, which are typical of the Netspeak. The use of abbreviations without spaces (22km), emoticons, tags and hashtags between words or even instead of words, are an example. Nonetheless, the major difference can be encountered when reading the first clauses; the punctuation, in fact, is wrongly and informally used and two clauses, one exclamative and one interrogative, are turned into two simple declaratives. The firmness achieved with this strategy further contributes to the illocutionary force of persuading the charmed reader to get more information about the location. Moreover, the descriptive tone increases the desire before making the real request by means of more overt imperatives and modals. Notwithstanding, the overall tenor is friendly and spontaneous, as every Social

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sltinfo.com/lexical-density/> (Last visited: 20/05/2019)

Media post should be, in order, for the author, to succeed in its communicative purpose. The travel agency aims to engage with the audience, as well as to establish an equal and close relationship with the potential customer and to push him into eventually purchasing.

With regards to the features, characteristic of tourism and Social Media language, we will avoid repeating ourselves, by listing again features shared with the previous post, since the genre and the strategies are similar. Therefore, we will limit ourselves to adding new useful or different information from the first analysis. First of all, the post clearly embodies the authenticity and strangerhood strategies. The definite binary distinction, defined by time and space locations, between the “here”, adorned with a series of fascinating qualities, and “home”, strongly supports the idea of the new, unique and exotic, wild, “vibrant” but nonetheless “relaxing” “other”. Furthermore, this post puts the attention several times on references to colors, which also make a coherent connection to the image, full of warm and vivid chromatic tones. The key word strategy therefore is employed with phrases such as “striking contrast in hues” “vibrant yet relaxed lifestyle”, more overt references to colors and the use of “experience” , “enjoy”, which clearly semantize the experience and help shape an idyllic image of the destination, with the help of the image as well. Positive feelings are induced also by the highly metaphorical language deployed in the first sentence, where “captured” is figurative and directly addresses the reader and the author, which are connected together in this experience. The colors, which, according to Dann (1996), are mostly evocative in tourism language and images, are included here, such as the blue and white. Furthermore, the overall use of the same color on wide spaces in the images further outlines the image’s coherence. Finally, as we already said earlier, instances of the ego-enhancing and targeting strategy can be noticed through the employment of imperatives, modals, rhetorical questions and pronouns such as “you” or possessives such as “our”, with which the audience can identify and pre-live the experience.

To conclude, with respect to the Social Media nature of this semiotic entity, one can safely affirm that this post, by belonging to descriptive generic value, can coherently be identified as a slightly more overt promoting type of post; it coincides in fact with the brochure and website genres. It includes, however, some informational and engaging aims as well. As a matter of fact, the rhetorical question, the covert/overt requests and pieces of advice towards the end of the post aim at both building an informal, friendly and personal relation with the interlocutor and leading him into the last step of the advertising strategy, the *call-to-action*. The first step is enacted by using the metaphorical language and the rhetorical question, whereas the second, third and four, i.e. the holding of the attention, the creation and conviction of a desire that has to be satisfied, are achieved through the evoking description of the features and activities possible, of which the reader might be the protagonist. All of these powerful connotative strategies are fixed and consolidated by the last series of clauses and therefore the last step. The high use of emoticons, tags and hashtags here makes this post even more attractive and the communicational purpose, i.e. the increase of awareness and the creation of the desire, even more effective. The intertwining of emoticons in fact provides coherence, color, dynamicity, frivolity and vividness of imagination to the text, whereas the use of tags and hashtags in the middle of the text also achieve concreteness, due to the reference to user-generated-content (the *AustraliasNorthWest* page and the photographer’s profile page) or to the same location around the Social Media. Eventually, the hashtags at the end of the post, along with pursuing the same marketing strategies similar to the ones of the previous post, confer internal and external coherence with the discourse. They serve the purpose of targeting a specific audience with the most suitable and looked for hashtags content, such as keywords related to potential tourist researchers, famous trends online and others directly connected to the country to which the location belongs. The targeted audience, if the hashtags are used properly, will therefore definitely be able to find the content and will, on the one hand, engage with it, providing consequently more visibility in the search tab, and might, on the other hand, “fall” for it and be affected by it, when planning the next vacation.

### **3.4 Explore Canada (Destination Canada): post’s visual and written analysis**

**Visual analysis.** The image below was taken from Destination Canada’s Instagram account and represents a moment of a typical *tourist* holiday. The young girl in the picture, in fact, is enjoying a luxurious service provided by a Spa located in the proximity of Ottawa, the capital city of Canada. The organization is thus offering her a morning hot bath surrounded by a cold, frosty and snowy landscape. The attention of the photographer is focused on the represented human participant, who is probably contemplating the clear blue sky. The woman in the bathing suit, if one looks carefully, is immersed in an environment which is both natural and artificial, unnatural. On the one hand, the Spa made out of wood and the see-through glass hot bathtub,

even though they both recall natural elements, such as the wood of the trees in that area and the water, from which snow is created, were created and designed by human beings and therefore do not belong to the natural environment. Furthermore, the unnaturally hot and steamy water contrasts with the naturally cold location. The surroundings, on the other hand, i.e. the soil covered in snow and the leafless trees, do belong to the nature. The picture, therefore, by being featured by both human and artificial/natural elements, can be described as *narrative reactional*, both *natural* and *artificial*. Additionally, the picture could be seen as *actional* as well, for the girl is performing an action in order to stay afloat, despite the fact that she is leaning against the woody and comfortable balustrade and the pool is shallow. The vector shaped by her movement and her pose do not in fact coincide with the vector created by her eyeline. The situation portrayed and captured in this photograph subtly invites the viewer to identify with the represented participant and desire to enjoy the same relaxation, lightheartedness and carefreeness that the young woman is probably feeling. The subtle request to loosen up a little is enhanced by the presence of her swimsuit, symbol of vacation, and the idea that she is completely alone and unseen by anybody. This visual situation therefore could be considered to fully embody the indexical



*Narrative actional-reactional* image taken from a post shared by *Explore Canada*. Photo credits go to @thechrishau and @lizziepeirce (Instagram username)

transference, the ego-targeting, the tourist gaze and the typical color/tourism strategies. First of all, both the swimsuit she is wearing and the hot bathtub carry specific, symbolic meanings, i.e. relaxation, good life and also sexual inhibition, especially in an environment like this. These meanings are transferred to the person in the image, who is showing a positive attitude thanks to the presence of these objects. The denoted way of living and feeling is then passed to the person viewing this image, who, triggered to desire to live that situation, for he also feels singled out and identifies with the subject, claims that social and emotional condition, status. This last step is obviously achievable through the call-to-action and the asking for information. Moreover, the ego-targeting technique is further exploited through the deployment of a beautiful, white, blonde young woman, who evokes sexual inhibition but somehow results attractive thanks to her pureness as well. The pureness is, similarly to the previous process, transferred to her – and successively to the viewer – also by the presence of the snow all around her. The color white in fact recalls, according to Dann (1996), an idyllic nature, the paradise, pure and unspoilt, whereas the snow clearly refers to the simple and untamed nature. Eventually, the process of sightseeing and the tourist gaze strategy are able to successively turn the viewer into a potential customer, who is prompted to contemplate the suggestive endless, mountainous and pure landscape. It should be regarded as important, however, to underline the fact that the yearning viewer is stimulated to consciously long for a typically *tourist, artificial* experience, as the person he identifies with is enjoying the nature and the landscape from a privileged and somehow unnatural point. Contrary to the represented participant of *Tourism Ireland's* post, the girl is wearing light clothes – as if she was wearing underwear – in a cold environment and is immersed in hot water, which is unnatural with temperatures that allow the formation of snow. She is thus not on adventure, exploring and wandering in the nature, but is conversely taking advantage and depending on the comforts offered by a luxurious, artificial environment, protected in a “bubbly”, false, constructed reality. She is able at the same time to benefit from the more positive, passive sides of the landscape and is protected from possible inconveniences related to bad weather.

With reference to the three visual metafunctions, many assumptions can be made about this picture. To begin with, the ideational metafunction is fulfilled by two different kinds of narrative processes, represented by two vectors and enacted by a represented participant. On the one side, the vector shaped by her pose and the movement of her leg, that helps her stay afloat, form an action process, where the girl is the Actor and, since there are no other participants, has no Goal. On the other side, the represented participant is also “reacting” to something, i.e. she is quietly contemplating the landscape and watching the phenomenon, i.e. the blue, clear sky which expands outside the picture. The young woman, as the one portrayed by *Tourism Ireland*, is looking at some point outside the picture; the vector formed by the girl's eyeline in fact points to the angle at the top left and supposedly continues. Hence, since the image does not feature a clear and finite Phenomenon, the narrative image is reactional and non-transactional. Finally, the circumstances are represented by the woody establishment, with its roof, column and floor, and the square glass pool, all of which are connected to each other not only through proximity but also through the underwater stairs. The presence of the snow right next to and before the entrance to the pool creates a great contrast between hot and cold, natural and artificial elements.

Secondly, if one pays attention to how the relation between the represented and the interactive participants is enacted, it should be of enough interest to investigate how the author intended to make and communicate meaning to the interlocutor. He manages to address the viewer somehow through many elements and techniques, such as the gaze, the size of frame with its implied social distance, and eventually the perspective, the angle which reflect a precise stand from the point of view of the author of the image. First of all, it is safe to assume that the author did not aim to shape a direct relation between the represented participant – and implicitly the author, the interactive participant – and the viewer, the other interactive participant. This is inferable by the fact that the woman is not establishing a direct eye contact of demand with the viewer, i.e. she is not looking at the camera, she is not addressing the viewer; conversely, she is looking somewhere else. The connection is therefore of offer, not demand. The girl is not asserting neither power nor subjugation over the viewer, but is there for observation, as she is spontaneously, and not artificially, contemplating the view, as if the camera were not there. The process of identification is conversely achieved through the strategies listed earlier. Secondly, the size of frame, the subjective perspective and the horizontal angle play here an important role, leading to an interconnected set of meanings. On the one side in fact, the author opted for a close-medium shot, therefore depicting the woman closely and in detail, making her a salient and proportioned element in the depiction. The shot therefore establishes a relation among the participants which is both intimate and social. This choice, in our opinion, conveys the idea that the person, even though it is a stranger, it is not an “other”,

it is similar to the viewer and could either be personified by other viewers or trigger sympathetic reactions towards her. Additionally, the close shot is usually employed in order to provide a close representation for the object – or person of desire and better prompt identification and, since the objects seem to be in the viewer's reach, to use them, to benefit from them, and therefore to *buy* them. On the other side, the adoption of a determinate perspective and the angle formed by it reflect some specific author's attitudes as well. As a matter of fact, the angle elected is horizontal, for the frontal plane of the author and the one of the represented participants are not parallel. They therefore form an angle, exemplified and made clearer by the left angle visible of the pool, which would not be observable if the angle was purely frontal. Furthermore, the different vectors present in the image, as for example the lines that form the perimeter of the pool, the roof and the column, converge in points outside the picture. The main convergent point lies outside the picture, on the right and in the middle, from which the vectors of the roof, the building, the pool and the pavement depart. By means of this effect they gradually give more space, metaphorically and concretely, to the main element of the image, i.e. the pool cluster and the woman swimming in it. However, also this kind of angle conveys involvement, which is reinforced by the close shot choice and confirmed by the distorted dimensions and shapes of the rectangular pool. Only frontal and top-down angles can in fact convey real detachment, for their proportions and lines are perfect. Moreover, the vertical angle is almost absent, which means that the author wants to make the viewer feel as if it was an equal of the represented participant, therefore equally worthy of that tremendously amazing and relaxing, carefree experience.

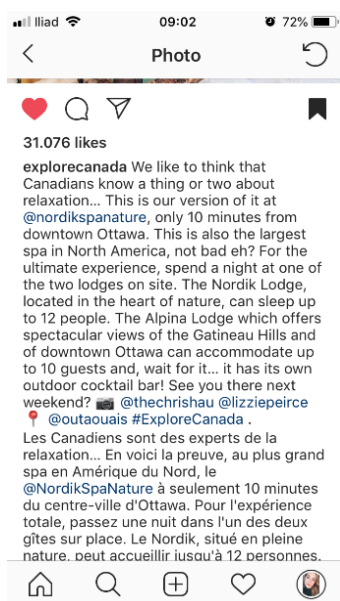
Eventually, the degree of modality expresses some meanings elaborated by the author as well. The coding orientation is naturalistic, as photograph is considered the most faithful naturalism and reality coding orientation. As a matter of fact, photorealism expresses a high level of correspondence between the representation and the reality and, when the relative modality values have middle degrees in their scale, the image ends up being even more naturalistic. This picture, in our opinion, is very realistic; however, some values have higher degrees than they should in a perfectly reality-depicting image. For example, the color saturation has a distortedly elevated degree in order to shift the attention to the contrast between the four basic colors, i.e. the white of the snow, the transparent light-blue of the pool, the pink of the woman's bare skin and the light-brown of the building. Furthermore, the picture is so bright, and the source of illumination is so evident – the sun rays – that the color of the sky is of the same color of the snow, i.e. white, this way conferring coherence to the picture. The element which is mostly affected by the sun is the young woman, who benefits from the natural sunny heat and tan as well. Conversely, the degrees of color differentiation and modulation stay in the middle, together with the degree of contextualization, representation and depth. The representation is defined in fact by three different backgrounds, i.e. the pool, the spa and the hill behind; in addition, the picture is sharp and rich in details, as it can be noticed by looking at the various wooden planks, of different colors and length, and the underwater, dotted floor of the pool.

Thirdly and lastly, the textual metafunction can be considered of pivotal importance, when explored according to the information value distribution and the overall coherence provided by the distribution of color. On the one hand, the image is clearly centered and not polarized; consequently, the whole attention is deliberately given to one element, which distinguishes itself from the surroundings by size, color and shape: the pool and the human being in it. The pool is accordingly the only salient and recognizable cluster; it could in fact be treated as part of the spa and therefore make the latter relevant as well. Nonetheless, due to the position of the woody part in the background and its less vibrant but warmer color, the establishment looks less attractive, evoking, "eye-catching". Hence, it stays in striking contrast with the central element, the pool, and supplies it with more evidence to the central element. The viewer is thus led to admire and focus on the pool, which is the most salient element for its foreground position, its definite dimensions and borders and its vibrant color as well. The pool is fact framed by firm lines, which provide definite contours also due to the difference in color between the material inside the pool and the color of the borders. Eventually and most significantly, the meaning potential – the materiality – and the compositional coherence of the picture are realized through the employment of saturated, pure colors and the extended distribution of a limited number of colors over the image, creating three "layers", dimensions, and realities, with three basic natural elements. These are the natural snow (which derives from the water), the water and the wood. Their adoption has the purpose of connecting the artificial world to the natural one, the unspoilt landscape to a touristic, organized experience and also of putting the real service and subject at the center of the attention. The protagonist of the imagery dichotomically stays between a "cold" environment and color – the snow of the wintery nature – and a warmer one, which illustrates the comfort of the nature "tamed" by the human presence and consequently "at the service" of the potential tourist.



**Linguistic analysis.** As regards the linguistic analysis, the written part of the post will be analyzed according to the SFL theory. The original text is reproduced below and its original version can be viewed in the next page. The three-part analysis will follow.

“We like to think that Canadians know a thing or two about relaxation... This is our version of it at @nordikspanature, only ten minutes from downtown Ottawa. This is also the largest spa in North America, not bad eh? For the ultimate experience, spend a night at one of the two lodges on site. The Nordik Lodge, located in the heart of nature, can sleep up to 12 people. The Alpina Lodge which offers spectacular views of the Gatineau Hills and of downtown Ottawa can accommodate up to 10 guests and, wait for it...it has its own outdoor cocktail bar! See you there next weekend? 📸 @thechrishau @lizziepeirce 📍 @outaouais #ExploreCanada .”



The text (in English) attached to the post shared by *Explore Canada*. Text credits go to it.

#### a) Transitivity and Theme analysis

Key. *Processes*: material (Pm), mental (Pme), attributive (Pa), identifying (Pi), behavioral (Pb), verbal (Pv), existential (Pe). *Participants*: Actor (A), Goal (G), Beneficiary (B), Senser (S), Phenomenon (Ph), Carrier (C), Attribute (At), Token (T), Value (V), Behaver (B), Sayer (Sy), Target (T), Receiver (R), Existent (E). *Circumstances* of location (Cl), of extent (Cx), of manner (Cm), of cause (Cc), of accompaniment (Ca), of matter (Ct), of role (Co). *Theme* is underlined.

“We (S) like (Pme) to think (Pme) that Canadians (S) know (Pme) a thing or two about relaxation (Ct) ... This (T) is (Pi) our version of it (V) at @nordikspanature (Cl), only ten minutes from downtown Ottawa (Cl). This (T) is (Pi) also the largest spa (V) in North America (Cl), not bad eh [(Pa)]<sup>12</sup>? For the ultimate experience (Cc), spend (Pm) a night (G) at one of the two lodges on site (Cl). The Nordik Lodge (A), located (Pa) in the heart of nature (Cl), can sleep (Pm) up to 12 people (G). The Alpina Lodge (A) which offers (Pm) spectacular views of the Gatineau Hills and of downtown Ottawa (G) can accommodate (Pm) up to 10 guests (G) and, wait (Pb) for it (Ph)<sup>13</sup>...it (C) has (Pa) its own outdoor cocktail bar (At)! See (Pme) you (Ph) there (Cl) next weekend? (Cl) 📸 @thechrishau @lizziepeirce 📍 @outaouais #ExploreCanada .”

<sup>12</sup> Netspeak informal expression; the verb “to be” is implied but will not be counted as a process in the box below

<sup>13</sup> Behavioral processes are usually non-transitive and feature one entity; however, it is not always the case.

Process type	No.
Material	4
Mental	4
Relational attributive	2
Relational identifying	2
Verbal	0
Behavioral	1
Existential	0
Total number of processes:	13

Process types in the post provided by *Explore Canada*

The current analysis, contrary to the previous ones, shows an equal number of material and mental processes, with a total number of eight, whereas the number of the relational processes is lower. The text of the post, on the one hand, is in fact focused on both metaphorically and extensively overselling and defining the destination promoted and describing the more concrete activities and characteristics related to it. On the other hand, the mental processes are employed in order to underline the cognitive processes of which the human subjects at issue, i.e. the authors, “We”, the local population, “Canadians” and the addressee, “you”, are the protagonists. Furthermore, the connection created by the mental processes among the three live subjects is deliberately shaped by the authors in order to transfer positive attitudes and comments, qualities firstly to the local population, then to the service promoted and eventually to the individuals who decide to take part to it and benefit from it, i.e. the potential tourists. The absolute superlative in the function of attribute, the “largest spa in North America”, further intensifies the characteristics of the location from a qualitative point of view and the persuasive marketing strategy as well. With regards to the circumstances, the majority of them, as in the other posts investigated, is locative, for the same purpose of the others, i.e. to concretely circumscribe the “idyllic”, “imaginary” location in terms of time and space. The circumstance of matter “about relaxation”, which features in the first line, semantically introduces the major topic of the content of the post. Conversely, the circumstance of cause and purpose “for the ultimate experience” serves the purpose of instilling in the potential customers the desire and the need to urgently live that experience. The latter phrase, together with the imperative and the informal rhetoric interrogative at the end of the text, clearly realize the call-to-action strategy. As for theme-rheme structure, themes are mostly unmarked, which means that the sentences appear to be quite simply structured and their components conflate with the MOOD structure. Notwithstanding, the marked theme “For the ultimate experience” aims at shifting the attention at the key word “experience” and the meaningful related adjective “ultimate”. Additionally, the informal rhetoric interrogative features a marked theme as well, for, by being constructed as an imperative clause, begins with the infinite and unconjugated verb “See” instead of auxiliary verbs such as “Do”, “Will” and the subject, which is typical of interrogative clauses.

To conclude, the discourse unfolding clearly underpins a both descriptive and instructive/expositive generic value, typical of websites, brochures but especially of travel and *practical guides*. The genre families to which it belongs are therefore the *editorial*, institutional, commercial and informal. The promotional communicative function is here more overt and practical. The first clause reproduces more an ideal and abstract idea, whereas from the second sentence until the last one, which embodies the typical final request for engagement, the expression of more concrete qualities of the destination is realized by a more overt, evocative but especially practical, language. It could be thus said that this post less confirms the covert advertising status of typical Social Media posts and website pages as well. We consider in fact the three posts analyzed here as defined by gradually less covert promotional strategies. While the first one revolves around the telling of a story, the second one more overtly benefits from typically evocative linguistic structures. However, in our opinion, the final and third post, i.e. this one, is even more overtly promotional for it uses tags, hashtags and clauses in a more practical and functional way, without devoting too many words to the description of the location and typical of both advertising and guides.

#### b) Mood and Modality analysis

Key. *Subject* (S), *Finite* (F), negative (Fn), modalised (Fms), modulated (Fml), *Predicator* (P), modulated Predicator (Pml), modalised Predicator (Pms), fused Finite and Predicator (F/P). *Complement* (C), attributive

Complement (Ca), agent Complement (Cg). *Adjunct* (A), circumstantial (Ac), mood (Am), comment (Ao), polarity (Ap), vocative (Av), conjunctive (Aj), continuity (At). The *MOOD element* of ranking clauses is shown in bold, [embedded clauses] stay in square brackets.

“**We** (S) **like** (F) to think (P) that Canadians (S) **know** (F/P) a thing or two (C) about relaxation (Ac)... **This** (S) **is** (F) our version of it (Ca) at @nordikspanature (Ac), only (Am) ten minutes from downtown Ottawa (Ac). **This** (S) **is** (F) also (Aj) the largest spa (Ca) in North America (Ac), not bad eh (Ao)? For the ultimate experience (Ac), **spend** (F/P) a night (C) at one of the two lodges on site (Ac). **The Nordik Lodge** (S), [located (P) in the heart of nature (Ac)], **can** (Fml) sleep (P) up to (Aj) 12 people. **The Alpina Lodge** (S) **which offers** (F/P) spectacular views of the Gatineau Hills and of downtown Ottawa (C) **can** (Fml) accommodate (P) up to (Aj) 10 guests (C) and (Aj), **wait** (F) for (P) it (C)...**it** (S) **has** (F/P) its own outdoor cocktail bar (C)! **See** (F/P) you (C) there (Ac) next weekend (Ac)? 📷 @thechrishau @lizziepeirce 🍷 @outaouais #Canada

This analysis reveals that the main purpose of the author of this text, as in the previous ones, is mainly to inform, to offer information. The adoption of the declarative mood in almost every sentence makes it clear that the company aims at providing as many practical pieces of useful information as possible. The author therefore adopts this strategy in order to convince the audience of the positive qualities and concrete attributes, activities that make the location so special. The other deployed mood typology is the imperative one, which, in the last sentence, seems to be realized by an interrogative clause; however, the mood construction is an imperative one. This one, together with the imperative exemplified by the verb “spend”, incorporates the typical and recurrent ego-targeting and call-to-action strategies, which focus on directly and firmly addressing the reader and inducing him into *do* something. The employment of the question mark instead of the exclamative point or the period, characteristic of declarative sentences, could function as a provocative, persuasive strategy that forces the reader to answer, and affect the reader’s answer, for it is a rhetoric question. The Finite structure is very simple and linear; however, Finite and Predicate structures work together quite often and provide complexity and a pleasant rhythm to the composition. The embedded clause after the nomination of the destination and the occurrence of verbs with prepositions, along with structure markers, are an example. Furthermore, the use of modulated forms of the Finite parts of the verb confers the capacity of the location to literally satisfy possible tourists’ needs. The majority of adjuncts are either circumstantial or adjunctive; moreover, there is a high number of direct and attribute complements. The reason obviously lies in the fact that the objective of this discourse is to first persuade the audience into believing that the location features both idyllic qualities, which get the attention and stimulate the desire, and then to convince it to buy the service for the concrete, real attributes and activities it can provide. An example could be the room capacity, which also boosts the credibility of the presence of the location there. Finally, the subjects involved in the MOOD structure mainly refer to the protagonists of the composition, i.e. the interactive participants and the promoted destination, all of which are realized through the employment of an alternate use of determiners, pronouns, and original names. While the use of the foreign and original names further consolidates the credibility and exotic narrative strategy, the employment of the pronoun “you”, “we” or possessives like “our” specifically target the reader and manage to create an informal, shared and intimate way of communicating.

### c) Clause complex analysis

Key. [embedded clauses]; 1,2,3 parataxis; α, β, γ hypotaxis; “ locution; ‘ idea; = elaboration; + extension; × enhancement

1. We like

α to think that

β ‘ Canadians know a thing or two about relaxation...

Clause simplex: This is our version of it at @nordikspanature, only ten minutes from downtown Ottawa.

Clause simplex: This is also the largest spa in North America, not bad eh?

Clause simplex: For the ultimate experience, spend a night at one of the two lodges on site.

1. The Nordik Lodge,

α × [located in the heart of nature],

can sleep up to 12 people<sup>14</sup>.

1. The Alpina Lodge

α × which offers spectacular views of the Gatineau Hills and of downtown Ottawa can accommodate up to 10 guests<sup>15</sup> and,

2 = wait for it<sup>16</sup>...

2 + it has its own outdoor cocktail bar!

Clause simplex: See you there next weekend?

📷 @thechrishau @lizziepeirce 📍 @outaouais #ExploreCanada .

No. of words (without the final hashtags and tags)	106
Lexical density	No. of content-carrying words = 51 No. of non-content-carrying-words = 55
No. of sentences	7
No. of clause simplexes	4
No. of clause complexes	3
No. of embedded clauses (dependent)	1
No. of projected locutions/ideas	1
No. of elaboration, extension, enhancement processes (expanded logico-semantics relations)	2 (paratactic) 2 (hypotactic)
Parataxis	2
Hypotaxis	4

Clauses' relations and complexes in the post provided by *Explore Canada*

The undertaking of this analysis shows that the syntactic structure of this composition is quite rich but concise at the same time; the author managed in fact to elaborate a stimulating discourse by exploiting paratactic and hypotactic relations between clauses, but nonetheless did not shape a redundant or too exaggerated *tourism discourse*. The text is characterized by a balanced subdivision between clause simplexes clause complexes, which are mainly realized through subordinate clauses. The latter express different logico-semantic relations; the various subordinates succeed in enriching one another with various relations of projection and expansion, by which also some coordinate clauses are affected. For example, the declarative attitude of the first clause complex serves the purpose of introducing the topic by employing the key word strategy with “relaxation” and, previously, with the reference to the local population of the destination, the “Canadians”. Successively, three clause simplexes, following one another, start describing, with short but effective clauses, accompanied by informal, spoken discourse markers and phrases, the unique and irresistible qualities of the Spa service at issue. The other two complexes are characterized by the unfolding of an embedded subordinate clause, a relative clause, a coordinate discourse marker and a coordinate clause, which extend the qualities and affordances of the location. Furthermore, they confer a dynamic, detailed, colorful tone to the discourse pace, which ends up in a climax and a friendly tone. The rhythm, the words, and the syntactic relations employed, manage to prompt the imagination, increase the expectations and the desire and finally lead to action, which is exemplified not only by the hortatory illocutionary force of the imperative of the third clause simplex, “spend a night”, but also of the hybridity of the last sentence. As a matter of fact, the latter is firm as an order but is still asking for a response, and therefore engagement, to the audience. Eventually, regarding the degree of lexical density and semantization of the post, some assumptions might be easily inferred. On the one hand, the number of content-carrying words is slightly lower than the number of non-content-carrying words, such as prepositions, numerals, determiners, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs and pronouns<sup>17</sup>. Due to the predominant instructive and expositive nature of this post, the number of evocative nouns and adjectives decreases, contrarily, for example, to the post shared by *Western Australia*. However, the composition, by always being

<sup>14</sup> The subject of this principal clause is previous to the embedded clause, i.e. “The Nordik Lodge”

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>16</sup> Discourse marker clause typical of informal spoken language that, by its syntactically “omittable” nature, stays in a paratactic relation with the previous clause (interpreted according to Fraser 1999)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.sltinfo.com/lexical-density/> (Last visited: 20/05/2019)

commercial and engaging, is dotted with nouns, adjectives and adverbs that aims at prompting the imagination of the audience. The semantization of the experience is in fact realized through words such as relaxation, spa, experience, view, accompanied by adjectives such as spectacular, superlatives like “largest” and adverbs such as “only”, or even more evocative and exotically, persuasive phrases, such as “heart of the nature”. Here, the destination is metaphorically compared to the more alive, intimate and wild side of the nature, in order to create an image of both comfort and danger.

In order to conclude this section, we would like to say a few words on the strategies employed with respect to the language of tourism and of Social Media. To begin with, this text reproduces, similarly to the narratives proposed in the other two posts, the tourism authenticity and the play perspectives. While the former emphasizes the uniqueness and the incredibility of the experience, the latter highlights the series of activities that can be performed there and the comforts enjoyable with that specific service. The authenticity strategy, for instance, is denoted and exemplified by the already mentioned strategy of semantization and all of those nouns, adverbs and adjectives that stress the spectacularity, pureness, wildness, comfort and relax and that connect it with a reference to the local population, the “Canadians”. Furthermore, the ideas of the unspoilt and of the regeneration, purification are here enhanced also through the solely presence of the service itself, i.e. the spa. Baths in pools or in more natural environment are often adopted by the tourism discourse in order to remind the potential tourists of the beneficial results, both on the health and the spirit, that can derive from the exploitation of the experience. The play perspective, conversely, focuses here on concretely listing the activities and comforts that the location can offer, such as the accommodation place and the opportunity to have a drink and fun, besides having a hot bath. The tourist, here, and not the traveler, who does not live among comforts but might appreciate a little bit of adventure as well, can in fact also benefit from sites where he can relate to other people in a more loosened and carefree way. This conception points to recall the idea of taboo-free living and youth, which is also symbolized by the young woman, alone, and the indexical reference of the swimsuit in the pool. These two rhetoric devices perpetrated by the tourism discourse deliberately exploit the inner and unconscious social and intimate needs of every individual in the society. Some examples can be found in the desire to be accepted, to feel energetic, happy, beautiful, and free of thoughts and sexual, moral inhibitions. Eventually, the author also adopted and reinterpreted the puzzle strategy, for he does not actually propose a shocking picture. However, the evident contrast between the hotness and the highly relaxing comfortableness of the hot bathtub and the snowy hill surely attracts the eye and the interest of a possible high number of users. The strategy is accompanied by a declarative sentence but nonetheless insecure and curiosity-arousing, for the present of suspended dots. This conception is incorporated again in the rhetoric discourse marker clause towards the end of the composition. All of these strategies therefore, together with the semantization of the experience and the already mentioned ego-targeting strategy, aim and manage to supply the dreaming and demanding user with a more tangible fruition of a product intangible by nature, i.e. a service. The tourism rhetoric here in fact focuses on addressing the mentally tired young person or middle-age person, who likes to enjoy some free time from work doing nothing and especially no efforts, but instead wants to simply go on vacation. Once there, he will only and probably tautologically quest for the confirmation of the expectations, which had been created by the tourism industry, thanks to the shaping of an artificial representation of reality.

With regards to the Social Media language and strategies, this post, by being shared by Instagram, fully reproduces and features all of the characteristics listed so far. For this reason, the purpose and the type of the content are clearly informative and engaging; additionally, we would say it is more overtly promotional than the other posts. As a matter of fact, it does not devote much space to narrate a story around it or to pompously describe the positive features of it. It does conversely support the image creation by focusing on the more concrete facilities offered and creating a more complete experience, which include, relax, regeneration, meals, drink, social interchange and sleep recovery. The advertising strategy structure is similar to the other ones; the first clause in fact aims at catching the attention of the interlocutor, whereas the second and the third are designed to hold the attention and push the reader to keep reading and get more information about the location. The following clause, i.e. the third clause simplex, subtly starts shaping and creating the desire, by covertly and provokingly alleging that this experience would be the ultimate, the perfect one, after which nothing would stand the comparison. Successively, the consecutive two clause complexes further shape the experience and reinforce this desire, which is pushed through the employment of discourse marker strategy, the exclamative clause and the final rhetoric question. The latter also serves the purpose of finally leading the audience into action. The tenor achieved is friendly, intimate and interacting, engaging as every other Social Media post, for

the author does not want to put himself in a higher position than the reader; conversely, he wants to help and give precious and useful, trustworthy pieces of advice to their friends. He focuses on creating awareness towards the existence of a need and of a product which can satisfy it and on changing, improving the perception of the quality and the necessity of the service, by listing all of the comforts and attractions present. This is actually the role Instagram images play in travel agencies. It is more effective to shift the attention to the needs and quality of the experience rather than to the price, which comes later, for it is a *secondary* element. The latter is in fact not worth mentioning (nor clever), compared to the uniqueness of the experience.

Ultimately, it should be mentioned that this post, compared to the previous one, for example, features an interestingly lower amount of emoticons, which, additionally, do not appear between clauses or phrases, but just at the end of the composition, with a mere functional purpose. In other words, the emoticons here are not meant to stimulate the creation of an image, composed of the entities represented by the emoticons; conversely, the photograph and the pin are employed simply as *icons* – but less *emotional* – that replace text references and add some color and friendliness to the text. The familiar tone of the communication is enhanced by the presence of Netspeak colloquialism and inaccuracies, realized by informal discourse markers and phrases. Few examples can be found in the first sentence, a declarative ending with a series of dots, followed by an implicit rhetoric interrogative and a non-restrictive relative clause, which is not introduced by the comma. Finally, towards the end of the post, another unrequired but rhetorically effective discourse marker clause with suspended dots characterized the text's colloquiality. The tags and the hashtags, which accompany the composition and the final references, are few but very significant and targeted. As a matter of fact, the four keywords present in the tags refer to the spa company, which offers that specific service, whereas the final tag links to a Canadian tourism information center, which the Destination Canada travel agency might probably be in partnership with, in order to share advertising/visibility strategies. The center Outaouais, actually, aims at providing more information about the country and the possible activities; however, it points only to booking companies that tag its account in the post. The other two tags fairly credit the photographer and the model of the photo, which is legally mandatory in order to post others' pictures on Instagram. Many companies in fact, instead of hiring a professional photographer, cost- freely exploit high-quality user-generated-content, which consequently brings visibility to those users as well. Finally, the only hashtag employed coherently reproduces and restates the username of the travel company and targets the potential tourist who, looking for some fresh and valuable content about *exploring* Canada, will surely find the travel agency at issue. In the case his attention gets then caught, he will hopefully engage with the content and the company, and, on this account, he will provide more visibility and possibly profit, which account for the main aims of the contemporary, comprehensive digital marketing strategy.

#### 4. Summary of findings

This section aims to indicate and summarize the findings of the investigation that was carried out in this article, renewing the importance that should be devoted to this type of analysis and subject of study, i.e. multimodal promotional communication on the Instagram platform. With regards to the visual modes, the findings revealed that the Instagram platform layout was designed in order to foster the visual appeal and the user's activity and agency. This was achieved by means of a high degree of text granularity and clusters, which friendly prompted engagement with the content. For example, the logo, the written text and the images were the most salient pieces of information and created a coherent narrative. The role fulfilled by the image of prompting the imagination, therefore allowing the consumption of the intangible service, and subsequently inducing needs, positive attitudes and, finally, influencing the behavior, was achieved by means of visual tools such as the human presence, the conformation of the landscape, the shot frame, the color saturation and differentiation, the perspective and the information value distribution. However, the most effective device employed was the presence of human beings, together with the tourist gaze and indexical reference strategies, which allowed an identification with the represented participant and its situation.

On the other side, the investigation on meaning construction by means of language shed light on the different ways of perpetrating the same illocutionary persuasive force conveyed by images. For this purpose, various linguistic aspects were investigated from a multi-faceted point of view. First of all, Systemic Functional Linguistic analysis allowed the assessment of the deliberate presence of tourism discourse and genre choices in meaning and language construction. At the ideational level, material, mental and relational processes circumscribed the experience portrayed by the image and semantically added color, credibility to this ideal of



idyllic vacation and adventure, in contrast with the current condition. At the interpersonal level, the Mood analysis shifted the focus on the illocutionary forces provided by the subtle employment of different speech acts, along with varying degrees of modulation with modals and adverbs. Eventually, clause complex research helped frame a hybrid tourism genre, therefore being characterized by a shared communicative promotional purpose, with features mainly belonging to the website and the brochure and the institutional, commercial and informal genre families and new properties as well. The sentences tend in fact to be shorter, due to the immediateness proper of online language. Hypotactic relations, however, stay persistent, since this discourse is constructed, covertly spontaneous. Successively, the investigation on the tourism rhetoric devices led to the identification of storytelling and destination-description narratives, along with the suggestion of practical information to the users. Strangerhood and authenticity tropes were exploited by means of binary oppositions between the unspoilt, exotic, vibrant, relaxing and the predictable present. Additionally, ego-targeting techniques with pronouns and indexical references figured as well, in order to single out the viewer and connect him to the positive feelings evoked by the multimodal discourse. To reinforce this idea, syntactical patterns appear, such as imperatives, interrogatives and modals, together with the key word strategy.

Lastly, the exploration of the Social Media and marketing language established an interconnection between the presence of a friendly tone and strict marketing purposes. Daily instances of colloquialisms, inaccuracies and emoticons worked together with compelling, rhetorical questions and call-to-action imperatives in order to catch the attention, build long-lasting relationships and create needs. Furthermore, hashtags, tags and links served the purpose of targeting/segmenting the audience and connecting it to the content to the looked searched for, increasing therefore the visibility and the profit.

## **5. Conclusion and limitations of the study**

This article aimed to identify the effective uses and modalities of Instagram accounts in order to promote a tourism business. In view of this, the study focused on verifying the engagement and promotional purposes of travel agencies on Instagram, and on analyzing the specific and deliberate realizations of this communicational aim, both from a visual and a linguistic perspective. Furthermore, it provided a small investigation on the page layout, a third mode, in order to demonstrate how the visual design of the entire page and posts supplied the overall arrangement with a coherent and powerful meaning. Based solely on a qualitative review, some analysis was conducted on the different constituents of three posts, provided by three different travel agencies based on three different English-speaking countries. On the one hand, the visual analysis, which was carried out according to the visual design description adopted by Kress and van Leeuwen, managed to provide a detailed insight into the meaning conveyed by means of the picture, carefully chosen and supplied by the company after consideration. The linguistic analysis, on the other hand, was intended to investigate the meaning provided by the written part of the post from various points of view. In this respect, an example can be found in the observation of the different choices of verbs, subjects, constructions of the clause and of the illocutionary force. The SFL theory was elected due to its coherence with multimodal research. Moreover, it served the purpose of explaining how meaning is deliberately socially transmitted through specific choices in language construction. Additionally, a generic inquiry was carried out in order to discuss the phenomenon of generic hybridization and the distinct text structures employed to achieve the same communicational outcome.

Our study allowed therefore the application of the works of important academics such as Kress, Dann, Halliday and Francesconi to a new sub-domain of research of linguistic, economic and social fields, i.e. the Instagram platform. The complex interpretation and intertwining of deliberately selected theories, which derive from fields such as multimodal communication, advertising and tourism language, online and social network communication and marketing studies was designed in order to provide an updated examination of the contemporary communication, of its power and trends. Nonetheless, to better understand the implications of these results, future research should include the collection of a higher number of material and the implementation of scientific results, achievable by means of corpus analysis. This would supply the findings and their trend with more credibility. In addition, a more detailed marketing inquiry should be encompassed as well, in order to concretely demonstrate the effects, produced by a social marketing strategy, on the leads and the profits. In our opinion, consequently, both a qualitative and quantitative Search Engine and Search Optimization Marketing study would have to be conducted. Eventually, in the area of English Linguistics, further qualitative study could follow, along with some quantitative study. The implementations at issue would focus on either the promotional language of other social platforms and websites, or on Instagram user-

generated-content material, which is abundant on this social platform. Finally, a supplementary review on the different English varieties could turn out to be useful as well.

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