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PRAGMALINGUISTIC ELEMENTS IN TOURIST DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION

Nevenka Blažević

Aneta Stojić

University of Rijeka, Croatia¹

Abstract: Image has been an important topic in tourism research. It is one of the key factors in the travel selection process. The image of a tourist destination is the sum of all perceptions tourists and potential visitors hold of that destination. In tourist advertising materials it is represented through verbal and pictorial elements. The focus of this research is to find out pragmalinguistic elements in tourist destination image formation. This paper especially concentrates on some typical pragmalinguistic elements forming the image of Croatia as a tourist destination.

Key words: image of a tourist destination, language of tourism, pragmalinguistic elements, tourism advertising materials.

Sažetak: PRAGMALINGVISTIČKI ASPEKTI STVARANJA IMIDŽA TURISTIČKE DESTINACIJE. Imidž je značajan predmet istraživanja i jedan od ključnih čimbenika pri odabiru turističke destinacije. Imidž turističke destinacije predstavlja zbir percepcija koje potencijalni turisti imaju o dotičnoj destinaciji. U promidžbenim materijalima pri stvaranju imidža se koriste verbalni i slikovni elementi. Predmet ovog istraživanja su najčešći pragmalingvistički elementi koji se koriste u promidžbenim materijalima. Posebna pozornost posvećena je pragmalingvističkim elementima koji utječu na stvaranje imidža Hrvatske kao turističke destinacije.

Ključne riječi: imidž turističke destinacije, jezik turizma, pragmalingvistički elementi, turistički promidžbeni materijali.

INTRODUCTION

Destination image has an important influence on tourist's consumption behaviour. There are many factors which influence images of destinations. Therefore, in order to understand why tourists select certain destinations, it is necessary to identify the influencing factors and examine how people perceive and create mental images.

¹ Nevenka Blažević, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija, Croatia, Aneta Stojić, Lecturer, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Philosophy, Rijeka, Croatia.

In recent years linguistic research has shown an increasing sign of the author's involvement and of the recipient's response in specialized texts through the exploitation of rhetorical or discourse devices with a mainly persuasive purpose. Tourism advertising materials include various kinds of specialized texts which have a direct influence on destination image formation.

The main focus of this research is to find out pragmalinguistic elements in tourist destination image formation. The paper will look at the language choices favoured by tourist texts and the strategies they serve. Travel books, tourist destination brochures and web sites provide data for the analyses. This paper especially concentrates on some typical pragmalinguistic elements forming the image of Croatia as a tourist destination.

1. DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION

The image of a destination has been an important topic in tourism research. As one of the key factors in the travel selection process the image of a destination is an important topic for tourism marketers. The research has illustrated that destination images and tourist's purchase decisions are positively correlated (Woodside 1989). The investigation of destination image in tourism research has indicated that it does influence tourist behaviour (Pearce 1982). People are more likely to choose to visit destinations that have strong and positive images. This is primarily because the images that tourists have of destinations are based on their perceptions and perceptions are closely related to attitudes, motivation and consumption behaviour.

There are many definitions of destination image. After Crompton (1979) and Kotler et al (1994) an image may be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination. According to this definition, an image is formed when people develop beliefs, ideas, perceptions, or impressions about a product, place or person.

The formation of an image has been described as a mental construct developed by consumers on the basis of impressions chosen from a flood of information, which comes into being through a creative process in which these selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered (Reynolds 1965). The image of a tourist destination is the sum of all perceptions tourists and potential visitors hold of that destination. It is represented through verbal and pictorial elements.

According to Gartner (1989) destination image plays an important role in the decision of a consumer to visit a destination. It represents the consumer's expectation of the experiences to be gained at the destination.

Destination regions have to work increasingly hard to create or maintain a share of the tourism market. The success depends on how destination regions market their images and whether they are successful in persuading potential tourists that they will enjoy their holidays if they choose a particular destination.

Image is the result of a communication process. The communication of a desirable and realistic image of the tourism destination to potential tourists is crucial as nothing will convince potential tourists to visit a destination unless they possess a desirable image of that destination, and unless the marketing process is successful in attracting tourists through the creation of such images, the rest of the marketing process has been a waste of time and money.

Before a tourist selects a destination, he/she must be aware of the destination and have the interest and desire to visit it. Often consumers have images of destinations before they receive any promotional information about the destination. These may be based upon myths, stories, legends, impressions, and images communicated by family and friends. Thus, destination marketers have the difficult job of identifying, creating, altering, changing, or completely reinventing the destination's image. Knowing how people judge space and place, and upon which criteria they base these judgments, is extremely important for tourism marketers. Perceived images are dependent upon a number of different factors, such as mental and physical capacity, previous experiences and images and the environment in which the perception occurs.

The tourism industry is highly competitive, and tourism marketers must constantly review and revise their marketing goals, plans, strategies and images.

2. TOURISM ADVERTISING MATERIALS

Tourism advertising materials are used to communicate images of tourism destinations to potential tourists. These materials usually contain textual descriptions, pictures, maps, animation and video. Print advertisements include those in magazines, newspapers, tourism brochures and flyers. They are filled with textual descriptions, pictures, maps, lists of attractions, accommodations and restaurants. These elements, including design elements such as text font, page layout, and background colours, work together to create the overall image of the destination in the tourist's mind.

The predominant promotional form in destination marketing is the brochure, followed by Internet and multimedia CD-ROM. The brochure reaches the most potential customers, so many think that the "physical value" of an attractive brochure cannot be replaced by other forms of communication (Middleton 1990: 182). The most important purpose of the destination brochure is informing and promoting. It serves as a substitute for the destination until the moment of arrival in a tourist resort. The brochure should be easy to read and attractive. It contains not only a verbal message, but also pictures as a very strong means of communication.

The Internet is the newest and perhaps the most powerful tool available to tourism marketers. It has multimedia capabilities and, therefore, is a valuable device for creating images of tourism destinations. Tourism destination web sites may consist of pictures, videos, sounds, animations, graphics, maps and interactive maps, charts, text, games, and even programs, such as distance calculators and currency converters.

3. PRAGMALINGUISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE LANGUAGE OF TOURISM

3.1. The language of tourism

Tourism has a discourse of its own. It is a language which through static and moving pictures, written texts, audio-visual offerings and virtual reality attempts to persuade, lure and seduce millions of human beings and convert them from potential into actual clients. The language of tourism talks to them about the possible places they can visit and their attractions. Tourism and language are so connected that for Dann (2001) tourism is language.

In tourist discourse, the writer has to try to anticipate hypothetical reader's reactions. In the analysis of this interaction, the social dimension of the language chosen, affected by the target audience, and of the overall communication is central. Tourist texts, which belong mostly to advertising discourse, are defined as ideological discourse. Their performative force has to induce the message recipient to make the purchase by creating a correspondence between the object advertised and particular social values. The advertising text is therefore not a mere informative text, created to provide information about the qualities and features of a product, but the creator of magical objects able to make the dreams and hopes of its audience come true.

The language of tourism has its own techniques and registers which appear in advertising materials and create among others the image of a destination. The terms used in tourism advertising materials have informative and emotional function. Emotional function is usually expressed by adjectives. Adjectives, as well as the other lexical terms and patterns, should be chosen carefully, because each wrong word may cause negative consequences.

3.1.1. Techniques of the language of tourism

According to Dann (2001: 171) there are verbal and visual techniques of the language of tourism. Verbal techniques include comparison, key words, testimony, humour, languaging and ego-targeting. The characteristic of visual techniques is the pictorial use of colour, format, visual cliché and connotation procedures. There are some techniques which combine the verbal with the visual elements (temporal contrast, puzzles, collage).

Verbal techniques

One of the most frequent verbal techniques in promotional material is comparison. It is used in order to mollify the effects of strangeness. That is why the expression "*It looks like ...*" is very frequent in travel writing. This way strange, unknown place seems familiar to potential visitors. So, for instance St. Louis, the capital of Senegal, is said to be like an old town in Provence and Mopti is referred to as the Venice of Mali. (Dann, 2002: 172).

Great emphasis in promotional material lies on some key words. In every language and language variety, key words offer insight into the most important values and processes of a particular era, culture, society, social groups and professions. In this sense, concerning tourism, vocabulary can be regarded as a key to history, culture, tradition, etc. of a destination. "Key words gain their status within a given social context and lose their status with changed circumstances." (Fox 2004: 108).

Key words refer not only to the attributes of the destination, but also to the requirements of the potential tourist. The projection of favourable destination images by the tourism industry may be carried out by key words such as *romance, excitement, dream, pleasure, shopping, adventure* etc. Krippendorf (1987: 21) lists several key words as follows:

... deep blue ocean, white sand, sunset, palm trees, picturesque fishing and mountain villages, happy and laughing, colourfully dressed locals, turquoise green swimming pools, eternal sunshine, eternal snow, untouched landscapes, exciting nights ...

These words, called verbal clichés, lead on to a desire for change. Although the promises of brochures are rarely fulfilled, people will always long for new experiences. It is obvious, that there is no verbal cliché without an adjective.

The guides often use the first person singular or plural in order to give greater authenticity to the account. Personal pronouns are often strategically used to influence sender-receiver relationships. In tourist discourse, the writer has to try to anticipate his/her hypothetical reader's reactions. The use of passive voice is not recommended, as it suggests distancing from the tourist as a person (Tarlow 1996). Textual descriptions are rich in adjectives and adverbs.

In travel writing, especially in the domain of the gastronomy, real or fictional foreign words often appear. This is known as languaging (Potter, 1970: 90). Languaging means a special use of vocabulary for its own sake.

Visual techniques

It is well known that the language of tourism speaks through pictures and verbal messages. In promotional literature pictures usually take up over twice as much space as verbal messages. The predominant colours are blue and white. The sea is always intensive azure, the sky bright blue and the sand white. Tour operators are aware of the power of colours and they exploit it to the maximum.

Dilley (1986: 60) finds that brochures allocate approximately 32 % of their space to landscapes, 36 % to culture and 16 % each to recreation and services. He identifies nature, sports, food, culture and shopping as key themes in promotional materials directed at Japanese tourists and Selwyn (1993) stresses the importance of sights, beaches, food and hotels for British tourists.

The image of a tourist destination is determined by visual clichés like blue sea, palm trees, smiles on the faces of locals and sunshine. Sunshine is the most used visual cliché in brochures which became synonymous with a virtual guarantee of good weather.

Laurent (1967) who examines sunshine in the language of brochures finds that the sun is everywhere. It represents a source of happiness and the good life. Above all, the sun promises warmth, freedom and pleasure, it guarantees pure hedonism, provides well being and is a source of health.

3.1.2. Registers of the language of tourism

The wide variety of destinations and the sheer diversity of activities are increasingly evident in tourist promotion. The destinations range from the traditional to the more exotic. Variety also extends to types of tourist accommodation and food and drink. According to this variety there are several registers of the language of tourism. As the most frequent registers Dann (2001: 218) notes the register of nostalgia tourism, the register of health tourism, the register of food and drink and the register of health tourism.

The register of nostalgia tourism

As Cohen (1996: 13) observes, although tourism represents travel through space, it is frequently also a journey through time, from the everyday present into the past and more rarely, the future. Since the contemporary word is in many respects

materialistic, many people are longing for far off times. So nostalgia is a popular theme in the language of tourism. An accentuation of time is manifested in an attitude towards all that is old (archaeological sites, monuments, souvenirs etc.).

There is a type of promotional material that refers to time as standing still, to eternal time (Krippendorf, 1987: 21). In travel books the present tense is used as a strategy for reinforcing timelessness. However there are more promotional materials which use the past as far superior to the present.

Promotional discourse of nostalgia is evident in the use of syntagmas like "romantic old town", "romantic hotel", "points of historical interest" etc. Nostalgic transportation forms such as railway (Orient Express), steamboat and coach are frequently promoted.

Tours and attractions can also be built around famous personalities from the past as follows:

"In 1844 the powerful merchant Higinio von Scarpa erected Villa Angiolina, with beautiful green and a lavish park around it, visited by distinguished guests - the Croatian Viceroy Josip Jelacic, the Austrian empress Maria Anna - which soon made Opatija a popular excursion destination of the inhabitants from Rijeka, then of the Italians and Austrians."(www.htz.hr)

Even some tourist events are promoted through the register of nostalgia:

"Very famous are also Dubrovnik carnival festivities, so-called Dubrovnik "karnevo" (local variant of the word "carnival"), held ever since the early Middle Ages, when they were brought from the neighbouring Italy. Another important event is the Feast Day of St. Blaise, also the Day of Dubrovnik (3rd of February)". (www.htz.hr)

Contemporary tourists like myths, which are frequently used in the publicity of leisure and travel and represent a form of infantilism. Cocker (1992: 257) states that travel books, in fact, frequently dramatise a return to the innocence and paradise of childhood.

The register of health tourism

Many of today's fashionable resorts began as spas. Today many hotels have wellness centres, which attract guests all the year round by promoting their health-care services and facilities in addition to its regular tourist amenities. Health tourism has developed a register of its own. Promotional materials offer various treatments, baths and massages (heat sauna, aromatherapy, alphasage, thai massage etc.). There is also evident the specialized vocabulary of health tourism, which is not easy to decipher. Who understands for example the meaning of "bindi", "lomi lomi", "shiatsy", "watsy" "kosoburo" (Dann, 2001: 232)? These and other terms are frequently used in brochures without explanation in order to lure the potential tourists into the mystery of the spa offer.

The register of food and drink

For many tourists, restaurants, cafes, pubs and bistros of tourist destinations are as attractive as world famous sights. The research has acknowledged the importance of the gastronomic identity for the success of the tourist destination (Sparks et al 2000; Hjalagar and Richards 2002 and others.) Sparks et al. (2003) revealed that for about 60 % of respondents restaurants are an important factor, and for 20 % a very important factor of selecting a destination. As the local cuisine is becoming an important factor

of tourist satisfaction, tourist destinations should be promoted gastronomically through culinary attractions.

The register of food and drink, or “*gastrospeak*” (Fox, 2004) is incorporated in menus, cookery books, mass media, brochures etc. The characteristic of this discourse is a tendency to over-use foreign words without further explanations assuming the readers are thoroughly acquainted with these terms. Foreign words serve to heighten the exotic qualities of a dish. To be familiar with this esoteric vocabulary is status fulfilling, too.

The register of eco-tourism

The travel industry has moved its field of interests to the countryside with beautiful landscapes and interesting old cultures. In contrast to the dirt, noise, work, rush and pollution of everyday metropolitan life the media create a holiday mood of freedom, serenity and pleasure referring to peace, relaxation, romanticism and a return to nature and origins. The countryside represents the roots of ancient hospitality and truth that people dreamt about and to which they returned.

Hawkins (1994:261) notes that eco-tourism is one of the fastest growing trends in the worldwide tourism industry. The attention of the potential eco-tourists is captured through the tour names, unspoilt nature and little farmhouses far away from crowded beaches. Key words used in brochures to attract the eco-tourists are “*nature*”, “*natural*”, “*unspoiled*” and “*undisturbed*”.

4. PRAGMALINGUISTIC ELEMENTS FORMING THE DESTINATION IMAGE OF CROATIA

Croatia as a tourism destination is becoming more and more popular among foreign tourists. As a young country it is forming a recognizable image in order to attract new target groups all the year round and not only during the two summer months.

Observer (November 24, 2002) describes Croatia as follows:

“Croatia looks set to be Europe’s hottest new tourism destination with 20 UK tour operators, including Abercrombie and Kent and Simply Travel, starting to sell holidays there next year. Once a Mecca for low-cost package holidays when it was part of the former Yugoslavia, the country is reinventing itself as an upmarket destination. Croatia maintains its old Mediterranean style. It was a package-holiday “sun, sea and sand” destination in the 1960s, Seventies and Eighties and will not return to the previous “mass market” incarnation. Croatia is one of the very few places left on the Continent whose coastline and country remains unspoiled by overbuilding and intensive tourism.

Croatia combines the best of other Mediterranean countries - Tuscan style farmhouses in the north, secluded bays, small family-run hotels and friendly hospitality,’ says Ben Blacker of Simply Travel, which launched its first Croatia brochure last week.

As Catherine Crone, managing director of Headwater Holidays says: ‘Our customers have been asking us to include Croatia. It combines relatively easy walking, coastal scenery and very high-value culture. With its sublime stretch of Adriatic coast, Croatia has long been regarded as one of the most beautiful parts of Europe. Despite the tragedy of war, its charms remain largely intact; most of the tourist areas have been lovingly recreated.’

This article, like lots of them, proves that Croatia, as a new tourist destination, successfully builds its image. In the past it generally put emphasis on mass tourism based on natural beauties, sea and climate and was not a recognizable destination on a tourism map. Therefore it was necessary to rebuild the image of Croatia which has been realised through implementing ecological aspects and culture.

There are various verbal clichés used in Croatian promotional material. The most frequent are: *peaceful country, untouched nature, crystal-clear sea, unspoiled fishing villages, small Dalmatian towns, lush islands and islets, rich cultural heritage.*

Verbal clichés can be very powerful image creators when they are used often enough in advertising materials. Adjectives are an obligatory part of the verbal clichés. They have not only a descriptive, but also an emotional function.

In Eyewitness travel guide (2003) Croatia is “*a stunningly beautiful country*”, “*a fascinating country with indented coastline fringed with lovely islands*”. “*The coast is spectacular and the towns and cities are fascinating. Croatia is indeed unique, not only for its crystal clear, clean blue sea, but also for a thousand years of different cultures that have replaced each other and sometimes assimilated in these areas.*”

In the process of revival of Croatian tourism great emphasis has been put on cultural information as a part of promotional activities. The concept of culture is expressed through the following key words: *ethnic and national heritage, tradition, historic sights, festivals, events and gastronomy.*

As mentioned, the most frequent verbal technique in promotional material is comparison, which is used in order to mollify the effects of strangeness. This way strange, unknown place seems familiar to potential visitors. So, for instance, Opatija is in tourist brochures and on web pages often compared with Nice, and Dubrovnik with Athens:

“*Opatija, often called the Nice of the Adriatic, is one of the most popular tourist resorts in Croatia and a place with the longest tourist tradition on the eastern coast of the Adriatic.*”

(www. htz.hr)

“*...Dubrovnik, the Croatian Athens, as people used to call it, was among the most prosperous towns on the Mediterranean.*” (Croatia, 2004: 178)

As many people are longing for good old times, the register of nostalgia appears in many texts. In the process of image building its contribution can be very precious. Nearby all descriptions of tourist destinations in brochures begin with their history:

“*Poreč was a Roman town (Colonia Julia Parentium) which, after centuries of splendour, was sacked by the Goths and ...* (Croatia, Eyewitness Travel Guide: 51)

“*The old town has been rebuilt several times, but retains the look and feel of an ancient Mediterranean city.* (Oliver, 171)

“*On an isolated hill, among flourishing vineyards, stands Buje, the ancient Roman settlement of Bullea.*” (Croatia, Eyewitness Travel Guide: 50)

“*Opatija is one of the most popular tourist resorts in Croatia and a place with the longest tourist tradition on the eastern coast of the Adriatic.*” (www. htz.hr)

Ecological aspects of a destination are emphasized, especially through adjectives like natural, unspoiled, undisturbed, clean etc.:

“*The Brijuni islands are covered with lush vegetation, much of it undisturbed by human habitation.* (Croatia, Eyewitness Travel Guide: 56)

“*Nature is left undisturbed on these islands, with woods of pine ...*” (Croatia, Eyewitness Travel Guide: 135)

“*Adriatic coast is among the cleanest in the world.*” (Oliver: 26)

“*There are many retreats of untouched nature...*” (Nazor, 2004: 6)

Many resorts and hotels on the Croatian coast and in the inland advertise their health facilities to tourists. The term *wellness* is very popular nowadays and has replaced a lot of terms creating the register of health tourism. Although the meaning of this term is not so transparent, its power in the process of the image formation is very respectable. This word sounds well and everybody associates it with *wellbeing*. In this word and in many terms belonging to the register of health tourism there is a mystery which attracts potential guests.

Hotel Ambassador in Opatija offers on its web site a program for stress reduction which, among others, includes: *traditional Chinese medicine diagnosis, acupuncture, acupressure, laser acupuncture, electro acupuncture, cupping, moxibustion, magneto therapy, bio energy treatments, crystal therapy and aroma therapy*. There is no explanation of any term used, although some of them are not familiar to potential guests. Through this terminology the advertisers attempt to lure the guests and convert them from potential into actual clients. "Come and enjoy it! When you come, you will see what it means!" is the message sent through these words.

The image of Croatia has been formed through its cuisine, too. Describing it, some authors of promotional material compare it with Italian and Austro-Hungarian in order to mollify the effects of strangeness. On the web site of the Croatian National Tourism Board, as the most important internet information source about Croatia, there is a text about Croatian cuisine which gives some general information about it. A reader can find out that the Croatian cuisine is heterogeneous and therefore known as "the cuisine of regions", and that it was influenced by neighbouring countries. This description does not contain any information which might contribute to the image building of Croatia. On the most web pages *čevapčići, ražnjići, pljeskavica* and *burek* have been used as key words representing Croatian cuisine. Millions of tourists know pretty well what gastronomic terms are typically for Italian, Spanish, Greek or Turkish cuisine, but do not have any idea of what constitutes Croatia's national cuisine.

The research has shown (Fox, 2004), that gastronomic informativeness of Croatian destination brochures is quite low and that Croatia has no national gastronomic identity. One of the solutions, according to Fox (2004), might be creating symbols and "gastrospeak" related to Croatian gastronomic heritage. Croatian marketers should make more efforts in order to point out some domestic dishes, which might be the image creators as well. Promotional materials should relate destinations to their gastronomic tradition, listing typical names and ingredients of local dishes and restaurants serving local food. Fox (2004) points out, that the great part of Jamie Oliver's planetary success can be ascribed to his use of "gastrospeak". He skilfully uses some specific lexical terms, verbal clichés, metaphors and comparison, which turned out to be his powerful image creators. This example shows that pragmalinguistic elements can be very powerful image creator.

New brochures published abroad and in Croatia represent Croatian cuisine in new light. The stress has been laid on Croatian traditional dishes (*seafood, grilled fish, dalmatinski pršut, paški sir, sarma, rožata* etc.) their ingredients and preparation art. *Čevapčići, ražnjići, pljeskavica* and *burek* as simple, cheap, popular and well known dishes did not disappear, but they have not been used as the most important key words representing Croatian cuisine. Through brochures Croatia has been creating its own gastronomic identity.

5. CONCLUSION

Destination regions have to work increasingly hard to create or maintain a share of the tourism market. Their success depends on how they market their images. The image building of a tourist destination is a very complex and a long lasting process. It has been realized to a great extent through the language as the most important means of communication. The power of the language in tourism is immeasurable. Speaking through pictures and verbal messages, the language of tourism attempts to seduce millions of people into becoming tourists and to control their attitudes and behaviour. Pragmalinguistic elements mentioned in this paper are a powerful means of the image formation in tourism.

Through new advertising materials Croatia builds successfully its image as a tourist destination. The power of language can attract the tourists, but it can not convince them to come again. They will come again and recommend the destination they visited only if their expectations come true. The image building through language is only the first step in this process.

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