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Communicating Sustainable Tourism in English and Italian: A Contrastive Analysis

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ABSTRACT – Sustainable tourism has become a popular field of research over the last decades; yet, while acknowledging that sustainable tourism requires communication strategies different from those of mainstream tourism, scholars have paid little attention to this area of language. Based on two parallel corpora, this study explores the discursive representation of sustainable tourism in web communication in English and in Italian. The methodological framework adopted is that of Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies. The analysis suggests that the Italian representation of sustainable tourism is characterized by a distant stance towards readers and relies on a strong polarization between 'good' tourism and 'bad' tourism. Communication in English instead relies on proximal person deixis and on the creation of value around responsible tourism by means of factual information rather than on mere evaluation.

KEYWORDS – sustainable tourism; tourism discourse; discourse analysis; corpus linguistics; semantic prosody.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become a popular field of research over the last decades, as a consequence of the increasing awareness towards sustainability at a global level. International organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union and the World Tourism Organization are deeply engaged in the challenge of fostering a sustainable form of tourism that wisely uses and conserves resources in order to maintain their long-term viability.

During the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which took place in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, the Assembly strongly expressed its support to sustainable tourism, as able to

> promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity, and improve the

> welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole. (United Nations 2012, 25)

More significantly, the Sustainable Development Agenda of the United Nations has set among its goal targets, to be achieved by 2030, "to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products" (United Nations 2015, 24). To that end, the WTO awards the contribution of public and private institutions that contribute to the development of a responsible and sustainable tourism. Many organizations and associations also work at a national level, such as the Italian Association for Responsible Tourism (AITR), a non-profit and non-governmental association that aims at promoting responsible, sustainable and ethical tourism.

In parallel to its large spread, communication of sustainable tourism has established a discursive specificity of its own (Allen 2016; Tölkes 2018). However, against a plethora of studies on tourism discourse, those on the language of sustainable tourism are relatively rare (Argondizzo and Ruffolo 2012; Mihalic 2016; Malavasi 2017).

The present study aims at partly filling this gap by analysing the discursive representation of sustainable tourism in English and Italian web communication. To that end, two parallel corpora of Web texts on sustainable tourism have been compiled, enabling comparative and contrastive observation of the discursive strategies put in place by a multifaceted authorship of travel operators, institutions, bloggers and other professionals involved in the field.

The corpora have been explored with a view to investigating specific linguistic features, such as evaluation, semantic prosody, conceptual metaphors, deictic style and author stance. Starting from a corpus-driven perspective, thus relying exclusively on data and refraining from any prefabricated view on the texts under scrutiny (Baker 2006), the present study also attempts at identifying discursive traits that are peculiar of the language of sustainable tourism with respect to those already acknowledged for tourism discourse.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The term "sustainable tourism" first appeared in academic settings in the early '90s: its birth can be ideally dated to 1993, when the first issue of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* was published (Hunter 2002, 3; Weaver 2006, 10; Dodds and Butler 2009, 43). From then on, the concept of an alternative to mainstream

tourism has been given many names, such as "soft, quality, eco, responsible, minimum impact tourism, green and ethical tourism" (Mihalic 2016, 461). Still, the most used denominations are "sustainable tourism" and "responsible tourism". About the actual and academic co-existence of these terms, Mihalic anecdotally noted that, in early October 2013, on the same days, two conferences were held on the issue: one, in Istanbul, having "sustainability" in its title and the other, in Barcelona, discussing "responsible tourism" (462).

Even though the distinction might appear fuzzy, "sustainable tourism" and "responsible tourism" are not synonyms: Mihalic stresses that, while sustainability is a theoretical notion, responsibility deals more with practice and is understood as appropriate action. Scholars have also highlighted that "responsible tourism" mostly occurs when questions of ethical and moral responsibility are brought to the fore (Fennell 2006; Blackstock *et al.* 2008; Bramwell *et al.* 2008). After criticizing this "never-ending search for new tourism terms" (2016, 462), Mihalic ended up in the same pitfall, coining the option "responsustable tourism" (469), which should merge the words responsible (behaviour-based) and sustainable (concept and value-based), but actually adds to the already flooded list of nomenclatures in use.

As it stands, sustainable/responsible tourism does not need further terminological disputation, but would deserve more attention in terms of description of its discursive specificity. Argondizzo and Ruffolo (2012) elaborated on the use of the terms 'nature' and 'natural' in travel promotion texts which aim to attract potential tourists who care for the well-being of the environment. Their study, based on a corpus of English language travel promotion texts, shows that, on the one hand, the image of nature illustrated in these texts reinforces the social values of nature protection and conservation, but, on the other, it also serves blunt marketing purposes. Similarly, Malavasi (2017, 374) argued for an "extremely persuasive" nature in the web-communication of sustainable tourism. Among Malavasi's findings, there is also the frequent recourse to the you-form, serving the ego-targeting function (Dann 1996).

From the perspective of professional communication, sustainable tourism should rely on an accurate combination of meaningful content, credibility, clarity, emotions, consistency and an effective message design, possibly adapted to the type of audience (Allen 2016). A motivating and personally resonating message is needed in consideration of the ethical aspects involved in sustainable tourism: according to Allen, individuals may feel overwhelmed by ethical dilemmas and tend to ignore them "in order to reduce the stress associated with the decision" (2016, 15).

Previous research has shown the effectiveness of emotionally charged communication for the promotion of sustainable tourism. According to a study carried out by Wehrli *et al.* (2014), emotional feelings play a fundamental role because the benefits of sustainable tourism are often not directly tangible for the consumer. It is therefore important to increase the emotionality of the text through evaluative language and narratives positively involving the consumer. However, the study also shows the interest of some segments of consumers, namely those who have already experienced sustainable tourism products, for more objective texts, in which they can find basic information, details on sites and activities, etc. Other studies confirmed that consumers already interested in sustainability prefer detailed information on location sustainability performance, while other consumers who do not have any particular interest in sustainability in their daily lives are persuaded by emotional communication (Vinzenz *et al.* 2018).

There are also different views on how to present the benefits deriving from a sustainable choice. Some authors suggest to engage tourists focusing on their own capacities for change and emphasizing their choice of doing things together for a collective benefit (Font and McCabe 2017). According to others, instead, tourists respond more positively when personal benefits are emphasized (Tölkes 2018). This disagreement can be interpreted as the result of the cultural divide between individualistic and collectivistic societies (Hofstede 2013). Studies have shown the potential of focusing on altruistic messages in a collectivistic country in comparison with the individualistic messages typically shown to be more persuasive in Western countries (Shahzalal and Font 2017). This confirms the importance of approaching the communication of sustainable tourism also from a cultural perspective.

In the frame of the present study, in particular, it appears interesting to ascertain whether the corpora under scrutiny fit to the paradigm outlined above. The Italian corpus might be considered as the expression of a mainly Western culture and therefore of an individualistic society, while the English corpus – where English is used as a lingua franca – could be expected to reflect a broader society and represent the values of both Western and Eastern cultures.

3. Materials and methods

The study is based on two parallel corpora: the ST ENG corpus, consisting of English web texts on sustainable tourism, and the TS ITA corpus, made

up of Italian web texts on the same topic ('turismo sostenibile'). The analysis combines a corpus linguistic approach with qualitative discourse analysis, in line with the Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies tradition, which entails the investigation of discourse "integrating into the analysis, where appropriate, techniques and tools developed within corpus linguistics" (Partington 2010, 88; see also Baker *et al.* 2008;Taylor and Marchi 2018)

Both corpora were built with the aid of Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2004; Kilgarriff *et al.* 2014), as among the options offered by this platform is that of compiling corpora of texts available on the Web.

In the case of the ST ENG corpus three seed words (phrases) were inserted, which define the topics of the corpus – 'sustainable tourism', 'responsible tourism' and 'sustainability' – and the web search option was used to make Sketch Engine find suitable texts using an Internet search engine. Sketch Engine downloads the pages, removes advertising, navigation menus and other linguistically irrelevant content and processes the texts into a corpus. A maximum of 100 URLs per search was set. No limitation to specific websites was given.

The same procedure was adopted to build the TS ITA corpus. The seed words inserted into Sketch Engine to define the topic of the corpus were the same as those provided to build the ST ENG corpus, translated into Italian: 'turismo sostenibile', 'turismo responsabile' and 'sostenibilità'. By so doing, an Italian corpus mirroring the ST ENG corpus was obtained, enabling parallel observation of discourses about sustainable tourism in English and Italian.

The ST ENG corpus totals 139,187 words. The TS ITA corpus, totalling 117,971 words, is smaller, but lexically richer: it provides more than 13 thousand different word types (9,400 in the ST ENG corpus) and a STTR value of 47.83 (41.33 in the ST corpus). Moreover, sentences are longer: their mean length is 26.93 words (21.64 in the ST ENG corpus) (see *Tab. 1*).

Table 1. General statistics on the corpora under scrutiny

Word Tokens	Word Types	TTR	STTR	Mean Sentence Length
ST ENG CORPUS				
139,187	9,427	7.03	41.33	21.64
TS ITA CORPUS				
117,971	13,739	12	47.83	26.93

An inherent limit of the procedure followed to compile the corpora relies on the random selection of texts performed by Sketch Engine, which does not enable to define *a priori* the typology of texts to collect, especially with regard to the authorship. Therefore, this latter aspect was ascertained *a posteriori*, through manual observation. Three main typologies were identified, in both English and Italian corpora: (a) texts by travel operators and companies active in the field of sustainable tourism; (b) texts by non-profit organizations and national agencies promoting sustainable tourism; (c) blogs on sustainable tourism.

All the texts contained in the corpora were uploaded to the linguistic analysis software Wordsmith Tools (Scott 2016): after creating two sets of wordlists, the concordances of the most frequent lexical items were plotted, so as to obtain the main clusters in which they featured. Then the extended co-text of these clusters was analysed, with a view to investigating the prevailing semantic prosody associated with the examples, in order to shed light on the aura of meaning with which each of the selected word forms is "imbued by its collocates" (Louw 1993, 157).

Regarded by Louw (2000, 57) as "a form of meaning which is established through the proximity of a consistent series of collocates", semantic prosody expresses the speaker/writer attitude and evaluation. In particular, the idea of semantic prosody as "the spreading of connotational colouring beyond single word boundaries" (Partington 1998, 68) appeared crucial to identify the stance of writers towards sustainable tourism in the corpora.

Both corpora have also been explored with regard to the relation between semantic prosody and conceptual metaphors, as Louw claims that metaphor is often enlisted "both to prepare us for the advent of a semantic prosody and to maintain its intensity once it appeared" (Louw 1993, 172). As pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) metaphors involve a relationship between a source domain, i.e. the source of the literal meaning of the metaphorical expression, and a target domain, i.e. the domain of the experience actually being described by the metaphor. For example, in the case of the Lakoffian formula 'time is money', when TIME (the target domain) is compared to MONEY (the source domain), time is construed as a valuable asset possessed by human beings and 'used' in the same way as money is. The conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson served as a framework for the present study and guided the analysis of figurative language related to sustainable tourism.

A further element of interest in the analysis was the deictic style and the stance adopted by the authorship. Person deixis localizes an entity in relation to the position of the producer and/or the receiver of communication (Green 2008). First and second person pronouns typically refer to the speaking and hearing speech participants, whereas third person pronouns designate the non-speech or narrated participant. According to Lyons (1983) the active participants are the speaker and the addressee, whereas the third person is not an active participant in the speech act. Specific focus was therefore placed on the lexical and interpersonal features deployed to discursively 'situate' and position the authorship in addressing the audience, with a view to identifying linguistic evidence of distance or proximity between them.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. ST ENG corpus

As a first step, a list of the most frequent lexical words and terms in the ST ENG corpus was derived, e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives and lexical adverbs. In order to compare data between the two sub-corpora, which have different size, occurrences were normalised per thousand words.

The *Tables 2* and *3* give us an idea of what the ST ENG corpus is *about*. There are words about travelling (*tourism*, *travel*, *tourists*), about the environment (*environmental*, *environment*, *water*, *waste*, *energy*), words belonging to the economic field (*sustainable*, *development*, *economic*, *business*, *enterprise*, *management*) and words for localizing and identifying places (*local*, *south*, *Africa*, *national*, *international*). Not surprisingly, after adding the frequencies of *tourism*, *tourists*, *tourist*, *tour* and all other forms of the same stem, TOUR results the most frequent lemma in the corpus.

Responsible is the most frequent adjective in the corpus and, quantitatively speaking, the phrase *responsible tourism* recurs more often than *sustainable tourism*, with 716 and 338 occurrences, respectively. As outlined in § 2, 'responsible tourism' and 'sustainable tourism' are not synonyms: in broad terms, responsible tourism has an ethical connotation, while sustainable tourism is mostly concerned with the socio-economic aspects of travelling.

Table 2. Top lexical words in the ST ENG corpus

TOP 20 LEXICAL ITEMS			
N	Word	Raw Freq	PT Norm Freq
1	tourism	3,009	21.62
2	responsible	966	6.94
3	local	903	6.49
4	sustainable	700	5.03
5	development	591	4.25
6	south	562	4.04
7	africa	530	3.81
8	environmental	503	3.61
9	water	385	2.77
10	community	376	2.70
11	people	344	2.47
12	travel	331	2.38
13	economic	304	2.18
14	business	302	2.17
15	social	285	2.05
16	environment	284	2.04
17	enterprise	283	2.03
18	sustainability	269	1.93
19	waste	269	1.93
20	communities	265	1.90

Table 3. Top lemmas in the ST ENG corpus

TOP 10 LEXICAL LEMMAS			
N	Lemma	Raw Freq	PT Norm Freq
1	TOUR	3,560	25.58
2	RESPONSIBLE	1,228	8.82
3	SUSTAIN	1,025	7.36
4	LOCAL	989	7.11

5	ENVIRONMENT	939	6.75
6	DEVELOP	866	6.22
7	SOUTH	643	4.62
8	COMMUNITY	641	4.61
9	TRAVEL	475	3.41
10	ECONOMY	421	3.02

By examining the collocates surrounding the word *tourism* we begin to take into account the context that the word is placed in. Given that defining it as *responsible* is the main way to identify the relevant approach to tourism described in the corpus, there are many other terms adopted to highlight positive ethical aspects involved with it: *alternative*, *nature-based*, *cultural*, *environmentally friendly or eco-friendly*, *pro-poor* and *transformative*. We might expect that the positive pole represented by *responsible tourism* is contrasted to a *not responsible* one or that, at least, negative light is shed on commercial or unethical approaches to tourism: that might be a way for the writer to take a stance against market-oriented practices and indirectly praise their own approach. Yet, we find only a few occurrences of expressions negatively evaluating traditional tourism, i.e. *mass tourism* (6 occurrences), *large-scale tourism* (2), *unsustainable tourism* (2), *uncontrolled* (1). In just one case direct reference is made to *sex-based tourism*.

An examination of three-word clusters reveals some of the most common patterns: *responsible tourism manual* (143 occurrences) and *responsible tourism guidelines* (75). The clusters hint at a prescriptive trait characterizing these texts, which often call upon acknowledged and authoritative sources of information, or propose themselves as accredited sources:

1. In summary, *the guidelines and this manual* provide tools with which people and organisations in the travel and tourism sector can enhance their business activities […].

Nonetheless, writers present responsible tourism as a valuable option for travellers and companies, not as an obligation: adhering to sustainable tourism practices is ethically recommendable, but the final choice is up to single organizations and individuals (example 2).

2. Sustainability is the goal, a goal which can only be achieved by people taking responsibility together to achieve it.

The language adopted in the ST ENG corpus does not result particularly rich in figurative terms: only a few examples of metaphors were retrieved and these rest on the conventional imagery related to tourism. For instance, the image of an invasion is exploited to critically evoke the target domain of mass-tourism practices (example 3), while, on the positive side, responsible tourism locations may be described as a 'paradise' (4). Good practices are indirectly praised and defined as the 'heart and soul' of the local economic system, stressing once again the profitable effects of responsible tourism and encouraging its adoption (5).

3. Tourism operators should be sensitive to potential impacts, such as loss of privacy, prevention of access to culturally significant places, *invasion* of sacred sites or the demeaning of cultural ceremonies, which can result from tourism.

4. the impact of cruise ships on the local islanders in beautiful Vanuatu, an idyllic and unspoilt *paradise* in the South Pacific.

5. [Agritourism] is the *heart and soul* of rural economic development.

The limited presence of metaphors seems to confirm that texts in the ST ENG corpus are mainly informative and less evaluative than expected. Positive evaluation is a common feature of Tourism Discourse (Mocini 2013), but in the present case authors tend more to value the potential of sustainable tourism practices by showing concrete, successful examples instead of unconditionally praising them. The persuasive aim obviously present in these texts is therefore achieved in an implicit and indirect way.

The high frequency of personal pronouns in the corpus (*it*, *you*, *they*, *we* and *I*, totalling 1,424 overall occurrences) leads us to question the positioning of the writer in the texts. As pointed out in the previous section, the authorship of the texts collected in both corpora is mostly to be identified with travel operators and organizations operating in the field of sustainable tourism, more seldom with bloggers.

With 504 occurrences, *it* is the most frequent personal pronoun in the corpus. A manual observation of concordances shows that the pronoun is seldom used as a means for third-person self-reference (10 cases); most occurrences rather highlight the use of *it* as an anaphoric pronoun referring back to a textual antecedent, which is often to be identified in *responsible tourism* or, more generally, *tourism*.

6. *Tourism* can involve primary transportation to the general location, local transportation, accommodations, entertainment, recreation, nourishment

and shopping. *It* can be related to travel for leisure, business and what is called VFR (visiting friends and relatives).

The most frequent three-word cluster around *it* is *it is important* (17 occurrences): this reinforces the idea of texts where the instructional component plays a relevant role. As an engagement marker, the locution *it is important* is used to create "a set of shared, taken-for-granted purposes and understandings" (Hyland 2005, 82). We are therefore in front of texts that aim at educating readership and disseminating good practices.

You is the second personal pronoun in the frequency list (301 occurrences). Occurrences point to a first typology of direct addressing, quantitatively more relevant, related to suggestions and instructional content: the writer provides users with useful information on how to set up a business in the field of sustainable tourism.

7. *You* can set up a management board if *you* wish to involve local stakeholders in the planning and management of your enterprise.

A second typology is that of enacting engagement of readers by inviting them to have their say, according to the ego-targeting function (Dann 1996), through which web-readers are singled out of the crowd.

8. We're keen to hear your thoughts; do *you* consider yourself a responsible traveller? In what ways are *you* a responsible traveller? If before reading this blog *you* weren't a responsible traveller, will *you* now try to make conscious decisions to make sure *you*'re helping sustain responsible travel? Let us know in the comment section below!

The we-perspective is relevant in the corpus, with 201 occurrences of the personal pronoun *we* and 134 of the possessive adjective *our*. However, most occurrences of *we* and *our* – about 70% – are receiver-excluding (Poppi 2012), i.e. they only include the writer's identity as in:

9. Take part in *our* way of life and discover the small things that make *us* so special.

More seldom the ST ENG corpus provides instances of inclusive *we*, *us* and *our* which involve the recipients more directly in the communication, as in:

10. *We* are all responsible for producing carbon emissions: when *we* take a flight to go on holiday, when *we* drive, and when *we* use electricity.

On the whole, the deictic style adopted by the authorship – be it a multiple and collective one, as in the case of web texts written by travel operators, or a single one, as for tourism bloggers – comes across as proximal to the readers and aims at establishing a dialogic relationship with the audience. The dialogue involves two groups of participants: the *we*-group, to be identified with an authoritative source disseminating valuable information on sustainable tourism, and the *you*-group, represented as a proactive community of responsible tourists/consumers, often invited to join the conversation and share their unique experience.

4.2. TS ITA corpus

Considering the most frequent lexical words and terms in the TS ITA corpus, not surprisingly we find again that the Italian word for tourism, *turismo* is the most frequent noun (see *Tabs. 4* and *5*). We also find many other words belonging to the same lemma, such as *turistica*, *turisti*, etc, which all together total 2,247 words.

Secondly, a series of words related to economy appear in the list, such as *sostenibile*, *sviluppo*, *attività* and *servizi*. A third category of words identifies places and communities (*territorio*, *comunità*, *locali*, *locale*); many terms also relate to the environment (*ambiente*, *ambientale*).

Table 4. Top lexical words in the TS ITA corpus

TOP 20 LEXICAL ITEMS			
N	Word	Raw Freq	PT Norm Freq
1	turismo	1.260	10.68
2	sostenibile	571	4.84
3	sviluppo	416	3.53
4	turistica	257	2.18
5	attività	232	1.97
6	turistico	232	1.97
7	responsabile	226	1.92
8	sostenibilità	217	1.84
9	territorio	215	1.82
10	culturale	205	1.74

11	ambiente	204	1.73
12	comunità	203	1.72
13	locali	178	1.51
14	ambientale	176	1.49
15	modo	168	1.42
16	settore	165	1.40
17	turisti	164	1.39
18	locale	161	1.36
19	servizi	158	1.34
20	parco	155	1.31

Table 5. Top lemmas in the TS ITA corpus

TOP 10 LEXICAL LEMMAS			
N	Lemma	Raw Freq	PT Norm Freq
1	TURISMO	2,247	19.05
2	SOSTENERE	926	7.85
3	CULTURA	509	4.31
4	SVILUPPARE	492	4.17
5	AMBIENTE	490	4.15
6	LOCALE	422	3.58
7	VIAGGIARE	413	3.50
8	SOCIALE	336	2.85
9	ECONOMIA	333	2.82
10	RESPONSABILE	316	2.68

Sostenibile (sustainable) is the most frequent adjective in the corpus and, quantitatively speaking, *turismo sostenibile* (413 occurrences) is more often used than *turismo responsabile* (203). This result is opposite to that observed in the ST ENG corpus, where *responsible tourism* was quantitatively more relevant than *sustainable tourism*.

It is also worth noting that *turismo di massa* (*mass tourism*) – used as a negative pole contrasting to *turismo sostenibile* – ranks among the most fre-

quent three-word clusters (38 occurrences). This locution is used to address mainstream tourism and its related habits; as such, in the present context of texts on sustainable tourism, it is characterized by a negative semantic prosody. This points to a polarization between 'good' (*turismo sostenibile*) and 'bad' practices (*turismo di massa*) which was almost absent from the English corpus.

The negative prosody of *turismo di massa* can be enhanced by other lexical items in the surrounding co-text. See, for instance, expressions such as *l'impatto devastante del turismo di massa* (the devastating impact of mass tourism), *l'esacerbazione del turismo di massa* (the exacerbation of mass tourism), or even *il turismo di massa uccide* (mass tourism kills).

The combination of adjectives and nouns like *devastante, consumistico* or *esacerbazione* concurs to shaping a negative perception of *turismo di massa* as a practice to preferably avoid. Elsewhere the expression *turismo di massa* is presented in antithesis to the notion of *turismo sostenibile*, as suggested by expressions like *un'alternativa / un'ottima alternativa* (an alternative / an excellent alternative to) *al turismo di massa* (3 occurrences). Despite the negative prosody generally associated with *turismo di massa*, there is at least one case in the corpus where the author attempts at defending it: according to the writer, mass tourism cannot be totally despised because it is democratic, for everyone, at the opposite of the 'radical chic' taste. Still, according to the author, it has to be corrected in its unethical aspects (see example 11).

11. *Sto scrivendo tutto questo per dire che il turismo di massa fa schifo? No, davvero. Sono tutto tranne che la radical chic moderna. Il turismo di massa non lo condanno perché, naturalmente, ci sono dentro fino al collo anche io: si tratta della democrazia del turismo e non voglio certo dire che non dovrebbe esistere. Dico solo che questa democrazia ha, o meglio dovrebbe avere, dei limiti […]*
(Am I writing all this to tell you that mass tourism sucks? Not really. I'm anything but the radical chic type. I don't condemn mass tourism because, of course, I also have it in my neck: it is the democracy of tourism and I certainly don't want to say that it shouldn't exist. I only say that this democracy has, or rather should have, limits)

Turismo di massa is not the only negative locution retrieved in the TS ITA corpus to identify bad tourism practices: corpus evidence shows occurrences of *turismo sessuale* (sexual, 4 instances), *selvaggio* (wild, 1), *mordi e fuggi* (hit-and-run, 1), *artificiale* (artificial, 1).

On the whole, the Italian corpus shows a wider range of expressions to evaluate tourism and appears lexically richer, as already suggested by the

STTR value: among positive locutions we can identify *turismo accessibile* (accessible), *diverso* (different), *comunitario* (community tourism), *consapevole* (conscious), *di nicchia* (niche tourism), *di qualità* (quality tourism), *dolce* (sweet), *equosolidale* (fair trade), *ecosostenibile* (eco-friendly), *ecologico* (ecological), *esperienziale* (experiential), *evoluto* (advanced), *felice* (happy), *lento* (slow), *solidale* (supportive), *verde* (green) and, of course *turismo responsabile* and *turismo sostenibile*. Among the neutral expressions are *turismo culturale* (cultural), *naturalistico* (naturalistic), *rurale* (rural), *storico* (historical), *stagionale* (seasonal).

Another significant difference between the English and the Italian corpus relies on the use of metaphors, more relevant in the latter. A first typology relates to the conventional comparison between tourists (target domain) and invaders (source domain), as offered by example 12.

12. Questo incide negativamente sulle piccole località, *invase da migliaia di turisti in poche ore*
(This adversely affects small towns, invaded by thousands of tourists in a few hours)

Very close to that is the metaphor relying on the association between tourists (target domain) and voracious insects (source domain), which, like grasshoppers or locusts, gobble up heritage sites. The locution *mordi e fuggi*, which could be translated into 'hit and run', suggests this negative image of 'fast tourism'.

13. Per approfondire la conoscenza su poche località anziché su tante, ma *'mordi e fuggi'*
(to deepen knowledge of few places instead of many, but by 'hit and run')

Both metaphors shed negative light on unethical tourism practices, so as that of mass tourism linked to the source domain of lethal weapons, that might seriously endanger the environment.

14. la massa *non solo uccide* l'autenticità dei luoghi, ma anche i delicati equilibri ambientali e sociali
(the mass does not only kill the authenticity of the places, but also delicate environmental and social balances)

Notably, the metaphor of invasion can be used in opposite terms, replacing the target domain with positive concepts like culture and tradition (example 15): by so doing, the metaphor and its semantic prosody are reversed

and the suggested invasion acquires a completely different shade of meaning, pointing to something actually desirable and good.

15. Lasciate che cultura, viaggio e tradizione *invadano* il vostro modo di viaggiare!
    (Let culture, travel and tradition invade your way of travelling!)

Also, the idea of 'grabbing a bite' (similar to the previous *mordi e fuggi*) can convey a neutral metaphorical meaning, neither negative nor positive *per se*, which is that of suggesting potential travel destinations at a glance (example 16).

16. È grazie all'ecoturismo che ampie aree naturali sono oggi ben conservate e protette. Qui *un assaggio* di Costarica.
    (Thanks to ecotourism large natural areas are well preserved and protected today. Here a bite of Costa Rica)

A striking aspect in the frequency list of the TS ITA corpus is the prevalence of third-person markers – *loro* (180), *sua* (103), *suo* (78) – over first- and second-person pronouns and adjectives – *noi* (50), *io* (20), *tu* (20), *voi* (6). This hints at a distal positioning of the writer towards readership. Imperatives are also rarely used to directly address readers, with only 6 cases retrieved in the corpus (see example 17).

17. *Informatevi* in modo consapevole dei luoghi che volete visitare.
    (Inform yourselves consciously about the places you want to visit)

To reinforce the hypothesis on the prevalence of distal deixis is also the difference in terms of frequency between verbs in the first-person plural form with a we-subject (characterised in Italian by the suffix *-iamo*), which are only 206, and the third person of the 'be' verb (*è*), which has 1,056 occurrences. Notably, *il turismo sostenibile è* (sustainable tourism is) is the most frequent four-word cluster in the corpus, with 35 occurrences. The highlighted trend is that of using *turismo sostenibile* as the subject of many, generally favourable, predicates, as in:

18. *Il turismo sostenibile è* un'opportunità di reddito per i cittadini del luogo
    (sustainable tourism is an income opportunity for local citizens)

19. *Il turismo sostenibile è* la nuova frontiera del viaggio.
    (sustainable tourism is the new frontier of travelling)

20. *Il turismo sostenibile è* "un turismo capace di durare nel tempo".
    (sustainable tourism is "tourism able to last over time")

While in the English corpus sustainable tourism was the object of indirect evaluation, mostly obtained by enhancing its positive outcomes in the long run and the subsequent effects on local communities, the Italian examples above show an explicit and direct evaluation of the concept of *turismo sostenibile*, presented as a commendable practice *per se*. The legitimation of sustainable tourism in the Italian corpus is therefore overt, so as the aim of persuading readers about the inherent value of this practice. In light of their definitive tone, sentences introduced by the formula *il turismo sostenibile è* have a strong impact on readers and appear hard to counter. Furthermore, the lack of direct address contributes to distancing the author, providing incontrovertible truths about sustainable tourism, and the reader, who has to aprioristically accept them.

5. Conclusions

The present study highlights some key differences in the discursive representation of sustainable tourism in English and Italian web texts. The first is in terms of nomenclature: in English texts the most accredited expression is *responsible tourism*, while in Italian texts *turismo sostenibile* is preferred. Given the elusive traits of the distinction between these terms, we might consider this outcome as not substantial for the analysis. However, if we accept the different shades of meaning attributed by scholars to *responsible tourism* and *sustainable tourism*, we should acknowledge, in the first place, a different cultural interpretation of the phenomenon across the two corpora: an ethical approach to tourism in English texts and a more pragmatic approach in the Italian ones. We will attempt at the end of this section to assess whether this interpretation can be confirmed or not.

A significant difference between the corpora relies on the strategies called upon for evaluation of sustainable/responsible tourism. The English corpus is characterized by the lack of polarization between 'good' and 'bad' tourism: there is no overt criticism to mainstream tourism and allusion to sex tourism is minimal. Conversely, in Italian texts, evaluation of sustainable tourism is obtained through a consistent contrast with the opposite pole of mass tourism. The Italian expression *turismo di massa* is generally accompanied by a negative semantic prosody, enhanced by collocates aimed at criticizing non-sustainable practices. To that end, the language of Italian texts is coloured

with a multitude of vivid expressions, used to contrastively characterize 'good' and 'bad' tourism and pointing to a richer lexical choice, as already suggested by the STTR value of the corpus, greater in Italian than in English. In figurative terms, also, the Italian range of metaphors available to connote the two opposite poles of tourism appears wider and less conventional. Moreover, it is interesting how, in Italian, the same metaphors can be used in different senses, to obtain positive or negative evaluation. For example, the metaphor of 'invading' tourists can be reversed by replacing the target domain with culture and thus evoking the idea of a favourable cultural invasion.

In the English corpus, the assessment of sustainable tourism takes place indirectly, by highlighting the positive results of sustainable tourism rather than celebrating the practice itself. The informative purpose, therefore, precedes the evaluative one. In the Italian corpus, by contrast, the assessment of sustainable tourism is direct and explicit, as shown by the frequent cluster *il turismo sostenibile è* followed by praising expressions. Persuasion of readers is obtained by stressing the intrinsic value of sustainable tourism, which should be appreciated and embraced as such.

If we move to consider the author's stance, in the English texts there is no effort to convince the public to adopt sustainable tourism practices, but rather the desire to show opportunities and advantages. There is a strong aim to provide useful information and create a community of people sharing the values of sustainability: the deictic style is proximal, and there is a clear attempt to establish a dialogic relationship between authors and readers by means of personal pronouns. By contrast, in the Italian corpus the deictic style is mostly distal and a certain tendency to patronize the readers has been noticed, realized by pouring down opinions and facts about sustainable tourism, whose value is asserted as an incontrovertible fact. The use of the second-person pronoun to address the reader, so as that of the first-person *we* as an inclusive subject of discourse, is minimal, hinting at a one-way mode of communication.

Given its limited scope, the present study does not allow to highlight if the ethical aspect is actually paramount in the characterization of responsible tourism in English or if, on the other hand, the socio-economic aspects prevail in the Italian texts, thus justifying the difference in the nomenclatures adopted (*responsible tourism* vs. *turismo sostenibile*). In this regard, a different investigation methodology, such as, for instance, the analysis of semantic fields, could offer better insights. The collected data, however, suggest that the style of communication highlighted in the English texts is certainly more

ethical than that of the Italian ones, as it aims at establishing a dialogic, symmetrical and proximal relationship with interlocutors, thus pursuing ethical engagement. The idea of engagement as collaboration, based on principles of dialogue and openness, is often presented by scholars as an ethical mode of communication, to be preferred over the notion of engagement as control, enacted through one-way dissemination of messages (Taylor and Kent 2014; Cho and De Moya 2016). Yet, the representation of sustainable tourism provided by Italian texts results more emotional and captivating, due to its richer lexical choice and to a narrative built around the polarization between 'good' and 'bad' tourism, which certainly takes on readers, in spite of the inevitable simplifications it entails.

Besides the respective discursive strategies put in place to disseminate sustainable tourism, this study highlights a cultural divide in the way communication itself is intended. The Italian discourse is emotional, imaginative, 'gut' oriented; as such, it is aimed at an individualistic society. By contrast, the English discourse has the main purpose to inform the reader and create a community of practice based on collectivistic values. As such, it is aimed at a wider and globalized society, such as that using English as a lingua franca.

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