The Construction of the Territorial Image in Tourism Websites: The Case of the Veneto Provinces

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ABSTRACT: Websites are popular platforms for institutional Tourist Boards that want to promote their territories to visitors from all over the world. When tourism promotion is directly conducted by local institutions it entails greater responsibilities for the promoters since they are the real, actual territory introducing itself to prospective tourists. Therefore, the construction of the territorial image is fundamental to convey the aspects that best symbolize the land and that, eventually, will be the reason why tourists will choose to visit the area. This study investigates how local institutions in the Italian region of Veneto promote their districts (a.k.a. 'provinces') both in English and in Italian. To do so, the official tourism websites of the seven Veneto provinces are considered. The corpora, composed of texts taken from the websites, are examined quantitatively and qualitatively to identify the most recurrent keywords used in the texts. The aim is to identify the most representative aspects chosen by the seven territories as their symbolic markers, i.e. elements typical of a destination that are selected to provide an iconic, but also stereotypical, image of the local culture they are promoting.

KEY WORDS: language of tourism; computer-mediated communication; corpus linguistics; Veneto tourism promotion

INTRODUCTION

Today, the promotion of a territory for tourism purposes exploits the affordances of the Internet, which has become the preferred medium to communicate with both domestic and international visitors. It is for this reason that tourism websites come with pages in the national language and in the specific languages of the foreign tourists that usually visit the territory. In this respect, English is the preferred *lingua franca* used to convey the promotional message to an international public regardless of the possible nationalities of the receivers of the message. However, the way in which local destinations are promoted depends not only on the language(s) used but also on the kind of visual and verbal communicative strategies adopted. The accurate construction of the territorial image is, indeed, fundamental to convey the aspects that best symbolize the land and that, eventually, will be the reason why tourists will choose to visit the area.

The tourism promotion of territories by local institutions has already been investigated in several studies which consider the use of English as well as of the national language to promote regional destinations online. For instance, we can mention Roque *et al.* for the promotion—in English and in other European languages such as Spanish, French, German, and Italian—of local destinations in Spain. The authors' proposal to implement tourism promotion and the local competitiveness of Tourist Boards includes the establishment of synergies between the public and the private sectors as well as the improvement of the overall quality of the online material that is used to describe and promote landmarks, local traditions and culture. Mich *et al.* consider the local promotion of Tourist Boards in the Alps through the use of European languages, concluding that, if local communities want to effectively promote their territory, new shared guidelines are necessary. Cappelli investigates the issues emerging from the translation (and consequent localization) of the content of tourism websites reflecting on the importance that keyword analysis has in determining the quality of a translation in terms of adaptation of the content typical of a source language into a product that achieves the same communicative purpose in the target language. Furthermore, it is worth listing a group of studies which—for their approach and material investigated—can be compared to the present one and can, thus, reveal themselves useful to frame within current research the results emerging from the analysis regarding the Veneto region. These studies are Pierini, Maci ("Click"), Manca ("Official Tourist Websites," *Persuasion*, "Verbal Techniques"), Cesiri ("Promoting," "Representing"). Pierini investigates, among others, the websites of local institutions in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, San Marino, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway, and Croatia. Her corpus-based analysis reveals that the websites are, in general, user-friendly but rich in contents, while their discursive persuasive strategies prefer the use of terms with positive connotations, typical of the spoken language but, at the same time, void of specific cultural connotations. This is explained by the author with the intended audience of the websites, that is supposedly composed of a generally international public. Maci ("Click") examines the discursive strategies employed by the tourism industry in websites. Her study shows that the tourism websites considered are visually dynamic and innovative, while the verbal component "shares the same features

as more traditional tourist communication (Maci *Language*) […]. [T]he description of the location's physical and cultural characteristics is embedded in a text which is extremely evaluative" (Maci "Click" 153). Manca ("Official Tourist Websites") examines four official tourist websites from Italy, France, Germany, and New Zealand in order to categorize the cultural features that are represented in them. Her analysis reveals that "cultures systematically select definite linguistic and visual communication modes in the way they describe their cultural values, exchange information between participants and structure the messages which carry the content of the communicative event" (2). Similarly, Manca (*Persuasion*) concentrates on the persuasion strategies in tourism texts, considering in particular how tourism promotion is adapted to the specific socio-cultural contexts, taking into account the peculiarities of the local culture as well as the expectations and perceptions of the target public. Manca ("Verbal Techniques") investigates the verbal techniques typical of tourism texts (according to Dann, they are: comparison, key words, keying, testimony, languaging, and ego-targeting) in a corpus composed of five official tourist websites from USA, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and Italy. The analysis of her corpus reveals that, even though all the websites use the same techniques, the different socio-cultural contexts in which the websites were created determine a different frequency in the employment of the techniques "with relevant implications for cross-cultural tourist communication" (91). Finally, two contributions by the present author ("Promoting," "Representing") investigate the strategies of tourism promotion employed to 'advertise' the city of Venice to an international audience. Both studies found out that online texts in English are written implying that prospective tourists possess a high level of presumed knowledge as regards local customs, dialect, and traditions. This has the effect of widening the cultural gap between the local culture and the tourists "who, in turn, miss the opportunity to establish a real connection with the local culture" (Cesiri "Representing" 195).

The present study investigates the linguistic strategies used by local institutions in the Italian region of Veneto to promote their territories (a.k.a. 'provinces') in English and in Italian. The aim of the analysis is to identify recurrent patterns occurring in the texts that reveal how each territory selects its symbolic markers, i.e. elements typical of a destination that provide an iconic, but also stereotypical, image of the local culture (Dann), and how these symbolic markers are presented to the public both visually and verbally. To do so, the official tourism websites of the seven Veneto provinces are considered. Corpus linguistics methods of analysis are used to investigate the corpora. In particular, results from the corpus in English are contrasted with the results from the corpus in Italian to see if local institutions promote the same aspects regardless of the national culture of the visitors or if they prefer to adapt the promotional message to the presumed expectations of foreign visitors (*versus* the Italian ones). In this regard, the qualitative analysis takes into consideration the content accessibility offered by the websites, i.e. it considers whether the websites allow foreign or Italian tourists to easily access and understand the specific information regarding the territory, thus making the promotional message more or less effective.

CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF A TERRITORY

Several marketing studies, especially in the decades from the 1960s through the 1990s, have investigated the idea of country image behind consumers' attitude towards the products of specific countries (see, e.g. Han, and Martin and Eroglu). If a country image is defined as "the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country" (Martin and Eroglu 193), then the concept of country image itself is a commercial construct that summarizes the cultural attributes associated with a particular nation and uses them to create a stereotypical idea. The marketing strategies used to commercialize this 'stereotypical idea' vary according to the consumers' expectations, which are based on their "beliefs and claims about the brand" (57). These marketing strategies are also applied to the construction of a territory image for its promotion as a tourist destination. In fact, studies in tourism communication emphasize the importance of the effective construction of the image of a territory as a means to attract prospective visitors' attention—and bookings (Iversen *et al.*, Kiryluk and Glińska, Martins).

Dann argues that the promotional language found in tourism communication uses attractions as signs which represent something to someone. A sight is usually the first contact that the tourist has with the attraction. In this respect, the representation of the attraction anticipates the real visit and influences the tourists' expectations as well as determining their decision to visit the destination. The features that characterize the place—and are repeatedly used to embody it in promotional material—become symbolic markers, i.e. (stereo)typical representations of that territory that are used by the tourists to create their own mental image of the place as well as to generate their expectations towards the whole visiting experience (MacCannell).

THE SEVEN PROVINCES OF THE VENETO REGION

The region of Veneto, situated in the North-East of the Italian peninsula, is divided into seven territorial-administrative districts ('provinces'). The names of the provinces derive from the main cities present in the territory: i.e., in alphabetical order, Belluno, Padova, Rovigo, Treviso, Venezia, Verona, and Vicenza. A statistical report published in 2009 by the Veneto Region (Regione del Veneto) states that each province has its own territorial features which define the economic and social structure of the area. In fact, Belluno's territory is almost exclusively mountainous; its economy is based on activities related to the mountains. Padova is defined as the region's economic hub, while the territory is characterized by plains, hills, and places with plenty of cultural, artistic and historical heritage. Rovigo's territory is a plain whose activities are centred around the agri-food sector and the textile industry. The hilly province of Treviso is renowned for its vineyards and local craftsmanship, while the province of Venezia takes its name from the world-renowned city. Visitors are attracted by Venice itself, the smaller islands in the lagoon, the *Lido* with its beaches, and the surrounding mainland territory. Verona's territory is characterized by the presence of the agri-food and furniture industries; the presence of

the Lake of Garda and of the city of Verona attracts numerous visitors interested in nature but also in history and the arts. Finally, Vicenza presents a varied territory with mountains, hills, and a historical-artistic heritage (Regione del Veneto).

IMAGES USED IN THE PROVINCES' WEBSITES[1]

A visual analysis of the pictures in the official, promotional websites of the provinces confirm their description by the Veneto Region. The province of Belluno (Provincia di Belluno) shows the Dolomites in the territory and the manifold activities offered to visitors. The province of Padova (Provincia di Padova) highlights its artistic heritage with several sections dedicated to museums, cities of art and the UNESCO's World Heritage sites present in the area. Rovigo (Provincia di Rovigo) focuses on the fluvial landscape between the two rivers, Po and Adige. The website of the province of Treviso (Provincia di Treviso) centres around the activities available to visitors in the area who are shown tasting the local eno-gastronomic products. The website of the province of Venezia (Provincia di Venezia) shows the territory surrounding Venice, the artistic-cultural heritage, and local eno-gastronomy. The website of the province of Verona (Provincia di Verona) shows a full screen picture of Juliet's statue, one of the attractions of the city, while the rest of the territory is represented through its diversity of landscapes (mountains, hills, the Lake of Garda, etc.). Finally, Vicenza (Provincia di Vicenza) promotes its territory with a special focus on the Palladian-style villas and on the city of Vicenza, as well as on the hills and thermal resorts present in the territory.

It is evident that the seven territories choose to present specific, well-defined identities that create, in turn, specific expectations in the prospective visitors. As they appear in the websites, the symbolic markers chosen to represent the territories are the Dolomites for Belluno, the fourteenth-century art for Padova, a fluvial landscape for Rovigo, vineyards for Treviso, Carnival masks for Venice, Juliet's statue for Verona, and a picture of the city of Vicenza for the whole province. These visual symbolic markers will be the starting point of the present study which, in the following sections, will identify the keywords that are used to verbally represent the territories. The results from the verbal analysis will be compared to the visual symbolic markers just presented in order to ascertain if the verbal and visual representations of the territories are consistent, and if they achieve the goal of successfully creating an accurate image of the specific territory which is being promoted to tourists.

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[1] Unfortunately, after writing the present article, two of the websites are not available anymore. The website www.turismovenezia.it (Provincia di Venezia) stopped being updated, as it is indicated in a message on the header at the top of the home page, while the website www.tourism.verona.it (Provincia di Verona) is no longer accessible. Another website (*Provincia di Verona Turismo*) currently publicizes the public agency that promotes the territory, but it does not promote the actual territory.

CORPORA AND METHODOLOGY

The verbal analysis in this study was conducted on the pages—both in English and in Italian—that describe the territories from the natural, architectural and historical viewpoints. Thus, the texts were collected into seven corpora, one for each province. Quantitative analyses were carried out on the seven corpora taken together for both the Eng_VePro corpus and the Ita_VePro corpus.

The investigation proceeded by means of corpus linguistics methods of analysis. In the first part, a keyword analysis identifies the type of words used in the corpora and their level of specialization. Data are, then, contrasted with the discursive features typical of the language of tourism in order to see whether the language of the websites is in line with tourism discourse and whether it reflects the communicative aim of the websites themselves. The keyword analysis was chosen because it indicates not only "the 'aboutness' […] of a particular genre, it can also reveal the salient features which are functionally related to that genre" (McEnery *et al.* 308). In the present study, in particular, the keyword analysis was employed to identify the most recurrent words in the description and presentation of the territory in the seven Veneto provinces.

Table 1 and Table 2 show the statistics of the English and the Italian corpora, respectively. The quantitative analysis was conducted using Scott's *Wordsmith Tools 7.0*. The reference corpus used for the English language is the BNC, comprising samples of written and spoken language for a total of more than 100 million words. It was compiled between the 1990s and 2007 from a wide range of genres collected to be representative of a consistent portion of British English. The reference corpus for Italian is the CoLFIS[2], which is composed of more than 3 million words and is based mostly on written 'general Italian'. The texts composing the corpus were collected and selected to reflect "the reading habits of the Italian population as inferred by ISTAT data" (Bertinetto *et al.*).

Stylistic Description of the Corpora

Table 1 shows the statistical figures for the corpus in English: we can see how the STTR is considerably higher than in general English. The same trend is also visible in all the other values, namely the length of the words, in terms of characters, as well as the length of the sentences which score much higher than in the BNC. All these figures point out to the fact that the texts describing the Veneto provinces are all lexically dense. Their vocabulary is seemingly composed of content words, constructed in long sentences. According to de Haan and van Esch and to Diemer and Frobenius, these data are all indicators that the texts are specialized in content and elaborate in style. This is also consistent with data presented in Kang and Yu (133) who found out that, in their corpus of English tourism texts, content words and longer sentences are used "to introduce large amounts of practical information such as location, history, culture, etc."

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[2] Another corpus for 'general Italian' is the itWaC, a corpus generated from the Web and limited to the pages with a .it domain (*WaCky*). Despite the efforts of the present author it was not possible to extract data that could be suitably worked with the software used in the present study. For this reason it was decided to employ exclusively the CoLFIS corpus.

	TOKENS	TYPES	STTR	AVERAGE WORD LENGTH	NUMBER OF SENTENCES	AVERAGE SENTENCE LENGTH
Eng_VePro	*56,240*	*8,018*	*45.90*	*4.94*	*2,083*	*26.60*
Belluno	10,293	2,331	44.42	4.89	329	31.01
Padova	2,696	936	45.15	5.01	111	24.20
Verona	11,371	2,746	47.01	4.93	529	21.18
Rovigo	14,117	3,194	45.71	5.02	470	29.59
Venezia	1,224	580	49.70	4.95	47	25.98
Vicenza	11,614	2,909	45.96	4.90	415	27.29
Treviso	4,925	1,587	46.53	4.90	182	26.66
BNC	**97,860,872**	**512,588**	**42.66**	**4.68**	**4,754,513**	**20.59**

Table 1. Quantitative data for the corpus (and sub-corpora) in English.

Figures in Table 2 confirm the same tendency for the texts in Italian. The STTR and the word-length values are dramatically higher in the corpora than in the reference corpus, which collects written texts taken from newspapers, magazines, and books; whereas the length of the sentences is varied: only the Belluno and the Treviso corpora have sentences whose length is closer to those in the CoLFIS, while all the other corpora have shorter sentences.

	TOKENS	TYPES	STTR	AVERAGE WORD LENGTH	NUMBER OF SENTENCES	AVERAGE SENTENCE LENGTH
Ita_VePro	*24,147*	*5,746*	*51.11*	*5.26*	*824*	*28.83*
Belluno	2,822	973	44.15	3.09	42	36.93
Padova	1,298	630	51.10	5.32	51	25.35
Verona	2,983	1,214	50.75	5.10	119	24.94
Rovigo	1,603	609	47.40	5.01	54	29.54
Venezia	587	311	53.25	5.08	20	29.20
Vicenza	13,003	3,901	52.76	5.33	484	26.21
Treviso	1,851	861	52,20	5,10	55	33.11
CoLFIS	**411,050**	**113,711**	**27.95**	**3.63**	**359**	**37.20**

Table 2. Quantitative data for the corpus (and sub-corpora) in Italian.

These figures indicate that the texts in Italian, too, are lexically dense; they use content words drawn from specialized domains such as Tourism English (considering also their length in terms of characters, see Kang and Yu). However, the sentences are shorter than in the reference corpus, thus the texts show a preference for a complex, specialized terminology but a rather simple sentence structure.

The following sections examine the most recurrent keywords found in the corpora for both languages. The aim of this part of the study is to see if the qualitative investigation confirms the findings reported in the quantitative analysis. Then, it is considered how the texts describe the provinces and the specific elements highlighted as symbolic markers of the territory.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: KEYWORDS IN ENGLISH AND IN ITALIAN

The qualitative part of the investigation consisted in a parallel analysis of the keywords in the texts in English and in Italian, grouped by province (in alphabetical order). As regards the selection of the keywords, only what Scott ("PC") calls "key keywords" were included in the present investigation. Key keywords are keywords which occur at least twice in a given corpus and, thus, "a key keywords list reveals how many texts a keyword appears in as key" (Baker 350). Consequently, since the aim of the study is to find patterns in the use of specific linguistic choices in the texts composing the corpora, and in order to select the words that are really relevant for the description of the territories, the analysis focused on the top 20 key keywords (henceforth, 'keywords'). Table 3 shows the 20 keywords considered for each Veneto province listed in order of frequency. As the lists show, function words were excluded, the study considering only content words as more indicative of the lexical choices operated in the texts.

PROVINCES	KEY KEYWORDS IN ENG_VEPRO	KEY KEYWORDS IN ITA_VEPRO
Belluno	Belluno, Feltre, Cadore, Piave, Alpago, Agordino, Dolomites, Dolomiti, castle, century, ancient, lake, piazza, province, Veneto, square, admire, Vedana, Valbelluna, Montina	Dolomiti, vette, Belluno, lago, provincia, Cadore, bellunesi, Piave, Feltrino, territorio, riserva, parco, luoghi, regionale, comune, torrente, attraverso, Unesco, patrimonio, naturale
Padova	Padua, Paduan, Padova, province, Montagnana, Teolo, Galzignano, Battaglia, Abano, Montegrotto, Euganean, Euganee, terme, thermal, spas, spa, hills, territory, itineraries, radicchio	terme, termale, termali, Padova, Teolo, Galzignano, Battaglia, Abano, Montegrotto, colli, euganei, euganee, escursioni, territorio, storia, oggi, epoca, bicicletta, benvenuti, luogo
Rovigo	Polesine, Rovigo, Adria, Lendinara, Fratta, Badia, Ficarolo, Ferrara, territory, towns, Veneto, century, Estensi, Accademia, Po, Adige, rivers, delta, reclamation, luoghi	acqua, mare, delta, Po, fiume, fiumi Polesine, natura, cultura, terra, provincia, territorio, paesaggi, itinerari, storia, arte, scoprire, visitare, godere, possibile
Treviso	Treviso, Veneto, Vittorio [Veneto], Castelfranco, Possano, Cansiglio Valdobbiadene, Conegliano, Piave, Asolo, Grappa, piazza, prosecco, Montello, marchlands, river, Sile, area, ancient, city	Piave, Cansiglio, Montello, Grappa, Caglieron, Pizzoc, fiume, monte, territorio, boschi, grotte, Grande, Guerra, testimonianze, sci, specie, naturale, amanti, animali, luogo
Venezia	Caorle, Eraclea, Jesolo, Bibione, Venice, lagoon, fishmarket, sea, fish, beaches, hinterland, red, fun, relax, recipes, palaces, villas	Venezia, mare, Caorle, Chioggia, laguna, Eraclea, Jesolo, spiagge, spiaggia, territorio, natura, cultura, località, verde
Verona	Verona, veronese, Valpolicella, church, villa, lake, Garda, monte, Lessinia, area, Scaligeri, castle, town, museum, roman, olive, century, famous, section, visit	Verona, Veronetta, Adige, città, piazza, mura, porta, Arena, storia, tempo, arte, signori, cultura, anfiteatro, chiesa, chiese, palazzo, castelli, colline, scopri, ville
Vicenza	Palladio, Vicenza, century, Thiene, ancient, important, famous, town, museum,	Vicenza, Thiene, Tonezza, Marostica, Bassano, villa, palladio, museo, chiesa,

building, palazzo, church, built, piazza, architect, architecture, castle, art, centre, years	castello, palazzo, cappella, sede, anni, città, guerra, piazza, storia, centro, ponte

Table 3. Lists of key keywords analyzed for both Eng_VePro and Ita_VePro.

Starting with the province of Belluno, the first 20 keywords occurring in the corpus in English are mainly placenames such as "Belluno," "Feltre," "Cadore," "Piave," "Alpago," "Agordino," "Vedana," "Valbelluna," "Montina." "Dolomites" and "Dolomiti" are also present, while more general nouns refer to the history of the territory, such as "castle," "century," and "ancient" while other nouns refer to the territory in general ("lake," "piazza," "province," "Veneto," and "square"). The only verb present in the list is "admire," which transmits the call of the territory to visitors to observe the beauty of the land with their own eyes. Looking at the collocations for these keywords, the corpus search reveals that "Belluno" is used mostly in reference to the rest of the territory, such as "Belluno Dolomites," "Belluno area," "Belluno Province," "Municipality of/Province of Belluno." This indicates that the attention is drawn towards the whole province rather than the main city. This is also confirmed by the recurrence of the nouns "province" and "Veneto," which clearly emphasize the link with the rest of the region. The case of "Dolomites" vs. "Dolomiti" is quite interesting: the former is used to indicate the mountain chain, while the latter occurs only in the name "Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park," which is the institutional name in English of a local natural park. The other keywords refer explicitly to specific elements of ancient medieval traditions, which attract as many tourists as the Dolomites themselves.

The analysis of the keywords for the corpus in Italian reveals that the results are similar to the corpus in English. In fact, the most recurrent keywords for the Belluno province are "Dolomiti" and "vette" (mountaintops), which confirm the mountain as the symbolic marker of the whole territory. The remaining keywords refer more to the area than to the main city, Belluno, as in the texts in English, but in Italian they are used with a focus on other aspects of the territory, namely: "lago" (lake), "provincia" (province), "Cadore," "bellunesi," "Piave," "Feltrino." More general keywords are used to describe the area, such as "territorio" (territory), "riserva" (reserve), "parco" (park), "luoghi" (places), "regionale" (regional), "comune" (borough), "torrente" (stream), while the keyword "attraverso" (through) gives the idea that the visitor is invited to travel throughout the province to better appreciate its resources. The keywords "Unesco," "patrimonio" (heritage), and "naturale" (natural) draw the attention to the official endorsement awarded by an important international cultural institution.

As for the Padova corpus, the first 20 keywords remind again of the places present in the province, such as "Padua"/"Paduan" with a direct reference to the main city, while "Padova" collocates with the other keyword "Province." Then, we have recurrent reference to other local placenames such as "Montagnana," "Teolo," "Galzignano," "Battaglia," "Abano," and "Montegrotto." Two specific groups of keywords, however, reveal the real attractions promoted in the website, namely: "Euganean"/"Euganee," "terme"/"thermal," "spas"/"spa" and "hills," "territory," "itineraries," and "radicchio." The first group refers to the thermal resorts offered in abundance in the province, while the second group relates directly to the main attractions offered.

As for the corpus in Italian, the first keyword is "terme" (thermal baths)—followed by "termale/I" (thermal) in sixth position—thus confirming that the symbolic marker chosen to represent, linguistically, the territory are the thermal spas present in the province. This contrasts with the images of the fourteenth-century art and historical buildings used in the website as visual symbolic markers. The placenames in the keyword list are basically the same as in the corpus in English ("Padova," "Teolo," "Galzignano," "Battaglia," "Abano," and "Montegrotto"), so attention is drawn to the same places regardless of the visitors' geographical provenance. Elements of the area that are promoted in Italian are, again, the same as in English. They are represented by the keywords "colli" (hills), "euganei"/"euganee," "escursioni" (excursions), and "territorio." Three keywords are found only in the corpus in Italian, namely "storia" (history), "oggi" (today), "epoca" (era): they all represent specific temporal references stressed in the texts, balancing between the present and the past of the province. Other keywords are "bicicletta" (bicycle), "benvenuti" (welcome), and "luogo" (place). In the first case, the specific activity mentioned is probably considered to be of particular interest to an Italian visitor as the corresponding term is absent in the corpus in English, while the second keyword stresses the perhaps warmer language used to welcome Italian visitors; in this case, as well, there was no corresponding keyword in the corpus in English. Finally, the general reference to "luogo" seems to be typical of the texts in Italian, since it was found also in the Belluno corpus, while the corpora in English refer to more specific places.

In the case of the Rovigo corpus, the most frequent keywords are local placenames, such as the territory Polesine and the city of Rovigo, followed by other cities in the territory, such as "Adria," "Lendinara," "Fratta," etc. In the list, there are also nouns for the territory in general and its history, such as "territory," "towns," "Veneto," "century," "Estensi," "Accademia," "cultura." Particularly recurrent are also specific words referring to the fluvial nature of the area, such as "Po," "Adige," "rivers," "delta," and "reclamation," which refers to "the cultivation of waste land or land formerly under water" (Oxford).

The same tendency is found in the Italian corpus: one of the recurrent keywords in this case is, in fact, "luoghi." In the case of the texts in Italian the province is represented again through images related to water as it is testified by the keywords "acqua" (water), "mare" (sea), "delta," "Po," "fiume"/"fiumi" (river/riverss). However, we do find recurrent reference to the land from a naturalistic perspective—with keywords such as "Polesine," "natura" (nature), "terra" (land), "provincia," "territorio," "paesaggi" (landscapes)—as well as from the 'human' perspective with the keywords "itinerary" (itineraries), "storia," "arte" (art). It is interesting to notice the presence of verbs that do not occur in the texts in English, such as "scoprire" (to discover), "visitare" (to visit), "godere" (to enjoy), which directly guide the tourist in what to do upon arrival. Finally, we find the keyword "possible" (possible) that enhances the experience of the 'guided' tour of the province with the indication of the potential offered by the territory.
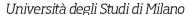
The keywords analyzed for the Treviso corpus are not particularly significant in terms of characteristic elements that represent the territory. In actual fact, the first 10 keywords are placenames of local towns, rivers and areas, such as "Treviso," "Veneto," "Vittorio [Veneto]," "Castelfranco," "Possano," "Cansiglio Valdobbiadene," "Conegliano," "Piave," "Asolo," "Montello." The main wine for which the Treviso area is famous, Prosecco, occurs only in 13th position, preceded by "grappa" (which is used in the corpus only to refer to Mount Grappa) and "piazza" (square). The remaining keywords are other placenames and terms referring to the geography or history of the territory, such as "marchlands," "river," "Sile," "area," "ancient," "city."

Substantial differences can be noticed in the Italian keyword list. Local placenames occupy a reduced space, and referring to different places than in the corresponding corpus in English ("Piave," "Cansiglio," "Montello," "Grappa," "Caglieron," "Pizzoc"). They are also accompanied by general nouns such as "fiume" (river), "monte" (mount), "territorio," "boschi" (woods), "grotte" (caves), "luogo." Then, other keywords— "Grande Guerra" (Great War), "testimonianze" (testimonies)—direct the readers' attention towards a specific historical event that had a great impact on the territory. A specific sporting activity ("sci") is present in the list of keywords for the corpus in Italian but it does not appear in the list of keywords for the corpus in English, while another group of keywords directly refers to the natural resources of the territory, namely "specie" (species), "naturale," "amanti" (lovers), "animali" (animals). All in all, the corpus in Italian presents the Treviso province as a territory rich in natural landscapes but also linked to its historical past.

The keywords in English found for the Venice corpus were only 17 and do not reflect at all the images provided in the website to attract the tourists' attention. While the images focus on the Venetian Carnival and the gondolas, the keywords refer to the coastal resorts of the area with the names of seaside towns such as "Caorle," "Eraclea," "Jesolo," and "Bibione." The noun "Venice" occurs only in fifth position, followed by marine terms, such as lagoon, "fishmarket," "sea," "fish," "beaches," and "hinterland." Particularly interesting is the adjective "red," which associates a particular color with the city of Venice. In fact, the color red is traditionally matched to the city not only in the symbols of its institutions as also in the existence of the specific color 'Venetian red' ("a brownish-red color," Collins). The keywords "fun," "relax," "recipes," "palaces," "villas" are used to define the visiting experience both in reference to the sites to be visited and the activities available there.

In the corpus in Italian, the first keyword found is *Venezia*. As in the corpus in English, attention is drawn to the marine environment rather than to the city. Indeed, content keywords in Italian are only 14 and include terms such as "mare" (sea), "Caorle," "Chioggia," "laguna" (lagoon), "Eraclea," "Jesolo," "spiagge"/"spiaggia" (beach/beaches). However, we also find some reference to what the mainland has to offer, expressed with keywords such as "territorio" (territory), "natura" (nature), "cultura" (culture), "verde" (green). It is interesting to notice that, while in the English corpus Venice was associated with the color red, in the corpus in Italian the reference to the color green means that greater attention is given to the natural resources that can be found in the province.

The first 20 keywords in the Verona corpus reflect the composition of the province: the most recurrent placenames are, unsurprisingly, of local cities and areas such as "Verona"/"veronese," "Valpolicella," "Garda," "Lessinia," but we have also terms referring to more characteristic elements, such as "church," "villa," "lake," "monte," "castle," "town," "museum," and the name of the former local ruling family, the Scaligeri. In addition, we have a recurrent use of "roman" referring to the historical past of the area and to "olive" in reference to a local specialty. More general terms referring to the history of the province, and to the visit itself, are the keywords "century," "famous," "section," and "visit."

The keywords in the corpus in Italian are similar, referring again to the city of Verona, its section "Veronetta," and the river Adige. These keywords are followed by the only verb in the list *scopri* (discover) and several general nouns such as "città" (city), "piazza" (square), "mura" (city walls), "porta" (gate), "area," "colline," "ville." The landmark of the city of Verona, the "Arena," is key term in this corpus but not in the one in English, while a specific group of keywords indicates that the main focus is on the history of the area rather than on the territory's natural resources; in fact, we have: "storia," "tempo" (time), "arte" (art), "signori" (lords), "cultura." Much attention is also paid to the architectural landscape of the province, as testified by the keywords "anfiteatro" (amphitheater), "chiesa"/"chiese" (church/churches), "palazzo" (palace), "castelli" (castles).

Finally, the Vicenza corpus in English shows keywords that refer to the architectural and artistic features of the area. The focus is mainly on the main city that gives the name to the province, and to its architectural past, since the first keywords are "Palladio," "Vicenza," "century." The other recurrent placename is "Thiene," famous for its villas, while "ancient," "important," and "famous" are adjectives that are normally found in tourism texts, while the rest of the keywords are taken from the semantic field of the history of the arts. In fact, we have keywords such as "town," "museum," "building," "palazzo," "church," "built," "piazza," "architect"/"architecture," "castle," "art," "centre," "years."

Likewise, the keywords in Italian name the same places ("Vicenza," "Thiene") with the addition of "Tonezza," "Marostica," "Bassano." As in the corpus in English, we have keywords for the territory's architectural and artistic features as in "villa," "palladio," "museo" (museum), "chiesa," "castello" (castle), "palazzo" (palace), "cappella" (chapel), "sede" (location), "ponte" (bridge). A last group of keywords represents the language used to describe the area and the history of the territory, as in "anni" (years), "città," "guerra," "piazza," "storia," "centro" (centre).

CONCORDANCE ANALYSIS: MAKING THE TERRITORY IMAGE ACCESSIBLE… OR NOT?

The previous sections have focused on how the seven Veneto provinces try to create a specific image of their territory in the mind of the prospective visitor both visually (with the use of specific images in the websites) and linguistically (recurring to specific keywords). Once the verbal symbolic marker for each province has been identified, it is

interesting to look at the collocates accompanying the corresponding keyword in order to understand how the marker is described to the tourist, be s/he Italian or foreigner. The accurate presentation of a symbolic landmark is, in fact, essential in the promotion of a destination for several reasons. First of all, it might determine the choice of that destination over a competing one; then, it creates specific expectations that must find their fulfilment once the tourist has arrived, if the promoting agency wants to be considered reliable. If description and reality do not correspond, the tourists will criticize the promoters of the destination; this will result in a reduced number of visitors, as a consequence of the negative reviews. Lastly, an accurate description must allow tourists to immediately access the typical features of the destination; it must, thus, break down communication barriers and enable the tourist, who has never visited that destination, to clearly understand the local culture and how it is reflected in, and represented by, the territory under promotion.

This part of the study will be based on concordances generated with *Wordsmith Tools 7.0*. The aim is not to investigate the semantic fields to which the keywords belong but to analyze the collocates accompanying the specific markers representing each Veneto province both in English and in Italian. For this reason, the selection of the concordances to be analyzed was conducted after matching the visual symbolic markers identified in the third section ("*Images Used in the Provinces' Websites*") to the key keywords (verbal symbolic markers) listed in Table 3. The node words thus selected were considered as the preferred choices to represent the corresponding territories; namely, they are: "Dolomites"/"Dolomiti" for the Belluno province, "thermal"/"terme" for Padova, "river(s)"/"fiume(i)" for Rovigo, "grappa" for the Treviso province, while "beach"/"spiaggia(e)" represent Venezia. The province of Verona is analyzed through the concordances for "castle"/"castelli," while "Palladio" is the choice for the province of Vicenza.

The concordance analysis for "Dolomites"/"Dolomiti" reveals that the corpus in English shows preference for a more descriptive language than the corpus in Italian. In English, in fact, the word "Dolomites" collocates with adjectives such as "beautiful," "highest," and "majestic," which give to the reader the clear image of an impressive mountain chain. In the corpus in Italian, instead, "Dolomiti" collocates with expressions that refer to the area rather than to the mountains, as in "parchi e riserve delle Dolomiti" (parks and reserves in the Dolomites) or in "il territorio delle dolomiti" (the territory of the dolomiti). Only in one case "Dolomiti" collocates with a descriptive adjective, namely in "le maestose Dolomiti" (the majestic Dolomites).

In the case of the Padova corpora the node word in English, "thermal," collocates with "hotels," "resorts," "basin" and "spa hotels" as well as with "cave," "water," "mud" and "treatments." Thus, it clearly indicates the facilities and the activities that are offered to tourists. The concordances in Italian show similar preferences, as it is demonstrated by the collocates "acqua termale" (thermal water), "città termale" (thermal town), "stazione termale" (thermal centre), "grotta termale" (thermal cave), "trattamenti termali" (thermal treatments).

As regards the Rovigo province, concordances in English and in Italian reflect the aim of the promotional texts, that is to say to inform visitors on the fluvial nature of the territory. For instance, the node word "river*" collocates with "banks," "moorings," "beds," "port" but it is not accompanied by any adjective. In the Italian corpus, "fium*" appears in expressions as "passaggio del fiume" (flowing of the river), "percorso del fiume" (river passage), "corsi dei fiumi" (river flows), "basso corso dei fiumi" (lit. lower river flows), "direttrici dei fiumi" (routes of the rivers). It is evident that the result is not stylistically inviting as the expressions used for the description of the territory are typical of the domain-specific language of geographical studies but are not so frequently associated with the promotional and engaging style found in the language of tourism (Dann). This can be clearly seen in this sentence taken from the corpus in Italian: "Diversamente da quanto avviene di solito, si è voluto, nella *delineazione* degli itinerari turistici e artistici, mantenere la caratteristica *precipua* del territorio e cioè quel percorso attraverso le *direttrici dei fiumi*, che storicamente ha *connotato* il Polesine"[3]. As we can see, the description uses highly formal and outdated expressions in the everyday language (purposely italicized in the extract) which exemplify the complex and specialized nature of the descriptions. Thus, a reader is required to possess some minimal knowledge in that specific domain, otherwise the access to the meaning of those words might be problematic.

For the Treviso corpus, the keywords collocate differently in the two languages. In the English texts, "Grappa" collocates with "massif" and "vibrant," while the collocates in Italian are more general and refer to the history—"Monte Grappa teatro delle cruente battaglie" (Mount Grappa [as] scene of ferocious battles) —or the activities related to this mountain —"ascesa del Monte Grappa" (climbing the Mount Grappa); "Monte Grappa una meta sempre viva" (Mount Grappa [is] always a lively destination). These results are similar to the analyses for the Dolomites representing the Belluno province.

As for the concordances for "beach(es)" vs. "spiaggia(e)," they are very similar in the corpora of the Venezia province. In both cases the node word collocates with words such as "ideal"/"ideale," "wide"/"ampia." A slight difference can be found in a concordance in which the facilities on the beach are described. While the English concordances contain collocates with a focus on the services offered, such as "beaches," and "well equipped with all up-to-date services," the concordance in Italian is "la Bandiera Blu sventolerà infatti sulle spiagge del Lido di Venezia" (the Blue Flag will wave on the beaches of the Lido of Venice). In this case, the text in Italian contains reference to an award that is a clear sign of quality for an Italian tourist since the 'Blue Flag' is given only to beaches that are particularly clean and environmentally friendly (FEE). As already mentioned in the previous section, the Venice corpus in English is the only one that describes Venice in terms of the color red, which is usually matched to the city. As for its collocates, we see that it is used to describe specific elements of the territory, such as the "houses," the whole city ("the color of the city is red") as well as "the sunset on the lagoon."

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[3] 'Differently from what usually happens, it was decided, while delineating the tourist and artistic itineraries, to keep the primary feature of the territory, namely the itinerary through the routes of the rivers that has historically characterized the Polesine territory' (author's translation).

In the corpora referring to the province of Verona the keywords investigated are "castle*"/"castell*." However, the concordances produced by the two keywords are different in the two languages: in the corpus in English "castle" refers exclusively to the Scaligeri Castle (one of the main attractions in Verona), which is described more in terms of its history and present-day function than of its architecture. The plural "castles" appears in five concordances, all referring to those present in the territory but in general terms, as in the concordance "The natural sequence of its colours and landscapes surrounds country houses, villas and castles" or in "In 1336, the Bevilacqua family erected one of the territory's most significant castles." It is interesting to notice that the corpus in Italian contains only the plural "castelli" —as in "Vigneti, ville, pievi, castelli, corti, cantine e coinvolgenti feste locali" (Vineyards, villas, *pievi*, castles, courts, cellars and engaging local festivals)—which indicates that the website in Italian ignores one of the main attractions in Verona to shift its focus on the historical buildings present in the territory. It is also worth mentioning that a specific word, "pievi"[4], is not explained to the general reader, thus the website presumes a quite advanced previous knowledge in the historical-architectural domain on the part of the Italian visitors. The access to the content of the description of the territory is not made easy, or even possible, to anyone with an average level of education who might not possess such domain-specific information.

The keyword "Palladi*" was chosen for the corpora regarding the province of Vicenza: it specifically refers to the famous local architect Andrea Palladio as well as to a specific artistic-architectural style that takes its name from the same architect and is generally used to define the city as well as the entire province. The concordance analysis of this particular word is useful in that it gives an idea of whether, and to what extent, the websites provide accessible information about a specific architectural style to the general readers who must be able to recognize it upon arrival. Particularly revealing in terms of the readers' presumed knowledge, taken for granted by the website, is the concordance "the trabeations and capitals on the piano nobile are clearly Palladian." In the text, however, no further explanation is provided, so the reader is left to wonder what actually makes something "clearly Palladian," let alone what trabeations, capitals, and *piano nobile* are. The same applies to the name "Palladio" who is repeatedly mentioned but never really described, so the readers can only guess it is an important, local architect of the sixteenth century who used a "mannerist style." Likewise, in the corpus in Italian we find that the name of Palladio repeatedly occurs also in relation to events from the life of the architect linked to the places or to the attractions mentioned, but he is never fully described. In addition, we find concordances such as "La Basilica, opera paradigmatica dell'architettura palladiana" (The basilica, paradigmatic work of Palladio's architecture). The Basilica is certainly showed in pictures but nothing in the website explains to the readers the elements that make it 'typically Palladian'. The lack of a more detailed presentation of the architect as well as of his characteristic style does not convey, effectively, the importance of the person nor does it allow the readers to access the information related to the architectural style typical of the province, and to understand how they can recognize it when touring the territory.

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[4] *Pieve* is a kind of medieval, rural church (Treccani, my translation).
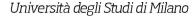
FINAL REMARKS

The investigation conducted in the present study aimed, first, at individuating the visual symbolic markers that the seven Veneto provinces use in their official, promotional websites to advertise their territories to prospective tourists and, second, at examining how these markers are exploited linguistically to generate a thorough description of the same territories which can create a specific, representative image of the territory, which is thus made univocally recognizable by the visitors when they book their holiday as well as once they arrive at the destination.

The analysis conducted in the study has revealed that both quantitative and qualitative data are consistent: the stylistic description of the corpora has shown that, in English as in Italian, the promotional websites use specialized language and are written in an elaborate style. The qualitative analysis has also confirmed this characteristic of the corpora: the terminology used is not as promotional as one would expect from tourism websites. Emphatic language, typical of promotion in tourism (Dann), is not frequently used. Nouns predominate over adjectives and the verbs typical of the tourism domain (e.g., visit, enjoy, etc.) were found to recur significantly only in one of the seven corpora analyzed. On the other hand, the general preference is for nouns that belong to the specialized fields of the history of the arts, architecture, and geography. Thus, if the territories are described in greater detail, the information is very specific, making it difficult—if not impossible—for the general public to easily access the specific information and create their own image of the territories that they wish to visit. All in all, the websites investigated use a language that does not differ from the one that is traditionally found in other official/institutional websites of Tourist Boards in other countries. As in the case of the websites investigated in Maci ("Click"), reviewed at the beginning of this article, the seven Veneto provinces seem to prefer the use of a more descriptive or informative language, rather than a promotional, creative one. In this regard, the study has also highlighted how the seven Veneto provinces try to provide the prospective visitors with a specific image of their territory, first, by presenting specific pictures in the websites and, then, constructing the promotion of the landmarks through the recurrent use of specific keywords. However, it has clearly emerged how the visual and the verbal symbolic markers do not always coincide: it is so with the provinces of Belluno, Rovigo, and Vicenza, while in the other cases the verbal representation does not correspond to the keywords used. The final result is that the presentation of the territories is somehow confused and no specific mental image is created because of the lack of consistency between images and lexical choices.

In conclusion, the general impression deriving from the websites is that they are more informative than promotional; their intended public seems to be stakeholders rather than tourists. Nonetheless, if the real target user of the websites is the general public, the use of more effective descriptions of the territories would be desirable. This could be achieved through the use of a simpler language that creates a specific image of each province, sending a promotional message that must contain consistent choices in both pictures and language, making the information about the provinces accessible

to any kind of visitor, regardless of their geographical provenance and, thus, making the institutional promotion of each territory much more effective.

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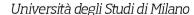
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