



Promoting Italian regional tourism in the 1930s: a qualitative analysis of English-language brochures and booklets for international visitors

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this work is to carry out a qualitative analysis of some English-language print material – mainly brochures and booklets – promoting Italian regional tourism during the 1930s. With the centralisation of the tourism industry under the Fascist regime in the 1930s (Berrino), Italy's promotion as a tourist destination became primarily an economic and profitable opportunity (Syrjämaa *Visitez*). The analysis explores the "intersemiotic relations" (Barthes) between language and visual elements (photographs and other images such as drawings, maps, and so on) considered as a main strategy of cultural adaptation for international tourists. Using multimodal discourse analysis, particularly the theoretical model defined by Kress & van Leeuwen and Kress & Jewitt, the study examines how linguistic, visual, and cultural elements contributed to a "postcard effect" – a standardised representation of Italian regions within the English-speaking world and beyond – that shapes and reinforces the image of Italy as "Bel Paese" (Dann).

KEY WORDS: Italian regional tourism; English-language brochures and booklets for international visitors; postcard effect; *Bel Paese*; multimodal discourse analysis; intersemiotic relations



INTRODUCTION

This study aims to conduct a qualitative analysis of print material promoting Italian regional tourism during the 1930s, focusing specifically on brochures and booklets either translated from Italian or directly published in English at that time. As the Fascist regime consolidated its power in the 1930s, the Italian tourism industry and its communication channels underwent more centralisation compared to the more fragmented situation of the past (Berrino). In this new scenario, the promotion of Italy as a tourist destination for international visitors gained new significance, with the regime primarily considering tourism as a great economic opportunity. Against this backdrop, the tourist material produced in the 1930s had to find a delicate compromise between the broad influence of Fascist propaganda and the practical demands of the tourism market, wherein concrete economic concerns took precedence over more ideological considerations (Syrjämaa *Visitez*).

In this context, two main institutional actors took centre stage in the tourist promotion of Italy: ENIT and Ferrovie dello Stato (FS), the national railway company. On the one hand, ENIT leveraged its resources to define large-scale marketing campaigns and international exhibitions aimed at showcasing Italy's rich cultural heritage (Battilani; Syrjämaa *Visitez*; "New"). On the other hand, FS played a crucial role in facilitating travel within Italy, providing tourists with access to remote regions and iconic landmarks across the country. This resulted in the promotion of Italy as a nation poised at the intersection of tradition and modernity, where the echoes of ancient civilisations blend with the aspirations of a burgeoning tourism industry to promote a new and modern view of the country (Aliano).

Within the Italian tourism sector of the 1930s, brochures and booklets were among the most produced text types, quantitatively speaking (Mauro in this issue). They turned into effective marketing tools for promoting Italy as a must-visit destination to foreign tourists, contributing to 'selling' a revised and modern image of the country. In this regard, they represent interesting material for analysis as they generally combine both the informative and appellative functions, as first defined by Katharina Reiss and then expanded by Peter Newmark (*Approaches; Textbook*). Their promotional nature is achieved through the interplay of these two functions: this type of publication not only provides readers with information about tourist destinations but also aims to arouse their interest and thus attract potential visitors through the use of persuasive language and captivating visuals.

The analysis presented herein will focus, quite unsurprisingly, on tourist publications jointly edited by ENIT and FS. Special attention will be given to the "intersemiotic relations" (Barthes), specifically on the interaction between language and visual elements (photographs and other images such as drawings, maps, and so on), considered as a main strategy of cultural adaptation for international visitors. The study will be conducted within the framework of multimodal discourse analysis, through the lens of the theoretical model defined by Kress & van Leeuwen, and Kress & Jewitt. Both linguistic and extra-linguistic features (including cultural and ideological factors) will be



explored with the aim of verifying the extent to which tourist brochures and booklets contributed to the creation of a 'postcard effect', that is a standardised representation of Italy and Italian regions within the English-speaking world and beyond. Following Dann, the resulting image of Italy as "Bel Paese" will be discussed as a powerful means of attracting international tourists and upholding the country's reputation abroad.

The material analysed in this study is drawn from the DIETALY project archive (Agorni in this issue), which provided a curated and varied selection of 1930s publications promoting Italian regional tourism. Following an initial screening, the publications were categorised by their subject matter, distinguishing between those devoted to individual Italian regions (e.g., Tuscany, Sicily, and Sardinia) or specific areas of the country (e.g., the Dolomites, the Adriatic Riviera, and the Bay of Naples), and those offering an overview of Italy from diverse perspectives, such as arts and music, nature, sports, and wellness. The analysis herein presented will be divided into two main thematic macro-areas: the naturalistic promotion of Italian beauty, emphasising the different opportunities for international visitors to engage in various sports activities and enjoy wellness facilities (i.e., spa resorts) throughout the peninsula; and the artistic promotion of Italian regions as part of the "Bel Paese" (Dann; Barrese) or 'Land of Beauty', focusing on introducing tourists to artistic highlights and human-made artifacts. Although the thematic brochures and booklets examined herein constitute only a select number of the tourist publications released in the 1930s, they nonetheless represent significant examples of the overall mechanisms at play in tourism communication during that period. With no pretence of exhaustivity, this study seeks to offer valuable insights into the strategies and themes employed in English tourism communication of the 1930s, shedding light on the broader context of promoting Italian regional tourism to international visitors.

PROMOTING SPORTS AND WELLNESS

This analysis begins by examining the naturalistic promotion of Italian regional tourism during the 1930s. A particularly effective strategy employed for this purpose involves presenting Italy as a destination where international visitors can practice sports and, at the same time, take care of their wellness. One of the primary promotional methods in this regard consists of introducing the diverse range of sports activities practiced in the country. The combination of nature and sports activity, while tracing back to ancient Greece with the Olympic Games, emerges as a significant tourist opportunity in the mid-19th century. One pivotal development occurs in Switzerland, where winter and mountain tourism begin to flourish, particularly through alpine climbing expeditions (Battilani). This marks the beginning of organised recreational activities in natural settings, attracting tourists seeking adventure and physical challenges amidst 'breathtaking' landscapes.

Within the promotional material produced in the 1930s, of particular interest are two booklets dating back to 1931: *Sport in Italy* and *Winter Sports in Italy*. They showcase not only popular sports but also traditional or lesser-known activities that are unique to specific Italian regions. Emphasising Italy's rich sporting heritage and the variety of



options available throughout the country may encourage potential visitors to explore different areas based on their sporting interests. The former booklet, *Sport in Italy*, published by Bestetti & Tumminelli, features a colourful cover with a watercolour-style illustration. Two sailboats are depicted navigating a calm blue sea – a clear allusion to the Mediterranean – under a cyan and almost cloudless sky, while three additional boats appear in the distance. The cover is signed by renowned Italian illustrator and painter Max Ninon (1896-1982), alias Vittorio Accornero de Testa (Pallottino "Ninon"; *Storia*), explicitly acknowledged on the bottom right-hand side, highlighting the artistic value of the image.

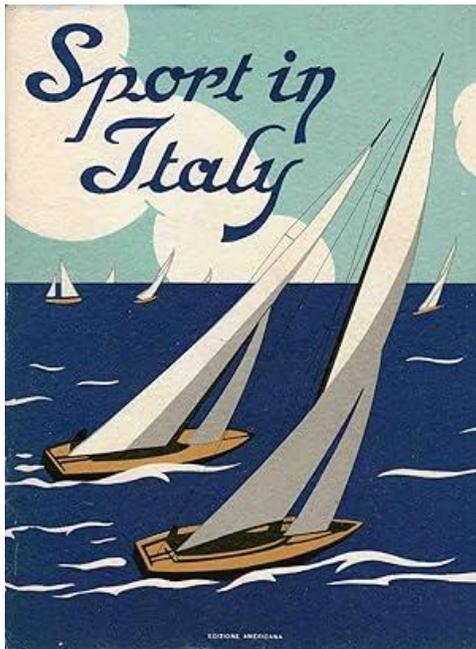


Fig. 1. Cover of *Sport in Italy*, ENIT, 1931¹

Despite presenting an example of water sport on its cover, the 32-page booklet provides a comprehensive overview of the different activities practiced in the country, including winter sports. From north to south, it presents a wide range of athletic activities and events, highlighting the unique offerings of each region. In the north, readers are introduced to the thrill of skiing in the Alps and climbing on the Gran Paradiso, as well as boating on Lake Como and playing golf in Merano. International visitors seeking maritime adventures can enjoy boarding competitions such as the Sailing Regatta in San Remo and the Motor-boat Races in Venice. In central regions, tourists can experience the excitement of cycling through picturesque countryside landscapes as well as track cycling, polo, and steeplechasing. Moving southward, sea activities always remain good options (starting with fishing) as well as other sports such as golf in Rhodes.

¹ Image sourced from an original copy preserved in this author's private collection.



The layout of *Sport in Italy* is consistent throughout, with each page featuring a black-and-white picture at the top that occupies half of the page, while the written text is incorporated just below. The pictures maintain the postcard-style, with the only visible difference being that this time they obviously portray individuals engaging in the activity at issue. The captions for each picture are concise and straightforward. Interestingly, each page also contains a stylised orange drawing placed at the bottom, on the external part. The drawing is closely related to the main topic discussed in the text and is linked to the picture at the top, operating as a sort of visual hypernym. The overall impact of the layout is dual: not only does it enhance the brochure's visual appeal, but it also enriches its content, striking a balance between sobriety and a more captivating aesthetic.

Compared to *Sports in Italy*, the content of the booklet *Winter Sports in Italy* is much more detailed, considering that this publication has a total of 96 pages and includes both a preface and an index at the end to assist readers. As referenced in the title, the booklet covers a variety of popular winter sports destinations, spanning from the northern regions (the Dolomites) to the southern areas (the Apennine Mountains).² It highlights Italy's diverse landscape and offerings for winter sports enthusiasts, providing valuable information on each location. This includes detailing their specific features, attractions, accommodations, amenities, as well as dining options and transportation services for visitors seeking a memorable winter experience.

The cover of the booklet is partially different from *Sports in Italy*: while still retaining the watercolour-style, it does not display a postcard landscape but a suntanned fit man skiing. As far as the integration between the verbal and the visual mode is concerned, the pattern is similar, but not the same. This time, there is more dynamism in the layout as pictures and images are placed either on the top or at the bottom of the page. Postcard-like pictures in black and white alternate with small black-and-white drawings related to the semantic field of winter sports, contributing to the overall cohesion and coherence of the text. The visual elements also include six maps of the main regions presented in the booklet – namely, the North-West side of the Alps and Piedmont, Lombardy, Trentino, the North-East area, Tuscany, and Abruzzo – along with the plans of the two most important infrastructures.³ Additionally, the booklet incorporates some visual graphs that represent the most popular facilities in the field of winter sporting.⁴

The booklet is the translation of the corresponding Italian version entitled *Sports invernali* ('Winter sports'), published in the same year. Focusing on its layout and textual organisation, the English booklet represents an extreme example of what Nida would call "formal translation." It faithfully mirrors the Italian counterpart not only in terms of the tourist information provided but also regarding the visual elements employed,

² These destinations encompass renowned ski resorts (such as Courmayeur, Madonna di Campiglio, and San Martino di Castrozza), mountain passes (like Aprica Pass and Tonale Pass), and valleys (such as Fassa Valley and Fiemme Valley).

³ Namely, the artificial bobsleigh run at Cortina d'Ampezzo, and the bobsleigh run at Vipiteno (the Giovo Pass road), both located in the Dolomites.

⁴ Examples of these facilities include the Littorio spring-board at Ponte di Legno (Lombardy), the Barone Franceschetti spring-board for jumping at Cortina d'Ampezzo, the Spinning road at Selva, and the spring-board at Avelengo, all situated on the Dolomites.



starting with the cover that displays the same image as the Italian source text. Within the overall formal approach followed in the English text, the addition of the prepositional phrase 'in Italy' in the title exemplifies a more "dynamic" translation choice (Nida), demonstrating the importance of considering cultural adaptations (Vinay and Darbelnet) when catering tourist texts to an international audience.

Within the realm of sports activities available to foreign visitors in Italy during the 1930s, two publications are specifically devoted to golf. The booklet *Golf in Italy* (1931) differs from the two publications analysed thus far in as much as it serves a more practical purpose. Here, the visual mode prevails over the verbal mode: the book aims to provide international sports aficionados with useful information about the golf links available throughout the country. The image of a tall man playing golf on a green course is foreground in the watercolour-style cover with some Roman ruins in the background, under a cyan sky – a clear metaphor for Italy as a land always kissed by the sunshine.⁵ The cover illustration is signed once more by Max Ninon who is credited on the bottom right-hand side.

The 42-page booklet is divided into two parts. The first one devotes each page to a different golf link, providing a sort of verbal-visual outline for twenty-three golf courses.⁶ All outlines are composed of a postcard-like picture of the place inserted on the top of the page with practical information about the location and the golf course at the bottom. The second part, entirely visual, presents the detailed plans of twenty golf courses,⁷ with two plans drawn for each page.

Golf in Italy seeks to convey a precise image of Italy as a modern and up-to-date country where tourists can find world-class facilities and picturesque landscapes to enjoy their favourite sport. The first part of the booklet opens with a map of the country where each link is located. Visually, the imbalance between the north and the rest of the country is quite noticeable. Nonetheless, no mention of this discrepancy is made in the brief note that accompanies the map, which reads as follows:

NB. – The links described in this booklet are placed in geographical order from west to east and from north to south. It is considered superfluous to mention in each case that there are hotels provided with all conveniences since they are all situated in the neighbourhood of popular resorts or important towns (ENIT *Golf Booklet 2*).

This caption is more of a declaration of intent, in which marketing needs seem to prevail over any other possible considerations. Something similar also happens with the brochure *Golf in Italy*, published one year later, whose promotional intent becomes visible right from the outset. Italy is presented as a developed and well-equipped

⁵ The trope of the sunshine kissing the land of the boot is explicitly 'exploited' in three brochures of the period all entitled *Winter and Spring Sunshine in Italy*, two of them dating back to 1932 and the third to 1934. Interestingly, the introductory text for all of them is signed "by a Scotsman", with a clear allusion to someone coming from a country whose climate conditions are totally different from Italy.

⁶ Namely, Clavières, Turin, Stresa, Pallanza, Villa D'Este (Montorfano), Menaggio and Cadenabbia, Milan, Franciacorta (Brescia), Gardone Riviera, Madonna di Campiglio (Dolomites), Mendola, Merano, Carezza al Lago (Dolomites), Lido (Venice), Brioni Island, Abbazia-Lariana, Bordighera, San Remo, Rapallo, Florence, Rome, Palermo (Mondello), and Rhodes.

⁷ The three plans missing are Stresa, Bordighera, and Palermo (Mondello).



country in terms of sports infrastructures. The 1932 brochure leaves no room for doubt as it bluntly states:

Up to a few years ago golf links were almost unknown in Italy but things are very different now so that there is no district without its golf course, each of which seems to have some particular charm of its own (ENIT *Golf Brochure*).

The layout of this 8-page brochure follows a well-established pattern. The cover page features a watercolour-like image of a golf player set against the backdrop of stylised ruins reminiscent of ancient Magna Grecia temples, all under a light-blue sky. The light blue is also employed on the external and internal pages. In terms of visual elements, two pages respectively display pictures of two golf players placed at the top, and the plans of two courses – in Clavières and Turin – at the bottom.

In terms of content, the brochure succinctly describes the multitude of golfing opportunities awaiting international tourists, emphasising that Italy's mild climate – evoked throughout by the prevailing use of light blue – allows golf lovers to play their favourite sport year-round in diverse locations, suiting every golfer's taste and needs. From mountainous regions like Clavières and the Dolomites to picturesque lakeside locales such as Stresa and Como, and even along the Italian Riviera in San Remo and Rapallo, golf courses abound. Major cities like Milan, Turin, Florence, Rome, and Palermo also offer courses, as do international resorts like Venice's Lido and the Island of Brioni. Quite proudly, the brochure also remarks that "even on the artistic and picturesque Island of Rhodes, the Italian colony of the Aegean, one can play golf."

The island of Rhodes is consistently mentioned and included in three of the publications dedicated to sports in Italy, with the only notable exception being the booklet *Winter Sports in Italy*. This deliberate inclusion of the island aims to underline the imperial dimension of the country. Throughout these publications, Rhodes is always referred to as "the colony of the Aegean Sea." Notably, the island is normalised as if it were part of mainland Italy, illustrating a sense of territorial expansionism and integration, thus strengthening the idea of Italy's beauty and tourist facilities extending beyond its peninsular borders. While the normalisation of Rhodes as part of the Italian nation may indirectly reinforce the international image of the country as a colonial power in the Aegean region – also known as the Dodecanese –, it does not overtly highlight the broader imperial aspirations of the Fascist regime during that period (McGuire). Instead, it functions more as a veiled allusion and implication in the editorial rationale behind these publications, rather than being a feature expressly addressed in the textual and visual elements of what essentially remains promotional material for international tourists.

Unsurprisingly, some publications of the late 1920s to early 1930s were specifically devoted to promoting Rhodes. Among them is the 48-page booklet *Rhodes - The Island of Roses* (1933), which is the English translation of the Italian booklet *Rodi - L'isola delle rose* (1933). While the tourist information provided is essentially the same, some minor modifications are introduced in the layout of the English version to seamlessly integrate the written text with the black-and-white pictures. The same occurs also with the visual



design of the English booklet *Rhodes*, possibly published some years earlier,⁸ compared to its Italian counterpart *Rodi*. Overall, both English booklets, along with their corresponding Italian source texts, exhibit a consistent and well-established pattern in terms of the intersemiotic relation between the verbal mode and the visual components. In these four publications, the visual elements seem to prevail, contributing to an overall 'postcard effect' in the presentation of the Italian island in the Aegean.

The interplay between promotional purposes and ideological implications is more visible in a booklet from the sports series specifically devoted to one of the most beloved sports in Italy: football. The booklet, entitled *See Italy and the World's Football Championship* (1934), was specifically produced on the occasion of the second edition of the FIFA World Cup – the quadrennial international football championship for senior men's national teams – that took place in the country from May 27 to June 10, 1934. Here, the influence of Fascist ideology becomes more evident than in the other publications of the same period, possibly due to the circumstantial nature of this specific booklet (Syrjämaa *Visitez*). From the very words of the introductory text, this publication openly acknowledges the huge effort made by the Fascist regime in the organisation of such an important sport event. The text reads as follows:

[...] the development of sport and the great progress made by Fascist Italy in sporting organization were fully and unconditionally recognized by the International Federation of Association Football (ENIT *Football*).

The explicit reference to the regime and the overtly ideological interpretation of this booklet are immediately mitigated and toned down by the mainly informative and practical nature that the introductory text acquires as it progresses. The visual elements are also key in this regard. The text opens with a black-and-white drawing of a football player kicking a white ball, while it closes with a drawing of a white football ball 'literally' flying into the net to mark a goal. The ball is visually depicted with a pair of white wings, serving as a metaphor for fair play in sports. This imagery is encapsulated by the association with a dove, symbolising unity and peace.

The white football ball is also prominently positioned at the centre of the booklet's cover. Against a blue background, the cover showcases stylised Italian monuments on the left-hand side, alongside eight red points representing the eight hosting cities on an imaginary map on the right-hand side, with Rome's point being larger than the other seven. Though apparently superfluous, this detail is quite revealing as it alludes to the greatness of Rome as both the current capital of modern Italy and the vibrant centre of the glorious Roman Empire. The message conveyed to foreign tourists is in the sign of continuity between Italy's glorious past and its modern incarnation.

In terms of layout and textual organisation, the 24-page booklet follows a pretty regular pattern. It introduces the eight main Italian cities hosting the football

⁸ In the case of *Rodi* and *Rhodes*, the date of publication is not explicitly mentioned in either booklet. This information can be recovered only indirectly from their content and their visual design.



championship, along with their respective stadia.⁹ The visual-verbal outline is the same for each of them. The verbal mode is consistently accompanied by three visual elements: a postcard-like black-and-white panorama of the cityscape, a panoramic picture of the stadium, and a map with directions to reach the stadium from the city's central stations and other landmarks in town.

Overall, the design and messaging of the booklet's cover, along with the accompanying text, suggest an intention to showcase Italy's hosting and participation in the World Cup championship. By highlighting Italy's sporting achievements, the booklet only indirectly aligns with Fascist propaganda, projecting an image of national pride abroad. This narrative serves to promote the sporting event and, to some extent, reinforces the Fascist regime's authority as an actor entitled to play on the international field. Nonetheless, this latter aspect is carefully balanced within the booklet's textual organisation, whose primary focus is on celebrating Italy's leading role in the sport competition rather than overt political messaging.

From sports, this section concludes with the analysis of a topic that is closely related to physical exercise: the promotion of wellness tourism in Italy during the 1930s as depicted in a booklet exclusively dedicated to showcasing the country's spa destinations: *Spas in Italy* (1933). Wellness and thermal baths in Italy have ancient origins, tracing back to the Roman era, and experiencing a revival during the Renaissance. In the 19th century, Italy saw a renewed interest in spa tourism driven by medical advancements, resulting in the great popularity of hydrotherapy and balneotherapy. In the 20th century, a more modern concept of spa resorts emerges, with destinations offering an array of wellness treatments and amenities to cater to the growing demand of international tourists (Battilani; Berrino).

The 50-page booklet *Spas in Italy* offers a comprehensive guide to Italy's thirty-one thermal destinations, including renowned spa resorts like Montecatini Terme, Fiuggi, and Abano Terme.¹⁰ Each spa destination is promoted for its distinct healing traditions and natural wonders. The booklet provides a verbal-visual outline for each destination, offering general information about the town followed by specific details about the thermal waters, principal uses, and establishments available.

The booklet opens with a map detailing the Italian railway paths – both the main and the secondary ones – whose captions are not translated into English. It is not entirely clear whether this foreignising choice was deliberate or simply an oversight when incorporating the original railway map in Italian. In the latter case, this could suggest that the English booklet is the result of a translation process from an Italian text. However, since the research project does not include the original material among its sampled documents, this interpretation remains partially speculative. Nonetheless,

⁹ The eight hosting cities, along with their respective stadia, are Turin (the Littorio Stadium), Milan (San Siro Stadium), Trieste (the Littorio Stadium), Genoa (the Football Stadium), Bologna (the Littoriale Stadium), Florence (the Berta Stadium), Rome (the Stadium of the National Fascist Party), and Naples (the Ascarelli Stadium).

¹⁰ In alphabetic order, the remaining twenty-eight thermal destinations mentioned include Bagni di Casciana, Bagni di Ghianciano, Bagni di Lucca, Bognanco, Castellammare di Stabia, Castrocaro, Civitavecchia, Island of Ischia, Levigo-Vetriolo, Leghorn, Monsummano, Pejo, Torretta Terme, Recoaro, Roncegno, Saint Vincent, Salice Terme, Salsomaggiore, San Pellegrino, Santa Caterina Valfurva, Sciaccia, Sirmione, Terme di Valdieri, Uliveto, Vinadio.



considering the meticulous attention paid to linguistic details in adapting the visual components of the other promotional texts analysed thus far – not to mention the fact that the final page of the publication expressly refers to it as the “English version” –, this possibility seems to be highly likely.

In terms of layout and visual design, the booklet adopts a similar approach to the publications previously discussed, with captivating imagery that reinforces the informative text. With black-and-white postcard-like pictures, readers are invited to embark on a visual journey through these spa towns, immersing themselves in the timeless elegance of their architecture, the tranquillity of their lush gardens, and the serenity of their picturesque surroundings. Pictures are always positioned on the top half of each page, interspersed with some indoor shots depicting bathrooms in Abano Terme, Acqui, and Salsomaggiore. The booklet’s cover features a blueish and stylised drawing of the Mouth of Truth, the well-known ancient marble mask located along the portico of Santa Maria in Cosmedin church, in Rome. From the mask’s mouth erupts what seems to be a copious waterfall, which symbolises water and metaphorically alludes to the benefits of thermal therapy.

In a nutshell, the booklet emphasises Italy’s continued commitment to spa tourism, with modern facilities and innovative wellness treatments (Berrino). Tradition and innovation, on the one hand, and beauty and wellness, on the other, merge together to create the image of a country that successfully manages to incorporate its glorious thermal past – tracing its origins back to the ancient Roman baths of Salsomaggiore – into a diverse and contemporary array of therapeutic offerings for international visitors.

PROMOTING ARTISTIC ITALY AS THE LAND OF BEAUTY

This section will delve into the artistic promotion of Italian regions, portraying them as part of the “Bel Paese” (Dann; Barrese). This trope has always been indirectly alluded to in all the promotional material examined thus far. The analysis will now consider promotional brochures and booklets that address this aspect more directly. The aim is to explore how international visitors are introduced to the rich artistic heritage and human-made artifacts that adorn almost every corner of the Italian peninsula – the ‘Land of Beauty.’ Analysing the interaction between language and visual elements employed in these promotional publications will help define the strategies used to captivate and entice tourists with Italy’s cultural charm.

Of particular interest here are three booklets dedicated to music and art: *Musical Life in Italy* (1933), *Musical Life in Italy* (1934), and *The Art in Italy* (1934). To better understand the attempt made at portraying Italy as the ‘mythical Land of Beauty,’ it may be beneficial to quote the opening words of the 1933 booklet devoted to musical life in Italy. The text reads as follows:

Lovers of music, as well as even the most celebrated musicians, have always visited and still continue to visit Italy, as it is above all a land of vibrations, of harmony, and of song, the home of melody. In Italy, everything throbs and pulses with life, from the overheated air one breathes, shimmering in the sunshine, to the memories of the most far-distant civilizations, and still



further back to the myths and fables which still survive in its laws, its traditions, its superstitions, its love-songs, its country melodies, and the calls of its mountain dwellers (ENIT *Musical* 1933 3).

The excerpt vividly portrays Italy as a land of vibrations, harmony, and song – an image able to deeply resonate with readers, inviting them to explore its rich tapestry of culture and history. Through the use of poetic and expressive language (Reiss; Newmark *Approaches; Textbook*) – though some may consider it old-fashioned – the text transports readers to a ‘mythical’ place where memories of past civilisations merge with the natural beauty of the country, referenced via the warmth of Italian sunshine. The passage carefully aggrandises the image of Italy, weaving together sights, sounds, and emotions into a captivating symphony of imagery. The booklet concludes with defining Italy as “the classic land of harmony” (ENIT *Musical* 1933 35). This vibrant rhetoric reflects a trope commonly employed in tourism communication throughout the 1930s.

The 36-page booklet takes music enthusiasts on a journey through the most emblematic theatres and opera houses of the country, where they can immerse themselves in live music performances – from the renowned Scala in Milan to the San Carlo Theatre in Naples and Teatro Massimo in Palermo. By also including insights into venues such as the Roman Arena at Verona and the Greek theatre in Syracuse, the booklet offers a comprehensive view of Italy's diverse musical landscape, inviting readers to experience the harmonious blend of ancient history and contemporary musical excellence – a theme introduced from the very outset. The content of the 1934 booklet *Musical Life in Italy* remains largely unchanged, with the new publication essentially serving as a new edition of the booklet released the previous year. The only slight differences between the two versions can be observed in the layout of the written text and the positioning of some pictures.

Despite these minor changes, the overall visual design of both booklets follows a well-established pattern. Each page generally features a black-and-white picture at the top half, with the written text shown in the bottom half. The postcard-like pictures alternately display the sumptuous indoor hall and the majestic outdoor façade of the theatre/opera house being presented. The captions accompanying each picture are telegraphic, consisting solely of the name of the place and city portrayed.

While the overall visual design remains largely consistent between the two versions, their covers diverge noticeably. The 1933 booklet's cover foregrounds a pastel drawing against a monochromatic beige background. The drawing depicts two cherubic girls reminiscent of Renaissance putti, with one positioned on the right-hand side playing a mandolin – one of Italy's most emblematic musical symbols. Not only does this illustration create a charming and playful aesthetic, capturing the attention of potential readers, but it also sets the tone for the booklet's topic. It conveys a sense of whimsy and cultural richness that will be explored within its pages. The captivating visual design is further embellished by the image placed on the front page: a fair-coloured pastel drawing depicting a slender putti-style young girl playing a lute against a darker backdrop. The choice of the lute effectively reinforces the trope of Italy's varied musical tradition. A black-and-white picture portraying a sculpture of putti playing the lute featured on the final page further enriches the visual cohesion and coherence of



the booklet. A very similar picture replaces the pastel drawing on the 1934 booklet's cover and is also used on the front page.

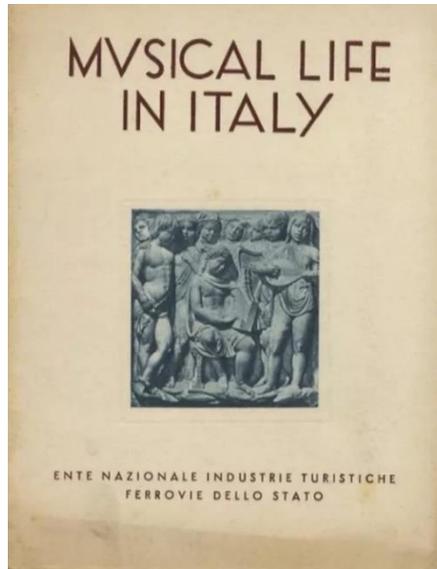


Fig. 2. Cover of *Musical Life in Italy*, ENIT, 1933¹¹

The final visual impact of both publications is sober and polished, an impression reinforced by the careful selection of an elegant font and lettering. The lettering employed on the cover and front page of both booklets merits further analysis. The title is written in capital letters as 'MVSICAL LIFE IN ITALY.' This convention is reminiscent of both classical and ecclesiastic Latin spelling rules, where the capital 'U' is commonly represented by 'V' in official writings, such as inscriptions on buildings, churches, monuments, and epitaphs (Treccani "U"). This detail is quite telling in terms of the intended audience envisaged by the two booklets. Coupled with the topic explored, this 'innocuous' element contributes to defining the socio-cultural profile of the readers and potential visitors to Italy: aficionados and virtuosos alike, that is, well-educated and sophisticated members of the upper-middle class.

While attempts to popularise cultural tourism had already begun in the second half of the 19th century with Thomas Cook's 'packaged tours,' which aimed to make visiting Italy more accessible to a broader range of foreign travellers, especially those from the lower middle class (Hom), cultural tourism communication in 1930s Italy still appears predominantly aimed at the upper-middle class and wealthy individuals (Battilani; Berrino). This implies that the international tourists targeted possess not only high social standing and the financial resources to travel abroad but also the background knowledge and education – that certain amount of "cultural capital" to quote Bourdieu – necessary to fully appreciate the cultural offerings of the 'Land of Beauty.' This entails being able to pay attention to any minimal details – from noticing the antique-style use of 'V' on the cover to distinguishing between different Italian

¹¹ Image sourced from an original copy preserved in this author's private collection.



traditional instruments, and from recognising the diverse architectural and decorative styles of the individual theatres to appreciating their acoustics. In both booklets, the visual and verbal mode are craftily tailored to suit the needs of this specific profile of international visitors. What is novel is the reinterpretation of old and picturesque images of Italy through a more contemporary lens: foreign tourists are confronted with a modern country that strategically leverages this image, economically benefiting from its historical charm while offering competitive services and new opportunities.

The concept of tailoring the promotion of the country's artistic heritage to visitors' expectations and curiosity also emerges in the 1934 booklet *The Art in Italy*. This 78-page booklet introduces art enthusiasts to the richness of Italian art by presenting three different thematic itineraries organised along three distinct temporal axes: ancient art, medieval art, and Renaissance and modern art. In terms of the overall layout, this publication appears at the intersection between a concise art history textbook and a detailed museum catalogue, thus aligning with the sophisticated and 'sleek' presentation of the two music booklets previously discussed.

The invitation to a fascinating journey through Italy's artistic beauty begins right from the cover of the booklet, where a charcoal-style drawing reproducing the Chimera of Arezzo captures the reader's eye. Regarded as the most emblematic example of bronze-casting in the history of Etruscan art, the mythological creature of the Chimera, composed of different animals, embodies strength and power. Its representation on the booklet's cover symbolises Italy as an artistic powerhouse, a land that has significantly contributed to the world of art and culture with its creative excellence – a trope that imbues the booklet throughout. This imagery sets the stage for an immersive exploration of Italy's artistic treasures and historical landmarks, inviting readers to embark on a visual and intellectual discovery of the country's vibrant past and dynamic present.

Within the booklet's internal pages, the integration of the verbal and visual mode follows a well-established pattern, albeit with some dynamism. The balance between the written text and the black-and-white pictures is harmonious and cohesive. Visual elements are alternately positioned at the top and bottom halves of the pages. Several pages feature postcard-like pictures of some of Italy's most emblematic monuments (historical palaces and churches), alongside internationally renowned artworks in Italian sculpture and painting. At times, the pictures occupy the entire page, and even span two consecutive pages, thus reinforcing the message that art should be experienced first and foremost visually. The final effect is to present the 'Land of Beauty' as a 'museum *en plein air*', combining pictures of artistic artifacts from major museums and galleries in the country with captivating panoramic views of historical ruins and landmarks.

To conclude this section, it may be useful to provide a very brief overview of the additional materials collected by the DIETALY research project that promote Italian regional tourism in the 1930s. This material also includes brochures and booklets presenting Italian regions *stricto sensu* – that is, from a more administrative and contemporary standpoint. Among them are *The Valley of Aosta* (1933, brochure),



*Lombardia*¹² (1937, booklet), *Istria*¹³ (1934, booklet), *Romagna* (1932, brochure), *Tuscany* (1930, booklet), *Umbria* (two booklets dating back to 1933 and 1937, respectively), *Sicily* (1933, booklet; 1935, brochure), and *Sardinia* (1932, booklet). Other publications promote Italian regions from a more geographical perspective, such as the brochure *The Dolomites* (1932) and the booklet *The Dolomites Northern Italy* (1937), the booklet *The Italian Lakes* (1938), the two brochures *The Adriatic* (1932) and *The Adriatic Riviera* (1932), and the brochure *The Bay of Naples* (1932). Some other thematic publications are devoted to classical sites of Magna Grecia – the brochure *Magna Grecia* and the booklet *Magna Grecia*, both from 1933 – and classical cities of Sicily – the eponymous booklet *Classical Cities of Sicily* also from 1933.

In terms of layout and textual organisation, all these publications adhere to a similar pattern, wherein written text is thoughtfully integrated with visual elements. Notably, postcard-like pictures play a prominent role in the representation of the *Bel Paese*. The overall rhetoric remains consistent across all of them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through a qualitative analysis of English-language brochures and booklets promoting Italian regional tourism during the 1930s, this study has sought to offer valuable insights into the communication strategies employed by ENIT to attract international visitors to Italy during the second decade of the Fascist era.

Though not a direct expression of Fascist ideology, tourism communication of the 1930s proves to be intricately linked to the regime's political and economic agenda. While the promotional publications do not overtly adhere to hardcore Fascist ideals, they are not entirely deprived of any ideological stances either. Ambivalence characterises the interplay between the marketing and promotional mission of the tourism sector (Italy as a destination worth visiting) and the regime's political and ideological ambitions (Italy as a nation worth international respect). This ambivalence emerges in various ways, from more subtle references to softcore Fascist principles in some promotional material – Italy's glorious cultural past idealised as a source of national pride and identity – to efforts to maintain a neutral stance while still aligning with the regime's economic objectives of upholding the country's reputation on the international tourism market.

Thematic brochures and booklets thus become effective marketing tools for promoting Italy as a must-visit destination to foreign tourists, contributing to the regime's effort to 'sell' a revised and modern image of the country. The analysis has focused on the intersemiotic relation between linguistic and visual elements in tourist publications, examining how they contribute to the creation of a standardised portrayal

¹² While the book retains the title in Italian, throughout the text, the region is consistently referred to as Lombardy (in English). It is not entirely clear whether this choice was deliberate or merely a material error. The latter interpretation appears more plausible considering that the titles of similar publications tend to use the English name for other Italian regions.

¹³ After Italy's victory in World War I with the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919) and the Treaty of Rapallo (1920), Istria became part of the Kingdom of Italy (1919-1947). After the end of World War II, Istria was ceded almost entirely to Yugoslavia (Wörtsdörfer).



of Italy and its regions for international visitors. Through a multimodal discourse analysis, the study has explored the main strategies and tropes used to promote Italy as the 'Land of Beauty' and showcase its naturalistic and artistic attractions. On the one hand, the naturalistic promotion of Italian beauty, with a focus on sports activities and wellness facilities, and on the other hand, the artistic promotion of Italian regions, emphasising their cultural heritage and human-made artifacts. The concept of the 'postcard effect' has emerged and been discussed throughout the analysis, highlighting the role played by these promotional publications in shaping and reinforcing prefabricated perceptions of Italy among English-speaking audiences.

Despite the limited number of publications analysed in this study, it has offered valuable insights into the historical and cultural context of Italian tourism promotion during the 1930s. It has underscored the significance of language and visual imagery, particularly in terms of rhetoric and symbolism, employed to shape both new and old images of Italy abroad. What has emerged is a reinterpretation of the classic romantic portrayal of Italy as the 'Land of Beauty' through a more contemporary lens – the representation of a modern country equipped with advanced facilities and service to welcome foreign tourists with its hospitality.

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