Research Paper

Official websites as a tourism marketing medium: A contrastive analysis from the perspective of appraisal theory

Geqi Wu

School of Foreign Languages, Hangzhou Normal University, No. 2318, Yuhangtang Road, Hangzhou, Zhejiang 311121, China

A B S T R A C T

This article provides a discourse analysis of the online tourism marketing of two tourist destinations – Hangzhou and London – with the purpose of examining how destinations from different cultural contexts promote the local attractions to an international audience. The sample texts chosen from two websites (www.gotohz.com and www.visitlondon.com) are analysed through appraisal theory. The results show that the use of linguistic resources functions to promote destinations and that the two destinations differ from each other in marketing methods. The measures that Hangzhou adopts include conveying information, highlighting its history and establishing credibility by citing authoritative words, whereas London attempts to promote the city by foregrounding its current attractions and inviting readers to the text. The paper finally discusses possible reasons for the differences and provides several implications for online tourism marketing.

1. Introduction

In today's world, with its fast-developing information technology, online tourism marketing is an alternative to paper-based marketing or other types of promotional media. Reading travel guides on the Internet is, for most tourists, part of the process of preparation and anticipation long before they arrive at their destinations. As noted by Jack and Phipps (2005, p.82), "[i]t enables the imagining of the destination. It is future-oriented travel in the present". Searching for information online is also an important part of the purchasing decision process. Through the selection and publication of tourism information, a tourism website guides and promotes the browser's formation of a destination image and hence influences his/her decision-making (Zhang, Xu, Lu, & Lei, 2015). Against this backdrop, many countries and regions have made considerable efforts in tourism marketing by means of designing tourism websites in order to promote themselves and reach a national and international audience.

As the tourism business continues its globalisation process, growing competition makes the tourism website a valuable tool for marketing tourism and the destination, and makes the text on the tourism website an instance of advertising discourse (Zuliani, 2013). In a global scenario, information provided by the tourism website should, on the one hand, manifest the culture of the destination (Horng & Tsai, 2010) and, on the other hand, be adjusted to the international audience.

This paper deals with tourism marketing by looking at two tourism websites, (www.gotohz.com and www.visitlondon.com), both of which

are local government-sponsored tourism websites. By comparing and contrasting the discourse of the two websites, the paper intends to examine how destinations from different cultural contexts promote the local attractions to an international audience. Against the background of the abovementioned research objective, the primary question is the following: In what ways do tourism websites, through the use of linguistic resources, realise the purpose of tourism marketing? This question triggers the following specific questions: What aspects of the two destinations are presented as tourism themes on the tourism websites? In what ways are voices invited into the texts on these websites? What evaluation is made about the two destinations? How is the evaluation made? What are the possible reasons for the differences between the two destinations in marketing the cities? Based on the answers to these questions, implications for online destination marketing will be discussed.

2. Literature review

The promotion of tourism has been interrelated with the branding of destinations. The boosting of the destination can be traced to ancient times. However, the marketing or branding of destinations, especially cities, has become a matter of course since the 1990s "as a result of the convergence of three macro processes that have been taking place all over the world: the growing urbanization, the technological revolution, and the economy and communications globalisation". (Gascó-Hernández & Torres-Coronas, 2009, p. xii). The concept of destination

branding started to spread with the Travel and Tourism Research Association's Annual Conference in 1998 (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005). Since then, the concept of the tourism destination image has been widely studied from the point of view of tourism (Pan & Li, 2011; Stepchenkova, Kirilenko, & Morrison, 2008).

The tourism website is regarded as the most important communication tool for destination marketing in the information age (Chiou, Lin, & Perng, 2011; Law, Qi, & Buhalis, 2010; Lee & Gretzel, 2012). The website's influence on readers' attitudes about the destination has been confirmed by empirical research (Lee, Gretzel, & Law, 2010). The vividness, directness and convenience are the main advantages of the website. Research shows that the usability of tourism websites is "a key aspect in the creation of a good brand image"(Fernández-Cavia & Huertas, 2009, p.33), that tourism websites "can provide a huge amount of information, convey an image of the place, permit useful ways of interacting with users and also operate as a point of sale" (Del Vasto-Terrientes, Fernández-Cavia, Huertas, Moreno, & Valls, 2015, p.16) and that countries and territories can identify themselves with a defined and specific brand through user-friendly and attractive institutional tourist websites (Luque, 2016). In this sense, tourism websites serve as the portal for advertising and marketing.

Since the marketing role of tourism websites has been widely acknowledged, the importance of a thorough evaluation of websites for tourism destinations has been largely recognised. There has been a growing body of research on the evaluation of tourism websites in the last three decades since various approaches were first proposed by researchers in the late 1990s (Lu & Yeung, 1998). Both commercial and government tourism websites have been evaluated to discuss tourism marketing, and strategies have been discussed to improve the quality of tourism websites (e.g. Baggio, 2003; Cao & Yang, 2016; Chiou et al., 2011; Del Vasto-Terrientes et al., 2015; Doolin, Burgess, & Cooper, 2002; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Ip, Law, & Lee, 2011; Law et al., 2010; Morrison, Stephen, & Douglas, 2004). Different aspects of the websites have been investigated, including the amount and quality of content, website layout, user judgement, textual information, visual and presentation style, ease of navigation and online transaction, usability and accessibility. Most of the studies largely concentrate on the economic and technical aspects of destination brand promotion, such as financial, human and physical resources. Details of the attributes of the websites are excluded. A lack of sufficient research has been noted in regard to the combination of tourism studies and the study of discourse or language. Researchers notice that "there has been little dialogue between scholars who primarily study discourse (language in particular) and communication, and those whose primary focus is tourism" (Pritchard & Jaworkski, 2005, p.1).

Applying discourse analysis to tourism websites can provide professionals working in tourism with knowledge about what is being communicated to browsers. This approach may allow the professionals to become more aware of the functioning of tourist promotional material such that they can master how the range of resources can be used as strategies for designing websites to attract the target visitor (Nekić, 2015). As Hannam & Knox (2005) state, utilising discourse analysis, meaning the development of a more nuanced reading of the data, can add a more critical edge to much of tourism research. Studies on combining tourism studies with discourse studies began mainly in the last decade. The literature review of such studies manifests four points. First, during the beginning phase, most studies (e.g. Dann, 2001; Flowerdew, 2004; Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005; Koller, 2008; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010) were concerned with the analysis of print material. It was not until 2010 that the discourse of tourism websites has aroused more researchers' attention (e.g. Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010; Manca, 2013; Magyar, 2015; Nekić, 2015; Zuliani, 2013). Studies focus on linguistic texts on both commercial websites and official websites. Researchers believe that the discourse of tourism can be understood as a particular way of using language to communicate information and convince prospective tourists. Second, some studies of tourism websites

from the perspective of discourse study focus on how to appropriately translate the information in order to enhance the communicative effectiveness of the message (e.g. Luque, 2016; Ríos & Hernández, 2016). Third, various approaches and frameworks are applied, including content analysis, textual-linguistic analysis, semiotic analysis, genre analysis (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005), corpus-assisted discourse studies (Jaworska, 2016), functionality analysis (Lu, Lu, & Zhang, 2002), and systemic-functional analysis (Magyar, 2015). Hannam & Knox (2005, p.1) argue "[t]hat discourse analysis is not just interested in what is within the text itself but also in what has been left out and the 'secret' meanings that are not obvious". Shi-Xu (2005) also states that to explain, interpret and evaluate discursive events, what is said and done, who speaks, how it is said and done, medium, culture, and history should be examined. In other words, discourse studies should explore the discourse topic, discourse subject, and discourse strategy, as well as other 'hidden' aspects. I think that discourse analysis of tourism websites can shed light on the roles that linguistic resources play in tourism marketing and branding and thus allows us to investigate the functions of promotional strategies adopted by the website. In light of this belief, this paper studies promotional tourism discourse by comparing the promotional strategies of two websites.

3. Research method and analytical framework

This section will introduce how data is collected and what framework is going to be adopted to analyse the data.

3.1. Data collection and analysis

This study adopts the case study approach with the purpose of having a detailed contextual analysis of two tourism websites and their relationships. Despite the limited data, a case study can povide a detailed examination and obtain an in-depth appreciation of the subject of study in its natural real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). The sample texts chosen for analysis were two official websites, namely, www.gotohz.com and www.visitlondon.com. Hangzhou is a Chinese coastal, historical, thriving tourist city. The city was named 'The Best Tourist City in China' by the World Tourism Organization in 2007 and made the 'The New York Times Places To Go in 2016 List'. As one of the departments most important for articulating the city-brand to the international community, Hangzhou Municipal Tourism Commission has been making great efforts to promote the city on a global scale. The official website is, no doubt, one of the most important channels of which the commission makes use. So far, three foreign language versions – English, German, and Japanese – are available on the official website. We take the English version, a complete translation of the Chinese one, as the data for analysis. London, as one of the largest cities in Europe, "has been one of the world's top tourism cities for many years, and a key gateway for domestic and international visitors" (Maxim, 2017, p.1). Over the years, London has been successfully implementing policies towards sustainable tourism.

The tourism websites of these two cities are chosen as the data for analysis based upon the following reasons:

(1) The two websites have parallel text structures which have been agreed upon by researchers in the area of contrastive linguistic studies suitable for comparative analysis (Krzeszowski, 1984).
(2) Although tourism websites for other destinations may equally display common bases of comparison, Hangzhou is chosen as the object of study because although the city is acknowledged as a representative of oriental Chinese culture due to its long history, rich culture, and natural beauty, it is still underrepresented in linguistic analysis. London is recognised as the leading global city for tourism and a constantly evolving destination delivering a high-quality visitor experience (Tyler, 2009). Therefore, London is chosen as the representative tourism city of the West and serves a reference point

in this study. It is hoped that the comparison of these two cities' official tourism websites can explore the promotion strategies and the properties and problems of the destination branding practice of Hangzhou from an oriental developing-world context.

The website www.gotohz.com consists of four main sections, each of which includes subsections. Of these, two were selected for analysis, namely, 'About Hangzhou City' and 'Why Hangzhou'. The former is a general introduction to Hangzhou, and the latter provides reasons to visit the city. We chose these two sections, on which the other sections are based, because they provide the most basic and comprehensive information of the city. Additionally, they show the longest stretches of continuous text. To maximise comparability, two similar sections from www.visitlondon.com are selected, namely, 'London at a Glance' and 'Top 10 Reasons to Visit London'. In total, the data are made up of 1824 words, 761 words from www.gotohz.com and 1063 words from www.visitlondon.com.

This study focuses on three aspects of the discourse, the discourse topic, discourse subject, and discourse strategy. As mentioned in the literature review, the discourse topic refers to the main content covered on the websites, which is of particular importance "because it directly influences the perceived image of the destination and creates a virtual experience for the consumer" (Doolin et al., 2002, p.557). The discourse subject refers to the speaking actor, i.e. the person or agent who is responsible for a certain opinion expressed on the websites. The analysis of the discourse subject can determine what possible relationship is established between the writer and reader. The discourse strategy in this context refers to linguistic devices that are employed to describe the destinations on the websites. The analysis of the discourse strategy can show what attitude is presented in the text and how the destination is evaluated. When these three aspects are integrated, they can provide us with a picture of the image that the city tries to present via the website.

3.2. Analytical framework

Appraisal theory is employed as the framework within which the data are analysed. This framework is used based on the belief that a tourism website, designed to market tourism and destination, is rich in interpersonal meanings, i.e. expressions of interacting with prospective visitors, exchanging meanings, and establishing and maintaining appropriate social links with them and that the theory which focuses on interpersonal meanings related to the negotiation of social relationships (Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; Martin, 2000), can therefore be an effective framework of analysis.

Appraisal theory divides the interpersonal meanings into three semantic domains: Attitude, Graduation and Engagement.

Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things. *Engagement* deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. *Graduation* attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred. (Martin & White, 2005, p.35)

The lexical resources for expressing Attitude are grouped within three systems: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation (Martin, 2000). Affect "is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings: do we feel happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored?" (Martin & White, 2005, p.42) Judgement is about the moral assessments of behaviour, i.e. "attitudes towards behaviour, which we admire or criticise, praise or condemn" (Martin & White, 2005, p.42). Appreciation involves aesthetic evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena, including things, texts and processes. (Martin & White, 2005). In general, Appreciation can be divided into "reaction" to things, "composition", and "value" (Martin & White, 2005, p.56). According to the two-way distinction of Engagement, utterances can be classified as

"monoglossic" when they make no reference to other voices and viewpoints, and as "heteroglossic" when they do invoke or allow for dialogistic alternatives (Martin & White, 2005, p.99–100). Graduation has to do with adjusting the degree of an evaluation in the context of gradable resources, which is called "force", or has to do with the effect of adjusting the strength of boundaries between categories, constructing core and peripheral types of things, which is called "focus" (Martin & White, 2005, p.37). Resources from the three appraisal systems cluster together to construe the 'rhetorical voice' of a text (Martin & White, 2005).

Appraisal theory provides the tools to analyse the key interpersonal features. The analysis follows three steps. First, the discourse topic of the two sections on each website will be analysed. The content that the two sections in the two websites cover is going to be compared. Then, Engagement will be analysed as a way of probing the discourse subject. By analysing to what degree the voice is heteroglossic, the study will investigate what voices are drawn into the text, and whether or not a dialogic space is opened up between the copywriter and reader. Thus, who is speaking in the discourse can be discussed. Third, Attitude and Graduation will be analysed as a way of probing the discourse strategy. By analysing such factors as what emotion is expressed in the text, what evaluation is made towards a certain phenomenon or entity, and how emotion and attitudes are expressed, I will discuss what discourse strategies are employed on the two websites to present information and interact with the reader.

Then, by combining the discourse topic, discourse subject and discourse strategy, the paper will discuss the similarities and differences in the ways the two cities promote local attractions by means of websites. Finally, implications for marketing tourist destinations will be given.

4. Marketing of the two tourist destinations

4.1. Discourse topics in the two sections on each website

4.1.1. Discourse topics of www.gotohz.com

The section 'About Hangzhou City' is where Hangzhou Municipal Tourism Commission conceptualises the city as a brand and tries to establish the ideal image in the minds of prospective tourists. We find that Hangzhou is presented based on its history and scenery. First, Hangzhou's long history with splendid culture is chosen as the core content of this section. Expressions such as 'was settled as early as 4700 years ago', 'was applauded as "the most splendid and luxurious city in the world" by Marco Polo, the Italian traveller in the 13th century', etc all highlight the long history and splendid culture of the city. Second, when Hangzhou's current status is described, the focus is the city's natural beauty. Such expressions as 'is often described as a natural traditional Chinese painting' and 'is a world-famous scenic tourist resort' stress the city's natural scenery. However, only two sentences are used to describe the scenery. Compared with its historical and cultural resources, the city's current attractions lack importance and prominence in the text.

The explanation of why Hangzhou is an ideal destination is provided in six subsections: Culture & Heritage, Tradition & Folklore, Specialty & Souvenirs, Festivals and events, Key facts, and Historical Notables of Hangzhou. The reasons range from heritage sites, traditional activities, and traditional products, to stories of celebrities in Hangzhou. So, basically, all the six sections highlight one aspect, i.e. the traditional Chinese culture of the city.

To sum up the contents of both sections, history and traditional culture are the main aspects of the city that Hangzhou Municipal Tourism Commission hopes to present to prospective visitors. The attractiveness of the city "is mainly generated from the cultural memory and cultural atmosphere that constitutes the spirit and soul" of the city (Zhang et al., 2015, p.122). In this sense, the image which Hangzhou Municipal Tourism Commission tries to present to prospective visitors is mainly based on its historical self, i.e. the image and reputation it

established in history.

4.1.2. Discourse topics on www.visitlondon.com

The corresponding section, which gives a general introduction to London on the website www.visitlondon.com, is called 'London at a Glance'. The main contents are divided into thirteen subsections, titled Capital of Britain, Connectivity, Diversity, History, Attraction, River Thames, Outdoor Spaces, Restaurants, Shopping, Family Holidays, Hotels, Transport, and Accessibility. Generally, the main emphasis of the introduction is laid on the contemporary self, i.e. the current status of the city, instead of the historical self, for only one section is about the history and all of the other sections are about London's current attractions. This is different from 'About Hangzhou City'. Another difference from 'About Hangzhou City' is that different aspects of London are introduced, ranging from transportation, parks and museums, to restaurants and hotels. It seems that the copywriter hopes that the prospective visitor can get a multi-angle view rather than experiencing just one single aspect of the city.

The section corresponding to 'Why Hangzhou' is titled 'Top 10 reasons to visit London' in www.visitlondon.com. Generally, the ten reasons focus on the best sights, attractions, and activities in London. Similar to the section 'Why Hangzhou', this section also stresses its history, tradition and culture. However, differently from 'Why Hangzhou', which focuses almost exclusively on the traditional culture and historical aspects of the city, 'Top 10 reasons to visit London' also touches upon modern culture. For example, in addition to traditional food and drinks and long-running plays, new works and contemporary food are also introduced. Additionally, rather than repeatedly mentioning the long history and rich culture the city has, as in the case of the Hangzhou website, this section of www.visitlondon.com focuses on describing concrete cultural and sporting events, which are regarded as important channels for improving the destination image (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

In summary, in www.visitlondon.com, the image of London is mainly based on its contemporary self. In addition, various cultural resources are specified to illustrate the rich culture with which the city is endowed.

4.2. Discourse subjects of the two sections of each website

4.2.1. Discourse subjects of www.gotohz.com

The copywriter's employment of Engagement is visible, although not highly frequent in the text. Altogether, six instances of Engagement resources are drawn on (bold faced), five of which fall into the category of expansion (the first five instances) and one of which falls into the category of contraction (the last instance):

Hangzhou once **was applauded as** 'the most splendid and luxurious city in the world' by Marco Polo, the Italian traveller in the 13th century

the cultural heritage of Hangzhou **is considered by the locals** to be the jewel

the city **is also praised as** 'the Home of Silk and Tea'

Hangzhou **is often described as** a natural traditional Chinese painting

which **is considered** one of the best in China

Hangzhou is **not** to be missed.

Expansion "makes allowances for dialogically alternative positions and voices" (Martin & White, 2005, p.102). It is clear that the copywriter admits other voices into the text. As the first five instances show us, the passive voice constructions (Expansion: Attribute: Acknowledge) are attributes which suggest that "the propositions are grounded in the subjectivity of an external voice" (Martin & White, 2005, p.98). This finding suggests that the copywriter hopes to validate the plausibility of the remark by referring to other people as the discourse subject. In the first two instances, the voice of Marco Polo and the locals are explicitly acknowledged. The act of taking Marco Polo as the discourse subject indicates that the copywriter hopes to convince the reader that Hangzhou enjoyed great reputation in history, which serves as a good foundation for the contemporary self. Hangzhou locals are a collection of people who are sure to have a good knowledge of the city, so their remarks would sound believable. Some discourse subjects are implicit but recoverable. The passive structures such as 'is considered' and 'is praised as' tell the reader that the reputation Hangzhou enjoys is accepted by the public or is taken as an accepted fact. Extravocalisation also suggests that the copywriter tries to distance the authorial voice from the attributed material. The passive voice structures seem to tell the reader that the copywriter is not the source of the propositions. Rather, he/she allows other people to introduce the city. The question of where the authorial voice stands with respect to the proposition is open to the co-text. Thus, a neutral and objective attitude is established, which in turn is likely to lead to the plausibility of the text.

4.2.2. Discourse subjects on www.visitlondon.com

The text on www.visitlondon.com is less heteroglossic, with most parts of the text giving mere facts about the city with little appraisal. No Engagement resources are used in the text, indicating that no alternative voices are drawn in.

A point worth noting is that the text, although it sounds monoglossic, is in fact very dialogic. At the very beginning of the text, the tone of the dialogue is set with the second person pronoun 'you', addressing the reader directly. The first sentence '[b]efore you visit London, you'll need to know the basics' sounds as if the copywriter is giving the prospective visitor some suggestions for visiting London. Next, the following sentence '[h]ere are some useful facts and tips to help you plan your trip' gives the feeling that the suggestions are given to the reader face to face. Additionally, imperative sentences such as 'don't be surprised' and 'take a culinary journey' also directly address the reader. In this way, the reader is well-integrated into the text.

4.3. Discourse strategies in the two sections on each website

4.3.1. Discourse strategies on www.gotohz.com

The primary attitudinal source used on www.gotohz.com is that of Appreciation. Sixty-one instances of Appreciation can be found in the text compared to only four Judgement instances and not a single instance of Affect, suggesting that the text is virtually devoid of overt emotion and assessments of people. The statistics tell us that among the three Appreciation categories, reaction is the value employed most dominantly (see Table 1).

The fact that the majority of appreciating items are classified as Quality suggests that the copywriter intends to make use of people's

Table 1
Frequency of Appreciation resources in www.gotohz.com.

Appreciation	Reaction		Composition		Valuation	Total
Sub-category	Impact	Quality	Balance	Complexity	Social significance	
Number (percentage)	4 (6.6%)	33 (54.1%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	22 (36.1%)	61 (100%)

reactions provoked by the things promoting the city of Hangzhou. The 33 instances of Quality are mainly used to evaluate Hangzhou's reputation throughout history, as well as its rich culture and tradition.

Of the 33 instances, seven instances of verbs are used to evaluate the reputation that Hangzhou has enjoyed throughout history and the good qualities that Hangzhou possesses. Twenty-four instances of adjectives evaluate the beautiful scenery, splendid history, colourful activities, and the romantic nature of the city, while two nouns evaluate the good reputation of the city. The following extract clearly demonstrates how the text uses incidences of Appreciation: Reaction: Quality (bold faced).

Extract 1. Paragraph 1 of About Hangzhou City

Hangzhou was settled as early as 4700 years ago, by the aurora Liangzhu Civilization. As one of the seven <u>ancient</u> capitals and the **scenic** tourism and <u>historical</u> culture cities in China, Hangzhou once **was applauded as** 'the **most splendid and luxurious** city in the world' by Marco Polo, the Italian traveller in the 13th century.

In the first sentence, the judgement resource 'as early as' is used. From the second sentence on, resources of Appreciation: Reaction: Quality are used. The attributive adjective 'scenic' is value-laden, indicating that the beautiful scenery of Hangzhou is a generally acknowledged fact in China. The subsequent verb phrase beginning with 'was applauded as' in the next clause, which usually carries a positive sense, suggests that the copywriter wants to associate Hangzhou with positive qualities such as 'splendid' and 'luxurious'. In this way, a positive evaluation is made at the beginning of the text, and the reader is orientated to interpret the text in a particular way. It is obvious that the city image of Hangzhou is evoked through tokens of Appreciation: Reaction: Quality.

The variable of Valuation is the type of Appreciation resource used second most frequently in the text. This type of resource "has to do with the assessment of the social significance of the text" (Hunston & Thompson, 2002, p.162). In Extract 1, two instances of Appreciation: Value: Social significance, i.e. 'ancient' and 'historical' are used (underlined). Both of these two instances evaluate the city and thus give the reader the first impression that Hangzhou is a city with a long history and a historically high political status. Other attributive adjectives of the same type include 'valued', 'time-honoured', 'world-famous', etc, which are mainly used to modify activities and products and thus highlight Hangzhou's long history and rich culture.

To further reinforce Attitude, a handful of Graduation resources are used in the text. Table 2 shows that only resources of Force are employed in the text.

Force: Quantification is achieved in terms of number, extent, or mass, as shown in the following instances (bold faced):

there are **numerous** related or themed festivals and events organised for family, fun, and leisure

possessing **thousands of** years of rich and distinctive history

boasting **many** stories of celebrities

in addition to these great innovators are **many** others

shopping in Hangzhou **ranges** from a traditional to a modern experience

Table 2
Frequency of Graduation resources in www.gotohz.com.

Graduation	Force		Focus		Total
Sub-category	Quantification	Intensification	Up-scale	Down-scale	
Number (percentage)	9 (56.3%)	7 (43.7%)	0	0	16 (100%)

there are several major shopping areas spread **all** over the city

participate in **a variety of** events throughout the year

Temples, pagodas, poems, proses, paintings, music and calligraphy are all inextricably woven into **a kaleidoscope of** cultural tradition and philosophical aesthetics.

Resources of Force: Quantification: Number carry the semantic meaning of a large amount, as shown in the first four instances, suggesting that the copywriter wants to give prominence to Hangzhou's long history and residents' rich and colourful life and give readers the impression that Hangzhou is a remarkable place producing outstanding people. Resources of Force: Quantification: Extent cover "scope in time and space (i.e. how widely distributed, how long lasting) and proximity in time and space (i.e. how near, how recent)" (Martin & White, 2005, p.149). The phrases 'ranges from a traditional to a modern experience' and 'all over the city' give the impression of the multitudinous choices that Hangzhou can offer in relation to shopping. Clearly, the purpose is to attract the reader to visit Hangzhou. Resources of Force: Quantification: Mass refers to the imprecise reckoning of mass or presence (Martin & White, 2005). This category (the last two instances) gives prominence to the rich cultural life that Hangzhou people enjoy. In summary, the resources of Graduation: Quantification in the text of www.gotohz.com are employed mainly to present the rich culture and colourful life that Hangzhou people have, which is employed as a selling point to attract prospective visitors to the city.

Force: Intensification in the text is achieved in terms of quality, and all the resources are used to upscale attitude (bold faced)

Hangzhou is of **great** historical and cultural importance

are **highly** valued and also practised by local people

is considered one of the **best** in China

is one of the **finest** characteristics

Graduation resources are used to modify the Appreciation resources to further emphasise the attitudinal force. For example, the adverb 'highly' is used to modify 'valued', so the positive quality of the traditional activities is boosted. In addition, the copywriter's attitude is boosted through the use of superlatives, such as 'best' and 'finest'. In this way, the quality of traditional products and characteristics of Hangzhou people are underlined.

In summary, the use of Graduation resources suggests that the reputation Hangzhou has enjoyed throughout its long history, as well as its rich culture and the activities people engage in are the three main aspects that are most strongly presented. The use of Graduation resources not only amplifies the attitudinal force but also strongly indicates to readers that they share the same value position.

4.3.2. Discourse strategies of www.visitlondon.com

As with the text on www.gotohz.com, the dominant Attitude resource in www.visitlondon.com is Appreciation. Altogether, 68 instances of Appreciation are found, but only two instances of Affect and no instances of Judgement are found in the text. The statistics show that reaction is the most frequently used value, which is the same as on www.gotohz.com.

In contrast to www.gotohz.com, which includes seven verbs to evaluate the city, only one verb of positive evaluation is used in www.visitlondon.com, i.e. 'boast'. Rather, the overwhelming majority of Quality instances are attributive adjectives. In addition, instead of describing the history and culture of the city, these attributive adjectives describe all-around aspects of London, including history, restaurants, hotels, transport, attractions and theatres. Additionally, these attributive adjectives describe tangible aspects, such as 'cosy bed and breakfast' and 'cheap backpackers' hostel' suggesting that the emphasis is put on basic necessities of life, with the purpose of informing prospective

visitors of the convenience that the city can provide when they visit London. The following extract, which introduces London's restaurants, demonstrates how the text uses resources of Appreciation: Reaction: Quality (bold faced) to promote the city.

Extract 2. Restaurants of Top 10 Reasons to Visit London

> There are more than 6000 restaurants in London so you'll never be short of **new** places to eat. London **boasts** 65 Michelin-starred restaurants and many celebrity chefs are based here, and there are plenty of **good**, **cheaper** options too.

The noun phrase followed by the verb phrase 'new places to eat' carries the connotation that London has many restaurants, and visitors can always get fresh and distinctive feelings when having dinner in London. The positive evaluation is thus set. The following two sentences specify the meaning of the first sentence by introducing two different kinds of restaurant. The verb 'boast' indicates that London is proud of having high-class restaurants and chefs. Then, the two attributive adjectives 'good, cheaper' introduces the other kind of restaurant. On the whole, the paragraph manages to give the impression of the multiple choices visitors can make when visiting London. A sense of convenience and rich and colourful experiences is transmitted to the reader.

As Table 3 shows, the frequency of Reaction: Impact, although lower than that of Reaction: Quality, is higher than on www.gotohz.com. The instances of Reaction: Impact, such as 'amazing views' and 'a stunning backdrop', highlight the glamour of the attractions in London. These resources aim to provide an extremely attractive picture of London to readers, with the hope of impressing them deeply. In addition, the use of Impact resources seems to involve readers more directly by giving them the feeling of being amazed or stunned. In this sense, the recourse to Reaction: Impact is designed to heighten the reader's involvement in the discourse, and, hence, a more dialogic nature of the text can be seen.

Similar to www.gotohz.com, Resources of Value: Social significance, such as 'economic', 'cultural', and 'historic', are also used to highlight London's status in the three aspects (bold faced). However, more resources are employed mainly to highlight the important position of London in the world, as shown by 'the centre', 'world-class', and 'renowned' in the following instances (bold faced).

> London is the political, **economic** and **cultural** capital of Britain.

> You can visit the Queen's official residence at Buckingham Palace and tour the Houses of Parliament, **historic** home of the UK government.

> London is a city **at the centre** of the world.

> London's **world-class** tourist attractions are **renowned** across the globe.

As on www.gotohz.com, Graduation resources are used on www.visitlondon.com to further reinforce Attitude. However, the frequency of Graduation resources is much higher than on www.gotohz.com, indicating that the copywriter hopes to intensify the tone. Out of the 34 instances of Graduation, the variable of Force is the most dominantly employed value, dividing nearly half-and-half into Quantification and Intensification (see Table 4).

Different from www.gotohz.com, where resources of Quantification

Table 4
Frequency of Graduation resources in www.visitlondon.com.

Graduation	Force		Focus		Total
Sub-category	Quantification	Intensification	Up-scale	Down-scale	
Number (percentage)	17 (50%)	16 (47.1%)	1 (2.9%)	0	34 (100%)

are achieved in terms of number, extent and mass, on www.visitlondon.com, the resources of Quantification are achieved mostly in terms of number. As shown in the following examples, words and phrases such as 'many', 'plenty of' and 'a few' are used to modify the city and its belongings, suggesting that London is a city rich in all kinds of facilities, making it attractive to visitors. Therefore, the use of numbers to evaluate London can be seen as the copywriter's effort to promote the city with an amplified attitudinal force.

> The city has **many** famous luxury hotels, but there are **plenty of** cheaper options too.

As in www.gotohz.com, Force: Intensification is also an important variable used in www.visitlondon.com, and all instances are Force: Intensification: Quality, which are used to upscale attitude. However, different from www.gotohz.com, a high degree of Intensification is mostly achieved through the comparative and superlative degree in www.visitlondon.com. For example,

> Many of the **most famous** attractions are free to visit.

> examine the world's **most precious** treasures at the British Museum

> Shop in Europe's **largest** urban shopping centre at Westfield Stratford

> London has the **best** theatre scene in the world.

As shown in the above instances, by using such resources as 'largest', 'best', 'most famous', and 'most precious', the copywriter tries to give prominence to the large size of shopping areas, the good quality of the exhibits and theatres, and the great fame of the attractions. In one word, the excellence of London is boosted by the use of the comparative and superlative degrees.

In short, in contrast to www.gotohz.com, where it is the value of beautiful scenery, rich culture and long history that are mainly boosted, www.visitlondon.com aims to promote the city by emphasising its tangible aspects and the colourful life it promises. The linguistic features favourably position London as a tourist destination offering a comfortable and attractive environment for experiencing the sights. Additionally, the upscaling of attitude acts show that the copywriter is committed to the value position they express and hence attempt to align the reader into that value position.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The results of analysing the discourse topic, discourse subject, and discourse strategy of the two tourism websites through appraisal theory suggest a strong, subjectively coloured textual voice on both websites. The similarities and differences between these two websites are

Table 3
Frequency of Appreciation resources in www.visitlondon.com.

Appreciation	Reaction		Composition		Valuation	Total
Sub-category	Impact	Quality	Balance	Complexity	Social significance	
Number (percentage)	12 (17.7%)	36 (52.9%)	0	6 (8.8%)	14 (20.6%)	68 (100%)

summarised below.

In terms of the discourse topic, both websites describe the history and culture of the two cities. However, on www.gotohz.com, the history and traditional culture of the city is presented as the tourism theme, while www.visitlondon.com places more emphasis on various aspects of the city, such as museums, shopping areas, restaurants, and hotels. In terms of the discourse subject, the text on www.gotohz.com is more heteroglossic than that on www.visitlondon.com. However, the reader is invited into the text on www.visitlondon.com, while the reader is distanced from the text on www.gotohz.com. In terms of the discourse strategy, both websites choose to evaluate the city itself but not the people, and there is nearly no expression of emotion on either website. As a result, Appreciation, i.e. the aesthetic evaluation of entities, is the main appraisal strategy. However, the Appreciation resources on www.gotohz.com mainly evaluate the reputation, culture, and history of the city, while those on www.visitlon.com evaluate various tangible aspects of the city and highlight the important position of the city. In addition, many more Graduation resources are used on www.visitlondon.com, indicating that the copywriter is working hard to boost the positive aspects of the city and to establish a convincing authorial persona to align the reader with that value position.

This study shows that apart from visual and presentation style, layout design, etc, which are commonly studied aspects of tourism websites, linguistic resources, particularly words and phrases, can function to promote the destinations. Additionally, the study finds that destinations of different cultural contexts differ from each other greatly in the use of linguistic codes to market tourism and brand the cities. Since content is the core asset for any destination (World Tourism Organization, 2008), both of the tourism destinations provide rich information to introduce the cities. However, different aspects of information are focused on across the two websites to present a different city image. Hangzhou projects itself as a historical city with rich culture, whereas London identifies as a modern city providing colourful activities as its brand. It is true that a place is founded on a history that cannot be overlooked or denied. However, an indisputable reality is also of importance for the brand of the place (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013). In addition, as Palmer (2005, p.28) states, "tourism destinations are probably one of the most difficult 'products' to market, involving large numbers of stakeholders". Therefore, instead of focusing on only one or two aspects of the destination, a comprehensive introduction should be made to cater to all readers. As regards the ways of presenting the self, www.gotohz.com chooses to transmit information unidirectionally, where the copywriter performs the speech act of 'telling', and the reader, constructed as the receiver of the information, is distanced from the copywriter and the text. In contrast, www.visitlondon.com chooses to orientate the reader, whose existence is justified through being served as a tourist. As we know, receivers are the cornerstone of any branding campaign. Putting the focus on the product would lead to the ignorance of the real target (Luque, 2016). In this sense, with the focus mainly on information, www.gotohz.com is prone to ignore the reader/prospective visitor. In terms of voice, www.gotohz.com takes referring to other people's opinions as a promotional strategy, especially where the reputation of the city is to be proved. By contrast, no such promotional strategy is adopted in www.visitlondon.com. Instead, a definite tone of voice is adopted to ensure that the visitors can get an exciting experience. To sum up, as far as linguistic resources are concerned, London shows a stronger intention of destination branding than Hangzhou.

The different ways of marketing on the two websites reflect the differences in the history of commercial advertising, the city's reputation, and culture. Commercial advertising has a much longer history in western economies than in China. The company or organization maintaining the website is experienced in how to use language in advertising. Comparatively speaking, commercial advertising is not that old in China. Not as much research has been done on using language in commercial advertising. Therefore, the text on www.gotohz.com

merely transmits messages to the reader. In addition, Hangzhou enjoys a great reputation in China but is not yet so well known outside of China. Because of this, great efforts are made to introduce the city, especially the reputation it has earned, with the purpose of increasing credibility. It is hoped that visitors would be willing to visit the city when they know its long history and rich culture. London, on the contrary, seems so confident about its reputation all over the world that its history and culture do not need much introduction. Therefore, more practical suggestions about how to visit the city are given on the website. Different cultures are another reason for the differences between the two websites. In the past 2000 years of Chinese history, respect for authority has been a salient value in Chinese culture (Shi-xu, Prah, & Pardo, 2016). In contemporary Chinese discourse, respect for authority is not the same as in the past, but still, Chinese people would refer to the authoritative, the experienced, and the knowledgeable to establish credibility. However, English culture does not share the value to the same extent.

Discourse analysis of the tourism websites has some implications for online tourism promotion. Compared to the provision of basic information services, it is more important to create persuasive website designs that can help prospective visitors to learn about destinations and form strong attitudes about them (Lee & Gretzel, 2012). First, to present the self as a destination worth exploring, the tourism website should establish a common ground with readers by inviting them into the text. More personal language could be used to involve prospective visitors better. In other words, more persuasive words and expressions could be used to have a dialogue with the reader. Just as on the London website, the second person pronoun 'you' could be used to create a natural model of face-to-face communication. Imperative mood could also be used to give readers the impression that they are given practical suggestions about how to explore the city. If readers are invited into the text, they are likely to form a cognitive resonance that leads to an approval of the investigated destination as a favourable place to visit. Second, tourism organisations that wish to influence tourists' perceived image of a destination should pay more attention to the evaluative and affective dimensions of the image. Therefore, decisions to use appraisal strategies in texts on websites need to be made with an understanding that such strategies will enhance the website's persuasiveness. The proper use of Appreciation, Judgement, and Graduation resources could help to boost the positive image of the destination such that prospective visitors might get readier to visit the destination. Third, the website could provide prospective visitors with a virtual experience. To reach that aim, tourism website designers need to consider what to present to prospective visitors. Apart from such information as history and culture, more tangible aspects of the destination, such as shopping centres, restaurants, and museums, should be presented. Such information can help prospective visitors to imagine that it would be feasible to visit the destination and hence, adopt a positive attitude while planning their trip. Last but not least, from the perspective of information transaction, the tourism website should provide information on various aspects of the destination to serve different customers. For example, some readers are business travellers, others are fond of cuisine, and still others are regular sightseeing tourists. Therefore, only when the tourism website provides information segmentation can it better cater to readers' needs, wants and preferences.

To conclude, this paper compares two official tourism websites with a discourse approach, and sheds some light on the different discursive strategies of tourism marketing and destination branding between the tourism websites from two cultural contexts. Recommendations have been made for increasing the effectiveness of the tourism websites.

More systematic research is needed to better understand whether the differences would apply to other tourism websites or if they are specific to London and Hangzhou. To determine whether there is consistency between the tourism websites design and the customers' requirements and preferences, further research is needed to examine the websites from the reader's perspective.

Acknowledgements

Funding

References

Baggio, R. (2003). A websites analysis of European tourism organizations. *Anatolia, 14*(2), 93–106.

Blain, C., Levy, S. E., & Ritchie, B. J. R. (2005). Destination branding: Insights and practices from destination management organizations. *Journal of Travel Research, 43*, 328–338.

Cao, K., & Yang, Z. (2016). A Study of e-commerce adoption by tourism websites in China. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 5*, 283–289.

Chiou, W. C., Lin, C. C., & Perng, C. (2011). A strategic website evaluation of online travel agencies. *Tourism Management, 32*(6), 1463–1473.

Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. BMC Medical Research Methodology. 11, 100. Retrieved 20.05.18. from: ⟨https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/1471–2288-11-100⟩.

Dann, G. (2001). The self-admitted use of cliché in the language of tourism. *Tourism, Culture and Communication, 3*(1), 1–14.

Del Vasto-Terrientes, L., Fernández-Cavia, J., Huertas, A., Moreno, A., & Valls, A. (2015). Official tourist destination websites: Hierarchical analysis and assessment with ELECTRE-III-H. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 15*, 16–28.

Doolin, B., Burgess, L., & Cooper, J. (2002). Evaluating the use of the web for tourism marketing: A case study from New Zealand. *Tourism Management, 23*, 557–561.

Fernández-Cavia, J., Díaz-Luque, P., Huertas, A., Rovira, C., Pedraza-Jiménez, R., Sicilia, M., ... Míguez, M. I. (2013). Destination brands and website evaluation: A research methodology. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 68*, 622–638.

Fernández-Cavia, J., & Huertas, A. (2009). City brands and their communication through web sites: Identification of problems and proposals for improvement. In M. Gascó-Hernández, & T. Torres-Coronas (Eds.). *Information communication technologies and city marketing: Digital opportunities for cities around the world* (pp. 26–49). Hershey: Information Science Reference.

Flowerdew, J. (2004). The discursive construction of a world-class city. *Discourse & Society, 15*(5), 579–605.

Gascó-Hernández, M., & Torres-Coronas, T. (Eds.). (2009). *Information communication technologies and city marketing: Digital opportunities for cities around the world.*. Hershey: Information Science Reference.

Hallett, R. W., & Kaplan-Weinger, J. (2010). *Official tourism websites: A discourse analysis perspective.* Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Hannam, K., & Knox, D. (2005). Discourse analysis in tourism research: A critical perspective. *Tourism Recreation Research, 30*(2), 23–30.

Horng, J., & Tsai, C. (2010). Government websites for promoting East Asian culinary tourism: A cross-national analysis. *Tourism Management, 31*, 74–85.

Hunston, S., & Thompson, G. (2002). *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ip, C., Law, R., & Lee, H. A. (2011). A review of website evaluation studies in the tourism and hospitality fields from 1996 to 2009. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 13*, 234–265.

Jack, G., & Phipps, A. (2005). *Tourism and intercultural exchange: Why tourism matters.* Clevedon: Channel View Publications.

Jaworska, S. (2016). A comparative corpus-assisted discourse study of the representations of hosts in promotional tourism discourse. *Corpora, 11*(1), 83–111.

Jaworski, A., & Pritchard, A. (2005). *Discourse, communication and tourism.* Clevedon: Channel View Publications.

Koller, V. (2008). 'The world in one city': Semiotic and cognitive aspects of city branding. *Journal of Language and Politics, 7*(3), 431–450.

Krzeszowski, T. P. (1984). Tertium comparationis. In J. Fisiak (Ed.). *Contrastive linguistics:*

Prospects and problems (pp. 301–312). Berlin: Mouton.

Law, R., Qi, S., & Buhalis, D. (2010). Progress in tourism management: A review of website evaluation in tourism research. *Tourism Management, 31*(3), 297–313.

Lee, W., Gretzel, U., & Law, R. (2010). Quasi-trial experiences through sensory information on destination web sites. *Journal of Travel Research, 49*(3), 310–322.

Lee, W., & Gretzel, U. (2012). Designing persuasive destination website: A mental imagery processing perspective. *Tourism Management, 33*, 1270–1280.

Lu, M., & Yeung, W. L. (1998). A framework for effective commercial web application development. *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy, 8*(2), 166–173.

Lu, Z., Lu, J., & Zhang, C. (2002). Website development and evaluation in the Chinese tourism industry. *Networks and Communication Studies, 16*(3–4), 191–208.

Luque, A. F. (2016). Branding and selling a country through translated tourism advertising: Spain's image. *Revista de Lenguasfines Específicos, 22*(2), 84–103.

Magyar, C. E. (2015). *The discourse of tourism and national heritage: A contrastive study from a cultural perspective.* New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Manca, E. (2013). Describing through the five senses: A contrastive socio-cultural and linguistic analysis of Italian and British tourist websites. In E. Manca, & F. Bianchi (Eds.). *Tourism and tourist promotion around the world: A linguistic and socio-cultural perspective* (pp. 109–124). Lecce: Università del Salento.

Martin, J. R. (2000). Beyond exchange: APPRAISAL systems in English. In S. Hunston, & G. Thompson (Eds.). *Evaluation in text* (pp. 34–55). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause.* London & New York: Continuum.

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The Language of evaluation: Appraisal in English.* London & New York: Palgrave.

Maxim, C. (2017). Challenges faced by world tourism cities: London's perspective. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1-20. Retrieved 04.06.18. from: ⟨http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2017.1347609⟩.

Morrison, A. M., Stephen, J. S., & Douglas, A. (2004). Website evaluation in tourism and hospitality: The art is not yet stated. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 17*(2–3), 233–251.

Nekić, M. (2015). *Tourist activities in multimodal texts: An analysis of Croatian and Scottish tourism websites.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Palmer, A. (2005). The internet challenge for destination marketing organisations. In N. Morgan, A. Pritchard, & R. Pride (Eds.). *Destination branding: Creating the unique destination preposition* (pp. 128–140). Oxford: Elsevier.

Pan, B., & Li, X. (2011). The long tail of destination image and online marketing. *Annals of Tourism Research, 38*(1), 132–152.

Pritchard, A., & Jaworski, A. (2005). Discourse, communication and tourism dialogues. In A. Jaworski, & A. Pritchard (Eds.). *Discourse, communication and tourism* (pp. 1–19). Clevedon: Channel View Publications.

Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2004). The impact of cultural events on city image: Rotterdam, cultural capital of Europe 2001. *Urban Studies, 41*(10), 1931–1951.

Ríos, E. C. M., & Hernández, A. C. (2016). The Promotion of health and beauty tourism through websites: A linguistic analysis. *Revista de Lenguas Paraense Fines Específicos, 22*(2), 62–83.

Shi-xu (2005). *A cultural approach to discourse.* England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shi-xu, Prah, K. K., & Pardo, M. L. (2016). *Discourses of the developing world: Researching properties, problems and potentials.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Stepchenkova, S., Kirilenko, A. P., & Morrison, A. M. (2008). Facilitating content analysis. *Tourism Research Journal of Travel Research, 47*, 454–469.

Thurlow, C., & Jaworski, A. (2010). *Tourism discourse: Language and global mobility.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Tyler, D. (2009). London's tourism: Is a purely economic approach appropriate? *Local Economy, 24*(5), 415–425.

World Tourism Organization (2008). *Handbook on e-marketing for tourism destinations.* Madrid: World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission.

Zhang, H., Xu, F., Lu, L., & Lei, Y. (2015). Cultural capital and destination image of metropolitans: A comparative study of New York and Tokyo official tourism websites in Chinese. *Journal of China Tourism Research, 11*, 121–149.

Zuliani, A. (2013). A journey to Portugal: The official tourist promotion of Turismo de Portugal. In E. Manca, & F. Bianchi (Eds.). *Tourism and tourist promotion around the world: A linguistic and socio-cultural perspective* (pp. 61–80). Lecce: Università del Salento.

Geqi Wu is Associate Professor in the School of Foreign Languages at Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, China. Her research interests include discourse analysis and pragmatics.