TOURISM AND TECHNOLOGY: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF ONLINE HERITAGE PROMOTION

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Abstract: The present paper presents a multimodal contrastive analysis of the way different countries, such as United Kingdom, Spain and Romania, officially promote themselves world wide by using technology. The aim is to describe and compare, following Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) and Kress and van Leeuween's (2006) models, the way official websites use images and language to compose virtual brochures that present national heritage sites. The results are discussed from a cultural perspective considering Hall's dimension of context dependency (2000).

Keywords: Culture, Internet, Multimodal Analysis, Technology, Tourism.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I compare official tourist websites from different countries: United Kingdom, Spain and Romania. For reason of space, I refer only to the pages dedicated to the following religious World Heritage Sites: Canterbury Cathedral, the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial and the Monastery of Horezu. The analysis is multimodal; it focuses on both the text and image of each page. The framework used is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), mainly Halliday's metafunctions (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) and their adaptation for the analysis of images by Kress and van Leeuween (2006). My aim is twofold: (1) describe, analyse and compare the similarities and differences that appear between the way official websites construct their pages and use images and language to compose virtual brochures that present heritage monuments and (2) see whether these choices can be accounted for from the point of view of cultural difference.

1.1. Theoretical framework

Texts can contain linguistic and non-linguistic elements, the meaning being thus communicated through several simultaneous modes. This can also be applied to Internet sites since they combine words, images and/or sounds into complex structures. Often, different modes may partly overlap or diverge (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 2). Therefore, in order to explain the intended meaning, it is necessary to analyse this type of texts from a multimodal perspective.

1.1.1. Linguistic communication

Language is the most frequent and widely used mode for communication. According to Eggins (2004: 327), it "is modelled as networks of interconnected linguistic systems from which we choose in order to make the meaning we need to make to achieve our communicative purposes". As a functional-semantic resource, we

use language to continuously construct, maintain and define appropriate meanings in possible contexts in our culture (Eggins 2004: 327).

1.1.2. Visual communication

Another mode frequently used in communication is non-linguistic, but visual, the image. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 15), "the visual component of a text is an independently organized and structured message – connected with the verbal text, but in no way dependent on it". Images contribute to a complete understanding of texts, drawing attention to the objects, landscapes or persons represented and influencing the way the text interacts with the audience (Goddard 2002: 166).

1.1.3. Metafunctions

Within SFL, language fulfils three main metafunctions: ideational - the way the experience of reality is constructed in discourse; interpersonal – the grammatical choices that enable people to enact their complex and diverse interpersonal relations; and textual - the internal organization and communicative nature of a text (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 5). These functions are fulfilled also by visual design, since it is a semiotic mode (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 2). Even if their realization or expression is different, they are interpreted in the same way as in linguistic communication. Thus, it can be said that different linguistic and visual choices lead to different interpretations of texts.

1.2. Cultural framework

Linguistic and visual communications are not transparent and universally understood, but culturally specific, since they are formed in and produced by particular cultures (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 3). Therefore, the study of the ways websites are created and virtual brochures composed can show cultural differences.

To start with, I understand culture as "an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviours, shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol systems", which "has a direct influence on the physical, relational, and perceptual environment", following Neuliep's definition (2006: 20-21). Though there are many dimensions that can show cultural differences, I have chosen Hall's *context dimension* (1976, 1990, 2000) since it seemed more relevant for this study, as it focuses on the ways meaning is created and interpreted. According to Hall (1990: 6), context is "the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event". The elements that combine to produce a given meaning usually depend on culture. He proposes two types of culture: *low context*, which relies on elaborated code systems; direct and highly structured messages and linearly organized and focalized information, and *high context,* which relies on restricted code systems; indirect messages; non-linear information; meaning retrieved from prior knowledge and emphasis on emotions (Hall 1976, 1990, 2000). Nonetheless, deviations from the main cultural pattern can occur in certain contexts and situations, since cultures are "dynamic, continuously developing, and evolving"

(Neuliep 2006: 45) and are influenced by different factors, which may be geographical, historical, religious, economic, social or political (Şerbănescu 2007: 155).

The cultures under discussion can be classified according to context-dependency as follows: the British culture is considered a low context culture, whereas the Spanish and Romanian cultures are seen as high context cultures (Hall 1976; Neuliep 2006; Şerbănescu 2007). The present study investigates whether the ways official websites construct their pages and use image and language to compose virtual brochures are consistent with these cultural classifications.

2. Data selection and methodology

This study is part of a larger research project. The corpus consists of three sets of webpages, each belonging to a different official national tourist websites: British, Spanish and Romanian. Every set contains three webpages, each introducing a different national World Heritage Site. The selection process focused on official national tourist websites, particularly on the way they present World Heritage Sites. In the case of the Spanish and Romanian websites, their English version was considered, as the study is interested in international promotion. Regarding the selection of World Heritage Sites, different types of national landmarks, such as historical, religious and urban, were considered in order to have a broader view of the official promotion method. The webpages share the following similarities: field (tourism, particularly World Heritage Sites), function (the creation of a national brand and its promotion internationally, more exactly to persuade the tourist to visit the country and the sites), medium (Internet), mode (written text and/or image and/or audio/video clip) and language (English). The most obvious difference is that they belong to different countries and cultures. After collecting the corpus, different analyses were carried out on the representations of the metafunctions in the texts and images of the webpages promoting the World Heritage Site, focusing on clause structure, transitivity, mood choices, thematic structure and visual metafunctions.

In this paper, for reasons of space, I refer only to the religious set of webpages, which promotes the following landmarks: Canterbury Cathedral in the United Kingdom, the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial in Spain and the Monastery of Horezu in Romania. I present the analyses of the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions both in texts and images. In the case of texts, I focus on types of clauses, processes, participants and circumstances; types of mood choices and types of themes and thematic progression within Halliday and Matthiessen's framework (2004). In the images, I look at types of processes, represented participants and circumstances; types of image act, social distance, perspective and angle; and types of information value, salience and framing following Kress and van Leeuween's model (2006).

3. Results of the analysis

The results of the linguistic and visual analyses are presented in relation to the representation of the metafunctions and the cultural variable for each website. This shows how the language and image, i.e. the webpage, follow or deviate from the typical cultural pattern. The webpages are included in the Appendix.

3.1. The British website

The webpage dedicated to Canterbury Cathedral can be briefly characterised as follows: short, there is little need to scroll down; multimodal, it has a long text and a small image embedded in the text; and interactive, it includes a 'Discounts and deals' section which advertises the page's online shop where the visitor can book and buy a ticket to visit the cathedral. The use of a rather short and transparent page to present the landmark and to make information easy to access can imply a direct and explicit message; a feature encountered in *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). The webpage contains also framed elements, such as the title and the image, and salient ones, such as the title, subtitle, caption and hyperlinks in the text and the cathedral in the image. These can indicate the focalization of information, as usual in *low context cultures* (Șerbănescu 2007: 142). All in all, the message seems to be transmitted mainly textually, by explicit verbal code, practice typical of *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79).

The text used to introduce Canterbury Cathedral is the following:

"Canterbury has been a key location for the Church of England for nearly five centuries and you'll find many important religious buildings and monuments in the area. Canterbury Cathedral was founded in AD597 (that's over 1,400 years ago!) and is the Mother Church of the Anglican Communion. It has a perpendicular nave, 12th-century Gothic choir, stunning stained glass windows that fill the church with colour and a Romanesque crypt. The Cathedral is the site of the Archbishop Thomas Becket's martyrdom in AD1170. His shrine became one of the most visited in the Middle Ages by pilgrims travelling the Pilgrims' Way from London and Winchester. Another important church is the Church of St Martin just outside the city's medieval wall, half of which survives today. Probably built as a Roman church in the 4th century, St Martin is the oldest church in England that's still in use as a parish church. Many visitors miss St Augustine's Abbey because of its location just outside the city centre. The ruins of this once great abbey are an impressive sight. Another not to miss is Christ Church Cathedral, a breathtaking mixture of Romanesque and Perpendicular Gothic, where Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in 1170. Must see & do: The Canterbury Tales Experience - step back in time with this audiovisual experience of the sights, sounds and smells of the middle ages in this stunning reconstruction of 14th century England. Canterbury West Gate Towers - One of England's finest medieval gates built as part of the city defences in the 1380s. See the exhibit featuring Canterbury's war history and visit the prison cells inside the towers. Canterbury Roman Museum - Located underground at the levels of Roman Canterbury. Features a mix of excavated real objects and buildings and lifelike reconstructions including computer-generated images."

Apart from presenting the cathedral, the text includes also other religious monuments and a 'must see and do' list, which provides information about nearby attractions. The contextualization of the cathedral in the surrounding area can indicate an explicit verbal code and a direct message, features usually encountered in *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). However, the inclusion of other religious landmarks in a text that announces in the title only one landmark can be confusing. The assumption that readers know that Canterbury Cathedral forms a World Heritage Site together with St. Augustine's Abbey and St. Martin's Church can suggest that meaning is assigned on the base of prior knowledge as in *high context cultures* (ibid: 79).

The text is long and built up of both clause simplexes and complexes, the latter developing by elaboration, mainly by non-defining relative clauses (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 363-482). The length of the text, the low number of sentences and the presence of relative clauses show that information is organised compactly in a

highly structured message, typical of *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 142). It generally identifies and describes by means of relational and material processes, such as 'be' and 'build'. The main participant, 'Canterbury Cathedral', and other participants, such as 'you', several religious monuments and other attractions, are usually expressed. The circumstances are detailed and varied, such as location in space 'in the area' and time 'in AD597', manner 'as a Roman church' or extent in time 'for nearly five centuries'. These are features of explicit verbal codes and elaborated codes systems typically found in *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79).

In addition, the text is composed mainly of statements which are used to make bare assertions. There are also several commands expressed by imperatives such as 'see'. This lack of meaning negotiation can imply an explicit verbal code and a direct message, features typical of *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). The placement in subject position of the cathedral and other religious landmarks indicates a focalization of information, as usual in *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 142). The themes of the text are usually unmarked. The message develops following a zigzag pattern and through new themes, indicating a non-linear organization. Both unmarkedness and nonlinearity are features preferred in *high context cultures* (ibid: 141). At the same time, there are also several continuous themes, which, together with the presence of textual themes, can imply certain linearity in the message, as usual in *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 141).

The image representing Canterbury Cathedral is small and embedded in the text, as part of it, as if, without the text, the picture has no meaning. It represents a gothic construction, possibly a church due to its cross-like shape and its towers, on a blue background, taken from a close, low and oblique angle. The image is subjective and real, as if the viewer is standing there near the building, looking at it and taking the picture him/herself. The lack of detail makes difficult to identify the building as Canterbury Cathedral. Without the title and the text, it could be any gothic construction in the world. All these elements can indicate that meaning is assigned on the base of prior knowledge as in *high context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). The addressee is expected to know what the cathedral look like, since the picture comes first, as given information, being followed by the text, as new information.

To sum up, Canterbury Cathedral is presented mainly verbally, by text. The message is direct, explicit and elaborated. The website aims to interest the tourist by presenting information in a rather short and transparent way, as in *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79).

3.2. The Spanish website

The webpage presenting the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial has the following characteristics: long, there is a need to scroll down; multimodal, it has a big image that occupies the entire screen and a text that follows it; and interactive, it contains a map, practical information, location, prices, useful information, services, travel ideas and planner, adverts for booking hotels and flights and for renting cars and a section dedicated to proposals for nearby accommodation, restaurants, tourist offices and cultural visits. This large amount of details and possibilities shows a focalization of information, as typical of *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 142). Information is also focalized by framed elements, such as the title, the image, the page subsections, the logo and the map; and salient ones, like the image and, within the image, the title,

the word '*conoce*' (discover) and the building. However, the length of the page can make the message rather indirect and inexplicit, as typical of *high context cultures* (ibid: 141). All things considered, the message seems to be transmitted firstly visually and then verbally, a practice encountered usually in *high context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 141).

The text introducing the Spanish monument is presented below:

"The Monastery of El Escorial was the first example of the architectural style which came to be known as Herrerian after its creator, Juan de Herrera. It holds the designation of World Heritage site. Philip II used this Royal Site for his family pantheon. Construction work began in 1563 under Juan de Toledo, and on his death was continued by Juan de Herrera, who completed the building in 1584. It is built in granite and divided into three areas. The central area is the Kings' Courtyard. There is a tower at each of its four corners measuring 55 metres, each crowned by a metal sphere. The building's premises include the Ministries, Casa de los Oficios (Artisans' Houses), Compaña (Company Quarters), Infantes and Reina rooms, all connected via arches. The church is laid out in the shape of a Greek cross and the funerary monuments to Charles V and Philip II can be seen in the main chapel. The library is also of particular interest. It is on the second floor of the west wing, and contains close to 45,000 documents from the 15th and 16th centuries. It was designated a Historic-Artistic site in 1971 and received the World Heritage designation in 1984. The building was designed by Juan de Herrera and gave rise to an architectural style known as Herrerian. It is a large construction, as can be seen from its 15 cloisters, 13 oratories, 86 staircases, 88 fountains, more than 1,600 paintings, 9 towers and 73 sculptures."

It is long and contains a high number of clause complexes, which unfolds by elaborating on given information and adding new one. This development can indicate an elaborated and structured message, as typical of *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 141). The text mainly identifies and describes the monastery by relational and material processes, such as 'be' or 'use'. The main participant, the monastery, and its different parts, such as towers or court, are usually expressed. The circumstances mainly situate the monument in time, e.g. 'in 1984'. This can indicate an explicit verbal code as in *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). However, the message seems to be transmitted indirectly as in *high context cultures* (ibid: 141), since the monument is identified and characterised by relational processes such as 'crown', 'connect' or 'include'. Different from the usual 'be' and 'have', they imply also a meaning of circumstance and/or possession. The indirectness of the message is highlighted also by the absence of 'you'; the addressee is not openly stated, but implied.

Information is presented through statements that act as bare assertions, leaving meaning negotiation aside, as typical of *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). It is also focalized, as in *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 142), since the main participant, the monastery, is placed in subject position. The text develops by continuous and textual themes, organizing the message linearly, as in *low context cultures* (ibid: 141). At the same time, there are several linear and new themes, which can indicate nonlinearity. This and the lack of marked themes are features of *high context cultures* (Şerbănescu, 2007: 141).

Finally, the image is the most important part of the message. It comes first, at the top of the page, as 'an ideal product'. The top-bottom, or ideal-real organization of the page, implies that, after reading the text (the real), the tourist can access or come closer to the 'product' in the image, i.e. the monastery (the ideal). It is also

accompanied by an invitation implied by the imperative 'conoce' (discover). This connotative meaning can show an emphasis on emotions, as typical of *high context cultures* (Șerbănescu 2007: 141). The image is a close shot taken from a high oblique level and represents several buildings, possibly religious due to the form of the towers, with a garden. As in the case of Canterbury Cathedral, the lack of details makes difficult to identify the image as the Monastery of El Escorial. Without the title, which acts as a stamp identifying the photo, it could be any construction in the world. This can imply the assumption of prior knowledge and the assignment of meaning based on it, as in *high context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). In addition, the organization of the image is non-linear, presenting a conglomerate of buildings, as usually found in *high context cultures* (Șerbănescu 2007: 141).

The Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, then, is depicted firstly visually and then verbally. The message is mainly visual and connotative; meaning is based on assumptions and is assigned indirectly, a practice typical of *high context cultures* (Șerbănescu 2007: 141). The website seems to apply the same strategy as commercial advertisers, i.e. persuasion through images and implications.

3.3. The Romanian website

The webpage describing the World Heritage Sites in Romania is very long; one needs to scroll down to see all the landmarks presented, but it has links that takes the visitor directly to the desired one. The section dedicated to the Monastery of Horezu comes first in the list. The webpage is multimodal and contains a short text and a small image embedded within the text. The message seems to be transmitted mainly textually, by explicit verbal code, a practice typical of *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). The webpage is basic interactive, especially in its top section, and includes only interior links, namely to other subsections or topics on the website; advertisements for flights; accommodation guide and links to social channels. It presents no information related to a possible visit, except location, nearest train station, a telephone number and the actual text. The lack of practical information, together with the length of the page, which can make the message indirect and inexplicit, and the links to other subsections and pages, can denote a restricted code system, as found in *high context cultures* (Șerbănescu 2007: 141). At the same time, the use of salient elements, such as the title, the picture, the short information at the beginning and some words in the text, and framed ones, like the title and the photo, can indicate focalization of information, a technique used in *low context cultures* (ibid: 142).

The Monastery of Horezu is presented as follows:

"Founded in 1690 by Prince Constantine Brancoveanu, the monastery of Horezu is a masterpiece of the 'Brancovenesti' style. Renown for the richness of its sculptural detail, the treatment of its religious compositions and its painted decorative works, the monastery houses precious collections of frescos and icons dating from the end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th century. The Hurezi School of mural and icon painting established at the monastery in the 18th century had a profound influence on religious art and architecture in the Balkan region. The monastery museum, housed in the princely residence, features masterpieces of Brancovenesti art: icons, books, embroideries, silver collections and an interesting library of old books containing approximately 4,000 volumes. Overnight accommodation available."

As can be noticed, it is rather short and built out of clause complexes in relations of elaboration through non-defining relative clauses. This can imply a highly structured message, as typical of *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 141). The monastery is mainly characterised and identified by relational processes other than 'be' and 'have', such as 'house' and 'feature', which also imply the idea of circumstance and/or possession. The main participant, the monastery, and its various elements, such as 'museum' or 'painting school', are expressed and implied in an equal amount. Background information is provided mainly by temporal circumstances, such as 'in the 18th century'. The expression of participants and the presence of background details can indicate explicit verbal codes and elaborated code systems, features typical of *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). Nevertheless, the message seems to be transmitted indirectly as in *high context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 141), due to the type of relational processes, the implied participants and lack of an addressee.

There is no meaning negotiation throughout the text, but information is rather expressed by means of statements, making bare assertions, which show an explicit verbal code as in *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). The monastery is always placed in subject position, information being thus focalized as typical of *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 142). The message unfolds either by new or by multiple themes, following a non-linear organization, as in *high context cultures* (ibid: 142). The use of fronted non-defining relative clauses as marked themes can suggest focalization of information (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 79). Fronted elements, together with dense noun phrases in theme position, can also indicate a highly structured message. All these features are typically encountered in *low context cultures* (Şerbănescu 2007: 142). However, this can also lead sometimes to a complicated and tangled syntax and make the message difficult to follow. This is frequently encountered in restricted code systems, belonging to *high context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79).

The image presenting the Monastery of Horezu is smaller than the text and is embedded within it, as if it had no meaning without. The text is presented on the left, as given information, and the image on the right, as new information, as an exemplification or clarification of the ideas presented in the text (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 179). It is a middle shot taken from an oblique eye level and it represents several religious buildings, a courtyard and few persons walking. Its placement in the page layout and the amount of details presented, which is sufficient to identify that the picture is a sort of religious landmark, make the message direct and explicit as in *low context cultures* (Șerbănescu 2007: 141).

To sum up, the Monastery of Horezu is presented both verbally, through an explicit, highly structured and focalised message, and visually, by an image which comes to complete the text and exemplify the landmark. This elaborated code system is typical of *low context cultures* (Hall 1976: 79). Nonetheless, the message is sometimes indirect, non-linear and based on restricted code systems, features usually encountered in *high context cultures* (Şerbănescu, 2007: 141).

3.4. Summary of findings

Table 1 below summarises the contextual features found in the webpages analysed.

CONTEXTUAL FEATURES		UK	ES	RO
Low Context	Elaborated code systems	X	X	X
	Direct & explicit message	X		X
	Highly structured message	X	X	X
	Focalization of information	X	X	X
	Linear organization	X	X	
High Context	Restricted code systems		X	X
	Indirect message		X	X
	Prior knowledge	X	X	
	Emphasis on emotions		X	
	Non-linear organization	X	X	X

Table 1. Summary of contextual features

Relating the findings to the literature consulted (Hall 1976, 1990, 2000; Neuliep 2006; Şerbănescu 2007), the Canterbury Cathedral webpage has features mainly encountered in low context cultures, such as elaborated code systems, direct, explicit and structured message and focalised information. On the other hand, the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial webpage shows contextual features mainly typical of high context cultures, such as restricted code systems, indirect and non-linear message, prior knowledge and emphasis on emotions. At the same time, both webpages contain some contextual features more characteristic of the other type of culture, thus deviating from the typical choices. The British webpage is also built around prior knowledge and non-linear organization, whereas the Spanish one contains features of linear and focalized information and elaborated code systems. Finally, the Monastery of Horezu webpage combines contextual features of both low context cultures, such as elaborated code system, direct and highly structured message and focalized information, and high context cultures, such as restricted code system, indirect and non-linear message, proportionally. All in all, none of the webpages analysed are totally consistent with their culture classification, according to the literature consulted.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, in this paper I have compared the webpages of official national tourist websites that promote the following religious landmarks: Canterbury Cathedral in the United Kingdom, the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial in Spain and the Monastery of Horezu in Romania. I have analysed the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions both in texts and images, following Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Kress and van Leeuween (2006). I have then discussed the findings from the cultural perspective of context dependency proposed by Hall (2000).

The British and Spanish webpages are mainly consistent with the theory consulted, although not totally. The British webpage seems typical of low context cultures, whereas the Spanish webpage seems to belong to high context cultures. The Romanian webpage, instead, combines features of both low and high context cultures fairly proportionally.

The inconsistencies found can perhaps be explained by the influence of the context of communication (promotion), which is considered high context, and/or the

medium of communication, (Internet), which is considered low context. They may also be indicative of different cultural changes. British culture can be influenced by the internationalisation of the English language, whereas Spanish and Romanian cultures might be influenced by the changes in terms of politics, economy, society and culture and/or by globalisation and English culture.

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Webography

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