

ART-GUMENTATION IN VIRTUAL TOURIST SPEECH. MADRID ON THE WEBSITE OF TURESPAÑA: SPAIN.INFO

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Turespaña, an agency within the national Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, was created with the aim of undertaking action abroad in order to promote Spain as a tourism destination. Its core mission concerns an industry that carries considerable weight in the Spanish economy, an “irreplaceable foundation” (Cuadrado Roura y López Morales, 2011: 20); for which it was seen as critical that the organization responsible for tourism promotion maintain an Internet presence. If we keep in mind the increase in total world population with access to cyberspace – 566.4% between 2000 and 2012 (Internet World Stats, 2012) – and the reach of published information, we can affirm that the Internet has revolutionized the tourism sector. According to Turespaña’s own website, 80% of visitors to the country are Internet users (Turespaña, 2015.) The desire to maintain Spain’s position within the ranks of primary destinations involves the mapping of a good digital strategy.

In this article, we set out to analyze the argument in the discourse of the city of Madrid’s website, published in Spanish through the portal of Spain.info, where the Institute of Spanish Tourism – Turespaña – has publicized the country’s image since 2002 (Rodríguez Abella, 2012). Although the portal www.spain.info has been the object of analysis (Chierichetti, 2010; Rodríguez Abella, 2012), the originality of the present study lies in its focusing its research on the page dedicated to the city of Madrid, during the observation period from 2012 to 2014. This encompasses several versions of the portal, since the agency released a new one in June 2013. With the aim of reaching conclusions different than and complementary to those of other disciplines, we purport to analyze the webpage within the framework of argumentative analysis (Amossy, 2006) and to combine these methodologies using a communicative approach. Our goal is to examine the strategy of persuasive discourse carried out by a speaker (Turespaña) in order to introduce and promote the destination of “Madrid” to as wide and heterogeneous of an audience (potential visitors) as possible.

For this purpose, we keep in mind the elements which determine the statement's production: the style, the context, the medium and the discursive techniques. In this way we situate our discourse within the sphere of tourism in accordance with the purposes of analysis, as the institutional and discursive framework is decisive to the purpose of the statement, the distribution of roles and the exchange management. According to Amossy (2006), the argument depends upon the discursive framework in which it unfolds. Without neglecting the comprehensive studies already conducted regarding style in that sector, we have agreed, given the characteristics of the analysis already carried out, to consider the agency's tourism webpage as a cyber-style which follows in the tradition of the touristic "discursive type" (Maingueneau, 2009: 138).

First, and from an interdisciplinary field, we capture the ethos of the speaker whose development is evident in the medium. The methodological framework proposed by Amossy (2006) highlights the argumentative power of the ethos that refers to the presence of the speaker in the discourse, to the features which it projects in order to act upon the public. This discourse is, like advertising or journalistic discourse, "the product of a negotiated collective collaboration" (Maingueneau, 2009: 44), that we attribute to a sole speaker. The situation of the statement includes a speaker concerned with presenting itself favorably to its audience.

The explicit presentation is smoothed down by its style. The "Meet Us" section specifically informs us of its nature and function, highlighting the institutional character of the page which provides it with authority. The agency demonstrates a commitment to its task and evidenced seriousness. Its discourse takes place within a complex medium: the web 2.0. Opening a window in the virtual universe does not mean simply possessing a domain and uploading the contents which, according to the issuer, might interest users. The speaker, as proven by the improvement of the page in 2013, is able to adapt itself to the technical elements which determine the new digital discourse, identified as multimedia, hypertext, instantaneity, interactivity, and universality (Parra Valcarce y Álvarez Marcos, 2004). In accordance with these parameters, we confirm the dynamism of the same and how it impacts the image that Turespaña projects. On one hand, the speaker makes visibility a priority and cares for the webpage's position in searches, because appearing in the first pages of results facilitates access to promoted destinations while revealing its primacy in the sector. On the other, and keeping in mind the distribution of textual and illustrative information, and the resources utilized by the analyzed page, we demonstrate that the adaption degree to which López García *et al.* (2005) refer is elevated, situating Madrid's page within the highest level of dynamism. The speaker takes advantage of the resources provided by the medium and combines them with the characteristics of traditional paper discourses, therefore resulting in a hybrid of contents. In its care to be exemplary with regards to formal aspects, it presents itself as the technological showcase of a country which is a leader in tourism, flinging open its door to visitors.

Second, we see how the argumentative strategy is organized around the depiction of the audience (Amossy: 2006). The speaker therefore constructs the visitor figure in line with the final objective: virtual visitors to the webpage must become physical visitors to the city.

In order to accurately guess the profile of the audience, Turespaña manages statistics, surveys, and studies which generate reliable data regarding tourist behavior in Spain. Although the speaker cannot personally know the portal's users, that information allows it to form an accurate preliminary view of its audience. Knowledge of a real situation gives it clues in order to guide its strategy of persuasion. In accordance with these parameters, Turespaña has planned the promotion of Madrid on a global scale, addressing an audience which is culturally diverse and clearly "compound" (Amossy, 2006: 58).

The discourse to a heterogeneous tourism brings with it difficulties which the agency resolves in various ways. The first consists of breaking down the linguistic barrier. In order to do that, the entire portal is written in Spanish and translated into three other languages, English, German, and French, due to the United Kingdom, Germany and France being Spain's primary tourism markets. In the second place, involvement of a plural audience by way of a singular user is achieved through the use of second-person singular deictics. Finally, the speaker makes distinctions in accordance with the thematic variety of tourism. The speaker demonstrates differential treatment, but its argument takes place within a strategy of growing touristic activity. The page is especially aimed at one type of tourism on the rise: the particular attention paid to the lucrative "shopping" tourism" (synthesized in a section composed of 4 subparts), traditionally linked to urban tourism, illustrates this intention.

Although the speaker sketches the audience based on factual data previously provided by appropriate organizations, it adapts its outline to the discursive strategy, erases the inconvenient features, reworks it, perfects it (Amossy, 2006). In this way, the selection of graphic files reveals a commitment to a tourist base with cultural interests. The speaker exhibits, in effect, an iconographic program that creates a Madrilenian identity based on a suggestive historical, artistic and cultural substratum. It highlights, through video and images, artwork and its sanctuary: the museum. The argument based on the topic of culture dignifies the participants of the interaction, as much the speaker as the audience. In this relationship process of tourism and art, the discourse places in the limelight the lover of painting. Nevertheless, it is not exclusively aimed at enthusiasts. It recognizes in that touristic interest differing degrees of dedication, to which it responds with various ways of addressing this cultural heritage. In fact, the city offers to adjust itself to a plurality of timeframes and although the chief motivation might not be cultural, to the visitor this lends a desire to find a way to continue learning throughout the trip. Thus it allows itself to adhere to a touristic image of Madrid full of history and art: the speaker mobilizes the Madrid of the Austrias (16th-18th centuries) and of the Bourbons (18th-19th centuries, beginning of 20th) as well as the museums. It fills out the city's historical past and artistic legacy with a modern and cosmopolitan aspect and adjusts to the existing touristic norms that consist of exhibiting the sites of strong symbolic capital. The speaker makes use before the audience of suggestive images and of the creative power of the city's name. This rhetoric in the screen, far from diminishing interest in the trip, increases the necessity of the physical experience. Therefore, through the city's methods of practice, the audience becomes embodied in the text and moves centrally through the space in the hand of the speaker, as on certain guided tours. With this, Turespaña manages to create sensory expectations and generate a need for escapism.

Finally, we explore the relationships established by the speaker with its audience. On one hand, we know that the discursive style molds the nature of the discursive roles and that, on the other, the digital world has allowed the creation of new forms of communication mediated through the computer. The computer considerably stimulates the establishment of a link between speaker and audience: the web 2.0 has transformed the former expository showcase into a tool for the collaborative construction of shared information. The speaker relates to an empowered audience which is involved in vacation planning and links it to a foreign space. The discourse provides insights to the future visitor with which to understand and take ownership of the city. But the helpful relationship is likely to be lasting, able to extend into the physical world; the speaker in the distance has a counterpart in proximity, so that delayed-time communication can be maintained in real time further on.

In the discursive passages, the speaker modulates as much the profile of both instances as its presence and the relation to the other. Although it appears very present in some cases, in others it erases itself from the text and the discourse becomes focused on the traveler placing it in the middle of the space, in full interaction with the environment. It disappears in order to create bonds with the destination, of course, but also around it, through the introduction of virtual community links. In the tab “share your experience,” a new window opens into a singular and subjective space of expression, the site of the “Spain addicts”: through a multimodal message, the traveler-speakers deliver there a relevant moment pertaining to their stay on the peninsula. In these spaces, the discourse takes place polyphonically around a touristic practice consisting of active observation of the environment. The various authors confirm and authenticate the campaign’s message, but we believe that it also rebuilds the vision about the type of tourism taking place in Spain. The recollections depict examples and perhaps models of more experimental touristic practices.