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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Persuasive Language in Tourism Webpages: Official  
Webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington

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## ABSTRACT

Tourist promotional material has developed from paper tourist guides into digital promotional material, taking advantage of the benefits of the Internet. The appearance of tourism official webpages has changed the style of writing whose aim is to persuade tourists. In this way, this work is a corpus-based study of the most frequent persuasive strategies used by the tourism official webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington. The results were extracted with the program AntConc 3.2.4w and the analysis will focus on adjectives, neologisms, ego-targeting, interrogative sentences and the imperative mood.

Persuasive Language, Tourism Official Webpages, Corpus-based Study, English for Specific Purposes.

El material de promoción turística ha evolucionado de las guías turísticas en papel al formato digital aprovechando las ventajas que ofrece Internet. La aparición de las páginas web oficiales de turismo ha cambiado el estilo de la escritura cuyo objetivo es persuadir a los turistas. De esta manera, este trabajo es un estudio basado en un corpus de las estrategias persuasivas utilizadas más frecuentemente por las páginas web oficiales de turismo de Los Angeles, Seattle y Washington. Los resultados se han obtenido con el programa AntConc 3.2.4w y el análisis se centrará en los adjetivos, los neologismos, el ego-targeting, las oraciones interrogativas y el imperativo.

Lenguaje Persuasivo, Páginas web Oficiales de Turismo, Estudio basado en Corpus, Inglés para Fines Específicos.



# **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

DPM → Digital Promotional Material

KWIC → Key Word In Context

PTG → Paper Tourist Guide

TOW → Tourism Official Webpage

TPM → Tourism Promotional Material

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## INTRODUCTION

We decided to address the present study due to our interest in the use of persuasive language in tourism promotional material (TPM); specifically, we have worked with the digital promotional material (DPM) in tourism official webpages (TOWs). We have focused our study in these online promotional resources because of their increasing development in tourism and also because of the consequences that we believe the use of persuasive strategies has in clients when looking for a destination. TOWs take advantage of persuasive language in order to promote their city or state. They make use of different persuasion strategies to fulfill their ultimate aim, which is to seduce and encourage tourists to choose the places they are being publicized as their final destination.

There are two reasons why we have decided to analyze specifically texts of TOWs:

1. Firstly, we have noticed that the vast majority of studies made about TPM were based on paper tourist guides (PTGs). Moreover, although it is true that in the last ten years some studies have been carried out on webpages (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004; Antelmi, Held and Santulli 2007; Maci 2007) they do not broach the subject proposed in this work.
2. Secondly, we believed that the use of persuasion in institutional webpages is more objective than in those of private companies. The latter adapt their language to their main target which is not only to attract visitors but also to obtain economic benefits; and as a result, these digital sources are less impartial and persuasion acquires a more subjective sense.

On that account, in this dissertation we are analyzing the language used in the institutional webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington created by governments or local authorities with the objective of presenting their state or city as a touristic destination.

Taking these considerations into account, in regards to the objectives of this paper, our general purpose is to analyze the persuasive language in these three American institutional webpages. To achieve this, we have to meet the following specific purposes:

- To study the impact of persuasive language in TPM with the change from PTGs to DPM.
- To understand the use of persuasiveness and to identify the features of persuasive messages in TPM.
- To identify the most recurrent persuasion strategies employed in TPM to meet that purpose.
- To develop a corpus-based study of the most frequent linguistic methods used by the TOWs under consideration.

Dealing with the structure, our paper is organized in three parts. The first part of our study consists of a theoretical review of the promotional material in tourism, and the language used in it. Then we will present the methodology used for our empirical study in which we have described the corpus that we have compiled and we have explained the tools of the program AntConc 3.2.4w, that have helped us to make the exploitation and analysis of our corpus. The third part of our work covers the analysis of the results obtained. This analysis has been divided in two sections which are the strategies used to create a constant positive language: adjectives and neologisms, and the procedures applied to address directly to the visitor: ego-targeting, interrogative sentences and the imperative mood. Finally, we have presented our conclusions in terms of the theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects studied.



## **PART I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The final purpose of this study is to analyze the most frequent persuasive strategies used by the institutions of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington in their TOWs. Nonetheless, to achieve this objective, we have first carried out an analysis of the existing literature dealing with this or with related issues in order to design our system of analysis. Once this done we have been able to identify and study persuasiveness in the discourse of the institutional webpages.

### **I.1. Promotional material in tourism**

Promotional material in tourism has always been conceived as the advertising of destinations through paper tourist guides or brochures. Nowadays, the revolution of the Internet has opened up its boundaries adding to it the promotion of tourism through the Web. As a consequence of this development, the language used in the TPM has also changed; therefore, in the following section we will study the evolution of persuasive language from PTGs to DPM.

#### **I.1.1. Digital promotional material**

We live in an era of maximum development of communication and information technology; accordingly, the documents that have until recently been or still are in paper have been digitalized. Tourist texts are not an exception of this digitalization; and although local authorities continue investing in promotional material in paper format, they have also taken advantage of the huge possibilities offered by the Internet technology, creating TOWs to promote their destinations. As Pierini states: “the tourism industry is a global enterprise that has captured the relevance of the Web as a new mass medium for contacting potential receivers all over the world and promoting tourist products both in domestic and international markets” (95).

It is true that the immediacy and visual potential of the World Wide Web are great benefits for governments who have the necessity to communicate to the widest possible range of tourists and to attract them to visit their destinations. However, we hypothesize that the decisive element to cause an attractive effect in their audience is, in fact, the clever use of persuasiveness that they make. As Nigro says, to motivate people, language needs to present the tourist destination as a novelty, as a change of routine (47-48). The language used should convince the tourist to visit places that he or she has evoked thanks to these texts which presented the city or the country as an attractive destination.

In this way, considering the accomplishment of attracting visitors, the spread of the Internet has had a strong impact in the world of tourism and particularly in its language. PTGs use an essentially referential language and they adopt descriptive techniques to present information that promotes a destination. In the case of DPM, the repercussion of language goes beyond the informative function enhancing the element of persuasiveness. In the online platform, the referential function is reinforced linguistically to provide objective information about a place. Calvi notes that the irruption of communication through the network has created new alternatives in the experiences of recipients, as DPM combines the strength of the promotional ads and PTGs, with the flexibility and interactivity of the media (*Los Géneros Discursivos* 20). In essence, the network has given a new boost to the dissemination of TPM, turning it into useful information which makes emphasis in its promotional character to increase the promotion of the tourist attraction (Navarro 199).

## **I.2. The language of tourism promotional material**

To achieve our purpose of understanding the use of persuasiveness and identifying the features of persuasive messages in TPM, in this section of the paper we will start by explaining the meaning of persuasion, to then apply this definition to our general theme of analysis which is the use of persuasive messages in TPM. The last step will be to make a more detailed study, focusing on our specific aim which is to identify the most recurrent linguistic methods employed in TPM to persuade.

### **I.2.1. Defining persuasion**

Persuasion is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “the addressing of arguments or appeals to a person in order to induce cooperation, submission, or agreement”; in other words, persuasion is the “manipulation designed to produce action in others” (Lerbinger 3). Moreover, Aristotle defined rhetoric as “an ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion” (Kennedy 37). Therefore, we can deduce that all language use can in a sense be regarded as persuasive since we give this value to “any message that is intended to shape, reinforce or change the responses of another or others” (Roloff and Miller 11). However, Halmari and Virtaen made the most suitable interpretation of persuasion in regards to the subject of this dissertation, defining it as “those linguistic choices that aim at changing or affecting the behavior of others or strengthening the existing beliefs and behaviors of those who already agree, the beliefs and behaviors of persuaders included” (5).

### **I.2.2. Features of persuasive messages in tourism promotional material**

According to Fischer a tourist text is every text addressed to an audience that informs about the qualities of the place and suggests the reader to visit it (Fischer, par. 1). Obviously, in the language of tourism, the methods employed to encourage tourists to visit the destinations advertised acquire a vital relevance. That is to say, tourism discourse is a combination of transmission of information and persuasiveness. In this way, Dann describes the language of tourism as a language that controls society (79). He thoroughly details this idea of the discourse of tourism being an instrument of social control by saying that:

. . . tourism, in the act of promotion, as well as in the accounts of its practitioners and clients, has a discourse of its own. Seen in this light, the language of tourism is thus a great deal more than a metaphor. Via static and moving pictures, written texts and audio-visual offerings, the language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and, in doing so, convert them from potential into actual clients. (Dann 2)

In the act of controlling people, travel texts present us the benefits of a product or service; and furthermore, they motivate us to purchase it, creating a necessity in the visitors. Thus, the tourist language presents events manipulated by the tourism industry to satisfy a touristic demand based on the real or created needs of the tourists. Lafant says that there is a necessity of touristic experiences, and the tourist industry has to master this demand (qtd. in Dann 75). In this way, the tourist discourse, whose principal aim is to exercise some influence on the recipient of the message, emerges as a consequence of the presence of a necessity or interest (Corral 19). As a result of this, the suitable communication of information becomes as important as the effect that it causes in its audience because, by controlling people, writers meet their goal of encouraging potential tourists to become actual tourists; and they achieve this by means of a persuasive communication developed in their TPM.

To reach this paramount role of language, persuasive messages must gather a series of characteristics that Lewis summarized in 1898 in the AIDA model, acronym that stands for *attention, interest, desire* and *action*. Although this classification was made for marketing communication, we have considered that it could be applied to tourist discourse too as the message expressed in tourist texts also has an advertising incentive. For this reason the language of persuasion should firstly attempt to capture the attention of the reader. To cause interest, the theme has to be developed in depth accompanied by the benefits of the immediate action. Moreover, the message also has to have a supporting evidence to motivate the individual to have the desire to buy the product or the service. Finally, the message has to use the corresponding procedures to motivate the reader to take the desired action. Indeed, the language of tourism in TPM should use those four elements as its ultimate purpose is to seduce and persuade visitors.

### **I.2.3. Persuasion strategies in tourism promotional material**

In order to persuade, the language of tourism applies diverse linguistic techniques which help to sing the praises of a place. Along this section we will make an analysis of the

most relevant methods employed in TPM in order to encourage visitors to choose these places as their travel destinations.

There are two types of persuasive strategies: one group which aims at creating a positive language and the other which involves the prospective client in the reading of the texts in order to create a communicative familiarity. Each of them uses different linguistic techniques that we will explain in more detail.

On the one hand, TPM tries to emphasize the qualities of a destination creating an embellishing language which predisposes the receiver to be moved (Corral 38). The language of tourism uses real events and transforms them in an aesthetic depiction of reality. Dann says that “reality and authenticity itself were covertly staged as tourism became increasingly institutionalized and commercialized. What the tourist believed was the real thing . . . one that had been manipulated by the tourism establishment” (8). This is the reason why it is important that the TPM keeps the authenticity perspective, due to the fact that the tourism industry is adapting reality in positive terms. In this way, even the information is elevated to a privileged status, the rhetoric of tourism must contain true events.

In order to achieve this purpose of creating a positive language without losing its authenticity, the most recurrent linguistic technique employed in TPM is the use of positive and superlative adjectives which describe a product or service filling the information with emotion and beauty. Another method used in these webpages in order to portray those meaningful experiences to the client is the use of key words like ‘excitement’, ‘dream’ or ‘escape’ accompanied by similes or metaphors which give poeticism to the language. Neologisms were similarly a recurrent alternative to create this sensation of traveling to an exotic place. The use of terms from other languages is a habitual phenomenon in the tourist discourse in order to encourage tourists to discover different sensations. Dann, talking specifically about gastronomy, maintains that “this variant of ‘linguaging’ serves to heighten the exotic qualities of a dish” (237); nevertheless, he expresses a negative aspect

of its use since “there is a tendency to over-use foreign words, particularly French and Italian expressions, without further explanation” (Ibid).

On the other hand, supplementary strategies of persuasion applied in TPM are those linguistic procedures which directly involve the reader and establish a user-friendly communication. The language of TPM is in fact a monologue in which there is only one-way communication and the public cannot answer back except by refusing to read the texts (Dann 64). However, the senders of the messages use linguistic strategies to hide this unilateral nature of the tourist texts and to create the illusion of an interactive dimension in which the reader is involved. In this way, the receiver perceives the message as if there was a two-way communication instead of a monologue in which the sender writes and the receiver reads.

This interpersonal function is managed by means of different persuasive strategies. Alcaraz refers to the fact that persuasion focuses on the receiver in a subjective way, and this is done through the use of ‘you’ and sending the message directly to the potential customer (130). This use of ‘you’ and ‘we’ is called ego-targeting and it creates a conversational discourse because by being involved the tourist perceives the message as something personalized and addressed to him or to her exclusively. “There are just two parties involved – “we” and “you”. The dialogue assumes the form of an intimate conversation as if “you” were the only person in the world receiving VIP treatment and personalize service” (Dann 187). According to Williamson, by recognizing that we are being addressed by the advertisement we become singled out from the crowd; we become spectator and consumer as part of the product (50-51). In her words: “We constitute a totemic set of one, we find our identity as part of a group the rest of which does not exist. We are appellated as already in a group of one... We give the product meaning by our own individuality” (Ibid).

This singling out of the individualism is often achieved by means of interrogative sentences that formulate questions directly to the traveler. Two fictitious conversation

interlocutors are created, together with the imperative discourse, which maintains communication links with the reader. This is done thanks to the use of this verbal mood that gives the visitors instructions and invites them to participate in the activities that the city or the states offers. Dann argues that “underlying all these linguistic strategies is the supposition that a strong ethos of individualism prevails in society itself – that by purchasing the product I will become a bit more myself, someone special, and realizing my unique potential” (186).

## **PART II: METHODOLOGY**

In this part of the dissertation, we have followed the method proposed by Anthony’s *A critical look at software tools in corpus linguistics* where he stresses the importance of differentiating between the data and the tools when analyzing a corpus. This distinction is important since “a corpus by itself can do nothing at all, being nothing more than a store of used language” (Hunston 20) and because “the essence of the corpus as against the text is that you do not observe it directly; instead you use tools of indirect observation, like query languages, concordances, collocations, parsers, and aligners...” (Sinclair 189). In this way, in the following section we will describe on the one hand the corpus that we have compiled together with the criteria that we have followed for the selection of the texts that make it up; and on the other hand, we will explain how we have used the tool AntConc 3.2.4w to analyze our corpus.

### **II.1. Description of the corpus**

This study consists in an analysis of persuasion based on a corpus extracted from the institutional webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington. Despite many experts (Sinclair 1991 and Laviosa 2013 among others) have elaborated a definition of corpus, each of them has emphasized different aspects of it; and as a result, some of the interpretations given to this term may seem incomplete. We have considered that the definition proposed

by Sánchez is the most suitable because it includes some of the characteristics to which we have given prominence in our work such as representativeness, size and language.

Conjunto de datos lingüísticos (pertenecientes al uso oral o escrito de la lengua, o a ambos), sistematizado según determinados criterios, suficientemente extenso en amplitud y profundidad de manera que sean representativos del total del uso lingüístico o de alguno de sus ámbitos, y dispuestos de tal modo que puedan ser procesados mediante ordenador con fines de descripción o análisis. (Sánchez 13)

Following this definition, in this section of our study we will describe our corpus by means of its representativeness, size and language, together with other two characteristics that we have also considered important which are the date of publication and the sender and receiver.

First of all, in order to compile a corpus, we have collected data in electronic format taking into account its representativeness of the language variety under consideration. In this way, due to the fact that “a corpus constitutes a standard reference for the language variety that it represents” (McEnery and Wilson 32), the corpus that we have used to do the analysis is characteristic of the tourist language. This representativeness is an important characteristic because we intend to make certain hypotheses based on the results obtained. Therefore our corpus has to be characteristic enough to provide a reliable analysis and to extract valid conclusions. In addition, the corpus is taken as evidence for the linguistic description of the language in use, because according to Marzá a corpus “uses an empiricist method consisting of the construction of knowledge through experience” (50). In this way, we will undertake an explanatory study from which we will observe and describe real examples of the use of the popular discourse in promotional material with the intention of persuading.

As for the size, the corpus has to be large enough to be illustrative of the language that will be studied. There is not one fixed size for a corpus to be considered appropriate, but Baker asserts that “the more specific the use of language, the less need there is to



collect millions of words” (31). In the language of tourism the issues covered should not be many to maintain a high level of attention of the audience (Calvi, *Lengua y Comunicación* 25). Consequently, the texts are direct and brief and their extension is shorter than in other subjects. Having these considerations into account, we have considered that in the case of promotional material in tourism, it is adequate to work with a corpus size of between 50,000 and 100,000 words (*tokens*). As a result, our overall corpus size is of 68,000 tokens, being the number of words extracted from each source provided in the table below.

<b>SOURCES</b>	<b>TOKENS</b>
Los Angeles	40,438
Seattle	19,559
Washington	8,391
<b>Total number of tokens</b>	<b>68,338</b>

Table 1: Sources and size of our corpus

The fact that the number of tokens in the three sources of our corpus is not equal is due to the fact that the institutional webpage of Los Angeles gives more information about its destination than the other two. Furthermore, we have decided not to include some texts that we considered less relevant for our analysis as, for example, those of the webpage of Seattle which refer to the news of the city and have the style of a newspaper article; and those of the webpage of Washington which publicize hotels and restaurants.

To continue with the characteristics of our corpus, meaningful importance also has the decision of the variety of language used in the texts, because they have to share linguistic attributes in order to achieve this representativeness. We have collected data in electronic format from three different institutional webpages of the United States. Being those our sources, we have created a monolingual corpus with the body and title of different texts which form the final corpus and whose language is the American variety of English.

In addition to these three characteristics included in the corpus definition of Sánchez, since our corpus has been collect *ad hoc*, we have added two other aspects that texts have to encompass to be part of our corpus. These are to share the same date of publication as well as sender and receiver.

Regarding the date of publication, our corpus is designed to study language synchronically, and the data compiled was taken from publications from 2014 and 2013. The reason for this is that tourist texts may sometimes be temporary and become out of date in a very short time due to competition and diversification of the market.

From the point of view of the sender and receiver, we are going to analyze persuasion in promotional material of official webpages, so the texts are written by governments or local authorities and they are addressed to non-experts.

## **II.2. Corpus exploitation tools**

Corpora have become larger over the years and hence linguistic data require specialized software tools to analyze them. Linguistic corpora make use of computers to analyze the documents using automatic and interactive techniques (Biber et al.). Our corpus has been analyzed by means of the concordance software program AntConc 3.2.4w developed by Laurence Anthony. It includes a suite of programs created in order to observe data and display it in different formats. We have worked with the applications *Word List* and *Concord*.

We have used the function *Word List* to create a list of terms ordered by the number of times that a word type appears in a text; that is to say, they were ordered by their frequency in the corpus. Before obtaining the frequency list with which we will finally work, we have added a *stoplist*. It is an enumeration of mainly functional words (prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs) and some lexical ones (forms of common verbs such as be, was, been, has, had, have) that allow us to shorten the total list of words and exclude

those that are very frequent and that we do not want to include in our final wordlist (see Table 2). This process has helped us to obtain an enumeration of terms from which we have selected manually the adjectives which appear at least eight times in our corpus.

WORDLIST ADDING A STOPLIST			WORDLIST WITHOUT A STOPLIST		
RANK	TERM	FREQUENCY	RANK	TERM	FREQUENCY
1	SEATTLE	314	1	THE	3459
2	MUSEUM	161	2	AND	2632
3	LA	157	3	OF	1914
4	CITY	146	4	A	1811
5	PARK	141	5	TO	1156
6	ART	138	6	IN	1109
7	RESTAURANT	136	7	IS	905
8	MEMORIAL	122	8	WITH	865
9	MENU	118	9	ON	497
10	FOOD	117	10	FOR	490

Table 2: Top ten words in our corpus with and without *stoplist*

The *Concordance* application has been crucial in this work because it allows us to study the context of some keywords whose usage in promotional material discourse to persuade or to create a positive language will be analyzed later. This tool provides us Key Word In Context (KWIC) concordance lines (see Figure 1) in which the keyword is set in the center of the screen surrounded by a number of words on both sides of the line. Therefore, through a concordance list provided by the Concord Tool, we have been able to observe words that usually co-occur around key terms. These sets of word combinations are called collocations and they are so necessary because our keywords are pragmatic units that acquire meaning in a context. The words that we will analyze may not have relevant significance on their own. However if we observe them in their context and we analyze their collocations, we will be able to study their persuasive function in our corpus.

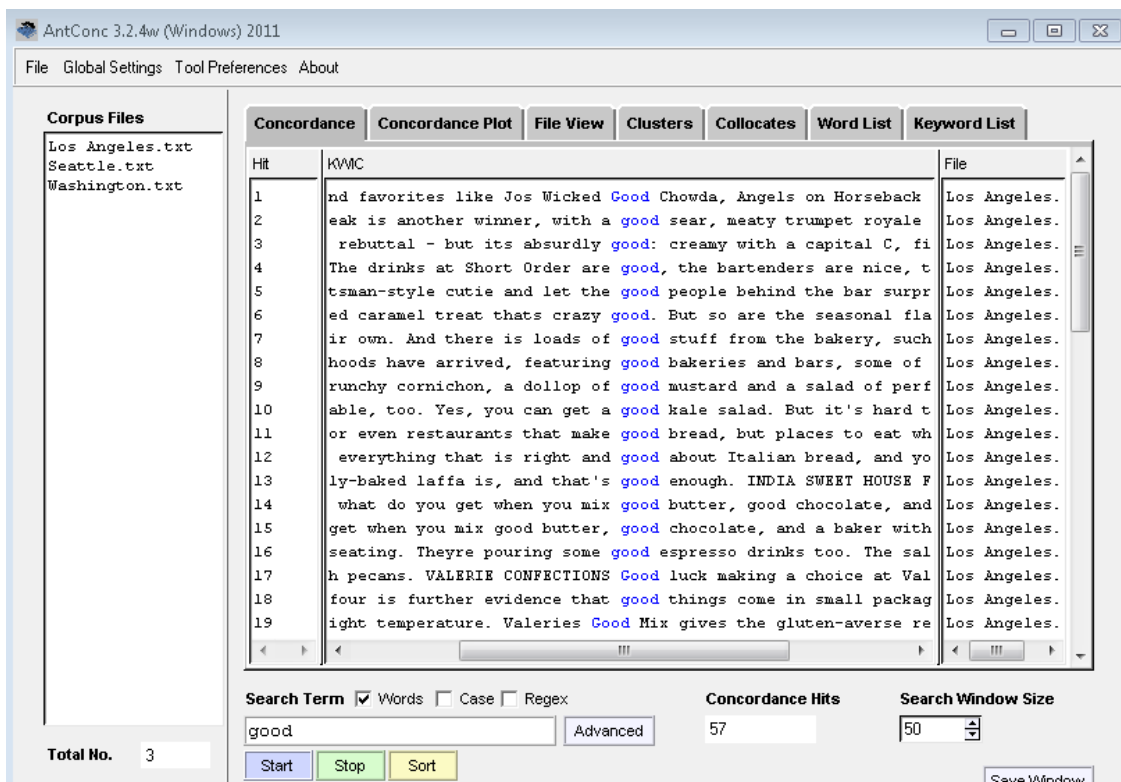


Figure 1: KWIC Concordance View from AntConc 3.2.4w

In this way, the functions *Word List* and *Concordance* included in the program AntConc 3.2.4w are useful tools that will allow us to exploit our corpus in an easy way; and as a result, we will be able to analyze efficiently the results obtained from our data, achieving in this way the purposes that we have established in this dissertation.

### PART III: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

On account of the methodology explained in the previous section, in this third part of our study, we carry out an analysis of the results of the most common persuasion strategies employed by the institutional webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington in order to encourage visitors to choose these places as their travel destination. To do so, we have based our study in the linguistic corpus that we have compiled. Therefore, we are

performing an empirical approach because in our corpus-based analysis we will analyze patterns of language use in real texts (Biber et al. 4).

### **III.1. Data analysis and results**

As we have explained in the theoretical review, there is a broad variety of persuasion strategies used in digital promotional material. However, due to the limitation of space in this study we will just focus our attention in analyzing the most relevant methods of persuasion employed by the official webpages of our study. Given the purpose of this study, two specific matters will be addressed in this section:

1. The techniques used to create a constant positive language:

Within this section we have included the use of adjectives and the use of neologisms.

2. The procedures used to address the message directly to the visitor:

This part reviews the usage of ego-targeting, interrogative sentences and the imperative mood.

#### **III.1.1. Persuasion strategies to create a constant positive language**

With the goal of highlighting a product or tourist service and call the attention of the visitors, the DPM of the TOWs selected for the study reinvents reality in positive terms by making use of positive vocabulary with the aim of transmitting optimism, joy and wellbeing. We have noticed that they achieve this by using an adjectival system and neologisms whose objective is to present the beauty, attractiveness or uniqueness of the tourism product. For this reason, in what follows we will analyze the most frequently used adjectives and neologisms in our corpus.

Adjectives play a prominent role in the tourist discourse since they describe the qualities of the destinations. In this way, they can influence the attitude of the reader, being that the reason why we have taken them under consideration in our analysis of persuasion techniques.

Some authors (Lee, 1994 and Ferris, 1993 among others) have classified adjectives semantically, syntactically or functionally using different criteria. However, in our study we have not followed any of these categorizations because our aim is not to identify the types of adjectives used by governments, but to demonstrate that actually the use of adjectives is a frequent persuasion strategy in TOWs. In the absence of the necessity of a categorization we have generated a wordlist in AntConc 3.2.4w to which we have added our *stoplist*. Once we have done this, we have carried out two procedures. First, we have manually extracted the 1,000 most frequent adjectives in our corpus (not including words originally pertaining to other syntactic categories as for example past participles); and second, we have ordered them in terms of their frequency in our corpus (see appendix).

Indeed, as we can see in the numbers of the table of the appendix, the use of positive adjectives is a recurrent method that the local authorities of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington have made use of to highlight the qualities of their destinations. Furthermore, in that account, as they want to publicize their state or city, it makes sense that two of the most frequent adjectives are ‘national’ and ‘American’. On the contrary, in the gastronomy discourse, in addition to the adjectives describing the flavor and texture of the food, official webpages wish to emphasize their multicultural dishes and this is the reason why there are in the table other adjectives that refer to the place of origin (e.g. ‘Asian’, ‘Indian’, ‘Japanese’.)

Besides, dealing also with this category, the governments of the official webpages of our study use as well the superlative of some adjectives in order to give a higher connotation to these meaningful experiences to which the tourist will be exposed if they

decide to visit these destinations. Some of the most recurrent superlatives are included in table 3:

<b>SUPERLATIVES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>POSITIVE ADJECTIVES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
BEST	120	GOOD	74
LARGEST	24	LARGE	37
LATEST	12	LATE	19
OLDEST	12	OLD	51
NEWEST	8	NEW	101
BIGGEST	7	BIG	39
FINEST	7	FINE	15

Table 3: Comparison of the usage of the most frequent superlatives and their corresponding positive adjectives.

As we can see, all the superlatives have a lower usage rate than their corresponding positive adjectives, with the exception of the most frequent one, in which the superlative ‘best’ is almost twice as frequent as ‘good’. The explanation that we can give to that fact is that many destinations can be good, but there is only one that can be the best. In this way, since the messages of official webpages wish to portray their state or city as a better place than the others, they use more the superlative ‘best’ in order to persuade tourists to choose them instead of the others.

Moving into the other procedure employed to create a constant positive language, it has attracted our attention the fact that these specific institutional webpages use some neologisms to create the impression of refinement. We have found that in our corpus neologisms were used more in *gastrolingo*<sup>1</sup>. Some examples are the French words ‘crème’ which is used seven times in the gastronomy texts taken from the webpage of Los Angeles; and ‘décor’ which appears ten times in Los Angeles and Seattle official webpages. There are other neologisms taken from the Spanish language that they have also used in their gastronomy related texts, such as ‘tortilla’ or ‘salsa’, but we have highlighted the French words because, as opposed to the Spanish ones, they have an equivalent in English. Thus,

<sup>1</sup> “The register of food and drink within the language of tourism” (Dann 235).

even though their frequency may not seem meaningful in comparison to other words, we have made reference to it because the use of neologisms is not indispensable in these cases and therefore they use the French words as a persuasive strategy.

### III.1.2. Persuasion strategies to address directly to the visitor

Supplementary strategies of persuasion applied in the tourism webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington are those linguistic procedures which directly involve the reader and establish a communicative familiarity. In this case, we have noticed that this interpersonal function of the discourse is managed in these official webpages by means of the use of ego-targeting, interrogative sentences and the imperative mood. Consequently, these three strategies will be analyzed in this part of our study by identifying different examples in our corpus.

Ego-targeting is a persuasion strategy used by these governments of the United States to create a conversational style in their promotional material. In order to analyze it, we have looked for the pronoun ‘you’ in the wordlist of our corpus by extracting it with the program AntConc (see Table 4); and with the *Concordance* tool, we have quoted some examples of the use of the determiner ‘your’ within the context of our corpus. As we stated earlier in our methodology section, pronouns and articles are some of the words that we have included in our *stoplist*; but due to the fact that the determiner ‘your’ and the pronoun ‘you’ need to be analyzed for the reasons previously given, in this particular case, we have used our *stoplist*.

<b>RANK</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>WORD</b>
1	3459	THE
2	2632	AND
3	1914	OF
4	1811	A
5	1156	TO



6	1109	IN
8	905	IS
9	865	WITH
10	497	ON
11	490	FOR
12	479	AT
13	433	ARE
14	406	THAT
15	378	AS
<b>16</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>YOU</b>

Table 4: First sixteen word occurrences in our corpus

On the one hand, as we can see in table 4, the word ‘you’ is the sixteenth most used word in our corpus, appearing 330 times in the texts that we have compiled; moreover, it is the most used pronoun in our corpus. As a result of this, we can conclude that our TOWs use the pronoun ‘you’ to make the tourist who is reading the DPM feel as if he or she is the only person to which the message is addressed.

On the other hand, the word ‘your’ (with a frequency of 112) is used in sentences that induce the readers directly to experiment the sensations that the destinations offer to them. We can see it being used as an strategy of persuasion in the following sentences extracted from our corpus:

- *You’ll try **your** best not to eating the warm and chewy shaobing (sesame bread) [...]*
- *[...]Seattle is **your** destination for festivals.*
- *Make sure **your** voice is on-key for the Monday-night Showtunes Sing-a-Long [...]*

Continuing with the strategies used to direct the message to the tourist, we will go on with the analysis of the imperatives in our set of texts. To carry out our analysis of the imperative mood we have extracted the verbs from the list of words that AntConc gives us once we add a *stoplist*. After this step, we have realized that their frequency is not a reliable number in our study because in some cases verbs that seemed to be in the imperative mood

were in fact infinitives. Then, we have looked for the imperatives in context with the *Concordance* function. In this way, we have decided to evidence the use of this persuasive strategy quoting some sentences that include the imperatives most frequently used in these institutional webpages:

- *Visit the more-than-100-year-old Union Station to find out why its beautiful architecture and special events make it more than just a train station.*
- *Experience the serenity of the monuments at sunrise.*
- *Find friendly faces and a half-price menu [...]*
- *Enjoy extended gallery hours and exhibit openings, along with refreshments and great people watching [...]*
- *Explore the streets bordering the park and enjoy stately homes built when city forefathers envisioned Seattle as the capitol of Washington State.*
- *Discover Northwest African American culture at the Northwest African American Museum.*
- *Feel the city's soul power at one of DC's many nightspots.*

In these sentences we see that the local authorities that write this promotional material use the imperative to maintain the communication links with the reader, and to give the visitors instructions, inviting them to participate in the activities that their city or state offers them. Furthermore, we have observed that, especially the Washington webpage, makes an ample use of the imperative (see Image 2) because they include lists of things to do by their visitors. Therefore, by using imperatives, this institution invites tourists to take part in their attractions and give them the opportunity to follow the steps suggested in the journey planning of their DPM.

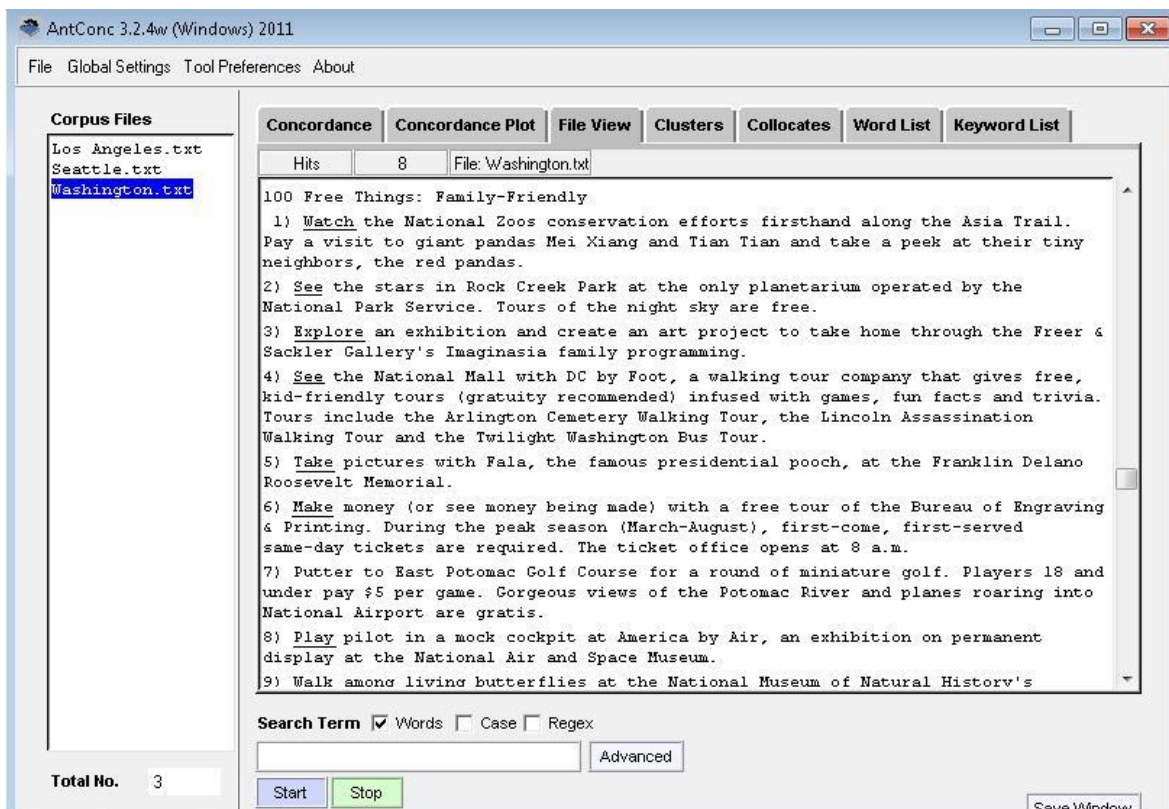


Image 2: Screenshot of imperative usage in the Washington webpage [AntConc 3.2.4w]

Finally, the last persuasive strategy intended to focus on the receiver, that we will study, is the use of interrogative sentences. These sentences are intended to create a closer relationship between the sender and the receiver of the message.

To achieve this purpose, since we have our corpus in docx format, instead of using the program AntConc 3.2.4w, we have used the search tool in Microsoft Word and we have keyed in the interrogative symbol. This way we have been able to find all the interrogative sentences included in our corpus. As a result, once we have studied them we can conclude that the officials make use of them with two aims. The first one is to get the attention of the tourists, usually in headlines. The most frequent questions of this type are ‘*Did you know?*’ and ‘*What will you find?*’ The second reason why the institutional webpages make use of interrogative sentences is to ask questions that they presuppose the visitors would pose.

They have the solution to the possible problems that the tourists could have, so instead of just presenting this information, they formulate the questions to highlight the fact that they can solve any problem that could arise to their customers. Therefore, they write the questions in advance, to answer them immediately after their formulation, being the following some of the examples taken from our corpus:

- *Sounds far? It's really just a couple minutes from the heart of Downtown Los Angeles, on the other side of the river. You can even take the Metro there, destination Mariachi Plaza.*
- *Don't want to stray from your workout routine? Join DC Front Runners, a running, walking and social club that meets at 9:30 a.m. on Saturdays at 23rd and P Streets for a brisk walk, or 10 a.m. for a fun run followed by socializing.*
- *Need to check your email or confirm a hotel stay while you're out? You're in luck – the courtyard has free Wi-Fi.*

This is a good method to make the addressee feel understood and to avoid them feel bad, when making questions that may seem too obvious; and it is also a proper alternative to present their information in a user-friendly language which is another clever approach to persuade tourists.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our general purpose in this work was to study the persuasive language in the official webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington; but as we stated in the introduction, to achieve this objective, we have established other more specific purposes. Hence, in this final part of our study, we will present our conclusions divided in three parts: firstly, the aims that we have met in the theoretical approach; secondly the ones reached in the methodological part; and thirdly, those achieved in the empirical research.

Starting with the theoretical framework, in this first part of the study we have concluded that although the persuasive element is present in PTGs, the rise of the Internet has brought with it new capacities to enhance this persuasiveness; and consequently, the officials have taken advantage of the benefits of the World Wide Web using different persuasive strategies when writing their DPM. In addition, we could determine that in order to meet this purpose, their persuasive messages may fulfil the four elements summarized in Lewis AIDA model: *attention*, *interest*, *desire* and *action*. Finally, after our literary review, we conclude that these messages make also use of persuasive strategies which can be divided into those that create a constant positive language and those that address directly to the visitor.

With reference to the methodology, by means of our corpus we have been able to analyze the real use of the persuasive strategies in the two senses just stated. In this way, the software program AntConc 3.2.4w has provided us with *Word List* and *Concordance* tools which have helped us to fulfil the purposes of the experimental part of our study. On the one hand, the *Word List* program has allowed us to analyze the frequency and distribution of the adjectives, superlatives, the pronoun 'you' and the determiner 'your'. On the other hand, the *Concordance* program has been effective to study the ego-targeting strategy and to observe the imperatives in context.

In regards to the empirical part, and as a result of the conclusions obtained in the other two parts of the study, we have come to the conclusion that the official webpages of Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington make use of specific linguistic elements in order to persuade tourists. On the one hand, in order to achieve their purpose of creating a positive impression, they use positive and superlative adjectives to describe and highlight the qualities of their destinations, together with French neologisms especially in *gastrolingo* to give the impression of elegance. On the other hand, to maintain the communicative links with the reader, they use the second person singular and the imperative mood to address the tourists directly. They also often include rhetorical questions with the intention of involving the reader in the message.

To sum up, we can imply from the conclusions we have just presented, that in our study we have been able to verify the fact that persuasion is a powerful component in the tourist language of DPM from TOWs. In fact, this strategy helps to meet the purpose of seducing, encouraging and attracting visitors to the Web's destination.

Finally, as one of our reasons for carrying out this corpus-based analysis was the fact that we considered that the study of DPM is not very extensive, we hope that our work contributes to the analysis of other studies on similar subjects.

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## APPENDIX

1,000 top-frequency adjectives in our corpus

ADJECTIVES	RANK	FREQUENCY
CULTURAL	21	87
NATIONAL	22	87
AMERICAN	27	81
FREE	28	78
SWEET	45	65
NATIVE	47	64
POPULAR	49	64
HISTORIC	51	63
PUBLIC	52	63
GREAT	53	62
GOOD	60	57
GREEN	69	54
PACIFIC	75	51
ORIGINAL	78	49
FRESH	83	47
INTERNATIONAL	94	45
BIG	97	44
FAMOUS	100	44
SMALL	103	44
LOCAL	106	43
FAVORITE	116	41
WHITE	118	41
ASIAN	119	40
INDIAN	120	40
RED	123	39
TRADITIONAL	125	39
MODERN	129	37
BLACK	131	36
FRIENDLY	137	35
LONG	138	35
UNIQUE	152	34
HOT	163	32
PERSIAN	169	31
RICH	171	31
SPECIAL	179	30

HIGH	185	29
JAPANESE	187	29
NATURAL	189	29
SEASONAL	191	29
URBAN	195	29
ETHIOPIAN	200	28
SPICY	203	28
CRUNCHY	207	27
EXCELLENT	209	27
PERFECT	211	27
FULL	225	26
CHINESE	233	25
DIVERSE	234	25
HARD	235	25
SHORT	240	25
VIETNAM	241	25
HAPPY	251	24
CRISPY	256	23
DELICIOUS	257	23
SOUTHERN	267	23
BEAUTIFUL	269	22
CLASSIC	271	22
SOFT	282	22
AFRICAN	288	21
MAIN	285	21
MAJOR	296	21
OUTDOOR	299	21
ROUND	302	21
TENDER	305	21
ITALIAN	310	20
CONTEMPORARY	323	19
THICK	345	19
CREAMY	354	18
JUICY	358	18
KOREAN	360	18
YOUNG	372	18
LARGE	386	17
CENTRAL	404	16
FUN	415	16
MEXICAN	417	16
STUNNING	429	16
WARM	439	16
ARMENIAN	441	15

COOL	446	15
DEEP	451	15
FINE	453	15
GOLDEN	457	15
ORANGE	464	15
SIMPLE	472	15
VIBRANT	484	15
EASY	495	14
LUXURY	503	14
TINY	523	14
VINTAGE	525	14
CHEWY	534	13
LEGENDARY	553	13
PERMANENT	563	13
REAL	567	13
RECENT	568	13
SAVORY	572	13
THIN	582	13
TRUE	584	13
UNIVERSAL	585	13
BROWN	597	12
CASUAL	603	12
CURRENT	609	12
DARK	611	12
FAST	615	12
FRENCH	618	12
IMPORTANT	625	12
NOTABLE	637	12
SATISFYING	642	12
VEGAN	657	12
VEGETARIAN	658	12
ARCHITECTURAL	666	11
BLUE	672	11
CREATIVE	687	11
GENEROUS	701	11
HOMEMADE	703	11
HUNGRY	705	11
ICONIC	706	11
NICE	720	11
SALTY	731	11
STANDARD	735	11
BRIGHT	749	10
DEFINITIVE	761	10

EASTERN	766	10
MILD	786	10
TASTY	813	10
VIETNAMESE	816	10
BELOVED	830	9
COMPLEX	835	9
ENDLESS	841	9
ETHNIC	842	9
GLOBAL	852	9
GOLD	853	9
GOURMET	854	9
GREEK	855	9
INTERIOR	864	9
PRETTY	885	9
REGULAR	890	9
SINGLE	895	9
SUNNY	902	9
TALL	904	9
WESTERN	910	9
ACCESSIBLE	913	9
ARCHAEOLOGICAL	914	9
BOLD	922	8
GORGEOUS	963	8
GRAND	964	8
INCREDIBLE	975	8
INDUSTRIAL	976	8
INTERESTING	978	8
INTIMATE	979	8
JAMAICAN	983	8
LEBANESE	991	8
MASSIVE	998	8