

ADJECTIVES IN TOURISM ENGLISH ON THE WEB:
A CORPUS-BASED STUDY

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore the ‘phraseology of tourism’, i.e. lexical choices and recurring patterns in discourse with the tools of corpus linguistics. It investigates the use of adjectives in the discourse of accommodation, considering their lexico-semantic, grammatical and pragmatic aspects. The data are extracted from a small and untagged corpus amounting to 196,400 words, compiled at the University of “Roma Tre” by downloading the pages of British hotel Web sites.

The methodology consists of two steps. First, a frequency wordlist of the adjectives occurring in the corpus is produced. Then, some of the most frequent adjectives are analysed in concordances to highlight relevant features of accommodation discourse, and to discover collocations. The study tries to integrate a corpus approach into a discourse perspective in the analysis of data, considering situational and functional factors to explain linguistic choices.

Keywords: adjectives, English, tourism discourse, Web communication

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1. Introduction

Adjectivisation displays interesting aspects in general language as well as in domain-specific languages, not yet fully investigated. Adjectives, modifying, modulating or elaborating the meaning of nouns, play a relevant role in discourse: they are used to describe an entity, foregrounding some property or characteristic, or to express an opinion, a judgement or an emotional attitude on an entity, having the special power of condensing evaluation in a single lexeme. They are central in various genres: the critical review (*a charming book, a fascinating read, a questionable classification*); the back-cover blurb (*an invaluable textbook, a breath-taking drama, memorable characters*); the advertisement, where adjectives like *new, special, fine, best, original* frequently occur; the novel, in the description of people and places, e.g. the opening paragraph of R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* which

portrays a Victorian lawyer employing many adjectives (*cold, scanty, lean, long, dusty, etc.*).

The selection and use of adjectives vary across domains and discourse types. Lehrer (1975), examining the discourse of wine, has found that experts and novices use a variety of adjectives to describe basic features of wine — colour (*white, red, rosé*), activity (*gassy, sparkling*), age (*young, mature, aged*), nose (*fruity, fragrant, nutty, woody*) — and to evaluate its quality — high praise (*fine, elegant, delicate*), low praise (*clean, refreshing, simple, sound*), mildly derogatory (*insipid, bland, ordinary*) and strongly derogatory (*ghastly, awful*). Carter (1998: 53-55), discussing the discourse of cooking, shows that the properties of food are described using adjectives: *tender/tough* (meat), *fresh* (fish, milk, cheese), *light/heavy* (pastry, cake), *sour* (milk, cream), *crisp/soggy* (toast, biscuits). Scrolling *The Academic Word List* compiled by Coxhead (2003) from a corpus of written Academic English including texts from twenty-eight subject areas, we observe that most adjectives are formal Latinate words, such as *adequate, discrete, evident, previous, relevant, similar*. Swales & Burke (2003: 2) highlight that colour adjectives, such as *green* and *black*, and common adjectives, such as *cold and hot*, tend to be used metaphorically in everyday conversations, and literally in spoken academic discourse.

This study is concerned with adjectives in the discourse of tourism, a leading sector in the European economy¹. 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. At present, tourism is a fast-growing sector on the Web (Marcussen, 2008), where the promotional-commercial sites of intermediaries (tour operators, travel agencies), and service providers in the sectors of accommodation, catering, transport, and attractions are increasing their business volume.

¹ According to the estimates of the European Commission (2008), “it accounts for 4% of the Community's GDP, with about 2 million enterprises employing about 4% of the total labour force (representing approximately 8 million jobs). When the links to other sectors are taken into account, the contribution of tourism to GDP is estimated to be around 11 % and it provides employment to more than 12% of the labour force (24 million jobs).”

Tourist communication on the Web is realised in a rich and complex language in which many registers can be identified (e.g. the register of health tourism, the register of ecotourism, the register of food and drink), as suggested by Dann (1996: 211-252) who underlines the specialisation that tourism discourse can undergo. This study aims to explore the ‘phraseology of tourism’ (Gerbig & Shek, 2007), i.e. lexical choices and recurring patterns in discourse. It investigates the use of adjectives in the discourse of accommodation, considering lexico-semantic, grammatical and pragmatic aspects. The data are extracted from a small specialised corpus compiled by downloading the pages of British hotel Web sites. The study tries to integrate a corpus approach into a discourse perspective in the analysis of data, considering situational and functional factors to explain linguistic choices.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 deals with the corpus compilation and methodology. Section 3 considers adjectives as lexical items used to describe and evaluate entities. Section 4 provides a frequency wordlist of the adjectives found in the Hotel Corpus and discusses the data. Section 5 explores the semantic values conveyed by the adjectives, section 6 their grammar, and section 7 their pragmatic meaning. Section 8 outlines the collocational profiles of some adjectives, with regard to the Adjective + Noun pattern. Section 9 presents the concluding remarks.

2. Corpus compilation and methodology

The Web is a multi-billion repository of documents, offering an enormous amount of empirical data for linguistic research that are fresh, authentic and representative, since any domain, discourse type, content area or textual genre are present. It can be seen as a ‘monitor corpus’ that provides up-to-date samples of current English: texts go in and out of it, making it a very dynamic entity.

The Web proves useful in three different ways: it can be exploited as a corpus to interrogate, as a resource that makes available on-line corpora, or as a source of texts for corpus compilation; in this case, the researcher will select texts adopting specific criteria.

The present study analyses the data extracted from a corpus compiled exploiting the Web. It is a small and untagged corpus amounting to 196,400 words, but even when small-scale, a corpus is a reliable aid when working with domain-specific language (Bowker & Pearson 2002:48). It was assembled at the University of “Roma Tre” by downloading the pages of Web sites of British 3- and 4-star hotels, and saving them in text format. This procedure has many advantages: it is easy, quick and allows to compile specialised corpora on specific topics of a variable size. One issue of this type of corpus is represented by the particular textuality of the Web page — links, menus, headings, buttons, etc. — that is flattened in the conversion, and constitutes what Fletcher (2004) calls ‘noise’, i.e. fragments ‘disturbing’ connected discourse. For this reason, corpus compilation needs some post-editing. An alternative way is downloading on-line texts in PDF format (easy to convert in text format), but they are available only in some Web sites.

The analysis was assisted by the use of *MonoConc Pro* (Barlow, 2000). The methodology adopted consists of two steps: first, a frequency wordlist of the adjectives occurring in the corpus is produced; then, some of the most frequent adjectives are analysed in concordances to highlight relevant features of accommodation discourse and to discover collocations.

3. Tourism discourse: describing and evaluating through adjectives

The promotional-commercial discourse of tourism under examination takes place in a business-to-consumer, or ‘B2C’ context. Hotel Web sites can be characterised as realisations of the genre ‘Web advert’² containing an informational-promotional as well as a commercial section. Their communicative purpose is to persuade receivers to purchase the tourist product, carried out either with attractive images or linguistic

² It is assumed that the hypertext as text is a multisemiotic entity, and as genre can be divided into subgenres, such as the Web advert (a term taken from Janoschka 2004) and the blog.

means. The intended audience is a market segment defined by the product (3- and 4-star hotels). As any domain-specific discourse, the discourse of tourism can show a variable level of specialisation (Gotti 2006: 20-21). In this type of Web sites, the message sender is a firm, and the encoder is a tourism professional who tries to reach out a wide audience of non-specialists. For this reason, discourse shows a low level of specialisation, and tends to be similar to general language.

A central dimension of discourse is the presentation of the tourist product in propositions that are multifunctional: they describe the characteristics of the tourist product, present it in positive terms (implicitly or explicitly), and constructs its identity. As a result, description and evaluation are interwoven in discourse (Pierini, to appear). Two basic strategies are adopted: the use of a vocabulary often emphatic and highly evaluative, extolling the positive features of the product/service offered (Dann 1996:65; Gotti 2006: 26-28); the appeal to the receivers' emotions trying to motivate them to action (the purchase) (Janoschka 2004:146-150).

While evaluation has recently received the attention of many scholars (e.g. Hunston & Thompson 2003; Martin 2005; Dossena & Jucker 2007), description has been rather neglected, even if it is pervasive in any discourse type and genre (Pierini, 2003). Quite distinct in many respects, description and evaluation share the centrality of the encoder's (describer / evaluator) viewpoint in the construction of discourse — a viewpoint that is physical (spatial and temporal), psychological, socio-cultural and ideological. The viewpoint in tourism discourse is that of an expert who talks about an entity s/he knows in depth, selecting and arranging details — an 'observe-it-all / know-it-all' professional who, from a privileged stance, describes the entity while making judgements on it. So a central task is to explore how viewpoint is indicated through the exploitation of the linguistic resources available to the encoder (Short, 1994). Among the various view markers, adjectives seem to be basic means by which the encoder expresses his/her perception and evaluation of a given entity.

As a starting point for discussion, we can group adjectives in descriptive adjectives, having more referential content, whose function is to provide factual information, and evaluative adjectives, reflecting a subjective stance, whose function is to evaluate. But, on a closer look the question turns out to be more complex. Snell-Hornby (1990) distinguishes between 'stative' adjectives, designating inherent

stable objective properties, such as size, shape and substance (*circular, liquid*), and ‘dynamic’ adjectives referring to properties either viewed as temporary or changeable, or applied externally as a value judgement (*careless, cruel*), or experienced as sensory perception (*noisy*). In expressing a value judgement or describing perceptions, dynamic adjectives are susceptible to subjective measure, thus reflecting the individual point of view of the encoder. In being gradable, they permit variations in degree and measurement on a scale; hence their value is relative and can be identified in terms of some implied norm, set by the encoder (*slow*) or imposed by the socio-cultural context and accepted by him/her (*vulgar, naughty*). The point is that socio-cultural norms are elusive factors, while perception and evaluation complicate the lexical item by adding perspectives which go beyond the purely denotational.

A relevant point focused on by Snell-Hornby is that ‘stative’ and ‘dynamic’ are not discrete categories into which all adjectives can be divided; they should rather be understood as the outer areas of a *continuum*. One of the examples discussed by Snell-Hornby is *bleak*, a typical dynamic adjective expressing the speaker’s subjective perception and evaluation. Frequently used to describe the north of England, the lexeme expresses not so much objective coldness and/or lack of vegetation, but the speaker’s experience of a place lacking warmth, colour and comfort (see *Bleak House* by Dickens).

A central point to highlight is the potential role of linguistic context in bringing out the attitudinal element: the interpretation of a word as good or bad depends on the other items in the environment (see section 7).

4. Producing a wordlist of adjectives

My first step in the analysis was to produce a frequency wordlist of the adjectives occurring at least fifty times in the Hotel Corpus. Table 1 presents the adjectives found and their frequencies³.

³ Some lexical items can function as adjectives as well as nouns, verbs and/or other word-classes (e.g. *welcome, light*). The quantitative data only refer to their occurrences

Table 1. Frequency of adjectives occurring in the Hotel Corpus

adjective	occurrences	%
<i>special</i>	519	0.2655
<i>available</i>	346	0.1770
<i>private</i>	334	0.1709
<i>western</i>	263	0.1345
<i>new</i>	220	0.1125
<i>civil</i>	200	0.1023
<i>local</i>	183	0.0936
<i>full</i>	181	0.0926
<i>free</i>	164	0.0839
<i>on-line</i>	158	0.0808
<i>double</i>	143	0.0732
<i>first</i>	122	0.0624
<i>marine</i>	121	0.0619
<i>royal</i>	119	0.0609
<i>daily</i>	115	0.0588
<i>great</i>	114	0.0583
<i>perfect</i>	112	0.0573
<i>grand</i>	110	0.0562
<i>hot</i>	106	0.0542

as adjectives, e.g. *families with children are welcome, the perfect place to visit for a light meal.*

<i>mid</i>	106	0.0542
<i>legal</i>	105	0.0537
<i>short</i>	103	0,0527
<i>own</i>	101	0.0517
<i>single</i>	100	0.0512
<i>virtual</i>	99	0.0506
<i>high</i>	96	0.0491
<i>large</i>	96	0.0491
<i>long</i>	96	0.0491
<i>international</i>	92	0.0471
<i>ideal</i>	90	0.0460
<i>main</i>	89	0.0455
<i>central</i>	87	0.0445
<i>small</i>	87	0.0445
<i>English</i>	86	0.0440
<i>fresh</i>	84	0.0430
<i>traditional</i>	83	0.0425
<i>direct</i>	81	0.0414
<i>beautiful</i>	80	0.0409
<i>modern</i>	78	0.0399
<i>seasonal</i>	77	0.0394
<i>natural</i>	75	0.0384
<i>twin</i>	75	0.0384
<i>open</i>	72	0.0368

<i>complimentary</i>	69	0.0353
<i>standard</i>	69	0.0353
<i>residential</i>	68	0.0348
<i>excellent</i>	66	0.0338
<i>weekly</i>	66	0.0338
<i>easy</i>	63	0.0322
<i>comfortable</i>	62	0.0317
<i>wide</i>	61	0.0312
<i>deluxe</i>	60	0.0307
<i>friendly</i>	60	0.0307
<i>white</i>	60	0.0307
<i>unique</i>	59	0.0302
<i>welcome</i>	59	0.0302
<i>en-suite</i>	58	0.0297
<i>national</i>	58	0.0297
<i>good</i>	57	0.0292
<i>warm</i>	56	0.0286
<i>contemporary</i>	55	0.0281
<i>green</i>	55	0.0281
<i>personal</i>	55	0.0281
<i>organic</i>	54	0.0276
<i>superb</i>	54	0.0276
<i>light</i>	52	0.0266
<i>vibrant</i>	51	0.0261

<i>complete</i>	50	0.0256
<i>famous</i>	50	0.0256
<i>happy</i>	50	0.0256

What emerges from Table 1 is the wide range of adjectives used in the Hotel Corpus; to the 70 items found, we can add 45 occurring at least thirty times. This may be related to the variety of entities considered: hotel Web sites present the ‘technical details’ of the establishment (rooms, facilities, services), the place where it is situated, attractions and activities.

By examining the adjectives identified, we observe that they are common adjectives that can be found in general language, except for the term *en-suite*. The specificity of the vocabulary used in hotel Web sites lies in the co-presence of: content-specific adjectives, i.e. specific of accommodation (*twin, single, double*); medium-specific adjectives (*virtual, on-line*); genre-specific, i. e. specific of the Web advert (*special, new, free*).

5. Exploring the semantics of adjectives

Exploring the meaning of the adjectives in Table 1, we find adjectives that can be placed along the whole continuum: at one extreme, descriptive adjectives such as *twin, single, central*; in between, adjectives expressing perceptions or emotions that we can call ‘experiential’, such as *warm, happy* and *vibrant*, that partly denotes an objective property (‘full of life and energy’), partly conveys the subjective perception of the encoder; at the other extreme, positive evaluative adjectives, such as *beautiful* and *excellent*.

Considering the adjectives found in the Hotel Corpus and the content of the Web sites, I identified 16 semantic categories that represent relevant values in accommodation discourse. Table 2 shows the suggested categories and the adjectives expressing them.

Table 2. Categories of accommodation discourse and adjectives encoding them

semantic category	adjectives
availability	<i>available</i>
quantity	<i>twin, single, double</i>
size	<i>small, large</i>
space	<i>central, long, short</i>
time	<i>daily, weekly, seasonal, long, short, mid</i>
money saving	<i>special, free, complimentary</i>
exclusiveness	<i>private, own, personal, en-suite</i>
tradition	<i>traditional</i>
newness	<i>new, modern, contemporary</i>
authenticity	<i>local, English</i>
internationality	<i>international</i>
popularity	<i>famous</i>
wellness	<i>comfortable</i>
emotional impact	<i>friendly, happy, warm, vibrant</i>
aesthetic appreciation	<i>beautiful</i>
extraordinariness	<i>grand, great, excellent, deluxe, perfect, ideal, unique, superb, special</i>

The first categories account for the descriptive adjectives, the others for the experiential and evaluative adjectives. Both creating the categories themselves and placing individual adjectives in them are to some extent subjective processes; in particular, some need to be explained.

A well-established technique in promotional discourse is the use of keywords, i.e. frequent words that convey primary information and tend to be short, clear and to the point. Janoschka (2004:151-154) observes that Web adverts make use of ‘trigger words’, such as *free and new* that occur very frequently. According to Dann (1996:174-76), the keywords in tourism discourse are not so much those referring to the attributes of the tourist product, but rather those corresponding to the requirements/needs of the potential tourist. In the Hotel Corpus, we found both.

The keywords referring to the attributes of hotels are, for example, *central* (‘space’) and *available* (the ‘availability’ of rooms and facilities). Then, there are clusters of keywords referring to the requirements/needs of the receiver as potential tourist. The first is represented by *special, free and complimentary (complimentary toiletries/newspaper/mineral water/tea, coffee and biscuits)* that express ‘money saving’, a value underlined in commercial Web sites to attract the receiver’s attention. If we consider *free*, 158 out of 164 instances carry the sense ‘without payment’, as in the following typical concordances:

Free car parking for up to 46 cars. **Free** internet access for all our customers
 Other features of The Grand include **free** health club, exercise equipment deliv
 raer, another sister hotel, offers **free** use of the leisure facilities, including
 Edinburgh, a luxury boutique hotel with **free** car parking. This privately owned and

A large cluster encodes the ‘extraordinariness’ category that comprises positive evaluative adjectives with an in-built superlative meaning. *Special* is also placed in this category on the grounds of its concordances (see section 8): it can take on the sense ‘at competitive price’ (hence expressing ‘money saving’), or ‘(of) exceptional (quality)’ (hence expressing ‘extraordinariness’). The adjectives here included realise the ‘euphoria technique’ (Dann 1996:65): the message sender tends to speak only in positive and glowing terms of the tourist product.

Other adjectives placed in two categories are *long* and *short*: they can refer to ‘space’ (e.g. *short distance, long golden sands*), or to ‘time’ (e.g. *long stay, short break*).

Another cluster is constituted by *private, own* and *personal*, placed in the ‘exclusiveness’ category along with *en-suite*. These adjectives convey the idea of

‘something only to be used by the individual guest of the hotel’. They realise one of the techniques largely exploited in tourism discourse, i.e. ‘ego-targeting’ (Dann 1996:185-188): the message singles out the receiver from the crowd, making him/her feel somewhat privileged in that the potential guest can take advantage of the ‘unique’ facilities and services offered by the hotel:

ation, offering many bedrooms with **private** facilities, a restaurant, a busy lounge disabled guests. Garden Room with **private** patio available. Residential meetings advisable to leave the car in our large **private** car park. Comfortable and spacious

The adjectives *own* and *personal* are the items that better convey the idea that the stay in the hotel will be ‘tailor-made’, explicitly built upon the needs of the potential guest (dogs included), as in the following concordances:

The weekends can be tailored to your **own** requirements, however a typical itinerary d like the privacy and intimacy of your **own** dining room when entertaining family suites - where children have their **own** separate room. Cots are also your canine companion with his very **own** dinner bowl and a super comfy basket

luxury includes air-conditioning, **personal** tea and coffee making, mini-bar a day out in Brighton with your own **personal** stylist for advice, with the unique board, Molton Brown toiletries, **personal** safe, private bar, radio, satellite should you require. Services: a daily **personal** laundry service can be arranged

Also consider some concordances of *en-suite*, that highlights that each room has a bathroom and other facilities of exclusive use of the individual guest:

to six adults. All of our bedrooms have **en-suite** facilities, central heating,

£ 20.00. The above tariff is for an **en-suite** room with central heating, colour

adjacent 3ft beds). These rooms have **en-suite** bathrooms with a power shower

Promotional messages target different people with different strategies emphasising different values. Hotel Web sites, according to the characteristics of the establishment, focus on four basic values. A common strategy focuses on the tourist's search for 'authentic' experiences, i.e. activities, attractions, lifestyle typical of the tourist destination (Dann 1996:6-12). The adjectives usually encoding the 'authenticity' value are *typical* and *authentic*, only having 8 and 5 instances, respectively, in the Hotel Corpus. Here, the value is encoded by *local* (*local attractions/amenities/produce/markets*), and *English*, typically occurring with nouns referring to food (*breakfast, cuisine, dishes, menu, cheeses, tea*), seen as a symbol of culture. The opposite value is encoded by *international* (*international hotel/restaurant*). Other strategies focus on the 'tradition' or 'newness' values: they address people searching for continuity or novelty.

6. Investigating the grammar of adjectives

In this section I will focus on three (lexico)grammatical means used to intensify the semantic values encoded by the adjectives. The first is the superlative form of adjectives, typical of promotional discourse in general, whose use is identified by Dann (1996:65) as one of the features of tourism discourse, seen as a form of 'extreme language'. To find the superlatives in the corpus, I searched for '(the) most' and '*est'; checking the concordances, I found the occurrences shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of superlatives

superlative form	occurrences
<i>the best</i>	474
<i>the finest</i>	43
<i>the / our latest</i>	29
<i>the largest</i>	24
<i>the greatest</i>	9

<i>the biggest</i>	6
<i>the freshest</i>	6
<i>the lowest</i>	5
<i>the nearest</i>	4
<i>the cleanest</i>	2
<i>the happiest</i>	2
<i>the/X's/ our most + Adj</i>	89
Total	693

The use of superlatives, confirmed by the corpus evidence, is the grammatical means more frequently exploited to intensify semantic values; in particular, *the best* appears to be an all-round superlative, referring to any tourist product/service.

The second means is the use of the premodifier *very* occurring 82 times, in some cases intensifying absolute adjectives with an in-built superlative meaning, and superlatives:

offers luxurious accommodation of the **very** highest level with spectacular

the hotel to enable us to give you our **very** best attention. The Civil Ceremony

All rooms have been made **very** comfortable up to AA three-star standard
 dressing room area, these rooms have **very** large bathrooms with free standing tub

Another means is the sequencing of adjectives, as in the following concordances:

Events Room at The Bonham, offering its **own private** entrance and breakout area

English family run hotel with a **warm, friendly** and **welcoming** atmosphere.
 visited attractions in the country. **Unique** and **unforgettable**, the giant ‘biomes’

The sequence in line 1 intensifies the ‘exclusiveness’ value, in line 2 ‘emotional impact’, in line 3 combines ‘extraordinariness’ and ‘emotional impact’ that amplify

each other. But the combination of adjectives can have a different aim, as we shall see in the next section.

7. Dealing with pragmatic meaning

A word in a particular environment can take on extra meaning of emotional or attitudinal nature, creating what is known as ‘semantic prosody’⁴. This phenomenon refers to the “spreading of connotational colouring beyond single word boundaries” (Partington 1998:68), and expresses the encoder’s attitude. *Small* is a descriptive adjective that in most cases carries a neutral meaning, denoting a property of hotels, rooms or facilities:

happy to help. The Candlesticks is a **small** family run hotel under the ownership style. The room benefits from a **small** private bar area and is air restrictions apply. The hotel has a **small** car park located to room. Double and twin bedrooms are **small** rooms with 5ft beds (or two

Carter & Nash’s (1990:22) observation, according to which “a writer’s stylistic choices enable or facilitate certain kinds of readings while closing off or suppressing others”, is useful to understand how the presentation, rather, the construction of the tourist product is made by manipulating language resources. Since the message has a persuasive purpose, the encoder tries to reassure the receiver by selectively highlighting the positive, brighter aspects of the product. When some problematic, not wholly positive, or negative aspect cannot be left out, the encoder constructs a message minimising it or converting it into a positive one. For illustration, consider the following examples from a corpus of tourist board Web sites (Pierini, to appear):

⁴The definition of the concept arising from corpus linguistics (Louw 1993), and the term itself have recently been at the centre of a debate (e.g. Whitsitt 2005, Hunston 2007).

- (1) a. The bay is renowned for its crystal-clear waters and its picturesque pebbly beach.
- b. With [...] wonderfully remote farmhouses where you can walk and talk with the animals, the choice of accommodation has never been better in Ireland.
- c. Slovene campgrounds are small but well-equipped.

In (1a), *pebbly* describes a beach surely less attractive than a *sandy beach*, but the positive value of *picturesque* spreads over it. In (1b), *remote*, an experiential adjective not exactly positive, is modified by the adverb *wonderfully* that colours the adjective with a favourable prosody. In (1c), we find *small*: on the basis of his/her world knowledge the receiver may assume that a small campground offers limited or poor facilities. Hence the need for blocking this reading: the choice of *but* selects, and then negates, the negative evaluation, while *well-equipped* transfers its positive attitudinal value to the descriptive *small*.

A similar phenomenon is observed in the Hotel Corpus: when *small* may be interpreted as negative, a positive evaluative item (underlined in the concordances below) is placed in its immediate co-text to yield a good prosody:

exudes tremendous character with **small**, intimate lounges, creating an ambience historic market towns and discover **small** charming villages dotted across the of Cornwall's best kept secrets, the **small** and totally unspoilt beach at ternet access. Single rooms are extra **small**, but perfectly appointed and fine

As pointed out by Tognini Bonelli (2001:113), in the industry of persuasion a clear understanding of semantic prosodies is of great assistance: companies spend money making sure that bad prosodies do not impede their sales.

8. Discovering collocations: the Adjective + Noun pattern

It is through the context in all manifestations that a lexical item acquires its sense(s)—the cultural and situational context as well as the discursal and the lexicogrammatical co-text (phrase, clause, sentence). Adjectives, more than other word-

classes, are able to take on different senses depending on their co-text. By analysing the Adjective + Noun patterns of some of the most frequent adjectives, they appear to be subject to collocational restrictions, usually activating only one of their senses.

In the Hotel Corpus, I found two types of collocations: ‘restricted’ collocations (restricted by the content of the message, and the medium), involving descriptive adjectives; collocations of a cliché character (motivated by pragmatic factors), involving experiential and evaluative adjectives. The first type is represented by collocations motivated by the Web, such as *virtual* (*virtual tour*) and *on-line* (*online booking/reservations*), or by the content, such as *standard* occurring with *room/bedroom*, and *single*, *twin* and *double* occurring with *room* and *occupancy*, as in the following concordances:

£90.00 per person in a **double** or **twin** room (based on two persons

news papers available. **Double** and **twin** rooms are available, some interconnecti

Single occupancy £135.00. **Double/Twin** occupancy £155.00

Another example is *direct* occurring with *access* and *telephone/fax/line*:

south in a quiet cul-de-sac with **direct** access to the beach and promenade including television with SKY News, **direct** dial telephone, radio, trouser press dvd/cd player, satellite television, **direct** fax and telephone lines, wi-fi techno booked well in advance of arrival. **Direct** lines: Health Club (01425) 277674

With regard to the second type of collocations, Dann (2001) discusses the functions of cliché, found in many genres produced within tourist communication, but largely employed in promotional discourse. Clichés can supply a sense of safety to potential tourists, satisfy their expectations, and act as vehicles of memory. But they can also operate as means of ideological control, result in meaningless expressions and impose stereotypical imagery, in particular in the promotion of tourist destinations. Yet, clichés continue to be used because considered effective: as Voase (2000) indicates, “messages about travel opportunities addressed to a mass market cannot be expressed in

any way other than cliché... Cliché is an indispensable linguistic device” (cited in Dann 2001:9). An example is represented by *special* that can take on the sense ‘exceptional’, when referred to a place or a product/service, or the sense ‘(at) competitive (price)’ when occurring with *offers/rates/prices*. The most frequent collocation is *special offers* occurring 169 times, not so much in connected discourse, but rather as the label of links:

matching a very special occasion with a **special** wine we have bottles costing up to to visit. Chewton Glen is a very **special** place. World renowned for its ability ceive e-mails with details of our latest **Special** Offers and Activity Weekends please spa facilities with a getaway break at **special** rates. Find out more about our special ly Room: Prices available on request. **Special** prices available for longer stays and

Another example is *vibrant*, usually occurring with *town* and *city*:

in Arden. Henley-in-Arden is a **vibrant** town of 4000 inhabitants that is surrou buzz of Manchester won’t wait. This **vibrant** city blazes with entertainment cancellations. Edinburgh the beautiful **vibrant** capital of Scotland is an extraordinary

The next examples involve *warm*:

whipped Cream and topped with a **warm** chocolate sauce. Traditional terrace available for the **warm** summer evenings. Garden C City within just 10 miles away. A **warm** welcome awaits you at The Abbey Hotel a good selection of drinks within a **warm** and friendly atmosphere. A good

Except for a few concordances in which *warm* has literal meaning when referred to food or climate, it takes on the figurative sense ‘showing affection’, occurring with *welcome* and *atmosphere*.

Other clichés involve *friendly*, *ideal*, *perfect* and *superb*. Below are typical concordances in which *perfect* co-occurs with *choice* and *place* words (*place/setting/base/venue*):

and central location, makes this a **perfect** choice . If you are seeking a give the room a warm glow and provide a **perfect** place to relax at any time. The owned and popular 3-star hotel is the **perfect** base for a weekend break or of woods, gardens and fields offer a **perfect** setting for a myriad of activities

9. Conclusions

This corpus-based study has shown how lexical choices are related to domain, discourse type, content of the message and medium, and rest crucially on the ideological point of view of the tourism persuader. The selection of adjectives, together with their pragmatic meaning, grammatical patterns and collocational behaviour play a fundamental role in the construction of the promotional discourse of tourism. A phenomenon observed is that the use of adjectives is characterised by collocational restrictions and ‘semantic restrictions’, i.e. the activation of just one (or two) senses of the adjective in discourse.

The vocabulary of accommodation is characterised by the co-presence of three types of adjectives: descriptive adjectives, describing the details of the hotel; experiential adjectives, expressing sensory perceptions and emotions; evaluative adjectives, expressing an overwhelmingly positive attitude. The dense adjectivisation, reflecting the combination of description, emotional impact and evaluation, is aimed at increasing the persuasive force of the Web message.

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