

SEM36. Tourism discourse at the human-digital interface: Technology, regeneration, storytelling

36A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN6

36B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN6

Convenors

Maria Cristina Paganoni (Università degli Studi di Milano) mariacristina.paganoni@unimi.it

Eleonora Gallitelli (Università degli Studi di Udine) eleonora.gallitelli@uniud.it

Elena Mattei (Università degli Studi di Bergamo) elena.mattei@unibg.it

Abstract

Contemporary tourism spans a hybrid continuum, from market-driven digital representations of destinations to embodied travel experiences, increasingly mediated by technology. Tourists navigate virtual and real routes through an array of digital tools which include tourist board websites, travel portals and blogs, social media platforms, smart wearable devices, geo-tracking apps, QR codes and augmented reality. These technologies not only guide experiences but also shape expectations, generating vast amounts of data that feed into industry algorithms to personalize and optimize digital tourism offerings and flows.

While such tools enhance customization, they also raise ethical concerns, particularly as overtourism continues to contribute to global inequalities and environmental degradation. Unless aligned with sustainability and social justice principles, the integration of technology into tourism risks perpetuating the same extractive logics.

In response, alternative discourses and practices are emerging in which digital technologies actively contribute to making travel more sustainable in its deepest human-centric articulation of cultural, social, environmental and economic issues. Whereas ecotourism has traditionally emphasized the preservation of natural environments and low-impact travel, these newer trends go further by incorporating social dimensions and digital innovation to reimagine the relationship between visitors and destinations. On the one hand, regenerative tourism reframes destinations as living ecosystems, encouraging eco-sensitive value co-creation and respect for local communities by promoting active involvement in the restoration of natural resources and ensuring fair income distribution. On the other, storytelling in various forms – participatory, community-based, ethical – educates locals and visitors about pluralism by uncovering often neglected perspectives on heritage and tradition beyond the mainstream. Amid differences and similarities, the common anthropological foundation of these approaches arguably lies in the use of digital technologies not just to enhance the tourist-as-consumer experience but to cultivate awareness and stimulate critical participation in the ethical values of justice, peace, and social engagement.

This seminar, framed within the theoretical and empirical scope of Critical Discourse Studies, welcomes contributions that examine recent trends and experiments aimed at integrating digital innovation with human-centric values. Particular emphasis is placed on linguistic, discursive and multimodal strategies that foster ethical engagement, responsible travel and sustainable perspectives.

References

- Antonucci, B. & Gallitelli, E. (Eds.). (2024). *Beyond the last 'post'. Il turismo e le sfide della contemporaneità*. RomaTrE-Press.
- Bortoluzzi, M. & Zurru, E. (Eds.). (2024). *Ecological communication and ecoliteracy: Discourses of awareness and action for the lifescape*. Bloomsbury.
- Floridi, L. (2024). The hardware turn in the digital discourse: An analysis, explanation, and potential risk. *Philosophy & Technology*, 37(1), Article 39.
- KhosraviNik, M. (2022). Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 19(2), 119–123.
- Mattei, E. & Maci, S. M. (2025). For a future (re) generation: Modelling effective tourism communication for social-ecological development of local communities and destinations. In Fusté-Forné, F. & Hussain, A. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of regenerative tourism* (pp. 557–576). Routledge.
- Paddison, B. & Hall, J. (2024). Regenerative tourism development as a response to crisis: Harnessing practise-led approaches. *Tourism Geographies*, 1–18.
- Paganoni, M. C. (2023). The words and routes of peace-sensitive tourism. *Poli-Femo* 26, 81–94.

SEM36. Papers

36A 12 September h. 14:00-16:30, PN6

- *Tourism goes digital* (Stefania M. Maci, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)
- *Narrating the 'sense of place': A corpus-assisted study of ecomuseum discourse* (Sara Castagnoli, Università di Macerata)
- *"Peace is a walk": Tourism destinations, peacebuilding and the engagement of digital discourse* (Maria Cristina Paganoni, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Exploring language in immersive heritage tourism: A discourse-based study of AI-driven mobile storytelling in "Milano Resiste"* (Julia Mary Scilabra, Universidad Complutense Madrid)

36B 12 September h. 16:30-18:30, PN6

- *Tracing the origins of Italian tourism narratives in the digital age: A human-digital interface for academic research and social awareness* (Giuseppe de Bonis, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *"The perfect destination for sustainable tourism": Understanding sustainability in the digital promotion of Rome* (Barbara Antonucci, Università degli Studi Roma Tre / Lorenzo Buonvivere, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *Exploring AI-assisted content creation in tourism promotion: Insights from a classroom experiment* (Eleonora Gallitelli, Università degli Studi di Udine)
- *"The making of a global destination": Narratives of innovation and urban regeneration in the city branding of Milan* (Giulia Meroni, Università degli Studi di Milano)

SEM36. Abstracts

"The perfect destination for sustainable tourism": Understanding sustainability in the digital promotion of Rome

Barbara Antonucci (Università degli Studi Roma Tre) barbara.antonucci@uniroma3.it

Lorenzo Buonvivere (Università degli Studi Roma Tre) lorenzo.buonvivere@uniroma3.it

The achievement of sustainability in both tourism and cities is "a wicked problem" (Day, 2020: 54). Met with the difficulty of even conceiving a negotiation between urban centres and ecology, discussions of sustainable tourism focus mainly on rural or natural areas, while disregarding tourism cities. Yet, sustainability is professed as a major concern of tourism planning in Rome (Valeri, 2015). The previous (Regione Lazio, 2020) and the recently announced (Regione Lazio, 2025) three-year regional tourism plans, as well as the latest strategic plan for the city of Rome (Città Metropolitana di Roma Capitale, 2022), devote sections to "green tourism" and "slow tourism", and frequently refer to issues of environmental responsibility. Bearing this in mind, this study seeks to answer the following question: how does digital promotional tourism discourse shape the perception of sustainability in Rome? Building on Gallitelli's (2024) work on institutional tourism communication about Rome, this paper offers a preliminary case study that compares national and local official tourism websites (*Italia* and *Turismo Roma*) and travel blogs with an emphasis on sustainable travel (e.g., *Sustainable rookie* and *Explore mindfully*). Through the framework of critical discourse studies (Wodak, 2025), the analysis explores and categorises linguistic items addressing ecological consciousness to understand which areas of sustainable tourism are prioritised by each text (e.g., mobility, tourist intensity, nature-based activities, food, etc.). Initial results appear to suggest that institutional websites focus on proposing alternative activities to established 'sustainable tourists' while travel bloggers mainly focus on educating potential tourists to sustainability per se, as they often provide advice which does not apply to Rome specifically. The study is carried out by the Roma Tre University research unit working on the broader objectives of Spoke 9 (Cultural Resources for Sustainable Tourism) of the CHANGES project, which aims to identify methods and practices for the integration of government agencies, private organisations, and local communities in the development and management of sustainable tourism.

References

- Città Metropolitana di Roma Capitale. (2022). *Roma, metropoli al futuro. Innovativa, sostenibile, inclusiva: Piano strategico metropolitano di Roma Capitale, 2022-2024*: https://pianostrategico.cittametropolitanaroma.it/sites/default/files/documenti/allegato_sds_0400036036_PSM_CmRC_21nov2022%20%281%29.pdf
- Day, J. (2020). Sustainable tourism in cities. In Morrison, A. M. & Coca-Stefaniak, J. A. (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of*

- tourism cities* (pp. 53–64). Routledge.
- Gallitelli, E. (2024). Ostiense and Esquilino on two institutional tourism websites: Dominant framings and possible reframings. In Antonucci, B. & Gallitelli, E. (Eds.), *Beyond the last 'post'. Il turismo e le sfide della contemporaneità* (pp. 51–68). Roma TrE-press.
- Regione Lazio. (2020). *Piano turistico triennale 2020–2022 della regione Lazio*: <https://www.regione.lazio.it/documenti/72635>
- Regione Lazio. (2025). *Turismo, approvato il Piano Triennale 2025–2027*: <https://regione.lazio.it/notizie/turismo-approvato-il-piano-triennale-2025-2027>
- Valeri, M. (2015). Sustainability development and competitiveness of Rome as a tourist destination. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 21(2), 203–217.
- Wodak, R. (2025). Critical discourse studies/analysis. In Leung, C. & Lewkowicz, J. (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to English studies*, 2nd ed. (pp. 31–44). Routledge.



Narrating the “sense of place”: A corpus-assisted study of ecomuseum discourse

Sara Castagnoli (Università di Macerata) sara.castagnoli@unimc.it

Ecomuseums represent a relatively recent form of museum that aims to present and preserve the identity of specific areas, offering a holistic interpretation of their natural and cultural heritage. Rooted in local communities and participatory engagement, they “seek to capture the distinctive nature of places” (Davis, 2011). Since the 1970s, the concept of ‘ecomuseum’ has been adopted to refer to community-based heritage projects designed to safeguard and showcase both tangible and intangible heritage resources, foster cultural identity, and generate benefits for local communities (Borrelli & Davis, 2012, p. 33; Li & Selim, 2024, p. 1211).

Positioned at the intersection of *New Museology* and the emerging paradigm of *regenerative tourism* – which transcends both ecotourism and responsible/sustainable tourism – ecomuseums promote a model of tourism that reframes destinations as living ecosystems. This model emphasises social and environmental regeneration, community participation, and inclusive storytelling. As such, ecomuseums offer fertile ground to examine how discourse strategies mediate identity, heritage, and sustainability.

This paper explores how ecomuseums construct their identity discursively. Ecomuseums often articulate their mission through a blend of heritage discourse, environmental activism, and social innovation, presenting themselves as agents of empowerment and stewards of ‘living heritage’. However, the ways in which they represent themselves can vary significantly depending on the nature of specific instantiations, as well as across cultural contexts. In fact, while several attempts have been made to define core principles of ecomuseums (e.g., Corsane, 2006), in practice these organisations can differ remarkably in terms of stated roles and objectives, funding, geographical scale, and levels of community involvement (Davis, 2011, p. 91). Their global distribution is also uneven: while the vast majority of ecomuseums are located in Europe (especially in Italy, France and Spain), the concept has seen limited uptake in Anglophone countries, possibly due to misconceptions about the term or the existence of similar institutions (e.g., heritage sites, open-air and folk museums) that render the ecomuseum model redundant (Davis, 2011, p. 173).

Adopting a critical discourse studies perspective and using corpus-assisted methods, this paper undertakes to conduct a comparative analysis of institutional and promotional texts from the websites of selected ecomuseums in English-speaking regions (including the UK, Ireland, North America, and Australia) and Europe. The aim is to identify common themes and discursive strategies that contribute to a shared core of ecomuseum discourse, as well as divergences in discursive practices possibly shaped by local socio-political histories and cultural values. By observing how ecomuseums construct and project their identity through discourse, the study may also contribute to a better theorisation of the ecomuseum as a cultural phenomenon.

References

- Borrelli, N. & Davis, P. (2012). How culture shapes nature: Reflections on ecomuseum practices. *Nature and Culture*, 7(1), 31–47.
- Corsane, G. (2006). Using ecomuseum indicators to evaluate the Robben Island Museum and World Heritage Site. *Landscape Research*, 31(4), 399–418.
- Davis, P. (2011). *Ecomuseums: A sense of place*. Continuum.
- Li, M. & Selim, G. (2024). Cultivating ecomuseum practices in China: Shifting from objects to users-centred approaches. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 30(10), 1211–1234.



Tracing the origins of Italian tourism narratives in the digital age: A human-digital interface for academic research and social awareness

Giuseppe de Bonis (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) giuseppe.debonis@unive.it

Within the framework of the PRIN DIETALY project, three research units (Venice, Ferrara, Salento) investigated the evolution of Italian tourism discourse in English, tracing how narratives have developed over time – from the centralised promotional strategies of the 20th century to the complex, multimodal, and digitally-mediated forms of the present. Drawing on a rich body of written, visual, and audiovisual materials, the project highlights tourism communication as a strategic narrative practice that continues to shape the construction of Italy's image as a tourist destination, balancing cultural representation with commercial imperatives (Agorni, 2025).

One of the project's key outcomes is the open-access digital database that brings together metadata on more than 600 tourism texts collected from national and international libraries as well as private collections (Mauro, 2025). Adopting a multimodal and critical discourse approach to tourism promotion, the database classifies materials by editor, translator, publication language, genre, geographical focus, promotional themes, and visual elements such as images and maps. Worthy of note, this database serves both as a historical resource and a dynamic, customisable research tool for academic investigation and for building social awareness about tourism sustainability, or lack thereof. The digital infrastructure not only supports digital humanities methodologies but also enables ethical and reflective engagement with the formation of Italy's image as a tourist destination over time. By offering a digitally-enabled lens on the development of place branding and cultural storytelling, it contributes to broader debates on sustainability (Mattei, 2025; Rodrigues et al., 2022), the digitisation of memory (Mandolessi, 2024), and the construction of cultural identity in tourism discourse.

While not intended as a promotional tool, the database may nonetheless stimulate reflexivity and ethical engagement in tourism discourse (Opgenhaffen, 2022, p. 2). By tracing the origins of standardised visual and verbal tropes used to represent cultural heritage and tradition, it encourages a critical reassessment of the narratives shaping tourism imaginaries. This process provides valuable insights to scholars in tourism studies and related fields, fostering more holistic and contextually-aware approaches to the cultural, social, and ethical aspects of tourism communication.

References

- Agorni, M. (2025). Destination Italy in English translation and language over the years (1919–1959). *Altre Modernità, special issue*, I–XXVIII.
- Mandolessi, S. (2024). Memory in the digital age. *Open Research Europe*, 3, 123.
- Mattei, E. (2025). From exclusive health and climatic resorts to affordable summer holidays: ENIT's seaside tourism promotion in English over the years. *Altre Modernità, special issue*, 119–142.
- Mauro, V. (2025). Shifting strategies in communicating Italy abroad: A multimodal analysis of Italian tourism brochures from 1919–1959. *Altre Modernità, special issue*, 30–45.
- Opgenhaffen, L. (2022). Archives in action: The impact of digital technology on archaeological recording strategies and ensuing open research archives. *Digital Applications in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*, 27, e00231.
- Rodrigues, V., Eusébio, C. and Breda, Z. (2022). Enhancing sustainable development through tourism digitalisation: A systematic literature review. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 25(1), 13–45.



Exploring AI-assisted content creation in tourism promotion: insights from a classroom experiment

Eleonora Gallitelli (Università degli Studi di Udine) eleonora.gallitelli@uniud.it

This paper discusses the outcomes of a teaching experiment conducted at the University of Udine as part of the Erasmus+ project *Empowering Specialized Language Acquisition with Integrated AI* (ELITE-AI). The project focuses on English for specific purposes (ESP), with a special attention to the language needs of students in specialized fields such as tourism. The experiment began with a workshop led by guest speaker Dr. Elena Mattei, who introduced methods for integrating ChatGPT into tourism content creation, emphasizing multimodal analysis and critical engagement. The workshop was addressed to first-year MA students of Professional English for Tourism, and drew on theoretical frameworks from systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) and tourism discourse (Dann, 1996) to provide a foundation for critical analysis and AI-generated tourism communication.

The most stimulating phase of the experiment involved the creation of sustainable tourism content. Students used ChatGPT and DALL·E to generate social media posts and images based on a local tourism company's branding. They then evaluated the outputs for alignment with the company's values and principles of sustainable tourism. In line with findings from prior studies (Cruz, 2024; Jeon, 2024; Silcheva et al., 2023), it was noted that the integration of generative AI tools enhanced student engagement, fostered critical thinking and promoted cultural awareness, while creating an interactive and meaningful learning environment.

The experiment also raised important ethical considerations. Students expressed concerns about AI bias and the need for responsible use of technology in tourism promotion. Their reflections addressed concepts such as sustainability, authenticity, cultural specificity and regenerative tourism, revealing students' perspectives on the interplay between human creativity and artificial intelligence in contemporary tourism communication.

References

- Cruz, M. (2024). Exploring the integration of Artificial Intelligence generative tools in teaching Hispano-American literature: A student-centric approach. In *INTED2024 Proceedings* (pp. 5717–5727). IATED.
- Dann, G. M. S. (1996). *The language of tourism: A sociolinguistic perspective*. Cab International.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Jeon, J. (2024). Exploring AI chatbot affordances in the EFL classroom: Young learners' experiences and perspectives. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 37(1-2), 1–26.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (2021). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Silcheva, A. G., Lamzina, A. V. & Pavlova, T. L. (2023). Specifics of using text and graphical chatbots with artificial intelligence in English language teaching. *Perspektivy Nauki i Obrazovania – Perspectives of Science and Education*, 64(4), 621–635.



Tourism goes digital

Stefania M. Maci (Università degli Studi di Bergamo) stefania.maci@unibg.it

As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, many museums and archaeological sites globally shut their doors to prevent contamination (UNESCO, 2020). In reaction to this situation and to maintain communication with their audiences, several cultural organisations and travel firms augmented their online presence and sought other methods to engage with their tourist audiences via digitalisation. Virtual reality emerged as a facet of digitisation, designed to provide access to original materials. In this regard, the pandemic has shown that sharing experiences and content on digital and social media has become an integral part of the tourist experience, influencing how tourists perceive and behave before, during, and after their trip (Tham et al., 2024).

Among the novel and digital offerings that emerged during the COVID period, the predominant one was the 'virtual tour', which has now been surpassed by the 'live' virtual tour. While a virtual tour is a simulation of a historic location, 'live' virtual tours are live-streaming experiences of online guided tours, particularly requested by people who want to experience the guided visit before a potential in-person tour and who may also be concerned about large crowds at museums and institutions in destinations where overtourism is now a major problem.

In this paper, we will investigate the genre of live virtual tour and examine how it has emerged as a distinctive communicative practice within tourism discourse. Adopting a discourse-analytic approach, this study explores the linguistic and technological characteristics that differentiate live virtual tours from traditional guided tours and pre-recorded virtual tours. Through qualitative analysis of recorded live-stream sessions and interviews with professional tourist guides, we aim to identify the interactive strategies, narrative techniques, and communicative functions that contribute to audience engagement and participation.

Additionally, the paper addresses how live virtual tours challenge traditional notions of authenticity and presence in tourism experiences. Drawing on CDA, we analyse how guides mediate heritage spaces, negotiate the co-presence of physical and digital audiences, and adapt their discourse to a live, mediated environment. Finally, implications for training guides, designing virtual experiences, and theorising tourism communication in digital contexts will be discussed, highlighting both the opportunities and limitations of live virtual tours as an emerging and influential genre in tourism studies.

References

- Tham, A., (Ava) Chen, S.-H. & Durbidge, L. (2024). A pentadic analysis of TikTok marketing in tourism: The case of



‘The making of a global destination’: Narratives of innovation and urban regeneration in the city branding of Milan

Giulia Meroni (Università degli Studi di Milano) giulia.meroni@unimi.it

In an increasingly competitive and globalized world, it has become common practice for cities seeking to stand out on the international stage to entrust their promotion to Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), i.e., public-private partnerships that work to attract foreign tourists, talents and investors in order to boost the growth of a city and its surrounding region (Gretzel, 2021). The peculiar nature of these organizations highlights the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private sectors typical of contemporary society whereby the former has become imbued with corporate ideology and discourse, with institutions often appearing to value profit and business over the social needs of the urban community (Koller, 2008). This convergence of the public and private sectors under the overarching principles of business efficiency and profit generation is also reflected in the communication strategies deployed by public institutions, which are often borrowed from the marketing tools traditionally used in the private sector. City branding has in fact become a staple practice that allows public administrations to design city identities in the eyes of local and international audiences (Paganoni, 2012). Branding – and re-branding – has a strong transformative potential and is especially tied to urban regeneration projects (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012).

This study investigates the discourse of selected tourism development organizations with major urban regeneration-related projects in European cities to observe what role innovation, technology, and urban regeneration play in the promotion of such cities. In particular, the social, environmental and digital dimensions of city branding will be evaluated within the framework of regenerative tourism (Paddison & Hall, 2024) to explore what place sustainability occupies in DMOs promotional discourse. Qualitative analysis will be conducted on reports and selected campaigns by Milan’s DMO, YesMilano, within the time period 2019-2024 to identify their promotional strategies and assess how these principles and intentions have been operationalized. Similar campaigns by London and Amsterdam will also be analyzed to provide a comparative outlook on a European level. Linguistic analysis focusing mainly on framing (Jones, 2018) and metaphors (Nientied, 2016), as well as visual semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), will provide insight into how regenerated urban areas designed to be innovation hubs may be used in city branding as selling points to attract foreign audiences.

References

- Eshuis, J. & Edwards, A. (2012). Branding the city: The democratic legitimacy of a new mode of governance. *Urban Studies*, 50(5), 1066–1082.
- Gretzel, U. (2021). The smart DMO: A new step in the digital transformation of destination management organizations. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 30, 3002.
- Jones, M. T. (2018). Framing regeneration: Embracing the inhabitants. *Urban Studies*, 56(9), 1901–1917.
- Koller, V. (2008). ‘The world in one city’: Semiotic and cognitive aspects of city branding. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 7(3), 431–450.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (2021). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Nientied, P. (2016). Metaphor and urban studies – a crossover, theory and a case study of SS Rotterdam. *City, Territory and Architecture*, 3, 21.
- Paddison, B. & Hall, J. (2024). Regenerative tourism development as a response to crisis: Harnessing practise-led approaches. *Tourism Geographies*, 1–18.
- Paganoni, M. C. (2012). City branding and social inclusion in the glocal city. *Mobilities*, 7(1), 13–31.



“Peace is a walk”: Tourism destinations, peacebuilding and the engagement of digital discourse

Maria Cristina Paganoni (Università degli Studi di Milano) mariacristina.paganoni@unimi.it

This paper forms part of an ongoing research project on peace communication in tourism, conducted within the framework of the 4EU+ University Alliance, of which the University of Milan is a partner. It explores the potential of

digital tools to disseminate peace discourses in tourism contexts, merging technological innovation with cultural and historical narratives in engaging ways. While tourism communication has long embraced digitalisation to expand its offerings, comparable developments in peace-sensitive tourism remain relatively limited (Wohlmuther & Wintersteiner, 2014). This is the case despite the increasing recognition of peace museums, parks and memorials – often dedicated to iconic peace figures – whose visibility has been enhanced through digital media.

Several factors may account for this gap. First, although tourism itineraries frequently incorporate histories of war and conflict, they seldom frame peace as a thematic lens for reflection, possibly to avoid imposing perceived ‘moralisation’ on leisure experiences (Butcher, 2003). Second, because peace is commonly defined in opposition to war and violence, contemporary societies have been argued to lack compelling imaginaries of positive peace (Mazza, 2023). Third, the adoption of digital technology itself should not be assumed to guarantee success. As scholars have noted, digital tools in tourism and heritage settings (King et al., 2016) may generate unintended consequences – such as superficial content, biased representations, or low-quality engagement – raising concerns about trivialisation and the suppression of physical space (Floridi, 2024).

Nonetheless, if destinations are not fixed entities but rather the product of symbolic transformation through discourse, there is room to challenge prevailing reluctance, limited creativity and techno-solutionist thinking. This invites us to imagine innovative forms of peace-oriented, human-digital encounters (Bødker, 2023). Drawing on Hughes’s (2018) integration of positive discourse analysis within critical discourse studies, this paper builds on a preliminary exploration of peace-sensitive tourism (Paganoni, 2023) to examine selected case studies of peace destinations, and specifically peace walks, at the intersection of physical infrastructure and digital affordances. It reflects on how critical design and digital discourse may serve to foster awareness of peace-related themes in tourism, thereby contributing to more thoughtful and socially conscious travel experiences.

References

- Bødker, M. (2023). Design as inquiry: Critical design in tourism. In Pechlaner, H., Erschbamer, G. & Olbrich, N. (Eds.), *Destination design: Entrepreneurial management und Standortentwicklung* (pp. 133–151). Springer.
- Butcher, J. (2003). *The moralisation of tourism: Sun, sand ... and saving the world?* Routledge.
- Floridi, L. (2024). The hardware turn in the digital discourse: An analysis, explanation, and potential risk. *Philosophy & Technology*, 37(1), 39.
- Hughes, J. M. F. (2018). Progressing positive discourse analysis and/in critical discourse studies: Reconstructing resistance through progressive discourse analysis. *Review of Communication*, 8(3), 193–221.
- King, L., Stark, J. F. & Cooke, P. (2016). Experiencing the digital world: The cultural value of digital engagement with heritage. *Heritage & Society*, 9(1), 76–101.
- Mazza, G. (2023). *Campagne di guerra. Centocinquant’anni di comunicazione, pubblicità, propaganda*. Prospero Editore.
- Paganoni, M. C. (2023). The words and routes of peace-sensitive tourism. *Poli-Femo*, 26, 81–94.
- Wohlmuther, C. & Wintersteiner, W. (Eds.). (2014). *International handbook on tourism and peace*. Drava.



Exploring language in immersive heritage tourism: A discourse-based study of AI-driven mobile storytelling in *Milano Resiste*

Julia Mary Scilabra (Universidad Complutense Madrid) juliamsc@uclm.es

Immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and AI-powered mobile platforms are reshaping how cultural heritage is communicated, experienced, and learned. This study investigates their educational potential in tourism contexts, specifically focusing on language-mediated learning, engagement, and identity. Previous research has shown that escape rooms offer excellent environments for language learning and teaching (e.g., Gómez López, 2019; Nasri et al., 2024; Sntaxi Llumiquinga, 2022). Drawing on this, the study will take *Milano Resiste* – a Milan-based mobile escape room – as its central case study to explore how AI-driven storytelling and digital interactivity (Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012) can support language learning and cultural engagement within heritage tourism. While *Milano Resiste* is not a VR experience, it incorporates key features of immersive learning, like interactive storytelling and real-time player interaction with AI-generated content. To contextualize *Milano Resiste* within a broader continuum of immersive tourism formats, comparative references will be made to VR-based heritage learning projects (e.g., Bekele et al., 2018), to assess how such experiences can support intercultural competence, vocabulary development, and narrative-based learning. Methodologically, a critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2014; Martens, 2022) will be applied to the narrative scripts, chat dialogues, and multimodal materials of the app, focusing on speech, register, and the positioning of the user within the

story. By analyzing how language and discourse function within an AI-enhanced urban escape room, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on the educational role of immersive technologies in tourism, where AI-enhanced and VR-supported settings are not just forms of entertainment (Godwin-Jones, 2016) but rather sites for meaningful, targeted learning through language, narrative, and place.

References

- Bekele, M. K., Pierdicca, R., Frontoni, E., Malinverni, E. S. & Gain, J. (2018). A survey of augmented, virtual, and mixed reality for cultural heritage. *Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage*, 11(2), 1–36.
- Gee, J. P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2016). Augmented reality and language learning: From annotated vocabulary to place-based mobile games. *Language Learning & Technology*, 20(3), 9–19.
- Gómez López, Á. (2019). The use of escape rooms to teach and learn English at university. In Pérez-Aldeguer, S. & Akombo, D. (Eds.), *Research, technology and best practices in education* (pp. 94–102). Adaya Press.
- Martens, D. (2022). The experience of common European heritage: A critical discourse analysis of tourism practices at Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. *Journal of European Landscapes*, 3(3), 45–59.
- Nasri, N. F., Ahmad Zaidi, N. N., Kamarudin, S., Hanafi, M. & Nasir, Z. A. (2024). Digital escape room: Students' perceptions as an educational tool in learning reading skills. *International Journal of Education*, 16(2), 21–30.
- Suntaxi Llumiquinga, J. (2022). Educational escape room as a gamification strategy for improving oral skills in the English language. *Kronos – The Language Teaching Journal*, 3(2), 32–40.
- Sykes, J. M. & Reinhardt, J. (2012). *Language at play: Digital games in second and foreign language teaching and learning*. Pearson Education.