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**ABSTRACT**

The paper aims at studying the linguostylistic and cultural peculiarities of tourism advertisements representing Armenia on social and commercial tourism websites.

On the one hand the texts on tourism sites provide information about different destinations, often complemented by pictures and videos, on the other their main function is persuasion. Our focus is on what linguistic and visual means are used to persuade the customers to buy country brands, and how countries, as culturally marked places, are introduced as brands.

The development of e-tourism is also considered within the framework. It is studied whether the dialogue with the tourism industry changes the attitude of tourists towards the commercials, i.e. the potential tourists; trust in the information provided in the advertisements.

The methodologies of our research are linguostylistic method of analysis and multimodal discourse analysis that help to reveal text, image and video interaction in tourism discourse and the specific linguistic and stylistic means through which the discourse realizes its communicative aims.

The overall conclusion is that textual and visual texts on social tourism sites created by the authentic tourists telling about their real experiences strengthen the impact function and the persuasiveness of the discourse and thus compete with the advertisements on commercial sites vitally changing the potential tourists' attitudes.

**INTRODUCTION**

The process of learning about the country begins before the intended travel. The acquisition of knowledge about tourist destinations may be realized through different sources— friends, family, social media, official tourism websites, TV programs about the destination and so on.

Countries are transformed into brands to be advertised and to be purchased. The country brands are greatly connected with the culture and history of the countries and, therefore, with their national identity. Hence, branding a country is a more complicated process than branding a product, given the fact that it should be realised according to various perspectives. First and foremost, countries want to sell their country brands to develop their economy; in this respect, the task is more difficult for small, developing countries like Armenia(is) when compared to such countries as France, Italy, the UK and the US are. The country brands are connected with the reputation of the country, stereotypes about this or that nation and are often designed by professionals to change the stereotypical perception of a certain nation or country via advertisements both linguistically and extralinguistically. With the spread of social sites and special tourism social sites such as *tripadvisor*, *virtualltourist* or *lonelyplanet* the customers may not only book hotels or flights but also may join in forums or write reviews, thus shaping country brands. 'Conversations, whether a review on *tripadvisor*, a picture on *flickr* or an interaction on *twitter*, drive the informal exchange of thoughts, opinions and feelings between customers who are increasingly listening to each other. Those

conversations ultimately shape your brand and, at its most extreme, your brand becomes its reputation online defined through the conversations customers are having about their real brand experiences' (Munro and Richards, 2011). Fotis et al. write that their study showed that social media are used during all stages of the holiday planning process ( before, during and after holidays) and that information from other travellers on various sites is trusted more than that of official tourism websites and travel agents. The information gained from other travellers has changed the tourists' plans concerning their future destination or hotel to different extent (2012). Therefore, not only advertisements may persuade the potential tourists to make decisions about their travel but also user-generated content on social sites.

To understand how the commercial and social tourism sites persuade the potential tourists to make choices is possible by discourse analysis. Dann claims that '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 so doing, convert them from potential into actual clients – thus, since much of this rhetoric is both logically and temporally prior to any travel or sightseeing, one can legitimately argue that tourism is grounded in discourse' (1996). According to Fairclough (1995) 'discourse' is use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice. Such analysis requires attention to textual form, structure and organization at all levels. The distinction between what is explicit and what is implicit in a text is of considerable importance in sociocultural analysis. Fairclough claims that one cannot properly analyse content without simultaneously analysing form, because contents are always necessarily realized in forms, and different contents entail different forms and vice versa'.

The paper claims to study what linguostylistic tools and photos that complement the advertisements and the reviews are used in tourism discourse to persuade the customer to buy the country brand through the realization of the function of impact.

## ADVERTISING THE COUNTRY BRAND ARMENIA

The first advertisement on Armenia to be analysed is from tripadvisor. It is the ad of the site and not a part of a review written by a tourist.

*Long fought over by warring empires, the city of Yerevan **survived centuries of foreign occupation, finally becoming independent** with the fall of the Soviet Union. This capital city, a center of Armenian culture, has **celebrated its freedom with a flurry of construction and a growing population. Despite this push forward, history survives** in Yerevan - The Institute of Ancient Manuscripts houses books dating back to the 9th century, and the ruins of the Erebuni Fortress, built in 782 BC, still stand.*  
(/http://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g293932-Yerevan-Vacations.html/)

This advertisement realizes both intellectual (informative) and impact functions. The stratification of functional styles is based on the system suggested by the Russian linguist V. Vinogradov. According to him speech realizes three functions – communicative function, intellectual (informative) function and the function of impact (aesthetic function) (Vinogradov, 1963). Considering the passage given above in the light of the theory of speech functions it should be said that firstly, it is a short introduction to the history of Yerevan (informative function), secondly, some word-combinations and collocations serve to interest and persuade the future tourist to buy the country brand which is the ad's main function, and stylistically it realizes its impact function. Surprisingly, the advertisement is not

rich in adjectives intrinsically charged with positive connotation that is peculiar to the language of advertisements. The adjectives found in the ad are the following: *long*, *foreign* which have acquired a connotative meaning in the context whereas the attributes *capital*, *Armenian*, *growing*, *ancient* are neutral. The persuasive function is carried out through the syntagmas which have connotative meaning and are stylistically marked. In the example under consideration the following word-combinations have been detected as connotative and thus tend to be persuasive:

1) *Long fought over by warring empires...* the phrasal verb *fight over* has acquired connotative overtones due to the adjective *long*, which in this context has acquired certain adherent connotative, emotional-evaluative overtone. The combination *long fought over* changes the informative influence of the phrasal verb and connotatively refers to the dramatic and lasting history of Yerevan and Armenia. The sentence continues in the following way:

2) *...the city of Yerevan survived centuries of foreign occupation* –Yerevan is the main constituent of personification and metaphorically is transformed into a hero that survived centuries of foreign occupation, the adjective *foreign* has a negative connotative meaning used with the noun *occupation* which has a denotative negative meaning if used separately. Two other examples of personification are found in the advertisement. They are the following:

3) *This capital city, a center of Armenian culture, has celebrated its freedom with a flurry of construction and growing population.* Yerevan is considered to be a hero that celebrates freedom.

4) The third example of personification is found in the last sentence *...history survives in Yerevan.*

The first visual text (see Figure 1) is the map of Armenia beneath which 13.652 reviews and opinions are written followed by small photo icons: on the left side is an icon on which it is written ‘2.394 candid traveller photos’ that is followed by three other photos: two of them present the Republic Square of Yerevan, one of them shows khachkars (crosstones) and on the last one is written ‘Traveller’s Choice: Tripadvisor’. This clickable icon takes the reader to the page entitled ‘10 destinations on the rise – Asia’, on the 9<sup>th</sup> place is Yerevan, Armenia.

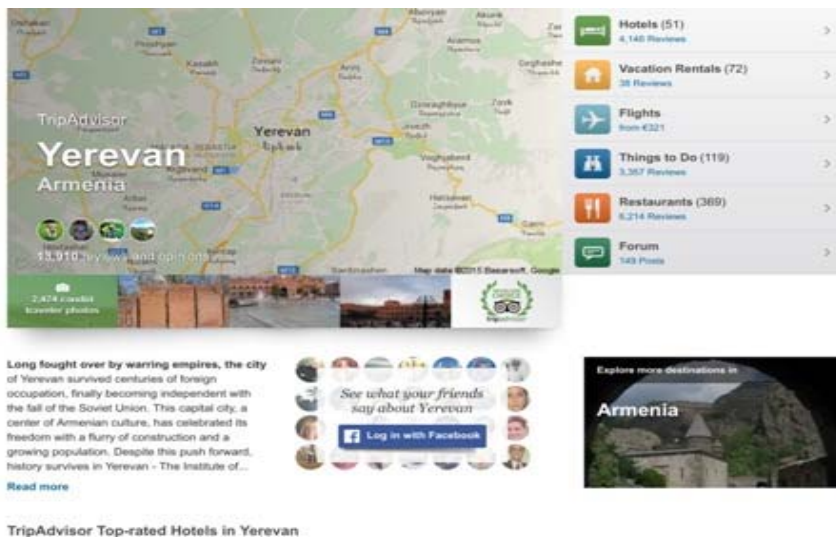


Figure 1: Trip Advisor – Yerevan, Armenia (<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g293932-Yerevan-Vacations.html>)

The potential tourists have the possibility to log on with Facebook and to find out what their friends say about the destination. All the icons are clickable, they take the potential tourist to the whole photogallery enabling them to see the photos with captions and small avatar of the site member and his/her nickname. The potential tourist has the opportunity to read the reviews written by tourists and ask them questions about the destination. Most photos are authentic and not photoshopped. They illustrate many aspects of the Armenian culture: places of interest, museums, galleries, concert halls, souvenirs, local people, cars, restaurants, clubs, pubs, food, national dress, thus shaping the country's brand.

The next advertisement representing Armenia is from Lonely Planet:

### **Introducing Armenia**

*Although Armenians carry a lot of psychological baggage from a traumatic 20th century, you'd hardly notice it from a quick tour around the country. The rapidly modernising capital, the boutique tourism industry and the warm welcome you'll receive everywhere seem to belie the country's reputation for tragedy. Rather than letting past woes weigh it down, Armenia (ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ) has built its memorials, dusted itself off and moved on. For travelers, easily visited highlights include ancient monasteries, candlelit churches and high-walled forts – but lasting impressions lie more with the Armenians themselves. You'll easily find friends among these gracious, humble and easy-going people, even without a common language. The travel experience is wide-ranging – you can have a four-star holiday in Yerevan and Sevan or a much simpler experience in rural towns like Dilijan and Goris. Many travelers only spend a week or less as they shuttle around the region but those with more time get to experience the best spots in crowd-free bliss. (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/armenia#ixzz3agld1m8b/>)*

Beneath the advertisement are placed two clickable photo ads (see Figure 2): 1) Top things to do in Armenia – photo of Geghard medieval monastery, which is one of a kind, most of it is cut into the rock and it is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site 2) Best places to stay in Armenia – photo of a hotel pool – contrasting the ancientness of the country with its modernization.

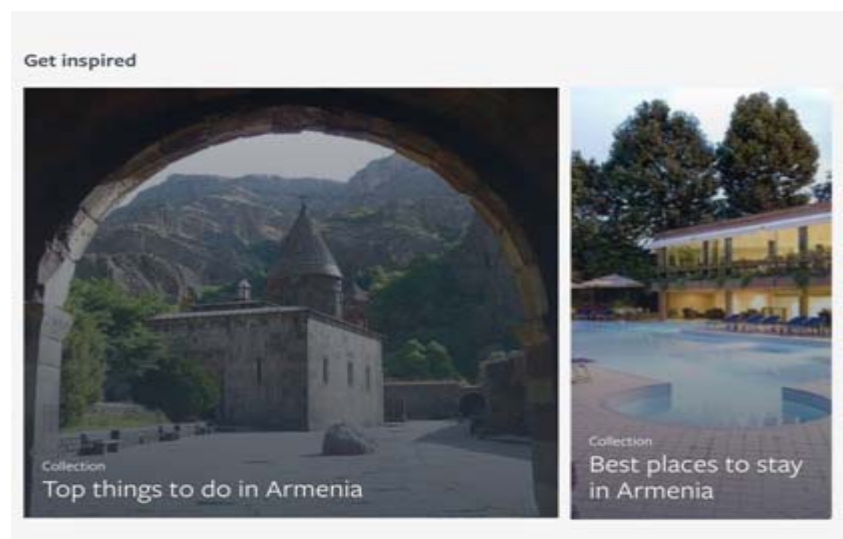


Figure 2: Lonely Planet (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/armenia#ixzz3agld1m8b/>)

As evident from contracted usages of auxiliaries (you'd, you'll x2) the advertisement addresses the consumer informally. The abstract is rich in epithets which add to the emotional evaluation of the country-brand.

The adjectives found in the advertisement are the following: *psychological, traumatic, quick, modernising, boutique, warm, past, ancient, candlelit, high-walled, lasting, gracious, humble, easy-going, common, wide ranging, four-star, simpler, rural, crowd-free*.

The following collocations are obviously connotative: *psychological baggage* is an example of deformation of an idiom. The original idiom is *emotional baggage*, hence the collocation has acquired an adherent connotative meaning referring to the historical memory of the Armenians related to their traumatic past – the Genocide (1914-1915) and the Sumgait pogrom (1988). The author figuratively calls the 20<sup>th</sup> century *traumatic (traumatic 20th century)*.

*Rather than letting past woes weigh it down, Armenia (ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ) has built its memorials, dusted itself off and moved on* is a good example of another personification. The *crowd-free bliss* (meaning *quiet bliss*) is a collocation used figuratively.

The next advertisement is from Tourism Armenia. The first things that strikes the customer's attention are interchangeable pictures representing Armenia through symbols: the Biblical Mount Ararat (historically on the territory of Western Armenia, in present-day Turkey), an eagle flying in the sky, rocks, red, ripe redcurrants, architectural carvings, ruins of Zvartnots Cathedral, Lake Sevan. Below the pictures a verbal advertisement is presented:

**Welcome to Armenia**

*When you visit Armenia, take the occasion to stop and listen attentively to your inner rhythm. Attune it to the rhythm of the life pulsing through "the country of a found and a lost Eden". Set your pace to its pace - stroll through the bustling avenues of major cities, walk along the quaint streets of provincial towns. Relax on the sun-warmed steps of a hilltop chapel. Enjoy a leisurely conversation in a mountain hamlet - let the flow of the life of the country embrace you. Sharpen your senses and feel Armenia (<http://www.tourismarmenia.org/#ixzz3aquxUyP>).*

The verbs are expressed in the imperative mood though there are no exclamation marks at the end of the statements. The advertisement is written as an instruction - advice for the tourist. The stylistic devices used in the example are the following: personification, allusion and repetition.

- 1) *let the flow of the life of the country embrace you* – personification,
- 2) *the country of a found and a lost Eden* – an allusion traced in reference with biblical Eden,
- 3) *Set your pace to its pace* – an example of repetition to strengthen the function of impact,
- 4) *Sharpen your senses and feel Armenia* – metaphor.

Taking into consideration the analyses of the above ads it can be inferred that the advertisements are written in a literary style, they are linguistically well-designed, rich in metaphors and exaggerations, lack first person narration and often are manifested in the imperative mood. The modern tourist, I believe, needs a more interactive and personified information. Nowadays, the potential tourist is able to find reviews they can comment on or make enquiries regarding the information provided, rank the usefulness of the review, and thus be in a dialogue (between the tourists and the industry) with the industry (Dann, 2012).

Capelli (2013) claims that ‘travel reviews are more similar to personal writing without an explicit promotional intent...’, ‘It’s only very recently that the first linguistic analyses of reviews, and more specifically travel reviews, have started to appear’. Hence, the comparison of the advertisements with the reviews will contribute to the overall linguistic study of tourism discourse.

The example brought below is a review about Yerevan written by a tourist from *Virtual Tourist*. The nickname of the reviewer is *Horscheck* and his avatar, the date of his last visit to the destination and the date of the last update of the review are also available. These details make the review more reliable psychologically and thus, persuade the potential tourist to take up the tour (see Figure 3).

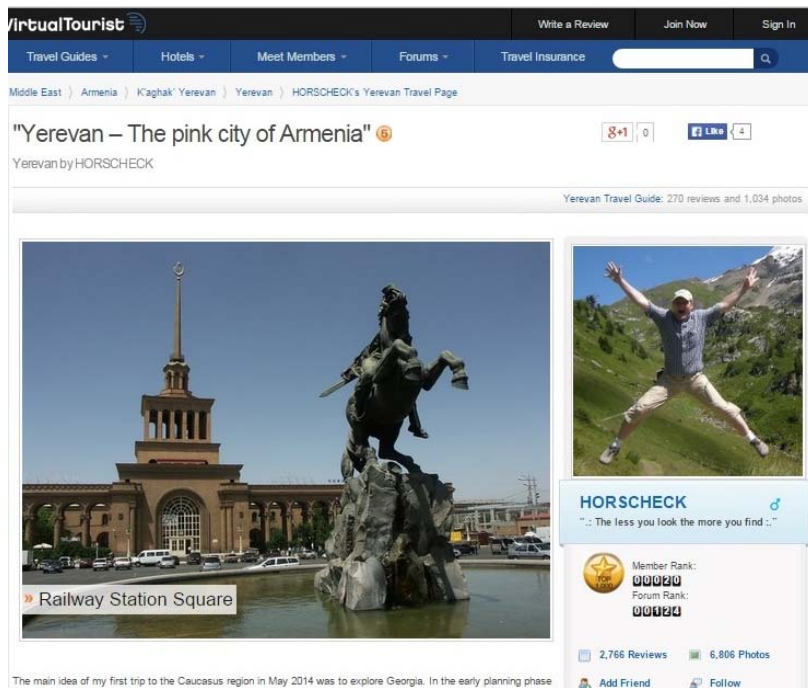


Figure 3: Virtual Tourist (<http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/3a000/1a163f/>)

**"YEREVAN – THE PINK CITY OF ARMENIA" YEREVAN BY HORSHECK**

*The main idea of my first trip to the Caucasus region in May 2014 was to explore Georgia. In the early planning phase I realised that neighbouring Armenia can be visited visa-free as well, so I thought about taking a detour to this country. After I had read some travel tips about Armenia I eventually ended up spending 8 days in Yerevan. From there I explored large parts of the country on day trips. The Armenian capital is often referred to as "pink city". This is derived from the colour of a volcanic tuff stone, which is used for many buildings in the city. Yerevan has just over 1 million inhabitants and to my surprise it is located at an altitude of around 1000 metres. On clear days the famous Mount Ararat (5137 m), where Noah's ark is said to have come to a rest, can easily be seen from Yerevan. I especially liked the multitude of Soviet style buildings. Many of these can be found at the Republic Square, but my personal favourite was definitely the Railway Station, which was built in Stalinist wedding cake style in 1956.*



Other well worth seeing sights include the large Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral, the Persian Blue Mosque, the Opera Theatre, the Mother Armenia Statue and the Karen Demirchyan Complex. Apart from these, the Cascade is a must-visit in the city. It is a giant stairway from whose top panoramic views of Yerevan with the Mount Ararat in the background can be enjoyed.

Among the highlights in the city was also my stay in the Downtown Hostel, where apart from the friendly staff I also met many travellers from several countries like Singapore, America, Iran, the Netherlands, Poland and quite a few more.

Last but not least, Yerevan is the perfect location for both organised and independent day trips to other parts of Armenia. I took part in two organised tours with different companies, one through southern and one through northern Armenia. Besides I went to Armenia's first capital Ejmiatsin by public transport and explored the town by myself.

**"Even if one believes that there is nothing to expect, we always expect something or someone."**

--- Charles Aznavour ---

### **Pros and Cons**

- **Pros:** Soviet style architecture, tasty food, friendly people.
- **Cons:** Letterboxes are not really emptied.
- **In a nutshell:** Yerevan – The pink city of Armenia.

Last visit to Yerevan: Jun 2014 Intro Updated May 1, 2015 (<http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/3a000/1a163f/>)

The review is written in the form of a first person narration, the tense of the narration is past simple, it is written post-trip in the style of narration. The author expresses his emotions and feelings through the following phrases and positive evaluative expressions: *I especially liked; my personal favourite was, other well worth seeing sights include; the Cascade is a must-visit, can be enjoyed, to my surprise, famous, tasty, friendly, perfect.*

The expression *Noah's ark is said to have come to a rest* referring to the Bible and the quotation by Aznavour *Even if one believes that there is nothing to expect, we always expect something or someone* that is used to emphasise and prove that the destination is worth visiting are good examples that persuade the future tourists to make the tour. Importantly, the reviewers may also write the disadvantages of the destination alongside with the advantages mentioned.

Below the review the replies of other members of the site *Virtual Tourist* are given. The potential tourists reply to the review using informal language, addressing the reviewer by his real name, their own avatars and nicknames are also available together with date and time when the reply was written.

Below follow the replies to the review "Yerevan – The pink city of Armenia" Yerevan by HORSHECK.

1. *Nemorino Yesterday*  
*Me again, coming back for another look at this updated page.*  
*When I first came to Germany I heard lots of jokes about "Radio Yerevan", but these have gone out of fashion since about 1990.*
2. *magor65 Mar 7, 2015 at 9:40 AM*  
*Very interesting and useful tips about Armenia. I'd love to go there.*
3. *starship Jan 11, 2015 at 11:42 AM*

*Holger, your excellent introduction page was very interesting! Enjoyed all your tips and photos which I thought made Armenia a very appealing destination! Great work!*

4. *Regina1965 Jan 9, 2015 at 6:52 AM  
A very good page. I would love to visit Armenia one day.*
5. *Kuznetsov\_Sergey Dec 29, 2014 at 11:04 AM  
A very exciting trip to Yerevan, Holger! I've never been to Armenia and looking forward to go there someday. It becomes more actual now when the trip to Europe will be too expensive for Russians after the rouble falling down.*
6. *hunterV Nov 28, 2014 at 1:23 AM  
Hello, Holger! Thanks for your comprehensive page and travel advice!*
7. *yummyum Nov 3, 2014 at 8:05 AM  
Excellent page on Yerevan! It certainly changed a lot since I've been there in 1984 during Soviet times. I remember the market hall with its colourful produce on offer which now obviously houses a supermarket. Should look at my slides again some day*
8. *wabat Oct 31, 2014 at 7:44 PM  
Holger - got through half this great page and look forward to returning to read your things to do section soon.*
9. *xaver Oct 31, 2014 at 2:08 PM  
some really great tips here. The idea of a combined trip Georgia Armenia is on my mind for a too long time....*
10. *IreneMcKay Oct 25, 2014 at 5:09 AM  
This looks like a fantastic city. Exactly the sort of place I really, really like. Another one on my to do list. Great page. Irene*
11. *german\_eagle Oct 23, 2014 at 4:02 AM  
Another excellent page, Holger. I enjoyed reading your tips and watching the pictures - the number of sights from the Soviet era is amazing. Cannot say I'm the biggest fan of that kind of architecture, but it's interesting. I'm wondering if you were able to go inside the churches or if photography was just not allowed there.*
12. *MalenaN Oct 21, 2014 at 10:46 AM  
Enjoyed reading your tips Holger! They brought back many nice memories from my two visits to Armenia.*
13. *Nemorino Oct 19, 2014 at 3:36 PM  
Holger, I like your new page on Yerevan. The Downtown Hostel sounds really nice. Do you know if they actually perform operas at the Opera Theatre?*
14. *globetrott Oct 19, 2014 at 1:27 PM*



an interesting page about a special Location ! Great to see these great vintage cars with the "special charmes" of the CCCP ! ;-)

15. toonsarah Oct 19, 2014 at 7:54 AM

Great new page Holger! This looks a fascinating city to visit and I also very much enjoyed your accounts of the day trips you did and the photos of all those beautiful monasteries. Great restaurant and transport tips too!

16. Gili\_S Oct 17, 2014 at 11:12 PM

What a lovely page, looks like a full guide for this place and you had excellent weather.

PS: Very danger postal service here, so everyone should be aware of that ;)

17. BillNJ Oct 13, 2014 at 4:27 AM

Very interesting. You're really getting off the beaten path with some of your latest trips!

18. Chinggis\_n\_Borte Oct 12, 2014 at 1:39 PM

Excellent information, beautiful pics. A really great page with great useful tips, and great photos.

19. Chinggis\_n\_Borte Oct 10, 2014 at 7:24 PM

I will come back for a look when you have had a chance to finish it. Looking forward to it!!

(<http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/3a000/1a163f/>)

The replies contain some grammatical mistakes as the repliers are not native speakers, and their reviews are written in a colloquial language rich in contractions, emoticons, exclamatory sentences to convey the potential tourists emotions and feelings. The interrogative sentences available accomplish the communicative function.

I have compiled the list of attributive collocations used in the replies that have inherent positive meaning. These adjectives evaluate the review together with the destination making it more trustworthy and the destination appealing. Using the Theory of Appraisal (Martin and White, 2005) as basis it can be stated that the repliers appreciate the review they have read; such appreciation according to Martin and White is divided into three types – reaction (Impact: did it catch their attention? Quality: did it please them?), composition and value. Martin and White (2005) interpret the appreciation framework metafunctionally referring to systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 2014) as reaction oriented to interpersonal significance, composition to textual organisation and valuation to ideational worth.

Below is the list of evaluative collocations picked up from the review:updated page, very interesting and useful tips, excellent introduction, a very appealing destination, great work, a very good page, a very exciting trip, comprehensive page, excellent page, colourful produce on offer, great page, really great tips, an interesting page, nice memories, great vintage cars, special charmes of the USSR, great new page, fascinating city, beautiful monastaries, great restaurant and transport tips, a lovely page, a full guide for this place, excellent weather,very dangerous postal service, excellent information, beautiful pics, great useful tips, great photos.

The list of utterances from the replies that express intention of the repliers is supplied to meet the subject-matter of my presentation, i.e. the persuasion. They are – *I'd love to go there; I would love to visit Armenia one day; ...looking forward to going there someday; Should look at my slides again some day; look forward to returning to read your things to do section again; the idea of combined trip Georgia Armenia is on my mind for too long time; another one on my to do list; this looks a fascinating city to visit; I will come back for a look when... .*

The list of the attributive collocations and different utterances expressing intention compiled from the replies show that the potential tourists trust the reviewers' narratives and intend to visit the places captured and described. The frequently used exclamatory sentences express the emotional attitude of the potential tourists towards the reviewer, the review and the destination. The language of the reviews is on the one hand a "language of testimony" as the tourists reveal what lies beyond the travel magazines and on the other they contribute to "language of promotion" (Capelli, 2006). Hence, it can be concluded that **the** yet different from the advertisements, the reviews and replies promote and rebrand tourist destinations.

## CONCLUSION

The overall conclusions of the article are the following:

The tourism advertisements, reviews and replies are rich in adjectives, metaphors and collocations with adherent connotative meaning, they realize the impact function.

The photos found on travel sites present Armenia's historically and culturally marked sights and the national lore to contribute to the country's identity paradigm and persuade the potential tourists by visual images.

The potential tourists' reviews and replies play a vital role in the creation of the country brand and in the promotion of tourist destinations.

The repliers evaluate not only the reviews and photos about the destination but also the destination itself. The language of the reviews is highly emotional, abundant in phrases of desire and intention to rely on the reviews and photos provided by an ordinary person who simply expresses and shares his/her impressions.

The reviews are written in the past tense and in the style of narrative in contrast to advertisements.

Based on the examples analyzed, it can be stated that the impact and the communicative functions are rather more successfully conveyed by the user-generated content posted on-trip or post-trip than by the commercials, and the former vitally influence on the choice that the potential tourists make pre-trip. Psychologically the reviews written by the tourists that have sender identification are more trustworthy than the ads that lack sender identification and the dialogue component peculiar to the social media. Therefore, it can be inferred that user-generated content can also be regarded as a form of destination branding and advertising as it corresponds to the advertising function AIDA (capture attention, maintain interest, create desire, get action).

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