

Engagement of readers/customers in the discourse of e-tourism promotional genres

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Abstract

Tourism 2.0, which involves direct e-communication between travellers and the tourism industry, has among its needs the discursive creation of websites that attract individual customers. Recent research in tourism and marketing (Austin 2009; Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011) suggests that it must also include the co-creation of values that align to the customer in some way. Their design must be persuasive yet trustworthy. This is achieved through diverse discursive strategies, some containing interpersonal clues that reflect the voice of the institution or business (author), and others that engage the customer (reader). This study discusses *engagement* and its importance as a key concept in e-genres such as institutional and private promotional websites (hotels, tourist guides, etc.) from the perspective of interpersonality, using data from the Cometval corpus (English and Spanish). Its conclusions note significant and controversial differences in the way these promotional e-genres are envisaged and construed in English and Spanish, with societal implications.

Keywords: engagement/promotional genres/interpersonality/tourism/discourse/e-genres/hotel websites

1. Introduction

The world of tourism has undergone a dramatic change with Web 2.0 technologies. While this is undeniable, it is also true that current discourse studies in professional domains need to take into account research findings in this discipline if they want to have meaningful implications for society. In the discursive study of e-tourism genres, fields like marketing, hospitality, the tourism industry and sociology must be brought into the equation as a means of identifying specific needs and shifts that help to show the way to useful linguistic analyses. In this vein, Austin (2009), a

marketing analyst in tourism, suggests that increasingly, hotel selection processes might involve triangulated research using TripAdvisor.com, the hotel's website, and perhaps other sources, to ascertain price, location, amenities, and charm.

One of the needs of tourism 2.0, which involves direct e-communication between travellers and the tourism industry, is the discursive creation of websites that can attract individual customers, who are more informed and demanding than ever, and who search for destinations and/or specific hotel features that meet their requirements. These websites must be designed in a persuasive yet trustworthy way. This is done through discursive strategies that combine certain rhetorical functions with interpersonal clues that align with the reader's voice (i.e. the customer), and in this way is the genre's persuasive aim achieved (Suau-Jiménez 2012b). This combination makes the customer's voice part of a dialogue intended to offer and share real information, based on certain values that can differ from one website to another. For instance, they can offer values aimed to convince and charm the potential customer through focusing on the specific kind of pleasure sought in a destination or hotel, thus creating a feeling of attraction, comfort, etc. Needless to say, this is also meant to create economic value. In the half-explicit, half-implicit dialogue that is woven between the tourism institution or business and the customer, engagement, or the way in which the reader/customer is addressed and involved in the contents, is essential to achieve these aims. The opposite part of this dialogue, that is, what the institution/business thinks and feels about the characteristics that are offered, is what shapes the stance voice and what transmits the necessary authority and confidence that gives credit to the persuasive message. Engagement and its importance for persuasion and for the creation of specific values will be discussed in this chapter, since this voice is never explicit in a tourism website but is implicit in what the author suggests, recommends or subtly leads to, its effect

being that of attracting and involving the reader/customer in the message. However, engagement varies cross-linguistically, since it is connected to the socio-cultural trends of a particular language and to the interpersonal patterns it generates, as well as being influenced by genre and discipline (Suau-Jiménez 2012a, 2016a).

This study addresses engagement in promotional genres like institutional or private websites from the perspective of interpersonal discourse, based on Hyland (2005, 2008) and the way in which the subjective interaction of writers and readers in promotional genres of e-tourism is understood. It draws on Suau-Jiménez and Dolón-Herrero (2007) and Suau-Jiménez's (2012a, 2012b) refined interpersonal pattern for e-tourism genres in English and Spanish, and how customers are involved in the discursive creation of tourism websites in order to be guided and persuaded about certain pre-conceived values that are shared by businesses and consumers. It provides, first, a theoretical approach, based on the way tourism marketing itself perceives this, and then on the way engagement is envisaged in systemic functional and social constructionist frameworks, which share the view that language use is influenced by social and cultural contexts. Likewise, a brief overview of the differences between academic, legal and professional interpersonal discourses is provided, as well as the importance that the aim of the genre plays in creating engagement in one or other dimension. Following this, quantitative and qualitative data are presented and discussed, these deriving from research on engagement in tourism websites, these data being of potential interest to linguists, socio-linguists and the tourism industry. The data themselves are drawn from the COMETVAL corpus on e-tourism genres, University of Valencia, Spain (<http://www.uv.es/cometval/wikibase/cas/index.wiki>), collected in 2012 and 2013, which contains some 1.5 million words. The methodology is based on the concept of

engagement (White 2003; Hyland 2005, 2008), with cross-generic and cross-disciplinary refinements for texts on tourism by Suau-Jiménez (2012a, 2014, 2016a).

2. Engagement in social and professional settings: what research in marketing and tourism suggests

Research in engagement within e-tourism genres must be addressed not only from the field of discourse, but from a number of different yet related fields, if we want to arrive at a complete picture of its scope as a social and professional concept. Only in this way can we fully explain how communication is construed between businesses and consumers/customers in e-genres, and thus understand the different generic purposes and the values linked to what tourists and travellers demand and what the tourism industry offers.

The concept *consumer engagement* has been coined in the field of tourism industry studies, defined thus:

Customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers including: word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, customer-to-customer interactions, blogging, writing reviews, and other similar activities (MSI, 2010: 4).

This definition entails a strong psychological and behavioural focus. From this same perspective, Brodie, Hollebeek et al. (2011) claim that customer engagement is a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences and exists as a dynamic process that creates value. The idea of co-creating value between businesses and customers is also interesting to explore, since it underlies many of the new proposals for tourism on offer through e-genres: values like multiculturalism, ethnicity, well-being, healthy food, ecology, environmentally-friendly practices, e-connectability, etc. are all understood as what customers expect and demand

from establishments. In this sense, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004: 5) suggest that companies can no longer act autonomously, designing products with little or no interference from consumers:

Consumers now seek to exercise their influence in every part of the business system. Armed with new tools and dissatisfied with available choices, consumers want to interact with firms and thus co-create value. The use of interaction as a basis for co-creation is at the crux of our emerging reality.

In other words, interaction, and therefore *engagement* of consumers/customers in the promotional process through new e-genres that allow communication between both parties, is central for the co-creation of values, and indeed value.

Again from the perspective of marketing, Austin (2009) suggests that the voice of the customer must be embraced since it entails a transformational power towards improving quality, building loyalty and gaining market. Listening to customers through online platforms, such as those provided by some hotel websites or through traveller forums like TripAdvisor, provides clues that can subsequently be implemented in the services offered. This self-explanatory example from Austin (2009) relates to hotels:

In the InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) community, some travelers reveal that they remove their shoes first upon entering a hotel room, while others say they immediately scan the room for an Internet connection and outlet for their laptops. In response, the company decided to experiment with a new room design that would give a new orientation for outlets and a clear view of the desk chair from the doorway.

Austin also claims that the web 2.0 technology definitely facilitates this task.

Likewise, research has shown that customers have more respect for and trust in companies that actively listen, and that the customer's feeling of having been heard by companies is related to positive business outcomes (Lerman and Austin, 2006).

Other sources, such as Eye for Travel (2011), an entity involved in providing marketing information for tourism, suggests that hoteliers are now faced with a significant challenge, since customers are more informed and demanding than before: “to capture and retain the attention of consumers who are constantly on-the-go and becoming increasingly aware of their control over the way they receive and interact with your marketing messages.” (2011: 5)

Institutional and private tourism websites have shifted their marketing messages from one-sided conversations (speaking to consumers) to engaging discussions (speaking with consumers). This view suggests that marketing strategies, and more specifically promotional discursive strategies, need to be refined so as to engage customers not only in terms of their visual representations but in their discourse, thus establishing new bonds that make them feel like actors that participate in the message of the website, and whose opinions are taken into account before decisions on products and services are made by hoteliers or tourism agents.

The field of tourism management and hospitality has also contributed research on how customers are engaged in promotions, this time not through websites but through online forums where consumers share their experiences, something that can be of benefit to tourism businesses. Osman, Johns, and Lugosi (2014:3) suggest that tourists’ visual representation of spaces and reflections on their experiences, especially through online forums, is becoming a frequent practice. Traveller forums are one type of digital genre that provides authentic, non-business biased information that can have considerable indirect influence and can be of great value for both the tourism industry and for individuals, due to be combination of its rhetorical goals of persuasion, evaluation and solidarity (Suau-Jiménez 2014). Also, Hsu, Dehuang and Woodside (2009) indicate that online representations of tourism products and services offer

valuable consumer-generated insights into the people, practices and processes that influence tourists in their decision making. Watson, Morgan and Hemmington (2008), for their part, claim that rather than viewing online platforms as one-directional representations, virtual forums can be seen as performative spaces where consumers build their values through engagement with others. In other words, engagement in its different forms and practices is crucial, not only for promotion in tourism, but, more importantly, for the co-creation of products and services, as well as for relationships based on confidence, trust and authenticity between businesses and consumers.

3. Engagement and genre in social discourses

Before exploring what engagement signifies for the e-genres of tourism, let us address Swales' (1993) and Martin's (1990) claims as to its importance for a social view of genres and discourse communities. Their basic contention is that genres go beyond being discursive phenomena, since their social dimension is part of their essence. Starting with Martin's dictum: "Genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them" (Martin 1985: 250), it becomes clear that genres may include a transactional process that affects authors and readers, these becoming social-discursive agents, and genres becoming a kind of social action. Meanwhile, Swales recalls what systemic-functional linguists like Halliday and Hasan (1989) and Martin (1992) call "contexts of culture", which is defined as the origin of genres, those contexts being understood as social, academic or professional groups that need to communicate and interact through certain recurrent text types. Therefore, engagement would be an essential part of how discursive communities use genres to achieve their

transactional and communicative aims. Fairclough (1992) is another author who claims that genre is a social construct where people interact following specific discursive patterns, their actions being, thus, socially constrained. Hence genres can never achieve their goals if the members of a discursive community are not aligned in their communicative purpose and integrated within their discourse. Engagement is, therefore, a key socio-discursive concept in academic, legal and professional genres. It has been researched widely, often in contrast to stance, both of these being considered as the discursive or disciplinary voices of authors and readers (Hyland 2005b, 2008). Stance transmits the author's authority and request for credibility, and engagement is the necessary instrument that involves readers and makes them co-agents of the discourse in openly interactive genres. Engagement has been defined by Hyland (2001a: 197) as: "an alignment function, concerning the ways that writers rhetorically recognise the presence of their readers to actively pull them along with the argument, include them as discourse participants, and guide them to interpretations". This definition has most often been applied to academic writing.

3.1. Engagement in academic discourse

Engagement in academic discourse deserves some mention here. The concept was applied to the analysis of academic genres by Hyland (2001a); it is through the Research Article (RA) that engagement is best represented. The RA is a genre that has been extensively researched in a variety of domains, including medicine, engineering, biology, chemistry, geology and business (Hyland 1998, 2000, 2001a, 2005; Vázquez and Giner 2009; Dafouz 2007; Lorés-Sanz 2011, 2015; Mur-Deñás 2013, 2014), to name but a few. As Hyland (2005: 173) notes:

Writers seek to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views, so that controlling the level of personality in a text becomes central to building a convincing argument.

The discursive realization of engagement in academic discourse is undoubtedly biased by the requirements that the international academic community, mostly Anglo-Saxon, has set on how RAs must be understood, written and evaluated: always addressed to lead readers, a community of academics and researchers who demand that ideas and findings be hedged and stated as objectively as possible. This presupposes that RAs have to be blind-reviewed and presumably devoid of subjectivity, something that clearly establishes limits on stance (author's authority) and engagement (reader's alignment). The restrictions imposed on engagement dictate that persuasion here must never be achieved through an explicit alignment with the reader, but rather the very opposite of this. However, a subtle and camouflaged level of subjectivity that aids evaluation has been claimed by researchers in interpersonal discourse, as Hyland reports (2005), challenging the traditional view of academic writing as impersonal and objective. Thus, writers actively pull readers along with the argument, include them as discourse participants and guide them to interpretations and positive evaluation through a series of interpersonal markers that can be identified and isolated (Hyland 2001a).

Interestingly, some genres within the academic world, but not directly related to research, do behave as promotional ones, as in the case of the Grant Proposal (GP), a genre where the ability of researchers to write proposals that can persuade sponsors and secure funding is essential:

In contrast to, RAs' peer review process, GP review is not blind. The proposer's reputation, track record and perceived ability to deliver the research programme significantly affect reviewers' feedback, affirming the genre's promotional nature. (Koutsantoni 2009: 38)

This genre entails a strong sense of engagement towards readers, that is, towards sponsors who must be persuaded of the quality of the proposal, and the genre therefore displays an interactive or interpersonal discourse, a dialogic relationship with the discourse communities that are related to it. In terms of engagement, such promotional genres in academic writing come close to promotional text types in professional fields like tourism. It can be concluded, then, that engagement in academic writing is powerfully related to the genre's purpose, ranging from evaluation and appraisal in research writing (RAs), where readers must be addressed in less overt ways, to persuasion in promotional text types such as GPs, where readers are open and subjectively aligned in the discourse as a means of attaining the final aim of the text.

3.2. *Engagement in legal, corporate and professional discourses*

Legal, corporate and professional discourses have been approached in different ways that describe their genre traits, their narratives and some of their interpersonal characteristics, although the methodology used has not always been based on the view of interpersonal metadiscourse suggested by Hyland and Tse (2004) and Hyland (2005, 2008). Rather, it has tended to follow genre analysis (Bhatia 1993) or the view of metadiscourse proposed by Ädel (Ädel and Mauranen 2010). Gotti and Sancho (2013) report a series of studies that address narratives in corporate and professional genres, but that do not deal with promotional aspects. In Breeze, Gotti and Sancho (2014), another collection of studies, legal genres are approached from multiple discursive perspectives; in the introductory chapter, the editors give a general theoretical overview of interpersonality, seen as a fuzzy concept that is complicated when a further concept, that of voice, is added (these two often seen as synonymous). Engagement is also

understood to be fuzzy in nature, a category of voice that together with stance construes interpersonality in a kind of circular relationship, since “engaging with interlocutors inevitably entails adopting a stance on them, and taking and disclosing such posture intentionally is per se an act of engagement” (2014:9). Likewise, the inventory of interpersonal devices is an open one, some researchers regarding them as “potential features” (Hiltunen 2010, cited in Breeze, Gotti and Sancho 2014:10).

Professional discourse has been explored from the viewpoint of interpersonal metadiscourse by Suau-Jiménez (2010), who analyzes several business-related professional genres, including commercial letters, memos and reports. As for the domain of tourism, Suau-Jiménez and Dolón Herrero (2007) focus on promotional genres, and Suau-Jiménez (2014) analyzes a corpus of banking texts (COMENEGO corpus), all these studies from the perspective of interactional metadiscourse. Finally, Suau-Jiménez (2012a, 2012b, 2016a) looks specifically at studies digital genres of tourism from the perspective of disciplinary voice and interpersonal metadiscourse (White 2003, Hyland 2005, 2008).

Before concentrating in more depth on how engagement is conceived and materialized in the construction of promotional e-tourism genres, it is worth noting, in relation to the above discussion of academic, legal and professional types of engagement, the powerful influence on its interpersonal texture played by tenor, discipline and generic constraints (Suau-Jiménez 2016a). In other words, what differentiates engagement in RAs, GPs and e-tourism genres is essentially what the discursive communities of science or tourism demand, together with the generic constraints and their communicative purposes.

4. Engagement in promotional e-tourism genres in English and Spanish

Engagement in promotional e-tourism genres has been researched by Suau-Jiménez and Dolón-Herrero (2007) and Suau-Jiménez (2012a, 2012b, 2016a), based methodologically on the approach from interpersonal/interactional metadiscourse by Hyland and Tse (2004) and Hyland (2005, 2008). As mentioned above, these authors propose an interpersonal discourse pattern for academic writing, claiming that there are specific markers that cater for the linguistic materialization of the interactional dimension in academic genres. White (2003) and Hyland (2008) added to this research the concept of narrative voice, coined by Bakhtin (1986) for literature, divided into stance and engagement (author's and reader's voice). In this way, a new socio-linguistic level of analysis was at hand, establishing a bond between the analysis of individual interpersonal realizations through markers and the final genre characterization through functions. Voice has proved to be a useful tool here, since it has to some extent enriched an unstable methodological framework, that of interpersonal metadiscourse, which used individual markers to explain how generic rhetorical functions were achieved (Hyland and Tse 2004). The fact of grouping these markers into author's and reader's voice has provided a more solid and reliable method for analysis, since individual markers alone proved to be an unstable tool, given that their categories could change considerably across genres, disciplines and languages.

Engagement is seen as the voice of the reader/customer that shapes part of the hidden dialogue displayed by promotional genres, together with the stance or author's voice, which is the other side of this dialogic interaction.

Work by Suau-Jiménez (2012a, 2012b) on e-genres in tourism reports clear differences in the way engagement is addressed when compared with academic or legal genres, between English and Spanish, and finally when compared with the importance that the author's stance has in the promotional discourse. The interpersonal pattern derived from these studies points towards a much more direct way to align/engage the reader/customer in the English language websites, according to a corpus of 200 US and UK hotels, in comparison with the Spanish language websites of 200 hotels in Spain, Chile and Argentina. Engagement here represents one face of interpersonal communication, intertwined with other markers, these pertaining to stance, which represent the other face. Both voices, stance and engagement, are interwoven with functions such as description, explanation, evaluation and persuasion. Their analysis tells us which voice has a stronger weight in the hidden author-reader dialogue, and therefore how the two voices are represented in communication. The results of these analyses are here discussed, in terms of engagement and its relation to stance, and also concerning the kind of markers and strategies that are deployed, their frequencies and qualitative importance in English and Spanish. The taxonomy of engagement markers used as a reference for the analysis is based on Hyland (2008):

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Engagement (reader's voice) | <i>reader's pronouns</i> (second person pronouns) <i>directives</i> (second person imperatives) |
|-----------------------------|--|

Table 1. Taxonomy of interpersonal markers for engagement (Hyland 2008)

It also seems necessary to provide a view of how stance and engagement voices and markers are represented in promotional e-tourism genres in English and

Spanish before discussing engagement and its relation to stance in this type of discourse. This is set out in the following two tables:

ENGLISH

| <i>Category</i> | <i>Total markers</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| STANCE | | |
| Hedges | 57 | 11'42% |
| Boosters | 210 | 42'08% |
| Attitudinals | 25 | 5'01% |
| Self-mentions | 62 | 12'42% |
| ENGAGEMENT | | |
| Reader's markers | 139 | 29'07% |
| Directives | 80 | 16'00% |

Table 1. Stance and engagement in English promotional e-tourism genres (Suau-Jiménez 2012a, 2012b)

SPANISH

| <i>Category</i> | <i>Total markers</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| STANCE | | |
| Hedges | 37 | 7'11 |
| Boosters | 408 | 78'46 |
| Attitudinals | 22 | 4'23 |
| Self-mentions | 36 | 6'92 |
| ENGAGEMENT | | |
| Reader's pronouns | 3 | 0'57 |
| Directives | 20 | 4'00 |

Table 2. Stance and engagement in Spanish promotional e-tourism genres (Suau-Jiménez 2012a, 2012b)

4.1. Engagement marker categories in English and Spanish promotional e-tourism genres (COMETVAL corpus)

| CATEGORY | Total markers (English) | Percentage (English) | Total markers (Spanish) | Percentage (Spanish) |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Reader's pronouns | 139 | 29'07% | 18 | 3'28% |
| Directives | 82 | 17'00% | 20 | 4'04% |

Table 3. Marker types and frequencies for engagement in promotional e-genres in English and Spanish (Suau-Jiménez 2012a, 2012b)

Quantitatively speaking, it can be noted that engagement is a more highly represented voice in English than in Spanish. This can be interpreted in the sense that the reader, that is, the customer, is taken into account far more in English, whereas in Spanish it is the stance voice that bears the strongest force in the communication, thus basing the promotional discourse on the author's authority and a request for credibility with respect to the values that this voice enhances. In English, although the stance voice is also strong, customers are well aligned through the use of personal pronouns and directives that engage them. In this way, the author assumes their participation in the display of values that the stance voice enhances. On the Spanish websites, by contrast, this is not the case; here it is the stance voice that leads the power of the hidden dialogue, with a poor engagement of the reader/customer, therefore *imposing* the pre-conceived values that the institution or business is interested in presenting.

ENGLISH

| <i>Stance (author's voice)</i> | | <i>Engagement (reader's voice)</i> | |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|--------|
| Hedges | 11'42% | Reader's pronouns | 29'07% |
| Boosters | 42'08% | Directives | 20'05% |

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--|---------------|
| Attitudinals | 5'01% | | |
| Self-mentions | 12'42% | | |
| <i>TOTAL</i> | <i>70'93%</i> | | <i>49'12%</i> |

Table 4. Differences in stance and engagement markers for English (Suau-Jiménez 2012a)

These findings suggest that although the stance voice is strongly represented, thus aiming for credibility as a central means of achieving persuasion, engagement is also a very important feature. *Reader's markers*, in the form of personal or possessive pronouns, show that customers are engaged in the sharing of the values being offered and promoted. The inclusion of the personal pronoun *you*, together with a verbal action or the possessive *your* accompanied by a noun phrase, directly engages the reader/customer in the discourse and in the co-creation of values and promotion (i.e. of economic value). This does not happen in Spanish, where persuasion is attempted in a rather different way, the reader/customer to a great extent disregarded as a co-participant in the communication.

This is how strategies that include *reader's markers* are qualitatively construed in English:

Examples:

(1). “*You’ll get to see* such treasures as King Charles I”.

This example engages customers in the co-creation of values like history and art (such treasures as King Charles I) through the strategy “*you’ll get to see*” that includes the reader in the verbal action.

(2). “Cinema Jove Internacional Film Festival *brings you* another year of quality films...”.

Here, the strategy is to offer the reader/customer the possibility of enjoying quality films as a value to be shared, using the verbal action “brings you”.

(3). “Hotels and hostels *book your stay* in Valencia.”

(4). “An audioguide that will *complement your visit* to Valencia...”

These two examples are meant to co-create the values of ease and efficiency in booking and in information, by engaging the reader/customer in the verbal action through the verbs “book” and “complement”.

Directives, the other markers that are highly represented in the engagement voice in English, are one step further along the alignment process with readers/customers, since they are a direct way of aligning them and of recommending the use of services and/or the enjoyment of specific values that the stance voice enhances. Often, directives embody direct or indirect recommendations that are, obviously, related to the stance, but that are also the most blatant way to engage readers/customers in the promotion. The overlapping of these markers with reader’s pronouns is inevitable in many cases, which results in a powerful engagement strategy that embodies two types of markers at the same time.

Examples:

(5). “If you are looking for something *special, pay a visit to...*”

(6). “*Request your FREE* Tourist Pack. A pack with everything...”

These two examples directly engage customers in actions that are meant to enhance values like finding what is specific to a city (special) or the low cost of a service (free).

They also include reader’s markers that are included in verbal actions like “pay a visit to” or “request” and that directly align with readers. This overlapping constitutes a more powerful interpersonal strategy aimed at engaging customers.

(7). “*We recommend* you to follow this list”.

This example engages readers/customers through the author’s authority, based on a self-mention marker (*we*), i.e. part of the stance that represents the tourism institution or business. The verbal action “recommend” includes the customer.

(8). “*You can bathe naked* on Hampstead Heath”.

(9). “*You will find hotels* for all tastes and at the best prices...”

Through the alignment in these verbal actions, accompanied by adjectives (*naked, best*), readers/customers are being engaged in the co-creation of values such as freedom and nature and also affordability for any budget.

SPANISH

| <i>Stance (author’s voice)</i> | | <i>Engagement (reader’s voice)</i> | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Hedges | 7’11% | Reader’s pronouns | 3’28% |
| Boosters | 78’46% | Directives | 9’50% |
| Attitudinals | 4’23% | | |
| Self-mentions | 6’92% | | |
| <i>TOTAL</i> | <i>96’72%</i> | | <i>12’78%</i> |

Table 5. Differences in stance and engagement in promotional e-tourism genres in Spanish (Suau-Jiménez and Dolón Herrero 2007)

As can be observed in Spanish tourism promotional websites, engagement is a poorly represented voice with respect to stance and also with respect to English. Here, practically all the weight of the discourse is born by the stance voice, i.e. that of the

tourism institution or business. Customers are barely taken into account as participants in the construction of shared values. Promotion is built on the basis of the authority that the stance voice displays, principally through *boosters* (positive evaluative adjectives) with the aid of *self-mentions* (first person pronouns) and *attitudinals* (adverbs and non-evaluative adjectives). *Hedges* (modals and conditionals) are the only way in which the strong authority and imposition of the stance voice is softened, yet this is done only very lightly, represented by only 7'11% of the total stance markers. Engagement is only a small part of the promotion dialogue, with a minimum percentage of reader's pronouns and directives. Another characteristic of engagement strategies in Spanish is the two possible forms of addressing readers (tú, usted), and the indirect address to the reader through the third impersonal person (el turista, el lector, el viajero)

As for their qualitative nature, here are some examples of *reader's markers*:

(10). "...la suerte de venir en alguna de estas fechas de las Fallas, *no te las puedes perder*."

(11). "...la Exposición del Ninot (en la que *tu voto puede salvar* a un Ninot del fuego)

In these two examples, readers/customers are engaged with the informal pronoun *te/tu*, this serving to shorten the distance with the author. The values that are co-created are the unmissability of the Fallas as something unique (*no te las puedes perder*) and the tourist's participation in the festival itself (*tu voto puede salvar*).

(12). "...conciertos o zonas de ocio que convertirán *tu fin de semana* en algo *inolvidable*..."

Here, the strategy is construed around the possessive *tu* that embodies two values: to close distance with the author, a same-level authority being one who can be trusted, and also the capacity of the tourist to shape his/her own weekend and make it unforgettable.

As for *directives*, this is how they are used in the engagement strategies:

(13). “...no *deje de tener* en cuenta la Lonja de la Seda”.

(14). “...al *amigo lector* que *seleccione*”.

Both examples display a more distant relationship with the author. The first directly recommends and leads the customer in his/her visit to a historic place such as la Lonja de la Seda in Valencia, a Renaissance monument. The distancing employed here, using the “usted” (*deje*), can be interpreted as a sign of respect towards a target segment of the audience, senior tourists. The same happens in the second example, where the distance is even greater, using a third person, impersonal strategy “*amigo lector*”. The co-created values represent the ability of the customer to participate directly in the organization of the visits.

As has been shown, Spanish and English engagement in promotional e-tourism websites are very different. Quantitatively speaking, the former is very scarce, promotion and persuasion being based mainly on the stance through the author’s enhancement of the values, and with little co-creation of values with the reader/customer. Qualitatively, though, Spanish is more here varied than the English, due to the two ways of addressing the reader in Spanish, either formally or informally, something that can be adapted to the tenor of the discourse and the objectives of the genre, i.e. to target a specific age-related segment of the audience. The third impersonal person (*el lector, el cliente*) is a yet more distant way of engagement.

5. Discussion and conclusions

As noted above, engagement is a powerful means of co-creating values and therefore economic value, a trend that has been acknowledged by the tourism industry

and in related marketing studies (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Morgan and Hemmington 2008; Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011; Osmans, Johns and Lugosi 2014). With the rise of the 2.0 web, individuals have developed a growing interest in participating in the personal organization of their travel and tourism activity, something that many hoteliers and tourism agents now take into account. The creation of values is no longer something that can be imposed on travellers and tourists. The promotion of urban or natural spaces, countries and cities must take into account the demands and needs of customers, something that is available today through different network sources (traveller forums, travel and tourism portals, customers' commentaries, etc.) and that stand for their subjective positioning in the market. Their direct engagement in the actions and in the values proposed by institutions or businesses of tourism is also central in the *triangulation* of 2.0 travel and tourism, that is, business, customers and e-genres (Austin 2009). This is realized not only through the authority that the stance voice represents in e-tourism websites by means of certain interpersonal strategies; the integration of readers/customers' voices in this hidden dialogue is a means of establishing a balanced and more democratic communication. Also, it is how genres transcend their linguistic essence to become social-discursive agents at the service of a discursive community (Martin 1990). However, cross-linguistic differences in the construction of promotional e-tourism are undeniable, and Spanish interpersonal discourse does not align the reader/customer as much as the English discourse, in quantitative terms, when it comes to engagement, although Spanish presents some interesting qualitative variations that can adapt more effectively to specific are groups. In what concerns promotional e-genres, and based on our data from the COMETVAL corpus, the Spanish tourism discourse community sees the institution or business (the author's voice or stance) as the most reliable voice to achieve persuasion, disregarding

the customers' role and their will to participate more actively in the management of their trips, as current research in tourism and marketing has suggested (Suau-Jiménez 2012a). Although Spain had in 2014 a 12% increase of tourists more than in 2013, according to the official figures of the WTO (World Tourism Organization, <http://mkt.unwto.org/publication/unwto-tourism-highlights>), this could presumably improve if the current trend in e-tourism research on the importance of engagement was followed. The limits of the present article preclude a deeper analysis as to whether the English model is influencing the Spanish promotional discursive construction of tourism websites. Thus, further research within both discourse and marketing in this area would be interesting.

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