

## **ADDA 1 Conference**

**TITLE OF PANEL:** “Interpersonality in digital communication types: academic, professional and disciplinary variations”

### **PANEL ORGANIZERS**

Francisca Suau Jiménez, IULMA, Universitat de València

Rosa Lorés Sanz, INTERLAE, Universidad de Zaragoza

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### **The role of customer online reviews in the discourse-dialogic construction of hotel websites**

Francisca Suau Jiménez

IULMA

Universitat de València

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The internet as a tool for travel and tourism has triggered or reshaped new webgenres (Herring et al. 2005), also known as digital modes or phenomena (Thurlow and Mroczek 2011, Herring 2013) that have revolutionised the way discourse is modelled. A great amount of *word-of-mouth (WOM)* information has thus appeared, partly through consumer-generated *online reviews* (Gretzel and Yoo 2008; Sandvik, Arnett, & Sandvik 2011). These digital communication types are of great value to hospitality marketers since they offer a solution to the “problem” of the intangibility of their products (Zhang, Yea, Law and Li 2010), thus facilitating that hotel websites are updated, refining their proposals to match customer demands.

Online reviews can be regarded as a webgenre within another webgenre. Through them, customers deploy a strong *interpersonal stance discourse* evaluating the hotel’s quality and services, and making specific requests via positive or negative *attitude markers* as well as *boosters* (Suau-Jiménez 2012). This stance discourse should ideally be incorporated into the hotel website’s textual part and transformed into engagement strategies that address readership.

This research attempts to assess whether hotel websites include the aforementioned writer-reader interplay using stance markers from customer reviews and transforming them into engagement strategies, which are necessary to construct a persuasive enough discourse. To this end, four hotel websites of high and medium rating categories containing customer reviews are analysed, both quantitative and

qualitatively. Results will allow a deeper interpersonal knowledge of the role of online customer reviews in the discursive construction of hotel websites.

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