'Different' and 'distinct' as markers of otherness: A corpus-driven study of the (re)creation of privilege in high standard hotels

Rosana Dolón Herrero
Universitat de València (España)
dolon@uv.es

Abstract

The present study seeks to offer an understanding of how high-end hotel websites produce privilege, creating a sense of belonging and entitlement for their 4/5-star guests. The experience of tourism is intrinsically linked to embracing otherness, and as a reflection of this, hotel websites offer a characterization of cultural otherness in an attempt to make it resonate with the potential expectations of a socioeconomically privileged client. The study considers the question of what elements of experience of otherness the website will address, relying on a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective and drawing on Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as related to lifestyle, *difference* and *distinction*. Specifically, the words *different* and *distinct* are addressed in this study as markers of otherness and privilege. Based on Fairclough's sociocultural approach, and specifically on Halliday's transitivity system, the use of these words in clause construction patterns yields an understanding of how specific representations of reality revolving around the idea of otherness are built up. The research is corpus-driven and qualitative, its conclusions also offering some insight as to how hotel websites recreate forms of in-group similarity.

Keywords: tourism discourse, difference, otherness, privilege, Critical Discourse Analysis.

Resumen

Diferente y distinto *como marcadores de otredad: un estudio de corpus de la (re)creación de privilegio en hoteles de alto nivel*

El presente estudio pretende dar a conocer cómo las webs de los hoteles de alto nivel (4 y 5 estrellas) crean privilegio entre sus huéspedes, construyendo un

sentido de pertenencia a la élite y de derecho a recibir dicho privilegio. La experiencia del turismo está intrínsecamente unida a abrazar la otredad, y como tal reflejo, las webs hoteleras ofrecen una caracterización de otredad cultural en un intento de hallar un eco en las expectativas de un cliente socioeconómicamente privilegiado. Este estudio toma en consideración qué elementos de la experiencia de otredad recoge la web, basándose en una perspectiva del Análisis Crítico del Discurso y, en concreto, en la noción de Bourdieu de *hábito*, relacionado con *estilo de vida*, *diferencia* y *distinción*. Específicamente, los términos *diferente* y *distinto* son tratados como marcadores de otredad y privilegio. A partir de la aproximación sociocultural de Fairclough, y, más concretamente, del sistema de transitividad de Halliday, el uso de estos términos en los patrones oracionales permite comprender cómo están construidas las representaciones específicas de la realidad que giran en torno a la idea de otredad. Esta investigación cualitativa está basada en un análisis de corpus y las conclusiones obtenidas apuntan hacia una profundización del modo en que las webs hoteleras recrean formas de similitud inter-grupal.

Palabras clave: discurso del turismo, diferencia, otredad, privilegio, Análisis Crítico del Discurso.

1. Introduction

Tourism represents one of the most active areas of economic growth in the era of post-industrial globalization, and as such has the potential to create social realities that project ideologies of difference. Critical tourism research, hence, reaches beyond its characterization as a service industry concerned with the reflection of a socioeconomic order, and addresses its role as a cultural industry endowed with the power to create, maintain and perpetrate different forms of social inequality (see e.g., Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010: 187; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2011: 287).

As a cultural industry, the goods rendered are semioticized to a significant degree through the use of linguistic and audio-visual resources, in an attempt to turn the potential customer into a client (Jack & Phipps, 2005). Accordingly, tourism, an essential component of the globalized economy, has resulted in the commodification of both language and identity (Heller, 2003: 474). This has contributed to cognitive and cultural constructions of how a consumer is, sees him or herself, or wants to be seen in the world, both as an individual and as a member of a group (Richardson & Langford, 2015: 83).

Mediating the relationship between tourist and destination, with the pervasive presence of language and other modes of communication, tourism can be seen as primarily an information-intensive business (Jack & Phipps, 2005; Cheng, 2016: 85). This implies, as Hannam and Knox (2015) highlight, the treatment of texts from the tourism sector as mediated cultural products, which provides insights into how the discursive practice in tourism '(re)produces and shapes objects of knowledge and social identities as well as being (re)produced and shaped by them' (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258).

While acknowledging the importance of all modes of communication which contribute to (re)shaping cultural practices in the discourse of tourism, our interest in this study lies specifically in the language used. A critical discourse analytical approach to the promotional discourse of hotel websites will seek to understand how a privileged sense of belonging and entitlement to space is enacted. We will ask how the hotel as a destination reference creates a sense of privilege, which is to resonate with the identity of potential guests of four and five star hotels, a particularly demanding client group.

From a constructivist perspective, a critical discourse analytical approach allows for the conceptualization of discourse as a linguistic mechanism that contributes to the socio-cognitive representation of a collective identity for privileged customers (Koller, 2012). It is a framework through which we can access the processes of demarcating 'sameness' and 'difference' in space (literally and figuratively) as enacted by power (Norquay & Drozdzewski, 2017: 92). The critical approach is further justified when we understand the discursive construction of privilege along the lines of Ferber (2012), that is, as a possible means of naturalizing inequality, and hence with the potential to lead eventually to the preservation of some sort of permanent inequality.

Certain discourse practices in the context of tourism are intended to draw attention to the self. Such is the case with hotel websites that offer four or five-star distinction with a client in mind who is supposed to expect a (re)creation of a space where 'action and meaning, status and distinction are acquired and transmitted', the experience of tourism thus becoming 'a vehicle for transmitting identity' (Edensor, 2001: 71). The simultaneous expectation of distinction and the quest for it demand the concept of privilege. The privileged self, both as an individual and a group, enjoys a series of structural advantages that have been granted, 'whether or not these advantages are readily perceptible, actively sought after, or even desired'

(Stoudt, 2009: 8). In fact, whether the quest for privilege is unconsciously motivated or willingly activated is not of interest in the present research. It is the concept of privilege itself that lies at the heart of our study, in that the structural advantages from which the higher class tourist benefits are necessarily to the disadvantage of others. In this sense, engaging with the study of privilege also allows for insights into the social inequality underlying disadvantage, enacted at the cost of a status typically held by a minority group. Reason and Bradbury (2006: 10) identify this effect as illustrating the need to study privilege in the pursuit of social justice, since 'the "pedagogy of the oppressed" must be matched by a 'pedagogy of the privileged".' Or, as McIntosh (2012: 195) observes, 'the study of power is not accurate unless it includes both disadvantage and privilege'.

2. About difference and distinction

The concepts of *difference* and *distinction* lie at the very heart of our study. On the one hand, *difference* points at the nature of the touristic experience itself, embracing the idea of otherness; on the other hand, *distinction* is intrinsically linked to the concept of privilege itself.

The experience of tourism is often represented as 'removed from the quotidian', in that it offers 'opportunities to explore different identities' (Edensor, 2001: 60). This temporary distancing from the habitual has also been referred to as an exploration of otherness, 'a privileged entry into a variety of phenomena' that allows for an incursion into 'the world in its differences and diversity' (Favero, 2007: 52), where the attainment of pleasure is significantly related to the experience of what is different from everyday life (Urry, 1990, 1995). The polarisation between the known, quotidian place and the other, different one in tourism echoes a parallelism in the discursive construction of the tourist identity, recreating a tension between the individual self and the tourist self (Dolón, 2016: 67) in a constant interplay 'with difference and authenticity (…) where "otherness" and "selfness" are brought into dialogue' (Favero, 2007: 58-59).

In a similar fashion, this place-related experience of otherness is expressed in terms of lifestyle migration, where place is seen as performed in and through discourse, as a means of contributing to the fabrication of individual and collective identities (Torkington, 2012: 72). The concept of lifestyle encapsulates systematic products of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), and

integrates a set of practices embraced by the individual, which give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 81). Hence, lifestyle migration implies a tourism experience that conveys the idea of temporarily leaving behind the quotidian, which in turn is expected to challenge the individual's self-narrative.

In terms of the study of privilege the perspective of constructivist structuralism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) is undoubtedly of relevance. This approach postulates an understanding of discursive and social practices inasmuch as they identify with active processes of (re)production and transformation of social structures. Bourdieu (1990: 59) articulates this transformational potential, assuming a social genesis of habitus, structure and social classes: A social class, then, is a group of individuals that share 'identical or similar conditions of existence and conditionings…having the same habitus', where the members' in-group perception hinges on 'internalized structures, common schemes of perception, conception and action' (1990: 60).

In his classic study on distinction, Bourdieu (1984: 170) elaborates on the concept of 'habitus', relating it to lifestyle, taste, difference, and distinction itself, where different conditions of existence produce a different habitus. Lifestyles, in turn, are to be understood as the systematic products of habitus, which become socially qualified sign systems. Taste would partake of this dialectical relationship as 'the practical operator of the transmutation of things into distinct and distinctive signs' (Bourdieu 1984: 174). Thurlow and Jaworski (2012: 490-491), also drawing on Bourdieu, point to the ideological essence which underlies communication, where the articulation of 'good taste' entails the reproduction of dominant systems of belief, maintaining structures of inequality and privilege.

The habitual consumption of symbolic goods contributes to a stylization of identity (Fairclough, 2003: 159), which encapsulates the potential of 'strategic (re)presentation, promotion and imposition of particular ways of being (or styles) involving language, image, social practice and material culture' (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2009: 195), liable to become naturalized through routinization, that is, habitus. Identity is then to be approached as a resource that people may *use*, rather than as an attribute that individuals have or are; a discursive construction through which people do things (Hall, 1996).

The discursive construction of place contributes to the construction of both individual and collective identities (Torkington, 2012: 72), as the marketing

of place requires representations of a touristic nature to utilise and reflect identities (Pritchard & Morgan, 2001: 168). We can hence understand place identity as being intrinsically linked to the multiplication of versions of individual and collective selves (Torkington, 2012: 168), where places are given meanings and identity traits by people, and places may be said to shape tourist identities in some way (see Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

An insight into the experience of tourism in terms of consumption of social mobility (Machin & Richardson, 2008: 281) brings together the concepts of identity, otherness and difference in an interesting way, turning the hotel destination into a significant place reference, where lifestyle, privilege, habitus and identity have a symbolic interplay, and where the hotel website stands as an important mediator that articulates the dialectics between these categories.

In Dolón (2016) the hotel itself as a tourist destination is discussed, the tourist experience being framed in terms of the consumption of place, which in turn implies the notion of commodification of place identity (e.g., Urry, 1990; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Heller, 2003; Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010; Torkington, 2012). This itself translates into the idea of tourists consuming the symbolic characteristics and values attached to the discursive articulation of the place in question.

3. The study

Tourism websites in general have received extensive academic attention (e.g., Dann, 1996; Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010; Hung & Law, 2011; Koskensalo, 2012; Dolón, 2014, 2016), as opposed to hotel websites in particular, where scholarly approaches are still scarce, as observed by Arfin Bin Salim et al. (2012: 136). Studied mainly in terms of their potential as marketing tools (see e.g., Hsie, 2012), hotel websites have also been analysed for their generic textual and multimodal characteristics, and their underlying discursive strategies (e.g. Suen, 2009; Cheng, 2016; Suau-Jiménez, 2016).

Our interest in the present study lies in the important representational potential of hotel websites. While engaged in promotional marketing, their discourse may offer a representation of the hotel destination that reflects the way a tourist is meant to look at it. That is, the representation of the hotel has to resonate with the image that prospective guests entertain for

themselves and for the destination they have in mind. The potential for a socio-cultural construction of the hotel empowers the website to construe a particular vision of the place, the hotel thus being recognised as a socio-cultural construction rather than a physical location (Pritchard & Morgan, 2001: 167); the existence of hotels, being fundamentally a cultural one, turns these into 'places that have no objective reality, only intersubjective ones' (Shurmer-Smith & Hannam, 1994: 13).

The purpose of the study is to offer an analysis of the discourse of hotel websites whose promotional activity is addressed to four and five-star hotel guests, that is, individuals who share social class and income as privileging factors (McIntosh, 2012: 197). The aim is to uncover the discursive construction of privilege. A critical discourse analytical approach will seek to identify how the hotel as a place reference is represented to create and offer a sense of privilege intended to resonate with the social class identity of the prospective hotel guest. The study will lead to an understanding of how a privileged sense of belonging and entitlement to the hotel space is discursively constructed, where the concept of privilege articulates what is demarcated (literally and figuratively) as sameness in space (Norquay & Drozdzewski, 2017: 90).

Our approach to the study of privilege relies on the conceptualization of difference in terms of otherness as discussed above. It also hinges on the precepts of constructivist structuralism, drawing on Bourdieu (1984) in the terms above mentioned. The hotel website is expected to articulate a place representation to meet the specific taste and general lifestyle requirements that encompass the guests' sense of distinction, a representation of privileged otherness that is expected to echo in the guests' perceptions of their own social class.

As we have noted previously, the tourist experience is intrinsically linked to embracing otherness (Favero, 2007), and can even be referred to in terms of lifestyle migration (Torkington, 2012). The question arises, then, as to what elements of experience of otherness or difference the website will attend to in the discursive representation of the hotel when addressing a privileged guest: whether these will be circumscribed to issues of status and distinction, to a real temporary change in lifestyle, or indeed will convey some change of habitus.

Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's (e.g., 1999, 2002) sociocultural approach proves an insightful perspective for the

present research, where social structure, social action and agency are dialectically related. More specifically, I have drawn on Halliday's (1985) system of transitivity, which integrates the components of participants, processes and circumstances associated with the ideational function of expressing content and communicating information, starting from clause construction patterns as semantic representations of experience and reality.

To capture the sense of difference and distinction, I have chosen to analyse the precise uses of *different* and *distinct,* with the aim of gaining an insight into how hoteliers explicitly integrate these adjectives into their websites' clause construction patterns as a means of recreating specific processes of representation of reality while marketing the prospective tourists' hotel experience. The choice of *different* and *distinct* is not random: While *different* lies at the centre of the characterization of otherness, the meaning of which is strictly to confer the idea of *other than, separate from* or *not the same*, *distinct* adds a more marked sense of difference, one nuanced by the trait of this difference being clearly noticeable and clearly separate from something else, this additional semantic quality being intrinsically linked to the idea of privilege.[1]

A corpus of 189 hotel webpages was compiled from our research team's database (Corpus Multilingüe en Turismo – Universitat de València – COMETVAL)*,* representing in equal proportion four and five-star hotels from both the UK and the USA. Attention was also paid to the geographical locations of hotels, in order to avoid the possibility of certain geo-spatial conditions outweighing others, and thus guaranteeing a balanced representativeness in the corpus (see e.g., Atkins, Clear & Ostler, 1992). The hotel websites were fully exploited, with the inclusion of the entire texts therein, leading to a total of 813,922 words.

Our study is qualitative and corpus-driven. The use of the concordancing tool AntConc3.4 (Anthony 2014) makes it possible to trace and retrieve specific patterns of linguistic choices, in this case to access systematic uses of clause construction and transitivity patterns (see e.g., Hundt, Nesselhauf & Biewer, 2007; Baker, 2006). The search words *different* and *distinct* yielded forty-two and twenty-three clauses respectively, and the transitivity patterns of these were then analysed manually. For the forty-two examples including the word *different,* a further refinement of the data was made in which we discounted those uses that referred to routine administrative formalities *(*e.g. *use a different card, arrival on a different date, prices are in a different currency)*, in that

these do not express the tourist experience in a strict sense. The remaining samples with *different* amounted to thirty clauses.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Uses with 'different'

The prevailing clause construction pattern corresponds to material processes of semantic representation of experience, with a total of eighteen samples (tables 1—5) clearly outnumbering other process types, these others including six examples of relational processes (table 6). Hence, in addition to circumstantial use (table 7), for most of the representational choices the use of the concept *different* is circumscribed to a representation of reality in terms of *doing* and, to a far lesser extent, *being*. *Different* is not found to partake of any of the other four process types (experiential, mental, behavioural or verbalization) in the data. The following tables (1 to 4) illustrate the different uses related to the material processes.

The hotel in agentive position (material process)
1. The hotel provides *many different options* for any event
2. The hotel has catered for *numerous different events*
3. The hotel has a variety of *different sized rooms*
4. Fownes hotel has eleven different meeting rooms

Table 1.

Room/rooms in agentive position (material process)
5. Each of them [the rooms] has *a different feel and character*
6. The hotel has catered for *numerous different events*
7. [The] dining rooms accommodate *different food requests*

Table 2.

'We' (hoteliers) in agentive position (material process)
8. We can accommodate *different sizes of groups*
9. The hotel has catered for *numerous different events*

Table 3.

'We' (hoteliers) in agentive position (material process)
10. What makes the hotel different…
11. Caterers accommodate different food requests
12. El Puerto [restaurant] offers a different style [of going out]:
13. Doing something a little bit different is refreshingly down-to-earth.

Table 4.

The important discriminating factor here is the participation framework, with a focus on who or what stands in the agentive actor position. Two options reveal themselves as possible: either the hotel, its representatives (we, the caterers) or a part of it (the rooms) stand in agentive position and offer something different to the prospective guest (tables 1—3 above); or it is the hotel guest who accesses different elements or services (table 5 below). However, a clear preference for an impersonal agentive role can be identified, as shown by the scant use (only two examples) of a *we*-pronoun in agentive position, in favour of space references (the hotel, the room(s), the restaurant), which are clearly more representative.

A closer examination of the examples above links the hotel's doing in the interest of the guest to processes of *having, offering, making, providing, accommodating,* and *catering for*. It is the hotel (table 1) that provides what is different, seen in its pronominal representation *we* (table 3) or in specific role representations such as *caterers* (11), in addition to specific hotel premises, such as *the restaurant* (12). Importantly, the hotel rooms also take on this agentive function (table 2). The three uses with *accommodate*, applied to either different food requests (6, 11) or to different sizes of groups (8), add to the simple process of offering, the willingness and capacity to adapt to the specific traits of the guests, and thus address an individualized target customer.

On the other hand, clauses with the guest in agentive position (table 5) are represented far less frequently, and in general portray a visitor who *needs, requires, looks for* and *finds*. It is interesting to highlight the uses (15) *We understand that* (16) and *As we have found,* along with (22) *We appreciate that* and (24) *We recognize that* from table 6 below, which frame the main clause while showing an awareness and understanding of the client's requirements. These uses also succeed in projecting a role for the hotelier as a researcher, one that not only offers but also enquires about the kind of differences desired or required by the hotel guest.

'You'/the guest in agentive position (material process)
14. (You) choose different ways to experience beauty treatments
15. [We understand that] Every customer has different needs
16. [As we have found] Each person has *different requirements*
17.(You) looking for somewhere a little different for a special occasion?
18.(You) will find a host of different entertainment, style and theme options

Table 5.

The uses of *different* in relational processes (table 6), despite being infrequent, are interesting in that they reveal types of equivalences that are established and discursively projected. It is specifically the rooms that are given this status of being different (with the exception of examples 22 and 24), where 'difference' includes references to shape, size or style. These qualities are further emphasised, and also extended in more abstract terms, when talking about a suite *exuding an aura of quiet luxury* (23). Of note are the uses of *each* (22, 23) and *every* (24) in combination with *all* (20, 21), embracing both an individualized and a collectivized offer of difference, and thus covering the totality *(all)* but also implying an attention to detail *(each, every)*.

'Different' in relational processes
19. The ensuite bedrooms [are] all different shapes and sizes
20. All the hotel bedrooms are different styles, shapes and sizes
21. All the rooms we offer are different [with something to suit every preference]
22. [We appreciate that] each event is different
23. Each [Luxury Grand Suite] is different, exuding an aura of quiet luxury
24. [We recognize that] every wedding is *different*

Table 6.

The circumstantial uses of *different* add further specification to the essential clause construction pattern, as table 7 shows. Examples (25)-(27) all suggest the idea of variety, hence the range and choice of what is on offer. On the other hand, in examples (28)-(30) *different* is related to a sense of purposefulness. Of special interest here are (29) and (30), where the hotel offers both *for something a little different* in combination with *for something completely different*, addressing the tourist experience of experiencing otherness *(something completely different)* while making an explicit reference to the preservation of habitus in lifestyle *(something a little different)*.

'Different' in circumstantial position
25. Each [corporate venue] *with a different feel,* each *with a different appeal*
26. A dynamic mix of common and private spaces, furniture, objects, lighting and finishes *from different eras* to reflect a sense of unconventionality and freedom
27. We offer dedicated fitness professionals in *a variety of different* disciplines
28. The restaurant is ideal *for different occasions*
29. For *something a little different*, Day Spa packages are the ideal to unwind
30. *For something completely different* you could host a drinks reception

Table 7.

The above analysis of the clause as an expression of semantic processes is complemented with an insight into the syntagmatic frame in which *different* has been used. Most of the collocations are found to integrate abstract concepts, these related either to the idea of ambiance/atmosphere *(different feel, appeal, aspect, character),* to the context of decoration *(different style(s), shapes, sizes),* or to a sense of variety *(different ways, options, varieties).* These occurrences are followed, according to quantitative criteria, by references to rooms *(different sized rooms, event rooms, meeting rooms, suites, room types, suite types).* Finally, we may add here specific uses, such as *different bourbons, stories, disciplines, eras, element teas,* and the like, which again point at an idea of variety.

4.2. Uses with 'distinct'

As was the case with *different,* the prevailing clause construction pattern with *distinct* again corresponds to material processes of the semantic representation of reality. This preference proves to be especially salient here, as no other process types (except one example, (47), for existential processes) were identified. Even examples of relational processes were absent from the data, which were often found to establish equivalences in terms of *being different* in the previous sub-section. The use of *distinct,* with the sole exception of one example in table 11, is circumscribed exclusively to a representation of experience and reality in terms of *doing,* as shown in tables 8-11 below. This *doing* takes the shape of *offering, featuring, having, providing,* etc., all of which result in the hotel or other related space references communicating to the prospective guest a specific sense of distinction.

Lodgings, rooms, spaces in agentive position (material process)
31. Each [of the very spacious family apartments] offers you *distinct advantages*
32. [These rooms] feature *a distinct alcove* for dining and/or working
33. The large sitting room has *distinct areas* for comfortable seating
34. Standard rooms feature one of three *distinct design styles*, ranging from warm and inviting to classic elegance to avant-garde
35. [Our Junior Suites] consist of one large room offering *distinct bedroom and sitting areas*
36. *These suites feature a distinct dining area and guest bathroom*
37. The Executive Suites provide *a distinct living area*
38. Each [hotel/duo of hotels] has *its own distinct appearance*
39. Each [of Halekulani's three restaurants] offers *its own distinct style*
40. [Our stylishly redesigned lobbies] provide guests with a distinct sense of arrival

Table 8.

'Distinct' in agentive position (material process)
41. *Distinct professional character* make Hard Rock Hotel Chicago's meeting space ideal for hosting any event
42. The resort's distinct architecture has its own distinct appearance

Table 9.

Hotel representatives in agentive position (material process)
43. *Our catering and banquet teams have earned a distinct reputation for their quality of service*

Table 10.

'Distinct' in existential process
44. *On the third floor of the hotel [there] are two distinct meeting areas: The Salon, overlooking Fifth Avenue and The Boardroom, overlooking 36th Street*

Table 11.

As to the participation framework, the hotel, rooms, suites and other space references (lobbies, apartments) prove to be the most representative choices for the agentive actor position. It is these spaces that provide some distinct feature for the prospective guest. While this was also the case with the use of *different,* the samples with *distinct* are more frequent and also more complex, in that they involve a wider range of space references. These references, as happens with *different*, significantly outnumber those cases in which the hotelier or other personified hotel representative plays an agentive role. In fact, only one sample was found with *distinct,* expressed through reference to the catering and banquet teams (47), offering or recreating a sense of distinction.

The two samples in table 9 are worth a closer look, as it is the distinct quality trait that occupies this agentive position. A *distinct professional character* (41) and a *distinct architecture* (42) are seen to do something to the guests' benefit, example (42) being especially noteworthy in that both agent and object convey the idea of distinction: *the distinct architecture has a distinct appearance.*

As table 12 below shows, the hotel guest is rarely found in agentive actor position. Only three samples (45-47) portray a guest who *experiences, discovers* or *chooses* an element of distinction.

'You'/the guest in agentive position (material process)
45. [You] experience the *distinct collaboration* of classic and modern architecture
46. Guests of our boutique hotel will discover a *distinct European-styled ambiance*
47. [You] choose from *the distinct quarters* of the capital and three very individual luxury London hotels

Table 12.

The circumstantial uses of *distinct* (table 13) are expressed mainly in prepositional phrases, the preposition with conveying an additive specification: *with its distinct character and style* (48), *with its distinct neighbourhoods* (49), and *with a style distinct to its New York setting* (50) thus translate into something extra offered to the hotel guest. And this additional something is invariably related to an abstract idea of style or character. In fact, both in (49) and (50) the distinction that is made accessible to the guest is not retrievable from the hotel itself, but from its surroundings, such as the neighbourhood or New York City. Style also proves to be the theme of distinction in samples (51) and (52), referring to the cuisine, in a distinct local style, and to architecture in noting the distinct European design styles that the hotel has to offer. The idea of purposefulness, which was found to be more salient in the uses with *different,* is here found in just one example (53), the criteria for space distributions accounting for *a distinct residential feel.*

'Distinct' in circumstantial position
48. [Island themed suites] each *with its own distinct character and style*
49. *With its distinct neighbourhoods*, ethnic foods and quaint cafés, Boston is the commercial and cultural centre of New England
50. Contemporary interiors blend Setai elegance *with a style distinct to its New York setting*
51. Each of our hotel restaurants offers exceptional cuisine *in a distinct local style* – the very antithesis of bland hotel food
52. [Art Deco] found its inspiration *in many distinct early 20th century European design styles*
53. A private living room parlour is separate from the bedroom *for a distinct residential feel*

Table 13.

A further consideration of the uses of *distinct* within the frame of collocations yields interesting observations. *Distinct* appears to be related mostly to the idea of style *(distinct character and style, design styles, early 20th century design styles, local styles, own style, style),* while the use of *different* most frequently evokes the idea of ambiance or atmosphere, as noted above. This sense is also recreated through the use of *distinct,* but to a far lesser extent in

our corpus, with only three samples *(distinct European-styled ambiance, residential feel, sense of arrival).* A notable characteristic underlying the use of *distinct* is in its collocation with the spatial concept of area, where the offer made to the guest ranges from general references to *distinct areas* to the functional specifications of *distinct dining, living or meeting areas.* This spatial expression of distinction is not found in uses with *different.*

The following schematic layout summarises the main differences between the two uses:

Different: prevailing process type	Distinct: prevailing process type
Material (*having, offering, making providing, accommodating, catering for*). To a lesser extent: relational processes (*being*).	Material (*offering, featuring having, providing*). No other process type.
Relational processes: especially related to rooms, recreating abstract qualities with reference to shape and style, often further epitomized (e.g. exuding an aura of quiet luxury).	No relational process

Different: participation framework	Distinct: participation framework
Mostly the hotel space and parts of it (e.g. the rooms) in agentive actor position. Mostly the hotel and the rooms grant elements of otherness (in equal proportion)	Mostly the hotel space and parts of it (e.g. lobbies, apartments) in agentive actor position. A variety of hotel spaces (*rooms, suites, lobbies, sitting rooms, hotel restaurants, apartments*) grant otherness.
Minimally represented: *we, the caterers* (hotel representatives) in agentive actor position. Preference for an impersonal agentive actor.	Almost inexistent: *we, the hotelier* (hotel representatives) in agentive actor position. Preference for an impersonal agentive actor.
Prospective client (you) in agentive actor position with same frequency as the hotel, in material processes. The client as an agent *has, looks for, chooses, finds* difference.	The rooms importantly outnumber (more than triple) the prospective client (you) in agentive actor position in material processes. The client as an agent *discovers* and *experiences* distinction.
Prospective client (you) in agentive actor position with same frequency as the hotel, in material processes. The client as an agent *has, looks for, chooses, finds* difference.	*Distinct* also in agentive position of material processes (e.g.: the distinct professional character, the distinct architecture) offering s.th. to the client.
Recurrent uses with *we accommodate:* implies willingness and capacity to adapt (hotelier as involved agentive actor). Related uses such as *we recognize, we appreciate, we have found out, we understand,* position the hotelier as a researcher, able to respond to different demands on the part of the client.	

Different: circumstantial uses	Distinct: circumstantial uses
Recreate idea of variety and range, offering choice.	Recreate specifically idea of additive specification, the addition of s.th. extra (related to style and character), restricted to the hotel setting.
Specifically recreate sense of purposefulness	Purposefulness practically inexistent.
Point at the idea of preservation of *habitus*, when specifying *for s.th. a little different* or *for s.th. completely different.*	
Different syntactic frame/collocations	Distinct syntactic frame/collocations
Mostly abstract concepts, referring to ambiance, atmosphere and feel *(different aspect, character)* related to hotel and rooms; decoration *(different style, shape)* and variety *(different ways).*	Mostly embracing idea of style (context of design and decoration). To lesser extent related to ambiance/atmosphere. Attached to spatial concept *area* (referring to the range of functions *(living area, meeting area, dining area).*

The results yield insights into the specific hotel-guest relationships underlying the uses of *different* versus *distinct*, which contribute to an understanding of how privilege and entitlement to the high-standard hotel space are (re-)created.

Material processes were found to be the predominant clause construction patterns underlying the use of both words, which implies that rather than referring to difference or distinction in terms of qualities that exist, are perceived, or else used to identify how or what something is, they are associated with an idea of *doing:* a characteristic that is offered to a prospective guest by some agent.

It is interesting to highlight that it is mainly the hotel space or its constituent rooms that offer different or distinct elements, importantly outweighing a personalized hotel representative being projected as the agent. Difference and distinction are hence granted not by the hotelier or in any case the hotel marketer but by the hotel space and its constituent spaces (e.g.: rooms, lobbies, restaurants), the uses with *distinct* entertaining a wider variety of hotel spaces in agentive position, while *different* is mostly restricted to references to rooms.

However, despite the clear prevalence of an impersonal agent, represented by the constituent hotel spaces, the uses with *different* also include -to a much lesser extent- the voice of the hotelier (we, the hotel) as an agent that offers the quality of difference. This involves his/her discursive projection as

somebody capable of adjusting to and finding out about the needs on the part of the prospective client, requirements that are neither disclosed or made (explicit or implicit) reference to.

When looking into the circumstantial uses, *different* recreates the idea of the rooms themselves (and to a lesser extent the hotel marketer) offering variety and a sense of purposefulness behind this, which presupposes a discerning guest who seeks to make specific choices. Even an awareness of the guest's habitus, that is habitual lifestyle expectation, is made reference to. Instead of variety and purposefulness, *distinct* recreates on the other hand the idea of the hotel spaces (including rooms and the hotel itself) offering something added (which does quite encapsulate the semantic traits of the concept of distinction itself), and depicts the privileged guest as expecting to be granted some special extra.

Despite offering different elements, both *different* and *distinct* coincide in delimiting these to abstract concepts, the hotel spaces making the offer of something *distinct* accessible to the guest mainly in terms of style, while the offer of *different* revolves around the idea of ambiance, atmosphere and feel. The avoidance of concretion in favour of abstract concepts is very interesting in the hotel's (re-)creation of a privileged guest. It implies in the first place the projection of some kind of floating signifiers whose possible meanings are left open. Thus the appeal is, on the one hand, to a collective status-driven group identity, whose members will mirror and recognize themselves in the offer provided. On the other hand, the exact nature of possible referents is left open, and each individual hotel guest is allowed to endow the abstract concepts with the meanings that resonate most closely with their mental representation of what counts as a different atmosphere, ambiance, feel and the like. In this sense, these uses also contribute to the creation of an individualized identity, appealing to the singularity of the guests' expectations. The four/five-star hotel, then, is invariably depicted as being able to respond to all possible expectations on the part of the prospective client.

5. Conclusions

The discussion section above yields important findings for an understanding of how high-end hotel websites (re-)create a sense of privilege and belonging for their prospective hotel clients. In the first place, the proportion

between corpus size and frequency of occurrences of clauses that contain the words *different* and *distinct*, confirm that it is not quantitative but qualitative criteria that do substantially reflect the major ways four and five star hotels construct the idea of otherness through these two precise words.

The study offers interesting insights into how the hotel website discursively entertains an idea of difference and distinction, thus articulating what elements of experience of otherness are made salient, and how these are circumscribed to experiences of lifestyle, habitus and status. Neither the uses with *different* nor those with *distinct* have been found to signal an idea of experiencing otherness that would convey a sense of lifestyle migration (Giddens, 1991; Torkington, 2012), an opportunity to explore different identities (Edensor, 2001) or an incursion into the world in its differences and diversity (Favero, 2007). The current study thus invites the reflection that their uses, rather than pointing to a (temporary) removal or change from the habitual, are meant to reassure the guest that the ambiance, atmosphere, style, or feel evoked or created by the hotel and its constituent rooms will stand out and separate from the quotidian lifestyle of average middle class living standards.

In this sense, the offer of otherness is interpretable in fact as being specifically the offer and assurance of a status-driven socio-cultural sameness. These uses can, accordingly, be said to emphasize the idea of in-group similarity for a socioeconomically privileged client. The study thus contributes to an understanding of how in this specific touristic context sameness is demarcated in space (Norquay & Drozdzewski, 2017) through a stylization of an identity of privilege (Fairclough, 2003; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2009), which represents, promotes and imposes a sense of status-driven belonging and entitlement to the hotel space.

The findings have important implications for the hospitality industry, which could reconsider its discursive practices in the design of hotel websites. The way these were found to create a place representation through the uses of *difference* and *distinct* endows these adjectives with an important potential when it comes to creating an identity for the hotel, thus revealing themselves as powerful persuasive tools.

The semioticized hotel identity in the terms developed in this study is liable to be used as a resource (Hall, 1996) to discursively create a sense of belonging or (hence) exclusion. At the same time, this hotel identity could symbolically fabricate a sense of privilege which may eventually lead to a

naturalization of inequality (Ferber, 2012). This is so because the hotel space seems to appropriate difference and distinction as signifiers that confer in-group belonging rather than recreate strict senses of touristic consumption relating to changes in lifestyle and habitus.

References

Anthony, L. (2014). *AntConc* (Version 3.4.2.) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. URL: http://www.laurenceanthony.net/

Arfin Bin Salim, M., N. Aireen Binti Ibrahim & H. Hassan (2012). "Language for tourism: A review of the literature". *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences* 66: 136-143.

Atkins, S., J. Clear & N. Ostler (1992). "Corpus design criteria". *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 7(1): 1-16.

Baker, P. (2006). *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis.* London: Continuum.

Benwell, B. & E. Stokoe (2006). *Discourse and Identity.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice.* New York: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. & L. Wacquant (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Cheng, F.W. (2016). "Constructing hotel brands: A multimodal analysis of luxury hotel homepages". *Ibérica* 31: 83-108.

Coupland, N. (2007). *Style. Language Variation and Identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dann, G. (1996). *The Language of Tourism. A Sociolinguistic Perspective.* Wallingford: CAB International.

Dixon, J.A. & K. Durrheim (2000). "Displacing place-identity: A discursive approach to locating self and other". *British Journal of Social Psychology* 39: 27-44.

Dolón, R. (2014). "A corpus-based study of the discursive creation of a child consumer identity in official tourist information websites vs. opinion forums" in G. Gil-Salom & C. Soler-Monreal (eds.), *Dialogicity in Written Specialised Genres,* 166-187. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Dolón, R. (2016). "A twofold commodification of 'place' in hotel websites and its consequences for the discursive creation of a tourist identity". *Ibérica* 31: 63-82.

Edensor, T. (2001). "Performing tourism, staging tourism. (Re)producing tourist space and practice". *Tourist Studies* 1(1): 59-81.

Fairclough, N. (1999). "Global capitalism and critical awareness of language". *Language Awareness* 8(2): 71-83.

Fairclough, N. (2002). "Special Issue: language in the new capitalism". *Discourse & Society* 13(2).

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research.* London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. & R. Wodak (1997). "Critical discourse analysis" in T.A. van Dijk (ed.), *Introduction to Discourse Analysis,* 258-284. London: Sage.

Favero, P. (2007). "What a wonderful world! On the touristic ways of seeing, the knowledge and the politics of the culture industries of otherness". *Tourist Studies* 7(1): 51-81.

Ferber, A.L. (2012). "The culture of privilege: color-blindness, post-feminism and christonormativity". *Journal of Social Issues* 68(1): 63-77.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hall, S. (1996). "Introduction: Who needs identity?" in S. Hall & P. du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity,* 1-17. London: Sage.

Hallett, R.W. & J. Kaplan-Weinger (2010). *Official

Tourism Websites. A Discourse Analysis Perspective. Bristol: Channel Publications.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1985) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar.* London: Edward Arnold.

Hannam, K. & D. Knox (2015). "Discourse analysis in tourism research: A critical perspective". *Tourism Recreation Research* 30(2): 1-23.

Heller, M. (2003). "Globalization, the new economy and the commodification of language and identity". *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7: 473-498.

Hsieh, Y.Ch. (2012). "Hotel companies' environmental policies and practices: A content analysis of their web pages". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 24(1): 97-121.

Hundt, M., N. Nesselhauf & C. Biewer (eds.) (2007). *Corpus Linguistics and the Web.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Hung, K. & R. Law (2011). "An overview of internet-based surveys in hospitality and tourism journals". *Tourism Management* 32: 717-724.

Jack, G. & A. Phipps (2005). *Tourism and Intercultural Exchange. Why Tourism Matters.* New York: Channel View Publications.

Jaworski, A. & C. Thurlow (2009). "Taking an elitist stance: Ideology and the discursive production of social distinction" in A. Jaffe (ed.), *Perspectives on Stance,* 195-226. London: Oxford University Press.

Koller, V. (2012). "How to analyse collective identity in discourse: Textual and contextual parameters". *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines* 2(5): 19-38.

Koskensalo, A. (2012). "Towards a better understanding of the hybrid genre 'tourism websites'". *APLSP Proceedings*: 3-23.

Machin, D. & J.E. Richardson (2008). "Introduction". *Critical Discourse Studies* 5(4): 281-288.

McIntosh, P. (2012). "Reflections and future directions for privilege studies". *Journal of Social Issues* 68(1): 194-206.

Norquay, M. & D. Drozdzewski (2017). "Stereotyping the shire: Assigning white privilege to place and identity". *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 38(1): 88-107.

Pritchard, A. & N.J. Morgan (2001). "Culture, identity and tourism representation: Marketing Cymru or Wales?" *Tourism Management* 22: 167-179.

Reason, P. & H. Bradbury (2006). *Handbook of Action Research.* New York: Sage Publications.

Richardson, B. & R. Langford (2015). "A shifting collective identity. A critical discourse analysis of the child care advocacy association of Canada's public messaging in 2005 and 2008". *Critical Discourse Studies* 12(1): 78-96.

Shurmer-Smith, P. & K. Hannam (1994). *Worlds of Desire, Realms of Power: A Cultural Geography.* New York: Hodder Arnold.

Stoudt, B.G. (2009). "The role of language in the investigation of privilege: Using participatory action research to discuss theory, develop methodology, and interrupt power". *Urban Review* 41: 7-28.

Suau-Jiménez, F. (2016). "What can the construction of stance and engagement voices in traveller forums and tourism promotional websites bring into a cultural, cross-generic and disciplinary view of interpersonality?" *Ibérica* 31: 199-220.

Suen, A. (2009). "Self-representation of five star hotels: A digital genre analysis of hotel homepages" in V.K. Bhatia, W. Cheng, B. Du-Babcock & J. Lung (eds.), *Language for Professional Communication: Research, Practice and Training,* 111-130. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Torkington, K. (2012). "Place and lifestyle migration: The discursive construction of 'glocal' place-identity". *Mobilities* 7(1): 71-92.

Thurlow, C. & A. Jaworski (2010). "Silence is golden: The 'anti-communicational' linguascaping of super-elite mobility" in A. Jaworski and C. Thurlow (eds.), *Semiotic Landscapes: Language, Image, Space,* 187-218. London: Continuum.

Thurlow, C. & A. Jaworski (2011). "Tourism discourse: Languages and Banal Globalization". *Applied Linguistics Review* 2: 285-312.

Thurlow, C. & A. Jaworski (2012). "Elite mobilities: The semiotic landscapes of luxury and privilege". *Social Semiotics* 22: 487-516.

Urry, J. (1990). *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies.* London: Sage.

Urry, J. (1995). *Consuming Places.* London: Routledge.

Van Leeuwen, T.A. (1996). "The representation of social actors" in C.R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (eds.), *Texts and Practices. Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis,* 32-70. London: Routledge.

Rosana Dolón is Senior Lecturer at the Universitat de València, where she has been teaching and researching since 1990. Her research attention is currently directed towards the field of Discourse Analysis, particularly Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus studies. Her most recent publications focus on the discursive genres found in the areas of tourism and politics.

NOTES

[1] The precise differences between the semantic characteristics of *different* and *distinct* have been obtained from the main current dictionaries in English Language. Derived words such as *distinction* or *difference* have not been considered for the study as the frequency of their occurrences was not found to be significant, their inclusion being beyond the scope of the present study.