

Linguistic and pragmatic potential of hotel website in the tourist branding of destination

Anna Novozhilova
Volgograd State University,
Institute of Philology and Intercultural
Communication, Department of
Translation Studies
Volgograd, Russia
novozhilova@volsu.ru,
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7601-9048>

Svetlana Korolkova
Volgograd State University,
Institute of Philology and Intercultural
Communication, Department of
Translation Studies
Volgograd, Russia
korolkova@volsu.ru,
<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2083-4101>

Vera Mityagina
Volgograd State University,
Institute of Philology and Intercultural
Communication, Department of
Translation Studies
Volgograd, Russia
mityagina@volsu.ru,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3997-3139>

Yevgenia Shovgenina
Volgograd State University,
Institute of Philology and Intercultural
Communication, Department of
Translation Studies
Volgograd, Russia
shovgenina@volsu.ru,
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6898-7946>

Abstract - The article presents linguistic and pragmatic analysis of German hotels' websites content, considered by the authors as a significant component of the tourist Internet resource. Being a popular format of communication in the field of tourism Internet resource is aimed at increasing the attractiveness of tourist sites and destinations. It serves as an effective tool for mutual understanding and activation of business and cultural-mediated communication. The hotel website belongs to the basic genres of tourist Internet discourse. Due to the analysis we can state that the hotel website content being a hypertext (a large number of tabs, a significant number of related pages) is hybrid (synthesis of advertising, historical, art, legal and other discourses); it implements both explicit and hidden intentions of the addressant and acts as an agonal communication instrument branding the region. These functions are implemented through various language means of different levels. At the lexical level they are adjectives with meiorative (positive) meaning, expressive units, high-sounding expressions, evaluative epithets and other elements of high style, providing an attractive image of the destination. Anglicisms occupy a significant place in the language content of hotel websites, explicating their aiming at global communication. At the syntactical level, in the texts of hotel websites there are imperative constructions of polite form and interrogative sentences, creating the impression of a direct dialogue with the addressee. Thus, implementation of territorial branding involves linguistic and pragmatic potential of verbal content of hotel websites, that creates a positive and attractive image of the destination.

Keywords - *tourist Internet resource; content of hotel websites; agonal communication; hybrid text.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Intensive and extensive development of the tourism sector resulted in the actual increased interest among linguists in the texts of tourist discourse, their

characteristics, functional and linguistic features and various genres that form this discourse.

Tourist discourse covers a wide range of different types of texts, which may differ in their subject matter, pragmatics, intentional and structural features. These include travel brochures, brochures and flyers, guidebooks, museum brochures, etc. Global development of the Internet has led to recognition and popularity of a new genre, i.e. "tourist Internet resource" along with traditional genres of tourism discourse; one of its tasks is to increase attractiveness of described tourist sites and destinations and thereby branding the region and attracting tourist flows [1; 2; 3]. Within texts of this genre the researchers consider mainly informational and tourist online portals containing comprehensive information about any city, region, tourist sites or objects, etc., as well as the content of hotel websites, restaurants, websites for leisure activities, etc.

According to M. Agorni, the peculiarity of tourism discourse is that it does not possess its own specific terminological system, unlike, for example, medical, legal or economic discourses. Ordinary, everyday language is used for its purposes, since its recipient is not a specialist, but a wide audience, any member of society [4]. However, such texts are loaded with "local flavor": they are full of names of famous people, place names, culinary specific names, everyday realities, etc. At the same time, texts of the tourism discourse refer to marketing texts, since their main function is to promote a certain tourist destination, encouraging tourists (in fact consumers of tourist services) to buy a tour, stay at a hotel, visit a museum, walk along the route, etc. Accordingly, texts of tourism discourse should be convincing and attractive for a potential tourist to acquire the very tourist 'product'. They are full of different stylistic figures: epithets, comparisons, metaphors, etc. Considering such a variety of components within the tourism discourse and availability of Internet resources, it is very relevant from

a linguistic point of view to study the texts that make up the content of various tourist websites, since they play a significant role in creating a positive image of the region and increasing its attractiveness.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

The researchers suggest that tourism industry is a space that makes possible understanding between representatives of different linguistic cultures, activating business and cultural-mediated communication. Here, elements of various institutional discourses intersect as well as socio - cultural linguistic features of written and oral communication are verified within multi-functional travel genres [5]. N. V. Filatova, exploring the tourism discourse, emphasizes that this is a special kind of institutional discourse with polyphonic inclusions and signs of hybridity [6]. V. A. Mityagina also notes the synthetic, complex, hybrid nature of tourism discourse and argues that “communication in the tourism sector creates a discourse that fully reflects the multidimensionality of goals, themes, values and diversity of participants in the processes of interaction” [7].

Tourist Internet resource is a mixture of different styles: advertising (promoting certain goods and services), historical (announcing facts related to the history of a particular area or object), art (presenting cultural information about a certain area), legal (information on the possibility of booking tours or rooms in hotels, samples of contracts for tourist services provision).

The recipient represents great masses of population, so the language of the text should be simple and understandable to almost every potential tourist. Most texts contain almost all kinds of information: cognitive, operative, aesthetic, emotional.

By the nature of the principal intention, we can say that tourist Internet resource is close to the advertising or ‘agonal’ type of texts [8], which includes many texts aimed at branding an object. Their communicative task is to transfer certain information to the recipient to affect his/her attention, memory and emotional state in order to convince to purchase a tourist product.

In this article we will analyze text content of hotel websites. Analysis of this material seems to us very relevant, because tourists planning their trip and searching for information about the places and attractions that they would like to visit, usually refer to websites of hotels, guest houses, hostels, etc., where their journey and the first acquaintance with new tourist sites begins. A large number of travelers’ review with close attention websites of hotels where they are going to stay. Sometimes a tourist's acquaintance with a new culture starts with the hotel's website. Many modern hotels to increase competitiveness and attract more foreign guests create multilingual versions of their Internet websites, thus, linguists are interested in studying their structure and content [9; 10].

Internet website of hotels can be isolated in a separate genre, based on its inherent features and characteristics: they have the addressee and the addressant, the producer of the text, expressing intentions of the addressant, the form and means of communication. R. Morin, one of the leading experts in marketing hotel services in France, outlined five

main characteristics of a high-quality hotel website: “1. website should load fast, it should be simple and readable; 2. website should be evenly visible on all devices (a screen of any type from an ultrabook to a 24-inch screen, including tablets and smartphones); 3. address and phone number should appear first; 4. the hotel should be represented with top-quality and beautiful photos, as well as video; 5. it is possible to post information about history of the place where the hotel is located, or about style and decor of the hotel” [11].

The hotel's owner is an addressant of Internet websites of hotels, it is he/she who communicates information about the hotel to other parties in order to encourage to use services of this hotel. There are also producers who are engaged in the design and creation of the hotel's website in accordance with instructions of the addressant, observing conventions of the text in the appropriate language/culture. The producer of the text plays a secondary role, being guided by customers' attitudes and implementing their concept, without affecting significantly the development of communicative situation. Producers are specialists in advertising, editors, etc., they create Internet websites of hotels by order of the addressant represented by the hotel owner, considering all his/her intentions.

Internet websites of hotels can implement both explicit and implicit intentions of the addressant. An explicit intention is an informative intention, for example, the addressant's intention to inform the addressee about the hotel and its services. Hidden (implicit) intentions of the addressee are subject intention, i.e. the addressant's intention to keep the addressee's attention and encourage him /her to form a certain attitude to the hotel, as well as communicative intention, i.e. the addressant's intention to establish or maintain contact with the addressee (for example, to make a hotel reservation via the Internet) [12].

Potential tourists or consumers of tourist services who express their willingness to contact (in this case, to make a booking or reservation) are considered to be the addressee of hotel Internet website genre.

Genre features of Internet websites of hotels involve also the form of communication. These are, first of all, written messages, which are implemented in the form of monologue speech, occurring separately in the temporal and spatial aspects. The form of text presentation determines not only conditions of its perception, but also conditions of its creation: content (for example, the degree of explicitness), verbal design of the text (grammar and syntax, structural and compositional organization), non-verbal means.

This work includes the linguistic analysis of materials of German-language hotel websites. These websites are chosen deliberately, because most of German hotels are very traditional European hotel-type establishments and the results can be extrapolated in subsequent studies on the example of other European languages.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A hotel website contains, like many other tourist sources, stereotypical texts that are primarily promotional in nature and represent specification of the rooms, descriptions of services offered, location of the hotel, transport links,

often a summary of the nearby or main attractions of the city and other information placed at the discretion of the hotel administration. Along with the advertising component, hotel Internet websites also contain elements of the legal text, which are placed in the sections of booking, its cancellation, official documentation, etc. This combination of different types of texts emphasizes the hybrid nature of Internet website of hotels, inherent, as mentioned above, in most of the texts of tourism discourse.

In addition to verbal elements, the hotel website contains many graphic objects: logos of the hotel, photos, pictures, symbols, videos, and presentations, etc., it is a prime example of a hypertextual space, where all “verbal and non-verbal elements form one visual, structural, semantic and functional unity and influence the addressee in a comprehensive manner” [13]. Other linguists also note the hypertext nature of hotel websites [14]. We find the most successful definition of hypertext in M. M. Subbotin's paper: “The hypertext is a connection of the semantic structure, the structure of internal relations of certain content, and technical environment, technical tools, enabling a person to learn the structure of semantic relations, to navigate between related elements” [15]. When visiting the hotel website, the user “travels” through available tabs in the sequence that he/she chooses for himself/herself.

In terms of structure there are various websites of German hotels, they can have 8-10 tabs, and contain a huge number of related pages. The first place where a potential client usually gets when searching for information about the hotel is home or initial or main page of the website, where one obtains the first impressions about the hotel. Therefore, this part is the most important component in the development of the website. As for design of home page, it is also impossible to distinguish any unification, but according to the content criterion, they can be divided into three groups:

1. Page with only the hotel name, a short advertising slogan and several hyperlinks to further tabs. For example, home page of the hotel *Gästezimmer u. Metzgerei Zum Bären*, located in Schiller's hometown of Marbach, includes only the name of the hotel, an invitation slogan to visit the city placed on two icons separated by pictures, and at the same time informing potential guests that the famous poet was born here: “*Herzlich willkommen im Herzen der Schillerstadt.*” and links where users can get further information about the hotel. (<http://www.baeren-marbach.de/home.html>)

You can see similar laconicism on the home page of another hotel *Schillerhof*, also located in Marbach. In addition to the name and several links to other tabs here we find several advertising calls to visit the town of Schiller, enjoy its picturesque landscapes and, of course, stay in this hotel:

Willkommen in der historischen Atmosphäre der Schillerstadt Marbach!

Genießen Sie bei uns die malerische Altstadt von Marbach am Neckar.

Lassen Sie sich von uns verwöhnen.

Hier können Sie unseren Imageflyerherunterladen. (<http://www.schillerhof-marbach.de/>)

Such design of home pages is typical for Internet websites of small private hotels, which often do not have translated versions even into English.

Sometimes the brevity of home pages in terms of content (language) is also characteristic of sufficiently large respectable hotels, but in this case, other details that create design of the main page (photos, graphics, animated pictures, etc.), are presented in large numbers (see for example, the website of a large hotel in Berlin “*Hotel Berlin*” (<http://www.hotel-berlin.de/de/>).

2. They contain in addition to those components, which were discussed above (name; advertising slogan – which is optional, but often is present; links to other tabs), also a brief description of the hotel and/or its services, more detailed information on which is available when you click on the corresponding tab page by pressing the keys *mehr, weiter, weitere Informationen*, etc. As an example of such home page, you can see main pages of hotel websites “*Hotel Restaurant Lamm - Alte Post*” (<http://www.hotel-lamm-alte-post.com/Startseite>), “*A. C. Hotel Hoferer*” (<http://www.ac-hotel.de/index.html>) and others.

3. Home page contains a very large amount of information: name, advertising slogan, long descriptions of the hotel, types of rooms, additional services, events, promotions, etc. etc., ad infinitum. It contains almost all available information about the hotel. Such home pages seem to be very overloaded, extremely inconvenient to search for necessary information; they are completely uninformative and even complicate the process of acquaintance with offered services. You can find an example of such home page on the hotel website “*Hotel und Landgasthof Rössle*” (<http://www.landgasthofroessle.de/>).

The second group represents the most successful variant of home page design, because such page is the most illustrative, clearly arranged, user-friendly and convenient for the target audience: on the one hand, in terms of quick acquaintance and, on the other hand, in terms of simple and clear navigation of a potential guest on the website. N. Eyal and R. Hoover emphasize that the target audience is a priority when creating a website offering sale of any services. The main task of website developers in its design is to win over the visitor and attract his/her attention, to encourage him/her to continue to review or observe the website, come back later and not to leave it on the first visit [16].

From the point of view of the linguistic content, Internet websites of hotels have their own characteristics, and, first and foremost, there are expressive units, grandiloquent expressions, evaluative adjectives or descriptive words and other elements of high style. The texts contain a lot of adjectives with meiorative (positive) meaning, the use of which is aimed at creating an attractive image of the described objects. This is explained by the intention of the author of any text of hotel website to attract and retain the attention of an increasing number of potential recipients in order to sell services. Here is a vivid example of a description characterized by a grand or elevated style:

Hotel Berlin, Berlin bietet Ihnen ein abwechslungsreiches kulinarisches Angebot. Unser Hotel ist bekannt für sein Frühstück, seine moderne Küche mit Esprit und sein ausgesuchtes Restaurant in Berlin. Besonderen Wert legen wir auf einen gelungenen Mix an regionalen Klassikern, internationalen Gerichten und individuellen Kreationen. Hierfür verwenden wir weitestgehend frische Zutaten und bevorzugen regionale wie saisonale Produkte. Denn Essen ist für uns Genuss. Eine Auswahl an Speisen servieren wir Ihnen außerdem 24 Stunden auf Ihrem Zimmer. (<http://www.hotel-berlin.de/restaurants-berlin/>)

As for tab names, which are present in large numbers on any website of a hotel, they are predominantly nouns. On some websites in the menu names there are substantive nouns *Feiern, Tagen, Online-Buchen*, etc., but their use is not dominant, and you can often see alternative variants: *Veranstaltungen, Tagungen, Reservierung*, etc. Anglicisms are very frequently used. In addition to borrowings from English already familiar and clear to almost all German-speaking Internet users (*online, News, Shopping, Check-in, Check-out, Live Music*, etc.), you can find more 'exotic' options (*Furnished apartments, Catering, Twist design cocktails & lounge*, etc.). Since anglicisms occupy a very important place in the language content of hotel websites, let us consider them in more detail.

Anglicisms on the hotel's websites can be divided into three groups:

1. English words and expressions in their pure form, without adaptation to German grammar: *Hotels & Resorts, Swimmingpool, Spa & Wellnesscenter, City Centre, mentioned above Furnished apartments, Catering, Twist design cocktails & lounge, News, Shopping, Check-in, Check-out, Live Music* etc. In this form, you can find anglicisms most often in the names of tabs and other subheadings, but they are no less frequent in the descriptions:

Auf unserer Terrasse können Sie Drinks und leckere Snacks zu sich nehmen, nach Wunsch auch ausgiebig speisen. (<http://www.hotel-berlin.de/restaurants-im-freien-berlin/>)

Hotel Berlin, Berlin ist der Ort für einen Aufenthalt in Berlin's City Center! (<http://www.hotel-berlin.de/de/>)

Wir bieten Ihnen außerdem aromatische Kaffee- und Tee-Spezialitäten, eine große Auswahl an Speisen und Finger-Food. (<http://www.hotel-berlin.de/berlin-bars/>)

Buchen Sie über diese Webseite und sammeln sie Starpoints als Starwood Preferred Guest Mitglied!

Geben Sie hierzu einfach am Ende des Buchungsvorgangs Ihre SPG Nummer an, die Starpoints werden Ihnen umgehend bei Check-In auf Ihrem SPG-Konto gutgeschrieben. (<http://www.westin-berlin.com/starwood-preferred-guest-program/>)

2. Anglicisms adapted to the rules of German grammar. In this case, they are used in a sentence accompanied by a German article, adjective or other accompanying word indicating the gender of the noun, which is not typical of the English language, they can acquire endings in accordance with grammatical laws of the German language. Here are some examples of such use:

Genießen Sie den Komfort eines späten Check-outs - Aufpreis für Spätabreise bis 15 Uhr. (<http://www.hotel-engel-hamburg.de/buchen/?arrival=04.09.2016&departure=05.09.2016>)

Genießen Sie einen erfrischenden Cocktail oder einen anregenden Drink in der offenen Lobby Bar & Lounge in stilvollem Ambiente rund um die imposante Freitreppe im Atrium des The Westin Grand Hotel Berlin. (<http://www.westin-berlin.com/bar>)

Geben Sie hierzu einfach am Ende des Buchungsvorgangs Ihre SPG Nummer an, die Starpoints werden Ihnen umgehend bei Check-In auf Ihrem SPG-Konto gutgeschrieben. (<http://www.westin-berlin.com/starwood-preferred-guest-program/>)

Besuchen Sie unsere Executive Lounge mit ihrem eleganten Ambiente und Panoramablick. (<http://www.marriott.de/hotels/travel/bermc-berlin-marriott-hotel/>)

Besuchen Sie nach Ihrem Meeting oder Ihrer Konferenz unsere CATWALK Bar und genießen Sie erstklassige Getränke und ein hervorragendes Unterhaltungsangebot. (<http://www.marriott.de/hotels/event-planning/business-meeting/bermc-berlin-marriott-hotel/>)

Der GM's Run ist wieder da! <...> Die Berliner Highlights mit dem passionierten Marathonläufer erleben. (<http://www.hotel-berlin.de/gms-run>)

3. This group includes anglicisms, which are used as part of a complex word, consisting of two components – the roots or whole words – English and German: *Sky-Sender, Wifi-Internetzugang, Chill-Out-Bar, Hot Stone Rückenmassage, King Size-Bett, Wellness-Bereich* etc.

As a rule, the English component precedes the German one, as a result of which, when used in a sentence, the entire lexical unit is subject to the rules of German grammar:

In unserer "Chill Out Bar" lassen Sie den Tag in angenehmer Atmosphäre ausklingen. <...>. Unsere Chill-Out-Bar hat täglich für Sie geöffnet. (<http://www.hotel-waldesruh.de/hotel/chill-out-bar.html>)

Im Preis inbegriffen:

eine Hot Stone Rückenmassage mit warmen ätherischen Ölen und heißen Steinen

ein Romantikbad zu zweit oder alleine mit einem prickelnden Glas Sekt und einer süßen Verführung (Dauer ca. 90 Minuten). (<http://www.hotel-waldesruh.de/zimmerpreise/pauschalen/relax-tage.html#quicknav>)

Entspannen Sie sich in unserem modernen Wellness-Bereich mit Schwimmbad und einem rund um die Uhr geöffneten Fitnessstudio. (<http://www.marriott.de/hotels/travel/bermc-berlin-marriott-hotel/>)

In addition to certain sporadic English lexical inclusions in German the texts on hotel websites are full of slogans, written entirely in English. It should be noted that there are such slogans often not only on websites with a multilingual register, but also on websites of German hotels that do not

have an English version, which indicates consolidation of a position of so-called Global English.

Explore our elegant hotel accommodation in Berlin, Germany (<http://www.marriott.de/hotels/hotel-rooms/bermc-berlin-marriott-hotel/>)

IT'S GIN O'CLOCK AT MOTEL ONE! (<http://www.motel-one.com/de/itsginoclock/>)

STAY CONNECTED

(<http://www.pullmanhotels.com/de/business/index.shtml>)

English slogans are often used to improve the expressiveness of the text in German, i.e. a description of the service, etc., accompanied by a short phrase in English, visually highlighted in large print, colored letters and other design elements. It looks more expressive and attracts the attention of potential tourists. This technique is used on the website of the Hotel Berlin, Berlin:

WIR BIETEN VIELE VERSCHIEDENE ZIMMERKATEGORIEN, UM IHRE PERSÖNLICHEN BEDÜRFNISSE ZU ERFÜLLEN.

STAY WITH US.

HOTEL BERLIN, BERLIN IST DER ORT FÜR EINEN AUFENTHALT IN BERLIN'S CITY CENTER!

STAY IN TOUCH.

DIE PERFEKTE MISCHUNG AUS TRADITIONELLEM UND MODERNEM DESIGN.

STAY INDIVIDUAL.

STAY SMART.

Jetzt buchen und bis zu 25% sparen.

STAY SPORTY.

Der GM's Run ist wieder da! (<http://www.hotel-berlin.de/de/>)

All English phrases are short and in a single lexicostylistic design, in the imperative mood, every phrase begins with the verb *STAY* (live somewhere temporarily as a visitor or guest). The slogans are in a larger color font than the German text. This gives the website expressiveness and great appeal and thus, enables the addressant to achieve the main goal – to attract and retain the attention of the addressee.

Syntactically, there are imperative phrases in a polite form, presented as an invitation or recommendation for a potential tourist to take advantage of the hotel's offers and services. Such offers are abundant on the website of almost any hotel:

Relaxen Sie bei angenehm warmen Wassertemperaturen oder schlummern Sie auf den bequemen Liegen im Panorama-Ruhebereich. Spüren Sie beim Wasserstrudel das Element Wasser auf Ihrer Haut, ziehen Sie Ihre Bahnen durchs kühle Nass, oder tanken Sie die wohltuende Wärme der Sonne auf unserer großen Liegewiese. (<http://www.hotel-waldesruh.de/wellness-spa/wasserwelten.html#quicknav>)

Along with the use of the polite form of imperative, imperative phrases in the 2nd person singular are common. Most often they appear in the form of headlines or advertising slogans, and their purpose is to get closer to the addressee and win his/her friendship:

Fühl Dich Wohl

1 x Ganzkörperpeeling

1 x Partnerbad nach Wahl inklusive Nachruhe im Wasserbett

1 x Teilkörpermassage mit warmen Aromaölen Glas Prosecco und eine süße Verführung (<http://www.hotel-waldesruh.de/wellness-spa/partnerbadewanne.html#quicknav>)

Interrogative sentences create the impression of a dialogue with the addressee on websites of hotels, because the question is followed by additional explanations, as if the recipient responded to the question:

Möchten Sie mit Ihrem Partner zusammen Wellnessmomente erleben? Dann sind Sie genau richtig. Zuerst baden Sie mit dem Badezusatz Ihrer Wahl in kuscheligem Ambiente. (<http://www.hotel-waldesruh.de/wellness-spa/partnerbadewanne.html#quicknav>)

Warum etwas dem Zufall überlassen? Unser aufmerksam-diskretes Servicepersonal und unsere individuelle Ausstattung sorgen dafür, dass Ihre nächste wichtige Konferenz in Berlin ein voller Erfolg wird. Das The Westin Grand Hotel Berlin bietet Ihnen geschmackvoll eingerichtete Räumlichkeiten für bis zu 220 Tagungsteilnehmer und bis zu 400 Bankettgäste sowie eine imposante Lobby für unvergessliche Cocktailempfänge. (<http://www.westin-berlin.com/tagungen-veranstaltungen/>)

This method is aimed at establishing contact and trust with a potential tourist.

To attract attention, enhance expressiveness and emotionality, they use other stylistic devices: metaphors, metonyms, hyperboles, parcelling, allusions, inversions, etc. All these means serve achieving one pragmatic goal – to present the hotel in the most favorable light and to get as many customers as possible.

IV. CONCLUSION

Due to our study we can conclude that referring to the agonal type, texts of websites of German hotels have linguistic and pragmatic characteristics that implement the main intention of any hotel site – to attract and hold the attention of as many potential recipients as possible in order to sell services. Analysis of the content of hotel websites revealed that anglicisms, while remaining a fashionable marker and a significant tool of influence, are largely assimilated by the German language in texts of tourist discourse. These websites are visited and reviewed by travelers and potential tourists when planning and preparing for a trip. The more accessible and attractive material presented to the addressee, the higher probability that he/she will be interested in and visit the objects described on the tourist online resources.

Tourist Internet resources, which include analyzed hotel websites, play a significant role not only in making a profit from the sale of services by the owners of objects presented on them, but also in the territorial branding in general, creating a positive and attractive image of the city/region, participating in attracting financial flows to the region. Thus, the linguistic and pragmatic program of the hotel website content is subordinated to the implementation of private tasks of the hotel business to achieve the global goal of branding of the region.

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