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Metaphor in Web-based Promotional Tourism Discourse: A Quantitative Exploration

Abstract

The paper aims at systematically examining the frequency and distribution of metaphor-related words in the web-based promotional tourism discourse, which can be regarded as an online hybrid info-promotional/persuasive register characterised by "description-with-the-aim-to-sell" (Biber and Egbert, 2018). The study employs frequency analysis and comparative statistical research to analyse texts from the official destination websites of an emerging tourist destination such as Georgia, and established touristic countries such as the UK, and the USA. This approach enables a rigorous evaluation of the role of metaphors in promotional tourism discourse and provides statistically grounded insights into how figurative language functions to construct brand identity, shape perceptions, and enhance visitor engagement. The choice of the destinations was motivated by the assumption that developing destinations rely more heavily on metaphors in their promotional discourse compared to the well-established tourism markets (Dann 1996; George 2010; Jaworska, 2017).

The results reveal that the metaphor density in web-based promotional tourism discourse is lower than in general discourse, at approximately 10%, which situates the info-promotional register between fiction and face-to-face conversation (Steen et al., 2010). This frequency reflects the dual informational and persuasive functions of this register and promotional discourse of tourism, where clarity and readability must be balanced with emotive and imaginative engagement.

The findings also demonstrate strategic rather than excessive use of metaphors: contrary to the commonly held idea that developing destinations employ more metaphors for their promotion, Georgia exhibited the lowest metaphor frequency, challenging the assumption that developing destinations strategically rely on metaphors to attract tourists. This suggests that there might be factors beyond a developmental status of a destination, such as target audiences, cultural considerations, etc, which might play a significant role in shaping metaphor use.

The overall distributional analysis of metaphors across word classes demonstrates a clear preference for verbs and prepositions, emphasising dynamic, relational, and persuasive functions rather than purely informational ones. Cross-destination comparison indicates shared tendencies alongside regional variations: the UK corpus demonstrates a strong preference for metaphorical adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions, whereas Georgia exhibits a more literal style with lower metaphor density, reflecting distinct promotional strategies and stylistic conventions.

Overall, this study provides important insights into how tourism marketers employ metaphor to balance informational clarity with persuasive impact, strategically shaping promotional narratives and destination brand images. While the research is limited by its focus on frequency and distribution, it highlights a significant role of metaphor in online tourism promotion and sets the stage for future research into metaphor types, cultural resonance, and the interaction of medium, genre, and marketing strategy in shaping persuasive tourism discourse.

Keywords: *metaphor, quantitative research, info-promotion, tourism discourse, tourist destinations*

1. Introduction

Metaphor is a cognitive tool or process that enables us to understand one concept, often abstract or intangible — a target domain — in terms of another, usually concrete or tangible — the source domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). For example, the word ‘spend’ in ‘You could spend weeks seeking out its hidden treasures’ (<https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/england>) helps us conceptualise the target domain of TIME through the source domain of MONEY. In this instance, metaphor can emphasise certain facets of the target while hiding others (Kövecses, 2020), making it a potent tool for creating subtly persuasive messages that evoke emotions (Ortony, 1975: 50) and sway evaluations (Sopory and Dillan, 2002; Van Stee, 2018).

Empirical studies (Semino, 2008; Steen et al., 2010; Deignan, Littlemore and Semino, 2013; Semino & Demjén, 2017) have demonstrated that the use of metaphors varies across different discourses and registers, with some employing more metaphorical language than others (Steen, 2007). In promotional discourse, metaphors serve as attention-grabbing devices (Semino, 2008), shaping consumer perception and influencing behaviour (Thibodeau & Flusberg, 2022; Kövecses, 2020). They also play a role in ideological framing, branding, and enhancing ad memorability (Hidalgo-Downing and Kraljevic-Mujic, 2017).

Despite this, research into metaphors within promotional tourism discourse (PTD) remains limited (Iritspukhova, 2023). According to Dann (1996), tourism promotion functions as a form of social control, persuading individuals to become tourists and shaping their attitudes and behaviours through various media, thereby constructing their ‘tourist gaze’ during the pre-trip stage (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Unlike traditional advertising, tourism promotion markets intangible products, selling ‘a dreamed experience’ (Francesconi, 2008), with language playing a crucial role in this process. In this context, ‘phrase precedes the gaze,’ as tourism promotion develops its specialised discourse (Dann, 1996; Gotti, 2007)

1.1 Research Questions

While the recent review highlights important trends in metaphor use within PTD (Iritspukhova, 2023), systematic quantitative studies of metaphor frequency and distribution remain limited. This paper addresses this gap by analysing tourism promotional material from Georgia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, guided by the following research questions (RQs).

1. *How common is metaphor in the database?*

Researchers hold differing views on how common metaphors are in tourism advertising. Some argue that metaphors are ‘massively used’ (Dann, 1996, p. 172), while others suggest that the euphoric and emphatic language of PTD reduces the need for metaphorical devices (Narváez and Valverde Zambrana, 2014). A diachronic study by Djafarova and Anderson revealed a decline in metaphor use from 21.5% in the 1970s to 15% in 2005, suggesting that interpretive challenges may lessen metaphor effectiveness (Djafarova and Anderson, 2008). To contribute to this ongoing discussion, the study systematically examines tourism materials to provide a detailed quantitative assessment of metaphor use in web-based PTD. Additionally, the findings can support cross-register comparisons (Steen et al., 2010), enhancing our understanding of how metaphors function across different communicative contexts.

2. *Do metaphor frequencies differ between emerging destinations (Georgia) and established markets (the UK and USA)?*

Previous research indicates that metaphors in PTD primarily help manage unfamiliar destinations, portraying them as extraordinary yet relatable. Consequently, metaphor use is believed to increase when promoting places that are geographically or culturally distant (Dann, 1996, pp. 172–174) or in developing countries (Dann, 2002: 4).

Sylvia Jaworska's analysis (2017) of three corpora describing tourist destinations in Britain (Home-Corpus), Europe (Europe-Corpus), and far-flung tropical locations shows a notable quantitative difference, with more remote destinations employing more metaphors than those closer to 'home' (Jaworska, 2017). However, Jaworska's analysis was limited to the most frequent metaphors in 10% of the data. To address this, the current study thoroughly examines the entire dataset to assess metaphor density. It explores the possible relationship between destination status—emerging (e.g., Georgia) versus established (e.g., the UK and USA)—and metaphor use. It hypothesises that Georgia might use more metaphors to evoke a sense of uniqueness and attractiveness, while the UK and the USA may depend more on familiar cultural frameworks.

3. *How are metaphors distributed across word classes?*

No research has examined the distribution of metaphors across word classes within PTD. This study aims to be the first comprehensive analysis, exploring how metaphors operate across grammatical categories in a genre characterised by its persuasive "description-with-intent-to-sell" (Biber & Egbert, 2018). Identifying distributional patterns offers insights into how metaphors enhance engagement, reinforce persuasion, and shape perceptions of a destination.

4. *Does metaphor distribution vary by destinations, reflecting varying persuasive strategies in emerging versus established locations?*

Understanding how metaphors are used across different destinations is crucial in revealing how tourism promoters adapt their strategies to target diverse audiences. This research addresses these questions and adds to the growing work on metaphor use in tourism marketing. A systematic, data-driven analysis of metaphor frequency and distribution across different contexts uncovers how metaphors function in tourism promotion and highlights differences between emerging and established destinations. Connecting metaphor use to geographical and cultural contexts deepens our understanding of how metaphors influence perceptions and engagement within PTD.

2. Methodology

This study expands existing discourse-analytical research by analysing metaphor use in Georgia, the UK, and the US PTDS.

The analysis combines comparative statistical and frequency techniques within a discourse-analytical framework to study metaphor. Investigating metaphorical language—either quantitatively or qualitatively—requires attention to both linguistic and situational features of the discourse (e.g., participants, settings, etc.) (Semino, Deignan and Littlemore, 2013). Therefore, the study draws on Biber and colleagues' influential work on register variation (Biber and Conrad, 2009; Biber and Egbert, 2018), which suggests that linguistic features of each register are shaped by its situational context, resulting in different communicative functions. Steen et al. (2010) extended this approach by including metaphor analysis across registers (e.g., academic texts, news, conversation, and fiction), demonstrating that metaphor usage varies considerably across contexts.

Building on this foundation, the present study further explores discourse-analytical research by examining tourism promotional materials as a unique register. According to Biber and Egbert (2018), tourism promotional materials belong to the online info-promotional/persuasive register, specifically the sub-register of 'description-with-the-aim-to-sell' (Biber and Egbert, 2018: 36ff), which combines informative content with a persuasive intent. The following sections present the situational characteristics of this register, detailed data collection and preparation, and the metaphor identification process.

2.1 Situational Characteristics

To provide a comprehensive overview of the info-promotional register in the context of PTD, this study applies Biber and Conrad's situational analysis framework (2009: 39-40), integrates insights from Biber and Egbert's description of the "description-with-intent-to-sell" register (2018: 108ff), and the sociolinguistic studies of tourism (Dann, 1996; Cappelli, 2006, and others; see Appendix A).

These situational characteristics directly influence the linguistic features of tourism texts, shaping their style, structure, and communicative functions. They affect lexical choices, word class usage, and the frequency of metaphors. They also explain the everyday use of descriptive adjectives, dynamic verbs, and culturally significant metaphors that create an engaging and vivid narrative.

2.2. Data Collection and Preparation

The primary linguistic data were collected from official tourism promotional websites or official destination websites (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2020: 6), as well as ODWs of the UK, the US, and Georgia. The selection of countries was motivated by assumed differences in the frequency, distribution, and function of metaphors between well-established (the UK, USA) and emerging destinations (Georgia).

The data were manually compiled from three website sections: *Destinations*, *Facts about the Country*, and *Experiences*. All texts were initially produced in English for international tourists, providing current information on destinations and experiences. The final database consisted of 79 texts (Georgia: 31, UK: 24, USA: 24).

The dataset was organised into four corpora (see Appendix B, Figure 1): a combined corpus, including data from all destinations, and three individual corpora for Georgia (GEO), the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA). The texts in each corpus were categorised into two thematic groups: destinations (cities, states) and experiences (facts about the country, activities). The Destinations category included 34 texts/43% of the database (GEO: 10, UK: 12, USA: 12), while the Experiences category comprised 45 texts/57% (GEO: 21, UK: 12, USA: 12). This categorisation enabled a detailed examination of metaphor use across different thematic contexts.

The four corpora were then to be uploaded to the Wmatrix tool (Rayson, 2008) for lexico-grammatical tagging to analyse metaphor distribution across word classes in the data.

Since PTD is characterised by informal language and aims to foster a "friendship-like relationship" with readers (Maci, 2007: 60; Sulaiman and Wilson, 2019: 26), it often uses contracted forms. This creates challenges for the part-of-speech tagging process with the CLAWS tool,¹ thus potentially distorting the distribution of metaphors across word classes. All contracted forms were manually separated and treated as separate words or lemmas to ensure accurate analysis.

The cleaning and organisation process resulted in 57,206 orthographic words for the combined corpus, distributed as follows: GEO with 19,715 words, UK with 18,384, and USA with 19,107. Text lengths ranged from 130 to 1,846 words, with both extremes appearing in the UK corpus.

As the boxplot in Appendix B illustrates (Figure 2), GEO texts ranged from 160 to 1401 words, with one outlier at 1812 orthographic words [mean - 635.97; median - 618]. UK texts varied from 130 to 1241 words, with an outlier of 1846 [mean - 766; median - 721]. US texts ranged from 520 to 1465, with no outliers, indicating a relatively uniform distribution [mean - 796.1; median - 695.5].

¹ The CLAWS part-of-speech tagger represents a lexico-grammatical tagging system integrated into the Wmatrix tool (<https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/>).

After organising the data, the four corpora were uploaded to the Wmatrix. Following an automatic horizontal conversion, the texts were exported as XML files with the lexico-grammatical tags. Despite the tool's reported accuracy of over 95% (<https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/>), errors were identified and manually corrected¹.

2.2.1. Data Analysis

For metaphor identification, I used the widely used context-based procedure: the Metaphor Identification Procedure, Vrije University, MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010). The initial step involved close reading of each text to establish overall meaning and identify lexical units in accordance with MIPVU². This process reduced the total from 57,206 to 56,311 valid units of analysis: GEO: 19,405 (34.5%); UK: 18,058 (32.1%); USA: 18,848 (33.4%) (see Appendix B, Table 1), averaging approximately 18,770 words per destination.

This means that the destinations were balanced in terms of sample sizes, each destination comprising approximately one third of the corpus³.

The next step involved identifying metaphor-related words. MIPVU captures a broad spectrum of metaphors — indirect, direct, and implicit — as well as borderline cases with unclear but potential metaphorical relations⁴. It also accounts for metaphor flags, which signal metaphors without being metaphors *per se*.

For *indirect metaphors*, the procedure compares word's contextual meaning with its basic (i.e., concrete, specific, and human-oriented) sense, using corpus-based dictionaries (e.g., Macmillan Online, Longman Online). In ambiguous cases, the VU Amsterdam Metaphor Corpus⁵ was also consulted.

MIPVU strictly adheres to grammatical categories, prohibiting comparisons across word classes to ensure consistent metaphor identification (Steen et al., 2010). For instance, if *come* functions as a preposition (as in example 2), its verbal meanings are excluded from metaphor analysis.

(2) This picturesque region [...] provides a rich array food and drink *come*^{MRW} the autumn.

<https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/stunning-british-countryside-surrounds-cities>

However, I deviated from this approach, allowing cross-category comparisons, as per MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), to better reflect the cognitive connections between meanings (Deignan, 2005). This adjustment acknowledges that readers of tourism texts, particularly those with diverse linguistic backgrounds, may interpret metaphors beyond strict grammatical boundaries. Consequently, the study combines MIP and MIPVU to enable a more flexible analysis tailored to tourism discourse.

Direct metaphors (or *similes*) explicitly signal cross-domain comparisons between referents, signalled by metaphor flags (e.g., *like*, *remind*, *etc.*), which do not represent the cases of metaphor (see Steen et al., 2010). *Implicit metaphors* function as cohesive elements (e.g., pronouns or ellipses referring to metaphorical

¹ For example, proper nouns were misclassified as verbs, Roman numerals - as letters, etc. Overall, 852 tags (1.51%) were corrected: 361 (1.9%) in GEO, 213 (1.2%) in UK, and 278 (1.5%) in USA.

² Polywords, phrasal verbs, and compounds are treated as complex but single lexical units (e.g., *look out for* was consolidated into *lookoutfor*). These elements were manually combined as the CLAWS treats their parts as separate lemmas.

A minor deviation from MIPVU involved classifying all noun-noun combinations as compounds based on dictionary entries, rather than prosodic stress (Steen et al., 2010: 30–31). Additionally, *by the way*, *to boot*, and *in fact*—though absent from the BNC (Steen et al., 2010: 27)—were treated as polywords due to their functional use and dictionary recognition.

³ Complex lexical units were rare (957 instances, 1.69% of the dataset). Compounds were most frequent (429 cases/45%: GEO: 136, UK: 159, USA: 134), followed by polywords (233/ 31%: GEO: 119, UK: 85, USA: 91), and phrasal/phrasal-prepositional verbs (233/ 24%: GEO: 47, UK: 119, USA: 67). Given their low frequency, separating these categories offers limited analytical value (Steen et al., 2010). Consequently, they are treated alongside simple lexical items in this study.

⁴ For instance, *chock-full* in the sentence "... the M Shed, a museum chock-full of local history" (<https://www.visit-britain.com/gb/en/stunning-british-countryside-surrounds-cities>) was classified as borderline. While dictionary definitions (e.g., "very full, especially with pleasant or enjoyable things" (MMOD); "completely full of people or things" (LDOCE) typically refer to concrete entities (e.g., a pond chock-full of weeds), its collocation with the abstract noun *history* suggests potential metaphorical use, warranting its borderline classification.

⁵ Available here: <http://www.vismet.org/metcor/>

antecedents). Given their low frequency (Steen et al., 2010), implicit metaphors were not categorised separately in this study. As for the direct metaphors, they are discussed in detail in Iritspukhova (submitted).

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents descriptive and inferential quantitative findings from applying MIPVU and synthesising all the instances of metaphors in the database. The quantitative data on metaphor frequency and distribution are examined statistically to identify significant trends and patterns. Before that, the broader linguistic characteristics of the dataset are presented.

3.1 Linguistic Characteristics: General Overview

The research on info-promotional/persuasive registers identifies ‘description-with-intent-to-sell’ as characterised by frequent nominalisations, long words, and complex noun phrases with premodifiers (Biber and Egbert, 2018: 116-117). This register also exhibits a high density of evaluative language (adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs) (Biber and Egbert, 2018: 126-127), reinforcing its promotional and persuasive functions.

These features align with tourism discourse strategies, where promotional language often employs exaggeration to aid persuasion (Febas Borra, 1978: 70, cited in Dann, 1996: 65). This effect is reinforced through superlatives, intensifying adverbs, hyperbole, and other emphatic expressions. Accordingly, tourism advertising relies heavily on “positive and glowing words” (Dann, 1996: 65; Cappelli, 2006: 63) and euphoric language (Sulaiman and Wilson, 2019) to evoke pleasure and excitement, emphasising the uniqueness of destinations (Pierini, 2009: 105, 107–109).

To determine whether these tendencies appear in the current database and identify distinctive language patterns, the frequency lists of the combined and individual corpora were compared against a larger normative corpus - the British National Corpus (BNC) written sample, available in Wmatrix. Although PTD typically exhibits conversational and informal elements, the written sample was opted for due to PTD’s alignment with written discourse via setting, medium, production context, etc. (see above).

The keyword clouds in Appendix C visualise significant lexical differences between each corpus against the BNC written sample, with larger fonts indicating prominent items and italics - underused terms in relation to BNC (Log-Likelihood, $LL > \pm 6.63$, $p < 0.01$).

The combined corpus (Appendix C, Figure 1) reveals a strong emphasis on toponyms and place-related terms, highlighting the unique ‘selling’ points of the destinations. A prominent use of invitational imperatives (*‘explore’*, *‘discover’*, etc.) and activity-related terms (*‘offers’*, *‘hiking’*, etc.) reflects the register’s info-promotional/persuasive style (Manca, 2016). Evaluative adjectives (*‘stunning’*, *‘iconic’*, *‘largest’*, *‘unique’*, etc.) are strategically employed to construct an idealised image of destinations, attractions, and experiences, thereby enhancing their appeal.

Another significant difference is the excessive use of ‘you’ ($LL = +445.04$, $p < 0.01$), strategically employed in PTD to create a sense of exclusivity and personal invitation (Mocini, 2005/2009: 160; Dann, 1996: 185–188; Cappelli, 2006: 64).

This direct engagement fosters a sense of closeness and familiarity via a ‘pseudo-dialogue’ (Manca, 2016: 47; Mocini, 2005/2009: 160), establishing a ‘friendship-like relationship’ with readers (Maci, 2007: 60). Their overuse—contrasted with the relative absence of other pronouns¹—emphasises the register’s focus on personalised, experiential marketing.

¹ Compare the LL coefficient to other pronouns, exhibiting a significant underuse: *‘I’*: $LL = -676.54$, *‘he’*: $LL = -463.68$; *‘she’*: $LL = -228.40$; *‘we’*: $LL = -142.44$; and *‘they’*: $LL = -217.44$

The word clouds of *individual destinations* reveal distinct patterns in their promotional strategies, reflecting their unique tourism offerings and priorities.

Georgia emphasises its rich cultural heritage and natural landscapes (Appendix C, Figure 2), with the key terms like ‘*cathedral*’, ‘*fortress*’, ‘*monastery*’, and ‘*mountains*’. The prominence of words like ‘*ancient*’, ‘*century*’, and ‘*unique*’ indicates a heritage-oriented discourse, offering visitors experiences rooted in history, culture, and adventure. Nature-based activities—such as exploring caves, gorges, and resorts—also position Georgia as an adventure destination with unspoiled landscapes.

The UK focuses heavily on its urban and historic appeal (Appendix C, Figure 3). Toponyms like ‘*Belfast*’, ‘*Cardiff*’, ‘*Edinburgh*’, and ‘*London*’ indicate an emphasis on city tourism. The terms ‘*historic*’, ‘*explore*’ and ‘*tour*’ promote engagement with the British rich cultural and historical heritage, particularly through city explorations and walking tours.

While natural attractions such as ‘*parks*’ and ‘*routes*’ are also mentioned, the discourse primarily positions the UK as a destination for city-based cultural experiences.

The USA corpus highlights a diverse tourism appeal, balancing urban and natural experiences (Appendix C, Figure 4). Keywords like ‘*California*’, ‘*historic*’, ‘*museum*’, and ‘*music*’ emphasise cultural attractions, while ‘*park*’, ‘*beach*’, and ‘*outdoor*’ reflect a strong focus on nature and recreation. This suggests the USA promotes its geographical and cultural variety, offering experiences that range from city exploration to outdoor adventures—appealing to a broad spectrum of traveller interests.

In summary, Georgia promotes its historical and natural beauty, the UK focuses on historic city tourism, while the USA offers a diverse mix of urban and natural attractions. These distinctions highlight the different marketing strategies employed by each destination to appeal to various types of tourists. Moreover, the keyness of the words directly addressing the audience (e.g., ‘*you*’) is slightly higher in GEO (LL=+219.72; $p<0.01$), compared to those from the UK (LL=+196.25; $p<0.01$), and significantly greater than in the USA (LL=+70.35; $p<0.01$). This suggests that Georgian marketers are particularly focused on creating a stronger *personal* connection with potential travellers while establishing its niche in the tourism industry.

Next, the frequencies and percentages of all (metaphor- and non-metaphor- related) words distributed across the six word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and others (e.g., pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, existential ‘*there*’, etc.) per corpus (PTD/combined, GEO, UK, and USA) were examined (see Appendix C, Table 1).

Nouns dominate in the combined corpus with 20,023 occurrences (35 %), reflecting dense information packing, typical of promotional materials (Biber and Egbert, 2018). Others rank second (13,417/ 24%)-predominantly articles, possessive pronouns, and conjunctions, followed by verbs (7,443/ 13%), which enable descriptions of actions and experiences and support the persuasive function of tourism discourse (Manca, 2016). Prepositions reach 7,305 instances (13%), adding spatial and relational descriptions.

Adjectives, with 6,097 occurrences (11%), are pivotal for expressing positive evaluations, emphasising the uniqueness and allure of destinations (Manca, 2016; Biber and Egbert, 2018). Adverbs, though less frequent (2,026 instances, 4%), enrich descriptions and actions, adding nuance and intensity.

In conclusion, the distribution reflects the dual function of tourism discourse—informative and persuasive—with nouns delivering dense content, and verbs, adjectives, and adverbs enhancing engagement and appeal.

3.1.1. Destination-Specific Trends

To analyse the destination-specific distribution across the word classes, a contingency table of frequencies was constructed, incorporating two variables: *destination* (GEO, UK, USA) and *word class*

(nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, others). A chi-square test revealed a statistically significant yet weak association ($\chi^2(10) = 278.28$, $p < 0.05$, Cramer's $V = 0.099$), indicating differences in word class distributions across the destinations.

- *Georgia's* texts exhibit a higher-than-expected use of verbs (standardised residual, (SDR):+4.48), adverbs (SDR:+7.75), and others (SDR:+4.29), but lower-than-expected use of nouns (SDR:-7.48). This dynamic style underscores Georgia's strategic positioning as an emerging destination, using a persuasive and engaging narrative to appeal to tourists by evoking emotions and excitement.
- *The UK* texts show a balanced distribution of word classes, with a slight overuse of adverbs (SDR:+2.85) and prepositions (SDR:+2.94). This may indicate a blend of informational and persuasive intents, offering a nuanced and well-rounded portrayal of its destinations.
- *The USA* texts demonstrate a strong preference for nouns (SDR:+7.03) and lower-than-expected use of adverbs (SDR:-5.07), verbs (SDR:-3.53), and others (SDR:-2.42). This noun-heavy and less descriptive style suggests an emphasis on clear, factual presentation of attractions and features, reflecting a straightforward strategy for audiences preferring concrete and concise destination information.

The analysis highlights distinct approaches to word class usage in PTD across the destinations. While Georgia adopts a dynamic and emotive style, the UK maintains a balanced and nuanced approach. The USA prioritises clarity and factual descriptions over emotional engagement. These variations reflect the interplay between cultural and strategic considerations in shaping the language of tourism promotion.

3.2. Metaphorical Dimension

Having established a picture of general trends in the data, the metaphorical variable was incorporated to examine its relationship between the destinations and word classes.

3.2.1. RQ 1: Prevalence of Metaphors

To address RQ 1, all words were analysed with MIPVU as outlined above. Of 56,311 lexical units, 5,683 (10.1% of the database) were identified as metaphor-related¹ - lower than a typical metaphor frequency in general discourse (13.6%) (Steen et al., 2010), reflecting the need for clarity and accessibility in cross-cultural tourism communication. It is also lower than the figure reported by Djafarova and Anderson (2008), possibly suggesting medium-specific variations of metaphor use (e.g., in print and web-based PTD).

To further contextualise these findings, the info-promotional register was compared to other registers (Steen et al., 2010). PTD's metaphor density of 10.1% exceeds that of conversation (7.7%) but falls slightly below fiction (11.9%), and sharply below news (16.4%), and academic texts (18.5%)². This reflects PTD's hybrid function: balancing clear, practical communication with persuasive and narrative-driven techniques to engage a cross-cultural audience.

3.2.2. RQ 2: Metaphor Frequency Across Destinations

A comparative statistical analysis was conducted to test whether developing destinations use more metaphors than established ones (Dann, 1996). The results revealed a significant yet weak interaction

¹ Within this subset, 168 were identified as borderline cases, distributed across the destinations as follows: Georgia – 49, the USA – 54, and the UK – 65. These cases were included in the group of all metaphor-related words.

² It should be noted that the metaphor frequency in this study exceeds what would have been identified under strict adherence to MIPVU, due to the incorporation of cross-part-of-speech comparisons, aligning with MIP's broader approach (see above).

between *the word types* (metaphor- and non-metaphor-related) and *destinations* (GEO, UK, USA): $\chi^2(2)=98.91$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.04$. Contrary to expectations, Georgia, as a developing destination, had the lowest proportion of metaphor-related words: 8.8% (1,710 MRWs) of its corpus while established destinations used them more frequently: 9.7% (1,834) in the USA and 11.8% (2,139) in the UK. The post-hoc analysis confirmed Georgia's significant underuse (SRD: -5.61) and the UK's overuse of MRWs (SRD: +7.41), and underuse of non-MRWs (SRD: -2.48). The USA fell within expected ranges for both groups.

These findings challenge the assumption that developing destinations rely more on metaphors for promotion (but see Iritspukhova, submitted), suggesting that metaphor usage in tourism advertising may be shaped by factors beyond destinations' perceived "strangeness" (Cohen, 2000).

3.2.3 RQs 3 and 4: Overall and Cross-Destination Distribution of MRWs across Word Classes

This section addresses the distribution of MRWs across word classes in the combined corpus, and their cross-destination variation to identify differences in persuasive strategies. To these ends, the analysis was conducted in two steps:

1. measuring the distribution of metaphor- and non-metaphor-related words by word class in both the combined corpus (to determine general trends) and each destination (to determine specific trends);
2. measuring the distribution of metaphor across the destinations for each word class (to elucidate on the cross-destination differences).

The analysis of the frequencies and percentages of metaphor- and non-metaphor-related words across the word classes reveal (see Appendix D, Table 1) that in the combined corpus, most MRWs are concentrated in verbs (32%) and prepositions (29%), collectively representing over 60% of all MRWs. This means that nearly every second metaphor-related word is either a verb or a preposition. Conversely, these word classes constitute only 22% of non-MRWs (each 11%). The SDRs further show significant overrepresentation of metaphorical verbs (+39.8) and prepositions (+32.8), and their marked underrepresentation in non-metaphor-related contexts (-13.33 and -11.003, respectively). These findings suggest that in the web-based PTD, verbs and prepositions play a larger role in expressing metaphors compared to non-metaphor-related language.

Nouns and others show a reverse pattern: non-metaphorical nouns are more frequent (38%, SDR: +7.44) than metaphorical ones (18%, SDR: -2.22), although nouns still occupy an important role in MRW group, ranking 3rd. Others are significantly overrepresented in non-MRWs (26%; SDR: +9.24) but drastically underrepresented as MRWs (6%; SDR: -27.58), indicating that PTD prefers content words as metaphors (especially verbs and prepositions) for vivid and more persuasive messages.

Adjectives and adverbs display a relatively balanced distribution between MRW and non-MRW groups. The metaphorical adjectives form 12% (SDR: +2.21) compared to 11% of non-metaphorical adjectives, while metaphor-related adverbs formed only 3% of all metaphors versus 4% of non-metaphor-related adverbs, with no significant deviations. Accordingly, in the web-based PTD, adjectives modestly contribute to metaphorical meaning while adverbs play a limited role in metaphorical framing of promotional messages.

Summarising, MRWs are unevenly distributed across word classes in the PTD. Despite the hybrid nature of the register, balancing information and promotion/persuasion, metaphors are predominantly used for persuasion, reflecting their higher concentration in verbs (Manca 2016), and less for conveying information, as evidenced by reduced number of metaphorical nouns. This supports the idea that tourism metaphors are strategically crafted to persuade than merely inform.

Regarding the cross-destination analysis, a separate two-way contingency table for each destination (Georgia, the UK, the USA) was constructed for the variables of *word* (MRWs and non-MRWs) and *word class* (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, others). The chi-square analyses showed significant differences for all the destinations, with moderate effect sizes: Georgia ($\chi^2(5)=1336.08$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.26$), the UK ($\chi^2(5)=1541.99$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.29$), and the USA ($\chi^2(5)=1581.17$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.29$). Despite these variations, the overall distribution pattern aligns with the combined corpus.

In the Georgian corpus (see Appendix D, Table 1), verbs (32% of MRWs, SDR:+19.44) and prepositions (31%, SDR:+21.59) are strongly overrepresented in metaphorical use, while underrepresented among non-MRWs (verbs: 13%, SDR:-6.04). This suggests verbs are often used metaphorically in Georgia's tourism discourse. Conversely, nouns are more common in non-metaphorical contexts (34%, SDR:+4.17) and less so in MRWs (14%, SDR:-13.40), indicating a focus on factual content. Adjectives and adverbs show no significant variation, confirming their minimal role in metaphorical expression. Others are overrepresented in non-MRWs (27%, SDR:+13.65) and underrepresented in MRWs (9%, SDR:-4.24).

In the UK corpus, verbs (31% of MRWs, SDR:+23.28) and prepositions (29%, SDR:+18.57) contribute significantly to metaphorical expressions, while both are underused in non-MRWs (verbs: 11%, SDR:-8.53; prepositions: SDR:-6.80). Nouns are prominent in non-metaphorical content (38%, SDR:+4.63) but underrepresented in MRWs (19%, SDR:-12.64), indicating a more literal use in the UK material. As in Georgia, adjectives and adverbs in the UK show no significant deviations, suggesting limited metaphorical function. Others are overrepresented in non-MRWs (26%, SDR:+17.56) and underrepresented in MRWs (25%, SDR:-6.44).

In the USA corpus, verbs dominate MRWs (34%, SDR:+26.77) and are underused in non-MRWs (10%, SDR:-8.79), highlighting their strong metaphorical role. Prepositions are also key in MRWs (26%, SDR:+16.6), though slightly less than in Georgia and the UK, and underused in non-MRWs (SDR:-5.45). Nouns are prevalent in non-metaphorical contexts (41%, SDR:+4.2) but underrepresented in MRWs (20%, SDR:-12.78), indicating a preference for literal use. Adjectives are slightly more frequent in MRWs (12%, SDR:+2.03), while adverbs show no notable difference. Others are overused in non-MRWs (23%, SDR:+16.32) and underused in MRWs (5%, SDR:-5.36).

To further explore how metaphor use varies by destination across word classes, the interaction was examined from *the viewpoint of the word class* (Step 2); six chi-square tests were conducted using separate contingency tables. Results showed statistically significant yet weak associations between the destinations and distribution of metaphorical and non-metaphorical words for all word classes: nouns ($\chi^2(2)=46.00$, $p<0.05$, $V=0.05$), verbs ($\chi^2(2)=61.42$, $p<0.05$, $V=0.09$), adjectives ($\chi^2(2)=17.36$, $p<0.05$, $V=0.05$), adverbs ($\chi^2(2)=26.999$, $p<0.05$, $V=0.11$), prepositions ($\chi^2(2)=13.576$, $p<0.05$, $V=0.04$), and others ($\chi^2(2)=10.225$, $p<0.05$, $V=0.03$).

The analysis revealed that nouns are predominantly used non-metaphorically across the destinations. In Georgia (see Appendix D, Figure 1), 96% of noun use is non-metaphorical, with metaphorical nouns significantly underrepresented at 4% (SDR:-4.61). Similarly, in the USA, 95% are non-metaphorical and 5% metaphorical. The UK shows the highest proportion of metaphorical nouns: 6% (SDR:+4.73), highlighting their role in descriptive content compared to the USA and Georgia.

Others are predominantly non-metaphorical across all destinations, with MRWs at 3% in Georgia and 2% in the UK and USA. Chi-square analysis shows slight variation: Georgia overuses metaphorical others (SDR:+2.23), the USA underuses them (SDR:-2.23), and the UK shows no significant deviation.

Verbs play a key role in metaphors across all destinations, with notable regional differences. In the UK (see Appendix D, Figure 2), they are the most frequent MRWs (28%), showing overuse (SDR:+3.57) and

underuse in non-MRWs (SDR:−2.05), indicating a strong preference for metaphorical verbs. In the USA, verbs also dominate MRWs (27%, SDR:+2.26), though less markedly. Georgia shows the lowest proportion of metaphorical verbs (20%, SDR:−5.32), ranking second after prepositions, with non-metaphorical verbs overused (SDR:+3.05), suggesting a greater reliance on literal verbs. Overall, verbs are central to metaphorical expression in the UK and USA, while Georgia demonstrates a preference for non-metaphorical verbs. The SDRs highlight verbs as the most variable word class, reflecting distinct regional strategies in representing actions and events in PTD.

Metaphorical prepositions are the most frequent MRWs in Georgia (22%), with non-metaphorical ones at 78%, showing minimal SDR deviations. In the UK, they rank second after verbs, making up 25% of prepositions and showing significant overuse (SDR:+2.52). The USA (see Appendix D, Figure 3) shows the lowest proportion (20%), with 80% non-metaphorical, and a slight underuse (SDR:−1.96). These patterns highlight the UK's stronger reliance on metaphorical prepositions compared to Georgia and the USA.

Adjectives and adverbs exhibit a more balanced distribution but with regional differences. The UK uses the most metaphorical adjectives and adverbs (13% and 14%), supporting a vivid promotional style. The USA uses lower proportions (11% and 9%), and Georgia the least (9% and 6%), preferring a more literal approach. Chi-square analysis shows significant underuse of metaphorical adjectives (SDR:−2.86) and adverbs (SDR:−2.97) in Georgia, and significant overuse in the UK (adjectives SDR:+2.69; adverbs SDR:+3.96). The USA shows no significant deviations. This highlights the UK's preference for rich metaphorical language versus Georgia's restrained style.

Overall, Step 2 reveals verbs and prepositions as the most metaphorically overrepresented word classes across all destinations, especially in the UK and USA. Nouns mainly appear in non-metaphorical contexts in all three countries. Adjectives and adverbs are evenly distributed between metaphorical and non-metaphorical uses, with minor regional variations. Others contribute minimally to metaphorical contexts across destinations.

3.2.4. Section-Based Perspective

The analysis above revealed important insights into the distribution of MRWs across word classes and destinations. However, for a more granular understanding, the difference between the text types within the database was examined to reveal trends within Destinations and Experiences sections. To this aim, additional research questions were posed:

RQ 5:

- a) *What proportion of words in the 'Destinations' and 'Experiences' sections are metaphor-related; and*
- b) *How do these proportions vary across the destinations?*

To address these questions, the first step involved analysing the distribution of MRWs and non-MRWs within *two text types* (Destinations and Experiences) across different *word classes* (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and others) for *each corpus* (combined, GEO, UK, and USA).

Table 1 in Appendix E presents the overall distribution of metaphor- and non-metaphor-related words across the word classes in the combined corpus, revealing that the *Experiences* section contains a slightly higher proportion of metaphors (10.6%) than *Destinations* (9.2%).

Across the word classes, verbs exhibit the highest MRW proportion in both text types (Destinations- 24.6%, and Experiences- 24.8%). Prepositions also show a higher metaphorical use in Experiences (23%) than Destinations (21.3%). Adjectives and nouns follow, with higher metaphorical rates in Experiences (11.7% and 5.4%) than Destinations (9.8% and 4.7%). This suggests a stronger focus on emotionally

engaging, descriptive language in the Experiences section. Interestingly, metaphorical adverbs are more frequent in Destinations (10.6%) than in Experiences (8.3%). Although not statistically significant, this variation may reflect strategic differences in rhetorical strategies between sections¹. Conversely, others display a statistically significant difference, with a higher proportion in Experiences (3.2%) than in Destinations (1.4%), supported by post-hoc analysis (SDRs:+3.87 and -5.11).

The findings reveal a slight divergence in metaphor use between text types. Experiences employ a higher proportion of MRWs to create vivid, emotive, and immersive descriptions, while Destinations use metaphors more sparingly, maintaining an informative, fact-based tone. These patterns reflect differing rhetorical strategies: *Experiences* focus on abstract, emotive qualities, while *Destinations* prioritise concrete, tangible aspects of the location. This distinction can inform targeted marketing approaches, with metaphor use potentially shaped by the type of content and the intended audience.

The results in Table 2 (Appendix E) illustrate the section-based distribution of MRWs for GEO corpus. Texts in Georgia exhibits the most pronounced disparity in MRW proportions between Destinations and Experiences, with Experiences showing 9.85% MRWs compared to 6.44% in Destinations. This pattern is evident across all major word classes.

Metaphorical nouns significantly exceed in Experiences (4.8%, SDR +4.56) than in Destinations (1.9%, SDR -3.32). Similarly, metaphorical verbs are higher in Experiences (21.2%) than Destinations (15.6%), with Destinations showing a significant underuse (SDR -2.56). Metaphorical adjectives also differ significantly: 10.4% in Experiences (SDR +2) versus 4.8% in Destinations (SDR -3.25). Prepositions are slightly more metaphorical in Experiences (22.9%) than Destinations (19.2%). Others have a small MRW proportion, 1.9% in Destinations and 3.5% in Experiences.

Similarly to the combined corpus, the Georgian Destinations section exhibits a higher proportion of metaphorical adverbs (10.3%, SDR +2.32) than Experiences (4.95%), reflecting their strategic use in spatial descriptions.

Experiences texts in Georgia use more metaphorical nouns, verbs, and adjectives, creating vivid, engaging depictions that appeal to emotions while Destinations rely on metaphorical adverbs to emphasise physical locations and movements, supporting spatial orientation and physical appeal of the destination.

The USA corpus (Appendix E, Table 3) exhibits a relatively more balanced distribution of MRWs between the Destinations and Experiences sections. Similarly to the combined and GEO corpora, the Experiences section demonstrates a slightly higher overall proportion of MRWs compared to the Destinations section (10.5% vs. 9.1%). Metaphor-related nouns are slightly more frequent in Experiences (5.3%) than Destinations (4.9%), indicating a modest focus on activities over places. Both sections share an equal proportion of metaphorical verbs (27.1%). Experiences also show a significantly higher proportion of metaphorical adjectives (13.5% vs. 9.4%, SDR +2.07) and slightly more metaphorical prepositions (21.3% vs. 19.6%), reflecting greater metaphorical use in experiential content. Others have low MRW percentages (1.6% Destinations, 2.4% Experiences). Unlike other corpora, metaphorical adverbs are less frequent in Destinations (6.5%) but notably higher in Experiences (10.1%).

Overall, in the USA corpus, the Experiences section demonstrates a slightly higher frequency of metaphor-related adjectives and adverbs, which could reflect a more vivid and emotionally engaging portrayal of experiences.

¹ In Experiences, adverbs (e.g., harmoniously, closely, together, gently) evoke sensory, emotional, or relational imagery, creating vivid and engaging descriptions. In Destinations, adverbs (e.g., widely, around, up, down, over) emphasise spatial orientation, movement, or scale, highlighting geographical features and enhancing factual descriptions by conveying scope and distance. This suggests that adverbs in Destinations strategically emphasise location scale and geography.

The UK (Appendix E, Table 4) is the only destination in which the Destinations section has a slightly higher overall proportion of MRWs (12.5%) compared to Experiences (11.5%). This trend is consistent across the word classes.

In the UK corpus, metaphor-related nouns constitute 7.4% in Destinations and 6% in Experiences. Metaphorical verbs account for 29.7% in Destinations and 28% in Experiences. Adjectives show 15.5% in Destinations versus 12% in Experiences. Metaphorical adverbs are higher in Destinations (16.3%) than Experiences (12.8%), while prepositions are 26% in Destinations and 24% in Experiences. Others have a low MRW proportion in Destinations (0.5%) but higher in Experiences (3.4%), with significant SDRs (-4.5 and +3.05).

The UK database shows that the Destinations section consistently uses a higher proportion of MRWs across most word classes, emphasising its strategic use of metaphorical language to create vivid imagery and forge a strong connection to place. In contrast, the Experiences section employs metaphors less often, especially in nouns and adjectives. These differences indicate that the Destinations section strategically boosts place-based appeal, likely supporting the overall brand image, while the Experiences section takes a more restrained approach to highlight specific actions and experiences.

In summary, the section analysis uncovers a consistent pattern: the Experiences section contains a higher proportion of MRWs—especially in nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions—indicating a more vivid and immersive rhetorical style. Conversely, metaphorical adverbs are more common in Destinations, likely supporting spatial and geographical descriptions.

These findings reflect distinct communicative functions, with Experiences evoking emotions through metaphor, while Destinations adopt a more factual, location-focused approach. The second analysis investigates metaphor usage by destination (Georgia, UK, USA) across six word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, others) and two text types to explore differences between destinations further.

The statistical analysis indicates the Destination texts demonstrate a greater variation in MRW distribution across the countries than the Experience texts, probably reflecting underlying cultural differences in how destinations conceptualise landscapes, attractions, and features, particularly in the use of symbolic, historical, or nature-oriented metaphors.

Destination Texts (see Appendix E, Table 5):

- **Nouns:** The analysis revealed statistically significant yet weak association in the use of metaphorical nouns across the destinations ($\chi^2(2)=70.34$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.09$.) Georgia underuses metaphorical nouns (SDR:-6.06), the UK overuses them (+5.47), and the USA aligns with expectations (SDR:+0.57), indicating the UK's stronger preference for metaphorical nouns.

- **Verb** analysis demonstrated the strongest cross-regional variation ($\chi^2(2)=46.84$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.13$). Georgia significantly underuses metaphorical verbs (SDR:-4.94) and overuses non-metaphorical ones (+2.82) whereas the UK shows a notable overuse of metaphorical verbs (+2.84), with non-MRWs close to expected (-1.6). The USA's distribution of MRWs and non-MRWs aligns closely with expected values, showing no significant deviations. These results suggest regional differences in action-oriented metaphor use.

- **Adjective** use shows a significant association across destinations ($\chi^2(2)=38.61$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.13$). The USA displays no significant deviation in the use of metaphorical or non-metaphorical adjectives, indicating a balanced approach. Georgia underuses metaphorical adjectives (SDR:-3.88), indicating limited reliance on figurative evaluation. The UK significantly overuses them (+4.43), suggesting a more metaphor-rich promotional style.

- **Adverbs:** The association between destinations and the distribution of metaphorical and non-metaphorical adverbs is also statistically significant ($\chi^2(2)=9.93$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.13$). The UK exhibits a significant overrepresentation of metaphorical adverbs (+2.30) while Georgia's and USA's uses of adverbs align closely with expected values, showing no significant deviations.

• **Prepositions** show a statistically significant yet weak association in the distribution of metaphorical and non-metaphorical prepositions ($\chi^2(2)=15.22$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.07$). The UK overuses metaphorical prepositions (SDR:+2.93), while Georgia and the USA display balanced distributions with no notable deviations.

• **Others** exhibit a significant yet the weakest association across destinations ($\chi^2(2)=9.84$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.04$). Georgia and the USA maintain a balanced use, while the UK slightly overuses metaphorical others (SDR:+2.59). Although conjunctions, pronouns, and determiners play a limited role in conveying regional metaphorical variation, their contribution still shapes how experiences are framed.

Summarising, the analysis reveals regional variation in metaphor usage within destination texts. The UK relies more heavily on metaphorical nouns, verbs, and adjectives, while Georgia adopts a more restrained approach, especially with metaphorical nouns and verbs. The USA maintains a balanced use of metaphorical and non-metaphorical language. These differences likely stem from cultural preferences and regional approaches to tourism promotion, highlighting metaphor's role in framing destinations to align with specific cultural contexts.

Regarding the Experiences texts (see Appendix E, Table 6), the analysis reveals two distinct patterns in metaphor usage across the word classes:

• Minimal variations are exhibited by most word classes, including prepositions ($\chi^2(2)=2.70$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.03$), others ($\chi^2(2)=6.04$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.03$), and nouns ($\chi^2(2)=6.35$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.02$), and almost no variation in adjectives ($\chi^2(2)=5.04$, $p>0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.04$). This suggests that metaphor use in these word classes remains relatively stable and are less culturally distinct in experience texts across the destinations.

• Conversely, verbs ($\chi^2(2)=25.11$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.07$) and adverbs ($\chi^2(2)=23.16$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.13$) show significant variation, highlighting their role in encoding cultural perspectives. Verbs are especially sensitive to regional differences, shaping metaphorical framing of actions and participation (e.g., *immerse*, *discover*, *soak up*), while adverbs refine these frames with nuance and intensity. Together, they convey emotion, reflect culturally specific patterns, and support destination branding by shaping the tone, personality, and experiential appeal of a place.

Summarising, destination texts show greater cross-regional variation in metaphor-related words than experience texts. Destination texts primarily describe places, landscapes, and attractions, often using figurative language to evoke symbolic, historical, or nature-related meanings. This explains the significant variation in metaphorical nouns, verbs, and adjectives across Georgia, the UK, and the USA, reflecting culturally distinct framing. These metaphors play a key role in place branding and cultural representation, driving regional differences in promotional language. In contrast, experience texts focus on activities and engagement, emphasising personal involvement and transformation. As a result, these texts are more functionally consistent across cultures. However, verbs and adverbs still show some variation, reflecting cultural differences in how action-based experiences are marketed.

4. Conclusion

This paper examined the use of metaphorical language in promotional tourism discourse through a quantitative analysis, focusing on two established: the UK and the USA, and the developing destination: Georgia. Destination marketing organisations strategically use language to shape brand identity and influence visitor perceptions. As powerful rhetorical tools, metaphors can reinforce key themes—whether historical, natural, dynamic, or immersive—thereby contributing to a destination's unique appeal.

The findings position PTD within a broader metaphorical spectrum of discourse, revealing its distinctive hybrid info-promotional function. While its metaphor density is lower than that of general discourse, this aligns with its need to balance clarity with engagement. The lower metaphor frequency in

web-based PTD compared to print-based formats suggests medium-specific adaptations, warranting further investigation into how metaphors function across different tourism communication channels.

The quantitative results challenge the assumption that developing destinations rely more heavily on metaphors for promotion. Georgia exhibited the lowest metaphor usage, indicating that metaphor frequency in tourism discourse is shaped by factors beyond a destination's status. Future research should examine metaphor types, cultural context, marketing strategies, and target audiences, with a focus on novel vs. conventional metaphors (Iritspukhova, submitted), genre and section within PTD, and qualitative analyses of metaphor functions in shaping promotional narratives.

The findings also reveal an uneven distribution of metaphors across word classes, with verbs and prepositions playing a dominant role in metaphorical expression. This suggests that metaphors in PTD primarily serve persuasive rather than informational functions. The limited presence of metaphorical nouns further supports this, indicating a strategic emphasis on dynamic and relational language to enhance engagement.

The cross-destination analysis highlights both shared patterns and regional variations in metaphor usage. While all destinations prioritise verbs and prepositions for metaphorical expression and rely on nouns for non-metaphorical content, the extent of this usage varies. The UK corpus exhibits the strongest preference for metaphorical adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions while Georgia favours a more literal style, with fewer metaphorical verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, reflecting distinct regional approaches to tourism promotion.

The section-based analysis further highlights these differences. Across all the corpora, the Experiences sections exhibit a higher proportion of MRWs, reinforcing their role in creating immersive and emotionally resonant narratives, whereas Destinations sections exhibit a more restrained use of metaphor, consistent with their factual and spatially oriented function. However, the UK corpus displays a higher metaphor density in the Destinations section, suggesting a strategy that emphasises place-based appeal, potentially contributing to the formation of a distinctive brand image. The strategic deployment of metaphor in this section may aim to highlight the destination's unique qualities—whether its historical significance, natural landscapes, or cultural heritage—which can foster a stronger emotional connection with potential visitors and enhance the destination's overall marketability. Conversely, Georgia's and the USA's Experiences sections rely more heavily on metaphor, indicating a preference for evocative storytelling to enhance engagement.

While this study provides valuable insights into metaphor usage in promotional tourism discourse, certain limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study primarily examines metaphor frequency and distribution across word classes but does not extensively analyse metaphor types (e.g., conventional vs. novel) or their cultural and psychological impact on audiences. Investigating these aspects could enhance our understanding of how metaphor functions within PTD. Second, the study assumes that linguistic patterns in ODWs reflect intentional marketing strategies; however, variations in metaphor use may also be influenced by broader linguistic and editorial practices within each destination's marketing team. A more detailed investigation of content creation processes could help disentangle strategic language choices from stylistic conventions. Additionally, as the identification of metaphors was conducted solely by the author, potential biases or errors may exist.

Nevertheless, the findings highlight the strategic deployment of metaphor in tourism discourse, where text type and regional priorities shape metaphor use to align with communicative goals - whether emphasising spatial orientation, historical allure, or experiential immersion, and ultimately shaping the brand image of the destination.

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Appendix A: Situational Characteristics

Web-based promotional tourism discourse /Description-with-intent-to-sell Sub-Register

CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
I PARTICIPANTS	The author is typically not acknowledged, representing an institutional voice. This enhances credibility by presenting evaluations as objective facts, targeting a diverse, global audience of prospective tourists.
II RELATIONS AMONG PARTICIPANTS	The communication is expert-to-non-expert, with low to medium level of specialisation. Given a cross-cultural context, the language is explicit, universally comprehensible, friendly and engaging to foster rapport and establish a ‘pseudo-dialogue’ with the readership (Manca, 2016: 47; Mocini, 2005/2009: 160; Sulaiman and Wilson, 2019).
III CHANNEL	Texts are published in electronic format by public institutions and are freely accessible to the public. The electronic format allows for multimodal communication through text, images, video, and interactive features.
IV PRODUCTION CIRCUMSTANCES	Content is produced by teams of writers, marketers, and designers specialising in persuasive and engaging texts. Writers have time to plan, draft, edit, and proofread the content, ensuring high-quality output. However, regular updates are necessary to maintain relevance in the rapidly changing tourism market.
V SETTING	Authors and readers are typically distant in both physical and cultural terms. This separation requires linguistic choices that bridge potential gaps in understanding, such as the use of inclusive, neutral, and universally relatable language. Additionally, there is often a time delay between the production of texts and their consumption by potential tourists, further emphasising the importance of universally engaging content.
VI COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE	The primary aim is to ostensibly describe destinations and related experiences positively, subtly persuading the audience to visit the promoted destinations. This dual purpose influences the linguistic choices, combining factual descriptions with persuasive devices such as emotive and evaluative language, and vivid imagery.
VII TOPIC	Tourism promotional texts encompass a wide range of topics, including gastronomy, art, culture, sports, nature, etc. The diversity of topics often necessitates the use of specialised terminology (e.g., ‘gastrolingo’, etc.).

Appendix B: Database Details

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of destination and experience texts per corpus.

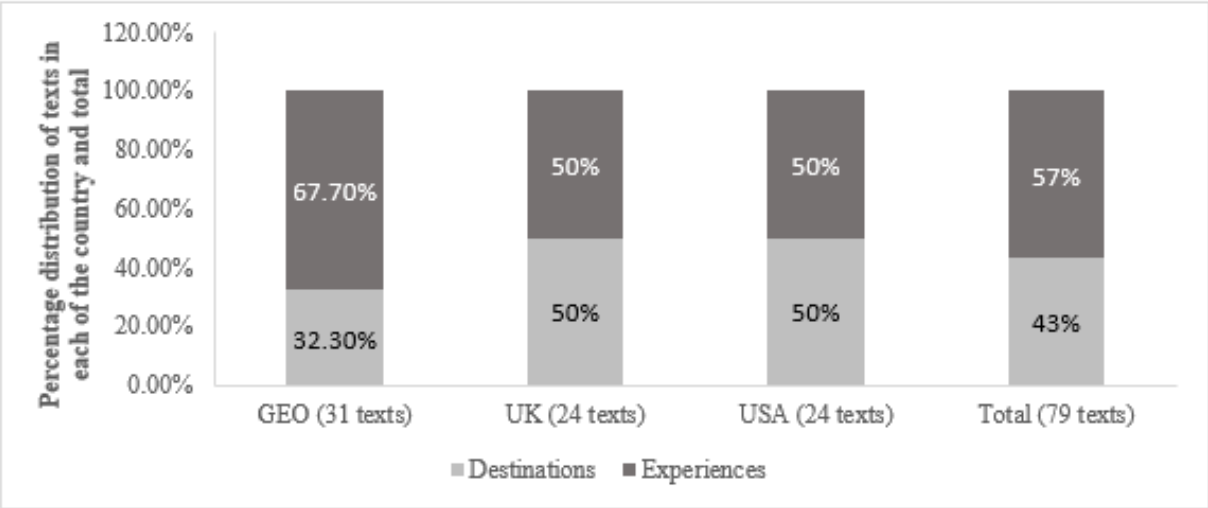


Figure 2: Text Length Per Country

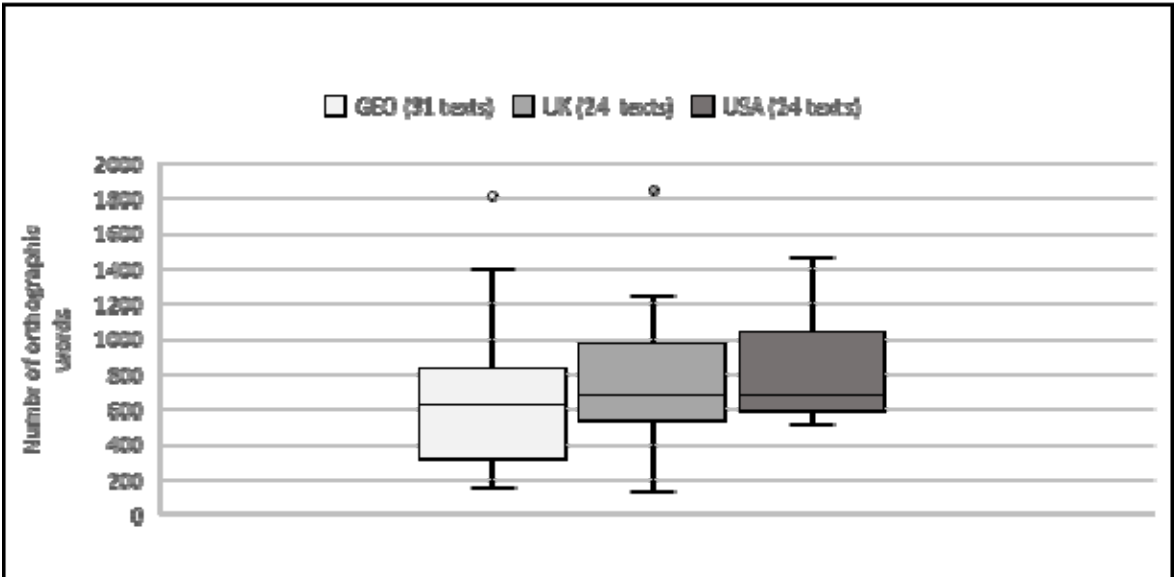


Table 1: Sample Size per Destination

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Absolute Frequency</i>	<i>Relative Frequency %</i>
<i>Georgia</i>	19405	34.5
<i>The UK</i>	18058	32
<i>The USA</i>	18848	33.5
<i>Total</i>	56311	100

Appendix C: General Linguistic Characteristics of the Database

Figure 1: Keyword cloud for the combined corpus compared to BNC sample written

altitude Atlanta attractions **be** beautiful been Belfast borjomi but can Cardiff cathedral Caucasus center century check_out city coast colorful could cuisine cultural
culture discover downtown Edinburgh enjoy **explore** famous Georgia georgian had he
her heritage hiking him **his historic** history home i iconic including is kilometers km lakes largest
located Louisiana Manchester May me meters monastery mountain mountain mountains museum
museums music my national_park natural New_Orleans offers park perfect resort restaurants River said she spot stunning Svaneti
Tbilisi that they tour tours trail trails travel trip Tusheti UNESCO unique views village visit visitors **was** we were world
would you

Figure 2: Keyword cloud for GEO compared to BNC sample written

's also amazing ancient and archaeological architectural architecture are area around autumn baths bc be beautiful built_in can
cathedral cave centuries **century** cheese christianity church city complex constructed country
cultural dates delicious destination dishes exhibits famous find forests **fortress** from gorge he heritage highest hike
his historic historical houses is lakes **located** location m medieval monastery mountain
mountains museum museums natural nature of peaks picturesque place places protected region resort
resorts River rivers rivers situated ski skiing spa springs that they to tourists tours towers town trails trip unique upper valleys
village was waterfall waterfalls were wine winter would you

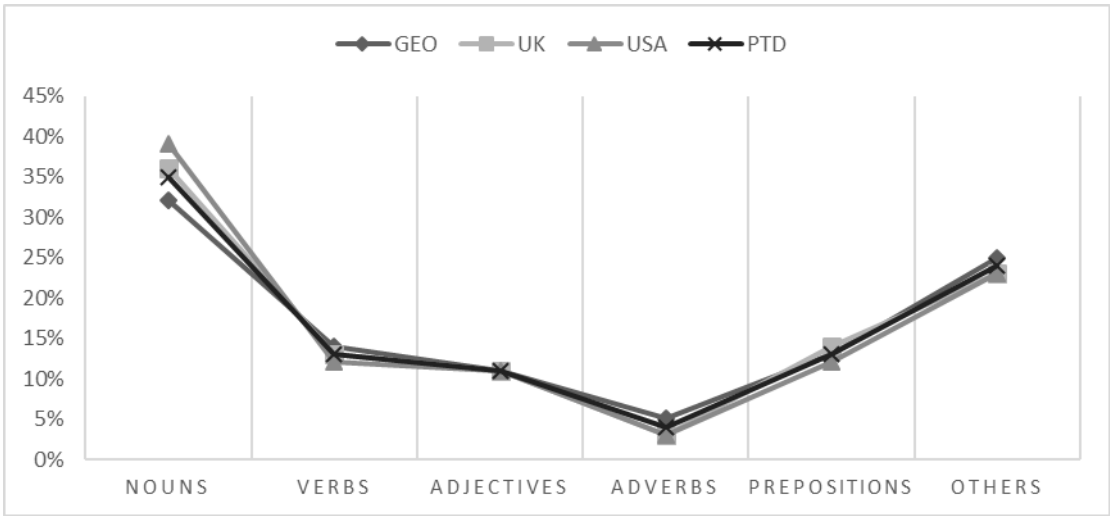
Figure 3: Keyword cloud for the British corpus compared to BNC sample written



Figure 4: Keyword cloud for the American corpus compared to BNC sample written



Table 1: Distributional profile of word class frequency per corpus



Appendix D: Metaphorical Dimension

Table 1: Distribution of Metaphor- and Non-Metaphor-Related Words Across Word Classes

Destinations	Georgia		UK		USA		COMBINED	
Groups Word Classes	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs
Nouns <i>% within the group</i>	6041 34% (+)*	238 14%(-)	6050 38% (+)	416 19%(-)	6910 41% (+)	368 20%(-)	19001 38% (+)	1022 18%(-)
Verbs	2241 13% (-)	551 32%(+)	1672 11% (-)	664 31%(+)	1688 10% (-)	627 34%(+)	5601 11% (-)	1842 32%(+)
Adjectives	1865 11%	182 11%	1758 11%	262 12%	1804 11%	226 12%(+)	5427 11%	670 12%(+)
Adverbs	849 5%	54 3% (-)	497 3%	80 4%	499 3%	47 3%	1845 4%	181 3%
Prepositions	1933 11% (-)	536 31%(+)	1872 12% (+)	613 29%(-)	1871 11% (-)	480 26%(+)	5677 11% (-)	1629 29%(+)
Others	4766 27% (+)	149 9% (-)	4070 26% (-)	104 5% (+)	4242 25% (+)	86 5% (-)	13078 26% (+)	339 6% (-)
Total	17695 100 %	1710 100%	15919 100 %	2139 100%	17014 100 %	1834 100%	50629 100 %	5683 100%

*Statistically significant deviations are given **in bold**, marking overrepresentation (+) and underrepresentation (-), with the critical value for the $SDR \pm 1.96$, at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance.

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of MRWs and non-MRWs across word classes in Georgia

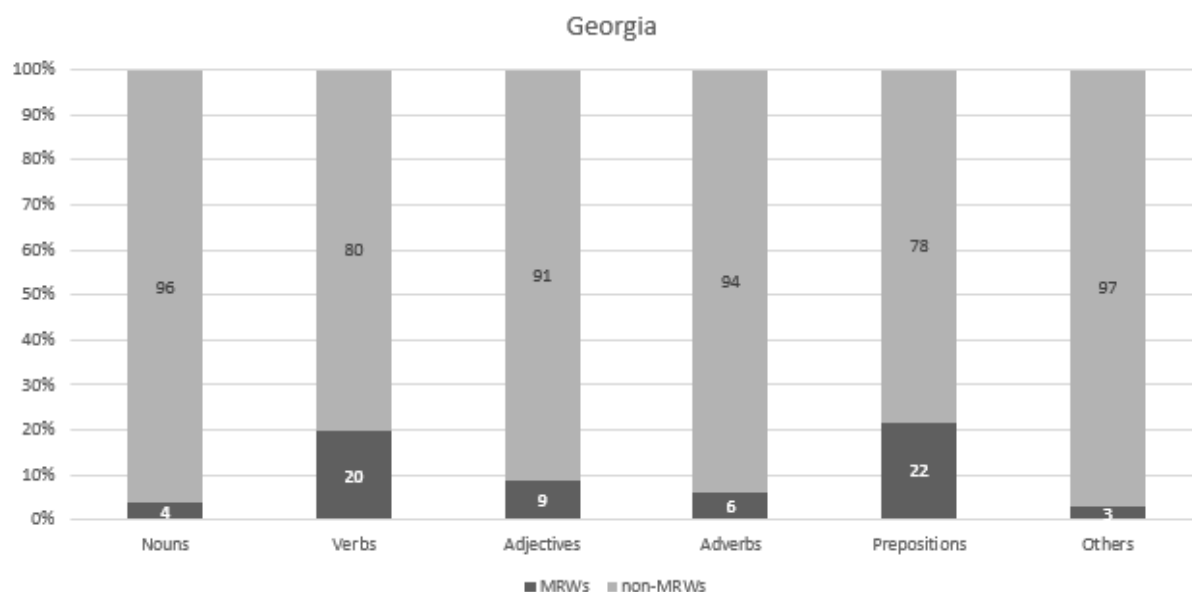


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of MRWs and non-MRWs across word classes in the UK

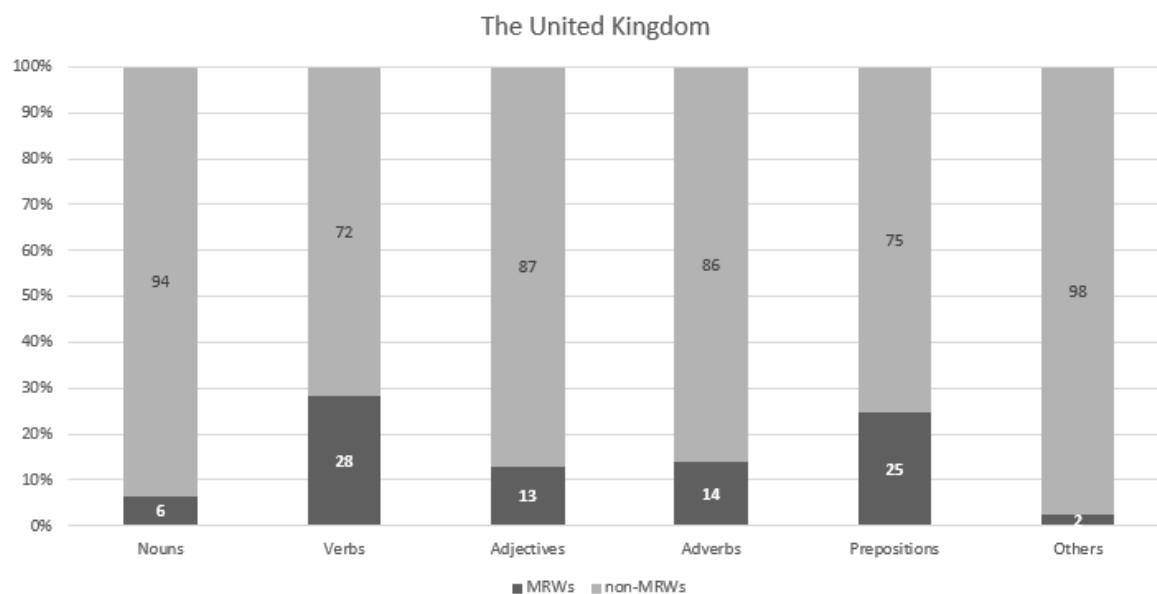
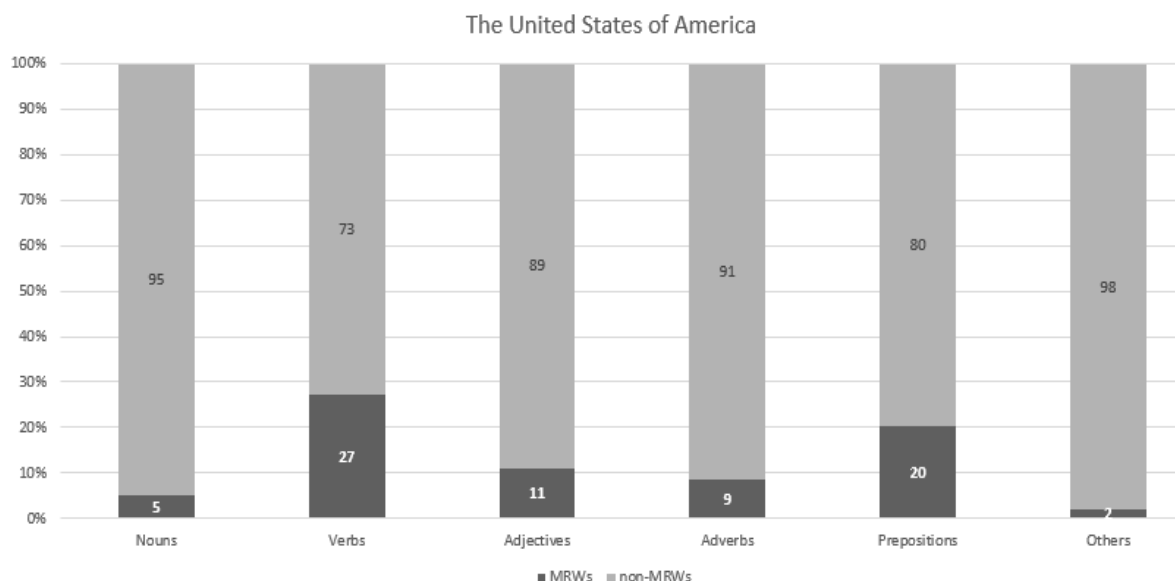


Figure 3: Percentage distribution of MRWs and non-MRWs across word classes in the USA



Appendix E: Section-based perspective

Table 1: The combined corpus

Types of text	Destinations		Experiences		Total	
Word classes	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs
<i>Nouns</i>	393 4.7%	7959 95.3%	629 5.4%	11042 94.6%	1022 5.1%	19001 94.9%
<i>Verbs</i>	638 24.6%	1958 75.4%	1204 24.8%	3643 75.2%	1842 24.7%	5601 75.3%
<i>Adjectives</i>	225 9.8%	2072 90.2%	445 11.7%	3355 88.3%	670 11%	5427 89%
<i>Adverbs</i>	61 10.6%	516 89.4%	120 8.3%	1329 91.7%	181 8.9%	1845 91.1%
<i>Prepositions</i>	614 21.3%	2271 78.7%	1015 23%	3405 77%	1629 22.3%	5676 77.7%
<i>Others</i>	67 1.4%(-)*	4833 98.6%	272 3.2%(-)	8245 96.4%	339 2.5%	13078 97.5%
Total	1998 9.2%	19609 90.8%	3685 10.6%	31019 89.4%	5683 10.1%	50628 89.9%

*Significant deviations are given in bold, with the critical value for the $SDR \pm 1.96$, at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance.

Table 2. Georgia

Types of text	Destinations		Experiences		Total	
	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs
Word classes						
Nouns	41 1.9%(-)	2133 98.1%	197 4.8%(+)	3908 95.2%	238 3.8%	6041 96.2%
Verbs	114 15.6%(-)	620 84.4%	437 21.2%	1621 78.8%	551 19.7%	2241 80.3%
Adjectives	27 4.8%(-)	535 95.2%	155 10.4%(+)	1330 89.6%	182 8.9%	1865 91.1%
Adverbs	18 10.3%(+)	157 89.7%	36 4.95%	692 95.05%	54 6%	849 94%
Prepositions	153 19.2%	645 80.8%	383 22.9%	1288 77.1%	536 21%	1933 78.3%
Others	27 1.9%(-))	1433 98.1%	122 3.5%	3333 96.5%	149 3%	4766 97%
Total	380 6.44%	5523 93.56%	1330 9.85%	12172 90.15%	1710 8.8%	17695 91.2%

Table 3. The USA

Types of text	Destinations		Experiences		Total	
	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs
Word classes						
Nouns	204 4.9%	3961 95.1%	164 5.3%	2949 94.7%	368 5.1%	6910 94.9%
Verbs	302 27.1%	813 72.9%	325 27.1%	875 72.9%	627 27.1%	1688 72.9%
Adjectives	109 9.4%	1053 90.6%	117 13.5%(+)	751 86.5%	226 11.1%	2030 88.9%
Adverbs	15 6.5%	215 93.5%	32 10.1%	284 89.9%	47 8.6%	499 91.4%
Prepositions	249 19.6%	1023 80.4%	231 21.3%	848 78.7%	480 20.4%	2350 79.6%
Rest	33 1.6%	2093 98.4%	53 2.4%	2149 97.6%	86 2%	4242 98%
Total	912 9.1%	9158 90.9%	922 10.5%	7856 89.5%	1834 9.7%	17014 90.3%

Table 4. The UK

Types of text	Destinations		Experiences		Total	
<i>Word classes</i>	<i>MRWs</i>	<i>Non-MRWs</i>	<i>MRWs</i>	<i>Non-MRWs</i>	<i>MRWs</i>	<i>Non-MRWs</i>
<i>Nouns</i>	148 7.4%	1865 9.6%	268 6%	4185 94%	416 6.4%	6050 93.4%
<i>Verbs</i>	222 29.7%	525 70.3%	442 28%	1147 72%	664 28.4%	1672 71.6%
<i>Adjectives</i>	89 15.5%	484 84.5%	173 12%	1274 88%	262 13%	1758 87%
<i>Adverbs</i>	28 16.3%	144 83.7%	52 12.8%	353 87.2%	80 13.9%	497 75.3%
<i>Prepositions</i>	212 26%	603 74%	401 24%	1269 76%	613 24.7	1872 75.3%
<i>Others</i>	7 0.5%(-)	1307 99.5%	97 3.4%(+)	2763 96.6%	104 2.5%	4070 97.5%
Total	706 12.5%	4928 87.5%	1433 11.5%	10991 88.5%	2139 11.8%	15919 88.2%

Table 5: Destination section: Cross-destination comparison in SDRs

Destinations	Geo		UK		USA	
<i>Word class</i>	<i>MRWs</i>	<i>Non-MRWs</i>	<i>MRWs</i>	<i>Non-MRWs</i>	<i>MRWs</i>	<i>Non-MRWs</i>
<i>Nouns</i>	-	+	+	NS	NS	NS
<i>Verbs</i>	-	+	+	NS	NS	NS
<i>Adjectives</i>	-	NS	+	NS	NS	NS
<i>Adverbs</i>	NS*	NS	+	NS	NS	NS
<i>Prepositions</i>	NS	NS	+	NS	NS	NS
<i>Others</i>	NS	NS	-	NS	NS	NS

*Non-significant deviation with the critical value for the standardised residual ± 1.96 , at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance.

Table 6: Experience section: Cross-destination comparison in SDRs

Destinations	Geo		UK		USA	
Word class	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs	MRWs	Non-MRWs
Nouns	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Verbs	-	NS	+	NS	NS	NS
Adjectives	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Adverbs	-	NS	+	NS	NS	NS
Prepositions	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Others	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

Author's Biographical Data:

Nazi Iritspukhova's research encompasses cognitive and discourse-analytical studies of figuration, alongside sociolinguistic and cultural analyses of tourism discourse. Her doctoral thesis combines comparative quantitative and qualitative methods to examine how tourism marketers use figuration to enhance the persuasive impact of promotional messages. Her research has been published in high-impact journals, including those by John Benjamins Publishing Company. She has presented her work at conferences organised by Edge Hill University, the Thessaloniki Cognitive Linguistics Research Group, and participated in the 15th RAAM.

Nazi is also an ESL teacher and mentor in the British Council (Georgia). She holds CELTA, TYLEC, is a NILE- and American Councils-accredited teacher trainer, and plans to pursue DELTA soon.