



TOURISM PROMOTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF GENRE-BASED STUDIES IN DIGITAL PLATFORMS

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ABSTRACT

The shift from traditional to digital marketing has transformed how tourism promotion is structured and delivered. This paper presents a systematic review of seven studies applying genre analysis, primarily Swales' and Bhatia's move analysis, to digital tourism texts such as websites and online advertisements. Results revealed that while familiar promotional moves (e.g., detailing products, establishing credentials) are often identified, digital platforms use two-sided strategies, which is "soliciting response" namely hyperlinks, comment sections, imperative remarks, etc. The findings suggest that Bhatia's original framework requires further development in order to adapt for multimodal and interactive elements in the digital tourism genre. Future research is discussed for further evolution of genre studies, emphasizing the importance of adapting genre analysis to the dynamics of digital tourism marketing.

Keywords: Genre analysis, tourism promotion, digital platforms, tourism promotion, systematic review

1. Introduction

By the year 2025, marketing and promotional strategies have adopted a new shift of an era. Before the internet became viral in the 2000s, traditional marketing techniques such as brochures and print ads dominated the industry (Nair & Subramaniam, 2012). In the early stages of internet growth, digital platforms such as websites became more common. At the same time, social media as a platform of connectivity began to globalize, creating opportunities for new types of socialization regardless of distance (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Although social media has become a global hit, promoting products through websites remains essential to many businesses. Websites are often established first to build credibility and trust in a brand or product and also allow more detailed descriptions and visually appealing presentations than social media (Lusian & Harjanti, 2023). However, websites also have their own drawbacks, such as visibility issues, which require search engine optimization (SEO) or additional promotion to increase traffic visits (Giomelakis et al., 2023; Zhu, 2023). Despite the limitation, recent research shows that websites continue to play an essential role in the digital era, supporting brand image, facilitating consumer purchase decisions, and complementing social media strategies for impactful marketing (Daoud et al., 2024; Nurhadi, 2022). At the same time, social media platforms have become more and more well-known, due to its online connectivity and enhancing personal interaction. This also prompted business owners to make use of the platform for promotional purposes and brand engagement. The introduction of Instagram in 2010 further transformed the scene with its focus on visual content that quickly captivated a global audience while encouraging user-generated content (UGC) and became the platform that gave birth to a new type of job which is called "influencers". The visual-oriented platform is perfectly aligned with users' preferences for self-expression, establishing Instagram as a leading platform for UGC and influencer-based marketing strategies (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Genre Analysis in Tourism Discourse

The idea of genre has existed for some time and has traditionally been linked to literary classification. However, its integration into academic discourse represents a significant evolution within scholarly circles. John M. Swales is known as a pivotal figure in this area due to his early investigations into the

discourse structures of research articles during the 1980s (Swales, 1981; Swales, 1990). He posited that academic texts possess standardized rhetorical structures that fulfill communicative functions within specific discourse communities. This perspective led to what is now known as "genre analysis," which offers fundamental insights into how academic writing operates by pointing out how form, function, and context are linked together (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993). Bhatia later broadened this framework to adapt additional fields including business and legal discourses through “move analysis.” Despite variations among texts across genres, Bhatia identified similar patterns that frequently exist within specific genres. While much has been written about digital marketing and genre studies in tourism, very few reviews have systematically examined how Swales’ and Bhatia’s frameworks are adapted for multimodal and interactive digital platforms. This creates uncertainty about whether existing models are still adequate for analyzing tourism promotion in the digital age.

Just as traditional marketing methods have transitioned into digital formats over time, genre theory in linguistics has also expanded. Hiipala (2014) further developed a multimodal genre analysis framework that can be applied to digital texts fused with multiple modalities, especially visual elements. However, this paper will only look at text on digital platforms that are not necessarily put not only on social media, but also webpages and e-brochures. More research has been conducted on genre within tourism and advertising contexts focusing on conventional brochures and printed materials (Nguyen & Modehiran, 2023; Saputri, 2023; Furnama & Rosa, 2020). Afterwards, more research started to focus more toward digital content related to tourism such as e-brochures and websites (Ekawati & Puspitasari, 2019; Thumvichit, 2018). While genre and move analysis have been widely applied to traditional promotional texts such as brochures and print advertisements, systematic reviews focusing on their application in digital and social media platforms are still extremely limited. This is important because today's marketing is predominantly shaped by interactive and multimodal elements on online platforms. Systematic review is necessary to identify whether the existing genre frameworks could sufficiently capture these new promotional strategies. To address this gap, this study systematically examines genre-based research on social media platforms, with a particular emphasis on tourism marketing and advertisements.

3. Research Methods

As a systematic review paper, this study will select some relevant research to be further examined. Fundamentally, this paper is focusing on genre studies which are still extremely limited, the author compared seven papers that can be found from the last ten years. The reason why these studies were chosen was because they used Swales and Bhatia’s genre approach as the foundation theory. To narrow down the scope, the papers chosen must explore digital promotion content under the tourism category. All seven papers will be compared and critically reviewed in order to see how far the development of genre-based studies have been explored in the digital tourism context.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. Move Application for Digital Promotion Content

All seven papers used Swales and Bhatia’s theoretical frameworks as the principal theory. Genre studies emphasize on the generic structure and communicative purposes of texts (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993), whereas CDA is more concerned with the ideological, power-related, and social meanings of discourse (Fairclough, 1995). Multimodality, on the other hand, analyzes how meaning is made by combining multiple semiotic elements such as images, videos, sound, and layout (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

In his framework, Swales (1990) came up with his own "move analysis" model after critically analyzing academic text. Bhatia (1993; 2004) further expanded Swales’ genre theory by coming up with an advanced method to identify the rhetorical structure of a text beyond scholarly works such as advertisements, legal documents, etc. “Move analysis” in genre studies is essential to help researchers analyze the organized patterns that are commonly shared to achieve its goals (i.e. to persuade, to inform, to request, etc). All seven papers were applying move analysis to the objects they reviewed (Aib, 2024; Lestari & Ekawati, 2022; Hui et al., 2020; Awal, 2020; Ekawati & Puspitasari, 2019; Thumvichit, 2018;

Leelertphan, 2017). Seeing that these papers were discussing tourism promotion, the extended version of move analysis initiated by Bhatia was used.

Subsequently, these papers found that the pattern of promotional genre is mostly compatible with Bhatia's (2004) idea begins with headlines, followed by justifying the product (move 3), detailing the product (move 4) and soliciting response move 9). Some of them had the second, fifth and sixth respectively which is targeting the market, establishing credentials and celebrity or typical user endorsement in it. However, the 7th and 8th moves were not identified in all papers. It is certain that the advertisers tend to do less "offering intensive" (move 7) and using pressure tactics (move 8). This raises a question: why do tourism promotions tend to avoid pressuring their target market? The noticeable assumption that can be drawn is that the promoters tend to exaggerate the destination or product they offer with the descriptions of the product in order to persuade more potential tourists. Some of the papers have shown that most of the advertisements emphasize the authenticity and cultural values (Thumvichit (2018); Hui et al. (2020); Lestari & Ekawati (2022)). The frequent appearance of Move 9 suggests that persuasion in digital tourism promotion genres might be achieved through mutual communication rather than just describing the product. Yet, little work has explored how this affects audience engagement or conversion in practice. Moreover, the absence of pressure tactics (Move 8) raises questions about whether tourism discourse deliberately avoids aggressive persuasion to maintain cultural authenticity or sustainability branding? And whether the absences of this move made tourism discourse differ from the other product advertisements?

4.2. *The New Model of Interactive Promotion on Digital Media*

Six from seven papers have found consistent findings related to move 9, "soliciting response" (Aib, 2024; Lestari & Ekawati, 2022; Hui et al., 2020; Awal, 2020; Thumvichit, 2018; Leelertphan, 2017). Unlike traditional advertisements that relied heavily on textual persuasion, digital tourism genres tend to be more interactive to the potential market as the main persuasive strategy. These texts and webpages frequently conclude with explicit action remarks such as "Book now," "Visit us," or "Plan your trip" that often incorporate hyperlinks, booking systems, and contact forms.

For instance, Leelertphan (2017) and Awal (2020) showed how boutique hotel and Iranian hotel webpages include direct reservation systems transforming stagnant promotional text into proactive digital liaison. Similarly, Thumvichit (2018) and Hui et al. (2020) found that destination overviews and attraction texts often used imperative verbs and invitations i.e. "Come and see," or "Experience now" which blend rhetorical persuasion with digital interactivity. Aib (2024) and Lestari & Ekawati (2022) also highlighted the way hyperlinks and directions worked as a way to encourage potential visitors to act, improving Bhatia's understanding of Move 9 into an online, multimodal practice.

The only exception was Ekawati & Puspitasari (2019), whose analysis of Madura tourism websites revealed a stronger focus on descriptive detailing (Move 4) rather than on explicit calls-to-action. This suggests that while most digital tourism genres adapt Bhatia's promotional moves into interactive formats, some remain closer to the traditional descriptive promotion with limited interactivity. However, this study was done in 2019, which is believed to be still under the transformation of convenient and direct digital connectivity.

Without a doubt, these findings suggest that Move 9 in the digital promotion use goes beyond solicitation. It has become a mutual correspondence expressed in hyperlinks, booking buttons, and multimodal elements. This triggers another issue whether Bhatia's original move framework requires further adaptation to suit digital media especially for tourism promotion, where persuasion is achieved not just through text but through interactivity and user engagement mechanisms. As Hiippala (2014) emphasizes that multimodal genre analysis is highly relevant for understanding digital communication. Building on this idea, he refers to Tan (2010), who describes websites as a hybrid digital genre that brings together different modes and discourses to create intertextual possibilities. Not only websites, social media platforms are also a pivotal method of destination advertisement as the new interactive model of promotion as they provide wider options of communication modes such as comment section, direct message, hashtags and hyperlinks.

5. Conclusion

Genre analysis or in this case, move analysis may sometimes be overlooked as the fundamental area of modern advertising communication. Looking at how researchers appreciate Swales and Bhatia's idea by utilizing their framework into their research, it is no doubt that each generic text does have some similar patterns and organization. Only, there must be an adaptable application to the specific discourses. Genre analysis could be conveniently flexible as an approach and does not stop evolving. Whilst it used to be focusing only on textual analysis, it is now evolving into broader modality such as visuals and digital interactive communication. Regrettably, this paper only limits to digital media and tourism promotion as a context, which cannot be generalized, but this could be the trigger for further research involving genre, multimodality, and digital platforms communication, especially in the field of tourism advertisement.

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