Multimodal corpus analysis of representations of travel destinations: two methodological approaches

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a surge of interest to utilizing multimodal approaches for analysing tourism discourse (e.g. Francesconi, 2011, 2014). However, methodological frameworks for studying the representation of travel destinations in multimodal texts have not received much attention.

Aim

To discuss two multimodal approaches to city representation analysis in travel-related texts.

Data

Two comparable multimodal corpora of online tourism discourse in Moscow and London collected between 2017 and 2018 from a popular travel portal www.tripadvisor.com containing webpages for top 10 places in each of the 3 categories (accommodation, tourist attractions and restaurants) with images and travel reviews in English.

Structure of multimodal TripAdvisor Moscow and London corpora
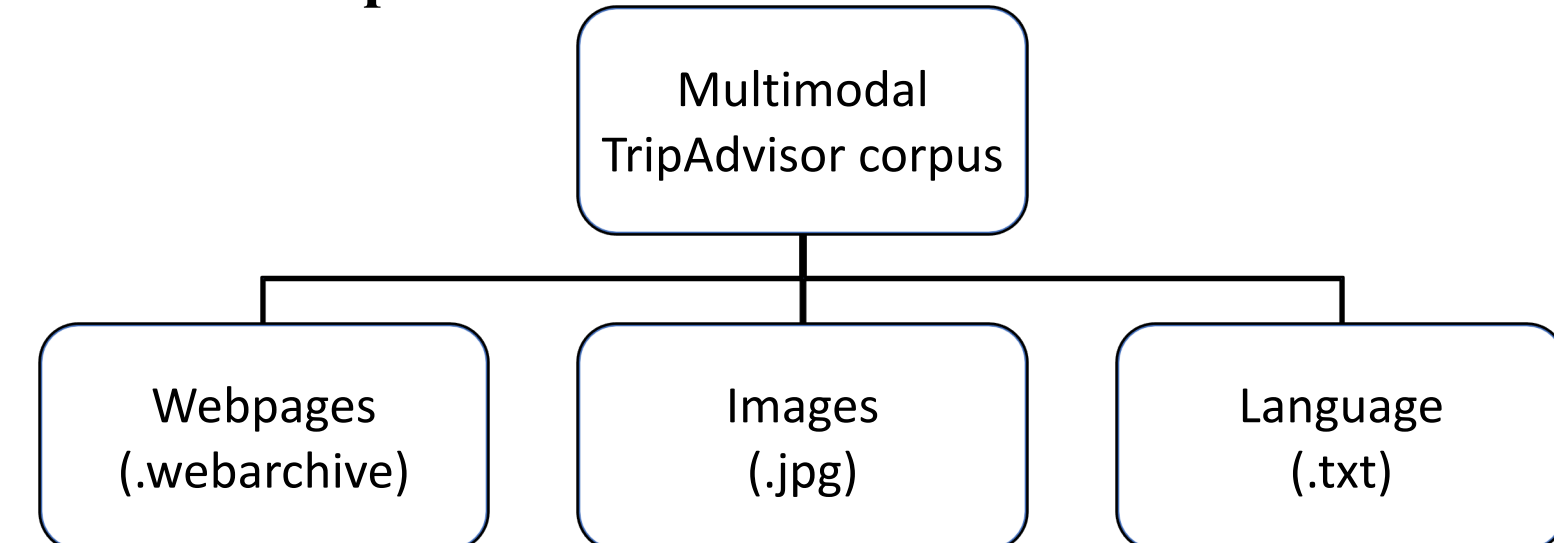
Sources of data
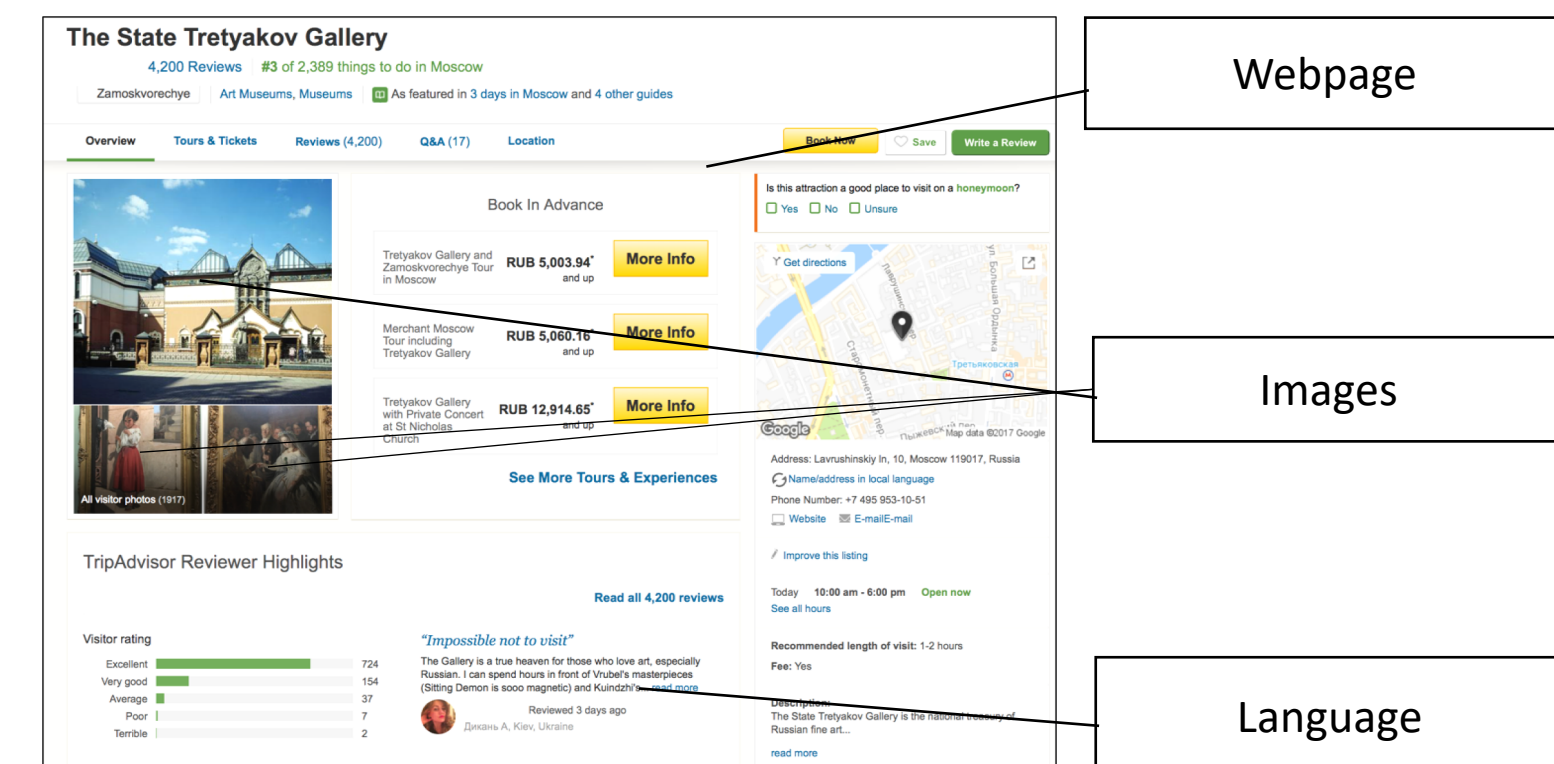
Size of Moscow and London corpora

Data type	Moscow	London
Webpages	40 files	40 files
Language	24,499 words	26,511 words
Images	291 images	184 images

Methodology

The main focus of my research is the similarities and differences in the representation of the two cities in language and images.
The language analysis is similar in both approaches but the images analysis is different.

Language analysis

- keyness comparison using Wmatrix
- concordance analysis of keyness
- collocation comparison using LancsBox
- concordance analysis of collocations

Preliminary results of keywords analysis in Moscow corpus

Preliminary results of keywords analysis in London corpus

Images analysis
Approach 1

Stratified random sample of 9 large images (3 random images in each of the 3 categories) from each corpus.

Stage 1: Simplified version of social semiotics visual analysis (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006)
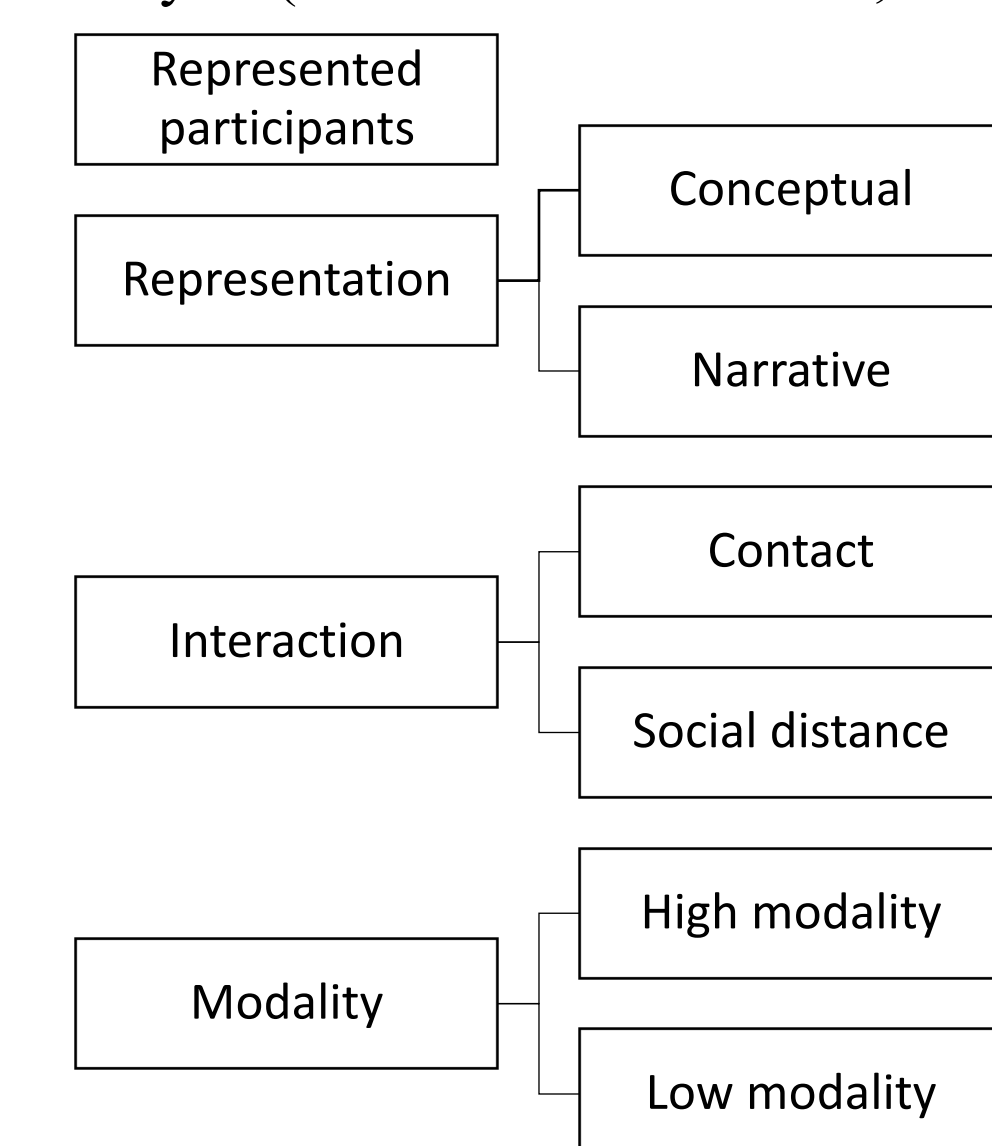
Stage 2: Comparative and interpretative analysis based on visual semiotics theory (Barthes, 1977) and framework of visual techniques (Dann, 1996)

- Colours
- Visual clichés
- Connotational procedures
- Significant omission
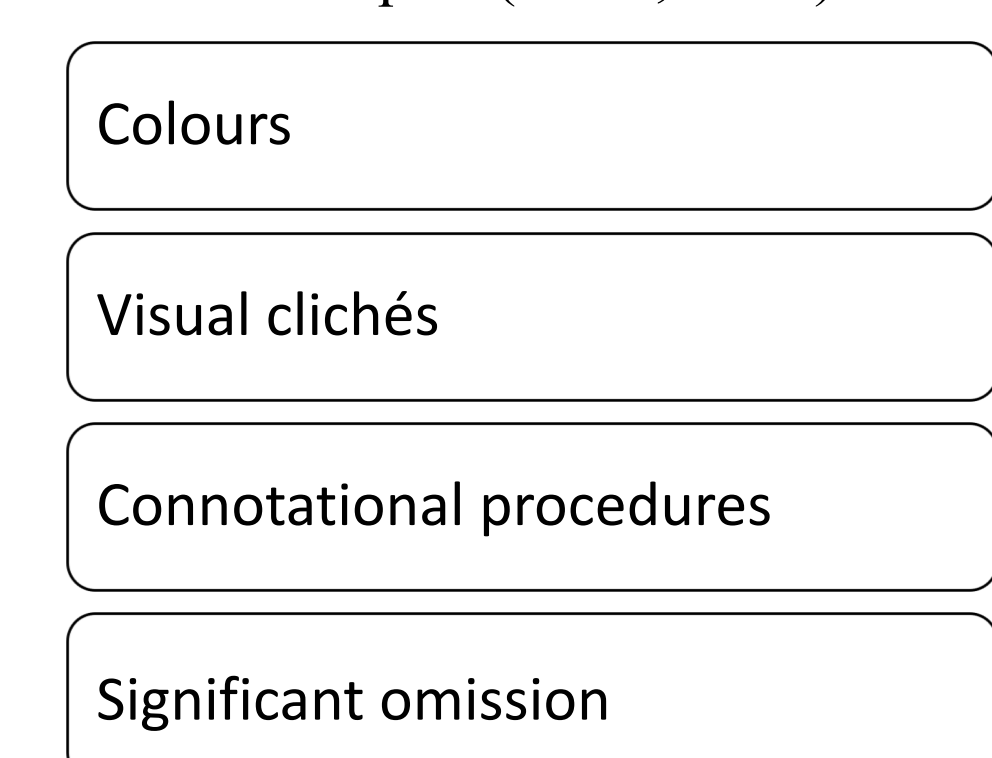
Images analysis
Approach 2

All the images in the corpora are analysed.
Analogous to language analysis:

Tagging images with keywords

- Each image in both corpora is tagged with one keyword describing the main represented object (a place, people or thing, including abstract things).
- Two researchers tag images independently taking into account the image captions and accompanying reviews, then they compare and discuss their results and reach an agreement in case of differences.

Keyness comparison

- The keywords are then treated as corpora, keyword comparison and key semantic categories comparison are conducted with Wmatrix analogous to language analysis.

Example of image tagging with a keyword

Discussion

The project is at a very early stage. Some preliminary results of language analysis can be seen in the Language analysis section.
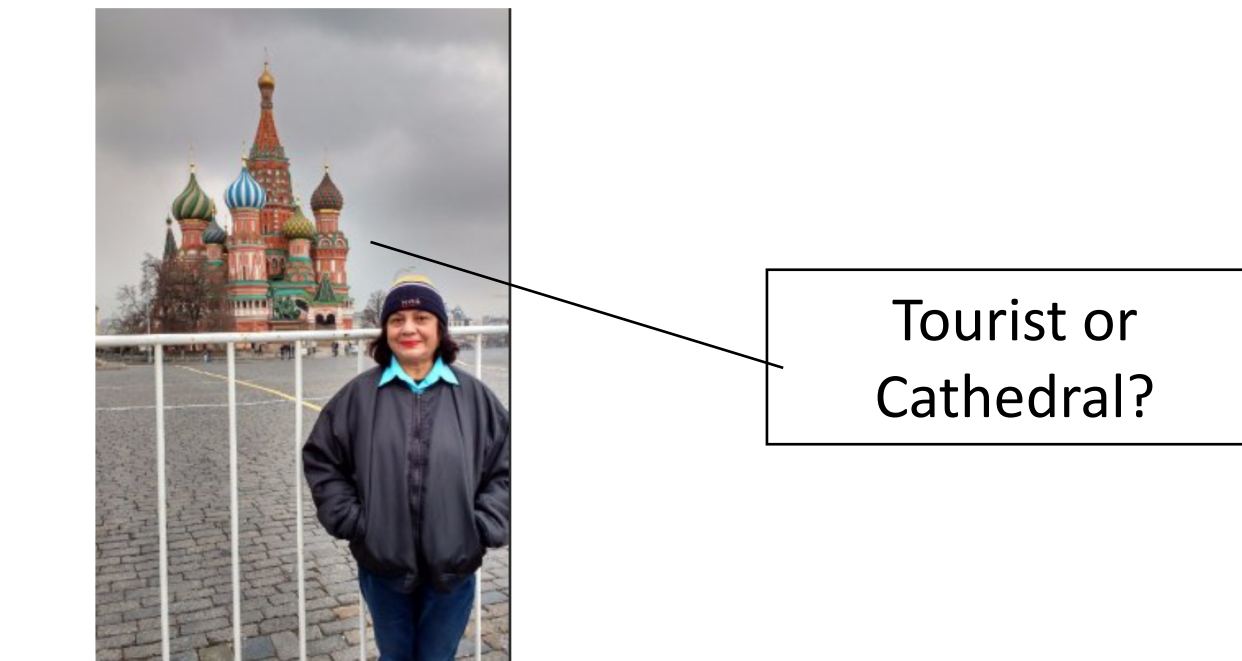
Approach 1

+ Deeper insights into what visual elements, structures and techniques are used to represent travel destinations
− Time-consuming
− Only a limited number of images can be analysed
− Some techniques allow to "cherry-pick"
− Findings will be researcher's interpretations of the images

Approach 2

+ A larger number of images can be analysed
+ Allows to identify and compare patterns
− Analysts might produce different keywords for the same represented object
− Some images might have several different represented objects

Example of image with two represented objects

Conclusion

Each approach has its advantages and drawbacks.

The two approaches complement each other and can be used individually or in combination depending on the time limit and research questions.

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