APPRECIATION IN ONLINE ENGLISH TOURISM ADVERTISING DISCOURSE: AN APPRAISAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract - This research examines the manifestation of *Appreciation* system in online tourism advertising discourse. The data were picked out from ten advertisements posted on Youtube by Expedia Group, an American travel group and were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed with the help of the Concordance Software AntConc. The findings show that three subcategories of *Appreciation* which are *Reaction*, *Composition* and *Valuation* coexist in this discourse with different distribution. Besides, positive *Appreciation* and its negative counterpart are unevenly distributed in the samples, with the rate of 1: 9. Negative *Appreciation*, however, contributes to the ignition of visitors' curiosity and desire to discover the destinations rather evoke unfavourable views of the appraised. Beside the conclusion, some implications for applying the research result to English teaching and learning in Vietnam were also provided at the end of the paper.

Key words - Appreciation; tourism advertisements; Reaction; Composition; Valuation

1. Introduction

Language is a tool to express the writer's/speaker's opinion on people, things and situations, so it either directly or indirectly impacts people and their behaviors. Take an example from Wu [10], who analyzed *Appreciation* in public service advertisements, to better see how the writer's implicit attitude and intention can be drawn out using the language.

(1) For Nziku, life is **harsh**.

The lexis "harsh" in (1) is negative *Appreciation*, which belongs to *Reaction*, a subsystem of the Appraisal theory [4]. It appraised Nziku's life and appears to evoke the feeling that God does not treat her justly. The advertising writer attempts to arouse public concern of being sympathetic with Nziku.

Example (1) emphasizes the vitality of language choice and the use of language in marketing and advertising since they influence the audiences' intention and decision. This study, therefore, expects to provide a better understanding of the language choice and use in English tourism advertisements in light of the Appraisal framework [4]. For Vietnamese users of English whose (future) job relates to marketing and advertising, this research is particularly of great help since the native linguistic resources for communicating one's evaluative stances differ significantly between English and Vietnamese [6].

2. Aims

This study considers the semantic features and the use of *Appreciation* in tourism advertisements. It expects to provide a deeper understanding of the language use in tourism advertisements.

3. Research Questions and Methods

3.1. Research questions

This study seeks the answers to the following questions:

(1) What are the semantic features of *Appreciation* used in tourism advertisements in light of the Appraisal theory?

(2) How are the linguistic resources denoting *Appreciation* used in online tourism advertisements?

3.2. Research methods

The method employed in this study is descriptive and analytical in nature, accompanied by the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Here, the researcher selected the descriptive type to provide the specific phenomenon portrayed. Moreover, quantitative and qualitative approaches are combined to analyze the text in the way that the quantitative one is used to count the number of appraisal devices while the other is employed to describe the existence of discourse function in the text.

Besides, the corpus analysis is conducted with the software Concordance Software AntConc. This analysis helps figure out the frequency of the occurrences of words and clusters, syntactic patterns, etc. Initially, the linguistic resources that are likely to denote *Appreciation* will firstly be explored. They will then be analyzed in light of the Appraisal theory to draw out conclusions on the semantic features of *Appreciation* in the online tourism advertising discourse.

4. Sampling

The data for this research were collected through the video-streaming website YouTube. This corpus includes ten tourism advertisement videos posted from 2013 to 2017 by Expedia Group, an American travel group, and has the total number of 20,672 words.

The data were qualitatively and quantitatively processed for finding out the frequency and percentage of *Appreciation*. Then, their semantic features were analysed.

5. Literature Review

5.1. Previous Studies related to the Research

Since its inception in the 1990s, the Appraisal Theory and its sub-systems have been widely applied in analyzing various types of discourse such as news [7], commentaries [1], public service advertisements [10], literary works [3], formal interview [9], students' essays [11], law judgments [2], evaluative stances [6]. Despite the abundance of the research using the Appraisal theory, the online advertising

discourse is under research, and the very purpose of this paper is to address this gap.

5.2. Theoretical Background

Appreciation is a sub-system of the Attitude system (Figure 1), located in the Appraisal framework [4]. It is the system by which evaluations are made of products, processes, natural objects, manufactured objects, texts, states of affairs as well as more abstract constructs such as plans and policies or humans when viewed more as entities (rather than human behaviours) by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value. It encompasses values which fall under the general heading of aesthetics, as well as a non-aesthetic category of 'social valuation'.

Values of *Appreciation* may be the compositional qualities of the evaluated entity, how well formed it is, e.g., *harmonious, balanced, convoluted*; or on the aesthetically, related reaction with which the entity is associated. Its values have either positive or negative status such as *harmonious* versus *discordant*. They can also be located on the cline of low to high force/intensity, that is, a high through median to low scale, e.g., *pretty*, *beautiful*, *exquisite*.

Figure 1. *The Appreciation system in the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005, p. 38)*

Rothery and Stenglin [8] propose three subcategories under which *Appreciation* may be grouped: *Reaction, Composition* and *Valuation*. They claim that *Reaction* is 'interpersonally tuned'. It describes the emotional impact of the work on the reader/listener/viewer.' Thus, under *Reaction*, the product/process is evaluated in terms of the impact it makes or the quality shows. *Reaction* is subcategorized into *Impact* which can be identified by answering the question 'did it grab me?', e.g., *arresting, stunning, monotonous*), and *Quality* which can be figured by seek the answer to the question 'did I like it?', e.g.,

splendid, attractive, ugly.

For *Composition*, the product or the process is evaluated according to its makeup, whether it conforms to various conventions of formal organization. *Composition* is textually tuned and describes the texture of a work in terms of its complexity or detail [8]. *Composition* is subcategorized into *Balance* which answers the question 'did it hang together?', e.g., *harmonious, unified*, and *Complexity* identified by the question 'was it hard to follow?', e.g., *intricate, simplistic.*

Evaluation evaluates the object, product or process according to various social conventions. In the media texts under which much of this theory was developed, the key values were those of social significance or salience (whether the phenomenon was *important, noteworthy, significant, crucial*, etc.) and of harm (whether the phenomenon was *damaging, dangerous, unhealthy*, etc.). *Valuation* can be identified answering the question 'was it worthwhile?'

To cut the words short, the *Appreciation* system 'might be interpreted metafunctionally – with reaction oriented to interpersonal significance, composition to textual organization and valuation to ideational worth' [4].

6. Findings and discussion

The data analysis showed that the large number of the linguistic items denoting *Appreciation* occurs in the samples, with their occurrences and percentage distribution presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Appreciation Found in the Data*

	Appreciation						Total number of Appreciation found in the study	
	Reaction		Composition		Valuation			
	O	**%**	**O**	**%**	**O**	**%**	**O**	**%**
Positive	295	91.3	146	81.6	278	93.9	719	90.1
Negative	28	8.7	33	18.4	18	6.1	79	9.9
Total	**323**	100	**179**	100	**296**	100	**798**	100

The linguistic resources of *Appreciation* in the data come from all its three subcategories - *Reaction, Composition* and *Valuation*. However, the items denoting each type are unevenly distributed. *Reaction* and *Valuation* are extensively used, with 323 and 296 items respectively, which approximately doubles the number of *Composition*, with 179 items. Besides, the items demonstrating the positive and negative *Appreciation* are unequal, with the rate of 1:9. These findings explicate that the advertiser regularly uses *Reaction* and *Valuation* to appreciate the tourist attractions being advertised. The abundance of positive *Appreciation* implies the advertiser's attempt to generate favourable views of the destinations from the listeners - the potential visitors.

6.1. Reaction

The statistical data (Table 2) reveal that the linguistic resources denoting *Reaction* come from both of its subcategories: *Impact* and *Quality*, with 227 items demonstrating *Quality* and 96 items denoting *Impact*.
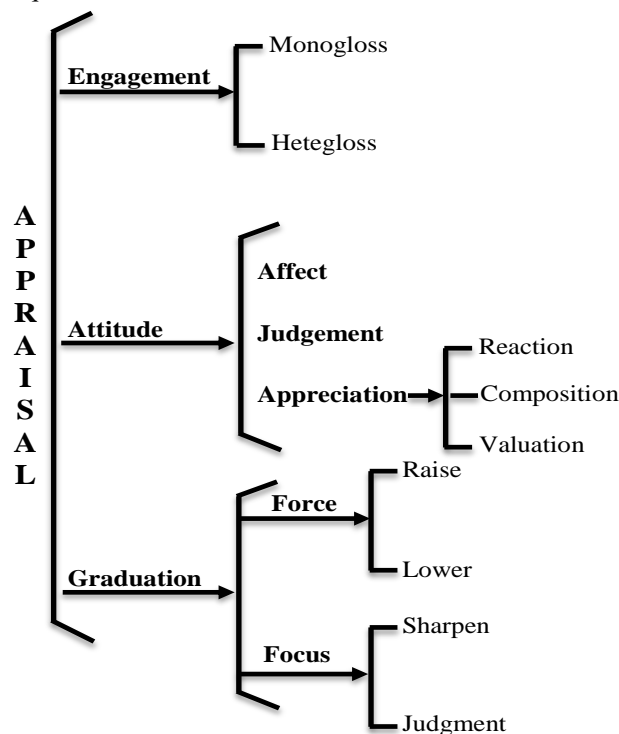
Table 2. The Reaction Found in the Data

	Reaction				Total number of *Reaction* found in the study	
	Impact		Quality			
	O	**%**	**O**	**%**	**O**	**%**
Positive	93	96.9	202	89	295	91.3
Negative	3	3.1	25	11	28	8.7
Total	**96**	**100**	**227**	**100**	**323**	**100**

Clearly, the percentage of the items defining positive *Reaction* outweighs that of its negative counterpart, with 91.3% and 8.7% respectively. Detailed discussion of these linguistic resources will be presented in the subsequent parts.

6.1.1. Impact

Impact is employed in the data to produce the appraisal on various aspects of the advertised subjects, including a whole city or its typical features such as buildings, animals, art products, trips/tours, customs, places to visit, cuisine, and scenery. Besides, local people and their life, creativity, products, culture are also appraised by means of *Impact*. The following sample illustrates *Impact* extracted from the data:

(2) We are at the CN tower skypod, the highest level on the tower at 147 stories high; this is a **stunning** place to see the city at the very top of it.

In (2), the adjective *stunning* was uttered to appraise the CN tower skypod in Toronto, which aims to encourage to tourists to come and see the extreme beauty of the building.

Negative *Impact* also occurs in the data; it is exploited to appraise a mountain-hiking journey, immigrants or artificial storms. Noteworthily, despite its negative meaning, this type of *Reaction* contributes to the building of visitor's' positive views of the destinations being advertised. For instance, in sample (3), the lexical item 'adventurous' could help to attract the visitors who enjoy an adventure in their tour.

(3) After the **adventurous** journey, a futuristic looking mountain station welcomes the passengers.

6.1.2. Quality

The appraised of *Quality* are of great diversity, including the nature (e.g., islands, waterfalls), local people and culture (e.g., night life), arts (e.g., exhibits), architecture (e.g., wineries, palaces), local products (e.g., food, craft), local history (e.g., weaponries), and the environment. Let us take a look at the following example of positive *Quality*, in which the word *colorful* is used to appraise the attractiveness of the streets of an area named Little India in Singapore.

(4) The streets here are more **colorful** than anywhere else in Singapore.

Conversely, positive *Impact* has quite a low frequency of occurrence. The linguistic resources denoting *Impact* are exploited to appreciate beaches, prisons, islands, geographical regions, streets, elephants' stunts, gravel roads, water, the past and contemporary life, sand dunes, the heat, landscapes and the kayaking. For example,

(5) The waterfront is also the gateway to one of the

world's most **infamous** prisons, Robben Island.

In the above sentence, the prison Robben Island (in Cape Town, South Africa) is appraised by the lexis *infamous*, and the lexis is likely to evoke the listener of the feeling that this prison deserves a visit someday.

6.2. Composition

Composition did not show an imbalance within its subcategories: *Balance* and *Complexity*, with the figures being 67 and 79 respectively. Its linguistic realizations are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. The Composition Found in the Data

	Composition				Total number of *Composition* found in the study	
	Balance		Complexity			
	O	**%**	**O**	**%**	**O**	**%**
Positive	67	73.6	79	89.8	146	81.1
Negative	24	26.4	9	10.2	33	18.9
Total	**91**	**100**	**88**	**100**	**179**	**100**

There, nevertheless, exists an unbalanced distribution relating to the positive-negative status both in *Composition* and its subtypes, with the positive items outnumbering the negative ones.

6.2.1. Balance

The *Balance* found in the data aims to intensify the characteristics of the appraised, emphasize the immensity of a place, indicate the availability of services, represent the perfection of a place or thing, inform the blend between modernity and tradition, the solidarity and the internationality. It appears that with the use of the *Balance* the advertiser expects to strengthen the listeners' impression on the appraised.

The positive *Balance* is used to appraise roads, animals, local traditions, and, religious buildings, landscapes, cuisine, the wave of immigrants in bygone times, street vendors, old-style furniture, reproduced tropical forests. For example, sample (6) contains the positive *Balance perfect*, which represents the perfection of Akureyri, a small city in Iceland.

(6) Known as the Capital of the North, Akureyri is the **perfect** place to warm up and enjoy some comfort and culture, before heading off into the wilds again.

Like the other types of *Appreciation*, negative *Balance* has a lower frequency of use than its positive counterpart. This type of *Composition* is exploited to appraise animals, plants, lights, the art, the temperature, the flow of visitors, huts and desert tents, noise, fountains, human activity, villages, land, immigration movement, buildings, skyscrapers, bridges and parks. For example,

(7) With a population of only 300,000, Iceland can feel like the most **isolated** place on earth.

The lexis *isolated* in (7), appraises 'Iceland', which describes the separation of this country from the other parts of the world and this could bring it distinctive features that visitors cannot find elsewhere.

6.2.2. Complexity

The data analysis demonstrates that positive

Complexity is exploited to appraise various characteristics of the tourist attractions being advertised, including the nature, architecture, celebrities, animals, landscapes, the weather, legends, local culture, lifestyle, products, traditional works of art and colonial influence. Sample (8) is an example of this type of *Composition*, where the adjective *harmonious* describes the convergence of the scenes in Dubai.

(8) The past is gradually merging with the present and portrays a new and **harmonious** image.

Also, negative *Complexity* covers a wide range of the appraised: typical animals, old buildings, local art and culture, the history of a destination, the environment, landscapes, and the nature. Let us take a look at the following example.

(9) Now water driving in the mountains on P gravel roads and **treacherous** rivers must be negotiated the skill of the drivers is put to the test.

The lexical item *treacherous* is used to appreciate the rivers in Dubai, and it appears to help the advertiser target the group of tourists who enjoy an adventurous part in their journey.

6.3. Valuation

Valuation occurs with the highest frequency in the tourism advertisements under investigation and is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. *The Valuation Found in the Data*

Valuation		
	O	**%**
Positive	278	93.9
Negative	18	6.1
Total	**296**	**100**

Like *Reaction*, the *Valuation* has an imbalance between the items indicating the positive and negative value, with the rate of 1:15. The positive one occupies the most and the subjects they appraise is also the most diverse and numerous. Their appraised include food, the sea, the animals' performance, sailing ships, journeys, the prices, the decorations of hieroglyphics, cuisine, exhibits, live shows, museums, galleries, landmarks, palaces, insects, restaurants, furnishings. For tresses, fashion styles and selections, the scenery, wines, hotels, music, immigrants, local inhabitants, services, fountains, street decorations, boutiques, human activity, natural wonders, fashion trends, coastline, buildings, beaches, computer programs, shopping streets, the sunset, waterfalls, rock formations and caves, traditions, antiquities, events, life, breeding programs, skyscrapers, music weddings, forests of bamboo, and lifestyle. Let us consider the example (9) to gain a better understanding of the linguistic realisations of this type of *Appreciation*. In this example, Venetian Hotel (in Las Vegas) is appraised by the lexis *superlative*, which shows the speaker's positive evaluation of the hotel.

(9) The Venetian is a **superlative** hotel with its spacious 6600 Suites.

Perhaps, advertising has the very purpose of attracting tourists, and this leads the limited use of negative *Appreciation*, including negative *Valuation*. In the samples, negative *Valuation* is used to appraise buildings, a city's history, hotels, vehicles, tourism attractions, and human behaviours. Besides, negative *Valuation* is skilfully used to avoid building the listeners' unfavourable views of the destinations. Let us take some extracts as examples.

(10) Here's another attraction in this city of **extravagance**.

(11) The roots of its subsequent claim to fame were laid in 1792 the young state **desperately** needed investment.

In example (10), the noun *extravagance* is used to appraise New York City, and this *Appreciation* is likely to evoke the listeners' attention to their financial management and the gorgeousity of New York resulting from its wealth rather than the negative evaluation of the destination. The only *Appreciation* which could lead to a negative impact on the listener's view is the adverb *desperately* in (11); however, the temporal expression informs them that this is just the past.

7. Conclusion and Implications

One of the major findings of this study is that the linguistic resources denoting *Appreciation* cover all its three subtypes *Reaction*, *Composition* and *Valuation*, but they are unevenly distributed, with the extensive utilisation of *Reaction* and *Valuation*, whose total numbers approximately doubles that of *Composition*. Besides, the number of items indicating positive *Appreciation* is nearly nine times as much as the negative one. Regarding the appraised, the *Appreciation* found in this study appraises various aspects of the attractions being advertised, including the nature, architecture, animals, local cultures and products, services, local people and their life, and past events.

The above findings reflect the nature of tourism advertisements: challenging the audiences' buying decisions and leaving them appeal to the products [5]. The advertiser attempts to provide the audience with detailed descriptions by extensively use of *Reaction*, to strengthen the audience's feeling about the features of the destinations by using *Composition*, and to bring the audience initial evaluation of the destination by using *Valuation*. These make the samples good advertisements since they "provide the audience with intense experiences" [5]. Advertisements are less useful if they fail to help the audience find out about new products, and the imbalance of the subcategories of the *Appreciation* in the data reflect this. Extensively exploiting the linguistic resources denoting *Reaction* and *Valuation* to appraise numerous aspects of the tourist attractions helps provide the audience with as much information as possible, while the utilization of *Composition* at some point could intensify the audience's appeal. Last, the high percentage of positive *Appreciation* also contributes to the very purpose of advertising: bringing the audience's positive views and evaluation of the tourist attractions.

Numerous linguistic resources denoting *Appreciation* found in this study imply the popularity of using this type

of language in English tourism advertisements. This suggests that the users, teachers and learners of English, whose job and study relate to advertising, should equip themselves with knowledge about *Appreciation*, its linguistic resources and skills in using them.

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