

The Printed Travel Guide in the Analysis of the Tourist Discourse

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Abstract

Among the texts dedicated to the tourism sector, there is a wide variety of genres such as: hotel catalogues, brochures, flyers, menus, travel guides, audio guides, etc. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze the structure of these materials and the connections between their texts. Travel guides – descriptive information tools – are both spatial representations, invitations to travel, dream and experience emotions, as well as the mirror of a certain way of understanding the world. Despite their great diversity, these travel incentives play the role of practical advisors, being involved in a dynamic market, i.e. they seek to sell or promote tourist destinations. This paper, which focuses on travel guides, addresses their complex aspect, having in view that they mix maps, texts and images. The speeches transmitted by these different elements complement each other, sometimes making it possible to send contrasting messages. We will make a brief presentation of the travel guides.

Key words: travel guide, tourist space, communication means, promotion of destinations, commercial strategies

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1. Introduction

Seen as an instrument of mass tourism for a long time, allowing the access to information of a very large number of readers, at present, the travel guide contributes to the development of the modern "tourist", i.e. the one going on a pre-constructed path, through landscapes and monuments selected and interpreted/ presented by it. Thus, nowadays, the travel guide is a product of both the tourism industry and of the publishing house. The advertisers' commercial strategies (i.e. publishers, in our case) entail the evolution of travel guide offers, which retain, less and less, their main function, i.e. to "guide" (Vivant 2006: 308). Currently, the travel guide market is a niche market depending on destinations, customers, types and duration of travel. Over the last ten years, the most important trend has been "le glissement du guide pour le voyage au guide de loisirs pour les résidents eux-mêmes" (i.e. a shift from the trip guide to the recreation guide, for residents themselves) confirming the idea of endogenous urban tourism, supported by Vivant (2006: 308).

2. Theoretical background - Short history of travel guides

The oral and the written communication have long been the only ways to inform about remote lands and travel conditions to get there. The first travel "books" emerged at the end of the Middle Ages, with the invention of printing and the expansion of travel of all types: pilgrimages, trade, diplomacy, intellectual and artistic exchanges. These works aimed, first and foremost, at reassuring the traveler, who might have faced unknown and dangerous situations. To a greater or lesser extent, by recounting travel experiences, they described landscapes and societies, "other" than those known, and they also presented different attractions that worth being visited by the traveler. In the eighteenth century, due to the institutionalization of the Grand Tour as an initiation ritual for young English aristocrats, the development of tourism activities and their future form – i.e. mass tourism – were foreshadowed. Under these conditions, editing travel guides has become a trade and an industry. In the paper *La Roue et le style*, Catherine Bertho Lavenir (1999 with Hécate Vergopoulos and Emilie Flon 2012) shows that, in tourism, technical changes have accompanied

and have been accompanied by scriptural transformations. Due to the advent and, later on, to the expansion of railways and of the tourist market, guides departed from travel stories, which were sometimes bulky and heavy, with few titles. Thus, a slow transformation began, which will underlies today's works, published in specialized collections, in volumes that include "practical" information, such as schedules, prices, accommodation, etc.

The first travel guides – as we know them today – emerged in the early 19th century in England, Germany and then in France, foreshadowing today's modern publishing system. The most important travel guides include *Le Guide des voyageurs* Richards (1817), Baedeker (1827) and the first Murray guide, *Handbook for Travelers on the Continent* (1836), the first collection of travel guides providing for practical (and not just cultural) information, such as monument opening times, accommodation costs or the current exchange rate. At first, guides were mere inventories of the historical and artistic heritage of cities, providing generic information about the natural landscape; later, they included information about services, geo-economics and topographic development (Faccin 2015: 10). At first, guides were real encyclopedias, with lots of pictures, addressed to only one type of audience. However, Karl Baedeker, the founder of the homonymous publishing house, profoundly revolutionized the travel guide world through the "pocket" format. The small-size Baedeker Guide is the most comprehensive and reassuring guide, based on information collected and verified by the publisher itself. We can conclude, first and foremost, that all the guides of that period, and especially the Baedeker guides, paid greater attention to information than to the content form.

The development of auto tourism has transformed the Michelin tire manufacturer into a publisher of maps and travel guides. The Green Guides (*Les Guides Verts*), which emerged after World War I, are still published and represent one of the oldest collections of French guides, which, even today, remains very active, with a well-developed catalog, capable of coping with the challenge of the Internet. Due to the development of tourism in the 1950s, numerous collections of guides were published, with an extraordinary evolution; however, some of them did not survive. In the 1970s, the famous *Guide du Routard* was published and enjoyed international success, as evidenced by the number of editions in foreign languages. The guide of *Hachette Tourisme* publishing house – launched in the same year as *Lonely Planet* – which adapts to the evolution of its clientele, addressing young people first and foremost, occupies an important place. Among the works of tourist nature, this collection has enjoyed great and long-time success and notoriety. The *Lonely Planet* guides have been published since 1973. Initially addressed to Anglophones, these guides addressed to the lonely traveler with a limited budget are increasingly being translated, like the guides published by *Dakota Publishing*, which, initially, they were drafted by the Harvard Student Agency.

Despite the presence of the Internet and the information it transmits, publishers continue to expand their range of printed travel guides today. The number of guides available on the market is endless: from generic to specialized guides, for the independent traveler or for those who like traveling in groups. New forms of fully digital travel guides are being developed, in the form of audio tour guides, guides for mobile devices or GPSs. However, regardless of their typology, all guides are characterized by the function of mediator, which they play, between the tourist and the tourist destination.

3. Travel guides – definition and presentation

Patricia Aelbrecht (2013) defines travel guides in the following way: "whether they are descriptive information tools [...] or invitations to travel, dream and experience emotion, they are both spatial representations but also mirrors of some ways of understanding the world". In the *Encyclopedic Dictionary* (1996: 453), the guide is defined as a brochure or book that contains the information needed for orientation in a region, city, collection or field of knowledge. According to the authors of the *DEX* (1984: 371), the guide is a book containing travel information, maps, plans, directions, etc. necessary for orientation in a country, region, museum, etc.

Despite their diversity, these travel incentives have two common features: on the one hand, the scientific discourse, the description, the observation, aiming to get closer to concrete facts, and on the other hand, the literary, photographic or artistic discourse aimed at capturing the reader and attracting him/her. In addition, guides play the role of practical advisors and are involved in a dynamic market – i.e., they try to sell themselves or sell by promoting tourist destinations.

Tourism and leisure have become major economic sectors, carrying social and economic stakes for the development of territories.

Considering the historical basis of the evolution of the guide over the last centuries, it is appropriate to analyze the current general situation. Given the diversity of travel guides on the market, it would be difficult to draw their complete and exhaustive picture. The guide offers and types on the market are, in fact, endless; however, despite the economic crisis, the affirmation of the Internet, the rapid diffusion of new methods and patterns of behavior involved in using tourist information on the move, printed guides (or in book format) still hold, to a certain extent, a privileged ranking on bookshelves. Their offer remains wide and diversified.

The printed tourist guide is a means of tourist information used by the reader-traveler. It is a textual tool whereby the reader is introduced to the discovery of an unknown or insufficiently known space, promoting places and stirring the imagination of future travelers (Stock 2014: 6). These materials are works published in collections whose aim is the exhaustive enumeration of "what is to be seen" (t.n) (Boyer & Viallon 1994: 55). We may notice the existence of publications with an encyclopedic aspect, such as "Les Guides Bleus", but also more concise copies, which can be browsed on the spot, such as "Les Guides Verts Michelin". They contain practical pieces of information (for example, accommodation, meals, places to visit), geographical information (landscape descriptions, orientation information in the area, etc.), as well as cultural, historical, political information, etc. In order to organize their writings, the editors of these tourist texts arrange them in different sections, following an almost always similar plan (title, chapters, subchapters, general index of localities, legend of maps and plans of a tourist destination). This creates a certain consistency of the text and a standard structure for this textual genre (Gotti 2006: 33).

In addition to these features, the guide offers a reading/ an interpretation of the tourist space that finds its specificity in the preference given to certain places, considered worthy of interest, compared to the others, which were not mentioned. Thus, it operates a selection and differentiation in terms of «regard touristique» (Stock 2014: 7) of the moment, «publicized» by the interests of the publishing house. Adjectives such as "picturesque", "paradisiacal", "exceptional" or "extraordinary", used to justify this selection, are elements involved in defining tourism. At the same time, the genre known as "travel guides" is very broad and diversified because there are: generic guides, local guides and thematic guides. According to Urry (1990: 150), the guide expresses the "*collective tourist gaze*", and, in fact, it prescribes only the tourist places that enjoy, at one point, the acknowledgement of the "tourist" status by various actors of social structures. Used in the communication act, in a certain place, at a certain time, the tourist text aims to convey those pieces of information that are necessary to "guide" the reader on the occasion of his/her visit to a chosen destination. As a result, the speaker will use communication means such as: photos, colors, maps, but also a special typography.

Thus, travel guides enjoy a special graphic treatment. First, we note that the background of the characters varies depending on the speaker's choices, and it also underlines the names of the referents. Specifically, in order to attract readers, the writer-guide resorts to bold titles for names of cities or for the names of historical, religious, political, etc. persons. It is also noteworthy that, within the guides, different markers (squares, colored arrows, circles, etc.) are used in order to highlight prices, accommodation, places that represent points of interest to the reader.

At the same time, maps and toponymic schemes, which often follow the presentation of destinations, are important reading and understanding elements that support the orientation of readers. Maps – visual elements also full of textual significance – are typical of guides; their success has contributed to the popularization of these abstract and structured representations of space. As agents of the social space, guides are also mediators of geographic networks, of tourist roads, of destination networks that influence the tourist practices and underlie the imaginary spatial constructions, stimulated by stories and images (Aelbrecht 2013). While the textual content of

guides tends to be expressed in such a way as to give an impression of objectivity and neutrality, the photographs convey a message that emotionally engages the reader. The harmony, aesthetics and grandiose nature of destinations are imposed by images that invite the reader to dream, to contemplate and to embrace adventure.

According to Mourlhon-Dallies (1995: 32), travel guides and brochures are "ephemeral" writings, as they have a short archiving period. This depends not only on the social and political realities of a country, but also on the evolution of tourism data itself. The analysis of travel guides allows the "historicization" of tourism and the reconstruction of the way the tourist space was imagined at a certain point. But this ephemeral nature influences the names used, because names can be changed from one era to another, especially those of hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars, etc. This forces publishers to re-edit their guides periodically, therefore to update their information. In fact, guides vary according to the audience, editors, eras and contexts of communication and their changes accompany technological developments. Thus, the advent of tourism triggers the birth of travel guides for promotional purposes (Stock 2014: 9).

In conclusion, contemporary guides are sources of information regarding the artistic, cultural and patrimonial treasures of various villages, towns and cities, both for tourists and cultural heritage agents (Devilla 2013: 2). These texts play an important role in highlighting destinations, and we must not forget that their discourse describes but also builds a historical, cultural and social "Ailleurs-Image" (Seoane 2013: 19).

4. Conclusion

Travel guides are volumes that contain practical information (itineraries, means of transport, traditions and art, fauna and flora, accommodation and restoration, etc.). Increasingly exhaustive claims and the presence of paratextual elements define the so-called "tabular" writing that allows the reader's eye to scroll through the page thought as a spatial and visual composition, as opposed to "linear" writing (Vergapoulos et Filon 2012). They differ in terms of format, number of pages and graphic adaptation, but in terms of content and structure, they are almost similar, the differences being more important between practical and cultural guides than between guides in Romanian and French. They are descriptive texts, often telegraphic, accompanied by images, paintings, icons, plans and various announcements.

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