

---

## **AlmaTourism**

Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development

---

### **Cloud Communities and Travel Diaries. Virtual Representations of Tourist Areas<sup>1</sup>**

Platania, M. \*

Torre, S. †

Università degli studi di Catania (Italy)

---

#### **ABSTRACT**

Collective construction of descriptions can radically change the image of an area. This uncontrollable process is destined to become one of the main priority research areas also in tourism studies. The spread of Web sites in which telling stories and descriptions of territories has become a significant element in the network society, and the growing use of social networks and cloud communities, often in planning tourism, contributes to social description of touristic landscapes and influence the collective imaginary. In social space, territories are the result of the superposition of different layers, from the real one to the virtual, bound to a constant exchange of information. This phenomenon that could guide tourist attraction, begins to affect the choices of local institutions and residents.

The aim of the paper is to give an interpretation on the construction of collective representation, which takes place, after the journey, through the on-line publication of a diary. The research is divided into two parts. In the first, we explain some theoretical aspects related to the representation of the travel, the sharing of information in virtual form and the construction of an imaginary touristic. Subsequently, are taken into account the results obtained in previous studies related to the analysis of the narratives of tourism experiences, shared within virtual spaces freely accessible on the

---

\* E-mail address: [marco.platania@unict.it](mailto:marco.platania@unict.it)

† E-mail address: [storre@unict.it](mailto:storre@unict.it)

net. These results will be used to develop a model of interpretation on the virtual representation of tourist areas.

---

**Keywords:** Virtual Landscape, Cloud Communities, Travel Diary, Text Mining

## Introduction

The relationship between travel narratives and the construction of a diffuse image of a landscape has been a central theme of the humanities for several decades and has been analyzed in relation to phenomena radically different from each other (Leed, 1992). Most studies agree that a representation of a place or a cultural tradition, which has received great acclaim, is able to influence the perception of a cultural landscape and may affect the origin and consistency of tourist flows. These are two processes that tend to overlap, producing a circuit in which the representation is the result of a cultural construction, which affects the tourist behaviors and from these, in turn, is conditioned (Turri, 1998).

The spread of new communication tools has, in this debate, an important role, because it can contribute to the mode of sharing information and to the luck of the different representations of landscapes. In recent years, for example, several studies have shown how these new tools make it possible to build new relationships with the physical environment and the community of users of electronic networks (Giaccardi & Magatti, 2003; Rheingold, 1994).

Obviously, it is a transformation that can be observed at different levels, from the one of daily practice to the one of cultural heritage. The access to the Web allows to create relationships quite different than in the past, including the possibility to constantly share aspects of daily life that were previously represented in different ways (Rheingold, 1994, Castells, 1996; Wang, Tucker & Haines, 2013; González, Hidalgo & Barabási, 2008).

Diffusion on the web of software and comparison sites (such as blogs and social networks) has characterized the first phase of this transformation. Subsequently, the progressive integration of mobile technologies and the access to telematic networks has enabled more sharing of experiences with other users (Kien-Weng Tan, Na & Theng, 2011; Rheingold, 2002). The ability to share content consistently can be considered, in this context, a further change, especially for the use of a set of products that determines a different way to conduct the life experiences. The phenomenon is so

significant to suggest, in the case of tourism studies, to reconsider the travel experience in its entirety. All steps of the journey are, in fact, shared, from beginning to end, with different modalities from the planning stage to the next phase of storytelling. The whole experience of the traveler may be marked by the online dissemination of images and comments and the report with other users of the same products.

This paper addresses some issues related to the construction of the shared representation which takes place after traveling, by publishing online a travel diary. After a brief theoretical framework, which analyzes the themes of representation of the journey, sharing mode and construction of a touristic imaginary, will be presented a summary of the methodological approach and results obtained from previous studies carried out by this group of research, which provide the basis for some observations on a possible path to the modeling of virtual representation of the tourist areas.

### **1. Travel representation and content sharing**

The texts under study are travel diaries online, interpreted at first glance as representations of conventional travel, enriched by the potential offered by the web and explicitly intended for publication. It is therefore not of texts for private use or product made from professional authors.

These texts can be compared to other forms of representation, literary, cinematographic and television, which have been studied in various scientific fields. There are many case studies that can synthesize the role of different forms of representation in the construction of the image of an area and their impact on the formation of tourist flows (Dioguardi, 2009). For example, the luck of the novel *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson, as Dydia DeLyser (2003) has amply demonstrated, has allowed the diffusion of an image of the landscape of Southern California that is still central to the whole tourist supply of the area. What is now being offered to the majority of the tourists is a construction that comes from the imagination of the writer, not historical phenomena occurring in the area. Although this is a process that was, in part, built by the tourist industry in California, we must underline that the representation of the landscape produced by the cultural context has spread in a non-programmed even among those who had not read the novel. The landscape described in a narration, was then rebuilt on a territory; it later became the element recognized and sought by tourists, which identify as a tradition something that has been reinvented recently. The process is reproduced in various forms, but basically similar, even through motion picture or television (Davis, 1999). These studies demonstrate, therefore, as the problem is, in this case, the spread of an attractive image, which is then further elaborated by the public of the cultural market. The phenomenon, especially for its spontaneity, is subsequent to the process of social perception of the landscape, which is still the result of a cultural construction, linked to the needs expressed in specific historical contexts (Cosgrove, 1984; Lefebvre, 2000; Lowenthal, 1975; 1998).

The landscape can not be exempt from the phenomenon described by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) as the invention of tradition, that is, the constant inception of customs and traditions completely fabricated and that are commonly perceived as historical heritage. Must still be understand in what forms and what impact the process comes up again, for some years, even in places of sharing information created by telematic networks, especially for the way in which builds a shared representation in those contexts. The success of a literary product is, in fact, be measured by the satisfaction expressed by an audience of readers, while there are no clear methods of analysis of the processes of collective construction of a product made anywhere. Also, a few years ago have become popular sharing systems authoring tools of information, generally indicated by the category of cloud computing, also facilitated by the spread of mobile technologies and associated software useful for the production and storage of information, as well as necessary for the interaction with other users (Mascheroni, 2007).

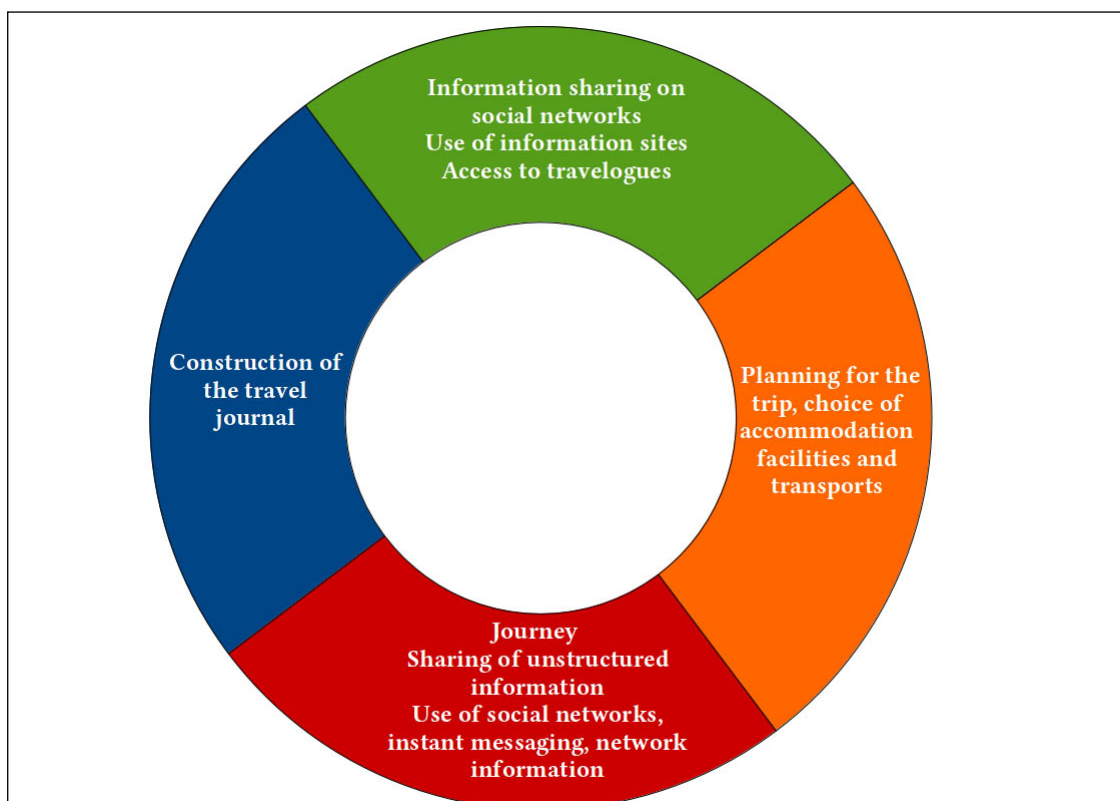
The existence of an external memory storage element characteres the "cloud computing", led to the creation of a form of shared storage, where often gets lost the role of the authors and, most importantly, it tends to create a typology of community oriented by the use of collective standardized instruments. In this context, therefore, it seems possible to define cloud communities or mobile social networks, the virtual communities, where the same relationships between users, which are characterized by extreme instability in time and content, are conditioned by the sharing of production systems information and those involved use non-proprietary tools (Rheingold, 2002; Bakardjieva, 2003).

The sharing of information and tools, characterizes the second generation of products for the web, through it is possible spread (and, within certain limits, determine) the contents of the Internet in a pattern that some technologists have described as "many-to-many" communication paradigm rather than "one-to-many" (O'Reilly, 2007; Trobia & Milia, 2011). Who uses the sharing tools can create virtual spaces, accessible to other users, where he tries to build a self-image and to produce modes comparison with others (Di Fraia, 2007). Some authors have also proposed the definition of the network society, to understand the totality of virtual communities created by the subjects using with some consistency the new network tools (Schianchi & Franchi, 2011) and to refer to the tools used (social networks, instant messaging tools, open repository).

## **2. Sharing travel experience online**

Sharing the experience of travel within a virtual community (understood in a generic sense, from a community cloud to a stable network of contacts), can be summarized in four steps: the first is the on-line access to other users' experiences, the second focuses on the planning of the journey (which happens often using the resources on Internet). The third is the sharing while traveling of images and comments with other users, while

the fourth is the reworking of the experience in the form of the construction of a report (fig. 1).



**Figure 1. The stages of travel as a shared experience on the web 2.0.**

In each of the four phases, the constant exchange of information, aimed at different purposes, represents a fundamental constant. The online publication seems generally driven by the desire to share with others all can reflect the experience that traveler has just ended. Responds to the need to confront with other people, initiating various forms of discussion and debate. The use of the most common social networks (such as Facebook or MySpace) or instant messaging tools (Twitter, Instagram) generally allows to meet to this need, but in a confined space for the amount of text or image sequences. In virtual relationships are established modes of communication (Carrington, Scott & Wasserman, 2005) in which everything takes place in the form of communication short and sequential. Users accept rarely long texts or descriptions that resonate with literary models.

Among the tools available there are also several sites now defined as traditional media (magazines, newspapers), forums and blogs specially designed for the sharing of stories and diaries. For research purposes, a first area of analysis selected was the one of the blogs that publish travel diaries.

These are products that generally follow similar patterns, contain short stories (but more complex than those of the social network), often divided chronologically, accompanied by pictures or video footage. The study of the contents proposed by the different users of the sites is not particularly new, compared to that of traditional literary products (such as travel narratives or personal diaries). It is innovative narratives only to the method of dissemination. When trying to assess the impact of travel diaries emerge different problems: the measurement of diffusion, the number of readers, the geographical distribution of users. In general it can be argued that the stories published are potentially achievable by a large number of users. Among them, there is a group of regulars readers of the sites involved in the production of a narrative model. The author of a text search, often, to reproduce, according to a typical pattern of network communication, read descriptions prematurely; sometimes reproduces the narrative style that is favored by other users of the site. One of the first problems of analysis is, therefore, to understand the specific intent pursued by the authors. Who writes for the online publication describes its image by considering the information he wants to share (Chandler, 1995). This makes it difficult to identify a clear purpose of the texts and it is difficult to understand the contribution of a single author, which often mimics other products. The aim of the authors, in the case of blog with travel diaries, it seems mainly to represent themselves within the context, rather than to describe places or telling the landscape context (Platania & Torre, 2013). These texts are then made representations through texts and images that do not seem to prefigure the search for the original observations (Albanese, Ligorio & Zanetti, 2012; Di Fraia, 2007; Pizzoleo, 2002).

Another difficulty is that the users think of the stories that the descriptions are direct reliable, so not affected by previous elements (Kien-Weng Tan, Na & Theng, 2011). Overall, the published description of a travel diary online seems to enjoy a level of credibility that is not attributed to traditional products or to the official websites.

Participation in the life of these small virtual communities is made with brief interventions, usually text, which relate mainly to the liking of the content shared by other users. In this way, travel diaries combine to create views, feature requests for comment to the readers. The diaries start up often short debates that take place according to the rules of the virtual community. Some behaviors can be considered to be the search for consensus; to get the most pleasure, in fact, members of the community tend to share positive content and don't detailed (Gehl, 2011).

In the case of travel diaries, this means that the majority of authors tend to present known places, reflections that they believe shared, and behaviors that in other cases have been positively evaluated. This is also because the effort in terms of information search tends to decrease as a result of learning, transforming the extensive decision-making processes in routine decision-making processes (Dalli & Romani, 2000). Stratification and distribution of content thus contribute to the construction of a collective representation that is, sometimes, away from the direct perception of the individual sites.

### 3. Construction of the touristic imaginary

The analysis of the ways in which it is shared the travel experience can reconsider some of the traditional issues especially related to the process of creation and dissemination of image of tourism. A first problem concerns the ability of scientific analysis to clarify new problems, especially when they hit consolidated phenomena. This is because in recent years seems to have emerged a framework that summarizes the complex steps that lead from virtual communities to build an image recognized within a cultural area. There are several studies of the case of the influence of traditional media, for example, (Frazzica, 2010), but it is difficult to apply them to the case of representation produced by the web (Garibaldi & Peretta, 2011). An essay by Derek Hall published in the *Geographical Journal* in 1999 sought, for example, to identify the ways in which academic knowledge and communication media had built the new image of Albania in the UK (Hall, 1999). In the case analyzed by Hall, the representation constructed from a long literary tradition was reconsidered in the light of the new geopolitics. The image of Albania was essentially the result of the overlap between a long tradition of British cultural and media production at the end of the twentieth century, which represented a country devastated by the crisis of the regime, unable to rebuild, with a rural economy and high tolerance of criminal behavior.

Some studies in recent years faced the case of the representation of Sicily that is in several television programs and films, leading to similar conclusions (Magazzino & Mantovani, 2012). In the Sicilian case tourism has been encouraged by the spread of an image artifact, but the processes seem to correspond. As demonstrated by a long scientific tradition, the reality that is possible to observe by visiting the places is irrelevant in the construction of an image socially recognized (Cosgrove, 1984). Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the television representation still possesses a particular role, as it overlaps with different patterns of communication and often tends to present itself as a reality observable and objective (Derrida & Stiegler, 1997).

The differences between the cases are therefore considerable, although there seems to be an analogy in the absence of a direct link with what is directly observable. Users sharing sites do not seem, for example, to favor particularly classical representations (literary, journalistic, cinema). Despite this, the shared representations seem the result of processes that correspond to the traditional ones. There is the weight of the cultural heritage, as well as social factors (migration, conflicts, natural disasters) or linked to the influence of fashion. Furthermore, most of the virtual community is still very westernized style and content. For them, all that is foreign to the tradition can be presented as exotic. However, there are also significant news related to the economic and social importance of regular users of the network. It can be begin to identify a new category of consumers who belongs to this group and that has defined characteristics. It is possible, therefore, try to speculate to what extent the development of the type of use of the contents of their cloud communities also possess a strong impact on tourist behaviors. In the blog of travel diaries there is also a traditional description of the

landscape, with the possibility to find practical information on places of interest. A reading of set of different sources also allows you to locate a certain homogeneity in the construction of the routes of travel, not only for the presence of similar destinations, but for categorization. It seems that at the beginning, when you start to imagine the text, the author of a book looking for a strong characterization, which can attract readers and improve their image. In this sense, the frequent use of terms such as 'adventure' can serve to make the content more appealing. It could be one of the cases where there similarities with the traditional models. As noted in a study by Malcolm Crick (1989), the tourist tends to be represented as a traveler, to the negative implications underlying the idea of tourism. In part, this also serves to enhance the charm of the story and the winning image of a person who faces difficulties and adventures. Overall, the authors of travel diaries tend to reinforce their image, often at the expense of details and useful information to other travelers.

Looking at the text, also emerge the specificities of the travel stories of blogs. In the case of urban tourism, for example, we are witnessing a repeat of the experience and research with a substantial homogeneity of the narrations. The authors of travel diaries seek also to describe the city in single sentences, creating a narrative mode that is very similar to those of the editorial and artistic production of the last two centuries. Emerge the same limits of the imaginary construction of a tourist use of an audience culturally alien and not very interested in-depth knowledge of the places (Platania & Torre, 2013).

Similarly, most of the authors of the tales in the internet sites seem to want to direct the reader to a summary of the visited places. The problem is that most uses popular schemes, ending to feed a complex of information that strengthens a holographic representation. Are prevalent narrative patterns and images that do not correspond to the direct experience, but they seem more recognizable to readers.

#### **4. Case studies**

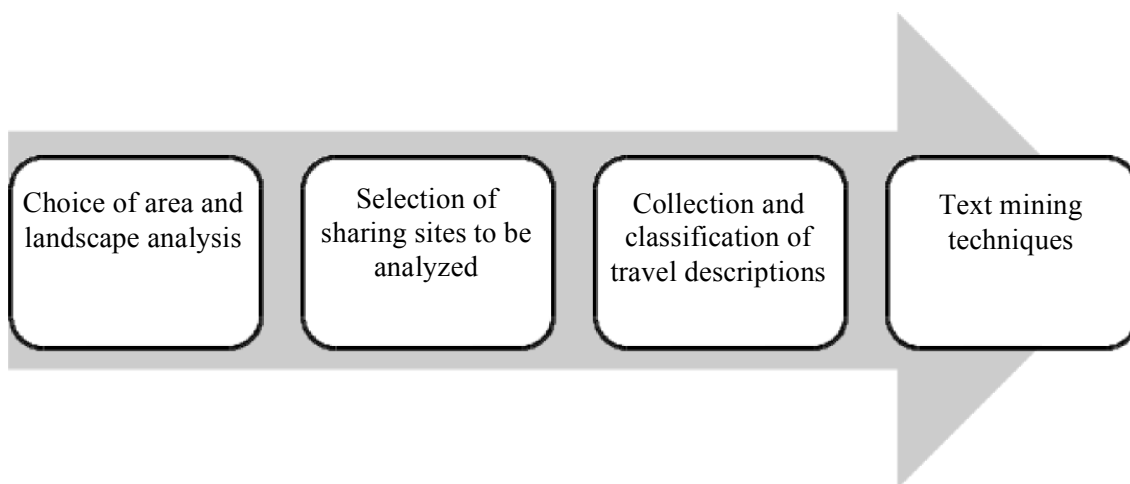
##### *4.1 The applied methodology*

As already stated above, in this paper we intend to summarize the results obtained by this research group in previous empirical contributions in order to arrive at a model that helps to clarify the way of the tourist areas representations.

The methodology applied in these previous studies (Platania & Torre 2012, 2013) is shown in Figure 2. It envisaged four phases: the first is found the area of analysis. In the second you switch to search on the net space for sharing information related to this tourist area and to collect travel diaries. Finally, the data are cleaned and analyzed through text mining techniques.

The starting point, as already explained, has provided for the identification of an area. In previous work, have been considered two areas: Sicily and Ireland. The choice was suggested by the easiness of identification within the collective representations, from film to literary ones.





**Figure 2. Research design (Platania & Torre, 2012; 2013)**

The islands, also for reasons associated with of the road network, are more easily definable than other areas most tourists. The difficulty of access to the local system were, for the purposes of research, an advantage, because forcing tourists to prepare a regional itinerary closed.

The empirical research, the next step in this research design were carried out in the virtual space for sharing information, by selecting the text content found on the internet which tells its own tourist experience. Among the various available spaces (such as, for example, online magazines, thematic websites, newsletters) were preferred blogs, that is those particular websites where the content is displayed in chronological order managed by one or more bloggers who publish multimedia content in text form similar to a newspaper article. Moreover, in such Web sites, the authors regularly update their own experiences as travel diaries.

To select these sites have been chosen some keywords in the search engine most used (for example, the terms "travel diary" and "tells your trip" and the area under investigation, such as "travel diary Sicily "). This procedure was repeated several times using the Italian language, English and Spanish.

After Identified sites of interest, were collected travel experiences during the years 2010 and 2011. Texts of these diaries were first processed using the software "Wordle", freely available on the net ([www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)) . Subsequently, in order to have a more thorough analysis of the text collected, was used software T-Lab (Lancia, 2004).

#### *4.2 First elements on the representation of territory*

Examined blogs contain only topics in tourism. Some of these are characterized by different images and articles not particularly extended, a sign that even the description on the web follows its practice in the compilation of the text, preferring

representations concentrated in time and space. Overall, the research network identified 16 blog: among them, those in Italian as their primary language have the greatest number of articles and have the greatest number of readings (Tab.1).

**Table 1 Main features of examined blogs**

territory	Blog Language	Number selected blog	ofNumber of article analyzed
Sicily	English	4	25
	Italian	4	44
	Spanish	3	8
Ireland	English	3	46
	Italian	2	41

Some of these sites have a considerable importance among users of the network: for example, the travelogues on Sicily in Italian have numbers next to the 72,000 views.

For an initial analysis of content we have adopted the software Wordle.com: through this program, the texts analyzed are processed by analyzing the occurrences, that are, the number of times (frequency) that a lexical item occurs within a corpus or a unit of context; the program provides, among several options, also the return of the results of processing in graphical form.

Already through this first mode of description it is possible to select some elements on the mode of representation of the territory. If we consider for example the analysis on Ireland (Platania & Torre, 2012), the results obtained show some attention in the collective description, to the elements that characterize the territory of Ireland, such as the words "ireland", "town", "dublin", "dingle", "down", "cliffs" (tab.2).

**Table 2** *List of occurrences obtained from processing texts related to travel diaries in Ireland published in English-language blog\**

Ireland	84	Rain	32	Hotel	24
Good	73	Took	32	Main	24
Like	69	Beautiful	31	Arrived	23
Irish	67	Head	31	Built	23
Around	66	Since	31	Drive	23
Bus	64	Found	30	House	23
Place	64	Guinness	30	Lovely	23
Down	61	Made	30	Point	23
Town	61	Met	30	Think	23
Golf	56	Music	30	Come	22
Dublin	55	People	30	Days	22
Time	50	Take	30	Decided	22
See	48	Being	29	Long	22
Little	47	City	29	Park	22
Great	45	Few	29	Quite	22
Nice	44	Find	29	Trip	22
Walked	43	B&B	28	Water	22
Dingle	39	Big	28	Airport	21
Old	39	Galway	28	Best	21
Most	38	Headed	28	Church	21
Way	37	Kinsale	28	Stopped	21
Car	36	Started	28	Wanted	21
Cliffs	36	Weather	28	Afternoon	20
Room	35	Hill	27	Cork	20
Tour	35	Road	27	Him	20
Home	34	Still	27	Play	20
Walking	34	Castle	27	Played	20
Hostel	33	Green	27	Say	20
Pub	33	Dinner	26	Sea	20
Saw	33	Donegal	26	Small	20
Street	33	Dinner	25	Things	20
Walk	33	Called	24	Views	20
Night	32	County	24	World	20
				Food	20

Adapted from Platania, Torre 2013

\* Results limited to textual units with at least 20 occurrences

Unlike travel diaries in Italian are better characterized by words that relate to the temporal scansion of the journey, such as “tempo”, “verso”, “giornata”, “viaggio”. In these texts, the reference to geographic locations is not present, while in the description of the collective urban element (in this case the reference in Dublin) is highly distinctive.

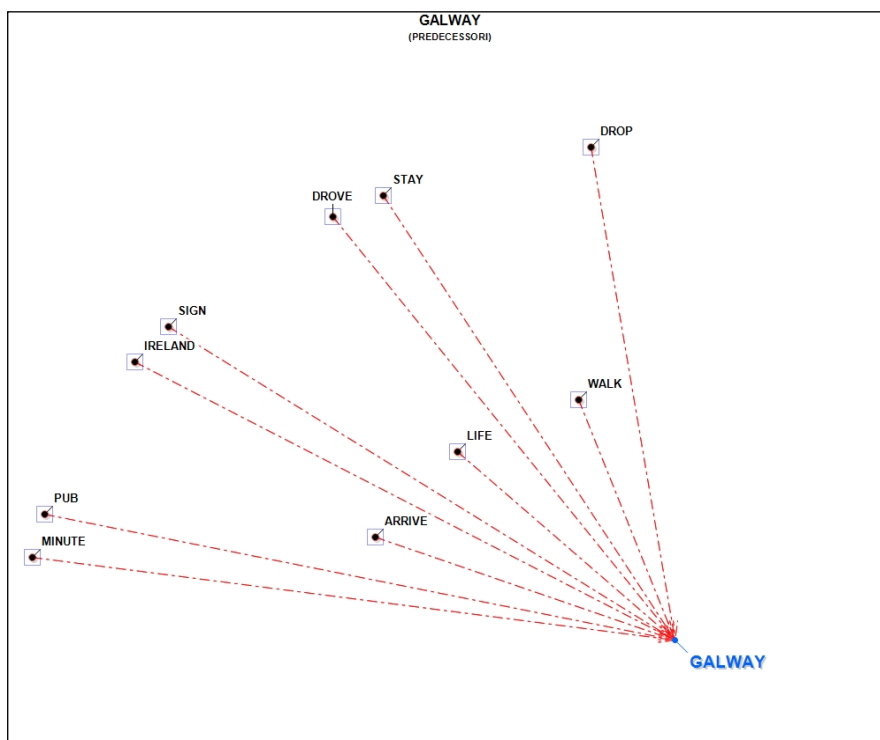
Further different is the reconstruction provided by tourists in Spanish. In the study about Sicily (Platania & Torre, 2013) the most representative verbal elements are indicative of urban places: the words “ciudad”, “centro” and the reference to cities such as Palermo, Taormina, Catania implying an emphasis on a visit that privilege strongly anthropic areas, and which differs from the English one for a relative importance given to cultural elements.

#### *4.3 Textual analysis*

To assess with greater degree of detail the ways in which are described places visited, we proceeded with the analysis of text mining that allow to treat the text collected in blogs in statistical form.

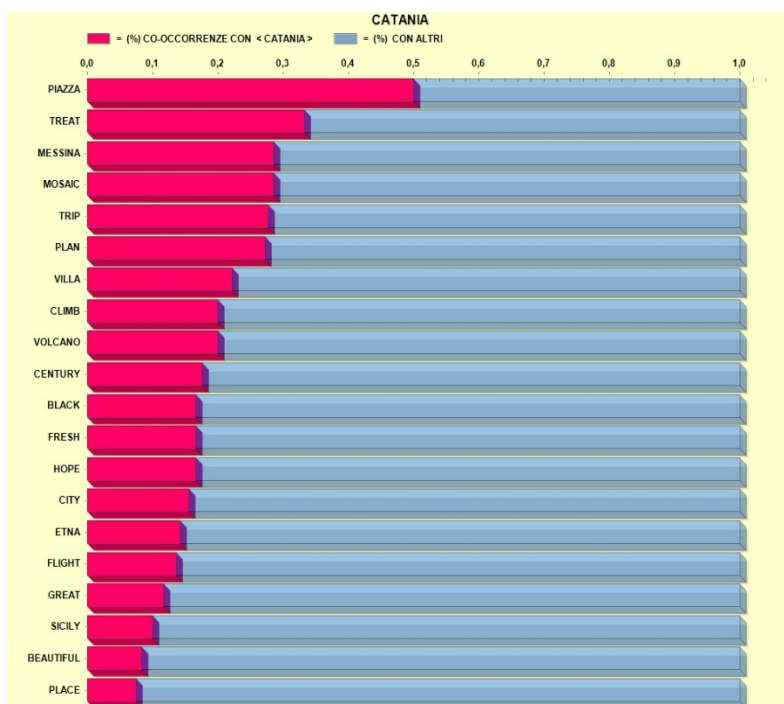
There are several techniques of analysis and related indicators used to analyze the text to the purposes of the research. Here we recall the co-occurrences, that are, the amount resulting from the count of the number of times in which two or more lexical units are simultaneously present within the same elementary contexts. Another method is the statistical analysis of the sequences: in particular, a specific function, based on probabilistic Markovian chains, is able to analyze the predecessors and successors of a given word (Lancia, 2004; Trobia, 2005). From the graphical point of view these predecessors and successors are respectively represented by arrows in the input or output. According to their report, you can determine the semantics variety of the word, which can be the source (ratio > 1), relays (ratio = 1) or absorbent (ratio < 1). Generally among the predecessors are the causes of the variables under study. In terms of graphics, the lexical units less distant from the one selected are those that appear to be more likely to precede (or follow in the case of the successors).

Using this method of analysis it is possible to capture more accurately the relationship of connection among some words. In analyzing the text of travelogues carried out in Ireland (Platania & Torre, 2012) was noted how different are connotations given by the authors of the diaries to the places visited: in particular, those closest to the word "Galway" (one of the main urban tourism destinations of island, famous for the presence of a particular old town and for some very steep cliffs), "walk", "arrive" and "life", can be interpreted easily as characteristic elements of a tourist experience in this town (fig.3).



**Figure 3. Predecessors with the word "Galway" in the texts related to travel diaries in Ireland published in English-language blog.**

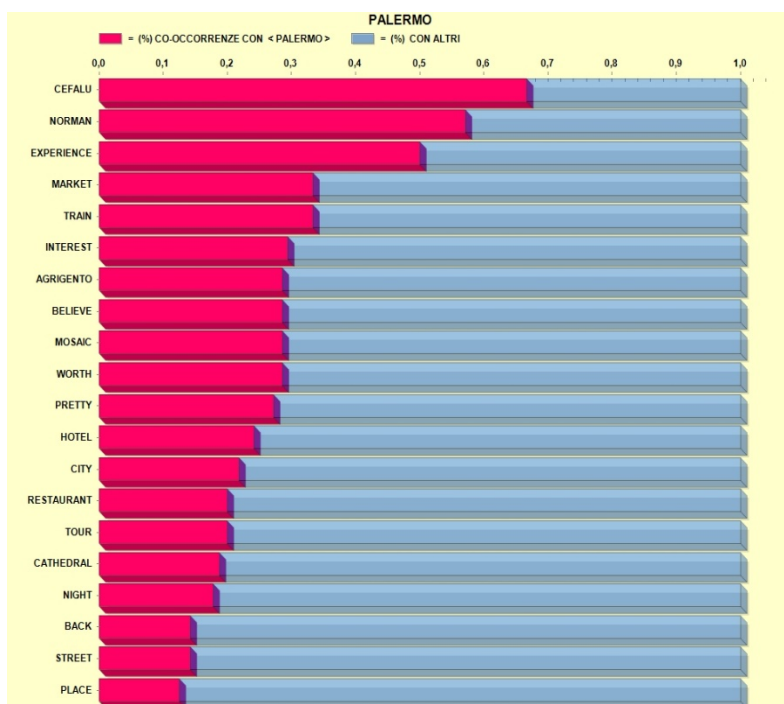
In previous researches, technique of co-occurrences has been frequently used, because it was considered more appropriate and intuitive to the purpose of the studies. In the case study for Sicily (Platania & Torre 2013) there are various elements that allow some considerations on the system of collective representation, which would seem to grow mainly through travel planning. For example, in the diaries in English, in reference to Catania, the first five words with the co-occurrences are more terms used in the construction of tourist routes, such as "Piazza" - which certainly makes reference to the town of Piazza Armerina -, "mosaic", "treat", "trip" and "plan", nearly to signify that with respect to such city the visit is part of a broader process that relates to the city of Messina (29% of co-occurrences) and the visit to the "volcano" (20%), or more precisely to "Etna" (25%) (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4. Co-occurrences with the word "Catania" in the texts related to travel diaries in Sicily published in English-language blog (Platania & Torre, 2013).**

Through the narration takes shape the tourist destination: other recurring adjectives with the word Catania, such as the term "black", probably referring to the wide use of volcanic stone (black) in the construction and decoration of the city, and the word "fresh" connected to the perception of the quality of food and wine.

These results do not differ in the analysis of co-occurrences of "Palermo": in this case the description is more complicated since there are recurring terms that describe more the cultural aspect, as "Norman" (48% of co-occurrences ) and "experience" (50%) (Fig. 5). Even for this town, word processing highlights the location in a wider circuit, which connects to Cefalù and Agrigento.



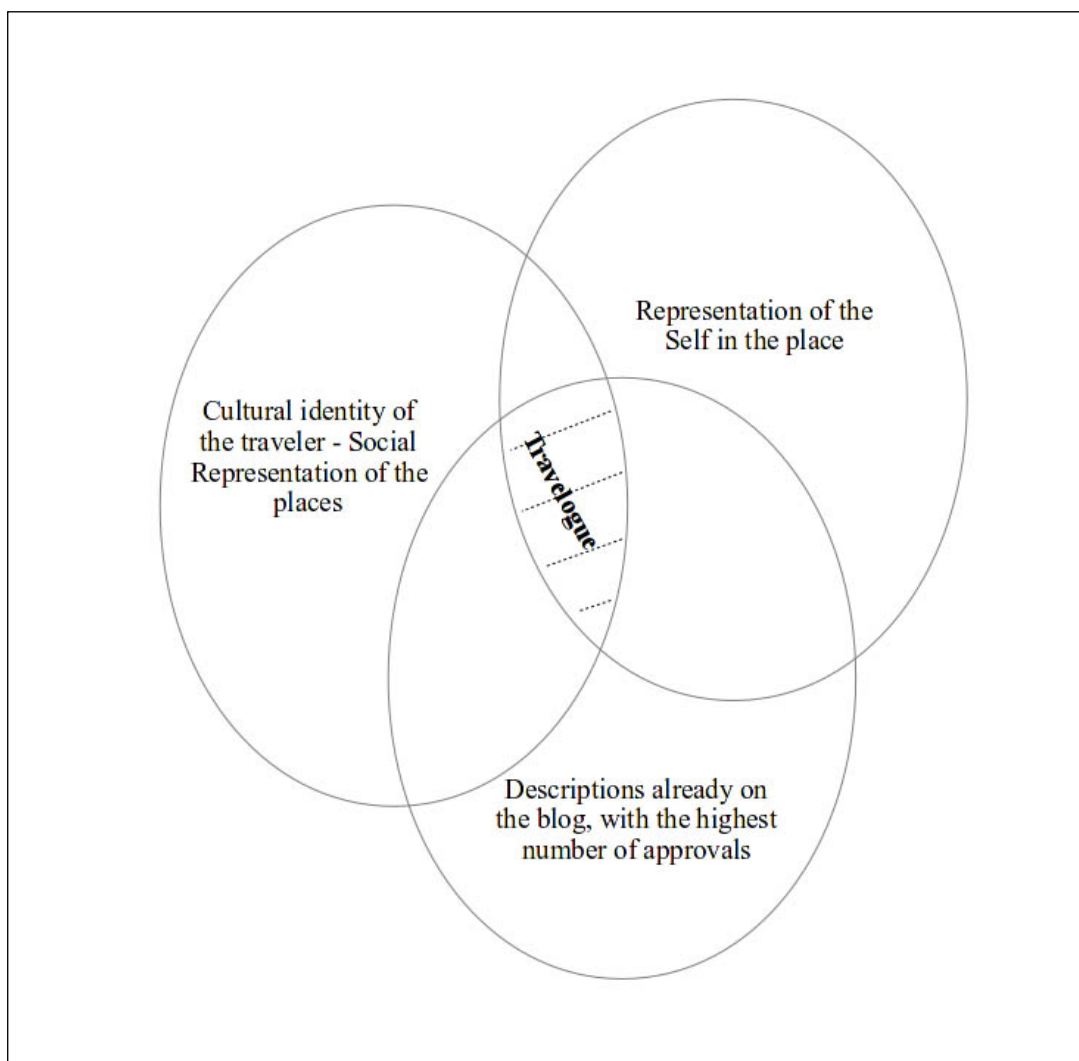
**Figure 5. Co-occurrences with the word "Palermo" in the texts related to travel diaries held in Sicily in English language blog (Platania & Torre, 2013)**

### 5. Early hypothesis on an interpretative model

Starting from the results, can be drawn some useful consideration for the construction of an interpretative model of representation. Firstly it is necessary consider the methods of describing: it seems that the texts analyzed are able to convey oleographic representations of the contexts in which what is being described has no direct reference to observation, but rather looking for places, symbols and experiences related to a specific imaginary. There is a strong recurrence of the same elements in all the descriptions and there is also a substantial amount of repetition of similar expressions for the description of places or features which no longer seemed of interest to the tourist offer. Territories and landscapes are therefore represented in this case, according to a strongly superficial knowledge of culture and traditions, generally reduced to individual folkloristic expressions. In order to interpret the findings in a structured form, can be summarized in a diagram the drafting process of description contained in the travel journals (object of empirical analysis). This description seems to be the result of the interaction of three areas of influence, related to items acquired by the reading the texts most watched online, the need to represent themselves in the places and on the web and finally the cultural identity of the traveler (fig. 6).

The first "area" of influence is related to the fact that most of the travel stories analyzed follows a textual structure and a description very similar. The second "area" refers to items already anticipated above: the desire for self-representation, that is the ambition of every user of the computer networks to place elements of the Self in the virtual space. Finally, the third "area" refers to the cultural characteristics of the traveler, his experience and his ability to represent the places visited, according to different narrative registers (Fig.6).

It should be emphasized that it is possible to assume that the process is continuous and self-constituent: the travel diary obtained by the superposition of the three areas described can help in sharing with multiple users, to disseminate a virtual representation because it can become part of the process of sharing and then to generate the collective imagination.



**Figure 6. The elements that contribute to the drafting of the description**



### **Some concluding remarks**

Information sharing and collective representation are two fields of great interest to those who intend to explore some qualitative aspects of the dynamics of tourist flows. We tried to synthesize the first elements of a theoretical contribution in drafting of interpretative models. The result is obviously not devoid of limitations, linked to mode of data collection and the places of production of texts. It should be noted that, if the purpose is the realization of a model that can be adapted to all the places of communication on the web, the areas to be analyzed are many and modalities necessarily differentiated. A first problem is represented by the major social networks (Facebook, Myspace), whose analysis could provide additional insights, but necessarily requires the use of analysis software online. The amount of text does not yet allow to theorize a reading that has statistical value. A similar analysis of the recurrence of the descriptions on instant messaging systems could then help to elucidate the way of spreading of some forms of representation. One of the later developments of this research could be, in fact, the application of this model analysis using the environment of Twitter (at the end of September 2013 had surpassed 230 million monthly active users). Through special software, you can perform the tracking of hashtags broad-spectrum, ie, that particular type of tag used to create the labels, deducing the actual interest on some issues.

Despite these limitations, can be expressed, however, some basic considerations. It seems, for example, that the role of the effective presence on the territory of what is described in the online travel diaries appears irrelevant. The object of the description is a product that is characterized by the absence of specific references to cultural stratification and by the real lack of consistent relationships between the elements that characterize it. It is a landscape without history and as such can not really be tracked down over a territory.

Another aspect to be considered is the impact that such descriptions have on the cultural representation in general. In a context in which the input provided by the studies did not appear to in-depth yet fully the role of the Web, the problem arises also in terms of economic and territorial planning. If we must consider all the elements of a territory as products to offer to the potential tourist market, the producers of shared descriptions have a potential role of consumer orientation. The users of traditional descriptions, such as those from fiction and cinema, are yet a significant part of the market and seem to have a significant effect, with their tourist behaviors, on the construction of the image of the territories. While it is increasingly clear the role played by social networks and by the producers of digital content, does not seem to increase the focus on practices that may represent new forms of consumer orientation. In Italy are rare the cases of local agencies or travel companies that have embarked on a serious campaign of action in this area. The main problem is the inability therefore to affect in an accurate, quantifiable way on the construction of the image, for both the amount of interventions and the type of users.

It should be emphasized, finally, that the limit in the reading skills of the places for the traveler is a long-standing problem; the problem that arises to the studies in this case, however, is to identify the weight that the traditional descriptions assume in opposition to a pattern that seems to depend strongly by established practice of construction of information for consumption and dangerously decrease the depth of the experience of travel in flattened forms of self-representation. The development of a complete model for the analysis of forms of representation of landscapes available on the web could support, therefore, also a re-discussion of the practices of institutional or collective production of tourist image of a place.

## References

- Albanese, O., Ligorio, M. B. & Zanetti, M. A., (2012). *Identità, apprendimento e comunità virtuali. Strumenti e attività online*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Bakardjieva, M. (2003). Virtual togetherness: an everyday-life perspective. *Media, Culture & Society*, 25, 291–313.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society*. Oxford: Blackwells.
- Carrington, P., Scott J., & Wasserman S. (2005). *Models and Methods in Social Network Analysis*. Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Chandler, D. (1995). *The Act of Writing: A Media Theory Approach*. Aberystwyth: Prifysgol Cymru.
- Cosgrove, D. (1984). *Social formation and symbolic landscape*. London: Croom Helm.
- Crick, M. (1989). Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences: Sun, Sex, Sights, Savings, and Servility. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18, 307-344.
- Dalli, D., & Romani, S. (2000). *Il comportamento del consumatore: teoria e applicazioni di marketing*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Davis, S. G. (1999). Landscapes of Imagination: Tourism in Southern California. *Pacific Historical Review*, 68, 173-191.
- DeLyser, D. (2003). Ramona Memories: Fiction, Tourist Practices, and Placing the Past in Southern California. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93, 4, 886-908.
- Derrida, J., & Stiegler, B. (1997). *Ecografia della televisione*. Milano: Cortina.
- Di Fraia, G. (2007). *Blog-grafie. Identità narrative in rete*. Milano: Guerini.
- Dioguardi, V. (2009). *L'immagine della destinazione turistica come costruzione sociale*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Frazzica, G. (2010). *Rappresentazioni della Sicilia. Un'indagine quali-quantitativa*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Garibaldi, R. & Peretta, R., eds. (2011). *Facebook in tourism. Destinazioni turistiche e social network*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Gehl, R. W. (2011). The Archive and the Processor: The Internal Logic of Web 2.0. *New Media & Society*, 13, 1228-1244

Giaccardi, C. & Magatti, M. (2003). *L'io globale. Dinamiche della socialità contemporanea*. Roma: Laterza.

González, M., Hidalgo, C. & Barabási, A.-L. (2008). Understanding individual human mobility patterns. *Nature*, 453, 5: 779–782.

Hall, D. R. (1999). Representations of Place: Albania. *The Geographical Journal*, 165, 2, 161-172.

Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kien-Weng Tan, L., Na, J.-C., & Theng, Y.-L. (2011). Influence detection between blog posts through blog features, content analysis, and community identity. *Online Information Review*, 35, 3, 425-442.

Lancia, F. (2004). Strumenti per l'analisi dei testi. Introduzione all'uso di T-LAB. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Leed, E. J. (1992). *La mente del viaggiatore. Dall'Odissea al turismo globale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Lefebvre, H. (2000). *La production de l'espace*. Paris: Ed. Anthropos.

Lowenthal, D. (1975). Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory. *Geographical Review*, 65, 1, 1-36.

Lowenthal, D. (1998). *Possessed by the past. The heritage crusade and the spoil of history*. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press.

Magazzino, C., & Mantovani, M. (2012). L'impatto delle produzioni cinematografiche sul turismo. Il caso del Commissario Montalbano per la provincia di Ragusa. *Rivista di Scienze del Turismo*, 1, 29-42.

Mascheroni, G. (2007). *Le comunità viaggianti. Socialità reticolare e mobile dei viaggiatori indipendenti*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

O'reilly, T. (2007). What is Web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software. *Communications & strategies*, 65.

Pizzoleo, A. G. (2002). Internet provider di rapporti sociali. Identità e socializzazione in rete. In: M. Morcellini, A. Pizzoleo (Ed.), *Net sociology*. Milano: Guerini e associati.

Platania, M., & Torre, S. (2012). *Landscapes from cloud communities. Virtualization of island territories in a network society*. Paper presentato alla conferenza European Culture expressed in Island Landscapes, Sassari, Italy.

Platania, M., & Torre, S. (2013). Territori turistici nell'immaginario collettivo. Viralità delle informazioni sul web e costruzione della rappresentazione delle città. In: C. Cirelli, M. Giannone, E. Nicosia (Ed.), *Percorsi creativi di turismo urbano. I luoghi dell'entertainment nella città del tempo libero*. Bologna: Pàtron.

Rheingold, H. (1994). *Comunità virtuali*. Milano: Sperling & Kupfer.

Rheingold, H. (2002). *Smart mobs: The next social revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus.

Schianchi, A., & Franchi, M. (2011). *Scegliere nel tempo di Facebook. Come i social network influenzano le nostre preferenze*. Milano: Carocci.

Trobia, A. (2005). *La ricerca sociale quali-quantitativa*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Trobia, A., & Milia, V. (2011). *Social Network Analysis. Approcci, tecniche e nuove applicazioni*. Roma: Carocci.

Turri, E. (1998). *Il paesaggio come teatro. Dal territorio vissuto al territorio rappresentato*. Marsilio: Venezia.

Wang, V., Tucker, J. V., & Haines K. (2013). Viewing Cybercommunities through the Lens of Modernity: The Case of Second Life. *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking*, 5, 1, 75-90.

---

<sup>1</sup>The paper is the result of collaboration between the authors. Marco Platania wrote sections 2, 3 and 4.3 and Salvo Torre wrote sections 1, 4.1 and 4.2. The introduction, section 5 and the conclusions are a joint contribution.