EXPLORING GENRES RELATING TO TOURISM MARKETING
Part 2: Building OpenMWS as an integrated corpus-based platform for engagement with social media resources

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Abstract – This chapter adds to the chapter by Kantz and Baldry (*this volume*) by providing a second perspective on tourism marketing genres in the digital age: it explores the effects of AR and AI technologies for would-be tourists and for users in the field of Education by encouraging the development of structured pathways that potentially enrich and amplify the SG (serious game) genre. The proposed developments include, in particular, the integration of podcast and video corpora so as to anchor SG simulation in explorations of real places and reconstructions of their place in history. The desire to provide a better interplay between entertainment and knowledge about people and places is backed up by suggestions of how current authoring tools could be reworked to provide a single platform through which users, whether teachers, tourists, students or others, can access pre-existing structured pathways and/or easily add to them.

Keywords: social media; tourism marketing; structured pathways; AI/AR technologies

1. Introduction

"When is a place not a place?" As Figure 1 shows, one of the many possible answers to this riddle is when, as is the case with the blue plaques in cities like London, somewhat anonymous and rather uninspiring buildings become part of a virtual network of places associated with historical figures; once part of cyberspace, such buildings come to acquire a special cultural significance unrelated to their physical form. A building's meaning potential (O'Toole 2004, p. 15) thus comes to be transformed: specialised icons like London's blue plaques mark them out as enticing starting points for storytelling journeys and gateways to explorations about people and places. When part of classroom experiments or projects, users quickly discover the potential such icons have to become a source of insightful reflection on a digital society that constantly

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repurposes (Bolter, Grusin 1999) and adds new meanings to its texts and genres: as Figure 1 shows, blue plaques recall an often-forgotten past, a first step in regenerating interest in places so branded.

Figure 1
Branding buildings.

Below we explore the provision of specialised technological supports and pedagogical foundations for the use of video and podcast corpora that document and encourage virtual explorations of people, places and the activities associated with them: our brief exploration of tourism marketing genres focuses on virtual tourism linked to famous people in cities like London and to wine-related virtual tourism in regions like Friuli Venezia Giulia. When describing these supports, we assume that, behind virtual explorations, lies a need for critical awareness of the multimodal nature of texts and genres and of the empowerment that such awareness brings (Baldry, Thibault 2006; Kress, van Leeuwen 2021; Vasta 2020a, 2020b); such awareness will often be stimulated by 'reworking' places as stories that transcend reality, a good example of which is blue plaques' propensity to initiate imaginative explorations as demonstrated by the video series *Plaque to the Future*; as shown in Figure 2, the first episode in this series links a miniature blue plaque, similar to the one in Figure 1, to an imaginary Iconophone Switchboard, that allows Ada, a contemporary teenager, to cross space and time and engage in a fictitious but witty conversation with Virginia Woolf.

Figure 2
The blue plaque remediated as a memento of a time-bridging Iconophone call.

Figure 2 thus points to one answer to the aforementioned riddle: now transformed into a medallion, the blue plaque acts as a memento of a 'phone call' that took place a century earlier, or more precisely in 1925. In other words, though still visually and intertextually referencing the original plaque, the icon has become an interface providing access to the fictional worlds and fantasies enacted as structured pathways in this video series. Each such pathway in this series is based on careful diachronic research into past vs. present contrasts and relies for its implementation on young people's eagerness to participate in the series' realisation.[1] In the case of *The Woolf of Callstreet* episode described above, the pathway took the form of question-and-answer routines within a fictitious conversation encouraging reflection between past and present and included feminist-related observations about differences between today's world and the past, but also more veiled comparisons about the transformation over time that has affected phone calls: as described below, mobile technologies such as smartphones underpin today's tourism marketing

[1] For *Plaque to the Future* and *Plaque to Basics* see *Shout Out Loud's* YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@shoutoutloud1941); for details on *Shout Out Loud,* English Heritage's national youth engagement programme, see https://www.shoutoutloud.org.uk/about/. Each episode in the Plaque *to the Future* series has a follow-up episode in which the actors and production team discuss how the episode was researched and acted out; in the episode in question audio recordings of Virginia Woolf's voice were analysed so as to foreground contrasts between today's oral discourse and that of Londoners 100 years or so ago. The *Ways to get involved* section of the *Shout Out Loud* web page advises that if "Aged between 11–16 and part of a youth group, you may be able to take part in our creative projects" and that "If you're 18 or over you can apply for a paid placement. Roles include social media, film-making, research, and evaluation" [sites retrieved May 7, 2024].

subgenres (Bengesser, Waade 2021; Kim, Law 2015; Garau 2014) in a way that landlines never did.

In keeping with *Plaque to the Future*'s thought-provoking comparative approach, the current chapter adds to the illustration of the potential/actual outcomes of teacher/student partnerships in relation to tourism marketing genres in a digital world heavily influenced by Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality (henceforth AI and AR). The challenges represented by AI, and, in particular, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT (Schicchi *et al*. 2023), are such to warrant critical assessment of their potential when investigating specific tourism marketing subgenres. The same is true of AR, where the authors have broached the issue of AR semiosis in relation to the *Blended Realities* corpus (Baldry *et al.* 2023) hosted on the specialised video corpus hosting platform, OpenMWS (http://openmws.itd.cnr.it) that they have designed in collaboration with others for the construction and annotation of audio and video digital corpora (Taibi 2020, 2023; Baldry, Kantz 2022; Baldry *et al.* 2020; Bianchi *et al.* 2022). Indeed, the *Blended Realities* corpus, which includes simulations relevant to virtual tours of 'indoor' and 'outdoor' places (Baldry *et al.* 2022), is the result of online partnerships based on research agreements between ITD/CNR and Italian University departments providing users, teachers and students alike, with online distance-learning resources and guidance in the construction of digital corpora;[2] the OpenMWS project does so with reference to the possibilities for analysis of videos and podcasts accessed virtually (Arizzi 2021; Cambria 2023; Coccetta 2022). In the furtherance of the aforesaid partnerships, what follows explores two case studies envisaging greater integration of AR and AI in the construction and management of the structured pathways that, ultimately, this chapter seeks to characterise and, where possible, define.

2. Case Study n° 1: AR as a support for structured pathways

Figure 2 shows that London is, and has been since the 19th century, home to the eye-catching blue roundels illustrated in Figures 1 and 3, a specialised subgenre through which many buildings in London that would otherwise have attracted little, if any, attention have collectively come to be branded within a celebratory network creating tourist-linked economic opportunities ranging from grassroots ventures such as walking tours suitable for "those visitors who

[2] Four such partnerships between ITD/CNR (co-ordinated by Davide Taibi) and University Departments have been set up to develop the OpenMWS platform: in temporal order, they are: DILL, University of Udine (co-ordinated by Nicoletta Vasta), DSLCC, Ca' Foscari-Venezia (co-ordinated by Francesca Coccetta), DICAM, Messina (co-ordinated by Mariavita Cambria and Maria Grazia Sindoni) and DSU, Salento (co-ordinated by Francesca Bianchi and Elena Manca).

want to construct their own experiences from the raw materials that the city provides" (Maitland 2007, p. 85) to institutional ones such as charity-based fund-raising or investment in downgraded areas (Smith, Graham 2019). However, in the smartphone age, such a network of icons is also a clear invitation to use AR technologies as a means for "escaping from the institutional limitations of each separate genre, program, or website, to make something uniquely our own and uniquely free" (Lemke 2009, p. 291).

Figure 3
English Heritage on London's Blue Plaques: https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/

As such, AR technologies constitute an entry point into what Lemke has called *transmedia traversals* through which, by hopping "between websites, across institutional, genre, and even language and culture boundaries […] we are stretching our penchant for making meaningful wholes to its limit" (Lemke 2009, p. 291). Indeed, the combination of the real world as seen by users and the virtual world, as it were 'generated by a computer', augments reality by integrating visual and/or verbal information to what is seen in 'real' life, and thus challenges us to go beyond conventional boundaries.

As well as by a computer, such traversals are made possible using a mobile device such as a smartphone or a tablet; besides hypertext links, they can make use of marker-based links between texts: thus, for a tourist visiting London and wanting to learn more about a person mentioned on a blue plaque, a simpler and faster alternative to entering the name of the person on their smartphone and browsing through web pages is to access the many YouTube

videos associated with the person in question by simply framing the plaque with the smartphone's camera, i.e. without even taking a snapshot. A further step is to match this 'marker frame' against a pre-existing database of icons and to follow a structured pathway made available, for example, by a platform such as ARLectio (Farella *et al.* 2020, 2021; https://www.arlectio.eu/). This prototype AR authoring system recognises smartphone or tablet markers and, with its simple user interface and limited set of functions, is designed to facilitate the application of AR to written texts, videos and images. Since ARLectio works with preconstituted sets of virtual markers, it provides many affordances for virtual tourism in educational contexts and, with further development, could be used in tandem with other resources, such as the OpenMWS platform, to explore the use of AR resources. For instance, as suggested in Figure 4, one of the blue plaques in the subnetworks *de facto* established by the professional roles of those celebrated (writers, scientists, musicians and politicians) might be used as a pathway's starting point for an integrated ARLectio/OpenMWS pathway.

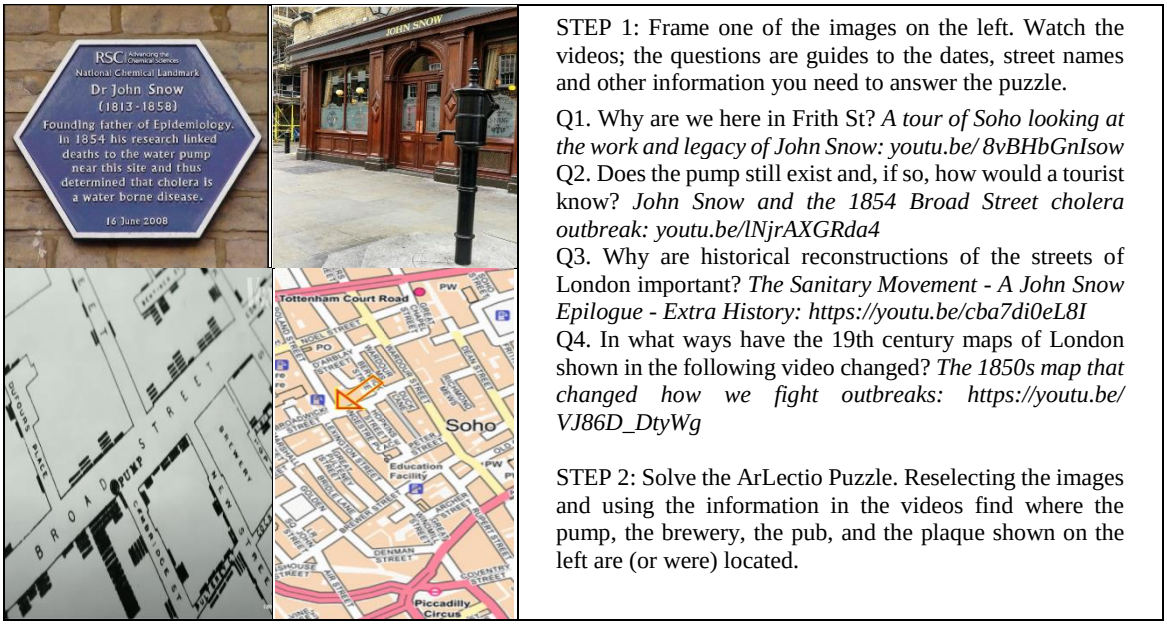

Figure 4
A structured pathway: a video playlist as a series of steps to solving an AR puzzle.

Indeed, Figure 4 relates to the possibility of exploring (and ultimately marketing) London's connections with biomedical sciences through a pathway recalling the achievements of scientists who lived in London, based on selections from the many videos about them found on video-hosting platforms

such as YouTube or Vimeo.[3] The goal of such a pathway might be to signal the relevance of visual information in the breakthroughs achieved by scientists such as John Snow: the segments of videos selected for viewings could very well relate to the maps of London that he annotated in his quest to demonstrate, by pinpointing the source of the cholera outbreak (the pump shown in Figure 4), that cholera was waterborne and not airborne. In so doing, the role of maps, tables and charts, and their relevance to tourism marketing genres, would be highlighted (Baldry, Thibault 2006, pp. 24-34); indeed, in the example illustrated, as part of a virtual historical tour of 'scientific' London, the links between people, places and the origins of a particular science (in this case epidemiology) would be highlighted.

The pathway posited in Figure 4 is a two-step puzzle in which the successful completion of the second step is dependent on solving the first: indeed, when accessing the pathway, a user's mobile device frames one of the four images shown (whether as a digital or printed resource), allowing the user, by way of introduction, to watch an explanatory video linked to that image-cum-marker. The relevant video sequences can then be viewed in any order to grasp the scientific thinking underpinning the pathway, and especially the temporal and causal aspects involved. However, until users have acquired a complete picture, their attempts to proceed to the second step in the puzzle are blocked: the puzzle is completed by correctly locating the correct square on a map of today's London suitably divided into many such squares. This is also designed to be an AR-supported learning experience and, as such, is based on a Treasure Hunt case study (Farella *et al.* 2020, 2021), which road-tested the ARLectio framework as an authoring support when engaging with AR technologies. Like all treasure hunts, the experiment included various challenges and enigmas to be solved by middle school children and, for example, included a "We respect our Earth" sustainability-oriented puzzle exploring an aquatic environment in relation to the themes of animal extinction, climate change, pollution and water contamination.

The pathway posited in Figure 4 attempts to simplify the authoring task by re-using first-step images in the second step. Even so, from an authoring standpoint, this pathway requires video selections to be made that involve AI-based techniques, such as working memory, to keep track of the various sequencing permutations and hence decide which next steps in a given pathway a user may take. To this end, adjustments would be required to both the ARLectio and OpenMWS platforms to improve their capacity to select, display and switch between specific video sequences, while discarding others. However, beyond such technical adjustments, there is a greater need to come

[3] See the English Heritage page calling for greater representation of scientists (https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about-us/search-news/more-blue-plaques-for-scientists/ [retrieved May 11, 2024]).

to terms with the genre and subgenre configurations lying behind such an endeavour, as this is likely to encourage more sophisticated pathways (Taibi 2020) than the simple two-step solution illustrated above. Indeed, one of the goals of the initial development of ARLectio was to demonstrate how AR can be used to teach and communicate by borrowing from the architecture of the serious games (hereafter SG) subgenre interpreted as "an application with three components: experience, entertainment, and multimedia" (Laamarti *et al*. 2014, p. 4) in which the user's experience of reality is preserved in a way that will "narrow the gap between virtual and real spaces, enabling experiential learning techniques to be more readily and effectively applied" (Liarokapis *et al.* 2017, p. 372).

Since data relating to participant activities can be collected and analysed to monitor learning experiences, the structured pathways in question are not a-free-for-all-experience but rather an empirical basis on which to carry out research since quanti-qualitative data can be gathered and analysed (Taibi 2021). Yet, while, as a result of such research, the SG subgenre has evolved to include immersive experiences, it cannot be overlooked that efforts to reconcile the gap between real and virtual spaces will often embrace different subgenres: for example, the use of AR to visualize a museum's artefacts digitally is unlikely to adopt the structured pathway solution described above unless further development (see Section 3) is undertaken to re-imagine how users interact with such artefacts. While the Treasure Hunt map SG is certainly well established (Bellotti 2013; Lameras 2015), and can make good use of AR technology (as participants compete to reach different target locations by correctly interpreting the clues proposed to them),[4] such an SG is far from being the only framework for the structured pathways envisaged.

3. Case Study n° 2: AI supports for podcasting as a marketing genre and its interpretation by students

Hence the description in this Section of a different interpretation of activity-based tourism marketing which potentially merges the two different 'worlds' of the Museum Visit and Treasure Hunt subgenres (Baldry 2012); the former is predominantly concerned with indoor spaces, the latter with outdoor spaces, but both require critical thinking about the meaning potential of space, such as the mutual positioning of objects and people within space (Benford *et al* 1994;

[4] An example of this is where, in the Treasure Hunt experiment described above, the problem of pollution from factories to groundwater was posed, with the participants asked to solve a physics problem: using an AR chart, they had to work out how many years it takes to restore environmental contamination caused by the spillage of harmful substances (Farella *et al.* 2021, p. 152).

Licoppe, Inada 2008; McMurtrie 2016) and how to manage this within the types of structured pathway posited in this chapter.

This case study looks at the step-by-step inclusion of generative AI, and in particular ChatGPT3.5, in the furtherance of an SG template capable not just of incorporating the visual and the sonoral, but also of approaching the analysis of tourism marketing genres through the comparative but corpus-based lens of critical multimodal discourse analysis (hereafter CMDA) incorporated within the framework of interactive software (O'Halloran *et al*. 2011). That the structured pathways in question can extend the corpus-based structured pathways described above to the voices and sounds of wine-based tourism marketing has never been in doubt: numerous podcasts and videocasts about wine production and marketing in specific Italian regions, such as Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (hereafter FVG), now exist as illustrated in the top row of Figure 5, which relates to the construction of a pilot podcast corpus about FVG wines and vineyards.[5]

What was, and still is, in doubt is instead the development of frameworks for the critical awareness of the likely impact of AI and AR technologies on tourism marketing genres. Take, for example, another instance of icon-based branding of places, namely the brass cobble-stone commemorations that lead tourists to bend down in streets, read and take photos of these miniature plaques so as to share this experience with others; known in Italy as *pietre d'incampio*: each of these stumbling stones (from the German original *Stolperstein*)[6] names deportation victims who died in Nazi concentration camps. Since each such stone is found embedded in the road where the victim lived, it requires little imagination to see how a structured pathway could be devised linking up the individual experiences of tourists as they tour FVG, with, for example, indoor, museum-based commemorations of a collective nature, such as the museum in FVG's capital, Triest, which is dedicated to these victims.[7]

[5] The corpus is constructed using an Excel-based template which when uploaded to the OpenMWS platform produces the searchable sequence-based corpora described. The Excel template used consists of three sheets: the first (*Overview*) includes playlist data such as the title, address and duration of the audio (mp3) and video (mp4) files included in the corpus, with each file typically corresponding to an episode in a video or podcast series; the second (*Transcripts*) contains the transcription of what is said in each of these files, divided into time-stamped sequences corresponding to speaker turns within the exchanges characterising interview-based podcasts or, in the case of single-speaker narratives, reflecting the division into microphases (Baldry and Thibault 2020); the third (*Multi-summaries*) contains summaries of each episode, with the possibility of providing more than one summary per video. In this case, the pilot FGV wine and vineyard corpus was constructed under the research agreement between ITD/CNR and the DSU Department, University of Salento.

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stolperstein [retrieved May 11, 2024].

[7] https://www.museoebraicotrieste.it/en/digital-map-of-the-trieste-stumbling-stones/ [retrieved May 11, 2024].

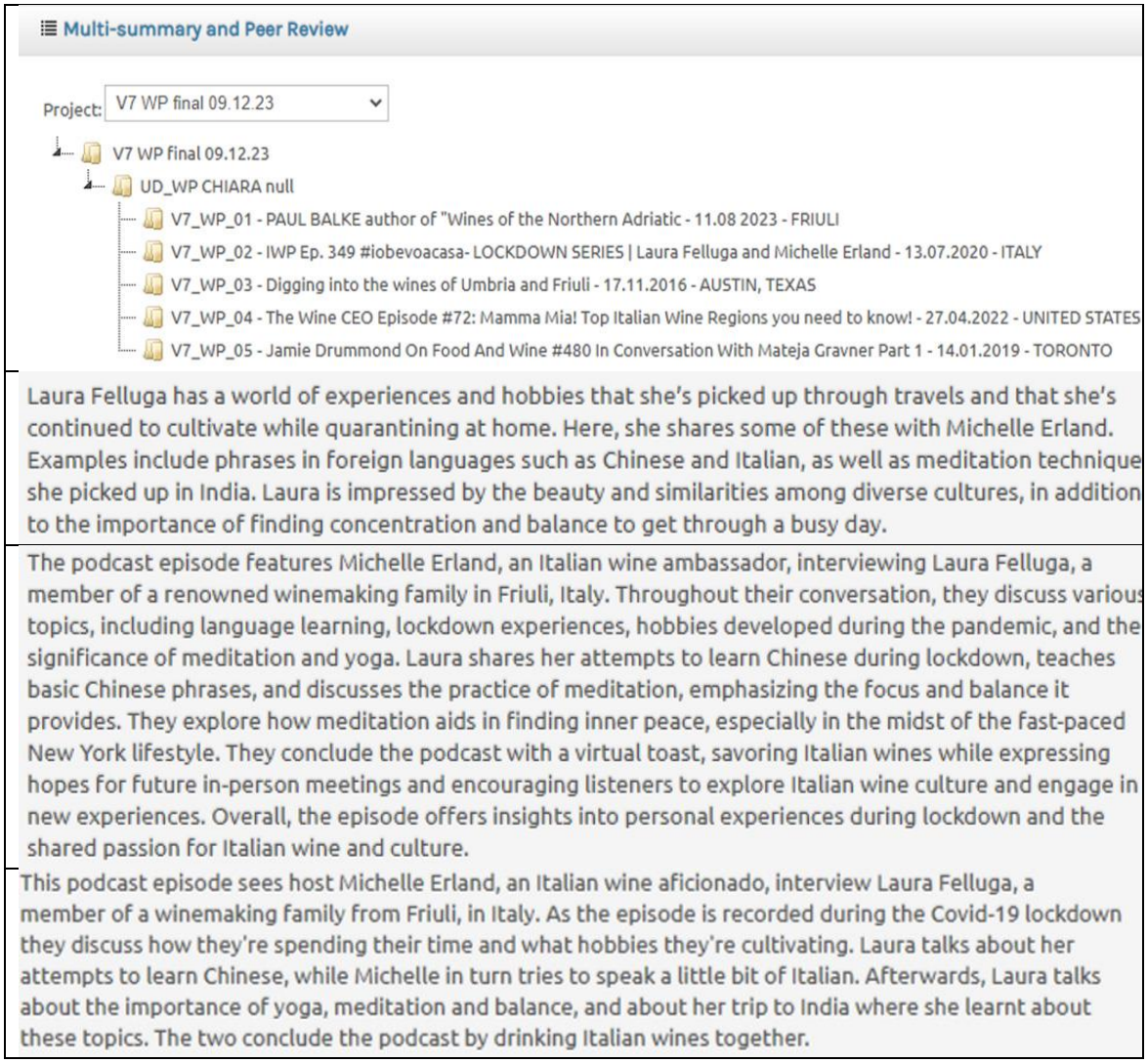

Figure 5
A pilot video and podcast corpus for FVG wines and vineyards.

However, within the authoring perspective that underlies this chapter, such an undertaking presupposes the existence of templates which, as indicated above, facilitate the co-existence within the SG subgenre of various other genres, while remaining within the reasonable learning curves achieved for corpus construction in the OpenMWS project with the use of Excel-based templates. Such templates need to encapsulate other genres. One example that meets this criterion is the reusable template model (Baldry *et al.* 1994), designed with a view to training university students in the complexities of oral discourse: this template consisted in "a re-usable, application-independent model of interaction […] which links a tactical level […] to a metalevel which provides a move-by-move commentary on interactional theory" (Baldry *et al.* 1994, p. 27). In other words, in this solution the structured pathways described above now transcend the tactical game-oriented level of many SGs; their gated-access techniques are extended beyond conditioning and constraining the next-step

moves in an SG puzzle and function instead as the gateway to a strategic, metatextual level that comments on the users' various moves as they work through the SG; this metatextual level will typically take the form of a pyramid-like hierarchy of increasingly abstract theoretical concepts that users can only access having made smart (or maybe dumb) moves. In this respect, the step forward that the OpenMWS research project makes is to replace the typical simulated discourse of SG applications with a data-driven approach (Coccetta 2022) in which corpus-based data provides an appropriate balance between real discourse, theory-related interpretations and an SG's fun-and-games entertainment.

At the tactical level, one such re-usable model might cast the end-user as an imaginary tourist visiting FVG encountering real places and the real experiences of other tourists (both of these video and/or podcast-based) while, at the strategic level, it might take the form of a CMDA-based exploration simulating the interactions of an online travel research company, such as TripAdvisor, which defines itself as "a family of brands that connects people to experiences worth sharing" (https://ir.tripadvisor.com/). Such a model would specifically include analysis of AI and AR affordances: while posts on TripAdvisor show that today's savvy travellers already know about the network of stumbling stones found in Italy, on the other hand, TripAdvisor has only recently introduced "generative AI & Large Language Models (LLMs) to distil user reviews into a helpful and intuitive set of review summaries" (Varuni, Raja 2024). Thus, on the one hand, such a reusable template could provide links to the various travel trajectories described in the various articles in this volume, or, on the other hand, it could be used, for instance to explore experiences of space: for example, bending down to take a picture of a stumbling stone requires an unusual and, for some, a difficult orientation in space whose description can benefit from the theory-based analyses and exemplifications of space mentioned above; the same goes for map-based visits where it might be expected that the wine labels described in the previous chapter (Kantz, Baldry, *this volume*) would constitute the initial marker.

The development of such SG models is a step-by-step procedure. A preliminary step in this otherwise forthcoming research relates to the likelihood that tourists' interactions with online travel research sites such as TripAdvisor, Expedia, Booking.com describing their tourist experiences (e.g. evaluating hotel stays) will become increasingly interactive with both parties (i.e. the 'site' and the individuals using the site) using generative AI in their efforts to synthesize and summarise their experiences. Accordingly, already armed with wariness about "Ask AI to do anything" claims, a group of university students was asked to explore summary writing in relation to the pilot podcast corpus

about FVG wines and vineyards described above.[8] Three types of summaries were envisaged: the first taken from the podcast website; the second, a podcast summary generated by ChatGPT on the basis of the transcription of the podcast that the students undertook; the third a summary produced by the students themselves. Unlike the ChatGPT summaries, the students' summaries were characterised by an interesting emphasis on crucial details missed by the automatic system. A student user can *see* events and *hear* sounds and can thus report what people *did* and what *happened* that (at the time of writing) freely available AI tools such as ChatGPT3.5 cannot, except where explicitly stated in the documents they are fed with – in the case of the OpenMWS project, the written transcripts of what is said by podcast and video participants.

Figure 5 reproduces part of the *Multisummary and Peer Evaluation* functionality that OpenMWS uses to display these different types of summaries through which critical comparisons of summary writing can be made (Cambria 2023). A crucial element that is missing in all three summaries is that the genre in question is that of a video call in which the two speakers are linked in time but not space. There is nothing in the first summary – taken from the YouTube page for Michelle and Livia Felluga's Lockdown Series chat (https://youtu.be/iDcoWKZ55TM) – to suggest that the two participants are not in the same room but instead communicating in a video call. Likewise, although the second summary produced by ChatGPT3.5 describes a 'virtual toast', it fails to explain that this toast was not directed to viewers but, instead, referred to the fact that the participants could not clink their glasses together as they were separated by hundreds of miles. Only the last summary (the one by the student) explicitly states that the video was 'recorded during the Covid 19 lockdown'; as such, of the three, it comes closest to recognising that this is an example of a video call; that the student had known this, is suggested by her emphatic use of "together" as the very last word in the summary: this seems to mean that despite their physical distance, a video call still allows the two participants to partially perform the synchronised, co-ordinated actions that they would have taken if they had been in the same place. All three summaries present shortcomings as regards the identification of generic features that a combined SG tactical/strategic template would potentially resolve by

[8] See the *Advanced manuals page* http://openmws.itd.cnr.it/pages/advanced_manuals.jsf. This is the part of the OpenMWS platform which hosts the online manuals produced by students in relation to AI supports within the CNR-University partnerships. One of the first of these illustrates the simple prompts needed to convert a pre-existing transcription into a ChatGPT-generated summary and further explains that once inserted into the *Multi-summaries* sheet of the Excel template, that when uploaded to OpenMWS a title to will be automatically associate to the summary by retrieving it from the Excel template's *Overview* sheet. Other manuals produced by students relate to AI support in storyboarding and speech-to-text conversion in the production of transcripts, e.g., through the combined use of TurboScribe and ChatGPT.

guaranteeing a CMDA metatextual level without which the role of genres in guiding social interactions would be sorely missed.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have explored genres relating to tourism marketing as springboards for other initiatives that lie beyond tourism and financial gain and which instead focus on Education and training within an interdisciplinary framework which views the multimodal features of place branding as a centrepiece for academic research. The chapter has described the interdisciplinary foundations so far undertaken to create easily accessible but culturally-inspired virtual journeys that enhance an understanding of people and places and the co-existence of present and past times. In many cases we have resisted using AI merely for the sake of using AI where simpler techniques perform as well or better. However, we ourselves could not resist the temptation to ask ChatGPT3.5 for answers to the riddle posed at the outset. The prompts given in relation to the "When is a place not a place?" riddle generated the following answers:

> "When it is in a state of flux or change." In other words, a place ceases to be defined as a fixed location when it is constantly changing, thus not fitting the usual static notion of a "place." […]
> "When it exists only in the mind." This suggests that a place that is imagined or dreamed of is not a tangible, physical place, but rather a creation of thought.
> "When it is a metaphor." Sometimes we refer to concepts like "a dark place" or "a good place" metaphorically, rather than as physical locations.
> "When it is a transition." A place might not be considered a stable, fixed location when it is merely a point of transition, like a train station or an airport.
> "When it is a memory." A remembered place exists in the past and in the mind, not in the present physical world.

Though expanding the concept of place beyond physical locations, in many respects, the definitions were little more than a summary of the various evolutionary, metaphorical, real vs. virtual perspectives described above of what a "place" can be considered to mean. ChatGPT certainly demonstrated an intriguing pattern-matching capacity to mimic wording conventions of riddles. For example, when asked to give an answer rhyming with the word *place*, the response complied with the fact that genre norms will guide and constrain the microstructures used, in this case those typical of Q&A routines:

> "Sure! A rhyming answer to the riddle 'When is a place not a place?' could be: 'When it's just empty space'."

However, a better answer might have been "*no longer* an empty space *but one full of meaning*". Indeed, while acknowledging that ChatGPT plays a significant role in stimulating critical commentaries and reflection on the relationship between textual and metatextual levels in discourse, the authors contend that as regards the contribution that specific technologies can make when exploring, for example, genres relating to tourism marketing, valuable solutions will emerge from the use of AI and AR only when they are combined with other tools, whether conceptual, pedagogical and/or technological in nature. Research of the interdisciplinary type envisaged in joint CNR-University research projects, such as the OpenMWS project, is thus needed to ensure that such a toolkit is constantly in place.

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