

The digital promotion of slowness

Dialogicity and interaction in the virtual realm

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This paper explores the promotion and discourse of the new values of the term *slow* in the context of Slow Tourism. Within Slow Tourism, *slow* means sustainability with host communities and tourists working towards green and eco-friendly goals. This paper aims to explore how slow travelling associations engage with their audiences online. Under the lens of dialogic action and through a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of websites and respective social media accounts of two slow travelling associations operating in the UK, I will analyze and compare recurring phraseologies in the way they communicate with their readers. Results shed light on how discourse on slow tourism is co-created through different forms of online interaction.

Keywords: slow tourism, dialogicity, corpus-assisted discourse analysis, digital communication

1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the Slow Food Movement (SFM) in Italy in 1989 which aimed at the re-introduction of the pleasure of eating at table and to take time to create moments of conviviality, the motto ‘good, clean, and fair’, coined by the founder of the movement Carlo Petrini, was then used as a springboard for analogous movements which all have in common a set of ethical principles. A closely related field that has been affected by the SFM is, among others, that of tourism, which in recent years has become globalized and easily accessible to everyone. The rise in overtourism, the awareness of environmental changes, and the need to ‘disconnect’ from an everyday hectic lifestyle (Fullagar et al. 2012) has led to the development of slow tourism, where *slow* means sustainable and where host communities and tourists work towards green and eco-friendly goals. Motivations that lead people to approach slow tourism may include a need for relaxation, self-

reflection, escape, novelty-seeking, engagement, and discovery (Oh et al. 2014). Slow tourism implies giving meaning to travel. In other words, rather than visiting cities as if they were items to tick off on a supermarket checklist, people might consider engaging with the local community, understanding their culture and traditions. This automatically leads to “slow mobilities”, where alternative ways to travel such as walking and cycling are strongly encouraged, not only for sustainability reasons, but also to understand more about geography, distances and cultures (Howard 2012, 19).

The aim of this paper is to explore how slow tourism initiatives promote such alternative types of travelling through their blogs and social media accounts. In terms of discourse, tourism has been defined as a form of specialized language (Dann 1996; Gotti 2006) with numerous studies focusing on its persuasive features in digital contexts (Cappelli 2007; Maci 2007; 2017; Manca 2012; 2016; Turra 2020; Soto-Almela 2024; Zakharaova García 2024). Since the advent of Web 2.0, the internet has become more of a tool for users to co-create material rather than a simple platform (Baron 2008): tourists can not only retrieve information about their destinations, but they can also interact with companies, associations, and other travellers through websites, social media and blogs. With regards to the latter, these play a fundamental role in creating a sense of belonging and identity (Davies and Merchant 2006; Myers 2010; Luzón 2012; Zou and Hyland 2019), as well as sharing and disseminating information (Luzón 2012; Bondi and Seidenari 2012), while still being a tool for self-promotion open to potential engagement with users. Blogs are characterized by an “inherently evaluative nature” (Bondi and Seidenari 2012, 25), thanks to the presence of their subjectivity markers (Bondi and Diani 2015), expressions of subjective stance (e.g., hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention), and forms of engagement, such as addressing the reader through the use of imperative forms, obligation modals, and questions. Meanwhile, the construction of social media communication is per se much different from blogs. On Instagram for instance, you have an image or video for each entry, then a more or less brief description next to each image where people can react with emojis and/or comments. According to Jovanovic and Van Leeuwen (2018), in a semiotic technology view of dialogue, there are two main forms of interaction, namely a user-user communication (e.g., one between two users commenting below a post) and system-user communication (i.e., between a system and its users, such as entering a password or pressing the heart or like button under a picture). Communication on social media allows “one-to-one dialogues to subsequently be published for a wider audience, with the Initiator addressing this new audience, and receiving comments from it, over the head of the original addressee, so that the participants are no longer in an equal relation” (Jovanovic and Van Leeuwen 2018, 686). Such interaction in the digital space hap-

pens on many levels, from sharing a post, to liking a picture, or commenting and initiating a conversation through direct messages. While the social media function is more related to a virtual space of opinion sharing, blogs can still be considered a shop window for the organization's identity and for public views (Etter et al. 2019; Bondi and Nocella 2023).

This study aims to explore how two slow associations operating in the UK build a dialogue with their audience both on their blog and on their respective Instagram page. More specifically, the two associations that have been taken into account are Slow Travel¹ and Slow Ways.² Slow Travel is an association of writers, artists, and creators who share their experiences on slow travel, providing readers with tips and suggestions on where to go. Their definition of slow travelling starts from the acknowledgement of certain principles, such as leaving no environmental impact, avoiding overtourism, using low impact transport, and eating, shopping and staying local. Slow Ways, instead, is a UK national initiative which aims to create a walking network that connects all towns, cities, and landscapes in the UK. The aim of this non-profit initiative is to promote local walks and organize long-distance journeys, as well as to gather volunteers willing to explore new paths and trails. While the focus of the two associations is slightly different, with the former presenting various tours to approach slow travelling and the latter focusing on the creation of a slow walking network, both initiatives have the common goal of creating and promoting an alternative type of travelling connected to the new values of *slow*.

Following this brief introduction, the paper will continue with the presentation of the materials and methods adopted in this study (Section 2). Results will be then presented starting with a quantitative overview (3.1), followed by a qualitative discussion of dialogicity in blogs (3.2) and on Instagram (3.3). The paper will then close with conclusions (Section 4).

2. Materials and methods

In order to explore how slow tourism and slow travelling associations and initiatives engage with their audience online, I have collected four corpora made up of blog posts and Instagram posts of Slow Ways and Slow Travel. More specifically, with regards to the blog, the corpora consist of all posts that have been published since the launch of the websites, with a time span ranging from 2020–2024 for Slow Travels and 2021–2024 for Slow Ways; however, for Slow Travel I discarded

1. Official website available at: <https://www.slow-travel.uk/>

2. Official website available at: <https://beta.slowways.org/>

the few posts that regarded travels outside the UK so to have a comparable focus on the case of Great Britain. As for the Instagram accounts, the corpora consist of all posts published in 2024. For all four corpora, the data was collected manually by copying and pasting the verbal part on Notepad (txt format), so that they could be machine readable; images were not taken into account in this study as the focus is primarily on the verbal dimension. Table 1 below provides details on the number posts and tokens for each corpus.

Table 1. Number of posts and tokens for Slow Ways and Slow Travels blog and Instagram account

Associations Posts/tokens	Slow Ways		Slow Travel	
	Blog	Instagram	Blog	Instagram
No of posts	20	155	272	7
No. of tokens	25,336	15,772	426,944	570

Although Table 1 provides the reader with a quantitative dataset on the distribution of information on the Instagram profile and blog of the two associations, this study is more qualitative in focus. In order to explore dialogicity in the two associations, Bondi’s (2018) framework (Figure 1) was used as a starting point to explore elements involved in the “action game” (Weigand 2009; 2010) of dialogues.

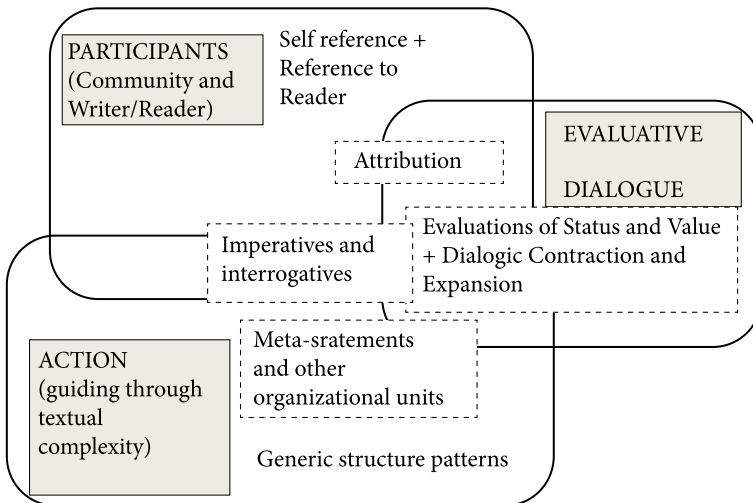


Figure 1. Model of dialogicity (Bondi 2018)

Bondi's model of dialogicity for academic discourse (Figure 1) was applied and readapted to the study of blogs and Instagram posts of the two associations, taking into account three components that make dialogicity possible, namely participants, action, and evaluation. The 'participants' component includes members belonging to the community, readers, authors, and anyone who is addressed and involved in the verbal part under analysis. Elements of 'action', which include meta-statements, rhetorical structures (e.g., recapitulating and anticipating), local organizational units (e.g., transition markers), are relevant to explore how the author guides the reader through the textual complexity of posts published on their Instagram account and on their blog. Finally, 'evaluation' shows the position and stance of the author through claims: this includes the use of modal verbs, periphrasis, and adverbs.

In order to carry out a corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington et al. 2013), I availed myself of Antconc (3.5.8) software, which allowed me to compute both wordlists and keyword lists of the corpora under analysis: one that shows the most frequent words in the corpus and another that highlights keywords that are statistically significant when set against a reference corpus. Because of the conspicuous disproportion between the two Instagram corpora, I started my analysis from the two wordlists. As for the blogs, keywords were used as a starting point to contrast and explore the aboutness of the two corpora: more specifically, these were found by setting Slow Ways blog against the Slow Travels one and viceversa Slow Travels against Slow Ways. Results emerging from the lists, together with the blogs' wordlists, were used to further explore collocations and phraseology of specific items related to the aforementioned elements of dialogicity.

3. Results

3.1 Slow Ways and Slow Travel: A quantitative overview

As already visible from Table 1 in Section 2, there seems to be a significant difference in both the number of words and posts published on the blog and on the Instagram account of the two slow travel associations. This first result already suggests a preference in the type of communication, and probably target audience, of the two companies. On the one hand, Slow Ways seems to prefer communication on social media, with a higher number of updated posts. On the other hand, Slow Travel has an updated and regular blog post, while the social media account on Instagram presents fewer instances of regular posts.

Table 2 and Table 3 below respectively show the first ten keywords of the Slow Ways' blog when set against the Slow Travel one, and the ones of Slow Travel when

set against Slow Ways. As already stated in the methodology (Section 2), despite the use of corpus tools, this study is more qualitative in focus; however, this might still be a relevant starting point of analysis.

Table 2. Keyword list of Slow Ways

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Effect	Keyword
1	592	+ 1516.48	0.0441	<i>I</i>
2	176	+ 806.79	0.0138	<i>ways</i>
3	187	+ 608.7	0.0146	<i>slow</i>
4	190	+ 585.2	0.0148	<i>my</i>
5	146	+ 374.37	0.0114	<i>walking</i>
6	77	+ 336.06	0.0061	<i>routes</i>
7	77	+ 318.14	0.0061	<i>Ve</i>
8	85	+ 232.7	0.0067	<i>me</i>
9	38	+ 219.09	0.003	<i>Caleb</i>
10	70	+ 201.12	0.0055	<i>route</i>

Table 3. Keyword list of the Slow Travel blog

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Effect	Keyword
1	34733	+333.22	0.15	<i>the</i>
2	975	+112.54	0.0046	<i>Salisbury</i>
3	901	+87.06	0.0042	<i>museum</i>
4	9575	+75.73	0.0438	<i>in</i>
5	6319	+73.66	0.0292	<i>is</i>
6	2405	+69.64	0.0112	<i>which</i>
7	1052	+69.5	0.0049	<i>house</i>
8	593	+68.42	0.0028	<i>cathedral</i>
9	760	+65.76	0.0036	<i>visit</i>
10	664	+60.91	0.0031	<i>war</i>

As visible from Table 2, Slow Ways seems of course to focus more on topics that are related to walking and trails (e.g., *walking*, *ways*, *route*, *routes*) and the presence of reference to participants, such as personal pronouns *I* and *me*, possessive adjective *my* and proper names, such as *Caleb* seems quite striking. This suggests a more personal and direct involvement with the reader. In contrast, when looking at the keywords of Slow Travel (Table 3), we certainly notice a difference in the themes and topics of the blog, which are more related to a different type of slow travelling, namely that related to discovering unconventional parts of cities

or specific monuments. This explains why the keyword list shows names of cities (e.g., *Salisbury*), architectural elements (e.g., *cathedral, house*), reference to cultural sites (e.g., *museums*) and historic events (e.g., *war*). Moreover, the presence of the relative pronoun *which*, as well as the use the third person of the verb to be in the present tense (i.e., *is*) indicates the fact the quite likely this blog is more descriptive and maybe explanatory than the Slow Ways' one.

3.2 Dialogicity in the Slow blogs

Slow Ways

Starting from the participants that are visible from the Slow Ways' keyword list (Table 2), I will try to trace the construction of dialogicity. The prominent use of the first singular personal pronouns, whether as a subject (i.e., *I*) or as an object (i.e., *me*), denotes a certain visibility of the author(s) as they might introduce elements of personal disclosure. In some cases, bloggers address themselves as a sort of adventurers, guiding the reader step by step through their walk: the use of the past tense leads the reader through the narrative of the writer's journey as they are describing what they saw or did (e.g., *I drove, I was walking, I passed...*), while the present tense in such descriptions may convey a sense of a reporting style (e.g., *It's 2 pm and I am out snacks...*), catching the curiosity of the reader. First person pronouns also introduce bloggers as such by stating explicitly their function as writers (e.g., *my intention here is to write something pop-culture about this natural landscape/ my intention for coming here was largely to write*). Personal pronoun *I* also appears to co-occur with cognitive verbs (e.g., *I definitely think, I find, I'd double check*), as well as with verbs of emotion (e.g., *I fear, love, had an immediate and deep moment*), revealing the presence of an autobiographical self. This is further corroborated by sharing personal experiences about their past or about the reasons that led them to join Slow Ways (e.g., *since my accident I had to slow down/ Annie and I caught up on recent work and life events*). As Slow Ways' bloggers are not always the same or constant, they might also use posts to present themselves, as in an actual friendly virtual conversation with the reader (e.g., *my name is Micheal Torney*). When sharing personal experiences, emotions and events linked to slow walking, the personal pronoun *me* is preceded by 'trigger verbs' (e.g., *remind me, enable me, drive me*) that allow them to share their stance on ethics and personal values that are in the first place caused by walking. Examples (1) and (2) below show how authors, by sharing their experience, disclose their feelings and opinions, confirming the values of slowness related to wellbeing as well as their awareness towards the environment. Moreover, by sharing their feelings and opinions, authors not only engage in a one-to-one conversation, as if

it was a diary, but they also engage in wider topics that embrace the whole community of human beings.

- (1) Walking *makes me feel well, physically, mentally and spiritually*.
- (2) The walk *reminded me of what disturbs me most about the earth crisis* is that the baseline of our existence – clean air and waters, habitable lands – is crumbling away.

Me is also preceded by *verba dicendi* (e.g., *tell, say*), putting into action other voices that range from more accredited ones, such as locals and guides (e.g., *a local guide tells me...*), to close-related ones, such as family members (e.g., *my dad told me about slow ways*). This of course leads to the presence of other voices, which play a role in giving credibility to the trail and information related to the described place, as well as reinforcing the presence of a human autobiographical self.

The *I/we– you* dichotomy is of course present when interacting virtually with their readers and community members. With the second person *you*, authors address readers, a generic universal public, and interviewees. When engaging directly with the reader, there seems to be a transactional type of dialogue, which is achieved through the use of imperatives and direct questions. In this case, readers are invited to share their slow walking journeys, as well as to sign up to their community or follow them on social media. This seems to be a more a vertical type of dialogue, with Slow Ways addressing the reader to join their group (Example 3).

- (3) *Have you been on a memorable Slow Ways journey recently?* We'd love to hear about it! *Send us your story, email us at hello@slowways.org. Sign up* to walk and *review* Slow Ways. *Follow us* on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

With *you* as a generic universal, authors expand their personal experience to any of the readers making what is presented as an individual choice and taste (e.g., *I love*) can be relevant to all readers and members of community (Example 4). The use of a universal *you* shortens the distance between the reader and the author and conveys a sense of accessibility to walking as it leads to shared emotions that people happen to experience in their life (e.g., *waiting for the bus, reflecting on what you've seen...*).

- (4) *I love the sense of relief and achievement you get* at the end of every walk *when you finally* arrive at a settlement, and *when you're waiting for the train or bus*, reflecting on all the things that you've seen, heard and learnt that day. *You also learn a lot on* Slow Ways walks from bits of local language, local culture, heritage to history.

With reference to posts dedicated to interviews, such dichotomy appears in a more obvious dialogic style, with an interplay between voices and more specifically, between the blogger who functions as the interviewer, and the interviewee which is usually a walker. A third participant is present in this virtual dialogue, namely the reader who functions as an invisible spectator and as someone in between being an external participant and being virtually involved in the interview. These interviews with walkers start with more general questions to allow the speaker to self-introduce themselves (Example 5), to more specific ones on why/how they started to be involved into walking (Example 6).

- (5) *Who are you* and what do you do?

I'm Mahroof Malik, a British-born Pakistani who lives in Tyseley in Birmingham. It's still one of the most industrial parts of the city. Fortunately, even here there are canals, rivers, and walking routes on my doorstep.

- (6) Lizzy, why do *you* walk?

I walk to feel whole and to disconnect from the constant stress of teaching. I used to do half marathons but hurt my back and wanted to take up gentler exercise. I used to walk to school and back as a child. I love looking at nature and just being.

Questions about walking aim at making the interviewee talk about their positive experience. Interviewees' responses commonly show how slow walking is related to values of sociality, discovery, and taking time to disconnect from the outside world. Through other voices, slow walking is presented as a positive experience connected to encounters with the other, joy and, of self-discovery. Questions of course guide the interviewee in their response as they inherently include positive evaluative language (e.g., *Tell us about some of your more memorable walking journeys. Have you had any interesting or serendipitous encounters while walking?*).

One interview worth mentioning is between blogger Caleb, an eco-poet, and the non-human voice of ChatGPT. Example (7) below shows an excerpt from this blog post, with the blogger aiming at making ChatGPT write a poem and guiding artificial intelligence through questions and asking tips.

- (7) Caleb: I'm trying to walk to Troopers Hill now, but my back is hurting. *Any tips? I realise you don't have a body.*

CGPT: I'm sorry to hear about your back pain. [**Caleb: What does it mean for an AI to be sorry?**] While I can't provide medical advice, here are a few general tips for managing back pain during a walk:

Take it slow: Pace yourself and take frequent breaks if needed. [...]

Also, it is interesting to notice how Caleb comments on, or maybe interrupts, the AI's response (see square brackets in bold in Example 7), making this virtual

dialogue even more surreal, as the blogger makes it clear that the “action game” (Weigand 2010) of dialogicity is playful. AI models generate their responses based on statistical patterns found in chat logs, conversations, and sets of texts, meaning that Caleb is introducing a voice that uses Internet (and not of course, feelings and personal experiences like the previous interviews) as a primary source of reference. Moreover, the ‘tips’ given by ChatGPT in the response to Caleb also apply to the silent spectator that I previously mentioned, namely the reader.

We appears as a recounter, with the writer reporting step by step what he/she did with his/her walking group. Example (8) below shows the natural transition of voices, with *we* as a group, moving to an external voice (Becky) giving directions on how to approach discussion in slow walking, and questions which seem to be addressed also to the readers.

- (8) *We'd stop again soon after, at an especially interesting point, a confluence where three watery bodies met – the Mutton Brook, the Dollis Brook and the River Brent. [...] Becky invited us to take note of the significance of this confluence; who decides the boundary between them? Does the water know where it is? How does our presence meet with theirs? Where do they end?*

The use of inclusive *we* is also present, meaning that within this form of horizontal dialogicity, readers and actual members of the Slow Ways community are addressed as human beings, namely as inhabitants of the world. The themes collocating with the inclusive *we* are those related to climate change with the aim of raising awareness on such problem (e.g., *we can keep living in a severely climate-changed world; what we humans are doing to our fellow earthlings*), hence implicitly addressing the need of a more environmental-friendly approach, such as that of walking.

While participants seem to play a central role in this blog, action is still achieved through the interplay of text and images, which are fundamental in supporting and enhancing descriptions of the routes and convivial moments. However, as stated previously, these will not be taken into account in this study. Action is also achieved through local organization textual elements, such as hyperlinks connecting to external web pages, leading readers to further information. Reformulation of content through the use of general questions also contributes to the dialogic action game. Rhetorical questions that open for reformulation allow for evaluative statements that summarize the main points of what has previously been described (Example 9).

- (9) *So what does this all mean? It suggests that some easy changes to the network could make a significant difference for some high-need, highly indirect routes in particular.*

The use of modals (e.g., *may*, *might*) certainly shows the position of the writer, especially on issues regarding slow travelling and nature, which are presented as values. Moreover, the use of intensifiers, such as superlatives, comparatives and positive evaluative lexical items (e.g., *best*, *better*) clearly counterbalances the softening effect achieved by the use of modals, making their position in favour of a slow walking philosophy even clearer (Example 10).

- (10) For a traveller, traversing routes created by locals, *might prove the best way* to get under the skin of a place.

Overall, in the Slow Ways' blog participants are presented in various ways that range from adventurers, to autobiographical selves; moreover, interviews and *verba dicendi* leave space to other voices, which, together with the use of *you* and questions play an important part in the dialogic action game.

Slow Travel

Moving onto the Slow Travel blog, it is worth mentioning that, unlike for Slow Ways, posts are mostly written by the same blogger, Sarah. The starting point for this analysis will be the wordlist, as the keyword list (Table 3) mostly shows elements related to the type of travelling, rather than to participants, action or evaluation. Therefore, starting from the wordlist, *you* appears to be the most frequently mentioned participant (3227 occurrences). *You* frequently follows the time conjunction *as* (i.e., *as you*) and such colligation co-occurs with verbs of movement (e.g., *approach*, *complete*, *descend*, *explore*, *ride*, *walk*, *wander*) which altogether precede the proposition of what visitors might discover and notice (*you can find see/notice/discover/pick/visit*) during their visit (Example 11).

- (11) *As you approach* the main entrance round the other side, *the first thing you notice* is not just how small it actually is, but that it has no windows.

What the blogger(s) means is that by following a slow approach to travelling, visitors and travellers might discover something unexpected. The colligation *as you* is also followed by verbs of expectation (e.g., *would expect*, *imagine*), which open a positive proposition or statement of what (future) slow travellers might find (e.g., *the food is excellent/ the views are spectacular*). By speculating the readers' imagination, the writer is engaging with them, confirming their expectations and revealing details of the trip. When engaging with the reader, the blogger is also promoting places to visit making sure that attention is also given to individuals' empowerment, ensuring them that they can travel at their own pace (e.g., *at your own pace/speed*). Slow travels are presented in a more promotional and – in a sort of – romanticized way than Slow Ways walks, where the reader seems to be taken by hand and guided in a different world (Example 12).

- (12) *Your entrance is accompanied by the music from the Steinway, with the resident pianist tickling the ivories while you check in. Your coats get whisked away to an unseen cloakroom and uniformed staff show you to your table.*

Imperatives and questions are also present in this blog, with similar functions of the Slow Ways' one. Imperatives, once more, range from transactional communication, such as hyperlinks leading to further information on accommodation (e.g., *Find out more and book your stay*), to giving advice (e.g., *Choose your site wisely*) and encouraging slow travellers to be independent by providing them with hints on how to prepare themselves before advertising the place (e.g., *do your research before you go, check accessibility, look at the map before you set off*). Questions further foster a virtual dialogue, engaging directly the reader (Example 13).

- (13) *Have you tried this walk? Let us know how you got on! If you want to do more walking in the area, try the walk to the Breamore Medieval mizmaze, or the Breamore railway walk.*

Questions are also used as a starting point for argumentation, which opens up to both political and social issues (e.g., war, environment), guiding the reader through an alternative choice of travelling. Example (14) below shows how argumentation in favour of slow travelling is built. By posing a rhetorical open question to readers, the blogger then proceeds listing some "good alternatives" which lead to an independent type of travelling (e.g., *all it takes is to..., just work out...and find*). The adverbs *just* and *all* convey the idea of simplicity, accessibility, and independence in approaching this type of travelling.

- (14) *Do you really want to give your hard-earned cash to them? There are some really good alternatives out there, and all it takes is a look at the map before you set off, and leaving a bit earlier than you would normally. Just work out where you are likely to want to stop, and find somewhere in the vicinity that will provide you with a walk/food/petrol.*

Action is embedded within this, with patterns of hypothetical sequences that aim at including various travellers with diverse situations and backgrounds (e.g., *if you have kids... if you have time and the weather is good..., if you are interested*), making slow travelling an inclusive type of vacation.

The first-person pronoun *I* is also present (907 hits) and, similarly to the function present in the Slow Ways' blog, it is used to share personal experiences and habits of the writer. This strategy certainly shortens distances with their reader and helps in creating connections (e.g., *although I live a good distance away, I regularly try to plan my holidays*). The autobiographical self also appears to introduce the writer's personal opinions and feelings with verbs linked to the emotive sphere (e.g., *I noticed, I was really impressed, I really appreciated*). *I* as

a recounter is also present here, with the blogger guiding the reader through the tour with verbs in the past tense reporting what they did during the visit or travel (e.g., *I sat, I picked, visited, took a peek*).

Other voices are present in both a direct and indirect way. Direct voices are introduced by quotation marks (Example 15), giving space to the voices of people encountered during the journey, poets or historic figures connected to their visit, or to exponents of Slow Movements. Voices of guides or people sharing the same tour of the blogger are likewise cited in an indirect way through reported speech (Example 16).

- (15) *He moved to a rural Suffolk village in 1947 and started writing about the people of this remote village, "Listening to ... people I realised that they were historical documents, books that walked, and nobody was recording them."*
- (16) *Some of the gardens had the owners in situ and visitors would approach to ask them how they cared for a particularly tricky perennial, how often did they prune, what was the name of that flowering shrub*

The idea of (exclusive) community is built indirectly through the use of *few people* which collocates with verbs such as *know* or *notice*. Such indirect periphrasis seems to open secrets paths to a sort of privileged community, which consists of people who want to travel in different and unique ways (Example 17). Implicitly, the only way for them to find out about special views or places is to follow the Slow Travel blog or to be part of their community.

- (17) *Few people know that it is possible to visit Lambeth Palace in London, lying next to the Thames within a stone's throw of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament.*

Community building is also constructed indirectly through the use of *like-minded*, which defines the similar attitude of people taking part in these types of slow travel activities (e.g., *surrounded by like-minded people; the visitors are also like-minded people with an interest in history; the festival is for like-minded people*).

Evaluation is much present in Slow Travel, with blogger(s)' claims on their position on such alternative type of tourism. These claims are achieved by putting a slow travel approach in contrast with the indirect negative critique to over-tourism (Example 18).

- (18) *In the spirit of Slow Travel, where the independent is prioritised over the conglomerate, where unique character and eclecticism is more important than conformity, and where we encourage people to avoid the over busy tourist attractions, Historic Houses fits the brief perfectly.*

This implicit form of evaluation is rendered by highlighting the positive side of slow travelling and leaving an implicit negative evaluation to overtourism (e.g., *where independent is prioritized over conglomerate/where unique is more important than conformity*). And the same goes with adverbs (e.g., *fortunately, thankfully*) which signal a clear position in favour of a shift in travelling behavior:

- (19) *Fortunately, with the lockdowns, it looks like people are now re-evaluating the speed of their previous lives.*

Slow Travelling distances itself from how other slow living movements have been interpreted (e.g., *Slow Living does not need anything to do with...*), creating further distance between *us*, the real community, “the few people”, and ‘them’, namely the people “drifting around in linen”:

- (20) *The Slow Movement is ready for a rebirth and it needs to be entirely different to what has gone before; there is no need to replace one set of rules for another. Slow Living does not need to have anything to do with morning routines, quietude or minimalism. If people want to do those while drifting around in linen and bleating on about intentionality then good luck to them, but they really need to stop hijacking the Slow Movement to do it.*

Example (20) shows how claims are built both through negation by counterposing the association to what is not, and through inferential sequences, claiming a separate identity from what ‘other people’ *want to do*. By claiming their principles and defining their identity through the use of negations, the Slow Travel’s blog certainly serves not only as a promotional tool for a specific type of travel, but also as a means for self-identity.

Overall, what seems to distinguish the Slow Travel’s blog is not only the promotional type of language used to engage with their readers, but also the way they manage to create what appears to be an alternative and ‘anti-commercial’ type of community.

3.3 Dialogicity on Instagram Slow accounts

As already explored in the Materials and Methods section, Slow Ways is much more active on Instagram than Slow Travels, with the former posting almost every day over 2024 and the latter less than once a month. For this part of analysis, I will take into account the functions of engagement used by each of the associations from a qualitative perspective. Once again, however, even if the focus was merely qualitative, the wordlist was used a starting point to explore initial collocations of what could be classified as one of the three elements of the dialogic framework used for this analysis (i.e., participants, action, evaluation).

Slow Travel

All 7 posts are very short and either comment on a picture related to an event, hence reinforcing the image content, or encourage users to read their blog following a link, functioning as a self-promotional tool for their website (e.g., *check our website; link in bio*):

- (21) Hoping you've all had a wonderful Christmas break? Now's the perfect time to start planning your slow travel adventures for the year ahead – *our website is full of ideas and inspiration for your travels in the UK. Link in bio.*

On the one hand, polyphony is very limited in their posts with one example of a direct quotation from the Italian poetess Eleonora Duse. On the other hand, users' voices are present in the comments' threads through positive reinforcement under the posts. These appear with verbs related to the field of affect (e.g., *I am loving the photos and blog, love your updates*) as well as engaging with writers through the use of the personal pronoun *you* (e.g., *you are definitely an inspiration to sustainable travellers*). Heart emoticons are also present, reinforcing the positive evaluative content present in the comment.

Slow Ways

As for the Slow Ways Instagram posts, starting from the wordlist, *likes* appears to be the one of the most frequent words (210 hits). This refers to the 'number of likes' (i.e., number of people pressing on the heart button below each post) that posts receive. When looking at the collocation of *likes*, indeed, this is preceded by numbers which range from 16 to 912, meaning that their posts had reached a certain amount of people. Action seems to be achieved through the use of hashtags, which are metatag operators that allow for cross-referencing, linking elements to one another and giving visibility to the post to both 'inside' and 'outside' members of their community. In the case of Slow Ways, hashtags mostly refer either to the movement itself (e.g., *#slowways, #slowwalkingnetwork*) or to the community in a broader sense (e.g., *#community*). Because of the endemic structure of Instagram, users can also react with hearts to each post and comment; some posts are followed by 86 threads showing that they must be quite popular and reach people. Action is also achieved by citing other members using the 'at symbol', which can then be reached and seen by other users by clicking on their profile.

Now, community members are directly addressed thanks to the use of *you* which appears at least once every post (168 hits). It seems that through the Instagram profile the aim of the Slow Ways is to attract as many members as possible to be part of the community. The *you can* cluster is quite frequent followed by verbs such *help, search, sign* as to involve users in their national walking project (Example 22).

- (22) *If you'd like to help*, please sign up on www.railwalks.co.uk and come to their first meeting on March 9th – a workshop in person in Worcester – *if you can*.

Engagement is achieved much more directly though again the use of questions and imperative forms, encouraging people to directly join them in outdoor activities (Example 23), to buy a copy of their atlas or to apply for an open position (Example 24), hence with a more transactional purpose.

- (23) *Join* a free led walk through Newcastle this Sunday!
- (24) *Does this sound like you? To apply see the full job description and application form at tinyurl.com/slowwaysjobs (live link in Insta stories)*

The use of *just* (e.g., *just log, just check*) conveys the idea of simplicity and accessibility, which is further corroborated by the use of the verb *wheel* which is quite present on their Instagram posts, meaning that walking paths and their reviews are open to anyone despite their walking skills and abilities (Example 25).

- (25) *Wanna join in? Just choose a route, walk or wheel it*, and review it on the site. *Follow* the Waycheck link in the Linktree in the biog for more info.

The informal style (e.g., *wanna*) also gives an idea of speaking rather than writing, shortening distances in the one-to-one/one-to-many virtual dialogue.

The presence of *we*, similarly to the blog, creates a 'we-you' dichotomy, with *we* followed by verbs of self-promotion so to attract people to join them (e.g., *we are creating, looking for the right person, playing*). Users are mutually encouraged to engage with them through imperative forms (e.g., *drop us a comment, join us, help up, walk with us, tell us*), calling for a need for reciprocity as well as visibility of 'the other'. In some cases, the use of *we* is made explicit, engaging in an intricate word play with users (Example 26). The aim is probably that of creating an actual community, or at least a sense of it, where all members feel actively involved.

- (26) "We, for example, have made this lovely little pocket atlas ☺. *And when we say 'we', we mean everyone who's ever contributed to Slow Ways in any way. Does that include you? Have you walked a route, helped a crowdfunder or even just told someone about Slow Ways? If so, this book is (y)our book!*

The use of capital letters throughout posts is also interesting in terms of evaluation as it gives the idea not only that they are stressing on what is important, but also that they are emulating speech rather than writing (Example 27).

- (27) If you're nearby you could make a BIG DIFFERENCE round these parts!

Such attention to typography contributes to making social media a multimodal platform in the attempt of substituting features of a face-to-face communication (e.g., intonation, facial expressions, gestures, etc. – see Jovanovic and Van Leeuwen: 685). Evaluation is also achieved through the use of emoticons which may reinforce or summarize the written content (i.e., the emoticon of a letter as ‘accept our invitation’, or that of a sun for ‘midsummer collective walk’):

- (28) ✉ If this sounds good to you, please accept our invitation to be part of our Great Summer Waycheck! We’d love your company!
 ☀ The Waycheck is our annual midsummer mission to collectively walk, run, wheel and review as many Slow Ways routes as we can.

Comment threads are all positive reactions to the posts, full of evaluative language with verbs related to the emotive language much emphasized (e.g., *I’d love to hear more, this sounds amazing, love this and your explanation*) or with users mentioning friends through tags, contributing to the action game. The example below (29) shows a thread under one of the posts with ‘I’ indicating the initiator (namely, Slow Ways) and ‘R’ the reaction (namely, a user):

- (29) **I:** THIS WEEK’S FUN FACT: Did you know the average person in the UK walks 221 miles per year? Approximately how far have you walked this year? Do you think you’ll beat the average? We’d love to know!
R: I’m definitely above
I: that’s great to hear Elaine! Do you have a favourite walk from this year?
R: @slowwaysuk the Speyside Way. All of it. It was amazing. Except the but where I got lost for 4 hours [...]

Example (29) shows how dialogue is constructed with their users: it opens with a one-to-many post with the Initiator engaging with all users through an open question, this is then followed by a response which is promptly followed by the Initiator’s follow-up, engaging in a one-to-one dialogue which leads to the visibility of the user, who shares his/her personal experiences.

Overall, the Slow Ways’ Instagram profile acts as a virtual starting point to promote their community and ‘attract’ more members to take part in both their online and in-person community.

4. Conclusions

This study has explored the construction of dialogicity in the blogs and Instagram accounts of two slow travelling non-profit associations operating in the UK, namely Slow Ways and Slow Travels. The dataset itself revealed the preferred type

of means of communication of the two initiations, with Slow Ways being mostly active on Instagram, while Slow Travels giving more space to their blog. However, both associations use their blog and Instagram account respectively for different purposes.

Slow Ways seems to use their blog to present different voices, those of writers and of interviewees, which are presented both as adventurers and in an autobiographical way, sharing their experiences and feelings. Readers are engaged through questions and directives and are involved in a horizontal dialogue with the bloggers. This is also visible from the use of an inclusive and universal *we*, where writers and readers are placed on the same level and share the same fear towards climate change or the same (potential) passion for walking and discovery. Their Instagram profile on the other hand has a more direct and promotional function which is that of gathering as many people as possible to be active members of their community and contribute in the marking of walking (or wheeling) trails in the UK. Moreover, their Instagram profile is used to strengthen their connection with the outside world and as a space for users' gathering.

The Slow Travels blog functions more as a descriptive tool, where the blogger reports her travel step by step in a sort of reportage style. A sense of community is built up through the idea of exclusivity, with slow travelling leading to peculiarities accessible only to *few people*. Their blog becomes a space for identity construction which is built through claims that define their principles by counterposing themselves to what they are not. If we think that the Slow Food Movement was initiated for the same reasons, namely that of opposing to the opening of McDonald's, Slow Travels perfectly places itself within the realm of Slow Movements. Their Instagram profile however is not very active and is mostly used to either recontextualize their blog posts or to encourage readers to read their website and blog.

Overall, this case study has shown how dialogicity contributes to the construction and identity of slow travelling communities. The function of blogs seems to reinforce the sense of identity of both initiations, which is achieved both through the use of claims and by creating a horizontal dialogue with their readers. Through the construction of identity and sense of belonging, it emerges that slow principles are again strongly correlated to values of environmental awareness, community building, and wellbeing.

As this is a limited case study on two slow travelling associations operating in the UK, it would be interesting to further explore the construction of slow travel communities in other countries so to explore whether there are any cross-cultural similarities (and differences) in the values of *slow*. Furthermore, this study could be further implemented by taking into account non-verbal elements, such as videos and images.

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