

Understanding the Top Questions Asked about Hong Kong by Travellers Worldwide through a Corpus-Based Discourse Analytic Approach

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Abstract : As one of the most important service-oriented industries in contemporary society, tourism has increasingly seen the influence of the Internet on all aspects of travelling. Travellers nowadays habitually research online before making travel-related decisions. One platform on which such research is conducted is destination forums. The emergence of such online destination forums in the last decade has allowed tourists to share their travel experiences quickly and easily with a large number of online users around the world. As such, these destination forums also provide invaluable data for tourism bodies to better understand travellers' views on their destinations. Collecting posts from the Hong Kong travel forum on the world's largest travel website TripAdvisor®, the present study identifies the top questions asked by TripAdvisor users about Hong Kong through a corpus-based discourse analytic approach. Based on questions posted on the forum and their associated meta-data gathered in a one-year period, the study examines the top questions asked by travellers around the world to identify the key geographical locations in which users have shown the greatest interest in the city. Questions raised by travellers from different geographical locations are also compared to see if traveller communities by location vary in terms of their areas of interest. This analysis involves the study of key words and concordance of frequently-occurring items and a close reading of representative examples in context. Findings from the present study show that travellers who asked the most questions about Hong Kong are from North America and Asia, and that travellers from different locations have different concerns and interests, which are clearly reflected in the language of the questions asked on the travel forum. These findings can therefore provide tourism organisations with useful information about the key markets that should be targeted for promotional purposes, and can also allow such organisations to design advertising campaigns which better address the specific needs of such markets. The present study thus demonstrates the value of applying linguistic knowledge and methodologies to the domain of tourism to address practical issues.

Keywords : corpus, hong kong, online travel forum, tourism, TripAdvisor

Conference Title : ICCLM 2018 : International Conference on Corpus Linguistics and Methodology

Conference Location : Venice, Italy

Conference Dates : April 12-13, 2018